THE UNITED STATES HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL MUSEUM TURNS 25

30 YEARS OF THE MARCH OF THE LIVING: INTERVIEW WITH AHARON TAMIR

'THE FUTURE OF HOLOCAUST RESEARCH' CONFERENCE

PHOTO EXHIBITION: 'SURVIVOR: MY FATHER’S GHOSTS' BY HANNAH KOZAK AT LAMOTH

"IT’S GOOD TO BE ABLE TO HAVE, SEE AND TOUCH SOMETHING..." THE WORK OF THE ITS ARCHIVE
Linking the Memory of the World

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"It's good to be able to have something..."
The work of the ITS Archive

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An International Consensus built around the Importance and History of Auschwitz

The Tailor Project
30 years of the March of the Living and 25 years of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington D.C. Those two important anniversaries are reflected in the May edition of Memorial Magazine. The history, achievements and challenges of the USHMM are presented in an article by its director Sara J. Bloomfield. We also interviewed Aharon Tamir, General Director of the March of the Living.

We also present two exhibitions: about the fate of children in Bergen-Belsen concentration camp as well as very moving photographic tribute that Hannah Kozak created to commemorate her father, a Holocaust survivor.

„Returning memories stolen from Nazi victims“ is a unique campaign organized by the International Tracing Service in Bad Arolsen. It helps to return artefacts stored in the Archives of ITS to families of there owners. We also present a summary of „The future of Holocaust research“ conference in New York and the history of the Canadian Tailor Project.

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
When Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu thanked Paraguay’s government this week for moving its embassy to Jerusalem, he said that before, during and after the Holocaust, Paraguay opened its doors to Europe’s Jews – “an act of benevolence and mercy that is forever etched in our hearts.”

A main part of the rescue story to which Netanyahu was referring was carried out by Polish diplomats. As noted this week by the director of the Polish Institute of International Affairs, almost all the forged Paraguayan passports that were designed to help Jews flee Nazi-occupied Europe were prepared by Polish diplomats who were serving in the Swiss capital Bern.

This rescue story is not known in Israel and there is almost no material about it in Hebrew. In recent months, it has been brought to light once again by the Polish Embassy in Switzerland, which posted documents and photographs discovered last year, and added new details about the story, on Twitter.

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Yad Vashem has developed a free online course, 'Antisemitism: From Its Origins to the Present'. This free video course brings together 50 leading researchers and public figures from all over the world – historians, sociologists, linguists, philosophers, and political scientists, as well as policy makers, and religious leaders.

MORE DETAILS

Sweden said it wants as many young people as possible to visit Holocaust memorial sites to tackle antisemitism in the Nordic nation, where neo-Nazi activities have been intensifying in recent years. The government said it would invest 15 million kronor ($1.7 million) on projects over three years to raise awareness about Nazi crimes against Jews, Roma communities, and other groups.

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Call for Papers: On 6 December 2018, a one-day conference on Research and Preservation of the Secret Archive of the Warsaw Ghetto will be held at the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw. The conference will take place with the participation of archives, archivists and Holocaust-centered institutions in Poland.

MORE INFORMATION

The exhibition 'Face to Face: Art in Auschwitz' - a unique project created by the National Museum in Krakow and the Auschwitz Memorial, for the 70th anniversary of the creation of the Auschwitz Museum - has been awarded the Sybilla 2017 Museum Event of the Year Award in the 'Historical & Archaeological Exhibitions' category.

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THE UNITED STATES HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL MUSEUM AT 25

In 1978, US President Jimmy Carter established a commission to study the idea of an American national memorial to the Holocaust and named Holocaust survivor and author Elie Wiesel as its chair. After a year of study, discussion, and visits to Holocaust sites such as Auschwitz-Birkenau, the commission recommended that a memorial alone would be insufficient. What was needed was a memorial museum that would be devoted not only to remembrance but also to education.

They believed that it should be situated on the National Mall in Washington DC in order to teach all Americans about this watershed event in human history and to remind them that all societies – even advanced, educated, democratic ones – can be fragile. That the human capacity for depravity - and the dangers of inaction - require ongoing vigilance and a strong sense of personal responsibility to shape the present and future.

Elie Wiesel called the Museum a “living memorial” to the victims that would speak to the future as much as to the past. He hoped the Museum would transform people and that they in turn would work to transform the world.

The effort to build the Museum was long and complicated with many discussions about how to create the architecture and an exhibition that would be worthy of the victims and meaningful to Americans from all walks of life.

As part of the process, the Museum began working closely with Poland – various governments over the years and many professionals at memorial sites, archives and museums. Those relationships were invaluable then and remain so today.

Since the Museum opened in 1993, over 43 million people have visited. About 90% are non-Jews and a third are school groups. Many are foreign visitors to our nation’s capital. Since the lessons of the Holocaust are vital for all of humanity, the Museum began bringing its message to those who cannot visit Washington. This involved, among other things, the creation of traveling exhibitions throughout the US and abroad and an online Holocaust encyclopedia that is now in 16 languages.

It also involved building a foundational structure by creating various centers and institutes:

The National Institute for Holocaust Documentation, which houses the collection of records on the Holocaust, which includes copies of archives from over 50 countries;
The Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies, which works to ensure the permanent vitality of the field of scholarship;

The William Levine Family Institute for Holocaust Education, which is responsible for education in the US and abroad; confronting denial; and the training of leaders in the American military, law enforcement and judiciary; and

The Simon Skjodt Center for the Prevention of Genocide, which seeks to do for victims today what was not done for the Jews of Europe.

The Museum’s educational goals are based on stimulating critical thinking about not only how the Holocaust happened, but also why it happened, what made it possible.

We want visitors to ask – and keep on asking - themselves a range of questions: for example, what made Nazi ideology attractive? Why were the Nazis allowed to come to power in an advanced country? Why does someone murder innocent people, let alone children? Why did so few confront the Nazis? What made the rescuers take action?
Then we hope they will ask of themselves: What would I have done? And go on to ask: What will I do?

To stimulate this kind of critical thinking our recent temporary exhibitions have focused on topics that raise some of the big questions the Holocaust presents:

'Deadly Medicine: Creating the Master Race' which shows how highly educated scientists and physicians legitimized Nazi racial theories;

'State of Deception: The Power of Nazi Propaganda' which shows the various messages and techniques that the Nazis deployed during the democracy of the Weimar Republic and under Nazi dictatorship;

'Some Were Neighbors: Collaboration and Complicity' which examines the various fears, pressures and motivates that shaped the behavior of ordinary people during the Holocaust;

'Americans and the Holocaust', which looks at the attitudes and actions of all parts of American society in the 1930's and 40's including the government, the media, popular culture and public opinion.

As the Museum looks to its next 25 years, there are several urgent priorities. We must rescue the evidence of the Holocaust during this closing window of opportunity before it is too late. As antisemitism, hate and ideological extremism are on the rise and genocide remains an ongoing threat, the Museum must strive to reach a global audience, ensure the relevance of the lessons of the Holocaust for new generations, and create more agents of change who will not only learn those lessons, but act on them.

www.ushmm.org
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Most of the children in Bergen-Belsen were Jewish, some were Sinti or Roma, and others had been taken to the camp along with their mothers who had been imprisoned on political grounds.

Many of these children died of hunger, disease or physical violence. Those who survived carried the burden of their physical and mental suffering for the rest of their lives.

The special exhibition 'Children in the Bergen-Belsen Concentration Camp' tells the story of the around 3,500 children under 15 who were imprisoned in the camp. Based on individual life stories, the exhibition presents the specific conditions under which children lived in the Bergen-Belsen camp and the ways in which they tried to cope with them.

Topics covered range from family life and games through roll-calls and violence to fear, hunger, disease and death. The exhibition also touches on less well-known aspects such as births in the camp.

“Food bearers to the gate!!”, drawing by János Reisz made at Bergen-Belsen, 1944/1945. 11-year-old János Reisz kept a notebook at the camp and made drawings. © Memorial Bergen-Belsen (donated by Jovan Rajs). All images in the article courtesy of Bergen-Belsen Memorial.
The relief measures taken for surviving children after the liberation and full biographies of child survivors also have their own exhibition sections. A final section is dedicated to around 600 children who lost their lives in the Bergen-Belsen camp.

The exhibition approaches its subject from multiple perspectives and is based on a broad range of images and documents including prisoners’ diaries, drawings and photographs, autobiographical accounts and documentary footage and audio recordings made only a few days after the liberation. At its core are previously unreleased excerpts from video interviews with child survivors of the Bergen-Belsen camp.
They give an insight into the specific experiences of children in the camp and the ways in which they reacted to the conditions of their imprisonment.

The exhibition (exclusively in German) was opened on 15 April 2018 and will be shown until 30 September 2018 at the Bergen-Belsen Memorial. It is accompanied by an extensive programme of events which includes several talks by child survivors of the Bergen-Belsen camp, a documentary drama performance, a film screening and an academic conference. The Memorial has also published an exhibition brochure in German and English.
Effects in the International Tracing Service Archive and their significance for the following generations

The so-called effects in the archive in Bad Arolsen represent a special category in the International Tracing Service’s holdings. In the 1960s, the ITS received about 5,000 personal objects once belonging primarily to political inmates who were deported to concentration camps. The majority of these effects were secured by the British Army after the liberation of the Neuengamme concentration camp and handed over to the ITS through the Verwaltungsamt für Innere Restitution (Administration Office of Internal Restitution) in Stadthagen in the early ‘60s. In addition to personal items from the Neuengamme concentration camp, the ITS also has in its holdings a substantially smaller number of effects from the Dachau concentration camp, the Hamburg Gestapo, the Ammersfort police transit camp and the Compiègne deportation camp. In the years that followed, the ITS made an effort to return the effects to their owners, often with the aid of the memorials and the worldwide Red Cross society network. Moreover, in 2009 the Tracing Service undertook research on the effects whose owners were not yet known by name at the time and was able to assign a large percentage of the effects to specific persons as a result. In 2011, in a further attempt to support the efforts to return the personal belongings still in the ITS’ possession - numbering approximately 3,200 at the time - the names of the owners were published online.

In the autumn of 2015, the effects inventory was one of three sub-collections to be made accessible for viewing and research in the ITS’ first online archive, the Digital Collections Online.

Since that time, interested persons have had the opportunity to view all photos of the effects in conjunction with the owners’ names and, where known, birthdates, and to filter the names by nationality.
This tool is intended to aid volunteers all over the world in assisting the ITS in the search for the rightful owners and calling public attention to these special temporary holdings. Thanks to help from volunteers, a number of items were successfully returned as a result of this online publication, initially predominantly in Holland.

On the strength of an initiative launched by Annelies Sijtsma-Hoezen and Erik Dijkstra of Holland after this information went online, more than thirty effects have been turned over to families in Holland. In view of the successful searches, as well as the increasing opportunities offered by the Internet and advancing digitization, the ITS itself started the Returning Effects project in the autumn of 2016. Within this framework, it began systematically researching the persecution histories of the owners of the approximately 3,200 effects in its own archive, and documenting and evaluating the results. The majority of the persecutees proved to be political inmates, primarily from Poland, but also from the former Soviet Union, Germany, Holland, France, and thirty other countries. Effects belonging to Jewish victims of persecution are the exception. The information contained in the documents in the ITS holdings (transport lists, inmate personnel cards, etc.) in turn provide important pointers for where to begin the search for the survivors themselves or for members of their families. Thanks to external investigations and support from various offices all over the world, such as vital statistics and registration offices, and co-operation with memorials, primarily in Poland - among them the Auschwitz and Stutthof Memorials - and international inmates associations, as well as the initiative of dedicated individuals in Poland, Holland, Norway and France, 100 effects were returned to family members such as daughters, sons and grandchildren within a single year.
Many of the items have been handed over to the families in person, either in Bad Arolsen or in the families’ home countries. The encounters that have taken place within that framework underscore the importance of the ITS’ efforts to track down the relatives. The majority of the items in the possession of the ITS are pocket watches, wristwatches, jewelry, wedding rings, personal documents such as birth certificates, school certificates, identification papers and correspondence, and everyday objects and family photos, all of which are of inestimable value for the families. In all cases, the personal objects have inspired the families to investigate their own histories.

They provide important pointers to blank spots in people’s biographies or prove to be missing puzzle pieces in the reconstruction of persecution histories unknown - or known only in fragments - to date. For many relatives of former victims of persecution, the fact that these objects virtually turn up out of the past after a period of more than seventy years is very surprising and deeply moving. In many cases, people actually remember the objects from their childhood; the pocket watch, for example, that Papa used to pull out of his waistcoat pocket on a Sunday outing. Now - seventy years after the beloved relative’s murder - these objects return to them, sparking childhood memories. The family members’ emotional knowledge and memories of the victims of persecution, whose personal belongings - the few remaining possessions they had with them before being deported to a concentration camp - are waiting for return at the ITS represent a valuable enhancement to the information and documents on the victims of Nazi persecution on file in the ITS archive.
The meetings with these relatives are thus part of the process of remembering and commemorating the victims of persecution and murder. What is more, often these items are the only ones left that can testify to the carefree life the father or brother led before his persecution and murder.

The returns of the objects and the families’ reactions are a confirmation of ITS’ time-consuming and intensive efforts in this regard. In 2016, for example, seventy-five-year-old Joost de Snoo - who was named after his murdered father - held a photo of his parents and himself as a small child in his hands for the very first time. His father died when he was four years old. In the fall of 2017, Wanda Różycka-Bilnik, the daughter of Armia Krajowa soldier Czesław Bilnik, received her father’s pocket watch.

“All I can remember is that my sister and I cried and screamed when those strange men forced their way into our flat and took my father with them.” Czesław and his wife had cared for wounded partisans and hidden them in their home. It was when he was arrested by the Gestapo in late 1943 that Wanda last saw her father. He was deported first to the Gross-Rosen and then to the Neuengamme concentration camps. He died in the tragic sinking of the Cap Arcona in the Bay of Lübeck in May 1945, shortly before liberation. “Nothing else of my father’s has survived… I’m never going to part with it [the pocket watch] again. I might even take it with me to my grave.”
As a consequence of this extremely successful research and return project, the ITS launched the #StolenMemory campaign in January 2017. In the form of a poster exhibition, it details the origins of the effects, about cases in which the search for family members was successful and the personal objects were returned to the families, but also about the objects and personal fates of the victims in cases where the ITS is still looking for the rightful owners.

The #StolenMemory exhibition opened on January 25 as part of the UNESCO festivities accompanying the memorial services on International Holocaust Remembrance Day in Paris. Jeanita and Martine van Dam, the granddaughters of Holocaust survivor Nathan van Dam, were present. The exhibition was on display on the fence surrounding the UNESCO building on 125 Avenue de Suffren.

Forty-three large-scale posters, including thirty-five on specific individuals, tell the fates of the victims and the encounters with fifteen families to which effects have been returned. 20 posters show objects and recount the fragmentary information that has come down to us in the ITS archive about the persecution and fates of their former owners.

The exhibition will next be presented at venues in England, Luxembourg and Poland with the hope of returning as many effects as possible to the families and calling public attention to these special ITS holdings. For further information on the project, and on borrowing the exhibition, please go to: www.StolenMemory.de.

Between November 2016 - when the project began - and April 2018, 135 effects have already been returned to the families of the victims.
Neonella Doboitschina

L'ITS recherche la famille de Neonella Doboitschina, née le 11 août 1923. Apprêhendée par la Gestapo à l'âge de 20 ans, cette jeune Russe fut l'une des nombreuses ouvrières forcées exploitées par le régime nazi pour faire tourner l'économie de guerre. Elle fut arrêtée pour de petits délits et pour relations interdites avec des Allemands. La jeune étudiante fut déportée par la Gestapo le 5 mai 1944 au camp pour femmes de Ravensbrück puis transférée au camp de Neuengamme le 31 août 1944. Son destin n'a pu être éclairci. Les photos dédicacées qui étaient en sa possession témoignent de temps heureux. Ses amis l'appelaient Nelly.

The ITS is looking for Neonella Doboitschina's family. At the age of twenty, she was arrested by the Gestapo and forced to work as a laborer for the Nazi regime to support the war economy. She was arrested for petty crimes and for prohibited relationships with Germans. The young student was deported by the Gestapo on May 5, 1944 to Ravensbrück concentration camp for women and later transferred to Neuengamme concentration camp on August 31, 1944. Her fate could not be clarified. The dedicated photos that were in her possession testified of happy times. Her friends called her Nelly.
AHARON TAMIR: "WE NEED TO CARRY THE TORCH OF MEMORY"
30 YEARS OF MARCH OF THE LIVING

On 12 April over 12,000 people - mainly young Jews from around the world but also groups of Polish youth - marched from the Auschwitz to Birkenau in the 27th March of the Living led by the Presidents of Poland and Israel, Andrzej Duda and Reuven Rivlin. These Marches have been organized for 30 years. Paweł Sawicki spoke with Director General of the March Aharon Tamir about the history of the project, its mission and challenges.

The MOTL is considered as just one event: people marching from the Arbeit Macht Frei gate to Birkenau. Primarily the MOTL consists of this two-week program, but of course, MOTL staff work all year round.

The March in Auschwitz is our symbol and the most important event since we created the Organization. In addition to the March we have a lot of activities, seminars, gatherings, conferences and exhibitions around the world. In the USA and Canada, for example, we have people attending the MOTL that have been studying with us for seven or eight months before going on the Marches to get knowledge and be much more aware of the history. So there are ongoing activities. We have another project in the States, teaching about the historical period from the Holocaust to the creation of the state of Israel. So we do a lot of other events and activities beside the main activity of the march in Auschwitz itself.

How many people do you estimate are involved in all these projects?

During the last 30 years, we have officially brought 300,000 people to Poland and Israel. We have groups coming that we were not even aware would be attending - so at least 300,000. If we have 300,000, though, it means that each person is an agent for others. They go back to their family, to their school, to their society. In this way, I believe we touch millions of people and I am confident it is even more! We are known all over the world. When I am traveling and meet people, I am amazed that people have heard of the March in Auschwitz even though they’ve never visited the site. The March became a symbol and sends its message that goes from school to school, from society to society, and a lot of people are involved in it.

Thinking about the two main goals that we were discussing earlier: can you see the fruit of the activities of these 30 years? Do you meet people that participated 20 years ago, who have gone on to do other, similar things?

We have people that were involved, that came here as participants of the MOTL and now they are the second generation of MOTL participants, and their kids are involved too. But they haven’t just passed this onto their family; many have become active in teaching, in visiting, in escorting groups around Poland and other sites, including the other part of the March in Israel. After they experience the Marches, alumni are going with their classes to museums and sites such as the Museum in Washington, to lead them around and tell the story that they have been to Auschwitz. We see so many groups from different countries, with different signs, all of them coming to show that they remember and declare – Never Again! They want to go together, to march, to show that we are all still here. It’s not a March of Death anymore; I believe what we now have is truly a March of the Living. In Israel, you see that not only Jewish people are coming - mainly Jews, but not just them. Many non-Jews are coming from the USA, France, Poland, Hungary and other many countries to Auschwitz, but also to Israel.
They are coming and then they are coming back. We have stories of Japanese people coming again and again, and not just them – others from the Far East are joining our activities. They have nothing to do with the Holocaust, but they are still coming. We believe we have to do a lot more to spread the messages we carry with us, we are trying to do more and we are expanding. We are now creating a legal society, not just to raise money. This is something we need - we need funds as we are not a business entity and depend on donations, but the most important part of our efforts is education! We need this to make people aware, to teach them, to guide them toward our goals!

This year the MOTL was organized during a year of quite unusual anniversary roots, you could say: on the one hand, you have 30 years of the MOTL, the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, the independence of Israel and the independence of Poland. On the other hand, the general political climate in the world right now makes things difficult. Did you feel these political reverberations during this MOTL? Did they make things more difficult?

We have to be aware of it, and we pay attention to this in all aspects. We need to keep things separate. Let us speak openly: there is a general view and climate around the world that is not related to Poland, not related to this law. We are teaching and talking about it, and we are trying to bring people to understand and be aware of the issues. We didn’t get too heavily involved in the current situation related to the law, but of course we believe we have to say that any accusations of us acting against the law are incorrect. We sent a statement to the President. We are very happy that the Polish President came for the MOTL and we met with him. I had a very good experience when I spoke to him when escorting him to his car at the end of the ceremony. What he told me was encouraging. He said to me, “I am so happy to be here; it’s so important to pay tribute to those that were murdered here. We have to work together in order to do, together, whatever we can to avoid such events.” I believe that the MOTL has become a bridge, at least between this area of Poland, Jews and Israel. It was very important, very promising and a great success.

Building bridges is, of course, the main goal of education, but it seems that sometimes the world of politics can trigger and also destroy those bridges.

I agree, but we need to continue, not give up. When you feel that someone is pushing you, you have to stand still, take it and then you need to get back to where you were. We believe this is what we’re doing. I will have a meeting with a president to discuss current tensions if necessary. We will do what is in our power to help bring the situation back to what it was before. Over the last 30 years, we have built such good relations with Poland and both sides must get that back.
We don’t feel anything negative on the physical side, not just here at the Museum, but also from the authorities. There is very good – excellent co-operation. They understand that we are an educational project, not dealing with politics. In our relations we have to stick to the truth and to the facts and we have said this. We don’t come here to create anything bad; we need to work together.

Every time there are politicians at MOTL, people ask – and you’ve probably also heard these voices - why are they in the March? Some people say that maybe there too many speeches and too strong a political presence. How do you do balance this?

That is a problem, and I agree with that 100%. The March is for the participants, mainly and majority youth. They come here to meet, to learn, to see to be part of the challenge to change the world to a better world! Those speeches and statements are not for them. But you can’t avoid it, you can’t do it without them. Of course we can say no, but if we hear that the President or Prime Minister wants to come, we are going to host and accommodate them. During the last march the ceremony was perhaps too long, but we also had a survivor speaking, Mr. Mossberg. We could have just stopped him, but it was the third time he’d come and wanted to express himself. We believe that it even made the ceremony longer – but survivors should be heard with a lot of respect and great honor. Maybe this makes it too long sometimes, but at the end, everybody was happy. We gave recognition not just to the politicians and their statements - and this was important - but also to the survivors and their memories, which is very important. By the way - how can you not present a statement from the Prime Minister of Canada, who very much supports the March? Are you not going to accept it? It’s only three or four minutes...I am sure the whole March, including the full visits to all parts of Poland, was a great success. We evaluated the groups, and we know that not everything was perfect, but it was close to perfect. I always tell Piotr Cywiński and Andrzej Kacorzyk that the co-operation here, at the Memorial and the way that you have dealt with us for so many years, is so good that I do not have words that can describe our satisfaction and thanks.

This is also something that I wanted to ask. 30 years of the MOTL also means 30 years of co-operation. It is a changing, developing institution.

We started very modestly: we just marched. I was very friendly with Mr. Wróblewski. The first years with the Museum were quite tough, but slowly and with time, we both learned how to accept each other and we became very good friends. Now, we are working towards the same goals, same vision, with the same tools of education.
It became a win-win operation and the relations became so tight, friendly, effective and efficient and is an example of the best co-operation two institutions can have! We are confident and sure this co-operation will stay at its highest level!

Symbolically, this 30 years of co-operation has ended with you being nominated to the Council of the Museum (we are meeting just before this assembly). Is that important to you?

Yes, very much so. First of all, it’s a recognition of the MOTL. It’s not just me as a person. But this is also recognition that the March is accepted, that it is a well built-in project, and that both organisations have a certain attitude towards teaching about the Holocaust, and memory, and we will do it together. We’ll do it like partners. For us, it’s very important. It was accepted very, very positively.

I think we all believe that, when you bring those thousands of people here, the visit at the Memorial is not only a historical experience, it’s a personal experience. So I have a question for you. From your personal perspective, is this place still a moving place for you? How do you feel coming back?

Every time I come here for meetings, I know the place, I know the people, and I am friendly with them. I feel Piotr and Andrzej are like my brothers! But when I come for the MOTL I see the youngsters, I see those that are coming for the first time. I see the leaders that have been coming for many, many years and I always have tears in my eyes. I am running around, I am busy, I am active, it’s crazy - but it still does something to me. Every year it feels the same as when I participated for the first time.

Do you remember your first time here in the Auschwitz Memorial?

Yes. 27 years ago, the March was small, and I was not the director at that time, I was just getting involved. I came after my service in missions around the world – it was the first meeting with Auschwitz for me. I came here and it was amazing for me. I had met people connected with the place, I knew about it, but I had never been here before and it was a shock for me. I remember I had to wipe away my tears. I still do so when I am talking about it, when we have meetings and lectures. In a few days I am going to speak in Budapest. There will be a march – huge and impressive, but nothing can be compared to the March in Auschwitz. It is not organized like here, where people arrive, we march and we have a ceremony. It is a very important and moving event - but March of The Living is Auschwitz - as I said before, is the real symbol!

I am the main speaker there and will speak about the March here – in Auschwitz. I will say that a month ago we marched from Auschwitz to Birkenau: that is the unique experience, promise and commitment that Holocaust will never happen again. We must continue to teach the history of the Holocaust. We need to do all we can to avoid atrocities and hatred - to change the world. We have to be practical and talk about it. We are talking about a fight - a combat, but not a physical one - fighting verbally, historically, and demonstrating that we won’t let it happen again. Crime and disasters starts from minor incidents and issues. The Holocaust started from small beginnings: everything started from words, ideas, publications, and books and turned to brutal atrocities. It was Germany - civilized Germany - that turned to a monster and created the Nazi regime that invented the Final Solution and the murder machine. We know everything about this and we have to remind all people about it. Time is running out and In few years we will not have many survivors left with us. We have to remember, we have to share, and we have to pass on the torches of memory and remembrance.

Is there a place at the Memorial that brings you to a halt, which is difficult to pass without noticing?

That’s a hard question. There are so many places here: when I am walking into the barracks as well as to the Jewish pavilion in Block 27.
When I am walking down the main street, when I see the barracks, when I see the numbers, the way they are standing very straight. You get an impression of how it was before with the people that almost all perished. When you actually first walk in; when Andrzej took me to Block 25; when I met Mirek and saw the exhibition department, so much to see and implement...But there is a place in Birkenau, when I walk towards the end of the road, get to the main monument and turn left towards the ruins of the crematorium. I stand there and look at them, at the ruins, and this is Auschwitz for me...This stems from 18 years ago when we had a ceremony there in 2000 with President Weizman and President Kwaśniewski together. We performed the main ceremony there and it was very powerful and so strong to have the two Presidents on the ruins of the crematoria that can no longer touch and endanger Jewish people and all humanity. Since then I haven't missed any Marches – I stand there by myself with tears in my eyes. I will always go there...
The participants included leading scholars in the fields of Holocaust and genocide studies from across North America, Europe, and Israel. The conference, which was open to the public, was sponsored by a range of international organizations. The aim of the conference was to foment discussion into the current state of the field of Holocaust research, its relevance now in the early twenty-first century, and the outlook for the field and its global relevance, not only to research, but also politically and mnemonically in the coming years and decades.

The salience of a conference focusing on the present and future trajectory of Holocaust research seems self-evident: over 70 years have passed since the end of World War II and the liberation of the concentration camps, and the generation for whom these events form part of their living memory is inevitably fading away. The Holocaust is fast becoming an abstracted item of historical memory, mediated through school curricula, public memorial events and institutions, and cultural media, all of which offer only a second- or third-hand entry into this darkest chapter of the twentieth century. This necessarily raises questions on the implication not only for Holocaust research, but also for its dissemination and relevance as we progress through a new century with its own challenges, upheavals, and atrocities.

A central concern raised by a number of speakers, including Chase Robinson, President of the CUNY Graduate Center, in his opening remarks, revolved around recent claims that the younger generation knows increasingly little – sometimes frighteningly little – about the Holocaust. These concerns go back, amongst other things, to recent reports following a study conducted by the Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany in February 2018, widely reported in American and international media around Yom HaShoah in April, which found that two-thirds of American millennials surveyed could not identify what Auschwitz was, while 22 percent of millennials said they had not heard of the Holocaust or were not sure whether they had heard of it.

Coupled with this concern was the issue raised throughout the successive panels of the conference concerning the populist turn in Europe and North America in recent years and the impact this has not only on Holocaust research and remembrance, but also on the normalization of revisionist narratives, even denial, of the Holocaust and of the actions of various peoples and nations, especially but not exclusively Germany, during World War II. These trends toward the fading from memory of the Holocaust as a real historical occurrence, coupled with the appropriation and even subversion of its memory for nefarious political ends in the present day, are indeed a cause for concern.
That being said, one can safely surmise that the Holocaust has never before occupied such a central place in academic, memorial, and political discourse as it does in the present day. Concerning research on the Holocaust, Professor Wendy Lower of Claremont McKenna College, who is Acting Director of the Jack, Joseph, and Morton Mandel Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, remarked in her keynote speech that “the field has exploded” in recent years.

Lower pointed by way of example to the almost incomprehensibly vast collection of testimonies recorded at USC Shoah Foundation, which currently hosts a total over 165,000 hours of footage, but which still only amounts to the testimony of a fraction of the survivors of the Holocaust. The opening of archives following the end of the Cold War in 1989/90 and the adoption of the Holocaust by the now greatly expanded European Union
as a keystone in its political and educational agenda have moreover led to a veritable “Europeanization”, as it was repeatedly termed throughout the conference, of Holocaust research. International and transnational studies, such as those pioneered by Timothy Snyder, not to mention local and diffuse studies on hitherto neglected areas and themes of the Holocaust as are accumulating in various European countries, all suggest a growing momentum behind Holocaust research, and its increasingly international, even global, visibility and relevance.

These observations were augmented by the introductory words of David Gill, the Consul General of the Federal Republic of Germany in New York. The very presence of the German consul general, including the support for the conference by the German embassy and the German Academic Exchange Service, underscored his assessment that the Holocaust is today recognized as “a part of the history of Germany and of civilization,” as well as his reference to the former German Federal President Joachim Gauck that “there is no German
identity without Auschwitz." Gill’s speech addressed head-on the challenge of continuing to educate about the Holocaust in an age where the contemporary witnesses will soon no longer be among us, equally addressing the rising problems, including in Germany, of right-wing populism and revisionism, not to mention resurging antisemitism.

The answer to these issues, and the emphasis of the conference, continues to be on research and education: there are now numerous institutions dedicated to the study of the Holocaust, along with manifold university professorships and classroom curricula dedicated to this history, in Germany, Austria, Israel, the United States, and elsewhere. The Holocaust is today commemorated officially not only by numerous countries such as Israel and Germany, but also by the UN and the EU. There are hundreds, if not thousands, of Holocaust memorial sites great and small scattered across Europe, North America, and elsewhere. In short, the “memory boom”, as it has been called in recent years, shows no immediate signs of abating, and thus stands in perplexing contrast to the troubling reports that the Holocaust is being forgotten among younger generations.
A significant trajectory of the conference was the relation of Holocaust research and commemoration to wider studies of genocide, to mass political violence, and not least of all to the European and extra-European contexts of colonialism, imperialism, and enslavement. In this respect, as Professor John Torpey from the CUNY Graduate Center commented in his closing remarks, which were live-streamed following the final session of the conference held at the Museum of Jewish Heritage, the Holocaust has occupied a central, unique, and historical role not only in broader research into genocide and memory, but also in the development of human rights legislation, the prosecution of genocide and other crimes against humanity, and in the international political commitment to justice and responsibility. Precisely given the recent trends of forgetfulness, coupled with a resurgence in right-wing populism and antisemitism along with new forms of anti-immigrant and anti-refugee politicking, it seems clear that Holocaust research still has a central role to play here – to learn from past tragedies of human making and thereby to strengthen democratic values in the present and future.

The cover of the conference program featured the infamous gates of Auschwitz-Birkenau in the background as a visible reminder of the centrality of Auschwitz to the memory of the Holocaust. As demonstrated by this high-profile international conference, Holocaust research, commemoration, and education is analogously central to the pursuit of justice, responsibility, and human rights in the global community today. The Museum of Jewish Heritage – A Living Memorial to the Holocaust was proud to co-present this important event, and remains committed to the realization of these lofty ideals through its ongoing public educational work.
Hannah Kozak, photographer, film-maker and writer, retraces her father’s footsteps of his stays in eight Nazi forced labor camps in Germany from 1943 until liberation on May 8, 1945. Shot entirely on film on a 1961 Rolleiflex 2.8F and hand-printed silver gelatin prints.

From 2013 to 2017, on multiple sojourns, Hannah traveled to Poland to see and photograph Auschwitz-Birkenau, Markstadt, Klettendorf, Dernau, Belzec, Sobibor, Treblinka, Majdanek, Chelmno, Gross Rosen, Hirschberg, Erdmansdorf and Bad Warmbrunn. She also traveled to the Czech Republic to see Terezin and to Germany to see Sachsenhausen, Stutthof, Dachau, and Buchenwald as well as to Berlin, Munich, Krakow, Warsaw and Wroclaw to fully flesh out her project and her understanding of the Holocaust.

Her exhibition is presented at Los Angeles Museum of the Holocaust between May 20 - August 20, 2018.

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She has traveled to 18 former concentration camps, killing centers and the remains of forced labor camps. Hannah worked side-by-side with the U.S. Holocaust Museum in Washington, D.C. for historical accuracy in her research.

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My father, a Holocaust survivor, was never a victim. His unresolved grief and sadness became a catalyst for ambition. His parents were Orthodox Jews who, in my father’s words, “never had money in the bank and lived hand to mouth.” As one of eight children, he was the only member of his family to survive, including his parents and grandparents. Yet there was always a shadow of Poland behind my father.

Before the camps, my father was forced into the ghetto in Bedzin, in German-occupied Poland. He was allowed to leave the residential district only to do forced labor, working for starvation wages making uniforms for soldiers.

My father was in daily direct contact with death. Starving and weakened yet he didn’t give up hope. He walked with death, and lived so that I could tell his story. As I walked the grounds at Treblinka, where his brother was machine-gunned down, I found myself humming Hebrew songs, chanting the prayers of dead souls. When Dernau, the final camp he was in was liberated on May 8, 1945, he collapsed weighing just sixty-five pounds.

He remembers hearing someone say in Yiddish, “The Russians are coming, the Russians are coming.” He spent a year in a sanitarium called Marine House, a place mainly for people with tuberculosis. I have traveled to Poland numerous times to retrace his steps to see the camps he was forced into and the killing centers where his family was murdered. Dernau, in particular, quieted me while awakening every sense.

Hannah Kozak
I saw the barbed wire fence that kept him prisoner when he was close to death. I heard crickets and the ever-present singing of birds that seem to sing differently in Poland than they do in the U.S.

I wondered if he could have heard the running water from the creek surrounding the camp. Could he see the tall, sinewy trees? Making it out alive was a combination of his will, his intuition, a bit of luck and a miracle.

My father asked me to tell his story towards the end of his life. I took this as a task. As a second generation survivor, perhaps this is a reason for my existence. I created a short film called Survivor: My Father’s Ghosts as well as a photo essay, which will eventually become a book. These are my love letters to him.

The remains of the war fascinate me even as a cloud of darkness from my father’s past has haunted me since I was ten years old. I grapple to understand man’s inhumanity to man. I understand now, that I will never truly comprehend what happened to my family but my continued sojourns to Poland and Germany help me to see answers to my questions, in person.

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Hannah Kozak was born to a Polish father, a Holocaust survivor, and a Guatemalan mother in Los Angeles, California. At the age of ten, she was given a Kodak Brownie camera by her father and began instinctively capturing images of dogs, flowers, family and friends that felt honest and real.

As a teenager growing up in Los Angeles, Hannah would sneak onto movie lots and snap photos on the sets of Charlie’s Angels, Starsky and Hutch and Family, selling images of the stars to movie magazines and discovering a world that was far from reality.

Hannah has been awarded the Julia Margaret Cameron Award for Female Photographers and has exhibited in Malaga, Spain and Berlin, Germany as well as numerous group exhibitions in the United States.
AN INTERNATIONAL CONSENSUS BUILT AROUND THE IMPORTANCE AND HISTORY OF AUSCHWITZ

The summary of the 2012-2018 term of office of the International Auschwitz Council and the report on the work of the Auschwitz Museum in recent years, were some of the topics of the 34th session of the International Auschwitz Council, which was held in Auschwitz, 7 and 8 May 2018, chaired by Prof. Barbara Engelking. The meeting was attended by the deputy minister of culture and national heritage, Jarosław Sellin, who read a letter from Deputy Prime Minister Prof. Piotr Gliński addressed to members of the IAC.

In February, the Ministry of Culture issued a statement in which it expressed its unequivocal opposition to the dissemination of slander, lies and hateful content addressed to persons committed to the care of Memorial Sites on the grounds of former concentration and extermination camps. I wish to strongly re-affirm that it is a position I still uphold,' Prof. Gliński stressed in his letter.

During the session, Minister Jarosław Sellin said that the concentration camps created by the Germans are located on the territories of five contemporary states, but the former extermination centers are located on the territory of the Polish state. "These are places where every sensitive, young person may contemplate about what is good and what is evil - including personal evil - what is love and hate; if God exists or not. In these places, we ask these questions with particular intensity," said Minister Sellin.

'I ask all members of the International Auschwitz Council to accept the assurance of my highest consideration and recognition for their commitment in the accomplishment of the Council’s tasks throughout its entire term of office, especially in the area of protection and development of the sites of the former Nazi extermination camp Auschwitz and other Holocaust memorials. For your concern and sensitivity to this painful legacy, for your uncompromising attitude, and for not allowing the problems of the Holocaust and martyrdom of the nations to become commonplace; for these wounds must be torn so that, as Stefan Żeromski said, ‘this memory is not forgotten', thank you very much,' wrote Prof. Piotr Gliński, the Deputy Prime Minister of Poland and Minister of Culture and National Heritage.

'I also wish to thank all the directors, employees of martyrdom museums, experts and social activists who work tirelessly with dedication to documenting and educating about the truth of the Holocaust.
"I assure you that the Polish state will ensure that these places commemorate and induce not only historical reflection but also moral reflection on the human condition," emphasized Minister Sellin, who also summed up the activities of the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage related to preserving the Holocaust memory - not just at Memorial Sites on the grounds of former camps, but also through new institutions, such as the Warsaw Ghetto Museum, or financial support for the preservation of the Warsaw Jewish cemetery, among others.

During the meeting, Museum Director Dr Piotr M.A. Cywiński summed up the most important activities of the Auschwitz Memorial which had taken place since the last meeting of the Council.

Attendance at the Memorial is still very high. In 2017, it was visited by 2.1 million people. "The steady growth over the past dozen or so years is the result of an international consensus built around the significance and history of Auschwitz, as well as the role of Auschwitz in building a post-war Europe and the world. The majority of visitors are young people who visit as part of educational programs. It means that in several dozen countries, major educational programs and travel subsidy programs have been created in the last dozen or so years. These programs would not have been created without a consensus as to the importance of the Memorial. It is worth emphasizing that these programs were primarily created within the circles of the International Auschwitz Council," said Director Cywiński.

He also stressed that due to the steady number of visitors it is important to expand the infrastructure for serving visitors associated with the new Visitor Services Center. The Museum plans to raise funds for the creation of the Center from Norwegian Grants.

The Director also spoke of the exhibition “Auschwitz. Not long ago. Not far away”. It is the largest of such exhibitions devoted to the subject of Auschwitz and the Holocaust in history. Over 600 original objects are presented across an area of approximately 2,500 square meters, obtained mainly from the Auschwitz Museum Collections, but also other museums and institutions, including the Yad Vashem in Jerusalem, the Holocaust Museum in Washington and Holocaust museums in North America and Europe, as well as from private collections of Holocaust survivors.
The Museum Director also shed light on recent major events at the Museum, namely the 73rd anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz, including the publication of articles related to the anniversary in several European newspapers, posing important questions regarding the present in the context of Auschwitz; the March of the Living with the participation of the Presidents of Poland and Israel; the 30th anniversary of co-operation with the Volkswagen Group and the International Auschwitz Committee; and two temporary exhibitions - an exhibition of archival documents from the collection of Władysław Rath, and an exhibition on the role of the German police in the Third Reich.

Director Cywiński also talked about the progress of the project for the adaptation of the Old Theatre building to the new headquarters of the International Centre for Education about Auschwitz and the Holocaust - a project financed by the European Union, as well as conservation works conducted at the brick barracks of the former Auschwitz II-Birkenau camp, financed by the Auschwitz Birkenau Foundation.

During his report, the Director also talked about the creation of the Centre for Research on the Economics of Memorial Sites at the University of Social Sciences and Humanities (SWPS), which is to conduct scientific research in the scope of economics, finance and management of the proper establishment, functioning and preservation of memorial sites.

Piotr Cywiński also presented two new publications of the Museum: 'Little White House: History of Extermination in Bunker II', as well as 'I am in the Very Heart of Hell: Notes of the Sonderkommando Prisoner Załmen Gradowski,' two new online lessons, "Extermination of Jews in KL Auschwitz" as well as a preparatory lesson for a visit to the Memorial. He also recalled the gold medal for the film 'Escape through Wires' at the New York Film Festival and TV Awards.

The Director also gave a summary of how the Museum has developed its structure and activities over the last 12 years and recalled the most important events of this period. Given that the session was the last meeting of the IAC in the 2012-2018 term of office,
the Council members discussed recommendations for successors regarding the general and detailed direction of actions for the IAC, as well as the fundamental principles and values that should guide the Council. The list of recommendations shall be forwarded to the Prime Minister of the Republic of Poland, whose advisory body is the International Auschwitz Council.

Non-involvement in ongoing politics; knowledge and expertise, as well as the international authority of members of the council; independence and underlining the international importance of the IAC; readiness to conduct dialogue on difficult, complicated and inconvenient issues, but also the ability to seek compromise and understanding; preserving memory and representing all the victims of Auschwitz; the importance of looking at the issues of memory from a long-term perspective; supporting the activities and development of all Memorial Sites in Poland and beyond, as well as developing good practices that could benefit other similar memorials, were some of the issues raised during the discussion on the tasks and recommendations for the International Auschwitz Council in the future.

"This council has acquired an opinion-forming status that goes beyond internal Polish affairs and beyond issues of the most important Memorials in Poland. This council has, in the last dozen or so years, received growing international recognition and authority, with a great ability to engage in dialogue and debate on very difficult subjects," said Director Cywiński. "These elements have helped to strengthen the global constants around this place, the memory of those victims and those people. It is something that requires the greatest protection for the future, regardless of issues that will be discussed in the future. The development of the Memorial that I presented would not have been possible without this field of mutual understanding between different groups, countries, opinions or viewpoints."

The IAC members also discussed topics such as the amendment to the Act on National Memorial Institutes, as well as plans for a museum dedicated to the residents of Oświęcim and the surrounding area who provided help to prisoners of the German Nazi concentration and extermination camp Auschwitz-Birkenau during the war.
Our journey began in the autumn of 2017 when Larry Enkin approached Impakt Labs, a Toronto-based non-profit that conducts social impact research and incubates innovative solutions to complex social problems. He began by telling us a bit about his father’s, Max Enkin, inspiring journey through life. Among Max Enkin’s many esteemed accomplishments, including being elected an Honorary President for life of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations (1975) and being awarded the Order of Canada (1983), he was instrumental in creating a program that brought tailors living in displaced persons camps across Europe to Canada in 1948. This program was formally called the Garment Workers Scheme.

The Garment Workers Scheme, or The Tailor Project, began as a joint proposal from the Toronto, Montreal and Winnipeg needle-trade industries to bring over 2,000 tailors and their families. Once the proposal received approval, Max Enkin led a delegation to visit the displaced persons camps in Europe to identify workers suited for the role. Unfortunately, at the last moment, the Canadian government realized that most of those involved in the industry were Jewish and limited the number of immigrants to Canada of any specific ethnic group to 50% of the total. The “none is too many” policy that had existed during the war was still prevalent.

Once Max Enkin arrived in Europe he visited 19 displaced persons camps. People were desperate to leave the camps and often put their names down on the waiting lists for every country that was taking in people. When people in the camps heard that Mr. Enkin and his team were looking for skilled tailors to come work in Canada, the news spread fast. Men and women could apply through The Tailor Project and every applicant was subjected to a practical job test. If a sewing machine was available then it was used for the job test, but more frequently than not there was no sewing machine available and the test was to sew a button hole.

In a letter Mr. Enkin wrote to the Canadian Deputy Minister of Labour, Arthur MacNamara, he wrote that, "the character and general attitude of the applicants was such as to make us fully confident that we’re bringing to Canada a truly fine type of citizenship material and that they would contribute materially to the economic wellbeing of Canada." Mr. Enkin also went on to urge the Canadian government to consider implementing similar projects to help the people still living in displaced persons camps. He wrote in the letter that after witnessing ‘how a million uprooted people live in a war torn area and listening to the experiences of hundreds of these people, we are all moved to stress the humanitarian aspect of this project.’

As I look over the lists of names of people that arrived in Canada in 1948 from displaced persons camps, I wonder: who were these people, what were their stories, what was their life like here in Canada? Very little is known about these tailors and their families. Now, for the first time, we are going to uncover the answers to these questions.

Nicole Bryck
The Tailor Project allowed 1,000 Jewish families to come to Canada to start a new life here. I have had the privilege to speak with many of the children of these survivors. We have begun to turn the names on the lists into stories. Stories that include horrific, unimaginable struggles, but also unimaginable strength. Stories of families that were broken and rebuilt. Stories of families who contributed to the Canadian landscape by working as tailors, finding other employment, or starting businesses. Stories of parents who empowered their children to be resilient, educated, and valued members of their communities.

Muriel Behar, the daughter of Zalman Jakter a tailor that came to Canada through The Tailor Project reflected on the impact of the research, “as the daughter of immigrant parents who survived unbelievable hardships and came to Canada from Germany as part of The Tailor Project, I constantly reflect on possibilities. I ponder the possibility of survival, the possibility of perseverance in the face of terror, and the possibilities of profound gratitude to those who were and are dedicated to TIKUN OLAM, The Repair of Our World. It is of utmost importance and necessity to research, comprehend and embrace the past in order to understand, ensure and protect the future. It is essential to study, learn from and always remember the noble upstanders like the Enkin Family who implemented The Tailor Project, in order to understand that we cannot ever afford to be bystanders again. The dedication of the Enkin Family is exemplary; they are the very essence of what it means to be an upstander.”

We are still on our journey to uncover the stories of the tailors that came through The Tailor Project. If you know someone or have a father or mother that came as a tailor to Canada in 1948, please reach out to us at tailorproject.ca.
Salomon Lakter (My Father)
Faiga Lakter (My Mother)
Chayka Schneider
My Mother's Sister In Law
(Far Left)
Ely Schneider
My Mother's Nephew
Chayka's Son

Salomon Schneider
My Father
in the Camp

My Parents Wedding
Dinner
September 22 1946
They Served Herring & Shrapps

In the DP Camp