

Eboli Today

Since the creation of the Eboli website, www.eboli.org.au, I have received numerous requests, comments, and questions from visitors to it, seeking help in finding a loved one. Common questions are: "Is there anything still of the camp left in Eboli?"; "Can you help me find a relative?"; "How long did they stay in Eboli?", "Where did they go after Eboli?"; and "What is on the Eboli camp site today?"

One particular request came from Filip Ognjenovic in August of 2022. Filip and his family from England had travelled to Italy in the summer of 2022. He was keen to retrace his father's and uncle's movements after WWII and sent me several emails and messages seeking assistance.

Filip's father, Stojan Ognjenovic, was wounded in Slovenia but managed to travel through Lika and Slovenia to Italy and eventually to Eboli. Stojan's elder brother, Milan, who died in 1984, was a member of the Royal Yugoslav Army who escaped from Yugoslavia and traveled directly to Germany in 1945. Stojan's other brother, Đuro, was only 17 years old when captured and executed by Communists in 1943, in Zalužnica, Lika. Stojan's remaining sibling, his sister, Draga died, had died in 1932, aged only 14 years.

Like the members of many families, including my own, as children and young adults, although we heard stories of camp life at Eboli, we did not fully comprehend what that experience entailed. We had not experienced war, abandoned our homes, travelled (in most cases on foot) endless kilometers into the unknown, nor struggled to survive the constant threat of death at the hands of our enemies.

Over the course of a week in August 2022, Filip had driven through and around Eboli trying to match some of the historical photos with what he could see. Filip wrote to me as follows:

"I drove around the Eboli area, generally taking photos of the hill ridges, to narrow down the location. Some photos from several miles south of Eboli. It was a strange feeling to be following in our Dad's footsteps. Even stranger when I stood on the platform of Eboli station."

"As our Dad had spent so much time in Eboli, he must have walked every street so many times, including passing the square where I was sitting. Even sat where I sat! This square (World War One Monument) seemed to me to be the closest I could be to the camp."

"My Sister asked our Dad if news was getting home to his parents in Doljani, Otocac, (Lika) whilst he was in Eboli. Could they write to their families? My sister didn't think that our Grandfather could be aware that our Dad was still alive after he reached Eboli. Our grandfather died in 1945 and it was said that he died of a broken heart"

Filip's reflections, photographs, analysis, and time spent in Eboli is a wonderful example of retracing our parent's and grandparent's footsteps after the tragic events of WWII, especially, the mass exodus of members of the Royal Yugoslav Army, including the Dinaric Chetnik Division, from their homeland to southern Italy and then beyond to Europe, North America, Australia, and elsewhere.

Our sincere thanks to Filip and family for their time, dedication, and, of course ,photographs of Eboli today.

Nikola Lukich





