



WE DID IT! JRI OBTAINS MONUMENT FOR JASENOVAC VICTIMS

*By Barry M. Lituchy, JRI
National Coordinator*

After more than three years and three months of constant struggle, the Jasenovac Research Institute finally won approval from the City of New York for the first public monument to the victims of Jasenovac ever created outside of the former Yugoslavia. The inscription for the Jasenovac monument was finally approved by the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation's Holocaust Advisory Committee on 15 February 2005, with some minor changes to the inscription.

The information was received at 3 PM the following afternoon. Following the announcement a period of tortuous waiting for the engraving that lasted until April 12th. This delay for the final engraving created difficulties for the planning for the day of commemoration marking the 60th anniversary of the end of the Holocaust and the unveiling of the monument.

Several changes were imposed on the inscription. It was the fourth time that the original inscription was revised.

In the final two weeks leading up to the engraving the government of Croatia made impassioned pleas to New York City officials to stop the monument. The Croatian govern-

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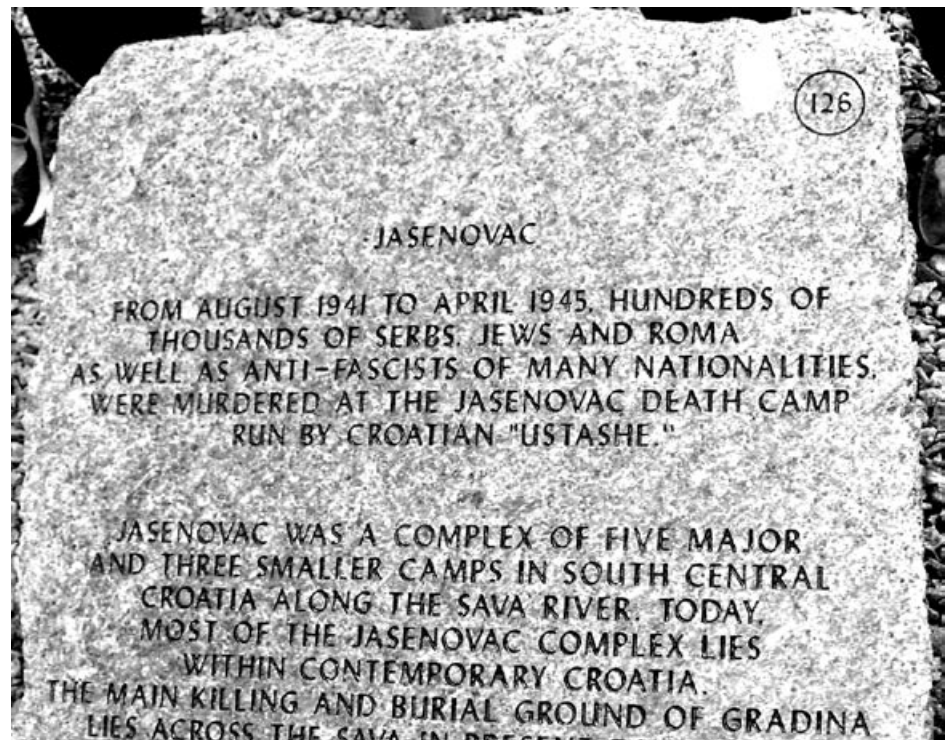
FIRST MONUMENT TO VICTIMS OF JASENOVAC IS UNVEILED IN NEW YORK CITY'S HOLOCAUST PARK AT JASENOVAC DAY OF COMMEMORATION CEREMONIES

On Sunday, 17 April 2005 the first public monument ever established for the Jasenovac death camp outside of former Yugoslavia was unveiled at ceremonies marking the 60th anniversary of the end of the Holocaust held at the Holocaust Memorial Park in Brooklyn, NY. Some 200 people attended the ceremonies including U.S. Congress-

man Anthony Weiner, New York City Ombudsman Ralph Peretto, Radio Commentator Barry Farber, eight Survivors and Jewish Partisan fighters from Yugoslavia, and diplomats representing three countries including Israel, Serbia & Montenegro, and Bosnia & Herzegovina.

The Mayor of New York City, Hon. Michael Bloomberg, officially proclaimed April 17, 2005 as "Jasenovac Day of Commemoration throughout New York City" in a decree issued on April 14th. Special greetings were read from the Serbian President Boris Tadic and from the Serbian Prime Minister Vojislav Kostunica. The special Committee on Jasenovac of the

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Inscription at the Jasenovac Memorial Stone in the Holocaust Garden on the bank of the Sheepshead Bay in New York

ment insisted that the monument was not accurate and therefore should be stopped. In particular the Croatian government objected to the numbers cited on the monument. This intervention was reported to us by an aide to U.S. Congressman Anthony Weiner, who was instrumental in helping to obtain the monument. Congressman Weiner's letters to the New York City Parks Department pushed that department into Action at a time it was prepared to do nothing. Other Congressman in New York City offered no help when we asked them.

In July the JRI's chief legal counsel David Gottfried obtained through Freedom of Information Act requests all correspondence regarding our monument. Apparently the Croatian government had made all of their interventions to the city by phone. We also learned from the FOIA documents that a lobbyist on behalf of Albanians had made repeated written requests for the city to establish a monument honoring the Albanian people for having "saved the Jews." This request was treated as an application in February at the same time as ours and was rejected.

When we first applied for the monument in the Holocaust Park in Brooklyn (one of a very few outdoor monument parks and museums dedicated to the Holocaust in the world) we thought the process would be short. In the end we had to work extraordinarily hard to obtain it and marshal the support of many people, especially Survivors. It became a daily struggle in the last six months. It serves as another example of why only an organizational approach to the problem of Holocaust research and commemoration can be successful. Individuals by themselves could never and have never righted the wrong of omitting Jasenovac and the experience of the Holocaust in Yugoslavia from Holocaust institutions. This is why the JRI was cre-

ated and why it will remain necessary. If you care about the memory of the victims of the Holocaust in Yugoslavia we encourage you to join us in our work.

Now with the inclusion of a monument for Jasenovac in New York's Holocaust Memorial Park, the victims of Jasenovac will never be forgotten. And the families of those victims will forever have a place to recognize and remember them. Thanks to the efforts of the JRI and its supporters, Jasenovac is finally being recognized as central to the study and commemoration of the Holocaust.

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Serbian Orthodox Church also sent a special greeting to the event.

At the ceremony John Ranz, Buchenwald Survivor, wartime Partisan and JRI Director, noted that it was "...an historic day, for from this day forward Serbian and Roma victims of the Holocaust shall forever be remembered with their fellow Jewish brothers and sisters with whom they shared the same fate, and the same graves." The monument was established through the efforts of the Jasenovac Research Institute which has organized the annual Jasenovac Day of Commemoration at the park for the past four years.

The Roma organization Voice of Roma sent a delegation to the ceremony, and Alexandra Oprea of Voice of Roma spoke on behalf of the Roma community to the audience praising the monument and the Holocaust Park. She severely criticized other Holocaust institutions for failing to pay sufficient attention to Roma and other non-Jewish victims of the Holocaust or in some cases totally ignoring them.

On behalf of the Survivors and victims' families, JRI Founder Barry Lituchy thanked Mayor Bloomberg, Congressman Anthony Weiner, and New York Ombudsman Ralph Per-

fetto for their help in obtaining the monument. Holocaust Park founders Pauline and Ira Bilus warmly welcomed the participants to the park and the inclusion of Jasenovac on an equal footing with Auschwitz, Dachau and Buchenwald. A letter from U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum Chairman Fred Zeidman to the JRI made the same point that of the thousands of camps and massacres during the Holocaust, Jasenovac must be recognized as one of the very worst. On behalf of the New York City Public Advocate's office, Ralph Peretto awarded the Jasenovac Research Institute and the Holocaust Park Committee special awards "For Extraordinary Service to New York City." The awards were received by Barry Lituchy and Pauline Bilus for their organizations.

Religious services were conducted by Father Djokan Majstorovic of St. Sava's Serbian Orthodox Church in New York who also blessed the monument. After Father Djokan, Rabbi Dr. Ephraim Isaac, a member of the JRI Advisory Board and head of the Institute for Semitic Studies in Princeton, also said Kaddish for the victims. Following these ceremonies the names of dozens of victims of the Jasenovac camp and the Holocaust in Yugoslavia were read aloud, while seven large candles were lit for each hundred thousand of the estimated 700,000 victims of Jasenovac.

The first of the seven candles was lit by a representative of the Voice of Roma organization, Sonya Jasarska, in memory of the many tens of thousands of Roma victims at Jasenovac. Another candle was lit by a nine year old Serbian girl at the ceremony in memory of the many tens of thousands of Serbian, Jewish and Roma children brutally exterminated at Jasenovac. Elisa Gutman lit a candle in memory of her father killed at Jasenovac. Anna Beck also lit a candle in memory of the tens of thousands of Jews from other parts of Yugoslavia

killed by German, Croatian, Muslim and Albanian fascists. A seven foot wreath was placed next to the monument and many lit individual candles to remember victims.

Anna Beck spoke movingly prior to the candle lighting of how she personally witnessed the mass murder of Jews and Serbs on the frozen Danube River in Novi Sad in January 1942. Ricki Danon Soltan and Michael Danon recalled how they survived, while their fathers were murdered in Jasenovac along with many other members of their family. Aleksandar Masic spoke on behalf of fellow Jewish Partisans and Survivors from former Yugoslavia. Survivor Eva Deutsch Costabel recalled how her father and many friends were arrested by the Ustashe and then sent to their deaths.

The Ambassador of Bosnia and Hercegovina to the U.S., H.E. Igor Davidovic, spoke movingly about the murder of his grandfather at Jasenovac. Dan Kapner, representing the State of Israel, warmly congratulated the JRI and all participants for the establishment of the Jasenovac monument and reminded all of the dire need to strengthen our remembrance activities in the face of growing threats from anti-Semitism, racism and neo-Nazism. Melody Devine, a foreign policy advisor for U.S. Congressman Trent Franks of Arizona spoke on behalf of the Congressman.

Other speakers included Dr. Norman Markowitz a Professor of History at Rutgers University and Dr. William Rosenbaum, a Psychology Professor at Kingsborough Community College in Brooklyn who stressed the vital importance of Holocaust education. Reflecting the JRI's profound commitment to furthering education about the Holocaust in Yugoslavia, Director Lituchy announced the winner of the JRI's first annual Jasenovac Essay Contest - Alexander Osman of Hopewell Junior High School in

Aliquippa, PA., who will receive a \$500 prize for his work. The winners in Serbia and Bosnia will be announced later in May and June.

A small Croatian group arrived toward the end of the ceremonies. The state of Croatia was not formally invited on this occasion because the monument was not engraved until April 12th. However, Croatia will be invited to participate next year.

JRI Founder Barry Lituchy reminded the participants that justice and recognition for the victims of the Holocaust in Yugoslavia has not come without hard struggle: "The lessons of the Holocaust were bitterly learned and on this day we must remind ourselves of them as we honor the victims. The victims speak to us still, reminding us "Da Se Ne Zaboravi!" ("So that you may not forget!"). On April 17th we did not forget - we honored our martyrs in a manner they long deserved, with a permanent monument, for-ever."

*Mr. Barry Lituchy
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and Political Science
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Dear Mr. Lituchy,

I write to thank you for the tremendous efforts you have undertaken In bringing to life a memorial to the victims of the Jasenovac concentration camp in faraway New York.

Whatever is said at the consecration of this monument in New York—sixty years after that place of horrors was liberated and closed down—will not be enough. Words do not exist to describe the planned deaths of thousands upon thousands of innocent people. Words, in any language, spoken at any time and

by any nation, cannot honor fully the memory of those who perished in that place, in Jasenovac.

We must root Jasenovac in our memories so that we may unroot the hatred that continues to exist among certain nations in the Balkans.

So that we may never forget
May their memories live on forever

*Boris Tadic
President of Serbia*



Courtesy Translation

HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL COMMITTEE
Library, Education & Resource Center
Mr. Barry Lituchy

Dear Friends,

On behalf of the Government of the Republic of Serbia and on my own behalf, I would like to thank you for all your efforts and the love you have shown to the innocent victims of the Jasenovac Concentration Camp with the newly engraved monument in the New York City's Holocaust Memorial Park.

In World War II, hundreds of thousands of Serbs, Jews and Roma, men, women and children, the old and the young alike, were killed in the Jasenovac Concentration Camp for no other reason than their nationality, race and religion.

Today, 60 years after a brave breakout attempt by Jasenovac inmates, we remember all those innocent victims from persecuted nations, as well as the courageous individuals from other nations who perished in Jasenovac and other death camps because they stood against the insane ethnic cleansing.

The victims should be remembered forever, and the descendants of the people who suffered at their own hearts and on their own land only because they were of a different race, ethnicity or religion, should be given an opportunity to exercise all international and national guarantees for a safe and peaceful life. In the name of those who suffered for the wellbeing and peace of present and future generations, we have to fight for the truth to be known, the truth that has been contested so many times before.

We are facing a long recovery and healing in the wake of the wars of the 20th century.

For a safe and peaceful future, it is necessary to achieve reconciliation between nations: remembering the words of the late Serb patriarch German at the consecration of the memorial church in Jasenovac, that we should be prepared to forgive, but not to forget.

Dear friends, I would like to thank you again for the monument to the Jasenovac victims: to honour and remember the dead, and instill hopes for a better and safer future in the living.

Vojislav Kostunica
Prime Minister



Office of the Mayor

CITY OF NEW YORK



Proclamation

WHEREAS: SIXTY YEARS HAVE PASSED SINCE THE END OF THE HOLOCAUST. AS THE HORROR OF THOSE EVENTS RECEDES DEEPER INTO HISTORY, THE RESPONSIBILITY OF REMEMBRANCE WEIGHS MORE HEAVILY ON ALL OF US. NEW YORK CITY IS PROUD TO JOIN THE JASENOVAC RESEARCH INSTITUTE IN COMMEMORATING THE HOLOCAUST IN YUGOSLAVIA WITH A CEREMONY AT THE HOLOCAUST PARK IN BROOKLYN. TOGETHER WE HONOR THOSE WHO SUFFERED AND PLEDGE TO REMAIN VIGILANT AGAINST THE DARK IMPULSES THAT TRIGGERED THIS GENOCIDE.

WHEREAS: A MONUMENT HONORING THE VICTIMS OF THE JASENOVAC CONCENTRATION CAMP WILL BE UNVEILED AT TODAY'S EVENT. JASENOVAC WAS THE LARGEST CONCENTRATION AND EXTERMINATION CAMP IN SOUTHEASTERN EUROPE. WE TAKE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO REMEMBER THE THOUSANDS OF INNOCENT VICTIMS WHO DIED THERE, AS WELL AS THE HEROIC PRISONERS WHOSE ESCAPE IN 1945 SPARKED THE LIBERATION OF THE CAMP.

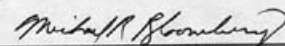
WHEREAS: IT IS VIRTUALLY IMPOSSIBLE TO COMPREHEND THE SCOPE OF THE LOSSES SUFFERED BY YUGOSLAVIA'S JEWS, SERBS, ROMAS, AND ANTI-FASCISTS AT THE HANDS OF THE NAZIS. IT IS IMPERATIVE THAT WE HONOR THEIR MEMORY, FOR THE SAKE OF THOSE WHO SUFFERED IN THE PAST AND TO ENSURE THAT FUTURE GENERATIONS WILL NEVER KNOW SUCH HORRIFIC ATROCITY.

NOW THEREFORE, I, MICHAEL R. BLOOMBERG, MAYOR OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK, IN REMEMBRANCE OF THE MILLIONS OF PEOPLE WHO LOST THEIR LIVES IN THE HOLOCAUST, TO HEREBY PROCLAIM SUNDAY, APRIL 17, 2005 IN THE CITY OF NEW YORK AS

"JASENOVAC DAY OF COMMEMORATION"



IN WITNESS WHEREOF I HAVE HEREUNTO SET MY HAND AND CAUSED THE SEAL OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK TO BE AFFIXED.


MICHAEL R. BLOOMBERG
MAYOR



Mr. Barry M. Lituchy, Mrs. and Mr. John Renz, US Congressman Anthony Winer, and Mrs. Eva Deutsch Costabel



Mr. Vladimir Drobnjak, Representative of Serbia and Montenegro at U.N. in New York and Barry Lituchy at the Unveiling Ceremony in Holocaust Park.

AN INTRODUCTION TO DONJA GRADINA

THE LARGEST EXECUTION SITE OF THE JASENOVAC CONCENTRATION CAMP

By Simo Brdar

*Part 2 of 2 (Part 1 was
published in the last issue)*

The Memorial-Area Donja Gradina is the largest execution place of the Ustashe concentration camp Jasenovac and an inseparable part of the history of Jasenovac and of Pavelic's Independent State of Croatia.

After the brief April war in 1941, the Kingdom of Yugoslavia was dismembered by the aggressor states: Nazi Germany, Fascist Italy, Horthy's Hungary and Boris' Bulgaria. In the meantime, the Ustashe Independent State of Croatia (NDH) was proclaimed in Zagreb on April 10, 1941, which aside from territories inhabited by Croats also included the whole of Bosnia and Herzegovina and parts of Serbia.

In this newly created puppet state there lived more than 2,000,000 Serbs and significant populations of Jews and Roma.

Immediately after the proclamation of the NDH, the leader of this monster-state, *Poglavnik* Ante Pavelic began to implement a program of creating a "pure Croatian living space and a pure Croatian nation". According to his program, the prerequisite for the creation of a pure Croatian state was extermination of Serbs, Jews and Roma. Pointing out that Serbs are religiously and racially different from Croats and that they represented a third of all inhabitants of the NDH, for the extermination of Serbs the Ustashe applied the motto: banish a third, convert a third to Catholicism and slaughter a third. The Ustashe government passed a num-

ber of laws, decrees and instructions which legalized Nazi-Fascist methods of terror and ethnic genocide (for example, the legal decree on prohibiting the Cyrillic alphabet, the legal decree on racial affiliation, the legal decree on citizenship, the legal decree on conversions from one religion to another, etc.). The Ustashe authorities were supported by the bulk of the Catholic clergy and the Islamic religious community.

The Ustashe organization was a typical Fascist organization, and its armed forces were the instrument that implemented the Ustashe Nazi ideology.

The "Ustashe army" ("*Ustaska vojnica*") was organized by Slavko Kvaternik. It was comprised of Ustashe units, mostly volunteers under the command of the Main Ustashe Headquarters, special police forces and *Domo-brans* ("Home Army"). In August 1941 the Ustashe Security Service (UNS) was formed as well. These institutions carried out the most severe forms of genocide against Serbs, Jews and Roma in the NDH. In order to enable only Croat and Muslim people to live in the NDH, the Ustashe authorities carried out mass physical destruction, deportation and conversions of Serbs to Catholicism, systematic extermination of Jews and almost complete extermination of Roma. Mass murders of Serbs in the NDH began immediately in April 1941, with massacres in villages around Bjelovar, on Mt. Banija, in Lika, on Mt. Kordun, in Bosnian Krajina and Herzegovina. Facts indicate that only from April 1941 until mid-August 1942 around 600,000 Serbs were killed in the NDH in the most brutal manner. Around 180,000 Serbs were deported to Serbia during the war. Spiritual genocide, to which the Serbian Orthodox Church was exposed, was especially pervasive. During the war 450 Orthodox churches were destroyed.

During the Second World War, with the aim of destroying political opponents and entire nations, to intimidate and crush all resistance by the enslaved nations of Europe – Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy expanded and consolidated their existing concentration camps and commenced forming new camps in their own territories as well as in territories of annexed and occupied states. By their capacity and means of destruction of innocent people, many of these camps represented enormous "death factories". Such camps were: Auschwitz, Maidanek and Treblinka in Poland, Dachau, Buchenwald, Bergen-Belsen and Sachshausen-Oraninburg in Germany, Mathausen in Austria and others. From 1939 until 1945, more than 12,000,000 people from occupied countries of Europe were confined in German and other Fascist concentration camps, where most of them were killed in the most hideous manner. In annexed and occupied territories in 1944, there were 28 central concentration camps with around 2,000 ghetto-branches and labor camps.

In these and other Fascist camps, inmates were killed in the most atrocious ways: by beating, shooting, hanging, starvation, exhaustion with hard labor, incineration, gassing, freezing, vivisection and many other ways. The concentration camp of Jasenovac with all its killing fields also belongs in the category of those largest Nazi death camps that were organized during the Second World War in Europe.

The first camps in the NDH were founded on the island of Pag – Slano, on Mt. Velebit near Gospic – Jadovno and in Bosnia near Travnik – Kruscica. Among larger camps were: Danica in Koprivnica, Kerestinec, Lobograd, Lepoglava, Jastrebarsko, Sisak, Djakovo and Tenje near Osijek. The largest, the most monstrous and the worst possible of all was Jasenovac, founded in August 1941.

The man who realized the idea to found a concentration camp was Eugen Kvaternik – Dido. The commander of the camp was Vjekoslav Luburic – Maks, and in his absence the commandants of the camp were: Ljubo Milos, Fra (Franciscan) Miroslav Filipovic-Majstorovic called “Satan”, Dinko Sakic, Hinko Picili, Ahmed Kapetanovic and Jakob Dzal.

By atrocities, torture and methods of liquidation of innocent men, women and children, Jasenovac is without precedent in history of mankind. Inmates were killed by blunt objects: sledgehammers, iron bars, bludgeons, army boots... Liquidations were performed by sharp objects as well: knives, daggers, sabers, axes and specially designed knives and blades. Inmates were tortured and exhausted by hunger and thirst. Their skin was cut and salted. Their genitals were scorched by red-hot iron. The Ustashe placed rats on bellies of inmates, then covered the rat with a pot and heated the pot with a blow torch, until the rat would bite through the skin and hide in the intestines of an inmate. They pulled out nails of inmates with metal devices, they gauged eyes with specially made hooks, they blinded inmates by stabbing needles in their eyes, they cut off noses, ears and tongues, they stabbed awls in hearts, raped daughters in front of their fathers, under horrible torture they forced sons to rape their mothers, they cut off male genitals and placed them into mouths of mothers and daughters. In a single sentence, concentration camp Jasenovac, by brutality of torture and killing of people, surpassed everything even the sickest mind could imagine and accomplish.

It is possible to list for days the places of horrible suffering and death of inmates. The Ustashe even organized competitions in slaughtering innocent victims.

In Jasenovac, near the flower monument, there is a lake. The lake

was artificially created before the war by digging out land for brick production in Bacic's brick factory. During the existence of the camp, canals were dug out towards the lake. Logs were placed over those canals, which served as toilets for inmates. Inmates – living skeletons – after arriving on the logs, would often fall into the canal after trying to relieve themselves and they would drown in water with human feces. All of that flowed down into the lake. There was not even a drop of clean water in the camp. Inmates were forced to drink water from the lake. That was the aim of the Ustashe – to cause dysentery and typhus epidemics among the inmates. Thus a large number of inmates died from those diseases suffering horribly. Inmates called it the “Ghastly Lake”.

Jasenovac and Gradina Since 1945

By the end of April 1945, Ustashe committed their last massacre in Jasenovac, burned their archives and calmly retreated, while units of the National Liberation Army of Yugoslavia entered Jasenovac on May 2, 1945. They found Jasenovac and Gradina fields covered with corpses, and out of mass graves blood flowed like oil. All objects of the camp were preserved, except wooden constructions that were burned down. From that time began the silence about Jasenovac and erasing all traces of the Ustashe crime of genocide.

After the end of the Second World War with the victory of the anti-fascist coalition, in places of mass crimes of genocide, in concentration camps, authentic objects and documents were preserved and memorial museums and memorial areas were founded (Auschwitz, Dachau, Treblinka, Mathausen and others) and not only in countries of the anti-fascist coalition, but also in aggressor countries from that period. These significant museum institutions, appreciated and visited, by their themes and original mate-

rial, not only inspire remembrance and warning, but also explain the causes and consequences of genocide by totalitarian regimes.

In the territory of the former Socialist Republic of Croatia after the Second World War, all authentic objects and locations of the Ustashe crime of genocide over Serbs, Jews and Roma were destroyed, and such was also the fate of Jasenovac. All objects in Jasenovac were demolished and razed, and the area of the camp itself was turned into an idyllic lawn, while most of the wider area is overgrown with weeds and brushwood.

The building of the Sava dikes began in 1956. A large number of graves ended up under dikes and canals. Grave field “Bare” in Donja Gradina is an obvious proof. By a great effort, two graves were only partially salvaged from remaining under a dike. On the property of the Loncarevic family from the village of Medjedja, graves of Jasenovac victims also ended up under a dike.

Only twenty years after the end of the Second World War, in 1965, when the fields of Jasenovac were covered with women wearing black, lighting candles for their relatives, someone remembered to build a monument. Three years later, in 1968, a museum was built, and soon the Memorial Area Jasenovac - Donja Gradina was formed, which encompassed the entire area of the former concentration camp Jasenovac. This memorial functioned until the beginning of the war in 1991.

With the breakup of former Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia and creation of Republic of Croatia, the largest part of the surface of former concentration camp Jasenovac remained in the territory of Croatia. Mass graves are located in Jablanac, Mlaka, Krndija, Medjustrugovi, Krapje, Jasenovac, Dubicke Krecane, Cerovljani, Ustice.

Donja Gradina remains in Republika Srpska – Bosnia and Herzegovina. With numerous execution places and grave fields of victims of the Ustashe crime of genocide in the area of Kozarska Dubica and Gradiska, it is the only location of the Ustashe concentration camp Jasenovac where serious exploration has been performed.

In this period the only explorations were performed in Donja Gradina during the existence of Socialist Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina, while there were never any serious explorations by the Croatian side.

According to adopted methodology and in accord with the law on the arrangement of the Memorial Area Donja Gradina, anthropological explorations have been conducted on the site.

In 1962 and 1964, drilling and probing was performed on locations of known graves, but were not completed.

By analysis of the current status and orientation in further work, the problem of anthropological explorations was regarded in twofold sense:

Regarding all interventions in the space of construction and notation, it was necessary to attempt to determine all possible undiscovered locations of graves.

Completion of anthropological explorations in the sense of establishing the number of victims, age and national structure, means of execution and all other data that was possible to research.

Based on testimonies of surviving inmates and the population that came to that area just after the liberation, it has been determined that at the time there were significantly more graves than there are today.

As the terrain has changed its appearance over time, there is no

possibility to identify all undiscovered locations of graves based on memories.

Based on consultations with experts it was decided to conduct an aerial survey of the terrain with a multi-emulsion technique, which implies a simultaneous photographic survey with 4 cameras in panchromatic infrared, red-white and color techniques.

The project of photographing the terrain and interpretation of photographs was entrusted to the Geodetic Institute of Slovenia.

Based on characteristics of the infrared photographs and data acquired by comparison of the mentioned techniques, and by analogy according to locations of known grave sites, suspected locations were marked according to higher and lower probability of containing mass graves.

After identification of suspected locations on the terrain, the procedure of drilling was performed from August 15, 1976 until September 9, 1976. Locations of drilling sites were determined according to aerial photographs and according to statements of inhabitants of the village of Donja Gradina. All information is available on the map of anthropological explorations. In the mentioned period over a thousand drilling holes were made.

Based on all explorations a program of arrangement of the Memorial Area Donja Gradina was made (Institute of Urbanism of the Socialist Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina – Sarajevo, March 1977). Donja Gradina was arranged according to that program and officially opened for the public in April 1988.

On the central information granite panel that was installed in 1986 in Donja Gradina, it is clearly stated that by committing the crime of genocide in concentration camp

Jasenovac, the Ustashe murdered in horrible throes 700,000 innocents, men, women and children. Out of that number it is established that 366,000 were murdered in Donja Gradina. Of the total number of victims, the Ustashe savagely liquidated over 20,000 children. To this day the number of 19,432 children to the age of 14 have been identified by first and last names and basic personal information to have been murdered in the system of Ustashe concentration camps Jasenovac.

With the breakup of Yugoslavia, the single Memorial Area Jasenovac – Donja Gradina has been broken up as well. As of September 1991, Memorial Area Donja Gradina is without status and nobody has dealt with it institutionally.

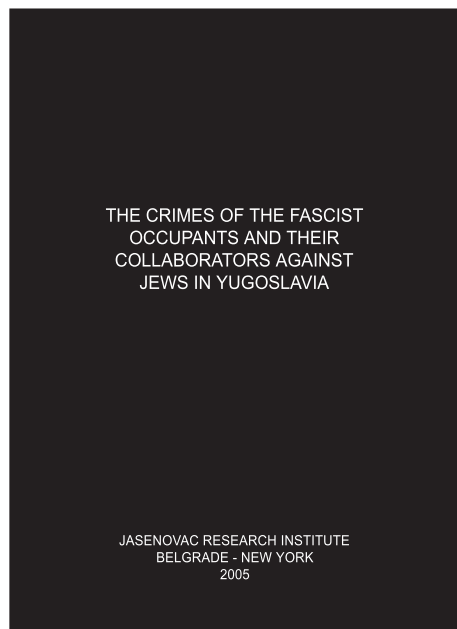
By the decision of the National Assembly of Republika Srpska No. 02-871/96 from July 9, 1996, the Law on the Memorial Area Donja Gradina was passed, which regulates the status of this memorial in Republika Srpska. The law was passed based on the previous law passed by the Socialist Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Today it is the Public Institution Memorial Area Donja Gradina with eight employees.

(The Gradina Memorial Area has become an important site for Holocaust commemoration and international Holocaust studies. In recent years it has served as the site for an annual Day of Commemoration for Yugoslav Holocaust victims, and in May 2005 was the venue for the award ceremonies of the first annual Jasenovac Commemorative Essay Contest in Republika Srpska sponsored by the Jasenovac Research Institute.- Editors)



JRI REPUBLISHES MAJOR WORK ON THE HOLOCAUST IN YUGOSLAVIA, "THE BLACK BOOK"

On the 60th anniversary of the liberation of Jasenovac and the end of the Holocaust in Yugoslavia, the Jasenovac Research Institute is proud to announce its publication of one of the most important studies of the Holocaust in Yugoslavia - "The Crimes of the Fascist Occupants



and Their Collaborators Against Jews in Yugoslavia" ("Zlocini fashističkih okupatora i njihovih saradnika protiv Jevreja u Jugoslaviji"). It is generally agreed that this work is one of the two most important books on the Jewish dimension of the Holocaust in Yugoslavia ever produced (the other being Jasa Romano's study published nearly thirty years later).

Also known simply as "The Black Book," this study first appeared 53 years ago in an edition officially listed as 4000 copies. But in truth, fewer than 1000 copies of "The Black Book" were distributed, and far fewer still ever saw public distribution.

This edition, with a new preface by Alexandar Masic, Barry Lituchy and Danko Vasovic in English and Serbian, consists of three parts: the

main text is 195 pages in Serbian; there is a very comprehensive English language summary of 53 pages; plus another 44 pages offer photographs and original documents with English and Serbian captions. It is an extraordinary work that will be reissued by the JRI in the future and will become the standard text in libraries, universities and Holocaust institutions around the world that it was always meant to be.

It is available to the public for \$30 (US) (includes shipping and postage). For JRI Associates the book is \$20 (US).

Make your check payable and mail to:

Jasenovac Research Institute
PO Box 10-0674
Brooklyn, NY 11210 USA

SERBS, JEWS, ROMA MARK ANNIVERSARY OF THE LIBERATION OF JASENOVAC CAMP

*Published by Itar-Tass
18 April 2005*

BELGRADE - Thousands of people gathered in the town of Donja Gradina in the Serb Republic of Bosnia Sunday to mark the 60th anniversary since liberation of the Jasenovac Nazi concentration camp, where more than 700,000 Serbs, Jews, gypsies, and antifascists died during World War II.

"A most atrocious form of genocide was committed at Jasenovac, as hundreds of thousands of innocent elderly, women and children died there just because they belonged to a different creed or different ethnic groups," said the President of the Bosnian Serb Republic, Dragan Cavic.

He urged the attending people "to continue punishing the butchers

by gathering here every year and reminding them about their victims".

"Such butchers can appear in other places, at other periods of time, and speak other languages," Cavic said.

He called on the Balkan nations to break the vicious circle, which turns today's victims into tomorrow's hangmen and transforms today's hatred into tomorrow's revenge.

"All of us need exceptional responsibility so that our region wouldn't be regarded as a place of crimes anymore," said Boris Tadic, the president of Serbia.

His mother, Nevenka Tadic came to Donja Gradina, too. Her own father was killed in a concentration camp on Bosnian territory during World War II.

Donja Gradina has nine fields of communal graves of the victims, and the remembrance function held there Sunday under the motto of Let Us Remember brought together diplomats from the Russian, German, Slovene and other embassies in Bosnia, as well as representatives of the World Jewish Congress and the World Gypsy Congress.

Serb Orthodox, Jewish and Roma clergy served remembrance services for the victims of wartime genocide.

JASENOVAC DEATH CAMP VICTIMS HONORED IN S'HEAD BAY

The cloudy day provided a grim backdrop as a sea of mourners united in grief to remember the victims of one of the Holocaust's most barbaric death camps.

The commemoration - held at Holocaust Memorial Park, Emmons and West End avenues - paid tribute to the memories of the hundreds of thousands of men, women and children of the Yugoslavian death camp known as Jasenovac where estimates of the total number of Serbs, Jews, Romas and others systematically murdered there from August 1941 to April 1945 range from 300,000 to 700,000.

The memorial program - presented by the Jasenovac Research Institute (JRI) and marking the 60th anniversary of the end of the Holocaust in Yugoslavia - recalled the sacrifices of the slaughtered with poignant guest addresses followed by a wreath placing ceremony.

Following the Nazi invasion and dismemberment of Yugoslavia in April 1941, the "Independent State of Croatia" was established as a pro-Nazi government.

It was dedicated to a clerical-fascist ideology influenced both by Nazism and extreme Roman Catholic fanaticism.

On coming to power, the Ustashe Party dictatorship in Croatia quickly commenced on a policy of racial extermination of all Serbs, Jews and Romas living within its borders.

Jasenovac was actually a complex of five major and three smaller "special" camps spread out over 240 square kilometers (150 square miles) in south-central Croatia along the Sava River.

Of the 60,000 Jews living within wartime Croatia's borders, 45,000 were murdered and at least 25,000 of these at Jasenovac.

Today, the area where one of the most barbaric death camps once



Barry Lituchy, founder of the Jasenovac Research Institute and an adjunct professor of History at Kingsborough Community College, joins Dr Ephraim Isaac, director of the Institute of Semitic Studies at Princeton and founder of Afro-American studies at Harvard University (from left).

stood, lies within the borders of contemporary Croatia, with the notable exception of the main killing and burial ground of Gradina, which lies across the Sava River in present day Bosnia.

HOLOCAUST MUSEUM OPENS IN ROMANIA

On September 11, 2005 Romania's first "fully functional" Holocaust museum - The Northern Transylvania Holocaust Museum - was dedicated in Simleu Silvaniei, Romania. In May/June 1944, that area's Jewish population was forced out of their homes into the brutal Cehei Ghetto and from there transported to Auschwitz-Birkenau to be murdered. Some 160,000 Jews from that region were killed. For more information visit www.jahf.org.

from The Jewish Press (New York), September 9, 2005

HAGUE ACCUSES THE VATICAN OF HIDING CROATIAN WAR CRIMINAL

The Vatican's historic connections to Croatian fascism and war crimes came under renewed scrutiny today when the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia at the Hague publicly accused the Vatican of hiding suspected Croatian war criminal, Gen. Ante Gotovina. The ICTY's chief prosecutor Carla del Ponte, informed BBC that Gotovina is believed to be hiding in a Vatican monastery and that the Vatican has refused to cooperate with the ICTY. Gotovina is accused of numerous war crimes during Croatia's brutal ethnic cleansing of the Serbian populated region of Krajina in late summer of 1995

including the massacre of 150 Serbian civilians in one town and the murder of hundreds of other Serbs when Gotovina's forces overran the Krajina and expelled 250,000 Serbs from the region. This incident recalls the still unresolved crimes of the Vatican in protected hundreds of Croatian fascists after World War II which led to the creation of the infamous ratlines.

from BBC News, October 20, 2005,



СА КОМЕМОРАЦИЈЕ ЖРТВАМА ЈАСЕНОВЦА У ЊУЈОРКУ

СПОМЕН-ПЛОЧА ЗА НЕЗАБОРАВ

■ У комеморативним говорима наглашен значај откривања првог споменика посвећеног страдалницима у Јасеновцу, који је постављен у САД



Игор
Давидовић

У Меморијалном парку холокауста у Бруклину у недељу је, како смо већ писали, у присуству великог броја Срба, Јевреја и Американаца, свечано откривена спомен-плоча посвећена жртвама Јасеновца на којој пише да је у овом логору страдало стотине хиљада Срба, Јевреја и Рома, као и других антифашиста многих националности.

Свештеник цркве Светог Саве у Њујорку отац Ђокан Мајсторовић благосиљао је плочу и прочитао молитву за упокојење страдалних. Свечаности су присуствовали Игор Давидовић, амбасадор Босне и Херцеговине у Вашингтону, чији је деда страдао у Јасеновцу, председник Мисије Србије и Црне Горе у Њујорку Владимир Дробњак, директор Истраживачког центра

Јасеновац Дарко Трифуновић, Ентони Винер, амерички конгресмен, Ден Капнер, представник израелског конзулата, Мелоди Дивајн, члан Српско-америчког кокуса и други.

У комеморативним говорима наглашен је значај откривања ове спомен-плоче посвећене жртвама Јасеновца, прве ван територија бивше Југославије, што ће допринети да се жртве и страдања из тог логора никада не забораве.

**ПОМЕН ЖРТВАМА ЈАСЕНОВЦА:
Комеморативни скуп
у Њујорку**



Спомен-плоча у парку
холокауста у Бруклину

На скупу су прочитани телеграми премијера Србије Војислава Коштунице, председника Бориса Тадића и амбасадора Ивана Вујачића, а упале је седам свећа, по једна за сваких 100.000 жртава. Градоначелник Њујорка Мајкл Блумберг прогласио је недељу, 17. април 2005. године за Дан комеморације жртвама Јасеновца.

Организатор и иницијатор постављања спомен-плоче је Институт за истраживање злочина у Јасеновцу из Њујорка, основан 1998, који је после више од три године од подношења захтева добио дозволу њујоршких градских власти за подизање споменика.

На интернет-страницама Института за истраживање злочина у Јасеновцу наводи се да је Институт основан “у уверењу да недавна трагедија на Балкану води порекло од занемареног геноцида над Србима, Јеврејима и Ромима у Другом светском рату”.

М. Ф.

Abstract,

Memorial stone for ever lasting remembrance, (Serbian, Cyrillic print)

Pictures of H.E. Igor Davidović, Ambassador of Bosnia in Washington, D.C, the memorial stone, the attendants at the unveiling ceremony, as well as complete a printed list of government and social officials present.

JRI ESSAY WINNERS ANNOUNCED

Winners of the First Annual Jasenovac Commemorative Essay Contests in North America, Republika Srpska, and Serbia & Montenegro (sponsored by the Jasenovac Research Institute)

The Jasenovac Research Institute is proud to announce the winners of the first annual Jasenovac Commemorative essay and art contest held simultaneously this past school year in North America, Republika Srpska and Serbia & Montenegro. The contest was open to all students ages 14 to 18 in these coun-



tries and awards were presented to the winners in May and June. The first place winners in Serbia & Montenegro - Tijana Tomic of Varvarin, and in Republika Srpska - Dejan Arnaut of Kozarska Dubica - received gifts and \$200 (US) prize. The first place winner in the North American contest, Alexander Osman of Aliquippa, Pa., received gifts and a \$500 prize. The second and third place winners in Republika Srpska, Zeljko Slijepcevic of Gradiska and Ana Rakita of Banja Luka, received a \$100 prize. The contest juries decided that no second or third place prizes would be awarded this year in the Serbia & Montenegro or North American contests, although letters of thanks were sent to the entries. The contests were launched with the critical support of JRI Director Kosa Martjak in New York.

The enormous success of the contest in Republika Srpska was in

large part due to the leadership of JRI board member Dejan Miletic who coordinated the event with Republika Srpska institutions. Also critical were the efforts of Gradina curator and historian Simo Brdar, Prof. Vladimir Lukic of the Initiative Board for Donja Gradina, and Department of Schools head Milos Milincic. These efforts culminated in a moving ceremony at the hall of the Gradina Memorial Zone on May 8th. Despite the torrential rain the event was attended by a packed hall at which the three winners read their works accompanied by student musicians playing Bach. The contest evolved and expanded to include an art contest as well which also drew hundreds of participants and whose winners will be announced in September. JRI directors Barry Lituchy from New York and Aleksandar Masic from Belgrade spoke at the May 8th ceremonies, first in Banja Luka to view the art contest entries, and then in Gradina. Following the Gradina ceremonies, JRI members Miletic, Lituchy and Masic met with Srpska Republika Prime Minister Pero Bukejlovic as his guests and discussed future activities.

Alexander Osman, a student at Hopewell Junior High School,



received his award by mail, but will be a guest at next year's Jasenovac commemoration ceremony in New York. In Serbia JRI director Aleksandar Masic traveled to Varvarin (about 100 miles south of Belgrade) to meet the winner of the contest in Serbia & Montenegro, Tijana Tomic. Mr. Masic, whose mother were murdered by German fascists in Nazi occupied Serbia and who fought as a Partisan in the anti-fas-

cist struggle, spoke to students and faculty in Varvarin about his experiences. While there Masic and others laid flowers at the monument for the victims of the bombing of Varvarin by NATO in 1999. on behalf of the JRI, recalling the tragic links between the events of the Holocaust and the reemergence of anti-Serbian aggression in the 1990's. The Jasenovac Research Institute will announce the upcoming Jasenovac Commemorative Essay and Art contests for 2006. in the Srbobran in September

SPEECH TO STUDENTS AND TEACHERS AT THE AWARDS CEREMONY FOR THE FIRST ANNUAL JASENOVAC COMMEMORATIVE ESSAY CONTEST AT THE GRADINA MEMORIAL ZONE, REPUBLIKA SRPSKA, BOSNIA

*By Barry Lituchy
8 May 2005*

Dear Friends,
I came a long way to be here today to give awards and to congratulate all of you have worked hard to study the lessons of Jasenovac and the Holocaust. I am here today because I firmly believe that your efforts in this study are extremely important for the future of the Serbian people, for the future of the Jewish people, for the future of the Roma people, for the future of this land, and for the future of humanity. Without Holocaust education we are doomed. But by sponsoring contests like this one here in Bosnia, in Serbia & Montenegro and in North America, the Jasenovac Research Institute believes that together we can change the world for the better and help build a better future based on a real understanding of human rights and social justice.

Through this contest students and teachers such as yourselves can

teach others who have not learned, or who have chosen not to learn, the lessons of Jasenovac and the Holocaust. Because without knowing the basic facts of how German and Croatian fascists with others created the Ustashe puppet state and its race laws designed to commit crimes of genocide against Serbs, Jews and Roma, how can anyone talk about justice or human rights in Bosnia or anywhere else in the world today?

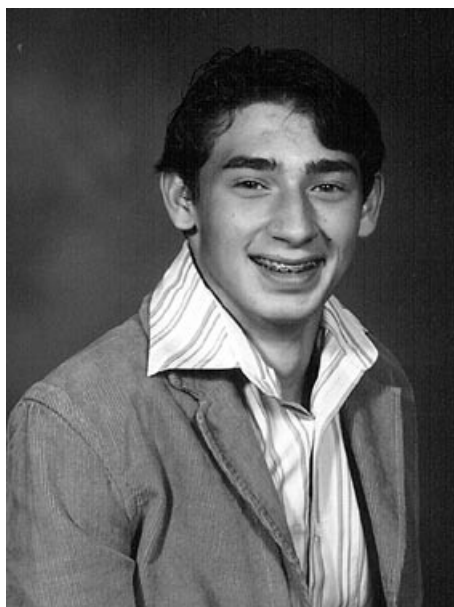
No one can talk about human rights or democracy without first understanding that the crimes committed here on this spot 60 years ago were the greatest threat to human rights and democracy of all time. We can build an understanding of human rights and democracy only through an understanding of Jasenovac. That dialogue can only begin here. This is why we are here today.

I think it is a shame and a crime that Paddy Ashdown is not here today. It shows a lack of seriousness on his part about human rights and war crimes that he has failed to recognize these ceremonies at Gradina. It is not only anti-Serbian to ignore the commemoration of Jasenovac, it is anti-Semitic and anti-Roma as well. Paddy Ashdown could learn a lot from you students. You all have something important to teach the world about your history and we will not let anyone forget that!

When on April 21, 1945 the last thousand of Jasenovac prisoners were rounded up and marched to a few buildings, they knew that they were going to be murdered. So, on that day these starving, exhausted and unarmed prisoners decided that they had to liberate themselves and close Jasenovac forever. But they also knew that almost all of them would surely die in the process, because without weapons and weakened by sadistic cruelty, they would have to throw their tortured, emaciated bodies at the machine gun bullets. But they decided they

had to do it. Because as the Survivors have told us – even if just one man or woman survives, he or she will be able to tell the whole world about what happened to us here.

Those poor victims who are buried by the thousands right here on



Alexander Osman, First Place essay contest winner, is a member of Lodge #23 - Aliquippa

this sacred ground under our feet – they speak to us still. Can you hear them? They ask us only that we never forget what was done to them. I can hear them. They died as martyrs for you and me, for all of us. This is why we are here today.

We are also here today to honor you young people. Yes, you! Because by honoring you today for your work in this contest, we are honoring them, our martyrs, who speak to us from this sacred ground and say: “Never forget!” and “Never again!”

And I want to emphasize and say to all of you young people here who participated by the hundreds in this contest – we are extremely proud of all of you! You have done truly what is called in Hebrew a Mitzvah – a good deed that helps your country, your people and your fellow human beings. You are helping to change the world for the better. Your work gives us all hope and courage.

So, let us keep this annual contest going as a way in which we can keep our promise to the martyrs that we will never forget them. Together we will insure that the young generation will hear their voices, as you have, forever.

WINNING ESSAY OF ALEX OSMAN

As the shepherd watches over his flock, so God watches over the souls of the Jasenovac victims. Jasenovac, a word that even to this day lies heavy in the hearts of those who lived through this cruel experience. In the modern Western world this horrifying ordeal was passed off as just another Nazi death camp, but in harsh reality, it was so much more. Few people know the true story of the horror of Jasenovac and the history of the Croatian Nazi government whose goal was to eliminate all non-Croatian people from its territory. Because of the efforts of the Jasenovac Research Institute, the truth of Jasenovac and the Yugoslav people is now being told.

The Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes was founded on July 17, 1917, by the Corfu Pact. This pact united the Serbs from Serbia, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Macedonia, along with the Croats and Slovenes. This new country, under the Serbian dynasty, was tolerant of many different religions: Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Jewish, Protestant and Muslim. This country comprised of people from different nationalities and religions became known as Yugoslavia in 1934. Yugoslavia became a leader in industry and as such had great pride in their country and in their community. However, this was short lived as World War II was on the horizon.

On March 4, 1941. Adolf Hitler, leader of Nazi Germany, met with Prince Paul Karadjordjevic, King of Yugoslavia, requesting Yugoslavia's participation in the Axis pow-

ers. Prince Paul agreed to participate, mainly because Yugoslavia's army had been neglected, as the country was concentrating on its economic growth, and because of Germany's threats to attack. This agreement was brief, as Serbian Nationalists plotted and overthrew the government declaring young Prince Peter II Karadjordjevic ruler. Prince Peter was not yet of age, so a caretaker government was formed to run the country.

As a result, the Axis powers imposed "Operation Punishment" on April 6, 1941, which crushed Belgrade with a hail of bombs. Serbian people from provinces all over came together to fight the Axis powers, these fighters were called "Chetniks". Although the Chetniks fought courageously, they were outnumbered and inadequately armed. Then, on April 10, 1941, the German Nazis rolled into Zagreb, with a warm welcome from the Croats. A few days later, on April 15, 1941, Croatia declared its independence from Yugoslavia. The leaders of Croatia were mere puppets of the Nazi Party, especially the fuehrer of Croatia, Ante Pavelic. The Germans also brought with them the Italian fascists, who along with the Croatian Nazis, called "Ustashe", a radical segment of the Croatian population, attacked the western borders that delivered the final blow to the Serbian government. This was the break that the Ustashe had been waiting for, as they had unlimited rule and unlimited resources to finally carry out their desire to rid Croatia of all Orthodox Serbs and others.

By April 18, 1941, Yugoslavia was conquered and divided into parts. Germany took over Banat, Srem and Serbia as a whole, because these regions had the largest Jewish population. Macedonia was given to Bulgaria, and the other southern regions of Yugoslavia were given to Italy. Bosnia-Hercegovina and Dalmacia were given to Croatia; Slovenia was given to Hungary. Ger-

man Nazis in Srem and Banat were there to carry out their established policy to eliminate the local Jewish population, just as it was occurring in Germany. The areas under Croatian rule were extremely unfortunate, as the Croats had their own terrible ideas for creating their own Holocaust. Genocide of all non-Croats, especially Serbs, was the official policy of Ante Pavelic, the home-grown Croatian Fascist who was the leader of the Croatian Nazi state. Similar to Adolf Hitler in Germany, Ante Pavelic instilled his ideas that a pure Croatian state was essential to the growth and prosperity of the newly independent Croatian nation. In both instances, Hitler and Pavelic created a problem in order to fulfill their lust for power. Pavelic had always viewed Hitler and other European fascist leaders as inspiration for his rule. On the eve of the declaration of the independent Croatian state, Pavelic declared: "The Croatian Ustashe movement has placed itself not today, but ten years ago at the side of our friends, at the side of Hitler and Mussolini, those great leaders of those great nations, whom no one can resist anymore, who are standing in our defense and will guarantee our liberation, our victory, our freedom, and our Independent State of Croatia." Hitler had invented the idea that all problems in Germany came from the Jews. Carrying on that idea, Pavelic instilled the same principles but with different sects of people. "The Jewish Problem" and "The Serbian Problem" both led to mass murder. The new Croatian State believed that they could eliminate Serbian history and tradition by destroying the Orthodox faith. Placing heavy taxes on all church properties and then using force to capture and imprison all Serbian Orthodox clergy would destroy the church system. After taking anything of value, the churches were ultimately burned or bombed to oblivion. Although churches were ransacked and destroyed, Serbian resistance was not deterred and the Chetniks launched guerilla attacks

aimed at the Ustashe. As a result, Ustashe stepped up their efforts to destroy the Orthodox faith by killing the imprisoned clergy. Over 170 priests and clergy were brutally butchered and dismembered because of the Croats growing frustration with the perseverance of the Serbs. Furthermore, more than over fifty rabbis also met their deaths in the same manner.

In order to more effectively eliminate the Serbian Orthodox and other non-Croatian populations, the Ustashe set up death camps modeled after existing ones in Nazi Germany and other occupied territories. Since the mission of the Ustashe was to cleanse their country to make a pure Croatian state, most of the camps were established in Croatia. During the war, the Ustashe operated a total of twelve camps. The largest and most brutal camp in all of Nazi Croatia was Jasenovac. The camp was actually a complex with several sub-camps, all of them near each other, including Stara Gradiska, the women's camp. The Jasenovac death camp was located in Southwest Slavonia; the region at the heart of Croatia, which until 1941, both Serbs and Croats shared. The Jasenovac camp was activated in August 1941, with the herding of over 200,000 Serbs, Muslims, Roma (gypsies) and Jews into the newly created camp.

These camps were known for their terrible conditions. Many prisoners died from starvation, disease, and exposure to the elements, in addition to executions and torture. There are many stories of unusual cruelty and even Roman Catholic priests were involved in these dastardly acts. Miroslav Filipovic-Majstorovic, the captain of the UNS (Croatian Security Police), a former Catholic priest, was known for killing scores of prisoners with his bare hands. Peter Brzica, a guard at Jasenovac, won a contest for slitting the throats of 1,360 prisoners with a butcher knife on August 29, 1942 - where he was crowned the "King

of the Cutthroats” and received a gold watch, a silver service, and a roasted suckling pig for his deed. Children were especially vulnerable. In fact, according to Avro Manhattan. “Jasenovac Concentration Camp distinguished itself because of the number of young inmates sent there. In 1942, the camp held over 24,000 Orthodox youngsters. Twelve thousand of them were murdered in cold blood by the Commandant.”

This camp became a symbol of the attempt of the Puppet state of Croatia to cleanse the country of all denominations and religions except for the “true” Catholic Croatian people. This quote by Milovan Zanic, the Minister of Justice, revealed quite clearly the Croatian Government’s plan: “This State, our country, is only for Croats and for no one else. There are no ways and means which we Croats will not use to make our country truly ours, and to cleanse it of all Orthodox Serbs. All those who came into our country 800 years ago must disappear. We make no attempt to conceal our intention. It is the policy of our state and during its realization we shall do nothing else save follow the principle of the Ustashi.”

From one man’s hatred came this inhumane experience of the Jasenovac death camp. Parallels between both Jasenovac and the holocaust in general display the evil and hatred that is contained within all men. These societies were very much alike. In Germany, Adolf Hitler believed and convinced his followers that the Jews brought economic and emotional unrest to the country. The Puppet State of Croatia expanded upon his idea and wanted to exterminate or remove all Serbs, Muslims, Roma and Jews to create a true Croat country. The German Nazi party never planned for the massacre of Serbs to happen. However, because of the desire to have a true Croat state, the Croatian Nazi party executed their barbaric plan,

which was based upon the philosophy of one mad man in Germany.

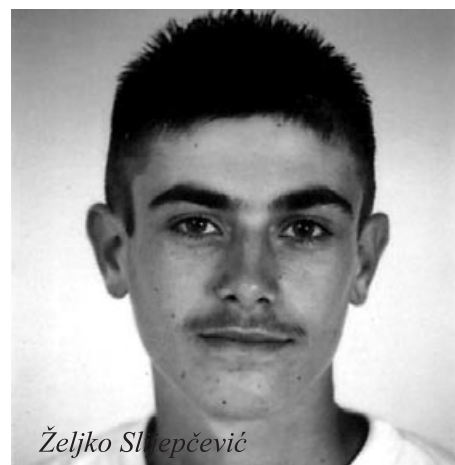
While historians do not completely agree on the number of victims of the Jasenovac Holocaust, most believe that a minimum 200,000 people were brutally murdered. However, some scholars claim the number of victims approach nearly 700,000. Regardless of which number is correct, the number of Serbian Orthodox citizens in the Croatian Nazi State was estimated at 2.2 million prior to World War II. The lower estimate of 200,000 victims translates into 10% of the Serbian Orthodox population exterminated in this one camp. To put this percentage into perspective, in a high school class of twenty students, at least two of your closest friends would have been brutally murdered for no other reason other than their ethnicity and religion.

Understanding the Jasenovac Holocaust contributes to a better understanding of the Holocaust in general for many reasons, one of which is that more than just Jews were killed. There were Serbian Orthodox, Roma, Muslims, Protestants, and other ethnic groups that were not Roman Catholic Croatians. These people were thoughtlessly executed just for being different.

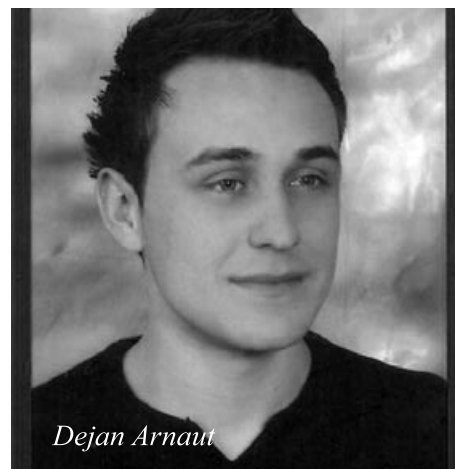
There were nations other than Germany who participated in the Holocaust. The new Independent State of Croatia joined the Axis Powers on April 15, 1941, and was fully supported by the German and Italian fascist powers. The Croatian Nazis or Ustashe were the most brutally efficient exterminators of all the Nazi puppets, having almost no regard for life itself.

The Croatian government hid the atrocities of the jasenovac camp. When it was liberated, all records of the camp’s activities had been burned, first in 1943 then again in 1945. Hiding the Jasenovac Holocaust gives one more example of why, if we as a society do not under-

stand and are not aware of our past, it has a chance of being repeated. The horrors of the Holocaust and the Jasenovac death camps have a very similar paradox. In each example, there were mass murders, and these murders are incomprehensible in our world today. But unfortunately, some societies have not learned from the past. For in the 90’s, war broke out in the same region, and the same people again practiced genocide. It is essential for us as a human race to learn from the past. A mistake is only a mistake if it is not learned from.



Željko Štjepčević



Dejan Arnaut



Ana Rakita

A DISTANT MEMORY

by A. Masic

In the springtime of a long gone year in the 1960s, I was taking the express train from Zagreb to Belgrade via Sunj; we were crossing a bridge on the Sava the River when the train slowed down. Since it was passing the Jasenovac station (where it wasn't going to stop), the passengers went into the train's corridor and silently looked through the window in the direction of Bogdanovich's great "Stone Flower." I could never determine whether the tracks were being repaired or whether the engineer was aware of the silent glances the passengers cast at the monument as it was slowly disappearing behind them. When the monument finally disappeared from sight, the passengers returned to their seats, and the locomotive picked up speed. We were silent for a while. A little later, a man with a large, thick gray-ing mustache spoke, as if to himself, but in any case loud enough for everyone to hear him clearly: "Seven hundred thousand, but who knows, maybe more." "That's too much. I don't believe it," replied a thirty-something man in a conciliatory tone. Then there was silence once again. All that could be heard was the steady whistling of the wind that was blasting the passing train from the east. A woman who sat across from the mustachioed man spoke up: "Mister, where do you come up with that number, seven hundred thousand?" And that's how the conversation began.

— I read it somewhere.

— Mister, don't go off half cocked. I heard educated people talk about it. They say there were eighty thousand victims.

— That's a big difference. Our people are never going to agree on this.

— Well, they can not. Where I come from, twenty three were taken

away and it wasn't written down anywhere.

The mustachioed man was silent, thinking something over, and then spoke again as if he were speaking to himself, but this time he was instead addressing everyone in the coach.

I don't like this kind of politicizing and wholesale bidding on the number of victims. I get the strong impression that those who feel the bite of conscience deliberately speak only of the number of victims in order to conceal worse and much more important things that are already known about Jasenovac. The Nazi concentration camps industrialized killing. We know about gas chambers, crematoria, and executions; we know the approximate number of victims. But here everything that concerns the victims is vague and unclear. People who had no names were killed, without any accounting of the number, and without any graves. The only things we are certain of is Piceli's furnace, and the indescribably savagery endured by the victims; and we can be certain that the detainees were killed like chicks, and that half-naked executioners had knives that were tied to their wrists. I don't want to speak about the number of deaths any more. Those are empty tales told in order to conceal the bestial nature of the place. Such a dispute about the number of victims is a horrible word game. Let's close that part of the discussion. Let's mention the victims, the many victims, the excessive number of victims; let's talk about their unspeakable suffering; let's talk about Piceli's furnace which was originally intended for firing bricks and let's compare it to the stakes on which people were burned alive during the middle ages for alleged heresies. Then it will become clear that everything that is expressed by numbers of five or six figures is equally incomprehensible; that every figure representing the number of victims is inaccessible to the human mind if only it

could be compared to the number of residents of a large-sized town. Let's close the discussion about guesstimates. Let's accept it without trying to make it prettier or bigger than it is — it's horrible and terrifying enough just as it is — what is indisputable is this: Jasenovac was the most horrible and the most bestial concentration camp in Europe. And we don't ascribe it to a nation. It is the work of mentally deranged executioners.

The denazification of the Jasenovac concentration camp will not be successfully completed even a hundred years from now if the dispute about the number of victims and the invocations of some imaginary "Greater Serbia" continue. The indisputable facts alone about the concentration camp are enough to proclaim it to be the most bestial and most horrifying concentration camp that ever existed in Europe. When this is understood, denazification shall have been accomplished, and the conscience of the people will then be pacified.

Translated by Milo Yelésiyevich



Tijana Tomic, 1st prize in Serbia and Montenegro



UNKNOWN DOCUMENTS

*By Drago Katratovic
and Uros Soskic*

As one might expect, during the period when this column and its subsequent installments were appearing in the press, we were continuously receiving new material that filled out our story. Many of those involved in saving the children of Kozara contacted us and provided new information, and offered eyewitness accounts and in some cases, previously unknown documents. The most important material we received was the documentation that concerned Diana Budisavljevic and Prof. Kamil Bresler, who were the leading figures in this undertaking and merit further historical study.

We have not until now touched upon this subject it, but it is fair to say that Diana Budisavljevic died on June 20, 1978 in Innsbruck, her birthplace, and Prof. Kamil Bresler died on September 3, 1967 in Zagreb. Both had lived long lives. Diana had children; Kamil did not. From the documentation, which was written in their own hand during the time these events were taking place and afterwards, it is easy to complete their characters. These are not documents that would merely hold interest for their respective families. They contain a great deal of previously unknown information that sheds light on the actions of Zagreb's anti-Fascists in 1942.

It is important to note that Diana Budisavljevic provided a card catalogue containing information on 12,000 children to the Health and Social Welfare Department on August 27, 1945. This documentation filled twenty-five drawers, and with it she also submitted five books that aided in the search for lost children, and five books of photographs with an index. This demonstrates the tremendous effort, courage, and painstaking atten-

tion to detail she devoted to these children. There is much more, of course, about her in the diary that she kept which started with the first day of the occupation until the liberation of Zagreb. This precious document is in her granddaughter's possession.

Diana's Circle of Good Will

The opening pages of Diana's diary describe how those mothers and poor children who were being persecuted and driven out of Zagreb found her to be an outstanding guardian who protected them from the moment the Fascist reign of terror had begun. The Fascists became suspicious of this Austrian woman, who was the wife of a highly respected surgeon, in January 1944. But they were blinded by their own prejudice and racism, and could never have imagined that person of "German blood" would have helped the hunted and the persecuted.

Diana describes how in October 1941 she first learned the truth about the concentration camp in Loborgrad where Jews and Serbs had been interned. A few days later, she found out during a visit to Zagreb's Jewish Quarter that these prisoners were limited to receiving aid only from the residents of Zagreb's Jewish Quarter. Diana began collecting food and clothing from her own circle of friends.

And she had a large circle of friends. She immediately contacted about twenty-five people of goodwill; the group included doctors and architects, nurses and teachers, merchants and students. Colnar, a representative of the unofficial Slovenian Red Cross, was among them. Dozens of people (many of them anonymous) brought aid in the form of food, clothing and money to her husband's private clinic under the pretext of coming in for an examination. The aid packages were prepared and packed in Diana's apartment and then taken to a nearby post office.

At the end of February 1941, Diana visited the camp at Loborgrad and a few days later she visited (Archbishop) Alojzije Stepinac with the hope that she might persuade him to help the children detained in the camp. She even summoned the courage to go to the infamous Andrija Artukovic with the same request. He refused, using the excuse that he did not have the authority to make such a decision, and he sent her to see Kvaternik. She spent a long time on the phone with the Ustashi commander, and she tried to obtain the release of innocent people from the camp. On several occasions, her request was postponed for a day, and at one moment, she feared that she too would be arrested.

Diana met Prof. Kamil Bresler for the first time in November 1942 and soon began working with him. She sensed that she could achieve her plan of getting the people who were in the most danger out of Loborgrad, and she succeeded in sending a large number of individually addressed packages through the Jewish Quarter to some of the prisoners. Then she had her first unpleasant experience. One night, the police came and searched her apartment right after she had finished preparing some aid packages with her friends.

First News about Kozara

She described her first success in a diary entry dated October 19, 1942. The camp directors at Loborgrad gave her permission to take eleven children. Eight days later, they were brought to the Institution for Deaf Children in Zagreb. During those days she met nurse Dragica Habazin with whom she would later have a long and successful association.

On October 30, 1942 Diana was at the main railroad station in Zagreb where she met a group of 58 children and 86 women traveling from Loborgrad to Belgrade. She took down their addresses and immediately sent letters to their families so

they would know where they were being taken.

Diana was courageous and worked tirelessly... In the beginning of September, Dr. Branko Kesic, a military doctor, informed her of the grave condition of the children from Kordun. This man would inform her on two more occasions of the terrible events taking place in that area. At the start of the Fascist offensive in Kozara on July 8, one transport of women and children being sent to Germany was stopped on the road to Zagreb. The manager of the transport, a man named Hecker, allowed Diana to talk to the women and it was then that she first learned that the camp in Stara Gradiska was being used to imprison the children of Kozara. The lines she wrote that night impress the reader with the precision of her insight:

“July 8, 1942. At 10:00 p.m. nurse Habazin found out that a transport which needed our help would pass through Zagreb at 11:00 p.m. I went with her to the railroad. While we waited for the late train, I met the chief of transport, Hecker. This transport is loaded with women and children. I pleaded with Hecker not to send the children to Germany, but instead to leave them here with us. He agreed but said that no woman would consent to being separated from her child. I got permission to talk to all of them, but not one of the women would give up her child. After all that these women have suffered, it is quite understandable [that they would not give up their children] during this short stop in the darkness. Why should they trust someone to have good intentions toward their children? They explained to me how they had come from the Stara Gradiska camp, and how there had been many other children there, many of them without parents, who had been taken to Germany with earlier transports or who had simply died. they said ‘free those children that remain, there are more than a thousand of them.’”

“Now it became clear to me that these were children from Kordun and from other areas, children for whom we had been searching without success. It is clear to me that I must do everything in my power to save those children. When the train left, Hecker asked me which children I wanted to take. I told him that the women had begged me to take the children from the camp, instead. He promised me that he would find out about these children from his colleagues who chose people to work in Germany. On the morning of July 9, I went to Hecker’s office and there I met Captain von Kotzian who promised to help me.”

Cooperation with Bresler

Six days earlier Diana wrote in her diary that she had been called by Dragica Habazin late at night and told that 220 children, 224 women and 6 men had just arrived at the main train station. All of them had been sent back from Maribor because of illness, and that they had been shipped out of the Stara Gradiska camp to work in Germany. Diana called Hecker right away and he allowed her to keep those people from being transported. She had to act immediately because there was a risk that these people would be returned to Stara Gradiska. She found Prof. Bresler right away, and that night the Institution for Deaf Children in Ilica took the children in, while the adults were received by Jeronim Hall. That was the first large scale action that had been undertaken by Diana and Kamil, and that encouraged them to undertake even larger actions later.

In another document, Diana Budisavljevic wrote in Veljaca in 1947 that:

“After that, in cooperation with nurse Dragica Habazin from the Red Cross on transports of prisoners who were being sent to work as slave laborers in Germany, I found out that in the concentration camps

Stara Gradiska and Jasenovac there were large numbers of Serbian children suffering in terrible health conditions, without food and without any nurse; they had been sentenced to death. These children needed help right away. As I was not able to take action by myself, I asked Prof. Bresler to help. He specialized in the health and welfare of children. Prof. Bresler promised me his help and full cooperation. So he, with such support from the ranks of Red Cross nurses, whose numbers included many friends of the NOP [the Peoples’ Liberation Army), began working to save the children of Kozara who had been imprisoned in Stara Gradiska and Jasenovac.”

The information contained in Diana’s diary entry has never been published before, and we have Bresler’s description of the same events for corroboration. His diary entry states:

“...Heedless youth cannot look after itself. The Fascist criminals shot at them in the middle of the street as though they were wild beasts, while others ended up being hanged, while so many more of them ended up being killed in Jasenovac, Gradiska and Lepoglava. Not a day passes without such disturbing news....”

“Life was becoming harder with the perpetual expectation of being caught by Ustashe killers: the whole city was becoming one big concentration camp. It is the early summer 1942. The Kozara offensive has ended. We know a little bit about what happened in the town.

“One day a lady (Diana Budisavljevic) entered my office. As she introduced herself, I realized that she was the wife of one of our respected physicians. She asked me if I knew that there were hundreds or even thousands, or maybe even tens or hundreds of thousands of children in camps from Stara Gradiska to Jasenovac who would

be killed if we did not do something to save them.

“Thoughts were racing through my mind: in the whole of the NDH there are 4,000 beds for children that have already been taken and now we are talking here about thousands of new children.... Sick children ... how many people will we need to do that?... and what about the transports and the guards? Where will we get medical instruments, dishes, food? I need a month to prepare — but by then there will be no more children. The lady’s large, dark and compassionate eyes inspected my face — asking, begging, demanding...”

All of the children from Kozara who were rescued were forced to convert to Roman Catholicism.

Thousands of Letters

Let’s return to Diana’s diary. Zagreb, June 7, 1942: Hecker’s office received the long awaited permission from Kvaternik to take the children from Stara Gradiska. Two days later Vlado Broz, Diana Budisavljevic, Dragica Habazin, Jana Koch and other nurses and doctors of the Red Cross were on their way to Stara Gradiska. After some tense moments during their meeting with Maks Luburic, the first transport went to Zagreb. The transports went on all that year until the late autumn. Diana, her friends and colleagues worked tirelessly. After Stara Gradiska, she went to Mlaka and Jablanac, and then at the request of Prof. Bresler, she assisted the staff of the children’s house at Josipovac. But even Diana’s strength found its limits. She struggled with her own psychological problems, and soon even she had to seek help from doctors. She recovered soon afterwards, and returned to the dangerous task at hand.

Her diary in 1943 notes frequent meetings with representatives of the International Red Cross,

whose assistance and cooperation she tried to enlist in order to continue to rescue children from the camps. She pleaded with them to get food and medicine, which she sent to the camps. She awaited each transport that arrived in Zagreb’s main train station where she handed out leaflets with her address and instructions for the imprisoned parents to send information to her about their children. Zagreb, July 4, 1943. The Gestapo inquired about the leaflets she was distributing. But those leaflets helped hundreds, even thousands of people. Right up to the end of the war, she had received between three and four thousand letters from the German camps, and she replied each of those who were prisoners there. Each and every one of those letters contained a truly terrifying story of human destiny.

Thanks to this rich and newly discovered treasure trove of documentation from Budisavljevic and Bresler, along with supporting signatures and testimonies sent by others involved in rescuing the children of Kozara, we cannot say that this story is over.

Translated by Milo Yelésiyevich

HOLOCAUST SURVIVORS OUTSIDE THE EU FACE NEW INJUSTICES

The German Government, in accordance and cooperation with the Claims Conference, founded by the World Jewish Congress, subsidizes Jewish Holocaust Survivors with 403 Euros quarterly in European countries outside the European Union. But recently a 100% increase was granted only to Survivors living in former Warsaw Pact countries whose states already become members of the EU. Such an approach is grossly discriminatory.

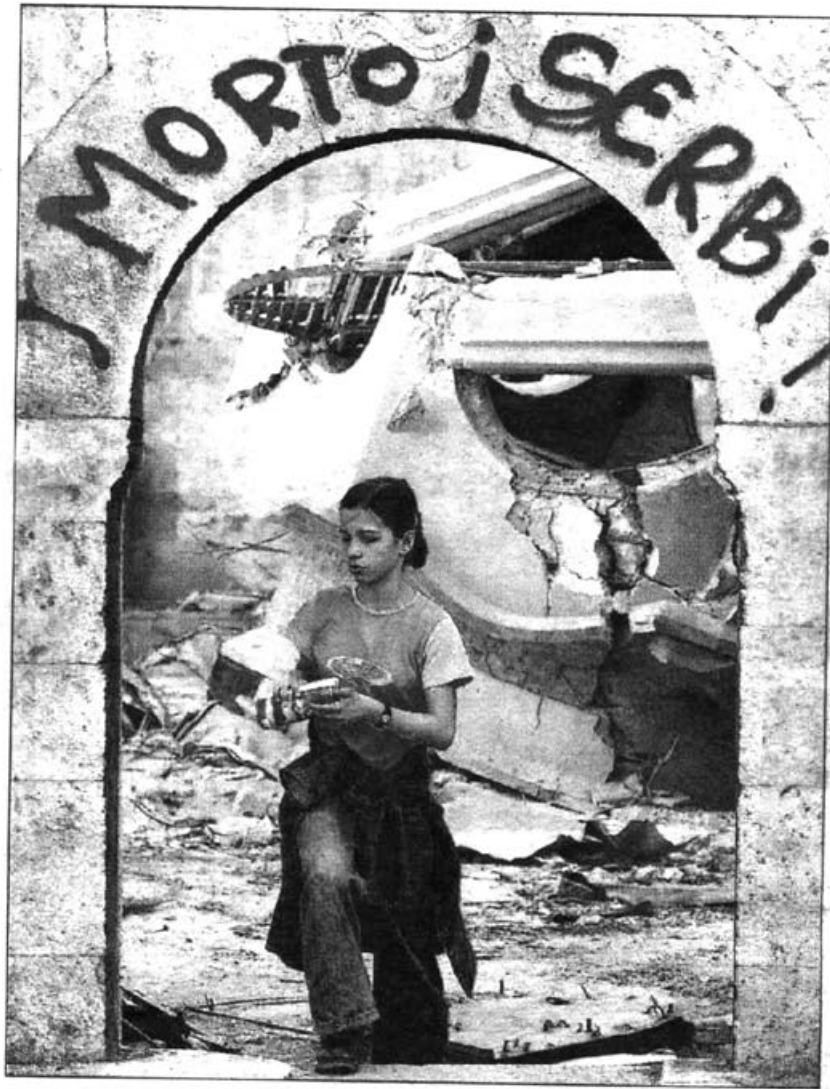
The Jews in countries such as Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, and Serbia were tortured in ways far more brutal than those in Western Europe, even taking into account the camps and crematoria. A striking example of the inequities of this new policy is the case of the Hungarian Jews. The Jews in Hungary, as limited by the Trianon Treaty after World War I up until full Nazi Occupation, lived under very discriminatory though not deadly conditions. However, in the annexed territories of northern Serbia (the Voivodina), the Hungarian Jews, as an ethnic minority, along with the Serbian Jews and the Orthodox Christian Serbs, were murdered in the most cruel way, namely by drowning them in the icy water of the Danube River, on the banks of Novi Sad (Ujvidek in Hungarian) in January 1942. There they were pushed alive under the ice.

Under the new policy, the Hungarian Jewish Survivors will receive 806 Euros quarterly while their close relatives in Voivodina who happen to be Serbian citizens will receive only 403. What is the rationale behind such a double standard? Please do not forget that the Survivors are now octogenarians. How many of them will still be alive when the Slavic countries are admitted to the EU?

by Aleksandar Masic, JRI

3/20/04

PICTURE OF THE DAY



PIER PAOLO CITO/AP

ETHNIC HATE: An Albanian girl walks through ruins of a Serb monastery in Prizren, Kosovo. The monastery was damaged during ethnic violence this week. Written over the archway: "Death to Serbs."

Front Page Photo from the MIAMI HERALD, 20 March 2004 showing an Albanian girl participating in the whole scale plunder and destruction of a medieval Serbian church in the Kosovo city of Prizren during the bloody March Pogrom of 2004. NATO, UN and KFOR forces did nothing to prevent these human rights atrocities against the Serbian and Roma population of Kosovo. A year later and the only solution offered by UN and US advisors is the forced mass expulsion of the remaining Serb and Roma populations. Would they have assisted the mass deportation of Jews out of Hitler's Germany as well? - JRI

JRI FOCUS ON KOSOVO

The JRI continues to monitor the ongoing human rights catastrophe in Kosovo where hundreds of thousands of Serbs, Romas and other national minorities have been persecuted, brutalized, murdered, exiled and dispossessed. After six years of U.N. control little has been done to remedy the crisis, rebuild destroyed property, or return Serbian and Roma refugees to their place of origin. Hundreds of ancient Serbian churches and monasteries have been vandalized or destroyed in deliberate acts of genocide (as defined by the UN charter on genocide).

Working in close cooperation with Roma and Serbian organizations, the JRI sent photographer Elizabeth Bieber in August 2005 to document the human rights crisis in Kosovo in preparation for a book to be published on the subject in 2006. A Roma delegation participated in the April 2005 Jasenovac monument unveiling in New York and the JRI is proud to announce that Voice of Roma President Sani Rifati joined the JRI's Honorary Advisory Board in June. JRI Director Velimir Nestorovic, an environmental engineer, is preparing a paper on the harmful health effects plaguing displaced Roma and Serbs in refugee camps such as those in Mitrovica where lead poisoning and other problems are rampant due to the failure of the UN and Western nations to protect the citizens of Kosovo.

JRI Directors Barry Lituchy and Darko Trifunovic visited Roma refugee camps in Kosovo in 2004 and future visits are planned.

OLD BALKAN HATREDS PLAY OUT IN COURT CASE -A CLASS-ACTION LAWSUIT CHARGES THE VATICAN BANK WITH A ROLE IN THE FLIGHT OF PRO-NAZI HENCHMEN AND LOOT FROM EUROPE AFTER WORLD WAR II

*By Ron Grossman
Chicago Tribune
July 6, 2005*

Like any new pope, Benedict XVI inherits some problems from his predecessor, among them sexual abuse scandals and a Catholic Church deeply divided between progressives and traditionalists.

Then there are William Dorich's accusations.

Dorich, a Los Angeles book publisher, is the force behind a class-action lawsuit against the Vatican Bank and the Franciscan Order.

Filed in a federal court in California, the suit alleges that immediately after World War II the bank--the financial arm of the Roman Catholic Church--helped fleeing members of a brutal, pro-Nazi regime in Croatia hide and launder millions of dollars worth of loot, including gold and jewelry taken from concentration camp prisoners.

According to Dorich and his lawyers, those riches were used to help the pro-Nazi henchmen slip out of Europe and escape to South America in 1945 and after.

Dorich, the son of a Serbian immigrant, recalled that dozens of his relatives were massacred by the Ustashe, a Croatian puppet government installed by the Nazis when they conquered the Balkans in the 1940s.

U.S. government documents of the period show that some Ustashe

leaders and many of their financial resources made it to Rome during the chaos of the war's final months.

Alleged missing link

But Dorich and other plaintiffs take the chain one crucial step further: Their suit alleges that the missing link between the money's arrival in Rome and its apparent transfer to South America was the Vatican itself.

A 1947 intelligence report noted: "Many of the more prominent Ustashe war criminals and Quislings are living in Rome illegally, many under false names. ... All this activity seems to stem from the Vatican."

Long classified and buried in military archives, those memos first came to light through the detective work of author John Loftus.

Once a Justice Department lawyer assigned to track wanted war criminals, Loftus had come upon documents suggesting that Catholic clergy had a role in the so-called Rat Line, an underground railroad that helped Nazis and their allies escape to Latin America.

Pavelic went to Argentina, he found. There the ex-strongman was supported by proceeds from the Ustashe treasury, which traveled the same route, according to a 1998 State Department investigation of assets stolen by Germans and their collaborators during World War II.

"From the character of the Ustashe regime and the nature of its wartime activities," that report said, "this sum almost certainly included some quantity of victim gold."

The State Department's investigation was belatedly instigated under congressional pressure, after parallel cases of looting of Holocaust victims' assets became a hot issue in the 1990s.

"The State Department knew about those documents for 50 years and did nothing," said Loftus, who later wrote of his discoveries in the 1992 book "Unholy Trinity."

He attributes the government's long reluctance to investigate the affair to the fact that the American hands weren't clean, either. As World War II segued into the Cold War, U.S. and British officials were eager to recruit former Axis agents and willing to overlook their wartime records.

William Gowen, an Army intelligence officer stationed in Rome at the war's end, was the author of some of the newly surfaced memos. He was then barely out of his teens, but because he was fluent in Italian he found himself in the thick of an investigation of the Rat Line. He discovered that a Croatian Catholic monastery in Rome was sheltering a group of armed men, presumably former Ustashe operatives.

"We found out about the Ustashe treasury and knew it had been brought to Rome," Gowen said in an interview. "But where in Rome?"

Gowen said Ustashe funds eventually were transferred to Swiss banks, and then presumably to Latin America.

"The Swiss banks are famous for their secrecy. Once you have an account there you can send money anywhere, no questions asked," Gowen said. "But you couldn't just drive truckloads of gold, jewelry and other valuables across the Swiss border."

According to Jonathan Levy, one of the plaintiffs' attorneys, the Franciscans were named as defendants because the political extremism of the period was fueled by religious hatred.

"Not everybody who collaborated with the Germans committed atrocities," Levy said. "But in the

Ustashe movement, religiosity was wrapped up with fascism.”

The lawsuit alleges that members of the Franciscan Order were allied with the Ustashe and participated in attacks on Serbs.

“Our official position is that there is nothing to the allegations,” said Ronald Mallen, attorney for the Franciscan Order. “The other side ignores the fact that ‘Brother Devil’ was excommunicated.”

That was the nickname given to Brother Miroslav Filipovic-Majstorovic by inmates of the notorious Jasenovac concentration camp, where tens of thousands of Serbs, Jews and Gypsies perished. A Franciscan brother before becoming the camp’s commandant, Filipovic-Majstorovic was tried and hanged as a war criminal after World War II.

Other Ustashe leaders got away. When Germany’s defeat became imminent in late 1944 and early 1945, high-ranking members of the Croatian government fled, some passing through Rome en route to escaping from Europe.

The military and political situation in Italy was chaotic. From day to day, it would be hard to say who was in charge. German troops were fleeing northward. Italian partisans led popular uprisings. Arriving Allied forces struggled to establish some sort of order.

Ante Pavelic, the head of the Ustashe government, and 1,500 of his followers made their way through Austria to Italy. They carried with them gold--estimates of its value vary widely from a few hundred thousand dollars to many millions, according to U.S. military reports at the time.

The route of the Ustashe leaders and treasure can roughly be traced through memos written by U.S. Army intelligence officers.

One 1946 memo on the Ustashe treasury said that “approximately 200 million Swiss Francs (about \$47 million) were originally held in the Vatican for safe-keeping” before being moved to Spain and Argentina. Like other documents of the time, that one is tantalizingly silent about whether “Vatican” meant the Vatican Bank or the papal city-state, a political enclave within Rome.

Author’s detective work

“From money stolen from the gold teeth of my relatives, the Vatican enabled Nazis to escape to Argentina,” Dorich said.

In 2003, a federal judge dismissed the case, saying U.S. courts lacked jurisdiction. But this spring, that decision was reversed by the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals.

“Deciding this sort of controversy is exactly what courts do,” a panel of the appellate court said in a 2-1 ruling.

The judges noted that the issues “ultimately boil down to whether the Vatican Bank is wrongfully holding assets.”

It could be years before the case goes to trial or is settled. The defendants are considering appealing to the U.S. Supreme Court. And even if the plaintiffs proved the Vatican Bank played a role, that would not--of itself--settle the issue of who at the Vatican was involved or knew what was taking place.

Still, as the Vatican struggles with the role the church and its leading clergy played during World War II, the case sheds renewed light on the tangled ethnic and religious landscape of Eastern Europe--and the way in which ancient feuds and hatreds played out during the horrors of a modern war.

The events recalled in the case took place against the background

of religious antagonisms that were still sparking violence and bloodshed in recent years, especially when Yugoslavia broke apart in the 1990s.

Serbs are predominantly Orthodox Christians and Croats are predominantly Catholics. Despite their longstanding antipathies, Serbs and Croats were linked together in the creation of Yugoslavia after World War I.

Settling old scores

Yugoslavia was dominated by Serbs, so when Yugoslavia was defeated early in World War II, Croatian nationalists saw the Germans not as conquerors but liberators. Ustashe military detachments fought alongside Nazi armies while settling old scores.

During the Ustashe regime, Orthodox Christians were subject to forced conversions to Catholicism. Serbian churches were looted and burned, sometimes with their congregations locked inside. In one such massacre, at a church in the village of Vojnic, 99 people were burned alive on April 17, 1942.

“Seventeen of the victims were my relatives,” said Dorich, who visited the site.

Money laundering charged

Accordingly, Ustashe loot had to be converted into currency that could not be traced, then transferred to Switzerland. The lawsuit alleges that the Vatican Bank was the perfect agent to perform that money laundering. Should the suit go forward, plaintiffs’ attorneys will press the Vatican to open its archives in hopes of finding documents to cement their thesis.

Jeffrey Lena, an attorney for the Vatican Bank, declined to comment.

The Serbs' lawyers hope to mobilize public opinion, noting that there has been a pattern to similar suits on behalf of Holocaust victims and World War II slave laborers: After first denying the allegations and resisting the lawsuits, Swiss banks and German industries felt enough pressure to make an out-of-court settlement.

Attorneys for the defendants petitioned the full appellate court to overturn the finding of the three-judge panel, but their request was turned down in June. The Franciscans' attorney said that decision, in turn, will be appealed to the Supreme Court; the Vatican Bank's attorney said a Supreme Court appeal is under consideration.

Both defendants contend that the dispute doesn't belong in court but should be resolved by diplomacy, since the Vatican is not just a religious body but a sovereign state.

Mallen, the Franciscans' attorney, noted that under the law, his client can argue that the affair belongs to the world of diplomacy without conceding there is anything for diplomats to negotiate--without, that is, admitting wrongdoing.

Others, though, wonder if that argument might be too subtle for the court of public opinion.

"It's not exactly a plea of innocence, is it?" Loftus said.

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THE KOZARA TRAGEDY AND RECOLLECTIONS

Letter from a Reader

I was born on April 27, 1933 in the village of Demirovac Bos. Dubica, BiH. As you already know, during WWII, more precisely, in 1942 during the enemy offensive in Kozara in June 1942, the Serbian people were totally destroyed and eradicated in the Kozara region. However, all of the people from that region were deported to concentration camps, and their homes and property destroyed. My parents, my brother and my sister disappeared in these concentration camps, while I, along with the other children of Kozara, was persecuted in a variety of concentration camps: Cerovljan, Ustica, Jasenovac, Sisak, Novska, Daruvar and who knows where else they took us in cattle cars, transporting us to various places where many lives forever crumbled, exhausted by suffering in indescribable misery. Fate has decreed that I once again experience, not the same, but a very similar destiny, except this time in my old age with the civil war. I lived and worked in Zenica for a full forty-three years and I experienced many disagreeable things and once again I found myself in exile, deprived of everything, empty-handed, old, exhausted, unhappy, beset with woes, humiliated and helpless.

Following current events in the Serbian press, as I do, I found out that you are marking the anniversary of the escape of concentration camp detainees from Jasenovac. A moral obligation overcomes me; I would be delighted to find myself at this commemoration in order to share the sadness of those of our people who died, but unfortunately, I am unable to, for financial reasons as well by reason of my poor health, to attend this memorial gathering which you are organizing.

All that remains for me is to thank you for going beyond the call of

duty in engaging, being ready to sacrifice and interceding for the sake of far-away places so that we may at least recall in this fashion and pay our debt to those who have died in the killing fields of Nazi-Fascist concentration camps.

Escondido, April 4, 2005

Rajko Hrnjak
330 E. Mission Ave., #16
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