Article title: Painter Alfred Krupa (1915-1989) was the very first man who invented the modern wheeled suitcase in the early 1950's

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Painter Alfred Krupa (1915-1989)¹ was the very first man who invented the modern wheeled suitcase² in the early 1950's

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According to the UNTWO (World Tourism Organization) 1.2 billion people made an international trip in 2015, and it is predicted that it will rise to 1.8 billion world travelers in 2025. Suitcase with wheels is known to all those who traveled but the real inventor of it is not known to everyone. Many journalists reported that in 1970, Bernard Sadow³, then the owner of the American company U.S. Luggage (now part of the Briggs & Riley TRAVELWARE) invented in 1970 and patented in 1972 first suitcase with wheels and so changed the world of travel. There are records of some earlier efforts to solve the wheeled luggage problem, but it all remained still impractical, archaic and vague.⁴⁵⁶ It is true is that **Bernard Sadow** was the one who patented with success suitcase with wheels but not the first man who invented it and use it in daily travelling. The fact of the history is that the painter **Alfred Krupa was the very first man who invented and used the modern suitcase with wheels, as we know and use it today, sometime before or in 1954 (in period 1950-1954)**. And that is only one among his popular creations from early 1950's.

Who was Alfred Krupa?

Alfred Krupa (Alfred Joseph Kruppa⁷) was born in Mikolow, Poland in the Polish family of German and Jewish origin on 22nd July 1915 (died in Karlovac, Croatia, Yugoslavia on 16th October 1989). Alfred lost parents in early age. He and his brothers were raised by their mother's mom Therese during the difficult times of the young Polish Republic. After the grammar school he went to Krakow. He studied painting at the Academy of Fine Arts in Krakow until 1937 (a former pupil of famous Polish painter Józef Mehoffer). In an incredible carousel of events, like in a movie, in 1943 he reached Yugoslavia, where he crossed over to the partisans to eventually become one of the 13 core artists of the Art of

1

https://www.getty.edu/vow/ULANFullDisplay?find=Krupa+Alfred&role=&nation=&prev_page=1&subjectid=500355816

² This term means a modern, practical, easily usable wheeled suitcase (inc. a pulling strap or handle) as we know and use it today. This does not include earlier obscure and archaic variants that are sporadically mentioned in the sources.

³ <https://www.nytimes.com/2010/10/05/business/05road.html>

⁴ The Lyceum Magazine, Volume 23, 1913

⁵ <http://www.winnetkahistory.org/gazette/before-her-time-anita-willeys-burnhams-rolling-suitcase/>

⁶ https://www.retrowow.co.uk/retro_collectibles/luggage/suitcases_with_wheels.php

⁷ https://actacroatica.com/en/memory/Alfred_Krupa/

Croatian Antifascist Movement (he exhibited at the historic first Partisan exhibition held in Topusko in 1944 on the free territory of Yugoslavia) and founder of the Watercolor Biennale of Yugoslavia (BAJ, 1979). Alfred Krupa was among the partisans securing Randolph Churchill (son of British Prime Minister Winston Churchill) during a mission to Croatia in September 1944 ordered by Mayor-General Sir Fitzroy Hew Royle Maclean.⁸ Also he saved the US soldiers from the 449th Bomb Group when they were forced to land in Croatia, and one of those soldiers John R. Szablinski has become a long year friend of the family.^{9,10} His sister Hildegard Marie was burned alive in the furnace of the KC Auschwitz - Birkenau on 1st February 1944. He himself is also officially registered victim of the Nazi regime by ITS Bad Arolsen.¹¹

1 Alfred Krupa filmed with wife Štefica and son Mladen on the balcony of the house (JNA/Domobranska 8) where all of his inventions have been created. This place is connected to him and his family in almost iconic way.¹² Photograph is from mid 1960s. (Source: the Krupa family archive)

The artist and sportsman Alfred Krupa from his youth in Poland always loved all technical. Including watches. As the factoid notion his collection once included from the Soviet made cheap exotic watches up to the Swiss made Doxa and Omega. The later one, legendary Omega Seamaster Compressor (1970) is still part of the Krupa family heritage.¹³

⁸ <https://aktivirajkarlovac.net/2015/10/freddy-krupa-moj-djed-alfred-je-podcijenjen/>

⁹ <https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=4614159909659&set=a.1106187532542&type=3&theater>

¹⁰ <https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=4621292047958&set=a.1106187532542&type=3&theater>

¹¹ <http://www.rodoslovlje.hr/istaknuta-vijest/prilozi-citatelja-hildegard-marie-ili-zatvorenica-broj-9772-zrtva-paljenica-obitelji-kruppa>

¹² "Old Karlovac - streets, houses and people" by Radovan Radovinović, published in 2010.

¹³ <https://www.instagram.com/p/B8TfCYWpHb3/>

2 - Alfred Krupa in front of his home with the original suitcase on wheels in early 1950's (1954).

The original black and white photo has been colored (MyHeritage tool). (Source: KaFotka public photo archive)

3 - The same photo shows that his invention includes the wheels and the adjustable leather stripes for easier handling of a suitcase

Inventions of Alfred Krupa in the context of his time

The public record photo from 1954 (published on 11th January 2014 at the popular Croatian online photo archive Kafotka¹⁴¹⁵) taken in front of the family Krupa home (The Max Heinrich Palace) in the Domobranska 8 Street (then JNA 8) presents definitive proof of claim that Alfred Krupa was the very first man who invented and used a modern suitcase with wheels (as we know and use it today) sometime before or in 1954 (in period 1950-1954) which is more than a decade and a half ago (or two) before Bernard Sadow.

It should be noted that he did not hide his work, as matter in fact his inventions was known, used and presented in Yugoslavia.¹⁶ It is not anything new, many older people still remembers

¹⁴ <https://www.kafotka.net/4297>

¹⁵ <https://www.kafotka.net/oznake/alfred-krupa>

¹⁶ <http://kaportal.rtl.hr/karetrovizor-americki-novinari-s-ironijom-kazu-kako-su-ljudi-prije-hodali-po-mjesecunego-imali-kofer-s-kotacima-no-to-nije-bas-tocno-davno-prije-izmislio-ga-je-karlovac-slikar-krupa/>

how he walked on the Korana river. In 1957 he exhibited his **glass bottom boat for sightseeing**¹⁷ (another mega popular thing today) and his other inventions on "Sajam tehnike i tehničkih mogućnosti u Beogradu" (Fair of Techniques and Technical Opportunities in Belgrade, report about it in Sunday edition of the „Borba“ on 25th August 1957). Documentation shows his attempts to patents his inventions first the authorities in Belgrade, and then through the British Embassy but at the time they didn't want to against or aside authorities in Belgrade.¹⁸

Alfred Krupa pored svog platna

Snimio: Nikola Perić

Slikar - partizan na obali Kupe

Izložbenom dvoranom karlovačkog Zorin-doma sece omladin čovjek – slikar i sanjar, nekadašnji partizan i izumitelj, putnik i sportaš. Mnogo riječi za Alfreda Krupa, ali mi ih još nedostaje jer ga je njegova radoznalost vodila u mnoge vode u kojima se zadržavao dok ga je to zanimalo, pa plovio dalje. Slikarsko platno i svi posli, nije nikada napuštao osim u dijelu ratnih godina kad ih nije imao, ali je zato po «skarnicima» rade svoje dragovoljce i dio toga izložio zajedno s partizanima-slikarima na prvoj izložbi natih umjetnika u Topuskom 1944. godine.

Od Krakowa do Like

Za Alfreda Krupa, Polaka po rođenju, rat je trajao osam godina. Bio je 1938. godine, odmah po završetku likovne škole, u Krakovu, zatečen u vojsci i preživio nije protiv Hitlerove armade, pa se, zadržavši putovanje, našao u Banjoj Luci pod kraj 1942. godine u uniformi «njemačke internacionalne vojske» u koju je ušao kao dobrovoljac. Učestvovao je u brojnim bitkama, ali je znao i smrt ili novi život.

Bili smo trenirani, zajedno s našim antijerjskim konjima, poput životinja. Nijemci podoficer, specijalist za prusku disciplinu natjerao nam strah u kosti, a za partizane je govorio da su paukove i obični sunjski razbojci.

Krupa je imao sreću što su se «interoficir» dopali njegovi akvareli s bosanskim motivima i našao ga je sat-dva da izlazi bez pratnje drugih. Tako je na trenu-tak sreo Poljake iz Banje Luke i oni su mu rekli: «Nije ti nabacila da u blizini ima partizana» (Od tada sam čitao priču da pobjegne).

Krenuše u ofenzivu prema Lici. Put ih vodi dolinom Une. Nigdje nisu sreli partizane. Neki su ih, jerimice se ukopavaju. «Interoficir» naredio da vojska i konji krenu na «farbung» – vježbu bez amida i zadatka, tek toliko da se ne izležavaju i odmore.

Bila je takva tišina uz rijeku Unu da me naprosto pritiskivala – sjeca se Krupa. – A to je u ratu najopasnije! Bio sam s podoficerom na čelu kolone od sedamdeset ljudi i devet kola s ratnom opremom.

«Ja Polak, ja Polak!»

Ospjedom vidim da se kraj puta pomakla granica. Šturim s konja za jedan poredi kamen, kad se prošlim partizanskim zauzima. Pucalo se srijeda, straga, sa strane. Gledam njemačkog podoficira kako je polegao po konju i pokušava se sam spasiti. Partizan ga munjavno i oborio kad je već probio kordon zasjede. Sve je trajalo tek deset minuta. Nijedan vojnik u njemačkoj uniformi nije ostao živ osim mene i dva druga kamion. S partizanskim

strane nisam vidio ni jednog poginulog. Preda mnom su bili borci Seste ličke. Kad se sve smirilo, Krupa se pojavio iz zaklona i za sekundu bio opkoljen partizanima.

Prisao mi je jedan, stavio pištolj na stjepočicu i rekao vikao: Nisam razumio što govori, ali sam znao da nije ništa dobro. Prišao je partizanki, kasnije sam saznao, bolničarka, i udarila ga po ruci. «Ja Polak!» Ja Polak! gromio sam.

Natrag se tu neki Licanin koji je razumio poljaci i pita Krupu želi li s njima ili hoće kući. Kad se odmah vratio, rekao da će s njima.

● Zanimljiv životni i umjetnički put Alfreda Krupa, slikara partizanskih likova, prirodnih ljepota i podzemnih pojsova, izumitelja, putnika i sportaša

ma, vode ga u šlah u jednu seosku kuku.

– Vidim u uglu složene tronožne partizanske kape i ja, akimom sliem, bacim ga o pod i savim titorku na glavu. – priča Krupa. – Podržavio sam stisnutom rukom, šalo sam to vidio u partizanima i kasim. Senti i izumim! Svi me opkolise, tagu po ramenu i uakoro sam se našao među antijerjskim Seste ličke.

Topdžija i slikar

Vec drugi dan Krupin je top prasilo po Nijemcima. Bilo se cijelu sedm godinu. Za slikanje nije bilo vremena. Tek tu i tamo načinio bi poneku skicu, a drugovi su ga izerali da ih portretira. Portretirao je i onu bolničarku što mu je spasila život u prvim trenucima.

Kasnije je nabavio tuč i pakapapira, pa je to čuvao kao oko u glavi. Radio je u preduhu borbi, a ponekad skicirao neposrednu bitku, dok je njegov top čekao akciju. (Danas se njegovi crteži čuvaju u Vojnom muzeju u Beogradu i Muzeju revolucije u Zagrebu, a valjda je poneko sačuvalo svoj portret što mu ga je u ratu poklonio Krupa).

Negdje 1944. godine našao se u Hrvatskom Selu u blizini Topuskog i tu sreo slikara, Ljudevita Sešića, pa su, jedno vrijeme drugovali i zajedno slikali. Tako je i dospio na prvu izložbu slikara-partizana u Topuskom crtežima i akvareliranim crtežima. Vidio je Pricu, Murica, Detonja, Šimaga.

Podvodni svijet

● Profesore, vaša se život nije sastojao samo od borbe i slikarskog rada. Bili ste radoznali, bavili se mnogim drugim stvarima.

– Radoznao sam i danas. No zdravlje mi ne dopušta da sa 64 godine idem u avanturu, kao još prije desetak godina, kad sam se biciklom iz Karlova uputio u Crkvenicu i stigao slikati. – vratio se. No, tada sam još bio mlad!

Na tehničkoj izložbi u Beogradu svoje, dobro je bio izložen čamac što ga je izumio Alfred Krupa. Čamac je na dnu imao posebne promore za promatranje podvodnog svijeta.

– Predlagao sam da se takvim čamcima opreme svi naši primorski hoteli za posebne izlete gostiju i daka. Mislim da je ideja još aktualna, premda su od tada prošla tri desetljeća. – kaže Krupa.

Podvodni svijet, oduvijek je fascinirao Krupa. Negdje pedesetih godina ronio je u blizini Vrbnika – onako, na dah. Ona mu je bila na pameti da izradi masku iz koje se može izvući i vratiti se. Učeo je od čamca, izradio masku i dobio disalo. Počeo se spuštati sve dublje i dublje u podmore, a kasnije je posebno prepratio papir i boje i završio da slika milimetre metarima u proznoj vodi i sjene kupaca. – Izlazio je 1951. godine u Zagrebu cirkus slika nastalih pod morem. Ali ga je službena kritika «sahranila» zbog bizarnosti. (Afraga godina kasnije pročitao sam negdje kako je jedan Amerik na toj ideji stvorio unosan biznis.)

U dodiru s prirodom

Krupa je bio vrsan sportaš – majstor u borilačkim vještinama: odgajao je generacije karlovačkih boksača, učio mladiće džudu i džiu-džicu u vrijeme kad se govo i nije znalo za te vještine. Eksperimentirao je svojim izumom – specijalnim pisačkim cipelama i nudio ih tvornicama, sagradio skije za vodu i njima se zabavljao sa karlovačkim plaćama, slikao vozila, jaci sebe i slikarski pribor da ih jadranjska burza ne baca u more, lutan polima i rijekama kilometrima oko Karlova.

Nikada nisam volio ateleški slikarski, već sam radio u neposrednom dodiru s prirodom. To radim i danas. – kaže Krupa, kad je sa njega 25 samostalnih i stotinjak drugih izložbi (Ova posljednja u Zorin-domu u Karlovcu točno 35 godina pošlije prvu u Topuskom).

Karlovačani toga nekadašnjeg profesora umjetnosti na Krku i u Karlovcu i dan-danas susreću u skrivenim zakutima grada kako tiljezi neobična svjetla vode i igru lika na vrbama i ne smetaju ga u vječnom poslu – slikanju prirode u prirodi, izvan ateleja, kojega, usput bude rečeno, nikada nije ni imao ni previle želio.

Nikola Perić

4 "Vjesnik" (Sunday edition, 2nd September 1979) "Painter-partisan on the bank of Kupa river"

¹⁷ <http://hbl.lzmk.hr/clanak.aspx?id=10684>

¹⁸ https://actacroatica.com/en/memory/Alfred_Krupa/

„Vjesnik“ one of the largest daily newspapers in Yugoslavia, reported about the fact that Krupa was the very first man who painted under the sea classical painting oil on paper. It was in the summer 1950 in Vrbnik at the Krk island. He hand-made a dive mask from truck tires and glass, a tube for breathing under water and he tied himself and a painting stand to the bottom. Unfortunately those works exhibited in Zagreb in 1951 are lost at present. Criticism buried him for being too bizarre.¹⁹

5 Skis for walking on water (26th August 1951) at Korana river. Colored black and white photo with the MyHeritage tool . (Source: the Krupa family archive)

Some other inventions include a complex **system for preventing the sinking of ships**, **water walking skis** (in 1951, his variant of the Leonardo da Vinci idea), **lightweight folding impregnated canvas catamaran**, **portable hanger ie body support** (for example, in the

¹⁹ "Vjesnik" (Sunday edition, 2nd September 1979) "Painter - partisan at the bank of Kupa river"

trains of that time / early 1950s), **boxing gloves inflated with compressed air** (he was also a boxer) and many other.

Water walking skis today has been patented by others and produced in a number of variants in various productions. Similar situation as with the glass bottom boat for sightseeing.

A complex **system for preventing the sinking of ships** has been seriously discussed at one point at the Naval Institute in Zagreb (Brodarski Institut est. 1948) but nothing was realized from their part.

6 Lightweight folding catamaran made of the impregnated canvas. Filmed in the early 1950s. (Source: *the Krupa family archive*)

7 Alfred Krupa recorded in the train at the Central Station in Karlovac with his portable hanger ie body support
Early 1950s, there was objective everyday need for such small practical inventions. (*Source: the Krupa family archive*)

Historical credit and the legacy

Krupas ideas at the time has not been met with understanding at the official Yugoslavian authorities (unlike his work as an artist and sportsmen) and eventually lacking support and encouragement, feeling defeated, he dropped any idea to force patent registration anymore. But he continued to flourish as an artist and humanist until his death in 1989.

He was decorated with a number of awards and decorations including the Medal for Bravery (for extraordinary courage showed in combat given by Marshall Tito), Order of Republic with

Silver Collar, Karlovac City Award, Plaque of ZAVNOH (highest social distinction in Republic of Croatia in period 1982-1990) etc.²⁰

As sort of post mortem recognition Croatian journalist called him "Leonardo of the 20th century".²¹

Destiny prevented Alfred Krupa to become very rich man, but now (at least) we can give him the long time ago deserved historical credit.

At the end it is interesting to note that his son Mladen Krupa M.Sc. (1949 -) continued family tradition and invented the metal bunker Kruppa-M91 in 1991. One example (inv.no. GMK-IKMP-13074) from the real battle today is restaured and exhibited at The Homeland War Museum in Karlovac.²²²³ He also worked on further development of his fathers complex system for preventing the sinking of ships.

That and some other inventions asks for additional study and presentation.

²⁰ <https://likumzg.wordpress.com/2015/05/31/u-susret-100-godisnjici-rodenja-slikara-alfreda-krupe/>

²¹ Karlovački tjednik, 16th October 2004 „Noble in life, aristocrat in painting“

²² <https://hr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kruppa-M91>

²³ Zbirka naoružanja Domovinskog rata na Turnju, str. 28, Brigadir u miru Dubravko Halovanić, Karlovac: Matica Hrvatska, 2009. ISBN 978-953-55627-0-2