LIGHT OF THE NEGATIVE / IMAGES FROM THE RINGELBLUM ARCHIVE AND THE JERZY LEWCZYŃSKI ARCHIVE / REINTERPRETED
EXHIBITION AT THE JEWISH HISTORICAL INSTITUTE IN WARSAW

NEW ON DISPLAY AT YAD VASHEM

DRAWING BY JERZY ZIELEZIŃSKI AT THE AUSCHWITZ MEMORIAL COLLECTIONS

VIRTUALLY INSIDE ANNE FRANK’S OLD HOME

ABOUT POLISH MEMORY. INTERVIEW WITH A GREAT-GRANDSON OF CAPTAIN WITOLD PILECKI.
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We invite all of you to work closely with us. We would be grateful to receive information about events, projects, publications, exhibitions, conferences or research that we should share with our readers. We also accept proposals for articles.

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Paweł Sawicki, Editor-in-Chief

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From 2 to 5 June 2019, the 33 Member States of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) held their first plenary session under the Luxembourg chairmanship. It took place in Mondorf-les-Bains and was chaired by Ambassador Georges Santer. The Mondorf Plenary was a meeting where IHRA’s expert and political level came together to discuss and move forward with projects relating to Holocaust research, remembrance, and education. The next plenary session is due to be held in Luxembourg City from 2 to 5 December 2019.

“A half truth is worse than a full lie,” said IHRA Honorary Chairman Professor Yehuda Bauer on the dangers of Holocaust distortion in member countries. Safeguarding the record and countering distortion is the IHRA’s priority theme for the next five years, and during the IHRA meetings four experts took part in an open, unscripted discussion moderated by Klaus Mueller (USHMM) to explore the spectrum of distortion from a variety of perspectives.

During the session Australia officially joined the IHRA member states.
The government of Canada announced on June 25 that it will formally adopt the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance’s (IHRA) definition of anti-Semitism as part of its anti-racism strategy.

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The head of the Dutch state rail company announced compensation for Jewish and Roma survivors deported on Dutch trains to German Nazi concentration and extermination camps. Widows and relatives of victims will get compensation as well.

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How Hollywood idol Audrey Hepburn helped save Dutch Jews during the Holocaust. Veteran star chronicler Robert Matzen traces Hepburn’s roots in the Netherlands, her mother’s fleeting Nazi sympathies, and her covert activities against the occupying Nazi regime.

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The photographs are presented in a way that gives the reader (the reader, not just the viewer!) the opportunity to read the collection and take advantage, among other things, of the interpretative guidelines contained in the text by Professor Georges Didi-Huberman and the new findings regarding the locations, circumstances and heroes of the photographs.

**Reinterpreted**

Documents and photographs hidden in 1942 by members of the Jewish conspiratorial group Oneg Shabbat contained testimonies to the fate of Jews during the German occupation. Found in the ruins of the Warsaw Ghetto in 1946, these testimonies became the voice of the murdered and a great challenge for researchers.

The collection of photographs located in one of the boxes contained 76 pictures. However, it was not the only collection in the Archives. In another box, the photographic file was completely destroyed due to moisture. So, were these 76 images a complete whole? Was the destroyed set a supplement to this collection? The first objective, therefore, was to determine the coherency of the collection; an attempt to associate it with the concept of the entire Archive, as well as to examine the images themselves, and their language.

Consequently, two trails were elucidated. The first one was analysed and interpreted by Georges Didi-Huberman, who suggested the following in his essay on the archive: Perhaps it is necessary to go back to the beginning and start all over again: to look simply, more simply. Before examining each image, I try to consider the whole collection; in a way, this presupposes going fast, “flipping through.” But it also gives a valuable indication of the overall gestus, the adopted method, the suggested montage.

Constellations become apparent. Proceeding in this fashion, I first notice that all the photographs were taken from inside the ghetto; such is the primary – fundamental – logic of this collection of images, which, if necessary, would attest to its consistency with the Oneg Shabbat’s historical approach of documenting the fate of the Warsaw ghetto from within – any other point of view being impossible since, in this case, the observer does not enjoy any privilege of location in relation to the observed.

**Does the collection of these photographs form a corpus?**

The second, parallel trail was the search for links between the creators of the Archive, their intentions and that of the photographer (one of the observers) in historical documents and the photographs themselves. Is the photographer's presence more or less perceptible in his works? By deciding when to take a picture and how it should look, the photographer always imposes his or her perception criteria. He interprets the world through a defined recording, creating a series of images or arranging them in cycles. Furthermore, there is the intention of the ordering party - presumably, in this case, Emanuel Ringelblum, who planned to take photographs to illustrate important issues in the context of the entire Archive. In the autumn of 1942, he noted down: "Photographs [:] Ghetto, Police, Thirteenth Street, Jewish Model, Beggar, Children, Social Institutions, Sejm, Photographs of Gestapo and police officers, the Ghetto in Piotrków".

Most of these subjects are in the preserved photographs, but not all of them have survived to this day, and in some cases, only the titles have survived.
Therefore, if it is a deliberately composed collection, is it possible to attribute them to any author; is its presence visible, and how did it affect the collection? Emanuel Ringelblum did not question the objectivity of photography; he considered it registration of reality and not a medium subject to feelings and interpretations. Photographs that do not fit in with the rest become all the more mysterious, as they point in an unequivocal way to the photographer who added his/her perspective and relations with the people immortalised in these photographs. Therefore, the field of interpretation of the work stretches between the planned purpose of the photographs, those who commission them, and the photographer's sensitivity and intentions, his or her relationship with the photographed and ultimately those who watch them. The photographer's intentions do not define the meaning of photography; for a certain moment, the images live a life of their own. We - the viewers - are happy to watch and seek for explanations in the contexts in which we live. Photographs, on the other hand, do not explain anything; they live in different interpretations and independent cycles. The same applies to the photographs from the Archive. Repeatedly published, reprinted, copied and exhibited, they deviated from the intentions of their author, Ringelblum; they were interpreted; differently, of Beit Lohamei Hagetaot (Museum of Ghetto Heroes) in Israel, which were re-scanned and added to the collection with the help of the Museum.

After more than seventy years, we were able to return to these photographs and traces of past events, reread them and look at them as constellations of images with context and aesthetics.

The photographer, in other words, who? The signatures or stamps on photo prints are a significant trail in the search for a photographer. Some of the photos are marked their descriptions and meanings changed. In 1946, the commission that compiled the photographs, which included Nachman Blumental, Laura Eichhornowa, Dora Elbirt, H. Smolar and Luba Szochet, gave them titles and conducted the first identifications. With great probability, we can point to Laura Eichhorn, which is handwritten on the reverse of one of the photographs. However, in most cases, with no additional information at her disposal, she was not precise. The collection of photographs was dispersed after 1946. All the more so, with only short descriptions, the matching of a photograph with a title is not at all evident. After an arduous search, 6 photos were identified between copies from the collections of Beit Lohamei Hagetaot (Museum of Ghetto
"A group listens to the radio on the street (German "yappers")" The caption of the photo is not precise. A crowd gathered on Gęsie Street, waiting for people released from prison by Adam Czerniakow. They occupy the entire breadth of the street where the prison is located. It is the 11th of March 1942, at about 3 pm. People are smiling and even laughing at the photographer. Some degree of intimacy exists between him and the people. The one with the camera is one of them, "fellow countryman". Photo by Henryk (Jechiel) Bojm (?), Foto-Forbert

"Obituaries" Obituaries placed on walls are a confirmation of someone’s existence. Death was a daily occurrence in the ghetto, but the Jewish photographer did not photograph the dead bodies; he only wrote down the traces of the person, his name and surname, as well as the circumstances of death. Obituary photos are like portraits of people - Szlama Fagot (73), music by Bela Berlandstein (Berland), Helena Trilling, Władysław Teszner - a chemical engineer from Łódź, Cyna Oberrotman (died 20 March 1942). Photo by Henryk (Jechiel) Bojm (?), Foto-Forbert
with the logo of the Foto-Forbert studio. It was a well-known pre-war atelier run by Leo Forbert and Jechiel (Henryk) Bojm. In 1923, Henryk Bojm together with photographer Leo Forbert, the owner of one of the largest photo studios in Warsaw, who photographed the film and theatre community, founded a Jewish film enterprise called Leo-Film, with its seat in Leo Forbert's studio. Together they work on the first Yiddish film of the interwar period - "The Vow" (1924). During the occupation, despite the death of his partner, Bojm did not stop running the workshop. Upon the closure of the ghetto, he moved to No. 7 Elektoralna Street.

Another evidence concerning the author is the expenditure on the photographs recorded in the Oneg Shabbat ledger, which he gave to "p. Baum" in August 1941 and at the end of March 1942. These dates correspond to details that make it possible to determine the time some of the photographs were taken - from the release of prisoners from the Central Prison (11.03.1942) or the obituaries at Karmelicka Street (end of March 1941).

Bojm's involvement is confirmed by a document preserved in the Ringelblum Archive, which says that Chil Bojm takes pictures not only for Joint (American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee) but also for the Jewish Social Self-help and has a permit to take photographs in the ghetto. From the beginning of the 30s until 1939, Bojm was the most frequently published photojournalist in a famous Jewish magazine published in Polish. In search of illustrated supplements for the "New Review," he was present with his camera at almost every event: sports events, rallies, demonstrations, conventions and official visits. He often photographed crowds, made documentaries, photographed athletes and group portraits (with a significant dominance of the latter).

The topics mentioned predominate photographs commissioned by the Oneg Shabbat, [photo 3 - The Thirteen] also provide a rationale for solving the mystery of the only pre-war photo included in the collection, which does not match the others but shows the famous interwar boxer who served as a Jewish police officer in the ghetto...

**Three paradigms**
The title of the first part of the presentation of the photographs from the Archive at the exhibition, "Government of the oppressors", was derived from a text by Prof. Georges Didi-Huberman, which was created after he visited the Ringelblum Archive and saw the photographs: “The first of these paradigms to be documented was, logically, that of the government of the oppressors. But the Nazi...
oppessors themselves are hardly to be seen here; this is because they are mostly on the other side. They dominate everything, however, in power as well as in action. They exercise their power of terror from behind what constitutes one of the recurring figures in this set of images: the ghetto wall, often photographed for itself, in alternately empty and overcrowded streets, as a place of misery or apparent urban “normality.” The ghetto wall would, therefore, serve as the impersonal symbol, but also the primary technical framework, of the policy pursued by the Germans: to lock up, isolate, starve, exterminate.”

One of the photos in this part is a take of the cemetery gate on Okopowa Street. It reflects an atmosphere of confinement; shows hierarchy - inside the ghetto. From the photographer's perspective, there is the Jewish Law Enforcement Service (Jewish police) right behind the gate of the Polish Police (known as the Navy Blue Police), and a German officer Ordnungspolizei ("Orpo") in the centre of the passageway, who oversees both the Polish and Jewish police. Everyone in the photograph is looking at the camera, indicating that the photographer is not hiding the camera - so he has permission to take pictures, but does not get too close to the gate and keeps a safe distance. The picture is part of a larger group of photographs documenting significant changes in the ghetto borders, which the Germans imposed in the autumn of 1941. The changes also affected the Foto-Forbert workshop, which was forced to relocate again, and its author is probably Henryk Bojm. [photo 4]

Didi-Huberman writes about the second part of the photos as follows: “The second paradigm corresponds to the paradox that the enclosed life of the ghetto had its own administration, the Judenrat [...] this government of the oppressed, itself drawn into a spiral of impossible negotiations with the “masters,” perverse compromises, injustices and ill-treatment of all kinds, all this despite its desire
to “do the best,” in such torment, for the people of the ghetto. [...] If the wall is a symbol of the first paradigm, the uniform of the Jewish police could serve the same function with regard to the second paradigm. Polish Jews who have accepted this dirty job as a guarantee of certain privileges: very temporary privileges, in fact, since, like the others, they too will end up losing everything and being murdered.”

The Germans demanded the supply of sheepskins for the army fighting in the east. Adam Czerniaków, the president of Judenrat, tried to exchange the collected fur and sheepskins for people imprisoned for illegally leaving the ghetto. Finally, on March 11, 1942, he succeeded in freeing the first group of prisoners. The President personally went to the Central Jail on Gęsiej Street. On March 11, 1942, he noted the following in his diary: “At 3.30 I released 151 prisoners from the Jewish prison. Among them, 5 died, and 7 were hospitalised. I placed thirty or so prisoners in a shelter; the others went home. I spoke to the prisoners. A great emotion overwhelmed everyone. A crowd of people awaited the prisoners on the street”. [photo 5]

Consequently, the photographer introduced an important figure to the ghetto, whom the creator of the Archive, Emanuel Ringelblum, was extremely critical of - Adam Czerniaków, President of Judenrat. In the photographs, he presented him ambiguously - maybe because he allowed him to take photographs freely in the ghetto so he could carry out the assignments of the Judenrat, or perhaps because he knew too much about him. Following the inclusion of Chłodna Street into the ghetto in December 1941, Adam Czerniaków moved into the tenement house at number 20. The Foto-Forbert photo studio also moved into the same tenement house.

The last fragment of the collection shown at the exhibition is: “The third paradigm that structures the Oneg Shabbat photograph collection will therefore logically be that of the ungovernable people: a people of nameless, shipwrecked beings. A people that no government will want to take care of. To which, therefore, any government – even Jewish – will remain hostile. And so there opens up the vague area of “life in spite of all,” of ungoverned life, that is to say, life abandoned
unto itself, illicit or clandestine, out of vital necessity. We can find its visual symbol, in contrast to the variety of uniforms, in the rags or tatters that street children wore at the time.”

Photographs from a Jewish school, wedding, and food cultivation show that in spite of the abnormality, ordinary life continued in the ghetto. Mothers took their children for a walk, materials and food were traded. It has daily life, but with dark shadows in the background. An example of this is a series of photographs from a potato field, taken in the autumn of 1941 on the grounds of the former “Skry” Stadium at the cemetery in Okopowa Street, which was used for cultivation of plants. Shortly after the excavations, the stadium was excluded from the ghetto. A few months later, this field was filled with mass graves. [photo 6]

The exhibition “Light of the Negative / Images from the Ringelblum Archive and the Jerzy Lewczyński Archive / Reinterpreted” will be open at the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw until 25 August 2019

More information

The exhibition is an element of the Oneg Szabat Program implemented by the Emanuel Ringelblum Jewish Historical Institute and the Association of the Jewish Historical Institute of Poland, within a public-private partnership.
Yad Vashem recently opened a special exhibit entitled "New on Display" in its Museum of Holocaust Art. The exhibit presents works of art that have been added to Yad Vashem’s 12,000-piece Art Collection in recent years, and are now revealed for the first time to the general public. The works were created by artists from a wide range of backgrounds and genres, who were active in Europe and North Africa during the Nazi German occupation under varying circumstances: in hiding, in concentration camps, in prisoner-of-war camps, and in the ghettos.

The display includes works by artists who were already accomplished at the outbreak of World War II, alongside those of younger artists who were just beginning their artistic journey in this period. For both the more experienced artists and the novices, continuing to create art was a means of personal expression, as well as testimony during this time of terrible pain and crisis. Groups of works from these collections are integrated into this exhibit, allowing for a fuller understanding their daily struggle and the life story of the artist who created them.

"Each piece in the exhibition tells at least three stories: the story of the artist and his fate in the Holocaust, the content of the work and what is described within it, and the story of the physical embodiment of the work and how it survived and reached us," remarked Art Department Director Eliad Moreh Rosenberg. "The 'New on Display' exhibit connects many artists who on the surface have nothing in common except with their undying drive to create, in spite of the difficult conditions and often at great physical risk. The art they produced gave them the inner strength to live, and expresses faith in the spirit of humanity even when evil and cruelty prevailed all around them."
Yad Vashem's Museum of Holocaust Art is dedicated to the world of Jewish creativity during the Holocaust, and presents works by artists who were active in ghettos, camps, hiding places and forests.

The works in Yad Vashem's unrivalled Art Collection will soon be preserved and stored in Yad Vashem's new Shoah Heritage Collections Center, the heart of the new Shoah Heritage Campus being built on the Mount of Remembrance in Jerusalem. The new Collections Center aims to preserve, catalogue and display these items as everlasting witnesses to the horrors of the Holocaust.

The German Nazis were determined not only to annihilate the Jewish people, but also to obliterate their identity, memory, culture and heritage," remarked Yad Vashem Chairman Avner Shalev. "For many, all that remains are a treasured work of art, a personal artifact that survived with them, a photograph kept close to their person, a diary, or a note. By preserving these precious items – that are of great importance not just to the Jewish people, but also to humanity as a whole – and revealing them to the public, they will act as the voice of the victims and the survivors, and serve as an everlasting memory."
On 14 June 1940 the Germans sent a group of 728 Poles from a prison in Tarnów to the Auschwitz camp. This date is considered to be the beginning of the functioning of the camp. Today June 14 is a National Remembrance Day of Victims of the German Nazi Concentration and Extermination Camps. About the memory in Poland and about Polish memory we spoke with Krzysztof Kosior, a great grandson of captain Witold Pilecki.

You have been following this Polish remembrance from a very special perspective, as it is not only a universal remembrance but also a family one. What kind of memory is it?

K.K.: Perhaps I should start with the national perspective. I would narrow it down into a kind of "six P's": Polska Pamięć jest obecnie Przypominana, Przywracana, Propagowana, ale też musi być ona Prawdziwa (Polish Memory is now Remembered, Restored, Propagated, but it must also be true). It was lost at some point. I have the impression that the subject of World War II or the Holocaust was not of particular interest to Poles in the 1990s. Today, this memory has been uncovered thanks to the great effort of various individuals. Sadly, it is often misrepresented, which is a major problem, as some people think that because they possess certain knowledge; they know it all. An important role in ensuring that memory is not misrepresented or distorted is certainly played by the Auschwitz Museum or the recently established Pilecki Institute. In my opinion, there are two sources of this misrepresentation - these are both extraneous factors because one can feel that in the United States or Israel, from our viewpoint, we are often overlooked or marginalised when it comes to the Polish experience of the war period. On the other hand, these grassroots acts of remembrance of Poland's suffering are also - to put it mildly - often less scientific, not supported by sources, but based on a general vision of the fact that we have always been the victims. However, the truth, as is customary, lies somewhere in the middle. As far as the family view goes, I also underwent such an evolution. When I was younger, the memory of Witold Pilecki was for me praiseworthy, but very distant. At that time, it reminded me of the stories about the January or November insurgents. The older I get, the closer I get to the memory of Witold Pilecki. It turned out that this is not so distant, either ideologically or temporally. I am glad that this memory has been extracted and protected by many different people, but I always try to act in such a way that it is not used for political goals. Witold Pilecki is often used as a final argument to silence an opponent during a discussion. But unfortunately, quite often the same people who willingly use Witold Pilecki, are the ones who demonstrate ignorance of history. They do not know the realities of war and occupation. For example, a case where journalists made "ridicule" about who was released from Auschwitz. How is it possible that "someone on sick leave, left the camp". Prisoners were indeed released from Auschwitz, which is thoroughly described in Witold's report. You can see that sometimes someone slips through the subject, without any knowledge of the details. They will willingly back themselves up with Pilecki but do not know the source. It is, in my opinion, very problematic. Naturally - not everyone will be a specialist in historical topics, but I would be great when people use the figure of an individual for their reflection, to at least get acquainted with the outline of "what and how". Nowadays, this knowledge is too often completely superficial. If someone uses this subject and Pilecki's reports for personal arguments, it is worth reading this book, because then he or she will learn a lot and stop committing blunders. The report is available on the Internet - it suffices to reach for it!
While still adhering to this metaphorical letter "P", I'll add one more "P" - Polish memory is Witold Pilecki. We can see how this memory is restored and propagated. How do you build such an important symbol of memory so as not to lose connection with knowledge about the figure?

K.K.: I am very glad that Witold Pilecki was excavated from the oblivion he was condemned to by the communists. It was also a chronicle of the history of his children - both my grandmother and her brother - to carry this memory through the worst years of the Communist Poland. At the beginning of 2006/2007, more and more people became interested in this figure. A play was created by the television theatre entitled "Śmierć Rotmistrza Pileckiego" ("The Death of Cavalry Captain Pilecki") directed by Ryszard Bugajski. Independent, grassroots initiatives began to emerge, reminiscent of Witold's biography and achievements. I think it's a good thing that he is a symbol of our somewhat forgotten struggle during and shortly after the Second World War. However, it is inappropriate for it to be used as a political symbol for contemporary disputes because - as outdated as it may sound - he united rather than divided people. When I look at the monument to Witold Pilecki in Warsaw; I like the fact that the side wall of this cube is made up of standing figures of people. The message I make out it is that Witold was an organiser, a co-founder of several underground organisations, but he never acted alone. He motivated people to work together because people are important. I'm glad that we remember Witold, but let's also try to have it at the back of our heads that all that surrounds us were created by people who willing to cooperate with one another. In any case, Witold points this out very nicely in his report. He mentions successive numbers of sworn conspirators in the Organisation: right-wing, left-wing, right-wing, left-wing, etc. He notes that these people had previously fought each other, but in these specific camp conditions, they started to cooperate for a common purpose. Nowadays, I am very concerned about such extreme polarisation on the grounds of political views. I think it is a road to nowhere. I believe that it is in our interest to prevent such divisions.

What universal reflection for today and the future may still be derived from the report?

K.K.: The report must have been written rather hastily. It was not fully polished, and yet it is an excellent read. I recommend that most adults read this not very thick book. What is amazing for me is that this report above all
gives us hope that in the conditions of hell in which the Auschwitz prisoners found themselves, we can preserve humanity and do something good. After all, he even chips in some humorous elements here and there. For me, it was amazing that while reading a book about dying people I would smirk from time to time because a kind of wink suddenly appears in this entire horror. Regardless of these circumstances, these people did not succumb to suppression or lose their humanity or sanity. The message here is that if we work together, there is always hope for success. I also think that the last paragraph of the report is very important because it is perhaps a kind of short will that Witold wrote for us.

I have the paragraph with me: “It is not important what I have written so far on these several dozen pages, especially for those who will be reading them only as a sensation, but here I would like to write in such capital letters, which are unfortunately not available on a typewriter, for all those heads which have just water under their beautiful parting and they can perhaps be thankful to their mothers for well-formed skulls, so that water is not running out of their heads.” an element of humour slightly appears again, but then, it followed by this deep thought “...let them think deeper about their own lives, let them look around at people and start the battle against falsity, hypocrisy, against interest cleverly and conveniently adjusted for the idea, the truth and even the huge issue, from themselves.”

K.K.: It compels us to think about not letting ourselves be crammed into some sort of frame prepared for us. Rather than yelling at each other out of emotion, we should sit back and think about what we can do, what we should do and start doing it. Later, we may analyse it much more broadly - where did fascism, Nazism and the Auschwitz camp come from. Where did these ideas, which the Germans of that time so believed in, originate? These people allowed themselves to be driven into such a monstrous act. If we do not apply critical thinking but accept what someone tells us in propaganda, the results may be tragic. You should be independent, think independently and have an internal element of goodness that allows you to follow your direction indicator. For Witold, such an important moral compass was faith, which enabled him to distinguish between good and evil, and at the same time was not excluding, confining... I think that the
commandment about love helped Witold to survive and turn his weaknesses into a kind of inner strength that united all kinds of people.

In Pilecki’s report, the community is very important, and it was important for Witold Pilecki not just in the camp. In his case, one can see that he looks at a particular individual, and not at what role he plays or what titles he or she holds. They're not "compatriots" and "strangers".

K.K.: Precisely. I see him as a statesman. He was a Pole and was very proud of it, but it was not an exclusionary patriotism, which implied that being Polish, makes me superior to others. He was proud of his origin, but it was as inclusive as it is known today. He never judged others by their religion, ethnic origin or political convictions. Naturally, he had his personal views, which is valuable, because I have the impression that the contemporary media tend to produce people without personal views and are only able to quote what they read on the Internet. While it is important to have a personal outlook, it doesn't necessarily imply that I can't talk to someone with a different view. The anniversary of the first transport to Auschwitz is approaching and, on the one hand, I am glad that we recall how much Poles suffered in the camps. After all, Auschwitz was founded as a camp to destroy the Polish intelligentsia and clergy, and only afterwards did it transform into this widely-known death camp and extermination site for Jews. It's great that we remember that. We must also understand that for Israel and the Jews; it is also a very special place and we cannot, as I observed in the media a year ago, use this place for anti-Jewish campaigns.

This place should unite us with the Jews, and not be a bone of contention. It's not about who suffered more. Every suffering is important, and everyone deserves to be remembered. I find it very painful when people who may not remember those times are involved in such a tone of "demanding" and bidding who has suffered more. I would like us to understand each other better and stop generating unnecessary conflicts.
When we talk about the Auschwitz Memorial Site today, it is important we remember that it is a place of multiple memories. Respect for these different views is very important.

K.K.: Absolutely, yes! We cannot confine ourselves to our group, and we need to have a lot of forbearance and understanding for different views because each of us has had our share of trauma from this place. Naturally, we must also fight for our rights and remind them that a lot of Poles died in Auschwitz and that the local population also supported the resistance movement. It's good for the world to remember that because I have the impression that it has forgotten about it at some point and attempts to place this story in some false frames.

The Auschwitz Museum is no stranger to you. How is your contact with the Memorial Site?

K.K.: I hesitated for a long time whether to come here at all. It wasn't until I was twenty-seven that I went there for the first time. Personally, it was a very difficult matter for me. I had the impression that I was not ready. It is great that the Museum advocates a professional approach; that it employs true historians who convey authentic, source-based history and do not yield to any pressure - this at least is my impression that it does not deviate from presenting something more intensively in one direction or the other. It seems to me that given the complexity of the issues involved, the Auschwitz Museum is properly serving its purpose. If there is an opportunity to highlight the history of the Polish resistance movement a little more, I am all for it. I would not subscribe to those voices that I have heard saying that everything is being done wrong here, under the dictates of some foreign entity. I have the impression that this is not the case at all.

The educational sessions I had the opportunity to participate in were very interesting. They cover a wide range of subjects and show history from a more Polish or more Jewish perspective. I have seen the Roma visiting Auschwitz. I imagine that reconciling these different narratives is very difficult, but I think the Museum is doing quite well. There must be some sort of fusion of the different views of those who were victims. Numerically,
those who were victims. Numerically, everything speaks in favour of Jewish suffering. The majority of them died, and they were above all the "target" of the German Nazis. However, I am extremely irritated when we are marginalised, and people say that Poles are "accomplices to the Holocaust, period".

I disagree with such comments. We need to educate the West in this regard, but the question is, how can we do this effectively. All those the Germans succeeded in sending to this camp suffered inexpressibly. It would be a pity for us all to be divided today, when, in spite of everything, such suffering and memory should, in a way, unite us.

Do you have any message for the National Remembrance Day?

K.K.: I think that I would conclude by saying that I have this hope, which I derive from the fact that if only people want to, we can truly achieve a lot together. Let's cultivate this memory; let's try to interest people. Let's not yell at each other. Let's talk to each other.

Thank you

(The interview was conducted by Paweł Sawicki)
Jerzy Zieleziński was arrested on 18 March 1943, in his apartment in Warsaw, and detained in the Pawiak prison, from where he was deported to Auschwitz on 28 April. He was registered as a political prisoner with number 119 517, which was tattooed on his left forearm. During his time at Auschwitz II-Birkenau, he stayed, among others, in the penal company. In November 1943, he fell ill with typhoid. He was transferred from Auschwitz to the Flossenbürg camp, and later to Dachau, where he was liberated.

"His series of drawings consists of 41 works, most of which were created immediately after the war, in the years 1945-46 during his recovery in a hospital, and stay at the "Displaced Persons" camp in Schwandorf. In the drawings, he refers directly to the camp experience. Individual drawings show the subsequent stages in the life of a concentration camp prisoner: arrival at the camp, punishment, returns from work, hunger, cold, and death marches. They also depict prisoners dying from the electrified wires of the camp fence or victims of hanging executions,' said Agnieszka Sieradzka, an art historian working for the Museum Collections. 'Most of the drawings refer to Auschwitz and are marked with his camp number. The whole is an expressive, subjective, and intense artistic expression of recorded camp episodes, full of drastic details, Agnieszka Sieradzka emphasized.
Jerzy Zieleźniński was born in 1914 in Łowicz. In the years 1934-39, he attended the Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw, graduating a few months before the outbreak of World War II.

Little is known about him before his arrest. 'What we do know is that the artist managed to make his way to the Warsaw Ghetto, to which he devoted several of his drawings. It was most likely due to his fiancée of Jewish descent, whom he wanted to extract from the ghetto, and which he probably succeeded in doing,' said Sieradzka.

After the war, Jerzy Zieleński ended up in Munich, where two exhibitions of his drawings from the concentration camps took place, and where his works were published in the form of two graphic portfolios: the first in 1946 (consisting of 18 drawings) and the second in 1948. (containing 24 drawings).

His friend Jerzy Szwede, also a former prisoner of concentration camps, wrote the following in a preface to the catalogue: "The characters of the composition have nothing to do with the products of sick imagination or lush fantasy. They are the most realistic reflection of reality. For many, it may be incomprehensible, and they may be inclined to consider it an artistic exaggeration, for those, it must be affirmed that it was the unfortunate reality of daily life."

In the mid-1950s Jerzy Zieleński emigrated to the United States, where he changed his name to Georg. Initially, he tried to make his mark in the artistic world of New York City. Eventually, however, as Georg Ziel (he signed the shortened version of his name for book illustrations), and became famous as an illustrator in the publishing industry, specialising in Gothic romances and horror novels. He designed over 300 book covers in total. He spent the final years of his life in Connecticut. He passed away in 1983.
INSIDE ANNE FRANK'S FORMER HOME

Google Arts & Culture (in collaboration with the Anne Frank House) uploads 360-degree images of Anne Frank’s former home. There are 360-degree images of all the rooms in the house at Merwedeplein 37-2. The images are uploaded on the occasion of Anne Frank’s 90th birthday.

The new 360-degree images, created with Google Street View, allow viewers to take a virtual step inside Anne Frank's former home and look around all the rooms, including the bedroom that Anne shared with her sister Margot. The images have been added to the online exhibition ‘Anne Frank's Former Home’, which tells the story of Anne Frank and her family before they went into hiding.

The Frank family lived in the house at Merwedeplein 37-2 from December 1933 to July 1942. The only moving images of Anne Frank of 22 July 1941 were shot here, when the girl living next door was getting married and Anne Frank leaned out of the window to see the bride and groom. It was in this house that Anne started writing in the red-chequered diary that she got for her thirteenth birthday. Three weeks later, the Frank family went into hiding.

Since 2005, the house has been let to the Dutch Foundation for Literature. It serves as a refuge for foreign writers who feel restricted in their own countries. The house is decorated in the style of the 1930s, when the Frank family lived here.

SEE THE INTERIOR OF THE HOUSE