

***20. Oktobar* – Narratives of Identities in the Celebrations for Belgrade’s Liberation Day (1945-1961)**

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Abstract: The aim of this paper is to explore the relationships and interactions between socialist ideology and national narratives in Tito’s Yugoslavia, focusing on the peculiar case of Belgrade. Taking into account the representative role of the capital city, narratives of identity are analysed from the point of view of the ideology involved and displayed in the celebration of the post-war city’s holiday: the 20th of October, anniversary of Belgrade’s liberation during the Second World War. Using both archival material and reports published in different newspapers as primary sources, the research studies these celebrative practices as an extremely concentrated expression of the state’s ideology but also as occasions of tension and negotiation between different representative meanings: from the attempt of Sovietization of the country – reinforced also by the role of the Red Army in the liberation of the city – to the strengthening of the Yugoslav socialist patriotism after the split between Tito and Stalin and the permanence of Serbian and local identity’s narratives.

Keywords: Belgrade, Liberation day, Yugoslavism, Socialism.

Introduction

Belgrade, our capital city of Yugoslavia, only today really becomes the capital city of all South Slavs, a city that will be loved by all peoples of Yugoslavia, a city for which all sons of Yugoslavia have shed their blood. It is from here, from Belgrade, that the guiding principles, which have carried us through these difficult days, should shine – the idea of brotherhood and unity and the idea of a bigger and happier Yugoslavia¹

¹ “Prvi govor Maršala Tita u slobodnom Beogradu” (Marshal Tito’s first speech in free Belgrade), in *Politika*, 28 October 1944, p. 1.

With these words Marshal Tito emphasised, after the battle that on October the 20th 1944 led to the city's liberation from German occupation, the refounding nature assumed by the event and the collective symbolic meanings that the capital was to take up in the new state. The liberation of Belgrade had been achieved with a major military effort and a high cost in terms of human lives. The Red Army and the Yugoslav People's Liberation Army brigades converged on the city and were able to overwhelm the German forces only after a few days of fighting. In the following decades, the words uttered by Tito on that occasion were often used to commemorate the *20. oktobar* and the importance of that battle. The anniversary of the liberation of the city in Second World War became the festivity of Belgrade and of the capital of the Yugoslav federation.

The aim of the essay presented here is to analyse the meanings of the celebrations organised on the occasion of 'October the 20th', and this is carried out with the particular aim of investigating the complex dynamics of identity in socialist Yugoslavia. The case study is considered to be particularly peculiar because of the specific role played by Belgrade in the new state-building process. It is well known how capital cities in modern times have taken on representative and symbolic functions, often interpreted by performing functions, and the ability to become a stage for events and celebrations designed to 'put on display' the ideology of state². The analysis, however, is intentionally limited to the years between 1945 and 1961, a period of greater centralisation of the federal state of Yugoslavia and of consequent greater political weight for its capital city. In addition, the period under review represents a phase of particular interest with respect to the dynamics of identity of post-war Yugoslavia, as characterised by a more intensive promotion of 'socialist Yugoslavism'. The national question in Yugoslavia had been settled during the war with the proclamation of 'brotherhood and unity' among the Yugoslav peoples, a sort of local variation of Marxist internationalism. After the war, however, public discourse saw a growing assertion of the importance of what was called 'Yugoslav socialist patriotism'. Tito's Yugoslavia, unlike the monarchical Yugoslavia that preceded it, remained a constitutionally multinational state – inhabited by Serbs, Croats, Slovenes, Macedonians, and Montenegrins – and any sense of common belonging then had to be considered in supranational terms. In fact, in everyday political practice, the ideological foundations could be adapted to the prevailing situation: while some scholars have recorded in this sense exclusively a policy of repression of the different nationalisms within the federation, others have talked of the promotion of a sense of a Yugoslav and *de facto* national belonging, supported by integrating forces in a cultural and

² Andreas DAUM, "Capitals in Modern History. Inventing urban space for the nation", in **Andreas DAUM**, Christof MAUCH (eds.), *Berlin - Washington, 1800-2000: Capital Cities, Cultural Representations, and National Identities*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005, pp.16-18.

linguistic sense. Defenders of the latter interpretation see in 1961 and in the years immediately following it a significant break, marked by the reopening and reconsideration of the national question in the country. This would have led to the consequent dilution of state Yugoslavism and to a greater affirmation of national particularism³.

Recently, in the context of international historiography, there have been several attempts to re-approach the relationship between communism and nationalism in the European context, particularly trying not to look at the two ideological systems in terms of total mutual exclusion, but trying instead to investigate their peculiar dynamics of interaction in political practice. The importance of the national discourse for the legitimacy of the communist parties and the definition of 'socialist patriotism' have known, for example, a good level of closer elaboration as far as the Stalinist Soviet Union is concerned, but only recently, however, more attention has been paid to the specific cases of the different people's republics⁴. The Yugoslav experience remains particularly complex because of the interaction between the different identity-based discursive levels, the relationships between socialism, Yugoslavism, and the different national identities, between the federal political context and the republican ones. Such dynamics manifested themselves in a peculiar way within the context of Belgrade, because of the overlapping representative functions dictated by the need to interpret both the role of capital of the federal state and that of the capital of the People's Republic of Serbia.

The day of the liberation of Belgrade became part of the new socialist calendar which had become institutionalised in the country starting in the early post-war years. At the time, the celebrations, both at federal and at Republican or local level, were organised by involving society in its entirety. Theatres, cinemas, museums, cultural institutions, factories, mass organisations and all levels of public administration took part in them, by creating special programs. From a wide range of festivities and celebrations connected both to the local tradition and to the tradition of international socialism, some major anniversaries were

³ Among those who support the second hypothesis are Dejan Jović, Predrag J. Marković, Aleksandar Pavković, see in particular Dejan JOVIĆ, *Yugoslavia: a state that withered away*, West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 2008. The first interpretation is advocated, among others, by Olivera Milosavljević and Jovo Bakić. For reference see Jovo BAKIĆ, "Jugoslovenstvo Josipa Broza *Tita*: kontinuitet ili diskontinuitet?" (Tito's Yugoslavism: Continuity or Discontinuity?), in *Tito - viđenja i tumačenja* (Tito – Perceptions and Interpretations), Belgrade: Institut za noviju istoriju Srbije, 2011, pp. 51-56.

⁴ David BRANDENBERGER, *National Bolshevism: stalinist mass culture and the formation of modern Russian national identity, 1931-1956*, London: Harvard University Press, 2002; Stefano BOTTONI, *Transilvania rossa. Il comunismo romeno e la questione nazionale (1944-1965)*, Roma: Carocci, 2007; Jan PALMOWSKI, "Building an East German Nation: The Construction of a Socialist Heimat, 1945-1961", in *Central European History*, vol. 37, no. 3, 2004; Nationalities Papers special issue edited by Martin MEVIUS, *Socialist nations the communist quest for national legitimacy in Europe*, vol. 37, no. 4, 2009.

standardised: Republic Day (*Dan Republike*) on November the 29th, Army Day (*Dan Armije*) on December the 22nd, Youth Day (*Dan Mladosti*) on May the 25th, and, of course, May the 1st. Each republic then celebrated their Insurrection Day (*Dan Ustanka*) on different dates, while the cities celebrated the anniversaries of liberation during the Second World War. Historians consider state celebrations and commemorations as part of a system of politics of memory and identity established in modern societies since the 19th century, aimed at promoting civic religion and/or a sense of national community⁵. However, this kind of public events, often more ambiguous and complex than they appeared, have proved useful areas of investigation for the study of the evolution of ideological structures, and of the identity dynamics, both political and national, in the states led by communist parties⁶. In Yugoslavia and in Belgrade, the collective memory of the 20th of October and the interpretation of the events related to it were, throughout the socialist period, conveyed ideologically and loaded with meanings as much as possible by means of the celebration of the anniversary. Even though important changes in the definition of the semantic characters assigned to the liberation of the city took place in those years, it was only after 1991 that a reversal of the interpretative paradigm was reached. In different contexts, there started to be mentions of ‘occupation’, rather than ‘liberation’, and debates about the violence and repression in the city after the entrance of Soviet soldiers and partisans. However, the events of October the 20th 1944, as many others events related to Yugoslav past, still remain very controversial in the collective public memory of Belgrade⁷.

⁵ Catherine BRICE, Massimo BAIONI, “Introduzione”, in *Memoria e Ricerca*, n. 34, 2010. There is a wide literature on this topic, but some of the first and most influential works are George L. MOSSE, *The nationalization of the masses: political symbolism and mass movements in Germany from the Napoleonic wars through the Third Reich*, New York: H. Fertig, 1975. Eric J. HOBBSBAWM, Terence RANGER (eds.), *The Invention of tradition*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983; John R. GILLIS (ed.), *Commemorations. The Politics of National Identity*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994.

⁶ Karen PETRONE, *Life has become more joyous, comrades. Celebrations in the time of Stalin*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000; Yannis SYGKELOS, “The National Discourse of the Bulgarian Communist Party on National Anniversaries and Commemorations (1944–1948)”, in *Nationalities Papers*, vol. 37, no. 4, pp. 425–442, 2009; See for a Yugoslav case-study Drago ROKSANDIĆ, “Shifting References: Celebrations of Uprisings in Croatia, 1945–1991”, in *East European Politics and Societies*, no. 9, 1995, pp. 256–271.

⁷ Miroslav JOVANOVIĆ, “20 Oktobar: od oslobođenja do okupacije Beograda (radikalna transformacija jednog političkog simbola)” (October 20: From Liberation to Occupation of Belgrade. Radical Transformation of a Political Symbol), in Aleksandar ŽIVOTIĆ (ed.), *Oslobođenje Beograda 1944: zbornik radova* (The Liberation of Belgrade in 1944: a collection of papers), Beograd: Institut za noviju istoriju, 2010, pp. 505–523. For an attempt to study the political repression after the city’s liberation, see Srđan CVETKOVIĆ, “«Divlja čišćenja» u Beogradu 1944” («Wild cleansings» in Belgrade 1944), in *Hereticus*, vol. 5, no. 1, 2007.

Defining the celebration's meanings: the Yugoslav peoples, the Soviets and Slavic brotherhood

The first anniversary of the liberation, October the 20th 1945, was celebrated a few months after the actual end of the conflict and for this reason it assumed a dimension and meanings of particular relevance. Momčilo Mitrović observed how that occasion marked the consolidation in the country of a celebratory system characterised by the centrality of the war of liberation, by rigid planning and by mass participation⁸. On that occasion, an article published by Moša Pijade, a prominent personality in the party, confirmed how the words spoken by Tito in 1944 did not depend only on the contingent situation and on the rhetorical needs of a war of liberation, at that time still in progress, but rather defined the official meaning of that event:

Belgrade is celebrating its first liberation anniversary. But it is not only Belgrade's celebration. For the liberation of Belgrade, combatants of all our peoples and from all corners of our country have spilt their blood, together with the fighters of the fraternal Red Army who have played the decisive role in the combat for the liberation of Belgrade. And that is why it stands and will stand as a symbol of the liberation of the whole country; it is a universal celebration of the liberation of all our peoples⁹.

These strong “Yugoslav” meanings assigned to the “20th of October” responded to the urgent need to transform the image of Belgrade after the end of the Second World War. The dismantling of the pre-war monarchic system, of which the capital was the symbol, was one of the sources of legitimisation of the new system of power in front of much of the population. For two decades the city had been the centre of what was deemed a “monarchic, bourgeois and reactionary regime”, characterised by “Pan-Serbism” of the Karadorđević dynasty. In a revolutionary discourse system marked by strong discontinuity, justifying keeping the centre of power in Belgrade made necessary a radical break in the townscape and a strong ideological redefinition of the representative ties between the urban centre and the citizens of the whole federation¹⁰.

The celebration of October the 20th 1945 translated then into the first major effort to show the new face of Belgrade. A grand military parade in the streets of the city centre, which was attended by all senior state officials and of

⁸ Momčilo MITROVIĆ, “Proslave i slavlja u Srbiji 1945. Godine” (Festivities and Celebrations in Serbia in 1945), in *Tokovi Istorije*, no. 3, 2006, p.118.

⁹ Moša PIJADE, “Godišnjica oslobođenja Beograda” (The Anniversary of the Liberation of Belgrade), in *Borba*, 20 October 1945, p. 1.

¹⁰ For this reason it was proposed to move the capital city to Sarajevo, see John R. LAMPE, *Yugoslavia as History. Twice there was a country*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996, p. 232.

foreign delegations, stressed the political significance of the celebration. A particular effort was made in the consolidation of the public memory of the event and the laying of several commemorative plaques marked the ever-growing ideological semantisation of the urban space. One of the most significant acts from a symbolic point of view was the ideological appropriation of the mountain of Belgrade, the Avala, an important symbol of the city that housed an important *lieu de mémoire* of the times of monarchist Yugoslavia, represented by the monument to the Yugoslav Unknown Soldier¹¹. The monument was kept in its place, but a commemorative plaque was placed nearby, which read:

Here, at the entrance of the ever disobedient Belgrade, the brave soldiers of the National Liberation Army of Yugoslavia, side by side with the combatants of the Red Army, have won the historical battle on the 14th of October 1944 against a big German troop, which has come to the rescue of the occupied invading treacherous garrison. Having smashed and destroyed it, a total liberation of Belgrade has made it possible for its freedom-loving heart to beat happily forever, to be forever a free and proud capital of Tito's Yugoslavia, - for the common fight for freedom to be remembered until the end of times, and for the blood sealed brotherhood of the grand Soviet Union and the new Yugoslavia to stay inextricable and eternal¹².

The same type of setting was common to the entire scaffolding of memory erected for the celebration¹³. The public memory of the event maintained then at this stage a certain balance between the fundamental importance of the contribution of the Red Army in the liberation of the city and the role played by the People's Liberation Army of Yugoslavia, which had fought "side by side" with the Soviets. The ideological context of 1945 and the temporal proximity of the events still left room for different outcomes in the interpretation of the event. In 1945 it was decided to reinstate, despite the year of delay, the celebration of the centennial of the founding of the National Museum, the first museum in Serbian history, founded in 1844. The event was then loaded with a particular Serbian patriotic connotation¹⁴. It was decided to connect the anniversary to the celebrations for the 20th of October by inaugurating the

¹¹ The most interesting and complete study on the representative meanings of the Avala's monument during the monarchic period is Aleksandar IGNJATOVIĆ, "From Constructed Memory to Imagined National Tradition. The Tomb of the Unknown Yugoslav Soldier (1934–38)", in *The Slavonic & East European Review*, vol. 88, no. 4, October 2010.

¹² "Juče su u Beogradu održali pomeni borcima Crvene armije i Narodno-oslobodilačke vojske Jugoslavije" (Commemorations were held yesterday in Belgrade for soldiers of the Red Army and of the People's Liberation Army of Yugoslavia), in *Borba*, 21 October 1945, p. 3.

¹³ Momcilo MITROVIĆ, "Proslave i slavlja u Srbiji 1945. Godine", *op. cit.*, p. 118.

¹⁴ Letters from the National Museum to the Ministry of Education of Serbia, 9 July 1945, Arhiv Srbije AS (Archives of Serbia, Belgrade), fond Ministarstvo Prosvete (fond Ministry of Education), k. 4.

exhibition “Serbian Painting of the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century” and, as demonstrated by the opening speech, the city’s liberation was celebrated as an event embedded in the historical narrative of the struggle for the national affirmation of the Serbian people¹⁵.

In fact, since the early days following the liberation of Belgrade, the topography of memory and the related symbolic meanings in the city began to assume a very precise ideological connotation. Immediately after the end of the conflicts, the fallen soldiers of the Soviet and of the Yugoslav armies were buried in the streets and squares of the city, but with a very different visual rendition in the public space. As noted thoroughly by Olga Manojlović Pintar, the cityscape of Belgrade saw strong Sovietisation achieved by placing a series of monuments to Soviet soldiers throughout the city, including some of the city’s main squares¹⁶. The entire public and cultural life of Belgrade at the time was more and more strongly influenced by the close alliance with Moscow, and October the 20th could not but assume a fundamental value in the strengthening of the Soviet/Russian-Yugoslav brotherhood¹⁷.

The anniversary of 1946 reached a particularly high level of Sovietisation, so much so that the great emphasis on the celebration of the Russian liberators and their commemoration in the most important places in the city centre led to a significant marginalisation of the role of the Yugoslavs¹⁸. Simultaneously, the new system of alliances of Yugoslavia was aided by a Pan-Slav identity narrative that proclaimed the ‘brotherhood of the Slav peoples’¹⁹. In October 1946 Belgrade was preparing to host the Pan-Slav Congress, and the celebration for October the 20th, which occurred concurrently with a Polish state visit, became charged with broad meanings by the Pan Slavists:

The liberation of Belgrade, like the liberation of Warsaw and other capitals of all other Slavic countries, has brought us not only internal freedom but also a possibility, for the first time, to freely reach out in brotherhood over the

¹⁵ “Prekjuče je otvorena izložba srpskog slikarstva XVIII i XIX veka” (The day before yesterday the exhibition of Serbian painting of the XVIII and XIX century was opened), in *Borba*, 21 October 1945, p. 7.

¹⁶ Olga MANOJLOVIĆ-PINTAR, “Široka strana moja rodna. Spomenici sovjetskim vojnicima podizani u Srbiji 1944–1954” (Soviet Soldiers Monuments in Serbia 1944-1954), in *Tokovi Istorije*, no. 1-2, 2005, pp. 135-137.

¹⁷ Goran MILORADOVIĆ, “U traganju za novim čovekom: vrhunac kulturne saradnje Jugoslavije i Sovjetskog Saveca 1944-1948” (Searching for a new man: the peak of the cultural cooperation between Yugoslavia and Soviet Union 1944-1948), in Aleksandar ŽIVOTIĆ (ed.), *Oslobođenje Beograda 1944.*, op. cit., pp. 419-436.

¹⁸ “Beogradani se sećaju oslobodilaca” (Belgraders remember liberators), in *20 Oktobar*, no. 98, 20 October 1946, p. 14; “Dvogodišnjica oslobođenja Beograda proslavljena je svečanim akademijama u svim reonima” (The second anniversary of Belgrade’s liberation celebrated with solemn celebrations in all the districts), in *Borba*, 21 October 1946, p. 3.

¹⁹ Carol LILLY, *Power And Persuasion: Ideology And Rhetoric In Communist Yugoslavia, 1944-1953*, Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2001, pp. 83-84.

borders and spaces that divide us. [New relations] have confirmed the Slavic brotherhood and the solidarity for which the Slavic peoples have yearned, for centuries, and for which they have sacrificed an immense number of victims²⁰.

Such a discursive structure, however, became completely inadequate only a few months later, following the split between Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union in June 1948. The ideological reading of the entire war experience began to orient itself more and more towards the relativisation of the role of the Red Army and the parallel strengthening of the role of indigenous Yugoslav leadership, which found in the resistance struggle the main source of legitimacy. The liberation of Belgrade, the largest wartime event that saw the participation of the Red Army, inevitably became the focus of this review. As shown by several studies, the new definition in the public memory caused a gradual “relativisation and minimisation” of the role of Soviet forces – to the point where quotation marks were being used for the term “liberation”. This obviously had an effect on the celebratory system and on the public perception of the monuments to Soviet soldiers, which, over the years, were gradually abandoned. The most important one, situated in the main city’s square, Republic Square, was eventually removed at the beginning of the fifties²¹.

Belgrade’s liberation in the light of Yugoslav socialist patriotism

It is quite clear in which terms the 20th of October was stripped of pro-Soviet meanings, but less immediate is the understanding of the identity content that went to fill the celebration in the years following the post-1948 ideological landslide. In fact, the celebratory rhetoric of 1947 already denoted a certain recovery of the Yugoslavian meanings of the capital’s liberation, marginalised in the previous year. Following the split with the Soviet Union, this trend greatly strengthened, seeking in particular to emphasise the link between Belgrade and the Yugoslav peoples. In the commemorations, the liberation became a truly “Yugoslav” event, awaited and celebrated in every corner of the occupied country; an article by a Slovenian intellectual recalled: “[the fighters] with thought and heart in hand, have proven all the way that evening their own Yugoslavism: ‘Belgrade is ours!’” was being evoked from the Slovenian mountains²². The celebratory ritual set in previous years began to be gradually redefined, subsequently coming to a complete re-evaluation. Already in 1948, the focus of the celebrations were no longer

²⁰ “Jugoslovenska armija pozdravila je predstavnike bratske i savezničke Republike Poljske” (The Yugoslav army has welcomed representatives of the fraternal and allied Republic of Poland), in *Politika*, 20 October 1946, p. 1.

²¹ Olga MANOJLOVIĆ-PINTAR, “Široka strana moja rodnaja». Spomenici sovjetskim vojnicima podizani u Srbiji 1944–1954” (Soviet Soldiers Monuments in Serbia 1944–1954), *op. cit.*, pp.142–143. Miroslav JOVANOVIĆ, *op. cit.*, pp. 514–517.

²² France BEVK, “Beograd je naš” (Belgrade is our), in *Književne Novine*, no. 36, 19 October 1948, p. 1.

only the monuments and graves of the soldiers who fell in the battle for liberation, but also a new important monument placed in Kalemegdan, inside the ancient fortress that embodied and represented the city's history. In March 1948, the remains of two heroes of the liberation struggle and revolution were moved there: Ivan Milutinović and Ivo Lola Ribar, of Montenegrin and Croatian origin, respectively. The celebratory ritual began to insist more and more on a place to which strong Yugoslav meanings were being assigned: where "the grateful homeland has honoured two of its greatest sons who have lived and died for it" and where they would rest, in the historic town fortress "as a symbol of the freedom of our peoples." At the same time, the two heroes had to be an example of sacrifice for the brigades of young people who had reached the capital from all regions of Yugoslavia to participate in the construction of *Novi Beograd* [New Belgrade]²³. The project of *Novi Beograd* involved the transformation of the image of Belgrade through the construction of a major new centre that, besides realizing the ideal model of socialist city, would have also had to represent "the first centre of people's government in our history, the first unified centre for all our peoples, an ideological centre, cultural and administrative, a centre of brotherhood and unity"²⁴.

Starting in 1949, the celebrations for the 20th of October began to also insist on the process of construction of what the party press called 'the proud capital of our socialist homeland'²⁵. The main exhibition organised for the occasion opened in Kalemegdan with the title 'Five years of constructing Belgrade,' intentionally drew a direct link between the struggle for the liberation of the capital and its reconstruction as a capital city 'beloved by all peoples of Yugoslavia'. October the 20th the following year was then celebrated by presenting the ambitious twenty-year development plan for the city. On the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the liberation, Marshal Tito gave an interview, picked up by every newspaper, in which, recalling the war experience, he insisted on how Belgrade – now 'considered as their own centre' by the Yugoslavs and inhabited by people from all over the country – had to create a representative role and a new 'Yugoslav and socialist' image for itself²⁶. The dom-

²³ "Posmrtni ostaci narodnih heroja Ivana Milutinovića i Ive Lola Ribara uz odavanje počasti i učesće naroda Beograda sahranjeni su na Kalemegdanu" (The remains of people's heroes Ivan Milutinović and Ivo Lola Ribar were buried at Kalemegdan with the tribute and the participation of the people of Belgrade), in *Politika*, 28 March 1948, p. 2.

²⁴ Ljubo ILIĆ, "Uz izgradnju Novog Beograda" (With the construction of New Belgrade), in *Arhitektura*, no. 8-10, 1948, p. 9. The planning and building of *Novi Beograd* is well analyzed in Ljiljana BLAGOJEVIĆ, *Novi Beograd: osporeni modernizam* (*New Belgrade: Contested Modernism*), Beograd: Zavod za udžbenike, Arhitektonski fakultet univerziteta, 2007.

²⁵ "Raste i cveta Titov Beograd" (Tito's Belgrade grows and flourishes), in *Borba*, 20 October 1949, p. 3.

²⁶ "Beograd je za nas bio i za vreme čitave Narodnooslobodilačke borbe ostao centar iz koga je zračio nov duh, nova ideja pokreta" (Belgrade has been for us and during the whole People's Liberation Struggle a centre from which a new spirit and new ideas of the movement radiated), in *Politika*, 20 October 1954, pp. 1-2.

inant public discourse about the city, promoted at every celebration, also through the opening of new buildings or new infrastructures, remained instrumental for the legitimisation of the role of the Yugoslav capital in the *State Building* process: 'All that we see today, passing through the streets of Belgrade, is the work of the people of Belgrade and of the workers from the other regions of the country, whose love and desire for Belgrade to grow in width and amplitude, to become better, more beautiful, and more powerful, is great'²⁷.

The void created by the marginalisation of Soviet memory was then filled mainly with references to the epic of partisan resistance, which represented the founding myth of the 'New Yugoslavia'²⁸. The people's struggle for liberation (*Narodno-oslobodilački rat*), however, had lived its most epic moments in the mountains of Bosnia, therefore, from a political point of view, remedying the relative marginality of Belgrade in relation to that experience became necessary. It was ensured that the capital could find a particularly important place in the narrative of war by insisting on the fact that 'at the time of the occupation a real front line existed in Belgrade'²⁹. The celebrations in the early 1950s became a vast ritual of transformation of the meanings of urban space in this sense. In 1950, two fundamental memorial sites in the city were commemorated, the concentration camp at Banjica and the execution site and mass graves of Jajinci, with the aim to emphasise the role of the resistance in Belgrade during the occupation. The plaques placed by war veterans of Belgrade fully adhered to a Yugoslav vision of the struggle, transcending the local meanings of sacrifice and integrating them into a 'Yugoslav' narrative of the people's war of liberation: 'they gave their life as a contribution to the heroic struggle of the peoples of Yugoslavia for the freedom and the independence of our homeland'³⁰. The following year, then, a widespread semantisation of the public buildings of Belgrade was promoted, memorial plaques were placed in factories, schools, institutions, to remember those citizens of Belgrade fallen on the various battlefields in the country³¹. This way, a narrative that guaranteed

²⁷ "Uoči praznika" (On the eve of the holiday), in *Borba*, 20 October 1951, p. 4.

²⁸ See for example: Vjekoslav PERICA, *Balkan Idols: Religion and Nationalism in Yugoslav States*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002, pp. 95–98; Wolfgang HÖPKEN, "Guerra, memoria ed educazione in una societa divisa: il caso della Jugoslavia", in *Pasato e Presente*, no. 43, 1998; pp. 61–74; Andrew B. WACHTEL, *Making a nation, breaking a nation. Literature and cultural politics*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998, pp. 132–134.

²⁹ "Pokret prema Beogradu bio je pravi pohod, oduševljeni juriš boraca Narodnooslobodilačke vojske iz svih krajeva naše zemlje" (The movement towards Belgrade was a real campaign, an enthusiastic assault of the National Liberation Army fighters from all the corners of our country), in *Politika*, 19 October 1951, p. 3.

³⁰ "Svečana proslava 20 oktobra, dana oslobođenja našeg glavnog grada" (The celebration of the 20th of October, the day of our capital city's liberation), in *7 juli*, 31 October 1950, no. 25, p. 3; "Spomen-ploča banjičkim žrtvama" (A memorial plaque to Banjica victims), in *Politika*, 21 October 1950, p. 3.

³¹ "Zapisnik sa sastanka agit-prop komisije gradskog komiteta" (Minutes of the meeting of the Agit-Prop Commission of the City's committee), 20 September 1951, Istorijski Arhiv

the capital a major role in the founding myth of the main country was being rebuilt: the city from which the party had declared the beginning of armed resistance in 1941, the active centre of resistance, and place of the sacrifice of all ‘sons of Yugoslavia’, who came to liberate their capital in 1944³².

The strengthening of ties between Belgrade and the Yugoslavs and the construction of an image of a capital ‘loved by all our peoples’ in this period was also achieved by insisting on the historical continuity of this relationship. ‘Belgrade’s past is our peoples’ past,’ the *Borba* proclaimed emphatically on the occasion of the 20th of October 1949³³. In this sense, the centuries-old Yugoslav peoples’ struggle for their freedom and independence, fought against many and powerful enemies, was emphasised. The past repeated itself in contemporaneity, and the independence of the homeland, now Socialist, had to be defended from Soviet Union as well. Belgrade was presented as a ‘fighting city’, the incarnation of ‘traditions of struggle and freedom’, destroyed dozens of times during its long history, but always able to rise again. The struggle for social and national emancipation, carried out in the past by Matija Gubec, the leader of the Slovenian-Croatian peasant revolt of 1507 and by the leader of the Serbian uprising of 1804 Karađorđe, had experienced ‘its own triumph’ on October the 20th³⁴. The relationship between the capital and the Yugoslav space was then defined by reinforcing the symbolic and almost metonymic meanings of Belgrade, as emphasised by Siniša Stanković from the Academy on the occasion of celebrations in 1951:

Belgrade has, throughout its whole history, stayed truly faithful to its freedom-loving and fighting traditions. Through the centuries, Belgrade has resisted different invaders: Byzantine emperors, Turkish sultans, Hungarian kings, Viennese Cesars, and finally Hitler’s motorized hordes. That Belgrade, which has resisted even when its combatants were singing as they died impaled over Belgrade fortress, has stayed a true symbol of resistance, not only of the Serbian people, but of the whole of Yugoslavia.³⁵

Beograda IAB (Historical Archives of Belgrade, Belgrade) fond Gradski komitet – Savez Komunističke Srbije (fond City committee – *League of Communists of Serbia*), k. 147, f. 5. p. 1; “Otkrivanjem spomen-ploca u svim delovima grada i polaganjem venaca na grobovih palih boraca Beograd im je još jednom odao priznanje i poštu” (Unveiling memorial plaques in all parts of the city and laying wreaths on the martyrs graves, Belgrade once again paid tribute and its respects to them), in *Politika*, 21 October 1951, p. 2.

³² “Proslava 20 oktobra u Beogradu” (The Celebration of the 20th of October in Belgrade), in *Borba*, 20 October 1949, pp. 1-2.

³³ “Raste i cveta Titov Beograd” (Tito’s Belgrade grows and flourishes), in *Borba*, 20 October 1949, p. 3.

³⁴ “Svečana sednica Gradskog Narodnog Odbora Beograda” (Cerimonial session of the City People’s Committee of Belgrade), in *Borba*, 22 October 1949, p. 2.

³⁵ “Pokret prema Beogradu bio je pravi pohod, oduševljeni juriš boraca Narodnooslobodilačke vojske iz svih krajeva naše zemlje” (The movement towards Belgrade was a real campaign, an enthusiastic assault of the National Liberation Army fighters from all the corners of our country), in *Politika*, 19 October 1951, p. 3.

Celebrating 20th October the year before, the Croatian writer Šime Vučetić insisted on these meanings in an even more marked way, defining them in both a spatial and a temporal dimension:

Something deeply ours, immediate and fresh, breathes through the streets and eyes of Belgrade. The city is a true expression of the name and memory of our culture, of the grandeur, artistry and intelligence of our people. That is for sure. But which of our names contains in its epos as truthfully as Belgrade our destiny, typical of all our provinces, regions, cities and republics – from the republic of Dubrovnik to our socialist republic:³⁶

It is important to note how, in this sense, in the years 1952-1953, once the Soviet monuments were completely excluded from the celebratory system, the 20th of October was commemorated around monuments dating from before the Second World War. In a moment of particular strengthening of Yugoslav feelings, imposed international isolation, the commemorations ended up linking the victims of the people's War of Liberation to victims fallen for their homeland in past conflicts³⁷. For example, a commemoration was held on Avala mountain, by the monument to the unknown soldier built during the monarchy, in times of integralist Yugoslavism, 'to represent the core of Yugoslav national imagery'³⁸. The different caryatids carved by Ivan Mestrovic, and decorated with different Yugoslav traditional costumes adorning the monument, could probably be easily reinterpreted according to the principles of socialist Yugoslavism. The weekly journal of war veterans *Crvena Zvezda*, explained: 'The Unknown Soldier is today a symbol not only for those who died in previous wars for freedom, but also for the thousands and thousands of unknown heroes who fell in the 1941-1945 War of Liberation'³⁹. In 1953, the celebrations came to include the monument for those who died in defence of Belgrade during First World War, built in 1931 and soaked in the symbology of the Serbian national military tradition. In this place, Belgrade representatives of the League of Communists, of the association of veterans, and of mass organisations laid wreaths to the sound of the funeral march⁴⁰. The commemoration,

³⁶ Šime VUČETIĆ, "Naš Beograd" (Our Belgrade), In *Književne Novine*, no.42, 17 October 1950, p.1.

³⁷ "Proslava Oslobođenja Beograda" (The celebration of the liberation of Belgrade), In *Politika*, 21 October 1953, p. 5; "Sećanje na veliki dan" (Remembrance of a great day), in *Crvena zvezda*, no. 79, 27 October 1953, p. 1.

³⁸ Aleksandar IGNJATOVIĆ, "From Constructed Memory to Imagined National Tradition. The Tomb of the Unknown Yugoslav Soldier (1934–38)", *op. cit.*, p. 649.

³⁹ "Kako je postao Spomenik neznanog junaka" (How the Monument to the Unknown Soldier was built), in *Crvena Zvezda*, no. 130, 19 October 1954, p. 2.

⁴⁰ "Proslava Oslobođenja Beograda" (The celebration of the liberation of Belgrade), in *Politika*, 21 October 1953, p. 5; "Sećanje na veliki dan" (Remembrance of a great day), in *Crvena zvezda*, no. 79, 27 October 1953, p. 1.

ideologically rather problematic, was not proposed again in the following years. Interpreted according to the dominant ideological context, however, it appears primarily as an attempt by the local sections of the party to reintroduce a local Belgrade memory which was still alive – that of the occupation during the First World War – associated in the previous decades with ‘Serbianness’ or to the monarchy’s Yugoslavism, within the dominant ideological system, in support of the new patriotism⁴¹.

The culmination of this process of rearranging the practices and contents of the 20th October celebration probably came in 1954, the tenth anniversary of the liberation. The anniversary was celebrated in a particularly extensive way, as the program included orchestra concerts, fireworks at Kalemegdan, military drills, theatrical performances and exhibition inaugurations⁴². The main event, however, was represented by the unveiling of a monument dedicated to ‘the liberators of Belgrade’. In previous years the distribution of graves to the dead in the streets and squares in Belgrade had provided a great way to keep the sense of collective sacrifice alive in the public space. However, the wearing effect of time and neglect put at risk this particular form of ‘widespread monument’⁴³. If on the one hand there was concern ‘that one day all their traces may be lost,’ on the other hand the new ideological circumstances dictated the need to find a solution that would ensure ‘full expression of the patriotic feelings of the Belgrade people towards the spirits of the soldiers who died in the struggle for the liberation of the city’⁴⁴. On October the 20th 1954 a new major *memorial cemetery* was thus inaugurated in the city, in which 1386 fallen soldiers of the Yugoslav Army and the 711 soldiers of the Red Army were laid to rest. The beginning of the thawing of relations between the two countries following the death of Stalin led to the normalization of diplomatic relations and to the first cautious contacts between Tito e Khrushchev⁴⁵. The Soviets gained, however, a limited symbolic

⁴¹ Belgrade’s war veterans claimed at that time: “The issue of expanding and fostering the Yugoslav patriotism should be the first and main task of our organization”, “Zapisnik sa sastanka godišnje skupštine Saveza boraca Opštine Palilula” (Minutes of the Meeting of the Annual Assembly of the Union of Veterans of the Palilula municipality), 22 January 1953, IAB, fond Gradski Odbor – Sbnor Beograda (fond City Council – *Sbnor* of Belgrade), k. 54.

⁴² “Program proslave 10-to godišnjice oslobođenja Beograda” (Program of the celebration for the 10th anniversary of Belgrade’s liberation) pp. 1-5, IAB, fond Gradski komitet – Savez Komunističke Srbije, (fond City committee- *League of Communists of Serbia*) k. 551, f. 1.

⁴³ The relationship between monuments devoted to People’s Liberation Struggle and Yugoslavia’s population is investigated in Max BERGHOLZ, “Među rodoljubima, kupusom, svinjama i varvarima: spomenici i grobovi NOR 1947 – 1965. godine” (Among Patriots, Cabbage, Pigs, and Barbarians: Monuments and Graves to the People’s Liberation War, 1947–1965), in *Godišnjak za društvenu istoriju*, no. 1-3, 2007, pp. 61-82.

⁴⁴ “Zaštita grobova palih boraca” (Protecting the graves of fallen soldiers), in *Crvena zvezda*, no. 98, 9 March 1954, p. 4.

⁴⁵ See Svetozar RAJAK *Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union in the Early Cold War: Reconciliation, Comradeship, Confrontation, 1953-1957*, London: Routledge, 2011.

space, and were confined to the most remote part of the memorial complex; in the planning operations and in the development, attention was paid to the numerical proportion of the fallen soldiers of the two armies that would have found place in the monument⁴⁶.

The cemetery was the final visualisation of the discourse on the liberation of Belgrade as the result of the sacrifice of the ‘sons of the whole of Yugoslavia’, who were buried and honoured with plaques, side by side. On October the 20th, a commemoration attended by thousands of people was organised, in the presence of representatives of the state, of the party and of the army. The speeches held for the occasion assumed particularly patriotic tones, highlighting the sacrifice of young people from all over the country, the value of the struggle for freedom, for the independence of the homeland, and a collective ‘spirit’ that would have established itself throughout history:

So much heroism is indicated by the plaque which tells of a girl or young man who came here to Belgrade, by foot, from a village below Kozara, from Podgmeč, Lika, Kordun, Dalmatia, from all across the country, through constant clashes, to give their life here in Belgrade and in that way to strengthen the brotherhood of our peoples [...] That spirit that carried them through the struggle, in the moment when their life ended, became an integral part of the people’s spirit, which has been created through many decades of fight against foreign invaders. That people’s spirit is created with acts that require sacrifice and is held through the tradition of our peoples. And these heroes gave their lives so that Belgrade could be free.⁴⁷

A flexible paradigm. Towards a diversification of the 20. Oktobar’s identity meanings

In the years following 1954, a stabilisation of the ritual and of the meanings of October the 20th was seen. The places around which the system revolved were still the tomb of heroes on the Kalemegdan fortress, the site of the mass executions of Jajnici and, of course, the memorial complex to the liberators of Belgrade built especially for that purpose. The local sections of the city’s mass organisations continued to participate in the events, while primary and secondary school children of Belgrade repeated the ritual of visiting the graves of the fallen soldiers every year. The associated content retained that Yugoslav dimension defined since 1948; however, the overall character of the celebration, with its

⁴⁶ Letter from the City Council al State Secretary for Foreign Affairs, 11 December 1953, IAB, fond Gradski odbor - Sbnor Beograda (fond City Council – *Sbnor* of Belgrade), k. 58; see also Miroslav JOVANOVIĆ, *op. cit.*, p. 517.

⁴⁷ Blagoje MIRJANIĆ, “Proslava devetogodišnjice oslobođenja Beograda” (The celebration of the ninth anniversary of Belgrade’s liberation), in *Godišnjak Muzeja Grada Beograda*, no. 2, 1955, p. 512.

related activities and events, began in time to assume an increasingly modest tone, in many cases confined to the repetitiveness of the commemorative ritual. Even the media coverage given to the commemorations, much more reduced than in the past, testified how the 20th of October began to see its meaning of ‘celebration of the liberation of all the Yugoslav peoples’ downsized.

Between 1959 and 1961, socialist Yugoslavia celebrated two important anniversaries: forty years since the founding of the Yugoslav Communist Party in 1919 and the twentieth anniversary of the uprising of 1941, the beginning of the People’s Liberation Struggle. The general context of ideological revival also influenced the celebrations for the 20th of October. In 1959 the city celebrated 15 years since the liberation, adorned with hundreds of Yugoslav flags and flags of the party placed in any politically or culturally significant place⁴⁸. To celebrate the event, the city’s theatres offered both a classic of the Serbian tradition such as *Koštana*, converted into an opera by Petar Konjović, and *Glorija*, a drama by Croatian author Ranko Marinković. The climax of the celebrations was, however, represented by the opening of a new memorial cemetery for the fallen fighters of the resistance in occupied Belgrade. The new monument partly changed the topography of the memory connected to the event, shifting the attention from its liberation to those who embodied the resistance in the city. Deliberately designed with a modest architectural structure, it found a place in an even more intimate location within the main city cemetery. ‘Everything has to make reference to Belgrade,’ claimed architect Bogdan Bogdanović in the planning phase, and indeed the whole symbolism reproduced the urban structure⁴⁹. The meaning of the monument was intended as patriotic – in the debate over the choice of name, the definition of ‘patriots’ rather than ‘revolutionaries’ was chosen⁵⁰ - and it integrated itself into the rhetoric of Yugoslav socialist patriotism: ‘the opening of this memorial cemetery dedicated to the organizers, fighters, anti-fascists and all fallen patriots is an expression of gratitude of our peoples towards their best sons who have selflessly given their lives for the freedom of our country, for

⁴⁸ “Plan dekoracije i dekorativnog osvetljenja za proslavu 20. oktobra 1959 g.” (Plan of decorations and decorative lighting for the celebration of the 20th October 1959), IAB, fond Gradski komitet – Savez Komunističke Srbije (fond City committee – *League of Communists of Serbia*), k. 551, f. 1, pp. 1-5.

⁴⁹ “Zapisnik sa sastanka IOGO Sbnor-a Beograda” (Minutes of the Meeting of the IOGO of the Belgrade Sbnor), 20 March 1959, p. 2, IAB, fond Gradski odbor – Sbnor Beograda (fond City Council – *Sbnor of Belgrade*) k.49. In the following years Bogdan Bogdanović became the most important commemorative architect in socialist Yugoslavia. Some of his most famous memorials can be found in Jasenovac, Mostar, Kosovska Mitrovica, Prilep.

⁵⁰ “Zapisnik sa sastanka IOGO Sbnor-a Beograda” (Minutes of the Meeting of the IOGO of the Belgrade Sbnor), 30 September 1959, pp. 2-4, IAB, fond Gradski odbor – Sbnor Beograda (fond City Council – *Sbnor of Belgrade*) k.49. “Spomen Groblje streljanih u okupiranom Beogradu” (Memorial Cemetery for executed people in occupied Belgrade), in *Arhitektura-Urbanizam*, no. 1, 1960, p. 26.

the freedom of Belgrade⁵¹. However, the site maintained a marked local sense, so that even though many of the names appearing on plaques adorning the cemetery were referring to fighters originating from other areas and ‘other peoples’ of Yugoslavia, this aspect was not particularly emphasised.

It was 1961 that suggested a more markedly Yugoslav meaning to the liberation of Belgrade again. The 20th of October, like other celebrations, fell within the broad celebratory program the twentieth anniversary had since the beginning of the insurrection of 1941, which led to the founding of the new Yugoslavia. In the official opening speech of the celebration, Momčilo Moma Marković, a member of the party’s Central Committee, drew directly on the words of Tito in 1944, moving from the statement of a wish to the statement of a fact: ‘Belgrade is now truly a city of all our peoples, from which brotherhood and unity shine.’⁵² The centrality of the capital in the country experienced a new strengthening, and the celebrations regained a certain degree of importance. Once again, for example, emphasis was placed in particular on the participation of brigades that came from all over Yugoslavia to the liberation of the city. Two commemorations of the battle, which assumed a significant mass dimensions, were organised. The first one, entitled ‘On the streets of the liberators of Belgrade’ saw 5,000 relay runners honour the places of the battles and the monuments to the soldiers around the area, accompanied by the citizens throughout the city to the cemetery of the liberators of Belgrade. The ‘On the streets of liberating brigades’ march saw thousands of young people, students, and ‘pioneers’ to march on the city, divided into thirty units that bore the name of several brigades from all over Yugoslavia who took part in the battle. On this occasion, party operatives could see how ‘some 9,000 young people and pioneers have learnt about the story of the brigades, particularly those whose name they carried, and about the overall situation during the course of the battle for the liberation of Belgrade’.⁵³ The cultural program for the celebrations of the anniversary included the National Theatre staging for the first time in Belgrade the drama by the Croatian Mirko Božić, *Pravednik*, directed by host director from Zagreb Davor Šošić. During those days, as part of the musical event *Oktobarski muzički dani*, orchestras, ensembles and soloists from all over the country – from Ljubljana, Zagreb, Sarajevo, and Skopje – performed in Belgrade⁵⁴.

⁵¹ “Otkriveno spomen-groblje streljanim rodoljubima u okupiranom Beogradu” (A memorial cemetery for executed patriots in occupied Belgrade opened), in *Borba*, 21 October 1959, p. 1.

⁵² Marković’s speech can be found in “Beograd je proslavio veliki praznik” (Belgrade celebrated the great holiday), in *Crvena Zvezda*, no. 497, 24 October 1961, pp. 1-2.

⁵³ “Informacija o proslavi 20.oktobra u Beogradu” (Information about the celebration of the 20th of October in Belgrade), 4 November 1961, pp. 1-4, IAB, fond Gradski komitet – Savez Komunističke Srbije (fond City committee – *League of Communists of Serbia*), k. 551; “Putevima oslobodilaca Beograda” (On the roads of Belgrade’s liberators), in *Borba*, 18 October 1961, p. 8.

⁵⁴ “Pravednik Mirka Božića i Idealni muž Oskara Vailda”, (Mirko Božić’s *Pravednik* and Oscar Wilde’s *An Ideal Husband*), in *Borba*, 19 October 1961, p. 7; “Začetak Beogradskog

The climax of the celebrations in 1961 coincided with the reopening, in the presence of Marshal Tito, of the Military Museum of the Yugoslav Army of Kalemegdan. After five years of work, in a building specially renovated for the occasion, a vast and permanent exhibition dedicated to the wartime history of the peoples of Yugoslavia was inaugurated, which, starting from the arrival of Slavic tribes in the Balkans and ending in the People's Liberation War, rebuilt a great and 'convergent' narrative of the common past. The celebration, which took place in the presence of high officials of the federal government and of the party, culminated in the official address by General Otmar Kreačić, who stressed how the museum would have shown 'not only the weapons of the past, but also the man, the fighter who carried those weapons and the epic of a people who for centuries fought for freedom, for independence and for a better life'⁵⁵. The reopening of the museum and the choice to keep it in its historic headquarters contributed to the semantic redefinition of Kalemegdan, and somehow to that of Belgrade itself. The place that represented the city and its history more than any other would no longer have to be the symbol of Serbian national tradition, like it was in previous decades, but it would transform into the exhibition stage of a Yugoslav historical-military narrative lasting centuries.

The celebrations of October the 20th 1961 constituted an opportunity to revive the role of the capital city as a centre for the promotion of a Yugoslav identity narrative. However, this was probably one of the last efforts in this direction. The decision, debated by the most important party operatives, not to hold the main celebration of the twentieth anniversary of the uprising in Belgrade is clear evidence of this⁵⁶. There were some uncertainties on whether the day of the liberation of the city itself deserved to be within the celebrations of the 'jubilee year.'⁵⁷ As part of the overall policy of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia, in line with the decentralisation process that was being discussed, Belgrade's role was destined to change. A transition that, according to some, had been accomplished as early as the mid-sixties⁵⁸. A significant sign

muzičkog festivala" (The beginning of the Belgrade Music Festival), in *Borba*, 18 October 1961, p. 8.

⁵⁵ "Predsednik Tito otvorio stalnu muzejsku izložbu ratne istorije naroda Jugoslavije" (President Tito opened the museum's permanent exhibition of the war history of the peoples of Yugoslavia), in *Borba*, 21 October 1961, p. 1.

⁵⁶ "Diskusija o predlozima i idejama za proslavu dvadesetogodišnjice ustanka naroda Jugoslavije" (Discussion about proposals and ideas for the celebration of the 20th anniversary of the uprising of the peoples of Yugoslavia), 14 November 1959, pp. 1-19, Arhiv Jugoslavije AJ (Archives of Yugoslavia, Belgrade), fond Subnor – Savezni Odbor (Subnor – Federal Committee) k. 35.

⁵⁷ "Sastanak Izvrsnog odbora Gradskog odbora Socijalistickog Saveza" (Meeting of the Executive Board of the City's committee of the Socialist Alliance), 5 December 1960, pp. 9-22, AS, fond *Socijalistički savez radnog naroda Srbije (fond Socialist Alliance of Working People of Serbia)*, k. 52.

⁵⁸ Predrag MARKOVIĆ, *Beograd između Istoka i Zapada 1948-1965* (Belgrade between East and West 1948-1965), Beograd, Službeni list SRJ, 1996, p. 7.

of the changes under way traces back to the celebrations for the October the 20th 1960 - an anniversary celebration without a particular celebratory value⁵⁹ - when the city government promoted the inauguration of a large art exhibition [The October Exhibition] entitled *Oktobarski salon*, attended only by artists from Serbia, the dimension of which remained exclusively republican⁶⁰. The appointment would become in the years to follow an increasingly significant event within the celebration for the 20th of October, contributing more to linking the occasion, and thus the memory of the event, to a more strictly Serbian dimension. The weakening of the Yugoslav meanings of is also evidenced by the gradually improved disposition towards the commemoration of the Soviet contribution to the liberation that, in a context of greater relaxation of the relations with Moscow, was viewed positively by the ideological organs of the party⁶¹. The year 1962 would see, not surprisingly, the burial and commemoration of other Soviet soldiers fallen in the city⁶².

Conclusion

The analysis of the celebratory practices and of the discursive dynamics recorded on the occasion of the 20th of October cannot unravel the complexities of the relations between the Yugoslav Communist Party and the various supranational, national, or local identity-related universes. The deeper analysis in a case study of this type, however, allows a closer look at some features of the political practice of the time. It has been indicated how the celebration of a local but significant event such as the liberation of Belgrade in World War II could have different meanings depending on the time and the particular political context. Negotiations and promotions of public memory and differently articulated identity-related narratives have been noted, sometimes even in contradiction with each other: local, national Serbian, Soviet-internationalist/ Panslav or Yugoslav. The reaction to Soviet pressure led to a shift

⁵⁹ Stenografske beleške sa sastanka sa predsednicima opštinskih odbora SSRN” (Stenographic notes of the meeting with presidents of the municipal committees SSRN), 8 October 1960, p. 62, AS, fond *Socijalistički savez radnog naroda Srbije (fond Socialist Alliance of Working People of Serbia)*, k. 52.

⁶⁰ “Svečano otvoren «Oktobarski salon»” (Solemnly opened «October Salon»), in *Politika*, 20 October 1961 p. 10.

⁶¹ “[...] In the memorial cemetery devoted to Belgrade’s liberators girls don’t lay wreaths on Soviet graves but only on ours”, “Stenografske beleške sa sastanka u Ideološkoj Komisiji CK SKJ” (Stenographic notes of the meeting of the Ideological Commission CK SKJ), 9 January 1960, p. 26, AJ, Fond Komitet Savez Komunista Jugoslavije (fond Central committee – *League of Communists of Yugoslavia*) k. 8.

⁶² “Uz vojničke počasti pali crvenoarmejci sahranjeni na Groblju oslobodilaca Beograda” (The fallen Red Army soldiers were buried with military honours in the Cemetery of the Liberators of Belgrade), in *Crvena Zvezda*, no. 516, 6 March 1962, p. 7.

from an identity narrative marked by internationalism, and at times by pan-Slavism, to an exclusively Yugoslav one, absolutely dominant for some years, also incorporating any specific Serbian identity narrative.

The 'Yugoslav socialist patriotism' never came to take on the national meanings of the corresponding 'socialist patriotisms' present in the so-called people's democracies⁶³. The League of Communists of Yugoslavia did not depart from its official positions of rejection of the existence of a 'Yugoslav nation' under construction, an idea which it had already opposed in the years between the two wars and against which it had built part of its own legitimacy. However, in the process of strengthening the state and the leadership, the patriotic meaning of some events and the associated promotion of a Yugoslavism that, especially in certain international political conjunctures, would consolidate the unity of the country, were not given up. Quite often, this identity narrative did not withhold the use of images and rhetoric traditionally associated with the national discourse: the love and sacrifice for the homeland, the link between land and blood, the use of a family vocabulary (sons, brothers and sisters), the construction of a common past of struggle for freedom and independence. In some cases even the ideological formula 'our peoples' was replaced with 'our people'.

The context of Belgrade provides for a peculiar case study, where the distances between centre and periphery, between federal, republican, and local levels are reduced to a minimum. The policy promoted by the summit has undoubtedly a much greater capacity for direct action than anywhere else in the country, passing through and reaching more easily the different levels. Particularly in the first half of the fifties, the celebrations for the 20th of October highlighted how in the *state-building* process the fundamental representative character of the capital city could not be conveyed only through socialist ideology, but needed to become stronger through the insistence on the historical, cultural, and patriotic relationship with the rest of Yugoslav citizens. The way in which identity narratives and dynamics of this type replicated themselves outside the capital city, in more remote contexts would, however, deserve more specific analysis. Belgrade would continue to host 'Yugoslav' events until the disintegration of the country, but the loss of momentum of Socialist Yugoslavism and the changing political context - not least a degree of internationalisation of the city's role, together with the success of the Non-Aligned Movement – would change its image to some extent.

⁶³ See Martin MEVIUS (eds.), *Socialist nations the communist quest for national legitimacy in Europe, op. cit.*