

66 | 2 (2026)

PRISPEVKI

ZA NOVEJŠO ZGODOVINO

2



INŠTITUT ZA NOVEJŠO ZGODOVINO

PRISPEVKI
ZA NOVEJŠO
ZGODOVINO

Prispevki za novejšo zgodovino

Contributions to the Contemporary History

Contributions a l'histoire contemporaine

Beiträge zur Zeitgeschichte

UDC/UDK 94(497.4) "18/19 "
ISSN 0353-0329 (tiskana izdaja)
2463-7807 (spletna izdaja); <https://ojs.inz.si/pnz>
DOI <https://doi.org/10.51663/pnz.66.2>

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Izdajatelj/Published by: Inštitut za novejšo zgodovino/Institute of Contemporary History,
Privoz 11, SI-1000 Ljubljana, tel. (386) 01 200 31 20, fax (386) 01 200 31 60,
e-mail: jure.gasparic@inz.si

Sofinancer/Financially supported by: Javna agencija za znanstvenoraziskovalno in inovacijsko
dejavnost Republike Slovenije/ Slovenian Research and Innovation Agency

Računalniški prelom/Typesetting: Studio Aleja d.o.o.

Tisk/Printed by: Medium d.o.o.

Cena/Price: 15,00 EUR

Zamenjave/Exchange: Inštitut za novejšo zgodovino/Institute of Contemporary History,
Privoz 11, SI-1000 Ljubljana

Prispevki za novejšo zgodovino so indeksirani v/are indexed in: Scopus, ERIH Plus, Historical
Abstract, ABC-CLIO, PubMed, CEEOL, Ulrich's Periodicals Directory, EBSCOhost

Številka vpisa v razvid medijev: 720

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Fotografija na naslovnici:

Pogled na mlin v Thörlu na avstrijskem Štajerskem, olje na lesu neznanega slikarja, okoli 1850.

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Gabriele Mastrolillo*

Sacralisation and Monumentalisation of World War I in the Isonzo/Soča Region

IZVLEČEK

SAKRALIZACIJA IN MONUMENTALIZACIJA PRVE SVETOVNE VOJNE V POSOČJU

Članek obravnava monumentalizacijo prve svetovne vojne v Posočju (danes razdeljenem med Italijo in Slovenijo), ki so jo v medvojnem obdobju spodbujali italijanska vlada in lokalne oblasti. Po zmagi Italije v vojni sta liberalna država in zlasti Mussolinijev režim spodbujala kult patriotizma, ki je podpiral diktatorjeva prizadevanja, da bi fašizem predstavil kot legitimnega dediča te zmage. Ta ideološki okvir se je izrazil v gradnji treh večjih kostnic v Sredipolju, Oslavju in Kobaridu, pa tudi v spomenikih, posvečenih posameznim vojakom. Namen teh spomenikov je bil sakralizirati in monumentalizirati vojno in padle v njej, ki so bili prikazani kot »junaki« domovine. Članek vsebuje pregled najpomembnejših in najbolj značilnih spominskih obeležij ter se osredotoča na zgodovino gradnje nekaterih od njih, ki so bili izbrani kot študije primerov z analizo arhivske dokumentacije. Slednja izvira predvsem iz prefektore v Gorici in je bila delno predložena kabinetu predsedstva Sveta ministrov Kraljevine Italije.

Ključne besede: Posočje, prva svetovna vojna, kulturna dediščina vojne, fašizem

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the monumentalisation of World War I in the Isonzo/Soča region (today divided between Italy and Slovenia), promoted by the Italian government and local authorities during the interwar period. Following Italy's victory in the war, the liberal state – and even more emphatically Mussolini's regime – fostered a patriotic cult that supported the dictator's efforts to present Fascism as the rightful heir to that victory. This ideological framework found material expression in the construction of three major charnel houses at Redipuglia/Sredipolje, Oslavia/Oslavje, and Caporetto/Kobarid, as well as in monuments dedicated to individual soldiers. These memorials sought to both sacralise and monumentalise the war and its fallen, who were portrayed as "heroes" of the homeland. The article provides an overview of the most significant and emblematic memorial sites. It focuses on the construction histories of some of them – selected as case studies – by analysing archival documentation, primarily produced by the Prefecture of Gorizia and partially submitted to the Cabinet of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers of the Kingdom of Italy.

Keywords: Isonzo/Soča Region, World War I, cultural heritage of war, fascism

Introduction

World War I marked a turning point from the preceding era. For decades, it has been narrated as an epic and heroic adventure set in the Alpine landscape, and (at least until the 1960s) as proof of harmony and national unity.¹ It holds primary importance in Italian history because it enabled the young nation-state (founded only fifty-seven years before the end of the 'Great War') to acquire additional territories inhabited predominantly (in some cases almost entirely) by populations of Italian language and culture. Consequently, it gave concrete form to irredentist aspirations that had developed both in Italy and among Italians living in the Austro-Hungarian monarchy since the mid-nineteenth century.²

During the 1920s, liberal governments, and especially the Fascist regime, together with members of the local notability, promoted an extensive campaign to monumentalise the war, particularly along Italy's eastern border (or, to use a more neutral expression, the Upper Adriatic frontier). This process unfolded within the broader context of postwar reconstruction in that area, which had been profoundly shaped by the conflict.³ It had already begun during the final stages of the war but gained

1 Cf. Marco Mondini, *La guerra italiana. Partire, raccontare, tornare 1914–18* (Bologna: il Mulino, 2018), 9–10.

2 In the broader collection of literature, see especially the recent monographs by Roberto Spazzali, *Gli ultimi del Risorgimento. Democratici, garibaldini, mazziniani tra irredentismo e rivoluzione* (Milan: Ares, 2024) and Fabio Todero, *La patria alla frontiera. Storia dell'irredentismo adriatico* (Rome–Bari: Laterza, 2025).

3 Cf. Petra Svoljšak and Petra Kolenc, "Obnavljanje Goriške po prvi svetovni vojni in vloga arhitekta Maksa Fabianija," *Prispevki za novejšo zgodovino* 63, No. 3 (2023): 10–30.

renewed momentum following the March on Rome, for obvious political reasons: Benito Mussolini appropriated the memory of the war to present Fascism as the direct heir to this victorious conflict. The Fascist leader thus instrumentalised World War I,⁴ turning it into an identity-forming and legitimising element of Fascism, a myth and a central component of the regime's rituals, and employing it to consolidate (and in some cases even to construct) Italian national consciousness in a newly acquired area such as the 'Venezia Giulia' (Julian March/Region).⁵ Not least, it served as a vehicle for the Italianisation of a region inhabited by Italians, Slovenians, and Croats. In this area as well, the processing of the great collective mourning became intertwined with its instrumentalisation, in a symbolic confrontation that played a crucial role in political struggle.⁶ To this end, the Fascist regime promoted a full-fledged mythologisation of the war by ordering the construction of charnel houses and 'sacred zones' and by endorsing requests to erect specific monuments in memory of specific fallen soldiers or units, to standardise the collective memory of the conflict and present the fallen as 'martyrs' of the homeland. This effort followed a precise programme for the monumentalisation of war sites, focusing especially on Gorizia/Gorica and its surroundings, as it is the main city of the Isonzo/Soča Region. This programme was drawn up in 1928 by General Giovanni Faracovi, Extraordinary Commissioner for Honours to the War Dead, whose central focus was the construction of a limited number of charnel houses to replace the numerous cemeteries along the front.⁷ This happened following the criteria "*di Perpetuità che vuol dire durata millenaria delle opere e altrettanto millenaria conservazione dei gloriosi Resti [...]* Individualità poiché ciascuna salma identificata avrà la sua tomba [...] Monumentalità in quanto si tratterà di monumenti severi e solenni"⁸ ("of Perpetuity, meaning the millennia-long duration of the works and the

4 See Fabio Todero, "War and Memory: The Fascist Instrumentalization of the Italian Front," in Oto Luthar, ed., *The Great War and Memory in Central and South-Eastern Europe* (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2016), 123–36.

5 This denomination was coined in 1863 by the linguist Graziadio Isaia Ascoli from Gorizia to refer to the territory comprising the Isonzo/Soča Region, Trieste, the Karst, and Istria (at the time also known as the Austrian Littoral and later, at least partially, as the Slovenian Littoral). In this article, both the Italian and Slovenian versions of place names are provided when they first occur; thereafter, the version in the language of the country where the place is currently located is used. For places still divided between the two countries, the dual name is always used. However, in quotations from archival documents, the Italian version is retained, as this was the form used in the original documentation, since all this territory was under Italian rule.

6 Paolo Ferrari, "Dal culto dei caduti alle memorie della guerra," in Corrado Azzollini and Maria C. di Micco, eds., *1918–2018. I monumenti ai caduti della Grande Guerra in Friuli Venezia Giulia. Censimento in memoria* (Pasian di Prato: L'Orto della Cultura, 2018), 29, 31–33. Lorenzo Cadeddu, *Alla ricerca del Milite Ignoto. Aquileia, Redipuglia, Altare della patria, i luoghi della memoria e dell'identità italiana* (Udine: Gaspari, 2018), 46–50. To explore the connection between war memorials and the expression of mourning from a European perspective, see especially the chapter with the same name in Jay Winter, *Il lutto e la memoria. La Grande Guerra nella storia culturale europea* (Bologna: il Mulino, 1998), 117–57 [original edition *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European Cultural History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995)].

7 Paolo Nicoloso, "Edificare ossari per costruire una memoria della Grande Guerra," in Lorenzo Cadeddu et al., eds., *La religione civile di un popolo. Carso, Redipuglia, Oslavia, il Cimitero degli Eroi di Aquileia* (Udine: Gaspari, 2020), 15. See also Paolo Nicoloso, *Mussolini architetto. Propaganda e paesaggio urbano nell'Italia fascista* (Turin: Einaudi, 2008). Gaetano Dato, *Redipuglia: il Sacrario e la memoria della Grande guerra. 1938–1993* (Trieste: IRSML FVG, 2014), 29–30. Hannah Malone, "The Republican legacy of Italy's Fascist ossuaries of the First World War," *Modern Italy* 2 (2019): 200, 202.

8 Quoted in Marco Mondini, *Andare per i luoghi della Grande Guerra* (Bologna: il Mulino, 2015), 122. See also Quinto Antonelli, *Cento anni di Grande guerra. Cerimonie, monumenti, memorie e contromemorie* (Rome: Donzelli, 2018),

equally millennia-long preservation of the glorious Remains [...] Individuality, since each identified body will have its own tomb [...] Monumentality, inasmuch as these will be severe and solemn monuments.”)

This article aims to examine the campaign of monumentalisation in a subregion of the Julian March, the Isonzo/Soča Region, today divided between Italy (the province of Gorizia) and Slovenia (Goriška). After providing an overview of this campaign and outlining the context in which the ‘sacred zones’ and the three charnel houses/ossuaries of this region were created, drawing on the literature produced on this topic,⁹ the article focuses on the histories of specific monuments, chosen as case studies, thanks to the analysis of unpublished contemporary archival sources preserved at the State Archive of Gorizia and the Italian Central State Archive (Rome).

Temples of a Civil Religion: “Sacred Zones”, Charnel Houses, and Remembrance Parks

In the immediate postwar period, the Supreme Command of the Royal Italian Army devised a ‘pilgrimage circuit’ to nurture a cult of the fallen. To this end, the identification of sites to be ‘sacralised’ and converted into museums across the five sectors of the Italo-Austrian front (Stelvio-Adige, Adige-Brenta, Grappa, Isonzo, and Carso) was promoted.¹⁰ The Commission of Sacred Zones, chaired by General Eugenio Barbarich, completed its work on 20 October 1922. Its final report formed the basis of Royal Decree-Law no. 1286/1922, which established four ‘monumental zones’: two for the defensive phase (Mount Grappa and Pasubio, in Veneto) and two for the offensive phase (San Michele and Sabotino/Sabotin, both near Gorizia). Specifically, the Sacred Zone of Mount Sabotino/Sabotin underwent monumentalisation, resulting in the construction of fourteen obelisks at Oslavia/Oslavje, Mount Calvario / Podgora, Mount San Marco, Mount San Gabriele, and Holy Mount (Monte Santo / Sveta Gora). Among these, the obelisk on Mount San Marco was particularly emblematic. After that area passed under Yugoslav jurisdiction following World War II, it was destroyed on 8 April 1949.¹¹

At the same time, the regime promoted a plan to construct Remembrance Parks and Avenues in line with directives from the Undersecretariat of Public Education,

244 and Marco Mantini, *Viaggio nell’Ade Carsica. Il Cimitero degli Invitti della Terza Armata sul colle S. Elia* (Udine: Gaspari, 2023), 56–57.

9 The topic has been examined in studies of political history (which have reconstructed – more or less in an extensive way – the campaign to monumentalise the war and the context in which it was carried out) and in those related to the history of architecture, as well as in ‘technical’ pamphlets (especially concerning the charnel houses) produced within the military context and in publications addressed to the tourist sector. For specific references, see the following notes.

10 Marco Mantini, *La Zona monumentale del monte San Michele. Carso 2014+: da teatro di guerra a paesaggio della memoria* (Udine: Gaspari, 2016), 27.

11 Cf. Marco Mantini, *La Zona monumentale del monte Sabotino. Storia e memoria della straordinaria fortezza sull’Isonzo* (Udine: Gaspari, 2021), 65–68, 80. Matic Batič, “‘Zones more Related to Immortal Splendor of Glory’: Italian War Memorials and Commemorative Practices in Venezia Giulia (1918–1922),” *Acta Histriae* 4 (2018): 1072–73.

Dario Lupi.¹² In the Isonzo/Soča Region, only one was built, in the centre of Gorizia, on a site of approximately two and a half hectares that had already served as a cemetery in the mid-nineteenth century. The project originated in 1923, when Enrico del Debbio proposed it to commemorate the Gorizian volunteers who deserted the Austro-Hungarian army to enlist in the Italian forces. The park is traversed by several paths along which busts honouring the Gorizian irredentists Giovanni Maniacco and Emilio Cravos, and the interventionist from Tuscany, Vittorio Locchi, are placed, as well as sculptures celebrating the Alpine Brigade “*Julia*” and the Infantry Brigade “*Lupi di Toscana*”. At the centre were a fountain and the remains of a chapel, built in 1929 and destroyed in August 1944 by Slovenian Nazi collaborators.¹³

The charnel houses built in Oslavia, Redipuglia/Sredipolje, and Caporetto/Kobarid, all inaugurated in 1938, were the flagship of the project to monumentalise and sacralise the war in the Isonzo/Soča Region. Their construction was not merely the result of a clear propagandistic plan¹⁴ but was also linked to practical and sanitary considerations: the construction of monumental funerary sites served to inter the countless bodies scattered across the 107 military cemeteries (49 of which were on the Karst) within three large, contained spaces,¹⁵ rather than in temporary burials, which hindered the full revival of productive activities in the territories – the Isonzo area and the Karst – where the Italian army suffered losses of approximately one million men.¹⁶ For this reason, following a decree-law approved on 29 January 1920, the task of collecting the fallen and arranging them in designated sites was entrusted to the Directorate-General of Military Health and to the Central Office for the Care and Honours of the War Dead, both under the Ministry of War.¹⁷ On 28 July 1928, Mussolini authorised the allocation of 50 million lire for the permanent arrangement of military burials. General Faracovi was therefore tasked with compiling the final programme for this arrangement.¹⁸

The first charnel house was built in Oslavia (a suburb of Gorizia), based on a design by the Pisan architect Ghino Venturi.¹⁹ It was intended to house the remains of soldiers from the Second Army, exhumed from pre-existing cemeteries along the mid-

12 Cf. Dato, *Redipuglia*, 28–29. Cf. also Giulia Albanese, “Mappare la memoria del fascismo,” in Giulia Albanese and Lucia Ceci, eds., *I luoghi del fascismo. Memoria, politica, rimozione* (Rome: Viella, 2022), 33–34.

13 “Parco della Rimembranza di Gorizia,” *Itinerari della Grande Guerra*, <https://www.turismofvg.it/parco-della-rimembranza-di-gorizia>. “Parco della Rimembranza,” *Walk of Peace*, <https://www.thewalkofpeace.com/it/locations/memory-park-parco-della-rimembranza/> (all the websites were last accessed on 29 January 2026).

14 Cf. Giuseppe Severini, “Gli elementi costitutivi di un popolo,” in Cadeddu et al., eds., *La religione civile di un popolo*, 11–12.

15 Cf. Mantini, *Viaggio nell’Ade Carsica*, 23.

16 Cf. Mondini, *Andare per i luoghi della Grande Guerra*, 110.

17 Cf. Fabio Todero, “‘Come gli eroi di Sparta’: il culto del volontario caduto e la memoria della Grande guerra nella Venezia Giulia (1918–1929),” in Fabio Todero and Luca G. Manenti, eds., “*Si scopron le tombe*”. *Ricordare, commemorare, evocare i caduti della Grande guerra* (Trieste: IRSML FVG, 2018), 110–12. Mondini, *La guerra italiana*, 350.

18 ACS, Segreteria Particolare del Duce (1922–1945), Carteggio ordinario, serie numerica (1922–1943), b. 1186, f. 509.602 “Cimiteri di guerra,” s.f. 509.602/4, note No. 2736 produced by the Cabinet of the Ministry of War, Rome, August 1928.

19 Cf. Nicoloso, *Edificare ossari per costruire una memoria della Grande Guerra*, 16.

dle courses of the Isonzo/Soča and Vipacco/Vipava rivers.²⁰ In this charnel house, the remains of 20,654 identified soldiers and 30,000 unknowns from the Collio/Goriška Brda, Gorizia, and the middle Isonzo/Soča areas are entombed. The structure occupies a triangular area and comprises four circular towers, including a central, classical-style tower housing a crypt containing the tombs of thirteen men who were awarded the Gold Medal of Military Valour. Among them are Generals Achille Papa, Ferruccio Trombi, and Alceo Catalocchino, who died, respectively, on the Bainsizza/Banjška Plateau on 5 October 1917, at Oslavia on 28 November 1915, and in the Natisone Valleys on 27 August 1917.²¹

The Italian historian Giorgio Rochat correctly pointed out the contrast between the anonymity of thousands of graves and the privileged role granted, even in burial, to generals who fell on the battlefield and, above all, to marshals who died in their beds and were buried at the centre of monuments dedicated to their armies.²² This is the case of the Redipuglia charnel house, where six generals (among them the head of the 3rd Army, Emanuele Filiberto of Savoy, Duke of Aosta) are entombed.²³ Redipuglia's charnel house stands out within this reconstruction for its significance, as it is not only the principal site of the Upper Adriatic but of all Italy. For this reason, the site has also been the main secular pilgrimage destination for those visiting World War I sites, also due to its proximity to the border, which enhances its symbolic significance as a place embodying the ultimate sacrifice of a soldier for his homeland.²⁴

Unlike Oslavia, the Redipuglia charnel house has a background: in 1921, on the nearby Sant'Elia Hill, the Cemetery of the *Invicti* of the 3rd Army was established. It was originally intended as an underground ossuary, but this plan was not realised, and it was decided to inter 30,000 bodies directly in the ground (divided into seven sectors, with the summit sector reserved for officers) along the slopes of the hill, within an area

20 Cf. Enrico Galante, *Il sacrario militare di Oslavia* (Gorizia: Libreria Paternolli, 1959), 5.

21 Cf. *Sacrari militari della 1ª guerra mondiale. Oslavia e S. Michele* (Rome: Ministero della Difesa. Commissariato Generale per le Onoranze ai Caduti in Guerra, 1991). Elvio Pederzoli, "Il sacrario di Oslavia," in Cadeddu et al., eds., *La religione civile di un popolo*, 195. "Sacrario Militare di Oslavia," *Caduti Grande Guerra*, <https://cadutigrandeguerra.net/index.php/features/sacrario-militare-di-oslavia>. "Ossario di Oslavia," *Itinerari della Grande Guerra*, <https://www.turismofvg.it/ossario-di-oslavia>. *Sacrari e cimiteri di guerra nelle Tre Venezie. Venezia Giulia e Friuli: Redipuglia, Aquileia, Fagare, Oslavia, Timau, Udine. Oltre frontiera. Caporetto, Fiume, Zara* (Rome: Olimpia, 1963), 34. *Sacrari militari della Prima Guerra Mondiale. Redipuglia Oslavia (ed altri sacrari del Friuli Venezia Giulia e d'oltre confine* (Rome, 1983), 47–49. Enzo Bologna and Elvio Pederzoli, *Guida ai Sacrari della Grande Guerra da Redipuglia a Bligny. 19 itinerari lungo il fronte italiano*, prefaced by Giuseppe Severini (Udine: Gaspari, 2010), 109–12. Paolo Nicoloso, *Architetture per un'identità italiana. Progetti e opere per fare gli italiani fascisti* (Udine: Gaspari, 2012), 92–94. Paolo Nicoloso, "Tra memorie e oblio: monumenti alle guerre mondiali sul confine orientale, 1920–2007," in Paolo Nicoloso, ed., *Le pietre della memoria. Monumenti sul confine orientale* (Udine: Gaspari, 2015), 25–28. Loredana Pin, "L'ossario di Oslavia di Venturi, 1930–1938," in Paolo Nicoloso, ed., *Le pietre della memoria. Monumenti sul confine orientale* (Udine: Gaspari, 2015), 113–28. Loredana Pin, "L'ossario di Oslavia di Venturi, 1930–1938," in Paolo Nicoloso, Luka Skansi, and Ferruccio Luppi, eds., *Gorizia – Nova Gorica, Architettura e urbanistica del Novecento. Arhitektura in urbanizem 20. stoletja* (Udine: Gaspari, 2024), 104–12. Antonelli, *Cento anni di Grande guerra*, 249–50.

22 Giorgio Rochat, "Il soldato italiano dal Carso a Redipuglia," in Diego Leoni and Camillo Zadra, eds., *La Grande Guerra. Esperienza, memoria, immagini* (Bologna: il Mulino, 1986), 614.

23 Cf. Cadeddu, *Alla ricerca del Milite Ignoto*, 51. Silvia Barisione, "The reception of World War I monuments. From the Ossari to the Case del Mitulato," in Kay B. Jones and Stephanie Pilat, eds., *The Routledge Companion to Italian Fascist Architecture. Reception and Legacy* (London – New York: Routledge, 2020), 346.

24 Fulvio Poli, "Il Sacrario di Redipuglia," in Cadeddu et al., eds., *La religione civile di un popolo*, 54.

of 96,000 m² enclosed by a one-and-a-half-kilometre-long fence. At the summit of the hill, a chapel surmounted by an obelisk was constructed. Four red crystal crosses, illuminated at night, were installed on the upper part of the obelisk, one on each side, while an electric beacon in the shape of a flame was placed at the very top.²⁵

As Marco Mantini wrote, the cemetery (which in the 1920s had been visited by approximately 100.000 people) complied with the principles of the Faracovi programme because it housed the remains of known soldiers in individual niches, had an imposing appearance, and was easily accessible due to its proximity to a major road and a railway station. For these reasons, it was inaugurated on 24 May 1923 in the presence of 4,000 war-disabled veterans and an additional 2,000 attendees, by high-ranking state officials, including Vittorio Emanuele III, Emanuele Filiberto, Duke of Aosta, and Mussolini, as well as public figures such as the nationalist writer Gabriele D'Annunzio.²⁶ During the 1920s, as the cemetery deteriorated due to poor maintenance, and as requested by Mussolini (who considered it insufficiently monumental), it was decided to completely transform the area by creating a new charnel house. Its construction (on Mount Sei Busi, in front of Sant'Elia Hill) was part of an ambitious architectural project encompassing 40 sites across various battlefields nationwide. Redipuglia became the flagship of this commemorative and propagandistic scheme. Under the direction of architect Giovanni Greppi and sculptor Giannino Castiglioni (the same team that projected the Caporetto and Monte Grappa charnel houses) and supervised by General Ugo Cei, who succeeded Faracovi as Extraordinary General Commissar for the Honours of the War Dead on 11 December 1935, the works to construct the Redipuglia charnel house were carried out.²⁷ Here, the remains of the 30,000 fallen, who had been interred at the Cemetery of the *Invicti* from 1921 to 1938, were relocated.²⁸

The Redipuglia war memorial was inaugurated on 19 September 1938, after ten years of work. Apart from the Duke of Aosta, five other officers are buried in this war memorial, each in a separate tomb before the 22 steps, which, in alphabetical order, contain the remains of 39,867 identified soldiers. The officers are Army Corps General

25 Cf. Mantini, *Viaggio nell'Ade Carsica*, 30–32. Gaetano Dato, "Lineamenti storiografici, memorie pubbliche e miti all'origine del Sacrario di Redipuglia. La fondazione di un tempio della nazione," *Acta Histriae* 3 (2014): 704.

26 Cf. Mantini, *Viaggio nell'Ade Carsica*, 47–49, 58–59, 82. Cf. also Fabio Todero, *Le metamorfosi della memoria. La Grande Guerra tra modernità e tradizione* (Udine: Del Bianco, 2002), 18. Todero, "Come gli eroi di Sparta," 115–16. Fabio Todero, "Politiche della memoria della Grande Guerra: il caso della Venezia Giulia," *Acta Histriae*, 3 (2010): 392. Fabio Todero, "Il culto del soldato caduto nella Venezia Giulia dalla Grande guerra al fascismo," in Anna M. Vinci, ed., *Regime fascista, nazione e periferie* (Udine: IFSML, 2010), 64–65. Dato, *Redipuglia*, 31–36. Lucio Fabi, *Redipuglia. Storia, memoria, arte e mito di un monumento che parla di pace* (San Dorligo della Valle: Lint, 2005), 8–12.

27 Cf. Todero, *Le metamorfosi della memoria*, 66–67. Fabi, *Redipuglia*, 18–21, 25. Nicoloso, "Edificare ossari per costruire una memoria della Grande Guerra," 16–17. Anna M. Fiore, "La monumentalizzazione dei luoghi teatro della Grande Guerra: il sacrario di Redipuglia di Giovanni Greppi e Giannino Castiglioni," *Annali di architettura* 15 (2003): 235, 239. Dato, "Lineamenti storiografici," 705. Daniele Pisani, "'Le schiere serrate degli invitti eroi.' Sui tardi sacrari fascisti della Grande Guerra," in Maria G. D'Amelio, ed., *Per non dimenticare. Sacrari del Novecento* (Roma: Palombi, 2019), 46. Mondini, *Andare per i luoghi della Grande Guerra*, 123.

28 Cf. Elvio Pederzoli, "Visitare il sacrario di Redipuglia," in Cadeddu et al., eds., *La religione civile di un popolo*, 192. Mondini, *La guerra italiana*, 354–55. Bologna, Pederzoli, *Guida ai Sacrari della Grande Guerra da Redipuglia a Bligny*, 113–14. Tadej Koren, *The Walk of Peace from the Alps to the Adriatic. A Guide along the Isonzo Front* (Kobarid: Ustanova Fundacija Poti miru v Posočju, 2015), 171.

Antonio Chinotto, Brigadier General Tommaso Monti, Lieutenant General Giuseppe Paolini, Lieutenant General Giovanni Prelli, and Major General Fulvio Riccieri. At the end of the steps, two large tombs, covered with bronze slabs, preserve the remains of 60,330 unknown soldiers. On the 22 steps that make up the charnel house, the names of the known fallen are inscribed, surmounted by the word ‘*Presente*’ (the response to roll call pronounced by the officers), which appears 8,000 times.²⁹

The third charnel house in the Julian March is that of Kobarid, which, unlike Oslavia and Redipuglia, was built on predominantly Slovenian territory to impose “*una memoria che – fatta salva la pietà dovuta ai caduti, indipendentemente alla loro nazionalità – non poteva che risultare estranea*”³⁰ (“a memory that could only be felt as unrelated, except for the sorrow owed to all who died, regardless of their nationality”). The municipality of Kobarid ceded, free of charge, the municipal area of Saint Anthony Hill designated for the construction of the charnel house to the Italian state.³¹ With the replacement of Faracovi by Cei, the project changed: initially, the charnel house was planned in the plain below, near the town centre. To make it more imposing, it was decided to locate it on Saint Anthony Hill, where a seventeenth-century church was incorporated into the new construction, built between 1935 and 1938. There, 7,014 soldiers (of whom 2,748 are unknown) who fell during the Battle of Kobarid, which took place from 24 October to 9 November 1917, are interred. The memorial (also designed by Castiglioni and Greppi) structurally resembles a fortress. It is accessible via a system of ramps leading to the church, which rests on three tiers of octagonal terraces. To reach it, one follows a winding road, along which the stations of the Via Crucis are placed.³²

29 Bologna and Pederzoli, *Guida ai Sacrari della Grande Guerra da Redipuglia a Bligny*, 115, 118. Fiore, “La monumentalizzazione dei luoghi teatro della Grande Guerra,” 238–42. “Sacrario di Redipuglia,” *Itinerari della Grande Guerra*, <https://www.turismofvg.it/sacrario-di-redipuglia>. “Sacrario Militare di Redipuglia,” <https://sacrioredipuglia.it/index.html>. Numbers in Patrizia Dogliani, “Redipuglia,” in Mario Isnenghi, ed., *I luoghi della memoria. Simboli e miti dell’Italia unita* (Rome–Bari: Laterza, 1996), 379. Cf. also Dato, “Lineamenti storiografici,” 705–06. Pietro Valle, “La terra resti terra, il monte resti monte: sacrari militari come percorsi ambientali,” in *Architettura della memoria e paesaggio. Sacrari di guerra come interventi ambientali. Monte Grappa, Redipuglia, Caporetto, Pocol* (Melfi: Libria, 2020), 22–30. Fabi, *Redipuglia*, 24. Pederzoli, “Visitare il sacrario di Redipuglia,” 193–94. Dato, *Redipuglia*, 39–43. Antonelli, *Cento anni di Grande guerra*, 254–55. *Sacrari e cimiteri di guerra nelle Tre Venezie*, 9–20. *Sacrari militari della Prima Guerra Mondiale*, 7–17. Barisione, “The reception of World War I monuments,” 350–51. Nicoloso, *Architetture per un’identità italiana*, 89–92, 94–96. Nicoloso, *Mussolini architetto*, 144–45. Anna M. Fiore, “Il sacrario di Redipuglia di Greppi e Castiglioni, 1936–1938,” in Nicoloso, ed., *Le pietre della memoria*, 133–48. Todero, “Come gli eroi di Sparta,” 113–15. Paolo Nicoloso, “Tra ossari di guerra e monumenti alla pace: politica e costruzione della memoria in Italia 1938–1952,” in D’Amelio, ed., *Per non dimenticare*, 51–53. Mondini, *Andare per i luoghi della Grande Guerra*, 124. Antonella Indrigo, “Il sacrario di Redipuglia (Gorizia). Paradigma del rapporto tra architettura e paesaggio,” in Ferruccio Canali, ed., “Monumenta Honoraria. Monumenti per la celebrazione,” monographic number of *Bollettino SSF* 28–29 (2019–2020): 166–74. Koren, *The Walk of Peace from the Alps to the Adriatic*, 169–81.

30 Cf. Todero, “Politiche della memoria della Grande Guerra,” 393.

31 ASGO, Archivio generale della Prefettura di Gorizia (1927–1962), b. 826, f. 2316, copy of the deliberation minutes, subject “Monumento-Ossario per i Caduti in guerra di Caporetto – Cessione allo Stato della Chiesetta eretta sul Colle di S. Antonio,” 15 June 1938. Cf. also *ibidem*, copy of the deliberation minutes, subject “Monumento-Ossario per i Caduti in guerra di Caporetto – Concessione allo Stato dell’area di sedime,” 1 June 1935.

32 Cf. Valle, “La terra resti terra, il monte resti monte,” 30–33. *Sacrari e cimiteri di guerra nelle Tre Venezie*, 37. *Sacrari militari della Prima Guerra Mondiale*, 91. Bologna, Pederzoli, *Guida ai Sacrari della Grande Guerra da Redipuglia a Bligny*, 104–05 (see *ibid.* for the numbers). Koren, *The Walk of Peace from the Alps to the Adriatic*, 45–47. “Sacrario Militare di Caporetto/Kobarid,” *Caduti Grande Guerra*, <https://cadutigrandeguerra.net/index.php/features/sacrario-militare-di-caporetto-kobarid>. “Ossario italiano di Kobarid (Caporetto),” *Walk of Peace*, <https://www.thewalkofpeace.com/it/locations/italian-charnel-house-kobarid/>.

Monuments in Memory of Specific Fallen Soldiers and Military Units – Some Case Studies

A vast number of smaller monuments, such as memorial stones, altars, and columns, are present in almost every town in this region. Among this multitude, the monument to the fallen on Mount Nero (in Slovenian 'Krn',³³ close to Kobarid), the one on the Holy Mount (Sveta Gora, near Gorizia), those concerning the "*Gialli del Podgora*" (also close to Gorizia), and the memorial stone related to Filippo Corridoni (near San Martino del Carso / Martinščina) stand out for the turbulent historical trajectories in which they were implicated, which resulted in the production of a wide range of institutional records.

In the first half of June 1922, a monument was erected on the summit (2,245 metres above sea level) of Mount Krn to commemorate the conquest of this peak in the Julian Alps, which took place on 15–16 June 1915 by the "*Exilles*" Battalion of the 3rd Alpini Regiment under the command of Colonel Donato Etna. Approximately 1,500 men took part in the operation.³⁴ The monument (erected by the *Associazione Nazionale Alpini*, ANA – Alpines National Association) consisted of a pyramid with a square base, approximately 4 metres in height and a base side of about 3 metres. It was built of stone, and at its peak, a wooden stake slightly over one metre tall was fixed, with a nail at its summit. The framework of a five-pointed-star-shaped floral crown was attached to the terminal stake.³⁵ On the night of 20–21 June 1922, the monument's central pyramid was severely damaged, and the bronze plaque depicting the victory was found on the ground, partially destroyed. According to Slovenian historiography, the damage was caused by lightning rather than by vandalism, as instead the Italian authorities believed.³⁶ Investigations by the Carabinieri Reali (CC.RR.) identified

33 It is interesting to note that the Italian name of that mountain is the result of an erroneous translation of the corresponding Slovenian name, confused with *črn* (meaning 'black'), whereas the toponym 'Krn' most likely shares the same pre-Roman root (*kar, 'rocky') as Karst (Cjars/Carso/Kras in Friulan/Italian/Slovenian), Karnien (Cjargne/Carnia/Karnija), and Krain (Craign/Carniola/Kranjska). Cf. Mauro Pascolini, "Paesaggi e luoghi di guerra: il piano paesaggistico regionale del Friuli Venezia Giulia, uno strumento di conoscenza e valorizzazione," in Luca Caburlotto and Silvio Stok, eds., *La toponomastica della Grande Guerra su fronte carnico isontino* (Pasian di Prado: L'Orto della Cultura, 2021), 39.

34 A.D., "Monte Nero," *Atlante dizionario della Grande Guerra a Trieste e nel Litorale*, <https://www.atlantegrandeguerra.it/portfolio/monte-nero/>. See also Orio Di Brazzano, *La Grande Guerra sulla Fronte Giulia (1915–17). Dalla conquista del Monte Nero a Caporetto* (Trento: Panorama, 2002), 70–71, 76–83, 85. Marco Mantini, *Andar per trincee da Tolmino a Caporetto lungo i percorsi della Grande Guerra tra Italia e Slovenia. Tra Caporetto, Kolovrat e il Monte Nero per scoprire un museo all'aperto ricco di memorie* (Udine: Gaspari, 2020), 114–16. Fabio Todero, *Terra irredenta, terra incognita. L'ora delle armi al confine orientale d'Italia. 1914–1918* (Rome–Bari: Laterza, 2023), 168–74. Damir Globočnik, *Likovno in simbolno. Kolektivni spomin slovenstva v likovni umetnosti* (Ljubljana: Slovenska matica, 2017), 391.

35 A.D., "Monte Nero." See also Orio Di Brazzano, *La Grande Guerra sulla Fronte Giulia (1915–17). Dalla conquista del Monte Nero a Caporetto* (Trento: Panorama, 2002), 70–71, 76–83, 85. Marco Mantini, *Andar per trincee da Tolmino a Caporetto lungo i percorsi della Grande Guerra tra Italia e Slovenia. Tra Caporetto, Kolovrat e il Monte Nero per scoprire un museo all'aperto ricco di memorie* (Udine: Gaspari, 2020), 114–16. Fabio Todero, *Terra irredenta, terra incognita. L'ora delle armi al confine orientale d'Italia. 1914–1918* (Rome–Bari: Laterza, 2023), 168–74. Globočnik, *Likovno in simbolno*, 391.

36 Cf. Globočnik, *Likovno in simbolno*, 391–92. I would like to thank the referee for suggesting that I consult this book to learn the Slovenian account of the damage to the monument on Mount Nero/Krn.

three members of a group they considered responsible for the politically motivated act of vandalism; they were boys aged 14 to 16 from the nearby locality of Dresenza/Drežnica,³⁷ who were found in possession of the monument's visitor sign-in book, a stamp, and other items. Consequently, the following night, the statue of the Slovenian musician Hrabroslav Volarič, located in the public garden of Kobarid's main square, was destroyed by unknown individuals, most likely from the local Fascist milieu. To prevent any potential incidents, the commander of the Tolmino/Tolmin Carabinieri company decided to concentrate 35 soldiers in Kobarid to support a company of 70 Alpines stationed there, to quell any possible unrest that might arise, particularly in light of the arrival of around seventy Fascists from Friuli, who – although generally welcomed positively by the Italian community – had nonetheless assured that they had come to peacefully protest against the vandalism carried out against the monument. In fact, they peacefully protested on the night of 22 June. The following evening, 150 Fascists arrived in Kobarid from Palmanova, Udine, and Treviso. Some of them set fire to the parish house and two private residences in Drežnica during the night, then escaped into the woods before law enforcement arrived. Around six o'clock the next morning, the Fascists ransacked the house of the parish priest of Staroselo, don Giovanni Iores, who was temporarily away, damaged the furniture, and took money and valuables.³⁸ The CC.RR. investigations were aimed not only at establishing the identity of those directly responsible for the violence but also at determining the potential co-responsibility of the leaders of the respective Fascist groups.³⁹

The vandalism against the monument on Mount Krn was publicly condemned by both the Gorizia section of the *Associazione Nazionale Combattenti* (ANC, National Combatants Association) and the clergy of Tolmin, Kobarid, and Plezzo/Bovec.⁴⁰

37 ASGO, Regio Commissariato Civile (1918–1926), b. 51, f. 322, handwritten note No. 884/Gab., sent by the civil commissioner of Tolmino, 23 June 1922.

38 Ibid., notes No. 369/3 and 369/21 from the commander of the Gorizia Division of the CC.RR. territorial legion of the Julian March, to the deputy general civil commissioner of Gorizia, respectively dated 22 June 1922 and 26 June 1922, subject "Incursione fascista in quel di Caporetto". Ibid., handwritten note No. 1201 Gab., classified as "riservata urgente", subject "Danneggiamento monumento Monte Nero," sent by the deputy civil commissioner to the *questore* of Gorizia, 23 June 1922. Ibid., note from the civil commissioner for the political district of Tolmin, No. 949/Gab., classified as confidential, sent to the general civil commissioner of Trieste and to the deputy general civil commissioner of Gorizia, 29 June 1922, subject "Relazione sulla agitazione conseguente al danneggiamento del monumento sul 'Monte Nero'". Cf. also Matic Batič, "Le Terre Redente si presentano a noi come vecchie terre italiane": Building *italianità* in the *Provincia di Gorizia* between the Two World Wars," in Borut Klabjan, ed., *Borderlands of Memory. Adriatic and Central European Perspectives* (Oxford, Bern, Berlin, Bruxelles, New York, Wien: Peter Lang, 2019), 180–81. Batič, "Zones more Related to Immortal Splendor of Glory," 1077. Lavo Čermelj, *Life-and-Death Struggle of a National Minority (The Yugoslavs in Italy)* (Ljubljana, 1945), 51. Lavo Čermelj, *Sloveni e croati in Italia tra le due guerre* (Trieste: Editoriale Stampa Triestina, 1974), 241–42.

39 ASGO, Regio Commissariato Civile (1918–1926), b. 51, f. 322, note No. 369/34 sent by the commander of the Gorizia Division of the CC.RR. territorial legion of the Julian March, to the commander of the CC.RR. of Tolmino and in cc to that of the CC.RR. station in Trieste and to the divisions in Udine and Treviso as well as to the deputy general civil commissioner of Gorizia, 1 July 1922, subject "Per la denuncia dei colpevoli dei noti reati commessi in Caporetto, Dresenza e Staroselo nella notte dal 23 al 24 Giugno 1922".

40 Ibid., communication from the governing council of the Gorizia section of the National Association of Combatants, sent to the deputy general civil commissioner of Gorizia, 24 June 1922. Ibid., joint communication from the priests of the deaneries of Tolmino, Caporetto, and Plezzo, sent to the civil commissioner of Tolmino, 27 June 1922.

However, nothing similar (according to the available documentation) was done regarding the destruction of the statue of the Slovenian musician. On 16 July 1922, an 'expiatory' ceremony was organised by the Udine section of the ANA, consisting of an ascent of the mountain and the celebration of a Mass at the summit. In the afternoon, the ceremony continued in Kobarid, in the presence of delegates from various patriotic associations from Friuli and other parts of Italy, as well as Fascists.⁴¹

To prevent further acts of vandalism (which were likely, given the monument's remote location and the difficulty of guarding it), the civil commissioner for the political district of Tolmin proposed placing the monument under the effective supervision of the Boundary Delimitation Commission (based in Kobarid). The Commission would have been required to keep any news of further damage confidential, allowing the competent authorities to take the necessary measures to deal with any incident and, at the same time, to ensure an investigation into the cause of the damage. This latter proposal was prompted by the military authorities' immediate public announcement of the defacement, rather than informing the political authority. This had provoked the reprisals carried out by the fascists living in Kobarid against the monument to Volarič during the night of 22 June and had warned the action squads of Friuli and the entire Julian March.⁴²

In 1927, however, the Committee for the reconstruction of a monument on Mount Krn was established in Cividale del Friuli. It comprised the Cividale sections of the associations of the disabled, former combatants, and former Alpini, as well as the Union of Hikers.⁴³ The proposal put forward by this second committee was to erect a monumental hut⁴⁴ dedicated to Alberto Picco di Ulrico, a soldier who died during the battle to conquer the mountain on 16 June 1915. The honorary presidency of the committee was entrusted to Mussolini, while the vice-presidencies were held by the marshals of Italy, Generals Luigi Cadorna and Armando Diaz. The prefect of Udine, Agostino Iraci, and his counterpart from Gorizia, Anselmo Cassini, were appointed presidents, while Antonio Persoglia (president of the ANC and vice-president of the Cividale section of the ANA) and Cesare Blasigh (president of the Cividale Union of Hikers) were appointed vice-president and secretary, respectively. The construction of this hut, financed by the Ministry of Public Works, was completed in 1928, and its inauguration took place on 17 September of that year in the presence of Pier Silverio

41 Ibid., note No. 1006/Gab. sent by the civil commissioner for the political district of Tolmino, to the general civil commissioner of Trieste and his deputy of Gorizia, 10 July 1922, subject "Cerimonia di espiazione sul Monte Nero". Ibid., note No. 1017/Gab. sent by the civil commissioner for the political district of Tolmino, to the deputy general civil commissioner of Gorizia, 11 July 1922.

42 Ibid., note No. 1079/Gab. sent by the civil commissioner for the political district of Tolmino, to the deputy general civil commissioner of Gorizia, 19 July 1922, subject "Monumento sul Monte Nero".

43 ASGO, Archivio storico del Comune di Gorizia (1830–1927), b. 1321, f. "Monumenti e lapidi," letter sent by the members of the executive committee of the "Comitato per l'erezione di un Rifugio-Monumento agli Eroi del Monte Nero" to the mayor of Gorizia Giorgio Bombig, 14 May 1927.

44 ACS, Presidenza del Consiglio dei Ministri (PCM), Gabinetto, 1928–30, 14.4.711, f. "Cividale del Friuli – Erezione Rifugio Monumento agli eroi del Montenero," *Appunto per S.E. il capo del governo*, Rome, 1 July 1927. Ibid., letter sent by the members of the executive committee of the "Comitato per l'erezione di un Rifugio Monumento agli Eroi del Monte Nero" to Mussolini, Cividale del Friuli, 14 May 1927.

Leicht, the undersecretary of the Ministry of Public Education, on behalf of the government.⁴⁵ This was perhaps the only case of a World War I memorial conceived simultaneously as a hut (technically, a bivouac) for hikers. It was built approximately 100 metres from the summit, on the southern slope, at the end of the mule track from Drežnica, to a design by the architect Leone Morandini. Architecturally, it was in the classical style, with four pillars on the main façade topped by four bas-reliefs depicting eagles, surmounted by a massive architrave on which the dedication '*Victoribus esto*' ('sacred to the victors') was carved. It contained three rooms: the entrance, the dining room, and the dormitory. The dining room (illuminated by four windows) was furnished with a stove, tables, chairs, and benches; the dormitory (which contained a bifora) had 21 military-style cots.⁴⁶

As with the monument on Mount Krn, the monument on Podgora Mount, erected in memory of the fallen of the Casale Brigade (11th and 12th Infantry Regiments) – also known as the '*Gialli del Podgora*' – was built on the initiative of a sponsoring committee, established in 1926 in Turin. Its main organisers were Lieutenant Colonel Giuseppe Proteani (already aide-de-camp to the brigade in 1915–1916) and Commander Professor Pietro Gorgolini (a former soldier of the brigade), who served as president and general secretary of the committee, respectively. They delivered a series of lectures in the Marche and Romagna to publicise the initiative before travelling to Trieste and Gorizia to liaise with the commissioner of Gorizia and coordinate with the commander of the Casale Brigade, who was vice-president of the committee. To raise the necessary funds, subscriptions were collected in Casale, Forlì, Cesena, Macerata, and Gorizia. The mayors of these towns were members of the honorary committee, whose honorary presidency was offered to Mussolini.⁴⁷

Instead, in 1930, on the initiative of Captain Guido Slataper, a recipient of the Gold Medal of Military Valour and the rector of the Franciscan sanctuary of the Holy Mount, a sponsoring committee for the monument to the fallen of the Holy Mount was established in Gorizia. The peak had first been conquered by the Royal Italian Army in May 1917, by a unit led by Slataper. It was lost shortly thereafter but recaptured by the 8th Infantry Division on 25 August of the same year. The committee comprised the guardian father of the sanctuary's friars and Slataper, who served as the regional delegate for Friuli, Julian March, and Dalmatia of the *Associazione Nazionale Mutilati* (National Association of the Mutilated). To raise funds, a white metal commemorative plaque depicting the sanctuary was sold throughout Italy for 100 lire.

45 Ibid., note from the head of Cabinet of the Ministry of Finance to the secretary of the PCM, Rome, 25 January 1928. Ibid., note from the minister for the Public Works to the PCM, 1 February 1928. Ibid., letter sent by A. Persoglia on behalf of the executive committee of the "Comitato per l'erezione di un Rifugio Monumento agli Eroi del Monte Nero," Cividale del Friuli, 3 September 1928. Ibid., telegram No. 38943(2=V) sent by the minister of the Education Belluzzo to the PCM, Rome, 13 September 1928.

46 Ibid., *Progetto per l'erezione d'un Rifugio-Monumento agli eroi del Monte Nero*.

47 Ibid., 1926, 14.4.992, f. "Gorizia. Monumento ai fanti della Brigata Casale "Gialli Del Podgora," Communication from the Minister of Communications to Mussolini, Rome, 25 September 1926. Ibid., note from the prefect of Turin No. 1167/14–4, 10 April 1926. Ibid., letter written by G. Proteani to Mussolini, Turin, 20 March 1926.

Two years later, a second committee was established to oversee the construction of a commemorative obelisk dedicated to General Cascino and the fallen. This second committee – whose honorary presidency was entrusted to the Duke of Pistoia, commander of the 232nd Infantry Regiment that had fought on the Holy Mount, while the secretariat fell to General Paolo Tacoli – included Slataper; the guardian father of the sanctuary, Guglielmo Endrizzi; the prefect of Gorizia (president); the secretary of the Gorizia federation of the *Partito Nazionale Fascista* (PNF, National Fascist Party); and representatives of the national associations for combatants, the war-disabled and the wounded, war volunteers, and the families of the fallen.⁴⁸ The committee determined that the monument should meet certain aesthetic requirements: it had to have decorum, a simplicity of lines imposed by the harshness of the place and the austerity of the events commemorated, and be visible from a great distance.⁴⁹ To complete the monument (which was inaugurated on 24 May 1938⁵⁰ in the presence of the Minister of National Education, Giuseppe Bottai, on behalf of the government⁵¹), the Ministry of the Navy was requested to provide a decommissioned lighthouse to be placed atop the tower.⁵²

Last but not least, in 1933, near the Franche Trenches (*Trincea delle Franche*, in the territory of the municipality of Doberdò del Lago / Doberdob, near Gorizia), a cippus was erected in memory of Filippo Corridoni, an interventionist who fought on the Julian front during World War I and died there on 23 October 1915. As a personal friend of Mussolini, Corridoni prompted the Duce to promote the construction of the commemorative cippus, which the Duce attended at its inauguration on 24 May 1933.⁵³ The cippus combines symbols of labour and the combatants with emblems of the Fascist regime, such as the Italian eagle and the fasces.⁵⁴ Its construction was sponsored by the Provincial Union of Fascist Trade Unions of Industry of Gorizia, which

48 Ibid., 1937–39, 14.5.4569, f. “Gorizia – Monumento ai caduti in guerra sul Monte Santo,” *Appunto per S.E. il capo del governo*, 9 July 1934, Report from the general inspector of Public Security to the chief of police, Rome, 13 January 1934. Ibid., *Schema di contratto* signed by P. Tacoli (secretary of the committee) and E. Mazzoli, Gorizia, 7 May 1935. Ibid., P. Tacoli, *Relazione circa l'opera del comitato per l'erezione di un ricordo ai caduti del Monte Santo al 28 ottobre 1933/XI*. Ibid., untitled and undated note signed by G. Slataper and the general inspector Pietro De Filippis.

Ibid., *Appunto per S.E. il capo del governo*, 3 August 1932. Cf. anche ASGO, Archivio di Gabinetto della Prefettura di Gorizia (1927–1934), b. 53, f. 109, *Comitato per l'erezione del monumento ricordo ai caduti di Monte Santo*. Ibid., *Contratto*. Ibid., *Relazione circa l'opera del Comitato per l'erezione di un ricordo ai caduti del Monte Santo al 28 ottobre 1933/XI* signed by the secretary of the committee, General P. Tacoli.

49 ASGO, Archivio di Gabinetto della Prefettura di Gorizia (1927–1934), b. 53, f. 109, *Relazione della Commissione Esecutiva* signed by its president, General Tacoli, Gorizia, 24 July 1937.

50 ACS, PCM, Gabinetto, 1937–39, 14.5.4569, f. “Gorizia – Monumento ai caduti in guerra sul Monte Santo,” telegram No. 18274 sent by the undersecretary of state of the PCM to the minister of National Education, 20 May 1938.

51 Ibid., telegram No. 27387 sent by Bottai to the Cabinet of the PCM, 21 May 1938.

52 ASGO, Archivio di Gabinetto della Prefettura di Gorizia (1927–1934), b. 53, f. 109, s.fasc. “Monumento ai caduti di Montesanto,” unsigned letter sent to the rear admiral E. Somigli, head of staff of the Ministry of Navy, Gorizia, 6 April 1938.

53 ACS, PCM, Gabinetto, 1931–33, 14.4.9399, f. “Gorizia – Monumento-cippo dedicato alla memoria di Corridoni – Inaugurazione,” ciphered telegram No. 20867/2 sent by the prefect of Gorizia to the head of Cabinet of the PCM, 17 May 1933. Cf. anche Koren, *The Walk of Peace from the Alps to the Adriatic*, 167.

54 Lucio Fabi and Roberto Todero, *Andar per trincee sul Carso Triestino, Goriziano e Sloveno* (Trieste: Transalpina, 2004), 52–55.

launched a subscription to raise the necessary funds to realise the project, following the design by the sculptor Francesco Ellero of Latisana.⁵⁵

Conclusion

As stated above, the campaign to monumentalise World War I was promoted by the government and by members of the political and military establishment of the Isonzo/Soča Region not only to commemorate specific fallen soldiers and military operations that had taken place in that area, but also to glorify them and, through fascism, to exploit the emotion stirred by the memory of that recent tragedy to secure popular support; not coincidentally, these sites immediately became destinations for a “sacred pilgrimage”, encouraged by the regime itself.⁵⁶ For this reason, the charnel houses and World War I monuments in the Isonzo/Soča Region can be fully considered *lieux de mémoire* in the sense proposed by the French historian Pierre Nora: sites that evoke a specific historical event in collective memory, thereby consolidating particular narratives of the past.⁵⁷ In the case of the monuments discussed here, they evoke the image of a victorious Italy, which, from the post-World War II period onwards, served as an incentive to hold commemorations at the charnel houses that remained on Italian territory (Redipuglia and Oslavia), also in an attempt to forget – at least during these commemorations – the disastrous outcome of the other world war for Italy.⁵⁸ Even at the Kobarid charnel house, despite the area’s having come under Yugoslav jurisdiction, commemorations were held from the post-World War II period to the present day,⁵⁹ by prior agreement between Rome and Belgrade, especially on 2 November (All Souls’ Day), in the presence of Italian authorities such as the consul in Koper and the ambassador in Ljubljana, and, in some cases, also members of the Italian armed forces. Unlike the commemorations held at Redipuglia and Oslavia, those at the Kobarid charnel house were more modest, lacking a large popular turnout, sober, and depoliticised; this was also because, more generally, during the regime of Josip Broz ‘Tito’, the memory of World War I among the population of the Isonzo/

55 ACS, PCM, Gabinetto, 1931–33, 14.4.9399, f. “Gorizia – Monumento-cippo dedicato alla memoria di Corridoni – Inaugurazione,” *Appunto per S.E. capo del governo*, 12 maggio 1933; *ibid.*, note from the prefect of Gorizia to the Cabinet of the PCM, 2 May 1933.

56 Cf. Batič, “‘Zones more Related to Immortal Splendor of Glory.’” Petra Kavrečič, “‘Sacro pellegrinaggio.’ Visits to World War I Memorials on The Soča/Isonzo Front in the Interwar Period,” *Etnološka tribina* 47 (2017): 141–60. Petra Kavrečič, “Tourism and Fascism. Tourism Development on the Eastern Italian Border,” *Prispevki za novejšo zgodovino* 60, No. 2 (2020): 99–119.

57 Cf. Batič, “‘Zones more Related to Immortal Splendor of Glory,’” 1066. Dato, “Lineamenti storiografici,” 696.

58 Concerning commemorations, see (in the case of Redipuglia, therefore as an example) Dato, *Redipuglia*, 63–140. See also Gaetano Dato, “La memoria della Grande guerra nei discorsi ufficiali presso il Sacratio di Redipuglia. Dalla ricostruzione al boom economico,” in Marco Mondini and Fabio Todero, eds., “La Grande guerra ai confini: italiani d’Austria e comunità di frontiera 1914–18,” *Qualestoria* 1–2 (2014): 155–74. Malone, “The Republican legacy of Italy’s Fascist ossuaries of the First World War,” 206–07.

59 See, as an example, Krsto Babić, “Omaggio ai caduti della Grande guerra. Il ricordo del passato è un dovere,” *La Voce del popolo*, 26 October 2024, <https://lavoce.hr/attualita/omaggio-ai-caduti-della-grande-guerra-il-ricordo-del-passato-e-un-dovere>.

Soča Region declined in favour of that of World War II – not merely for chronological reasons, but because the Marshal's regime emphasised it, portraying the second conflict as a war of liberation, redemption, and the founding of socialist Yugoslavia.⁶⁰

Acknowledgements

This article is one of the outcomes of the research conducted by its author as *assegnista di ricerca* at the Department of Political and Social Sciences of the University of Trieste, within the PRIN 2022 PNRR project “Cultural Heritage of War on the Borderland. Politics of Memory, Economic Development and Local Communities”, funded by the European Union – NextGenerationEU, Mission 4, Component C2, Investment 1.1, n. P2022SZMFW, CUP: J53D23017650001.

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60 On the latter point, see Jaka Repič, “Memorialization of the First World War in the Landscape of the Julian Alps,” *Folklore* 73 (2018): 41.

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61 Last accessed on 29 January 2026.

Gabriele Mastrolillo

SAKRALIZACIJA IN MONUMENTALIZACIJA PRVE SVETOVNE VOJNE V POSOČJU

POVZETEK

Prva svetovna vojna je pomenila prelom s predhodnim obdobjem in ima pomembno mesto v italijanski zgodovini, saj je Kraljevini Italiji omogočila pridobitev dodatnih ozemelj z večinskim italijansko govorečim prebivalstvom in kulturo.

V dvajsetih letih 20. stoletja so liberalne vlade in zlasti fašistični režim skupaj z lokalnimi veljaki spodbujali obsežno kampanjo monumentaliziranja vojne, zlasti ob vzhodni meji Italije (ali, če uporabimo bolj nevtralen izraz, ob meji na Severnem Jadranu). Ta proces je potekal v širšem kontekstu poveljne obnove tega območja, ki ga je spopad močno zaznamoval. Začel se je že proti koncu vojne, vendar je po pohodu na Rim iz očitnih političnih razlogov dobil nov zagon: Benito Mussolini si je prilastil spomin na vojno, da bi fašizem predstavil kot neposrednega dediča tega zmagovitega spopada. Služil je tudi kot sredstvo za italijanizacijo regije, v kateri so živeli Italijani, Slovenci in Hrvati. Na tem območju se je predelovanje kolektivnega žalovanja torej prepletalo z njegovo instrumentalizacijo v simbolnem soočenju, ki je imelo ključno vlogo v političnem boju. Zato je fašistični režim spodbujal popolno mitologizacijo vojne z gradnjo kostnic, razglašanjem »svetih območij« in podpiranjem zahtev po postavljanju posebnih spomenikov padlim vojakom ali enotam, da bi tako poenotil kolektivni spomin na spopad in padle predstavil kot »mučenike« za domovino.

Namen tega članka je raziskati kampanjo monumentalizacije v Posočju, ki je bilo del Julijske krajine in si ga danes delita Italija (Pokrajina Gorica) in Slovenija (Goriška). Po pregledu te kampanje in opisu konteksta nastanka »svetih območij« in treh kostnic na tem območju, ki temelji na preučeni literaturi o tej temi, se članek osredotoča na zgodovino nekaterih spomenikov, izbranih kot študije primerov na podlagi analize neobjavljenih sodobnih arhivskih virov, shranjenih v Državnem arhivu v Gorici in italijanskem Osrednjem državnem arhivu v Rimu.