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Institute of National Remembrance Review
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

Our e-mail: memoria@auschwitz.org

All editions: memoria.auschwitz.org
AGAINST THE CRIME OF GENOCIDE

The 3rd Global Forum Against the Crime of Genocide was held in 2018 in Yerevan in Armenia and was dedicated to the issues of genocide prevention through education, culture and museums. It examined the challenges and opportunities, experiences and perspectives of the genocide education.

The Forum is now summarized in a special publication.

“Education has pivotal significance in effectively countering the gravest challenges that the Humanity faces. In this regard the education on genocide prevention is an essential pillar of prevention efforts. The 2015 UN Human Rights Council Resolution 28/34 on genocide prevention highlights the importance of education and appeals to the governments of the member states to support raising awareness on genocide prevention, through promotion of relevant educational programs. The role of genocide education and remembrance has been underlined by regional security organizations as well, particularly the OSCE, the structures of which have been tasked to implement the commitments undertaken by participating states in this regard,” wrote the organizers of the Forum.

This book encompasses presentations that address among other things the role of genocide museums, memorial sites and institutes for perpetuation of remembrance, as well as such complex issues as working with groups-in-conflict in non-traditional educational settings in which reconciliation, memory, and empathy help to restore a modicum of trust and open communication; combating genocide denial and propaganda of xenophobia. It also offers deliberations which might be helpful for enhanced understanding of 'what we want to prevent in our present and for our future, and how to do it’, as well as the essence of fight for Fairness and Justice.

The Plenary Session was dedicated to the 70th anniversaries of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The speakers focused on the background of the adoption of Genocide Convention, its role, steps undertaken in accordance to it, results and lessons learnt, as well as the supplementary roles of this two simultaneously adopted international tools in the context of protection of individuals and groups.

The panel discussions were centered on the issues of supporting genocide prevention through perpetuation of remembrance days of genocide victims, particularly, the role of genocide museums, memorial sites and institutes in the fight against the crime of genocide. The new approaches to education and art about genocide and its prevention, training projects and public education strategies, including the use of social media were the focus of attention of eminent trainers, media activists, leaders of NGOs and university professors, who looked into how the education can best be leveraged to have a lasting effect on the society.
GENOCIDE PREVENTION THROUGH EDUCATION

AGAINST THE CRIME OF GENOCIDE
The Camp’s 3 Periods

- From September 1939 to June 1940:
  Internment camp for “enemy subjects”
- From July 1940 to July 1942:
  Internment and transit camp for “undesirables foreigners”
- August and September 1942:
  2,000 Jews deported to Auschwitz via Drancy
The Global Forum also addressed the issues of combating genocide denial and propaganda of xenophobia, discussed how genocide histories are erased from, trivialized and denied in textbooks and curricula across the world, how the narrative of denialism changes through time.

Special attention was paid to making steps in raising awareness of younger generation on countering xenophobia, hatred and intolerance, thus contributing to the preventing measures against the formation of genocidal environment.

The Global Forum brought together representatives of the United Nations, namely, the Special Adviser of the UN Secretary General on Prevention of Genocide Adama Dieng and the UN Special Rapporteur on Minority Issues Fernand de Varennes, the OSCE, the Global Action Against Mass Atrocity Crimes (GAAMAC) and other international organizations, as well as prominent experts in the fields of genocide prevention and international criminal law from Germany, Poland, the United States, Ireland, the United Kingdom, Australia, Argentina, Japan, Canada, Bangladesh, and Rwanda.

DOWNLOAD THE PUBLICATION IN THE PDF FORMAT
14 June 1940 is considered the date when German Nazi Auschwitz concentration and extermination camp began its functioning. On that day, the Germans deported from the prison in Tarnów to the Auschwitz camp the group of 728 Poles. Among them were veterans of the September 1939 campaign, members of underground independence groups, high-school and university students, and a small group of Polish Jews. They received numbers 31 to 758.
Due to the unprecedented circumstances of the state of epidemic threat caused by the coronavirus pandemic, events commemorating the anniversary had a different character than initially planned. Commemorative events on a mass scale were impossible to organize. Many of the scheduled events, in particular exhibitions, have been held online. They can be found on the special website: 14june.auschwitz.org.

The Museum has prepared for instance:

**ONLINE LECTURE**: "Beginnings of Auschwitz", Dr. Piotr Setkiewicz, the head of the Research Center of the Auschwitz Memorial

**ONLINE LESSON**: "Poles at Auschwitz"

**ONLINE EXHIBITION**: ‘I have been in the concentration camp Auschwitz since 14 June…’ Camp letters of Tadeusz Korczowski.

Symbolical commemoration took place at the Memorial on 14 June.

Two Auschwitz survivors took place in the events commemorating the anniversary together with the delegation of Polish authorities, headed by the President of Poland Andrzej Duda.

Polish national anthem was played in front of Block 11. Wreaths were laid under the Death Wall in the courtyard of Block 11 by the President of the Republic of Poland, Elżbieta Witek, Marshal of the Sejm, Prof. Piotr Gliński, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Culture and National Heritage as well as Dr. Piotr M. A. Cywiński, Director of the Memorial.

"In memory of the visit on the National Day of Remembrance of German Nazi Concentration and Extermination Camps Victims; to commemorate the 80th anniversary of the first mass transport of Poles to KL Auschwitz; paying tribute to the memory of the victims, incarcerated, murdered and tortured by the functionaries of Hitler’s Third Reich; with appreciation and gratitude for directors and staff of the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum in Oświęcim – the custodians and guardians of this place, which constitutes a shocking symbol of crime, terror and extermination; deeply convinced that the truth about what had happened here during the Second World War will remain a warning for the entire mankind forever. No more war, hatred, racism”, President Andrzej Duda wrote in the Museum memory book.

In his special speech on the occasion of the anniversary, minister Piotr Gliński announced the creation of the New Polish Exhibition at the Auschwitz Memorial, to be financed from the funds of the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage: “Advanced works are already carried out in order for the exhibition to be ready within the next three years. It will constitute a multidimensional, modern presentation, so important for spreading the knowledge and continuing commemoration activities and so important for the families of Polish victims, still bearing the trauma of their ancestors”.
A DOCUMENTARY "THE FIRST TRANSPORT TO AUSCHWITZ. POST SCRIPTUM"
PRODUCED BY THE AUSCHWITZ MEMORIAL AND POLISH TELEVISION IN CRACOW
FOR THE 14 JULY ANNIVERSARY.

ONLINE LECTURE BY DR. PIOTR SETKIEWICZ, HEAD OF THE RESEARCH CENTER OF THE
AUSCHWITZ MEMORIAL ABOUT THE BEGINNINGS OF THE AUSCHWITZ CAMP.
Each subsequent anniversary of the arrival of the first transport of Polish political prisoners to KL Auschwitz encourages to review the state of historical research on the origins of the camp. It could seem that after 80 years, there are no new facts to discover or even complement; however, ...

It is first of all necessary to emphasize that relatively few documents referring to the origins of KL Auschwitz were preserved. Some of them come from German police agendas from the Silesia region, other are connected directly with the construction department of the camp. Basing on these documents, the book by research staff from the Research Center of the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum: Igor Bartosik, Łukasz Martyniak and Piotr Setkiewicz, entitled “The Origins of the Auschwitz Camp in the Light of Source Materials”, was published in 2018.

Thanks to the analysis of several thousand archival documents, with a lot of them unknown so far (including about a hundred discussed in details in the abovementioned publication), several new pieces of crucial information were found, referring to camp origins, decision-making processes leading to its establishment, its initial designs as well as extension stages in the first dozen months of its functioning. What is more, the already present and deeply rooted thinking patterns concerning the early days of KL Auschwitz were verified, present in the media as well as common historical consciousness. The most important ones have been presented below.

1) The Auschwitz camp was established within the premises of former Austrian army barracks

It is not true. In 1916, the government of Austria-Hungary had decided to build an emigration station in the vicinity of Auschwitz, as Oświęcim was called in this way in the period of the Partitions of Poland. This undertaking was connected with migrations due to the First World War. The station had been supposed to consist of brick and mortar buildings as well as wooden residential barracks. The entire infrastructure was complemented with such facilities as a bakery, a hospital, a bath, a chapel and so called "job market" buildings, where manufacturers had the opportunity to gain new workers. Borders moved in connection with the end of warfare as well as the creation of independent Polish state resulted in the idea of an emigration station becoming outdated, but the constructed facilities were relatively quickly used as residential area for Poles – refugees from the Zaolzie region, which in 1919 became the territory of military dispute between the newly revived Polish state and Czechoslovakia. Some facilities were transformed into Polish Army barracks in the early 1920s, and other adapted for the purposes of the factory forming part of Polish Tobacco Monopoly.
2) KL Auschwitz was established having in mind convenient railway connections with other parts of Europe and its location in the delta of the Soła and Vistula rivers was supposed to constitute natural barrier ensuring more efficient isolation of the camp.

At the decision-making stage leading to the establishment of a new concentration camp, only two factors were generally taken into consideration. The first of them consisted in the already existing infrastructure, which could be relatively quickly adapted to the needs of a new camp. The second factor consisted in convenient railway connection ensuring easy transport of prisoners as well as providing the camp with food, fuel, construction materials etc. At the decision-making stage, two locations were generally considered for the establishment of the central camp for conquered Polish territories. Auschwitz was the first of them and Stutthof, situated to the east from Gdańsk, the second. Without taking into account internal disputes between the staff of Concentration Camp Inspector Richard Glucks, Head of the Main Security Office of the Reich Reinhard Heydrich as well as senior SS and Police commanders for the Silesia and Gdańsk regions, the factor that made Reihsfuhrer SS Heinrich Himmler resign from Sztutowo consisted in the lack of convenient communication (the transport of prisoners from the railway station in Gdańsk to the camp by buses or optionally narrow-gauge railway was considered here). Nonetheless, at that time the fact of locating the camp in Auschwitz had nothing in common with a convenient railway connection in view of future deportations of prisoners from the conquered European countries, which took place by mid-1941. At that stage, the camp was intended exclusively for so called “citizens of former Polish state”. It is also an error to claim that the location of the camp in the delta of the Vistula and Soła rivers was intentional, as it created better isolation conditions. The rivers mentioned above had substantial influence only in the context of the creation of so called Camp Interest Zone, which took place only in late 1940. Upon Himmler’s order, agricultural experimental station for the conquered Eastern territories was supposed to be established. According to initial assumptions, the isolation of KL Auschwitz from the external world was to be ensured by a high wall surrounding the entire camp complex as well as additionally, barbed wire fencing.
3) Reichsführer SS Heinrich Himmler gave the order to establish the camp in April 1940

From the very first days of the war, German SS Operation Groups – so called SS-Einsatzgruppen subordinated to Sicherheitspolizei and Sicherheitsdienst, with the support of so called Selbstschutz units and Freikorps consisting of the members of diversion formations were conducting intense extermination actions aimed in particular against the Poles, known among German intelligence for their patriotic, national and pro-state attitudes.

What is more, an extensive wave of arrests by Gestapo in the autumn of 1939 resulted in extreme overcrowding of prisons and detention centres. Transports directed by the German to camps located in the middle of the Reich would not solve the problem either, as they also quickly became overcrowded. The situation resulted in the outbreak of infectious diseases and high mortality rate among prisoners.

Thus, already in late 1939, former area of the colony of barracks and former Polish Army facilities in Auschwitz (Oświęcim returned to this name from the period of Partitions after the annexation of Western Polish territories to Germany in October 1939) became the subject of interest of Gruppenfuhrer Erich von dem Bach – Zelewski, Higher Commander of SS and the Police in Wroclaw. By the intermediary of Arpad Wigand, his subordinate, first assumptions relating to the future camp were made. According to them, it was supposed to be treated as a concentration camp, but with the character of a gathering and quarantine area before further deportation of the arrested to other concentration camps inside Germany. Reports developed as a result of the review of Auschwitz premises in January and February 1940 revealed that the place was accepted as “appropriate for a concentration camp”; it was only necessary to remove some technical deficiencies.

The only problem left consisted in formal takeover of the area from Wehrmacht, under whose administration it remained from September 1939, when the camp for POWs, Polish soldiers taken into captivity during the September Campaign, was established. Negotiations were simultaneously carried out with German Railway of the Reich in connection with leasing railway sidings in the vicinity of the camp. Finally, at the turn of March and April, formalities were completed and on April 8th 1940, General Hans Halm, on behalf of the military side, handed the territory of former Polish Army barracks in Auschwitz over to SS. Even if the actual decision on the establishment of the camp was made in the early 1940, its formal creation can be dated as of the first half of April. The completion of all formalities automatically opened the way to assign by the SS Main Budget and Construction Office on April 15th 1940 the amount of 2 million Marks for the extension of the camp and a week later, to inaugurate the activity of so called SS Construction Department within its premises.
4) The proximity of industrial plants was decisive for the location of the camp in the Upper Silesia region

Upper Silesian industry had no influence on the location of the camp whatsoever. Both at the moment of making the decision on establishing KL Auschwitz as well as for the first months of its functioning, no concept was developed for employing the prisoners incarcerated within its premises, even if it was supposed to constitute the biggest of all existing camps.

Prisoners from the first transports were used mainly for different works aimed at preparing camp infrastructure for the arrival of new prisoners. Their small part found employment during the creation of the SS DAW (Deutsche Ausruestungswerke – German Equipment Plant) concern in the area adjacent to the camp as well as during gravel extraction.

Mass employment of KL Auschwitz prisoners by German industrial concerns and companies from Upper Silesia region as well as in the established Camp Agricultural Farms crystalized only in the later period and was connected with constantly changing economic and military condition of the Third Reich.

5) Auschwitz became the biggest concentration camp only when the extermination of Jews began

First designs of KL Auschwitz were developed after the local vision conducted on April 18th-19th 1940 with the participation of Rudolf Höss, at that time probably already unofficially appointed camp commandant, Friedrich Seidler, delegate of Concentration Camps Inspectorate and August Schlachter, Head of the newly established Construction Department of KL Auschwitz. The area on which the camp was supposed to be established was impressive taking into consideration the reality at that time. While the already existing Dachau or Sachsenhausen camps had the surface of ca. 10-12 hectares, the surface of Auschwitz was supposed to be nearly three times bigger.

Camp structure was supposed to be based on several dozen brick and mortar buildings, including 4 large-volume ones and several dozen wooden barracks. Such surface was not a coincidence. KL Auschwitz was planned as the biggest camp taking into consideration not only its territory, but also the number of incarcerated prisoners. Already in May 1940, first calculations referring to the capacity of 30 000 prisoners were made.
Finally, such number became legitimate upon the ordinance of Richard Gluck as of June 1st 1940.

A reference point may be constituted here by the fact that upon the outbreak of the war, in September 1939, about 20,000 prisoners were in total incarcerated in all concentration camps in Germany. As a result of important organizational difficulties as well as material deficiencies, adjustments to initial plans from April 1940 were made in the summer of that year.

Finally, camp fencing (planned as temporary), was constructed around 20 former brick and mortar barracks. In addition, in 14 single-level objects, next floors began to be constructed. According to the initial plan, this limited zone was supposed to accommodate 10,000 prisoners; in reality, there were usually nearly two times more of them crowded within this space.

The aimed capacity of 30,000 prisoners was never abandoned. All activities conducted basing on revised plans were always based on the initially estimated camp size, or it was even extended (for example the plan from the spring 1942 assumed that as many as 50 thousand prisoners could be incarcerated in the camp).

6) Initially, Auschwitz was a typical concentration camp

Yes, but from the very beginning, high mortality rate of prisoners was assumed. Its establishment coincides with the A-B action conducted by German police forces, assuming further extermination among others of Polish intelligentsia as well as the members of emerging underground organizations. KL Auschwitz had its role assigned in connection with this purpose. It was the first concentration camp in which the construction of stationary camp crematorium was planned from the very beginning and implemented. Decision in this matter was made already in April 1940, while the installation of the first stove began two weeks after the arrival of the first transport of Polish political prisoners from Tarnów. It was launched in mid-August and its daily cremation capacity amounted to ca. 100 corpses. It very quickly turned out to be insufficient and already in the autumn, it was decided to extend the crematorium installation with the next identical stove manufactured by the German company Topf und Soehne from Erfurt. It can thus be assumed that, with the size of the camp at the time, SS was able to murder and cremate the bodies of all KL Auschwitz prisoners in maximum...
LEYT. THE WINNING DESIGN OF THE COMMEMORATION OF ROMA & SINTI TRAGEDY
The Museum of Romani Culture has announced the winner of the landscape-architectural competition for the form of the future memorial in Lety dedicated to the tragic fate of the Roma and Sinti in Bohemia.

The winning design was submitted by Jan Sulzer and Lucie Vogelová from terra florida v.o.s. studio and by Jan Světlík, Vojtěch Šedý and Filip Šefl of Ateliér Světlík. Roman Černohous and Petr Karlík also worked on the design.

The jury assessed the designs according to the architectural and artistic quality of their response to the challenge posed by the competition, taking into account the perspective of how the memorial would be situated in the landscape and also the degree to which the design expresses the subject matter and processes the topic of the memorial. A crucial factor in that regard is the degree of respect shown by the design for the culture of Bohemian Roma and Sinti.

“We are very glad that we have managed to choose a design that the jury agreed on practically unanimously,” said the director of the Museum of Romani Culture, Jana Horváthová.
“The winning project was highly appreciated for its sensitive approach to the subject itself and to that of the surrounding landscape where the memorial will be situated, as well as for fulfilling the conditions of the economic suitability of the design.”

The assumed costs for building the memorial are, according to expert estimates, CZK 31.5 million [EUR 1.18 million] during the first phase of realization. The memorial will be financed by multiple sources, with most of the budget covered by the EEA and Norway Grants.

The building of the memorial is connected to the demolition of the now-defunct industrial pig farm in that location, which was bought out by the state on the basis of Decree no. 609 of the Government of the Czech Republic on 21 August 2017. Preparations to announce the tender for the demolition work have already begun and the demolition itself will begin in the second half of 2020. The opening of the new memorial to the public is planned for 2023.

Detailed information about the competition and the background materials for it are available on the competition website in Czech and English: www.newmemoriallety.com.

The „gypsy camp“ at Lety was established on the site of a former disciplinary labour camp. The camp’s capacity was increased so that it was able to take up to 600 prisoners, but that number, too, was soon exceeded, since during August 1942 over 1 100 men, women and children were interned in the camp. The camp was not equipped with the necessary sanitation and other facilities for such a large number of people. Moreover, until August 1942 only men had been imprisoned here. From August 1942 on, women and children had to live here too, in totally inadequate conditions. After the influx in August 1942, subsequent new arrivals were mostly individuals or families. The number of prisoners thus did not continue to rise, but the unsatisfactory conditions in the camp remained practically unchanged.

In all, 1 309 people were interned in the camp, of whom 326 survived their internment. A quarter of the prisoners were released or escaped. The remaining prisoners were transported to the concentration camp at Auschwitz.

Two mass transports took place. The first was a transport of „asocials“ which set out for the Auschwitz I concentration camp on the 3rd of December 1942, numbering 16 men and 78 women. The second transport marked the practical closing of the camp, since 417 prisoners were taken to the Auschwitz II - Birkenau camp. While the first transport took place on the basis of a decree on crime prevention, the second took place on the basis of Himmler’s decree from the 16th of December 1942 (link in Czech), ordering the transport of all Roma to the concentration camp at Auschwitz.

The remaining 198 prisoners were transferred to the „gypsy camp“ at Hodonín u Kunštátu or to collection camps in Prague and Pardubice. Only a few of them were released.
Over the course of a week, we received donations from over 2,200 people from all over the world amounting to over half a million Polish zloty.

‘The money collected will be fully allocated to the functioning of our institution of memory. It is very important to us in these difficult times. It is also very important for us to see that we are not left alone, that so many people see the need for their solidarity and generosity. It raises real hopes for the future,” said Museum Director Dr. Piotr M. A. Cywiński.

We are continually asking for your help and support for our mission. Donations can be made through our website donate.auschwitz.org or a direct deposit to our bank account:

IBAN: PL 29 1130 1150 0012 1268 9720 0001
Bank Gospodarstwa Krajowego (BGK S.A.)
SWIFT: GOSKPLPW

Fortunately, conservation works to preserve the authenticity of the Memorial are not at risk, as these works are done thanks to external funds from the Auschwitz-Birkenau Foundation. Due to the emergency, the Foundation decided to double its financial support in 2020.

On 16 June in Warsaw the German minister of foreign affairs Heiko Maas and the president of the Foundation and the director of the Auschwitz Memorial Dr. Piotr M. A. Cywiński signed an agreement that confirmed the declared doubling of the German support to the Auschwitz-Birkenau Foundation - from 60 to 120 million euro. The money will come from the federal donation as well as German states.

From 1 July, the site of the former German Nazi Auschwitz concentration and extermination camp will again be open to visitors. Reservations for guided tours, as well as individual entry for the period 1 July - 30 September, can now be made online at visit.auschwitz.org. The visiting regulations have been adapted to the new sanitary requirements, as ensuring the safety of visitors and employees of the Memorial is one of the most important tasks of the Museum during the ongoing pandemic.
‘We also heavily suffered from a lack of visitors, also financially. Many programmes and investments had to be cancelled or postponed to subsequent years. Many people have asked in the past whether it would not be possible to introduce paid entrance tickets since the funds raised in this way would help to achieve the museum’s great mission. Regardless of the current difficult situation, we want the entrance to the Memorial area to remain free.

However, to meet the needs of those who have supported us in the past or are willing to do this, we are introducing the so-called “pay what you want” system, in which everyone will decide for themselves if they want to enter for free, or rather make a donation. In this way, the concern for our mission can become our common cause,’ said the director of the Museum Dr. Piotr M. A. Cywiński.

Tours with an educator for individual visitors will take place in smaller groups of up to 15 people. The number of people on the site will also be minimised. Visitors will have to observe a safe interpersonal distance - both before entering the Museum and during the tour.

The same regulations governing covering of the mouth and nose apply in the premises as in entire Poland (right now face must be covered indoors). Several places on the Museum grounds have also been equipped with devices for contactless hand sanitation, and a special sanitation gate has been placed in front of the entrance.
CONFLICT OVER STREET NAMES NEAR THE FORMER SACHSENHAUSEN CAMP

Despite the massive criticism of the International Sachsenhausen Committee, associations of former camp prisoner, the international advisory board of the Memorial Foundation, the Central Council of Jews in Germany, the Memorial and over 1,000 signatories to an online petition, the city councilors of Oranienburg decided the streets in a new development area on the site of the former “Zeppelin” external command will be names after women from very different historical contexts. Only one in eight streets is to be named after a victim of the German Nazi Sachsenhausen concentration camp.

The proposal to name a street after a special camp detainee was heavily criticized. According to the context of numerous submissions and letters, the inclusion of this name is tantamount to equating different historical contexts with the victims' experiences of suffering.

Foundation Director Axel Drecoll explains: “The decision of the Oranienburg city council to not name the streets on the site of the former concentration camp external command after concentration camp prisoners deeply disappointed us. It is absolutely incomprehensible to me that it was not possible to change the list of proposals for weeks and months and despite the numerous comments, requests and protests from home and abroad. The now decided naming practice takes no account of the concerns of the victims of the concentration camp and their relatives, a clear affront, of all people, for whom the city of Oranienburg would have to take special responsibility”.

Andreas Meyer, Vice President of the International Sachsenhausen Committee, adds: “We are deeply concerned that the vast majority of city councilors have ignored the many urgent appeals from across Europe against the concealment of the site's concentration camp history and against the equation of concentration camps and special camps. In doing so, they inflict deep injuries on the survivors and their relatives, which will have a long-lasting effect and can permanently damage their relationship with the city of Oranienburg. This caused damage to the land, which could have been avoided with a little good will and willingness to talk. The fact that this was not possible is also of great concern for the future”.

On October 1, 1942, a branch of the Luftschiffbau Zeppelin GmbH Friedrichshafen, which was located in the immediate vicinity of the Sachsenhausen concentration camp on the site between Aderluch and the train tracks, went into operation.

Initially around 150 and later up to 700 prisoners from the Sachsenhausen concentration camp, supervised by around 120 civil workers, had to manufacture and repair tethered balloons with which the approach of enemy aircraft was to be prevented. A residential area with eight new streets is currently under construction on the site, the naming of which has been the subject of debate for months.
Vorstadtvillen Adelbruch

bonava.de/adelbruch
0800 870 89 89
(gültig 09–10 Uhr an Wochenenden)
The damage done by both totalitarianisms in this part of the world does not simply come down to the crimes committed; it also consists of deep destructive processes causing permanent changes in consciousness and identity; the deformation of social bonds, and the degradation of culture. Understanding these processes, studying their conditions and mutual relations, is the only way to understand the threats that violence and totalitarian dictatorship pose to humanity as a whole and nations in particular', wrote the President of the Institute Jarosław Szarek, PhD in the first edition of the Review.

The journal, whose editor-in-chief is Anna Karolina Piekarska, is dedicated to academics, opinion leaders and other interested circles, and intends to present the results of Polish research and the Central European point of view on problems of contemporary history.

‘Each issue of the journal will present a collection of interdisciplinary studies on a selected problem from the history of the former Communist bloc countries. In addition to research papers, it will include presentations of memorial sites and historical museums in Central and Eastern Europe commemorating the war, occupation, and Communist dictatorships. Discussions and reviews of historical books and papers will also be published,’ says the editorial by Anna K. Piekarska and Franciszek Dąbrowski, PhD.

The first and the second issue of ‘Institute of National Remembrance Review’ discuss the matters of politics of history and politics of memory in the countries of the former Soviet Union and of former Soviet bloc.

The first edition contains eight main articles:
- On the Historical Identity of the Estonians and the Politics of Memory in Estonia (by Toomas Hiio)
- Culture of Memory and Politics of History in Lithuania in 1989–2018 (by Alvydas Nikžentaitis)
- The Militia and the Special Services in the Contemporary Politics of History of Belarus (by Aliaksandr Laneuski)
- Between the Politics of History and Practice: Ukrainian Struggles with the Past. The Example of the Permanent Exhibition of the National Museum of the History of Ukraine in the Second World War (by Olga Gontarska)
- Politics of Memory in Independent Georgia. Selected Aspects (by Wojciech Górecki)
- History as an Apology for Totalitarianism (by Andrzej Nowak)
- The History and Politics of the Russian Federation: a War for Memory, or a War against Memory? (by Jolanta Darczewska).

The aim of the Institute of National Remembrance Review is to become a reliable source of information for English speaking readers about the recent history of Poland and Central Europe.
Politics of History
Politics of Memory
after 1989
The presentation of one of the most important remembrance institutions in the world, Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum, takes a significant place in the second issue of periodical.

The interview with the Museum’s director, Piotr M.A. Cywiński PhD, touches the matters of Museum’s functioning, financing, logistics and its place in the contemporary remembrance culture – especially considering the fact that the legally established mission of the Auschwitz Place of Memory is to keep the remains of the concentration camp “for all eternity”. The text raises awareness of a wide range of challenges surrounding the need to obtain funds, the enormity of conservation work, the fight against time and nature to preserve the camp’s remains, the millions of visits each year, its archives and efforts to educate on the Holocaust.

Fragments of the interview (full text in PDF):

**About contexts of Auschwitz:**

“Context is not self-generated, it is not neutrally definable. Every attempt to define the context will itself be a contextualisation; that’s what the adoption of a specific option will really be like. For example, one could show Auschwitz in the context of Germany’s power, in the context of the dehumanisation which was present in what’s called “both totalitarianisms”, with reference to detention camp Bereza Kartuska (just because some inmates were Communists and were imprisoned there), or in terms of failing to deal with the acceptance of homosexuality in Europe—and all of these visions are contextualisations, generally speaking—aimed at eliminating potential opponents. And let’s agree: each of these contexts is a part of the truth. There’s no lie in them. But showing Auschwitz from one single viewpoint would be the creation of a new, false order.”

Anna Karolina Piaskowska (AKP):

At the beginning of our conversation, let’s think about what distinguishes Auschwitz from other memorial institutions.

Franciszek Dąbrowski (FD): Let’s define the difference between museums as places of memory and classical historical museums.

Dr. Piotr M.A. Cywiński (PC): First, while we’re defining the concepts, we need to clearly point out that the very elegant, even quite placid-sounding term “place of memory” (Gedenkstätte, memorial) is actually a synonym for “place of murder”. However, “place of murder” sounds terrible, and people are instinctively reluctant to use such a term. So names like “places of memory” are in fact an attempt to avoid calling a spade a spade. And inevitably, the activity to which a classic historical museum is named doesn’t necessarily coincide with what is fitting for a place of murder.

Any historical museum presents a particular history, from a certain angle, for a selected audience. So out of necessity, there is some interference: they want to enhance some elements of the story, or highlight something special when conveying it... And that doesn’t mean that it’s appropriate to make any narrative priorities in a place of murder. In the case of Auschwitz, we are dealing with a place of a special kind of murder—mass murder, abundant and refined, the murder of countless people who were innocent, because they were not tried by a court which sentenced them to such a martyr’s death. Among the multitude of the innocents at Auschwitz were Polish Army
About the challenges:
“This place exists. If the institution of the museum was founded, that was done so in order for this place to exist. And this ontology is something quite essential, although it defies the logic of time, because some places have been smoothed away into nothing. There are not many historical sites of murders; all of them disappear after some time. So if we want to be in any way responsible for this repository, then above all we have to fight its tendency to disappear. After all, this is a process that begins with the disappearance of the historical substance itself, for example, by the contamination of the landscape. Although these are very complex issues, they are somehow justified, that is, they are natural and normal. And it’s endurance, existence, that is absolutely the top priority. Everything else can be up for discussion.”

About the Auschwitz-Birkenau Foundation:
“There’s no other project in the world, no such place defined as important, a UNESCO World Heritage site etc., which has such a fund behind it; of international provenance, inviolable, secure, unthreatened by any political or other movements. The Foundation is such a good solution because it is strongly independent, and secondly, it is strongly definable in its statutes. Everything else can be easily changed—any law can be replaced by voting through another one on any evening; but statutory changes are much harder—they require consultation, collective decisions and so on. As guarantees of security, we listed even more guarantees: any changes to the foundation’s statutory aims must be communicated to all the donor states to the fund, that’s 40 different governments”.

About the metaphysics of his mission:
“What in my opinion is the limit? It’s metaphysical in nature. I’m sorry that I’m resorting to an answer that eludes political discourse, but after living for as long as possible, I will die sometime, and I will knock on those doors, and I will come (I hope) through that gate; and there, I suspect, that 1.3 million very curious people will be waiting and will look me straight in the eye. Why? Because in some way I’m responsible for the memory of them, and for making some kind of sense out of the senselessness which they encountered. They will be curious at my coming and, apart from my immediate family, they will probably be the first natural people whom I will meet there. I’d love to be able to meet the gaze of those 1.3 million people, that is, not to lower my eyes with shame, because that will be the most important final settlement.”

The interview is complemented with paper concerning the current structure and activities of the Museum. It describes the activities, structures and tasks of the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum, one of the most important remembrance institutions and the most important Holocaust Memorial in Poland. The short outline of the camp’s wartime history is followed by sections concerning the post-war site’s use and commemoration, the forming of the Museum, concepts of its shape, and contemporary challenges to its activities. The selected Museum’s structures were discussed: the archives, exhibitions, research, collections, conservation and visitor services departments.