



Behind Closed Doors

Growing up under Totalitarian
Regimes/Growing up in Wartime

ABOUT

Behind closed doors – Growing up under Totalitarian Regimes/Growing up in War-time project bases its activities on two topics which are strictly interconnected when it comes to Memories of Totalitarian regimes and armed conflicts: CHILDHOOD and EVERYDAY LIFE under Totalitarian regimes and War.



IN societies dominated by repression and violence, children are the most vulnerable part of the population. On the other hand, the stories of everyday life of people that suffered under regimes/war seem non significant within the general framework of important historical events, but they can be essential in helping new generations to better understand the consequences of brutal and anti-human regimes.

The aim is to stimulate the reflection of young people from four different countries on how the totalitarian regimes in Europe and armed conflicts in Bosnia affected the way of life of children so as to better understand the brutality of those systems, to comprehend and appreciate the benefits and rights that are given by peaceful and democratic Europe, as well as to commemorate and pass on the stories of the victims of these crimes.

The objectives of the project:

- collection of micro-stories in each involved country about personal experiences and life of ordinary people who lived their childhood under totalitarian regimes;
- meeting between students and witnesses: people who lived their childhood under Communism in Czech republic/Romania, Fascism in Italy and War in Bosnia and Herzegovina;
- implementation of “Twinning through History” activities by involving young participants (students) to “adopt” personal stories and to take care of them by trying to get closer to the life of the person that suffered by enriching it with further personal research;
- organization of public events such as reading of stories, visiting of places that marked the life of witnesses;
- realization of a documentary movie about micro-stories and production of an e-book to disseminate stories also in other countries;



PROJECT PARTNERS:



WAR CHILDHOOD MUSEUM

War Childhood Museum,
Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina
lead partner



ASSOCIAZIONE ATRIUM
Forli, Italy

●●● Post Bellum

Post Bellum
Prague, Czech Republic



Fundatia Academia Civica
Bucuresti, Romania

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WAR CHILDHOOD MUSEUM

www.warchildhood.org



Sarajevo,
Bosnia and Herzegovina

DUring the two and a half years of working on the book 'War Childhood: Sarajevo 1992 – 1995,' I had the chance to meet hundreds of participants and hear their stories and testimonies. I learned that growing up in a war is complex, insufficiently researched and universal experience. Many of participants described or showed their war memories to me: personal items, photographs, diaries, letters, drawings and other documents. Twenty years after the war, a large number of these were lost during relocation, accidentally thrown away or permanently damaged. In May 2012, I wrote the first draft of the concept of 'War Childhood Museum.' My dream was to store these memories in a museum in order to preserve them permanently.

Three years later, in May 2015, the process of creating the Museum has officially started. Few months after, the collection already contains hundreds of items and documents. The creation of this Museum is important, not only for permanent preservation of memories of war childhood, but also because the Museum will, unlike other war museums, document the experience of those who played no role in the start of the

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war, and still suffered multiple consequences. Children's stories are particularly important for their potential and suitability to serve as a basis for advancing mutual understanding, which is essential for the reconciliation process. Ten years after the opening, the War Childhood Museum in Sarajevo will be the world's largest archive dedicated to the experience of growing up during the war.

The mission of the War Childhood Museum is to continuously and in accordance to the highest standards document and digitize materials related to growing up in the war, and to present the archived materials throughout various media channels in order to educate a broad audience about this experience.

The vision of the War Childhood Museum is to help individuals overcome past traumatic experiences and prevent traumatization of others, and at the same time advance mutual understanding at the collective level in order to enhance personal and social development.

In the opening statement of the book 'War Childhood,' I wrote that I hope the book would help in better understanding of this specific experience, but also that it would contribute to raising awareness of adults about their responsibility to create a better world for children. I hope that the War Childhood Museum will do more than that.

Sarajevo, 27th July 2015
Founder and Director of
the War Childhood Museum,
Jasminko Halilović

WITNESS: SEAD VRANA



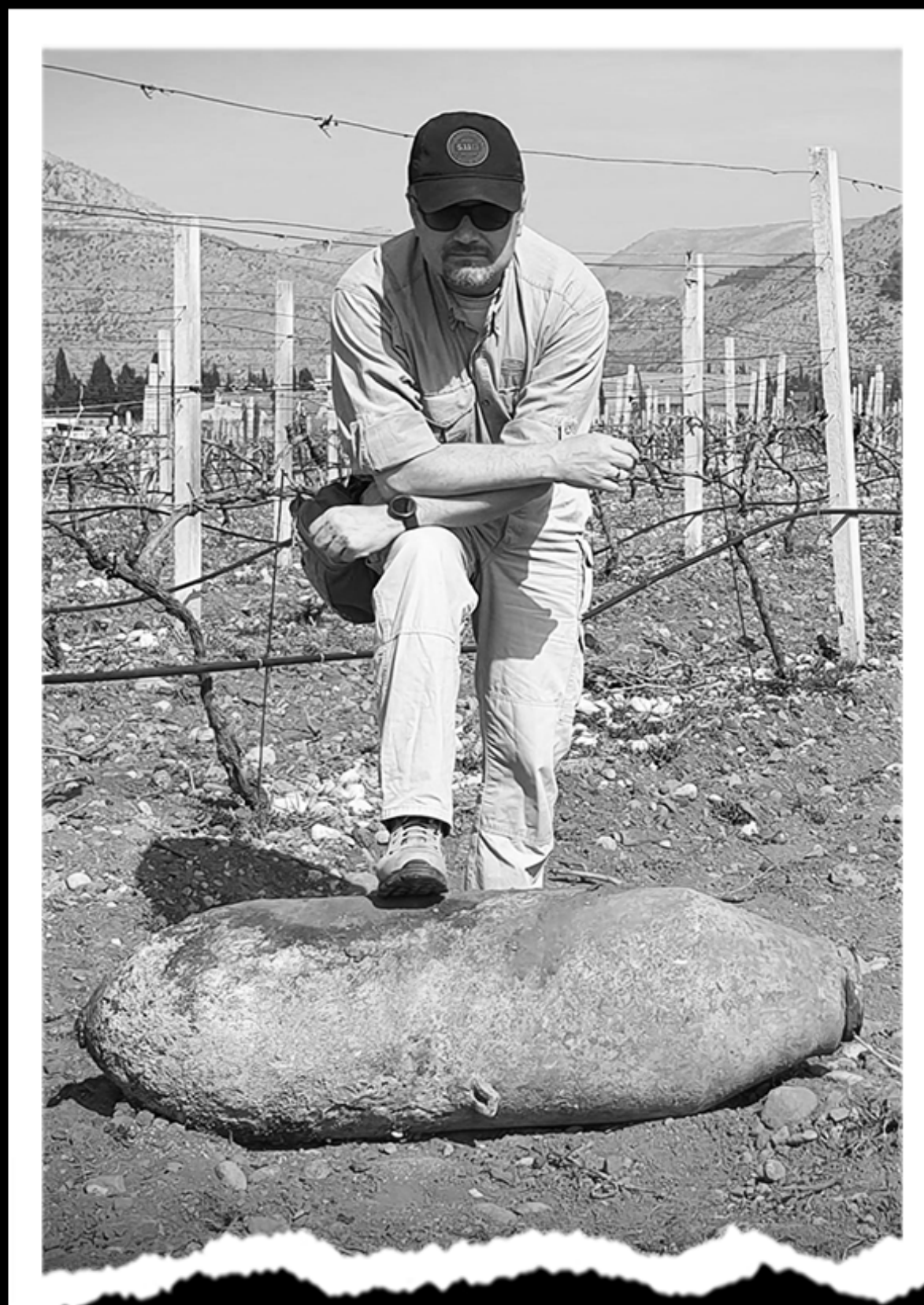
SEad Vrana was born in November 1975. in Sarajevo where he attended primary school and graduated aeronautical engineering in Mechanical Engineering High School in Sarajevo. His education was interrupted by war in Bosnia and Herzegovina, as he joined the Army of Bosnia and Herzegovina where he spent nearly 4 years.



At the beginning of the war he was 16 years old. His family lived near the frontline, which constituted one of the main elements leading to Sead joining the Bosnian army, where he spent the whole war as a soldier. At the same time he was also a student enrolled in high school in Sarajevo, and it was quite challenging for him to juggle life as a soldier and being a student. For most of the war, he and his family did not have electricity, water, nor fuel, meaning he also had to provide the necessary for his family. For nearly four years, Sead spent his time being a soldier, a student, providing for his family, while trying to make the most out of any opportunity to do what teenagers usually do – listening to music and having a good time.

After the war, as he needed to take a break from the war and uniform, he enrolled in the Faculty of Philosophy, which he successfully completed. Then, he gained a Master's degree in State management and humanitarian affairs on an international programme managed by La Sapienza University of Rome. The reason behind this choice was the need to move away from anything that resembled the war. Nevertheless, during the conflict he gained quite in-depth knowledge on demining and he was offered a job as a deminer in 1998. From that year onwards, despite all his efforts to move away from the war and war-related jobs, he started to work in the field of humanitarian demining: he is a trained explosive ordnance disposal technician.





and at present, he is the head of the explosive ordnance disposal department for the Federal Administration of Civil Protection.

Somewhere along the road he was a DJ on a local radio and for a few years wrote a column in the youth magazine Urban Bug. Also, he published the poetry book “Garnished Utopias” back in 2004 and wrote several papers on history of aerial warfare over Bosnia and Herzegovina. He got married and became a dad.

On the first of two photos, Sead was photographed 5 days after he got discharged from the army and had quite a babyface for a war veteran (the guitar is an exhibit in War Childhood Museum in Sarajevo). The second photo is recent and was taken a few months before his interview, on his job of explosive ordnance disposal.

As he always says – Man never chooses his work, but work chooses him - which was definitely his case.

Photo Archive of the War Childhood Museum



ATRIUM

www.atriumroute.eu



ATRIUM Association is a transnational organization established in 2013 and based in Forlì (Italy) to promote and manage the homonym European Cultural Route “Architecture of Totalitarian Regimes of the 20th Century in Europe’s Urban Memory”, certified by the Council of Europe in 2014.

The Association (and the Route) is composed by 17 municipalities from 4 European countries (Italy, Croatia, Bulgaria, Romania), and aims to disseminate knowledge, protect and promote European tangible and intangible heritage associated with the architecture and history of the 20th century, with special focus on periods marked by dictatorial regimes in Europe.

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Since 2013, the Association has been implementing activities aimed at discovering shared historical elements and raising awareness of European identity in its unity and diversity: researching activities on dissonant heritage, educational projects with schools, exhibitions, seminars, publications. It is a member of the Faro Convention network and of the Rete Faro Italia, connected with the implementation of the Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society of the Council of Europe (the FARO Convention).

The Association is strongly based on an explicit rejection of all forms of historical revisionism and apologetics with regard to authoritarian, dictatorial or totalitarian regimes and is dedicated to the promotion of democratic values, as is made explicit in the statute of the Association.

As a European Cultural Route of the Council of Europe the ATRIUM association is committed to promoting activities in the following areas:

- Research;
- Enhancing of the memory;
- Educational exchanges, especially addressed to European students and young generations;
- Contemporary cultural practice around the themes of the route;
- Sustainable cultural tourism.



RED POPPIES

The story of Antonia “Tonina” Laghi as told by Marisa Fabbri*

That of Tonina Laghi is one beautiful and intense story, which was collected by Marisa Fabbri in the book “Non ho mai avuto una bambola. Ricordi di una staffetta partigiana” through a series of encounters at the retirement home where Tonina spent the last years of her life.



The book is more than just a story of Resistance: it's the narration of the story of a little girl, Tonina, who was born in Pievequinta (Italy) on the 2nd of October 1921 under the Fascist dictatorship and then lived her childhood and youth during the war.

The importance of her testimony lies in the ability to reach those who did not live through the years of Fascism and to convey what those events meant for a child and then for a woman.

Tonina was attending third grade when she was expelled from school because her mother refused to let her take part in the big gathering of the “Piccole Italiane”, a Fascist organisation to which Italian girls aged between 8 and 14 years old were compulsorily enrolled. Her class had prepared a theatrical performance, but in order to participate, you had to be dressed as a “Piccola Italiana”, meaning wearing a black skirt, white shirt and black shoes and, as she lived in a poor family, they

could not afford this. This event was one of a series that left a deep mark on her.

Tonina then started working at a very early age in the houses of neighbouring farmers: at the age of 13, she was hired to work at Orsi Mangelli factory, in Forlì. Those were the early years of piece work and, therefore, of heavy exploitation. Most of the workers at Orsi Mangelli were women, due in part to the fact that at that time men were either in the army or hiding in the mountains, where they were partisans. Working in the fields, maintaining the house, but also participating in trade union activity and work were therefore mainly the responsibility of women.



During Fascism, she then joined the Resistance, becoming a partisan courier ("staffetta") with the battle name of 'La bionda' ("The blonde"). As a girl, she took part in the women's uprising in Via della Ripa on 24 March 1944, which led to the liberation of 10 renegades sentenced to death.

But her story also tells us about something else: she was a child and a rebellious woman who did not accept certain standards within the family or society. Even after the fall of the regime, she continued fighting for labour, civil and women's rights.

There are therefore many remarkable events in the life of Tonina under the Fascist Regime and throughout the Resistance

that have left a mark on her, among which stands out her account of one particular memory linked to red poppies, a representative one that tells the most about what people experienced during that period of war. "Red poppies" is the account of what happened in 1944, in Pievequinta (Italy), when four partisans were killed and left in the middle of the main road. The Germans killed them in a series of reprisals, so that they would serve as an example to the whole population. Those bodies remained there all night, until Tonina's brother and another boy, who worked for the public administration and therefore had a uniform, found a way to move them and put them on the bank of the road. At that point, Tonina and a friend went to a

nearby field and collected grass and poppies, which they used to cover their faces and wounds, which were covered in flies. It was an event that remained in the collective memory of the population, who experienced the violence of war every day near their homes, in the streets and everywhere.

Tonina died on the 26th of September 2021, when she was almost 100 years old. In her last years Tonina could no longer see, so she had no television. She liked to listen to the radio from time to time, but what kept her company were her memories. What she always repeated is that the best thing in her life was the experience of the Resistance.

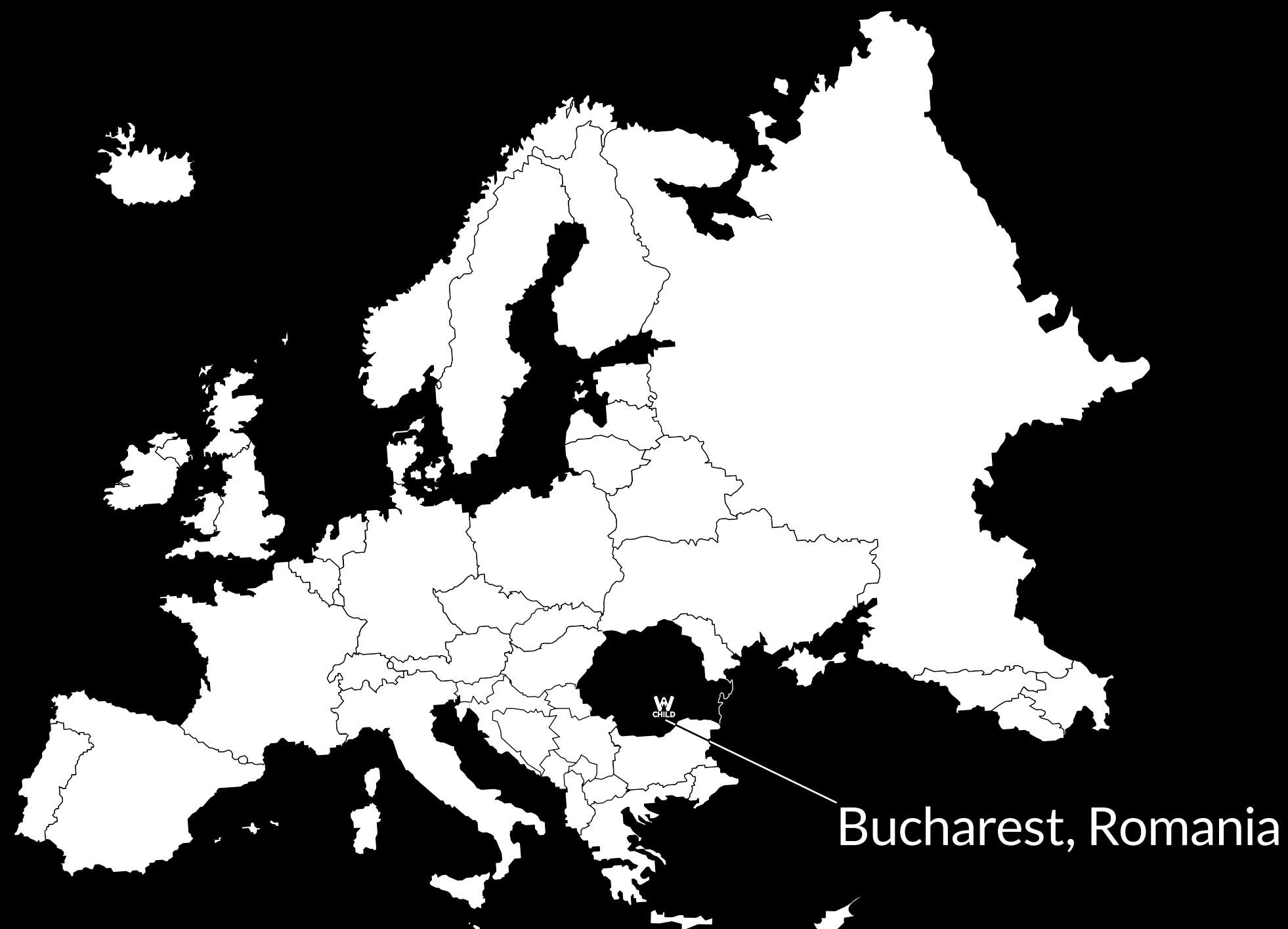
Photo Archive Atrium

She said herself:

"The first time I felt happy was when I was carrying bombs in my bag on my bicycle; I didn't even realise how dangerous it was or what I was doing. It was night, it was dark, but I was singing. I sang because I was happy, because for the first time I felt that I was serving something and someone. And I was happy of being a person, because the Resistance gave me the right to be considered a person."

THE CIVIC ACADEMY FOUNDATION

www.memorialsighet.ro



THE Civic Academy Foundation is an NGO established in 1994 by two well-known Romanian writers, Ana Blandiana and Romulus Rusan, with the aim to provide civic education by knowing the recent past of Romania and of Eastern Europe. Its main project is the Memorial to the Victims of Communism and to the Anticomunist Resistance, which became the world's first memorial to the victims of communism and which was taken by the Council of Europe under its aegis. The Memorial is made up of the International Center for Studies into Communism, based in Bucharest, and the Museum, which is located in Sighet, a town in north-west of Romania.

The Museum of the Memorial to the Victims of Communism and to the Resistance is set up in a former communist political prison, where between 1950 and 1955 the political, cultural, economic and religious elite of interwar Romania was imprisoned. In the 60 rooms of the museum are presented in chronological order the communist repression, the destruction of the rule of law, and its replacement with a totalitarian system, not only from Romania, but from other communist countries also. The creation of the Sighet Museum was preceded and then supported by the activity of the International Centre for Studies into Communism.

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The Centre has a number of departments:

- the Editorial Department (until now were published 10 book collections, 115 titles, 46.000 pages)
- Oral History Department (which comprises over 6500 hours of recordings)
- Archive (tens of thousands of archived documents, photos, audio and video recordings)
- The Research Department
- The Department for Exhibitions (approximately 60 permanent exhibitions realized at the Sighet Memorial Museum and 12 traveling exhibitions)

The main goals of the Memorial are civic education, youth education, to reconstruct and preserve the memory of those nations, and of the Romanian nation in particular, whose historical memory was deliberately falsified for half a century.

In the last 20 years, the foundation organized hundreds of activities, such as exhibitions, symposia, educational activities, oral history recordings and so on, to provide information to citizens to understand what happened in Romania and in other Eastern European states during the five decades of communism, and to understand the complexity and traumas of the historical period as a whole.



WITNESS: NICULINA MOICA



She was born on the 21st of October 1943 in Ploiești, where her parents had taken refuge during the Second World War, after running away from Reghin (Mureș County).

Niculina Moica comes from a family that started having problems with the communist regime in the early years of its establishment.

In 1944-1945, her family moved back to Reghin and managed to buy 5 hectares of arable land. As a result, her father was labelled a kulak (chiabur in Romanian, meaning wealthy peasant) and was sentenced in 1949 to two months in prison for 'sabotage'.

Moved by her family's suffering, but also influenced by them listening to Radio Free Europe at home, in 1959, Niculina Moica, a 9th grade high school student at "Petru Maior" High School in Reghin, joined the anti-communist organization 'Union of the Free Youth', which had been set up on the initiative of a high school colleague, Nicolae Munthiu, along with other peers. The members of the group met on several occasions,



discussed about drafting a statute for the organization, talked badly about the regime and wrote a few compassion letters to families whose members had been arrested. In June 1959, several boys in the group stole a few weapons from an office of the forest department in Gurghiu Valley, planning to flee to the mountains and fight the communist regime. Shortly after this incident, on the 15th of June



1959, all members of the organization were arrested. Niculina Moica was 15 years and a half at the time.

After she was taken into custody by the communist authorities, she was first transferred briefly to the Securitate in Reghin, and then to the Securitate in Târgu Mureș, where she was detained for investigation for three months.

While under arrest by the Securitate in Târgu Mureș, Niculina Moica learned that her father had also been arrested. Petru Moica had been taken into custody on the 13th of July 1959, almost a month after Niculina's arrest, and was accused of allegedly having had knowledge of the anti-communist organiza-

tion Niculina was a member of. The trial against the members of the Union of the Free Youth and its sympathisers started shortly after the end of the investigations and was heard at the Cluj Military Court. 21 defendants, most of which were high school students, appeared before the court, which finally passed sentences ranging from 10 years of harsh imprisonment to 25 years of hard labour. Niculina Moica and her father were sentenced to 20 years of hard labour for 'machination against the socialist order'.

After their arrest, Domnica, Niculina Moica's mother, was evicted from their home and all her belongings were confiscated. In order to survive, Dominica Moica temporarily stayed with

relatives and earned a living doing work for various families.

Once the trial was over, Niculina Moica was taken to the penitentiary in Târgu Mureș, where she was locked up in a cell next to her father's cell, with whom she was able to communicate through the wall. Several months later, Niculina was transferred to the Jilava Penitentiary, a prison located in an old fort close to Bucharest, with one of the harshest detention regimes in the Romanian prison system. Here, Niculina Moica endured isolation, misery and cold.

In May 1960, Niculina Moica was transferred from Jilava to the Botoșani Penitentiary. Roughly a year after her arrest, she was granted the right to

receive visits for the very first time. Niculina Moica was allowed to be visited by her mother, who had not heard from her ever since the arrest. Once again, she endured both cold and hunger.

In December 1960, she was taken to Arad prison, where she stayed until she turned 18, and was then transferred to the Gai labour colony near Arad, where political detainees had to do wickerwork.

After almost two years, in October 1962, she was transferred to the Oradea Penitentiary, where she was again put to do wickerwork. While serving time in Oradea, female inmates also underwent re-education as they were forced to watch ideological films and read various Soviet propaganda books.





In 1964, following several pardon decrees, all political prisoners in Romania were released from prison. After five years of imprisonment, Niculina Moica was released on the 23rd of June 1964 by Decree No. 310/1964.

Her father was first imprisoned in Târgu Mureș, then served time in Gherla, Văcărești and in the Luciu-Giurgeni labour colony. He was also released in 1964, four days after Niculina was set free.

Shortly after her release, because of her criminal record, she barely managed to find a job in a bakery, where she peeled potatoes for bread. With the consent by the Ministry of Education, she enrolled again to high school in a distance learning program, and worked in accounting after graduation until her retirement.

Niculina Moica married a former political detainee, who had served time with her father. They had a daughter together.

Up until 1989, Niculina Moica's family was under permanent surveillance by the communist authorities. The last surveillance report on Niculina by the Securitate is dated December 1989, just before the fall of the communist regime.

Niculina Moica is now living in Bucharest and is an active member of the Association of Former Political Detainees in Romania.

Photo Archive of the Memorial to the Victims of Communism and to the Anticommunist Resistance

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POST BELLUM

www.postbellum.cz



POst Bellum is a non-profit organization established in 2001 that seeks out and records witnesses' memories and personal experiences of historical events from throughout the 20th century. The organization was founded by a group of journalists and historians from the Czech Republic who kept meeting at press conferences and anniversary commemorations. They believed that witnesses should have the opportunity to tell their stories and that these stories should be accessible to everyone. From this vision, Post Bellum was created.

Post Bellum's core project is the Memory of Nations, a collection of memories from people who experienced the totalitarian eras

of the 20th century as well as photographs, newspapers, and various historical records. The collection is comprised of thousands of witness stories and is accessible to the public through an online database.

Our online collection contains the memories and stories of veterans from World War II, Holocaust survivors, and resistance fighters as well as testimonies from political prisoners, nonconformists, contemporary war veterans, and ethnic minorities. It also includes the experiences of those who were on the repressive side of the totalitarian regimes – State Security, the KGB, and more.

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The strategic partners and co-creators of the Memory of Nations are the Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes and Czech Radio.

Besides recording witnesses' testimonies, Post Bellum strives to get these stories out and into the world for access to broader audiences. The Post Bellum team now contains more than twenty employees and hundreds of external collaborators. Our team works on expanding the Memory of Nations collection, securing finances, and managing everyday operations. We coordinate educational projects for both children and adults along with preparing exhibitions, publishing books, and organizing social events. In addition to this, we have been broadcasting

"Stories of the 20th Century" on Czech Radio for more than 10 years.

"We also encourage students to take an interest in modern history and their own roots with the help of experiential workshops and the extensive educational project "Stories of our Neighbors".

Each year we hold the largest documentary contest in the Czech Republic and Slovakia. We are constantly looking for new ways to enhance public awareness and open up public debate on democratic values. All of these activities are governed by Post Bellum's Code of Conduct.

WITNESS:

**JARMILA
KROČKOVÁ**



Jarmila Kročková, née Fuchsová, was born on November 5, 1947 in Ostrava-Vítkovice. Both her parents escaped at the end of 1930s from Nazism to England, where they met and married. Her mother was a Jewish refugee from Germany, her father a lawyer and Jewish refugees from Czechoslovakia.



After war the family settled down in Czechoslovakia, in the city of Ostrava. The father, Vítězslav Fuchsa, was a regional secretary of the communist party. In February 1951, he was tried in a show-trial for alleged-treason along with other prominent members of the party. Whereas many of them received capital punishment, Jarmila's father was "lucky" to be sentenced only to fifteen years in prison. Also her mother, Emilie Fuchsová, ended up in custody for two years. This was a hard experience for her also because her mother tongue was German, which was highly unpopular among Czechs at that time. Three years old Jarmila and six years old brother Milan were suddenly left without their parents. Milan went to the children home and Jarmila was adopted by an older childless couple who turned out to be secret service collaborators. After eight months and mother's attempt at hunger strike in prison, the communist authorities allowed both children to move to their aunts. Until the age of six, Jarmila Kročková was growing up with her aunt in Košice, Slovakia. Then she reunited with mother and brother, but for a long time she was unable to recognise and accept her real mother. Father remained in prisons, Jarmila was able to visit him only twice. On one occasion, she brought a small bunch of flowers for him, but the prison authorities did not allow her to pass it to him.





Father Vítězslav was preliminary released from prison due to health issues in autumn 1956. After his rehabilitation in 1963, the family moved to Prague. Things were gradually improving until August 1968, when the Soviet Union and other communist regimes in Eastern Europe invaded and occupied Czechoslovakia. Jarmila was on a student trip in England, but returned to Czechoslovakia immediately. She was one of the group angry and desperate Czech students filmed by BBC after the invasion in Prague's centre. Her parents were in Yugoslavia at the time of the invasion and considered fleeing to the West. After several months they decided to

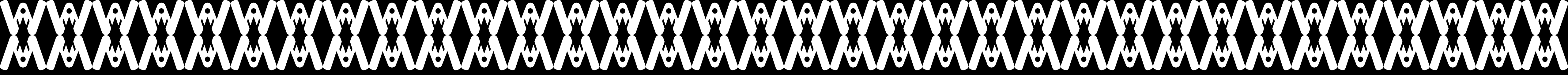
return, because the communists offered father a lucrative position in automotive industry. But it turned out to be only a trap, despite his education, father was only employed in unimportant and badly paid positions until 1990.

The only family member that left the country until 1968 was brother Milan. He returned to England, a country where he was born at the end of WWII and where he lives until today.

Jarmila Kročková had many friends who signed the Charter 77 protest manifest against the communist rule. She admired them, but she never did so herself. However, she perceived the change of regime in 1989 with great relief and so did her father. In 1992, Jarmila began working in a clinical research of a British pharmaceutical company, where she worked until 2016. She has two children and lives in Prague.

Photos Archive of Post Bellum





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