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**Tadeja Tominšek Čehulić**

mag. zgod., Arhiv Republike Slovenije, Zvezdarska 1, SI-1102 Ljubljana
E-pošta: tadeja.tominsek-cehulic@gov.si

Tadej Cankar

univ. dipl. zgod. in obr., Arhiv Republike Slovenije, Zvezdarska 1, SI-1102 Ljubljana
E-pošta: tadej.cankar@gov.si

Primož Tanko

univ. dipl. zgod., univ. dipl. lit. komp., Arhiv Republike Slovenije, Zvezdarska 1, SI-1102 Ljubljana
E-pošta: primoz.tanko@gov.si

Tanja Žohar

prof. zgod., univ. dipl. lit. komp., Arhiv Republike Slovenije, Zvezdarska 1, SI-1102 Ljubljana
E-pošta: tanja.zohar@gov.si

Sledi bitke pri Jelenovem Žlebu v virih in javnih razpravah

IZVLEČEK

Pričujoči prispevek govori o nenačrtovanem srečanju partizanske in italijanske vojske pri Jelenovem Žlebu 26. marca 1943. Prikazati skuša, kaj o bitki sporočajo partizanski in italijanski dokumenti. Članek želi pretresti arhivske vire o žrtvah spopada in pokopu padlih vojakov ter predstaviti odsev bitke v kulturi spominjanja.

KLJUČNE BESEDE

Jelenov Žleb, italijanska vojska, partizanska vojska, pokop žrtev, kultura spominjanja

ABSTRACT

TRACES OF THE BATTLE AT JELENOV ŽLEB IN SOURCES AND PUBLIC DEBATES

The article deals with the encounter battle that occurred between the Partisan and Italian armies at Jelenov Žleb on 26 March 1943. Its aim was to show how the combat action was presented in Partisan and Italian documents, closely examine archival sources regarding its casualties and the burial of the fallen soldiers, as well as demonstrate the reflection of the battle in the culture of remembering.

KEY WORDS

Jelenov Žleb, Italian army, Partisan army, burial of casualties, culture of remembering

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S U M M A R Y

Traces of the Battle at Jelenov Žleb in sources and public debates

This year (2018) marks the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Battle at Jelenov Žleb. Even though a great deal of time has passed since then, regular commemorations suggest that the event has not sunk into oblivion. Given its scope and character, as well as the number of casualties, it is interesting to note that its memory is mainly preserved at a local level. In terms of Slovenian memorial landscape (and the memory of the part of the past that continues to divide the nation honouring the tradition of the Slovenian Partisan movement), the Battle at Jelenov Žleb remains largely unnoticed, pushed to the margins by better-attended and organised events at Dražgoše, Osankarica, and Javorovica. This is surprising also because the said battle did not represent a defeat (as did the decimation of the Pohorje Battalion), a clash between Slovenian fractions (the few Slovenes engaged on the Italian side merely served as guides), and because it did not culminate in the occupier's direct reprisals against civilians (the case of Dražgoše).

Nevertheless, the battle is still of relevance today, as evidenced e.g. by two questions raised in the parliament last year (2017). Another manifestation

of how strong feelings can bring up events from the distant past was last year's destruction of two memorial plaques at the site of the battle. The authors of this article aimed to confront archival sources with testimonies and memories, and thus gather the most accurate possible account of the course of the battle and its aftermath.

Any kind of dealing with military history will unavoidably clash with the fact that the combat reports of the opposing sides provide strikingly different estimates of their own and the enemy's fighting forces. Even greater disparities tend to occur in casualty reports, where the enemy's side is usually ascribed greater losses than actually sustained. The Battle at Jelenov Žleb is no exception in this regard, although

a careful examination reveals that more »moderate« reports from both sides provide similar estimates, at least regarding Italian losses. In any event, the comparison of the reports compiled by both sides proved necessary, for it enabled a reconstruction of the early stages of the battle and some of its significant repercussions (not only human losses on both sides but also losses in armament and equipment suffered by the Italian forces). Some questions, however, could not be provided with definitive and unequivocal answers solely based on archival and memorial sources. For this reason, such divergent interpretations as well as further research into individual aspects of this undoubtedly major and bloody battle at Jelenov Žleb will also be possible in the future.