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Jasenovac, the Camp and its Historical and Moral Meaning

Summary: The paper gives an overview and stages of the development of the Ustasha concentration camp Jasenovac, during the existence of the "Independent State of Croatia" (ISC) in World War II. The fact is emphasized that the policy of the "Final solution" (for Jews and Roma, and in Croatia for Serbs as well), which was implemented by Nazi Germany, chronologically looking, was actually first applied in the ISC, and then in Germany. According to several criteria, the comparison is made between the concentration camps Auschwitz and Jasenovac, while particularly insisting on the brutality in the Ustasha killing of the victims in Jasenovac.

Keywords: concentration camps, "Independent State of Croatia", Nazis, Ustasha, World War II

Introduction

"The Jasenovac camp was the lowest level to which mankind could fall", said the survivor Đorđe Miliša and he was certainly right. The cruelty that prevailed in the Jasenovac camp makes it to a hell on earth. Yechiel Dinurs, also known as Ka.Tzetnik, said about another hell on earth, the Auschwitz camp complex and the concentration and extermination camp Auschwitz-Birkenau, that it was „another planet", where normal, human values were turned upside down (Gutman & Berenbaum, 1994). We could say the same about the Jasenovac camp even if its reality in some central points differs from Auschwitz's reality. In order to give some insight in the historical and moral meaning of the Jasenovac camp, I will conduct a detailed comparison

between Jasenovac and the much more known Auschwitz. By analyzing the differences and the similarity between the two camps, we can draw a clearer picture of what the existence of Jasenovac means historically and what it means for us today. In order to be able to analyze the essence and the character of the Jasenovac camp and its historical and moral meaning, I will first have to refer to the historical development of the camp. How was it established and which developments in the Ustasha State led to its existence? After that I will start with the thorough comparison with Auschwitz.

The establishment of the camp

Ruth Elias, a survivor of Theresienstadt, used to say: "If you who were not there in Auschwitz and did not

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experience it on your own body, will never be able to reconstruct even one second of what we underwent in that Hell called Auschwitz” (Długoborski & Piper, 2000).

Dorđe Miliša, another survivor of Jasenovac, wrote in his book entitled “Jasenovac - Hell”: “Everything that one could write about Jasenovac camp could only be a pale picture of Jasenovac and what it was, because no one could ever overdo it when writing about Jasenovac and what happened there. The Jasenovac camp was the lowest level to which mankind could fall” (Miliša, 1945).

12 | Even if both, Elias and Miliša are right when they say that every word we write about both Auschwitz or Jasenovac, cannot make us understand the true reality of the camps, the suffering of the prisoners and the agony of those murdered, it is still important to convey all the historic fact about the camps, their background and the history of their establishment, their functioning and their end.

The establishment of the concentration camps in the territories of the Independent State of Croatia (ISC) was closely connected to the increased spreading of terror by the Ustasha. As a consequence of the mass arrests of Serbs, Jews, Roma and undesirable Croats, the Ustashes’ needs for the creation of camps grew. The camps quickly became the places of internment and incarceration of all persons deemed enemies of the Ustasha regime (Greif, 2020a).

In the beginning the creation of the camps and their supervision was in the hands of the Ustasha Supervisory Agency [Ustaška nadzorna služba,

UNS], headed by Eugen Kvaternik. He was the director of the Directorate for Public Order and Security [Ravnateljstvo za javni red i sigurnost, RAVSIGUR], established in early May 1941, as a special department of the Ministry of the Interior (Greif, 2020a). UNS and RAVSIGUR were given the authority to create camps and send prisoners to them. When in early 1943 the UNS was dissolved, the RAVSIGUR remained the only agency with such authorities.

Eugen Kvaternik was given jurisdiction over “all police agencies, armouries, local commands and all state self-government bodies”^[2]. Jozo Tomašević says that “never before in history were the Croats exposed to such administrative, police and legal brutality and abuse as during the Ustasha regime” (Tomašević, 2001, p. 300). Dido Kvaternik was the son of Ustasha leader Slavko Kvaternik and took part in the assassination attempt at King Alexander in Zagreb. At the end of the war he escaped to Argentina, where he died in a car accident.

In a Gestapo report to Heinrich Himmler of February 17, 1942 it is stated that that very year there was a greater activity of groups which

“include the atrocities of the Ustasha units in Croatia against the Orthodox population. The Ustashes commit their acts of bestiality not only on adult men, but also on the helpless old, women and children. The number of Orthodox who the Croats massacred and sadistically tortured to death reaches about three hundred thousand.”^[3]

[2] In UNS, there was a special Department No. III which directly managed the concentration camps (see *The Rise of the State of Croatia*, 1942).

[3] <http://dictionnaire.sensagent.leparisien.fr/Bleiburg%massacre/en-en>, (accessed on December 1, 2016)

The establishment of the camps went through several phases. The first phase was the establishment of the so-called “collection sites” [“sabirališta”] also called collection camps, deportation camps. These were places where the arrested, mostly Serbs, were kept temporarily. They were then deported further from there. These „collection sites” were located all across the ISC. The most famous and largest were those in Caprag near Sisak, in Bjelovar and Slavonska Požega.

The second phase, which ran along simultaneously with the first, included the building of concentration camps, the well-known “death

camps” (Greif, 2021). The first camp of this type was “Danica” near Koprivnica. This was followed by Jadovno near Gospić, Stara Gradiška, Jasenovac, the Slana and Metajna camps on the island of Pag,^[4] Kruščica, Loborgrad,^[5] Đakovo,^[6] Tenja,^[7] Jastrebarsko,^[8] Kerestinec, Lepoglava, Sisak,^[9] Caprag, Gornja Rijeka, Feričanci, Vinkovci, Slavonska Požega, Bjelovar and others. In all the ISC there were 24 camps in total.

The Jadovno camp near Gospić was the first in which mass murder of Serbs and Jews took place. Daily the Ustahas brought prisoners in large groups to Gospić and then to Jadovno, where they

[4] In the summer of 1941, there was a concentration camp for Serbs and Jews on the island of Pag. There prisoners from the collection camp in Gospić were brought. Mass killings were conducted there; when the camp was disbanded in the middle of August, around 3000 Serbs were shipped to Jadovno and the last group of around 450 Jews to Kruščica (women), Jadovno and Jasenovac (men). The camp in Kruščica, near Travnik, existed in around the same period and in it were imprisoned mostly women and children, the majority of them Jews.

[5] From September 1941 to autumn 1942 there was a concentration camp in Loborgrad, near Zlatar Bistrica in the Croatian Zagorje. Besides a number of Serbian women, around 1300 Jewish women and children were imprisoned, having been brought there from Kruščica.

[6] In December 1941 a camp was established in Đakovo, intended mainly for Jewish women and children of whom there were about 3000. A large number of them were executed. In July 1942 the camp was disbanded, and the remaining prisoners were taken to Jasenovac.

[7] In June 1942 a temporary camp called Tenja was established in Osijek. In it almost all the remaining Jews arrested in Osijek and other places in Slavonia. The camp held around 3000 people. Their liquidation began in mid-August, mostly in Jasenovac.

[8] The Jastrebarsko concentration camp was built near the town of Jastrebarsko. It was in operation during 1942. The worst aspect of this place was that it was a camp for children, mostly those captured in Kozara and other parts of the ISC. The barracks abandoned by the Italian army, the castle of the counts of Erdödy and a Franciscan monastery where the first transports of children from the Stara Gradiška camp arrived in 1942. They were followed by children from the camp farms in Jablanac and Mlaka. To the village of Rijeka, three kilometers away from Jastrebarsko around 2000 children were brought. In both camps there were around 3,336 children). The children were loaded onto trains and transported to the mentioned locations where their hair was cut and they were dressed in uniforms. They slept in sheds on straw and some of them were included in the camp organization (see <http://www.jusp-jasenovac.hr/>).

[9] At the beginning of August 1942, the camp in Sisak was established. Serbs from the Kozara region, captured after the German-Ustasha offensive, were brought there. These were mostly the elderly, women and children. This camp had a special cap for children, who were separated from their parents. Groups of elderly prisoners were transported to Jasenovac and Stara Gradiška.

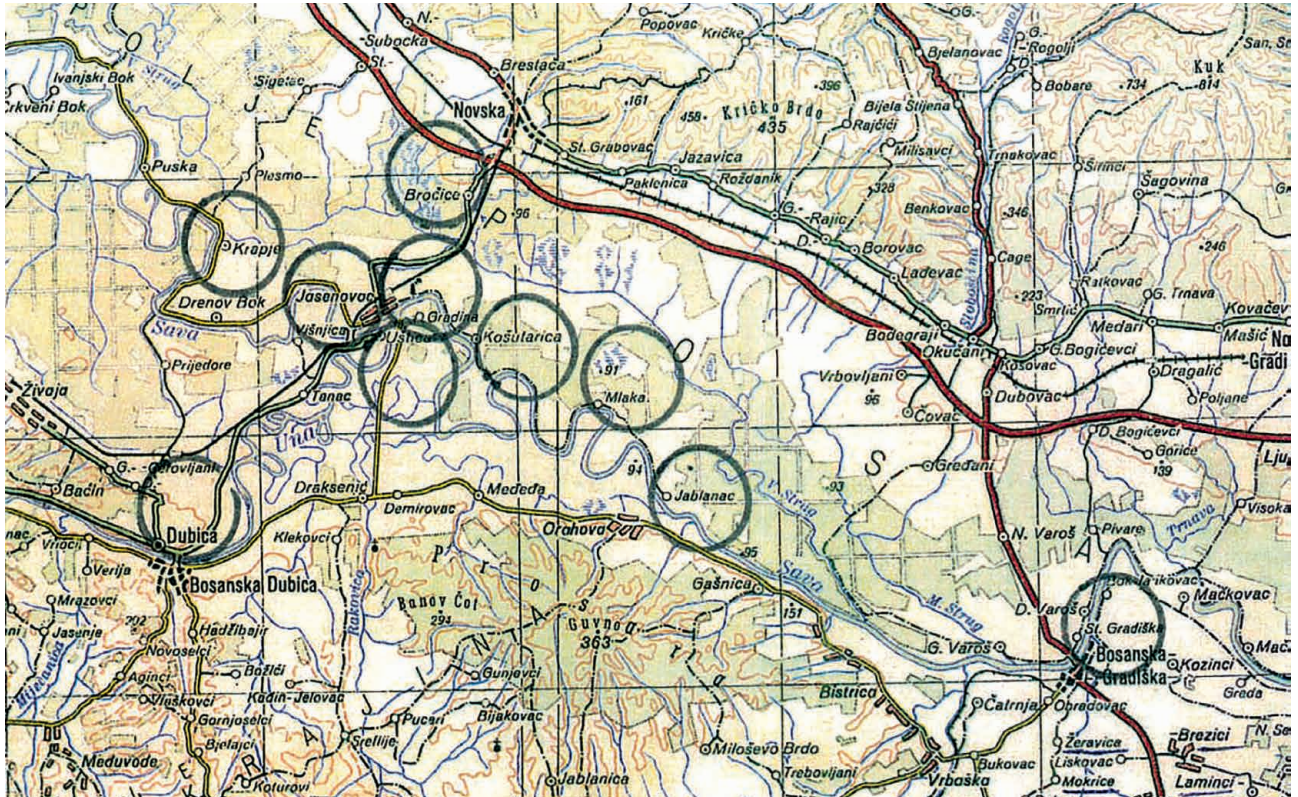


Photo 1: Map of the Jasenovac camp system with an area of 240 km²

Source: Institute of Military Geography, Belgrade, Serbia.

Taken, with the permission of the author, from the book *Jasenovac, Auschwitz of the Balkans* by Gideon Greif (Teper LTD, Garey Tikva, Israel, 2021)

were killed and thrown into deep ravines. Amongst the killed were many communists. According to available data, around 35 000 people were killed in Jadovno. The camp was closed in August 1941 (see Zatezalo, 2007; Israeli, 2013; Mojzes, 2011).

The Usthas organized “a whole range of different collection centres and camps for different purposes” (Peršen, 1952, p. 29). Although it was not until January 25, 1941 that the Legal Decree on the Transportation of Undesirable and Dangerous Persons to Forced Internment in Collection and

Labour Camps (Peršen, 1952, pp. 19-20) was passed, many of the “death camps” were already established and even disbanded (Slana and Metajna on the island of Pag, Danica in Koprivnica, Jadovno near Gospić, Kruščica near Travnik).

Due to the Italian reoccupation of the demilitarized zone and the growth of the popular uprising (started on August 5, 1941) the Usthas were forced to quickly disband the camps in Gospić (Jadovno) and Pag (Slana). The last group of inmates that the Usthas did not manage to kill were transported on

19, 20 and 21 August 1941, via Jastrebarsko, to the new camp of Jasenovac, while some were brought to Kruščica near Travnik (see Miletić, 1986, p. 20; Lengel-Krizman, 1996a, pp. 91–102; Lengel-Krizman, 1996b, pp. 247–256; Dizdar, 1990).

The establishment of the first camps was directly managed by Eugen Dido Kvaternik, while their director was Mijo Babić – Giovanni, who after his death was succeeded by Vjekoslav Luburić Maks, who with a few breaks remained in the position until the end of the existence of the ISC. Vjekoslav Luburić is the person directly responsible for the organization of the Jasenovac camps (Peršen, 1952, p. 44).

The Jasenovac camp began to operate in the summer of 1941, when the Ustasha brought the first groups of Serbs and Jews to the camp that was later named Camp no. 5 (Greif, 2021). For the above-mentioned reasons, the camp had to grow quickly, and soon Camp no. 2 was created. The exact timeline of the creation of the various Jasenovac camps (1 and 2) varies with different authors and therefore remains a question which should be adequately researched. From November 1941 the camp grew considerably, Camp no. 3 was established, followed by Camp no. 4). In the camp, “undesirables” were imprisoned, regardless of their faith. This was also a feature of the Stara Gradiška camp. In Stara Gradiška and Jastrebarsko in particular, women and children were slaughtered.

The Ustasha Jasenovac death camp was built to receive 3000 prisoners at the most but the headquarters of Poglavnik Ante Pavelić in Zagreb did not share this view and on April 27, 1942 they issued the order to all local institutions “that Jasenovac can receive an unlimited number of prisoners”

(McCormick, 2017). The Jasenovac camp complex covered an area of 240 square kilometers, from Krapje – 12 kilometers west of Jasenovac, and the Dubički (Baćinski) limekilns – some twenty kilometers upstream of the Una River to Stara Gradiška – about thirty kilometers east, and from Strug in the north to the Draksenić-Bistrica line in the south (Mirković, 1980, p. 7).

The Jasenovac concentration camp – unlike the temporary, improvised camps established shortly after the creation of the ISC – was the first systematically built concentration camp and the largest death site on the territories of occupied Yugoslavia (Barbić, 1987, p. 67). Due to the Italian demands to reoccupy Zone B, which contained the Gospić group of camps (Gospić, Jadovno, Pag), the ISC had to remove its armed forces and disband these concentration camps. Therefore, what was required was the security of a space which could be used for the intended purposes: the extermination of a portion of the population, but also the use of slave labour. Research conducted up to this date, published historiographic papers and memoirs have not yet provided us with the answer why the camp was established precisely in Jasenovac. Nevertheless, it must be noted that the geographical layout of Jasenovac was favourable as it was connected by land, railway and river routes and was relatively close to Zagreb (around 100 kilometers), it was surrounded by water (the rivers Sava, Una and Veliki Strug), which protected the settlements and the camp from potential attacks, while on the other side there were marshlands – Lonjsko and Mokro. The old, incomplete plans for draining the marshes and land improvement provided the Ustashas with a ruse with which to deceive the public and conceal

the true purposes of the building of camps in the area. For this reason, the Directorate of Land Improvement and Regulatory Works was established.

Jasenovac is the first Ustasha camp that operated following Nazi principles (Greif, 2021). Maks Luburić, the Ustasha official managing the camp, had spent some time in Germany, as a guest of the Gestapo in early October of 1941. On that occasion he visited several German concentration camps, and on return to the ISC he reorganized the existing camps and created new ones, following the German model.^[10] In Jasenovac, the “Jasenovac Collective Camps Command” is formed.

The system of Jasenovac camps included the camps numbered 1 to 5, as well as other camp facilities and locations (killing grounds, farms, etc.) (Greif, 2021). “Jasenovac Camp no. 1” was near the village of Krapje, 12 kilometers upstream (west) of Jasenovac. The first transports were brought to two sheds on stilts in the fenced area near the forest Gornja Krndija, near Strug, between the village of Krapje (where the later Officers’ School was established) and Plesmo.^[11]

“Jasenovac Camp no. 2”, called “the Forest”, was in the area of the Bročke Jasenine, on the road Jasenovac – Bročice, along the edge of the Donja Krndija forest. The area enclosed with wire contained three sheds. Due to the autumn flooding,

in November 1941 the Ustashes destroyed Camps 1 and 2 and most of their inmates. The remainder were sent to the industrial complex of the Bačić and Partner company (1.5 kilometers along the Sava from the centre of Jasenovac), where “Jasenovac Camp no. 3” called the Brick Factory was established.^[12]

In the town of Jasenovac itself there was an industrial building called the “Tannery” [Kožara], which became Camp no. 4. The Camp in Stara Gradiška in some documents is called the “Command of the Stara Gradiška Collection Camp”, while in others it is referred to as Camp no. 5 in the Jasenovac camp complex (Miletić, 1986, p. 23). Besides the official name “Ustasha Defense / Command of the Jasenovac Collection Camps”, or “Command of the Jasenovac Collection Camps”, other names were used: “Concentration Camp Jasenovac” and “Collection and Labour Camp Jasenovac” (Miletić, 1986, pp. 20-21).

The camps of the Ustasha Supervisory Agency (UNS), although they were called collection and labour camps, were in fact extermination camps (*Vernichtungslager*). This is particularly evident in the example of the Jasenovac group of camps, while before these were established, the Gospić group of camps did not even bear the name “labour camps”. The Command of the Jasenovac Collection

[10] “The plans for the camps were made by captain Luburić while he was still an émigré. After visiting the German camps, they were improved”. (Excerpt from the Report of Siegfried Kasche of February 1942 to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Reich on the situation in the Jasenovac concentration camp (see Barbić, 1986, str. 170).

[11] Plesmo – Croatian village in which the Communist Party of Yugoslavia existed as far back as 1935, and whose population joined en masse the People’s Liberation Struggle; even before the war it was called “Little Moscow”.

[12] The front gate had a large sign with the inscription “Labor Service/Ustasha Defense/Collection Camp no. 3”, and a large letter U (the Ustasha sign) above which were the words “All for the Poglavnik” [“Sve za Poglavnika”].



Photo 2: Entrance gate to Jasenovac

Photo documentation Donja Gradina Memorial Site. Taken, with the permission of the author, from the book *Jasenovac, Auschwitz of the Balkans* by Gideon Greif (Teper LTD, Garey Tikva, Israel, 2021)

Camps also managed at certain times the camps at Đakovo^[13], Lepoglava, as well as their respective farms, and besides the farms near the camps (Mlaka, Jablanac, Bistrica, Gredani, etc.) there were also outposts in Feričanci and Obradovci (see Zečević-Popović, pp. 245-247; Danon, p. 68)

The guarding of the Jasenovac camps was performed by the units of the Ustasha Defense Department 3 (Department for Camps) which had been made into a separate military formation. The members of the Ustasha Defense, besides directly securing the camp and performing guard duties, also guarded the prisoners who were working outside the camp perimeters and took part in individual and mass liquidations, as well as repressive

activities in the area around the Jasenovac camps (Barbić, 1986, p. 163).

The management of the camps was external, i.e. Ustasha, headed by the “Commander”. It had seven different “departments” which issued working orders, organized procurement, punishments, interrogations, tortures and liquidations. They maintained contact with institutions outside the camps while the internal administration included a “logornik” (a prisoner, usually a criminal or imprisoned Ustasha, although sometimes they were decent and uncompromised) and “grupniks”, heads of groups of a hundred, fifty and ten prisoners (usually informants, criminals and beaters).

Two categories of prisoners were brought to the camp: those with a conviction and those without. According to the “Legal Decree on the Transportation of Undesirable and Dangerous Persons to Internment in Collection and Labour Camps”, the length of imprisonment varied from three months to three years. These convictions, which were issued by the Ustasha police as a branch of the UNS were mockeries, as all prisoners were in fact sentenced to death, while the “three-yearlings” [“trogodišnjaci”, prisoners with three-year sentences] were immediately executed on arrival (Barbić, 1986, p. 163).

The cruelty and depravity of the manner of executions, their sheer number and scope, mean that the atrocities committed in Jasenovac “go beyond any human imagination” (Iveković, 1945, p. 16). The killing with firearms, the killing with knives, mallets, hammers, bludgeons, axes, adzes, the killing by hanging, drowning, burning, death as a conse-

[13] “Shortly after the arrival of women prisoners from Stara Gradiska, the Ustasha Defense takes over the internal management of the Đakovo camp. The Ustasha arrive to the camp on March 29, 1942, headed by Ljuba Miloš and the Ustasha Ensign Jozo Matijević. All access to the camp is taken over and the guards are removed” (see Vasiljević, 1985, p. 195).

quence of hard labour, starvation, water deprivation, infection, poisoning, the exposure to the cold, torture and sadism – these were everyday events in the Jasenovac camps (Barbić, 1985, pp. 153-178).

One of the most important characteristics of the camps in the ISCC was that they were managed without any direct German or Italian involvement.^[14] In fact, the fascists in Italy and Germany often objected against the Ustasha management of the camps. The Nazi regime required that the Ustasha adopt antisemitic policies and persecute the Jews. Pavelić and his Ustashes accepted Nazi requests, but their racial policies were primarily aimed at exterminating the Serb population (McCormick, 2017). When the Ustashes needed more recruits for the destruction of Serbs, the ISC even distanced itself from the Nazi antisemitic policy, promising honorary Aryan citizenship, and consequently freedom from persecution, to Jews who were ready to fight for the ISC (Tanner, 1997, p. 149). As this was the only legal way to save themselves from death and persecution, a certain number of Jews joined the armed forces of the ISC.^[15]

Jasenovac and Auschwitz

Analyzing the nature, the essence and character of Auschwitz and comparing it to Jasenovac, permits, without any feeling of exaggeration, or artificial invention, to speak about the historical and moral meaning of Jasenovac. Ervin Miller, a survivor of Jasenovac, said the following: “Indeed, the camp

was infamous for its brutality, where the systematic extermination surpassed even the Nazi methods. It has often been referred to as the Auschwitz of the Balkans” (Greif, 2021).

While Auschwitz all over the world has become the symbol and synonym of the cruelties of the Holocaust, even the existence of Jasenovac is unknown to many – even those who intensively dealt with the history of World War II and the Holocaust. This is of course fact that should be changed as soon as possible! Both camps, Auschwitz and Jasenovac, although belonging to different geographical spaces, are synonyms and symbols of the extremely cruel regimes they represented: Auschwitz has become a synonym for the whole Holocaust and Jasenovac has become synonym for the Ustasha criminal regime.

Both places, Jasenovac and Auschwitz, embody the non-human principles of the two regimes, and their murderous attitude towards anyone they considered an enemy, an undesirable or inferior person, or those who did not enthusiastically support the regime.

A thorough comparison between the Auschwitz chain of camps and the Jasenovac chain of camps reveals many identical aspects relative to the development of the camps, the technique of killing and the attitude of the perpetrators towards the prisoners. Naturally, there were also significant differences between Jasenovac and Auschwitz, due to the origin and mentality of the criminals and to their psychologies.

[14] See <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Holocaust/Jasenovac.html>

[15] Some authors give the number of 5000 (see Tanner, 1997, p. 149-150).

Through generations, human society developed a code of moral values in order to protect its cultural achievements and ameliorate the moral codes of civilizations. This system of moral codes was completely annihilated in Auschwitz, as well as in Jasenovac (Greif, 1998, p. 10). Three thousand years of civilization were destroyed at once and replaced by a destructive, murderous, anti-human set of values. Darkness obscured humanity and millions of people had to live under the brutal rule of terror. That is exactly what Yehiel Dinur meant, when he called Auschwitz “another planet”. Auschwitz, the biggest Nazi concentration and extermination death camp and Jasenovac, the biggest complex of Croatian Ustasha concentration and death camps, were both sites which deserve the title Hell on Earth (Greif & Carlsen, 2012, pp. 237-292). In the following minutes we are going to compare the two Hells.

Both the Nazi and the Ustasha regime were motivated by racial theory, which dictated their policy and their behaviour. National Socialist racial theory was central in all spheres of German public life from January 30, 1933 on. When the new regime came to power, the whole nation was obsessively considering the question of blood purity and racial purity. The results of the investigations into racial origins were crucial for the career and even life for each individual. German medical doctors and geneticists collaborated with the regime and helped to decide who was to be taken to the special program for “euthanasia”, the murder of so-called life unworthy to live. Anti-Jewish legislation was based on racial principles and led to mass discrimination and hatred directed towards the Jews in Germany and later in any country under German occupation (Długoborski & Piper, 2000).

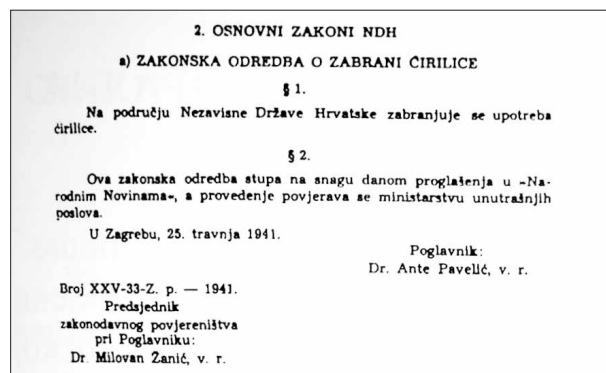


Photo 3: The legal provision prohibiting the Cyrillic alphabet, adopted on 25 April 1941. One in a series of racial laws through which Serbs, Jews and Roma were outlawed.

Taken, with the permission of the author, from the book *Jasenovac, Auschwitz of the Balkans* by Gideon Greif (Teper LTD, Garey Tikva, Israel, 2021)

The Ustasha regime was greatly influenced by German racial theory and fully adopted it. From the first day of the existence of the Independent State of Croatia, the government implemented racial laws against the Jews, Serbs and Roma, using the exact methods of discrimination which were already in place in Germany. The racial laws had a strong effect on the daily life of Jews, Serbs and Roma, who lost their position in laws, lost their civil rights and their property. Finally, the laws enabled the authorities to deport them into concentration camps (Greif, 2020b). All these racial laws paved the way for the policy of annihilation.

As a result of racial legislation and the policy of discrimination against elements which were defined as hostile to the Croat nation’s spirit, Serbs and Jews were forced to wear identification marks which aimed to publicly humiliate them. For the Jews it was the letter “J” for “Juden” or Jews and the Serbs were forced to wear the letter “P” or “pravoslavci”, meaning “Orthodox Christians”.



Photo 4: "Orthodox Christian mark"

Taken, with the permission of the author, from the book *Jasenovac, Auschwitz of the Balkans* by Gideon Greif (Teper LTD, Garey Tikva, Israel, 2021)

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Auschwitz is known as the biggest "factory of death" among the camps which Nazi Germany established in order to implement the Final Solution of the Jewish Question (Greif, 2005). However, at the beginning of its existence Auschwitz was not an extermination camp. The original intention of the National Socialist authorities was to build it as a prison for the local Polish population, suspected to be hostile and dangerous to the German army or found guilty of acts of resistance.

The turning of Auschwitz into a Factory of Death was the result of previous experience, based on the methods of the German mass killings implemented during the Barbarossa Operation. This operation started on June 22, 1941. In the framework of the Barbarossa Operation, about 1.6 million Jews were murdered by the "Einsatzgruppen", mostly by shooting, partially in gas vans. This system of mass murder was problematic for the perpetrators for several reasons. It was too slow, too expensive and psychologically problematic for the murderers, who had to look directly into the eyes of the victims.

During the few months of such mass killings, as conducted in "Babi-Jar", the German command-

ers responsible for the "final solution", decided to change the method completely and instead of shooting introduced permanent killing centres where no guns were to be used but poisonous gas (Rees, 2005). The new system solved all the problems that I just mentioned. It was cheaper, quicker and the killers did not have to look into the eyes of their victims. The only contact with the murdered victims were the screams which emerged from the gas chamber and which could be heard around the area.

The mass killing process in Auschwitz was completely impersonal (Długoborski & Piper, 2000). As we shall see later, in Jasenovac the system was different. It was personal, direct, manual - a close, intimate, passionate murder (Greif, 2021).

On the basis of the criminal and pathologically-distorted ideology of the National Socialists and the Ustasha, the similarities between the two camps are easy to distinguish. The Ustasha regime was to a very great extent influenced by Nazi Germany and its ideology and wanted by all means to demonstrate this close relationship to National Socialism. The best example of this is the fact that the Final Solution of the Jewish question in Yugoslavia was introduced by the Ustasha even before it was introduced by the Germans. When the Ustasha started implementing anti-Jewish measures in April 1941, the "Final Solution" was not even decided on by the German Nazi authorities (Greif, 2020b).

The killing process in Auschwitz was more sterile and cleaner, with some distance between the murderers and their victims, whereas the killing process in Jasenovac was more direct, and the murderers enjoyed looking at their victims being murdered and tortured and did not need any physi-

cal distance during the execution of their crimes. This point demonstrates that the Ustasha killers acted according to more barbaric lines of behaviour than the Germans, a fact which even German visitors to Jasenovac mention in their reports. In this sense, the report of the General Gleise von Horstenau, German military envoy to Zagreb is worthy of note. For the German officers the methods of Ustasha killing were too wild and too barbaric in comparison to the system enacted in the factories of death (Auschwitz Birkenau, Chelmno, Belzec, Treblinka, Majdanek, Sobibor, Maly Trosteneec). Despite their demonic crimes, the Germans still wanted to be considered cultured.

Photos which exist show us the amusement and fun of the Ustasha murderers while performing their crimes. They did not have psychological problems while doing their cruel deeds nor did they feel any twinge of conscience. This difference allows us to state that the killing process in Jasenovac was much more barbaric, brutal and primitive (Greif, 2020a, pp. 560-561). The “sophistication” needed by the Germans to protect their “soul”, was not needed by the Ustasha killers.

In order to implement the new killing system in Auschwitz, a new mass murder process was developed, based on the use of poisonous gas. At the beginning of 1942, two sites of mass murder were prepared in Birkenau, a sub-camp of Auschwitz, to which the killing activity was transferred from the Main Camp. The murder was conducted in two buildings, the so called “Red house” or “Bunker 1”, and the so called “White House”, or “Bunker 2”.

The first transports of Jews, who were deported to their death by the RSHA (*Reichssicherheitshauptamt*), reached the new killing facilities

in Birkenau in February 1942. Due to the process of further modernization, the two bunkers were temporarily abandoned, and four new modern buildings emerged in spring 1942, gas chamber and crematoria 2-5.

This steady tendency of the modernization of the industrial mass killing is strongly differing from the mass killing in Jasenovac, where the process of killing can be defined as very primitive from the beginning until the very end. That does not imply that the primitivity had any impact on the number of victims but shows the primitive way of thinking of the Croat Ustasha criminals, who were satisfied with their own bestial ways of killing and did not look for ways to modernize, pleased as they were with the existing methods.

The German method resembled a typical industrial process, namely, the purpose was to obtain the greatest results (in this case, the murder of the highest number of innocent people) for the least cost. Nevertheless, the teams in these camps, the Nazi Germans and the Ustasha Croats as well, had a very important common denominator. They were trained not to show the slightest sense of mercy, sympathy or empathy towards their victims. On the contrary, they enjoyed their brutal and aggressive behaviour, and looked for new methods of torture, a way to prolong the prisoners’ death and competed who could inflict the most extreme torture, humiliation and death.

The Ustasha however, were very happy to dirty their hands and the bloodier their hands, the happier they were.

Inside the German killing facilities the principle of remaining clean was introduced by using Jewish slaves in a variety of activities which allowed

22 | the German murderers to keep their hands clean. Hundreds of Jews were recruited to the special squad, the "Sonderkommando", which were forced to conduct the most humiliating work in the process of killing, although the killing itself was conducted exclusively by the German SS. The slaves had to carry the bodies of the murdered Jews to the crematoria, to remove their valuables, gold teeth and cut the women's hair, to throw the bodies into the crematoria ovens and finally to throw the ashes into the surrounding river. In this way the perpetrators had only to give the orders and not execute the work with their own hands. The impersonal method of killing in Auschwitz was principally based on the famous speech held by the head of the SS, Heinrich Himmler, in which he emphasized the following: "We will never get our hands dirty; we will remain clean". The necessity of remaining clean dictated the patterns of behaviour of the German team of the camps. In Jasenovac such an idea of cleanliness did not exist.

The regulations in Auschwitz were clear and permanent: there was a significant difference between those who were sent immediately to their death after being selected on the ramp by a medical doctor, and those who could temporarily remain alive and become slaves (Wagner, 2000).

Those who were sentenced to death, 75 to 90 percent of the newly arrived, usually did not live for more than 4 hours after their arrival. The others, 5 to 15 percent, were selected to become slaves.

For those who became prisoners, the biggest challenge was to survive under the inhuman conditions which prevailed in the camp. It was especially important to maintain the desire to live. This desire was essential for the continuation of the will to live.

Jasenovac survivors report the same psychological principle. As long as they did not lose their desire or passion to live, they had a chance of survival. In Jasenovac however, the life of the prisoners was more chaotic, there was not the same amount of constant and clear rules a prisoners could adapt to in order to improve his chances of survival.

Both camps underwent a long process of dynamic development. As I already mentioned, Auschwitz did not start as an extermination camp. In 1940, its first goal was to be a concentration camp for the local Polish population, a large prison for Poles suspected of being hostile to the German occupying forces or suspected to be part of the Polish underground movement (Gutman & Berenbaum, 1994). Only late in 1941, after the decision on the "Final Solution" did Auschwitz become an extermination camp, where the "Final Solution" of the Jewish question was to be implemented. From June 1941 it also was a concentration camp or a large prison for Soviet prisoners-of-war, who were captured during the Barbarossa Operation.

The fact that until late 1941 Auschwitz was not yet a Factory of Death does not mean the prisoners were not treated brutally and bestially or that they were not murdered. This is not the case. Many prisoners died or were murdered from the first day of the existence of Auschwitz, because of the harsh conditions, the cruelty of the guards, and the fundamental policy of maltreatment, dehumanization and starvation.

Jasenovac was a place of death from the first day and the mass killing there did not require any official decision, like the decision of the Final Solution (Greif, 2020a). Nevertheless, even Jasenovac underwent some changes which were caused by

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the war developments, or by political changes in the region, and it was dependent on the successes and defeats of Nazi Germany.

The killing methods in Jasenovac, developed over time and became more extreme and brutal, based on the same principles of non-humanity and non-mercy, in the attempt to cause the utmost suffering to the prisoners.

Another difference refers to the policy of secrecy: the Germans tried to hide the reality from their victims by distributing lies and fake information of what awaits their victims, disguising the killing sites as showers or public baths. The murderers of Jasenovac were more direct and thought they had nothing to hide, committing their crimes under open skies (Greif, 2020a).

A very clear point of similarity is the greed of both the Germans and the Ustasha. The victims, murdered or imprisoned, had to hand over all their property which they brought to the camp, and the perpetrators were now the new owners of their property. Possessions such as apartments, bank accounts, jewellery, valuables were already confiscated before arrival in the camp. The Germans were no doubt the greatest murderers in history but also the greatest thieves. The Ustasas acted under similar lines and started the confiscation of property of Jews and Serbs by April 1941.

The Ustasha authorities, under the leadership of Poglavnik Ante Pavelić, tried to imitate Germany, and became even more extreme (McCormick, 2017). The pupil wanted to become more extreme than the teacher.

Another point of similarity is the fact that the camps were a state inside a state. No ministry, no court, no politician, could intervene in the reality



Photo 5: Woman with children arriving at Jasenovac

Taken, with the permission of the author, from the book *Jasenovac, Auschwitz of the Balkans* by Gideon Greif (Teper LTD, Garey Tikva, Israel, 2021)

of the regulations of the camps. The SS and the Ustasha saw the camps as their own kingdom and felt they could do anything without being criticized, inspected or punished. They felt they could continue with their barbaric crimes forever. Indeed, Auschwitz and Jasenovac were among the longest

lasting concentration and extermination camps, remaining in operation almost until the end of the war – until January 1945 and April 1945, respectively.

Until the last moment the camp staff were sure they could go on uninterruptedly forever, not realizing that the war was going to come to an end very soon. For Nazi Germany the “Final Solution” and the existence of Auschwitz were more important in 1943 and 1944 than any other national interest, even becoming the most important national interest (Posner & Ware, 1986). In light of imminent defeat in the war, the annihilation of the Jewish people was considered the most important goal. The Ustasha came to the same conclusion and considered the continuation of Jasenovac as the most important interest of the ISC (Greif, 2021).

Another point of similarity is that in both camps there was a total loss of sanctity of life. The life of the victims had no value, whereas death was worshipped. In both places, death was developed into an art and into an ideology. It seems that the members of the SS and the Ustasha competed among themselves who would become more cruel, more barbaric and more sadistic. The policy of a non-human attitude prevailed in both places, robbing the prisoners of the minimal human dignity, minimal living conditions, minimal sanitary conditions, trying to ruin their inner spirit and their psyche, exploiting their bodily strength and finally killing them in various methods: by poisonous gas, burning alive, cutting bodies into pieces, starvation, beating, hanging etc.

In both camps, an inversion of values existed. In Auschwitz as well as in Jasenovac, a different scale of values was adopted, which stand opposite to the normal values of the world before WWII. In

other words, the 10 commandments were reversed. For instance: “Thou shalt not kill” was reversed to: “Thou shall kill”. There is a famous sentence written by the Jewish poet Paul Celan that says, “Death is a Master from Germany”. The same can be said about the Ustasha: “Death is a Master from Croatia”.

Despite the sense of security that there would be no punishment for the crimes, both camps had severe measures of security to prevent the outside world from getting information of what is going on in the camps. Accordingly, every effort was made to not allow the prisoners to escape. Any attempt at escape was considered the worst crime.

In comparison to Auschwitz, some of the camps attached to Jasenovac were dedicated to only female or child prisoners (Greif, 2020a). Auschwitz sub-camps did not have such places and women and men stayed together, although always separated.

Both camps tried to exploit the physical power or energy of the prisoners for their own benefit, by establishing factories or workshops as the possibility of replacing the laborers with new slaves was so easy. However, the similar policy of not supplying enough food or adequate working conditions, caused the quick death of slave workers in both places and the industry or semi-industry in both camps was not productive due to the inhuman treatment of the prisoners.

Both camps deprived the prisoners of the most natural needs of human beings. Among other aspects it is important to emphasize the lack of proper medical treatment. Prisoners who became sick or exhausted could not get help and died in pain, getting no medication or almost no medications. In Auschwitz the so-called hospital had nothing in common with the normal clinics or hospitals,

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providing no real treatment or real medications (Gutman & Berenbaum, 1994). A similar situation existed in Jasenovac. Sick prisoners, knowing that the so-called hospital would not cure or heal them, preferred not to complain and continued their slave work hoping to be cured naturally. In both places it was clear to the prisoners that complain about their health would just bring them closer to their death. In both places the medical staff was involved in the criminal activities.

Comparing Auschwitz and Jasenovac, the first might be considered to belong to the 20th century, while Jasenovac reminds us more of the inquisition of the 16th century, which used primitive methods of torture and killing. Unfortunately, those primitive methods were not less effective than the German ones.

The “modern” character of Auschwitz and the primitive character of Jasenovac can also be seen in the case of the administration. Auschwitz had a very modern administrative system (Gutman & Berenbaum, 1994). It had several departments, secretaries, translators, adjutants, a technical team etc. All this was linked to the German government. There was, of course, a big gap in the normal correspondence between offices, but we should not forget that this correspondence tried to hide the huge crime. On the other hand, Jasenovac did not have any of this. It had no offices, no regular correspondence, nor intelligent Jewish secretaries. It was a primitive reality with no necessity of official administration. In comparison to Auschwitz, Jasenovac did not produce any secret diaries or reports (Greif, 2021). The most important Auschwitz documents are called the Auschwitz Scrolls, which describe the miserable lives of the Jews belonging to the “special squad”.



Photo 6: Older man taking off his wedding ring
at the camp entrance.

Photo: Jasenovac Memorial Site, photomonography, Nataša Mataušić. Taken, with the permission of the author, from the book *Jasenovac, Auschwitz of the Balkans* by Gideon Greif (Teper LTD, Garey Tikva, Israel, 2021)

In both places, prisoners never gave up their hope to be liberated, and made attempts at escape. In Auschwitz, relatively speaking it was easier and hundreds of prisoners tried to escape. Most of them did not succeed, like in the case of Jasenovac, where they tried even though it was more complicated and riskier and only towards the end did the prisoners have some success in breaking out of the camp. The constant attempts of escape show us that the spirit of the prisoners was not destroyed.

Another significant difference is that in Auschwitz there was an underground movement, quite well organized (Czech, 1997). Whereas in Jasenovac there were no conditions for the creation of such a movement.

The similarity between the two camp systems is primarily the result of the fact that National Socialism was similar to Ustashism. Both are extreme,

destructive ideologies which planned and executed murderous plans which brought about the annihilation of millions of innocent people. By understanding that Ustashism is no different to Nazism we might better understand to the criminal acts of the ISC government.

Extremely significant is the fact that the Ustaša introduced the final solution, even before the Germans did it (Greif, 2020b). The persecution of Jews, their deportation to the Jasenovac camps, the confiscation of their property and all the anti-Jewish steps were introduced earlier than in Germany, where the final solution started only in 1941. Jasenovac became the slaughterhouse of the Yugoslav Jews even though at that time Auschwitz was not yet a concentration camp (Lituchy, 2006). The conclusion arises that the Ustaša were quicker than the Germans in their final solution or alternatively that the crimes of the Ustašas were the final solution before the final solution.

The speed of the policy of persecution by the Croatian government was much faster than the speed of the German government. The Croatian pupil was quicker than his German teacher.

Auschwitz and Jasenovac symbolize the extreme policy of dehumanization of the body as well as the spirit and the means of reaching those goals were mainly terror and humiliation. The sanctity of human beings did not exist – the only human beings were the murderers themselves, who got the best possible conditions and food and enjoyed the property of their victims. The dehumanization was conducted towards all prisoners in both camps, mainly to Serbs, Jews and Roma, and all others who were considered dangerous or undesirable or inferior. In certain cases when prisoners were ready to

collaborate, they got better conditions, but with no guarantee that this would continue forever.

Both camps had only two kinds of people: the group which had everything and the group which had nothing. In both camps, the attitude of unnecessary suffering was used, in order to amuse those causing the suffering. Murdering or killing a prisoner without causing suffering was not enough for the perpetrators. Unless the prisoner was tortured and humiliated, his death was not enough. Unnecessary torture is a term developed by the American sociologist Daniel J. Goldhagen in his book "Hitler's Willing Executioner 1996". For these purposes, a variety of methods were introduced to prolong the process of death, causing the victim horrible suffering on the one hand, and amusement for the murderers on the other hand. In Auschwitz and Jasenovac, all repressed, brutal and evil emotions could be expressed without any fear of the consequences.

Within the framework of terror, the camp authorities in both places tried to implement an extreme policy of punishment for real and imaginary crimes. For any form of disobedience, the prisoners were punished severely, and very often the punishment was death.

A point of similarity of camps is that after the war, there were attempts at diminishing the number of victims and to characterize the camps as slave labour camps and not death camps. This tendency, in the context to Auschwitz is called Holocaust denial, but we might use the same term concerning Jasenovac. There is a denial of Jasenovac and the Ustaša crimes by the young generations, and both unfortunately continue to this today. Morally, this phenomenon, can be seen as a second mur-

der of the victims. The denial murders the victims for the second time, while ignoring their existence desecrates their human dignity and is a murderer of their memory.

Since the causing of pain and endless suffering was important for the perpetrators in both Auschwitz and Jasenovac, on personal initiative by the guards, new instruments of torture were developed. In Auschwitz, the place which was the most creative in developing the tools was the Political Department (*Politische Abteilung*). Infamous was the "Schaukel", developed by the SS man Wilhelm Boger. It was an instrument which broke almost all the bones of the prisoner under interrogation. Torturing the prisoners was a daily phenomenon and the sky was the limit in causing pain to a prisoner who had to be punished. Exactly the same occurred in Jasenovac, where an Ustasha guard invented the new device called the "Serb cutter" and other instruments of torture and death (Greif, 2020a). Places like Auschwitz and Jasenovac enabled people with sadistic tendencies to express themselves perfectly.

Humiliation was extremely important for the Nazis. Humiliations were used against the Jews but also against non-Jews. The most favourite form of humiliation was public humiliation with the participation of the audience. Concerning Jews, the policy of humiliation did not stop when the German policy changed in 1941. From expulsion to the final solution, the Jews had to be humiliated even minutes before they were gassed in the chambers when men and women had to undress before being gassed. Even before, during the mass killing of the "Einsatzgruppen" Jews had to undress before being shot to death. In Jasenovac the same policy

of humiliation was introduced for the amusement of the killers.

Both places, Auschwitz as well as Jasenovac, started very modestly. At the beginning, Auschwitz was nothing more than one small concentration camp of only 28 buildings, called the main camp or "Stammlager". Later on, new sub-camps were added. The most important and biggest one was Birkenau which was opened at October 1941. Later on, 43 other sub-camps became part of the Auschwitz camp complex and the so-called „Interessengebiet" (Adelsberger & Langbein, 1961). Auschwitz then was divided into three parts: "Stammlager", "Birkenau" and "Monowitz".

A sense of self-confidence and power caused both places to grow and grow steadily. In 1943 Auschwitz became an empire. It had 44 sub-camps or branches spread across an area of 40 square kilometers (Megargee, 2009, pp. 203-276). The same happened with Jasenovac, which grew and developed many sub camps in an area of 240 square kilometers, where people were imprisoned. Therefore, Auschwitz and Jasenovac can be called kingdoms of suffering, dehumanization and death (Greif, 2021). The rapid expansion of both camps symbolizes the passion of power of the SS and Ustasha and simultaneously shows us how the ideology of death became significant and even popular. Two vicious regimes had the desire to enact their policy of death and in order to implement it, they needed a lot of space, not hesitating to use thousands of guards to implement this policy and to prevent any prisoners from escaping. In times of war the dictatorships strangely focussed on such investments which demand a lot of manpower, budget and energy that could also have been used for the war effort.



Photo 7: Rounding up Jasenovac inmates

Photo: Documentary from 1945. „Jasenovac“, Archive of Yugoslav Cinematheque.

Taken, with the permission of the author, from the book *Jasenovac, Auschwitz of the Balkans* by Gideon Greif (Teper LTD, Garey Tikva, Israel, 2021)

Important as it is, the number of victims should not be considered the most important method concerning Auschwitz or Jasenovac. Since the death of one person is a tragedy of itself, for the tortured and murdered person the question of how many others were murdered is not important.

“Holocaust denial” started immediately after the end of WWII, with attempts to suppress the mention of the crimes of German National Socialists, to reshape their character, or to completely deny the existence of the crimes. Most deniers are not professional historians, barring few, and they base their argumentation on false information and on twisted facts. Among professional historians who belong to the deniers was David Irving who lost a trial to professor Deborah Lipstadt in Great

Britain, a defeat which was a big blow to the industry of falsification of the Holocaust. Interestingly the denial of the Holocaust concentrates almost exclusively on Auschwitz, which shows to what extent Auschwitz is a symbol of the Holocaust. The killing machines were destroyed by the Germans before leaving the camps, which helps the deniers to distort history.

In the case of Jasenovac, the tactics are almost identical, trying to minimize the crime or trying to change the meaning of the camp, making it out to be a slave labour camp and not death camp, that the deaths were the result of living conditions and not murder. Behind the tendency of denial stands the difficulty of generations living after the event to accept the guilt, to live with it, to ask the victims

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and their children for forgiveness. By reducing the scope and avoiding mention of the crimes, generations after the war hope to clean their conscience.

It is necessary to emphasize that the second and third generation do not bear any guilt. They only bear the collective moral responsibility, which includes primarily accepting the facts, and trying to prevent such a crime in the future. Manipulating with the number of victims is a very dangerous weapon, and it is our moral duty to prevent any distortion of the number of the victims. Most historians agree, that in Auschwitz the total number of victims was about 1.5 million, 90% of them Jewish victims. Other sources use lower numbers, as for instance 1.1 million. The multinational memorial site at the end of the ramp of Birkenau mentions the number of 1.5 million. The difference in numbers derives from the fact that the German authorities of Auschwitz did not register those who were selected for immediate death, but only those who were to be slaves, which were only around 5-15% of those who were deported to the camp. The percentage of those sentenced to immediate death was 75-90% on average.

The most reliable historian, who tried to figure out the number of victims by the Ustasha in Jasenovac, was the late historian Menachem Shelach who published his book "History of the Holocaust – Yugoslavia", as part of the big project published by Yad Vashem called "The History of the Holocaust". Menachem Shelach was considered the most prominent expert of the history of the Holocaust in Yugoslavia and was the first to publish the complete history of the Jewish Holocaust in Yugoslavia. He refers to the numbers of victims using this formulation: „the Croats mur-



Photo 8: Notorious commander of Ustasha camp of death Jasenovac, Vjekoslav "Maks" Luburić (left).

Photo: Documentary from 1945. „Jasenovac“, Archive of Yugoslav Cinematheque. Taken, with the permission of the author, from the book *Jasenovac, Auschwitz of the Balkans* by Gideon Greif (Teper LTD, Garey Tikva, Israel, 2021)

dered in Jasenovac many hundreds of thousands of Serbs”, by using such a formulation Shelach means at least 500 thousand Serbs. After he finished his book, he told me that he is certain the number is much greater and that it is closer to 1 million. Yad Vashem Institute in its reference to Jasenovac on the website mentions about 600 thousand Serbs murdered in Jasenovac. It means that Israeli scholars fully accept the Serbian calculations. The Shem Olam Institute mentions that there were at least 750 thousand Serbian victims.

The greatest number of killings in the ISC were committed in Jasenovac. The true number is, however, still a matter of debate. According to the data of the Land Commission of Croatia for the Establishment of Crimes of the Occupiers and their Collaborators, the number of victims ranges

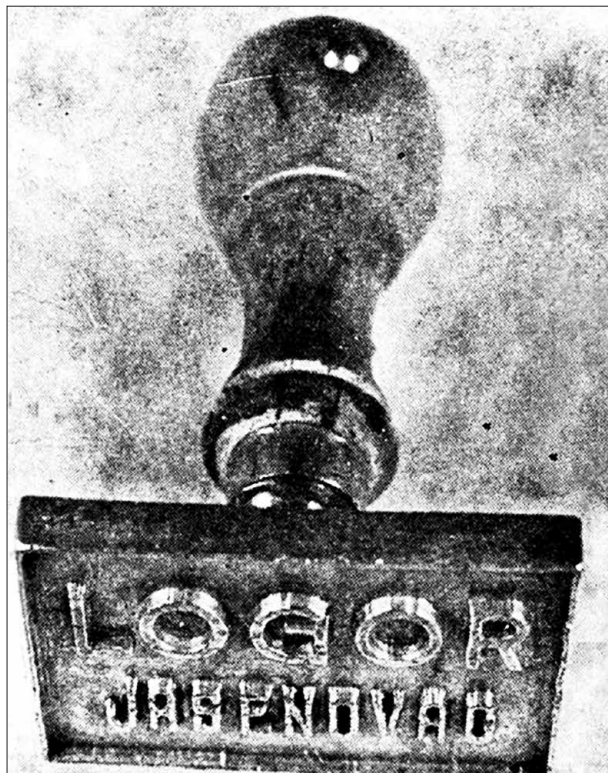


Photo 9: Seal of Jasenovac camp.

Photo documentation Donja Gradina Memorial Site. Taken, with the permission of the author, from the book *Jasenovac, Auschwitz of the Balkans* by Gideon Greif (Teper LTD, Garey Tikva, Israel, 2021)

from 500 000 to 600 000.^[16] The historian Tomislav Dulić says that there were 700 000 killed in Jaseno-

vac and adds, correctly in our opinion, that if there were more than 100 000 victims then Jasenovac is surely one of the largest concentration camps in Europe during WWII (Dulić, 2005, p. 281).

According to Hermann Neubacher, the special envoy of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Third Reich to Yugoslavia, in Jasenovac more than 750 000^[17] people were brutally killed, while Bulajić states that the number of victims was over 700 000 (Bulajić, 2007). The historian Vladimir Dedijer quotes the letter of Ernst Fick, general major of the German SS troops, sent to Himmler on March 16, 1944. In the letter Fick states that the Ustashes killed between 600 000 and 700 000 people in Jasenovac (Dedijer, 1987, p. 644). According to the more recent data of the International Commission, more than 800 000 innocent victims were sent to their death in Jasenovac and Donja Gradina, exclusively because they were Serbs, Jews, Roma or antifascists.

The number of victims is difficult to establish for several reasons. The first is that the people brought to the camps were registered only if they had personal identification or another similar document. The Serbs gathered from the fields, and the Roma in particular, for the most part did not have such documents. Convicted persons were registered, but these camp documents were carefully

[16] (See Barbić, 1988, pp. 81-97; Barbić, 1985, pp. 154-155; Miletić, 1986, p. 38). In the first text, Barbić lists the numbers given in other papers, which range from 400 000 to 800 000. The most commonly given number is 700 000 of victims. There are authors who decrease the number and mention 40 000 victims (like Cardinal Kuharić on the commemorative mass for Aloysius Stepinac held on February 10, 1981); I. Supek and F. Tuđman: 50 000. There are also authors who talk about the number of 1 million (Terzić, Bulatović and others). Both groups focus on the victims belonging to their nationality.

[17] “The slaughter of Serbs by the Croats is amongst the most vicious mass murders in world history. I witnessed Ustasha leaders brag about the fact that they butchered one million Serbs, including infants, children, women and the elderly” (see Neubacher, 1957, p. 31).

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destroyed on two occasions: In order to hide their crimes, UNS and Luburić personally ordered the destruction of camp documents in December 1942 and January 1943, before the UNS was disbanded by legal decree. The liquidation of the camp in April 1945 included the destruction of all documentation. There were other attempts to hide evidence of the crimes: the killing of the remaining prisoners, the digging up and burning of corpses, the mining and burning down of the buildings in the camp and in Jasenovac. Also, many were not only not registered but they did not even pass through the camp gates, but were taken directly to be killed. Additionally, the number of missing children is unknown because a large number of Serbian children were forcibly converted to Catholicism and taken to orphanages or families. For this reason, it is impossible to estimate how many were killed and how many were taken away.

The climax of Ustasha crimes against humanity, was no doubt the establishment a special concentration and extermination camp designed for children.^[18] Three concentration and extermination camps existed: Sisak, Jastrebarsko and Jasenovac. Such camps have no precedence in history of mankind and even Nazi Germany did not establish camps especially for children.



Photo 10: Knife for mass slaughters
known as “Srbosjek”, produced in the factory “Solingen”
– “for the hand to wear out less”.

Photo documentation Donja Gradina Memorial Site. Taken, with the permission of the author, from the book *Jasenovac, Auschwitz of the Balkans* by Gideon Greif (Teper LTD, Garey Tikva, Israel, 2021)

The ideological background for the crimes against children on behalf of Nazi Germany and on the behalf of the Ustasha are identical. The idea was that children who belonged to the undesirable races have to be considered the “biological future” of that race and therefore should be totally and completely eliminated. Jewish babies as well as Serb babies would grow one day and might take revenge

[18] “Genocide against children in the ISC is the most drastic expression of the planned Ustasha Final Solution. Only in the Independent State of Croatia were there camps for children, where around 23,500 young ones lost their lives. Jasenovac, the most brutal and infamous of the ISC death camps, swallowed 19,432 children. Most of the children murdered and identified come from Kordun, Lika, Banija, Slavonija, Bosanska Krajina, east Bosnia and Herzegovina, mostly populated by Serbs, while Jews mostly lived in urban areas. They were only children, and among them there were babes in diapers, who could not even say “mama”. The names of the children whose lives were extinguished in the Ustasha Final Solution during WWII were identified thanks to the extensive archival documentation gathered by the Commission for the Establishing of Crimes of the Occupiers and their Collaborators. The matter was covered by Dragoje Lukić in his book “Bili su samo deca” [They Were Only Children] and Mile Dasić in the book “Iz kolijevke u Jasenovac” [From the Cradle to Jasenovac]” (see Greif, 2020a).



Photo 11: Adolf Hitler meets Ante Pavelić 1941

Taken, with the permission of the author, from the book *Jasenovac, Auschwitz of the Balkans* by Gideon Greif (Teper LTD, Garey Tikva, Israel, 2021)

against the German or Croat, a situation which has to be prevented by all means.

The Jasenovac camps were never liberated by any army unlike Auschwitz. The Jasenovac camp inmates made the final breakthrough, three months after Auschwitz was liberated on 27 January 1945 (Greif, 2021). After the Allied bombing of the camp in March and April of 1945, many buildings inside the camp were destroyed but extensive excavations and the destruction of the corpses of the victims was

still taking place. Luburić ordered that all prisoners should be executed and that the camp and town of Jasenovac had to be torn down and burned to the ground, so as to hide all evidence of the crime. The last group of 700 women was killed on April 21 (Lituchy, 2006, p. 51, 114). That very same day all the remaining male inmates (on rollcall there were still around 1073 inmates present) were locked up in a two-story building in the eastern sector of the camp (Mataušić, 2008, p. 115). In the night

of April 21 and 22 they attempted to escape from the camp. Only 106 of them survived the camp breach (Lituchy, 2006, p. 52). Around 407 of the sick, elderly and weak inmates did not participate in the breach. They were most likely killed later and burned together with the camp buildings (Mataušić, 2008, p. 115). The same day, only a few hours later, the inmates from the “Tannery” attempted to escape. Out of 176, only 11 survived.

The abandoned village of Jasenovac and the destroyed camp were first entered by the Artillery Regiment 1st Battalion 4th Serbian Brigade of the 21st Serbian Division of the Yugoslav Army on May 2 and 3, 1945 (Lituchy, 2006). The battalion that entered Jasenovac was given the orders to guard the evidence of the crimes until the arrival of the state commission which would ascertain the crimes of the occupiers. In the camp, torture chambers were found, as well as Pičili’s furnace, corpses, skeletons (partial and whole) of inmates. Between 200 and 600 members of the ISC army were arrested and a wall 1.2 kilometers long and 4 meters high that surrounded the camp was torn down. The existence of the hell on earth that Jasenovac had been had finally come to an end.

The various examples which were mentioned in this historical introduction, lead us to the conclusion that among criminal regimes there is the worst but sometimes even worse than the worst. Nazi Germany brought criminality against humanity which the world had not seen to that point. Analyzing all the above-mentioned manifestations of evil it is not difficult to come to the conclusion that the Ustasha regime and its atrocities were even worse than German Nazi atrocities. The Ustaschas’ wicked minds overshadowed in many aspects the murderous minds of the Nazis. The techniques of murder of the Ustasha were much more brutal, wilder and more malicious. The Croats even surpassed the Germans in their wickedness and in their bloodlust (Greif, 2020a). It seems that they lost all humanity. It is therefore justified to define Jasenovac as the Auschwitz of the Balkans. We have emphasized the common denominators, the differences and the identical aspects and although it is not always possible to compare the two regimes, in this case it is legitimate and even recommended in order to send a warning to the world: Auschwitz and Jasenovac should never be repeated again.

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ДИРЕКТНИ НАЧИНИ УБИЈАЊА ЖРТАВА

1. Дављење у реци
2. Тровање цијанидом
3. Убијање чекићем
4. Убијање маљем
5. Убијање секиром
6. Убијање српом
7. Вешање
8. Одсецање главе
9. Масовно убијање „србосјеком“
10. Гушење рукама
11. Пререзивање гркљана
12. Пробадање ножем до смрти
13. Вађење срца из жртве
14. Устрељивање
15. Премлаћивање насмрт гвозденим шипкама
16. Убијање трудница струјом

МУЧЕЊЕ ЖРТАВА КОЈЕ У ВЕЋИНИ СЛУЧАЈЕВА
ДОВОДИ ДО СМРТИ

17. Бацање живих жртава у јаме
18. Спаљивање живе жртве (поливање бензином)
19. Масовно спаљивање у пећима
20. Набијање на колац
21. Кување живих у казанима за сапун
22. Вађење органа из живих жртава
23. Бацање жртава псима и свињама
24. Бичевање до смрти
25. Драње коже жртава
26. Гажење до смрти
27. Укуцавање ексера у главу
28. Комадање тела жртава
29. Копање очију
30. Разапињање (са закуцавањем ексера)

DIRECT METHODS OF KILLING VICTIMS

1. Drowning in the river
2. Poisoning with cyanide
3. Killing with a hammer
4. Killing with a mallet
5. Killing with an axe
6. Killing with a scythe
7. Hanging
8. Decapitation
9. Mass killings with the "Serb-cutter"
10. Strangulation
11. Slitting of throat
12. Knifing to death
13. Removing the heart of the victim
14. Shooting from firearm
15. Beating to death with iron bars
16. Electrocuting pregnant women

METHODS OF TORTURE WHICH MOSTLY LED TO DEATH

17. Throwing the living into pits
18. Burning a living victim (dousing with petrol)
19. Mass burning in furnaces
20. Impalement
21. Boiling the living in vats for soap
22. Extracting organs from living victims
23. Throwing the living to dogs and pigs
24. Whipping to death
25. Flaying
26. Trampling to death
27. Driving nails into the heads of victims
28. Dismembering
29. Gouging out of eyes
30. Crucifying (with nails)



31. Одсецање тестиса
32. Ломљење костију
33. Премлаћивање
34. Набијање ексера под нокте
35. Везивање жртве и њено ваљање по дасци са ексерима
36. Вешање за ноге
37. Организовање гладијаторских борби (брат на брата)
38. Засецање ради пијења крви
39. Окивање ногу логораша букагијама (гвозденим ланцима)
40. Тровање хране каустичном содом
41. Прогоривање жртве лемилицом

ПОСЕБНИ НАЧИНИ УБИЈАЊА И МУЧЕЊА ЖЕНА

42. Вађење фетуса из стомака трудних жена
43. Силовање и набијање на колац
44. Силовање и одсецање дојки
45. Силовање и стављање живих пацова у гениталије
46. Силовање и стављање опушача у гениталије

ПОСЕБНИ НАЧИНИ УБИЈАЊА И МУЧЕЊА ДЕЦЕ

47. Разбијање дечије главе о зид
48. Разбијање дечије главе маљем
49. Набијање деце на бајонет
50. Ослепљивање деце тако што су терана да гледају сунце

СТАВЉАЊЕ ЖРТАВА У УСЛОВЕ КОЈИ НЕСУМЊИВО УЗРОКУЈУ ТЕШКЕ БОЛЕСТИ ИЛИ СМРТ

51. Изгладњивање
52. Држање затвореника без воде
53. Недостатак тоалета
54. Потпуно нехигијенски услови који директно доводе до заразних болести
55. Стимулисање на канибализам у условима крајњег изгладњивања
56. Робовски рад до смрти
57. Смрзавање

31. Removing testicles
32. Breaking of bones
33. Beating
34. Driving iron pins under finger nails
35. Tying up the victim and rolling him over a board with protruding nails
36. Hanging by the feet
37. Organizing gladiatorial fights (brother against brother)
38. Cutting to drink the blood of victims
39. Putting victims in iron shackles
40. Poisoning of food with caustic soda
41. Burning victim with soldering iron

SPECIAL WAYS OF KILLING AND TORTURING WOMEN

42. Removing the fetus from the woman's womb
43. Rape and impalement
44. Rape and cutting off breasts
45. Rape and putting living rats in genitalia
46. Rape and putting cigarette butts in genitalia

SPECIAL WAYS OF KILLING AND TORTURING CHILDREN

47. Smashing the child's head against a wall
48. Bludgeoning the child's head with a mallet
49. Bayonetting
50. Blinding by forcing the children to look at the sun

PLACING THE VICTIMS IN CONDITIONS WHICH INEVITABLY CAUSE SERIOUS ILLNESS OR DEATH

51. Starvation
52. Deprivation of water
53. Lack of sanitary facilities
54. Unhygienic conditions which directly lead to the outbreak of infectious disease
55. Stimulating cannibalism by causing starvation
56. Slave labor to the death
57. Freezing





Photo 12:

Ustasha crime: decapitation, December 1942.

Photo documentation of the Museum of the Victims of Genocide, Belgrade. Taken, with the permission of the author, from the book *Jasenovac, Auschwitz of the Balkans* by Gideon Greif (Teper LTD, Garey Tikva, Israel, 2021)



Photo 13:

Ustasha crime: decapitation, December 1942.

Photo documentation of the Museum of the Victims of Genocide, Belgrade. Taken, with the permission of the author, from the book *Jasenovac, Auschwitz of the Balkans* by Gideon Greif (Teper LTD, Garey Tikva, Israel, 2021)



Photo 14

Photo: Archive of Yugoslav Cinematheque.

Taken, with the permission of the author, from the book *Jasenovac, Auschwitz of the Balkans* by Gideon Greif (Teper LTD, Garey Tikva, Israel, 2021)



Photo 15: Victim of Ustasha terror with a stone around waist and in the mouth. The corpse was taken out from the Sava River, downstream from Jasenovac. The shot was taken in 1945.

Photo documentation Donja Gradina Memorial Site.

Taken, with the permission of the author, from the book *Jasenovac, Auschwitz of the Balkans* by Gideon Greif (Teper LTD, Garey Tikva, Israel, 2021)



Photo 16: Ustasha crimes against children in Srebrenica, 1941

Photo documentation of the Museum of the Victims of Genocide, Belgrade.

Taken, with the permission of the author, from the book *Jasenovac, Auschwitz of the Balkans* by Gideon Greif (Teper LTD, Garey Tikva, Israel, 2021)



Photo 17: Divoselo (Lika), A girl stabbed by knife.
Italian photos of Ustasha Crimes.

Photo documentation of the Museum of the Victims of Genocide, Belgrade.

Taken, with the permission of the author, from the book *Jasenovac, Auschwitz of the Balkans* by Gideon Greif (Teper LTD, Garey Tikva, Israel, 2021)



Photo 18: Dead bodies were just thrown into the river.

Source: Archive of Yugoslav Cinematheque.

Taken, with the permission of the author, from the book *Jasenovac, Auschwitz of the Balkans* by Gideon Greif (Teper LTD, Garey Tikva, Israel, 2021)