

Maria DEL MONTE

Preliminary hearing

19 march 1971



« I remember in particular a German SS man, he had an arm missing one hand and he had a hook and he would use it to hit people. With the other he would hit prisoners with the butt of his revolver.

I had been closed in a cell that had a window that overlooked the crematorium ovens, so therefore I can state with absolute certainty that I saw hundreds and hundreds of people going through the door that led to the oven».

«Everyone who I saw going through to the room that housed the oven, and there were many of them, I never saw them come out again, I was convinced

in fact, I was sure they were being killed inside there. In any case, they nearly always arrived half-stunned from the savage blows they had received.«The German SS entered... that room supplied with bottles of cognac or various liquors, we could always see the smoke rising from the chimney, and there was the smell of burning human flesh. I remember one specific violent attack on a Jew, called Felice, he was first beaten round the head by German SS officers with their pistols, and then dragged into the oven-room - from that moment on, I never saw him around the Risiera again.»





Jože SLOSAR

Statement

18 Feb 1976

« I will speak about my family members as they were in the Risiera, and I was not. The Germans captured us all at our house in Novokračine in Fiume, located between Trieste and Fiume. My brothers were partisans, and the other relatives were arrested as a result as well. My father Antonio, my older brother (also Antonio) and my younger brother, 14-year old Mariano, my mother (who was called Maria) and my sister (also called Maria) plus my

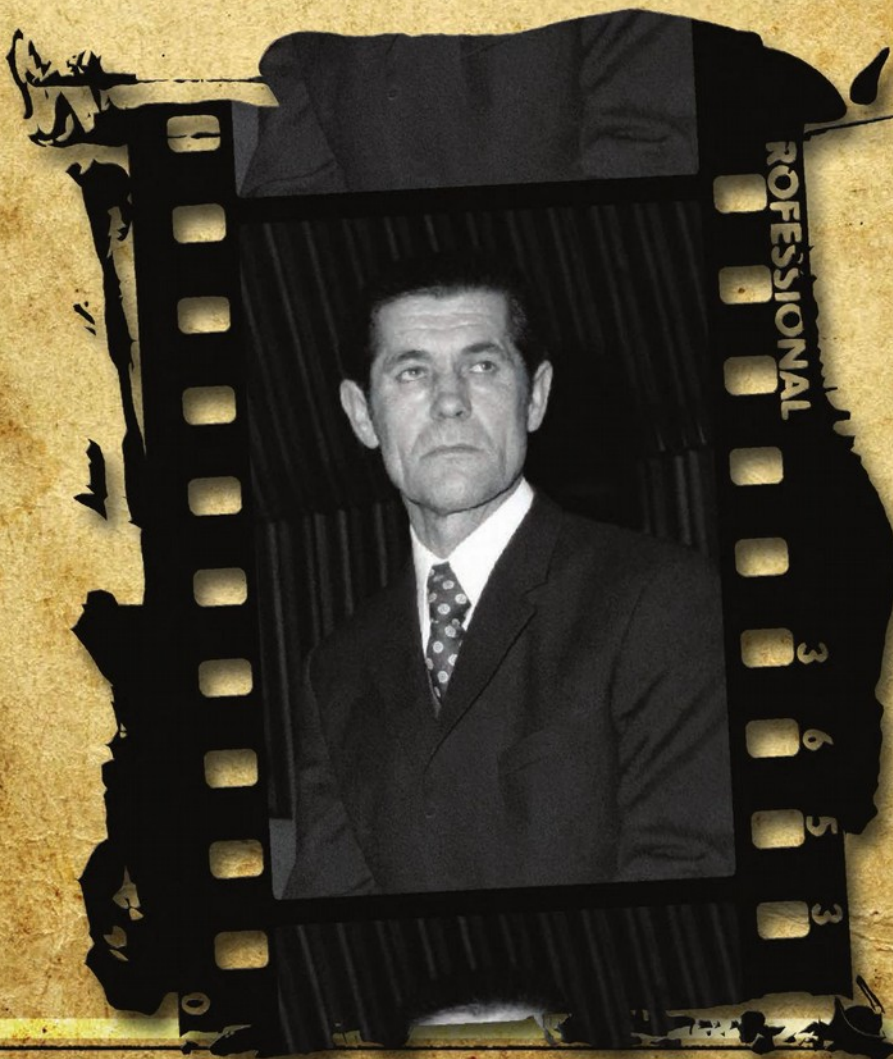
88-year old grandfather, called Antonio. It was the 4th of May 1944».

«My brother Antonio, together with Franjo, had been captured eight days before the rest were rounded up, in a bunker that they had been hiding in.

Both were immediately deported to Germany, and only Franjo ever came home».

«My grandfather, parents, sister and brother Mariano were taken to the Risiera, where they met their deaths.

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Giuseppe GIONECHETTI

Statement

26 February 1976



Police officer detained in the Risiera from April 1944 for 43 days, and then deported.

« I was taken to the Risiera and I was locked in prison cell n. 4.

Based on information given to me by a Ukranian soldier, the unhappy prisoners were taken to the boilerhouse, after being stunned by blows from a club, [...] and then they were killed; the bodies were laid out one on top of the other in a pile,

soaked in gasoline and burnt.

Ukranian collaborators arrived from Trieste, along with members of the AK. According to various witnesses, the Ukranians were in charge of executions in the Risiera.

Thinking back, the mass executions took place on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Saturdays. »





Franc ŠIRCELJ

Statement

18 February 1976

Partisan, held prisoner in Risiera

« I was captured on 18 November 1944 by the SS at Castelnuovo, and placed in a truck along with other prisoners, including one Italian prisoner.

We were taken to the Risiera, and closed in a large room the next day, we were taken to a storehouse where we undressed, and were beaten; then, we were taken one by one to a cell. I didn't hear any shouting».

«From what I learnt from Stojan, a prisoner allowed to leave his cell once a day to go and

look after the horses, the Germans would use a huge wooden club to carry out the executions of the prisoners».

«There were mass executions every two days, they used the truck engines to mask the screams of the victims.

Once, ten of us were taken from our cells, to a parking lot where Schultze was. Me and another prisoner, we were about to enter a nearby building when Schultze shouted at us, and we made to undress; then he just told us to back to our cells. »

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Luisa DEGANUTTI

STATEMENT

23 February 1976



Sister of Cecilia Deganutti, a Resistance fighter in Friuli, who was killed in the Risiera

« Even if Cecilia spoke very little about her activities, our house was often full of people involved in the underground resistance. But it was never used as an arms-depot».

«On the night of 6 January 1945, around 10pm, our doorbell rang. I went to open it, and found myself in front of three people holding pistols. Dressed in civilian clothes, they must have been members of one of the German security or espionage services. One was blonde with a moustache, blue eyes, 30-35 years old, about average height and he was speaking in [illegible].

His colleague had brown hair and eyes, he average height, he spoke Italian very well, almost with a Venetian accent. There was a woman, brown-haired, attractive, average height, she spoke Italian very well, with an accent from Trieste».

«They went straight to my sister Cecilia's room, they woke her up and made her dress. Then Fritz (the blonde agent) took her to a room, and interrogated her nearly half an hour.





Luisa DEGANUTTI

Statement

23 February 1976

« From what I know, Cecilia was taken to the prison in via Spalato in Udine, but shortly after she was moved to the Coroneo prison in Trieste. From here, she was taken to the SS HQ in via Carducci [...]. She was tortured, I believe they pulled out her nails, and injured her eyes. I know that in the Coroneo prison, she was treated by an eye-specialist. We heard about Cecilia's detention in Trieste from Stefania (Stef) Arming, a teacher who German very well, and she sent us a signed letter from Cecilia, asking us for our news».

«One day, my sister Lorenzina bumped into one of the Germans who had arrested Cecilia, while she was travelling in Trieste (he also confirmed that he was based at a local station). This was the man described earlier, and he had recognised her, as she had been at home on the night of the raid – he threatened to arrest her as well».

«The news of her death in the Risiera, and the date (4 April 1945) we were given, were later confirmed by photocopies of German documents found after the war.»

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Vilim VIRAG

STATEMENT

17 February 1976



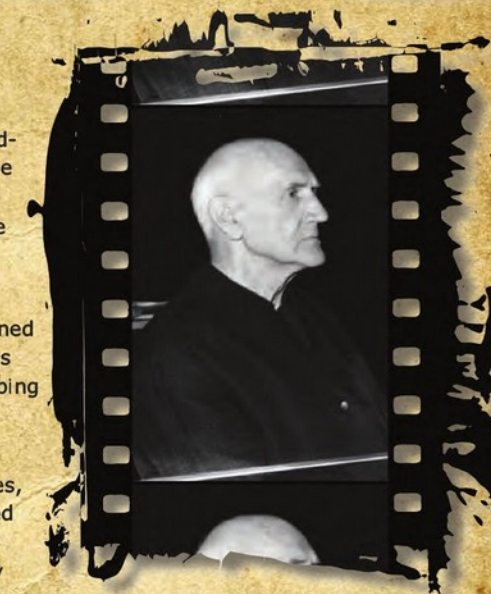
Prisoner in the Risiera, January to May 1944.

« Around March, not before, during the night, we started to hear motor engines being revved at high level and dogs barking. Moreover, more than one loud-speaker was playing music at full volume. At the same time, a number of people were taken from the large rooms and also from ours on the 2nd floor. They were frog-marched to another part of the complex of buildings used as the prison.

We heard horrible screams, which the sounds mentioned before could not fully conceal (at least not from us, as we were on the second floor). The strange and disturbing thing, however, was that I never heard the sound of gunshots, although some of the others did»

«These events, by which I mean these death sentences, happened more and more often. Each time it happened after April, the following day I noticed a strong smell of burning flesh, and I saw the chimney of the factory emitting a thick, oppressive smoke.

«Of the many people removed from our room, I remember a paralysed prisoner, whom they dragged out into the courtyard, screaming with pain. She was an old woman, around sixty or seventy years old,



born and raised in Trieste, an Italian citizen. She had been brought into our room only a couple of days before she was dragged off and murdered.»

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Darinka VIRAG

Preliminary hearing

8 September 1970



Imprisoned in the Risiera, January-May 1944.

« Two Italian soldiers were shot dead, in front of me and my husband. I often heard screaming and the sound of truck engines being revved from the Risiera.»



Marta ASCOLI

STATEMENT

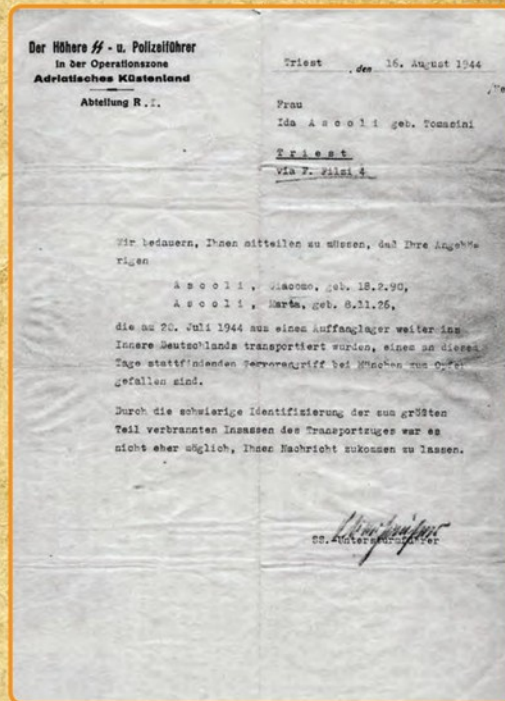
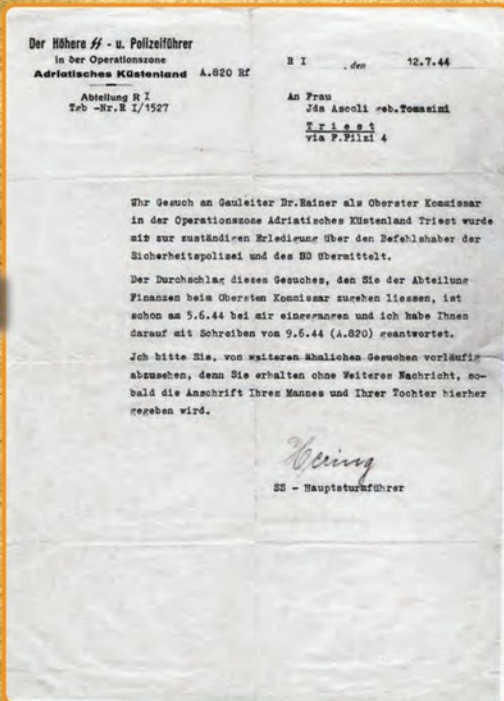
25 February 1976

Held in the Risiera from 19 to 30 March 1944, then deported to Auschwitz.

« She was a simple soul, but my mother looked all over for us, and via Reiss, she managed to speak to Oberhauser, but without result. Next, she managed to contact the Gauleiter, who asked the Risiera, whom my mother had already asked for information about us without effect, to reply; via Reiss, the Gauleiter told her to await an answer that would be sent to her.

A letter signed by Hering arrived, and then, since my mother continued with her courageous enquiries, another arrived, signed by Oberhauser. I attach a photocopy of that original letter, along with the letter signed by Hering (in both the original German and in Italian translation), for the court »

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To Mrs Ida Ascoli nee Tommasini
Trieste - Via Filzi, 4

16 August, 1944

We are sorry to have to inform you that your relatives ASCOLI Giacomo born 18.2.1890, ASCOLI Marta born 8.11.1926, were transported on 20 July 1944 to a transit camp inside Germany where they fell victim to a terrorist attack outside Munich on the same day. Due to difficulties in identifying the occupants of the convoy they were in, who were badly burned, it is not possible to furnish you with any further information.

SS Untersturmführer
[Oberhauser]

Paolo SERENI

STATEMENT

20 February 1976



Arrested in Venice under the racial laws, and held in the Risiera from October 1944 to January 1945. Only member of his family to survive.

« When I was deported on 12 January 1945, there were around 40 of us, including some children, we were made to walk from the Risiera to the station. We were loaded on a cattletruck, and spent four days travelling to Ravensbrück. I do not remember if any food was distributed to us during the

journey. We were only allowed to get off the train for a call of nature, and to draw some water from the fountains»

«I am sure that the guard detail that accompanied us from San Sabba to the station was made up of German and Italian SS»

Paolo Sereni's mother, Giannina, was arrested on 21 September 1944 simply because she was the wife of a Jew. She was murdered in February 1945, when, according to the documents issued by the Upper SD, she had asked for the restitution of 30,000 lire that had been confiscated from her, and which the accused had taken for themselves (as she was "Aryan", she was not subject to the racial discrimination laws.





Aldo OSTERMANN

STATEMENT

17 February 1976

« I can confirm that I carried out an inspection, in my role as secretary of the Jewish Community, right after the Nazis fled, during which I was able to identify the remains of an oven, located at the base of a chimney stack, if I remember correctly, it had the entrance on the left
They were the remains of the materials left over after an explosion

In an opening, there were hooks hanging down, which still had organic matter attached to them, and so I can exclude the possibility that this room had been a cold-room. The councillor who came with me took a number of photographs»
«We had handed over this convincing material in outline form, and other materials, first to the Yugoslav authorities and then to the Allied forces»

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Luciano HESSE

STATEMENT

17 February 1976



Interpreter at SD HQ located in piazza Oberdan; in 1943, he had been involved in the liberation of Benito Mussolini from Gran Sasso.

« I do not remember the names of the commanders nor the people under investigation, some of whom were sent to their deaths at the Risiera, as I have heard too many names of different people »

« The Nazis behaved in a particularly harsh manner, sometimes hitting the prisoners »

« I do not know if there were torture chambers. People were sent to the Coroneo for deportation to the camps »

The witness was first warned by the court, and then on 3 March, was arrested in the courthouse for refusal to testify.



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Augusta REISS

Preliminary hearing

3 April 1970



Interpreter at the Risiera di San Sabba

« The executions of prisoners at the Risiera were by means of hanging. In the so-called garage in the Risiera, there was a rope with a noose hanging from a wooden beam in the centre of the ceiling. I think that in the period under discussion, there were around 10 executions, at least as far as what I know of these people. I don't know what happened to their bodies, but I am sure that they were not taken to the cemetery, nor did they leave the Risiera; so, it is possible and plausible to think that they were burned in the boiler-room »

Statement of 24 February 1976

« There was no crematorium oven at the Risiera just a simple boiler-room for the central heating »



Judges and historians - a difficult dialogue

HEARING

4 March 1976

Court President Domenico Maltese issued the following warning to the historians before they testified.

« You are historians, we are judges - possibly history has a concept of historical causality, but in law, there is the concept of legal causality. In the difficult navigation of this trial, our compass will be represented by the principle of legal causality - we will be speaking of murder and conspiracy to murder, a specific and particular context that

should not be forgotten when you make your statements. Obviously, this does not mean that you will not be able to express yourselves with all the necessary narrative completeness. That is all I wanted to say to you, just this brief methodological point »

The statements by historians, aimed at placing the Risiera di San Sabba in its proper historical context, created tensions with the Court by insisting on the central role of local collaborators in its operations. Pictures, from the left: Tone Ferenc, Galliano Fogar, Mario Pacor, Enzo Collotti

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Alessandro Canestrini - lawyer

Closing Statement

26 April 1976



« Excluding [the issue of] collaboration is to exclude a fact now accepted as historical reality from Denmark to France, from Russia to Great Britain, that without willing collaborators, the German occupation of Europe would not have been possible. Without the collaborators, the German occupation would have lasted all of one morning, for a thousand different political reasons, and above all military reasons
[...]

I am persuaded that the lessons in morality and culture that we received from the generations that preceded us, and the message, the torch, that we wish to transmit to the next, lies precisely in this symbol of our honour, our dignity, to probe the wound with our finger, and to say that in a trial, no-one is untouchable or immune, [] why [] can we not say that [] the Salo' Fascist Federation of the Italian Social Republic in Trieste was a hotbed of denunciations to the Germans? »





Sergio KOSTORIS

CLOSING STATEMENT

30 March 1976

« Mr President, your honours, I would like to share the opinion offered by Simon Wiesenthal recently, that this trial, exactly because it comes 30 years after the facts in a world that has now documented these events so fully, represents a historical-legal event on the same level of importance as the international trial of the Nazi war criminals at Nuremberg - it is also true that it was also at Nuremberg that the first, most infamous racial laws were announced by the Nazi regime, and that it was in fact here in Trieste that Mussolini announced the Italian racial laws, in

his significant speech of 18 September 1938. Given all of this, in my closing statement, I cannot but draw your attention to, to confess to you, the discomfort that I feel in the light of the clear knowledge that the tools at my disposal are so inadequate compared to these events even from their specific historical context, of the methods of research and inquiry, even of the most resonant expression of the task imposed on us by an "extra ordinem" trial that seeks to be and above all must be a re-
evocation »

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The Lawyers

HEARING

16 February 1976



AGOSTINO MAJO (Gorizia): Luciano Frausin; Arrigo Zanetti.

SENATOR UMBERTO TERRACINI (Roma): Pierina Luca widow of Frausin; Stefania Facchin, widow of Colarich; Josef Slosar (and relatives).

ALBERTO MALAGUGINI (Milano): Emma Pahor (nee Marusic).

ALFREDO BIONDI (Genoa) and **SERGIO TRAUNER** (Trieste): Giuseppe Zancolich.

SERGIO TRAUNER (Trieste): Libero Marassi; Ida Samec (nee Ciacchi); Franc Ferfolja.

SERGIO KOSTORIS (Trieste): Sergio Piperno Beer (Jewish community); Maria Visintini (nee Robusti).

NEREO BATTELLO (Gorizia): Mario Tardivo; Vekoslava Slavec, widow of Ribarich; Wilma Tabarin; Anamarija Slosar; Maria Velušček; Carmela Velassi.

PIERPAOLO LONGO (Trieste): Michele Peciarich.

ENZO MORGERA (Trieste): Albino Orel; Josef Franceskin.

GINO PINCHERLE (Trieste): Mario Larisch; Mario Karis.

EMANUELE FLORA (Trieste): Attilio Cattaruzzi; Maria Concetta Gignate (nee Boldi); Wanda Fonti; Pietro Caleffi (Aned); Maria Lorenzi (widow of Neri); Patrizia Facchini (nee Ricci); Assunta Tonelli (nee Basèggio).

ALDO TERPIN (Trieste): Franca Tul (nee Cepar); Ana Ferfolja (nee Semolic); Damo Clarici; Clara Petaros (nee Sulli); Stojan Pettiroso.

FRANCESCO SKERLJ (Trieste): Guerrino Miot.

DRAGO ŠTOKA (Trieste): Felicita Adami.

EGONE FLORIDAN (TS): Alessandro Antonic; Felice Colja.

BOGDAN BERDON (Trieste): Francesca Ferletti, widow of Misigoj; Marta Ribarič (nee Jelerčič).

GIOVANNI GODNIC (Trieste): Maria Leghissa (nee Tence); Sonia Spanger.

GIANFRANCO MATEJKA (Trieste): Giulia Jullien, widow of Fonda.

PASQUALE CIVELLO (Trieste): Daniela Marzodini, nee Colotto.

PIETRO SANZIN (Gorizia): Franjo Slosar (and relatives).

ALBERTO COSATTINI (Udine): Luisa Deganutti, nee De Roja.

DUSAN MOGOROVICH (Trieste): Bartolomeo Misigoj.

MARIO BERCÈ (Trieste): Emilija Ferfolja nee Marussic.

ENZIO VOLLI (Trieste): Nedda Miot nee Sossi; Luigia Zupancic.

ANGELO KUKANJA (Trieste): Giuseppina Bencina, widow of Cattaruzzi; Vida Semenic, widow of Ribarič; Marija Tul nee Smolnikar.

SERGIO PACOR (Trieste): Stanislava Furlan, widow of Sanic/Sani; Ema Franceskin, widow of Perdec.

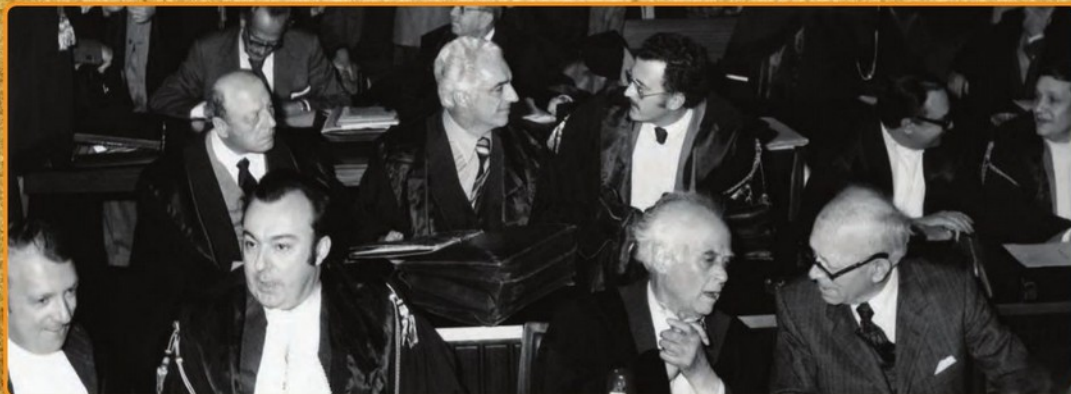
ALESSANDRO CANESTRINI (Rovereto): Ercole Stoini; Aloisa Ferfolja; Aldo Zaccaria; Lidia Ferfaglia; Igor De Kleva.

NOMINATED PUBLIC DEFENDERS:

FRANCESCO FILOGRANA: Josef Oberhauser.

SERGIO PADOVAN: August Dietrich Allers.

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Journalists

Tribunal of Trieste

Many newspapers followed the course of the trial with great interest, publishing regular accounts of developments in local, national and foreign newspapers and magazines.



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Risiera di San Sabba (1945): macerie del locale dove si trovava il forno crematorio

Risiera di San Sabba (1945) the ruins where the camp crematorium was located

Concept and realisation:

Dunja Nanut - Franco Cecotti

Research committee:

Tristano Matta, Stefano Fattorini, Dunja Nanut, Franco Cecotti, Riccardo Goruppi

Involved organisations:

Aned – Associazione Nazionale ex Deportati, provincial branch of Trieste
IrsmlFVG – Istituto regionale per la storia del movimento di liberazione nel Friuli Venezia Giulia
Nšk – Odsek za zgodovino – Narodna in študijska knjižnica / Sezione Storica - Biblioteca nazionale slovena e degli Studi
Comune di Trieste – Civico Museo della Risiera di San Sabba
Janko Furlan e Mario Magajna

Trial photographs:

Archive and photographic documentation:

Aned, IrsmlFVG, Nšk

Cartography

Franco Cecotti

Graphics:

Paolo Magnani

Typographers:

Adriatica

Witnesses, Judges, Spectators - the Risiera di San Sabba trial exhibition from Trieste 1976 was made possible thanks to the contribution of members of the ANED Trieste branch.

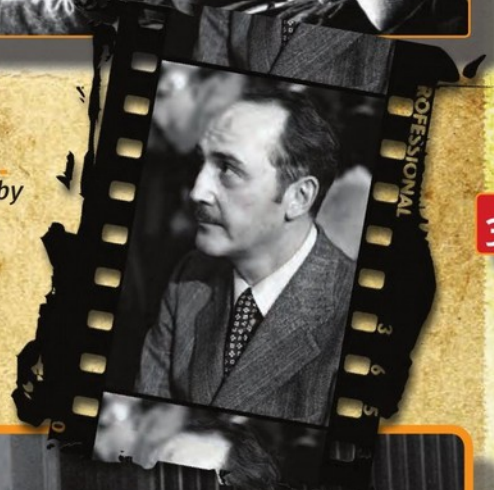
Trieste, January 2013

Spectators

Tribunal of Trieste



All 31 sittings of the court were followed with great interest by a packed public gallery. Some hearings were attended by councils and resistance organisations, including the then mayor of Marzabotto (pictured right).



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