78TH ANNIVERSARY OF LIQUIDATION OF THE ROMA CAMP IN AUSCHWITZ

‘REMEMBER. 23 AUGUST’ RECALLS VICTIMS OF TOTALITARIANISMS

DOCUMENTARY "HIS NAME IS MY NAME"

PRIZE FOR A BOOK FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH

STONES LAID IN BELGRADE TO COMMEMORATE HOLOCAUST VICTIMS

INSTAGRAM  YAD VASHEM  STUMBLING
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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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During the night from August 2nd to 3rd 1944 the Germans liquidated so called family camp for the Gypsies (Zigeunerfamilienlager) within Auschwitz II-Birkenau. At the time they murdered in gas chambers about 4.3 thousand children, women and men, last Roma prisoners of the camp.

Helena Dalli, EU Commissionaire for Equality, said in her address to all those gathered within the premises of the former Auschwitz II-Birkenau camp, in front of the monument dedicated to Roma victims that today, we are all honoring the memory of the Roma deprived of their right to live during WW2: "We are commemorating the influence that this historical fact is still having on the Survivors, as well as Roma communities and its subsequent members. This occasion has a sobering effect, as we are surrounded by the evidence of the most inhuman period in the history of Europe. We cannot let the extermination perpetrated on the Roma be forgotten".

"Our message has to remain clear: hatred and anti-Gypsy attitude constitute a fatal combination that may once again lead to unimaginable tragedies if we fail to act. [...] May the commemoration of this day open our eyes and let us understand better the extermination perpetrated on the Roma", Helena Dalli called.

Christian Pfeil, a Sinti whose family originated from Trier, while he was born in Lublin in 1944, addressed all those gathered. As he recalled, he was many time told that it was a miracle that he survived, because many members of his family were exterminated: “When I come to Auschwitz, I think most of all about the fate shared by my great-uncle’s children murdered here”, he said. He also addressed the young not to lose their courage to defend democracy and oppose anti-Gypsyism, anti-Semitism and racism.

Łukasz Kmita, Voivode of Lesser Poland, read the letter addressed by Prime Minister of the Republic of Poland Mateusz Morawiecki to ceremony participants. The head of Polish government recalled in it that the Roma have been living on the Polish land for over 600 years. “These are the centuries of the shaping of Roma identity, caring for their rich tradition and unique customs. It is the period of co-existence of our nations. Holocaust of the Roma constitutes a tragic chapter in this heritage that remained forgotten for decades”, Prime Minister wrote.

"Bowing our heads over the ashes of those murdered we undertake the obligation that we shall make every effort possible in order for their memory not to remain only a ritual”, Mateusz Morawiecki emphasized in his letter.

Roman Kwiatkowski, President of the Roma Association in Poland, said: “We owe our survival to the defeat of the German Nazi war machine to allied forces, but also to human solidarity and a great will to exist shared by our sisters and brothers. The Roma survived, but unfortunately, the ideologies that, in the name of one nation’s superiority over the
name of one nation’s superiority over the other, were not forgotten, they would not refrain from terror and crime.

Referring to the Russian war in Ukraine he said: "A year ago, I would not have imagined that next time, we would meet in the shadow of the war. Unfortunately, in the name of an unimaginable lust for power, feeling of supremacy, ideology of hatred, the blood of innocent victims is shed on the land of our eastern neighbor. In this senseless and cruel war there are also Ukrainian Roma that fight and perish. Their mothers, wives and daughters are escaping this war, coming also here, to Poland. This period requires the entire international community as well as all of us individually to unite. The world may not surrender to the dictatorship of power. We have already learned this lesson in the past – concession leads to further unlawful claims. Holocaust would not have happened, extermination of the Roma either, if the passivity of the western world had not had made the Nazi fell unpunished", Roman Kwiatkowski emphasized.

Romani Rose, Head of the Central Council of German Sinti and Roma, referred in his speech to the symbols of current Remembrance. He emphasized that the name Auschwitz signifies not only the extermination of 500 thousand Sinti and Roma as well as six million Jews, but at the same time an unprecedented gap in civilization that made the entire Europe follow straight into the abyss.

"The achievement of open democratic society, for many years considered obvious, is being questioned more and more frequently, while anti-Semitism and anti-Gypsyism again pose a threat to human life", Romani Rose said. "When I turn my eyes several hundred kilometers to the east from the site where we have gathered today and see what is happening in Ukraine, I think that it is the place where our defeat towards the
Bodo Ramelow, President of the German Bundesrat, took the floor during the commemorative events as well: “We are here today to look this horror straight into the eyes and thus make it visible. We are here in order to pay homage to the victims and mourn them together. And we are also here, together with Survivors and younger members of their families, to honor their memory.

He emphasized that the Germans commemorate this memorial day together with the Roma: “The obligation of our societies is to recognize the victims, to tell Survivors and their descendants that something like this shall never repeat [...] Germany and other countries in which you live need you. You are an important part of our social and cultural life. You belong to us. Please, be visible”, Bodo Ramelow said.

During his speech Director of the Auschwitz Museum, Piotr Cywiński, Ph.D., referred to historical space in which commemorative events are taking place: “A while ago we were following this path, walking on uneven grass. Here, starving children used to play next to their starving mothers. 78 years ago the last of them were murdered. Why? Because of a crazy paradigm of racial purity. Today, these words resounded in Europe once again”, Cywiński said.

"A year ago we could be wondering whether history really is a teacher of life. Today such divagations are no longer possible. In face of Russia’s attack on Ukraine we all know that the points of reference remain in history. And that we need to be listening to them carefully not tomorrow, but today. Before we hear the words referring to racial purity again. Before once again, starving children play next to their starving mothers”, Museum Director warned.
The Nazi considered the Roma a “hostile element”, “genetically” prone to committing crimes and to asocial behaviors. Since 1933 they became, together with Jews, the aim of racists persecutions; first through their registration, deprivation of the right to perform certain professions, to mixed marriage, then by being directed to forced labor and finally, incarcerated at concentration camps.

After the outbreak of WW2 the decision was made to resettle German Roma to occupied Poland. German police authorities began to arrest and perform the executions of the Roma within occupied territories, including also the rear of the eastern front, where they were, together with Jews, subject to mass murders by so called Einsatzkommandos.

Upon Heinrich Himmler’s order on transporting them to Auschwitz, since 1943, Sinti and Roma mainly from Germany, Austria, Czech Republic and Poland were deported to the camp. The Germans deported to Auschwitz in total about 23 thousand Roma, with two thousand murdered without being entered into camp register. 21 thousand people were registered in the camp and 19 thousand of them perished – starved to death, due to illnesses or they were murdered in the gas chamber during the liquidation of the “Gypsy camp”.

In Block 13 within the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum, exhibition commemorating the extermination of Roma and Sinti is presented, showing the specific character of genocide perpetrated on the Roma in Nazi-occupied Europe. In former Birkenau camp, within the BIIe section, the monument commemorating Roma victims is situated.

The history of Roma victims of the camp is presented in the online lesson "The Roma in Auschwitz", one of the episodes of the podcast “On Auschwitz”, as well as 7th volume from the educational series "Voices of Memory". The websites of Google Cultural Institute also includes the exhibition “Roma in Auschwitz” prepared by the Museum.
‘REMEMBER. 23 AUGUST’ RECALLS VICTIMS OF TOTALITARIANISMS

23 August marked the European Day of Remembrance for Victims of Totalitarian Regimes proclaimed by the European Parliament in 2008. On this day in 1939, just before the outbreak of the Second World War, the Third Reich and the Soviet Union signed an agreement known as the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact. It gave rise to a tragedy for millions of people. The European Network Remembrance and Solidarity (ENRS) once again organised the international public educational campaign Remember. August 23 which brings the significance of those events closer to contemporary Europeans.

Short films which recall the individuals who experienced totalitarian violence, commemorative black ribbon pins, as well as an article on the contemporary controversy surrounding the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact by the renowned British historian Roger Moorhouse, were just some of the activities of this year’s edition of the campaign delivered by the ENRS. The ENRS’s initiative is joined by the European museums and memorial sites.

On 23 August, visitors to the Auschwitz-Birkenau Museum, the Museum of the Second World War in Gdańsk, the House of European History in Brussels, the Museum of the Occupation of Latvia in Riga and the Nation’s Memory Institute (UPN) in Bratislava received a pin with the inscription ‘Remember. August 23’.

The film spots were shown on social media and public television channels in Romania, Czechia and Poland. The three premiered films present profiles of individuals whose fates become a starting point for reflection on moral values, civic attitudes and various forms of resistance. The protagonists of the ‘Remember. August 23’ campaign teach us that it is necessary to call a lie by its name as becoming aware of the truth brings liberation (Doina Cornea). They explain that freedom can also be found in reading and imagination (Ieva Lase), and that in the pursuit of reconciliation, dialogue is key, including that about trauma (Władysław Bartoszewski).

Doina Cornei (1929-2018) from Romania had the courage to publicly oppose the bloody rule of communist dictator Nicolae Ceausescu in the 1980s. Ieva Lase (1916-2002), a Latvian translator and French teacher was imprisoned for anti-regime activities by both Nazi Germany and Soviet Union. Władysław Bartoszewski (1922-2015), a famous Polish social activist, historian and politician, a prisoner in the Auschwitz concentration camp, spent his entire life contributing to the dialogue between victims and perpetrators, supporting the reconciliation.

As part of the campaign, posters with the profiles of selected protagonists from previous years’ film spots - Kazimierz Moczar, Mala Zimetbaum and Edward Galiński - appeared on the streets of Warsaw. Thanks to QR codes, the posters referred to the short films dedicated to their stories.

In addition, an article by the British historian Roger Moorhouse in which the author analyses why Western Europe is reluctant to remember the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact was be published on ENRS website on 23rd August. The article also appeared in online editions of selected European dailies.
This year’s Remember. August 23’ campaign takes place in the shadow of the war in Ukraine, a tragedy affecting hundreds of thousands of people injured, murdered, imprisoned, deprived of their property and forced to flee by the Russian aggressor. On the day of yet another anniversary of the signing of the criminal Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, we should remember not only the millions of victims of the 20th-century totalitarianisms, but also the inhabitants of Irpin, Borodyanka, Bucha or Mariupol.
The book presents the result of many years of research by Dr. Bartosik from the Museum Research Center on the archival documentation preserved in the Memorial Archives. The compiled material constitutes the most complete reconstruction of the history of the Sonderkommando created to date. A thorough search made it possible to fill in many gaps in its history.

The study consists of an extensive historical overview, a choice of source materials, a calendar of events in the Sonderkommando, a bibliography, and a name index. The essential part of the volume is an over 100-page analysis of the history of Sonderkommando based mainly on documents created in various departments of the administration of the German Nazi concentration and extermination camp Auschwitz. Dr. Bartosik reached documents hitherto unknown or overlooked by historians dealing with the history of the Sonderkommando due to their allegedly low research value.

The author found much information in entirely unexpected places. One example is the first document published in the book, dating from April 1942, which is a record card for materials taken from a warehouse for workgroups employed at Birkenau. It contains an order for cement and lime intended for the Sonderkommando. Another interesting example is the record cards from the camp arrest in Block 11, which show the names of hitherto unknown inmates of this workgroup. Analysis of orders of the Auschwitz camp commandant's office also proved important: one contains a commendation for SS men who caught two escapees from the Sonderkommando nearby the camp.

The finding of the name "Sonderkommando" on some documents not directly related to the extermination process showed that a surprisingly large amount of data on the subject survived in the SS documentation. At the same time, that made it possible to find details of many aspects related to the fate of this group of prisoners. Where it was impossible to reconstruct specific facts, Bartosik used prisoners' accounts written down secretly in the camp and post-war testimonies.

About 1,800–2,000 prisoners were forced to work in the Sonderkommando during the camp's operation. Approximately 50–60 of them survived.

The book "Witnesses from the Pit of Hell" is available at the Memorial and in our online bookstore.
Dutch filmmaker Eline Jongsma grew up unaware that her great-grandfather was a Nazi-aligned mayor famous for his penchant for violence. Known as "Gekke Gerrit" ("Mad Gerrit), he was wiped from the family history after the war. But secrets can’t stay hidden forever.

In the animated Instagram documentary series His Name Is My Name, Jongsma and her partner Kel O’Neill unearth a history that is at once unique and universal. Equal parts detective thriller and personal essay, His Name Is My Name explores how the crimes of WWII-era perpetrators still reverberate through today’s society, shaking the foundations of our homes and our families.

“This is the story of a man named Gerrit Jongsma. It’s about his crimes, and about how those crimes have been hidden—by his family, by government policy, and by the sweep of time. He was a member of the Dutch SS and a Jew hunter whose signature damned at least one family to their deaths. And he was also my great-grandfather. But until recently, I’d never even heard his name. “ Writes Eline Jongsma.

Emmy-nominated filmmakers present the groundbreaking documentary in 10 animated chapters and an AR experience only on Instagram. Follow now, www.instagram.com/hisnamemyname.

The film is part of „House of darkness“ project, a small-scale cooperation in which three WW2 memorial centres, together with a non-profit media organisation, invite a young audience to participate in...
exploring perpetrator spaces and the question of how to incorporate a legacy of brutality and ignorance in the larger narrative of European cultural heritage.

The project is the result of a joint initiative by the former German Nazi camps and now memorial centres Falstadsenteret (Norway), Herinneringscentrum Kamp Westerbork (Netherlands) and Gedenkstätte Bergen-Belsen (Germany). The project runs to December 2023, and is co-funded by Creative Europe.

Over the past few years, the three institutions have all met with challenges in trying to incorporate ‘perpetrator spaces’ – former camp headquarters and commander houses – in their teaching and curatorial practices. The project is motivated by these challenges.

It is also motivated by an accompanying conviction that today, over 75 years after WW2 and in a time where growing nationalism and violent extremism threatens European integration, it is crucial not to keep perpetrator history and memory in the dark, risking populist voices claiming their ownership to it.
YAD VASHEM PRIZE FOR A BOOK FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH

The International School for Holocaust Studies at Yad Vashem has announced the winner of its Book Prize for an Outstanding Holocaust-related Book for Children and Youth to Maya Klinger-Cohen for her publication The Photo that Saved Us, published by Hakibbutz Hameuchad.

For decades, Yad Vashem has been awarding prizes to authors, in Israel and internationally, who excel in raising awareness in the areas of Holocaust remembrance, education and research.

The Photo that Saved Us tells the story of Moshe and Ela Mandil and their children Gavra and Irena, who lived in Yugoslavia before the outbreak of World War II. The book details the family's harrowing experiences of escaping German-occupied Yugoslavia, and how an Albanian Muslim family, the Vesilis, rescued them from the atrocities of the Holocaust. In 2004, the Vesili family was recognized by Yad Vashem as Righteous Among the Nations for their selfless and life-threatening efforts in providing shelter for the Mandils and other Jewish refugees during the Holocaust.

The judges felt that Klinger-Cohen's book "conveys educational values and brings children and youth closer to the topic of the Holocaust."

"The book was not only well written, but it also draws the reader into the subject in an unintimidating way, presenting elements of her family's rescue story as well as relatively unknown aspects of the Holocaust," stated the International School's Pedagogical Director Dr. Yael Richler Friedman. "It has great potential to touch the hearts of many young readers."

The Mandil family came from Yugoslavia, where Moshe owned a flourishing photography shop. When the Germans invaded Yugoslavia in April 1941, the family fled to the Kosovo province that was under Italian control, where the Jews were relatively protected. Towards the end of the summer of 1942 the fugitives were moved deeper into the Italian controlled area – into Albania – where the majority of the population was Muslim.

The family – Moshe and Ela Mandil and their children Gavra and Irena – settled in Tirana. As he was looking up photography shops, Mandil came upon a store owned by one of his former apprentices, Neshad Prizerini. Not only did Prizerini offer Mandil work, but he also invited the family to stay at his home.

In the photo shop Mandil met Prizerini's apprentice, 17-year-old Refik Veseli, who had been sent by his parents from their village, Kruja, to learn the trade of a photographer. After the German invasion of Albania the situation became dangerous for Jews, and Veseli suggested that the Mandils should move to his parents' home in the mountains. Veseli and the Mandils set out on a long journey by mules over rocky terrain. They took side roads, moving during the nights and hiding in caves during the days to avoid detection by the German military.

After the war, when the Mandils returned to Yugoslavia, the family went to live in Novi Sad and Moshe reopened a photography shop. They invited Refik to live with them and to continue his training as photographer. He stayed with the Mandil family until their emigration to Israel. Then, despite the distance, contact was maintained between the two families.
In 1987 Gavra Mandil wrote to Yad Vashem and told his story. He wrote that he felt an obligation in the name of all those saved in Albania to pay tribute to the Albanian people and to his rescuers in particular.

In December 1987, Yad Vashem recognized Vesel and Fatima Veseli and their son, Refik Veseli, as Righteous Among the Nations. Hamind and Xhemal Vessel were recognized on May 2004.

The prize will be officially presented to Klinger-Cohen at a ceremony in Yad Vashem in the near future.
On 5 July, in front of building No. 9 on Maršala Birjuzova Street, Belgrade saw the installation of its first Stolpersteine, or “stumbling stones.” Dedicated to Emil Dajč, Avgusta Dajč, Hilda Dajč and Hans Dajč, the stones will remind passersby of this Belgrade family, the horrors they faced during the Nazi occupation, and their murder at Staro Sajmište, the Old Fairground Camp.

Remembering the victims of the Holocaust in everyday life

The Stolpersteine are part of the largest decentralized memorial in the world dedicated to the victims of the Holocaust. Each stone honors the memory of one victim. This international global project, led by the German artist Gunter Demnig, allows for Nazi crimes to be remembered in everyday life, on the street. Placed in front of the houses where victims lived, the stones allow passersby to literally “stumble” over them, and to start thinking about the individuals who were murdered. Looking down and reading the names makes them symbolically bow to the victims of Nazi terror.

Stolpersteine installation ceremony underlines the importance of remembrance

The installation was accompanied by a formal ceremony. President of the NGO Haver Serbia, Sonja Viličić, addressed the audience. Referencing the Talmud, she opened her address by saying that a person is only forgotten once their name is forgotten. She thanked everyone present for coming and pointed out that this was a very important day for the Jewish community in Belgrade. Belgrade Stolpersteine stumbling stones Members of the Braća Baruh choir, one of the oldest Jewish choirs in the world, performed at the ceremony, after which President of the Federation of Jewish Communities of Serbia, Mr. Robert Sabadoš, and President of the Jewish Community of Belgrade, Mr. Aaron Fuchs, addressed those present.

Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany in Serbia, Thomas Schieb, said that the victims of the Holocaust must not be forgotten and that Stolpersteine were the right way to save the murdered from oblivion and to preserve their dignity.

At the end of the ceremony, the artist and project creator, Gunter Demnig, laid the stones, “planting” them on the Belgrade cobblestone pavement.

Six further stones were installed in other areas of the city: at 30 Dobračina St. for Geca Kon and Elza Kon, at 53 Gundulićev Venac St. for Matvej Ajzinberg, at 8 Solunska St. for Aleksandar Bril, and at 29 Andre Nikolića St. for Dr Simon Bril and Evgenija Bril.