INTERVIEW WITH ROBERTA GROSSMAN, DIRECTOR OF 'WHO WILL WRITE OUR HISTORY' DEDICATED TO THE ONEG SHABBAT GROUP

EXHIBITION: 'AMERICANS AND THE HOLOCAUST' IN WASHINGTON DC
BOOK: '485 DAYS IN MAJDANEK: THE MEMORIES OF JERZY KWIATKOWSKI'
SAY NO TO ANTISEMITISM. VISIT OF CHELSEA LONDON AT THE AUSCHWITZ MEMORIAL
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LINKING THE MEMORY OF THE WORLD

INTERVIEW WITH ROBERTA GROSSMAN: ONEG SHABBAT. COLLECTIVE VOICE OF A MURDERED PEOPLE

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SAY NO TO ANTISEMITISM

1,5 MILLION BUTTONS - SYMBOL OF MEMORY ABOUT MURDERED CHILDREN
"Who will write our story" is a moving, well-made documentary, dedicated to the history of the Oneg Shabbat group. Emanuel Ringelblum and his colleagues created the underground archive of the Warsaw ghetto. As director Roberta Grossman says, they were "giants of spiritual resistance - people who risked their lives to collect and record so that the truth would survive even if they did not". In Memoria we publish an interview with Roberta Grossman.

The history of the Holocaust is told from a completely different perspective by a new exhibition of the US Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington D.C., "Americans and the Holocaust" dispels the myth that Americans had little access to information about the threat of Nazism, including the persecution and murder of Europe’s Jews.

In "Memoria" we also write about the "Give them a Face" project of Kazerne Dossin in Mechelen, Belgium, which aims to show faces of each of over 25,000 people deported from the Dossin barracks to Auschwitz, Bergen-Belsen, Buchenwald, Ravensbrück and Vittel. All the time, further photographs appear on the walls of this Memorial Site.

We also recommend the personal reflection of Dean Mears who visited the Auschwitz Memorial as part of the Chelsea London football club project "Say NO to antisemitism". We are write about a new edition of the memoirs of the former prisoner of the Majdanek concentration camp Jerzy Kwiatkowski, and about buttons that commemorate the children - victims of the Holocaust.

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
On June 14th, marking the anniversary of the deportation of first Poles to KL Auschwitz, a new exhibition was made available to the public in two rooms on the ground floor of Block 11 in the former Auschwitz I camp, devoted to the resistance movement in the German Nazi concentration and extermination camp. Among the participants of the inauguration ceremony there were among others Deputy Prime Minister of Poland Beata Szydło and Deputy Minister of Culture and National Heritage Jarosław Sellin.

"Block 11 occupies a place of particular importance for the history of Auschwitz not only due to the fact that it used to constitute camp prison, but also that SS men shot thousands of people in its courtyard. Many of them were involved in the resistance movement activity opposing the oppressor both within the camp as well as outside it. The exhibition was prepared in recent months shows comprehensive history of the camp resistance movement. In this historical space this story gains symbolical meaning”, said Dr. Piotr M. A. Cywiński, Director of the Auschwitz Museum.

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On 20 June, 2018, the Romanian Chamber of Deputies adopted a law that specifically combats antisemitism. The law incriminates the promotion of antisemitic ideas, the distribution and dissemination of antisemitic materials, as well as the initiation and the creation of an organization with an antisemitic character.

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On 31 May 2018, the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) successfully concluded its first bi-annual Plenary Meeting under the Italian Chairmanship in Rome where more than 200 experts and governmental representatives met to discuss the Holocaust as a contemporary political issue.

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A monument to Holocaust victims in Luxembourg was officially inaugurated on June 17 in the presence of the country’s Grand Duke and Prime Minister. The monument, made by French-Israeli Holocaust survivor Shlomo Selinger, occupies the site of Luxembourg’s first synagogue.

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The Council of the Auschwitz-Birkenau Foundation held its session on 18 June in Warsaw. The primary objective of the Auschwitz-Birkenau Foundation is to finance the conservation of the authentic remains of the former German Nazi concentration and extermination camp Auschwitz-Birkenau. The
Defining the Oneg Shabbat group on a factual level is relatively simple. It is much more challenging to talk about when we start thinking about their work on a symbolic level. How would you define the symbolism and meaning of Oneg Shabbat?

On one hand, Oneg Shabbat was a group of people who collected primary documents so that, when the war ended, they and other historians could document the war years from the Jewish perspective - certainly, a noble, farsighted and very modern thing to do. But, on the other hand, when understood from the context of the hell these people were living in and the obstacles arrayed against them for survival, let alone for sophisticated research and intensive collecting, the members of the Oneg Shabbat were no less brave resistance fighters than those who fought in the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. As Samuel Kassow, author of the book *Who Will Write Our History*? said in an interview for my documentary of the same name, “You don’t need guns to fight, you could fight with paper and pen. This was a battle too. A battle for memory.” The members of Oneg Shabbat were giants of spiritual resistance - people who risked their lives to collect and record so that the truth would survive even if they did not.

What is the value of the sources created in this context? An archive gathered by victims in the most extreme situation who looked at it not from the big historical perspective, but from their own, very intensive, but very limited view.

The value of eyewitness accounts is incalculable, priceless. For so long, the story of the Holocaust was told from the perspective of the perpetrators: German documents, charts, protocols, photos and footage – history seen literally through a German lens. Historians asked important questions about how and why mass murder was committed. Yet for decades after the Holocaust, the voices of the people whose lives were devastated were absent from the reconstruction of the story. In fact, there was suspicion, even dismissal of survivor voices as important historical information.

Rachel Auerbach, one of the three Oneg Shabbat members (out of sixty) who survived the war, went to Israel in 1950. There she created and led the Survivor Testimony Department of Yad Vashem. She supervised or personally collected 50,000 survivor testimonies. During her productive tenure at Yad Vashem, Auerbach often clashed with the powers that be, mostly classically-trained historians who were skeptical about the reliability of survivor testimony. Auerbach persisted. She had, after all, been “trained” by Emanuel Ringelblum, or rather inspired by him, to value the spoken and written words of everyday people: what they saw, what they felt, how they struggled to survive.

Roberta Grossman’s new movie ‘Who Will Write Our History’ tells the story of the underground archive of the Warsaw Ghetto created by the Oneg Shabbat Group, led by Emanuel Ringelblum.
As Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett said in an interview for 'Who Will Write Our History': “The marvelous thing about the Ringelblum archive is that those documents were written on the very spot and in the very moment of the events that they record. And they were created by those whose experiences they communicate. And that makes the material in the Ringelblum archive absolutely unique, an extraordinary antidote to the German perspective.”

An important part of the film is the idea of having this meeting of two completely different kinds of sources - coming from the world of the perpetrators and the victims. There are many difficult images of death in the film, and somehow they are balanced by the stories from the Archive. Was that the purpose?

The film is, in a way, a dialogue between Nazi sources (including footage and photographs taken by Nazi propaganda units in the Ghetto) intended to show the world how dirty and heartless the Jews were, and the first-person voices of the Jewish people imprisoned in the Ghetto. The main point or question of this conversation is literally: who will write our history? Will the Germans, who are out to destroy us, be the authors of our story? Or will we, the Jewish people in all our complexity - good guys and bad guys, rich and poor, religious and atheist, collaborators and resistance fighters - be the ones who get to tell our own story? The film is, I hope, a way for the voices of the Oneg Shabbat to finally be heard loudly and clearly. That’s what they wanted. As one young member of Oneg Shabbat said in his last will and testament, which he placed in the cache of the Archive that he helped to bury during the Great Deportation, “I hope to live to see the moment when the great treasure will be discovered and scream the truth at the world.”

What was the most challenging part of creating the script and the whole idea of the movie?

It took six years to make the documentary 'Who Will Write Our History?' based on Samuel Kassow’s book of the same name. Kassow spent ten years researching and writing his book, which encompasses inter-war Jewish life, Ringelblum’s biography and the story of the creation, discovery and preservation of the Oneg Shabbat Archive. Kassow’s book is a weighty bible.
The film, in comparison, can only be a haiku. The hardest part of making this film, or really any historical film, is what to leave out.

For every diary entry or literary passage from the Archive that is in the film, there are hundreds of equally moving and revealing passages that have been left in folders on my computer. Sadly, there are also entire categories of materials that are absent from the film. For example, there are dozens of profoundly moving poems in the Archive. There are jokes and collections of songs of beggars. Ringelblum also made sure that Oneg Shabbat members interviewed refugees who were pouring into the Ghetto from hundreds of towns from the provinces outside Warsaw. Ringelblum instructed the interviewers to write detailed reports about what they learned from the refugees about what happened to the Jews when the Nazis arrived in their towns. And what happened to the Jewish architecture, artifacts and libraries that were also destroyed by the Nazis in the process of destroying Polish Jewry. Although Ringelblum called the resulting reports the “jewels of the archive,” they are not represented in the film.

Despite, or because of, the brevity of the film, I hope viewers will be inspired to go to the sources: the Jewish Historical Institute where the Oneg Shabbat Archive is housed and, of course, Samuel Kassow’s historical masterwork Who Will Write Our History?

In the film - especially in the elements with actors - we can see some strong personalities. It shows that it was not the work of one man, but the whole group. Yet, could it all have happened without Ringelblum?

Without Ringelblum there would be no secret archive of the Warsaw Ghetto. The survivors of the Archive, Rachel Auerbach and Hersh Wasser, spoke about Emanuel Ringelblum as “the pulsing motor of a great machine.”
Scholar David Roskies said in an interview for my film that Ringelblum “became great because of Hitler, it was the war that brought out his greatness.” Before the war, Ringelblum earned his PhD with a study of the Jews of Warsaw in Medieval times. He was an early and enthusiastic participant in the YIVO. He was an active and loyal member of his political party, the Left Poalei Zion. He wrote books and articles and supported his family by teaching history at a Jewish girls’ school in Warsaw. In 1938, he went to work full-time for The American Joint Distribution Committee helping impoverished Jewish communities throughout Poland. All these various aspects of his personal and professional passions and experience coalesced in the Oneg Shabbat Archive.

Only eight days after the Warsaw Ghetto was sealed, Ringelblum held a meeting of people whom he carefully selected from across the religious and political spectrum. He told them that it was up to them to write, collect and record the story of the war from the Jewish point of view. At first, they thought most of them would survive to write this history after the war from the primary documents they had collected. As it became apparent that few if any of them would survive, Ringelblum encouraged archive members to work faster, as Rachel Auerbach wrote: “to finish before it was too late.”

Even in the darkest hour, Ringelblum kept the members of the archive on track for what he correctly perceived as a monumental historical mission. Without his vision, his organizational skill, his commitment to objective historical methods, and his love of the Jewish people, the 60,000 pages of material in the Oneg Shabbat archive that survived would simply not exists. And, as a result, we would know next to nothing about the Warsaw Ghetto from the perspective of the people who were incarcerated there. Ringelblum should be a household name. He’s not. I hope that my film will help to put Ringelblum on the heroic pedestal where he belongs.

Is there a story in the Archive that left a personal trace in you?

Many people have asked me, how is it possible to be immersed in such painful material for so many years? People must ask those, like you, who work at Auschwitz the same thing.
I would guess that the answer you give is similar to mine. The satisfaction that comes from helping to give voice to the people who lost their lives in the Shoah, the knowledge that you are helping to ensure that their names and experiences, their individuality will not be forgotten, far outweighs the despair that comes from dealing with the facts, the words, the images, the incomprehensibility of their suffering.

Why should people today take a look at all the documents gathered by the Oneg Shabbat group?

After the war Rachel Auerbach could not understand why she survived. Like many survivors, she felt guilty that she lived while so many others had perished. The only meaning/reason she could find for her survival was to dedicate her life to making sure the world would not forget her murdered people. In 1946, there was a commemoration of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. She stood up and admonished the survivors present that day that there should be no more speeches, talk was meaningless. All available resources and energy needed to be focused on finding and unearthing the archive in the rubble of the Warsaw Ghetto. Rachel Auerbach believed that the diaries, letters, postcards, poems, commissioned works on the Ghetto street, women in the Ghetto and so much more buried in the Oneg Shabbat Archive, was the collective voice of a murdered people, the time capsule of the destroyed civilization that was Polish Jewry. She was right.

Interview by Pawel Sawicki, the editor-in-chief of the Memoria magazine.
The story, distributed to the Post from the Associated Press wire service, read: “The Polish Ministry of Information said today that more than 500,000 persons, mostly Jews, had been put to death at a concentration camp at Oswiecim, southwest of Krakow.” It went on to describe the crematoria inside the camp: “The report asserted that men, women, and children arrive by truck-loads and are removed to gas chambers, where 10 to 15 minutes are required for execution.” These words, with some additional horrific details, ran below the headline: “Poles Report Nazis Slay 10,000 Daily.”

There is a misconception that Americans had little access to information about the threat of Nazism, including the persecution and murder of Europe’s Jews, as it occurred. 'Americans and the Holocaust', the new special exhibition at the US Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, DC, dispels this myth.

News about many aspects of the Nazi threat regularly appeared in American magazines and newspapers, as well as in newsreels and on radio, from the earliest days of Hitler’s reign through the mass murder during the Holocaust. Americans who were paying close attention could have learned a great deal about Nazi ideology and persecution. As the influential American journalist Dorothy Thompson wrote in 1932, the year before Hitler became Chancellor: “Anti-Semitism is the life and soul of Hitler’s movement. The Nazis lose no opportunity to insult the Jews.”

An interactive, touchscreen map of the United States at the beginning of the exhibition shows that Americans across the country had access to reports about the Nazis’ April 1933 boycott of Jewish-owned businesses, German students’ burning of books the next month, and the Nuremberg Laws that stripped German Jews of their citizenship in September 1935. These were just three of the many stories covered in the American press.

A museum-sponsored crowdsourcing project called History Unfolded has asked students and citizens from all over the United States to research what their local newspapers published about Nazism. The response has been overwhelming: more than 15,000 articles from American newspapers have been submitted to the museum, making this the largest collection of press on the topic ever assembled. This effort by citizen historians across the country challenges conventional wisdom, showing that Americans did not have to live in a major metropolitan city to have access to information about the dangers of Nazism and, perhaps more significantly, disproving the assumption that news coverage was always “buried” in the back pages of newspapers. It was not.

Examples from the American press are woven throughout the exhibition 'Americans and the Holocaust'. They raise a troubling question about this history: If Americans had access to such significant information about Nazism, including the treatment of Jews, why did the rescue of Jews never become a priority for the majority of the American people or, perhaps more significantly, for the US government?
The exhibition does not offer simple answers to such a troubling question. Instead, it emphasizes that the domestic context of the United States at the time - especially Americans’ isolationism from world affairs in the aftermath of World War I; prejudices against foreigners and immigrants, racism, and antisemitism; and the economic devastation of the Great Depression - shaped Americans’ responses to Nazism. News about Nazism was always overshadowed in American newspapers by coverage of the Great Depression in the 1930s and then World War II in the 1940s.

Context alone is not enough to explain American inaction, however. The exhibition also looks closely at decisions made within the US government by its leaders. During the 1930s, President Franklin D. Roosevelt and his administration focused on lifting the nation out of the Great Depression. As the 1930s gave way to the ‘40s, FDR prioritized leading the nation to war but not rescuing Jews.

We cannot fully understand the government’s response to Nazism without also asking what American citizens wanted from their elected leaders. Public opinion polls from the late 1930s reveal that the vast majority (usually around 70%) of Americans were against admitting refugees to the United States and that most Americans hoped that United States would not enter the war in Europe. The exhibition prompts visitors to consider these opinion polls from the era and then to ask why FDR and his administration opted to go against the grain of popular opinion on intervention in war but chose not to try to lead the public to more openness on the refugee question. Simple explanations, still offered too often to explain FDR’s decision making, should not suffice here, and the exhibition helps visitors understand the texture of American life in all its complexities during the 1930s and ‘40s.
One important lesson of 'Americans and the Holocaust' is that the most simple excuse for inaction - that Americans lacked access to information, that they "just did not know" about the dangers Jews faced at the hands of Nazism - absolutely does not hold up to scrutiny. At the beginning of the Nazi regime’s terror in 1933, newspapers across the United States reported on persecution at Dachau, the first concentration camp that the Nazis established. Ten years later, subscribers to the Indianapolis Star in Indiana (as just one example of how news of the Holocaust was widely available) could have read about the “murder camp” in Oświęcim (Auschwitz). At the very moment that hundreds of thousands of Hungarian Jews were being deported to Auschwitz-Birkenau in summer 1944, American newspapers reported that more than 1.7 million Jews already had been killed there. By November, as prisoners at Auschwitz-Birkenau were being evacuated for brutal death marches, American newspapers ran stories about the Auschwitz Report, released to the public by the War Refugee Board, which provided even more graphic detail about what occurred in the complex of camps. Readers in Chicago, New York City and, Washington, DC, had access to this information about the horrors in their daily papers, and so did readers in Greenville, South Carolina; Athens, Ohio; Helena, Montana and scores of American cities in between.

What may be most troubling is to realize just how much Americans could have known about these atrocities as they were occurring - and then to consider why this information did not lead to concerted, sustained efforts to rescue Nazism’s victims.

Daniel Greene, PhD, is curator of 'Americans and the Holocaust', a special exhibition at the US Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, DC. A web version of the exhibition may be found at www.ushmm.org/americans.
'GIVE THEM A FACE' – COMMEMORATING BELGIUM AS A TRANSIT COUNTRY

The Kazerne Dossin - Memorial, Museum and Documentation Center on the Holocaust and Human Rights is located in Mechelen, Belgium, in the former Dossin barracks which served as an SS-Sammellager for Jews, Roma and Sinti from 27 July 1942 until the Liberation on 4 September 1944.

25,274 Jews and 354 Roma and Sinti were deported from the Dossin barracks to Auschwitz-Birkenau. Another 218 Jews were deported to Bergen-Belsen, Buchenwald, Ravensbrück and Vittel. Less than 5% survived deportation.

Since the late 19th century, Belgium has been a transit country for people from all over Europe trying to reach territories overseas to build a new life. However, thousands of migrants and refugees remained in Belgium for various reasons such as health issues; difficulties obtaining visas; marriages and births, etc. By the time Nazi Germany invaded Belgium on 10 May 1940, the Jewish population was very diverse, ranging from ultra-orthodox to atheist, from politically far left to extremely conservative, from extremely wealthy to downright poor.

Joe Loewenstein umieszcza zdjęcie swojej krewnej Esther Rozenzweig na Ścianie Pamięci podczas ceremonii w 2013 roku. Wszystkie zdjęcia © Kazerne Dossin (jeśli nie zaznaczono inaczej).
Dorien Styven has been a researcher at the Kazerne Dossin – Memorial, Museum and Documentation Center on the Holocaust and Human Rights since 2010. She obtained her Master's degree in contemporary history at KU Leuven in 2009 and is currently studying Archival Sciences at Vrije Universiteit Brussels. Dorien co-ordinates the development of Kazerne Dossin's portal website and is the 'Give Them a Face' project leader. Her own research focuses on hidden children and hiding networks in Belgium.
wealthy to downright poor. On 28 October 1940, the Germans made a decree ordering that all Jews aged 15 and older must be registered with the municipality.

An unintended outcome of this registration was that it offered previously unknown census data, revealing the structure of Jewish society that had blossomed in Antwerp and Brussels and, to a lesser extent, in Liège and Charleroi.

The numbers showed a distinctive Polish presence and a high number of Germans, while Belgians only accounted for, at most, 10% of the total population – 55,000 to 60,000 people (the Sicherheitspolizei-Sicherheitsdienst registered 56,000 individuals as of 1941).

The migration background of most Jews in Belgium inspired a key project initiated by the Jewish Museum of Deportation and Resistance (JDMR), a predecessor of Kazerne Dossin. In the early 2000s, Ward Adriaens, director of the JDMR, was able to convince the Minister of Internal Affairs to allow the JDMR access to over 2.7 million immigration files, created by the Belgian Office.
The JMDR had noticed that most of the immigration files contained a questionnaire, filled out upon arrival, in addition to a photo of the migrant or refugee. As over 90% of the Jewish population in Belgium consisted of migrants and refugees, this meant that these files would most likely contain portraits of a majority of the deportees of the Dossin barracks.

Thus, the 'Give Them a Face' project, which worked to identify the correct files and scan the photos, was launched in 2005 under the supervision of Patricia Ramet, daughter of camp survivor and JMDR chairman Natan Ramet.

Between 2005 and 2009, over 18,000 photos were scanned from the immigration files and carefully cataloged. During the process of scanning, word about the 'Give Them a Face' project spread and Jewish families in Belgium and abroad started to present photos to the JMDR to be added to the photo collection. As the immigration files often didn’t contain photos of children arriving in the country, nor were photos of children born in Belgium from non-Belgian parents added to the files, this support from the community greatly enriched the project.

By 2009, 18,522 portraits of the 25,628 deportees had been collected. That year, the four-volume series *Mechelen-Auschwitz, 1942-1944: The Destruction of Jews and Gypsies from Belgium* was published. Many Holocaust survivors, including hidden children, were very touched by the project as they had never before seen photos of their parents who were killed in the camps.
The 'Give Them a Face' project struck a chord with many, and upon publication, many relatives sent photos to the JMDR to add to the collection. From 2009-2017, the JMDR received 1,341 additional portraits. Also as a result of the success of the project, the JMDR launched a second phase of the project, collecting photos from the immigration files of Jews living in Belgium but deported from France.

This led to the collection of 4,169 photos of 5,877 deportees and the publication of these portraits in Drancy-Auschwitz in 2015 (Herman Van Goethem et al., Drancy-Auschwitz, 1942-1944: Jews from Belgium Deported via France, ASP, Brussels, 2015).

Today, JMDR’s successor, Kazerne Dossin, still continues this work, focusing on the immigration files as a whole, and holds over 1 million scans of over 20,000 files of Jews, Roma and Sinti living in Belgium before or during the Second World War. The files are accessible both at the Belgian State Archives in Brussels and at the Kazerne Dossin reading room. The files are a rich documentation source on the life of migrants and refugees in Belgium with documents including discussions about work permits; support letters and recommendations; information on reasons for migrating; plans for further migration; judicial documents; police reports on the arrest of refugees who immigrated illegally etc.

When working on the new permanent exhibition at Kazerne Dossin in 2010-2012, the museographer made the collected portraits of the deportees into the backbone of the museum building. A wall, containing 25,000 photos, stretches from the third floor to the ground floor. Every deportee leaving from Mechelen is represented on the wall, be it with a photo or just a silhouette if a photo has not yet been found. The photos literally stare back at the visitors, confronting them with the individuality of the deportees.
Ralph Italie pokazuje zdjęcie swojego brata Paula, które przekazał Kazerne Dossin w 2013 r.

Odczytywanie nazwisk podczas ceremonii w 2015 r.
View of the commemoration wall, which stretches over five floors at the Kazerne Dossin museum (© Christophe Ketels)
at the visitors, confronting them with the individuality of the deportees.

Kazerne Dossin actively continues to reach out to friends and family members of deportees and to researchers, research institutes and archives worldwide to find new photos. Since the opening of the new exhibition, Kazerne Dossin yearly organizes a commemoration during which newly found photos are added to the commemoration wall, thus continuing the Give Them a Face project.

The yearly ceremony consists of a speech with stories of photos found, the reading of the names while showing the photos and the opportunity for families from all over the world to visit the photos of their lost loved ones on the photo wall.

In 2013, 139 were added, 73 in 2014, 168 in 2015 and 102 in 2016, and last year an unprecedented amount were added to the portrait wall–265 new photos. This was largely the work of Rafid Alsaad. As a museum focusing on both Holocaust and Human Rights, Kazerne Dossin actively tries to live up to its museum mission by giving recent arrivals an opportunity to work at the documentation center for a year.

Rafid arrived in Belgium from Syria in 2015. As a staff member of the Kazerne Dossin documentation center, he started off scanning historical records, but as a political sciences student, quickly proved to be an invaluable researcher as he set out to analyze archives of institutes worldwide in an attempt to find new photos.

His work became a huge success. During the ceremony on 30 November 2017 Rafid took the stand in front of 250 people, many of whom were relatives of deportees, and explained his motivation:
Rafid Alsaad giving his speech during the 2017 ceremony (© Kazerne Dossin).
My name is Rafid. I come from Syria. I have been in Belgium for 2 years now and I live in Mechelen. I have been working at Kazerne Dossin since 4 May 2017. My first project was to search for photos of deported persons. I used the Yad Vashem website. I compared the website to the list of persons whose portraits were still missing on the commemoration wall. I found 175 new photos.

[...] This project is very important to the family members of those deported from the Dossin barracks. I learned about the Holocaust at school and I read a lot about it, but I never truly grasped the meaning of the word.

Today, I understand. They were individuals. They had their own lives, went to work and had children. They were not simply numbers on a list. Do not forget these innocent victims. We must continue to commemorate them.

In 2018, Rafid continued his mission to find photos and, with help of colleague Salma, he again found over 170 photos. Thanks to researchers such as Rafid, families and friends of deportees, volunteers, and institutes worldwide, the Give Them a Face portrait collection continues to grow in honor of the 25,846 deportees of who many lost their lives during the Holocaust. Thanks to the support of EHRI, as of 2018, Kazerne Dossin also made the portraits available via its portal website. And thus, the research continues. The search is never over.

The article was originally published at the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) blog "Seeking protection"

Be sure to check out Kazerne Dossin on Facebook, Twitter (@Kazernedossin), and Instagram(@Kazernedossin) for more information!
Jerzy Kwiatkowski (1894–1980) was born in Vienna. He studied law at the University of Vienna and the University in Chernivtsi, where he obtained a PhD in law in 1919. He was the son of Stanisław, a Polish surgeon, leader of the Polish community in Bukovina, member of parliament, honorary consul of the Republic of Poland in Chernivtsi and the only Polish senator in the Romanian parliament.

In 1914, Jerzy was drafted, as a soldier of the Austro-Hungarian army; he fought on the Russian, Serbian, Montenegrin and Italian fronts. He was promoted to the rank of lieutenant; he was a cryptographic officer in the General Staff in Warsaw. In the years 1921-1933, Jerzy Kwiatkowski was the deputy director and head of the Warsaw branch of the Polish Industrial Bank. In the years 1934-1936, he worked as the administrative director of the magazines “ABC”, “Wieczór Warszawski” and Drukarnia Literacka, and further as an administrative director of the machine tools factory “Pionier”, which he was a shareholder. On 18 March 1943, Kwiatkowski was arrested for collaboration with the Home Army. On 25 March he was incarcerated in the concentration camp in Lublin. Wojciech Lenarczyk gives an account of his further fate in the introductory text to the book:

*In the camp, he was placed in the III prisoner’s field and assigned the duties of a gardener. From November 1943 to the spring of 1944 he worked in the camp’s law office, and later an ordinary prisoner performing hard physical labour. Kwiatkowski left Majdanek on 22 July 1944 in the last transport of prisoners. After a month’s stay in Auschwitz, he was transferred to KL Sachsenhausen on 29 August 1944. In the camp near Berlin, he was assigned to the command serving the Politische Abteilung (Political Department), where he performed the duties of a translator from September 1944 to April 1945. He was liberated by American soldiers during the evacuation march on 3 May 1945 near Schwerin in Mecklenburg.*

Kwiatkowski, while staying in Bordesholm and Maczków, in the British occupied zone of Germany, began to take notes of his memories from KL Lublin. He wrote on the waste papers of a German transport company, on a borrowed typewriter, in an unheated room. In December of the same year, the typescript was ready. He began making efforts to print but met a total lack of interest from editorial offices of magazines and publishers in East Europe. The first and second (constituting reprints) editions were published by the Lublin Printing House, at the initiative of the State Museum at Majdanek (hereafter the PMM).

485 days at Majdanek is one of the most important diaries for the PMM, with an outstanding documentary importance that stands out against other literary memoirs. The book received numerous and positive reviews in Poland, Great Britain, as well as America. In 1969 it was also discussed in the House of Representatives of the US Congress. According to Wojciech Lenarczyk:
Jerzy Kwiatkowski
485 dni na Majdanku
All reviewers emphasised the immense cognitive value of 485 days at Majdanek. The author received a well-deserved recognition for "phenomenal "memory, will and courage". They also pointed out his fluent command of the German language, which had a direct impact on his situation in the camp, and consequently - on the shape of the memories. No less important was the significance of the moment of creation of the accounts. While writing in 1945, Kwiatkowski still had a fresh memory of his experiences, which allowed him to "carefully and meticulously" reflect the daily life of Majdanek prisoners. He confirmed it, after all, when he admitted that, looking at his text after so many years, he had the impression that he was reading the words of a stranger. It was only after a long reading that he recalled long-erased images and faces in his memory.

Kwiatkowski donated the typescript of his 1945 diary to Poland; to the PMM, while he was still living in the US. He deposited most of his archive, a gardener from field III at the Hoover Institution Library and Archives at the University of Stanford in the United States. It turned out that there are three typescripts of his memories stored there, brush prints of the first edition with proofreading, as well as letters and a rich dossier of the first edition (more on this topic at https://www.hoover.org/news/485-days-majdanek- jerzy-kwiatkowski). Colleagues, former prisoners who were the first readers of the memoirs, informed the author who had been living outside the country since 1945, what he could not print due to censorship in the communist era. Apart from his colleagues’ censorship due to personal reasons, Kwiatkowski censored himself by removing from the message addressed to Majdanek, ten fragments of anti-Russian content. Institutional censorship questioned about a hundred subsequent fragments, and employees of the publishing house extensively corrected the brusque language of the camp.

In preparing the latest issue, staff of the State Museum at Majdanek decided that the best solution would be to publish the memories in their original form, free of censorship, editorial changes, corrections, deletions and additions, as well as free of stylistic refinement. The earliest, complete, copyrighted subheadings of the typescript stored at the University of Stanford were chosen as the basis for the publication.

The new edition, compiled by employees of the PMM (scientific supervision by Wojciech Lenarczyk, editorial work and language editing by Dorota Niedziałkowska) was preceded by an introduction.
Thanks to materials stored at the Hoover Institute and those obtained from the author’s cousin Janina Kwiatkowska-Korczak, it was possible to considerably broaden Kwiatowski’s biography, as well as present the editorial and publishing fate of 485 days at Majdanek. The book was illustrated with pictures of the author, his drawing of the Majdanek camp plan and plan of prisoners’ field III, camp documents, as well as reproductions of the archives.

From 20 June 2018, the book is available for stationary and online sale at the PMM bookstore (księgarnia.majdanek.eu). A promotional meeting is scheduled for the beginning of September in Warsaw.
Anti-semitism at Chelsea has been a big problem due to one of our biggest rivals, Tottenham Hotspur, coming from a largely Jewish area of north London. Because of this, Tottenham supporters were called ‘yids’ and more recently their fans have tried to take ownership of the word, calling themselves the ‘yid army’. There has also been more sinister chanting heard at Stamford Bridge, including songs about Auschwitz and hissing noises aimed at Tottenham supporters.

However, since the more recent campaign by the club, these have thankfully disappeared from the terraces. But like in all of society, a few ‘individuals’ who still chant or hiss are still present. The more supporters who are educated, the better chance we have to stamp this disease out of our football club.

Auschwitz-Birkenau has always been somewhere I had wanted to visit. Since studying Nazi Germany at A-level, I understood how they could have come to power and created a dictatorship from a democracy. But I never understood how they were able to murder 6 million people. How people could sit quietly and say nothing as their neighbours and friends were taken away from their homes. I wasn’t sure what I was expecting, people tell you of a very harrowing and somber experience, but that feeling, of utter contempt for those responsible for this massacre is what’s needed to remind you that this was possible, and still is.

As we entered the gates of Auschwitz I, the sign above your head reads ‘Arbeit Macht Frei’ (work brings freedom). For those trapped in the concentration camps this was the message they saw, day after day, week after week. The myth around this, is what helped the guards of Auschwitz keep control of the prisoners. They thought there would be a way that. The harsh reality was only death would release them.

As a parent to a young boy, the exhibits of children’s clothing and shoes struck me the hardest. These children were totally innocent, had done nothing except be born into the Jewish faith. I think of my own son Charlie. They could be his shoes, it could be his photograph. This thought is what occupies me from the short drive between Auschwitz I and Birkenau.

It’s here, in the watch tower, when I was taken aback by the scale of this operation. This site, this huge site, designed to make killing more effective. Jews from as far as Norway and the occupied Greek Islands were being transported here. Some of them would be sent to the gas chambers direct from the train. All that’s going through my mind is the thought that it could’ve so easily been me.

Our educators from the Holocaust Educational Trust and the Auschwitz Memorial guide share stories that are difficult to comprehend.

How can we be this evil to our fellow humans?

For the guards of this camp, it seems they took pleasure in doing so?
Coming to Auschwitz-Birkenau is difficult. Because in doing so you’re accepting that the greatest evil on this planet, the biggest threat to life, is humankind. And that is a difficult pill to swallow.

On our trip, we are joined by Rabbi Barry Marcus. At the end of our trip we join him in front of the memorial for a service. I’ve never been a religious person, I’ve never really seen the point of it all. But here, I get it. These prisoners had everything taken away from them. Their family, homes, jobs, even their humanity. But what they could never take from them, was their belief.

As we head home, I’m sat near some important faces at Chelsea Football Club. These trips that the club have run are very important to the owner personally and for the future generations of supporters. What I learned, and I think what we all learned, is that education is the biggest tool in combating anti-semitism and racism.

The club already operates a zero tolerance approach with any offenders caught. But what they need is people to come forward, to not sit in silence if somebody is being anti-Semitic. To know that it’s not acceptable and can’t be tolerated in the football stadiums or in society in general. And now, more than ever, this is so very important. During a protest march this month, in the same city in which we live, men walked the streets doing Nazi-salutes.
We mustn’t sit in silence, we must learn from what our experience and what history has taught us.

This can happen again, this has happened again and if we do nothing, this will happen again.
1,5 MILLION BUTTONS  
SYMBOL OF MEMORY OF THE MURDERED CHILDREN

B’s buttons is a project that began in a small secondary school in the English Lake District. Each year, the school welcomes Holocaust survivor Arek Hersh to share his experiences with our students. These visits are particularly meaningful when we consider the history of the Lakes School, and it was after one of these visits that the project came to life.

In 1945, when the concentration camps were liberated, the British government said they would give a new home to 1000 child Holocaust Survivors who had been liberated and discovered in Theresienstadt in the Czech Republic.

Many of these children were found to have passed through Auschwitz Birkenau at some point in their dreadful time during the Holocaust, and had been transported to Theresienstadt towards the end of the war.

Sadly, only 732 could be found alive in Theresienstadt, and who qualified to be taken to Britain. The qualification had been that they had to have survived the concentration camp system and many of these had survived time in Auschwitz, Majdenek, Buchenwald, and many other notorious and lesser known camps. Each had their own tragedy attached to their young lives.

Most of the children who came to Britain were teenage boys along with a smaller percentage of girls, and even some very small children aged between three and six years old. For most of them, their time had been spent as slave labourers in numerous camps for the previous few years. The very much younger children arrived without parents or relatives and their infant lives remain something of a mystery of survival.

Of the 732 who were to come to Britain, the first 300 were flown to Windermere, in the Lake District of England, to be housed on the Calgarth Estate. During the war, the estate had been built to house workers at the nearby Sunderland flying boat factory, on the shores of the lake. When the end of the war came, these workers moved on, and the estate became the start of a new life for the 300 children. The Lakes School is on the site of the former Calgarth Estate, and so the story has a particular resonance with us.

Following Arek’s visit last June, Arek himself being a teenage survivor of Auschwitz, students were asked to reflect on how the Holocaust should be remembered. Some sketched a memorial design, others wrote poetry, and some simply discussed their reactions to what they had heard. One student asked me what 6 million looks like, following Arek’s sharing of the number of Jewish victims of the Shoah. This was a question I simply could not answer. I, as an adult, have no way to conceptualise such quantities, and so, I reasoned, neither do our students. This led to a discussion about what we as a school, could collect in such quantities to act both as a learning tool but also as a permanent memorial to the victims. As the school has a particular connection to the children of the Holocaust, it was decided that we would collect 1.5 million buttons to create a memorial. Buttons were chosen by Student B, as she said ‘they are all different, all individuals, just like people.'
Since putting a post on Facebook appealing for buttons from our local community in September, the post has gone viral and been shared all over the world. We have received buttons from Australia, Mexico, the USA, France, Poland, Israel, New Zealand and many more places, which has been overwhelming. We are nearing our target, though the totals still need to be added up – massive collections and counts have been happening in Jewish communities in London, and also efforts have been made in the Isle of Man, and we are waiting on a delivery of these buttons before adding up the totals.
The collection of the buttons is just the beginning of a much larger story. Already, students are shocked at the sheer quantity arriving, and are utterly horrified to consider what they represent. It has encouraged them to think more deeply about the impact and absurdity of discrimination and prejudice. Moving forward, the buttons will be created into a permanent memorial here on the school site, to educate not only current and future students about the horrors of the Holocaust, but also the wider community. This is a part of history that cannot be forgotten, and we hope to create a lasting legacy of remembrance, understanding and education which will tell the story of the ‘Windermere Boys’ and their families and communities for years to come.

https://www.facebook.com/lakesbuttons/