Newsreel Shred
Falsches Bild

“Foolish” and “Shameful” Image

In May 1992, stories about Bosnian-Serb-run camps started to emerge in newspapers and on television and it took another three months and international pressure for Radovan Karadžić to allow the first journalists to enter the Omarska and Trnopolje concentration camps. On 6 August 1992, British reporters Penny Marshal, Ian Williams and Ed Vulliamy entered Omarska and produced two video reports that were broadcast on ITV and Channel 4. On 7 August, part of this video reportage was re-edited and broadcasted in the main news programme of a Slovenian television channel, as well as in Austria, Germany, France, etc. The video and the still photograph taken from the video and printed in numerous newspapers in the days that followed were the first visualisations of the concentration camps in northern Bosnia. These images were presented as proof, as visual evidence supporting the stories and testimonies of those who had escaped or in some other way witnessed the concentration camps. Reporters Roy Gutman and Maggie O’Kane had written about these stories for *The Guardian* already in early July 1992. However, then, a month before the August reports, there were no images, no photos, and therefore no disquiet, no evidence, no proof – “just” the words.

Among many of the images that represented the war, the atrocities and the suffering that took place during the dissolution of Yugoslavia, one stands out. It is a still photograph, an image of Fikret Alić, a 20-year-old emaciated man standing behind a barbed wire. The still photograph was taken from a video report done by Penny Marshall. The image attracted worldwide attention and was reproduced and distributed countless times in magazines, newspapers and various films. *The Daily Mail* titled the cover photo “The Proof”; the *Daily Mirror’s* title for the cover photo was even bolder: “The Picture that Shames the World – Belsen ’92”. In that very moment, when the image was published and the video broadcasted, it seemed that something had become real – or at least had become more real by virtue of the fact that it was photographed. As if the image acknowledged the reality. The image and the six-minute video took a long journey through various institutions. The image triggered heated debates on how various atrocities are represented, and among many discussions a historical parallel with the Holocaust and its representation was drawn. The image opened an intense debate on photography that ended in a legal clash between ITN and *LM Magazine*.[1] In 1997, “the icon of contemporary atrocity”[2] was publicly questioned as to its veracity. An article written by Thomas Deichmann and titled “The Picture that Fooled the World”[3] was published in an issue of *LM Magazine* and in *Novo* magazine. The German version started with the sentence “*Ein Bild ging um die Welt, und es war ein falsches Bild vom Bosnienkrieg*”,[4] where Deichmann argued that Williams, Marshal and the cameraman, Jeremy Irvin, constructed misleading reports by virtue of camera angles and editing.[5] Deichmann questioned the still photograph representing the barbed wire behind which stood Fikret Alić. According to the article, Deichmann’s concern about the truth of the

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1. Two extended essays about the still photograph and the dispute over its veracity were written by David Campbell: “Atrocity, Memory, Photography: Imagining the Concentration Camps of Bosnia – The Case of ITN versus *Living Marxism*, Part 1”, “—Part 2”.
2. David Campbell, “Atrocity, Memory, Photography: Imagining the Concentration Camps of Bosnia – The Case of ITN versus *Living Marxism*, Part 1”, p. 6.
3. http://web.archive.org/web/19991110185707/www.informinc.co.uk/LM/LM97/LM97_Bosnia.html
4. Thomas Deichmann, *Novo*, no. 26, January/February 1996, [i don’t know what this “S” refers to-->]S.16–25, http://www.novo-magazin.de/itn-vs-lm/novo26-1.htm
5. David Campbell, “Atrocity, Memory, Photography: Imagining the Concentration Camps of Bosnia – The Case of ITN versus *Living Marxism*, Part 1”, p. ?.

image was focused on the nature of the fence. He argued that the fabrication of the truth lies in the portrayal of the fence, which according to Deichmann was not holding anybody back. He stated: "There was no barbed wire fence surrounding Trnopolje camp. It was not a prison, and certainly not a 'concentration camp', but a collection centre for refugees, many of whom went there seeking safety and could leave again if they wished."[6] The images were shot from the wrong angles and these images are "Falsch", cried Marshall's critics – as if the gaze at a photo, even if it looks quite "documentary", says whether what you are looking at is the "truth" – as if a precisely selected discourse, manipulation, power and interest were not already inscribed in "perceptible reality",[7] in every image and word. And at every opportunity, Marshall's "critics" shouted crude arguments about the abuse of images. The saga of the image that "fooled the world" ended in 2000 at a trial with the court determining "that Deichmann and *LM* had not proved their case and were therefore guilty of libelling ITN and the two television journalists."[8]

Regardless of the outcome of the verdict and the facts, such as the thousands of refugees in Europe by 1997, the numerous published testimonies of the survivors and the visual shreds such as photos or videotapes of executions, a denial of the atrocities committed in Bosnia was instigated. In one of the many interviews that were later conducted with the man behind the barbed wire, Fikret Alić stated: "That image made me deteriorate. As much as I am lucky for being that man, I am that much unlucky. I am lucky to be able to explain to people what happened – the crime committed against humans, and unlucky because some people have used it for unthinkable things."[9]

War and images work together and against each other. They have existed in a "strange symbiosis" since the invention of photography. Part of war, power and political strategy is that they are often waged through images, and images do have the capacity for waging war. In an inversion of its purpose, the image that circulated as a witness to a crime, a shred representing atrocity, became a sort of a "counter-proof". Deichmann considered the picture as a witness to something unwitnessable, something that did not take place. For him, the picture was a denial of somebody's experience. The image that was taken at the Trnopolje concentration camp depicting Fikret – "Falsches Bild" – became an agent of historical denial.

If after the formation of concentration camps in the 1990s in Bosnia we received, as Campbell claims, "an icon of contemporary atrocity",[10] and if the numerous iconic photos representing the previous atrocities of the long 20th century constituted the "icons of past atrocities", could we then imagine what "an icon for/of the future" would look like? An image functioning as a monument that does not work retroactively? Could we imagine an image that would remind us that the future can be fought for and negotiated so that the past icons would not become future icons, but instead a real "Falsches Bild"? What image could we imagine so that "Falsches Bild" would represent something that did not happen and will not happen because it should not happen and would work proactively?

Penny Marshall's video from 1991 is also showing inmates at Omarska running from one building to the other. In that particular shot, the inmates were forced to run across the yard to the staged canteen and act like it was lunchtime for the benefit of the reporters. Exactly 20 years later at the

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6 http://web.archive.org/web/19991110185707/www.informinc.co.uk/LM/LM97/LM97_Bosnia.html

7 Judith Butler

8 David Campbell, "Atrocity, Memory, Photography: Imagining the Concentration Camps of Bosnia – The Case of ITN versus *Living Marxism*, Part 1", p. 6.

9 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W2sO-XcI9FQ

10 David Campbell, "Atrocity, Memory, Photography: Imagining the Concentration Camps of Bosnia – The Case of ITN versus *Living Marxism*, Part 1", p. 6.

commemoration ceremony, I was standing on that same spot and witnessing a spontaneous re-enactment by the survivors of the camp. They re-enacted the “staged run” for the reporters. What kind of an image did I witness? What kind of a testimony did I hear and record? Performance, re-enactment, theatre at the scene of the crime appeared as an attempt at establishing collectivity that transformed the sensuous and the aesthetical. Rancière explains that such images can be understood as “a way of occupying a place and a time, as the body in action as opposed to a mere apparatus of laws; a set of perceptions, gestures and attitudes that precede and pre-form laws and political institutions.”[11] I thought: could we imagine this kind of an image or an act, a performance, as “a future icon”? A tiny, fragile icon, seeking change and stressing reconciliation? But then I thought that a “future icon” should not be defined, not with a representation of a particular event, especially if we wish for such an icon to be able to remind us of a future that can be waged, negotiated in order for the “worldlessness” to obtain the shape of a “world”.

At the beginning of the video report (which is accessible online), we can see three seconds of a test image. A test image is an image file that is used by televisions (also other image-processing institutions) to test image calibration. It is usually not seen by the viewers, as it is not broadcast, and has the status of a non-image. The actual real image comes after the test image is processed. In the mentioned video report from the concentration camps, the test image was seen. I found it online as well as in the archives of Slovenian National Television. I wondered whether such a “non-image” could become a temporary “future icon” until we find a more suitable one.

A Proof and a Shred of the (In)visible

When Penny Marshall’s video was broadcast, I was ten years old and lived in Maribor, the third biggest industrial centre in the former Yugoslavia. Looking back, I remember the events of that time on the basis of which I formed a naive, childish and foggy idea about the war. One among the many reports coming from Bosnia that were shown in early 1992 was Penny Marshall’s video. Another memory that I carry is connected to a disturbing morning at school at the beginning of 1992, when two of my classmates went “missing”.[12] The teacher kindly explained that they went home. At that time, I did not understand the concept of home that she had in mind, nor was I able to connect the images from the evening news with my missing school friends.

Almost 20 years later, working on issues such as asylum, migration policies, violence and the politics of memory, led me to the topics related to the wars in the former Yugoslavia and to the questions concerning the economic/power relations and interests inscribed in the proliferation of image production. It was in the early spring of 2012, when *In the Land of Bears* was screened for the first time during the WPU May Day School’s “The Future of European Integration: Left Perspectives” in Ljubljana, that I met Jelena Petrović, a curator and a member of Grupa Spomenik.[13] It was late in the evening and the discussion shifted towards questions regarding the Omarska mine, where a concentration camp was established during the war in the 1990s, its representation and the images that framed and formed that particular space during the war. I was introduced to the Four Faces of Omarska[14] working group, and four months later I was in Belgrade at one of their public gatherings entitled Video arhiva Četiri lica Omarske. The intention of the workshop was to give an

[11] Jacques Rancière, *The Emancipated Spectator*, p. 10.

[12] At the beginning of the dissolution of Yugoslavia, many changed their residence.

[13] “Grupa Spomenik has been active in the broadly conceived fields of art practice and theory, developing strategies and generating a political space to enable a discussion on the Yugoslav wars of the 1990s and the existence of the post-war collectives in the region. In this space, we aim to produce a monument that will follow neither the ossifying politics of monuments nor the prevailing models of reconciliation.” https://grupaspomenik.wordpress.com/

insight into the images, interviews and other documentation about the Omarska camp that the group had collected during their on-going research. At the forefront of all the questions that were put on the table was one that stayed opened because of its elusive nature. How to present to the public the material they had gathered? What kind of strategies could be used in the process of image production as well as in the process of displaying and presenting images, narratives, interviews, and testimonies in order to avoid all the dangers that this kind of exposing involves? One of the possibilities proposed by the filmmaker Slobodan Šijan[15] was the form of the newsreel. It was an interesting coincidence that at that same time a group of artists and theoreticians in Ljubljana, which I was a part of and was later named Newsreel Front, was working on a new film that also borrowed ideas from the treasury of the newsreel..

Besides thinking about a suitable format for the material presented at the workshop and about Omarska as a paradigmatic case of the 1990s, two unpleasant thoughts kept entering and occupying my thoughts. They had both been silently present for quite some time. The first became clear in my mind when I went to Bosnia with Armin during our making of *In the Land of Bears*. One sunny Sunday in 2011, when we were walking around the castle near Cazin, which was built in the early 18th century and was now heavily damaged, Armin and Esad (both construction workers and therefore expert in recognising different construction materials, types of buildings, etc.) were discussing which type of a grenade destroyed a particular part of the building. While listening to them, I was struggling unsuccessfully to get rid of the persisting feeling of shame. Three years later at the workshop, this echoed even more loudly. Firstly, the shame of not knowing, the shame of being ignorant and, secondly, the feeling of being unsuitable, of not having the right to speak or to think about or discuss the war or the past which I was not a part of.

The second quandary concerned the attempts (films, artworks, books, etc.) at expressing the experience of war or other atrocious events. Firstly, I kept asking myself what could exposing and expressing such events bring (a shock, some condemnation, a moral judgment, information) and, secondly, I understood that the representations of silenced or (in)visible narratives are by definition condemned, as Agamben pointed out, to the sphere of the unimaginable precisely because the experience is irreducible to the elements that compose it. There is something that does not come through to the language or the image.

Before the war, the generation of my peers lived an experience very similar to mine. This is the experience we talked about, shared, made fun of, exalted, felt nostalgic about. The other experience, the one that Armin and Esad shared, I knew nothing about, and it remained shrouded in silence. It floated in the silence of the unspoken and was seen merely through the fragments of consequences. I felt like Benjamin's barbarian once more, now that we, similar to what he writes in his text "Experience and Poverty", "stood in open air, amid a landscape in which nothing was the same except the clouds and, at its centre, in a force field of destructive torrents and explosions, the tiny, fragile human body."[16] While walking among the ruins, I recalled two things. First, the photos of soldiers with disfigured faces reproduced in 1924 in the book *War Against War!* (*Krieg dem Kriege!*), which showed the consequences of a horrific war on the bodies of German soldiers.

[14] Four Faces of Omarska is an on-going art project questioning the strategies of producing a memorial. It consists of networks of human relations, experiences, their opinions and discussions on the three eras and four faces of the Omarska mine. http://radnagrupa.org/en/statement.php

[15] Slobodan Šijan is a Serbian film director, film critic and a painter. He is known for his successful films from the 1980s *Who's Singin' Over There?* (1980) and *The Marathon Family* (1982), which have become evergreens of Yugoslav cinema.

[16] Walter Benjamin, "Experience and Poverty", in: id., *Selected Writings, Volume 2*, 1927, 1934, p. 732.

Despite the graphic photos, the soldiers' experience remained concealed and silenced. Inaccessible to the viewer. The experience was hidden in maimed bodies, disfigured faces that silently stare, quietly looking at us, printed on paper. Second, the concern that was expressed by Henry James about sharing and understanding the experience of the war and the "unbearable" and the "inaccessible" inscribed in it: "One finds it in the midst of all this as hard to apply one's words as to endure one's thoughts. The war has used up words; they have weakened, they have deteriorated."[17] Staring at the ruins, the images from the news representing the Bosnian war started to flash back. Did the war use up images as well? The reproductions of the photos of disfigured soldiers admonished against the war and called for it not to be repeated. Susan Sontag wrote how the book was "immediately denounced by the government and by veterans' and other patriotic organisations – in some cities the police raided bookstores, and lawsuits were brought against the public display of the photographs."[18] In any case, the shock and the condemnation of the war were but temporary. A similar effect was produced by the first video reports from Omarska and even more so by the appalling photos of disfigured and maimed bodies taken in secret in 1992 by Dr. Idriz Merdžanić. Idriz was a 33-year-old Bosnian doctor from the city of Prijedor who was imprisoned at the Trnopolje concentration camp. All of his photos of the injured detainees were taken in secret, and the roll of film was given to a British television network when they first came to the camp in August 1992. As Merdžanić said, he took the photos so that some day they could prove what had happened. These photos were later used as the smoking gun at the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY). They functioned as proof of what had been talked about for months by those who had managed to escape. The same goes for the short video report by Penny Marshall, shot at the Omarska and Trnopolje concentration camps. Now it is for real, said the media, now the crime has obtained a face, an image. It seemed as if the horrors needed a photographic record, as if there is no atrocity without an image. There is no truth, no reality without an image. It was as if a testimony needed an image and the image needed a caption. Sontag mockingly writes: "Everyone is a literalist when it comes to photographs."[19] The images of Omarska were soon replaced by others. The first shock was replaced by a second shock, the second by a third one and so on. Some were appalled, others covered their eyes for fear, still others dismissed it as just another war. Susan Sontag writes: "Shock can become familiar. Shock can wear off. Even if it doesn't, one can *not* look."[20] Those who were temporarily shocked or disturbed by the images (at least while they watched them) reacted with temporary moral condemnation (as I, too, did). That is the purpose of shock. And we (the spectators) are the voyeurs of "horror".[21]

What I would like to point out besides the fact that the idea of shock is inscribed in the perception of photography, which is often understood as a "truthful messenger", is how our response varies and depends on the social and political framework in which a certain type of representation is placed and positioned. By strangely mixing an illusion of reality and political and social desires and ambitions, photography has become extremely powerful in shaping our perceptible capacities.

A series of conflicts, also known as the Thirty Years' War, that took place in Europe between 1618 and 1648, was depicted by the German artist Hans Ulrich Franc. Some of the 25 etchings represent crimes committed by the soldiers against the civil population. The etchings play the role of a storyteller, expressing that such acts happened, framing a narrative that does not function as

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[17] Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others*, New York, Picador, 2003, p. 23.

[18] Ibid., p. 13.

[19] Ibid., p. 44.

[20] Ibid., p. 80.

[21] Ibid., p. 80.

evidence or as a witness. Sontag explains that such representations work as “a synthesis”.[22] They do not aspire to “show” the conflict the way it happened, whereas a photograph has a different effect. Photography desires to claim that what is depicted is exactly what happened. To top it all off, such attributes of “truth” and “evidence” are usually automatically ascribed to photography, but not to other representational modes. Nevertheless, it seems that different historical events are measured, judged and defined differently according to the political and power interest inscribed in them. In 1947, a bottle filled with 32 drawings was found at the site of the Birkenau concentration camp. In 2012, the sketches were published in a book. *Der Spiegel* captioned the edition of the book with the title “Witness to Extermination”.[23] What is interesting about the article is that the title suggests understanding the sketches as witnesses, as evidence. Therefore, the understanding and the perception of a certain narrative sometimes depend on the historical, political and social framework, regardless of the representational mode of the narrative. Different modes of representation – testimonies, drawings, photos – have the power to *demonstrate* a part of their reality for a short period of time (at least while we watch them). This certainly holds for the atrocities committed during World War II, especially when we talk about extermination camps, as Campbell points out: “The Holocaust has become a benchmark for evil in the modern world.”[24]

Referring to a different context, Judith Butler explains that “whether and how we respond to the suffering of others, how we formulate moral criticism, how we articulate political analyses, depend upon a certain field of perceptible reality.”[25] In the case of Omarska, perceptible reality was anchored in two different ways: firstly, in Europe’s memory of the violent events that took place 60 years before, in the memory that had until just recently prior admonished that such horror would not be repeated; and, secondly, in the fact that the lives that were now endangered were perceived as mere half-lives. Sontag explains “that there could be death camps and a siege and civilians slaughtered by the thousands and thrown into mass graves on European soil fifty years after the end of the Second World War gave the war in Bosnia and the Serb campaign of killing in Kosovo their special, anachronistic interest. But one of the main ways of understanding the war crimes committed in Southeastern Europe in the 1990s has been to say that the Balkans, after all, were never really part of Europe.”[26] The framework in which the lives that counted and those that did not were placed at the beginning of the 1990s was a strange mess. In it, the images of the past, various anthropological as well as racist discourses, political defeatism and impotence, and, above all, power and interest all ambivalently mixed. In *Frames of War*, Butler explains that: “The frames that work to differentiate the lives we can apprehend from those we cannot, not only organize visual experience but also generate specific ontologies of the subject.”[27]

The understanding of war by people who have not experienced it, today, mostly results from the impact of images. Something becomes real for those who are elsewhere, who follow it from afar, by being photographed.[28] I, too, came closer to the understanding of the wars of the 1990s by

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[22] Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others*, p. 42.

[23] “Badges of functionary prisoners, number plates of the trucks, train cars on the ramp as well as block numbers are carefully depicted. The author of the sketchbook hoped that someone would find his work so that it would become a witness to extermination.” http://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/witness-to-extermination-auschwitz-museum-publishes-prisoner-sketchbook-a-809591.html

[24] David Campbell, “Atrocity, Memory, Photography: Imagining the Concentration Camps of Bosnia – The Case of ITN versus *Living Marxism*, Part 1”, p. 7.

[25] Judith Butler, *Frames of War*, New York: Verso, 2010, p. 64.

[26] Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others*, p. 70.

[27] Judith Butler, *Frames of War*, New York: Verso, 2010, p. 3.

[28] Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others*.

examining its images and testimonies. And it was only then that I became aware that such an approach offers data reduced to the counting of bones and bodies. Silence and quiet inscribed in the images got louder and louder. Now, a third question started to perplex me. It had occurred to me for the first time while listening to Armin and Esad discussing the grenades. Now, three years later, it persistently repeated itself in Omarska. What is invisible, inaudible in these images and what remains concealed? What perplexed me now was related to what was "left out", the unrepresentable. What we do not see, what we do not hear, is not inscribed in the production of images but in the very structure of representation. This became the quandary that I examined in the work entitled *Falsches Bild*. Even though Armin explained to me in detail the angles of the shelling, the dimensions of the grenade that struck his house and told me about his experience of growing up in wartime, even though we all watched the images coming from the concentration camps in 1992 from our living room armchairs, even though we today know that Idriz risked his life to secretly shoot disfigured bodies in impossible circumstances so we could see and understand, there remained something I had no access to. Why and in what way do we link the images that carry devastation and destruction with the "traumatic"? How does an image become unbearable, or in what way is the unbearableness of an image at work?

In the process of making *Newsreel 55* and *Falsches Bild*, I came across the absence of an image and the impossibility of the visible several times. In the installation of Slava Klavora, who was a national hero representing the underground struggle of the 1940s in Maribor, the lack of documents or a representational frame that would show/represent her work and her life raised the core question of how to form a historical narrative that lacks documentation. Whereas, in the case of Omarska, there was an abundance of images, documents and archival material. Nevertheless, what perplexed me was the question about what those images do not show. Was the problem Brechtian, in the sense of a simple reproduction of reality not being able to reveal the nature of human relations that are hidden in that same reproduction? Was it that this material hid something, or was rather it our own inability to perceive – to understand, to comprehend, as Didi-Huberman suggests, at work "images in spite of all: in spite of our own inability to look at them as they deserve"?[29]

The quandary caused by the unimaginability and the unrepresentability in images or words led to a resounding polemic in 2001. Later, Rancière pointed out that the debate about the images in the name of the unimaginable and unrepresentable clearly demonstrates the shift "from the intolerable in the image to the intolerability of the image."[30] In 2001, an exhibition entitled *Mémoire des camps* was mounted in Paris, exhibiting photo documentation of the Nazi concentration camps. Besides many documents and photographs, four particular photographs triggered an intense debate that still resonates when thinking about images depicting atrocities from various war zones that we – image consumers – look at every day. Didi-Huberman's essay on the four photographs taken by members of the Sonderkommando in Birkenau in August 1944 was published in the exhibition catalogue and, later, in a book along with his response to two columns published by Gerard Wajcman and Elisabeth Pagnoux in *Les temps moderns.* Elisabeth Pagnoux claimed that these images are intolerable and impermissible because they project the horrors of the Holocaust into our reality, polarising the gaze and blocking critical distance. Gerald Wajcaman claimed that these images are intolerable and impermissible because they do not represent the reality and the horror of Shoah, and are therefore deceitful. On the other hand, Didi-Huberman claimed that we are here to first try to look at them (photos), to try to think them and understand them, and to try to imagine them despite the unrepresentability, the unimaginability of the horror of the camps and the experience of death. He said that "in order to know we must imagine," and continued: "We are obliged to that oppressive imaginable. It is a response that we must offer, as a debt to the words and images that certain

[29] Georges Didi-Huberman....

[30] Jacques Rancière, *The Emancipated Spectator*, p.

prisoners snatched, for us, from the harrowing Real of their experience. So let us not invoke the unimaginable."[31]

In the chapter on "The Intolerable Image", Rancière explains that the shift from the *intolerable in the image* to *an intolerable image* has been clearly foregrounded by the mentioned polemic even though such a transformation can be seen much earlier, especially in activist and political arts from the 1960s on. The intolerability in the image is constituted by the dialectic of the clash between two realities – the intolerable reality that the image posits against the dominant appearance. In opposition to the dialectical clash, the intolerable image exists within the same current of images, with the same regime of visibility.

The polemic triggered by the exhibition in Paris did not concern the powerlessness of images involved in one and the same course of visibility. Its point was not that there is no image to be opposed to the validity of appearances. It did not question the frustration of the dialectics of images characteristic of "committed" montage, where one image attempts to show reality and unmask the illusion of the other. On the contrary, the arguments established a radical opposition between two kinds of representations. Rancière explains: "He who testifies in a narrative as to what he has seen in a death camp is engaged in a work of representation, just like the person who sought to record a visible trace of it."[32] The core of the conflict was in the understanding of the representation of an event: "The visible image and spoken narrative – and two sorts of attestation – proof and testimony."[33] Nevertheless, the photos did not have the intention or the ambition to demonstrate the entire horror of Auschwitz. The photos were shreds from Auschwitz in which concealment and silence was inscribed. The invisible and inaudible constitutes the structure of representation, the structure of testimony as well as the structure of images. What Wajcaman thought about images holds also for words; the traumatic experience does not come through either in images or in words. As Agamben pointed out: "On the one hand, what happened in the camps appears to the survivors as the only true thing and, as such, absolutely unforgettable; on the other hand, this truth is to the same degree unimaginable, that is, irreducible to the real elements that constitute it. Facts so real that, by comparison, nothing is truer; a reality that necessarily exceeds its factual elements."[34] Primo Levi explains that, despite the inaccessibility of the experience of the drowned, for the ones who saw the final destruction, it is their duty to try to articulate and think this experience since the ones who went through it are unable to testify. "Those of us singled out by fate have sought, with greater or less wisdom, to relate not only our own fate but also the fate of the others, the drowned. But it has been a 'third party' account, a tale of things observed closely, but not experienced directly. … We speak in their name, by proxy."[35] Didi Huberman is of a similar opinion: the images that the ones drowned in horror captured in secret and in great danger are a "few shreds, of which now we are trustees, charged with sustaining them simply by looking at them."[36]

The discussion regarding those photos resonates also when looking at different images from the Bosnian war that either circulated in the media or were used as evidence at the Hague. The same holds for the 36 photos taken in secret by Idriz at Trnopolje in 1992. They were fragments, fragments of reality, fragments of a whole, just as the testimonies recorded by the journalists

[31] Georges Didi-Huberman, *Images in Spite of All*, p. 3.

[32] Jacques Rancière, *The Emancipated Spectator*, p. 90.

[33] Ibid., p. 89.

[34] Giorgio Agamben, *The Remnants of Auschwitz: The Witness and the Archive*, New York: Zone Books, 1999, p. 12.

[35] Primo Levi, *Potopljeni in rešeni*, p. 66.

[36] Georges Didi-Huberman, *Images in Spite of All*, p. 3.

Gutman and O'Kane in July were. The above questions regarding the invisible and the unrepresentable stand in opposition to what the first images of Omarska from Penny Marshall's 1992 report triggered. I do not mean the reaction of dismay or Europe's humanitarian activity, nor the discussion that reproached these images as being falsified, but the fact that neither the camera nor the one looking through the view-finder could capture and see the "experience" while shooting the image. What one could not see is the atrocity – the traumatic experience.

"You'll Be the Detainee, and I'll Be the Guard."

While sitting at the table at the workshop and raising all the questions mentioned above, I strangely started becoming aware of and started to understand all the dispersed hunches that had very foggily flashed through me in the past. The rise of nation-states and the fall of socialism, the erasure and the criminalisation of the past in the public sphere and in the collective memory, the dramatic turn of power distribution, the strange pecuniary circumstances, the process of privatisation, the rise in unemployment, poverty and corruption, the blood and corpses and ethnic cleansing. The asynchronous ruptures that came with the re-establishment of the new political and social order – capitalism, etc. All this was now literally squeezed into a field full of dig sites and covered with strange vegetation.

The 1,000 square meters of the Omarska mine.[37]

Omarska – a mine in the socialist period

Omarska – a mine as a concentration camp

Omarska – a mine owned by the multinational corporation ArcelorMittal

It was not until 6 August 2012, when I entered the Omarska mine for the first time, that those images from the evening news started to haunt me. 6 August is the date chosen for the commemoration day. This is also the date on which the journalists took the first images of the concentration camp that circulated through the European media. After three days of workshops in Belgrade and thinking about the image and its function, we drove to the Omarska mine, where a commemoration ceremony was to take place. The 20-year "anniversary" of the atrocities and crimes committed on the grounds of the former concentration camp brought to Omarska even those survivors and relatives who had been displaced the furthest. I did not imagine that that day would shake all the theretofore "collected" ideas about war, its images, media representations, its silence and my plans about how to make a documentary about Omarska. I never did make that documentary. I needed three years to synthesise all the mentioned questions around the quandary of (un)representability into a statement and an attempt entitled *Falsches Bild*.

When we packed together in a van early in the morning, the line of cars on the dusty gravel road that turns off the main road without any signs was long. The registration plates evidenced the dispersion of those who were forced to find new homes all over Europe: Germany, Switzerland, the Netherlands, Serbia, Slovenia, Austria, Croatia, the UK, France, Italy... The dust from the gravel road created a haze in the light of the burning sun. It was a hot morning; but more than the August

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[37] The mine that was opened in the time of the former Yugoslavia (in 1984) was closed in 1992 due to the war in BiH. That same year, the buildings there were turned into a concentration camp. In 2004, it was revitalised as a contemporary mine with the help of a foreign investor (ArcelorMittal).

sun, it was a lump in my throat that relentlessly burnt me. I again felt like I was digging into something that I had no right to – no right to think, see or hear. The moment these thoughts rushed through my mind, I tried to stifle them. It struck me that ArcelorMittal, the new mine owner, is using the same strategy, only the other way round. Every time it seems that the company will listen to the survivors and their families, it stifles this thought by saying that its role is "neutral" and that the conflict is a question for the local authorities. With its "neutral stance", ArcelorMittal does not contribute to appeasement, but fuels passions and encourages the politics of conflict. I can thus consider my own shame and the feeling of a lack of justice about expressing events as merely a revisionist and backward part of my own stupidity that stealthily sneaks in to silence and keep unexpressed the invisible and the erased. Bearing witness, observing, trying to think in images and words are thus ways of struggling against the politics of exclusion. That is why I watch, listen and try. We need to try not to maintain the silence, because we are like Didi-Huberman's "trustees" who say: "In order to know, we must imagine."[38]

After a few minutes of driving, I saw on my right an old dusty sign from the time of socialism: Omarska Mine. In the distance, there appeared a huge hole, a fresh pit. It looked like a gorge. I thought: iron production mixed with bones. In the distance, names echoed through the loudspeakers. Someone was naming those who horrifically disappeared here. The area was guarded. ArcelorMittal determined exactly where we could move and how much time we could stay. On the platform where the first journalists stood 20 years ago, a crowd gathered. There were a few speeches and then there was silence. The machines were still for exactly 120 minutes. That is how much time the mine owner allowed for memory. The work process was stopped for two hours. The calculation was precise: two hours of silence for two hours of memory. Then something unexpected happened. In the corner, next to the former canteen, seven to 10 people had gathered. When I got near them, I heard them assuming roles: "You'll be the detainee, and I'll be the guard. When I shout 'stop', do what you did twenty years ago." A group of survivors who in 1992 had stood precisely on this platform and ran in line from one building (the hangar) to the other (the canteen) for the cameras and the first journalists who had obtained access to the camp, now attempted to spontaneously re-enact the same run. While I was listening to them assuming the roles of detainees and "guards-executioners", an older woman grabbed me by the hand and said: "You have a camera, watch, darling, and shoot. Watch and remember."

It all took place in a flash in front of the cameras, iPods, iPads and smartphones. The same day, various social networks were full of images of the commemoration. A live monument, a temporally limited event, a monument that was from the outset structured so that it would not remain or persist, it became an object-monument, an image-monument. It looked like everybody was trying to get "a souvenir", for, after all, "photographs objectify: they turn an event or a person into something that can be possessed. And photographs are a species of alchemy, for all that they are prized as a transparent account of reality."[39] What I watched three days before while studying Penny Marshall's video report was now again taking place before my eyes.

With the re-enactment, a live memorial took place. A live horror that depicted complex strata of the past and the present. I understood the re-enactment as a collage of images that not only ruptured the time-framed memory revision, but also posed questions about the on-going exclusion, identity division, and economic inequality that had marked the territory of former Yugoslavia. I understood that, in addition to the above, the knowledge and the understanding of the war in former Yugoslavia

[38] Georges Didi-Huberman, *Images in Spite of All*, p. 3.

[39] Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others*, p. 79.

have been systematically erased from the public sphere – the awareness and the knowledge that the generation born after the 1980s has been deprived of – the generation that can no longer speak a "common" language, the generation that grew up in the midst of transition and the dissolution of the former state, and in the case of Slovenia,[40] in the "comfort zone" of a non-war territory, the generation that found itself in the midst of great ideological shifts at the heart of revisionist processes,[41] the generation that today marches in the streets "in the disappearing footsteps of organized industrial workers, like the mob forgotten by the state."[42]

The re-enactment that took place at Omarska in 2012 was the trigger and the reason for the images from the evening news now entering my life in a different way. Because of the impact of the presented images and the questions raised at the workshop, I decided to integrate some of these questions into *Newsreel 55* and *Falsches Bild*, which are primarily not about Omarska, and yet, on the whole, they are about Omarska. *Newsreel 55* was finished a year after the workshop, in 2013, and two years later those images still haunted me. I felt as if I were caught in a snare, not able to say, speak or show what the images were about. They kept recurring as if they had their own agency, functioning like audio feedbacks, repeatedly generating, producing and shifting new forms of the same. This resulted in another attempt in 2015, an installation entitled *Falsches Bild.*

I was wondering how to transfer into experience, as Benjamin suggests, the images that appear fragmentarily, as a crushed shell, that slowly slide and disappear, but also reappear and flash in the most unexpected moments. And how is someone who does not know the vocabulary of these fragments to see this experience? The images that accompanied me, that were flashing and disappearing when I squinted my eyes in order to sharpen my gaze, reminded me of the dialectics of the image that simultaneously includes experience and poverty. At this point, I understood Benjamin's "starting anew" not so much as "inventing" something anew, but more in the sense of "rediscovering the links within and between images, sounds and words,"[43] as Minh-ha pointed to.

The mentioned images (Penny Marshal's video, the roll of film from Trnopolje and the re-enactment) differ both in the contexts in which they were made and in their effects and the pathways along which they circulated. They intertwine at the very moments when the viewer starts wondering about the quandary of the traumatic in an image, about photography and its function as proof, about shreds of reality, about the quandary of the unrepresentable and the inaudible. In this light, I also understand *Falsches Bild* as an attempt and failure of speech and image.

[40] In Slovenia, the dissolution of the state and the period of war in the 1990s are presented as something disconnected to the wars in Bosnia and Croatia. As if it had nothing to do with the "modest" wish of being independent. The "war in Slovenia" refers to the so-called ten days of political shifts, military moves and strategic games for the purpose of gaining independence and international recognition.

[41] Today's political, economic and social system has been marked and shaped by the fall of the common state and the process of transition. Nevertheless, there is a process that is common to all the republics of former Yugoslavia, the process of revisionism, which could be dangerous due to the possibility of sliding into denial. The revision of history taking place in the territory of former Yugoslavia tries to erase/hide the events that took place in the 1990s (erased people, genocide, concentration camps, brutal privatisation, etc.). In addition, it rehabilitates the idea of socialism as a "wrong", "misguided", "backward" project, a dark era, which had to be replaced with something more natural, normal, spontaneous and progressive.

[42] *Newsreel 55*, dir.: Nika Autor, Marko Bratina, Ciril Oberstar, Jurij Meden, colour, 30', 2013.

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Es war ein Falsches Bild. A misleading image.

Falsches Bild – created out of shooting angles and editing.

Falsches Bild – another false witness, a shred and a note.

Falsches Bild – a tool for erasing historical non-events.

Translated by Maja Lovrenov