

## CHAPTER 11

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Danilo Šarenac

# **The Serbian War Dead and Matters of Ideology: Path Dependence, Commemorative Infrastructure and the Case of the Vido Ossuary**

## **Introduction**

In July of 1916, a small Serbian military delegation landed on the island of Vido, just next to Corfu. Their mission was to inspect the military cemetery, which was just a few months old. However, the men witnessed the most gruesome scenes soon upon their arrival. The bodily remains of Serbian soldiers lay before them. The corpses were in a state of advanced decay, partially uncovered and exposed.

“As it is clear from our report, the cemetery on the Vido Island is in such a state that it is impossible to stand in the cemetery due to the stench, and this is the result of poorly and insufficiently inhumed corpses [...]”<sup>1</sup>

The island had become notorious during the Entente’s rescue operations for the remnants of the Serbian army, at the beginning of the same year. Namely, while the bulk of the men were transported to the safety of Corfu, thousands were instead disembarked at Vido Island. This small plot of land was reserved for those who were too ill or exhausted to make the trip. In a short period of time, thousands died in the most appalling agony. The rocky soil offered little possibility for a proper or timely burial, and because of this fact, a decision was reached to bury the soldiers at sea. Consequently, the events at Vido Island marked the climax of the suffering that accompanied the month-long retreat of the Serbian army and civilians in 1915/1916.

Recognized as “Serbian Jerusalem” and the “the epicenter of suffering,” the cemetery at the island was burdened with numerous problems.<sup>2</sup> As the above-mentioned report shows, the dead had not been properly buried. Moreover, the ossuary project met with continuous obstacles and had to be delayed several times. Even when the ossuary was finally built in 1940, it was left unattended for decades. Ultimately, it wasn’t until the early 1980s that the Vido ossuary was

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<sup>1</sup>Архив Србије (Архив Србије - АС), Ратничка гробља (RG IV/41), Санитетско одељење – Министарству војном, 31.7.1916.

<sup>2</sup> Маре Јанакова Грујић, *Архитекта Драгутин Маслаћ (1875-1937)* (Београд: Ценар ВАМ 2006), 33.

reconstructed and fully integrated into the Yugoslav and Serbian commemorative pantheon. Nevertheless, even today, general knowledge about the ossuary's history remains dotted with significant gaps. For example, in the literature it has been erroneously written that the ossuary was completed in 1939, despite the fact that the works lasted well into 1940.<sup>3</sup>

A controversy concerning the ossuary sprang from an unresolved question – has the ossuary ever been truly finished or should it still be considered “under construction”? Consequently, instead of instantly becoming one of the focal Serbian and Yugoslav remembrance sites abroad, the Vido ossuary has evolved into a source of continuous worry, shame, and frustration. Such a situation demands a nuanced analysis and detailed explanation.

In tackling the paradox surrounding the Vido ossuary two concepts can be very valuable. The first is path dependency. This theoretical framework focuses on the influence of past decisions and experiences on subsequent steps. In addition, this work places special attention on the importance of the “initial conditions” or the “zero decision” in certain historical processes.<sup>4</sup> These “conditions” could present an arbitrary event that proves to have a constraining effect on all future steps. Consequently, path dependency increases our awareness concerning the functioning of the causal mechanism, and difficulties involved in reversing the course of action, once things are set in motion.<sup>5</sup>

This concept is fully applicable in the case of the Vido ossuary. The “zero” contingent event can be found in the fact that the Serbian army created a huge number of military cemeteries across northern Greece. No one could have anticipated that such an extraordinary voyage would be made by the Serbian army back in 1914. After the war, there were only two paths forward. Either to exhume the dead and carry them back to Serbia or to organize an entire network of memorial sites abroad. It was decided to stay on the island and build a monumental ossuary. However, problems erupted due to Belgrade's desire to occupy the most elevated position on the island, as such visual domination to be asserted by a foreign memorial was unacceptable to the Greek side.

As the path dependency concept shows, this deadlock could not be solved easily. Once a specific form of policy is chosen it is very difficult to halt the mechanism of organizational continuity and opt for a different proposal. It seems that the personality of the influential and pragmatic Yugoslav politician, Milan

<sup>3</sup> In the key reference book dedicated to the Serbian cultural heritage, the ossuary at the Vido island has been tackled only briefly: *Културно наслеђе Србије. Заштита и уређење 1947–1982* (Београд: Завод за заштиту споменика културе, 1982), 139. In the literature the year 1939 has been usually listed as the construction date, despite the fact that the works lasted until January 1941: Aleksandar Kadijević, “Prilog proučavanju dela arhitekta Nikole Krasnova u Jugoslaviji (1922-1939)”, *Saopštenja* 26 (1994), 181-192; Грујић, *Архитекта Драгутин Маслаћ*, 36.

<sup>4</sup> Ian Greener, “The Potential of Path Dependence in Political Studies”, *Politics* 25:1 (2005), 67f.; James Mahoney, “Path Dependence in Historical Sociology”, *Theory and Society* 4 (2000), 507-548, 509, 511.

<sup>5</sup> Paul Pierson, “Increasing Returns, Path Dependence, and the Study of Politics”, *American Political Science Review* 2 (2000), 251-267, 252f.

Stojadinović (1888-1961), played a vital role here. The course of action was changed at the very last moment, just months before the Second World War “came” to Greece. Here again, the path dependency concept shows its relevance as it emphasizes the specificity of the time when the action takes place. At any other given moment, it would have been too late for a change in the course of the Yugoslav policy, as the war had already spread towards the Balkans.

Once the ossuary was built, the new communist authorities had to decide what to do with it. Their focus was on the World War II partisan memorials. Path dependency implies that there were only two viable alternatives: to keep the sites in good order or to leave them at the mercy of natural elements and the passage of time. It was decided to maintain the ossuary but mostly keep it at a low profile. However, the decision was reversed after a few decades. This time the change was not the result of the intervention of a strong individual with a strong political prerogative, as was the case with Milan Stojadinović in the 1930s. The reasoning behind the change emerged from the shifts and rifts in Yugoslav ideological patterns. As the importance of the Serbian identity policy rose within Yugoslavia, so too did the importance of integrating Vido into the official martyr pantheon.

The second important concept is infrastructure. Hundreds of cemeteries and ossuaries for not only Serbian but also former Habsburg soldiers of South Slavic origin were scattered across Europe, Africa, and even parts of Asia. This implied a significant expansion of Serbian and Yugoslav space. However, in order to understand how the Vido dead were finally integrated into the Yugoslav and Serbian commemorative pantheon in the 1980s, it is important to treat the term “infrastructure” capaciously: as a network of social activities and conditions that enable diverse human activities.<sup>6</sup> This view of infrastructure can include the elements necessary for the establishment and functioning of remembrance culture, such as dissemination of information, repetitive patterns, and actions performed through education and media.

By applying these two theoretical frameworks it will be shown that problems with the Vido ossuary, for the most part, were propelled by a continuous focus on the political and ideological role of the ossuary. Vido Island wasn't the primary place for the bereavement of the families in mourning. The need to preserve the identities of the fallen and their skeletal remains was also not seen as a key demand. The ultimate success in integrating the island into the Serbian national cultural heritage came as a result of wider ideological shifts, and the crisis of communist authority in the 1980s. In the broadest sense, the controversies surrounding Vido Island also reveal an uneasiness in establishing a link between Serbia's war dead and their role in the creation of the Yugoslav state. This relationship presented a winding road throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

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<sup>6</sup> Dirk van Laak, “Infrastructures”, *Docupedia-Zeitgeschichte*, 20.5.2021. [https://docupedia.de/zg/Laak\\_infrastructures\\_v1\\_en\\_2021](https://docupedia.de/zg/Laak_infrastructures_v1_en_2021).

## The Expansion of the Geographical Space

Serbian war planning before 1914 implied *the strategic welcoming* of enemy forces onto Serbian soil. Subsequently, actions would be taken in accordance with further developments. The Battle of Cer (August 1914) illustrated this well.<sup>7</sup> However, hardly anyone could have anticipated that the Serbian army would be awaiting Entente ships on the shores of Albania at the end of 1915. By 1918, the Serbian army's soldiers had been dispersed across Europe and North Africa. When the war ended, the veterans of the Serbian army had significantly expanded their knowledge of foreign countries, their people and culture. One of the important consequences of such a specific form of travel was that the cemeteries of the Serbian dead were dispersed across three continents.<sup>8</sup> Apart from building Serbian and Montenegrin military cemeteries from the 1912-1918 wars, the Yugoslav state also looked to the establishment and took care about the cemeteries of the former Habsburg army. These included the cemeteries of Austro-Hungarian units that had mostly been recruited in Southern Slavic regions. Consequently, a number of cemeteries along the former Eastern and Italian fronts were also under the jurisdiction of the Yugoslav government. This meant that the *Yugoslav space* expanded drastically. In retrospect, the Serbian and the Austro-Hungarian dead were now seen as "Yugoslav dead." Moreover, toponyms of faraway places now became common knowledge in the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes. Places such as Nagymegyér in Slovakia, Łambinowice in Poland, Guvia on Corfu, Thiais near Paris, Cap Matifou in Algeria, and Bizerte in Tunisia represented just a fraction of the toponyms that were regularly mentioned in the press and literature. In 1919, when the European map was redrawn, the "Yugoslav" cemeteries were to be found in as many as 13 countries.<sup>9</sup>

Creating a unifying ideological narrative that should link former enemies was a very complex task and it cut to the core of the Yugoslav ideology. Serbian military merit and the sacrifices of the Serbian army were understood as key elements solidifying the state's foundations. In the process, the story of the Serbian army had to be adjusted to fit the Yugoslav paradigm. Such a prioritization of the Serbian role in the narrative of unification provoked negative reactions in various parts of the country.<sup>10</sup> However, aside from questions of unifying ideology, the maintenance of commemorative infrastructure abroad, often in faraway places,

<sup>7</sup> Aleksandar Životić, *Путникова школа ратне вештине: главни ђенералштаб војске Краљевине Србије (1903-1914)* (Београд: Медија центар *Одбрана*, 2019); Danilo Šarenac, "The Object of Great Expectations in a Deprived Country: The Serbian General Staff 1876-1914", in Lukas Grawe (Ed.), *Gehirne der Armeen? Die Generalstäbe der europäischen Mächte im Vorfeld der Weltkriege* (Paderborn: Brill Schöningh, 2023), 135-152.

<sup>8</sup> Several thousand of Serbian soldiers and civilians perished while working on the Bagdad railway. See more in: Исидор Ђуковић, "Српски ратни заробљеници у Турској", *Војно-историјски гласник* 1-2 (2001), 80-82.

<sup>9</sup> Danilo Šarenac, "Remembering Victory: The Case of Serbia/Yugoslavia", in Wolfgang Höpken, Wim van Meurs (Eds.), *The First World War in the Balkans* (Berlin: Peter Lang, 2018), 225-245.

<sup>10</sup> For more see: John Paul Newman, *Yugoslavia in the Shadow of War. Veterans and the Limits of State Building, 1903-1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

meant resolving a whole series of enormous logistical problems. Moreover, the financial burden was immense. The case of the Vido Island illustrates all of these problems very well.

### What Exactly Happened at Vido Island?

After the realization dawned that the Serbian army could not be reorganized within Albania, it was decided in January 1916 to transport the Serbs to some other place. Options varied from Africa to France. At first, the port of Bizerte was selected in French North Africa. However, the difficulties of such a long trip soon became evident and only a fraction of the Serbian units were disembarked there. Ultimately, the Greek islands were selected. The Island of Corfu was seen as a much more favorable location. As Greece was still out of the war and bitterly split over the issue of whether it should join and with whom it should fight, the French army decided to occupy the island by force. There was no resistance however, only verbal protest.<sup>11</sup> Serbia's Great War experiences now encompassed not only Montenegro and Albania but also Greece.

The disembarkation of the Serbian units on Corfu started on the 6th of January 1916, in the port of Guvia. However, as many of those arriving in Corfu proved to be in poor health and extremely weak, it was decided to send the sick to the neighboring small island of Vido, in hope that they would recover. Evidently, fears of a potential outbreak of contagious disease played a role here as well.<sup>12</sup> This small island became a synonym for dying in the most appalling agony. This was the "zero" event that set the stage for all subsequent commemorative actions.

Only a few kilometers in diameter, this rocky island was unpopulated and treeless at the time. There were also no facilities where the men could be placed or treated. The first sick and weak soldiers were placed in four improvised tents that were made by French marines. This was an improvised hospital. The space was soon overcrowded, and full of mud and dirt. The wounded and the sick lay one next to another in close proximity. The tents had only one entrance and the orderlies would step on the wounded while entering and exiting. Before long, Vido had become notorious as the death rate skyrocketed. It was believed that only a handful of men survived from these initial days.<sup>13</sup> On January 21<sup>st</sup> the Serbian Morava Military Field Hospital division arrived. Soon, a French modern field hospital was installed.<sup>14</sup> The situation slowly improved.

The dead were firstly sent to the "chapel," a small open space surrounded by bushes, where they waited for the burial. However, it soon became impossible to bury so many men with the necessary expedience, even using mass graves.

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<sup>11</sup> Милан Недић, *Српска војска на албанској Голготи* (Београд: Штампарска радионица Министарства војске и морнарице, 1937), 177.

<sup>12</sup> Будимир Швабић, *Старим трагом* (Београд: Прометеј, 2015), 20.

<sup>13</sup> Владимир Станојевић, *Преко Албаније на острво смрти. Из дневника једне болнице* (Београд: [с. н.], 1921), 24-26.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

There were hundreds of dead each day. One day in February 1916 became notorious, as more than 300 soldiers had to be buried.<sup>15</sup> The land, composed of clay, was very hard to shovel. Fears grew of a potential contagion. Ultimately, the decision was made to carry the corpses to the docks. The dead were to be buried at sea, off the southern shores next to Corfu Island. At first the corpses were tied to a piece of iron, but soon the iron ran out. The most horrible scenes ensued. Without any weights to hold them down, the bodies of the dead returned to the island, swept ashore by the waves. They had to be buried again. As one witness wrote after the war: “The sea was bringing the Serbian dead back, as if it too wished to banish us from its waters.”<sup>16</sup> Serbian war photographer Miloje Igrutinović took pictures of the boats sailing from the island packed with bodies. His image taken near Vido became one of the defining images of the conflict.<sup>17</sup>



Picture 1: The boat carrying the dead soldiers. National Library of Serbia

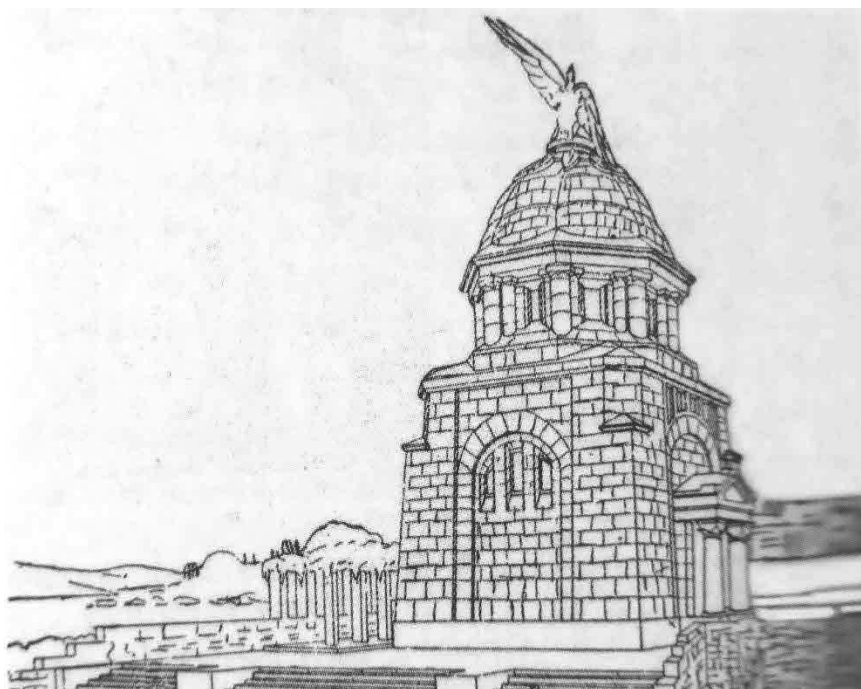
<sup>15</sup> Швабић, *Старим трагом* (2015), 21.

<sup>16</sup> В. Т. Ђујић, *Видо, острво смрти* (Београд, 1921), 50.

<sup>17</sup> Марина Зековић, “Милоје Игрутиновић”, in *Ратни сликари, фотографи аматери и дописници фотографи у српској војсци 1914-1918* (Београд: Војни музеј, 2001), 62-67.

## The First and the Second Initiative

The wartime plan of the Serbian government for building an ossuary at Vido Island was launched in Summer of 1916. It seemed feasible at first glance. There were a number of distinguished Serbian pre-war architects and engineers in the army who were now part of the reserve officers' corps. In addition, the Serbian soldiers could be used as an abundant and well-motivated workforce. One proposal was to use the materials available onsite: the remaining stones of an old Venetian fortress. The second option was to transport the building materials from Corfu. The Serbian authorities hoped to operate within a framework of regular legal procedure, as if they were working in their own country. Firstly, a selection committee was formed and a proper tender was organized in June 1916. Dragutin Maslač (1875-1937), a distinguished Serbian prewar architect, won. His project was described by contemporaries as a construction with a "strong silhouette," a monument that was to be a symbol of suffering, but a symbol of strength too. It was a massive and tall construction, "a genuine continuation of the island."<sup>18</sup> On top of the ossuary a representation of a wounded eagle was to be placed. The entire building had elements of the Serbo-Byzantine architectural style that was present in Serbia.<sup>19</sup> The plan was to place the memorial close to the existing Serbian cemetery and to connect the ossuary with this site.



Picture 2: The sketch of the project designed by Dragutin Maslač

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<sup>18</sup> Грујић, *Архитекта Драгутин Маслаћ*, 33-35.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

At the architect's request, a special leave was even granted to him, so that he could visit Italy and France and "refresh his knowledge of decorative art, so that he could choose suitable decorations for the ossuary."<sup>20</sup> This strange measure, in the middle of the war, testified to the importance that was attributed to this ossuary. However, the project did not materialize during the war, due to the fact that the Greek authorities had to give permission for any Serbian construction project. More precisely, they had to give a piece of land to the Serbian state. However, all Serbian appeals for such a favor were simply ignored by the Corfu authorities as well as by Athens.<sup>21</sup> It is interesting to stress that the Serbian authorities seem to have approached the Vido Island plot of land in the typical European fashion of the time. As Marian Burchardt and Dirk van Laak have argued, at the turn of the century a space without the infrastructure must be somehow without an owner as well.<sup>22</sup>

Indeed, Greece was in a state of internal turmoil with a rather ambivalent relationship towards the Entente. Moreover, the Greek authorities were not satisfied with the forcefully imposed French arrival and the subsequent landing of more than one hundred thousand exhausted Serbian soldiers. By late 1916, Corfu Island was dotted with as many as 76 Serbian cemeteries. The largest were at the small islands of Vido and Lazaret. This "land occupation" provoked various reactions among the locals.<sup>23</sup>

It should be mentioned that the Serbian side had high hopes for its project due to some verbal promises made by Greek officials during the war. Namely, as Yugoslav interwar internal correspondence has revealed, the Greek Prime Minister Eleftherios Venizelos made a promise regarding the memorial to the Serbian wartime ambassador in Athens. However, his government did not manage to make good on the commitment as time ran out. It was expected that the new government would be less inclined to reach a positive decision.<sup>24</sup> Nevertheless, in November 1920, the Yugoslav legation in Athens was informed that Greece would give away a plot of land to the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes. Unfortunately, this sudden positive reply from the Greek authorities took the Yugoslav government by surprise as there was no money in the budget that could facilitate swift action and an immediate start of the construction works.<sup>25</sup> It appears that the momentum had been lost and that the Greek government again took up its defensive posture, precluding a definite solution for this problem.

Dealing with commemorative sites abroad was a completely new problem for Serbian and Yugoslav officials. The Yugoslav policy was based on the concept of keeping the cemeteries onsite, as at the end of the war the Serbian

<sup>20</sup> AS-RG/IV, Драгутин Маслаћ – Комисији за преглед нацрта и предрачуна за споменик на Виду, 11.6.1917.

<sup>21</sup> AC-PG/IV, Министарство вера за Министарство спољних послова, 9.10.1925.

<sup>22</sup> Marian Burchardt, Dirk van Laak, "Introduction", in Marian Burchardt, Dirk van Laak (Eds.), *Making Spaces through Infrastructure* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2023), 22.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> AC-PG/IV, Свештеночувар ратничких гробова – Министарству вера, 5.2.1921.

<sup>25</sup> AC-PG/IV, Министарство иностраних послова – Министарству вера, 27.11.1920.



authorities were closely following the policies of France and Great Britain. On the 20<sup>th</sup> of November 1918 a deal was reached between the Entente, the Greek authorities, and the allied countries that were fighting in Greece from 1915 until 1918. This deal became the law in Greece in August 1920.<sup>26</sup> It was intended to secure the resting places of the allies' soldiers. The Yugoslav law dedicated to war cemeteries made it clear that all military cemeteries were to be grouped together and seen as temporary.<sup>27</sup> The families who wished to opt for an exhumation process could do so, but the state plan was to transform the cemeteries into ossuaries as this made maintenance less demanding and less costly.

As far as the Vido cemetery is concerned, the Yugoslav government at first tried to relaunch its 1917 plans. They encountered the same problems with regard to property rights and the lack of any response from the Greek side.<sup>28</sup> This absence of a Greek reply provoked anger in Belgrade's press, but a commotion could be heard among the Greeks on Corfu as well. The reassurances made in 1916 by Eleftherios Venizelos did not mean much in the 1920s as he was now far from political power. It became evident that the Serbian plan did not meet the approval of a large part of the Corfu public. For example, the local Corfu paper *Ora* published on November 19, 1925, that it would be "a disaster if our beautiful island of Vido is transformed into a Serbian cemetery." The problem was that the ten year contracts the Serbian state had made with Greek peasants in 1915 and 1916 were expiring, and there was no legal basis for keeping the cemeteries on their land across Corfu.

Finally, things changed in 1926 when the Greek authorities granted the desired permission to the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes. It is most likely that the two governments made a deal that implied reciprocal measures. Namely, in the Serbian town of Pirot there was a Greek cemetery in which more than 300 soldiers had been buried in 1918. These casualties were caused by the Spanish flu. By the mid-1920s the cemetery had found itself in a poor state.<sup>29</sup> In December 1925 the Yugoslav Ministry of Faith allowed the construction of a Greek memorial. In addition, the municipality of Pirot gave away the necessary plot of land for free. It appears these actions were part of a diplomatic rapprochement.<sup>30</sup>

The Corfu administration was now even offering to build the ossuary at its own expense. This offer was politely rejected by the Yugoslav officials who desired to stick to its original project. Despite such a new and positive development, problems reappeared. The Greek government decided to give away a smaller plot that measured 6,000 m<sup>2</sup>. Maslač's project however was planned for

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<sup>26</sup> АС-РГ/IV, Министарство вера – Министру иностраних дела, 9.10.1925.

<sup>27</sup> The legal framework implied several documents: "Уредба о уређењу и одржавању војничких гробаља и грובה у домовини и на страни од 12. децембра 1919. године"; "Закон о уређењу наших војничких гробаља" published in February 1922. The final corrections in this domain were made in 1929.

<sup>28</sup> АС-РГ/IV, Министарство иностраних послова-Министарству вера, 2.2.1926.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> АС-РГ/IV, Министарство вера – Министру иностраних дела, 9.10.1925.

a 12,000 m<sup>2</sup> space. Moreover, the conditions of the Greek permission were precise: the plot given to Serbia had to be close to the sea, not more than 60m from the coast.<sup>31</sup> This meant that the highest point of the island would be off-limits for the Serbs. It should be emphasized that Vido is very small in size, less than 1km in diameter, and is generally flat. The only way to make the ossuary visible from far away would be to place it at a high point height, and that option was now unavailable. If the Greek permission was to be accepted the memorial would have to be a very low-profile structure, hardly observable from the sea. Such a development went entirely against the dominant thinking about war memorials at the time. In addition, construction of a memorial close to the sea cliffs implied additional technical and construction problems.

A two-sided approach was conceptualized in Belgrade in order to overcome this problem. Firstly, pressure was to be put on the Greek side through the Yugoslav embassy in Athens. Their instructions were to petition for another, larger location that approached the dominant height of the island. The idea of possibly abandoning Vido was also discussed, but it was instantly rejected. It was important to build an ossuary at the place “where it all happened. This was the epicenter of suffering.”<sup>32</sup> It was rightly understood that the memorial would send a much stronger message if placed at the exact historical site.

However, the Greek side decided not to give way either. In September 1928 they claimed that the height had already been reserved for a wireless telegraph and a meteorological station.<sup>33</sup> Yugoslav diplomats wrote back to Belgrade that the debate over Vido Island had created much commotion and polarization in the Greek public. The monument was evidently understood as part of a power struggle, a part of a Slavic pretension southwards.

It was estimated that it would be counterproductive to further insist. Despite these sound estimations made in 1928, the stalemate lasted well over ten years. In the meantime, the Serbian cemetery was falling apart: the concrete tombstones were disintegrating, those made of wood rotting. The names and the data of the dead were being lost.

The years from 1926 until 1938 passed, and the Vido cemetery, like other similar sites at Corfu, remained for the most part in its original state.<sup>34</sup> Only minor repairs were executed where the situation had become most urgent, and only one man was on the payroll of the Ministry of Faith, which was responsible for maintaining all 76 Serbian cemeteries in this area. Often, appalled visitors from Serbia would sound the alarm to ministries in Belgrade, sending worrisome accounts of the conditions at the sites. The only occasions when these sites would be cleaned in a more systematic manner was during state visits. It was on such occasions that the extent to which the role of the dead was essential for Yugoslav ideology became visible.

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<sup>31</sup> AC-РГ/IV, Министерство иностранных дела – Министерству вера, 10.9.1928.

<sup>32</sup> AC-РГ/IV, Министерство грађевина – Министерству вера, 24.6.1926.

<sup>33</sup> AC-РГ/IV, Министерство иностранных дела – Министерству вера, 10.9.1928.

<sup>34</sup> AC-РГ/IV, Министерство грађевина – Министерству вера, 10.9.1928.

### The Yugoslav Navy Arriving to Visit Its Dead<sup>35</sup>

In 1929 the Yugoslav navy, led by admiral Dragutin Prica (1867-1960), visited Vido Island. This was the first voyage of the Yugoslav fleet abroad, and with ten vessels in total, almost the entire Yugoslav fleet was taken on this trip.<sup>36</sup> Despite his fleet having arrived near Corfu, Admiral Prica forbade any disembarkment: the first place where the men would be landed was on the island of Vido.<sup>37</sup>

This visit clearly showed how Vido, a symbol of the sacrifices of the Serbian army, was being transformed into a Yugoslav memorial. As the concept of path dependence shows, the relative proximity of the Corfu and Vido to the Adriatic Sea, together with the strong symbolism of the Vido cemetery, became crucial in making these islands an ideal destination for not only propagating official Yugoslav ideology but also furthering Yugoslav naval ambitions.

Budimir Švabić, a veteran of the Serbian army, was on this trip. He kept notes and published them as a book in 1930.<sup>38</sup> Some of his passages encapsulated well the position of the 1914-1918 landmarks in the official narrative. Vido was among the essential locations in explaining Serbia's role in the creation of the joint state. The model was always two-fold: it implied sacrifice and creation.

“Our young navy for the first time goes into foreign waters to make a visit to the graves of those who were killed for the freedom of this country, and to visit the fleet of our allies from those glorious days”<sup>39</sup>

In addition: “The Young Yugoslav navy will bow to the sacred graves and will give a pledge there, that it will guard, until the last drop of blood, the great achievement on which the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes was founded”<sup>40</sup>.

As Švabić wrote, the Yugoslav maritime areas Dalmatia and Boka Kotorska were very closely monitoring this visit. Vido Island was to play an integrating role in Yugoslavia, and this was to be done by setting in motion a vast infrastructural network based on the press and educational system. The press covered this trip, day by day.

The islands dotted with the Serbian tombstones became ideal places for understanding the Yugoslav melting pot. Former Austro-Hungarian officers, with a new generation of naval cadets arriving from Croatian and Montenegrin ports, were paying homage to Serbia's 1912-1918 struggle. Admiral Prica himself was a Croat and a battleship commander of the Habsburg Empire during the Great

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<sup>35</sup> Швабић, *Старим трагом* (2015), 17.

<sup>36</sup> The fleet was composed of two battleships named *Dalmatia* and *Hvar*, as well as six smaller vessels and two submarines. Швабић, *Старим трагом* (2015), 12.

<sup>37</sup> Швабић, *Старим трагом* (2015), 18.

<sup>38</sup> Будимир Швабић, *Старим трагом* (Београд: Штампарија И. Чоловића и Ж. Маџаревића, 1930).

<sup>39</sup> Швабић, *Старим трагом* (2015), 11.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

War.<sup>41</sup> Now in 1929, giving a speech at the Serbian cemetery, the admiral underlined that the island offers an exemplary lesson of how to love one's country.<sup>42</sup>

To mark this historic visit, a concrete cross was placed next to the cemetery.<sup>43</sup> The fleet continued its trip across the Mediterranean Sea, towards Bizerte where yet another Serbian cemetery lay.<sup>44</sup> A similar visit took place the following year in August of 1930, when the cadets of the State Naval Academy of Dubrovnik visited Vido.

### The Breakthrough

Years went by but little changed for the better. In 1937, architect Budimir Hristodulo, an influential figure in the Ministry of Construction, was sent to inspect the cemetery. Again, he pressed the case to obtain the highest point on the island, the only guarantee that the memorial "will never be overshadowed by any other construction." However, by mid-1938 the land issue had simply evaporated as a problem. There is no document which clearly explains this shift, but what is clear is that the Yugoslav side had decided to build the ossuary at the granted plot of land, close to sea. Despite the lack of a "document zero" that might testify to the cause of this turn, it is evident that entire departments within various ministries were suddenly set in motion.

However, there is a detailed report about the history of the Vido project, which was submitted to Milan Stojadinović in November 1936. He was on the rise at the time, being the minister of foreign affairs as well as the new Prime Minister. His politics implied a greater degree of care in matters of Serbian wartime traditions, and it could be that his pragmatic approach prevailed in changing the existing course of action. It appears this was the key moment when it became possible to reverse the course of action that had already been established, as the path dependence concept hints. The Greek offer was accepted, and financial calculations were made immediately.<sup>45</sup>

In April 1938 a competition was held to conceive a new memorial project more suitable for the steep coastal terrain. However, in June 1938 the government decided to disregard the results of the competition and use its own discretion. The Ministry of Justice was not satisfied with the sketches that had arrived, and not a single project was suitable for the steep slopes of the island. A decision was reached to hire one of the most distinguished Russian émigré architects living in

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<sup>41</sup> "Prica, Dragutin M.", in *Ko je ko u Jugoslaviji* (Beograd, Zagreb: Jugoslovenski Godišnjak, Nova Evropa, 1928), 123.

<sup>42</sup> Швабић, *Старим трагом* (2015), 24.

<sup>43</sup> "Prica Dragutin", in Mile S. Vjelajac, *Generali i admirali Kraljevine Jugoslavije 1918-1941* (Beograd: Institut za savremenu istoriju, 2004), 254.

<sup>44</sup> Будимир Швабић, "Пут наше флоте. На великом гробљу малог Феривила", *Политика*, 10.6.1929, 1.

<sup>45</sup> АС-РГ/IV, Министарство грађевина – Председнику Министарског савета и Министру спољних послова, 25.11.1936.

Yugoslavia, Nikolay Krasnov (1864-1939).<sup>46</sup> His project, as was observed by the Serbian art historian Professor Aleksandar Kadijević “had a somewhat archaic outlook” with elements of a military fort, and was characteristic in its use of rustic stone blocks. Professor Kadijević also wrote that this project was “among the most mature accomplishments of the Serbian interwar memorial architecture.”<sup>47</sup> Interestingly, Professor Kadijević, either consciously or simply following the dominant paradigm of the time when his text was written (1994), does not consider the memorial part of the Yugoslav architectural traditions, but sees it instead as belonging to Serbian ones.

In September 1938 the government made the decision to start work on the memorial.<sup>48</sup> It had to be done in several consecutive phases. The barracks were built and the robust works had already begun: the first step would be the exhumation of the dead as the existing cemetery partially occupied the site for the ossuary. In March 1939 the Ministry sent its delegates to oversee the process of placing the dead in the tin caskets. Their task was also to determine the identities of the fallen. Ultimately, there were 1120 known and 332 unknown among the dead soldiers.

One of the essential difficulties in building abroad was the issue of money transfer. In December 1939, the works, which had been progressing very well, had to be stopped for several months, due to an issue that emerged with regard to the payment of the Greek workers. Namely, in October 1939 the Greek-Yugoslav trading agreement expired, causing problems with money transfer.<sup>49</sup>

Despite creating a less monumental ossuary, Krasnov had conceptualized a stunning memorial. Artists from various parts of the country were hired. The frescos in the interior were done by the famous Yugoslav artist from Macedonia Lazar Ličenoski.<sup>50</sup> The adornments also include two statues of Serbian soldiers in the front of the building. The famous Croatian sculptor Grga Antunac was commissioned to design the models of these two figures.<sup>51</sup>

The bronze coat of arms was to be sculpted by the workshop normally held in service of the Greek army. The decorations, commemorating all those who participated in the Great Albanian Retreat of 1915/1916, included the Kingdom’s coat of arms and two giant Albanian Commemorative Medals.

However, the project was influenced by the dramatic events of 1939. Ordered decorations for the ossuary – the sculptures of the two Serbian soldiers – had to be canceled. In September 1939 it was decided to cut the expenses due to the ‘international tensions’, and that the statues were to wait for some ‘better

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<sup>46</sup> АС-РГ/IV, Министарство правде, решење, 16.6.1938.

<sup>47</sup> Kadijević, *Prilog proučavanju dela arhitekta Nikole Krasnova*, 191.

<sup>48</sup> АС-РГ/IV, Министарство грађевина – Министарском савету, Одобрење елабората за дизање костурнице на острву Видо, 19.7.1938; АС-РГ/IV, Режијска комисија за израду спомен-костурнице на острву Видо – Министру правде, 13.5.1939.

<sup>49</sup> АС-РГ/IV, Режијска комисија за израду спомен-костурнице на острву Видо – Министарству правде, 9.12.1939.

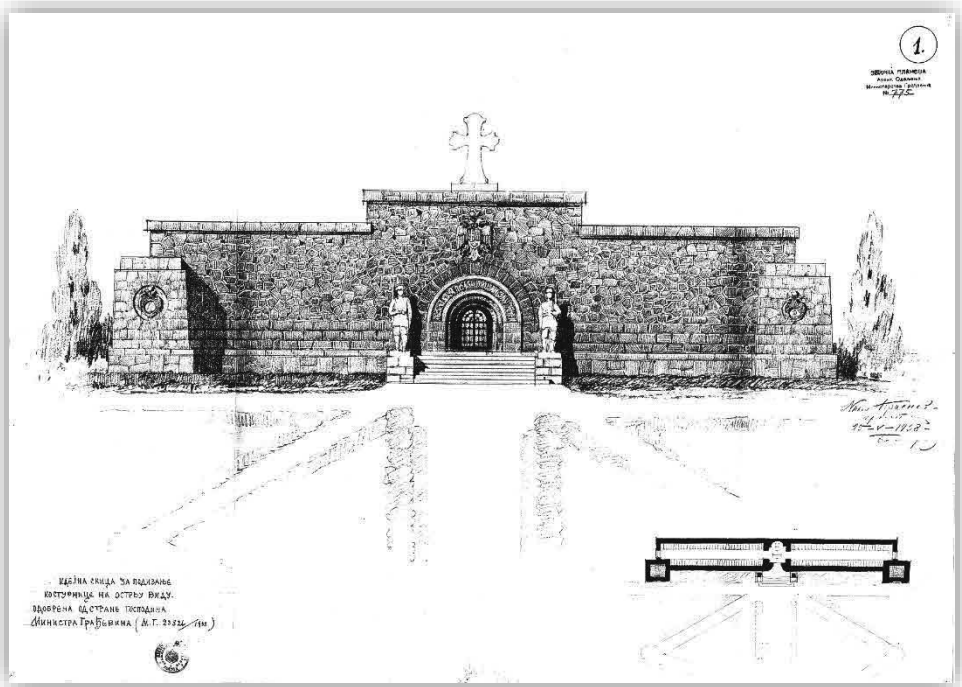
<sup>50</sup> АС-РГ/IV, Министарство правде, Решење, 22.5.1940.

<sup>51</sup> АС-РГ/IV, Министарство правде – Министарству грађевина, 21.7.1939.

time', as the import of bronze elements became impossible at that time. By June 1940 the ossuary was mostly finished, but there was still a lot of work to be done. Yugoslav architect Budimir Hristodulo was constantly on site supervising. From the documentation kept at the Archives of Serbia it was clear that the ossuary was not finished in 1939, as it is usually referenced in the Serbian historiography. In late 1940 the focus was on the immediate surroundings of the memorial.

The war in Europe has reshaped the entire context of the project. In October 1940 this report arrived to Belgrade from Corfu:

“Due to the international tensions and mobilization in Greece there is a shortage of construction material and workforce, the naval traffic has been disrupted, and for these reasons the work on the ossuary has not been finished as it was previously planned.”<sup>52</sup>



Picture 3: The plan of the ossuary. Archives of Yugoslavia

<sup>52</sup> AC-PG/IV, – 11.10.1940.



Picture 4: The ossuary during construction. Archives of Yugoslavia

The remaining work at the ossuary was stopped by the the Ministry of Justice on the 18th of January 1940 due to “the outbreak of war hostilities”.<sup>53</sup> The Yugoslav personnel was to be evacuated right away from the site. The only one to remain on the Vido until March 1941 was a single guardian who were to keep the order at the construction site. Once he left the site, it was at the mercy of intruders. After the war it was established that the interior of the ossuary was damaged by the Italian or German troops during their occupation of the region. Namely, several of the cripts were broken. The reason for this violation was allegedly the search for hidden treasure.<sup>54</sup>

### **The Ossuary in the post-1945 context**

There are still many gaps related to the treatment of Serbia’s Great War traditions during the socialist times. The case of the Vido ossuary intersects with some of the most crucial aspects of this relationship. Before northern Greece became linked with Serbia’s Great War, there was already a very important religious and cultural Serbian landmark in this country. It was the 12<sup>th</sup> century Hilandar Monastery, built in northern Greece. After 1940, with the Zejtinlik and the Vido memorials construction finished, the Serbian cultural heritage in Greece became

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<sup>53</sup> АС-РГ/IV, Министарство правде – Министарству спољних послова, 28.1.1941.

<sup>54</sup> О. Милићевић, “Боравак председника Тита на Крфу”, *Борба*, 26.7.1956, 1.

more significant. Yugoslavia's cultural institutions have started using a new phrase in the post 1945 correspondence: 'the Serbian monuments in Greece'.<sup>55</sup> These sites now existed and the government had to decide how to treat them. Government's actions were following the course set up by the previous political structures - repair them and pay homage to the fallen, or simply ignore them and observe their gradual collapse. Whatever the answer was to this dilemma, the revolutionary break with the pre-1941 system created enormous problems. It was often occurrence that even the most basic information about the 1914-1918 memorials was lost, and that data had to be collected from scratch.

Memorials and cemeteries were moved into the jurisdiction of the Socialist Republic of Serbia. Its Department for the Invalids' and Veterans' questions was to deal now with monuments as well. The Republic's department for culture was also to assist. Here, the key institution was Serbia's Institution for Preservation of Monuments. This institution was responsible for providing expert opinion and implementing the conservation measures for monuments. The work of all those institutions was controlled from above, by the Executive Committee of the Assembly of Socialist Republic of Serbia.

The first sign that Vido Island would not be forgotten in the new ideological and political context was observed in 1954. Yugoslavia's president Josip Broz Tito visited Vido Island while on his way to Athens, and honored the fallen. As in the case of the Kingdom, this was a good opportunity to show Yugoslavia's naval capacity. Tito traveled on the famous yacht 'Galeb' (the Seagull), followed by four Yugoslav destroyers. The ships were welcomed by the additional two Greek war vessels in Greek waters.<sup>56</sup> In the morning of 2<sup>nd</sup> of June, the Yugoslav officials in dark suits came out from their cabins as the ships reached Corfu and Vido islands. The crews of the ships stood firm on their decks. A minute of silence followed. Afterwards, the Yugoslav officials threw the wreath into the sea. The Yugoslav president did not disembark from the ship, nor visited the ossuary. Moreover, the terminology used in his speech was very indicative - Tito did not refer to the dead as the soldiers of the of Kingdom of Serbia, nor even as the Serbs. He has used amore neutral term: "our fallen". However, the very visit and publicity that surrounded it clearly indicated that the Vido's martyrs were incorporated into the Yugoslav mythology.

At some point in time the coat of arms of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia that stood above the entrance of the ossuary was taken down. The event was veiled in mystery and the bronze object was never to be found again. Still, this was fitting the pattern of similar 'interventions' within Yugoslavia, the systematic destruction of symbols of monarchism.<sup>57</sup>

<sup>55</sup> Архива Републичког завода за Заштиту споменика културе (АРЗ), фасцикла 19, Информација о току радова на заштити и уређивању спомен-обележја српске војске у Грчкој, Тунису и Алжиру из Првог светског рата, октобар 1979.

<sup>56</sup> Жоже Смоле, "Председник Тито данас стиже у Атину", *Борба*, 2.6.1954, 1.

<sup>57</sup> See more in Угљеша Рајчевић, *Затирано и затрто: оскрнављени и уништени српски споменици на тлу претходне Југославије* (Београд: Прометеј, 2001).



Tito visited this part of Greece again in 1956. That time the Greek Prime Minister Konstantinos Karamanlis traveled to Corfu to meet the Yugoslav president.<sup>58</sup> Again, Tito did not visit the Vido Island despite spending several days with his wife, traveling around the Corfu. However, a solemn ceremony was held this time on the Vido Island. Yugoslav lieutenant-general, Miloš Šumonja, led the Yugoslav delegation. The press reported "the modest and emotional ceremony" at the front pages. The lieutenant-general placed the wreath sent by the Yugoslav President in front of the Serbian ossuary.<sup>59</sup>

The tone of the visit was much different than two years before. The dead soldiers were now openly named as the Serbs. They were praised as models for "the younger Yugoslav generations who should be inspired by their example". The Yugoslav and the Greek anthems were played by the Yugoslav sailors.<sup>60</sup> This was an important step forward in accepting the Serbian war dead as legitimate creators of the Yugoslav state.

Despite such high profile visits, there were no major repairs at the Vido ossuary in the 1950s. The last work around the edifice was left untouched since 1940, and was demolished during the occupation. Minor repair of the broken windows was performed in 1969. More serious work was done in 1972 when the roof and some other elements were replaced. However, this was barely enough to keep the ossuary safe and suitable for visits. The state clearly demonstrated that the ossuary would not be forgotten, but it was visible that the site was not high on the list of priorities.

Nevertheless, visitors were coming to the island. Those were usually the Serbian Great War veterans, and their family members. Serbia's institutions for monument protection kept receiving protest letters. For example, in August 1975, the veterans of the Great Serbian retreat, the members of the Society of the Albanian Commemorative Medal sent one with a vivid account of the problems at the site. The mausoleum was in full decay, and the main problem was the water leakage causing corrosion. Former soldiers made some very disturbing points, hitting directly at the core of the typical pattern. They wrote that the ossuary was falling apart in times "when our country is getting richer".<sup>61</sup> The veterans also mentioned the prominent appearance of the new memorials, honoring the fallen in the Second World War, and issued the long list of neglected monuments to the 1912-1918 wars.<sup>62</sup>

The official reports were very similar. The curators of the Republic's Institution for Preservation of Memorials wrote that "the current state is unsatisfactory". In the report from December 1974 expert from this institution stated that monuments 'in Greece were left to self-preservation'. Minor interventions in the ossuaries and at the cemeteries were seen as actions that did not solve the

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<sup>58</sup> Милићевић, Боравак председника Тита на Крфу, 1.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> APЗ-фасцикла 25, Савез ратника ослободилачких ратова Србије 1912-1918 – Републичком секретаријату за културу, 6.7.1977.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

problems. It was simply "the polishing of the aging process". The key problem was the humidity that was destroying the walls. At the same time, the back wall was under continuous pressure as the stones kept falling from the neighboring cliffs that surpassed the ossuary.<sup>63</sup>

In addition, as the surrounding of the ossuary was never covered with asphalt, water was jeopardizing the foundations of the building. Moreover, roots of the large trees right, that next to the ossuary were now jeopardizing it. In addition, a few olive and fig trees also grew right from the ossuary's walls. The reports underlined that the memorial had the atmosphere of an unfinished project.

Over time, the number of memorial sites at Corfu was rising. In 1975 the commemorative plaque was placed in the Guvia port, the site where the first Serbian soldiers disembarked in Corfu in 1916.<sup>64</sup> The initiative came from the private organization of the Great War veterans, but it got all the approvals of the Secretary for Culture of Socialist Republic of Serbia. Slowly, the state institutions were intertwining its actions with the more and more influential societies of the 1912-1918 veterans.

Minor, most urgent repairs were performed in 1972. Each few years the repairs were performed, but the ossuary was still surrounded by debris from the 1940 construction and almost nothing was done in its immediate vicinity. Ambitious plans were made for 1975 and 1976, but these were not performed due to problems with the Greek authorities.<sup>65</sup> Political instability in Greece probably did play some part here as just a few years ago Greece ended "the Regime of the Colonels" (1967-1974). Yugoslavia also tried to implement the treaty that was signed in June 1955, an agreement dedicated to the collaboration in the sphere of culture and education. Article 10 of the Agreement implied cooperation of the conservation institutions, and this document proved to be very important in surpassing Greek objections linked with the reconstruction of the Hilandar Monastery.

Still, the true impetus came in March 1977 when the Executive committee of the Assembly of Socialist Republic of Serbia gave clear recommendation to its subordinate institutions in Socialist Republic of Serbia to systematically cherish and repair the Serbian memorials from the Great War.<sup>66</sup> This seemed to be the true political shift which enabled unhindered and continuous care for the Serbian war cemeteries and ossuaries in Greece, but also in many other European countries. It was an unambiguous sign of an official political embracement of 1914-1918 Serbian traditions.

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<sup>63</sup> APЗ-фасцикла 25, Извештај архитекте Миљана Стевчића – Републичком заводу за заштиту споменика културе, 14.11.1975.

<sup>64</sup> APЗ-фасцикла 25, Удружење носилаца Албанске споменице 1915-1916 – Републичком заводу за заштиту споменика културе, 20.8.1975.

<sup>65</sup> APЗ-фасцикла 25, Амбасада СФРЈ у Грчкој – Републичком заводу за заштиту споменика културе, 14.9.1972; План акција на заштити споменика културе српског порекла у Грчкој у 1975 и 1976, фебруар 1975.

<sup>66</sup> APЗ-фасцикла 19, Социјалистичка република Србије, Републички секретаријат за борачко инвалидска питања – Извршном већу скупштине СР Србије, 15.9.1979.

The money was provided for the reconstruction work, and the project was ready for 1978 and 1979. Money was provided by various Republic or Federal funds, and it was to be sent to the sites in Greece, despite certain interruptions.

Finally, a systematic conservation begun in 1981. Very pragmatic model was established and regulated that the work is done by the local architect and under the authority of the domestic Corfu administration. The funding was arriving from Belgrade in a pattern to simplify all bureaucratic procedures. However, due to constant political changes in local administration, as well as occasional obstacles in money transfer, the work was prolonged until 1988. At that time the work had a more systematic character and it was constant from 1981 to 1988. The repairs included work outside and inside the ossuary, replaced roof and marble stones. In the end, the exterior was neatly arranged. The 'Blue Tomb Plateau' was constructed with a view on the part of the Ionian Sea where the dead were placed into the water. A commemorative multilingual plaque was installed, as well as benches and new pine trees. The Plateau, the Navy Cross from the 1929 visit and the ossuary were linked by walking paths creating a memorial complex.<sup>67</sup>

As part of the final repairs, the new coat of arms of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia was cast in bronze, following the original drawings of Nikolay Krasnov. However, the permission of the official institutions in Belgrade was denied for that decoration, and it could not be returned to the building. Only in 2006 the Serbian Ministry of Culture agreed to have the coat of arms back to the same place where it originally was located.<sup>68</sup> It is unclear what was the problem with it in 1980s, and why it could not be brought back. One can argue that the monarchist coat of arms was still too much for a country that was firmly a socialist one, or on the contrary, that the coat of arms was too 'Yugoslav' for days of the 'Serbian energetic revival'. In any case, the coat of arms became a vivid indicator of the societal changes in Yugoslavia and Serbia and its repercussions for the Vido Island.

In 1988, as part of the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Salonika front breakthrough, Yugoslavia's official delegation visited Corfu and Vido.<sup>69</sup> It was the first time since 1956 that the large socialist delegation visited the site. The ossuary was now fully embraced by Serbia's media and educational system, and the entire infrastructure was placed in motion to keep the remembrance alive. The media coverage was now more detailed in their description, and the language was stronger and more emotional.<sup>70</sup>

One final question loomed over the final repairs. Should the two statues, envisioned by Nikolay Krasnov to be positioned in front of the ossuary, be created now? Serbia's Minister of Defense announced in 2020 that the Vido ossuary "will be fully finished in the accordance with the original project". High quality

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<sup>67</sup> Оливера Кандић, Лукић Миладин, *Крф и Видо: споменици српске културе* (Београд: Друштво конзерватора Србије, 2018), 87.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> APЗ-фасцикла 25.

<sup>70</sup> Mića Živojinović, "More beznadja i ostrvo nade", *Borba*, 12-13.9.1998, 12.

lighting was also promised.<sup>71</sup> It all looked like as if 'finishing' the memorial became some sort of a mission. However, this bold promise of the minister was not met with joy in Serbia's expert and conservation circles. Would two statues that were only part of the draft and never actually made present an act of reconstruction, or an additional intervention on the memorial that was already finished? This dilemma has not yet reached its epilogue.

Actually, one more issue was raised in the recent months. Why was there a coat of arms of a non-existent state above the entrance? Why not placing the coat of arms of Kingdom of Serbia?<sup>72</sup> The lack of understanding for Vido's complex legacy is evident, and by reaffirming its Serbian character all traces of the state that built the ossuary were to be erased.

### Conclusion

The case study about the Vido ossuary reveals all the difficulties the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes met in its effort to deal with the bodily remains of the fallen but also to create a unifying ideological pattern. Simultaneously, the creation of this memorial testifies about additional infrastructural problem that the new state had to solve, due to the very specific 'enlargement' of its borders. The use of Yugoslavia's scarce resources had to be now directed abroad as well. Some additional spaces had to be overcome and controlled. However, building an ossuary in a foreign country was also an expression of sovereignty, of power and capability. It was the showcase of the Yugoslav knowledge as well as art. In addition, it is important to stress that the entire social infrastructure of the Socialist Republic of Serbia of the late 1980s had to be set into motion. A myriad of social activities had to be launched in order to bring back the remembrance of the Vido fallen into the center of the Serbian national narrative.

Various layers of meaning and interpretations accumulated in the 20th century at the island of Vido. The communist approach to the Serbia's Great War traditions seems much more complex than previously thought in the 1990s. Any approach that disregards the ossuary's evolution implies simplification and misunderstanding of complex episode in Serbian and Yugoslav history. The path dependence concept proves to be very useful in studying this thickness and all strong symbolism embodied on this island. The question that encapsulates this very well is the looming debate over the coat of arms at the ossuary. The question is very relevant even today and it provokes thought over Serbia's role in the creation and in the collapse of the Yugoslav project. Keeping the Vido into the center of the national imaginary also implies the continuous, uninterrupted and diverse

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<sup>71</sup> Tanjug: "Uskoro završetak radova na Spomen-kosturnici na ostrvu Vido", JMU Radio-televizija Vojvodine (rtv.rs) (last accessed 28.9.2020).

<sup>72</sup> Marko Lakić, "Zašto srpski heroji i dalje počivaju pod šahovnicom – dva puta su odbacili Jugoslaviju" (politika.rs) 29.3.2023, (last accessed 30.6.2023).

infrastructural work that needs to be in lines with the dominant ideological paradigm. What was, however, continuously absent from the focus of the authorities of Yugoslavia, regardless of the ideological and political paradigms, was the lack of understanding for the role the ossuary could play for bereavement process and for preservation of the identity of individuals who lost their lives at the Vido Island.

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