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TELEVISION NEWS AND THE DYNAMICS OF NATIONAL REMEMBERING[1]

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News reports, as the cliché goes, are the first drafts of history. Faced with
current events, journalists draw on established narrative conventions of the
news genre to transform an otherwise incomprehensible reality into
instantly recognizable and meaningful stories about the immediate past.
They do so under the pressure of deadlines, within the limits imposed by
the demands of the particular media institution and its editorial practices,
and without the benefit of hindsight and prolonged reflection. News, in
other words, is 'history written in a hurry' (Pickering 2008: 203). Many of
these first drafts of history may seem too superficial and ephemeral to
have any long-term significance. Yet despite that, at least some of them
may continue to shape collective perceptions of 'what really happened' for
many years and even decades after the fact, and even provide the basis for
the subsequent drafts of history produced by professional historians. This
is particularly true of those special media occasions, known as 'media
events', which interrupt the normal flow of broadcasting and invite
audiences to participate in a live transmission of a public ceremony. The
images, stories and sounds televised to private homes on such occasions
often function as veritable 'electronic monuments'; they offer participants
an enduring frame for organising their personal recollections of events,
which can occasionally contradict the narratives produced by professional
historians (Dayan & Katz 1992: 211-213).

The engagement of the news media with history does not end with the
writing of history's first drafts. Despite the professional division of labour
between journalists and historians – the former focussing primarily on
recording the present, the latter on recovering the past – journalists also
often write the second, third and fourth drafts of history, and thereby

engage in various kinds of 'memory work' (Zelizer 2008). Over the past two decades, the role of the news media as sites for the creation, revision and reproduction of collective memories has been explored by a number of authors, who have taken into account a wide array of news genres, ranging from television news and newspaper reports to obituaries and recollections of past events appearing in popular magazines (e.g. Lang & Lang 1989; Schudson 1992; Zelizer 1992; Edy 1999; Peri 1997, 1999; Ha-Ilan 2001; Culbert 2001; Winfield *et al*. 2002; Yadgar 2002; Kitch 2003; Edy & Daradanova 2006; Volkmer 2006; Fowler 2007).

It is regularly acknowledged that the historical events commemorated or invoked by the media are often *national* events, and that correspondingly, the collective memory reproduced or negotiated through various media genres frequently takes the form of *national* memory.[2] In particular the literature on film and national memory is enormous, and the reproduction of national identity and memory in other fictional genres has also received a fair share of attention. In contrast, systematic empirical examinations of national memories in news genres, in particular television news, are rather rare (e.g. Peri 1999; Ha-Ilan 2001; Yadgar 2002; Seppänen & Stocchetti 2007). In order to fill a part of this blank, this chapter first draws a distinction between two types of news reporting – routine reporting and crisis/celebratory reporting – and then considers how the narrative conventions characteristic of these types of reporting relate to different types of journalistic uses of history and to broader processes of national identity formation.

In the final part of the chapter, these general issues are briefly illustrated by drawing on the analysis of television news bulletins broadcast in the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia shortly before and during the armed conflict that took place in Slovenia in the summer of 1991.[3] As expected, the journalistic engagements with collective remembering during the conflict were significantly different from those prevailing in the relatively peaceful period before the conflict, This case study also provides a rare chance to examine the journalistic uses of history in a context of rapid social and political transformation, accompanied by a rather sweeping reshuffling of collective identifications. As previous research demonstrated (Mihelj *et al*. 2009a, forthcoming), the late 1980s and the early 1990s were a period during which both TVL and TVB gradually abandoned their identification with Yugoslav 'brotherhood and unity'. The analysis presented in this paper shows how this televisual dismantling of

the common socialist Yugoslav identity was complemented by a parallel dismembering of shared collective memories.

Journalistic conventions and uses of history

Broadly speaking, existing research on journalism and collective remembering suggests that news reporting relates to the past in two main ways.[4] On the one hand, journalists are periodically involved in commemorative practices, usually tied to major holidays and anniversaries of important events, institutions or individuals, or to deaths of notable politicians, writers, artists or sport stars (Edy 1999: 74-77; Kitch 2005: 13-37, 154-174, 61-86; Fawler 2007; Sumiala-Seppänen & Stocchetti 2007). On the other hand, journalists also often draw on collective memories when reporting on current events. On such occasions, historical analogies and discussions of historical causes and precedents normally serve as a springboard for interpreting present developments, predicting their outcome, or drawing lessons on how to react (Peri 1997, 1999; Edy 1999: 77-82; Culbert 2001; Ha-Ilan 2001; Winfield *et al.* 2002; Yadgar 2002; Bishop & Jaworski 2003: 254-257; Kitch 2005: 38-60; Edy & Daradanova 2006). While the implications of these different types of journalistic memory work for broader mnemonic practices and processes have been discussed on several occasions, it is less clear how they relate to the professional conventions of journalistic reporting and to the broader socio-political context in which journalists operate.

In terms of narrative conventions, a typical news story follows the familiar inverted pyramid format. It normally starts with a lead paragraph providing most important information first, answering the 'W-questions' (who, what, where, when and sometimes also why), followed by the rest of the information in decreasing order of significance. This format requires news stories to start with the 'climax' or the most recent developments and incorporate the work of exposition, including information about events that led to the climax, into the rest of the story, or avoid it altogether. Combined with the shortness of the standard news item, this format inevitably limits the range of narrative devices that can be employed by the journalist (Corner 1999: 54-55). Additional limitations are imposed by the constraints of balanced and neutral reporting, which drive journalists to perform various 'strategic rituals' that serve to convey their adherence to professional standards and protect them from charges of subjectivity or bias (Tuchman 1972). These constraints inevitably require them to adopt the position of a third-person narrator, avoid emotionally charged

expressions, appear formally dressed etc. (Dunn 2005: 147-151). As a consequence, news reports typically lack elements of narrative structure normally found in fictional genres, including cause-effect relationships, a double chronology and a clear dramatic structure with an exposition, initial complication, and climax, followed by resolution and closure (ibid.: 145-146).

Arguably, commemorative journalism is better suited to fit the conventional format of news outlined above than journalistic accounts that draw on historical analogies or historical causes. To start with, commemorative news items tend to appear in response to specific pre-planned commemorative events – for example memorial speeches or wreath layings – and as such, they are easily amenable to the required focus on fact-based answers to W-questions. Furthermore, in comparison to journalistic use of historical analogies and causes, commemorative journalism is less marked by efforts to use the past to elucidate the present, which inevitably require the journalist to engage in interpretive work. Although some references to links between the past and the present do appear, journalists normally do not make much effort to establish a strong connection between the two (Edy 1999: 76). This could be seen as a direct consequence of the inverted pyramid structure, which compels journalists to focus on the climax of the news story – in this case, the commemorative event itself – and minimalize or even avoid exposition – including, in this case, the explanation of why a specific historical event is important and how it relates to present concerns. This is particularly valid for events that have been commemorated on a regular basis for a longer period and whose collective meaning is no longer a matter of dispute.

However, journalists do not always conform to the professional standards of 'objective' journalism and the inverted pyramid format. For instance, during periods of war, mainstream journalists tend to put aside their disagreements and adopt a patriotic stance, organizing their narratives around the basic conflict between 'us' and 'them', between 'our community' and its enemies (Hallin 1986; Allan 1999: 172-180). A similar shift away from a neutral stance can be observed in moments of public danger and tragedy (Schudson 2003: 188-189), as well as during ceremonial media events such as the Olympic games openings or royal coronations and weddings (Dayan & Katz 1992). In such instances, reporting draws on a range of narrative devices typical of fictional narratives (Mihelj *et al.* 2009b, forthcoming). All such occasions are also characterized by a relatively high degree of elite consensus, while routine reporting is

normally adopted in response to events that provoke elite disagreement and fall within what Daniel Hallin called 'the sphere of legitimate controversy' (Hallin 1986).

Existing literature suggests that historical analogies and causes particularly often appear in the context of such non-routine reporting. For example, after the attack on the New York World Trade Centre and the Pentagon in 2001, both British and American newspapers frequently established a link with the World Trade Centre bombing in 1993, compared the impact and scale of the attack to that of the 1941 Pearl Harbour raid and the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing, and related the event to the rise of Osama Bin Laden (Winfield *et al*. 2002: 293). Similarly, the crash of the space shuttle Columbia in 2003 prompted American journalists to establish an analogy with a comparable accident involving the Challenger shuttle that occurred in 1990 (Edy & Daradanova 2006). Analogous uses of history were also found in media reporting during ceremonial events. The British newspaper coverage of the football game between Germany and England during Euro 2000 was full of references to events from both the football history and the military history of the two countries involved, effectively resulting in the presentation of the sports contest as an extension of historical armed conflicts (Bishop & Jaworski 2003: 252-257).

The reasons for such uses of the past in moments of crisis or major ceremonial occasions are not hard to find. For instance, major ceremonial occasions such as those surrounding popular sports contests demand expressions of collective support and of belief in a victorious outcome for one's national team. Faced with unexpected natural catastrophes, large-scale violent attacks or accidents, journalists tend to support their audiences with practical advice, boost morale by conveying feelings of solidarity and try to re-establish social bonds and a sense of direction (Schudson 2003: 188). In the context of war, they also frequently encourage fear and hatred, and in response to the menace of social disintegration following a traumatic event, they may try to re-establish social bonds and a sense of direction (Peri 1997). Finally, they may also seek explanations for the shocking events and look for those responsible, thus providing their audiences with the cognitive reassurance of understanding not only what happened, but also why.

The past provides a rich resource for achieving these diverse ends. As every other narrative device, historical analogies and causes do not merely provide a neutral frame for telling a meaningful story about the present,

but impose tacit assumptions about its nature, about the identity of its key actors, victims and perpetrators, about the likely outcome, as well as about the preferred response (Edy 1999; Peri 1999; Winfield *et al*. 2002; Edy & Daradanova 2006). For instance, if the shocking events of the present have their precedents, there is hope that the damage will ultimately be repaired and future disasters avoided – as long as we follow the lessons of the past. Likewise, rapid changes, even if pre-planned, may seem less disruptive if they are presented as logical consequences of long-term developments. Finally, recalling past military victories can help enhance the confidence in one's army or in one's football team, while memories of past defeats can be used as a pretext for confidence-boosting and calls for revenge.

Narrating the past, narrating identity

The different journalistic uses of history discussed above not only display affinities with different modes of reporting and different socio-political contexts, but also play different roles in processes of nation-formation and national identification. Given the tight connection between collective identities and narratives, especially narratives about the past, these elective affinities are hardly surprising. By locating themselves or being located within a narrative – usually a narrative that is not of their own making – human beings acquire a particular social identity (Somers 1994). In particular narratives about history are central to the engendering, reproduction and transformation of collective identities. They provide groups with particular trajectories that not only tell a story about where they come from, but also help define their present identity and help choose a direction for the future (Liu & Hilton 2005). The link between national identity and narratives about the past is particularly widely acknowledged and well documented, and selective remembering and forgetting of historical events and experiences is at the heart of several influential definitions and theories of the nation (e.g. Renan 2001; Smith 1999).

Since the media function as key mnemonic sites in modern societies and play a crucial role in the maintenance of national identities (Olick & Robbins 1998: 124), one can expect that journalistic engagements with history will be closely related to processes of nation-formation and national identification. To explain that, we first need to clarify what we mean by nation-formation or nation-building. Contrary to what common sense and much of the scholarly literature implies, recent theories of nationalism suggest that nation-formation is not a one-way, cumulative process culminating in the creation of a fully-fledged nation. Instead, this

process is highly uneven and 'episodic'; interspersed with sudden, short-term crystallizations of national feelings on a mass scale, followed by lengthy periods of 'quiet' nationalism (Beissinger 2002; Hutchinson 2005). For most of the time, feelings of national belonging and ideas about nationhood are not at the forefront of people's everyday concerns – unless their day-to-day existence prevents them from fitting neatly into established categories and frames, as may be the case for example with recent immigrants or ethnically mixed couples. By and large, in contemporary nations, the continual re-enactment of nationhood and competition over its correct definition is generally left in the hands of a narrow circle of professional nation-builders and nation-maintainers: nationally-minded politicians, poets and writers, history teachers, national museum and art galleries curators etc.

During periods of 'quiet' nationalism, which are also periods when journalists tend to follow the conventions of routine reporting, national identity plays a minimal role in journalistic narratives. The professional conventions of routine reporting require journalists to focus primarily on providing material for a rational public debate, and not on identity-building (Schudson 2003: 177-193). National identity effectively becomes reduced to a largely invisible narrative frame that holds together the otherwise rather disparate news stories and views published in a newspaper or broadcast in a news bulletin. This narrative frame rests on two main sources: first, the fact that all news stories in a particular newspaper or news bulletin relate to events that happened on the same day and are somehow connected to members of the same imagined community; and second, the fact that they will be read or heard by thousands or even millions of individuals, who all share an awareness of each-other as members of the same community (Anderson 2006: 32-36).

This does not mean that nationhood is entirely absent from such reporting, yet by and large, it remains limited to hardly noticeable, 'banal' journalistic habits and categories, such as for example occasional references to 'us' and 'them', 'here' and 'there', or to 'our government' (Billig 1995: 93-127). However, although compatible with national imagination, these banal reminders of collective belonging can accommodate many competing definitions of identity, which allows the exact content and boundaries of the fictive 'we' to remain fuzzy and flexible (Rosie *et al*. 2004). For instance, the events of the day are not explicitly presented as events happening to 'our' nation, and unambiguous references to 'us' – an imagined community that embraces both journalists and their audience –

are extremely rare (Mihelj *et al*. 2009b, forthcoming). Routine commemorative journalism clearly fits this type of relationship between the media and collective identity; given the weak links between the commemorated event and present concerns the exact meaning of the past often remains ambiguous (Edy 1999: 76). As such, it can in principle accommodate diverse interpretations of 'our' history, which correspond to different interpretations of collective identity.

Contrary to that, in exceptional moments, for example in a context of war or in moments of collective euphoria accompanying major sports contests, enactments of nationhood become much more widely present in everyday life and often attract large-scale participation. The competing definitions of collective belonging are rendered visible and 'are put to open test', inviting and even demanding choice between competing forms of identity (Beissinger 2002: 18). Within the media, the struggle over the appropriate portrayal of collective identity, otherwise hidden behind the screen and the front page, moves to the forefront (Carey 1998: 45). The reporting becomes permeated by deictic references unambiguously tied to a particular nation or state, and references to 'us' become filled with explicitly national content. Reporters frequently abandon the position of a detached, third-person narrator, and instead report the events of the day from the point of view of the national 'we', explicitly presenting them as events that happened to 'our nation' and incorporating them into an unfolding national narrative (Mihelj *et al*. 2009b, forthcoming). This unfolding national narrative often stretches back into the past and includes historical events and episodes that are presented as meaningful for the understanding of present events. For example, in response to the assassination of Israel's Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin in 1995, the Israeli media incorporated the event into the 'nation-constitutive myth' originating in the 1948 Arab-Israeli conflict (Peri 1999, 108-109). Similarly, the Israeli television coverage of a fire in the Carmel Forest in 1989 linked the incident to the Biblical past and presented it as a parable of Jewish martyrdom (Ha-Ilan 2001, 210-211). As demonstrated further on, such narratives, stretching back from current events into the national past, were also an integral element of war reporting examined in the case study.

The case study

The prime-time television news bulletins analyzed in the case study come from two TV stations, located in two different Yugoslav republics: TV Belgrade (TVB) in the Republic of Serbia and TV Ljubljana in the

Republic of Slovenia (TVL).[5] The case study covers both the period of relative peace immediately before the armed conflict (June 16 – June 24 1991) and the period of the actual war, preceded by Slovenia's declaration of independence on June 25 (June 25-July 07). While the first period was characterized by internal elite dissent in each republic, the second was accompanied by broadly uniform elite responses. As demonstrated elsewhere (Mihelj *et al*. 2009b, forthcoming), the second period was marked by an abandonment of routine reporting and open promotion of national identity on both TVL and TVB. It is therefore reasonable to expect that the use of history changed accordingly, and that during the conflict, journalists were more often drawing on historical references.

To establish whether this was indeed the case, all relevant sections of news bulletins – i.e. all parts dedicated to the conflict or domestic politics – were first screened for any mentions of historical references. In the second step, it was established whether these references appeared in reported speech and direct quotes or in journalists' own interpretations and commentaries. Finally, a comparison between the two periods was drawn to identify any significant differences. As expected, the analysis confirmed that historical references did indeed become more frequent in the second period and that journalists themselves started using them to interpret present events.

It is also worth keeping in mind that the armed conflict in Slovenia marked the beginning of the Yugoslav Wars and formed an integral part of a wider process of rapid social, economic and political transformation. An important socio-cultural component of this process was the transformation of collective identities and adjoined collective memories. The socialist Yugoslav identity matrix was initially modelled on the Soviet one, and despite important changes after Yugoslavia's expulsion from the Cominform in 1948 it retained the same basic two-layered pattern: the common Yugoslav identity, underpinned by supra-national ties of 'brotherhood and unity', coexisted with distinct, institutionally supported national identities – Slovenian, Serbian, Croatian etc. (Shoup 1968: 114ff). According to the Yugoslav myth of origins, this particular paring of national distinctiveness and an overarching Yugoslav identity was forged during World War Two, and found its expression in the Anti-Fascist People's Liberation Struggle, led by the Yugoslav Partisans (Perica 2002: 95-98).

This idealistic vision of the Yugoslav past permeated history education throughout the socialist period and was supported through a wide range of monuments and commemorative events (Höpken 1997). The parallel history of hatred and violence among members of Yugoslav nations themselves was either suppressed or subsumed under a set of simplistic dichotomies that pitted 'revolutionaries' and 'liberators' against 'foreign occupiers' and 'domestic traitors' (ibid.). At the same time, however, the institutional and political infrastructure underpinning Yugoslav unity was slowly weakening. The series of reforms that culminated in the adoption of a new constitution in 1974 effectively strengthened sub-state national loyalties at the expense of pan-Yugoslav ones. Ironically, while the proportion of Yugoslav citizens identifying solely as 'Yugoslavs' was growing (Sekulić et al. 1994), all forms of political representation were being adapted to Yugoslavs that also had a distinct sub-state national affiliation (Jović 2003). The death of Yugoslavia's life-long president Josip Broz Tito in 1981 dealt another blow to the already fragile infrastructure of Yugoslavism. In the years that followed, these problems were compounded by raising foreign debt, spiralling inflation rates, growing unemployment and marked regional and ethnic disparities (Lampe 2000: 321-334).

Given these developments, and taking into account that the 1980s were characterized by a relatively liberal political and ideological atmosphere, it is hardly surprising that this was also a period when several key Yugoslav myths lost their taken-for-granted status, and when the official historiography was being openly questioned. Memories of the heroic Partisan struggle were increasingly challenged by narratives emphasizing fratricidal wars, in particular those involving the Independent State of Croatia, a puppet state of the Axis powers established in 1941, the associated Croatian nationalist Ustashe movement, and the Serbian nationalist Chetnik movement (Banac 1992; Denich 1994; Hayden 1994; Dragović-Soso 2002). As Dejan Djokić (2002) argues, the rise of these alternative narratives about World War Two simultaneously contributed to the internal, intra-ethnic reconciliation of individual Yugoslav nations, as well as to their inter-ethnic 'irreconciliation'.

As follows from the above, the journalists of TVB and TVL reporting on the war in Slovenia had a variety of potentially useful historical narratives at their disposal, ranging from those emphasizing the common Yugoslav partisan struggle to those underscoring fratricidal wars between Yugoslav nations. By making a choice between these they inevitably became

engaged in the process of collective memory negotiation. One of the aims of the analysis was to establish what kind of choices they were making, and what role these choices were playing in the broader transformation of collective attachments and memories at the time. The presentation of the analysis is split into three parts. The first and the second part examine how the journalistic uses of history before the conflict differed from those during the conflict. The third part focuses on the types of historical references chosen by the journalists and discusses the role they played in the wider processes of collective memory and collective identity negotiation.

Before the Conflict: Mnemonic Battles in the Background

Prior to the beginning of armed confrontations, mentions of historical events and experiences were already relatively frequent, yet were largely limited to reported speech and direct quotes, and hardly ever appeared in journalists' own interpretations and commentaries. This indicates that at the time, interpretations of history were a rather important public issue, yet the journalists, for the most part, maintained their professional distance and gave voice to different perspectives.[6] For instance, a news bulletin broadcast by TV Ljubljana included a report summarizing the political disputes over Slovenia's new flag, which revolved around the interpretation of Slovenia's recent history, and specifically around the question of whether or not the new flag should retain the red star (TVL, 20 June 1991). Another news item in the same bulletin mentioned a speech delivered by Slovenia's Prime Minister Lojze Peterle, who traced the origins of the process of gaining independence back to the last years of the socialist rule in Slovenia (TVL, 20 June 1991). A couple of days earlier, disagreements over the proposed programme for the official celebration of independence were mentioned; in the opinion of some commentators cited in the report, the celebration was aesthetically too similar to official celebrations from the socialist period (TVL, 18 June 1992).

Similar examples could be found in TVB's bulletins. One report for instance summarized a public statement issued by the Slovenian World War Two veterans, who warned of 'attempts to revive the fascistoid totalitarian ideology' in Slovenia (TVB, 20 June 1991). Another example appeared in a news item summing up the key points raised by the Yugoslav Prime Minister Ante Marković in a speech dedicated to the current crisis. Towards the end of his speech, Marković urged everyone to 'put emotions aside' and 'leave everything behind … as we managed to do

several times in the past' (TVB, 21 June 1991). The latter example is particularly interesting also because it represents a rare case of a historical reference being used to promote pan-Yugoslav reconciliation rather than to foster a further escalation of hatred and suspicion between Yugoslav nations. When the armed conflict started and journalists themselves turned to the past, they virtually never used it in this way.

During the conflict: Mnemonic battles move to the front stage

With the declaration of independence in Slovenia, and particularly with the start of the armed conflict, the tone of reporting changed dramatically. History became much more prominently present and historical analogies were now regularly used also by the journalists themselves. By far the greatest share of historical references used was tied to World War Two, followed first by World War One and then by various domestic events from the period between 1945 and 1990. In all cases, the selected historical events were incorporated into an unfolding national narrative culminating in present events. The following excerpt, taken from the news anchor's speech, provides a particularly clear example:

> We have faced several challenges; we have been tormented by problems, natural and other catastrophes. Yet we have always stayed firm, and we still are, since we always relied primarily on ourselves, although friendly neighbourly help kept easing our pain and wounds. This time, solidarity will emerge as well, since the picture of locations where the army horde raged is the same as 46 years ago. Gornja Radgona, one of the worst stricken municipalities, was visited today by the Slovenian parliamentary delegation. (TVL, 06 July 1991)

From the very start, the anchor adopts the position of a collective 'we' – the Slovenian nation – and begins by recalling past experiences of suffering, resilience and neighbourly support, going almost half a century back in time to establish a continuity with the collective trauma and solidarity in the aftermath of World War Two. In the second step, he turns to the subject of the report, namely the visit of a parliamentary delegation to one of the Slovenian towns damaged during the conflict, and introduces it as an integral part of this long historical chain of collective experiences.

The exact functions of historical references to World War Two varied. The above-quoted excerpt is a typical example of a historical analogy established with the aim of boosting the feelings of solidarity, as well as conveying the hope of recovery from the trauma of war. The past is used

simultaneously as model of such solidarity and as a guarantee that it will emerge again in response to present suffering. Furthermore, this analogy also serves to dramatize the present situation, and thereby instigates fear and hatred. Arguably, the comparison with World War Two in this context functions as a hyperbola: given that the scale of devastation and number of victims during the 1991 war in Slovenia was incomparably smaller than that left behind by World War Two,[7] such analogies clearly exaggerated its impact and consequences for purposes of rhetorical effect.

Such hyperbolic analogies were used on a regular basis by both TVB and TVL. One of the war-time news bulletins broadcast by TVB, for example, started with the following opening: 'Dear viewers! Yugoslavia is experiencing its most dramatic moments since World War Two,' (TVB, 02 July 1991), which was followed by a lengthy, over four minutes and a half long direct address by Blagoje Adžić, Yugoslav People's Army's Chief of the General Staff. On TVL, a report from a region that recently experienced an attack by the Yugoslav Army ended with a similar comment:

> All these are consequences of the attack that the occupying army is perhaps now calling a successful air attack on a barricade. However, we of course see that this is the worst barbarity experienced in this part of Europe since World War Two. (TVL, 28 June, 1991)

Another, equally dramatic field report drew a similar historical analogy. After describing the damage caused by Yugoslav Army's intervention in a Slovenian border town, the journalist concluded: 'Only Nazis were capable of such barbarity. Yet these are Nazis with a five-pointed red star,' (TVL, 02 July, 1991).

Dismembering identity, dismembering memory

Apart from dramatizing the events and inciting fear and hatred, historical analogies also helped identify the key agents of present events and distinguish victims from perpetrators. Predictably, the two broadcasters, although using the same historical analogies, identified the agents in a different way. From the point of view of TVL, as the above-quoted examples suggest, the role of the Nazis was played by the Yugoslav People's Army. The last excerpt, in which the Yugoslav Army soldiers are described as 'Nazis with a five-pointed red star', went even further than that, obliquely suggesting that Yugoslavia was still a communist country, and as such equivalent to Nazi Germany.[8] In contrast, from the perspective

of TVB, the roles were reversed, and the modern Nazis were to be found in Slovenia and Croatia. A particularly interesting example appeared in a news bulletin broadcast towards the end of the conflict, which included two archival newsreel stories from 1941. The first one was a report about Adolph Hitler's visit to the Slovenian town of Maribor, which was annexed to the Third Reich in April of that year. This item contained several images of cheering crowds greeting Hitler upon his arrival, as well as images of Nazi flags all around the city. The second news story focused on the declaration of war against the UK and the USA, announced by the Independent State of Croatia in December 1941. The anchor's introduction suggested that current events in Slovenia and in the neighbouring Croatia, which announced its independence alongside Slovenia, were effectively a repetition of these historical events, and hence of the Nazi occupation:

> In the following part of the programme, dear viewers, the news bulletin is going 50 years back in time. With the help of archival films […] you will be able to see the images of events that in many ways resemble what is going on these days. Memory as a warning. (TVB, 05 July, 1991)

It is important to note that while these examples indicate that TVB and TVL provided radically different versions of the same past, intra-republican struggles over the correct interpretation of recent history disappeared from view. History was no longer presented as a matter of public dispute within each of the two republics, but as an eternal, reliable reservoir of truths to which all Slovenians on the one hand, and all Serbs on the other hand, stood in equal relation. The only significant differences in interpretation appeared between, and not within, each nation. Arguably, the two broadcasters participated in the parallel processes of intra-national ideological reconciliation, and the cross-national 'irreconciliation' briefly described above. When choosing from the available range of possible historical analogies, both TVL and TVB privileged those narratives that emphasized the history of conflicts between Yugoslav nations over the history of either cross-national cooperation or intra-national ideological divisions. Although a powerful narrative of successful pan-Yugoslav co-operation was available, and was occasionally invoked by some of the interviewees and sources quoted in the bulletins, it was virtually never adopted by the journalists themselves.

Conclusions

The case study examined in this chapter supports the argument that journalistic uses of history vary with respect to the broader socio-political

context, the type of journalistic conventions employed, as well as with regard to the type of media involvement in nation-formation. During the period of relative peace, journalists generally adhered to the routines of objective reporting and rarely explicitly identified with the nation, as well as avoided using historical references – except in reports covering routine commemorative events. In contrast, during the period of collective celebration and the subsequent armed conflict, journalists abandoned the requirements of balanced, neutral reporting, explicitly embraced a particular national identity, as well as frequently delved into historical analogies or examinations of historical causes. History was no longer presented as a matter of public discussion open to divergent interpretations, but as a stable source of facts that hold unambiguous lessons for the present.

This case study also suggests that the links between journalistic uses of history, journalistic narration and identity construction become particularly interesting when looking at reporting in periods of rapid socio-political change. Such periods tend to be characterized by a proliferation of competing identity constructions and collective memories, each tied to a different vision of a possible future. The selected case study was no exception. The journalists of TVB and TVL had an array of potentially useful historical narratives at their disposal, ranging from those emphasizing the history of pan-Yugoslav cooperation to those focusing on mutual suspicion and hatred. Nevertheless, they chose to draw primarily on the latter, thus contributing to the dismantling of common Yugoslav collective memories and thereby also to the undermining of the shared Yugoslav identity and future.

Given that these conclusions are based on a single case study involving only television news, the scope for generalization is of course limited. Similarly as their counterparts elsewhere in the region, Yugoslav post-communist elites treated the media in much the same way as their communist predecessors: as instruments of control belonging to the ruling party (see e.g. Veljanovski 2002). Although the elites never achieved full control over the media in respective republics, alternative voices were confined strictly to media with limited audience reach. Television stations such as TV Ljubljana and TV Belgrade were particularly prone to governmental control, and their positions were closely tied to the political mainstream (Bašić Hrvatin 1997). Arguably, all these contextual factors make it highly likely that the analysed coverage would conform to expected patterns of journalistic engagements with national memory. It

remains to be seen whether comparable patterns would appear also in other types of media forms and genres and in a different media and political environment.

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[2] Although using the concept of collective memory introduced by Maurice Halbwachs (1992), this chapter adopts a more dynamic approach and understands collective memory primarily as a process of ongoing negotiation. For an overview of the key differences between Halbwachs' and other approaches to collective memory see Misztal (2003: 50-74).

[3] The ten-day long armed conflict started in Slovenia on June 27, when the Yugoslav People's Army made an attempt to preserve the territorial integrity of the federation and re-establish federal control over Slovenia's borders. The Slovenian government in turn mobilized its Territorial Defence units, arguing that Yugoslav Army's involvement was a hostile assault of a foreign army on a sovereign state.

[4] Edy (1999) establishes a very similar, but tripartite typology of commemorative journalism, historical analogies and historical contexts. For the purpose of this chapter, the latter two categories are collapsed into one.

[5] The news bulletins have been collected and transcribed in collaboration with Veronika Bajt and Miloš Pankov for the purposes of the research project "Spinning out of Control", funded by the Norwegian Research Council (grant reference no. 174860). The author would like to express thanks to Radio-Television Serbia and Radio-Television Slovenia for providing access to archival materials. Thanks are also due to Nedin Mutić for his help with transcriptions.

[6] A combination of detailed discursive and content analysis may have revealed that journalists privileged some interpretations of history over others, yet at the very least, they did explicitly acknowledge that these different interpretations existed – something that did not occur during the conflict itself.

[7] According to the data released on 07 July 1991 by the Slovenian Red Cross, the total number of casualties amounted to 62, and the number of wounded to 313 (Vojaški muzej Slovenske vojske 2006: 12).

[8] Such stereotypical representations of the rest of Yugoslavia were relatively common among Slovenian intellectual and political elites at the time, and formed an integral part of the process of Othering that involved casting the rest of the federation as substantially less democratic, civilized and 'European' than Slovenia (e.g. Patterson 2003: 114-121).