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**Hidden History: The Horror of
Jasenovac**



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On the morning of April 22, 1945, nine days before Hitler committed suicide as Allied forces moved toward Berlin, 1,073 men were locked in the tailor's building in the main Jasenovac concentration camp in the Nazi puppet state of Independent Croatia. The building in the women's camp had housed 760 women until the evening before when the women were marched, singing bravely, to their deaths by fire, knives specially designed for throat-slitting, and wooden mallets—the killing specialties of the Ustasha, the Croat equivalent of the SS, in the Nazi occupied Independent State of Croatia. The men and boys who had survived by working in camp facilities had been gathered and transferred to the building in the late evening. Many men hanged themselves before the gathering, rather than succumb to Ustasha tortures, and the young Dušan Prpoš hanged himself in a restroom in the tailor's building early the next morning.



THE NIGHT was filled with sounds of explosions as Ustahas blew up buildings in the camp in an attempt to hide their crimes of mass murder. The men had little doubt they would be killed soon as they planned an escape in the early morning. After the first sign from leader Ante Bakotić and the signal of whistles, one from seventeen-year-old Milutin Mirić, four teams would break down the doors simultaneously, fight the Ustasha guards bare-handed, and run through Ustasha machine gun fire in a cold rain.

Ilija Ivanović, then sixteen years old, later described the moment at 9:30 a.m. when the escape started:

“I watched through the window. It was raining really hard. It was thundering and flashing lightening, just like the sky had opened up and wanted to swallow us. Master [Altarac Morić] was lying on the blanket. Ante Bakotić, with a bigger group of people, was going toward the exit door.



“*Silence!* Silence before the storm.

“Suddenly it thundered, but now, the thunder was in the exit hall of our building. Yelling people merged with the sky's thundering.

“I ran to see what was happening there. In the hall was about a hundred people who were trying to break through the exit door with the pressure of their bodies. Fists were raised. In some hands, there was a

piece of brick, and in one, an axe, probably found somewhere on the top floor. I heard shouting, ‘Let's go, friends! Freedom or death!’

“The door gave up. It crashed down. People went out, running like lava from the building. They stepped over the first Ustasha guard. *Hell.* From the bunkers all around, the Ustahas opened fire. Glass on the windows was breaking. Bullets were whizzing above our heads. It was still raining. . . .

“Exhausted, hungry, and until this morning, powerless prisoners changed into lions that were pulling apart and tearing asunder with their bare hands.”

Ivanović tells of running back to his beloved mentor Altarac Morić, a Jewish barber from Zagreb who was the last survivor of his family, and pleading with Mr. Morić to run away with him. Too weak to run, Morić refused and cautioned his young apprentice, “Goodbye, Son. Good luck. Don't forget—.” Ilija didn't hear what he

should remember, but he had in his head Mr. Morić's tutelage to help him survive. Ilija remembers running over the bodies of a sea of fallen men as he made his way toward the gate. Mile Ristić and Rade Kasić struggled to shoot, for the first time, the strange machine gun they had wrestled from an Ustasha guard. Ristić was finally able to shoot the gun and to cover some of the escaping prisoners before he was killed by Ustasha gunfire.

As the young Ilija cleared the gate, he had to choose a path. On the right was the Sava River. He saw men struggling to survive amid those already killed by Ustasha bullets. On the left was an open field with woods in sight. Frail from more than three years of famine, Ilija feared the crowded river. In a second, he chose the path on the left. He ran, losing one shoe and then kicking off the other, barefoot through the mud toward the other men. He called for someone to wait for him. No one waited.

As he reached a road, he saw men in front of him as they encountered Ustashes. Ustashes killed two of the escapees before all but one Ustasha, who was trampled by the fleeing men, stepped aside.

Still hearing the sound of gunfire from Jasenovac, a group of about fifteen men ran deep into the forest. Ivanovic writes, “[S]omeone shouted, ‘Stop! Stop, people, to see where we will go.’ We stopped and gathered. We kissed each other. *We are free.*”



The men separated, and Ilija soon found himself running alone. When he reached a river he mistakenly assumed to be the Strug, he crossed with a sigh of relief. But soon, he was captured again by Ustashes near a train station where fleeing Germans were promising to return to help their Ustasha brothers. The seventy-three-year-old Ilija Ivanović still has a twinkle in his eyes as he tells of

saving himself by tricking the Ustashes into believing he was a Croat by giving them a made-up name and family history. The Ustashes fed him, dried his clothes, took him with them as they fled with some Germans, and then they left him with a peasant family.

The family was Croat, and Ilija kept his made-up name until, as he and Grandpa Pavle stood the next night at the window, watching and waiting for Partisans, Pavle's dog chased some fleeing Ustashes and Germans across the yard.

“You see,” Grandpa Pavle said, “even our dogs don't like fascists.”

Ilija was encouraged and told, first Granny, that his name was not Stipe but Ilija, that he was not Catholic Croat but Orthodox Serb. The family soon gathered around him, beseeching him to tell them how to act, how to receive the Partisans they believed, from Ustasha propaganda, to be murderous villains.

“Give them food,” Ilija said. Ilija spoke from his own perspective of three years of

all-consuming hunger. Granny immediately began preparing food. When the first Partisans arrived around midnight, they were well received and well fed. In the early morning hours, the small, frail Ilija fell asleep in the lap of the Partisan commander who had questioned him for hours about the events at Jasenovac.

The next morning, when Ilija begged to join the Partisans, he was told that he should go home when the roads were safe, that he was too skinny and weak and that it would be a tragedy for him to be killed after what he had endured. But Ilija was given a task. He was to go to the villagers and ask them to prepare food for the advancing Partisan army.

“Be sure to tell them it is voluntary,” the Partisan commander said.

Ilija, fearing no one would bring food, omitted the “voluntary” part as he ran from house to house, and soon Pavle's yard was filled with a feast for the arriving Partisans.

When Ilija made his way back to his village, he learned that his friend young friend Sveto, who had also escaped Jasenovac on April 22nd, had died of exhaustion and hunger a short distance from his village. Ilija doesn't know why he survived as other children were slaughtered or died from starvation or sickness. He believes an angel must have been watching over him. He doesn't know why he was chosen to live, but he feels compelled to tell the story and did so in a book, *Witness to Jasenovac's Hell*, that was first published in Yugoslavia and then in America. The book is dedicated to the child victims at Jasenovac, some of whom were burned alive or buried alive when the blows or cuts failed to kill them. (Mr. Ivanović retired as a schoolteacher in the village of his birth.)



+ OF THE 1,073 men and boys who were alive at Jasenovac on the morning of April 22, 1945, about 80 survived the day. The 400 who, because they were too weak to run, stayed in the building were promptly slaughtered by Ustashas and dumped in the Sava River. Out of the 80 who survived the escape, fewer than ten still live to tell the story of the camp that was only mentioned in American media in July, 1999, when *CNN/Time Perspectives* aired a segment on the trial of one of the camp commanders, Dinko Sakić.

The breakout from Jasenovac has been called a “failed” attempt because of the 1000-odd men and boys who perished that day. But because of the eighty men who lived to tell the story and give statements to the war crimes commission and testify at trials of the handful of Ustasas who were prosecuted, the breakout might better be described as a heroic success. Some men had escaped from this or that work crew over the four years the camps operated, but the eighty men who escaped on that day were able to foil the Ustasas' plan to destroy the camp and prisoners and blame the deaths on Allied bombs.

Of the now-aged, few survivors of the escape from Jasenovac Camp IIC, six were brought to the First International Conference on the Jasenovac Camps at Kingsborough College of the City University of New York in 1997 to tell their stories. Two of those men, Čedomil Huber and Eduard Šajer, have since died.



LAST WEEK the Third International Conference on the Jasenovac Camps, organized by Dr. Bernard Klein of CUNY's Kingsborough College History Department, was held at Hebrew University in Jerusalem. The two survivors who were scheduled to

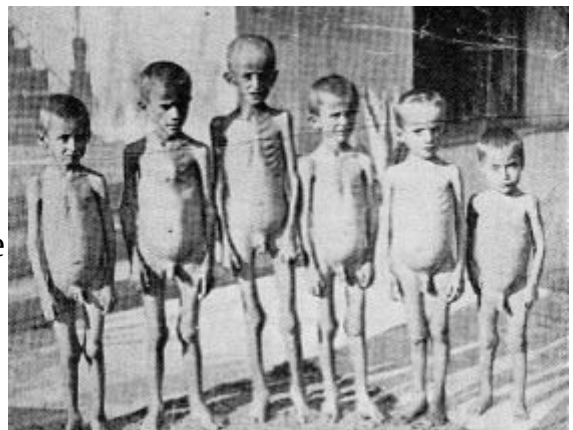
appear were in poor health and unable to attend. However, scholars presented new research information on remote sensing radar images of mass graves and the continuing documentation of names and villages of victims; expressed concern about the safety of the documents and artifacts that were taken last year from Bosnia, channeled through Washington, D.C., and then sent to Croatia; and discussed the still-undetermined number of victims.

The number of victims at the Jasenovac camps has been estimated with figures ranging from 20,000, from the now-deceased first president of the new Independent Croatia who served as an Ustasha in World War II, to up to one million, with an 840,000 figure coming from a surviving inmate of Jasenovac, Lazar Jankov, who testified, “... I found out that 840,000 men, women and children killed had gone through the books,” and the most commonly cited figures of 700,000 or 750,000 from German officials who were in Croatia as part of the occupying forces.

At the end of World War II, the Croatian State Commission began prosecuting war criminals and collecting documents, depositions of witnesses, etc. but suddenly cancelled research in the district offices in 1946, in the territorial commissions in 1947, and cancelled work of the entire State Commission in early 1948.

However, according to the Foreword in the reprinted report of the Croatian State Commission, “[The various] Commissions

collected 900,000 reports on war crimes, made some 550,000 minutes on hearings of witnesses and criminals, collected about 20,000 original documents from the



occupiers' sources, many thousands of other materials (newspapers, posters, publications, copies of documents, etc.) and over 5,000 photographs of various criminals [and victims]. About 170 papers and analyses were made, brought 120,000 decisions by which 65,000 people were stated as war criminals.”

The Croatian State Commission, while acknowledging that too many documents had been destroyed to establish an exact number, reported: “[S]ome 50 mass crimes [were] committed by the Ustashas in Jasenovac, and if we add the number of victims killed in these slaughters to the prisoners killed individually, we will reach the number of some 500-600,000... . There was not a single criminal in the whole history of humankind who had one tenth of a nation slaughtered, as Ante Pavelić did with his own people.”

Croatian official historians now cite minimal numbers of victims, but that was not the case during the war when the Ustasha documented their crimes with photographs and even film and bragged publicly about the numbers of victims. On October 9, 1942, still early in the war, Commander-in-Chief of all Croatian camps Vjekoslav Luburić announced at a banquet, “We have slaughtered here at Jasenovac more people than the Ottoman Empire was able to do during its occupation of Europe.” (Qtd. in *Genocide in Satellite Croatia: 1941-1945*, by Professor Edmond Paris, 1961: 132) When researching the matter of numbers of victims and character of the camp, one need not look at Serb sources that some Croatians now deem “communist propaganda.” Foreign sources from those who were there and made records at that time are available.

Among German documentation is that of Hitler's assistant for Balkan affairs, Dr. Hermann Naubacher, who published a report in which he stated, “When the leading men of the Ustashi movement are stating that they have slaughtered one million Serbs (including infants, children, women and aged) this in my opinion is a self-praising exaggeration. According to the reports that have reached me, my estimate is that the number of those defenseless slaughtered is some three-quarters of a million [750,000].” (*Sonderauftrag Sudost 1940-1945, Bericht eines fliegenden Diplomaten*, Gottingen, 1956: 18-31)

Another German representative in Zagreb, Artur Hoeffner, wrote in his diary on November 18, 1942, “Regardless of the propaganda, [Jasenovac] is a camp of the very worst kind and can be compared to Dante's Inferno.”

Italians who visited or served in the area during the war were also revolted. Alfio Russo wrote in *Revoluzione in Jugoslavia* (Roma, 1944), “Even the most extraordinary massacres in the darkest era of history would not soil its name—Croatia.... Kill, kill, scream the Ustashi against Serbs. And they cut their heads off and throw bodies away into the Sava River which flows slowly and gravely in the direction of Belgrade. . . . Neither Fascists nor Nazi have the remotest resemblance to the Ustashi, they are a fauna absolutely extraordinary and strange ...”

Curzio Malaparte, a member of the Fascist party, was in Italy's diplomatic service from 1922 to 1931 and a reserve captain and war correspondent when he visited the Croat Fuehrer Ante Pavelić in Zagreb. Malaparte wrote in *Kaputt* (10th ed., Rome,

1948: 313) that Pavelić had a basket of human eyes on his desk and quoted Pavelić's proud claim, "It is a present from my loyal Ustashas. Forty pounds of human eyes."

Francesco Bassotiti supported Malaparte's reports in an article in *Il Borghese* magazine (Rome, 1960):

"I wish to declare, having held during the war a high position in Rijeka (Croatia) where I was in constant touch with the Army Commandant Prefecture What Malaparte wrote is the living truth, because our soldiers and officers and I saw heaps of gouged out human eyes. Copies of all photographs of Croatian crimes were received by me, the Second Army, and the Prefecture.... I never heard of the Serbs having engaged in such bestiality, toward our soldiers or toward anyone else."

The war-time report from Dubrovnik of Ruth Mitchell, sister of the American father of the U. S. Air Force, General Billy Mitchell, included, "For now I began to get news from Croatia that told of slowly rising tide of murders, of unrepeatable atrocities, of massacres of defenceless Serbs by berserk-mad Croatians and by [fascist] Moslems in Bosnian Croatia. In the little back parlors of trusty men, the tales were whispered. I could not believe a quarter of them. Unfortunately, I was soon to know that they were a weak understatement of the truth. Men were to arrive in Dubrovnik itself, hung with strings of Serbian tongues and with bowls of Serbian eyes for sale." (*The Serbs Choose War*, Doubleday, 1943: 148)

Other Western sources tell the same story: "The Ustashi murdered and tortured Jews and Serbs in indescribably bestial fashion. One of the most notorious camps in Hitler's Europe, Jasenovac, was in Croatia. Here the Ustashi used primitive implements in putting their victims to death—knives, axes, hammers and other iron tools. A characteristic method was binding pairs of prisoners, back to back, and then throwing them into the Sava River. One source estimates that 770,000 Serbs, 40,000 Gypsies and 20,000 Jews were done to death in the Jasenovac camp" (Dr. Nora Levin, *The Holocaust: The Destruction of European Jewry 1933-1945*, Schocken Books, New York, 1973 ed.: 515)

The *Encyclopaedia Britannica* says, "In Croatia the indigenous fascist regime set about a policy of 'racial purification' that went beyond even Nazi practices. Minority groups such as Jews and Gypsies were to be eliminated, as were the Serbs: it was declared that one-third of the Serbian population would be deported, one-third converted to Roman Catholicism, and one-third liquidated.... Ustasha bands terrorized the countryside. The partial collaboration of the Catholic clergy in these practices continues to be a component of Serb-Croat suspicion." (1991 ed., *Macropedia*, Vol. 29: 1111)

All versions of *Encyclopedia Britannica* from 1971 through 1987 (after which the entry was deleted) contain the following: "In Bosnia... the Croatian fascists began a massacre of Serbs which, in the whole annals of World War II, was surpassed for savagery only by the mass extermination of Polish Jews." (1971 ed., Vol. 23: 922)

Encyclopedia of the Holocaust reports the Croat territory awarded by Hitler as having “a population of 6.3 million, of whom 3.3 million were Catholic Croats, 1.9 million Serbs, 700,000 Muslims . . . 40,000 Jews, 30,000 Gypsies... Shortly after taking control, the Ustasha, with the support of many Croats, embarked upon what it called ‘The Purge of Croatia from Foreign Elements,’ which had as its main purpose the elimination of the Serb minority....



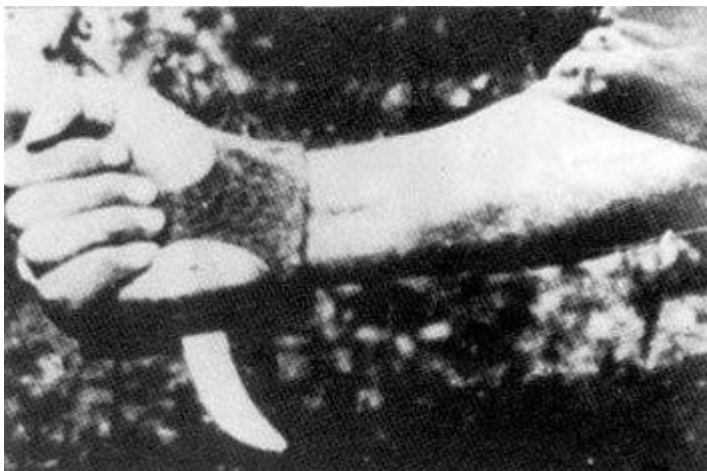
“The murder methods applied by the Ustasha were extraordinarily primitive and sadistic: thousands were hurled from mountain tops, others were beaten to death or their throats cut, entire villages were burned down, women raped, people sent to death marches in the middle of winter, and still others starved to death.” (Vol. 1: 323. Entry: Croatia.)

While some Croatian Catholic priests were executed for refusing to take part in the massacres, there is documentation of participation by others. Informed American Catholics are horrified at Ustasha crimes and the implicit or explicit complicity of the Vatican and Croatian clergy. John Cornwell, a research fellow at Jesuit College and devout Catholic who studied Vatican archives reports in *Hitler's Pope*, “Ustashe leadership embarked on their massacres with a cruel and haphazard barbarism that has few parallels in history.... Priests, invariably Franciscans, took a leading part in the massacres. Many went around routinely armed and performed their murderous acts with zeal . . . Individual Franciscans killed, set fire to homes, sacked villages, and laid waste the Bosnian countryside at the head of Ustashe bands.” (Penguin Books, New York, 1999: 249-254)

The American Catholic Professor Edmond Paris, in *Genocide in Satellite Croatia: 1941-1945*, writes, “The greatest genocide during World War II, in proportion to a nation's population, took place, not in Nazi Germany but in the Nazi-created puppet state of Croatia. There, in the years 1941-1945, some 750,000 Serbs, 60,000 Jews and 26,000 Gypsies—men, women and children—perished in a gigantic holocaust. These are the figures used by most foreign authors, especially Germans, who were in the best position to know....

“... The magnitude and the bestial nature of these atrocities makes it difficult to believe that such a thing could have happened in an allegedly

civilized part of the world. Yet even a book such as this can attempt to tell only a part of the story.” (American Institute for Balkan Affairs, Chicago, 1961: Introduction)



Perhaps the full story will never be told or understood. Survivors find it difficult to find words to tell their stories. A Jewish survivor, Eduard (Edo) Šajer, submitted testimony in New York in 1997 that said in part, “Here I have described only a small part—a short period of events. To describe the horror and suffering of the prisoners from Ustasha crimes is impossible because that was a camp

of death and horror.”

None of three known Roma (Gypsy) survivors of Jasenovac still live to tell their stories. And many Serbs tend to think of their tragedy as “their tragedy,” something they shouldn't discuss with outsiders or, often, even share with their own family members. Perhaps the silence is because of shame and embarrassment at being helpless to protect the children, at being *nađve* to the point of disbelief even as they were ferried to Gradina to be killed, at following the Communist Croat Tito as they were led away from their families and from Jasenovac, at times, to be slaughtered (i.e., the battle at Srem), at accepting Tito's “Brotherhood and Unity” program for forty-five years as their religion was suppressed, their culture “contained,” and neo-Ustashes plotted their demise.

As Mr. Šajer noted, the horror of Jasenovac is impossible to describe—beyond words and human comprehension. Yet we must learn the story and try to understand the human capacity for cruelty to its own. As we struggle to understand, perhaps we can learn from those who participated.

Avro Manhattan, who operated the radio station Radio Freedom to broadcast to occupied Europe in World War II, reported, “In the concentration camp at Jasenovac, on the night of August 29, 1942, orders were issued for executions. Bets were made as to who could liquidate the largest number of inmates. Peter Brzica cut the throats of 1,360 prisoners with a specially sharp butcher's knife. Having been proclaimed the prizewinner of the competition, he was elected King of the Cutthroats. A gold watch, a silver service, and a roasted sucking pig and wine were his other rewards....” (*The Vatican's Holocaust*, Ozark Books, 1986: 48.)

Below is the story from the perspective of another of the contestants, Mile Friganović:

“Franciscan Pero Brzica, Ante Zrinusic, Sipka and I waged a bet on who would slaughter more prisoners that night. The killing started and already after an hour I slaughtered much more than

they did. It seemed to me that I was in seventh heaven. I had never felt such bliss in my life. And already after a few hours I slaughtered 1,100 people, while the others only managed to kill 300 to 400 each. And then, when I was experiencing the greatest ecstasy I noticed an elderly peasant standing and peacefully and calmly watching me slaughter my victims and them dying in the greatest pain. That look of his shook me: in the midst of the greatest ecstasy I suddenly froze and for some time couldn't make a single move. And then I walked up to him and found out that he was some Vukasin [Mandrapa] from the village of Klepci near Capljina whose whole family had been killed, and who was sent to Jasenovac after having worked in the forests. He spoke this with incomprehensible peace which affected me more than the terrible cries around us. All at once I felt the wish to disrupt his peace with the most brutal torturing and, through his suffering, to restore my ecstasy and continue to enjoy the inflicting of pain.

“I singled him out and sat him down on a log. I ordered him to cry out: ‘Long live Poglavnik [Fuehrer] Pavelić!’, or I would cut his ear off. Vukasin was silent. I ripped his ear off. He didn't say a word. I told him once again to cry out ‘Long live Pavelić!’ or I would tear off the other ear too. I tore off the other ear. ‘Yell: “Long live Pavelić!”, or I'll tear off your nose.’ And when I ordered him for the fourth time to yell ‘Long live Pavelić!’ and threatened to take his heart out with a knife, he looked at me, that is, somehow through me and over me into uncertainty and slowly said: ‘Do your job, child.’ [*Radi ti, dijete, svoj posao.*] After that, these words of his totally bewildered me. I froze, plucked out his eyes, tore out his heart, cut his throat from ear to ear and threw him into the pit. But then something broke within me and I could no longer kill that night.

“Franciscan Pero Brzica won the bet because he had slaughtered 1,360 prisoners and I paid the bet without a word.”

(Qtd. in *The Role of the Vatican in the Breakup of the Yugoslav State*, by Dr. Milan Bulajić, Belgrade, 1994: 156-157; from a Jan., 1943, interview with Friganović by psychiatrist Dr. Nedo Zec, who was also an inmate at Jasenovac.)

AT YAD-VASHEM, the Holocaust memorial in Jerusalem, the word *Jasenovac* is engraved on the stone floor in the Remembrance Hall along with Auschwitz, Dachau, Treblinka, and Mathausen. But few people, outside the Balkans and a small

international group of scholars, remember. Remembering is impossible for those who never knew. The word *Jasenovac* is not in Western history books, and for fifty years, discussion of the atrocities committed in the so-called “Balkan Auschwitz” was suppressed under the politics of the former Yugoslavia. Josef Broz Tito believed that discussion of the camp and further arrest of war criminals was counter-productive to the strictly enforced policy of Brotherhood and Unity. Some research was allowed and museums and commemorations were established, including one for the breakout on April 22, but the families of victims and survivors of the horrors remained mute for fear of prison or worse.

But Tito wasn't the only leader to have an interest in suppressing the story of Jasenovac. Top Ustasha war criminals were funneled through the so-called “Rat Lines” to Argentina and other countries, often under Allied noses. The failure of the West to demand retribution for the Balkan Holocaust under

German occupation is a difficult-to-explain embarrassment that is, some believe, better left buried in government archives. And few even whisper about the Vatican's well documented betrayal of good Catholic laity in helping German Nazi and Croat Ustasha war criminals escape punishment, and today, the never-de-Nazified Croatia has a



strong lobby and competent Washington public relations firms that somehow managed to keep the lid on the story during the recent civil war in the Balkans, even amid rhetoric and denial that would now be considered a crime in Germany.

And in the former Yugoslavia, the suppression of the story by Tito wasn't the only reason survivors didn't talk about it. A complicated mix of fear, shame, and desire to protect post-war children from the pain and danger of knowing were contributing factors.

IN JUNE, 2000, in Bosnia, the twenty-six-year-old Zlatan translated for his grandmother as she told what happened to her eighteen-month-old brother and five-year-old sister. As she tells how the seven-year-old sister awakened in the Jasenovac-Stara Gradiska camp to find the younger brother and sister she had been carrying for gone and looking for them, only to find them lying in an open pit with other dead children who had also been bashed in the head with wooden mallets, Zlatan moaned and said, “I didn't know.” To the interviewer, he said, “You see, they kept it a secret from me until this very moment—how she lost a brother and a sister.” He was visibly shaken as he continued the translation, stumbling on his words and repeating, “I didn't know.”

Eighteen-year-old Aleksandra had never heard the details of her grandmother's

experiences in Jasenovac-Stara Gradiska until she translated as her grandmother told her story. The grandmother had been fourteen when she was captured and spent time at Stara Gradiska before she was transported in a cattle car to Germany to work.

The teary-eyed Aleksandra translated what her grandmother had witnessed: a woman had given birth. After the baby was born, an Ustasha put his bayonet through the baby and held it up, saying to the mother, “Here is your little Partisan, your little Serb.” While incredible-sounding to the young Aleksandra, such Ustasha barbarism was glorified by the Ustasha leader, Fuhrer Ante Pavelić. According to Ronald H. Bailey in *Partisans and Guerillas, WW II* (Time-Life Books, 1978, p. 87), “A good Ustasha, [Pavelić] told his men, ‘is he who can use his knife to cut a child from the womb of its mother.’”

Other peasant Serb survivors, because they were taxed two-thirds of their crops under the post-war Communist government, were preoccupied with survival, with feeding the new families formed of survivors of the genocide—a woman with one or no surviving children and a man who had survived by working as forced labor in Germany or who was liberated from Auschwitz as his wife and children were killed. Milka Bralić, who now lives in Arlington, is the product of one such family and recalls never having enough bread until she was fifteen years old when she, through an older half-brother, immigrated to Australia.

Survivors maintained sanity by blocking out, at least in waking hours, the horrific images. Boro Prpoš was nine years old when he was captured along with his stepmother and three-year-old brother and herded toward Jasenovac. He saw his stepmother and brother killed on the way to the camp, his brother in such a brutal way that he still cannot bear to describe the killing.

“I can forget everything. But I cannot forget my little brother. Three years old.” Mr. Prpoš fought tears and tapped his clinched fists together as he repeated, “Three years old.” He suppressed his emotions and shrugged as he said, “It was war.” He hesitated before he continued slowly. “No, it was not war. It was genocide. It was just to keep certain people away from the planet.”

JUST AS it is impossible for Americans to remember what they never knew, it is impossible for people in the Balkans to forget. Most Serbian, Jewish, and Roma families are poorer by a relative or two or twenty or fifty. Called the “Balkan Auschwitz,” the Jasenovac system of death camps is cited as the “third most effective” in occupied Europe—behind Auschwitz's 1.1-1.3 million victims and close to Treblinka's 700,000-870,000, yet the story of the camp is, as suggested in the title *Jasenovac: The Anatomy of Neglected Concentration Camps of the Third International Conference* last week, still buried in government archives, the victims and their families having received no apology nor reparations but only suppression under Tito and now minimizations and denials from the new Croatian government, notwithstanding that many Croats fought Fascism with Partisan armies or helped Serbs escape Jasenovac and rescued Serb children, and many others died at Jasenovac

as resisters of Fascism. The long-suppressed history of genocide by Nazi Ustasha and the cover-up of atrocities and commission of new ones by Tito's Communists in the name of Brotherhood and Unity will fester in the darkness of secrecy. Undoubtedly, the hidden history was a main reason for the recent war in the Balkans, and the lack of knowledge and understanding of history on the part of foreign intermediaries validates the adage that those who don't know history are bound to repeat it.

Hope that the story will be told, a lesson taught, and relations between Serbs and Croats improved, lies with men such as Dr. Bernard Klein of CUNY's Kingsborough College and Dr. Milan Bulajić, international lawyer and author of several books on the Balkan Holocaust who has researched the topic for forty years. Dr. Klein first met Dr. Bulajić at a Holocaust conference in Israel in 1996. Dr. Bulajić asked Dr. Klein's help in researching and exposing the truth about Jasenovac, and Dr. Klein organized the 1997 conference in short order, in spite of political opposition and even threats. The Second International Conference was organized by Dr. Bulajić and held in Banja Luka, RS, Bosnia, the Third in Jerusalem, and a Fourth International Conference, Drs. Klein and Bulajić hope, will be held in December of 2003 to continue to search for truth, after fifty years of neglect in the Western world, about the camp that was liberated only when starving and exhausted prisoners liberated themselves

Sources:

http://www.jerusalim.org/cd/biblioteka/wschindley-jasenovac_en.html

http://jasenovac-info.com/cd/galerija/arhivrs/index_1.html

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pWGyTPu6UDE>



And the remnant took his servants, and entreated them spitefully, and slew them.

Matthew 22: 6



Ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts: for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God.

Luke 16: 15

