



„Gallows”, central monument, a work by Vanja Radauš, erected in 1961 in memory of the victims of the Gospić group of camps, not far from the Orthodox cemetery in Jasikovac near Gospić. It was destroyed in the war of 90s and not restored until today.



Smiljan, 30th June 2018. Placing of the Holy Cross next to the mass grave.



Badanj Pit, above the village of Stupačinovo, Velebit Mountain;

PHOTO: Dani(j)el Simić, 2021.

Nikola Tesla's Smiljan, the place of execution of the Serbian people in 1941



The village of Smiljan is located almost in the epicenter of the territory over which the so-called Gospić camp group was scattered. The Serbian population of Smiljan and the surroundings went through a horrible ordeal caused by the Independent State of Croatia armed formations.

When the Second World War broke out, archpriest Matija Stijačić headed the Smiljan parish in Gospić. He had been serving in America and Canada and, at the suggestion of Nikola Tesla, whom he was very close to, returned to serve in the church where Milutin Tesla, Nikola Tesla's father, had previously served.

From 1935 to 12th April 1941 he served as archpriest of the parish of Smiljan.

Here he was arrested by the Ustasha and sent to the Gospić prison where he was subjected to horrendous torture. They murdered him on the Velebit Mountain, throwing his mutilated body into one of the pits there. His son Slavko set out in the fall of 1941 to search for his kidnapped father, but he too was arrested by the Ustasha in Gospić and murdered.

To the right of the entrance of the Orthodox church of the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul in Smiljan is a mass grave with the bodies of no less than 560 murdered Serbs from Smiljan and the surrounding area, among them the relatives and namesakes of Nikola Tesla, who were murdered by the Ustasha between 1941 and 1945.

Next to that grave, the Association Jadovno 1941 erected a wooden Orthodox cross in 2018 and not long after that the Eparchy of Gornji Karlovac erected there a marble cross, the work and the gift of a man from Jadovno, the late sculptor Mirko Čelić. Above the tomb there is an Orthodox cemetery that is slowly succumbing to the growing forest.

On the walls of the church in Smiljan, in addition to the usual religious scenes, one can also notice a fresco with the motif of the baptism of Nikola Tesla, as well as of the Holy New Martyrs of Jadovno, that is to say, a fresco dedicated to the victims of the Ustasas' Gospić – Jadovno – Pag death camps.

Association of Citizens “Jadovno 1941.”

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Association of the descendants and supporters of the victims of the death camps complex of the Independent State of Croatia, Gospić – Jadovno – Pag of 1941.

AGAINST OBLIVION



The people of Jadovno take the Holy Cross to the Slana Cape on the Croatian island of Pag, for Serbs who were executed there in 1941.

„Cross over the pit“



„Slaughter“



JADOVNO PROCLAMATION

We, the descendants and the supporters of the victims of Jadovno, in 2010, seven decades after the criminal massacre, genocide committed against the Serbian people by the Independent State of Croatia (ISC), declare the 24th June the Day of commemoration and of Jadovno 1941.

In the area dominated by that monstrous state, there is hardly a single Serbian family whose either direct or indirect relatives did not innocently perish in one of the execution sites of this notorious creation.

The complex of death camps Gospić – Jadovno – Pag was the first carefully planned center for killing in the Independent State of Croatia.

Thus this crime has become both the historical and social issue that we must approach with all possible dignity and responsibility.

It was nowhere after that, nor in a shorter time that madness would triumph with mass executions. Natural circumstances of the terrain in a dire way prepared and favoured this crime, because in a relatively small area there is an abundance of Karst pits into which the victims that were murdered mainly by hands, by cutting throats or beaten to death by a sledgehammer, were thrown. The victims mainly included the Serbs and the Jews although there were others, too.

They belonged to all nomenclatures and occupations of the time. This is where 73 priests of the Serb Orthodox Church were murdered in the most horrific way, too, which means, every third of the total liquidated in the ISC.

Since they were brought from all areas and included all social structures, this precedent set the rule for genocide procedures and the application of racial laws against non-Croats in the ISC.

The fact that this was the first criminal undertaking to be committed en masse, and that it was abandoned for pure technical reasons, due to the expansion of the Italian reoccupation area, makes this mass crime the first practice of inhuman madness that has neither been condemned nor thought about in the historical sense.

On the contrary, it was neglected to the extent of denial. This forces us, as their relatives, to remind the public with great pain in our hearts and with the best of intentions, to stand in solidarity with us in the joint commemoration.

The dead have no voice and cannot defend themselves, as they had been unable to defend their own lives.

It is our common duty to defend their temporary abodes, to respect their earthly remains, erect the monuments and memorial crosses, to pray for them and denounce crime by all civilized means.

At the place of the Jadovno camp, on 24th June 2010.

Briefly on the Gospić – Jadovno – Pag of 1941. Death Camp Complex

As early as April 1941, the authorities of the Independent State of Croatia (ISC) legalized the crime through a series of laws and began to set up concentration camps: “Danica” near Koprivnica and “Gospic” in the Lika region.

These camps were organized long before 25th November 1941, when the leader of the ISC, Ante Pavelić, issued a legal decree on sending the so-called inappropriate persons to detention in concentration and labour camps. With the support and help of the local Croatian population, on the very next day after the proclamation of the ICS, that is, on 11th April, they started arresting the Serbs from Gospić and the surrounding area, and, beating them heavily, held them hostage in the District Court Penitentiary (the so-called Gericht) and its fenced out yard, where, about 2.500-3000 people could be detained for a short time.

Already in May and early June, the Ustashas and other Croatian armed forces began to deport hundreds of arrested men, women and children, mainly Serbs, but also Jews, from the entire territory of the ISC by train, in cattle cars. The area of the Gospić camp soon became too small, so the ICS Ministry of Internal Affairs, under the leadership of Andrija Artuković, built four new camps in the remote areas of the Velebit and on the island of Pag, thus forming the notorious Gospić – Jadovno – Pag death camp complex.



Memorial plaque at Cape Slana on the island of Pag, for no less than 8.000 victims. It was built and destroyed three times in 1991, 2010, and 2013. It has not been restored to this day.

“Jadovno” death camp was founded in the first half of May 1941. on the Velebit, 22 km north-west of Gospić, on a clearing called Čačić-dolac, 1200m above sea level, deep in the forest under the open sky; it was 50 m long and 25 wide. At the beginning of June, this area was extended to 90x70m, and then on 24th of June to a final area of 180x90 meters, secured with 4m high double barbed wire.

Nearby is one of the karst pits where the victims were murdered.



The village of Smiljan, Lika Region, on 19th June 2021, on Jadovno 1941. Memorial Day

At the same time they built a camp for Serbs and another for Jews on the island of Pag at Cape Slana. The camp complex included the collection point at Gospić railway station as well as the collection camps Ovčara and Stupačinovo on Baške Oštarije, as well as numerous pits in the Lika region, the Velebit Mountain and the foothills of the Velebit, as locations for the liquidations.

In the village of Metajna on the island of Pag, in three existing buildings, they built the first camp for women and children in World War II.

According to research by Dr. Đuro Zatezalo, from 11th April to 21st August 1941, that is to say in only 132 days of its existence, 42.246 men, women and children from the entire territory of the ISC were abducted and no less than 40.123 of them were murdered in the cruelest way. Of these, no less than 38.010 are Serbs, including 73 priests of the Serbian Orthodox Church.



The criminals did not succeed in murdering 2,123 of them because they were prevented from doing so by the Italian fascists' reoccupation of the territory, so that they were transported by trains to Jastrebarsko camp from 19-21 August 1941, where a number of women and children remained imprisoned, and the others were deported to the newly built Jasenovac camp and were among the first prisoners of the Krapje and Bročice camps (Jasenovac 1 and 2 camps).

The remains of the unfortunate victims were never exhumed, identified or buried from the karst pits. And the few monuments erected after the Second World War were completely destroyed in the war of the 90s.

Since the end of 2009 the Association of Citizens Jadovno 1941 has had many activities to try to reveal the truth about the Genocide crime perpetrated in that area, and to find and mark the positions of Karst pits and other mass graves, renew the very modest monument legacy and preserve the memory of the innocent victims.

Since 2010, the Association has been organizing annual prayer and commemorative events in late June, in the Lika region, on the Velebit Mountain and on the island of Pag, to commemorate Jadovno 1941 Memorial Day. At ten locations of mass executions, the association has erected wooden Orthodox crosses.