

# ***Bystanding and the Holocaust in Europe. Experiences, Ramifications, Representations, 1933 to the Present***

**Saul Friedländer**

**2021 Balzan Prize for Holocaust and Genocide Studies**

**Balzan GPC Advisers:** Marjan Schwegman

**Deputy Director:** Christina Morina

**Senior Advisor:** Norbert Frei

**Affiliated Institution:** University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA)

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**Saul Friedländer** is emeritus Professor of History at UCLA.

Bystanding and the Holocaust in Europe. Experiences, Ramifications, Representations, 1933 to the Present continues and expands Saul Friedländer's work. Prof. Dr. Christina Morina (Bielefeld University), Deputy Supervisor, will be in charge of the coordination and execution of the project. Prof. Dr. Norbert Frei (Jena University) has been nominated Senior Advisor. Morina and Frei will work in close collaboration with Prizewinner Saul Friedländer, who will be responsible for the research project as a whole.

The Holocaust was a social process driven not only by the Nazi regime and a few hundred thousand perpetrators but also by the more or less active involvement of the non-Jewish majority populations in Germany and the occupied countries. To this day, the role of so-called bystanders in this process remains unclear and contested. After decades of Holocaust scholarship focusing first on the perpetrators and subsequently on the victims' perspective, the overall role, (in)actions and experiences of bystanders remain to be explored systematically. The project undertakes the first comprehensive analysis of the perceptions and actions of bystanders based on the systematic exploration of a large sample of published and unpublished diaries written by Jews and non-Jews in Germany, Austria, Poland, the Netherlands, France, Switzerland, the UK, and the US. Other egodocuments, especially surrounding evidence such as letters and memoirs written by the diarists, will also be considered. The central questions addressed by the projects are:

- 1) How do non-Jewish diaries address and (self-)justify stigmatization, persecution, and murder?

- 2) How is bystanding reflected in Jewish diaries and letters?
- 3) What was the role of bystanding in the persecution and mass murder of the European Jews?

In addition to answering these questions, one of the researchers will work on a conceptual and narrative framework for writing the history of bystanding in the Holocaust. The aim is to transform the way scholars and public historians explore bystanding in genocide in general, and how we deal with egodocuments from such contexts in particular. Egodocuments are among the most immediate textual manifestations of stigmatization, persecution, and mass murder. They contain ample evidence of and (self-) reflection on bystanding as a constantly evolving factor in the dynamics of violence. An analysis of Jewish and non-Jewish diaries – read as mutual reflections of one another – offers a unique perspective on the unfolding of the Holocaust as a social and an *interpersonal* process.

To achieve its objectives, the Deputy Supervisor Christina Morina will set up an international group of young researchers coming from different institutions (Bielefeld, Kraków, and an institution in Israel or the USA). While Morina will have the responsibility for the first project, the other three projects will be carried out by two researchers on the post doctorate level and one prospective PhD student. Moreover, the project as a whole will be supported by a young research assistant. To discuss and disseminate the knowledge produced by the research project a series of international workshops and prominent lectures will be organized and a final international conference will be held to present and discuss outcomes as well as perspectives. The documents collected in the context of this research will be digitalized and stored in the Bystanding in the Holocaust Diary Collection (BHDC) at the Bielefeld University Library. The collection will provide the basis for future research into the issues at the heart of the work of Saul Friedländer and the Balzan Prize Project, well beyond its duration.