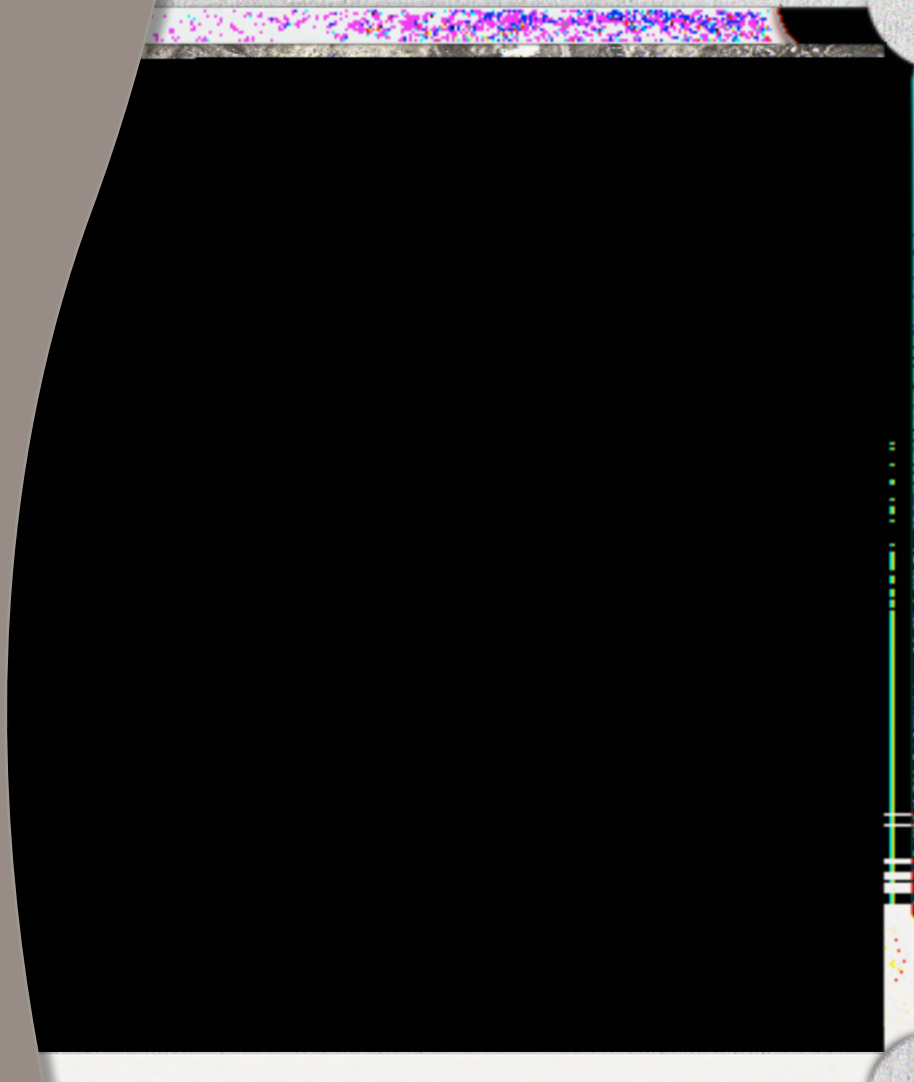


Nenad Perošević
Milos Vukanović

**I don't know whose
those airplanes are,
but the bombs are
ours**

Allied bombing of Yugoslavia during
Second World War



K



Who gets to drink and who is paying the bill?

T

The topic addresses the period of Allied bombing of the cities of Yugoslavia in the period of 1943-1944; Similar to the rest of Europe the process is widely neglected in education even if it was the cause of thousand of casualties and the destruction of many cities. The bombing took place in all of the former Yugoslav republics and today is still a controversial issue about the reasons, level of bombing and who gave the order.



A :

The aim of the workshop is to bring closer to the students the topic of devastation and suffering of the civilian population in the situation of mass aerial bombing. The workshop is focused on the period of WWII, precisely the Allied bombing of the cities of what is to become Communist Yugoslavia. Even if the Axis bombing is presented in the workshop, the main focus is the activities of Allies because of the extent of destruction caused by their actions. The critical approach to this topic will prompt the discussion on friends and interests in international affairs and war time periods.



L :

- The students will analyze historical sources.
- The students will develop awareness about the horrors of the war and life under the bombs.
- The students will get familiarized with the attitude of present day politics toward historical events



T

The teacher opens the workshop with a brainstorming activity:

1. What aims are being bombed and what is the difference between military and civilian goals?
2. What do you think, how precise was the bombing in the WW2?
3. What bombing in the near past are you familiar with?
4. Do you know if your town has ever been bombed?

The teacher continues with the introduction. The pupils read the introduction text, source 1 and analyze the map. The teacher asks them to answer the questions at the end of the introduction.

After answering the questions the teacher draws a timeline and asks the students to fill in the most important dates from the text in the introduction.

A 1

The teacher separates the pupils into 4 groups and gives them sources from Leskovac, Podgorica, Belgrade and Zadar.

Every group has the same task, by using the texts and pictures, to make a news report from the point of view of a different, foreign, news correspondent.

Group 1(Leskovac) must write a news report from the point of view of a Soviet news reporter.

Group 2 (Podgorica) must write a news report from the point of view of a British news reporter.

Group 3 (Belgrade) must write a news report from the point of view of a German news reporter.

Group 4 (Zadar) must write a news report from the point of view of a Yugoslav (partisan) news reporter

A representative from each group reads their news report.

After reading the news report the teacher asks the students to compare and discuss other groups' news reports.

A 2

For the conclusion of the class the teacher presents Source 5 and the pictures of two monuments. He asks the students to look at the material, answer the question and asks for their opinion.



45
minutes

INTRODUCTION

The first bombing of Yugoslavia during the WW2 was done by fascist Germany aviation on 6 April 1941. The task was given to the 3rd air fleet. The main target of bombing was Belgrade, but besides it they also bombed Novi Sad, Sarajevo, Nis, Mostar, Banja Luka, while Italian aviation targeted Croatian Adriatic, Podgorica and other cities. The operation of bombing Belgrade had the code name 'The Final Judgment'.

Despite the fact that the Yugoslav government and the Belgrade military HQ, foreseeing the war, proclaimed Belgrade an 'open city', 484 aircrafts intensely bombed the city on 6 and 7 April 1941.

During the bombing of Belgrade, 2,274 people got killed. 627 buildings were completely destroyed, while other 10,000 were heavily or partially damaged, including

a portion of the 'Old Court'. The most significant monument of culture fully destroyed in bombing was the National Library with 300,000 books, including medieval manuscripts of priceless value. According to German sources, the old fashion way of building houses and badly organized fire-fighting and civilian protection, contributed to such a high number of casualties.

The western allies increased their interests about the Yugoslav battlefield along with transfer of war operations towards the south of Europe. The allied aviation occasionally acted on territory of occupied Yugoslavia since April 1943. First major bombing took place on 20 April 1943 after attack on Skopje and Nis.

More intense actions of allied aviation came in the second half of 1943, after the recognition of the Liberation Army of Yugoslavia (The Partisans) by the Allies. The formal recognition of NOVJ at the Teheran conference contributed to the development of its military ties with the Allies in the first half of 1944. The decision on helping the NOVJ at the same time meant including these forces in wider Allies' plans about fighting the German troops. Increased aerial attacks of Allies were conditioned by the fact that the Balkans became very important to Germans in the Autumn of 1943 and particularly Spring 1944, due to the breaking of German front in Italy in April 1944 and operation 'Overlord' in June 1944. The Allies tried to disable withdrawal of German forces, by bombing, from Greece, Albania and Macedonia.

The first request for bombing Belgrade was sent by General Draza Mihailovic, to the President of Yugoslav government in exile, Slobodan Jovanovic, (through British Ambassador with the Yugoslav government, Rendel) on 4 November 1942.

The Supreme Commander of the National Liberation Army, Josip Broz Tito, in his letter of 17 May 1943 (at the start of the 5th enemy offensive) addressed to the HQ of his units in Croatia, explained the acceptance of cooperation with Allies, and in relation to that, informed them about the requested bombing of Berane, Bijelo Polje, Pljevlja, Andrijevisa, Mostar, Podgorica and Niksic.

* NOVJ – National Liberation Army of Yugoslavia – the Partisans



Source 1

Surprised citizens of Niksic were seeking hideaway in houses and basements after the first flyover of aircrafts. However, many feared to stay captured under the rubbles, so they remained in the open. On the square, at the tap next to Katurica house, Stevan Zlatni Vukovic, 'calmly' watched the sky and talked to himself. There is a true anecdote remembered from that time. Asked by one citizen who also did not want to run in the house 'Whose aircrafts are those?' he answered with all the seriousness: 'I don't know whose aircrafts are those, but the bombs are ours.'

Maksim Vujačić, *Trg Slobode (1885-2007)*, Nikšić, 2007. str. 48-49

Q

1. When and why the Allies started the campaign of bombing Yugoslavia?
2. What the quoted citizen of Niksic actually wanted to say in his answer?
3. Was aerial bombing practiced only during the WW2?
4. Do you know of any other examples of aerial bombing?

Source 2

P

, L

, S

The Bulgarians left their HQ in the Gymnasium that was across the road from our prison, and we heard they left the town completely. The Gymnasium and the park around looked desolated and scary with empty tranches. From Zotovic's prison, right next to ours, we could not hear any screams. It must be Zotovic* and his 'butchers' were at the celebration. There was only one Nedicevac** walking in front of a Falcon gym, probably a guard. There was a strange silence in the room. Everybody were busy thinking about their own fate.

Suddenly, there was a distant roar of aircrafts. We 'sensed' that they were bombers. Their arrival today was a lot louder.

It was exactly quarter past twelve (noon). Suddenly there was a horrifying sound of a bomber going down. It was clear: We will get bombed. First I heard a whistling sound, and then the explosion. One, two, ten, hundred... It seemed the bombs were falling straight to the prison, on me. Pushed by the primal fear of death, I run out of the room and lied down under a tree in the center of the yard. While it was grooving around, dust and rubbles were falling on me and around me. I could not see anything from the dust. I felt a hit. Then I realized it was not dangerous. I was hit by a piece of a brick from destroyed buildings.

All around me was screaming and moaning. However, there was so much dust that it was dark and I could not see anything around me. My mouth were full of dust and ground. The cracking around us finally stopped. Explosions were rare and further from us, until the silence came. Little by little, the dust settled and the Sun beams were getting down to us. We could feel the burning and some sort of acid in the air. When I finally got off the ground and looked around, I almost passed out. The prisoners were running frantically out. Doors, windows, roof tiles, everything vanished in a blink of an eye. Only the walls remained, and rooms gaped lifelessly. I did not see anyone got killed. So, we all survived the bombing. Zotovic's prison was destroyed, and also a part of municipality where the Police was housed. Front part of the Falcon building also disappeared. There was a huge hole where the entrance used to be. A few living Nedicevac were swearing, throwing their weapons and running away. I looked to the East: The Gymnasium was gone. It was flattened to the ground...



(*Mihajlo Zotovic, a Major, commander of 'Gvozdeni puk' of Serb Corps of Volunteers – a quisling organization under the command of Dimitrije Ljotic)

(**Nedicevac – a supporter of the Government of National Salvation of Milan Nedic, a German collaborationist)

Rukopis sećanje Dragiše Kneževića, Istorija Leskovca 1944-1953 godine, (Građa Narodnog muzeja u Leskovcu)

Source 3

Pictures of bombings and testimonies, Podgorica, Montenegro

P 1

The first group of 60 aircrafts flew over the city and ejected some white smoke from the tail, something we did not see before. They made a circle over the city, as if they were marking the space to be bombed, and it appeared they were doing exactly that. When the first group closed the circle, the hell burst open. After the first group of planes released their deathly burden, there was the second, and the third. The ground was trembling, the city was falling dawn, parts of human bodies were flying in the air. I lost my mother Milica (39) and sister Zorka (8). Our house in the center of town, across from 'Beko' store, was destroyed. Many more houses and buildings were destroyed and many families got killed. Number of wounded and killed persons has never been determined. The events were going like in a film. Killed needed to be buried, and life had to be continued under the circumstances of occupied and, now, destroyed city. I believe there wasn't a family in the center that went without casualties, or a wounded member.



The most hit part in this bombing was the center: Balsica st., Novaka Miloseva st., Nemanjina bank... There was a chaos after the bombing. The survived were fleeing the town. There were screams under the rubbles. The streets were jammed with rubbles, and full of deep holes. Parts of human bodies were hanging from telegraph wires. Some objects were on fire. The smoke was hurting the eyes. Clouds of dust. In a word – Hell.

P 2

The night bombing found me in the city, in the house where we stayed. The owner of the house, our cousin, was a single woman, so I visited her daily and brought her the food we could spare. I stayed home that night, to sleep. Suddenly, there was an aircraft roar, a strong explosion that lit the city. The light last long and it was so intense that a needle could be found. It looked creepy over the destroyed town. Night turned into a day. After the Allied aircrafts unloaded their deathly burden, it was silent. There were talks that many got killed that night, citizens who were coming to their homes at that time. I left early next morning and went to see my family in Zagoric. Passing by the military area, in a fenced space, I saw a few parachutes. At a closer look I noticed that there were some small metal things on them, driven into the soil. When I told my folks what I saw the older neighbors said it were the parachutes of the rockets that lit the city.



Many times later I thought about why was our city so drastically bombed. According to what really happened in Podgorica, it seemed that strategic objects were not their goal. How else can we explain the fact that no bridges, save the Kneginja bridge, was hit, and none of the military objects.

Prof. Dr Branislav Kovačević, Savezničko bombardovanje Crne Gore, Podgorica 2003.

Source 4

P

B

S

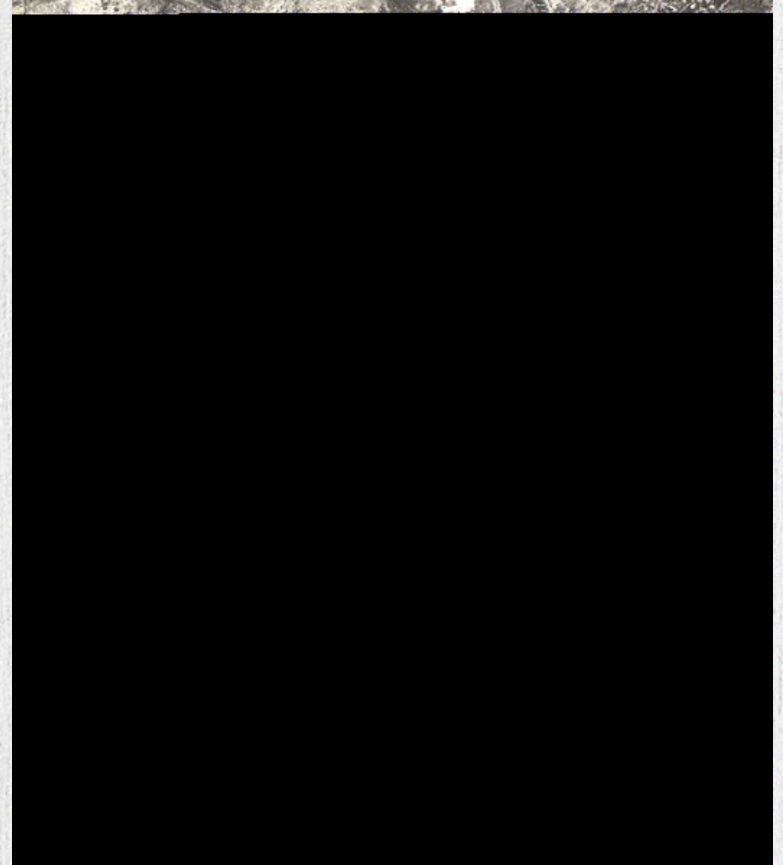
B

Results of bombing of Belgrade by the western Allies, on 16 and 17 April (1944) was such that people of Belgrade suffered huge casualties. The only military objects affected were the railway station, factory of military accessories and a house of the Gestapo on Dorcol. Bombs were thrown all around the city, they even hit the hospital and the sanatoriums. Military hospital, where our captives, returnees, were kept for treatment, was hit. The following institutions were destroyed: Internal clinic, children's clinic, state hospital, municipal obstetrics & delivery clinic, Home for refugee children, and many private objects.

The following spots in Belgrade were severely damaged: Vicinity of Technical faculty, students' dormitory and Slavija square. Then Terazije, Nemanjina st., Milosa Velikog st., Queen Natalija st., Sarajevska st. Also hit were vicinity of the Theatre, Zeleni Venac and Nova pijaca. Dead bodies are everywhere in the streets. The survived ones scattered in all directions. Whole streets were in flames. Emergency service stopped functioning. Corpses are still on the streets. Consequences of this bombing are far greater than those of 6 April 1941. The Belgrade that gave the 27 March did not deserve this.

General D. Mihailović, 21 April
1944.

- Prof. dr Branislav Kovačević, *Savezničko bombardovanje Crne Gore 1943-1944*, GRADA, Podgorica 2003.



Bombing of Belgrade; *Military Encyclopedia of Yugoslavia*; 1958 edition

Source 5

P , C



Left: Piazza Marina

Right: Licej Svetog Dimitrija.

The first major air attack of Allies on Zadar was in the night of 2 November 1943, when the Home for orphan children was destroyed, among other objects, and there followed great attacks on 28 November (over 200 victims) and 16 and 30 December 1943. First attacks were marked by large number of civilian casualties, but the city, though damaged, continued to function. Particularly difficult bombing was on 16 December, when shelters on Cererija (present Vostarnica) were hit, and those in the center of town. That time some 150-200 people got killed. 50 American bombers 'Mitchell' (B-25) participated in that action, throwing 90 tons of bombs.

The attacks that completely devastated Zadar followed from January to March 1944. However, number of casualties was less, since the people who lost their homes already scattered around less damaged suburbs and islands around Zadar. The estimation was that in Spring of 1944 in Zadar, together with suburbs, there were less than 4.000 civilians. Though all industrial capacities and docks were disabled, and the Germans had to establish auxiliary ports, bombings continued throughout 1944.

From the summer time, the center of Zadar did not exist anymore: Most houses were fully flattened, and the rubbles jammed the streets. The city was desolated. There were no major attacks from June to October, but new attacks started at mid-October with the withdrawal of Germans. The strongest bombings were on 25 and 30 October. The last Allied bombing was on 31 October, the very day of coming of partisans to Zadar. Zadar was finally liberated on 1 November 1944. It is assumed that the last bombing took place by mistake, due to bad communication. Several partisans got killed as well.

Besides the destruction caused by the allied bombing and by Germans who mined the Nova Riva as they were leaving, the total number of victims of bombing is still disputable. Exact data will never be established, for there was a great flow of people in war time Zadar. Local people were leaving, Italians were coming in from other Dalmatian cities, and the number of soldiers was also undetermined. The most realistic number of casualties is about 1.000, because most citizens fled after the first attacks in the Fall and Winter of 1943. However, that number also represents the highest casualties that some Croatian city suffered from Allied bombing.

Text taken from a Croatian documentary film 'Ognjevi s neba', 5th episode.
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HC9OWbFLMs> 27 May 2013.

Source 6

L (P)



Two monuments in the capital of Montenegro, Podgorica.

On the left is a monument, named the Black bombe, dedicated to more than 2000 citizens of Podgorica killed in the allied bombing during WWII. The monument was erected in 1993.

On the right is a monument, named the White bird, dedicated to 2 allied pilots. These pilots were shot down by German anti-aircraft fire during the allied bombing campaigns of Yugoslav cities, in the skies over Montenegro, in WWII. The monument was erected in 2012.



<http://portalanalitika.me/drustvo/tema/69476-bijela-ptica-i-crna-bomba.html>
(25.05.2013)

Q :

1. Why were these monuments erected?
2. What are the similarities and differences between these two monuments?