

Press Release: **Grand opening of the permanent exhibition “Hodonín u Kunštátu Camp. Intersection of Tragedies 1940-1950. Central Europe” at the Hodonín u Kunštátu Memorial to the Roma and Sinti in Moravia**

Brno, 1 July 2021

After many long years of effort, a new permanent exhibition has been installed in the memorial to the former “Gypsy Camp” at Hodonín u Kunštátu. The author of the exhibition is the National J. A. Comenius Library and Museum of Pedagogy in Prague (NPMK) which, as the first administrator of this memorial, began the designing of the exhibition and is responsible for the main creative contribution to its production. The Museum of Romani Culture (MRK) acquired the exhibition after taking over the facility in 2018, prior to the completion of the exhibition. During the following years, according to the original administrator’s plan, and after a necessary but protracted procedure to clarify authorial rights to the material, the exhibition was finalized successfully and is now ready for viewing.

This new exhibition focuses on the moving history of this location. The shocking living conditions and everyday nature of the imprisonment here is brought closer to us by period photographs of its operation, by documentation, by artefacts, and especially by the recollections of eyewitnesses, most of whom are former prisoners.

Representatives of the media and visitors will be able to tour the permanent exhibition for the first time during its grand opening on 15 July. A press conference will be held that same day at 15:30 and the opening will take place at 17:00. Guests and speakers at the press conference and the opening will be, for example, PhDr. Jana Horváthová (MRK director), Mgr. Dušan Slačka (MRK historian), eyewitnesses to the camp’s operation, the Mayor of Olešnice and member of the Commission for the Construction of the Memorial Zdeněk Peša, staff scholar of the NPMK in Prague Mgr. Roman Škoda, and others.

In 2009, thanks to the longstanding efforts of the MRK, of then-Human Rights Minister Michael Kocáb, and of Romani activists, the Czech state bought the recreation facility located on the site of the former Protectorate-era “Gypsy Camp” at Hodonín u Kunštátu in the Blansko district. In 2011, through a Government resolution, the NPMK (an organization funded by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport) was entrusted with building a memorial to the Holocaust of the Roma including an exhibition that would familiarize the public with the moving history of this location in the context of Czech (or rather, Czechoslovak) and European history. The crucial theme of the exhibition was the 1942-1943 period, when the “Gypsy Camp” existed at this site that *de facto* fulfilled the function of a concentration camp. The exhibition is predominantly focused on that period and, at a more general level, on the Holocaust of the Roma and Sinti during the Second World War; under the leadership of the director of the NPMK, PhDr. Markéta Pánková, it was created by MRK staffers PhDr. Jana Horváthová and Mgr. Michal Schuster. Others who contributed to its creation were doc. Ing. Jiří Cajthaml, Ph.D.; prof. PhDr. Jiří Kocian, CSc.; Jiří Paděvět; prof. PhDr. Eva Semotanová, DrSc. and PhDr. Jan Šimek, Ph.D. The architectural and artistic design was provided by Jaroslav Obst.

MUZEUM ROMSKÉ KULTURY (MRK)

státní příspěvková organizace, Bratislavská 67, 602 00 Brno
organizace je zřízena Ministerstvem kultury ČR, je oprávněna nakládat s majetkem státu, dle z. č. 219/2000 Sb.,
a dále zřizovací listiny MRK platné od 1. 1. 2013, ve znění Rozhodnutí ministryně kultury
č. 45/2012 ze dne 20. 12. 2012 a ve znění Rozhodnutí ministra kultury č. 18/2017 ze dne 26. 10. 2017.
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In 2017, the Government resolved to transfer administration of the yet-to-be-completed exhibition and the facility as a whole to the MRK at the beginning of 2018, which began adjusting and completing the exhibition. In addition to PhDr. Jana Horváthová, those contributing to this process were Mgr. Veronika Kolaříková, Mgr. Anna Míšková and Mgr. Dušan Slačka.

The exhibition, entitled "Hodonín u Kunštátu Camp. Intersection of Tragedies 1940-1950. Central Europe" is located the memorial's two main spaces. The larger part of the exhibition is installed in the new information center at the memorial, where it presents visitors with the history of this location in the context of Czech and Czechoslovak history. It begins by presenting the context of the creation of Czechoslovakia, as well as the position of Romani and Sinti people in that state, which was influenced by the authorities' "antigypsyist" disposition, lawmaking and procedures. Furthermore, the exhibition presents the development of measures targeting Romani and Sinti people in the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia (1939-1945). This crucial part of the exhibition focuses on the "Gypsy Camp" at Hodonín u Kunštátu, a location of imprisonment, suffering and death that then became a departure station for the transport of hundreds of Romani children, men and women to the Auschwitz II-Birkenau concentration and extermination camp (a similar camp at Lety u Písku in Bohemia is better known to the public). The exhibition includes a separate room with audiovisual equipment that makes it possible for visitors to play both audio and video recordings of eyewitnesses recounting selected memories of the camp, categorized by theme. The exhibition also focuses on the transports of the Hodonín prisoners to Auschwitz and their fates in other Nazi concentration camps. The exhibition's final section at the information center familiarizes visitors with the postwar fate of the facility, which became, among other things, a location for the imprisonment of German-speaking individuals designated for evacuation from Czechoslovakia, then a forced labor camp for those opposed to the communist regime, and finally, for decades, a recreation facility.

The second part of the exhibition is located in the reconstructed building of the former prisoners' barracks, which is equipped with replicas of the prisoners' bunks from which the recordings of eyewitnesses to the "Gypsy Camp" period can be heard. The exhibition text is produced in both Czech and English.

The MRK will offer activities and educational programs related thematically to the Holocaust in the Guards' Barracks and throughout the entire facility. The first will be the exhibition of the winning entries to the second annual Karel Holomek and Emília Machálková Competition, entitled "Hlava **Nemtudomky**" ("The Head of **Nemtudomka**") by Jakub Brázda, a student of the Academy of Fine Arts. That sculpture will be installed in front of the Guards' Barracks. The presentation of all the competition entries thematizing the Holocaust of the Roma will be available there for viewing. The MRK will also hold another exhibition here until 31 October 2021 of drawings called "Draw What You See" (*Maluj, co vidíš*), created by Helga Weisssová-Hošková during her three years of imprisonment in the Ghetto at Terezín (Theresienstadt).

The grand opening of the permanent exhibition is part of the Summer at the Memorial program, during which visitors can look forward to a concert by Iva Bittová on 24 July

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and the commemorative ceremony marking the 78th anniversary of the mass transport of the Romani and Sinti prisoners of the "Gypsy Camp" at Hodonín u Kunštátu to the Auschwitz II-Birkenau extermination camp, which will be held on Wednesday 18 August. The museum will arrange a charter bus free of charge to bring visitors to the ceremony from Brno. To reserve a place in advance, contact rezervace@rommuz.cz or call +420 545 581 206 by 30 July 2021.

Contact for the media

Mgr. Bohdana Kuzmová Křepinská, Museum of Romani Culture, mobile phone: 775 407 065, e-mail: media@rommuz.cz

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