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IDEOLOGICAL USE OF MEMORIAL PLAQUES DEDICATED TO GAVRILO PRINCIP IN THE UPBRINGING AND EDUCATION OF GENERATIONS OF YOUTH IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

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Abstract: This paper analyzes newspaper articles dealing with Sarajevo assassination published in mid-1945 in the Sarajevo daily newspaper Oslobođenje, showing how the narrative of this event and its main protagonist, Gavrilo Princip, were presented with a simplified, one-sided interpretation that guided the upbringing and education of young people. Although the attitudes toward this event may be followed throughout the 20th century and different political regimes, this paper focuses primarily on the second half of the century. Although it offers only a partial picture, the paper sheds light on a time devoid of dialogue and the right to differing scholarly interpretations of historical events.

After the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina (1992-1995), many visitors (journalists and various researchers) approached educators in Sarajevo's primary and secondary schools with a question: "How do you interpret the Sarajevo assassination today, and what does Gavrilo Princip mean to you: was he a national hero or an assassin?" This was at a time when one could already say openly that Princip had committed an act of terrorism. Still, such was not the case in that part of Bosnia and Herzegovina named the *Republika Srpska* by the Dayton Agreement of 1995, where the teaching of history, and perhaps even more the general public, continued to interpret Gavrilo Princip as a national hero – no longer as a Yugoslav hero but only a Serbian one. During socialist Yugoslavia, many generations were educated in the narrative of

Gavrilo Princip as a supranational hero who had fought foreign power in Bosnia and Herzegovina, but without additional explanation, such as whether he had been fighting for the statehood of Bosnia and Herzegovina or for the expansion of Serbia. This is only one example of history teaching as an indicator of a broad approach to history in Bosnia and Herzegovina after the Second World War. The generations that took an active part in wars in Yugoslavia in the 1990s had learned history in a socialist education system, and during the war, the knowledge they had acquired was incorporated into nationalistic efforts to rectify historic wrongs that then turned into violence.

It is well known that the socialist educational system adopted the regime's official position that mandated an interpretation of history that applied to all citizens of SFRY. Besides, the attempts to establish supranational loyalty to the Yugoslav community were implemented at all educational levels as the most important means to promote statehood and a feeling of supranational belonging. Although there are many examples that may illustrate this, this paper focuses on a particular case to explore the starting point to any challenge to officially-sanctioned viewpoints. One may analyse this using materials published in daily newspapers immediately after the liberation of Sarajevo, which put history in the service of the political establishment. At the time after the World War Second, the victors claimed the moral right to success and believed that history belonged to them; it made no sense to grant others the right to interpret history, because they believed that no such interpretation would lead to progress. In reality, the state established control of historical knowledge, and everything had to correspond to an interpretation of the conflict as a struggle between the communist partisans on the one hand, and the Nazi and fascist occupiers and domestic quislings on the other. Events and individuals from the past were elaborated with the aim of making them fit the needs of the new authorities. The communist regime sought to maintain its ideological and material supremacy in the society by mandating interpretations of different events and valorizing different individuals. Any other interpretation was considered an act against the state.

The instructions on how to interpret the Sarajevo assassination and understanding of the person and acts of Gavrilo Princip first appeared in early May 1945. The daily *Oslobođenje* published a series of articles meant as directives and guidelines for constructing "proper" views of the event. For journalists, these articles were meant as instructions on the spirit, topics and manner of their writing; to academic researchers, the articles presented an interpretation of historic events that scholars were required to promote. Under the title "Revealing the memorial plaque to Gavrilo Princip", these articles from mid-1945 assigned great significance and social value to the assassination. They placed particular emphasis on linking the assassination with the First Youth Congress. "As a part of the First Youth Congress, on May

7, at four o'clock in the afternoon, a large crowd gathered in the Park of the Emperor Dušan for the unveiling of the memorial plaque to the great national hero and martyr, fighter for freedom and brotherhood of all peoples of Yugoslavia – Gavrilo Princip. Joining the gathering with banners and flags were numerous young people whose deeds during the previous four (wartime) years proved that they had deservingly followed ideals of our young hero, Gavrilo Princip, and members of the organization *Mlada Bosna (Young Bosnia)*”.¹

In view of such a gathering, it was impossible to initiate any scholarly dialogue, because such discussion would have raised too many questions, including how it was possible that in a society of “people’s democracy”, the Atmejdani was named the Park of Emperor Dušan”, the Miljacka River bank was named after Vojvoda (*Duke*) Stepa, the Square of the 6th November (...), and an assassin was given attributes of a national hero to be admired by progressive youth. Important political figures of the time attended the gathering, lending it legitimacy. As *Oslobodjenje* reported, “the gathering was attended by the President of the National Assembly of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Vojislav Kecmanović Ph.D., members of the Peoples’ Government of Bosnia and Herzegovina headed by its Vice President, comrade Rodoljub Čolaković, members of the National Assembly, representatives of the Land and the USAOBiH (United Alliance of Antifascist Youth of Bosnia-Herzegovina), the youth delegates from the provinces and the delegates of the youth of Greece and brotherly Bulgaria”.² The mere presence of such high-ranking persons at this event was horrifying to anyone who might have had different ideas. To validate the authenticity of the event, the “Gathering was opened by comrade Braco Kosovac and he passed the floor to comrade Dragoslav Ljubibratić, one of Princip’s collaborators and a member of the revolutionary organization *Young Bosnia*, while underlining the important role of the youth of Bosnia and Herzegovina – the Princip’s youth, inspired by the ideas of brotherhood and unity of all peoples of Bosnia and Herzegovina, all peoples of Yugoslavia, and emphasized their fight against then reactionary politicians who had advocated a compromise with Vienna. He concluded his speech with the words: “By his ideas, Gavrilo Princip belongs to the young generation of today, which has finally and completely realized the same aspirations Gavrilo Princip initiated in his time”.³

¹ “Otkrivanje spomen-ploče Gavrilo Principu“. *Oslobodjenje*, Year III, No. 45, Sarajevo, 9 May 1945, 5.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*

In order to show that, apart from the Serbs, the person of Gavrilo Princip is perceived as heroic by the youth from Croat and Muslim peoples, comrade Cvijetin Mijatović took the floor, followed by two youthful speakers – the Croat Mile Čačić and a Muslim girl, Nađa Biser”.⁴ Adhering to a detailed script, the event ended with a commemoration ceremony. “After the speeches, a long line was formed that continued to the historical place of “Princip’s Bridge”, where the bullet shot by Gavrilo Princip announced death to all those who attempted to enslave our peoples. The Gavrilo Princip memorial plaque, removed by the hated occupier in the first days of the occupation, was replaced by a new memorial plaque in the same place. It was unveiled by comrade Borko Vukobrat, a youth from Bosansko Grahovo, with the words: “I am proud and greatly honoured as a countryman of Gavrilo Princip to have this opportunity to unveil this memorial plaque to his name at this first day of the First Youth Congress of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Gavrilo Princip, who assassinated Ferdinand, was only the first in a line of many national heroes. Gavrilo Princip showed heroism when he leapt at the car with gun in hand. Grahovo also gave birth to new heroes of today, who leapt at the tanks in the same way. On their arrival to Sarajevo, the Schwabe (pejorative for German) gangs removed the memorial plaque to Gavrilo Princip. But those heroes, inspired by ideas of Gavrilo Princip and his comrades from *Young Bosnia*, fought and struggled once again to liberate our dear city of Sarajevo and all of our homeland. The ideas for which Gavrilo Princip fought, became reality, and today we are again unveiling this memorial plaque to Gavrilo Princip and other heroes. May there be eternal glory and thanks to the national hero Gavrilo Princip.

After these words, comrade Borko Vukobrat revealed the memorial plaque containing the following text written in golden letters: AS A SIGN OF ETERNAL GRATITUDE TO GAVRILO PRINCIP AND HIS COMRADES – FIGHTERS AGAINST GERMAN OCCUPIERS, THIS PLAQUE IS DEDICATED BY THE YOUTH OF BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA. Sarajevo, May 7, 1945”.⁵ If one counts the number of times the name of the leading hero was mentioned, it becomes clear that the keyword and the significance and merits ascribed to Princip constituted a direct message to anyone who might entertain a different interpretation. The paper reported, “Those present followed the unveiling of the memorial plaque by declaring, “Glory to the un-dead national hero Gavrilo Princip and his comrades”!⁶ This article in

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Ibid.*

Oslobođenje was followed by others that further affirmed the officially-prescribed narrative of the Sarajevo Assassin.

In the same issue of the *Oslobođenje*, on the following page, the official version of the assassination was presented in great detail: “On June 28, 1914, Gavrilo Princip killed the nephew of Emperor Franz Joseph, the heir to the throne Ferdinand and his wife, announcing the uncompromising fight of the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina against the Austro-Hungarian conquerors. The vindictive shot fired on the bank of the Miljacka River spoke of inextinguishable hatred toward the foreign power and love for the enslaved homeland borne in the hearts of the progressive Bosnian-Herzegovinian youth. The heroic accomplishment of Gavrilo Princip inspired hundreds and thousands of young sons of Bosnia and Herzegovina to join the liberation war against fascist conquerors and their servants to fight for a better future and for a happier, brotherly Bosnia and Herzegovina like the one Gavrilo Princip had also wanted, and for which he gave his life”.⁷

The next task of the article was to incorporate the slogan of brotherhood and unity and to establish continuity between the Second World War and this fundamental communist slogan. This was done in the following way: “As early as the time of the arduous and unequal fight against the enemy, through numerous heroic deeds of young patriots, the brotherhood and unity of Serbian, Croatian and Muslim youth was forged. Today, the united youth of Bosnia and Herzegovina are experiencing brotherly love for the homeland based on the example of Gavrilo Princip and his comrades. His deeds taught heroism to the national heroes Slobodan Princip, Pavle Goranin, Slaviša Vajner Čiča, Danilo Đokić and many more of Tito’s brave youth. The torch lighted by Gavrilo’s shots on that historic day of June burned for years for the fighters for justice and freedom, and it flared up during the national liberation war with inexhaustible power and the heroism of our youth whose numerous heroic deeds and selfless sacrifices inscribed the brightest pages of our history. Gavrilo’s shots announced the uncompromising fight against the foreigners – for freedom, national independence and a better life in which all our peoples would live together and in happiness”.⁸ There was not a single word about the unrest, protests, insults and other undesired events caused by the assassination.⁹

⁷ “U znak vječne zahvalnosti Gavrilu Principu i njegovim drugovima“. *Oslobođenje*, Year III; No. 45, Sarajevo, 9 May, 1945, 6.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ Further information is to be found in the proceedings of the academic conference “Sarajevo 1914 – Devedeset godina poslije“ (*Sarajevo 1914 – Ninety Years Later*) held on 28 June

By equating Gavrilo Princip with national heroes of the Second World War, these articles suggested the assassins were Tito's heroes and Tito's youth and delivering a clear message to anyone with a different opinion on the assassin. The vocabulary used in this text was identical to that used in propaganda regarding other events, thereby emphasizing that this was the Party's position. As in other narratives in the post-war period, the Kingdom of Yugoslavia was disparaged: "The dream of Gavrilo Princip and his comrades did not come true. The year 1918 did not bring to our peoples, especially the peoples in Bosnia and Herzegovina, any greater freedom or happiness or a better life. The Old Yugoslavia was a prison of peoples in which the peoples of Bosnia and Herzegovina were denied all rights. Today, after four years of the war of liberation, the peoples of Bosnia and Herzegovina are celebrating their own holiday, their liberation. The dream of Gavrilo Princip, Gaćinović, Čubrilović, and others who had given their young lives for a homeland for all peoples of Bosnia and Herzegovina, is coming true. Sarajevo, where the first retaliatory shots at Germanic conquerors were fired, became the capital of the first Bosnian-Herzegovinian government. Its streets echo with the sounds of marching soldiers of Tito's Army, who will remain faithful guardians of the legacy of the war of liberation for which the peoples of our country made countless sacrifices. May Gavrilo Princip and his comrades remain eternally in glory!"¹⁰ These proclamations sent a clear message to scholars, history textbook writers, and the general public, leaving no room for dialogue, since anyone questioning them might be considered an "enemy of the people."

To provide a scientific basis for this view, *Oslobođenje* published an article two days later called "Lik Veselina Masleše – publiciste, naučnika i javnog radnika" ("The Personage of Veselin Masleša – publicist, scholar, and public figure"). At that time, *Borba* (published in Belgrade) was the main Party newsletter, and articles published there were frequently republished in the daily newspapers of the Republics. The papers' interpretation of the Sarajevo events of 1914 was therefore disseminated throughout Yugoslavia, most likely under directives from the Party's central headquarters. *Borba* reported, "Veselin Masleša was born on 20 April 1906 and later became a member of the young generation of Marxists who devoted their skills to serving the proletariat. Originally from Banja Luka, he was educated first in Bosanska Krajina, then in Frankfurt, where he studied political science and Marxism. After that he went to Paris, but he was soon expelled from France because of his political

2004. Selected papers from the conference were published in *Sarajevo 1914*, a special edition of journal *Prilozi* 34 (2005): 13-78.

¹⁰ "U znak vječne zahvalnosti Gavrilu Principu i njegovim drugovima". *Oslobođenje*, Year III; No. 45, Sarajevo, 9 May, 1945, 6

activities. Upon his return, he was arrested and kept in prison until the capitulation of Yugoslavia in 1941. Masleša had spent a short time in Osijek and then moved to Belgrade where, in addition to his active involvement with illegal organizations, he wrote prolifically. Various newspapers and journals published his literary criticism and other articles on economics, sociology and history. Masleša also became an editor and translator. His editing of the second volume of Marx's *Capital*, translated by Moša Pijade (who was at the time in prison in Sremska Mitrovica) is generally considered his most important work. As an experienced scholar, he also published his own original studies in *Kultura*, most notably the works 'Mlada Bosna' (Young Bosnia), with a forward by Milovan Đilas; and 'Svetozar Marković,' with the foreword by Radovan Zgodović."¹¹

Masleša's published biography conformed fully to the requirements of a scholar who could provide an authoritative, incontrovertible interpretation of the life and deeds of Gavrilo Princip. The details of his life corresponded with the image of an ideal scholar at the time: educated, persecuted by the authorities, scientifically versatile, knowledgeable of publishing, and so on. Veselin Masleša was presented as highly knowledgeable of the terrorist organization Young Bosnia. His biography was further enhanced with the vitally important element of his service during the national liberation war: "From the first days of war, Veselin Masleša joined the ranks of people's fighters. He performed a wide variety of functions. As a journalist, he centered his activities on liberation and combat. He was member of political department of the 4th Montenegrin Brigade and Head of the Propaganda Section of the AVNOJ (*Antifašističko vijeće narodnog oslobođenja Jugoslavije – Anti-Fascist Council of the National Liberation of Yugoslavia*). At the first session of AVNOJ he was elected to its the executive committee. He was killed in the Fifth Enemy Offensive in Montenegro. In his foreward to Masleša's book *Young Bosnia*, Milovan Đilas concluding by summarizing Masleša's importance as a publicist and scholar: 'Veselin Masleša is an example of a tireless cultural and political worker. His life is the epitome of those intellectuals who remained faithful to their people and to progressive social thought. He and others suffered harsh repression because of their work, and some of them lost their lives. The personage of Veselin Masleša will radiate far in future by its example and its ideas'."¹² This article, third in sequence, reaffirmed everything that had been said about Gavrilo Princip in the two prior texts. The interpretation of history was validated by Masleša's scholarly authority and achievements as a Partisan.

¹¹ "Lik Veselina Masleše – publiciste, naučnika i javnog radnika". *Oslobođenje*, Year III, No. 46, Sarajevo, 11 May 1945, 6.

¹² *Ibid.*

Party-issued instructions on how to understand the Sarajevo assassinations were finalized in late June 1945, by adoption of a report on celebration of the Vidovdan (St. Vitus Day) in Sarajevo. Party powers fashioned the celebration as a combination of religious and secular events for the needs of the “peoples’ government,” ideologically, politically, socially and culturally. On the second page of the paper *Oslobođenje*, under the title “Vidovdan was celebrated festively in Sarajevo”, there was an extensive report on the celebrations reiterating previous interpretations: “Thirty one years have passed since the day when the revolver shots fired by the un-dead fighters for freedom, Gavrilo Princip and his comrades, echoed on the River Miljacka. They were members of the Young Bosnian movement that was based on great love for one’s peoples and the aim of liberating our homeland from the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. Their path, a path of devoted struggle, was followed by all our progressive and freedom-loving youth. The ideals for which the members of Young Bosnia fought were realized and firmly grounded in our national-liberation struggle. And today, while remembering heroic deeds of Gavrilo Princip and his comrades, we also remember those of Tito’s soldiers everywhere in our country who spilled their blood for a better and happier future of our peoples”.¹³ Of course it was necessary to report that the atmosphere was festive, that the turnout from all social strata was massive, and that the most prominent political figure in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Secretary to the Party Committee of CPY (*Communist Party of Yugoslavia*) for Bosnia and Herzegovina, Đuro Pucar Stari was also there. His title, well known politically, was not mentioned in the report; however, the meaning of his attendance was well understood by everybody. “Sarajevo paid its respects to the fearless heroes of St. Vitus Day in a very solemn way. Many youths, military and citizens came to Koševo to put flowers and wreaths on their graves. Among them were members of the national government of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Minister of Social Policy, comrade Novak Mastilović and Minister Comrade Đuro Pucar Stari, who personally placed a wreath on the common grave”.¹⁴

The massive turnout, presence of the dignitaries of the State and Party, flowers and wreaths were all well-designed elements of a commemoration that was named a celebration: “The event was opened by comrade Anđelko Volić, member of the local committee of USAOBiH, who said, among other things, the following: ‘Today, for the first time in our free homeland, we are celebrating the day when the un-dead fighters, Gavrilo Princip and his comrades, announced to the great Austro-Hungarian

¹³ “Vidovdan je u Sarajevu svečano proslavljen“. *Oslobođenje*, Year III, No. 74, Sarajevo, 29 June 1945, 2.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

Monarchy that the peoples of Bosnia and Herzegovina, our freedom-loving peoples, shall not be slaves. This great holiday has never before been celebrated in Sarajevo, by the youth of Sarajevo, in a completely free, brotherly and united homeland. The youth are particularly entitled to celebrate this great day because the fighters, the heroes of the St. Vitus day, the un-dead Princip and his comrades, were also young”¹⁵ Then the Protocol once again cited well-known historic events. “After that, the fallen heroes were honoured by a minute of silence, followed by comrade Braco Kosovac, President of the City Committee of the USAOBiH, taking the floor and describing in brief the history of the organization Young Bosnia; and among other things, he emphasized that Young Bosnia first came into existence around 1910, at the time of democratic and revolutionary turmoil in Europe that followed the Russian revolution of 1905. In our country, at that time, democratic life was undermined and the position of serfs was unbearable. Such circumstances, such revolt against Austro-Hungarian tyranny, produced youth ready at any time to lay down their lives for the freedom of their peoples. In the beginning, Young Bosnia had a largely Serbian national character. Youth looked up to Serbia as a country where life was better, more bearable. They felt their people were suffering and that they were nationally and socially enslaved. Young Bosnia had no help from anyone because the business community (‘čaršija’), although its merchants and craftsmen felt Serbian, did not want to fight. They had no help from Serbia either. Serbia provided help only when required by imperialistic interests. The young heroes believed their personal sacrifice was sufficient to achieve freedom. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, young fighters also emerged from Muslim and Croat communities, so besides Žerajić, Gaćinović and other Serbs who were members of Young Bosnia, Mehmedbašić, Golubić and Ivo Kranjčević also joined. Young Bosnia thus assumed a Yugoslav character”¹⁶

Following the established order of things, the speech was expected to mention the Kingdom of Yugoslavia in a negative light. This was done as follows: “The ensuing imperialistic war was followed by an imperialistic peace. That peace failed to yield any of the results for which Gavrilo Princip and his comrades had laid down their lives. The same community (‘čaršija’) they had fought against, and that Princip had hated, came to power. That same ‘čaršija’ wanted to use Princip’s patriotism for their Great Serbian purposes. It wanted to ruin the name of Gavrilo Princip, who had loved Serbian peoples with all his heart, but he had also loved all other peoples”¹⁷ But

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

the “(...) people’s government offers the following: ‘Today, the situation is completely different. Today the youth are not the only ones who fight, but they are rather a part of the general populist movement. What we can learn from the Young Bosnia is fierce patriotism, how one should sacrifice and die for one’s people. Their examples should show us how to affirm brotherhood and unity. Gavrilo Princip, we can tell you that the youth of Bosnia and Herzegovina stand firmly on the foundation you have laid! With these words the celebration concluded’.”¹⁸ This glorified portrait of this event offered the prospect of a better and more just society. Anything different would have damaged this prescribed narrative and been politically unacceptable.

The day-time celebrations alone were not enough for this St. Vitus Day. The paper went on to report, “In the evening, an academic meeting was held in the Youth Home that was opened by Braco Kosovac honouring the heroes of the Young Bosnia and describing the role of the young people gathered in Young Bosnia to fight for liberation of our peoples. Their assassination of Franz Ferdinand had not been an act of fanatics, but a reaction to the politics of Austro-Hungary and reaction to the difficult social situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The heroes of Young Bosnia were pioneers of revolutionary awareness. They understood that freedom could not be won in peaceful and legal ways; instead, they took the path of individual terror, forgetting the link with the broad popular masses, which is the only way for a political struggle to be successful. Although they had failed to find the appropriate form of fighting, their sacrifice still produced a deed that is a glorious page of our political history. They were models of heroism and self-abnegation to today’s generation of youth, whose massive participation in national-liberation fight with arms in their hands has brought to a conclusion what Gavrilo Princip and comrades had started on St. Vitus Day in 1914. Then abstracts from documents on the assassination, the articles ‘Ljudi’ (*People*) by Veselin Masleša, and ‘Onima koji odlaze’ (*To Those Who are Leaving*) by Vlado Gaćinović were read, as well as Gaćinović’s poem ‘Drugarići sa Volge’ (*To a Comrade (female) from Volga*) and ‘Otadžbina’ (*The Homeland*). The meeting ended with the ‘Pjesma o Titu’ (*Song about Tito*) that was performed by the choir of the Central Theatre Group”.¹⁹

According to the news published in the paper, Sarajevo celebrated St. Vitus Day with a program that was held in a number of locations in the city and that lasted the whole day. The question remains: “What was the perception of this ceremony in va-

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

rious national and social groups of population?” But this would require additional research.

The articles published in *Oslobođenje* depict a pattern that imposes a strict division between events of the distant and recent past, with construction of common elements for actions in the future. Public observance of St. Vitus Day combined religious festivities with a secular holiday, and insistence on the speeches as the central and the most important element of the ceremonies of the time sent out a clear message from the center of political power to the general public.

During the peacetime development of the Socialist Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina, generations were educated in schools, at celebrations and commemorations, and on school trips, all in this type of historic learning. The contents, publicly already established by mid-1945, were conveyed in textbooks and the teaching of history all the way until the 1990s. With this valorized picture of this historic event, as well as many others, the socialist generation joined the war following dissolution of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. Dissolution of the country had led to the end of the prescribed historic lessons. The symbiosis between Princip and the national-liberation events faded away. Interpretations of historic events and their protagonists were transferred into national historiographies. The figures and events from this article, Gavrilo Princip, the Sarajevo assassination, the national-liberation war, St. Vitus Day, communist politicians (...) were given new interpretations, completely different from the ones before. A dialogue with the past was begun but it never fully crystalized. After half a century of delay, the discussions sometimes wandered from academic discourse into the domains of political rhetoric and feuilletons.

The various current interpretations of Princip exceed the intentions of this paper, and only some of them will be mentioned here, without any special order, to introduce the necessity of thinking differently if one wants to build a democratic society. One of the interpretations of this event is “So this was how Croatia entered the First World War. The trigger for the war was the assassination of the heir to the throne Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo on 28 June 1914 by Gavrilo Princip (1894-1918), a member of a terrorist organization Young Bosnia, organized and directed from Serbia. The assassin had also shot and killed the heir to the throne’s wife Sofia, who was pregnant, and he later regretted this”.²⁰ In one current textbook the event is described as follows: “The excuse for the war was found in a bloody event of 1914. In June of that year, Austro-Hungarian army had been carrying out military exercises in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and they were to be visited by the heir to the throne Franz Ferdi-

²⁰ Ivo Goldstein, *Hrvatska povijest*, - volume 21, Zagreb: 2008, *Europapress holding*, 313-314

nand. Members of a revolutionary organization Young Bosnia, mostly students of secondary schools and university, had planned to assassinate the heir. Supported by some secret organizations from Serbia, members of the Young Bosnia twice attempted to assassinate the heir on 28 June 1914 on the occasion of his visit to Sarajevo. The first attempt was unsuccessful, while in the second, a young grammar school student Gavrilo Princip shot and killed the heir to the throne and his wife Sofia”.²¹

This textbook also offers information on the monument devoted to the event in the following way: “From ancient times, monuments were erected to honour great people and events. All of history is filled with numerous monuments that serve as silent witnesses to the past. During the First World War and afterwards, monuments commemorating the killings were built throughout Europe and in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The most famous among them certainly was the one erected at the site of the assassination in 1917, on the third anniversary of the event. Beneath a medallion with images of the two victims, a Latin script read, “In this place, Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his wife Archduchess Sofia of Hohenberg gave their lives and spilled their blood for God and homeland’. This monument was removed after the war, in 1918. In 1953 it was replaced by a memorial plaque with an inscription and imprints of Princip’s feet at the place on the street where he fired the shots. This monument was destroyed in the period 1992-1995. Today, the location is marked by a plaque that shows the location of the assassination”.²²

The *Museum Mlada Bosna*, established during the socialist times, was restored and is today known as the *Museum of Sarajevo 1878-1918*. During the socialist period, the bridge across the Miljacka River at the assassination site, formerly known as the Latin Bridge, had been renamed Princip’s Bridge. After 1995, its former name was restored and it again became known as the Latin Bridge.²³ The ideological import of these monuments becomes clear when the various interpretations are put in sequential order: First the Austro-Hungarian period, then time of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, then the era of Socialist Bosnia and Herzegovina, and finally the present-day independent Bosnia and Herzegovina. The textbook also contains an assessment of the assassination and Gavrilo Princip by Duke Georg von Hohenberg, grandson of Franz Ferdinand: “For me, and seen from the perspective of today, he

²¹ Leonard Valenta, *Historija - Povijest* (History) textbook for the 8th grade of primary school, Sarajevo, Bosanska Riječ, 2007, 40.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ About this, see: Indira Kučuk-Sorguč, “Prilog historiji svakodnevnice: Spomenik umorstvu – okamenjena prošlost na izdržavanju stoljetne kazne“. Sarajevo: *Prilozi*, Institut za istoriju, 2005, No. 34, 61-66.

was a poor student joined by a handful of other people who thought they were doing the right thing, but did the wrong thing”.²⁴

This balanced opinion, without any harsh references to terrorism, assassination, or the primitivism of destroying the original monument etcetera, has not prevented scholars and textbook authors in today’s Bosnia and Herzegovina from holding varying opinions about this event and characterizing its main protagonist differently. But a dialogue has begun, and with it, the possibility of public re-examination of the past. In the continual struggle for legitimacy, political elites in different ethnic communities in Bosnia and Herzegovina have been using the educational systems for propagating historic interpretations that maintain the *status quo* or promote their desired goals. The society of Bosnia and Herzegovina has embarked on the path of a free approach to the past, without centralized control – one of the main freedoms enjoyed by citizens in a democratic society. This time-consuming process is developing slowly and at a different pace at the national-academic level in a divided Bosnian and Herzegovinian society.

²⁴ Leo Valenta, *Historija - Povijest*, 41.