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Memorials to the Red Army in Croatia

History, Preservation and Discussions since 1991

A number of memorials commemorating World War II fatalities and military successes of individual soldiers and units of the Red Army have been preserved in the territory of present-day Croatia. They were built when Croatia formed part of communist Yugoslavia (1945–1991), and can be exclusively found in its eastern and northern regions. The reason for that is the fact that in these areas, just as in other eastern and northern parts of Yugoslavia (present northern and eastern Serbia and Vojvodina), the Red Army played an important role in the battles against the Axis powers (Nazi Germany, Fascist Italy and their allies) in the final months of World War II. These Croatian areas include Baranja, Slavonia and Western Srijem.

The authors' field research¹ has ascertained that the region contains a total of ten monuments dedicated (in part or entirely) to Soviet soldiers: in the towns of Beli Manastir (two monuments), Vukovar, Ilok, Borovo Naselje, Markušica, Darda, Tovarnik, Virovitica and Batina². While there is a lot of literature on some of the anti-fascist monuments in Croatia, those dedicated partly or entirely to Soviets have not been researched in detail, partly because most of them are relatively modest. The aim of this article is to provide insight into the most monumental memorials to the soldiers of the Red Army in Croatia, to place their construction in a wider historical context, and to examine any shifts in attitude towards these memorials in the period after the start of the war in Ukraine in 2022.

Monuments and Politics in the Early Years of Communist Yugoslavia, 1944–1947

Of the ten memorials built at the mentioned sites to commemorate the fallen soldiers and units of the Red Army in Croatia, only three are dedicated exclusively to the Soviet Army (the monuments in Ilok, Markušica and in the centre of Beli Manastir), while the rest were erected in honour of the Red Army and the Yugoslav

Army jointly, and sometimes also to civilians from the areas where the monuments were built (the same is mostly true of the monuments in the eastern parts of the former Yugoslavia as well, today in the territory of Serbia³). Most of these ten monuments show similar design features – the shape of an obelisk or stela, resembling tombstones – and are relatively modest also in size, as are a number of other monuments erected in smaller towns and villages in Yugoslavia after World War II. They were placed either at the sites where Soviet soldiers had died, or where the Red Army participated in key battles of World War II. Only rarely were they positioned in the centres of settlements that the Red Army liberated from the Axis powers.

The circumstances surrounding the construction of those ten memorials reflected the political relationship between communist Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union in the post-war years. Immediately after the end of World War II, Yugoslavia was one of the first Eastern European countries in which the Communist Party completely took over power. Considering the local leaders' ideological closeness to Soviet communists and the generally unstable political situation in Europe, it seems logical that, from 1944 to 1948, the Yugoslav communist authorities relied wholly on Moscow. Emphasising the close affinities between the two countries was therefore also promoted in all forms of artistic expression, including memorial sculpture⁴. At that time, the first group of monuments dedicated (in part or as a whole) to Red Army soldiers were erected in Borovo Naselje (1946)⁵, Darda (1947)⁶ and Batina (1947). The monument in Beli Manastir, dedicated to Vasiliy Petrovich Musin, a hero of the Soviet Union, probably dates from the same period⁷ (fig. 1).

The largest of these – one of the largest post-war monuments in all of Yugoslavia – was erected in 1947 on the hill above the Danube in the village of Batina (formerly Batina Skela) in the region of Baranja, where,

after the successful attempt of the Allied units to cross to the river's western bank, a decisive battle had taken place in November 1944⁸. As was often the case with monumental public artworks commemorating World War II in Yugoslavia, the construction of the memorial was entrusted to a sculptor and an architect working in tandem. They were the key Croatian artists of the period: the sculptor Antun Augustinčić and the architect Drago Galić (fig. 2, 3). Augustinčić became one of the most important artists specialising in monumental sculptures in the interwar period, not only in Yugoslavia but in other parts of Eastern Europe too, so it is not surprising that he was entrusted with the project in Batina. As he had the opportunity to stay in Moscow in 1944 and become familiar with Socialist Realism in Soviet sculpture, Augustinčić designed a monument (in collaboration with Galić) in which he combined motifs of Socialist Realism and Art Deco, a style that had influenced much of his pre-war work.



Fig. 1: Unknown author, monument with the Ossuary of the Red Army in Beli Manastir, 1945 (?). Photo: Dragan Damjanović, 7 April 2021.

The Batina memorial's architectural element is in the shape of a fan ellipsoidal plateau, which carries a tall obelisk, with depictions of Red Army soldiers in sculptural relief, executed in expensive marble from the island of Brač and topped by a bronze sculpture of Victory (fig. 3, 4). The sides of the monument are covered with reliefs depicting units of the Yugoslav and Red Army crossing the Danube, and with bronze soldiers, placed on the eastern side of the plateau, pointing towards the river⁹ (fig. 5, 6). Although the monument was meant to commemorate both the Yugoslav and Soviet armies, its inscriptions emphasise the role only of the Red Army. The first of these reads: "To the soldiers and officers of the heroic Red Army who fell in November 1944 in the joint fight against the fascist aggressor", and the second one: "To the fallen soldiers of the heroic Red Army – the peoples of Yugoslavia MCMXLVII"¹⁰. The gratitude to the Red Army and the "unbreakable bond" between Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union were also highlighted at the memorial's dedication ceremony on 9 November 1947, which was attended by numerous leading Yugoslav politicians and the ambassadors of the Soviet Union and other Eastern European countries to Yugoslavia¹¹.

Soviet-Yugoslav Relations and Monuments, 1948–1991

Very soon after the Batina memorial's completion, the construction of monuments commemorating the Red Army's military victories and casualties in Croatia and the rest of Yugoslavia was interrupted due to the conflict between the then Yugoslav communist leadership (headed by Josip Broz Tito) and the Soviet leadership (headed by Stalin), which started in June 1948. In that conflict, Yugoslavia successfully gained its independence from the Soviets and began cooperation with the West. The anti-Stalinist campaign that was soon launched in Yugoslavia led to the oppression of a large number of individuals who sympathised with the Soviet Union and all of those who were represented as enemies of the regime. In such conditions, it was politically inappropriate to over-stress Yugoslav military cooperation with the Soviet Union during World War II. Instead, the emphasis was increasingly placed on "self-liberation" from the Nazis.

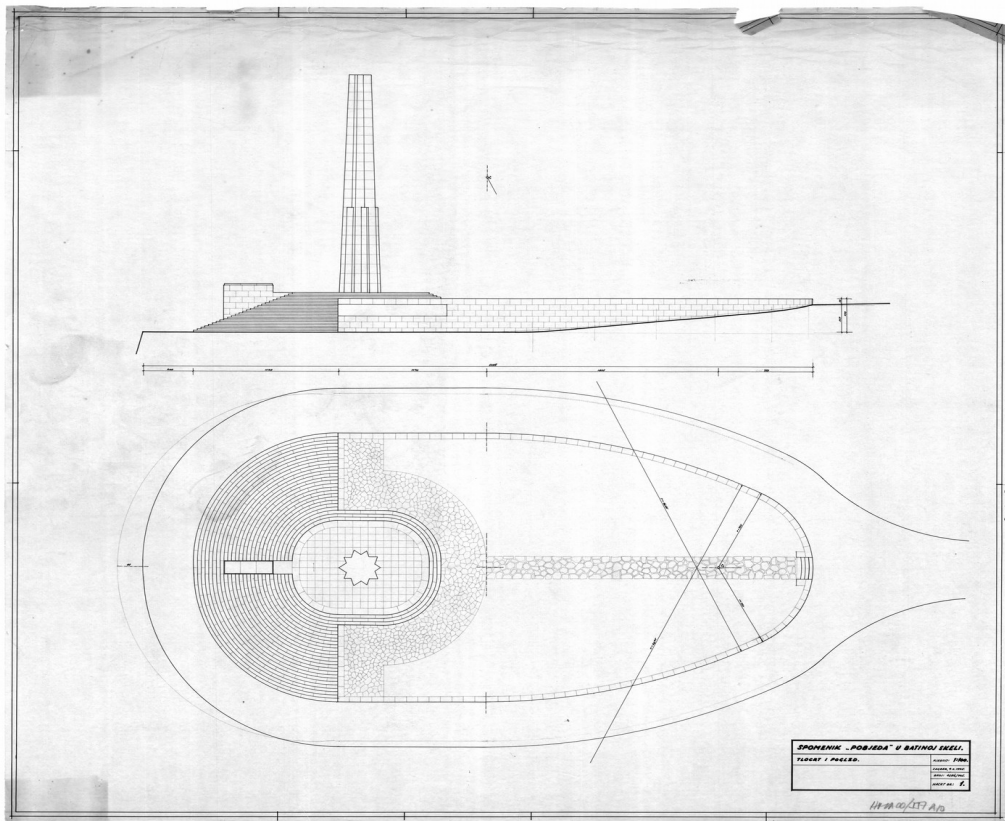


Fig. 2: Drago Galić (?), architectural design for the Monument of Gratitude to the Red Army in Batina, originally called *Victory*, Zagreb, 1945. Courtesy of the Croatian Museum of Architecture, Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts (HMA 557-A10).



Fig. 3: Drago Galić and Antun Augustinčić, Monument of Gratitude to the Red Army in Batina, 1947. Photo: Dragan Damjanović, 7 April 2021.



Fig. 4: Antun Augustinčić, sculptures in the central part of the Monument of Gratitude to the Red Army in Batina, 1947. Photo: Dragan Damjanović, 7 April 2021.



Fig. 5: Drago Galić and Antun Augustinčić, ellipsoidal plateau of the Monument of Gratitude to the Red Army in Batina, 1947. Photo: Dragan Damjanović, 7 April 2021.



Fig. 6: Antun Augustinčić, relief on the Monument of Gratitude to the Red Army in Batina, 1947. Photo: Dragan Damjanović, 7 April 2021.

In other words, the role of the Yugoslav Army in World War II battles in all parts of Yugoslavia was much more emphasised than that of the Red Army¹².

Political events were also clearly reflected in the memorial sculpture in Croatia, as shown by the monument commemorating the Battle of Bolman (fought in March 1945), a work of the sculptor Nikola Kečanić from 1951, erected near the village of Bolman in Baranja, not far from Batina¹³. Although Soviet soldiers fought in this battle, albeit to a much lesser extent than in the Battle of Batina, the monument exclusively commemorated the fallen Yugoslav soldiers¹⁴.

The role of the Soviets in the war was, in a similar manner, overlooked and undermined in the case of the memorial in Tovarnik, a village located along Croatia's border with Serbia. It was erected in 1953 with a tomb holding bodies of fallen Yugoslavian and Red Army soldiers¹⁵, but featuring the inscription that states in very general terms that it was dedicated to "freedom fighters"¹⁶. The situation with the monument in Čakovec in northern Croatia (erected between 1947 and 1949) is very similar: it uses the vague language – "soldiers of the National Liberation Struggle" – without stating which military units played the decisive role in the final battles of World War II¹⁷.

The situation changed once again with the rapprochement of Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union after Stalin's death, especially after Nikita Khrushchev's visit to Yugoslavia in 1955 and Tito's visit to the Soviet Union in 1956. At that time, memorials to the joint Yugoslav-Soviet fight against fascism began to be erected more frequently and, over time, some of the older monuments from the 1940s were repaired or rebuilt¹⁸. First, in 1957, a memorial ossuary was erected in Beli Manastir, commemorating both Yugoslav and Red Army soldiers¹⁹. Then, in 1961, an ossuary with a monument to Red Army soldiers was built in Ilok²⁰ (fig. 7). In 1965, an ossuary with a monument to the Red Army, Yugoslav soldiers, and victims of fascism was erected in Virovitica (by the sculptor Velibor Mačukat-in)²¹. And in 1968, a memorial to fallen Soviet aviators was erected in Markušica²². In 1986, due to the damage inflicted on the old monument and memorial ossuary in Vukovar, a brand new one was built with an



Fig. 7: Unknown author, monument with the Ossuary of the Red Army in Ilok, 1961. Photo: Dragan Damjanović, 29 September 2023.



Fig. 8: Miodrag Jandrić and Slavko Marušić, monument with the Ossuary of the Fallen Soldiers of the Red Army, Yugoslav Army and local civilian victims in Vukovar, 1986. Photo: Dragan Damjanović, 29 September 2023.

inscription that clearly stated that it commemorated the fallen soldiers of the Red Army, along with Yugoslav soldiers²³ (fig. 8).

All of the aforementioned political changes were reflected in the memorial complex in Batina, which was significantly expanded: in 1962 it received an ossuary²⁴; in 1972–1974 a memorial bridge was built over the Danube connecting the Croatian and Serbian territories (Bridge of the 51st Division)²⁵; in 1976–1979 the Battle of Batina Memorial House was built on the Croatian side of the Danube (where a museum exhibit was put up in 1983)²⁶; and in 1978–1981 the Battle of Batina Memorial Museum was constructed on the Serbian side²⁷. Therefore, Croatia and Serbia were both involved in the huge project of the commemoration of the Batina battle, which was annually marked with a special ceremony until 1991 and the

disintegration of Yugoslavia. Due to the ensuing war, the memorial museum closed in 1991 and did not re-open until the renovation of the building in 2017²⁸.

Red Army Memorials in Post-Communist Croatia

In Croatia's war of independence, between 1991 and 1995, or in the first post-war years, a large number of monuments commemorating World War II events were destroyed, damaged or removed – and that despite the protests organised by numerous Croatian art historians, historians and numerous individuals. However, since most of the monuments commemorating the Red Army in Croatia had been erected in the border areas that were under Serbian occupation during the war, they were left standing. This was due to the pro-Russian position of the Serbian authorities of the area, but was also because some of the monuments commemorated soldiers and civilians of Serbian nationality who had lost their lives in World War II. Due to poor economic conditions and political instability in Serbian-held areas, however, these monuments were either not preserved with any particular care or completely neglected.

Baranja, eastern Slavonia and western Srijem (the Croatian Danube area) were peacefully reintegrated into Croatia in January 1998. By that time, efforts to intentionally remove and/or destroy monuments from the communist era had diminished in Croatia, so all of the aforementioned monuments commemorating the Red Army were preserved in situ.

After 2000, some damaged or destroyed monuments dedicated to World War II casualties and battles in all parts of Croatia were restored or reconstructed. The same was true of some of the memorials to Red Army soldiers: these have also been restored in the last ten years, just as in Serbia, mostly with the help of various Russian institutions and voluntary donations collected in Russia. These include the memorial to the Red Army in Beli Manastir – which was restored in 2016, owing to the efforts of the ambassador of the Russian Federation to Croatia, Anvar Azimov, who collected 10,000 US dollars²⁹ – and the monuments in Borovo Naselje and Vukovar, restored in 2020³⁰. The attitude of Russian institutions towards monuments is also shown by the fact that, in

2019, Russian state television made a documentary film about the monuments to Soviet soldiers erected in Yugoslavia³¹.

Although the destruction and removal of communist monuments in Croatia became rare after 2000, there are still occasional initiatives to remove them and/or transfer them to museums. The issue of monuments has been especially highlighted since 2017, activated by the removal of Confederate monuments in the United States of America³².

Developments since 2022

The war in Ukraine, as far as could be established from the available sources, did not significantly change the attitude towards the Red Army monuments in Croatia. Since the beginning of 2022, no initiatives to remove or destroy them due to anti-Russian sentiments have been detected. The only recorded intervention was the painting of a Ukrainian flag on the obelisk of the monument in Batina, which took place in the early days of the Russian invasion³³.

There are several reasons why the mentioned monuments are not a particularly controversial topic currently in Croatia, in contrast to the situation in other parts of Eastern and Central Europe.

The first reason is the geographical distance of Croatia from Ukraine. Unlike other former parts of the Soviet Union (e.g. Estonia, Lithuania and Latvia), or the former communist countries that were controlled by the Soviet authorities (e.g. Poland), and the capitalist countries that directly bordered the Soviet Union (e.g. Finland), Croatia – and the rest of Yugoslavia – was between 1945 and 1991 outside the immediate sphere of Russian influence, which is why anti-Soviet sentiment is not as strong in the majority of post-Yugoslav republics.

The second reason is connected to the function of the memorials, which often commemorate not just fallen Red Army soldiers, but also Yugoslav military units and the local people killed in World War II. The local population therefore feel a connection with these memorials, which have become connected with their identity (as shown by numerous publications cited in this article). The pro-Russian sentiment of a part of the Serbian population, which is numerous in the eastern parts of Croatia, where most of the monuments

are located, undoubtedly contributes to their preservation and restoration as well.

Thirdly, the absence of a negative attitude towards the monuments of the Red Army is partly conditioned by the fact that they were not erected by the Soviet authorities, but by Croatian or Yugoslav institutions, and that they were made exclusively by local artists. Finally, some of these monuments became legally protected, as immovable cultural assets, already during the time when Croatia was part of communist Yugoslavia, mainly between the 1960s and 1980s; after 1991 the national monuments board in independent Croatia confirmed their protected status. Therefore, their removal or any changes to them requires a permit from the Conservation Department of the Republic of Croatia's Ministry of Culture and Media³⁴.

Furthermore, these monuments, especially the one in Batina, have recently come to represent important assets in the cultural or heritage economy in the region, which today in Croatia is known for the so-called continental tourism. The style of the Batina monument, its position high above the Danube, and its monumentality have become magnets for (mostly Croatian) tourists, attracted by both the exoticism of Socialist Realism and the scenery: the view of the plains of Serbia and Hungary to the east and north.

The future fate of these monuments in Croatia will undoubtedly be affected by the length and effects of the war in Ukraine. It is to be hoped, however, that they will remain preserved because they are all culturally and historically interesting examples of public sculpture created in communist Yugoslavia.

Endnotes

1. This work has been partly supported by the Croatian Science Foundation under the project IP-2018-01-9364, "Art and the State in Croatia from the Enlightenment to the Present".
2. Future research might detect even more memorials devoted to the Red Army in Croatia. It is possible that some of them were erected in the northernmost Croatian region of Međimurje too, because of the role the Red Army played in the final battles of World War II there. However, so far we have found none.
3. Vojislav Martinov, "Spomenici crvenoarmejcima u Vojvodini" [Monuments to the Red Army soldiers in Vojvodina], in: Batinska bitka. Zbornik radova [Batina Battle. Proceedings], ed. Stanko Šuš-njar, Novi Sad 2014, pp. 119–128, here pp. 121–122.
4. Olga Manojlović Pintar, "'Široka strana moja rodnaja', Spomenici sovjetskim vojnicima podizani u Srbiji 1944–1954" ["A broad side of my homeland": Monuments to Soviet soldiers erected in Serbia], in: Tokovi istorije, vol. 1–2, 2005, pp. 134–144.
5. The memorial is in the shape of an obelisk with a memorial plaque in honor of the Yugoslav and Red Army fighters who fell in the battles for the liberation of Borovo (Milenko Patković and Dušan Plečaš, Vodič uz kartu. Izbor spomen-obilježja Narodnooslobodilačkog rata Jugoslavije [Guide with a map: A selection of memorials of the National Liberation War of Yugoslavia], Osijek 1975, p. 68; Srđan Sekulić and Nikola Milojević, Spomenici NOB-a nekad i sad. Bivša općina Vukovar [National Liberation Struggle monuments then and now: The former municipality of Vukovar], Vukovar 2020, p. 17).
6. Jovan Nedić, Spomenici Narodnooslobodilačke borbe na području Baranje [National Liberation Struggle monuments in the area of Baranja], Zagreb / Beli Manastir 2022, p. 36.
7. Patković, Plečaš 1975, Vodič uz kartu, p. 68; Nedić 2022, Spomenici..., pp. 19–20.
8. About 8,000 Soviet and Yugoslav soldiers and about 15,000 soldiers of the Axis powers were wounded or killed (Nikola Božić, Batina historijski spomenik [Batina historical monument], Osijek 1981; Aleksej Timofejev, "Crvena armija i batinska bitka" [Red Army and the Batina Battle], in: Batinska bitka. Zbornik radova, ed. Stanko Šušnjara, Novi Sad 2014, pp. 48–61).
9. "Spomenik majstora-kipara Antuna Augustinčića crvenoarmejcima palim u borbama kod Batinske Skele" [Master-sculptor Antun Augustinčić's Monument to the Red Army Soldiers fallen in the battles at Batinska Skela], in: Arhitektura, no. 4–6, 1947, p. 18; Božić 1981, Batina..., pp. 103–105; Davorin Vujčić, "Spomenik zahvalnosti Crvenoj armiji" [Monument of Gratitude to the Red Army], in: Refleksije vremena 1945.–1955. [Reflections of time], ed. Jasmina Bavoļjak, Zagreb 2012, pp. 127–137; Snježana Pavičić, "Neka zapažanja o Spomeniku zahvalnosti Crvenoj armiji u Batinoj Skeli" [Some observations about the Monument of Gratitude to the Red Army in Batina Skela], in: ANALI Galerije Antuna Augustinčića, vol. 32–33/34–35, 2012–2015, pp. 249–260.
10. Božić 1981, Batina..., p. 103.
11. "U Batinoj Skeli otkriven je na svečani način spomenik Crvenoarmejcima koji su pali u borbi za oslobođenje naše zemlje" [A monument to the Red Army soldiers who fell in the fight for the liberation of our country was unveiled in a solemn manner in Batina Skela], in: Glas Slavonije, vol. V, no. 795, 11.11.1947, pp. 1–2.
12. Timofejev 2014, Crvena armija..., p. 52.
13. Patković, Plečaš 1975, Vodič uz kartu, p. 69; Jovan M. Nedić, Bolmanska bitka [Bolman Battle], Bolman 2016, pp. 120–122.
14. Mahmud Konjhodžić, Sjećanja u kamen uklesana. Spomenici radničkog pokreta i narodne revolucije u Hrvatskoj [Memories carved in stone: Monuments of the labor movement and the People's Revolution in Croatia], Zagreb 1960, pp. 186–187; Nedić 2022, Spomenici..., pp. 26–27.
15. A mass grave with approx. 80 bodies of Red Army and Yugoslav Army soldiers (Patković, Plečaš 1975, Vodič uz kartu, p. 94).
16. Sekulić, Milojević 2020, Spomenici..., p. 92.
17. Konjhodžić 1960, Sjećanja..., pp. 246–247.
18. Martinov 2014, Spomenici..., pp. 125–127.
19. Nedić 2022, Spomenici..., pp. 21–22.
20. Ibid., p. 26; Patković, Plečaš 1975, Vodič uz kartu, p. 77.

21. Ive Šimat Banov and Nikola Albaneže, Velibor Mačukatin, Zagreb 2019, p. 135.
22. The Red Army aviators Nikolaj Maksimovich Kravtsov and Leonid Nikolajevich Reshetnikov (Milan Balić, Narod partiji. Spomenici i spomen obilježja komunističke partije u Slavoniji [People to the Party: Monuments and memorials of the Communist Party in Slavonia], Valpovo 1978, p. 19; Slavko Puškar, Spomen obilježja revolucije i NOB-e. Pregled za Općinu Vinkovci od 1945–1975. godine [Memorials of the revolution and the National Liberation Struggle: Overview of the municipality of Vinkovci], Vinkovci 1975, p. 82; Sekulić, Milojević 2020, Spomenici..., p. 62).
23. Sekulić, Milojević 2020, Spomenici..., p. 16. Sources suggest that the original monument mentioned only partisan units (Ante Eugen Brić, "Spomenici narodne revolucije u Vukovaru i Borovu" [Monuments of the People's Revolution in Vukovar and Borovo], in: Oglledi, povremeni bulletin za kulturna pitanja, Vukovar, no. 1, 1958, pp. 8–15, here p. 10.
24. Vujčić 2012, Spomenik..., p. 127.
25. Božić 1981, Batina..., p. 107.
26. "Spomen-dom Batinske bitke" [The Battle of Batina memorial house], in: muzeji! Hrvatski muzeji i zbirke online, <https://hvm.mdc.hr/spomen-dom-batinske-bitke.745:BAT/hr/info/> (last accessed 15.9.2023); Nedić 2022, Spomenici..., pp. 11–13.
27. Pero Matić, "Nova koncepcija memorijala batinske bitke" [A new conception of the memorial of the Battle of Batina], in: Batinska bitka. Zbornik radova, ed. Stanko Sušnjar, Novi Sad 2014, pp. 129–137, here p. 131; Milka Ljuboja, "Revitalizacija spomen muzeja batinske bitke" [Revitalisation of the Memorial Museum of the Battle of Batina], in: Batinska bitka, pp. 138–146, here p. 139.
28. "Историјат" [History], in: Музеј Батинске битке, <https://mbb.gms.rs/o-nama> (last accessed 15.9.2023).
29. "Spomenik Crvenoj armiji u Belom Manastiru pregledali konzervatori" [The Monument to the Red Army in Beli Manastir was inspected by conservators], in: Glas Slavonije, 20.1.2016, <https://www.glas-slavonije.hr/290932/4/Spomenik-Crvenoj-armiji-u-Belom-Manastiru-pregledali-konzervatori>; Ivica Getto, "Rusi daju 10.000 USD za spomenik Crvenoj armiji!" [Russians give 10,000 USD for a monument to the Red Army!], in: Glas Slavonije, 10.5.2016, <http://glas.hr/301202/4/Rusi-daju-10000-USD-za-Spomenik-Crvenoj-armiji> (both last accessed 1.11.2023).
30. Slavko Bubalo, "Antifascistički spomenici ponovno sijaju" [Anti-fascist monuments shine again], in: srb.hr, 10.6.2020, <https://srb.hr/antifascisticki-spomenici-ponovo-sijaju/> (last accessed 1.11.2023).
31. Zoran Popović, "Руски новинари снимaju филм о руским споменицима у Хрватској и региону" [Russian journalists are shooting a film about Russian monuments in Croatia and the region], in: srb.hr, 10.5.2019, <https://srb.hr/ruski-novinari-snimaju-film-o-ruskim-spomenicima-u-hrvatskoj-i-regionu/> (last accessed 1.11.2023).
32. E.g. Darko Jerković, "Baština za muzeje ili skladišta otpada" [Heritage for museums or waste warehouses], in: Glas Slavonije, 26.8.2017, <http://www.glas-slavonije.hr/341403/11/Bastina-za-muzeje-ili-skladista-otpada> (last accessed 1.11.2023).
33. E.g. Ivica Getto, "Na batinskom spomeniku naslikana ukrajinska zastava" [Ukrainian flag painted on the Batina monument], in: Glas Slavonije, 12.4.2022, <http://glas-slavonije.hr/491310/4/Nabatinskom-spomeniku-naslikana-ukrajinska-zastava> (last accessed 1.11.2023).
34. For information on the status of monuments, see Pretraživanje Registra kulturnih dobara Republike Hrvatske [Search the register of Cultural Properties of the Republic of Croatia], <https://registar.kulturnadobra.hr> (last accessed 1.11.2023).

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Fig. 1, 3–8: Dragan Damjanović.

Fig. 2: Croatian Museum of Architecture, Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts (HMA 557-A10).

Abstract

A number of memorials commemorating World War II fatalities or the military success of individual soldiers and units of the Red Army have been preserved in Croatia. They were built when Croatia formed a part of communist Yugoslavia (1945–1991), and can be exclusively found in its eastern and northern regions (Baranja, Slavonia and Western Srijem), where the Red Army played an important role in battles in the final months of the war. This article deals with ten such monuments: in Beli Manastir (two monuments), Vukovar, Ilok, Borovo Naselje, Markušica, Darda, Tovarnik, Virovitica and Batina. Only three of them are dedicated exclusively to the Soviet Army (the monuments in Ilok, Markušica and in the centre of Beli Manastir), while the rest commemorate the Red Army and the Yugoslav Army together. The most monumental is the one in Batina. Our field work has led us to conclude that the war in Ukraine has not significantly changed the attitude towards the Red Army monuments in Croatia: since the beginning of 2022, no initiatives to remove or destroy them have been detected. There are several reasons why there is less anti-Russian sentiment in Croatia than in some other parts of Eastern and Central Europe, and why the monuments have not become particularly controversial: the geographical distance from Ukraine; commemorating not just the fallen Red Army soldiers, but also the Yugoslav military units and local people; and not being erected by the Soviet authorities. Indeed, the monuments were often put up by Croatian or Yugoslav institutions, and executed exclusively by local artists. Finally, most of these monuments are legally protected as immovable cultural assets.

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Title

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