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**Illegal: Reading, Radicalism and Paramilitarism in Bosnia and Herzegovina**

Over the past twenty years, we have witnessed not only the appearance of Al Qaeda and the Islamic State, but also an increase in global paramilitary activity, representing a range of anti-state movements. As states and their citizens are confronted with violent activity that is the result of informal networked military organizations, understanding radicalization has become increasingly important. How do individuals adopt new ideologies and become politically 'radicalized'? How do radicalized individuals leave their everyday lives and join paramilitary organizations?

While radicalization today is spoken of as a new phenomenon, the integration of youth and disenfranchised citizens into larger political projects deemed 'radical' or 'extreme' has long sustained paramilitary activity around the world. In order to understand the questions surrounding radicalization posed above, I propose to study a historical case of radicalization: I will study the rise of Communist Party youth in the 1930s Kingdom of Yugoslavia and their subsequent transformation, in the early 1940s, into Yugoslav Partisan paramilitary units, and eventually the National Liberation Army of Yugoslavia (or *Narodnooslobodilacka vojska Jugoslavije*, NOV). This project will ask: how did ordinary civilians ally themselves with Communist politics and become members of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia (*Komunisticka partija Jugoslavije*, KPJ) in the 1930s? And, furthermore, how did these Communist Party members organize themselves from local KPJ committees into paramilitary units during World War II?

In order to understand how citizens became radicalized Communists and then NOV soldiers, I will examine an extensive collection of over 1000 memoirs of NOV soldiers held at the Archive of the Republic of Srpska in Banja Luka, Bosnia and Herzegovina, that has thus far remained completely unexamined in research on the region. These memoirs track the experiences of NOV soldiers in the 1930s and 1940s and describe these soldiers' integration into the KPJ, and their transition from civilian activists to paramilitary officers. Using both historical and anthropological methods, I will analyze the radicalization and militarization experienced by KPJ members. Research in this memoir collection will be complemented by supplementary archival research at the main NOV holdings in Zagreb, Croatia and Belgrade, Serbia, as well as by interviews with the last remaining NOV soldiers in Banja Luka.

In this project, I will investigate how radicalization is as much a *cultural process*, as it is a military or political one. One of the most important aspects highlighted in the few memoirs I have seen in Banja Luka is the critical role that KPJ reading circles played in the radicalization of workers and peasants in Bosnia and Herzegovina in the 1930s and 1940s. The KPJ began organizing reading circles to covertly read, discuss and circulate socialist, communist and anarchist texts. With the arrival of Nazi-allied forces in 1941, the reading circles themselves transformed into networks for sharing information about the occupation. KPJ activists even developed elaborate codes for military operations using the content from the reading circles' books. They dubbed the whole of this political, military and cultural work '*ilegala*,' or 'that which is illegal.'

This project will have four outcomes. First, this project will advance our knowledge on understanding different paths towards radicalization. This knowledge will be of interest not only to anthropologists and historians, but also political scientists, policy experts and the general public, whom I will communicate to through public talks and popular media articles. Secondly, by studying ilegalas as a form of radicalization, this project will advance theoretical discussions on the role of cultural forms in non-state violence and paramilitary organizations. I will communicate these discussions through academic journals and conferences. Thirdly, this project will mark the beginning of my new research agenda examining the rise of political radicalism and extremism in 21<sup>st</sup> century Europe, especially the competing attractions of universalizing political movements, such as European nationalism and paramilitaristic Islamism. Lastly, this project will provide important training opportunities for graduate and undergraduate students, while advancing the students' academic and professional career goals.