



10 February 2020, "Il Giorno del Ricordo" What is this Italian solemnity about?

Il Giorno del Ricordo (Remembrance Day) is an Italian national civil solemnity, celebrated on February 10th. Established with the law 30 March 2004 n. 92, it aims to "preserve and renew the memory of the tragedy of the Italians and of all the victims of the foibe, of the exodus of their lands by the Istrians and Dalmatians after the Second World War and of the more complex story of the eastern border". These are events in the territories of northeastern Italy on the borders of what is now Slovenia. On April 6, 1941, the Axis countries invaded Yugoslavia. The country, already divided, was dismembered, and Italy occupied some parts of Dalmatia, Montenegro and Slovenia. In Slovenia, the Italians established the 'Ljubljana province': the population responded with armed guerrilla warfare. The fascist reaction was brutal: massacres of civilians and fires in entire villages. In February 1942, the city of Ljubljana was surrounded by a wall of barbed wire raised by the fascist occupiers and manned by control towers: in this way the city was besieged; adult males were captured and locked up in concentration camps. Many of the survivors joined the Yugoslav anti-fascist resistance, under the command of Josip Broz (battle name: Tito). This Communist resistance from April 1941 was taking on the characteristics of an anti-fascist military formation, the People's Liberation Army of Yugoslavia (1942). To complicate matters there was also the presence of the Yugoslav Army JVUO, also called Cetnic, a rival, monarchist and nationalist organization, tending to be anti-Nazi and initially supported by the British, but ready to collaborate with the Italian fascists against the partisans of Tito and against the Ustasha, Croatian ultra-nationalists who claimed Italian Dalmatia. Soon, the allies only recognized Tito's army. After the armistice (September 8, 1943), many Italians would return ruinously to their homeland, prefiguring the subsequent exodus. As it freed parts of the occupied territories, the People's Army of Tito organized popular government committees, laying the foundations for the future of Yugoslavia. A future that foresaw, towards many Italians in Istria and Dalmatia, a ruthless showdown that would have occurred with the slaughter of the foibe. The foibe are natural cavities, even hundreds of meters deep, that exist in the Karst region. As early as the autumn of 1943 many Italians were killed by throwing them into the sinkholes. With the conquest of the cities of Trieste and Gorizia in 1945 by Tito, there were further waves of violence and people killed in the sinkholes. One of the symbolic places of the 1945 wave of violence is the Pozzo di Basovizza, today a national monument, in which an unknown number of victims of Tito's army were thrown. Following the 1947 Treaty of Paris, Italy ceded a large part of Istria, Rijeka, the territory of Zadar, the Gorizia and Trieste Karst, and the upper part of the Soča valley to Yugoslavia. Trieste, with the surrounding municipalities and a small part of Istria, instead passed to the Free Territory of Trieste, divided into two areas and managed by the international community (since 1954 only from Italy and Yugoslavia). Since 1943 some Italians had started to leave Istria and Dalmatia, but the majority emigrated in two waves: the first between 1947 (signature of the Paris Treaty) and 1951, the second wave around 1954 (London memorandum). The emigrants could not bring anything with them because their assets were confiscated by the Yugoslav authorities. The most involved cities were Zadar, Pula and Rijeka, and in general the coastal communities, where the Italians had been living since long time. It is not easy to establish exactly how many Italians participate in the exodus, but the most reliable data oscillate around 250,000 people.

Resources



[Don't miss the exclusive interview with Antonio Ballarin, second generation exile and president of the Federation of Associations of Italians exiled from Istria, Fiume \(Rijeka\) and Dalmatia by Pierardo Davini](#)



Pierardo Davini, USITF Chief Rome Correspondent has been a journalist and a tv reporter of Rai Tg3 news



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