



Centropa's 17th International Summer Academy
Vienna, Prague, Terezin

Centropa's Summer Academies.

Since 2007, we have turned cities into classrooms—for 941 teachers from 15 countries.



"I loved the rich content - the fact that we didn't learn only about the Holocaust, but about Jewish life before and after the war. We were in a continuous learning process—through Centropa content on your website, on tours with highly qualified guides, in museums with curators, in lectures and conversations with historians, and then the brainstorming we did together. It was all priceless. All these experiences were so profound that I know they will affect the way I teach. Thank you!" Etelle Kalaora-Shulberg, Israel, Jerusalem

"This program is invaluable. It has fundamentally reshaped the way that I think about teaching Jewish life & culture in Europe. Hearing from experts, talking to other educators, learning from survivors & their testimonies, and visiting the places where this history happened was impactful in ways that are impossible to measure." Zain Shariff, Washington, DC



There is nothing like place-based education, especially for teachers who specialize in history, civics, social studies, and the Holocaust.

We are not the only content provider that sends educators to Central and Eastern Europe, but we are the only organization that brings 75 classroom practitioners from 15 countries together to have them visit art museums with curators, discuss European history with scholars, tour historic sites of terror with survivors, and engage in panel discussions on how each of us teach difficult histories in our respective countries.

Since 2007, over 900 educators have attended our Summer Academies, and we focus on two goals:

- to expand the knowledge base of our teachers, and
- to enrich their skill set for combining technology, personal stories from our archive, and European history so they can create dynamic learning experiences for their students.

That way, when our participants walk back into their classrooms, they are armed with great resources they can easily access, lesson plans they have written themselves, and a network of other teachers just waiting to carry out projects together.

This Summer Academy report will share with you all we accomplished in July 2023, and please feel free to be in contact with us and our respective teams.



Dr Maria Lieberman
Director, Centropa Hungary



Fabian Ruehle
Director, Centropa Germany



Dr Lauren Granite
Director, Centropa US

Touring Vienna: A golden age brought low



In a few short decades Vienna produced some of the foundational names of Western culture: Freud, Mahler, Schoenberg, and Wittgenstein. Then in June 1914, two bullets delivered in Sarajevo spelled doom for much of Europe, and the death of the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

Fast forward to March 1938: as the Germans swept into Austria, thousands of Viennese took to the streets—not to protest, but to welcome the arrival of Adolph Hitler. And, in the months that followed, they attacked every Jew they could find.

Around 175,000 Jews lived in Vienna then. 110,000 managed to flee for their lives, but not before their neighbors stripped them of every asset they owned, from great paintings to dining room carpets. The 65,000 that couldn't escape were rounded up and sent off to their deaths.

How does a country face such a past? The answer is simple: Austria didn't. For decades, Austrians told themselves and anyone who would listen that they were actually the first victims

of Nazi Germany and it took until the mid-1980s for the mirror they had been holding up to start to crack, and then shatter.

Today, Holocaust education is mandatory throughout the country, hundreds of millions of dollars have been paid to victims of the Third Reich, Holocaust memorials have been built, and museums have taken stolen art off the walls and returned it to rightful heirs.

All of this we wanted to learn about during four intensive days in Vienna and we did this by touring the city, meeting Holocaust survivors and historical experts, and brainstorming with each other.



"Touring Vienna with dozens of other educators was both immensely rewarding and a powerful experience for me. It gave me access to historical and cultural resources, but also the chance to exchange experiences and ideas with other practitioners. I am immensely grateful for the experience. Svitlana Sakivska, Kyiv

Meeting with Holocaust survivors



"I found these meetings so powerful. I have not been able to meet with a Holocaust Survivor since I was in college, it has been years. I believe this is the most powerful way to learn about the history of the Holocaust. Specifically for these meetings, I found these stories extremely important to keep telling others; hearing from the source is much different from hearing from a video or reading an article. Those that lived through it explain it in such a way that is shocking, moving, and in many cases moves you to tears because it is unthinkable to even imagine what they had gone through. I believe these stories are perhaps one of the most, if not the most, important pieces of the entire program.
Thomas Montesion, Little Falls, NJ



As stated in our annual report, Centropa has been holding eleven annual events for Holocaust survivors in Vienna since 2006. Obviously, there are fewer of them each year, but we still meet regularly. And during our Summer Academy, 19 of our seniors came to spend a few hours with our 75 participants.





Our speakers



Philipp Blom, Historian.

Philipp Blom, our keynote speaker, is a historian, novelist, filmmaker, and lecturer. He is the author of two award-winning books on 20th century Europe: *The Vertigo Years* and *Fracture*, which paint a picture of European society as it headed toward the First World War, and then the Second. His more recent books have to do with climate change and philosophy and Philipp's books have now been translated into 16 languages.



Dr Emil Brix is currently the Director of the Vienna Diplomatic Academy, a position he took after a long and storied career in Austria's foreign service. Emil, a longtime friend of Centropa, served as Austria's ambassador to Russia and as Consul General re-opened the Austrian consulate in Krakow after the fall of Communism. Emil also headed up his ministry's cultural department.



Mordechai Rodgold, born in France, has been Israel's ambassador to Austria since 2019 and formerly served in Israeli embassies in Italy and Switzerland.



Antonio Martino directs a program for Austrian-Jewish Cultural Heritage in the Federal Chancellery. Antonio, an EU law expert, is Austria's Coordinator in the European Commission's working group against antisemitism. Antonio is also a lecturer for EU law at the Universities of Innsbruck and Vienna.



Vadym Kovalevskyi is the Ukrainian Embassy's minister-counselor and hails from Dnipro. Vadym has served in his country's foreign ministry for more than twenty years and has been stationed in Thailand and Austria.



Rainer Rudolph is the Deputy Chief of Mission of the German Embassy. Rainer's focus is on European policy, EU enlargement, and EU external relations. Rainer has been posted previously in Brussels and Washington.



Teta Moehs, Public Affairs Officer in the US Embassy in Vienna, also served in US Embassies in Guinea, China, and Germany.

Holocaust and educational experts



Moritz Wein

Moritz represents the Austrian Federal Ministry of Education, Science, and Research and is the Director of International Cooperation & Holocaust Educational programs. Through Moritz's office, Austrian teachers are able to take part in programs in Israel and Moritz also oversees bilateral relations with education ministries in other countries.



Hannah Lessing

Secretary General of the National Fund for Victims of National Socialism; since the mid-1990s Hannah's organization has distributed more than \$500 million directly to Holocaust survivors and also to programs that provide Holocaust education.



Mag. Patrick Siegele

Director of the Holocaust educational program erinnern.at, Patrick oversees an organization that works with hundreds of Austrian teachers and helps implement Holocaust education throughout Austria. Erinnern.at ("remember" in German) offers teachers and students videos, thematic websites, and historical essays to download and read. They also hold teachers' workshops in all nine Austrian states.



Ursula Szczepinska, Director of Education & Research, The Florida Holocaust Museum, St. Petersburg, FL



Franz Günter Froneberg, history, language, and literature teacher, Gymnasium Wasagasse (Bundesgymnasium Wien 9), Vienna



Loranda Militec Senior Advisor for History Education at the Education and Teacher Training Agency, based in the Croatian city of Zadar



Igor Jurakov lecturer, author, and researcher at the Institute of History at the St. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje

Trebic and Prague



We devoted four days to the magical city of Prague, and since we left Vienna by bus, we stopped en route in the small town of Trebic, where we visited an intact medieval Jewish ghetto. In Prague we toured the sites of the Jewish Museum and also engaged with our guides about Prague during the Cold war.

Terezin



"I really have no words to describe the visit to Terezin. I felt that the children of Terezin were with me every step of the way. I have already been teaching about Terezin for some time but I will now use the content that you gave us—stories from the Czech Jews who were imprisoned there, and who remained in their country afterwards." Daniella Garran, Barnstable, MA





Built by the Austrians as a fortress and barracks town in the 1780s, Theresienstadt became Terezin after 1918 when the Czechoslovak state was born. The Austrian Army moved out; the newly formed Czechoslovak army moved in. Twenty years later, when the Germans dismembered Czechoslovakia and occupied Czechia, German troops came to Terezin and, beginning in late 1941, the first Jewish prisoners began arriving.



By the time Soviet troops liberated the Terezin ghetto in May 1945, some 140,000 Jewish prisoners had been interned there. Around 33,000 died there—mostly the old and infirm—and around 87,000 were sent on transports to “the East,” which usually meant the death camp of Auschwitz Birkenau. The vast majority of those did not return alive.



We spent a day in Terezin, taking a walking tour prepared by Max von Schoeler of our Hamburg office. Max and his team chose excerpts from Centropa interviews for our teachers to read to one another as they walked through this haunted fortress town.



There are so few of them left: Holocaust survivors who can share with us stories of their lives before, during, and after the horrors. One of them still with us in Prague is Michaela Vidlakova, who was deported to Terezin with her parents, and who managed to stay alive there until liberation. In her Centropa interview, Michaela tells us this about Terezin:

"A child's experiences in Terezin are of course completely different from those I'd have had there as an adult. I had a child's problems, which from the viewpoint of an adult seem to be trifles, but for a small child they were dramatic. I was quite a solitary child for some time, and I remember my mother asking me why I didn't play with other children. I told her, 'I don't want to be friends with anyone. Every time I make friends with someone, they take him away to the transport.'"

"I cannot express how meaningful it was to have met these brave and outstanding people. First, we met Holocaust survivors in Vienna, and their stories were so moving, so precious to me to hear them firsthand. But my heart was absolutely lifted by hearing Michaela Vidlakova speak to us in Prague about Terezin, not only because of her own family's story, but the lessons she shared with us about how to live life. I will be forever thankful to Centropa for this gift." Lisa Risinger, Lexington, SC

“Sing to them what you cannot say to them.”

How the prisoners of Terezin performed Verdi’s Requiem for the International Red Cross and the SS. A session with conductor Murry Sidlin and how we partner with The Defiant Requiem Foundation.





As difficult as it is to believe, the Terezin Ghetto probably had the freest cultural life of any city in the Third Reich. After all, what did the Nazis care if their Jewish prisoners attended lectures, theatre performances, or concerts? SS Commandant Karl Rahm knew where most of them were headed.

Raphael Schächter was an accomplished pianist, conductor, and composer in Brno, and while imprisoned in Terezin he organized a choir and orchestra to sing and play Verdi's Requiem, a compelling work that still has monumental power.

It is also a performance of defiance. Schächter recruited Terezin inmates to perform Verdi's Requiem, which they did sixteen times (accompanied only by a pianist). Their most important performance was for the International Red Cross during their visit to Terezin in June 1944. "Sing to them what you cannot say to them," one of the choir tells us, and indeed they did. Afterwards, most of the ensemble were sent off to their deaths, including Schächter, who perished on a death march from Auschwitz in the final weeks of the war.

Murry Sidlin is a conductor and professor of music at the Catholic University in Washington, DC. Murry wrote and directed Defiant Requiem: Verdi at Terezín, a concert-drama that combines the magnificent music of Verdi with video testimony from survivors of the original Terezin chorus and footage from the 1944 Nazi propaganda film about Theresienstadt. Defiant Requiem has now been performed in Washington, New York, Berlin, Amsterdam, London, Vienna, Prague, other cities, and in Terezin itself.



Alexandra Zapruder, Director of Education at the Defiant Requiem Foundation, and Murry Sidlin spoke with our group in Terezin, where Murry described Schächter's work and also showed a documentary about it. Alex's team, working with Lauren Granite of Centropa, are now creating an educational program for teachers to use with their students in the US, Czechia, Germany, and other countries.

"What I learned while at Terezin, through Murry Sidlin's presentation about Raphael Schächter, has absolutely changed the way I will teach about the Holocaust. This has given a new entry point for me to teach this topic to my students." Gili Sherman, Chicago, IL

"Their work and program were extremely inspiring and interesting. They showed to the full extent the power of Art, particularly music, in difficult and unbearable war conditions. I am going to set this example to my Ukrainian students in order to encourage them to continue studying, singing, painting, playing musical instruments. They must understand that each war ends sooner or later, and their aim is to remain HUMANS." Iryna Vasylyayko, Lviv, Ukraine

In appreciation

our Ukrainian teachers at the Centropa Summer Academy



"I am excited by the incredible people I've met and had luck to communicate with (and who I would never have met in my everyday life). Some ideas I've heard from both speakers and participants are brilliant and I will return to my students with great new programming ideas. I am also touched by everyone's attitude towards my feelings and the situation in my country. GRATEFUL." Svetlana Sakivska, Kyiv.

As stated in our annual report, well more than a hundred Ukrainian teachers have continued to be highly active with Centropa programs, even during the war. That's because we provide them with films, thematic websites, and an exhibition students can access online, and copies of a new graphic novel they can read in class—or, for those learning from home, view on our website in PDF.

We brought 9 Ukrainian teachers to our Summer Academy this year, and they shared with us stories of how they and their students are coping during Russia's bloodthirsty war.



When teachers brainstorm and learn from each other



"My experience at the 2023 Centropa Summer Academy was life-changing. I am a veteran teacher, yet I came away with new knowledge and understanding, unforgettable experiences, new teaching ideas and newly formed professional relationships with teachers from Europe, the US and Israel. I plan to share what I learned to impact as many other educators and students as I can." Lisa Risinger, Lexington, SC



"I think that the ability to learn with and from different teachers that represent different cultures is a priceless experience." Amichai Tittman, Israel, Jerusalem

The Marketplace of Ideas

a select group of teachers share what works best for them



All during the school year, our teachers try out a variety of ways to use Centropa's films, websites, exhibitions, and podcasts. And when they find that their students have responded especially well, we ask them to share their lesson plans with other teachers during our Summer Academies. That way, teachers find out what really works, and they then adapt those ideas and lesson plans for their own classrooms.

"Dora's jigsaw on Hungarian Jewry at the turn of the century was a really cool idea, but even more than that it provided me with some great educational design practices. I can modify the framework to use for other history lessons, Holocaust-related or otherwise." Zeke Timen, West Orange, NJ

Our final event

hosted by Austrian Ambassador Dr. Bettina Kirnbauer



Austria's ambassador to Czechia, Dr. Bettina Kirnbauer, hosted us on our final evening. Her earlier postings have been in the Philippines and Switzerland and Ambassador Kirnbauer also served as foreign policy advisor to Austria's president, Alexander van der Bellen.



Our team

Our teams in Vienna, Hamburg, and Budapest help Fabian, Lauren, and Mirus run programming throughout the year. We thank them all.

Vienna



Edward Serotta

Edward is a journalist, photographer, and filmmaker specializing in Jewish life in Central and Eastern Europe. Born in Savannah, Georgia, Edward has worked in Central Europe since 1985. Between 1996 and 1999, he produced three films for ABC News Nightline. Edward has published three books – *Out of the Shadows*, *Survival in Sarajevo*, and *Jews, Germany, Memory*.



Jonathan Schwerts

Jonathan was born in Germany and received his Bachelor's degree in Political Science and Sociology in 2018 at the University of Trier. Jonathan began as an intern at Centropa in 2018 and we asked him to stay on. He has been carrying out research in our archive as well as helping with our teachers' seminars.



Anna Domnich

Anna hails from a small town in the heart of the Russian Ural mountains. When she was 7 she moved to Dnipro, Ukraine, where she finished high school. She holds a Bachelor's degree in Business Administration and a Master's degree in Management and Leadership from Lauder Business School, Vienna. At Centropa she works as a project coordinator and is responsible for administrative tasks.



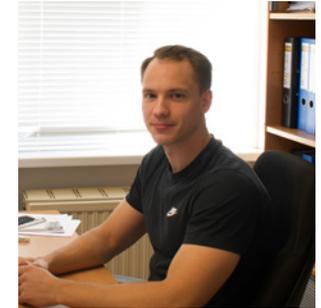
Tijana Zherajikj

Tijana was born in North Macedonia and received her Master's degree in International Public Affairs and Public Policy at Central European University in Vienna. Tijana started as an intern in 2022 but soon developed into an integral part of many Centropa's projects and activities.



Maria Zaslavsky

After receiving her Honors BA in Gender Studies from McGill University, Maria moved to Vienna to pursue a Gender Studies MA at the Central European University. She is involved in historical research, grant writing, and day-to-day coordination.



Paul Sommer

Paul joined Centropa last year, and assists with accounting, expense reports, preparing bank transfers, and administrative support. Paul studies at the Vienna University of Business and Economics, where he specializes in economics and informatics.



Veronika Doppelreiter

Veronika has been Centropa's stalwart bookkeeper since 2004 and we can barely get by a day without her. Veronika was born in Brazil and worked as a freelance bookkeeper for El Al Airlines and other companies before coming to work with us.



Yanina Bluvstein

Yanina joined Centropa in 2021, and is involved with office management and bookkeeping. She holds a BA from the State Pedagogical University of Sumy.

Hamburg



Maximilian von Schoeler

Max studied Social Science at Humboldt University of Berlin and received his Master's degree in Holocaust Communication and Tolerance at Touro College Berlin. Max joined Centropa in August 2017. He is coordinating Centropa's projects in Moldova, Ukraine, Belarus, Russia, Georgia, and Germany, and assists Fabian Rühle in fundraising and content development.



Katja Grosse-Sommer

Katja studied history in Amsterdam, Seattle, Berlin, Stockholm, Heidelberg, and Hamburg. Her work focuses on the Holocaust as well as the memory of World War II and its relevance for today. She enjoys leading workshops and seminars where she brings people together to reflect on the history that surrounds them. She has been working as a project coordinator for Centropa Hamburg since October 2021.



Ninja Stehr

Ninja is the Deputy Director of the Hamburg Office. She organizes several projects and oversees with Fabian the educational program as well as the coordination of education material and youth competitions in different projects. Ninja studied History at the University of Hamburg with a focus on media, gender, and culture in the 20th century.



Johanna Blender

Johanna studied History, Anglistics, and Public History in Berlin and Dublin. Her main interests regarding research and educational projects include the diversity of remembrance culture, Jewish history, and comparative history of flight and migration of the 20th and 21st centuries. In 2021, she curated an exhibition on Berlin as a city of refuge for Jewish Displaced Persons after 1945. She joined the Centropa Hamburg office in March 2022 as a project coordinator.



Nicola Andersson

Nicola joined Centropa to work as a project coordinator with the Centropa Hamburg team. She studied Art History and Anthropology at the University of Sussex, England, and Conservation of Cultural Heritage at the University of Gothenburg, Sweden. During this time she developed an augmented reality app to connect Stolperstein memorials to personal information about those commemorated. She is particularly interested in digital approaches to remembrance.

Budapest



Eszter Rózsa

Eszter has been working in the Hungarian nonprofit sector for more than 20 years. She volunteered in different organizations in many countries and thus had the chance to see different approaches to the civil sector. These experiences inspired her work in organizing events and coordinating projects. At Centropa she is the project coordinator of the Centropa Jewish Network (CJN).



Sára Szilágyi

Sára studied Minority and Ethnic Studies at ELTE University in Budapest. She has been working in NGOs and education projects about social issues for many years. She really enjoys facilitating trainings with non-formal education methods and supporting young people in creating their own initiatives. At Centropa she is the coordinator of the programs in Hungary.



Péter Balla

Péter holds a degree in International Business Communication and economics. He worked in the energy industry as an Internal Regulations and Quality Management Specialist while transitioning his skills in web development to his primary position. He then moved to become Centropa's web developer, eventually becoming Centropa's Tech Director.



Andrea Jámbor

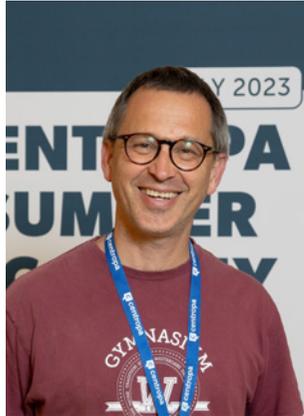
Andrea has been working in finance for 10 years. She qualified first as a financial and accounting administrator and then as a chartered accountant in 2018. She discovered her Jewish roots as an adult and then she received a BA degree in denominational community building from the Jewish Theological Seminary - University of Jewish Studies. She works as a financial assistant at Centropa.

Our participants

Austria



Andrea Brunner
Vienna



Franz Günter Froneberg
Vienna



Katrin Lang
Vienna



Renate Mercsanits
Vienna



Kirstin Lakeberg
Bonn



Anke Schinner
Dortmund

Croatia



Mirna Kovačić
Sarajevo



Loranda Miletić
Zadar



Tomislav Šimić
Zagreb



Snježana Šincek
Zagreb



Biserka Zajec
Varaždin



Dóra Kovács
Budapest

Germany

Hungary

Greece



Aikaterini Antoniou
Arta



Eleni Benekou
Heraklion

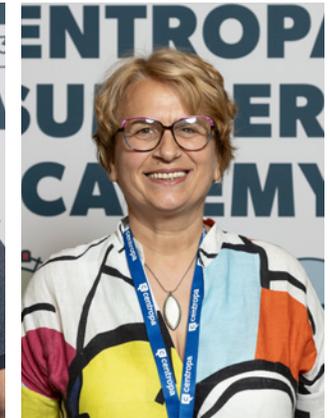


Ioannis Karalis
Kavala

North Macedonia



Igor Jurukov
Skopje



Dijana Rubelova
Strumica

Bosnia and Herzegovina



Uma Isic
Sarajevo



Tatjana Juric
Banja Luka



Anna Kozemjakin
Sarajevo



Dainius Makauskas
Kaunas



**Arūne Vaičiūnaitė-
Levuškinienė**
Marijampolė



Ingrida Vilkienė
Vilnius

Israel



Ettie Abraham
Kfar Saba



Yonathan Bar-On
Nesher



Nomi Bass
Neve Daniel



Orit Berlin
Kfar Monash



Yonat Gross
Yavne



Etelle Kalaora-Shulberg
Jerusalem



Yahel Ox
Mazkeret Batya



Amir Tamary
Ramat Gan



Amichai Tittman
Boca Raton, FL

Poland



Jacek Jaros
Kielce



Rafał Spodarek
Tomaszów Lubelski



Marta Wasielewska
Bydgoszcz



Ryszard Wróbel
Zabrze



Gabor Kovacs
Istanbul



Ciara Windsor
Istanbul

Republic of Serbia



Vesna Kolarski
Bačka Palanka



Jelena Krucicanin
Belgrade



Zvezdana Petrović
Jagodina



Ana Vušurović Lazarević
Belgrade

USA



Jodi Aker
Smithfield, NC



Marc Bragin
Gambier, OH



Jaime Chavkin
Little Falls, NJ



Daniella Garran
Barnstable, MA



Amanda Greenbacker-Mitchell
Columbia, MO



Samara Grossman
Bloomfield, NJ



Omari James
Bethesda, MD



Mitch Kalin
Las Vegas, NV



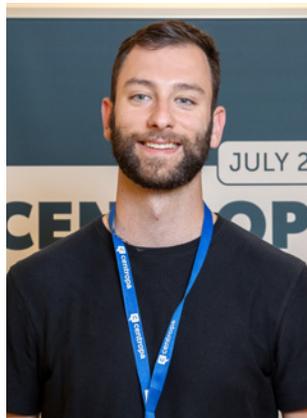
Rachael Kelly
Boca Raton, FL



Krystal Lamb
West Palm Beach, FL



Jessica Lugo
Dallas, TX



Thomas Montesion
Little Falls, NJ



Nancy O'Donnell Marvel
Newark, DE



Elizabeth (Lisa) Risinger
Lexington, SC



Zain Shariff
Washington, DC



Gili Sherman
Wilmette, IL



Stacy Steele
Lancaster, SC



Ellen Stolarski
St. Marys, PA



Ursula Szczepinska
St. Petersburg, FL



Ezekiel Timen
Hoboken, NJ



Liz Weide
Clemmons, NC



Bradd Weinberg
Delray Beach, FL

Ukraine



Ruslana Bernatska
Kyiv



Olga Dudar
Kyiv



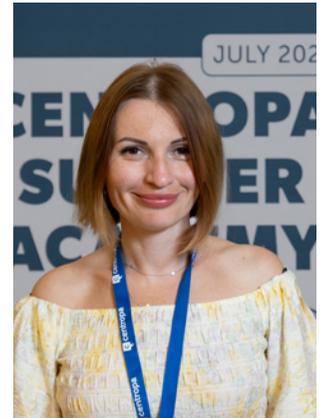
Tetiana Ibrahimova
Kyiv



Iryna Matsyshyna
Odesa



Valentyna Merzhyievska
Kyiv



Maria Parkhomenko
Kharkiv



Svitlana Sakivska
Sofiivska Borschahivka



Olha Taratula
Sambir



Iryna Vasylyayko
Lviv

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Humanity

Kenyon College



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PATRICIA WERTHAN
UHLMANN FOUNDATION

RAQUEL FLATOW HAAS AND
MICHAEL HAAS

MILTON A. & ROSLYN Z. WOLF
FAMILY FOUNDATION

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ALL PHOTOGRAPHS TAKEN IN TREBIC, PRAGUE AND TEREZIN WERE TAKEN BY DAVID KUMERMANN

"At Centropa seminars I know and feel that I am appreciated for my professionalism. In your follow-up survey, you ask if anything should be added and my answer is yes! Please give us at least two more days together." Yonathan Bar-On, Israel, Neshet

