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Report
Visegrad Fellowship June-July 2019

Research Project:
Life of Images - Visual Memory of Yugoslav Wars

Wars in former Yugoslavia were described as “televsual war(s)” (Michalski and Gow, 2007) played on television almost simultaneously as they proceed on the ground. The global mediascape of 90s with the 24/7 TV news network channels ensured that the wars in former Yugoslavia were extensively reported in the western and regional media, creating particular visual representation of the wars. And yet, the lack of research of visuals and their importance both during and after the war is striking. Apart from an excellent article about Ron Haviv's "Bijeljina image" in which Vladimir Petrović explored the image following its creation, circulation (in and outside the courtroom) and consumption reconstructing the life of photography, as well as crimes of depicted persons and their superiors (Petrovic, 2015) and Michalski, Gow and Cerr analysis of the importance of war images, their salience and importance outside the courtroom (Michalski et al, 2013) there is considerable lack of research on what was the role of images in collective memory of Yugoslav wars. This is not to say that importance of visuals was not acknowledged immediately: on the contrary, this mediation of the war through the real-time images of conflict was recognized as unprecedented moral obligation of audiences which are becoming compliances by the sheer fact of the witnessing (Moeller 1999; Campbell, 2002; Shandler, 1999). Images were seen as particularly strong argument for the intervention, and hesitation of politicians to start the humanitarian intervention against Serbian forces was interpreted as failure of international community, European Union and finally images, as they, in the end failed to change the policy toward Balkans of western powers. Moeller coined the term "compassion fatigue" to capture saturation with images of disasters and atrocities in media in end making no effect on the actions (Moeller, 1999:40). Even if unable to change the policy, they, to use Sontag's words haunt us - to remember becomes ability to recall a picture, not a story (Sontag, 2004). Still, relation between **visuals and knowledge** about the war on the one hand, and **visuals and moral obligation to act** was in the center of media reports during the wars in Bosnia and Croatia.

No less important were the images from the conflict in the local media, where persuasive power of images was more effective, leading thousands of volunteers to inscribe to military forces. Watching television and deciding to go in war became common trope in the films (Pretty Village, Pretty Flame), documentaries (Lazar Lalic, Vukovar, OSA-307-7076) and even perpetrator's memoirs (Lukić, 2011). The role of regional media for forging the war was already addressed by number of scholars (Thompson, 1999, Kurspahic, 2003), but again, without in-depth focus on visual as specific mode.

To summarize, during the war, atrocity images were circulating in the regional media, forging hatred and revenge, and in the international media, requiring the humanitarian intervention to put an end to atrocities. The end of the war was not the end of the atrocity images' life - they continued to circulate in media, this time in providing a visual narrative of atrocities prosecuted in the ICTY. Reports on the trials commonly used atrocity videos from the war, now in the context of justice done and perpetrators punished. The same atrocity images were used in dozens of documentaries about the post-war justice (BBC Cry from the Grave, the ICTY Outreach documentaries on Prijedor, Srebrenica, Dubrovnik to name few).

Even more importantly, in the ICTY, the atrocity images turned from media material into evidence of crimes, and they were introduced by prosecution in number of trials. This change of the status of documents was followed by specific judicial treatment of footages, requiring the testimonies of photographers, journalists and experts in order to determine their origin, authenticity and validity. It was not uncommon to identify victims from the footage, and include them as witnesses in the trials.

In short, three main functions of atrocity images could be distinguished:

- (i) Atrocity images during the war, facilitating different moral obligations based on the knowledge and emotions they evoked;
- (ii) Atrocity images as judicial evidence about atrocities in the ICTY;
- (iii) Facilitating post-conflict moral obligation to remember.

This project aims at discerning visual memory of Yugoslav wars as set of iconic images of war, by tracing the life and genealogy of iconic atrocity images in different mnemonic communities from the moment they were created till today.

As an entry point into the research about visual memory of Yugoslav wars I selected five atrocity footages, namely ITN footage of Omarska and Trnoplje camps, Srebrenica footage, Scorpions footage, fall of Vukovar and Operation Storm footage.

The ITN footage was taken by television team led by Penny Marshall, who visited Omarska and Trnopolje concentration camps in August 1992. There is hardly a scholarly work on war in Bosnia not commenting on the image of emaciated body of Fikret Alić in front of the barbed wire, which invoked the Holocaust analogy (Cambpell, 2002; Shanlder, 1999). Some authors even argue that this footage "was one of very few clear instances where government policy was changed and shaped by television news images" (Michalski and Gow, 2007:122), namely the decision to deploy armed forces if necessary to assist in humanitarian relief in Bosnia. Only two months later the UN SC adopted Resolution 780 deciding to establish Commission of Experts to investigate the crimes in former Yugoslavia, which would subsequently lead to creation of the ICTY.

According to Lene Hansen, two competing discourses on wars were present in the US and Britain media: A Balkan discourse, ascribing equal responsibility of all parties in conflict, and complexity of ethnic identities and military goals, and genocide discourse claiming the asymmetry of power and criminal responsibility of Serbian side engaged in ethnic cleansing and mass rapes. The prevalence of the former could be traced to the August 1992, when images from the camps were broadcasted, and journalist on the ground like Christiane Amanpour, Roy Gutman, Samantha Power,

and politicians like George W. Bush and Margaret Tatcher all joined the outcry against genocidal practices of Serbian forces (Moeller, 1999: 257-267).

Another iconic footage was taken by the Serbian journalist Zoran Petrovic Pirocanac as he followed the Serbian forces entering Srebrenica, UN protected zone on 13th and 14th July 1995. The footage was broadcasted on Studio B, and it was included as evidence in all Srebrenica related trials in the ICTY (Krstic, Mladic, Karadzic, Popovic, Beara, Pandurovic). Zoran Petrovic testified in the ICTY on 3rd May 2012 in Karadzic trial, and in December 2007 in the trial to Popović et al, offering pacifying interpretation of events in Srebrenica where VRS forces were evacuating Muslim population, with no selection, no tensions and no violence (Sense, 06.12.2007. What Shocked Belgrade Journalist in Srebrenica).

The third iconic image of Bosnian war is the Scorpions footage, displayed during Milošević trial on 1st June 2005 showing the murder of six Bosniaks in July 1995 after the fall of Srebrenica. It was followed by significant, albeit short lived, outcry in Serbia, requiring punishing of perpetrators. The circulation of this footage inside and outside the courtroom proved to be one of the most significant moments of combating denial in Serbia (Petrovic, 2014), while it according to Nettelfield and Wagner "clearly tied Serbia to the genocide" (Nettelfield and Wagner, 2014: 117). Nevertheless a trial of direct perpetrators in Serbia managed to downplay the murder of six Bosniaks into an incident of paramilitary forces, safely removed from the Serbian state and institutions (Ristic, 2016).

Apart from these three videos from the Bosnian war, two footages from the war in Croatia were pre-selected, namely footage taken after the fall of Vukovar on 18th November 1991, and operation Storm on 5th August 1995. In these two cases additional research is needed in order to establish the authors, number of different video recordings and how they circulated afterwards.

The selection of five footages rested on unequal information about footages, their creation and importance in media. Moreover it was arbitrary - it excluded vast number of visual material produced during the war, based on the impression on circulation from scholarly literature, media reports on the trials during the last two decades, as well as atrocity images used in documentaries produced by the ICTY (e.g. Srebrenica, Prijedor, Visegrad).

Nevertheless, these five footages shared similar life paths due to which they could be taken as icons of war: intense public attention upon first appearance and frequent circulation afterwards in the media reports during war. Then they entered the ICTY courtroom as the evidence of crimes, where they were meticulously examined and investigated. Finally they returned in post-conflict societies through documentaries and media reports about the ICTY trials and justice. In each of these instances these visuals obtained slightly different meaning, which changed together with their function and context. As the general topic of my research is visual memory of Yugoslav wars, looking at the role of images in creating memory of war in Croatia, Bosnia and Serbia, there are three main questions of interest during the research in the OSA Archive:

(i) Mapping out war imagery during the war

Arbitrary selection of five iconic images necessitated the question of other images used during the war in western and regional media: are there images with similar life-path which I didn't select? Are there images which were not picked up by local commemorations, western media or the ICTY, hence falling into oblivion?

(ii) What kind of image of war was created by usage of these images? What aspects of war are left out by prevalence of iconic images, and what aspects of war remained untold or unexplained?

(iii) What kind of meaning was ascribed to these images in different mnemonic communities? If Srebrenica genocide is still contested in Serbian public, what was the role of images in perpetuating denial? Were these images not shown? Falsified with the caption? Transformed into western propaganda? Judging by the western and Bosniak media reports on Mladić and Karadžić trials, which include not only ITN, Srebrenica and Scorpion footages, but also interviews with the victims and relatives of those depicted in these images, from Ramo Osmanović's wife, to Fikret Alić, these images have become iconic representations of Bosnian war, while victims from these images became embodiments of victimhood. In Serbia, both images and victims are unknown.

For the first function of images, namely war footage (i) I examined the OSA archive fond 350-1-1, a collection of records of the International Monitor Institute, Europe (Balkan archive, 1990-2001).

The second, evidence function of images (ii) is going to be part of the ICTY archive research, examining the trials at which these images were introduced as evidence. For example, ITN footage was used in Tadic, Stakic and Karadžić trial. Ed Vulliamy, a journalist of Guardian who entered the camps in western Bosnia with Penny Marshal, testified in June 1996 at Dusko Tadic trial, than in September 2002 at Stakic trial, and finally in November 2011 at Karadzic trial, every time giving detailed account about the production of footage, context in which it was taken and their impression on the situation in the camps.

Finally, for the post-war usage of atrocity videos, I looked at four fonds in OSA archive: OSA 307 - VIN, OSA 308 Monitoring Yugoslav TV 1996-1999, OSA 309 - Monitoring Bosnian TV 1996-1998, OSA 310 - Monitoring Croatian TV 1996 - 1998.

I Atrocity images during the war (1991-1995)

The first fond I started with in the archive was HU OSA 350-1-1 Records of the International Monitor Institute, Europe (Balkan archive, 1990-2001). It is a collection of material created by the Institute consisting of western media reports (ABC, CNN, BBC, Chanel 4, ITN, some French and German channels), as well as Bosnian, Croatian and Serbian media reports during the war. To my surprise, I learned that 350 fond also contained the visual archive created by Bassiouni's commission, which not only collected documents, reports and media material for the final report to UN SC, but also created it's own visual archive. The visual archive of commission itself is part of the HU OSA 304 fond - Records of the International Human Rights Law Institute Relating to the Conflict in the Former Yugoslavia, with the subfond HU OSA 304-0-16 Video Recordings Relating to the Conflict in the Former Yugoslavia. It consists of

237 items, and in order to identify their place within the 350 fund, one would have to reexamine all 237 VHS items, because only few of them could be identified by the title or description (for example 43, 44, 45, 47,48, 49 in 304 might correspond to 206, 036, 037, 039, 012, 041 in 350 respectively).

Even more surprisingly, the commission created it's own short documentary, extensively using atrocity images from western and domestic media (item 071 in 350-1 fond). In explaining the reason for such visual report, at the beginning of the footage Bassiouni says that he has decided to add "a visual dimension, which might serve as part of audio-visual record of commission's work. Also because viewing the footage of investigative tapes made by various television reporters, it was very clear that the very vivid images that you are about to see are much **more telling** than any written reports that we or others might produce." (OSA-350-1-071, International Human Rights Law Institute, De Paul University, 1993, 50 sec -1min 30sec). It is unclear who directed this video, where it was broadcasted and when. Similar uncertainty about the documents, their origin, creator, date of air is common to some other items too, making it necessary to engage in tracing their genealogy, especially in the case of "raw material" which was obtained by commission from different sources on the ground, from international organizations visiting combat areas, to civilians.

Working with digitalized collection of the fond, it was relatively easy to identify and search videos with footages I selected - items included depiction of visuals in the footage, while digitalized format was easy to search. There were number of media reports which included preselected footage. For example, camps footages, starting with the ITN report from August 1992 (HU_OSA_00000012), were included in following material: *Bosnia: The Untold Story*, 1993 (HU_OSA_00000004), *ABC Nightline: Bosnia: The Hidden Horrors*, November 1992 (HU_OSA_00000001), *CNN News: Collage of Six Reports*, 1993 (HU_OSA_00000031), *ABC-Nightline: US Bosnian Policy: Politics, Careers & Principles* (HU_OSA_00000041), *Chicago TV: The Atrocity Hunter*, 27. January 1994 (HU_OSA_00000092), *The Peacekeepers: how the UN Failed in Bosnia*, 24. April 1995, produced in 1994 (HU_OSA_00000294) to name only few reports which appeared through out the war. As it could be seen from the list, the date of broadcasting, as well as the date of production are not always clear - it requires further research to establish who, when and where produced these materials and when they were broadcasted.

The preselected footages from the Bosnian war were extensively used in western media, but there is a whole set of atrocity footages also used and circulated depicting other crimes, like images from Manjaca camp, Sarajevo sniper attacks, and number of massacres in Sarajevo. For example Breadline massacre (or the massacre in Vase Miskina street) on 27th May 1992 was used in items 350 - 004, 111, 212, 273, 626), Markale massacre on 5th February 1994 in 175 and 294, while number of documentaries dealing with Sarajevo during the siege used the images of sniper attacks, shelling, hits of the civilians in the street etc. An important correction to the preselected images is to include footage from Manjaca, which is used equally

extensively, and which had its own genealogy in becoming an icon of concentration camps.

In general, Western media reports which use atrocity visuals, as well as archival descriptions of the items, direct toward what Lene Hansen calls "genocide discourse": roles of conflicted parties are divided between perpetrators and victims while Holocaust analogy is used to explain the war in Bosnia, understood primarily as a Greater Serbia project and inviting for intervention. In creation of genocide discourse images from concentration camps - Manjaca, Trnopolje and Omarska played crucial role, while the Srebrenica footage in 1995 and subsequent ICTY trials, finally confirmed that Serbian forces were committing genocide.

Corrective to the two iconic images of Croatian war is to add images of Dubrovnik attacks in the Western media, which were also used extensively during the war, and in subsequent trials (e.g. Strugar trial 2001-2008), as well as in the ICTY documentary "Dubrovnik and Crimes against Cultural Heritage".

Beside international media and Bassiouni's commission, National TV stations (RTS, HRT, BHT) as well as state institutions (the State Commission for Gathering Facts on War Crimes in Bosnia-Herzegovina) were equally important for the collection and dissemination of atrocity images in the region. Nevertheless, material they produced and circulated overlaps only partially with the images used by international actors. For example, there is large number of images of murdered civilians in Croatia broadcasted in RTS, e.g. Gospić massacre which was included in the video footage created by Bassiouni, but it later disappeared with no commemorations in Serbia or Croatia and no trials to follow them. Similar was the fate of images of attacks on and Yugoslav People's Army (JNA) soldiers in Croatia, also reported by RTS later to disappear as there were no trials and no commemorations for the soldiers of nonexistent state fighting a non-existent political cause. Similarly, highly disturbing graphic footage of massacres in Sarajevo, and wounded in hospitals used in the material created by Bosnian commission, were rarely taken by western media. If these footages were used in subsequent trials for crimes during the siege of Sarajevo is a question that needs to be answered from the work on the ICTY Archive.

Finally there was number of human rights NGOs (Human Rights Watch, Amnesty, Feed the Children, Physicians for Human Rights) who were engaged in creating and disseminating visual reports about the atrocities during the war. Almost without the exception they used the same atrocity images, arguing in favor of intervention and help to the victims of war. At the same time, despite number of human rights NGOs operating on the local level, I didn't come across specific visual material they produced in the archive. Some of these organizations were active in collecting visual material, for example Humanitarian Law Center in Belgrade has a large collection of VHS material, recordings of different TV stations programs during the war (due to the lack of time I looked only eight tapes from 1991 and 1992 of this OSA-338 fond).

Finally, a number of intellectuals engaged as moral entrepreneurs (Susan Sontag, Elie Wiesel, Bernard Henry-Levy, Zubin Mehta) were fighting disinterest of western public and politics, speaking publicly and requesting intervention. Sontag produced a theater play in Sarajevo (video about this play is available in digital fond 350

HU_OSA_00000172), Henry-Levy directed a documentary on war in Bosnia (HU_OSA_00000295), while Elie Wiesel visited camps in Bosnia, appealing on the conciseness of the world to stop the atrocities (HU_OSA_00000041). In all of these cases, atrocity videos were edited in the reports.

The number of actors engaged in the creation and circulation of atrocity footage during the war, difference between images used by local and international actors, as well as additional images which need to be taken into account, will necessary lead toward refining the research question, deciding on criterion for selection and focusing on particular aspect which is going to be investigated.

II Postwar usage of atrocity images in the region (1996-1999)

For the post-war usage of atrocity videos, I looked four different fonds:

HU OSA 307-0-2 Television Programs "Weekly Independent News" VIN, OSA 308 Monitoring Yugoslav TV 1996-1999, OSA 309 - Monitoring Bosnian TV 1996-1998, and the OSA 310 - Monitoring Croatian TV 1996 - 1998.

From 83 VIN items, I selected 15 videos directly related to the war - two in 1993, four in 1994, four in 1995 and five in 1996. As these items are digitalized and well described it was easy to decide, watch and partially transcribe items of interest. As for the news in Bosnia, Croatia and Serbia, I watched around 40 VHS tapes from Serbia, 53 from Bosnia and 40 from Croatia. In the selection I followed commemoration days, days of independence or day of Republic as well as trials (Dusko Tadic, Drazen Erdemovic) and arrests (Zdravko Mucic, Hasim Delic, Esad Landzo, Radoslav Krstic). Silence in Serbia about the wars in Bosnia and Croatia was in full swing in 1996, when not even operation Storm was mentioned while fall of Vukovar disappeared from the Dnevnik. On 11th July 1997 main informative program Dnevnik on RTS starts with commemoration of 13th July as Day of Uprising in Montenegro in 1941 (VHS #73). At the same time, BHT in Bosnia dedicated almost half of the program to commemoration of Srebrenica, noting that the SFOR arrests of the ICTY indictments in Prijedor is only a prelude for the arrests of Karadžić and Mladić responsible for atrocities in Srebrenica (11 July 1997, VHS #403). This report used images from Omarska and Trnopolje in depicting the atrocities in Prijedor in 1992. In Bosnia atrocity images are widely used on days of anniversaries e.g. on the 1st March 1997 Day of independence, images from Vase Miskina street massacre, ITN footage, and Srebrenica footage (#273), while commemorations of Srebrenica always use Srebrenica footage (11th July 1996 tape #37, 11th July 1997 tape #403, and 11th July 1998 tape #769). Reports from the ICTY on the ongoing trials to Tadic and Erdemovic also included atrocity images - for example, on the 29. November 1996, TV report of Erdemovic judgment (VHS #180) includes selection of man in Srebrenica, evacuation of women and children, and Mladic's statement. Similarly, in Croatia fall of Vukovar is yearly commemorated on 18th of November always including visuals of destroyed Vukovar and columns of refugees leaving the town. Operation Storm, celebrated as victory of Croatian forces in liberating the state is presented in TV news using a vast amount of images from the war (in 1997 #466, in 1998 #629), but careful not to present one image of refugee columns and Serbian

civilians leaving Croatia. Of course, detailed analysis of the meaning attached to these images in reports, and how they change during the following two decades will be the next step following systematic coding, analysis and interpretation of material. This report provides just an overview of material I consulted and preliminary impressions during the research in archive, mainly focusing on questions of material selection and presence of atrocity footage. In the light of preliminary findings the research question needs to be tuned and clear criterion for selection of material to be developed. Although extensive circulation of five preselected footages was confirmed, number of other equally important iconic footages appeared, while some of the atrocity footages from local media seem later to disappear. It could be asked to which extent each of different mnemonic communities selected particular sets of visuals to represent the war and organized remembrance around these images. Further material research and analyses are needed to establish how, in each of these communities, images were entering and falling out from public sphere, what kind of portrayal of war they created and how these portrayals changed in the post-war years. As a preliminary research for the future project on Visual Memory of Yugoslav wars, the research in the OSA Archive was extremely helpful. Although the main path of the project is still to be decided, there are several directions in which the project could be developed, as indicated in this report. I would like to thank the Visegrad Fund and the Open Society Archive for supporting this research, and especially Csaba Szilagyi for helping me navigate through the archives, and sharing his knowledge and literature on Bassiouni's commission and its visual archive.