INTERACTIVE MODEL OF THE LITZMANNSTADT GHETTO
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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.

Please do share information about this magazine with others, particularly via social media.

Paweł Sawicki, Editor-in-Chief

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All editions: memoria.auschwitz.org
Auschwitz Museum is probably the first museum in the world for which an official flight restriction zone was established. It will make it possible to better protect the authentic site of the former camp as well as the visitors of the Memorial through among others the possibility to control drones flying over the historical area visited each year by over two million people.

'Each year, the interest in flights over the Memorial is increasing and drones make it easier to perform sky photographs even for private individuals. It used to happen that several such machines were used at the same time over former camp site without any knowledge from our part. This was the source of serious questions about the security of both historical objects as well as the people within its premises. It is also important that a drone in the sky, in particular near the groups, simply disturbs the guides and visitors. Due to this fact, already a few years ago, we began to introduce some limitations concerning the use of this technology.

Consents for drone flights are issued nearly exclusively to film crews. They are usually held outside Museum opening hours. However, so far we did not dispose of legal tools to ensure the safety of airspace over the historical post-camp premises for all. It has now changed and – probably as the first museum in the world – we have the possibility to control what is happening above our heads and the heads of our visitors,' said Dr. Piotr M. A. Cywiński, Director of the Auschwitz Museum.
BBC to produce a documentary on #Holocaust denial. The film titled ‘Holocaust Denial: A History with David Baddiel will air on BBC Two in early 2020 to mark 75 years since the liberation of Auschwitz.

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In this short video European Holocaust Research Infrastructure presents its human network, which plays a vital role in the success of the project, next to the digital infrastructure. Meet several EHRI fellows and hear about their experiences during their fellowship.

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Over his 37 years as a news anchor and reporter for ABC-owned WLS-Channel 7, Alan Krashesky has traveled the world more times than he can recall. But few assignments affected him as deeply as his journey earlier this month to the Auschwitz death camp with Holocaust survivor Fritzie Weiss Fritzshall.

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German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas was in Florence to return a painting once looted by the Nazis. The still life "Vase of Flowers" by Dutch Baroque painter Jan van Huysum was stolen from the famous Uffizi Gallery by the Wehrmacht in 1943.

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It consists of 21 portraits of Auschwitz survivors: Jews, Poles and the Roma. The author of the photographs is Caryl Englander. The photographs are accompanied by fragments of accounts by the survivors related to the subject of faith in the tragic world of the German Nazi Auschwitz concentration and extermination camp. The artist showed the people at homes and in their private surroundings. Several of those portrayed, look directly into the lens – often revealing the camp number tattooed on the forearm.

'The unique exhibition speaks of the humanity of the victims. After all, Auschwitz was not only a place of physical destruction of people. It was also a place of mental and spiritual destruction for many prisoners. Until now, this perspective has never been addressed by an exhibition at the Memorial. I want to thank everyone who contributed to its creation,' said Dr. Piotr M. A. Cywiński, director of the Museum, during the opening ceremony.

'The exhibition is presented at a unique moment, due to the commemorated anniversaries. We are approaching the 75th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz. However, we are now in the period of the 75th anniversary of the most devastating time in the history of the camp – the period of deportation of Jews from Hungary; deportation from the liquidated Litzmannstadt ghetto; deportation of civilians from Warsaw during the Uprising; and many other places in Europe, still occupied by Germany. I hope that our visitors will closely observe these photographs, look into the eyes of the survivors and understand their words,' said Director Cywiński.

The curator of the exhibition is Dr. Henri Lustiger Thaler. 'Through the Lens of Faith is a testament to the resiliency of the human spirit. Survivors imprisoned in Auschwitz-Birkenau drew on their most profound beliefs systems in the cruelest place on earth. Daniel Libeskind’s design captures the past, present and future of survivor experiences and memories in conversation with Caryl Englander’s moving portraits' said Henri Lustiger Thaler.

The design of the exhibition space was prepared by Daniel Libeskind and Studio Libeskind. He designed a path with three metres of vertical steel panels on both sides. They are arranged in a pattern resembling striped camp uniforms, evoking associations with imprisonment, while their exterior mirror surfaces reflect the surrounding landscape.

'This exhibition brings the stories of the survivors into focus, while weaving their intimate accounts into the context of the camp and contemporary life. We can’t understand the millions that were murdered in the Holocaust, but we can understand one person’s story' said Daniel Libeskind.
Each panel of the exhibition has a cavity with the portrait of the character. In front of it, fragments of their accounts have been engraved on black glass.

“I was seventeen years old. We were taken to Buna, Monowitz, a working sub camp of Auschwitz. My brother became ill and was sent to the notorious camp hospital. I was also ill and placed in the hospital. There was a selection soon thereafter. My brother was taken to be killed. I use that selection day when he was removed from his bed, as his yahrzeit, commemorative death date. At night, in the barracks, we were 8 people in one bed. When one moved, everyone had to move in the same direction to keep covered. Like this we davened (prayed). No prayer book. Nothing. In the cold” - Yitzchok Baruch Schachter, a Polish Jew.

“I was seventeen years old when I met Tadeusz Paolone-Lisowski in Birkenau. The last time I saw him, he asked me: “do you believe in God? Because, as you know many people think that if something like Auschwitz is possible...”. He didn't finish. I remember my mother's words at that moment: "if there is evil in the world, it comes from Satan, not God.". Tadeusz said: "on the pages of the account book is a small metal object for you, a medallion. Take it as a souvenir of me. May it protect you. Look after it, and if God lets you, take it to freedom.” - a Polish woman, Zofia Posmysz, a Christian.

"I was four years old. I remember sleeping on my mother's knees. I sensed bread crumbs under my cheek. I felt safe. My father was brutally punished for giving a Jewish woman a potato. She prayed for him." - Peter Hollenreiner, a Roma prisoner from Germany, a Christian.

“I was fifteen years old. I prayed to God in the selection line to keep my parents alive. I believed I could not survive without them. Upon entry, men and women were separated, the young and old too. I ran quickly to be with my mother. She pushed my back firmly. Her last words were: “take care of your sister, so she will survive. Marry a religious man. God will save you, and you will tell the world what happened to us”. My mother said I had the courage to survive Auschwitz and must do so. Those words kept me alive." - Esther Peterseil, a Jewish woman from Poland.

“The project asks an often thought of question, but never so purposefully explored in visual and discursive terms: How did a largely religious population maintain their sense of identity and culture in a Deathworld, called Auschwitz? This place was structured to disarm any form of dignity and resistance. My work is a visual testament to the absolute endurance of human courage. With each person I had the privilege to meet, I felt their resilience, their hope and their joy for life,” said the photographer, Caryl Englander.

The exhibition “Through the lens of faith” is on display at the entrance to the Auschwitz Memorial until 30 September 2020.
INTERACTIVE MODEL OF THE LITZMANNSTADT GHETTO

From the beginning of occupation, in September 1939, the Jews from Łódź were subjected to severe repressions, which finally led to the establishment of the ghetto within the area of the Bałuty and Stare Miasto districts on February 8th 1940. It was the second largest ghetto within the occupied zone, after the one in Warsaw, completely isolated from the rest of the city. Until the end of April 1940, 40 thousand people were concentrated there within the area of 4.13 km².

“The closed district” was characterized by tightly and incoherently constructed tenement and detached houses. After the end of WW2, communist authorities decided to transform this poorest district into the most modern, exemplary socialist housing estate. The construction of new blocks and establishment of new streets began. Due to the decision concerning the reconstruction of the capital, the implementation of this plan was discontinued, enabling further uncontrolled filling of gaps emerging after the demolition of historical buildings. The observation of changes taking place within the area of the city influenced the decision made in 2015 to take the initiative to construct the model of the ghetto. The aim of the project is to create a new medium of remembrance and symbolically rescue the decaying buildings from oblivion.

The first model of the ghetto was the work by Leon Jakubowicz, who in the spring of 1940 began his activity and conducted it until its liquidation in August 1944. The 1:5000 scale model survived hidden in a chest in one of the Łódź basements. Discovered by his brother, it was transported to Israel and then to the United States. It is now displayed within the permanent exhibition at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington.
A very important aspect for the context of construction of the model is its location inside a historical building, former ghetto railway station – currently Radegast Station. From 1941, this place served the function of a transit point for the food and resources intended for ghetto inhabitants. From January 1942, nearly 145 thousand people were transported from this place to Kulmhof extermination camp in Chełmno on Ner and to Auschwitz-Birkenau. Today, the preserved building constitutes an element of the Litzmannstadt Ghetto Extermination Monument established in 2004. As a memorial site, due to the lack of a separate museum of the history of Łódź ghetto, it somehow serves the role of such an institution.

Within the first stage of the project, resource base was established, including accessible archive materials concerning the topography of the ghetto. The collections included in total over 2.5 thousand maps, architectural plans, photographs as well as aerial photographs. They were obtained from the archives, and thanks to the support from foreign partners, also from private collectors from all over the world. The base is complemented by currently performed photographs of all preserved buildings and objects from the area of the former ghetto. Over 6 thousand photos were performed in total. The analysis of the collected material made it possible to decide on constructing the physical 1:400 scale model presenting the ghetto in May 1942, with the dimensions of 10 x 4 m. In this shape it constitutes the largest exposition object of this kind in Poland.

Main tasks that were supposed to be performed consisted in identifying the buildings (basing on not always complete source materials) and then locating them on the network of streets. The support of enthusiasts, often not professional historians, turned out to be very helpful, as their knowledge of the city’s topography is often impressive. One place was reconstructed many times basing on a limited number of photos seen from different perspectives or constituting only the background, for example for group photographs. The color scheme was reconstructed basing on the preserved color photos, pre-war design documentation as well as joint experts’ consultations and the analysis of scientific literature.

At present, the fragment consisting of about 40% of the model is presented and its completion is scheduled for the end of the year 2019. It is of major importance in the context of this year’s 75th anniversary of liquidation of the Łódź ghetto.

Together with the construction of the model, works are conducted around the project website www.radegast.pl. Its aim is to provide information concerning the project as well as historical knowledge devoted to the ghetto. It consists of 8 educational theme paths including historical sites. They form a walk through modern streets within the city. In this way the educators, teachers and guides receive ready-made material for conducting educational classes, including also the walks through still preserved area of the former ghetto.
Completion of the construction of physical model, initial stage of the construction of its interactive materials. “Animating” the model through introducing the multimedia is aimed at developing it with details and making the history closer to the addressee. Thanks to 3D technology, the addressee will be able to watch on the screen all buildings included within the physical model, making it at the same time possible to see archive photos or to discover their history. Visitors of the Museum will have the opportunity to listen and watch the educational path displayed on the model and devoted to the history of the ghetto. Narration conducted in this way is supposed to bring the history of the Shoah closer in a unique way, at the same time accessible for modern addressees, translating directly into a more modern encounter with the presented history.

Thanks to the combination of a traditional model formula, including a multimedia component ensuring the access to historical materials, it will become a modern educational tool with a commemorative element. Such approach will make it possible to adopt a new perspective of teaching about the Holocaust, promoting tangible building restored where the history “took place”. The experience gathered so far with reference to multi-dimensional use of the model within educational activities as well as its perception by the visitors of the memorial site proves a strong need of visualization of spatial history.

In the years 2015-2019, the project was realized with the support from the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance within the framework of three-year grant program, the Łódź City Hall as well as the museum’s own budget.
Exactly 75 years ago, in July 1944, a transport comprised of 1,000 Jewish women from Auschwitz arrived at a satellite camp of the Neuengamme concentration camp in Hamburg. This in itself was remarkable, on two counts. Neuengamme concentration camp had been built in 1938 and named after a district of Hamburg. One of the largest camps of its kind on the territory of the German Reich at the time, it was used exclusively for male prisoners. And in July 1944, none of the prisoners held there was Jewish. Rather, there were none left. Indeed, all concentration camps on the territory of the German Reich had been rendered ‘free of Jews’ in October 1942 by order of the Reichsführer-SS. In other words, all the Jewish prisoners previously held at Neuengamme concentration camp had been sent to Auschwitz. So why the sudden turnaround? Why were Jewish prisoners now being taken from Auschwitz back to Hamburg?
Neuengamme Concentration Camp Memorial, death register August 1944: A page from a death ledger which was kept at the infirmary at Neuengamme. The entries are dated August 1944 and show the names of prisoners who lost their lives in explosions.

Dagmar Fantlová, July 1945. Private collection.

In der zweiten Kriegshälfte waren die KZ-Häftlinge während ihrer Einsatz bei Arbeiten nach Luftangriffen und durch die Einrichtung von Außenlagern in Hamburg in der gesamten Stadt für die Bevölkerung sichtbar.


In the evening, when we saw prisoners returning out of the camp, it truly was a dirty sight. The sick, the weak, and the unconscious were pushed in wheel barrows, so that one could [...]. I imagine how they felt and that they were basically not able to perform this hard work. [...] Everyone who came across such a procession had to see it.


Die SS und Wehrmachtsgrößenzüge, Parteifunktionäre und Richter beschäftigten das KZ Neuengamme zu densten Zwecken.

In the second half of the war, concentration camps were used as clearance work after Allied air-raids. The SS and Wehrmachtsgrößenzüge, Parteifunktionäre and Richter were involved in the Neuengamme concentration camp.

Many people who lived in the vicinity countered concentration camp prisons. After escape attempts, the SS security forces were reinforced by various companies, among them a butcher shop, a bakery and a hardware store.

The SS and Wehrmachtsgrößenzüge, Parteifunktionäre and Richter were involved in the Neuengamme concentration camp.
Hamburg was one of the German cities most severely damaged during the Second World War. The air raids that took place between 25 July and 3 August 1943 in particular – codenamed ‘Operation Gomorrah’ by the Allies – caused destruction on an unprecedented scale: 34,000 people were killed; 125,000 were left wounded. Eastern parts of the city were burned to the ground, declared uninhabitable, and closed off. The city was in a state of emergency.

‘They thought it was the end of the world.’
(Zbigniew Piper)

The shock and the state of emergency in the wake of Operation Gomorrah prompted a sudden change in the actions and thinking of the SS leadership. Until then it had insisted that any forced labour by concentration camp prisoners – always regarded as ‘dangerous enemies of the state’ – should be carried out exclusively within strictly guarded camps. But now, increasing numbers of concentration camp prisoners were to be made available for clear-up operations. Immediately after the first large-scale bombing raid on the night of 25 July 1943 the City of Hamburg started using Neuengamme concentration camp prisoners as labour to clear away rubble and find unexploded bombs in the city centre.

Indeed, hundreds of concentration camp prisoners were deployed throughout the city centre. The Hamburg municipal authorities were not the only ones to put in requests for concentration camp prisoners: the Gau Economic Chamber and individual companies also asked for forced labour to help build temporary shelters, extract raw materials, and work on the armaments production and in the shipyards. There was almost a genuine scramble for prisoners and their labour.

In April 1944 SS Reichsführer Heinrich Himmler offered to put 20,000 Jewish prisoners at the service of Reich Housing Commissioner Robert Ley to help with the construction of temporary housing. Ley forwarded the offer to the City of Hamburg authorities, who pounced upon it.

‘It was a strange feeling to leave Auschwitz.’
(Dagmar Fantlová)

The first 1,000 Jewish women arrived in Hamburg from Auschwitz in July 1944. Most of them were from Czechoslovakia and Hungary. Four weeks later they were joined by another 500 Polish Jewish women, also from Auschwitz. The warehouse in the free port (Freihafen) of Hamburg-Veddel where they were housed became the first Neuengamme satellite camp for women. 23 other satellite camps for women were set up across northern Germany. Jewish prisoners were used for labour at many of these camps. By the end of the war Neuengamme concentration camp had a total of more than 80 satellite camps, 15 of them in the Hamburg metropolitan area alone. Hamburg-based companies and the municipal authorities were the main driving force. Two thirds of the Hamburg satellite camps were used to clear bomb damage and build temporary shelters, and one third in the armaments industry.

‘We knew that as long as we still had our strength and were able to work we would live; if not, we were done for.’
(Edmund Radziewski)

Sanitary conditions in the buildings that housed concentration camp prisoners in Hamburg were atrocious. The men and women were undernourished; their thin prisoner uniforms offered no protection from the cold, wet weather; and they were constantly exposed to violence and abuse at the hands of the guards. Exhausted from their hard work, many fell ill. At least 2,300 prisoners died in the Hamburg satellite camps. Records show that a total of 42,900 prisoners died at Neuengamme concentration camp.

‘People went past us, and they ignored us, didn’t look at us; they didn’t want to see us.’
(Edith Kraus)

The concentration camp prisoners would have been more than conspicuous in Hamburg’s city area. In fact, Hamburg’s resident population would have seen the prisoners in the street, on their way to work and at their workplace. The vast majority of the people of Hamburg remained indifferent to these concentration camp prisoners. Very few ever mustered up the courage and the strength to rise up against their treatment.

The exhibition in two languages ‘A City and Its Concentration Camp. Prisoners of the Neuengamme concentration camp in wartime Hamburg 1943-45’ is currently on show at the Neuengamme Concentration Camp Memorial. It looks at how prisoners from Neuengamme concentration camp were widely deployed in the city centre and those who initiated those deployments.

The exhibition can also be viewed online:
http://www.offenes-archiv.de/de/WeitereAusstellungen/rathausausstellung_2019_stadt_startseite.xml
In 2015, Nikolaus Wachsmann, Professor of Modern European History at Birbeck College, University of London, published his monograph KL: A History of the Nazi Concentration Camps (Little, Brown). The book has since been translated into Polish, German, French, Italian, Spanish and Portuguese. Described by reviewers as “groundbreaking” (The New Yorker), “outstanding” (Financial Times) and “profoundly important” (Mail on Sunday), the book has won the Jewish Quarterly Wingate Literary Prize, the Mark Lynton History Prize (Colombia University/Harvard) and the Wolfson History Prize.

Following this book’s publication – and with a desire to better integrate academic and public understanding of the camps' history – Professor Wachsmann created the free-to-use website ‘The Nazi Concentration Camps: A Teaching and Learning Resource’. The site is hosted by Birkbeck and was developed with input from secondary school teachers in England. The website was officially launched at a panel event in London in November 2016, and has continued to garner attention since, with Professor Wachsmann delivering a series of talks on the topic to teachers in the UK and the US.
British Holocaust education is predominantly Auschwitz-centric. Whilst it is, of course, important for students to learn about this, the deadliest of all the Nazi camps, one of the website's aims is to promote better understanding about the other concentration camps established in Nazi-occupied territory (in keeping with the focus of KL, labour and transit camps are not featured in this resource). This includes knowledge of the fate of other prisoners incarcerated in concentration camps who were not targeted for extermination, an aspect that is minimally explored in the British curriculum.

Users of the website can access maps, documents (translated into English), photographs, films and testimonies regarding the history of the concentration camps, from the infamous camps at Auschwitz, Bergen-Belsen and Dachau to lesser-known sites such as Esterwegen, Herzogenbusch and Vaivara. Documents are divided into themes – for example, 'Daily Life', 'Perpetrators' and 'Holocaust' – and teachers can also access lesson plans and recommended further reading to incorporate the website and its resources into their teaching. The website does not feature graphic imagery, meaning it is accessible for younger students (in the UK, the Holocaust is taught to pupils from the age of 13). Official accounts on both Twitter and Instagram were launched in early 2019, sharing photographs, documents and facts concerning significant anniversaries, information about the concentration camps and individuals' stories.
1 SEPTEMBER 1939

German invasion of Poland, leading to the Second World War

START OF WAR

1940

10 MAY 1940

Start of German offensive in western Europe

31 DECEMBER 1940

c. 53,000 prisoners in concentration camps

1941

JUNE 1941

First “euthanasia” policies implemented
Commenting on the development of the website, Professor Wachsmann said, "The SS concentration camps are symbols of Nazi evil. And yet – despite all the lessons, books and documentaries – popular understanding remains very sketchy, especially among the young. We need to be teaching the next generation the realities of the Holocaust and the camps – because we can only hope to learn from history if we understand it."

'The Nazi Concentration Camps' is currently seeking feedback from both educators and students about the website. Please see the pop-up survey on the home page at the below URL; or if you would like to provide more detailed feedback, email nazi-camps-project@bbk.ac.uk.

Website: www.camps.bbk.ac.uk
Twitter: @NaziCamps
Instagram: @nazicamps
OUR NEIGHBORS.
THEIR STORIES.

Staten Island, often referred to as the “forgotten borough” of New York City, may be the best place to remember the Holocaust.

In 2011, selfhelp.net predicted that 453 Holocaust survivors would be living on Staten Island by 2018, and that the number would drop to 381 by 2020. It was a stark reminder that if we were to capture their stories, we needed to act quickly before the opportunity to recount their narratives slipped away. After all, their stories needed to be told, so that no one would ever forget. In June 2017, Staten Island Advance/SILive multimedia specialist Shira Stoll met 15 Holocaust survivors at the Cafe’ Europa event at the Bernikow Jewish Community Center of Staten Island.

Cafe’ Europa, a celebration of Holocaust survivors with Klezmer music and Yiddish karaoke, brought together survivors and their families to celebrate their resilience and the lives they rebuilt on Staten Island. The event was particularly meaningful to Stoll, who in 1995 met Helen Freibrun, an Auschwitz survivor who cared for her while her parents were at work. Freibrun inspired the young Stoll from the time she was 2 years old. The two grew very close over the years, and Stoll considered Freibrun her “third grandma.” Freibrun told Stoll her story of being taken from Uzhorod, Czechoslovakia, to Auschwitz. She was sent to the crematorium by Dr. Mengele during selection, but she miraculously ran to the “life line,” not once, but twice.

She recounted her Auschwitz experience as a way to encourage Stoll to talk about the Holocaust so that future generations would never forget. Freibrun rebuilt a happy life after the war, marrying her husband, Jerry Freibrun, and taking care of their daughter, Bonnie Sutherland. And, of course, she enjoyed being an adopted member of the Stoll family.
The author together with an Auschwitz survivor Helen Freibun.
The Holocaust survivor passed away in 2011, and Stoll realized that she never told Freibrun’s story. There were stories to be told. At Cafe’ Europa, Stoll saw Freibrun’s face in all of the survivors - and she knew that the event was more than just a celebration.

Since the JCC gathering two years ago, Stoll has made 16 different documentary videos. In the longest, the 24-minute New York Emmy-winning film “Where Life Leads You,” she took on the extremely difficult task of relating the historical arc of the Holocaust and its entire timeline through 10 unique and geographically disparate stories. The result is seamless, mesmerizing and, at times, devastating. The other 15 mini-documentaries are the individual stories of Holocaust survivors who eventually moved to America and built joyful lives on Staten Island. The videos confront intolerance and its horrifying potential. They are historical, but urgently told and heart-wrenchingly vivid. And they find inspiration and grace in one of the darkest eras of the 20th century.

The Claims Conference, an organization dedicated to providing a measure of justice for Jewish Holocaust survivors and to provide them with care, has released some startling statistics: 11 percent of American adults and over a fifth of Millennials do not know about the Holocaust, and 66 percent of Millennials have never heard of Auschwitz.

It was after these numbers were made known that the “Where Life Leads You” project, created by Stoll (who is a Millennial), grew into a teaching tool for New York City public and Catholic schools on Staten Island.

The work has been introduced to grades 4-12 through presentations and in-classroom viewings of the films. The goal has been to teach the Holocaust to Staten Island students, using vivid accounts given by those who survived and now live in their community. And it is our hope that the stories, recounted to these students by their neighbors, will ensure that the forgotten borough will be a place that will always remember.

The project is available for viewing at https://holocaust.silive.com/