

“VWI goes to the Moishe House Vienna”

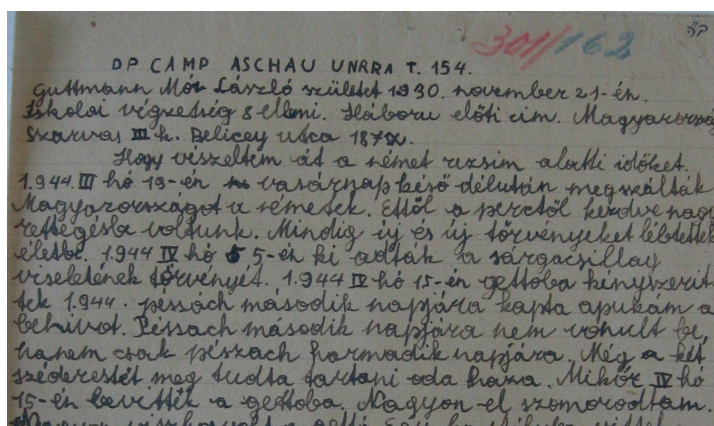
Tuesday, 19 June 2018, 6.00 pm

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Rita HORVÁTH

Memory and Anger

The Experiences of Hungarian Jewish Child Forced Labourers in Vienna (1944/45)



This presentation will analyse the experiences of Hungarian Jewish child forced laborers in Vienna and its environs in 1944/45 as the survivors relate them in their testimonies and literary memoirs. One of the special characteristics of this atypical chapter of the Holocaust is that the majority of the witness accounts were given by former deportees who had been children at the time. Moreover, in the overwhelming majority of the cases the witnesses gave accounts much later, as adults. Therefore, these children's memo-

ries have an especially prominent role in informing us about Viennese forced labour. It is important to explore the significance of this phenomenon and also to demonstrate the wealth of crucial information we can learn from child survivors.

The in-depth analyses of memoirs of child survivors who became writers and publicists constitute the first step. Mária Ember's famous memoir/novel entitled *Hajtűkanyar* [Hairpin Bend] about Viennese forced labour, for example, is one of the most representative literary works concerning the Holocaust of the Jews of Hungary. During close readings, it is crucial to focus on the literary methods and the historical research methods that memoirs employ, and then to compare these texts with other child survivor testimonies that were given to large-scale testimony-collecting projects, such as the Kestenbergs project, the Yad Vashem testimony collecting project, and the Shoah Foundation project (today known as the Visual History Archive). This comparative research explores the identification and investigation of various methods of remembering as well as relating traumatic past experiences as they are employed in all kinds of testimonies. The complex relationships between the central topics of the memoirs and other type of testimonies rendered by child survivors of Viennese forced labour and the major emotions informing them will also become identifiable.

Commented by Michaela RAGGAM-BLESCH

Rita Horvath is currently a Research Fellow at VWI. She is a literary scholar and historian. She received her Ph.D. from Bar-Ilan University (Ramat Gan) in 2003. Since 2010, she has been a Research Associate at the *Hadassah-Brandeis Institute*, *Brandeis University*, and a research fellow at the *International Institute for Holocaust Research in Yad Vashem*. From 2004, she taught in the Holocaust Studies Program at *Eötvös Loránd University* (Budapest) and between 2005 and 2012, she gave English literature courses and Holocaust literature courses at *Bar-Ilan University*.

Michaela Raggam-Blesch is a historian at the *Austrian Academy of Sciences* and the *Institute of Contemporary History at the University of Vienna* who is conducting a postdoc project on children of intermarried families during the Nazi period in Vienna. From 1999 to 2003, she worked at the *Leo Baeck Institute* in New York and was among the first fellows of the *Center for Jewish History* in 2003. She was part of the curating team of an exhibit on collection points before deportation from Vienna and recently received an Elise Richter postdoc scholarship from the Austrian Science Fund (FWF). Her most recent publication is *Topographie der Shoah. Gedächtnisorte des zerstörten jüdischen Wien*, Vienna 2018 (together with Dieter J. Hecht/Eleonore Lappin-Eppel).