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Series Historia et Sociologia, 36, 2026, 2





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POLITICAL MEMORY AS AGONISTIC PRACTICE ON SOCIAL MEDIA:
SEMIO-SOMATIC MEMORY, MULTIMODALITY, AND AFFORDANCES
THEORIZED THROUGH THE DIGITAL CIRCULATION OF THE SLOGAN
“SMRT FAŠIZMU, SVOBODA NARODU”

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ABSTRACT

In recent decades, digital platforms have become central spaces for reshaping cultural memory. The article examines the contemporary circulation of the Yugoslav partisan slogan “Smrt fašizmu, svoboda narodu” (“Death to Fascism, Freedom to the People”) on X and Facebook and argues that its political force cannot be explained by textual meaning alone. It argues that the contemporary power of the slogan in the context of digital memory comes from activating semio-somatic memory sedimented through repeated bodily practices, ritual performance, collective action, and recognizable semiotic forms. The article shows how digital memory operates as agonistic practice: historically sedimented semio-somatic forms are reopened as sites of struggle over meaning, legitimacy, and power in the present.

Keywords: digital memory, semio-somatic memory, agonistic public sphere, platform affordances, multimodality, embodiment, political memory

LA MEMORIA POLITICA COME PRATICA AGONISTICA SUI SOCIAL MEDIA:
MEMORIA SEMIO-SOMATICA, MULTIMODALITÀ E AFFORDANCE DELLE
PIATTAFORME TEORIZZATE ATTRAVERSO LA CIRCOLAZIONE DIGITALE DELLO
SLOGAN “SMRT FAŠIZMU, SVOBODA NARODU”

SINTESI

Negli ultimi decenni, le piattaforme digitali sono diventate spazi centrali per la ridefinizione della memoria culturale. L'articolo esamina la circolazione contemporanea dello slogan partigiano jugoslavo “Smrt fašizmu, svoboda narodu” (“Morte al fascismo, libertà al popolo”) su X e Facebook e sostiene che la sua forza politica non possa essere spiegata solo dal significato testuale. Sostiene che il potere contemporaneo dello slogan nel contesto della memoria digitale derivi dall'attivazione della memoria semio-somatica, sedimentata attraverso ripetute pratiche corporee, performance rituali, azioni collettive e forme semiotiche riconoscibili. L'articolo mostra come la memoria digitale operi come pratica agonistica: forme semio-somatiche storicamente sedimentate vengono riaperte come luoghi di lotta per il significato, la legittimità e il potere nel presente.

Parole chiave: memoria digitale, memoria semio-somatica, sfera pubblica agonistica, affordance delle piattaforme, multimodalità, incarnazione, memoria politica

INTRODUCTION

In academic circles, it is nearly undeniable that digital platforms have become central environments in which memory is now experienced and shaped (Hoskins, 2011; 2018; van Dijck, 2013; van Dijck et al., 2018).¹ The collective act of remembering, once largely organized through traditional institutions such as museums, archives, education, and mass media, is now increasingly mediated by digital platforms and their multimodal, interactive structures. These environments introduce new layers of technical and semiotic mediation, where digital design and algorithmic logic influence how the past is reshaped into publicly perceptible and affectively charged forms (Birkner & Donk, 2018; Hoskins, 2024a; Bucher, 2018).

Processes once largely stabilized through institutional selection and archiving (with expert object annotation, established metadata taxonomies, and classificatory relations), and presentation within relatively enclosed reception contexts – such as exhibitions, official commemorations, and legacy media (Bennett, 1995; Assmann, 2011) – are increasingly reactivated through algorithmic circulation and user co-authorship. Instead of stabilizing mnemonic authority through institutional curation, digital infrastructures condition how mnemonic forms resurface and gain prominence within feedback-driven interactional environments (Hoskins, 2024b). Within this memory ecology (cf. Brown & Hoskins, 2010), institutional authority remains; it operates within reorganized conditions where remembering and forgetting are shaped by platform architectures. These dynamics intensify with legacy institutional efforts toward platformization, networkization, and user co-authoring engagement (Ringel & Ribak, 2024), the rise of AI-driven curation, and dedicated memory applications. Institutional authority persists but now functions within a hybrid ecology in which institutional materials circulate alongside vernacular and user-generated content.

The article argues that the political power of digital memory arises where *semio-somatic* forms sedimented through earlier ritual, institutional, and bodily practices meet platform-specific conditions of action. By semio-somatic memory, we mean mnemonic forms sedimented across semiotic structures,

sensory modalities, learned bodily dispositions, and recurrent social practices, so that linguistic, visual, auditory, and bodily cues can mutually activate one another. Semio-somatic memory does not designate a separate body-stored or procedural memory system; rather, it refers to the semiotically organized relation between signs, sensory experience, bodily disposition, and memory. While bodily practices refer to concrete gestures, postures, vocalizations, and ritual actions; bodily dispositions refer to learned tendencies toward such actions; and sensorimotor dimensions refer to the sensory-motor processes through which these forms can support mnemonic reactivation.

Theory of multimodality (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006) can help us explain why certain mnemonic forms remain affectively potent and recognizable over time; affordances theory (Gibson, 2015) and platform affordances studies (Hutchby, 2001; Treem & Leonardi, 2012; Bucher & Helmond, 2018; Evans et al., 2017) help us to explain how – and under what conditions – this affective force becomes activated in public. Memory is thus viewed as a political practice that functions in the present and influences current power relations. These processes of redistribution of multimodal artifacts and their platform-conditioned visibility are explored through digital circulation of the slogan “Smrt fašizmu, svoboda narodu” (“Death to Fascism, Freedom to the People”), which demonstrates how semio-somatic mnemonic forms are reactivated and contested on social media. The article approaches digital memory from a praxeological perspective, considering it a somatic and semiotic *practice* whose political impact depends on the interaction of historically sedimented mnemonic forms, platform affordances and the potential for multimodal articulation of meaning. By examining how the slogan is activated and contested on X and Facebook, the analysis situates platformed remembrance within broader discussions of agonistic public memory and democratic debate.

MEMORY, POWER, AND POLITICAL ACTUALITY

Memory studies emphasize that references to the past gain meaning through their current significance, meaning – their ability to address ongoing matters that range from intimate experience to collective and

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political issues. As Jan Assmann (1997, 9–10) has argued, the “truth” of memory lies not so much in its factual accuracy as in its relevance.

Memory is selective and interest-driven, making it inherently open to intervention. As Edward Said notes, “the processes of memory are frequently, if not always, manipulated and intervened for sometimes urgent purposes in the present” (Said, 2000, 179). Institutions and social groups do not simply inherit memories; they actively create them through symbols, narratives, and commemorative practices (Assmann, 2008, 55) that reinforce certain interpretations of the past while marginalizing others. Since memory functions through selective activation and suppression, it influences current power dynamics connected to identity claims and struggles for legitimacy. This political aspect becomes especially prominent in digital spaces, where processes of remembering and forgetting are intensified and publicly contested. Personal recollections reappear through algorithmic prompts and “memories” features (e.g., Facebook Memories, Instagram Stories Archive and Highlights, and Snapchat Memories), while collective histories are reassembled through platform-native mechanisms such as tagging, recommender systems, and algorithmic curation.

Aleida Assmann (2010) has demonstrated that cultural memory operates through a distinction between the canon and the archive: the canon comprises narratives that are actively shared and normatively reinforced, while the archive holds preserved materials that remain politically dormant. Systems of memory are therefore also systems of forgetting: exclusion and omission function as organized mechanisms through which relations of power determine what becomes publicly rememberable and what is made invisible.

Michel Foucault’s (1977) concept of *counter-memory* offers terminology for analyzing these struggles. Counter-memory refers to practices that challenge dominant historical narratives by reactivating marginalized pasts and exposing the power relations embedded in regimes of remembrance. As Davis & Starn (1989) point out, counter-memory does not just recover suppressed content but functions through strategic remembering that resists enforced silence and questions established frameworks of historical authority. In this way, counter-memory shows that memory conflicts are not rare moments of disruption, but recurrent interventions through which claims to legitimacy and historical meaning are continuously contested.

This political and present-focused view of memory is further developed in approaches that see memory as mobile and ongoing, such as Astrid Erll’s (2011) concept of “travelling memory.” Memory is not tied to a single medium, institution, or authoritative narrative, but circulates through continuous processes of

mediation, translation, and recontextualization across social and historical settings. As memories travel, they do not retain a stable or original meaning but are constantly rephrased in relation to new actors, interests, and power relations (Erll, 2011). This view is especially relevant for understanding digital memory cultures, where mnemonic forms quickly circulate across platforms, formats, and audiences. The mobility of memory increases its political importance: as references to the past shift between contexts, they become sites of continuous reinterpretation and contested public debates. However, mobility does not displace the importance of the sedimentation of mnemonic forms; rather, historically layered meanings, carried by repeatable signs, images, gestures, and practices, periodically crystallize in specific communicative conjunctures. They gain political strength when they are revived in new communicative settings – places where remembering becomes both a mode of discourse and a mode of political intervention. Sedimentation provides the structured forms through which memory becomes intelligible and politically operative.

This tension becomes especially noticeable in digital memory cultures, where mnemonic forms quickly spread across platforms, formats, and audiences. Under faster mediation, processes of de-sedimentation and re-sedimentation happen more quickly and dynamically, giving the impression of constant instability as references to the past are repeatedly mobilized, contested, and displaced. As the following analysis demonstrates, the slogan “Smrt fašizmu, svoboda narodu” illustrates this dynamic, maintaining its political salience not as a stable discursive reference but as a historically ritualized and semio-somatic mnemonic form that remains accessible for reactivation under contemporary conditions.

The slogan today circulates across different mnemonic registers. It may appear as a nostalgic invocation of the socialist antifascist canon, and it can also act as a site of counter-memory, reopening silenced or marginalized aspects of that regime. At the same time, it undergoes further semantic transformations (discussed in detail below) that go beyond both nostalgia and critique. These changes, however, do not detach it from the past; they draw their strength precisely from historically sedimented semio-somatic memory, which allows the slogan to stay recognizable while embracing new political expressions.

The digital shift: from the regulation of meaning to the regulation of visibility

In more centralized regimes of cultural memory, authority was more strongly tied to the stabilization of legitimate interpretations of the past. Digital platforms, by contrast, reorganize mnemonic power around conditions of visibility and circulation rather than

interpretive closure. Authority no longer rests primarily on defining what the past means, but on shaping which references to the past become perceptible, repeatable, and affectively resonant in public space. Mnemonic power therefore depends not only on visibility itself, but also on the visual forms through which the past becomes repeatable, recognizable, and politically or ideologically operative (cf. Babnik, 2026).

This shift has important political consequences – struggles over memory are increasingly fought over algorithmically intensified “exposure” rather than interpretative “closure.” Mnemonic power arises through iterative interaction and affective involvement, embedding memory in ongoing public contests. While institutional actors still influence memory cultures, they now operate within a hybrid environment where platform circulation increasingly intersects with grassroots practices.

The reconfiguration of mnemonic power to platform-mediated visibility has significant implications for the public sphere. When remembering is structured by algorithmic exposure and emotional uptake, memory practices revolve around political contestation rather than the possibility of agreement. Instead of reinforcing shared narratives of the past, platform-mediated remembering increasingly leads to competing claims about what should be remembered, how, and by whom.

Chantal Mouffe’s (2013) concept of the agonistic public sphere offers a helpful framework for understanding these dynamics, highlighting conflict as a core element of democratic life. When applied to memory cultures, this indicates that struggles over remembrance and forgetting are not anomalies within a stable historical consensus but are expressions of ongoing disputes over identity, legitimacy, and power. Digital platforms amplify these agonistic dynamics by enabling multiple, often conflicting memory claims to be visible, circulate broadly, and mobilize affective responses within the same public space.

BODILY PRACTICES, MULTIMODALITY, AND SEMIO-SOMATIC MEMORY

Historically ritualized semio-somatic forms of remembering existed before digital media, but they continue to shape how memory is revived online. The focus here is not on platform infrastructures themselves but on the semio-somatic dispositions ingrained through earlier ritual practices and reinterpreted within platformed environments. Instead of being replaced by digital mediation, these forms – considered not as purely modal or mental representations (Iani, 2019) – persist and are reshaped through platform-specific multimodal discourse. The article argues that embodiment must be recognized as an

important aspect of digital memory, which is often overlooked in memory and multimodal research, where emphasis generally goes to representational modes and sensory channels at the expense of bodily and ritualized enactment and the somatic nature of memory itself (cf. Campbell et al., 2019; Iani, 2019).

In digital platform environments, the political efficacy of mnemonic forms depends on how bodily dispositions are reactivated through multimodal configurations. Affordances and modes of expression influence whether dispositions and sign-forms sedimented through earlier practices remain latent or become publicly active in the present. Such reactivation relies on culturally recognizable discursive configurations and shared semantic vocabularies (cf. Greimas, 1987; Eco et al., 1989). In platform settings, these patterns are rearticulated through historically ritualized semio-somatic forms whose affective force is modulated by specific affordances and multimodal expression.

The key difficulty lies in analytically distinguishing semiotic, sensory, and perceptual dimensions of remembering that are intertwined in experience. Rather than opposing “disembodied” and “embodied” memories, this approach examines how these dimensions operate together (Lagerkvist, 2016). Many ideas about affordances in digital media research assume embodiment but rarely explicitly highlight it. Embodiment, seen as our relationship to the world, forms a foundational “ur-relation” that underpins the link between material substrates and action possibilities (Gibson, 2015). This aligns with cognitive scientific accounts of memory as an adaptive ability that supports agency in response to environmental demands, particularly with the symbol-grounding hypothesis, which states that symbols gain meaning through sensorimotor experience (Iani, 2019, 1747–1748).

Concepts such as “media ecology” and “memory ecology” already situate memory and media within environmental relations (Lagerkvist, 2016); the emphasis of the article’s argument lies in considering the environment as both semiotic and somatic. It examines semio-somatic memory diachronically, focusing not on the formation of new memories specific to digital platforms, but on the persistence and rearticulation of earlier bodily practices within platformed environments, as well as their relevance for political memory. Social-media-specific sensorimotor practices (such as clicking, scrolling, and finger gesturing), while important in their own right, are not the subject of the article’s focus. The political effectiveness of memory in the present stems from the activation of historically ritualized mnemonic forms through multimodal configurations that enable their rearticulation and contestation across different contexts.

Multimodality as a political force of memory

Multimodality is essential for understanding the political force of memory because memory is constituted through bodily, sensory, and semiotic processes that arguably precede and exceed any specific technological setting. To explore questions about platform affordances and digital circulation, it is important to clarify how meaning and affect converge to create political intensity through the interaction among bodily practices, perceptual processes, and semiotic material forms.

In multimodal theory, a key distinction is made between semiotic modes and sensory modalities. Based on social-semiotic approaches developed by Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen (2006), modes are seen as socially and culturally shaped semiotic resources – such as language, images, sounds, gestures, and layouts among others – each with its own conventions and potential for meaning-making. Modes are not neutral transmitters of information; rather, they are structured systems of meaning-making that are historically sedimented and socially regulated; they are habitualized practices. The concept of modality, as used here, following multimodal theorists, refers to sensory modalities (Kress, 2010; Bateman & Wildfeuer, 2014; Forceville, 2006): the sensory channels through which modes are apprehended – visual, auditory, and tactile/kinesthetic modalities (among others). Sensory modalities influence how semiotic modes are perceived, integrated, and affectively experienced.

Multimodal research distinguishes three analytically separate yet interconnected dimensions: (1) sensory channels (e.g., vision, hearing, bodily movement), (2) perceptual integration through which sensory input is combined and organized, and (3) semiotic modes, which convey culturally mediated meanings (cf. Kress, 2010; Bateman et al., 2017; Oja, 2023). A common issue in communication and memory studies is that these dimensions are often conflated. Multimodality is frequently used as a catch-all term, while in practice it most often refers primarily to the coexistence of text, images, and sounds, or to the multimedia character of digital artifacts. Consequently, analyses tend to remain descriptive, emphasizing media formats rather than exploring the relationships among semiotic modes, sensory modalities, and socio-technical affordances. This conceptual slippage is particularly consequential for memory studies. When multimodality is reduced to a combination of media forms, the embodied and ritual dimensions through which memory acquires affective and political force are obscured.

Memory, as enacted through bodily practices – gestures, vocalizations, rhythms, and repetitions – can be seen as a kind of “semiotic scaffolding acquired by learning” as that which binds sensory experience to shared symbolic frameworks (Campbell et al., 2019, 356). Although multimodal theories foreground the material base of meaning-making, they often neglect the role of bodily enactment when semiotic resources are treated primarily as culturally available forms rather than as enacted in and through the environment. As Campbell et al. (2019, 358) argue, referencing James J. Gibson’s (2015) idea of affordances, “semiotic resources [as affordances] are not just anything in the environment, but anything that an organism’s sense perceptive and motoric capabilities evoke as available.”

The political importance of memory cannot be understood without considering both its semiotic materiality and its somatic dimensions, including sensory-perceptual and sensorimotor aspects. As Kress (2010, 157) highlights, the affordances of modes “rest on the materiality of the stuff” from which signs are made, even though this materiality is socially shaped into cultural semiotic resources. Meaning is therefore not purely discursive, cognitive, or somatic; nor should materiality be understood only as the physical form of the sign. Rather, it emerges through historically situated practices that interrelate semiotic forms, sensory perception, embodied dispositions, and social conventions.

Existing research on digital and political memory primarily focuses on representational, discursive, informational, and technological aspects of remembering – highlighting communication but often neglecting the bodily and sensorimotor dimensions as important dimensions through which memory acquires affective force. This limitation is evident not only in memory studies but also in media and platform research and in political theories. It is less prominent in multimodal scholarship, where the bodily dimension is usually emphasized, but only secondary to questions of mode, medium, and signification. Multimodal theorists emphasize that meaning is co-constructed across modes, rather than found in any single mode alone (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006; Bateman et al., 2017). The political and mnemonic power of an expression depends as much on bodily enactment, sensory perception, and collective repetition as on semantic content and modal composition. The more inter-semiotically complex the multimodal configuration is, the more expansive is its intermodal meaning potential, as well as its potential for affective charge.

The political intensity of certain mnemonic expressions arises from their prior ritualization and bodily repetition. Through sustained collective actions, ideological meanings become sedimented as



Figure 1: Early partisan poster dated July 7, 1941, featuring the slogan “Death to Fascism, Freedom to the People” (Serbian Cyrillic: “Смрт фашизму, слобода народу”), along with an image of a clenched fist as a symbol of resistance (Source: Wikimedia Commons).

learned bodily dispositions – internalized through repeated vocalization, posture, rhythm, and synchronized performance. This early habituation forms the mnemonic substrate from which current reactivations draw their force. In post-socialist digital environments, such expressions no longer function within the institutional rituals that once grounded them, but their political efficacy persists precisely because they still activate historically internalized forms. Multimodality is crucial here: it facilitates the reexpression of sedimented semio-somatic memory across textual, visual, and gestural configurations, allowing both affirmative and critical political expressions to surface today. Positioning multimodality at this fundamental level highlights an approach to memory as practice – a process in which ideological meanings are sedimented, internalized, and made experientially compelling.

MNEMONIC ENDURANCE OF THE SLOGAN “SMRT FAŠIZMU, SVOBODA NARODU”

The analysis in this section traces how the slogan is activated and rendered contestable in platformed environments, thereby shifting attention from memory as representation to memory as practice within contemporary political struggles.

The slogan “Smrt fašizmu, svoboda narodu” originates in the WWII Yugoslav resistance against the occupying Axis Powers. Although the exact point of origin is difficult to discern from available documentation – it is clear that it became particularly widespread during the summer of 1941 when it began to circulate (on posters and official correspondence) within the partisan movement (Figure 1).²

Semiotically, the slogan condenses existing European antifascist signifiers – most notably the

² The Kingdom of Yugoslavia joined the Tripartite Pact, the Axis alliance between Germany, Italy, and Japan, on 25 March 1941 under strong geopolitical pressure. Two days later, however, a military coup in Belgrade overthrew the government that had signed the pact. In April 1941 the country was invaded by Axis forces, rapidly defeated, and partitioned among occupying powers, giving rise to both collaboration and resistance. In the first months of occupation, resistance activities largely took political, organizational, and cultural forms, including the establishment of clandestine networks, the circulation of illegal publications, and other forms of opposition to the occupying regimes, involving a variety of political actors. Notably, TIGR, an antifascist militant organization rooted in the Slovene Littoral and the wider Julian March, had already engaged in clandestine and armed activity against Fascist Italian rule during the interwar period. Until 22 June 1941, Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union were still bound by the Molotov–Ribbentrop non-aggression pact of 1939, during which the Comintern interpreted the war as an imperialist conflict between capitalist states. After the German attack on the Soviet Union on 22 June 1941 (Operation Barbarossa), the Communist Party of Yugoslavia initiated and expanded the organization of its armed resistance. During this period the slogan “Smrt fašizmu, svoboda narodu” began to circulate widely. For the broader historical context of Yugoslavia in 1941, the Comintern line, and TIGR’s interwar antifascist activity, cf. Tomasevich (2002), Pavlowitch (2008), Mawdsley (2017), Kacin Wohinz & Verginella (2008) and Kacin Wohinz (2013).

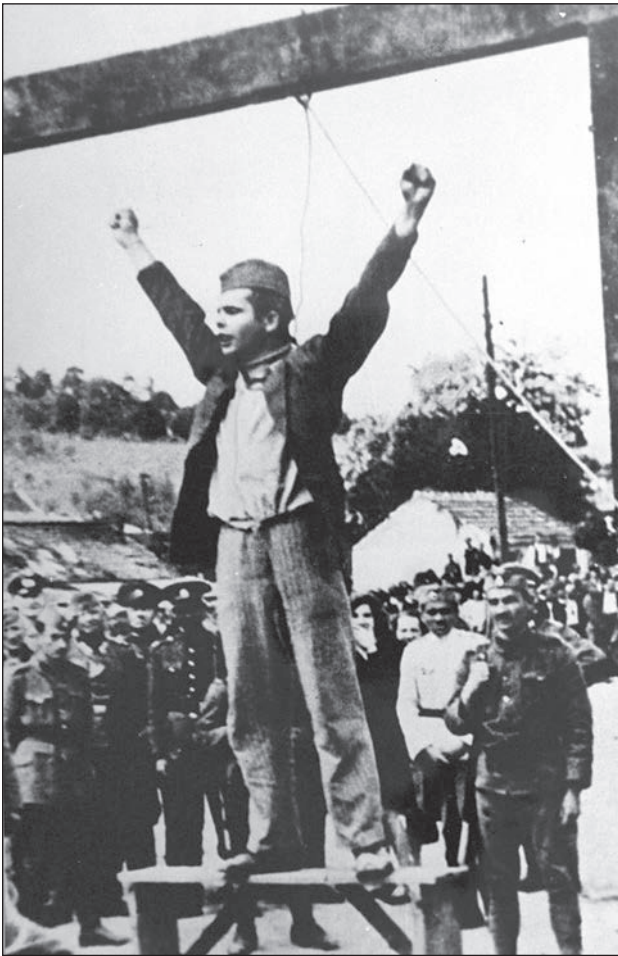


Figure 2: Slobodanka Vasić, Stjepan Filipović beneath the gallows in Valjevo, Serbia, on May 22, 1942, just before his execution. With his fists raised and clenched, he became a lasting symbol of partisan resistance, widely remembered for the slogan “Death to fascism, freedom to the people” (Source: Wikimedia Commons).

formula “death to fascism,” which circulated during the Spanish Civil War – into a binary structure that pairs negation with an emancipatory promise. It quickly spread across various forms of communication: printed leaflets and bulletins, partisan press, graffiti, correspondence, and everyday speech. It served both as a greeting and a farewell, replacing the traditional language and gestural conventions and norms of

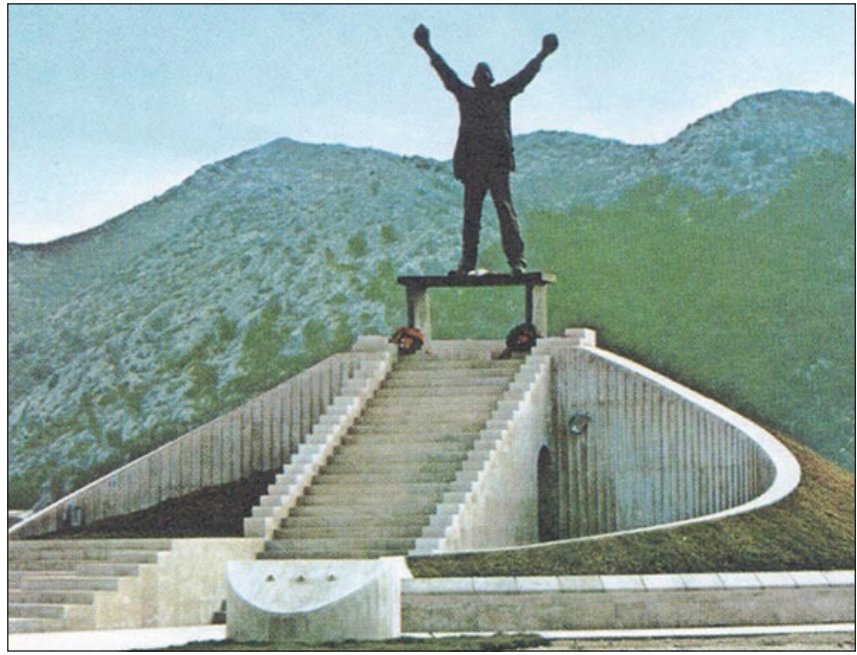
everyday address – embedding political opposition into daily interactions. Its abbreviation (“SF–SN”), numerous public inscriptions, and reported heroic vocalization during moments of intense combat confrontation indicate that it acted as a performative act of collective identity. In this context, its discursive economy and affective intensity invite comparison with “¡No pasarán!” of the Spanish Civil War.

After WWII, the slogan became increasingly associated with an image of the resistance fighter Stjepan Filipović, who was photographed just before his execution and is said to have spoken the slogan in the final moments, with raised and clenched fists (Figure 2).³ Especially after its public release in *Politika* on November 4, 1944, the photograph of Filipović became a symbol of partisan resistance; after the war it circulated publicly, and gained an iconic status. His signature defiant pose was replicated in statues (notably in Opuzen and Valjevo, cf. Figures 3 and 4), on an official Yugoslav stamp, and later even outside of the Yugoslav context as an international symbol of resistance, including in the Holocaust Museum New York.

In this process of public circulation and institutional reproduction, the image stopped serving only as a record of a single execution and instead became a condensed visual symbol of occupation violence, resistance memory, and post-war socialist narrative formation. Crucially, the difficulty of retrospectively distinguishing the slogan’s genesis, its association with Filipović’s posture, and its subsequent performances in schools and public ceremonies is not an obstacle but an indicator of its ritualized character. Ritual tends to erase contextual specificity, operating through repetition and bodily habit rather than conscious reflection. What endures is less the memory of specific events than a bodily disposition: a learned way of standing, speaking, responding, and aligning oneself with a shared symbolic order. In this way, ritualized mnemonic practices act as tools for internalization, embedding ideological orientations in bodily habits.

During WWII and afterward, within socialist Yugoslavia, the slogan functioned as a collective performative articulated through ritualized enactment: standing posture, forceful vocalization, coordinated bodily gestures (such as body orientation and a raised fist), and synchronized collective utterances in

³ Stjepan Filipović was executed in Valjevo on May 22, 1942, at the age of twenty-six. According to SS reports, he shouted antifascist and pro-communist slogans while being led through the streets (Radanović, 2012) urging the locals to take up arms and fight against the occupiers (Konjikušić, 2017, 139). Immediately before his execution, at least as is widely reported and circulated, he raised his arms, clenched his fists, and cried out “Smrt fašizmu, sloboda narodu.” While these exact final words cannot be definitively verified, collective memory has condensed these reports into the recognizable phrasing of the slogan, which captures both the event and his defiant stance at the gallows. Slobodanka Vasić, a young apprentice at the Kosara photographic studio in Valjevo, most likely took the photograph. According to later testimonies, the image was briefly offered for sale by the studio after the execution, before a German raid confiscated and destroyed the negative and most prints; some reproductions nevertheless entered clandestine circulation (cf. Konjikušić, 2017).



Figures 3 and 4: Postwar monumentalization: cultural memorialization and mythologization of the WWII resistance movement. Figure 3 (left) shows the monument to Stjepan Filipović in Valjevo, Serbia (sculptor Vojin Bakić, erected 1960), which still stands today (Source: Wikimedia Commons). Figure 4 (right) shows the monument in Opuzen, Croatia (sculptors Miro Vuco and Stjepan Gračan, erected in 1978), which was demolished in 1991 during the Yugoslav breakup wars by Croatian nationalists (Source: unidentified historical photograph, “Zaostrog spomenik (1980s),” reproduced in Donald Niebyl, “Zaostrog,” Spomenik Database, original source not specified (Niebyl, n. d.)).

partisan meetings and other settings. These practices engaged multiple sensory modalities simultaneously – auditory, visual, proprioceptive, and kinesthetic – tying the slogan to bodily experience and not to abstract cognition alone. Through repetition in institutional and public contexts during the war and later in the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (including Slovenia until 1991), the slogan became associated with learned bodily dispositions, acquiring force beyond its propositional content.

A comparison with the slogan “Za domovino, s Titom naprej” (“For our homeland, we move forward with Tito”)⁴ helps clarify how mnemonic endurance functions in “Smrt fašizmu, svoboda narodu.” The former was highly ritualized and routinely performed in post-WWII Yugoslav daily institutional settings, especially in schools. It also depended on repetition, collective vocalization, and bodily synchronization to foster ideological alignment. Its performative force did not come from a single utterance but from regulated repetition: the slogan worked by being cited and re-enacted across institutional settings, recalling Judith Butler’s (1997) account of performativity as citational

practice. In primary schools, classes usually started with a standard call-and-response performance: the teacher – or a designated pupil – would stand before the class and utter the initial phrase “Za domovino,” to which the pupils responded together, “S Titom naprej.” The slogan was also linked to the Pionir pledge – a formal oath children took when joining the Pioniri, the youth organization of socialist Yugoslavia.

Yet despite these similarities with “Smrt fašizmu, svoboda narodu,” the slogan with Tito did not become a lasting political mnemonic form in later periods and mostly faded from use in independent Slovenia. This difference suggests that ritualization and bodily enactments alone do not ensure mnemonic longevity. They create conditions for mnemonic force that can later be reactivated or not, depending on semiotic structure and broader historical and political factors.

What sets apart slogans that endure from those that fade is less their level of ritualization than their capacity for resignification. A similar logic of historically mobile symbolic matrices, which retain recognizable structures while acquiring different social and political functions in changing contexts, can be

⁴ Josip Broz Tito (1892–1980) was a Yugoslav revolutionary who led the Partisan resistance during WWII and became the leader of socialist Yugoslavia from 1945 until his death. For an insightful study, cf. Pirjevec (2018).

found in Tratnik's analysis of the dragon-slayer matrix (cf. Tratnik, 2022). In the case of "Smrt fašizmu, sloboda narodu," the bodily-affective charge generated through ritual repetition provides conditions for its rearticulation in new political contexts, especially as its original historical reference becomes partly obscured. The slogan is also characterized by a strongly oppositional semiotic structure. Its endurance is maintained through repeated enactment and through a linguistic configuration where political meaning is generated relationally rather than referentially: fascism and freedom are positions defined through negation, so that the rejection of fascism acts as the formal condition for the affirmation of freedom. By embedding political opposition directly into its linguistic form, the slogan distills a complex political stance into a durable and easily mobilizable utterance. Importantly, its semiotic "clarity" notwithstanding, the slogan remains underdetermined in a way associated with floating or partly empty signifiers, whose meaning is stabilized contingently through discursive articulation rather than by fixed referential content. The repeatability of the slogan's formulaic configuration allows metonymic displacement, enabling successive enemies and groups to be inscribed

into the same structural positions, while the rhythmic symmetry and evaluative asymmetry of the opposition sustain its affective charge. The slogan's political efficacy is therefore anchored in the tension between syntagmatic invariance and paradigmatic variability, allowing for a continuity of the form alongside semantic rearticulation within shifting discursive formations. By contrast, "Za domovino, s Titom naprej" cannot function in the same way, since it lacks a relational opposition that generates meaning through negation and ties its significance to the explicit figure of a former Yugoslav president, anchoring interpretation to a specific historical reference rather than a structurally reproducible opposition.

From ritualization to resignification: three phases in the use of the slogan

The persistence of "Smrt fašizmu, sloboda narodu" cannot be explained by a single historical context or political regime. Its durability comes from a series of transformations through which the slogan has been repeatedly re-embedded in changing configurations of power and memory. These transformations can be broken down into three



Figure 5: Public ceremony in the theatre of liberated Split, September 1943, beneath the banner "Death to Fascism, Freedom to the People," enacting the socialist symbolic order in a ritualized institutional and commemorative setting (Source: Horvatinčić, n. d.).

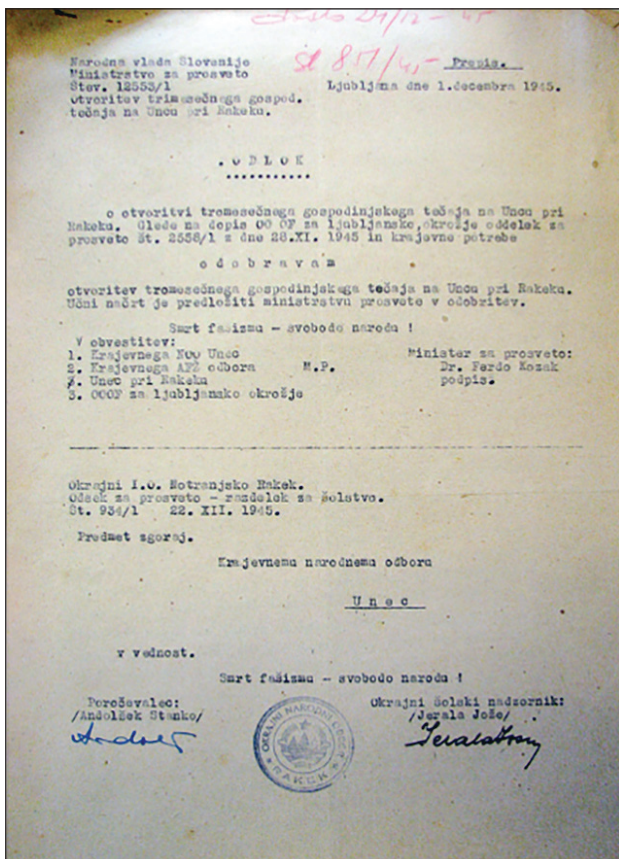


Figure 6: Official post-war administrative document (Ljubljana, December 1, 1945) ending with the salute “Smrt fašizmu – svoboda narodu.” The slogan was used as a formal closing greeting in both spoken and written bureaucratic correspondence (Source: authors’ archive).

interconnected phases: (1) the emergence of the slogan during the revolutionary and resistance efforts of WWII Yugoslavia; (2) its post-war institutionalization in the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia; and (3) its reactivation during the transitional and post-socialist periods, including today’s contexts. Each phase features a different relationship between ritual, authority, and political function.

In its initial stage, the slogan arose within partisan resistance as a revolutionary and mobilizing utterance under conditions of foreign military occupation. Established in a context in which occupying forces maintained political and territorial control, the slogan served as an explicitly oppositional, anti-occupation, freedom-affirming performative statement. Appearing within a politically organized movement led by the Communist Party (Figure 5), it operated under conditions of existential threat and violent repression. Its performative force lay in its ability to articulate a collective stance in a situation of armed conflict and occupation, where

speech, bodily presence, and risk intertwined. During this phase, the slogan was a performative act of alignment enacted through bodily multimodal practices.

Following the war, the political actor that had mobilized the slogan within resistance – the Communist Party – became the ruling authority. The slogan was not abandoned; instead, it was carried into the new political order by the very actors who had previously used it in opposition. However, its role fundamentally shifted. What once embodied performative resistance under occupation became, in the post-war era, a commemorative tool embedded in state power. The conflict that initially defined its use was no longer active and had been resolved. The slogan’s antagonistic force was displaced from the present confrontation to the memory of past conflict. Integrated into state-sponsored rituals, school practices, national commemorations, and official memory culture, it became a stable part of the socialist symbolic order (Figure 6). Through ritual repetition, it no longer motivated collective action against an existing authority but instead confirmed the legitimacy of the authority now in control.

While the slogan continued to evoke freedom, this appeal was channeled through an authoritarian one-party political system. Its rebellious energy was redirected toward a narrative of antifascist victory and the prevention of perceived external and internal threats, thus anchoring state authority in the memory of communist-led resistance. In this second phase, the slogan mainly served as a legitimizing memory: it reinforced the ideological link between the Party, the Partisan struggle, and the socialist state, naturalizing their inseparability.

The third phase occurs in the post-socialist era after Slovenia’s independence, when socialist memory regimes dissolved and institutional monopolies over public remembrance weakened. In this context, “Smrt fašizmu, svoboda narodu” lost its clear institutional support and re-entered public debate as a contested, politically charged slogan. Its reemergence on social media – particularly X and Facebook – does not depend on detailed historical knowledge of its origins but on semiotic and bodily dispositions formed through earlier rituals, commemorative practices, and habitualized modes of response.

The capacity for resignification

The slogan “Smrt fašizmu, svoboda narodu” functions as a multimodal semiotic complex in which meaning arises not from the verbal text alone, but through transductions among semiotic modes – verbal language, image, gesture, layout, and typographic form – and through the sensory modalities by which these modes are apprehended. Visually–textually, the slogan

can act as a trigger that activates culturally sedimented auditory patterns – specifically rhythm, volume, and collective cadence – as it circulates in various cultural contexts like commemorations, cinema, and protests. This causes a shift from a visual-verbal mode to vocalized enactment, where one hears or even mentally repeats the slogan's cadence. This auditory response can then shift into gestural and sensorimotor dimensions: once the written slogan is mentally vocalized as a chant, it may activate the bodily disposition associated with that chant, most notably the raised-fist gesture. The gesture is not produced primarily through explicit conscious reflection; rather, it is experienced as a bodily continuation of the vocalized slogan. This gestural response is not fixed, as the slogan can be easily conflated with the similar one "Za domovino, s Titom naprej," causing bodily responses to vary between defiant fist-raising and salute-like postures shaped by pedagogical and ceremonial repetition. Nevertheless, in this relation, the raised fist, whether enacted or represented, functions as a sign, whereas the learned readiness to assume or recognize such a gesture, or vocalize the slogan, is a bodily disposition.

These modal transitions are rooted in layered mnemonic structures – both personal and collective – condensed in iconic visual artifacts, such as the photograph of Stjepan Filipović at the gallows (and its reproductions in statues and stamps), which functions as a visual condensation of resistance, sacrifice, and bodily – gestural defiance. The slogan's semiotic force thus resides in a cascading affective economy where textual visibility, auditory resonance, visualization, and gestural enactment strengthen one another within a particular cultural sphere, or as Eco et al. term it – localized discursive universe (Eco et al., 1989), making its meaning inseparable from culturally specific multimodal memory and bodily practices through which it is repeatedly brought to life.

This account should be seen as an analytical reconstruction: it outlines a possible multimodal and somatic "trajectory" by extrapolating from the mnemonic abilities of the analyst and a nearby interpretive community. As a result, it runs the risk of mistaking such abilities for a generally available mechanism of remembering. Because collective memories are generational and constantly evolving, it is hard to identify a single way the slogan works in today's social media environments, especially when considering the somatic aspect of memory and its relation to different semiotic modes, sensory experiences, and platform affordances. Still, the significance of the slogan relies precisely on the specific ways memory forms within different cultural settings. Our analytical attempt at reconstruction arguably outlined its main multimodal semiotic function through a relational approach to modes and modalities (Oja, 2023).

Empirically, the bodily and sensorimotor dimension of the slogan is unevenly distributed: for some, it is grounded in practiced vocalizations and ritualized bodily postures, while for others, it is mediated – learned through popular culture, commemorative media, or contemporary platforms – or both; the iconic photograph might be central, peripheral, or completely absent. What keeps the slogan's circulation going is not a stable, shared archive but a certain fuzziness – partial overlap between episodic memory (personal recollections, bodily practices, lived through experience) and semantic memory (collective memory repertoires, testimonial experience, culturally mediated bodily practices). This very indeterminacy enables memetic adoption: the form stays recognizable enough to coordinate emotion and orientation, yet flexible enough to be re-anchored in different mnemonic resources, allowing vocal and bodily responses (such as standing, shouting, fist-raising, or salute-like postures) to remain variable enactments rather than uniform effects. The slogan functions as a complex mnemonic form – a meme in the Dawkins's (2006 [1976]) sense – before modern digital adaptations, as it condenses verbal, auditory, gestural, and emotional traces into a relatively stable yet internally diverse unit of memory. When it circulates on social media platforms like X and Facebook, its mnemonic and political power is heightened through integration into composite artifacts – photos, caricatures, typographic variations, added framing, acronym reduction, and interactional layers like replies, comment threads, and visibility metrics. These transformations do not diminish its semio-somatic complexity; rather, they expand it into new environments (as shown in numerous examples of its current circulation), enabling the slogan to act both as a condensed mnemonic cue and as a dynamically recontextualized node within networked political memory practices.

This capacity for resignification sets "Smrt fašizmu, svoboda narodu" apart from other ritualized socialist slogans like "Za domovino, s Titom naprej," which, despite similar levels of institutional repetition and bodily enactment, failed to re-emerge in contemporary political struggles with the same force. The difference is not in the level of ritualization itself, but in the slogan's capacity to define a normative boundary that stays relevant beyond its original historical context. While slogans focused on unity, development, or leadership were closely tied to the legitimacy of a specific political order, "Smrt fašizmu, svoboda narodu" maintains a semiotically conflictual structure that can be reactivated whenever questions of authority, exclusion, and freedom come to the forefront. Its semiotic openness, paired with ritualized embodiment, makes it adaptable to a variety of discursive reconfigurations. The variety of posts on X and Facebook from the Slovenian context that utilize this slogan across commemorative,

political, and everyday settings show not only its antagonistic power but also its ongoing agonistic potential. Rather than merely marking exclusion or opposition, the slogan functions as a reusable mnemonic form that enables political disagreement, historical positioning, and normative claims to be expressed within a shared symbolic framework. Its continued circulation demonstrates a form of semiotic applicability that supports ongoing processes of agonistic memory formation, in which conflict is preserved as productive and open rather than being resolved or closed.

PLATFORM AFFORDANCES AS CONDITIONS OF MNEMONIC ACTION AND VISIBILITY

In this section, affordances are understood in Gibson's (2015) original sense: as action possibilities that emerge from the relationship between an organism and its environment. When applied to social media, this does not mean viewing platform features as deterministic causes or simplifying affordances to user perceptions. Instead, platforms serve as extended environments – material and symbolic infrastructures of perception and action – where historically ingrained mnemonic dispositions can be reactivated and reshaped. The central question is which platform affordances sustain the repeated reactivation of mnemonic forms.

Affordances have become a key analytical lens in social media platform studies for explaining how platform architectures enable and constrain communicative action, its visibility, and its interactive potential (Hutchby, 2001; Boyd, 2011; Treem & Leonardi, 2012; Bucher & Helmond, 2018; Evans et al., 2017). What remains underexplored is how these actions become mnemonic and politically consequential by taking shape within specific multimodal and sensory configurations of expression and embodiment.

Within communication and media scholarship focused on social media and digital memory, affective, discursive, and political dimensions have been more prominently theorized than multimodal and sensorial ones (cf. Papacharissi, 2015; Ben-David et al., 2024). When multimodality is addressed, it is most often simplified to a general acknowledgment of the “multimedia” nature of platforms, mainly referring to the coexistence of text, images, audio, and video. What remains under-theorized is the relationship between modes and sensory modalities: how meaning is produced across them, how it is anchored in bodily perception, and how it acquires affective and ritual force. Approaches that combine affordance-based analysis with theories of multimodality are therefore uncommon, and even fewer studies explicitly integrate both traditions in a theoretically and methodologically explicit manner within research on digital and social media (notable exceptions include Reichl et al., 2022; van Leeuwen &

Johannessen, 2022; Plastina, 2022). Nonetheless, such integrative frameworks are rarely used in research on digital memory. Consequently, affordance-based analyses often focus on what platforms enable users to do without explaining how (mnemonic) meaning is concretely and sensorially constructed through multimodal configurations.

This limitation matters for memory studies because remembering is an embodied and affective practice shaped by repetition, ritual, and sensory involvement. Visual forms, vocal intensity, rhythm, gestures, spatial arrangements, and collective synchronization all enhance mnemonic force. Without paying attention to these dimensions, affordances risk being seen as just technical or interactional potentials, detached from the environmental conditions that make mnemonic forms politically charged and socially mobilizing. As previously mentioned, a helpful connection is offered by Campbell et al. (2019), who relate semiotic resources to Gibson's organism–environment relationship with sense-perceptive and motoric capabilities.

For the purposes of this article, Gibsonian affordances are therefore defined in relation to multimodal mnemonic circulation: the possibilities for action through which historically sedimented mnemonic forms can be repeatedly brought into platformed public space and become contested. Affordances matter politically because they create potentials under which memory-related interventions gain public traction and enter agonistic contestation.

In the case of “Smrt fašizmu, svoboda narodu,” the relevant affordances are those that support (a) the inscription and re-inscription of the slogan (including abbreviation, quotation, and reformulation), (b) transduction across modes (embedding the slogan in images, videos, and typographic compositions, including remediations of iconic artifacts such as the Filipović photograph), (c) interactional uptake (reply threads and quote-post framing through which the slogan is reaffirmed, contested, or recontextualized), and (d) visibility modulation (feed ordering, algorithmic ranking, and engagement metrics that condition its platformed recirculation). Together, these affordances enable the slogan to operate as a repeatable and contestable mnemonic form rather than a static symbolic reference.

These affordances do not replace the slogan's semio-somatic force, which was formed through earlier ritual and institutional repetitions; they modulate its circulation and activation. What changes under platform conditions is the speed and scope at which the slogan can be re-inscribed, recontextualized, and brought into interaction, intensifying cycles of reiteration and contestation central to its contemporary political efficacy. This efficacy is further sustained by the perceived public nature of platform environments: from users' perspectives, mnemonic interventions appear to unfold within a seemingly open public sphere,

even though the infrastructures that mediate them are privately owned, commercially oriented toward engagement, algorithmically governed, and subject to algorithmic personalization. The feeling of participating in a shared, accessible space for political expression strengthens the slogan's ability to serve as a public act of political positioning. However, the availability of these affordances does not guarantee equal political influence. The public uptake of mnemonic forms remains contingent on continued exposure and affective resonance – potentials that platform architectures and algorithmic filtering differentially enable and amplify.

The digital circulation of “Smrt fašizmu, svoboda narodu” shows how platform affordances reconfigure political memory. The slogan's mnemonic force is not lessened in digital environments, but it becomes publicly operative through the platform-mediated dynamics. The following analysis explores how these dynamics shape the slogan's multimodal articulations and agonistic uses in today's digital publics.

“SMRT FAŠIZMU, SVOBODA NARODU” ON X AND FACEBOOK

An analysis of contemporary uses of the slogan “Smrt fašizmu, svoboda narodu” on X and Facebook shows that it circulates less as a purely verbal statement and more as a multimodal mnemonic configuration in which text, images, and bodily gestures are tightly and affectively interwoven. The empirical material was gathered through keyword-based searches for the phrase on both platforms and assembled as a purposive qualitative corpus of approximately one hundred salient and diverse examples (Babnik & Tratnik, 2026), selected for their analytical relevance rather than for statistical representativeness.⁵

Across the analyzed posts, the slogan functions as a conflicting sign whose political meaning is repeatedly reactivated and renegotiated in the present. The posts do not form a single, uniform reference point but instead group into different ways of remembering. Across the material, six main patterns of reinterpretation can be observed. First (1), institutionalized commemorative uses, where the slogan appears in connection with officially recognized historical events and state holidays, such as the Slovenian Day of Uprising Against Occupation (27 April), functioning as a ritualized motto of institutionalized antifascist memory. Second (2), vernacular commemorative reaffirmations, in which users repeat the slogan alongside archival photographs, monuments, or references to partisan history, reaffirming the established antifascist narrative in a more informal digital context. Third (3), contemporary political

adaptations, where the slogan is redeployed in current political conflicts by substituting new actors into its antagonistic structure. Fourth (4), counter-memory reinterpretations, which detach the slogan from its association with the Communist-led partisan movement and reconnect it to alternative antifascist traditions. Fifth (5), post-socialist delegitimizing reinterpretations, which recast the slogan as a symbol of communist domination or totalitarian rule. Finally (6), reflexive or critical inversions, in which the slogan is deliberately altered to expose the instability and manipulability of politically charged mnemonic expressions. These variations do not stand alone but frequently intersect and overlap, showing the slogan as a compact mnemonic form through which competing interpretations of the past and present are articulated.

The circulation of the slogan on social media is not always confined to clearly demarcated national or linguistic contexts. In some instances, posts referencing “Smrt fašizmu, svoboda narodu” intersect with wider post-Yugoslav mnemonic repertoires, including the Cyrillic script, Serbian or Croatian language versions, or symbols associated with a shared socialist past. While such overlaps complicate attempts to attribute mnemonic practices to a single national memory culture, they underscore the transnational mobility of antifascist symbols that cross borders and the open, fluid nature of platform-mediated memory. Content circulates across linguistic, cultural, and political boundaries and becomes available to conflicting appropriations.

Across the examined posts, a dominant visual genealogy of the slogan emerges. Archival photographs of WWII partisans, post-war propaganda posters, the red star, contemporary urban graffiti, and photographs of standing or saluting figures positioned next to inscriptions or memorials – especially during commemorative events associated with WWII battles, meetings, or anniversaries – recur with striking regularity. These images do not merely illustrate the slogan but anchor it in a continuity of bodily and spatial practices that connect different historical moments through the repetition of bodily postures, spatial arrangements, and modes of public appearance. In this way, the mnemonic force of the slogan is sustained both symbolically and through recognizable bodily dispositions that persist across media, contexts, and generations.

Alongside conflicting and polemical appropriations, a significant number of posts reinforce the slogan in an affirmative and commemorative register (Figures 8 and 10). These posts reproduce archival photographs of partisans, wartime documents, or iconic figures such as Stjepan Filipović, often accompanied by quotations, dates, and references to specific battles or anniversaries. In

5 For ethical reasons, posts originating from private or non-institutional user accounts were anonymized before inclusion in the article. Usernames, handles, profile photographs, links, and other directly identifying metadata were removed or obscured in the reproduced screenshots. Figure captions retain only the platform and year of publication, while the anonymized items are cited through the authors' research corpus.

these cases, the slogan is not reinterpreted but reaffirmed as an ethical and historical axiom. Its meaning remains anchored in the antifascist struggle of WWII and is used as a sign of respect, continuity, or nostalgia. Here, the slogan acts as a stabilizing mnemonic device rather than a site of disruption. It reinforces an established narrative of antifascist legitimacy and effectively passes it down through generations, maintaining emotional ties to a heroic past. However, in such cases, the slogan usually implies a normative endorsement of the partisan and socialist historical narrative, framing it as the legitimate or morally authoritative trajectory of antifascist struggle. As a result, these invocations often generate counter-posts and revisionist responses that contest this implicit claim to historical legitimacy.

The slogan is often paired with visual symbols linked to socialist and antifascist iconography, most notably the red star (Figure 7). In this context, the red star does not function merely as a referential sign of communism or resistance but as a condensed visual mnemonic device. It encapsulates ideological positioning, affective alignment, and claims of historical continuity into an immediately recognizable form. At the same time, the red star's circulation across contemporary anti-imperialist, antifascist, anti-populist, and anti-nationalist contexts reveals the fragmented and contested nature of collective memory, as the same symbol can be adopted for different political appropriations.



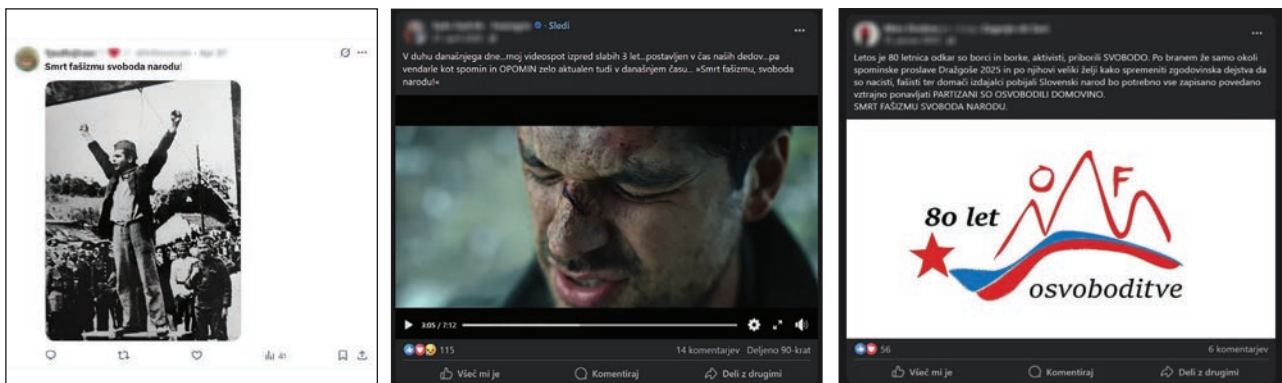
Figure 7: Anonymized post on X from 2025 pairing the slogan “Smrt fašizmu, svoboda narodu” with the red star and the hammer and sickle – symbols closely associated with socialist and antifascist iconography. In this configuration, the red star operates as a condensed visual mnemonic device that anchors the slogan within a recognizable socialist visual repertoire and signals ideological alignment with antifascist and leftist historical narratives (Babnik & Tratnik, 2026).

The slogan is frequently shared on social media in connection with the Slovenian national holiday Day of Uprising Against Occupation (27 April), which was known as the Day of the Liberation Front from 1948 to 1992. The Liberation Front was a political organization established in Ljubljana on 26 April 1941 as the Anti-Imperialist Front. After Germany attacked the Soviet Union, it was renamed the Liberation Front of the Slovene Nation. In this context, the slogan functions as a guiding motto of the commemorative event, reaffirming the established antifascist narrative associated with the Liberation Front (Figures 8–10).

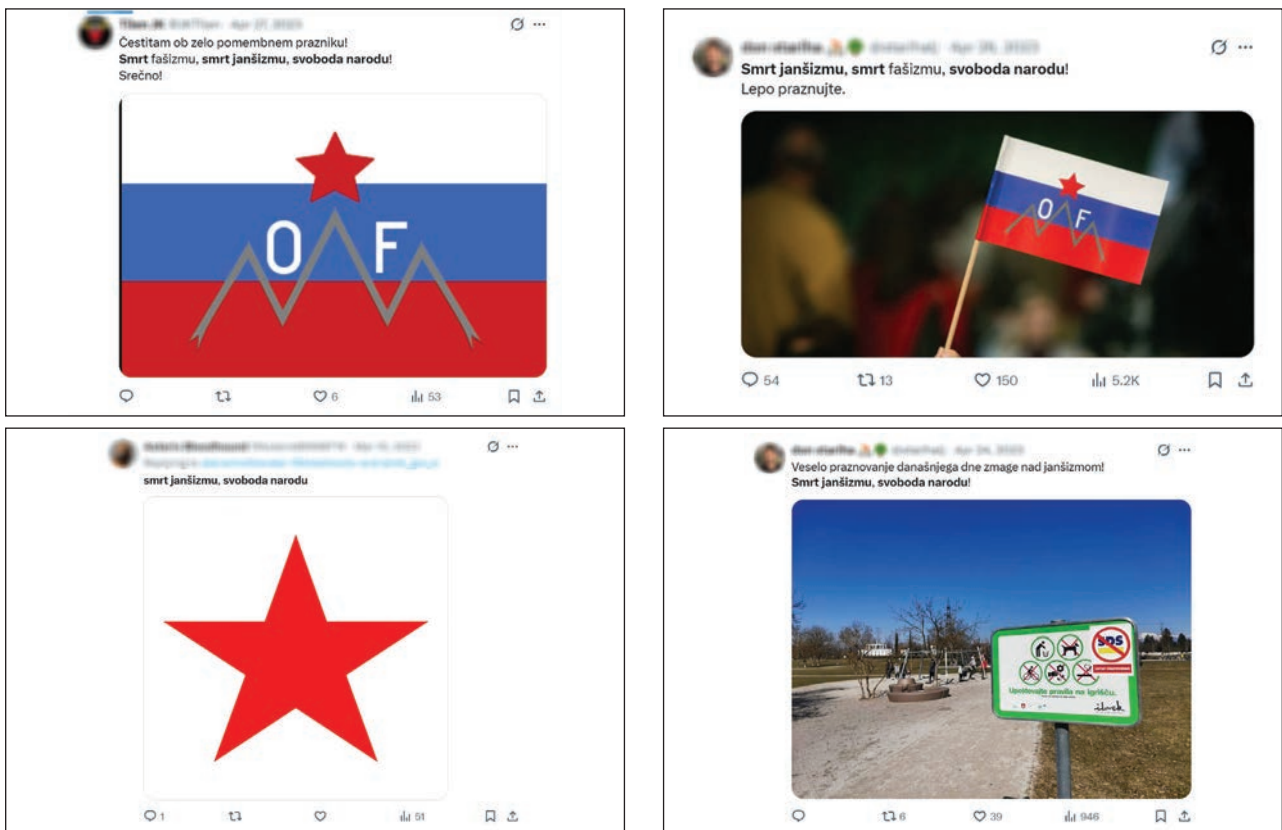
During the anti-government protests that took place in Slovenia between 2020 and 2022, amid the COVID-19 pandemic and its containment measures, protesters coined the slogan “Smrt janšizmu, svoboda narodu” (“Death to Janšism, freedom to the people”), which appeared on banners, placards, and other protest materials. At the time, the Slovenian government was led by Janez Janša of Slovenska demokratska stranka (SDS, Slovenian Democratic Party; a conservative party), and many protesters framed the government’s broader political conduct as authoritarian, mobilizing against it and calling for political change. After the parliamentary elections of April 2022, which brought Robert Golob of Gibanje Svoboda (Freedom Movement; a liberal party) to power, the slogan did not disappear from public discourse but continued to circulate on social media. Especially after 2023, it appears frequently in the form “Smrt janšizmu, svoboda narodu” or in the expanded formulation “Smrt fašizmu, smrt janšizmu, svoboda narodu.” In some cases, the phrase is invoked around the anniversary of the 2022 parliamentary elections (Figures 11–14), where it functions as an informal commemorative marker of the political transition.

In September 2020, the Slovenian prosecution dismissed a request to prohibit the public display of banners carrying this slogan, a decision that supporters of the protests widely celebrated and commented on social media. The continued circulation of the slogan has also generated political controversy. In 2025, the parliamentary group of the Slovenian Democratic Party (SDS), led by Janez Janša, addressed a question to the government asking whether the dissemination of the slogan could be sanctioned under proposed legislation addressing hate speech, arguing that it incites hostility toward political opponents (Figures 15 and 16). Similar post-Yugoslav disputes over historically charged slogans and salutes show how symbolic forms can operate simultaneously as memory markers, identity claims, and objects of hate-speech contestation (cf. Damčević, 2025).

Variants such as “Smrt janšizmu, svoboda narodu” and the expanded form “Smrt fašizmu, smrt janšizmu, svoboda narodu” appear particularly frequently after 2023, when the government had already been led by Robert Golob, whose electoral victory in 2022 had



Figures 8–10: Figure 8 (left) shows an anonymized post on Facebook from 2026 reproducing the iconic photograph of the partisan Stjepan Filipović with the slogan “Smrt fašizmu, svoboda narodu”; Figure 9 (middle) shows an anonymized post on Facebook from 2020 in which a musician dedicates a music video marking Slovenia’s national holiday Day of Uprising Against Occupation (27 April); Figure 10 (right) shows an anonymized post on Facebook from 2025 that repeats the slogan and explicitly links it to the historical legacy of the Liberation Front (*Osvobodilna fronta*) (Babnik & Tratnik, 2026).



Figures 11–14: Anonymized posts on X from 2023 illustrating the contemporary adaptation of the slogan in connection with Slovenian electoral politics. The expanded formulation “Smrt fašizmu, smrt janšizmu, svoboda narodu,” and the shortened version “Smrt janšizmu, svoboda narodu,” appear alongside symbols associated with the Liberation Front (OF) and the red star. Circulating around the one-year anniversary of the 2022 parliamentary elections that brought a change of government, these posts reinterpret the historical slogan within a present-day political context, framing it as a celebratory marker of political transition and as a continuation of antifascist symbolic language in contemporary partisan discourse (Babnik & Tratnik, 2026).



Figures 15 and 16: Posts on X from 2025 illustrating critical reactions to the slogan “Smrt janšizmu, svoboda narodu.” Figure 15 (left) shows a post by the parliamentary group of the Slovenian Democratic Party (SDS) questioning whether the dissemination of the slogan should be sanctioned under proposed legislation addressing hate speech. Figure 16 (right) shows a post by another account amplifying the same message through a video excerpt from a parliamentary debate. These X posts frame the slogan as an incitement to hostility against political opponents, demonstrating how its circulation generates counter-discourses that challenge its legitimacy in the contemporary political arena (Babnik & Tratnik, 2026).

been supported by the earlier protesters. In this new context, the slogan no longer functions primarily as an immediate anti-government address against the government then in office, as it did during the protests of 2020–2022. Rather, its already layered mnemonic and political function becomes more pronounced. The slogan’s reformulations simultaneously evoke several historical layers: the original wartime antifascist resistance, the socialist period in which that resistance was institutionally commemorated and ritualized, and the anti-government protest mobilizations of 2020–2022 directed against Janez Janša’s third administration. Through this layered mnemonic reference, the slogan increasingly operates as a symbolic reminder of earlier political struggles. At the same time, its continued repetition in digital environments maintains a clear motivational dimension. As Slovenia approached the parliamentary elections in March 2026, the slogan was frequently used as a form of political mobilization that draws on antifascist memory to reinforce support within a particular political camp.

A rarer but illustrative variation appears in the slogan “Smrt golobizmu, svoboda narodu,” which emerged shortly after the change of government in 2022 (Figure 17). This formulation can be understood as a reactive inversion of the much more widespread slogan “Smrt janšizmu, svoboda narodu.” By inserting a different political figure into the same antagonistic structure, the slogan demonstrates how its formulation

can be redeployed by opposing actors as a vehicle of political criticism directed at the government of Robert Golob. Although such examples are far less common, they reveal the structural openness of the phrase: its oppositional semiotic structure allows different political adversaries to occupy the same position within the formulaic configuration.

In some cases, the slogan is also linked to a broader geopolitical framework. For instance, the phrase “Smrt fašizmu, svoboda narodu” appears alongside expressions such as “Long live Vladimir Putin” and “Long live Russia,” framing contemporary geopolitical conflict through the symbolic language of antifascist struggle (Figure 18). Such uses extend the slogan’s mnemonic field beyond the national historical context and implicitly revive the earlier symbolic alignment between Yugoslav communist resistance, the Soviet Union and anti-imperialism. In this sense, the slogan demonstrates a form of mnemonic mobility, whereby antifascist memory is reactivated within new geopolitical narratives.

In some cases, the slogan is being reframed in ways that activate counter-memory. For example, a post on X (Figure 19) presents it as a “TIGR greeting,” referencing the antifascist organization TIGR that operated in the Slovene Littoral before and during WWII. Through this reframing, the slogan is detached from its association with the Communist-led partisan movement and reconnected to a non-communist lineage of antifascist resistance. This reinterpretation brings to the surface

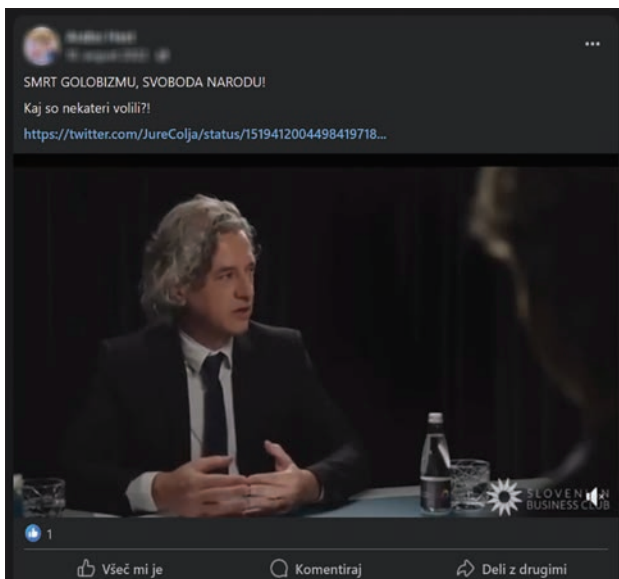


Figure 17: Anonymized post on Facebook from 2022 featuring the slogan “Smrt golobizmu, svoboda narodu” (“Death to Golobism, freedom to the people”), published shortly after the change of government in 2022. By substituting “Golobism” for the original target of the adapted slogan “Smrt janšizmu, svoboda narodu,” the post illustrates how the same antagonistic semiotic structure can be redeployed by opposing actors as a vehicle of political criticism directed at the government of Robert Golob (Babnik & Tratnik, 2026).

memories that had been marginalized within the socialist symbolic order, where the antifascist struggle was narratively unified under the Partisan movement and the Communist Party. By invoking TIGR, the slogan becomes a site where suppressed or subordinated strands of resistance history resurface, recalling actors who fought against fascist occupation and advocated for the freedom of the local population but were later overshadowed or ideologically neutralized in the dominant post-war narrative. In this way, the slogan functions as a vehicle of counter-memory: it destabilizes the previously hegemonic memory regime and reopens the questions about who constitutes the legitimate subject of antifascist struggle. Instead of merely repeating an established historical script, it becomes a discursive space where competing memories of resistance are articulated and renegotiated.

One X post reiterates the words of the famous Slovenian writer Vitomil Zupan in his disillusionment with the Communist Party after the war (and particularly its grandiloquent slogans) that “Death to Fascism, Freedom to the People” actually meant “Death to the fascist, power to the communist” (it combines the reinterpretation with an image of a page from Zupan’s

book, cf. Figure 20). Here the slogan is reinterpreted as an expression of communist dominance. What was once a call for collective liberation from fascism is reclassified as a tool for ideological consolidation. The slogan is seen as evidence of ongoing totalitarianism and is often dismissed as an illegitimate remnant of an authoritarian past. Through this reinterpretation, anti-fascism itself is destabilized as a moral and political benchmark, and the slogan becomes a proxy for broader disputes over the legitimacy of the socialist era. The slogan’s structure is reopened and reinterpreted, not to expand its emancipatory potential, but to invert its moral significance.

In another example from X (Figure 21), the slogan undergoes a mnemonic reversal, redirecting antifascist rhetoric against the current government. The phrase “Death to Fascism, Freedom to the People” is used in a post targeting Robert Golob (Prime Minister at the time). While Golob has previously called out the former government as fascist, this post reverses the accusation, blaming him for fascism. The reinterpretation occurs on multiple levels. The statement, typographically added on the collage – “My grandfather was a fascist,” adds a genealogical layer, personalizing the accusation and symbolically linking the Prime Minister to a stigmatized historical lineage. This shifts the debate

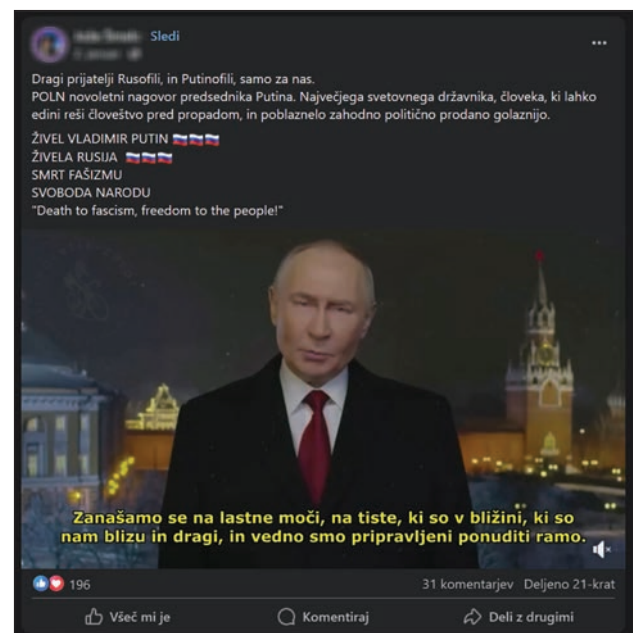


Figure 18: Anonymized post on Facebook from 2026 presenting Vladimir Putin as a global liberator and the only effective counterforce to Western power, invoking the slogan “Smrt fašizmu, svoboda narodu” to frame contemporary conflict through a revived anti-imperialist imaginary (Babnik & Tratnik, 2026).



Figure 19: Anonymized post on X from 2023 reframing the slogan “Smrt fašizmu, svoboda narodu” as a “TIGR greeting.” By linking the slogan to the antifascist organization TIGR, which operated in the Slovene Littoral before and during WWII, the post, while using inflammatory rhetoric against Prime Minister Golob, reinterprets the slogan outside its association with the Communist-led partisan movement (Babnik & Tratnik, 2026).

from policy criticism to a moral and historical attack. The visual pairing of Golob with Hitler and Mussolini further erases the time gap, equating today’s democratic leadership with key figures of 20th-century fascism. In this context, the slogan acts as a call for political change. Calling the Prime Minister a fascist suggests that his removal from office would lead to freedom for the people. This results in a mnemonic reversal: the language of antifascist resistance is turned against a government that claims the antifascist tradition, disrupting traditional memory alignments and reinterpreting the meaning of fascism in today’s political landscape.

Taken together, these modes of circulation indicate that the slogan functions less as a stable form of remembrance and more as a recurring source of disruption within the contemporary memory landscape. It challenges both the socialist narrative of antifascist continuity and the post-socialist narrative of democratic rupture, reopening conflicts that dominant memory regimes try to close.

The repeated circulation of the photograph of Stjepan Filipović shows how this mnemonic persistence is maintained. The image often appears alongside the slogan or circulates on its own as a compact visual icon. For those who grew up in socialist Yugoslavia, its associated bodily dispositions may be linked to episodic memory of institutional rituals and public commemorations; for later generations, these dispositions are acquired through mediated repetition and

even reenactment – posing with raised fists, staging the gesture for the camera, and sharing it online. In this way, digital artifacts do not just represent the slogan but also participate in the reactivation of the repertoire of learned bodily dispositions. Memory here is not confined to narrative recall but is enacted through posture, gesture, vocalization, and affective alignment. Even when detailed historical knowledge is partial or absent, the repetition of recognizable gestures and signs sustains mnemonic continuity across generations and political orders.

The endurance of the slogan shows how historically sedimented semio-somatic mnemonic forms can traverse regimes and reappear in public space as arenas of ongoing struggle. Having lost its previous roles as a tool for resistance uprising and later for state legitimization, it persists as a politically charged mnemonic form whose force derives from multimodal recognition and bodily repetition. The fight over the slogan thus reflects a broader struggle over historical authority, political legitimacy, and the narrative framing.

CONCLUSION: PLATFORMED MEMORY AND AGONISTIC PUBLIC CONTESTATION

Representational accounts and generalized affordance models are inadequate to explain the political significance of digital memory. The analysis shows that memory becomes politically active in platformed environments through the reactivation of mnemonic forms previously stabilized through ritual repetition, institutional use, bodily enactment, and cultural recognition. Their political force depends on socio-technical conditions that regulate visibility and enable renewed mnemonic uptake. The issue is therefore not the displacement of institutional memory by vernacular participation, but the reorganization of mnemonic authority within hybrid, platform-mediated memory ecologies.

Central to this is the interaction between semio-somatic memory and platform affordances. The slogan’s oppositional semiotic structure and associated bodily dispositions provide the conditions for mnemonic endurance; platform affordances, understood in a Gibsonian sense as relational potentials for action within extended environments of perception and communication, modulate how it reappears and becomes publicly operative. Affordances do not determine meaning but condition the repeated inscription, multimodal rearticulation, and interactional engagement through which historically charged forms enter agonistic contestation. Memory on platforms thus functions as a field of mediated activation, where semio-somatic structures are continually reopened to public dispute.

The case of “Smrt fašizmu, svoboda narodu” demonstrates that mnemonic endurance relies not only on ritualization and bodily practices but also

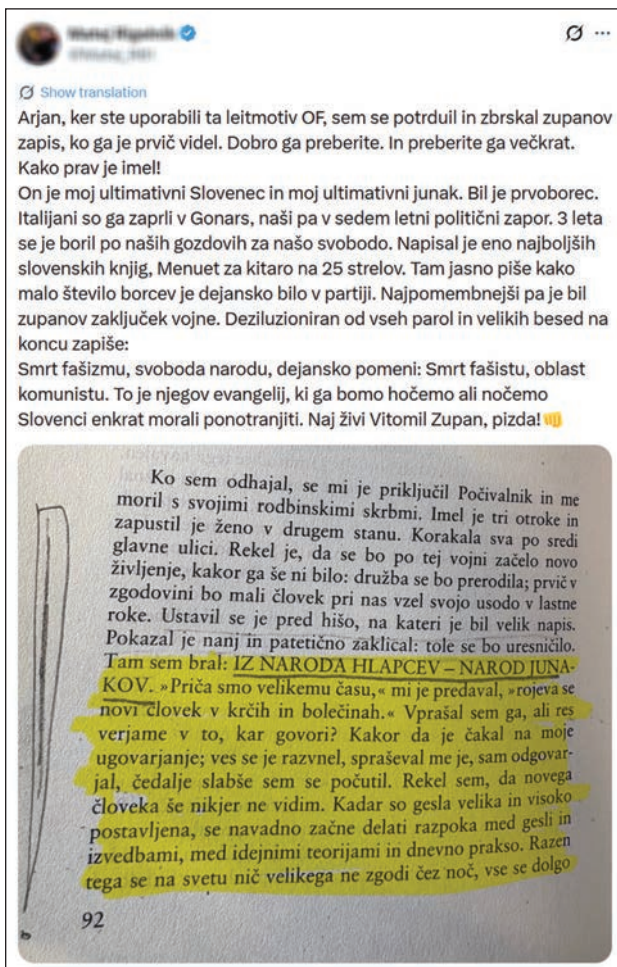


Figure 20: Anonymized post on X from 2026 presenting a post-socialist critique of the slogan “Smrt fašizmu, svoboda narodu.” The post argues that the phrase in practice meant “Death to the Fascist, Power to the Communist,” thereby reinterpreting the slogan not as a call for liberation but as an expression of communist domination (Babnik & Tratnik, 2026).

on semiotic structure. By combining negation with emancipation, the slogan encodes political antagonism into its linguistic form. This relational structure allows different opponents to be incorporated into the same syntagmatic framework, preserving formal continuity while allowing paradigmatic variability. Its political durability therefore depends on the conjunction of structural flexibility and sedimented semio-somatic memory.

The slogan’s current circulation shows how digital platforms function as spaces of competitive public memory. Its various appearances – ranging from institutionalized commemorative uses and vernacular commemorative reaffirmations to contemporary political



Figure 21: Anonymized post on X from 2024 combining the slogan “Smrt fašizmu, svoboda narodu” with a visual collage juxtaposing Prime Minister Robert Golob with historical fascist leaders. By inserting a contemporary political figure into the antifascist visual and rhetorical framework, the post illustrates a mnemonic reversal in which antifascist symbolism is redeployed to target a government that claims the antifascist tradition (Babnik & Tratnik, 2026).

adaptations, counter-memory reinterpretations, post-socialist delegitimizing reinterpretations, and reflexive or critical inversions – demonstrate that its survival depends less on stable meaning than on its capacity for repeated uptake and resignification. In engagement-oriented platform environments, mnemonic power is sustained through forms that remain recognizable while being repeatedly drawn into divergent political uses. The repeated disputes surrounding the slogan therefore reveal the continuing political significance of the semio-somatic antifascist mnemonic repertoire as a resource in struggles over who may legitimately speak for the political community and on what normative grounds.

The rapid activation and recirculation of historically sedimented mnemonic forms within algorithmically structured environments – memorification – does not undo memory’s embodied foundation; it exposes it to intensified visibility and agonistic rearticulation. The political efficacy of digital memory therefore depends on the interaction of semiotic structure, semio-somatic sedimentation, and platform-driven visibility. Future research should further develop a relational multimodal approach capable of analyzing how semiotic modes, sensory modalities, bodily practices, and affordances co-constitute mnemonic force in digital publics.

POLITIČNI SPOMIN KOT AGONISTIČNA PRAKSA NA DRUŽBENIH OMREŽJIH: SEMIO-SOMATSKI SPOMIN, MULTIMODALNOST IN PLATFORMNE ZMOŽNOSTI DELOVANJA, TEORETIZIRANE SKOZI DIGITALNO KROŽENJE SLOGANA »SMRT FAŠIZMU, SVOBODA NARODU«

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POVZETEK

Digitalne platforme so postale ključni prostori oblikovanja kulturnega spomina. Članek zagovarja tezo, da politična moč digitalnega spomina izhaja iz aktivacije zgodovinsko ritualiziranih semio-somatskih mnemoničnih oblik znotraj platformnih infrastruktur vidnosti. Opira se na študije spomina, teorijo multimodalnosti in študije platformnih zmožnosti delovanja ter te procese konceptualizira skozi pojem semio-somatskega spomina. Pri tem poudarja, kako takšne mnemonične oblike vztrajajo in pridobivajo politični učinek s sedimentacijo telesnih praks, senzoričnih modalnosti in semiotičnih struktur. V sodobnih razmerah se mnemonična avtoriteta premika od razmeroma centraliziranega institucionalnega nadzora nad pomenom k hibridnim, platformno posredovanim procesom vidnosti, kroženja, sodelovanja in afektivne resonance. Argument je razvit skozi obravnavo današnjega kroženja slogana »Smrt fašizmu, svoboda narodu« na omrežjih X in Facebook. Slogan, ki izvira iz jugoslovanskega partizanskega odpora med drugo svetovno vojno, je prvotno deloval kot konfrontacijski in mobilizacijski performativni akt. V povojni socialistični Jugoslaviji je bil institucionaliziran in ritualiziran ter je postal del državnih slovesnosti in izobraževalnih praks, pri čemer se je njegova antagonistična moč delno zmanjšala, hkrati pa se je ponotranjil skozi ponavljajoče se telesno uprizorjanje. V postsocialistični in digitalni dobi ta semio-somatska mnemonična moč omogoča njegovo ponovno aktivacijo in resignifikacijo v novih političnih kontekstih. Primer kaže, kako semio-somatske mnemonične oblike preživijo različne politične režime in medijska okolja ter v sodobnih političnih bojih delujejo kot aktivne politične intervencije znotraj agonističnih javnih sfer. To preoblikovanje lahko razumemo kot memorifikacijo: pospešeno aktivacijo in ponovno kroženje zgodovinsko sedimentiranih mnemoničnih oblik v algoritmično strukturiranih okoljih.

Ključne besede: digitalni spomin, semio-somatski spomin, agonistična javnost, platformne zmožnosti delovanja, multimodalnost, utelešenost, politični spomin

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