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"WE WERE PROUD TO LIVE WITH YOU, AND NOW IMMENSELY SAD TO HAVE LOST YOU"

A CHRONICLE OF THE WAR THROUGH NEWSPAPER DEATH NOTICES

DUNJA RIHTMAN-AUGUŠTIN
Institut za etnologiju i folkloristiku, Zagreb

Wartime newspaper death notices and in memoriam seem to present a kind of chronicle of the war and a testimony of the war mentality. They establish the identity of the killed and the circumstances of their death, often also offering their biographies *in nuce*. Institutions and political parties join the families in their grief. In death notices, everyday discourse about life, death, victim and the sacrifice is intertwined with that on the homeland. Published in writing and in public information medium, newspaper death notices exist in the realm between oral and written communication. Although their function is to notify the living, death notices are often addressed to the deceased and tell them about the family's life after their departure. Glory is mentioned in the cases of politically prominent persons. The rest are regarded as victims of an unfair war and as martyrs for Croatia.

The war which has escalated in Croatia during the summer and autumn of 1991, and has continued in 1992, does not appear in newspapers only in news articles. Not only professional journalists inform us about more or less anonymous deaths, about military successes and defeats. Among newspaper death notices appear the names, surnames and photographs of young people fallen in defence of their homeland: of policemen, guards-

men and members of the Croatian army.¹ Different frontlines can be identified, particularly bloody in certain stages of the war. From death notices we learn of victims left unburied in the occupied areas, and of the deaths of the refugees. The deaths of certain individuals cause extraordinary publicity; some others are not reported on at all, except in death notices. In this way newspaper death notices again appear as a sensitive seismograph of what is going on in society.²

However, war-related newspaper death notices convey more than simple information. They are more expressive and individual than the "regular" ones, related to people who died of natural and peacetime causes. Beside that, they in fact replace the rite in cases where, due to the war, death and funeral rituals were omitted. In a war that has destroyed so many material goods and killed so many people, the families of victims seem to find solace in newspaper death notice - the only thing, after all, they can do to maintain the memory of the deceased.

And these war-related death notices are numerous, increasingly so every day. On a single randomly chosen day, October 3, 1991, "Večernji list" published 7 death notices for killed guardsmen and soldiers and 14 final salutations! Two months later, on December 3, 1991 out of 43 death notices, 11 are related to killed guardsmen, along with two final salutations for five HOS members, and one for 5 guardsmen. Even on the days following the reaching of the "final" cease-fire agreement, sad announcements of killed combatants continue to appear. Gradually in memoriam grow more numerous, since, as the time passes, anniversaries of various battles and major bloodbaths arrive. In the days I am finishing this article (November 1992) falls the anniversary of the battle of Vukovar and newspapers daily publish many in memoriam for the town's fallen defenders every day.

War-related newspaper death notices contain, naturally, the usual and conventional information about the death and the funeral, but often they offer much more than basic facts. The perception of war, the distress of the surviving and the bereaved, the personality of the killed or assassinated are completely personal. In this article I will try to discern something more: the way oral discourse about the war and death was expressed in this

¹ At the beginning of the war Croatia had no army of its own. For that reason police forces were those engaged in the defence of the country. Resistance against the aggression triggered the forming of numerous volunteer units which were organized into the "National Guard Corps" (*Zbor narodne garde*), which in turn made way to the formation of the Croatian Army during the war.

² Newspaper and other printed death notices have been a subject of research by some European ethnologists. Klaus Roth offers a survey of such works in his article published in 1988. I have repeatedly written on the subject, and have listed the literature I used in my *Ethnology of Our Everyday Life*, 1988:116-183; 217-226.

written medium and whether a discussion on people's mentality in war can be based on death notices.

Policemen, Guardsmen and Soldiers

No death notice was published for Josip Jović, the first Croatian policeman killed on March 31, 1991. A solemn funeral at his birthplace and the details of his death came to us through daily news. His death was a public concern. It wasn't until a year later (March 31, 1992) that his family reaction became known³

IN MEMORIAM

to our beloved son and brother

JOSIP JOVIĆ

Croatian soldier

March 31, 1991 - March 31, 1992

The Plitvice Lakes, an oasis of peace, was your last stop. You were the first to sacrifice your young life for our Croatia. We shall never forget you. We are grateful to all those visiting your resting place.

The Holy mass will be served at 3. p.m. on March 31, 1992 in the Church of All Saints in Aržano.

Mother Marija, father Filip, brother Tomislav, sisters Franka and Anita with their families, Mirna and numerous relatives.

In a separate in memoriam for the first killed Croatian warrior, his uncle and aunt, along with cousins and their families announced another holy mass to be served *on the first anniversary of his misfortune* in a church in Zagreb.

During summer 1991 the pages of daily newspaper *Večernji list*, which was then bringing everyday city chronicle alongside with war reports, and was still full of advertisements, theater, cinema, exhibitions and concert guides - all of these signs of a peacetime life - gradually began to shock us with an ever increasing amount of death notices related to war victims and combat casualties. The following is such a shocking death notice (July 30, 1991):

³ All the death notices quoted in this article were published in *Večernji list*, a Zagreb daily, between the spring of 1991 and the autumn of 1992. In that period *Večernji list* every day published dozens of newspaper death notices grouped under common titles: death notices, final salutations, acknowledgements and in memoriam.

Deeply distressed, we announce the sad and tragic news that in course of duty, defending the sovereignty of the Republic of Croatia succumbed

GORAN FADLJEVIĆ, born in 1969
ŽELJKO FILIPOVIĆ, born in 1966
ŽARKO GUNIĆ, born in 1963
MLADEN HALAPA, born in 1969
IVICA PERIĆ, born in 1961
ZORAN ŠARONJA, born in 1963
BRANKO VUK, born in 1952
DAVOR VUKAS, born in 1971
members of the Zagreb Police Department.

Common obsequies of the killed policemen will take place at 1 p.m. on Tuesday, July 30, 1991 at the Mirogoj cemetery in Zagreb.

May the killed colleagues' glory last forever!

ZAGREB POLICE DEPARTMENT

On the same day separate death notices were printed for some individuals from this group, mainly from families: for Branko Vuk (*tragically killed while fulfilling his duty*), for Goran Fadljević (*insidiously murdered by the Yugoslav People's Army...; forever left us on duty while defending the homeland which he learned to love as our member... it is not specified whose member*), for Davor Vukas (*tragically killed*), for Mladen Halapa (*insidiously murdered by the so-called Yugoslav People's Army and terrorists while defending his beloved Croatia*), for Žarko Gundić (*tragically killed*), and a joint death notice for Mladen Halapa and Ivica Perić (*tragically lost their young lives while defending their Croatia*).

I here single out the death notice for one of those policemen signed by his family:

With deep grief, we announce to all the relatives, friends and acquaintances the sad news that our beloved son, brother, grandson, brother in law and uncle

ŽELJKO FILIPOVIĆ
tragically died on Friday, July 27, 1991.

The funeral of the beloved deceased will take place at 6 p.m. on Wednesday, July 31, 1991, at the Miroševac cemetery.

Rest in peace!

Grieved mother Ankica, father Janko, brothers Žarko and Nenad,
and other bereaved relatives.

We could hardly detect from the text that it is related to a war casualty. For his family, his death is simply tragic beyond words. At the moment of his death, the family found itself dumbfounded, it wished the deceased just to rest in peace.

A year later (July 25, 1992) the employees of the Zagreb Police Department remembered again their eight colleagues killed on July 26, 1991. In addition, separate in memoriam were published for Željko

Filipović and Goran Fadljević. This time Željko Filipović's family remembered *their beloved son, brother, brother in law and uncle* in a more eloquent manner and address him thus:

Our dear Želja! 365 sad days have passed since you left us, and we still haven't come round to comprehending the fact that you have really gone, and forever so. Every day we expect the doors to finally open, and your beloved figure and smiling face to appear, we expect you to hug your beloved ones and shower them with kisses like you used to do, but it never happens. It has become a dream dreamt but never fulfilled. You left us without a good-bye, just when you loved life most, full of happiness and confidence. You rushed off, as you always did to school, to work or to college, and always came back on time until that final once. Instead we are now left with memories of you, with pain in our hearts, grief in our home, now sad and empty without you.

That tragic faith made you forsake your young life, tearing you out of our beings, out of our hearts, our bosom.

Our dearest son, we strive to keep you with us where you used to be and where you belong, and while we are alive, you will be alive in us.

However, time passes by, but grief and pain remain and squeeze our hearts and our souls more and more each day, while tears bring no relief, they just water our grief and darkness - eternal darkness. There is no sun, no light, now you've gone. There is no joy in our lives, only grief, only pain.

We wish to thank all those who remember you, who pause before your final residence and light a candle for your rest and peace.

This death notice represents a touching expression of a death locating it within a family. But there are different family reactions to the death of their soldier members. They are less intimate, express strong national feelings or catholic piety. The loss of a family member is felt as a heroic act and sacrifice for the common good of the homeland which is resolved in the next world. Such is the spirit which permeates the following death notice published on August 6, 1991:

Having confirmed his highest love - love for the homeland - by sacrificing his twenty-two year old life, our pride

ZDESLAV TURIĆ
gave himself over to Eternal Love

The funeral of our dear hero will take place at 6. p.m. on Tuesday, August 6, 1991, at the Mirogoj cemetery.

The Holy Mass will be served the same day at 7:30 p.m. in the Chapel of the Holy Mary of Lourdes in 35 Vrbanićeva Street. Deeply believing that his sacrifice had not been in vain, we await the day of the reunion.

Rest in God's peace.

The family perceive the young man's death as a heroic contribution to the patriotic national cause for which the surviving family members are also actively struggling as political personalities. Only later we were to find out

the extraordinary circumstances of the death of this young man who was killed along with Miro Barešić (see below).

The twofold attitude towards the death of soldiers, i.e. as a personal family tragedy or as heroism and a sacrifice to the altar of the homeland will be followed still further. This duality can be found almost every day. Often the perception of heroic death and sacrifice for the homeland convenes with the perception of a death tragic by itself, because of the deceased being young and a dear member of the family. But sometimes it hardly can be discerned from a death notice whether it is related to the death of a soldier.

On November 22, 1991 a death notice was published relating to DUBRAVKO OŽEGOVIĆ, a Croatian guardsman who

left us forever... on November 20, 1991 at the age of 32, succumbing to a serious wound he sustained while defending Croatia's freedom.

For the same person four final salutations were published from which we cannot ascertain at all that it goes to a fallen soldier: these final salutations were addressed to *our dearest and never forgotten son...*, *to dear Dubravko...*, *to our dear friend...*, and the following:

My dearest little brother

I don't want to think about you being no more. It is too hard for me to accept your fate as it is.

You will always be with me and beside me.

Your only "Pero" will always love you.

However, the same day there were several death notices in which the families stress the sacrifice for the homeland: MARKO LUKIĆ *tragically died defending the freedom of his homeland...*; *tragically died near Vinkovci defending the freedom of the Homeland...*; ERNEST GREDIČAK *killed in defence of the homeland.*

Sometimes the mourning of a killed soldier emits anti-war messages, even in cases of volunteers. The following final salutation was signed by 46 friends by names or nicknames (November 11, 1991):

On Tuesday, November 5, 1991 while defending his and our Croatia as a volunteer, left us forever, our dear friend

DANIJEI MAVRIN - NJEŽNI⁴

a young man who hated war...

"Dies young he
whom the gods do love"

⁴Nježni = the tender one.

Occasionally the killed are mourned by their fellow-soldiers, as on December 3, 1991:

FINAL SALUTATION
to our dear fellow-soldiers and friends
JOSIP MIKAC (ZAGI)
DRAGAN EVIĆ (GRGA)
VESELIN VOJNOVIĆ (VESELI)
ZIATKO LATINVIĆ (ŠOGI)
ŽELJKO LUDAŠ
guardsmen
who have laid down their lives in defence of Croatia's freedom.
Rest in peace in this suffered Croatian soil!
A part of each of you will remain within our hearts forever.

Your 1st Platoon:
Čmi, Ilija, Šogi, Tom, Ničo, Jana, Sitar, Bengesz, Dugi,
Damir, Veki, Dejan, Jerman, Štef, Dražen, Fridau,
Krešo, Dukica, Luka, Veza, Majcan, Dok.

There are a lot of death notices signed by the mourners' nicknames. Nicknames, it seems, testify to the integrity of the wartime or peacetime group now grieved by the loss.

Death notice for Miro Barešić, formerly known as the assassin of an ambassador of ex-Yugoslavia to Sweden⁵ provoked particular attention. Barešić returned from exile in the summer of 1991, went immediately to the war and was killed soon after that. His return and death were kept away from the public, and he was buried under a different name. A year later, Croatia's political leaders announced Barešić's death, and a new, solemn funeral and holy mass in Zagreb Cathedral took place, while Barešić's family published (June 24, 1992) that:

MIRO BAREŠIĆ
Croatian soldier
died on July 31, 1991, at the age of 41,
bravely fighting for his Homeland.

Two days later (June 26, 1992) the following final salutation appeared:

⁵ Vladimir Rolović, former Yugoslavia's ambassador to Sweden was assassinated in 1971. On April 17, 1971 Belgrade daily "Politika" published a death notice signed by *seven cousins, seven Rolovičs with sixteen sons* which called for a war against the Croatian butchers to extermination (I wrote about that in 1988:175). Barešić's death seems to have been a realization of this vengeful prediction.

To a brave fighter
MIRO BAREŠIĆ

Croatian rose, legend and brother
Even with your death you love Croats
The whole homeland will always remember
Miro Barešić, the brave fighter.
Let Velebit's Fairy be tender to you
All of Croatia's diaspora grieves and honors You
O, Almighty God, protect our brother
The legend, the rose and the pride of all Croats.
With your everlasting salute:
Everything for Croatia!

For the Croatian diaspora: rev. Vjekoslav Lasić, Dominican friar, Jozo
Vukušić and Božo Kelava, for Croatia: Vlado Grabovac, godfather
Ivan Vujičević, Tihomir Orešković and Tomislav Merčep.

This death notice corresponds to the spirit of the Croatian émigrés' political programme and symbols. Along with the merging of national and family aspects of mourning, here we can notice an overlapping of the intimate and the political discourse.

The case of Ante Paradžik and "HOS"

Violent deaths of certain political leaders were echoed in death notices in a special way. Ante Paradžik, a prominent member of the Croatian Party of Rights and Chief of the HOS⁶ War Staff, was killed by a regular Croatian police patrol under still unexplained circumstances.⁷ News on this incident were scarce and contradictory, but death notices were numerous (September 24, 1991):

Pro patria!
"The white dove has been struck..."
(S.S. Kranjčević: Golgota)⁸
We announce a most sad news that Mister
ANTE PARADŽIK (48)
vice-president of the Croatian Party of Rights
and the Chief of HOS War Staff
was insidiously killed on September 21, 1991 in Zagreb.

⁶HOS - Hrvatske obrambene snage (the Croatian Defence Forces), was a military formation of the radical nationalistic Croatian Party of Rights. HOS began as paramilitary force but was subsequently incorporated in the regular Croatian army during 1992.

⁷The circumstances of the killing have not been entirely explained during a court trial against four indicted policemen (the trial ended at the beginning of December 1992): three defendants have been acquitted and one sentenced to four years prison.

⁸Silvije Strahimir Kranjčević, a Croatian poet (1865-1908)

Alive he ranked among the most prominent activists for the establishing of the Independent State of Croatia, now dead, he joined Croatian martyrs who are innumerable among the stars above the Croatian sky, but saints and martyrs rule from their tombs...

The funeral will take place at 2 p.m. on September 25, 1991 at the Mirogoj cemetery, and the Holy Mass will be served immediately after the funeral in the Chapel of Christ the King.

God have mercy upon his soul!

For Home - at the Ready!

The Croatian Party of Rights

This death notice contains three clear allusions to the Ustasha movement and state: the mentioning of the Independent State of Croatia (Nezavisna država Hrvatska), the quotation of the Ustasha greeting "Za dom spremni" (For Home - at the Ready) as well as the allusion to this greeting in Latin. His children, however, perceive the party's military leader, in a death notice published the same day, this way:

Dear Daddy,

you were a man of the world and a family man, always sincere and honest and dear to many, but a thorn in side of the weak. If your life had been a pawn for peace for this suffering nation, for all those who cherish truth, justice and love, then your life had a definite meaning. But to us who knew and loved you as an ordinary warm man, as the only and irreplaceable big daddy, there is nothing that can make your place.

In a separate death notice his wife dedicated to him August Šenoa's⁹ verse. A final salutation to *dear man and friend* was published by the family of Dražen Budiša, the Croatian Social Liberal Party leader. The Croatian Political Prisoners Association specified the location of his death:

... lost his life in a tragic accident on the evening of September 21, 1991 in Staro Brestje, Sesvete.

This formulation "tragic accident" sounds quite conciliatory. Later, Ante Paradžik's death will trigger much stronger accusations from the radical opposition against the government and the party in power.

Many in memoriam published a year later revive the memoirs of the assassination of Ante Paradžik. He is talked about as mythical person, and the following in memoriam escalates the contemporary political struggle (September 21, 1992):

⁹ August Šenoa, a Croatian poet (1838-1881)

September 21 is the day when all party members and CPR supporters remember the vice-president of the Croatian Party of Rights and the Chief of HOS War Staff, the late

ANTE PARADŽIK

A year ago to the day He was insidiously killed by those who could not tolerate his dedication to the CPR and the resulting attitude, for He truly thought, breathed and spoke in the Croatian way. His goal was to establish a free and independent State of Croatia, and for this goal He gave over His life, like the numerous Croatia knights before and since. Our remembrance of Him is marred by a painful comprehension of the state our Homeland is in, which is best described by the fact that the murderers of the late Ante Paradžik walk the streets free and unpunished, as if they had not deprived the Croatian people of one of its most noble sons.

HIS SHINING IMAGE IS STILL WITH US!
FOR HOME - AT THE READY

The Croatian Party of Rights

The sheer number of death notices for Ante Paradžik advance the radical rightist opposition. The Croatian Defence Forces, abbreviated HOS, are the military arm of the Croatian Party of Rights which does not hide its affiliation to the Croatian radical nationalist orientation - the Ustasha movement. Indeed, they claim that the Second World War Ustasha were not fascist nor war criminals. They see the Independent State of Croatia (as was the name of Croatia's quisling state during WW II) as a modern European state. Although certain authors understand their usage of Ustasha symbols as a modern re-semanticization, one cannot set aside the possibility the revival of fascism and the Ustasha movement being their real goal.

It is in fact, however, that HOS units, as a form of self-defence were well armed and organized, and that they contributed greatly and with huge losses on numerous critical frontlines in Croatia during the 1991/92 war¹⁰. Newspaper death notices for HOS members, who operate in Croatia in the fringes of legality, serve as a proof of their sacrifice and contribution in the home war. Often these are collective death notices for several killed soldiers, and in the newspaper context they seem like great epitaphs.

On October 21, 1991, *Večernji list* published, along four death notices for dead regular guardsmen, a final salutation for 20 HOS members born in the late sixties and early seventies, with two born in the fifties, signed by the HOS and Croatian Party of Rights. These HOS fighters were killed mainly on the Vinkovci frontline between September 27 and October 2. For each of these the death notice mentions the date of birth and the date of death and it finishes with the Ustasha salute "Za dom spremni" (For Home - at the Ready).

¹⁰HOS fought, with numerous casualties, also in Herzegovina in 1992.

A few weeks later on November 12, 1991 a final salutation addressed to *Croatian heroines and heroes* commemorates eight HOS members, killed mainly in the Vinkovci area. The first was

MIROSLAV MARTINOVSKI (born May 8, 1961 in Vinkovci), Commander of the HOS 1st company "Ante Paradžik", wounded on October 24 in Popovača, died on November 9, 1991.

The second mentioned in this same death notice was a woman, *BISERKA DRAGUN*, born in 1967 and killed on November 8, 1991 in Vinkovci. Women infrequently participated in the home war as combatants, so their names appeared in death notices accordingly rarely.

Let's mention that the same day a separate final salutation for Commander Martinovski was published, signed by the soldiers of his unit, which contained the lines of the HOS march. These lines later appeared in all final salutations for HOS soldiers:

Many have fallen to the cold grave,
but their battle call echoes across the hills.
Charge, brothers, be it to death,
the sacred Croatian flag leads the way,
be it to death, be it to death.

The same lines could be found in the death notices for a foreigner *GAY DOMINIQUE*, born in 1973 in Aurec-sur-Loire, who was killed on June 10, 1992, near Livno, Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Frontlines

The war in Croatia used to have and still has very difficult and bloody frontlines which are often identified in death notices. The aforementioned death notices referred to the Plitvice and Vinkovci battle zones. Immediately after great human losses in the Kupa river fight in December 1991, as well several months later, death notices specify that frontline (April 6, 1992):

NENAD BIĆANIĆ, died for his Homeland on the Kupa river on December 13, 1991, at the age of 29.

His family addressed him in a painful cry:

Three indescribable woeful months have passed since enemy fire finished your young life in the icy Kupa river. How can we live without you who had been everything to us, now when only an overwhelming despair remained?

In the days of the fiercest attacks on Dubrovnik by the Serbian and Montenegrin Army, on November 23, 1991 we could read of a soldier who

... died in his native Dubrovnik on the Bosanka hill on November 9 at the age of 23 and thus gave over his life bravely defending the Croatian state.

The southern front had its heroes and martyrs still later (July 9, 1992):

MATE ČAGALJ, officer of the First Croatian Army Brigade sacrificed his life at the age of 23 on July 6, 1992 while defending Croatia on the southern front in Dubrovnik.

Information about the deaths of the defenders of Vukovar¹¹ often appear months later, when their families receive definitely reliable news of their fate:

MATE PRKA - SIR, Vukovar hero and fighter for the freedom of his Homeland, a company commander.

This death notice was published on February 6, 1992 and was signed by 19 relatives and the dead soldier's girlfriend.

Two days later a mother cried out:

My beloved son remained forever under the ruins of Vukovar, defending his and my own dearest Croatian homeland.

Among innumerable victims of Vukovar there was also the following (March 13, 1992)

Dear Denili, you wished for peace eternal when short of being eighteen, and inconsolable over your Vukovar. But you shall eternally live with us.

May God give your youth eternal peace.

In summer of 1992 (July 3) Sarajevo massacres echoed in Croatian newspaper *Večernji list*:

Deeply grieved we announce to all relatives, friends and acquaintances a sad news that our dear

FILIP ŠIMIĆ

died on July 1, 1992 at the age of ten of a Chetnik shell in Dobrinja, Sarajevo.

Victims of other Bosnian fronts began to appear more frequently (August 14, 1992):

¹¹ Vukovar fell on November 18, 1991 after a hundred days of fierce battles and widespread destruction.

Two months, June 14,1992 - August 14,1992, have passed since the tragic death of our only son

MIJAT EŠEGOVIĆ
born in Foča on October 18,1968

He lost his life near Derventa defending his home town Foča. He lost his life just because he was a Croat and was defending the Croatian land.
Dear son Mijat, may the Croatian soil be light to you.

If it is at all possible to compare grief and pain, the Petrinja front seems to be appearing in a most sad context (September 21,1992):

SINIŠA ĐURKIN. On September 21,1991 he tragically died as a guardsman in Petrinja and was left without a funeral...

The death notice featured a photograph, the face on it boyish, almost a child's...

The killed, deported, unburied

This war has been particularly brutal on civilians. Multitudes of innocent citizens were killed or forced to flee their homes. Funerals could not be carried out. On October 18,1991 KATA OREŠKOVIĆ's deeply grieved family announced to

... all relatives, friends and acquaintances a sad news that their dear wife, mother, mother-in-law, and grandmother died at the age of sixty by the hands of Serbo-Chetniks in Široka Kula on October 13. Since the funeral is impossible to arrange, the requiem will be held in St. Michael Church in Dubrava (Zagreb)...

On the same day a death notice of a similar content was published for a married couple who were killed in Lovinac, Lika, on September 29,1991. KAJA ŠARIĆ from the same village of Lovinac was remembered on August 22,1992 by her daughters, son, granddaughters, sons-in-law and her grand granddaughter:

A sad year has passed since the beats of your noble heart were violently stopped by Chetnik villains.

In an in memoriam for the same person her granddaughter says:

It is sad to live with the knowledge that I did not see you off to your voyage without return, a fate you did not deserve.

On September 26,1992 an in memoriam was published for the PAVIČIĆ brothers, JOSO and MIĆO, also from Lovinac, who were:

dastardly killed by a Chetnik hand.

An echo from another suffering Croatian village, Kijevo, could be found in the death notice for JAKOVICA and IVAN ERCEGOVAC (September 1,1992), who were:

dastardly killed by a Chetnik hand on their doorstep on July 11,1992 in Kijevo where they have been buried in the local cemetery with the help from UNPROFOR.

Very frequent are the death notices which say that the deceased was a refugee from a certain village or town, for instance (April 22,1992):

JAKOV LUKETIĆ, a refugee from Vukovar, died at the age of ninety in Donji Miholjac...

Dramatic circumstances of death were expressed in a in memoriam (May 14,1992):

No words can express the pain and grief which gripped us, your dearest, six months ago, on September 14,1991 when the murderer's hand wiped you out unarmed in your homes. You did not want to leave your dwelling knowing you were guilty of nothing. But you were Croats, and that was a sufficient reason.

You will eternally live with us. We are sad to have lost you, but proud to have lived with you.

For lives he forever who dies honourably.¹²

A death notice instead of news coverage

Some people were killed while in the service of the Yugoslav People's Army¹³. Their destiny could be only guessed at. But a death notice (September 18,1991) revealed such an ill fate.

... ČEDOMIR MLADAN, a YPA officer, tragically died on September 15,1991 at the age of thirty-five when a bullet in the back brought him dastardly an early death. The funeral of our dear deceased will take place at 2:45 p.m. on September 18,1991 at the Varaždin town cemetery.

Two months later (November 27,1991), another in memoriam was related to a soldier, most likely a Serb from Zagreb, and obviously killed while in the YPA:

¹² Verse from Frano Krsto Frankopan (1643-1671).

¹³ The outbreak of war caught many Croats either in the service, or as officers, of the former Jugoslavenska narodna armija (JNA) - Yugoslav Peoples Army (YPA). Getting out of it was dangerous and opposition to war cost many (not only Croats) their lives.

We will gather at your grave at 2. p.m.

IN MEMORIAM

Forty sad days have passed. My telephone shall never ring again and I shall never hear your question; 'ow are you my multi mother. Nor shall you ever ask about your Zagreb again.

ŽELJKO-ŽAC KNEŽEVIĆ

October 19,1991 - November 27,1991

It was a sad occasion when your uncles Ilija and Neđo, aunts Žiljka and Ljilja, the Đurđević and Maksimović families, V.P. 8205 from Banja Luka¹⁴ and the driver that brought him to Zagreb came to the funeral. We thank prim. dr. sci. med. Colonel Jovo Nikić, head of the Zagreb Military Hospital, dr. Colonel Jovan Bjelica, deputy head of the Zagreb Military Hospital, dr. Ivan Rebrić M. Hospital, the Mihoković family, the Sila family, Mr. Pošutic, Mr. Bakić, Mr. Marušić, Mr. Okiljević, your Picek.

Thanks once again.

The crash of a Croatian plane got only a small news article. A death notice revealed the victim's identity and his rank (July 9, 1992):

Deeply grieved we announce a sad news that

ANTUN RADOŠ

Colonel-pilot

tragically died on June 24,1992 at the age of forty-two.

Many were killed while dismantling land mines left by the Yugoslav Army. Such an accident happened in the very center of Zagreb (November 30,1991):

Shaken by the tragic fate and premature death of our colleague, friend, teacher, we announce that

VLADO ŠTIMAC

graduated mining engineer and assistant professor

gave over his life for us and for our Homeland in the very heart of the white city of Zagreb on November 28,1991, while clearing a mine field around the Military Hospital in Vlaška Street.

The bright figure of our dear Vlado shall remain in our permanent memory as a victim of this senseless and cruel war.

His colleagues, friends and students of the Faculty of Mining, Geology and Oil mining, Zagreb University

That same day the late engineer's family published a separate death notice, saying that the deceased *tragically died*. These days no newspaper brought any news about this really tragic incident in the center of Zagreb; it became public much later.

¹⁴ Army post code.

Everyday wartime life in Zagreb

The worst wartime days for Zagreb came in the autumn of 1991. Air raid alarms, sometimes several a day, were very frequent throughout September, October and November, although only the Upper Town, where the government's and parliament's buildings are situated, was bombarded by planes. Dangerous attacks on the population came from the Yugoslav People's Army (YPA) barracks, situated in several different locations in Zagreb. The YPA housed in these barracks targeted nearby tenement blocks. For example, several flats in the neighbouring blocks were affected by artillery fire and some were gutted from the notorious "Marshall Tito" barracks in Travno, a part of Zagreb.

Newspaper death notices testified to civilian casualties of the war and of constant fleeing to underground shelters. For instance, on October 15, 1991 a death notice mourns an old lady who

tragically completed her this-worldly life on October 10, 1991 at the age of eighty-one from a severe head injury sustained in a fall down the stairs in a shelter during an enemy attack...

The mourning family asks contributions should be given to war victims charities instead of decorating the deceased's bier.

In a letter of thanks related to the death of grad. eng. agr. V.I., published on October 18, 1991, the wife and the family express their

... immeasurable gratitude to those who have come to the funeral in this dramatic occasion and have decorated Vlado's burial place with numerous wreaths and flowers. We thank also the many who could not make it to the cemetery because of the perilous circumstances...

An in memoriam for P.B., deceased four years previously (November 27, 1987 - November 27, 1991), was put in the contemporary war situation:

In the hard war days of the suffering Croatia, the memory of you is the only paradise out of which no one can ban us.

Peoples mentality during the war

Limited in substance by their nature as paid newspapers advertisements, death notices tend to be brief and informative and to stick to certain conventions. However, the mourners give vent to their feelings in death notices, final salutations and in memoriam related to combatants, especially in those published after a month, after several months or particularly a year after the death. These feelings are expressed through various stylistic

methods, and are situated at the edge between the spoken and the written literature. Contained in the notices sometimes are well or ill-written verse for these occasions, as well verse by Croatian and foreign poets and pop song lyrics. Occasionally, longer poems appear in death notices, as in the case of a final salutation to *son, brother and brother in law RADE TEOFILOVIĆ*¹⁵, a 29 year-old Croatian guardsman, published on November 12, 1991, which contained thirty-odd verses of a poem written by the Russian poet Konstantin Simonov titled "Wait for me".

The deceased are not only remembered by their families or friends, but are for instance mourned by their teammates. On November 20, 1991 the members of a diving club from Čakovec send their final salutation to their friend Macan

who has sacrificed the most valuable thing one can possess - his life - for the freedom of the Republic of Croatia.

Immense grief gripped the hearts of your teammates with whom you lived through wonderful moments in the blue silence and struggled for the club's survival.

This last and hardest battle of yours, the one for your life, was unfortunately lost forever. What we are left with is an empty space in our ranks which is hardest to bear and for which we know that it can never be filled again.

The words we address to you are too small for your great deeds. We can only promise you that we shall pursue your noble duty to your memory and our honor.

Extraordinary circumstances of death make individuals and their families to stand out. Certain killed combatants were evidently very popular in their environs. Although killed as mere soldiers, policemen or guardsmen, these individuals received a great number of death notices and final salutations. On April 6, 1992 thirteen final salutations were published for TOMISLAV SUKOBLJEVIĆ:

FINAL SALUTATION
to my beloved and most tender daddy
TOMISLAV SUKOBLJEVIĆ

Daddy, you left and I didn't even get to know you.
Daddy, you left cherishing and caring for me
for only fifty-five days.
But, daddy, you are me and I'm spit and image of you
And that's my beloved daddy - us.

Your only little daughter Tea (five and a half months old)

The same person, *the only and never forgotten husband*, was addressed by his wife with the following verse:

¹⁵Considering the name evidently a Serbian!

Behind my eyes... in the heat of the day
under the touch of the darkness
I shall be looking for you
You, now denied to me and taken away
Somewhere...
Far away from me, and yet so close
Realizing the hopelessness
My hands will be drenched in tears
I'll wish for a scream
And prepare my throat for despair
But only silence will remain
And a terrible urge for life
Because of her... you know
Rest peacefully in eternity!

One of the thirteen final salutations discovers information about the deceased: he was a guardsman, born on May 23,1967, killed on December 13,1991, but his death was reliably verified only at the beginning of April 1992:

Immensely sad, after three and a half month of inexpressible anxiety and suffering, I had to face the cruel truth that my dear, kind and tender nephew

TOMISLAV SUKOBLJEVIĆ

is no longer alive.

Dear Tommy, on December 5,1991 the last you told me when we were parting was: "Auntie, I leave without fear, because I know that as long as you're alive, my two girls are safe with you."

"The day of one's death is the day of birth of eternity and the day of the supreme judgement which will pronounce its verdict for everyone."

(Seneca)

My precious gold, rest in peace.

Heroes are recognized as such in their environs. On October 23,1991 twenty-three final salutations were published for a single person, a killed soldier MARIO BABIĆ. The young man was, as can be discerned from one of the salutations, born in 1967, killed on October 19,1991 at the age of twenty-four. The salutations are addressed as follows to: *the killed defender of the Croatian homeland..., to beloved Croatian combatant..., to the killed on October 19,1991 on the Pokupsko frontline..., to the killed in Jamnička Kiselica by the bloodied hand of the Serbo-Chetnik bandits..., to the only beloved..., dearest grandson..., dear cousin..., to the martyred by a Chetnik hand..., to Croatian soldier..., to dear friend and brother in arms...*

The final salutation signed by his girlfriend is entirely intimate. The girl speaks as though he were still alive:

You left saying to me: "My lass, take care, don't be afraid for me, let Mario chase those villains out and we'll fulfill our dreams."

Thank you for all love and care you've given me.

I swear to you, my love, that where you have stopped I will proceed, what you couldn't do I'll accomplish.¹⁶

Your "lassie" Josipa

In memoriam for the same deceased person appeared after only a month, on November 23, 1991, and an avalanche of sentiments was renewed on the anniversary of his death. A month after his death his family mourned and expressed gratitude:

Having laid your young life at the altar of your Croatian homeland you left a deep pain in our hearts, but also the pride for being our Croatian knight who shall never be forgotten.

We thank all the relatives, friends and acquaintances who have helped us to escort our son to his eternal resting-place with dignity and honour. We especially thank the parish priest Franjo Jurak from the parish of the Blessed Mark of Križevci, the priests of All Saints parish in Sesvete, the friars of Rama and Rama¹⁷ community in Zagreb.

On January 13, 1992 eight final salutations were published for BRANKO FARKAŠ; seven of them barely mention the fact that the deceased was a combatant, while three salutations carry only identification of the families who address the deceased:

Everything passes, dreams and hopes
Like the dreamy blossoms of spring
But love for my brother
Shall never, never stop

(I.N.S.)

Let the Croatian soil be light on him!

Your sister Nada

We all build our dreams
And follow our stars
But cruel fate, my uncle,
Wrote the last of your lines.
Let the Croatian soil be light on you!

Your Robert

¹⁶ An adaptation of verse from the poem "Svetli grobovi" by Serbian poet Zmaj Jovan Jovanović (1833-1904).

¹⁷ Rama is a small region in Herzegovina, evidently the native place of the deceased's family.

It's over. Not ever again will eyes
Observe the loving fields
And with winged leaves never again will
Poplars murmur above me.
Rest in God's peace!

Saddened by a sudden separation, all your friends from 211 Ilica Street

There'll be everything but friends
There'll be everything but happiness
There'll be everything, let the tears roll down
...when friends part...

Biba, Mima, Ivica and Toni Anić, the 'Kika' Café

Dialogues with the deceased appear very often, as well as the motif of waiting for their return (April 22,1992):

Two months have passed since the death of our son, brother, father who died at the age of twenty nine

IVICA BRZANAC - BRZI
Croatian Army officer
February 16,1992 - April 16,1992

Dear son Ivica, time cannot alleviate the pain and grief for you. We're waiting for your return, but you're not coming to say with a smile "mom, here I am". You always used to say "Don't be afraid mom, I'm watching you all". Tell us how we can live when we remember that you are no more. Only a mother and a father know how is it to mourn a beloved son.

Let our thoughts, memories and love for you always be with you in the silence of the eternal darkness.

On the anniversary of the fall of Vukovar, a grandmother mourns her grandson in traditional decasyllabic lines (November 19,1992):

IN MEMORIAM
of my dear
ZVONKOTVOREK
from Vukovar

't is a year that passed
since they killed our dearest one
Chetniks, damned be your hand
for killing my beloved grandson
no one knows where your grave might be
cause you fought for your country to be free.
They have killed you my dear, my good child
and orphaned your two poor kids,
your Lidija and your Deja,
two roses left to grow unaided.
They have slain our blessed hero
his old granny is now filled with sorrow.

Only exceptionally do the death notices contain such curses. They rather deal in a indirect or direct manner with the subject of sacrifice.

The war in Croatia in 1991/92 and in Bosnia and Herzegovina 1992 took the lives of many young soldiers, as well as the lives of middle aged and senior citizens - civilians. Children were orphaned, people were left without their aged parents and without opportunities to help them, sometimes even to bury them. Death notices did not commemorate all war victims. However, newspaper death notices remain a lasting evidence of the wartime life and mentality in Croatia in the nineties. This mentality is characterized by national feeling and the sacrifice for Croatian cause on the one hand and by the personal tragedies caused by enormous losses which have halved families, affected the relatives, friends and acquaintances of the deceased on the other. War is the feeling of horror which cannot be avoided. Individuals that get killed are not some distant unknown people but our closest relatives, friends, neighbours and dear persons.

During this research I was particularly moved by the death of Ante Livajić from Poljice, near Imotski. Leafing thorough *Večernji list* my son Borko came across Mr Livajić's photo published in a death notice and remembered the face he had seen when attending the deceased's identification in Vinkovci while working as a guide for the European Community monitors. That way Ante Livajić's death entered my seemingly tranquil Zagreb home...

* * *

Ethnological bibliography contains several researches and essays on contemporary newspaper death notices (see footnote 2). Neither I nor other researchers have ever quoted full names of the deceased in these essays, just the initials.

In this essay I have deviated from that convention. Fully aware that most of the casualties of war remain anonymous for the history, I felt the urge to pay my personal tribute to the killed, be they mere victims, ordinary soldiers, militant nationalists or celebrated heroes.

This is closely connected to an academic question: what the attitude of an ethnologist towards a war that happens to him personally should be? When mentioning his contemporaries by name the ethnologist assumes greater responsibility and expresses his own reverence towards the victims and their families, and towards their way of thinking and feeling. But there is another problem: perceiving that an ethnological interpretation in a way constructs the described event, even produces history, should the ethnolo-

gist abstain from writing what is currently going on and about individual contemporary people?

Writing about the war at this time I am deprived of the necessary historical distance and my conclusions are thus limited. But there is an inner, personal motive for writing this piece. One feels an urge to get involved whatever knowledge and capabilities he or she has. That is where researcher's risk lies.

War, regardless to what extent it affected some of us personally, determined fatefully all our existences. At this moment all of us are going through difficult times. Can an ethnological interpretation of a single wartime life phenomenon help us surpass the difficulties?

I have tried to describe the mentality in this war using a segment of human personal narration which appears in written form - death notices. I did not want the discourse to dwell on people without their names, biographies and identities. Abundant death notices for some individuals enabled me to establish their identity and reconstruct their biography. I strove not to misrepresent anyone in the process.

Anthropological literature on death was useful for writing this essay only in part. Anthropologists and historians speak about death as a contemporary taboo, (Ariès), or even about pornography of death (Gorer), and write about lonely people of today who die lonely (Elias). But the anthropological thought developed in the West lacks even the mere hypothesis of a warrior's, heroic death, a death which *has to be* discussed here, at the fringe of Europe and at the end of the second millennium.

In his masterpiece on the history of death, Philippe Ariès mentions heroic death only when analyzing the sixteen and seventeen century epitaphs (1980:285). He determined the formal elements of epitaphs: the identification, the addressing of passers-by, the rhetorical long-windedness and the participation of the family. They mention the age of the deceased, the glory these have reached by heroic death, but also the injustice of their fate. The sixteen and seventeen century epitaphs "are full of glory of the nobility and the French nation, they are the first individual signs and anticipation of the later memorials to the fallen in wars" (Ariès 1980:287). Could the same be said for the contemporary newspaper death notices in Croatia? (See Roćenović 1992.)

In the mid-eighties of this century Norbert Elias stated that our contemporary civilization negates death. In it violent death is legally forbidden, although "group conflicts multiply for which their participants believe that can be solved only by killing the enemy and by the corresponding sacrifice of people from their own group, and which usually end in collective programmes of action, be it publicly or behind the scenes, as

violent conflicts on life and death" (Elias 1984:78,79). This grim statement by a wise analyst of the European civilization materialized itself in contemporary Croatia and was confirmed through numerous victims. It seems to me that newspaper death notices, particularly the family ones, testify to the fact that Croatia recognized itself as victim once again.

Feđa Šehović, author from Dubrovnik, reflecting on the anniversary of the death of Pavo Urban, a young photographer and his fellow-citizen wrote:

... Recollections free me from the nightmare of doubts and I see sense in the victims (1992:13).

(Translated by PROFIKON)

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"PONOSNI ŠTO SMO TE IMALI, A SADA NEIZMJERNO TUŽNI ŠTO SMO TE IZGUBILI"

KRONIKA RATA U NOVINSKIM OSMRTNICAMA

SAŽETAK

Ratne novinske osmrtnice i sjećanja svojevrsna su kronika rata i svjedoci mentaliteta ljudi u ratu. One utvrđuju identitet poginulih i opisuju okolnosti njihove smrti, a nerijetko nude njihove biografije *in nuce*. Žalosti obitelji pridružuju se institucije i političke stranke. U osmrtnicama se prepleće svakodnevni diskurs o životu, smrti i žrtvi s onim o domovini. Objavljene pismeno i u mediju javnoga priopćavanja, novinske osmrtnice egzistiraju između usmene i pisane komunikacije. Iako su prvenstveno namijenjene obavješćivanju živih, osmrtnice se često obraćaju pokojnicima i govore o preživljavanju obitelji nakon njihova nestanka. Slava se spominje kad je riječ o politički istaknutim osobama. O ostalima se govori kao o žrtvama nepravedenoga rata i žrtvama za Hrvatsku.