

NOSTALGIA MATTERS: NOSTALGIA FOR YUGOSLAVIA AS POTENTIAL VISION FOR A BETTER FUTURE¹

Važnost nostalgije: Nostalgija za Jugoslavijom kao moguća vizija bolje budućnosti

APSTRAKT Nostalgija za Jugoslavijom kao društveni fenomen prisutna je u današnjem Mostaru, kao i drugde u zemljama-naslednicama bivše Jugoslavije. Iako se lokalne političke elite trude da izbrišu tragove jugoslovenske prošlosti (naročito u zapadnom Mostaru, koji je pod kontrolom Hrvata), dobar deo Mostaraca još uvek s nostalgijom pamti taj period. Sve do nedavno, nostalgiji se u društvenim naukama nije posvećivala velika pažnja; ako se o njoj i govorilo, shvatana je isključivo kao fenomen usmeren ka prošlosti. Novije studije, međutim, naglašavaju utopijski karakter nostalgije. Taj aspekt je posebno zanimljivo proučavati u kontekstu postsocijalizma. Na osnovu terenskog rada koji ja autorka sproveda između 2005. i 2008. godine, u članku se analiziraju narativi dve Mostarke i njihov odnos prema Jugoslaviji. Pokazuje se da se razlike u narativima mogu dovesti u vezu s nacionalnom pripadnošću i porodičnim poreklom, ali isto tako – ako ne i više – sa starošću i životnim stadijumom. U zaključnom delu rada pokušava se odgovoriti na pitanje da li jugonostalgija može predstavljati potencijalnu viziju za bolju budućnost i, ako da, pod kojim uslovima.

KLJUČNE REČI *nostalgija, Jugoslavija, postsocijalizam, Bosna i Hercegovina*

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ABSTRACT *Nostalgia for Yugoslavia is a social phenomenon which prevails in present-day Mostar as well as elsewhere in the Yugoslav successor states. Even if attempts are made by the elites of local politics to erase traces of the Yugoslav past (especially in Croat dominated West Mostar), a good part of Mostar's population still nostalgically remembers that period. Until recently, nostalgia has been neglected as a subject of research in the social sciences and has been acknowledged – if at all – only as a phenomenon oriented towards the past. Recent studies, however, have emphasized a utopian character of nostalgia. It is particularly interesting to further investigate this aspect in the context of post-socialism. This paper discusses the selected narratives of two women whom I encountered during my fieldwork conducted between 2005 and 2008, and their relationship to Yugoslavia. It is shown that differences in their narratives can be related to their nationality and family backgrounds, but to the same degree – if not more so – to their age and the stage in life they are in. At the end of the paper I shall tackle the question whether nostalgia for Yugoslavia can hold as a potential vision for a better future and, if so, under which conditions.*

KEY WORDS *nostalgia, Yugoslavia, post-socialism, Bosnia and Herzegovina*

Introduction

With the rise of exclusive nationalism in Bosnia and Herzegovina, loyalty to the late Tito declined among politicians as well as the media. In the years after his death in 1980, atrocities committed during his period of rule (together with other atrocities committed during WWII) drew public attention (see Bax 1997, Bet-El 2002, Denich 1994, Hayden 1994, Palmberger 2006, Price 2002). However, they were primarily discussed from a nationalist vantage point, with the aim of supporting the claim for victimisation of one's group, Serb, Croat or Bosniak, and not as a critique of socialism under Tito in more general terms. Since the war, the picture of Yugoslavia drawn in public discourse has lost some of its edge, although the acrimonious version remains common among some hard-line politicians as well as media supporting such a political orientation. The war fought between 1992 and 1995 was so cruel, that all the crimes committed by Tito seemed negligible in comparison. This is one reason why in Bosnia and Herzegovina the Yugoslav socialist past has never been critically discussed in wider public debate (see Gilbert 2006). Instead, almost contemporaneous with the demise of Yugoslavia, the term *jugonostalgija* (Yugo-nostalgia) was born.

When we come across this term today, it most often refers to a retro-trend or a cultural revival of, for example, Yugo-rock or products popular in former Yugoslavia and their commercialisation.² The following discussion, though, is not particularly concerned with Yugo-nostalgia as a retro-trend or fashion. Unlike a

² Four years ago, an encyclopaedia titled "Leksikon YU mitologije" (Andrić et al. 2004) was published with entries on Yugoslav popular culture (see also Labov 2007).

fashion trend, the kind of nostalgia under investigation here cannot be easily replaced by a different kind of nostalgia. Nostalgia for Yugoslavia is analysed as a widespread social phenomenon, which I encountered during my fieldwork in Mostar between 2005 and 2008. An extreme form of nostalgia can be experienced as a burden and is potentially dangerous for the person involved in it.³ Therefore I argue that nostalgia as an emotional experience is a phenomenon that should be taken seriously, perhaps even more so in a post-war setting.⁴ This said, nostalgia is not understood as a solely private sensation, but is dealt with as an experience communicated and shared, as well as negotiated and contested.⁵

Today, a longing for Yugoslavia exists in all of its former republics.⁶ In some successor states more than in others, Yugo-nostalgia has taken on the role of a counter-discourse to the respective dominant public discourse. Yugoslav successor states, however, are not unique in their nostalgia for the socialist times, which indeed can be found in all post-socialist countries.⁷ One should also be aware that this nostalgia cannot be explained by the negative side effects of the so called “transition period” alone, since nostalgia is also present in post-socialist countries that went through a relatively painless transition, like Slovenia (see Velikonja 2005). Nostalgia for the socialist time is a multi-faceted phenomenon that has not yet been sufficiently studied. There also is a need for further investigation into subjects closely related to nostalgia, such as utopia and belonging (and the loss of it), social trust and security. As the following text will show, the loss of social trust as well as the current social insecurity, both strengthen the feeling of longing for the past. Pre-

³ During my stay in Mostar I became friends with a young Bosniak man, whose parents had died shortly after the war ended. He blames their death on their strong political commitment to a united Mostar during the war in the 1990s and them holding on to the ideal of “brotherhood and unity” at a time when it was already clear that this would not be realised, even once the war was over. When they saw that even their closest friends had betrayed the ideal of a multi-ethnic Mostar, they became extremely depressed and lost their will to live.

⁴ In Ugrešić’ (2006) well written novel *The Ministry of Pain* one learns about the graveness Yugo-nostalgia can bear.

⁵ I follow the path of authors who argue that emotion is not a purely private matter, but is also communicated to and shared with others. Although we can never be certain that we have understood each other’s feelings, we should not forget that the same is true when communicating our thoughts (see Abu-Lughod and Lutz 1990, Leavitt 1996, Perkins 1966).

⁶ Yugo-nostalgia is also a widespread phenomenon among those who had to leave their homes during the wars fought at the demise of Yugoslavia – via several internet sites they are invited to join the community of Yugo-nostalgics.

⁷ A brief selection of authors who have written on post-socialist nostalgia: For a stimulating introduction into the subject of nostalgia in general and post-socialist nostalgia in particular, see Boym (2001). For a critical discussion of nostalgia for the socialist times in rural Bulgaria in relation to trauma, and on the way “anti-nostalgia” is instrumentalised, see Creed (2006). On the question of truth of nostalgic memories in rural Russia, see Heady and Gambold Miller (2006). For a discussion of the expressions and motivations of “Ostalgie” (nostalgia for the GDR), see Boyer (2006), Bach (2002), Berdahl (1999), for further discussion of Yugo-nostalgia see Velikonja (2005) and Volčič (2007).

war Bosnia and Herzegovina is presented as the “secure past” by many Mostarians (especially by those who have spent good parts of their lives in socialist Yugoslavia), while present and future Bosnia and Herzegovina is seen as insecure.

The act of comparing is inherent to nostalgia, since it always forms a reaction to the present state (Davis 1977: 417). This clearly shows that nostalgic feelings are never directed to the past alone, but always tell us something about how the status quo is perceived and what is expected of the future. This article builds on the past-present-future interrelations that are inherent to nostalgia. Rather than viewing nostalgia for Yugoslavia as oriented towards the past alone, I will argue that it can also be seen as criticism of the present post-socialist reality and may be reflected in visions of a better future. It is suggested that a longing for Yugoslavia has the potential to paralyse individuals, who realise that what was lost can never be regained, which puts them into a constant state of “waiting”. At the same time it is an expression of criticism of the present situation and in this way can become a source for future aspirations.

Nostalgia

Nostalgia is commonly understood as a hazy perception of the past that glorifies what was and is no more, while downplaying all the shortcomings of the past. This rather pejorative view of nostalgia has also found its way into scholarly discourse. For a long time, nostalgia, like memory in general, has remained set in opposition to history within a clear hierarchical order. History has been seen as the representative of the real past - memory as the one of the past blurred by emotion. Nostalgia has been dismissed as remembering through rose-coloured glasses and therefore being devoid of any claim for truth. This negative attribution of nostalgia may explain the lack of interest scholars have shown in this social phenomenon for a long time. This paper is based on the belief that, on a social level, it is more interesting to find out which memories are important to people, and why and how these constructions of history influence their lives, than to judge memories according to the amount of truth they hold. The fact that the process of remembering is selective – meaning that remembering always goes hand in hand with forgetting or silencing – does not reduce its social significance.

The phenomenon of nostalgia was first identified and named by a Swiss doctor, Johannes Hofer, in the seventeenth century. He observed that individuals can suffer from a disease characterised by a longing for the lost home, which can eventually lead them to lose touch with reality. Many of the patients he diagnosed with nostalgia were displaced persons. The name he gave the disease is a combination of the two Greek words *nostos*, to return home, and *algia*, to long for.

Over the last century, the meaning of nostalgia has changed. Today, nostalgia is no longer classified as a disease, but analysed in the context of life in Western modernity. Nostalgia is seen as a phenomenon founded on the modern concept of time as linear and irreversible, as well as a reaction to a fast moving and changing environment (see Lowenthal 1985).

The belief that we have to sever the links to our past in order to be free to move on is immanent in the concept of modernity. Modernity tells us that progress and change is all that counts – while the past may be happily left behind. However, the rapidly changing world leaves us with a feeling of discontinuity and loss, especially when moral values are declared outdated and overcome in quick succession. In situations where this feeling prevails, we start longing for a “secure” past, when life was stable and predictable. This past is secure alone for the fact that - in retrospect - we know what it brought while we do not know what the future will bring. Nationalism has one remedy for this feeling of loss, suggesting that only national liberation can pave the way back to the always distant and long gone golden age (see Boym 2001). This nationalistic nostalgia for an ancient golden age is not of main concern here, but rather the nostalgia for a past in individuals’ own lifetime. Assuming that regime changes or war are likely events to strengthen a feeling of loss and insecurity and trigger a longing for the past, it is not surprising that a longing for the pre-war times, for Yugoslavia, prevails in Bosnia and Herzegovina. People in Bosnia and Herzegovina have not only experienced a drastic change in the political system governing their country, but also the war that accompanied it.

Even if the credibility of objective history has been put in question and oral history has been established as a sub-discipline - nostalgia is still tarnished as fake history. Although “modern life” is built on the belief that anything that keeps us connected to the past, such as tradition, prevents us from moving on, teaching history is seen as an investment in the future. Nostalgia is afforded no such value. Nostalgia is perceived as backwards and conservative rather than future-oriented and progressive.

Only recently have scholars begun challenging this biased assumption. Tannock (1995), for example, argues for widening the definition of nostalgia: “The presence of multiple and different nostalgias among individuals and communities of social groups throughout Western modernity has to be acknowledged” (Tannock 1995: 454). He also stresses the fact that nostalgia is the response to diverse personal needs and political desires. Other authors like Pickering and Keightley (2006) make us aware of nostalgia’s contradictory character as “being driven by utopian impulses – the desire for re-enchantment – as well as melancholic responses to disenchantment” (Pickering and Keightley 2006: 936). We can conclude that the most important presumptions on which the following discussion is based are a) that nostalgia cannot be viewed as a simple and coherent manifestation, but has to be

acknowledged in its complexity and manifoldness, and b) that nostalgia can be oriented towards the future as well as the past.

The Division of Mostar

During the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina between 1992 and 1995, Mostar saw extreme violence, and its population underwent far-reaching political and demographic changes. Mostar's citizens tend to speak of two wars that were fought in their town. During the first war, Croats⁸ and Bosniaks⁹ fought as allies against the Serb dominated forces. Once the latter retreated, fighting between the former allies started in May 1993, only to be settled by the Washington Agreement signed in March 1994 (see Bjelakovic and Strazzari 1999). During these ten months, the two sides were separated only by the Bulevar (Boulevard, Mostar's main artery before the war), which was perceived as no-man's-land dividing Mostar into a Croat dominated west and a Bosniak dominated east side.

After reaching an agreement for the armistice, Mostar was put under the interim European Union Administration (EUAM) from July 1994 to January 1997.¹⁰ Even after Mostar's population was able to move about the city again freely, the city remained separated in all aspects of life: politically, economically, culturally, and also in terms of health care, education and the media (see Bose 2002, Price 2002, Torsti 2003, Vettters 2007, ICG Report No. 90). Even though a physical border no longer exists, the Bulevar continues to be an "imaginary" border dividing the people of Mostar, as the majority of them has little if any contact with those on the "other side" in their everyday life.

The composition of Mostar's population has changed drastically as a consequence of the war. The once multi-ethnic city – 35 per cent Muslims, 34 per cent Croats, 19 per cent Serbs and 12 per cent others (including those who identified themselves as Yugoslavs) – has become a divided city, split in half between Croats and Bosniaks, who make up the vast majority of the population.¹¹ Today, most *Mostarci* (Mostarians) define themselves as *Bošnjaci/Muslimani* (Bosniaks/Muslims), *Hrvati* (Croats) or *Srbi*, unless they are members of one of the minorities, or unless they are among the few who continue to call themselves *Jugosloveni*

⁸ In this text Bosnian Croats are referred to as Croats, as is common practice in Mostar.

⁹ Today, *Bosniak* is the official term for Bosnian Muslims.

¹⁰ Although the war was officially over, people kept being wounded, killed and expelled from their homes up until 1997 (ICG Report No. 90).

¹¹ Of around 20,000 Serbs only about one thousand remained in the divided city during the war, and thereafter only a minority returned (Bose 2002: 105). Leaving tantamount aside the demographic changes along national lines, significant changes were caused by the majority of Mostar's intelligentsia and middle-class professionals having fled (Bose 2002: 106).

(Yugoslavs).¹² Among Mostar's population, only a minority would identify themselves publicly as *jugonostalgičar* (Yugo-nostalgic) although in private conversations many more would nostalgically recount the time of Tito's Yugoslavia.¹³ Particularly in the dominant Croat discourse, Yugoslavia represents a dark period of history, where the respective nation (and here most often religion and language are stressed) was suppressed. In extreme cases proponents speak of Bosniaks, Croats and Serbs as distinct civilizations, which have never been able to live together peacefully and never will. For them, nostalgia for Yugoslavia is tantamount to betrayal or, at best, amnesia. Interestingly, many of my interlocutors who spoke critically of Tito's Yugoslavia still painted a very positive picture of Mostar during that period. Even if Yugoslavia was blamed for its national repression, Mostar during the time of Yugoslavia was remembered as an idyllic place.

Generally, in Mostar nostalgia is more often expressed among Bosniaks than among Croats. This is especially true in public places, as on the Croat west side an attempt has been made to erase the Yugoslav past from the cityscape by removing Partisan busts and memorials and by renaming streets reminiscent of the communist past. In this spirit, the *JNA* (Yugoslav National Army) street became *Kneza Branimira* (Duke of Dalmatian Croatia in the ninth century) and *Bulevar Narodne Revolucije* (Boulevard of the People's Revolution) became *Hrvatskih branitelja* (Croatian defenders). On the east side many of the Partisan heroes have remained on their pedestals, and the main street is still named after the former leader (*Maršala Tita*).

To explore the topics and the emotions involved in nostalgic memories of Yugoslavia more in depth, let us now look at the narratives of two women of different national background and age. While Aida¹⁴, born in 1968, spent the largest part of her life in Yugoslavia, Sanja, born in 1983, has only childhood memories of Yugoslavia. As will be shown, these different generational experiences have to be taken seriously when analysing narratives of Yugoslavia. At the same time, the way individuals engage the past to understand it while trying to make sense of the present and to conceptualise the future cannot be explained solely by the dissimilar direct personal experiences different generations have made (see Carr 2003: 59). The social setting – and here in particular the family and the political orientation and positions of its members towards Tito's Yugoslavia – play an important role too.

¹² In 2007, the *Federalni Zavod za Statistiku* estimated the population of Mostar to be 111,198.

¹³ Especially among Croats, calling someone *jugonostalgičar* is not a compliment; more often than not it is used to blame someone of being anti-patriotic, disloyal or in the best case unrealistic (see Ugrešić 1998).

¹⁴ The names of all interlocutors and some of the places have been changed to secure anonymity.

Nostalgia Matters: Two Narratives

Aida: Nostalgia for Yugoslavia as Longing for a Lost Home

I was introduced to Aida by one of her lecturers at the university on Mostar's east side. Back then, Aida was in her final year of English studies. In her mid thirties, she was older than most of her fellow students, who were still in their early and mid twenties. Aida already held a degree in science but decided to do a second degree in English, the language she had become familiar with as a refugee in Great Britain during the war, hoping to increase her chances on Mostar's weak job market. Her father and brother had been taken to a detention camp at the beginning of the war between Croats and Bosniaks in 1993. Upon his release, Aida and her brother fled the country. Her mother had been expelled from the west to the east side of Mostar in January 1994. Since then, Aida's family has been living on the east side. They sold their former flat located in West Mostar after the war. In 1997 Aida had to return to Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Aida describes herself as a *Muslimanka* (Muslim), although not a practising one. She never joins in prayers at the mosque and tells me that, frankly, she has never learned how to pray. In her family, values taught by Tito such as *bratstvo i jedinstvo* (brotherhood and unity) have always outweighed any religion, she reminds me on several occasions. Still, the members of her family perceive themselves as *Muslimani* (as a national distinction to Croats and Serbs more than in a religious sense) and celebrate the most important religious holidays. With the war and the division of Mostar her Muslim/Bosniak identity became part of everyday life: Aida studies at the Bosniak dominated university, she teaches in a school on the east side that follows the Federation's curriculum (as opposed to the west side, where schools follow the Croat curriculum), her close friends are all Bosniaks, and when they meet, they do so in cafes in East Mostar.

Beside her identity as a *Muslimanka*, Aida maintains the identity of a Yugo-nostalgic. From her grandfather Aida had learned a lot about the history of the Partisan movement, and I was impressed by how she is able to recall a great number of facts about Partisan battles and former Yugoslav holidays until today. In 1985, at the age of seventeen, Aida became a member of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia (Savez komunista Jugoslavije) and burned her membership card in 1993, fearing it would be held against her if discovered. This did not mean, however, that she gave up her loyalty to the idea and ideals of Yugoslavia. One day Aida announced with an important air about her and in a hushed voice (as if she were telling me a very important secret about herself): "I have to tell you, I am a Yugo-nostalgic". This "confession" was followed by praise for the low unemployment rate under Tito, the health insurance everyone enjoyed, the good income as well as free

education. “And nobody asked you about your religion, everyone got along well. Mostar was the place with the highest numbers of inter-ethnic marriages”, she added.¹⁵ Aida ends her defence of Yugoslavia by saying: “If I had a hero it would be Tito. This man is my hero! I have to tell you I am really not confident in what the future will bring us.” Aida believes that the future looked more promising after World War II than after the war in the 1990s. As her grandmother used to tell her, a powerful reconstruction of destroyed Yugoslavia was under way soon after WWII. Young people followed the call to volunteer in several big national reconstruction projects:

That was the reconstruction movement (*radne akcije*). Everyone was optimistic that the situation would improve and they all backed Yugoslavia. These people were volunteering because they believed in it. Many things were built this way, for example train lines, big factories and such things. This was Yugoslavia in its beginning. After WWII, from the mid 1950s onward, everything got better. The country rebuilt itself and progressed. Out of its own strength it recovered and got better each day indeed. The standard of living became higher and higher, apartments were built, plenty of jobs were available, good schools and higher education were free for everyone. My grandmother always said that life was best in the 1970s. The state was strong, salaries were good, and one could enjoy the good pension system, health insurance, long vacation, free education. It was indeed great! Midway through the 1980s it started to get worse.

When Aida talks about how her grandmother’s generation built the Yugoslav state, she obviously admires the verve of the people who took this endeavour into their own hands. Aida also makes clear that she likes the way they managed to do all this by themselves. Although Aida never said so explicitly, one may assume that she admires this movement even more as she sees a lack of a similar spirit in the post-war society of today. Furthermore, reconstruction is not directed by a local leader (like Tito), but by foreigners and foreign aid that dictate the building of the state.

Aida was constantly reminded by her grandparents (like the youngest generation today is reminded by those who fought in the war of the 1990s) of the struggles their generation went through in order to secure the life she later enjoyed. She felt as if she were reaping the benefits of the work of her grandparents’ generation and Tito, and that she owed them all her gratitude. This also became clear whenever Aida defended Tito. Several times I noticed how important it was for her that the “world” (“the West”) knew about what Yugoslavia really was like. Tito was no dictator, Aida insisted, but provided people with security regarding health care,

¹⁵ Mostar used to have the highest rate of inter-ethnic marriage in Yugoslavia. This is still remembered today and employed to make the case for pre-war peaceful and harmonious co-existence. Today, however, many of the mixed couples have left the country and new inter-ethnic marriages are rare. If someone falls in love with somebody of different national background, family and friends will most likely be critical of the relationship and pity any children yet to be born.

jobs, education etc. It is true that Tito accumulated a lot of luxury, she admitted, but he did not keep it for himself or for his family: “When he died, the luxury goods became state property again – so we can say he only borrowed it.”

At the end of my fieldwork, Aida received her second diploma and left university for good. She had difficulties finding a job as a teacher, and today works only part-time. She is upset with her situation, since her job neither fulfils her nor provides her with the necessary money to leave her parents and establish a household of her own. During Tito’s rule, she told me, everyone could find a job: “You knew that once you completed your education you would find a job and a flat. Life was somehow calmer, not so fast and not so tough. It was much easier and nicer to live back then.”

Aida’s longing for Yugoslavia is characterised by the defensive position she adopts when talking about former Yugoslavia under Tito. She defends Yugoslavia just as other people may defend their home country. One could say that Yugoslavia is what Aida experiences as home, but a home that no longer exists. Yugoslavia was where she felt secure and where she was able to look towards the future optimistically. Today, Aida gives the impression of being lost in her hometown (or in the town that used to be her home but no longer is) - longing for the past and at the same time knowing for certain that this past is lost for ever.¹⁶ Nevertheless, I am convinced that if one asked her what her ideal future looks like, she would say: like Mostar before the war. This is why I am inclined to describe Aida’s hope as a paralyzing one, a hope that is condemned never to be fulfilled and that puts its owner in a permanent state of waiting (see Crapanzano 2003). Aida is aware of the fact that her longing has no chance of being satisfied. Her mourning over the loss (her lost home) is at times so overwhelming that she does not feel strong enough to change anything for the better.

Sanja: Nostalgia for Yugoslavia as a Tool and a Vision for Better Co-existence

When I met Sanja, she was in her early twenties and a very energetic and communicative young woman. She grew up in a town about 50 kilometres from Mostar. By the time I met her, she had lived in Mostar for more than three years. She had fallen in love with it right away. Having spent the years of war with her aunt in Split together with her little brother (her parents had stayed behind in their hometown and her father had joined the HVO), she had returned to her – in comparison to Split – small hometown. She was relieved at the prospect of moving to Mostar for her studies, since Mostar offers not only a beautiful old town but also a vibrant student life, with plenty of cafes, pubs and parties.

¹⁶ Returning “home” but not recognising that place as home any more is a common experience among Bosnian returnees (see Jansen 2006, see also Stefansson 2006).

Sanja studies Croat language and literature at Sveučilište Mostar, the Croat dominated university. Even during the first days after her arrival in Mostar she had been desperate to see the *stari most* (old bridge). However, all her colleagues warned her not to go to the old town (located on the east side), telling her that she would put herself in great danger if she did not heed their advice. But she did not pay attention to what they said and, as she had expected, nothing happened. Sanja knows that nobody can tell the difference between a Bosniak and a Croat just from appearance. They might have been able to recognise her accent as Croatian (mainly since she spent a long time in Croatia), but nobody ever accosted her. Today, she frequently crosses the Bulevar, especially because of her involvement in one of the youth NGOs situated on the east side. Through her activities in the NGO she met a young Bosniak and fell in love with him. Sanja knew that if her parents found out about the relationship they would strongly disapprove. The fact that her own feelings and her parents' expectations were in stark opposition preoccupied Sanja, especially because she was not sure whether she would succeed in convincing her parents to view the relationship in a more positive light, if she ever tried.

Sanja displays a peculiar mixture of sympathy and antipathy towards Yugoslavia. Her parents had told her many negative stories about it. She was taught, for example, that her father's father had been killed by the communists, and that legal action had been taken against her mother for using the Croat language (instead of Croato-Serbian) at her workplace. In contrast to Aida and many others who uncritically admire Tito, Sanja does not show so much sympathy for the former leader and once called him a dictator when she told me about the difficulties her family had faced under his rule.

As we can see, Sanja certainly was influenced by her parent's perception of Tito, although she grew up at her maternal grandmother's. It is most likely that Sanja owes to her, whom she feels closest to in her family, the positive picture she also maintains of Yugoslavia. Sanja is highly aware of her national background. She also shows an interest in learning more about it by choosing to study Croat language and literature. Catholicism plays a central part in her life as well. Nevertheless, her strong national awareness does not prevent her from believing that Bosniaks, Croats and Serbs can live together in one city and in one and the same state. For her, Bosnians of all national backgrounds share many local customs and a common mentality. Therefore, what they share is at least as strong as what sets them apart. Sanja herself feels a twofold identity, as a Croat as well as a Bosnian. Her Croat identity is more the private/family-based identity, where religion and religious holidays play a considerable role. Her Bosnian identity links her to all the other compatriots, whether they are Muslims, Catholics, Orthodox or atheists.

Yugo-nostalgia for Sanja is of a different quality than the one displayed by Aida characterised above, since for Sanja it is only partly directed towards the past,

for example when recalling childhood memories of her excitement in face of becoming one of Tito's *Pioniri* (Pioneers), or the apartment complex where she grew up, which accommodated families of all national backgrounds:

I remember we lived at my grandparents', my mother's parents. We lived here and other Croats there and a Serb family over there and next to them another Croat family and downstairs Muslims and one mixed couple, she was Serb and he Muslim. They were all married couples of similar age like my parents, and they all had kids. We used to play together, hanging out, chatting. My parents used to drink coffee each day with our Serbian neighbours and they visited us for Christmas.

Sanja's nostalgia is mainly directed towards the multi-ethnic coexistence she experienced as a child in the apartment complex she grew up in. She recalls this place and its tenants as one big family despite the families' different nationalities. But more often than being directed towards the past, Yugo-nostalgia as expressed by Sanja is an expression of her political view and used to criticise the present political situation. She strongly believes that Bosnia and Herzegovina should be a multi-ethnic place. In Sanja's case, nostalgia for Yugoslavia is a tool for overcoming the troubled relationship between Bosniaks, Croats and Serbs in her country; she uses memories of Yugoslavia and a good co-existence as a "guiding star" for the future. She also uses Yugo-nostalgia to establish common ground with Mostarians of Bosniak background, such as with my friend Minela. Both Minela and Sanja were frequent guests in our house, where one day they had the chance to meet. The first time they met, one could feel the uneasiness in the air. It was the time of Ramadan, and Minela was fasting. Sanja was not aware that it was Ramadan, and was surprised to hear that Minela did not want to join us for coffee and cake. After a while they found a subject that broke the ice in this somewhat tense situation: they talked about their pre-war memories. They remembered their time as *Pioniri*, the candy they liked back then and many other things connected to their childhood in Yugoslavia. It was a safe topic to engage in, since it showed the mutual willingness to communicate, to get to know each other without having to fear to be caught up in some political discussion related to the war or post-war politics in their country.

Discussion

Nostalgia for Yugoslavia is expressed by both women, but in significantly different ways especially with respect to their emotional ties and the past-present-future direction they give it. While we could perhaps describe Aida's nostalgia as paralysing, expressed with a hope that has no chance of ever being met, Sanja's nostalgia is far more light-hearted and is formulated and utilised as a vision for the future. In the former case, nostalgia is directed towards the past (although at the

same time it is a direct criticism of the current state of affairs), while in the latter case it is rather orientated towards the future.

Central to Aida's nostalgia is the memory of her carefree youth, when all her needs were satisfied and she possessed good perspectives for the future. Thus, her nostalgia is linked to the deterioration of her economic situation and her now grim future perspectives. The experience of loss makes it impossible for Aida to orient her nostalgia towards the future. The loss she experiences is so strong that it barely allows her to hope for a better future. Rather than feeling able to change anything to the better, she is caught in a state of waiting, knowing that her hope (that the pre-war time will be returned to her) is destined never to be fulfilled. When the war broke out, Aida was about the same age as Sanja at the time I met her, just ready to begin an independent life, find a suitable job and build her own home. All her plans were frustrated by the outbreak of the war, which forced her to leave her hometown. Although she managed to settle down in Great Britain, she had to return to Bosnia and Herzegovina after a few years, where she faced the post-war situation characterised by high unemployment and low salaries. Although the outbreak of the war and the end of socialist Yugoslavia amounted to a great rupture in the lives of individuals of all age groups, the years of young adulthood are a particularly vulnerable time.

Studies in psychology have shown that formative events experienced during early adulthood are those that are remembered as most dramatic (see Schuman and Scott 1989). This helps us understand why Aida's nostalgia for Yugoslavia differs greatly from Sanja's. In Sanja's case, remembering Yugoslavia in a nostalgic way is less oriented towards the past, but is chosen to envision a peaceful future for Bosnia and Herzegovina. Even when recalling memories of Yugoslavia in my presence, Sanja never showed the same deep and emotional ties as Aida. One must also keep in mind that the Yugoslavia Sanja grew up in was of a different kind, since it was marked already by its own decline. It is also due to the stories Sanja has been told about Yugoslavia by family members, that her nostalgia is not unrestricted but somewhat reserved, and that she carefully weighs the positive against the negative sides. Due to her family members' distinctive experiences and memories of Yugoslavia, Sanja maintains a differentiated view on it. Equipped with her family's multifaceted perspective on Yugoslavia and her comparatively loose emotional ties with it due to her age, Sanja is able to use nostalgia for Yugoslavia (primarily the aspect of good neighbourliness) as a compass and aspiration for the future. Since nostalgia for her does not have the same graveness as for her older compatriots, Sanja playfully picks only the parts of Yugoslavia she believes can contribute to a better future.

What has been said above may seem to contradict much of what has been said about young people in Bosnia and Herzegovina, who are often presented as the most

desperate part of the population.¹⁷ We certainly cannot take Sanja as representative for Mostar's or Bosnia's youth. I am even inclined to argue that she is part of a minority. Many people of her age have internalised national divisions. But even if Sanja is not representative of her generation, we can learn something from her story. When exposed to a multi-perspective picture of Yugoslavia, young people (regardless of the amount of personal memories they have of Yugoslavia) are in the position to judge which aspects of life in Yugoslavia are worth reviving and which are better left behind. As has been argued in this paper, due to their relatively loose emotional ties with Yugoslavia, it is easier for them to do so. One attempt to provide young people with a differentiated picture of their country's socialist past has been made with the promotion of multi-perspective history textbooks in schools in Bosnia and Herzegovina as well as in other Yugoslav successor states.¹⁸ So far, only a small number of teachers have made use of this ambitious project.¹⁹ Although I believe that these textbooks are an important step in the right direction, their perspective for success remains limited until a critical discussion on the socialist past is led on a wider social scale, i.e. not from a nationalistic perspective alone. Such a discussion about the socialist legacy, however, is crucial when negotiating Bosnia and Herzegovina's future.

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¹⁷ For example, a report by the *Youth Information Agency Bosnia and Herzegovina* in 2005 for the UN Review of the *World Programme of Action for Youth* states, that 77 per cent of the youth in Bosnia and Herzegovina want to leave the country, 24 per cent of whom want to leave the country without ever returning (<http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unyin/documents/wpaysubmissions/bosnia.pdf>. Retrieved January 3, 2008.).

¹⁸ In Bosnia and Herzegovina a commission was established for developing guidelines for the writing and evaluating of history and geography textbooks for primary and secondary schools, and by 2006 it had been adopted by all ministers of education. Since then, OSCE together with the Council of Europe and the Georg Eckert Institute for International Textbook Research have offered training courses in multi-perspective textbook writing. (Interview conducted with two members of the OSCE Education Department, Mostar, August 21, 2008. See also <http://www.oscebih.org/education/textbook.asp?d=2>. Retrieved April 28, 2008).

¹⁹ One project aiming for multi-perspectivity was initiated in 2003 by a group of historians from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia under the umbrella of EUROCLIO (the European Association of History Educators) and resulted in a joint textbook "Obični ljudi u neobičnoj zemlji, svakodnevni život u Bosni i Hercegovini, Hrvatskoj i Srbiji 1945.-1990. Jugoslavija između Istoka i Zapada" (Ordinary People in an Extraordinary Country - Every Day Life in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia 1945-1990. Yugoslavia between East and West). In a conversation with one of the authors, I was told that until today only a small number of copies have found their way into the classroom.

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