

## The Micro-Encounter & Expanding Histories of Liberation

Engaging with the recent historical scholarship that asserts that “liberation” could be miserable, uneven, and prolonged, this panel brings together historians who study the interactions among European Jews, Allied military personnel, and journalists. It turns to the “micro-encounter” as a methodology that can result in nuanced understandings of liberation, the Allied presence, and local Jewish communal life in postwar Europe. Like micro-history, which begins its study with a small but defined unit of analysis (such as an individual or community), the study of micro-encounters starts its examination with a series of exchanges. These possibly minor interactions can suggest ways in which stories of ordinary human contact can reveal the weaknesses and the makings of constructed narratives. Analyses of postwar micro-encounters reveal how certain assumptions about liberation came to be formed and disrupts both triumphalist imaginations of liberation and the reliance on national narratives. Moreover, it brings those moments often seen as peripheral within the history of liberation into the center.

Each panelist looks at an event through the multiple perspectives of the individuals taking part and draws on multiple sources: correspondence, diaries, testimonies, and film footage. Patricia Kollander, a German historian studying German and Austrian emigres in the U.S. army during World War II, will comment on the papers and reflect on the value of the “micro-encounter” as a method of historical analysis.