

TITLE OF PROJECT: IHRA Regional Research Survey

DATE OF PROJECT: 8-12 July

LOCATION: Zator, Wadowice, Andrychów, Kęty, Bielsko-Biała, Czechowice-Dziedzice, Bieruń, Będzin, and Oświęcim, Poland

TEAM LEADERS: Dr. Caroline Sturdy-Colls, Steven Reece, Agnieszka Nieradko, Aleks Schwarz, and Czelsie Weston

PARTICIPANTS: Dr. Caroline Sturdy-Colls, Steven Reece, Agnieszka Nieradko, Aleks Schwarz, and Czelsie Weston

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF PROJECT:

The main purpose of the regional survey was to determine:

1. In what ways the Nazis treated other Jewish cemeteries in relationship to the Oświęcim Jewish cemetery
2. In what condition were the cemeteries surveyed (level of care, vandalism, expressions of anti-Semitism, etc.)

GOALS OF PROJECT:

- Survey 10 to 15 Jewish cemeteries in the Oświęcim region
- Begin initial survey and preliminary scientific examination of the Oświęcim Jewish cemetery

LODGING:

Hotel Adria

Wawelska 4, 43-150
Bieruń Nowy, Poland

TRANSPORTATION:

I rented a mini-van through Panek car rental.

PRELIMINARY BUDGET:

IHRA budget is for 63,000 Euros; I do not know what the budget for this part of the project was.

PREPARATION OF VOLUNTEERS:

I was the only participant from TMF, who played a role in this project.

EXPECTED OUTCOME OF PROJECT:

Develop a contextual understanding of the state of several Jewish cemeteries in the Oświęcim region.

ACTUAL OUTCOME OF THE PROJECT:

Generally the 1,200 to 1,400 Jewish cemeteries in Poland fall into three categories: no matzevot, 20 to 50 matzevot and greater than 50 matzevot. The number of matzevot present can vary between the latter two categories; however, the primary emphasis is on whether or not the space has any identifying elements that would be indicative of a cemetery such as fencing, walls, gates, and/or matzevot.

The Nazis systematically destroyed Jewish cemeteries as a means to destroy Jewish cultural identity.

The cemeteries in the Oświęcim region were found to be in similar conditions to those located throughout Poland: some were cared for, some were not, some were vandalized and neglected, while some had anti-Semitic expressions in or around them.

With respect to the condition of the Jewish cemetery in Oświęcim, the regional cemeteries surveyed demonstrated Nazi desecration. Nevertheless, one had been spared (the Jewish cemetery in Wadowice) because it had been purchased by a Nazi business man, who had plans to use it in some manner but never realized his plans. For this reason the cemetery survived unscathed.

No other Jewish cemetery in the region of Oświęcim was used in quite the same manner as the Jewish cemetery in Oświęcim.

The aim of the research project is to determine and demonstrate what the Nazis actually did in the cemetery through non-invasive archeological investigation.

The initial results will be made available to research partners in the spring of 2017.

PARTNERSHIP WITH THE LOCAL COMMUNITY:

Supporting partners in the research project are:

1. The Auschwitz Jewish Center
2. The International Youth Meeting House
3. The Jewish Community of Bielsko-Biala

EDUCATION R.E. HOLOCAUST?

Yes. The IHRA project addresses the question of cultural genocide in the space of Jewish cemeteries.

CONTACT WITH LOCAL JEWISH POPULATION:

The project has collaborative interaction with the local Jewish community.

VOLUNTEER FEEDBACK:

None at this time.

BUDGET & EXPENSES:

No line item budget made available for this project to me. Expenses were covered by the IHRA Grant. JoAnn Siegienski is preparing a spread sheet which will capture expenses.

GRAND TOTAL PER PERSON:

No data.

GRAND TOTAL FOR MATZEVAH:

\$0.00

PROBLEMS, ISSUES, THE UNEXPECTED:

None noted.

FOLLOW UP:

Initial project report will be made available in the spring of 2017. This is a two-year pilot project.

WHAT DID YOU LEARN?

At this point anything that I would say about learning related to the actual project would be conjecture, since the data from scientific examination has not yet been completed.

Personally, I learned that my role in this project is that of a transformative moral agent, meaning that I speak to the moral and ethical questions concerning the research project. I also learned that my expertise in the realm of Jewish cemeteries is highly valued and appreciated by my peers.

PLANS TO RETURN?

Plans call for another regional survey to be conducted in Poland in 2017 followed by a non-invasive archeological field work project in a select Jewish cemetery.