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# Jasenovac—A Past That Does Not Pass:

## The Presence of Jasenovac in Croatian and Serbian Collective Memory of Conflict

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In this article the authors discuss the role of Jasenovac Concentration Camp in Croatian and Serbian political and social spheres. Connecting the historical data with the analysis of the recent mutual accusations of genocide between the Republic of Croatia and the Republic of Serbia before the International Court of Justice in The Hague, the authors demonstrate the pervasive presence of Jasenovac in Serbian and Croatian political discourse. Presenting different modes of social construction around Jasenovac, from the end of the Second World War to the present, the article proposes a specific reading of Jasenovac as a form of the "past that does not pass." In this respect, Jasenovac is seen as a continuous reference point for understanding collective losses and group suffering, both past and present, in Serbian and Croatian society. Although historically distanced by seventy years, the events surrounding Jasenovac are still constantly recurring in both political and private, official and unofficial, spheres of life, functioning as a specific symbol around which narratives of ethnic, national, and religious understanding as well as inter-group conflicts are thought and constructed. The role of political and social factors in the construction of frequently incompatible narratives is further underlined by the analysis of selected oral testimonies related to the war in Yugoslavia in 1990s.

Keywords: Jasenovac; collective memory; Serbia; Croatia; genocide

#### Introduction

On 5 August 2015, the Republic of Croatia celebrated the Day of Victory and Homeland Thanksgiving, and the Day of the Croatian Defenders (Croatian: Dan pobjede i domovinske zahvalnosti i Dan hrvatskih branitelja), marking the twentieth anniversary of the military operation, "Operation Storm" (Operacija Oluja), with a set of public events including a large military parade. On the same day, a very different

set of commemorative events was observed in Serbia, where the day was declared one of national mourning. On that occasion, during a memorial symposium dedicated to the same commemoration held at the Sava Center, the Serbian president, Tomislav Nikolić, described Operation Storm as a "bestial action with elements of a genocide," suggesting a continuity between the military parade held in Croatia and the acts of the fascist Croatian government during the Second World War (WWII).<sup>2</sup> The president of the Democratic Party of Serbia, Sanda Rašković Ivić, drew an even stronger parallel, claiming that the "genocide against Serbs continues, and we are still counting the dead from Jasenovac and from the action of 'Storm."3

The symbolic strength of Jasenovac in the collective memory of Serbs and Croats is apparent because it appears as a regular reference (in a more or less explicit manner) when other mass atrocities and sufferings that took place in their respective territories from WWII onwards are interpreted. Although historically distanced by seventy years, the events surrounding Jasenovac continually recur in both political and private, official and unofficial, spheres of life, functioning as a specific symbol around which narratives of ethnic and national histories as well as intergroup conflicts are considered and constructed.

By analyzing the recent materials presented before the International Court of Justice (ICJ), during which mutual accusations of genocide were leveled by both the Republic of Croatia and the Republic of Serbia, along with interviews collected within the framework of the Croatian Memories project, this article aims to show that Jasenovac has attained the status of "a past that does not pass," that is, of a past that continuously re-appears in the political, intellectual, and social life of a society.

The idea that there are certain historical events that have a strong hold on the present became especially prominent in the second half of the 1980s, first marked by a controversial article by Ernst Nolte on the past that does not want to pass (Vergangenheit, die nicht vergehen will) that provoked a whole series of public quarrels, later known in German historiography as "Historikerstreit." In his polemical essay published in June 1986 (soon afterwards criticized as an attempt at historical revisionism), E. Nolte argued that the memory of the Nationalist Socialist past in Germany is unique because, unlike any other "past," it has not lost its urgency but instead established itself as a "sword hanging above the present" (ein Richtschwert über der Gegenwart aufgehängt). At the same time, he did not see that process as something autonomous, but rather as a project supported by various political interests. Only one year later, Henry Rousso published his famous work entitled "The Vichy Syndrome" (Le syndrome de Vichy), in which he traced different public manifestations of memory related to the period of the French Vichy government. Those manifestations varied from unfinished mourning (immediately after the war), overt repression (during de Gaulle's period), to obsession (from the late 1960s onwards). The title of his later book, which was accidentally almost identical to Nolte's essay, soon became an iconic phrase in French history and memory studies: un passé qui ne passe pas.6 Despite the fact that the two historians were very

different in their theoretical positions and methodology, and regardless of their dissimilar cultural and political contexts, they both put forward an important idea of something historical which cannot be seen solely as a history. In other words, both the German and French "historical quarrels" had as their subtext something excessive, with a nature different from an "ordinary history," that is, something with important social relevance, provoking strong emotional reactions.

In the context of the former Yugoslavia, especially with regard to Serbian and Croatian collective memory, the position of the "past that does not pass" is occupied by Jasenovac, a complex of labor and extermination camps on the territory of the former Nazi-allied Independent State of Croatia (Croatian: Nezavisna Država Hrvatska [NDH]). Jasenovac does not represent solely a specific geographic location in its historical context but also a contested lieu de mémoire.7 In oral history and in the public memory of the former Yugoslavia and the subsequent successor states, it surpasses its limited historical locus and has the quality of an axial reference point against which other traumatic events are understood and measured. This peculiar status of Jasenovac has had an extensive lifespan, ranging from the end of WWII until the present. As a starting point, the historical background of the Jasenovac concentration camp will be viewed within the context of the political and social struggles in Southeastern Europe in the mid-twentieth century. Following that, the discussion will focus on the construction of Jasenovac as a dual symbol of crime and suffering during the first decades of Communist Yugoslavia. Its ambiguities will be further illustrated by the uses of the notion of "Jasenovac" in political and war propaganda during the 1980s and 1990s. Moving towards the contemporary construction of memory, the article will analyze the role of Jasenovac in recent legal documents, as presented in the mutual accusations of genocide between the Republic of Croatia and the Republic of Serbia before the ICJ in The Hague. Finally, the discussion will conclude with an overview of oral testimonies related to the war in Croatia in the 1990s, in which the history of Jasenovac and WWII functions as a narrative sub-structure. This article does not attempt to give an extensive overview of the symbolic and mnemonic presence of Jasenovac. Rather, it offers a set of cross-sectional analyses that illustrate the complexity of the construction and reconstruction of the collective memory of that site.

## The role of the Jasenovac Concentration Camp in the **Independent State of Croatia**

The Jasenovac Concentration Camp was the largest complex of extermination, concentration, and labor camps in the NDH during WWII. In the very first month of the NDH's existence, its leader Ante Pavelić signed a set of racial laws that were aimed at the protection of the supposedly "Aryan blood and honor of Croatian people" and thus targeted the Jews and the Roma.<sup>8</sup> A few months later, on 7 June 1941

during his first meeting with Hitler, Pavelić received support for the elimination of the Serbian population from the state by mass executions and deportations.<sup>9</sup> The execution of crimes was primarily in hands of Ustaša units. In the ideology of the NDH, Serbs were not seen as clearly non-Aryans but principally as politically incompatible elements, "perennial enemies." <sup>10</sup> Throughout the entire territory of the NDH during 1941 and 1942, around thirty German, Italian, and Ustaša camps were established, some of them functioning as transit and assembly camps and others as concentration camps. In terms of prisoner numbers and surface area, Jasenovac was the largest concentration camp in the NDH and stayed in operation the longest (from August 1941 till April 1945). 11 According to the official presentation of the Jasenovac Memorial Site, the Jasenovac concentration camp had several different functions: it was an assembly point for men, women, and children from all parts of the NDH; a transit camp for other camps in occupied Europe; a labor camp and a penal camp; and it was a prisoner-of-war camp. However, it was primarily a death camp, a killing ground for those who were seen as racially impure or politically undesirable.<sup>12</sup> The Jasenovac Concentration Camp was actually an assembly of five connected camps in the vicinity of the village of Jasenovac, founded one after another.<sup>13</sup> Camp I (Krapje) and Camp II (Bročice) were operative from August till November 1941. Surviving prisoners were then transferred in November 1941 to the newly established Camp III (Brickworks) in Jasenovac which was from that date the central place of execution. It is the camp most commonly associated with the name "Jasenovac." A Other camp sites were Camp IV (Tannery work detail) and Camp V (Stara Gradiška). 15 Although the government of the NDH was dependent on the support of Germany and Italy, the camp itself was completely under local administration. The camp was run by Ustaša officials who became notorious for their cruelties and modes of torture in such measure that even German officers in official reports sent to Berlin expressed their revulsion. Comparing this place with the German "death factories," which were the product of growing modernity and bureaucratization, Mataušić describes Jasenovac as "primitive manufacture, the manual production of all possible cruelties."16 In Jasenovac "the Ustasha killed the prisoners by cutting their throats, hanging, beating, or starving them and forcing them into hard physical labor."<sup>17</sup> According to the latest list of individual victims published by the Jasenovac Memorial Site (last update in March 2013), one can identify 83,145 victims by name. The majority of victims were Serbs (47,627), Roma (16,173), and Jews (13,116). One quarter of all victims (20,101) were under 14 years of age. 18

After the liberation in May 1945, there were very few remains of the camp, as it had been bombed by the Allies in March and April 1945. Additionally, before abandoning the camp, Ustaša officials ordered the destruction of the remnants of the camp in order to hide the traces of the crimes that had been committed there. 19 A few of the last physical remnants were later claimed by the inhabitants of the surrounding villages and used as construction materials. By the 1960s, almost all material evidence had been removed from what was once the largest site of mass atrocities in the NDH. Only in the late 1950s and early 1960s were the first steps taken towards designating the area of the camp and construction as a memorial site by the Conservation Institute of the National Republic of Croatia and the Central Committee of the Federation of War Veterans' Organizations of Yugoslavia. The latter organization invited the architects Zdenko Kolacije and Bogdan Bogdanović to submit plans to commemorate the tragedy of Jasenovac. Bogdanović's monument Stone Flower, unveiled in 1966, became the first monument of what would eventually become the Jasenovac Memorial Site.20

Although Jasenovac was an important place of commemoration in Communist Yugoslavia, the nature of the regime did not allow sufficient agency for independent scholarship related to this camp and the crimes of WWII in general. This would particularly be the case with regard to the number of victims, a statistic that was destined to become one of the most contested elements in contemporary Croatian and Serbian historiography.

### Jasenovac in the Context of Communist Yugoslavia—The **Problem of the Number of Victims**

Immediately after WWII, the Yugoslav government proclaimed that 1.7 million people had lost their lives during the war. Soon after, this number achieved official status, eventually challenged by later scientific research. It seems that the initial approximation was created partly for external political needs, in order to justify requests for large wartime reparations from Germany. It also rested on unclear methodological procedures which could not be replicated.<sup>21</sup> At the same time, according to The Report of the State Commission of Croatia for the Investigation of the Crimes of the Occupation Forces and their Collaborators (Croatian: Izvještaj Zemaljske komisije za utvrđivanje zločina okupatora i njihovih pomagača) from 1946, the number of victims that perished in Jasenovac was placed between 500,000 and 600,000. This report also suffered from methodological shortcomings since it was based on the testimonies of survivors along with general approximations.<sup>22</sup> Later there were attempts to list the number of individual victims, first in 1946, then 1950, and again in 1964. The data were collected in the field by governmental organizations as well as by veterans organizations; all of them came up with a much smaller number of victims than the government continued to claim. In particular, the number of individual victims listed for Jasenovac was less than 600,000. However, official state publications such as the Yugoslavian Military Encyclopedia of 1967 and the Encyclopedia of Yugoslavia of 1971 continued to repeat the previous estimate of 500,000-600,000, which was later inflated in publications by Antun Miletić and Milan Bulajić to 700,000 victims.<sup>23</sup> The latter number was frequently repeated, and sometimes reinterpreted as 700,000 Serbian victims, without any real grounds in historical evidence.

After WWII, there were several attempts to establish the number of human losses in Yugoslavia based on statistical approximations. Among foreign researchers, important work was done by Paul Myers and Arthur Campbell, who approximated the number of total deaths in Yugoslavia, among all ethnic groups, at 1.067 million, which was already significantly lower than the number put forward by the Yugoslav government.<sup>24</sup> In the 1980s, Bogoljub Kočović<sup>25</sup> and Vladimir Žerjavić<sup>26</sup> conducted independent research based on statistical approximates and came up with remarkably similar results: respectively, 1.014 million and 1.027 million total deaths.<sup>27</sup> With regard to deaths in Jasenovac, Žerjavić arrived at the approximate figure of 83,000.<sup>28</sup> According to his own testimony, Kočović did not make any scientific calculation of the number of victims in Jasenovac, but he estimated that the total number of Serbian victims in all twenty-six concentration camps on the territory of the NDH (for which Jasenovac was a unifying symbol) could be around 200,000. Kočović in the same interview criticized manipulation of numbers, mentioning the unrealistic overestimation of 700,000 or even a million Serbian victims in Jasenovac, in which he detected nationalist propaganda.<sup>29</sup> Slowly but surely the number of victims in Jasenovac in general and the number of Serbian victims in particular became a key element in the political use of memory, especially during the second half of the 1980s.

Although the public stance of the Yugoslav government was anti-nationalist, it did not encourage independent research that would place the number of victims in a more realistic framework—possibly because of the fact that the greater the number of victims of fascism, the more legitimacy could be claimed by the Communist government. Hence, the inflated numbers were perpetuated in official governmental publications, various encyclopedias, and historical textbooks. On the other hand, nationalist circles in Serbia, especially from the 1980s, used the same numbers not only to emphasize the sense of collective victimhood of their own people but also to depict others as perennial enemies. The story of Jasenovac and the idea of hundreds of thousands of Serbs killed during WWII thus came to represent a key element in narratives about the position of the Serbs in Croatia and about Serb-Croat relations. According to Ozren Žunec, the inflated number of Serb victims was formulated by Serbian nationalist circles in such a way that any negation of this claim was taken as indicating the possibility of a new genocide, like that conducted under the NDH. In his view, manipulation of an excessive number of victims, not excluding other motives, served as a preparation for future political action.<sup>30</sup>

Hoepken, who has conducted a study of war narratives in Yugoslavia, demonstrates how new national identities were constructed by a selective reading of history, concentrated primarily on previous conflicts.<sup>31</sup> The aim was obviously their solidification into the collective memory of a nation. After attempts to open a public discourse between Croatian and Serbian professional historians ultimately failed in 1989, Hopeken indicated that

the discussion lost almost all intentions to clarify the historical facts and correct inappropriate descriptions and evaluations. Among the intellectuals and politicians on both sides, this topic became little more than a tool for refueling nationalist controversies with the issue of victims of the Ustaša terror dissolving into a pointless body count. While figures were downsized in the Croatian papers, Serbian figures went up, inflating even the figures from the Tito period, which had often been questioned by historians.<sup>32</sup>

Hoepken shows how political elites in Serbia promoted a version of national identity based on the premise that Serbs were the constant victims of others, under the perennial threat of physical annihilation. This portrait of history as a sequence of collective suffering was nonetheless complemented with examples of extraordinary heroism. Those two images together created a very specific "historical auto-stereotype" of hero-martyrs. The historiographical and public debate in Serbia revolved around genocide and suffering. Jasenovac, in this ensemble, had the principal symbolic place.33

Writing about the genesis of the Serbian revolt in Croatia in 1990, Žunec emphasizes that in the period of the 1980s, specifically at the time when it became possible to debate the Communist "truth," the number of victims was growing rapidly, despite the greater availability of actual data and evidence that pointed to the opposite conclusion. As an illustration, he quotes a statement made by Vojislav K. Stojanović then president of the Association of University Professors and Scientists of Serbia (Udruženje sveučilišnih profesora i znanstvenika Srbije)—in a letter sent to the newspaper Politika in February 1990 in which he claimed that "in the crime of genocide perpetrated by the Croatian ultranationalists, the Serbian nation lost over two million innocent victims simply because they were Serbs."34 In addition to the exaggerated numbers, Žunec states that the "mythical aspect of the narrative of Jasenovac" became more evident in what he terms "ethnic claims to victimhood." In his view, there was a tendency to present Jasenovac as exclusively a Serbian tragedy, in such a way that the mention of any victims of other nationalities diminished with time, despite the fact that research by Vladimir Žerjavić indicated that the nationality of 40 percent of the victims was not Serbian.35

The response in Croatia was both defensive and reactionary. The narrative of collective victimhood present in Serbia from the 1980s evoked in many Croats the feeling that they were being blamed as collective perpetrators—that all Croats were genocidal supporters of the NDH. The actual historical problems of the NDH regime were then set aside, and there was no real process of what could be called "coming to terms with the past." Attention was instead concentrated on crimes committed against Croats by the Partisans and Četniks. The counter-toponym to Jasenovac became Bleiburg.<sup>36</sup> In response to the need to assure the continuity of national and state identity, the NDH was often presented as one stage (although insufficient) in the fulfillment of a long desired dream of national independence. However, there was no official rehabilitation of that regime, whether in politics or in education.<sup>37</sup> Towards the end of the 1980s the book Bespuća povijesne zbiljnosti (Wastelands of Historical Reality), written by soon-to-be Croatian president Franjo Tudman, caused another controversy related to Jasenovac. Although his approximations of the number of victims were

closer to the estimations of Žerjavić and Kočović than to the official number, he was criticized for historical revisionism. Since Tudman speaks about the existence of the "myth of Jasenovac," misused to demonstrate the genocidal nature of Croats, the word "myth" was criticized as a denial of the historical reality of genocide itself. 38

Since the Ustaše's crimes were exceptionally heinous in their nature and extremely broad in their scope, it is no surprise that Croatian Serbs, who suffered the most under the NDH, remembered this period as one of the most difficult in their history. However, the fact that parts of that memory of suffering were instrumentalized later for political propaganda points towards constant dangers related to the construction of narratives of the past.<sup>39</sup> At the same time, Croatian political leaders faced the challenge of establishing the legitimacy of the newly independent state that was almost immediately drawn into war. In that process, the greatest challenge was precisely the history of the NDH and the acknowledgment of past atrocities that took place on its territory.

In both cases, it is clear that the past extends far beyond the scope of academic study, and it comes into interaction with many social and political factors. Even the number of victims in Yugoslav society/societies was not merely a subject that could be delegated to independent historical research. It was instead used as a political instrument, first for the Communist Yugoslav state and later in the states that emerged from its collapse. This was once again acutely visible in the conflict between the Serbianruled Yugoslavia and Croatia during the period 1990-1995. As is often the case with intergroup conflicts, antagonisms are not simply given, but developed through a series of divisive narratives and symbols. Bruce MacDonald puts it succinctly:

By proving their own victimisation at the hands of Croatian enemy, Serbs portrayed their machinations in Croatia as self-defensive, preventing a "repeated genocide" of Serbs. Similarly, for Croats, the massacre at Bleiburg demonstrated a pattern of Serbian genocidal aggression, followed by scheming, cover-ups and political dominance. . . . Each side, by proving its own "holocaust" was able to convince its own people that they needed to defend themselves against the renewed horrors of genocide. 40

In other words, the past of the Second World War became again the present of new conflicts in the 1990s, and continued as a constant symbolic "burden." In the following paragraphs, we will attempt to illustrate further the contested position of Jasenovac by focusing on the mutual accusations of genocide between the Serbian and Croatian governments before the International Court of Justice, and some elements of the current reception of Jasenovac in Croatia and Serbia.

#### The Place of Jasenovac in Mutual Accusations of Genocide between Croatia and Serbia

In July 1999, the Republic of Croatia filed before the ICJ in The Hague, the "Application of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (Croatia v. Serbia)" accusing the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia represented by the Republic of Serbia as its legal successor, for violations of the 1948 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide.<sup>41</sup> In 2010, Serbia presented a *Rejoinder* against Croatia for breaches of the same convention.<sup>42</sup> Although both cases deal with the conflicts that took place between 1991 and 1995, throughout their explication of events, legal teams of both countries penetrated much deeper into history.<sup>43</sup> In the initial legal exposé called the *Memorial* presented by Croatia in 2001, Jasenovac is mentioned only in passing, in Volume 1, section 2.53, where it is stated that it was misused in inflammatory articles in Serbian newspapers from the early 1980s onwards. Although it is not denied that in Jasenovac "terrible crimes had been committed against Serbs, Jews, Roma/Gypsies, Croats and others during the Second World War," it is emphasized that the aforementioned articles, "authored by Serb historians and commentators such as Milan Bulajić and Velimir Terzić, exaggerated the numbers of those murdered in the camp, claiming that 700,000 Serbs had been killed. These figures were, the Memorial states, subsequently increased to one million, and then several million, until finally it was said that the precise number of Serbs killed 'could not be counted." As a counter-argument to those historical claims, the Applicant (Croatia) referred to other estimations of the number of victims done in 1946, the 1960s, and the 1980s, which range from 46,000 to 100,000.45 Volume 2 of the Croatian Memorial brings two testimonies (Annexes 31 and 275) from which it is apparent that Jasenovac was used as a means of intimidating prisoners of war during the 1990s.46 Volumes 4 and 5 of the same document bring examples of inflammatory articles from Serbian newspapers of the time.<sup>47</sup> In short, the Croatian Memorial treated Jasenovac in the context of the political propaganda of the late 1980s. In their approach, the "terrible crimes" of the NDH were not denied, but they were also not directly qualified as genocide. Their criticism was directed towards the uses of past suffering, epitomized by Jasenovac, in the political propaganda that immediately preceded the war in the 1990s. Serbia's counter-suit, on the other hand, did not deny that "Serbian nationalists misused the recollections of these past events,"48 yet they argued that a similar nationalist revival also took place in Croatia, especially through "its rehabilitation of the NDH, Ustasha movement and its symbols."49 The Respondent (Serbia) insisted on defining the previous terror in the NDH against the Serbian population as "genocide," stressing that it "left an indelible mark on the consciences of the Serbs in Croatia and elsewhere. The events leading to the conflict of 1991–1995 and the conflict itself cannot be understood without taking this into account."50 The argument goes that the rise of nationalism amidst political turmoil in Croatia, especially in the newly founded Croatian state, created the fear of a new genocidal persecution among the Serbian population, especially in light of their previous persecution during the period of the NDH.

The Jasenovac camp is discussed in Chapter V of the Counter-Memorial, in sections 412-420. After introductory historical remarks, the Respondent (Serbia) defended the number of approximately 500,000-600,000 victims in Jasenovac by

referring to witnesses from the aforementioned "Report of the State Commission of Croatia for the Investigation of the Crimes of the Occupation Forces and their Collaborators," the Yugoslav Government, Yad Vashem's Encyclopedia of the Holocaust, and Israel Gutman's "Encyclopedia of the Holocaust." Volume 2 calls on a number of historical sources that attempt to prove the genocidal nature of the NDH, the terrors of the Jasenovac camp, and the Croatian nationalist revival supported by instances of what they saw as historical revisionism by Croatian President Tudman and other Croatian historians and public figures. Finally, in the 2010 Reply of the Republic of Croatia, the Applicant moves on from the historical debate over the number of victims towards the iconographic representation of Jasenovac and its public image.

Under the heading "The Rise of Serb Nationalism," the Applicant emphasizes the role of the infamous Memorandum of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts (SANU) 52 from 1986 and the role of intellectuals and the media in the creation of nationalist narratives and anti-Croatian sentiments in Serbia.<sup>53</sup> Jasenovac appears in sections 3.13 and 3.14 where the applicant mentions a visit of the SANU delegation to Jasenovac in October 1985, quoting a passage from Minutes of the Meeting from 11 and 12 October 1985 where Vladimir Dedijer said,

However, the circumstances are difficult and younger generations could be again called upon to defend their homeland. If they see the graves of their predecessors being neglected, that could negatively affect their fighting morale. And finally, it is only decent to thank general Ivan Gošnjak, who during the sixties, invested a lot of energy to advocate for Jasenovac to be marked visibly, because hundreds of thousands of Serbs, Muslims, Jews, Roma and members of other nations lost their lives here. I think if necessary, the Army will help us, as it has helped us before.54

The Applicant (Croatia) connected this visit with the mobile exhibition about Jasenovac titled "The Dead Open the Eyes to the Living" shown to Yugoslav National Army (JNA) soldiers in the period from 1986 and 1991. Analyzing the map of the exhibition sites, the Applicant concludes that "it is easy to see that these were the areas where genocidal acts were later perpetrated by the Respondent. . . . The presentation and the exhibited material, including photographs, had a clear goal of connecting the crimes from WWII to the allegedly 'separatist' tendencies in the Socialist Republic of Croatia. Simultaneously, numerous articles in weekly journals intended for the JNA (e.g. Front, People's Army) contributed to this notion from 1986 to 1991."55 The intention of the Applicant was to demonstrate that Jasenovac and its history of suffering was instrumentalized for nationalistic purposes, in addition to the way in which the historical tragedy was presented through exhibited materials and narratives surrounding them. At the same time, the effectiveness of the nationalist political programs seems to be in some degree attributed precisely to the use of symbols of group suffering which resonated with public sentiment.

It is apparent that Jasenovac still occupies an important role in Croatian and Serbian political discourse. It is important to note that both legal teams, though in different ways, represented Jasenovac as a symbolic place that functions as an anchor of a group identity constructed through remembrance of past suffering. Jasenovac is thus not only a site but also a memory-place of decisive importance, as is apparent from the Serbian Rejoinder. At the same time, precisely because of its public significance, Jasenovac became additionally burdened as an instrument of political propaganda leading to new atrocities more than fifty years afterward, as emphasized in the Croatian Application. In the political spheres of both countries, Jasenovac has been instrumentalized both for revisionist projects and for propaganda purposes, provoking endless debates. However, it is important to note that Serbia in its counter-suit did not deny political misuse of the past by Serbian nationalists, while Croatia did not deny the horrors of the Jasenovac concentration camp. Although they still differ in further interpretations of those elements, these agreements could be seen as a step in a different direction from the exclusively self-centered nationalist discourses that were, and still are, sometimes present in the public spheres of those two countries. Finally, the challenge of Jasenovac elicits the "difficulties of representing Jasenovac." As we could see from the Croatian Reply, their legal team saw a link between iconographical representations of the massacres and terrors presented in the exhibition related to the Jasenovac Concentration Camp during WWII, and the terrors that took place during the war in Croatia in the 1990s.

The question might arise—to which degree is Jasenovac a political matter and how much does it represent an element in collective memory? Clearly, it is difficult to draw a clear line between the collective memory of suffering and the political (mis)use thereof. Nevertheless, it is important to see that political programs that aim to strengthen their public appeal by evoking past suffering can succeed only if there is a certain collective memory of those events shared among their population. The situation becomes very challenging when there are no institutions or groups in various domains of academia, culture, the media, religious communities, etc., that can publicly question a particular political or ideological use of the past. Our analysis points precisely to the fact that both the collective memory and history of Jasenovac were mutually related and that neither of them was free from political influences. As we could see in the example of the legal suit, its text mentions not only historical data (from the current standpoint) but also previous manipulations of "history," as well as collective memory (i.e., in terms such as an "indelible mark on the conscience"). The whole legal suit before the ICJ was—in the words of Vesna Crnić-Grotić, the leader of the Croatian legal team—a "political decision." 56 At the same time, that "political decision" was made, at least in part, with the intention of forming collective memory. The Croatian minister of justice at the time, Orsat Miljenić, stressed that it was important to present the case well so that testimonies about the events of the 1990s could be placed before the international forum and "preserved for future generations."57 Similarly, the former Croatian minister of Justice, Dražen Bošnjaković, in an interview for a Croatian Radio station, said that the verdict is important for future generations because "it will show them the angle from which they should look at what happened in these territories."58 Former ICTY prosecutor Geoffrey Nice expressed a similar opinion that one of the consequences of the verdict will be "how the future generations see those events. Trials and verdicts will be part of the material based on which they will form their opinions."59 In short, politics, collective memory, and history are not the same domains, but they are also never completely independent. What unites them is the common concern for the past, and they overlap precisely in a struggle over its interpretation.<sup>60</sup>

#### The Place of Jasenovac in Oral Testimonies

In his article on collective memories among ethnic groups in the territory of the former Yugoslavia, Ruiz Jiménez notices that each group has traumatic memories of suffering inflicted by their neighbors, which permeates each society and creates a shared feeling of victimhood. His impression is that the groups who inhabit the former Yugoslav region live in a certain form of a simultaneous history (una especie de historia simultánea) in which history and the present coexist with myths and lies, rendering the history of a group essentially tragic in the collective imagination of its members. Anecdotally, he mentions that journalists who covered the wars in the Balkans during the 1990s could not easily infer whether the atrocities that local people spoke about had taken place just a day before, in 1941, 1841, or even 1441. Trying to trace neuralgic nodes in Serbian memory, he stressed the mass extermination of Serbs during the period of the NDH and, more precisely, the horrors of Jasenovac. In his view, Serbian collective memory saw the proclamation of a new Republic of Croatia as the revival of a previous genocidal policy, instilling existential fears among Serbs in Croatia who responded by saying: "this time they will not kill us like then, this time we will fight." On the other hand, according to Ruiz Jiménez, the Croatian collective memory of suffering is focused on the political asymmetry of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes, and the suffering of their nation under Communism and the executions committed by Communist Partisans and Četniks.61

Jasenovac, in other words, can be seen as a central place of Serbian collective memory of suffering to such a degree that it became a symbol and identity marker through which all future suffering is to be read and understood.<sup>62</sup> Jasenovac, as a symbolic place, is present in Croatian collective memory in a similar way. However, instead of being a building block of national identity, it is manifested more as a challenging past. In both Croatian and Serbian memory one can detect a tendency to develop a continuity of persecution and suffering. While this continuity in the Serbian case is seen as a mnemonic line that connects Serbian victims in Jasenovac with the persecution of Serbs in the 1990s, in the Croatian case there is a tendency to connect Serbian political misuse of Jasenovac with crimes against Croats during the same period. Moreover, in Croatia, the period of Communism is seen as a repressive system that had already shown its real face in the Bleiburg massacre of prisoners of war.

In the 2012 report to MYPLACE, an international research organization on the construction and transmission of historical memory, researchers observed a tendency among young Croatian participants to claim that current politics are no longer influenced by the past. However, it was also noticed that "as soon as any subsequent question is asked, it becomes obvious how much they are aware of the inevitability of taking into account the past and forms of social memory when analyzing contemporary society in Croatia, especially when it comes to politics."63 In this respect, two major Croatian national political parties (HDZ and SDP) are accused of instrumentalizing historical memories for political purposes. These memories are gathered into two groups, one containing Jasenovac, anti-fascism, and Josip Broz Tito, and another one that comprises Bleiburg, its subsequent "Way of the Cross," and victims of Communism. As Pavlaković observed, "Jasenovac and Bleiburg serve as antipodal public rituals, in which political opponents denigrate each other every year, over the issue of the interpretation of the Second World War."64

Similarly, in a set of Croatian Memories (CroMe), video-interviews collected within the framework of the Balkan Memories project, 65 the presence of Jasenovac as a place of memory along with dehumanizing labels based on WWII divisions can still be identified. This set of interviews is focused only on the period of the war between 1991 and 1995, with respondents sampled from all nationalities and social groups in the territory of the Republic of Croatia. The elements that stand out are the symbolic topoi of Jasenovac and Bleiburg together with a general tendency to interpret the new war in light of previous conflicts.

One of the respondents was Milan Tadić, a Serb from Donji Lapac who worked in 1991 as a translator for UNPROFOR. In his interview, Tadić speaks about fear within the Serbian population in his village in 1990 and 1991.66 According to him, "the memories of the Second World War were exclusively used to create fear among people here."67 Tadić states that the fear was that there would be a new wave of Croatian Ustaša-like nationalism that would bring about a new concentration camp like Jasenovac, along with killing pits, etc. Among the mechanisms that contributed to the perpetuation of anxiety, he mentions mass gatherings during which the atmosphere of fear was even more accentuated, while anger and aggression were proposed as ways out of the danger.68

The strong presence of the memories of WWII was visible even in names that were used to describe the belligerent groups. Often, opponents were called "Ustaša" or "Četnik" (after WWII military units) in a derogatory way, but sometimes those names were also used as a means of self-identification.<sup>69</sup>

In the testimony of Vesna Bosanac, it is apparent how particular images of WWII were used to discredit the efforts of certain important individuals. During the war in the 1990s, Vesna Bosanac was a physician and director of the city hospital in Vukovar, a city in Eastern Croatia that became a symbol of wartime destruction. She speaks about an article that appeared in the British press under the influence of Serbian diplomatic efforts. The article named her as "Vesna Bosanac Mengele," directly alluding to the Third Reich and making a direct connection between Croatia and Nazi Germany, and claimed that she killed forty-three Serb children. 70 This article appeared at the time of the murder of 264 Croatian civilians in Ovčara, near Vukovar. In fact, Dr. Vesna Bosanac is credited with saving many lives, both Croatian and Serbian, during that war. The fact that the war was not fought only through weapons but also through media is also apparent in the testimony of Vjeran Piršić, who was at that time a computer expert charged with the development and analysis of data in the Croatian Ministry of Defense. He speaks directly about the propaganda during the war and about battles fought on the Internet. Although the Internet of that time was very slow, Piršić points to the fact that each time they would post current information about a crime committed against Croatians, it would be followed by fifty items posted by the Serbian side about the Ustaše's crimes in WWII.<sup>71</sup>

It is interesting to note that some testimonies explicitly address the lack of "coming to terms with the past." For instance, Josip Sopta, a Franciscan priest and historian, attributes the greatest responsibility for the wars in the 1990s to Communists who, according to him, never openly acknowledged the realistic number of fascist victims and who never spoke openly about crimes committed after the war, especially those in Bleiburg. That lack of readiness to come to terms with the past, he claims, provoked a desire for revenge. He mentions examples of journalists in Serbia who exaggerated the numbers of deaths, speaking about millions of victims at Jasenovac, and creating fear among the Serbian population that the same atrocities would be repeated.<sup>72</sup> Željko Obradović, a Serb from Donji Lapac, is rather skeptical with regard to the work of memory in the territory of the former Yugoslavia. He claims that WWII never ended in these areas, and that it continues even today. As an example of the extension of violent memories, he mentions the nationalist songs celebrating crimes committed by the Ustaše, most notoriously "Jasenovac i Gradiška Stara," which is still sung by certain nationalist groups in Croatia.<sup>73</sup>

Although our presentation of oral testimonies is by no means comprehensive, it suffices to show that the controversies about Jasenovac are not just a matter of official politics, but also an element of shared, lived memory. Marie-Claire Lavabre makes a distinction between the "choice of the past" (choix du passé) and the "weight of the past" (poids du passé) in order to illustrate two intertwined modes in which the past has bearing on the present.<sup>74</sup> In the first instance, the past is seen as a pool of different elements, and the "choice of the past" implies that some of these elements are more strongly emphasized than others. Thus political decisions influence the way the past is interpreted and restructured. The "weight of the past," on the other hand, underlines the fact that political views, decisions, and choices are not independent, but are rather formed and framed by past events that cannot be completely manipulated by elites.<sup>75</sup> While one can describe "official memory" or "memory from above"

more in terms of specific choices made with regard to the past, it cannot be forgotten that they coexist with other interpretative forms, oral testimonies being one of them. Collective memories, therefore, could be seen as dynamic structures of meaning, mediated through the concerns of the present, in response to various social and political factors. <sup>76</sup> Jasenovac is a paradigmatic example of a mnemonic site in which both the "choice of the past" and the "weight of the past" meet. While we could note many instances in which Jasenovac has been used for specific political purposes, we could also notice its strong presence in public memory which was both formed by and formative in terms of political decisions in the past and the present. Moreover, the understanding of the past cannot be separated from the identity of the group and from its own way of experiencing the "weight of the past." The challenging question that both Croatian and Serbian societies encounter is how to think about the transmission of memory to future generations without betraying the importance of past events and remaining aware of its possible misuses. Recognizing mutual differences in the commemoration of the past is a necessary step forward. However, as mentioned earlier, that does not suggest either disinterest (i.e., every group has its own story) or relativism (insinuating that all narratives about the past are equally valid). Rather, this points to the need for additional and thorough historical research, and for inter-group engagement with the past that goes beyond mutual accusations.

## Jasenovac as a Symbol—Why So Pervasive, Why So Strong?

Our discussion has frequently stressed that Jasenovac functions as an important symbol, a reference point of identity, and a specific framework of collective suffering. In this final section, we would like to reflect upon possible reasons. To understand why Jasenovac has such a strong relevance in Serbian and Croatian collective memory, one has to take into account the complex interplay between historical, political, and social factors. First of all, there are different political groups that continuously make Jasenovac a matter of daily politics, turning it into a "symbol" of political division and a source of their rhetorical capital and social control. The way political influence is exhibited heavily depends on the political leadership of a country and the political climate related to questions of the past. However, we also wanted to emphasize through our presentation that Jasenovac, although always a question of political relevance (if we understand politics as a public concern), cannot be reduced to the particular interests of political elites and parties. Its symbolic status is also (and perhaps primarily) due to the nature and scope of the tragedy that took place there. Like Auschwitz, a camp that became a symbol of the Holocaust on the international level, Jasenovac came to be understood as a place standing for all the horrors on the territory of the NDH. This was not only so for survivors and the families of victims, but also for some scholars. Bogoljub Kočović, one of the leading experts on the victims of WWII on the territory of the former Yugoslavia,

said in an interview that Jasenovac represents for him a symbol of all the concentration camps in the NDH, and when he estimated the number of victims in Jasenovac he included there the victims of other camps in the NDH. This was because he saw Jasenovac as a "main" camp, and all others as "auxiliary" to it.<sup>77</sup> Moreover, as in many other cases, there is a strong relationship between past suffering and group identity. Among Serbs, Jasenovac became not just a symbol of suffering but more specifically the central symbol for the suffering of their own people. To understand why, one has to take into account, besides political factors, the importance of oral testimonies and inter-generational transmission of trauma, and the religious rites and narratives that commemorated Jasenovac as a special place of Serbian martyrdom. 78 Especially after 1984, when it was already possible to speak about suffering in more specific ethnic terms, Jasenovac became a pilgrimage site and, next to Kosovo, the greatest liturgically commemorated tragedy of Serbian people.<sup>79</sup> Furthermore, the symbolic position of Jasenovac is also a result of historiography, which, in turn, has to be perceived against the background of political systems. As was shown earlier, in early Communist Yugoslavia, Jasenovac represented a symbol of the struggle of all Yugoslav people under fascism and was commemorated in line with the official ideology of "brotherhood and unity" which did not leave space for ethnically-based representations— of victims or perpetrators. As Perica writes, in Tito's Yugoslavia, "Jasenovac became a shrine of the civil religion of brotherhood and unity and a memorial to the Partisan struggle in which all ethnic groups and minorities took part and suffered."80 A corollary of such a state ideology in combination with authoritarian rule was the overestimation of the number of people who lost their lives in the anti-fascist struggle, and the censorship of serious scientific research that would put into question official figures. The decline of the Communist state in the late 1980s opened up the possibility of questioning previously established "truths" but also led to a new set of nationalistic interpretations of Jasenovac, supported with historical research of a dubious nature, continuing during the war in the 1990s and later.<sup>81</sup> Jović attempts to show that political control of memory is characteristic not only of authoritarian regimes but also of a period of transition that ensues following the collapse of a totalitarian system. According to him, political leaders in Croatia and Serbia after 1989 opposed the official narratives of Communist times by constructing a new "official memory" through similar non-liberal modes of differentiation between acceptable and unacceptable memories. In his view, a truly pluralist approach that allows heterogeneity of memories in the public sphere seems to have prevailed in Serbia and Croatia only at the beginning of the twenty-first century.82 In that respect, NGOs and civil associations that deal with the issues of past play an increasingly important role in commemoration and representation of traumatic events, including Jasenovac. In turn, those processes were not without effect on the collective memories of people, and Jasenovac continues to appear in the oral testimonies of both younger and older generations of Serbs and Croats.

When thinking about the importance of Jasenovac, one cannot overlook broader cultural tendencies related to collective memory which developed globally since the 1960s in relation to the Holocaust. Appropriating its moral significance for their own cause, both Croatian and Serbian writers, historians, and politicians spoke, and continue to speak, about their own specific "Holocausts," and in that narrative Jasenovac has attained a central role (either as the central place of the "Serbian Holocaust" or as an antipode to the "Croatian Holocaust").83 Besides that, the events around Jasenovac are questions that Croatia and Serbia have to face in bilateral relations, but also before international bodies such as the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance, to which they have to present their efforts in commemoration, education, and research on the Holocaust and the Second World War.84 Briefly speaking, Jasenovac was, and still is, a symbol, but a symbol for different things whose interpretations and meanings were and still are manifold. Its "symbolic" status makes it a place of particular social importance, but it also carries a danger of decontextualization, simplification, and even manipulation. Thus, Jasenovac can be seen as an emblematic case of the question of how to deal with the past in a situation where there are conflicting memories of the same historical events. Although a plurality of memories is inevitable, the differences can manifest themselves in various ways, varying from compatible pluralities to clear opposition. Especially in cases when memories of different groups directly oppose each other, one can see a need for mutual engagement in a "work of memory" (travail de mémoire) which is not a recourse toward relativism, but a recognition of the complexity of the past and the necessity of cooperation of both parties in an attempt to reread it.85

#### Conclusion

In this article, we aimed to discuss the role of Jasenovac in Serbian and Croatian collective memory, its importance in the development of ethnic and national selfunderstanding, in the perception of the Other, and its presence in both official and unofficial narratives of the past. Unlike events that are analyzed from "a historical distance," there are certain places of memory which transgress their historicity and appear as continually present and organically tied to communal life. In the context of Southeastern Europe, in particular in Serbian and Croatian social and public life, such a status of "past that does not pass" belongs to Jasenovac. This was demonstrated through several cross-sectional analyses that illustrate the complexities related to the construction and reconstruction of the history and memory of Jasenovac. In the first instance, this was apparent through the modes in which the political establishment of Communist Yugoslavia manipulated the statistics of the victims of WWII, and presented Jasenovac as a "common tragedy" that epitomized the losses suffered by anti-fascist forces. In this respect, the numerical approximations of human losses represented much more a symbol rather than a scientific

datum, examples of which are certain numbers (such as that of 700,000 Jasenovac victims) that gained almost a sacrosanct status in Yugoslav political circles. The symbolic strength of Jasenovac became prominent again in the 1980s and 1990s, when new national tensions in the former Yugoslavia came to be analyzed through the prism of past conflicts, creating a new set of propagandist activities and manipulations with regard to the number of victims and even visual representations of the Jasenovac tragedy. Our analysis suggests that there were, and still are, conflicting memories and "memory-politics" developed around this place of suffering. The presentation of the recent mutual accusations of genocide by the Republic of Croatia and the Republic of Serbia indicated that Jasenovac played an important role in framing the conflicts of war and of suffering in the period between the years of 1990 and 1995. Although these conflicts occurred fifty years after WWII, their development cannot be properly understood without regard to the ways in which WWII and the Jasenovac tragedy continued to be present in the public memory of the Croatian and Serbian populations. It is also evident that disputes surrounding collective memory still represent a significant obstacle in current international relations between Serbia and Croatia, not only before international fora (e.g., before the international courts) but also in the ways in which these countries publicly observe and commemorate their national holidays. Using the materials from recent social research projects conducted with respondents in Croatia, it was also suggested that these conflicts of memory continue to be deeply embedded in the social reality of both the young and the older generations. The article thus proposes a specific reading of Jasenovac as a form of the "past that does not pass," seeing it as a continuous reference point for understanding collective losses and group suffering among Serbian and Croatian social groups. However, since in this article we relied on research in which participants were non-systematically sampled, there are clear limitations with regard to any generalized conclusions. Further comparative research on the role of Jasenovac in Serbian and Croatian society would be necessary to get a deeper insight into this polemic. For better understanding of the phenomenon, it would be especially important to include oral testimonies from Serbia. Unfortunately, at the moment of analysis there was no comparable database. We hope that similar projects will expand to other regions of the former Yugoslavia.

Finally, our paper attempts to demonstrate that the memory of past suffering is never detached from social and political influences, and that it can be misused to create antagonism and even lead to new suffering. At the same time, we also stress that collective memory cannot be reduced to a construct made under direct political influence. Instead, we aim to show that history, collective memory, and politics stand in an ongoing dynamic interplay in their common concern for the past and its interpretation. In order to illuminate this problem in the Croatian and Serbian context, future research might focus on an analysis of the strategies and mechanisms that societies use to face the challenge of what is frequently described as a process of "coming to terms with the past."

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#### Notes

- 1. Operation Storm was the final decisive battle in the Croatian War of Independence. It led to the reintegration of a large part of Croatian territory that had previously been controlled by the Republic of Serbian Krajina (Republika Srpska Krajina). The main point of controversy here revolves around the question of whether the Croatian political leadership, through this operation, intended to achieve a permanent and forceful removal of the Serb civilian population from this region. One of the most complex and prominent cases brought before the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY)—the case Gotovina et al. (IT-06-90)—focused precisely on the events related to Operation Storm, and was closed in 2012 by the Appeal Chamber's rejection of the Trial Chamber's conclusion that such a joint criminal enterprise took place. The case is available at the following page: International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, "Gotovina et al. (IT-06-90) 'Operation Storm," http://www.icty.org/ case/gotovina/4 (accessed August 4, 2015).
- 2. In original, "zverska akcija s elementima genocida." See: Politika Online, "Nikolić: Zverska akcija s elementima genocida," http://www.politika.rs/rubrike/dogadjaji-dana/Nikolic-Zverska-akcija-selementima-genocida.lt.html (accessed 7 August 2015.).
- 3. "Genocid nad Srbima traje i još prebrojavamo mrtve iz Jasenovca i iz akcije 'Oluja."" See: Demokratska stranaka Srbije, "ГЕНОЦИД НАД СРБИМА JOШ ТРАЈЕ," http://dss.rs/genocid-nadsrbima-jos-traje/ (accessed 6 August 2015).
- 4. Ernst Nolte, "Vergangenheit, die nicht vergehen will: Eine Rede, die geschrieben, aber nicht gehalten werden konnte," Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, June 6, 1986.
  - 5. Henry Rousso, Le syndrome de Vichy: 1944-198-, XXe siècle (Paris: Seuil, 1987).
- 6. Eric Conan and Henry Rousso, Vichy: Un passé qui ne passe pas, Pour une histoire du XXe siècle (Paris: Fayard, 1994).
  - 7. See: Pierre Nora, Les lieux de mémoire (Paris: Gallimard, 1984).
- 8. The first law was enacted on 17 April 1941. It declared that the any attempt to endanger the honor and interest of Croatian nation or the Independent State of Croatia was punishable by death. The same act allows formation of extraordinary courts that consists of three people that can bring immediate verdicts. Two weeks later, on 30 April 1941, three other laws were enacted: "Juridical Provision on Citizenship," "Juridical Provision on Racial Belonging," and "Juridical Provision on Protection of Aryan Blood and Honor of Croatian People." Those laws have firstly deprived all Jews and Roma people of all legal protection and then legitimize their open persecution; see: Nada Kisić Kolanović, NDH i Italija: Političke veze i diplomatski odnosi (Zagreb: Naklada Ljevak, 2001), 60. During the same period, another set of laws was designed to suppress Serbian and Orthodox elements. Based on the aforementioned law on protection of national interest of Croatian people, all "dangerous" elements could be easily persecuted. That category included Serbs, which were seen as hostile adversaries of "Croatiness." See: Filip Škiljan, "Odnos ustaške

vlasti na Kalniku i u potkalničkom kraju prema Srbima, Židovima i Romima 1941. godine.," Cris: časopis Povijesnog društva Križevci 11, no. 1 (2010): 97.

- 9. Unlike Jews and Roma, the Serbian national group represented a very significant portion of the whole population. For that reason, the "Serbian question" required a more complex solution. In June 1941, at an official meeting with the German ambassador in Zagreb, "it was concluded that the Serbian question could be resolved by the mass removal of Serbs to Serbia, mass executions in the field, and deportations to concentration camps. The Government of the Independent State of Croatia, at their own request, were included in the transfer plan, and promised to deport to Serbia 30,000 more Serbs than the number of Slovenes who would be transferred to Croatia from the Third Reich." Jasenovac Memorial Site: Jasenovac Concentration Camp, http://www.jusp-jasenovac.hr/Default.aspx?sid=6793 (accessed 16 January 2016).
- 10. Although Serbs, legally speaking, were not considered non-Aryans, there has been an effort to see them as partially non-Aryans because of alleged miscegenation with various Romanized or Near Eastern groups during the period of Ottoman rule. In state propaganda, they were attributed nomadic and non-civilized characteristics that were socially destructive. See: Nevenko Bartulin, The Racial Idea in the Independent State of Croatia: Origins and Theory, Central and Eastern Europe Regional Perspectives in Global Context 4, 206-8.
- 11. Jasenovac Memorial Site: Camps in the Independent State of Croatia, http://www.jusp-jasenovac. hr/Default.aspx?sid=6877 (accessed 16 January 2016).
- 12. Jasenovac Memorial Site: Jasenovac Camp III (Brickworks), http://www.jusp-jasenovac.hr/ Default.aspx?sid=7291 (accessed 16 January 2016).
- 13. It is important to note that there are still many terminological and numerical inconsistencies among historical works on Jasenovac. See: Mario Kevo, "Počeci jasenovačkog logora i pojmovna (terminološka) problematika Sustava jasenovačkih logora," in Dijalog povjesničara-istoričara, Vol. 9, 573–89 9 (Zagreb: Friedrich-Naumann-Stiftung, 2005), 584.
- 14. Jasenovac Memorial Site: Camps in the Independent State of Croatia (Jasenovac Concentration Camp), http://www.jusp-jasenovac.hr/Default.aspx?sid=6886 (accessed 16 January 2016).
- 15. From May 1945, Stara Gradiška was turned into a prisoner-of-war camp run by the Partisans, and in 1948 it was renamed into the Penitentiary Rehabilitation Center. It functioned until 1990 as a closed prison, not only for serious criminals but also for political prisoners, many among them being students, intellectuals, and opponents of the Communist regime. During the war in the former Yugoslavia, it was once again a place of forced imprisonment and torture, this time under the control of Serbian forces. Jasenovac Memorial Site: Stara Gradiška, http://www.jusp-jasenovac.hr/Default.aspx?sid=6751 (accessed 16 January 2016). For a more detailed report of the Stara Gradiška prison during the war in 1990s, see: United Nations Security Council, "Final Report of the United Nations Commission of Experts Established Pursuant to Security Council Resolution 780 (1992): Annex VIII: Priso Camps," http://mcherifbassiouni. com/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/Yugoslavia-Report-Vol-4-Annex-VIII.pdf (accessed 16 January 2016).
- 16. "U logoru Jasenovac nije bilo plinskih komora, u usporedbi s njemačkim modernim tvornicama smrti ovaj je logor bio tek 'primitivna manufaktura, ručni rad najraznovrsnijih okrutnosti.'' Nataša Mataušić, Jasenovac 1941.-1945: Logor smrti i radni logor, Biblioteka Kameni cvijet (Jasenovac, Zagreb: Javna ustanova Spomen-područje Jasenovac, 2003), 171.
  - 17. Jasenovac Memorial Site: Jasenovac Camp III (Brickworks).
- 18. Jasenovac Memorial Site: List of Individual Victims of Jasenovac Concentration Camp, http:// www.jusp-jasenovac.hr/Default.aspx?sid=6711 (accessed 1 June 2015).
  - 19. Jasenovac Memorial Site: Jasenovac Camp III (Brickworks).
- 20. Jasenovac Memorial Site: The Foundation and Operation of Jasenovac Memorial Site up to 1991, http://www.jusp-jasenovac.hr/Default.aspx?sid=6469 (accessed 15 May 2015).
- 21. According to Geiger, this number was first proclaimed by Josip Broz Tito in 1945, and approximately the same number was later presented by the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia during the Paris Conference on Reparation in 1946. (See: Vladimir Geiger, "Ljudski gubici Hrvatske u Drugom svjetskom ratu koje su prouzročili "okupatori i njihovi pomagači": Brojidbeni pokazatelji (procjene, izračuni, popisi)," Časopis za suvremenu povijest 43, no.3 [2011]). For an additional overview of

different approximations of the number of victims of the Second World War in Jasenovac and Yugoslavia, see: Srđan Bogosavljević, "Drugi svetski rat—žrtve. Jugoslavija.," in Dijalog povjesničara-istoričara, Vol. 4, ed. Hans-Georg Fleck and Igor Graovac, 487–507 (Zagreb: Friedrich-Naumann-Stiftung, 2001).

- 22. In the Report, under the section "How many victims did Jasenovac devour?" [Koliko je žrtava progutao Jasenovac?], it is stated that it is not possible to answer these questions since the Ustaše destroyed all the material that could have statistical indicators. Nevertheless, the Commission states that a number between 500,000 and 600,000, which is based on collected testimonies, "does correspond to reality." That statement, however, is not further warranted. See: Zemaljska komisija Hrvatske za utzvrđivanje zločina okupatora i njihovih pomagača, Zločini u logoru Jasenovac (Zagreb, 1946), http:// digital.nub.rs/pdf/jasenovac.pdf (accessed 3 July 2015), 42-43.
- 23. Geiger: 702-21; Mate Rupić, "Popis žrtava Drugoga svjetskog rata u Hrvatskoj iz 1950. godine," in Dijalog povjesničara-istoričara, Vol. 4, ed. Hans-Georg Fleck and Igor Graovac, 539-45 (Zagreb: Friedrich-Naumann-Stiftung, 2001), 540-44. He refers to the following publications: Milan Bulajić, Ustaški zločini genocida i suđenje Andriji Artukoviću 1986. godine. Vol. 1-4 (Beograd: Rad, 1988/1989); Antun Miletić, Koncentracioni logor Jasenovac 1941-1945: Dokumenta. Vol. 1-2 (Beograd: Narodna knjiga, 1986/1987).
- 24. David B. MacDonald, Balkan Holocausts? Serbian and Croatian Victim-centred Propaganda and the War in Yugoslavia (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), 162.
  - 25. Bogoljub Kočović, Žrtve Drugog svetskog rata u Jugoslaviji (London: Naše delo, 1985).
- 26. Vladimir Žerjavić, Gubici stanovništva Jugoslavije u drugom svjetskom ratu (Zagreb: Jugoslovensko viktimološko društvo, 1989).
  - 27. See also: MacDonald, Balkan Holocausts?, 162.
  - 28. Žerjavić, Gubici stanovništva Jugoslavije u drugom svjetskom ratu, 179-82.
- 29. Bogoljub Kočović, "Još jednom o žrtvama Drugog svjetskog rata, genocidu i Jasenovcu," Hrvatska ljevica 5, no. 10 (1998): 36.
- 30. See: Ozren Žunec, Goli život I (Demetra, 2007), 393-95. In footnote 710, Žunec also quotes historian Slavko Goldstein who suggests three principal reasons for manipulation of the numbers of victims of the Jasenovac concentration camp: a "certain disease of victimhood" (svojevrsna bolest zrtvomanije) which is present among different groups in these territories, painful emotions and feelings among the Serbian population that their suffering during the WWII was not recognized enough, and the thesis about the genocidal nature of Croats which was in the 1980s advocated by certain Serbian public figures, such as Belgrade academician Vasilje Krestić. See: ibid., 400.
- 31. Wolfgang Hoepken, "War, Memory, and Education in a Fragmented Society: the Case of Yugoslavia," East European Politics & Societies 13, no. 1 (1998).
  - 32. Ibid., 210.
  - 33. Ibid., 207-11.
- 34. "u zločinu genocida počinjenom od hrvatskih ultranacionalista srpska nacija izgubila preko dva milijuna nedužnih žrtava samo zato što su bili Srbi." Žunec, Goli život I, 399–400.
- 35. "Mitski karakter ove konstrukcije nije tek u očitom iskrivljavanju istine (to ni inače nije glavna razlikovna značajka mita) nego u njenoj transformaciji u ekskluzivni narativ jedne etničke zajednice, pri čemu je unaprijed odrečena mogućnost da u tom narativu participiraju i druge zajednice." ibid., 401.
- 36. Following the fall of the Axis powers, a great number of Ustashe forces together with the Croatian Home Guard (Domobrani), accompanied by thousands of civilians, surrendered themselves to the British Army near the Austrian city of Bleiburg. The British decision was not to intervene, and they directed prisoners to the Yugoslav Army. Some of the prisoners were killed near Bleiburg, but most of them died during the forced marches that followed. While the number of soldiers and civilians who were killed or died of starvation and abuse remains controversial, according to some estimates the number of victims was in the tens of thousands. This tragedy in Croatian memory became known as the Bleiburg tragedy or sometimes "the Way of the Cross" (Križni put).
  - 37. Hoepken: "War, Memory, and Education in a Fragmented Society," 207-15.

- 38. See the debate in the international journal East European Politics & Societies that stretched over three years. See: Ljubo Boban, "Notes and Comments: Jasenovac and the Manipulation of History," East European Politics & Societies 4, no. 3 (1990); Ljubo Boban, "Still More Balance on Jasenovac and the Manipulation of History," East European Politics & Societies 6, no.2 (1992); Anto Knežević, "Some Questions about a 'Balanced' Discussion," East European Politics & Societies 7, no. 1 (1992); Robert M. Hayden, "Balancing Discussion of Jasenovac and the Manipulation of History," East European Politics & Societies 6, no. 2 (1992); Robert M. Hayden, "Notes and Comments: On Unbalanced Criticism," East European Politics & Societies 7, no. 3 (1993).
- 39. E.g., in his analysis of Serbian war-propaganda led by Slobodan Milošević, Bruckner (2000), 215-27 sees the narrative of victimhood as a way of securing a moral high ground that can be used as a protection from external criticism and as a distraction from new crimes that were underway. See: Pascal Bruckner, The Temptation of Innocence: Living in the Age of Entitlement (New York: Algora, 2000).
  - 40. MacDonald, Balkan Holocausts?, 177–78.
- 41. International Court of Justice, "Application of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (Croatia v. Serbia): Preliminary objections: Summary of the Judgment of 18 November 2008," http://www.icj-cij.org/docket/files/118/14913.pdf (accessed 26 January 2015).
- 42. International Court of Justice, "Press Release: Application of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (Croatia v. Serbia)," http://www.icj-cij.org/docket/ files/118/15847.pdf (accessed 26 January 2015).
- 43. The complete written proceedings can be found on the following page: International Court of Justice, "Application of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (Croatia v. Serbia): Written Proceedings," http://www.icj-cij.org/docket/index.php?p1=3&p2=3&k=73& case=118&code=cry&p3=1 (accessed 26 January 2015).
- 44. Republic of Croatia, "Case Concerning the Application of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (Croatia v. Serbia): Memorial of the Republic of Croatia," http:// www.icj-cij.org/docket/files/118/18172.pdf (accessed 25 January 2015), 38–39.
  - 45. Ibid., 39.
- 46. C.f. Annex 31, Witness Statement of K. M.: "I was imprisoned on 2nd September 1991 . . . on Sunday 6th October 1991 at 1300 hrs, taken by bus in which there was 27 prisoners, to Begejci. . . . During the journey, we had to sit facing the front side, and if someone moved, he would get beaten. All the way, they threatened us that we were going to the new Jasenovac, that they would kill us." Quoted from: Republic of Croatia, "Case Concerning the Application of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (Croatia v. Serbia): Memorial of the Republic of Croatia," http:// www.icj-cij.org/docket/files/118/18174.pdf (accessed 25 February 2015), 107.
- 47. See the newspaper article "Nuclear Bomb in Hand" ("Atomska bomba u ruci"), Pobjeda, 27 September 1991: "Don't fool yourself into thinking that a truce of some kind can be signed and that the Serbian people in Krajina can go through another genocide. There will be no more Jasenovac! We will not be sheep. We will be, most of all, wolves!" Quoted from: Republic of Croatia, "Case Concerning the Application of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (Croatia v. Serbia): Memorial of the Republic of Croatia," http://www.icj-cij.org/docket/files/118/18182.pdf (accessed 25 January 2015), 98.
- 48. Republic of Serbia, "Case Concerning the Application of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (Croatia v. Serbia): Counter-Memorial Submitted by the Republic of Serbia," http://www.icj-cij.org/docket/files/118/18188.pdf (accessed 25 January 2015), 145.
  - 49. Ibid.
  - 50. Ibid., 144.
- 51. It is worth mentioning that the quoted reference to Yad Vashem's source has meanwhile been removed. Current references to Jasenovac are not unified. While the Dutch version of the Encyclopedia of the Holocaust still mentions about 600,000 victims, Spanish version mentions "hundreds of thousands," while references in English operate only with a notion of "many thousands." For Dutch: Robert Rozett and Shmuel Spector, "Jasenovac: Beknopte encyclopedie van de Holocaust,"

http://www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/education/languages/dutch/encyclopedia/32.asp (accessed 20 January 2015). For Spanish: Efraim Zadoff, "Jasenovac: SHOA - Enciclopedia del Holocausto, Yad Vashem y E.D.Z. Nativ Ediciones, Jerusalen 2004.," http://www.yadvashem.org/yv/es/holocaust/encyclopedia/70.asp (accessed 20 January 2015). For English: Yad Vashem, "Jasenovac: The Holocaust Resource http://www.yadvashem.org/odot\_pdf/Microsoft%20Word%20-%206358.pdf (accessed 20 January 2015).

- 52. The Memorandum of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts (SANU) first appeared in a draft version, which was leaked before its finalization and published in the Serbian newspaper Večernje novosti on 24-25 September 1986. After publication, the document was criticized from the side of the Communist government in Serbia (at the time led by Ivan Stambolić). The Draft was condemned as a nationalistic document, and SANU came under pressure to distance itself from it. Since the Memorandum was not finalized, the SANU saw it as a non-authorized document, and never officially renounced it. After Slobodan Milošević seized power in Serbia in 1987, criticism of the Memorandum declined, and the general political situation drastically changed. In the following years, there were many ideological overlaps between the increasingly nationalist Serbian regime, state-controlled media, and some leading members of the SANU. For a detailed chronology and criticism of the Memorandum, see: Olivera Milosavljević, "The Abuse of the Authority of Science," in The Road to War in Serbia: Trauma and Catharsis, ed. Nebojša Popov, 274–302 (Budapest, New York: Central European University Press, 2000). In their later official document, titled "Memorandum of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts. Answer to Criticism," from 1995, SANU aimed to distance themselves from the accusations of nationalism and the direct link with Serbia's official policy and Slobodan Milošević. Nevertheless, the opening text repeats the main positions from the original draft document emphasizing the "disadvantaged position of the Serbs and the Serbian nation in Yugoslavia" (p. 12), where "Croats and Slovenes were the supreme arbiters on all matters" (p. 10), while "Serbia had been dispossessed of its attributes of statehood" (p. 10), and had "subjugated status" (p. 9), and stating that the autonomy of Kosovo was "tantamount to a return to the time of the Ottoman Empire" (p. 11). Moreover, speaking about the situation in 1990s, the document claims that the Serbs in Croatia "were perfidiously stripped one by one of their national, political, cultural, religious, civil and human rights" (p. 10), that the Muslim nation was "artificially created" (p. 10), and suggesting that the genocide of Serbs in Bosnia and Herzegovina was repeated again after the Second World War (p. 11). Referring to the draft version, it is stated that "first portion of the text, up to about page 30 [out of 74], can be considered to have been approved by the [SANU appointed] Committee" while "several amendments to the text from pages 30 to 74 never had a chance to be considered." (p. 15). See: Kosta Mihailović, Vasilije Krestić, and Miroslav Pantić, eds., Memorandum of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts: Answers to criticisms (Belgrade: Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts, 1995).
- 53. Republic of Croatia, "Case Concerning the Application of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (Croatia v. Serbia): Reply of the Republic of Croatia; Volume 1," http://www.icj-cij.org/docket/files/118/18198.pdf (accessed 25 January 2015), 49-52.
  - 54. Ibid., 51 (quoted with emphasis).
  - 55. Ibid., 50-51.
- 56. HRT vijesti, "Vesna Crnić-Grotić: Tužba za genocid bila je politička odluka," http://vijesti.hrt. hr/271358/intervju-tjedna-hrvatskog-radija-vesna-crnic-grotic (accessed 15 January 2016).
- 57. Al Jazeera, "Hrvatska optužila Srbiju za plansku agresiju," http://balkans.aljazeera.net/vijesti/ hrvatska-optuzila-srbiju-za-plansku-agresiju (accessed 15 January 2016).
- 58. "Presuda je veoma bitna i za buduće generacije. Pokazatće im kut s kojeg trebaju promatrati što se sve na ovim prostorima događalo jer se trenutno pokušava izjednačiti krivnja i na taj način se ne bi znala u budućnosti istina. Presuda je važna u povijesnom smislu." Quoted from: HRT vijesti, "Kako će presuda utjecati na odnose Hrvatske i Srbije?," http://vijesti.hrt.hr/270876/presuda-je-povijesna-oznacitce-tko-je-agresor-a-tko-zrtva (accessed 15 January 2016).
- 59. "Bit će posljedica i jedna od njih bit će kako buduće generacije vide događaje. Sudski procesi i presude bit će dio materijala iz kojeg će formirati svoje stajališta', rekao je Nice." Quoted from: Slobodna Dalmacija, "Drugi dan u Haagu: 'JNA je znala za genocidnu namjeru paravojnih skupina'; Hartmann:

Jasno je kako će sud presuditi da Srbija nije kriva," http://www.slobodnadalmacija.hr/Prilozi/Automoto/ tabid/90/articleType/ArticleView/articleId/237812/Default.aspx (accessed 15 January 2016).

- 60. The difference between collective memory and history, and conversely their relation to political influence, is the subject of much debate in memory studies. Without attempting to enter an elaborate discussion, we would like to emphasize that we take a moderate constructivist stance that sees both history and collective memory as social constructs that are, albeit to different degrees and in different ways, dependent on various social factors. We also acknowledge that history (as a scientific discipline connected with particular academic institutions, methodologies and authorities) does not stand on the same epistemological level as collective memory, which is by definition a shared construct without clearly defined authoritative centers. Thus, when speaking about collective memory, it is helpful to see it as a "social construction constituted through a multiplicity of circulating sign forms, with interpretations shared by some social actors and institutions and contested by others in response to heterogeneous positions in a hierarchical social field in which representations of the past are mediated through concerns of the present." Brigittine M. French, "The Semiotics of Collective Memories," Annual Review of Anthropology 41, no. 1 (2012): 340. Finally, in our view, comparisons between history and collective memory should always take into account that they are phenomena of a different nature. When comparisons are made, it would be more helpful to make a distinction between, on one hand, two scientific fields of history and collective memory studies, and on the other, between collective memory and oral history.
- 61. Ruiz Jiménez and José Ángel, "Las sombras de la barbarie: Confrontación de memorias colectivas en los países exyugoslavos," Balkania, no. 3 (2012): 127-41.
- 62. For a good analysis of the presence of Jasenovac in Serbian understanding of collective suffering and victimhood, see: Jovan Byford, "When I say 'The Holocaust,' I mean 'Jasenovac," East European Jewish Affairs 37, no. 1 (2007); Jovan Byford, "Remembering Jasenovac: Survivor Testimonies and the Cultural Dimension of Bearing Witness," Holocaust and Genocide Studies 28, no.1 (2014); Jovan Byford, Potiskivanje i poricanje antisemitizma: Sećanje na vladiku Nikolaja Velimirovića u savremenoj srpskoj pravoslavnoj kulturi (Beograd: Helsinški odbor za ljudska prava u Srbiji, 2005).
- 63. Benjamin Perasović and Danijel Vojak, eds., "MYPLACE (Memory, Youth, Political Legacy And Civic Engagement): Country based reports on historical discourse production as manifested in sites of memory (Croatia) (2012)," http://www.fp7-myplace.eu/documents/Partner%2013%20-%20Croatia\_ deliverable 2 1 submission.pdf (accessed 28 February 2015), 49.
- 64. Vjeran Pavlaković, "Komemorativna kultura Bleiburga, 1990–2009," in Kultura sjećanja: 1945: Povijesni lomovi i svladavanje prošlosti, 167-97 (Zagreb: Disput, 2009), 189.
- 65. See: Croatian Memories, "About the Project," http://www.croatianmemories.org/en/about-theproject/ (accessed 1 February 2016).
- 66. Milan Tadić, http://www.croatianmemories.org/en/video-archive/milan-tadic (accessed 1 July 2015), 00:07:00-00:08:35.
  - 67. Ibid., 00:07:46-00:08:00.
  - 68. Ibid., 00:10:56-00:11:15.
- 69. See the testimony of Martin Čičin Šain, http://www.croatianmemories.org/en/video-archive/martin-cicin-sain/ (accessed 3 July 2015), 00:08:23-00:11:34.
- 70. Vesna Bosanac, http://www.croatianmemories.org/en/video-archive/vesna-bosanac, 00:40:13-00:41:25.
- 71. Vjeran Pirišić, http://www.croatianmemories.org/en/video-archive/vjeran-pirsic/ (accessed 1 June 2015), 00:21:30-00:23:00.
- 72. fra Josip Sopta, http://www.croatianmemories.org/en/video-archive/fra-josip-sopta (accessed 1 July 2015), 00:32:20-00:36:00.
- 73. Željko Obradović, http://www.croatianmemories.org/en/video-archive/zeljko-obradović (accessed 1 July 2015), 00:15:30-00:16:15.
- 74. Marie-Claire Lavabre, Le fil rouge: Sociologie de la mémoire communiste (Paris: Presses de la Fondation nationale des sciences politiques, 1994); Quoted in: Valérie Rosoux, "De l'ambivalence de la

mémoire au lendemain d'un conflit," in Questions d'histoire contemporaine: Conflits, mémoires et identités, ed. Laurence van Ypersele, 203–22, Quadrige. Manuels (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 2006).

- 75. Ibid., 219.
- 76. French, "Semiotics of Collective Memories," 340.
- 77. Kočović: "Još jednom o žrtvama Drugog svjetskog rata, genocidu i Jasenovcu," 36.
- 78. See: Byford, "When I say 'The Holocaust"; also Byford, "Remembering Jasenovac." The public debate around Jasenovac in Croatia is also by no means freed from religious connotations. One of the most recent debates was stirred up by an interview in which the head of the Archdiocese Archives in Zagreb claimed that Jasenovac was not an extermination camp but merely a labor and temporary transit camp. In the same interview, he added that there was no proof of mass executions in Jasenovac during WWII but that there are indications of post-war executions practiced by the Communists. See: HR Svijet, "Dr. Stjepan Razum: Nema dokaza za masovne ustaške zločine u Jasenovcu, ali ima za partizanske!," http://hrsvijet.net/index.php?option=com content&view=article&id=23167:dr-stjepan-razum-nemadokaza-za-masovne-ustake-zloine-u-jasenovcu-ali-ima-za-partizanske&catid=1:politika&Itemid=9 (accessed 5 August 2013).
- 79. Vjekoslav Perica, Balkan Idols: Religion and Nationalism in Yugoslav States, Religion and global politics (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 148–50.
  - 80. Ibid., 148.
- 81. As was shown earlier, from the 1980s, Jasenovac was directly used as a part of inflammatory propaganda against Croatia, and certain highly ranked Serbian scientists were instrumental in this effort. In the Croatian context, nationalistic readings are tied to revisionist tendencies among certain authors that try to undermine the nature of the camp and the scope of the historical tragedy. For further analysis and criticism of revision in Croatia, see: Ivo Goldstein and Goran Hutinec, "Neki aspekti revizionizma u hrvatskoj historiografiji devedesetih godina XX stoljeća—motivi, metode i odjeci," in Revizija prošlosti na prostorima bivše Jugoslavije: Zbornik radova, ed. Vera Katz, 187-210, Posebna izdanja knj. 4 (Sarajevo: Institut za istoriju, 2007).
- 82. Dejan Jović, "Official Memories' in Post-Authoritarianism: An Analytical Framework," Journal of Southern Europe and the Balkans 6, no. 2 (2004): 98-107.
- 83. Vjeran Pavlaković in Kultura sjećanja, 179-89; David B. MacDonald, Identity Politics in the Age of Genocide: The Holocaust and Historical Representation (London: Routledge, 2008), 165-94; Perica, Balkan Idols, 147; Byford, "When I say 'The Holocaust"; Byford, "Remembering Jasenovac"; MacDonald, Balkan Holocausts?
- 84. Formerly known as the International Task Force for International Cooperation on Holocaust Education, Remembrance, and Research. Croatia became a member of this organization in 2005, while Serbia was admitted to full membership in 2011.
  - 85. Valérie Rosoux in Questions d'histoire contemporaine, 217–18.

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