
Memorial Day in a Europe with new walls

Another Memorial Day, a precious opportunity to “preserve and renew the memory of the tragedy of Italians and of all victims of foibe massacres and of the exodus of Istria, Fiume [Rijeka] and Dalmatia people after the Second World War and of the more complex eastern border affair”.

This event is never easy to recount because, unlike other tragedies of the past century, it almost seems to lack a collective memory, enriched with many intimate and personal stories and thus harder to narrate and to share.

Stories of men and women who from one day to the next were forced to permanently forego that part of themselves formed by their past in order to try to give a future to their present.

In that future there was no certainty and there was no choice: daily violence, continuous intimidation, vicious murders, designated departure as the only means to escape the ethnic cleansing imposed by Tito's regime. The only option was running the concrete risk of following the fate of people whose corpses had been thrown into the foibas, deep natural sinkholes resembling open wounds that lacerate the Karst mountains. In those abysses the light of humanity was defeated without any possibility of plea from the darkness of Good Friday: in that obscurity of endless pain thousands of men and women were brothers and sisters for eternity.

They spoke different languages: Italians, Slavs, Germans... they might have been apparent “enemies”, but there they were united by a common destiny of death.

In the name of ideology, some people have tried to find a motivation for what happened by remembering what had been there before. But nothing and no one will ever find a justification for those who consider themselves victims whilst being the executioners of their fellow human beings.

In a Europe of new walls, that sees the resurgence of racism hoped to be forever extinct, this Memorial Day takes on a twofold, fundamental meaning

On February 10 of every year, Italy, above all, tries to compensate for part of the immeasurable debt contracted with these countrymen for not having been able to embrace them as they deserved in the hours of Exodus (as if they were to blame for their "departure") and for having ignored them for decades. This obligation also entails a commitment to researching the still unknown foibas and the documents describing the fate of those who disappeared without a trace.

Not out of anti-historical demands for revenge, but so that a concrete gesture of mercy may forever accompany the memory of loved ones.

Those tragic events, apparently distant in time, call into question every person today and especially believers. To them too are addressed the words that Pope Francis has entrusted to the Church on the next World Day of Social Communications: “For no one is an extra on the world stage, and everyone’s story is open to possible change. Even when we tell of evil, we can learn to leave room for redemption; in the midst of evil, we can also recognize the working of goodness and give it space.” The darkness of Good Friday was broken by the light of the Resurrection.

