

Remembering and Forgetting World War II within Changing Political Contexts from 1945 up to the Present. Public Treatment of WWII Monuments in Slovakia and Bosnia-Herzegovina

The proposed project aims to research on the changes in the perception of past in Slovakia and Bosnia-Herzegovina through the development of the official treatment of WWII monuments from 1945 up to present. The focus will be put on how the politics of these states have been creating the politics of memory within the given space and time scope.

Last two decades have been marked by increased political and public interest in war commemorations and thus the academia has responded by producing a significant number of studies on history and memory. Two main streams have developed within the research on war memory and commemoration, one focusing on the politics of memory (referring to identity construction theories) and the other one connected with the psychology and memory (referring to collective and individual mourning processes) (Ashplant, Dawson and Roper 2000). In our research, we plan to deal with the changing politics of memory in Slovakia and Bosnia-Herzegovina. Therefore, we will develop our project within theoretical framework focusing on the relation between collective memory and collective identity. At this moment we will disregard the psychological aspect of the mourning processes connected with the war remembrance.

Firstly, we will focus on the remembrance of WWII in Slovakia and Bosnia as the parts of composite Communist states, and secondly as independent post-Communist countries pursuing their own policies. Parallel research on the two countries, which have had different political development after the fall of Communism, has the aim to offer the view on how the different policies influence different practices of commemoration. Thus, historical comparison shall be the central methodical approach. Particular case studies on selected monuments and memorial places shall serve as the examples of state policies to construct the World War II memories.

The key questions of the research are:

- Why are the WWII monuments and memorials used by the political authorities to construct the group identities?
- In which ways are the states or political parties using the WWII monuments in order to promote their policies?
- What kind of changes occurs within these policies in different political contexts?

We find the photographic presentation of usage of the WWII monuments, combined with analysis providing the context of their usage in past and present, as the most comprehensible way for understanding the importance of the state involvement in changing policies of memory. The first

step of the research will be to select particular WWII monuments in both countries, research on the context of their building, and how they were utilized in public life during Communism and after its failure.

As a result of this research, we expect to gather the images of the places of remembrance and the data about the public treatment of World War II monuments before and after the failure of Communism in Slovakia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, which we plan to present in the form of an internet exhibition. This approach seems to be the most feasible for presenting the case studies on the changing politics of memory and thus can be used in similar projects. By presenting the uses of World War II memories through time, we wish to show how the layers of memory are constructed by the state politics.

Darko Karačić

Slávka Otčenášová

Key publications:

Ashplant, T.G., Dawson, Graham, and Michael Roper (eds) (2000) *The Politics of War Memory and Commemoration*. London, New York: Routledge.

Hobsbawm, Eric and Terence Ranger (eds) (1983) *The Invention of Tradition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Hodgkin, Katharine and Susannah Radstone (eds) (2003) *Contested Pasts. The Politics of Memory*. London, New York: Routledge.

Lebow, Richard Ned, Kansteiner, Wulf and Claudio Fogu (eds) (2006) *The Politics of Memory in Post-War Europe*. Durham, London: Duke University Press.

Rossington, Michael and Anne Whitehead (eds) (2007) *Theories of Memory. A Reader*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Dieses Projekt wird im Rahmen der Geschichtswerkstatt Europa realisiert. Es ist eins von 28 europäischen Projekten, die 2009 zum Thema „Schichten der Erinnerung“ mit Mitteln der Stiftung „Erinnerung, Verantwortung und Zukunft“ gefördert werden.

Die Geschichtswerkstatt Europa ist ein Programm der Stiftung EVZ zur Auseinandersetzung mit europäischer Erinnerung. Die Förderung von Projekten wird vom Institut für angewandte Geschichte in Kooperation mit der Europa-Universität Viadrina koordiniert. Das Internationale Forum wird vom Global and European Studies Institute der Universität Leipzig ausgerichtet.

Zitierweise

Karačić, Darko / Otčenášová, Slávka: Remembering and Forgetting World War II within Changing Political Contexts from 1945 up to the Present. Public Treatment of WWII Monuments in Slovakia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, in: Geschichtswerkstatt Europa, 16.07.2009, <http://www.geschichtswerkstatt-europa.org/media/projekte/Methodenpapier/layers_monuments.pdf>

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