

# *MATANEL FOUNDATION*

## *ACTIVITY REPORT*

**Program:**  
**Year: 2012**

Please present your activity report according to the following lines. The whole rapport will not exceed 2 or 3 pages (as word document).

Name of the Program: **Research and investigation of the mass killing sites of Jews and video recorder interviews of non Jews witnesses to the crimes committed by the Nazis in the Ukraine, Russia, Belarus Poland, Romania and Moldova.**

Year of activity: 2012

Name of the report's writer: Johanna Lehr

Function of the report's writer: Assistant for International Affairs

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**1/ Give the actually state of the program (where the program stands at the date of the activity report, no more than ten lines):**

Yahad - In Unum is the leading research organization investigating the mass executions of 2.2 million Jews and an unknown number of Roma/Gypsy people in Eastern Europe between 1941 and 1944. While the atrocities of the concentration camps are well-known, this genocide perpetrated as far east as Ukraine, Belarus, Russia, Romania or even part of Poland is not common knowledge. Until today the work of Yahad – in Unum has confirmed the location of hundreds of mass graves, many previously unknown. Up today, about 3000 Ukrainian, Belarusian, Polish, Russian, Moldovan and Romanian witnesses to the executions have been interviewed and their testimony recorded. Yahad – in Unum's research has accelerated in recent months as investigators race to identify and document as many of the graves as possible while remaining witnesses are still alive. Yahad also started in 2012 a specific research on Moldova genocide.

**2/ The main achievements during the last year of activity (main achievements, number of events, number of participants, etc.):**

One major goal of YIU was to maintain the number of research travels in Eastern Europe. In 2012, YIU achieved 14 research trips. More than 50,000 archive pages were collected and studied at Yahad-In Unum's research center in Paris to prepare the on-the-ground research. Yahad-In Unum has increased archival research in order to provide the necessary background information needed for the 14 investigation travels scheduled in 2012. From January 1st to December 31<sup>st</sup>, 2012, 586 testimonies have been recorded in the course of 14 research travels and 199 mass killing sites have been registered.

Another goal was **to expand our researches in Moldova and in Romania.**

In 2012, YIU made **two successful research trips in Moldova :**

### May 2012, Region of Orhei

In this first research trip to Moldova, Yahad interviewed 38 witnesses and identified 13 execution sites, most with no memorial. Yahad investigated Straseni, Peresecina, Semenenko, Pepeni, Inesti, Telenesti, Ghidighiti, Bulaiesti, Bravicieni, Gura Cainarului, Marculesti, Vertujeni and Vulcanesti.

Moldova is located between Romania and Ukraine. Formerly Bessarabia, it was under Romanian occupation from 1941 to 1944. According to historians, tens of thousands of Jews were executed, mostly in the summer of 1941 by Romanian gendarmes.

Romanian gendarmes appeared to have carried out the genocide without a true organization, which is why each village differs from the others. Even less than elsewhere can generalizations be made.

In Samananka, Romanian gendarmes rounded up and shot Jews or drowned them in a lake after having bound them with ropes and made them walk through the village. The bodies are still in the lake. In Pepeni, the Jews were first gathered in the municipal building. The Romanians then demanded young Moldovians fit for military service to assist them in their task: they slaughtered the Jews in the center of the town, in the municipal building with grenades and guns.

### November- December, Regions of Orhei and Balti

After thirteen days of investigation in Moldova in the regions of Orhei and Balti, the Yahad in Unum research team investigated in the following villages : Vulcanesti, Bolduresti, Calarasy, Tuzura, Limbenii Noi, Falesti, Hiriseni, Hoginesti, Bravicea, Dereneu, Orhei, Raute, Petreni, Dominteni, Codreanca.

In 1941 it was estimated that 300,000 Jews lived in Moldovan territory (including Bucovina). According to historians, 150,000 of these Jews were deported to Transnistria (now Odessa, Vinnitsya, and Mykolaïv in Ukraine). Only 50,000 came back alive from this deportation. Thousands of Roma who also lived in Moldova were deported from 1941 and onwards. In addition, it is also estimated that between June and September 1941, 10,000 Jews were shot in Moldova itself by Romanian forces and the Einsatzgruppen.

Over the course of this 13-day research trip, Yahad interviewed 32 witnesses and identified 10 mass grave sites, 90% of which remain without any protection or memorial.

In 2012, YIU made its **third trip to Romania** :

### July – August 2012, Region of Multenia

27 testimonies were video recorded and 15 were villages investigated during this research travel : Borlesti, Badesti, Pitesti, Dragasani, Potcova, Bunesti, Ramnicu Vulcea, Contesti, Pauleasca, Du Miresti, Draganesti De Olt, Caracal, Cazanesti, Andresesti, Florica.

During this third research trip Romania, Yahad continued interviewing Roma survivors.

During WWII, all the Romanian nomadic Roma and part of the Romanian sedentary Roma were deported by the Romanian authorities on the order given from Romania by Antonescu to the so-called Transnistria, or southern Ukraine. The deportees were settled in buildings of kolkhozes or in wild fields without any food and water.

Thousands died of hunger, thirst, or diseases. Some of deportees survived and came back to Romania.

First of all, Yahad focused its research on the interview of Roma who had been deported.

A third goal was to expand **our educational and academic program**.

### Seminar « Writing the History of Holocaust »

This monthly seminar has been directed by Pr Edouard Husson at the Ecole Normale Supérieure and focused on Yahad's research in Eastern Europe.

### Thursday at CERRESE

Anti-Semitism played a major role in the Holocaust in Hungary, contributing to the tragic outcome of 440,000 Jews deported in a matter of months, following the March 1944 invasion of the country by the Nazis. German historian Patricia von Papen-Bodek shared her research findings on the history of Hungary and other countries in Europe at Yahad's Thursdays at CERRESE session in January 2012 at the College des Bernardins in Paris, joined by Father Desbois.

### A new partnership between Yahad and the CNRS

A new Yahad's program was created in February 2012 as part of the « Transitions Center for International Research in the Humanities and Social Science » of New York University and the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, Paris. The CNRS and NYU program, "Transitions", is an innovative long-term interdisciplinary research collaboration between a number of major academic institutions that consider the subject of memory and how diverse knowledge is transmitted, translated, institutionalized, marginalized and lost. In addition to contributing to this research, Yahad will participate in the Center's seminars and round tables.

### A new partnership starts in Azerbaijan

In partnership with The European Azerbaijan European Society and local universities, Yahad continues its education and research efforts in Azerbaijan. Many Holocaust survivors fleeing the Nazi invasion of Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union found refuge in Azerbaijan, particularly in the capital city of Baku. Yahad will have the Holocaust by Bullets teaching kit it has created translated into Azerbaijani for use in teaching high school students about the history of the Holocaust to. Yahad also will gain access to archival records that detail the personal histories of Jewish refugees. Yahad organized an international symposium about the Holocaust in the Caucasus in October 2012.

### Yahad's Research articles

New research articles authored by Yahad's researchers (Johanna Lehr, Marie Moutier) explore the Holocaust by Bullets history at Lyakhovichi (Belarus), Mikhaïlivka and Kamianky (Ukraine). Pr. Wendy Lower, a Yahad's scientific committee member, wrote a paper about the Third Reich's colonialist ambitions in Eastern Europe. Dr. Lower is John K. Roth Professor of History at Claremont McKenna College, USA, and Research Associate at Ludwig Maximilians Universität, in Munich. She is the author of *Nazi Empire-Building and the Holocaust in Ukraine* (Chapel Hill, 2005), and of *The Diary of Samuel Golfard and the Holocaust in Galicia* (Lanham, 2011), both published in association with the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum. The papers are available on Yahad's web site.

### Yahad at Ottawa International conference on Genocide

Andrej Umansky, Yahad's research team leader, participated in an international interdisciplinary symposium on « Genocides: the place, figure and role of bystanders and witnesses », organized by the Ottawa University in May 2012.

### Brussels Conference on Roma « Porajmos »

With the association Roma Dignity, Yahad has helped to organize the beginning of a dialogue among members of the European Roma population about the fate of their people during the Holocaust. A first meeting, held in Brussels on May 3<sup>rd</sup>, marks the first step in an awareness campaign being undertaken by members of the Roma community. A particular target is the younger generation of Roma who have had little exposure to the history of the Roma Holocaust or “Porajmos.” Support for the conference was provided by the office of the Mayor of Brussels.

#### Conference at French internment camps site

The Centre d’Etudes et de Recherches sur les Camps d’Internement dans le Loiret (CERCIL) in Orleans, France, is located near the site of three notorious internment camps from which thousands of Jews and Roma were deported to the death camps. Among the victims: the 4,400 children rounded up in July 1942 by French police and held at the Vel d’Hiv (Winter cycling race track). Yahad team members Fanny Chassain and Johanna Lehr made a presentation on Yahad’s archival and field investigation research work at a June 12 conference at CERCIL.

#### Yahad’s presentation at the 32th Jewish genealogy conference

The annual conference of the International Association of Jewish Genealogical Societies (IAJGS) was held in Paris July 15-18. The association serves as an umbrella organization coordinating the activities of more than 70 national and local Jewish genealogical societies around the world. Father Desbois has been invited to address the conference and a presentation has been made by Yahad researchers Patrice Bensimon and Johanna Lehr.

#### Workshop on Holocaust in Poland

As part of its continuing close consultations with historical experts, Yahad investigation teams held a workshop on the history of the Holocaust in Poland with historians Dr. Andrej Angrick and Jean-Charles Szurek. Yahad completed its fourth research trip to Poland in September 2012 and the workshop provided an opportunity for a debriefing on the findings to date and for discussion with the scholars of specific issues related to the Holocaust, including mass shootings, ghettos and extermination camps, in order to help guide future investigations. Yahad also held a workshop on Yahad research methodology in March 2012 with Dr Andrej Angrick and Dr Danielle Rozenberg.

#### Yahad at Ukrainian teachers’ seminar organized by Paris Shoah Memorial and Ukrainian Center for Holocaust Studies.

Yahad researchers Patrice Bensimon and Alex Kosarevskyi made a presentation in Paris to a group of visiting Ukrainian high school teachers on October 16, regarding the history of the Holocaust by Bullets and Yahad’s investigation methodology.

#### Father Desbois at United Nations

Father Desbois has been invited to present Yahad’s work at the United Nations in November before an audience composed of the UN diplomatic community, UN staff, NGO representatives, the general public and the news media

#### Yahad Research Director at USC’s Shoah Foundation workshop in Los Angeles

Yahad Research Director Patrice Bensimon participated in a November 7-8 Holocaust workshop on sexual violence organized by the USC’s Shoah Foundation and the Remember the Women Institute. Participants will discuss the question of whether it is still possible to obtain first-person testimony and how to ensure that victims’ voices are heard.

*Yahad's presentation at Caen History Festival « Les Mémoires »*

On November 9, Danielle Rozenberg, Johanna Lehr and Alex Kosarevskyi participated in a round table organized by the Caen Memorial as part of the History Festival « Les Mémoires ».

*Yahad's participation in Moscow's International Conference on « World War II, Nazi crimes and the Holocaust in Soviet Union »*

Yahad's researchers Andrej Umansky and Alex Kosarevskyi participated in a conference on "World War II, Nazi Crimes, and the Holocaust in the Soviet Union" to be held in Moscow, December 7–9.

**3/ The evaluation (methodology, results, comparisons with the precedent year, conclusions for the future...):**

Yahad - in Unum has three aims:

1. To restore dignity to thousands of Jews who were murdered and thrown into mass graves;
2. To fight against Holocaust denial;
3. To uncover, disseminate historical information on hundreds of mass murder sites that are totally unknown.

More than 50,000 archive pages were collected and studied at Yahad-In Unum's research center in Paris to prepare the on-the-ground research. Yahad-In Unum has increased archival research in order to provide the necessary background information needed for the 14 investigation travels scheduled in 2012.

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**4/ Provisional guide lines for the advancement of the program in the next year:**

With proper funding Yahad-in Unum will be able to conduct up to 14 research trips in the Eastern Europe each year starting in 2012.

Yahad is making the results of its research available to the public through an **interactive, online map of the villages and of the sites of mass executions**.

Searching the website by village name or clicking and zooming on country maps, researchers, students, educators and family members of the victims will be able to access multimedia pages with detailed information about the mass killings of Jewish victims. Each page includes photos and video excerpts of witness interviews, crime scene summaries, quotes from archival records and more. This innovative and unique resource is particularly useful for young Jews who wish to learn about and strengthen their identity by connecting to their heritage and for those organizations dedicated to this important mission.

Yahad - In Unum's **video library** is a new project directly linked with the Online Interactive Map and extending its purpose. It will allow users interested in seeing more of a testimony, after visiting the Online Interactive Map, to watch full versions on a dedicated video platform.

In partnership with local foundations and universities, Yahad continues its education and research efforts. In November 2013, Yahad will hold a training seminar for European teachers at the Caen Memorial. This two-day session is meant to support Holocaust in Eastern Europe teaching and will gather 15 French teachers and 15

European (Greece, Eastern European countries) who will share their teaching experiences and be taught Yahad's methodology and results.

**5/ A summary table – as PDF document – specifying the progress in the program since the beginning of the encouragement by the Matanel Foundation according to the main parameters and objectives such as:**

Events	Number of participants	Number of beneficiaries
14 Research travels in 2011	140	/
14 Research travels in 2012	150	/
International symposium 2012:		
- Baku	140	1000
- Jewish genealogy conference, Paris	100	2000
Educational events 2012:		
- CNRS program	250	2000
- Conference on Roma Porajmos, Brussel	10	100
- CERCIL conference	15	150
- Workshop on Holocaust in Poland	30	30
- Ukranian teachers seminar, Shoah memorial, Paris	15	150
- Caen History Festival "Les Mémoriales"	30	200
Thursday at CERRESE conference 2012	300	300
Exhibition 2012		5000

Please join the Evaluation Report, the Financial Report and the list of the participants to the program (PDF documents)

Please joint photos – as photos – and any document connected to the program which will seems to you relevant – as PDF document.