

Boris Pahor, the bestselling author of *Necropolis*, celebrates his 100th birthday!

Tatjana Rojc

SO I LIVED



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TAKO SEM ŽIVEL *Stoletje Borisa Pahorja*

Stari mehilnik

Boris Pahor

Vsočf teden smo nekam šli. V tovarni "Lejet" so nam delavci razčepili od razjavega testa še toplo kupo čokolade. Iz tovarne mila je vsek prinesel domor mami kosček rumene "Adrije". A tiški dopoldan nas je učitelj peljal na mehilnik. Cil razred se je sprehajal na terasi, vse okoli steklenega rüsa.

Kakor s mi nareta smo gledali na Trst. Kristali so se mrislo mehi kati v februarškem soncu.



An illustrated biography of Boris Pahor

The biography of the one-hundred-year-old Boris Pahor, the Slovenian writer and thinker from Trieste, is also a tale of one of the most turbulent centuries in human history. With his lucid thinking and engagement, the author constantly provoked the authorities in power, finding himself at the most sensitive crossroads. To embark on these paths with him then, represents a portrayal of the entire twentieth century.

So I Lived is also a story about Trieste in the twentieth century, about the lives of the people that moved to the city from the countryside, about the genocidal fascism that aimed to eradicate the Slovenians as a nation, and about the unfriendly fate that Pahor's nationally conscious Slovenian friends suffered, and of course the story of his own personal ordeal in the extermination camps of the Third Reich. The book reveals the dilemmas and decisions of a young man, destined for the seminary by his parents, his independence and decision to take on the writer's profession. It affords us a view into Pahor's personal life, his first experiences of love and his first encounters with like-minded thinkers and supporters, and future intellectuals. We follow him through the lonely hours of writing over the village inn and his high-profile conflicts with Slovenian politics, as well as his work in the international arena for the rights of minority cultures, particularly their languages. The narrative rounds off with excerpts from Pahor's literary works, which faithfully follow the autobiographical events from his rich past, whereas documents and photographs from the writer's collection and public archives add to the book as a whole.

The author of the biography, Tatjana Rojc, PhD, is a literary historian, novelist, screenwriter and university lecturer from Trieste.

BORIS PAHOR was born in Trieste, still Austria-Hungary, on 26 August 1913. Five years later, after the end of World War I, the city was annexed to Italy. The rough fascist attacks against his nation left a lasting mark on the boy. He completed his secondary schooling at the Italian seminary grammar school in Koper and enrolled on a course of Theology in Gorizia, but abandoned his studies soon. In 1940, he donned a military coat in Abyssinia, and saw the dawning of World War II as a translator in the concentration camp for captured Yugoslav officers at the Lago di Garda. After the capitulation of Italy, he returned to Trieste in early 1944. He was arrested by the Collaborationists and handed over to the Gestapo because of his cooperation with the resistance movement. He described what followed in Dachau, Natzweiler-Struthof, Bergen-Belsen and other German concentration camps in *Necropolis*. The commemorative narrative is considered to be one of the best texts on the life in a concentration camp and has been translated into many languages, including English. His autobiographical *A Difficult Spring* (*Spopad s pomladjo*) describes how he cleansed himself of evil and returned to the living through an awakening of love.

The novels *The Fire in the Harbour* (*Grmada v pristanu*), *The Call of the Steamer* (*Parnik trobi nji*), *Dark Days* (*Zatemnitev*) and other works go on to make up his literary opus, also joined later by his collections of essays and memoirs. He has been instrumental in co-shaping literature and thought as a writer, essayist and debater, continuously from the beginning of the 1950s to the present. An intellectual at the intersection of two worlds and cultures, he stands for a clearly defined national stance and for the equality of the minor languages. On his ninety-ninth birthday, he published a collection of diary entries in his *Book about Rada* (*Knjiga o Radi*).

