Jelena Đureinović. *The Politics of Memory of the Second World War in Contemporary Serbia: Collaboration, Resistance and Retribution.* London 2020.

Studies of historical memory have shown that the dominant popular understanding of a country's history can deviate considerably from its scientific history as derived from empirical evidence and scholarly studies. In this volume, the historian Jelena Đjureinović takes this conclusion a step further and shows that, in the case of Serbia since the Second World War, its "official and dominant memory" (p. 24) not only changes but has been consistently dynamic, generating a new variant whenever a new regime achieves power. In particular, she seeks to explain the confounding turn-of-the-century reversal of the positions of Partisans and Chetniks in the popular imagination of many Serbs. The Partisans, who enjoyed the status of victorious heroes of national liberation for the latter half of the twentieth century, in the 2000s devolved in popular perception into murderous, oppressive communists acting as agents of foreign powers, while the Chetniks, despised and detested during the socialist years, have been rehabilitated and placed atop the hierarchy of resistance fighters, liberators and Serbian national martyrs.

Each successive regime in Serbia since 1941 designed a new and different dominant memory of the primary belligerents of the Second World War in Yugoslavia, each time effecting a change in the position of the Partisans and Chetniks in the pantheon of belligerents. In Chapters 3-5, the author of this austerely argued volume shows how each new regime commissioned the creation of a new dominant memory of the Second World War that served its interests and reaffirmed its legitimacy.

The Second World War was a monumentally complex, multifaceted struggle for supremacy in Yugoslavia. Tito's Partisans, the undisputed winners, earned the exclusive right to formulate the dominant memory of post-war Yugoslavia. They assigned that task to an official government-sponsored veterans' organization known by its acronym, SUBNOR (*Savez udruženja boraca narodnooslobodilačkog rata*), and charged it with being "the main actor responsible for the preservation of the memory of the war and revolution." With Tito as its President and over a million members, SUBNOR divided the belligerents of the Second World War in Yugoslavia into two starkly opposed camps. On the one hand were the victorious Partisans, led by Tito himself

but including fallen Partisan fighters, veterans who survived the war, civilian victims of fascism, and allies who aided the Partisans, mainly the Soviet Union, Great Britain, and the US. Together, those in this camp were often called simply "anti-fascists." In the other camp were the German and Italian occupying forces; the Ustasha, an extreme Croatian nationalist group that governed Croatia and most of Bosnia; and the Chetniks, Serbian nationalists led by Draža Mihailović loyal to the Serbian royal family and the Yugoslav government in exile. The latter camp was often labeled in the aggregate as the "foreign occupiers and their domestic collaborators." These two dichotomous camps – winners and losers, good and bad, patriots and traitors – remained enshrined in the dominant popular memory of the war in Serbia during socialism (1945-1990). Those in the former group, living or dead, were feted and memorialized in holidays, public monuments, and textbooks. Mihailović, the most demonized of those in the latter group, was captured, tried, and executed in Belgrade in 1946 by Tito's government. Taking no chances, Tito's regime not only buried him in an unknown location but kept him posthumously in the proverbial dog house for forty five years. The Ustasha, who governed and terrorized most of Croatia and Bosnia during the war, were depicted in postwar films and textbooks as massmurderers and torturers.

Slobodan Milošević' sascent to power in Serbia in the late 1980s marked the first change in governance in Yugoslavia after the Second World War. He established and headed a government described by Djureinović as a thoroughly corrupt, nominally democratic client state that retained or adopted improbably inconsistent policies designed to mollify individual constituencies rather than create a just, rational governing system. Among the regime's contradictory policies were the abolition of the Titoist practice of workers' self-management and dismantling state socialism, while at the same time legalizing private property but retaining the concept of social property.

The Milošević-era dominant memories of the Second World War were likewise segmented, inconsistent, and finely tuned to appease or recruit constituencies Milošević considered essential to preserve his rule. Socialist-era SUBNOR survived and continued to lead public observation of Partisan holidays, but the multiethnic Partisans were reformulated in the new dominant memory as a strictly Serb force motivated by virulent expansionist Serbian nationalism. Thus in addition to honoring Partisan holidays as a way of celebrating the

ideals of victimhood and heroism, the regime ethnicized the Partisans by dropping characterizations of them as multiethnic and instead portraying them as a Serbian resistance movement.

The official memory ingeniously characterized the disgraced fascists of the Second World War in the 1940s as the ideological forefathers of the secessionist-minded Croats, Slovenes, Albanians and Bosniaks of the 1990s who campaigned to achieve independence for their republics from Milošević-dominated Yugoslavia. While spewing venemous rhetoric against non-Serb secessionists of the 1990s as heirs to the Ustasha, the regime's attitude toward the Chetniks was more flexible. The unabashed ideological contradictions inherent in the Milošević-era dominant memory were apparent in the regime's initial efforts to prevent the development of a Mihailović cult, but in the early 1990s its policy shifted to benign tolerance for efforts of the Serbian Movement for Renewal (SPO - *Srpski pokret obnove*), a nationalist party led by the firebrand and political novelist Vuk Drašković,to glorify the formerly despised Serb nationalist Mihailović. The SPO's lionization of Mihailović brought his pariah status into question but left him and his Chetnik followers in an uncertain contested middle position during the Milošević years.

Professor Đjureinović characterizes Milošević's ouster in October 2000 as an "immense turning point" (p. 66) in the history of Serbia. His fall from power, followed by his transfer to the Hague in June 2001, ushered in the last era the author discusses in the book. She skillfully unpacks the complex, multifaceted movement of several disparate unofficial interpretations of memory from the clutches of individual political parties and leaders into the realm of officially endorsed memory. With widespread public acceptance of these shifts, the public perception of anti-communist wartime forces, particularly the Chetniks, was elevated, while Tito, the Partisans, the multiethnic Yugoslav socialist state, and communism were denigrated to the status of historical pariahs who installed a repressive, Stalinist-type Yugoslav regime in the 1940s. The Serbian state officially adulated the Chetniks, following the lead of Drašković and the SPO, elevating them to the position of avatars of anti-communist fervor in the dominant official narrative of the Second World War. Thus the inconsistent, segmented elements of memory that prevailed during the Milošević years were consolidated and superseded by a new, clear-cut realignment that amounted to a total inversion of the previous alignment of heroes and pariahs of the Second World War.

In general, according to the author, those who ousted and succeeded Milošević shared a strong aversion both to communism and to Yugoslavia, both of which had been pillars of Milošević's regime. Those two principles drove the post-Milošević Serbian governments to recast more positively the anti-Partisan belligerents in the Second World War and to demonize socialist Yugoslavia, Tito, and the League of Communists as repressive anti-Serb institutions.

The author mentions that Chetniks became models of behavior and appearance for several paramilitaries that helped prosecute the wars of the 1990s against non-Serbs and non-Serb republics. By the second decade of the twenty first century, "Chetniks" had become valorized among most Serbs very much like the Partisans had been two generations before. Thus Milošević's anti-communist and anti-Yugoslav successors completed the binary realignment by glorifying the Chetniks and Mihailović as resistance warriors while relegating the once-sacrosanct Partisans to condemnation as cowardly collaborators and the forerunners of a darkly repressive regime.

Four chapters of the book are devoted to unofficial efforts to rehabilitate the Chetniks in full, both by an official court degree of exoneration and by massive government-backed projects to identify the exact location of his death and to recover his earthly remains. But as she relates, the efforts attracted amateurs and charlatans with little interest beyond self-aggrandizement. Despite the fanfare these efforts attracted, they failed to achieve their goals and their efforts degenerated into a propaganda campaign that supported the new dominant historical memory on the basis of little or no new evidence.

Professor Đjureinović has provided a major contribution to understanding Serbian political and intellectual life since the Second World War by offering a compelling explanation for total reversal in the positions of the Partisans and Chetniks in the dominant memory of Serbs in the past eight decades. She further shows that the dominant and official memory promulgated by each successive regime was finely tuned to meet the regime's specific political needs and adapted to its quest for validation and a favorable historical legacy. Her masterful explication of the complex relationship between political change and mnemonic transformation in Serbia sets this work apart as both an advance in the methodology of memory studies and to the complex machinations of Serbian politics since the end of the Second World War.

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