

Aliki L. Arouh

Jewish Community of Thessaloniki

Mary Arouh was born on December 24th, 1941. She lived with her family at 6, Gladstonos street, in the center of the city. She was deported from Thessaloniki on April 5th, 1943. She and her parents, Alberto and Roza, arrived in Auschwitz five days later.

Mary died on April 10th, 1943. She was 16 months old.

This is the short story of my father's first cousin. An aunt I never met. She was part of a big family, yet Mary's name was forgotten and we would have never known it were it not for my work at the archives of the Jewish Community of Thessaloniki and were it not for my passion in the research of the names of the Holocaust victims from Thessaloniki.

I started this research in 2012, the very same year that the European Holocaust Research Infrastructure had invited me to participate in a workshop in Athens.

Since then, I have collected and documented more than 25.475 Holocaust Victim's names, all residents of Thessaloniki, the "Mother of Israel", and the largest Jewish Community in Greece before the Shoah, counting 49.000 Jews according to the 1940 official state census.

I am proud and happy to announce that the Jewish Community of Thessaloniki is in the process of erecting the Wall of Names in the Jewish Museum of the city and has already started designing the "Holocaust Memorial and Human Rights Educational Center" which is inspired by the vision of the Jewish Community's President, Mr. David Saltiel.

More specifically on the "Wall of names" the monument will list the last name, first name and the year of birth of the victims, but the database supporting the project includes many more details on each individual, such as father's name, mother's name, address, profession, date of birth and many more data so that each entry can give us the closest possible estimation of the individual's personal story. Insisting on the details strengthens the assumption that each entry refers to a different person.

Each name is documented by one to four or even more documents, which are available mainly at the Central Archive of the Jewish Community of Thessaloniki and as well as other sources.

Recording and documenting the Jewish citizens of Thessaloniki, who fell victim to Nazism continues intensely on a daily basis, and it is enriched as the processing of the archival material develops.

It is a project that requires patience, persistence, research, a lot of reading, constant updating and cooperation with other researchers. It's a lot like a treasure hunt: searching for the sources in the long-suffering prewar archive of the Jewish Community of Thessaloniki, which was looted by the Commando Rosenberg in 1941. The destruction of the war scattered it in the wind to the four corners of the earth and, now, one must try to reassemble it like a puzzle. Sources of all kinds must be combined with other, post-war documents and with the help of custom made tools they produce the result of the research: a name- a person- a story- a victim or alternately: a survivor.

With the rapid development of the internet over the past decades and the digitization of more and more archives, in an era where data is swiftly transmitted and the amount of information is vast, Ehri's mission to provide access to dispersed sources relating to the Holocaust and encouraging collaborative research becomes even more significant. Ehri's project and the development of the new portal now provide a new perspective on cooperation and endow the Holocaust Researchers' community with powerful tools. Tools and resources that will help us work together and create a strong network that will keep the history and memory of the Holocaust alive.

Banksy said: "I mean, they say you die twice. One time when you stop breathing and a second time, a bit later on, when somebody says your name for the last time."

Yes, a person may die twice, but with archival research and the devotion of modern researchers, these people live once more. After all, this is the purpose of each archive, each museum, each library, and each portal. Preserving memory.

Mary!

They all have names, they all have stories!

Let's keep their memory alive. Thank you.

E.H.R.I. / Berlin, March 26,2015