IN MEMORY WE MUST SEARCH FOR SOURCES FOR OUR RESPONSIBILITY TODAY.
Producer: TVP S.A. (Polish Television)

Music pieces:

– Mieczysław Weinberg, "String Quartet no. 5" op. 27 (fragment),
– Roger Moreno Rathgeb, "Requiem for Auschwitz" (fragment),
– Gideon Klein, "Trio/Lento" (fragment),
– Daria Pacuda, "Lament of the earth".
– Aleksander Lasoń – "Sereno" (III part from "String Quartet no. 5")
– Antonín Dvořák – II part from "String Quartet in F-major" op. 96
– Arvo Pärt – "Fratres" for a string quartet

Irena Kalinowska-Grohs – I violin
Agnieszka Lasoń – II violin
Aleksandra Batog – viola
Danuta Sobik-Ptok – cello
Alicja Molitorys – flute
On January 27, more than 200 Auschwitz and Holocaust Survivors met in front of the Death Gate at the former Auschwitz II-Birkenau camp to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the liberation of the German Nazi concentration and extermination camp.

They were accompanied by leaders and representatives of over 50 countries who listened to their words – crowned heads, presidents, prime ministers, ministers and diplomats as well as the representatives of numerous international institutions, social organization, clergy, the staff of museums and memorials devoted to this subject as well as – by intermediary of the media – all those who wished to honour the memory of the victims of German Nazis.

In the special edition of Memoria we publish all the speeches from the anniversary delivered by:

Andrzej Duda - the President of Poland
Batsheva Dagan - Auschwitz Survivor
Else Baker - Auschwitz Survivor
Marian Turski - Auschwitz Survivor
Stanisław Zalewski - Auschwitz Survivor
Ronald S. Lauder - representative of Pillars of Remembrance
Piotr M. A. Cywiński - director of the Auschwitz Memorial

Photos: Wojciech Grabowski, Jarosław Praszkiewicz

Pawel Sawicki, Editor-in-chief
Honourable Survivors, Witnesses of the Holocaust!
Excellencies, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen!

"A train has just arrived at the unloading ramp. People started to get off the freight wagons and walked towards the grove. [...] When I got up in the morning to wash the floor, people were walking [...]. Women, men and children. [...] I went out at night in front of the block - in the darkness the lamps over the barbed wire were shining. The road lay in the darkness, but I could clearly hear the distant hubbub of thousands of voices - people were walking and walking. Fire rose from the woods and lit up the sky, and with the fire, a human cry rose. [...] For days and nights, people were walking [...]. The wagons were constantly coming up to the ramp and - people were walking on".

This is how Auschwitz was described, in the summer of 1944, by the Polish prisoner of the camp, writer Tadeusz Borowski. Crowds of people walking, led, driven to mass death. We, in Poland, know well the truth about what was happening here since it was recounted to us by our compatriots who had camp numbers tattooed on their bodies by Germans.

Seventy-five years have just passed since the end of that monstrous, horrendous, criminal nightmare which was unfolding in this place for almost five years. It has been three generations since that day, the 27 January 1945, when a few thousand prisoners – exhausted with the cruelty of the perpetrators, with slave work, hunger and disease – lived to see the liberation by the soldiers of the Red Army.

We have here with us today the last living Survivors, who have endured the hell of Auschwitz. The last of those who saw the Holocaust with their own eyes. And among them those who experienced the fate of the Jewish Nation as referred to in Psalm 44: "we are killed all day long, we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered".

We have come here together – members of 61 delegations from all over the world – to commemorate jointly the International Holocaust Remembrance Day. We are standing in front of the gate leading to the camp which claimed lives of the biggest number of victims and which has become the symbol of the Shoah. We pay tribute to all the six million Jews murdered in this and other camps, in the ghettos and places of torture.
We stand here before You, Honourable Survivors, in order to assume anew, in the presence of the Witnesses of the Holocaust, an obligation — thinking of those who perished, of You who have survived and of the future generations.

The genocide perpetrated here by the functionaries of the Nazi Third Reich, claimed more than one million three hundred thousand human lives. Among them were Poles, Roma, Soviet prisoners of war – but first and foremost Jews, of whom over one million one hundred thousand were slain here.

We are speaking about numbers but these numbers represent concrete people, their histories and their suffering. We are speaking about numbers though we will surely never get to know the exact figure. We are speaking about numbers for we are in the factory of death. For the numbers make us realize the industrial nature of the crime committed here.

The Holocaust, of which Auschwitz is the main place and the main symbol, constituted an unexampled crime throughout the entire history. Here, the hatred, chauvinism, nationalism, racism, antisemitism assumed the form of a mass, organized, methodical murder. At no other time and at no other place was extermination carried out in a similar manner. Jews from Poland, Hungary, France, the Netherlands, Greece and from other occupied countries all over Europe were brought here in cattle cars, underwent selection and were deprived of all their belongings. And, in their vast majority, immediately killed in the gas chambers. And burned in the crematoria ovens. All of that took but a few hours, quarters, minutes. For years, the factory of death operated at full capacity. Smoke was rising from the chimneys, the transports were rolling. People walked and walked in their thousands. To meet their death.

It is hard to encompass it all with your mind. The magnitude of the crime perpetrated here is terrifying. But we must not look away from it. We must never forget it.

When the front was approaching, to put an end to the crime, the perpetrators attempted to obliterate its traces. They were destroying the buildings and the documents of the genocide. Having slain millions, they also wanted to wipe out the memory of them. However, their attempts failed. Witnesses were saved, of whom You, Honourable Survivors, are the last ones. And this very place has been preserved - the tangible evidence and the symbol of the Holocaust.

Hence, we stand here today, on the premises of the former German Camp Auschwitz. We stand all together and bow our heads before the suffering of the victims of this most horrendous crime in history. And before the Survivors, in the presence of the last Witnesses, we assume an obligation for the future.

In the name of the Republic of Poland,

- who was the first target of Nazi Germany's aggression,
- whose territory was occupied and its nation subjected to terror,
- who established the largest European underground resistance movement against the Third Reich,
- whose soldiers were fighting against Germans on all fronts of WWII from the first to the last day of the war,
- whose six million citizens died at the hands of Nazis, including three million Jews,
- and who makes an utmost effort to preserve this place: the premises of the Auschwitz camp – as well as all other places of the Shoah: the former German camps located in our territory,

I have the privilege and honour to renew the obligation,

- which we, Poles, assumed back then when the Holocaust was being carried out,
- when our forefathers came to the aid of the murdered Jews, putting at risk their own lives,
- who were the first ones to reveal to the world the truth about the Shoah and demanded response from the world statesmen,
- the obligation to which we, the contemporary Poles, consistently adhere – also for the sake of the memory of our heroic compatriots, such
of the memory of our heroic compatriots, such as Witold Pilecki and Jan Karski:

to always nurture the memory of and guard the truth about what happened here.

I wish to invite the Distinguished Guests gathered here today, representatives of foreign states and nations, as well as international institutions and all people of good will from across the world, to participate in this endeavor. Let it be our joint commitment undertaken before the last Survivors and Witnesses: to keep carrying into the future the message and the warning, for the whole mankind, which stem from this place.

Distorting the history of WWII, denying the crimes of genocide and the Holocaust as well as an instrumental use of Auschwitz to attain any given goal is tantamount to desecration of the memory of the victims whose ashes are scattered here. The truth about the Holocaust must not die. The memory of Auschwitz must last so that such Extermination is never repeated again.

Once again thank You, Honourable Survivors, for Your testimony and for Your presence here today.
Greetings to you all. Hearty Shalom from Israel. It's hard for me to hide my feelings. I'm standing here, and I don't know if it's real or a dream that I've been with you 75 years since my great suffering here. I was Schutzhäftling, number 45554. Schutzhäftling in German is a prisoner under protection, but there, I mean here, in that reality, which existed here, that word did not mean protection. There was no such thing as concern for a fellow human or human dignity. On the contrary. A dictionary search won't provide a word to describe how they trampled on human dignity. So why was the term 'under protection' added to the word prisoner, Schutzhäftling - a prisoner under protection. How much in this is contempt? In the devil's world, where human dignity was treated like dirt, there was no trace of refuge for anything. I'm a Häftling, and all those people who were in the camp will surely be amazed, but I did not have a striped uniform, because it was not enough. And they gave me a Russian soldier's uniform; on a bare body and legs were wrapped in a prayer shawl taken from the Jews. And I had Dutch clogs, two different ones.

What else did they do to me? Apart from the number they tattooed on me, which is still as it was then, because it was well-tattooed, and I, for one, didn't recognise myself, and since these blocks had high windows, I raised my hands and then recognised myself; it was me. And well, the worst thing that I experienced at the beginning; it's hard to say what caused me more pain - tattooing a number on my arm or something else. It seems to me, however, that the most painful thing was losing my hair. It gave me a sense of feminine beauty; braids combed into a crown on my head, smooth and pleasant to the touch, and they were mine! And yet they were affected by the criminal hand; it took the crown from me and made me another sad, pathetic creature. My hand touched my bare skull, I stood in front of the window, the contour of my face reflected in it. An unfamiliar figure. Is that me?! Where is my crown?

I raised my arms through the corner before I even said that; I recognised my reflection in the mirror, well not in the mirror but the glass; it was me. My braids and hair were to serve other purposes. Who could have assumed that they would become raw materials for mattresses or carpets. The motivation for the haircut was different: that there would be lice on the head, but it was above a plot to deprive me of a human countenance. The hairs taken from me under duress grew back in accordance with nature and against all the odds. And along with them, a hidden dream lived in my heart: And perhaps, perhaps, tomorrow will still come? Tomorrow comes, and yet the memories remain.
And I also want to tell you - I worked in four commandos, in the camp. In the first commando, I collected nettles. And these hands of mine bled. 12 hours each day. And when we were woken up, everyone sitting here experienced it, at 4 a.m., they gave us a drink from the nettle, and they also used the nettle-soup. Aufseherin, that is, the one who kept guard over us and everyone knows what Aufseherin is, she was very cruel, she had a dog, and a stick and she would beat us if the baskets weren't filled, tall enough with the grass we were using. I was in this commando for many months, and later in the second commando, the Kartoffelkommando, where I was briefly and on this Lagerstrasse (camp street), I met a cousin who was a doctor's wife and was working at the sick room. What about the sick room? On one side, the chimneys were on burning and on the other side were hospitals. But what kind of hospitals were they? All the diseases I could have had there, Flecktyphus, Bauchtyphus, it all remained in my head in German. And the terrible scabies that bit me, and I was the first, the best candidate for the chimney because I got there when Dr Mengele conducted the selection process, with us, lined up naked and thus walking to our death. And I said: “I won't go”. And I hid under the bed cover and somehow saved myself from it. And then, one more Commando. I was working in the sick room and my daily task was to observe the type of lice and I also learned that there are two kinds of these creatures - one is head lice and the other is clothing lice. And so, I was killing these lice with my fingers. It was my first job from the very morning.

What I'm going to say... well, you can't talk about it to everyone. I had overcome that terrible illness of mine, and after that illness, the actual illness, I was posted to the "Canada" Commando, and the prisoners invented the name Canada. So, I worked in Canada. Surely there are people from Hungary here and I was holding Hungarian clothes in my hands. At first, I cried but later had to get used to the fact that it was to be my job. Then, on these huge mountains of different clothes from all over the world, I came across photographs of my teachers from Łódź, because they liquidated the Łódź ghetto in 1944. Since Jewish schools were closed, I decided that I had to learn something, and there were so many languages! About fifteen languages were spoken, I heard so many languages and I said, "I must learn something, I will learn a language". And so, I found a lady from Belgium who was my teacher, no pencil, no paper, nothing and I'm learning. And I finished Auschwitz-Birkenau with fluent French.

The other things I learned were poems and melodies created by various prisoners. One of the poems was by Krystyna Żywulska, which became our prayer. I learned the poem; it is a very long poem that I will not recite because I remember it today as I did then. Krystyna Żywulska's poem "Wymarsz w polu" (March out into the field) was known to us as " March out of the gate" and it became our prayer. The description of those sufferings was an expression of each of us, but not every prisoner was able to describe the painful reality in such a manner. The main source of strength was a mad desire for revenge for so much torment, for so many complaints, bayonets in the brain, daggers in the neck. The words of rebellion went from mouth to mouth and changed slightly depending on the female prisoners' memory and personal associations. The thought of revenge became a source of strength to endure long days and nights of human suffering. I continue to learn and learn all the time. And what helped me to survive? The fact that I decided to do something for myself and choose what I want, not what they order me to do. But I wasn't liberated on the 27th. We already heard the canons of the Russian army, but then it wasn't liberation, they only chased us out to march. That's what I thought there, I mean here. There, in hell, it was a pipe dream - a dream about freedom. There, the heart was beating with a cry of revenge for so much suffering, for waiting in line for death predestined from above, and the countries of the world did nothing. And to this day I have this feeling; where were you all, where was the world that saw and heard and did nothing to save so many thousands.

And what's next? Since learning was my dream.

I'll speak from my heart, not from paper. I was
in Auschwitz-Birkenau until the liquidation of the camp and my last job in Canada, that was the name given by the prisoners, in fact, by the Sonderkommando, because Canada is a rich country, and all the things that prisoners from all countries brought with them were gathered in Canada, and I saw it all there; however, Canada had one advantage - that there was something to eat. And what could we eat there? What people brought with them because they told people in different countries that they were going to work and therefore, to take all their provisions. And these provisions were brought to Canada, and we the sick, skinny people ate these things. Could one eat such things? Then you could eat anything. One more thing that helped to survive in this hell was friendship because you could find a group of people who supported one another, so the Shoah, the Holocaust is not just terrible things, and where are the righteous of the world who helped and hid?

There are other topics that children can take in. I'm fighting to introduce the subject earlier. Why earlier? Because in countries where children are 13.14 years old, it is generally too late. Because then they have to deal with their physiological change and do not think about other things other than themselves and what place they occupy in the group of their peers. Is it necessary to teach this subject? Is it possible? I have an answer to these two questions. Yes, it is necessary and possible. And why is it necessary? Because we live in a world of the media - the phone, the iPhone, as it is called in every country - children play with it, even babies. These kids grow up using this iPhone and know more than we would want them to know. And therefore, this topic must be introduced as early as possible.

In Israel, we have to because there are sirens, and it is the beginning of the day of remembrance. The children ask why the sirens buzz. But in countries where there are no sirens, they have the same problem. The problem is that children hear it all around. Surely, there are teachers here. I can tell teachers that first of all, they need to investigate what children know, what is the source of their message, and what they would like to know. I've been to several places. I've been to Argentina, Canada, America, I've been to America many times, and three years in England where I wrote because I wanted to learn - so the first thing I did was learn. I learned Hebrew very quickly and was in a teachers' seminar and worked as a kindergarten teacher, and I have a number and the children asked me why and who wrote it. For 40 years I've been looking for the answer to this question, who wrote it on me. By the way, the museum has 4 Polish books that are translated from Hebrew, which are available for schools.

What should I say? That I'd like to cry, because only with tears can I flush out the past. When I see so many people, you are our consolation that all of you will try to make the memory of this place and other places where innocent people from all nations were killed; that you will be responsible for ensuring that such misfortune never occurs again in the history of the world.
It is a great privilege to stand here today at this great event, this historic event. Having just listened to that ladies speech, that really upset me, despite the fact that I was also in Auschwitz as an 8-year old girl. I would like to say it is an honor to me to be among so many people who suffered so greatly, perhaps even much more so than I. I am upset, you can feel that. I would like to thank the Polish people for having preserved this former camp and made it into such a world-renowned Memorial which it is today, where people can come. I was in Auschwitz as a Sinti and Roma. I lived in England nearly 60 years and I know not many people know that Sinti and Roma greatly suffering under the Nazis, similar to the Jewish people.

I am blind, I cannot look at notes, so what I am saying comes from the heart and Joanna Talewicz-Kwiatkowska will now read me speech. She will read what I have written.
In 1944 when I was just an eight year old girl, I was taken from my home in Hamburg and deported to the Auschwitz-Birkenau extermination camp. Since my biological mother was a Sintiza the Nazis considered me a gypsy and imprisoned me together with thousands of other Sinti and Roma in the so called gypsy camp. Almost ninety per cent of a total of 23,000 inmates at the 'gypsy camp' were murdered.

Horrible as it was -- the extermination camp Auschwitz was just one site of the genocide committed against Sinti and Roma. All over Nazi occupied Europe Sinti and Roma were murdered in camps or shot by execution squads. Today we know that around 500,000 Sinti and Roma became victims of a campaign of systematic extermination.

In Auschwitz I witnessed mass murder. There were long cues of people in front of the mass murder facilities like the gas chambers and crematoria which were not far from our camp's electrified fences. And then the ear splitting screams started. Orders to stay inside our barracks with doors locked were disobeyed. And we saw a large area of open fires blazing. I as an 8 year old girl overheard adult conversations like; they must have run out of gas and are burning people alive now.

You might be interested to know, that only 6 months ago I was here at the Auschwitz memorial commemorating an event that took place there on the 2nd of August 1944. Almost 4,300 men, women and children from our camp; after one of those Nazi selection processes, were condemned to be murdered that very night. I was among those the Nazis selected to be put into cattle trains and to be transported to Ravensbrück concentration camp.

Even today it is extremely difficult for me to come back to the place of the former concentration camp Auschwitz. I experienced first hand the effects of Antigypsyism, Antisemitism and Racism. I myself survived Auschwitz through sheer luck and the selfless acts of some of my fellow inmates. For decades after 1945 the genocide committed against Sinti and Roma was largely ignored. It took a private initiative by Vinzenz Rose, one of the early activists of the Sinti and Roma civil rights movement, to erect a modest memorial on the site of the former camp to commemorate the Sinti and Roma murdered at Auschwitz. Today it is the setting for memorial services like the one I attended last August.

Those that were murdered and those that survived the camps must never be forgotten. Hopefully this memorial site and museum will remain here for many years to come as a warning to people not to let racism and insane ideologies, backed by wrong sciences like for example, Eugenics, gain power again.
My dear comrades of the camp misery, distinguished guests, esteemed participants, friends.

I am one of the few still alive of those who remained in this place almost until the very last moment before liberation. My so-called evacuation from the Auschwitz camp began on the 18th of January. Over the next six and a half days it would prove a death march for more than half of my fellow prisoners, with whom I marched in a column of six hundred.

In all likelihood, I will not make it to the next commemoration. Such are the laws of nature. Please then forgive me the emotion in what I will now say.

This is something I want to say above all to my daughter, my granddaughter, who I thank for being present here, to my grandson: it concerns mainly those who are the peers of my daughter, of my grandchildren; a new generation, particularly the youngest, those who are younger even than they are.
When the Second World War broke out, I was a teenager. My father was a soldier in the First World War who had received a serious gunshot wound to the lung. It was a dramatic situation for our family. My mother came from the Polish-Lithuanian-Belarusian border, where armies had swept back and forth, plundering, looting, raping, burning villages so as to leave nothing for those who came after them. You might say I knew first-hand from my father and mother what war is. Yet despite everything, although only 20 or 25 years had passed, it seemed as distant as the Polish uprisings of the 19th century; as distant as the French Revolution. But it was only 20 years.

When I meet young people today, I realize that after 75-80 years they seem a little weary of this topic: war, the Holocaust, Shoah, genocide. I understand them. That is why I promise you, young people, that I will not tell you about my suffering. I will not tell you about my experiences, my two death marches, how I ended the war weighing 32kg, exhausted, on the verge of death. I will not talk about the worst of it, that is, the tragedy of parting with loved ones after the selection, when you sensed what awaited them. No, I will not talk about these things. Instead, I would like to talk to you about my daughter’s generation, and my grandchildren’s generation.

I see that Alexander Van der Bellen, the president of Austria, is among us. You will remember, Mr. President, when you hosted me and the leaders of the International Auschwitz Committee and we talked about those times. At one point you used the phrase: “Auschwitz ist nicht vom Himmel gefallen”. Auschwitz did not fall from the sky”. This is, to use a phrase of ours, an obvious obviousness. Of course it didn’t fall from the sky. Yet while this may seem a banal enough statement, it contains a profound and extremely important and deep cognitive shortcut.

Let us shift our imagination for a moment to Berlin in the early 1930s. We are almost in the city centre, in a district called Bayerisches Viertel, the Bavarian Quarter. Three stops from Ku’damm; from the zoo. Where the Bayerischer Platz metro is today. And here, one day in the early 1930s, a sign appears on the benches: “Jews may not sit here.” “Okay,” you might think, “this is unpleasant, it’s unfair, it’s not nice, but after all there are so many benches around here, you can sit somewhere else, it’s fine.” This was a district inhabited by German intelligentsia of Jewish origin. Albert Einstein, Nobel laureate Nelly Sachs, the industrialist, politician and Foreign Minister Walter Rathenau lived here. One day a sign appears at the swimming pool. “Jews are forbidden to enter this swimming pool.” “Okay,” you might think, “this is unpleasant, but Berlin has so many places to swim, so many lakes, canals — it’s practically Venice — so you can go and swim somewhere else.”

Then another sign appears. “Jews are not allowed to belong to German choral associations.” So what? They want to sing and make music? Let them gather together and sing by themselves. Then another sign and order: “Jewish, non-Aryan children are not allowed to play with German, Aryan children.” So they can play by themselves. And another. “We sell bread and other food products to Jews only after 5pm.” Now this is a real inconvenience because there’s less choice, but in the end you can still shop after 5pm.

Attention. Here we start to get used to the idea that you can exclude someone. That you can stigmatise someone. That you can alienate someone. Slowly, gradually, day by day, people begin to get used to the idea that a minority that gave the world Einstein, Nelly Sachs, Heinrich Heine and the Mendelssohns and many Novel laureates, is different, that these people can be pushed to the edges of society, that they are strangers, that they spread germs and start epidemics. These terrible, dangerous thoughts are the beginning of what may happen next.

The regime of the time plays things cleverly, meeting the demands of workers. The first of May wasn’t celebrated in Germany before? Never mind, here you go. On leisure days, they introduce Kraft durch Freude — Strength Through Joy. Organised holidays for the workers. They vanquish unemployment and play on the strings of national dignity.
“Germany, rise from the shame of Versailles. Restore your pride.” At the same time, the regime sees that the people are gradually overwhelmed by the anaesthesia of indifference. They stop reacting to evil. And so the regime can afford to accelerate the process of evil.

From there, things gather pace: a ban on employing Jews, a ban on emigration. Then the evil spreads to the ghettos: to Riga; to Kaunas; to my ghetto, the Łódź ghetto — Litzmannstadt Ghetto. Most of those there are sent to Kulmhof — Chelmno by the river Ner — where they will be murdered in gas vans, and the rest are sent to Auschwitz, where they will be murdered with Zyklon B in modern gas chambers. And here we see the truth of what President Van der Bellen said: “Auschwitz didn’t suddenly fall from the sky.” Auschwitz crept up, tiptoed along with small steps, moved closer and closer, until the things that happened here began.

My daughter, my granddaughter, peers of my daughter, peers of my granddaughter — perhaps you do not know the name of Primo Levi. Primo Levi was one of the most well-known prisoners of this camp. He once used the phrase: “It happened, therefore it can happen again, it can happen everywhere. Around the world.”

I will share with you one personal memory. In 1965 I was in the United States of America on a scholarship during the fight for human rights, for civil rights, for rights for African Americans. I had the honour of taking part in the march from Selma to Montgomery with Martin Luther King. When my fellow marchers found that I had been in Auschwitz, they asked me, “Do you think that such a thing could only happen in Germany? Or could it happen elsewhere?” I told them: “It could happen to you, too. If civil rights are violated, if minority rights are not respected and are abolished. If the law is violated, as happened in Selma, then such things could happen.” What to do? “You must do what you can. If you can defend your constitution, defend your rights, defend your democratic order, defend the rights of minorities — then you can overcome this.”

Most of us as Europeans come from the Judeo-Christian tradition. Believers and non-believers alike accept the Ten Commandments as the canon of our civilisation. The closest friend of mine, Roman Kent, the president of the International Auschwitz Committee, who spoke here five years ago during the previous commemoration, could not be here today. He is recovering from a serious illness. He coined the Eleventh Commandment, which stems from the experience of the Shoah, the Holocaust, the terrible epoch of contempt. It runs thus: thou shalt not be indifferent.

And this is what I want to tell my daughter, what I want to tell my grandchildren. My daughter’s peers, my grandchildren’s peers, wherever they might live, in Poland, Israel, America, Western Europe, Eastern Europe. Yes, in Eastern Europe, this is very important. Thou shalt not be indifferent in the face of lies about history. Thou shalt not be indifferent when the past is distorted for today’s political needs. Thou shalt not be indifferent when any minority faces discrimination. Majority rule is the essence of democracy, but democracy also means that minority rights must be protected at the same time. Thou shalt not be indifferent when any authority violates the existing social contract. Be faithful to this commandment. To the Eleventh Commandment: thou shalt not be indifferent.

Because if you are indifferent, you will not even notice it when upon your own heads, and upon the heads of your descendants, some another Auschwitz falls from the sky.
Dear and distinguished Participants of the solemn celebration of the 75th anniversary of the liberation of Konzentrationslager Auschwitz!

I address my words of respect to all those who fate spared from industrial operations of the German Nazi machine of genocide in Auschwitz and other concentration and extermination camps.

A drastic but true expression. I am referring to the innumerable amounts of human hair, glasses, prostheses, shoes, clothing, and other items of daily and periodic use by children, women, and men of different nationalities and religions.

The storms of history dispelled the ashes of the owners of these possessions. However, their immortal souls remained in a space invisible to humans.

Today they have come to this place in large numbers and mingle among us. And if we open our hearts, we will hear their cries, moans and complaints to God.

"In a place such as this, words are missing, and the heart cries out to God in dreadful silence. Lord, why did you remain silent? In this silence, we bow our heads before the countless people who suffered and were murdered here. Yet this silence is a loud cry for forgiveness and reconciliation, a prayer to the living God to prevent it from ever happening again".

"How many questions come to mind here! One, in particular, keeps coming up: Where was God in those days? Why was he silent? How could he allow so much destruction, this triumph of evil?"

These were the words of Pope Benedict XVI during his visit to Auschwitz-Birkenau in 2006. He went on to say:

"We cannot fathom the mystery of God. We see only fragments of it, and we wander around when we want to become judges of God and history.

These words of the Pope became a point of reference for me: One must not rummage through the consciences of people who had experienced a time when people deliberately forgot about another person's right to live.

From here onwards, I will speak based on my "Polish War Paths", which began in September 1943 and ended in July 1945.
These roads consisted of such places as:
- the Gestapo headquarters in Warsaw
- Pawiak prison in Warsaw
- the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration and extermination camp
- the Mauthausen, Gusen I and Gusen II concentration camps.

I was brought to this place in a railway carriage on 5 October 1943 and tagged with number 156569 tattooed on the inside of my left forearm. At the Mauthausen and Gusen I camps, I received the following numbers: 4491 and 45332. The number from Auschwitz has existed for 77 years and is still legible. It is a living witness to unforgettable tragic events. I remember!

In Auschwitz-Birkenau
- I remember driving living naked women in trucks from the barracks to the gas chamber. I can hear their screams in my subconscious mind when I recall these events.
- I recall people nicely-dressed, wearing the Star of David armbands and walking around with no signs of anxiety or fear. A large group of these people were led by just one SS officer. He led them in the direction of the crematorium. However, only me and a few prisoners standing next to me knew about it.
- I was the "object" of the periodic selection of prisoners from my barrack upon returning from work. After the evening food ration was dispensed, the designated prisoners were led to the crematorium.

In Gusen I and Gusen II
- I was a witness to - Death penalties for observing the rules of one's religion.
- The killing of sick prisoners in the camp hospital by a functionary prisoner.
- The suicide of prisoners who threw themselves on the electrified barbed-wire fence of the camp.
- On the first day of freedom, I witnessed the drastic prisoner extra-judicial executions of functionary prisoners who killed other prisoners on orders from the camp authorities or because of their sadistic nature, which originated or manifested itself in camp conditions.

These are only selected examples. To live a normal and creative life, I try not to think about the events of the camp. I found a way to achieve this: I put my memories in an airtight box, tied a rope to it and threw it into the water. I take it out occasionally, for instance, for today's ceremony, and after using its contents, I throw it back into the water.

However, once the echoes of the celebration cease, some memories overcome these defences, penetrate my memory, trigger reflections and unanswered questions. When I say the Pater Noster prayer, I recite a verse: "Give us our daily bread today and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us."

Does forgiveness of sin mean:
- forgetting the damage inflicted?
- refrain from imposing punishment?
- abandoning the right for compensation?

Can you forgive those who had the inscription "Gott mit uns" on the buckles of military belts and killed people with premeditation? I emphasise: with premeditation! Because war is the "art" of killing. Whoever kills more, wins. War breeds violence on both sides; blurs the line between good and evil, and the victor dictates a law that is often cruel. To avoid it, there must be reconciliation between nations.

Yet, reconciliation without historical truth and forgiveness will only be a bridge without a railing between the edges of a precipice - you can cross it, but not without fear. Therefore, the moral obligation of all people gathered here is to undertake actions so that all nations can live in mutual respect and understanding.

Under these inhumane conditions that prevailed in Auschwitz and other concentration camps, the prisoners formed various underground organisations with the primary goal of protecting life and human dignity.
various underground organisations with the primary goal of protecting life and human dignity.

Speaking in modern terms, I was the beneficiary of such activity, which enabled me to survive temporary breakdowns and the feeling of hopelessness in Auschwitz-Birkenau and Gusen II. Such actions unleashed new energy, strengthened the sense of bonds, stimulated one to act against one's sense of powerlessness and loss of hope.

Two examples:
1) In 1941, Franciscan Father Maximilian Maria Kolbe voluntarily gave up his life for another convicted father of a large family. 2) In 1940, Calvary Capt. Witold Pilecki voluntarily allowed himself to be imprisoned in KL Auschwitz. He organised and participated in the camp resistance movement. He fled the camp in 1943 to convey the truth about Auschwitz to the world. He participated in the Warsaw Uprising. The Polish communist authorities executed him in 1948.

Two different personalities who demonstrated exceptional charisma, heroism and dedication in a place created for the extermination of people.

Their sacrifice has not been in vain. The Witold Pilecki Institute of Solidarity and Martyrdom was established in Poland in 2017. The aim of the Institute is, among others, to commemorate people of different nationalities - victims of German Nazi crimes. The Maximilian-Kolbe-Werk Association, established in Germany, has been operating since 1973. Its task is to reach agreement and reconciliation and to provide assistance in various forms to former prisoners of concentration camps and ghettos, regardless of their religion, views or beliefs.

On the 50th anniversary of the end of World War II, the association awarded all former prisoners of concentration camps a commemorative medal. The document attached to the medal reads:
"You have survived the atrocities of terror prevailing in the camps. But afterwards, your life was very difficult. And yet during this time, you have given great reasons for reconciliation. The rose flower reproduced on the medal, symbolises your message of reconciliation. We believe that your exemplary attitude will also affect others, not only for the mutual relations between Poles and Germans but that it will also become a role model, particularly for those nations, which today, represent an attitude of mutual intransigence. Your suffering in camps, ghettos or Nazi prisons, as well as your difficult life after the liberation, were not in vain. Of this, we are deeply convinced. That's how it should be! But it's not!
In many regions of the world today, people overcome by the fanaticism of political, racial or religious domination, or even personal domination, engage in acts of armed violence to achieve their personal goals. These acts of violence claim thousands of lives and thus bear all the hallmarks of genocide. Has history turned full circle? A circle propelled by people without respect for others' dignity.

Dear Participants of today's ceremony!

I am an optimist and believe in people, because in my life to date, excluding my stay in prisons and concentration camps, I have encountered greater good than bad from people. In qualifying human deeds as good or bad, I am supported by a beautiful woman with a blindfold on her eyes. In her left hand, she carries a balance, and in her right hand, a sharp sword. I'll ask her to continue to stay with me.
Your Majesties, Your Excellences, Rabbis, Clergy, Honored Guests and most importantly, The Survivors of Auschwitz-Birkenau,

This is about you the Survivors and I cannot begin to tell you how grateful I am that you are here and in some cases here with your children and grandchildren. Five years ago when I stood here. In front of these painful gates I admitted that I am not a Survivor. But I am so grateful for the Survivors. Who are here today.

But I am so grateful. For the Survivors. Who are here today.
I am not a liberator. Although I salute the courage of the veterans who saved us all.

I am here simply as a Jew and like all Jews everywhere. This place this terrible place called Auschwitz has sadly become an inseparable part of us. Auschwitz is like a scar from a terrible trauma. It never goes away. It never goes away and the pain never stops. I have always wondered if I had been born in Hungary where my grandparents were from instead of New York in February 1944. Would I have lived?

The answer is no. I would have been one of the 438,000 Hungarian Jews gassed by the Nazis in 1944 right here in Auschwitz. I can assure you almost all Jews have pondered this question. 75 years ago today when Soviet troops entered these gates they had no idea what lay behind them. And since that day the entire world has struggled with what they found inside.

We have all wondered how an advanced country that gave the world great literature and art and scientific advancement could sink to an anger, a meanness, a depravity like Auschwitz. I’m afraid Auschwitz offers more questions than answers.
But let me be clear. While Germany and Austria caused, created, and carried out this shattering evil. Practically every other European country helped the Nazis gather up their Jewish citizens.

Too many people in too many countries made Auschwitz happen and when European Jews begged the world for a safe harbor. Someplace to go. The entire world turned its back on them. Even my own country - the beacon of freedom - turned out its light on the Jewish people when they needed it the most.

The U.S. organized a conference in Evian, France, in July of 1938, to discuss the Jewish refugee crisis. There were a lot of lovely speeches but the United States did not let any additional Jewish refugees in and every other country in attendance followed their lead.

There were 32 countries and none of them except for the tiny Dominican Republic wanted anymore Jews. Hitler saw this. Four months later, came Kristallnacht. And again, there was no world reaction. Hitler tested the world and at every step he saw the truth: The world did not care. That’s when he knew that he could build this factory of death. Evian led to Auschwitz.

That’s when he knew that he could build this factory of death. Evian led to Auschwitz. Kristallnacht led to Auschwitz. World anti-Semitism led to Auschwitz. Thankfully, there were some people throughout Europe who had a moral decency and who acted differently. Ordinary people who risked their lives and their family’s lives to save other human beings sometimes people they didn’t even know.

At Yad Vashem in Jerusalem you will see 27,362 names of what we call: the Righteous Among Nations those gentiles who risked everything to save Jewish lives. We have not forgotten. These honorable men and women and we never will. Five years ago, at the 70th anniversary, I was very concerned. About the shocking rise of anti-Semitism here in Europe. Today, you all know the attacks on Jews, the killings the vicious slanders have only grown worse and they have even spread to my country.

75 years ago when the world finally saw the pictures of the gas chambers here and the piles of bodies nobody in their right mind wanted to be associated with Nazis.

But now, I see something I never thought I would see in my lifetime: the open and brazen spread of anti-Jewish hatred throughout the world once again.

In 2020 we hear the same lies the Nazis used so effectively in their propaganda:

- Jews have too much power;
- Jews control the economy and the media;
- Jews control governments;
- Jews control everything.

We hear this madness online in the media and even from democratic governments. We will never eradicate antisemitism. It’s a deadly virus that has been with us for over 2,000 years. But we cannot look the other way and pretend this isn’t happening.

That’s what people did throughout the 1930s and that is what led to Auschwitz. I remember walking here once with a former inmate named Elie Wiesel. At one place, he stopped and he said something I will never forget, Elie told me that, “The opposite of love is not hate, it is indifference. It is indifference that allowed Auschwitz to happen.”

There are 50 countries represented here today. I know each and every one of you is as disgusted by anti-Semitism as I am. I also know that you, alone, cannot stop this. But all of you can certainly. Speak out forcefully against it. We can’t re-write history. But we can be much more forceful today.

All of us must remember those brave, moral people who tried to stop this. All world leaders, all politicians must lead in this effort. Words are not enough. Political speeches are not enough. Laws must be passed severe tough real laws that will put these hate mongers away in prison for a long, long time. Children must be educated and know where the hatred of Jews leads. Those are important but there is another vital way for world leaders today to fight this age old hatred.
I ask all countries to stop casting votes in favor of the U.N.’s constant and shameful fixation on Israel.

Exactly 3 years, 3 months, and 3 weeks after the liberation of Auschwitz the Jewish people realized their 2,000-year-old dream and founded the Jewish state of Israel. If for no other reason then the fact that not a single country on earth would take in Jewish refugees when they begged for their lives that is why the Jewish people need Israel.

The Jewish people left Auschwitz they fled Europe they were forced out of every country in the middle east and instead of living in refugee camps and turning to terror... they built a vibrant democracy in a place where democracy does not exist. They have created miracle after miracle while having to defend their existence every single day. No other country on earth has had to do this. And for this the UN journalists and even some world leaders constantly condemn them. But it’s even worse. Israel has been singled out over and over with the same lies that we heard about the Jewish people for centuries.

Over the last 7 years alone, the United Nations general assembly has adopted 202 resolutions condemning countries around the world. Of those 202 resolutions Israel was condemned 163 times and the rest of the world only 39. 163 against Israel, 39 for the rest of the world. We all know these votes are absurd. The U.N. ignores truly evil dictatorships that kill millions of their own people. And its clear as day, that this kind of obsessive anti-zionism, is nothing but antisemitism. And with every absurd vote ... every vote that targets only Israel and ignores the rest of the world ... this demeans the entire U. N. and makes it a less serious institution. That is such a shame. Because the U.N. was built on the ashes that we stand over right now. It had so much promise. It could be so much more.

I realize that here at Auschwitz you are surrounded by numbers: 75 years, 1933, 1938, 6-million. But there is one number that still shocks us. While breaking our hearts at the same time. One million five hundred thousand. That’s the number of Jewish children – one-and-a-half million. Who died in the Holocaust. It is so painful that we try not to think about it. It just hurts too much.

Had these 1-and-a-half million children been allowed to live their lives like all other children around the world. They would now be in their 70s and 80s. They would have been educated. They would have married. They would have had children of their own. Such a loss. But something else was lost as well. What could these one-and-a-half million have created for us all? What symphonies? What great literature? What technology? What medical breakthroughs did we lose? From these lost souls? If you have had a loved one who has suffered from cancer or Alzheimer’s or Parkinsons. Perhaps the cures for those diseases were lost right here at Auschwitz. This was not just a Jewish loss. It was a loss for the entire world. There is one more part of the Auschwitz story that no one ever talks about. When the survivors were liberated from this Nazi nightmare. They never sought revenge. They lost their mothers and fathers, sisters and brothers. In too many cases. They lost their wives and their children. And in spite of this ... not one German was killed in retribution by a Jew. Not one !!

Think about that for a moment. After everything that happened to them these Jewish survivors just walked out of these gates and went on to build new lives, raise new families work hard and create. Some have grandchildren here today. And it is shameful that 75 years later they now see their grandchildren face this same hatred again. This is a shame and it must never be tolerated. In the end, I’m afraid that all of these numbers – one and a half million children. Six million Jews. These numbers are just too hard for us to comprehend. So let me leave you today with one last story.
It came from the Eichmann trial in 1961 where witness after witness described their experience here at Auschwitz. But there was one man who stood out because he spoke in an unusually non-emotional tone.

He described arriving at this platform right here with his wife and little daughter. They were herded out of the cattle cars, and stood in line for the “selection,” right over there. A doctor decided who would go to the right to work and who would go to the left for extermination. The man was separated from his wife and daughter at that moment and they were pushed away.

On the witness stand he said: “There were so many people, I didn’t know how i could keep my eye on them.” But his little girl wore a red coat and he was able to watch the little red coat until it got smaller and smaller and then he couldn’t see it anymore. The young Israeli prosecutor, Gabriel Bach, was standing at his chair when the man finished. He just stood there silently. Finally, the judge asked Bach to continue but he just stood there. Again, the judge told Bach to continue and again he just stood there, silently.

Years later, Bach explained that as fate would have it. He and his wife had just bought their 3-year-old daughter a little red coat.

And Gabriel Bach said that to this day if he walks into a sports stadium or a restaurant or he’s just walking down a street in Jerusalem and he sees a little girl in a red coat his throat will tense up and he cannot speak. Frankly, whenever I see a red coat on a little girl I think of the same thing. This is the legacy of Auschwitz, and it will never go away.

To every Jewish person and non-Jewish person in this audience who leaves these gates today we must do this: When we hear something that is anti-semitic. When we hear someone talk about Israel unjustly. When Jews are attacked on your streets.

Do not be silent. Do not be indifferent. Good things great things can start with everyone one of us. And do not just do this for the Jewish people around the world. Do this for your children. Do this for your grandchildren but also do this for the little girl in the red coat. Her ashes lay beneath us. Along with over one-million other tortured souls. They are watching us and they cry out in one shattering chorus.
Do not be silent!!!
Do not be complacent!!!
Do not let this ever happen again to any people !!!!
It's been seventy-five years since the liberation of Auschwitz Konzentrationslager. We have among us today, over 200 people who experienced this hell - an unimaginable hell. Thank you so much.

What you've been saying in the camp and through these 75 years, is “Never again.” Not for yourselves, but for us, our children and grandchildren. We built the post-war world on your experience. So, we owe you something. We all do.

The world was meant to be different. The United Nations was to be the guarantor of peace. Crimes against humanity were to be prosecuted endlessly. International cooperation and interdependence were intended to deter conflicts. Ecumenism was supposed to bring people of faith together.

Today, however, from almost every corner of the world, we can see the revival of the old ghosts. Acts and attitudes of antisemitism, racism and xenophobia are on the increase. In the darkness, the resurgence of populism and demagogy strengthen the ideologies of contempt and hatred.

And we are becoming increasingly indifferent. Confined within ourselves. Apathetic. Passive.

We don't see and don't want to see. We don't talk and don't want to talk. The majority were silent when the Syrians drowned, in silence, we turned our backs on the Congolese, we almost didn't utter a word when Rohingyas were murdered two years ago, with silence today, we conceal the tragic fate of the Uyghurs.

The silence after the Holocaust is inhuman and will never be human again. Besides the Holocaust, our silence today is our greatest disaster, our self-dehumanization. Yes, that's right: self-humanization.

The Righteous Among the Nations did not give likes, they never wrote protest-songs, nor signed online petitions. They performed endless good in dramatic conditions, rescuing a particular individual. But that's the only reason they saved their face and dignity. How do we, with all our culture of memory, compare ourselves to them today?

Worse than forgetting, is such a memory, that doesn't arouse a moral concern within us. Only then, the "Never again" is lost.

Seventy-five years after Auschwitz it is in fact in memory that we must search for sources for our responsibility today. Meanwhile, in our memories, we often only seek short-term emotions, without consequence, without obligation. Such a memory loses its significance.

How can one say “Never again” while looking into the eyes of the Jews attacked on the street, to the humiliated Roma, people all over the world: persecuted minorities, refugees, the starving, murdered, hundreds of thousands of people locked up in various camps?

Zalmen Gradowski, who was murdered in Birkenau, was right when he wrote, shortly before the Sonderkommando revolt: “We have a terrible feeling because we know.”

We also know and feel. What has become of our world? Where and why did we squander our basic, fundamental values? Where is our responsibility? Each one of us!

So, when will Auschwitz become a reality that has been overcome and liberated? In the very essence of the cry “Never again" the liberation of Auschwitz also continues today! Here and now, every day.
PIOTR M.A. CYWIŃSKI
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Albania – Ambassador Shpresa Kureta
Argentina – Ambassador Ana Maria Ramirez
Armenia – Ambassador Samuel Mkrtchian
Australia – President of the Senate Scott Ryan
Austria – President Alexander Van der Bellen
Azerbaijan – Chairman of Milli Mejlis Asadov Ogtay
Belarus – Deputy Chairman of Council of the Republic Anatoli Isachanka
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Bosnia and Herzegovina – Member of BiH Presidency Šefik Džaferović
Bulgaria – Prime Minister Boyko Borissov
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European Council – President Charles Michel
OSCE – Secretary General Thomas Greminger
United Nations – Secretary-General's Special Adviser for the Prevention of Genocide Adama Dieng
UNESCO – Director-Generaal Audrey Azoulay
FILM PRZYGOTOWANY SPECJALNIE NA 75. ROCZNICĘ WYZWOLENIA AUSCHWITZ

PRZEDMIOTY / ONI BYLI TACY JAK MY

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Director: Tadeusz Śliwa
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Producer: Kuba Ranik (OTO Film)
Music by: Marcin Masecki
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This film was produced in close cooperation with The Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial and Museum