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Gal Kirn

# The Memory of Liberation: Studies on the People's Liberation Struggle in the (Post-) Yugoslav Context

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# The Memory of Liberation: Studies on the People's Liberation Struggle in the (Post-) Yugoslav Context

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## Note on the chapters

Those articles that have already been published have been granted open access and are permitted to be republished in part or completely. Each of them was revised for this book. Those not included in the list below are published for the first time here, namely the Introductory Chapter, Chapters 5, 7, 8, and the Concluding Chapter.

My thanks also go to the editors and publishers of the following publications:

- Chapter 1 is a heavily revised version of the first part of my open-access article 'Counter-Archival Surplus: Remembering the Partisan Rupture in Post-Socialist Times'. *Artl@s bulletin*. 2022, vol. 11, iss. 1, 14-28;
- Chapter 2 is a revised version of my article 'Was Dancing Possible During the Fascist Occupation of Yugoslavia?' *Apparatus*, 2020, no. 11, 1-12;
- Chapter 3 is a revised translation of my forthcoming chapter 'Anonimnost i masovnost pjesničke produkcije u NOB'. *ZBORnik PRAKSA aktivističkog pjevanja* (eds. Ana Hofman and Lada Duraković, Centar za kulturološka i povijesna istraživanja socijalizma: Pula);
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- Chapter 6 is based on my article 'In a partisan way: Želimir Žilnik's *Uprising in Jazak* and the Reconstruction of Antifascist Memory from Below.' *Studies in Eastern European cinema*. 2022, vol. 13, no. 3, 272-287.
- Chapter 9 is based on the second part of my article 'The Primitive Accumulation of Capital and Memory: Mnemonic Wars as National Reconciliation Discourse in (Post)-Yugoslavia'. *Memory studies*. Dec. 2022, vol. 15, iss. 6, 1470-1483.

## Introductory Chapter: After Iconoclasm and Right-Wing Revisionism in the 1990s: Against the Primitive Accumulation of Nationalist Memory

Is a return to the partisan and antifascist past required today? Are we not presented with a completely different set of circumstances in post-1989, united Europe? If antifascism was long seen as a central ideological pillar and a memory frame of postwar Europe, there is, at least from the 1990s onwards, no consensus on this point. Antifascism, and the partisan and national liberation struggle, became very contested grounds, as is the case with the legacy and public memory of WWII. As Enzo Traverso rightly states, European memory culture and its dominant frame have been utterly weakened by the advent of the antitotalitarian memory agenda (Traverso, 2017b). The socialist experiments, and everything connected to the time, space and imaginary of socialism – including antifascism, which was often seen as an ideological corollary to state socialist ideology – need either to be buried once and for all, or remembered for their part in producing the totalitarian catastrophes of the twentieth century. The image that has cemented our views on the post-1989 has undoubtedly remained the fall of the Berlin Wall. This iconoclast image has become hegemonic – one of those famous images of history that was subsequently promoted by the dominant historiographic, political and journalistic perspectives across the globe. Tearing down the walls, and the Iron Curtain itself, seem to herald democratic promise for the East and even potential democratic renewal for the West.

However, this triumph of liberal democracy was neither happy nor peaceful everywhere. Especially for those from Yugoslavia, the 'end of history' (Fukuyama, 1992) meant a proper catastrophe, and even a rehabilitation of fascism. 'Our' 1989 started in 1991. It brought with it wars, genocide and the utter destruction of the social infrastructure and wealth that had contributed to decades of socialism. This is why, at least if we take history seriously and think about it in a materialist and dialectical way, we cannot reduce an era of transition to one victorious image. History is not a closed process with already known outcomes. In order to understand the whole period of transition to post-socialism, we need to reckon with a contradictory logic of capitalist restructuration and nationalist ideology that has become a part of the prevalent model of one nation in one state.

Instead of a so-called peaceful transition to democracy and the free market, the entire East was subjugated to what Naomi Klein has called neoliberal 'shock therapy' (Klein, 2008) which involved large degrees of the violence of transition. The opening up to capitalist temporality and its processes of privatization meant impoverishment, dispossession, and class stratification. At the same time, we also witnessed the establishing of state borders along fixed ethnic lines. The ethnic lens, the weaponization of victimhood, and the memory wars, were all brought to an extreme in the (post-)Yugoslav wars. The Dayton Peace Treaty that brought a lasting ceasefire did not shy away from its neocolonial stance vis-à-vis the Balkan region and more tragically baptized the ethnically cleansed imaginaries of those that promoted the wars. Long before Donald Trump, these latter had (re)invented the maxim *Make Country 'X' Great Again*. This maxim chimed with the inculcation of another prejudice and self-fulfilling prophecy, one that foreclosed any possible history or future of living together, namely the notion that social and collective life in a multi-ethnic and multi-religious society is not possible, which is why a federal Yugoslavia is strictly unthinkable. The promotion of protection of some 'national being'[1], which goes hand-in-hand with the 'ethnically cleansed' point of view, was further strengthened by a (self-)orientalizing discourse that projected eternal ethnic animosities (Woodward, 2003) onto the Yugoslav space, and that was fully explored by inventing national traditions and heavily investing in ideological terms in the memorial legacy of the post-Yugoslav context.

Even the collective memory of the antifascist and partisan struggle was not safe, in the places where it is still preserved and commemorated, partisan legacy is often inscribed in a nationalistic frame as a celebration of nationhood and one of the proofs of some primordial state sovereignty. Other emancipatory, or revolutionary, dimensions of partisan struggle from

1 Such conservative nationalist revisionism took place in the general European context (Traverso 2017a), in the Yugoslav context it was particularly strong in Slovenia and Serbia in the 1980s. The strong ideological shift strengthened 'ethnic victimhood' and rehabilitated nationalist figures from the past. To mention a few popular cultural works from that time: in Serbia, the theatre performance Golubnjaća; the novels of Dobrica Ćosić and Vuk Drašković from the 1980s, and especially their defence of Kosovo Serbs; while in Slovenia, Tone Svetina's major novel emerged, and the new Heideggerian philosophers and historians within the Nova revija circle who published a nationalist programme in 1987. For a more general overview of nationalist tendencies, as well as the political and cultural struggles in civil society in the late 1980s, see Mastnak (1987; 2023).

WWII had to be forgotten, or more violently eradicated. As Enzo Traverso (2017b) has mentioned, the weakening of antifascist memory came at the expense of the equation of communism, and even antifascism, with fascism itself. The paradigm of antifascism that had served as an important intellectual, ideological and political cornerstone of postwar Europe, both in the former East and the former West, was deeply challenged. In their major books on revisionism, Losurdo (2015) and Traverso (2017a) each conclude that the revisionist challenge emerged deep in the Cold War period, from around 1970 onwards. Instead of antifascist monuments, museums and memories, a new European frame received a whole array of cultural, intellectual and memorial practices that were invested, also in a commodifying sense, in demonizing the socialist past (Buden, 2020), or in equating communism with fascism within a totalitarian frame (Kirn, 2015). The antifascist memory became part of a 'dissonant heritage' (Tunbridge, 1994) over WWII. In many places that saw the rise of far right, it even became part of an 'antagonistic memory' (Bull and Hansen, 2016). The new European memory frame, it must be added, is marked by complete oblivion regarding European colonialism. This has been challenged recently through a decolonial push and by antiracist movements such as Black Lives Matter, but has been a part of a longer history of 'counter-visuality' (Mirzoeff, 2011).

In the post-Yugoslav context, memorial revisionism was high on the agenda: politicians and municipal authorities ordered the removal of monuments, changes to street and square names, which, at times, were taken over by grassroots fascist groups that vandalized, and even destroyed, sites of partisan memory. In short, right-wing revisionism targeted histories and heritages relating to the socialist and antifascists past, while also writing new histories, creating new museums and documentaries, and a new ideological frame that fuelled the rehabilitation of fascist collaborationism/fascism proper. This was all part of very intense ideological processes that took place during the transition. The post-Yugoslav memory politics has been dominated by right-wing nationalist revisionism, which itself has navigated from an open rehabilitation of fascist collaborationism during WWII to the mobilization of 1000-year-old dreams of mythical kingdoms.

This brings us to the question of existing studies that returned to the transitions and questions of Yugoslav socialism and antifascism. Beside the more

mainstream perspective of transitology, according to which history is an already decided process (Kirn, 2017), ethnic methodologism/ethnocentrism (Woodward, 2003) also permeated various of the academic disciplines that broached the topic of transition. From a critical standpoint, we find a number of solid theoretical and historical analyses that evaluate the break-up of socialist Yugoslavia along two central axes: (1) the more marginal politico-economic strand, which has mostly relied on the concept of the world-system and on (neo-)Marxian analysis, with its focus on rising peripheralization, increasing class inequalities, the waning welfare state, and the privatization process[2]; and (2) the cultural strand that has focused on a critique of revisionism and nationalist ideology.[3] This strand has critically investigated the excesses of nationalism and the role of the media (Wachtel, 2000), as well as the links between nationalism and the intellectual elites (Dragović-Soso, 2014; Kuljić, 2012). (Post-)Yugoslav memorial revisionism was not exceptional; the ideological shifts should be situated within a long-term turn to neoconservative reactions within European historiography and official or public memory (Ghodsee, 2014; Losurdo, 2015; Traverso, 2017b). In the (post-)Yugoslav context, however, the mnemonic wars that began in the mid-1980s broke the anti-fascist consensus and prepared the ground for the violent break-up of the 1990s. A strong sub-cultural current of 'Yugonostalgia' developed (Petrović, 2013; Velikonja, 2009) that fought nationalist public memory. Yugonostalgia does not only entail a structure of feeling that reminisces about and idealizes the good old times. It is also visible in various everyday activities, ranging from commemorations of partisan battles and the popularity of Yugoslav songs to the commodification of memory and the traumatic (or not) coming to terms with the loss of the country and its socialist welfare provision.[4] Despite the limits of the nostalgic horizon, one cannot dismiss it out of hand as a mere remainder of the former socialist ideology borne

2 Some representatives of this strand are Kirn (2019); Kržan (2022); Močnik (2003); Podvršič (2018); Suvin (2018) and Veselinović et al. (2011).

3 Some texts and edited volumes representative of this line of thinking can be found in the works from Bešlin (2013); Brentin et al. (2018); Buden (2020); Centrih et al. (2008); Đureinović (2020); Kirn (2020); Luthar (2014); Radanović (2016); and Vasiljević and Štiks (2024), among others.

4 Breznik and Močnik (2022) recently called for non-nostalgic and Marxist research on Yugoslav socialism and memory. They launched an explicit critique of existing studies that have surveyed nostalgic forms of remembrance of the socialist past. But whatever theoretical lens we take up, the question remains as to how to deal with nostalgia, and whether or not it retains some emancipatory power?

by nostalgic subjects. Researchers should also desist from judging nostalgic subjects in terms of class or racism as if such people have no clear memory or knowledge about the past, as their nostalgia clouds their consciousness and prevents them from genuinely acting in the world.

Despite two strands of critical approaches that deal with the recent past and the Yugoslav past and contribute to more complex understandings critical of the nationalist resurgence, these strands would benefit from a joint implementation. If a political-economic analysis does not deal consistently with the non-economic field, and most notably with that of memory, then the opposite is also true – that is, memory and historical studies on (post-) Yugoslavia lack a rigorous approach able to evaluate the changing relations between the political economy and collective memory. The relationship between memory and critiques of political economy through the post-socialist transition is largely understudied. This Introductory Chapter presents one attempt to bridge the gap between both approaches by returning to Marx's conception of the primitive accumulation of capital. Marx's concept has been recently updated in approaches that evaluate neoliberal restructuration (Harvey, 2005; Perelman, 2013). I extend it here to understandings of changes in the nationalist memoryscape and the capitalist transition in the (post-)Yugoslav context. Rather than presume the dominance of either state or capital, I will demonstrate the complex and changing dynamics in the relationship between the social instances of the capitalist economy, ideology, and the state. In the first part, I show how the primitive accumulation of capital during the ethnic wars of the 1990s achieved the major dismantling – or even the destruction – of social(ist) infrastructures, resulting in a de-accumulation of social wealth and ownership. To initiate a new cycle of capitalist accumulation, both the destruction and the nationalization of social property had to be effected.

## From the Primitive Accumulation of Capital and Nationalist Memory to...[5]

In Marx's *Capital* (1867 [1967]), the most essential entry point is to study capital through an analysis of the world of commodities and its value

5 For a more detailed look at this concept see Kirn (2022, 1470-1483).

forms. What ultimately emerges is the question of the relationship between workers and capital, as well as an openly political question: work produces 'surplus value', which consequently enters into an asymmetrical relationship with capital. Instead of slogans of freedom and equality before the law, Marx demonstrated that the emergence and perpetuation of the capitalist mode of production are based on inequality and exploitation. Workers offer their labour, but they are not able to choose the contractual terms and they have very little say in the valorization process (a process defining wages and profits). Marx's theoretical tenets have proved even more valid during the recent period of intensified globalized capitalism. Instead of free market forces forging a harmonious field led by an 'invisible hand', Marx's tenets speak of social conflict and global inequalities, rising poverty, and a crisis of overaccumulation and logistics, all of which create visibly chaotic and conflictual relations in the 'capitalist world-system' (Arrighi and Silver, 1999; Gindin and Panitch, 2012; Harvey, 2005). In the conclusion to volume 1 of *Capital*, rather than continuing his conceptual analysis of capital, Marx presents us with a short historical analysis to demonstrate the origins of capitalism, namely, how this mode of production came into existence. In the bourgeois political economy, capitalism was often linked to an original myth in the figure of Robinson Crusoe, a character whose spirit of individual endeavour and entrepreneurialism built an entire societal system (on an isolated island). In contrast, Marx demonstrated that for capitalism to take hold, a set of historical conditions had to first occur. The most important condition for capitalist transition was extra-economic restraint – violence. Instead of the market's invisible hand and diligent capitalists, the emergence of a strong nexus of state authority and capital power is crucial. For a free workforce to emerge, freed from bondage and land, the enclosure of common land had first to occur. Enclosure took place through various levels of repression, and it led to the dispossession of an army of peasants. Vagabonds and beggars needed to be disciplined, potentially imprisoned and even executed (Labica, 2001). The primitive accumulation of capital internally guaranteed the necessary labour power for manufacturers. In so doing, it pushed dispossessed vagabonds and beggars into factories (production), while also perpetrating acts of violence against emancipated women (Federici, 2003). Finally, colonial conquests deemed civilizational undertakings – in fact brutal acts meted out on enslaved and

slaughtered populations – led to the external expansion of capitalist markets. Marx's concept of the primitive accumulation of capital was written from the standpoint of colonial war and state-perpetrated class violence. The asymmetries within the capitalist world-system and between workers and capital took hold here. This originary myth and constant violence is precisely that which the memory of capital(ism) forgets. This forgetting of capitalism's violent beginnings is part of its very structure; in other words, the illusion of its idyllic origins is structural.

If, for Marx and many generations of Marxists, the primitive accumulation of capital has remained on the margins of their theoretical preoccupations for long time, should we not say that the violence of primitive accumulation can be transposed rather neatly into memory studies – into the core of its memory economy? As Ann Rigney (2018) demonstrates, the very fabric of memory (studies) constellation is based on the paradigm of violence. Like the Marxist critique of political economy, where we have an asymmetrical relationship of exploitation between worker and capitalist, within memory and trauma studies we have a constitutive and asymmetric relationship of violence between perpetrator and victim. However, the stakes and temporalities are very different. In Marxist theory, exploitation forms the basis of a structural economic antagonism and is perpetuated through an unequal relationship. An organized working class must not only be made aware of this, but must also struggle against it by means of revolution, reform or both. For memory studies, then, violence is taken to be a rupture in everyday life, and the effects of that originary violence persist for long afterwards. These traumatic consequences can then be addressed with very different strategies ranging from reconciliation and rehabilitation to forgetting, repair and others. If Marxist theory had long been preoccupied with the logic and social relations of capital, while ignoring other forms of domination and violence (e.g., race, gender), then for memory studies the preoccupation has been with the entity of the state (and nation) and its violence, but which has largely ignored *economic* violence (capital) and other logics of oppression. If Marxist theory long remained embedded in the sphere of the economy and structural violence of capital, then memory studies – and extensive amounts of Western memory culture – has been shaped by a vague analytic of totalitarian violence and victimhood (for a critique of the universalism

of antitotalitarian memory, see Lim, 2021). Juxtaposed to the vague and abstract analytics of totalitarian violence, Michael Rothberg's approach lucidly demonstrates how conventional approaches in memory studies can come to terms with heterogeneous forms of violence and their histories (Rothberg, 2009). Furthermore, for critical memory studies to account for the complexities of time, as well as colonial violence and the field's interdisciplinarity, the plea for memory activism and solidarity with the oppressed should extend beyond the national frame and the centrality of the state and its apparatuses (Feindt et al., 2014; Lim, 2021; Rigney, 2018).

How, then, can we conceptually link the fields of memory studies and Marxist theory? I suggest that one possible path of their encounter is to elaborate on Marx's notion of primitive accumulation, which hovers between the capitalist transition and a thoroughly revised public memory and memoryscape. I consider the primitive accumulation of memory as the most vital part of the historical process to have taken place in socialist Yugoslavia during the mid- to late 1980s. This was a proper mnemonic war, and it served as the ideological fuel by which the political elites could intensify political conflicts and mobilize people for the ethnic wars of the 1990s. The ethnic wars then brought about the utter destruction of lives and of socialist infrastructures, with nationalist memorialization projects contributing to a swifter transition, while leaving the economic dispossession of working people unchallenged. To be clear, Yugoslav socialism was not paradise on earth. Despite its differences from other socialist countries, its historical achievements in education, social infrastructure and services, and its experimentation with worker self-management, attained fairly high levels of socioeconomic prosperity and participation in the sphere of (re)production. However, the political structure of Yugoslav self-management was fairly authoritarian. The Yugoslav communists followed the principle of democratic centralism, later redefined as 'agreement socialism', which, in the last instance, made party members and the rest of the society follow specific directives that were decided by the most important bodies of socialist authority, and were adopted by the major League of Communists congresses (Kirn, 2019; Rusinow, 1977). When we focus on the field of public memory, the main political and cultural institutions have invested effort and resources in remembering and

commemorating the partisan and antifascist legacy, which was seen as a cornerstone of the new socialist and federal Yugoslavia. In a nutshell, the commemorative formula of mourning the victims of the fascist occupation and collaborationism, on the one hand, and celebrating the victory of the Partisan Liberation Struggle, on the other, were culturally embodied in a broad range of practices, museums, monuments and cultural artefacts. The fact that, historically speaking, the Yugoslav Partisan antifascist resistance – largely organized by communists, the Women's Antifascist Organization (AFŽ), and democratic left forces – managed to liberate Yugoslavia on its own, was an integral part of socialist Yugoslavia's official constitution and formed its ideological and political basis.

Also importantly, Silič-Nemec (1982) rightly argues that the culture of remembrance was not only about official politics, or a memorialization imposed from above. Rather, in the first decade after the war, it was predominantly organized from below, and it emerged as a spontaneous memory reaction to the horrors and heroic acts of WWII. Local communities, many of which lost family members, felt a strong need to commemorate the victims and heroes, and this need materialized in various 'people's architectural monuments' (Silič-Nemec, 1982, 14). From the mid-1950s, we can trace more organized commemorative efforts led by the Veterans' Association and the commissions (Karge, 2009), while in the late 1960s and 1970s, broad alternative, late-modernist monuments (Kirn, 2020) were erected, alongside a populist mythologizing of cultural works that dealt with the Partisan struggle through music and Partisan films (Stankovič, 2011). Constant reference to the partisan past, evidenced by massive amounts of partisan artworks, actually led to an emptying out of anti-fascist and partisan memory. This, it could be argued, weakened Yugoslavia's antifascist politics in the long run. In the mid-1980s the fundamental structure of socialist Yugoslavia, which had been based on inter-republican solidarity (preventing rising inequalities among republics) and a shared memory of the Partisan antifascist past, was deeply challenged and eventually dismantled. This challenge came after the death of Josip Broz Tito in 1980. He had been the undisputed leader of the socialist Yugoslavia, and his death resulted in a prolonged political crisis within the political apparatus. It was unclear who would gain the upper hand in federal politics and later the

republican leaderships of the League of Communists began to compete with one another, which, in the words of historian Dejan Jović, perfectly demonstrates the 'withering away of Yugoslavia' (Jović, 2009, 2). Simultaneously, Yugoslavia suffered from the major after-effects of the 1970s oil crisis, from rising unemployment, and from a deepening economic crisis that was aggravated the neoliberal austerity policies imposed by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and other credit institutions in the early 1980s (Magaš, 1993). Apart from this systemic turmoil, there was also a strong democratic civil society and workers' strikes demanding more socialism and more democracy. Many of these bottom-up political actions were met with repression; the fiercest response occurred in the autonomous region of Kosovo, which later also lost its autonomy through Milošević's rise to power. In the socialist republics of Serbia and Slovenia, where anti-socialist, anti-Yugoslav and (extreme) nationalist positions became active, civil society could sometimes also be very reactionary, especially among the cultural elite, and most notably among writers and intellectuals (Dragović-Soso, 2014). Once the dramatic events in Kosovo had unfolded, intellectuals were the first to produce what were positively termed dissident but were essentially nationalist texts and declarations that stirred up nationalist sentiment and called people to arms. These intellectuals spoke of preserving and defending the national substance, and they sought to emphasize some eternal national victimhood – all these acts were alarming signs of the early period of mnemonic struggles. Their first target was Yugoslavia and its shared collective memory, its anti-fascist struggle, and its international solidarity. The increasing investment in nationalist memory came at the same time as the dismantling of economic solidarity among workers and among republics by commercial banks and international credit institutions, forcing the republican leaderships to make calculations based on their national interests and gradually to move away from Yugoslavia.

The concept of the primitive accumulation of capital did not feature prominently in the analysis of the transformation process from socialism to capitalism during the late 1980s, 1990s or later. Very few authors from the post-Yugoslav region have suggested the concept's potential use, either by using it to highlight the conflictual dimension of the war and of capitalist transition (Komel, 2008), or to analyse the political antagonism directed at

workers' organizations (Bembič, 2013). Furthermore, David Harvey's analysis of neoliberalism can be helpful insofar as it shows how the new cycle of capitalist accumulation advances by dispossessing large parts of populations and concentrating power and wealth in the hands of a few (Harvey, 2003). The case of Yugoslavia's post socialist transition is of particular interest to Harvey's argument of 'accumulation by dispossession' (Harvey, 2003, 137–182): first, socialist Yugoslavia introduced social ownership in the 1950s, which meant that workers became directly involved in managing the value produced (at their workshop), and thereafter social ownership expanded to encompass social housing, factories, the fields of culture and sport, and forests. Consequently, all social sectors were in the hands of associations of producers or users – that is, of society in general. Social wealth and infrastructure were never simply managed by political bureaucrats, something that was enabled by the nationalization of property that had taken place in many socialist countries. The privatization process was delayed not only because of war conditions specific to the post-Yugoslav context but also because the newly and democratically elected governments had to first nationalize the socially owned infrastructure, companies and land. What was euphemistically called the denationalization' process in the early 1990s first entailed nationalizing all the most important branches of the economy and privatizing the others (such as social housing), through specific laws. The nationalization of major companies was carried out by a tightly knit and carefully selected group of people who had good connections with the governments (oligarchs and tycoons), and with the sale of these nationalized assets, a characteristic form of crony capitalism developed that had an extremely damaging effect on social wealth of working people.[6]

However, even before the economic transformation can be tackled, another major dimension of the primitive accumulation of capital needs to be

6 For a more general analysis about this gradual privatization, consult Bohinc and Milković (1993). Zupan (2021), however, argues that in Slovenia the process of 'wild' privatization took place in the 1990s and was subject to a form of political control led by the Agency for Revision of Property Transformation of Companies. Many of these cases were not brought to court, but the numbers speak for themselves: in 2004, the last report of the agency concluded that more than 1000 cases were recognized and compensated for (over the years up to 2020) to the sum of 1.4 billion euros. The main form of mismanagement in dealing with the property changes was found in instances of the unfounded cancellation of claims and unfair distribution of profits via intermediary companies.

addressed, namely war. If, at least for a large part of the former Soviet countries, the capitalist transition was not accompanied by military conflicts, then in the (former) Yugoslavia, violence was the determining force and frame of the transition on all social levels: economic, political, cultural and military. To consider seriously what the primitive accumulation of capital entailed in (post-)Yugoslavia, we need to start with its most violent manifestation. I argue that to read primitive accumulation in precise dialectical terms, we need to stretch dispossession further, in what could be called 'war capitalism', a capitalist form that managed to mobilize society and military forces into war through the primitive accumulation of memory in particular (I return to this point in the next section). Such war capitalism brought about a genuine and major de-accumulation of social capital and the dismantling other modes of production and exchange that had been established during self-management. The wars in the former Yugoslavia can be seen as the ultimate 'expenditure' – that is the physical waste and destruction – of three fundamental aspects: (1) symbolic violence over emancipatory ideas connected to Yugoslav federalism, nonalignment, socialist self-management, gender and national equality; (2) symbolic and real violence enacted against (working) people who, due to their location, beliefs or for other reasons, resisted being transformed into an ethnic subject (of new nation-states); and (3) violence enacted against the infrastructure, wealth and social fabric that had been created, accumulated and become socially owned during the socialist period. Rather than the more conventional primitive accumulation of capital in the former Eastern Bloc, which progressed through a change in ownership and the dispossession of companies, state, land and the public sector, in post-Yugoslavia such war capitalism entailed a huge amount of destruction and the deaccumulation of the social wealth and infrastructures constructed by this self-managed society. The dismantling of the social security system, and the socialist market with its specific protected institutions and time regimes, led not only to the bankruptcy of many companies and factories but also to skyrocketing unemployment: this generated an intense accumulation of a giant 'reserve army' of labour power that was either mobilized for war or prepared to migrate. What the post-Yugoslav context experienced could be described as a major case of underdevelopment (Frank, 1967). Let me here quote a crucial passage from Dedić's work, in which he insists that nationalism was

the pivotal force within the capitalist transition, but that this nationalism should also be seen as a consequence of capitalism:

> Nationalism is not a phenomenon that is separate from the 'logic of transition'. On the contrary, nationalism made room for the establishment of neoliberalism, and genocide is a radical consequence of the privatization that began in the 1990s. Afterward, with the empowerment of 'democratic' transitional governments and privatization laws (which most of the former Yugoslav states adopted in the late 1990s and early 2000s), genocide was finally legalized. Genocide, ethnic cleansing and nationalism, therefore, served as the basis for the accumulation of surplus value, and paved the way for the integration of the former Yugoslav societies into the system of global capitalism. (Dedić, 2016, 184)

I would suggest slightly tweaking Dedić's argument, especially to challenge the hypothesis that genocide and ethnic cleansing were a logical consequence of privatization. First, at that historical point in time, as I demonstrated above, the nationalization of social property was taking place (not privatization per se): and second, I would argue that the wars were a result of the primitive accumulation of both capital and memory. In other words, the transition did not follow a simple formula: economic changes necessitated politico-legal, ideological, and cultural changes, which necessarily lead towards genocide. However, to understand the early stage of the transformation, we need to reverse the order: what dominated the break-up of Yugoslavia was an ideological memory-related level, that is, the primitive accumulation of memory by the state. This means that society was guided and mobilized by democratically elected parties with a great amount of assistance from the media and the cultural apparatus. Instead of the old and emptied-out socialist slogan of brotherhood and unity, *national unity* and the demand for ethnic states reigned supreme across the post-Yugoslav space. Mobilizing people for war, should that be required, was done in the name of 'one nation in one state', and as such cannot be reduced to an adherence to some rational economic formula. The collapse of Yugoslavia, and the ensuing wars, had a major negative impact on the economies of the newly formed countries. The processes benefitted certain sectors of the military industry in the core countries, and war profiteers within the emerging

post-Yugoslav countries. The early 1990s were marked by extreme economic hardship, an illegal arms trade, war profiteering and clientelist networks that appropriated and managed the once socially owned companies. From the perspective of a national political economy, the transition and the wars were not economically rational: major companies lost their former markets and lines of economic cooperation. Most were brought to their knees and were eventually sold off cheaply or closed, while entire countries had to deal with high(er) unemployment and emigration as a result of this, along with the sometimes gradual, sometimes abrupt restructuration processes. In transitology discourse, this highly irrational and violent process is often cast as a 'catching up with the West' (Buden, 2020, 158). Only after all this utter destruction could we speak of the subjugation of nationalism and states to the logic of the capitalist economy. With the end of the war, the economic instance again became dominant in regulating postwar societies and continuing the dispossession of working people.

## Call for a New Partisan Memory Studies: Doing Research *in a Partisan Way*

The passing of more than three decades since the break-up of Yugoslavia has given us enough distance critically to survey the abandonment of its antifascist and Partisan past, and to retrace certain emancipatory fragments apt to awaken the Partisan legacy from its symbolic death. If the mnemonic wars, and the nationalization of memory, fuelled the way to ethnic wars and the destruction of Yugoslavia, demonizing the socialist and partisan collective memory, then one minor detail of the revisionist reasoning should be highlighted. Paradoxically, the (extreme) conservative position often evokes revolutionary dimension of liberation struggle as part of a totalitarian horizon. I am convinced, however, that this insistent negation points to a symbolic strength that goes beyond spectrality. I argue that the revolving around this partisan matter and memory points to something symptomatic at work, an excess that is often designated as either negative or utterly nostalgic, but that I find productive. Elsewhere I have called this excess a 'partisan surplus' (Kirn, 2020, 18) that indelibly remains despite all the changes in historical circumstances that have undone all the major pillars for which partisan struggle fought. Those interested in excavating, and perhaps even

reactivating, the partisan past will thus necessarily need to intervene into dominant readings, whether they are nationalist (anti-totalitarianism and its rehabilitation of fascism), moralizing (reconciliation and relativisation of past) or culturalized (nostalgia) perspectives. This book has a particular interest in digging up those dimensions of the partisan struggle and its memory that have not played a prominent role to date: partisan ecology and female agency.

The chapters in this book are studies of diverse political moments and (art) works from the past that form emancipatory fragments and that can potentially transfer them into the present. Needless to say, without pretending to be objective, or to take up a neutral mediation between opposing and competing narratives of histories of WWII, this book offers a *partisan position*. It does so in order to rethink the material in *a partisan way*. Within the history of philosophy, Immanuel Kant (1998) was the first to argue that philosophy is a *Kampfplatz*, which is to say a battlefield of ideas and, as such, an eminently partisan activity. Philosophers take sides on that battlefield, which is occupied by the dominant ideological worldview/philosophy of the time. Philosophy, at least until Marx, had been perceived as an activity marked by the courage to think and interpret the world, and more broadly as an activity of competing interpretations of that world. It was with Marx's famous *11th Thesis on Feuerbach* that the central shifting point became an imperative to change philosophical praxis itself, the point being to *change the world* and not merely to interpret it. Neither Kant nor Marx was wrong. Critical partisan activity will always need to address and think social change. The challenge of any materialist approach thus lies in the manner of grasping and acting on that change, both in terms of analysis and in terms of (political and artistic) praxis. Rather than measuring the distance between theory and practice, and rather than perceiving philosophy as an always delayed activity, much less has been said about how the ideas themselves are staged and about what they perform for each other and for the world, or how their images might overshadow, or even silence other (counter-)images, by placing other competing images outside of the frame? If philosophical activity seems like a site of ideas caught in an eternal struggling ideas, ideas that always come too late, then partisan political activity has always been presented as an avant-garde activity that always

comes before time, and that challenges the existing order of the established (colonial) empires, states and occupations.

## Structure of the Book

This collection of essays attempts to take sides in current memory studies discussions, while also engaging in a practice of recovering a 'tradition of the oppressed' (Benjamin, 2003). It traces the emancipatory dimensions of partisan memory, especially in artworks that emerged during WWII, but also in socialist and postsocialist contexts. In short, the central aim of this book is to address two deeper questions. Firstly, a question related to my ongoing project of constituting a 'partisan counter-archive' (Kirn, 2020), which can be formulated simply as follows: what can we learn about the Partisan struggle even today? Secondly, I am increasingly more interested in projects, and political and artistic practices that attempt to reactivate partisan memory beyond notions of victimhood, and to articulate hope (Rigney, 2018), others would call for various ways of mobilizing past emancipatory resources that strengthen a utopian dream, and even an 'archaeology of different futures' (Jameson, 2005).

The book introduces reader to its site of intervention, right-wing nationalist revisionism and capitalist restructuration, and the ways in which revisionism has had strong ideological effects that go beyond academic practice. In Chapter 1, I explain my methodology. First, I define the partisan counter-archive and its surplus, explaining who I have traced and selected the examples and the emancipatory resources that I see as inspiring and useful for reinventing the figure of the partisan today. I give a short overview of central features of the partisan counter-archive: partisan positionality, self-reflective modality, aesthetical experimentation, and a temporality that expresses a memory of revolution. Such selected artworks and political moments run against the dominant archive, perhaps against any dominant memory politics that aims at state memorialization. Different case studies aim to demonstrate that the partisan excess was disturbing, or at least unsettling already the emerging socialist official discourse/archive. The latter focused on celebratory narrative of partisan struggle, which became a part of official state ideology. More recently, partisan surplus became even more troubling in the revisionist

memory politics of current times. Official memory politics today either demonizes the partisan struggle, or dismisses it neatly as the preservation of a long gone and outdated past. While conducting research for my monograph, *Partisan Counter-Archive* (Kirn, 2020) I assembled extensive archival material that are further elaborated on in this collection of essays. On top of this, I have added new archival material and new case studies, especially of films and monuments that came out in the socialist and the post-socialist periods.

The chapters that follow are divided into two parts along a temporal axis: the *first part* – Chapters 2-5 – delves into what I call partisan memory studies about the art created during WWII. Chapter 2 comprises a detailed case study of a few partisan performances and of what is probably the most famous partisan dance (Marta Paulin-Brina). I access the material with the help of testimonials and photographs. Chapter 3 analyses an impressive hyperproduction of partisan poems and songs that were created by masses of anonymous poets. The case study focuses on the multiplicity of partisan anthems and on two anthems in particular: *The Women's Anthem* and a poem titled *Why Poems?* by a partisan-poet, Franc Pintarič-Švaba. Chapter 4 takes us to the lesser-known territory of the partisan care of nature and the non-human world, something I call partisan ecology. It turns the forest from a site of refuge into a site of political subjectivation. Moreover, this care and its sensitivity for nature are reconstructed through a number of various graphic works, poems, and stories that were created during the liberation struggle. Chapter 5 delves into a new digital and open access photographic archive project called *Unwanted Images*. The focus of the research is the representation of activities of partisan women and the printing press, both of which were pivotal elements/subjects of the liberation struggle.

*In the second part of the book* – Chapters 6-9 – I tackle two fields that emerged in the socialist and postsocialist periods: *the first field* is broached in Chapters 6 and 7, and focuses on independent films that succeeded in sustaining the partisan surplus and continuing the partisan struggle with other means. Chapter 6 involves in a close analysis of a lesser known but most inspiring antifascist partisan film, *Uprising in Jazak,* which is an anthropological and philosophical investigation into the wellsprings of popular support and the infrastructure of the partisan struggle. Instead of focusing

on the banality of evil (Arendt), I claim that our return to the antifascist past could benefit from Žilnik's portrayal of something I call the banality of everyday resistance. Chapter 7 brings together two prominent, contemporary women filmmakers, Marta Popivoda and Nika Autor, both of whom weave together, each in her own way, documentary, investigative, poetic and committed approaches to a memory from below. These works provide the material evidence that the way partisan memory can be mobilized and even demonstrate how we are still able to reactivate this legacy in our times of nationalist amnesia. *The second field*, tackled by Chapters 8 and 9, concludes the book through a focus on case studies of the dominant memory politics in socialism and postsocialism, and also the ways in which various forms of memory activism resisted against it. Chapter 8 takes a singular event in the history of WWII: the women's protest movement that occurred in occupied Ljubljana in 1943. It gives an overview of the processes of re-memorization and remediation in the socialist (especially monuments) and postsocialist contexts, in which new generations of women and antifascists (memory activism, guided tours and public protests) had to deal both with right-wing revisionism (removal of monuments) and with reconciliation. Chapter 9, the last chapter, is a critical case study of the most dominant slogan and practice of memory politics in late socialism, most notably in Slovenia but also elsewhere, namely *national reconciliation*. The text comes full circle with a critical assessment of how the primitive accumulation of nationalist and reconciliatory memory performed an ideological attack on the antifascist paradigm in Slovenian context, while also facilitating the path to capitalism and to ethnically cleansed and pacified communities. Here I highlight – and this is where I diverge from my own argument in my previous book, *Partisan Counter-Archive* – the intersectional and environmental dimensions: the topic of female antifascists, whether agents in the history of the partisan struggle, activists, fighters or cultural workers, or those who continue to nurture the partisan memory and work, or do art, in a partisan way, runs like a common thread through many of the chapters. Examples include the aforementioned female film directors who work on a 'memory from below' today or AFŽ theorists and archivists; the analysis of the *Women's Anthem* and Brina's partisan dance; my exploration of Alenka Gerlovič's graphic material on partisan ecology or the in-depth analysis of the women's anti-fascist protests in Ljubljana and the women's memorial

activism in relation to them today. Finally, the new topic of partisan ecology, of how partisans manifested a caring sensitivity towards forests, plants and animals also points to the political ways they could be useful to environmental struggles today.

## Acknowledgement

I want to conclude with a brief reflection on the positionality and limits of research: needless to say, I am aware that research, even when ambitious and critical, can offer only a more complex and improved understanding of the past and present situation. One can agree or disagree with the methodology and partisan perspective. But perhaps, in a way that cannot be really measured or predicted, some emancipatory fragments might inspire readers and be adopted by other practices beyond the theoretical and academic frame, whether part of an artistic project that sheds new light on the partisan past, of a political practice that takes partisan departure for new struggles. This eventuality is not in hands of critical theory; any real social change entails massive artistic and political practices that open onto a different future. It is to this future that this book is dedicated.

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influenced the way I am and reflect on related matters, and to my sons Shayan and Diyako, who have brought me much light and encouragement along this journey. The will to never give up can be learned from past, present and future, and to not give up despite the amassing of dark clouds in all parts of the sky:

*No pasarán, smrt fašizmu, svoboda ljudstvom!*

# 1 The Partisan Counter-Archive and Surplus: A Short Note on Method

In the Introductory Chapter, I gave some general theoretical and also politico-historical criticisms of the postsocialist transition and the nationalization of memory, while in this chapter I would like to give a methodological overview that gives some consistency to the heterogenous material that I analyse in the following chapters. Furthermore, since these essays can be seen as a continuation of my ongoing theoretical work within critical memory studies, which I call the 'partisan counter-archive' (Kirn, 2020), I shall give a short overview of this approach.

My methodological approach sets out with the prefix *counter*, which should not just be understood as a combative stance towards the dominant conservative and nostalgic reading of the recent past, but also as a re-reading of the past that mobilizes revolutionary resources in order to imagine a different (lost) future. The concept of the counter-archive is admittedly a heterogeneous one and there is no dominant, or general, definition. However, let me start by citing a short paragraph from an important, ongoing research project *Activating Canada's Moving Image Heritage*:

> Counter-archives are political, ingenious, resistant, and community-based. They are embodied differently and have explicit intention to historicize differently, to disrupt conventional national narratives, and to write difference into public accounts. They seek to counter the hegemony of traditional archival institutions that have normally neglected or marginalized women, Indigenous, Inuit and Métis Peoples, the LGBT2Q+ community, immigrant communities...[7]

This definition points toward a conflictual relationship of the counter-archive with the established national institutions, as entities that assign clear privilege to the dominant groups and their readings of their historical events. It also insists on the need to move beyond from critique to an alternative production of counter-narratives that foster intersectional histories. The counter-archive thus departs from challenging the 'official view

7 The quote is taken from their webpage: https://counterarchive.ca/about. The project is mostly occupied with preserving and also producing indigenous visual counter-archive in Canada.

of history', which then includes alternative counter-archives and leads to a more democratic society. However, my small modification, and the call for a construction of a partisan counter-archive, consists in radically modifying the way we do history. That is, in altering the way we think through and write history, by departing from hegemonic, chronological, episodic history and transforming its central categories, such as the nation-state, the archive, linearity and so on. The theoretical frame of this larger project has been heavily influenced by the epistemological legacy of figures such as Rancière (2004), and Deleuze and Guattari (1994), each of whom has variously intervened in the fields of (dominant) history and archive by insisting on the collective emancipation of workers and the oppressed, which also means by developing new political metaphors and ways of seeing and remembering (Azoulay, 2019). More recently, Mirzoeff's call (2011) to engage in counter-visuality posits an alternative decolonial genealogy in order to dismantle racial hierarchies and visualizations. By analogy, a partisan counter-archive is interested in defragmenting scattered and demonized partisan histories and artworks, which can still be of use for art-critical and political practice today. The examples selected express a strong sense of self-reflectivity about the partisan rupture (that is, during the liberation struggle itself), practice formal experimentation and envision a history of the oppressed that help us to sustain the imaginary of radical discontinuity over space and time.

Since the partisan counter-archives relate to a specific liberation struggle, it will be necessary to evoke some of the features of the partisan movement. Elsewhere I have discussed the political and historical overview of the partisan liberation struggle (Kirn, 2019; Kirn, 2020), so at this point I will only sum up the central tenets and explain why this struggle can still be seen as the deepest emancipatory rupture in twentieth-century Balkan history. Only weeks after the fascist occupation of Yugoslavia in April of 1941, during WWII, the antifascist and partisan resistance began. It relied mostly on the communist forces that had been working underground for two decades prior. The people's liberation struggle was not merely a military struggle; it also entailed a strong social and cultural revolution that eventually led to a major social transformation, creating a new, federal and socialist Yugoslavia (Komelj, 2008). This intense process was thus accompanied

by extensive cultural activities that transformed masses of (semi-)illiterate workers, peasants and women, prompting them to start reading, writing and performing poems. The masses became an integral part of partisan cultural activities, as Miklavž Komelj writes:

> It was not necessary for the masses who spoke up for the first time to formulate revolutionary slogans; they were included in the revolutionary process simply by the very gesture of speaking out. The liberation struggle also brought freedom of expression – that is, to people who had been denied this right before; but they had fought for it and started exerting it. (Komelj, 2008, 104-105; trans. mine – G.K.)

During the war, the cultural field became a democratized space that was open to the masses and characterized by enthusiasm for the political urgency of liberation. Partisan culture was not simply instrumentalized by the communist elite sending directives from above (no effective central authority existed that could keep the dispersed network of local resistances in check), nor did it sustain pre-war bourgeois autonomy and its institutions, which had once guarded artistic engagement. To the contrary, in the impossible circumstances of occupation, when the materials required to practise the arts and develop cultural infrastructure were extremely scarce, partisan art succeeded in ensuring a rupture with the concepts of both Party control and pre-war, bourgeois, artistic autonomy (Kirn, 2020). The PLS involved a cultural renaissance that was exemplified in the mobile amateur and professional theatre, and other groups (Milohnić, 2016), as well as in the approximately 40,000 poems and songs written mostly by anonymous poets but also by some famous ones (Dedijer, 1980), in partisan photography, graphic design, paintings, statues and sculptures; in performances, dance, exhibitions, and even partisan films (Komelj, 2008; Kraševec, 1985; Kirn, 2020).

The PLS triggered a revolutionary process that had tremendous consequences for culture and art. First of all, it transformed the concept of the masses as passive spectators, as consumers of propaganda, by turning them into 'emancipated spectators' (Rancière, 2011), that is, into spectators who became active participants in the cultural and reflective process. Also, the

old concept of cultural space as a space designated for the cultural elite only was abolished. Partisan art was not an aesthetic ornament of the People's Liberation Struggle and the resistance, but rather a relatively autonomous force that created and performed the symbolic imagery of the resistance and the future of the new Yugoslavia. In a world dominated by weapons of mass destruction, the precarious space of partisan arts and the multiplicity of partisan art formats became what I call 'weapons of mass creativity'. The PLS can thus not be envisioned without partisan art or, as I will show, without the desire to depict – in advance – a different and as-yet-non-existing new world. This was a very different community of Yugoslavia, based on antifascist solidarity and principles of transnational community, which at the time actually existed behind the partisan slogan of 'brotherhood and unity' that will later become one of socialist Yugoslavia's official slogans. In this respect, the national aspect of liberation – to emancipate all nations and nationalities from the fascist occupation and the old Kingdom of Yugoslavia – was coupled with a new idea of Yugoslavism and social liberation that entailed building a federal and socialist country after the war (Kirn, 2019a).

In more than one regard, we can consider the partisan movement as a proper revolutionary upheaval, as a social force that radically disturbed the coordinates of the possible and, thus, in a longer historical perspective, as something that still points to a specific 'surplus' in the situation. This gesture of transforming the world has to do with a certain impossibility and the overcoming of the series of dominant prescriptions pertaining to the status quo. It went against the maxim that there is no alternative to the existing occupation/world. In the fascist dominated war, it also went beyond ethnic identity as the purportedly only option for national belonging. Partisan struggle cannot be thought without a revolutionary process that I call the 'partisan rupture' (Kirn, 2019a), which had strong effects due to the radical excess over the situation that it carried into the realms of politics (federative, egalitarian model, non-aligned future), art (engaged partisan autonomy), memory (on future), and even economics (self-management).

When we return to the partisan rupture, we should evaluate it in accordance with two theses. Firstly, the PLS was not simply a rupture that would end with the mere overthrow of the old powers. Rather, it was a rupture

with long-term effects that would shake Yugoslavia during WWII, and be felt globally afterwards. Secondly, the strategy of the liberation struggle was successful because it productively and dialectically tackled both the national as well as the class question. If Tito's answer to Stalin in 1948 was a resolute 'no', a no that meant, *do not meddle in the political and economic autonomy of the new Yugoslavia*, Tito would also respond with a 'no' to Schmitt's telluric image of the national partisan (Kirn, 2019a). Instead, Tito embarked on a path of international struggle alongside oppressed and colonized nations, which will become clearer after WWII, in support of anticolonial struggles across the world. The figure of the partisan and partisan politics in general were thus internally connected to a much larger project of decolonization that included ending forms of oppressions and exploitation. After the split with Stalin, partisan politics was pursued with other means: on the one hand, another independent road to socialism was opened up with the initiative around workers' self-management; on the other, Yugoslavia, together with Egypt and India, became a founding partner of the non-aligned movement. The supposed decisionism of the great leader, Tito, was not done in some abstract way, in a sort of top-down process of History; rather, it was based in and set out from a broad mass support, from the very concrete experiences and mobilization of active women and men in the partisan struggle, and later in transitory forms of socialism.

The task of constructing a partisan counter-archive then consists in tracing specific ways in which the partisan rupture was performed, commemorated and formalized as well as imagined within partisan artworks created during WWII, but also in socialism and still today. I am interested in the artworks that succeeded in formalizing the rupture of the moment and that were conscious, formally and/or politically, of the struggles' creating and bearing witness to a radical novelty. The partisan legacy has remained of utmost importance for subsequent periods, echoing and expressing visions of the future in socialist and even post-socialist contexts. A counter-archive that comprises these notions of cultural and revolutionary creativity is interested in an emancipation process that helps to reorient the predominant model of memory studies, which still retains the eternal ethical and ethnic lenses of perpetrators and victims. Thus, rather than remaining rooted in the figure of victim, the partisan counter-archive contests such a perspective, and

has to do so in accordance with the thought of Walter Benjamin, who insisted that any critical and cultural history must reconstruct a 'history of the oppressed' (Benjamin, 2003).

Hence by taking the methodological, and partisan, standpoint of the oppressed, I am interested in recovering traces of partisan rupture, traces that are structured around a 'counter-archival surplus'. This latter consists in an *excess* over a given situation – whether a revolt/revolution, an act of inclusion of the dispossessed, or of some unexpected action or artwork – and also certain impossibility of remembering that excess, which is often throttled through violence and subsequently forgotten by the new political authority. Despite this impossibility, something always insists that does not stop disturbing our perception, as it unsettles mainstream images and discourses – what Rancière calls the 'distribution of the sensible'. The counter-archival surplus emerges with the politico-aesthetic ability to effect a rupture with hegemonic forms of how we tell, see, and remember this world. The counter-archive continues the rupture by its own means, and becomes an expression of the rupture and a call to produce an emancipated – though never fully achieved – future. This persistence of the partisan rupture, of now scattered fragments that call for a continuation of revolution has made it difficult for genuine partisan works to fit into the socialist archive let alone the post-socialist (state) archive. Here I associate the notion of surplus with Marx's concept of 'surplus value' and Lacan's concept of 'surplus enjoyment', two antagonistic and yet foundational concepts of Marxism and psychoanalysis, respectively. To simplify the long theoretical debate, I refer here to the theoretical framework and findings of Samo Tomšič (see Tomšič, 2015, 64-79) who has convincingly shown how these two concepts have played a prominent role within French structuralism and even for later discussions in the poststructuralist tradition. From the epistemological perspective developed by Louis Althusser (2006), Freud's groundbreaking discovery does not lie in his having produced a complete positivist empirical study of the human mind vis-à-vis the unconscious, and Marx's not in some statistical measurement of wealth and the degree of capitalist exploitation in his analysis of capital. Rather both Marx and Freud initiated a decisive theoretical rupture within the then-existing ideologies: for Marx, the rupture occurred with the bourgeois political economy and its blind

spot around 'surplus value'; for Freud, the discovery of the unconscious helped him break with the alleged autonomous and conscious subject of psychology. Despite these scientific contributions to the humanities, Marxism as well as psychoanalysis remain peculiar sciences, since their objects of study and their major concepts – class struggle and sexual indifference – are traversed by antagonism and conflict. Antagonism in Marxism means that there is no reconciliation regarding the class division of society cannot be finally reconciled, just as with Freud the split subject will remain after its psychoanalysis. In a similar way, the field of memory cannot be easily reconciled when speaking about periods of war, struggle and rupture. Memory itself is struggle. And within the perspective of these conceptual ruptures – the notion of 'surplus value' and, by homology, 'surplus enjoyment' in psychoanalysis, as that which structure capitalist exploitation and the unconscious – I argue that this excess can be traced within the field of memory politics and culture. This dimension of surplus structurally falls out of the neat equation of costs and investments, therapeutical (self-)help manuals and the alleged strengthening of the ego, as well as of the functioning of memory, whether subjective or collective. The counter-archival surplus incorporates the logic of antagonism. It reminds us why taking sides, or becoming partisan, carries consequences into our present.

This conceptual device takes as its point of departure the national archive that is built after the birth of (a) nation, and is neatly measured, canonized and structured around what is deemed the greatest aesthetic achievements of national culture within established institutions, and is financed and organized by a centralized authority. The counter-archival surplus then disrupts the neat measure of national-aesthetic substance and offers a counter-institutional and insurgent modality. The lesson to be learned from a counter-archive is not just the perspective of struggle, but an intellectual empathy that forces sides to be taken with the oppressed and the excluded, an empathy that not only commemorates the defeats but also nurtures the victories. Furthermore, in line with Freud and psychoanalysis, the work of the counter-archive makes no claim or promise to return to comforting memories or moments of reconciliation after the traumas of war and revolution. Rather, it takes seriously the lessons learned by the splits, the gaps, and the selectiveness of its own project. The point here is

not to make a qualitative measurement in accordance with which, on the one hand, a majority of partisan artworks are considered devoid of counter-archival quality and, on the other, a minority of politico-aesthetical gems/exceptional artworks are thought to contain a 'surplus' value that we need to re-enact and re-activate. Instead, my central focus is to grasp the modality of artworks that directly address the question of rupture (social transformation) and (counter)memory about the rupture: why and in what way is the partisan rupture continued by other means? If the counter-archive is not organized around a sacred 'origin' that has changed the world irreversibly, one is left with a series of heterogeneous material inscriptions of rupture.

These inscriptions, each in their own way, continue the partisan legacy in the socialist and post-socialist context. The counter-archival surplus is located at diverse sites of struggle, as temporal, spatial and aesthetic interruptions that target previous and existing forms of domination and exploitation, but also of visuality. Another vital feature of a surplus is that

Image 1: Tjentište, partisan monument to the major battle of WWII in Yugoslavia (Miodrag Živković, 1971). Photo by Gal Kirn, 2024.

it cannot be easily co-opted by the prevailing institutions; it counters the merely selective inclusion of forms of oppression in the established historical canon, done in order to absolve colonial guilt, or for merely representative, ornamental purposes. The counter-archive has no reason to enter the established structures and leave domination untouched. In other words, the counter-archival surplus does not seek to practice a quasi-democratic inclusion of difference, but to perform and make visible radical dissent from the established order/archive. It commemorates past and present voices as well as sounds of oppression, occupation and exploitation. At the same time, it nurtures and organizes those voices, gestures and images around an emancipated future that participates in new, counter-institutional apparatuses, or that takes over the existing ones through their internal transformation.

# Section 1
# Partisan Memory Studies in Art from WWII

I don't care a spit
for tons of bronze;
I don't care a spit
for slimy marble.
We're men of kind,
we'll come to terms with our fame;
let our
common monument be
socialism
built
in battle.

Vladimir Mayakovsky, 1930 (At the top of my voice)

# 2 If I Can't Dance during the Fascist Occupation, I Can't Be Part of This Liberation

This chapter analyses two cases of partisan dance/performance that survived with the help of two contemporary partisan photographers, Jože Petek and Edi Šelhaus, as well as self-reflexive testimonials on these events given after the war. The centre stage of this chapter is given to Marta Paulin-Brina, who is perhaps the most famous partisan dancer. My commentary on her work is undertaken through the prism of a partisan poem called '*Himna agitteatru*' ('Anthem to Agitprop Theatre') by Janez Kardelj. In the second part of the chapter, I look at some performances that involved two potent symbols, namely Tito and the star. These symbols were performed by a directed constellation of partisan school children. Despite the political recommendation that partisan photography limit itself to reporting and documentation (Brenk, 1979), these latter cases serve as evidence to show that there was a peculiar staging and performing for the partisan camera that was capable of subverting propagandistic reductionism. These performances were addresses to the community-in-resistance; that is, they expressed symbols of the liberation itself, and even anticipated future ritual performance under the aegis of the Titoist state.

## 2.1 From Anthems to Agitational Theatre: A Multiplicity of Voices, Images and Performances

Marta Paulin-Brina is a famous name in the history of Yugoslav and Slovenian performing arts. Her initial fame arguably stemmed from her dance performances during the PLS. As a member of the cultural group of the XIV Division of the Slovenian Liberation Army, she was not only in charge of various cultural activities but also actively participated in military combat. One of her answers to the question of how she could dance in front of partisans was that she was able to find the 'correct language of movement only because of the *people* and the *partisan poem*, which was understood by everyone' (Paulin-Brina 1975, 25; emphasis in the original). Referring to partisan poetry in general rather than to any specific poem (see also Komelj, 2009), Marta Paulin-Brina here alludes to the general reception and enthusiasm she received when reciting poems to, and singing songs with, ordinary people. However, one poem in

particular contains notably prophetic lines and, to a significant degree, describes the novelty and rupture of partisan art. It is entitled 'Anthem to Agitprop Theatre' (1942), and I would like, in a retrospective reading, to relate it to Marta's partisan dance, which we can see as an effective materialization of this poem, as a performance of the manifesto-like theses in this 'Anthem'.

I return in detail to the question of partisan anthems in the next chapter. Here, let me simply state that the first major difference between partisan and conventional national anthems consists in the very multiplicity of partisan anthems. There were various anthems that evoked either an entire detachment or a general or specific partisan figure, such as Tito or women, workers or internationalism. This multiplicity of anthems did not follow any single national ideological interpellation of individuals as 'citizen-subjects' of a single nation-state. Instead, we can trace, read out loud, and listen to the specific encounter between partisan politics and art that demonstrates the fundamental difference between the partisan community and the sovereigntist model that is organized around a central authority.[8] Partisan anthems imply unity through the very multiplicity of their subjects, groups and positions.

In 'Anthem to Agitprop Theatre',[9] Janez Kardelj describes a deeply prophetic vision.[10] His central goal had been to organize a partisan theatre; an ambition sadly thwarted by his early death in 1942. The anthem itself can be seen as a meditation and an attempt at answering the question of how to engage in partisan art in such impossible circumstances. I argue that this anthem is a crystallization of a multi-year-long process that a group of six

8 In the more specific context of war, anthems – from the marches of armies using drums as they storm the enemy to anthems that relate to specific parts of the army – are designed to fuel patriotic feelings. The American military, for example, has a US Air Force hymn, a US Navy hymn and a US Marine hymn, as well as the general US Army anthem. What the military context of war provides is a well-orchestrated army of corps that directly addresses all of its parts and bodies with a proper, adapted musical accompaniment. Anthems represent the military body's musical politics, which expresses the specific division of labour of the general army.

9 As the term suggests, agit-theatre was created as a legacy of the October Revolution and early Soviet times, when cultural groups travelled across the countryside and its various fronts, mobilizing, educating and empowering workers and peasants. The early cultural activities in Yugoslavia were very much in concordance with the Soviet legacy; however, through the partisan struggle, they acquired their own forms and dynamics – an especially strong stamp of political autonomy.

10 His brother was Edvard Kardelj, the famous ideologue of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia, and Tito's right-hand man, who wrote extensively about the theory and practice of self-management.

other partisans and cultural workers engaged in by organizing meetings, guitar-accompanied poem recitals, and performances of agit-stories in the villages of Stari Log, Grintovec, and elsewhere (see also Kraševec, 1985, 32). Additionally, this group of cultural activists was preparing performances of the first partisan theatre plays, including the first partisan play by the renowned poet Matej Bor, namely *Heavy Hour*. The group, however, never brought these plays to the stage because it was interrupted by the fascist offensive of May 1942.[11] All the members of the group, except for the poet Ivan Rob, died during the Rog Offensive. The Agitprop Theatre, which produced and performed its own theatre plays, was formed a year later. In addition, the Theatre of the People's Liberation, which had been experimenting across the liberated territories in Bosnia and Herzegovina, became very active from 1943 on.[12] I argue that this was their anthem in that it drew abundantly from the initial experiences of partisan cultural production and dissemination, which heralded the ambitious expectations of what partisan art would then become.

**Anthem to Agitprop Theatre**

All of us here are partisan actors,
Our home is nowhere, our stage everywhere.
We are comrades at our fighters' side,
Now we are here, tomorrow somewhere else.

Our words will not enlighten
The conceited well-fed gentlemen in theatre boxes.
Not under floodlights but in a deep forest
They lift the hearts of fighter heroes.

The green forest is now our auditorium
The moon the floodlight shining in the sky
The recognition by our fellow partisans
Means more than all the applause of the bourgeois world.

When the evening envelops the forest in darkness

11 The Rog Offensive (Roška ofenziva) was launched by Italian fascists in the spring of 1942 to quell the partisan resistance and defeat their organization in the liberated territories.

12 See Milohnić (2016) and especially the figures of Vjekoslav Afrić and Žorž Škrigin, who were the main driving force of the early experimental performances of the People's Liberation Theater.

And through it a secretive whisper runs,
Then through the night between the rocks
Echoes the free flight of our words!

And even though the voices disappear in the distance
Like shooting stars from the night sky,
Even then a thousand voices sing from within us
We are like the beating of an enormous single heart.

(translation mine – G.K.)[13]

This poem touches on practically all the major topics that can still be seen as pivotal for social and aesthetic transformation in any struggle. Its programmatic nature – agitational theatre has an openly propagandistic character – does not exclude the author from profiling 'contingent' moments in the cultural process. Everyone can be a partisan actor or artist (contingent agency): 'Our home is nowhere – our stage [is] everywhere' (the contingent space of the home and performance); and 'Now we are here, tomorrow somewhere else' (the mobility of space). It takes a stand against the audience of the masters/the elite, and seeks the applause

13 Himna agitteatru

Mi vsi smo tu igralci – partizani,
naš dom nikjer, a oder naš povsod.
Borilcem smo tovariši ob strani,
sedaj smo tu, a jutri spet drugod.

Besede naše siti, domišljavi
Gospodi v lozah glave ne vedre.
V teatru svetlem ne, temveč v goščavi
junaku – borcu dvigajo srce.

Zelena hosta nam je zdaj dvorana,
reflektor – mesec ji sije z neba
in nič več nam je priznanje partizana
kot ves aplavz buržujskega sveta.

Kadar zvečer v temo se gozd odeva
in vanj zaveje tajnostni šepet,
takrat skoz noč med skalami odmeva
besede naše svobodni polet!

In dasi v dalji se izgublja glas
kot zvezd utrinek z nočnega neba,
a vendar tisoči pojo iz nas
smo kot utrip ogromnega srca! (Paternu et al., 1998, 257).

of the partisan masses (the heterogeneity and openness of the masses against a homogenous bourgeois audience). This contingency, which pins down and explores a further surplus over the war situation, does not fall from the sky and would be impossible to conceive of without the liberation struggle. It was the liberation process that made this radical contingency necessary.

More concretely, 'Anthem' addresses the elementary modality of partisan cultural work, which had to be in constant flux, day and night, in cities as well as villages. At the same time, partisan artists and cultural workers needed to be inventive, had to conceive new 'floodlights' that would become the 'moon in the sky', or a small fire in the deep forest, that at night performs an additional dance of/with the shadows.[14] Furthermore, 'Anthem' conveys a strong farewell message to established institutions, as it abandons the bourgeois canon and audience, while partisan artists discover their stage as deterritorialized – as being anywhere. This does not mean that nothing existed before partisan culture. In the PLS, there were artists and communist activists and leaders who, before the war, made major contributions to the organization of cultural campaigns. In the early stages, various established pre-war artists joined the partisans, but in the new conditions they had to significantly alter conventional ideas of how to 'do art'. The situation forced them to further experiment with modest means, but with enthusiastic support from the partisans and people. These artists had to 'unlearn' much of their previous cultural engagement, and practise the maxim that 'our stage is everywhere' in the liberated territories and in the illegal underground. Imagine small events happening in basements, or theatre performances that took place in stables with minimal lighting, and which had to be done while whispering because the enemy was just a few hundred metres away (Milohnić, 2016). This political and cultural capacity was attested in the innovative ways it was able to assert itself in the new circumstances. The partisans had to be extremely inventive in order to overcome the obstacles of war and scarcity.

14 There are many examples of the inventiveness of cultural theatre workers, including the designing and creating of puppets from various materials (for details about puppet theatre, see Gerlovič, 1979) and the making of clothes for actors who were performing Molière's plays from Allied parachutes (Milohnić, 2016).

The creation of new partisan public points to a deep awareness of another key dimension: the specificity of partisan cultural production and dissemination. Anyone who had the talent, will, or desire to become a partisan cultural worker or artist could be part of partisan experimentation and self-management. Partisan artists, then, participated in creating and addressing their new audiences: villagers and fellow partisan fighters. The author of the poem stresses that their recognition mattered more than 'all the applause of the bourgeois world'. This was a proper coming together of the masses and the partisans, where established artists, anonymous poets, amateur designers, actors and singers created a culture of struggle. Lastly and most importantly, the poet concludes the poem by highlighting the silencing and the 'disappearing voice' of the partisan resistance. Despite the distance and gradual disappearance of any particular cultural performance, song or theatre play, the echoes reach out and extend to yet another multiplicity of voices, as 'a thousand voices sing' and unite in the 'beating' heart of the resistance. Deleuze and Guattari's notion of the 'monument to revolution' (1994) is structured precisely around such echoes and visions that forge the community-in-resistance, the community that performs and lives the future partisan community:

> A monument does not commemorate or celebrate something that happened but confides to the ear of the future the persistent sensations that embody the event: the constantly renewed suffering of men and women, their re-created protestations, their constantly resumed struggle. Will this all be in vain because suffering is eternal and revolutions do not survive their victory? But the success of a revolution resides only in itself, precisely in the vibrations, clinches and openings it gave to men and women at the moment of its making and that composes in itself a monument that is always in the process of becoming, like those tumuli to which each new traveller adds a stone. The victory of a revolution is immanent and consists in the new bonds it installs between people, even if these bonds last no longer than the revolution's fused material and quickly give way to division and betrayal. (Deleuze and Guattari, 1994, 176–177)

## 2.2 The Conditions of (Im)Possibility of Marta Paulin-Brina's Dance

I would like to compare this anthem, its expectation and its realization to another partisan medium, namely to Marta Paulin-Brina's dance performances, and to claim that her partisan dance represents the most striking materialization of poetry in dance. Already a modern dancer before the war,[15] Marta Paulin-Brina joined a partisan cultural group when invited to perform on a heavily symbolic occasion, the inauguration of the Rab partisan brigade which comprised liberated survivors, among them hundreds of Jews, from the concentration camp on the Italian-occupied island of Rab. The event was fuelled by the symbolism of homecoming and the struggle for freedom after the horrific experiences in the concentration camp. Paulin-Brina struggled with the question of how to dance among partisans on such an occasion, and her self-reflection on the partisan cultural technique explains her dance performance best:

> I became a dancer where nature became my stage. Instead of on a wooden stage, I now dance everywhere. The feeling of balance becomes a 'problem' again; the muscles work differently, because a leg may search for support either on stones or on soft ground. This was the first thing I noticed. But there was more to this. This immense natural space provides opportunities and calls for the expansion of movement. From restricted motion and gesture in the closed theatre, one can then create a whole march in the open space of a natural stage. This is also how dance movements could become big, clear and broad – that is, if I wanted to somehow command this enormous space and establish myself in it. I also danced alone. In the process of creation, my co-dancer was perhaps left to his own devices more than all other artists, as he had to react to my thoughts without any external help. Alone with his mind and body, this 'something' had to be created. Conventional and unpersuasive ballet 'grace' would

15 She attended the school of modern dance in Ljubljana run by Meta Vidmar, who obtained a dance licence from internationally renowned school in Dresden (Mary Wiggman). For details on early modern and partisan dance as well as on another partisan dancer, Živa Kraigher, see Vevar (2017).

immediately wither away in nature, it would even become comical. In our case, there was no so-called ballet in the broad sense of the word, but we could speak of dance expression rooted in the liberated ground, with human participation in the historical creation of a nation or a people. It was about the participation in the liberation struggle of people that knew no despair and were aware of their strength and historical mission. Dance calls for a struggle, and in this struggle, it is winning; it unfolds in joy; because of the struggle and constant effort, because of its power and its very historical act. (Paulin-Brina, 1975, 25; translation mine – G.K.).

Image 2: Marta Paulin-Brina dances on the occasion of the oath and foundation of the Rab Brigade, 23 September 1943, Mašun (Jože Petek). Courtesy of the National Museum of Contemporary History of Slovenia.

The strength of Marta and her performance is something that, in the first instance, she drew from the liberation struggle itself, its historical mission of liberation, and the determination of the partisans to conduct it (see also

Pristaš, 2015). However, how can one dance if one is besieged, occupied, and bereft of basic infrastructure? Again, Paulin-Brina's lucid answer requires no further explanation:

> In this dance circle, we could all hold each other's hands. Ours was a closed circle: in our efforts and in suffering, in the midst of sighs and smiles and laughter – we were closely bound together. When I became a dancer, I found myself standing alone in front of a mass of fighters. I had this awareness of what I could do with my gift for dancing and my weak body, but how I could express that something, that which brought us together, and how would I be able to command this extensive natural space? Suddenly, I felt an immense power in my legs, as I stood up and pushed down hard against the ground of the earth. My hands felt the horizons outlined by the forests and climbed over the peaks of the trees. My dancing did not imitate anything that could be associated with formalistic moves. I rejected almost everything that I had learned during all the years of my dance school training. I searched for a dance expression, original and fresh, which emerged from the human need to move. I found it in the game of balance with dynamic, rhythmical, and voluminous dimensions, in the tension and relaxation. Dance expression was a consequence of my internal engagement. That I found this correct language of movement was only possible because of the *people* and the *partisan poetry*, which was understood by everyone. (Paulin-Brina, 1975, 25–26; translation and emphasis mine – G.K.).

Paulin-Brina's self-reflection expresses one of the most profound insights into partisan dance and art, which I would sum up as follows: despite being highly skilled in modern dance techniques, she had to first 'unlearn' these techniques and relearn to dance in new conditions and in front of a new audience. Thus, she had to encounter and experience all the unexpected varieties of the landscape, while simultaneously carrying a deep awareness of her mission. She was there for the people and because of the people, bearing in mind and body the task of liberation, while also trying to invent new artistic forms and practices. Her performances were a 'surplus' from

Image 3: Marta Paulin-Brina dances on the occasion of the oath and foundation of the Rab Brigade, 23 September 1943, Mašun (Jože Petek). Courtesy of the National Museum of Contemporary History of Slovenia.

her past engagement as a dancer and a radical consequence of her 'internal engagement'.[16] Paulin-Brina's performances could be perceived as a living and performed anthem by means of partisan dance, as she said herself it was partisan poetry that not only accompanied her dance, but made it possible to engage with her thought and with other bodies in the partisan struggle. Her partisan dances express the very tense and incessant movement that occurred on the liberated territories, dances that, on a deeper level, were accompanied by the other liberated bodies of partisans as part of the long march to freedom. In the final section, I would like to review two examples that announced or gave a sneak preview of the imagery of the new Yugoslavia, that is, of the kind of 'performances' that would take place when liberation finally came.

## 2.3 Icons of the Liberation Struggle in Edi Šelhaus' Photography

Nowadays, we cannot look at images of Tito and the (red) star without thinking about the former socialist state and its ideological apparatuses. In Marta Popivoda's film essay *Yugoslavia: How Ideology Moved Our Collective Body* (2013), which discusses the public holiday 'Relay of Youth' *(Štafeta mladosti*), it was possible to glimpse the complexity of the internal dynamics of state imagery and its transformation, as well as the statist instrumentalization and emptying out of communist imagery. Nevertheless, Edi Šelhaus took photos during the war, a time when the new Yugoslavia lay in the future and both the star and Tito were emblematic figures of the Liberation Struggle rather than of the state. Tito was

16 Marta Paulin-Brina was not the only dancer among the partisans. There were some ballet dancers in the Theatre of People's Liberation in Bosnia and Herzegovina; while in the occupied zone in Ljubljana, another woman from the school of modern dance, Živa Kraigher, practised and set up a fixed choreography. She was active at the front while also working on her dance at her studio in secret during the war. In her memoirs, she writes that both the intensity of the partisan experience and the reading of Matej Bor's poetry collection *Previharimo viharje* (1942) gave her an idea about how to conceive and practise her own performance. Kraigher first performed her dance piece as late as 1953 and called it *Upor/Borba* [*Resistance/Struggle*]. Even to consider conceiving a single five-minute performance during the work process that went on for ten years – both during and after the liberation – would be practically impossible to do in the current post-Fordist era of precarious and instantaneous conditions of artistic labour. Kraigher's performance and her circular movements remained one of the key performances in the history of modern dance of Slovenia/Yugoslavia (Vevar, 2017). For a new re-enactment/remake of Marta Paulin-Brina's partisan performance see also Kolenc's *Brina* (2019).

a unifying name for the multiplicities of the resistance, and not that of a statesman.[17]

Two emblematic photos became famous during and immediately after WWII. The first photo displays the most prominent symbol of the partisan struggle, namely the five-pointed star consisting of people. On a cold winter's day in Babno Polje in 1944, Edi Šelhaus asked a partisan teacher, Nada, to organize a small staging of a star. The performance was carried out by pupils from a partisan school. As Šelhaus (1982, 46–50) recounts, German planes would often patrol the area. Thus, staying outside and displaying clear political messages would not only have endangered lives but also exposed the location of the local resistance. A few weeks later, the photo was published in various Allied newspapers.

Image 4: 'Mladina iz Babnega polja je sestavila peterokrako zvezdo. 1945, Babno polje' [The youth from Babno polje formed a five-pointed star, 1945, Babno polje]. (Edi Šelhaus). Courtesy of the National Museum of Contemporary History (MNSZS), Ljubljana.

17 In a similar way, Alain Badiou differentiates between a revolutionary Mao and a statesman Mao (Badiou, 2005) This differentiation has serious implications both for political strategy and for different ways of remembrance that avoid a teleological Party-centred view of History. Yet again, it should be pointed out that to produce an abstract picture from one person in order to distil a purer, partisan/revolutionary essence – one that has nothing to do with the building of a state or anything that went awry – can also lead to romanticization.

It seems that the idea of forming a star on a winter's day using the very bodies of pupils was a highly risky move. Yet at the same time, it does capture the resilience of the partisan organization: in the liberated territories, schools were organized to contribute to the Liberation Struggle, which they did in a variety of ways. The image of a star in the middle of a field became ingrained in people's minds, and helped them to overcome their fear. The pupils, directed by a teacher and a photographer, ensured that we received one of the first emblematic performances of the key symbol of the liberation struggle. This performance instilled hope and unity in a country ravaged by civil war.

Edi, Nada, and the partisan schoolchildren repeated the exercise another day and formed the name 'Tito' with their bodies. These partisan gestures and symbols succeeded in staging a living monument to the community-in-resistance. After WWII, enormous stones spelling out the name TITO, organized in such a way as to be seen from afar, were erected in the countryside in some regions of Yugoslavia.

Image 5: 'Partizanska učiteljica Nada Vreček je s svojimi učenci v snegu izpisala ime ljubljenega tovariša Tita' [Partisan teacher Nada Vreček and her students compose the name of their beloved comrade Tito in the snow]. (Edi Šelhaus, winter 1944-45). Courtesy of MNSZS.

## 2.4 Conclusion

These photos evoke a question: how did these performances stage the partisan community and its liberation? Did partisan performances in particular, and the partisan struggle in general, successfully manage to conceive of the collective figure/image of the partisan struggle? Did they succeed in separating it, culturally, from the figure of the individual hero or heroine (ballet dancer), and, politically, from Marshal Tito and the symbol of the star? The above analysis does not give a final answer to these questions. The cases studied demonstrate an obvious ambivalence between, on the one hand, what could be seen as the utopian vitality of a transformed female dancer (Marta Paulin-Brina) and, on the other, the static imagery of a personality/symbol (Tito, the star). What becomes clearer, perhaps, is the fact that the variety and multiplicity of images, gestures, performances and poems attests to the radical and pivotal character of partisan politics and arts. What was at stake back then was a 'partisan rupture' of such magnitude that it can still inspire us to transform our world, anew.

# 3 Anthems of the Oppressed: The Multiplicity of Partisan Anthems in the Yugoslav People's Liberation Struggle

The immense cultural and artistic productivity of the Yugoslav People's Liberation Struggle (PLS) comprised various art practices and artworks, ranging from partisan print, poetry, music, theatre and dance to graphic art, photography, drawing, painting and film. This productivity can be seen in the thousands of graphic works/linoleum cuts, and the 40,000 poems that would not have been possible without collective effort from more established and engaged artists as well as a mass of anonymous partisans who only became artists in and through the struggle. Many partisans started writing and reading during the PLS, which triggered a deep cultural and revolutionary process (Komelj, 2008; Kirn, 2020). Focusing on the partisan poetic legacy, in the first part of the text I highlight the context of this immense (hyper) productivity and its anonymity. Anonymity here is to be understood in multiple modalities: some partisans did not sign their poems, others used only their first names, and others still used a code name. The use of code names was part of illegal prewar communist cultural activities, a way to protect the individual artist but also communist organizations. In the Yugoslav partisan cultural context, anonymity performed another important transformative gesture: it countered the bourgeois ideology of the individual genius and the idea of copyright linked to the name of cultural producers/artists. The anonymity of the partisan artists, epitomized in the cultural work of the masses, became an essential feature of all cultural activity. In the second part of the chapter, I tackle the emergence of a multiplicity of partisan anthems that in certain respects are the most 'proper' multitudinous format of this anonymous mass. The anthem is usually thought of as a form where in a single anthem represents a specific political community, or nation-state, and thus we would expect a sole anthem to have been erected into the exclusive official anthem of the Yugoslav partisan army during the four years of resistance. We would expect that one anthem would emerge to represent Yugoslavia as a whole, another all partisans, and that the specific republics would each have their own special anthems. Rather, this chapter highlights the fact that tens, perhaps hundreds, of anthems were dedicated to the past struggles of the oppressed, as well as to (partisan) subjectivities and their activities.

## 3.1 Poetic Hyperproductivity and Partisan Anonymity

Branko Petranović's detailed historical study of the Partisan liberation struggle gives special attention to partisan prints. The study surmises that more than '3,500 Partisan newspapers' were published during the war, as well as '151 collections of poetry, 111 books and brochures/booklets of art prose-literature and 102 collections of reports' (Petranović, 1988, 371). More specifically, concerning the Slovenian territory, the Propagandistic Section of the Executive Committee of the Liberation Front in 1944 published a booklet called *Partisan Printing Houses in Slovenia* (1944). The latter states that within a time span of only eight months, from December 1943 to July 1944, the regular publication of

> 169 different periodicals, among them two dailies and six weeklies [occurred]. Each month 340 Partisan newspapers were published and every month one article or a poem was contributed by more than 4000 Partisan officers and fighters that cooperated in the printing activities (Krajnc, 1944, 31).

Compared to the print production of other WWII resistance movements across Europe, this is an exceptional level of production, in relative but also in absolute terms. A member of Tito's closest entourage, Vladimir Dedijer, assembled various political and cultural documents during the People's Liberation Struggle (PLS) and claimed that more than 40,000 partisan poems and songs were written during WWII (Dedijer, 1980, 929). In the Slovenian context once more, we can count approximately 12,000 poems and songs (Paternu et al., 1987). When it comes to Partisan Yugoslavia, things were extremely challenging during the war, due to the constant mobility of archival infrastructure. But in the period of socialist Yugoslavia, much partisan poetic and visual material, as well as objects related to the PLS, were distributed among the archives of the various republics, including in museums named after, and devoted to, the PLS. There was no central depository for partisan artworks and poems. These poems were gathered through the diligent work of various cultural workers and intellectuals and were edited and published on special occasions. We can find poems and songs in partisan newspapers, brochures, and children's books as well as in specialized publications of partisan poetry and song. The most extensive

project for gathering the majority of Partisan poems in Slovenia was collected and edited in four volumes and published by Paternu in collaboration with Irena Novak-Popov, Marija Stanonik and numerous lecturers and students of the Slovenian studies seminar at the Scientific institute of Faculty of arts, at the University of Ljubljana. Other important publications are much smaller in scope, and gather together partisan poems from Serbia, Croatia or other parts of Yugoslavia (Čubelić, 1983; Rodić, 1983; Nedeljković, 2017). A large majority of these poems and songs remain untranslated into any non-south Slavic language. Another detail of key importance is that songs performed in the PLS were actually already existing pieces – local folklore and international song repertoire – that were revived, sometimes with the addition of new lyrics.[18]

Even if most of partisan poems remain widely scattered, certain poems were put to music and acquired a much stronger and lasting popularity as songs, songs still sung today by various post-Yugoslav activist choirs, as well as electro, rock or punk bands and that have gained their popularity on social media channels, such as YouTube and Facebook. Some of these recent popularizations speak to nostalgic discourses/audiences, others to more directly political ones. In recent years, new and more affirmative studies relating to the legacy of partisan poetry and music have been published.[19] All studies agree on the basic point that partisan poems represented an important symbolic imaginary and developed in a variety of forms: from old popular songs that might have been referred to or changed, to a mix of international revolutionary, folk songs, from poetry about national-awakening to a vast array of new poems.[20]

I would add that the body of partisan poems was not only exceptional in terms of the enormous output, but also in terms of its diverse modes of dissemination, which took place through more traditional poetry collections

18 For details see Hofman (2016). Hofman refers to a songbook entitled *Zbornik partizanskih narodnih napjeva* (Hercigonja, 1962) which presents numerous variants of one song.

19 See, for example, Hofman (2016), Kirn (2020), Komelj (2008) and Momčilović (2010).

20 The very first collection of poems was printed in Slovenia. The General Command of the Liberation Front ordered the printing of Matej Bor's edition *Previharimo Viharje* (Overstorming the Storms) in an illegal printing workshop in Brdo, in January 1942. There were almost 10,000 copies of this collection, which mixes together realist and avantgardist styles, and which points to the fact that partisan leadership went to great lengths to promote partisan creativity, production, and dissemination.

that were neatly designed, and song publications, to collective declamations and adaptations of songs that accompanied by more-or-less improvised musical scores. 'Partisan song was everywhere', remembers Šime Kronja, one of the citizens of Rudo, who witnessed the inauguration of the First Proletarian Brigade: 'Partisan soldiers came to our town by singing' and this song enlisted new fighters and 'echoed long after they had left our town' (in Bojić et al., 1966, 19). Poems and especially Partisan songs were everywhere, even during the most difficult times of battle and the long exhausting marches through the snow. The reading of poems aloud also occurred at cultural events, both formal and informal, as did reading in silence, or aloud around the fire: partisan poems and songs became a common thread that ran right through the struggle. They became a vital oral legacy of the struggle after the war, forging a memory of times, landscapes and soundscapes of resistance in which the anonymous masses are the central political subject (Kirn, 2020).

The omnipresence and collective nature of the production and dissemination of poems and songs bespeaks the specific modality of partisan poetry, which we might call the 'partisan avant-garde'. This is different to the youthful cultural urban milieu that existed before the war, which mostly catered for an urban and left-elite audience. Some partisan poets continued to experiment on/with very subtle poetic procedures, but the conditions of armed resistance also pushed them into using more metric schemes and cooperating with music composers, thus helping to bring about the transition between poem and song. Močnik (2018) rightly suggested that the most circulated forms of visual partisan culture 'were distributed as leaflets and posters', while 'poems were meant to be sung'. In this respect, I would argue that partisan songs became the dominant oral expression of liberation. Furthermore, neither partisan poems nor partisan songs ever existed for a specific elitist audience. Instead, partisan poems and songs came to full life at partisan performances. They existed in and for the People's Liberation Struggle; they reflected an encounter between the masses of anonymous and renowned poets, that is, between all those who had created poems for the first time and those who were exploring further poetic forms in the light of struggle and who demanded that its vocation plunge deeper. This entailed an encounter

between the pre-war avant-garde (constructivist, surrealist) poetry and folkloric tradition. Written and oral culture, poem and song, contributed in a major way to the partisan uprising: one could even argue that they became poetic and sonic performatives of the struggle. This does not mean the partisan poems and songs had no predecessors. As we saw, they used international melodies and lyrics, but also drew on a long oral tradition of resistance.

It thus comes as no surprise that the very first printed versions of partisan poems and songs during WWII included a mix of folk internationalist revolutionary and new, local partisan poems and songs that become popular. The collection, called *Antifašističke pesme,* was printed in Užice on 7 November 1941 on the first liberated territory of fascist occupied Europe. The first collection of antifascist songs was edited collectively, while one of its main editors was Dušan Nedeljković, a pre-war communist philosopher. Nedeljković wrote a foreword to the second edition 30 years later in which he describes in detail what the central criterion of the editorial board for song selection had been. Nedeljković recounts how the editorial board conducted small surveys among partisans and activists, asking them which songs were the most popular and why (Nedeljković, 2017, 60–64). The editorial board made a decision to publish old and new songs of resistance, thus putting the newest song *Srpska partizanka* (Serbian Partisan Woman) on the same page as the Workers' and Soviet *International*. Due to the absence of original Soviet songs, the latter were transcribed from memory and improvised by those who spoke Russian. Additionally, the publication consisted of folk songs that related directly to past peasant and national struggles in the Balkans; *Ženska himna* (*Women's Anthem*); Bulgarian antifascist songs, and other songs written by workers and partisans (e.g. Miodrag Tatović).

The writing, reading and singing of poems and songs was not the exclusive property of pre-war intellectuals and artists but rather sprang up organically from the partisan movement. This popular, mass and 'lay' dimension of partisan words and poems cannot be reduced either to a certain ethnic folk imaginary or to an internationalist frame. It is the expression of a certain mixing of avant-garde and folk elements. It also occurred out of an entirely practical reason, namely that most people

from the peasant population already knew the old songs and melodies, so they inserted new lyrics into these old songs in order to sonically 'arm' the fighters (see Hercigonja, 1972). It is also important to note that, in the early partisan brigades, the practice of forming choirs, made of up to 40 members, was completely normal. Petranović sums up well the zeal of these cultural innovators:

> A very unique phenomenon unfolded when poets-peasants, popular folk artisans without artist renown, began to write poems in decasyllable art forms and reflected on and celebrated the People's Liberation Struggle, while those who were literate, writers and journalists in the liberated territory were fully immersed in propagating the struggle. (Petranović, 1988, II, 375)

Another fascinating feature of partisan songbooks and poetry collections consists in printing international songs untranslated, in their original versions. This aspect points to the internationalist feature of Partisan song production, which – despite regional specificities – shared an international antifascist solidarity and the belief in another world. The features of multiplicity and internationalism are particularly well reflected in the partisan anthems, which are the most emblematic poetic carriers of the partisan bodies that point to the directions and goals of the partisan struggle.

## 3.2 One Anthem Splits into Many

Upon hearing the word anthem, one immediately associates it with a specific melody and genre of lyrics, that is, with the symbolic representation of one's own nation-state. As is the case with any anthem, from its more liturgical origins to its use in periods of national awakening, an anthem is seen as an important performative part of the process of any 'imagined community' (Anderson, 2010), which is created and recreated through rituals and various media. Kelen (2014) had conducted extensive research on the role and ways in which a particular poem – or anthem – performs an ideological effect that weaves together and builds a community. In short, singing in the same space, or in distant spaces, means the coming together of very different members into a community, thus performing and enacting

the community itself. Moving to the more specific context of war, anthems have been designed to fuel and increase patriotic feelings, whether the marches of armies that use drum tactics as they storm enemy troops or anthems that relate to specific parts of the army. What the military context of war provides is a well-orchestrated army of corps with direct calls for limbs, organs and a body, with a properly adapted musical accompaniment. Anthems and marches represent the military's *body music politic*, which expresses a specific division of labour and the importance of each part of the general army, all parts of which are finally consolidated. The metaphor of the conductor and the orchestra resonates with that of the political body being led (i.e. conducted) by a supreme sovereign who should be obeyed by all parts, soldiers and citizens.

Evidently all people's liberation struggles during the twentieth century developed their own poems and anthems. I want to claim that the liberation/partisan anthems introduced two major differences, one related to its political constitution as a community-in-resistance and not simply a nation-state; the other concerned its creation of not one but a *multiplicity of anthems*. In the Yugoslav partisan context, partisan anthems proliferated: there were anthems for specific units (e.g. the 'Anthem of the Venetian Brigade', the 'Artillery Anthem') and anthems for the sole purpose of playing to the revolutionary government AVNOJ during its meetings (e.g. 'Hej Slaveni' and poems to Tito). There were also poems that carried and addressed the name of the major battles, most notably that which played out around Sutjeska, including striking ones by Vladimir Nazor and Ivan Goran Kovačić), as well as poems that addressed the whole partisan struggle, which I call partisan anthems (e.g. Pintarič's 'Why Poems?', Kajuh's 'Our Poem', and many others). There was an anthem to historical revolt that was transversally and organically connected with partisan struggle (e.g. 'Padaj silo i nepravdo'[21]); anthems to important partisan/communist personae/martyrs (e.g. commandant Stane, commandant Sava, Rade Končar); an 'Anthem of Women'; the

21 Matija Gubec (a major peasant hero for Croatians and Slovenians alike from a revolt in 1575) and Matij Ivanić (the hero of the island of Hvar who, beginning in 1511, led a major revolt for several years against the entire Venetian Republic) were taken up and used as the names of partisan brigades, but also transformed into anthems for those very same brigades. Probably the most famous of all were the poems that refer to Matij Ivanić, such as *Padaj silo i nepravdo* (*Fall Authority, and Injustice*), which was re-appropriated in the twentieth century song *Slobodarka* (lit. *Freedom Giver*).

highly popular working class and Soviet Union's 'International'; and an 'Anthem to Agitational Theatre' (analysed in the previous chapter). In the more specific republican context, a key example of the Slovenian anthem is 'Zdravljica' (by France Prešeren, the nation's greatest poet), and there is the already forgotten 'Slovenian Anthem' by Anton Lavrin from 1944 and many, many more.

The proliferation of anthems speaks to the liberatory character of the plurality of partisan voices and styles contributing to the creation of a new partisan republic, to the new Yugoslavia. These anthems imagined the utopian horizon of the new Yugoslavia, which was based on multiple anthems and gestures of resistance that did not follow a single 'interpellation' of individuals as 'citizen-subjects' into one 'nation-state' under the rule of one person (Tito). It is here – on the constitutional level – that we find the fundamental difference of new political form from the old sovereigntist model: the partisan anthem implies unity through a multiplicity of subjects, groups and positions, through all those that were occupied, but also those who were exploited and dominated before the war (workers, peasants, different nations and nationalities). The slogan 'Brotherhood and Unity', adopted as the formal slogan for the new Yugoslavia, cannot be understood without taking into account the fact that no one anthem was held aloft above all others. There was neither a Yugoslav nation, nor a Yugoslav language, but a time of revolutionary activity that went beyond any (mono)ethnical identity. Any survey in 1941, 1943 or 1945 conducted among the partisans or partisan leadership on the question of the partisan, national and/or Yugoslav anthem would readily show that there was no consensus on such an issue. Rather, strength was to be found in the multiplicity of anthems contributing to (the anthem to) the People's Liberation Struggle. It is such anthems, rather than the unity of the nation, that enunciate the position of the oppressed and the occupied, of those who mobilize both past struggles and figures and who already speak from the future of a 'new world'. Finally, it is noteworthy that not all of these anthems were new: some of them were appropriated from the previous popular legacy of poems of local resistance, while others, through parasitizing the melody and musical score, were either parodies or expanded versions of existing international revolutionary poems and songs.

## 3.3 'The Women's Anthem'

'The Women's Anthem' is another example with a rather fascinating historical trajectory, even if the date of its inception is difficult to discern. The poem was written by a woman communist youth activist and Jew Magda Bošković, who herself had taken a trajectory of continuing encounters with Roma music and culture, already in the time of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. Women communists adopted her song in 1937 (Apih et al., 1976), while the melody was taken from the Soviet context, that is from Eimlers's film *Counterplan* (1932), for which Shostakovich wrote a musical score to commemorate fifteen years of the October Revolution. The original's lyrics are very different from 'The Women's Anthem', whose focus is on female emancipation. Before WWII only a tiny minority in the feminist communist struggle knew of the poem, but this would change in November 1941 and as the struggle progressed. The 'Anthem' received a mass popular reception in the first liberated republic of Užice, since it was printed in the aforementioned partisan songbook, *Antifascist Songs*.

The bitter and dark past is disappearing behind us
putting a century old dream behind us,
we women are all black from slavery
but we approach the day freely now.

And also a woman, who has suffered the most
up until now
has joined in the struggle now and is raising
her fist for more beautiful days.

We call all women to the struggle,
so let our voice be heard in the city and in the village
we build a brighter future
so let us sing a song at the top of our voice

And also a woman, who suffered the most
up until now

has joined in the struggle now and is raising
her fist for more beautiful days. (translation mine – G.K.)[22]

This poem soon became a popular song, so much so that it could be said to have been a sonorous spearhead of the political agency of the Women's Antifascist Organization (AFŽ). We might imagine that this song echoed through the forests of Yugoslavia, or the streets of occupied cities, at times loudly, at others in silent murmur, always in the hope for a peaceful and different future. Its political subjectivity consists in the women's process of awakening, and the historical fact that many women saw the liberation struggle as a historical opportunity to transform the traditional role that women had had in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. Partisan women received the political right to vote and to be voted for, and for the first time in history they were able to fight with arms side by side with partisan men. This anthem clearly resonated with the notion of a collective path to the new free world that would liberate all working women and especially those who had 'suffered the most for us' in terms of intersectional modes of exploitation and domination. Patriarchal ideology was particularly strong in rural areas, but underwent a thorough-going social transformation during WWII. Partisan women and the AFŽ had a decisive impact on the liberation struggle itself, as many women became fighters, educators, and cultural and political leaders who paved the way towards the new world. At the end of the war, the AFŽ had more than two million members. The legacy of female antifascism in many respects formed what today we might call an intersectional struggle.

22 See also: http: //kombinatke.si/Pesmipdf/zenska_himna.pdf

Za nami je temna preteklost,
za nami stoletni je san,
me žene iz sužnosti črne,
v svobodni zdaj stopamo dan.
In žena, ki molčala
je doslej vse dni,
zdaj v borbi dvignila je
pest za lepše dni.
V borbo vas kličemo žene,
naj čuje nas mesto in vas,
gradimo si lepšo bodočnost,
zapojmo si pesem na glas.
In žena, ki molčala
je doslej vse dni,
zdaj v borbi dvignila.

## 3.4 The Partisan Anthem: 'Why Poems?'

This poem represents one of the deepest poetic expressions of the whole partisan struggle, and speaks from that impossible space of revolutionary temporality, between the past and future. I argue that it succeeds in evoking an awareness of intensifying the partisan rupture. The poem, written by Pintarič-Švaba (1924–1942), is titled 'Čemu pesmi?' (Why Poems?). The original was lost during the war and the poem has only survived in German translation. Franc Pintarič-Švaba was certainly not a renowned poet, either during or after the war, but his personal, tragic story deserves our attention. He was a fighter in the Štajerska Battalion and, on 23 August 1942, was poisoned by a local Nazi collaborator, dying on the way to the Nazi encampment. No image remains of him, no real biography and no grave. All we have are his personal notes, which, as it turns out, were his poems. We do not know whether these poems were recited to the Partisan battalion, or perhaps read silently during long nights with his fellow fighters, or even just by himself. There remains no memory, no testimony to this. Yet it is a historical fact that Pintarič's notes fell into the hands of the Nazis, who with the help of the same collaborator who had poisoned him, translated them into German. They hoped to uncover important information on the morality of the movement and on the identity of Pintarič's fellow partisans. Instead, as we will read, what they received were some of the most striking verses of partisan poetry in memory. These poems remained in Nazi hands, and, by a curious irony of history, they remained intact in a Nazi archive, and only, as aforementioned, in German translation. At the end of war, the partisans confiscated part of the archive belonging to the Nazi occupation forces. These records were then moved to the archive of the new socialist republic where they remained practically invisible. In 1987, however, some 45 years later, Boris Paternu et al. edited a large body of partisan poems and also translated Pintarič's poems. Yet at the very moment the(se) poem(s) finally appeared in Slovenian, ready to address the partisan rupture once more, the bloody end of Yugoslavia was already in preparation and with it yet another denunciation of the partisans by old local collaborators dressed in new clothes. This ironic moment reflects the failure of an historical mission: the real addressees of the poem are the future partisan generations, but the

historical context and absence of a critical-affirmative contextualization had already disappeared. It seems that this historical coincidence corresponds to the specific paradoxical temporality that is inherent in the structure of the poem.

**Why Poems?**

We wrote poems in different times,
When we had nothing else to do.
But today,
When justice belongs to those in power,
When weapons do the talking,
Our poem is loud and clear:
'We want to live, to live freely in a free land.'
This poem of ours is our guidance,
It is our anthem.
Victims are falling for this poem
– innocent victims –
And they are falling by the thousands.
When this poem becomes a reality,
When freedom approaches in all its light and power,
Come forward, you poets and writers!
To the victims fallen for this poem –
(Write) poems of eternal glory and memory. (translation mine GK)[23]

Franc Pintarič-Švaba wrote this poem in the early summer of 1942, when the situation on the military front at home and abroad could still be viewed as one of defeat: Axis forces had occupied the entirety of continental Europe and parts of Slovenian territory were annexed to the Third Reich at that time. The anthem, nevertheless, is directed against the tragic reality of this situation and attempts to elaborate the question written by the first

23 V drugih časih smo pisali pesmi, ker nismo imeli drugega dela. Danes pa, ko je pravica na strani močnejšega, ko govori orožje, je naša pesem dovolj glasna in jasna: 'Živeti hočemo, živeti svobodno na svobodni zemlji.'
Ta naša pesem je naše vodilo, je naša himna.
Za to pesem padajo žrtve – nedolžni – padajo tisoči.
Ko bo ta pesem postala resničnost, ko se bo svoboda približala v vsem svojem sijaju in moči, tedaj na plan, pesniki in pisatelji! Padlim žrtvam za to pesem – pesmi neminljive slave in spomina. (Komelj 2008, 551).

partisan poem, printed in December 1941 and directed to all partisan artists (and poets). The famous poem '*Veš poet svoj dolg?*' ('Poet, Do You Know Your Duty?') by Oton Župančič was a call to take the partisan side in the struggle. Similar political solicitations to poets (and artists) were very common in partisan poetry. One key text in this vein was the call to arms written by Karel Destovnik Kajuh, which was also one of the earliest. His first partisan verses were written on the eve of the Nazi invasion of Yugoslavia when he called on poets 'to sing today, like bayonets sing in the struggle. Poets need to spark the flame that is lit in people's hearts' (Kajuh in Paternu, 1995, 207). The higher duty of each individual and poet was, then, to go to battle using any and every means. I would argue that such calls to arms are most fully developed in Pintarič's poem, and are even the essence of the vocation of partisan poetry.

The very title of his poem 'Why Poems?' typically advocates that, in times when weapons do the talking, words in turn should also become weapons. But what if one entertains the option of translating the poem's vocation in a slightly different manner? '*Čemu pesmi?*' also means 'Poems to What?'. This title opens a different perspective by posing the following question: Who does the poem speak to and what purpose does it address? This is no longer a simple call, not the mere duty of the poet to speak to others about the partisan struggle; rather, it addresses the partisan struggle itself and offers one path for 'formalizing' the rupture that took place during the war. This is an anthem that was written in and because of the partisan struggle and it participates in the process of changing the existing state of affairs.

Such self-reflexivity offers a multi-layered view of temporality. As aforementioned, what is striking here is the temporal impossibility that is structurally inscribed in the poem and its vocation. The poem is first related to the past, per negationem, to earlier poems, poems that were written in a time of leisure and can no longer satisfy the demands of the 'vocation' of poetry. In the final paragraph, the poem refers to the poems of the future, poems, which will commemorate the partisan struggle. However, the gist of the anthem is concentrated on present impossibility, on the way that partisan poetry participates in the struggle to 'free' the land. This not only differentiates between the different vocations of poetry, but is also itself articulated from a paradoxical point in time; it evokes the perspective of

the future, of that which does 'not yet exist' – or, in Pintarič's words, the perspective of the 'free land' to come. This is highly self-reflexive poetry that dramatizes the tension between the past and future – both times of 'romanticism' (peace and glorious heroes) – but speaking from the position of the partisan present. This is a poem that is a partisan anthem engaged in the partisan struggle, in its very interiority. A revolutionary situation necessitates a call to 'overtake oneself towards the future' (Žižek, 2008, 460), which demands that one thinks and acts as if the future already existed, and thus effectuates the transformation before it takes place in reality. One dimension of this specific temporality therefore has to do with affirming something in the future, as if it has already come about; but there is another side, and this side has to do with retroactively asserting that whatever has been asserted will be achieved. Žižek (2008) takes this conception of temporality from both Lacan and Badiou, who connect it to the *futur antérieur*. It is not enough for a revolutionary event simply to take place: in order for it to take hold it needs to be named and intensified as well as retroactively acted upon in the future.

Such a complex temporality is woven into the very fabric of direct speech and communicates by way of prosopopoeia, whereby the anthem gives voice to and impersonates the struggle itself: 'We want to live, to live freely in a free land'. This is one of the most precise formulations of the political maxim of partisan struggle and it consists of three steps: firstly, against the regime of fascist death and murder, partisans decide to live; secondly, life is affirmed not in its subjugated, controlled or obliterated form, but as free existence; and, finally, partisans want to live freely in a free land. This seems an elementary formula but can also be universalized and seen in many other anticolonial experiences and subaltern subjectivities throughout the twentieth century. If struggle could speak or even be declaimed as a poem, it would impassion itself as a call to counter-interpellation, a poetic performative that goes against the apparatus of fascist occupation and the collaborationist tendency that either called for subjugation (and the obliteration of difference) or remained in the privacy of a pragmatic silence and empty expectation.

Pintarič's poem demands that future poetry replace the anthem when freedom comes. The future of poetry is now tasked with reciting and

memorializing the glory of past struggle. Can it then be said that the partisan anthem ultimately dissolves in nostalgia or in the socialist realist commemoration of the partisan struggle? This invitation to future poets seems to dissolve the very vocation of poetry advocated within the foundation of Pintarič's poem. In other words, the future poems would be placed in the service of commemoration, whereby revolutionary weapons would be transformed into state weapons or ideological vehicles conveying the glorious aspects of past struggle. This would mean that new poetry would only reflect the memory agenda of the (new) state and would be relegated to the state archive. But then again, the relationship between future poems and a future political entity is not discussed in Pintarič's poem. Future poems can and should warn both against the forgetting of the past and explore partisan struggle by other means. If we do not uphold this task, such an experience will be lost for us despite its being – or even by its being – duly archived.

The anthem signals the immanent failure to commemorate what remains to be realised and hence what cannot be fully closed off. Is not the key characteristic of the anthem precisely its 'artistic' disappearance through its realization as a political goal? Could we say that it will disappear the moment the land is freed? Within the Soviet avant-garde, new art was thought and realised through its very disappearance, but also through becoming an integral part of reality (a form of life) itself. Thus, if Pintarič's anthem was written solely for the purpose of liberation, it is clear that in the times that come after war and after the occupation has ended, there is no need for it, for it is a fait accompli. This anthem remains a disturbing reminder, even in the case that freedom is formally obtained, be it in socialism or capitalism. The poem points to the never fully attainable character of universal emancipation, and as such it traverses the specificity of any specific historical period. It is written for all the revolutions to come. Without new struggles and the new poetry of such struggles, Pintarič's poem really disappears.

To conclude, the two selected poems left an imprint of revolutionary memory each in their own way and form a proper poetic counter-archive. Franc Pintarič-Švaba›s *Why poems* touched upon the complex revolutionary temporality of poems that never quite coincide with the struggle, and the partisan subjectivity that transforms the coordinates of what art and land are.

While for the 'Women's Anthem' it becomes increasingly clear that when fascism is on the rise, today as yesterday, all marginalized groups, and most notably women, are the first to be targeted. Thus, their political and cultural work in antifascist struggle will be decisive for the future, yet again.

# 4 Partisan Ecology: Art and Care for the Non-Human World and Partisan Subjectivity in the Yugoslav People`s Liberation Struggle

How and why should we connect all of Yugoslav antifascism, antifascist liberation art and the figure of the partisan with the topic of *ecology*? Needless to say, during WWII no concern whatsoever was shown toward the environment in any of the theoretical, political or military agendas. An environmental politics simply did not exist. At a first glance, then, my attempt might seem riskily anachronistic – the simple application of fashionable, contemporary lenses to past material. But in what follows, I argue that an important relation can be traced between a concern for ecology and antifascism. In this vein, I develop three interrelated topics: the *first* involves tracing a lesser-known practice within Yugoslav partisan history, one that not only perceives the importance of the *site of struggle* (a large majority of struggles took place in the mountains and forests), but also offers an overview of the partisan artistic material that introduced the imaginary of caring for a non-human world, and especially for animals, in the fight against fascism. The second topic concerned partisan resistance. Such resistance, which is part of the longer lineage of the oppressed, and of indigenous and anticolonial struggle, actually unfolded a political subjectivation that developed its own set of cultural and political institutions. Due to their very site and forms of resistance, partisan struggles took place in nature and in the wilderness (Malm, 2018). From the outset, then, partisans were posited as an exteriority. This exteriority was immanent to the construction of the Western political canon as well as of a Eurocentric epistemology. In terms of a legal-ideological frame, those that were deemed to be radically Other, whether the figure of the slave/maroon, the bandit, the partisan or the savage, were perceived as being outside the legal frame, and also as being incapable of developing cultural and political institutions. Positing a division between nature and savages on the one hand, and city, state and civilization, on the other, famously reiterates the eternal divide in Western thinking between culture and nature, a trope well integrated into the project of progress (Adorno and Horkheimer, 2002). The third argument is that, rather than treating partisan/antifascist/maroon ecology as an anachronism, partisan struggles of the past might still be our 'contemporaries' that have been

participating in the collective praxis of radical transformation that already succeeded in practising a non-extractivist relation to nature.

## 4.1 From Fascist to Antifascist Ecology?

Let us start with a useful negative distinction and a question: what might the negation of partisan/antifascist ecology be? The attempt to draw a line of demarcation between a fascist ecology and an anti-fascist ecology shows that one needs to be careful when making distinctions. Fascism, both historically and in its contemporary guises and shapes, has always oscillated between a capitalist, modernizing orientation that is anti-ecological, and a more ideological romanticist anti-modern orientation that embraces a specific return to nature. Many studies have clearly demonstrated that fascism was an attempt to respond to a capitalist crisis not by abolishing it, but by embracing the most extreme fractions of big capital, the financial aristocracy, and the military-industrial complex. At this deeper politico-economic level, Nazism, fascism, and the longer history of colonialism never contradicted racialized capitalism or undermined the paradigm of domination over nature, over what was perceived as foreign, over the uncivilized world that ought not to be mixed with. The second 'ecological' orientation of fascism is at first glance even trickier to assign to an anti-ecological progressist mode: throughout its history and up to today, fascism has had diverse strands and movements – including, notably, some strands of 'deep ecology' with a Heideggerian influence (for criticism of this view, see Phillips, 2022), and neo-Malthusian strands that want to limit the size and resources of ever-growing populations and consider violence/war necessary to achieving population control (for criticism, see Ajl, 2021), all of which have presented themselves as pro-ecology.

It is important to consider the extent to which ecological discourse is still used today in order to present historically contingent hierarchies as natural, such as the gender order, or the extent to which it reiterates medieval corporativism, as if society required the individuals in it to follow assigned parts and roles. A corporativist reconciliation might then be actualized in the figure of a leader or as some variation of a supposedly organic community. But what should always be taken into account is the fact that such communities are always consolidated through the exclusion

of an Other – an Other deemed not to fit into the normal order of society. The notion of a clean environment also refers to a landscape cleansed of all those that do not belong to the national community, of all those ethnicities, races and identities that do not fit into the heteronormative, white supremacist ideal. In more eschatological terms, a pristine environment is a territory that is exclusively reserved for a specific/chosen people. As Max Ajl (2021) has clearly shown, these variations form a 'fortress of eco-nationalism' that, if needed, align with the proponents of eco-modernism (such as the famous capitalist green transition), and that actually prevents any real social changes by protecting the borders and privileges of the global North, and that, when necessary, enables the conducting of wars outside its borders.

However, (neo-)fascist ecology stands in stark contrast to what I want to suggest are practices of *partisan ecology*. It is true that militant figures such as partisans, guerrilleros, and anticolonial fighters all had strong social ties with nature. They moved – either forcibly or of their own volition – deep through forests or mountains. However, with this return we cannot speak of romanticization, as though these figures aimed at some sort of innocent and romantic life in nature. Nature presented itself to them in a multifaceted way: initially it was a site of refuge but also a site of awe and fascination, while – and this is important in terms of countering the culture-nature divide – the demonstration of a partisan capacity meant that nature became a site of political subjectivation, in which the partisans built a resilient infrastructure of resistance, and a political and cultural (counter)institutional frame that also entered into a relation of co-existence with nature. I define partisan/antifascist ecology as a set of practices that breaks with the system of capitalist exploitation and domination, and that in itself already sketches the material reality of a world in which a community-in-resistance develops a coexisting and non-extractivist relation to nature.

This definition of partisan ecology is indebted to two authors, the aforementioned Andreas Malm (2018), who has written a short article on the maroon partisans and the wilderness, and Malcom Ferdinand, whose book *Decolonial Ecology* (2019) gives an extremely multifaceted overview of Caribbean modernity in terms of collective resistance to a twofold fracture, both colonial and environmental. Both authors trace the emancipatory

trajectory of the former slaves, who built alternative communities in remote sites, from the sixteenth to the early twentieth centuries. Emancipated slaves, maroons who had escaped from plantations and gone deep into the mountains, marshlands and forests, where living conditions were not idyllic, encountered many challenges. Their lives continued to be imperilled, both due to the incursions of slave-owners and their militias, and due to the harsh conditions. Nevertheless, maroon communities expanded and constituted a different, autonomous, and political form of life, and they developed institutions of self-governance. They also existed in a more organic relationship with nature. The maroons had to remain militarily vigilant, whether in order to defend themselves or to launch raids on plantations and free other slaves. The maroons' liberation struggle was waged against the oppressive forms of the plantation system, which was the most violent side of the primitive accumulation of capital and colonialism, and they succeeded in building autonomous political communities.

My research takes into account the historical specificity of the Yugoslav partisan struggle and also seeks to set the partisan experience within the lengthy 'tradition of the oppressed' (Benjamin, 2003) and its solidarity. In terms of a general comparison, the experiences of the maroons and of the Yugoslav partisans share a certain positionality: *first,* both occupy a structural position as the *oppressed*. The maroons were slaves who emancipated themselves, while the partisans came from the most exploited and dominated social groups: peasants, workers, youth, and women. *Second,* they share the same *site of political subjectivation.* Importantly also, the political entrance to deep forests and mountains was used from the outset in ideological warfare against the resistance. Fascist and colonial propaganda branded them as savages and bandits who, as they said of partisans in the twentieth century, go so far as to return to nature. As Sanja Horvatinčić argues,

> Closeness to nature served to dehumanize Yugoslav partisans, similar to the indigenous peoples of European colonies, whose resistance also relied on natural environment and resources. Thus, the typical colonial gaze on the 'uncivilized other', paramount to white supremacist ideologies such as Nazism.[24]

24 Horvatinčić, 2023.

The *third* common trait shared by maroons and partisans is their political capacity, which enabled them to build their own institutions of self-governance and create the horizon of an alternative world. There were also some key differences in this lineage of the oppressed. Besides the apparently different historical frame, there is another major political difference; the maroons had to start out from nothing, while the partisan antifascists had to leave their 'homes' and organize in 'their' forests, and moreover were organized and guided by activists and leaders of Communist Party of Yugoslavia. The latter had had lengthy experience in underground work prior to the war (the Communist Party was banned in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia in 1921). Another difference in scale was that the central modus operandi of the (Yugoslav) partisans involved their mobility. Partisans liberated large swathes of land, which aimed to organize and mobilize the local populations in the cultural and political life of the liberation, while they also kept constantly moving. They embraced the logic that Deleuze and Guattari called 'deterritorialization' (1980). This took place in stark contrast to the substantialist definition of land – 'telluric' belonging – that the fascist thinker Carl Schmitt (2004) saw as the most important feature of the partisan. The essentialist definition of the partisan as a soldier that defends the land in the frame of *Blut-und-Boden* ideology (for a critique, see Kirn, 2019) is diametrically opposed to the Yugoslav partisan experience, which countered such mono-ethnical identifications. Just as Yugoslavia was not a nation, nor was Yugoslav a language. The key to the liberation struggle in Yugoslavia was not only to fight the fascist occupation and its local collaborators, often gathered around the old political class, but also to effect a social transformation of prewar Yugoslavia. The partisan political formation was the only formation in occupied Yugoslavia that was open to all religions, nations, nationalities, as well as to women, while other collaborationist groups were guided by a twofold identification with religion and with the nation, and organized around ethnic hatred and the exclusion of others.

In this process of transformation called the Yugoslav liberation, art and culture played a pivotal role by creating a symbolic frame of resistance and the solid imaginary of new world. Indeed, on the liberated territories, partisan culture had already been contributing to this new world through

organizational work and performances. This moment was one of the rare ones in which the masses enter onto the stage of history and counter forms of occupation, exploitation and domination over people and nature (Komelj, 2009). For our purpose here, which is to trace the *ecological current* within the partisan struggle, I give an overview of the important partisan artworks and practices that attest to how nature, the forest, but also animals and plants, became an integral part of partisan struggle, its imaginary and life. Moreover, I am interested in how these artworks, through their depictions, poems, visuals, and metaphors, launched a process of transformation on the side of partisan subjectivity, something that Deleuze and Guattari call 'becoming human animal' that is the 'existence of a very special becomings-animal traversing human beings and sweeping them away, affecting the animal no less than the human' (1987, 37; see also Timofeeva, 2018).

A look at the existing literature on Yugoslav partisan art shows that there has been practically no serious study on the relation between partisan art and ecology, or on the role that nature played for partisan subjectivity or for utopian imagination.[25] The following sections aim to start to fill that gap, but also to call to attention a potentially larger field of research interest that would cover the most impressive figures of partisan, anticolonial, and indigenous ecology. Indeed, my last figure, Alenka Gerlovič's drawings of snails, might not appear as an immediate candidate for a visual that is associated with the figure of partisan liberation, but I argue that the snail is a perfect figure to symbolize partisan ecology and resilience.

Furthermore, as I show in the conclusion, the snail offers a trajectory for sharing the lineage of partisan ecology across time and space. The partisan figure of the snail is a visual-political bridge to the Zapatistas' central motif and organizing principle: *caracoles*. Snails-shells embody a principle of decentralized organizing and even of collective remembrance that has been reappropriated from Mayan indigenous civilization.

25 Within the Slovenian literary context, the analyses of Stanonik are notable for tackling the emergence and role of nature in some partisan poems (Stanonik, 1995). Importantly, there is also Gostiša's analysis (1994) of some allegorical motives of animals in the graphic art of France Mihelič. And in the appendix to his book on partisan art, Komelj (2009) and Vičar (2016) a few examples of 'becoming animal' in poetic-literary partisan works.

## 4.2 Is It Possible to Draw Trees in Times of War and Antifascist Liberation?

It is a pertinent question in times of fascist occupation and war to ask why and to what extent it is possible to make art, or even to paint nature? As Bertold Brecht's famous 1939 poem *To Those Born Later* says, 'a talk about trees is almost a crime, because it implies silence about so many horrors'.[26] Furthermore, when waging an antifascist struggle/war, is it not better to take up arms and to fight in the military struggle? Or, if other means to fight against fascism are being used, surely it would be better to propagate and mobilize for the antifascist cause rather than to draw nature, animals, and trees? Such questions evoke a longer discussion about leftist controversies, ranging from the avant-garde to partisan art, ones perhaps most succinctly condensed at the time in the call of Walter Benjamin: rather than put down poetic arms, he called upon people to counter the fascist 'aestheticization of politics' by creating the conditions for, and practices of, a 'politicization of aesthetics' (Benjamin, 2003).

In the context of the Slovenian-Yugoslav liberation, the dilemma of partisan art was sharpened following a public call in 1944 for drawings/paintings that depicted the liberated territory. The controversy is known by the name of 'partisan birch' (in Slovenian, *partizanska breza*), and the public call carried what can be interpreted as a clear political directive: if someone wants to paint a (birch) tree, then s/he needs to make clear that 'a well-drawn birch tree cannot be a work of art, if there is no rifle leaning against it, or if it is not pierced by a burst shot'.[5] The depiction of nature thus needed to carry a direct representation of partisan/military struggle, which is why many artists and cultural workers at the time questioned this as a political directive that reduces art to propaganda. In the public debate of partisan cultural workers and political delegates, the autonomist position (defending the freedom of art but not its depoliticization) prevailed over the propagandistic position. A close reading shows that both sides were actually not that far apart: the autonomist (which becomes modernist in socialism) perspective never argued that there is such a thing as value-free, unpolitical art. Moreover, within the liberation struggle, any artwork

26 The original German title of Brecht's poem is '*An die Nachgeborenen*'. It was first published in Svendborger Gedichte (1939/1967, 722-25).

will become political because it participates in inventing new conditions of partisan art. Furthermore, that which was deemed the propagandistic position neither excluded any particular art form from partisan art, nor could we claim that socialist realism was the predominant frame of liberation art. The retrospective dichotomy was overcome by the partisan art practice itself, which followed neither propaganda nor partisan modernism/avant-gardism. Rather, what we find among the rich artistic material, which includes graphic or written to oral and musical formats, is a mixture of modernist, expressionist, avant-gardist, but also propagandistic, vernacular and folkloric tendencies and legacies (Hercigonja, 1962). There were no pure partisan forms. What partisans witnessed was rather a dramatic reversal of who is a producer of art, what is produced, for whom and where. As Janez Kardelj expressed it in his famous *Anthem to Agit Theater* (1942):

> All of us here are partisan actors,
> our home is nowhere, our stage everywhere.
> The green forest is now our auditorium,
> The moon the floodlight shining in the sky.
>
> (Paternu et al. 1998: 257, translation mine)

Those in the struggle were producing for those in the struggle located deep in the forest. As Miklavž Komelj has convincingly argued, partisan art had to reinvent the very conditions of art production, by inventing new institutions and practices, and using the scarce materials at its disposal (Komelj, 2009). I argue that precisely this novelty and multiplicity marked the hybridity of the amateurish and the avant-garde in partisan art. For example, in graphic art once can find expressionist, surrealist, but also social realist and propagandistic drawings, posters, and engravings (Kirn, 2020).

## 4.3 Partisan Art Examples: Nature Becoming Partisan, Partisans Becoming Animal?

My initial selection of partisan artworks in the following sections demonstrates that in partisan art the animal world was not coded as a simple symbol or a metaphor for partisans.[27] Non-human worlds and specific fig-

27 Močnik, 2016, 32. For a longer discussion on political engagement, that is on the modernist, realist and avant-gardist tendencies within leftist and partisan art, see also the discussion between Komelj (2016) and Močnik (2016) in the same journal *Slavica tergestina* (2016).

ures functioned as, or were given the status of, a political subject that participated in the partisan struggle. There are various ways in which artworks depicted plants, forest and animals, and challenged the border between the human and the animal (Haraway, 2015).

Departing from the controversy of the partisan birch, I want to analyse one striking example of a partisan tree, a drawing that became a famous partisan graphic called 'Scorched Pear-Tree' (in Slovenian, *Ožgana tepka*):

Image 6: Scorched Pear-Tree (France Mihelič). Courtesy of the National Museum for Contemporary History, Ljubljana.

This work is by France Mihelič, one of the more famous expressionist graphic artists. His artistic production includes a vast graphic portfolio in which dead nature and burned trees hold a strong place. According to some art historians, his work also plays strongly on documenting killed or wounded animals, and depicting the fields, trees and villages burned through fascist terror. I would like to suggest that the scorched pear-tree does not only represent an emblem of the destruction of fascist warfare. Nature, it is true, is also a victim of (fascist) war, as Tina Fortič has cogently argued (Fortič, 2022). However, I would like to underline two further dimensions for my ecologically focused analysis: the first is that, rather than depicting scorched trees as 'victims', one can see them as the 'material witnesses' of war. This small shift from victims to witnesses expresses the desire and projection of the artwork; Mihelič's fascination with the destroyed plants and trees is actually a way of giving this deadly presence a specific visual agency. Secondly, Mihelič's move isolates a particular tree – some works even focus on a sole branch – and succeeds in making a dead tree autonomous and isolated from the rest of the landscape. This gesture does not embellish a trace of violence that would be then read as a fascist gesture of 'aestheticizing' the effects of such (fascistic) violence. Rather, the horrific waste and remnants of nature left after human destruction are signs of landscape resistance. For Komelj, this depiction evidences Mihelič's antimilitaristic stance, which, given he was involved in the partisan struggle, evinces a truly ethical position on, and sensibility for, the human and the non-human worlds:

> Mihelič maintains that trees are important precisely in their concreteness and foreignness and that the very standpoint from which we become aware of their importance is also the standpoint from which we can resist the attempt at any aestheticization of war devastation, from which it follows that Mihelič's position is antimilitaristic. (Komelj, 2016, 60)

The scorched tree persists; it thus becomes a striking exemplification of the 'partisan' resilience of nature itself. Rather than remaining a victim of fascist crime, we could, in the name of nature, turn it into an emblem of partisan ecology.

The second example of partisan graphic ecology art can be found in the contributions of Marijan Detoni, a Croatian artist who created insightful realist drawings and graphic artworks depicting the working class in Paris prior to the war. His first partisan graphic map, *Plodovi uzbuđenja* (Fruits of excitement, 1941), which dates from the early days of the war, seemingly depicts nature amidst the scream of the coming horrors. We are drawn into his visual analysis of plant morphology, but on closer inspection the details of nature defy romantic assurances, as various flowers and plants threaten to grow beyond every limit of that which is perceived as natural, but perhaps even beyond the limit of the graphic medium, extending its tentacles to embrace the public. In some sense, by disrupting the dying horizons of bourgeois morality and taste, Detoni's graphic map can be read as a visual reference to Baudelaire's work *The Flowers of Evil*. But perhaps this monstrous expansion of plants ought rather to be read as a process of breaking the chains, as a certain premonition and announcement of a (partisan) uprising of plants against the looming brutality of war and occupation? It seems to me that nature's monstrous growth, its popping out of all joints, points to the traumatic dimension of war that leaves nobody unscathed.


Image 7a, 7b: Flowers of Imagination (by Marijan Detoni, 1941). Courtesy of Museum of Contemporary Art, Belgrade

To return to France Mihelič, his inspiring graphic works in a series of drawings called *Apocalypse* is another striking depiction of nature and struggle. Mihelič here captures multiple dimensions of the destruction of villages, people, nature, material signs as well as the traces of violence, rape and torture, all of which together form an apocalyptic landscape with 'filmic' qualities. This is what, with Pavle Levi (2012), we could call 'film with other means' – in this instance, graphic art and drawings – at a time in which the material conditions for film had not been met. For my purposes, I would like to discuss a striking drawing called *Traces* (in Slovenian, *Sledovi*). This graphic artwork consists in a linoleum cut and is perhaps the artwork that best condenses the apocalypse desired by fascist dreams and politics.

Tina Fortič Jakopič argues that this particular drawing 'encapsulates the stage of total ruin, while at the same time it shows the moment where everything calms down and silences ... the only surviving beings are two crows' (Fortič Jakopič, 2020, 22-31). The only survivors of fascist crimes are animals. The depiction of 'total ruin' is somehow surprising since other drawings in the cycle, and many other graphic artworks by Mihelič, rather activate the gaze: we see animals, people, partisans, fascists, and others moving around, perhaps only temporarily waiting for the (final) storm. In contrast to the depiction of movement, the two graphic artworks selected here, *Scorched Pear-Tree* and *Traces*, become distilled images of war: life becomes still, is paralysed, or reduced to the bare life of animals that wonder alone, or is portrayed as dead trees to mark the silence after the terror. These works can be also seen as a temporary result of the war movement and the negative consequences for (partisan) ecology.

The next group of examples deal with the forest, which as mentioned, was not only a refuge for partisans, but also a key site of political organization and resistance, a laboratory of people power. Animals and the forest became a major part of partisan and artistic sensibility, even if Marija Stanonik, in analysing partisan poems, suggests that the topic of nature is not as predominant as expected (Stanonik, 1995). Yet, all throughout the visual, written and oral matter, one encounters the forest as refuge, as inspiration, as monument and as grave; it is a holder of emancipatory promise, a site of freedom, and a *new political space* for the whole liberation struggle.

Image 8: Sledovi/Traces (France Mihelič). Courtesy of MNSZS.

One of the most famous songs of the Yugoslav partisan struggle was made an official partisan anthem, namely *Over the Woods and Hills* (in Serbo-Croat *Po šumama i gorama*). The song weaves a very strong link between partisan struggle, defence, and transformations of the land. Or, yet another

lesser-known folk song *Forests, Forests* by Međimurje succeeds in summoning forests as active agents of transformation. It gives special credit to the forests that enabled and gave birth to freedom.

> Forests, forests,
> Our greatest thanks to you,
> Freedom was born in you.
> We gained freedom in you,
> For all small and real nations/people.

Sanja Horvatinčić incisively points out that partisan units benefited from the Dinaric mountains and the geographic terrain of Karst, providing them with multiple hideouts, shelters and barriers that form a kind of rhizomatic landscape. As Horvatinčić argues, there was also the knowledge of the local population that

> was another crucial element of successful resistance: old forest trails and shortcuts, food, water, medical herbs – all of which were vital to keeping the resistance alive, to enabling the partisan movement to turn the difficult landscapes to their favour. This experience was not unique to Yugoslavia – in the Eastern European countries (Belarus, Poland, Ukraine/USSR) and in some regions of the West (Italy, France, Norway), armed resistance and civilian refuge were closely related to mountains and forests.[28]

Here the forest functions as a direct allusion to partisan struggle itself. Going to the forest meant becoming a partisan (see Komelj, 2009). I would like to quote one section from Zoran Hudales Senoviški's poem that attests to a fascinating transition that turns partisan fortresses into partisan choirs – choirs being the most popular and mass poetic-artistic form and praxis of the partisan struggle:

> ...forests, green fortresses,
> The murmur of struggles, heroes and victory....
> The murmur over the ground where dear ones have fallen.

28 Ibid. Horvatinčić. I would like to thank Sanja Horvatinčić for pointing out to this poem to me.

Murmur proud, bud and stand!
With the wind mighty to the far distances
Sing especially a song of freedom.

The transition from the immobile fortress of nature to the choirs that are given a voice is accompanied by a small shift from singing-murmuring, as a praxis of mourning the fallen fighters to singing songs of freedom. Words and poems of partisan resistance become extremely mobile and spread wide and far, even to the occupied cities. A similar rhythm and resilience can be traced in various stories and visual depictions of the caged, bruised and battered birds, and also to those partisan birds that cannot be caged, and that will get free with other fellow birds. A partisan bird continues to sing despite the impossible circumstances, despite not being heard due to fascist bombs or restrictions on speaking in their own language. Despite the restrictions and thorns, the partisan bird keeps singing and awakening the people, as Radajev's poem aptly depicts it

from under the sky
The droning engines roar...

Sing the birds...
a song of iron
a song of thunder, strikingly...

Sing it day and night,
So that he will listen to it
The cursed devil.
And fly over us
And announce to us
Happy New-
Free Spring.

Birds have long been a strong visual and sonorous trope of freedom. A nightingale singing on a branch of thorns is one of the most famous such examples. One could even say, emphatically, that such emblems from nature help us to substitute the typical figurative heroic representation of male or female partisans with something else: this bird stands as the index and symbol of partisan resistance, art, and ecology.

## 4.4 Becoming Animals: Partisan-Wolves

Trees, forests, and birds are perhaps the most common motifs of partisan – liberation art. For this reason, I would like now to turn to the process of political transformation, and to a more challenging representation of partisans-as-beasts. Conventionally, the figures of the savage and the beast have always served to cement the border between the human/the civilizational, and the animal/the barbaric. In a more propagandistic genre, the other side, here the fascists, would be caricatured in times of war as beasts/wolves that prey on 'our' people/innocent sheep. This trope exists in some caricatures and graphic artworks; however, there is also a counter-current that embraces the beasts that emerge in various poems, stories, and visual artworks. Interestingly, multiple positive references can be found to wolves, and even to what are 'wolves-partisans'. In the first partisan report written by the partisan poet Matej Bor about his drama *Torn* (in Slovenian, *Raztrganci*, 1942), Bor used wolves in a clear connection to partisan subjectivity, part of a process we could call the 'becoming of partisan-wolves'. Also, there is a surprising reference to wolves in the very first partisan poem called *Sing after me* (Slovenian, *Pojte za menoj*), which was written by a major Slovenian poet, Oton Župančič, and printed in the Slovenian daily *Delo* in an illegal printing shop in Ljubljana in December 1941. The song calls people to arms against the fascist occupiers and their collaborators, and concludes that the wolves will turn against the hunters, the hunted will become the hunters:

> then the wolf assembly
> goes to slaughter the hunters.

A 'pack of wolves', or what here becomes a 'wolf assembly', points to the political process in which the 'hunters' come to face an active and fierce resistance. Komelj argues that the positive reference to some beasts and wolves can be partially ascribed to its positive folkloric legacy in the broader Balkan imaginary (see also Komelj, 2009). I suggest here that we ought not to take it as a mere metaphor, but rather as an imaginary that sets a political process to work, one that Deleuze and Guattari (1986) call 'becoming-animal'. The latter is defined by a movement from the major, or constant to the minor, or variable, where deterritorialization marks a nomadic modality of becoming. From the hunted to the assembly, from hunter to wolf, all sorts of subtle

changes that account for transformation. Due to its intensity and the specificity of its site, partisan struggle testifies to the overcoming of the border, or at least to a new constellation between the human and the animal.

Also importantly, taking seriously partisan ecology and political metamorphosis is juxtaposed to a retrospective and relativizing liberal-humanist trope that insists on upholding the morality of humankind by clinging to the distinction between (noble) humans and (evil) animals. Such a trope ascribes the horrors of war to the transformation of humans into animals during the war. Such argumentation also exculpates humans from their horrific deeds: for contemporary revisionists, fascist deeds and antifascist struggles are all considered simply violent, and in this respect are seen as proximate, and even equated (Traverso, 2016). Thus, the inhuman and bestial dimensions of war and all extreme ideologies, testify to the long-gone borders between the human/the civilized, on the one hand, and nature/war, on the other. But the opposite is true: isn't precisely the emergence of extreme horrors, such as the gas chambers of Auschwitz, testimony to the fact that humanity and its racialized supremacy is able to precisely do all these acts, in some cases without remorse, with blissful ignorance, with silent or open collaboration? There is nothing animal-bestial here. War and its horrors are neither transhistorical nor foreign to human nature. It is not as if in times of peace and stability humans are somehow innocent and civilized, and then in times of war they all of sudden change and become beasts, such that it no longer matters which side one is on, or what the conflict is about (on the connection to animals, ecology and social justice, see also Benton, 1993).

The precise metaphorical distinction between humans and animals contributes to decontextualizing war, and sets fascism and antifascism on the same footing. We might add that this separation, as well as the stereotype according to which beasts are out to exterminate other species, is biologically and environmentally incorrect. The non-human world follows its own laws and dynamics, and adheres to its own selections, its own fight against the circumstances and forms of symbiosis that work to balance ecosystems. Also, there exists no animal species, or so-called beast, that would simply exterminate another species or build concentration camps with utmost industrial precision. The alternative partisan ecological trajectory puts forward a new identification in which partisans are made beasts in order

to emerge victorious over the fascists. To win the war against fascism, it takes total commitment and transhuman coalitions to win the struggle. The process of overcoming the binary separation between humans and animals thus avoids any moralizing humanist trope that would call for decency, civilizational values and non-animalistic behaviour from humans.

One of the most emblematic visual representations of 'the beast' is again found in France Mihelič's cycle *Apocalypse*. Some authors have referred to the image as a screaming dog, but I suggest that this image be read as a howling wolf, or even as a partisan, or partisan-dog, becoming a wolf. Tina Fortič (2022) has analysed this image as a depiction of a wandering dog, as the last one left standing in the scorched landscape, besides the aforementioned crows. This dog can only howl in despair to the sky. I would like to add a small dialectical twist: the howling wolf can be also seen as calling for revenge, or as calling others to arms, to the emerging assembly of the liberation front and the growing assembly of partisan-wolves.

Image 9: Howling Wolf (France Mihelič). Courtesy of MNSZS.

Partisan publishing also included poetry and literature for children. Among the poetry for children, I came across a little illustration that accompanied a poem called *Animals Help* ( *Živali pomagajo*) published in 1944.

> That night at full moon
> The animals of the forest gathered
> They came together in unison:
> 'We will help the Partisans!'[29]

Some animals in the poem then become couriers. Others patrol. Again, all take part in the partisan struggle against the fascist occupation. It should also be noted that many partisans took animal names when they entered detachments. Thus, in this transition between the human and the animal, even a certain sort of comradery develops.

This brings me to one of the last key animals that feature in various stories, poems, graphic maps, photos and drawings. This vital figure is undoubtedly shared between a mule and a horse. These animals constituted the partisans' most essential means of transport, but were also symbols of victimhood and resistance, and a strong part of the constant partisan marching columns. One of the most striking figures was created by Ive Šubic, who refers to the mule with a proper name, and even gives a mule a significant addressee, a 'comrade'. This sensibility, care, and love for animal life clearly positioned animals in the partisans political camp. Vičar argues convincingly that animals, and notably horses, in their suffering and during the struggle, were able to be subjectivized – and is a recurrent motif in some partisan artworks (Vičar, 2016). This deeply resonates with the thought that Oxana Timofeeva – through her close readings of Platonov, whose concern and utopia implied the whole planet – suggests: 'In his writings, not only humans, but all living creatures, including plants, are overwhelmed by the *desire for communism*' (Timofeeva, 2018, 168). In the case of Platonov, we speak of the horse's comradely back; in the case of Šubic, its comradely face and neverending support in the joint quest for liberation.

29 Published in *Slovenski pionir*, 9-10 April 1944.

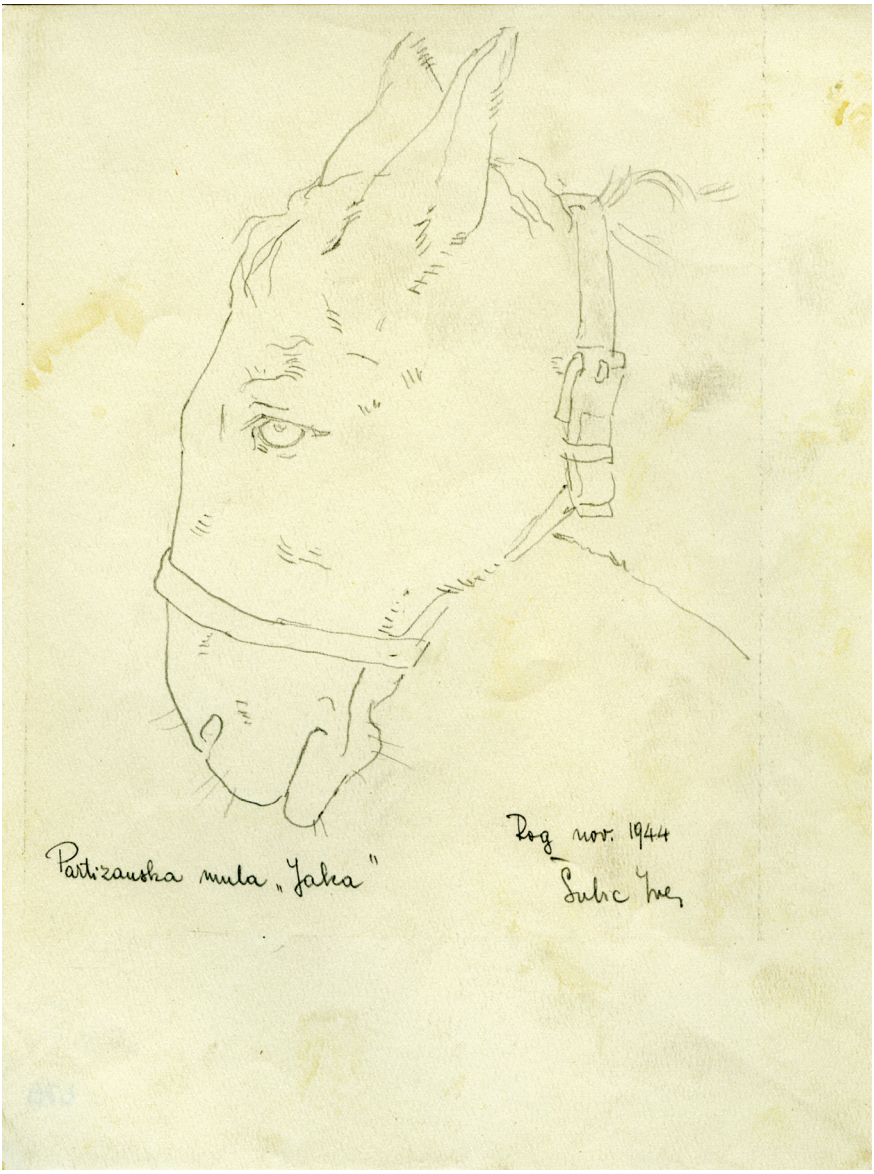


Image 10: Mule Jaka (Ive Šubic). Courtesy of MNSZS.

## 4.5 The Snail as a Figure: From Partisan Resilience to the Inspired Organization, Memory, and Degrowth Strategies of the Zapatistas

In the concluding part, I would like to mention some depictions of an animal that might not be seen on the front lines of partisan struggle: a snail. Relative to horses, wolves, or birds, a snail is usually associated with slowness of movement. At first glance, a snail is neither seen as being fierce, or as being able to form assemblies like wolves. A snail cannot really sing a loud song that would inspire, or even mobilize nature and the masses to join the struggle. A snail is also unable to transport ammunition, the wounded, or food for whole detachments. Nonetheless, a snail represents the most central feature, attitude, and affect of the partisan struggle itself. The snail embodies resilience and the painstakingly long walk of resistance, a crawling to the partisan liberation from occupation. A snail also always carries its own house, and thus emblematizes a certain independence from property and the state. It points to the deterritorializing movement of partisan troops.

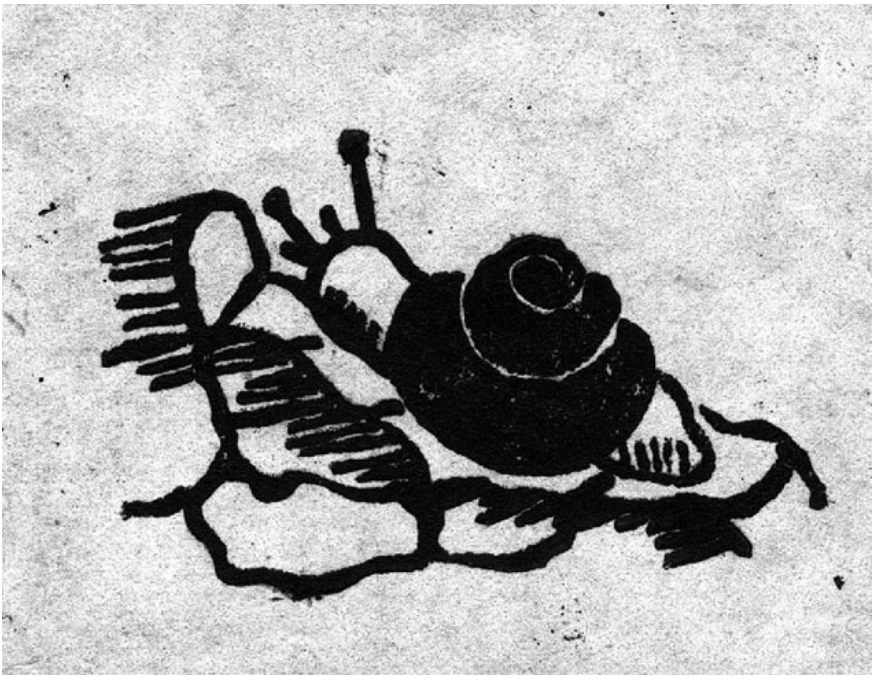

Image 11: Snail (Alenka Gerlovič, 1945). Courtesy of MNSZS.

The snail is an embodiment of the deterritorializing principle of the partisan movement. The partisans were constantly on the move, and this is something that is always repeated in the word and deed of Zapatistas. To share one's experiences of various struggles, to walk together through continents, and to slowly arrive in a different world: deterritorialization is opposed to the so-called substance of a national territory, or an ethnically and racially purified homeland. The snail is a figure that can be radically juxtaposed to the telluric dimension, which yet again opposes it to Carl Schmitt's definition of the partisan figure (Schmitt, 2004). For Schmitt, partisan formation is distinguished by mobility, irregularity, and is most notably overdetermined by the telluric attachment to the national soil. While for the partisan-snail, just like the old mole that digs into the earth, it is all about redefining and transforming what the land, or country, is. The partisans and their animals cannot live without the soil, but they are also always changing it.


Image 12: A Zapatista graphic from group Memoria y Revuelta. Online material.

The figure of snail is not arbitrary and can be related to a variety of partisan-liberation struggles across the world. These range from Che Guevara's famous saying that guerrilla fighters are like snails that have their home-house always packed on the back (Che Guevara, 2006, 52) to our last example of the major relevance of snails and shells in the Zapatista movement from the 1990s onwards. It was the Zapatista movement that first took the snail-shell as a historical figure and as a *Denkfigur*, as something that marks the beginning and the end of their struggle. The snail marks both a potent device for archiving the history of indigenous resistance, as well as a political principle of organizing communities into a series of decentralized shells/caracoles, each bearing a different name.[30]

Most importantly for my purposes here is a specific Mayan-Zapatista lineage and an intergenerational memory of the ongoing revolt. The Zapatistas often refer to both Emiliano Zapata, a Mexian revolutionary leader and to older Mayan indigenous civilization and adopt their emancipatory resources by recounting stories in which the snail-shell embodies a material device that archives, and indeed materially traces, past ruptures and counter-ruptures. Against the linear time of progress, snail-shells form concentric spiralling circles and fractures that register history in a more organic way in which nature and culture are bound together. The Zapatistas speak neither of the mere cyclical repetition of nature and history, nor do they naïvely decipher signs that can be interpreted in any way possible. With them, there is no romantic return to some pristine state of nature before capitalism and colonialism, but instead of a necessity to move slowly, and to go beyond the capitalist temporality of acceleration. Subcomandante Marcos (2021) condenses the importance of the figure of the snail in the political imaginary of the Zapatistas as follows:

> The snail made by the Mayan rebel leaders began and ended at the safehouse, but it also began and ended at the library. The site of meetings, of dialogue, of transition, of seeking– that was the snail of Aguascalientes.[31]

30 The most detailed ethnographical research into the Zapatistas visual narrative also focuses on the figure of the snail-shell. See Cozzolino and Solomouhka, 2022.

31 Quoted from Subcomandantos Marcos speeches: https://barricadejournal.org/ramparts/architectures-antifascism/the-snail-of-the-end-and-the-beginning/.

Snails are constantly on the move; they also constantly document their movement. This makes them a highly resilient species, able to survive extreme climatic changes. Beyond their biological specificities, which allow for their impressive resilience, their partisan 'nature' can be signalled by their slowness of movement. To walk slowly, step by step, is a principle evoked by the Zapatistas, step by step with a determination to make it to the end, regardless of the awful circumstances. This snail principle is used to counter tropes of liberal technologism and individualization. 'Slowing down' can be read as a tactic for the urgent transformation of the human world in the late capitalocene, and as indicating the importance of moving together slowly to curtail the exponential economic growth and capitalist extraction that hit both the oppressed and ecosystems alike. In light of the deep crisis of progress, capitalist growth and the so-called green transition, which have been increasingly overwritten by the horizon of war and a war economy, the figure of the snail might be seen as the most potent icon for degrowth and peace as linked to social, racial and environmental justice.

## 4.6 Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated the forgotten legacy of the Yugoslav partisan struggle, which, along with its multiple and fascinating artistic activities, produced a strong ecological sensibility and a non-extractivist rapport with the non-human world. I analysed an array of artworks that show various depictions, caricatures, and allegorical motives; that reveal the narrative and representative power that is invested in the forest, animals and plants. If, initially, partisan autonomy and its liberated territories were enabled thanks to the shelter provided by dense forests, partisans, through their organizational and creative efforts, turned their place of refuge into new political spaces. In a productive exchange between the human and the non-human world, the desire of much partisan art was to mobilize the non-human world in the struggle against fascism, and perhaps also to call for an understanding of the deep transformation of people and the world around. With the help of Deleuze and Guattari, I call this a process of becoming partisan-human-animal. Through the analysis of a small selection of poems, short stories, drawings and graphic artworks, I have attempted to show that animals are not a simple allegory in these works; rather, the

partisan struggle is marked by a process of overcoming the distinction between the animal and the human through the enlistment of animals as comrades in arms in a collective fight against fascism and other forms of domination. Partisan ecology thus acts and imagines a world without arms, free from war, but also a world that challenges and develops beyond growth and profit.

For partisan ecology, the forest and what has become of nature is not something to which one returns in a romanticized fashion. Historically speaking, the importance of the forest is clearly unsurprising given the landscape of resistance; liberation came about primarily in the forests. Also, the very social constitution of the partisan body largely consisted of members of the peasantry, which had emancipated itself through struggle and its cultural politics. In respect of partisan ecology and the debt to partisan-nature, the future orientation of socialist Yugoslavia, which took up the tropes of modernist development and industrialization for its postwar socialist reconstruction, can be grasped in its ambivalence, or indeed contradiction. One could argue that it became part of a certain partisan history that had been forgotten in socialism then became completely erased during the period of transition to capitalism.

In the concluding part, I have built a small bridge through the figure of a snail. The snail marks the last vestige of partisan struggle in its connection to transversal and international struggles. The figure of snail as a figure of partisan resistance and resilience, as a figure of liberation struggles, for the Zapatistas carries, as I have shown, a particular weight for thinking about the past, the present and the future. To move slowly, to keep moving, and to share space and time with others bears a promise of international solidarity. Such a figure could well be a harbinger of the contemporary struggle for degrowth, that prompts us to rethink how we use and share the (partisan) landscape with others. The figure of the snail, together with the oppressed, demand that the Global North finally pay its debt to the Global South. To be partisan today means to think about and act on ecological challenges and climatic changes from within a utopian horizon, and to participate in recovering and reactivating the tradition of the oppressed.

# 5 The Unwanted Images Project: Liberation, Women and the Printing Press in Partisan Photography

This chapter starts by crediting the work of the photographer and theorist Davor Konjikušić, whose book on partisan photography compelled him to explore ways to make partisan photos – entrusted to him during research – accessible for further public use. Unwanted Images is a digital platform that assembles interventions, texts, and most of all very precious and not-so-famous photos that were created during the liberation struggle in Yugoslavia. Compared to partisan graphics and poems, partisan photography has received far less attention in art history, and has often been categorized under the genre of war 'documents', war-partisan reportage/journalism (for critical take on this view, see Kirn, 2020). In this regard, Davor Konjikušić's ongoing work (Konjikušić, 2020) and the project called Unwanted Images is a unique online site that not only provides more access and visibility to Yugoslav partisan photography, but also offers a view on a strong political aesthetics to which multiple photos attest. Some may see this project as an updated and more visually focused archival attempt to that of znači.net, but I believe that Unwanted Images as a project raises a number of serious epistemic questions: not only to what, how, and why are we returning, but also whether such a treatment of the emancipatory past offers a way to imagine and create a different future? How can partisan, unwanted photographic material be staged, framed, exhibited and, most importantly, reused and 're-mediated' in emancipatory ways? The project *Unwanted images* as partisan photo-counter-archive does not shy away from the fact that partisan photography took a committed stance, so that its use today will also necessarily entail intervening into the field of memory culture, which is riddled with antagonisms, exclusions, amnesia and blind spots.

Furthermore, returning yet again seriously to Karl Marx's famous 11th thesis on Feuerbach ('Philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways; the point is to change it.' MECW 5, 1975, 8), we need to argue that partisan photography should not only capture and represent the world, but inquire into how and in what ways photography can contribute to changing it. Azoulay's meticulous work on archives and long history of imperialism calls on critical scholarship to unlearn our imperial way seeing and reading the past. (see Azoulay, 2019). One such way to unlearn what remains of imperial

and national archives is to launch an antifascist and anti-imperial desire for justice that defragments, rereads, and looks anew at the same material. Can we see the partisans as antifascist, and anti-imperial discontinuity, and contingency that shatters with the imperial photo-camera, ways of reception? Perhaps we could say that partisan photography succeeds not by making certain images 'eternal', but rather by capturing 'contingency' (Doane, 2002). Partisan 'photo-eye' photography captured the fleeting moments of the partisan rupture and revolutionary time, which was constantly 'deterritorializing', and its ever-changing territory/space. In this respect, I have selected photos that show the various ways in which partisan men and women organized their struggle and ways of life, imagined new symbolic networks of resistance, and not only captured them in their military actions/fights and photographic poses. In search of images of liberation, it was these multiple angles and partisan 'photo-eyes' that managed to capture the processes of liberation that moved men, women, and animals which already constructed an alternative society, and promoted an alternative world for all.

This chapter will select from among those partisan photos that relate to the presentation of women and their multiple activities, on the one hand, and infrastructure of the printing press, on the other. Both women as pivotal subjects and the printing press as a fundamental infrastructure can be thought as crucial for the development and social life of the whole liberation struggle. Before I engage in a close analysis of the selected material, I would like to make a few more points of a general and historical nature about the role and modality of partisan photography.

## 5.1 Partisan Photography: Propaganda, Documentation, and the Ethnography of Resistance

The partisan photography in question was created in wartime, more precisely in the context of the fascist occupation of Yugoslavia. It is also important to note that, at least initially, the PLS political leadership had reservations about the use of photographic cameras. Photography was seen as a weapon that made the party's movement more vulnerable by exposing its members. Photography could capture and betray the identity of specific partisans, of their secret locations. Even if an individual was not directly threatened, his/her family and close friends could be taken hostage, sent to the camps or

shot by the fascist regime. However, a year after the occupation, the General Command of the PLS realized the importance of archiving the resistance in order to document it to the Allies, and also to use it for the future. The well-known Jewish communist intellectual and partisan Moše Pijade, a member of the Liberation Struggle Command, signed the first decree on the partisan archive on 20 October, 1942, which called on the partisan units to collect

> a) one copy of each publication (a newspaper, booklet, leaflet, or any other cultural or other material) and also all future publications […] b) one copy – of all photographs of our struggles and from behind the front, also the confiscated enemy's photographs […] each photo needs to state who or what it represents, when and where it was taken, and from who this photo was taken […]. Quoted in Kurs (Miletić and Radovanović, 2016, 106).

As the war progressed, the partisan resistance became larger and more organized. Photography was assigned an important propaganda role and featured strongly in various propaganda sections of partisan detachments.


Image 13: Room of Cultural Workers (Mladen Iveković, 1944). Courtesy of Unwanted Images.

From 1943 until the end of the war, the considerable amounts of photographs produced came to number in the tens of thousands and were

collected for years after the liberation (mostly by Museums of Revolution in the various cities of socialist Yugoslavia). The photographic archive of the partisans is immense, and covers multiple themes: photos of fascist violence, traces of the fascist occupation, of horrific images of dead bodies and animals, burned and abandoned villages, the effects of bombs and weapons on survivors. Another important part of the photo-archive is the documentation of the partisan commandos of everything from their military actions and training to their posing for the camera and doing various vignettes at the partisans' political and cultural events; finally, the partisan camera also captures contingent moments of the partisans' everyday life in the liberated areas. Much of this material can be classified under the conventional genre of war photography, the primary function of which, in this instance, was to document the war and the resistance against the fascists during WWII.

Many researchers emphasize that partisan photography and partisan art are generally reduced to a propagandistic or, at best, documentary function (Brenk, 1979). However, this does not preclude looking at partisan art and photography beyond the lens of the 'documentary-propagandist'. As Komelj's recent study of partisan art has rightly shown, one must imagine that, for there to be any liberation at all, an immense effort of political will and creativity was invested in cultural activities. And secondly, how can we grasp the impressive quality and abundance of the poems, songs (which measured in tens of thousands), sculptures, drawings, graphics (measured in thousands), photographs and even films that were produced during the war (Komelj, 2008)? Partisan art, and partisan photography, were central neuralgic points that radiated the symbolic power of partisan resistance. With the help of complex partisan print infrastructures this symbolic resistance gained power and contributed to the imaginary of a New World, a new Yugoslavia (Kirn, 2020). The PLS was not only an anti-fascist resistance, but a revolutionary struggle that profoundly changed the social relations and politically oppressive system of the prewar Kingdom of Yugoslavia.

Sanja Horvatinčić points out that from 1943 onwards we can trace a 'method of reportage documentation', and that, more importantly, partisan photography contributed to the

> redefinition of the photographic medium itself, its historical and political scope, making it an inseparable part of the cultural partisan

> production that engaged in social transformation. Individuals who stood behind the lenses participated themselves in the transformative socio-political process. (Hovratinčić, 2019, 11)

Davor Konjikušić states that the main characteristic of photography was its popular and vernacular practice: 'The main actors of partisan art were cultural workers, amateurs, but also authors who had no specific professional and craft knowledge, which thus led to a democratization of the cultural field' (Konjikušić, 2019, 18). This transgression or even abolition of the boundary between authors and producers recalls Walter Benjamin's hope for an emancipated/communist art that criticizes the established elitist-bourgeois conception of the autonomy of art with its presupposed canon and audience (on the artist-producer, see Benjamin, 1999). Partisan photography, along with other artistic practices, invented new institutions, its own partisan canon, and its own way of doing, producing and disseminating things. Each engaged a photographic camera that produces images for its emerging (counter-) audience is part of a process that Jacques Rancière calls the 'emancipated spectator' (Rancière, 2009). Partisan photography helped train the eye for an emergent mode of perception. One of the most famous partisan artists, Božidar Jakac, presented a lecture at the first congress of cultural workers of the Liberation Front in Semič on 4 January 1944:

> When today, actually on a daily basis, our eyes see a fleeting film of thousands of images and experiences all full of precious and valuable memories, everything is dependent on our experiencing and conceiving of all those moments; what kind of creation of these visible forms should be unfolded, what shall our ancestors see, how can a deeper image of our era be preserved in juxtaposition to the daily reportage that is only an interpreter of events and cannot give us deeper and more permanent experiences? (quoted in Komelj, 2008, 124, translation mine – G.K.).

This is the lesson that Konjikušić's study of partisan photography confirms. For Konjikušić, photography had not only propagandistic value, but also artistic, documentary and photojournalist value:

> (Photography) becomes first and foremost the semantic carrier of the message about building a new world and the material for the agitation of the broad masses in building that world. From

> the beginning, it balanced between the free author approach of partisan photographers and the later attempt to become part of a comprehensive information and propaganda system. (Konjikušić, 2019, 21, translation mine – G.K.).

As the selected examples in the following subsections demonstrate, photographs in partisan Yugoslavia not only helped to propagate the need for anti-fascist resistance and to mobilize people for the struggle; they documented a wide range of the horrors of fascism and the everyday life of the partisan resistance. In some cases, Konjikušić archive even managed to capture the contingency of the emergence of partisan subjectivity and the revolutionary process. Along with some graphic works and drawings, the strongest partisan figures are no longer male partisan heroes, but female figures and the figure of liberation itself. The selected material can be read as a small montage of images that aim to capture the ephemeral, even contingent character, and moments of the partisan transformation.

## 5.2 Concrete Case Studies: Towards a New Figure of Woman

Here I limit myself mostly to those works that aroused a new politico-aesthetical sensibility and were important for the topics at issue, that is, a new female subjectivity. If, in the postwar arts, the dominant partisan figure quickly became a heroic male fighter, a figure replete with weapons and a fearless spirit, a martyr or a victor, then there was more ambivalence around the representation of women. Women were often portrayed as nurses, auxiliary staff, as mourning mothers, and far less often as active fighters (Vittorelli, 2015). Only recently has this representation and narrative about women begun to change, if only gradually, in research and art projects on the AFŽ (see chapter 8, where I detail various researchers and artists).

Let us start with the visual capturing of women as partisan fighters and martyrs. One such example is Lepa Svetozara Radić, a seventeen-year-old partisan fighter who was in charge of caring for the wounded during the Fourth Offensive launched against the partisan forces in central Bosnia. She was part of a group of wounded fighters and fought up to the last hail of bullets, after being besieged by the Prince Eugen division. Severely tortured, she nonetheless refused to reveal the names of the partisan leadership and was publicly executed. The photo shows her strong, calm resilience,

which was larger than life itself and reflected the profound resistance that pervaded the partisan struggle.

Image 14: Hanging of Lepa Radić. Courtesy of Unwanted images

However, apart from the fact that many women were also fighters in the PLS, I am interested in the images that documented and formed a new figure of the partisan woman, a new collective of emancipated women who organized the AFŽ, which was endowed with its own infrastructure and had a membership of about 2 million women by the war's end (Dugandžić and Okić, 2017). The partisan struggle cannot be understood apart from the profound process of female emancipation (Kovačević, 1977), which led to a new relationship between (partisan) women and men in the new, partisan Yugoslavia. Concerning the partisans, is there such a thing as a feminine figure of multiplicity? To provide a more visually satisfying answer than that of an individualized female fighter, I propose to interweave various female figures who operated in very different partisan situations: from partisan reproduction and discussions about what to cook for meals, to partisan education, making political speeches and printing; from combat and nursing to arranging the odd leisure activity.

***New Partisan Women's Collective, a collage of photos, all courtesy of Unwanted Images***

Image 15: Girls from the Village of Vrlika. Second Regional Conference of the United Alliance of Anti-Fascist Youth of Croatia (UAAYC). Hvar, November 1944.

Image 16: Cook from 6 Shock Brigade Discussing What to Cook, unknown author.

Image 17: From Agitprop, Livno, Liberated Territory, 1943 (Slavko Zalar).

Image 18: Members of the SKOJ, League of Socialist Youth of Yugoslavia, 1945.

Image 19: Medical Staff in Mikleuš, Zagreb corpus, unknown.

Image 20: Women Fighters, unknown.

Image 21: Path from Livno to Hvar, Slavica Cvrlje Kukoč, 1943 (Slavko Zalar).

These images express equality and respect between the different roles, positions and activities in the liberation struggle. All of these latter were pivotal for political, cultural and military infrastructure, in short for partisan social reproduction. From this awareness, a stark contrast emerges with the cultural cementing of women as mothers in prewar times, and, to some extent also, to postwar culture. The fact that women could occupy all positions in the liberation struggle, from organizers and fighters to political educators and commissars, that they could vote and be voted for in the political bodies of people power – all this proves that the principle of political equality was deeply rooted in the people's liberation struggle. This intertwining of women partisans and their multifaceted activities serves as a condensation and reminder of the partisan figure of the women's collective.

The constant tension between liberating territories, imagining a new world and the cruel reality of losing fighters, of reprisals that killed civilians, and an awareness of the risk of defeat at the hands of the fascist occupier and collaborationists, who outnumbered the partisans, points to what Benjamin famously calls a 'moment of danger'. Evidently images of fights and suffering bring out an awareness of life's precarity in times of war, but have there been any other images that inscribe this tension between the partisan awareness of annihilation and the expectation of a new world? Is there some image that stands for partisan contingency? For this purpose, I have selected two photographs that express a tense and highly divergent representation of partisan liberation. On the one hand, we see a *liberated* landscape/village – reminiscent of Breughel's depiction of a village in a winter landscape. Image 22 shows an emptied landscape with a lone partisan standing as a guard, while image 23 shows the liveliness of a political-cultural meeting of predominantly peasant women in a liberated forest.

There is no single photograph that succeeded in singularizing a partisan subjectivity from which the entire partisan liberation can be extracted. Rather, it is possible to discern the form and content of a general tendency to inscribe the liberation process in the representation of the partisan movement itself.

Image 22: Liberated Landscape (my title – G.K). Courtesy of Unwanted Images.

Image 23: Women, Peasants and Youth at a Politico-Cultural Meeting (Mladen Iveković). Courtesy of Unwanted Images.

## 5.3 Partisan Printing: Real Infrastructure and the Symbolic Network of Empowerment

The last series of photographs brings us to the topic of partisan printing. Yugoslav partisan printing was indisputably one of the most creative and fascinating episodes in all of resistance printing during WWII. The extreme care and dedication shown by the partisans concerning the materials, infrastructure and production of partisan prints point to their political and symbolic importance for the partisan struggle (Repe, 2004). Branko Petranović's study of partisan printing during the war concludes that more than '3,500 partisan newspapers' were printed during the four years of resistance, as well as '151 poetry collections, 111 books and pamphlets/art prose booklets, and 102 collections of reports' (Petranović, 1988, 371, translation mine – G.K.).

Image 24: Vjesnik/Newsletter on Petrova Gora 1944, book binding process outside (Hugo Fischer Ribarić). Courtesy of Unwanted Images.

Image 25: Printing House in the Village of Mračaj, Kordun (Mahmud Konjhodžić). Courtesy of Unwanted Images.

While reviewing photographs of partisan printing activities, one is (visually) struck by the complexity involved in organizing a well-functioning printing machine. Through some valuable photo snippets, we can highlight the inventiveness of the partisan printing process from production and infrastructure to distribution and various uses. The publications were not only periodicals or pamphlets of the Communist Party, but also the printing of posters, poetry collections, the printing of materials for the exhibition of partisan photographs, which enabled the work of reading groups and cultural campaigns. Let us start with the printing material itself. As there was little material for printing, partisan technicians needed to use linoleum they had scraped from the floors, while other materials were confiscated, or smuggled from other occupied urban areas.

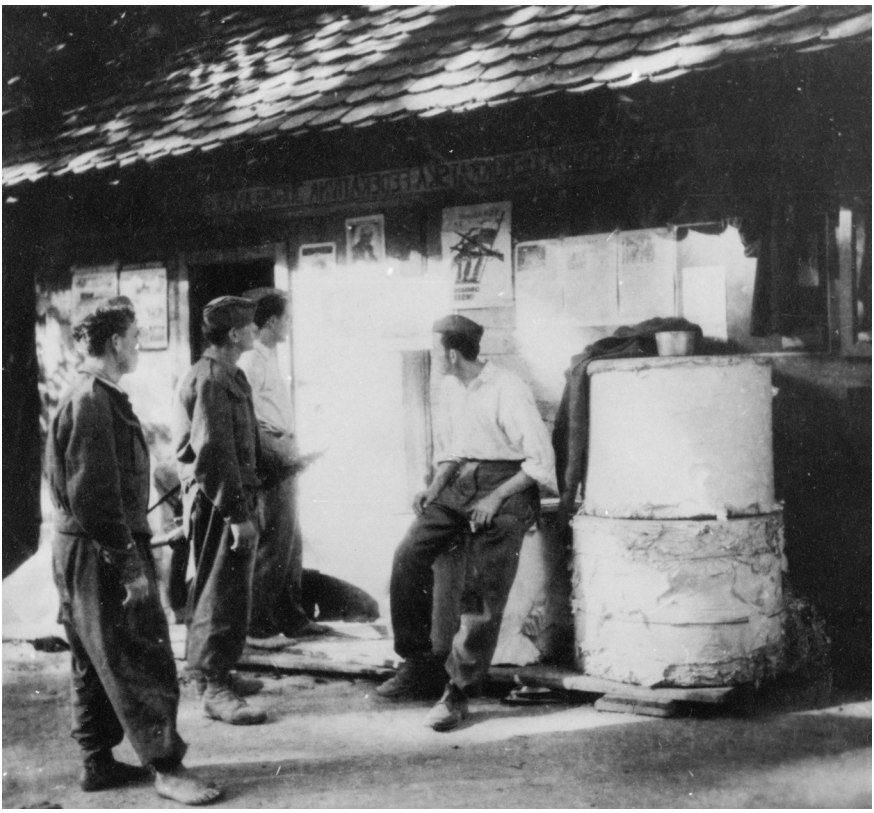

Image 26: One hundred bales of rotary paper were seized from a single freight train. The diversion was made at the end of 1943. The paper was delivered in the first half of 1944 through illegal connections among partisans. Courtesy of Unwanted Images.

The next step involved preparing the paper and the upkeep of the printing machines, which ran almost continuously, spewing forth letters and drawings on paper.

In the war's early stages, the illegal networks in the major cities were of great importance, and members of the resistance developed considerable underground infrastructures and many activities. However, by mid-1942 at the latest, the cultural infrastructure and the majority of the partisan activists had shifted from the cities to the countryside. This shift had to

do both with the fascist dismantling of partisan networks, and with the expansion of the liberated territories, and with the establishment of a political and cultural infrastructure in the countryside. This infrastructure included print shops, cultural houses, open-air theatres, photo studios and more. In retrospect, we can consider the print shops as the core of cultural production and dissemination. It was partisan printed matter that formed the symbolic core of the imaginary, disseminating counter-intelligence, poetry, graphics and more. Despite the gradual improvement in infrastructural conditions in early 1943, partisan print shops had to be extremely inventive/rational in their use of materials and infrastructure. Some developed mobile units that printed outdoors in the forest, others printed underground in residential buildings.

Image 27: Preparation of Paper for Printing, Mračaj, Petrova Gora, Petar Stanić and Ante Rocca, photo by Žganjer. Courtesy of Unwanted Images.

Image 28: Vjesnik in the Village of Mračaj on Petrova Gora, 1944m printing process outside (Hugo Fisher Ribarić). Courtesy of Unwanted Images.

Image 29: After Italy's Capitulation in 1943, two issues of Slobodna Dalmacija were printed in the printing house of Il Popolo di Spalato (Živko Gatin). Courtesy of Unwanted Images.

It is also noteworthy that the political authority of the resistance was aware that the symbolic struggle and the communicative strategy with people and the allies was crucial for the liberation struggle. For this reason, a lot of energy was invested in building a network of partisan printing houses throughout Yugoslavia. A well-functioning print shop required a dedicated group of editors and scribes, a team of technicians and designers to collect and prepare the material and take care of the machines, and a group of couriers to re-source and distribute the material. Image 30 shows a larger printing house in Lika that counted about 30 members.

Image 30: Collective of the ZAVNOH printing house, Turjansko, Lika, Spring 1944. Courtesy of Unwanted Images.

Another important visual feature of the partisan space is its multifunctionality following the maxim 'less is more'. The partisans' capacity for innovation can be seen here in their ability to create a space that would serve as a kitchen, a print shop, and a small warehouse.

Image 31: Kordun Printing House (Mahmud Konjhodžić). Courtesy of Unwanted Images.

Finally, the printing activities that related to educational campaigns were crucial not only for mobilizing partisans, but also for changing social relations. In the prewar period, rural areas were seen as bastions of provincialism and illiteracy (about 80% of the Yugoslav population were illiterate peasants), and traditionally it was also the church (whether Catholic, Orthodox, Islamic, or Jewish) that organized the local community and most often promulgated a conservative, anti-communist ideology, since Bolshevik ideology was portrayed as supposedly anti-moral (they steal and

corrupt your women) and anti-property (they steal your land). Therefore, the peasantry was always seen as a conservative force, also by many communist leftists. However, during the partisan liberation struggle, the peasantry and the countryside in general became increasingly politicized, which also changed the main social base of the revolutionary subject. Most of the partisan struggles occurred here as did the organization of political and cultural life by the people. In many reading seminars, illiterate people were taught how to read, and also how to write their own notes and poems. Fight during the day, write poems at night, very much reminiscent of the proletarian archives, that Jacques Rancière traced (2012). Similar to the way that workers rejected what was expected from them, and also denied the typical divisions of labour requiring them to sleep at night, they used the nights to educate themselves, to read and write, to emancipate themselves at night. Here, the figure of peasant breaks with the image of a backward rural, patriarchal idiot and becomes part of a subjectivity of 'partisan-poets' that is fully emancipated.

Image 32: A Woman Partisan Reading to Comrades. Courtesy of Unwanted Images.

As Miklavž Komelj (2008, 58-59) rightly notes, the Yugoslav countryside was more progressive than the urban centres until the end of the war. People's collective emancipation, their capacity to break with the dominant expectation to subjugate, and collaborate, and rather be able to imagine an alternative world, to engage in mutual aid and support, as well as to fight successfully against the Nazi army, all this turned the tables in favour of the countryside. Also importantly, the struggle and practice of printing led to experimentation among partisan artists and technicians, who reinvented printing techniques and obtained elementary materials in the most impossible circumstances, scraping the floors of houses and workshops (as linoleum and wood were often used).

Finally, I would like to mention that partisan printed matter not only circulated by hand, but – in addition to graphics, photography, posters – was exhibited in partisan exhibitions and also in mobile photo exhibitions/on wallpapers. Such partisan photo exhibitions are relatively well-known aspects of the history of partisan photography (Konjikušić, 2019); they were put on in the liberated territories and their cultural spaces throughout all Yugoslavia.

The dissemination format of mobile and short-term photo exhibitions, an area that is still little studied, is valuable because its form demonstrates the deterritorializing nature of partisan dissemination. Fabec and Vončina were the first to study this format, explaining that 'mobile exhibitions consisted of 20 to 40 photographs, mostly in 18 x 24 cm format [...] and were placed in visible places in villages and in town squares' (Fabec and Vončina, 2005, 115, translation mine G.K.). These photographs could be seen by villagers, townspeople and partisan troops, but also by enemies – they could be seen by anyone in the area. In a way, this gesture put valuable material on display and showed not only the presence of partisan resistance, but also of partisan art. Speaking only of the level of dissemination and the specific form of partisan art, one could say that the most appropriate cultural forms and formats of partisan art were undoubtedly found in the travelling photo exhibitions and the mobile theatre groups that journeyed throughout the liberated territories. The mobile theatre groups were particularly successful in moving people and contributing to new partisan performances and to the dissemination of works and practices. While the organization and

processing of photographic material produced cinematic effects on the audience, these mobile photo exhibitions pointed to an invention – experimenting with the mobile format of the exhibition, the photos were sent on the road with the partisans.

## 5.4 Conclusion

This chapter attempted to defragment the partisan (photographic) history of the Yugoslav PLS by paying particular attention to the creation of a new figure of the (partisan) woman and the centrality of partisan print in the creation of a New World. The examples examined here were collected as part of an ongoing study on the partisan image and they attest to the profound self-reflexivity that Yugoslav partisans displayed during the struggle for liberation. I have shown that cultural activities were central to understanding the construction of international solidarity and the imaginary of the New World (the new Yugoslavia), and that it was possible to practise a high level of formal experimentation. The visual history of the oppressed and especially of women's emancipation was overshadowed by the promotion of masculine heroics, as seen in partisan film under socialism right up to the even more misogynistic character of nationalist revisionism in the 1990s. The partisan visual counter-archive can help us mobilize emancipatory material from the past by pointing to the creative combination of intermedial art forms and comradely collaboration between artists, cultural workers and amateurs. The selected images are not a closed selection. Instead, they form a starting point for future research, for creating a space in which solidarity among the oppressed is (re)established, even if they are distant to each other in time and space.

# Section 2

# Partisan Memory from Below and from Above: Films, Memory Activism and Memory Politics in Socialism and Postsocialism

Tonight, I saw your palm,
how it got clasped into a firm fist
in the darkness of the Ljubljana streets.
And you know what I thought of poet-partisan?
If only my poem were like your palm,
all soft and tender like the cherry blossom in spring
and that it was as resistant as your fist,
whenever you witness the fascist parade.*

Matej Bor, from *Love in Storm* (1942) (trans. mine – G. K.)

* Matej Bor was a partisan poet whose work was printed in the thousands already during the war. Permissions for the publication and translation of Matej Bor's poem was given by Matej and Manja Pavšič.

## 6 Partisan Film in Yugoslavia? Memory from Below in Želimir Žilnik's *Uprising in Jazak* (1973)

Želimir Žilnik has worked as a film director for almost 60 years. His work became synonymous with political and engagé film already in the tumultuous time of socialist Yugoslavia in the late 1960s, marked as it was by workers' strikes, student protests, and cultural experimentation (for details about this period see Kirn, 2019; Suvin, 2018). The engagé nature of his filmmaking lies both in its meticulous work on marginalized subjects, as well as in its methodology, which recombines fictive and documentary means in displaying marginalized protagonists. A handful of authors have correctly evaluated that, if we are to understand both the form and politics of his films politically, we need to take into account an openly Brechtian method. Brecht's 'alienation effect' works to disturb the conventional separation between the fictive and the documentary. It makes spectators aware of the director's involvement in the film and of the importance of marginalized topics that are often excluded from the reigning ideology, into which Žilnik's films intervene (Čurćić, 2009; on the Brechtian approach, see Mazierska, 2013). Within critical scholarship and more recent studies on Yugoslav cinema, Žilnik's work has enjoyed a prominent place.[32] Owing to his long film career, his own agility, and his attention to archival detail, Žilnik has become one of the best documented (post)Yugoslav filmmakers.[33] He has worked on diverse topics, many of them taboo – from unemployment, homelessness and female revolutionaries to the Roma, peasants, workers, sex workers and transgender and queer identities – in both socialist as well as postsocialist times. From this perspective, one might rightfully wonder whether there is a topic or a group that has been marginalized within Žilnik's filmography.[34] Writing from a postsocialist horizon, we may well be struck by the fact that a major lacuna exists in his work: that is the absence of films that deal with the topic of WWII, and especially the partisan struggle.

32 For a good overview of Žilnik's work, see Goulding, 2002.

33 Žilnik and Kuda.org (Novi Sad) have gathered comprehensive documentation of Žilnik's filmography (https://www.zilnikzelimir.net/); there is also a DVD of the whole project for anyone interested in a serious study of his films in his time.

34 Recent feminist criticism on Žilnik and the rest of Black Wave film directors has emphasized that the female protagonist in these films almost always ends up dead, as if there was a self-fulfilling prophecy, a destiny that cannot be broken in the patriarchal society (Majaca, O' Reilly, and Vesić, 2021).

Going back in time to the socialist era of the mid-1960s, when Žilnik started his film career, partisan films had already become a dominant artistic and filmic genre, or more precisely, as per Jovanović's dictum, a 'dominant genre platform' (Jovanović, 2001). Yugoslav filmography between 1945 and 1985 (Čolić, 1984) contains more than two-hundred films on the topic of 'the partisan', so it is undoubtedly possible to claim a specific ideological and aesthetic over-saturation. This might already give us a strong enough reason as to why Žilnik did not want to make 'just another' film on the topic of the partisans: by the time he had entered the film scene, partisan films were already in vogue, and by the end of the 1960s had become heavily commercialized, while politically they often resonated with the official legitimization of the socialist authorities. Nevertheless, delving into his rich archive of short films, we find one film that was withdrawn from distribution already long ago, namely the very film that Žilnik made before he left for Germany in the early 1970s – *Ustanak u Jazku/Uprising in Jazak* (1973).

This chapter looks at the film through the specific lens of collective memory-building from below. I claim that, despite the aforementioned oversaturation of the partisan topic as it hovered around existential dramas (independent films) and epic battles (mainstream films), in *Uprising in Jazak* Žilnik succeeded in making a distinct partisan film that articulates a unique politics of aesthetics (Rancière, 2004). Žilnik demonstrates how it is possible to make film *in a partisan way*. The syntagm *to make film in a partisan way* draws a clear line of demarcation between the then-existing 'Red Westerns' and film spectacles (e.g. Bulajić's *Battle of Neretva/Bitka na Neretvi*, 1969), on the one hand, and political, or partisan, cinema, on the other. Žilnik's films make precisely this distinction and take the further step of 'siding with' the oppressed, which is a primary feature of what makes one a partisan, whether in thought, in action, or in film itself. It should thus come as no surprise that internationally we have already witnessed the rise of so-called *Third Cinema*, a form of cinema that seeks openly to intervene in social reality, whether through representative means or by taking sides in concrete/actual struggles. This chapter aims to show how Žilnik's partisanship in *Uprising in Jazak* has to do both with his formal approach (*how to represent the partisan struggle in the film*), and also with a very innovative

turn to the witnesses and antifascists left out from epic representations of the struggle, which is to say, common villagers. This has to do with a question that Stuart Hall (Hall, 1999) raised when he critically considered the status of heritage: one should always bear in mind 'whose heritage' is being invoked and whose heritage is considered worth remembering, representing and narrating. I show that Žilnik, without much romanticization, takes the side of the antifascist villagers and succeeds in reconstructing their villagers in an aesthetically appealing and politically potent way, which makes *Uprising in Jazak* one of the few real filmic jewels of a partisan 'heritage from below' (Horvatinčić, 2020). The film also contributes something to the more general discussion about the existential decision taken in WWII by villagers to adopt partisan positions and provides an answer as to why it was so easy for them to enter the partisan struggle. Bearing in mind that Yugoslavia was not 'immune' to fascist collaboration, mass killings, moral pragmatism, and what Arendt refers to as the 'banality of evil' (Arendt, 1977), Žilnik's film takes a step beyond the dualism of victims and perpetrators. Taking the side of the oppressed, he portrays what I would call the 'banality of the good', or the banality of everyday good/resistance as a specific practice of emancipation of the oppressed. This practice cannot be seen as some sort of a grand 'event' that would irreversibly transform society, but rather is an ethnography of resistance. This resistance takes place in the village of Vojvodina, which, from a feminist perspective, grasps the diversity of the everyday micro instances and deeds of resistance that constituted the partisan community.

## 6.1 Intervention into Mainstream Partisan Films

Before I present my analysis of Žilnik's filmic method and his contribution to the alternative culture of memory entailed in *Uprising in Jazak* (1973), let me briefly sketch the dominant film landscape of partisan film. As aforementioned, partisan films in general had been heavily commercialized by the end of the 1960s and made up some of the most renowned Yugoslav film 'exports', providing a distinctive contribution to the international film market and its festivals. This aspect does not relate only to epic war films, but also to films that can be regarded as *auteur* films, critical and innovative films that formed the partisan 'genre platform'. Žilnik's film entered the

Yugoslav film scene in the 1960s and early 1970s, during the renaissance period of 'new Yugoslav film' (Goulding, 2012; Kirn, Sekulić, and Testen, 2012), marked by a number of partisan films receiving various awards and mentions at film festivals (Cannes, Berlinale, Karlovy Vary etc.). These films were able to express their dissent either in terms of aesthetics or by choosing a more complex narrative structure[35] as compared to mainstream films and action films, Štiglic's *Ninth Circle* (1960) or, most prominently, Bulajić's major blockbuster *Battle of Neretva* (1969). The latter was nominated for best foreign film at the Oscars; it could be seen as an ouverture to epic war films and so-called Red Westerns (Štefančič, 2010).

Bulajić's film *Battle of Neretva* was the most expensive production in the history of (post-)Yugoslav film. Cost estimates at the time ranged from five to ten million dollars, and it took almost two years to produce. This film included sections of the Yugoslav People's Army, which put its manpower and infrastructure at the film crew's disposal. The casting was part of a more general 'political marketing', as it was composed not only of domestic stars, but also of international stars such as Orson Welles, Yul Brynner, Franco Nero, Sylvia Koscina and Sergei Bondarchuk.[36] Furthermore, Pablo Picasso designed the poster for the English version of the film, and the London Philharmonic Orchestra composed the music. The film crew pursued a strong advertising campaign abroad, which made it an instant success. In Yugoslavia, more than 4.5 million spectators saw it in its first years of release, while outside Yugoslavia it was around 350 million! When we approach the epic portrayal of the most important point of the partisan struggle, *Battle of Neretva* presents the overcoming of the fascist siege, and portrays the

35 Aleksandar Petrović's *Tri* (*Three,* 1965), Štiglic's *Balada o Trobenti in Oblaku* (*Ballad of the Trumpet and the Cloud*, 1961) Čap's *Trenutki Odločitve* (*Moment of Decision*, 1955); Bauer's *Ne okreči se sine* (*My Son Don't Turn Around,* 1956). Secondly, there were films that had a more neorealist influence devoid of any heroism in the life of the partisan struggle: Veljko Bulajić's *Kozara* (1962), Mutapdžić's *Doktor Mladen* (1975), Živojin Pavlović's *Zaseda* (*Ambush,* 1969) and *Hajka* (1977). Finally, there were horror and surrealist films such as Puriša Djordjević's *Jutro* (*Morning*, 1967) and Miodrag Popović's *Delije* (1968); fourthly, there was a range of films that included a more complex depiction of the collaborationists, but also their authority, from Lordan Žafranović's famous film, *Okupacija u 26 slika* (*Occupation in 26 Pictures*, 1977) to Miodrag Popović's *Čovek iz hrastove šume* (*The Man from the Oak Forest*, 1964).

36 Zvijer (2009) makes a good point when analysing Bulajić's *Battle on Neretva*/Bitka na Neretvi (1969), namely, that the foreign cast of renowned actors and bombastic scenes were skilfully designed as 'political marketing' that would reach more audiences and also legitimize Yugoslavia's independent road to socialism.

heroism and sacrifices of the partisans, including the humanity they showed to their wounded and to their typhoid-ridden comrades (Batančev, 2012).

The film lasts for almost three hours. It is accompanied by dramatic music and, seen in retrospect, started functioning as part of a collective monument to the central battle of the liberation struggle. This and similar film spectacles became the most important visual and popular *monuments* to partisan struggle (Zimmermann, 2014). The time was one of major advances in the commercialization of Yugoslavia's culture (Kirn, 2019; Vucetić and Cox, 2018). If many people have forgotten what they learned about it in their old history books, and if younger generations perhaps don't learn anything about it in their new ones, many will still recall specific passages of this film: the legendary singing of the wounded that urges and helps partisan fighters repel the impending Nazi annihilation, or the uncompromising resilience of partisan fighters faced with a much better equipped and numerically superior enemy. It is no exaggeration to say that such cultural artefacts performed two tasks: firstly, this sort of partisan film became Yugoslavia's most celebrated film product on the global film market, and thus contributed to commercialization of (partisan) culture; and secondly, in Yugoslavia, these films helped to mythologize official WWII memory and became filmic monuments that contributed to solidifying the political power of the Yugoslav League of Communists and Tito. The actors of such partisan films became major icons of Yugoslav popular culture, alongside sportspersons and Tito himself.

Mainstream popular culture capitalized on and commodified partisan memory, which thus became the dominant ideological-aesthetical ether from which any critical and independent filmmaker had to depart – or consciously reject to go into – in the late 1960s or early 1970s. In my personal correspondence with Žilnik (Kirn and Žilnik, 2018), he explicitly mentions that spectacularizing partisan films by Bulajić and others functioned as a 'falsification' and 'mythologization' of the partisan struggle, and thus were an injustice to partisan memory.[37] Žilnik indeed claims that such films

37 Evidently these films did not aim to truthfully represent historical events. Furthermore, they did not hide their aim to popularize the Partisan struggle. This is why the argument about 'falsification' misses the most vital point. However, the point that tackles mythologization, and the way how such cultural and political positions were easily instrumentalized for the ideological reproduction of power, is the one that deserves our attention.

were the main reason he made his 'only' partisan film *Uprising in Jazak*. For Žilnik, film cannot merely reproduce or embellish existing reality, but must participate in its transformation. My claim is that for Žilnik, but for also anyone in socialist Yugoslavia who had artistic or political ambition, to return to the partisan past was evidently not an easy task.[38] Elsewhere I have argued that the most fascinating artistic examples to have retrieved partisan struggle were able to do so when they formalized the 'revolutionary rupture' (Kirn, 2020) and contributed to developing alternative protocols for commemorating the partisan revolution, that is, the revolutionary movement that started within the antifascist resistance and created a new, federative and socialist Yugoslavia (Komelj, 2008).

For partisan film in general, this meant that questions such as how to film the period of partisan rupture/revolution, what partisan images and figures to promote, who were the witnesses, and what kind of ethics to follow when making a partisan film – that all these questions needed to be taken seriously. The intention was not thus to make the ultimate claim that only 'serious' partisan filmmakers were able to carry the only and most truthful depiction of the partisan struggle. Rather, the question is how a partisan film could be filmed *in a partisan way* in such ideological circumstances? How was it possible to find a way to affirm the process of partisan liberation and thus to articulate a non-party view that did not simply help to mythologize the personal and political power of the established political apparatus? The gesture of making a film in a partisan way then refers to a specific demythologization, or even 'banalization', of the partisan struggle, which Žilnik, not without a hint of irony, takes as his point of departure in the film. Furthermore, aesthetically speaking, such partisan films need to be differentiated from the established partisan film genre, which can occur through the use of more refined formal and narrative means, helping thus to articulate the memory gaps in testimonials, to collectively reconstruct memory *in (filmic) situ,* as it were. My claim is that Žilnik succeeds in producing a genuine political and aesthetic work, and that he also contributes to making the first conscious attempt at an alternative partisan commemoration in a Yugoslav film from below. *Uprising in Jazak* (1973),

38 For a good overview of the politics of film form in Žilnik, see Mazierska (2013) and Prejdova (2000). Also see the whole essay section on the web page with his archive, certainly worthy of further consultation: http: //www.zilnikzelimir.net/essays.

that is, succeeds in deploying alternative memory strategies from below. 'Alternative commemoration' here means that there is something that does not allow the spectator to reduce things to the dominant constellation of heroic partisans and bad fascists, and that draws attention to small but vital moments and deeds of resistance. This is a new memorial frame given by Žilnik and up to today remains one the most delicate reconstructions of antifascist struggle in Yugoslavia.

## 6.2 Žilnik as Partisan Filmmaker?

If we are to consider Žilnik as a partisan filmmaker, we must ask what this partisanship actually consists in. What is his partisan way of filmmaking? Žilnik was not an actual partisan during WWII, though, a child of two communist and partisan parents, he was born in a fascist concentration camp. Leaving his personal biography aside, my interest bears more on how his partisan commitment is inscribed in his aesthetic practice. I claim that it can be traced in at least three features: firstly, as a definition of the partisan, Žilnik has always taken sides, and more importantly, he takes the side of the oppressed and he contributes to what Benjamin calls the 'tradition of the oppressed' (Benjamin, 2003) by politicizing the aesthetic means of the dominant order and its history of as victors; secondly, Žilnik has always adopted a cause that seems lost in advance (marginal protagonists who fight against the dominant ideology/apparatus, which here refers to the general framework of the socialist state and its ideology (antifascism); and thirdly, his partisan thinking and work has always been inscribed in the very method of his filmmaking, and in this way carries on the spirit of the partisan struggle itself. *Uprising in Jazak* (1973) shares many characteristics in common with his earlier works from the 1960s,[39] namely, its method of retaining both fictional and documentary material, and holding them together in a docu-fiction form without the complete blending of one into another. He thus attempts to preserve the tension between those two sides. His filmic-eye is a sharp ethnographic journey that is critical towards the general circumstances in which the protagonists live and resist.

39 Early films such as *Unemployed* (1968), *Black Film* (1971), *Uprising in Jazak* (1973) and the feature film *Early Works* (1969), which all appeared as part of the production house Neoplanta in Novi Sad. There is a great documentation made by Žilnik and Kuda.org (Novi Sad) of Žilnik filmography (https://www.zilnikzelimir.net/), see also book from Buden, 2013.

Furthermore, the plot itself is based on a semi-prepared scenario, which demands both a skill to act spontaneously when meeting or encountering an amateur cast or the ordinary people asked to re-enact the events and re-tell its stories. This demands a high level of focus and improvisation on the part of the director, film crew and actors, in a dialectic that responds to the situation of diegetic real time and space. The trajectory of the plot and how the partisan past is montaged with socialist present leaves spectators with the impression that the film, and the reality itself could have developed in multiple ways, which on a deeper-level challenges the teleological idea of History. For Communist Party, communism will necessary come and realise historical mission and History.

Ian Goulding celebrates the period of the 1960s as the most productive, or golden, age of Yugoslav film, as it also was, we could add, for a range of cultural, intellectual and political activities in socialist Yugoslavia. This time of cultural and political empowerment did not last long; it was accompanied by public discontent with the authoritarian tendencies and market reforms of mature socialism (Kirn, 2019). The late 1960s and early 1970s saw a political and cultural crackdown on the most prominent political figures, student leaders, professors and cultural workers (Kanzleiter, 2011).

In the filmic context we need to be especially attentive to August 1969 when Vladimir Jovićić, one of the prominent party intellectuals, published an article titled 'Black in Our Film' in the official journal *Borba*. The article posits a few strategic theses that express the official support for modernism and the consequences that this view had for the relationship between art and politics. Jovićić re-instates the utmost importance of art for the Yugoslav future; moreover, he advocates the view that the historical period shall not be remembered by daily reports, conferences and archives of politicians (Jovićić, 1969, 19). On the contrary, every historical period and cultural memory is shaped through its artworks. Modernist belief prescribed an exceptional role to film, and this meant that Yugoslav political circles ought to be on guard against any dangerous tendencies. Jovićić, expectedly, located one such tendency in new Yugoslav film, pejoratively calling it the 'black tendency'. Soon afterwards independent film-directors began to be called representatives of the 'Black Wave' (Kirn, Sekulić, and Testen, 2012). Many of their films

were withdrawn from circulation, or censored, and some film-directors decided to leave the country.[40]

Despite this strong backlash, and being very conscious about potential consequences of persisting in production of critical films, Žilnik first made a short *Black Film/Crni film* (1971) that deals with the homeless people in his hometown. Two years later he went on to produce one of the most important films that stands as the core of the international legacy of antifascist/Partisan filmography.

## 6.3 Reconstructing Memory from Below: Peasant Antifascism as 'Banality/Everyday Good'

*Uprising in Jazak* is structured around dynamic and collective interviews that were conducted with peasants from the village of Jazak. The central part of the film centres on the retelling and re-enacting of stories from the occupation of fascist terror and partisan resistance. It is bracketed by a short reference to the endured hardships before war, and the somehow improved but still impoverished circumstances in times of socialism three decades after the liberation.

The film departs on its journey thanks to a shaky camera travelling on a bumpy road to Jazak. The film crew arrives in Jazak almost 30 years after the end of WWII. We hear the sound of Nazi planes, rolling tanks, and shots being fired at houses, as the camera arrives to film the peasants. The film crew metaphorically jumps into the collective memory by interviewing people, actual witnesses of the fascist occupation, and antifascist protagonists from the wartime period. The film crew descends on the village like a *Blitz*, which ironically imitates the way the village itself was occupied by

40 Žilnik cooperated with the film production company Neoplanta from Novi Sad, which, in the late 1960s, was directed by Svetozar Udovički. The latter supported the works of many other independent filmmakers such as Dušan Makavejev, Karpo Godina and many others who were not afraid to challenge the mainstream filmography or official ideology of Yugoslav socialism. If the late 1960s was the most productive historical moment for cultural and political activities, then the early 1970s saw a conservative backlash. It was in 1971 that due to mounting political pressure over what was declared to be 'Black Wave Film'. an independent critical film scene took root. Late in 1971 Neoplanta's progressive director Udovički was substituted by Draško Redjep whose political line was in complete agreement with the suppression of cultural and political disobedience. One of the first steps under his direction was to compile a 'black list' and prevent or completely halt the distribution of past critical films.

fascists in a matter of minutes (*Blitzkrieg*). The transfer of power from the representatives of the old Kingdom of Yugoslavia to the Nazis was done smoothly; the former surrendered to the latter without a fight. One villager adds that some of the old bureaucrats remained in the Nazi administration. It is clear from the beginning that Žilnik is not interested in displaying some local or other important partisan fighter or communist leader, but is focused on the stories of ordinary villagers. The latter take centre stage by either being active supporters of the partisan struggle, or entering the partisans and going to the woods. There is no voice-over that would explain and reconstruct the memory of antifascist struggle. Rather, spectators witness a multiplicity of voices, where a large majority of these protagonists are neither politically 'articulate', nor do they fit the image of a heroic partisan fighter as we had become accustomed to them in partisan blockbusters.

Image 33: From the Shooting of Žilnik's *Uprising in Jazak* (1973). Courtesy of Želimir Žilnik.

Nevertheless, the raw image aims to stay deeply bound to the vernacular imagery and language of the villagers. They are excited about retelling their stories: where they hid the guns (e.g. in the wells, in the stone-holes in their houses), how much food they gave to Partisans (from cattle to cheese, from rakija to wine); how women hosted partisans or took care of the wounded; how they had sewn the clothes for the resistance; how they endured torture; and how they witnessed the killing and burning of 70 older men and women. One also hears about how they first began with sabotage, whether the burning of fascist grain stores or the cutting of telegraph lines, and about how a host of younger peasants joined the partisans, fought and died, and how they helped to organize cultural and political meetings, and performed a partisan oath and became partisans. The spectator gets a detailed list of the resistance activities and practices. The filmic technique intensifies the retelling and reconstruction of antifascist memories: the camera focuses on spaces where guns had been hidden, meals cooked, and villagers tortured. If the camera is a pivotal element of the re-enactment, then the post-produced off-sound, the sound of guns, grenades, of car or plane movements, but also of the uplifting music of Katjusha with the liberation and the advancement of tractors-motorization within socialism, all bring various affects to the fore: on the one hand, we feel the fear and indignation brought about by fascism that interrupted village life; on the other, the villagers and their sounds reliving the joy and enthusiasm of the liberation process. Žilnik succeeds in working through the shared memory of the village and by re-enacting the memory events from the antifascist resistance recreated in the village of Jazak. Jazak was not the same in the war and after the liberation, but their mutual help and solidarity comes across as a key partisan value.

This type of heroism 'from below', which focuses on everyday deeds, is opposed to the partisan heroism of mainstream film. As aforementioned, in epic films, such as *Battle on Neretva*, Partisan fighters were painted as heroic figures and shown fighting and shooting fascists. It is not that such figures did not exist, but these masculine figures became the dominant image of the partisan, as that which emblematized victory and sacrifice in complete accordance with Communist Party dictates. In the filmic (and other artistic) depictions these figures were posited as a sort of unquestionable and

'absolute good' that led the liberation process, on the one side, while on the other side fascists were seen as representatives of 'absolute evil', obscuring the reasons and rationality of fascist politics and war (Badiou, 2005). Hannah Arendt intervened into the individualized and Manichean division between absolute good/evil by introducing the concept of the 'banality of evil' (Arendt, 1977). In order to understand the efficacy of the everyday dynamic of Nazi terror and collaboration, Arendt traces the logic of legalist 'duty': the fact that many ordinary men and women denounced, tortured and even executed Jews and political opponents of fascism according to the formula that 'they were simply following orders'. Such banality, not to mention fascism's very brutal dimension of 'evil', does not absolve anyone from fascist crime; to the contrary, it points to the utter failure of the legal and individualist tackling of fascism after the war. But while the Arendt's framework to understand fascism points to a more refined view of the perpetrators, it stays within a general traumatology, which is to say within a dualism between victims and perpetrators. It fails to address the position of the oppressed and their emancipatory acts and actions during the war.

It is on this terrain that I claim that Žilnik complements the Arendtian trope by reconstructing a collective memory from below and attributing a strong ethical and political stance through a multiplicity of micro acts. These acts and practices of resistance might seem banal at times, perhaps it would be more adequate to speak of a sort of antifascist everyday resistance (of good). The protagonists in his film are not presented as (passive) victims, but as the oppressed who, before and during the war, were able to successfully resist and contribute to the general support network of liberation.

This everyday life of resistance has nothing to do with mere survival. Those who adopted a survivalist position were the ones who took the path of collaboration and moral pragmatism, who refused to break with the logic of the situation. Furthermore, such acts of everyday resistance cannot be understood as some sort of philanthropy that only nominally supported the real struggle of the partisans. Also, such everyday resistance is miles away from a bourgeois ethics effected through the noble gestures of rare individuals within the collaborationist apparatus (e.g. Spielberg's *Schindler's List*, 1993). What appears as spectators following a 'gut' feeling – i.e. the notion that villagers entered the partisan side without thinking – proves to

be a very deliberate and rational decision. To become a partisan, it was not enough to take a performative oath: one had to practice it in everyday life, meaning that villagers started to think within the situation, which means to differentiate between the fascist aggressor (and collaborationists) on the one hand, and antifascists on the other. This differentiation led them to take sides and join the partisans in order to break with the impossible circumstances of occupation.

Žilnik's reconstruction and re-enactment helps us rethink the courage, rationality and determination required to enter the battle on the partisan side. To create and reproduce the infrastructure of resistance in such dire circumstances was an extremely dangerous activity, since you could be immediately condemned to death. Žilnik edits various images and words of the mass of peasants, of those from below who were allegedly not 'dignified' or 'educated' enough to remember or to be remembered, to narrate or represent the central event of the new Yugoslavia.

It might be said that Žilnik, in contradistinction to mainstream partisan films, conveyed a more realistic and 'truthful' account of the partisan past. This could well be true, though it seems to me that it is more important to focus on the manner in which the link between film, method and memory was made. The film's form consciously rejects any kind of aestheticization. This is not only the consequence of a lack of material means for the film's shooting. When we first watch the film – and the same goes for many of Žilnik's early works – we encounter 'raw image' (Levi, 2007).[41] It appears to us that Žilnik used amateurish cutting techniques and was hampered by a low budget; we might even wonder whether the film itself was not well preserved. In line with Levi's argument, I also claim that this 'raw image' is neither a sign of laziness on the part of the editorial team, nor of poor technical equipment, but rather that it expresses their conscious opposition to the aestheticization of the partisan struggle and to some degree can be

41 Pavle Levi has lucidly highlighted the political dimension present in this film method. Žilnik's film characters most often 'represent border examples […] between existing societies (within which they have no place) and possible, alternative, reorganized societies (within which – if these societies at some time, were to be established – they would have clearer and more stable identities). These characters are […] the material for a process that Etiènne Balibar described as constituting 'the people', which is initially non-existent because of the exclusion of those who are considered unworthy of citizenship'. (2009, http://zilnikzelimir.net/sr/essay/kino-komuna-film-kao-prvostepena-drustveno-politicka-intervencija-1).

compared to a similar film technique used by Godard at that time. The politicization of, and even obsession with, raw film material echoes an older discussion between Vertov and Eisenstein, and it connects to a neorealist metonymic line: raw peasant life, the raw circumstances of war and the struggle for survival and liberation, and also the raw conditions in times of socialism – all this is condensed by Žilnik's arrival in Jazak. Furthermore, Žilnik openly rejects the dominant mode of representing the war as a spectacular form that focused solely on partisan battles, or on underground resistance in the urban centres. This is a film that shows how the vital infrastructure of partisan liberation worked, already realizing the promise of a New World. Its primary political subject is the peasant masses.

*Uprising in Jazak* is a short film that reconstructs the uprising of antifascist peasant men and women. It explains why and how they struggled for the partisan cause and takes the standpoint of the 'masses'. The film then functions as a reconstruction of testimonies from below, a film version of the 'people's history of resistance' (Gluckstein, 2012). These people are not only subjects worthy of political attention and the media archive; they also became subjects that remember for 'us', which is to say, for Yugoslav society and others, such as us in our current moment of extreme nationalism and widespread borderization. Žilnik added an important layer in the format of a participatory survey, what is more in keeping with the Italian workerist tradition, which introduced collective participatory interviewing. This is masterfully inserted into the film dynamic, where the central events of village life and the resistance are narrated by the different voices of the participants. Their reconstruction is not simple and individualistic; during the filming, these voices contradict each other and thus renegotiate the reconstruction of their stories. The camera also travels between the protagonists. It does not immediately focus and zoom in to the individuals who are speaking. Žilnik creates a dynamic movement through switches in camera movement, while changes in sound and in focus strengthen the multiplicity of the voices – the very position of enunciation of the masses. This reconstruction takes the shape of a collective bottom-up process of a memorial narrative and imaginary of the partisan village, or community-in-resistance. We are not confronted with a single voice, or a retrospective Communist Party history of the partisan struggle, but rather with a mosaic

of all those who participated in it. Owing to the scarce material and raw image and sound, spectators are invited to imagine – with the help of elementary sound and different film devices – what locations and objects are missing on the set.

Image 34: From the shooting of Žilnik's *Uprising in Jazak* (1973). Courtesy of Želimir Žilnik.

The renegotiated memory of participants in the liberation struggle arrives at a clear political conclusion about the past, but perhaps even more so about their and our present. The epic battles and the victory of the Partisan struggle would not have been possible without broad popular support, especially from those in the countryside, who sacrificed their lives, but also preserved their dignity and engaged in mutual aid. In a more historical sense, the countryside provided the struggle with the key infrastructure and the entire partisan movement with the most vital means of reproduction. Žilnik's film makes a significant shift from the conventional portrayal of civilians and farmers as passive victims of fascism, or civil war, and stages them as the central protagonists of antifascism. They become representatives of the everyday resistance of those millions who supported and struggled all throughout the war against the brutal fascist machinery and the

collaborationists' banality of evil. Žilnik's memorial strategy consists in a re-enactment of this people's history, of the history of people who thirty years later became carriers and (re)negotiators of public memory. This is the key feature of making a film *in a partisan way*. *Uprising in Jazak* re-enacts the uprising of the peasant masses, intensifies their visions, and thus disturbs the dominant field of vision/narration in partisan films of the time.

## 6.4 From Partisan Production to Partisan Dissemination?

The very last partisan gesture comes at the very end of the film's production. When the film was being edited and prepared for its first screenings, it was, as was customary, sent to the commission that controlled film production in Vojvodina. This commission rejected the film as 'unfit', to quote from Žilnik's personal archive; it was described as an 'untruthful representation of the People's Liberation Struggle […] in which Žilnik offends the revolution by engaging a group of bums who allegedly represent partisans.' This judgement was not taken lightly either by Žilnik or by the protagonists of the film. In yet another dramatic post-filmic unfolding of affairs, Žilnik, together with the most determined villager-partisan veterans, entered the municipal office of the regional ministry of culture in Novi Sad. Having arrived without a formal invitation, the villagers displayed their 1941 partisan memorial plaques, which confirmed that they fought for the partisan liberation struggle from the very start of the war. They rushed into the office of the then minister Djordje Popović, whom they forced to tear up the decision to ban the film. After a formal apology – 'banning the film seems to have been a mistake' – Popović granted their demand and gave his permission for the film's distribution. The film's distribution can be seen as a continuation of Partisan politics by other means, namely by resisting the regional bureaucracy and its attack on this Partisan film. This is also where the Partisan memory of villagers, and Žilnik's methods of production and dissemination, come full circle. The first projection took place in the village cinema a few days later and Žilnik recollects that the cinema was completely full and the showing concluded with long standing ovations. *Uprising in Jazak* was screened a few more times in the surrounding villages, and then in March 1973 at Belgrade's short film festival, where it received several positive reviews and was warmly received by the audience. In April

of that year the film went to the Oberhausen Film Festival and afterwards was withdrawn from distribution until 1984, when Žilnik was at last able to take the film back and start showing it publicly.

## 6.5 Conclusion

Žilnik's treatment of the partisan topic disturbed the dominant regime/representation of partisan struggle in socialist Yugoslavia. *Uprising in Jazak* (1973) took a clear politico-aesthetical stance against the mythologizing tendencies that helped to reproduce socialist authority. I demonstrated that it was one of the rare filmic attempts at that time to successfully address the partisan rupture, by finding a sensitive way to represent and commemorate the partisan legacy from below without reproducing party narratives and dominant filmic representations, as epitomized by *Battle of Neretva*. The responses of the interviewed villagers show that their direct involvement in the struggle was not so much about the direct defence of their village, but about becoming part of general struggle for liberation. This film allows these protagonists, often overheard and silenced, to enter into the collective memory of the liberation. Žilnik, despite not having produced many films on the partisan struggle, is one of the most important partisan filmmakers in the (post-)Yugoslav context. He has helped to cultivate revolutionary resources and a genuine popular solidarity that has gone beyond party lines and the fascination with high-budget spectacles. He has retrieved partisan fragments from the past in order to keep mobilizing and inspiring us in our current struggles against authoritarian horizons. Žilnik was and remains a filmmaker that makes films *in a partisan way*.[42]

42 There is another film from Žilnik that was carried out in the post-Yugoslav era and deals partially with the partisan legacy that needs to be mentioned: 'One woman - one century' (2011). This film, however, is not done 'in a partisan way', that is, it is a more conventional documentary on one of the first women antifascist organizers, Dragica from Istria, a dedicated WWII fighter, a translator for the BBC, and the person that was sent to deliver the strategic 'no' to Stalin in 1948. A tragic irony, as part of party purges in the early 1950s, she was sentenced to spend a few years of her life in the Goli otok re-education camp – the place where Yugoslav 'Stalinists' were sent for a few years – and, after returning to 'normal' life, she continued to be monitored.

# 7 How to Make a Partisan Film in (Post-)Yugoslavia? Marta Popivoda's *Landscapes of Resistance* (2021) and Nika Autor's *Sunny Railways* (2023)

This chapter deals with the work of two (post-)Yugoslav women filmmakers who have delved into pressing problems in contemporary society in engaging ways, aesthetic and political. I argue that they have successfully attempted to respond to the question of how to make a film *in a partisan way* today. First is Marta Popivoda's film *Landscapes of Resistance* (2021).[43] This film is a timely political and visual intervention into the cultural landscape of post-Yugoslavia. The second example is Nika Autor's film *Sunny Railways* (2023), which is part of her ongoing work dealing both with the legacy of socialism – produced as part of Newsreels Front – and with the current situation in the Balkans, where the topic of migration plays a pivotal role. Both filmmakers share strong visual approaches that mix documentary with an essayistic form, macro-comments on a situation with the most meticulous working of micro-stories. Also importantly, both authors contribute to thinking through the complex temporality between past and future, between the forsaken ideals of partisan liberation and socialism as drowned in today's 'capitalist realism' (Fisher, 2009), and address the question as to whether an emancipated future can be reached only through a detour to the utopian past.

## 7.1 Marta Popivoda's Resistance: From Symbolic Deaths to the Monument of the Future

Here I focus on diverse sequences from the film that point to a specific symbolic death and rebirth of new protagonists of our antifascist memory and present. Popivoda's film is not only a film about a partisan who narrates her partisan experiences from the war. Popivoda's film is also done *in a partisan way*. What I have described in the Introductory Chapter, and also in the chapter on Žilnik, demonstrates that the legacy over WWII is highly disputed. It also means that any filmmaker that deals with this subject faces a difficult task. Since, on the one hand, new partisan film aims to affirm the antifascist legacy at a time of intense right-wing revisionism, and on the other, it also aims not to mythologize or perform only a nostalgic function of a once shared state. To make a partisan film in a partisan way means to

43 Marta Popivoda, *Landscapes of Resistance*, 2021, Germany/Serbia/France.

take a clear position, to take sides. At first glance, this might be understood in a merely political way: *all art*, especially in times of war, social change and revolution, and even in our societies today, *is political art.* The decision to take a stance in the struggle against nationalism, authoritarian neoliberalism and planetary destruction cannot be avoided if one does not want to take an anti-partisan, profascist and pro-neoliberal stance. However, my proposal here is to move beyond the metapolitical frame and read the partisan gesture *aesthetically.* How is the partisan message inscribed in between the lines in the form – as I argue ae the title of Popivoda's film suggests – the partisan can be located in resisting landscape edited with a resisting voice. It is not only that her film has a strong political message and that it builds a transgenerational memorial tie, but that its filmic format challenges the dominant representation and testimonies of the partisan past. It brings to the centre protagonists that were not seen to be dignified or heroic enough: here centre stage is given to a very old female protagonist, a communist, partisan and Auschwitz survivor called Sonja.

Marta Popivoda's film *Landscapes of Resistance* (2021) is one of the most important (post-)Yugoslav partisan films that succeeds in 'arming our collective memory' about the past and future of antifascism, and in this way in building a transgenerational, emancipatory memory. *Landscapes of Resistance* succeeds in leading away from the dominant regime of representation and (de)commemoration of the partisan past.

Popivoda's *Landscapes of Resistance* is not a film about partisan action. Rather, spectators are met with a slowing down of movements, sustained by pauses in the narrative of the main protagonist Sonja. Sonja's voice of determination cuts and travels through landscapes that evoke (her) past resistance. Our gaze wanders through the emptied spaces, nature, trees and abandoned houses, and leaves us the time necessary to reflect on Sonja's story and let our imagination be provoked. Both Marta Popivoda and Ana Vujanović were well aware at the time that the Sonja's story was already so dramatic that it did not need extra-filmic intensification, but rather a sense of interruption interlaced with a continuous slowing down of the flow. This happens in moments, such as when Popivoda openly takes a partisan position by embracing the politicization of antifascist memory and politics, and by highlighting the rather absent voice of a partisan female protagonist. What

is nowadays not known but needs to be remembered, is that in the Yugoslav partisan struggle the Antifascist women organisation (AFŽ) was one of the core organizations and that, by the end of the war, it counted two million members. Without these women, the PLS would not have been successful. At the same time, the liberation struggle itself asserted an array of new rights for women. Yugoslav women fought for their rights, attained them during the liberation, and retained and expanded them in socialist times despite certain setbacks (I will return to this question in next chapter).

Sonja's story constantly travels between individual and collective memories of resistance and becoming intensified through ruptures. I suggest reading the film through the dynamic, or different stages of the life, that Lacan posits as being located 'between two deaths'.[44] A catastrophe and multiplication of dead bodies in WWII puts on display a trope of real physical death, while we could also speak of the 'symbolic death' of humanity as such, a complete destruction of what (Western) civilization represented as a specific movement towards progress and freedom, abruptly rejected in the gas chambers. For Lacan, the site between two deaths, physical and symbolic, can be located by the persistence of the desire to avenge, to return to life, to endure and resist despite the most impossible circumstances. I would like to read Sonja's drive and her persistence beyond all symbolic death, and I think that what kept her going was her indestructible will and determination to fight for a better world.

Image 35a: Still from *Landscapes of Resistance*. Courtesy of Marta Popivoda.

44 For a longer interpretation of this Lacanian term, see Žižek (1999, 170).

In the first poignant scene, we listen to Sonja's recollection of her school times: starting to read progressive literature, e.g., Gorky and to meet with communist youths (which was forbidden in the kingdom of Yugoslavia), she was expelled from both the school and her family. Her normal course of life was interrupted, at the time this was a clear excommunication that presents her first 'symbolic death'.[45] We see the camera travelling across various landscapes, while she retells the story that brings her to marry her older comrade Sava, and to start an illegal political and cultural work that will become the central backbone of antifascist resistance with the advent of war. A new marginalized and revolutionary social life starts here.

The second scene takes place at the beginning of war. Upon her return from a partisan action, many of her comrades at the partisan camp do not want to look into her eyes. The tension of what is going on culminates in the moment that a partisan doctor tells her: *your Sava has fallen.* The Sava that 'saved' her and helped her during her first symbolic death is now dead. Her entire life seems to crumble into pieces. She cries and cries endlessly until another of their comrades, Stjepan Filipović, pulls her up and addresses her: *stop crying, we knew that we would die, we fight and will go on*. This section is montaged with the images of the monument to Stjepan Filipović, who was publicly executed just some months later. His words and partisan gesture became immortal moments before he was hung. He was captured on photo-camera with his hands spread out. According to the eye witnessing and an official report he exclaimed: 'Death to fascism, freedom to the people'. This sequence ends with the second symbolic death. After the first death, she was abandoned by her family and lost the comforts of bourgeois life in prewar Yugoslavia. During her second death, however, her first love and partner had disappeared forever. All Sonja had then was herself, and as she realises moments after, the partisan struggle itself.

45 See also Lacan (2006, 435–436).

Image 35b: Still from *Landscapes of Resistance*. Courtesy of Marta Popivoda.

The third impressive scene takes place in her recollection of the camp, and in particular of detention at Auschwitz. Following her story through different camp experiences, we are faced with an open declaration of resistance. Despite the horrific circumstances and aware that she will very probably die, she recollects a discussion she had with one of her female comrades, saying to her *We have something to live for* and it is in our will to resist, a will to make another world possible. She adds that we will most probably die at any rate. Thus, with this being a third 'symbolic death',[46] in which women and men, in the most horrific space of the twentieth century, kept not only thinking but preparing and organizing a surrealist uprising against the fascist machine of extermination. This could be seen as creating a monument to the future – the unforgettable testimonies of the uprising and her recollections are interlaced with memories about Vida Jocić[47] and about another comrade, Neda, who had produced a series of drawings which survived in Sonja's personal archive.

46 Lacan, ibid.

47 She is one of the most famous Yugoslav (female) sculptors, and, after the war, produced amazing sculptures about female camp internees.

Image 35c: Still from *Landscapes of Resistance*. Courtesy of Marta Popivoda.

Finally, after three 'symbolic deaths', we imagine Sonja herself on the 'march of death' with other female comrades. Sonja remembers how after the Soviets were approaching Auschwitz, the internees were taken to other camps and the Nazi troops were being constantly attacked by Soviet planes, so they could use the opportunity this presented to escape to the forest. The forest figures here once more as the most emblematic site of the (partisan) resistance, as a site of the encounter with other refugees, with escapees from military imprisonment awaiting liberation. Their gesture of togetherness is presented with their first baking of bread and, some moments later, cheering with a red flag – woven and stitched together from the parts of Nazi and other uniforms from the Ravensbrück camp – to the Soviet soldiers. Weaving as a practice of resistance, the weaving of an antifascist solidarity beyond ethnic and gender lines. Liberation finally comes, and Sonja returns to Belgrade where she is observed with some reservation by high Communist party members. But this is already part of the next story, of the next film that is, that is yet to be done.

## 7.2 Nika Autor's *Sunny Railways*: From Socialist Utopia to the Dystopian Present?

I would like to present another female filmmaker whose works range from exhibitions to films, but who has established herself in the last decade as a front member of the collective Newsreels Front. The name Newsreels Front evocatively connects this collective to the early avantgarde, to the Soviet

and Yugoslav socialist legacies of early filmmakers who intervened into and documented the process of 'socialism under construction', also presenting its major challenges. The work of Newsreels Front oscillates between the promotion of utopian ideas and the official ideology of socialism of the past, doing so in a style that is highly *engagé* and interventionist on topics of work, migrant work, and migration in the Balkan region. In the film work of Nika Autor, the documentary and political dimensions are not presented at the expense of aesthetic style and poetic devices. Her work skilfully navigates between the archives of the past, between socialism and partially realized utopias, while also bringing us to the midst of the Balkan Route today, a place where ethnic wars took place and migrants are not held in wait. Importantly, her films are not sensationalist investigations into the horrific circumstances that migrants face – border control, police violence, absence of official infrastructure – but take us on a journey through the underground infrastructure of migrants and ordinary people. They point to the political capacities of the oppressed, of the silent and unknown solidarities that exist between newcomers and local populations. They operate on the expectation of a world that, such as in her short film *Red Forest*, is already here, a world needed to take life forward into the future.

Here I will delve into her last film *Newsreel 242*, which also goes by the name *Sunny Railways* (2023). This film investigates the early postwar period of Yugoslavia after the fascist occupation, which left much of the basic infrastructure destroyed and in need of rebuilding. It was in 1947 that international youth (brigades) met with Yugoslav youth volunteers and built 242 km of railroad between Sarajevo and Šamac in a mere matter of months. The archival footage is accompanied by an off voice that travels through past and present landscapes and self-reflects about what it was that guided the youth in their internationalist spirit and solidarity. In what way can the bodies of all those working on the railroad express not only the idea of a socialist utopia, but its material realization? There is, however, a constant jump between the time of the present, the dystopian war-scarred landscape and the ethnic bodies of today, and the bygone time of socialist internationalism.

Image 36a: Still from *Sunny Railways*. Courtesy of Nika Autor.


Image 36b: Still from *Sunny Railways*. Courtesy of Nika Autor.

The first part of the film sets out from a landscape, a beautiful and mountainous landscape along which our eyes travel slowly. The absence of people and almost complete silence is then juxtaposed to the wars and the liberation movement that will see these mountains liberated. The camera is accompanied by an off-voice that recounts how the liberation forces were fighting their struggle for survival against the fascist occupiers. The scattered battlefields, strewn with corpses and bones, are situated in the most beautiful landscapes; they also harbour the attitude of hope and a belief in utopia, and most of all constructing for peace and prosperity of all nations and people of the new Yugoslavia. The film also briefly presents the most societally dominant narrative of that time, that of socialist progress and modernization. There is one short sequence that can be interpreted as part of a more official socialist representation – where the masses greet the then-president, Tito, at the opening of the railroad track – projects an image of successful socialist industrialization. It is noteworthy that this image of popular enthusiasm and modernization was not 'fake' or merely staged, but expressed and already materialized a clear vision for the future.

Image 36c: Still from *Sunny Railways*. Courtesy of Nika Autor.

Besides this, what Autor engages with at more length is the representation of internationalist spirit, something yet again that cannot be reduced to state propaganda, or to forced and manipulated labour. Railroad construction here points to the multiple conceptions of the future. Both camera and storyline dwell on the image of one Palestinian woman who is working together with two other comrades. We see her only from side-on, but we cannot see her face or hear her voice (See image 36b above). Spectators might speculate as to where she ended up a year later, during the 1948 Nakba, and whether and how she was involved in Palestinian anticolonial struggle. It does evoke a dimension of past international solidarity with the Palestinian anticolonial struggle, of which Yugoslavia was one of the great supporters. Furthermore, the image of antifascist and anticolonial struggle is not about violence, but it has always been internally linked to the image of peace and social justice. The film shows us people, young and old, happily working and building a project, a new railroad that symbolizes peace and sisterhood with other nations and people.

In the second part of the film, we come to the real desert of the postsocialist transition. This time we find the landscape empty once more; there are practically no people, which strongly echoes Pavle Levi, who argues:

> What is missing are, of course, the people (Deleuze) ... People – yes, but… not only the living. The dead, too, are missing! There is a manifest absence of human bodies, all human bodies, in these films. Bodies engaged in various activities, behaviours, and gestures, whether mundane or extraordinary.[48]

Nature seems to take some revenge on people, their wars, and horrific consequences, nature overgrows the railway tracks. The images and archival footage of new wars is absent. We might wonder whether the image of ethnic wars is absent because it bears no emancipatory and utopian fragments.

48 The quote from Levi is taken from his article accessible online in the journal *Senses of Cinema*: https://www.sensesofcinema.com/2022/after-yugoslavia/the-cinema-of-cleansed-landscapes-on-image-politics-after-yugoslavia/

Image 36d: Still from *Sunny Railways*. Courtesy of Nika Autor.

Furthermore, as Pavle Levi commented along various recent post-Yugoslav films that work on politics and landscape, they work carefully with slowing down and highlighting landscape poetics. For Levi this is not mere aestheticization, but rather, I would add, a politicization of the landscape that brings together a series of interconnected themes 'contemporary as well as historical; socio-economic, political, and cultural – themes ... every film image of a landscape is also a document of a particular way in which nature itself responds to human activity' (ibid.). In case of Autor's most recent film once cherished landscape of liberation and internationalist efforts turn into a sad picture of the scattered bodies of new wars that hold an almost fossilised remainders of the past. Can this railroad still evoke ways and traces apt to reactivate an internationalist spirit? The film gives us a clue, perhaps, as to how it can. It is not nature's more obvious overgrowing of the railway tracks that overgrows the utopian past; rather, it is through the new movement along the tracks. Autor's camera-eye focuses on the newcomers who use these tracks along the so-called Balkan route. The camera lingers on a group of female migrants/refugees from three different generations. The portraits of them make it clear that they are all from Palestine. Does the oldest of them, surely a survivor of the Nakba, know that one of her comrades was in Yugoslavia in 1947? Then we see women from the generation in between, all of whom know the Intifada well. Finally, the youngest generation remember their homes, even if they have been displaced or these

homes are now destroyed; they are the ones who will be conveying these stories to the core of Europe.

In images and words, Autor's film essay oscillates between what Traverso calls 'leftwing melancholia' (Traverso, 2017a) and what others call 'restorative nostalgia' (Boym, 2021). It does not construct a space that did not exist; rather, it transports us to a time when the vision of the future existed and was meaningful for many. Countering the right-wing dissident trope that the entire communist past can be reduced to propaganda and violence, Autor's film engages with an array of positive consequences, and juxtaposes them with the ideological effects of a dystopian present. Where there is no future, the structure of feeling fills us with apathy and resignation. Furthermore, the film does very well to show us that when there is an absence of conditions, and an absence of belief in a social, transformative project, and when the internationalist spirit becomes reduced to NGO work, then we are left with only one possible future: the militarization of society, the nationalization of communities, and the proliferation of war. Empty tracks. Miserable railways and empty stations that signify the new states after their transition to capitalism, evoking a state of sadness and isolation. The famous TINA (there is no alternative) of transitional time here becomes a visual trope that identifies war as the only paradigm of future: war and its consequences. Lost railway tracks and movements of people escaping catastrophes. In this film documentation, we do not deal directly with wars and the manifested violence that would draw on the ordinary mediatized spectacles of images. Much more, Autor's camera makes of those that flee subjects in their own right, seeing them as dignified and in need of respect for what they have undergone. The camera stops and, in a close up of the faces of the Palestinian women, shows them not as mere passive victims for a Western gaze, but as those – as Judith Butler (2016) well articulates – who are subjects worthy of our collective mourning. Can our collective mourning be a start for ending oppression and occupation in various contexts today? Their lives matter and they are worthy of being represented as more than victims of war. In times when double standards reign supreme and the lives of perpetrators have become more worthy than those of the oppressed, ideological grounds and battles for a 'people without history' and their own state become part of our de-normalization of dystopia. Newsreel Front is one such attempt.

## 7.3 A Short Comparison of Filming in a Partisan Way

Marta Popivoda's film *Landscapes of Resistance* was made in the last decade in which an increasingly neoliberal, patriarchal, and nationalist orientation emerged in Serbia in particular, and in the post-Yugoslav context in general. It provides a precious filmic testimony for a time in which the partisan past is otherwise demonized and local fascism rehabilitated. Sonja's story, and the way it is told and filmed, will long outlive her individual life. Her camera paints her protagonist in a very realist way and not at all as a victim. The protagonist is one of the members of the oppressed that make history and that transmit the need to be recovered from oblivion in order to empower us, new generations, for new struggles. Her film aims to reconstruct an *antifascist memory from below.* And it succeeds.

Popivoda contributes to the filmic counter-archive that cultivates the emancipatory resources of the past for our present. Her highlighting of this individual female story of partisan resistance speaks of the solidarity of the past and has the potential to help spawn a solidarity that would extend far beyond ethnic and (Communist) party lines. Her film dispenses with the prevalent form of memory aestheticization of, and focus on, the *victim*. Instead, it shows the *oppressed* as empowered and retrieves partisan fragments from the past in order to defragment history. This partisan method, which I have briefly described as an example of *how to make a film in a partisan way,* means taking a clear position, taking sides, aesthetically choosing to travel between female words and landscapes of resistance, while also taking sides politically on topics that matter in our societies. Instead of mythologizing partisan revolution/struggle, partisan art teases out, extends, and refracts the echoes, helping to create visions of revolution, to instil the bond between men and women, as well as between animals and landscapes.[49] The reference to the revolutionary past inspires our present. It does so by being inventive in its form, by experimenting with formats of narration and representation. Popivoda succeeds in constructing a counter-memory from below, expressed through a female protagonist who was, and still is, determined to fight.

In Nika Autor's film Newsreels 242, apart from the recovering of internationalist solidarity from times gone by, the film suggests that we rethink

49 See the passage on the monument to revolution, see Guatarri and Deleuze (1994, 176).

the conditions of lasting, or perpetual, peace, especially for the present moment, when all the major conditions for peace and social welfare are being dismantled. The film points to the need to think together after the loss of the once common space of internationalism, the loss of emancipatory ideas and utopias, dissolved by plural wars. Some might see this as an expression of 'left-wing melancholia' (Traverso, 2017a). However, I argue that, rather than show defeats, her films cultivate the resilience of the oppressed today and of once realized utopias – victories of the oppressed – in the past. One question remains, perhaps: if, at the moment when the scattered landscape becomes reorganized with the public railroad tracks, and when it dissolves into migration and scattered bodies that hover around the landscape, can we still trace certain projective position directed to the future? Will there always first be a detour through the past, as perhaps the film surmises, or should new internationalist figures and movements be built that can carry justice and peace? Glimpses of hope can carry justice and peace in times of global war.

These dimensions of Popivoda's and Autor's filmmaking unquestionably lend to the practice of making films in a partisan way today. Both tackle the partisan and socialist legacy from the past, and track the subtle and manifest ways it is echoed and refracted through the form and content of these very film. Both films effectively disturb the nationalist revisionism, the anticommunist and antimigrant hegemony, while they also help to mobilize and inspire us in current struggles against authoritarian horizons, whether by activating an image of a different future through resistance to fascism, or one of peace in today's time of global wars. Both evoke a deeply transgenerational dimension, one that connects diverse witnesses, artworks, and us spectators in socialism and post-socialism, incites us to reflect, act and renegotiate with the existing order, with the dangers of environmental collapse, and with the growing fascist danger of the capitalocene age.[50] Popivoda's and Autor's films bring the symbolic death of Sonja and of the socialist utopia into the foreground; if Popivoda thus helps to launch the rebirth of the female, partisan and communist protagonist (i.e. Sonja), Autor shows the young Palestinian socialist volunteer as being 'reborn' in the image of a Palestinian migrant who tells us another story of potential solidarity. Both

50 See especially the passage from Haraway, 2015, 159–165.

remain there beyond the spectral imagery, but as new members of a different futurity. These are not merely small gestures in a context that has been undergoing a double exclusion: note that the current official nationalist memory excludes partisan, socialist and female stories, and prioritizes national anti-partisan and anti-socialist mythology constructed around male heroes, grand personae of history. Sonja – despite the most impossible circumstances of occupation and its concentration camps – and the Palestinian women, despite enduring the most impossible circumstances at home and on the way to Europe, all display an indestructible will to resist, and, in a transgenerational way, call upon us, younger generations, to mobilize visual, cultural and political resources in the present struggles.

# 8 Remembrance of Ljubljana´s Antifascist Women's Protests (1943): From Agonist Memory in Socialism to Memory in Postsocialism[51]

This chapter thematizes diverse forms of contestation around the public memory of the women's antifascist protests, which first emerged during the fascist occupation of Ljubljana in 1943, aiming to contextualize this historical event, and to show how women's protests emerged with the political organization of the AFŽ. It then moves to the time of the tenth anniversary of women's protests in 1953. The official socialist launch of various monuments in Ljubljana by party and municipal powers is discussed in the light of dissolution of the AFŽ. In the last part of the chapter, I analyse how public memory on women's protests became part of an antagonist memory: from the symbolic removal of the monument from the front of St Nicholas's Church and the conservative mnemonic turn in 1991 to the emergence of the various memory actors – especially feminist and antifascist groups and memory activists – who challenged the conservative ideology. It examines the processes, agents and orientations that emerged through the process of 'dialogical remembering' in socialist and in postsocialist times. I argue that it is symptomatic that precisely the collective memory of women's emancipation and antifascism has been one of the most targeted and contested sites of public memory. If, in the early socialist context, the political authorities recognized the contributions of women's antifascism, even as they sought to contain its emancipatory impulses, then postsocialism saw more extreme forms of 'antagonist memory' (Bull and Hansen, 2016) in the conservative memory frame. The historico-political referent of women transgresses the rigid borders of who it is that gets remembered as 'antifascist'; their internal dissenting core – dialogue as dissent – demonstrates the intersectionality of this political agent, insofar as it concerns a collectivity of *women antifascist,* and *communist* activists.

Since little has been written about women's protests in the antifascist history of Yugoslavia, and since the actions of memory activists are rarely publicized – bar in a few daily newspapers – I decided, in September 2023, to

51 This chapter is a heavily revised version of an article forthcoming in *Memory Studies*. I would like to thank the editors Ksenia Robbe, Andrei Zavadski and Agnieszka Mrozik for their valuable comments of a previous version.

conduct interviews with some renowned anti-fascist memory activists to gain some additional insights. I asked why it is that there has been such resilience in collective remembrance around the women's antifascist struggle. Should we understand this remainder and reactivation of memory about these protests as shielding or even cultivating an 'unfinished' promise that transcends its localized and particular content? The dialogical and conflictual core of the female and antifascist past resides in its emancipatory promises around equality for all and recognition of the oppressed, something that cannot be discounted as 'left-wing melancholia' (see Traverso, 2017a) cultivating defeatism, but figures as a mobilizing resource that opens up utopian horizons in the fight against neo-fascism as well as against conservative and patriarchal ideologies today.

## 8.1 From Protests to the Antifascist Women's Organization During the Fascist Occupation

Within the general field of (post)Yugoslav studies, research into the history, culture and politics of Yugoslav anti-fascist resistance has recently gained in prominence.[52] Furthermore, something that is pertinent to my purposes here, a number of critical researchers, artists and activists have contributed to a historical analysis of women's emancipation, the AFŽ, and the role of women in the Yugoslav anti-fascist struggle.[53] We cannot understand the protests and political subjectivation and empowerment of women in former Yugoslavia during WWII without an analysis of the AFŽ, since – as the aforementioned works evidence – the AFŽ can be seen as pivotal in the liberation of Yugoslavia.

Although the liberation struggle in Yugoslavia was predominantly politically led by the Communist Party of Yugoslavia, the AFŽ was founded on 6 December 1942 by women volunteers of the partisan resistance, and it would soon become the largest mass organization of the Yugoslav liberation struggle. It is noteworthy that 110,000 armed women fought alongside partisan men, while at the end of the war, the various AFŽ groups operative in the various republics counted 2 million registered members.

52 Duraković and Matošević, 2023; Hofman, 2016; Horvatinčić and Žerovc, 2023; Kirn, 2020; Komelj, 2008; Velikonja, 2009.

53 Batinić, 2015; Blasin, 2022; Jančar-Webster, 1990.

In comparison, the entire Yugoslav partisan military formation comprised 800,000 fighters, of which 150,000 were registered members of the Communist Party (Petranović, 1988). Despite the overlapping activities and memberships of the communist and AFŽ organizations, it could be argued that the AFŽ wielded a semi-autonomous organizational power at the very least. The AFŽ groups not only called for liberation from the fascist occupation, but also insisted that liberation had to include women's emancipation and the creation of a new Yugoslavia. Batinić (2015) shows well how women made their own demands during the struggle, and their formal political equality had already been attained during the war, which meant they could vote and be elected within the political bodies of the liberation movement. This emancipatory process was furthered after the war, first through formal political recognition, and, second, through the granting of a wide range of socioeconomic rights.

Importantly for the contextualization of my case study, women's protests emerged not only in Ljubljana, but right throughout the occupied Yugoslav region. They were sometimes linked to women's and resistance organizations, but more often such protests occurred as a spontaneous political force that articulated immediate grievances, especially related to the shortage of food. With the notable exception of Barić-Deželak (2003), and some memoirs and descriptions by the activists themselves, little research has been done on women's protests during the fascist occupation. Besides filling the gap in the existing literature, I argue that analysing and remembering courageous acts of public protests is of crucial importance, as such acts bring to light another, often underacknowledged, mode of women's agency in the struggle. Below I briefly present diverse women's protests and their causes. The protests took place between 1941 and 1945 in the Yugoslav context. I have reconstructed them from various historical documents, leaflets and AFŽ newsletters, found in various online (digital archives) and in situ archives.

The most important reasons for the emergence of the protests can be divided into four groups: *firstly*, the occupation of Yugoslavia that started in April 1941 and was divided among mostly Italian fascist and German Nazi forces. One of the harsh features of occupation especially for those living in the cities was the sporadic and severe food shortages for the civilian

population. When such shortages were couple by the occupiers' failure to keep their promise on food rationing/provision, this forced women to protest (the most famous cases were in Mostar, Split 1941, in Zagreb in 1942, in Šibenik in 1942, and on the island of Komiža in 1943); *secondly*, another important reason for women organizing protests was due to the killings of prominent antifascist activists. In Zagreb, the AFŽ was already well organized by 1942, and on 18 January 1943 it organized strikes at different factories that functioned as a commemorative action due to the killing of Marko Linarić. In Ljubljana, women organized commemorations at the Vič cemetery for the killing of their comrade Malči Belič on 2 February 1943; more than one thousand people joined together in a procession with flowers, songs and leaflets. *Thirdly*, the women's protest movement in Ljubljana in 1943 was a reaction to the terrible conditions in the prison system and the increasing deportations to concentration camps (also on Vis, such demands and protests took place in 1941). And *fourthly*, the 8th of March, as International Women's Day, was an important political reference to the clandestine and public actions of the AFŽ. They took place with special intensity in Istria in 1943, in 1944, and in 1945 (in Pula and Rovinj), where everyday protests became more militant at night, with women lighting bonfires, spraying graffiti on fascist barracks, or even throwing grenades. Such militant actions should be understood in light of the imminent liberation, and as a product of the new women's agency. Despite their awareness of the fascist terror and dangers of doing politics publicly, anti-fascist women organized themselves in such way that showed open disobedience towards, and contempt for, the fascist apparatus. I agree with Grubački (2020), who argues that interwar women's struggles were not only reactions to the occupation, but already parts of the dreams of a new world. Also, this web of women's protests puts on display both the courage and power of all the women who were able to resist and imagine what was at that time utterly utopian: a radically New World.

## 8.2 Ljubljana, Centre of the Women's Protest Movement

Ljubljana's resistance was organized by the Liberation Front, which emerged at the very beginning of the occupation in late April 1941. Its organizational structures and activities were impressive to say the least, and

ranged from the daily broadcasting radio station Kričač to the underground partisan printing presses that printed leaflets and booklets (Komelj, 2009). Due to the increasing resistance activities, Italian fascist occupation forces decided to cover the whole city with barbed wire, which was followed by many arrests and severe reprisals, including the shooting of civilian hostages. Those arrested often endured torture, while shot, some remained imprisoned, and others, around 7,000 men, as well as hundreds of women and children, were sent to concentration camps, especially to Rab and Gonars, in 1942. Because of the increasing number of raids, many activists and also the command of Liberation Front joined the partisans and went into the forests. From 1943 onwards it can be argued it was *women activists* who formed the backbone of the clandestine resistance in Ljubljana. In order to protect the organization and the lives of the activists, the resistance adhered to secretive and conspiratorial methods almost from the start. Any public protest meant that one exposed oneself to the potential violence of the authorities, but also endangered one's family members and friends, who could be arrested or held hostage.

Just imagine how thousands of women dared to come together in such circumstances. They handed out leaflets, shouted slogans for the liberation of prisoners and delivery from fascism, sang anti-fascist and proletarian songs, and then marched and protested in front of the central administration building in Ljubljana. The singing of protesters echoed and triggered the singing of male inmates in the fascist prisons. Sounds of political resistance accompanied by thousands of protesters formed a not-to-be forgotten stage. This is not some art project with retro-utopian commemoration of liberation, but an actual historical event that took place in the summer of 1943 during the fascist occupation of Ljubljana! So how are we to explain the emergence of the women's protests? At the beginning of 1943, the citizens of Ljubljana received worrying news from the prisons and concentration camps: there was increasing hunger, and disease and death were spreading among inmates (for details see Deželak-Barić, 2005). The news provoked the first protest by the women in early February 1943, when a small group of ten to twenty women gathered in the city centre to collect clothes for the prisoners. This spontaneous public campaign to collect clothes and food for relatives gradually grew in size and became more organized. However, on 8

March 1943, the Italian fascist commissar Emilio Grazioli issued a decree banning the shipment of parcels to the concentration camps, thereby inhibiting the women protesters from reaching the prisoners. In response to this decree, the women activists organized an even more powerful protest. On Wednesday 21 April, they gathered in Zvezda Park, where the Italian fascist army command resided. During this protest, the women were not just asking for their parcels to be sent to the prisoners, but also demanded that the prisoners' rights would be respected, that prison conditions would be improved, and that the prisoners would be treated more humanely. The fascist General Gastone Gambara reportedly declared that he would not receive anything or anyone during Easter. In response to his disregard, Angela Ocepek, a communist and anti-fascist organizer, announced that the women would return the following Wednesday. This inspired the slogan of the women's protest movement: *See you next Wednesday*.

The number of women demonstrators increased to several hundred in early May. The demonstrators initiated a petition demanding the immediate release of old and sick internees as well as pregnant women (Deželak-Barić, 2003). On 12 May 1943, around a thousand women protested against the fascist violence and for the rights of internees. The fascist authorities used direct violence and blocked various areas, while the demonstrators handed over the petition to the governmental palace. Only one surviving photo of the women's protest remains. This photo was taken by the Italian colonel Diego de Henriquez.

Image 37: Women protests in 1943 Ljubljana. Photo by Diego de Henriquez. Courtesy of MNSZS.

The women's protests came to a climax on 21 June 1943, when a large demonstration took place in front of the City Palace. Two thousand women gathered there and distributed leaflets. A special issue of *Naša žena* (Our Woman) was printed for the occasion. The march stopped in front of the Diocese of St Nicholas, where the protestors repeated their request for help and support from the bishop. The female protesters were beaten up and dispersed with police water cannons, and some demonstrators were arrested. Although representatives of the Catholic Church met with some women demonstrators on prior occasions, they did little to help their cause. The repression of the women's protests further strained the already tense relationship between the resistance movement and the Catholic Church. The latter openly collaborated with the fascist regime and, along with a large section of the political elite, believed in the victory of Nazi Germany and viewed communism as the major threat (Godeša, 2011). The Catholic Church and its far-right political wings actively and coercively mobilized people into fascist collaborationist military units, which fought against the anti-fascist resistance, strongly leftist in orientation, and instigated a civil war that had immense consequences in terms of casualties in Slovenia. The harsh civil war left the ground ripe for conflicts and for the subsequent contestation of memory politics and ideological tropes.

The final public women's protest movement was organised together with the Liberation Front and took place on 1 August 1943. 10,000 demonstrators gathered and what emerged was a true spirit of liberation, as Deželak-Barić describes:

> The most massive demonstration in Ljubljana took place on Sunday 1 August in front of the prisons and court … However, this was no longer a typical women's demonstration – even if they called it that – but it was attended by a large number of men, as the demonstration took place after the Allied invasion of Sicily started.... the demonstrators sang the songs 'Our beautiful homeland', 'Hey Slovenians' … and were joined by prisoners in the judicial prisons, who sang the 'Internationale.' (Deželak-Barić, 2003, 69, translation mine – G.K.)

Even though the demonstration on 1 August 1943 can be also seen as a symbolic declaration of the end of the Italian fascist occupation – the Italian was then followed by the German Nazi occupation of Ljubljana – the courage and radicalism of the protesters' demands should not be underestimated. Furthermore, we should acknowledge the long-term persistence and commitment of the women at the gates of the fascist regime, where they encountered batons and water cannons and the expectation of possible internment or execution.

Female anti-fascist activists were not armed, but their words and deeds intensified as part of the protest movement throughout the year of 1943. They made a vital contribution to the politicization of women and the establishment of female agency in the liberation struggle. Women's protests were expressions of grievances which highlighted their vulnerability, increased by deteriorating infrastructures for food production as well as the dire circumstances of the war, the prisons and the camps. Women became more organized, which among other things strengthened the AFŽ in Slovenia, as they became the central bearers of alternative clandestine frameworks that provided material subsistence and ties of solidarity. As such, women's political activities provide a solid example of what Judith Butler (2016) theorized as the dialectical relation between vulnerability and resistance. In Butler's theory, vulnerability is not conceived of as something passive, but rather as evidence of the emergence of active and resistant subjects who respond to a shrinking and ideologically exclusive infrastructure that is bound to the racial and ethnic hostility of a regime. I would be reluctant, however, to make a retrospective claim and argue that since the protest movement consisted of a great majority of women, it can be viewed as proto-feminist, that is, that it became a central site for the subjectivation of a women's politics. Furthermore, women for the first time entered the historical stage on an equal footing and started expanding political demands that relate to women's emancipation, something that can be traced back to pre-war 'left feminism' (Grubački, 2020). Under the circumstances of the fascist occupation, the aims of the protests were evidently anti-fascist, but the resilience and courage of the women is telling of a proper political subjectivity apt to transform the conventional and patriarchal prejudices regarding a woman's place in society on a scale

that broke with the interwar feminism that had been limited to an urban intellectual milieu.

## 8.3 Cultural Remembrance and Monuments to Women's Anti-Fascist Activism in Times of Socialism

The end of the war and the liberation of Yugoslavia were marked by the political enthusiasm and reconstruction of the country, which developed alongside major political, social and economic changes. No longer the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, the country became the new federal, and later socialist, Yugoslavia. Due to the role of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia in the successful liberation struggle, its leader Josip Broz Tito and other communist organizations gained a great deal of support in the first post-war elections on 11 November 1945. The antifascist liberation struggle thus became the pillar of the new Yugoslavia and a socialist politics of memory. It is therefore unsurprising that the official cultural policy and orientation assigned artists and cultural workers the tasks of narrating, representing and commemorating the PLS.

The creation of the official frameworks of memory and politics is, on the one hand, related to the emerging state's attempt to acquire political legitimacy, and, on the other, to the social and individual need both to mourn the victims of fascist violence and to celebrate the partisan heroes. The theme of liberation became a central topic of the new politics of memory (Horvatinčić, 2017), and was accompanied by various artworks that centred around partisan struggle. The heterogeneity of cultural expressions of partisan memory is evident from the numerous sculptures, monuments, graphic artworks, films, books, festivals, public round-tables, and literary prizes that are displayed in museums dedicated to the liberation struggle across Yugoslavia (Kirn, 2020). The partisan martyrs and their heroes and heroines became crucial symbols in the culture of remembrance, and were commemorated in the naming of streets, schools and monuments. In this context, the organization of the Veterans of the PLS in particular, but also the municipalities and anti-fascist women's organizations more broadly, assisted in organizing public calls for new monuments, collecting material means and finances, and launching commemorative events. The key difference with the rest of the socialist countries of the East was that

Yugoslav partisan forces liberated Yugoslavia on their own, and also started revolutionary processes during the war itself.

Focusing on the emerging collective memory of women partisan and anti-fascist fighters and activists, there is unequivocal progress during the socialist era compared to the pre-war Kingdom of Yugoslavia (1918-1941). In the latter, there was scarcely any recognition of eminent women in prestigious public spaces, such as in the names of schools, streets, cultural establishments, memorials, or monuments. The patriarchal ideological climate and conventional memory politics, epitomized in the statues of male figures on horseback, had been challenged in the early years of the new Yugoslavia. It is noteworthy that a female partisan figure gained prominent entry into socialist cultural representation (Vittorelli, 2015). Despite the importance of this move in fostering an emancipated and self-determining image of a woman, which was meant to bestow more social power on women in Yugoslavia, there was nevertheless a palpable discrepancy between the representation of men and women in commemorative practises. In the field of partisan memory politics, women featured in approximately 10% of the total number of partisan monuments. However, the most courageous partisan and anti-fascist women were declared 'national heroines' and received numerous memorial plaques, school book write ups, and had various schools and libraries named after them. There were also memorial sites installed at hospitals dedicated to female medical staff, female soldiers, resisting and mourning mothers, and female victims of fascist terror. To my knowledge, there are very few monuments that commemorate the AFŽ, the partisan women's collective, or that refer to the collective actions organized by women. In this respect, the cultural remembrance of women's collectives and of women's protests in Ljubljana is a notable exception.

Cultural remembrance and wider social recognition of the women's protest movement in Ljubljana was galvanized in anticipation of its tenth anniversary in 1953. Typically, such anniversaries were an opportunity – in this case, initiated by Ljubljana's Veteran's organization of the People's Liberation Struggle – to organize public events, commission new monuments, inspire artworks, and provide financial and material resources for the realization of monuments. On 22 June 1953, two monuments to women's protests were inaugurated. The event commenced in the centre at Prešernova, where

a smaller monument had been created, and Lidija Šentjurc, a communist politician, delivered a speech on the significance of the courageous actions in which she promoted the figure of the female fighter (Ljudska Pravica, 1953). A large crowd of people gathered to listen to her, after which music was played, and then the crowd proceed to another monument that had been in front of the Church of St Nicholas.

The monument erected in front of the Church of St Nicholas created a controversy, since in its form and content it is evidently conflictual and ever since it has evoked agonist and even antagonistic responses. The monument was also designed by Edvard Ravnikar, the well-known modernist architect, and sculpturally represents a form of *J'accuse,* or rather of a collective enunciation: *We accuse* the Catholic Church and its leadership of having collaborated with the fascist occupiers and of failing to act against fascism. Allegedly without the architect's knowledge, monument was inscribed with the following words:

> On 21 June 1943, thousands of women and children wanted the bishop to intervene with the occupiers for the release of husbands, fathers, daughters and sons. But on the bishop's initiative, the demonstrators were forcibly dispersed. (translation mine – G.K.).

For the more progressive left forces and anti-fascist organizations in Yugoslavia, and also today, the role of the Catholic Church in Slovenian history has been interpreted predominantly through critical lenses that see the Church as the ideological and political apparatus of reaction, one with a strong misogynistic orientation.

In the eyes of the Church, this sculptured finger came to be known as 'the pillar of shame'. With regard to the inscription, it is worthy noting that there was no clear evidence that Bishop Gregorij Rožman or any other Church official directly conspired with the fascist occupation against the women's protests. However, this does not exonerate the Church leadership from its well-documented collaboration with the fascist occupiers, whether in their Italian or German cloaks. The Catholic Church remained a highly conservative, patriarchal, nationalist, anti-communist, and anti-anti-fascist force.

The fact that the sculpture was positioned in front of this prominent church building, undoubtedly contributed to its functioning as a disturbing

symbol for the leadership of the Catholic Church. But it also destabilized the traditionalist and almost transhistorical role of the Catholic Church in imagining and organizing the community of Slovenians. For the first time in history, the Church lost its political primacy and its social role. The Communist Party was therefore particularly invested in this ideological and mnemonic struggle, and such memorial gestures and monuments need to be read in this light.

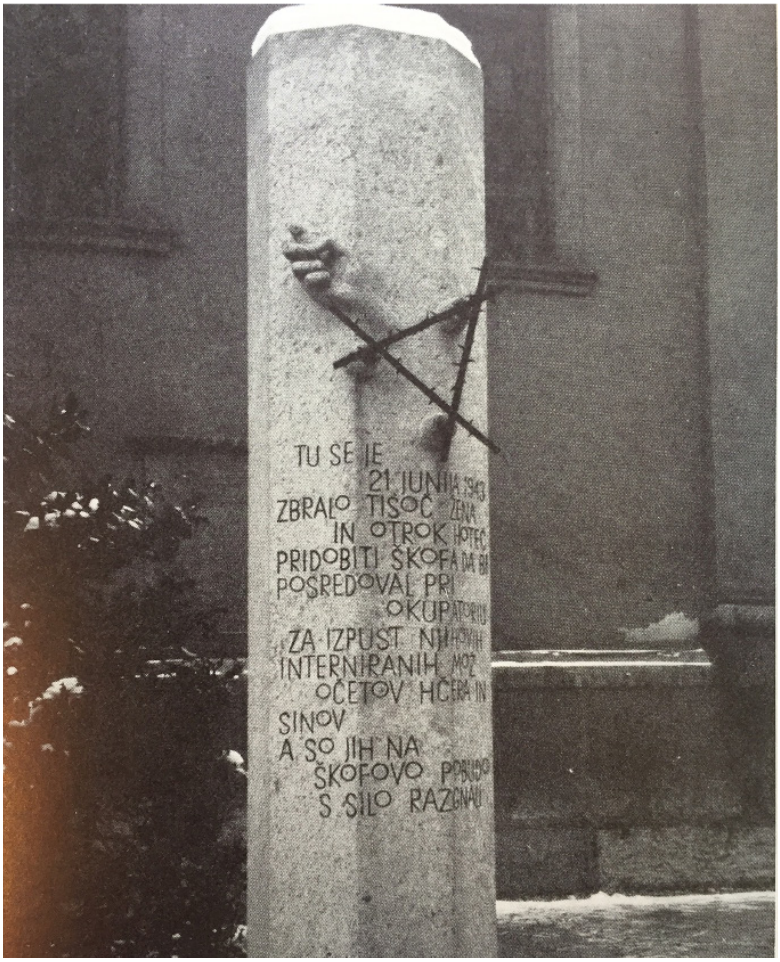


Image 38: Edvard Ravnikar's monument at the Church of St Nicholas.

The Communist Party itself was not tasked with the creation of monuments. This task was notably placed in the hands of the Veteran organizations of liberation struggle, and in these cases of women protests, also with the assistance of the AFŽ. Sonja Lokar, an active politician in the socialist era and fighter for women's rights during the transition to post-socialism, argues that AFŽ members did not contradict or question the criticism of the Catholic Church, while also that these women were aware that the struggle for gender equality continued under socialism 'and that women's demands could not be ignored by the decision-makers of the time, who were mostly men, because women had fought and sacrificed themselves for freedom just as much as their male comrades' (Interview with Lokar, September 2023). For them, erecting monuments to the women's protests clearly indicated an important symbolic recognition of their antifascist struggle and their contributions to the liberation; yet it also fuelled the desire to expand and strengthen women's role in socialism (from the interview with Lokar, September 2023). Articulating the memory on women protests became an openly conflictual field: an antagonistic dialogue that resulted in the exclusion of the former hegemon (the Church), and its replacement by the Communist Party, while within the communist organizations, it triggered a more subtle but productive and ongoing dialogue, not only in terms of public memory, but also of the role of women in the new society. While women were for the first time recognized as a historical subject that contributed to the liberation, their role was contained by the Communist Party – I return to this point below.

Given the significant public interest in, and attention to, the first two monuments dedicated to the women's protests, the Veteran Association of Ljubljana decided to create two more monuments. The third monument was allegedly designed by Jože Plečnik, the most famous Slovenian architect, and was constructed in the same year, and unveiled in Park Zvezda in the centre of Ljubljana in 1953. Research conducted by various feminist activists and scholars demonstrated that the monument was in fact designed, and surely finished by Milica Detoni, an architect and student of Plečnik. Although Detoni had conceived this monument for her father's grave, built in the same year in Begunje (Suhadolnik, 2009, 29), the design for the monument in Ljubljana has continued to be connected to Plečnik's name.

This was not an unusual practice in the male-dominated profession of the time (Interview with Jerant, September 2023). However, it is highly ironic that this type of practice occurred within the context of the creation of a monument meant to commemorate women's protests. Moreover, the fact that many people still refer to it as Plečnik's monument instead of Detoni's, demonstrates a facile erasure of women's work from the symbolic sphere.

Image 39: Plečnik and Detoni's monuments to the women's protests, Park Zvezda.

The last monument, which was planned to be unveiled in 1953, was to be placed in front of the central court prisons, the location of the final women's protest on August 1, 1943. On the initiative of the Veteran Association, the initial idea of the monument was developed by the architect Marko Zupančič and was published in the newspaper *Slovenski poročevalec* on June 28 of that same year of 1953. However, the monument could not be realized for another six years. This delay was caused by the demolition of the prison. This structure, named the Monument to the Prison Demonstration of August 1, 1943 is located at the intersection of Čufarjeva and

Miklošičeva Streets in Ljubljana. Designed and created by sculptor Slavko Krajnc and architect Boris Kobe, it was finally erected in 1959.

*Spominski kamen nasproti sodnim zaporom, kjer je bila velika demonstracija 1. avgusta 1943*

Image 40: Monument to the Prison Demonstration, Čufarjeva.

The monument consists of a three-metre-high, triangular stone column, decorated with relief carvings on two sides. The carvings depict groups of women marching and protesting together in orderly rows, risking their lives and freedoms, as they seem to be easy targets. It is one of the few anti-fascist monuments that both address the collective actions of women and function as an aesthetic representation of the collective subjectivity of women.

From the 1950s onwards, socialist organizations made valuable contributions to the commemoration of women's role in anti-fascism. However, many of the changes proposed in the socialist society were also prone to setbacks. For example, many women who entered the labour force for the first time, now had to carry a double burden, since they still maintained their primary role in domestic and childcare tasks. Even though working conditions had gradually improved and the childcare infrastructure was quite developed in the cities, the 1950s did not just represent a shining path for Yugoslavia's brand as an independent and self-management version of socialism and as the main creator of the non-aligned movement (Kirn, 2019). There were also multiple negative results from the political consolidation that followed the split from Stalin, including the political purges of alleged Stalinists, the return to a more conservative-paternalistic ideology, and an expanding elimination of all (semi-)autonomous political formations.

In the same year as the wave of commemorations of, and monuments to, women's protests in 1953, a major setback occurred for women's politics in the socialist era: the abolition of the AFŽ (Batinić, 2015). Women at the AFŽ had already had to manage scarce resources, and work was almost voluntary. Instead, they were invited to pursue their political careers as members of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia (LCY). The LCY succeeded in consolidating its political power, and it can be easily claimed that this consolidation had the effect of weakening the promise of gender equality and female emancipation. Several critical researchers observed that, despite the material improvements, there remained a persistent gap between the proclaimed goals of equality and the reality of gender inequalities (Batinić, 2015). I argue that the AFŽ's abolition was an explicit indication of the party's paternalism and of a broader process of repatriarchalization of both

the party and society itself. In many mainstream newspapers in the 1950s, the traditional role of women as backbone of the family is vigorously promoted, again a tendency not foreign to other socialist countries of that time. This occurred simultaneously with the public recognition of women's achievements concerning the liberation and socialism as well as with the aforementioned beginning of the commemoration of women's protests. If the official socialist politics of memory celebrated women's protests and the antifascist past, this was primarily, I argue, due to the interest to official memory in the context of the ideological struggle against the Catholic Church. In the context of political consolidation, we could regard this process as a particular containment of the emancipatory impulses of the AFŽ and women's agency. The women who left the AFŽ did not forget about women's issues overnight, but instead fought for these goals within the socialist apparatus and no longer from the semi-autonomous position of the AFŽ. Sklevicky aptly suggests that we can speak in terms of a process of 'integrated emancipation' (Sklevicky, 2012). It was part of a collective memory and a policy that – under the tutelage of the one party-state – became more neatly integrated into the Communist party apparatus and its history. The memory of women's antifascism demonstrated an agonistic moment that moved from a directly confrontational orientation (towards the Church), on the one hand, and circulation between recognition of the past and settling with the party direction, on the other.

## 8.4 From the Erasure of Women's Anti-Fascist Memory to its Renewal

During the decades of established socialism, the official politics of memory that related to anti-fascist women barely changed. However, a new antagonism emerged during the years of the new social transformation of the 1990s. The tragic breakup of Yugoslavia resulted in a series of ethnic wars, (war) capitalism, an intensification of class conflicts through the denationalization and privatization of social property, whilst ideologically, ethnic nationalism and patriarchal ideology reigned supreme (Kirn, 2022). Although Slovenia did not really experience a war, there was a dramatic rise of nationalism and a return of conservative ideology and of the Catholic Church as one of the key political players. The official politics of memory

with regard to WWII became contested even though the entire political spectrum, from the nominal left-wing (former communist then social democrats) to the right-wing, agreed on a need to revise history with the aim of a 'national reconciliation'. The political class, their ideologues and memory apparatuses (Breznik and Močnik, 2021) pacified past conflicts in a morally vague condemnation of both sides: anti-fascists and fascists had committed crimes in the past, but since they belonged to the same nation, Slovenia, this tragedy now had to be reconciled and appropriately commemorated within a common national framework (Kirn, 2022). This conservative revisionism had tremendously negative consequences for both the memory of the emancipatory past and the contemporary emancipation of women in the former Yugoslav and Eastern context. The advance of a patriarchal-conservative ideology resulted in women being treated as a 'marginalized social group' (Močnik, 2003). It was low-skilled workers, women and ethnic minorities who had to pay the highest price for the transition, in psychological, ideological and socio-economic terms. The representation of women in official politics declined, whilst the new conservative parties and the Catholic Church, with their ideological apparatus, attacked the achievements of socialism and forced women into the private sphere.

The changes in the symbolic spaces related to the legacy of women's struggles and achievements are a key issue for this chapter. For example, the first democratically elected parties united to form the right-wing governing coalition DEMOS (1990-92), which called for a rapid neoliberal transition and a historical revisionism which was anti-Yugoslav and anti-communist. DEMOS also voted for Jože Strgar as the mayor of Ljubljana (1990-94). Strgar was renowned for removing monuments and street names that were related to the partisan and socialist past. He was also the mayor who instigated the demolition of the autonomous cultural space, Metelkova, which harboured the demilitarized barracks of the Yugoslav People's Army in the centre of Ljubljana in 1993 (Bibič, 2003).

In terms of the contested memory of women's emancipation from the era of anti-fascism and socialism, one major political event took place that became an antagonistic core of the new memory framework. In 1991, the church and right-wing municipal authorities agreed to remove Edvard Ravnikar's Monument to the women's protests from the front of the

Archdiocese of St Nicholas's Church. This removal was legitimized by the ecclesiastical authority by arguing that the monument needs to be transformed to its earlier design. It was stated explicitly that the statue's index finger (see above image 38) had to be removed. The restoration of the monument was completed in 1994: the famous index finger was erased by a grinding down of the stone and they also removed the inscription that 'shamed' the Church for its collaboration with the fascist authorities. The expert commission of historians concluded that the inscription was factually incorrect and that there was no incriminating evidence against Bishop Rožman, who allegedly authorized the use of water cannons to disperse the demonstrators. It took the left-wing municipality of Ljubljana another seven years before it announced that the monument would be restored in its transformed form to its original place. However, this pursuit was abandoned due to protests and threats from the Catholic Church's leadership. The monument was stored in a municipal depot (Interview with Živa Vidmar, September 2023). Thus, the growing wave of conservative memorial revisionism not only aimed to erase the anti-fascist legacy, but opened a path to the rehabilitation of local fascist collaborationism, made possible by right-wing parties and church NGOs (Kirn, 2020).

The increasing strength of church and memorial revisionism prompted a group of women activists, politicians and intellectuals to intervene in various public places in Ljubljana. In the 2000s, they began with commemorative visits to (removed) monuments dedicated to women's protests. In 2013, the first bigger march to all three monuments took place. The occasion was the 70th anniversary of the women's demonstrations within the Women's Forum of the Ljubljana Social Democrats (Interview with Živa Vidmar, September 2023). This was one of the events of the Dobrnič Association that consisted in bringing flowers, reading short statements in front of the monuments, and organizing public discussions. Some activists could also be seen re-enacting the finger gesture on the site of the removed monument in front of St Nicholas's Church.

Jasmina Jerant, a feminist researcher and activist from a younger generation, argued that these commemorative events not only helped to '(re)activate memory, but also spurred a new generation of feminist activists to engage in alternative readings and the appropriation of public space' (Interview with

Jasmina Jerant, September 2023). Furthermore, this revival of interest in women's anti-fascist history inspired the creation of several cultural works, such as the graphic novel *Spomini in Sanje Kristine B* (*The Memories and Dreams of Kristina B*, 2015) that looks at the resistance movement in occupied Ljubljana from the perspective of one young woman. Finally, in recent years, numerous graffitis with anti-fascist and feminist references, performances with mobile women's monuments (as part of the City of Women's Festival) and research on past women's activism, including on those considered to be eminent figures within these movements, have been produced.

Image 41: Removed monument from St Nicholas's Church. Online archive from Zveza Borcev za vrednote NOB.

Returning to the Ravnikar monument, by the early 2000s, it became evident that its removal would be permanent. Consequently, memory activists and a diverse group of intellectuals pressured the nominally left-wing municipality of Ljubljana to organize a campaign for a new monument to the women's anti-fascist protests. The municipality established a new committee, which included a church representative, and arranged a series of expert meetings to design this new monument, which was to be placed in Pogačar's market square, a hundred metres from the original monument. The committee selected the design of sculptor Dragica Čadež, whose idea was realised in a public bronze sculpture of three simple, slender and abstract female figures standing together. The texture of the female figures imitated a multitude of knife wounds, which probably symbolises the danger of women's struggle for political freedom. The inscription in the monument reads: 'For the perseverance and courage of the women who demanded the liberation of thousands of internees from the fascist camps in the mass demonstrations of 21 June 1943' (translation mine – G.K.). Although all members of the committee had initially approved the form and content of the monument, the Church representative, the then bishop Anton Stres, disputed the monument on the day it was unveiled. Despite this, Ljubljana's mayor Zoran Janković, accompanied by the women's choir Kombinat and other cultural groups, ceremoniously opened the monument to the public in June 2010. This gesture was interpreted as a reconciliation in which the Catholic Church was no longer shamed; the new monument was now located at a safe distance from St Nicholas's Church, while it recognized women's struggles and the antifascist legacy of Ljubljana.

We can speak, once again, of a dialogic remembrance of women antifascism that released a radically democratic potentiation, and which not only highlighted a long history of women's struggles, but tried to wage a contemporary, conservative backlash led by the Catholic Church, on the one hand, and also to pressurise the nominally centre-left oriented municipal authority, on the other. I argue that dialogical remembrance can be seen here in the general light of the many various memory and political agents who fight against historical revisionism and aim to reactivate the antifascist legacy. Feminist and antifascist memory activists were indeed successful in challenging conservative revisionism in general and the Catholic Church

in particular, though the legacy and future of emancipation remains uncertain. The progressive members in feminist and anti-fascist circles believed the conciliatory gesture – of creating a new monument, but also appeasing the Church – to be a compromise unworthy of defending, one that works to pacify the dissenting nature of women's antifascism. According to one of the activists and intellectuals, the gesture even 'eliminated the more emancipatory impulse'. Mojca Dobnikar argues that

> It is in fact a merely servile bow to the power of the Catholic Church ... The only acceptable compromise for me would have been if the second version of the original monument had remained in its original place, with part of the inscription about the bishop's initiative removed, and it would have been even more acceptable if it had been the first version without the mention of the bishop. (Interview with Mojca Dobnikar, September 2023)

The public contestation relating to the monument reveals what has now become an antagonistic memory, and perhaps also evokes an irreconcilable split, a sharp divide between those that are more concerned with the future and those that cling more to the past. On one side of this divide, we find memory activists and feminists who, based on the past, strive for women's emancipation and social change in current and future endeavours, where on the other side we find the Catholic church and conservative forces, which call for the cultivation of a conservative image of woman and a return to the traditional, heteronormative nuclear family. There have been numerous legislative undertakings and referendum campaigns over the last two decades that have articulated this dividing line in recent Slovenian history.

## 8.5 Conclusion

The women's protest movement of 1943 represented a veritable rupture in how the anti-fascist resistance was generally organized and how it contributed to the representation of a self-determining and emancipated women's collective. I have shown that the creation and recurring memory work and investment in past antifascist and women's struggles cannot solely address one identifier, whether the political identity of *anti-fascism*, or the fact that both during those protests, and in subsequent memory activism, political

subjectivity was mostly realised/borne by *women*. This dissenting and intersecting politics destabilized the paternalistic narrative and politics of the early socialist memory frame about the liberation struggle, while it also developed into an even more antagonistic relationship towards the conservative ideology of Catholic Church in the 1990s.

Despite the various improvements for women under socialism, a disparity persisted between the promised goals and the reality of female emancipation, pushing women active in the AFŽ into an ambivalent position. In the early socialist period, the official memory of the women's protests was integrated into the ideological struggle against the position taken by the Catholic Church and its collaborationist legacy. Despite commemorations of the protest movement in artworks and the four previously described monuments (from 1953 to 1959), the underlying memory politics contained, and indeed sought to pacify, the emancipatory impulses of antifascist women. Moreover, the first commemoration of women's protests coincided with the abolition of the AFŽ in 1953, which openly marked a descent into a repatriarchalization and paternalization of the Communist Party and of society at large. I claim that there is a minimal memory formula in the official public realm with regard to the women's protests: on the one hand, a celebration of past victories and of women's emancipation; on the other, a containment, and even impediment, of this emancipatory push in the (socialist) present. This process of dialogic remembrance thus promoted and recognized women as an integral part of the liberation and socialist society, but only as under the tutelage of Communist Party.

In juxtaposition to the agonistic terms of the socialist memory frame on women's antifascism, the early post-socialist transition was marked by a stark and antagonistic dividing line. On the ideological field, a Communist Party vanguard was replaced by conservative and nationalistic forces. The memory politics that played out during the early 1990s presented a serious revision and undermining of the socialist, Yugoslav, and anti-fascist legacy in the Slovenian context. In the name of national reconciliation, all the visual markers of the past were attacked and challenged, according to the idea that fascists and anti-fascists were to be reconciled as all belonging to the Slovenian nation. This was part of an intense memory war, and the role and status of women and family were explicitly drawn into the struggle. This is

where the antagonist memory that aimed at erasing democratic dialogue and the emancipatory past came into play. The Catholic Church, together with the then right-wing mayor Strgar implemented a policy of renaming streets and buildings. This 'monologic' view was most blatantly portrayed in the removal of the monument that triggered a series of women's initiatives. However, a little the initial shock, memory activists and a new generation of activists, scholars, and artists, started to fight back in the new ideological climate and quite openly embraced and reclaimed the legacy of women's struggles, anti-fascism, and also the achievement of socialism. The monuments to women's protests in Ljubljana in particular, became a resource and a focus for the reactivation of these protests in the public sphere.

The most disturbing feature of dissenting remembrance has to do with the fact that activists promoted an 'intersectional' image of antifascism: that an emancipated, communist and anti-fascist women's collectivity needs to be taken seriously. This figure of memory is a threatening one, and it provoked tensions during the socialist, and open conflicts during the postsocialist period. Its key feature carries a dimension that Robert Meister (2011) would call a future 'option', one that calls not for victims but for (future) political subjects to push toward the unfinished and utopian promise of the new Yugoslavia. In this respect, the deeper dialogical nature relates to the recovery of a history of the oppressed, in particular of women, yesterday as today. Such a memory is endangered in reactionary times, and organizing and articulating it becomes dangerous. Besides the aforementioned, newly erected monument to women's protests in Ljubljana (it is quite exceptional that such antifascist monuments are still being created), this dialogical remembrance can be further evidenced in the series of annual commemorations and feminist tours, as well as cultural artefacts, which includes graffiti, a recent graphic novel, and an exhibition directly related to the women's protests. The legacy of women's protests is one of Ljubljana's most contested memory sites, and has helped to establish transgenerational solidarity that keeps giving fuel to new anti-fascist and feminist struggles.

# 9 Late Socialism and the Call for National Reconciliation: Antifascism Equated with Fascism in the Reconciled Nation?

The last chapter offers a critique of the attempts at national reconciliation that became a slogan of the new dominant class in Slovenia and, to some degree also, in other parts of the former Yugoslavia. National reconciliation became one of the hegemonic standpoints of a new memory politics that began to challenge the official memory politics of socialist Yugoslavia already in the late 1980s. The latter memory politics was structured around the antifascist paradigm as that which provided socialist Yugoslavia with its heroic start. Yet despite its massive production of monuments and cultural artefacts, it underwent a serious challenge during the mid-1980s. The main thesis of this chapter is to show that the new politico-commemorative strategies of national reconciliation and the rehabilitation of local fascism in relation to WWII prepared the ground for the capitalist transition and for ethnic wars. It was the memory wars that gave the ethnic wars their dominant frame within a capitalist horizon. The primitive accumulation of memory tells a story of the imposition of a long-term ethnonationalist narrative of a specific heroic and, in many cases, victimized nation (see the Introductory Chapter).

The most important treatises to have openly embraced a nationalist imaginary and a narrative legitimizing the project of 'One Nation in One State' were the memorandum of the Serbian Academy of Arts and Sciences in 1986, and the 57th issue of the literary magazine *Nova revija* in Slovenia (Hribar, 1987). Speeches that appropriated specific memory events, and helped establish new nationalist sites of memory, were given by leading politicians from the League of Communists (e.g., in Slovenia, the most important commemoration between antifascists and fascists took place with Milan Kučan in Kočevski Rog in 1990; a Serbian example was Slobodan Milošević's speech in Gazimestan in 1989). A reference to Yugoslavia and socialism became part of the empty ritualized ending to an article or a speech, while the core message was focused on the defence of narrow national interests amid proclamations of new nationalist memorialization projects. The cultural intelligentsia, together with liberal currents in the socialist political apparatus, formed a counterhegemonic bloc (Kirn, 2019)

that defeated the older pro-federal and pro-Titoist cadres in the branches of the League of Communists. In the new democratic civil society, meanwhile, conservative forces within the Church became involved in the process of 'totalitarianism from below' (Mastnak, 1987), pushing for economic and ideological changes. It was these forces – very much part of the emerging political elite – that embraced the project of one nation in one state that arose on the capitalist horizon.

Conservative memorial revisionism in Yugoslavia found its purest expression in the old romanticist model of one nation in one state. Here I want to analyse a memorial strategy – national reconciliation – that may at first seem dignified in that it appears to pacify the ideological struggle in public memory debates. The slogan and strategy of national reconciliation became popular in Slovenia in the late 1980s and central to Slovenia's state memorial policy in the 1990s. In other former Yugoslav countries, reconciliation became more important later on, and more temporary, that is, after the wars of the 1990s (for a good international overview of this reconciliation strategy, see Immler et al., 2012). Slovenia has long prided itself on being a 'model' of democratic transition, one that has also involved 'properly' dealing with the past in a cultural landscape of 'dissonant heritage' (Turnbridge 1994). However, I argue that this image is false and that what was seemingly a pacifying discourse – that of national reconciliation – actually started a mnemonic war that has recently led to the rehabilitation of (local) fascism and has openly participated in the nationalization and ethnicization of society.

In Slovenia, the moral philosopher and dissident Spomenka Hribar initiated the discussion about national reconciliation. She was one of the key dissident intellectuals who published in the most important scientific journals of that time. Most importantly, in 1987 she published an article in the 57th issue of the literary magazine *Nova revija*, in which she proclaimed an anti-communist programme for the national independence of Slovenia.[54] Her

54 As the editorial board of *Nova revija* announced, 'this is an initiative for a different kind of reflection on Slovenians and a new understanding of Slovenian statehood, which will be constituted in the institutions of a potentially sovereign nation and in its everyday life according to the demands of the new historical epoch' (Hribar, 1987: 2). The issue consists of a number of different sections, ranging from philosophical Heideggerianism (Urbančič's 'The Yugoslav "Nationalist Crisis" and the Slovenes in the Perspective of the End of Nation', and Tine Hribar's 'Slovenian Statehood') to more historical and political pieces.

interventions became popular semantic anchor points (for detailed criticism of Hribar, see Šumi, 2015) that served to create new sites of memory and public memory on WWII. The major thrust of national reconciliation involved initiating a process of appeasement between fascists and partisans: reconciliation should be understood as an agreement about our history. It would enable us to ultimately see both revolutionaries and counterrevolutionaries as unlucky 'sons from the same mother', that is, from a perspective that recognizes them all as people:

> This does not mean that we accept their ideology! Errors are human, but one need not accept and perpetuate them. But rejecting ideology does not also mean we must excommunicate its bearers; we need, then, to distinguish between the man AND his ideology. (Hribar, 1987: 100)

The moralizing, commonsense definition of national reconciliation becomes buried in a national soil argument, which claims that reconciliation is an excavation of the 'soil, where love and memory grow' (Hribar, 1987: 101), a reconciliation that can only happen 'between us as human beings' (Hribar, 1987: 100). Reconciliation draws a symbolic equivalence and relativizes the past: victims of all wars are the same. The discourse thus presents itself as a moral high ground that is seemingly anti-war. In a second step, within and after reconciliation, everyone – no matter if fascist or antifascist, nationalist or internationalist – belongs to the same 'national being' and are only 'brothers from the same mother'. The basic formula of reconciliation is the equation of all victims and their nationalization. Hribar argues that the fascist occupation resulted in many civilian and partisan victims, but that partisan crimes and especially the post-war extrajudicial killings of fascist collaborators should be accounted for (for historical details on the post-war killings see Tomasevich, 2001; Troha et al., 2017). For Hribar, then, only when all crimes are recognized and worked through by forgiveness or punishment, can we hope for a reconciliation of the Slovenian nation (Hribar, 1987). Hribar managed to greatly popularize national reconciliation in the mid-1980s and openly called for a mnemonic war with the official discourse of antifascism and the public memory of socialist Yugoslavia. After she published a series of articles, major political actors started calling for national reconciliation, which culminated in declarations made by the

Catholic Church and the Socialist Assembly of Slovenia in early March 1990. A few months later, in July 1990, multiple political forces, communists, and the Catholic Church, prepared a major and joint commemoration event on the 45th anniversary of the post-war killings enacted by fascist collaborators. The commemoration event saw the Catholic bishop Alojzij Šuštar shake hands with the head of the League of Slovenian Communists and later the first president of independent Slovenia, Milan Kučan. Kučan held a speech in which he acknowledged post-war crimes on the side of the communists and partisans, while Šuštar held a mass that sought to reconcile the dead with the living. This was the first official public apology and display of recognition of past crimes that was encapsulated in the symbolic gesture of the oppositional camps shaking hands.

This commemorative event took place in Kočevski Rog, a memorial site where the Slovenian partisan command was based during WWII, and which was long associated with the activities of the PLS in Slovenia. From this moment on, it became the central commemorative site for mourning the post-war killings of fascist collaborators who were returned from Bleiburg (in southern Austria) to the partisans by British forces. Some fascist prisoners of war were imprisoned, some were exiled, while a substantial number (estimates range from 15,000 to 30,000) were executed by the communist secret police and parts of the partisan army (Troha et al., 2017). These were war crimes for which nobody was held responsible, and they remained a dark spot in the aftermath of the PLS.

However, what started as an ethical call for reconciliation and for working through the tragic events of the past became politically manipulated by the emerging extreme right-wing forces and the Catholic Church. What was supposed to be a reconciliatory discussion between the (former) Partisans and their associations on the one hand, and the Catholic Church and new state party representatives on the other, remained entrenched in cultural warfare and did not in fact deal with the past. Rather, the logical consequence was to rehabilitate fascist collaborators as the equal – if not more morally dignified actors – of WWII (Kirn, 2020). Such a constellation obfuscates the asymmetric relations and the causes of fascism. It also avoids addressing the issue of antagonism in the present and of how the new elites profited from the transition.

How does the primitive accumulation of memory connect to the primitive accumulation of capital in this case? The Catholic Church, encouraged by the historical developments of independence in 1991, moved from an initially defensive mourning position to a search for a 'new truth'. Once the killings of fascist collaborators had been officially recognized as crimes and the search for the victims' graves had been institutionalized in the commission financed by the parliament, the time was ripe to demand the recognition of damages and the 'unjust' expropriation of property from the former regime (Cmrečnjak, 2016, 398). The move to (re)nationalize memory politics came at the same time as the demand for the 'nationalization' of social property. Unsurprisingly, the highest stake in this transfer of property and power was for a small layer of former capitalists, part of the former ruling class, for whom the Church was the hegemonic actor. It is no secret that the largest landowner (of forests and real estate) became the Catholic Church, which, besides regaining an ideological power, also profited the most economically. The new state budget included the payment of the clergy's wages and the return of church property that the socialist state had expropriated. The project of 'national reconciliation' became, strictly speaking, the central ideology of the ruling class and a major feature of the Slovenian nation-building process. What was initially seen as a pacifying, appeasing discourse was considered valid by the emerging political class, but not at all by Slovenian society in general, even less so when we evaluate its active role in dismantling the antifascist consensus in the Yugoslav context. The mnemonic wars already helped to define the ethnoreligious lenses of the 1990s wars.

## 9.1 Conclusion: National Reconciliation Appeasing Class Antagonisms

The creation of the new state and the transition to capitalism came with various levels and degrees of violence, which I described in a more detailed way in the Introductory Chapter, as a process of the 'primitive accumulation' of memory, state and capital. I argued that the nationalization of memory was quintessential to understanding the challenge made against the antifascist consensus in the historiography and public memory of the former Yugoslavia. I showed that one of the most vital ideological and

memorial forms of primitive accumulation is the discourse, and memory practice and frame of national reconciliation that facilitated the path to the rehabilitation of local fascist collaborationism. This process was accompanied by organized as well as spontaneous commemorative actions from below in the early 1990s: from the iconoclastic destruction of Partisan and socialist monuments to the renaming of streets and the destruction of books. In short, this legal and memory-related cleansing of the recent past intensified the dominant policy of the early 1990s – one of ethnic cleansing – which was centrally inscribed in the specific capitalist transition of the post-Yugoslav context. Those who did not properly belong (in terms of ethnic identity) or conform to the newly imagined nation-states were mortally threatened. The mobilization of people for war, if need be, was done in the name of the 'one nation, one state' ideology.

The wartime accumulation of nationalist memory had an extremely negative impact on the economy of the new countries. What was perceived as rational capital accumulation, enacted through neoliberal reforms and shock therapy in the former East under the pretext of catching up with the West, was actually a real catastrophe in the former Yugoslavia. I have pointed out that it is more correct to speak of the primitive deaccumulation of capital, which meant that the destructive part of transition needed to be forgotten. Wars are the ultimate form of destruction, and, in the case of Yugoslavia, what unfolded was the veritable deaccumulation of socialist wealth, and the destruction of infrastructure, people, and emancipatory ideas (nonalignment, socialist self-government, gender equality and national equality). It was in this space of violence and war that I located the generative dimension of the mnemonic wars during the mid- to late-1980s. The mnemonic wars in the late-socialist Yugoslav context strengthened the foundations for the invention of national traditions and competitive national victimhood, while also obfuscating class antagonism and the expropriation of working people during the capitalist transition. These mnemonic wars were a (counter)avant-garde of the coming wars in the 1990s.

This chapter has concluded with a short analysis of what was seemingly a pacifying discourse on public memory in the Slovenian context: that of national reconciliation. By the end of the 1980s, it had become part of a major national memorialization project to equate fascists and antifascists

in the name of a reconciled nation. Amid contradictory developments, episodic violence was not interpreted as the crystallizing and radicalizing of systemic developments and political and economic antagonisms, but rather as a moral and therapeutic laboratory that aimed to heal the nation.

Despite the note of appeasement inherent in the discourse of national reconciliation, it was actually a battle cry, a vital part of the mnemonic wars, with their intellectual and political champions from the mid-1980s especially active in Slovenia and Serbia. The dominant revisionism was characterized by an openly negative attitude towards the Yugoslav, socialist and partisan past. This attitude contributed to a mnemonic shift that dissolved an already unstable solidarity between peoples and nations in the socialist and federal Yugoslavia. This is why it and its agents share historical responsibility for the country's violent break-up. Furthermore, it comes as no surprise that, also within the dominant commemoration of Republika Srpska and Serbia, a strong and perverted form of national reconciliation has taken shape. Ultranationalist and profascist figures such as Chetnik leader Mihajlović from WWII and Ratko Mladić, a war criminal from the wars of the 1990s, are often presented as patriotic partisans who were also fighting against West. The movement to nationalize and neutralize the partisan past has a clear stake that promotes new nationalist ideology. However it often results in a schizophrenic memorial landscape in which profascist and revisionist monuments coexist with partisan ones.

## Concluding Chapter: The Figure of the Partisan and the Socialization of its Counter-Archive: Between Peace and Liberation

Today injustice goes with a certain stride,
The oppressors move in for ten thousand years.
Force sounds certain: it will stay the way it is.
No voice resounds except the voice of the rulers.

And on the markets, exploitation says it out loud: I am only just beginning.
But of the oppressed, many now say: What we want will never happen.

Whoever is alive must never say "never"!
Certainty is never certain.
It will not stay the way it is.
When the rulers have already spoken,
Then the ruled will start to speak.
Who dares say "never"?
Who's to blame if repression remains? We are.
Who can break its thrall?
We can.

Whoever has been beaten down must rise to his feet!
Whoever is lost must fight back!

Whoever has recognized his condition – how can anyone stop him?
Because the vanquished of today will be tomorrow's victors
And "never" will become: "already today"!

Bertold Brecht, *In Praise of Dialectics*

This book holds together texts with a notion of counter-archive that encapsulates and retrieves memory of (partisan) liberation. Its narrative is thus not linear, but rather defragmenting and condensing visual, political and textual ruptures. The book continues my ongoing work on the legacy

of the PLS most notably in Slovenia, and to a lesser extent to Yugoslavia. The chapters organize diverse materials with the help of a counter-archive, a method that I developed in my previous book *Partisan Counter-Archive* (Kirn, 2020), and which I have here updated by responding to some of the criticisms that came in the aftermath of its publication. The chapters thus follow a critical methodology that aims to retrace and defragment emancipatory fragments, mostly found in artworks scattered around the former Yugoslavia. The selected artworks, I claim, have succeeded in producing a certain surplus/excess, something that is not easily digestible by the dominant nationalist discourses today, and even in the former socialist state they would be deemed as disturbing the heroic teleology of the Party narrative. I was particularly interested in works that are self-reflective in terms of temporality and show an awareness of the (im)possibility of remembering the revolution/partisan rupture. Furthermore, I was interested in works that are marked by a partisan aesthetics, and whether they could work, perform, or produce *in a partisan way*.

The counter-archival surplus is located at diverse sites of struggle, as temporal, spatial and aesthetic interruptions that target the (then-)existing forms of domination and exploitation, but also of visuality. Another vital feature of this surplus is that it cannot be easily co-opted by the dominant institutions. It is also opposed to any inclusion in the official narrative that attempts merely to refine our knowledge of history by including only a narrow layer of the various forms of oppression. The counter-archive cannot be paid lip service to, nor can it be deployed for a representative, ornamental purpose that sustains the status quo. In other words, the counter-archival surplus does not aim at a quasi-democratic inclusion of difference, but at performing and making visible a radical dissent from the established order/archive. It contributes to a memory of revolution, a memory about how to commemorate in an alternative way past-and-present voices as well as the sounds of oppression, occupation and exploitation, and simultaneously how to nurture and organize those voices, gestures and images into an emancipated future that participates in new, counter-institutional apparatuses, or takes over existing ones through their inner transformation. This task was/is unquestionably realized by these works only to a degree, where my task as a counter-archivist is to document, interpret, and perhaps inspire other

readings or even projects that would ideally take these fragments to different sites of (new) struggles.

The chapters tackle a diverse array of artistic materials that elaborate on the work I began with my book *Partisan Counter-Archive* (Kirn, 2020), with two major additions: chapters that focus on women antifascist struggle, and a chapter that deals with partisan ecology. Four chapters have a clear interest in rethinking antifascism through women agency: one on Brina's partisan (Chapter 2); another on partisan photography that tackles the new image of dance woman and multiple activities which speak of the fundamental equality that reigned during the partisan liberation struggle (Chapter 5); another that involved a close analysis of post-Yugoslav and partisan filmmakers such as Marta Popivoda and Nika Autor (Chapter 7), both of whom perform a partisan memory from below; and another on the women's antifascist protests in Ljubljana and their subsequent struggles to be remembered (memory activism against revisionism, Chapter 8). All these chapters have attempted to extend the meaning and subjectivity of women in the antifascist and partisan struggle, today as yesterday.

Another novelty that I introduced in the return to partisan art and politics took as its point of departure a question raised during a public discussion in our Partisan Festival (Berlin, Vierte Welt, 2023): 'But what would the partisan figure, or partisan, neo-partisan position be today? We cannot simply go back to the forests?' A simple question, but one that is very difficult to give a quick answer to. Obviously, the past cannot simply be restored – in some nostalgic fashion – neither can the steps of the 'original' anticolonial and antifascists be repeated. However, there is something about repeating the partisan gesture. To go against the dominant trends, and perhaps in a different way to embrace this space deemed outside of 'civilization', outside the city and back into the forests. What do I mean by this? By situating the Yugoslav partisan struggle in the lineage of the struggles of the oppressed, anticolonialists and antifascists, struggles that span the entirety of capitalist modernity, the site of subjectivation for a great majority of those was located in nature, whether in the desert, the forest, or the mountains. Such sites are said to be part of 'nature', of that which in Western political philosophy has long been opposed to the political. Here political metaphor and the

constitution of polis, is linked to the city-state, the civil, civilization. The partisan struggle is – though not romantic – marked by a specific return to nature, achieved, at first, out of political necessity and survival. As Miklavž Komelj, a theorist of partisan art in Slovenia, rightly showed, to join the partisans meant going to the forest. In this respect, the partisans have much to say to the ecological movements today, in helping them rethink and decentre the dominance of the Global North and capitalist extraction that are ruining both ecosystems and social life.

To return to the departing question about how to make art or do research and politics in a partisan way, Želimir Žilnik has provided a possible answer: When intervening into the dominant ways about how the partisan struggle was represented, and how epic battles got narrated, he rather spoke of those broad popular masses of peasants who, in the countryside, sacrificed their lives and practiced mutual aid, thus becoming the key infrastructure and most vital means of reproduction for the entire Partisan movement. Žilnik's film makes a significant shift from the conventional portrayal of civilians and farmers as passive victims of fascism, or civil war, and stages them as the central protagonists of antifascism. They become representatives of the everyday resistance of all the millions who supported and struggled throughout the war against the brutal fascist machinery and the collaborationists' banality of evil. Žilnik's memory strategy consists in the re-enactment of a people's history, of people who thirty years later will become carriers and (re)negotiators of public memory. This is the key feature of making a film *in a partisan way*. His film, *Uprising in Jazak* reenacts the uprising of the peasant masses, and intensifies their echoes and visions, disturbing the dominant field of vision/narration in mainstream partisan films of the time.

Instead of continuing to write this conclusion in a conventional way that summarizes the breakthroughs and most important points and lessons from the heterogeneous materials that contribute to 'partisan memory studies', I would like to share a certain trouble that I have been experiencing, which is perhaps the central conundrum of academic research and artistic production; namely, that the more one engages in and researches the material, no matter how rich and inspiring it is, no matter how fascinating and transgressive the aesthetical and political practice, what becomes clear is that

the socialization of the research results and artistic practices does not lie simply in the hands of those same critical researchers and artists. If, at least from the organization of first partisan exhibitions (Stepančić 2004) and first major book on partisan art (Komelj, 2008) in Slovenian, and the post-Yugoslav context, there has been more work done to reactivate, or at least sustain some of the partisan legacy. However, despite there being no limits in tracing and uncovering or defragmenting the past, my general feeling – and in this I am not alone – is that there is a need to take a step further, or sideways, and to look awry. What actually matters is to do and think things *in a partisan way*. There are at least three possible trajectories in which I can imagine that the 'socialization' of the counter-archive could take us.

The *first possible trajectory* implies a theoretical and political call to engage in a partisan ecology, that is, to link current ecological struggles to a more anticapitalist, anticolonial and antifascist legacy, and to realign historical solidarities. This can contribute to our thinking about political agency in the age of the capitalocene. The political agency of partisan ecology, yesterday, today, and tomorrow, needs to include both the human and the non-human worlds and – a crucial point for critical memory studies – to develop a broader conception of 'ecological mourning' (Craps 2023), one that would include reparations and environmental debt. Debt mechanisms should not, as they do today, be able to write off whole populations and effectively dispossess the majority of the Global South; all debt must be 'relieved' by the capitalist and the wealthy, as a first step in repairing injustices and dissolving the ruinous system in which we live. It seems to me that it would be particularly productive to focus on bringing together the diverse struggles that can, through Marxist, feminist and decolonial lenses (Verges, 2019), steer societies towards socializing the means of reproduction. Here I cannot but think about one of the most emphatic and visionary passages from the concluding chapter of Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*. In the last lines of his book, Fanon articulates a path-breaking idea about the creation of an autonomous *third* universalism, a truly decolonial modernity on which former colonies, peripheries and the oppressed would need to embark and build without being dependent on the so-called developed world and former colonizers. For Fanon, the times in which Africa imitated the model of Europe should be done away with:

> This Europe, which never stopped talking of man, which never stopped proclaiming its sole concern was man, we now know the price of suffering humanity has paid for every one of its spiritual victories. Come, comrades, the European game is finally over, we must look for something else. We can do anything today provided we do not ape Europe, provided we are not obsessed with catching up with Europe (Fanon, 2005 236).

Fanon's project is not a quest for profitability and for a different productivity, and neither is it a quest for some precolonial authenticity that involves a return to 'nature', as if those communities had had no power relations or problems. In his words, the new project is 'not a question of increased productivity, not a question of production rates. No, it is not a question of back to nature ... The notion of catching up must not be used as a pretext to brutalize man, to tear him from himself and his inner consciousness, to break him, to kill him' (ibid., 238). How to not engage in a simplistic attempt to uncover and return to some 'origin'? Instead, how can we spread these 'seeds of resistance' (Cabral, 1974), and reinvent what man, woman, human and non-human can become? This is one of the key questions that runs through many strands of critical research, as well as of radical politics and art.

The *second trajectory* recognizes the limits of much critical research and of the world of art. On the one hand, critical researchers might be able to organize material, defragment the histories and memories of the oppressed, and understand the contradictions of global capitalism, yet it should also be clear that the very autonomy of research/academia has long crumbled and been permeated by neoliberal forces as well as by far older, neo-feudal forms of domination. Furthermore, academia has a fairly limited audience and political efficacy. On the other hand, artistic projects might have more autonomy and freedom to express certain forms and tendencies. And artistic exhibitions and public manifestations are susceptible to open the (counter)archive to a larger audience, even if only for the restricted time and space of the white cube or the ephemerality of a performance. However, neither researcher nor artist can intend that the counter-archive becomes something more durable, or that its emancipatory fragments will explode and seize the 'masses'. What is taken up and how it gets taken up by the

wind of new struggles is not something that lies in our hands, which does not entail giving in, or stopping to imagine alternative worlds.

The *third trajectory* is – also in the light of revisiting and reinventing the Yugoslav past – to think seriously about socialization and self-management as a process that is differentiated both from nationalization and privatization. In the case of counter-archival praxis, the question would then be: how can we socialize partisan counter-archives? How can we make them more present, visible, accessible, meaningful, and used by everyone? Not as a short-term solution or a therapeutic repair, and also not only by raising a banner in the name of the oppressed? More recent attempts at giving micro-voices to individual protagonists might also well lead to further fragmentation.

This series of concluding questions has made me think of some striking examples from my own region that could be seen as embryonic elements of a socialization of an antifascist partisan (counter-)archives. Let me name a few of them, insofar as they can direct the readership to a theoretical, cultural and political appropriation of the partisan counter-archive and its potential for socialization: Cartography of Resistance (*Kartografija otpora*), both a book and digital project that maps the resistance in Zagreb during WWII; Grupa Spomenika and the Four Faces of Omarska; Sanja Horvatinčić's project with the community around Drežnica (the site of a partisan hospital) that revisits and practices a genuine 'heritage from below'; the work of Darko Nikolovski, which spans from the organization of festivals, music and films to social games called *Become Partisan* and theatre performances; the Maska theatre and its theoretical output, with its recent engagement of a partisan and Yugofuturist legacy; diverse partisan and alternative choirs, from Pinko Tomažič (chiefly popular among the older generation) to the mostly female choirs scattered across ex-Yugoslav space and related to the partisan, revolutionary and Yugoslav legacy, such as Le Zbor, Kombinat.... Hor 29.novembra (Hofman, 2016); the former collective TkH Walking Theory has been immensely productive in returning to the partisan legacy in theatre, film and its theoretical respects; artist and curatorial collectives such as Kurs and Blok, WHW (work on Vojin Bakić, and Sanja Iveković's groundbreaking early attempts remain of inspiration); the Crvena group from Sarajevo, which launched a whole series of actions, and put on an exhibition and published a book around the theme

of the AFŽ, the Antifascist women's organization; the socialization of archives done by Ivana Hadjievska in North Macedonia…. the list of those engaging in the partisan counter-archive praxis is far longer. All of these collective attempts perform and make their own micro-communities, and, instead of building monuments, engage in acts of resistance and help to build, albeit temporary, movements and networks that carry emancipatory promise. *We are not so few* even if we are not so visible, or do not occupy positions of enunciation of political power. But these is where we are, and many more of new partisans are there to come. Taking care of the partisan memory presupposes organizing a collective care of the shared and emancipatory past. It points to a process of "socialisation" of the archive and legacy. *We ought to care for the present* and *our future* not just for ourselves, but also for others. These projects and collectives made the first pioneering steps, from within our postsocialist transitional catastrophe, towards not only curating exhibitions, writing books, and fighting ideological struggles, but also towards contributing to more profound social change.

If, how, and when such change takes place is not in our hands. However, one of the major partisan lessons is that, even in the darkest hour of the previous century, one should never give in and yield to fascism. It was in the darkest hour that the resistance not only occurred, but even prevailed and created an alternative world. The main protagonist of Marta Popivoda's film *Landscape of Resistance* (2021), Sonja, despite having entered very old age, becomes all animated and determined when recounting that in Auschwitz they organized a collective uprising – of men and women – which they began using small knives. Or, in a similar vein, one of the memorable testaments to the Yugoslav partisan struggle and its unbroken spirit is summed in a diary of the great surrealist, Spanish Civil War combatant and Commander of the First Proletarian Brigade, Koča Popović. Just after the partisan forces had fought one of the major battles and breakthroughs of WWII, on Yugoslav soil, that is, in the famous gorges, forests, and mountains of Sutjeska, Popović described the will of his fellow comrades and fighters as follows:

The fewer breaks we took – the more solid and fresh we became,
the worse we fed ourselves – the tougher we became,
the worse we were armed – the more lethal we became
without motorization – we became faster.

The costlier the deaths among us, the more special and valuable our breathing became. As if all our miseries, efforts, and difficulties condensed in lethal spite; as if all of this transformed into our advantage. (Popović, 1988)

This undying resilience and willingness to fight, despite the defeats, will forever stay with us. We should also not forget about the active resistance that exists against each and every war, which has also been an important part of the antifascist and anticolonial tradition. The tradition of the oppressed does not cultivate death, but life, and has been deeply embedded in a different antiwar struggle, one that articulates a desire for social change and for actually lasting peace. This is not peace as some ideal, but as an operative idea and principle that will come to be linked to climate and social justice. Pacifist claims can only go hand-in-hand with disarmament and radical cuts in pollution. This is to think and organize *in a partisan way*. There were, and will be, new figures and visions of resistance. The new struggles are already greatly indebted to women, to indigenous peoples, to anticolonial and antifascist struggles, past and future. However, perhaps the most pertinent example is that of the Zapatistas's small, precarious figure of the snail and its shell, which signals degrowth, an enduring resistance, and whose movement is slow but insistent, as it carries diverse and intersectional struggles onto a very different future.

Let me conclude with words of Henri Barbusse, who, while witnessing horrors in the trenches of WWI in 1915, became an inspiring novelist, and went on to become an antifascist and peace activist, someone who embodies politics and memory of liberation:

> War must be killed … There is not only the prodigious opposition of interested parties—financiers, speculators great and small, armour plated in their banks and houses, who live on war and live in peace during war, with their brows stubbornly set upon a secret doctrine and their faces shut up like safes. There are those who admire the exchange of flashing blows, who hail ... the bright colours of uniforms; those whom military music and the martial ballads poured upon the public intoxicate as with brandy; the dizzy-brained, the feeble-minded, the superstitious, the savages. There are those who bury themselves in the past, on whose lips

are the sayings only of bygone days, the traditionalists for whom an injustice has legal force because it is perpetuated, who aspire to be guided by the dead, progress, and the future and all their palpitating passion to the realm of ghosts and nursery-tales. (Barbusse, 2003, 706-707).

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## Summary

The book *Memory of Liberation* is written from a critical perspective and comes more than three decades after the dissolution of Yugoslavia. It departs from a critical survey of the gradual and, at times, violent abandonment of the public memory of antifascist and Partisan legacy. It understands the dominant ethno-nationalist trends in the politics of memory and revisionist historiographies related to the process of capitalist restructuring (denationalisation, privatisation) and to the model of one nation in a single state. Contrary to the dominant ideological trend that sees no alternative in the future and keeps demonising any emancipatory past, this book's primary goal is to retrace and defragment what now resides scattered along what used to be a common state: the emancipatory fragments related to the Yugoslav People's Liberation Struggle. Paradoxically, the (extreme) conservative position often evokes the revolutionary dimension of the liberation struggle as a part of the totalitarian horizon, while, at least in my argument, this persisting negation points to the symbolic strength that transcends spectrality. I argue that the continuous revolving around the matter and memory of the Partisan struggle points to something symptomatic – either demonising/revisionist or utterly nostalgic – that I refer to as the 'Partisan surplus'. This surplus persists despite all the changes in historical circumstances that have undermined all the major pillars fought for during the Partisan struggle. The work of the counter-archival and inspiring excavation of the Partisan past thus necessarily intervenes with the dominant interpretations, regardless of whether they come from the nationalist (anti-totalitarianism and the rehabilitation of fascism), moralising (reconciliation and the relativisation of the past) or culturalised (nostalgia) perspectives. The book demonstrates a critical and affirmative practice that Benjamin called recovering the 'tradition of the oppressed' (Benjamin, 2003).

The essays/chapters in this book are studies of the diverse historical political moments and (art)works that form the emancipatory fragments and can potentially transfer them into the present. Without pretending to be objective or a neutral mediator between opposing and competing historical interpretations or narratives, this book presents the Partisan position, striving to rethink the relevant materials from the Partisan perspective.

Within the history of philosophy, it was Immanuel Kant who first argued that philosophy was a Kampfplatz – i.e., a battlefield of ideas and, as such, an eminent Partisan activity. Philosophers take sides on that battlefield, occupied by the dominant ideological worldview/philosophy of the time. Philosophy, at least until Marx, was perceived as an activity characterised by the courage required to deliberate on and interpret the world, and, more broadly, an activity involving various competing interpretations of that world. Marx's famous 11th Thesis on Feuerbach called for a change in the philosophical practice itself – namely, to change the world rather than merely interpret it. Neither Kant nor Marx were wrong because critical Partisan activities must always address and deliberate on (social) change. The challenge of any materialist approach will thus be how to grasp and act regarding that change, both in terms of analysis and the broader (political and artistic) practices. Rather than measuring the distance between theory and practice and perceiving philosophy as an always delayed activity, much less has been said about how the ideas themselves are presented, how and what they should convey to each other and the world, and how their images might overshadow or even silence the other (counter)images by placing the competing images outside of the frame. If philosophical activities seem subject to eternally struggling ideas that always arrive too late, then Partisan political activities have always been presented as the avant-garde that always arrives prematurely, challenging the existing order of the established (colonial) empires, states, and occupations.

The book first introduces the reader to the general historical frame and theoretical site of the intervention – in short, it presents what the destruction of Yugoslavia has to do with the strong ideological trend of nationalist revisionism and capitalist restructuring and in what ways historical revisionism has yielded considerable ideological effects that have gone far beyond academic practices. In the first chapter of the book, I explain my methodology and define the Partisan counter-archive and surplus. That explains the selection of the heterogeneous and diverse mediatic/artistic examples and resources of the revolutionary history and how these resources could help us reinvent the concept of the Partisan struggle today. The main features of the Partisan counter-archive and the selected works include the Partisan position, self-reflective modality, aesthetic experimentation, and

expression of the temporality of revolutionary memory. The various case studies that follow in the subsequent chapters prove that it was already difficult to 'integrate' the Partisan surplus and the impossible memory of the revolution in the emerging socialist official discourse/archive that focused on the celebratory narrative of the Partisan struggle, let alone in the context of the present revisionism.

The following chapters are divided into two parts, chronologically: the first part – chapters 2-5 – addresses the Partisan memory studies of the art created during World War II. Chapter 2 is a detailed case study of a few Partisan performances and most likely the most famous Partisan dancer, Marta Paulin-Brina. The analysis is carried out based on testimonials and photographs. Chapter 3 focuses on the impressive hyperproduction of Partisan poems and songs by innumerable anonymous poets. The case study focuses on the multiplicity of Partisan anthems, underlining two anthems in particular: the Women's Anthem and the poem Why Poems? by the Partisan poet Franc Pintarič-Švaba. Chapter 4 introduces the readers to the less-known topic of Partisan preoccupation with nature and the natural world – something I refer to as Partisan ecology. The Partisans transformed the forest from a refuge into a place of political subjectivation, and their care and sensitivity for nature has been reconstructed through various graphic works, poems, and stories created during the liberation struggle. Chapter 5 discusses the new digital, open-access photographic archive titled Unwanted Images. The research focuses on the representations of the activities of Partisan women and on the printing press infrastructure. Both topics represent crucial elements/subjects of the liberation struggle.

In the second part of the book – chapters 6-9 – I tackle two aspects of the Partisan memory that emerged during the socialist and post-socialist times. The first aspect is tackled in chapters 6 and 7, which focus on the independent films that successfully sustained the Partisan surplus and continued the Partisan struggle with other means. Chapter 6 is a meticulous analysis of the less-known but most inspiring antifascist Partisan film Uprising in Jazak, which combines anthropological and philosophical investigation into what the popular support and infrastructure of the Partisan struggle consisted of. At this point, I explore whether there is something that I call the banality of everyday resistance. Chapter 7 brings together

two prominent female filmmakers of our time, Marta Popivoda and Nika Autor, who have both, each in her own way, combined documentary, investigative, engaged, and poetic approaches regarding the memory from below. These works represent material evidence of how it is possible to mobilise the Partisan memory and can even demonstrate how we can still reactivate this legacy in times of nationalist amnesia. The final aspect, tackled by chapters 8 and 9, concludes the book with a focus on the case studies of the dominant memory politics during socialism and post-socialism, as well as on the ways in which various forms of memory activism resisted the revisionism of political authorities. Chapter 8 explores a singular event in the history of World War II: the women's protest movement that occurred in 1943 in the occupied Ljubljana. The chapter reviews the processes of rememorisation and remediation in the socialist (especially monuments) and post-socialist context, in which the new generation of women and antifascists (memory activism, guided tours, and public protests) had to deal both with the right-wing revisionism (removal of monuments) and reconciliation. The final chapter presents the critical case study of creating the most dominant slogan and example of memory politics in late socialism, occurring most notably in Slovenia but also elsewhere: national reconciliation. The text concludes where it began: understanding the twofold role of the primitive accumulation of nationalist and reconciliatory memory. This phenomenon has first performed an ideological attack on the antifascist paradigm and then also facilitated the path towards capitalism and ethnically cleansed communities. Reconciliation aimed at appeasing class antagonism and de-contextualising history involves forgetting the transformative past.

The book further contributes to 'rethinking antifascism' and the Partisan past by highlighting and analysing it using two additional theoretical lenses: the environmental and the female/feminist perspective. Firstly, the book underlines the pivotal role that antifascist women played in the history of the Partisan struggle as activists, fighters, or cultural workers; while secondly, it describes how many women have kept nurturing and maintaining the Partisan memory, working or creating art in the Partisan way, also by being at the forefront of the current struggles against conservative, patriarchal, and fascist currents. The discussion involves the abovementioned directresses who nowadays focus on the "memory from below" as well as the

Women's Antifascist Front theorists and archivists and focuses on various issues from the analysis of the Women's Anthem to Brina's Partisan dance and her self-reflection; from Alenka Gerlovič's graphic materials on Partisan ecology to the in-depth exploration of the women's antifascist protests in Ljubljana and women's memory activism about this phenomenon today. Finally, the author believes that the novel and innovative approach to the Partisan struggle also involves the environmental perspective, which is named 'Partisan ecology'. The latter involves the imaginary and the artworks expressing a genuine concern for nature, animals, and plants. Unlike the self-evident approach of the sort of analysis that works at the level of metaphor and interprets the forest as a place of refuge, I argue that the deliberations on the forest took place at the moment when it became a space of political subjectivation rather than something that has been – throughout the long history of the Western political cannon – seen as the place for savages / the uncivilised. I posit the Partisan ecology as diametrically opposed to the fascist romanticisation of nature and the fascist wartime destruction of nature. The non-extractivist orientation of even becoming a human animal and enlisting the natural world in the struggle for social transformation was a part of the Partisan ecology. This part of the memory of the 'oppressed', which involves the necessary feminist and ecological note, seems to be crucial in terms of today's theoretical, historical, and topical interpretations.

## Povzetek

Knjigo *Spomin na osvoboditev: študije o narodno-osvobodilnem boju v (post) jugoslovanskem kontekstu* odlikuje kritična perspektiva na materijo, ki se zdi danes zavezana času, ki z našim svetom nima več veliko opravka. Govoriti o partizanski borbi se v naši konstelaciji zdi prežeto in preživeto – partizani proti domobrancem – ali ne bi raje, tri desetletja po razpadu Jugoslavije in 80 let od druge svetovne vojne, obrnili pogled v prihodnost? A kaj ko se horizont prihodnosti vse bolj umika v distopijo in apokalipso, gesta knjige je, da se moramo vrniti v utopično preteklost, zato da lahko drugače spominjamo in s tem ponovno mislimo, čutimo in ustvarimo drugačen svet. Kritična analiza uvodnega poglavja se začne pri mišljenju procesov zgodovinskega revizionizma in opuščanja javnega spomina na antifašistično in partizansko dediščino. Kaže, kako so se prevladujoče etnonacionalistične ideologije tako v politiki spomina, revizionističnih historiografijah in njihovih spominskih aparatih povezale s širšim procesom kapitalističnega prestrukturiranja (denacionalizacija, privatizacija). V nasprotju s prevladujočo ideološko usmeritvijo, ki ne vidi nobene alternative v prihodnosti, hkrati pa demonizira vsako emancipatorno preteklost, je osrednji cilj te knjige izslediti in defragmentirati tisto, kar je zdaj razpršeno po nekdaj skupni državi: emancipatorne fragmente, zlasti tiste, ki se še vedno nanašajo na narodnoosvobodilni boj Jugoslavije. Ne glede na to, da knjiga stoji v radikalnem nasprotju z rehabilitacijo fašizma, pa je tej konzervativni strani treba priznati naslednje: s svojim ikonoklazmom vsega, kar se dotika preteklega, socialističnega in partizanskega, se je vedno znova obračala na revolucionarno razsežnost osvobodilnega boja. Resda je tega prikazala kot del vnaprejšnjega totalitarnega obzorja, a je v grobem vsaj ujela tisto srž, radikalnost partizanskega preloma, ki še danes straši. V knjigi pokažem, da se ravno to vrtenje okoli partizanske revolucionarne materije in spomina kaže kot nekaj simptomatičnega, kar imenujem 'partizanski presežek'. Ta presežek vztraja kljub spremembam zgodovinskih okoliščin, ki rušijo vse glavne stebre in imaginarij, za katere se je borilo partizansko gibanje. Delo protiarhivskega izkopavanja partizanske preteklosti mora tako nujno poseči v prevladujoča branja, pa naj prihajajo iz nacionalistične (antitotalitarizem in rehabilitacija fašizma), moralizatorske (sprava in relativizacija preteklosti) ali kulturalizirane (nostalgija)

perspektive. Skozi poglavja skušam obujati metodo in perspektivo, ki jo je Benjamin nekoč imenoval 'tradicija zatiranih' (Benjamin, 2003).

Eseji/poglavja v tej knjigi so študije različnih političnih trenutkov in umetniških del, ki tvorijo emancipatorne fragmente in jih lahko potencialno prenesejo v sedanjost ter to preteklost reaktivirajo. Tovrstna metoda ne pretendira na nevtralno oziroma objektivno posredništvo med nasprotnimi in konkurenčnimi branji/pripovedmi o zgodovini, pač pa nudi partizanski, angažiran pogled. V zgodovini filozofije je bil Immanuel Kant tisti, ki je prvi trdil, da je filozofija t. i. bojišče idej, in kot taka že od samega začetka eminentna partizanska dejavnost. Filozofi se na tem bojnem polju, ki ga zaseda prevladujoči ideološki svetovni nazor/filozofija tistega časa, postavljajo na različne strani, včasih tečejo tudi mimo druga druge, ali se celo nasilno ignorirajo. Vsaj do Marxa je bila filozofija v večji meri razumljena kot dejavnost, ki jo zaznamuje pogum za mišljenje in različno razlaganje sveta. Prav z Marxovo znamenito 11. tezo o Feuerbachu se naznani ponovni bojni klic k spremembi same filozofske prakse, saj kakopak ne gre le za interpretacijo, ampak za spreminjanje sveta. Ne Kant ne Marx se nista motila, saj bo kritična dejavnost vedno morala obravnavati in misliti (družbeno) spremembo, izziv vsakega materialističnega pristopa bo torej v načinu, kako to spremembo zajeti in pa, v določenem zgodovinskem trenutku, delovati, tako v smislu analize kot v smislu širše (politične in umetniške) prakse. Namesto da bi merili razdaljo med teorijo in prakso ter filozofijo dojemali kot vedno zapoznelo dejavnost, je bilo veliko manj povedanega o tem, na kakšen način so uprizorjene same ideje, kako in kaj uprizarjajo druga za drugo in za svet, pa tudi, kako lahko njihove podobe zasenčijo ali celo zamolčijo druge (proti)podobe in postavijo druge konkurenčne podobe zunaj okvira?

Knjiga bralca najprej uvede v splošni zgodovinski okvir postsocializma in predstavi svoje teoretsko mesto intervencije, na kratko, predstavi videnje uničenja Jugoslavije kot splet ideologije nacionalističnega revizionizma in ekonomskih procesov kapitalističnega prestrukturiranja. To imenujem primitivna akumulacija kapitala in spomina. V naslednjem poglavju knjige pojasnjujem svojo metodologijo in opredeljujem, kaj je partizanski protiarhiv in presežek, ter zakaj mislim, da je NOB predstavljala zgodovinski prelom v celotnem 20. stoletju. Nadalje preko svoje metode pojasnim, kako in zakaj

sem zbral heterogena umetniška dela ter na kakšen način nam lahko morda pomagajo na novo izumiti figuro partizana danes. Glavne značilnosti partizanskega protiarhiva in izbranih del so: angažirana pozicija, samorefleksivna modalnost, estetsko eksperimentiranje in izražanje časovnosti revolucionarnega spomina. Različne študije primerov, ki sledijo v poglavjih, dokazujejo, da je bilo partizanski presežek in ta nemogoč spomin na revolucijo težko 'integrirati' v nastajajoči socialistični uradni diskurz/arhiv, ki se je osredotočal na glorifikacijo partizanskega boja, še bolj težavno pa je bilo tovrstne partizanske presežke in dela, ki kličejo nadaljevanje revolucije, misliti v kontekstu revizionizma danes.

Poglavja, ki sledijo, so razdeljena na dva dela: prvi del (od 2. do 5. poglavja) se imenuje študije partizanskega spomina na umetnost, ki je nastala med drugo svetovno vojno. V drugem poglavju analiziram nekaj primerov partizanskega performansa in najverjetneje najbolj znanega partizanskega plesa (Marta Paulin – Brina) s pomočjo pričevanj in fotografij. V 3. poglavju analiziram zajetno hiperprodukcijo partizanskih pesmi in napevov, ki so jih ustvarjale množice anonimnih pesnikov. Študija primera pa se osredotoča na množičnost partizanskih himen in zlasti na dve partizanski himni: Himna žensk in Čemu pesmi? partizanskega pesnika Franca Pintariča – Švaba. Če prva postavlja neizbrisen pečat ženske emancipacije, pa druga predstavlja eno najbolj preciznih analiz revolucionarne časovnosti in nemogočega skladja med poezijo in revolucijo. Četrto poglavje nas popelje na manj znano območje partizanske skrbi za naravo in nečloveški svet, kar imenujem partizanska ekologija. Gozd se je iz kraja zatočišča spremenil v kraj politične subjektivacije, medtem ko se ekološka občutljivost za naravo rekonstruira skozi različna grafična dela, pesmi in zgodbe, ki jih podrobneje analiziram. Prvi del zaokroža poglavje, ki obravnava določeno zbirko partizanskih fotografij, ki pa so že del novega digitalnega projekta in prosto dostopnega fotografskega arhiva Unwanted Images. V ospredju analize partizanske fotografije so upodobitve dejavnosti in lika partizank ter temeljne infrastrukture NOB: tiskarn. Tako tisk kot ženska politična subjektivnost sta ključna elementa osvobodilnega boja.

V drugem delu knjige (od 6. do 9. poglavja) obravnavam dve področji partizanskega spomina, ki sta se pojavili v socialističnem in postsocialističnem času: prvo področje obravnavam v 6. in 7. poglavju, kjer se osredotočam na

neodvisne filme, ki so uspeli ohraniti partizanski presežek in nadaljevati partizanski boj z drugimi sredstvi. 6. poglavje je podrobna analiza manj znanega, a najbolj navdihujočega protifašističnega partizanskega filma *Vstaja v Jazku* (1973) Želimirja Žilnika. Ta film odlikuje antropološka in politično-filozofska raziskava o tem, kaj je pravzaprav bil NOB, in kako je bila sama ljudska podpora ključna infrastruktura partizanskega boja. V nasprotju s tezo Hannah Arendt o banalnosti zla, ki zna dokaj dobro razložiti fašistično kolaboracijo, postavljam tezo o banalnosti vsakdanjega upora, tega, da je vendarle upor na koncu zmagal. V sedmem poglavju sta predstavljeni dve vidni filmski ustvarjalki našega časa, Marta Popivoda in Nika Autor, ki obe na svoj način prepletata dokumentarne, raziskovalne, angažirane in poetične pristope v spominjanju od spodaj. Ti deli sta materialni dokaz, kako je mogoče mobilizirati partizanski spomin, in celo kažeta, kako lahko v času antikomunizma in nacionalistične amnezije tovrstno dediščino še vedno reaktiviramo oziroma kako lahko delamo filme "na partizanski način". Drugo področje, ki ga obravnavam v 8. in 9. poglavju in zaključuje knjigo, poudarja študije primerov dominantne politike spomina v socializmu in postsocializmu, pa tudi načine, na katere so se ji različne oblike spominskega aktivizma upirale. Osmo poglavje obravnava singularni dogodek v zgodovini 2. svetovne vojne: žensko protestno gibanje, ki se je dogajalo polovico leta 1943 v okupirani Ljubljani. Po začetni kontekstualizaciji me zanimajo predvsem prvotna politika spominjanja in remediacije v socialističnem kontekstu (spomeniki ob 10-letnici), medtem ko sem v postsocialističnem kontekstu pogledal predvsem konzervativni revizionizem, ki je želel del te spomeniške dediščine odstraniti. V kasnejšem obdobju se pojavi tako starejša kot nova generacija žensk in antifašistk (spominski aktivizem, vodeni ogledi in javni protesti), ki so se uspele spopasti tako z desničarskim revizionizmom (odstranjevanje spomenikov) kot s paradigmo narodne sprave. Zadnje, 9. poglavje je kritična študija oblikovanja najbolj dominantnega slogana, diskurza in politike spomina v poznem socializmu, predvsem v Sloveniji, pa tudi drugod: nacionalne sprave. Besedilo ponuja detajlno branje ključnih tez Spomenke Hribar, kjer opozarjam, da narodna sprava odpira vrata rehabilitaciji fašizma (ne glede na dobre intence zgodnje teoretizacije). Besedilo tudi sklene krog z uvodom in pokaže, da je primitivna akumulacija nacionalističnega in spravnega spomina izvedla dvojno vlogo: pomenila je ideološki napad na antifašistično paradigmo; poleg tega pa

je "olepšala" pot v kapitalizem ter etnično očiščene in pomirjene skupnosti. Pacifikacija razrednih antagonizmov in ustvarjanje ideologije vladajočega razreda je dobila svojo sintezo prav v narodni spravi.

Knjiga prispeva k ponovnem premisleku antifašizma in partizanske preteklosti z dvema dodatnima teoretskima objektivoma: okoljsko in žensko/feministično noto. V poglavjih tako najprej poudarjam subjektivnost žensk antifašistk kot aktivistk, bork ali kulturnih delavk, poleg tega pa lahko s študijami primerov kasneje pokažemo tudi, da so številne ženske še naprej negovale partizanski spomin in skrbele zanj, delale ali ustvarjale partizansko umetnost, pri čemer so bile tudi v ospredju sedanjih bojev proti konservativnim, patriarhalnim in fašističnim strujam. Ta rdeča nit AFŽ se razteza od omenjenih režiserk, ki se danes ukvarjajo s 'spominom od spodaj', do teoretičark in arhivistk AFŽ; od analize Himne žensk do Brininega partizanskega plesa in njene samorefleksije; od grafičnega gradiva Alenke Gerlovič o partizanski ekologiji do poglobljene analize antifašističnih protestov žensk v Ljubljani in spominskega aktivizma žensk, povezanega z njimi danes. Avtor tako velik del pozornosti usmeri ravno v ta spregledani aspekt NOB in spomina nanj.

Na koncu bi še dodal, da je eden najbolj novih in inovativnih pristopov k partizanskemu boju mogoče najti v okoljski optiki, tistemu, kar sem poimenoval 'partizanska ekologija'. Slednja analizira imaginarij in umetniška dela, ki so izražala pristno skrb za naravo, za živali in rastline. Proti lahkotni analizi, ki deluje na ravni metafore in razlaga gozd kot kraj zatočišča, trdim, da je razmišljanje o gozdu prišlo v trenutku, ko je postal prostor politične subjektivacije, in ne nekaj, kar je bilo – v dolgi zgodovini zahodnega političnega kanona – obravnavano kot prostor divjega/neciviliziranega. Oditi v partizane je pomenilo oditi v gozd, kar zahteva celosten eksistenčni angažma, preizpraševanje pridobljenega znanja in predsodkov ter pripravljenost na učenje novega. Partizansko ekologijo postavljam kot diametralno nasprotje fašistični romantizaciji narave in fašističnemu aktualnemu vojnemu uničevanju narave. Neekstraktivistična naravnanost, celo spreminjanje v človeško žival in vključevanje nečloveškega sveta v boj za družbeno preobrazbo so bili del partizanske ekologije. Ta del spomina na 'zatirane', ki je nujno zaznamovan s feministično in ekološko noto, se zdi zelo pomemben z vidika današnjih teoretskih, zgodovinskih in tudi aktualnih interpretacij.

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