



## The Holocaust, European Values and Local History

Local Archives in the European Historical and Cultural Mosaic

//  
Archival pedagogy, microhistories of the Holocaust, and the shared European narratives

The project is developed and managed by:

### Terraforming

[www.terraforming.org](http://www.terraforming.org)

Terraforming is an independent non-profit organization from Novi Sad in Serbia committed to promoting and improving teaching and learning about the Holocaust and combating antisemitism, antigypsyism and other forms of xenophobia. Terraforming develops educational methodologies and teaching materials and facilitates multidisciplinary cross-sectoral international project cooperation and exchange.

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### The Archives of Vojvodina

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The Archives of Vojvodina is a public institution whose task is to collect, process, preserve and publish archival records, and enable public access to important documents and registry material produced by government bodies, institutions and prominent individuals in the Vojvodina Province of Serbia. As the central archival institution, the Archives of Vojvodina heads up the municipal archives network in the province. It holds around 9 000 meters of archival material, dating from the 12th to the 21st century, in 566 fonds and collections, professionally maintained by 69 permanent staff members.



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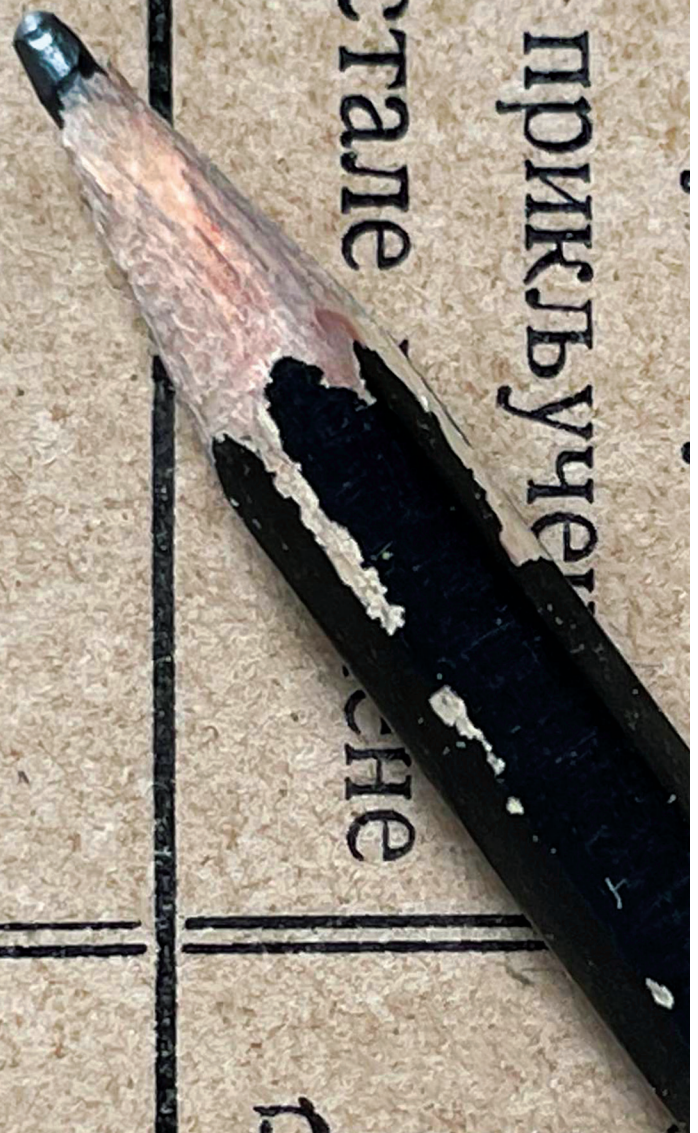


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# The Holocaust, European Values and Local History



## Local Archives in the European Historical and Cultural Mosaic

Editor in chief: Miško Stanišić

Editor: Dr. Nebojša Kuzmanović

Editor: Milana Meytes

Graphic designer: Jelena Lončar

Proofreading: Dejan Jovanović and Ranka Jovanović

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# Microhistories, Local Memories, and Archives

Miško Stanišić

## *Introduction*

If we strive to build inclusive societies, we have to develop an inclusive remembrance culture. In Vojvodina, it means the inclusion of specific microhistories and local experiences.

Responding to the new needs, archives are adapting to provide services to the local and global communities. A massive modernization is happening in the area of archival pedagogy. Still, archival pedagogy has not yet been systematically organized. As a result, most of the smaller historical archives in Central Europe and the Balkans still do not have specific educational outreach strategies or departments specialized in archival pedagogy. In parallel, the European evolving cultural heritage infrastructure of digital humanities is rapidly creating new spaces and opportunities for exchange and presentation of the rich and multilayered European culture and heritage. In this process of shaping new European identity and narratives, there is a growing interest in the interaction between micro and macro levels of history and culture.

## Microhistories of the Holocaust and local cultural identities

Our project “The Holocaust, European Values and Local History” explores the ways for smaller local historical archives to take a more prominent role in presenting local histories, experiences, and narratives of the Holocaust, persecution of the Roma, and other atrocities committed by the Nazis and their collaborators, contributing to the more balanced and inclusive representa-

tion of local communities and identities in the historical and cultural mosaic of Europe. The Lack of knowledge about these microhistories and local cultural identities is evident not only at European level but also among local communities in these countries and regions. There is room for local archives to step up in education, addressing current social challenges using contemporary pedagogy and appealing aids such as new-media-based teaching tools to attract young people.

## Vojvodina Province

Vojvodina is an autonomous province of Serbia with a population of 2 million (nearly 1/3 of Serbia's population) consisting of 26 ethnic groups, with six languages in official use by the provincial administration. The Public Broadcasting Service of Vojvodina RTV is an excellent example of the multicultural and multiethnic character of the Province. A Regional Public Service Broadcasting Institution RTV produces and broadcasts regional programming on two TV channels, RTV1 and RTV2, and three radio frequencies, all of which broadcast 24 hours a day in 10 languages, each with their editorial team that includes Serbian and nine languages of the minority communities living in Vojvodina: Hungarian, Slovak, Romanian, Ruthenian, Ukrainian, Roma, Croatian, Macedonian, and Bunjevac.

## Jewish and Roma communities of Vojvodina

A notable Jewish minority lived in Vojvodina. Well-integrated into society, prominent in trades, crafts, and industry, the Jewish community significantly contributed to the economy, culture, and other spheres of life. During the Holocaust, the Jews have almost entirely perished. There were 78 synagogues in Vojvodina, of which only three remain today. Fortunately, the survivors' descendants have revitalized what remained of the communities, particularly in recent years. Today in Vojvodina, the most prominent Jewish communities are Novi Sad, Subotica, Pančevo, Zrenjanin, Sombor, and Kikinda.

According to the 2002 census, officially, about 30.000 Roma live in Vojvodina, making up 1.43% of the population. The average age is 26 years, so it is a very young population. Despite many challenges this community still faces, significant progress has been made, especially in the fields of education of the Roma. The University of Novi Sad has the largest number of Roma students in Serbia, thanks to the measures of the provincial authorities, strong Roma non-governmental organizations, and Roma student organizations. But the long history of discrimination and exclusion still has a considerable impact on the Roma that faces poverty, unemployment, and lack of opportunities to prosper. During World War II the Roma suffered particularly in the Srem region, targeted together with Jews and Serbs by the racist policy of the Ustasha-run Independent State of Croatia.

## A kaleidoscope of memories in Vojvodina

After Germany attacked and destroyed Yugoslavia in April 1941, the country was divided between Germany and its allies. Vojvodina was split into three areas under different occupying powers.

Banat in the east was under the control of the

German Military Administration in Serbia, together with central Serbia and the north of Kosovo and Metohija. Banat had a special status under the administration of the local Germans - Volksdeutsche. In Banat, the Holocaust started immediately. The entire Jewish population was deported by August 1941. Jewish men were detained at Topovske šupe camp in Belgrade, together with Jews and Roma men from Belgrade. By that time, the German army was crushing the uprising in Serbia by mass shootings of the civilian population, and the camps became the main source of hostages to be shot. By the middle of November, Germans killed all prisoners of Topovske Šupe. Women and children from Banat were detained in Judenlager Semlin, at Sajmište, with Jewish women and children from Belgrade and central Serbia, and Jewish refugees from Central Europe. From April to May 1942, all Jewish detainees at Judenlager Semlin were murdered in a van reequipped as a mobile gas chamber. In March 1942, in Bela Crkva in Banat, Volksdeutsche formed the notorious S.S. Volunteer Mountain Division "Prinz Eugen" that participated in war operations against the uprising in Yugoslavia and committed mass atrocities against Serbian and other civilians.

Hungary annexed the Bačka region. Already when entering the area, the Hungarian military committed atrocities against the Serbian and Jewish population. Immediately the Hungarian anti-Jewish laws were introduced. In January 1942, the Hungarian Army and the Gendarmerie carried out a massacre of the Serbs and Jews in Southern Bačka and Novi Sad, known as the Novi Sad Raid, when about 4,000 civilians, including women and children, were killed. In the coming months, Jewish men were drafted into forced labor units in the war against the Soviet Union, where most of them perished. Upon request of the Germans, part of them was assigned to forced labor in the Bor mines. After the German troops entered Hungary in March 1944, new harsh anti-Jewish measures were introduced in Bačka. From the end of April 1944, all Jews were interned in the camps in Bačka Topola, Subotica, Segedin, Bačajmaš, and in the ghettos in Subotica and Baja. Except for a group of about 700 "work-





able" Jews who were transferred to labor camps near Vienna, Germans deported all the others to the death camp Auschwitz-Birkenau on 25 May 1944, where most were killed.

The Ustasha-run Independent State of Croatia annexed the Srem region. The persecution of Jews, Serbs, and Roma by Ustasha began immediately, with racist regulations, violence, and robbery. Many from the numerous German national minority participated in the atrocities. From the end of April 1941, the Ustasha authorities organized a system of camps, first Gospić-Jadovno, and from August 1941 to the end of April 1945 Jasenovac. Genocide against Serbs, Jews, and Roma, and the mass murder of the partisan resistance movement members,

were carried out in these camps. These were the only death camps in Europe beyond the control of Nazi Germany. In July 1942, Ustasha raided Srem, killing or deporting local Jews, Serbs, and Roma to camps.

After the liberation, between 1945-1948, more than 225.000 people, mainly from the areas of Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina most devastated by the war operations and German and Ustasha atrocities, colonized Vojvodina, significantly changing the regional structure of the population.

During the Yugoslav conflicts in the 1990s a new wave of hundreds of thousands refugees came to Vojvodina from Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina



and Kosovo and Metohija. They, too, brought their narratives, both about the recent conflict, but also the memories of World War II.

The different local histories defined the memories and narratives in the three regions of Vojvodina. While there are similarities and overlappings, the regions of Srem, Banat, and Bačka experienced three different military occupations and racist policies. They were victims of crimes inspired by similar, enabled by the Nazis, but different ideologies and motives. They were targeted by different perpetrators in different periods. Furthermore, 225.000 newcomers brought their own narratives and memories from other parts of war-torn Yugoslavia. Finally, a new wave of refugees in the 1990's made this memory landscape even more complex. This kaleidoscope of memories makes Vojvodina an extraordinary topography of remembrance.

## An inclusive remembrance culture

Sometimes, when people gather in a town of Vojvodina for some of the several official memorial days to commemorate the victims, I can't help thinking about how many of them wait to hear about their particular local experiences. Many are probably often disappointed and frustrated, feeling forgotten and neglected.

I remember an occasion when a group of activists gathered to commemorate the Jewish victims at one particular killing site. It was not an official commemoration, rather a small educational event. An older man brought a flower. He listened to a couple of speeches, and when the group started disassembling, he stayed alone, confused. He asked where he was supposed to leave a flower for his father, who was not Jewish but also killed by the Nazis. We explained that this commemoration was dedicated to a specific event, so were the speeches, while he was most welcome to join. "I understand, and I respect it," he said with teary eyes, "but what about my father? I come to all kinds of commemorative

events, but no one speaks about what happened to my father." It was a heartbreaking situation. Although the question he asked was very relevant. What about his father? We did not mention his father, or rather, he did not recognize him in the presented narrative. I would have loved to tell him about some event or a particular place where he could leave that flower he held in his hands.

How come this man can not identify with the commemorative activities and places of remembrance available to him?

While the official commemorative narratives about the victims include Serbs, Jews, and Roma, the overly general character of many of these observances is not always specific enough to fill the void in peoples' need for recognition and remembrance of their experiences. In addition, there are other victim groups particularly targeted by the Nazis and collaborators, too, such as members of the resistance and communists, to mention just some.

Some local communities do not have the capacities or skills to formulate their needs, or to initiate on a grass-root level their own commemorative events or create places of remembrance. There are many reasons for that: lack of knowledge, organizational skills, even shame or fear.

Suppressed, undeveloped and neglected remembrance culture is more vulnerable to distortion and manipulation of history, antisemitism and antigypsyism.

If we strive to build inclusive societies, we have to develop an inclusive remembrance culture. In Vojvodina, it means inclusion of specific microhistories and local experiences. We have to produce an overview of the complex tapestry of narratives, memories, and microhistories to achieve that. We need public institutions and professionals capable of unfolding complex history to guide people in a meaningful, understandable, and accessible way, in close cooperation with the stakeholders and local communities. We need a space where local





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communities will learn about each other's experiences. We need competent educators and relevant teaching materials.

We need expert institutions dedicated to (re) shaping and formulating the narratives of the remembrance culture based on relevant research, historical record, and international standards, to offer guidance, spaces and occasions to commemorate and learn about local histories, as building blocks of a regional, national and European remembrance.

It seems that, as in many other places around Europe, we need to ensure that World War II yet again ends with the victory of allies and loss of the Nazis and their collaborators.

In the expert community, we say that one of the challenges in education about the Holocaust is making this history relevant today. It would be significantly more relevant if we would locally incorporate the accounts pertinent particularly to local communities.

If Vojvodina's Public Broadcasting Institution RTV can produce and broadcast regional programming 24 hours a day in the languages of the local communities, can't we have a remembrance culture in Vojvodina that speaks the language of local narratives and microhistories, too?

The same goes for the broader context of memorialization. European remembrance must be inclusive and based on democratic values, as the European society we strived to build after the horrors of the Holocaust.

## Microhistories of the Holocaust and local archives

While many of the archivists we work with are very competent and dedicated professionals, sometimes, when we ask in a small provincial archive about Holocaust-related materials, we realize that they believe that we are looking

exclusively for documents such as a deportation list or a copy of a Nazi pamphlet. In addition, it seems that some archivists believe that their local data is "not interesting." Their understanding is that the significant, important events of the Holocaust supposedly happened elsewhere, far away, presumably in the most well-known death camps, while their records would not be of interest to anyone. Such misconceptions are the result of a lack of proper training about Holocaust records. There is a lack of basic understanding of what Holocaust records are, and for what purpose we are striving to identify and safeguard them.

A deportation list, too, is indeed a Holocaust-related document. But that is just a fragment of the story. The history of the Holocaust is an account of life, not death. The Holocaust record is a trace of every day of the life of every single Jewish person that lived through that historical period, whether killed or survived. Every single one of them is important.

What we need to promote among archivists in small local archives is that, as Abel Herzberg said, "there were not six million Jews murdered; there was one murder, six million times."

The image of a train station and groups of Jews with suitcases entering the trains to death camps is the image of the Holocaust most Western Europeans share. While certainly not wrong, it is far from the only picture of the Holocaust's horrifying finale. The way the Holocaust unfolded locally was specific in many places around Europe. Murders, too, were executed in different ways in different areas, under different circumstances and motifs, by different perpetrators. From the gas-van in Judenlager Semlin to the meadow outside Lviv where Erna Petri, a mother of two, cold-bloodedly killed six Jewish children shooting them each in the back of the neck, one by one, there are thousands of different singular local events in thousands of villages and small towns that constitute equally essential segments of this crime.

To better understand the European character of

the Holocaust, we need to learn more about these “small” local events. Equally, to better understand the local microhistories of the Holocaust, we need to look at them as building stones of the continent-wide genocide.

While there is a general awareness about the Holocaust in local archives, the history of life and the persecution of the Roma communities is totally absent. It is crucial to include this topic in professional training of archivists.

“Microhistories of the Holocaust,” a book edited by Claire Zalc and Tal Bruttman (Berghahn Books, 2016,) served as a huge inspiration for our project. In their words, “the change of scale entails a change of paradigm in the way of writing history.” “Reducing the level of analysis increases knowledge because smaller spaces can better elucidate the complexities of decision-making, help reestablish the ‘space of the possible,’ show how reality was experienced at the individual level, and ultimately provide more compelling insights into the events that contemporaries faced in their day-to-day lives.”

## The current project

Together with the colleagues from the Archives of Vojvodina, we developed the concept for the project “The Holocaust, European Values and Local History”. Our objective is to explore and develop methodologies and tools to introduce an innovative approach in archival practice within the context of archival pedagogy, particularly in smaller local archives.

We aspire to empower and train archivists to identify, promote, make available and safeguard Holocaust-related materials by creating their own educational outreach programs based on local materials and local history. Simultaneously,

we work on promoting archival pedagogy as a natural approach in Archives’ long-term activities.

During 18 months, between April 2020 and September 2021, we organized a series of webinars with international experts and worked with local institutions in Vojvodina. Our particular goal is to train the archivists:

- ♦ To identify important archival records according to two criteria:
  - the IHRA's working definition of Holocaust-related materials;
  - materials with a particular value/potential for use in education;
- ♦ To use these materials to create educational outreach programs focusing on local history,
- ♦ To permanently incorporate and make these programs available for visitors, local and international audiences.

This publication is one of the results of this process.

The project is still ongoing.

## Thank you

On behalf of the Terraforming team and the Archives of Vojvodina, I would like to thank all project partners for their excellent cooperation. Also, we appreciate all experts from around the world who contributed to the project. It was stimulating and inspiring to learn about the experiences from Austria, Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Israel, the Netherlands, Poland, Serbia, Slovakia, South Africa, and the U.S. Finally, I would like to extend our gratitude to the funding institutions for their generous support.

*Miško Stanišić*

*Director and co-founder of Terraforming,  
member of the Serbian delegation to IHRA*





Co-founders of Terraforming  
Miško Stanišić and Nevena Bejalica.  
Photo: Uroš Dožić

# A Significant Progress in the Field of Holocaust Memorialization

Ambassador Aleksandar Tasić

On behalf of the Delegation of the Republic of Serbia to the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA), and on my personal behalf, allow me to thank Terraforming and the Archives of Vojvodina. I would like to congratulate you on this significant project and for organizing a series of events that nurture collective remembrance of the Holocaust – one of the saddest and most disturbing events of our shared history.

The lessons of the Holocaust and its consequences are one of the foundations in establishing European values. Our task, and the task of future generations, is to ensure that this history is never repeated. Never again! Equally important is our responsibility to ensure that the Holocaust and its victims are never forgotten.

As a member of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance, IHRA, the Republic of Serbia actively participates in its work, contributing to shaping the international remembrance culture and preserving the memory of the victims.

In this regard, the Republic of Serbia has achieved significant progress: educational programs about the history of the Holocaust, annual observance of Holocaust-related memorial days, adoption of legal and other regulations for protecting the authentic Holocaust sites, to mention but a few. Furthermore, in December 2019, the Republic of Serbia presented its first Country Report at the IHRA Plenary Session. The Law on the "Staro Sajmište" Memorial Center was adopted in February 2020. The non-legally binding IHRA Definition of Antisemitism was adopted by the Government of the Republic of Serbia in February 2020. The "Recommendations for Teaching and Learning about the Holocaust" have been translated into the Serbian language. These, and a whole array of other activities, show that the Republic of Serbia continues with its intensive and proactive approach to strengthening, promoting, and improving Holocaust commemoration, research, and education.

In that spirit, this project is yet another constructive contribution to our collective efforts in achieving these goals.

Ambassador Aleksandar Tasić

*Head of the Serbian delegation to IHRA 2018-2021*

*Introductory speech at the online international conference "Microhistories of the Holocaust and its European Character - The Role of Local Archives in Identifying and Safeguarding the Holocaust Record", April 27, 2021*



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# Bringing Archival Holdings Closer to the People

Dr. Nebojša Kuzmanović

It is a great honor and pleasure to welcome you on behalf of the Archives of Vojvodina, me personally, and on behalf of our partner, Terraforming.

With this project, focusing on local Holocaust microhistories in the broader context of the European Holocaust, we are exploring a path towards new understandings of the role of archives and archival pedagogy.

The large number of archivists who took part in the project activities during the past year and their active participation speaks volumes about the vast interest in this topic among professionals.

Our relationship to the past largely determines our understanding of the reality we live today and the values we cherish. Our collective memory of the genocide against the Jewish people committed by the Nazis and their helpers during World War II defines us too. This memory guides us to distinguish between perpetrator and victim, good and evil, light and darkness.

The culture of remembrance is not just about paying tribute to the victims. It also means being committed to historical facts and countering the distortion of history.

I was born in the 1960s. I remember the times of socialist Yugoslavia and its "loud silence" when the state attempted to reconcile people by keeping silent both about the victims and about the perpetrators. As if we avoid mentioning the problem, it ceases to exist. Talking honestly about good and bad experiences is necessary in order to reconcile with the past and learn from it.

Otherwise, the past turns into myths, half-truths, and lies, directing personal and collective pain and frustration into new conflicts.

We are investigating and learning about the past not to confront, but to identify the truth. We owe it to all those who suffered. We owe the truth to ourselves and to generations that will come. Hiding or distorting the truth cannot create a better society. Without the truth about our past, we can not have true freedom. Without confronting the past, we will only repeat the same mistakes all over again. Without this knowledge and understanding, we can not become better people than we were yesterday.

Remembering and learning from history is a reminder of the ideologies that led to the war, mass atrocities, genocides, and the Holocaust. Taking fragmented historical facts out of context and proposing a new distorted memory presents a real danger as it justifies these ideologies and the people behind them.

Serbs, Jews, Roma, and other groups were victims of the dark ideologies of Nazism and Fascism. Serbs also went through the hell of collective suffering, sharing the fate of those targeted by the Nazi, Fascist, and Ustasha ideologies. During World War II, the Serbian people chose to be on the side of good, the fight for freedom, and anti-fascism, which is a fundamental human and European value, and today we are proud of it. That is why we must safeguard the memory we share with the Jews and Roma and all innocent victims of these crimes. The fundamental message is that such crimes must never happen again, to anyone, anywhere, ever.



The Archives of Vojvodina saw this project as an opportunity to investigate how we, as a prominent regional archival institution, can address the challenges and protect the history from distortion and manipulation. We wanted to learn together with our fellow archivists and other local, regional, and international institutions and experts about best practices and new trends in the field of archival pedagogy.

The vision we share at the Archives of Vojvodina is to bring our holdings, historical records, and documentation closer to the people. We aspire

to make it available for local communities, researchers, schools, and international experts. We do not want to wait for someone to knock on our doors and ask about the past. We want to be out there, where people form opinions about the past and shape identities around family histories and the histories of their local communities. In times when historical truth is endangered, it is only logical: as the archives hold the primary sources, it should become a focal point of the local and regional culture of remembrance.

*Dr. Nebojša Kuzmanović*

*Director of the Archives of Vojvodina*

*Introductory speech at the online international conference “Microhistories of the Holocaust and its European Character - The Role of Local Archives in Identifying and Safeguarding the Holocaust Record”, April 27, 2021*





*If we want to find out something about the victims of the Holocaust, focusing only on the period between 1939 and 1945 will not be enough. Instead we should go back to the times before that in order to get a complete picture of the life of the victims. The Nazis not only wanted to kill the Jews, but to destroy the memory of them, too. The Holocaust made a gap in history and it is our duty to fill that gap.*

**Dr. Haim Gertner**

*Director of the International Relations Division at Yad Vashem,  
member of the Israeli delegation to IHRA*



*Historical documents which reflect the developments in communities, towns, cities and regions can help us to get a better understanding of the Holocaust in three different ways. First, these sources may show us in detail how the Holocaust happened and how it affected concrete communities. It also might show us who was involved in the crimes and help us to get a clearer picture of the structure and the unfolding of the Holocaust as an European event. Second, microhistorical sources often address personal stories, glimpses of biographies of those who got killed and the few who survived. In other words they refer to the individual experiences of the victims, which are also part of an integrated history of the Holocaust. Third, these sources, and local history as such, can help us to identify differences and particularities of that history. This is essential for a differentiated understanding of the Holocaust in the whole. Local archives around Europe, with even a small number of Holocaust sources are obvious places for education. Students can do research in the archive, explore and evaluate the documents. In the sense of research-based learning, it is an open process where the learners engage themselves as historians, consult other archives and with the help of archivists and educators develop their own research contributions. I think that there is a huge potential for local archives to engage in this archival pedagogical approach.*

**Dr. Akim Jah**

*Research associate in the Research and Education Department at  
the Arolsen Archives*



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# Part 1

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## Local Archive: An Interface for Collective Memory, Knowledge and Education

# Remembrance Culture and the Emancipation of Archivists

Dr. Olga Manojlović Pintar

The “archival fever” that crossed the theoretical and artistic boundaries was intertwined with the gradual and slow, but constant process of the emancipation of the archival professionals as the bearers and holders of social responsibility.

## Archival Fever

At the beginning of 2008, the International Center of Photography in New York hosted the late Nigerian curator, art critic and writer Okwui Enwezor’s exhibition “Archive Fever: Uses of the Document in Contemporary Art”. Enwezor presented “works of the leading contemporary artists who used archival documents to rethink the meaning of identity, history, memory, and loss.” The exhibition presented “physical archives arranged by peculiar cataloguing methods, imagined biographies of fictitious persons, collections of found and anonymous photographs, film versions of photographic albums, and photomontages composed of historical photographs.”<sup>1</sup>

By 2008, when it was opened, the archive phenomenon had already been in the center of public discussions for some time. Art historian Hal Foster even defined the term archival art “as a genre that make[s] historical information, which were often lost or displaced, physically present.”<sup>2</sup> The attempt to provide proofs from the past, to

strengthen the argument, and to highlight once hidden truths, and question existing truths, represented the reasons for the archival search which produced new forms of documentary art, photography and theatre and the renaissance of docuseries and films.<sup>3</sup>

However, Okwui Enwezor’s exhibition stands out from other artistic projects which employed archival documents, because it directly borrowed its (cynical) title from Jacques Derrida’s book “Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression” published thirteen years earlier. Enwezor was obviously provoked by Derrida’s understanding of the archival paradox based on Freud’s pondering of the archive-law-power relations. Derrida questioned the archive as a concept, which could not avoid its peculiar crux of being an institution that stores documents related to various institutions and individuals, organizes them in accordance to the principle of provenance, but at the same time “buries” them while constructing completely new power relations in the society. Once accumulated and saved, information is simultaneously hidden among reams of other sources. This interpretation provoked numerous questions, such as: who is defining the scope

1 Archive Fever: Uses of the Document in Contemporary Art ([www.icp.org](http://www.icp.org)) available at: <https://bit.ly/3g7rrWw> (last access, 22. January 2021)

2 Cited from the Artspace editors, How the Art World Art Caught Archive Fever ([www.artspace.com](http://www.artspace.com)) available at: <https://bit.ly/3iSQsGD>

3 “Whether this happens in the form of projects dealing with real archival material or artworks in which artists use the archive as a theme (sometimes even inventing material), the idea of the archive continues to be an undeniable force and organizing structure in exhibitions today. Here we break down the basics of this complicated yet intensely contemporary genre, which easily elides from the hyper-researched to the totally surreal.”



of the documents' availability? Who are their guardians? To what extent does the one who defines the degree of public access, control the (power) relations in society?

Both philosophical doubts and the artistic reflections regarding the archives, represented the reactions to the raised interest in history, to the pluralization of different historical approaches and the occurrence of the endless number of the practitioners and researchers of the past. The multiplicity of perspectives nuanced the image of the past, "dethroned" the canonized official interpretations and the dogmatic ideological postulates. Furthermore, the "archival fever" represented a search for the reevaluation of the belief in the power of argument, fact, and the material evidence of the truth as the basic humanistic ideal.

## Emancipation of the archivist

The transformed position of the archival professionals in the public space speaks loudly about this change. For decades engaged in safeguarding the archive as a state shrine and sanctuary, archivists were perceived by theorists, artists, academicians and the wider public, but much more importantly, self-perceived, as the custodians of the humanistic ideal of truth and valuable agents in its revealing process.

The crucial reasons for this shift were the global change of contemporary history and memory politics and the constitution of the new humanistic discipline defined as Remembrance, or Memory Culture. It was based on the interdisciplinary methodology which opened new perspectives on the past and accepted new researchers. Most importantly, the change was induced by the specific topics which were in the center of the public interest. The Holocaust, Samudaripen, and genocide, as well as the post-socialist revision of history in the former "Eastern Europe", were questioned from various disciplinary perspectives, which were all interconnected by the need for a new type of



archival research capable of providing answers to the newly raised questions.

The events, phenomena and the individuals from the past, got much clearer contours when new generations of researchers illuminated them from the local archives' perspective. The documents buried in the files, folders and funds of the numerous local archives, forgotten for decades, represented a priceless treasure for historians and other researchers of the past. They were, finally, able to present the untold stories of the Holocaust victims and to personalize them, to uncover the forgotten individuals who, as perpetrators, took part in the crimes, or who, being bystanders of the crimes, silenced the memory of the past events after the end of the wars. The documents from the local archives provided a powerful weapon in the battles against historical falsification and revisionism.

Specific documents, necessary for this kind of research, became accessible to the wider public only through the mediation and with the help of the local archival workers. The citizens gathered in various types of civil organizations initiated numerous grassroots initiatives with enormous assistance and help from the local archivists all over Europe. The result of their dedicated work was disclosure of the hidden and forgotten documents which highlighted the dynamics of the Holocaust and exposed the whole process of the top-down initiatives reception on the local levels. This joint work was presented in the public field through numerous open-air and indoor

exhibitions, as well as through the network of the valuable archival publications and journals.

The activities of the archivists provide the tools necessary for the successful work of all those dealing with academic, scholarly, public, or applied history and taking the important steps forward, not only in understanding the past, but also in transforming the present we live in.

The "archival fever" that crossed the theoretical and artistic boundaries was intertwined with the gradual and slow, but constant process of the emancipation of the archival professionals as the bearers and holders of social responsibility. The position of the archival workers and records managers as the guardians of the truth and evidence appears to be among the important and intriguing social tasks. They represent a link in a chain of professionals and engaged activists who are in a position to find, critically evaluate, process, and finally to present the materials bearing the undeniable arguments which appear to be crucial in resolving the most delicate issues and controversies.

The archivists' ethics and their willingness to take serious initiatives in the domain of their profession, represent the key for the transformation of the corrupt and numb institutions and societies as a whole. Their "emancipation" is a result of their politically neutral, but value biased norms and activities, which enable the crucial democratization of the society.

*Dr. Olga Manojlović Pintar*

*Historian, Senior Researcher at the Institute for Recent History of Serbia in Belgrade*





*A number of years ago the IHRA launched a project looking at the ways archives made, or didn't make archival records available to patrons. What we found was a lack of awareness of the significance of archival holdings and how to make them intelligible to researchers and to a wider audience. The next step is developing partnerships between civil society and governments to make these records known and how to understand them. The project, "The Holocaust, Local History and European Values", is important because it brings together record holders and educators to develop new approaches to sharing these histories in ways that can speak to the relevance of the history, as well as shape the way that we remember the past.*

**Dr. Robert Williams**

*Deputy Director for International Affairs at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, member of the U.S. delegation to IHRA*

# Beyond the Crystal Ball

Dr. Gerhard Baumgartner

But when more and more historians started to research the topic, the results for many years remained rather limited and produced contradictory and controversial results. Looking back on three decades the reasons for these initial shortcomings become painfully apparent.

## Reconstructing the history of Roma persecution and genocide

When historians started to research the history of the genocide of the European Roma and Sinti by the German National Socialists and their fascist collaborators in occupied European countries, they had very little to go on apart from some basic information about the large "Gypsy Camp" at Auschwitz-Birkenau and some rare documents. Although survivors tried to get recognition for the racist persecution of their families<sup>1</sup>, it took decades after the war for professional historians to seriously enquire the fate of the second largest group of victims of racist persecution under the Nazi rule.

Even many political opponents of fascism and surviving political prisoners of the concentration camps were for many years reluctant to recognize that the persecution of the European Roma was a genocidal attempt, and not only a social policy measure against notorious vagrants and so-called "a-social elements", a term used to label

the Roma and Sinti since the second half of the 19th century. Consequently, most early Roma activists, who in the 1950s had repeatedly tried to raise awareness for this genocide and had campaigned for persecution of the perpetrators, fell silent and in many cases even stopped telling their children about their persecution. The few publications which appeared in the 1960s<sup>2</sup> were either based on very limited historical sources, or met with hardly any response from academic historians, research institutions or early Holocaust researchers, who at the time were preoccupied with bringing notorious war criminals to justice. When journalists and historians in the late 1970s again started to research the topic, they were often met with little interest from the general public, limited knowledge, and a lot of mistrust by members of the Roma and Sinti communities, and by sheer incomprehension by academic historians.

## Shortcomings of the historical research

During the 1970s, early Roma and Sinti organizations, like most European minority organizations, underwent a fundamental

1 Sascha Feuchert, Susanne Urban, Silvio Peritore, Frank Reuter, Markus Roth(eds): Entwurzelt im eigenen Land: Deutsche Sinti und Roma nach 1945, IST Bad Arolsen Fundstücke 1, Göttingen 2015; Gerhard Baumgartner: "Wann endlich wird dies himmelschreiende Unrecht an uns gut gemacht werden?" Frühe Zeugnisse österreichischer Roma und Romnia zu ihrer Verfolgung während des Nationalsozialismus, in: DÖW (Hrsg.), Feindbilder. Jahrbuch 2015, Wien 2015, p. 43-80.

2 Hans-Joachim Döring: Die Motive der Zigeuner-Deportation vom Mai 1940», Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte, 7/1959, p. 418-428; Selma Steinmetz: Österreichs Zigeuner im NS-Staat, Wien, Frankfurt, Zürich 1966; Miriam Novitch: Il Genocidio degli Zingari sotto il regime nazista, in: Quaderno del Centro di studi sulla deportazione e l'internamento 2/1965, p.31-61.

change<sup>3</sup> when representatives of the first postwar generations took office and adopted political tactics successfully applied by civil rights movements of the 1960s and 1970s. With the help of church organizations the European Roma movement managed not only to hold its first Roma Congress in Great Britain, but in 1981 also staged the first hungerstrike of Holocaust survivors on the grounds of the former Dachau concentration camp<sup>4</sup>. All of a sudden the persecution and genocide of the Sinti and Roma by the Nazis and their Central-European collaborators had gained international attention. However when more and more historians started to research the topic, the results for many years remained rather limited and produced contradictory and controversial outcomes<sup>5</sup>. Looking back on three decades the reasons for these initial shortcomings become painfully apparent.

Firstly, it took historians some time to realize that the main reason was the scarcity of documents in the archives of typical Nazi organizations such as the Gestapo, traditionally responsible for the racist persecution of Jews and political opponents. The persecution as well as the genocide of European Roma and Sinti was primarily organized and perpetrated by the criminal police organizations of the different countries. And although central Nazi organizations such as the "Reichsicherheitshauptamt" (Reich Security Main Office) controlled both strands of racist persecution, the direct measures on the regional and local level involved completely different administrations and were organized along completely different administrative regulations.

As a result when historians started to - for a second time - go over well known archival material related to the Holocaust in order to find additional information on the persecution<sup>6</sup> of the Roma and Sinti, the results were disappointing.

## Branded a "Gypsy"

The second insight that has emerged over the years was that the persecution of Roma and Sinti was only possible, because the underlying structures for it to succeed had already been in place for decades. Whereas the decision as to who was to be regarded as a Jew was more or less clear-cut and easily translated into an administrative and legal structure like the Nuremberg Laws, it was by contrast not so clear as to who was to be regarded as a "Gypsy." Even so-called racial research, as carried out by Robert Ritter and his colleague Eva Justin<sup>7</sup>, proved basically inconclusive so that researchers and policemen actually based their policies on genealogy and social ascription of families to the minority. Registration by local authorities as a member of the "Gypsy" population, often based on hearsay, family relations and sharing the same address during the 1920s and 1930s later served as the basis for Nazi persecution. Long before the Nazis came to power, a heady mixture of romanticised ideas about the so called "Gypsies" as a people essentially living outside of modern European culture<sup>8</sup> and the eugenic conviction - since then long discredited as a pseudo-science - that social behavior and especially criminal behavior were hereditary features passed from parents to children<sup>9</sup> had resulted in members of Roma and

3 Jochen Blaschke: Volk, Nation, interner Kolonialismus, Ethnizität : Konzepte zur politischen Soziologie regionalistischer Bewegungen in Westeuropa, Berlin 1985.

4 Rüdiger Rossig: Biografie von Romani Rose. Die erste Demo in der Geschichte. in: Taz/25.6.2017, (<https://taz.de/Biografie-von-Romani-Rose/!5425093/>).

5 Michael Zimmermann: Rassenutopie und Genozid. Die nationalsozialistische "Lösung der Zigeunerfrage", Hamburg 1996; Michael Zimmermann: The National Socialist "Solution of the Gypsy Question. Central Decisions, Local Initiatives and their Interrelation, in: Holocaust and Genocide Studies, 15:3 (2001), p.412-427.

6 Gerhard Baumgartner, Florian Freund, Harald Greifeneder: Vermögensentzug, Restitution und Entschädigung der Roma und Sinti. Veröffentlichungen der Österreichischen Historikerkommission 23/2, Wien 2004.

7 Joachim Hohmann: Robert Ritter und die Erben der Kriminalbiologie. "Zigeunerforschung" im Nationalsozialismus und in Westdeutschland im Zeichen des Rassismus, Frankfurt am Main 2001; Kathrin Kompisch: Täterinnen. Frauen im Nationalsozialismus. Köln 2008, p. 83.

8 Gerhard Baumgartner, Tayfun Belgin: Roma & Sinti: "Zigeuner-Darstellungen" der Moderne, Krems 2007.

9 Josef Jörgen: Die Familie Zero. Archiv für Rassen- und Gesellschafts-Biologie 2 (1905), p. 494-559; Melvyn Conroy: Nazi Eugenics: Precursors, Policy, Aftermath, New York 2017.

Sinti families being socially marginalized from many spheres of European society.

Burdened with rapidly growing costs of poverty relief, sparked by the social crisis in the wake of the World Economic Crisis of the late 1920s and 1930s and by the lack of state-wide social welfare systems, many local authorities started to question the residential status of Roma and Sinti families in order to reduce the number of possible claimants of unemployment benefits, health services and poverty relief. In 1929 the city of Frankfurt established the first "Zigeuner-Konzentrations-Lager" (Gypsy Concentration Camp) on the outskirts of the city in order to banish Roma and Sinti from the inner city.<sup>10</sup>

To cut along story short: If you were unfortunate enough to be branded a "Gypsy" either by the police or the local authorities in the 1920s and 1930s, you were probably later persecuted and deported by the Nazis or their fascist collaborators in the different countries under the Nazi rule - and the local police forces would probably have been involved in the persecution. It was only in the last twenty years that historians realized that whereas Robert Ritter's so called "racial research" played a decisive role in determining who became a victim of the Nazi genocide in the territory of the German Reich before 1938, its significance in other countries was at best minimal - as in Nazi occupied Austria<sup>11</sup> for example - or virtually non-existent in all other countries of Central and Eastern Europe, where apparently no comparable racist-genealogical research was carried out<sup>12</sup>. The single most important determining factor in these countries was the classification by police and local administrations, which often stigmatised persons as "Gypsies" for having a "typical Gypsy name", living in a "Gypsy settlement", or carrying out a

"typical Gypsy trade", etc. For historical research on the Roma genocide in Central and Eastern Europe such information from local archival sources has continually moved into the centre of academic attention. If the German army wanted to select people for retaliation measures - like shooting 100 people for any soldier killed by partisans - the first victims in line were local Jews and "Gypsies", who were of course selected based on the information from local administration files<sup>13</sup>.

Another oversight by Holocaust historians was to neglect information from social services archives, which in the interwar period together with the criminal police had become the decisive agents of measures directed against so called "Gypsies"<sup>14</sup>. Whereas archives of political and politicised Nazi organizations (for example, the Gestapo and even the criminal police) were often destroyed before the end of the war, the archival material of the regional and local social services institutions were left untouched. But in many cases it was exactly these institutions which drew up the lists for forced labor battalions, organized and financed the construction of forced labor camps and detention camps for Roma and Sinti and in some cases even organized and financed the deportations to concentration and annihilation camps. In recent years historians have often found it very rewarding to revisit archival material of social service institutions and to unearth numerous vital bits of information concerning Roma persecution, which had been overlooked by former colleagues from the social sciences or simply not recognized as vital clues and missing links for the history of the Roma Holocaust. It thus often pays to look up all the materials quoted in the footnotes of early social science publications on the Roma, some of which have turned out to be real treasure troves for Holocaust historians.

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10 <http://www.tenumbergreinhard.de/1933-1945-lager-1/1933-1945-lager-f/frankfurt-am-main-friedberger-landstrae.html>

11 Gerhard Baumgartner: Austrian Roma and Sinti and the Holocaust, in: Council of Europe: Seminar of Budapest April 15-17, 2004, Teaching the Remembrance of the Holocaust. Education for the prevention of crimes against humanity, Strasbourg 2004, p. 40-53.

12 Martin Holler: "Like Jews?" The Nazi Persecution and Extermination of Soviet Roma Under the German Military Administration: A New Interpretation, Based on Soviet Sources, in: Dapim: Studies on the Holocaust, 24:1 (2010), p.137-176.

13 Walter Manoschek: "Serbien ist judenfrei". Militärische Besatzungspolitik und Judenvernichtung in Serbien 1941/42, Wien 1995.

14 Huub van Baar: The European Roma: Minority Representation, Memory and the Limits of Transnational Governmentality, Amsterdam 2011.

## The administrative maze

The third reason, which has catapulted local archives into a center stage position for research into the history of Roma genocide, has to do with the traditions of administrative procedure. Unfortunately, the academic training many young historians receive at university level is still centered around an idealist conception of how everyday politics and administration works; i.e. many history students leave university completely convinced that if a governing body passes a law or issues an administrative order, this is what happens in real life. They never waste a thought that there might be a significant gap between a political program and what is actually carried out or enforced by administrators. When first engaged in archival research many of them are shocked to find that laws and regulations are merely words on paper - and often remain just that<sup>15</sup>. And that quite different things might happen on the local level in spite of all laws and regulations, and sometimes even because of them.

For historical research on the genocide of the European Roma and Sinti the often endless heaps of forms, surveys, reports and official correspondence files of regional and local administrations have proved a real goldmine<sup>16</sup>. The explanation for this is best illustrated by an old joke about public administrators: "Do you know why officials only use three-ply toilet paper? Because they need at least three copies of every shit!" The truth lurking behind this joke explains why many documents which were destroyed in the purges of the fascist administrations during the last days of World War II - and in many cases even afterwards, especially in countries where administrators regained their former positions

soon after the war. In order to profit from the information buried in local and regional archives, students and researchers must first and foremost all get to know the administrative structures, the official reporting systems, and the filing practices of these institutions, i.e. who usually gets or even must get a copy of which document? Which information is distributed from top to bottom through which channels? And vice versa...

This pertains of course not only to written documents, but also to visual documents such as photographs and posters, postcards, public announcements or circulars, local editions of daily or weekly papers and many more. At regional and local level, there is often an overlap between archives and libraries, the latter sometimes performing both roles, especially in smaller communities.

In academic fields, such as the research into the persecution and genocide of Roma populations in particular, the local approach has often turned out to be the most fruitful<sup>17</sup>. After several decades of Holocaust research, it has been established that a most promising research strategy is to start by contacting the local archivist, the local librarian or the head of the local administration, or even better, his or her retired predecessor. "Ad fontes!" - i.e. "Back to the sources!" must be the motto of all future Roma research, which has finally left behind the practices of informed amateurs and has matured into a fully recognized academic discipline, even if its sources - just like its subjects - may for the time being remain somewhat elusive.

*Dr. Gerhard Baumgartner*

*Historian, Director of the Documentation Center of Austrian Resistance (DÖW) in Vienna, member of the Austrian delegation to IHRA*

<sup>15</sup> Gerhard Baumgartner, Herbert Brettl: „Einfach weg!“ Verschundene Romasiedlungen im Burgenland, Wien 2020, p. 365.

<sup>16</sup> Herbert Brettl: Quellen zur Geschichte der Zigeunerpolitik im Bezirk Neusiedl am See, Halbturn 2007.

<sup>17</sup> Harmat József: Roma holokauszt a Grábler-tónál. A székesfehérvári és várpalotai cigányok tömeges kivégzése várpalotán 1945-ben. A Veszprém Megyei Levéltár kiadványai 34, Veszprém 2015.



# Encapsulating a Difficult History

Lewis Levin

“Can you assist,” I asked, “to find some means of representation? To assist me with some tools of association that could be translated into materials? Memories and images that I might employ on the busy streetscapes of Johannesburg to recall and symbolize your suffering? Can you help by suggesting associations that will present our visitors, and passers-by, with humanity’s great flaw?”

## Some thoughts on the challenges of designing The Johannesburg Holocaust and Genocide Centre in a post-apartheid South Africa

*I swore never to be silent whenever and wherever human beings endure suffering and humiliation. We must take sides.*

*Neutrality helps the oppressor, never the victim.*

*Silence encourages the tormentor, never the tormented.*

These are the words of Elie Wiesel, Holocaust Survivor and Nobel Peace Prize winner.

Designing and building a center dedicated to the cruellest aspects of human nature was a task taken with faltering footsteps. Our mission was to create a building where elements would be both functional and symbolic. But, how can the language of architecture, which is normally associated with optimism, be recruited to describe and symbolize the terrible events that took place in Africa and Europe?

Moreover, what does it mean to design a building in South Africa, a country that has just emerged

from years of its own legalized racial oppression of its people?

South African visitors to this institution would be familiar with the images and symbols of apartheid segregation but not the horrors of genocide.

I was haunted by the inevitable uncertainties that an architectural design language would make comparisons between different oppressions and fall into the trap of universalizing all suffering and thus rendering it devoid of meaning.

The challenge was compounded by the need to discover a voice, and find a symbolic language and purpose to build this centre in Johannesburg, a city seemingly remote from the places and spaces of genocide.

## Obvious connection to Africa

The institution decided to include the Rwandan genocide in the narrative of both the building and the exhibition. This created the first obvious connection to Africa. A shuddering connection to South Africa emerged as the date of the Rwandan Genocide coincided with the first democratic election in South Africa. It will always be

shocking to contemplate that as South Africans were going to polls to elect Nelson Mandela as the country's first black president, the Rwandan killings were at their height. Johannesburg had a small Rwandan survivor community who had made South Africa their home and the building had to reflect and commemorate their tragic history.

This problem of finding an appropriate form of expression is a universal one for all witnesses and survivors: to describe such a catastrophe with language, art and architecture always seems to impoverish the memories. And yet, to shy away from the task and fall silent does not do justice to the responsibility we have to remember the cruel past and to build a better world.

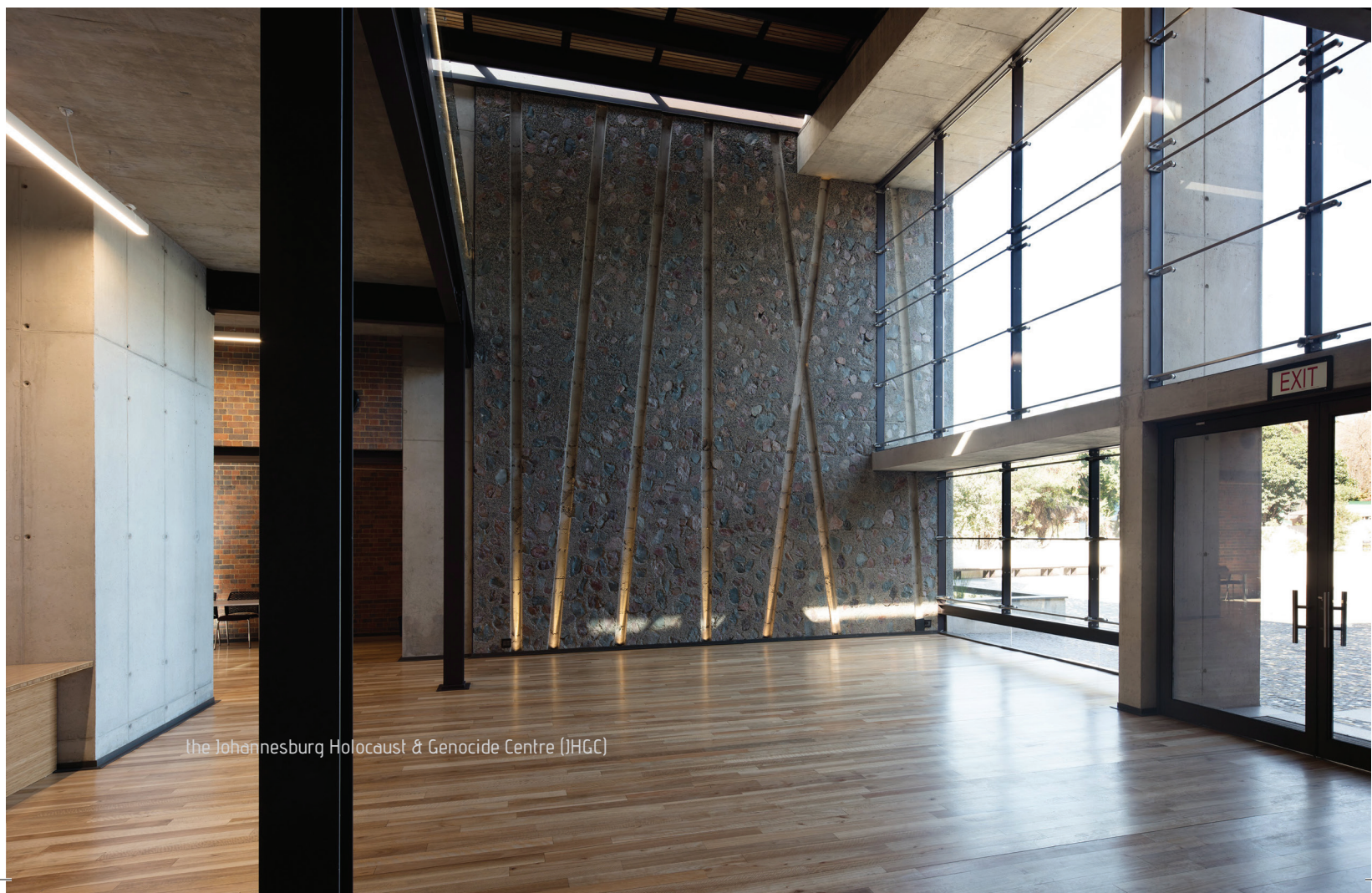
For help with this task, I turned to the survivors of both the Holocaust and the Rwandan genocide. Our first meetings with the separate survivor groups revealed deep wounds and anxieties. The Holocaust survivors initially questioned the design and narrative intention that might erode

the uniqueness of their experience. When the communities finally encountered each other, they discovered connections that spanned the years and we were able to ask them for help.

"Can you assist," I asked, "to find some means of representation? To assist me with some tools of association that could be translated into materials? Memories and images that I might employ on the busy streetscapes of Johannesburg to recall and symbolize your suffering? Can you help by suggesting associations that will present our visitors, and passers-by, with humanity's great flaw?"

We emphasized that we wished to commemorate their suffering, but also tell the uplifting story of survival and triumph and relate how they rebuilt their lives.

The first images that emerged from our discussions were recollections of the topographies of horror. Holocaust survivors spoke of trains, of railway lines and the vast transportation network of



the Johannesburg Holocaust & Genocide Centre (JHGC)



Europe that was employed and diverted to haul people to their deaths. We discussed how trains and railways, once a symbol of industrial progress in the eyes of 20th century modernists, were transformed by the Nazis and their collaborators into a vast killing machine. In Africa, we discussed how the railways that represented the great dream of the colonialists, brought along not only the empires, but also oppression and human misery.

This was our first design aid: the language of the architecture should recall simple old industrial and railway buildings with exposed structural elements of steel and concrete. This historic building type so recognizable to citizens of Johannesburg is hauntingly familiar.

The next images that weighed on the survivors were the forests and landscapes of death. The Nazis murdered Jews and others within the panoramas of the European landscapes, often in lyrical forest settings. The Rwandan genocide took place in a spectacular landscape of lush green vegetation and terraced hills.

This was another design aid: railway tracks would be embedded in the walls and cracks of the facades in inclinations that recall the trees that stood witness to the murders. They would also recall electrified fences where so many victims ended their lives. The railway lines would be recessed in concrete walls of rough exposed rocks, revealing grooves and gashes: reminiscent of the sheer brutality of Rwandan killings.

Looking at that most unforgettable image of the pile of railway lines at the Belzec extermination camp in Poland, and realizing that we were using the very same material profiles in the facades, brought home to us the horror of recruiting industrial efficiency to commemorate murder.

I took away from the encounters with the survivors the powerful notion that genocide takes place in surroundings all too familiar to all of us. This recognition that these places of barbarism echo the ones we encounter in our everyday lives is reinforced by anyone who visits

the concentration camps and killing centers of Europe and Rwanda.

I then derived another design concept: the structures that housed and hid the atrocities, were often simply reused industrial buildings. These were commonly built in a type of brickwork called 'English Bond', a 19th and early 20th century standard of construction.

The effect is a design texture, a tapestry of alternating rows of bricks in different orientations. Originally, this building technique was meant to delight the eye, but was turned by the Nazis and genocidaires into an envelope of horror and violence.

We employed this technique to build the walls of our building, as a reminder that genocide takes place before our eyes in broad daylight, in towns and cities, high streets and suburbs. We wanted to remind ourselves of this by orienting the long horizontal windows of our exhibition spaces to our busy streets and green suburbs of Johannesburg.





The other haunting images of the Shoah that accompany us are the long lines of industrial cattle trucks at the deportation centers. We can barely look at the photographs of the bewildered families as they boarded and disembarked from these trains. We tried to recall these images on the public façade of Jan Smuts Avenue, the main arterial street in the city, to remind visitors that these railway trucks, so familiar in our South African landscape, can never be neutral images again.

## Learning from the victims

But how can these images of violence and pain be used in a building that is meant to teach tolerance and compassion? Again, we learnt from the victims themselves - in this case, the brave children of Terezin, the concentration camp set up by the Nazis near Prague. Children living with death hovering over them produced drawings, paintings and poems of sublime beauty, hours, and days before they were murdered. These

drawings depict their bleak surroundings, the harsh living conditions and the deportation trains, but they are rendered in splendid colors and forms, full of optimism and the veneration of life.

The message of these children reaches out to our South African children: never relinquish art and language as a way to find meaning. They teach us that we should transform the experience of oppression into an embrace of creativity and action.

Visitors to this center are encouraged to ponder over these symbols, and leave inspired to take up a different path, to commit to Tikkun Olam, a Hebrew term and ethic meaning “Improving of the World”, a promise to rebuild our society through tolerance and compassion.

This passage from racial oppression to recovery and restoration was incorporated into other aspects of the building. In the courtyard, the stones were made from gravestone offcuts, which recall the cobbled pavements of European cities. We walk over granite slabs that resemble



the Johannesburg Holocaust & Genocide Centre (JHGC)

unmarked graves. We pass the Memorial to the children, and into the foyer. Our journey will take you into the darkest recesses of humanity but will end in a memorial courtyard that promises hope and revival.

In conclusion, apart from the design considerations to 'encapsulate the difficult history', there was another aspect that informed the process of making the building. This was the community of givers and donors where so many individuals, companies and contractors saw this as far more than just another building project. These people were drawn to its meaning and message, and made exceptional contributions in effort, time and materials. This 'giving' was akin to a design contribution that recalled the collection of materials for sacred buildings in the Bible: 'gifts from every person whose heart so moves him.' (Exodus 25:2)

I did not select materials but rather used the materials that were presented by the community of givers.

Bricks, steel, stone, timber and more arrived at the site as donations in kind, and using this palette, the wider South African community developed an appreciation that the building and the ideas that it represents had arisen from their participation and contribution.

This was for me the most profound aspect of this project and its enduring legacy.

To encapsulate a difficult history, we need to listen to the words of Elie Wiesel:

"We shall all see the day of liberation.

We are all brothers, and we are all suffering the same fate. The same smoke floats over all our heads. Help one another. It is the only way to survive."

*Lewis Levin*

*Architect, Designer of the Johannesburg  
Holocaust and Genocide Centre*



*The generations of survivors are diminishing and receding into history themselves. That leaves only the archives and the historical record to establish what really happened in the Holocaust. At a time when the very record of the Holocaust is being distorted for political purposes in many countries and has become part of political propaganda, it is all the more necessary to establish what happened in the Holocaust internationally, nationally, and on the local level. This project is a very strong initiative in that direction. By engaging students, teachers, and the community to research and find out what happened on the ground in their communities during the Holocaust, it takes the Holocaust, the facts of the Holocaust, out of the archives and into the classroom and into the community, thus firmly establishing the local record of what really happened. Only in that way can we begin to confront the past to learn the lessons that are necessary to move forward.*

**Mark Weitzman**

*Director of Government Affairs, Simon Wiesenthal Center,  
member of the U.S. delegation to IHRA*



*I'm convinced that it is very important to commemorate the past, especially such monstrous crimes as the Holocaust because we must never allow it to happen again. And I know from my own experience it is also very important to focus on local stories. When I was a kid, I worked on a school project on victims in my hometown in Germany. I learned about local Jewish people and forced laborers from Poland who were kept at local farms. We browsed shelves in our city archive to write about these people and their fates. That really got under my skin, much more than any textbook.*

**Dorothea Gieselman**

*Deputy Head of Mission,  
Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany to Serbia*





*The generation that survived these tragic events is almost gone. But they have left us a big number of testimonies, of life stories, of facts on the microhistorical level, but also on other levels, which are very important. It is up to us today what we do with all of what they have left us, with all the research that has already been done. Especially today with the current trend of revisionism of history, it is very important to integrate microhistories into the macro historic framework. I cannot overstress the importance of archives in all of these endeavors.*

### **Dr. Krinka Vidaković - Petrov**

*Full Professor at the Institute of Literature and Art in Belgrade (retired),  
former Ambassador of the Republic of Serbia to Israel*





RAUMKLIMA

TROCKEN  
BEFEUCHTEN

FEUCHT  
LÜFTEN

Präzisions-Hygrometer %

Temperatur °C

TFA

Made in Germany





# Part 2

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## Unboxing the History



# The Journey of a Document: From a Private Collection, through Archive Shelves, to Publication

Dr. Milan Koljanin

The files on the Ustasha atrocities were formed by the SS major (Sturmbannführer) Dr. Ernst Weinmann, member of the German Security Police Task Force and the Security Service (Einsatzgruppe Sipo-SD). He was the liaison officer of this paramilitary institution in Serbia, with its administrative headquarters headed by the State Counselor and Military Commander, Harald Turner and the representative of the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Serbia, Felix Benzler.

**I**t goes without saying that any research, including Holocaust research, is based on the collection and analysis of as many historical sources as possible. Archives or archival departments in museums or memorials are certainly key institutions in collecting, preserving and making historical sources available to researchers. When we talk about archives, I mean the whole network of archives of a particular country, with central archival institutions as well as provincial and municipal archives playing a significant role. I had the pleasure of cooperating with one such archive, the Archives of Vojvodina, in publishing hitherto unknown material about World War II, which partly refers to the Holocaust. The result of that cooperation is an extensive collection of documents called Ustasha atrocities (1941-1942), which was published at the end of last year. The case of the archival sources published in this collection and the entire personal fund in which it is located shows the importance of engaging the archives themselves in finding and collecting historical sources, as well as in their publication. When it comes to the Ustasha atrocities collection of documents, they were

published thanks to the initiative of the director of the Archives of Vojvodina, Dr. Nebojša Kuzmanović. He entrusted me with the task of preparing this collection of documents from an extensive file, which contained duplicates, or parts of documents that already exist in their entirety.

## A case study: Publishing historical records

A few words about how these documents got to the Archives of Vojvodina. This speaks of the attitude towards the documents of those who had access to them. Namely, in Yugoslavia and Serbia, it happened, and probably still happens, that certain official documents or historical sources ended up with private individuals, even though their place was in the archives. This was also the case with the legacy of Slavko Odić, a prominent partisan leader and senior official of the Yugoslav State Security Administration after 1945. He published several books related to the work of intelligence services in Yugoslavia during World War II. He also used the original documents that became part of his posthumous

legacy. The largest and the most significant part of these documents was bought by the Archives of Vojvodina from a private individual (civilian) in 2008 and formed the Personal Fund of Slavko Odić (Fund No. 562). Parts of his legacy are also kept in the Archives of Republika Srpska in Banja Luka and in the Institute of Contemporary History in Belgrade.

Slavko Odić's personal fund contains the "Dossier of the Commander of the Security Police and the Security Service in Belgrade on Ustasha crimes." Odić himself titled this dossier "Ustasha Atrocities in the Independent State of Croatia" after the name given to the dossier by the German police in the occupied Serbia, „Ustasha atrocities” (Ustascha-Greueln). This name indicates that the German police considered the mass crimes against Serbs as atrocities and assigned the highest importance to that fact. There was no dilemma among German representatives in occupied Serbia, nor among those in the Ustasha state, that the policy of destroying Serbs was the state policy of the Independent State of Croatia. The documents in the file show that it was clear to the German representatives that the Roman Catholic Church had its place in that policy, and tried to increase the number of its believers forcefully in such circumstances. From all this, it was quickly concluded that the policy of destroying the Serbs in fact led to their resistance movement and a massive uprising, which endangered German interests and required increased military engagement.

## The historical context

The Nazi “new order” in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia was distinctly anti-Serbian, and the main domestic support for Germany on the soil of the shattered state was the newly created great Croatian state. The Nazi leader Adolf Hitler himself approved of the Independent State of Croatia's policy towards the Serbs, and he never changed that attitude, despite the drastically changed circumstances during the war. In the Ustasha state itself, the policy of extermination

(elimination) of Serbs had the support of the German representative/emissary in the Independent State of Croatia, Siegfried Kasche, and the head of the Operational Command of the Security Police and the Security Service in Zagreb (Einsatzkommando Sipo-SD) SS-major Wilhelm Beisner. Representatives of the German army in the Independent State of Croatia had a different attitude though, in particular the German general in Zagreb, Edmund Glaise von Horstenau. In his report from August 9, 1941, he identified the destruction of Serbs as the main cause of the uprising. It was clear to both him and the German representatives in occupied Serbia that the Germans would be blamed for the crimes, because they created the Ustasha state and thus enabled the crimes. German occupation officials in Serbia received information about crimes against Serbs in the Independent State of Croatia not only from their own sources, but also from the Serbian quisling authorities. During the summer of 1941, the German military occupation authorities in Serbia constantly received information about the increasing massacres of Serbs. Despite certain changes in the Ustasha policy towards the Serbs under German pressure in the first months of 1942, it was then that a new great wave of crimes against Serbs began. Hitler's stance was that Pavelić was his faithful ally and that there was no one to replace him. He was not mistaken in that, because the Ustasha leader and his state were Hitler's last allies, even after his death. The Ustasha policy of extermination of Serbs had not been substantially changed until the demise of the Independent State of Croatia.

As early as the beginning of June 1941, the Ustasha massacres of Serbs in the Independent State of Croatia provoked spontaneous resistance from Serbs and the organization of insurgents. It included both those who identified the liberation struggle with the social revolution, and those who believed that the Yugoslav monarchy should be restored. However, the fundamental political differences between these factions were suppressed when it came to the Ustasha policy of destroying Serbs, because the fight was the only way to survive.



Mass riots and threats to communications gave rise to the spread of the Italian military presence and influence, which was already evident at the end of August 1941. The entry of Italian troops into the Second Zone of their area of interest in the Independent State of Croatia marked the end of the Ustasha massacres of Serbs and their return to some kind of normal life. The consequence was the dissolution of the first death camp of the Ustasha state in Gospić (a system of camps and execution sites in Gospić-Jadovno-Pag). From the few survivors and newly arrived detainees at the end of August 1941 in the German area of interest, a new death camp and concentration camp - Jasenovac - was formed in the Independent State of Croatia.

This brief account of events in Yugoslavia, especially in the Ustasha Greater Croatia, was necessary in order to understand the value of the documents published in the collection. The time span of the documents is from July 26, 1941 to November 20, 1942, with the continuity of documents being interrupted in the second half of June 1942. The documents refer to the period of the greatest mass crimes against Serbs in the Independent State of Croatia, in other words, to the period in which these crimes had a decisive influence on the development of events in occupied Serbia and, to an even greater extent, in the Ustasha Independent State of Croatia. Among the documents in the collection, those of German provenance, police and military, predominate. Among them are documents of members of the German national minority (Volksdeutsche). The file also includes documents of Croatian (military, administrative body, Ustasha), Serbian (Chetnik, Nedić's administration, members of Ljotić's organization and volunteer corps), and Muslim provenance. Although the file primarily includes documents on Ustasha crimes against Serbs, it also contains those on other mass crimes of the Ustasha authorities, primarily against Jews. Some of the documents are about Chetnik crimes against Muslims and Croats, about Ustasha persecutions of political adversaries, or just criminal cases.

## A collection gathered by SS major Dr. Ernst Weinmann

The files on Ustasha atrocities were formed by SS major (Sturmbannführer) Dr. Ernst Weinmann, member of the Security Police Task Force and the Security Service (Einsatzgruppe Sipo-SD). He was the liaison officer of this main police institution in Serbia with its administrative headquarters headed by the State Counselor and Military Commander, Harald Turner, and with the representative of the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Serbia, Felix Benzler. Weinmann also played an important role in the release of groups of Serb detainees from Ustasha camps in March 1942, for which Commissioner for Refugees Toma Maksimović thanked him. It is evident from the documents that Weinmann collected documents from various sources, including the German representatives in the Independent State of Croatia. Out of over 600 sheets of documents in the dossier, a total of 165 documents and 63 photographs were included in this edition of the collection. Most of the documents in the dossier were written in German and they were translated into Serbian for the purposes of this edition. Some documents were originally written in Croatian or Serbian and/or translated into German (by order of the service where the case was received). The main intention of the editors was to get a picture of when, how and which German representatives received notifications about Ustasha crimes, what was the nature of those crimes, and what were their consequences, according to the documents from the file.

The intervention of editors in the schedule of documents refers primarily to the five documents on Ustasha crimes from committed between May and August 1941, with which the collection begins. The first four documents in the collection are an appendix of an unsaved document from the end of January or the beginning of February 1942, and the fifth is related to the previous one. In other words, these documents became an integral part of the dossier at the end of January and the

# УСТАШКА ЗВЕРСТВА

Зборник докумената  
(1941–1942)





beginning of February 1942, and were created in July and August 1941 and at the end of January 1942, and their contents refer to the period from May to August 1941. The sixth document in the collection, a request addressed to the German commander in Belgrade by a Serbian refugee from the Independent State of Croatia, is in a way an introduction, or an announcement of what is contained in the seventh document from October 9, 1941.

Several documents of different provenance are about the Gospić, Jasenovac and Loborgrad camps, and represent very important sources about these camps. Based on these documents, it is obvious that the German representatives were very well informed about these camps and about the mass crimes that took place in them. These documents also contain important information regarding the course of the Holocaust in the Ustasha state. It should be emphasized that the Independent State of Croatia solved the “Jewish question” largely in its own death camps, first in Gospić, and then in Jasenovac. With the exception of Nazi Germany, the Ustasha Greater Croatia was the only “new order” state that had its own death camps in which it destroyed a large part of its Jewish population. Roma and, above all, Serbs, who were the most numerous victims, were killed alongside the Jews. There is little information about the Holocaust in the Independent State of Croatia in the collection, because the “final solution” was entirely in the hands of the Ustasha state. It was only in the last phase, in the summer of 1942, that the remaining Jews were deported to the Auschwitz death camp.

However, based on the documents in the collection, a partial picture of the position of Jews in the Ustasha state can be obtained. This

primarily refers to the looting of property, the internment, the conditions in the camps and the relations among the prisoners, and to the mass killing of Jews on the bridge over the Sava river in Brčko on December 12, 1941. The report by Karl Heger, the commander of the camps in Loborgrad and Gornja Rijeka, on the situation in the latter camp, as well as in the Đakovo and Jasenovac camps, is extremely important. The report is from April 9, 1942, and it is the most detailed account of the Jasenovac camp. Heger also presented a piece of information which should be checked against other sources as well. According to him, the Jewish religious community in Zagreb had at the time received funds in the amount of one million pengo from Hungary. This refers to the financial assistance provided by Hungarian Jewish organizations and explains why the Ustasha authorities allowed the Jewish community in Zagreb to continue its work. The testimonies of 13 Serbs who were released from the Jasenovac camp on March 31, 1942, are also significant. The Jews who spoke to them before they left were aware that they could not be saved. The collection also includes a photograph of a group of about 100 Serbian women and children who were released from the Loborgrad camp at the end of March 1942. After their departure, the camp remained exclusively reserved for Jewish women and children.

Finally, I would like to emphasize that the Ustasha atrocities collection shows that Holocaust sources are still being revealed and that the role of regional and local archives is invaluable in this regard. The efforts of the Archives of Vojvodina to collect and publish historical sources, including the Holocaust sources, show not only the importance of those archives but also the importance of personal initiative.

*Dr. Milan Koljanin*

*Historian, Senior Researcher at the Institute for Contemporary History in Belgrade (retired), Member of the Serbian delegation to IHRA*







# Breaking Into a Gallop – An Educational Graphic Novel about the Persecution of the Roma

Miško Stanišić

Most probably, these narratives have been enhanced, veering into the realm of folk tales and myths. But the fact is that 99 members of the Familić family were deported and killed. Furthermore, the fact is that the people of the Srem region kept the memory of this event through narratives, using the means available to them to safeguard it.

**I**t all began at the archive depo in the basement of the Archives of Vojvodina. We were looking into the lists of victims collected by the State Commission for the Investigation of War Crimes of the Occupiers and their Collaborators in 1946-1947. We noticed 99 names, all with the same surname "Familić," all from the same village - Molovin, all Roma, all killed in the Jasenovac concentration camp. I had never heard of Molovin or the Familićs, but the archivist who was helping us remarked that it was an exceptional case, as the entire wider family was killed together.

We investigated further using several resources created by the Archives of Vojvodina: "Crimes of the occupiers and their helpers in Vojvodina 1941-1944: Srem" published in 2020, "Ustasha atrocities: a collection of documents 1941-1942" edited by Dr. Milan Koljanin and published in 2020, and the two online platforms: "Victims in Srem 1941-1945" (<https://sremskeztve.arhivvojvodine.org.rs>) and "Ustasha atrocities" (<https://ustaskeztve.arhivvojvodine.org.rs>), both created by the Archives of Vojvodina in 2021.

We decided to create an educational resource about the pre-war life and culture of the Roma in the Srem region and their persecution during the occupation. Our idea was to focus on available

archival records and other resources and make them accessible through an educational graphic novel. This is a format we already have lots of experience with creating. It is easy to understand and interesting for young people.

## Zooming into microhistory: the destiny of the Roma community of Molovin

Molovin is a small isolated village in Serbia, situated in the Srem District in the Vojvodina province. Today, it is quite a poor community of just about 290 inhabitants, with Serbs being the ethnic majority. Most inhabitants are elderly farmers, and it was only a couple of years ago drinking water finally reached the village. The road to Molovin is a dead end. You can not go any further. Only back.

In the 1930s, Molovin had about 700 inhabitants. The village had an agricultural cooperative, a school with five classes, a church, pubs, and shops. Next to the Serb majority, at that time, there was a large Roma community in the village. The Familićs were the most prominent Roma family in Molovin, famous as great tamburitza

(footnote: a family of long-necked string instruments similar to a lute) musicians. Their tamburitza orchestras were well known. They played in restaurants and pubs from Zagreb and Split to Sarajevo and Belgrade.

In April 1941, Germany attacked and destroyed Yugoslavia. The country was divided between Germany and its allies. Germany and Italy endorsed the creation of the Independent State of Croatia ruled by the Ustasha. The political order of the Ustasha state was similar to the Nazi regime, with extreme nationalistic and racist ideology. In addition to Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Independent State of Croatia encompassed the Srem region and extended to Zemun and the banks of the Sava to the borders of Belgrade.

In the summer of 1942, Ustasha troops raided Srem, killing or deporting Roma, Jews, and Serbs. While there are many horrifying accounts of Ustasha crimes, one in particular is often mentioned in the local narratives.

In July 1942, Ustasha deported Molovin's entire Roma population to the Jasenovac concentration camp, from where no one returned. In this action, 99 members of the same Roma family, the Familićs – women, children, men, elderly, – were taken to the town of Šid and put on a train to Jasenovac. Since then, there have been no Roma in Molovin.

## Keeping the memory

Ordinary people in the Srem region still tell stories about this event. There are stories of how Ustasha forced the Familićs to play music during the march towards the Šid train station. The group of more than a hundred people was divided into sections as an orchestra: tambura, prim, bassprim, bass, and they played following the lead of the orchestra leader. The people of Šid lined the streets, crying and shouting their farewell. Near the train station, the orchestra leader gave his violin to the owner of a pub where he often played, saying that he would not need it

anymore as he would never return. The stories that remain about this event are mostly similar, but they differ when it comes to which doleful songs the Roma played while marching to the train station.

Of course, these stories are not first-hand accounts, and there is nothing to corroborate what really happened that tragic day. Most probably, these narratives have been embellished, veering into the realm of folk tales and myths. But the fact is that 99 members of the Familić family were deported and killed. Furthermore, the fact is that the people of the Srem region kept the memory of this event through narratives, using the means available to them to safeguard it. The sense that this event is extraordinary and important, and must be preserved in collective memory, has been strong enough to keep it alive among ordinary people for 80 years.

In the village of Molovin, there are two memorial plaques on the front wall of the old, decaying community building. One, dated 1951, is devoted to the memory of 21 villagers killed as resistance fighters, partisans. The other memorial plaque, from 2008, is engraved with the names of all the Roma from Molovin murdered by the Ustasha.

While researching the story of the village that has lost its entire Roma population, we interviewed several inhabitants of Molovin. One of them was Nikola Subić, a villager in his late 60s.

Nikola Subić:

*"Older people who remember these times are unfortunately all gone. Still, I heard stories from the elderly. They loved our Roma. They had beautiful times together. They were fond of Roma and liked living together with the Roma. We lived as one, in harmony. The Roma were bringing joy and happiness to our village, singing and playing music. We were dancing and singing together. The village was larger then, and there were several Roma orchestras.*

*The Roma were mainly poor; they had no proper clothes, but they seemed happy. For them, life was good if they could get enough food. Some Roma*



were shoemakers. Some had other artisan jobs. Some were hired to work in the fields, some took care of the disposal of livestock carcasses, some were scrap metal collectors.

*The Roma neighborhood used to be down by the creek, near where the village graveyard is today. They had traditional houses made of mud, soil, reed, and straw. They kept horses, chickens, and sheep. Now, there is nothing there. Ustasha took all the Roma.*

*The elderly villagers spoke about how strange it was to be in a village and not see a single Roma. It was very sad. There was no Roma at all. Before, one could always see Roma, on the main street, everywhere.*

*In 2008 we, the villagers, decided to put a plaque at the local community center. The Roma were our fellow citizens. We were residents of the same village. They were good people. We owed it to them. So we arranged the memorial plaque and engraved all the victims' names. We put it on the wall of the youth center building so that the new generations and the inhabitants of the village could remember the Roma."*

Of course, his comment about how the Roma were "happy with just enough food" was based on stereotypes. But, I noticed how this simple, not well-educated, and not particularly well-spoken man from a small village persistently used the word "Roma." Many would use "Gypsy" (Cigan) in colloquial language. But he did not. Instead, I believe, he knew that the Roma should not be called "Cigan" - a discriminatory and racist term. He somehow learned it from the local historical experience and the stories he heard from the elders about the tragic destiny of the local Roma.

We were very impressed that 66 years after the crime, the local community of a tiny isolated village felt obliged to create a place of memory for the community of a different ethnic group. They did it, not in spite of the fact that there were no Roma in the village anymore, but because of it.

## Educational graphic novel

In 2016 we developed "Ester" – a series of online graphic novels and teaching material, with dramatized stories about the Jewish victims killed in the Jewish Camp at Sajmište (Judenlager Semlin) at the beginning of 1942. Based on actual historical events and characters, the stories focus on young victims and their families, their life before the war, during the German occupation, and the Holocaust. The graphic novels were created through reconstruction and dramatization of history based on available historical records and fragments of personal stories. The illustrations are accompanied by rich, interactive digital content, such as archival documents, historic newspapers, photographs, maps, glossaries, and a variety of investigative tasks for students.

When we set out to create the teaching material about the Roma community of Molovin, encouraged by the positive responses to "Ester" by teachers, students, and experts, we decided to use the same format. It was an opportunity to implement accumulated experiences and further improve the methodology.

This time, focusing on the persecution and genocide of the Roma, we faced many new and particular challenges:

- ◆ Lack of research about this subject.
- ◆ Lack of archival resources about the life of Roma and their persecution during the war. There are literally no archival collections about any segment of Roma's history, culture, or life.
- ◆ Very few testimonials of survivors.
- ◆ The Roma community is still discriminated against, isolated, and facing prejudices.
- ◆ Even the cultural and educational institutions, such as museums, archives, and schools, are not immune to prejudices and bias against the Roma.
- ◆ Due to the indifference of the institutions and a long history of exclusion, the Roma community does not perceive archives or



museums as places where they are supposed to be represented. Thus, they are not seeking to establish partnerships with archives and museums to work together on overcoming this problem.

- ♦ Lack of educational materials about the Roma and their history.
- ♦ Teachers have little knowledge about the Roma, their culture, and history in general, including persecution and genocide.

Our task was not only to present particular historical events. We had to introduce the Roma, their culture, their contribution to society, and the consequences of the long history of discrimination that still impacts the life of Roma today.

Only 84% of Roma children enroll in primary school, and only 67% complete it, compared to 96% of the non-Roma population (footnote: European Commission report on Serbia for 2019). Roma students often encounter an unstimulating environment at schools, rejection in the classroom, and misunderstanding by teachers. The Roma are mentioned only three times in Serbian history, geography, and civic education textbooks. ("The Representation of Roma in European Curricula and Textbooks", a joint report commissioned by the Council of Europe to the Georg Eckert Institute for International Textbook Research in partnership with the Roma Education Fund, 2020). Thus, Roma students find it challenging to identify





Illustration from the graphic novel "Breaking Into a Gallop."  
Illustration: Marija Ranković

with the curriculum. Consequently, students of the majority population do not perceive Roma as part of the overall national culture and history.

Our goal was to create an educational resource that would contribute to inclusive education and capacity building of teachers towards an educational environment based on intercultural values.

In addition, the process of developing the material was designed to strengthen the awareness and capacity of local archives and museums through their engagement in identifying historical records about the Roma.

Naturally, we were keen to work with Roma communities and ensure their active participation in the process. The Roma editorial team of the Radio-Television of Vojvodina, the regional public broadcaster, had a crucial role in promoting and legitimizing our work among Roma communities. Roma activists were engaged as members of our team. We worked closely with poets, teachers, scholars, and others from the local Roma communities to identify essential elements of Roma culture, customs, language, art, music, cuisine, and folklore. A significant contribution was made by Rajko and Maja Jovanović, father and daughter from the village of Deronje, well-known Roma poets and authors.



While many of these elements were a new addition to our graphic novel methodology, some of the primary educational goals remained the same:

- ♦ To contribute to better knowledge of the crimes committed by the Nazis and their collaborators;
- ♦ To raise awareness of these historical events that took place right here, in our closest surroundings;
- ♦ To provide insights into the processes of historical research, in particular about what historical records are, where to find them and how to use them;
- ♦ To contribute to addressing distortion and denial of this history.

To ensure historical accuracy, we consulted leading expert historians, such as Dr. Milan Koljanin and Dr. Milovan Pissari, and local researchers, such as Radovan Sremac. Particular attention was paid to connecting local history with the broader context of the European history of the Holocaust and the persecution of the Roma.

The materials were mostly collected in cooperation with the Archives of Vojvodina, the Historical Archive of Belgrade, the Historical Archive of the City of Novi Sad, the Archive of Srem, the Museum of Srem, the Museum of Vojvodina, the City Library of Novi Sad, but also other local institutions.

We worked with two amazing artists, Marija Ranković and Jelena Ristić, who illustrated the novel in two distinctive graphical styles. Jelena depicted the Roma life in Molovin, and all the scenes that took place in the village. Marija illustrated the scenes in the town of Šid and in Belgrade.

Last but not least, I have to mention our core team: Gojko Kekić, Ljiljana Čumura, Snežana Orčić, and Nevena Bajalica. Without their research and tireless efforts, none of this would have been possible.

In addition to International Visegrad Fund, International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA), the Federal Ministry of Education, Science, and Research of the Republic of Austria (BMBWF), and the Ministry of Culture and Information of the Republic of Serbia, our work on developing the educational graphic novel was also supported by the Open Society Foundation from Belgrade.

## Breaking Into a Gallop

The novel's main character is Todor Familić – one of only two surviving members of the Familić family from Molovin (as far as we could find out through research.) Todor Familić was born in Molovin in 1908. As a very skilled musician, in 1936, he left Molovin for Belgrade to join the Belgrade Radio Orchestra. That saved him, as he was not in the village during the Ustasha raid. After the war, Todor was a member of the Janika Balázs Orchestra – the most famous tamburitza orchestra in post-war Yugoslavia.

The story begins in 1976 with the Janika Balázs Orchestra playing on a street in Šid during a local wedding procession. It is the same street where Ustasha marched the Familićs through Šid in 1942. The story is presented in a retrospective way, starting just a year before Todor would pass away. From that point, we are traveling back to 1935 when he was playing in a pub near the Šid train station as a young musician. We follow him to Molovin to get to know its Roma community. Then we go to Belgrade. We find out about the beginning of Radio Belgrade and Todor's prominent role in its orchestra. There is a vivid pre-war Belgrade Roma community. After the German occupation, everything changes. Anti-Jewish and anti-Roma rules are introduced. The Belgrade Roma are imprisoned in the Topovske Šupe concentration camp and killed. In parallel, we learn about the Srem region under the Ustasha rule. Todor finds out about the Ustasha raid in Molovin and the murder of his entire family. He will remain plagued by his loss, even in 1976, when he plays at the wedding in Šid, where the story ends.



This digital novel contains the same rich interactive elements we used in earlier graphic novels: archival documents, historic newspapers, photographs, maps, glossaries, and investigating tasks for students.

The new feature is the inclusion of components of Roma culture. Each scene starts with a poem in the Romani language, written by the most prominent Serbian Roma poets, and the translations in Serbian. The novel's title "Breaking Into a Gallop" is taken from a poem written by the famous Roma poet Trifun Dimić. Many scenes are accompanied by music, mostly recordings of the Janika Balázs Orchestra. In some scenes, when we are visiting the Roma homes, we find the Roma cuisine recipes. Also, we get to know some Roma fairytales, folk sayings, and proverbs in Romani.

Currently, the translation into Romani is being prepared, as well as a version in English.

The novel will be available as part of our "Ester" collection on [www.ester.rs](http://www.ester.rs)

## Epilogue

Due to Covid-19 restrictions, for a long time we could not travel to Molovin. Six months later, when we visited Molovin, we met two Roma kids playing in the street in front of the community building. We asked them where they live, and they explained that their families moved to the village recently. It was heartwarming to see that, despite all, there are still Roma in Molovin, even if they are not descendants of the old, original families. I hope that the local narrative of the "beautiful life in harmony with the Roma community" in the past will impact the relations between the communities today. Let us hope that we really learn from history.

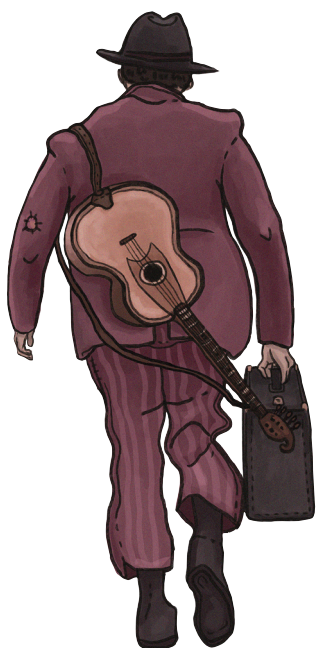
p.s.

The man we interviewed in Molovin, Nikola Subić, added something at the end of the conversation. I only noticed it later, after having listened to the interview recording. *"You are late now. The oldest inhabitants of the village were born in the 1950s. They don't have personal recollections of those days. Someone should have asked about this much earlier."*

Yes, old man, you are absolutely right. I do feel genuinely ashamed because of this.

*Miško Stanišić*

*Director and co-founder of Terraforming,  
member of the Serbian delegation to IHRA*





*The importance of identifying and safeguarding the Holocaust record is always there, maybe today more than ever. We all know that difficult times, and the rise of antisemitism, antigypsyism, and other forms of racism go together. The IHRA working definition of Holocaust denial and distortion states: “Holocaust denial in its various forms is an expression of antisemitism. The attempt to deny the genocide of the Jews is an effort to exonerate National Socialism and antisemitism from guilt or responsibility for the genocide of the Jewish people.” I very much welcome this project because it asks the right questions and I very much hope it will find convincing answers that will serve all of us. Identifying the Holocaust records in archives, and using them to create new educational tools, will help us to counter Holocaust distortion.*

**Ambassador Michaela Küchler**

*President of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA)  
during the German presidency, 2020 - 2021*



# More than Primary Sources: Archival Engagement for Education

Aleksandar Vranić and Marija Djurićanin

We were responsible for providing verified information. That requires time, attention, patience, and experience. One of the main goals of this kind of educational graphic novel based on archival records is to counter the Holocaust distortion. For that reason, it was imperative to prevent any possible misunderstanding or misinterpretation of the resources we provided.

The Historical Archive of the City of Novi Sad was founded in 1954. As an inter-municipal archive, it carries out its activities in nine municipalities: Bačka Palanka, Bački Petrovac, Beočin, Žabalj, Vrbas, Novi Sad, Sremski Karlovci, Temerin, and Titel. In addition to the protection and preservation of archival material, the Archive organizes thematic exhibitions, conferences, seminars, workshops, and training in all areas of archival business. The Archive keeps about 8 320 meters of archival material in its depots. The documents are sorted within 952 funds and cover the period from 1748 to 2016. These documents contain data on the development of the City and its surroundings, public bodies and organizations, legal entities, and individuals.

As archivists, our daily tasks include receiving and processing various documentation and issuing archival material for private and legal purposes to researchers and private citizens. Of course, to offer service to our users, an essential skill of an archivist is the knowledge of our funds, their availability, content, and the historical context in which these documents have been created and collected.

## The Novi Sad Raid

Within the project “The Holocaust, European Values and Local History”, we worked with Terraforming on gathering the material for the educational graphic novel about the Novi Sad Raid.

The Novi Sad Raid, also known as the Raid in southern Bačka, was a military operation carried out by Hungarian armed forces during World War II, after the occupation and annexation of the Bačka region. From January 21 to 23, 1942, Hungarian fascists killed up to four thousand civilians in the streets of Novi Sad and on the bank of the Danube river, mostly Serbs (at least 2 578) and Jews (at least 1 068), but also Roma (at least 64). The Novi Sad Raid is one of the most important events in the City’s history. It molded the memory of World War II and reshaped the identity of the City and its inhabitants.

In memory of this event, in 1971, a bronze monument called “The Family” by sculptor Jovan Soldatović was placed by the Danube. Traditionally, the Novi Sad Raid commemoration is held on January 23 on the river bank near the monument.

## Working on a graphic novel

Working on an educational project was a somewhat unusual task for us. As archivists, we were the source of primary information that the novel would be built around. Our task was to collect valuable historical records and materials from our archival collections and dig through all the documents, books, registers, newspapers, and photographs. We were looking for already known as well as new and unpublished materials that could shed light on the historical period before and during the Novi Sad Raid. In particular, we were trying to find untold personal stories and facts about everyday life of ordinary people before the war.

From the very start, the project group decided that the novel would focus on young athletes from Novi Sad - junior soccer players of two local sports clubs: Serbian "Vojvodina" and the Jewish "Maccabi." After identifying several candidates, the project group selected two boys, one Serbian and one Jewish, to become the novel's main characters. Then we could continue focusing our research on their families and studying their lives during peacetime, and their tragic fates during the occupation of Novi Sad. In parallel, we were looking for sources about the daily habits of Novi Sad's youth between 1930 and 1942, an insight into their cultural and social lives. Particular attention was paid to investigating the sources about the Jewish community in Novi Sad. Finally, we looked for records of that time in local newspapers related to significant relevant events in Germany and other countries during the same period.

It was vital for us to provide information about two different periods: during the peace before the war and during the occupation. We understood that it was the only way to present the proportions and consequences of the crimes.





## A new stimulating experience

This project was extremely interesting to us. It allowed us to discover and learn something new every day. It was very stimulating and exciting; sometimes, it felt like a detective job. On the other hand, it was not easy. We were responsible for providing verified information. That requires time, attention, patience, and experience. One of the main goals of this kind of educational graphic novel based on archival records is to counter the Holocaust distortion. For that reason, it was imperative to prevent any possible misunderstanding or misinterpretation of the resources we provided.

This project was important for us, both on a professional and personal level. We were inspired as we understood that we played a significant role in presenting the historical records to young people and stimulating their intellectual curiosity.

Through our work on this graphic novel, we hope that we were able to contribute to several critical educational goals:

- ♦The ability to recognize the authenticity of historical events and facts through relevant archival material, documents, photographs, and other resources;

- ♦Better understanding and knowledge of local history while creating an opportunity to place it in the broader European historical context;

- ♦The ability to recognize authentic locations, buildings, streets, and landmarks displayed in the novel and added historical documents; bringing the history closer, realizing that it took place here - in their city; contributing to making this history relevant.

We are confident that the educational graphic novel about the Novi Sad Raid will help students to become aware of the consequences of prejudice, racism, and stereotypes in all societies. It will be an excellent tool for education about the Holocaust. In addition to countering the distortion of history, the novel will also serve a higher purpose of strengthening remembrance culture in our city and our country.

We'd like to express our gratitude to Terraforming, and Miško and Nevena personally, for the excellent cooperation. In particular, we are grateful for the opportunity to take an active role in contributing to our society both in our professional capacity as archivists and as citizens.

*Marija Djurićanin and Aleksandar Vranić*

*Archivists at the Historical Archive  
of the City of Novi Sad*



*The biggest and the most atrocious crime in human history, the Holocaust, should never be forgotten. However, humans are prone to carelessness and oblivion. We must never suppress the memory of the Holocaust victims. Never again should such a crime be repeated. Let me express my pleasure that one of the key bearers of this project is the Archives of Vojvodina. It is one of the most important institutions funded by the Assembly of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina. For us, the role and responsibility of the Archives of Vojvodina in fostering the culture of remembrance is crucial.*

**Dragana Milošević**

*Provincial Secretary for Culture, Public Information and Relations with Religious Communities of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina*





*Over the course of the past decade, Holocaust distortion has grown in intensity. It manifests in multiple ways. This has a negative influence on efforts to confront it and threatens the long-term sustainability of the relevance of the Holocaust as a subject of common reflection. Holocaust distortion acknowledges aspects of the Holocaust as fact, but excuses, minimizes, or misrepresents the Holocaust in a variety of ways and through various media. A wide range of actions or inactions by states can intentionally or unintentionally promote distorted perspectives. IHRA has engaged with the issue of Holocaust distortion since the inception of the organization. Among recent accomplishments is the Working Definition of Holocaust Denial and Distortion, which is still not so familiar to the public. The Working Definition of Holocaust Denial and Distortion outlines the ways that trivialization of the Holocaust threatens civil society, including, but not limited to, the educational institutions and human rights oriented NGOs, and how it is tantamount to antisemitism.*

**Dr. Juliane Wetzel**

*Historian, Senior Researcher at the Centre for Research on Antisemitism at the Technical University Berlin, member of the German delegation to IHRA and Chair of the IHRA Committee on Antisemitism and Holocaust Denial*

# HOLOCAUST DISTORTION MISREPRESENT THE FACTS

#ProtectTheFacts #SayNoToDistortion  
[www.againstholocaustdistortion.org](http://www.againstholocaustdistortion.org)



Maths photo

1809

67

on 3

21

66

1809





# Part 3

## The Past in the Present



# #everynamecounts — everywhere

Berit Zimmerling

The crimes of the Nazi regime took the lives of millions of people in many different locations. Large memorial sites like Auschwitz or Dachau on the former campgrounds are in the focus of public perception. Especially on major days of remembrance, these memorials are at the heart of media reporting as they provide settings for remembering the dead in a dignified manner. Due to the pandemic, many commemorative events have shifted to digital formats to pay tribute to victims and survivors in a way that relates directly to the sites and the memorial signs erected there.

However, the systematic persecution of millions of people was not limited to these places: sites of persecution, terror, and exploitation could be on your doorstep. Local remembrance – though it

attracts much less attention – is often organized with great dedication by private individuals, memorial initiatives, history workshops, and associations. Particularly during the pandemic, these smaller institutions have struggled to adapt their commemoration to digital formats. They lack the financial means, but above all the media presence, networking capability, and reach that are needed, and some quite simply do not have the necessary experience in using social media and other similar platforms.

The Arolsen Archives' new campaign, #everynamecounts – Local Remembrance, aims to change all that by working together with local memorial sites and initiatives to commemorate the victims.



Original documents from the REIMAG armaments works in Kahla, Germany.  
Copyright: Mann- und Gedenkstätte Walpersberg e.V.

## A new “Local Remembrance” campaign

The partnerships between the Arolsen Archives and local institutions such as Geschichtswerkstatt Sachsenburg e.V. (Sachsenburg History Workshop), Gedenkstätte Ehrenheim Zeithain (Zeithain Memorial Grove) or Gedenkstätte für Zwangsarbeit e.V. (Memorial for Forced Labor), to name only a few, are part of the commemoration initiative #everynamecounts. With this initiative, the Arolsen Archives aim to build a digital memorial to the victims of Nazism and to remember the names and identities of every single one of them. “My greatest hope would be that by working with the Arolsen Archives we can become a kind of hub where all those involved can come together and cooperate. Together we can piece together a more complete picture of our history and this will make remembrance more comprehensive too,” remarks Patrick Brion from the Walpersberg Memorial, one of the local memorials involved in the new campaign.

The Arolsen Archives hold over 30 million documents on Holocaust victims, concentration camp inmates, Nazi forced laborers, and survivors. This makes them the world’s largest archive on victims and survivors of National Socialism. The sheer size of the collection is overwhelming. Every single document testifies to the inconceivable dimensions of Nazi persecution. For many survivors and their relatives in particular, these documents represent a hugely significant “paper monument”.

The documents archived in Bad Arolsen are particularly suitable for archival pedagogical approaches to the crimes of National Socialism and its aftermaths. The Arolsen Archives offer printed educational materials and digital educational tools covering many topics, including #everynamecounts. In addition, we advise and assist schools and history projects and offer support in how our documents can be decoded, contextualized, and used to best effect in educational contexts.

As part of the European Holocaust Research Infrastructure, the Arolsen Archives have been working on supporting microarchives, disseminating scholarly and public interest in microarchival collections, and integrating archival descriptions of microarchives into its portal for quite some time. The Local Remembrance campaign shall foster formed collaborations of microarchival and institutional collections and complement the stories that these sources tell together.

## From #everynamecounts to Local Remembrance

#everynamecounts is concerned with digitizing this “paper monument” step by step and document by document, so that the information it contains can be accessed by anyone, from anywhere, at any time. Volunteers transcribe the data contained in the documents and make the information accessible via the online archive of the Arolsen Archives. Their work forms the basis for the digital memorial. But at the same time, it also serves as a source of inspiration for the Arolsen Archives as they strive to promote an interactive and inclusive culture of remembrance in a virtual space, and create a digital memorial that visualizes the history of Nazi crimes in Europe and offers new opportunities for collaborative narratives.

#everynamecounts – Local Remembrance is not only about raising awareness of the valuable and important work of smaller memorials. “The work our #everynamecounts volunteers do to index documentary holdings from smaller camps is very valuable for memorials and memorial initiatives. People will soon be able to search specifically for this data in our online archive and gain new insights into the history of Nazi persecution,” explains Giora Zwilling, Deputy Head of Archives at the Arolsen Archives. By including more documents in #everynamecounts, we can commemorate more of the names and fates of the people who were persecuted in these places. Working with the



documents increases the volunteers' knowledge and raises their awareness of these memorials. It also helps to broaden the public's perception that the crimes of the Nazis were only committed at a few central locations.

## A culture of remembrance fit for the future

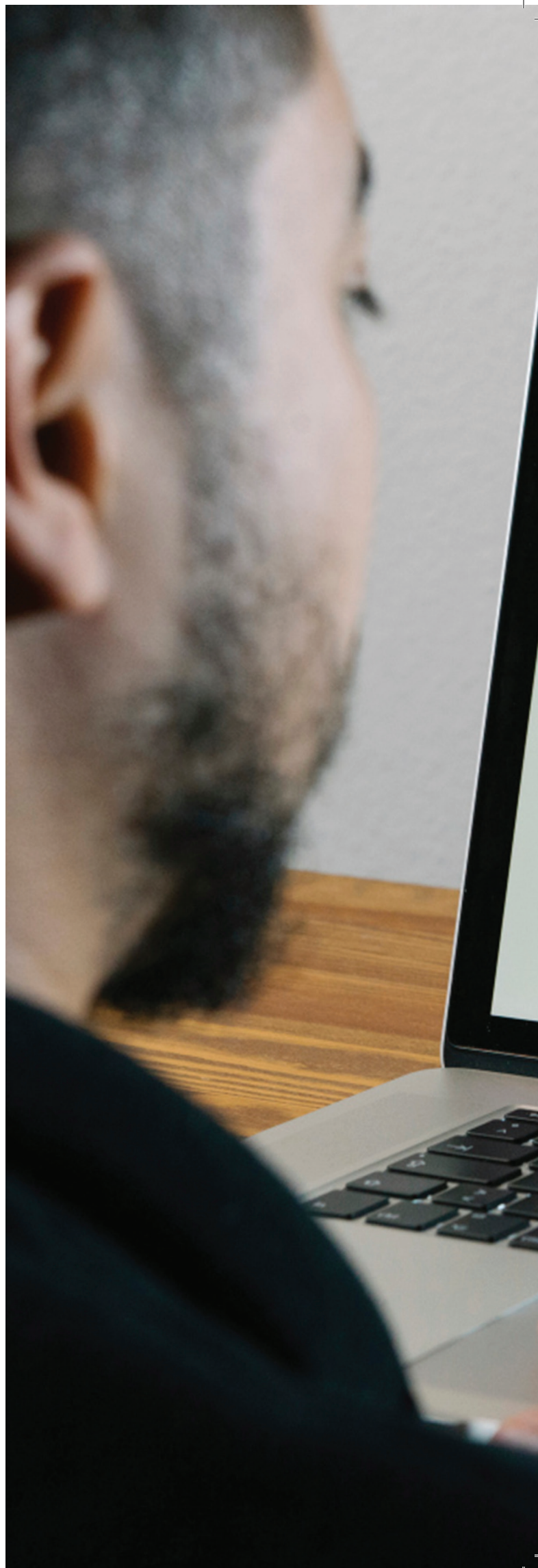
#everynamecounts brings people together: younger generations and the generation of their grandparents, history experts and interested non-professionals. Confronted with the details of victims' individual fates and the sheer quantity of documents recording their persecution, the volunteers are generating far more than just massive amounts of data. This diverse community unites people of different origins and different backgrounds who speak different languages, and by working together they are creating knowledge, creating space for questions, and increasing the visibility not only of the fates of individuals but also of crime sites that are rarely the focus of public attention.

Now, with #everynamecounts – Local Remembrance, the documents and the names from small memorial sites are as much a part of the initiative as are the large concentration camps. We are all part of #everynamecounts. Together we are working to build a memorial to the victims of Nazism, and we are taking an active stand against antisemitism, racism, and discrimination. The larger our community gets, the stronger we grow!

Do you want to help us build the digital memorial and make sure the names of the victims will never be forgotten? Then take part in #everynamecounts!

*Berit Zimmerling*

*Public Relations Assistant at Arolsen Archives*





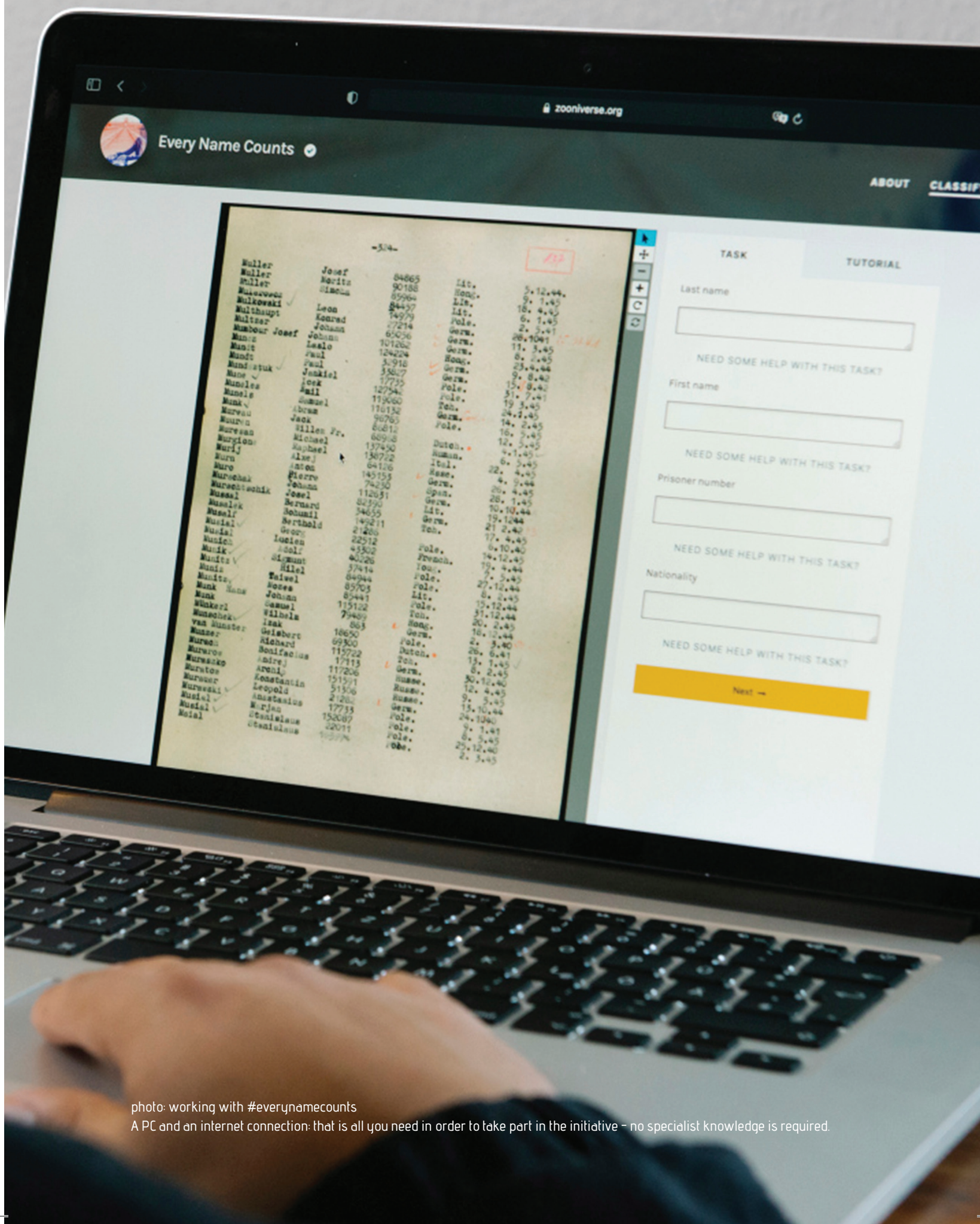


photo: working with #everynamecounts

A PC and an internet connection: that is all you need in order to take part in the initiative - no specialist knowledge is required.



# Jewish Digital Collection in the Historical Archives of Belgrade

Tijana Kovčić

The Jewish Digital Collection is an online searchable collection of archival material preserved in the Historical Archives of Belgrade which refers to the life of Jews living in Belgrade from the 18th to the 20th century.

The Historical Archives of Belgrade is a public institution founded in 1945 with the main task of collecting original documents relating to the history of Belgrade. The Archives is authorized to protect the documentary material of the local government authorities – the Assembly of the City of Belgrade and 17 municipalities. The Historical Archives of Belgrade now houses 2 738 fonds and collections occupying nearly nine miles of repository space, comprising the period from the 16th century to the present day. The most important fonds and collections are categorized into two groups of cultural assets: those of extraordinary importance and those of great importance. The fonds that are most frequently queried are: Zemun Magistrate, Administration of the City of Belgrade, Municipality of the City of Belgrade, District Court of the City of Belgrade, Chambers of Commerce. The documentation preserved in the Archives provides information on the capital's history and its citizens.

The Jewish community has been living in Belgrade for centuries. They participated equally in economic, political, social and cultural life, contributing to the capital's development. World War II suddenly interrupted the life of the Jewish community in Belgrade. In the course of just two years (in 1941 and 1942) the whole community disappeared. Out of 12 000 Belgrade Jews, just over 1 000 Jews survived the Holocaust.

## The everyday life of the Jewish community in Belgrade

Archival material kept in the Historical Archives of Belgrade preserves a record of the Jewish community's everyday life in Belgrade during the last two centuries. Numerous fonds preserved the documents testifying about various aspects of life of Jewish community members – men, women and school children. The oldest document mentioning the Jewish community preserved in the Archives was created in 1751 and is kept within the collection of the Zemun Magistrate.

The Jewish Digital Collection gathered 60 000 records preserved within 60 fonds and collections kept in the Historical Archives of Belgrade. The research and digitization process lasted three years. The work was implemented in three phases. The first and longest phase included the research of the archival material. The archivists involved in the project reviewed all the collections assumed to contain larger amounts of Jewish archival material. More than 20 000 archival boxes were physically reviewed, sheet by sheet. The reviewed documentation had been created by the authorities and public institutions, judiciary institutions, schools, various merchants associations and guilds, economic organizations and companies. Once identified, Jewish related material was selected and analytically described, scanned, and the descriptions later translated to English.

The most important documents of the selected material are citizens' identity cards, i.e. certificates

of permanent residence of Jewish citizens in Belgrade, as well as birth, death and marriage register books of the Jewish community.

The database is now searchable online in Serbian and in the English language by several criteria: by fond or collection where the document was preserved, by first name, by the year when the document was created, by profession or by keyword. The database can also be searched by topic: economy, commerce, finances, everyday life, population, culture and arts, education, health and social care, police, government and judiciary institutions, Jewish institutions, property and ownership, citizenship, occupational authorities,

war damage, Holocaust, identification documents, army, survivors, women. The database also allows users to view the original for most of the described documents.

Within two months of going online, the Jewish Digital Collection database, located at <https://jdz.arhiv-beograda.org/en>, has been visited by users from 25 countries worldwide, with 1 342 unique visitors, 20 057 visits and 22 644 monthly page views.

Tijana Kovčić

Archivist at the Historical Archives of Belgrade

сopственик куће  
sopstvenik kuće

хотел  
hotel

његов стан  
njegov stan

ПРИЈАВА — PRIJAVA  
ПРИЈАВЉУЈЕ СЕ: — PRIJAVLJUJE SE:

Улица, број, sprат — Ulica, broj, sprat

Име породично и рођено. За удату или удовицу и рође-  
но име мужа и девојачко породично име  
Ime porodično i rođeno. Za udatu ili udovicu i rođeno ime  
muža i devojačko porodično ime

Занимање — Zanimanje

Држављанство — Državljanstvo

Дан, месец и год. рођења — Dan, mesec i god. rođenja

Место рођења, срез, земља — Mesto rođenja, srez, zemlja

Завичајна општина, срез, земља — Zavičajna opština,  
srez, zemlja

Брачно стање — Bračno stanje

Вера — Vera

Рођено име оца и мајке, и мајчино девојачко презиме  
Rođeno ime oca i majke, i majčino devojačko prezime

Ранији стан у Београду: улица и број, или у ком другом  
месту: село, срез, Бановина  
Raniji stan u Beogradu: ulica i broj, ili u kom drugom me-  
stu: selo, srez, Banovina

Добрамина 30.  
Кот Теца.  
књижев.  
Југословен.  
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Ганград (Мађарска)  
Ожењен.  
Бенхарид-Мојсијева-Лујза.

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(mesto)

Власник куће-управитељ-станодавац  
Vlasnik kuće-upravitelj-stanodavac

photo: Citizen card of Geca Kon, famous Yugoslav publisher, killed in the Holocaust  
The database is available on: <https://jdz.arhiv-beograda.org/en>





*The main reason for not exclusively focusing on the limited period of time but allowing the survivor to present their story from the earliest possible memories until the present, is that you really cannot understand the loss of the years of war unless you know what came before. You need that context. You need to understand what Jewish life was like in each of these locations, each of these cities, and each of these countries, the relationships that the individuals had with their neighbors, in order to really understand what came during the war, and more importantly, what is actually lost. The same goes for the postwar period. We learned a great deal about the horrific events of the Holocaust through the ways in which the survivors find some way to return to life and start new productive lives in, oftentimes, new homes and new homelands. You have to have a full life story to grasp the devastation fully.*

**Stephen Naron**

*Director, Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies at  
Yale University in New Haven*



*As a history teacher, I believe that teaching about the Holocaust should have an important place in the educational system of each country. I find it very important to establish cooperation between schools and archives. For history teachers and their students, the archives is a place where they can have a direct encounter with historical sources. Using archival documents can be a very effective, and for students a very interesting way, to reconstruct the history of ordinary people as well as the past of entire local communities, their pain and suffering during the Holocaust.*

**Aleksandar Todosijević**

*History teacher, textbook author,  
President of the UDI Euroclio association in Belgrade*

*The story is what connects us, and the stories are what will continue to connect us. The archivist can find that story that will connect. We can present it, for instance, through various digital platforms. The way we do it through technology has to be appropriate to the story and the audience.*

**Dr. Kori Street**

*Program and Operations Director,  
The Shoah Foundation at the University of Southern California*



# The Testimonies from Sered'

Dr. Martin Korčok

The former Jewish labor and concentration camp in Sered' is an authentic location linked to the tragic period of *the solution to the Jewish question in Slovakia* during World War II. On the occasion of the Memorial Day for Victims of the Holocaust and of Racial Violence, an idea was born: to declare the five buildings

of the labor and concentration camp in Sered' a national cultural monument and to then create a Holocaust museum in them. This idea was officially approved by the Ministry of Culture of the Slovak Republic on May 12, 2009<sup>1</sup>, with a resolution declaring the former labor camp in Sered' a national cultural monument.



Sered' Holocaust Museum  
Photo: Christian Michelides

<sup>1</sup> The Monuments Board of the Slovak Republic, register of immovable national cultural monuments [online] available at: <http://www.pamiatky.sk/po/po>

At this time I was already engaged in a research project entitled Testimonies From Sered', involving ethnological research in the form of oral history. Its main objective was to collect the testimonies of survivors, which would then be used to create the exhibition at the Sered' Holocaust Museum. These invaluable life stories, mainly from former prisoners of the Sered' labor and concentration camp, allowed us to create a unique library of stories ranging from the history of devout Jewish families from small towns to the fate of secular families from large towns and cities. We used these testimonies in assembling a mosaic of fascinating life stories and fates of people who suffered during the Holocaust.

## Oral history is invaluable

In many areas of research, oral history is invaluable, and often the only way to obtain and process information. *"Oral history becomes indispensable primarily in cases where it is necessary to supplement, document, concretize, or verify the official interpretation of historical events through a micro-view from "below". A detailed presentation of individual stories and evaluative approaches adds missing information to provide*

*a more comprehensive, objective and above all human picture of the issue, which disappears if quantitative processes are solely used."*<sup>2</sup>

According to Miroslav Vaněk, a leading proponent of oral history in the Czech Republic: *"If we don't want to see history as an abstract factor, we return in it to the subjective experience of the individual, his acts, development, and attitude. Even if oral history did nothing but capture and preserve a mosaic of these experiences and opinions, it would contribute to the pool of knowledge and above all to that side of contemporary history that we can describe only as closely and intensively as it touches each one of us."*<sup>3</sup>

If we want to document history, it is also important not to forget individual experience, otherwise it will not be complete. Despite the fact that the history of individuals, otherwise called little history, was for a relatively long time unappreciated, considered insufficiently scientific, unobjective, even often ignored as if it did not exist, it is precisely this history that creates the essence of the history of life. And it is precisely due to history and the individuals that lived through it that we have succeeded in building the current exhibition at the Sered' Holocaust Museum.

**Dr. Martin Korčok**

*Head of the Sered' Holocaust Museum,  
member of the Slovak delegation to IHRA*

2 Silvia Letavayová: Orálna história a výskum cudzincov na Slovensku (Úskalia a výhody) 2005, p. 170. In Zuzana Profantová (ed.). Malé dejiny veľký udalostí II. V Česko(a)Slovensku po roku 1948, 1968, 1989. Bratislava: Institute of Ethnology of the Slovak Academy of Sciences 2005, p. 169 - 178.

3 Miroslav Vaněk Orální historie ve výzkumu soudobých dějin, 2005. Projekty Centra orální historie: Disent, univerzitní studenti a komunističtí funkcionáři v období tzv. normalizace – životopisná vyprávění. In Zuzana Profantová, (ed.). Malé dejiny veľký udalostí II. V Česko(a)Slovensku po roku 1948, 1968, 1989. Bratislava: Institute of Ethnology of the Slovak Academy of Sciences 2005, p. 205.



# Archival Materials and Their Use in the Educational Programs of the Sered' Holocaust Museum

Dr. Matej Beranek

Since it opened in 2016, the Slovak National Museum – Museum of Jewish Culture – Sered' Holocaust Museum (SNM-MJC-Sered' Holocaust Museum) has focused on providing educational programs about the era of the Slovak State (1938-1945) and the persecution of Jews during this period. The main objective of the educational programs is to fight and prevent manifestations of anti-Semitism, racism, and xenophobia in society.

Aside from the testimony of survivors, it also makes use of various archival materials in these educational programs. These mainly include various anti-Semitic posters, the period press, historical photographs and documents. Archival materials are an authentic source of information we can use to illustrate the various phases of anti-Jewish policies of the Slovak State.

## Antisemitic posters

Antisemitic posters were a key propaganda tool of the Slovak State, used to promote various prejudices and stereotypes about Jews as well as to support its anti-Jewish policies. With posters, we focus on their visual aspects during teaching:

- ♦ what or who the posters depict;
- ♦ what symbols are visible on the posters;
- ♦ which time period they represent.

The visual aspect of posters was complemented by text, focusing on the following:

- ♦ what was written on them;
- ♦ what slogans (if any) were employed.

Students thus learn that posters employed stereotypes depicted through the use of various caricatures, which were accompanied by clear, concise slogans. In this way we can describe to them how propaganda in non-democratic regimes worked and what techniques it employed.

## The period press

Through the period press we focus on what was written during a certain time period, or we can also describe a certain part of the Slovak State's anti-Jewish policies. These policies culminated in the deportation of the Jewish population in 1942. In this case we can focus on information that appeared in the press when the transports started, while they were taking place, and after they were over. For example, when the transports started, the Slovak Minister of the Interior Alexander Mach claimed that Jews were merely leaving to work. On the day the first transport departed, he declared: *"Allegedly, the most horrible fate awaits Jews. Supposedly, they are to be taken somewhere to some mysterious bogs, where they are to be murdered, shot. They are at risk of no such thing; they are at risk of only one thing: having to work."*

1 Gardista, March 26, 1942, Vol. IV, No 70, p. 3.

*That's all!"*<sup>1</sup> This declaration was published a day later in the Hlinka Guard's main press mouthpiece, the Gardista daily paper. Through exposing similar announcements and statements we try to show how government leaders and propaganda tried to claim that Jews were simply being deported to go to work. In reality, the transports were cruel and inhuman; Jews weren't going to work, they were going to death camps from which most of them never returned.

## Historical photographs

Historical photographs serve to describe the historical events that took place between 1938 and 1945. We classify photographic material into two categories: those officially created by public authorities, and those from various personal archives. In the official photographs of the Slovak State, we can focus on various details:

- ♦ who or what they depict (government officials, ordinary people, or anti-Jewish signs and graffiti), and the setting (public, party meetings, and other events);
- ♦ symbols and slogans (symbols and slogans linked to non-democratic regimes).

The Slovak Press Office (STK) took photos of

anti-Jewish graffiti and caricatures painted on buildings in Trnava and Sered', probably dating from 1941<sup>2</sup>. One shows the slogan: *"The Jew is our enemy"*<sup>3</sup> and another shows: *"This is how Jews convince Stalin and the Russian nation to wage war!"*<sup>4</sup>

## Historical documents

Historical documents are authentic sources created during the period of the Slovak State, and we can use them to provide a comprehensive depiction of this tragic time. In the area of education we combine them with other materials and in individual educational programmes. Through individual documents we focus on how the state discriminated against its Jewish citizens. It issued anti-Jewish measures, such as:

- ♦ laws<sup>5</sup> ;
- ♦ regulations<sup>6</sup> ;
- ♦ decrees<sup>7</sup> ;

which applied either:

- ♦ regionally<sup>8</sup> ; or
- ♦ nationwide (the Jewish Codex<sup>9</sup> ).

Through the use of such documents we show how the Slovak State gradually stripped Slovak Jews of their basic human and civic rights, thus gradually excluding them from public, economic, cultural, and social life.

*Dr. Matej Beranek*

*Director of Education, the Sered' Holocaust Museum*

2 Slovak Ministry of the Interior, Slovak National Archives, ph. STK, photo No 13302, 13303, 13307.

3 Slovak Ministry of the Interior, Slovak National Archives, ph. STK, photo No 13302.

4 Slovak Ministry of the Interior, Slovak National Archives, ph. STK, photo No 13307.

5 Constitutional Act of May 15, 1942 on the deportation of Jews. In Slovenský zákonník [Slovak Legal Code]. Section 22, Vol. 1942, p. 507.

6 Government Regulation No 63 of 18 April 1939 on the definition of the term Jew and the regulation of the number of Jews in some non-registered trades. In Slovenský zákonník. Section 14, Vol. 1939, p.77-78.

7 Decree of the Ministry of the Interior of March 2, 1942, No 14-D4-18/2-1942, on the marking of Jews. In Úradné noviny, March 7, 1942, Vol. XXIV, No 10, p. 294.

8 Decree No 144 of the county office of Šariš-Zemplín County of March 31, 1941 No 14.265/1-1941, ordering Jews to wear markings. In Úradné noviny, April 5, 1941, Vol. XXIII, No 17, p. 606.

9 Regulation No 198 of 9 September 1941 on the legal status of Jews. In Slovenský zákonník, Vol. 1941, Section 52, p. 643 – 684.



# From Class Registers to Memorial Walls – Sources Used for the Reconstruction of Deportation Lists

Dr. Dóra Pataricza

Szeged's Jewish community in Hungary has a rich cultural and historical heritage dating back two centuries. Like most Jewish cities in Europe, much of the Szeged Jewish population was utterly destroyed in the Holocaust. As a major regional center in Southern Hungary, the city of Szeged was the main deportation center for the surrounding villages (Csongrád County) and parts of current Northern Serbia (Bačka region), which at that time was under Hungarian occupation. Approximately 2 000 Jews living near the city of Novi Sad in Bačka were ultimately transported to Auschwitz in April-May 1944 via Szeged. In June 1944, about 8 600 people, including all the Jews of the surrounding cities and villages, were deported from Szeged in only three days. The first train went to Auschwitz, with most victims being murdered. The second train was uncoupled, with one half going to Auschwitz and the other to the Strasshof labor camp near Vienna, while the third train was sent to Strasshof too, with most of those Jews surviving.

## Building a database

Much of the archival material of the Szeged and Novi Sad Jewish Communities stayed intact. Recently, in 2018-19, these archives' documents were catalogued, indexed and partly digitized, including the list of ghettoization and lists of survivors. In an international project funded by the Claims Conference (2020-21), all available records are compiled to build a database and identify all the victims, ca. 10 600 Jews deported from or via Szeged. The project aims to integrate

all available data, including written and oral testimonies and memoirs, to find patterns and to combine personal stories with big data to reconstruct the happenings of May-June 1944. The research will result in a database with all the names and personal data of the deportees and it will reconstruct who was deported with which train. One of the project's goals is to offer innovative solutions for the methodological issues related to the research process and provide a valuable framework for novel directions in Holocaust research. The database will be accessible through the webpage of USHMM and Jewishgen.org.

## A digital memorial monument

The third phase of the project (2021-22), funded by IHRA, involves building a digital memorial monument, and creating a multilayered view of the Jewish communities of Szeged and Bačka regions before and during the period of World War II (1939-1945). The monument will be a living archive inviting family members, friends, historians, editors and visitors to share and document their memories and stories to ensure that the Jews who were murdered during the Holocaust will always be remembered. The monument will be able to feature images, links, videos, and documents. To achieve this, we will gather as much personal information on the individuals as possible and include a list and a personal profile for each deported Jew from the

Szeged-Bácska region who perished during the Holocaust, with the placing of events against a timeline. The individual profiles will allow visitors to conduct more general, basic searches and in-depth research based on various criteria, e.g. occupations, family relations, age, official religion (religion of the registries), or place of residence of the individuals. When collecting adequate and comprehensive data, one of the biggest challenges is the lack of detailed, relevant data. In our case, documents about deportations and survivors' lists from smaller villages and more nuanced records can help us obtain a fuller picture of the survivors; for example, information

about their family, property, and professional career might be lacking. To overcome these challenges, we use alternative sources, such as school records, vital registers, oral and written testimonies, newspaper articles and even the memorial walls of the particular cities.

The documents stored in the archives of the Szeged and the Novi Sad Jewish Communities are the last remaining witnesses of a bygone era. We have to preserve and analyze it by means of modern technology from as many aspects and angles as possible and thereby remember its previous members.

*Dr. Dóra Pataricza*

*Szeged Jewish Community*

## Teaching with Testimony and the IWalk Program

*Andrea Szony*

**T**he University of Southern California's Shoah Foundation is a global organization that focuses its work around testimony. The Institute's Visual History Archive contains 50 000 video testimonies with survivors and witnesses of genocidal events, the majority being survivors and witnesses of the Holocaust.

### Local history and video testimony

With testimony at the center of its methodology, USC Shoah Foundation strives to make all content and programming relevant and accessible to broad and highly diverse audiences of educators, students and decision-makers, whether through our international digital education platform

*IWitness*, or our international mobile application *IWalk*.

Our testimony-based educational work is embedded in pedagogical theory and is localized for specific contexts. The testimonies are in 43 languages and contain experiences from all over the world, which allow us to localize content as well. The full life histories cover the interviewee's life before and after the genocide, so they can teach us about the history of the 20th century. These stories help us connect macro- and microhistory and learn about the history of local people and communities. They often provide information unavailable from other sources. As we develop these stories into localized educational materials, not only language and content but the local educational context is considered too.



## Location-based digital resources

Our most innovative localized educational program is the IWalk program. IWalks are location-based digital resources that engage visitors in a learning experience anchored in testimony. IWalks are rooted in strong, sustainable methodology, which combines the use of audio-visual testimony, pedagogical theory, learning outcomes and localization to the site. Localization is ensured by the geography of the site but also by the choice of locally relevant testimony clips that help students create their own “subjective map” about the spaces and the stories of those spaces. Besides the clips, IWalks contain maps, images and other material to create a learning module that enhances learning of a physical location (e.g. memorial site, authentic site, or a village, a neighborhood), a concept or topic. This learning experience is delivered through face-to-face guiding at the location (often with peer-guiding) using mobile technology, or as an individualized experience using a mobile device (via an app freely available for Apple or Android devices).

*IWalks* in our app are available globally (currently 32 locations with the number growing rapidly) and guide visitors to historic sites, authentic sites, memorials, places related to Jewish life and/or Holocaust history. Today these places may look different and their local relevance might have been forgotten. *IWalks* bring back the histories of these forgotten places via human stories, individual recollections. Some places only have a memorial plaque, while others may completely lack the traces of former life or events. Even such places lend themselves to discussion about the importance of memory and memorialization, the forgotten local Jewish communities, the void the Holocaust left behind in Europe, and other themes. The human stories and memories help the void become teachable and the long forgotten places can reclaim their histories and historical relevance.

The built-in Google map helps navigate the route and each stop supports the interrogation

of the space with the help of relevant testimony clips, archival photographs, other resources and critical thinking questions. The USC Shoah Foundation – IWalk mobile app allows students to submit their responses to their teachers, which they can view via the Institute’s IWitness digital platform. The responses can then be the subject of a reflective classroom discussion.

## The history of a specific location

IWalks aim to increase historical and conceptual knowledge and the knowledge of the history of a specific location or its relevance to certain concepts or topics. They develop critical thinking skills, empathy and trans-literacy and have been designed following research-based theories of learning, and best practices in online instructional design principles: active learning, guided exploration and learning of content.

The use of locally relevant testimony from Holocaust survivors and witnesses provides a unique opportunity for students/visitors to establish a strong connection to the location and the individual whose testimonies they engage with. Such cognitive and conative development is key to establishing a disposition towards ongoing learning and a global worldview that is essential to quality, inclusive education. In the whole of Europe and in Central and Eastern Europe in particular, where Jewish life as it existed before the Shoah disappeared, and as a “product” of the Holocaust it has been replaced by the void or by sporadic desperate efforts to continue the tradition, educational programs like IWalks may shed light onto unknown or hidden local historical details for the youth of today. This unique program importantly lends itself to adaptation for almost any location.

*Andrea Szőnyi*

*Head of Programs for International Education at the  
USC Shoah Foundation,  
member of the Hungarian IHRA delegation*

# Mapping the Hiding Places in Europe

Dr. Dienke Hondius

I have been working on a long-term project, “Mapping the hiding places in Europe”, for the last few years. It is an excellent example of the new research based on the existing archival materials and the motivation to create the additional collections through the cooperation of students and archivists.

I initiated the project at the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam to motivate and involve the students to work more with archival research. One of the main tasks was to explore the large number of testimonies that Holocaust survivors had given to various institutions over many years.

In the spring of 2020, I was a visiting professor and researcher of Holocaust Studies at Stockton University in New Jersey, USA. I worked at their impressive Holocaust Resource Center. The American students, who did not know a lot about the history of Europe, were interested in working with the testimonies of Jewish survivors who had been in hiding during the Holocaust.

The students studied the interviews, focusing on analyzing and recording the names of places mentioned. They were very motivated to investigate deeper the available archival collections. At the same time, they got an opportunity to contribute to creating the new archives based on the collected records and go further with the research to gather new data, stories, and facts.

The personal stories of hiding are very diverse and fascinating. As a result, the students were personally and emotionally engaged. Many Holocaust survivors had been in hiding, for short or long periods of time, often on more than one address. The hiding locations

have a broad variety: apartments, houses, office buildings, haystacks, holes dug under the ground in woodland areas or rough terrain, etc. Every hiding place reveals many facts and aspects.

We included the collected stories and locations on digital maps using the Open Street Map and Esri's geographic information system (GIS) mapping software. The programs we used were ArcGIS, Survey123, and StoryMap. Students learnt how to use them within a few lessons and produced their own maps, stories, and illustrated presentations.

The mapping project will grow over the next ten years. I'd like to invite all archives to contribute. All information about hiding places from across Europe is welcome. Get in touch if you know something about a history of a place where Jews found a hiding place during the Holocaust.

Contact and information:  
[www.mappinghidingplaces.org](http://www.mappinghidingplaces.org)

## Motivating students to use archives

It is impossible to adequately explain the complex history of the Holocaust without the contributions of all local records, events, and microhistories from all around Europe. The project “The Holocaust, European Values and Local History” understands this very well.

Archives are practically endless sources of information. Our role as educators is to motivate students to use archives more. In cooperation with archivists, we can find creative ways to use



materials and create entirely new collections. We should trust students' ability to understand the situations and circumstances around the historical events they are researching. The students experience great excitement when accessing the archival documents. They might

discover less known or new stories and facts by digging deeper and exploring the data independently. In this way, we can help them explore history directly, which leads to a better understanding and better learning about the past.

*Dr. Dienne Hondius*

*Assistant professor of history  
at Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam*

## Mapping the Places of Remembrance

**Aleksandar Bursać**

*Mapping the Places of Remembrance and the Remembrance Culture of Novi Sad* represents a years-long project dedicated to mapping, recording, interpreting and presenting different locations, that is, places of collective remembrance and commemoration, as well as other locations that are important for the remembrance culture, collective memory and the identity of the city as a whole. The project was started with the basic goal of affirming and researching remembrance culture, nourishing its critical aspect and researching different forms of the city's collective memory.

While aiming to accomplish the specified goal, and as part of the realization of the first phase of the project, by the end of 2014 an internet presentation was created and initiated. This website, with a specifically formed and uniquely conceptualized interactive map and database created via a mapping process and with an additional library of content, represents the basic results of the activities on the project's realization. All the content available on the site refers to different aspects of topics related to remembrance

culture and the city's collective memory, and as such contributes to the affirmation of these subjects on a general level.

### Locations of personal memories

The database and the library of texts available on the website, enable the visitors, through a whole variety of critically examined information and educational texts, to get to know the different aspects of remembrance culture, or more specifically the places of remembrance and the official locations of commemoration in the Novi Sad area. Likewise, with regards to the noted personal memories of citizens, or more precisely, the mapped locations of personal memories that are located in the database, they represent a special kind of valuable documented material. When we take into consideration the length and complexity of the analyzed topics, the complexity of the methodological work of interdisciplinary research and the mapping process, as well as the

conditional dynamic of its realization, the project itself will be years-long and carried out in phases.

The first phase of the project, called “Mapping the Places of Remembrance in Novi Sad”, was carried out from June 2014 to June 2015 in cooperation with the Centre for Collective Identity and Political Mythology Research from Novi Sad and the Cultural Centre of Novi Sad. The realization of the first phase of the project, whose results are published as part of the content available on the internet presentation, included mapping that was conducted on locations of war atrocities which took place in the Novi Sad area and its surroundings, during World War I and World War II.

In other words, the mapped regions that are placed in the database on the website include most of the locations (that is, places of remembrance and commemoration) inside the city territory and its surroundings which are connected to World War I and World War II. As part of the first phase of the project, a special section of the site was launched with the goal of publishing readable and scholarly articles by authors dealing with different aspects of the topics which are connected to the remembrance culture of Novi Sad. Activities in the first phase of the project included publishing one readable text, while in the upcoming development and realization periods, the forming of some sort of library, with more published texts, was to be included.

The second phase of the project, called “Remembrance Culture of Novi Sad” began in May 2017. Part of the required assets were provided by the Secretariat for Culture of the City of Novi Sad. As part of the activities of carrying out the second phase of the project, whose institutional leader was the Centre for Collective Identity and Political Mythology Research, there have been significant increases in the existing database. Specifically, dozens of new locations were mapped, where the focus was on the mapping of locations connected to citizens' personal memories of places from the period of socialism in the area of Novi Sad. Apart from that, as part of the activities of the second phase

of the project, a specific group was formed: the digital library consisting of published scholarly and professional texts that deal with different segments of the analyzed topic.

As of January 16, 2019, the implementation of the project was handed over to the Archives of Vojvodina whereby a new period in project development began. The database, as well as content on the existing internet platform, will be expanded in succession, in accordance with the activity plan for the project, research on archival holdings and anthropological field work.

## The significance of the project

Taking into account the concept and its complexity, as well as the lack of any serious previous research of the topics in the given territorial context, the project, and this internet presentation as one of its main components, has a pioneering characteristic. That is to say, by creating this platform, a unique database was formed and with that a basic starting point for further and more complex interdisciplinary research of the remembrance culture in the city area. By taking into consideration the importance of the project, or more specifically the results of the years-long research, the ISSN National Centre for Serbia deemed the project an "integrative source of special significance for Vojvodina", and gave it a special ISSN (online) number making the internet platform, with its project database, listed in the National Register of the National Library of Serbia.

## The methodological approach

The methodology in the first phase of the project was, in significant measure, based on a critical interpretation of existing materials, published in scholarly and professional publications, and to a lesser extent on the analysis of archival



holdings. Likewise, during the mapping of certain locations, some analyses were based on collecting individual memories of the citizens of Novi Sad - they were also based on collecting materials related to the so-called oral history. In that sense, activities regarding the project were partially focused on critical interpretations of different types of narratives of the citizens.

The research methodology, during the second phase of the project, included anthropological field work and writing down the citizens' narratives (personal memory) about different

locations in the city area from the socialist period. In the context of implementation of the second phase of the project, interviews were conducted with over 40 individuals, via the method of unstructured interviews, about a few dozen different locations that were included by the mapping.

*Aleksandar Bursać*

*Senior archivist at the Archives of Vojvodina*

## Break the Vicious Circle

**Monika Mazur Rafal**

***You should never be a bystander!***  
(Holocaust Survivor Roman Kent)

The Humanity in Action Poland foundation focuses on respect for human rights and actions supporting democracy, civil society and multiculturalism. It works with young leaders, who wish to deepen their pro-social interests, foster awareness, empathy and responsibility for social justice among emerging and established leaders in Poland; those who have a passion to work creatively in the interest of people and groups affected by discrimination. The foundation supports these leaders in developing the knowledge and skills necessary to sensibly and effectively counteract prejudices while also responding to manifestations of hateful attitudes and behaviors.

The foundation is focused on activities which connect history education with human rights activism in ways that are relevant and meaningful for young people. One of the examples dedicated to teaching about history and activism is the

“Break the Vicious Circle” project, implemented with an aim to engage young people in researching local history. Young people are encouraged to discover both local archives and records. The project is being implemented in cooperation with Humanity in Action Germany, with the support of the EVZ Foundation “Remembrance, Responsibility and Future” and the German Federal Foreign Office.

### Engaging youth in local history research

From January 2021 to March 2022 Humanity in Action Poland together with Humanity in Action Germany is engaging in project activities aiming to deepen the knowledge of high school students about National Socialism, World War II and the Holocaust, as well as to provoke a reflection on the historical conditions that led to the Shoah, based on the concept of multiple stages leading to genocide by Prof. Gregory Stanton. The main

components of the “Break the Vicious Circle” project are: competition, raising awareness, app development and testing, and promotion of the educational tool.

Why this pilot project? There are several reasons for this action: interest in Polish history of World War II and the Holocaust in a comparative perspective; ideology in historical narratives as a tool to polarize society and consolidate electoral support; ideologized, biased and politicized narratives in teaching of history; a need for independent space for youth to learn about and discuss the “the good, the bad, and the ugly” past; backlash of human rights (as a value and as a fundament of democracy); the rise of hate speech and hate crimes towards certain minority groups; impact of COVID-19.

As part of the project we developed an innovative educational mobile application which features biographies of people who stood up to the oppression during World War II, who

did not remain indifferent, and who helped others through their courageous actions. These biographies represent 11 stages of genocide and will be used for historical and human rights learning through the “Superheroes and Superheroines Wanted!” contest thanks to the engagement of young people on social media.

This mobile application is a real fusion of new technologies, reliable historical knowledge in the context of human rights, national socialism, World War II, and the Holocaust, and touching stories.

Why is this important? Humanity in Action wants to restore the memory of those forgotten or lesser known individuals who did not remain indifferent and helped others through their courageous actions during World War II.

**We act because change will not happen by itself!**  
For us, upstanding is a social competence, for which you can train to achieve a higher level of mastery.

*Monika Mazur Rafal*

*Director of Humanity in Action Poland*





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