



INTERVIEW

Cartography of Resistance: Zagreb 1941-1945

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Abstract

On the occasion of the 70th anniversary of the liberation of Zagreb, a few interested researchers and activists, supported by the *Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung* Southeast Europe ([RLS SEE](#)) in partnership with Zagreb-based curatorial collective [BLOK], started to work on a project named “**Cartography of Resistance**” [Kartografija otpora]. The starting point is the underground networks established for the purpose of resistance to the fascist Ustaša [Ustaša] authorities during the Second World War on the territory of the Yugoslav countries (1941-1945), which were rooted in the interwar left-oriented labor movement and activism of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia [Komunistička partija Jugoslavije, KPJ, also referred to as the Party].

The research has been carried out in two phases: 1) in 2015 and 2016, and 2) from 2020 until 2022. Both focused on spatial, organizational, political, gender and social aspects of the resistance movement. During the first phase emerged the website [kartografija-otpora.org](#) that mapped the resistance on the territory of the city of Zagreb. On the basis of the research carried out in the second phase, the book entitled *Kartografija otpora: Zagreb 1941.-1945* (eds Josip Jagić, Marko Kostanić) was written and published. The book consists of nine chapters total, where the first three, written by Karlo Držaić, Saša Vejzagić and Josip Jagić, deal with the general institutional and social history of the resistance movement. Krešimir Zovak in his contribution tackles the Peoples’ Justice [Narodna Pravda], exploring controversial topic of Partisan courts. Barbara Blasin writes about Antifascist Women’s Front in Zagreb, while Ana Lovreković deals with women working for the Party’s Local Committee. Petra Šarin focuses on the *Agitprop* and the underground printing services. Stefan Treskanica and Goran Korov, members of the team from 2015, investigate the phenomenon of Peoples’ Aid [Narodna pomoć] and explored the activities of the KPJ in the interwar period, between 1931 and 1941. The website was also updated on the basis of these findings with more than 200 locations of terror and resistance.

We asked the contributors about the content and specific importance of this book.

Keywords: Zagreb, WW2, cartography, resistance movement, networks, Yugoslav countries, interview

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INTERVIEW

Cartography of Resistance: Zagreb 1941-1945

Résumé

En 2015, à l'occasion du 70^e anniversaire de la libération de Zagreb, quelques chercheur·euse·s et activistes, en partenariat avec le collectif de conservateurs [BLOK] basé à Zagreb et soutenu·e·s par la « Fondation Rosa-Luxemburg Europe du Sud-Est » ([RLS SEE](#)), ont commencé à travailler sur un projet intitulé « **Cartographie de la résistance** » [Kartografija otpora]. Cette initiative a pour point de départ les réseaux clandestins, enracinés dans le mouvement ouvrier de gauche de l'entre-deux-guerres et l'activisme du Parti communiste de Yougoslavie [Komunistička partija Jugoslavije, KPJ]. Ces derniers sont établis sur tout le territoire des pays yougoslaves (1941-1945) dans le but de résister aux autorités fascistes de l'Oustacha [Ustaša] pendant la Seconde Guerre mondiale.

Cette recherche a été menée en deux phases : 1) de 2015 à 2016, et 2) de 2020 à 2022. Lors des deux phases de ce projet, les auteur·e·s se sont concentré·e·s sur les aspects spatiaux, organisationnels, politiques, genrés et sociaux de la résistance. Au cours de la première phase, le site web [kartografija-otpora.org](#), cartographiant la résistance sur le territoire de la ville de Zagreb, a vu le jour. Sur base des recherches effectuées pendant la deuxième phase, le livre intitulé *Kartografija otpora : Zagreb 1941-1945* (éds Josip Jagić et Marko Kostanić) a été publié. L'ouvrage se compose de neuf chapitres au total, dont les trois premiers, rédigés par Karlo Držaić, Saša Vejzagić et Josip Jagić, traitent de l'histoire institutionnelle et sociale de la résistance. Dans sa contribution, Krešimir Zovak, quant à lui, s'attaque à la Justice des peuples [Narodna pravda] en explorant le sujet controversé des tribunaux de partisans.

Barbara Blasin a écrit sur le Front des femmes antifascistes de Zagreb, tandis qu'Ana Lovreković s'est intéressée aux femmes travaillant pour le Comité local du Parti. Petra Šarin, pour sa part, a écrit sur l'*Agitprop* et les imprimeries clandestines. Stefan Treskanica et Goran Korov, membres de l'équipe de 2015, ont enquêté sur le phénomène de l'aide populaire [Narodna pomoć] et exploré les activités du KPJ dans la période d'avant-guerre, de 1931 à 1941. Le site web a également été mis à jour sur la base de ces travaux, cartographiant ainsi plus de 200 lieux de terreur et de résistance.

Nous avons échangé avec les contributeur·rice·s sur la spécificité de cet ouvrage.

Mots-clés : Zagreb, Seconde Guerre mondiale, cartographie, résistance, réseaux, pays yougoslaves, entretien

Methodology

It has been argued that microhistory enables to navigate different scales of analysis and pays particular attention to the agency and choices of historical actors. What narratives of antifascism does your project, centered on concrete material places of urban resistance, help to unfold?

Josip Jagić:

Our intention was to bring back the subject of resistance to the spotlight of inquiry. Eighty years after the end of WW2 and thirty years after the bloody war that tore apart Yugoslavia in nationalist and interethnic violence, there is almost no institutional research engaging the topic of the biggest antifascist resistance in Europe which had socialist and internationalist character. That character made the topic especially unappealing in post-socialist societies that began their nationalist projects in which history departments played a key role. There was no room for research that would approach topics like antifascism on which socialist regimes founded their legitimacy. Especially the regime of socialist Yugoslavia. It is baffling to see the contemporary discrepancy between the importance and frequency of antifascism in the public debate that gets alive every year from April until June and the lack of any substantial and comprehensive research that would bring some nuance and rationality into the discussion. Our intention was to bring back the topic of antifascist resistance and its various dimensions (organizational, political, spatial, cultural, gender, demographical) to the spotlight once again. It is our conviction that not enough was done from the standpoint of the research and that the historical material tells a completely different story than the revisionist narrative or the accompanying silence when the narrative becomes untenable.

While it was evident that almost nothing has been done in regards of the research of the topic in contemporary Croatia (Ivo Goldstein relatively recently published a valuable book *Zagreb 1941-1945*), we were a bit surprised to find that very little analytical, especially from critical and interpretive standpoint, work was also done in Yugoslavia. Production regarding antifascist resistance in Zagreb was mainly focused on providing the testimonies of the surviving members of resistance. The sheer number of testimonies is impressive and some of them were later, in the eighties, published in a four-book series *Zbornik sjećanja: Zagreb 1941-1945*. (eds Lutvo Ahmetović et al.) and a two-book series *Revolucionirani omladinski pokret u Zagrebu 1941-1945*. (eds Ladislav Grakalić et al.).

With that there was one crucial monograph *Zagrebu u NOB-u* by Narcisa Lengel Krizman published in 2008 that was a valuable analysis of the resistance movement in Zagreb. This was surprising since a lot of effort was put into promoting Zagreb's resistance in the WW2 for which Zagreb was awarded the medal of the Heroic City and was labeled as Unconquered City in former Yugoslavia.

The project heavily relied on the aforementioned publications as well as the testimonies of survivors, stored in the Croatian State Archives in Zagreb. As you mentioned in the beginning, the project produced an edited book containing nine research papers and a website. Both use microhistories but they vary in the extent of use. The edited book *Kartografija otpora: Zagreb*

1941-1945, published by Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung Southeast Europe, aims at reconstructing the various dynamics of the antifascist resistance in Zagreb by consolidating and presenting the existing body of knowledge and relying heavily on the preserved memoirs and testimonials of the members of resistance. It aims to reconstruct one of the crucial political and organizational dynamics of resistance amidst the changing dynamics of the World War in Europe and in Yugoslavia. For example, the way resistance developed during the war, which tactics it used to appeal to the population, what was the role of women and how were Party members organized in the resistance; what were the limits of propaganda used by the resistance in the city and how its material production changed over time. Our team also tried to map out the current political discussion regarding the retribution of the antifascist victors in the aftermath of the liberation. It also aims to be descriptive enough in order to present the forgotten actors and acts associated with antifascist resistance in Zagreb thus entering the field of microhistory. The method of microhistory has been used to a bigger extent on the website “kartografija-otpora.org” which aims to document all of the relevant actors and acts of antifascist resistance, thus offering more space to trace, map and define the microhistories of resistance. The website connects the microhistorical approach to the praxis of public history, which was one of the driving ideas behind the project from the start. In this sense the “kartografija-otpora.org” website acts as a medium that translates part of the academic work of the historian to the public and makes it more accessible and usable.

Some narratives opened by this approach deserve to be further examined by a more scrutinous investigation. One that we touched, for example, is what does it mean to be from Zagreb? Saša Vejzagić brought to light one demographical analysis of a group from Zagreb that joined the partisans in 1942. Most of them were born outside of Zagreb but lived in it. What does that tell us about the local identities being forged and the city’s development? We still have a lot of work in front of us when trying to understand the motives of individuals to join the resistance movement. In the testimonies of survived members, we noticed that a number of them made the effort to locate themselves as earliest as possible in the resistance thus portraying the decision to join the resistance as straightforward or a default one. And while this was definitely the case for some members of the resistance movement, especially the ones who aligned and identified themselves with the politics of the Communist Party, this was hardly the norm. Individuals made this decision, as Claudio Pavone puts it in his seminal study *A Civil War: A History of the Italian Resistance*, in reference to their moral, economic, and social environments. Popularity of the People’s Liberation Movement (NOB) increased as the partisan movement in the outskirts of Zagreb became more and more successful. Once the Independent State of Croatia mustered armies and began the counter offensive, the partisan movement was on a defensive and the organization in the city, consequently, was also on the defensive. NOB had no repressive mechanisms to force people to join the resistance. People joined on a voluntary basis and the stakes were total. We can see that some of the people who joined the resistance and then broke down under the torture, while in police’s custody, didn’t understand the magnitude of the stakes involved. Some very well did. Numerous questions are still open from the standpoint of history, political sciences, organizational methodology, and regarding the role of such answers in contemporary interpretation and use of the memory of antifascist resistance, as well as the role it has in local and contemporary identities.

However, one phenomenon that clearly intertwines all microhistorical narratives of terror and resistance is the sheer expansion and popularity of antifascist resistance in the city that stubbornly persisted up until the end of the war, no matter the savage repression it was exposed to by the local collaborationist Ustasha regime and the armies of their patrons, Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany. The difference between contemporary revisionist narratives and that historical reality is striking and this problem is something this project wants to point out.

Zagreb during World War 2

The capital of the Independent State of Croatia [*Nezavisna Država Hrvatska*, NDH], Zagreb came under strict police control very soon following the establishment of the Ustasha government. The dissenting activists were therefore purged from its territory several times during the war. To what extent was illegal work possible in Zagreb and what was its role in the context of the communist-led People's Liberation Struggle [*Narodnooslobodilački borba*, NOB] on the territory of the entire country?

Josip Jagić:

Before the start of the Second World War, Zagreb was the biggest center of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia. It had the biggest membership and the leading members of the KPJ operated there. Consequently, it is not surprising that the beginning of April War, which resulted in the devastation of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia and the foundation of the fascist NDH, found Josip Broz Tito, general secretary of the KPJ in Zagreb.

Although the Communist Party made significant grounds in the rural parts of Yugoslavia at the end of the thirties, urban areas were their bases, as most of the members and networks were located there. It was for these concrete reasons and, to a lesser degree, the revolutionary esthetics stemming from the images of Red October that the resistance will be fought in the urban centers by urban proletariat, that Zagreb played a crucial role in the beginning of the resistance. The most spectacular diversions and sabotages happened in Zagreb. Most of the high-ranking members of the Party still operated in Zagreb up until the spring of 1942. At the end of the 1941, the leadership of the KPJ and People's Liberation Movement led by Tito, now fighting Chetniks and Ustashas in Bosnia-Herzegovina, even thought of forming a reserve center in Zagreb which would substitute the Party leadership if they ever fell in combat. But this idea soon became unattainable since it was evident that the repressive apparatus of the NDH concentrated in its capital Zagreb was too much of a force for the KPJ and the NOB. It was after a first brutal wave of state's repression, in the autumn and winter of 1941, that the decision was made to evacuate all of the important figures from the city to the countryside. There the Partisan movement –People's Liberation Movement– was beginning to take shape.

After the winter of 1941-1942, even the most optimistic ones had to face the reality that the war will not be won quickly and certainly not in the direct conflict with the Ustasha regime and its patrons Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany by insurrection in urban centers. Instead, the NOB took over the strategy of Partisan war waged by the Partisan detachments in the passive and hard to reach rural areas. Zagreb lost its centrality but still obtained an important role in the

war, now not as a center of conflict, but as a reservoir of fighters, material and intel. And from the political and ideological standpoint it was also important to resist the murderous regime in its capital. All this paved way to the formation of the NOB which demonstrated its multiethnic character by the alliance of the Communist Party, whose members were mainly Croats (a big number of them joining the partisans from Zagreb) and Serbian peasants who were the victims of brutal ethnic cleansing policies by the Independent State of Croatia. The NOB thus presented a clear and material alternative to the interethnic violence and the Party members from Zagreb played a key role in the leadership.

But to get back to Zagreb, from the standpoint of repressive pressure, local activists were exposed to the situation got from bad to worse as the war progressed. As the war moved to its end and Ustasha regime felt more and more pressure by the explosion of partisan movement, in and around the city, it banked even more on the repression for its survival. Repression was brutal from the onset. Few locations in the outskirts of the city like Dotrščina and Rakov Potok were used as places of mass execution from the summer of 1941. Repressive institutions such as police, secret service and prison buildings in the city became more notorious as they were the holding grounds for arrestees and places of torture, where people occasionally were thrown out of the windows onto the street. Execution of hostages as the act of reprisals became the standard technique from the onset of the regime, but from the end of 1943 these reprisals became more savage as the public hangings of hostages in the city and its approaches were introduced in order to scare the population.

This repressive activity was successful since almost the entire NOB's organization was wiped clean several times during the war with most of its members either arrested, tortured, killed or forced to flee the city or go into hiding, i.e., to go underground. The city's Local Committee of the Communist Party of Croatia (CPC [Komunistička partija Hrvatske, KPH]), which ran the resistance, changed composition 22 times from April 1941 until February 1945. Out of 51 members that were a part of the committee, only 26 survived the war. The Project *Dotrščina* (named after one of the locations of mass executions in the outskirts of the city) identified more than nineteen thousand people by name, which is around 10% of the population of Zagreb at the time, who died either as victims of fascism or in the fighting ranks of partisans and resistance. The figures are stunning. We can only guess how many people joined the partisans from Zagreb. Documents that survived reconstruct only the partial number since not every transfer to partisans in the outskirts of the city was managed by the local antifascist organization, especially in times of disarray, after the wave of repression.

As the capital of the Independent State of Croatia, Zagreb was continuously fortified from the standpoint of Ustasha regime. As the regime was losing control and grounds throughout the country, its governing apparatus was retreating to Zagreb –the only area they could control. So, the space in which the resistance could successfully operate was continually shrinking. From 1943 up until the end of the war there was a bigger concentration of *Wehrmacht* forces that were on retreat throughout Southeast Europe. Therefore, the role of Zagreb was changing in line with shifting dynamics of antifascist resistance on a larger scale, but it never ceased to resist the murderous Ustasha regime. Having in mind the savage repression that antifascists were exerted to, and a very narrow space to operate, that fact is stunning even more, and that is exactly what our project aims to recover.

How is Zagreb underground resistance movement comparable to other urban centers in the territory of Yugoslavia? Moreover, what does the focus on Zagreb bring to the study of resistance in general?

Josip Jagić:

That is yet to be seen. It is stunning to observe to which degree we lack contemporary analytical approaches and research regarding the antifascist resistance and its various elements. However, considering the present socio-political circumstances, it is not surprising that we lack the monographic analysis of the resistance movements in big urban centers in Yugoslavia, let alone the comparative approaches that would point out the similarities and differences in their roles, characters and dynamics. From the current production, it is important to highlight Ivo Goldstein's book *Zagreb 1941-1945* which focused on much bigger array of topics regarding the history of the city during World War 2. There are also two publications by Rosa Luxemburg *Stiftung* Southeast Europe: *Places of suffering and anti-fascist struggles in Belgrade 1941-44* [Mesta stradanja i antifašističke borbe u Beogradu 1941-44. Priručnik za čitanje grada] edited by Rena Rädle and Milovan Pisarri, and *Liberation: Belgrade, 20 October 1944* [Oslobođenje: Beograd, 20. oktobar 1944] by Milan Radanović. In order to have good comparative results, we need the analysis of particular case studies, such as the resistance in Belgrade or Sarajevo. All that is too big of a project to be initiated and run under small *Stiftung* and requires a more institutional commitment and approach. It is our hope that this project, with the material it presented and researchers it involved, along with the public interest it generated, will spark the interest in this immensely fascinating subject which has an enormous political potential, for which it is relevant in all post-Yugoslav societies.

Gender and resistance

What were the roles of women in occupied Zagreb in the illegal antifascist resistance during the war? Can we say that women's participation in the underground resistance challenged the existing gender roles in the Party? In what way?

Ana Lovreković:

Although by organized women in the narrow sense we signify members of the Communist Party and sympathizers, for a more systematic view of the roles that women had in the illegal antifascist resistance in Zagreb, we must not bypass the women who worked in the People's Aid. Their status varied, from members of the Antifascist Women's Front [Antifašistička fronta žena, AFŽ] and the League of Communist Youth of Yugoslavia [Savez komunističke omladine Jugoslavije, SKOJ], as well as all the women who, in numerous ways, were involved in the so-called background operations.

Women have taken an active part in various dimensions of the antifascist resistance movement, and their role can be described as crucial. Right from the first moment after the occupation, the women who were members of the Party or had both political and organizational experience of

illegal work from the interwar period (mostly through trade union organizing movement and women's organizations) started working as couriers or within underground printing services. Towards the end of the war, partly due to the increasing Ustasha's terror on the streets, which targeted men and thus tried to preserve the already significantly eroded regime, women held all the key positions in the Party's Local Committee. However, it is not possible to explain the key roles and the Party's field stronghold solely as a consequence of the fact that the conditions for any form of illegal work were significantly more threatening for men than for women. The situation in the city was burdensome for everyone – a series of preparatory tasks for liberation involved moving through the city which meant exposure to the risk of arrest, torture, and murder.

One of the problems that the Party faced since its early years was constantly reproduced during the war years. The lack of women was a major question that was problematized by the Party organs, especially in 1944, when the Instructor Norbert Veber addressed that "...comrades cannot work due to the constant raids, and we almost don't have women". Even though working with women within the Party organization was an ever-present issue, it is important to note that the wartime context of the problem is not comparable to the Interwar period. Regardless of the fact that the AFŽ as the organization that operating outside the Party, as well as the Party's local committee in Zagreb had been criticized by a higher level of the Party for failing to achieve the mass politicization of women, at the same time a large number of women were joining the People's Liberation Movement. That partly resulted from the reality of everyday life in the city, i.e. the difficult economic conditions and repressive practices carried out by the Ustashe, which affected the majority of the population. If we focus exclusively on the Party organization, it is undeniable that various tasks, even high-risk ones such as the courier liaison between Zagreb and Belgrade, were assigned to women who were not members of the Party, *only* sympathizers. They also performed all other tasks necessary to maintain the daily dynamics of illegal work, such as securing accommodation for illegal activists or providing different types of resources. In carrying out duties that were largely identical to those for which the members of the Party were responsible, a much broader circle of women has reached the role of a political subject in the NOB.

Can we talk about the role of gender in the distribution of tasks among the communist illegal activists? Were any gender-related everyday dynamics established during the war?

Ana Lovreković:

One of the most obvious proofs of the emancipation process within the NOB is that women carried out assignments on an equal footing with other Party members, from the most innocuous ones (if such assignments existed at all in the occupied city) to the most complex ones that often-entailed strict conditions such as months of isolation and conspiracy at the highest level. The role of women in the resistance movement was complex, especially considering the fact that many women carried out multiple assignments at the same time, often working parallel in the Party organization and organizations that operated outside the Party, such as the AFŽ. They have all been affected by often arrests and restructuring processes, continually forced

to build organizations from scratch. The harsh conditions of illegal work required for the ongoing production of a new pool of women activists, thus, during the war years we can trace the transfers of women linked to Party-related organizations to the Party's Local Committee. Women comrades who proved to be responsible and dedicated in their work would become members of the Party or would be given important assignments even though they were not formally accepted into the Party. This often involved a dual workload. While working on overlapping assignments implied a solid familiarity with the principles of illegal work, and thus enabled an easier transition from non-member or sympathizer status to the member status, taking on several roles also meant exhausting the women's capacities in Zagreb. The Party has tried to get to the bottom of this issue by directives that clearly delineated the boundaries between the duties of the Party members and those of AFŽ members. The AFŽ was expected to work on the first step toward political emancipation by including as many women as possible in their ranks. Some of them would then be prepared to take more important responsibilities than their previous work on the AFŽ committees implied in practice. Working within the Party's Local Committee was seen as the further step in participating in the NOB.

Through the research which dealt with the analysis of the Party's Local Committee in Zagreb, it can be said that there was no striking difference between women and men, from the preparation to join the Party, assigning tasks, as well as principles such as work evaluation or punishment. This is primarily reflected in the testimonies of the members of the resistance, from which we read that all Party members were faced with equal expectations.

Can you provide an example of a female activist who distinguished herself in the wartime resistance in Zagreb? What concrete activities did she perform?

Ana Lovreković:

Even though it is unfair to single out only one activist, one of the least known protagonists is Viktorija Vikica Tučkorić, who is most important for her function as the organizational secretary of the Party's Local Committee. A communist who gained experience in illegal work in labor organizing in the Interwar period through the work of the Union of Bank Insurance, Commercial and Industrial Officials of Yugoslavia, took over the assignment of establishing a women's line after the occupation. In 1942, she was arrested and sentenced, following a rigged trial where she was accused of assisting an acquaintance to find a doctor who was willing to perform an abortion, one of the most restrictive punishable offenses under the Ustasha laws. During her stay in the women's penitentiary in Požega, she continued to work, establishing liaisons to help political prisoners. After returning to Zagreb she worked on organizational duties and maintained important liaisons with the instructors, occasionally working as the Party's technician as well. In the summer of 1944, Tučkorić held one of the key positions in the city, that of organizational secretary of the Local Committee. This shows several aspects of this late phase of resistance in the city. In time when the Party network in Zagreb was almost completely dismantled after numerous falls, Tučkorić was one of the few remaining strong points, being part of an experienced staff to be counted on, while most endangered activists were forced to leave Zagreb.

This is the moment when the importance of female activists will become more than obvious, with Tučkorić as one of the outstanding examples, which will be clearly evidenced by the dedication after her death since she was a comrade who could not be compensated. In the months in which she held the secretary position, the most demanding was certainly maintaining the liaison with the Instructor Norbert Veber, at a time when Zagreb was facing enormous organizational problems such as rescuing endangered staff, mobilization, increasingly pronounced repression and the consequences of failures in organizing the AFŽ.

Materiality of resistance

To what degree was the infrastructure established through interwar illegal activities of the KPJ relevant in the wartime situation?

Petra Šarin:

Although the conditions have changed significantly, it should be borne in mind that the KPJ, founded in 1919, and its organizations, have been operating illegally since the end of the following year, and in particular since August 1921, when any activity related to communism was prohibited. Thus, the twenty-year experience of working underground before the start of the war in these areas certainly contributed to an easier transition to even more difficult operation and production conditions at the beginning of the conflict.

As my colleague Jagić already indicated, during the war, Zagreb was a kind of open-air prison, meaning one could only enter and exit it through checkpoints [*mitnice*] i.e., specific controlled locations. In that sense, an important role was given to the underground printing services, more precisely to the type called manual printing services, which worked on special tasks such as the creation of forged papers, identification cards and other documents. Owing to a large network of sympathizers, manual technicians, who worked in those printing services, were given original documents for inspection, serial numbers of document issuance were compared and controlled, forged signatures were checked, stamps were made, etc. In the late fall of 1941, a manual printing service was established in the apartment of mathematics professor Josip Lukatela (codename Feliks), which, due to a high level of conspiracy and impeccable work method, operated continuously until the April 1944, when Lukatela was transferred from Zagreb to work on other tasks. In regard to enabling unhindered movement and transfer of people to the battlefield, to join the partisan army, manual printing services were of the crucial importance.

As for other principal activities in the wartime, such as agitation and propaganda, printing services were also of great importance. The infrastructure established through pre-war illegal activities, once again, played a pivotal role in the overall success of the KPC, not only in terms of informing the inhabitants of Zagreb about the situation on the battlefield, and about everchanging socio-political circumstances, but also in terms of mobilization. Therefore, it is useful to observe the KPC's publishing activity in the interwar period, and the way of establishing and organizing underground printing services, which I also briefly discuss in my chapter. The fact that the entire sector of agitation and propaganda was extremely important in wartime Zagreb is obvious in that it was separated from other regular Party connections. According to

the ideal schematic reconstruction, in the second half of 1941, the Party and other organizations were connected to printing services solely through a local technician –member of the Party in charge for that job only. Local technicians had a direct contact with the printing service, they brought manuscripts and collected copied material. Given the top-down organization, the local technicians were connected to the secretary of the Local Committee and to the technicians of the District Committees, to whom they handed over printed materials.

Given the conditions of the communists' illegal activity, the entire work had to be carried out in the strictest conspiracy, which is why the printing services existed in many locations, so that the work could proceed unhindered even if some service was discovered. At that moment, backup printing services would be activated. Because of the secrecy, in addition to the existing organizational units, additional locations were established where paper and technical material such as stencils were stored. It was not possible to adhere to this ideal organizational scheme during the entire period of occupation and giving way to improvisation enabled easier detection of illegal activity. Nevertheless, given the experience of working illegally before the war, the Party workers continued to operate successfully in the new context.

However, it is important to keep in mind that the role of Zagreb was changing during the war. The initial concentration of propaganda production in Zagreb is logical as it was a Party center from before the war, which means networks and local infrastructure were already established there. As the war progressed, Zagreb became heavily dependent on propaganda produced elsewhere, on the liberated territory, while material and machines were sent from Zagreb. After propaganda material would be made, big part of reproduction, storage and distribution happened in Zagreb with the help of the Local Committee. This perfectly follows the change in the role of Zagreb in the wider development of the NOB.

Is there any resource of the resistance that could in this specific context be characterized as vital (whether in material, communicational, emotional or some other sense)?

Karlo Držaić:

It is hard to pinpoint a single resource or a single factor that had a decisive influence on the development and operation of the resistance in occupied Zagreb. The knowledge acquired through illegal activities in the interwar period in monarchist Yugoslavia manifested in the experience of activists and members of the KPJ, in organizational capacities and the ability to adapt to new circumstances in the context of occupation. No other party or organization on the territory of Yugoslavia possessed similar knowledge, and therefore this knowledge functioned as the basis on which the KPJ became the only relevant factor of the resistance.

Zagreb is a good example of this because even before the German attack on Yugoslavia, the Central Committee of the KPJ and the Central Committee of the KPC had been located in the city. And while the entry of the German forces into the city and the establishment of the Independent State of Croatia destroyed the structure of all other organizations that could be dissatisfied with the new regime, these central institutions of the Communist Party continued their work in Zagreb, made preparations for armed resistance, and within a few months managed to transfer people and material to parts of the country where there was less danger. However,

pre-war experience and gathered knowledge was only the basis upon which the practices of the illegal resistance movement were built on. The movement operated in an economically, socially and morally changing situation and was forced to adopt different models of resistance and to rely on various resources, oftentimes difficult to access. Therefore, in our research, we have divided the chronological framework of resistance, that was active from 1941 to 1945, into three basic periods, which I, Saša Vejzagić and Josip Jagić deal with in our articles. It is important to note that, in each of these periods, various changes occurred in the overall functioning of the city and its every-day life Zagreb, which further determined the way resistance functioned. For example, in the winter months, the material conditions in Zagreb regularly deteriorated due to shortages of food, warm clothing and firewood. The result was the strengthening of dissatisfaction with the Ustasha regime and the social radicalization that worked in favor of the resistance movement. In some other times, when the material situation wasn't as bad, the clearly visible politics of terror, be it in Zagreb or in the countryside, prompted regular citizens to join the cause of the NOB or to simply sympathize with it by refusing to collaborate with the government.

Although the resistance movement's actions were conditioned by a combination of numerous factors that sometimes had a greater and sometimes a lesser influence, perhaps we could single out the people of Zagreb as the key resource. It is obvious, from historical sources, that during the occupation, members of the Communist Party relied heavily on help and solidarity of the citizens of Zagreb who were not members of the Party or even previously associated with it in any way. This collaboration of ordinary citizens with the resistance movement included participation in various actions and diversions, as well as hiding compromised Party members and activists from the police, collecting medical supplies and clothing for the needs of the People's Liberation Army, obstructing work in factories, railways and government institutions, and various forms of passive resistance. Regardless of the fact that the Communist Party constantly stressed out the importance of secrecy, and in a number of memories it is evident that neighbors, acquaintances, and other citizens knew what antifascists were doing, but tacitly agreed to cover them up and rarely collaborated with the Ustasha police. In this way, the Communist Party, with little more than a hundred members in Zagreb during the occupation, could count on the active help of thousands and the sympathy of even greater number of citizens. The true significance of this comes to light when we take into account that the Ustasha laws prescribed the death penalty for any assistance to the communists, and even then, a large number of citizens knowingly risked their lives and the lives of their families, even though they were not directly involved in the resistance movement. In addition, it should be mentioned that over time more and more citizens decided to leave the relative safety of Zagreb and join the People's Liberation Army (PLA). So, in a way, the ordinary people were the key resource for the resistance movement.

In this regard, the microhistorical approach and the ideas of history from below were crucial because they revealed the social networks that connected the resistance activists to the wider Zagreb's community. In traditional history this layer is often obscured as the focus shifts on the larger historical narratives, as was the case with some previous research. Although in Yugoslav times, because of the resistance to the Ustasha regime, Zagreb was remembered as the "unconquered city", this was never before really reflected in historical writing, since historians primarily used more traditional approaches that focused on a large-scale political history, history of institutions or specific groups, such as communists, workers or distinguished individuals.

Therefore, the **Cartography of Resistance** project adds another layer to the historical narrative, and a very important one, since it for the first time clearly demonstrates the breadth and scope of the popular resistance to the Ustasha regime in Zagreb.

To conclude

It is well-known that the political establishments of the countries created following the collapse of socialist Yugoslavia are generally negatively disposed towards the legacy of the communist antifascist struggle. Is the materiality of this change visible in the urban memorial landscape of Zagreb? In what way is it manifested?

Petra Šarin:

Numerous locations, events and protagonists of the resistance movement in Zagreb were marked with memorial plaques or commemorated with sculptures and busts after of the World War 2. In parallel with the change in the social structure of the nineties, with the restoration of capitalism and the awakening of nationalism, historical revisionism penetrates the interpretation and role of the resistance movement and social memory, as my colleague Jagić already indicated. As a result, revisionism is reflected in the public space in different degrees of negligence for the installed monumental elements: from systematic neglect, through removal to vandalization and complete destruction. If we take the locations of underground printing services as an example, and it is similar in other cases, some locations and protagonists were never marked, but many were, and their memorial plaques have been removed since the nineties. Today, only rare marked locations of Agitprop are known to the general public. Their story and historical significance appear for the last time, almost as a rule, thirty years ago. Only a few memorial plaques have been preserved, which today still testify to the political steadfastness of young people who put resistance to fascism not only before their own commotion, but very often before their lives.

As an art historian who deals with a feminist reading of public space, that is, observing the gender discrepancy inscribed in the visual images of cities, I find it interesting to mention that sculptures of female historical figures before the World War 2 (with the exception of one relief) did not form part of the public sculpture repertoire in Zagreb, i.e., that women appeared as political subjects in the public space only after 1945, through portraits of real historical figures, often as People's Heroes/Heroines; or through group scenes of war, revolutionary or workers themes. Looking at the issue from this perspective, it should be noted that from the nineties onward, the memorial landscape of the former Yugoslav countries has been significantly devastated. Zagreb was one of those places where devastation of public memory was exceptionally thorough, which resulted in the loss of memory on the popular antifascist movement, and with it the extensive loss of memory on women and women's history. From the early nineties to 2013, 67% of the total monuments and memorials related to the People's Liberation Struggle and the resistance movement have been purged from the public space.

Another striking data from 2005 shows that only 14% of the public sculpture with human figures depict women. The statistic itself indicates a huge disproportion, but the additional gender asymmetry inscribed in the public space is underlined by the fact that almost all female characters represent the Virgin and saints, idealized motherhood or they are naked sculptures

of women that symbolize something else (shame, faith, hope, innocence, etc.). Today, in the city of Zagreb less than ten monuments represent actual female historical figures, of which in the representative part of the city there is a monument to the first Croatian professional journalist Marija Jurić Zagorka and, more relevant for this case, the busts of the sisters Rajka and Zdenka Baković, who worked in a family tobacco shop in the very center of the city in 1941. The Communist Party used that shop as one of the most important connection points with liberated area and, later on, dislocated Central Committee. To make it less suspicious, Zdenka regularly ordered press in German language and that is how this location came to be a permanent gathering place for German officers. Both sisters were eventually tortured and killed by the Ustasha regime.¹

The second bust that survived the purge is that of Anka Butorac who, among other things, worked in the underground printing services, who was captured by the Ustasha regime during the escape from Zagreb and also interrogated, tortured and killed. However, given the aforementioned circumstances, as well as the selective approach to education, not only that numerous other women and their fellow antifascist comrades are no longer represented or visible in public space, but they also disappeared from the public and social memory. This policy of erecting and removing monuments, along with the messages channeled through them, clearly illustrates the patriarchal and revisionist face of Zagreb's public (cultural) policies and the simultaneous absence of questioning the status quo at the institutional level.

Previously mentioned cases showed us that brutal revisionism and reckoning with the antifascist memory in Croatia, in the midst and after the bloody war that broke apart Yugoslavia, also promoted the re-patriarchalization of society. It is critical to note, once again, that these practices were an important integral part of state (un)official policies of nationalist renewal that was done in the opposition towards the socialist Yugoslavia.

What are the plans for the future?

Karlo Držaić:

Since the dissolution of Yugoslavia and the subsequent war, the memory of the antifascist struggle and the NOB during World War 2 have a status of a semi-repressed memory in Croatia. Although it was never officially repressed, president Tuđman's government during the nineties allowed and supported large scale removal of the antifascist heritage from the public space. As already mentioned, thousands of monuments and memorial plaques were destroyed or removed, streets were renamed, school curriculums changed, and museums closed. This instigated a strong current of historical revisionism that, on one hand, tries to whitewash the Ustasha movement and regime, and on the other hand tries to demonize the communists, antifascists, and socialist Yugoslavia in general.

Given this context, and previously stated adherence to the ideas of public history, we hoped our project would stimulate new initiatives capable of combating historical revisionism. One such initiative appeared with the idea of establishing the Museum of resistance of Zagreb, as such institutions already exist in a number of European cities. That initiative is especially important

¹ Read more about this case on our website at a location named "[Teslina Street 7](#)".

since the topic of resistance to the occupation during the World War 2, be it in Zagreb, Croatia, or Yugoslavia as a whole, is barely represented in any of Zagreb's museums. Because of that, we believe the initiative has significant potential to right at least some wrongs done by historical revisionism in the last decades thus providing an institutional foothold for further research into this vast and important field.

Josip Jagić:

We, the [RLS SEE](#) as the publisher, wanted to promote the research interest into this forgotten topic. We were quite aware that our resources in this regard, as one single political foundation, were limited. But we hoped we could secure the first steps into the field by supporting the interest of young and upcoming researchers, consolidating and slightly expanding the available body of knowledge and confronting the findings with the contemporary revisionist narratives.

We hope that the narratives and knowledge presented in the book and on the website will be picked up by the research community thus providing more insight into the topic. The book itself now has its own life and we yet have to see what the reception in the research community is and in the interested public. We believe in genuine discussion and exchange where our points will be expanded, confirmed, reformulated, or rebuked. In this way, we will gain more insight into the topic that, to a degree, influences our contemporary political imagery. The website, as colleague Šarin has stated, is an ongoing project that will publish the acts of resistance as they become investigated and defined by the team. This process will take time and energy, but the advantage is its availability and, we believe, attractiveness thus making the bits and pieces of history more public.

To conclude, the revisionist narratives in Croatia, that concentrate on the retribution of the victors and victimization of Axis and local collaborationist forces or that dismiss the antifascist resistance as something foreign, are just unattainable. They were, and still are to some lesser degree, based on a sheer power where politics, as colleague Držaić pointed out, signaled what is preferred or expected from the standpoint of the hegemonic ideological narrative of the state. We feel the time has come, where there is a space to approach these topics with more nuance, free of contemporary anachronisms and political pressures. This change can also be seen in the political context in Zagreb where the city and its government are starting to think about its antifascist legacy and its role in the contemporary public memory more freely. The year 2022 marked the first time after the breakup of Yugoslavia that the city government of Zagreb and the city's parliament officially supported the commemoration of liberation of Zagreb from fascism on May 8th. We are hopeful that the time is coming where there will be a space and resources to institutionally pursue the topic of antifascism in Zagreb, Croatia and, hopefully, in the post-Yugoslav space. That institutionalization would provide the continuity needed for further rigorous and scrupulous research of this vast field of grass roots and popular emancipatory projects that were gathered under the hope and umbrella of antifascist resistance.