REFLECTING ON 'MEMORY UNEARTHED: THE LITZMANNSTADT GHETTO PHOTOGRAPHS OF HENRYK ROSS'

A CHILD'S DRESS - A FAMILY MEMENTO OF A GIRL BORN IN AUSCHWITZ - DONATED TO THE MUSEUM COLLECTIONS

WOMEN UNDER NAZI PERSECUTION: PRIMARY SOURCE SUPPLEMENTS FROM THE INTERNATIONAL TRACING SERVICE

MAPPING THE HOLOCAUST: AN INTERDISCIPLINARY SCHOLARLY COLLABORATION

‘MEDICAL REVIEW - AUSCHWITZ’: MEDICINE BEHIND THE BARBED WIRE
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'Fate Unknown: The Search for the Missing After the Holocaust'
The March edition of "Memoria" shows how many tools we have to tell and research history. One one hand, we create exhibition such as the Litzmannstadt Ghetto Photographs by Henryk Ross presented in New York or the London Exhibition, showing the enormous post-war effort that was put into finding relatives by the survivors of the tragedy of the war.

These are also source publications, such as the book on the persecution of women by Nazi Germany prepared jointly by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, the International Tracing Service and the Wiener Library in London, the Holocaust Geographies Collaborative research project or the initiative of the Cracow Medical Association to recall the achievements of the "Medical Review",

We also write about the moving story of Maria Romik, born in the Auschwitz camp, who was released from the camp together with her mother Stefania, and who donated to the collections of the Auschwitz Memorial an extraordinary family memento - a children's dress that her mother sewed for her in 1944, after her release from the camp.

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

All editions: memoria.auschwitz.org
FASPE (Fellowships at Auschwitz for the Study of Professional Ethics) fellowship programs in Law, Business, Medicine, Journalism, and Seminary approach the study of the Holocaust in an intensive two-week program with a curriculum designed jointly by Yale, Columbia and Georgetown Universities. Now entering its ninth year, FASPE challenges graduate students and future leaders from different cultures and faiths to recognize and confront their ethical responsibilities in their chosen professions by analyzing decisions and actions of Nazi-era professionals and the part the various professions played in the measures that led to mass murder and the extermination itself.

Ancient Rome’s Emperor Titus isn’t a name that comes up at Holocaust events. Yet on March 5th, at the Fellowships at Auschwitz Ethical Leadership Awards Gala (FASPE) held at Manhattan’s Espace, 92 year old Marian Turski, survivor of the Lodz Ghetto, Auschwitz, Buchenwald, two death marches, and Theresienstadt, used this first century Roman to illustrate a moral conundrum involving historical evidence of the Warsaw Ghetto and linked it with FASPE’s role as ethical explorers.

READ MORE
Call for Participants: The International Centre for Education about Auschwitz and the Holocaust calls for enrollment to the 6th edition of the International Summer Academy in English, which will take place 4-10 August 2018 at the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum.

MORE DETAILS

Serge and Beate Klarsfeld are not only Europe's most famous Nazi hunters. For more than five decades, they've been the vigilante enforcers of the continent's moral conscience. Today they say they are horrified by the state of affairs in Europe and beyond: the rise of right-wing populist movements, and now governments, across the continent, often fueled by support from young voters.

READ MORE

The Holocaust Research Institute at Royal Holloway, University of London, invites applications for its Summer Institute on the Holocaust and Jewish Civilisation (2 – 11 July 2018). It is primarily aimed at PhD students and early career researchers. This programme is generously sponsored by the Holocaust Educational Foundation, Northwestern University, USA, and Pears Foundation.

MORE DETAILS

"Recent alarming events in Poland, most notably a law “protecting the reputation of the Polish nation” by criminalizing certain speech regarding the Holocaust, have led me to reflect on my own relationship with that country. It’s a relationship that spans three decades, dozens of visits, various negotiations — and the cultivation of many cherished friends and colleagues." writes Sara J. Bloomfield, USHMM Director.

READ MORE
It is Member Day at the Museum of Jewish Heritage – A Living Memorial to the Holocaust in New York, and the first Sunday that 'Memory Unearthed' is open to the public. Our tour group gathers just outside the gallery.

"I won’t compete with these voices," I say, gesturing above my head. "But I want to tell you what’s playing. You’re hearing survivor testimony about the Lodz Ghetto, from the Museum’s collection. You can also hear these testimonies inside."

Survivors’ voices draw us into the gallery. We step closer to the large projected image that is already partially visible.

Henryk Ross stands with fellow survivors, on the other side of the war, holding a box he has just unearthed - photos, negatives, and documents he buried in the Lodz Ghetto when he feared he would be deported and murdered in Auschwitz.

Ross had been put to work by the Nazi regime as a photographer for the Jewish Administration's Statistics Department ("NO CAMERAS ALLOWED," reads an announcement that was posted in the ghetto). He used his access to a camera and official position as cover, endangering his life to create "some record of our tragedy."

Approximately half of Ross's 6,000 negatives survived. Some of the nearly 200 photographs exhibited in 'Memory Unearthed' bear signs of moisture damage, of burial. Digitized photos scroll on a platform angled up from the gallery floor. Images, rising.

* This is the first time 'Memory Unearthed' has been exhibited at a Holocaust memorial museum. Some visitors move through the material as though along a thread of personal connection.

Down the hall, in New Dimensions in Testimony, a projection of Holocaust survivor Pinchas Gutter will tell you - when you ask him - that he was born in Lodz, Poland.

"My parents were in the Lodz Ghetto," a woman on the tour says. We pause in front of the map: 1.6 square miles. We discuss Ross' technique for preserving film.

"These are from Museum collections," I say regarding a case of artifacts. "A couple's identification cards and worker cards, a coupon for healthcare; here's a photo of the group wedding where they were married inside the Ghetto—"

"Those are my parents," the woman interrupts me, startled. She and her sisters donated these items years ago. Here they are, again, shifting the air.

Behind us, a photo by Ross: a man trudges through the snow, through the remains of the synagogue on Wolborska Street that was destroyed by the Nazis in 1939.

The woman tells us how her parents Rywka and Juda
The woman tells us how her parents Rywka and Juda Putersznyt (later Peters) survived.

* 

Ross’ photos of life in the Lodz Ghetto: the hunger; the birthday parties and wedding celebrations; encounters with the Judenrat; violence written onto bodies; the struggle to maintain a full life in a constricted zone; the pain of separation from family members.

“These photos are more difficult,” I say when we arrive at scenes of forced labor, of starvation. (More difficult than what?). I have to find a better way to prepare people for this material. (There is no preparation). The photos arrest - their moments, scenes, viewers.

* 

In the next stretch there is a video: excerpts from Memories of the Eichmann Trial (David Perlov, courtesy of IBA Film Archive, Ch. 1.). Henryk Ross and his wife Stefania reflect on their life in the Lodz Ghetto. Henryk shows how he concealed his camera in his overcoat. Stefania helped; she looked out for guards. Years later, Ross’ photos became evidence when he testified at the trial of Adolf Eichmann.

Ross went to Radegast Station only once - not only because of the danger, but also because he could not bring himself to keep watching people in lines being led to the train.

* 

The “memory portraits” in the final room ask us to remember not only how people died, but also how they lived. Ross took many of these pictures in the Ghetto’s early years. With few exceptions, the people in them knew that they were being photographed.

A young woman looks up from her book. A child sees his reflection in a mirror. A family poses stern-faced, formal. A couple gazes at each other, smiling. A woman wearing a yellow star looks us in the eye, her dignity a force.

We must also see them this way.
Miriam R. Haier is the Director of Strategy & Engagement at the Museum of Jewish Heritage – A Living Memorial to the Holocaust. 'Memory Unearthed: The Lodz Ghetto Photographs of Henryk Ross' is organized by the Art Gallery of Ontario. It is on display at the Museum of Jewish Heritage until June 2018.

mjhny.org
A child's dress - a unique personal memento related to the fates of Maria Podstawna (previously Romik) and her mother Stefania - was donated to the Auschwitz Museum Collections by Maria, who was born in the German Nazi Auschwitz camp on 22 July 1943. The dress was made by Stefania for her one-year-old daughter in 1944, just after their release from the camp.
The Germans arrested the pregnant Stefania Romik in the winter of 1942. “During the occupation, I was in Zakopane. In December 1942, I set out on a journey by train to Kraków. When the train arrived in Kraków, at the station in Borek Fałecki, it was encircled, and the passengers were instructed to get off, and taken to the Montelupich prison,” she wrote in her account.

She was deported to Auschwitz in January 1943 in a transport of 515 women from the prisons in Tarnów and Kraków. She was registered as number 32354. “We were led out on foot from the prison to the freight station, and after loading us onto the freight wagons with boarded windows, we set out on the journey not knowing where they were taking us to work. We arrived at night. We were ordered to alight from the train, and amidst screams, crying and beating, we were led to the camp. Soon after, at night, we were referred to the delousing room, where upon undressing and shaving our hair, we were led to the steam bath, then to a cold shower and from there to the hall, where we were registered and tattooed with numbers on the left forearm,” she recalled.

At the camp, Stefania Romik was subjected to back-breaking work, digging trenches in the village of Budy. “At 1:00 am, on 22 July 1943, I gave birth to my daughter Maria. A German prisoner - a midwife - delivered my baby. 10 days after delivery, a messenger arrived and ordered me to report to the doctor at the outpatient department. At the quarantine, a tall, stout and young SS doctor, seeing that I was debilitated, asked if my baby was alive. Having heard my confirmation, he referred me to the quarantine for a month. On 28 August, they released me and my child along with another pregnant woman from Przemyśl. We were led to the station and ordered to go to the head office of the Gestapo in Kraków,” she wrote.
Stefania Romik returned to Zakopane. Due to exhaustion caused by the camp conditions, the mother and daughter were treated in the hospital for several months. It was while at the hospital that Stefania Romik made a dress for her daughter using two different pieces of material, a dark green and multi-coloured material with irregular spots.

Maria Podstawna said she decided to donate the family memento during the 73rd anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz, in which she participated. “I did not attend previous anniversary meetings because I am prone to diseases. I preferred to watch it on television. However, this time around the weather was perfect. I have a fond memory of the anniversary and therefore decided that I will now attend it every year,” she said.

“I brought the dress with me to show it, but my friends and former prisoners persuaded me to leave it at the Museum as it is already in bad shape and the material is splitting apart in some areas. It is already 74 years old. I inherited it from my mother, but I think the Museum is now the right place for it,” she added.

“We should teach and tell the history of this place. My mother often met with pupils in schools and talked about her experiences. I, on the other hand, was only three months old - I only know my history from her stories,” emphasised Ms Podstawna.

The Director of the Auschwitz Museum, Dr. Piotr M.A. Cywiński, said that the Memorial is always the best place for various memorabilia and documents related to the camp history. “It is only here that they are legally protected, preserved and stored in the best possible conditions. But above all, they participate along with other collections and archival materials in the narrative history of the camp tragedy. Every object and document stored privately, unfortunately, remains in a sense beyond this history. For this reason, we are delighted with the attitude of many survivors and their families who - regardless of the great emotional attachment to various objects or documents - decide to donate their family memorabilia to the Museum, such as this unusual dress which dates back over 70 years."
The bibliography of the medicine practised in Nazi German concentration camps is extremely abundant as regards publications, both in Poland and worldwide. Research in Kraków on the medical, psychological, and social consequences of the Second World War and its death camps started in the 1950s, and its results were published in Przegląd Lekarski – Oświęcim (PL-O; English title 'Medical Review – Auschwitz') a unique journal of inestimable value for its scientific content and as a historical record.

In the 1950s a group of medical practitioners from Kraków embarked on a research project on concentration camp survivors and published their results in PL-O. They worked under the patronage of the Kraków Medical Society and its successive presidents: Professor Józef Bogusz, Professor Maria Rybakowa, and Professor Igor Gościński. The research was first carried out in the Psychiatric Clinic of the Kraków Medical Academy, and subsequently in the Social Pathology Department of the Chair of Psychiatry at the Jagiellonian University Medical College.

The head of the team of researchers was Professor Zdzisław J. Ryn, and its members were medical practitioners and psychiatrists Andrzej Jakubik, Małgorzata Dominik, Elżbieta Leśniak, Roman Leśniak, Józef K. Gierowski, Janusz Heitzman, and Aleksander B. Skotnicki. The results of their work were published in 460 books and papers. Their pioneering studies launched a long series of research on the psychiatric aspects of "KZ Syndrome", the post-concentration camp syndrome now recognized as a form of PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder).

Successive numbers of the journal started appearing shortly after the project was launched. They were edited by Professor Józef Bogusz (1904–1993)², Professor Antoni Kępiński (1918–1972)³, Dr. Stanisław Kłodziński, MD (1918–1990)⁴, and Jan Mastowski, M.A., (1931–2012)⁶, who replaced Dr. Piotr Bożek on the board of editors. Prof. Zdzisław J. Ryn was an associate of the editors, two of whom had personal experience of incarceration in a concentration camp. Professor Kępiński had been held in Miranda de Ebro (Spain), and Dr. Kłodziński was an Auschwitz and Mauthausen survivor. In Auschwitz he had worked as a medical orderly, helping sick prisoners. In January 1945 he was transferred to Mauthausen.

With the passage of time the journal built up a reputation as one of the main sources of information on the pathologies associated with the war and concentration camps.

31 volumes were published between 1961–1991, with a total of 7,200 pages containing 1,050 papers by 477 authors, covering a broad range of subjects. The main issues were medical and legal; philosophical and ethical; systems of extermination; questions relating to the health of concentration camp inmates, including starvation, disease and pseudo-medical experiments; repressive measures against the educated classes; the oppression and murder of children; problems associated with reparations and compensation; the oppression and murder of Polish, Jewish, Roma, and Russian nationals, and prisoners of many other nationalities; and the biographies of medical
which will be held in Kraków on May 9, 2018. The conference is being organized by TLK and Medycyna Praktyczna publishers, in cooperation with the Jagiellonian University and the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum at Oświęcim. The conference is on the medical, psychological and social consequences of the repressive measures practiced in the Nazi German concentration camps. It is primarily addressed to the international medical community, because it will carry a message of fundamental importance for contemporary medical ethics. Its organizers hope it will help the international community develop a better understanding of the sinister chapter contributed to the history of medicine by the Nazi German concentration camps - a chapter which should be a lesson for future generations.

Roman Niewiarowicz has said that in the concentration camps medicine literally entered in articulo mortis (at the point of death).
"The eyes of tens of thousands of inmates were fixed on the doctors in the camp, their only recourse for medical treatment and assistance. The doctors worked under an enormous amount of pressure, never encountered anywhere else, from their sense of commitment and responsibility. When all else failed, a prisoner's last resort and hope was that a Polish doctor might dispense treatment and help him survive."

Professor Kępiński was a far-sighted visionary when he wrote that, “The Nazi Germans did not achieve their aim, they did not cleanse the world despite the millions of victims, […] but they demonstrated what the outcome of a crazy ideology might be. Let us hope that the smoke of Auschwitz will be a warning for people not to become overwhelmed and blinded by hatred and contempt for other people. Ready-made formulas for thought and action and blind obedience to orders may bring very dangerous consequences, and that is why we must take full responsibility for our thoughts, emotions, and deeds. […] The anus mundi of the concentration camps revealed the full range of human nature – from barbaric cruelty to heroism, love, and self-sacrifice." 8 The aim of the 'Medical Review - Auschwitz' Project is to show these two faces of humanity in the medical context.

Bibliography

The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM), the International Tracing Service (ITS), and The Wiener Library have launched the first in a series of primary source supplements based on documents from the ITS digital collections. The three institutions are working in partnership to design these new educational resources available to all, but with particular attention to the needs of university undergraduate course syllabi in order to support instructors who want to utilize primary source material to teach about the Holocaust.

The Allied powers established the ITS after World War II to help reunite families separated during the war and to trace missing relatives. Millions of pages of captured documentation have been repurposed for tracing, and the ITS has continued to grow as new records, both originals and copies, have been deposited within its collections. For decades, the ITS strove not only to clarify the fates of victims of the Nazis but also to provide survivors and victims’ families with the documentation necessary for indemnification claims. In November 2007, the archive was made accessible to scholars and other researchers and both tracing and scholarly research continues today onsite at the ITS in Bad Arolsen, Germany, as well as at seven digital copyholders around the world. The USHMM and The Wiener Library are two such institutions.

The first publication in this series, "Women under Nazi Persecution," is now available on each of the partners’ websites for free download, and at least three more will follow in the near future. This publication is part of an effort to make primary source documentation available for pedagogical work in university courses and other settings and to raise awareness of the ITS archive’s unique holdings and powerful research potential.
Each supplement includes an introductory essay authored by an expert on a given topic and presents an assortment of ITS-original documents that support the theme. Descriptions, translations (as necessary), and questions for pedagogical work are included, as well as historical photographs from the USHMM and The Wiener Library’s collections and a list of suggested reading.

"Women under Nazi Persecution" comprises seven documents on various topics concerning the particular experience of women. Rebecca Boehling, former director of the ITS and professor of history at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County, wrote the introductory essay for the supplement, in which she described a society dominated by the “Herrenrasse” (superior race) and a so-called Aryan ideal to be the ultimate goal of National Socialism. The pseudoscientific ideological qualifications of “master race” doomed anyone determined to be “racially unworthy” to lead subordinate lives as “Untermenschen” (subhuman) or to die. Men deemed “of good racial stock” were to procreate; men of “inferior stock” were prevented from doing so by sterilization. Women of “good racial” quality were required to give birth to “racially valuable” children; the rest had to abort their “racially useless” offspring.

This concept simply reduced men and women to biological roles they were forced to take to contribute to the future biological success of National Socialist society, willing or not. It also stripped individuals of their right to decide whether to have children, as the state held the power to make the choice on their behalf. They became subjects of the state and their children, in turn, became its property.

Documents relating to the persecution of Barbara Koscielniak (presented in the supplement) serve as a good example. The Nazis deported Koscielniak to Würzburg, Germany, where she lived and worked in a camp as a Polish forced laborer. She became pregnant with the child of fellow Pole Zbigniec Konaki, a male forced laborer. Koscielniak was fully aware of her situation: she knew she would not have the time to care for a child because she had to continue to work for the state, and she did not want her child placed in the care of a German institution.
She decided to seek an abortion and placed a formal request with the appropriate authorities. She may have expected her request to be granted, as she was poorly treated while living and toiling as a forced laborer in Würzburg, but the SS authorities denied her petition. They argued that they expected her child to be “racially valuable” and therefore her pregnancy would not be terminated. Their determination went further to outline that she would not care for the child but rather he or she was to be placed in a German home for “racially valuable” infants.

Koscielniak’s predicament shows the contradictions of the Nazi system: although she was regarded as racially and socially inferior, her offspring could be seen as biologically valuable. How might the child of a “subhuman” potentially belong to the “master race?” And how can it be true that a mother should have had no say regarding her child’s future? The state held all the power in determining both.

Barbara Koscielniak’s documents exemplify the practical reality of one woman and mother’s situation under a state that assumed the right to (re)define womanhood and motherhood. The party apparatus itself took charge of foreign laborers’ pregnancies and the resultant children through directives and instructions issued to subordinate offices of the Volkswohlfahrt (literally, the people’s welfare) organization throughout the Reich, as illustrated by another document included in the “Women under Nazi Persecution” supplement. This official Nazi memorandum outlined the rules to be followed regarding foreign laborers’ children. A “racially inferior” child who had been placed in a national welfare organization’s children’s home was to be released and accommodated in a nursery for the offspring of foreign laborers; babies in such nurseries often died within a few months. An Ostarbeiterin (literally, “Eastern” female worker; female Soviet laborer) who applied to terminate a pregnancy was to be granted automatic permission if the child’s father was determined to be “racially non-German.” The same rule applied to Polish laborers who sought an abortion, but if the child’s father was “racially German,” the child was to be examined for potential “Germanizability,” and if positively evaluated, he or she would be conditioned to enter German society.

Foreign forced laborers were thus stuck in the dialectics of Nazi logic: they were not permitted to have a “racially unworthy” child but were not allowed to keep a “racially valuable” one. German families faced another dilemma: they had to raise a “racially valuable” child but part with a baby Nazi authorities deemed unworthy. The state took absolute power over the lives and bodies, sexuality, children, and identities of its people.

The next in the series of ITS primary source supplement will present and contextualize “The Camp System,” to be followed shortly thereafter by one on Roma and Sinti and another with a focus on Displaced Persons.

“Women under Nazi Persecution” can be downloaded for free via this link.

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An die
NSDAP-Gauleitung Mainfranken,
Amt für Volkswohlfahrt,
Würzburg,
-----------------
Fritz Schilling-Haus.

Betreff: Behandlung der von ausländischen Arbeiterinnen im Reich geborenen Kinder.

Die Polin Barbara Koscielniak, geb. 4.3.1918 in Pomiesze, wohnhaft in Würzburg-Frauenland, Zeppelin-Strasse (Polenlager), erwartet ein Kind (6. Monat), dessen Erzeuger der Pole Zbigniew Komski, geb. 22.10.1921 in Przemysl, wohnhaft in Würzburg, Eckstrasse (Polenlager), ist.

Einen von der Kindesmutter gestellten Antrag auf Schwangerschaftsunterbrechung wurde nicht stattgegeben, weil mit einem rassisch guten Nachwuchs zu rechnen ist.

Ich bitte, nach der Geburt des Kindes dieses in die Betreuung der NSV für gutrassige Kinder zu übernehmen.

I.A.

4-Hauptsturmführer.
What new information can we learn from using mapping and geography to examine spaces and places of the Holocaust?

In 2007, an interdisciplinary group of scholars with interest in both the Holocaust and geography came together for a two-week summer workshop at the Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies (CAHS) at the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington D.C. Their goal was ambitious: to expand our understanding of the Shoah by employing key geographic concepts of location, scale, space, place, and territoriality. Among them, there were specialists in history, Holocaust, and genocide studies (Dr. Waitman Beorn; Dr. Simone Gigliotti; Dr. Anna Holian), geography and social history (Prof. Tim Cole; Prof. Alberto Giordano; Dr. Anne Kelly Knowles), art history (Prof. Paul Jaskot), geographic information science (GIScience), interactive information visualizations, and cartography (Erik B. Steiner).

Bringing together diverse set of methodologies and expertise, they set out to answer questions about the study of the Holocaust that few had asked before: “how much insight and understanding one can gain by asking spatial questions and employing spatial methods to investigate even the most familiar subjects in the history of the Holocaust” and “how spatial analysis and geographical visualization of the built environment and forced movement of people during the Holocaust might inspire new research questions and pedagogical applications". Indeed, this was the first major attempt at defining and operationalizing "geographies of the Holocaust".

Since the spatio-temporal focus of the study lends itself well to visualization, the affordances of GIScience became central to setting priorities and defining broad themes for the group’s research. Questions of “when?” and “where?” studied at different levels of scale - from individual to collective - allowed the scholars to generate visualizations that “combine multiple variables, display change over time, and combine and manipulate information from huge sets of statistical data”1. This, in turn, allowed “for a wide range of new analytical approaches to even the most familiar evidence from the period.” In
new analytical approaches to even the most familiar evidence from the period. In other words, the Holocaust Geography Collaborative culls from historical data sets (like the Holocaust Museum archives and Registry of Survivors databases) to then capture, represent, and qualitatively and quantitatively analyze its geographic aspects, which in turn serve as a starting point for new original academic inquiries.

While the scope of this research is broad, the group decided to focus on six themes that, in turn, constituted the basis of their 2014 book ‘Geographies of the Holocaust’: the spatio-temporal aspects of the Nazi concentration camp system in Europe; the arrests during the Holocaust in Italy; the spatialities of the Shoah in the East; the shifting geography of the Budapest Ghetto; the materiality of construction and physical rendering of the spaces of power in Auschwitz-Birkenau; as well as the visual representation of evacuations from Auschwitz-Birkenau in January 1945.

Constantly zooming in and out between different levels of scale, authors engage with notions of national, regional, local, and individual/personal experiences of time and place. As a result, this “geography of oppression” allows us to understand the Shoah as a “profoundly geographical phenomenon.”

Each case study featured in the book ‘Geographies of the Holocaust’ highlights a collaboration between at least one Holocaust historian and a technically expert geographer. While all the chapters share the methodology of exploring data from visual and textual records through visualization, they operate at different levels of scale. For example, the chapter “Visualizing the Archive: Building at Auschwitz as a Geographic Problem” zooms in on a particular location: Auschwitz-Birkenau.
While the history of Auschwitz I, Auschwitz II, and Auschwitz III is well-known, authors point to a significant gap in our understanding of “what happened between the finalization of plans for the spaces of genocide and the ultimate use of those spaces, as exemplified by the SS urban schemes, on the one hand, and the photographs of Hungarian Jews, on the other.”

To enrich our understanding of the physical development of the camp, they engage with spatial modeling and analysis on the level of particular barracks and camp buildings:

“A digital model of the whole built environment, including both the concentration camp and the spaces used and inhabited by the perpetrators, gives rise to a new conception of Auschwitz as a city, all of whose complex functions were part of the Nazis’ imperial, genocidal mission. Adding time to the camp model through map animation of a buildings database suggests that the construction of Birkenau and the SS environs as a whole may have created chaotic periods that enabled prisoner escapes. Seeing which structures were built according to plan or in response to the exigencies of genocide further complicates our understanding of the built environment.” (Anne Kelly Knowles, Tim Cole, Alberto Giordano, eds. Geographies of the Holocaust (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2014), 12.)

“Terrain of encoded memories. Aggregating letters from six testimonies and locating traumatic incidents according to route path coordinates reveals the literal verbal density of memories of the experience. The resulting terrain of encoded memories was uneven across the landscape, raising questions about the relationship between space, proximity, and trauma: Why is the geography of memory irregular? How did the landscape shape affective and sensory memory? What memories have been lost in the gaps without testimony? What might those silences signify?” Visualization by Gigliotti, Masurovsky, and Steiner. Source: Anne Kelly Knowles, Tim Cole, Alberto Giordano, eds. Geographies of the Holocaust (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2014).

Alternatively, the next chapter, “From the Camp to the Road: Representing the Evacuations from Auschwitz, January 1945” 5 follows Auschwitz-Birkenau prisoners on January 1945 death marches. In order to engage with physical and emotional landscapes of survivors’ traumatic experiences, authors focus on “the intimate scale of individual bodies in space and time.” They map personal testimony “to reconstruct the routes of evacuations and transmute recorded memories into visual representations of emotional experience”.6 Since its inception in 2007, the Collaborative has partnered with the USC Shoah Foundation Center for Advanced Genocide Research, the Spatial History Project at Stanford University, and the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. It has received funding and support from National Endowment for the Humanities, National Science Foundation, USC Shoah Foundation, and United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

LEARN MORE:
Holocaust Geographies Collaborative website
By 1945, Europe was in chaos and millions were displaced by war and genocide. For many Holocaust survivors, the possibility of finding loved ones was a primal need and took precedence over everything else. As a result, a number of charities including the British Red Cross Society and the Jewish Relief Unit, came together in what became known as the International Tracing Service (ITS) in an attempt to help find missing people and reunite families.

A new exhibition at The Wiener Library - Britain’s largest archive of material on the Nazi era - hopes to bring the remarkable history of ITS to much greater public attention by recounting instances of discovery and reunion, as well as cases that remain unresolved to this day.

Leslie Kleinman

One of the remarkable stories highlighted in the exhibition is that of Lázár Kleinman who was born 29 May 1929 in Ambud, Romania, into an Orthodox Jewish family of eight children. After Hungary occupied northern Transylvania in 1940, his family’s life was brutally upended. In 1944, his father was deported and he and his family were put into a ghetto from which they were deported from which they were deported to Auschwitz-Birkenau. Although only fourteen, Leslie claimed he was older and as a result was selected for work.

After surviving several camps, Kleinman was found by the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA) after the war and placed in the Kloster Indersdorf children’s home before being taken to England in 1946. As part of the 'Fate Unknown' exhibition series, The Wiener Library will welcome Mr Kleinman for a lunchtime talk about his experiences during the Holocaust and his story of survival.
#StolenMemory

The exhibition also features two personal items on loan from the International Tracing Service in Bad Arolsen; earrings and a pocket watch belonging to Ilona Lencse and Emil Glass respectively, which were confiscated on their arrival at Neuengamme concentration camp.

Emil Glass (1896 – death unknown) was a Hungarian Jew who was given Neuengamme prisoner number 65210. While Glass has not been assigned a Tracing and Documentation number, indicating that the ITS has received no enquiries about him, Ilona Lencse (1923 - 2012) was liberated from Salzwedel (a subcamp of Neuengamme) in April 1945. She wrote to the ITS in 1999 to request documents about her persecution; however, the return of personal items was not prioritised under the ITS’ administration at this time and her earrings were not returned.

Personal items like these are often the last tangible evidence of an individual’s life, and while have no significant material value, possess great emotional significance for the relatives of the original owners. The Wiener Library hopes that the exhibition will expose the ongoing search for descendants to even wider audiences, and raise awareness of the ITS’ active mission to reunited families and objects via its #StolenMemory campaign.

‘Fate Unknown: The Search for the Missing after the Holocaust' runs until 30 May 2018 and has been created with the support of the Royal Holloway Research Strategy Fund, the Leverhulme Trust, the International Tracing Service and the German History Society.

For more information about the exhibition and the accompanying programme of evening events please visit this link.