EXHIBITION
"AUSCHWITZ. NOT LONG AGO. NOT FAR AWAY"
OPENS IN MADRID

ARCHAEOLOGY RESTORES THE MEMORY OF KL PLASZOW

"WHAT WE'VE BEEN UNABLE TO SHOUT OUT TO THE WORLD": NEW PERMANENT EXHIBITION AT WARSAW'S JEWISH HISTORICAL INSTITUTE

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EDITORIAL

Paweł Sawicki, Editor-in-Chief

„But we stand little chance of surviving and that is why I am writing this testament. May this treasure fall into good hands, may it survive until better times, may it alarm the world to what happened in to 20th century...“

These words of Dawid Graber’s, preserved in the Ringelblum Archive hidden in the ghetto in Warsaw, should be remembered every day. Our work today, the alarming of the world, would not be possible without the courage of people, who then discovered a huge courage to document and record the fate of those who suffered and perished.

In "Memoria" we present a moving new permanent exhibition at the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw. Its narrative is based on the history of the Oneg Shabbat group of Emanuel Ringelblum. We are also in Madrid, the first stop at the seven-year long trip of a huge exhibition devoted to Auschwitz and the Holocaust, where history is told by over 600 authentic objects. Soon, new objects discovered thanks to archaeologists at the site of the former KL Plaszow camp will be shown on some completely new exhibition. I recommend reading these as well as many other articles.

I also encourage all our readers to co-operate with us. We would be grateful to receive information about events, projects, publications, exhibitions, conferences or research that we could write about. We also accept proposals for articles. Please do share information about this magazine with others, particularly via social media.

Our e-mail: memoria@auschwitz.org
Sara Bloomfield joined the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in its early stages, years before the project turned into one of the nation’s most visited landmarks on the National Mall in Washington.

Now, after serving as director of the museum for 18 years, Bloomfield, 67, is tasked with leading the institution during a time when anti-Semitism is on the rise in America, and when political forces are slow to condemn manifestations of racism.

The Forward’s Nathan Guttman recently interviewed Sara Bloomfield:

READ THE ARTICLE
International Conference: Call for Papers: "Urban Jewish Heritage: Presence and Absence". 3-7 September 2018, Kraków, Poland. The aim is to examine, discuss and explore pasts, presents and futures for cities and towns with Jewish heritage.

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The exhibition "Code Name Żegota – The Hidden Aid" at Oskar Schindler's Factory in Kraków raises the topic of the support provided to the Jews by the Poles, a subject still relevant and arousing many emotions. The exhibition explores both the support provided in an organized manner, as well as help given by individuals.

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The Shimon and Sara Birnbaum Jewish Community Center Holocaust Memorial and Education Center in Bridgewater honors those who perished as well as those who survived.

More at www.mycentraljersey.com

The International Workshop within the Framework of the European Holocaust Research Infrastructure (EHRI), supported by the European Commission, will take place from 6-7 March 2018 at the “Elie Wiesel” National Institute for the Study of the Holocaust in Romania, Bucharest.

More
INTERNATIONAL TRAVELLING EXHIBITION ON THE HISTORY OF AUSCHWITZ OPENS IN MADRID

Almost 73 years after the liberation of the German Nazi concentration and extermination camp Auschwitz, its history and meaning is told in a new monographic travelling exhibition "Auschwitz. Not Long Ago. Not Far Away". It's the largest exhibition of its kind dedicated to the topic of Auschwitz and the Holocaust in history.

The exhibition was conceived and designed by Musealia and its international curatorial team of experts, including Dr. Michael Berenbaum, Dr. Robert Jan van Pelt and Paul Salmons, in an unprecedented collaboration with the experts from the Auschwitz Memorial: curators of our collections, conservators, archivists and historians from the Research Center headed by Dr. Piotr Setkiewicz.

Across 2,500 square meters the exhibition displays more than 600 original objects, most of them belonging to the Auschwitz Memorial Collections. The project also involves specific loans from various international institutions, such as Yad Vashem in Jerusalem and the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington DC.

Visitors can see hundreds of personal items that belonged to people deported to Auschwitz; fragments of an original barracks for prisoners from Auschwitz III-Monowitz camp; the desk of the first Auschwitz commandant Rudolf Hoess; a gas mask used by the SS garrison; and an original German-made Model 2 freight wagon used by the Deutsche Reichsbahn (German National Railway) during World War II for the transport of soldiers, prisoners of war, and for the deportation of Jews to the ghettos and extermination camps in occupied Poland.

"Today, the world is moving in uncertain directions. Auschwitz is not only an extremely painful memory of the past. Today, as in so many countries we feel an alarming increase of antisemitism, racism and xenophobia, the history of Auschwitz is unfortunately taking on a new, meaningful role as a warning for the future," said the Director of the Auschwitz Museum Dr. Piotr M.A. Cywiński.

"Peace is not given once and for all. That is why we all should safeguard equality of rights, respect, fundamental human rights and democracy on a daily basis in our lives, in our reality and within our reach. Passivity and consent are concepts almost equivalent to the cause of evil," he added.

The exhibition will stay at the Arte Canal Exhibition Center in Madrid until June 17, 2018. Over the next 7 years it will visit a total of 14 cities around the world.

More information: auschwitz.net
The road to Auschwitz was paved with frustration, populism, stigmatization of the Jews as scapegoats, dehumanization of fellow man and passivity to institutionalized hatred.

Today, our anxiety should be aroused by the fact that the post-war road out of Auschwitz may paradoxically have come full circle. It may occur again as none of the initial stages of the road that led to Auschwitz have disappeared once and for all. The escalation of populism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism and other racist ideologies is discernible in many parts of our world.

Perhaps this unrest is a signpost for us to find paths to lasting peace. Today, anyone seeking peace cannot escape the feeling of unrest. Because we know too much.

Today, unawareness is no longer an excuse or justification. We have access to all information and to several tools that influence public discourse.

And yet, our human passivity has not undergone a profound transformation. Our familial, tribal and national egotism are still perceived as virtues of patriotism. Pride continually prevents us from seeing equality in humans. Maturity is a state that we are still nowhere near.

Memory is, therefore, the fundamental key to responsibility. Memory thus compels us to look into the future.

The world, meanwhile, is changing at an alarming rate. For many years, analysts have been unable to keep up with the changing pace of civilization. It has been even more difficult for the entire education system to keep pace with these changes. Therefore, we need clear signposting, indisputable boundary conditions, stable and uncontested points of reference. Hence, of all the events of the recent past, Auschwitz increasingly appeals to us. We cannot cope without this memory.

Auschwitz and the Shoah do not yet constitute another single, dramatic event in the linear history of humanity. When we look at everything that happened before, and how much has happened in opposition to this unique experience, it is difficult not to understand that it is a critical point in the history of Europe, and perhaps the world.

It was after this war - and none other - that the legal definitions of genocide and crimes against humanity were established. It was then that human rights were universally understood, as a natural entitlement of all. It is from this perspective that the building of intra-European relations, based on values of community and interdependence, was set in motion. At the same time, a vision of a new civil society was born, not based on paramilitary models from earlier centuries. This period also gave birth to the large-scale search for ecumenical paths. Auschwitz, as a critical point, has a chance to become a point of no return. However, it will happen only thanks to memory. Or perhaps it will not happen.

Therefore, through this exhibition, this encounter with the darkest card in the history of Europe, listening to the words of witnesses, coming into contact with such meaningful authentic objects, and this time of self-reflection - we invite you to take this road full of unrest. Desired unrest.

Dr. Piotr M. A. Cywiński, Director of the Auschwitz Memorial. This article was published in the exhibition catalogue.
The exhibition in Madrid is now open. It’s clear that this project would not have been possible without your personal dedication.

It has been a very long journey. For me it started with pain because the initial idea came after my brother suddenly passed away. I was then given a book, “Man's Search for Meaning” by Viktor Frankl. At first I did not want to read it as I thought it was not appropriate at the time but in the end I read it, I was touched and I felt the need to share the story of Auschwitz in the only way I knew I could do it: an exhibition. This is what we do at Musealia.

These days have been very emotional, complex and long but it’s very difficult to express how I feel. I hope that we have done something that will help people to understand the past, if possible, and hopefully reflect on our society and the society we need to build for the future.

When you go back to the starting point – does this exhibition look as you imagined it then, right at the beginning? And what have you learned during this process?

I am not a historian, I am not an expert on Auschwitz. At the very beginning I was sent a suggestion of books to read – there were over 25 books and films. I also visited the site. After my visit at the former camp, when I was comfortably sleeping in my bed, I felt that I was so lucky to be in that warm bed, to have breakfast the next morning. It made me understand the value of what we have.

The Director, Piotr Cywiński, said that there are things we should not take for granted – the peace that we have, the society that we live in. We should take into consideration the threats of hatred, movements that target those who are different, act differently, think differently or believe in different things. There have been many personal discoveries for me. At the beginning I had a vision that people in my country – and this is why we wanted to start this project in Spain – do not know much about the story of Auschwitz. I felt this need inside. There are a lot of people who contributed later to this vision of mine from the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum – not only in terms of artefacts, but also the knowledge, a great team of curators, designers and architects, and all other institutions who loaned the artefacts.

It’s a very plural exhibition; there are many voices in it. I hope people will notice that there is not only one voice telling the story. One can find many different perspectives. This exhibition asks a lot of questions and I hope people will reflect on them and find their own answers.

What will be the most surprising or challenging aspect for the Spanish visitors here?

Let’s see what people say, but when I think of myself and when I knew nothing about Auschwitz, it is amazing to understand that it was not an island, that it did not start with gas chambers. I read an interview that you gave when you said it did not start with the killing, it started with hatred, with words, politicians dividing people. The killing was there eventually but it’s important to understand the wider context.

We try to show this context in the exhibition. The history of Auschwitz is very complex. People will be surprised to see that there were a lot of victim groups. Sometimes we only remember Auschwitz for the Holocaust and indeed, Jews constitute 90 percent of the victims, but we should understand that there were Poles, Gypsies, Soviet POWs, Jehovah’s Witnesses, homosexuals and other minorities targeted by the Nazi ideology. Understanding the universe of the camp may be shocking for people.
You and the whole team made an important but risky decision to create an exhibition about something that people will not immediately recognize. You began with the context, which is not really well-known, especially outside Poland, because this journey starts with the story of the town of Oświęcim far away in the past.

The curators were very interested in it and they wanted people to understand that Oświęcim had a past before being known for the Auschwitz camp. Oświęcim also has a present and a future. It’s a beautiful place to go to. It was important to make people understand that it was a Polish town with a vibrant life. And then history turned.

I think people will appreciate it because it may help them to understand the terrible tragedy of the camp in the context of the Second World War and the Holocaust.

You know the exhibition by heart. When you walk through those rooms now, is there a place where you still stop?

There are a few points. There is a shoe with a sock – it’s extremely powerful for many reasons, of course. Each artefact has a unique voice and each of them start a different conversation with each visitor.
For me, this object reminds us that we know nothing about this person. They have been erased from history. We do not know their name, their age, their face, and yet it tells us so much – also about hope. This child was taken with their family to the undressing room, people were told to leave their things there. It shows us that they did not know and did not believe that another human being was capable of doing this. This object still affects me. And there are many others, like the Canada section. For me it’s about the dignity of people. What do you put into your suitcase when you learn that you will be deported at 5am the next day? All of the artefacts have this mute warning cry that is so powerful.

The story started from Viktor Frankl’s “Man's Search of Meaning”. Do you think that these few years of work have given you the possibility of finding some meaning?

I am really satisfied. Me and the team tried to do something good. This is my little contribution. I hope this will be good for many people and society. We have done the right thing. It’s important to me and I hope that everybody involved feels the same.
Archaeological studies constitute one of the ways to restore the memory of KL Plaszow. They make it possible to discover and document material remains from the years 1942 – 1945.

The currently preserved fragment of the former KL Plaszow concentration camp consists of 40 hectares of green area in the center of the city. Many Kraków citizens and tourists treat it as a recreational area. They are not aware of the history of this place as they have never learned it.

In the years 2016-2017, a comprehensive archaeological field survey of the former camp premises was undertaken as part of a project entitled 'Developing the Study Concerning the Custody of Krakow Memorials with KL Plaszow' as part of the Historical Museum of the City of Kraków Memory Route, organized by the Museum and financed by funds from the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage as well as the Kraków Urban Commune. The specificity of archaeological studies concerning material traces from the not-so-distant past makes it possible to use and analyze the unique collection of sources concerning the camp (archival photographs, plans, witness accounts). Primarily, the studies were aimed at determining the level of preservation of the camp area as well as identifying the modifications which it has undergone since the war.

Acting so as to preserve maximum authenticity of the place and with respect to its historical, social and cultural context, non-invasive methods were selected to be applied during the fieldwork, which would not affect the historical area directly. The most important part of the project - the excavation works - constituted a complementary element of the works.

The first stage of the works consisted in the preparation of complete field documentation. An orthophoto map was amongst other techniques used, creating a detailed image of the surface of the area, developed based on aerial photographs. A numerical model of the grounds was then created based on a LIDAR scan. The application of both techniques made it possible to analyze the surface of the area in view of the possibility to determine the remains of archaeological relics, such as
relics, such as levelling for subsequent barracks or excavations. It enabled partial clarification of the location of the foundations of subsequent buildings as well as other camp structures.

A geophysical survey was performed on chosen areas with the use of the following methods: magnetism, electromagnetism, electroresistance and GPR. The application of the entire sequence of studies enabled the comparison of their readings and results. Preliminary analysis discovered anomalies between these tests suggesting the existence of preserved walls, foundations or archaeological objects.

The last part of non-invasive studies consisted of surface analysis combined with parallel land assessment. Surface studies involved walking through the entire post-camp area and collecting the items directly from the ground surface. The objects might have been left there as a result of natural defrosting and soil leaching processes or the activity of animals. In this way it was possible to collect over 60 historical items from the entire former camp area.

Among them there were an electric socket with the inscription Kabel Krakau and fragments of barbed wire as well as a bullet for a German Mauser weapon.

The main objective of excavation works was the recognition of the topography of the camp as well as acquiring artefacts for the future exposition at the KL Plaszow Memorial. The studies were aimed at determining the precise location of subsequent elements of the camp infrastructure – barracks, sidewalks, gutters and culverts.

The results will, in the future, make it possible not only to determine where exactly given buildings were located, but also to prepare the program of the conservators’ effective custody for the entire post-camp area.

The first excavation works were performed in the place where barrack number 24 was located, intended for Jewish men.
barrack number 24 was located, intended for Jewish men. Soon after the works had started it turned out that the relics of camp infrastructure could be found at a very shallow level, ca. 15 cm below the current ground level. After removing external sod layer, fragments of camp roads were uncovered. They were performed from fine limestone gravel as well as numerous fragments of matzevahs.

Tombstones were acquired from destroyed cemeteries, on the remains of which the camp had been established. Next section also unveiled a gutter leading along southern wall of the barrack as well as the foundations of the building itself performed from limestone stones.

The remains of the laundry and latrine were also discovered. The structures of these barracks were almost totally destroyed. In this case it is very difficult to determine where in fact the buildings themselves had been located. In one section there were only fragments of foundations preserved, covered with the elements of deconstructed wall made of stone and bricks. Gutters visible before the beginning of the studies, partially filled with concrete and located inside the buildings were also subject to exploration.

A fragment of pre-war seat of Jewish Healthcare Association (TOZ) together with the sanatorium for children at risk of tuberculosis were verified in the administrative part of the camp. Within the period of the functioning of the camp the building underwent important reconstruction works and was transformed into a bakery.

Barracks in the hospital and industrial section of the camp were also subject to studies. The remnants of camp sewage system were discovered during excavation works next to the supposed building of the so called “Polish hospital”. The following dates could be seen on prefabricated concrete components: 16 X 1943, 20 X 1943 and 22 XI 1943. The outline of the building itself was visible, performed in the same way as in the case of barrack number 24. The subsequent stage of works was concentrated on recognizing a part of the industrial plant – printing house, paper mill and ironworks. These buildings were preserved only in the form of levelling. In turn, some dewatering gutters forged directly in limestone substrate were readable.

W trakcie ogółu prac odkryto ponad 3 000 przedmiotów, z czego
Within the entire scope of works, over 3 000 objects were discovered, with about 300 of them representing exhibition value. The majority of them are constituted by fragments of damaged dishes, bottles and construction elements of barracks. An important group includes nails which had got to the ground during barrack deconstruction works, carried out in late 1944. Personal belongings of camp prisoners are of particular significance among the discovered items, e.g. a toothbrush, fragments of combs, buttons, cutlery, enamelled dishes, medicine bottles and boxes. Some of them were transported by Jews from the Kraków ghetto and the places where they had lived and worked before the war. This refers among others to a fragment of cup probably originating from the Jewish hospital in Kraków. Three plastic badges with the Star of David constitute another interesting artefact.

As a result of archaeological studies, the past of KL Plaszow is being restored in social consciousness. Innocent landscape – empty space explored during the research to a very narrow extent – has turned out to hide thousands of objects and traces dating back to the period of the camp’s functioning. These objects constitute a unique and dramatic proof of camp life, which has now been discovered again. The results of archaeological research performed were included in the scenario of future commemoration of KL Plaszow. Historical objects which have been discovered will form part of permanent exhibition devoted to the past and present of this place.
"WHAT WE’VE BEEN UNABLE TO SHOUT OUT TO THE WORLD"

The permanent exhibition at Emanuel Ringelblum Jewish Historical Institute constitutes the key element of the Oneg Shabbat Program, realized by JHI and the Association of the JHI in Poland.

On November 14th, President Andrzej Duda and his Wife, Professor Piotr Gliński, Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Culture and National Heritage, Ruth Cohen-Dar, deputy ambassador of Israel in Poland, Karel Fracapane representing UNESCO as well as Piotr Wiślicki, head of the Association of the JHI in Poland, as well as the representatives of Jewish organizations, cultural institutions and diplomatic corps took part in the ceremonial inauguration of the exhibition.

Professor Paweł Śpiewak, director of JHI and curator of the exhibition, said: “It is impossible to imagine Jewish culture without memory. (...) The memory – passed on to the child by their father – builds

White, black, grey, Minimalistic. Quiet. Visual language reduced to a few materials: glass, wood, metal. Simplicity making it possible for all the atrocities which are now, after over seventy years, “shouted out to the world” to resound fully.

These are the shades of permanent exhibition at Jewish Historical Institute devoted to the Underground Archive of the Warsaw Ghetto. This is the first time when original documents were presented, collected by secret group organized by Emanuel Ringelblum, patron of the Institute.

The exhibition is presented in the building at ul. Tłomackie 3/5, constituting before WW2 the centre of Jewish intellectual life (Main Judaist Library as well as the Institute of Judaist Studies had been located there). During the war, Oneg Shabatt used to gather there and nowadays, it is the seat of JHI and the Association. For the purposes of the exhibition, the area of the hall was renovated together with the conservation of historical floor, still marked by the traces of the fire which broke out after the Synagogue had blown up in 1943.
The activity of Oneg Shabbat constitutes the main subject of the exhibition. Biograms of subsequent members of the team were presented in the hall constructed from vertical raw tree trunks. At the wooden table representing the space of physical, intellectual and spiritual co-presence of this – as written by Emanuel Ringelblum – “brotherly union” – their contribution to the creation of the Archive was shown. Two timelines were builds credibility. What we are doing here, this is the work on memory. The biggest work was done by the people from Oneg Shabbat during the war, but we lacked those who could have transmitted it. It was only possible to find it. It was buried in milk cans, metal boxes. And this is how it survived, impersonally. If we would like to learn what happened during the war, we know it only from documents”.

And these documents – fragments of diaries, journals (original testaments of Izrael Lichtenstein, Gela Seksztajn, Nachum Grzywacz and Dawid Graber), compilations, photographs, memoirs, newspapers, personal documents, drawings and other – are for the first time being shown to the public. As emphasized by Piotr Duma and Aneta Faner, designers of the exhibition, the applied forms of expression and “visual silence” aim at emphasizing their meaning, multiplying the message they contain. They make it possible for the visitors to enter into a state of internal concentration, in which the construct does not obscure the words, and the words do not obscure those who wrote them. The exhibition honours those who, in spite of horrifying circumstances, decided that they would shape their memory themselves and that, as Professor Śpiewak emphasized it, “each voice, of each killed Jew, each Jew in agony, needs to be recorded. Not polished, not added. It must be presented in its actual form”.

Original milk can, in which the second part of the Archive was stored, constitutes the concentric point of the exposition. It has been placed in a narrow claustrophobic space formed from 35 tons of rubble, symbolizing the cellar of Borochow school at ul. Nowolipki 68, where Ringelblum Archive was buried.

Photographs of the exhibition: Paweł Sawicki
The title was taken from the testament left by Dawid Graber, who belonged to a group of people hiding the first part of the Archive. He wrote: “What we were unable to shout out to the world, we buried in the ground”. Dawid Graber was 19, and while hiding in a hurry subsequent parts of the material, he had one hope: “that future generations will recall our suffering and pain that during the fall, there were also people who had the courage to do this work”.

The mission of the Institute and the Association of the JHI in Poland – as the depositaries of Ringelblum Archive, which belongs not only to the Jewish nation, but constitutes the “memory of the world” – is to make it publicly available, to pass it on not only to the next generations, but first – to the current generation. For this reason, the works on a travelling exhibition are now being carried out so that it can be made available in the most important museums all over the world.

Everybody should visit Jewish Historical Institute at ul. Tłomackie 3/5. The place where the Oneg Shabbat group met. The building bearing the traces of the Great Synagogue fire. The space which, since mid-November, opens with the inscription in Polish, Jewish and English: What we were unable to shout out to the world...

The exhibition is one of the key elements of the Oneg Shabbat Program, realized by the Emanuel Ringelblum Jewish Historical Institute and the Association of the Jewish Historical Institute of Poland within a public-private partnership. The goal of the program is to commemorate and popularize the Underground Archive of the Warsaw Ghetto (the Ringelblum Archive) and to commemorate the members of the Oneg Shabbat group.
Jane Haining zmarła w Auschwitz-Birkenau w 1944 roku w wieku 47 lat.
Oneg Szabat Archive is an enormous collection. Which aspects did you find the most important while creating this exhibition?

For us it was the most important to present the people who were creating the archive. For this reason the awareness of its entire picture as well as the knowledge who was responsible for its subsequent fragments is crucial. It of course includes many technical elements or official documents, which are not so impressive, but this collection has many memorable elements. From my own perspective, among the most moving materials there are Abraham Lewin’s journals, Abraham Krzepicki’s account from Treblinka or the first volume prepared by Ruta Sakowska and devoted to postcards sent to the ghetto – all of them had a huge influence on my imagination. But the records of war events forming the last part of the exhibition were the most important. They show the moment when the members of Oneg Szabat found out that the Germans had decided to kill the entire Jewish nation. At that moment the archivists started meticulously looking for the information on the situation in Warsaw as well as other cities of the General Government.

From our current perspective the work of the group managed by Emanuel Ringelblum is difficult to understand. The comprehension that the witnesses of the tragedy begin to document it in a systematic and scientific way. How to understand this testimony?

From my own perspective there are two dimensions which play here the crucial role. It is the recording of the accounts of people who, consciously or unconsciously, are heading towards the final moment – the moment of deportation. Their language, the way in which they perceive it, how they communicate it, how they observe the massacre which has become a fact, are for me very important. It is not the perspective of historians, but of the people who are closed in the deadly circle, who are left alone, usually deprived of any hope and who have to follow the unpredictable fate. The archivists were able to reach this basic language. It is included in particular in postcards, but also in journals or different types of accounts from the functioning of the Warsaw ghetto. The second important element lies in the fact that they were trying to refer to it with some cognitive control. They were writing the events down, preparing reports on the situation of people in labour camps, on the situation of refuges from different places. They aimed at creating some regularity in this madness, at building the objectivism – if we can call it in this way. These documents were to reflect – at least to some extent – the guarantee of objectivity and reliability.
It is all full of statistical data – how many people were working in the sheds, how many were each day deported from Warsaw. They wanted it all to be treated seriously. But this is only one of the dimensions of their work.

Some very moving and piercing courage can be seen here. These are not a few randomly collected documents. This is an impressive systematic work done.

While thinking about the activity of Oneg Szabat it is necessary to remember that the group remained active for only 26 months. For some people it was even shorter, as some members died after a few months. We see that the authors were aware of the fact that this was a unique situation in the history of Jews and that it had to be recorded. We also see that they understood the importance of memory – they accepted that the nation might perish, but the memory should remain. It is extremely important, as we sometimes tend to banally repeat the saying that history is written by the winners. They did not want it to happen. The history was to be recorded by those sentenced to death.

The text included in these testaments which is the most shocking for me – though it is difficult to say what does not shock there – these are the words of the 19 years old boy who notes that they are already taking the people from the neighbouring street, that everything is unexpected, that he and his friends performed an enormous task and his request: remember, I’m Nachum Grzywacz. This request constitutes what remains – the archive preserved not only the tragedy of this death, but also names and surnames. Very specific people perished with very specific biographies – for the authors of the archives it constituted a must to show it.

The exhibition has already been inaugurated. In the nearest future, what will constitute crucial elements in the context of making the Ringelblum archive available to the public?

We are soon going to finish the publishing of the archive. There are a few more volumes. The translation of its entire content into English will also be crucial – it is a real way to make it publicly available, through posting it on the Internet. We will for sure be organizing workshops and lessons about this archive with people representing different environments. In Poland the archive is not really well known – it is not popular in the rest of the world either. The importance of the archive is not as appreciated as it should be. Maybe we will also be able to show a similar exhibition all over the world. First in Toronto. I hope that showing this work to the public will matter.
The IHRA founded in Stockholm 1998 unites governments and experts from 31 member countries to strengthen, advance and promote Holocaust education, remembrance and research worldwide and to uphold the commitments of the 2000 Stockholm Declaration. The chairmanship changes each year, with Switzerland holding the chairmanship in 2017. Early on, IHRA chose to include in its work the topic of the genocide of the Roma.

With the Bern conference, the IHRA has now turned to another topic of great importance for the understanding of the history of the Holocaust: the mass murder of people with disabilities and the continuities and parallels to the mass murder of Jews.

In the conference, we examined the ideological and historical context of the Holocaust, that included crimes against and mass murder of other groups of people the National Socialists deemed unfit to live. The conference aimed to draw lines of continuity and parallels in eastern and western European territories occupied by National Socialist Germany.

Before entering into the history of the crimes perpetrated in occupied Europe, two presentations covered the starting point for the so-called “Euthanasia” and mass murder of psychiatric patients: Regula Argast, Switzerland, shed light on the Swiss roots of Eugenic thinking and examined what role Swiss eugenacists played in the propagation of eugenics, as well as the links between Swiss eugenics and Nazi racial hygiene.

Starting with an explanation of crimes committed against peoples with disabilities, most of them psychiatric patients, in the German Reich and Austria, Paul Weindling, Great Britain, called for strengthening the remembrance of the victims of those crimes. Due to data protection problems, their names are rarely made public and therefore these specific victims of National Socialist rule tend to be more forgotten than others.
“Whereas Holocaust victims are commemorated by name, the situation for commemorating Nazi victims with mental and physical disabilities remains fragmented,” stated Paul Weindling.

The conference continued with a focus on Western and Eastern occupied Europe. The situation in the west was discussed using the examples of France and the Netherlands. While there was no centrally organised murder of psychiatric patients in the Netherlands, Cecile aan de Stegge pointed out the extremely high mortality rate in psychiatric hospitals - more than 10% - while the mortality rate within the Dutch population at large reached only 2.5% in the same time period between 1940 and 1945.

Jewish patients, doctors and medical staff were deported and most of them were murdered. A similar situation occurred in France where the mortality rate of psychiatric patients rose significantly due to starvation. But the intention to murder people with disabilities by starvation cannot be found, as Isabelle von Bueltzingsloewn explained.

An entirely different situation was to be seen in occupied territories in Eastern Europe as the presentations on Bohemia and Moravia, Poland and the Baltic states showed. Concerning Czechoslovakia, as Michal Simunek pointed out, the German occupiers made a distinction between inhabitants of German origin, who were included in the Action T4 and therefore murdered in Hartheim and Pirna-Sonnenstein, and people of Czech origin who were excluded.
Jewish patients were either murdered in the wake of T4 or concentrated in special hospitals and later probably deported to extermination/concentration camps.

In contrast, in Poland psychiatric patients were shot by SS units from the very beginning of the German occupation as Filip Marcinowski explained. Later, the National Socialist occupiers resorted to killing patents in gas vans, and other patients were deported to Auschwitz-Birkenau and murdered there.

Though occupied later during the attack on the Soviet Union in 1941, a similar picture can be seen in the Baltic states, as shown by Björn Felder, where the extermination of people with disabilities started immediately after occupation with random mass shootings in parallel with the murder of the Jewish population.

In the subsequent panel, Sara Berger presented the results of her study on the activities of the T4 staff - the perpetrators of the mass murder of the people with disabilities in the German Reich and Austria - during Aktion Reinhardt later on. They used their experience in mass killings to murder the Jews deported to the extermination camps.
This being a clear continuity, the context of the murder of people with disabilities and the Holocaust is quite complex: Jewish patients were included in the Aktion T4 and later on in Operation T13 (the murder of concentration camp inmates in killing facilities of the Aktion T4).

Jewish patients were also murdered during the mass killings in occupied eastern Europe and the methods of killings used point to the interconnectedness of these crimes. But the differences in motivation for these killings need to be considered alongside possible similarities. There is much research still to be done as Yehuda Bauer, Honorary Chairman of the IHRA and renowned expert on the history of the Holocaust, noted in his final statement in which he gave an impressive overview on the context of these killings within the history and ideology of the Third Reich.

The conference ended with presentations on pedagogical work done by institutions like Hartheim Memorial (Austria), Hadamar Memorial and Topographie des Terrors (both Germany), Yad Vashem (Israel) and the Danish Institute for International Studies.

Conference materials will be published by IHRA Alliance in 2019

www.holocaustremembrance.com
It was a dramatic moment. The Soviet army broke through German defenses and advanced on Buczacz and its environs, liberating the area on 23 March 1944. Some 800 Jews, a tiny fraction of the original Jewish community, emerged from hiding. Among them was historian Dr. Josef Kermisz, who had fled Warsaw to his native Eastern Galicia early in the war and had survived the last five months in hiding nearby with a Polish Christian friend. The Soviet commanders quickly identified the 36-year-old Kermisz, drafted him, and sent him to teach at the officers’ training school in Zhitomir, further east. However, the Soviets held Buczacz for only eleven days. In a counter-offensive, the Germans retook Buczacz on 3 April and immediately shot the “liberated” Jews. The Soviets finally liberated the town on 21 July. Kermisz had survived by coincidence.

The Soviet army then advanced rapidly westward, liberating Lublin on 23 July 1944. Kermisz got himself transferred there in September, was discharged, and immediately joined Dr. Philip Friedman and Nachman Blumenthal in a new project – recording Jewish survivor accounts in Lublin. Like Kermisz, Friedman and Blumenthal had survived the war in hiding. Their work in recording survivor accounts succeeded beyond their expectations, and by the end of 1945, the Jewish Historical Commission in Lublin had recorded some 1,500 testimonies.

All three historians went on to make a seminal contribution to laying the foundations for Holocaust research – Friedman eventually became a professor at Columbia University; Blumenthal directed the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw and then worked in research and publications at Yad Vashem; and Kermisz became Director of the Archive at the Jewish Historical Institute.
and then the Institute's Deputy Director – followed by his appointment as the first Director of Yad Vashem's Archives. The survivor testimony project these three men organized recorded some 7,300 survivor accounts in Poland by the end of 1947.

One of their important partners in organizing the Jewish Historical Institute was Rachel Auerbach, a writer and journalist who had been active in the “Oneg Shabbat” underground archive led by Dr. Emanuel Ringelblum. Auerbach had also survived in hiding – on the “Aryan” side of Warsaw. While still in the ghetto, she recorded one of the most important early survivor testimonies – the 323-page account by Treblinka escapee Yaakov Krzepicki – between 28 December 1942 and 7 March 1943. She, too, became a central figure in the Jewish Historical Institute, where she developed standards for recording survivor testimony and later became the first head of Yad Vashem’s Oral History Department.

Parallel to this, on November 28, 1945, Yisrael Kaplan, a survivor from Lithuania, co-founded and directed the Central Historical Commission of She’erit HaPletah, based in Munich, in the American zone of occupied Germany. In the following three years, the commission’s staff recorded more than 2,500 survivor accounts.

Parallel projects organized by survivors were undertaken in Paris and Budapest at the same time, as well as by Leib Koniuchowsky, who recorded the detailed accounts of survivors in Lithuania. Many thousands of survivor accounts were written as a result of all the above projects, and much additional documentation was collected to build these early Shoah archives.

As mentioned above, Kermisz, Blumenthal and Auerbach became central figures in Yad Vashem from its founding. Friedman maintained close contact with Yad Vashem until his untimely death.
in 1960, directing a joint documentary project between Yad Vashem and YIVO in New York and contributing seminal methodological articles to the early issues of Yad Vashem Studies. Kaplan’s Historical Commission archive became one of the important early collections deposited in Yad Vashem’s Archive, recruited by Kermisz, and Koniuchowsky donated his collection to Yad Vashem in 1989.

Other survivors also played central roles in promoting the recording of survivor testimony and developing the archive at Yad Vashem and research methods. Among these were Dr. Shaul Esh, who escaped Germany on the eve of WWII and became Yad Vashem’s first Publications Editor and Editor of Yad Vashem Studies; Dr. Nathan Eck, a survivor from Warsaw who was involved in research and edited the Yad Vashem Bulletin and later briefly edited Yad Vashem Studies; and Dr. Meir (Mark) Dworzecki, a survivor from Vilna, who was a member of the Yad Vashem Directorate and established the first Israeli chair in Holocaust studies at Bar-Ilan University.

Initiative, luck, and sometimes the assistance of others had helped these people survive the Holocaust, and remarkable vision had led them to jump into recording survivor accounts immediately after liberation and to lay the foundations for Holocaust research. Their seminal role in laying these foundations cannot be overestimated, and their legacy lives on in the work performed in Yad Vashem and many academic institutions around the world to this day.

The article was originally published at the "Yad Vashem Magazine".
30 YEARS INVOLVEMENT OF VOLKSWAGEN AG AT THE AUSCHWITZ MEMORIAL

An exhibition titled “Eine deutliche Spur” (Visible traces) was presented in Berlin on the occasion of 30 years of cooperation between the Auschwitz Museum, Volkswagen Group and the International Auschwitz Committee.

The ceremonial inauguration of the exposition, which took place on 29 November 2017 was attended by Sigmar Gabriel Vice-Chancellor and German Minister of Foreign, CEO of Volkswagen Group Matthias Müller, Vice-Chairperson of the International Auschwitz Committee Christoph Heubner, deputy director of the Auschwitz Museum Andrzej Kacorzyk, representatives of the International Youth Meeting Centre and students of Volkswagen vocational schools.

In addition to historical photos, the exhibition presents young people from Germany and Poland assisting during conservation works at the former German Nazi concentration and extermination camp Auschwitz II-Birkenau and during meetings with witnesses of history - former prisoners of the Auschwitz concentration camp.

‘As a society, but also as an enterprise, we must take a serious approach to our responsibility for democracy and freedom. I am saying this at a time when populism and nationalistic thinking are contravening the foundations of a united Europe. In the future, Volkswagen will continue
In a letter addressed to those present at the ceremonial opening, the director of the Auschwitz Museum, Dr. Piotr M.A. Cywiński, wrote: “Hundreds of volunteers from Volkswagen schools support our work by performing a number of tasks including; tidying up the premises of the former camp, maintaining infrastructure at the conservation workshops, preparing buildings for conservation works, and other technical areas of our Museum. It suffices to say that more than 20 thousand pieces of shoes belonging to victims have been secured by your students in recent years, and several other buildings have been prepared for conservation works. These visits perfectly combine voluntary work with lectures, guided tours and historical reflections, which makes them a formation tool that becomes embedded in the awareness of your future employees. I believe, that in this way a truly clever and well-thought ethos of your company is sculpted, capable of uniquely transforming the dramatic past into positive thinking about the future, on a global scale."

"For 30 years, we have developed a deep cooperation in this area that has no analogy in time between companies rooted in the history of the Third Reich and any other institution of memory about the victims. I firmly believe that the result of these efforts is equally well perceived by people at VW and by us, museums of memory" - director Cywiński wrote.

Since 1987, over 3,000 young Germans and Poles, students of the Volkswagen vocational schools have been helping the Auschwitz Memorial. Together, they help in preserving the authenticity of the Auschwitz Memorial: remove weeds, assist in installing barbed wire to the post-camp fence, support specialists of the Memorial in the conservation of shoes belonging to the camp, among others.

Thanks to the partnership with Volkswagen and the International Auschwitz Committee, it was possible to organise several significant international educational events, renovate of lecture halls as well as release several important publications, including a collection of ten books with memories of Auschwitz survivors prepared on the 70th anniversary of the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum.

Transport vehicles donated by the Volkswagen Group supports our conservators, and buses transport hundreds of thousands of visitors from across the world between the former Auschwitz I and Auschwitz II-Birkenau camps.
In October, ten students and six staff from New College Worcester, a college for blind and partially sighted young people in the UK, visited Krakow so that they could learn at first hand about the Holocaust and the stories of the people affected.

On the first day of our trip we had a meeting with Holocaust survivor Lydia who told us about her experiences as a young child in the Birkenau camp. This was thought-provoking and emotional as we heard how small acts of kindness made the difference between life and death for so many people.

This meeting prepared us for our visit to the camps. We felt it was very important to research and prepare, so that we could make the most of our visit.

Even so, the visit had a huge impact on all of us. Here are some of the impressions from the students:

Paige says: “The best part of the trip for me was visiting Auschwitz, because it was inspiring. There aren’t really words, but it was a humbling experience because it brought home their experiences, and the reality of it. Standing in the exact spot where people
died, it was incredible. One of the things that moved me the most was the cases of hair. It showed the lack of humanity shown by the Nazis, and emphasised the sheer number of people affected and imprisoned.

I think that the thing which I will take from the trip is a much better understanding of what these people endured. There are things that you can’t learn from a textbook. If there is evil in the world then it is there, but we also learned how they tried to fight back. When you learn about the Holocaust at school, you just look at the events. This trip allowed me to realise the impact that it had afterwards, like the girl who didn’t know how to play.”

Paige also said that standing in the gas chamber had a huge impact on her, more than some of the exhibits which are behind glass as you can’t experience those directly. You get a real sense of what it must have been like, not like being in a classroom.

Sean shivered. Not because of the cold but because of the ideas running through his head. He says that the experience spoke to his empathy and stayed with him for a good while afterwards.

Some of the students who have a little sight described how they could not see the end of the railway track, and the massive tracts of land in the camp. This gave them the same feeling that Sean described, especially when we went into the stone buildings.

The word they used to describe their feelings was ‘tainted’. I think by this they meant that the memory of the emotions they felt will never leave them, and their awareness of the darkness and the sadness and the evil that took place. Several of the students have said how important it is now for them to be witnesses, as there are now so few people left alive who experienced the Holocaust first hand.

We have now been back from our trip for two months, but our memories are still strong. We are preparing an assembly so that we can share our story with the rest of the students at our college and bear witness to what we have experienced.
In his Nobel Lecture, Elie Wiesel wrote this: ‘without memory, our existence would be barren and opaque, like a prison cell into which no light penetrates, like a tomb which rejects the living [...] It is memory that will save humanity. For me, hope without memory is like memory without hope.’
I recently visited Poland with a group of Christians from around the UK. The purpose was to engage with aspects of Jewish history in Krakow by learning more about the experience of the Jewish community during the Holocaust, and by visiting Auschwitz.

We toured Kazimierz, the old Jewish quarters, where we sat in the Remuh Synagogue, one of only two still active synagogues in the city. We visited Wavel Castle, where Nazi Governor General Hans Frank had his headquarters. We walked through the area of the city which was turned into the ghetto and from where tens of thousands of Jews were rounded up and sent to concentration camps.

The former administrative building of Oscar Schindler’s factory now houses an excellent museum dedicated to the history of Krakow occupied by German Nazis. At the site of the former concentration camp of Plaszow, cabbage white butterflies flitted in and out of the branches of small oak trees. A few Jewish headstones, used by the Nazis to lay roads and the foundations of camp huts, are the only evidence of what this peaceful green landscape was once used for.

On the final day of our tour we visited Auschwitz. We walked round both camps in silence for most of the time, punctuated only by the narration of our guide. As we stood at the infamous “Arbeit Macht Frei” gates, a church bell sounded twelve times.

It plodded out its daily duty, ringing clearly across from the nearby town, just as it must have done seventy five years ago as men and women walked through these gates, most never to leave.

It is impossible to put into words what it is like to walk round a death camp, feeling physically weighed down by the increasingly heavy knowledge of what took place on this very spot. It is also difficult to convey something of how much the experience of visiting Auschwitz is like nothing else. This is not simply a museum or a place of commemoration. This is a place where people were killed, not—as I have heard people suggest—because of one man’s hatred but because of the hate, indifference, and complicity of countless ordinary individuals.
I know many people who say they cannot visit Auschwitz because it would be too much. I have deep respect for this view. I also understand that many feel uncomfortable with the way in which Auschwitz has become a place that anyone can easily visit, take photographs, or purchase books and postcards.

But this is not a place like any other. And the millions of people who visit Auschwitz every year visit this place for a different reason than any other tourist place. Yes, I felt like some people were not as respectful of the site as they could have been. I was uneasy filing in and out of barracks with not enough time to stop and pause and truly come to terms with where I was. It was uncomfortable knowing that in just a few hours I could leave and travel back to a comfortable hotel room and a delicious meal in a beautiful city.

I also felt encouraged. I was heartened by the length of the queues of visitors—groups, families, students, travellers on their own. Because for every person who visits Auschwitz, there is another person who has seen and who has heard difficult truths.
CCJ’s work in Holocaust education is founded on the belief that Christians need to engage with the challenges of history, both for its own sake and for the sake of making the future the best that it can be. Visiting sites connected to the Holocaust is an essential part of this endeavour. So too is meeting survivors of the Holocaust. We feel very privileged that next month Eva Schloss MBE will speak to alumni of our Yad Vashem programme. Eva survived Auschwitz and her story is an inspiring testimony to the power of making a difference.

At a time when antisemitism has reached record levels in the UK and as around the world hatred is given a platform by the rise of populism and the consent of politicians, those who see, who listen, and who remember history also have a moral responsibility to tell and never to forget.

The author is the Programme Manager at UK Council of Christians and Jews
“NANA” is an award-winning transgenerational documentary on Auschwitz survivor Maryla Michalowski-Dyamant. The film, directed by 25-year-old Serena Dykman, documents her journey with her mother Alice retracing her grandmother’s Auschwitz survival story, and investigating how her lifelong fight against intolerance can continue to be taught to the new generations, against the backdrop of current events.

Maryla Michalowski-Dyamant, Dykman’s grandmother, born in Będzin, Poland, survived Ravensbruck, Malchow, and Auschwitz-Birkenau, where she was the forced translator of the “Angel of Death”, Dr. Mengele. She dedicated her post-war life to publicly speaking of her survival to the young generations, so that it would never be forgotten or repeated.

Alice and Serena, her daughter and granddaughter, explore how Maryla’s activism and crucial message can continue today, in a world where survivors are disappearing, and intolerance, racism and anti-Semitism are on the rise.

Having our Polish premiere at the Auschwitz-Birkenau Museum and Memorial was very important to us. My grandmother’s story started in Bedzin, only 50 km away from the place that would change her life forever. We shot a part of the film in Auschwitz, and it simply makes sense to bring the film to this place of personal and historical significance. Through the documentary and the screening, we hope to be able to share Maryla’s story and crucial fight for remembrance with future generations.
I was inspired to make this documentary after reading my grandmother's memoir a couple of years ago. I realized that she was more than a survivor, more than a Polish Jew. The reason she went back to Auschwitz so frequently and told her story publicly thousands of times was so that it would never be forgotten, and would never happen to anyone again. Her activism and continuous fight against intolerance still lives today, 14 years after her death, through the thousands of people she touched, and now through NANA, she can continue her crucial work.

Mr. Tomasz Michaldo organized the screening for the museum staff and tour guides so that they could use Mrs. Michalowski-Dyamant’s first-hand testimony when giving tours. We couldn’t happier and more touched that Maryla’s testimony and work will keep having an impact on the many museum visitors. Both Maryla’s daughter Alice Michalowski, and myself were present at this powerful event.

NANA the recipient of multiple prestigious awards on the festival circuit, including the Leon Award for Best Documentary at the St. Louis International Film Festival, the Bill Snyder Award for Best Documentary Feature at the Fargo Film Festival, the Best Biography Award at the Palm Beach International Film Festival, the Silver Palm Award at the Mexico International Film Festival, the Mary Lerner Human Spirit Award at the Chagrin Documentary Film Festival, and the Mira Nair Award for Rising Female Filmmaker at the Harlem International Film Festival.

In addition to these, “NANA” was part of a festival for Human Rights, organized by Amnesty International in France, where it received the Audience Choice Special Mention, and screened all over the United States, including at the Museum of Jewish Heritage in New York.

Trailers, press, as well as more information about the film can be found on www.nanafilm.com.
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