

WHAT VARAŽDIN HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS KNOW AND THINK ABOUT FASCISM AND ANTI-FASCISM? ON OCCASION OF THE 80TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE PERSECUTION OF JEWS IN VARAŽDIN (1941-2021)

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In this paper, the author presents the results of a survey conducted electronically from the beginning of March to the end of May 2021 among students of nine high schools in Varaždin on their knowledge and attitudes about fascism and anti-fascism. The survey consisted of 20 questions, and the answers were given by 356 students. This paper does not bring critiques or suggestions of the history curriculum for high schools, but presents some of its results. Special attention was paid to the events marking the *80th anniversary of the persecution of Jews in Varaždin (1941-2021)*, which were held during July 2021.¹

Keywords: Varaždin, 1941, Nazism, Anti-fascism, Varaždin.

Introduction

The reasons for writing this paper were the events marking the *80th anniversary of the persecution of Jews in Varaždin (1941-2021)*. At the initial proposal of the Institute for Scientific Work of the Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts in Varaždin, the project was sponsored by Varaždin County and the City of Varaždin, and the following public institutions in the city: the Varaždin City Museum, the Varaždin City Library and Reading Room “Metel

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¹ English translation by Vladimir Huzjan, Paul and Marijana Wells.

Ožegović”, the Concert Office Varaždin, the National Theater in Varaždin, the Open Public University – Kino Gaj, the State Archives in Varaždin, the Slovenian Cultural Society Nagelj and the initiator – the Institute of the Croatian Academy in Varaždin. In parallel with the marking of this anniversary, a survey was conducted among nine high schools in Varaždin among students about their knowledge and attitude towards fascism and anti-fascism.

Varaždin Synagogue – construction, destruction and reconstruction

In the area of today’s continental Croatia, the first organized Jewish community was founded in 1777 in the Free Royal City of Varaždin. It was founded by travelling Jewish merchants from neighboring Hungary. As early as the beginning of the 19th century, the first charitable, youth and women’s associations and schools were founded, and from 1802 the land for the cemetery was arranged.² The first Synagogue was built in 1812, and the larger and more elaborate Synagogue which is the topic of this chapter, was built a little later – in 1861.

Throughout the 19th and the first part of the 20th century, the Jews of Varaždin developed a rich economic presence, and when they received all civil rights in 1873, they actively participated in the political and social life

² Before that, the Jews buried their dead outside the city walls towards the river Drava (which was then the border between the Kingdom of Hungary and the Kingdom of Croatia and Slavonia). Today’s Jewish cemetery is located on a site chosen in 1802. The morgue was built in 1810 and renovated in 1927. During the Second World War, local authorities did not know what to do with the Jewish cemetery because it contained iron and bronze that could be used for military purposes. It was determined that the cemetery must be preserved, and a guard was appointed. Despite this, there was occasional damage and theft. In one case, the City allowed a monument to be taken from the cemetery and moved to another location. In February 1944, Antun Manfred Glasgall, a Jew from Varaždin, died. He was a great benefactor of the town’s people, and the Catholic pastor Mihovil Kanoti begged the City to take a monument from the Jewish cemetery for his grave in the Catholic cemetery (because it was forbidden to bury anyone in the Jewish cemetery). The request was granted, and his friends took care of arranging the grave. There were no burials in the cemetery after the Second World War, except for one case in 1952. Today, the Jewish cemetery in Varaždin is protected as a cultural monument. Magdalena Lončarić, “Pregled povijesti židovske zajednice u Varaždinu” [“Review of the History of the Jewish Community in Varaždin”], in: *800 godina slobodnog i kraljevskog Grada Varaždina [800 Years of the Free and Royal City of Varaždin]*, Miroslav Šicel, Slobodan Kaštela, eds. (Zagreb-Varaždin: Hrvatska akademija znanosti i umjetnosti, Zavod za znanstveni rad u Varaždinu, 2009), p. 200; Vladimir Huzjan, *Varaždin u vrijeme Nezavisne Države Hrvatske [Varaždin during the Independent State of Croatia]* (Zagreb-Varaždin: Hrvatska akademija znanosti i umjetnosti, Zavod za znanstveni rad u Varaždinu, 2020.), p. 152.

of the city. Overall, the Jewish community in Varaždin made an extremely significant contribution to its overall development.³

At the beginning of the Second World War, the process of persecution, looting and killing of Jews, Serbs and Roma, and Croats who did not support the new political order began in the territory of the then Independent State of Croatia. By the end of the Second World War, a large number of Jews from Varaždin had not survived the Holocaust. A small number survived because they were experts in their profession, were baptized or were married in a mixed marriage, but even that was not a guarantee of security. Some took up arms and joined the anti-fascist movement. According to the data available so far, 42 of them returned to the city after the Second World War. According to the 1931 census, 486 people of the Jewish faith lived in Varaždin. The surviving members of the Jewish community gradually left Varaždin and the former Yugoslavia and went to the newly established State of Israel or other overseas countries. Due to only a few remaining members, the Jewish Religious Community of Varaždin ceased to exist in 1949 and has not returned to this day. It lasted for a total of 172 years.⁴

³ Lončarić, "Pregled povijesti židovske zajednice u Varaždinu", pp. 191-207.

⁴ For more on the suffering of Jews in Varaždin during the Second World War see: Huzjan, *Varaždin u vrijeme Nezavisne Države Hrvatske*, pp. 49-75. A post-war report was published in the same book: "Krunoslav Batušić was the director of the local police (*župsko redarstvo*) from January 1942 until the end of February 1945, when he was transferred to Zagreb, where he disappeared. Throughout his service, he committed various acts of violence, injustice and crimes, arrests, deportations, executions and hangings directly and through his subordinate agents. Thus, in October 1942 and May 4, 1943, he arrested Jews and separated them into a camp. Batušić himself did not do that, but he did it through his most trusted agents, Dubić Dragutin and Franjo Bonšek. They arrested and took the Jews to the police station (*redarstvo*) by force, from where they were sent together to various camps. The last Jews were taken away on these occasions, except those who were in a mixed marriage or were unable to travel due to old age weakness and exhaustion. The first arrest of the Jews was on July 12 1941 it was done by Gregl Božidar. Gregl was assisted in the deportation of Jews by local Ustashas. Zubanjek Zvonimir, a merchant from Varaždin, who involvd himself with the local police (*župsko redarstvo*) and drove some Jews from the houses with his car on July 12, 1941. Then, Kreček Josip (tinsmith craftsman), Lukman Franjo (locksmith craftsman) both assisted the local police (*župsko redarstvo*) in arresting Jews and taking them to collecting points from where they were sent to camps. Horvat Pavao, 33 years old, a long-term medical student, promoted the Ustasha movement in the former Yugoslavia, and after the proclamation of the Independent State of Croatia he was completely open in the service of the Ustashas and Ustasha police in Varaždin. He assisted in the persecution and arrest of the Jews. He later had a special appointment in Zagreb. Šrenk Branko, 30 years old, a law student, entered service as Deputy Chief of the local police (*župsko redarstvo*) in Varaždin. Dr. Čanić Vladimir, a hospital doctor, killed by the People's Liberation Army (*Narodnooslobodilačka vojska*), illegally actively propagated the Ustasha movement in the former Yugoslavia and helped the local police (*župsko redarstvo*) in Varaždin in segregating the Jews. Žganec Stjepan, 37 years old, a merchant from Varaždin, helped with the arrest of Jews, as did Žganec Ivo, a 32-year-old merchant from

But let's return thematically to the Varaždin Synagogue.

According to previous research, it has been confirmed that members of the Jewish community in Varaždin initially used one room of the Old Town (*Stari grad*) for religious ceremonies. That room was located in the north tower of the Old Town and was rented. Later, the civic house of Captain J. Gojmerac, in what was then *Vugerska Street*, was rented for use. In these locations, the basic conditions for a religious rite were met, such as the installation of the Holy Closet facing Jerusalem, where the Torah was located. However, in 1811, the free and royal City of Varaždin gave approval to the Jewish religious community to build a Synagogue and the right to choose rabbis. So, the first Synagogue in Varaždin was built in 1812 in today's Ivana Kukuljevića Sakcinskog Street. It was a smaller house decorated in the classical style. That house still exists today, but its shape and facade have changed over time.

In the middle of the 19th century, when the Jewish community in Varaždin became economically stronger, it sent a request to the City to buy a larger plot of land on which to build a larger Synagogue. The request was granted, and construction began in 1858 and was completed in 1861. The rite of consecration was held on August 16, 1861, when the 50th anniversary of the decree granting Jews permission to settle in Varaždin was marked. The new Synagogue was a classical building decorated on the front with two towers topped by two domes, with the Star of David above each. The building was not on the road but recessed and fenced from the street with a metal fence.

Varaždin. All these Ustashes were led by Božidar Gregl on July 12 in 1941, when they committed the crime of abducting Jews. Gregl Božidar, 50 years old, merchant by profession, owner of a small haberdashery shop, was later manager of the local police (*župsko redarstvo*) in Varaždin at the time of the enactment and execution of the law on the protection of Aryan blood. He personally carried out all the measures, arrested and deported Jews to prisons and sent them to camps. He himself arrested and ordered arrests outside the city of Varaždin. His action in persecuting the Jews showed signs of a morally unbalanced man with an explicit criminal instinct. In those days, there was a real hunt for Jews as wild beasts. All this had a devastating effect on other citizens. (...) It was believed by citizens that he appropriated a good part of the Jewish property, movable and expensive, with his helpers, and in this way he remedied his poor economic situation, and obtained wealth for a more comfortable life. The property of the exiled Jews was confiscated. The real estate was appropriated by the Ustasha government, and since the registry was burned, the approximate value of the movable property which was sold below the market price could not be established. Returned Jews searched for movable property in private homes and found some items. Several Jews managed to flee abroad, to Italy, America, Palestine and Switzerland, but returned with the PLA (*Narodnooslobodilačka vojska*) as its members. Those who were taken to the camps, and to this day have not returned or been reported on, are in no doubt, not alive. Most of the men were sent to the Jasenovac camp, and the women to the Loborgrad camp and to Germany. It is difficult to establish the manner in which some were killed. They were massacred in Jasenovac and in camps in Germany, and they also disappeared individually in Lepoglava, Loborgrad and Stara Gradiška and also during the transport." Ibid., 59-60.

In order to better organize its work, the Jewish community of Varaždin bought in 1864, almost diagonally opposite the Synagogue, a house for the rabbi and his family.⁵ Social gatherings were also held in that house. A few years later, in 1868, a building was purchased next to the Synagogue where the employees of the Jewish community were housed.⁶

This situation lasted until the beginning of The Second World War. The author of this paper has already written down what happened to the Jewish community in Varaždin at that time. In conclusion: “The first arrests of Jews began in May 1941, in June they were ordered to wear a yellow round badge with the letter Ž (*Židov*, Jew), and in July of that year began their greatest persecution. On the night of July 12, 1941, almost all the Jews in the city of Varaždin were gathered and taken to the military riding school building. From there, on the next day they were taken to the railway station and to the concentration camps established by the ISC (NDH). The property of the Jews was confiscated and turned into state property and subsequently divided. That is why the Zagreb-based *Hrvatski list* wrote on July 3, 1941, that Varaždin was the first *Judenfrei* (*Jewish free*) city in the Independent State of Croatia. The Synagogue became a cinema and theater and was used as the base of The Croatian Workers syndicate Ivan Peštaj. During the alterations, the entrance facade, the internal contents and two domes were destroyed.”⁷

To this day, not many photographs of the interior and exterior of the Varaždin Synagogue have been preserved. There is a dozen of those filmed before the Second World War, and about as many after the postwar period. When the building of the Croatian National Theater was being renovated, the plays were held in the former Synagogue, and in the time of socialist Yugoslavia it was called the House of Freedom. The Synagogue was later used as a hall for the Park cinema and remained in that function until its closure in the late 20th century. There were various ideas of what to do with the building. During 1997, work was carried out on the static renovation of the roof structure, when it was widely speculated that it would house the Croatian Olympic Museum, but this did not happen.⁸ Since then, the sides of the building have been renovated, and the facade remained unfinished until the summer of 2021. Today, the Varaždin Synagogue has been restored on the outside for

⁵ The building of the Varaždin rabbinate was demolished in 1970. “Osnutak Pučke štedionice” [“Establishment of the People’s Savings Bank”], *Varaždinske vijesti*, 31 January 1996, p. 12.

⁶ Lončarić, “Pregled povijesti židovske zajednice u Varaždinu”, pp. 199-200.

⁷ Huzjan, *Varaždin u vrijeme Nezavisne Države Hrvatske*, p. 218.

⁸ “Sanacija krovne konstrukcije” [“Rehabilitation of the roof structure”], *Varaždinske vijesti*, June 25, 1997, p. 6; “Podrška kulturnim projektima” [“Support to the cultural projects”], *Varaždinske vijesti*, October 1, 1997, p. 19.

conservation and restoration, and the interior has been prepared for decoration and a future purpose that has yet to be agreed.

At the end of the chapter, it should be mentioned that in modern times only four people have received the recognition of an honorary citizen of the City of Varaždin. One of them is Eva Akerman born Krajanski (1923-2021) who survived the Holocaust. The citation of the Charter of the Honorary Citizen of the City of Varaždin states: “(...) due to the exceptional contribution of members of the Krajanski family and other members of the Jewish community to the development of the city of Varaždin between the two world wars.”⁹ The author singles out this part from her testimony: “I returned to Varaždin immediately after it was liberated in May 1945. I just had to go home to see if anything was left behind, if anyone stayed alive. I came to Gundulićeva Street and simply fell apart. Something happened inside me and I could neither speak nor walk anymore. I just stood there in shock. One man who knew me and my family spotted me, offered me an overnight stay. It was only after a few days that I came to my senses from the shock. There were a lot of strangers in my house. It was no longer my house.”¹⁰



The first Varaždin Synagogue in Ivana Kukuljevića Sakcinskog Street¹¹

⁹ <https://varazdinski.net.hr/vijesti/drustvo/4047316/in-memori-am-prezivjela-je-pa-kao-ustaskog-rezima-a-kad-se-vratila-kuci-tamo-vise-nije-bilo-nijednog-clana-njezine-obitelji/> (16 February 2022).

¹⁰ Ibid. The entire testimony in the Croatian language is available at the link above.

¹¹ Photographed on February 17, 2021 by Vladimir Huzjan.

Events marking the 80th anniversary of the persecution of Jews in Varaždin (1941-2021)

In 2021 at the initiative of the Institute of the Croatian Academy of Science and Arts in Varaždin, and under the auspices of the City of Varaždin and Varaždin County, eight of the above-mentioned public institutions from the city of Varaždin joined the *80th anniversary of the persecution of Jews in Varaždin (1941-2021)*. The coordinator of the program was the Institute, and they were held in Varaždin from Monday, July 12 to Friday, July 16, 2021.

On Monday, July 12, at 9 am in the Vatroslav Jagić Park, a commemorative plaque was unveiled as a reminder of the tragic event of the persecution of Jews in Varaždin in 1941.¹² The plaque is made of brass and glued to a granite plinth. The text is written in Croatian and Hebrew and reads: “In just two days, July, 1941, most of the Jews of the city of Varaždin were taken to camps and to their deaths. On the occasion of the 80th anniversary, this plaque was erected by the City of Varaždin and Varaždin County.” This plaque was erected opposite the Synagogue because in summer of 1941 most of the Jews of Varaždin were marched along the road by the Synagogue to the train station and on to the camps and their deaths. Also nearby is the recently erected sculpture *K19* by Zlatko Kopljar, which contains bricks made by detainees at the Jasenovac concentration camp.¹³ On the same day at 10 AM, a scientific conference entitled “Jewish community in northern Croatia” was held in the multimedia hall of the Hercer Palace of the Varaždin City Museum.¹⁴

¹² See more about the suffering of Jews in Varaždin in: Magdalena Lončarić, Vid Lončarić, “Židovi u Varaždinu” [“Jews in Varaždin”], in: *Dva stoljeća povijesti i kulture Židova u Zagrebu i Hrvatskoj* [Two centuries of Jewish history and culture in Zagreb and Croatia] (Zagreb: Židovska općina Zagreb, 1998), pp. 358-377; Magdalena Lončarić, *Tragom židovske povijesti i kulture u Varaždinu*, katalog izložbe [Following Jewish history and culture in Varaždin, exhibition catalogue] (Varaždin: Gradski muzej Varaždin, 2003); Lončarić, “Pregled povijesti židovske zajednice u Varaždinu”, *800 godina slobodnog kraljevskog grada Varaždina 1209.-2009.*, [“Overview of the history of the Jewish community in Varaždin”, pp. 191–208; Magdalena Lončarić, *Židovska zajednica u Varaždinu* [Jewish community in Varaždin], Vid Lončarić, ed. (Varaždin: Gradski muzej Varaždin, 2017); Huzjan, *Varaždin u vrijeme Nezavisne Države Hrvatske (1941.-1945.)*, pp. 49-77.

¹³ The following took part in the musical part of the program: Igor Matavulj on guitar and Zoran Resnik on cello. They performed the following compositions: Heitor Villa-Lobos, *Bachianas Brasileiras*, no. 5, Aria, cello and guitar cover (5,5 min), Augustin Barrrios, *La Cathedral*, cello and guitar cover (2,5 min) te Camille Saint-Saens, *Labud*, cello cover with guitar accompaniment (3,5 min).

¹⁴ The organizers of the conference were the Institute of Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts in Varaždin and Varaždin City Museum. Vladimir Huzjan, PhD, and Spomenka Težak, prof. were handling the conference. Before the conference started, the participants were greeted by the Ambassador of the State of Israel to the Republic of Croatia, His Excellency Ilan Mor.

On Tuesday, July 13, a lecture was held by Boris Jesih, PhD, entitled: “The righteous Ivan Breskvar – Slovenian from Varaždin”, and in the evening of the same day in the Gaj Cinema, the film “Saul’s Son” was shown. On Wednesday, July 14, a piano performance of the opera “The Diary of Anne Frank” was held in the Great Concert Hall of the Croatian National Theater in Varaždin. Then, on Thursday July 15, the exhibition “Jews in Varaždin – from racial to class enemies” organized by the State Archives in Varaždin was opened. On the same evening in the Gaj Cinema a film was shown: “Life is Beautiful”. The last activity was on Friday July 16, in the City Library and Reading Room “Metel Ožegović” Varaždin. Andreja Toljan gave a lecture entitled “Cultural heritage of the Varaždin Jewish community”, based on works from the Native Collection of the City Library and Reading Room “Metel Ožegović” Varaždin.



Varaždin’s Vatroslav Jagić Park with a sculpture *K19* by Zlatko Kopljar and two brass plaques placed on the ground. In the background is the Synagogue in the renovation phase¹⁵

Lecturers and topics at the conference were: Vladimir Huzjan, *Varaždin 1941. godine* [*Varaždin in the year 1941*]; Spomenka Težak, *Srpanj 1941. u Varaždinu* [*July 1941 in Varaždin*]; Barbara Markač-Despinić, *Židovi – đaci i profesori u Varaždinskoj gimnaziji* [*Jews – students and teachers in Varaždin Gymnasium*]; Klara Macolić, *Kultura ukopa u primjerima nadgrob-nih spomenika Židovskog groblja u Varaždinu* [*Burial culture in examples of tombstones of the Jewish Cemetery in Varaždin*]; Milivoj Dretar, *Dva stoljeća židovstva u Ludbregu* [*Two centu-ries of Jewry in Ludbreg*]; Mirjam Despinić-Biškup, *Politički, društveni i kulturni aspekti života Židova u Međimurju* [*Political, social and cultural aspects of the life of Jews in Međimurje*].

¹⁵ Photographed in July 2021 by Vladimir Huzjan.



Commemorative plaque with sculpture *K19* by Zlatko Kopljär¹⁶



Commemorative plaque in the Vatroslav Jagić Park marking 80th anniversary of the persecution of Jews in Varaždin (1941-2021)¹⁷

¹⁶ Photographed in July 2021 by Vladimir Huzjan.

¹⁷ Photographed in July 2021 by Vladimir.



Celebrating Europe Day on May 9, 2021, in Varaždin with a special music program¹⁸



Varaždin Synagogue after the renovation in 2021¹⁹

¹⁸ Photograph from Archive of the Varaždin Concert Office. Program: John Williams: Theme from the movie “Schindler’s List”; Ruta Bobić, violin; Daniel Otto, clavinova. Selection of musical numbers from the monodrama opera “The Diary of Anne Frank” by Grigory Fried: Marija Lešaja – Anne Frank; Stjepan Vuger – piano.

¹⁹ Photographed on February 17, 2021, by Vladimir Huzjan.

About the survey

Due to epidemiological measures and online teaching, the survey was conducted electronically from the beginning of March to the end of May 2021. The content of the survey was compiled by the author of the paper, and was conducted among students of nine high schools in Varaždin (in alphabetical order): Civil Engineering, Science and Mining School Varaždin (23 students),²⁰ First Gymnasium Varaždin (50 students),²¹ First Private Gymnasium with Public Law Varaždin (19 students),²² Medical School Varaždin (47 students),²³ Private Varaždin Gymnasium with Public Law Varaždin (13 students),²⁴ School of Economics Varaždin (47 students),²⁵ Second Gymnasium Varaždin (92 students),²⁶ Secondary Vocational Varaždin School (13 students)²⁷ Varaždin Mechanical and Traffic School (52 students).²⁸ Completion of the survey was not mandatory, and a total of 356 students participated.

²⁰ Students of the Civil Engineering, Science and Mining School Varaždin responded to the survey on May 7 and 21, 2021. I thank all the students who filled out the survey as well as Danijela Strmecki, prof. te Ivana Kelvisar, prof. on help to conduct the survey.

²¹ Students of the First Gymnasium Varaždin responded to the survey on March 26, 2021. I thank all the students who filled out the survey as well as Jurica Barulek, prof. on help to conduct the survey.

²² Students of the First Private Gymnasium with Public Law Varaždin responded to the survey on March 19, 2021. I thank all the students who filled out the survey as well as Ivana Švogor Kovačić, prof. of history and philosophy on help to conduct the survey.

²³ Students of the Varaždin Medical School responded to the survey on April 23 and 26, 2021. I would like to thank all the students who completed the survey, as well as Fabijana Ipša, Master of Education in history, for their help in conducting the survey.

²⁴ Students of the Private Varaždin Gymnasium with Public Law Varaždin responded to the survey on March 8 and 19, 2021. I thank all the students who filled out the survey as well as Barbara Frntić, prof. of history on help to conduct the survey.

²⁵ Students of the Varaždin School of Economics responded to the survey on May 19, 2021. I thank all the students who filled out the survey as well as Jurica Njegovac, prof. of history on help to conduct the survey.

²⁶ Students of the Second Gymnasium in Varaždin responded to the survey from March 29 to April 1, 2021. I thank all the students who filled out the survey as well as Miroslav Gradečak, prof. of history and Slavic studies and Nikola Slunjski, prof. to assist in conducting the survey.

²⁷ Students of the Secondary Vocational Varaždin School responded to the survey on March 12, 2021. I thank all the students who filled out the survey as well as Mihaela Šafran Denev, prof. of history and Croatian language and literature on help to conduct the survey.

²⁸ Students of the School of Mechanical Engineering and Traffic in Varaždin responded to the survey on May 27 and 28, 2021. I thank all the students who filled out the survey as well as Natalija Vidaček Štiber, prof. and Romana Milković, prof. of history on help to conduct the survey.

The survey consisted of three parts. In the first, students answered 11 knowledge questions with one correct answer possible; in the second there were eight statements in which their opinion was asked for, and in the third part a question to which they could give an affirmative or negative answer with an explanation. At the very beginning of the survey, the students answered which Varaždin high school they attend. In terms of implementation, the survey was conducted via Google forms so that the author of the paper sent an electronic link to the teachers who passed it on to the students. All 20 questions had to be answered in the survey, and the system allowed the student to complete the survey only once.²⁹

The paper “Survey: What do Istrian high school students know about anti-fascism?” by Igor Jovanović, Milan Radošević and Dragan Sokolović served as a reference point for research.³⁰ The authors conducted the research in 2014 in 14 Istrian high schools, surveying 648 students. The aim was to establish the level of knowledge about fascism and anti-fascism among high school students. Some of the results were: 88.15% of students believed that the anti-fascism movement originated in the first half of the 20th century as a reaction to fascism; then 73.55% of students believe that fascism was a movement that originated in Italy in the first half of the 20th century, and 29.14% of students believed that the red star is a symbol of anti-fascism, in other words 34.37% of students believed that anti-fascist values in the Republic of Croatia are confirmed by the constitution etc. But what do Varaždin high school students know and think about these and similar topics?

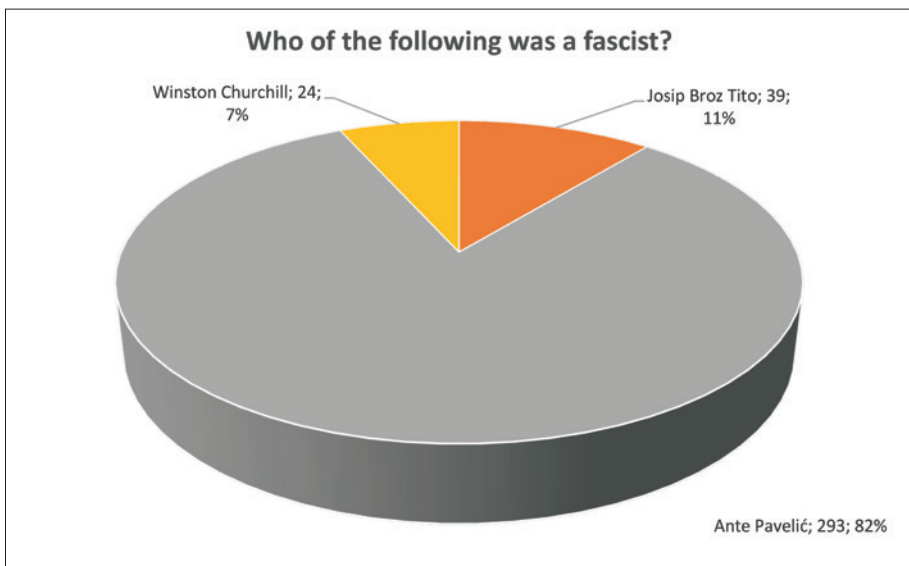
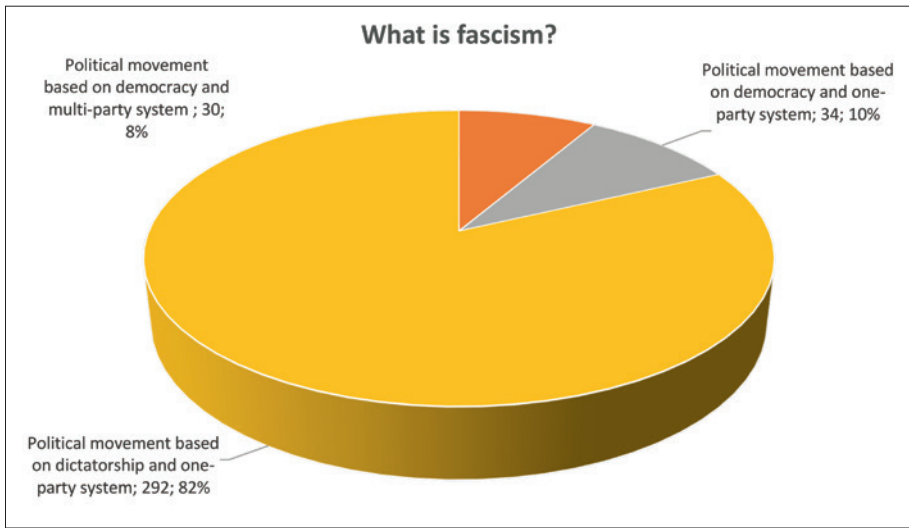
Survey results of high school students in Varaždin

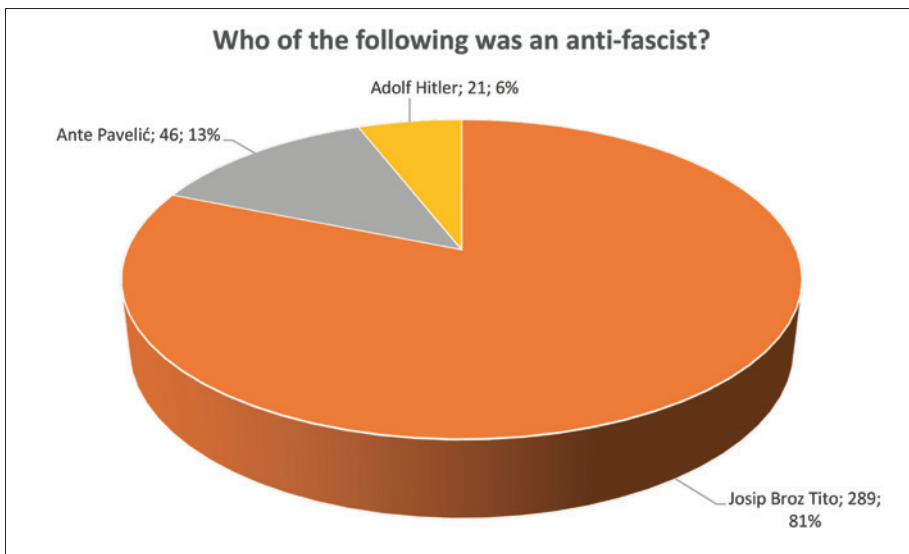
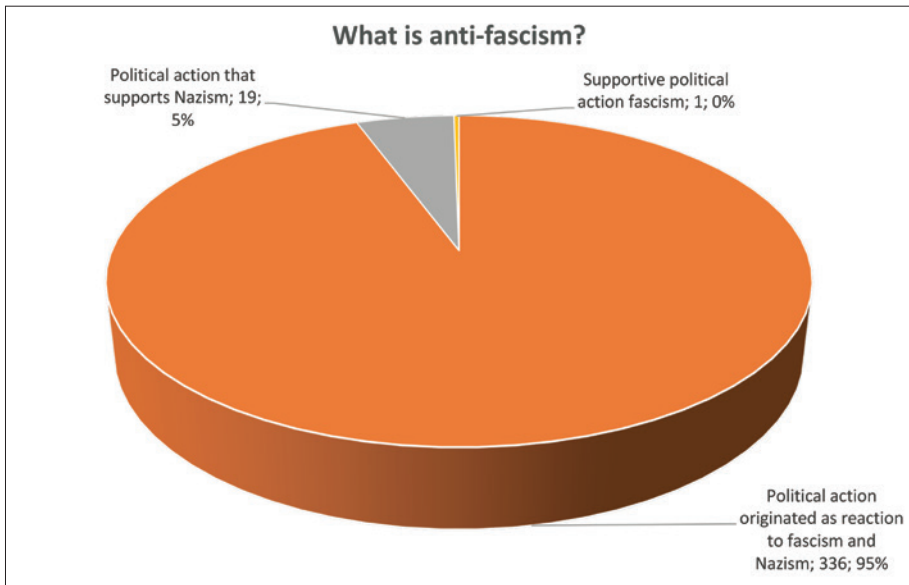
This chapter will not discuss in detail all the results of the survey but will highlight the highest or lowest values for the reason that all the details can be seen in each chart separately.

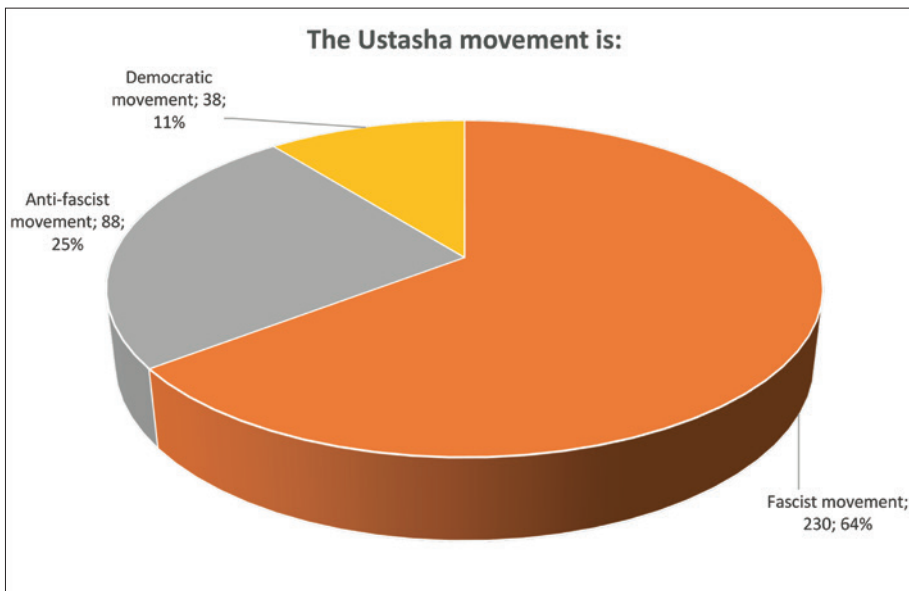
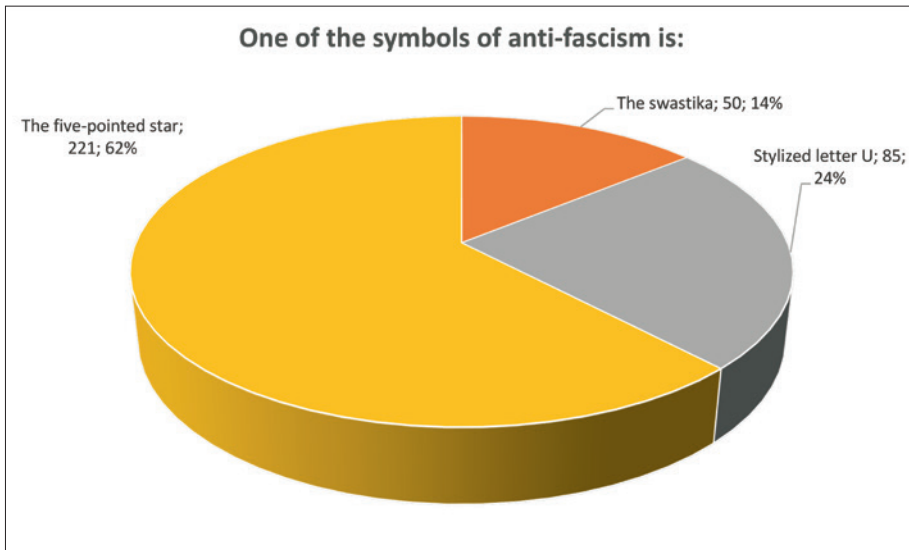
²⁹ The content basis for compiling the survey question consisted of two high school textbooks: Suzana Leček, Magdalena Najbar-Agičić, Damir Agičić, Tvrtko Jakovina, *Povijest 4.: Udžbenik povijesti za četvrti razred (opće) gimnazije* [*History 4.: History textbook for the fourth grade of (general) grammar school*], First edition (Zagreb: Profil, 1999); and Miroslav Akmađža, Mario Jareb, Zdenko Radelić, *Povijest 4.: Udžbenik za četvrti razred gimnazije* [*History 4: Textbook for the fourth grade of high school*] (Zagreb: Alfa, 2009).

³⁰ Igor Jovanović, Milan Radošević, Dragan Sokolović, “Anketa: Što istarski srednjoškolci znaju o antifazišizmu?” [“Survey: What do Istrian high school students know about anti-fascism?”], in: (*Anti*)fašizam u prošlosti i sadašnjosti: Zbornik radova (Pula: Udruga antifašističkih boraca i antifašista grada Pule, 2015), pp. 145-161.

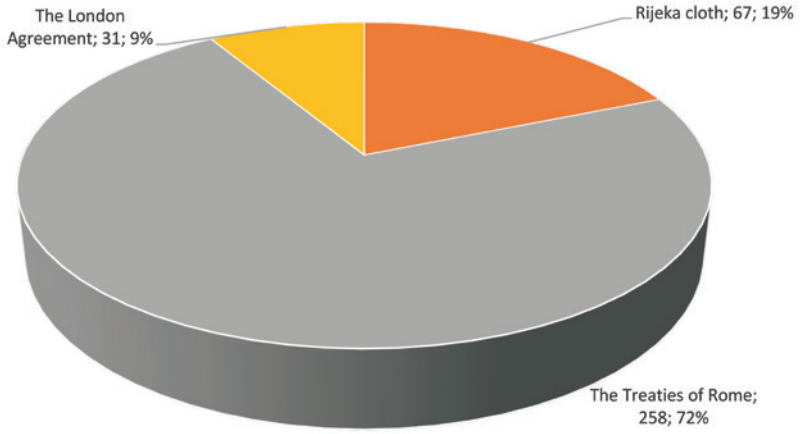
In the first series, out of a total of 11 survey questions, students were asked a question with three offered answers, one of which is correct. In the first question "What is fascism?" 82% of students answer that it is a political movement based on dictatorship and one-sidedness. However, 8% (or 30 students) believe that fascism is a political movement based on democracy and multi-party system. In response to the second question, "Which of the following is a fascist?", 82% said that it was Ante Pavelić, 11% Josip Broz Tito and 7% British Prime Minister Winston Churchill. Here, a pattern was observed in individuals who gave incorrect answers during the survey. Then, in the third question, "What is anti-fascism?", 95% of students answered that this political action was a reaction to fascism and Nazism, but 5% said that it was a political action that supports Nazism. There are 19 students who think so and are not from the same school. Then, in the fourth question, "Who of the following is an anti-fascist?" 81% think it was Josip Broz Tito, 13% Ante Pavelić (46 students) and 6% Adolf Hitler (21 students) – probably a repetition of deliberately giving an incorrect answer. In the fifth question "One of the symbols of anti-fascism is": 62% of students think it's a five-pointed star, then 24% a stylized letter U, and 14% a swastika. The incorrect answers here are not to the extent that one can speak of intentional incorrect answers, but it can be concluded that 38% of Varaždin high school students do not recognize the symbols of anti-fascism. Then, in the sixth question "The Ustasha movement is": 64% consider it a fascist movement, 25% as an anti-fascist movement and 11% a democratic movement. So, 36% of high school students in Varaždin do not know that the Ustasha movement was a fascist movement. In the seventh question, "How did Ante Pavelić hand over a part of the Croatian coast and islands to the Kingdom of Italy": 72% believed this was done by the Treaties of Rome, and 19% by the Rijeka cloth (which was signed in the 19th century). Then, in the eighth question, "The Partisan movement was under the leadership of": 87% of students responded to the Communist Party of Yugoslavia, and 4% (or 15 students) of the Ustasha movement. The latter is again most likely a result of deliberately marked wrong answers. In the ninth question, "The largest concentration camp in the ISC (NDH) was in": as many as 99% answered Jasenovac. Also, no one answered that there were no concentration camps in the ISC – Independent State of Croatia (NDH – Nezavisna Država Hrvatska). In the tenth question, "Holocaust is": 91% of students responded to the systematic destruction of Jews and other peoples during the Nazi period (1933-1945). Thus, Varaždin high school students are familiar with the fact and understand the suffering of Jews and other peoples in the concentration camps established by the ISC (NDH) authorities. In the final question, "May 8 marks in Europe": 85% of students answered Victory Day over fascism. Below are 11 graphs with a more detailed presentation of the answers to the first part of the survey:



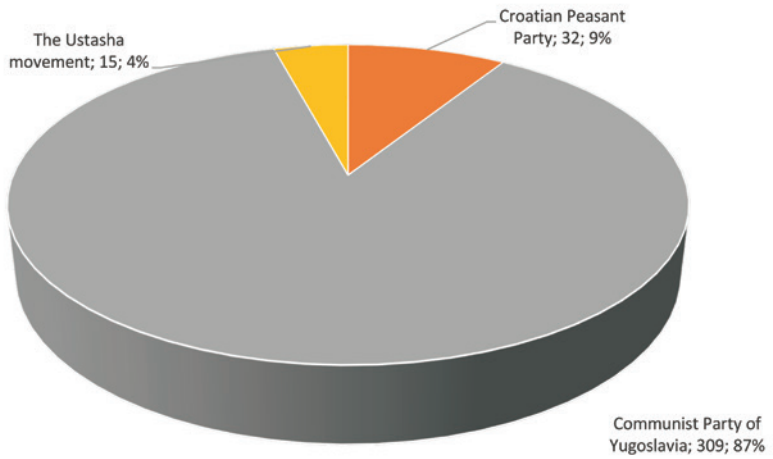


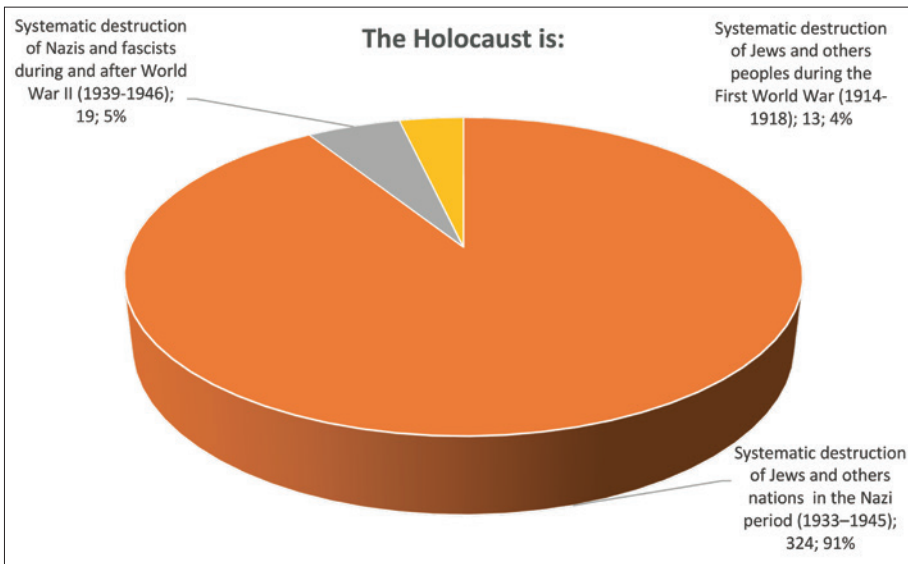
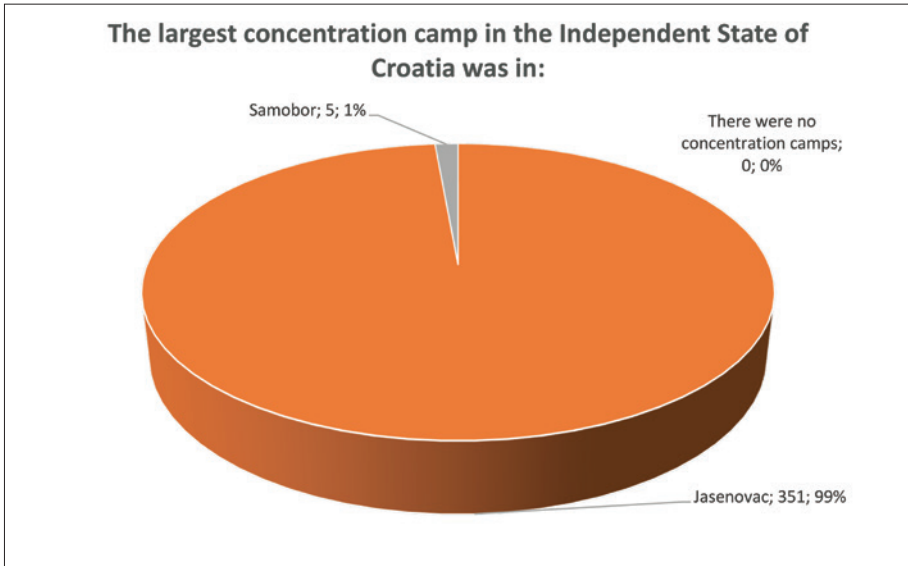


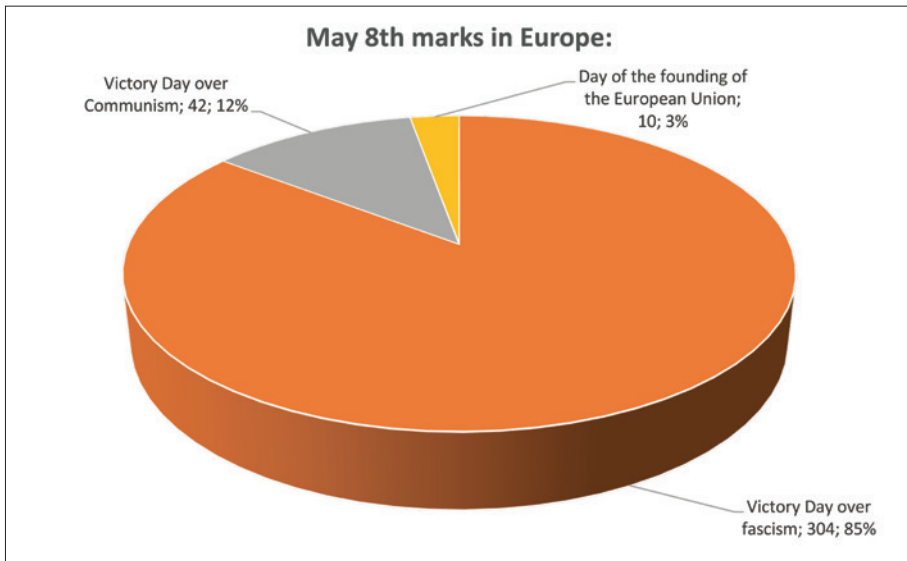
How did Ante Pavelić hand over a part of the Croatian coast and islands to the Kingdom of Italy:



The partisan movement was under the leadership of:



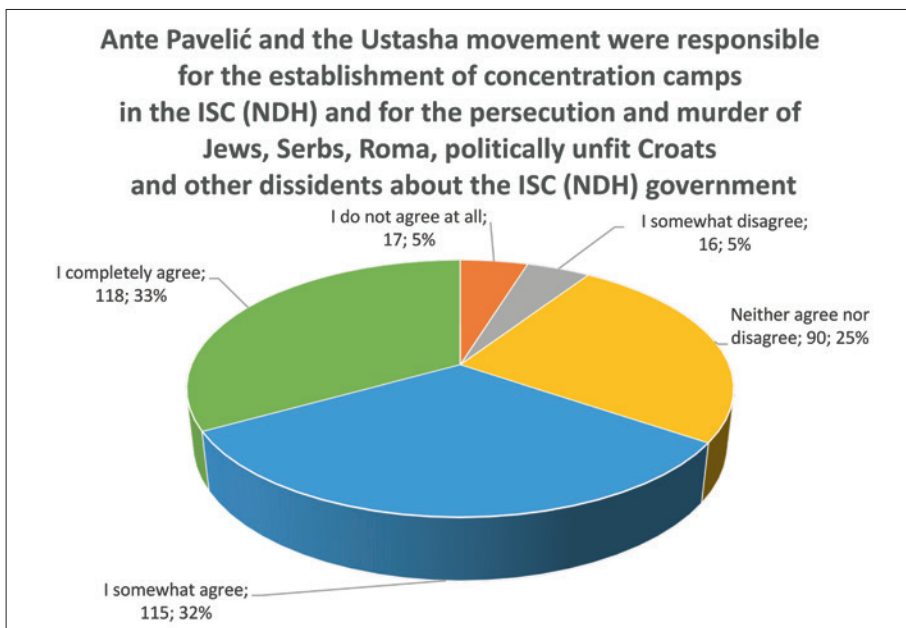


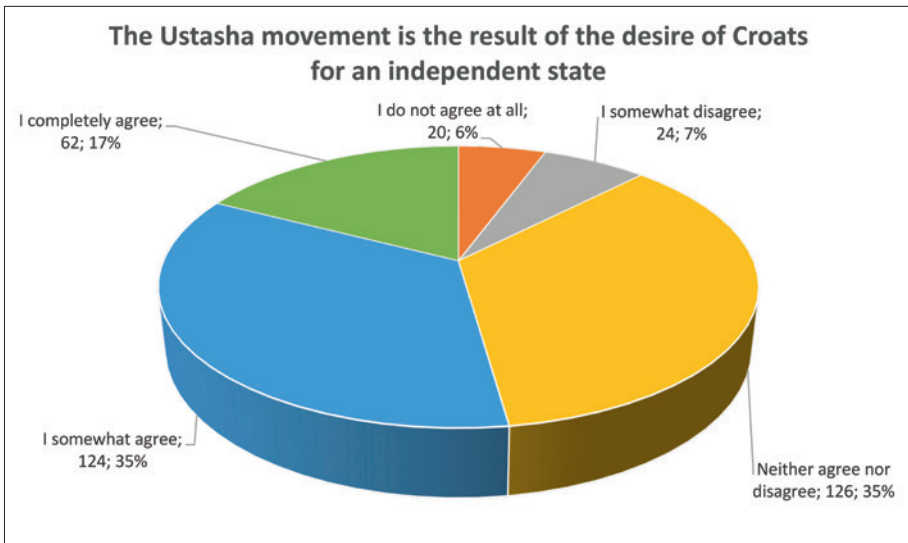
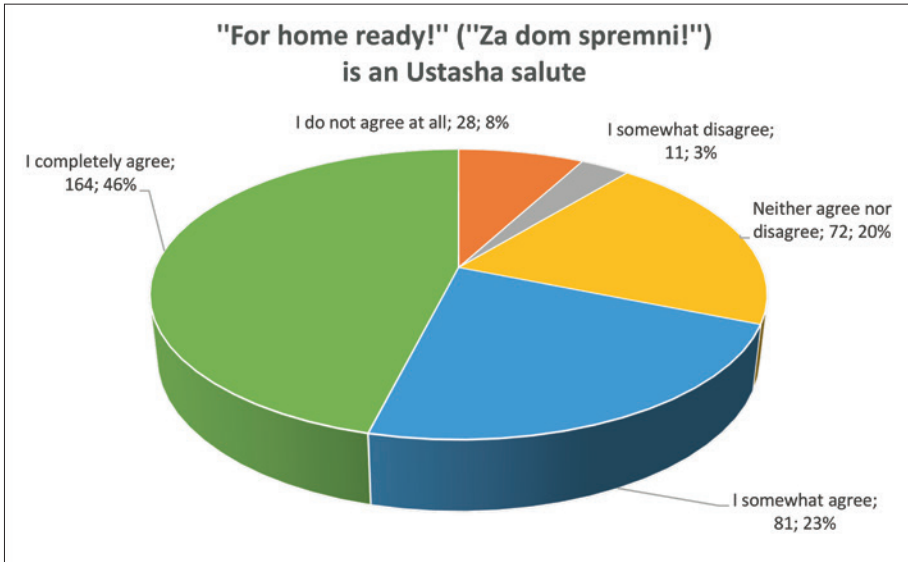


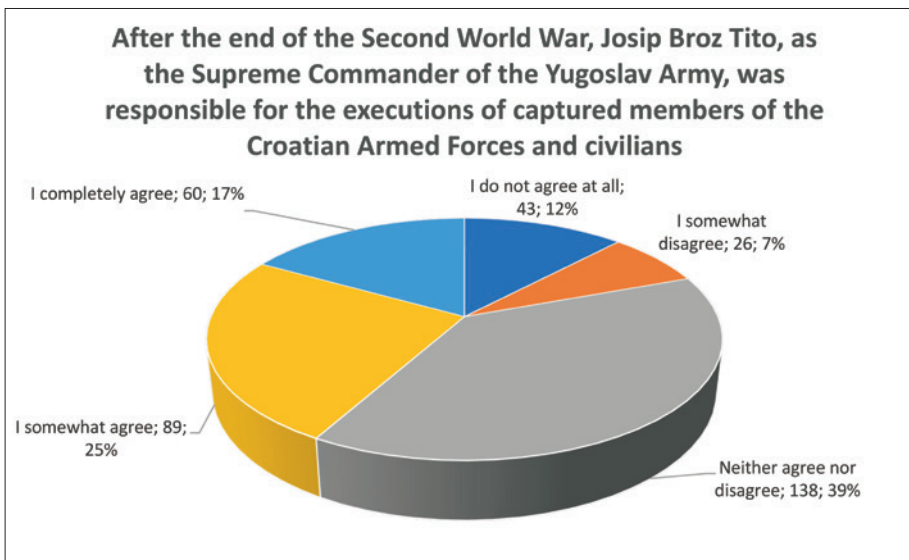
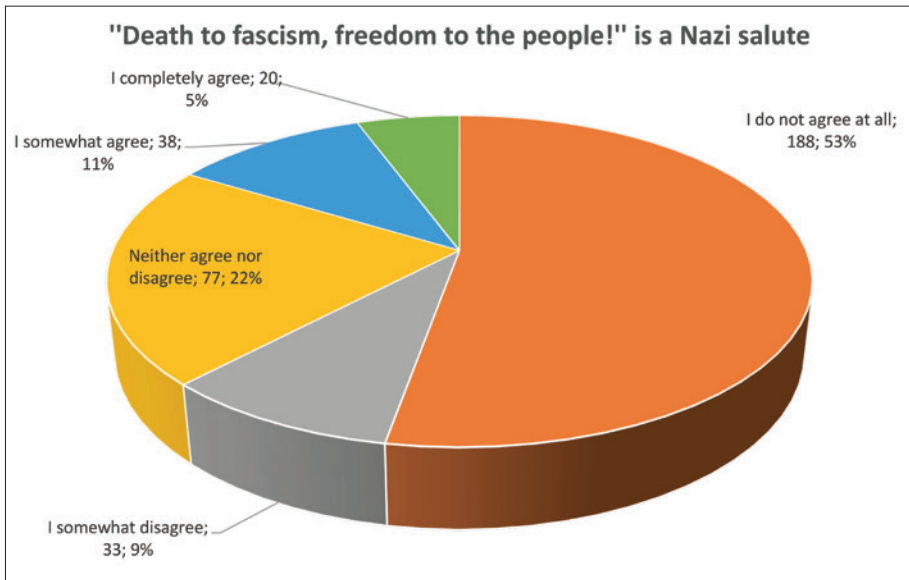
The second part of the survey contains eight statements to which students gave answers in terms of whether they agreed with the above or not, or to what extent. In the first three statements, the students were asked about their position on Ante Pavelić and the Ustasha movement. At first glance, Ante Pavelić and the Ustasha movement were responsible for setting up concentration camps in the ISC (NDH) and for persecuting and killing Jews, Serbs, Roma, politically unfit Croats and other dissidents – 33 % of students said they fully agreed, 32 % to some extent, and 25 % were undecided. On the other hand, 5 % of those disagreed with the above. These answers differ from those of question number nine from the first part of the survey: “The largest concentration camp in the (ISC) NDH was in place?” It can be assumed that high school students from Varaždin learn basic information, but in a more complex form they do not understand it or do not know how to connect the actions of the main political actors in the ISC (NDH). Then, in the second statement “For home ready! (Za dom spremni!) is an Ustasha salute” 46 % of students completely agreed and 23 % agreed to some extent, but 8 % of them did not agree at all. In the third statement, “The Ustasha movement is the result of the desire of Croats for an independent state” students were more undecided in their answers: 35% had no opinion, also 35% somewhat agreed with it, whilst 6% of students did not agree at all. In the fourth statement “Death to fascism, freedom to the people! is a Nazi salute” 53 % of students disagree, while 5 % completely agreed.

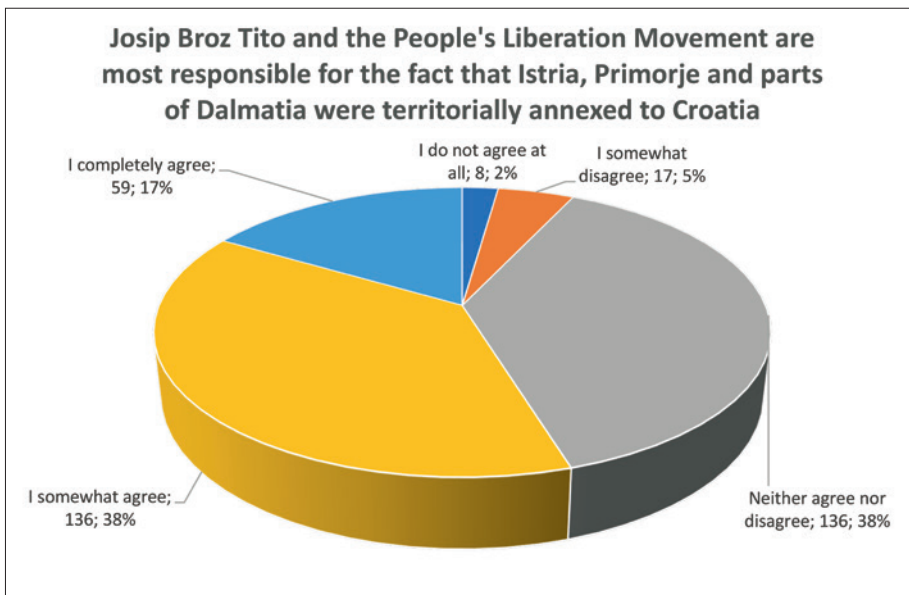
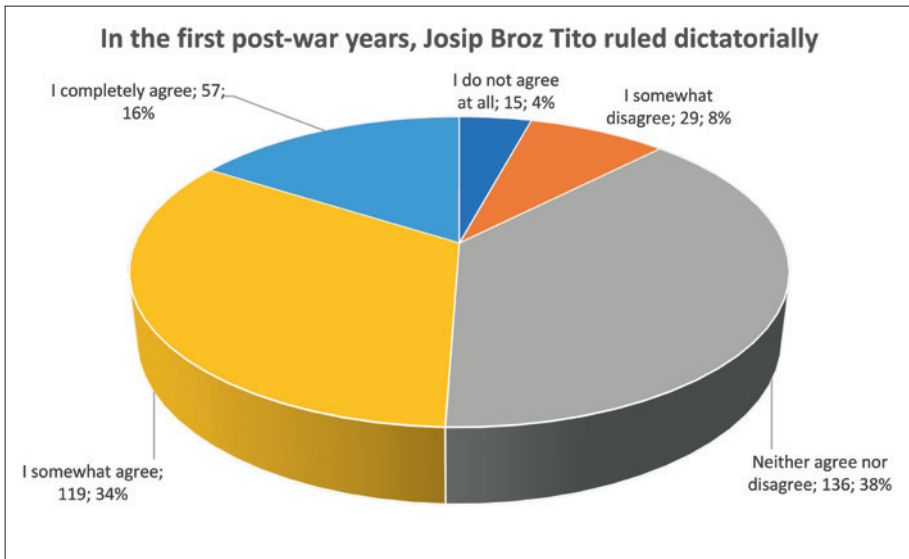
In the last three statements, the students were asked about their opinion of Josip Broz Tito. The fifth statement, “After the end of Second World War, Josip

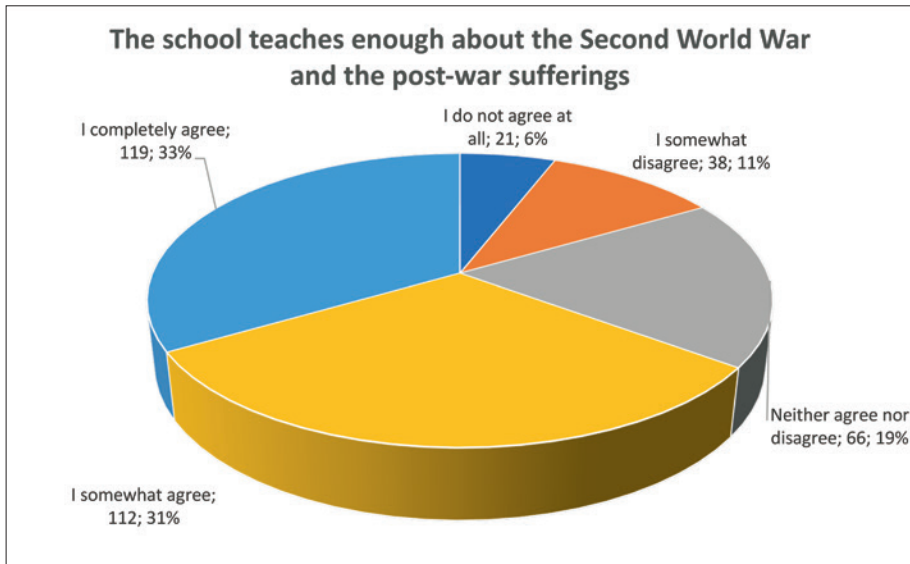
Broz Tito, as the supreme commander of the Yugoslav Army, was responsible for the executions of captured members of the Croatian Armed Forces and civilians”, the students were mostly undecided – 39% had no opinion, 25% somewhat agreed with the statement, and 12% disagreed entirely. Then, in the sixth statement, “In the first post-war years, Josip Broz Tito ruled dictatorially”, responses were similar to previous statements – 38% had no opinion, 34% somewhat agreed, and 4% disagreed entirely. In the seventh statement, “Josip Broz Tito and the People’s Liberation Movement are most responsible for the fact that Istria, Primorje and parts of Dalmatia were territorially annexed to Croatia”, indecision in the attitude of students dominated: 38% had no opinion, 38% somewhat agreed, and 2% (8 students) did not agree at all. In the last, the eighth statement, “The school teaches enough about the Second World War and the post-war sufferings”, 33% of students completely agreed with it, and 6% did not. Below are eight graphs with a more detailed presentation of the answers to the second part of the survey.



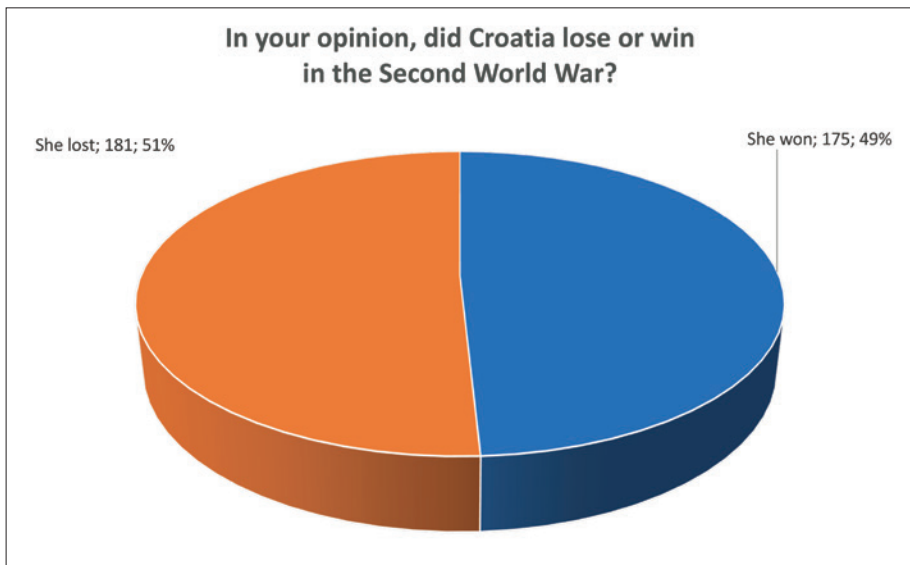








In the last, the third part of the survey, students had to answer one question and explain it: “In your opinion, did Croatia lose or win in the Second World War?”, the answer is the same – 51 % of students thought that Croatia lost, and 49 % that Croatia won.



The following are 10 selected explanations from students as to why Croatia won in the Second World War:

- "Because it was no longer under the leadership of Ustashas who were under the influence of fascism and Nazism."
- "I think that Croatia somehow won because the Ustashas were no longer in power, it managed to regain the lost territories."
- "I believe that the Peoples Liberation Movement (NOP) and the Yugoslav Communist Party (KPJ) liberated Croatia from domestic and foreign enemies."
- "Because a lesser evil was chosen between two evils, i.e., communism led by Tito, who, if he had not committed some crimes, would have been one of the most famous people in the history of Croatia."
- "Because in the end fascism in Croatia was removed."
- "The argument for victory is the fact that Croatia is now an independent state."
- "Because she decided to side with the allies who fought against Nazism and fascism."
- "Because it was founded on ZAVNOH and was on the side of the anti-fascist coalition."
- "Because in a way she managed to get rid of fascism and Nazism and she managed to return some taken away areas."
- "She won because of the partisan movement that was founded in Croatia."

Here are 10 selected explanations from students as to why Croatia lost in the Second World War:

- "Because most of Croatia belonged to the ISC (NDH), which was on Hitler's side, and that side lost in the war."
- "I think that instead of one totalitarian order, another came to power, and although communism is justified because it was good for everyone, it was still a one-sided party with many bad things that were swept under the rug."
- "I think that in the end Croatia lost, even though the partisan movement enjoyed the help of the Western allies. It lost because after the war, the partisans also committed certain crimes, and the population emigrated en masse from Croatia, and it was in an economic collapse."
- "With the formation of the Independent State of Croatia, Croatia clearly sided with fascism and Nazism. The number of victims and casualties that occurred in Croatia under that name can in no way represent a victorious country."
- "It did not achieve its primary goal, ie it did not get an independent state, and it did not move to a democratic system, but only moved from one dictatorship to another."

- “Because the Communist Party of Yugoslavia (KPJ) came to power whose goals were the socialist revolution and the dictatorial establishment of power, which was contrary to the wishes of the people and the policy promoted by the Western allies.”
- “Because I believe that the numerous victims that were the result of Ustasha actions are the greatest loss of any victory.”
- “Because even after the Second World War she did not get the independence she wanted”.
- “Because Croatia committed many crimes while the ISC (NDH) existed, and we never really had our own state. Others ruled us.”
- “Because many soldiers, home guards and civilians were killed on the Way of the Cross.

Conclusion

The basic motive for the survey was question: what do high school students from Varaždin know and think about fascism and anti-fascism? It was associated with the *80th anniversary of the persecution of Jews in Varaždin (1941-2021)*. Although the research did not include students from all 11 high schools in Varaždin, but nine, the number of 356 surveyed students is quite sufficient to get the desired overview.

According to the results from the first part of the survey, most students know the correct answers to the questions asked. But in the second part, where their opinion was examined, there were deviations. Namely, more than 80% of students in the first part answered that fascism is a political movement based on dictatorship and one-party rule; that Ante Pavelić was a fascist, that they clearly understood what the Holocaust was and that the largest concentration camp was in Jasenovac. The statement “Ante Pavelić and the Ustasha movement were responsible for setting up concentration camps in the ISC (NDH) and for persecuting and killing Jews, Serbs, Roma, politically unfit Croats and other dissidents of ISC (NDH) government” – 25 % could not decide, 5% partly disagreed, and 5% completely disagreed. However, this is a lack of understanding by some high school students about the events in Croatia during the Second World War. As for the salute “For home ready (Za dom spremni!)”, 46% of Varaždin high school students thought it is Ustasha, and 8% did not. Regarding the statement on the partisan movement and the role of Josip Broz Tito after the Second World War, Varaždin high school students believe the following: in regard to the statement “After the end of the Second World War, as the supreme commander of the Yugoslav Army, was responsible for the execution of captured members of the Croatian Armed Forces and civilians” – 12% of students completely disagreed, and 17% completely agreed.

To the statement “In the first post-war years Josip Broz Tito ruled dictatorially” 16% agreed completely and 4% entirely disagreed.

In the end, perhaps the most interesting question was asked: “In your opinion, did Croatia lose or win in the Second World War?” This also brought dissenting opinions: 51 % considered Croatia lost and 49% thought Croatia won. We can say that high school students adopt material from school textbooks, but their opinions and attitudes are influenced by other sources (i.e. family, friends, and modern Internet media, etc.). Varaždin high school students showed in some examples just how much.

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“Osnutak Pučke štedionice” [“Establishment of the People’s Savings Bank”], *Varaždinske vijesti*, January 31, 1996, p. 12.

“Podrška kulturnim projektima” [“Support to the cultural projects”], *Varaždinske vijesti*, October 1, 1997, p. 19.

“Sanacija krovne konstrukcije” [“Rehabilitation of the roof structure”], *Varaždinske vijesti*, June 25, 1997, p. 6.

<https://varazdinski.net.hr/vijesti/drustvo/4047316/in-memoriam-prezivjela-je-pakao-ustaskog-rezima-a-kad-se-vratila-kuci-tamo-vise-nije-bilo-ni-jednog-clana-njezine-obitelji/> (February 16, 2022).

List of Varaždin high schools whose students participated in the survey (in alphabetical order)

Civil Engineering, Science and Mining School Varaždin
First Gymnasium Varaždin
First Private Gymnasium with Public Law Varaždin
Medical School Varaždin
Private Varaždin Gymnasium with Public Law Varaždin
School of Economics Varaždin
Second Gymnasium Varaždin
Secondary Vocational Varaždin School
Varaždin Mechanical and Traffic School