



Genocide and Resistance Research Centre of Lithuania

Guide to European Best Practice of Oral History of Nazism and Stalinism



Europe for Citizens
Programme



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KULTUR
culture & tourism projects

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Introduction

This year Lithuania and other Baltic states commemorate 70th anniversary of mass deportation and extermination executed by Nazi and Soviet regimes in 1941. There are still some victims of crimes of totalitarian regimes alive, yet witnesses are dying off. Hence, it is of crucial importance to collect and preserve their testimonies for generations to come.

This paper has been prepared in the frames of the project *“Exchange and promotion of best-practice of recording, preservation and interpretation of oral histories of victims of Nazism and Stalinism in Europe” (ORAHIS)*, initiated and implemented by the Genocide and Resistance Research Centre of Lithuania (LGGRTC). The overall aim of the project is to contribute to keeping alive the memory of the victims of Nazism and Stalinism and to improving the knowledge and understanding of present and future generations about scope, character and reasons of mass deportation and extermination by recording, preservation and interpretation of oral testimonies.

There is a great variety of methods and techniques used in different EU countries for dealing with the memory of totalitarian crimes (Montero, 2010, p.8¹). The same applies specifically to the field of oral history. Hence, the objective of this paper is to identify and to disseminate good practices of European oral history archives in the fields of recording, preservation and interpretation of testimonies of victims of Nazism and Stalinism. This will contribute to improvement of LGGRTC’s and of similar organizations’ procedures and will enhance national and European networks of individual researchers and memory organizations involved in oral history on crimes of Nazism and Stalinism.

Oral history method has been widely used in research of and education on Holocaust already for six decades. Whereas Soviet crimes have been concealed and no oral history inquiries on the topic, at least in the former “Eastern Block” countries, have been officially possible until late 1980s. Hence, the paper is focused first of all on practices of recording oral history of the victims of Soviet regime. However, a rich and valuable experience of collecting testimonies of survivors of Nazi crimes will be also considered.

The survey is based mostly on desk research of internet resources as well as presentations made at the seminar, held in Vilnius on 8-9th of February, 2011. Material has been compiled and arranged by Martynas Užpelkis, director of the public institution „KULTUR“ (www.kultur.lt).

¹ Montero, C. (2010) Study on how the memory of crimes committed by totalitarian regimes in Europe is dealt with in the Member States. Institute for Public Goods and Policy Centre of Human and Social Sciences, CSIC, Madrid.

1. European initiatives in oral history of Nazi and Soviet crimes

There are many organizations, informal networks and individual enthusiasts in Europe dedicated to collecting, preservation and interpretation of testimonies of victims and witnesses of crimes committed by Nazi and Soviet regimes. Some of them are introduced in this section.

Check Republic

The Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes

Ústav pro studium totalitních režimů

www.ustrcr.cz/en

[Read the case study 2.6]

Post Bellum

www.postbellum.cz

[Read the case study 2.6]

Memory of Nation

Paměť národa

www.memoryofnation.eu / www.pametnaroda.cz

[Read the case study 2.6]

Czech Oral History Association

Česká asociace orální historie o.s.

<https://sites.google.com/site/czechoralhistoryassociation/>

The Association is a non-profit organization that supports and presents oral history research.

Politicalprisoners.eu

www.politicalprisoners.eu

Politicalprisoners.eu is a Prague-based, unsubsidized research initiative whose primary purpose is to collect and disseminate the life stories of survivors of Stalinist prisons and labour camps in the former Czechoslovakia and other European countries.

The Oral History Center

Centrum orální historie (COH)

www.coh.usd.cas.cz/en/the-oral-history-center

The Center was established in 2000 within the Institute of Contemporary History, Academy of Sciences to systematically support the development of oral history methodology and its application in historical research in the Czech Republic. The list of oral history projects accomplished or still being carried out by COH include following projects: “Students in the Period of the Fall of Communism - Life Stories”; „Political Elites and Dissidents during the Period of So-called Normalization - Historical Interviews’ ; „An Investigation into Czech Society during the „Normalization“ Era: Biographic Narratives of Workers and the Intelligentsia“; “Social and Political Aspects of Existence and Development of Independent Music Genres and Trends in the Czech Republic from the sixties until 1989”; “Cottagers: Social Aspects of a Subculture in Everyday Life Studies during the So-called Normalization Era”. COH organizes an annual international and interdisciplinary conference on oral history and biannual oral history courses and lectures at several Czech universities.

Living Memory

Živá paměť

www.zivapamet.cz

It is a public beneficial organization that was founded by employees of the Czech-German Fund for the Future who beside of their direct work in the field of compensations for the victims had compiled an archive of documents. *Živá paměť* processes and expands this material mostly through oral history documentation on the experiences of Czech forced labourers in Saarland, researching the history of the Flossenbürg concentration camp, and cooperating with a video- and audio-interview project funded by the German fund “Reminders and the Future.”

The Jewish Museum in Prague

Židovské museum v Praze

www.jewishmuseum.cz

The Museum (registered in 1994) is focused on Judaism and the Jews and Jewish history in Bohemia and Moravia. The museum records and compiles the memories of Nazi concentration camp survivors.

Terezín Initiative Institute

Institut Tereziňské iniciativy

www.terezinstudies.cz

The Terezín Initiative is an Association of former Czech inmates of the Ghettos Terezín and Łódź, and their descendants. Currently, the Terezín Initiative has approximately 600 members in the Czech Republic and about 100 members living abroad. The TI advocates responsible remembrance of the victims of the Shoa. The TI has established the Terezín Initiative Institute with its mission to research and document the history of the Terezín Ghetto. TI's members are frequently engaged as the Holocaust survivors at talks and lectures in schools and other institutions in the Czech Republic and abroad, especially in Germany. Some members have published memoirs in book form.

Holocaust.cz

www.holocaust.cz

It is an educational website presenting in a form of database names and fates of Jews deported from the Bohemian Lands and of the prisoners of the Terezín ghetto from other European countries. The website has been developed by The Jewish Museum in Prague in cooperation with Terezín Initiative Institute.

A documentary series “Children of Stalinism“

www.deti50let.cz

A documentary series “Children of Stalinism” has been made as a coproduction of Czech Television and *Sunfilms*, in cooperation with Faculty of Film and TV of Prague Music Academic. It tells political prisoners daughters of 50s life stories, from the times of communism up until today. Seven documentaries present 37 political prisoners' daughters. The project was co-funded by European Commission grant „Europe for Citizens’ and won European Commission „Golden Star 2008“ award.

The website has been created for promotion of the project and it features short trailers of the documentaries.

Estonia

Estonian National Museum

Eesti Rahva Muuseum

www.erm.ee

[Read the case study 2.4]

Estonian Memento Union

Eesti Memento Liit

www.memento.ee

It is a civil society association composed by several associations of those that suffered and fought for Estonia's independence. Alongside its direct assistance to repressed persons, the Estonian Memento Union has also been engaged in wide-ranging archival research to compile a database of all those deported, politically repressed, murdered and disappeared during Soviet rule. Engagement in oral history projects needs to be further specified.

Germany

Robert-Havemann-Gesellschaft

www.havemann-gesellschaft.de

The Robert Havemann Gesellschaft is a non-profit association that promotes the education of society about the opposition, resistance and the citizens' movement against the SED dictatorship. The association was founded in 1990 by members of the *Neues Forum* (New Forum party) to research, convey and document the entire spectrum and various phases of opposition and resistance from 1945 until 1990.

The basis of the *Robert Havemann Gesellschaft's* work is the *Archiv der DDR-Opposition* (Archive of GDR Opposition) with the largest non-government collection of personal testimonies about opposition, resistance and the citizens' movement in the Soviet Occupation Zone/GDR. As well as comprehensive records, the archive

holds a collection of photographs, posters, video and audio documents, objects and a reference library.

The Robert Havemann Gesellschaft organizes events, develops exhibitions and issues publications, such as the Internet portal www.jugendopposition.de, which was developed in cooperation with the *Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung* (Federal Agency for Civic Education) and has been awarded the Grimme Online Award. The website vividly portrays through witness' testimonies the courageous activities of young people to oppose the regime.

Forced Labor 1939-1945

Zwangsarbeit 1939-1945

www.zwangsarbeit-archiv.de

"Forced Labor 1939-1945" is a joint initiative of the Foundation "Remembrance, Responsibility and Future" (EVZ), *Freie Universität Berlin* and the German Historical Museum. It commemorates the more than twelve million people who were forced to work for Nazi Germany. Nearly 600 former forced labourers from 26 countries tell their life stories in detailed audio and video interviews. The interviews were digitized and have been made accessible online to support education and research. The online archive is searchable by theme, by region or by full text.

Bergen-Belsen Memorial

Gedenkstätte Bergen-Belsen

<http://bergen-belsen.stiftung-ng.de>

Bergen-Belsen is a memorial commemorating the over 70,000 people who died here between 1941 and 1945, when the site served as a POW camp, concentration camp and displaced persons camp. In 2007 the permanent exhibition was opened in the new Documentation Centre in a result of detailed research, carried out for almost two decades. Today the Bergen-Belsen Memorial is a place of remembrance, historical research, learning and reflection.

The Memorial has a collection of over 500 videos, most of which are biographical interviews conducted with witnesses since the late 1990s in the context of various projects. The video points in the permanent exhibition are based on excerpts from these interviews, which are copyrighted by the Bergen-Belsen Memorial. Most of the witnesses' interviews were conducted in German or English, but many other languages are represented as well. The interviews in languages other than German or English have been transcribed and translated to make them more accessible.

The biographical interviews have been stored in a database and tagged with keywords so that they can be systematically searched.

The Memorial's audio collection consists of around 680 audio cassettes with over 300 witnesses' interviews. The analogue recordings from the 1990s have been digitized for long-term preservation.

Memory of Nation

Das Gedächtnis der Nation

www.gedaechtnis-der-nation.de

The project "Memory of Nation" (Das Gedächtnis der Nation) has been initiated by the famous journalist Guido Knopp of ZDF TV channel. For many years he has been recording memories of eyewitnesses, including survivors of the Holocaust. The archive eventually grew into a collection of more than 6000 interviews. Parts of this collection are now made available on line through the website www.gedaechtnis-der-nation.de and YouTube channel: www.youtube.com/user/gedaechtnisdernation. Recording of witnesses' stories are still going on and even greater pace – a special "Studio on wheels" is travelling all over the country facilitating collection of the memories.

Hungary

Oral History Archive of the Institute for the History of the 1956 Hungarian Revolution

Az 1956-os Magyar Forradalom történetének dokumentációs és Kutató Intézete

www.rev.hu

[Read the case study 2.3]

Latvia

Association of the Politically Repressed of Latvia

Latvijas Politiski Represēto Apvienība

<http://vip.latnet.lv/lpra/lpra1segments.htm>

The Association was established in 1993 to represent the interests of all the repressed persons in Latvia. Among its specific goals is support for continuing research on repression during the Soviet period, identification of the burial sites and settlements of those deported to Siberia, the collection and preservation of memoirs and other documents of the repressed and the continuing upkeep of memorial sites in Latvia. Engagement in oral history projects needs to be further specified.

Museum of the Occupation of Latvia

Latvijas okupācijas muzejs

www.omf.lv

The Museum tells the history of three major Latvia's occupations: the first Soviet occupation 1940-1941, the period of Nazi occupation 1941-1944/45, and the second Soviet occupation 1944/45-1991. The Audio-Visual Archive, which is an integral part of the Museum's collection, contains testimonies about the occupation of Latvia - in film, photo and video format. The staff collects and records narratives of persons whose lives were dramatically influenced by the Soviet and/or Nazi occupation policies, for example, the deportees, refugees or eyewitnesses of significant historical events. The Virtual Museum of the Occupation of Latvia (www.e-okupacijasmuzejs.lv) introduces to the history of both the Stalinist and Nazi occupation regimes in Latvia (1940 – 1953). Documents, photographs, items and some testimonies of witnesses are used to tell the story.

Social Organization NGO "Lifestory", Association of Oral History researchers of Latvia

Latvijas mutvārdu vēstures pētnieku asociācija "Dzīvesstāsts"

www.dzivesstasts.lv

The website of the National Oral History Project www.dzivesstasts.lv has been developed by the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology of the University of Latvia in cooperation with Association of Oral History researchers of Latvia. The collection of the NOH project includes, beside others, testimonies about repressions during the war and occupation and the experience of the diaspora and exile.

Lithuania

Genocide and Resistance Research Centre of Lithuania

Lietuvos gyventojų genocido ir rezisencijos tyrimo centras

www.genocid.lt

[Read the case study 2.1]

The Vilna Gaon Jewish State Museum

Valstybinis Vilniaus Gaono žydų muziejus

www.jmuseum.lt / www.issigelbejesvaikas.lt / www.rescuedchild.lt

[Read the case study 2.5]

Poland

The KARTA Center

Ośrodek KARTA

www.karta.org.pl

[Read the case study 2.2]

Project InPosterum

www.projectinposterum.org

Project *InPosterum* [Latin – for the future], a non-profit, public benefit corporation established in 2004 in California with the purpose: to preserve and popularize selected subjects of World War II history and its aftermath with a focus on Central and Eastern Europe. The goal is achieved through facilitating the growth and development of online and traditional publishing resources of related documents and information for the general public with a special attention toward students'. The major web projects of *InPosterum* include:

www.projectinposterum.org The website serves for both representation of organization's activities and featuring some oral history testimonies in texts and videos, including some translations of memories in English.

www.warsawuprising.com An online presentation of photographs, film clips, documents, memoirs, personal accounts, and related event materials. The project

involves conducting research, digitizing documents and photographs and collecting and translating testimonies.

www.zegota.org An online presentation of materials related to rescuing Jews in German-occupied Poland. The project involves collecting testimonies, photographs, and documents related to both the rescued and the rescuers.

Romania

Centre of Oral History, The National Council for the Study of Securitate Archives

Centrul de Istorie Orală Consiliul Național pentru Studierea Arhivelor Securității (AIO - CNSAS)

www.cnsas.ro/centrul_de_istorie_orala.html

CNSAS is the custodian of the secret files of the *Securitate*. In 2010 the Center of Oral History was established within the CNSAS. The Center holds about 250 oral history interviews ranging from 13 minutes to 6 hours.

Oral History Institute

Institutul de Istorie Orala

<http://institute.ubbcluj.ro/iio>

Oral History Institute is a research unit of Babes-Bolyai University in Cluj-Napoca. It was established in 1997. The Institute gathers and interprets oral testimonies of eyewitnesses and/or their descendants speaking about their experience in connection to different topics related to Romania's recent past. The Institute is mostly focused on that part of the memory that still lacks written sources and it is aiming at facilitating the process of dealing with a traumatic past of the Romanian society. The Institute has carried out a number of projects aiming at recording and preservation of oral testimonies about the communist period of Romania. The Institute is currently implementing the project "The Holocaust Memorial of the Transylvanian Jews", aiming at creation of oral history archive for virtual museum of the Holocaust in Northern Transylvania.

Memoria.ro by the Aspera Romanian Educational and Charitable Foundation

www.memoria.ro

The Aspera Romanian Educational and Charitable Foundation is a non-profit private foundation, founded in 2000 according to the laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, with the mission to: (1) promote greater understanding and awareness of Romanian traditions, history and culture, and to encourage the development of excellence in Romanian arts and sciences; and (2) encourage and support gifted students, artists, scholars and scientists of Romanian ancestry or interests in furthering their education and professional development. A corresponding Romanian foundation, *Aspera ProEdu*, was established in Brasov in 2001 to oversee educational and research projects in Romania. One of the main projects of the foundation is operating the digital library www.memoria.ro and continuing the oral history projects in collaboration with U.S. and Romanian universities and research institutes.

Memoria.ro is a digital library of interviews, memoirs, oral history studies, books and images of Romania's recent history. It presents political, social and cultural events as reflected in the consciousness of those who experienced them directly. The library includes a wealth of electronic data relevant to the history of communist crimes in Romania.

National Institute for the Study of the Holocaust in Romania Elie Wiesel

Institutul National pentru Studiarea Holocaustului din Romania "Elie Wiesel"

www.inshr-ew.ro

The Institute was established in 2005. It is aiming at identification, gathering, recording, research and publishing of the documents on the Holocaust, as well as at implementation of educational programs on this topic. Launching and implementation of projects of oral history is one of the Institute's prerogatives.

Slovakia

The Nation's Memory Institute

Ústav pamäti národa

www.upn.gov.sk

The principle task of the Institute is the disclosure of documents about the persecutions, carried out by the Nazi or Communist security agencies, to individual applicants. The Institute is also involved in recording of testimonies of witnesses.

More than 170 witness' talks have been recorded until now with the total video-recording time exceeding 350 hours. Each year this number is being increased by 100 hours of the audio-visual record. The witness's talks of persecuted citizens, mainly the political prisoners, portray the period of the Second World War, holocaust, Slovak National Uprising, deportations into the Russian labour camps, 1950's, forced labour camps in the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic, events of 1968, and period of normalization until the November 1989.

The section at the Institute's website (<http://www.upn.gov.sk/v2/?page=project-oral-history-%E2%80%93-witnesses-of-the-oppression-period>) presents its oral history activities and features extracts of from video interviews with 65 witnesses.

Mosaic of the Century of the Daily SME

Mozaika Storočia Denníka SME

www.mozaika.sme.sk/

The publisher of the Slovak daily SME, in cooperation with the Nation's Memory Institute, the Slovak Film Institute, and Slovak Radio, collected the testimonies of ordinary people concerning major events of Slovak twentieth century history, including the Slovak National Uprising, the end of World War II, the Communist takeover, the invasion by the Warsaw Pact forces in 1968, the Velvet revolution, and the founding of the new Slovak state. All the testimonies are publicly accessible on a dedicated website, and a smaller collection has been published in the daily SME.

Slovenia

The National Museum of Contemporary History

Muzej novejše zgodovine Slovenije

www.muzej-nz.si

The Museum lists, collects, documents, protects, studies and presents the intangible heritage of the Slovenian ethnic space, national minorities, emigrants and immigrants from the beginning of the 20th century onwards – focusing on the First and Second World Wars, the First and Second Yugoslavia's and independent Slovenia. The Museum stores items, works of art and posters, documentary and art photos, and sound and movie recordings. The Museum is currently forming a new collection of life stories.

The Study Centre for National Reconciliation

Študijski center za narodno spravo

www.scnr.si

The Centre operating since 2008 examines recent Slovenian history with the emphasis on the study of all three totalitarian systems present in the Slovenian territory: Fascism, Nazism and Communism. The Centre collects and studies documents, stories and memories from witnesses of that time; publish research and collected testimonies; organize consultations and discussions on the topic of Slovenian history in the 20th century and carries out educational programs. One of major areas of activities of the Centre is collecting testimonies of political prisoners, deportees, dissidents, other victims of totalitarian regimes and their relatives, as well as creating records from the area of research using video, audio and computer equipment.

International

Yahad – In Unum

www.yahadinunum.org

Yahad – In Unum is the leading research organization investigating the mass executions of Jews and Roma/Gypsy people in Eastern Europe between 1941 and 1944. Through its investigation, *Yahad – In Unum* has discovered hundreds of mass graves of victims and recorded the testimony of more than 1,850 witnesses. Findings of the project, including oral testimonies, are presented in the website www.yahadinunum.org.

Museum.gulagmemories.eu

<http://museum.gulagmemories.eu/en>

An international team of researchers has collected 160 statements from former deportees, photographs of their lives, documents from private and public archives and films. Many of these witnesses had never spoken out before.

2. Case studies

2.1. Conducting large scale surveys

Based on the presentations by Teresė Birutė Burauskaitė and Violeta Životkevičiūtė
Genocide and Resistance Research Centre of Lithuania / Lietuvos gyventojų
genocido ir rezistencijos tyrimo centras (Lithuania)

www.genocid.lt

The Genocide and Resistance Research Centre of Lithuania was established by the Lithuanian Parliament in 1993. aiming at establishing historical truth and justice, investigation of the physical and spiritual genocide of Lithuanians carried out by the occupying regimes between 1939 and 1990, researching the resistance to the regimes, immortalising the memory of the freedom fighters and the genocide victims, and initiation of the juridical evaluation of the aftermath of the occupying regimes.

However, collecting of memories of victims of totalitarian regimes has been started already in the late 1980's, when the first commission for research of Stalinist crimes, a predecessor of today's Genocide and Resistance Research Centre, has made a public appeal through mass media asking victims of totalitarian regimes to write and to send their memories. Since then information from around 170 thousand of people has been received, which is being systematized and published in a series of indices of names of genocide victims "*Lietuvos gyventojų genocidas*". Three volumes (6 books) have been already published, covering different periods - 1939–1941, 1944–1947, and 1948. The forth volume, dedicated to events of 1949 is being prepared for publishing. Two more volumes (covering periods 1950-1952 and 1953-1986) will conclude the series in near future. The most characteristic feature of such publications is that they reflect the scale of the crimes of totalitarian regimes, yet unlike insensitive statistical data, it refers to real people who lived and suffered in a specific period of history.

Another large scale campaign of collecting memories has been launched by the Center in 1998. The programme, which has been renamed in 2003 to "*Places of deportation and imprisonment*", is aiming at collection of information, representing facts of genocide of Lithuanian citizens in places of deportation and imprisonment during Soviet and Nazi occupations.

The work has been carried out in two phases. Firstly, former deportees and political prisoners have been interviewed by several thousands of volunteers – local history

enthusiasts, museum workers, teachers, librarians, senior schoolchildren and many other active citizens - according to questioners, prepared by the Center staff members. Questioners have covered very wide range of topics:

- Data about the person deported/imprisoned and his/her family members
- The place of residence and occupation before exile/imprisonment
- Educational background
- Reason for deportation/imprisonment
- The period of deportation/imprisonment
- Addresses of places of deportation/imprisonment
- The moment of arresting and deportation, interrogation and trial
- Living and imprisonment conditions and regime
- Working conditions, nutrition, everyday life, health care
- (Self)-education, efforts to keep Lithuanian identity
- Resistance and escapes
- Names of Lithuanians with whom he/she was deported/imprisoned
- Cases of death and burial sites
- Life of children
- Returning to Lithuania, efforts to re-establish life, to find a job and get to school
- Returning and reburial of remains of family members

At the stage when the collected information was started being entered into the database, it became obvious that data must be checked and specified. Hence, in the second phase two new methodologies have been applied:

- a) Letters to informants have been sent out asking for more specific information;
- b) Oral history interviews (audio or video) have been recorded and transcribed in particular cases.

In a result of the programme:

- reply from more than 50 thousands of witnesses have been received;
- about 1500 places of imprisonment and about 2500 places of deportation have been identified;
- 26.000 photos of exile and imprisonment period have been collected;
- a number of previously written unpublished memoirs have been received;
- several hundreds of various personal documents and things from exile/prison period have been donated to the Museum of Genocide Victims.

Memories of repressed people as well as research based on them is being publicised in a form of memoirs, diaries, monographs, studies, collections of documents and articles.

2.2. Recording full life stories

Based on the presentation by Dominik Czapigo,
The KARTA Center / Ośrodek KARTA (Poland)
www.karta.org.pl / www.audiohistoria.pl

The KARTA Center is a Polish non-governmental public benefit organization, documenting and popularizing the recent history of Poland and Eastern Europe aiming at strengthening tolerance and democracy. It has been founded in 1982 as an underground organization.

First recordings of memories of people repressed by Soviets have been carried out by KARTA in 1987. A separate oral history programme has been launched in 2003. Today the Oral History Archive holds the largest collection of eyewitnesses' accounts in Poland. It includes over 3.000 audio and videotaped interviews. The holdings cover a wide range of relations about the twentieth century: the inter-war period, the Second World War, Nazism, Stalinism, the People's Republic of Poland.

All records are digitised, catalogued and available to access in the Multimedia Reading Room of the History Meeting House (www.dsh.waw.pl) or online at www.audiohistoria.pl. The internet resources also include selected excerpts of several hundred narratives with accompanying pictures.

The major web projects of KARTA include:

www.audiohistoria.pl - A showcase of all oral history projects conducted by KARTA;

www.polacynawschodzie.pl - The website presents the stories of the interviewed people recorded under the project "Poles in the East", which is aiming at documentation the fates of the Poles living behind Poland's eastern border.

www.kreuz-krzyz.pl - Polish-German memory. Biographies of former and present inhabitants of the Krzyż Wielkopolski commune.

The Oral History Archive closely cooperates with schools. Meetings with eyewitnesses, workshops for youth and teachers presenting the methodology of oral history, seminars for sociology and history students are organized.

KARTA Oral History Archive promotes recording full life stories, acknowledging following advantages of the method:

- 1) It allows interviewers to decide about importance of certain moments of their biographies
- 2) It allows talking on topics, which would have never been touched if people were only asked to talk on the topic of certain project. Certain things are simply forgotten or deliberately silenced by the interviewee during the interview. Researchers are not supposed to by all means to try to uncover those silenced part of the biography. KARTA follows the approach that in its

archive the most important thing is not facts but the way people remember them.

- 3) Telling full life story builds a unique bond between interviewer and interviewee, which allows getting better inside into particular biography.
- 4) It increases knowledge of the context – what was before and after events researcher is interested in.

However, two major disadvantages of recording full life stories should be acknowledged:

- 1) full time stories increase the time needed for interview and transcription.
- 2) it increases responsibility of interviewer (e.g. in terms of making interviewee aware of consequences of the interview).

Since 2005 KARTA follows certain standard for describing all the records. The major sections of the standard are:

- 1) basic data of the recording (date, place, duration, name of interviewer, language, historical framework),
- 2) basic data of interviewee (name, surname, date and place of birth),
- 3) short biography (and this is one of the reasons why it is worth recording full life story interviews);
- 4) description of the interview (it is the only part, which is not to be published; notes on various circumstances of the interview are indicated in this section, e.g. presence of the third part, comments of the interviewer about the atmosphere of the interview, etc.);
- 5) detailed description (yet not transcript) of recording, indicating what is told at what part of the interview;
- 6) “the best of” (subjective judgment of the interviewer about what was the most interesting told during the interview);
- 7) description of the interview using keywords;
- 8) information about annexes (e.g. some related photos have been scanned).

2.3. Interviewing on both sides of a conflict

Based on the presentation by Katalin Somlai

Oral History Archive of The Institute for the History of the 1956 Hungarian Revolution / Az 1956-os Magyar Forradalom történetének dokumentációs és Kutató Intézete (Hungary)

www.rev.hu

The Oral History Archive (OHA) is a collection of recollections of more than a thousand of witnesses of the events of 1956. OHA has been officially established within the Cultural Research Institute of the National Public Education Centre in 1985 with the support of the Soros Foundation. However, its scholarly roots go back to the turn of the 1970s and 1980s, when several initiatives to record memories about the events of 1956 has been undertaken. Since 1990 OHA is a part of The Institute for the History of the 1956 Hungarian Revolution.

OHA follows very inclusive approach according to which memories of all who had taken part in important events, initiated them or witnessed those are worth recording. Hence, recollections of Communist party leaders, members of the economic, political and cultural elites as well as participants and other witnesses of the 1956 revolution and its consequences have been recorded.

OHA's methodology:

- Full life interviews (including family background, schooling and initial socialization) are recorded
- Interviews are made in sessions (average length of total interview is 10-12 hours, which is divided in 5-6 sessions and some cases even more than 10 sessions)
- Interviews are carried out by specially trained interviewers (OHA staff provides the training for interviewers and later analyse the interviews together with the interviewers)
- Interviews are audio recorded (OHA prefers audio recording more than video in favour of more spontaneous recollection of memories)
- Verbatim transcriptions of all interviews are made (3 hard copies of interview transcripts are printed – one for interviewer, interviewee and for the archive; a copy of digitalized version of each interview is being sent to the National Library for preservation reasons)
- All additional material (photos, official papers etc.) are attached to the interview as supplements)

Interviews are made accessible with approval of the interviewee, who signs agreement after completion of the interview. Colours of traffic lights are used to distinguish 3 categories of interviews in terms of rights to use interviews for different

purposes. “Green” interviews are free to be made public; “orange” ones are researchable (they accessible, however they could be cited only with the permission of the interviewee) and “red” ones are not accessible for the specific period of time. Interviewees may also request a different level of accessibility for some parts of the interview.

To facilitate research of the collection following archive tools are used:

- Abstracts (includes names, date of birth, profession and main stages of interviewee’s life, date and length of the interview, level of its accessibility and name of the interviewer)
- Index of names
- Resumes by topics
- The annotated list of lifetime interviews is arranged alphabetically by the names of respondents
- TEXTAR database is used for relevant data on the interviews
- Oracle database is used for full text and sound track of interviews, supplements, etc.

Following major oral history projects have been carried out by OHA:

- Freedom fighters
- Business and party elite
- Intellectual movements of the revolution
- Hungarian minorities in Slovakia and Romania
- Hungarian diaspora throughout the rest of the world
- Second generation of 56ers
- Socialist towns (focused on towns, where the state has been subsidizing standards of living high above national average)
- Hungarian émigrés
- Other Hungary (focused on those who has been considered as non-conformist, mostly consisting of intellectual and artists)
- Democratic opposition (collecting remembrance of member of so called democratic underground)

Interviews are publicized in a form of books and journal contributions. A number of volumes with selected interviews have been already published each containing edited versions of 10-12 interviews, which build up a complex picture of specific historical events and the institutions active in them. Interviews are not made available online. However, so called “content developments’ based on the interviews are publicized within the Institute’s website to introduce with some specific issues. “Content developments” are considered by OHA as more practicable alternative to publicizing entire interviews. The later would imply legal issues, would be too long and would possibly contain some sensible data.

2.4. From diaries to visual anthropology

Based on the presentation by Terje Anepaio

Estonian National Museum / Eesti Rahva Muuseum (Estonia)

www.erm.ee

The Museum has been collecting voluntarily answered questionnaires about ordinary people's life already for more than 80 years. However, sharing memories about repressions of the regime has been for a long time dangerous affair and state museums have been very precautionous in collecting and preservation of any information of such type. For example, the Estonian National Museum has received in 1969 life reminiscences from one of its voluntary reporters, who apparently was a former deported person. For safety reasons, this letter has been ironically filed together with other material with a label "Foreign Nations'. It was only in the end of 1980s - beginning of 1990s when reminiscences and diaries of former deportees have started openly reaching the museum.

However, in general documenting past experiences is a very characteristic feature of Estonians, similarly to Scandinavians. Writing diaries here is an old and wide spread practice, which originated in the period of national awakening (the end of 19th century – beginning of the 20th century). Hence, the Museum's public appeal to record memories on deportation according to questioners again had reached a very high response rate. Nearly 300 people have sent their memories ranging from 5 to over 100 pages. The reminiscences are not digitalized yet. However they are made accessible for researchers in the Museum's library.

In addition to personal memories about repressions, the Museum has been methodically collecting material (mostly photographs and videos) about contemporary events commemorating the victims of repressions. Such an approach, arguably, helps to record memories, which otherwise would be too hurtful to be outspoken.

With a purchase of professional movie camera in 2005 the Museum started more methodological application of visual anthropological approach. The Museum has recently launched audio-visual documentation project focused on the current realities of *Rakvere Memento Union*, local organization of people who suffered from totalitarian crimes. During a fieldwork, which has lasted for a year, a number of videos have been filmed at commemorative events, gatherings, board meeting and Christmas party. In addition life stories of 50 members of the union have been filmed. Hence, oral history on past events in this audio-visual material is interwoven with realities of contemporary everyday life.

2.5. Using diverse media for publicising oral history

Based on the presentation by Danutė Selčinskaja

The Vilna Gaon Jewish State Museum / Valstybinis Vilniaus Gaono žydų muziejus (Lithuania)

www.jmuseum.lt / www.issigelbejesvaikas.lt / www.rescuedchild.lt

The Vilna Gaon State Jewish Museum is a national institution that collects, conserves, investigates, restores and exhibits the historical, material and spiritual heritage of Lithuanian Jews, traditional and modern Jewish objects of art and documents and objects connected with the Holocaust. The Jewish State Museum of Lithuania was re-established in 1989 and renamed the Vilna Gaon Jewish State Museum in 1997.

The Museum has been engaged in oral history since 1999, when the Department of Righteous Gentiles Department was established. The archive of the department comprises survivors' testimonies, reminiscences, letters and photographs as well as related books and articles.

Since 2004 the Museum has been taking part in a world-wide project "*Rescuers of Jews: The Righteous of the Nations of the World*", aiming at on-going search for rescued Jews and identifying their rescuers. Thus the Museum have received a large number of testimonies of rescued Jews, currently residing in Israel, Canada, Russia, Lithuania and other countries. The verified information is being transferred to the *Yad Vashem* memorial institute's Righteous of the Nations Recognition Commission in Jerusalem. It also serves as a background for naming rescuers the Righteous of the Nations and presenting them for decoration with the Life Saviour's Cross awarded by the Republic of Lithuania.

Authentic testimonies of Holocaust survivors, their memoirs, documents and photos have been so far published using diverse media:

- four volumes of the book series "*Hands Bearing Life and Bread*";
- two documentaries – "*I leave You my Child*" (2005) and "*Etude of Hope*" (2007);
- museum exhibition, virtual exhibition and DVD "*The Rescued Lithuanian Jewish Child Tells about Shoah*" (2009)

A new permanent modern exhibit titled "Rescued Lithuanian Jewish Child Tells about Shoah" was opened in the Museum's Tolerance Centre on 23rd of September, 2009 for the 20th anniversary of the Museum and the Day of the Remembrance of the Victims of the Genocide of Lithuanian Jews. The aim of the exhibition, which is comprised of memoirs, video interviews, documentaries and pictures of Holocaust witnesses, is to tell publics, especially the young generation, about the Holocaust

not from textbooks but from the stories narrated by living people. Unique and authentic material speaks about the Holocaust in Lithuania during the Second World War, about the loss of loved ones and miraculous salvations as well as feelings, stress and fear that accompanied children and their rescuers throughout the entire war.

It took a number of years preparing the exhibition. About 1,800 pages of text, 6,000 pictures, 60 hours of video footage and 5 hours of audio recordings have been generated in a result of this project.

48 panels telling the stories of children who have survived the holocaust and 20 panels dedicated to the rescuers of Jews form a core structure of the exhibition. Visitors may listen to and watch video recordings in the monitors installed by the panels and make use of the extensive amount of textual and visual information stored in computer terminals.

There are two computer terminals. One is located in the visitors' room and is dedicated for personal use and prolonged information analysis, while the other has been installed in the exhibit room and connected to a video projector. The latter is very practical for excursions as information can be viewed by groups of 20 people at a time.

In addition, a DVD and virtual exhibition – www.issigelbejesvaikas.lt / www.rescuedchild.lt – have been developed in Lithuanian and English. The content of the DVD/virtual exhibition comprises four major sections:

- Historical context. Holocaust in the Nazi-occupied Lithuania in 1941–1944. Chronology of the events;
- Interactive memorial dedicated to the memory of the Lithuanian Jewish children killed during the Holocaust;
- Stories of 48 rescued children illustrated with pictures from personal archives and video interviews of the Holocaust witnesses;
- Exclusive stories of the rescuers of Jews, illustrated with a large amount of photos and videos; books about the rescuing of Jews; the information about the rescuers, who were awarded; documentaries and video interviews with the rescuers of Jews.

Advanced software enables user friendly interactivity between families of survivors and their rescuers.

2.6. Connecting individual projects of oral history

Based on the presentation by Barbara Kopecká

The Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes / Ústav pro studium totalitních režimů (Czech Republic)

www.ustrcr.cz / www.memoryofnation.eu / www.pametnaroda.cz

“Memory of Nation” is a large digitized archive of witnesses’ memories of Nazism and Communism in original language and in translation, including recordings, diaries, archival documents, and photographs gathered by individuals, educational institutions, non-profit organizations, and governmental and semi-governmental institutions in Europe. The witnesses include World War II veterans and resistance fighters, Holocaust survivors, political prisoners from the 1950s, as well as regime officials, including StB, KGB, and NKVD agents. The portal was launched in October 2008 by three Czech institutions: NGO “Post Bellum”, Czech radio and the Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes.

Post Bellum (www.postbellum.cz) is a nongovernmental and non-profit agency (a civic association as a legal entity) founded in 2001. The association’s members are mainly journalists, historians, and students, who record the memories of historically significant groups of the nation, e.g. WWII veterans, victims of the Holocaust, present-day war veterans, political prisoners of the communist regime in former Czechoslovakia, representatives of the dissent and other important figures of political, cultural, social and academic life in the 20th and 21st century in Czechoslovakia and the Czech Republic. Its major oral history projects are “Heroes’ Voices” (collecting memories of people who left occupied Czechoslovakia to serve in foreign armies during the WWII), “Stories of the 20th Century” (weekly Czech Radio documentary series) and “Memory of Nation”.

“Memory of Nation” has been initiated in response to some major challenges of oral history method. Firstly, oral history projects are usually unconnected to each other. It is practically impossible to compare findings of individual projects, which diminishes value of the research. The portal www.memoryofnation.eu is aiming at connecting projects. The portal allows storing audio and video recordings of individual projects separately, yet enabling a comprehensive search through all the recordings on the portal by epochs and categories.

Another reason for developing the portal was that different projects look to the history from the different perspective. It is important to have possibility to compare them. It especially regards to testimonies related to such global phenomena as the Second World War. Hence, the portal is aiming at making such “cross-border” testimonies from different countries accessible to researchers.

Thirdly, testimonies are subjective. Therefore it is useful and even necessary to view individual testimonies within a wider framework, which enables comparison, classification and connections.

Finally, there are many oral history projects carried out in many countries by both institutions and individuals, which often have limited resources to archive and to publish them. This put recordings at risk of loss. Hence, the portal provides with low cost opportunity to store testimonies and to make them accessible for readers.

According to the current statistics of the portal there are more than 2220 witnesses in the database, more than 1170 of them are published. The total number of photos almost reaches 9000 and number of clips exceeds 7600. There are more than 2400 registered researchers with special rights of access.

The project was awarded a prize for the best informational product in Czech Republic in 2008 and has been nominated for the prize “Prix Europa” for the best European internet project in 2009.

The initiative is open to other partners: every person, association, governmental organization, NGO, school, museum or any other organization may take part in the “Community of European Memory” by contributing with their collections. The major condition for the community membership is implementation of its own documentation project, results of which would be published on the portal. However, each project retains its own specification, its own methodology, copyrights and level of data access. Stories are published in original language and some of them are translated into English. Currently there are 30 partners.