

II Podcast

The first part

EPIZODE 3 - NORMA AND MILOIKA

If you decide to come visit Nova Goriza European Capital of Culture, you should stop by the Dante Alighieri classical high school, which was the school of Norma Cossetto and Milojka Štrukel. The two girls probably never met, they were several years apart, and at that school they almost certainly never crossed paths, but in the same desks they studied and dreamt of a happy future. A future, however, that was denied them both: norma cossetto was tortured and infoibrated by the Titini partisans, while Milojka Strukel, who had become a fighter in the Yugoslav resistance, was killed by the Germans. Last year, a number of cultural associations in the city decided to tell their story, as dramatic as it is mirrored, in a panel placed in front of the entrance door of what was once their high school. An act so just and necessary as to seem almost taken for granted, yet in the city of the eternal past it has nevertheless managed to make a controversy out of it and even some inevitable protests. There were those who wanted to point out that Cossetto's rule deserved no commemoration because she was the daughter of a fascist podestà, for the record the equivalent of our mayor in the administrative system of the time. As if having a father with very questionable political ideas made you worthy of being raped and thrown alive into a foiba. On the other side of the barricade, there were even those who had the bizarre idea of organising a counter demonstration, accusing those who had decided to have the memorial placard printed of killing Norma a second time as if the poor girl had not already been killed enough the first time.



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In practice, the mere fact of placing her next to a communist militant reprobate would have irreparably contaminated her memory. In this regard, I feel it is only right to remind you that Milojka Strukel sacrificed her very young life for the ideal she believed in and to defend the homeland she felt was hers. Normally, people who behave like this are given a medal for valour, not exposed to a public pillory in the town square, complete with smoke bombs. Miloika and Norma, albeit from different sides, are symbols of the violence of the totalitarianisms that have bloodied the 20th century, seemingly opposed in their struggle for supremacy, but dramatically so similar in their homologising violence. Remembering these two girls together is not a way of justifying what happened to one and the other in a kind of balancing of horror: everyone puts their dead on the plate, we are even and draw, no one can recriminate any more, and that's the end of it. On the contrary, both those deaths belong to all of us European citizens and we should mourn them together as one. And this is not so much out of a form of homage to what happened as a reminder of what is still happening. Because today, not so far away from our peaceful reality, there are still young women being tortured and killed in war and in peace for their ideas, for their national and political affiliation or, unfortunately very often, for the mere fact of being women. So if you are planning a visit to the European Capital of Culture 2025, also plan a stop in front of the Liceo Classico Dante Alighieri. And while you're there, bring your children to that billboard. So that they can understand what a blessing it is to grow up in a place in time where, to remain yourself and to defend your ideals, you never have to get yourself killed.