Socialism as Ideology, Socialism as Legacy

Tjaša Konovšek
Institute of Contemporary History, Ljubljana

The study of the politics of memory,\(^1\) or, as the German political philosopher and historian Jan-Werner Müller has defined it, the study of the past’s involvement in the present, is an approach closely related to the study of categories such as nation and identity.\(^2\) Studying the politics of memory means examining connections between memory and political power as exercised by various historical actors, including state institutions, as well as the impact of memory on shaping power relations within a community. While memory itself can be and often is a very personal experience, memory is understood here in the context of memory politics, comprised of the “public activity of various social institutions and actors aimed at the promotion of specific interpretations of a collective past and establishment of an appropriate sociocultural infrastructure of remembrance, school curricula, and, sometimes, specific legislation”.\(^3\) When dealing with the politics of memory, the main interest of scholars is most often the ways of remembering historical events, their changing impact and reception in political, scholarly, popular, and other evocations.\(^4\) Thus, this process of remembering itself becomes

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\(^1\) I am grateful to my colleague Dr Bojan Godeša for long and fruitful debates on the topic, which helped me shape this contribution.


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a historical event and should be historicized, since forming and exhibiting different understandings of the past have concrete strategic, political, and ethical consequences.⁵

When taking into consideration the state’s attitude towards the past, an important question emerges: Can state institutions be the entry point of historical research when thinking about the politics of memory? Or would it be more effective to focus on the activity of various politicians or memory entrepreneurs (“actors seeking social recognition and political legitimacy for their preferred narrative of the past and combining resources across political, historiographic and Eurocratic fields”)?⁶ While both these focuses have proven to be fruitful, I propose that setting the research focus on the state and basing the research in institutions may also prove valid. There are two aspects that I wish to elaborate on, which both reflect the empirical research presented in this paper.

First, institutions themselves contain a high level of inertia, which at least to some degree affects every individual that is active in politics, from the local to the republic and federal or other supranational levels.⁷ Even the activities of memory entrepreneurs, who are crucial actors in creating memory politics, are tightly connected to political and state institutions. If nothing else, the memory institutes that memory entrepreneurs themselves oftentimes govern are founded and, in the long run, are financed by the state. This reflects the fact that even with relatively frequent changes of government the state institutions are, to a certain extent, bound to decisions and policies made by previous governments or, for practical reasons, often pick up the materials of previous governments as a basis for their own actions, including in the field of memory politics. In the case of Slovenia, the focus of this article, the state founded its memory institute, the Study Centre for National Reconciliation – SCNR (Študijski center za narodno spravo), under Janez Janša’s government in April 2008.⁸ Despite

harsh criticism and subsequent government changes, the state remains the Centre’s founder and financier.

Second, focusing on state institutions allows for empirical research with a longer time span. Memory entrepreneurs are intrinsically tied to the field of anticommunism as it emerged in the 2000s, while state institutions have a longer continuity and exhibit some of their characteristics and functions both before and after state socialism. Focusing on the official state attitudes towards the socialist legacy as articulated via state institutions thus allows for a more continuous historical view of the emergence of modern-day memory politics as well as anticommunism itself. The impact of institutions on memory politics, usually the European Parliament, is already acknowledged in the literature. This paper attempts to make further use of this knowledge by extending the period under observation and by investigating the transnational dimension by analysing its pre-history at the level of the republic.

The central perspective of existing literature often stresses the conflict surrounding the politics of memory. In contrast, this paper first explores the socialist legacy expressed through state holidays in the time of state socialism as events contributing towards political unity and towards building a common (socialist and national) identity. Holidays are used here because they are periodic events that preserve particular interpretations of historical events for inscription into the collective memory of a community. In the second part of my article, where the timeline moves beyond the state-socialist period, the perspective changes. The same topics that created a sense of unity before the break of 1989–1991 became a point of conflict and differentiation in the context of the Slovene nation-state. My research follows two basic questions. First, I aim to map the relationship between the state institutions and holidays as opportunities to narrate historical events. What did the socialist legacy mean in two very different time periods?

periods and in what ways was the state dependent on it? Second, I wish to investigate the specific temporality of holidays and, through them, memory politics. Their content was shaped by state institutions in connection, but not in direct correspondence with political events. Were there any deviations between memory politics and political breaks, and, if yes, what were they?

In the years leading to the break of 1989, socialism was the ideology of the state, and the past events from which it stemmed were used to support its validity and power as well as construct the ideological sphere and everyday life of the people. After 1991, when the early stage of Slovene transition ended and socialism was no longer the ruling state ideology, it became a contested and sometimes unwanted heritage, a dark past that called for critical assessment and even condemnation. The legacy for socialism became the legacy of socialism, changing to move closer to the narrative of national victimhood.

The two republics under investigation here are thus the Socialist Republic of Slovenia (Socialistična republika Slovenija), which existed within the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, and, after 1991, the independent Republic of Slovenia. The time frame of my research stretches from 1980 to 2008, including three major events that influenced the state’s need for legitimation through referencing past events: Tito’s death in 1980; the shorter period of the disintegration of the federation from 1989 to 1991; and Slovenia’s accession to the European Union (EU) and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in 2004, with the subsequent rise in anticommunism and the establishment of the SCNR in 2008. The first period represents Slovenia as a part of the Yugoslav federation, bound to the wider context, yet at this time autonomous enough to represent one of the possible units of historical analysis. The second period delimits the only period in Slovene history where the state did not belong to any supranational structure,
but existed as an independent national state, ending again with inclusion into a supranational organization and transnational trends.

This paper builds on the framework of performing memory politics as an element of identity building and, after the break of 1989, as an attempt to face the state’s legacy. It does so by offering substantial historiographical empirical research in the primary sources, mainly archival materials and other publicly available state documents, through the lens of state institutions as crucial power centres and organizers of commemorative practices.¹⁷

**Key Institutions and the Holidays of (Socialist) Slovenia**

In the late socialist period, the state functioned both through its institutions and its socio-political organizations. The presidency of the state, the assembly and the executive council at the national level all contributed to formalizing events, managing attitudes, and facilitating debates about the past. The five socio-political organizations provided broad social, ideological, as well as political and popular platforms for the same processes, stretching their organizational structures from the federal through the level of the republic, towards the local communities.¹⁸ The main centres of state power, representing the cornerstones of elite discourse essential for exploring the politics of memory,¹⁹ were: the Central Committee of the Slovene League of Communists (*Centralni komite Zveze komunistov Slovenije, CK ZKS*), the highest forum of the republic; the Presidency of the Socialist Republic of Slovenia (*Predsedstvo Socialistične republike Slovenije*),

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¹⁷ Commemoration, as Timothy Snyder defined it, is “an attempt to fix an event at a certain point and describe it in such a way that it will be remembered in a certain way for the future” (Snyder, Timothy: European Mass Killing and European Commemoration. In: Tismaneanu, Vladimir – Iacob, Bogdan C. (eds.): Remembrance, History, and Justice: Coming to Terms with Traumatic Pasts in Democratic Societies. Budapest, Central European University Press 2015, pp. 23–44, here p. 30).


¹⁹ Malinova, O.: Politics of Memory and Nationalism, p. 998.
the highest state institution of the collective leadership body pertaining to the structure of the state; the Republic Committee of the Federation of Associations of Combatants of the Slovene National Liberation Army (*Republiška konferenca Zveze združenj borcev narodnoosvobodilne vojne*, RK ZZB NOV), a moral authority over the events of the Second World War, which mainly legitimized state socialism; and the Protocol of the Socialist Republic of Slovenia (*Protokol Socialistične republike Slovenije*), the executive outpost of the state when organizing commemorations and other state-related events.

With the Slovene transition to parliamentary democracy after 1991, the focus of decision making shifted from the Central Committee of the Slovene League of Communists to the newly formed political parties, some of them reformed from the previous socio-political organizations, and to the parliament. The President gained the position of the symbolic head of state, performing many vital protocol and commemorative functions. Unlike other socio-political organizations, the Federation of Associations of Combatants of the Slovene National Liberation Army did not transform itself into a political party with the end of socialism and remains a point of interest in regard to the post-socialist politics of memory.\(^\text{20}\) It struggled to preserve its position as a moral authority of the Second World War antifascist struggle, offering its opinions in connection with the celebrations and political stances towards the past.

The first period under investigation stretches from Tito’s death in 1980 to the year 1989. Tito’s death caused significant changes in the attitudes towards the socialist legacy, to which the existence of the federation was directly connected. The changes might not have been immediately apparent, yet they gradually manifested themselves as a decline in the incentives the political elites to downplay the differences among the federal units. Similar to the Soviet case, this opened “spaces of indeterminacy, creativity, and unanticipated meanings in the context of strictly formulaic ideological forms, rituals, and organizations”.\(^\text{21}\) The myth of unity, based on the view of multi-ethnic partisan resistance during the Second World War, slowly began to be challenged more openly as tensions among the federal units, as well as among different segments of society, intensified.\(^\text{22}\)

\(^\text{20}\) *Uradni list Republike Slovenije* [Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia], Nr. 33/1990.


One such case of “creativity within formulaic forms” is the Day and Relay of Youth (dan in štafeta mladosti), celebrated in Yugoslavia on 25 May, Tito’s supposed birthday (he was, in fact, born on May 7, 1892), between 1945 and 1987. After his death, a number of creative variations for how to continue his birthday celebrations emerged. Some resembled religious ceremonies, in an attempt to maintain the sense of Tito’s everlasting presence, while others used the form of the event to provoke the regime. The latter reached its limit when a political art collective, Neue Slowenische Kunst (NSK), equated the similarities of Tito’s birthday celebration with the fascist ceremonies and symbols from the Second World War by releasing a poster depicting a young Yugoslav carrying a baton and a Yugoslav flag on a template originally created by a German artist, Richard Klein, entitled The Third Reich. After the ensuing outrage, the federal presidency of the Alliance of Socialist Youth of Yugoslavia abolished both of the holidays. This action by a narrow art collective did not mean, however, that the majority of the population either expected or suggested a change in the regime. High support for state socialism as well as for the Slovene political leadership persisted throughout the last socialist decade.

The following decade of economic and political crisis in the absence of its highest authority put the actors of Yugoslav socialism in a challenging position. In order to address the critical points in the workings of the federation, politicians and intellectuals were slowly forced to rethink or defend the socioeconomic


24 See, for example, a survey funded by the Socialist Alliance of Working People and conducted by the Slovene news group Delo [Work] in 1989. People were asked to give anonymous answers about their support for the Slovene political leadership and its defence of the confederal model of the Yugoslav federation against the Serbian idea of a centralised Yugoslavia. To most of the questions, more than 90% of correspondents expressed a high support for the Slovene political leadership and its actions. (Arhiv Republike Slovenije [Archives of the Republic of Slovenia], Ljubljana [hereafter ARS], collection [hereafter coll.] SI AS 1944, Predsedstvo Republike Slovenije [The Presidency of the Republic of Slovenia], box [hereafter b.], 232, archival unit [hereafter a. u.] 232/3839, Stališča in mnenja respondentov o usmeritvah slovenskega političnega vodstva, marec 1989 [Positions and opinions of respondents regarding the standings of Slovene political leadership, March 1989].)
system of the state. While in some federal units, the rule of the Leagues of Communists was stringent throughout the 1980s, in others, such as in Slovenia, the controlling function of the League had already begun to lessen, mainly due to a change of generation in its leadership. This enabled more critical public, intellectual, and political reactions to the existing challenges. As many of them were in some way active in the wider institutional network of late socialism, their ideas directly influenced the workings of the institutions.

The second period began in 1989 with the crumbling of Yugoslav socialism. This year marked the beginning of the end of federal Yugoslavia. The republics of Serbia and Slovenia unilaterally changed their Constitutions, which brought about the end of the Yugoslav legal order. The early stage of Yugoslav disintegration continued until 1991, when Slovenia and Croatia declared their independence. To put it mildly, the end of socialism required a transformation of the state-socialist tradition, in Slovenia as well as elsewhere in the region. Like elsewhere in the region, the door for shaping new historical narratives in order to legitimize newly emerging policies opened wide. This time, the newly established Slovene state and its political elites did not have to work directly with the federation. Yet,


26 For a generational approach, see: SPASKOVSKA, Ljubica: The Last Yugoslav Generation: The Rethinking of Youth Politics and Cultures in Late Socialism. Manchester, Manchester University Press 2020, pp. 80–123.


their reassembling of the Slovene past after 1991 was still deeply rooted in the binary understanding of the recent Yugoslav past. The ways in which the state decided to commemorate the events meant either working with or against the way they had been commemorated by the previous system.\textsuperscript{31}

Until 1991, the Socialist Republic of Slovenia celebrated two sets of state holidays connected to the national liberation movement, which served as keystones for the legitimation of socialism.\textsuperscript{32} The first set of state holidays were celebrated within the framework of the entire Yugoslav federation: 9 May, the Day of Victory (\textit{dan zmage}); 4 July, the Day of the Fighter (\textit{dan borca}); and 29 November, the Day of the Republic (\textit{dan republike}).\textsuperscript{33} The second set of holidays was celebrated only within the Socialist Republic of Slovenia: 27 April was the Day of the Foundation of the Liberation Front of the Slovene Nation (\textit{dan ustanovitve Osvoobodilne fronte Slovenskega naroda}); 22 July the Day of Armed Resistance of the Slovene Nation (\textit{dan oborožene vstaje slovenskega naroda}); and 3 October the Day of Slovene Statehood (\textit{dan slovenske državnosti}).\textsuperscript{34}

Among these, 27 April exemplifies the shift that occurred between 1989 and 1991. In the context of a federation, the date reflected the autonomy of the Republic of Slovenia, since it represented an early beginning of the liberation struggle against the occupation during the Second World War in Slovenia compared to

\textsuperscript{31} Snyder, T.: European Mass Killing and European Commemoration, p. 33.

\textsuperscript{32} Here, two important historical distinctions regarding the aspects of the Slovene national liberation struggle that later became heavily disputed within the politics of memory need to be made. The ways in which the socialist system was established after the Second World War in the states of East-Central Europe and in Yugoslavia were critically different despite having some similar characteristics. First, the revolution in Yugoslavia was autochthonous and Tito’s partisans were recognized by the Allies as being a part of the great anti-Hitler coalition. Second, the Yugoslav communists took over the leadership of the state by legal means, based on an agreement between Josip Broz Tito and the president of the Yugoslav government in exile, Ivan Šubašić. In East-Central European states, the presence of the Red Army and the secret police served as additional pressure when establishing a new communist system, and thus the East-Central European takeovers had less of a legislative basis. (See: Godeša, Bojan: Social and Cultural Aspects of the Historiography on the Second World War in Slovenia. In: Rutar, Sabine – Wörsdorfer, Rolf (eds.): \textit{Sozialgeschichte und soziale Bewegungen in Slowenien}. Essen, Klartext 2009, pp. 111–125, here pp. 115–116. See also: Tismaneanu, Vladimir (ed.): \textit{Stalinism Revisited: The Establishment of Communist Regimes in East-Central Europe}. Budapest – New York, Central European University Press 2009.)


other parts of Yugoslavia. The date of 27 April was celebrated as a republic holiday from 1948 to 1958 and was again reinstated in 1968 until 1991, when it was renamed Day of the Struggle Against the Occupying Forces (\textit{dan upora proti okupatorju}). After 1991, 27 April remained the only state holiday from the late socialist period that survived the transition to post-socialism, albeit under a different name. It also remained the only state holiday that celebrated events connected to the Second World War until today.\footnote{GODEŠA, Bojan: 27. april [April 27]. In: \textit{Slovenia 30 let} [30 Years of Slovenia]. [Accessed 2022-07-07.] Available at: https://slovenija30let.si/April27.html.} The national side of the holiday, its wide support among the Slovene population\footnote{Public opinion polls continuously showed high support for the struggle of the Slovene partisans during the Second World War and for antifascist values, even during the political transition of the 1990s. (See: TOŠ, Niko et al.: \textit{Razumevanje preteklosti: Slovensko javno mnenje 1995–2003}. [Understanding the Past: Slovene Public Opinion, 1995–2003.] Ljubljana, Fakulteta za družbene vede 2004, p. 21.} and its overlap with the European foundations of antifascism\footnote{DUJISIN, Zoltán: Post-Communist Europe: On the Path to a Regional Regime of Remembrance? In: KOPECÉK, Michal – WCIŚLIK, Piotr (eds.): \textit{Thinking Through Transition: Liberal Democracy, Authoritarian Pasts, and Intellectual History in East Central Europe After 1989}. Budapest – New York, Central European University Press 2015, pp. 553–586, here pp. 557–559.} enabled the holiday, commemorating the Slovene resistance movement, to endure the change.

A set of new holidays were introduced in Slovenia after 1991. The Day of the Statehood (\textit{dan državnosti}) was established on 25 June to commemorate the day Slovenia proclaimed its independence in 1991, and the Day of Independence (\textit{dan samostojnosti}), commemorating the plebiscite for Slovene independence, was set on 23 December.\footnote{Uradni list Republike Slovenije [Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia], No. 26/1991, Act No. 1091, p. 1088.} After establishing new state holidays, the rest of the period until 2004, when the continuous centre-left state leadership (Liberal Democracy of Slovenia, \textit{Liberalna demokracija Slovenije – LDS}) was replaced by Janez Janša’s government (Slovene Democratic Party, \textit{Slovenska demokratska stranka – SDS}), was extremely gradual in terms of political development as well as in shaping the state’s formal stances towards the past.\footnote{RIZMAN, Rudi: \textit{Uncertain Path: Democratic Transition and Consolidation in Slovenia}. College Station (TX), Texas A&M University Press 2006, pp. 52–62.} Memory battles became one of the few areas of open political differentiations among political parties that otherwise displayed a very similar mode of operation and political ambitions, regardless of their place on the political spectrum. This set the lines for sharper political divisions that occurred after Slovenia joined the EU.
Stand to the Left, Comrade: The Legacy for Socialism

The date and meaning of the state holidays have been contested in both the pre- and post-1989 periods. Sometimes, the shifts in their interpretation were easy to notice. They attracted much political and public attention, while many other changes were more subtle. Some of the changes can only be noticed if we view these celebrations as a series of events – as they are holidays, they occur yearly. The long view is especially apt when observing the workings of institutions throughout the years. Institutions that appear as the main organizers of holidays and celebrations were also the ones that formed the main message of these events. As such, their workings can be divided into at least from two elements: first, from the politicians, and, in the case of mass socialist organizations, the wide membership representing a major part of the population. With their activities, they shaped a part of the social framework through which the past was organized.\(^40\) Second, the socialist state institutions and the articulations of their understandings of the past were bound to their previous activities and to legislation adopted well before this articulation took place. In the cases represented below, the main institution that shaped the narrative was the Central Committee of the Slovene League of Communists (Zveza komunistov Slovenije). And yet, despite the influence its individual members held, the Central Committee was bound to other institutions, both those at the federal level as well as those within the republic.

The first example is the state’s attitude towards religion, i.e. the Catholic Church as well as other smaller religious communities. In the Socialist Republic of Slovenia, state repression towards the Church already started to be lifted when the federation accepted the Belgrade Protocol in 1966, which determined that the state holds its power over politics and society, while the Church holds its authority over spiritual life, even within a socialist state.\(^41\) The Central Committee of the Slovene League of Communists recognized the Catholic Church in its debates in 1979 as a potentially valuable ally and a subject capable of dialogue, although the State Security Service (Služba državne varnosti, SDV) closely followed the Church’s activities throughout the rest of the decade. An important signal to the public came in 1986, when Christmas wishes were again broadcast on television (the public was addressed by Jože Smole, the president of the

\(^{40}\) MÜLLER, J.-W.: Introduction, p. 3.

\(^{41}\) REPE, B.: Juri je nov dan, pp. 97–99.
Socialist Alliance of Working People) and the radio (where Archbishop Alojzij Šuštar gave a speech).42

In terms of state celebrations and shaping (or, in this case, sharing) the understanding of past events, the changing political climate was reflected in the celebrations of 27 April. Until 1985, the working group for the preparation of the celebration was created “like a front” (frontno): this meant that all of the highest representatives of socio-political organizations and state institutions were at the forefront of the celebration, taking the central organizational role in the event together with each year’s celebratory speaker, who was chosen by the Central Committee of the League of Communists.43 By staging the celebration in this way, the state publicly excluded any religious representatives from not only the event itself, but also prevented them from sharing this specific, identity-forming and legitimacy-building part of the past, i.e. the Slovene partisan antifascist liberation struggle in the Second World War. While the Church indeed led a collaborative policy during the war, this black-and-white narrative, emphasized through (non)attendance at state holidays, excluded from the national memory many examples of individual priests, religious people, and religiously inclined political parties (such as the Christian Socialists) that were indeed active in the partisan struggle.44 The attendance at the state celebrations thus intentionally reflected who, in the view of the state, belonged to the (imagined) Slovene nation.

After 1985, however, the front-like representation came to an end. The number of representatives of the state and the League of Communists started to decline, making the preparation of the celebration less rigid. This did not fundamentally change the meaning of the state holiday itself. In terms of state socialist ideology, the form of the funding narrative remained the same. It did, however, signal a level of flexibility within the Slovene League of Communists and the inclusion of the religious institutions at least on a symbolic level, once again taking a very well-established form of remembering and filling it with additional meaning. This extended even further in 1989, when the political opposition to

the socialist system started to grow and two openly oppositional and politically active individuals, Ivan Oman and Dimitrij Rupel, were formally invited to attend the event.\textsuperscript{45}  

The front-like organization and the protocol division of the most visible roles in the celebratory procedures were also visible in other state holidays apart from 27 April, such as 22 July, the Day of Armed Resistance of the Slovene Nation. In 1982, the highest representatives of all of the five socio-political representatives together with the president of the assembly, divided into two groups of three, laid wreaths at two locations in Ljubljana, at the Memorial of the Revolution and at the Tomb of National Heroes, thus commemorating the national liberation struggle in the Second World War and the subsequent revolution.\textsuperscript{46} Again, the structure of both delegations changed in 1985: only three people laid wreaths at the Memorial of the Revolution. These three were determined by function (and not by personal merit), reflecting again a firming of institutional relations and a specific form of celebration: the current president of the state presidency, the president of the Central Committee of the Slovene League of Communists, and the president of the Republic Committee of the Federation of Associations of Combatants of the Slovene National Liberation Army. Parallel to this, the representatives of all the religious communities became regular honorary guests at the state celebrations after 1985.\textsuperscript{47}  

The establishment of a form that allowed space for variations in content during late socialism was, in the case of Slovenia, conditioned by the wider context of late socialism. First, concerns were raised about the celebration of the Day of Armed Resistance and the public image of the socialist regime it portrayed around the year 1985. The organizers tried desperately to reinvigorate both the historical narrative and the attractiveness of the socialist regime by avoiding any elements that might indicate the funeral-like atmosphere of the holiday. Debates were held at length within the organizing group about what music the orchestra should play to make the event solemn, but not morbid. In the end, they settled for Beethoven’s Third Symphony, the \textit{Eroica}.\textsuperscript{48} Omitting laying a wreath

\textsuperscript{45} \textit{Ibid.} Ivan Oman, a farmer by profession, became a party leader of the Slovene peasants’ union (\textit{Slovenska kmečka zveza}) in 1988, a political party that helped formed the first anti-communist coalition, DEMOS. Dimitrij Rupel, one of the public intellectuals of Slovenia in the 1980s, likewise co-founded an anti-communist political party, the Slovene Democratic Alliance (\textit{Slovenska demokratska zveza}), in 1989.


\textsuperscript{47} \textit{Ibid.}

\textsuperscript{48} \textit{Ibid.}
at the Tomb of National Heroes might also be interpreted as an unburdening of the event, pulling it away from the decades-long tradition of socialist dogmatism towards a more stately, nationally based and somewhat more inclusive event.

Second, this was the time when the older generation of members of the Slovene League of Communists realized a generational shift was approaching. Indeed, in 1986 many of the leading positions within the socio-political organizations were taken over, with the support of their elders, by younger cadres. Milan Kučan⁴⁹ became the president of the Central Committee of the League of Communists, the aforementioned Jože Smole⁵⁰ took over the leadership of the Socialist Alliance of Working People, and Tone Anderlič⁵¹ of the Alliance of Socialist Youth.⁵² The Central Committee, as well as other socio-political organizations, were well aware of the troubles the League of Communists faced. The party membership was declining,⁵³ and beyond that, the narratives told by the older generations to legitimize the system and inspire the people simply did not work on the younger generations.

To stymy this trend, the Central Committee attempted not only a symbolic change through state celebrations, but in 1984 also launched a formal investigation into its own past. The Central Committee instructed both of its history commissions, one that was working with the Marxist Centre of the Presidency

⁴⁹ Milan Kučan was a member of the Slovene League of Communists and one of the main reformers of the Slovene political system. In 1992, he was elected president of the independent Republic of Slovenia, and was reelected in 1997. His term ended in 2002.

⁵⁰ Jože Smole, a long-standing member of the Slovene League of Communists, was one of the most prominent politicians of the 1980s to open a dialogue with those the League deemed undesirable, including the Catholic Church, the political opposition and critical intellectuals.

⁵¹ Tone Anderlič, a member of the Slovene League of Communists, represented one of the pro-reform youth strands that helped open up the political space to criticism and possible change. After the democratic changes, he continued his career as a member of parliament for the Liberal Democratic Party (Liberalno demokratska stranka).


of the Central Committee of the League of Communists, the other directly with the Central Committee of the League of Communists, to re-open certain historical topics and thus offer them a more modern understanding.\textsuperscript{54} A new, critical approach would, so the Central Committee concluded, lend new legitimacy to state socialism, one that was hopefully more convincing and attractive for the younger generations.\textsuperscript{55} In 1986, the Central Committee opened up its post-Second World War archive, exposing its own actions, such as the politically motivated show trials in 1948 and 1949, commonly known as the Dachau trials (\textit{dachauski procesi}).\textsuperscript{56} The material from the show trials was indeed shown to a research team mainly comprised of historians and lawyers, who were deemed to be trustworthy by the Central Committee, but not to the general public. For the researchers, access to the documents was unrestricted and they were allowed to carry out their research freely.\textsuperscript{57}

Pulling the socialist symbolic events from the grip of stifling formality and opening them up to professional and public criticism alongside other historical topics did have a certain effect, but not the one predicted. While including a larger portion of Slovene society in the most important state events and attempting to renew the League of Communists (and, by extension, the socialist system) were both meant to strengthen the bond between wider society and the state, the strong reforming currents within the League of Communists and the rising civil opposition within the state socio-political organizations contributed to what would later become the democratization process.

\textbf{Turning the Tables: The Legacy of Socialism}

No holiday in the time of late socialism was as sharply contested as were those after 1991, alongside the socialist legacy itself. Contrary to the strong performative side of state holidays and commemorations during late socialism, the period after 1991 brought a shift towards a constative dimension.\textsuperscript{58} Debating the contents of previously established practices prevailed over their performativity, to the extent that certain practices ended up being abolished altogether.

\textsuperscript{54} ARS, coll. SI AS 1589, Centralni komite Zveze komunistov Slovenije [Central Committee of the Slovene League of Communists], b. 1076, no archival unit.

\textsuperscript{55} Ibid., b. 749, no archival unit.

\textsuperscript{56} Ibid., b. 1080, no archival unit.

\textsuperscript{57} IVANIČ, Martin (ed.): \textit{Dachauski procesi: Raziskovalno poročilo dokumenti} [Dachau Trials: Research Report with Documents], Ljubljana, Komunist 1990.

\textsuperscript{58} YURCHAK, A.: \textit{Everything Was Forever, Until It Was No More}, pp. 22–23.
The first challenge the new state had to face was the commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the beginning of the Second World War and, in connection to it, of the Slovene resistance movement. On April 27, 1991, discussions about how the state should commemorate the occasion, began to reflect the split between the political parties active within the National Assembly. With the DEMOS coalition (Demokratična opozicija Slovenije, a democratic coalition of newly established, anti-socialist political parties) leading the state, the funds for the state celebration were much more limited than they were in the past, while the communication between the new and old political parties (i.e. reformed political parties stemming from socialist socio-political organizations) was often conflictive or even lacking.\(^{59}\)

Fearing that such an important anniversary might pass by without sufficient state recognition, the Federation of the Associations of Combatants of the Slovene National Liberation Army (Zveza združenj borcev narodnoosvobodilne vojne Slovenije) stepped into action to insure the preservation of the symbolic value of the event. At the moment of Slovene independence, the pronounced national sentiments, connected to the Slovene aspiration of “returning to Europe”, were widespread. The Federation of Associations took the political atmosphere in its stride and somewhat reframed the narrative of the anniversary. From building socialism and starting the revolution, the event shifted towards its European significance: the partisans’ collaboration with the Allied forces during the Second World War, the state-building elements of the liberation struggle, and the national character of the resistance became the main point around which, at least at the time, the anniversary was built anew.\(^{60}\) In the next years, the split between the old and new political parties widened to form a fully polarized political space.

The division between the political parties started even before they were officially legalized. It was roughly based on their position on the left – right political spectrum; but, more than that, the parties were divided internally along the lines of those who were successors of the organizations of the former regime (generally left-leaning) and those who were established anew, alongside the political pluralization and democratization (generally right-leaning).\(^{61}\) In terms of state holidays, this division manifested itself immediately at the beginning of the democ-

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\(^{59}\) ARS, coll. SI AS 1944, Predsedstvo Republike Slovenije [The Presidency of the Republic of Slovenia], b. 284 [no archival unit].

\(^{60}\) ARS, coll. SI AS 1238, Republiški odbor Zveze združenj borcev narodnoosvobodilne vojske Slovenije [Republic Committee of the Federation of Associations of Combatants of Slovene National Liberation Army], b. 685, a. u. 014/90.

\(^{61}\) It is worth noting that the new political parties were to some extent comprised of individuals who were also engaged with the socialist regime – some of them as members of the League of Communists, others their critics. But only one of them, Jože Pučnik, could potentially be understood as a dissident in the same way as dissidents in other East Central
ratization and independence process in Slovenia: not one 25 June, celebrating the emergence of an independent Slovene state, has passed since the original event in 1991, where the political parties have not offered severe criticism, boycotted the state celebrations, or organized their own celebrations of the holidays according to the division of old and new political parties.\textsuperscript{62}

Comparing the two newly established state holidays, 25 June, the Day of the Statehood, and 26 December, the Day of the Slovene Plebiscite that legitimized the independence process, the first soon proved to be much more prone towards political divisions.\textsuperscript{63} Frictions emerged on the first anniversary of the event, in June 1992. One of the DEMOS parties raised various concerns, criticizing mainly the cost and grandeur of the planned event.\textsuperscript{64} The following year, a schism occurred in connection to the holiday. The President of the Republic, Milan Kučan, who was a leading figure in the renewal of the League of Communists after 1986, awarded the most visible politicians of Slovene independence with the Golden Order of Freedom of the Republic of Slovenia: Igor Bavčar, France Bučar, Janez Janša, Jelko Kacin, Lojze Peterle, and Dimitrij Rupel, alongside Janko Pleterski and Ljubo Bavcon.\textsuperscript{65} The first six rejected their award in June 1993, stating in an open letter to Kučan that their nomination alongside Pleterski and Bavcon, who were members of the previous regime, devalued Slovene independence.\textsuperscript{66}

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\textsuperscript{63} Cooperation in organizing the celebrations for 23 December continued as a joint task of the three state functions: the President of the Republic, the Prime Minister, and the President of the Slovene Parliament. See \textit{Interni arhiv protokola Republike Slovenije 1991} [Internal Archive of the Protocol of the Republic of Slovenia, 1991], Ljubljana, a collection of formal invitations for 23 December.


Since then, the separate celebrations of this state holiday became a tradition. From 1994 onwards, at least two separate events have been organized to commemorate Slovene independence. During Milan Kučan’s presidency the official state event took place in Cankarjev dom, the main cultural institution of the state. Every year, the Municipality of Ljubljana has organized one or more celebrations either with the support of the opposing right-wing political parties or of various other groupings of political parties in different parts of Slovenia. It has also become customary that many or all of the politicians from the opposite political pole do not attend the celebratory events organized by their political opponents.67

The divide between the coalition and the opposition was relatively stable until 2004. Since the 1992 election, the Slovene right, composed from the newly established political parties, has been chronically pushed into opposition, with the exception of six months in 2000. The criticism of the state celebrations they offered were tied to their political position and hence they were relatively coherent, varying only in intensity. The most common reproach became the exclusivity of the celebration in the Cankarjev dom towards the public in general, as well as towards non-coalition political parties when planning the event.68 Indeed the role of the main organizer of this celebration shifted from the government and the State Protocol Office to the President of the Republic in 1996. As the long-time president (he held the office until 2002), Kučan strengthened the symbolic function of the head of state at a time when the ambitions of the right-wing political parties aimed to reduce the office’s power.69

The organization of different state celebrations had a very practical political message. If a politician attended or praised an event organized by President Kučan or by the government, i.e. the ruling coalition, she or he ascribed to the narrative of a successful Slovene transition and exhibited support for the reformed political elites, their activities, goals, and values. If, however, one attended any of the events organized by the right-wing opposition parties, one proclaimed the break of 1989–1991 as insufficient and the socialist past as a foreign and criminal ideology imposed on the Slovene nation.70

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67 In 1999, there were seven different events commemorating the day of statehood (ŠLAMBERGER, Vlado: Eni tukaj, drugi tam [Some Here, Others There]. In: Ibid. (28. 06. 1999), p. 2).
70 See, for example, REPOVŽ, Grega: Sporni naslovni moto glavne državne proslave [Controversial Motto of the Main State Celebration]. In: Delo (26. 06. 1996), p. 2.
Both narratives grew and branched out throughout the years, trying to encompass different political goals. All splits indicated above, facilitated by state institutions and articulated through their various attitudes towards the past, reflect the struggle of political parties over the state.\textsuperscript{71} The first narrative stretched to include the plurality of the Slovenes’ fights for freedom (political struggle to set the Slovene northern border further towards the north after the First World War, the national liberation struggle in the Second World War, and Slovene independence).\textsuperscript{72} It interpreted the socialist past as a positive – or at least a neutral – legacy that, despite its illiberalism, included the plurality of interests into its own structures. It openly or latently compared the socialist socio-political organizations with the plural political systems of Western democracies.\textsuperscript{73}

The second aimed at radically reinterpreting the past, especially the Second World War and socialism as a totalitarian regime equal to Nazism and fascism. This ambition reached its peak in 1997 with an (unsuccessful) proposal for a resolution and, in December of that year, for a declaration on the unlawful workings of the communist totalitarian regime. The lead signatories were, in both cases, Janez Janša and Lojze Peterle, leaders of the two conservative political parties. The propositions called for the criminalization of the former socialist regime, calling it a “totalitarian communist regime that systematically violated human rights and basic political freedoms”.\textsuperscript{74} Both proposals determined that the criminal guilt rests with the leadership of the League of Communists which should now, that the regime fell, be charged with criminal activity.\textsuperscript{75} As this charge pertained to the coalition parties, the attempt was unsuccessful; nor was it supported by all of the conservative political parties.

What is notable, however, is the persistence of the zero-sum political game the opposition led. While the coalition of the reformed political parties responded to this accusation by bringing to the forefront the gradual Slovene political transition from socialism, emphasizing the unity and cooperation of old and new political

\textsuperscript{71} DUJISIN, Z.: Post-Communist Europe, pp. 555–556.
\textsuperscript{74} Poročevalc državnega zbora Republike Slovenije [Parliamentary Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia], Predlog resolucije o protipravnem delovanju komunističnega totalitarnega režima [A Proposal of a Resolution on the Unlawful Workings of the Communist Totalitarian Regime], November 14, 1997, pp. 5–6.
\textsuperscript{75} Ibid., Predlog deklaracije o protipravnem delovanju komunističnega totalitarnega režima [A Proposal of a Declaration on the Unlawful Workings of the Communist Totalitarian Regime]. December 23, 1997, pp. 35–36.
parties between 1989 and 1991, the right-wing parties adopted a strategy similar to that of the official party line from the time of state socialism. After 2004, when the Slovene transitional centre-left government lost its momentum after the state had successfully joined the EU and Slovenia got its first right-wing government, the institutionalization of the revisionist narrative started, most notably with the establishment of the SCNR in 2008. With this, Slovenia’s trend of a shift in the politics of memory became more similar to other East-Central European states at the time.

Conclusion

This paper shows that both socialist and post-socialist Slovenia were highly dependent on shaping the attitude towards the past. Similar to the period of Slovenia as a nation state, the analysis of the socialist period reveals the state’s strategies and dynamics regarding its own historical narratives, which allows not only for an observation of the various attitudes towards the past in two different political, economic, and social systems; but also contributes towards a better understanding of state institutions and commemorative practices in both settings. The sequence of state-organized celebrations, as this investigation has shown, reflects the attitudes towards certain historical events and narratives as well as the slowly changing positions of the state in relation to socialism as its ideology and later in relation to socialism as its legacy.

The study of these two very different, but connected periods shows that the performativity of commemorations related to memory politics declined after the break of 1989–1991. While the legacy of socialism and its rituals were primarily used to legitimize the system as a whole until its very end, it also indicated the attitudes of the Socialist Republic of Slovenia towards its own status in the federation and towards the federation itself. The changing attitudes had their own temporality and did not always reflect the political decisions, but rather showed the less visible shifts in attitudes towards the past, such as the gradual change in state holidays after 1991, which started taking place after Slovenia exited the federation and pluralized its political space. The attempts to criminalize the socialist

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legacy emerged even later, in the mid-1990s, and reached their peak in the years between 2004 and 2008, when Slovenia elected its first right-wing government. What persisted throughout the post-socialist years was the structure of the narrative, legitimizing either left- or right-wing political options. In the late socialist period, the “us vs them” divide was clear, albeit starting to lose its dogmatism and to accept new members among the “us”. In post-socialism, the attitude of the socio-political organization that became a political party or parties had a positive view towards values such as a strong social state and continued to defend and promote the most visible state holiday that survived the break of 1989–1991, namely 27 April. The newly formed conservative parties, however, adopted the narrative structure of “us vs them”, but pushed for the complete reversal of the positions of morally just and morally unjust subjects within it. The polarization between both political options was most visible in the continuously separate celebrations of the official state holidays.

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Abstract

Focusing on key political actors and state institutions, this article aims to map the changing and often ambivalent political attitudes of the Socialist Republic of Slovenia (Socialistična republika Slovenija) and the later Republic of Slovenia (Republika Slovenija) towards its socialist legacy. By institutionalizing remembrance and promoting specific historical narratives, the state not only articulated its views on the past, but also expressed its understanding of the present moment and its hopes for the future. The main channels of communication between the state and the public, which are investigated in this contribution, are state holidays and state celebrations. Here, the highest state institutions appeared as main organizers and scriptwriters. Through these events, leading politicians valued, assessed, and (re)interpreted significant historical events in the name of the state. The temporal framework of the article covers two crucial periods. First, the late socialist period between 1980 (the death of Josip Broz Tito) and 1989 (the beginning of the end of Yugoslavia). Second, the period of Slovene transition between 1989 and early 2008, when the Study Centre for National Reconciliation (Študijski center za narodno spravo) began its operation and Slovenia joined the institutional international trend of anticommunism. During late socialism, constant economic, political, and social crises forced the state to re-evaluate and reconsider its socialist legacy and its form. After the end of state socialism between 1989 and 1991 in Slovenia, (anti-)socialist attitudes became one of the most important political markers by which the new
state defined itself. For both periods, socialism was thus one of the central themes of memory politics, albeit in different ways.

Keywords:
Yugoslavia; Socialist Republic of Slovenia; Slovenia; state socialism; late socialism; post-socialist transition; state holidays; politics of memory; commemorations

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