

# Foreword

My turn to Partisan memory and monuments dates back to 2009, when the Museum of Modern Art in Ljubljana (Tanja Lazetić and Zdenka Badovinac) organised a series of events and an edited volume, in which my text – primarily dealing with “national reconciliation” in memory and revisionist politics in Slovenia – appeared. I had no idea that my first article on the sad fate of Partisan monuments and the emergence of revisionist monuments in the post-Yugoslav context would kindle so much interest and eventually result in this book. This research project has travelled with me across a few institutions and scholarships that deserve a special mention. First, as a fellow at the Institute of Cultural Inquiry, Berlin, I was able to conduct research on Partisan poetry and revolutionary temporality (as part of the project *Multistability* and *Kippbild*, 2010–2012). I need to thank the entire group of scholars there for their generous feedback and, most notably, Christoph Holzhey. Furthermore, I would like to thank the Humboldt Stiftung for granting me a postdoctoral fellowship (2014–2016), in which I conducted research on Partisan film documents from WWII. Some of these investigations were published in the book *Partisans in Yugoslavia*, which Miranda Jakiša co-edited with Nikica Gilić (2015). I have to thank Christine Götz and Matteo Colombi for their invitation to the Leibniz Institute for the History and Culture of Eastern Europe (GWZO) and for their feedback on the topic of Yugoslav film and memory (chapter 3). Finally, I would like to thank TU Dresden and, in particular, the Institute for Slavic Studies and Prof. Christian Prunitsch, who hosted me as an Open Topic Fellow (2017–2020), where I received the opportunity to re-organise my research material in the form of a book.

Special thanks go to various individuals and institutions that have helped me or provided me with the archival material: first of all, to the Museum of Contemporary History (Ljubljana) for its generosity and the professional work of Jožica Šparovec, Katarina Jurjavčič and the director Kaja Širok. Also, I would like to thank the Slovenian Archive and Radovan Čukić from the Museum of Yugoslavia (Belgrade), the AVNOJ Museum in Jajce, the digital archive of [www.znaci.net](http://www.znaci.net) and the League of Croatian Antifascist Veterans (Zagreb) for their granting permission to reproduce visual material in this book. Furthermore, Robert Burghardt, Božidar Flajšman, Michael Allen, Marko Krojač and Goranka Matić deserve a special mention for the use of their photographs of Partisan monuments. My special thanks go to the owners of the rights for reproduction of the Partisan artists Tomaž Krpič, Andrej Gerlovič, Janin Klemenčič, Alenka Puhar, Luka Vidic, Matej and Manja Pavšič and Vedrana Madžar who not only granted me permission but were also keen to assist me with additional information on the Partisan artists and their artworks that I have been

able to reproduce here. Last but not least, I would like to thank Želimir Žilnik for inspiration and for sharing his personal trajectory on Jazak's antifascists. Thanks to these people, this book contains several unknown, or hardly known, artworks and photographs, which may hopefully trigger further investigations in a field of research that has remained mostly limited to the ex-Yugoslav region and fringes of academia.

There are many groups and individuals that have influenced, helped, improved and sharpened my thoughts and contributed to this book. First and foremost, my thanks and debt go to Miklavž Komelj, who published a long study on Partisan poetry in Slovenia a decade ago, which affected me deeply. It comes as no surprise that some of Komelj's topics resonate strongly with the book that is in your hands, while I tried to expand these topics both to different art materials and also temporally and spatially away from the horizon of Slovenia to the whole of Yugoslavia. Miklavž Komelj commented intensively on parts of my chapters (especially 1 and 2) and added several thoughts on the interpretations of a few poems. To his selfless help I can only respond with my deepest gratitude, and I am sure he will recognise his influence in more than a few passages. Furthermore, I have had lively discussions with members of the collective ThK, Ana Vujanović and Marta Popivoda, whose theatrical re-enactment of Partisan women (memories) and their current film project on the testimony of the Partisan resistance remains of vital inspiration. Also, I need to acknowledge another member of the ThK group Bojan Djordjev for his help with the translation of Partisan poems. To Ivana Momčilović I am heavily indebted for her continual support in writing and struggling, but also for herself being actively involved in rethinking Yugoslavia and the Partisan experience. I would like to thank Jernej Habjan for giving me the incentive to co-edit the first international volume on recent theoretical work on Partisan art and politics (*Slavica Tergestina*). I must also mention Davor Konjikušić for exchanging his materials and thoughts on Partisan photography, and I would also like to warmly thank the collective KURS (Miloš Miletić and Mirjana Radovanović) for their invitation to present some of my research in Belgrade (2017). In a similar vein, Katerina Kolozova and Artan Sadiku's invitation to the summer school in Skopje 2015 resulted in a lecture that was discussed by participants and integrated into the introductory chapter. Finally, I would like to thank Paula Barreiro López to invite me into the collective research team on Partisan Resistance(s) that aims to expand the political and artistic scope of partisan struggles.

The central theoretical inspiration for a return to the Partisans and for a way of connecting theory and praxis I owe to the Collective WHW, Darko Suvin, Ozren Pupovac, Srećko Pulig and especially Rastko Močnik and Boris Buden whose way of thinking has seeped deeply into my own work. I am deeply grateful to Peter Stanković's work on Partisan film, to Aldo Milohnić and Goran Sergej

Pristaš, for their selfless help in highlighting a few important cues for interdisciplinary research on Partisan performance and theatre. Mirt Komel's comments on chapter 1, especially with respect to the notion of surplus memory and accumulation, as well as Elena Vogman's insightful comments on the methodology and interpretation of past resources were of vital importance. Moreover, my dear friend Alan Kučar deserves a special mention for our continual dialogue on this and other related matters. Finally, I want to warmly thank Ana Hofman for commenting on aspects of Partisan poetry and song (chapter 2); Ana Dević for making remarks on the introductory chapter; Dominique Hurth for helping me to reflect on Brussels' revisionist monument in chapter 4; Mateo Ivčević, Milan Radanović and Sanja Horvatinčić for their knowledge of history and of the monuments; and Ankica Čakardić for a few great suggestions on women's antifascist legacy. My special thanks also go out to Jodi Dean and the Circle for Critical Theory from Nisyros for a lively discussion on my paper on the Partisan figure today and to Vjeran Pavlaković for his work on revisionism in the post-Yugoslav context and the round table discussion on populism and memory organised by Chiara de Cesari and Ayhan Kaya. I especially benefited from Gönül Bozoglu's comments, which helped me improve parts of chapter 4. Last but not least, my book would not be the same without Nathaniel Boyd and Andrew Hodges, who have improved not only my English and style of writing, but were also generous enough to illuminate some evident contradictions in my reasoning. In addition, I would like to thank Lydia White and Stella Diedrich for their assistance and guidance with finalising the book project. The list of credits is becoming long and points to the fact that despite the solitary experience of theoretical writing, one is always already involved in a collective journey.

Finally, my warm thoughts and thanks also go to my family in Slovenia, especially to my parents and my brother back home, who helped me to retrieve some material and who have offered long-term support. Let me also warmly greet my close family in Berlin, my partner Niloufar Tajeri with whom we started our project named Archive to Sub-Urban Dissent, which in many ways enriched my considerations on the Partisan counter-archive. I would also like to thank my sons Shayan and Diyako, who gave me strength when I needed it most, especially towards the end of the writing process.

At the very end, I would like to return to the beginning. How did I become interested in the Partisan resistance in the first place? It all started in 1943, when my great-grandfather Franc Kirn entered a Partisan shock-brigade from the XIV. Division and was captured and interned in a Dresden concentration camp – in the city where I currently work! – while my grandfather, Franc's son, Vladislav Kirn, like a large majority of Partisans, entered the struggle at a very young age. He was 16 years old when he worked in the Trbovlje mine and joined the Partisans in 1943.

Later that year, he joined the second battalion of Prešeren's shock-brigade and participated as part of a tiny assault troop in the major victory of Partisans against local fascists at Turjak. He was shot and captured by Nazis later that year. After a series of tortures by local fascists while he was being treated in a local hospital, he was sent to Dachau concentration camp, where he survived for a year and a half. As he was more of the silent type and did not boast about his bravery, I heard most of the stories of Partisan courage through my grandmother, after he had already died. And just when I started writing this book, my grandmother Fani also died. This book therefore wishes to interrupt the silence of the dead and is thus also a dedication to my (great-) grandparents, to their deeds and testimonies, which sparked a series of thoughts and flashes of memory that have produced lasting effects and affects. This is something that goes beyond a mere familial tie; there were many Partisans across Europe and the world that stood up against colonial domination and fascist occupation that should not be forgotten. Thus, at the end I conclude by dedicating the book to the Partisan struggle itself, to its memory that should not be forgotten and to the deep and determined belief that it was not only worth it but necessary to resist fascism and fight for another world. This book addresses both this bygone past and our potential future. A short poem "Love in Storm," written by the Partisan poet Matej Bor whose poems were printed such Partisan printing house depicted on the Figure 1, encapsulates the unbreakable spirit of emancipatory desire and revolt:

Tonight I saw your palm,  
how it got squeezed in the firm fist  
in the darkness of the Ljubljana streets.  
And you know of what I thought, poet-Partisan?  
If only my poem were like your palm,  
all soft and tender like the cherry blossom in spring  
and that it were as resistant as your fist,  
whenever you witness the fascist parade.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> All permissions for translations of the Matej Bor poems are courtesy of Matej and Manja Pavšič.



**Figure 1:** *Typesetters* by Ivo Šubic. Courtesy of the Museum of Contemporary History, Ljubljana (hereinafter MNZS).

