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# MEMORIA

MEMORY • HISTORY • EDUCATION



**THE REFLECTION  
ON OUR OWN INDIFFERENCE.  
THE 77TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE LIBERATION OF AUSCHWITZ**

**THE UNKNOWN  
MANUSCRIPT  
FROM CHEŁMNO**

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NEW NAME  
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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.

Paweł Sawicki, Editor-in-Chief

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# THE REFLECTION ON OUR OWN INDIFFERENCE. THE 77TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE LIBERATION OF AUSCHWITZ

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The beginning of extermination at Auschwitz constituted the main theme of the 77th anniversary of liberation of the German Nazi concentration and extermination camp. Due to the coronavirus pandemic, only a small group of participants, mainly a dozen of survivors, gathered within the Memorial.

Among those who sat in the auditorium of the International Center for Education about Auschwitz and the Holocaust there was also the French delegation led by Prime Minister Jean Castex, the delegation of Polish authorities led by Wojciech Kolarski, Secretary of State at the Chancellery of the President of the Republic of Poland, as well as ambassadors of many countries. Honorary patronage over commemorative events was extended by Andrzej Duda, President of the Republic of Poland.

Marek Zając, Chairman of the Council of the Auschwitz-Birkenau Foundation, led the events and inaugurated them standing by the "Arbeit macht frei" gate. ("works make one free")

"Due to the coronavirus pandemic, most of you can see me thanks to the online connection and the media. However, invariable points of reference for us all have always been constituted by the accounts of survivors of Auschwitz and the Shoah together with this authentic site", Zając said.

"The pandemic created new challenges also in education. Here, at the Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial, we had to face a particularly complex task – how to connect the authenticity with latest technologies and online learning? As a result of cooperation between the Auschwitz-Birkenau Foundation as well as Israeli Companies AppsFlyer and Diskin, the project of remote online tour of Auschwitz is in progress, unique on a global scale", Chairman Zając said, walking through authentic post-camp premises. "Thanks

to this initiative, we are going to bring the history of Auschwitz closer to those who for various reasons would never have the opportunity to come here", he emphasized and then headed towards the ICEAH auditorium.

The main theme of this year's commemorative events was the beginning of mass extermination of Jews in gas chambers.

"In its early days, starting from June 1940, Auschwitz operated as a concentration camp mainly for Polish political prisoners. Nearly two years later, on 26 March 1942, a transport of 999 Jewish women from Slovakia arrived here. It constituted the prelude of mass extermination at Auschwitz. Several first groups of deported Jews consisted of people able to work, needed as slave labour force for the extending camp complex. However, as soon as in late April, people regarded by the Germans as unnecessary began to arrive in transports – the elderly and children. After the selection performed by SS doctors, they were immediately murdered in the gas chambers", Marek Zając said.

By the intermediary of the recording donated by the Rena's Promise Foundation and originating from the coming documentary "999. Young women from the first official Jewish transport to Auschwitz", participants of commemorative events had the opportunity to hear the voices of women from the 26 March 1942 transport who survived: Elisabeth Silberstein Bence, Judith Spielberg Mittelman and Edith Friedman Grosman.

# 77th ANNIVERSARY OF THE LIBERATION OF AUSCHWITZ

27.01.2022



We didn't even realize what is happening to us. I was sitting in a corner, and I was staring, what is happening. Some of them were screaming, crying... But nobody could really anticipate what's coming," said Elisabeth Silberstein Bence.

Bogdan Bartnikowski was born in 1932. During the Warsaw Uprising, he was expelled together with his mother from their home and found himself in the transit camp in Pruszków. On 12 August 1944 both were transported to Auschwitz. At the camp he was registered as prisoner number 192731. On 11 January 1945 Bogdan and his mother were evacuated to Berlin-Blankenburg (working commando of the Sachsenhausen camp), where his work consisted in removing rubble from the city. After the liberation he came back together with his mother to Warsaw.

"Recently, at a meeting with students from a secondary school, I was talking about our childhood camp experiences, and after a dozen or so questions about the details of life in the camp, the question came up: 'And was there a school in Birkenau?' I burst out laughing. Birkenau? A school? But after a while I thought to myself: yes, it was a school. It was a school for survival. A school, in which they wanted to make slaves out

of us, when they wanted to deprive us of any hope for life, to prepare us to march in pairs, like animals, to the gas chamber. In accordance with the purpose of this camp," said Bogdan Bartnikowski.

"There are very few of us left. There are literally just a few people in this room right now, a few children whom I remember, with whom I was first in the FKL, in the women's camp, for one day, and then in the men's camp. We still meet, we talk about our camp past. These are our personal tragic memories. Each such recollection means tearing out of ourselves those terrible experiences, but we realise that we have to talk about it. To preserve the memory of what happened here, of what totalitarianism can bring about in its drive," he added.

Halina Birenbaum was born in 1929 in Warsaw. During the war she was incarcerated in the Warsaw ghetto and then in several German concentration camps, subsequently Majdanek, where she lost her mother, Auschwitz-Birkenau, Ravensbrück as well as Neustadt-Glewe. Her father perished in Treblinka. Among all of Halina's relatives, only her brother survived the war. In 1947 she reached Israel where she got involved in her literary work.





"People who survived these ordeals remembered them forever and tried with all their might to document them for the world to preserve in human memory and warn against their recurrence as they are passing away. New generations are born and grow up for whom this history is distant and old as if it does not concern them. Especially as they are so nightmarish that one would rather run away from the sorrows and tragedies than delve into them... People want to forget, belittle, deny their existence, and falsify history! But to ignore the criminal facts of this war and Holocaust is to renew this terrible threat," she said.

"Today, I reflect with great regret that I have accomplished too little with my fervent messages from those years of war and extermination of my Jewish people from Poland and all the countries of Europe. For a long time, people were reluctant to listen, believe us and imagine for themselves until most of the survivors had departed from this world - until it became too late, and they could carry on boldly, brazenly, and unpunished with these arrogant

marches of hatred and deafening screams of "Death to Jews, death to foreigners, death to refugees!". Death! To other people. It will come. No one will be spared. No one lives forever, neither the strong nor the weak - only remembrance. It is the only eternal thing from Generation to Generation," said Halina Birenbaum.

Then the time came for Director of the Auschwitz Museum, Dr. Piotr M. A. Cywiński, to take the floor: "Meanwhile, here and now, we need to remind ourselves that the watchword "Never Again" did not originate after the war. It had already been heard in the camp. And that it was not a cry for an eternal memory but for mindfulness, a kind of motto for the future. And the times are such as we wanted and managed to create. There is still too little of this moral anxiety in our memories to make us question our all-too-frequent indifference. It is not the memory that the victims, former prisoners and survivors had in mind.

"I would therefore like to thank the Auschwitz survivors present here, and all those who are



following these commemorative events through the media and the Internet... I implore everyone to observe a moment of silence, to reflect on their responsibility, indifference and commitment. This much we owe to the victims. It is, above all, what remembrance is meant to do, today," Piotr Cywiński emphasized.

The next part of commemorative events, devoted to new technologies in the education about Auschwitz, was inaugurated by Ronald S. Lauder, Chairman of the New York Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial Foundation: "There are young people who know nothing about it. When people know nothing about the Nazis, and the gas chambers, and the horror, that's when crimes like this can be repeated. That is why people, especially young people, must come to see it for themselves. But what do we do when there is a pandemic and no one can travel? We have developed a new concept – live remote tours with live guides."

Next, Marek Zając presented one more unique tool to be applied for the purposes of education about camp history – the Auschwitz VR Project.

"Together with the Auschwitz-Birkenau Foundation and the Polish company Real Invented Studio we are developing its virtual representation from the period of World War II and the Holocaust. The project is absolutely ground-breaking in various ways. It is characterized by outstanding precision. With great diligence and attention paid to details, basing on archive documents, historical photographs, and modern scans, in cooperation with Memorial historians", he said.

"But it is crucial that, by the intermediary of this virtual space, the visitors equipped with VR goggles or watching it on 2D screens will always be assisted by guides and educators. It will never be a game or entertainment", Marek Zając emphasized.

Auschwitz survivors also referred to the role and necessity of using new technologies by the Museum in its educational activity.

"I would stress that the possibility of using electronic devices, the development of the Internet and other devices that enable interested persons to see Auschwitz virtually, so to speak, without having to come here, is significant. Not everyone can, not everyone has the strength or means to come here from the end of Europe or

even from other continents, but thanks to the development of these means and implementation of existing programmes increasingly introduced here in the Museum, they can observe... see, walk along the camp roads just like the prisoners," said Bogdan Bartnikowski.

"I want the memory and knowledge of the Holocaust to protect us from further tragedies and ensure that we successfully counter new threats in every corner of the globe. Therefore, I am filled with hope that the latest Internet technology and painstaking efforts of the Auschwitz Birkenau State Memorial Museum, Director Piotr Cywiński and his dedicated team will soon make it possible for the knowledge and memory of the Holocaust to be present in schools all over the world through live Internet transmissions," said Halina Birenbaum.

"When you walk with an online guide along the path that I walked under different conditions. I will not mince words, the path of my agony; don't think about it. Think primarily about yourselves, because the Internet is a very close and personal thing. Think about yourselves. What can I do, what should I do, so that something like this does not happen to you or me? Think of it as fate dealt out by man to his fellow man under different conditions that can, should and must be avoided. And that is the message for you," said Marian Turski.

After the speeches by survivors, prayers were said within the premises of the former Auschwitz II-Birkenau camp by rabbi Michael Schudrich, bishop Piotr Greger from the Roman Catholic Church, priestmonk Aleksander Mokriszczew from the Polish Autocephalous Orthodox Church as well as bishop Adrian Korczago from the Evangelical-Augsburg Church.

The commemoration finished with lighting candles by 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.

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# MESSAGE OF AUSCHWITZ SURVIVOR HALINA BIRENBAUM

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So many thoughts, feelings and memories spring to mind and lips today, on another anniversary of the liberation of the Auschwitz Birkenau death camp! There is still so much to share with the world, explore, and recall! The countless experiences of infinite suffering on the brink of death are already a distant, unimaginable story for new generations...

In today's world, full of current pressing problems, severe conflicts, new deadly diseases, pandemics, humanity is less and less absorbed by the Holocaust. The enormity of human lives lost, suffering in vain, torture inflicted, and the death of the innocent. Time and ignorance can efface their traces, understanding of today's threats and undertaking the necessary actions.

People who survived these ordeals remembered them forever and tried with all their might to document them for the world to preserve in human memory and warn against their recurrence are passing away. New generations are born and grow up for whom this history is distant and old as if it does not concern them. Especially as they are so nightmarish that one would rather run away from the sorrows and tragedies than delve into them... People want to forget, belittle, deny their existence, and falsify history! But to ignore the criminal facts of this war and Holocaust is to renew this terrible threat!

I watch with growing horror and pain at the noisy, unpunished marches of hatred against another, the Jews and people fleeing for refuge from the rampant terror in their countries of origin. We know all too well the screams of bloodthirsty, stupefied, hate-filled youngsters and others before Auschwitz with a chorus of "Death to the Jews!" resounding boldly again in the authorised street marches.

And in the aftermath...? Gas chambers, frightening death for millions. My family, loved ones and I were miraculously omitted but lived through it day by day over two years at

Majdanek, in Auschwitz. I could still see the fire from their bodies, breathe the suffocating smoke hanging over the entire Auschwitz camp.

The slogans meant and mean: "Death to the Jews!" Death! Death! To other people. Death at the end awaits and will take us all away because of age, accidents in normal times, increasing wonders of technology, the glories of human reason and knowledge, including genius. Death from diseases - from one such recent one with multiple mutations, with a supposedly very "noble" name: CORONA (CROWN) The international bearer of mass deaths in all countries and languages sounds the same to nationalist haters in Poland, Israel, everywhere in this human or non-human world. The death proclaimed and heralded in marches by ferocious alleged "patriots", or the silent, invisible death from a kiss, a close-up sneeze, a cough: now on a massive scale from a coronavirus with mutations...!

I was ten years old when the Germans invaded and occupied Poland in September 1939, thirteen years old when I was dragged to Auschwitz-Birkenau after being led out of the gas chamber of the Majdanek camp thanks to a malfunction. I saw masses of the powerful but arrogant army of Nazi Germany as they marched cruelly, victoriously, into the devastated and burning streets of Warsaw. For more than five years, I breathed the crimes of Nazi Germany, death. I grew up under their criminal and absolute rule, which did not spare anyone, Jews or Poles. The Jewish people were condemned and executed by the German Nazis by all possible means and under a plan of total extermination.

And after five years of this horrible murder, I saw in the "Death March" from Auschwitz to the camps in the already losing war by Germany those arrogant, powerful, "pure Aryan race" Nazi enforcers of "Death to the Jews!" wounded,





crippled in dirty bloodied bandages, fallen to the ground returning to their broken homes and families in their homeland.

It is worth knowing before you set off on these kinds of racist demonstrations, hate marches, what they end up being and what price you will have to pay for them.

In all these years since my liberation from this hell on earth, I have not stopped recounting my experience then, what I was a victim of and an eyewitness to. Throughout my long life, I have carried the image of my lost family, mother, father, brother, sister-in-law and companions of destiny in the ghetto, at Majdanek, Auschwitz, in the camps in Germany. The sight of their infinite sufferings and mass deaths is etched in my soul like the number tattooed on my arm in Auschwitz. Today, I reflect with great regret that I have accomplished too little with my fervent messages from those years of war and extermination of my Jewish people from Poland and all the countries of Europe. For a long time, people were reluctant to listen, believe us and imagine for themselves until most of the survivors had departed from this world - until it became too late, and they could carry on boldly,

brazenly, and unpunished with these arrogant marches of hatred and deafening screams of "Death to Jews, Death to foreigners, Death to refugees!!!". DEATH! To other people. It will come. No one will be spared. No one lives forever, neither the strong nor the weak - only REMEMBRANCE. It is the ONLY eternal thing from Generation to Generation.  
Birenbaum VR

I wanted and still, wish that every victim of the Shoah and the criminal machinery of hatred will remain in the memory of generations around the world. I want the memory and knowledge of the Holocaust to protect us from further tragedies and ensure that we successfully counter new threats in every corner of the globe. Therefore, I am filled with hope that the latest Internet technology and painstaking efforts of the Auschwitz Birkenau State Memorial Museum, Director Piotr Cywiński and his dedicated team will soon make it possible for the knowledge and memory of the Holocaust to be present in schools all over the world through live Internet transmissions.

Today, at 92 years old, it's excellent news for me. But above all, for humanity as a whole.

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# MESSAGE OF AUSCHWITZ SURVIVOR BOGDAN BARTNIKOWSKI

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When I found myself on the ramp in Birkenau on 12 August 1944, I was one of more than 500 Polish children deported from the Warsaw Uprising in the very first transport of civilians. On the spot, we were called "kleine Polnische banditen aus Warschau" by the SS men and camp functionaries-capos. 'Little Polish bandits from Warsaw.'

There were over 500 of us. Over 350 girls and small boys were incarcerated in the female camp, while myself and about 150 boys aged 10-14 were kept in the men's camp in Birkenau. When we once asked one of the capos who was in a good mood: "Mr. capo, after all, we are children. What have we done wrong to be here? We want to be free, to go home". His answer was... He laughed joyfully. The answer was: "Home, freedom... Do you see these chimneys? From here you can be freed through the chimneys. There is no other way from Birkenau to freedom".

Recently, at a meeting with students from a secondary school, I was talking about our childhood camp experiences. After a dozen or so questions about the details of life in the camp, the question came up: 'And was there a school in Birkenau?' I burst out laughing. Birkenau? A school? But after a while I thought to myself: yes, it was a school. It was a school for survival. A school in which they wanted to make slaves out of us, when they wanted to deprive us of any hope for life, to prepare us to march in pairs, like animals, to the gas chamber. In accordance with the purpose of this camp. Birkenau at that

time, perhaps earlier as well, was called not a Konzentrationslager, but a Vernichtungslager. An extermination camp. There is no other way out except through the chimney.

We, however, did not allow our 'teachers' – the SS men and kapos – to break us. They tried to prepare us in this school, Birkenau, for a submissive death, and if the end did not come right away, then to submissive life, working as long as there was strength left. We, as a mass, survived, we retained our human impulses, we kept our dreams of freedom in these miserable conditions, where we every day starved and froze. This allowed us to survive to the end. Our paths were different, the paths of the boys from insurgent Warsaw imprisoned in Birkenau. Some were deported, evacuated to concentration camps, such as Mauthausen, where, on the death march from Auschwitz on January 18 or 19, the boys marched in the snow, in the cold, in the wind, towards Wodzisław Śląski, where open railway cars awaited them to take them further. Some, like me, were deported to Germany, where we worked as forced labourers, clearing the ruins of the Third Reich, which was then under bombardment. Only a small group of these children lived to see liberation here on 27 January.

I remember that in December we were in sector D. Next to our Polish block, there was a block for small Jewish children. I think they were the children shown on films made by Russian cameramen after the camp's liberation. Because our





children, those who were liberated in Oświęcim, were moved to Cracow, treated there and only after a few months, when their families found them, we could return to normal life.

There are very few of us left. There are literally just a few people in this room right now, a few children whom I remember, with whom I was first in the FKL, in the women's camp, for one day, and then in the men's camp. We still meet, we

talk about our camp past. These are our tragic personal memories. Each such recollection means tearing out of ourselves those terrible experiences, but we realise that we have to talk about it. To preserve the memory of what happened here, of what totalitarianism can bring about in its drive.



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# MESSAGE OF DR PIOTR M.A. CYWIŃSKI DIRECTOR OF AUSCHWITZ MEMORIAL

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"In the end, we will not remember the words of our enemies but the silence of our friends."

These words from Martin Luther King reflect, to a large extent, the complexity of the post-war relationship between European Jews and their European homeland.

80 years ago, the mass extermination of European Jews began in Auschwitz, a concentration camp that had been in existence for two years, which at the time was mainly populated by Poles.

The Shoah knocked on the gates of Auschwitz to claim its greatest number of victims.

King's words, unfortunately, epitomise our Western attitude today.

We are so proud of the values we have developed over centuries, our philosophical and religious foundations, and our humanism and definitions of human rights. These are enough for us.

Today, we cannot incorporate these lofty ideals into social, political, international, and universal human life.

The Rohingya, the Uighurs, the hunger-stricken in Yemen, those fleeing terror, starvation or hopelessness can only attest to this.

In today's world, we are witnessing the slow end of the old ideological divisions in politics. The Left and Right are becoming increasingly less divergent. Today, a new division is increasingly visible: those who, in the spirit of universal values and humanism,

pursue a humane world, and those who tread the path of dehumanisation.

And yet, we are hardly perturbed by this either, enthralled by the beautiful sound of our fundamental values. Consequently, we slump into silence and indifference.

Meanwhile, here and now, we need to remind ourselves that the watchword "Never Again" did not originate after the war. It had already been heard in the camp. And that it was not a cry for an eternal memory but for mindfulness, a kind of motto for the future.

And the times are such as we wanted and managed to create. There is still too little of this moral anxiety in our memories to make us question our all-too-frequent indifference.

It is not the memory that the victims, former prisoners and survivors had in mind.

I would therefore like to thank the Auschwitz survivors present here, and all those who are following these commemorative events through the media and the Internet...

I implore everyone to observe a moment of silence, to reflect on their responsibility, indifference and commitment. This much we owe to the victims. It is, above all, what remembrance is meant to do, today.



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# THE UNKNOWN MANUSCRIPT FROM CHEŁMNO

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*Odezwa do naszych braci!* (The address to our brothers!) is the priceless unknown historiographical document written by the last Jewish prisoners-workers incarcerated at the German Nazi extermination camp in Chełmno (German Kulmhof) in the years 1944-1945.

The staff of the camp in Chełmno benefited from forced labour of Jewish workers during the entire period of the functioning of the facility (1941–1943, 1944–1945). The groups consisting of several dozen men, including gravediggers, artisans and order workers, shared the same fate. As direct witnesses of the crime, they made an attempt to write down, briefly and in hurry, both their personal as well as collective experience connected with incarceration and forced labour. These documents, usually consisting of small items, written down on random pieces of paper, in strict confidence and under strong feeling of danger, then hidden with great difficulty, constitute shocking records of the fate of incarcerated Jews. Until recently, only five random notes of this kind were known.

One more document was discovered in 2018, entitled *Odezwa do naszych braci!* (The address to our brothers!). Together with the attached small metal tin, it was anonymously submitted to the Museum of the former Kulmhof Extermination Camp in Chełmno nad Nerem. Its scientific analysis followed, undertaken at the conservator's workshop of the Faculty of Fine Arts, Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń. It confirmed the authenticity of the manuscript, making it possible to present its form and content. Conservation and restoration works that followed, carried out under the supervision of conservator Agnieszka Zięba, constituted a compromise between preserving legible traces of the history of this document – dramatic circumstances of its creation, hiding and unclear fate after WW2, and protecting it against complete destruction.

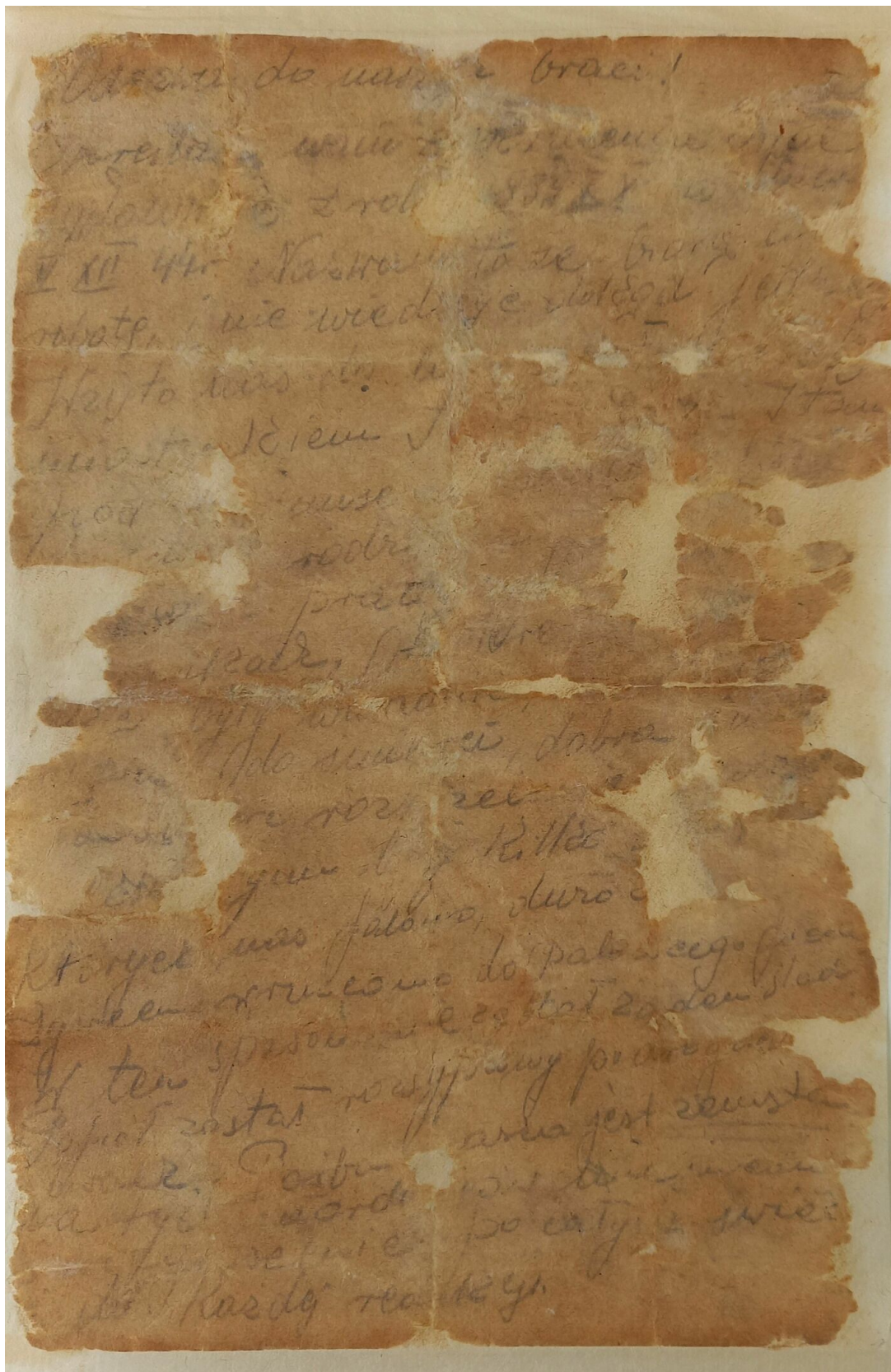
It is a one-sided manuscript, written with

the use of a graphite pencil, on paper substrate with the dimensions of 14 x 20 cm. The paper is light brown, it represents the characteristics of low-quality paper and advanced ageing processes. Upon its forwarding for conservation the manuscript was folded once, with its text exposed to the outside, to the format 14 x 10 cm. The analysis unveiled that originally, it was for a long time folded four times to form a small cube and in this way stored for a long time in a metal tin, most probably constituting its hiding place.

Due to important deficiencies of the writing material as well as nearly illegible text, it was possible to decipher exclusively some fragments of the text that consists of 23 rows written without margins. The content is similar to *Odezwa do naszego przyszłego narodu* (The address to our future nation), one of the already known documents prepared by the inmates. The title of the discovered memo suggests its similar content. Both texts are dated December 1st 1944. It is possible that they were written by the same person, most probably Izrael Zygelman, one of the initiators of the document entitled *Testament ostatnich więźniów* (The testament of last prisoners), the most extensive document produced by the inmates.

This unique document, disclosed so many years after WW2, constitutes another poignant testimony of the fate of last camp prisoners who, with the use of simple words, made an attempt to give their fate a name and describe it. Driven by a desperate need to record both personal as well as collective experience, they took over the responsibility for revealing the truth about the crime. Their words became the voice of all victims of the camp in Chełmno. The document was presented during the events





Several sentences were written in Polish, in pencil, on one side of the piece of paper with the dimensions of 14 x 20 cm.

establishing the first German extermination camp within the territory of Poland in Chełmno. Its content, together with the description of conservation works, was presented in the paper:

M. Grzanka, A. Zięba, Nazwali to, że biorą na robotę. Dokumenty osobiste więźniów niemieckiego obozu zagłady w Chełmnie,

Chełmno 2021. The artifact is included in the collections of the Museum under inventory number CH/1450.

\* Museum of the former German Kulmhof Extermination Camp in Chełmno nad Nerem, Department of the Martyrdom Museum in Żabikowo

# REMEMBER YOUR NEW NAME EXHIBITION

## Surviving the Holocaust under a False Identity

In the new Yad Vashem online exhibition, there are 14 stories of Jews who survived under assumed identities all over Europe. In Eastern Europe – Poland, Lithuania, Hungary and Ukraine; in Central and Western Europe – Germany, France and the Netherlands; and in Southern Europe and the Balkans – Italy, Greece and Croatia.

The stories are based on documents from the Yad Vashem Archives, and material from Yad Vashem's various databases and collections: personal documents, testimonies, photographs, Pages of Testimony, artworks, footage, and more. The forged documents on display in this exhibition were donated to Yad Vashem by survivors and their families, and bring to light amazing stories of survival, determination, creativity, resourcefulness, courage and sacrifice.

„I often used to wake the children in the middle of the night, to check if they remembered their new names even when half asleep. I would repeat over and over again that no one could know that we were Jewish.”

Excerpt from the memoir of Brenda Pluczenik-Schor from Krakow, who survived the Holocaust living under a false identity in Budapest together with her husband and daughters. Brenda's parents were murdered. The story of the Pluczenik-Schor family is just one of the many stories presented in this exhibition.

Throughout the Holocaust period, in the shadow of persecution at the hands of the Nazi regime, Jews tried to save themselves and their families using forged papers that provided them with false identities.

For many, this was a daily battle for survival in a hostile environment, which required resourcefulness and the ability to adjust to constantly shifting circumstances. They lived in perpetual fear of all people and places, and made every effort to make themselves invisible and to fully embrace the customs of their surroundings.

Mistakes were not an option. They memorized the Christian prayers, and were forced to renounce their religion and mother-tongue, often changing their hair color and trying to erase all signs of Jewish identity.

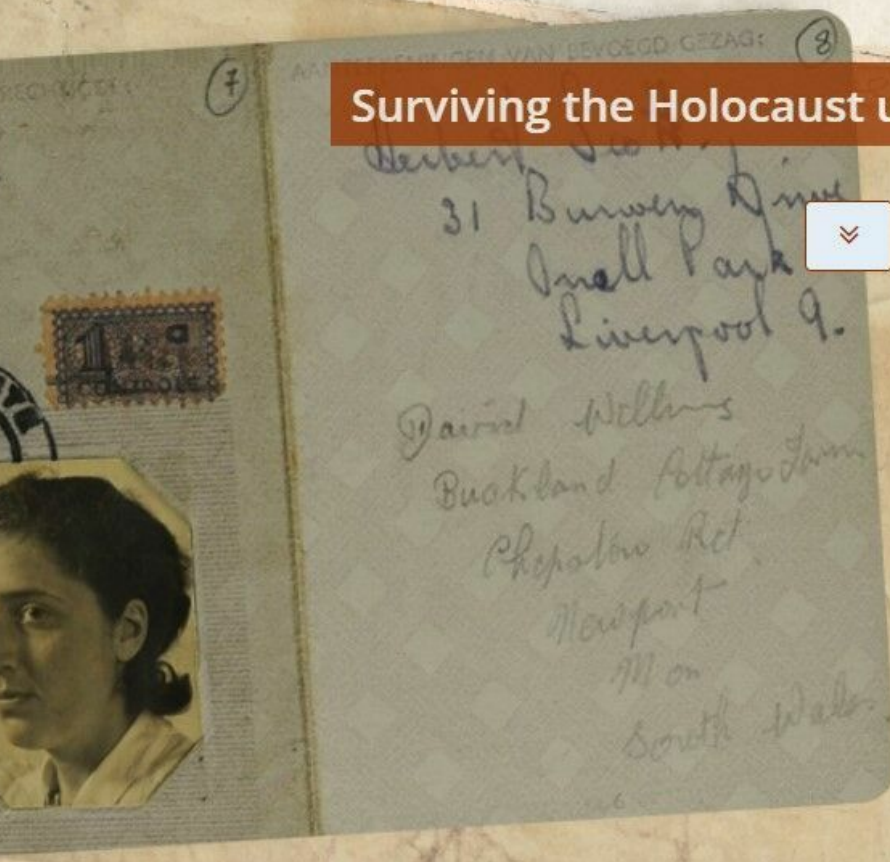
In many cases they were helped by non-Jews, some of whom were paid for their services. Others offered assistance for no monetary gain and at risk to their own lives, eventually being recognized by Yad Vashem as Righteous Among the Nations.

Jews were also helped by Jewish members of underground movements, who worked tirelessly on behalf of their brethren, finding them hiding places and food, and equipping them with forged documents including ID cards, birth certificates, food coupons and travel permits.



# "Remember Your New Name"

Surviving the Holocaust under a False Identity



[Link to the exhibition  
„Remember Your New Name“](#)



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# THE OBJECTS OF LOVE

## EXHIBITION

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An exhibition entitled The Objects of Love by Oliver Sears is currently running at Dublin Castle in Ireland. It tells the story of his Jewish family before during and after the Second World War.

Presented by The Office of Public Works in association with Holocaust Awareness Ireland this poignant exhibition tells the fate of individual lives torn asunder in Nazi-occupied Poland and beyond. Told through a curated collection of precious family objects, photographs and documents, powerful mementoes - which survived the Holocaust, Dublin based art dealer, Oliver Sears vividly brings to life this extreme edge of European history where his mother Monika and grandmother, Krysia are the beating hearts of an epic and intimate story of love, loss, and survival.

Set against images of WWII, among the objects, photographs and documents are photographs of Oliver Sears' mother, Monika aged 2 and a half in the Warsaw Ghetto, forged identity papers belonging to his grandmother Krysia (née Edyta Rozenfeld) which allowed her to live outside the ghetto for periods of the war.

Pre-war photographs of the Rozenfelds, Oliver Sears's grandparents, and their friends are among the hardest for him to look at. They depict life, love, community in their hometown of Łódź'. A time that could not conceive of a plan to eradicate them industrially and to vaporize any trace of them. By any measure, these photographs represent a time of innocence.

Among the documents on view is a witness testimony from Yad Vashem and a cache of documents, recently unearthed by Oliver from the archive of United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in

Washington, including Pawel's birth certificate, marriage certificate a sworn affidavit from Krysia to a court in Łódź' in 1946 explaining the fate of Pawel, her husband. How these documents fetched up in the USHMM remains a mystery.

Also on view is a gold powder compact. When Krysia and Monika returned to Łódź after the war, it was still a very dangerous place for Jews so, in 1947, Krysia took the decision that the family should leave. She sold her apartment for a fraction of its value, bought gold, the currency of the refugee, and had it made into a powder compact. His grandmother's whole world had been distilled into one golden square of hope.

Speaking at the opening, director Lenny Abrahamson paid tribute to curator Oliver Sears for sharing his family's story and for making the Holocaust relevant to our present. Minister Patrick O'Donovan emphasized the obligation and responsibility to speak out against hate speech and bullying and to make sure that the failures and atrocities of the past are not repeated.

As Oliver Sears poignantly summarized the exhibition: "It is the telling of individual stories that shows you how precious are the lives of strangers and how collectively we must protect them. When I look at my family, I see love love, loss, defiance and triumph but above all I hear a song for justice."

Oliver Sears, together with his wife Catherine Punch have founded Holocaust



Awareness Ireland, a new organization which aims to connect the Holocaust to contemporary culture and the politics of our times. Lenny Abrahamson and Bergen-Belsen survivor Tomi Reichental are among the advisors. Daniel Mendelsohn, author of *The Lost, The Search for 6 Million* has appeared on their Talks and Events programme.

The Objects of Love exhibition is accompanied by an audio narration by Oliver Sears and an illustrated booklet. It is free and open daily until 13 February in Dublin Castle's Bedford Hall.

"These forged wartime identity papers show a passport sized photograph of my grandmother Krysia with freshly dyed blond hair staring straight ahead. A new and necessary look to heighten her Aryan credentials, along with her acquired, nondescript Polish name and unlikely declared profession of 'typist'. How to measure the fear and desperation in those eyes, hiding from a regime programmed to turn you, your family and your culture into ash."

Extract from *The Objects of Love*, by Oliver Sears.

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# *BORIS LURIE:* *NOTHING TO DO BUT TO TRY* EXHIBITION

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The New York Museum of Jewish Heritage – A Living Memorial to the Holocaust opened a first-of-its-kind exhibition on the 20th century artist and Holocaust survivor Boris Lurie. It's the Museum's first contemporary art show.

The exhibition is centered around Lurie's earliest body of work (the paintings and drawings in his so-called "War Series"), as well as never-before-exhibited objects and ephemera from his personal archive, presenting a portrait of the artist reckoning with devastating trauma, haunting memories, and an elusive, lifelong quest for freedom. In drawing together artistic practice and historical chronicle, *Boris Lurie: Nothing To Do But To Try* is fertile new territory for the Museum of Jewish Heritage, offering a survivor's searing visual testimony within a significant art historical context.

Boris Lurie (1924– 2008) grew up in cosmopolitan Riga, Latvia in the 1930s. He was just 16 years old when Latvia was occupied by the Nazis in 1941, and he and his family were forcibly evacuated to a ghetto. Later that year, his mother, grandmother, sister, and girlfriend were murdered, alongside approximately 25,000 other Jews, in what would come to be known as the massacre at Rumbula. In the years that followed, Lurie and his father together survived several labor and concentration camps throughout Latvia, Poland, and Germany, until liberation from Buchenwald-Magdeburg.

Lurie created his "War Series" in the immediate aftermath of the war, following his service with the United States Counter Intelligence Corps and subsequent immigration to New York. In nearly 100 paintings and drawings made, with few exceptions, in 1946, the

"War Series" ostensibly contains Lurie's experiences of the war in a highly graphic, expressionist style: nightmarish camp scenes in riotous colors, laborers at work in striped uniforms, stark landscapes cut through with barbed wire, amorphous dream-like visions, and searing portraits. As suggested by their somewhat unfinished, chaotic style, as pages ripped from a notebook, Lurie considered these pictures a private catharsis, and never exhibited them in his lifetime.

Included in the exhibition is Lurie's only known self-portrait as a young man, in which he appears disembodied with a plaintive expression. There is also the exhibition's largest masterpiece—a ghostly concentration camp scene, 50 by 50 inches in scale, painted in 1971 after the original "War Series" was made.

*Nothing To Do But To Try* is the first Boris Lurie exhibition exclusively to consider the entire "War Series," alongside Lurie's original family photographs, correspondence, diary entries, and assorted ephemera, as an essential origin story for Lurie's life and work.

"The basis of my art education I obtained in a camp like Buchenwald," Lurie once wrote, alluding both to his lack of professional training and to how his traumatic experience became rich, if fraught, artistic terrain—his survival itself the ultimate creative act.



"As a person and as an artist, Boris was ingeniously creative, in the sense of both imaginative and productive.

Foregrounding his life—his biography, belongings, voluminous writings, his surroundings, even his library—in concert with his early artwork reveals a more nuanced portrait of the artist than ever before," says Guest Curator Sara

Softness. "Beyond his immensely expressive artistic talent, the exhibition really considers his devastating emotional life and how he existed in the world—all inescapably informed by his trauma."

The exhibition will run through April 29.





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