

## PREPARATORY DOCUMENTS

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### Speaker:

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**Debates regarding 'problematic' historical events: Bleiburg, pobjni poboji, Foibe**

Excerpt from the article:

Tamara Pavasović Trošt, “War Crimes as Political Tools: Bleiburg and Jasenovac in History Textbooks 1973-2012,” in *War Crimes as Political Tools: Bleiburg and Jasenovac in History Textbooks 1973-2012*, ed. Srđan Jovanović (Belgrade: Center for Good Governance Studies, 2013), 13–47.

Because of the extent of nationalist manipulation of these two events [Bleiburg and Jasenovac] and their continued relevance today, they deserve our special attention. In examining their ongoing contestation in contemporary post-Yugoslav societies, I have chosen to analyze history textbooks for several reasons. First, textbooks play an important role in the socialization of youth. Schools play an important role in reproducing social structure and transmitting ideology while textbooks frequently determine both the content and structure of the majority of classroom instruction and to pupils, textbook narratives appear to have objective, encyclopedic-nature, impersonal content. “Though [they] pretend to teach neutral, legitimate knowledge, [textbooks] are often used as ideological tools to promote certain belief system and legitimize an established political and social order”. More importantly, textbooks serve as aids of social and cultural reproduction of society and the witness of the ‘preferred’ historical narrative of elites: ‘Since school textbooks are the most significant vehicles for conveying the historical narrative, state supervision of textbooks affords a direct way for the state to shape and maintain its preferred historical narrative’. Textbooks do not only

define events in the past, but also aim to forge 'continuity in national memory, upon which a collective identity is founded and the future is predicated'.

This common or historical memory is often associated with professional historiography and textbooks as its foundation and primary source. It states that control of the educational apparatus, elites can shape the nation's historical memory by controlling which events and narratives to include, and which to exclude from the curriculum: In this respect, the school system, and textbooks, become yet another arm of the state, agents of memory whose aim is to ensure the transmission of certain 'approved knowledge' to the younger generation. Textbooks thus function as a sort of 'supreme historical court' whose task is to decipher from all the accumulated 'pieces of the past' the 'true' collective memories which are appropriate for inclusion in the canonical national historical narrative.