76. ROCZNICA
WYZWOLENIA AUSCHWITZ

76th ANNIVERSARY
OF THE LIBERATION OF AUSCHWITZ
## OUR PASSIVITY IS THE GREATEST SOURCE OF VICTIMS. 76TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE LIBERATION OF AUSCHWITZ

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We invite all of you to work closely with us. We would be grateful to receive information about events, projects, publications, exhibitions, conferences or research that we should share with our readers. We also accept proposals for articles.

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Paweł Sawicki, Editor-in-Chief

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Children in the camp constituted the theme of the 76th anniversary of the liberation of the German Nazi concentration and extermination camp. Due to the coronavirus pandemic, on January 27 the events commemorating the anniversary were exceptionally held not at the Memorial Site, but online.

The main part of the ceremony was inaugurated by the speeches of two Auschwitz Survivors – Zdzisława Włodarczyk and Anita Lasker-Wallfisch.

Zdzisława Włodarczyk was born on August 21, 1933. After the outbreak of the Warsaw Uprising on August 1st 1944 her family was arrested by the Germans and deported to Auschwitz in one of the first transports to Warsaw on August 8.

'Nights were the hardest... children were crying, calling their moms while sleeping... Whining and moaning, but then, they became silent, as they knew that no one would come to caress their head... no one would touch or hug... they were dying alone. Why?', she said. 'Children were born in the camp, but they were not given the right to live as they were killed immediately. They had no names and they didn't even have their numbers. How many of these children perished? Why? Were we the enemies of the Third Reich?', former prisoner emphasized.

'I wish there were no more wars, such wars. Now the whole world is affected by the coronavirus epidemic. Isn't it a war too? People are far away from one another, children can't play together, they become nervous and will suffer trauma, too. And there is suffering. And people are dying alone. Why? The world was not careful enough', Zdzisława Włodarczyk summarized her speech.

Anita Lasker-Wallfisch was born in 1925 in Wroclaw (then Germany). She was arrested in September 1942 at the Wroclaw railway station under the pretext of heading towards France using forged documents. She was incarcerated at Auschwitz on November 29, 1943. She received the number 69388. She become a member of the female camp orchestra, where she played the cello. In the second half of the year 1944, she was transferred to the Bergen-Belsen camp, where she lived to see the end of the war.

'I arrived at these gates in late 1943 without the slightest illusions. One knew what was happening here. I was eighteen years old and expected to be turned into smoke. That I'm still alive is thanks to the absurd turns that life can take. Believe it or not, there was music in this inferno and because I could play the cello I'm still here to tell the tale,' she said.

'I appeal to you, the people so many generations after the event, do not let us down, do not allow the memory to be distorted and poisoned by the ugly resurgence of xenophobia and antisemitism,' she added. ‘Conquer our fear of what we don't know. Build bridges, talk to each other, celebrate your differences because in reality, we have more in common than separates us. Today, we are facing a new challenge, a challenge with no respect for race, colour or religion and invisible enemy. A virus without a price tag on human lives. Today let us honour the people who were
senselessly murdered here. And never, never ever forget,' Anita Lasker Wallfisch emphasized.

President of the Republic of Poland Andrzej Duda extended his honorary patronage over the events commemorating the anniversary. In his address he emphasized that thanks to modern technology we are today able to honour the memory of the victims.

'However, this year's commemoration makes us realize in a very powerful way the significance of the material evidence of the genocide as well as its horrendous reality. The crimes committed in German concentration and extermination camps were real, real people were suffering an unimaginable but genuine pain and they were really dying. They were really murdered. The suffering and the death of the Victims were, are and will remain real,' Andrzej Duda said.

'It is our obligation to preserve all material evidence, memorabilia and signs of Their existence, Their life and martyrdom to make sure that humanity never forgets about Them,' the President added.

'The authorities of the Republic of Poland are carrying out their mission of preserving the evidence of that biggest crime in human history. When the threat of the deadly disease has passed, we will once again stand in Auschwitz-Birkenau on this soil soaked with the blood of over 1 million Victims. What one can see here is an answer to oblivion, to the illusion of non-reality, to the lie of denial,' Andrzej Duda emphasized.

Then the representatives of Israel and the Russian Federation took the floor.

'Many things have changed in the years that have passed, but hatred and antisemitism are still an issue we have to face today. Antisemitism isn't just a Jewish problem. It is everyone's responsibility to fight it. Hatred, xenophobia and intolerance towards others are things that tend to spread, poisoning societies. And as we remember today, might lead to deadly results,' said Chargé d'affaires Tal Ben-Ari Yaalon.

'We must do everything in our power to make sure such horrors won't happen again... to anyone. Regardless of gender, religion, race, colour or sexual preferences. It is up to us,' she
‘6 million Jews were victims of the Nazism, with 40 percent of them being the citizens of former Soviet Union, so we do know what the pain of the Holocaust consists in. The same atrocities awaited other so-called inferior nations: Russians, Belarusians, Ukrainians, Poles, Gypsies. These plans were thwarted as a result of the victory of the anti-Nazi coalition in 1945,’ said Ambassador Sergey Andreev.

‘The memory of World War II and its victims should remain the most powerful factor of rejecting all over the world the idea of the war itself. Never again. Let the peaceful sky dominate all of us forever,’ he added. Dr. Piotr M. A. Cywiński, Director of the Auschwitz Museum, was the last speaker during the commemoration event.

‘As it is impossible to bring the victims back to life, a child-survivor would not have their childhood restored either. The childhood in the frantic world of the adults. While looking into the eyes of the youngest victims of Auschwitz, one cannot but ask about ourselves, the post-war generation. As today the children are also murdered, they are sold, abused as slaves, hungry and starved, abandoned and lonely,’ he said.

‘Never before were the people as powerful and skilful as today. Whereas we all care more about our own convenience in our world than for creating a better world for the children and the entire future,’ he added.

‘Today, where can the future be seen better than in our today’s passivity, inability to react, to give a helping hand? We delude ourselves that wars, disasters or pandemics change the world. But our passivity is the greatest source of victims. And among them, the weakest, the
most trustful and innocent – are always the children’, Piotr Cywiński emphasized.

After official presentations, prayers were said by rabbi Michael Schudrich, bishop Roman Pindel from the Roman Catholic Church, bishop Atanazy from the Polish Autocephalous Orthodox Church as well as bishop Adrian Korczago from the Evangelical-Augsburg Church.

The second part of commemorative events was devoted to a panel discussion “Influence of the war and Holocaust on shaping children’s identity”. Among its participants there were Lea Balint, Holocaust Survivor, Melissa Hacker, President of Kindertransport Association as well as Janina Rektajtis, Auschwitz Survivor. On the day of the anniversary - as a symbol of remembrance and solidarity with the Victims - the Museum Director Piotr M. A. Cywiński laid a wreath at the Death Wall in Auschwitz I and a placed a candle at the monument in Birkenau.

It is estimated that at least 232 thousand children were deported to Auschwitz, including ca. 216 thousand of Jewish origin, 11 thousand Roma, ca. 3 thousand Poles, over 1 thousand Belarusians and several hundred Russians, Ukrainians and other. In total, ca. 23 thousand children and teenagers were registered in the camp, with slightly over 700 of them liberated in Auschwitz in January 1945.

www.76auschwitz.org
76th ANNIVERSARY OF THE LIBERATION
MESSAGE
OF AUSCHWITZ SURVIVOR
ZDZISŁAWA WŁODARCZYK

Nights were the hardest... children were crying calling their moms while sleeping... Whining and moaning, but then, they became silent, as they knew than no one would come to caress their head... no one would touch or hug... they were dying alone. Why? Children were born in the camp, but they were not given the right to live as they were killed immediately. They had no names and they didn't even have their numbers.

How many of these children perished? Why? Were we the enemies of the Third Reich? People who also had their families and children. In mid-January 1945 it was here more and more often that the front was approaching. We could hear cannon shots. The Germans were destroying the archives, destroying, burning documents. We saw it. They were demolishing the crematoria.

We were waiting for freedom. We were waiting for someone to liberate us. But on January 17th we all had to wait after the roll call. It was forbidden to enter the barrack they gave us double portion of bread and we were waiting, and then, in the afternoon, when it was getting dark we were led out of the camp.

During this march, still within camp premises, an older prisoner, a functionary, rejected my brother. He said that he was unable to go, that he must stay. I wanted to inform my mom. I began to call her. A soldier jumped to me, hit me very hard in my face. I spun around and kneeled, so that he would stop beating me. And in this way I was automatically left behind. I didn't care what would happen. I jumped out of the row and ran to my brother. I didn't want him to stay alone. We stayed within camp premises. An elderly woman stayed with us, too Janeczka from Belarus. She took care of our group. There was not even this slice of bread...

Elderly prisoners, who remained in the camp were plundering warehouses. My brother brought three loaves of bread. I don't know, he got them from somebody - he said. We were sleeping on it. Dry bread... so we would melt the snow in this stove, as in these huge barracks there were those long stoves. And a furnace, I don't know how it persisted. Someone older must have been watching it... So we were melting this snow, it was our meal.

And one day, after about 10 days, on January 27, I got to know later what date it'd been, because I didn't know. The front could be seen from far away. First in white uniforms there were soldiers running. This our carer, she was an orderly prisoner, she told us not to leave, as there was the front and a stray bullet could kill us. The soldiers came, a tall officer in a cap. I remember his words. I don't remember whether he said in Polish or in Russian, but it was understandable: "Children, what are you doing here?"
It was his question. He said that the Red Cross would come and take care of us, that we were free but we shouldn't disperse, because... we could still perish. And then they brought a cauldron of tomato soup. I heard somewhere that a group of women, who also remained within the camp, was leaving, going home. I decided that we would leave with my brother. Free ourselves... as soon as possible not to stay here, as we didn't know what would happen.

So the next day, with a piece of blanket, we headed towards the town or this camp. I didn't know in which direction we were following these women. A cart gave us a lift on our way, then a lorry with soldiers took us from the road and took to Cracow to the Red Cross. But we were free.

I wish there were no more wars, such wars. Now the whole world is affected by the coronavirus epidemic. Isn't it a war too? People are far away from one another, children can't play together they become nervous and will suffer trauma, too. And there is suffering. And people are dying alone. Why? The world was not careful enough.
Thank you for inviting me to say a few words as a Survivor on this hell on Earth.

I arrived at these gates in late 1943 without the slightest illusions. One knew what was happening here. I was eighteen years old and expected to be turned into smoke. That I'm still alive is thanks to the absurd turns that life can take. Believe it or not, there was music in this inferno and because I could play the cello I'm still here to tell the tale.

Life expectancy in Auschwitz, if you were not gassed straight away, was approximately three months. I was here for nearly a year all thanks to the fact that I could play the cello. We see approach of the Russian Army. We were moved in a westernly direction to Bergen-Belsen. Miraculously, I survived there until the liberation by the British Army. When my sister and I finally arrived in England we thought naively that we will tell the world what has been happening and that will be the end of senseless murder, xenophobia and antisemitism.

We were wrong. No one asked any questions when we returned. And now we even have to witness attempts to discredit what was happening in places like Auschwitz and so many others. I appeal to you, you the people so many generations after the event: do not let us down, do not allow the memory to be distorted and poisoned by the ugly resurgence of xenophobia and antisemitism. Inform yourself of the history of the people who were sentenced to humiliation and ultimate test.

These people were just people. Human beings. Before they were categorized into nationalities or religions. By denying what was happening and poisoning ourselves with hatred, we are murdering these victims a second time over.

We must fight against history repeating itself. Honour the millions who were murdered here. Conquer our fear of what we don't know. Build bridges, talk to each other, celebrate your differences because in reality, we have more in common than separates us. Today, we are facing a new challenge, a challenge with no respect for race, colour or religion and invisible enemy. A virus without a price tag on human lives.

Today let us honour the people who were senselessly murdered here. And never, never, ever forget.

Thank you.
Honourable Survivors and Witnesses of the Extermination, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Every year, January 27 marks the Holocaust Remembrance Day. Today the memory of 6 million murdered Jews is revered by the entire international community. On this day, 76 years ago, the Auschwitz-Birkenau camp was liberated. It constitutes the most important symbol of the Extermination as it was the biggest Nazi death factory. Germans established their genocidal industry on the occupied Polish land. Here in Auschwitz-Birkenau Jews, Poles, Roma and Sinti as well as the Red Army prisoners of war perished.

It is with profound emotion and reflection that I recall last year’s commemorations at the Memorial on the grounds of the German Nazi Concentration and Extermination Camp, where the last Survivors and Holocaust Witnesses from all over the world gathered.

This year’s commemoration ceremony looks different. It is an unprecedented situation with the coronavirus pandemic preventing us from organizing a direct meeting. But it also is an important sign reminding that we must always, whatever the circumstances, fulfill our duty as witnesses to memory and guardians of the truth about the Holocaust.

We live at a time in which virtual reality coexists with the real world and sometimes even strives to replace it. Modern technology allows us to pay our respects to the Victims under current circumstances.

However, this year's commemoration makes us realize in a very powerful way the significance of the material evidence of the genocide as well as its horrendous reality. The crimes committed in German concentration and extermination camps were real, real people were suffering an unimaginable but genuine pain and they were really dying. They were really murdered. The suffering and the death of the Victims were, are and will remain real.

It is our obligation to preserve all material evidence, memorabilia and signs of Their existence, Their life and martyrdom to make sure that humanity never forgets about Them. To ensure that what happened here at Auschwitz and at other sites of German crimes will never be forgotten.
The authorities of the Republic of Poland are carrying out their mission of preserving the evidence of that biggest crime in human history. When the threat of the deadly disease has passed, we will once again stand in Auschwitz-Birkenau on this soil soaked with the blood of over 1 million Victims. What one can see here is an answer to oblivion, to the illusion of non-reality, to the lie of denial.

The remembrance and the truth of the Holocaust are going to last forever. We, the contemporary ones, will carry on and convey to future generations the message from this place: No more Auschwitz! No more genocide, hatred and racism!
76 years ago, on January 27, 1945 the Red Army liberated the Auschwitz-Birkenau camp, symbolizing the end of the most awful and horrific period humanity has ever experienced.

Among the close to one million Jews who were murdered in Auschwitz-Birkenau, were also most of my grandfather's family. As I will light candles later on today in their memory, I will think of Itzhak and David Judkowich who were just little kids, when in the spring of 1944 their childhood ended abruptly. And soon after, their lives were ended as well, in the gas chambers of the camp. As a mother, I can begin to imagine the horror of knowing what fate awaited the children and the understanding you can't do anything to save them.

As for the children themselves, even those who were fortunate enough to survive had their childhood stolen from them. The basic belief that every child is born with, that he or she is loved and safe and protected was shattered by the cruel reality of the Holocaust, affecting all of us, till this day.

Last year, we had important words of Holocaust survivor - Marian Turski, warning us all from dangers of indifference. Imagining being indifferent to the cries of children being separated from their mothers, being able to actively participate in the murder of children, or simply being aware of it and going on with your day without giving it a second thought. Can we even call those people human beings?

Luckily, not all were indifferent. Not all chose to look the other way or in same cases to actively assist the Nazis in murdering Jews. Some were willing to risk their own lives, to risk their families in order to help their Jewish neighbors, and at times even complete strangers. Simply because it was the humane thing to do. These people, who I had the honour to commemorate many times since arriving in Poland, not only saved human lives, but also the very basis of humanity itself.

Today, while commemorating the victims of the Holocaust, we must also remember those Righteous Among the Nations.

Many things have changed in the years that have passed, but hatred and antisemitism are still an issue we have to face today. Antisemitism isn't just a Jewish problem. It is everyone's responsibility to fight it. Hatred, xenophobia and intolerance towards others are things that tend to spread, poisoning societies,
and as we remember today, might lead to deadly results. It is our responsibility to remember the victims, and to remember the lesson we must all learn from the Holocaust: We must do everything in our power to make sure such horrors won't happen again... to anyone. Regardless of gender, religion, race, colour or sexual preferences. It is up to us.

Thank you.
Ladies and Gentlemen,

on the occasion of the 76th anniversary of the liberation by the Red Army, Nazi extermination camp Auschwitz-Birkenau, I would like in particular to address former prisoners of Nazi extermination and concentration camps as well as combatants who fought during World War II against Nazi Germany and their allies. For them and for all those who are fortunately still among us, and for those who passed away we are obliged to protect the memory, which needs to be preserved complete, without any exclusions or unsaid words, to protect it against distortions to the benefit of political options, to guard the honour of the heroes who are among us and who passed away, civilians who perished from the hands of the Nazis and their supporters, in order for future generations to remember about the horror of the Holocaust and extermination camps forever. In order for mankind not to turn to such madness ever again.

Today is the International Holocaust Remembrance Day. 6 million Jews were victims of the Nazism, with 40 percent of them being the citizens of former Soviet Union, so we do know what the pain of the Holocaust consists in. The same atrocities awaited other so-called inferior nations: Russians, Belarusians, Ukrainians, Poles, Gypsies. These plans were thwarted as a result of the victory of the anti-Nazi coalition in 1945. We appreciate the contribution of our allies into our joint victory. But in three quarters it was gained by the Soviet Union, when main forces of Nazi Germany were crushed on Soviet-German front, where together with the Red Army, Russians, Ukrainians, Belarusians, Tatars, Jews, Armenians, Kazakhs, Georgians, Uzbeks, Azeris, Moldovans, the representatives of dozens of other nationalities, there were two Polish armies fighting.

Our country paid enormous price for the victory. 26.5 million Soviet citizens perished, while two thirds of them were civilians, victims of bombings, occupation, camps, blockades, starvation and diseases. It is our duty to remember about the victims.

To be proud of the victory is our unquestionable right. Those offending the memory of our ancestors, who crushed fascism, will never be accepted by us. Let nobody have any illusions.

Last year, when the 75th anniversary of the victory and of the end of World War II was celebrated, the world was forced to face the new challenge - the coronavirus pandemic, that reminded us all of human fragility, of the necessity to unite the efforts to prevent both new as well as old threats.

The invention of vaccines against coronavirus, is the source of hope for fighting the pandemic. While, one should remain worried about many countries where the immunity to the recurrence of Nazi principles, irresponsibility, temptation of war disputes is still alive. The memory of World War II and its victims should remain the most powerful factor of rejecting all over the world the idea of the war itself. Never again. Let the peaceful sky dominate all of us forever.

Thank you.
There were also children in the camp. They were murdered and were dying. The children.

Full of innocence, trust, willingness and dreams.

Little Jewish and Roma children, Polish children from the Zamość region, Belarusian children from the Grodno region, Children brought from Warsaw during the Uprising...

Children were also born in the camp. Instead of coming to this world, their lives would come to their end here.

Over two hundred thousand children-victims. A few hundred survivors.

As it is impossible to bring the victims back to life, a child-survivor would not have their childhood restored either. The childhood in the frantic world of the adults.

While looking into the eyes of the youngest victims of Auschwitz, one cannot but ask about ourselves, the post-war generation.

As today the children are also murdered, they are sold, abused as slaves, hungry and starved, abandoned and lonely! So why do we feel so distant from the era of the camps?

Never before were the people as powerful and skilful as today.

Whereas we all care more about our own convenience in our world than for creating a better world for the children and the entire future.

We want the children to respect other people... But do we respect their opinions? We want the children to trust others... But are we able to trust them? We want the children to behave responsibly... But don’t we disregard their problems? We want the children to grow up being loved... But do we make them feel that we love them? We want them to be able to react to evil... And we do almost nothing in front of their eyes!

Janusz Korczak used to warn: “We cannot leave the world as it is!”

The future is not what will come someday, later, on its own! It is already here, already alive and developing in our intentions, in our choices and in our indifference.

Today, where can the future be seen better than in our today’s passivity, inability to react, to give a helping hand?

We delude ourselves that wars, disasters or pandemics change the world. But our passivity is the greatest source of victims. And among them, the weakest, the most trustful and innocent.
ONLINE DEBATE
THE INFLUENCE OF WAR AND THE HOLOCAUST ON THE FORMATION OF A CHILD'S IDENTITY

PARTICIPANTS
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Melissa Hacker - President of Kindertransport Association
Janina Reklajtis - Auschwitz Survivor

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