

"VWI goes to the Romano Centro"

Wednesday, 20 January 2016, 5.00 pm
Romano Centro
Hofmannsthalgasse 2, Lokal 2
1030 Wien

Volha BARTASH: Survival as a Daily Routine. History and Memory of the Nazi Genocide among Roma from the Belarusian-Lithuanian Border Region

Along with the Jewish minority, the Roma of the Lithuanian-Belarusian border region were affected by the National Socialist genocide. Despite this fact, not much is known about their suffering and struggle for survival: the survivors have not left us any memoirs while archival records cannot provide insight into the life of local Romani communities.



Therefore, ethnographic fieldwork among Roma opens up a completely new perspective on the life of people under occupation. For them, survival was an everyday routine consisting of three essential "how and where" questions: where to hide, how to provide for their families and how to keep on the move.

Combining different kinds of evidence, this presentation will address the following questions: what were Romani responses to the Nazi persecution and what strategies did they initiate to survive? How did the survival strategies differ among sed-

entary and nomadic communities? What forms did the Romani Resistance take and how did Roma enter partisan units? What was the impact of local inter-ethnic relations on the fates of Roma under occupation?

The second part of the presentation will focus on the commemoration practices of the local Romani communities in order to show how the victims of the Nazi genocide are remembered today and what place the mass graves of Roma occupy in the memorial landscape of the border region.

Comments by Gerhard BAUMGARTNER

Volha Bartash, Research Fellow at the VWI, received her PhD in anthropology from the K. Krapiva Institute of Study of Arts, Ethnography, and Folklore at the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus in 2011. She was a fellow at the USHMM, Washington DC, and the Helsinki Collegium for Advanced Studies. Her dissertation is entitled *Family Relationships and Social Organization of Roma in Belarus in the Second Half of the 20th to the Beginning of the 21st Century*. She received the Marian Madison Gypsy Lore Society Young Scholar's Prize in Romani Studies.

Gerhard Baumgartner is a historian and Director of the Documentation Centre of Austrian Resistance (DÖW).