

About us



1999: Preparations for the launch of *rijo-research.de* are in full swing (in the foreground Mr. Jochem, in the background Ms. Rieger)

The beginnings

On June 8, 1999, we, the Munich political scientist Susanne Rieger and the Nuremberg contemporary historian Gerhard Jochem, launched the website *rijo-research.de* in order to create an independent, non-commercial and globally accessible forum for topics, people and their stories that are not in the mainstream, in addition to our publications in books, magazines and newspapers. We wanted to write about what we find worth writing about, fun or annoying, mainly in Nuremberg and Munich, whether history, urban development or architecture - and in the process try not to lose our sense of humor. The use of the Internet for such purposes was still a pioneering act at the time, and the combination of information, commitment and ironic distance has remained our unique selling point.

Over the years, the project's momentum expanded its scope in terms of time and space. With this approach, for example, we succeeded in initiating a public discussion and providing facts for regional research into and compensation for forced labor during the Second World War, which ultimately led to political action, including the inauguration of the memorial in Nuremberg in October 2007. With these and other actions we didn't just make friends, but our heraldic animal is the resilient porcupine and the historical truth remains, regardless of whether you want to hear it or not.

An integral part of our concept has always been the search for contacts with those immediately affected, such as Jewish forced emigrants, former forced laborers or prisoners of war and immigrants, which is why *rijo-research.de* was bilingual (German and English) from the outset. This meant that texts by guest authors in other foreign languages could also be included and has resulted in numerous connections to contemporary witnesses, foreign Internet users, experts and institutions, from whom we have benefited, whether through first-hand knowledge or authentic

experience reports. In return, we made our findings available to interested parties or cooperated in their projects (see references).

One such gem is the *rijo-research.de* motto borrowed from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, *Don't let the bastards grind you down*, which a friend in the USA pointed out to us because he thought it was appropriate for our work.

Awards

The recognitions that *rijo-research.de* has received we also owe to our supporters in Germany and abroad, who work with us for remembrance, material compensation for injustice and reconciliation:

- 1999 Certificate of Appreciation by JewishGen Inc. (USA) for cooperating in its *Yizkor Book Translation Project*.
- 2000 Certificate of Commendation by the German Jewish Community History Council (USA) and honorary membership of the Association of Slovenia's Victims of Occupation 1941-1945 in Kranj.
- 2001 Certificate of Appreciation by JewishGen Inc. (USA) for cooperating in its *Worldwide Burial Registry Project* and an award in the competition on *Humane Education and New Media - Continuity and Change of Schooling in the Internet Age*, organized by the Association of Friends of the Melanchthon-Gymnasium in Nuremberg, for the reason: *[rijo-research.de] is a well-done presentation of Jewish history, the Nazi era and post-war history in Bavaria. The difficult act between a moralistic and a funky presentation of serious topics has been well achieved.*
- 2002 Certificate of Commendation by the German Jewish Community History Council (USA).
- 2003 Obermayer German Jewish History Award by the German Jewish Community History Council. The website was awarded by an international jury with members from the USA, Israel, France and Germany.
- 2011 Certificate of Appreciation by the Society of the 3rd U.S. Infantry Division, Outpost #5845 Europe.

Relaunch & founding of our print in 2006

In the spring of 2005, we had to take a break: The migration of all data demanded by our Internet provider and the inevitable complete revision of its structure made it obvious that we should use this opportunity for a fundamental relaunch. At the same time, the illicit use of our contents had reached a level that made legal action necessary and caused us to doubt the purpose of our endeavor.

By February 2006, the new concept had been developed and implemented with the help of professional web designers, and in March we were able to go online with *rijo 2.0*. The most important formal change was the presentation of most text documents in PDF format. We have retained this basic structure ever since - very old school, but solid, stable and easy to maintain.

In terms of content, the experience gained from five and a half years has led to a massive expansion of the topics covered in order to create a framework in which the complex interrelationships that determine our lives in a globalized environment can be presented - and which gives us scope for our unconventional ideas.

In the same year, the next consistent development step followed with the founding of *testimon print* and the publication of the book *Solange ich lebe, hoffe ich* (As long as I live, I hope) by Ágnes Rózsa, a Hungarian Holocaust survivor. In addition to the large and ever growing e-book *rijo-research.de*, we created another outlet for our ideas on paper. In this medium, too, we found readers and visitors to the publishers' events with a wide range of topics. The *testimon print* also financially supports contemporary historical research and the communication of its results as part of its *FZFN* program. In another theater, we have been offering guided tours in Munich and Nuremberg since 2001, now branded as *transiturs city tours*.

Our concept was awarded the Alternative Media Prize in the print category, which the editorial team of our series *transit nürnberg* received for its first publication in May 2007. In 2015, we received the Outstanding Performance Medal from the U.S. Garrison Bavaria in Grafenwöhr for our efforts to promote German-American relations.

***rijo-research.de* today**

After a long journey of hard-earned successes, positive feedback, hostility and disappointment, our website has also become a living chronicle of the past quarter of a century that continues to be updated. Many of our friends from the Greatest Generation, who survived the Nazi regime and the Second World War, have passed away. We preserve their unique memories here, but also our own findings and interpretations of contemporary events from a historian's perspective, an approach that is just as unfashionable in the 2020s as the design of *rijo-research.de*. Despite this, or perhaps because of it, the site had 23,137 visitors in May 2024, generating 77,886 hits.

Looking back, the development of society, science and the media during this period is not encouraging: *Enlightenment* no longer is a fundamental value of human civilization. Instead, the flood of so-called sources, especially on the Internet, is mostly aimed at disinformation, manipulation or profit. We are proud that *rijo-research.de* and its offshoots may not have been a rock in the surf, but at least they are and will remain sand in the dumbing down machinery.

The past is not dead, it's not even past. William Faulkner

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