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## **THE TOMB AS TOURIST ATTRACTION: THE HOUSE OF FLOWERS IN BELGRADE**

**Abstract:** *The former Memorial Centre "Josip Broz Tito", named after the president of Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia who was buried there in 1980, belongs now to the Museum of Yugoslav History. Better known as The House of Flowers, Tito's grave is one of the major tourist attractions in Belgrade. Despite its relative remoteness from the city centre, it has been visited by the significant number of domestic and foreign tourists. This paper tackles certain features of this tourist attraction, whose thematic nature is associated with some forms of special interest tourism, and these are primarily dark tourism, communist (socialist) heritage tourism and nostalgia tourism.*

**Key words:** *House of Flowers, Josip Broz Tito, Belgrade, Special interest tourism, Tourist attraction.*

### **Introduction**

After the breakup of SFR Yugoslavia, in the circumstances of profound political, economic and social crisis in Serbia during the 1990s, international economic sanctions as well as NATO bombing in the spring of 1999, inbound tourism was completely extinguished.<sup>1</sup> Belgrade, once the main congress and transit tourist centre in former Yugoslavia as well as the usual gateway for various tours round the country, has turned into the destination of political delegations, negotiators and "business people". Inbound tourism in Serbia has been gradually recovering since 2001. By revitalising the navigation in the part of the Danube flowing through this country, foreign cruiserlines – organisers of river cruises started arriving in Belgrade with tourists from Germany, USA, Australia, France etc. During the high season, from March until November, around 400 cruisers stop in Belgrade, the port-of-call in the *Budapest to the Black Sea* popular itinerary. The city has also been visited by coach tours, mostly from Slovenia, and substantial inflow of individual tourists has also been registered, out of which predominantly business visitors and youth (Rabotić, 2009). For the latter, the main reason for the visit is linked to the new image of Belgrade as a destination of good vibrations offering a wide range of possibilities for fun or night life entertainment.

According to the statistics for 2011, 428,473 foreign tourist arrivals with 847,915 overnights were registered in Belgrade, around ten per cent more compared to 2010.<sup>2</sup> Most overnights (in the period from January-June, 2011) were spent by tourists from Slovenia, Italy, Montenegro,

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<sup>1</sup> After the dissolution of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, Federal Republic of Yugoslavia was created with two federal republics – Serbia and Montenegro. It existed for ten years, from April of 1992 until February of 2003, when it was renamed to the State Union of Serbia and Montenegro. Three years later, in June of 2006, Serbia and Montenegro became independent states (Manojlović Pintar; Ignjatović, 2011).

<sup>2</sup> Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, issue 21, 31.01.2012.

Germany, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Russian Federation, UK, Greece, US, Austria and Bulgaria. Almost in all of these cases, with the exception of Italian, Greek and Bulgarian visitors, there is an increase in comparison to the previous year.<sup>3</sup>

Nevertheless, the Serbian capital is not so popular European urban destination such as London, Paris, Prague or Budapest, mostly because it lacks conventional tourist attractions, especially its *cultural icon* (Holloway, 2006), such as the Acropolis in Athens or the Eiffel Tower in Paris. The program of individual and organized sightseeing tours principally includes three attractions – the Belgrade Fortress and Kalemegdan Park, St.Sava Temple and *House of Flowers*, out of which only the last is a site with spatial features of a "genuine" tourist attraction.

### House of Flowers

*The House of Flowers* is situated in the residential quarters in the southern part of the city. Known as Dedinje and Topčider Hill, these neighbourhoods represented an elite green oasis even before WWII with villas of well-off industrialists, merchants and bankers. After the war, newly established Communist regime confiscated most of the houses where its most-renowned members settled in, including Josip Broz Tito (1892-1980), the president of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. Tito's residency took large area with a number of facilities where, apart from the main residential building, there was a green or winter garden with a room for rest and work. It was this building which became Yugoslav president's tomb, after the renovation (*Figure 1*).<sup>4</sup> *House of Flowers* is now a part of the complex of the Museum of Yugoslav History.

*Figure 1. The House of Flowers*



*Source:* <http://www.belgradeeye.com/palaces.html>

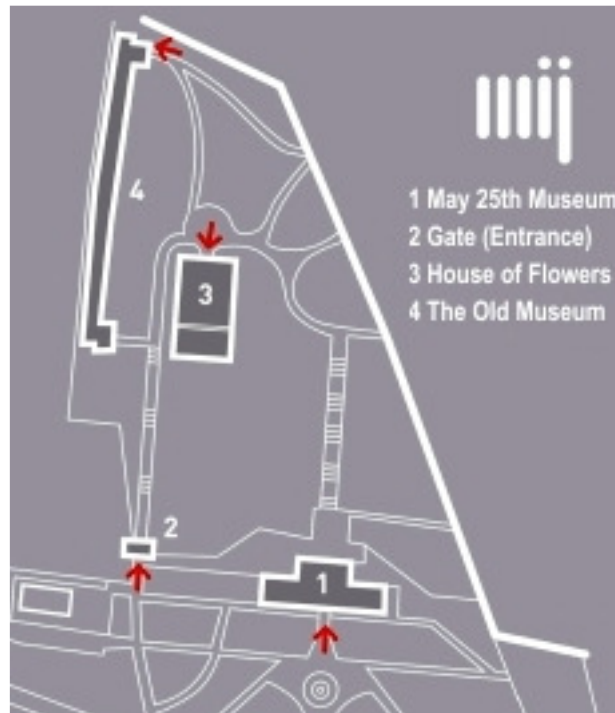
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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.kombeg.org.rs/Komora/udruzenja/UdruzenjeTurizma.aspx?veza=1605>

<sup>4</sup> Tito's body was placed in the *House of Flowers* as he requested: 700 000 people, 209 state delegations from 128 countries of the world came to the funeral, so it is estimated that it was the most visited funeral of a statesman in the 20th century. Last respect to Tito was paid by 31 presidents, 22 prime ministers, four kings, six princes, 11 assembly chairpersons etc. <http://www.blic.rs/Vesti/Drustvo/251633/U-Kucu-cveca-pristizu-postovaoci-Tita-iz-raznih-krajeva>, assessed on 15/01/2012.

The Museum of Yugoslav History, founded in 1996 by merging the Memorial Centre "Josip Broz Tito" and the Museum of Revolution, consists of three main buildings. Apart from the *House of Flowers* and the adjacent exhibition gallery ("The Old Museum"), there is another building which can be noticed from the road – the former Museum of the 25th May (*Figure 2*). It is being used for administrative purposes and casual theme exhibitions, but it used to house large collections of batons and numerous gifts given to Tito during his presidential career.

**Figure 2.** *Museum of Yugoslav History: layout of the complex*



*Source:* <http://www.mij.rs/mapamij.pdf>

Namely, just after WWII, in order to build the personality cult and state unity, Tito's birthday was celebrated each year as a holiday called *Youth Day* and marked by carrying batons throughout Yugoslavia. More than a million people carried them, whereas the making of batons was usually commissioned to eminent artists. This is why some of these represent the genuine works of art. On the 25th of May, the main *baton of youth* was handed over to Tito at a celebration in the form of an organised performance in one of the Belgrade stadiums (*Figure 3*). Obviously, love and obedience to the communist leader was a specific characteristic of all communist regimes (Ivanov, 2009), but it was also important to exhibit evidence on Tito's international reputation and appreciation aloud. The former Museum of the 25th of May was a special place for the gifts given to the president during his 169 state visits in 70 countries of the world, upon meeting 350 state and government presidents (Dimić, cited in: Krstić, 2010): "[T]he erection of the museum building represented one of the main goals of the Yugoslav communists... It was supposed to realize the central ideological slogan 'On-going Revolution' (Manojlović Pintar; Ignjatović, 2011:805)".

The *House of Flowers* itself was built in 1975, based on Stjepan Kralj's architectural design, with an area of 902.00 m<sup>2</sup>. It consists of three parts: central – flower garden (where Tito's tomb

is located today) and two side parts as detached premises. Opened for visitors in 1982, according to the statistics of the Museum of Yugoslav History over the last 20 years it was visited by 15,835.255 people.<sup>5</sup> For almost a decade after the breakup of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia the entire complex was closed to the public and the former military guards were permanently removed.<sup>6</sup> However, today the site is open again to tourists and people who wish to pay their respects.

*Figure 3. Memories of the past: The official celebration of Tito's birthday*



*Source: Museum of Yugoslav History*

As a tourist attraction, it fits into Pearce's (1991:46) operative definition of the attraction as "a named site with a specific human or natural feature which is the focus of visitor and management attention" as well as into some well-known theoretical concepts.

For instance, MacCannell's (1999) process of sacralisation of five distinct marking processes can be applied to the origin and evolution of this attraction. The second MacCannell's phase (*framing and elevating*) was made not only by adequate space arrangement of the *House of Flowers*, but also with the presence of the military guards in the first few years (*Figure 4*). The third phase of sacralisation, marked as *enshrinement*, parallels the previous two in this case: since its opening, *House of Flowers* has become a kind of sanctuary due to the *shrine* kept inside, i.e. the remains of the president. Consequently, it has drawn a large number of "pilgrims" from ex-Yugoslav regions, many of which were coming in an organized way (companies, schools etc.). The phase of *mechanical reproduction* came a few years later, since in the then still socialist country, souvenirs associated with Tito's image or their sale at *House of Flowers* were

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<sup>5</sup> <http://sr.wikipedia.org/>, assessed on 15/01/2012.

<sup>6</sup> In the 1990s, the Museum of Yugoslav History became an unofficial private property of Slobodan Milošević, Yugoslav President at that time, and his family. Two residential villas, with numerous artworks and unique sculptures in the surrounding park, which represented constitutive parts of the museum, were excluded from its content. Although an important part of the memorial complex and a space for storage of museum artifacts, the villas were subjected to extensive renovation under the instructions of the Milošević family. The former Memorial center was divided by a tall wall, which separated the new museum space from Slobodan Milošević's residential area (Manojlović Pintar; Ignjatović, 2011).

considered inappropriate to the dignity of both the spot and visitors. MacCannell's concept is thus applicable in relation to the *House of Flowers*, although the process implies possible exceptions in the order of phases, as Jacobsen (1997) found on the example of the Norwegian Nordkapp. Also, sometimes it is necessary to modify the concept, as shown by Seaton (1999) on the example of Waterloo in Belgium. Seaton rightly claims that, historically, sacralisation is "a process delimited, not just by the social power of representation vested in the attraction sponsor, but by the situated motives and perspectives of those to whose gaze a sight is offered, both of which may change over time" (ibid. 154). This is also evident in the case of *House of Flowers*.

**Figure 4.** *Framing and elevating* of the attraction in the 1980s



*Source:* [http://sh.wikipedia.org/wiki/Datoteka:Ku%C4%87a\\_Cve%C4%87a.jpg](http://sh.wikipedia.org/wiki/Datoteka:Ku%C4%87a_Cve%C4%87a.jpg)

*The House of Flowers* is the only tourist site in Belgrade which entirely meets the criteria of the physical aspects of tourist attraction according to Gunn's (1997) tripartite model of concentric circles. Namely, the author argues that the main element of attraction and its *raison d'être* is its nucleus, i.e. the core, in this case Tito's tomb. Successful attractions are also surrounded by *inviolable belt*, a setting which enables the context for comprehending the core. The visitor gets to the nucleus only by passing through this tampon zone (in our case, it is a landscaped park area decorated with sculptures from Tito's epoch). Its function is psychophysical preparation for the visitor and forms a unique frame for the attraction. Additionally, Gunn believes that the outer ring, he named *zone of closure*, is the inevitable part of the well-planned attraction since visitors can find there all the facilities needed – transport, toilets, kiosks, souvenir shops.<sup>7</sup> Thus, the *House of Flowers* souvenir shop is located next to the ticket office, on the very entry-exit point, whereas individual vendors of souvenirs and different memorabilia wait for visitors near the entrance or at the nearby parking lot for tourist buses. The inviolable belt has not been disturbed in any way, which cannot be said for other tourist attractions in Belgrade. In this case, however, the

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<sup>7</sup> According to Pearce (1991), the model shows an attraction as incomplete, difficult to manage and usually exposed to visitors' criticism, if it lacks some zones. Leiper (1990) believes that if designers and managers do not pay attention to the undamaged ring, the nucleus can fail to meet tourists' expectations or simply remain unnoticed. Excessive commercialization near attractions is not uncommon. The stated model determines the position of service providers at a safe distance from the nucleus, being especially important when commercial contents jeopardize the authenticity of the attraction (archaeological site) or its dignity (memorial monument).

physical structure of the site is not a result of its planning as a tourist attraction, but of the situation found on the spot.<sup>8</sup>

It should be emphasized that ever since *House of Flowers* has operated within the Museum of the Yugoslav History, it solved the problem of interpretation in a quality way. All the exhibits are clearly labelled in both Serbian and English. One of the walls is designated for displaying information on Josip Broz Tito's funeral in 1980, including a map with marked countries which were represented on that occasion by highest state delegations or people's liberation movements.

### **A general or special interest tourist attraction?**

The fact is that today's tourists look for more and more differentiated experiences at a destination, which caused the rapid development of the so-called special interest tourism which meets the needs of different and minor market niches. This type of tourism has usually been seen as an opposite to the so-called mass tourism and conventional, staged tourism settings (Robinson; Novelli, 2005). However, even with *general or mixed interests tourism* (Brotherton; Himmetoglou, cited in: Traurer, 2003) such as city break or vacation at a chosen destination, tourists can visit one of the specific attractions on the spot. The mentioned authors argue that tourists differ according to the intensity and the level of satisfaction of their specific interests during travel, so the following categories can be singled out: amateur, enthusiast, expert and fanatic.

Obviously, *House of Flowers*, i.e. Josip Broz Tito's tomb, is not a conventional heritage attraction (such as an archaeological site or art museum), and its peculiarity can be linked with the special interest holidays such as dark tourism, communist heritage tourism (Light, 2000) as well as nostalgia tourism. Naturally, this does not exclude tourists with no specific interests, the mausoleum being one of the relatively small number of Belgrade attractions. The visit to *House of Flowers* is recommended by the available guide books. For instance, *Bradt travel guide to Serbia* (Mitchell, 2010:158) speaks of it as a "half-forgotten but quite extraordinary memorial complex".

### ***A Dark Tourism Attraction?***

Is it possible to interpret *House of Flowers* as an attraction of the so-called dark tourism? Dark tourism, black spots tourism, Thana tourism, morbid tourism, grief tourism – more than one term is used in the academic literature for tourist visits to places associated with death, wars, misfortune etc. As emphasized by Stone and Sharpley (2008:576), Rojek was the first to introduce the notion of dark attractions in the academic literature, and his concept of *black spots* refers to the "commercial development of tomb sites and places where some well-known people or masses experienced sudden and non-violent death". The definition provided by Foley and Lennon (1996) primarily relates to the places of recent death or disaster still alive in the recollection of people. Despite comparatively numerous works, the concept of dark tourism has not yet been completed, which proves that authors do not concur on many aspects of this

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<sup>8</sup> Thus, the problem is the one single toilet available for visitors (located in the gallery next to the *House of Flowers*) as well as the lack of a café where the visitors could take a break and refresh themselves. This drawback is particularly noticeable during group visits, because the duration of a standard guided tour is often more than an hour.

phenomenon, its name as well. Besides, one can detect different approaches to dark tourism in academic literature – based on the supply and demand analysis as well as the integral approach from both market poles perspective (Biran *et al.*, 2011).<sup>9</sup>

Tombs, mausoleums and similar sanctuaries fall under dark tourism attractions (Stone, 2006). Tourists visit the places from different reasons, but it seems that Walter (2009) rightly claims that, in such cases, people are more interested in the life than the death of a buried person. This is evident with the *House of Flowers* as well, since tourists primarily visit it, because they are intrigued by the life and work of Josip Broz Tito, as the one of the most eminent statesmen of the 20th century.

Sharpley and Stone (2009) emphasize that "dark sites and attractions are likely to elicit, to varying degrees, an emotional response among visitors. Such a response will be mediated by the nature of the site or attraction..." However, other factors should also not be neglected, such as the visitors' nationality (experiencing attraction as a part of one's own heritage), or time. The flow of time can also transform dark attraction or "push" it from darker into a brighter part of the spectrum (Stone, 2006). It is clearly evident with *House of Flowers*: at the time of its opening, people all over Yugoslavia were coming for months to pay respect to the deceased president and express their grief at his death, queuing solemnly for hours. In the early 1980s, the *House of Flowers* was a *par excellence* facility of grief tourism. The visits focused on Tito's death (tomb) were, in time, replaced by those whose first motive was something else. Thus, the attraction of dark tourism has "faded" in the meanwhile, transforming itself into the attraction of communist (socialist) heritage tourism, even the so-called nostalgia tourism.

Sharpley (2009) believes that memorialising communist past also belongs to dark tourism, referring to Hall's view that the dark political past of East European countries becomes tourist attraction. Although communist (socialist) past of Yugoslavia is contested and susceptible to opposing interpretation (almost in all the countries formed after its breakup), an exaggeration would be to treat it as dark. It is not just because Tito's regime emerged from the merits of People's Liberation Movement in the struggle against the Nazi occupation in the WWII, but also due to the fact that *Yugoslav type of Communism* was significantly different from the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, especially in its later phase. From the perspective of those who lived in that system, such past is also seen as *bright*: today's fast way of living, sense of insecurity and uncertainty, especially in the countries of transition, influence not so small number of people to associate the symbols of the socialist past with the period when life was far more simple and carefree.

### ***A Communist Heritage Tourism Attraction?***

Communist heritage tourism involves visits to places associated with the Communist or socialist past and the sites which represent or commemorate that past or present (Light; Young,

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<sup>9</sup> Walter (2009) dealt with the relation between the dead and the living in the context of dark tourism. He believes the link is also established via other mediums, such as archaeology, tombs, genealogy, music, literature, law, family, language (both oral and written), photographs, history etc. The author notices that dark tourism primarily reflects the relation between tourists and the dead, much less between tourists and death as such. Normally, he believes that dark tourism is not a result of particular motivation: "I can think of few holidays whose main *raison d'être* is dark tourism – and even with battlefields, many family or individual visits occur because the site is on the road to somewhere else" (ibid. 54).

2006). This kind of tourism can also be defined as the consumption of sites and sights associated with the former communist regimes (Light, 2000). Although communist heritage tourism emerged during the early 1990s (in the past 20 years, western tourists have started to be interested in the heritage of the communist period, in seeing what it was like to live behind the Iron Curtain), the first scientific articles that covered the phenomenon appeared in the first years of the 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium (Caraba, 2011). These articles focused on the particular countries of Central and Eastern Europe (Romania, Poland and Germany), and the scholar's interests spread towards Bulgaria (Ivanov, 2009) as well as Albania.

Interestingly, ex-Yugoslavia was not the subject of research on the communist heritage in the function of tourism. Perhaps, it can be explained by the fact that Tito's Yugoslavia was not a typical communist country after all, since it soon abandoned the so-called Eastern Bloc in 1948 (which caused a conflict between Stalin and Yugoslav communists; see Skakun, 1999), following its "own unique course" of socialism through the process of gradual decentralization and democratization. Unlike the first post-war phase, the early 1970s are well-known as *the golden era* of Tito's Yugoslavia: citizens could easily obtain passports and travel abroad wherever they wanted; the standard of living was incomparably better than in other socialist countries; foreign tourists flocked to the Adriatic Coast to spend their holiday. Nevertheless, there were many tangible communist features, some of them still clearly visible: monuments in honour of the communist victory in WWII, statues of the regime's notables, primarily Tito, social realism architecture, gloomy blocks of flats for workers etc. Thus, *House of Flowers* could be considered as the part of this heritage, too.

Unlike other post-communist countries where "tourist interest in their communist past is far from welcome" (Light, 2000:172), in today's Serbia there has not been a reluctant acknowledgement of tourist interest in communism (as in Germany) or ironic engagement with the public monuments of state socialism (as in Hungary). At first glance, it seems that democratic authorities solely ignore the communist past, but actually they keep erasing it thoroughly, which can be noticed, for example, in changes of former street names. In times of transition and transformation of Serbian society and socialism, the previous ideological and political concepts have been subjected to new readings and understandings (Manojlović Pintar; Ignjatović, 2011). Interestingly, there is no initiative for creating a special communist heritage tourist attraction or program, as in some other countries.<sup>10</sup> *House of Flowers* has officially been treated as one of the city museums and it is listed as such on the website of the Tourist Organization of Belgrade (TOB).<sup>11</sup> However, the museum presentation of the past can be seen as an element in the process of establishing distance toward relational historical phenomena.

It can be assumed that foreign tourists who visit *House of Flowers*, both young and elderly, take into account its political connotation. Elderly tourists, such as American and, especially, British participants of the Danube cruises, are more interested in the role of Josip Broz in WWII, the non-alignment policy during the so-called Cold War, common people lifestyle during his

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<sup>10</sup> Many Central and Eastern European states have developed tourism programs (or tours) based on sites related to the communist period. The best example is Poland, known for Nowa Huta, a district of Krakow (The New Steel Mill). Due to its remarkable communist architecture, Nowa Huta became an important tourist attraction sought by foreign tourists and organized tours of the district and the steelworks quickly appeared. Another example can be found in Budapest (Hungary). After the fall of communism, all the statues symbolizing communist personalities and heroes were removed and transported to a park, inaugurated in 1993 as *Szoborpark*, which became one of the city's main sights (Caraba, 2011).

<sup>11</sup> [http://www.tob.rs/en/see\\_in.php?id=32](http://www.tob.rs/en/see_in.php?id=32), assessed on 15/01/2012.



regime as well as the private life of the statesman. Although there are no precise data on the nationalities of those who visit *House of Flowers*, it can be assumed that the attraction is not equally appealing to tourists from various Western countries. For instance, according to the information obtained directly from the local guides, French and German tourists almost never visit the place, at least not in an organized way.

In empirical research conducted among customers of the American company *Grand Circle Travel*, it has been established that their satisfaction with the information obtained from tour guides during Belgrade sightseeing (including the visit to the *House of Flowers*) is very high: for the information on the *places of visit* included in the itinerary, the average score is 4.4, and for *historic information* – 4.3. Undoubtedly, high score is the result of the guide's successful presentation on Tito and socialist Yugoslavia during the visit to *House of Flowers* (Rabotić, 2009). This proves that guides interpreted not only the site as such (data on time of construction, purpose, dimensions etc.), but its wider and more narrow context (the statesman's life, work, death and funeral, regime features, lifestyle and etc.), which is, sometimes, deliberately omitted, as in the case of *Palatul Parlamentului* in Bucharest (see Light, 2000).

### *A Nostalgia Tourism Attraction?*

Nostalgia is "a feeling of loss or anxiety about the passage of time, accompanied by a desire to experience again some aspects of the past" (Graburn, in: Jafari, 2000:415). Today, this "silent mourning" is successfully used by business, film and art. In the circumstances of contemporary tourism, nostalgia is also manifested as tourist motivation: „ [the] bittersweet sense of 'collective nostalgia' drives many people to experience heritage places as a way of getting back to their roots" (Timothy, 2011:198). As Dann (1996) argues, nostalgia tourism aims to answer the question "who am I?" in terms of "who was I".

*The House of Flowers* has most certainly a special meaning for the visitors from the countries formed after the break-up of Yugoslavia (Serbia, Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, and FYR Macedonia). It is the place of joint communist heritage and the symbol of once shared living within one country. Although only some twenty years have passed since the break-up of the Yugoslav Federation, many people feel nostalgic for the good old days. Furthermore, in the regions of ex-Yugoslavia, a peculiar term is coined: *Yugo-nostalgia*. Typical is the case of Slovenians who come to Belgrade all year round and whose visit to *House of Flowers* is the inevitable part of the local itinerary. They are the EU citizens today, living in completely altered circumstances, but many cherish dear memories on the time when their current country was one of the six republics of Tito's Yugoslavia. Some of them used to live and work in Belgrade (many Slovenians did military service in the Yugoslav capital), adding even more to the nostalgic feeling. According to street vendors of souvenirs and memorabilia which are associated with Tito's epoch (socialist banknotes, T-shirts with Tito's image, Yugoslav flag, books and photographs, even the lighters with Tito's "signature"), their best customers are Slovenians.

Nevertheless, the most profound outbreak of collective nostalgia upon visiting *House of Flowers* can be seen on May 25th, Tito's official birthday. The great number of people all over ex-Yugoslavia well-equipped with characteristic props (Tito's photos, partisan medals from WWII and Yugoslav flags) frequent Tito's tomb. It is more about non-religious pilgrimage and less about tourism. Visits to mausoleums and graves of eminent people are examples of secular

pilgrimage or *civil religion* (Katz, 1985). Firstly, most visitors arrive in groups, which is normally the characteristic of the pilgrimage. Secondly, their motive is to visit the perceived Centre of their own culture, i.e. society (former, in this case) or the foundation of faith (Cohen, 2004), whose symbol is Tito, i.e. his tomb. Such visitors feel deep respect for the place they visit and the personage associated with it. Finally, the feeling of spontaneous connection, brotherhood and social equality with other visitors (*communitas*) is also typical of the pilgrimage. Gatherings for Tito's birthday (and to a lesser extent on the day of his death, May 4<sup>th</sup>) imply shared experiences, meeting people, personal contacts, exchange of memories and even making friends among individuals, former compatriots (Yugoslavs) and today's "foreigners" from several countries.

**Figure 5.** Expressions of collective nostalgia on Tito's grave



**Source:** <http://www.srbijanet.rs/tag/josip%20broz%20tito.html>

Although elderly people are dominant, many young people frequent the place as well, even those who were born at the time when Tito's Yugoslavia no longer existed.

## Conclusion

*The House of Flowers* is the name for the tomb of Josip Broz Tito, former president of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. Today, this site is a part of the Museum of Yugoslav History and represents one of the major tourist attractions in Belgrade. The paper tackles the features of *House of Flowers* as an attraction – its origin, evolution and physical characteristics. Particular attention is paid to its thematic nature, which can be perceived from the grief tourism perspective, communist (socialist) heritage tourism as well as nostalgia tourism. The perception on the attraction differs and influences the motivation of the visit. Visitors from the countries established after the break-up of Yugoslavia perceive *House of Flowers* primarily as a symbol of their own (common) heritage, which evokes certain emotional reaction and satisfies the feeling of nostalgia with such individuals.

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