

Dead heroes and living deserters: the Yugoslav People's Army and the public of Valjevo, Serbia, on the verge of war 1991

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With the withdrawal of the Yugoslav People's Army from Slovenia, the Yugoslav conflict escalated into a full-scale war in Croatia in the summer of 1991. The article explores the involvement of the Yugoslav People's Army in the war in East Slavonia from the local perspective of the Serbian town of Valjevo. Touching upon Serbia's political and social radicalization in Valjevo in the second half of the 1980s, it discusses the process of the local garrison's military mobilization and an incidence of mass desertion by Valjevo reservists in September 1991. Based on local archive material, press releases, and interviews with former soldiers, the account focuses on the city's national engagement, the garrison's deployment in combat, and the process of "reimplanting" patriotism after the reservists' desertion. It reveals that the engagement of Valjevo's troops completed the city's mental process of ethnic segregation. The outbreak of violence in Croatia in 1991 destroyed the Yugoslav People's Army as a pillar of Yugoslav statehood and permanently transformed the identities of Valjevo's soldiers.

Keywords: Yugoslav People's Army; Yugoslav wars; Serbia; nationalism; desertion

If the individual is the negation of the State,
then war is the negation of that negation.
War is the moment of absolute socialization
of the collective existence of the people, the *Volk*.
Jonathan Littell

Introduction

On 24 September 1991, several thousand reservists of the Yugoslav People's Army (Jugoslovenska Narodna Armija – JNA) demonstrated in front of the Assembly Hall in Valjevo. The soldiers had deserted the frontline in East Slavonia and West Srem in the days that preceded this incident, justifying their behavior with the misconduct of the high command during the invasion into Croatian territory. The first seven casualties among the local units in the Croatian towns Tovarnik and Ilača created a heated atmosphere in Valjevo's community. The local weekly *Napred* (Forward) published an editorial on 4 October entitled "Desertion" (*Napred*, 4 October 1991, 1), which was printed across the whole front page with pictures of the dead soldiers. In nationalistic rhetoric, the author accused

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the reservists of being traitors to their homeland. Citing the dreadful measures of the Serbian commander “Dušan the Mighty,” who executed soldiers not willing to fight, the author repeatedly expressed implicit death threats to the reservists, even mentioning summary execution. The reply of the reservists was printed on page six of the same issue under the impressive headline: “The soldiers of Valjevo are no traitors and deserters” (6).

Valjevo’s community had been polarized since the invasion of Croatia in mid-September 1991. The Yugoslav conflict had evolved into a full-scale war. Serbian nationalist propaganda, which had become increasingly aggressive since the mid-1980s, served to justify the conflict, but the experience of combat quickly changed local politics. The town’s citizens realized that war had broken out and that death on the battlefield was now a real possibility. Before local troops got involved, the local garrison’s trainings in May and June 1991 had been regarded merely as “war games” consisting of tent camps, barbecues, and hard drinking in beauty spots around Valjevo. The outbreak of war and the death of the first soldiers destroyed this misconception. People started worrying about fathers, husbands, and sons. The onset of war raised the question to what extent the citizens of Valjevo were inclined to support and make sacrifices for the military actions of the JNA and Yugoslavia in general. The desertion of the reservists was a clear indication that mobilization for war had failed in Valjevo.

In the last 20 years, scholarship has produced substantial insights to help us understand the violent escalation that took place during the disintegration of the Yugoslav state (for comprehensive overviews, see Jović 2001; Ramet 2005; Dragović-Soso 2008). While exploring different dimensions of the violent breakup, special emphasis has been placed on the rise of renewed Serbian nationalism since the 1980s. We now have detailed accounts of the role the Serbian elites played in this process (Subotić 2000; Dragović-Soso 2002). We can also trace the loss of legitimacy of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia (Savez komunista Jugoslavije – SKJ) and the way Slobodan Milošević benefited from these changes (Malešević 2002, 172–222; Jović 2008; Nikolić and Petrović 2011, 9–21). His ascent within the League of Communists of Serbia (Savez komunista Srbije – SKS) in 1987 and his seizure of power are well researched.¹

However, as most of the research has concentrated on these high-rank decision-makers and on the intellectual avant-garde in Belgrade, we still know little about people’s reactions to mobilization, war, and violence in the Serbian hinterland. Therefore, the aim of this article is to analyze the beginning of the war in Croatia in 1991 from a local perspective. Focusing on Valjevo’s soldiers fighting in East Slavonia and West Srem, I want to clarify the aforementioned aspects on a micro level: first, what was the standing of the Yugoslav Army and how did the attitude of the population develop in these crucial months? Second, how did local actors experience mobilization, how did they perceive the outbreak of violence, and what were the reasons for the mass desertion? And third, how was the city’s community reconciled with Belgrade’s goals after the reservists’ desertion? My sources are based on fieldwork in Valjevo, western Serbia, which I carried out from May 2011 to September 2013. Besides Party and State documents and press releases from the local weekly newspaper *Napred*, I rely on 13 interviews with former soldiers of the JNA. The soldiers were active or reserve officers and reservists of the JNA or soldiers of Valjevo’s territorial units and all of them fought in East Slavonia in 1991. By focusing on the soldiers’ perspective, the article will enhance our understanding of the reception and adaption of Serbian nationalism, of mobilization, and of the use of violence during Yugoslavia’s dissolution. More precisely, it will allow us to qualify in which ways violence was used – in Gagnon’s words – as “a strategic policy chosen by elites who were confronted with political pluralism and popular mobilization” (Gagnon 2004, 7). The local perspective

on Valjevo's leaders and soldiers will explain to what extent the historical events were based on grassroots support and local Communist power structures and the ways in which the escalation of violence helped to overcome a critical attitude towards the war. More broadly, these issues allow us to draw conclusions about the legitimacy of the Yugoslav state, its armed forces, and military violence during the final years of Yugoslav Communism.

Helter-skelter into war: the Yugoslav crisis and the outbreak of violence in 1991

During the 1980s, Yugoslav society was shaken by economic depression. There was disagreement among the republics on how to overcome these troubles, and the League of Communists of Yugoslavia was confronted with a loss of legitimacy after Tito's death (Woodward 1995, 47–81; Ramet 2002, 8–21; Jović 2009, 141–170). Within the process of limited pluralization, which took place in the first half of the 1980s, intellectual elites in Slovenia and Serbia gained public influence and started challenging the status quo. Many of these groups – initially founded as freethinking circles and human rights movements – became increasingly nationalistic in the late 1980s. In Serbia, this new way of thinking gained political weight with Slobodan Milošević's seizure of power in the SKS in 1987 (Silber and Little 1997, 37–47; Jović 2008, 33–68; Nikolić 2008, 121–148). Unifying intellectual elites with grassroots demonstrations of Kosovo Serbs, he was able to stage himself as "Serbia's Savior." With the help of orchestrated mass rallies, he overthrew the ruling elites in Kosovo, Vojvodina, and Montenegro during the following two years. Appointed puppet cabinets allowed Serbia's leader to control – and thus paralyze – both the SKJ and the Federal State Presidency (Silber and Little 1997, 58–69; Dragović-Soso 2002, 207–226; Vladislavljević 2008, 108–178). Aggressively pursuing a centralized reconstitution of Yugoslavia against the interests of Slovenia and Croatia, his uncompromising policy and the unwavering opposition of the two western republics had centrifugal effects on the federation's cohesion and led to increased confrontation. The climax in the disintegration of the SKJ was reached at the Fourteenth Extraordinary Congress in January 1990. With their propositions blocked, Slovenia's and Croatia's delegates left the congress. This marked the end of Yugoslavia's Communist Party (Ramet 2002, 54–55; Jović 2009, 349–351; Glaurdić 2011, 69–73).

The outcome of the party congress put pressure on another vital federal organization: the JNA. Rooted in the partisan resistance movement of World War II, it evolved into the "Guardian of the Revolution" under Tito.² As a reaction to the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968, the armed forces were restructured around two main pillars: besides the regular forces of the JNA, the Law on Total National Defense (*Opštenarodna odbrana*) installed Territorial Units (*Teritorijalna odbrana*) at the republic and provincial levels. Designed to defend the country in the partisan tradition in case of an invasion, these units were commanded at the local level. With its own League of Communists, the JNA was politically separated from the state and gradually developed into a state within the state (Čuić 1986; Hadžić 2000, 243–244; Marijan 2008, 40–45). Committed to Yugoslavia's Communist project, the military leadership was pressured to reform itself in the "critical 1980s." Stubbornly resisting change, the JNA came under hefty criticism, among others from the Slovenian magazine *Mladina*.³ Having accused the army leadership of exporting weapons to Ethiopia during a famine, several journalists of *Mladina* were arrested in 1988. However, challenges to the JNA's position continued, among other things regarding the army's federal funding. Nevertheless, "[b]eing a 'system' rather than a single institution," the JNA failed to recognize the signs of the times and rather arrogantly dismissed all

criticism. However, it appeared “hardly a single unified actor” (Bieber 2008, 309) in the political debates of the time. In any case, it no longer had the untouchable status it once enjoyed.

The reform of the armed forces since 1988 may be seen as the high command’s reaction to political developments. Based on the idea of *Jedinstvo* (Unity), the JNA implemented an organizational shift from republic armies and divisions to military districts and brigades. By reducing the number of units, this tactical deployment led to a regrouping of the troops and changes of arrangement. Previously, the republic armies’ areas of competence had been more or less identical with the borders of the republics, and a republic’s general was usually in charge of the respective army. With the establishment of military districts, the reach of competence transcended the republics’ borders and the practice of a republic’s general in command was quiet. The military reform also changed the chain of command. Formerly coordinated as two different defense components, in the course of *Jedinstvo* the Territorial Units were subordinated to the JNA’s general staff. With this measure, the high command tried to guarantee its control over the entire armed forces of Yugoslavia in a state of emergency (Marijan 2003; Dimitrijević 2008). Nevertheless, the end of the SKJ threatened the JNA. The reform of the armed forces seemed to secure control over the troops in Yugoslavia. But with the party’s demise, the army lost its political legitimacy as the system’s foundation. In this sense, it was the war in Slovenia that prompted the army to collaborate with Serbian leader Slobodan Milošević.

With Slovenia’s and Croatia’s simultaneous declaration of independence on 25 June 1991, the Yugoslav conflict entered a new stage. Belgrade’s officials countered the new Slovenian cabinet’s takeover of power – legitimized by multiparty elections in 1990 – with the invasion of the JNA on 27 June (Silber and Little 1997, 154–168; Glaurdić 2011, 109–116). Faced with massive resistance by the Slovenian Territorial Units, the war ended after 10 days with the Brioni Agreement compelling the republics to suspend the declaration of independence. As a *quid pro quo*, the JNA withdrew from Slovenia and actually recognized the republic’s sovereignty.

In many ways, this retreat marked a turning point. Even hardcore ideologues in the JNA’s high command could no longer cherish illusions about popular approval of their actions or the legitimacy of the army as a federal institution. The Slovenes regarded them as an aggressor and were willing to fight against the former “guarantor” of Yugoslavia’s socialism. As a consequence, the high command adopted Slobodan Milošević’s “unitarist nationalism,”⁴ chose to consolidate its fortune, and sided with Serbia. Withdrawing to Croatia, the JNA started to openly support the uprising of the Croatian Serbs. Politically backed by Belgrade, self-appointed leaders had gained power in the Serbian enclaves in Croatia at the beginning of 1990, and declared autonomy in July 1990 (Caspersen 2003, 2007; Grandits and Leutloff 2003; Gagnon 2004, 142–153; Silber and Little 1997, 92–104). By proclaiming the “Serbian Autonomous Oblast of Krajina” (Srpska autonomna oblast Krajina – SAO Krajina) and mobilizing the Serbian population, this rebellion went helter-skelter from bad to worse in the spring of 1991. In response to violent clashes between Serbs and Croatian security forces in March (Plitvica Lakes) and in May 1991 (Borovo Selo), the Federal State Presidency dispatched troops to act as a “buffer” between Serbs and Croats. In the words of the then Minister of Defense Veljko Kadijević, since their retreat from Slovenia the JNA’s troops were starting to fight together with the Croatian Serbs to “create and protect a new Yugoslav state with all the nations willing to be part of it – at the moment the Serbian and the Montenegrin ones” (Kadijević 1993, 93). With the full-scale intervention of Yugoslavia’s armed forces in September 1991

on Croatian territory, Belgrade set the stage for a prolonged war; and the troops of the Serbian town of Valjevo were ordered to mobilize.

Drip-fed riot: Valjevo's grassroots support for the Serbs in Croatia

In 1991, Valjevo followed Milošević's policy of escalating violence. Situated 100 kilometres west of Belgrade, the agricultural region was dominated by the industrial complex Krušik with more than 10,000 workers. As a signature project of socialist industrialization, it was one of Yugoslavia's biggest arms producers. Both agriculture and industry in Valjevo were negatively affected by the economic crisis of the 1980s (for the party's evaluation see Municipal Committee SKS Valjevo [Opštinski komitet Savez komunista Srbije Valjevo – OK SKS-Valjevo]: Security Report June 1986; OK SKS-Valjevo 1987, 1988). The ability of agricultural production to satisfy the Yugoslav market and to guarantee the influx of foreign currency through export suffered from the deteriorating trade balance and the austerity policy. The cooperatives were no longer able to deliver agricultural products. This exacerbated the discontent of large parts of the district's population. The situation among Krušik's organized workers was dangerous. Confronted with the inactivity of production units, the factory's newspaper addressed delicate subjects like low wages, short-time work, and expected layoffs in every issue. Valjevo's party and state leadership tried to deal with the effects of depression and declining living standards, but at the same time rejected any responsibility for the situation.

The question of liability was omnipresent when Milošević seized power at the Eighth Session of the SKS Central Committee on 23 and 24 September 1987 (Centralni komitet – CK). Valjevo's Party Presidency (Predsedništvo – P) adopted the session's decrees, which demanded the rationalization of party and state organizations, and approved measures for the necessary reforms (OK SKS-Valjevo 1987). The dismissal of Dragiša Pavlović from the SKS CK created a stir among the party elites in Valjevo, but provided a scapegoat for the worsening situation.⁵ At an extraordinary meeting, the local party organizations renewed their support for the session's decision – this time in the presence of Belgrade's state and party leaders Borisav Jović and Milomir Minić. Especially the Krušik delegates were in favor of Milošević's newly established nationalist hardline concerning the Kosovo question: "These steps should have been taken earlier. The members of the League of Communists are at the end of their patience. ... Dragiša Pavlović is dismissed, but we think that there are some fifty more that should be dismissed, too" (P OK SKS-Valjevo 1987, 4 and 6).⁶ The factory's staff always had great influence on local decision making processes. As Dušan Mihajlović (Valjevo's mayor at the time) expressed in his memoirs, the city's condition was strongly influenced "by an old problem: the lack of cooperation between the municipal and the arms section of Krušik" (Mihajlović 2005, 89). Any kind of teamwork "was prevented by the fact that Krušik, as an arms producer, was always within the army's and federation's responsibility" (90).

The above-mentioned "rallies of truth," which took place in Serbia, Vojvodina, Kosovo, and Montenegro in 1988/1989, spelled trouble for Valjevo's authorities as well. On 6 October 1988, the Trade Union Federation (Savez sindikata) organized a general strike. It resulted in an unauthorized mass demonstration in front of the assembly hall. An initiative of Krušik workers who left the factory site resulted in a gathering of about 10–15,000 people shouting "down with the leadership" and "paper-pusher" (*foteljaši*) (P OK SKS-Valjevo 1988, 3). The demonstrators accused the local government of dragging Valjevo's name in the mud by refusing acts of solidarity with the Serbs in Kosovo. The city's reputation as an advocate of Milošević's hardline policy suffered from the demonstration. On

the same day, the leadership of Vojvodina resigned after massive demonstrations by about 150,000 people that had taken place the day before in Novi Sad (Vladislavljević 2008, 145–178). With Valjevo's demonstrators shouting similar slogans, the local authorities ran the risk of being characterized as “bureaucrats” and obstructing the “will of the people.” Belgrade's newspapers additionally put pressure on Valjevo's ruling elite by focusing on the city's general strike (*Politika Ekspres*, 7 October 1988, 11).

As a consequence, Valjevo's officials tried to regain their reputation by awarding Milošević the freedom of the city in April 1989 – putting him on the same footing as leading historical figures like General Živojin Mišić or Tito (Assembly of the Municipality (Skupština opština – SO): Common session of the town's councils 1989, 1–2). On top of being the first city to award Milošević honorary citizenship, Valjevo's executives underlined their commitment to Belgrade's political line by bestowing the city's Golden Sign (*Zlatna plaketa*) upon members of Milošević's political elite, namely Petar Gračanin, Borisav Jović, and Bogdan Trifunović. Especially in the aftermath of the Fourteenth Congress of the CK of SKJ in January 1990, the local Party Presidency commended the actions in a way that expressly underlined their support for “Serbia's savior.” Condemning the secession of the western republics, they signalled their readiness to take chances while threatening anybody who hesitated:

[T]he situation in Kosovo is difficult after the end of the congress, Serbia and Yugoslavia are threatened. The people of our region are threatened, too. We demand of the federal government to take all necessary measures to stop the developments in Kosovo. ... The Yugoslav Presidency is avoiding the solution of the problems in Kosovo. If the Socialist Republic of Yugoslavia and the Socialist Republic of Serbia do not adopt all necessary measures, the people will. I think that the people are prepared for this and they are starting to volunteer. The ones that do not feel able to take these steps should resign their positions. (P OK SKS-Valjevo 1990, 2)

But since the beginning of 1989, the party's monopoly on political statements was questioned in Valjevo – especially by Vuk Drašković's Serbian Renewal Movement (Srpski pokret obnove – SPO), which used Valjevo's church and the publishing house of the Orthodox Church, Glas Crkve, to spread nationalism and anti-Communism (P OK SKS-Valjevo 1989). Thus, national mobilization was not merely driven by the regime, but also by parts of the opposition.

The law on political organizations Serbia's parliament passed on 27 August 1990 formally disbanded the party's political monopoly. By uniting with the Socialist Alliance of Working People (Socijalistički savez radnog naroda), the SKS transformed itself into the Socialist Party of Serbia (Socijalistička partija Srbije – SPS) in July 1990. At this time, with New Democracy (Nova demokratija – ND) another important party – at least for Valjevo – entered the political stage. Founded as a Movement for Valjevo (Pokret za Valjevo) under the leadership of the above-mentioned Dušan Mihajlović, this party strongly influenced the city's developments in the two years to come. During the period of statutory changes on the provincial level, Valjevo's mayor (Slobodan Đukić) and the head of government (Milan Janković) had to deal with the “political limbo” and the outbreak of war in Croatia in 1991. Although the SPS won five of six seats for the Serbian Parliament in the first multiparty elections since World War II in Valjevo in December 1990, both executive leaders in Valjevo were members of ND (*Napred*, 28 December 1990, 1–2). This confrontational situation in Valjevo's political landscape did not become tangible until the outbreak of war in 1991. Initially, the common political agenda of support for Croatia's Serbs helped pool the city's resources and level out political differences. The commonly perceived “threat to Serbdom” unified the new political “entrepreneurs” to a certain extent – or at least helped to delay the power struggle in Valjevo.

The bond between Valjevo and the Croatian town Knin, then serving as the capital of the self-proclaimed Republic of Serbian Krajina, existed as early as September 1990 (SO: Common session of the town's councils 1990, 1). On the initiative of the city assembly, Knin became the sister city of Valjevo and established relations that led to the massive support of the Serbian insurgents at the turn of 1990/1991. Based on a revision of Communist interpretations of World War II in the 1980s, the state-controlled media in Belgrade launched a massive campaign to discredit the Croatian independence movement as a successor of the fascist Ustaše-regime (Dragović-Soso 2008, 100–114). The resulting sense of solidarity with Serbs living outside Serbia further increased in the second half of 1990, when Valjevo launched its grassroots support for Croatia's Krajina. This aid was "lifesaving" for the Serbian forces in Croatia. The relief supplies not only provided these regions with everyday necessities, but also helped to establish the political claims and the leadership of Krajina's new strongmen, and thereby contributed to the military mobilization of the Serbs in Croatia.⁷

On 16 May 1991, Valjevo's government founded a commission for the support of the SAO Krajina. Its members were officials of the local government and directors of Valjevo's main companies, that is, local elites. The aim of the commission was to support the Serbian population in Croatia with food deliveries and to compensate the lost market in Croatia by promoting trade and industry relations with businesses in Valjevo (*Napred-Informator*, 2 August 1991). The members of the commission waged a campaign requesting the inhabitants of Valjevo and local companies to support the initiative (see, e.g. *Napred-Informator*, 26 July 1991; *Napred*, 5 July 1991, 1; 9 August 1991, 5; 20 September 1991, 2; 27 September 1991). At the same time, the local administration organized collections in rural communities in the Valjevo district (*Napred*, 16 August 1991, 4). By the end of September, the commission was able to gather approximately 200 tons of relief supplies with a corresponding counter-value of 5.5 million dinars, and had established a biweekly transport to the regions of the SAO Krajina (*Napred*, 1 November 1991, 9). The aid convoys also helped to strengthen the political ties between the sister towns. Delegates from Krajina and Valjevo used the transports for bilateral visits, which journalists of the local weekly and other national newspapers like *Borba* and *Politika* regularly attended (see, e.g. *Napred*, 9 August 1991, 3).

Thus, the mobilization of civilian efforts preceded the war and it was not a question of political alignment. The support for Krajina's Serbs was a comprehensive action of Valjevo's population and political quarrels were irrelevant in this respect.

Valjevo's officials soon came to identify themselves with the Croatian Serbs. Since the "delivered solidarity" enabled Krajina's strongmen to provide the Serbs with food and everyday necessities, it helped them to maintain their political positions. Belgrade also paved the way for this support. Declaring the struggle for Serbian interests a solution to the crisis, the regime set the stage for the following process of national, and later military, mobilization. Accompanied by a massive campaign in the state-owned media, Slobodan Milošević and his Belgrade allies spread fear and sowed hatred. In this "battle for the hearts and minds," Milošević's leadership also proactively influenced local events in Valjevo. Party officials in Belgrade expected the local Presidency to acclaim Milošević's takeover, but did not stop short of using the masses in order to rid themselves of political opponents – sometimes, as in the case of Krušik, even with the help of the secret police.⁸

Considering that Valjevo's officials had experienced *and* submitted to Belgrade's pressure, we should keep in mind that the district politicians belonged to the same generation. According to the stenographs of the assembly's meetings, it became clear that the delegates knew each other very well. They had been classmates, neighbors, or boy scouts

together in their youth.⁹ This explains how Valjevo's elites were able to organize such massive support for the Serbs in Croatia on short notice, which initially turned them into a success story.

In the middle of 1991, however, the social situation deteriorated. In addition, the arrival of the first Serbian refugees from the war zone and their eyewitness testimonies published in the local weekly heated up the atmosphere. The more Croatian atrocities were reported, the more adamantly people called in the newspapers for countermeasures. The portrayed torture of women and children particularly incensed citizens. Ethnic hatred and fear had been sown in the newspapers for a long time and the refugees from Croatia confirmed these resentments. Consequently, the alleged Croatian cruelties not only amplified the demand to strike back, they also reduced the possibility of nonviolent solutions and helped to emotionally pave the road to war. Valjevo's community marked – contrary to Gagnon's thesis – a success-story of ethnic mobilization. It was not “the very inability of elites to ‘play the ethnic card’ as a means to mobilize the population that leads them to rely on violence” (Gagnon 2004, 8). The “ethnic card” was a trump in the hands of Valjevo's leaders.

Contested readiness: the outbreak of war and the desertion of Valjevo's soldiers in September 1991

The formation of the various political parties in Serbia since 1990 ended the former symbolic unanimity in favor of the Serbian nation. The advent of political pluralism and the corresponding self-assurance triggered a struggle for political power and accordingly profaned the “holy nation.” During the election of December 1990, Milošević benefited from holding office. Intransigently utilizing the remaining Communist structures, he managed to win at the polls.¹⁰ His modus operandi sparked resistance within the opposition, which reached its climax in the demonstrations for freedom of the press and of expression in Belgrade on 9 March 1991 (Silber and Little 1997, 119–128; Thomas 1999, 80–92; Dragović-Soso 2008, 245–253). The subsequent clashes between the police and the demonstrators resulted in a dead student and a dead policeman. The rally moreover caused massive disturbances and provoked vigorous reactions in Valjevo's political community. On a panel discussion held on 12 March, the leaders of the opposition parties condemned the violence. In absence of the SPS, the situation was evaluated as the most dangerous threat to the Serbian state since World War II. The refusal to negotiate with the opposition and the shut-down of the private radio and TV stations B92 and Studio B, which reported on the demonstrations, expressed both, the legitimacy of the opposition's demands and the sole responsibility of the ruling SPS (*Napred*, 15 March 1991, 2; in general Glennly 1996, 46–61; Thompson 1999, 112–120). Other open forums in Valjevo in March and April contributed to polarizing the political landscape, but with the JNA's invasion of Slovenia in June 1991 the threat of war postponed the political struggle in Serbia proper. Violence silenced inner conflicts and calls for a government of “national unity” (*Napred*, 22 March 1991, 2; 12 April 1991, 2; 19 April 1991, 4) were now amplified within all parties. While the socialist structures of Yugoslavia crumbled, the new state order remained in a state of flux and lacked legitimacy – both on the republic and the local levels.

In an outcry, the SPS condemned Slovenia's declaration of independence as unconstitutional. It demanded that the federal institutions adopt “decisive measures” against this act of “secessionism” and prompted the Serbian government to make all necessary arrangements in order to maintain security in Serbia (*Napred*, 5 July 1991, 1). The SPS's message was a threat of war. The reactions of the Serbian Radical Party (Srpska radikalna stranka – SRS) and the SPO were more concrete and explicitly anti-Yugoslav. While the

SRS blamed Ante Marković's federal government for needlessly dispatching Serbia's soldiers to Slovenia (2), the SPO's announcement more drastically asked for the prosecution of Marković, Kadrijević, Gračanin, and Jović – the last two honorary citizens of Valjevo (1–2). After the involvement of Valjevo's troops in East Slavonia that summer, the controversy between the political parties, which was temporarily suspended in light of the "threat" to the "Serbian nation," would surface again with renewed vigor and signed with the blood of Valjevo's people.

As mentioned above, the town's units were regrouped in 1988 in accordance with the *Jedinstvo* reforms. In reflecting the JNA's military doctrine of the time, this reshuffle changed the former infantry structure to a highly mechanized and armored division. Based on the military's experience in Kosovo since 1981, the high command decided to rely mainly on mechanized units. During states of emergency, these had proven to be most effective. Thus, confronted with instability in the western republics, the general staff transformed many units in this way and viewed the army as a player in the internal power struggle (Marijan 2003, 39, 2009; Dimitrijević 2011, 87–88). Additionally, the classification of Valjevo's newly established Proletarian Mechanized Guard Brigade (PMGB) was changed on 27 July 1990. Besides the structural restitution, the capacity of manpower was increased from B-level (units with a fulfillment of 15–60% of manpower) to A-level (60–100%) (Dimitrijević 2006, 81–83) – a clear sign that it was intended to be put into action.

The first mobilization in Serbia took place in early May and in Valjevo surpassed the expected numbers mainly as a consequence of successful ethnic mobilization. The manpower of the garrison's units was increased to 107 percent of capacity.¹¹ Dismissed after a short period, the troops had mostly partied around Valjevo. One participant recalls: "The first mobilization that I attended was on 6 May – George's Day. We were in the garrison Kadinjača [near Užice/Serbia] for seven days for some military exercise, so to speak, which was more 'booze' than anything serious" (Interview, former reservist of the JNA [in the following: I: R-JNA]). The second mobilization in Valjevo took place in June 1991, on the eve of the Slovenian war. With a mobilization of 97% of manpower, Valjevo's troops moved closer to the Serbian-Croatian border and stayed for 45 days in barracks near Šabac:

The second mobilization was approximately in June. And again, during that time I was on holiday at the seaside, watching on TV that Valjevo's reservists had left town in the direction of the Croatian border, waiting for further orders by the high command. Then they stayed in Šabac, they were there for forty-five days. ... I was at the seaside and did not want to go. It had become clear in the first seven days that it was ridiculous. ... Despite everything, I responded to the call-up after my return and went to Šabac, too. I stayed arguably some seven or eight days. But some comrades and I, we traveled from Valjevo by car. In the morning we left, during the day we stayed in the barracks, only dallying away the time, helping each other to pass the time, and in the evening we returned to Valjevo. (I: R-JNA)

Demobilized in mid-August, Valjevo's units got involved in combat in Croatia only after a third mobilization in early September. Due to frequent brawls, the mobilization of reservists dropped significantly. Together with a Rocket Artillery Regiment from Kragujevac, Valjevo's units fought on 20 September in the Croatian town of Tovarnik, where the first four soldiers lost their lives. During the following days, three more soldiers were lost in action in the town of Ilača, some three kilometers further into Croatian territory. The war games were over, outright battle had begun.

These first engagements and the loss of lives had a dramatic impact on the morale of the troops, in particular the reservists. More than a thousand reservists of the PMGB left the frontline in East Slavonia immediately after the first engagements and returned to their

homes in Valjevo.¹² Only two days after the incident in Ilača, the deserted reservists and their supporters, as already mentioned, demonstrated in front of Valjevo's assembly hall. Besides complaints about the unjust *modus operandi* of the mobilization and the insufficient support for the reservists' families, their speaker expressed serious doubts concerning the technical readiness of the units:

Something was obvious. Our technical equipment at that time, this means tanks, armored units – they were all at the very edge of ruin. If you want to go to the battlefield and half of your tanks are defective – the front clutch does not work, the machine gun is blocked, does not work, the tanks lack elementary things, they do not have triggers for the cannon, fuel was stolen ... I was in the position, for example, to say that of my thirty-one tanks in the battalion's armored unit, eighteen could not be dispatched on a serious mission because they would either conk out on the way or even kill people. (Interview, former noncommissioned officer of the JNA [reserves] [in the following: I: NCO-JNA/R])

The high prestige of the army was not matched by equally high combat readiness. The reservists moreover accused the military command of tactical and logistical disorganization. A "friendly fire" incident involving the air force was another blow to the image of the armed forces and to the morale of the troops:

This time in September, we left for Croatia – absurd – not knowing where we were going, why we were going. For example, we had the order to pass Tovarnik at that and that time, a place we know is Croatian, that it was Croatian even in World War II, a nest for Ustašas and other groups, and normally we had to pass Tovarnik in a convoy, where there is only one street, where we know they can wait for us any time of the day with anti-tank mines, and if they blast the first or second tank, or more precisely destroy the chain drive, all the others would be stopped and become victims of snipers ... In that way – yes, the first day – some ten people died in our unit, a huge number of people were injured. But the next day Belgrade ordered again: Forward march! Through Tovarnik! ... And that day and the day before our air force approached Tovarnik, and we thought: cool, it will come out all right, we will be able to pass through, but it was our people they bombed ... We had left that day and our own air force from Batajnica bombed our own army. There were some eighty-four dead and more than a hundred injured. Do you know what people experience in such situations? Grief, you have marched out somewhere and you have been bombed, our own air force is bombing our own armored units – that is absurd. (I: NCO-JNA/R)

The random violence of warfare came as a shock to the reservists. They were not willing to accept indiscriminate killing on the battlefield and they saw no sense in fighting when the army did not act professionally and no clear strategic and political goals were discernible. Especially the fact that the commander-in-chief of the PMGB appeared indifferent to the death of his soldiers left a mark on the memory of many reservists:

It was this first day that the commander said to me (I had come to him): "Hey man," he said, "why are you raising a complaint about that [the death of the soldiers in Tovarnik], let us drink a glass of plum brandy, let us eat a plate of bean soup ... Why?" What was the commander looking for, what did he expect? He was aiming to become a general, promoted by the high command in Belgrade. And these people from Belgrade were seeking somebody like him, someone who commands out of his armchair and is unable to do anything different on the battlefield. This system of subordination – a disastrous system. (I: NCO-JNA/R)

The former reservist from Valjevo recalls a similar incident:

He was the commander of the brigade; I remember his ramblings from May, the period we were at our military exercise in Kadinjača. He emerged with his little purse, proud, arrogant, monosyllabic, and he said: "I will be the first to die at the outbreak of war ... And finally, after arriving in East Slavonia, he cleared out, hid in a mouse hole. He never showed up at the base camp or even on the battlefield. (I: R-JNA)

The sudden experience of violence changed the soldiers' perspective. Unable to perform militarily and to set precise goals in the fight against the Croat adversary, the army's legitimacy and the combat readiness of its troops evaporated. At the same time, the officers were unwilling or unable to enforce discipline by means of force and punishment. Demanding an official statement by the military command, the reservists expressed their refusal to serve on the Croatian side of the river Drina. Though willing to protect Serbia, they unwaveringly refused to be part of an aggression (*Borba*, 1 October 1991, 5; 18 November 1991, 11). Many resisted becoming part of the violent space that shaped the war zone.

The outbreak of war in East Slavonia irrevocably changed the situation of Valjevo's soldiers. The first hostilities cooled their initial enthusiasm. Shell fire, mines, snipers, and the sustained casualties resulted in growing skepticism and even resistance. The former non-commissioned officer of the JNA remarks:

Especially the notion of "us" and "them" was unsettled in the combat operations. In an army which has as commander-in-chief, for example of a military branch such as the air force, a Croat, or you have, for example, people from Slovenia, who were very powerful [in the high command], or you have people from – yes, for example, at this time a Macedonian, Pirkovski, was commander-in-chief of the first army district; the commander-in-chief of the air force was a Croat, and so forth. ... You were going, for example, or you were willing to establish order in one of your – let me say – republics that was a constitutive part of Yugoslavia those days. And the commander-in-chief is a Croat. You are going to attack Croatia and the guy at the center of the JNA is a Croat – there was no logic behind the actions. (I: NCO-JNA/R)

Belgrade's propaganda had put Valjevo's citizens in the right mood to support the Serbian nation. But it was the experienced "friendly fire" of the JNA that gave the soldiers' ethnic-nationalist self-conception the finishing touch. Especially the assumed actions of a Slovenian or Croatian "fifth column" in the high command ultimately segregated even the last "sacred institution" of Yugoslavia. In their eyes, the army was still a part of socialist Yugoslavia. It had not yet been transformed into a Serbian fighting force. The soldiers returned as Serbian citizens, and most of them doubted the sense of their deployment as well as the legitimacy of the war in Croatia and of the Yugoslav army as a whole. And they put up resistance. But the outbreak of violence had not only changed perceptions: Belgrade's willingness to continue the struggle turned Valjevo's dead soldiers into Serbian heroes and thereby put pressure on the city's community.

Reimplanting patriotism: Valjevo's shame and the negotiation of loyalty

With the reservists' flight from the frontline, the political confrontation in Valjevo intensified. The high command of the first military district condemned the reservists in an announcement, describing them as "deserters," "traitors," and "cowards." It denied allegations against the military command in East Slavonia and dismissed them as flimsy and a shame for all stout fighting soldiers who remained at the front (*Napred*, 27 September 1991, 2). On 4 October, the local weekly released the above-mentioned article entitled "Desertion" on the front page. By setting Valjevo's population against the reservists, the journalist predetermined the local discourse:

We require that the responsible institutions publish the personal data of the soldiers who deserted and subjected the remaining comrades to a more serious hazard, so that we know with whom we have to deal. But we should also publish the names of the brave soldiers who refused to desert. Thank you for saving our and your honor. Let us bestow honor upon these men who saved us from the disgrace and shame of the deserters who are making a complete fool of us in front of earthly and heavenly (*zemljanskom i nebeskom*) Serbia. (*Napred*, 4 October 1991, 1)

The newspaper tried to rebuild the legitimacy of the army and to put the reservists under moral pressure. While not formulating any political goals, it relied mainly on concepts such as heroism and honor versus cowardice and shame. The opposition in Valjevo reacted in a similarly nationalistic way, but showed more understanding for the deserted soldiers. By condemning the officers accused of treason, they demanded a board of inquiry for the incidents and saw the foundation of a Serbian army with a loyal Serbian command as the only possible solution to the problem (*Napred*, 27 September 1991, 2 and 13). Thus, they also contested the legitimacy of the JNA. The local leadership of the SPS also accused the Yugoslav executives of treason in a similar manner, but at the same time declared the flight from the front a “chickenhearted act.” They referred to the reservists as cowards who took the death of the seven soldiers as an excuse to flee from Šid without even having smelled gun powder. The SPS ended its announcement with the remark that “all the local news agencies are reporting on their troops from the frontline, only the press in Valjevo is commenting from the assembly hall” (*Napred*, 4 October 1991, 2).

The flight of the reservists to Valjevo was not an isolated incident at the time. We have similar reports from other regions such as Gornji Milanovac, Čačak, Kragujevac, and Šabac, which give the impression that Belgrade had reasons to fear dwindling support for the war (Bačković, Vasić, and Vasović 2001). The local radio station repeatedly aired call-ups and local party representatives appealed to the reservists to return. Their jobs were even put at risk by local and national officials (*Borba*, 3 October 1991, 6). The high command even went one step further and staged show trials: it advised sentencing deserters to prison terms of three to 10 years (*Borba*, 1 October 1991, 5; 7 October 1991, 3). As “reliable sources,” an expression often used by critical journalists during this period, local officials at the Ministry of Defense cited reserve officers in their investigations of cases of desertion. But only 15 reservists were ultimately arrested and held in the garrison’s prison (*Borba*, 18 October 1991, 9). The military police in Valjevo rather pursued the strategy of using individual cases as a warning. One of these examples was, not surprisingly, the spokesman of the reservists (the noncommissioned officer), who was tortured in captivity. He remembers:

I got collared some days after returning to Valjevo. They [the army headquarters] sent a person from Belgrade, people were sent, people who arrested me at my workplace, they delivered a very hard blow to my head, then they walked me off. I was in prison for eight days ... They told me: “Talk louder.” I talked louder. They said again: “Talk quieter.” I talked quieter. I asked them: “Hey folks, why are you maltreating me? Brother, do not maltreat me, please.” ... They took me to the commander’s office, here in the garrison, at that time named Žikica Jovanović (nicknamed Španac), and they beat me senseless. I lost consciousness there, I was in a coma some eight hours and after that they put me in jail, took my clothes off, watered me down – nothing they did not do to me. They did not allow me to communicate with anybody for eight days, did not allow anybody to visit me in that time ... I was paralyzed on the right side ... When they beat me, when they beat me in the commander’s office, hands up, and they beat me, that is to say in the stomach, my legs ... and then the prosecutor, who was carrying the legal code the whole time, said: “Look how he will receive the deathblow now.” But before that situation, he gave me a gun in order to kill myself, or as a kind of tactic, to enable them to fire a salvo at me after I touched the gun, saying: “He wrenched the gun from us and tried to kill us.” The fingerprints would have been on the gun, you understand. (I: NCO-JNA/R)

Both the violence of the military police and the multiple appeals did not affect the other soldiers in the expected manner. In the middle of October 1991, three weeks after the initial incidents, only 6% of the reservists had actually returned to their combat units (*Borba*, 4 October 1991, 7).

The political disputes in Valjevo became even more heated when the desertion of Valjevo's reservists gained nationwide attention. The state-controlled tabloid *Politika Ekspres* launched an article on 26 September blaming the mayor of Valjevo and the chairman of the executive commission for encouraging the reservists to flee. According to this article, the two ND members were even said to have facilitated their return by arriving with several buses from Valjevo during a troop visit on 23 September. The quasi monopoly on the media by the ruling SPS in Belgrade guaranteed that this yellow press version gained acceptance as the right and only interpretation of the events. The media echo of the incrimination of Valjevo's officials seriously undermined the authority of the local leadership and permanently damaged their reputation. With the slump in ethnic mobilization Belgrade's elites relied on public pressure to enforce their political will and to construct a "homogeneous *political* space as a means to demobilize challengers" (Gagnon 2004, 9; Gordy 1999). In order to regain credibility by proving their patriotic alignment a "discourse of shame" began in Valjevo's weekly *Napred*.

The preferred ways to address Valjevo's shame were articles by local journalists. Partly narrated as heroic stories of individual units from Valjevo, they all served as a basis for the city's image campaign – a campaign the local journalists were committed to. In an article from 1 November, a local journalist, almost frustrated in his attitude, gave an account of one of Valjevo's units and its outstanding commander. It was his unit that had saved 65 charges of ammunition, seven tanks, and eight armored vehicles from the Croatian troops on the battlefield between Ilača and Tovarnik. In doing so, Valjevo's unit tried to counter the talk about desertion:

We have heard and read enough about the fighting in Tovarnik these days. In the shadow of the "notorious case" – the return of the reservists from the frontline – there are many heroic deeds of known and unknown warriors; and the people were still talking about Captain Ranko Jednak's unit. It is hard to find words for the actions of these fearless fighters – in just a couple of days. Everything began on 20 September, when Captain Jednak's unit did not allow three damaged armored vehicles and two tanks to fall into the enemy's hands. (*Napred*, 1 November 1991, 1)

In a similar manner, another local journalist reported about the determination and endurance of Valjevo's soldiers after having visited the troops near Tovarnik in mid-October. The local unit of Major Todorović was glorified with descriptions of how it was coping with the loss of 70% of manpower since the flight of the reservists, with only 80 soldiers performing the brigade's tasks, which were usually fulfilled by 380. And the portrayed soldiers' statements were full of resentments against the reservists:

In addition to the tasks that the army has to fulfill in wartime, the warriors are unloading ammunition from a truck alone – a task they consider more difficult than real combat tasks. They are tired, but determined to bear as much as possible ... An inevitable topic [among the frontline soldiers] is the departure of their friends from the battlefields, or in their own words: the desertion. It is not enough to say that they are disappointed by their comrades' behavior. "Outraged" is the right word for their emotions and reactions ... [They showed understanding for the flight from the frontline], but there is no apology for the departure of many who never even came near the battlefield, whose arena was the pub in Šid or its surroundings. Consolidated and happy, they will stay as long as they have the strength, and they informed us that they will honorably fulfill their tasks ... The most difficult thing for these people to bear is the picture of Valjevo that emerged in the media – a town of deserters and defeatists. (*Napred*, 11 October 1991, 7)

These examples of glorifying war reports clearly express both the significance of the flight from the front for the remaining troops in general and the subsequent in-group differentiation that was established with the return of the reservists to Valjevo. The frontline soldiers distinguished between "we here at the front" and "them at home." And this

distinction was – from the perspective of the frontline – accompanied with negative emotions like anger, rage, and envy. In contrast to the deserted reservists, they continued to serve and put their lives at risk while the returnees attracted tremendous media attention – and even became famous. They were offered a podium on television, on the radio, and in newspapers. And to top it all off, with each day the fled reservists remained absent from the front, the more the frontline soldiers would have to make up for them and the more the city's name would be dragged through the mire.

Especially these aspects of self-sacrifice and collective shame are persistent topics in *Napred's* discourse. With the headline “Valjevo's fighters during moments of recovery: whitewashing the name of Valjevo,”¹³ the journalist vividly expressed (and created) the mood. The remaining soldiers were particularly concerned about the brigade's honor, as the following quote shows:

They are tormented by one question: did the blood of their seventeen dead and hundreds of injured friends once and for all whitewash the name of Valjevo's brigade, with its warriors declared cowards and traitors? They have answered this question for themselves, but they want others to hear it, too. (*Napred*, 29 November 1991, 7)

Thus, the dissolution of the army on the battlefield was framed in traditional concepts of honor and shame. A week earlier, the words of the city's mayor Slobodan Đukić repudiated the allegations against Valjevo's soldiers:

The statements about Valjevo's fallen and wounded, as well as the names of the conquered towns, best serve to discredit the maliciously broadcasted stories about the city's soldiers being cowards and deserters ... It is obvious that the situation at the frontline is stabilized regarding the command structures. The soldiers trust their superiors, and they are prepared to discharge their task responsibly to the end.

He especially emphasized that in the last two months of hard skirmish on the battlefield, not a single soldier from Valjevo left the front. And most of the reservists who had left Šid in September were now fighting bravely in their units (*Napred*, 22 November 1991, 2).

The reservists' desertion created a “home front” in Valjevo. With the military police incapable of taking any measures and relying on individual cases, Valjevo's way of “reimplanting” patriotism was based on traditional heroism. The remaining soldiers in Croatia and Belgrade's media pressured Valjevo's elite to regain their reputation by forcing the reservists back to the front. The “discourse of shame” left no space for differentiation. The reservists' collective questioning of the JNA was reduced to the soldiers' individual “cowardice.” And the pressure on the community's honor was used to assure the city's loyalty toward Belgrade's war policy.

Conclusion

Without doubt, Valjevo's political leaders and its inhabitants initially supported the Serbs in Croatia in the crucial year 1991. They supported the political demands of Krajina's strongmen, compensated the lost market in Croatia, and sustained Krajina's residents with everyday necessities. And they did this out of a specific feeling of solidarity, a feeling that was encouraged by Belgrade's leaders around Slobodan Milošević since the late 1980s. It was the center's national priming that provided the basis for the “acts of solidarity” of Valjevo's community. But Valjevo not only blindly supported Belgrade's course – in many ways it went beyond that. Giving Milošević the freedom of the city, declaring Krajina's capital Knin sister city, and the exceptional willingness to donate money and to supply aid deliveries made Valjevo's engagement conspicuous – an exceptional commitment that not only found its expression in the sphere of political mobilization. The ensuing military

mobilization in Valjevo also reflected its exceptional role. Valjevo was a case of successful ethnic mobilization in every respect. Unlike regions in Croatia the leaders in Valjevo did not have to rely on violence. Violence was not their political strategy to secure mass mobilization or to demobilize political opponents. It is difficult to judge to what extent Valjevo's community was exceptional. Compared with Belgrade the city's engagement in the military mobilization was extraordinary. But there are more local studies necessary to qualify how far Valjevo was representative for Serbia's province.

The case of Valjevo also illustrates the dissolution of socialist statehood. As the "last outpost of Yugoslavdom," the JNA mirrored the malfunctioning of Yugoslavia's socialist institutions. The reservists did not take the military mobilization seriously. Killing time in boozing sessions around Valjevo, they even went on seaside holidays in the early summer of 1991. Unable to respond professionally to the seriousness of the situation, the JNA also committed organizational and tactical mistakes. Besides criticizing the obsolete and insufficient accouterment, the soldiers interpreted the chaotic conditions in the base camp in Šid and the "friendly fire" incident as actions of a "fifth column." In retrospect, this was a decisive turning point. With the JNA's malfunctioning, first experiences of combat, and the death of their comrades, the reservists' motivation to fight declined. Only a minority of soldiers seem to have experienced the male bonding characteristic of military units fighting in war. Certainly the culture of late socialism, its peacefulness, as well as its negative effects on state institutions like the armed forces influenced this development. The emergence of notions of "us" and "them" marked the end of the JNA as the only remaining pillar of Yugoslav statehood. The reservists were no longer willing to fight for a Yugoslav institution. And Serbian nationalism could not motivate them to conquer Croatian territory. The desertion can also be understood as an expression for what – or perhaps just where – the reservists were not willing to fight. But Valjevo's dead, the remaining JNA troops in Croatia, and the iron will of Belgrade's aggressive leadership to persist doomed their resistance to fail. The national media campaign against Valjevo for backstabbing the combat forces and "Serbdom" as such forced its officials to regain their reputation and to mediate between the reservists who fled the front and those who were still fighting on the battlefields in Croatia. And every hour of Valjevo's soldiers fighting at the front under mortal peril increased the city's pressure on the fled reservists.

With a discourse of shame that was established by Belgrade's leaders to collectively scapegoat Valjevo's ND officials for the desertion of Serbs, the city's community tried to reclaim its prestige, and thereby fully established the new conflict order. It is this refusal of Valjevo's reservists to take part in violence that illustrates the transformative power of violence once the war broke out. Individual soldiers reacted differently to the violence they experienced at the front. Many chose to leave, few chose to stay. The remaining troops in Croatia established a new order – and not only at the front. They were prepared to voluntarily join the fighting in the ensuing civil war. Still, everyone's identity was transformed. Even if Valjevo's soldiers initially engaged in Croatia to protect a unified Yugoslavia (whatever this concept actually meant for them individually), they returned as Serbian citizens in October 1991 – either as dead heroes or as living deserters.

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Notes

1. On the different aspects of Milošević's regime, (see Silber and Little 1997, 37–47 and 58–81; Gordy 1999; Gagnon 2004; Pavlović, Jović, and Petrović 2008; Vladislavjević 2008; Caspersen 2010).
2. Especially the breakup of Soviet-Yugoslav relations (1948), the dismissal of the chief of Yugoslavia's Secret Service Aleksandar Ranković (1966), and the purge within the Croatian League of Communists (*Savez komunista Hrvatske*) after the 'Croatian spring' (1971) contributed to this development; see on this aspect (Stanković 25 May 1980; Bieber 2008, 302–303) on the role and function of the JNA in general, (Johnson 1978; Niebuhr 2004; 2006, 489–504; Marijan 2008, 30–34).
3. On the *Mladina*-affair, (see Silber and Little 1997, 50–55; Jović 2009, 327–331; Ramet 2011, 424–429).
4. The military high command used the distinction between "unitarist" and "separatist" nationalism – Serbia representing the first and Slovenia and Croatia the second – to describe its own position as equidistant to both extremes (see Hadžić referring to interviews of Kadjević in the army magazine *Vojno delo* of 1989).
5. On the case of Dragiša Pavlović, see (Jović 2009, 265–272; Ramet 2011, 459–467).
6. All translations from archive documents, newspapers, and interview transcripts are mine.
7. Namely Milan Babić, Jovan Rašković, Milan Martić, and the infamous military leader "Captain Dragan" (see Silber and Little 1997, 92–104, 134–146).
8. For the interpretation that the demonstration took place "because of Milošević's use of the secret police with the aim of setting up Krušik's union," (see Mihajlović 2005, 152).
9. Dušan Mihajlović's memoirs (2005) contain many pictures in which Valjevo's officials spend free time together – irrespective of political affiliation (139, 146, 163, and 166).
10. On the institutional advantages Milošević was able to use in the election of 1990, (see Thomas 1999, 76–78).
11. For the following data concerning the response to the call-ups, cf. (Dimitrijević 2011, 90–92).
12. The published data about the exact number of deserted reservists range between several hundred and 2,800. Comparing this information with interviews I have conducted with former soldiers from this brigade, I assume a number of more than a thousand (for the different published numbers, see *Napred*, 4 October 1991, 8; *Borba*, October 1, 1991, 11; Jelić 1998, 215).
13. The Serbian expression has a more literal reference to "mire": *Valjevski borci u trenucima predaha: Sprati ljag sa imena Valjeva*.

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- OK SKS-Valjevo: Minutes of the meeting, April 19, 1988, MIA A.7.1.250, Inv.Br. 51.
- P OK SKS-Valjevo: Minutes of the meeting, December 18, 1987, MIA A.7.1.250, Inv.Br. 63
- P OK SKS-Valjevo: Report, December 19, 1988, MIA A.7.1.250, Inv.Br. 63.
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- SO: Common session of the town's councils, April 25, 1989 (copies in the author's possession).
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- Interview with a former reservist of the JNA, recorded by the author in Valjevo (March 20, 2012).
- Interview with a former noncommissioned officer of the JNA (reserve), recorded by the author in Valjevo (March 5, 2012).

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