CALL FOR APPLICATIONS:
SAUL KAGAN CLAIM
FELLOWSHIPS FOR
ADVANCED SHOAH
STUDIES

HOLOCAUST STUDIES IN ITS SOCIAL SETTING.
EHRI CONFERENCE.

TEDDY BEAR THAT
BELONGED TO STELLA
KNOBEL IN YAD VASHEM
COLLECTIONS

EXHIBITION ABOUT THE
POLENAKTION AT THE
JEWISH HISTORICAL
INSTITUTE IN WARSAW

EUROPEAN ROMA AND
SINTI GENOCIDE
REMEMBRANCE DAY

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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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LINKING THE MEMORY OF THE WORLD

LINKS TO THE MOST INTERESTING AND VALUABLE ARTICLES DEDICATED TO MEMORY AROUND THE WORLD (WIDE WEB)

Over a dozen original objects and copies of documents from the Collections of the Auschwitz Memorial Site are on display at the exhibition "Ochotnik (The Volunteer). Witold Pilecki and his mission in Auschwitz" prepared in Berlin by the Pilecki Institute. The opening of the exhibition on 17 September inaugurated the functioning of the permanent seat of the Pilecki Institute in the German capital. It is located near the Brandenburg Gate.

The curators of the exhibition are Hanna Radziejowska, head of the Witold Pilecki Institute in Berlin and Jack Fairweather, author of the book "The Volunteer" about Calvary Capt. Witold Pilecki. One of the historical experts was Piotr Setkiewicz, PhD, head of the Auschwitz Museum Research Centre.

In Berlin, visitors can also see a faithful copy of a drawing made in the summer of 1943 in Nowy Wiśnicz, right after Witold Pilecki escaped from Auschwitz. It portrays Pilecki and Tomasz Serafinski - who assumed Pilecki's identity as a prisoner of Auschwitz.

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The indispensable role that German railroads played as part of the Nazi machinery of genocide during World War II has long been known. But it may be only now that the Dutch are beginning to fully reckon with the role that their own national railroad played in the Holocaust.

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An exhibition has been opened to honour a Scots missionary who died at Auschwitz. Jane Haining, of Dunscore, gave her life to help protect Jewish schoolgirls in Hungary during World War Two. The display - on loan from the Holocaust Memorial Centre in Budapest - is being hosted at Wigtown Parish Church.

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The international conference Holocaust Studies and its Social Setting: Challenges and Trends was organised within the framework of the European Holocaust Research Infrastructure and took place in Amsterdam on July 3, 2019. It marked the conclusion of the second phase of the EHRI project. Therefore, the main ambition of this conference was to discuss the achievements of the project, to focus on the importance of EHRI’s human network and to reflect on the important interaction between Holocaust research and society at large.

Public dimension

Holocaust Studies is considered to be an interdisciplinary research field which is dedicated not only to the Holocaust itself but deals with various aspects of the post-World War II world such as memory, human rights, Jewish life and international relations. At the same time, it has a manifest public dimension. Taking into account the diversity of Holocaust research and its meaning in the public space, there are still many unanswered questions about the social setting of Holocaust Studies. To elaborate more on the current state of Holocaust research and its position in society, two keynote speakers, Dieter Pohl and Wendy Lower, were invited.

Keynote: Dieter Pohl

Dieter Pohl (Institut für Geschichte der Universität Klagenfurt in Austria) provided the audience with an inspiring, comprehensive and sophisticated response to the title of his lecture “Do our societies need Holocaust Studies?”. He addressed many important points about Holocaust research, the political and social importance of Holocaust Studies, particularly in regard to the application of its findings to 21st-century education. Contrasting national and transnational frameworks, he emphasised the necessity of a pan-European approach in this field. Pohl highlighted some challenges that Holocaust Studies is facing, such as the lack of a specific methodology or whether we should consider the Holocaust as a manifestation of anti-Semitism or anti-Judaism. In terms of the lessons we can derive from the study of the Holocaust, Pohl particularly emphasised the dangers inherent in the undermining of democratic regimes and principles, but he equally pointed to important limitations: Holocaust Studies by itself cannot prevent future genocides. Reflecting on contemporary challenges facing Holocaust Studies, Pohl mentioned softer forms of Holocaust denial and the dangers of narrow nationalism which have witnessed a significant rising since the 1990s. He concluded by noting that even though Holocaust research has much progressed recently and that societal interest in the discipline has increased, much still needs to be done particularly in regard to research the Holocaust in its wider context of World War II, occupation, and collaboration.
Second keynote: Wendy Lower

In the second keynote lecture, Wendy Lower (Claremont McKenna College, USA) outlined some recent trends and promises in Holocaust Studies. While noting a growth of interest and activity in Holocaust, she nevertheless perceives the field’s efforts as being diffused. In her speech, Lower highlighted the importance of conceptualising the Holocaust as a European event, often framed by the microcosm of European culture. In this context, transnational networking and digitalisation are important to conduct cross-border research. However, Lower stressed that all too often scholars still adhere to national narratives, and she stressed the need for further impetus to enable a truly transnational perspective in Holocaust Studies. Lower also emphasised the significance of interdisciplinarity in Holocaust Studies, and in particular the value of archeological approaches.

Video premiere: EHRI’s Human Network

The keynote lectures were followed by a video presentation about EHRI’s human network which introduced the panel discussion Accessing historical documents and creating expert networks. The panel was composed of former EHRI fellows who were sharing their experiences of participating in EHRI. Moderation was in the hands of Anna Ullrich from the Munich Institut für Zeitgeschichte and EHRI’s coordinator for fellowships and training. The panel highlighted the importance of the EHRI Fellowship Programme and the manifold benefits participants could derive from it such as getting feedback about their projects, accessing sources and expertise, supporting research in specific archives and networking.
Societal changes and the role of Holocaust expertise

In the afternoon, two roundtable discussions were held. The first was dedicated to societal changes and the role of Holocaust expertise and featured European coordinator on combatting Antisemitism Katharina von Schnurbein, Jolanta Ambrosewicz-Jacobs from the Jagiellonian University in Krakow and Wichert ten Have (Advisor to the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance, former director of NIOD Institute for War, Holocaust and Genocide Studies, The Netherlands)

Moderator: Veerle Vanden Daelen, Kazerne Dossin: Memorial, Museum and Documentation Centre on Holocaust and Human Rights, Mechelen, Belgium

Panellists reflected on the growing gap between historiographical advances and education, thereby calling attention to teachers’ training and highlighting the importance of devising new ways of applying the latest research finding to the curriculum development, textbooks, etc. Building empathy between different groups, encouraging non-binary modes of thinking beyond “we and they”, and improving levels of knowledge on the subject were identified as the main desiderata for contemporary Holocaust education.
Two violins

In between the two roundtables, musicians from the Dutch Leo Smit Foundation presented a short performance for two violins by Dick Kattenburg and Géza Frid. Both composers were of Jewish origin and their music was forbidden during the Holocaust period.

Challenges and innovations in Holocaust Studies today

The second roundtable discussion, entitled Challenges and innovations in Holocaust Studies today, featured Susanne Heim (Freiburg University), David Silberklang (Yad Vashem), Gadi Luzatto Voghera (CDEC, Milan) and Diana Dumitru (Ion Creang State Pedagogical University, Chisinau). Moderators were Karel Berkhoff (NIOD and EHRI) and Anne-Lise Bobeldijk (NIOD). It provided an opportunity to explore insights and perspectives stemming from current Holocaust research undertaken in Germany, Israel, Italy and Moldova. The main message emanating from the panel amplified what had been evident throughout the day: Interdisciplinary approaches greatly enrich Holocaust Studies. Methods and approaches taken from disciplines such as the digital humanities and political sciences are promising to lead to new research findings and to amplify the societal relevance of Holocaust Studies.

Informal exchanges

While the plenary programme of the conference highlighted the significant potential and relevance of trans-national Holocaust research for contemporary European societies, delegates were offered a rich side programme in which they could explore EHRI’s digital services such as the Online Portal, the Document Blog and the Editions Platform, and visit a marketplace where several EHRI partners and affiliates presented themselves and their research. Taken together with the concluding reception, the conference thus offered ample opportunity for informal exchanges and networking among delegates. The quality of the plenary presentations and the liveliness of subsequent informal discussions, demonstrate that the field of Holocaust Studies is in good health, and that EHRI is an important forum to advance its trans-national and inter-disciplinary agenda, now and in the future.

Watch the livestream of the conference on 3 July:

Morning part
Afternoon part I
Afternoon part II

Images by Mark Nauwen for EHRI
The 75th anniversary of 2 August, the European Roma Holocaust Memorial Day 2019, was commemorated this year by the last Sinti and Roma Holocaust survivors together with thousands of members of Sinti and Roma communities from around Europe, as well as with representatives of governments, international organizations and civil society.

The international human rights icon and activist Rev. Jesse L. Jackson Sr., a representative of the US civil rights movement, stated in his keynote speech:

“It is critically important that we are here today for the European Roma Holocaust Memorial Day. This day underscores the importance of educating people about the Roma Holocaust during World War II - Not just to look back but to surge forward with a renewed urgency to combat the discrimination the Roma community continues to face.”

Jackson emphasized the common ground of the US civil rights movement and the Sinti and Roma civil rights struggle against oppression and called for political resistance also in the future: “It’s time to organize and fight back. If history has taught us anything, it is that where there is oppression, there will be resistance. People will go forward by hope and unity, not backwards by fear and division.”

Else Baker, Eva Fahidi and Nadir Dedic spoke for the survivors of the Holocaust. Else Baker was deported as a Sinti child from Hamburg to Auschwitz-Birkenau and later to Ravensbrück before her father succeeded to get her released. In her speech, she called for the continued remembrance of the Holocaust and stressed the resulting responsibility: “The fates of the murdered and the survivors of the extermination camps must never be forgotten. All of us - the survivors of the extermination camps as well as those born after them - must stand up for human rights and democracy”.

Eva Fahidi, who had to observe the murder of the last Sinti and Roma in Auschwitz on August 2 1944, recalled the desperate resistance of the prisoners: “They resisted with stones, with sticks, with objects that fell into their hands, screaming, cursing, shouting or praying. The SS set the dogs barking loudly at the people, they attacked the people, the desperation was great, the noise was terrible, the children cried for their mothers, the mothers tried to calm the children down”.

The survivor of the Jasenovac concentration camp, Nadir Dedic, called for a committed civil society in view of current developments in politics and society: “It is certainly not an easy life to look back on. But it is above all my view of the present and the future that causes me fear and worry. Whether Jasenovac or Auschwitz, we must never forget what happened! Stand up together for a life together based on mutual respect and not on hatred, contempt and exclusion”.

Central Council of German Sinti and Roma
Romani Rose, the chairman of the Central Council of German Sinti and Roma, highlighted on behalf of the organizers a key message of the commemoration for the 75th anniversary: “It is the legacy of all the victims of the Holocaust, all the people murdered by the Nazis, which we must carry with us. We must pass on this legacy to future generations. With the many young people who are here today, I have no doubt that we will succeed. Today, we are challenged to take responsibility for democracy and the rule of law, for human rights and human dignity. Now, and in the future.”

Rev. Jesse Jackson, Romani Rose and Roman Kwiatkowski, chair of the Association of Roma in Poland, signed together a Call-To-Action. “For the first time, the representatives of the American Civil Rights Movement and the Civil Rights Movement of Sinti and Roma in Europe are jointly appealing from this place to the governments of the global community and supranational organizations to combat consistently any form of racism, antigypsyism and anti-Semitism. We demand political and social justice and thus dignity for all our people. Together we carry the legacy of the millions of Holocaust victims. We must put the moral and ethical values of our democracies at the centre of our actions. We must stand together for democracy and the rule of law. We must stand together for our shared human values.”

The commemoration ceremony concluded in the afternoon at the Centre for Dialogue and Prayer in Oswiecim with speeches by EU Commissioner Vera Jourova, German Minister of State Michael Roth, Chair of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance, Ambassador George Santer, and representatives of the Council of Europe, OSCE, and European Parliament.
Vera Jourova, Commissioner for Justice, Consumers and Gender Equality, stated on behalf of the European Commission: “The Roma are forgotten victims of the Holocaust for many Europeans. Remembering their historical persecution reminds us of the need to tackle the challenges which they still face today and which are too often overlooked. Seven decades on, Sinti and Roma still face hatred, violence, discrimination and racism on a daily basis. This day, demands from us to firmly condemn, Antigypsyism in all its forms and show the courage to protect the vulnerable. (…) Remembering the atrocities of the Holocaust, this darkest chapter of European history, is essential for understanding Europe today, for understanding the true value of universal human rights, democracy, rule-of-law and non-discrimination on which our Union is built. Being and becoming European means to acknowledge and accept our common history.”

Michael Roth, Minister of State for Europe of Germany, emphasized: “The fight against antigypsyism requires courage and solidarity. We need many more partners in Europe who are resolutely committed to the largest ethnic minority in Europe and its rights. What is needed are politicians who can clearly be heard saying Stop when right-wing populists use old reflexes and bad prejudices. Sinti and Roma belong to us. The united Europe stands for diversity. And we must defend it even more resolutely against its enemies - nationalism, isolation and racism.”

On the evening of August 1, the Roma and Sinti Philharmonic performed the composition "Requiem for Auschwitz" by the Dutch Sinto Roger Moreno Rathgeb in Krakow under the musical direction of Riccardo M Sahiti. The Requiem is dedicated to all victims of the Auschwitz extermination camp, which stands as a symbol for the genocide crimes of the National Socialists. The music keeps alive the memory of the suffering. Beyond remembering, the composer would like his work to serve international understanding and the respectful interaction of people with one another. The Roma and Sinti Philharmonic Orchestra was founded in 2002 to perform pieces of music rooted in the Roma and Sinti culture and to cultivate the musical heritage of the Roma and Sinti.
2 August was officially declared by the European Parliament in 2015 as the “European Roma Holocaust Memorial Day” commemorating 500,000 Sinti and Roma murdered in Nazi-occupied Europe. The commemoration ceremony was organized by the Central Council of German Sinti and Roma and the Association of Roma in Poland in cooperation with the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum.

From March 1943 to July 1944, the National Socialists deported 23,000 Roma and Sinti from eleven European countries to the former German concentration and extermination camp Auschwitz-Birkenau. Nearly all found death there. On August 2, 1944, the last remaining 4,200-4,300 Sinti and Roma in camp section BIIe – the so called “gypsy family camp” – were brutally murdered, and bodies were burned in a pit next to Crematorium V. Various accounts speak of attempts of resistance on that day, as well as of a resistance against a first planned liquidation of the camp in April-May 1944.

Further info about current research debates in the Memoria magazine (July 2018 edition) of the Auschwitz Museum.
"We are the last line of defense before these irreplaceable Holocaust-era artifacts and documentation are lost to the passage of time," states Kami Amiran, Director of the Conservation Laboratory in Yad Vashem's Archives. "Yad Vashem's goal is to rescue and preserve these remnants so that they can bear witness to the atrocities of the Holocaust for generations to come."

For close to 65 years, Yad Vashem has been collecting, preserving and featuring artifacts, artworks, photographs and documentation from the Holocaust. Over the years, hundreds of thousands of items have been added to Yad Vashem's Collections and are being housed at the World Center for Holocaust Remembrance. Many of these artifacts and documents are used to enrich the public's knowledge and identification with the history of the Holocaust, displayed either in various exhibitions on the Mount of Remembrance and other locations around the world, or online on Yad Vashem's comprehensive website in eight languages.

"Along with these artifacts, we collect personal stories of the victims of the Shoah," remarks Yad Vashem's Museums Division Director Vivian Uria. "Yad Vashem makes it its mission to tell not only about the events of the Holocaust, the lives of the victims and the cherished items that belonged to them, but also about how these items survived and arrived here."

One artifact with a fascinating tale is the teddy bear that once belonged to Stella Knobel. Born in Krakow, Stella received the stuffed toy for her seventh birthday. After the outbreak of WWII, Stella, her mother Anna and her father Morton fled to the Soviet Union. There Morton joined the Polish army in the east. Stella and Anna followed him to Teheran, and from there they continued onto Eretz Israel. Throughout their wanderings, Stella's teddy bear accompanied and served her as a "friend and brother."

More than 75 years later, Yad Vashem received the artifact in a state of terrible disrepair. "The toy arrived crumbling, moth-eaten, and badly disintegrating due to the passage of time and unsuitable storage conditions," comments Yad Vashem Textiles Conservationist Alexandra Borovok. Yad Vashem preservation experts began the intricate and time-consuming work to repair the bear and conserve it, so that it may be viewed and its story told for generations to come. "Fashioned from animal fur, we cleaned it thoroughly of destructive pests and dirt, and carefully sewn back together," Borovok continued. "Regardless of the condition in which items arrive at Yad Vashem, we treat them with great respect and do our best to restore them to their former condition."
On her "reunion" with her restored teddy bear, Stella recalled how the bear was like family to her "because I was an only child and so wanted a brother and sister... I clung to him... I had no other toys." In later years, she thought of burying it in her garden, but was afraid that someone would find it and throw it away. "The idea of [it] being thrown into a garbage can is terrible for me," she explained. "He symbolizes my life."

"The Yad Vashem Artifacts Collection holds great historical, social and cultural significance," echoes Michael Tal, Director of the Artifacts Department at Yad Vashem's Museums Division. "Together with all of our collections, its value is incalculable for both the Jewish people and all of humanity."

The results of Yad Vashem's efforts to gather Holocaust-era related items, as well as great advances made in recent years in preservation and conservation standards has created the need to build a state-of-the-art facility to house these invaluable collections. "These irreplaceable items must be stored in an appropriate facility consisting of state-of-the-art preservation laboratories, as well as storage areas using the latest in conservation technologies," explains Uria. "The new Shoah Heritage Collections Center, being built in the coming years as part of the new Shoah Heritage Campus, will properly preserve, catalogue, store and display priceless items like Stella's teddy bear."

"The Holocaust was a landmark event in world history that is still relevant to society today," stated Yad Vashem Archives Director and Fred Hillman Chair for Holocaust Documentation Dr. Haim Gertner. "The Nazis sought to murder all the Jews and to erase their identities and culture. The Holocaust created a huge void in the memory of the Jewish people and all of humanity. Yad Vashem was established in order to reverse this edict, and to perpetuate the loss in a way that is meaningful to each of the victims – most of whom did not even leave one photograph behind. The artifacts and archival materials that comprise our collections are firsthand witnesses to the terrible experiences their owners suffered at the hands of the Nazis and their collaborators, and their return to life afterwards. Preserving these documents and objects and making them accessible allows us to restore to the victims their faces, their names, their hopes and their dreams – and, most importantly, their humanity."
The significant financial support will help to develop the infrastructure for providing services to visitors to the Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial. The agreement between the Museum and the Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial Foundation for the transfer of $5.5 million for the project was signed in New York by the director of the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum, Piotr M. A. Cywiński, and the donors: Ronald S. Lauder and Joel Citron - on behalf of himself and his wife, Ulrika. The funds will enable the implementation of one of the complementary projects to the new Visitor Service Centre.
While signing the agreement regarding financial support for the Museum, Piotr M. A. Cywiński emphasised: - The project of the new Visitor Service Centre is an undertaking befitting the XXI century. The new infrastructure will include a new car park and a new entrance to the Museum, as well as a new exhibition space, cinema and hostel for the needs of education, conferences and volunteer work. Such ambitious investments would not have been possible without the help of private donors - people who entirely and responsibly feel that memory has a great role to play.

The Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial Foundation is an American charity organisation whose activities are committed to the protection of the Memorial Site. The sum of $5 million was donated by Ronald S. Lauder, who has been a donor and supporter of the Memorial for several decades. - Preserving Auschwitz-Birkenau has been one of my greatest priorities since I first walked through the ‘Arbeit Macht Frei’ gate 40 years ago. Back in the 1980s, I saw how much there is still to be done to maintain it since the end of the War and I knew that within a short time, there would be nothing left for future generations to see. If there was nothing left to see, people would never believe what really happened there – said Ronald S. Lauder. – The only way we can prevent another Shoah is through education, and ensuring that as many people as possible bear witness to this terrible place where the worst atrocities known to mankind occurred. The new visitor center will be an integral part of this experience and it will enable visitors to enter Auschwitz-Birkenau in an understanding frame of mind - added Ronald S. Lauder.

Joel Citron and his wife Ulrika, who were previously donors of the Memorial, donated half a million dollars. Joel Citron, a member of the board of the Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial Foundation, stated: - This is being done so that we may speak loudly to honor those who perished and those who survived. This is being done so that we speak clearly today and in the future. This is being done so that we stand up firmly against antisemitism and bigotry.

Currently, the Museum is implementing many large and important investments such as the Master Plan for Preservation, the new main exhibition, the new headquarters of the International Centre for Education about Auschwitz and the Holocaust, or the project to change the Polish exhibition. The nearly five-fold increase in the number of people who want to learn about the history of the German Nazi concentration and extermination camp Auschwitz over the last dozen or so years also necessitates a change in the reception and service of visitors. Consequently, a tender procedure is now ongoing for a part of the project of a new Visitor Service Centre, which is being developed thanks to EU funding and support from the Polish Ministry of Culture and National Heritage. The creation of a new space for the staff and a reception desk in the immediate vicinity of the Museum will be feasible in the next few years.
Polenaktion

On 31 March 1938, given the expected mass return of Polish Jews living in Germany to Poland, the Polish Parliament passed a law depriving them of their citizenship. According to the provisions of the Act, Polish citizens residing uninterruptedly abroad for at least five years after the establishment of the Polish State may be deprived of their citizenship. In mid-October 1938, a regulation of the Ministry of Internal Affairs was issued, which ordered every Polish citizen residing outside the country to submit their passport for registration in a relevant consulate and to obtain a control note confirming the validity of the document. Holders of passports without annotation were not entitled to cross the Polish border after 29 October 1938.

On 26 October 1938, the head of the Reich Security Service, Reinhard Heydrich, issued a decree on the immediate expulsion of all Polish Jews from Germany. They received a deportation order and were transported to the border with Poland at their own expense, in sealed trains. They could only take 10 Marks and some clothes with them. They deported entire families, single men and women, as well as children and young people without the care of adults. The action was carried out in both large cities and small villages. The Polish consul in Leipzig, Felix Chiczewski, reacted to the displacement by opening the door of the General Consulate and providing shelter to more than 1,300 people.

On 28 October about 17,000 Jews with Polish citizenship arrived at the border stations in Zbąszyń, Bytom, Chojnice and Wschowa. Several thousand of them, being stateless, were stranded at the border between the German and Polish army cordons. The majority, i.e. about 8,000, were transported to Neu Bentschen (today's Zbąszynek), from where they were transported across the border to the Polish town of Zbąszyń on the Berlin-Warsaw railway route, which had a population of about 5,400 inhabitants. A transit camp was set up on the site of the former barracks.

Aid

Many people who were picked up in the middle of the night found themselves in Zbąszyń in slippers and pyjamas. 1] They had no money, clothes, or everyday objects; they were on the brink of a nervous breakdown. In the first few days, some of the deportees went to their families living in Poland. Later on, the authorities closed the town - leaving Zbąszyń required the permission of the authorities, money for a ticket and certainty that one had a place to go. [2]
Jewish charity organisations (among others, JOINT) and the Polish Red Cross quickly organised aid. In early November, the General Committee To Aid Refugees From Germany (headed by Warsaw Rabbi, Dr Mojżesz Schorr), was established to coordinate the activities of numerous local committees. In Warsaw, a Workers' Aid Committee was established with the involvement of the Bund and the so-called class labour unions. In the press, appeals were made urging people to collect donations for the deportees - food, clothing, blankets and money. Accommodation spaces for over 4,500 persons were prepared in Warsaw and Cracow, while smaller communes accepted a few hundred people. Furthermore, PLN 3.5 million ($700,000) was raised, and JOINT assumed responsibility for aid organisation, while at the same time supplementing financial resources by 20 per cent of the entire sum. Polish intellectuals also made donations, including Prof. Tadeusz Kotarbiński, Zofia Nałkowska, Jerzy Andrzejewski, Maria Kunczewicowa, Józef Czapski and others. The news stirred up fierce attacks from the anti-Semitic press.

Ringelblum wrote: Giterman's phone appeal was answered by Łódź, Warsaw, Będzin, Katowice, Bielsko-Biała, Kalisz and other cities. They collected undergarments, blankets, clothes, money etc. Giterman set up a whole relief movement for refugees from Germany. Within a few weeks in Zbąszyń, Giterman managed to infect everyone with his extraordinary sacrifice. Thousands of unfortunate people were saved from starvation thanks to him; thousands with the help of "Joint" were moved abroad.

The deportees lived in old military stables, schools, mills, former shooting range, a gym at the local stadium. Wealthier refugees rented rooms from the inhabitants of Zbąszyń. Jewish hospital, school, kitchens, post office, clothing depots and emigration department, as well as choir and sports club, which played football matches with the locals, were quickly established in the town. Courses were launched in carpentry and tailoring. A special family search office was set up, as well as a special childcare department, particularly for displaced children without parents.

**Emanuel Ringelblum**

Emanuel Ringelblum also hurried to Zbąszyń at the orders of Icchak Giterman, who for five weeks coordinated the relief effort on behalf of JOINT. JOINT activists worked 18 hours a day, saving people from starvation and helping them move abroad. The work revealed Ringelblum's organisational skills and his ability to solve problems. He encouraged the refugees to report on the action, which he considered unprecedented in Jewish history, and to speak Yiddish (he even invited Noah Noahbusz, an actor from Warsaw who plays in the language). Ringelblum later applied the experience gained in Zbąszyń to work for the Jewish Social Self-help in the Warsaw Ghetto and to organise the activities of the Oneg Shabbat group.

Ringelblum tried to create conditions for refugees to live in a way that would undermine their dignity. He did not treat them as beggars waiting for almsgiving; he encouraged them to assume many duties in the camp. In his final report, he noted that of the 420 employees of the various camp departments, nearly all were refugees. He wrote to Mahler that the important thing is that in Zbąszyń there is no distinction between “givers” and “takers”, that what prevails in the camp are good relations, unblemished by humiliating philanthropy.
The end of the action and its repercussions

Following the Polish-German negotiations, an agreement was signed on 24 January 1939. Its provisions allowed for the temporary return of family representatives to Germany to regulate their personal and economic affairs. Within a few weeks, they were to sell the property and transport their belongings. In practice, however, obtaining an agreement was complicated and required overcoming many bureaucratic obstacles - 3,632 people took advantage of the permits. They sold their property at heavily discounted prices and most of the property disappeared.

With time, the number of escapes from the camp increased, as did the number of permits to travel deep into Poland. At the end of November, the temporary camp in Zbąszyń housed about 4,000 people. The large-scale exodus began in late spring of 1939. The camp was dissolved at the end of August 1939.

On 7 November, 17-year-old Herszel Grynszpan killed a German embassy employee, Ernst vom Rath in Paris, in revenge for his family's fate in Zbąszyń. It was a pretext for the Crystal Night - the pogrom against Jews in Germany and Austria on the night of 9-10 November 1938.

The exhibition presented at the headquarters of the Emanuel Ringelblum Jewish Historical Institute reminds us of the events of October 1938. The history of Polenaktion was shown through the prism of the individual fate of the victims. The central theme of the exhibition are the stories of six Berlin Jewish families. The exhibition consists of three chronologically arranged chapters: “Life in Berlin up to 1938”, “The deportation action of October 1938”, “The history of persecution and salvation”.

The exhibition was prepared by the History Department of the Institute of Eastern Europe at the Free University of Berlin and the Actives Museum in Berlin in connection with the celebration of the 80th anniversary of “Polenaktion” in 2018.

The exhibition was presented at the Stiftung Neue Synagoge - Judaicum Center in Berlin from 8 July 2018 to 28 February 2019. Over 400,000 people visited the exhibition.

The exhibition was co-financed by the Minister of Culture and National Heritage as part of the commemoration events of the 75th anniversary of the death of Emanuel Ringelblum.
The Institute has the following objectives: to conduct inter- and multidisciplinary studies and research with regard to the preservation, development and expression of ethnic identity, as well as about social, historical, cultural, linguistic, religious or other aspects of national minorities and of other ethnic communities living in Romania. The history of Jews in Romania, with a special focus on Transylvania, is explored at RIRNM through individual research projects conducted by the historians dr. Attila Gidó and dr. Anca Filipovici, and also through international projects having RIRNM as institutional partner. The most recent international projects include the Inventory of archive sources about Jewish history in Transylvania (2016-2019), a project funded by the Rothschild Foundation (Hanadiv) Europe within the Yerusha network. The project is coordinated by Ladislau Gyémánt, emeritus professor of Jewish History at the Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca. The researched surveyed Jewish-related documents in the archives of nine Transylvanian counties, resulting in a database with thousand archival descriptions. (For further information, please check: https://yerusha.eu/projects/romanian-institute-research-national-minorities/)

In 2018, RIRNM became associated partner in Rediscover, expose and exploit the concealed Jewish heritage of the Danube Region, a project co-funded by European Union funds (ERDF, IPA, ENI) through the Danube Transnational Programme. The project is based on an extensive partnership among Danube countries and explores the tangible and intangible elements of Jewish cultural heritage, in order to create competitive cultural products with potential tourism prospects. (For further information, please check: http://www.interreg-danube.eu/approved-projects/rediscover)
RIRNM Publishing House has published an extensive book collection on topics covering the history, culture and identity of national minorities in Romania (http://ispmn.gov.ro/nodes/term/slug:carti). One of the most important titles on the topic of Jewish history is the monograph signed by Attila Gidó, on the Jewish life in interwar Cluj (Transylvania): Două decenii. Evreii din Cluj în perioada interbelică [Two Decades. The Jews in Cluj in Interwar Period] (ISPMN, Cluj-Napoca, 2014). The history of the Transylvanian Jews went through a metamorphosis after WW I. Their social stratification, cultural life, institutional system, political attitude, and economic role have changed. Thus, the process of integration and assimilation to the Hungarian community had slowed down or in some cases even stopped, due to the geopolitical changes and internal political and social events. The volume analyzes these evolutions from the perspective of ethnic identity and social integration.

The most recent work published at RIRNM on the history of Jews is a collective volume titled Trecutul prezent. Evreii din România: istorie, memorie, reprezentare [The Present Past. The Jews in Romania: History, Memory, Representation], Anca Filipovici, Attila Gidó (eds.). Foreword by Lucian Nastasă- Kovács. (ISPMN, Cluj-Napoca, 2018). This volume brings forward the historical path of the Jewish minority in Romania using reading keys that connect wider phenomena – emancipation, nationalism, anti-Semitism. Signed by dedicated specialists (Ladislau Gyémánt, Carol Iancu, Camelia Crăciun, Tibori Szabó Zoltán, Lya Benjamin, Anca Tudorancea, Natalia Lazăr, Liviu Rotman, Michael Shafir, Alexandru Florian, Diana Dumitru), the studies track the shifting that took place around important milestones such as WW I and the 1918 Union, the Holocaust and the WW II, the communist regime and the recent history. The papers that approach the history of the Jews until the establishment of the communist regime follow the territorial distribution of the historical provinces highlighting – to the extent possible – the particularities of the Jewish communities in Transylvania, the Old Kingdom, Bukovina or Bessarabia. In fact, the affiliation to a certain province has conferred a distinct destiny of the communities, which has reinforced the heterogeneous character of the minority in Greater Romania. From this perspective, the path of the Jewish minority in Romania is a complex of histories with common trajectories and ruptures, also emphasizing the alert dynamics of the 19th – 20th centuries. Designed by the editors as a historical guide, the volume proposes a broadened perspective towards a modern synthesis of the history of the Jews in Romania. An English version is currently under preparation.
CALL FOR APPLICATIONS

SAUL KAGAN CLAIMS CONFERENCE FELLOWSHIP FOR ADVANCED SHOAH STUDIES

The Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany (Claims Conference) is offering a limited number of fellowships for Ph.D. and Post Doctoral Candidates Conducting Research on the Holocaust. The application deadline is December 23, 2019 for the Fall 2020 - Summer 2021 Funding Year.
The Saul Kagan Claims Conference Fellowship for Advanced Shoah Studies aims to strengthen Holocaust studies and Shoah memory throughout the world. Their mission is to support the advanced study of the fate of Jews who were systematically targeted for destruction or persecution by the Nazis and their allies between 1933 and 1945, as well as immediate post-war events.

Studies covered by the Fellowship can include the immediate historical context in which the Holocaust took place and encompass political, economic, legal, religious and socio-cultural aspects, as well as ethical and moral implications. The Fellowship also supports awardees in learning languages necessary to studying original Holocaust-related documents. Candidates can be pursuing a degree in a variety of fields, including History, Sociology, Philosophy, Judaic Studies, Political Science, Government, Women’s Studies and other fields.

Fellowships are awarded to outstanding candidates around the world who have a strong personal commitment to Shoah memory, who have demonstrated excellence in academic achievement, and who possess the potential to provide outstanding professional leadership that will shape the future of Holocaust awareness and scholarship.

As part of the program, Kagan Fellows are invited to attend an all-expenses-paid, annual 4-5 day summer workshop alternately hosted at the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum and Yad Vashem where they present their research to and network with leading scholars and peers.

For application and eligibility information, please visit fellowships.claimscon.org or email Chavie.brumer@claimscon.org.

Maximum Award Amount: $20,000 Per Year.