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How to Remember Jasenovac after 65 Years

Summary

After 1945 the state government organized silence about the genocide against Serbs, Jews and Roma in Independent State of Croatia (NDH) 1941–1945. Inadequate "conducted memory" under the auspices of brotherhood and unity and the socialist ideology had frozen the memory of the Second World War, or "fragmented private memory" is contrary to the "official memory", which sees war only as a "national liberation and socialist revolution". Such a selective memory, which separates parts of society from the official remembrance, created a gap between private and official memories and led to the complete dehumanisation of victims whose identity is often reduced to the level of political, revolutionary identity, or even just the number. Once a year commemoration can enable people to forget the horror and the challenges of the Holocaust and genocide. And therefore, in order not to be forgotten and neglected, like it happens with the socialistic monuments, the remembrance should grow into a collective and cultural memory. It is necessary to live Jasenovac, as well as to live Kosovo. This means in daily life to remember the martyrs of Jasenovac. Precisely, the holder of such a memory in the period of the existence of Communist Yugoslavia was the Serbian Orthodox Church (SOC). It is the liturgical memory and constant mention of the victims confirmed their identities for which they suffered. The SOC performed the victims' rehumanization. This experience of the Church is revealed in the following words: "innocent victims of Jasenovac, the Holy Serbian New-Martyrs of Jasenovac, live in our hearts and souls, in our prayer and reference memory".

The Jewish Holocaust memory is located in the biblical context, and thus in the very cultural matrix of the Jewish people. Besides this, they found a model on how to transfer this experience to the whole society. Holocaust Education is on a high level. There are a series of rituals related to the Holocaust that is gradually branded in the awareness of the entire nation.

When it comes to Jasenovac, the Church was able to put Jasenovac in the church-folk memory that is a cultural pattern of the Serbian people. It still was reduced to only believing Orthodox Serbs, so that this in itself was not enough. The social community has not done anything. What we are facing today and the future generations of Serbs is to find a way that the existing church-folk memory grow into a cultural memory. This is precisely the pattern how a periodically remembrance can be transported into collective memory and cultural memory.

Education about the Holocaust and genocide is necessary to create an awareness of young people what is Holocaust and genocide, to have sensitivity to any kind of xenophobia and racism, to recognize the sign, which can lead to the Holocaust and genocide, to prevent that this really never happens again.