

PIECES OF CONTESTED MEMORIES: THE HISTORY OF MONUMENTS IN BANJA LUKA

TRAGOVI OSPORAVANIH SJEĆANJA: POVIJEST SPOMENIKA U BANJOJ LUCI

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In the last century and a half, the city of Banja Luka has passed through the existence of six different states that came and left in dramatic, paradigm altering shifts. The historical breaks which occurred in 1878, 1918, 1941, 1945 and 1990 were manifested as deep discontinuities. In this paper, we present a history of monuments and memorial markers in Banja Luka, with the following aims: to reconstruct the memory politics of states and local actors as they have changed through time; to identify the material remains of mnemonic practices; and, to determine their fates after the states that placed them were removed from the historic arena. This work does not represent a thorough list of each monument or their full typology. Rather, it examines the main memorial markers, with additional focus on those monuments which are deemed important, such as the Monument to the Fallen of Krajina (1961), including their meaning and their subsequent use. While a detailed history of monuments and memorial practices spans from 1880 to 1990, the current, post-socialist era is reviewed in the form of an epilogue, with attention on the dominant mnemonic paradigm.

KEYWORDS: Banja Luka; monuments; memorials; Spomenik palim Krajišnicima; Antun Augustinčić; history of Bosnia and Herzegovina

U prošlom stoljeću Banja Luka je prošla kroz šest država koje su se izmjenjivale u dramatičnim zaokretima s korjenitim promjenama društvene paradigme. Povijesni prekidi 1878., 1918., 1941., 1945. i 1990. godine očitovali su se kao duboki diskontinuiteti. U radu se prikazuje povijest spomenika i memorijalnih obilježja u Banjoj Luci te rekonstrukciju memorijskih politika država i lokalnih aktera s njihovim promjenama. Rad prati njihovu sudbinu nakon pada sistema koji su ih postavili. Ovim radom ne daje se cjelovit pregled svih spomenika s punom tipologijom, nego osvrt na glavna obilježja, uz poseban fokus na važnije spomenike, kao što je Spomenik palim Krajišnicima (1961), te na njihovo značenje i potonju uporabu. Dok se detaljnija povijest spomenika proteže na razdoblje od 1880. do 1990. godine, na tekuću, postsocijalističku, eru osvrće se u formi epiloga, s naglaskom na dominantnu mnemotičku paradigmu.

KLJUČNE RIJEČI: Banja Luka; spomenici; memorijali; Spomenik palim Krajišnicima; Antun Augustinčić; povijest Bosne i Hercegovine

INTRODUCTION AND METHODS

There is vast literature surveying, discussing and theorizing monuments and memorial practices in (former) Yugoslavia, but due to visible distinctions between monument building and memorial practices in different socio-political contexts, few studies have been produced that look at monuments across the divides on a longer timeline. And rightfully so, as the monuments of Yugoslav state socialism, in their complexities, evolution, and sheer numbers – as more than thirty thousand were built (Horvatinčić & Žerovc, 2023) – demand detailed studies. For a noteworthy example of a study of practices and material traces of memory throughout the entire twentieth century, one can turn to Olga Manojlović Pintar's book focused on Serbia within its wider cultural and geopolitical context (Manojlović Pintar, 2014). Unfortunately, there are still no completed comprehensive surveys on the history of memorials in Bosnia and Herzegovina, apart from localized studies (Čusto, 2013), and an ongoing, comprehensive research of socialist-era monuments, conducted by Andrew Lawler and presented through an open access database (Spomenici NOB, 2025), followed by a recent article discussing their number (Lawler, 2024).

This paper is an attempt to give a general overview of monuments and memorial spaces in the town of Banja Luka and its immediate surroundings. While this analysis is primarily historiographical in method, with ample considerations of context, it will also include elements of architectural and urbanist nature, as well as an attempt to reconstruct, at least in part, some memorial practices connected with analysed spaces. It will also mention some of the unmaterialized mnemonic projects. Monuments themselves are treated as mnemonic agents that are woven into wider societal narratives, not only in favour of a desired communal self-perception, but also in opposition to perceived historical enemies, both real and symbolic. Finally, and equally important, this research paper is a contribution to a wider project dedicated to 'spatializing sedimentations and erosions of time in urban landscapes,' as explained in the introductory text to this special is-

sue. The concepts of sedimentation and erosion are applied here with concern to spatial markings within urban areas populated by different ethno-religious communities (Hayden & Katić, 2023), including Banja Luka as a given case study. In order to understand the spatial manifestations of interchangeably dominant identities, the joint research uses geo-mapping, where physical changes to urban landscapes carried out through placement of religious sites, monuments and other similar elements, are made visible. For the purpose of this text, 20 selected monuments and memorial objects were mapped, with additional data on their date of creation, as well as of later changes (Support Figure 1 & 2).

Sources used in this research are found in available literature, periodicals and archival records, while the discussion on the most recent memorial directions and practices are based on the author's immediate personal observations. However, the post-1990 era will not be discussed in length or in detail, but as a more general overview in lieu of a conclusion. Through this text, there will be several points of focus, based on the perceived importance of certain memorial spaces, such as the famous monument to the fallen Partisans on the hill Šehitluci (as it was one of the largest monuments built in socialist Yugoslavia), while some important facilities, like the Cathedral of Christ the Savior (originally the Church of the Holy Trinity), will be treated as memorials in their own right. Finally, the author will pose questions (and leave them unanswered) on the possibilities of subliminal elements affecting the choices behind monument building (and management), but also memory practices.

MONUMENTS IN BANJA LUKA (1878–1990)

Contested spaces, competing memories: 1878–1945

The concept of a 'monument' in the form of a three-dimensional object created for the primary purpose of memorializing people and/or historic events, was uncommon in the Ottoman world until the upsurge of western influence through

the Tanzimat period (Üstünipek, 2019). But even afterwards, it would be odd to witness the erection of such creations in the westernmost Ottoman province of Bosnia. Therefore, when discussing Ottoman 'monuments' in Banja Luka, we can only speak of historical remains which had – and may still have – other primary functions beyond memorialization, mostly religious, such as mosques and mausoleums (*türbe*). Nonetheless, most of these objects were in fact built with a memorial function in mind, by those who wielded enough power to be able to have their names preserved for posterity. In that respect, most of Banja Luka's mosques bear the names of notables involved in their construction (Husedžinović, 2005).

The first monument with a primarily memorial function was built by the arriving Austro-Hungarians, and it was, in effect, anti-Ottoman. Following the internationalization of the Serb rebellion against the Ottoman rule in Bosnia and Herzegovina that erupted in 1875, the great powers awarded the Austro-Hungarian Empire the mandate to occupy the provinces. As the Berlin Congress was concluded in the summer of 1878, the Empire's army crossed the river Sava. Their entry was followed by unexpected and fierce resistance from local Muslims. The first to reach Banja Luka were the Slovenes of the Imperial and Royal 17th Regiment in late July, who set up camp on the empty Banja Luka plain, between the town to the south and the railway station to the north. They were relieved by the Imperial and Royal 22nd Littoral Regiment (KuK XXII Küstenlandisches Infanterie Regiment). This Regiment – which was predominantly made up of conscripts from Dalmatia and Istria (Pojić, 2000) – soon had to fight off the Muslim insurgency. The main battle took place on 14 August 1878 and it engulfed the entire township (Andrejka, 1904). The first official records noted that in the fighting around Banja Luka and Ključ, the Regiment had lost 19 men, with another 181 wounded and 37 missing (Oršolić, 2000). Considering all units involved, the Austro-Hungarian losses in the battle for Banja Luka were later set at 54 dead and 117 wounded (Andrejka, 1904). To commemorate the fallen soldiers, the Army

erected a monument on the Banja Luka plain, which was most likely built in 1880 (Bajramović et al., 2019). The choice of location was not accidental. As the place of the military encampment and the battle itself, it was soon turned into an area specifically designated for military purposes, where the new 'Vrba Camp' army base was built. The monument in a certain way has marked the upcoming era of new spatial regulation. Until that time, Banja Luka grew as an Ottoman town along the banks of the river Vrbas, between the mouths of Suturlija to the south and Crkvena to the north. While the original core formed on the left bank of Vrbas around the southern Grab Hill above the Suturlija – the likely location of the late medieval fortification (Husedžinović, 2005) – the 'golden age' development in the era of Ferhad-paša Soloković (Sokollu Ferhat Paşa) created the new town centre within Vrbas-Crkvena junction zone around the fortress Kastel. In later centuries, the Christian minority settled on the left banks of the river Crkvena and laid the foundations of Varoš, the community of mostly Serb and Jewish tradesmen, which straddled along the main road. Throughout the four decades of Austro-Hungarian rule, the town continued its development down this longitudinal line that was separated from Vrbas in the northward direction. Besides military premises, the new administrators had built most of the amenities and infrastructure in this area, including the railway station, the tobacco factory, the steam mill, hospitals, schools, hotels, Christian places of worship and many villas of the new upper class, placed along the new, wide and landscaped alleys. While the original Ottoman Čaršija boasted the old Kastel (now occupied by the Imperial Army), many mosques and the main marketplace, it slowly stagnated in comparison to the new edifices of European architecture on the other side of Crkvena, where the city centre had been shifted (Ševo, 1996).

Although Austro-Hungary had recognizably transformed Banja Luka from an Ottoman township to the seat of the county, doubling its population to 17 thousand, it had left very little memorial markers. The Military Monument (Militär Monument), as it was featured prominently on many postcards and photographs,

erected in the new Rudolf–Weiler Park and surrounded by military installations, was therefore the biggest and the most important one. It was built as an obelisk composed of tuff blocks, stacked within a symmetrical octagon foundation with four inwardly curved surfaces. With 28 cemented layers above the three-level pedestal, it reaches the height of 7.22 metres. Its top is 40 centimetres wide. The stone plaque, now lost, bore the inscription: ‘In memory of those who fell in this victorious battle on 14 August 1878, loyal to their duty. Dedicated by the comrades in arms of the XXXVI Infantry Division.’ Apart from this monument, the Army also erected another, smaller obelisk, about two meters tall, which can be seen on a preserved postcard. Its original location and later destiny remain unknown, as no distinct surrounding markers can be seen in available images (Bajramović et al., 2019). We can speculate that the probable locations might have been those connected to the Army: in or around Kastel, the military hospital (today the Mladen Stojanović Park), or the ‘Small Camp’ near the tobacco factory. In contrast to the Militär Monument which stands to this day, it was either removed by the Yugoslav Royal Army, or perhaps destroyed in the Allied bombings of 1944.

In the course of the World War I, another monument was placed in the city centre in the small park in front of the main train station (Stadt Bahnhof), facing the main street called Carski drum (Kaiserstraße). It was called ‘Vitez u željezu’ (Wehrmann im Eisen – the steel knight), and it was a wooden statue of a medieval soldier that was meant to be covered in steel nails. The concept was applied throughout the Empire. Wooden knights were placed on pedestals in many cities, starting with Vienna on 6 March 1915. Nails would be sold by designated vendors to the citizens and then hammered into the wood, while the proceeds would be used for the war effort. Eventually, the knights would be enveloped in iron nail armour. Banja Luka’s ‘Wehrmann’ was placed on a stone pedestal beneath a canopy shaped like a classic revival tent (Bajramović et al., 2019). With lateral staircases on each side, the entire structure was at least five meters tall. The wooden statue stood at around two meters. In

early August 1915, general Schnitzler announced that this monument would ‘represent the heartfelt love, deep attachment and unrelenting faith’ in the emperor Franz Joseph. The authorities organized events and school groups that would gather around the statue and buy the nails. According to one contemporary, just before the official visit of the military governor Stjepan Sarkotić, the sparsely nailed statue was briefly taken down for the additional nails to be inserted. The governor indeed remained clueless, but the citizens noticed the sudden and awkward appearance of the knight’s stocky shell (Milošević, 2019). *Vitez u željezu* was one of the symbolic victims of 1918. The Austro–Hungarian power in Bosnia and Herzegovina and in Banja Luka itself had crumbled by late October. As the ripened chestnuts – whose trees remain a prominent appearance all around the town’s alleys – were baked in the open stoves of the street vendors, the ‘Wehrmann’ was taken down, chopped up and used for firewood (Vukliš, 2019). The stone canopy remained standing empty for at least a decade, until it was finally taken down. The street it had faced took the name of King Peter (of Serbia), symbolically confirming the major political change. In 1918 Bosnia and Herzegovina was integrated into the newly established Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (the Kingdom of Yugoslavia from 1929), under the Serbian dynasty Karađorđević, namely, king Peter and regent Alexander, popularly and ceremonially dubbed as ‘the Liberator’ and ‘the Unifier’. As of May 1919, other streets in Banja Luka were also ridden of their Austrian designation. For example: the Elisabethgasse became Ulica Ferhadija (after the most significant mosque), Ulica princa Albrehta took the name of Regent Alexander, while Željeznički drum was named after Nikola Pašić (Ravlić, 2002), the most prominent Serbian politician and leader of the dominant People’s Radical Party. However, apart from the political and respective symbolic changes, the 1920s would see very little change in terms of administrative and legal frameworks. Until 1929, Banja Luka remained the seat of one of the six counties in Bosnia and Herzegovina, among the total of 33 in the entire country. More importantly, its demographic and economic growth was

slow. By 1931 it was home to some 22 thousand residents, making it smaller than, for example, medium-size towns like Maribor, Sombor, Veliki Bečkerek, Knin, and even Drniš. Despite its important place in recent history and in current politics, its lesser economic power translated into relatively modest monumental production, dependent primarily on the help of higher, national powers and the elites. In addition, the town was ethnically mixed: the three major groups were not far from equal in numbers, with a slight relative majority of Muslims in the urban centre. In effect, the city would have a Muslim mayor, while the district and county-level powers would reflect the Serb-majority surroundings (Stošić & Radmanović, 2019), but also the heavy hand of the Belgrade regime. Thus, monumental production would also be dependent on the ethno-political context.

Nonetheless, Banja Luka built several memorial markers related to the most recent history. The most prominent monument built in the interwar period was the statue of Petar Kočić, arguably the most important personality of the Austro-Hungarian era. Kočić was born in 1877 in the village of Stričići on the mountain Manjača south of Banja Luka. He became the most prolific writer from Bosanska Krajina, a historical region between the rivers of Una and Vrbas. Apart from writing stories, poems and plays with inherently meditative, lyrical, naturalist, humourist and socio-psychological character (Maksimović, 2005), Kočić shifted from teaching to active politics. He took part in the 1906 general strike, wrote petitions for freedom of the press, established opposition journals and worked wholeheartedly for the interests of the peasants, who were still burdened by the unfulfilled promise of the agrarian reform. Finally, he was elected to the Bosnian Parliament in 1910, which he used as a platform against the Empire. After many arrests and personal tragedies, he died in 1916 in an asylum in Belgrade, where he was also buried (Kruševac, 1951).

More than a decade later, in 1929, a group of Kočić's friends and associates established the association 'Zmijanje' Association, named after the writer's native microregion. 'Zmijanje' had three goals: to build the monument dedicated to Petar

Kočić, to move his remains from Belgrade to Banja Luka, and to establish a trust fund for helping students from poor families. The president of the association was Vaso Glušac, the writer's friend and godfather to his late son, now a prominent politician. Other members of the steering board were Serb teachers, priests and political activists, mostly connected to the opposition parties (like the Independent Democratic Party of Svetozar Pribićević), with one Muslim among them. Nevertheless, the combined popularity of Kočić and the clout Glušac himself possessed brought ample resources for the cause. Among many benefactors, all levels of power would contribute, from king Alexander himself and the national government, down to the county, the city, large business enterprises and the banks. Funding campaign also attracted prominent international names of politics, science and culture, from Tamas Masaryk to Mihailo Pupin (Pejašinović, 2003; Ravlić, 2002). The attraction of Kočić as a socially engaged author and activist also brought contributions from distinctive and comparable personalities such as Branislav Nušić, Josip Smolaka and Vladimir Nator. However, the involvement of politically diverse people would cause concern among the authorities that the opposition parties might take advantage of events planned by 'Zmijanje' (Pejašinović, 2003; Pejašinović, 2022).

'Zmijanje' eventually failed to attain the support of Milka Kočić, the widow, who at first had supported the aim to rebury her late husband at the Orthodox cemetery of St. Pantelija in Banja Luka. She withdrew her support, citing as a reason the alleged wish of Kočić to be buried within Banja Luka's orthodox church courtyard. Apparently, the orthodox bishop refused to grant this wish, which does not come as a great surprise, given the somewhat ambiguous relationship between Kočić and the Serb high priesthood, whom he at times criticized as opportunistic. She also claimed that her husband would have never wanted a monument for himself, for a 'dead stone' is of no use to his poor compatriots (Pejašinović, 2003; Pejašinović, 2022). Still, the road to erecting the monument was wide open, and in fortunate circumstances, the allotted location would have turned out to be quite appropriate.

The changing local context created favourable conditions for the project. In 1929, as king Alexander dismissed the Parliament and established his personal dictatorship, the administration was reorganized into nine counties with expanded territories and jurisdiction. Banja Luka was ascended to the seat of the County of Vrbas, which, to its great fortune, ushered in a cycle of extensive public investment. The count Svetislav Milosavljević secured funding for many new edifices, including administrative, residential, educational and cultural buildings, while the city itself underwent urban and infrastructural intervention. By 1941 it grew to some 28 thousand residents (Pejašinić, 2023; Stošić & Radmanović, 2019; Vukliš, 2019). In the city centre, a new park was arranged in the place of an old Muslim cemetery, and the city granted a spot within the park as the location of the planned monument.

The public competition for the design of the monument in 1932 resulted in 12 applications. The jury, composed of two painters, two architects and the representatives of 'Zmijanje', selected the proposal named 'The Tribune'. Behind the aptly named design there were two Croatian

sculptors based in Zagreb: Antun Augustinčić and Ivan Vanja Radauš. Curiously enough, both of them were somewhat young, left-leaning artists, who studied under the guidance of famous Ivan Meštrović. He was the author of some of the most important monuments in the country, and he had already refused the offer to cast the monument himself (Pejašinić, 2022). Augustinčić, born in Klanjec in 1900, was also a member of the pro-Marxist, socially-oriented and avant-garde artist collective 'Zemlja' (Earth), which, after several internationally successful exhibitions, was banned by the authorities in 1935 (Zidić et al., 1971). Nonetheless, Augustinčić established himself as an author whose realist expression also catered to the needs of the current powers. Before Kočić, he sculpted *Spomenik palim Šumadinima* (Monument to the Fallen of Šumadija) in Kragujevac in 1928 and *Spomenik palim Nišlija* (Monument to the Fallen of Niš) in 1930. After Kočić, he was hired to create other public monuments, including the *Spomenik kralju Aleksandru na Sušaku* (Monument to King Alexander in Sušak), one year after his assassination in 1934 (Manojlović Pintar, 2014; Pintarić, 1988).



FIGURE 1 Statue of Petar Kočić: (a) the members of the committee for the building of the monument in 1932, and (b) the statue featured on a postcard from the 1970s

Source: Archives of the Republic of Srpska

The design was accepted with an additional intervention from the painter Spiridon Bocarić, an associate of Kočić, who represented the jury during the final shaping of the sculpture's head. The casting produced a two and a half meters tall bronze sculpture, representing, in fashion of vivid realism, Petar Kočić leaning forward, with his right hand extended in motion, while his left hand is holding a book. The statue was placed on a pedestal composed of two stone foundations (12 and 29 centimetres tall, 280 and 220 centimetres wide) and one square pillar (3,2 meters tall, 80 centimetres wide) (Fig. 1). The pillar bears two Cyrillic inscriptions: his name with years of birth and death, and the famous lines from the 1903 play *Jazavac pred sudom* (Badger on Trial): 'The one who honestly and passionately loves Truth, Freedom and Fatherland, is free and fearless like a God, but scorned and hungry like a dog.' The unveiling on 6 November 1932 was a grand event. With the support of the authorities, the town hosted a multitude of guests, albeit not of the highest national order. Naturally, a mass of people from Kočić's hometown came down to the city centre. The ceremony started with the church service, followed by choirs, military orchestra and a procession. Before thousands of attendees, at least three dozen speakers addressed the crowds. Later in the day, the new Vrbas County Theatre prepared one of his plays, which was followed by a banquet (Pejašinović, 2002; Ravlić, 2002).

Another memorial marker also commemorated the struggle against Austro-Hungary. To be more exact, it memorialized its direct victims. In 1915–1916 the County Court in Banja Luka conducted the so-called High Treason Trials, one of several show-trials organized by the imperial regime in the wake of the Sarajevo Assassination and the war campaign against Serbia and Montenegro. The indictment named 156 notable Serb citizens and accused them of conspiring to overthrow the Empire. With the confirmation of 87 imprisonment and 16 death sentences, the Serbian government in exile initiated an international amnesty campaign through the neutral countries. The Holy See, the United States and Spain, among others, pleaded with the authorities in Vienna to spare the lives of the 16 men.

With mounting pressure and unfavourable turns on all fronts, emperor Charles V commuted the sentences to imprisonment (Tomašević, 2011). However, five men died in the county prison. Their death was commemorated soon after the establishment of the new state. In 1921, the Herengasse (today the main promenade) was named after the Spanish king Alfonso XIII, to honour his leading role in the amnesty campaign (Arhiv Jugoslavije, 1923).

The creation of a common ossuary with a monument for the deceased was initiated by the Women's Section of the Yugoslav FIDAC (*Fédération Interalliée Des Anciens Combattants*) in 1933. The initiative was helped by the association 'Zmijanje' and the local Narodna odbrana (National Defence), as four out of five of the deceased in prison were themselves members of Narodna odbrana, at that time a clandestine pro-Serbian organization. The survivors of the Habsburg repression – including Branko Zagorac, one of the co-accused in the Sarajevo assassination trials and later a communist sympathizer – were involved with the activities from the start. They themselves financed the reburial. With the five victims of the county prison, the new ossuary placed in the Orthodox Cemetery also received the remains of another two who died elsewhere. The design and masonry work on the monument chiselled out of a stone block from Bihać was entrusted to Austrian born Bruno Diamant, the cousin of Bonaventura Diamant, the head of the Trappist monastery in Banja Luka, where Bruno headed the artworks. This unusual, five metre tall column was popularly dubbed 'Krstača,' for its resemblance and markings of the cross, but it is also reminiscent of a totem combined of Christian and folklore elements (Fig. 2). The inspiration could have come from similar (but slightly smaller) tombstones from the microregion Zmijanje. The monument bears the names of those buried, the years of the trials (1915–1916), the year it was erected (1933), and an added plaque on the ossuary itself, with the last words of Dragoljub Kesić, who expressed his love for Serbia. The monument was unveiled on 10 September 1933, and in the upcoming years it became a common place for commemorations (Pejašinović, 2022; Ravlić, 2002).



FIGURE 2 *Monument to the Victims of High Treason Trials (1933)*

Source: Photographed by the author, 2018

Other memorial practices related to the most recent history were usually connected to the date of 21 November 1918, when the Serbian Army first entered Banja Luka, and 1 December, the day of the unification and the creation of the new kingdom. The festive commemorations took place throughout this period, especially for the jubilees. Some citizens were also involved in initiatives for placement of monuments elsewhere, for example, of the French–Yugoslav friendship in Belgrade (Mikić, 2004). And just after Branko Zagorac lamented over the lack of monument to Gavrilo Princip, whom he deemed to be slowly falling into oblivion (Zagorac, 2024), a local chapter of the association ‘Krajišnik’ was established. Its aim was to build a memorial home in Princip’s native Grahovo, and to have it completed in 1939 (Damjanović, 2014). However, other, more ambitious plans for Banja Luka itself remained unfulfilled. Narodna odbrana, together with the Association of Chetniks, Serb-oriented

paramilitary organization, started in 1936 the joint initiative to find and rebury in a common ossuary the remains of all fallen soldiers who were born in Bosanska Krajina and then joined the Serbian army. While this initiative was supported by the County of Vrbas, it was cut short by the 1941 occupation (Pejašinić, 2022). Finally, the Muslim community also managed to install a small memorial marker of its own, which commemorated – in a visual contrast to the destitute Austro–Hungarian Military Monument – a Muslim victim of the 1878 battle for Banja Luka. In this way, it inserted its own mnemonic element into the government-sponsored anti–Habsburg narrative. A small concrete obelisk was erected near the main transit road. The short text explains: ‘In memory of Arifaga Šarčević, shot down by an Austrian rifle in 1878, erected by the City of Banja Luka in 1937’ (Fig. 3). A nearby street, which connects the transit road to the Petrićevac Franciscan monastery, was also named after him.



FIGURE 3 *Memorial to Arifaga Šarčević (1937)*

Source: Photographed by the author, 2024

According to a narrative source, Šarčević was an old Muslim citizen who was taken out of the line of prisoners, had his beard torn off and then shot point blank by four Habsburg soldiers (Džafić, 1927; Ravlić, 2002).

The placement of monuments paralleled the ongoing process of spatial recomposition. Rapid Christianization of local architecture was already underway in Austro-Hungary. Until that time, Christian religious buildings could only be found on the far outskirts, in Petrićevac, Delibašino Selo (two convents, Franciscan and Trappist) and Rebrovac (an Orthodox church). The placement of new sacral objects inside the new city core north of Crkvena, came about through the 1880s. The Catholic Bishop's Church was built on the plot north of the new Military Command (today's Archives) (Ravlić, 2002), while the Serb Orthodox Church of the Descent of Holy Spirit was built on the opposite side, near the future theatre building. At least a century earlier, the Orthodox

Serbs had built a small church in Rebrovac, but it was destroyed by the Ottoman loyalists during the uprising in 1876, alongside another sacral building which resided somewhere within the Christian township. Its precise location is unknown, but it was likely built after an Orthodox seminary was established by Vaso Pelagić in 1866 (Bijelić, 1933a; Ravlić, 2022; Teinović, 2021a). As early as 1912 the local Orthodox sacral authorities, which rose to the level of Metropolitanate in 1900, concluded that the Church of the Descent was in poor shape and that the new one should be erected. The Construction Committee was established in 1922 and two years later it acquired the project of the famous Serbian architect Dušan Živanović, known for other Orthodox churches built in the 'Serbo-Byzantine' style (Andrić, 2022). As the old church was taken down, the construction of the new Church of Holy Trinity commenced in 1925 on an empty plot of land bought from the Muslim Waqf,

between the hotels of 'Bosna' and 'Balkan'. The Church itself was an impressive and expensive stone and marble edifice. The construction was finished in 1929, while the last work on the interior was completed a decade later (Davidović, 1991; Latinović, 2006; Ravlić, 2002).

Current historiography underlines how the Church of Holy Trinity was supposed to be dedicated at the location where a dozen of Serb rebels from one of the earliest anti-Ottoman uprisings in Bosnia – which erupted in the first decade of the XIX century north of Banja Luka, following Karađorđe's rebellion – were executed after being defeated and captured. In such a manner, the Church of Holy Trinity was ascribed with a certain memorial character (Pejašinić, 2023; Šućur, 2016). However, not all sources agree on the location of the martyrdom. Stojan Bijelić wrote that the captured rebels from the Mašići uprising of 1806 were executed farther to the north, near the location where the old church was later built, and he gives no mention of similar events regarding the new location (Bijelić, 1933b, 1933c). In 1809, following the Jančić uprising, a larger group was also executed in Banja Luka, but this apparently happened near the Fortress (Teinović, 2021b). We can hypothesize that the dilemmas over the location of the new church may have caused later confusion regarding the historical location associated with the quelling of the uprising. In fact, even later historiography was not entirely clear on the events themselves and the time they transpired (Ekmečić, 2008; Hrabak, 2004; Latinović, 2006).

Curiously enough, the location for the new Church of Holy Trinity became a point of contention on two occasions. The first instance came in 1925, when several Muslim members of the Serb National Youth (*Srpska nacionalna omladina* – SRNAO) who were involved with the local initiative to erect a monument to late king Peter, argued that the plot intended for the church may have been more appropriate for a mounted bronze monument. The Waqf found itself with a dilemma and, apparently, spiked the price of land. The issue caused some commotion in the City Council, but the Orthodox Municipality quickly managed to secure additional funds by

selling some of its property and secured the plot (Ravlić, 2002). The tumult was immediately followed with the founding of the local association for building a monument to King Peter. Associations such as these sprang up across the country after Peter's death in 1921, with requests for granting the building of monuments dedicated to 'King Peter I the Liberator'. Over the years, several statues were erected, alongside many busts (Manojlović Pintar, 2014). Banja Luka would not, however, install the imagined mounted bronze statue. Instead, from 1929 it followed a more utilitarian approach. With the help of count Milosavljević, the Association decided to raise funds to build a memorial building with an educational and cultural purpose. The Home of King Peter was constructed from August 1933 to October 1934, south of the Military Command. Apart from a memorial room dedicated to the king – whose bronze bust ordained the entrance hall – the edifice was home to the two county institutions: the Theatre and the Museum (Pejašinić, 2022; Pejašinić, 2023). We may wonder whether Ivan Meštrović followed the example of Banja Luka when in late 1933 he unified two initiatives, to build a new Croatian arts venue and to erect a monument to king Peter in Zagreb, which resulted in the creation of the Meštrović Pavilion, a utilitarian memorial to the king which primarily served as an arts institution (Kraševac et al., 2022).

The second instance of contention regarding the location of the church came about *post festum*, not necessarily because of the church itself, which was already built, but because of what was being built around it. In 1930 count Milosavljević initiated the construction of two major edifices, the twin buildings of the County Administration and the County Chambers, which were completed in late 1932. For this purpose, the County bought the land from the Orthodox Municipality and demolished the old Hotel 'Balkan', despite several protesters who asserted its historical significance as the venue of opposition against Austro-Hungary. While the money certainly helped the Serb clergy to finish their grand project, the Church of Holy Trinity itself now stood exactly between the twin administrative edifices, which

were facing each other through its courtyard (Pejašinović, 2023) (Fig. 4). The added centrality of the religious building became a political issue. The inscribed 'Serbo-Byzantine' style of what now became an architectural centrepiece, could have likely reinforced the notion of an imposed cultural matrix. By the same token, the resulting central urban axis (County-Church-Chambers) could have easily been read in terms of Belgrade's hegemonic tendencies (Ignjatović, 2007). During the official visit by government ministers, count Milosavljević was confronted by the minister Nikola Preka, who had previously turned away from the Croatian opposition and joined the regime. Nonetheless, Preka fashioned himself as a concerned voice on behalf of the Croats, and after alleged consultations with Jozo Garić, the Catholic bishop in Banja Luka, he exclaimed: 'The Croats of this region consider the construction of the County Administration and County Chambers around the Orthodox church to be an act of provocation' (Milosavljević, 1996).

Needless to say, minister Preka did not voice concerns of all Croats, but the tectonic change that occurred in April 1941 brought to power a clique that transmuted these concerns into ominous threats and violent policy. As the Kingdom

of Yugoslavia crumbled under the Axis invasion, Banja Luka became a part of the Independent State of Croatia (*Nezavisna Država Hrvatska* – NDH), a puppet state under the fascist organization of the Croatian Ustasha. The head of the regime in Krajina and Banja Luka was Viktor Gutić, a local lawyer, who mustered up a group of like-minded individuals and established a reign of terror directed primarily against the Serbs and the Jews. As the Serb denomination was banned, traces of Yugoslavism and the Karadorđević dynasty were erased from public spaces. Street names were changed, display of Cyrillic alphabet was prohibited and undesirable signs were taken down. Central monuments suffered the same fate. The statue of Petar Kočić was torn down from its pedestal by metal lines attached to a truck. As the engine roared to collapse the unrelenting structure, one of the bystanders yelled out: 'Hold on, Petar!' An Ustasha fired a gun into the air and the crowd dispersed (Ravlić, 2002). 'Krstača' survived, likely due to its rather inconspicuous location in the Orthodox Cemetery. Two-headed eagles were obliterated and replaced with white-to-red chessboard coat of arms. Royal busts, such as the one dedicated to the assassinated King Alexander, cast in 1935 by



FIGURE 4 *Left to right: County Administration, the Orthodox Church of Holy Trinity, and County Chambers, photo from the late 1930s*

Source: Archives of the Republic of Srpska

a female sculptor Iva Despić and placed in front of the state-owned Tobacco Factory (Kastratović Ristić et al., 2024; M. B. 1935), were taken down by the new authorities.

Finally, the Church of Holy Trinity was demolished. The fact that it was already struck by German bombs served as a pretext to have it removed as a safety hazard. A regime-friendly construction company, helped by forced labour of local Jews and Serbs, took down the whole structure (Ravlić, 2002). It came as no surprise. Many of the Serb priests were already expelled and some, like Bishop Platon, were executed. In late July 1941, addressing the crowds, Gutić professed his desires: 'Couple of months ago we had standing before our eyes that one building, the house of spite [*prkos kuća*], a monument to *Svetosavlje* and Serbianism. Many thanks to the German *stuka* that struck it. What they have started, I have finished. There may be no more *stukas* here to drop bombs, so I gave the order to do the same with all other great-Serb monuments in our province, as we did here. We're going to clear them all out.' Gutić planned to use the open space between the occupied administrative twin buildings to create a park with a grand statue of Ante Starčević, appropriated by the Ustasha as *pater patriae*. The competition call was published in August 1941. There were also additional plans to bring in urban planners from Zagreb, to reshape and expand the urban space, to construct a grand Catholic cathedral and to change the city's name to Antinograd (for both Ante Starčević and Ante Pavelić), with an idea to turn it into the future capital of the Independent State of Croatia (NDH) (Stošić & Vukliš, 2017).

But none of these plans came to fruition. First, the local Muslim elites resisted further Croatization of public space. Second, the massive armed resistance by the persecuted Serbs, which erupted throughout Krajina in the summer of 1941, disrupted the possibilities for any major public project. Third, the resistance against NDH and the Axis was quickly and by large taken over by the Communist Party of Yugoslavia (*Komunistička partija Jugoslavije* – KPJ). The effective partisan warfare not only circled around Banja Luka throughout most of the war, but it also turned

it into a hotbed of underground resistance. After two major battles in the city itself and several Allied bombing raids in 1944, Banja Luka had hundreds of its buildings and much of its infrastructure heavily damaged or destroyed (Lukač, 1968).

Coming together through stone and concrete: 1945–1990

Banja Luka was liberated on 22 April 1945. The level of devastation was unparalleled, and the new authorities had to overcome immense challenges in order to make the city liveable and functional. While the late 1940s were marked by rebuilding, the next decade ushered in a period of steady growth. The 1950s brought new, state-owned industrial, manufacturing and commercial enterprises, infrastructure, electrification, public and private housing, schools etc. Growth, expansion and development continued in the next three decades. By the 1969 earthquake the city grew to 75 thousand inhabitants, and before 1990 the urban area itself expanded to 140 thousand residents (Vukliš, 2019). But even before any of these processes were jump-started, the erasure of all markings of the occupation had already happened. The streets named after Ante Pavelić, Adolf Hitler, Osman Kulenović and other Ustasha and conservative Catholic personalities were renamed after Tito, Stalin (shortly), Marx, many communist Partisan commanders native to Banja Luka and to Krajina, both living (Osman Karabegović, Slavko Rodić) and martyred (Kasim Hadžić, Mladen Stojanović, Josip Mažar etc.), but also historical personalities from the area whose biographies were easily appropriated into the new teleological trajectory, such as Vaso Pelagić and Petar Kočić (ARSBL, 1945).

Already in July 1945, the statue of Petar Kočić was ceremoniously brought back to its original place. As a large piece of valuable metal, but also as a piece of unwanted memory, it miraculously survived the war. In 1941, the City's servicemen had stashed it in a warehouse next to the firefighter's building. Three years later, the order came out to ship it off to Zagreb, but the clerk in the district who received the memo, knew Kočić

from the 1906 general strike. He did not act on it, and as the Allied bombs started to fall, the statue was forgotten. A year later it was found under the warehouse wreckage, in nearly excellent shape, with minor damage on the statue's hand, inflicted by the rope which had dragged it down (Ravlić, 2002). With his second return in bronze form, Kočić also had his second cultural rebirth. In the following decades, the new authorities named the new library in his honour, initiated a fair in his native Stričići, bought his manuscripts and published his works.

The bells taken from the Church of Holy Trinity also survived the war, but there was no more belltower to put them back. The clear area where it used to stand retained the new function of the central square between the two central administrative edifices. The already contested space was now additionally burdened by the ambivalent position of the Serbian Orthodox Church (*Srpska pravoslavna crkva* – SPC), as all other traditional religious congregations, under Yugoslav state-socialism. Although the Orthodox clergy were subjected to fierce Ustasha repression, and, furthermore, some of its members took part in the People's Liberation War (*Narodnoslobodilački rat* – NOR) under the lead of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia (KPJ) (Štrbac, 1960), the clear separation between organized religion and the state relegated the Church to a less prominent position in society. This was necessarily translated into spatial regulation, which affected the choices regarding the former churchyard. Of course, practical concerns were also involved. First, there must have been some political apprehension over the possible remarking of the city's central space with the edifice of one ethno-religious community, even if the opposite meant retaining the consequences of previous genocidal actions. Second, in 1945 the Church of Holy Trinity, despite its monumentality, was still regarded as a fairly new building. Third, and precisely because of its monumentality, we may speculate that there must have been doubts regarding real possibilities of authentic reconstruction.

Some narrative sources say that there was interest expressed by the Orthodox clergy to rebuild the church and that the money would come from

the expat community in North America (Ravlić, 2002). Records of the time show that in 1945 the local SPC tried to stop the local government from usurping the area and appealed to the Republic. Next year it asked for a permit to place a marble cross that would mark the events of 1941. The local authorities managed to find enough support among local Serbs to enforce a counter-proposal: instead of a cross, there would be an ossuary with a monument to the fallen Partisans. The SPC continued with their appeals, but by 10 July 1946, blocks of tufa excavated from Vrbas riverbed were already on site. The authorities unofficially stated their *mea culpa* and then offered monetary compensation for the land, which the clerical administration finally accepted. The monument, but without an ossuary, was unveiled on 27 July 1946, the date that marks the uprising in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1941 (Šućur, 2016; Ravlić, 2002). The apparent resolution of this dispute was followed by a period of further deterioration of the SPC's position in Banja Luka, marked by the campaign against the Orthodox bishop Vasilije (and the Catholic bishop Čelik). By 1961, the general relationship between the church and state improved, and Vasilije's place was taken by bishop Andrej, who relinquished the request to reclaim the churchyard, which was finally nationalized in 1963. The new Church of Holy Trinity was built on a plot next to the Orthodox Diocese (Davidović, 1991; Šućur, 2016).

The structure which was quickly built on the former churchyard was named *Spomenik palim borcima* (Monument to the Fallen Partisans). It was composed of 22 stacked layers of stone blocks on top of two layers of stone foundations. At the top, measured at nearly five meters from the ground, there was a white marble pentagram with a hammer and sickle. A white marble plaque placed at a visible level was inscribed with a thirteen-word sentence in three lines – one in Cyrillic script, second in Latin, third again in Cyrillic – stating: 'Glory to the fighters fallen for the freedom of the fatherland, for brotherhood and a better life of our peoples' (Fig. 5). Given the context of its creation, the temporariness of this monument, or, more correctly, its insufficiency, must have been apparent to those who were in-

volved with its fast placement. Its modest style and composition resembled monuments that in the upcoming years could be found in the countryside, but not in cities with a significant role in NOR. Nonetheless, the monument and the square around it would continually be used for commemorations, most notably, on the 22 April (Liberation of Banja Luka), 4 July (Call to Arms Day) and 27 July (Day of the Uprising in Bosnia and Herzegovina), when wraths would be laid.

In general terms, the 1950s would see increased criticism regarding the proliferation of monuments to NOR, which were of poor artistic quality and were not placed in relation to urbanist plans (Manojlović Pintar, 2014). Banja Luka itself did not adopt an urbanist program until 1967 (Vukliš, 2019), so the production of monuments was channelled between the historicity of spaces and the material possibilities of its demarcation. The position of Banja Luka in the history of the workers' movement and NOR was quite prominent. Despite its illegality, KPJ in Banja Luka was always active and it commanded certain influence among the working class. In the 1930s it controlled the legal unions, it had its hand in the establishment of a football club ('Borac' in 1926), a folklore society ('Pelagić' in 1927) and an academic discussion circle ('KAB' in 1934), and it worked through the local chapters of various civil associations ('Ženski pokret',

'Seljačko kolo' etc.). The local communists, at least fifty of them, were crucial in the establishment of the Partisan command structures in Krajina in 1941. Its underground organization, quite active throughout the occupation, even managed to organize the seizure of two enemy airplanes in 1942. Banja Luka municipality in its current borders (as of 1962) had lost at least 950 men as Partisan combatants (ninth out of 107 municipalities in the Socialist Republic Bosnia and Herzegovina). While Bosanska Krajina as a region carried the immense burden of the Yugoslav Revolution, with a dominant position of Krajina's Serbs (92% in the region, 47% in Bosnia and Herzegovina) (Cvetković, 2009), Banja Luka was able to boast its multi-ethnic contribution, interpreted as the continued historical presence of KPJ. Out of at least 330 men from the city itself, Serbs and non-Serbs shared equal parts among the fallen combatants.

Through agency of local and district chapters of KPJ, the workers' unions, factory councils, and, most importantly, the Association of the Veterans of NOR (Savez udruženja boraca – SUBNOR), Banja Luka's communist and Partisan past, both real and imagined, was marked through many memorial traces. By the end of the 1950s, in the town itself there were six new monuments, three busts and 17 memorial plaques. All six monuments – mostly modest in form and



FIGURE 5 *Monument to the Fallen Partisans (1946), photographed in the 1960s*

Source: Archives of Republika Srpska

style – were dedicated to fallen groups or individuals, including four that mark the graves or places of death (one to a woman, a communist associate Zdrava Korda killed by the Ustasha). Three busts that were placed around the city centre marked the lives of Veselin Masleša (in 1951, cast by Ante Kosović), the best known communist from Banja Luka, Vaso Pelagić (in 1957), previously mentioned as the XIX century Orthodox Seminary administrator who turned to socialism, Rudi Čajavec (in 1959), the pilot who stole one of the airplanes in 1942, while the bust of Josip Šoša Mažar, the famous ethnically Croat Partisan commander, who died in 1944, was commissioned (cast in 1957 by the famous Marijan Kocković) and placed later. On top of that, the names of socialist, communist and Partisan personalities were given to two enterprises (the new electronics production factory ‘Rudi Čajavec’ and a construction company named after a pre-war construction worker and union activist Pavao Radan), 14 schools, three folklore societies, two women’s associations and three student dormitories. Out of 17 plaques, nine were dedicated to events and personalities of the interwar workers’ movement, three to individuals fallen in the war, four as collective and other markings related to the war, and one for the post-war reconstruction (ARSBL, 1960; Spomenici NOB, 2025). In other words, the city was completely remarked in line with the dominant narratives, and, *vice versa*, the changes in the public arena further strengthened dominant narratives and effectively *spatialized* its ideology.

Of course, all of these markings retained a secondary character in contrast with an already planned memorial mega-project, whose implementation lasted over a decade. The details remain unknown, but sometime before 1948 an idea arose to create a central monument to the fallen Partisans of Bosanska Krajina. The burden that Krajina carried was apparent already throughout the war. Post-war counting only confirmed the impressions: with 28% of the pre-war population of Bosnia and Herzegovina, almost 19 thousand fallen Partisans were from Bosanska Krajina, or 51% from the entire republic (Cvetković, 2009). The location for a future

monument, on the top of the hill Šehitluci, at 431 meters ASL, was also chosen for historical reasons, with additional reasons of visual and popular convenience. Banja Luka itself is situated at an elevation between 150 and 160 meters ASL, on a plain where Vrbas canyon opens up into a valley towards the north. Šehitluci, standing above Vrbas on its right side, is a part of the small mountain Ponir, which peaks at 743 meters ASL and flanks the town from its southern side. The toponym derives its name from the word *šehid* – martyr. According to a folktale, the two Muslims were beheaded during the battle beneath. They picked up their heads and ascended the hill. People erected the two *türbe* at the spot where they eventually collapsed (Hangi, 1904). The top of the hill is visible from the main street as it passes through the city. One of its lower glades was, and still is, a popular picnic area. More importantly, apart from its dominating position, the locality unmistakably bears historical significance in relation to NOR. In the spring of 1941, KPJ had one of its men infiltrate a forestry ranger’s position, so they could easily use the ranger’s cabin that was situated around this location at the time. It was convenient because it was surrounded by a dense forest, but it was not too far from the town itself, so it could be used as one of the entry and exit points. On 8 June 1941 at that spot, KPJ’s County Committee, headed by Đuro Pucar Stari, held its seminal meeting where details and assignments of the future Partisan military organization in Bosanska Krajina were decided upon and set in motion. Fifteen people attended this meeting and they were assigned various military and political tasks throughout Krajina. Ponir mountain would also be used as the encampment by the first Partisan unit that was formed by Banja Luka’s communists (Beganović, 1981). Thus, the locality was regarded with major esteem, as the place where the most important decisions were taken before the uprising itself.

In 1953 Banja Luka’s Socialist Alliance (formerly the Popular Front) (Socijalistički savez radnog naroda – SSRN) organized over four thousand locals into work brigades to build a 4500-metre-long motor road to the summit of Šehitluci. It was then made public that Antun

Augustinčić – the same sculptor who created the 1932 Kočić statue – has already conceptualized an ossuary for the fallen Partisans, with a monument 13–15 meters tall, that would be finished by the end of the year, with the funds collected all over the Krajina (Č. Đ., 1953). Of course, it was an overly ambitious claim, which may have been an error committed by the journalist. Indeed, it would take years before some of these plans come to fruition, and the following deadline that was publicly set was 1957 (Midžić, 1954). The original idea was allegedly conceived during the war by Augustinčić himself, who had promised the people of Krajina that he would create a monument in their honour. Augustinčić soon found himself among the pre-war, left-leaning cohort of artists chosen by the new authorities to work on the new, revolutionary monuments (Žerovc, 2023).

As an acclaimed artist who resided in Zagreb in the first years of the occupation, Augustinčić applied for a competition with a concept for the monument to Ante Starčević (which was not built). He was then commissioned by Ante Pavelić – apparently without much room for refusal – to create his bust, which was presented in an international exhibition in Bratislava in 1943. However, in September that same year he joined the Partisans, and in November, during the Second Session of AVNOJ (*Antifašističko vijeće narodnog oslobođenja Jugoslavije* - Anti-Fascist Council for the National Liberation of Yugoslavia) – to which he was co-opted as a delegate and a presiding member – he worked on the portrait of Josip Broz Tito. This was the basis for the famous figure of the Partisan leader in uniform, cast in bronze in 1947 and placed in his native Kumrovec the following year (Vujčić, 2017; Manojlović Pintar, 2014; Zdunić, 1977). During 1944–1945 Augustinčić perfected his craft in the Soviet Union, where he adapted his technique to the dominant style of socialist realism. The style affected his ongoing production, which was at that time in tune with the cultural policy of the Yugoslav communists. In 1947 Augustinčić authored the massive 35 metre tall monument composed of an obelisk with bronze sculptures placed in Batinska Skela, to commemorate the location

where the Red Army had crossed the Danube and entered Baranja in 1944 (Šimat Banov, 1984). This monument was a continuation of the ‘classic triumvirate: full plastique, relief, [and] architecture’ which he had already applied in the monument *Spomenik palim Šumadincima*, and it was then reapplied in *Spomenik palim Krajišnicima* (Kolešnik, 1992).

In 1948 Augustinčić created the first, conceptual version of Šehitluci monument model plaster sculpture. As it became widely known in 1954, the model represented the future mausoleum, 25 metres long and 13 metres tall, which will be, in the words of Augustinčić himself, ‘the most grandiose monument in the country’. The journalist who visited the artist in his atelier was impressed by the resemblance of the sculpture to the massive rocks standing over the canyon of Vrbas. The two 20-metre-long sides were to be sculpted in stone to tell the history of the Bosanska Krajina throughout the ages, while the central shape of a nude male figure standing over the entrance and flying a flag represents ‘the Party – the organizer and the leader of the uprising’. The artist imagined a marble door with chiselled faces of ‘narodni heroji’ (people’s heroes) – a special status granted to individuals who demonstrated wartime courage and leadership – which led inside of the mausoleum. The internal walls would be covered with frescoes, while the black marble floor would be topped with a white marble sarcophagus standing on two horse and two lamb heads. Underneath, there would be the remains of the ‘fallen heroes’. The symbolism of the object, as interpreted by Augustinčić, refers to the caves used by the fleeing people of Krajina, and later the Partisans. The three-wall frescoes, as he then envisioned, would be painted by Krsto Hegedušić, Ismet Mujezinović and, curiously, Moša Pijade, who at that time had already stopped painting and was fully involved with politics (Midžić, 1954).

Who decided give the commission for Šehitluci monument to Augustinčić remains a mystery. From the early stages it was clear that this grandiose idea could not be materialized on the local, or even interdistrict level. But it was neither adopted into the national (federal) program established in 1952 to commemorate the central, Yugoslav

places of interest, such as Neterva, Sutjeska, Jajce and Drvar (Arhiv Bosne i Hercegovine, 1959a; Manojlović Pintar, 2014). Thus, the People's Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina took over the project. In February 1953 the main board of SUBNOR (Association of Fighters of the National Liberation War) of Bosnia and Herzegovina established the committee for the construction of *Spomenik palim Krajišnicima*. It was composed of 16 members, headed by Đuro Pucar Stari himself, who at the time was the president of the People's Assembly of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Other 15 members were all high ranking veterans, most of them from Bosanska Krajina, including the famous writer-veteran Branko Ćopić (Arhiv Bosne i Hercegovine, 1957). Three people were named as financial officers: Momir Kapor, Milorad Popović and Vojin Mitrov. According to a later recapitulation, the financial gains from 1953 to 1963 were amassed to some 269 million dinar. The sources of income came from various directions, but the two largest annual contributions were placed in 1960 and 1961 by the Council for Science and Culture of Bosnia and Herzegovina (a ministry-type body), amounting to 125 million dinar, or 46% of the entire income structure, with additional 65 million from other republic-level agencies through 1956–1958, which is another 24% of the funds. In other words, the Republic itself financed over 70% of the project (Arhiv Bosne i Hercegovine, 1963a).

Augustinčić visited Banja Luka in April 1954 and met the interested parties. The meeting confirmed the possibility that the monument would be built in three years, and that the marble for the monument – granting it passed necessary testing – would be excavated from the area around the nearby town of Čelinac (T. 1954). In 1956 the neighbourhood Gornji Šeher, right underneath Šehitluci, would be reconceptualized as a special ambiance area with Ottoman-era remains and new touristic infrastructure connected to both the envisioned monument and its natural resources, the thermal springs. In the upcoming years a new motel and a tourist restaurant would be built. However, the project was permeated with prolongations, technical difficulties and conceptual challenges. By 1957 Augustinčić fin-

ished the final plaster model, and the deadline was extended to November of the following year (P. 1957). Judging by available records, around that time it was decided that the stone to be used for the envelopment of the structure and for the masonry works and reliefs would be brought from the island of Brač. It is a striking white marble of special visual qualities, and it had been used in the monument in Batinska Skela (Horvatinčić, 2017). In 1959, while Grga Antunac, the main sculptor on the project, was in Brač working on the reliefs which would be placed on the two sides of the monument, the final deadline was set for July 1961, the twentieth anniversary of the uprising (Arhiv Bosne i Hercegovine, 1959b). The access roads and the monument's structure were built throughout 1960 and early 1961. Out of 266 million gross spent by the end of 1962, 44 million was paid for the placement of the concrete structure to the local construction company 'Krajina', 56 million for construction of the asphalt road, and 79 million to 'Jadrnkamen', the company from Split that supplied the stone from Brač. Out of 48 million allocated for the artisan labour, Augustinčić himself was paid 26 million, while Grga Antunac, the head of the masonry team, received 18 million (Arhiv Bosne i Hercegovine, 1963a).

As the project was entering its investment phase, it was clear that its original conceptual outline would be difficult to materialize. At the 5 November 1959 meeting of the Committee, the main question arose regarding the internal arrangement and, more importantly, utilization of the monument. The idea to create a mausoleum was phased out. Several members of the Committee, including Đuro Pucar, Rade Bašić and Velimir Stojnić, voiced their concerns over the idea of a massive ossuary for all of Krajina's Partisans. Bašić stated that there should be a clear decision, because the ongoing story about a central mausoleum is stifling all activities throughout the region regarding maintenance and building of Partisan cemeteries and ossuaries. Additionally, the members of the Committee were also against the separation of remains of the 'people's heroes' from their native areas and their transfer to the future monument. Such a move, it was said,

would cause discomfort in the local communities of Krajina. While the Committee definitely rejected the concept of an ossuary, the question remained regarding the internal composition of the monument (Arhiv Bosne i Hercegovine, 1959c).

As the deadline approached, there would be no progress on the conceptual front. Four months before the grand opening, while the entire structure was finally coming together, the question regarding the functional elements of the monument remained unresolved, which was clearly stated at the 11 March 1961 meeting of the Committee. As the concept of a mausoleum was relinquished, Augustinčić still suggested that there should be an internal centrepiece in the form of a tombstone, resembling the medieval *stećak*. After seeing the space first-hand, Pucar stated that 'if no one is buried there, the monument will lose some of its value,' but he offered no definitive solution as to who should be buried there (Arhiv Bosne i Hercegovine, 1961a). Several months after the opening, Augustinčić proposed an idea to create a copper-sheet book with names of the fallen Partisans that would be on display (Arhiv Bosne i Hercegovine, 1962), but that was never material-

ized, either. The only original element that clearly remained in the plans were the historical frescoes, with one name from the original proposal, that of Ismet Mujezinović. He and his three associates were commissioned in February 1961 to sketch out the images for a vast surface measured at 30 meters in width and 4,5 meters in height and to transpose them onto the internal walls of the monument (Arhiv Bosne i Hercegovine, 1961b). However, the ongoing construction work delayed the internal artistic interventions, so the fresco work itself was postponed.

In any case, the structure and the stone elements were properly placed in time for the opening. The early photos of the monument present a clear white marble edifice that stands out in striking contrast with its natural surroundings (Fig. 6). The original concept for the stonework was turned into an elongated, two-sided relief that tells the story from the ordeal of occupation and mass executions to resistance and liberation, with a central male nude figure flying a flag over the entrance. In terms of affectual strategy, the monument's reliefs were 'temporally sequenced, compartmental representations of characteristic wartime episodes,'

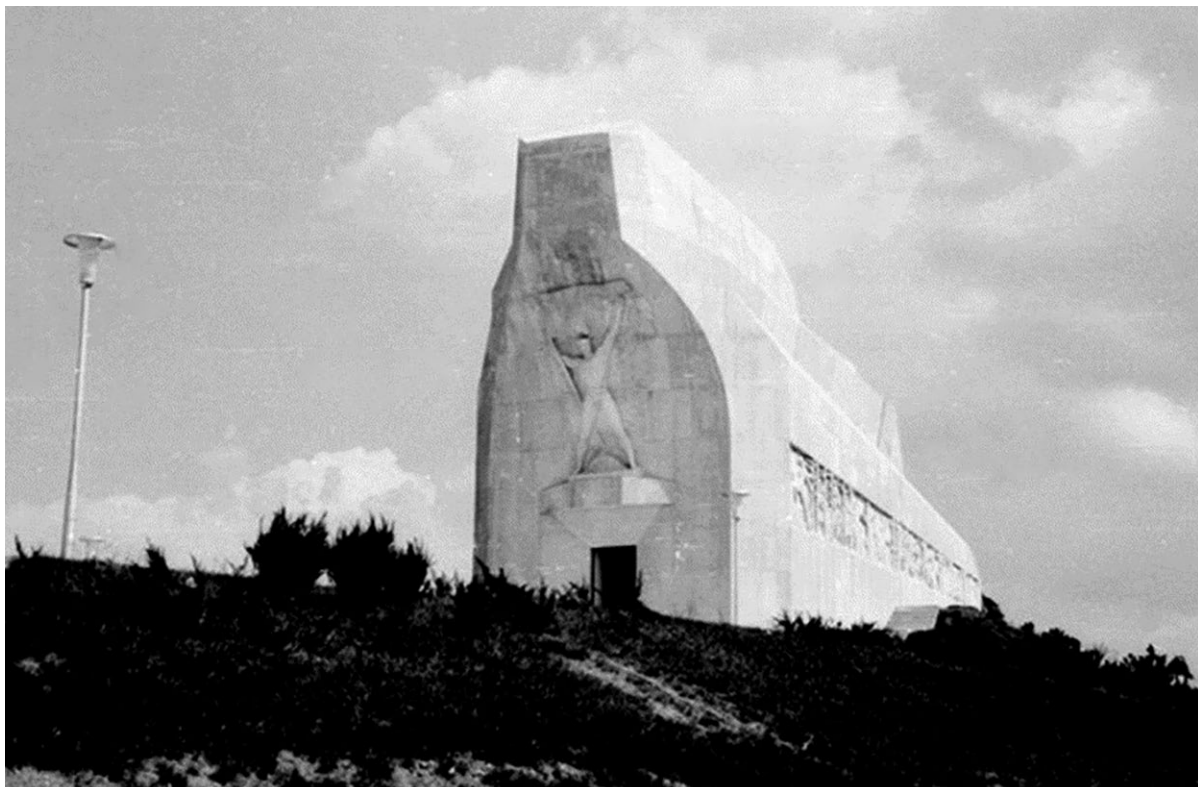


FIGURE 6 *Spomenik palim Krajišnicima*, 1961

Source: Archives of the Republic of Srpska

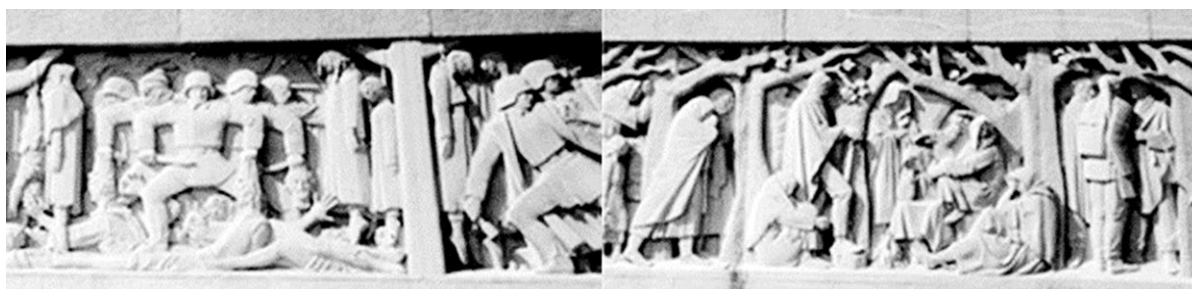


FIGURE 7 Reliefs on *Spomenik palim Krajišnicima*, 1961

Source: Archives of the Republic of Srpska

where literal images ‘merged with symbolic and allegoric elements’ (Horvatinčić, 2023a) (Fig. 7). The grand opening was scheduled for 27 July 1961. It was presented and organized as the central event for the entire People’s Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina, to mark the twentieth anniversary of the 1941 uprising. The event had massive attendance, as it is clearly visible from numerous reports, photos and film reels. Đuro Pucar was the highest-ranking member of government who took part in the event, alongside political figures such as Rodoljub Čolaković and Vicko Krstulović. The town itself used the ceremony to perform some landscaping and infrastructural intervention. On 26 July, the new part of the Museum of Bosanska Krajina dedicated to the war and revolution was opened in Kastel.

The first public impressions were positive (Papić, 1961a). Just before the grand opening, Augustinčić himself called the monument his ‘life’s work’. His first description compared the structure to a bullet being fired towards the mountain peaks of the northwest (T. 1961), which is the primary orientation of the structure. While visiting Banja Luka in 1966, Tito also praised the location and the size of the monument. ‘When the stone gets accustomed to its surroundings,’ he said, ‘it will look even better’ (Beganović et al., 1982). Without a doubt, the dominant position of the monument and its visual presence would eventually grow on the people of Banja Luka and it would become one of the city’s recognizable features. In 1965 the municipal council placed the outlines of the monument, together with the river Vrbas and the fortress Kastel, on the city’s first coat of arms (ARSBL, 1965).

On the other hand, the conspicuous silence of fellow artisans and art historians was some-

what telling. When the project started in the late 1940s, the absence of a wider discussion (and public competitions) and the dominance of socialist realism (infused with old artistic forms) were customary. But as the project slowly progressed, at one point it surpassed the threshold of artistic currency. From the late 1950s, new forms of expression appeared, and they would eventually lead to modernist projects of the new generation of artists such as Dušan Džamonja, Bogdan Bogdanović and Vojin Bakić (Kolešnik, 1992; Manojlović Pintar, 2014). Curiously enough, in early 1961 Dušan Misirača would approach the Council for Culture of Bosnia and Herzegovina on behalf of the republic’s SUBNOR with a draft ordinance that required an open call for all monument projects, because ‘many monuments were built that do not possess any artistic values’ (Arhiv Bosne i Hercegovine, 1961c). We may wonder why SUBNOR’s copy of this letter was archived with the records pertaining to the Šehitluci monument, but it could not have been accidental. The following year, an open call for the new monument on the Kozara Mountain came out, and it eventually resulted in Džamonja’s 1971 modernist masterpiece, arguably one of the most successful Yugoslav monuments.

Despite horticultural intervention around the monument in Šehitluci by the landscaping architect Dragutin Kiš (Arhiv Bosne i Hercegovine, 1961d), in 1966 art critic and urban theorist Eugen Franković briefly referred to the monument’s ‘imposition on the landscape,’ such that it ‘causes a conflict with its surroundings’ (Franković, 1966). Similar critique was repeated (Šimat Banov, 1984), so it should come as no great surprise that subsequent work on spatial arrangement also aimed to immerse the structure into

a wider framework, both natural and memorial, or, in other words, to turn it into a 'geographical monument complex' (*geo-spomenik*), which the more recent monuments represented (Tanović, 2023). In 1975, following the adoption of urbanist plans after the 1969 earthquake, the Municipality of Banja Luka formally defined the monument complex area and in 1980 it was placed within a wider 'Bratstvo i jedinstvo' ('Brotherhood and Unity') memorial park on the hill Šehitluci, covering some 60 acres (Ožegović, 2022). Another initiative, which was stopped by the events of the 1990s, envisioned Šehitluci as one of the key points of a historically infused route that would lead to the imagined memorial zone on the mountain Čemernica, some 50 km to the south, which was the locality of the Partisan hospital in 1942 (ARSBL, 1986). The idea resembled other memorial zones – dedicated, but not limited to Partisan hospitals, such as in Drežnica, Kalnica and Franja – an evolving concept 'aimed at establishing a network of significant checkpoints and trails' with an added value of economic and environmental sustainability (Horvatinčić, 2023b). In a similar vein, the protection of the natural area of Šehitluci and its frequent use for leisure and recreation (such as the first of May picnic) attracted visitors, as it does to this day.

Needless to say, the monument itself, despite its flaws, remained an important point for mnemonic practices until the 1990s. Laying of wreaths and holding history lectures on the steps under the monument were common occurrences. We might wonder whether the choice to keep the actual human remains out of the equation had an effect on the commemorative approaches. The original concept proposed by Augustinčić, which combined an elongated building with its apse facing southeast, frescoes depicting a solemn storyline and a tombstone in its choir, indubitably resembled a church; a secular church, but a church nonetheless. Instead, its implicit reconceptualization may have broken its possible 'correspondence with the monuments of Christian sepulchral architecture' and derivative practices resembling 'religious melancholy and depression,' a general trend that was criticized in one reflexive analysis from the late 1960s (Karge, 2023). Instead, the monument on Šehitluci, while

only symbolically commemorating the fallen, spatially marks the historical kernel of resistance and evokes optimism. In more practical terms – aside from conceptual and artistic concerns – the structural problems were apparent early on. The stone door was never placed on the entrance, but a white wooden door. The ventilation was insufficient, so the internal walls were visibly damaged by moisture even before the end of 1962. This necessarily postponed the commissioned painting of the walls, as well as other proposed elements, such as the tombstone and the metal-plated book (Arhiv Bosne i Hercegovine, 1963b). Several years later, as the internal use of the monument still remained an open question, the first damages to the external stone surfaces appeared (Šimat Banov, 1984; Savić, 2013). It was only the beginning of an ordeal that pointed to the apparent incompatibility of the Brač marble with the local atmosphere and its amplitudes. Ten years after the grand opening, the press declared that the 'monument is dying of shame.' Asked about its decay, Augustinčić blamed the inability of the investors to acquire another type of granite, or to ensure the quality and proper treatment of the one taken from the quarries in Brač, since other objects built from this material, including the memorial in Batinska Skela, withstood the test of time (Beganović et al., 1971). Some years later, Augustinčić claimed that the choice of the stone, in fact, was not his, but of the 'influential individuals' involved with the project, and repeated his earlier statement that he would have preferred the well-known stone from the Jablanica area (Marić, 1987), which was used by Meštrović for the Monument to the Unknown Hero in Avala.

Well advised was a warning issued in 1958 by the president of the Executive Council of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Osman Karabegović, himself a member of the committee for the construction of the monument. The warning, seconded by expert opinion, which came with the approval of the 162 million in investment funds, stated that during the implementation it should be 'taken into account that the stone should only come from those quarries in Brač whose product is adaptable to low temperatures' (Arhiv Bosne i Hercegovine, 1958). It soon became clear that this



FIGURE 8 *Partisan cemetery in Banja Luka (1963) today: the (a) metal and concrete sculpture at the entrance and (b) the triple obelisk with an ossuary*

Source: Photographed by the author, 2024

warning may not have been heeded and that the stone was never adjusted to its new surroundings. As the damage progressed, it was followed by several restoration attempts (Komisija za očuvanje nacionalnih spomenika BiH, 2013). In a popular picture book *Spomenici revolucije* from 1978, the monument from Banja Luka appears, as the first in alphabetical order, covered in scaffolding, with added words: 'In reconstruction'. Scaffolding was seen again in 1988 (P. 1988). That same year, with nearly a decade since the death of Augustinčić, and five years after the passing of Mujezinović, the apparent resolution to the problems of humidity led to the application of the painter's design. His son, the artist Ismar Mujezinović, headed the work to transpose the black-and-white drawings on the inside walls of the monument. On 22 April 1988 the indoors were finally open to the public (Ožegović, 2022). But the hopes were short-lived, as the recurrent humidity slowly ate away the paint (Komisija za očuvanje nacionalnih spomenika BiH, 2013).

Problems aside, the definitive refusal to build the monument on Šehitluci as an actual mausoleum had finally released the needed impetus on the local level. Since there would be no joint ossuary, cities and municipalities continued to work on their own. Banja Luka Municipality initiated its project in late 1961 (Papić, 1961b). In fact, a small part of the funding was relocated from budget of the monument on Šehitluci to the new project of a Partisan cemetery (Arhiv Bosne i Hercegovine, 1963a). Finished in 1963, it was based on the design of Irfan Maglajlić, a local architect. Partisan cemetery is situated next

to the newly established city cemetery on the hill Pobrđe, only two kilometres from the town's centre. Within two acres of landscaped environment, its main elements are: an entry-point, metal cut-out sculpture on a concrete block depicting rebellious people turning into partisans (Fig. 8a); 506 small tombstones with marble plaques (bearing names, dates and basic information) for people who were (in most cases) reburied there; and an ossuary with a concrete triple obelisk, which in all likelihood represents the three constituent nations – Serbs, Muslims and Croats (Fig. 8b). Other, smaller memorials and plaques for the fallen were placed in the countryside communities, inside older factories (such as the tobacco factory, 1951) or institutions (Hygiene Institute, 1948).

Another memorial ossuary was built in 1965 in the nearby village of Drakulić, but this time for the 'victims of fascist terror,' which was a formal mark for the category of civilians who were killed by the Axis, the Ustasha or the Chetniks. The monument, also designed by Irfan Maglajlić, was dedicated to Serb civilians who were slaughtered in what is most likely the largest single-day mass murder under NDH. On 7 February 1942 in the villages of Drakulić, Šargovac and Motike, the Ustasha special units killed around two thousand peaceful residents. For these and other crimes, Viktor Gutić was put on trial and executed in 1947, and the first memorial marker that commemorated these events was placed in 1959 near the coal mine pits in nearby Rakovac (AR-SBL, 1960). On the one hand, the first marker was in tune with the general preferences, as the first to be commemorated were members of the

working class killed in the events. The secondary position of civilian victims, especially if they were not killed by the Axis forces proper, was apparent in comparison to commemorative markers for the fallen combatants, even with the evolution of mnemonic practices that joined these two forms of sacrifice. This is also apparent in Drakulić memorial. As it was common for these types of monuments, the original dedication in 1965 did not mention the ethnicity of the victims, but addressed them as ‘patriots killed in the fascist terror’ (Latinović & Ožegović, 2022). The exception to what was otherwise common practice was the memorial marker to the Jewish victims. It was placed in the city cemetery on Pobrđe in 1977, after the reburial of the remains from the old Jewish cemetery, which was at that time removed from its original location (Ožegović, 2022). However, the constrained phrases for the ‘victims of fascist terror’ stood in parallel with general knowledge and understanding of the events, sometimes expressed in publicly available texts, including periodicals and historiography, which is certainly the case with Drakulić massacre.

The era between 1960 and 1990 saw the proliferation of smaller memorial markers, especially bronze busts representing ‘people’s heroes’. Some 35 busts were placed around the city, with half clustered around the fortress Kastel (Spomenici NOB, 2025), which was refurbished into a public park area in the late 1950s (Momčilović, 1957). The author of most of the busts was Ahmet Bešić, a local sculptor. Besides Kastel, other locations for placement and unveiling of the busts were either military installations in urban zones (characteristic of the Yugoslav People’s Army), or buildings (with courtyards) dedicated to and/or named after figures of NOR, including schools, factories and other institutions (Spomenici NOB, 2025). Exception to the trend was Ivan Franjo Jukić, a local XIX century Franciscan intellectual, whose bust was unveiled in 1957, a hundred years after his death (Ravlić, 2002).

At least 30 additional memorial plaques and several smaller markers were also placed in this period. Some commemorated the victims, or marked the events of the war and the locations of importance for the history of the workers’ move-

ment and KPJ. Others pointed to the homes of the families who collectively joined the communist resistance (Mažar, Odić, Kapor, Maglajlić, Delić, Bukić, Podgornik, Kovačević etc.), which was an obvious point of pride for the town, aptly expressed in the streets that took their names (Braće Lastrić, Braće i sestara Kapor etc.). The development of local historiography – crowned with the establishment of the Banja Luka History Institute in 1979 – helped this proliferation of memorial markers. By 1990, the city’s landscape was thoroughly embedded with an elaborate set of mnemonic elements that were interlaced into a common, continuous, imagined past, which culminates in the revolutionary war of 1941–1945 and extends into the socialist future.

EPILOGUE (POST-1990) AND CONCLUSION

Beyond the common past, but for what future?

As socialist Yugoslavia began to collapse in the late 1980s, its shared memory went down with it. In fact, contention over memory and history often predated other manifestations of inter-communal conflict. Banja Luka was no exception, but its specific historical position conditioned a particular relationship towards spatialized memory. Changes that came after the 1990 elections and the switch of power from the League of Communists to the nationalist parties would turn out to be comparably as dramatic as 1878, 1918, 1941 and 1945. But after more than a century of memorial sedimentation and erosion, combined with complex identities that developed through decades of powerful mnemonic practices – both official and vernacular – the new, ongoing, post-1990 era was ushered in by neither a clean and total break nor adapted continuity of memory.

On the one hand, power was taken over by the nationalist and anti-communist Serb Democratic Party (*Srpska demokratska stranka* – SDS). On the other hand, Banja Luka and its wider surroundings were home to an electorate (and military conscripts) who in great part were familially connected to the Partisan past. The events around *Spomenik palim* from 1946 are quite illustrative.

The 1990 initiative to rectify what was perceived as a grave historical injustice and to rebuild the Orthodox church in authentic form and in its original location was followed by a question on what to do with the monument (Ožegović, 2022). Sources close to the events claim that bishop Jefrem was resolute to relocate the monument without any damage. If rumours turned out to be true and the monument were demolished, he would rebuild no church. The new location was found diagonally across the street junction, on an empty plot next to hotel 'Bosna'. However, on 20 December 1991 someone had the stone star taken down prematurely. With quick protests from SUBNOR and what was still the Yugoslav People's Army, it was placed back, so the Army Day on 21 December was marked in that location for the last time. Two days later, the monument was taken down (Ravlić, 2002). It was rebuilt in almost its original composition, minus four rows of stone, facing what would become the Church of Christ the Saviour. The Church was completed in 2009 as an authentic replica of the destroyed cathedral, with a new name, reminiscent of the Moscow Cathedral of Christ the Saviour, which was demolished by the Soviet authorities in 1931 and renovated in the 1990s. With the preserved original pieces of the Church of Holy Trinity on display in the courtyard, the reconstructed facility has now become a memorial in its own right: a memorial to 1941, its own destruction and resurrection. The change was implemented on the symbolic level as well: the new city's coat of arms retained both the fortress Kastel and the river Vrbas, but instead of the monument on Šehitluci, it was adorned with the outlines of the foundations of the original Church of Holy Trinity.

The relationship of Banja Luka – as a community, as a city administration, but also as the administrative centre of Republika Srpska – towards its monumental heritage, especially the socialist one, has always been ambiguous. It was marked by all of the elements of post-socialist memory – forgetting, appropriating and revising – as identified by Marija Đorđević (2023). Needless to say, these elements were at the same time intertwined with new memorial directions. In lieu of a conclusion, we will address the new di-

rections here through an epilogue that, in general terms, offers an overview of memorial practices that mark what is still an essentially open-ended course. First, the relationship of the official authorities and mainstream politics towards the Yugoslav past, socialism and its memory of the World War II is marked by all three aforementioned elements. As argued in the introduction to this issue, the communist identities proved to be less viscous than ethno-religious ones. Nonetheless, the endurance of anti-fascist values and personal connections to the socialist past within the wider community resulted in comparable solidity of sediments of communist memory in a post-socialist society. The combined removal and recomposition of these sediments were filtered through a new interpretative matrix that enabled both their erosion and defragmentation, which was conducted through a conscious reconstitution of historic spatiality. In other words, the public space itself was recomposed in a dominant ethno-religious key, so the fragments of socialist past remained intact inasmuch as they were not in a way of the new ideological and identitarian hegemony. In concurrence with the Antagonistic Tolerance model, we see that the survival of sediments of previously dominant identities depends on their necessary decentering, as the new dominant community asserts and marks its own spatial centrality.

In the first instance, and most importantly, the concept of 'brotherhood and unity' was thoroughly erased from public space. The idea of the common past, after an inter-communal war raging for over three years, was no longer desirable. Most of the Croat and Muslim population left throughout the war. Although the city itself, remote from the frontlines, was not directly inflicted by devastation, in May 1993 all of its mosques were destroyed. While this clandestinely organized incident caused contention and friction within the official structures, the renaming of streets and institutions which had already begun, only intensified in 1994. Out of 467 streets, Croat and Muslim denominations were reduced from 35% to 4% of the total number, while Serb demarcations increased from 29% to 69%. Streets with nominally left-wing and Partisan names de-

creased from 271 to 111, and most of the streets with new names (at least 120) reflected elements of Serb history, from medieval times to the most recent years (Šušnica, 2015). Also, the old toponyms with Muslim roots were formally renamed to (allegedly) Serb names. Šeher became Toplice (or Srpske Toplice), while the Šehitluci were renamed to Banj brdo. In addition to that, the new semi-official line of 'national reconciliation' enabled the introduction, albeit in somewhat modest quantitative terms, of nominally Chetnik names, which were given to five streets.

Communism, although not obliterated from public space (as in some other locations around former Yugoslavia), was reduced, clustered, partially damaged and/or ignored. During the war, SUBNOR reported to the authorities the cases of removal of memorial busts or their physical damage, as well as some damage on the monument on Šehitluci (Kandić, 1995). Probably for this reason, the busts of 'people's heroes,' that had not been lost, were mostly collected and relocated in a semi-circle around *Spomenik palim borcima* in the city centre in the late 1990s (Karačić et al., 2012). Memorial plaques mentioning the workers' movement, KPJ or its personalities mostly remained attached to the walls, but in cases they went missing, they would rarely be returned or remade. For ideological reasons, not only Muslims and Croats, but also some Serb Partisan personalities, if they were deemed inappropriate or could not be effectively appropriated, also went missing from public space. The bust of Vaso Pelagić went missing during the reconstruction of the city's central park in 2006, and it has not been found yet.

Nonetheless, SUBNOR, as it still exists, remains the most important actor in the preservation of memory of NOR. Apart from caring for the few remaining veterans, it still organizes commemorative activities, and it performs this work in an uneasy triangle between its members, the Republic's authorities and the city administration, changed from a right-wing to a formally centre-left local government in 1998 (until the shift to a populist centre-right in 2020 with a big-tent opposition in the city council). Since the early 2000s SUBNOR commissioned the ad-

dition of new busts to the semi-circle, not only of Serb Partisans Drago Karalić, Jovo Bijelić and Milančić Miljević, but also those of Osman Karabegović (Muslim) and Drago Mažar (Croat). It also rebuilt the monument destroyed in the 1990s that marked the location of the death of Esad Midžić and 12 other people. SUBNOR is also the main caretaker of the Partisan cemetery, which it maintains mostly through small financial aid and volunteer work of its members. It is still a primary organizer of the 27 July commemoration on Šehitluci, although it has no financial capacities to maintain the monument which is visibly going through progressive erosion and decay. Calls for renovation and new conservation studies have failed to deliver permanent results (Karačić et al., 2012; Komisija za očuvanje nacionalnih spomenika BiH, 2013). In contrast with Kozara Memorial, it does not testify to vast civilian loss of life, which is why it was not appropriated into the new narrative.

In political terms, the memory of the World War II is being reinterpreted in an ethno-national key. Partisans are reappropriated as a majority, or almost exclusively Serb army that fought against the Ustasha to preserve their own lives and lives of their families. Non-Serbs whose bronze faces are still visible today are treated and interpreted as individual exceptions to an alleged rule. And instead of remembering sacrifice, new practices are oriented towards mourning of the victims. As early as 1991, Drakulić monument was reconstructed. The star was replaced by a cross and the inscription was changed (Latinović & Ožegović, 2022). The Orthodox clergy was introduced to the commemorative process and later, a memorial church was built. In 2007, in front of the building of the National Assembly of Republika Srpska (formerly the Army Hall), the monument dedicated to the victims of the Jasenovac Concentration Camp was erected. This eight-metre-tall metal sculpture, the work of Zoran Banović, represents the 'Poplar of Horror' (Topola užasa), a poplar tree on the Una-Sava confluence that was used for hangings (Dušanić, 2006). The monument, however, is not a common locality for commemorating Jasenovac, which is today in Croatia; the main events are therefore usually or-

ganized in the memorial site Donja Gradina, the part that remained in Republika Srpska.

Second, the mnemonic attention in the contemporary era was refocused around the formative years of Republika Srpska, the 1992–1995 war. Most of the monuments dedicated to the formative years of the Republic have an unmistakably thanatological character, as is the case with the monument to twelve babies ‘Život’, dedicated to the newborns who died due to lack of oxygen during the 1992 blockade. This modest memorial was placed in 2008 in the city centre, not far from where the 1915 steel knight used to stand. In contrast to a relatively small number of civilian victims, the municipality of Banja Luka gave over a thousand combatants who fell as soldiers of the Army of Republika Srpska. The city’s main memorial was built in the Orthodox cemetery, and it is a site used for commemorations. In similarity to smaller memorials of the fallen Partisans, memorials to the combatants of 1991–1995 were also built in institutions, factories and local communities. In rural areas, they were often placed side-by-side or combined into the Partisan memorials. Since Banja Luka is the administrative centre of the Republic, there is an ongoing construction project of the central monument to over 24 thousand fallen soldiers of the previous war. The edifice of 62 concrete pillars caused more questions than the monument on Šehitluci, but in contrast with the former, the discussions were made public. Apart from the symbolic meaning, the issues of its size and choice of location were also brought to the fore.

In a third and final point, beyond the two wars (1941–45, 1992–95), memory politics and memorial practices show lack of direction, conception and planning. With the absence of a general urbanist plan, all memorial decisions could be made by the administrative whim. Such is the case with the new monument to the High Treason Trials of 1915. It was placed in a park at the location where the trials took place, but the monument itself was designed without a process of public competition. At times, local memorial management demonstrates profound ignorance, as was the case with the recent Austrian civil initiative to move the 1878 military monument, now

standing in the way of housing development, when the city administration confused the word ‘obelisk’ (the monument) with ‘Obelix’ (a restaurant in another location). And while the Austrian monument might survive, other international memorial markers placed in the recent era are almost exclusively Russian. Three busts placed in recent years are those of poet Pushkin, czar Nicholas II and – somewhat contradictory – the Red Army general Georgi Zhukov. Since barely 3% of street names have an international character (Šušnica, 2015), the placement of these markers sends unambiguous messages regarding global cultural alignment.

In a symbolic turn to recapture and reclaim its imagined and lost past, the city’s recent and current administrations made moves and inquiries regarding the commissioning and placement of new memorials, mostly in bronze sculptured form, reminiscent of a long-gone era of monumental architecture. For now, two focal points are the 1930s and the Middle Ages. The former is revived in the style of an imagined ‘golden age,’ connected with the image of count Svetislav Milosavljević. His statue was placed in 2004, and it depicts a man overlooking his former County Chambers. There is also talk of an initiative to erect a sculpture of mounted king Peter, which was, as we have already seen, effectively overturned by Milosavljević himself. The latter is the focal point manifested in statues dedicated to medieval rulers. The bronze statue of Stefan Nemanja, the prince of Raška, standing on a large pedestal was unveiled in 2014 on the plateau in front of the Museum of Republika Srpska, not far from the tanks and cannons used in the World War II. The second statue, that of king Tvrtko Kotromanić, was recently unveiled in the new park near the reconstructed Ferhadija mosque, where it stands in contrast to its previous placement in Sarajevo: the ‘king of the Serbs and Bosnia’ versus the ‘Bosnian king’. The third statue, the one of medieval Bosnian count Kulin, was placed in the refurbished park dedicated to books, and Kulin himself is holding his famous 1189 deed for the City of Dubrovnik. Ironically, the socialist-era urbanist plan for this location was to build a public library, drawn up by the famous architect Ivan

Štraus. Needless to say, Yugoslav socialism had its failures, but its memorial and urbanist direction remained forward facing and imbued with optimism. What will be the promise for the future in the seemingly chaotic mnemonic practices of today's Banja Luka, remains to be understood.

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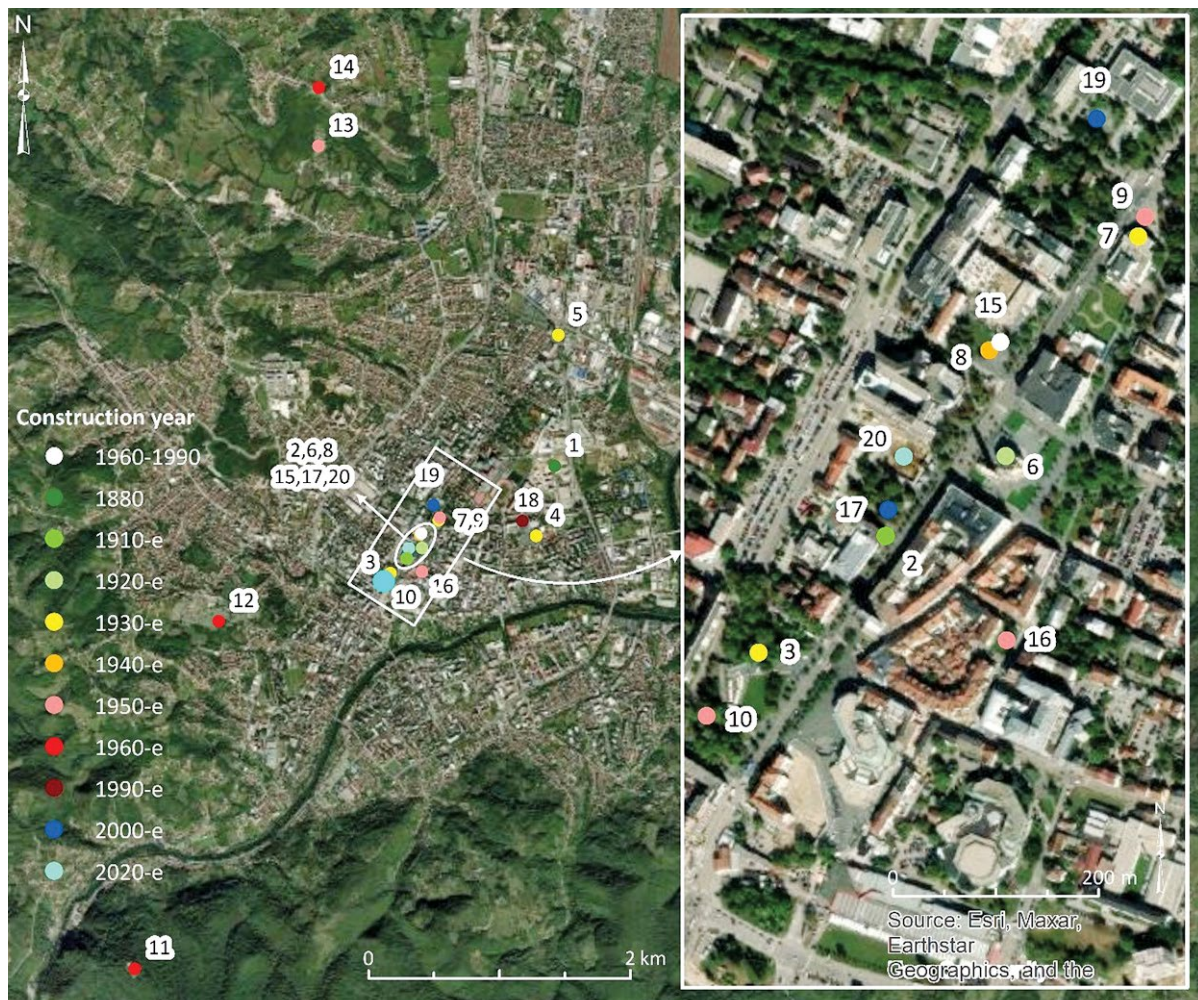
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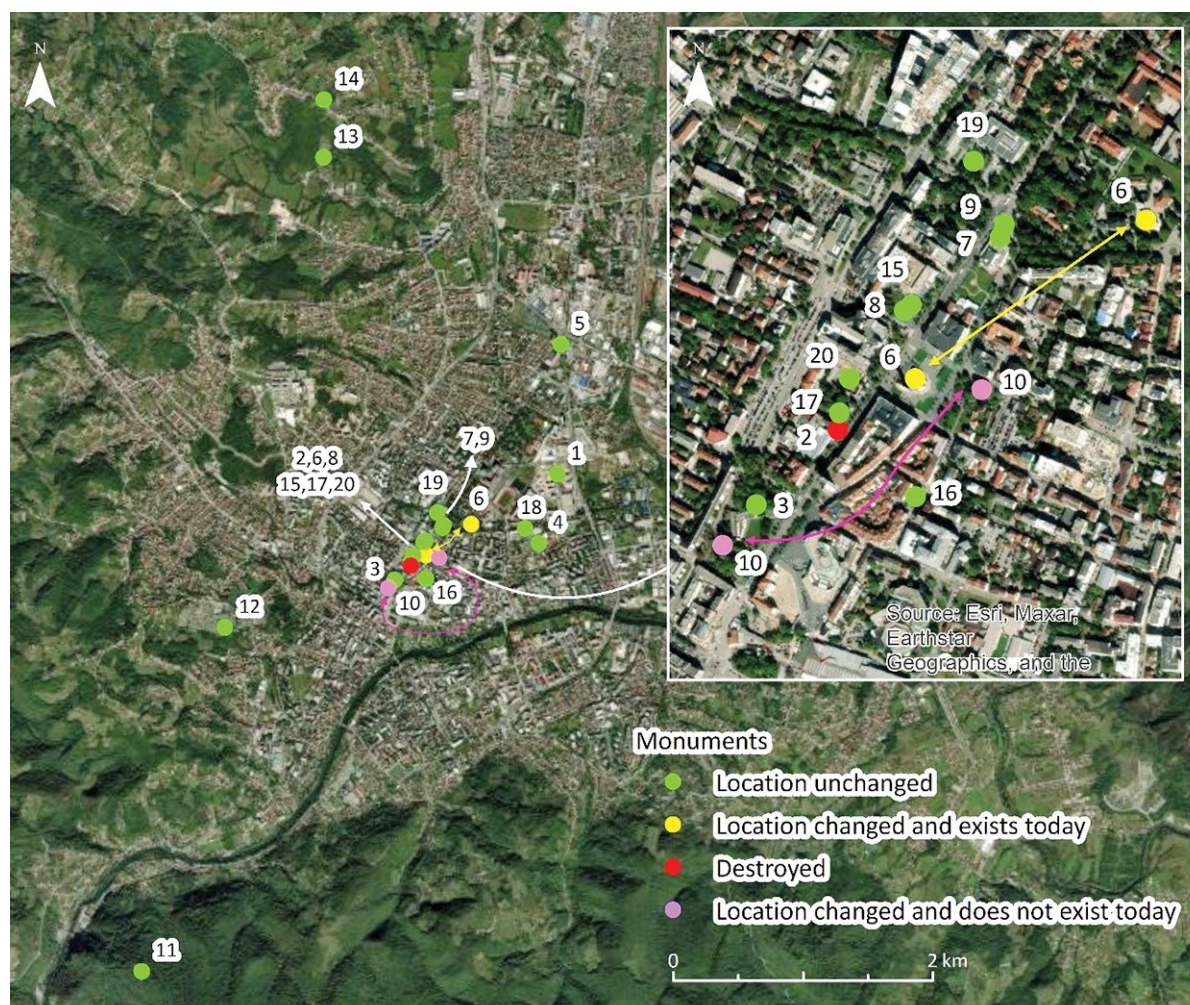
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Appendix: Maps of selected memorials in Banja Luka

The two maps in the Appendix visualize the locations of 20 selected monuments and memorial objects, with data on their time of completion and their later fates (including moving, destroying and/or rebuilding). The 20 monuments are: 1) Military Monument; 2) Vitez u željezu (Steel Knight); 3) Petar Kočić statue; 4) Monument to the victims of the High Treason Trials; 5) Monument to Arifaga Šarčević; 6) Church of Holy Trinity; 7) Home of King Peter I; 8) *Spomenik palim borcima* (Monument to the Fallen Partisans); 9) Bust of Veselin Masleša; 10) Bust of Vaso Pelagić; 11) *Spomenik palim Krajišnicima* (Monument to the Fallen of Krajina); 12) Partisan cemetery; 13) *Spomenik ubijenim rudarima* (Monument to murdered miners); 14) Monument to victims of terror in Drakulić; 15) Cluster of busts of people's heroes; 16) Bust of Ivan Franjo Jukić; 17) *Život* (monument to twelve babies); 18) *Spomenik palim borcima vojske Republike Srpske* (Monument to the Fallen of the Army of Republika Srpska); 19) Memorial to the victims of Jasenovac; 20) Central memorial to the fallen soldiers of the Army of Republika Srpska.



SUPPORTING FIGURE 1 Banja Luka with locations of 20 selected monuments; the colours represent the decades of their original construction



SUPPORTING FIGURE 2 Banja Luka with locations of 20 selected monuments; the colours represent their changing status over time (green: same location; yellow: moved and preserved; red: destroyed; purple: moved, now missing), with arrows to indicate movement