Between Memory and Oblivion

Holocaust and other WWII Genocides in South Eastern Europe: marginalized and forgotten places of memory

Impressum:
Documenta – Centar za suočavanje s prošlošću

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Zagreb, May/June 2023

This publication was prepared with the support of the European Union, through the CERV programme.

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The project

The project "**Between Memory and Oblivion: WWII places of remembrance**" (BMO) was created by *Documenta* – Centre for dealing with the past (Croatia), and its partners: JUSP Jasenovac (Croatia); Max Mannheimer Haus (Germany); Regensburg University (Germany); Associazione 4704 (Italy); Topografia per la storia (Italy); APIS Institute (Slovenia); Socialna Akademija (Slovenia). The project is financed by the European Union through the programme CERV.

The project aims to foster a discussion on WWII places of memory – former concentration camps, forced work camps, killing sites, prisons, etc., in order to combat the status of abandonment and of some of these places, and their removal from official memory, that we face today.

To reach this main aim, the project developed the following actions:

- **Understand transnational and local dimensions of WWII.** Consider places of memory in different European countries, focusing on the transnational dimension of the Holocaust and other WWII genocides, while also taking into account their local and regional aspects;

- **Promote further research on lesser known places of memories and WWII crimes.** Promote further research of places connected with the Holocaust and other WWII genocides/systematic murder and suffering of ethnic, religious, and marginalized groups during WWII;

- **Develop educational practices.** Discuss educational practices in formal and non-formal education, and creating new tools and materials, with the aim to improve educational practices in schools, universities, and non-formal education;

- **Commemorate and remember**. Start a discussion about the crimes committed during WWII in Europe, remembering and commemorating the victims, the survivors, and their families;

- **Combat Holocaust and other WWII crimes denial and distortion.** Decrease Holocaust and other WWII genocides/systematic murder denial and distortion of the facts connected to WWII crimes, by tackling historical myths by visiting the historical locations and telling the stories of victims and survivors.

Among others, the project included the following activities:

The international workshop and study visit "**Stara Gradiška: 1942 – 2022**" with the aim to commemorate the 80th anniversary of the arrival of Diana Budisavljević in the camp Stara Gradiška, and remember its young victims and survivors, through an educational, and musical program. The program lasted from the 9th to the 11th of July 2022, and included a guided visit to Stara Gradiška and Jasenovac, presentation of good practices and didactic materials, and workshops.

The study visit **„Between memory and oblivion" in Trieste and Koper**. The study visit lasted from the 14th to the 17th of October 2022, and included lectures from key speakers and experts, a city walk in Trieste, with a focus on less visible and memorialized places of memory, as well as in the close proximity of the city, in the towns of Basovizza and Opicina. The visit continued in Koper, with presentations, and a musical program. The study visit was concluded with the round table „Memorial architecture example of Island of Rab remembering internment in Italian fascist camps".

"**The conference "The transnational history and memory of World War II crimes in Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Slovenia, and the Northern Adriatic"** was organized in Regensburg, Germany, from the 12th to the 14th of May 2023. The conference included panels dealing with the transnational history and memory of marginalized and forgotten sites in Southeastern Europe where genocide and systematic murder took place during the Second World War. The geographical focus of the conference, as related to this publication, has been on the territory of what was once called the "Independent State of Croatia", Dalmatia, the territories of Slovenia annexed by Germany, Italy and Hungary as well as the Italian, Slovenian, and Croatian territories on

the Northern Adriatic, which were under fascist Italian control from 1941 and formed the Operational Zone of the Adriatic Littoral when Nazi Germany took control from September 10, 1943, onwards.

The **summer school "Between memory and oblivion"**, organized between June 24th and 26th 2023, which involved young people in the discussion of topics as the culture of memory and remembrance and forgetting practices in Croatia, especially concerning the concentration system initiated in the Independent State of Croatia (NDH) by the Ustashas from 1941 to 1945, and in the exploring of lesser known places of memory in Croatia, as the former concentration camps of Jadovno and Slana.

The publication

The research literature on the war crimes committed in Southeastern Europe during the Second World War and their (ever-changing) place in collective memory fills entire libraries. Nevertheless, these crimes are hardly anchored in the pan-European memory. This is partly due to the fact that, on the one hand, the political instrumentalization of the history of the Second World War in Southeastern Europe continues to this day — for example, through the simplistic assignment of victim and perpetrator roles along the lines of ethnicity or through historical-political and historical revisionist debates about the number of victims of crimes. However, this is also due to the fact that the crimes committed by the occupying powers in Southeastern Europe and their victims are rarely present in the public culture of remembrance, for example, in today's Federal Republic of Germany or in Italy.

This publication, therefore, has a twofold objective: on the one hand, it is about counteracting the instrumentalization of history to legitimize ethnic-national arguments in the present day. On the other hand, our goal is to make Southeastern European sites of mass crimes in the Second World War visible as transnational sites embodying the experience of the war and as transnational, European sites of memory.

We want to achieve this
1) by focusing on marginalized and forgotten sites of mass crimes in this region, and
2) by taking a distinct transnationally oriented empirical research approach.

1. Why are we focusing on marginalized and forgotten sites of war crimes?

There are numerous sites in the region that were forgotten and/or marginalized in the years after the Second World War—whether in socialist Yugoslavia or during and after the Yugoslav wars of disintegration. The reasons for this forgetting and marginalization were manifold. In socialist Yugoslavia, they were not only material (monuments and places of remembrance were mostly financed by the municipalities), but also, for instance, political: as the guiding

principle of interethnic coexistence, brotherhood and unity were not to be endangered by such war memories that touched on interethnic conflicts. There were exceptions—such as the state-sponsored commemoration of the victims of the Jasenovac concentration camp from the 1960s onward. In contrast, the victims of the first (and many other) concentration and internment camps in the fascist Independent State of Croatia, the Jadovno concentration camp, were not commemorated with a memorial until the latter phase of the Yugoslav socialist state.

The disintegration of Yugoslavia and the wars of the 1990s saw a further shift in remembering and forgetting. Some mass crimes no longer appeared as such, while others were considered crimes for the first time. Places like Jadovno, for example, which had been transformed into a memorial only a few years before, fell back into oblivion—the remembrance of Serbian victims had little place in the ethnically nationalizing Croatian public memory of the 1990s and years that followed.

2. Why a transnationally-oriented empirical research approach?

We are focusing on the transnational dimensions of mass crimes committed in Southeast Europe during the Second World War. Transnational dimensions exist for several reasons. The most obvious transnational perspective arises from the actions and crimes of the occupying armies. Soldiers of the occupying armies who were involved usually left the sites of the crimes after the events and took the memory of them with them to their home states. However, these crimes rarely became public there. Are there still traces of these deeds in the archives of today's Italy or Germany? Or are there still traces in the Southeastern European archives that, for various reasons, have not yet been processed and thus have not become part of the memory?

With the latter question, we do not just mean the traces of the occupying armies, which give the mass crimes of the war a transnational dimension. For this transnational dimension, and this is the second reason, also arises primarily through the perspective of local actors. For example, during the war Croatian Serbs were deported to occupied Serbia, and thousands of Jews from Bosnia and Herzegovina, which was part of the NDH, to Croatian Ustaša concentration camps. Today, and this is the point where we establish a link to marginalization

and forgetting, these victims (and perpetrators), who physically moved in a transnational space, fall through the cracks of the ethnic-national perspective of public memory. Furthermore, participation on different sides of the war was not an isolated case, even within one family. Croats and Serbs, Slovenes and Bosnians encountered each other in the same as well as in very different roles —when it came to the mass crimes, they served as helpers, spectators, accidental eyewitnesses, resisters, or active supporters. But this, too, is largely ignored in today's public cultures of remembrance in the area under study.
A transnational perspective that captures the stories of these people and the crimes they committed, witnessed, or endured must therefore include the concrete places where these people stayed during the war (and afterwards)—as civilians, as soldiers, as perpetrators, victims, or bystanders, and across state borders at the time and today. This therefore requires the inclusion of historical archives in different countries.

The current publication then is thus directed at research in the mentioned region that deals with sites of mass crimes that were in the shadow of public and official remembrance politics and culture after the Second World War or (until) today, and that have a transnational dimension in the sense described above. This includes (but is not limited to) crime sites such as villages and settlements where mass executions took place, prisons, concentration or transit camps.

Marginalized and forgotten mass crimes of the Second World War in this region are thus to be analyzed within a transnational perspective to counteract exclusive ethnic-national perspectives on the one hand and, on the other, to make Southeast European history(s) visible as part of the European entangled history of the Second World War.

Inspired by the project themes and activities, university and PhD students, young researchers and professionals, contributed to the current publication, with their case studies, reports, and impressions.

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A Memory of World War II Crimes in the Northern Adriatic: the Case of the Risiera di San Sabba Memorial Site in Trieste, Italy

Davide Bolzoni

Introduction

The Risiera di San Sabba in Trieste can be regarded as a good example of World War II memorialization in Northern Italy. Originally built in the late Nineteenth century for rice processing, the buildings that make up the Risiera were used as barracks and military equipment depots by Fascist Italy. From the armistice Italy signed with the Allies in 1943 until the end of the war, the Risiera, as well as the city of Trieste, became part of the Nazi orbit. During these years the Risiera was used as a concentration camp by the authorities of the Third Reich. Initially, it was used as a transit camp to the other main ones in Central and Central-Eastern Europe, but later it too became a place of extermination. The exact number of people who were killed there remains undetermined but has been estimated at several thousand. In contrast to the other Nazi concentration camps in Italy, the one in Trieste was also equipped with a crematorium, unique in Italy, through which the Nazis disposed of the bodies by having the ashes then perished in the Trieste sea. In the postwar period, the Risiera di San Sabba became a transit refugee camp between East and West until it became a national monument in the 1960s and the Civic Museum of the Risiera di San Sabba was opened in the 1970s. The paper considers the example of the Risiera as a successful memorialization of the events that characterized World War II. In addition, a space is devoted to the structure of the Risiera itself as it emerged following restoration in the 1970s and to the contemporary activities of the Risiera as a culturally active place in the Italian museum and memorial scene. A final section is devoted to considerations regarding another example of memorialization in the Trieste area, namely the Foiba of Basovizza.

Historical context

Historically, Trieste has always been a multicultural city. The majority of the population has always been Italian but a large part of the city was Slovenian. Other nationalities such as German or Austrian and Hungarian contributed over the centuries to the formation of Trieste's multicultural identity. Indeed, Vienna's rule over the city led to the cohabitation of many different ethnic groups in the city that represented the main port as well as the sea access of the Habsburg Empire. Its strategic location made it an access point for Vienna to the Adriatic Sea and thus to the Mediterranean, and this led the city to expand and become progressively more important within the imperial socio-economic context. With the emergence of nationalisms and the slow but gradual process of dissolution of the Vienna Empire, the city of Trieste found itself in one of the hottest spots of the early Twentieth century. The First World War, fought between Vienna and Rome in present-day Northeastern Italy, saw with its conclusion the transfer of power of the imperial areas historically inhabited more or less predominantly by Italians such as Venice-Giulia, Istria, parts of Dalmatia but also Trentino and South Tyrol (the latter with an absolute Austrian-German majority). The shift in borders also did not result in an immediate reshaping of the ethnic composition of the city and areas now under Italian control. Consequently, if the Italian nationalist sentiment in these areas to rejoin Rome had finally come true, the same could not be said of the Slovenian or Croatian population. While the advent of Fascism initially did not bring major upheaval to the area, as the Fascist twenty-year period progressed, Mussolini began to opt for policies of forced Italianization of the non-Italian, mainly Slovenian and Croatian, populations of the Northeastern Italian territories. These policies included also the forced change of Slovenian and Croatian surnames and toponymy, the gradual prohibition of the public use of the Slavic languages spoken there, and the consequent imposition of Italian as the main language. On September 18th, 1938, a year before the outbreak of World War II, in Piazza Unità in Trieste (now Piazza dell'Unità d'Italia), Mussolini first publicly announced the enactment of the racial laws in the territory of the Kingdom of Italy. The outbreak of World War II in 1939 with Italy's entry into the war in 1940 and the dismemberment of Yugoslavia by the Axis Powers led to a sudden worsening of the living conditions of Slovenes and Croats on Italian

territory and in Rome-occupied territories such as Carniola (territory now belonging to Slovenia), which was annexed of Italy as Ljubljana Province in May 1941.

On July 25th, 1945, Mussolini following a session of the Grand Council of Fascism in which he was challenged, went to the king to submit his resignation. The appointment of P. Badoglio as Head of Government and General of the Italian Armed Forces did not result in the country's immediate exit from the war, which, on the contrary, continued for more than a month on the side of the German allies. On the following September 8th, Italy's armistice was officially proclaimed, by which Rome signed an unconditional surrender. Italy's formal exit from the war also brought the country into chaos because of the mismanagement of the Italian army by the military brass. Beginning the day after the armistice, the German army began to occupy Northern and Central Italy while at the same time, the Anglo-American Allies moved up the peninsula from the South until they established themselves at the so-called Gustav Line, a defensive system prepared by the German army that ran from the Tyrrhenian Sea between Rome and Naples to the Adriatic Sea below Pescara. At the same time, the puppet state of the Italian Social Republic or the Republic of Salò, officially independent but formally controlled by Nazi Germany, was being installed in Northern Italy. However, the Italian provinces of Udine, Gorizia, Trieste, Pola-Pula, Fiume-Rijeka and Lubiana-Ljubljana were placed under the direct administration of Berlin under the name Operationszone Adriatisches Küstenland - OZAK (Adriatic Coastal Zone of Operation). As a result, the city of Trieste, as well as the surrounding area, fell fully under German control. The mode of control of OZAK was quite peculiar with a coexistence of German and republican authorities that did not occur in other areas of the Italian Social Republic. This territory has always been a crossroads between different areas and represents the junction between the Italian and Balkan peninsulas as well as, for Nazi Germany, the main if not only direct access to the Adriatic Sea. Beyond the geostrategic importance of the direct control of this territory, the German political will was to enclose under its control all those areas that were more or less rightly considered as German i.e., those territories inhabited by German-speaking population. If in the case of Alto-Adige/South-Tyrol, the connection is obvious, with the majority of the population being German-

speaking but in no way represented the majority of the population, which was strictly either Italian or Slovenian-speaking.

The activities in Risiera during the Second World War

The German occupation of Trieste also involved the application in the city of the so-called Endlösung der Judenfrage, the genocide of the population of Jewish origin. Just as in other occupied territories, a detention camp was set up in Trieste, which was also used as an extermination camp at the Risiera di San Sabba. The complex, as its name implies, was built as a rice-processing plant (specifically husking) in the late 19th century in the Trieste district of San Sabba, on the outskirts of the city. The plant was in operation for some 30 years until the 1930s when rice processing and husking ceased. At first, after processing ended, the large complex of buildings was used by the Italian army as a warehouse and then as military barracks toward the beginning of World War II. It was with the Nazi occupation of the area beginning in 1943 that the Risiera di San Sabba began to be used as a Polizeithaftlager, or detention camp, and during the war, the camp was a gathering place for internees to be sent to other concentration camps, detentions, torture and, through the construction of a crematorium, also as a place for the disposal of the bodies of the people killed in the Risiera and in the Trieste area in general.

Nazi concentration camps tended to be located well away from the main cities and in uninhabited places. For this reason, the case of the Risiera di San Sabba is peculiar since it is located within the urban fabric of the city of Trieste, straddling the working-class neighborhoods and the harbor docks. Probably influencing the case of the Risiera to a large extent was the fact that the structure was already built, thus without the need to undertake construction work from scratch on a camp near Trieste. Not secondary, the morphology of the city and its hinterland did not allow for the construction of concentration camps as Trieste straddles the sea and the steep Karst area on the present Italian-Slovenian border. In addition, the very location of the Risiera was strategic as it was located on the main communication axis both by road and also by rail to the territories of nowadays territories of Croatia such as Istia, Rijeka and Dalmatia.

The Risiera di San Sabba was defined during the trial against those responsible held in Trieste in 1976 as a detention, sorting and annihilation camp *(Risiera di San Sabba. Sentenza della Corte d'Assise di Trieste, 29/04/1976*). San Sabba was not only a gathering place for Jews from Trieste and the more or less neighboring areas, political dissidents, partisans and other opponents of the regime but also a place of extermination. Rudimentary gas chambers were set up in the complex, and with the use of exhaust gas from military vehicles, an unspecified number of people were killed, but estimates suggest between 3,000 and 5,000 (*Risiera di San Sabba*, Associazione Nazionale Ex Deportati nei Campi Nazisti). A basic crematorium was also set up for the disposal of the bodies, the perimeter of which can still be seen today inside the forecourt of the Risiera. As the 1976 judgment cited above recalls, the crematorium at the Risiera di San Sabba represented a unicum in the Italian concentration system since the other camps of Borgo San Dalmazzo (Cuneo), Bolzano and Fossoli (Modena) did not have crematoriums. While denialist theories of the existence of the crematorium inside the Risiera di San Sabba have emerged over the years, there is documented evidence such as the one reported in the judgment that "I knew that there was a cremation plant in the Trieste Risiera. This facility was built by Lambert, like most others of the same kind in extermination camps and euthanasia institutions. A chimney was used as a chimney that already existed in the Risiera [...]. According to my assessment, from time to time, 8-12 corpses could be placed in the oven. The oven and chimney were open. There was no iron door. It was a very primitive facility, which fulfilled its purpose because of the tall chimney [...]. Because gasoline was scarce, the oven was fueled by wood. In the Risiera large quantities of beech wood were stored, which already existed before our arrival. I myself saw how the corpses were cremated in the mentioned facility." (*Risiera di San Sabba. Sentenza, Op. Cit*.). Another testimony is important to better understand the functioning of the Risiera di San Sabba concentration camp: "It [the oven] was put into operation during the night [...]. During the night service I noticed that behind the Lager, by the crematorium, there was movement. I also perceived the unpleasant smell of burning [...]. Before the crematorium, there was a large room, into which Jews were led. I did not hear any gunfire. As far as I remember, there was no gas system in the room where the Jews were locked up. I suppose the Jews were hanged because you could sometimes hear during the night the screams [...]. The killings of Jews

in San Sabba were carried out until the end of the war [...] (I*bidem*). Another testimony reports how the killings were carried out through the exhaust gas of military vehicles and the subsequent elimination of the bodies through the use of the crematorium (I*bidem*). The Risiera oven was blown up by the Germans in April 1945 at the moment when they withdrew from the city with the conclusion of the war and the imminent arrival of Tito's communist partisans. In addition to the crematorium and the areas designated for the killing of internees, there were also rooms in the Risiera used as tailoring and shoemaking workshops in which prisoners were employed, dormitories for SS soldiers, and seventeen microcells in which up to six prisoners each were confined. The prisoners in these microcells were usually destined to be killed within a few days. In addition, there were also rooms used for torture and for collecting material gathered from prisoners. Other large dormitories were intended for transient prisoners waiting to be sent to other concentration camps.

The end of the Second World War and the refugee camp

With the defeat of Nazi fascism, in May 1945 the city of Trieste was liberated by Tito's communist partisans following what was called the "race for Trieste" or that parallel advance of the partisan army from the East and the Allied army from the West. After a month of occupation, the city and the surrounding area were internationalized and later divided into two zones: Zone A under Anglo-American occupation and Zone B under Yugoslav occupation. The city's situation remained unresolved at least until 1954 when through the London Memorandum of Understanding between Italy, Yugoslavia, the United States and the United Kingdom, Zones A and B were definitively placed under Italian and Yugoslav administration respectively. However, it had to wait until 1975 to have a bilateral agreement on the sovereignty of these territories when representatives of Rome and Belgrade met in Osimo (in the province of Ancona) and signed the Treaty of Osimo, ending the so-called Trieste question. The delicate context of the Italian-Yugoslav border provides the backdrop for what is known in Italy as the Istrian-Julian-Dalmatian exodus. This is the voluntary or involuntary displacement of people of Italian origin who remained within the border of communist Yugoslavia following the end of World War II. Not only that, the displacement of people was not unidirectional. Consider, for example,

former deportees, prisoners of war or soldiers who remained in a foreign and not always friendly territory. In this sense, Risiera di San Sabba in this context played an important role as it was for thousands of exiles one of the first points of arrival as soon as they crossed the border or a waiting point before departure to Yugoslavia as well as Germany, Austria and numerous other countries.

In the Risiera, a refugee camp was set up in the first years after the end of World War II. With the conclusion of World War II and the Paris Peace Treaty signed by Italy in 1947, the Free Territory of Trieste was established de jure. It would never come into operation but its territory, from the Timavo River in Italy in the vicinity of Duino to the Istrian Mirna River via Trieste, was divided into Zone A and Zone B under occupation by Anglo-American and Yugoslav forces. As the main center of the entire F.T.T. and Zone A in particular, Trieste inevitably represented the point of passage and/or arrival of refugees from Italy and Yugoslavia. For numerous individuals, the Risiera di San Sabba represented a refugee camp which awaits a later displacement or repatriation. The activity of the Risiera as a refugee camp lasted until at least 1966 as a place of passage for people from Eastern Europe as witnessed by the Czech photographer Jan Lukas passing through Trieste and then exclusively as a reception centre for Italian refugees from Yugoslavia (Granziero S. (2022), *Storia: La terza vita dimenticata della Risiera di San Sabba*. East Journal). Concomitantly with the Risiera, the "Annex" camp was set up in its immediate vicinity, where thousands of people lived (Comune di Trieste (2021), *Beyond the border: sogni e ripartenze dei profughi dall'Est Europa a Trieste (1950-1956).* The camp set up in the Risiera allowed refugees to leave from 7 a.m. to 11 p.m. and consisted of several common areas such as an elementary school, a refectory, areas dedicated to Catholic and Orthodox prayer, and other places designated for refugees (Biferali C. (2021), *Tra speranza e disillusione: cronache dal campo profughi di San Sabba*. Corriere della Sera). In the Camp of the Cemetery and Annex, refugees could stay for limited periods up to even years, making it even more difficult for those who could not obtain relocation elsewhere. In addition, as in the case of the Italian refugees, they were often received after the Risiera in other parts of Italy but always in temporary refugee camps set up by national authorities such as the camp set up in the Casermette di Borgo San Paolo in Turin and numerous others.

The 1965 and 1975: National Monument and Museum

1965 was the year in which the Risiera di San Sabba was declared by the President of the Italian Republic, G. Saragat, a national monument for its historical and political value in Italian history. As an immediate consequence, the Risiera di San Sabba was placed under strict architectural constraints so that its structure could not be changed except through the approval of special commissions. In addition, by doing so, the value of the Risiera di Sabba was also recognized from an institutional point of view, thus becoming one of the chosen places of historical memory in Italy. As described in the Decree of the President of the Republic number 510 of April 15, 1965, Risiera has been proclaimed a national monument as "the only example of a Nazi Lager in Italy" and that it be consequently "preserved and entrusted to the respect of the Nation for its relevant interest, from the historical-political point of view." (Decreto del Presidente della Repubblica, 15th April 1965, n. 510, *Dichiarazione di monumento nazionale della Risiera di San Sabba in Trieste*).

The following year, the Municipality of Trieste launched a competition to design the restoration of the Risiera di San Sabba to make it a museum. The competition was won by Architect Romano Boico and his project was realized by 1975 when the Civic Museum of the Risiera of San Sabba - National Monument was inaugurated. The complex can be described as monumental. The entrance is characterized by two eleven metres of exposed concrete walls that outline a passageway barely three meters wide. The feeling it conveys to the visitor is one of a forced pathway probably wanting to symbolize the imposed fate to which the deportees in the Risiera were subjected. The height of these walls directs the view in only two directions, either forward thus inside the body of the Risiera itself or upward leading the visitor to have to lean back to see the sky which in any case remains marked by the gap represented by the walls. The inner courtyard, the one in which the crematorium was located, became an open space but surrounded by the Risiera itself and by a perimeter wall more than ten meters high to emphasize the sense of closure and isolation that the deportees must have experienced once they arrived at the Risiera di San Sabba (*Trieste, Monumento della Risiera di San Sabba, Romano Boico, 1966-1975*, Sistema Archivistico Nazionale, Archivi degli architetti). In the inner courtyard, as mentioned, the marks left by the presence of the crematorium

oven remain, which were emphasized by Boico's work to visually render the presence of the crematorium itself. The footprint of the crematorium remains on the brick building of the Risiera. In the interior of the prison areas, all the masonry has been removed and only the wooden columns and beams that support the structure and supported the cell floors have been left. The feeling inside is alienating and throws the viewer into despondency and confusion, surrounded by wooden elements that look almost like a forest.

As described by Massimo Mucci, "The progressive loss of material traces of the Risiera starting with the destruction by the Nazis, followed by the modifications due to the refugee camp and some fires, up to the demolitions motivated by the degradation of the structures under construction, reinforce the design idea of using an abstract and essential architectural language. Boico adopts a poetics of emptiness as a metaphor for absence, which inevitably refers back to the loss of victims: from the absence of the floorboards we get the so-called hall of crosses, from the absence of the furnace building we get its metal footprint, from the absence of the chimney comes the symbol of the *pietas*, from the removal of the window and door frames emerges the image of empty circles. Boico does not realize a cathartic path from emotions to the rationality of the museum [...] since he only pursues the idea of an evocative monument. However, the expressive emptiness of the Risiera conveys a disturbing feeling of the presence of the past that must not have consoled even its creator, if even after its realization he still reiterates the impossibility of building monuments. The Risiera remains, even in its eloquence, an "absurd" monument, forced into anti-rhetoric, suspended between warning and pity." (Mucci M. (2015), *Il nomumento "assurdo" della Risiera di San Sabba a Trieste (1966-1975*), Enagramma, la tradizione classica nella memoria occidentale). The museum also consists of a large museum hall and the so-called Commemoration Hall, a large exhibition space used for exhibitions, displays as well as ceremonies and events.

Nowadays Museum

The Civic Museum of the Risiera of San Sabba is an important exhibition centre for the city of Trieste and each year hosts numerous exhibitions on themes

relating to World War II and also photographic and visual exhibitions. The importance of the Risiera is exemplified by the incessant activity carried on in offering visitors ever new exhibitions. The most recent exhibitions include the one inaugurated in the fall of 2013, *Immagini dal Silenzio: la prima mostra nazionale dei lager nazisti attraverso l'Italia 1955-1969* (Images from Silence. The First National Exhibition of Nazi Lagers Across Italy. 1955-1960). (*Immagini dal Silenzio, la prima mostra nazionale dei lager nazisti attraverso l'Italia 1955-1969*). The exhibition displayed at the Risiera retraces the path of another exhibition, the one organized in 1955 by the Municipality of Carpi by the Former Fossoli Camp Foundation and the Historical Institute of Modena. The exhibition inaugurated in 1955 was of considerable importance in that it took the history of the Nazi concentration camps in Italy around numerous cities in Northern Italy, contributing to increasing historical awareness of what had happened only a few years earlier in the Peninsula. The problem of historical memory is always present, and the exhibition displayed in Trieste paid tribute to one of the first attempts at public history in Republican Italy. Another exhibition was the one opened in 2021 *Beyond the Border Sogni e ripartenze dei profughi dell'est Europa a Trieste* (1950-1956) (Beyond the Border. Dreams and Departures of Eastern European Refugees in Trieste (1950-1956) *(Beyond the Border, Sogni e ripartenze dei profughi dell'est Europa a Trieste (1950-1956)* which traced, also visually through a rich photographic display, the history of the Risiera di San Sabba and Annex as the main refugee camp from Eastern Europe in Italy. Photographs of everyday, familiar, almost domestic life were shown. In addition, beyond the more familiar or personal photos, the picture collection also helped to provide accounts of material life in the refugee camp after the war. One of the most recent exhibitions, however, is the one that opened in January 2023, *Rammentare le vittime, ammonire i viventi. La Risiera di San Sabba a Trieste negli scatti di Marino Ierman* (Remembering the Victims, Admonishing the Living. The Risiera di San Sabba in Trieste in the Shots of Marino Ierman). *(Rammentare le vittime, ammonire i viventi. La Risiera di San Sabba a Trieste negli scatti di Marino Ierman*). The latter photographic exhibition consists of a series of images taken by the photographer in 2020 at the Risiera museum complex as an invitation to reflect on historical memory by taking advantage of the peculiar architecture created by Boico at the turn of the 1960s and 1970s when the museum was restored and acquired its current appearance.

In addition, the museum allows visits through trained guides and offers, in an additional form, specific insights for groups that refer to it, thus providing additional possibilities for visits. The educational insights (*Servizio didattico, Museo della Risiera di San Sabba - Monumento Nazionale*) are designed primarily for schools that wish to visit the Risiera di San Sabba with their classes. There are three in-depth studies: *Trieste e la Seconda Guerra Mondiale* (Trieste and the Second World War), *Il "campo di detenzione e di polizia" della Risiera di San Sabba nell'Universo concentrazionario* (The "Detention and Police Camp" of the Risiera di San Sabba in the Concentration Universe), *Il confine mobile. Storia del 900 nella Venezia Giulia* (The Moving Border. History of Venezia Giulia in the XX Century) and *Siamo nati tutti liberi e uguali. Dai lager alla Dichiarazione universale dei diritti dell'uomo* (We Were All Born Free and Equal. From lagers to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights). The first in-depth thematic study considers the position and role of the city of Trieste in World War II from 1943 to 1945, that is, during the period of Nazi Germany's Adriatic Coastal Operation Zone with a focus on the repression enacted by the authorities and the activities of extermination, deportation and repression against political opponents and Jews. The second thematic focus, about the Risiera detention and police camp, provides a specific overview of the site as a concentration camp within the larger system of concentration camps built by Nazi Germany. The third in-depth study considers the history of the 1900s in Venezia Giulia-Julijska Krajina, what was known under the Austro-Hungarian Empire as *Küstenland (Littoral)*. The theme it focuses on is precisely Venezia Giulia's position as a borderland and conflict. The city of Trieste itself over 36 years was chronologically controlled by the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Kingdom of Italy, Third Reich, Allied Military Government, and finally Republican Italy. The last in-depth thematic focus is *Siamo nati tutti liberi e uguali* which plows the path taken on the subject of human rights from the concentration camps to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948 from a civic education perspective.

The Risiera di San Sabba also lends itself effectively to the organization of events and ceremonies, as in the case of International Holocaust Remembrance Day on January 27th (*Giorno della Memoria 2023. Risiera di San Sabba*) or the Day of Italy's Liberation from Nazi-Fascism on April 25th *(25 aprile 2023, 78° Anniversario della Liberazione. Risiera di San Sabba*). In 2023 the Risiera was the

venue of choice for the City of Trieste's public ceremonies for these two anniversaries attended by local and regional authorities. In parallel with the official ceremonies, in the case of the Holocaust Remembrance Day of 2023 the Risiera, together with other partners, organized a series of events for schools as two theatrical performances *Matricola 75190* (Prisoner number 75190) and *Dal campo di calcio ad Auschwitz. Storia di un allenatore ebreo e della sua famiglia* (From the Soccer Field to Auschwitz. Story of a Jewish coach and his family) as well as other events. In the case of the April 25 celebrations in 2023, in addition to the official ceremony, Risiera was the curator of the theatrical reading *Nella morsa* promoted jointly with the Istituto Regionale per la Storia della Resistenza e dell'Età Contemporanea del Friuli Venezia-Giulia (Regional Institute for the History of the Resistance and Contemporary Age of Friuli Venezia-Giulia), a reading based on a true story that happened in Trieste after the war when M. Daris was first accused of collaborationism and then acquitted and recognized as a victim (*Prima assoluta dello spettacolo teatrale "Nella morsa" domenica 30 aprile alle 20 nell'Auditorium del Museo Revoltella*. Comune di Trieste).

Conflicting memories? San Sabba and Basovizza

The city of Trieste hosts two sites declared Italian national monuments about the events of World War II: the Risiera of San Sabba and the Foiba of Basovizza. The latter represents a complex and still unresolved chapter in Italian history. Foiba means a karst cavity up to hundreds of meters deep typical of the territory surrounding Trieste and other areas of the Italian, Slovenian and Croatian Karst. The Foiba of Basovizza, in particular, instead, was born as a mining well for the search for coal or lignite at the beginning of the Twentieth century. During the final stages of World War II, it was used as a place of killing people opposed to Yugoslav communism whether they were Italian, German or Slovenian. The killings in the foibe occurred not only in Basovizza but also in other locations in the Karst, but the one in Basovizza was chosen as a place of remembrance for those who lost their lives in this way. The number of people who died in both the Basovizza Foiba and the other foibe remains undetermined and is the subject of significant controversy. Several researches have been conducted on the Foibe issue, however, this remains controversial and is still characterized by conflicting memories. The issue of the foibe and the

Foiba of Basovizza has been, and in certain terms still is, a source of international controversy between Italy, Croatia and Slovenia as different interpretations and narratives have led to tensions between the three countries. On the occasion of the commemoration of the National Memorial Day of the Exiles and Foibe at the Foiba of Basovizza in February 2019, the then President of the European Parliament, the Italian A. Tajani, during his official speech at the memorial, created a diplomatic incident between Italy, Croatia and Slovenia, in perhaps one of the most controversial places in the common history of these three countries, speaking about Italian Istria and Dalmatia (Maranzin M. e Perosino M. (2019). *Foibe, la Slovenia protesta con Mattarella*. La Stampa). This speech inevitably attracted harsh comments from the Slovenian and Croatian authorities, who accused the European-Italian politician of championing a revisionist interpretation of history (Barigazzi J. (2019). *Slovenian, Croatian leaders accuse Tajani of 'historical revisionism'. European Parliament president denies remarks implied a territorial claim*. Politico). Instead, in 2020 Italian President S. Mattarella and Slovenian counterpart B. Pahor jointly visited the Foiba of Basovizza thus perhaps sanctioning a rapprochement, at least institutionally, between Italy and Slovenia on the issue of the foibe (Vecchio C. (2020). *Mattarella, gesto storico a Trieste. Mano nella mano con il presidente loveno Pahor davanti alla foiba di Basovizza.* Repubblica). On the other hand, the Risiera di San Sabba is shrouded in greater awareness concerning what happened in those buildings during World War II. The Risiera represents one of the places of the Holocaust on Italian soil, and even from the international point of view there is no controversy regarding the nature of the place and the events that characterized its history. In this sense, the Risiera di San Sabba, as opposed to the Foiba of Basovizza, tends to represent a unifying, not divisive, element of the history of World War II.

Conclusion

The Risiera di San Sabba is an important place in Italian and European history more generally. Its use by the Nazi authorities from 1943 to 1945 as a concentration camp and also as an extermination camp transformed it into a place of shared memory. The memorialization of the Risiera then found its fullest expression when the complex was declared a national monument and when, subsequently, the Civic Museum of the Risiera of San Sabba was opened. Its musealization made it possible to make the Risiera complex accessible to individuals and groups through tours of the places where thousands of people were detained and killed and visits to the permanent and temporary exhibits. In addition, the Risiera represents a place of culture thanks to the numerous thematic insights that groups such as schools can access. In recent years, the Risiera has also become the symbolic site of public ceremonies in Trieste related to the events of World War II. From the point of view of memorialization in the city, another symbolic place is the Foiba of Basovizza about which, however, there is still no common narrative and unambiguous historical convergence.

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A matter of perspective

Gaia Carboni

1. A shift in my perspective

As an Italian, it was the first time I was entering a concentration camp not being sure to have the right to pick the victims side to empathize with. As an Italian, every time I had visited a Lager so far, I had the feeling of being on the "good" side, as someone who identifies with the ones who were unfairly detained there because of their choice to fight against the Fascist Regime; thus, I would accept their inheritance, their sacrifice for all the people who can now live their life in freedom thanks to it. In Slana and Jadovno, for the first time I had to question my certainties: I had to be confronted with the idea of having been for once on the side of the perpetrators. This is surely the first value of many that the "Between Memory and Oblivion" Summer School, held in June 2023, deserves credit for. What I would like to highlight here is how for the first time I could really benefit from a transnational perspective on a local fact, that rather superficial glaze did not seem to have a strict connection with the history I feel I belong to.

In school the history programs usually focus on Italian internal events in the Second World War period, so that neither our colonialist politics in Africa, nor the Imperialistic war campaign in the Balkans, are really a subject. Together with other intertwined reasons, the lack of a proper process such as the denazification one led in Germany in the post-war time has eased the spread of a general narrative that would describe Italian Fascism just as a victim of the external occupation forced to join someone else's fights and atrocities. Further from conflating this, a trip through the Ustaša concentration camps system conveys how involved my country was. The Gospić-Jadovno-Pag system was shut down by the Italian Fascists after only three months from its opening and it was not a merciful act. According to the report made by Lieutenant Dr. Stazzi Santo, Director of Disinfection Distinction for the Italian Army who arrived on the Island of Pag on the first days of September, the traces of what was left of

the camp must have been very impactful, he seems to be equally impressed by the cruelty used by the Ustaša on the victims and by their rough management of the corpses and the consequent hygienic conditions:

> *"I started to dig and found a corpse of a man, probably around 18 years of age, very skinny and decomposing. Next to him there were several groups of corpses in impossible positions, some of them still bound. [..]*
>
> *The corpses were not buried enough. Somewhere I found them buried just at 15 cm and my conclusion that autumn rains could excavate the corpses that are in such shallow graves. The Croatian authorities did not conduct any preventive disinfection." (SLANA — The Italian Report www.slana.info/post/164144363704/the-italian-report*, consulted on 28 june 2023.)

But why was Lieutenant Stazzi sent to Pag Island? As I said, the Fascists did not close those camps out of mercy:

> *"After the Serb Uprising on 27th July, 1941, Italian fascists realized the consequences of the Ustaša genocidal campaign, which they were naturally aware of. The people, who had been persecuted and abused, following the organized crimes committed against civilians in Lika and after rumors started spreading about the pits on the Velebit mountain, began to realize the danger they were in and decided to put up a resistance, for the most part organized by seasoned Spanish Civil War fighters and Communists. That is precisely why the Italians re-occupied Zone B, and the island of Pag within it." (*Aneta Vladimirov, "*A memorial challenge" in "Slana. radikalni krajobraz - radical landscape*", Davor Konjikušić, Nika Petković, Goran Andlar, 2021, pp 43-45.*)*

Despite the shock that might emerge from Lieutenant Stazzi's report, the need of stopping and hiding the Ustaša's cruelty was just part of the war strategy to keep the Adriatic coast under control, all the more so because Slana survivors were not rescued but instead brought back to the mainland to build the Jasenovac camp, becoming also the first inmates of it. In the fact of this, there is no possible mitigating circumstance in comparison with the idea of having been

on the side of the perpetrators. To a fair memory and historical extent, there is no moral guilt needed in this knowledge process: the encounter with the objective fact that we might have been on the victim side for some aspects and on the opposite one in just related circumstances should be enough for it.

2. From the transnational to the ecological

The first achievement from the experience of visiting the Jadovno and Slana memorial sites is the transnational approach I gained in a new knowledge of the Second World War. Attending the commemorations at both memorials and trying to understand where I was in regard to their history and placement towards the national and local context, a few considerations came to my mind.
In the public debate going on since 2020 about monuments and statues in the public space, there are many arguments on the iconoclastic wave including all the possible reactions and suggestions, but there is almost any consideration on those memorial sites which have been under constant attack from their very struggling establishment. One of the most interesting theses I have read in this wide-ranging discourse is the proposal of considering monuments not as a single object but rather as generator of different tensions that is worth to consider in their complex (L. Parola, *"Giù i monumenti? Una questione aperta"*, 2022, Einaudi editore)

If we think about Jadovno and Slana, rather than generators, the two memorial sites are highlighters of many aspects of the actual political situation in Croatia and a fair example of how Remembrance practices are strongly linked to historical and identity processes. Looking at Jadovno history, and even more with Slana, it is easy to see how commemorating one event is a political act that can be harshly opposed by that part of the population who not only does not identify with it, but feels even threatened by it. This cannot be understood without seeing those slaughters in perspective with the historical context they happened into and with the ethnic conflicts that escalated in the 90s and are still very much present today.

In the case of the fallen statues in the U.S.A. representing male white figures embodying colonialism and oppression, it is clear what they stand for and why

they are thrown down. Where there has not been a distance set between the crimes and the ideology, but instead those events are misused to generate a nationalistic identity, memorials and their symbols are legitimately generators of the aforementioned tensions. Going through the history of Jadovno memorial we would first see how late it was established as such, compared to the moment in which the Lager memorials were opened in Europe: the first monument was put in 1975 and removed in 1990, the Serb National Council has held commemorations only since 2009, whilst memorial sites such Auschwitz or Mauthausen have been visited by pilgrims and families since the very end of the war. Despite being the first concentration camp created just the day after the declaration of the Independent State of Croatia (NDH), it has been forgotten for a long time. Reasons for this are numerous and they would need to be deepened all along the events of the post-war period and how the Ustaša heritage has been absorbed through the following decades. Proving that this process is anything but left in the past is a Holy Cross that stands just on the border of the area since 2021, dedicated to Stjepan Devčić, an Ustaša member who died in 1932, during the Velebit Uprising. As this event is particularly significant for the Ustaša narrative and ideology against the Serbs, it has been a scene of several demonstrations organized by the most nationalistic association starting from the moment it was established (In 2015 for example, President of the UHDDR City of Rijeka, Mile Biondić, in his speech at the monument asked for more clarity on the exact numbers of victims in Jadovno, to be able to reject the charge of genocide levelled against the Ustasha in World War II. *Jadovno: Croatian defenders FOR piety to the victims of the Ustasha regime, but AGAINST communist-Chetnik revisionism – narod.hr* consulted on 30th June 2023.)

By definition, a monument is usually the embodiment of a single narrative that sits high in public space which we should always consider in relation to who has put it there, when and for what purpose. Building a memorial adds to this the need to give a grieving community a space to collectively honor its dead, legitimating at the same time its victim role for that circumstance. With this, it usually comes an implicit commitment of the wider community to ensure the future of both the victims and their memorial. When it comes to the Jadovno memorial, we must bear in mind what it represents for the Serbian and Jewish communities and also for the Croatian one. We cannot understand it without

an ecological approach - given the specific nature of the site, which was already part of a system - nor ignore the transnational implications of its history.

3. Void is already a memorial

The necessity to look at a memorial site in relation to a wider contest is even more relevant when we look at the Island of Pag concentration camp. It might seem that his fate is to have no memory sign: the "barbed wire wreath found at the cemetery in Pag, hung from one of the crosses and painted silver with a long strap of about two meters, which said 'TO THE VICTIMS OF SLANA'" left by Ante Zemljar and his friend Oren Ružić already in November 1941 and immediately removed by the Ustaša has been only the first of many removed or destroyed homages to the victims of Pag concentration camp (Aneta Vladimirov, "*Slana testimonials*" in "Slana. radikalni krajobraz - radical landscape", Davor Konjikušić, Nika Petković, Goran Andlar, 2021).

On June 25th, 2023, I had the privilege to participate at the commemoration of the opening of the camp in Slana. As part of it, together with representatives from the Serb National Council, from the Coordination of Jewish Municipalities of the Republic of Croatia and from the Union of Antifascist Fighters and Anti-Fascists (SABA), we, as invited student from the European Union, should have witnessed the installation of the fourth plaque remembering the victims who between June 24th and the end of August 1941, were killed on the island. After being destroyed some years previous, the plaque has not yet been restored because the local administration has not ensured its security. What I witnessed instead was one of the strongest memorial gestures.

Every community needs its own rituals, collective actions that are always the same and that take place according to a liturgy and in relation to certain objects or places, which somehow renew the social pact that also defines its identity. To put it bluntly: one gathers periodically to reconfirm symbols and values shared in a specific place using specific accepted and recognizable objects. Most of these rituals are related to the idea of memory as an act of claiming ones belonging to an event in the past which legitimate their existence in the present (Bataille, "L'erotisme", Paris, 1957). This apparat is easy to understand when we

look at commemorations that take place in a specific memorial place. What happens when the memorial does not exist, or it is not outlined by the objects and buildings we usually detect as such?

Especially in regard to monuments dedicated to Holocaust and Deportations by Nazi-fascism, there seems to be a type of memorials which privileges void as its main signifier. For his "*La Maison Manquante*", artist Christian Boltanski in 1990 in Berlin decided to hang plaques with names of the victims who perished during an Allays shelling in February 1945. The bombed buildings outlined by the hung plaques on the survived walls of the adjacent houses exist just through its correspondent emptiness (A. Pinotti, "*Nonumento. Un paradosso della memoria*", Joan and Levi, 2023, Milano). In the Slana remembrance site the void has different features. On the one hand, the nature of the island is strongly affected by it: the widespread of white rocks, with absolutely no shadows nor trees that could interrupt the lunar landscape that has made it so famous, could certainly fall into the semantic field. On the other hand, there is a strong will of the local community to keep the emptiness and to not allow the outcrop and the unveiling of the signs which could show its history of death. This lack of proper memorial traces is not actually a void, but is instead the real ritual focus around which commemorations are held.

For the 2023 yearly commemoration, further than inviting a group of students supported by the European Union, the organizers rented a bus and a boat to get everyone at Slana beach, they provided an interpreter for the non-Croatian speakers for them to be able to attend the ceremony composed of speeches and songs. The climax and the end of the ritual is a white rose homage from each of the participants to the victims of the camp, to be offered at the bottom of the rock wall where the memorial plaque used to be. The lack of guarantees by the local administration will not prevent the vacuum of a physical memorial to be filled with the huge effort and amount of money needed to bring less than hundred people to leave white roses on a dried island: as long as there will be a community of direct descendants and people who joined the cause, there will be a memorial ritual to take place in Slana.

Victims of the Gospić-Jadovno-Pag concentration camp have been forgotten for

a long time and do not have a loud place in the transnational historical debate on the Second World War Genocides. It is just by bearing in mind all the reasons why this is, which can also explain why the lack of a memorial site will not be solved any time soon, that the strength of the apparently powerless flower homage can be deeply understood. The white roses might have already been dried or washed away by the seaside, on the beach, next to the two left empty hangers, but as long as they will be offered again, that part of the story will be told.

Transnational framework of remembering the fascist past in southeastern europe

Maja Kovač

Years ago, we spent our family holidays on the Croatian island of Pag. We stayed in a family house on the coast in the quiet fishing village of Metajna and over time became closer with the elderly hosts. Night fishing was a special experience. After a long wait in the middle of the silent sea, we started pulling heavy nets, and then fell asleep on the rocks. The feast with fish next day was shared, the wine cellar stayed unlocked for us and conversation was getting more and more intense as we felt comfortable with each other. Unfortunately, the other sides of their personal and local history have remained carefully hidden. It was 2023 when I realised that the school building on the shore which I was passing by on my evening walks was a women's concentration camp back in the past. The only plaque I can recall from that building, and I stood in front of and paid special attention to it was the sign on the wall in glagolitic writing. There could not be a clearer message that only a glorious and an unproblematic part of history is worth remembering in a public place like that building. Considering the situation not far away, more precisely in the neighbouring bay of Slana where the men's part of the concentration camp for mostly Serbs, Jews and politically corrupt citizens was located, confirms the same. We were visiting the same local couple from Metajna several times and never got a clue about the Ustasha camps nearby during WWII. Dani Novak, an American-Croatian emigre of Jewish origin, who visited Pag to research his family history, encountered even worse ignorance. His grandmother and aunt died in Metajna camp, but the locals persistently claimed to him that all the rumours about the Pag-Slana camps were just made up hoaxes (Jadovno, 2015).

Denial is still strongly present among the local population today. This is also proven by the constant interventions in the public space, in which there is clearly no place for nurturing memory of all the victims of concentration camps Pag-Slana, but instead the place remains marginalised, transformed into a space of oblivion. It is not only erased from the narrative, which reflects the

collective memory, but also removed from the field of vision of the visitors coming to the site of the horrendous murders not even knowing about them. Namely, the commemorative plaque in Slana has already been erected three times, so miscreants are persistently removing it. On the last initiative to mark the memorial site with an inscription this year, the local police from the city of Novalja reacted negatively with the excuse that they cannot guarantee the safety that the monument on the steep wall on the edge of the Slana will also stay there. In this case, the most important contribution is on us, the relatives of the victims, informed witnesses, connoisseurs, experts and the general interested public, to share our knowledge and to dare to speak publicly about it, thereby ensuring the presence of an otherwise admittedly sensitive topic in public discourse, which is after all the main driver of intangible heritage. A visit to the memorial site, as participants of the summer school "Between memory and oblivion", held by *Documenta*, did it attending the commemorations in the concentration camp system Gospić-Jadovno-Pag, is an act of honour to the victims of the senseless regime and a sign of recognition of all the efforts of the anti-fascist movement.

Thanks to the dedicated work of some brave individuals, today we can also read original documentary and literary texts about former crimes, which drags the obscured dark side of our history out of oblivion. Extremely valuable are the texts of Ante Zemljar, a writer from Pag, who described the moments of the war in two poetry collections and a novel, but the most important work is the monograph on the concentration camp of Slana titled "Charon and Destinies" published in 1988 (Slana – radikalni krajobraz, 2021). It is very encouraging that recently the unpleasant grip of silenced torments and generational traumas that our ancestors faced, and today's inhabitants are struggling with the consequences, is being opened. Increasingly, acts of individual characters are peeking out, daring to point the finger at the mistakes of an unjust system and save them from the shadows of oblivion.

Art plays an important role in building a healthy attitude towards multifaceted truth. A particularly grateful form for this is keeping a diary and diary entries, which give an insight into personal experience, look at history and take a closer look at intimacy and psychological dimensions. It is worth noting Primo Levi's

"Sad tropes" and Boris Pahor's "Necropolis", which reveal a sense of guilt because they survived among the multitude of internees, which means that even innocent victims carry the weight of a guilt and that even a naked life can be considered a sin in a distorted picture of the world. The perspective of children in the extreme conditions of war is particularly poignant, as the "Diary of Anne Frank" records a teenager's fate.

In our region, there was a huge number of interned children of Serbian origin, known as children from the Kozara, who were orphaned and then adopted by the mighty efforts of Diana Budisavljević. Her case is an example of modern cosmopolitanism (Južnoslovanski večer, 141−162), which does not look at origin, ethnicity or religion, but emphasises the pure ethical values as shown in the film by director Diana Budisavljević, prepared on the basis of the rescuer's diary, documentary material, testimonies of survived children and processed with aesthetically sophisticated procedures. Besides that, this year, honouring the Holocaust Day, Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts published a book "Prayer for Jasenovac" by the Slovenian writer Branko Šömen which brings six stories from the Ustasha's camp Jasenovac.

The fact that various artistic depictions that thematize fascist crimes are emerging in different places and countries means that society is creating a suitable atmosphere for a rather objective approach of research and narrative and, ultimately, reconciliation not only on a micro level, but also in a transnational context.

Report through traumas of Second World War and war in former Yugoslavia in nine days. Autoethnographic insights and reflections.

Michał Kucharski

Instead of methodology. Reflections on myself and someone else's (?) trauma.

I'm not from the Balkans. However, I am interested in the culture of the region, history and politics and I know Bosnian, Croatian and Serbian languages. At the same time, the emotional experience of collective and individual traumas, which I faced together with other participants of the trip from April 29 to May 6, 2023, was also my share. This universal aspect of experiencing other people's traumatic stories accompanied me throughout the trip. Being a scientist, a self-aware researcher, writing about the identity of one of the Croatian cities, I participated in what other participants of the field research also experienced.

On the one hand, you could say that I was an outsider. Today, however, more and more ethnographers and anthropologists point out that field research, often with elements of participation, excludes objectivity. This can also be seen in literary studies, where anthropologists or literary semiotics devote a lot of space to the reader's relationship to the text, including the experience and its impact on the reception and interpretation of the text (Myrdzik, 2012).

On the other hand, participation in the trip turned into a full-scale autoethnographic experience. Although at first I had doubts - being a representative of the organization that was co-responsible for the preparation of the trip, I did not feel I belonged here for some time. These doubts were also influenced by the large age difference in relation to the majority of students participating in the expedition. For me, however, those boundaries were also blurring. I listened to the same stories, I met the same witnesses, I was in the same places devoted to specific traumas. The experience of the eight-day trip

was the experience of all of us taking part in it. Hence, the clear decision to refer to autoethnographic research tools and style in my description of this expedition: "Autobiographers can make texts aesthetic and evocative by using techniques of "showing", which are designed to bring "readers into the scene"—particularly into thoughts, emotions, and actions – in order to "experience an experience". (Ellis, Adams, Bochner, 2011, 5). What I experience as “I” allows the reader to get closer to the researched phenomenon – for example, “I use my own narrative I to understand and describe the world of others” (Kacperczyk, 2014, 46). At the same time, the "I" in the study becomes an expression of the researcher's sincerity towards the reader. This was already noticed during the sociological research of the University of Chicago in the early 1930s, which is considered the birth of modern urban sociology (Anderson, 2014, 146). Today, it is one of the most important trends in urban studies - its creators studied their own environment, district, city.

Do I remember the war in former Yugoslavia from TV? NO. The memory of the photos of the land in Potočari, I would consider rather a "fabricated memory", based on conversations with my parents (see more: See more: Ceci, S.J., & Bruck, M. (1993). *Suggestibility of the child witness: A historical review and synthesis*. Psychological Bulletin, 113, 403-439; and Ceci, S.J., & Huffman, M.L.C. (1997). *How suggestible are preschool children? Cognitive and social factors.* Journal of the American Academy of Child Adolescent Psychiatry, 36, p. 948-958.). However, the stories of my parents, reading in the Polish press in later years, books that I reached for, may be the source of my memory of the trauma, although I have not experienced it myself. There is undoubtedly a social aspect of trauma here, which Larissa Sotieva writes about (2021). Society remembers and represses trauma, although individually it does not have to be its "carrier". At the same time, however, traumatic experiences accompany us in the environment and society. Although its members do not try to avoid the subject of trauma or even taboo it, as is the case in more conservative communities, even in a democratic state, we are the "territory" of the dispute. Because, as Dubravka Ugrešić wrote, “a political struggle is a struggle in the territory of collective memory” (Ugrešić, 2002, 285), and this struggle for memory takes place around us every day. It is a normal part of politics as an element of manipulation. From an ethical perspective, however, it cannot rule out any

trauma, because according to Martin Pollack, “something like this would be nothing more than an ideological construct and a political postulate to separate oneself from strangers” (Pollack, 2017, 111). And it was the communal and individual experience of traumas that was the focus of the research trip in which I participated. Compassion, sharing trauma, is known to everyone who reads novels or nonfiction – e.g. Wojciech Tochman's Eating a Stone or Tatjana Gromača's *Crnac* (note: has not been translated to English). These feelings are all the stronger when they relate to a direct story, from a witness, told face-to-face with microhistory.

“You are lying, Lady! Here, these children were helped!”

Our first stop is Sisak. Here we have the opportunity to get to know each other better. Here we will be divided into teams in which we will then work. We reached the park of Diana Budisavljevic. There is a monument dedicated to children imprisoned in the camp in Sisak during World War II. Data speak of about 7,000 small prisoners (Fumić, 2011, 57) (note: Mirna Jasić Gašić in text for Novosti gives the exact number of 6693 children (Jasić Gašić, 2021). We were greeted by Nevenka Končar, one of the last living witnesses and imprisoned children, and an activist from Srpsko Narodno Vijeće who accompanied her – Aneta Vladimirov. The park is a mass grave of children from Kozara, taken away from their parents or orphaned, taken by the Ustaše to concentration camps (formally shelters). According to the data collected by the gravedigger, who came at the behest of the camp authorities to collect the children's bodies, were buried there “1,152 children, when other sources saying that died there 1,631” (originally: “1,152 djeteta, dok 2 izvora govore da je umrlo čak 1631”), (Fumić, 2011, 57).

Among them is Mrs. Nevenka's twin sister. It was one of the first emotionally piercing things we heard. Together with the twins, their cousin was also in the camp. It was only thanks to her that the then 3-year-old Nevenka survived and learned her true origin. Their aunt prepared them plaques with their names, place of origin, surname and first names of their parents. The student operating the camera stopped filming when Mrs. Koncar burst into tears talking about the loss of her sister. And the fact that she still doesn't know if she was Nevenka.

The conversation, moved to the former camp building (now the cultural center), was also full of emotions. Next to the building is a fountain from Tito's time commemorating the location of the camp. Children cast from concrete are playing - this element was surprising for us. It is significant that the plaque commemorating the victims, removed in the 1990s, was replaced with a small plaque indicating only the political (fascist) affiliation of the perpetrators of the murders. At the same time, in the 1990s, a large brass plaque was placed on the other side of the stairs to commemorate Franjo Tuđman's last public lecture in the 1970s and the renewal of the HDZ party in Sisak in the 1990s. These children were helped here. They were fed. They were sent to foster families." "Please go away from here. Because I'll call the police." – threatened Aneta Vladimirov. "No, no, no police," the man said and walked away. Such unplanned situations accompanied us throughout the trip. We will be coming back to this one throughout the trip, also during the opening of the so-called green box (bhs.zelena kutija). For many participants, it will be an example of how deep contempt for historical truth and witnesses of crime is deeply rooted in Croatian society. How hypocritical the Croats are when it comes to the crimes of their ancestors - I will hear this expression many times from the mouths of Zagreb students of the Faculty of Political Sciences. Anyway, it is also proof of how strongly the history of World War II still has an impact, unaccounted for and unanalysed, also from a psychological perspective, experiences that resonated both in the 1990s and today. An accidental building worker is no exception. Only in May, after five months, the Senate of the University of Zagreb rejected the candidacy of Vlatka Vukelić for the dean of the Faculty of Croatian Studies, who is a known denier of Ustasha's crimes (Šimičević, 2023).

Nevenka Končar finally sat down with us at the hotel. And she told the rest of her story. In which, thanks to her aunt, she found herself in a family with whom she was supposed to work. In the village near Sisak, where she spent most of her youth, her adoptive parents took good care of her. At home, she could feel Serbian, her identity was maintained even the people who embraced her were Croatians. Until the end of their lives, she treated them as her parents, she also has a very good relationship with her half-brother. They supported and protected her. So she survived.

For a long time, she was not interested in her past and camp experience. She was persuaded by the long-time mayor of the city and the head of the railway in Sisak, where she worked, to share it with the people and fight for the memory. Then she became involved in support of the construction of the monument.

Nevenka Končar considers herself a Croatian citizen: “I don't have a problem with Croats. Only with a state that treats people”. When this confession is made, she begins to cry. Everyone starts crying. We want to finish, go somewhere. Thank you and take a break from it all for a while. Emotions that accompanied Mrs. Nevenka Končar quickly became our share, the listeners of her stories. We were, as the SNV (Srpsko Narodno Vijeće, eng. Serbian National Council) representative said, the first such young group listening to this herstory. A child who was trying to be deprived of the past.

We quickly learned that what happened in the 1940s is happening again in the 1990s. The historical and political context was presented to us by Novosti's associate, Tihomir Ponoš. Only some of those responsible for the crimes in 1991 were convicted. Sisak police chief Đuro Brodarac, accused of participating in the murders of 10 Serbs from the city, died shortly after the sentence, in Osijek prison. In total, journalistic investigations and witnesses confirmed at least 107 civilian victims - Serbs. Including 4 policemen of the Croatian police, positively verified in 1990. The President of the Republic was informed about these crimes by Stjepan Herceg, his special envoy. After the letters he presented, the crimes almost stopped. However, the responsible men were not prosecuted until years later. The former Minister of the Interior from 1991 -1992, Ivan Vekić hugged the convicts after the 2011 verdict. He then emphasized that "the only task in war is to kill the enemy."

Meanwhile, in the 1980s and early 1990s, Sisak was an important industrial center with a heavily mixed community. According to the data cited by Ponoš in 1991, in the then commune, 41 percent were Serbs, and 49 percent Croats. In the city, these figures are 24 and 59 percent, respectively. Nevertheless, the SDS (Srpska Demokratska Stranka), uses the fear of the Croats (as descendants of the Ustasha) to carry out a revolution here, as well in Knin. Many Serbs didn’t believe in the new state, and they were afraid of Croatian political structures.

They were trying to seize weapons from Yugoslav units and the newly formed Croatian police. On the other hand, the Croatian government created territorial defense units. These tensions lead to ethnic cleansing.

In the evening, we were talking about these meetings, about the children's camp. The organizers of the trip divided the students into teams, groups that should be a space for a group therapy for us. We are supposed to comment, talk about our feelings, and use our various professions (political science, photography, psychology, journalism) for analysis. I was also in one of the groups. I was talking about my emotions for the next few days in Croatian. It was very intensive and on that level it has never happened to me before. But there will also be days when the conversation gets bogged down. When we don't know what to say. A bit tired of emotions. A little doubting the sense of experiencing so many tragedies and traumas at once, overwhelmed by the worst side of humanity.

The last thoughts were going to the green box. It was a space for everyone. If we do not want to share something openly, e.g. with rage at criminals, a form of hatred, hidden tears, we write it down on a piece of paper and put it in a box. The idea of prof. Nebojša Blanuša and Tomislav Pletenc refers to the idea described in the book by the Yugoslavian architect, freethinker and Serbian dissident - Bogdan Bogdanović. The book is entitled *Zelena Kutija*. *Knjiga snova* (The book was translated to German as Die grüne Schachtel: Buch der Träume, published by Zsolnay Verlag in Vienna, in 2007). At the turn of the 1980s and 1990s, he and his students threw dreams and thoughts into such a box, which required self-censorship in those pre-war times. The box could not be opened - but then we decided that we will open our replica.

Kozara – Second World War doubts

We enter Bosnia from Sisak through Bosanski Novi or Novi Grad. For Bosnians, but also on English-language internet maps, it's the first one. In the Republic of Srpska (RS), it is Novi Grad. In the Croatian Wikipedia, the authors emphasize that the name Novi Grad was given when the city was founded in the Republic of Srpska. That was in 1992. Novi Grad is also the name of the border crossing

on online maps. The problem of naming a single town is a reflection of the problems of the whole country. And it's been 28 years since the signing of the peace agreement. Anyway, flags in Serbian colors were hanging everywhere, leaving no doubt that we are not exactly in Bosnia and Herzegovina. This kind of “marking of territory” is not only a problem for the Republic of Srpska. Especially since this flag hangs on the building of the former City Council, one of the best examples of the neo-Moorish style in all of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The first point of the program in Bosnia is the Monument to the Revolution in the Kozara National Park. Built in 1971-1972, it’s a gigantic concrete sculpture. Today it is a popular place to relax, barbecue and have fun on the weekend. The construction of the monument, by the Croatian sculptor Dušan Džamonja, however, reminds us of the tragedy that took place in the Kozara mountain range, in 1942. At that time, the local population rebelled against the power of the Ustasha, the Croatian fascists. However, there were only a handful of Partisans - four thousand (Niković, 2016). Their forces, poorly equipped, protected nearly 80,000 civilians and several hundred wounded (Fumić, 2011, 30). They faced nearly 40,000 soldiers of the Third Reich and the Independent State of Croatia (Niković, 2016). The best achievement of the partisans was breaking through the encirclement on July 4, 1942, and leading out nearly 10,000 people (Jokić, 1986, 145). The others weren't so lucky. The fascist offensive finally ended in mid-July. 1,700 partisans were killed (Fumić, 2011, 30). About 25-30 thousands of people, mainly of Serbian nationality, were sent to concentration camps, including Jasenovac, where they died (Hoare, 2013, 424; Srbi.., 2021). Thousands of children have been displaced to the Ustasha camp we heard about in Sisak (Fumić, 2011, 57-59).

However, this is not the story of a guide from the local center subordinated to the nationalist authorities in Banja Luka. Although he knows that he is dealing with a group from the University of Zagreb, he emphasizes the ethnicity of the victims (90 percent Serbs) and the fact that among the Ustashas there were also Muslims (Bosniaks) who, in his opinion, allegedly wore white ribbons. In his narrative, he also rejects any mention of "brotherhood and unity" accompanying the revolution in communist Yugoslavia. He emphasizes that it was a rebellion of the poor Serbian population. Who couldn't have any class

consciousness because she was uneducated, so the guerrillas had nothing to do with Tito and the communists. Doubts about this narrative arise immediately. Only later does the question come to mind: If they were not so educated as to be able to define themselves as communists, on what basis were they able to define themselves as Serbs? In Prijedor, one of the local activists of Serbian origin will emphasize in the conversation that we were dealing with a nationalist who strongly criticizes any activity for reconciliation and recalling the Serbian crimes of the 1990s.

The Kozara Monument is one of the few examples of phenomenal artistic achievements of Yugoslav modernism. To reach the central point of the monument - the openwork tower - you have to walk between large concrete blocks. It is a symbol of the fascist and Nazi forces that surrounded the rebellious inhabitants and Partisan forces. The space between them narrows as we approach the pole. This one is a symbol of surrounded civilians and Partisan forces. It rises to the sky to a height of 34 meters. The juxtaposition of enemies stuck in the ground and the majestic, metaphysical structure is impressive. Just like the fact that only a few can enter the inside of the cylindrical tower. The passages narrow towards the center, giving no hope at all, and even intensifying the sense of danger. If we go inside and look at the sky, will we ever get out?

On the boards in the labyrinth behind the monument there are only the names of the Partisans. Although civilians suffered casualties, only soldiers from this area are mentioned, or members of the brigades devoted to Kozara by name. This seems to be another proof of a selective view of history in the area of former Yugoslavia. Placed in the times of the SFRY, perhaps they were only meant to emphasize the heroism of the fighters, and not the tragic sacrifice of civilians. The questions remained unanswered. The Yugoslav government did not want to deal with all the victims. In this way, to this day, “unfinished business”, as prof. Nebojša Blanuša said, “are feeding violence”. World War II first affected the war of the 1990s, and now both, in a dimension in which they have not been worked through, accumulate violence. The impression of unfinished many of these experiences, lying, falsifying, ordering to forget, will accompany me in each of these places. In most of these cases, there is no

question of forgetting, but of a struggle between individual and collective, cultural and individual memory, when power, as defined by Michel Foucault, has no place for what does not fit into the public identity narrative.

Prijedor. How to throw off the burden of the past and move forward?

To get from Kozara to Prijedor you have to cross the river Sana. This is one of the many, and as usual, beautiful rivers of Bosnia. We stayed in a hotel, the largest in the city, where, as we soon learned, Serbian reservists (according to a United Nations report, Hotel Prijedor was the barracks for 200 officers and reservists, many of whom were members of special units subordinated to Željko "Arkan" Ražnatović) were stationed at the beginning of the war. For two days we ate, played, drank and discussed in this building.

As part of the program of activities, we watched the movie “Crimes before the ICTY. Prijedor”. It was played by Branko Ćulibrk, an urban activist, involved for years, among others in activities for the construction of a monument to the murdered children of Prijedor. In the 1990s, the city quickly witnessed ethnic cleansing. In 1991, out of 112,543 inhabitants, Bosniaks accounted for 43.9%, Serbs 42.3% and Croats 6.6%. Soon, however, militarily and politically, the Serbs dominated the city. They ordered Muslims to wear white ribbons to distinguish them. Anti-Bosnian hysteria grew in the media. Some of the Bosniaks left, those who stayed were systematically sent to three concentration camps, where they were to wait for deportation to the territories occupied by the BiH army. Some died, often on their own doorstep. Most of these incidents occurred in the surrounding villages like Rizvanovići. After serving the sentence some of them returned to their homes, Ramulić told us. They live among those whose family members they have previously murdered, as Edin Ramulić said, and there is no contact between them.

One of the elements of violence against people of Bosniak ethnicity was forcing people to wear white ribbons. Ultimately, the inhabitants of Prijedor of Muslim origin were sent to three camps: Keraterm on the outskirts of the city, Trnopolje and Omarska.

After the film, we listened to Branko Ćulibrk's speech. He's a local activist with

the Kvart organization. He deals with activities in the city space, the rights of LGBTQ+ people, as well as the truth about the war and the commemoration of the victims. He is also an associate of SNV. “New Policies of Remembrance in Prijedor” is the title of his presentation, during which he showed us how much has been done in the last 20 years and what has been blocked by the authorities. One of the important initiatives is the White Ribbon Day, referring to the situation of Muslims during the war in the city. To this day, it has not been possible to achieve success and erect a monument to the children from Prijedor who died in the 1990s. We are talking about 102 children. Until the conclusion of a coalition with the Serbian party of Milorad Dodik, who ruled the city, these actions were supported by the Bosnian party SDA (bhs Stranka Demokratske Akcije, or Party of Democratic Action). The activist himself emphasized that the current situation, public policy that allows the reproduction of ethnic hatred, will result in the reproduction of violence. If the inhabitants of Bosnia and Herzegovina do not learn and see the war experiences of all sides of the conflict in that space. In total, 3,176 non-Serb civilians (including 102 children and 266 women) died in Prijedor and in the concentration camps around it during the war. Only part of the criminals - 58 people - were tried. All the authors of the crimes committed in Prijedor and the surrounding area were from this city, so they were part of a multicultural community before 1990. 28 defendants are currently on trial, told us Ćulibrk.

The policy of memory is difficult to change. The dominant narrative is the Serbian one, but Branko and his colleagues try to show that this is not the only way. They also emphasize that it is necessary to ensure social rights, especially for young people. Better education, jobs. Otherwise, they become more susceptible to nationalist propaganda. In their activities, they avoid defining national and religious identity. They do not talk about "our and your victims", they do not relativize them on any side, and they want all victims to become "common". Another problem is the constant retraumatization of victims. An example is when he was sitting with a Muslim friend in a coffee shop. He jumped up from the table and started running. Cause he saw a man walking down the street, already released from prison, who had killed 14 members of his family.

It is hardly surprising that Ćulibrk is not liked by nationalist politicians. He emphasized that in the 1990s we were dealing with organized crime. As evidence, he cited the activities of the media, such as Kozarske Vijesti, which were full of anti-Muslim propaganda. In addition, the crimes against the Bosniaks were justified, among others, by information that allegedly the first Serbian policeman was killed, or that abortions were performed only on Serbian women and by Muslim doctors. According to information provided to us, the bodies of 250 victims are still missing. Some bodies were found in other parts of BiH, further evidence that these crimes were systemic. Today, the proportions in Prijedor are different - about 70 percent of Serbs live there and 30 percent of Bosniaks.

An important background for Branko's activity is his personal history. He has the feeling that his family was never nationalist. However, his father enlisted in the Republic of Srpska units and died during the first weeks of the conflict. Despite attempts to talk to three of his father's colleagues, Ćulibrk still does not know what happened to his father and how he died. One of his companions emigrated to the USA. A Croatian who changed his name to sound Serbian, not Croatian, right after the outbreak of the war. The second gave the location of one of the mass graves and disappeared right after. The third is the guide's father, whom we met in Kozara, like a son denying Serbian crimes. The father of Branko wasn’t posthumous awarded, although most members of his unit did receive a medal. So far, the activist has not been the only one to get an apartment in the block where he lives, which he also perceives as a form of repression for his social activities.

As teenagers, he and his brother beat up a neighbor in 1993 because he was a Muslim. Only because it was the "Muslims" who killed their father. Then the reflection came in high school, when the first Bosniak girl after the return of the expelled came to them. "She isolated herself a bit", but he was looking for books for her. Which surprised even the school pedagogue, a Croatian woman. In the second grade, she also integrated, and he reassured his friends against stupid comments. Based on his life, his family, and story of his father he is searching and trying to understand his identity.

The second part of the Prijedor journey was a walk with Edin Ramulić. Thanks to that, we also got to know the details of the city's history, including the period of World War II. Prijedor was established after the signing of the Treaty of Karlovac between Austria and the Ottoman Empire. It was founded by refugees from what is now part of Croatia.

During World War II, Prijedor passed from the partisans to the hands of the Ustasha and the Nazis several times. One of the symbols of the resistance to this day is Mladen Stojanović, a doctor, commander of the communist partisans, who died in 1942. He is still one of the most important figures born in Prijedor. Only, instead of being a symbol of cooperation and unity, Serbian politicians emphasize its Serbian, orthodox origin.

May 16, 1942, the first liberation of the city took place thanks to the communist party activist Mira Cikota (Dabić, 2016). She was arrested and hanged on a tree in the main town square. Her husband later became a national hero, she did not. Today, one school is named after her, although previously she even had a sports club named after her. Thanks to the liberation of Prijedor three times by the guerrillas, they captured planes. The pilots who formed partisan units were also erased from memory “because they were not Serbs”, Ramulić said.

In turn, the place where Mira Cikota was hanged has not been commemorated. First of all, there is a large monument symbolizing the soldiers and policemen of the Republic of Srpska who died in the 1990s. The name of the monument is "Krst časti" (eng. The Honour Cross). In the adjacent park, a chapel dedicated to Serbian soldiers, including war criminals, whose victims still do not have a monument, was located. Its name "Kameni cvet" is supposed to be a reference to the monument in Jasenovac. Lazar Četanović has a monument near Prijedor, although he was a Chetnik, and they are responsible for Stojanović's death.

They all show "something", as Edin diplomatically put it, to those who have returned to Prijedor and the surrounding area after Dayton. Another problem with commemorating common heroes is the fact that every plaque that causes disputes and is located on the premises of an educational institution must be removed.

Another monument that shocked us is the one under the management of the “Ljublja” mine. It is part of a Bosnian complex that was taken over by ArcelorMittal a few years ago. The owners do not comment on the matter, but they allow the existence of this monument in honor of those miners, only Serbian, who died during the war in the former Yugoslavia. One exception is a Muslim who died while he was still a JNA conscript - but there are many more such "exceptions". At the same time, the miners who ended up in e.g. Omarska, in the area also belonging to ArcelorMittal, have no monument.

The management does not come to the celebrations in Omarska, but only to the office of the mine. Anyway, as Edin emphasized, there is not a single monument to civilian victims in the city (both World War II and the war of the 1990s). Then he led us to the park between the blocks, where new monuments were placed in the 2000s. This time, which is a bit of a surprise, communist activists from the city. Most of them are of Serbian origin. Except for Muharem Suljanović, who was the head of the local Communist Party committee. He was arrested by the Ustasha and executed. Right next to it, there is a monument dedicated to the Partisans who died on May 16, 1942. It is all written in Cyrillic, although some were Croats or Muslims.

Then, Edin Ramulić showed us two concentration camps around the city. In the case of the third, Omarska, we had to let go. There is no possibility to enter the area except for the anniversary celebrations, and it is too far from our road. It is true that the organizers tried to obtain permission from ArcelorMittal, but to no avail.

Our visit to the camp in Trnopolje was the first stop. There the Edin alone was held, with his mother and sister. He was very lucky because, despite being nearly 20 years old, he did not look his age. Therefore, the Serbian executioners considered him a child and did not take him to Keraterm. 23,000 people passed through the camp. people. Mostly women and old people. There were about 5-7 thousand people there at a time. They were not allowed to sleep at night, shooting into the ground. This is how at least one woman died when the ricochet of a fired bullet hit her. Some people, even though there was no medical aid or food in the camp, asked their Serbian neighbors for a long time

to take them to Trnopolje. It seemed safer in the camp than in the city, where anyone could kill. But it was, as Edin pointed out, an illusory feeling. One Serb was also martyred in Trnopolje. He was killed because he hung a poster of the Muslim party, SDA, on his fence in 1990. When he was killed, the soldiers soon came for his wife, whom they also killed and burned down their house. Any reason and place could therefore be good to lose your life.

No one has ever escaped from both Omarska and Trnopolje. There were no clear boundaries of the camp. The barbed wire that appears in Ed Vuillamy's most famous photograph was not stretched around the entire camp. It's just that a British journalist drove up to Trnopolje from this side. Besides, no one wanted to run away, because everyone was afraid that the others would suffer the consequences of running away. Only one person escaped from Keraterm.

In the camp where Ramulić was staying, people were killed silently. First by torturing the victim. Among the visible victims was a 4.5-year-old girl who tried to defend her older sister from being raped. Anyway, these were the norm, although they remain a taboo to this day. Edin stressed that the torturer, who had imprisoned his apprentice for months, turning her into a sex slave, had not been judged. After the war, he was the headmaster of one of the largest schools in Prijedor for many years until he died.

On May 24, 1992, the first prisoner was brought to Trnopolje, and only two days later the police decided to establish a camp (M.Ć., 2017). Edin said that his family arrived there on July 20. They managed to get out of the camp in a convoy to Doboj. To this day, all he remembers is the shooting of the guard every 10, 15 minutes and the unbearable crying of children unable to sleep because of it. Ramulić's father died in Keraterm (“Fellow prisoners have stated that Uzeir Ramulic most likely was killed during the massacre but that his son, Enes, apparently survived. On 4 August 1992, he was seen for the last time, in very poor health, before being taken from the camp by bus the following day with around another 120 prisoners.” (Judicial..., 2018). His brother is still one of the 471 missing victims from Prijedor district (Delić, 2023; Enforced..., 2016).

Today, on the site of the former camp, there is only a monument

commemorating the Serbian soldiers stationed there, who were responsible for the rape of women, torture and murder. The school building, where part of the camp was, has been renovated. Just like the former camp buildings, previously a community center, where one door leads to rooms managed by former prisoners. No one from the former leadership has been tried in The Hague. 51 people out of 69 accused were sentenced for the camps around Prijedor. Trnopolje is still the most ethnically diverse village in the area (PTPC, 2017). Ukrainians also live there (Etnička/nacionalna..., 2013), from whom the village takes its name, and there is also a Greek Catholic church in the vicinity.

When we were getting to the bus, we were accosted by a woman passing by on a bicycle - "What are you doing here? What are you looking for?" And she began her story from the war in former Yugoslavia. He remembers running away. To Doboj and to the border. She with two children. First Croatia and Slavonia, where she did not feel at home, then Slovenia and Germany. Then, when she returned, the daughter was the first student in the renovated school where the camp used to be. Through tears, she talked about jumping almost 4.5 m with luggage. About the fact that she was born in Trnopolje and had to return to it, which she did for the first time in 1999. And then she realized that "This is my home, this is my Trnopolje". He has Croats and Serbs as neighbors, but "I'm not interested in religion, I'm not interested in whether you're healthy." She invited us to her place, wherever we will be nearby. Especially since, understandably for her, her children left Trnopolje because there are no jobs in the area.

The second camp we visited was Keraterm. Ceramics and glaze factories that serve their original purposes again. Father worked in these factories and was tortured there, for example three days without water. There were 1,800 people in the buildings at a time. It was originally a unit for separating men and women. However, it quickly became a prison when it turned out that there was not enough space because there were too many Muslims. Only two women were sent there as sex slaves.

In 1942, right next to Keraterm, there was a camp for Serbs, in a former brickyard. 14.5 thousand people passed through it, most of them went to Jasenovac. A plaque commemorating them has been standing since the 1980s.

hanks to Ramulić's determination and the change of the owner of the tile factory, the camp was commemorated. Edin brought the plaque to the site himself - that's why it's small. Fragments of the installation commemorating the crime are also kept nearby.

Croats and Roma were also detained in Keraterm. Only 15 people survived, most of them died from carbon monoxide released into trucks (about 180 people), were shot, or ended up in Sanski Most. At the same time, pro-Serbian propaganda argued that the prisoners killed themselves in a frenzy, told us Edin Ramulić.

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On the second day in Prijedor I got up early in the morning, had a quick breakfast and went for a walk around the city. I drank coffee in a cafe on the boardwalk. Most of all, however, I looked at some older buildings and new graffiti. The trend to decorate new buildings with new murals every year is present throughout the Balkans. I had discovered a large number of them in Sisak a while ago. In Prijedor there were a lot of beautiful projects with vivid colors and images of nature. However, the more recent, judging by the dates in the corner, the stronger their nationalistic overtones. Anyway, later Branko and Edin said that at some point the pro-Serb city authorities decided to channel youth activity in this direction. However, they have nothing of artistry or fantasy. They are a simple representation of national or even extremely nationalistic symbolism. “We are Serbs” is one of them, which shows the couple in traditional Serbian costumes. On the other I saw the date of the proclamation of the "independence" of Republika Srpska, the outlines of Serbian soldiers, and the outlines of the RS map.

Then we sat down with Edin, Branko and Nikola for coffee. Everyone was still getting ready. Nikola ran to rush the students. And Edin suddenly asked a good question: "You're from Poland, right? Tell me how you do it? Poles and Ukrainians. That after so many years of conflicts, reluctance, often hatred, you now cooperate so closely? That you, Poles, help the Ukrainians, and they stay with you? Why are we Bosniaks, Serbs and Croats not so capable of doing so?”.

Good and difficult question. I smiled – "The number of those who do not want to help Ukrainians has increased to 15 percent (according to a CBOS's poll on July 10, 2023, 21 percent do not accept supporting Ukrainians (Al. Shehabi, 2023). So it will be more complicated. Maybe a common enemy? Kidding. There were a million Ukrainians with us even before the war broke out. It's definitely a reflex of humanity and we'll see what comes later."

I haven't found a good answer over the past few months, although the question has been etched in my memory. Because it is known that tensions will appear, old animosities will return. This was evident during the next July anniversary of the Volhynia (pl. Wołyń) massacre in relation to the past and memory. Jan Assmann has described cultural memory as "a repository of reused texts, images, and rituals, characteristic of each community and epoch, in which it nurtures, stabilizes, and transmits an image of itself, a collectively shared knowledge, mostly (though not necessarily) of a past upon which a group it bases the consciousness of its unity and specificity" (Assmann, 2003, 16). But what if this knowledge of the past and the awareness of unity are based only on the victim's sense, and reject the truth of being the perpetrator? This is a situation that weighs heavily on Polish-Ukrainian relations. On the one hand, we have an unbelievable impulse of humanism and the need to help. On the other hand, these few anniversary days cause many doubts to be heard, and there is still little space for a sincere conversation, despite important books such as *Opowieści z Wołynia* (has not been translated into English. It could be Stories from Volhynia) by Witold Szabłowski (2023).

A crime (not) for a crime. Smrike, Ahmići, Trusina.

It is impossible to drive through Bosnia and Herzegovina and not admire the landscape. Clouds and mist descending from green slopes to river valleys. The rapid current of the Sana river flowing through the Sanski Most, where Arkan's soldiers murdered the Bosnians. Moisture hanging over Lake Plivsko and the cry of local herons. A waterfall in the center of Jajce, the water foam of the falling Pliva. Not to feel the shiver piercing the body for the perfect beauty of nature. You also have to stop thinking about crimes for a while. Separate them from this perfection, so as not to fall into the Western *clichés* that abound in

books as bad as Robert D. Kaplan's *Balkans Ghosts*.

Bogdan Bogdanović, in his modernist thinking about the compatibility of the landscape, nature with architectural interference, achieved extraordinary perfectionism. Martina Stierli, in a publication for the exhibition at New York's MoMA, wrote that "Bogdanović's many monuments, which were built throughout the culturally and topographically diverse territory of the former Yugoslavia, manifest a poetic sensibility." (Stierli, 2018, 5). At the same time, this poetic quality is related to the location of the crime itself. In the case of Smrike, near Novi Travnik, we are talking about a hill towering significantly over the nearby valleys. Someone from our expedition asked consciously, “Why shoot several hundred people in plain sight, on top of a hill?”. “Maybe to make everyone in the neighborhood afraid?” one of the professors replied. Behind this poetry, apart from the need to inscribe itself into collective memory and the topography of the area, there is also a crime. In this case, about 700 anti-fascist activists from Travnik and the surrounding area, were murdered in 1941 by the Ustashas (information carved in stone at the entrance to the park and described in the decision to establish a necropolis as a National Monument of Bosnia and Herzegovina (Decision. The cultural landscape of the necropolis of the victims of fascism, Municipality Novi Travnik, 2012). We are talking mainly about ethnic Serbs, Roma and Jews. We went up for a few minutes. Passing by new homes. There are stairs in front of the hill. A stone slab, heavily damaged, describes the memorial site. However, the word fascists or Ustasha was coined by someone. Whoever gets here by chance may not find out who shot people in this place. Lecturers at the University of Zagreb warn us not to go far. Not only because part of the memorial park is plowed and grain is growing there, but also because the front line ran here in the 1990s and it can always happen that we will hit a mine from that period.

The view from the hill impressed us. But the very symbolism of the stone blocks erected according to Bogdanović's design is unusual. Creatures reminiscent of those we know from pre-Columbian temples, the image of amphisbaena, a lizard from Greek mythology with two heads. In addition, two characteristic signatures of the Serbian architect, i.e. the Greek letter omega and cuts in the concrete. This is also how we can distinguish those monuments that have been

renovated in recent years - their surface is smooth. The hill seems to dominate the area, but at the same time the silence prevailing there makes me feel like at the end of the world. We all took pictures with the beautiful blocks by Bogdanović in the background. We talked, we enjoyed ourselves. We were looking for an answer to the question, why to forge a word meaning a criminal, fascist regime from 80 years ago?

From there we had only a short distance to Ahmići. A small Muslim village nestled between fields. Here, apart from the story of the imam who watches over the place, we are also dealing with an exhibition. Photos are showing the village a few days after the attack on April 16, 1993. On April 15, Catholic neighbors said good night to their Muslim neighbors as they always do, even though many of them knew about the planned ethnic cleansing. The next day, during the massacre prepared by the authorities of the Croatian republic of Herzeg-Bosnia, more than a hundred people were killed. We entered a small room with pictures of a destroyed village, a mosque, charred bodies of murdered men and boys, and two groups. It was cold, so you didn't feel crowded. I stay with a group of students longer. When there are fewer of us, you can stop at the photos for a while. We were focused on the images. They had a stronger influence on us as people for centuries than anything else. I was looking for photos taken by UNPROFOR soldiers. To this day, out of over a hundred victims, the bodies of 15 of them have not been found. It was not until 2022 that another 9 were discovered and identified as family members of those murdered in Ahmići. As much as 98 percent of families returned to the village, but contacts with Croatian neighbors are casual. Only one boy survived, escaping from the burning house to a Croatian friend. These Croats helped him and led him to the Bosnian side.

Some of the criminals were convicted. One of the highest responsible officers, Dario Kordić, has been released after a few years. He lives in Croatia and regularly takes part in anti-abortion marches. Two Croatian Presidents visited Ahmići. President Ivo Josipović even apologized for this crime against Muslims. President Kolinda Grabar-Kitarović came in turn, but with an unannounced visit. As he emphasized in the talk with us, the imam said that this year a Croatian woman brought her children and laid a wreath at the monument. And this is

the first such case.

Then, in the house of culture, which was built in the hall where the Croatian authorities of the region wanted to allow pig farming, we watched two documentaries. The first one was a story about a massacre, memories of people who survived and a story about searching for the bodies of loved ones. Well assembled, as the students of journalism will say later, an honest and calm picture of those who survived.

The second film was its opposite. There is an aggressive, nationalistic note in it. We discussed it already on the way to Mostar. Instead of summer, juicy colors, as in the first one, we have a black and white film, even better edited. In which the hero talks about his relationship with his uncle, after whom he was named. Uncle was murdered in Ahmići and his body was not found for many years. The hero walks through the rain and snow in heavy army boots and a black leather jacket. His words, which were an extension of a Facebook post, were not reassuring, but rather terrifying. The inability to live in the future and remember the past seemed to be a pervasive problem at times - not just in this film.

The last stop before Mostar was the small village of Trusina, lost in the mountains. Only hours separated this crime from the murder in Ahmići. The difference, however, was that the roles were reversed. Bosniaks came down to this village from the mountains and murdered the Croatian inhabitants. Dragica Tomić, who accompanied us that day, missed the bullet by only centimeters. Same evening, despite a fever of 39 degrees, she begins a persistent journey with her son. It was his determination and repeating the words: “it will be ok soon, mom”, allowed them to cross the mountains and reach themselves. We were shortly after the anniversary of those events. There was still snow on most of Bosnia and Herzegovina's peaks, although down here the first fruits are forming on the forgotten plum trees.

Graves lie next to burnt houses. On the wall in one of them, where the father died, and his body was probably completely burned, there are artificial flowers and candles left by children. “Up there was my grandparents' farm. Look, almost everything is overgrown, you can't even see the road." Tomic says. He

calmly talks about the crime. About how all her days merged into one during the journey. About convicted criminals. About five women who came back in 1995. About the fact that she would go to her husband's grave with a rifle, because it was not known whether someone would shoot. However, he adds several times - "it is not the nation that is responsible for the crimes, but a single person." Today, hardly anyone lives in Trusin. Dragica herself understands that young people are moving out and looking for a better place on earth. On our way to Mostar we drove through Konjic. We didn't have time to stop there. However, there is a unique monument there - the first common one, dedicated to victims of different nationalities. During which, as he repeated, everyone hugged.

Mostar. Living and/despite remembering.

When we go out for a beer late in the evening, the last one, because most of the places are already closed, I don't feel the sticky air, characteristic of Mostar, in the air. We hit the bar right next to our accommodation. When there are only two of us left, we start talking to the owner. From the history of the Velež club (Bosnian football club from Mostar, since 1995. connect to the eastern part of the city), we move on to a question asked by a student present with me. It almost answers the question of who we are and what we do in Mostar. "And what did you do during the war?" "I was almost a year at the Heliodrom." A man sent his family from Mostar to Slovenia. However, he stayed to defend the city. He had the opportunity to leave twice, but he didn't want to.

After the war, his tormentor came to the bar. He said, "You know, there was a war. But now at least we can have a drink together." They had a drink. A Croatian friend went. They didn't see each other for long after that. The owner says it's not about forgetting. But you have to live on. He runs a bar, pours Sarajevsko, returns home to his wife. He does what he likes. Like others. To confirm his words, he talks about the adopted daughter of his friends. She knows she is the daughter of a Serb who raped her mother and who gave her up for adoption. Friends could not have children, although they tried for years, so they adopted her. "A girl, or rather a woman" has children, treats her adoptive parents as if they were real and is happy. “This war might not have

happened at all. Has anyone gained anything from it? There were only so many victims. And the borders we fought for have hardly changed."

The next day we all listen to the story of the Heliodrom. It is there that a museum dedicated to the HVO ("Hrvatsko Vijeće Obrane", eng. Croatian Defense Council) is to be built. After breaking the alliance with the Army of Bosnia and Herzegovina, these units created an internment camp for ABiH (Army of Bosnia and Herzegovina) soldiers, i.e. the officials of the republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina in the 1990s.

Emir Hajdarović told us about torture in the camp there. We were sitting on the bus in front of the gate. Today, it is not possible to enter the Heliodrom area – part of it is the buildings of the university in Mostar, but it is still more convenient for its authorities to hide the truth about the crimes of the 1990s. In the name of the oppressive cultural policy, it is planned to build an HVO museum in this place. This institution would be dedicated to the heroism of those individuals, not their crimes. Former Helidrom inmates don't mind the HVO museum, but they don't want it at this location. They also have Croatian allies like Documenta. Hajdarović says that it is not about the number of those who died, but about 54 dead. Only about the torture they experienced, like being locked in a hangar in 50 degrees Celsius, without water. Back then, the only option was to drink the urine of the Biscuit Bucket for urine. 350 g of bread. Oatmeal ready to eat in 5 minutes. Asphalt on which you had to lie down, and which had 100 degrees. "We can't imagine what the human body can endure." Then some drank as much water as they wanted, especially the new ones. But after three days without water and walking 200, 300 m in the heat you will probably die. At least 10,000 people passed through the camp (Augustinović, 2023). From Mostar, from Ljubaška, some were forcibly resettled to Sweden during the war. His family asked a Croatian friend to find him. He was afraid to talk about it, even to show other Croats his face when he delivered the package. At the same time, prisoners were sent to forced labor, including digging trenches for the Croats, said Hajdarović.

On the day of our departure from Zagreb, May 6, "Jedinstvena organizacija boraca grada Mostara (JOB)" (eng. Common organization of the fighters of

Mostar) and “Centar za mir i multietničku saradnju iz Mostara” (eng. The Centre for peace and multiethnic cooperation from Mostar) published a video confirming the judgment of the Court in The Hague. It is the Croatian military units, the HVO, that are responsible for the destruction of the Old Bridge in Mostar (J. D., 2023). As the former mayor of Mostar said: "Those who lightly mention war and conflicts should watch these videos carefully, let them be a warning." (M. S. S. 2023, own translation).

In Mostar we also met with Dragan Markovina, who took us to the partisan cemetery destroyed last year. This is one of the last completed architectural projects by Bogdan Bogdanović. According to the legend, he was to allocate one niche on it, slightly to the side, to rest in this place with his wife. His ashes never ended up here, perhaps because of the tragedy of the war-divided city. In which the invisible border appears, it disappears. Was this really supposed to be Bogdanović's grave as well? Markovin wasn't sure. Renovated for many years, starting from 2008, the cemetery is waiting for funds again. Nearly 600 plaques commemorating partisans and units were smashed again. The cameras did not work, the guards were not found shortly after the reconstruction, as Markovina said.

Markovina himself slightly changed his view of Mostar and the socio-political situation in the region. For many years he fought hard for the multicultural memory of the former Yugoslavia. He was recognising himself as Yugoslavian. Today, he says there is no going back to that dream utopia. That if someone wants to fight on ethnic grounds, let them fight, but life goes on. There was a lot of disappointment in his voice - that's how I perceived it. Because at the same time, he sneered at how HDZ BiH, which is co-responsible for the crimes of the 1990s, including those at the Heliodrom, and after the collapse of Yugoslavia named some streets in honor of the Ustasha, has changed the perspective radically in the last few months. When an Israeli investor took over the “Aluminium Mostar” foundry, the fascist criminals were removed from the streets of the city. Jewish identity, which was part of the Mostar’s before World War II, returned to "favor". It turned out that money also dictates the conditions of cultural memory, said Markovina.

was in Mostar that we also heard about the shooting in a school in Belgrade. Another trauma that accompanied us until the end of the trip. When we were trying to support some Belgrade psychology students. Tears and rage, and a constant feeling of helplessness against the enormity of the tragedy. The victims and the perpetrator who shot his colleagues and a school employee on May 3, 2023. We spent at least a couple of hours talking about how much this crime is part of the sequence we hear about and which we have come to investigate. We were thinking and analyzing it at the end of the trip.

Dubrovnik-tration

The road to Dubrovnik was long and winding. Upon arrival, we were accommodated in a beautiful facility of the University of Zagreb CAAS (eng. Centre for Advanced Academic Studies). A historic building with an atrium, a great university restaurant, located right next to the charming Gradac Park, was supposed to give us almost three days to take a break from meetings with witnesses of the tragedies of the 20th century.

As part of the stay we had a tour of the old town, but offbeat. Our guide was Vjekoslav Viedra, for thirteen years the head of “Zavod za obnovu Dubrovnik” (eng.Institute for the Reconstruction of Dubrovnik). He told us about the Serbian bombing of the city in the 1990s, about his work, and about the monuments. Not necessarily the most visited ones. Knowing every stone and the history of almost every one he supervised, he was full of humor, wit and irony. And we actually relaxed. Even during the lectures of invited foreign professors, there was no such tension. During the break, we lit candles in the Orthodox church in the center of the old town to honor the victims of the shooting in Belgrade.

Just like in Prijedor or Mostar, I went out for a lonely, very early walk again. Again, I met someone - this time German tourists who got out of the cruiser. I jumped up from the bench outside the old city walls when they blocked my view. In English, one of them asked me "Well, are you fed up with us here?". Embarrassed, hiding the “Jutarnji List”, I replied that I was just going for a coffee. Because what would I say, being a tourist too? Going back, I rescued a common

swift caught by a cat.

An additional, “unforeseen” experience was the conflict between students after one of the nights, which had to be calmed down and explained by the professors. We held talks with the participants of the trip for almost two hours to lead to a sincere apology and reconciliation. The emotions that accompanied us were certainly intensified by those we experienced in the previous days, and at the same time were to some extent a reflection of the traumas and conflicts we heard about, albeit in a micro version. Fortunately, we were finally able to analyze our experiences, work in groups, and testimonies of witnesses. There were some serious games, conversations, cooperation and individual reflections. At the end of our stay in Dubrovnik, we opened the green box. And we got emotional again. We posted the reflections there anonymously. Again – it was a strong and devastating experience. For me, reading notes, analyzing them, and writing this text is kind of an attempt to deal with tragedies, to sort out emotions. The trip in which I participated in three languages (mostly Croatian, a little bit in English, and in Polish writing some short notes to my partner) took place a year after the full-scale invasion on Ukraine by the Russian regime. A year after the crimes in Bucha. There were so many similarities and differences that were weighing me down heavily throughout the journey.

Instead of summary

Undoubtedly, the most important reflection after leaving for me was the experience of community. Not necessarily mine, but how much the students needed a sense of belonging. For most it was crucial. That there are more, not only Croats, who think and feel what they do. Resistant to the interpretation of history and the myth of Croat-victims. Serbo-Croatian relations that are not only based on guilt and being a victim. Even last night, at the farewell party, I listened to stories from people younger than me about how, if at all, they were going to deal with the reactions at home to where they had been and what they had been doing for those nine days. For many of them, it was the Ahmići, the Croatian crime, that made the greatest impression, or at least talked about it the most. At the same time, it is not only about a crime attributed to a specific nation and its trauma, such as Bosnian or Serbian crimes committed against

Croats. Facing what may define us (should? must? define?) and what our loved ones may not accept can also be traumatic. So is confrontation, or lack of it, with those we love who think differently. And that's what we're dealing with citizens of Ahmići. So how can confronting trauma be inevitable in the long run? Sharing it, speaking it openly is part of dealing with it. Our study trip can therefore be considered a collective form of therapy and facing our own demons. This would undoubtedly be a counterattack, and over time perhaps a transformation of the cultural memory of the Croatian nation, which is based on the experience of Vukovar, Ovčar or Dubrovnik, and rejects what does not fit the role of the victim.

Courage is a word that came to my mind many times during conversations or listening to stories. This is not about civil courage, not above all. But for the courage to talk about your experience, trauma. The courage to share it with others. I saw it and appreciated our interlocutors for it. It is also a sign that in some way they have somehow worked through their traumas. Although everyone deals with them differently, as we saw during this trip among students - some were angry, others partied, others cried for a long time. Everyone reacts differently because there is no possibility to react in every known way - „The story repeats where there is a missing perceiver. The witness had to step out because the events were too much to bear and there was no time for all the reactions and responses, which had to be put on hold in order to go forward, to survive." (Audergon, 2004, 19-20).

The traumas that accompanied the participants of the trip over these few days were different – "Societal trauma is highly context-specific, and it can be difficult to distinguish between different origins of trauma." (Sotieva, 2021, 4). Yet at the same time, they were so much alike. Differentiating them would not only be difficult, but even inadvisable. All of them can be, to a greater or lesser extent, part of our memory - the participants of the trip. And "every memory – both individual and group – is the memory of oneself as an individual and as a community. And even if the matters, events and facts that are remembered concern distant matters and things, other people and groups, they always refer to remembering subjects, both individual and group, in one way or another. (Golka, 2009, 51) writes Marian Golka, showing that the experience of an event,

including the experience of trauma, shapes our "I". In this way, in each of the participants of the study trip, the traumatic events told, heard and experienced will leave a "stamp", become part of their identity. However, it will be up to them what they do with the memory of these traumas. Talking about atrocities always means participating in the act of interpreting their meaning in time. Why is it so important to know what horrific things happened in the past? No one can preserve his identity without taking on the burden of history. This would be a proper summary of reading the contents of zelena kutija (eng. green box) on the last day before returning to Zagreb. Aware of this, students of photography, political science and journalism from Zagreb, and psychology from Belgrade, perhaps strengthened by a sense of community, decided to talk honestly with their loved ones.

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On the Edge of Oblivion

Rebekah Manlove

Memory and oblivion, remembering and forgetting, form pairs for good reason. Without forgetting, humans would be in a constant state of overload, and could neither focus nor function. Without remembering, it would not be possible to plan long term, to learn, or to form identities. It tends to be the nature of these pairs, that one part could not exist without the other and that neither is morally superior. However, after the crimes committed by the Nazis, the worst in the history of mankind, a moral imperative has developed: To "Never Forget" in order to make sure that "Never Again" people will be systematically subjugated, humiliated, starved, tortured, and eventually murdered on an industrial scale. At least in Germany, the country most familiar to me, the crimes committed in the Second World War have taken a special place in collective culture, though this is not, and never has been, uncontested. Auschwitz survivor Jean Améry wrote already in the 1960s about the letter of a young man, clearly angry that he has to "hear again and again that our fathers killed six million Jews." (Jean Améry, *Jenseits von Schuld Und Sühne: Bewältigungsversuche Eines Überwältigten* (München: dtv, 1970), 91.) This type of sentiment has never disappeared and has been publicly repeated by well-known politicians in recent years. It is a call for oblivion, a call to forget the crimes committed by Germans, to get rid of the uncomfortable feeling of collective guilt and all the moral imperatives following it, be they commemorating the victims, turning former concentration camps into memorial spaces, taking antisemitism and other forms of discrimination seriously, and examining the foundations of a society that enabled these crimes critically.

To me, the assertion that there is "too much talking about the holocaust and the Second World War" always seemed absurd. The occupation of Yugoslavia and Greece, for example, were mere footnotes in my middle school history book. Only when I visited Kraljevo and heard about the reprisal shootings of October 1941, when the Wehrmacht killed thousands of men and boys, I got a glimpse into how much my country had affected this town, that I had never

even heard of before. Memory and oblivion aren't fixed states. Past events and people move between them. But how could I claim something is in oblivion, that nobody knows about and remembers it, when clearly I have learnt about it, through people, texts, and objects? If it truly was in oblivion, I couldn't possibly know about it. When does oblivion begin and when is something within the realm of memory? I wanted to explore this question by looking at some recent encounters of mine with the complex of German-Yugoslav connections, of communities commemoration practices, and the Second World War.

In October 2022 and March 2023, I visited the Banat region of north-eastern Serbia with a group of researchers from Germany, who are specialized in Romanian studies. This region had long been a part of the Habsburg empire, bordering the Ottoman empire, and as such had been turned into a destination for all sorts of Christian settlers. Germans, Slovaks, Czechs, and many other peoples began to colonize the Banat in the 18th century. Romanians also belonged to this group of settlers, which had piqued the curiosity of our team. That's why in October of 2022, we visited the village of Uzdin, the only Banat village with a Romanian majority population. Majority means in this case, that there are barely any non-Romanians living in the village. Normally, villages in this region are more ethnically heterogeneous, despite Serbs having become the dominant group over the last decades. Uzdin's Romanian homogeneity is an outlier, which caught the interest of our team members. During our first visit, we wanted to explore the village's cemetery. The locals mentioned to us that there was also a Jewish cemetery, somewhere at the end of the Christian cemetery. We wandered between countless Orthodox Romanian and Serbian tombstones but did not come across a single one that could be recognized as Jewish. However, the cemetery was big, we took a long time to explore it, and while the Jewish tombstones were certainly interesting to us, they were not the priority during this exploration.

We visited Uzdin for the second time in March 2023. This time, we insisted on seeing the Jewish cemetery. The old ladies in the village told us "Why do you ask about this? You already went there last time!" Did we? Had we somehow missed it, even though we had already spent hours on this cemetery? Our team discussed, but nobody could remember seeing any Jewish tombstones. This

time, the local priest, an employee of the Romanian-orthodox church, took us in and it was him, who finally showed us the Jewish cemetery. We once again wandered through the Christian cemetery, eventually passing it, and then went on to a path we hadn't taken before, through mud and trash, into the fields. The priest guided us to a small hill. "That's the cemetery", he said. I looked around, confused. I saw no tombstones, just bushes and trees, not even a path through them. But the priest insisted that we had arrived, and so we made our way up the small, completely overgrown hill. Finally, we could see gray stones, and letters on them, barely visible under branches and twigs. We split, each of us breaking through the greenery, focusing on one or two of the broken, fallen, overgrown, covered with earth, tombstones. We saw names, dates, descriptions, epitaphs, psalms, in German, Hungarian, and Hebrew. How long have these graves been left like this? Who last took care of them? When did their descendants leave, and why? Did they go on their own volition, for a better life elsewhere, or were they made to move away? It isn't hard to have suspicions, when one encounters an abandoned Jewish cemetery in an area that was under German control from April 1941, in the part of Serbia, which was first declared "Judenfrei". However, other possibilities exist. They may have already left when the Banat was integrated into the Kingdom of Slovenes, Croats, and Serbs after the Great War. At the point of writing this text, there is no further information available to me on the history of the Jews of Uzdin, other than a few names and dates on cracked tombstones at the outer edge of the village.

Gaj is another Banat village, south of Uzdin. We passed through by chance and decided to stop, as we saw a partisan monument from the car. A statue of a young man, his right fist heroically risen, marching forward, stands atop a pedestal. It is dedicated to those from the region, who died in the fascist terror, serving in the National Liberation Army (The plaque reads: У ЗНАК ВЕЧИТЕ ЗАХВАЛНОСТИ ПАЛИМ БОРЦИМА И ЖРТВАМА ФАШИСТИЧКОГ ТЕРОРА У Н.О.Б.-И ОВОГА КРАЈА. ОВАЈ СПОМЕНИК ПОДИЖЕ ОРГАНИЗАЦИЈА САВЕЗА БОРАЦА СРЕЗА КОВИНСКОГ. 1956 ГОД.). On two sides of the monuments are plaques, names of fallen fighters engraved on them. There is a second, smaller monument, which looks just like a typical regional grave. It is specifically dedicated to those, who were "hanged in Gaj on the 14th of October 1942 at

10:30 (The inscription reads: ЖРТАВА ФАШИСТИЧКОГ ТЕРОРА ВЕШАНИХ У ГАЈУ, 14 ОКТОБРА 1942 ГОДИНЕ У 10,30 ЧАСОВА У ЗНАК ЗАСТРАШИВАЊА ШИРЕЊА ПАРТИЗАНСКОГ ПОКРЕТА). The monument is in the middle of a park, which makes up the center of this village. A school, pharmacy, church, and supermarket surround it. This is a public space, people must pass it every day. The monuments are clearly being maintained. Considering this, as well as the fact, that the nearby school is named after a man, who appears to have led the southern Banat Partisans and was killed by the fascists in 1943 and whose date of death seems to be some sort of holiday for this school *('Историјат Школе – ОШ "Миша Стојковић" Гај'*, accessed 20 July 2023, https://www.osmisastojkovic.edu.rs/istorijat-skole/), one may safely assume that the locals know about and commemorate these victims of the fascist occupation. However, when I tried to research the atrocities in this region, and specifically the massacre on the 14th of October 1942, from my German home, I found no information about them. Most likely, something has been written about this date in the Yugoslav collections on fascist atrocities, and possibly German archives still hold the report that some Wehrmacht or SS-Unit sent to their higher ups about this day. Public hangings were commonly enforced by the occupiers since April 1941. They were meant to scare the public, but most likely became a driving factor for the people's increasing support for the Partisans. This village may still commemorate its victims, as flowers laid before the statue show. But back in the land of the perpetrators, this crime has long been forgotten. Maybe it was never even known there at all. And with no information on this massacre readily available, it will stay in this state of oblivion. Here it seems, that what is deemed worth commemorating in the community the victims once belonged to, is deemed barely relevant among the descendants of the perpetrators.

Oblivion eventually engulfs all past events, unless someone makes the effort to remember. What events and which people are deemed worthy to commemorate may vastly differ between states and individuals, between nations and communities. State and national commemoration will often focus on that, which they deem to be foundational for their identity. For the post WWII socialist states, that was the communist resistance against fascism. Additionally, in the second Yugoslavia, the Partisan movement also became

foundational, because it offered a mythos which included the state's different ethnicities working together and supporting each other. What apparently wasn't deemed foundational, was the experience and suffering of those, who left Yugoslavia or were deported. One of the many groups, whose suffering was long ignored, is that of the forced laborers. Some originally came to Germany voluntarily (For a discussion on how much force played a role for voluntary laborers and how they turned into forced laborers, see Sanela Hodzic and Christian Schölzel, *Zwangsarbeit Und Der Unabhängige Staat Kroatien 1941 - 1945* (Berlin: LIT, 2013), 48–58.). Others were prisoners, deported against their will to work as slaves for the war economy. Even those who came on their own volition eventually became forced laborers, as they were forbidden to return home (Christian Schölzel, 'Verbündete Als Zwangsarbeiter Arbeiter Aus Dem „Unabhängigen Staat Kroatien" Im „Großdeutschen Reich" 1941-1945', in *Arbeitskräfte Als Kriegsbeute: Der Fall Ost- Und Südosteuropa 1939-1945*, ed. Karsten Linne and Florian Dierl (Berlin: Metropol, 2011), 205.). Barbara Wiesinger presents some possible reasons why this group specifically was not deemed worth researching and remembering. Forced laborers fit neither in the Yugoslav concept nor in the successor states' concept of heroism and victimization. Possibly, the complexity of their biographies, their experiences, and their relations to other Yugoslav ethnicities whilst abroad made them unattractive as an object of identity construction and thus for commemoration (Barbara N. Wiesinger, 'Opfer oder Akteur? Ohnmacht und Handlungsmächtigkeit in *lebensgeschichtlichen Narrativen von Zwangsarbeiterinnen und Zwangsarbeitern aus dem ehemaligen Jugoslawien*', BIOS - Zeitschrift für Biographieforschung, Oral History und Lebensverlaufsanalysen 21, no. 2 (2008): 223.).

In Germany, research into their history began in the 1980s. Commemoration for the forced laborers began in the 1990s, usually due to the initiative of historically interested locals (Katarzyna Woniak, 'Späte Anerkennung: Lokales Gedenken an Die NS-Zwangsarbeit', *Osteuropa* 66, no. 3 (2016): 51.) As in many other German cities, discussions on local involvement in the forced labor system and the decision to take responsibility and to commemorate the victims, took place in my hometown of Leipzig. Thus in the year 2000, the Gedenkstätte für Zwangsarbeit was founded, whose continuous work has managed to spread

knowledge about the role of Leipzig in the forced labor complex within the local population. A lot of their work focuses on the HASAG, a company that had previously produced lamps, but began arms manufacturing in the 1930s. In the search for a thesis topic for my bachelor's, I had previously tried to look up connections of my hometown to the western Balkans, but found nothing. However, when I attended a presentation of the Gedenkstätte's work in Summer 2023, it was mentioned that Croatians had been one of the groups of forced laborers. That caused me to return to this research, and to my surprise I learnt that the HASAG was among the companies with the largest number of forced laborers from the Independent State of Croatia (NDH) in Germany and Austria (Hodzic and Schölzel, *Zwangsarbeit Und Der Unabhängige Staat Kroatien 1941 - 1945*, 83.). On the online map of the Gedenkstätte, three places in Leipzig are marked as "Kroatenlager" ('Gedenkstätte Zwangsarbeit in Leipzig - Karte', accessed 21 July 2023, https://www.zwangsarbeit-in-leipzig.de/karte.). It is possible that not only Croats, but also other inhabitants of the NDH state lived in these camps. Ethnic Serbs for example were one of the groups most often deported for forced labor (Schölzel, 'Verbündete Als Zwangsarbeiter Arbeiter Aus Dem „Unabhängigen Staat Kroatien" Im „Großdeutschen Reich" 1941-1945', 205) and the Germans didn't always bother to tell them apart from Croatians (Hodzic and Schölzel, *Zwangsarbeit Und Der Unabhängige Staat Kroatien 1941 - 1945*, 43). How is this history not more widely known, I wondered. At none of the addresses marked there you can find any indicator of this past, like most former forced labor camps. How could I grow from a child to an adult in this city, how could I study the history of the Balkans for years at a university in a town close to Buchenwald, and never hear of this connection? How could I live in Zagreb and not once hear how many people from Croatia were brought north, even to my hometown, where they worked and often died as slaves?

Choosing and rounding up deportees, holding them in camps, organizing their transit: The Germans did not do all this on their own. In the case of Croatia and Bosnia, without the willing work of the Ustasha and their local supporters, less people would have been sent away to starve and die in labor camps. Laborers were often taken directly from the Ustasha concentration camps like Stara Gradiška and Jasenovac or stayed in Ustasha run transit camps (Hodzic and Schölzel, 53–55.). The conditions there were so terrible, that people often died

before they could be sent away. Whilst the German conquest of Europe gave the Ustasha the possibility to rise to power, the Ustasha were no mere servants. In addition to supporting the German conquest of Europe and the destruction of its Jews, they had their own political program and genocidal ambitions. The concentration camps Slana and Metajna on the Island of Pag, as well as Jadovno, were among those camps, that were entirely run by Ustasha. Serbs, Jews, Roma and anti-Ustasha Croats were murdered without direct involvement of a single Wehrmacht or SS-member. The racial ideology of the Ustasha state also showed in negotiations with the Germans on the supply of forced laborers from the NDH for Germany and Austria, with Pavelić himself insisting, that ethnic Serbs be taken rather than Croats and that Serbs („Prawoslawen") should be accommodated separately from Croats and Muslims (Hodzic and Schölzel, 47).

The examples discussed above all differ in how well they are known, in research as well as in the public consciousness. If we look at oblivion and memory as two ends of a spectrum, which can present differently for the same event between communities, all these cases seem to fall on a somewhat different place. That the general situation of forced laborers has moved out of oblivion in Germany shows clearly that memory is dynamic. Both the overarching structure of forced labor, as well as its organization has been researched and managed to become a part of public memory. However, as soon as one looks for knowledge of specific groups and their relations in individual places, especially those from the former Yugoslavia, there is little to be found. From what I gathered, it also seems that the forced laborers from the former NDH hold no place in the memory of their places of origin, though much more in depth studies would be needed to judge this. The opposite is the case for the Partisans of the southern Banat. In Germany, they are barely known and information on them is hard to find. But it seems safe to assume that the plight of the Partisans has managed to stay in the public memory of the communities they used to be active in. Both were victims of German aggression, but one group has become relevant in Germany, while the other hasn't. One of the differences is where they suffered and died. Maybe it is simply more likely to convince people that an event is worth commemorating, if it happened right around the corner. Whatever happened with Uzdin's Jewish population seems like it hasn't been worth

remembering. Oblivion feels most present in this story. Hopefully, one day we will find out about the fate of the Jews of Uzdin. The cause of their disappearance matters not just for scholarly curiosity, but to better understand the workings of multi-ethnic societies. If deportation was their fate, they should be adequately commemorated. That they ever existed seems to be nearly forgotten, only the overgrown cemetery at the end of the village remains on some locals' mental map.

The need to commemorate applies to all victims of the fascist regimes, including those taken from their homes to work as slaves for the benefit of Germany's war economy. Without the ready and cheap supply of forced laborers, the war machine would have collapsed much earlier. Forced laborers were present in all of Germany, and knowing this shreds the claim of past generations that "We didn't know" to pieces. However, in every case it is also important to look at the roles of the local collaborators. Without those citizens of Yugoslavia, who worked with the Nazis to achieve their own goals, more people could have survived. Accepting responsibility instead of denying it, is the foundation on which trust can be rebuilt. The call for oblivion on the other hand, is disturbing to victims, survivors, and their descendants. Even though forgetting may be a normal process, the weight of the Second World War calls on us to chronicle, analyze, and commemorate it. Through the combination of research and public support, the above events might make their way from the edge of oblivion into public memory. However, to achieve this, there is much work left to do.

Post-communist (re)membering of the Holocaust in Croatia under the gaze of the European Union.

Georgios Manoudakis

Introduction

The Holocaust was the inhuman atrocity that occurred during the Second World War across Europe, where more than 6 million Jews perished in the hands of the Axis powers. Despite its tremendous value in the mnemonic landscape of not just the European, but the global collective memory, acts of brutal violence, persecution, and massacres were extended to other ethnic and religious groups all over Eastern Europe. The collaborator states of Nazi Germany, namely Italy, the Independent State of Croatia (NDH, 1941-1945), Hungary, and Bulgaria, practiced similar, yet less extreme, techniques of ethnic cleansing and extermination of the undesired members of their own society, as they were now deemed the unwanted foreign body that corrupted their ethnic purity.

In the aftermath of the Second World War and the gradual prevalence of the ideological dichotomization of the world between the Capitalist West and the Communist East, namely the Cold War, the attitudes and ways of remembering and commemorating this defining event that marked the 20th century were diversified. Each side was projecting, focusing, remembering, and forgetting different elements of their involvement in restoring peace in Europe and across the globe. In the radical shift of the political reality in the 1990s in Europe, with the Fall of the “Iron Curtain”, the disintegration of the communist regimes, and the formation of new independent and liberal states, the mnemonic landscape in Eastern Europe shifted yet again, incorporating European and global icons and memories, into their renewed, revised and reinterpreted historiography and national politics of memory.

Additionally, the angst of the new European states of being left out from the Western and Central European shared cultural and mnemonic spaces

pressured them to align themselves, to varying degrees, with the regulations, norms, and dogmas of commemorations and remembering of the European Union. The latter, having as one of its founding myths the unity of the European nations against the fascist and nazi ideologies and atrocities that occurred during the Second World War, draws attention to the importance of the Holocaust as the highpoint of collective remembering on a European level.

The aim of this paper is to discuss the post-communist remembering of the Holocaust in Croatia, a collaborator country, amidst two contemporary contrasting forces. Namely, I am interested in examining the mnemonic politics of the country inside the popularized and unofficially state-supported historical revisionism of the nation's past involvement and position within the Axis powers, on the one hand, and on the other hand, the EU enlargement pressures and responsibilities to which Croatia somewhat complies, in order to legitimize its own "Europeanness".

The overview of the Croatian political agenda, narratives, and practices is beyond the scope of this paper. Instead, I will focus on the particular case study of the Italian concentration camp Kampor that was located on the island of Rab as a "mnemonic scapegoat", as I would characterize it, in order to show its importance as a mediator inside the Croatian state – EU "memorial equilibrium", focusing on its particular international and transnational history, as well as the contemporary commemorations practices that take place in the camp by state officials.

My main theoretical questions, therefore, would be whether individual states could include and adjust the overall history of the Holocaust in their own national narratives to highlight or silence particular elements of their own history, and if so, in what way, while at the same time, I will address the practice of disregarding and neglecting their past brutalities by remembering and highlighting the atrocities of others against them.

Parallel, Yet Deviant Holocaust Remembrances

Nowadays, Holocaust remembrance is considered a worldwide moral value and obligation, creating a mnemonic community that commemorates the fallen victims of fascism and the fearless resistance of the European and American forces against the Axis powers. However, this universality is recent, along with the standardized rhetorics, practices, and ideology accompanying this horrific event. Aleida Assman characterized the Holocaust as "the paradigmatic genocide in world consciousness" (2010: 98).

If we are interested in understanding the particularity and differences in relating with and commemorating the Holocaust in Western and Eastern Europe, we should pay close attention to the spatial and temporal differences between these two sides of Europe since the end of the Second World War in 1945, where the communist-socialist regimes took hold of Eastern Europe, implementing their own narratives and readings of history, differentiating their position and involvement in the War from that of their Western counterparts. Moreover, the Holocaust left a much different impact on the structure and cohesion of Eastern European societies, where the exterminations took place mainly.

Hence, if we are to interpret the post-communist Holocaust remembrance in Croatia, we should be aware of the overall power dynamics and rhetoric in the continent, as they are the signifiers and guidelines, the analytical tools in other words, which the Croatian state is able to utilize accordingly.

First of all, immediately after the War in 1945, there was no mention of the Jewish suffering as a separate issue or thematic, but it was considered another side of the Nazi atrocities and brutalities that took place in the years of war (Subotić, 2019; Karge, 2009; Levy & Szneider, 2002). According to the political scientist Jelena Subotić (2019), the development of the Holocaust Memory in Western Europe had three consecutive and consecutive stages. Initially, as it was stated above, there was no mention of the term "Holocaust" in the first decade following the end of the War. At the same time, behind the Iron Curtain, the partisan anti fascist victory against the Axis was celebrated as a communist

triumph over Nazi totalitarianism (2019: 18).

It was only in the 1960s and with the popularization of important trials, prosecuting war crimes, such as the Trial of Adolf Eichmann in Jerusalem in 1961 and the Auschwitz Trial in Frankfurt three years later, that gave space in the Western European communities for understanding the Holocaust as a separate catastrophic event that was clearly planned and centrally organized. In the communist regimes of the East, the Second World War had now consolidated and mixed with the anti-fascist and communist identity, as it legitimized the latter. This ideological discourse and public memory did not allow for ethnic and religious minorities to be victimized, as this would inevitably draw attention from the established images that were promoted by the victors against fascism (2019: 19).

Ultimately, the end of the Cold War in the 1990s with the ferocious in some cases disintegration of the communist regimes and Federations in Eastern Europe, such as the aftermath of the dissolution of Yugoslavia, the Holocaust Remembrance took yet another, more unified turn. At this time, many important Western associations, such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the United Nations (UN), and the European Union (EU), together with many Israeli organizations and institutions such as Yad Vashem, and international museums, with one exemplary case that of the U.S. based Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, the Holocaust was transformed as the suffering of humanity in its totality against all evil, gaining thus a narrative in favor of the need for the globalization of human rights (2019: 21-3). The 1990s along with the following decades was the period where not only the memory but also the commemoration of the Holocaust was canonized and became more inclusive, incorporating the suffering of the Roma, Sinti, and other ethnic and religious minorities, and excluded social categories such as the disabled people and the persecuted LGBTIQ+ community.

On the other side, the Fall of the Curtain revealed a very different image of what the Holocaust represented for the now-free individuals and states from communist oppression. As numerous scholars argue, for the post-communist countries, especially in the final years of the previous century, their primary

goal was to criminalize, penalize and delegitimize their recent -non-fitting to the European standards- communist regime by blurring its borders with the other totalitarian and authoritarian political ideologies, as they were developed in the first half of the 20th century (Subotić, 2019: 24). It should be noted here that such was the approach of Croatia in the post-communist and post-Yugoslav Wars years, where its socialist past was to be purged in favor of the revitalization of a monocultural Croatian national identity that was considered suppressed thus far.

The reunification and mixing of the two sides of the continent, in the West of which the powerful European Union had already been formed, and to which the newly founded states of the East were looking to join, developed at the beginning of the year 2000 the so-called "memory wars" (Mälksoo, 2012). As I have already stated, the West had already developed and implemented a somewhat standardized image, content, ideology, and practices of Holocaust remembrance. What was at stake after the Fall of Communism in Europe was the introduction of alternative rhetorics by the Eastern European countries in their post-communist state, coming to challenge and on occasions contradict the centrality of the Holocaust as the main or harshest incident during the Second World War.

As Maria Mälksoo argues, there are mainly 4 different, yet related major mnemonic communities in the European Memory landscape. First of all, it is the Atlantic-Western European, followed by the German and then the Central-Eastern European, concluding with the fourth mnemonic community, Russia (2009: 654). According to her, the memories of the Second World War in Eastern Europe, contrary to their Western counterparts, are "lieux d'oubli", meaning obliterated places, or sites of forgetting (Bartov, 2008). This duality can entail that the local population in many cases either is not fully aware of the atrocities that took place in their land, or willingly avoid remembering because of the severe trauma that has caused in the local communities.

While the Jewish, Roma, and Sinti populations, together with a series of all the political actors, such as the antifascist and partisan fighters of the Western Front and political adversaries of Nazi Germany and fascist Italy that resided in

Western Europe, were transported to which concentration and extermination camps abroad, in places far away from their homeland, that is not the case with Eastern Europe. There, the Jewish genocide in many cases occurred outside the camps, in the city and ghettos of their country, where the victims were considered integral parts of the multiethnic communities of their homeland. Many killings were done in plain sight, while the community was forced to live on in fear of the perpetrators (2008: 570-1).

For example, the Poles, Slovaks, and Croats were direct witnesses of the atrocities, wagons, camps, and death. This affected the core of the ways each society in Eastern Europe commemorates the Holocaust and thus relates it to their own history, their own people, and could remind us "how intimate genocide could be, how personal and traumatic" (2008: 572). Hence, combined with the prolonged 40-year socialist silence, we can understand the everlasting importance and delicacy of the Holocaust in Eastern Europe. Contrary to Mälksoo, I agree with Omer Batrov that Eastern Europe could be seen as a "lieu de memoire" in its totality as it consists of the heart and core of the Holocaust experiences and memories (2008: 593). At the same time, however, we should focus on the ways the multiple and at times conflicting rhetorics co-shape these places of memory. We should, therefore, focus on the spatial dimension of the Holocaust and how it is incorporated and manifested within or by the local historical context and narratives.

In the following two sections, I will present the history of the Italian-run concentration camp during the Second World and the following commemorative practices during the time of socialist Yugoslavia and subsequently, in the aftermath of the bloody Yugoslav Wars, the Croatian Independence. By investigating the symbolic, ideological, and thus political connotations of this peculiar location of transnational interest in various times and under different regimes we can better understand the contemporary practices and preferences of Croatia in regulating and as a result, presenting its own part inside the common European framework.

Communist Holocaust Remembrance in Yugoslavia: The Case of Kampor

In order to talk about the Italian-run concentration camp of Kampor (1942) on the now-Croatian island of Rab, I will begin this section with a short historical overview of the actions and relations that lead to the formation of the nazi allied puppet state of the Independent State of Croatia and the relations it had with Mussolini's fascist Italy. Afterward, I will address the special case of the aforementioned camp to clarify its historical and thus symbolic importance as a place of memory as it was commemorated during the time of socialist Yugoslavia and after the Homeland War, as the Yugoslav Wars are called in Croatia.

In the aftermath of the First World War and the Fall of the Austro-Hungarian Empire in 1918, Croatia became part of the newly formed Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes, renamed a decade later into the Kingdom of Yugoslavia (Goldstein, 2003: 65). The two decades of the interwar period experienced political turbulence. Within the Kingdom, Belgrade's increasingly authoritarian and centrist policies culminated in the short-lived dictatorship of the 6th of January 1929.

Due to the unifying and assimilating procedures that were implemented in all the South Slavic nations, under the rule of the Serbian crown, and especially after the Dictatorship, when these processes intensified, many Yugoslavs immigrated abroad. Most of the new migrants were Croats, who left their homeland to go to Germany, Austria, and Italy, where they contacted and engaged with the already-established Croatian diaspora, whose role and political views played a critical part in the development of the history of Yugoslavia during the Second World War.

One of these migrants was the future leader of the Croatian fascist movement that developed in the 1930s, Ante Pavelić. He migrated to Italy and soon affiliated with the fascist ideology of a pure nation, purged from ethnic minorities and "foreign bodies", aspiring to overthrow the Yugoslav King and establish for the first time a sovereign Croatian state, run by him as its commander, in a form of personal despotism (Goldstein, 2008: 70).

The Second World War was deemed the ideal opportunity for the Pavelić-led Ustasha (Upraised) movement, to establish their desired state by collaborating with the Axis forces. The Yugoslav Government in Belgrade, pressured by the Axis powers, signed in Vienna on the 25th of March 1941 the protocol on the "Accession of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia to the Triple Pact" (Germany, Italy and Japan). The German forces captured Belgrade on the 6th of April in 1941 (Goldstein, 2003: 270-1).

The then leader of the Croatian Peasant's Party (HSS), and successor of Stjepan Radić, Vladko Maček refused to cooperate with the newly established government as the German forces entered Zagreb on the 10th of April. For this reason, his government was replaced by the emigrant Pavelić who returned to Zagreb on the 16th of the same month, accompanied by 200 Ustasha from Italy and a portion of the Italian army (Goldstein, 2003: 271). It is argued that the backbone of the new authoritarian regime was the emigrants from their neighboring collaborating countries. The Independent State of Croatia (NDH), whose existence is owed to the forces of Nazi Germany expanded in the majority of the territory of nowadays Bosnia and Herzegovina, the majority of Croatia, apart from the Istrian Peninsula and a portion of the Dalmatian coast, which fell under the Italian jurisdiction, reaching far until the outskirts of Belgrade.

The first mass arrests of Jews in the territory of Croatia took place between the 27th and 29th of May 1941, when 165 young Jews were arrested, and after an initial short-lived stay of a few days in a temporary dispersal camp close to the train station, they were deported in Danica concentration camp, moving yet again to the newly established camp of Jadovno where they were executed (Goldstein, 2001: 223-224). The summer of 1941 was critical in understanding the nature and character of the new regime as it established a series of concentration camps in the territory, the most important of which was the concentration complex of Jadovno-Gospić-Pag in June 1941.

Moreover, apart from the persecution of the Jewish and Roma populations from the territory, a practice that was nurtured and praised by the German side, the Ustasha administration was ruthless toward the Serbian people,

persecuting and imprisoning them in camps, either torturing or letting them "wither away" due to sickness, starvation or exhaustion. This brutality puzzled and was discouraged by the Axis forces, blaming the Ustasha for the senseless persecution of the Serbs and for being counterproductive to the interests of both Germany and Italy in the region.

It was for this reason that Italy pressured to take under its control most of the Croatian coast, especially the areas neighboring its borders. Pavelić had to comply with the Italian demands but proceeded with the complete liquidation of NDH's camps on the coast, and the establishment of a new concentration complex in the Slavonian plain, the infamous Jasenovac concentration camp. The latter consisted of several smaller locations in close proximity to each other and was the main theater of operation of ethnic extermination and purging until the fall of the regime in 1945.

On the other side of the borders, in the coastal realm where Italy reigned, a series of camps were also formed. I will concentrate in Kampor, a small concentration camp, situated in the island of Rab, referred to in Italian as "Campo di concentramento per internati civili di Guerra-Arbe", established on 27th of July 1942. The camp had Jewish and Roma inmates along with Slovenes and Croats from the coastal regions and the "Illyrian province", equivalent to nowadays Slovenia and Istria. Since its formation, almost daily transports of mostly Slovenes and Jewish people were going to Kampor.

Until its dissolution, on the 12th of September 1943, a few days after the capitulation of Italy on the 8th of the same month, the Croatian State Commission, together with the Slovenian National Commission determined that around 13.000 or 14.000 people entered the camp, resulting in 4.641 registered deaths in total (www.documenta.hr/koncentracijski-logor-Kampor-1942-1943), with Italian estimates being around 10.000 to 15.000 individuals (Idyllic Croatian Island Can't Erase Grim WWII History | Balkan Insight). These numbers are explained because of the Italian "cleaning operation" (rastrellamento) in the regions of Gorski Kotar and Primorije (Grgurić, 2005: 14). The camp was initially divided into four camps, aptly named Camp I [Men], II [Women], III [Jews], and IV [workshops] (2005: 52), and finally unofficially calling the camp cemetery as

Camp V (Jezernik, 2022). Despite the given difficulties and hardships of the prisoners, the conditions that prevailed in the camp were quite milder in relation to those of the Croatia extermination camps, while the persecution of Jews under the Italian authorities was not as intense.

The Slovenian anthropologist Božidar Jezernik offers a very insightful story regarding the delivery of arms by the Italian side to the prisoners on the 12th of September 1943. According to him, when Italy switched sides and joined the Allies there was no reason for the existence of camps with Allied prisoners. The Liberation Front Executive Committee in Camp I which had already formed since January, assisted by the partisans, met with the Italian Lieutenant Colonel Vincenzo Cujuli outside of the administration building in the afternoon of the 11th of September. There a small ceremony took place, with both sides present, the Italian militia and the multiethnic inmates. An Italian officer lowered the Italian flag and let the Slovenian flag fly in its place. After the short and day-long ceremony was over, the Italians surrendered their arms and departed from the camp, boarded a ship in the town of Rab, and left for Italy. It is remarkable that no Italian soldiers were killed that day (2022: 113). However, Cujuli was captured, and trialed by the "People's Tribunal" and they were sentenced to death, but he committed suicide a day before the execution date. He was buried outside of the formal cemetery walls.

It is worth noting that after the liberation of the camp on the 12th of September, many of the Jewish inmates aligned with the Yugoslav partisans and formed the first Jewish paramilitary unit during the Second World War (Jezernik mentions that the Israeli institution of Yad Vashem does not recognize this fact despite his arguments in favor of it), known as the "Rab Jewish Battalion", with more Jews to join them in the following months from all across the territories of coastal Italy and NDH. The remaining prisoners who were too sick or afraid to leave the camp were captured a few days later by the Nazi forces, transported to Auschwitz, and executed there.

The end of the Second World War found the partisan Yugoslavs victors over the Ustasha and the German collaborators, the socialist Federation with its six Republics was formed and the antifascist struggle was elevated as one of its

founding myths, blurring the details of the Croatian involvement in that War. The latter was a political choice. The Communist Party chose to avoid the commemoration of specificities over the controversies that took place during the war on the part of the partisans and their adversaries. Following the mnemonic practices of the rest of communist Eastern Europe and especially in their attempts to unify the People under a new and radical supra-national identity, that of the Socialist Yugoslav, the Communist Party of Yugoslavia focused on the national heroes (narodni heroji), the antifascist struggle and the partisan victories.

Every little village had its own local heroes' busts in the main square and various monuments were erected all over Yugoslavia, celebrating the communist victory. The actual places of the battles and of the human suffering of the People fell in dismay, while the Ustasha monuments and graveyards were completely destroyed by a decree that was issued on the 6th of July 1945 by the Central Committee (Subotić, 2019: 112-13). The concentration camps and the places of mass execution were initially left unmarked and in disarray. Even Jasenovac, the emblematic crown of the significance of pain and suffering during the war in the territory of Croatia, was left untouched for two decades. It was considered a "mnemonic problem for the communist state" (2019: 115).

It was only in 1966 when the Yugoslav architect Bogdan Bogdanović was commissioned to create a commemorative structure on the site, known as the "Flower". Two years later an initial small-scale exhibition was established in the newly formed museum in the area of the former camp. The camp itself, however, was long gone as its remaining, after it was set in flames by the Ustasha authorities just before the end of the war, were used as a building material for the houses of the adjacent settlements. Nowadays, no original structure remains but mounds of earth representing the pre-existing layout of the camp, with two small lakes, the result of the pits where prisoners collected dirt for the needs of the camp brick factory.

The camp of Kampor on the island of Rab, however, had a drastically different fate as it served a more favorable narrative, that of the communist-partisan heroism, which enabled the liberation of the camps and the salvation of

hundreds of suffering souls that were in the mercy of the brutal Italian forces. The most significant difference was that it represented an Italian-run camp and thus it belonged to the "Others", where "Ours" were the victims. For this reason, the Kampor Memorial Complex was created as early as 1953.

A year before in Ljubljana, "The Council for the Construction of the Monument on the Rab Island" was formed at the "Main Committee of the Association of Combatants of the National Liberation Struggle" (Jezernik, 2022: 120), tasked to erect a monument for the 10th celebration of the liberation of Kampor in the September of 1953. The Yugoslav architect Edvard Ravnikar transformed the site of the former camp into a symbolic necropolis where the souls of the dead could rest and "live on". At the same time, the camp cemetery was converted into a "Memorial cemetery" in an attempt to instrumentalize and utilize the grim memories of suffering and death as anti-Italian propaganda, using the narrative of the Slovenian and Croatian victims there, not accenting the presence of Jewish victims.

Post-communist Holocaust Remembrance in Croatia

The dissolution of the Federal Yugoslav resulted in blood-stained Yugoslav Wars that caused the complete disillusionment of the former popular motto of "unity and brotherhood" (bratstvo i jedinstvo) was a historical point, of pivotal importance for the practices of commemoration of the Second World War in the region. The decade of the 1990s was a period of intensified transition in Croatia in terms of the state's orientation, narratives, and ideology. First of all, already from the 1980s, but intensified in the 1990s historical revisionism of the Croatian past based on a nationalist approach was getting power over a certain vocal public audience. These rhetorics dominated the public scene and politics during and after the Yugoslav Wars as it was supported by the first President of Croatia and former communist elite Franjo Tuđman and its political party "Croatian Democratic Union" (HDZ) in later years.

I do not approach the post-communist remembering as the "defrosting" of memory that socialism paced in deep freeze. If we recount the daily encounters of everyday people with the public monuments and street names that were

dedicated to instances of local history and important regional national heroes, we could easily understand the familiarity of everyone with this aspect of history (Karge, 2009 & 2010). At the same time, however, we should never forget that such relations and affiliation are always mediated through the immediate materiality and name-giving that consist of their surroundings and this their living, experiential reality.

Apart from this reorientation in terms of ideology and total purge and criminalization of their very own communist and Yugoslav past, the Croatian state and the supporters of the new regimes took action into their own hands to cleanse the country's mental and physical landscape from memoirs that referred to this now undesired part of their history. It is indicative that the first 10 of Croatian independence out of the almost 6.000 monuments across the country that were dedicated to the events and partisans who fought in the Second World War, more than 3.000 were blown away by Croatian explosives, others were vandalized beyond repair, or they were simply taken away (Subotić, 2019: 113 & 120). The Cold War period purified and blurred all the undesired past(s) under the regime's ideology and aspiration. Similar processes, yet with different orientations and starting points occurred all over Eastern Europe in post-1989 Europe, where "a new past" needed to be cleansed and thus fall into oblivion. Whereas in 1945 the partisans were "liberators", since 1989 and in the case of Yugoslavia since 1991, these same important figures along with the regime they represented became "occupiers" and oppressors (Karge, 2010: 138).

Moreover, the 1990s was the time when many squares and street names changed, avoiding any former Yugoslav reference, being replaced with names of important historical personalities, or simply referring to their own Republic. Indicative of such controversies were the name changes of two important squares in the center of the Croatian capital, Zagreb. First of all, since 1946 one square in the city center, usually referred to as "Džamija" was officially called "The Square of the Victims of Fascism" paying tribute to all the fallen victims during the Second World War. The square held this name until 1990, when the authorities changed its name to "Squares of Croatian Greats" for 10 years, returning once again to its former name that was dedicated to the Victims of

Fascism in 2000 under immense pressure and dissatisfaction of the civic society of the city. Additionally, in a more recent example, there is the square where the building of the Croatian National Theater (HNK) resides during the time of the Federation was named “Marshall Tito’s Square”. However, in 2017 the City Assembly decided to rename it “Square of the Republic of Croatia” (Jutarnji list - ASSEMBLY DECIDED: ZAGREB LOST TITO'S SQUARE Hasanbegović: 'This is a historic moment' OSTOJIĆ 'Who is the next Croat to whom you will take the street?').

I will only cite two more illustrative examples, to substantiate the view that the change of course regarding what should be remembered and what should be forgotten was holistic and methodically organized. The first one refers to the fate of the memorial site of the Jasenovac camp, a location already problematic during the socialist regime. In the 4-year war in the first half of the 1990s, the location was turned into a proper battlefield where both the Croatian and Serbian forces destroyed the remaining structures and the 1968 Memorial Site, with the Serbian side looting more than 7.000 items from the collection and transferring them to Bosnia, returning only 70% of them after lengthy negotiation in 1998. Repairs in the site started a few years later, under direct pressure from the US Holocaust Memorial Museum, but the location was now more closely associated with the Fallen Croatian fighters in the “Homeland War" (this is a term that is exclusively used by the Croatian side to denote the Yugoslav War), or the “War of Independence”.

A new temporary exhibition dedicated to the victims and perpetrators in the Jasenovac camp officially opened in 2006, a year after Croatian joined the “International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance. The exhibition stands, nowadays, unchanged since then (https://www.jusp-jasenovac.hr/). The Memorial Site is funded by the Croatian Ministry of Culture, yet it is not regularly visited by school groups or the Croatian public, despite their important work. Indicative of the State’s indirect dismissal as a site of memory is the fact that while the city of Vukovar is considered a mandatory destination for every school class in Croatia, as it was the most heavily affected Croatian city during the recent war, most Croatians have not visited Jasenovac and are unaware of the existence of the Memorial Site. Finally, almost every year there

are controversies both from the Croatian and Serbian sides when it comes to the annual commemoration of the site on the 22nd of April, making a joint ceremony by the Croatian, Serbian, Jewish, and Roma sides hazardous. It should be also mentioned that after the 1990s, the suffering in Jasenovac was paired and counterbalanced with the after-war retaliation massacre near Bleiburg in Austria in May 1945, where partisan forces murdered fleeing Croatian soldiers and civilians, controversially naming it "the Croatian Holocaust".

The final example, before I move on to the post-communist commemoration of Kampor, is the lobbying by the Croatian state to shut off the Yugoslav National Pavilion-Exhibition that was part of the Auschwitz-Birkenau Statue Museum in Poland. In 1960 the aforementioned museums invited the nations whose populations suffered under the Nazi regime in the camp to create a "national exhibition" commemorating their victims. The socialist Federation of Yugoslavia, which claimed 20.000 fallen victims from all of its territory, opened its Pavilion 3 years later on 29th of September 1963 (Subotić, 2019b: 245-7). It should be added that the Pavilion did not specify or indicate separately the suffering of Yugoslav Jews. The Pavilion remained there until 2009 when after immense pressure from the Croatian side, deeming the exhibition redundant and obsolete, attributed to a nation that no longer exists, officially closed. Nowadays, the empty space of the former Pavilion is still there, but the 20.000 individuals are not remembered as there is no place to be commemorated.

Yet again the Memorial Site of Kampor is a clear exception as its symbolic meaning for the suffering of Croats under foreigner powers not only did not provoke the main rhetoric in the years following the Yugoslav Wars, but reappropriated it fit perfectly with the new image that was promoted by the State. The island of Rab was unaffected by the events of the 1990s. It would be wrong, however, to attribute the persistence of Kampor as a distinct mnemonic landscape to the Croatian State as this would diminish the importance of the active role of the Antifascist Association of Rab, a group of WWII veterans and their relatives that oversaw and maintained the integrity of the place (Subotić, 2019:122-3). Each year a commemoration is held in the first weekend of September with high officials from Croatia attending the ceremony. One

important instance was when during the 77th commemoration in 2020, amidst the Covid-19 pandemic, both Slovenian President Borut Pahor and his Croatian counterpart Zoran Milanovic went to the ceremony, being the first time when state representatives from different countries attended at the same time, confirming once again the international character of the event as well as an intention of a wider and transnational community of collective memory, within the European context (Idyllic Croatian Island Can't Erase Grim WWII History | Balkan Insight). It only remains to be seen how the ceremony will be the following September for the commemoration of the 80 years after the liberation of the camp.

The Right to Memory in Eastern Europe

Having discussed the case of Croatia's peculiar, altering, and at times challenging approach to dealing with their own past and the one shared with their neighbors, I would return again to the issues of an inclusive E.U. dimension of a shared European memory-scape as I discussed in the first section of this paper.

It is unavoidable to discuss local memories and mnemonic practices without acknowledging the importance of the already well-established global communities of memories and those important historical events such as the Holocaust are attributed to universal values and morals, becoming a global mnemonic event and point of reference. Already 20 years ago Levy and Sznaider talked about the emergence of a wide, all-including "cosmopolitan memory" (2002: 88). According to them, the nation-building processes of the 20th century can be paralleled to the globalization processes in the 21st century. As they phrase it, "The nation was global when compared with the local communities that preceded it" (2002: 90). The "cosmopolitanisation" of the Holocaust consists exactly in the collective, shared, but also productive co-configuration of its remembrance, memorialization, and attribution of universal values. In this way "collective traumas has no geographical or cultural limitations (Alexander, 2002:27)

Inside the European Union a carefully planned and significantly mediated,

shared “European cosmopolitan memory” is being constantly formulated, as an aide-mémoire patchwork of all the European countries (Levy & Sznaider, 2002: 101-2). The crucial difference between the mainstream E.U. and Western European view regarding the Holocaust remembrance with that of the Eastern and South-Eastern European countries is their temporal orientation. The E.U. mostly promotes a future-oriented understanding of the Holocaust, with the indicative “never again” motto, aspiring to ensure that such atrocities will never see the face of Earth again, as this horrific event will act as a guide and moral compass, with the assistance of the important E.U. regulations and safeguards. On the other hand, however, despite this shared interpretation in the part of Eastern Europe, the Holocaust is still rooted in their history and in some ways still affects their present political and civic communities. Hence, I would argue that the orientation of the latter countries regarding the Holocaust is rather towards the past, as that still affects and partly defines the present. Therefore, a clear conflict of narratives is at hand.

We, consequently, come across a global community of additive memorial practices, concepts, and inputs regarding a certain issue. I will avoid approaching the culture of memory of the Holocaust across the globe, and more specifically in the European context as a conceptual “lieux de memoire”, following the approach of the French historian Pierre Nora, who separated history from memory, claiming that the latter is a notion “constantly in our lips because it does no longer exist” (1996: 1). More importantly, he conceives the communities as homogeneous, equalizing them with the given national community. Overcoming these theoretical hindrances, the overall framework of a broad international community of shared memory needs a different, more constructive viewpoint.

I follow the American scholar Michael Rothberg, who proposes to think of memory beyond the contemporary nation-states, paying close attention to the distinct aspects, voices, opinions, and stances of the individuals and collectives inside of any given community in constant communication with cultural elements that surpass both physically and metaphorically the borders and boundaries of the said nation-states. As an homage to the French tradition of memory studies, he proposes the terminology “noeuds de memoire”, meaning

knots of memory. More specifically, he considers that ""knotted" in all places and acts of memory are rhizomatic networks of temporality and cultural reference that exceed attempts at territorialization… and identarian reduction" (2010: 7).

The excess of entangled and amalgamated opinions, mnemonic practices and perceptions of different individuals about certain historical events or the "past" more loosely defined allowed Rothberg to talk about a "multidirectional memory" (2009, 2014). As a scholar he spent the majority of his work discussing and analyzing the Holocaust and the way these traumatic events are remembered and commemorated across the world by different societies and groups of people, having both diverse approaches or ways of expressing their sympathy and emotions towards it. Moreover, he discussed the need to understand memory as a compilation of different scales of memorial traditions and ceremonies, paying close attention to the local, national, and transnational mnemonic landscapes. (2014: 127). More specifically, he argues that:

> "The model of multidirectional memory posits collective memory as a partially disengaged from exclusive versions of cultural identity and acknowledges how remembrance both cuts across and binds together diverse spatial, temporal and cultural sites." (2009:11)

What is at stake in the case of the European Union shared memorial landscape is the transition from a transnational memory, referring to different scales of remembrance that intersect and cross the national borders, to a more discursive and ever-developing transcultural memory. Transcultural memory, according to Rothberg is "the hybridization produced by the layering of historical legacies that occur in the traversal of cultural borders" (2014: 130). Only through productive dialogue and by allowing the conflicting instances, alternative narratives, and local, regional, or national historical events to be included, a shade of a different light than the established mainstream rhetorics can spring up, baring fruitful efforts for a more inclusive commemoration. This will allow each partner in the primary global community to feel that their opinions, emotions, and historical particularities are heard, valued, and properly dispersed, thus actively participating in the memory processes,

without remaining marginalized observers of the Holocaust recounting.

This productive, pluralistic perspective is aligned with what the scholar Aleida Assman calls “dialogic memory”, where neighboring nations do not ground their own or shared history or remembrance based on national pride, but experience a transnational sensibility, accepting their own dark past and involvement in the suffering of the other in their entangled history, finally incorporating their very own victims of violence into their own national memory (2014: 553). When it comes to the Croatian case, this treatment of memory, on a governmental level, seems so far utopic and purely idealistic, with the change of paradigm stemming from its active civic society with its developed international network and affiliations of various institutions, non-governmental organizations, and key actors-individuals.

I return now to the initial question of this paper, specifically “*whether individual states could include and adjust the overall history of the Holocaust in their own national narratives to highlight or silence particular elements of their own history, and if so, in what way*”. As it has been presented in this paper, the Holocaust as a historical event, occurring at the beginning of the 1940s resulted in many different complicated, conflicting, and politically engaging processes, with its overall Geist surpassing its actuality and transcending into a global symbol or “struggle”, “suffering”, “fascism”, “victimhood”, but also of “hope for a better future”, “solidarity”, “human rights” and “Europeanness”.

At the same time, the Holocaust has concretely drawn specific deep lines in the history of many countries, with the main ones being in Eastern Europe. The latter, after the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe and through the processes of enlargement of the European Union and the expansion of the European family, sought to overthrow communism, expecting to rediscover their "lost" European identity that they were briefly deprived of. We can find, therefore, a recalibration of identity and an aspiration of cultural and political proximity with the rest of Europe. It is indicative that the majority of the former communist states are member-states of E.U., with the majority of the remaining states to be in negotiation processes.

These negotiations, which all the new members had to go through, define certain responsibilities that the candidate state have to take into account, in many different aspects of the economic and political life together with specific law regulations and admittance of respecting human rights, as they embrace an array of European values. More importantly, when it comes to the idea of a "United Europe", there is "a call for a common historical memory for Europe" (Mälksoo, 2009: 672). All these regulations and doctrines are of great magnitude in order to successfully create a strong Union both politically and ideologically. What is often omitted, but it is of great importance, is the fact that traditionally "European History" is considered the sum of the most important Western and Central European nations, marginalizing or excluding the history of the "peripheral states", unless they fit the grand European narrative.

I would claim that these negotiation processes are made within a welcoming, yet hierarchical manner where the instruments of the European Union closely monitor the EU enlargement to Eastern and South-Eastern Europe. Mälksoo argues that resistance to full compliance with the ideological and mnemonic landscape is met with direct Western criticism, done in a colonial manner (2012: 184). I would not go this far and agree with this statement. Nevertheless, interested in the given power relations and the distinct ideological and political differences of this period of transition from Communism to European Unitarianism, I would argue that the "memory wars" ultimately attest to vicious circles of "Orientalisations" and "Othering".

Following the Saidian (1978) analysis of Orientalism, the Western gaze upon the Orient, the distant and the other, as exotic and ultimately different and inferior, Milica Bakić-Hayden coins the term "nesting Orientalism" as "a pattern of reproduction of the original dichotomy upon which Orientalism was premised" (1995: 918). By that, she means that all the succedent states of the socialist former Yugoslavia considered each other as the Orient, Balkan Other from which they were superior and more European. Of course, this could apply to every post-communist state that purges the idea of communism as an ideological foreign body, imposed by the "Communist Others", who are ultimately responsible for all the recent past atrocities in their homelands. In that way, the states are able to present a more appealing face to the European

audience. Western Europeans are “othering” Eastern Europeans, who in turn are “othering” their neighbors, as this is indicative in the case of the Balkans, particularly in the countries of former Yugoslavia. In addition, they are “orientalizing”, as a strategy, their own former self and the atrocities this might have caused, such as participating in the Holocaust on the side of perpetrators.

The critical point of reorientation and “Europeanisation” and thus accession to E.U. is at a crossroads between two opposing strategies that each nation could follow in order to redefine their identity. On the one hand, the politicians of a given nation can publicly emphasize the shared values, ideas, and norms among themselves and the rest of Europe, disregarding the contradictions and the black marks of history, for their own political gain and legitimization. Jelena Subotić calls this strategy “identity convergence” (2011: 310, 313), which is juxtaposed by “identity divergence” (2011: 310, 314). The latter refers to a political mechanism where the national elite refuses to comply with Europeanisation norms and processes. They argue that their own identity gets diminished in favor of a broader, enforced European identity. Croatia has more identity convergence tendencies, as they want to cleanse their past and align themselves with the European norm.

According to the author, these strategies are implemented as the newly formed independent states in Eastern Europe feel more vulnerable with their reconfigured post-communist, capitalist, nationalist, and European-oriented identity, striving for their own “ontological security” (Subotić, 2019: 27). Ontological security amounts to the state’s stability in their own narratives, ideology and the unquestionable right to exist as such, with every nation experiencing ontological and thus existential insecurities. One of the great stabilizers is the state's collective memory as it is presented and solidified in the political memory. The curious case for Croatia’s memory politics is that despite their obvious European-oriented identity association, yet they masterfully manage to engage in a deep memory divergence.

In the case of the Holocaust remembrance, Croatia’s memory divergence mixed with an identity convergence ultimately results in commemorating the victims of the Holocaust but at the same time disassociating themselves from having a

state past as nazi collaborators and participating in the genocidal crimes that we committed during the Second World War.

My final note in this paper would be my personal understanding. Ultimately the newly formed states of Eastern and South-Eastern Europe, coming out of different communist regimes, and thus by definition becoming post-communist (this term always implies the direct impact and metaphorical presence of the communist Geist in the post-communist society in transition. At the same time, by this term, we directly hinder them as we associate them only with their past and thus do not see them for the societies they are developing nowadays to be), aspire to participate in a more inclusive European community and be part of a shared cultural, political, economic, and mnemonic collective. Therefore, they aim to adjust their own present state and their narratives regarding the past in order to be welcome. At the same time, however, they rightfully claim a "right to memory" of their own history in this collective, regardless of whether it fits with the mainstream and well-defined memorial landscape.

In the end, memory politics inside the European Union are just that, politics inside a system where the power relations and conceptualization between East and West are altered but still stand and have an effect. Hence, the new member or candidate states manipulate and highlight certain aspects of their history, engage in various types of commemoration, and formulate fitting narratives in order to maneuver around the perilous paths of European memory. E.U. enlargement and ascension are processes desired by both parties, but their implementation can at times be complicated and entangled. However, once they become a member, States have more freedom to express themselves and reinterpret once again. Yet in a more subtle manner their own history, with Croatia being no exception to the rule.

Conclusion

In this paper, I was interested in the relationship between the post-communist states of Eastern and South-Eastern Europe inside the European mnemonic framework. I emphasized the case of Croatia, a former nazi collaborator state that got its independence from socialist Yugoslavia in the 1990s during the Yugoslav Wars. First, I emphasized the history of the Holocaust commemoration in the 20th century, showing the deviant approaches by the two sides of the Iron Curtain. Moreover, I wished to emphasize that despite the global importance and semantics that the Holocaust has a multiple signifier, it is deeply rooted in Eastern Europe's local, regional, and national history, allowing for a different experience and understanding. I placed the scope of my analysis in a contemporary E.U. enlargement setting, discussing the “memory wars” for a joined narrative.

My main example was the mnemonic landscape of Croatia, which presented great interest, addressing the history and commemoration practices of the events of the Italian-run concentration of Kampor on the island of Rab during the time of socialist Yugoslavia and in nowadays independent Croatia, juxtaposing it with that of the Croatian-run camp Jasenovac. By putting emphasis on one location, blurring and restricting the public visibility of the latter, unofficially declaring certain memories desirable, whereas others that force the state to face its past are deemed as undesired, Croatia engages in a European power play of remembering and forgetting.

Only if we consider the complexity of individual-state remembering inside the Europeanisation processes that took place in Eastern and South-Eastern Europe since the 1990s can we come to understand the role that Holocaust remembrance plays in defining their identity. At the same time, it is a universal moral compass, for certain countries such as Croatia, the Holocaust is a rooted part of their history, defining their history, and being a focal point for a public political discussion in the game of “what is to remember” and “what is to forget”.

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Forgotten camps of the Balkans in Yugoslav cinema from 1945-1992, a complex history

Alessandro Matta

This paper, with a deep analysis on the history of Yugoslav cinematographic and televisual history between 1945-1992, takes analysis of the representation of the Shoah and the fascist and Nazi crimes against Serbs and Roma people in the cinema and in television, hitting the focus on the representation on the less known places of murder and the less known concentration and extermination camps established in the Balkan regions by the fascists and the Nazis between 1941-1945.

If we had, in fact, in the history of Yugoslavia, a real marginalization of a larger number of crime sites and camps, and in particular the fascists camps, cinema and television did make a sort of an exception, in the realization of certain numbers of movies or tv-serials, still today less-known.

Many of these films are still little used or cited today, and do not often appear even in the most complete Holocaust filmographies.

What is the story behind some of these films? How are they made? How do directors, producers, and consultants see their work received by the public and critics?

But above all, does at least one of these films create a sort of an "awakening of conscience" in public opinion, triggering (as happens in the West with the TV drama "Holocaust") an awakening of interest on the issue? And what distribution did these films have?

The paper is subdivided into 3 parts:
- 50s: a memory of fascist camps and places?
- 60s: the Shoah, with(out) camouflage
- 70/80s: resistance, gender history and forgotten camps

Part 1: a memory of fascist camps and places?

In the period between 1946-1959, many fictional movies in Yugoslavia take place in the fascist camps ruled by Italian fascists or Croatian Ustaša authorities between 1941-1945.

In this part of the paper, I would like to talk about two movies in particular. The first "Campo Mamula" by Velimir Stojanković, 1959, is a clear example of a fake representation of the Italian fascist concentration camps that operated in a territory that later became part of Socialist Yugoslavia. The concentration camp, Mamula, which is the main focus of the movie, was an Italian fascist camp for political prisoners that operated between 20th May, 1942, until 14th September, 1943 in the Mamula Island, and which was completely abandoned by authorities after that period. In the movie, on the contrary, we assist in a totally fake plot because we see that after 8th September, 1943, the Italians have also been taken prisoners along with the others by the Germans and forced to deactivate the sea mines around the island.

In the movie, like in several other movies made in the 50s, we represent the Italian occupation like a "soft" occupation by "good" sentimental soldiers (thinking also about the soundtrack of the movie with the song "Mamula mia, Mamula mia, io vado via…") that are better than the Nazis or the Croatian fascist Ustaša. In this representation, we can probably see a result of the accords between Yugoslavia and Italy after the exit of Yugoslavia from the Comintern and the broken relations between Stalin and Tito, and the consideration of the Balkans like a "protection" region against the Soviet Union at the front of the occident.

On the contrary, in the 50s, we insist on showing local Ustaša crimes, in particular, the Ustaša concentration and extermination camps.

The movie "Ne okreći se sine" ("Don't turn around my son!"), by Branko Bauer, made in 1956, tells the story of a man that jumped from the train bound for the Jasenovac extermination camp. He returns home and finds his son in a school for young collaborationists of the fascist regime. He takes his son in the effort

to escape the regime, teaching him the real value of freedom and democracy. The movie shows us not only the horrors of Ustaša crimes, but also the perversal instruments of indoctrination of young people under the Ustaša totalitarian regime.

Part 2: the Shoah, with(out) camouflage

The 60s period is very particular and central in the representation of the Shoah in Yugoslav cinema. In this decade, we insist on a radicalization of a particular situation in the Balkan cinema: a representation of the genocide of Jews in a cinema that is without a doubt a cinema made in an Eastern European country, politically leaning to the left, but in a different way from other Eastern European cinema, like the Soviet or the Polish cinema. The destiny of the Jews is not represented (as fake) as "the same" as it is represented for political prisoners, but it reveals reality of the genocide of the Jews. However, we see some titles that have some particular situations, sometimes totally distant from reality.

The movie "Deveti krug" ("Ninth Circle"), by France Štiglic, 1960, is the first that I want to analyze for this period. The ninth circle is the last of the infernal circles and the film presents a story of a real descent into hell, in an unconventional attempt to describe the horror of the concentration camp. During World War II, to save a Jewish girl whose family has just been deported by the Nazis and their collaborators, a Croatian family organizes a wedding in white between the girl and their son. At first, the young man complains about this sudden end of his carefree youth and despite the friendship between his family and the Jewish family of the protagonist, the love between him and the young Ruth is often punctuated by troubled or dangerous moments, in which however the young man is able to defend the girl. However, Ruth is caught in a raid on the street, and the young man runs off to find her, aware that he too will end up in a Nazi camp, ruled by Ustaša collaborators.

The film can be divided in two moments: the first part being highly lyrical, where the cheerful and carefree life precedes the beginning of the persecutions, and the phase of the wedding in white is represented with a slow pace that forewarns, especially from the soundtrack, the tragedy that will be

highlighted in the second part of the film, which begins with a masterful scene in which the young Ruth runs through the city crossed by bombings, swinging on a swing in a public park to the rhythm of the falling bombs, and ends up in a concentration camp where the girl and her lover will find a dramatic ending to their love story. Now, the situation is almost curious in the movie, and in particular in the second part, where the concentration camp is represented like a sort of a house in which soldiers rape Jewish girls before they kill them. It is a situation that probably only those that know the history of the Ustaša camps can understand, because the director portrays the scenes of rapings of young Jewish women based on testimonies from witnesses of the local Ustaša camps. However, it is a clear situation that can show a sort of irreality when it comes to racial laws against Jews, because almost in the case of the Nazis, it is improbable that this can happen, and in fact it was also forbidden by Nuremberg laws. But the Stiglic movie is a good product that shows the reality of antisemitism in Croatia and the Ustašas involved in genocide.

On the contrary, a curious and really incredible movie that shows us something really bad and absurd, is the movie "Nebeski odred" ('A Heavenly Detachment"), by Boško Bošković, made in 1961. Based on the same title, this is the really first movie about the Sonderkommandos, a group of Jewish prisoners in Auschwitz Birkenau extermination camp, that were involved in the "welcoming" the victims to gas chambers, talking to them before the entrance to the "showers" and that were, after the extermination process, involved in taking the dead bodies from the gas chambers and burning them in the crematorium.

Now, the film, certainly with good intentions, ends up showing an enormous falsehood which unfortunately defames the very men of the Sonderkommando group: in fact, it shows that it was a man from the same Sonderkommando group who threw the Zyklon B gas into the death chamber. Today we know that this is absolutely not true, and that it was a Nazi soldier who was always involved in that precise operation. Consequently, with films like this, in this period we have a representation of the Holocaust that is certainly realistic, but also made up of many shady parts.

How does the Yugoslav representation of Holocaust differ from that of other

Eastern European countries? The aforementioned Yugoslavia's exit from the Comintern has also shaped a different relationship between Yugoslavia and Israel. Also, after the rupture of the six day war, Yugoslavia criticized Israel, but only politically, and did not create a boycott (like it was the case with Soviet Union and other Comintern states) against all the Israeli culture, or depict Jews as "zionist agents" (like we see in Poland after 1967).

Part 3: resistance, gender history and forgotten camps

Political issues in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia between the 70s and 80s, have brought change in presentation of the Holocaust and Nazi-fascist crimes. and several movies show that change with different aspects not so often analyzed in the previous decades. Several movies in particular show Italian crimes in Yugoslavia for the first time (the most famous is "Okupacija u 26 slika" ("Occupation in 26 pictures"), by Lordan Zafranović, 1977). The film also rediscovers themes such as: the resistance (and also the participation of the Jews in the resistance along with the Serbs, as shown in the historic film "Akcija stadion", by Dušan Vukotić, 1977), gender (tv-series "Marija", by Stipe Delić, 1977, is the most clear example of this, showing the history of one of the hundreds of Slovenian non-Jewish women deported in Auschwitz in 1944) and, last but not least, the forgotten places and camps, which is what I want to talk about in the final part of this paper.

The movie "Lager Niš" ("The Escape"), by Miomir Stamenković, 1987, the history of the "Crveni Krst" camp (lit. "Red Cross concentration camp"), also known as "Niš" or "Lager Niš" camp, located in the industrial area of the Serbian city of Niš, had at least 30,000 victims and it is estimated that 12,000 people in the camp were executed in Bubanj. Many of the other inmates were transferred to the Sajmište camp and from there to other Nazi camps located within the territory of the Third Reich. The victims were mainly Jews, Roma and Titoist partisans. In addition to the 12,000 victims of Bubanj, at least 300 Serbs and Roma people perished in Niš. The exterminations began in February 1942 and ended in September 1944. Before the withdrawal of the Germans, they captured some Italian deserters and gave them the order to dig the graves for people killed by machine guns and burn the corpses of the victims, in order to

destroy any trace of the atrocities committed. ''Lager Niš'' reconstructs the atmosphere of terror and fear that was breathed in the camp in an impressionable way, to say the least. Dark but not dull, gray in color and rhythm, the film alternates and balances between moments from known scenes of deportation and imprisonment to sudden assassination scenes, having in mind the scene of the search of the newcomer partisans in the camp, one of the first scenes in the film. The film passes from a hopeless rhythm to a hopeful rhythm with the escape that, in the end, succeeds thanks to the determination of some deportees.

The film received the Special Mention at the 1987 Belgrade Film Festival "July 4th". In Italy, and generally outside former Yugoslavia, the film is unknown. However, it is already momentous that in 1987 a director decided to dedicate a film to one of the main concentration camps in Serbia, which was later turned into a National Museum.

Exploring Memory Culture: A Filmmaker's Journey in Trieste and Koper

Moritz Mauderer

Allow me to introduce myself briefly at the beginning. My name is Moritz Mauderer, a 23-year-old student currently pursuing a degree in Education for high school at Regensburg University. My focus areas of study include German, History, Philosophy, and, as a hobby, I have been practicing the art of filmmaking since the age of 12. Last year, in 2022, I had the extraordinary opportunity to participate in a four-day study trip to Trieste and Koper focusing on memory culture organized by „Documenta". I saw this study trip as a unique opportunity to put my skills as a filmmaker to the test.

Prior to this experience, I had already produced several videos within the context of university projects. However, the prospect of exploring memory culture through filmmaking on this trip presented new challenges and exciting possibilities.

In this essay, I aim to share my experiences, difficulties, and insights gained from the journey. As a filmmaker, I found myself confronted with the task of capturing the essence of memory culture and translating it into a visual narrative. This meant grappling with the complexities of historical events, personal stories, and the wider societal implications Trieste and Koper hold. These cities have witnessed events that necessitate a thoughtful approach to remembering the past. Exploring the historical context and the events leading to the need for memory culture in the region is crucial.

Additionally, it is essential to acknowledge the presence of memorials, monuments, and museums that serve as tangible reminders of the past. During the study trip, I embarked on a journey as a filmmaker, eager to capture the essence of memory culture. The places I visited were intertwined with the fabric of remembrance. Each location offered unique perspectives on how individuals and communities evade their shared history. Through personal encounters and interviews, I had the privilege of documenting the experiences of others and gaining valuable insights into their relationship with their shared history. As a

layperson, it can be particularly challenging to construct a narrative that does justice to the complex and multifaceted topic of memory culture. Here are a few reasons why this task may be difficult:

1. Lack of Expertise: Remembrance culture is a specialized field that requires in-depth knowledge of historical events, sociopolitical contexts, and the theories surrounding studies. As a layman, you may not possess the same level of expertise and familiarity with these concepts, making it harder to navigate the intricacies of the topic.

2. Emotional Weight: Memory culture often deals with sensitive and emotional subject matter, such as traumatic events, conflicts, or historical injustices. Crafting a narrative that balances empathy, respect, and accuracy can be challenging, especially when trying to convey the lived experiences of individuals or communities affected by these events.

3. Complexity and Diverse Perspectives: Memory culture encompasses a wide range of perspectives, interpretations, and narratives. It involves examining not only dominant historical narratives but also marginalized or silenced voices. Grappling with this complexity and ensuring a fair representation of diverse perspectives can be daunting, especially without extensive background knowledge or access to firsthand accounts.

4. Ethical Considerations: Engaging with memory culture requires ethical considerations regarding the portrayal of personal stories, respecting privacy, and avoiding exploitation or sensationalism. As a layperson, you may not be as familiar with the ethical frameworks and principles guiding responsible storytelling in this context.

Despite these challenges, it is important to approach the topic with humility, curiosity, and a willingness to learn. Conducting thorough research, consulting experts or scholars in the field, and engaging with firsthand accounts can provide valuable insights and help shape a more informed and nuanced narrative.
Furthermore, collaborating with individuals or communities directly impacted

by memory culture can offer a deeper understanding and foster a sense of authenticity in your narrative. By acknowledging your limitations as a layperson, actively seeking knowledge, and approaching the topic with sensitivity, you can strive to create a narrative that respectfully explores the complexities of memory culture. While the resulting documentary undoubtedly served as a promotional tool for the underlying organization “Documenta” it is important to clarify that this was not my sole intention. I fully acknowledge that from a professional standpoint, there may be valid criticism regarding the potential bias or commercialization of the project. However, my primary goal was to reach a wide audience and emphasize the relevance of remembrance culture—a realization that became clear to me during the journey itself. The study trip was a transformative experience that allowed me to grasp the profound significance of memory culture firsthand. It awakened a deep sense of gratitude within me, and I wanted to express my appreciation by creating a documentary that would not only serve as a token of gratitude to “Documenta”, but also as a means to engage and enlighten a broader audience. By sharing the experiences, perspectives, and narratives encountered during the trip, I aimed to underscore the importance of memory culture in our collective understanding of history, identity, and societal development. My intention was to spark conversations, evoke empathy, and foster a deeper appreciation for the subject matter. In retrospect, I understand the potential critique from a professional standpoint, and I am open to learning from such feedback. It is crucial to continuously reflect on one's intentions, ethical considerations, and the impact of one's work. Moving forward, I will strive to strike a balance between conveying gratitude and addressing the core themes of memory culture with integrity and authenticity.

One of the most significant experiences during the study trip was the evening conversations over a beer with fellow participants from the region. These informal gatherings provided a unique opportunity to delve deeper into the importance of memory culture for individuals who had personal connections to the history being discussed—histories that were intertwined with the lives of their parents and grandparents. As we shared our stories and perspectives, it became evident that the topic held immense significance for them on a deeply personal level. Through their narratives, I gained a profound understanding of how memory culture directly influenced their identities, sense of belonging, and

understanding of their family's past. Listening to their accounts, I could sense the weight of history they carried and their strong desire to preserve and honor the memories of their ancestors. These conversations illuminated the intergenerational transmission of memory and its lasting impact on individuals and communities. It underscored the enduring legacy of historical events and the profound responsibility to remember and learn from them. Witnessing the passion, emotion, and commitment of these individuals in upholding their family histories added a human dimension to the academic and intellectual exploration of memory culture.

Engaging in these conversations as a filmmaker was both enlightening and humbling. It reminded me of the power of personal narratives in conveying the complexities of remembrance culture. Through the sharing of intimate stories, the evening discussions served as a reminder of the importance of empathy and active listening in capturing the essence of memory in film.

The experience reinforced the significance of including diverse voices and perspectives in any narrative surrounding memory culture. It highlighted the need to approach the topic with sensitivity, recognizing the lived experiences and emotions tied to personal histories. These conversations enriched my understanding of the subject matter and influenced the direction of my filmmaking, encouraging me to seek out more personal accounts and amplify marginalized voices. Engaging with memory culture as a filmmaker evoked a deep sense of responsibility and introspection. It required delicately balancing the desire to authentically capture narratives with the need to respect the privacy and emotions of those involved. Navigating ethical considerations while portraying personal stories allowed me to recognize the power of film as a medium for amplifying voices and fostering empathy. The study trip underscored the significance of memory culture in preserving history and shaping collective consciousness. It revealed the complexities inherent in memory construction, highlighting how personal and collective memories intersect and intertwine. The exploration of Trieste and Koper further emphasized the importance of recognizing marginalized perspectives, amplifying diverse voices, and acknowledging the nuances of memory. Looking forward, the experiences and insights gained from this journey will profoundly impact my future filmmaking endeavors. I aim to create thought-provoking documentaries that explore memory culture, encouraging viewers to reflect on

their own connections to the past and fostering a deeper understanding of our shared humanity. By shedding light on the complexities of memory, we can contribute to a more inclusive and empathetic society.

In conclusion, the study trip to Trieste and Koper as a filmmaker immersed me in the depths of memory culture. Through encounters with archival material, guided tours, and personal reflections, I witnessed the profound impact that memory culture has on individuals and communities. By engaging with history, acknowledging diverse narratives, and sensitively portraying personal stories, we can foster a collective memory that promotes understanding, empathy, and a more inclusive future.

The Italian WW2 concentration camps: a problematic memory

Alberto Rosada

“The real mistake was the alliance with Hitler” tells a recurrent standpoint in the Italian public discourse about fascism. This statement is part of a broader strategy to sanitise the legacy of fascism, trying to open a moral gap between the heinous and inhuman Nazi regime versus the benevolent, clement Italian fascism, whose supposed biggest mistake was following Hitler’s path into the horrors of the Second World War and antisemitism. Indeed, Hitler’s program was fiercely focused on antisemitism from the origins, while the same element does not have the same central position in Mussolini's movement and regime. However, fascism is far from innocent. Mussolini proclaimed the Racial Laws in Trieste on the 18th of September 1938 - not by chance in a peripheral city populated by minorities, including a large Slavic population. Those laws targeted the Jewish community in Italy with the expulsion from some professions and a ban on mixed marriages, among other harsh measures. That happened before the Pact of Steel, finally aligning the Italian regime to the German one, and they were not just a mere way to appeal to Hitler, as the fascist-friendly narrative pretends.

The supposed absence of antisemitism and the supposed non-participation in the Holocaust are false. But they are part of a wider narrative. The idea that Italians (and, for extension, the fascists) were goodhearted people, unable to commit atrocities, is one of the most vital myths in WW2 memory. The “Italiani brava gente” myth was proved wrong by historians. Some studies described the roots and the fertile ground for this misbelief. It was promoted in the immediate WW2 aftermath, during the peace talks: Italy was an aggressor and part of the defeated Axis, but part of the country turned to the Allies side after the 1943 Mussolini overthrow, and the Nazi-occupied North experienced two years of intense partisan activity.

it was then the interest of the antifascist coalition to establish a positive narrative about the Italian people: for example, stating that after the regime's fall, the real antifascist feelings of Italians were unchained, and they massively entered the fight for liberation. Moreover, the placid Italian soldiers supposedly sacrificed themselves in a war conducted by the Germans; they distinguished themselves by counterbalancing the brutality of the German soldiers with assistance for the local population. The narrative was even backed up by some actors in the occupied areas, with the "armata s'agapo" ("I love you" army) myth in Greece, depicting Italian soldiers as romantic lovers rather than brutal invaders, and the "vesela okupacija" ("happy occupation") myth in Yugoslavia. Those narratives permeated Italian popular culture through movies, as in the case of the Oscar awarded Mediterraneo (1991).

Italy also played the card of the nation suffering from Nazism. The German occupation lasted two years in central-northern Italy, leading to ferocious massacres as in Marzabotto (770 civilians killed in autumn 1944). This suffering opened the possibility of silencing the events up to 1943, with the key role of the Italian Kingdom in the Axis. A similar scheme is central to the problematic Austrian politics of memory: the Alpine state claims to be the first Hitler's victim, pointing to the Anschluss - the annexation to the Third Reich - in March 1938. The "victimisation framework" was hegemonic in Austria, at least until the 80s.

The German state(s) were not immune to the victimisation process. A set of ideas revolves around this core narrative: a small perverted elite spoiled the genuine essence of the German people, and thus, the Germans themselves were the first victims of Hitler; subsequently, they considerably suffered as a result of the Allied bombings (Dresden one, in February 1945 among all), and the largest forced migration in history, the expulsion of more than 10 million ethnic Germans from Eastern Europe and the Balkans. However, as the American political scientist David Art argues, the "victimisation frame" was strong in Austria, while in Germany prevailed the "contrition frame", the open acknowledgement of German crimes - not only committed by the SS but also by the Wehrmacht. In the 90s, even the most conservative parliamentary faction, the CSU, adopted the contrition frame - just in recent times, the far-right AfD is trying to break this consensus, pushing German nationalism and a revision of

the Nazi regime's memory. Still, Germany is a virtuous example of commemoration of a nation's own crimes, while the Italian and Austrian memories too often indulge in victimisation and the lack of recognition of the participation in the Holocaust and other crimes; in both countries, the cordon sanitaire against far-right parties capitulated more than twenty years ago, while it is still standing in Germany.

A relevant marker of this problem lies in the debate about memorial dates. In Italy, the International Holocaust Remembrance Day is the 27th of January, the anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz camp by the Red Army. It does not sound strange, since that date was chosen by many other countries - Germany, Poland and Croatia among them. Nevertheless, not every country opted for this europenised, universalist date. France, for example, chose the anniversary of the rounding up of Jews in the Vélodrome d'Hiver (between the 16th and 17th of July 1942) for its Holocaust commemoration day, while Hungary goes for the 16th of April (1944, the beginning of the ghettoisation in Munkács) and Latvia the 4th July (1941 synagogue burning in Riga). Following the same logic, Italy could have picked the 16th of October (1943 raid on the Roman Ghetto), a date linked to national history, reminding every year that the Holocaust did not happen just in some remote place in the Eastern European plain, but in the capital, and took place with the help of Italian bureaucrats.

The Italian parliament discarded the 16th of October proposal, and the 2001 bill did not mention any "national" date. It also failed to name the Italian places of the Holocaust, loosely citing "Nazi camps". The focus is on the memory of victimhood rather than the problematisation of Italian responsibility. Since then, the Italian media and government initiatives gave space to the Italian "Righteous Among the Nations", the non-Jews that saved Jewish lives from persecution for altruistic reasons. Giorgio Perlasca, the Italian Schindler, was one of them: the 2002 miniseries produced by the national broadcaster RAI celebrated his brave actions in Hungary - saving thousands of lives. His fascist ties - he volunteered in the Spanish Civil War on Franco's side - are played down; thus, the film got negative reviews from historians and was even pointed to "as a milestone in the ongoing rehabilitation of Fascism in Italy".

Only three years after the institution of the Italian Holocaust Remembrance Day, the Italian parliament passed another bill creating a new memorial date. The 27th of January - “giorno della memoria” - was joined by the “giorno del ricordo'' on the 10th of February. The two terms - memoria and ricordo - are synonyms, and the two dates are close, just two weeks apart. This induced confusion was a deliberate choice; the second memorial date was modelled out of the first, and some local administrations even organise a single event for both. Then, what is the 10th of February about? It is the anniversary of the 1947 Paris Peace Treaty: Italy ratified the loss of a significant border area in the Upper Adriatic region, incorporated by Yugoslavia. That decision, the ultimate result of the 1941 fascist aggression, exposed a large Italian population to Tito’s rule: the majority of them, around 280,000 people, left for Italy in a long timespan, some already during the war, others in the 50s. This process did not result from a formal expulsion, as happened with the ethnic Germans, but still involved a degree of violence. Two waves of massacres targeted the previous rulers (thus, mainly Italians) in September 1943 and April-May 1945. Those are collectively known under the name foibe massacres; they provoked 4,000-5,000 deaths, according to the most reliable estimates.

The 10th of February commemoration, rather than celebrating peace, carries a revanchist stance, focusing on Italian losses and the condemnation of the Yugoslav National Liberation Army. It creates parallels between the Jewish and the Italian suffering, openly applying some Holocaust narratives to Italian victims. These two events - the Holocaust and the foibe massacres - are incomparable both in scale and in their dynamics.

The proximity of the two forms of commemoration is also a spatial proximity in Trieste. The biggest city of the Upper Adriatic is the hotspot of the troubled history of this multiethnic region and went through many different political regimes and occupations in the 20th century. Trieste was prominent for the Slovenian nation movement (a Slovenian minority is still present in Trieste province nowadays) but was also a key target of Italian nationalism. Italy acquired the city as a result of WW1, and the fascist movement used Trieste as a testing ground for violent tactics: the fascists attacked and burned the Narodni dom, an important Slovenian National Centre, on the 13th of July 1920.

The second wave of the foibe massacres in 1945 is connected with the arrival of Tito's army in Trieste and the subsequent 40 days of Yugoslav occupation, followed by Anglo-American forces and seven years of "Free Territory", until the 1954 final transfer to Italy.

Trieste is then the centre of the Italian memory of the contested border history, and the most important foibe massacres commemoration takes place in Basovizza - 11 kilometres from Trieste's centre - the site of mass executions in an abandoned mining shaft. The area has other mnemonic layers: just 2 kilometres away from the pit, another monument celebrates the four Slovenes executed by a fascist firing squad in 1929.

The importance of Trieste does not just involve the frontier between the Romance and Slavic areas. The Adriatic city hosted the only Nazi camp with (partly) exterminatory purposes in Western Europe. It was active during the two years of German direct rule on the Upper Adriatic region, the Operationszone Adriatisches Küstenland (September 1943 - May 1945). The Risiera di San Sabba was mainly a transit camp but also equipped with cremation facilities. Jewish internees suffered through the camp, as well as political prisoners and partisans, mainly Slavs. The site is then a site of memory for different histories - the Holocaust, the antifascist movement, the Slovenian minority. This coexistence, along with the Basovizza monument and Trieste's tradition of nationalist, radical groups, creates a critical blend of conflicting memories. A protagonist of the foibe revival in the Italian public debate, the neofascist Roberto Menia took part in the 2002 Trieste's 27th January commemoration, held in the Risiera. His presence sparked controversy among the Slovene minority - the very opportunity of a speech in Slovene during the ceremony was under debate - and led to the boycott by a post-communist party (Rifondazione Comunista) and by part of Trieste's Jewish community.

The Basovizza monument celebrates the victims of extrajudicial violence, that, in some part, targeted civilians for personal revenge but was mainly directed against soldiers and other collaborators of the Nazi forces. Otherwise said, among the foibe victims there were also (not exclusively) people who supported the system that enabled a concentration camp in the Risiera. An honest review

of history never features only two categories - the good and the evil. In this border history, it is evident how the perpetrators could turn victims, and vice-versa. The anthropologist Pamela Ballinger argued that the memory practices of the Basovizza and Risiera are also "ritual performances of identity" for political and national groups and may give rise to claims of “exclusive victimhood”.

The institution of “national monuments”, the musealisation or the sole presence of commemorative plaques are the marker of the struggle for memory (and oblivion). It is definitely relevant to look at the history of the sites of memory since they often spent decades in oblivion or with a different use. Buchenwald, one of the most important and symbolic camps, was a Soviet internment camp between 1945 and 1950. Many sites underwent a period of oblivion and material dismantlement before being turned into protected heritage. The Risiera di San Sabba was granted the “national monument” classification in 1965 but previously served as a camp for refugees from Yugoslavia. The other important site for the Holocaust in Italy, the Fossoli concentration camp, first hosted a refuge for war orphans and then became another centre for the Istrian-Dalmatian exiles. Once again, the sites of the Holocaust and fascist persecution meet the history of population movement in the Upper Adriatic and, precisely, the narratives of Italian victimhood: the Italian refugees from Yugoslavia.

The Italian debate around the Upper Adriatic has a recurrent element: the claim that the foibe massacres and Istrian-Dalmatian exodus were silenced for many decades by the PCI (Italian Communist Party). It is true that this part of history rose to the front of the Italian memory landscape in the 90s and was before confined to the Trieste area. That had many grounds, also in Italian relations with Yugoslavia - it can not be just a communist plot since the PCI was never part of a government after 1947. History is ultimately about complexity: for every segment that emerges from oblivion, there are probably other less-known segments that only specialised historians and the involved community remember. Thus, a further, last, element could be added to the problematic equation of the Italian WW2 sites of memory.

The concentration camps in Italy were not only subordinate to the Nazi extermination plans. The fascist regime used forms of imprisonment or internal exile (*confino*) for political dissidents and other categories long before the war. During the war, the internment of civilians became a standard practice in the Balkans, to the point that Italian authorities discussed a plan for the deportation of the entire Slovenian population of the annexed Ljubljana province during 1942 summer. The camps were not only in the occupied areas but also in mainland Italy. Close to Treviso, there was the Monigo camp, active until the 1943 armistice and then used for displaced persons after the war. It disappeared from public memory until a Yugoslav delegation visited the camp in 1965, meeting unaware locals; the first book was published in 1988, and two memorial plaques were affixed only in 2019. Gonars camp, in Udine province, was the largest camp, with more than 6 thousand internees. The local community soon dismantled the camp to reuse the construction material; a Yugoslav initiative led to the creation of a flower-shaped monument in the local cemetery in 1973.

The memory of Italian concentration camps faced a first period of oblivion in the context of the postwar narratives of self-justification, the “italiani brava gente” myth and the supposed distance from German racism and war crimes. At the turn of the 90s, Italian historiography started investigating the fascist camps. The geopolitical contexts changed, and historical research faced a new “era of the witness”, as defined by Annette Wieviorka. The memorial paradigm changed, and in the 90s the Holocaust acquired a central role in the European memory landscape. Paradoxically, the centrality of the Holocaust and its images - the Auschwitz gate above all - once more served to deflect attention from the Italian repressive apparatus, maintaining the notion of an "innocent fascism" in contrast to Nazi atrocities. The rise of attention for the foibe massacres and the Istrian-Dalmatian exodus could have been a positive factor for awareness about the previous segment of the same history: the fascist repression of Slavic minorities and the WW2 Italian concentration camps. Lamentably, an excessive focus on an “exclusive (Italian) victimhood” linked to a nationalist and anticommunist exploitation of Upper Adriatic history left Gonars, Monigo and similar sites of memory in the shadows. In recent years, the rise and institutionalisation of the far-right even led to attempts to defund non-aligned

historical research centres. Those are worrying developments: the tragedies caused by opposed nationalisms must not be exploited in a nationalist-oriented memory. More substantial attention to the Italian concentration camps is crucial for strengthening the values of democracy, respect and human rights.

Gospić-Jadovno-Pag 1941/2023 - The memory of the victims endures, but for how long?

Barbara Stjepanović

"They brought captive girls in front of us, stripped them naked, and told us we could take whichever one we wanted, but that we had to kill them after the act. Some young men, intoxicated by wine and consumed by passion, began to kill in this way. I couldn't do it. It disgusted me, and I said so publicly. After a few days, a higher-ranking official from Zagreb came to the camp. His name was Luburić. He came to inspect the camp's operations. It was only then that the real slaughter began. The entire sea around Pag was red with blood..." (Testimony of Ustasha member Josip Orešković to the partisans, 1942.)

This passage is from a testimony given by an Ustasha member that portrays the situation on the island of Pag. The Independent State of Croatia was established on April 10, 1941. Only one day after the establishment of the Independent State of Croatia, Gospić-Jadovno-Pag complex became the first death camp in the territory. These camps became symbols of horrific crimes and mass killings that took place during the NDH.

It is important to mention that the Gospić-Jadovno-Pag complex was a system of death camps that operated during World War II in the NDH. It was located in Croatia, in the Gorski Kotar and Lika region and on the island of Pag. The Gospić-Jadovno-Pag complex was a network of camps and the exact number of victims is difficult to determine, but it is estimated that thousands of people, mostly Serbs, were murdered in this complex. These camps were also known for their brutality, torture, and mass executions of civilians, political opponents, Jews and Roma. It is also important to note that there were other death camps in the territory of the NDH during World War II, such as Jasenovac and Stara Gradiška.

The last 2,123 prisoners from Jadovno were transported to Jastrebarsko,

Kruščica and Jasenovac. Those who were brought to Jasenovac were its first inmates. Because of that, Jadovno is also mentioned as a precursor to Jasenovac.

Youth – It is up to them to remember

As part of the summer school „Between Memory and Oblivion“, organized by Documenta – Center for Dealing with the Past, I had the opportunity to participate in a commemorative gathering in Jadovno and at the Slana Bay, on the island of Pag. I remember when we were heading towards Jadovno, we all commented on how steep and poor the road was, and we couldn't even imagine what it was like for people who had to walk that path and be in that camp. That small part of the journey was a lot for us. Although we may not have been able to imagine what it was like for them at that time, we want to remember the victims. During the journey, we were told that top officials such as the Prime Minister and the President have not been participating in commemorations for years, and that we wouldn't be able to see many residents from the surrounding areas. That is the current situation in Croatia.

After the commemoration in Jadovno, we headed towards Pag's Slana Bay. Impassable terrain, wind, and barrenness. That's the situation at Slana. The wind carried away our hats, our skin burned from the sun, and it was very difficult to walk on the rugged ground. We reflected on the victims who spent their days there, working hard, being mistreated, beaten, only to be eventually killed. We were told that there were many cases of suicides, which is not a surprising image considering the situation at Slana. Not far from Slana Bay, there was also the Metajna camp where Serbian and Jewish women with children were housed in two larger houses, former villas, outside the village. Although we didn't have the opportunity to visit that camp, it is necessary to remember those innocent women and children as well.

I would say that it is important to remember the victims who perished in the formal camps, but even more crucial is the need for the state of Croatia itself to acknowledge its history and pay tribute to the victims. It is not only significant for families, relatives, and descendants to remember the victims, but for

everyone, especially young people. At the summer school I attended, I met many young individuals who were eager to learn about these topics, willing to discuss, but what disappointed me was the realization that there aren't a large number of young people from Croatia who share the same interests and desires.

What is the reason for that, how to change it, how to encourage young people from Croatia to participate more? I'm not sure myself.

How is Croatia confronting its own past?

When we consider everything that happened during World War II in the Independent State of Croatia (NDH), it is necessary to ask ourselves if we know enough. How is Croatia confronting its own past? Why is it important to commemorate and remember the victims?
When we examine the events that took place during World War II in the Independent State of Croatia (NDH), it is important to question whether we are sufficiently informed about those events. Confronting one's own past is crucial for building a society that respects human rights, values democracy, and prevents the repetition of such crimes. Confronting the past is a complex process that involves various aspects, such as research, documentation, education, and reconciliation. Croatia, like many other countries with a difficult history, has different ways of confronting its own past. One of these ways is commemorating and remembering the victims. Commemorating the victims serves several important purposes. First, it is a way to honor and dignify the victims. It also allows survivors and their families to express their grief and pain and to feel recognized. Commemoration also sends a powerful message to society that past crimes are unacceptable and that such violence must not be repeated. Commemorating the victims also serves an educational purpose. Through commemoration, society is reminded of its history and confronts the difficult facts in order to foster a broader understanding of past events. This can help prevent revisionism and denial of crimes, and promote dialogue and reconciliation.

It is important for society to engage in researching and documenting historical

events to ensure accuracy of information and prevent the repetition of crimes. Educating younger generations about history and human rights is also crucial for building a future based on the values of democracy, tolerance, and coexistence. Confronting one's own past requires the continuous commitment of all members of society, including authorities, civil society, and individuals. Only through such collective efforts can a society be built that learns from history, promotes human rights, and prevents the repetition of past crimes. Because of that, the victims of the Gospić-Jadovno-Pag complex, as well as other victims of atrocities committed during World War II in the territory of the NDH are an important part of Croatia’s history. They should be acknowledged, remembered, and their suffering recognized. Efforts to research and document the events that took place in the Gospić-Jadovno-Pag complex are important for preserving historical truth and ensuring that the victims are properly recognized.

Additionally, education plays a vital role in raising awareness about these events and promoting a comprehensive understanding of the past. Remembering the victims of the Gospić-Jadovno-Pag complex is an integral part of Croatia's journey towards confronting its own history and fostering a society that values human dignity, justice, and reconciliation.

Photo report

Vanja Tadić

Part 1 – Black and White

Last year, in July 2022, I was able to participate in a study visit to Stara Gradiška and Jasenovac camp organized by *Documenta*. These two concentration camps were used by the Croatian fascist regime during WWII to capture and kill Serbs, Jews, Roma and political opponents. Especially in Stara Gradiška, a lot of children and women were detained. Diana Budisaljević was one of these women whose story is shown in the movie "The Diary of Diana B" (2019). The reason for us to commemorate the events at this certain weekend was the 80th anniversary of the arrival of Diana Budisaljević, at the camp of Stara Gradiška. We first held a commemoration ceremony in the city center of Zagreb with music and speeches. The following day we attended the official ceremony in Stara Gradiška, again with speeches, poetry and laying down red roses at the memorial for the victims of fascism. After that, we went to visit the Jasenovac concentration camp and had a guided tour with one of the directors. It was an insightful day and made me think about remembering and dealing with the past – how crucial it is.

Visiting the places where atrocities took place during WWII leaves an impact and teaches us something which can never be done through solely reading and learning about what happened there. When we went to the concentration camps Stara Gradiška and Jasenovac, we were able to see the location and really imagine what people must have felt and been through. Through commemorating and walking along these places, we could *feel* the pain and grief which is still ingrained in the earth. We could try to imagine what people are capable of doing to other human beings. It remains unimaginable.

Slowly, nature is taking over in Stara Gradiška, the buildings are falling apart and trees are growing on the roof. The Croatian state fails to prevent the decay

of the premises. There are no plaques remembering the deaths of children and adults in this area. The collective trauma can never be healed through denial, but only through looking at what has happened – dealing with the past to improve the present and the future by taking responsibility and paying respect to the victims. The movie about Diana Budisaljević's work is an example for remembering what happened in Stara Gradiška by reaching a wider audience in the cinemas, to remember in order not to forget and repeat. This is what the following photographs are aiming towards as well, documenting the sites of mass killings and atrocities in a respectful way to honor the victims and commemorate the events of WWII with Documenta. Using a black and white film roll, the pictures are kept in the same style as the movie – without colors, highlighting the contrast between darkness and light.

Photograph 1:

The commemoration ceremony in Zagreb on the 9th of July. Speeches were held by Vesna Teršelič and survivor Živko Zelenbrz addressing the situation in Stara Gradiška during WWII. In between the speeches, two musicians played beautiful songs. A couple of people attended the event on this Saturday evening in the backyard of ALU (Art Academy) in the city center of Zagreb. The sun was slowly setting, the moon rising and the trees were swaying in the wind.

Photograph 2:

Commemorating the victims of fascism at the memorial in Stara Gradiška with red roses on the 10th of July.

Photograph 3:

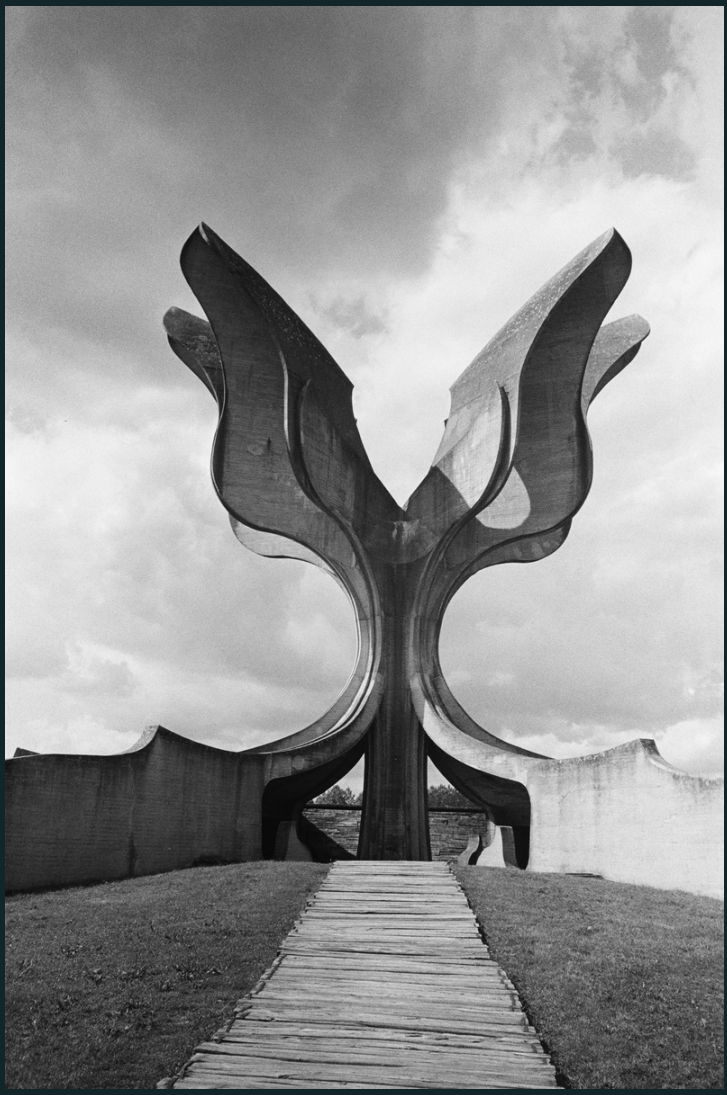
Bus station „ Stara Gradiška“.

Photograph 4:

Jasenovac concentration camp „Stone Flower“ monument created by Bogdan Bogdanović and finished in 1966 with two of the participants of the study visiting walking towards it.

Photograph 5:

Again the „Stone Flower“ monument from another perspective. This monument is rooted in the former concentration camp and moves from the earth towards the sky, towards hope.



Part 2 – Color

The border region of Italy and Slovenia is a fascinating place, where languages and cultures are interwoven across borders. However, during the interwar period and WWII, the differences between the nationalities were highlighted for terrible reasons. People of Italian and Slovenian ethnicity were killed and persecuted. Antifascist uprisings were stopped and punished. Pointing out victims and perpetrators is not that easy when it comes to the shifting persecutions and killings at the border landscape between Italy and Slovenia. Meaning that, the people in this region not only share the common knowledge of two or more languages and cultures but also a common understanding of pain and trauma from their ancestors. Visiting Trieste, Koper and places of memory and monuments in Basovizza and Opicina during our study visit enabled us to see the complexity of the past. In the small town of Marezige, which is famous for its astonishing views on the vineyards and the sea, we took part in a commemoration ceremony at the antifascist memorial for the victims killed by fascist regimes. This had its beginning already in 1921, when the first antifascist uprising of Marezige was ended.

This time I brought a color film, so I could capture the red roses on the monument with the red star. The photographs show the commemoration ceremony in Marezige and the numerous roses which have been laid to the monument. After that, two choirs sang a couple of songs, one of them wearing red. It was a rather joyful commemoration at this beautiful place in Marezige with music and the sun shining, remembering the antifascist resistance in times when populist and fascist voices are getting louder again, to remember in order to not forget and repeat. Capturing these moments with the camera was a special honor and is depicted in the following photographs.

Photograph 1-3:

Showing the process of Alice Straniero handing out the roses and the people waiting in line to lay the roses down at the monument. There were the members of the two choirs, children, tourists watching the ceremony, our group and several others joining in the event. After the commemoration, we had dinner together, right next to the square with the monument, and the atmosphere was lively and relaxed. Right after sunset, we returned to Koper.

Photograph 4:

‘Kombinat’ choir singing and commemorating.

Photograph 5:

City tour Trieste visiting visible and less visible memorial places with Štefan Čok.

Photograph 6:

Visit of the monument to the antifascists of Basovizza.

Photograph 7:

Visit to Opicina-Opčine shooting range with Dušan Kalc.

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Co-funded by
the European Union