

65 (02/2023)



# MEMORIA

MEMORY • HISTORY • EDUCATION



PIOTR M. A. CYWIŃSKI

## AUSCHWITZ BAULEITUNG

DESIGNING A DEATH CAMP  
PROJEKTOWANIE OBOZU ŚMIERCI

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DIGITAL AGE

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

Our e-mail: [memoria@auschwitz.org](mailto:memoria@auschwitz.org)

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# “AUSCHWITZ BAULEITUNG. DESIGNING A DEATH CAMP.” NEW ENGLISH-POLISH PUBLICATION OF THE MUSEUM

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**“Auschwitz Bauleitung. Designing a Death Camp” is the new English-Polish publication of the Museum written by the director Dr. Piotr M. A. Cywiński. It shows a harrowing depiction of Auschwitz camp, functioning as “machine of death” and designed in great detail.**

The essence and historical background of this study is constituted by plans which were created in Auschwitz Bauleitung – construction office of the camp. This office, headed by SS men that used the labor of prisoners who were technicians by education, was engaged in designing of basically all the constructions built in the camp site.

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During the four and a half years of its existence, the Bauleitung architects prepared vast numbers of plans and maps, technical drawings, plan views and cross-sections, façade designs, models as well as furniture and interior designs, cost estimates as well as photographic documentation for the camp’s ongoing needs and future expansion. Many of the plans and designs resulted in the actual construction of the buildings, but there were also plans that were never realised or simply rejected during the war. In other cases, there were several different designs for the same building, which indicates a complex decision-making process.

‘An analysis of the plans made by the Bauleitung shows that each stage in its

creation and expansion – even taking into account decision-making inconsistencies and logistical difficulties resulting from war – was assessed, critically appraised, redesigned and finally approved at various administrative levels. All aspects of German construction engineering, including land drainage, hydrology and road construction, were used to build practically from scratch and within a relatively short space of time thousands of extremely diverse structures and installations: prison blocks and barracks, watch towers, crematoria, gas chambers, railway ramps, water supply networks, drainage ditches, model farms, vast factory halls, entire residential estates, army barracks, offices and hospitals – in short, all that was necessary for the Auschwitz camp and its numerous affiliates to function,’ Dr. Piotr Cywiński wrote.

This book contains over 130 large color scans of architectural sketches of Auschwitz, specially selected for their significance in illustrating the very conscious, conceptual way in which the camp was created and expanded. Wherever possible, they have been complemented by photographs from SS documentation files.



des Kriegsgefangene  
AUSCHWITZ  
Maßstab 1:2000

PIOTR M. A. CYWIŃSKI

# AUSCHWITZ BAULEITUNG

DESIGNING A DEATH CAMP  
PROJEKTOWANIE OBOZU ŚMIERCI

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# 3.000 JEWISH REFUGEES' FILES HAVE BEEN DIGITIZED

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Informative files on the fate of around 3,000 persecuted Jews living in Belgium in the post-war period can now be consulted online for the first time. The Arolsen Archives have made this possible by digitizing more than 53,000 documents from the Belgian National Archives.

Numerous fates of Nazi-persecuted Jews who came to Belgium after the war can now be researched in the Arolsen online archive, including, for example, the persecution of Eva Heller, who was arrested by the Nazis in Budapest in October 1944 and deported to the Dachau concentration camp. The Hungarian woman survived the ordeals of camp imprisonment and was liberated by US troops in 1945. Like many others, she decided against returning to her home country, but chose to emigrate to Western Europe.

On June 28, 1945, Eva Heller arrived at an assembly center in Namur, Belgium, from where she moved on to the Brussels area. She apparently found employment quickly as a saleswoman in a tobacco warehouse. Because of her Jewish origin, she was supported by the Association of Israelites Victims of War.

Although the administration registered her as an immigrant wishing to return to Hungary, Eva Heller apparently had other plans. In February 1946, she gave birth to a daughter. A few months later, her then 57-year-old mother Elisabet Mezei also moved to Belgium. In 1949, she and Eva submitted an application to

the Belgian branch of the International Refugee Organization (IRO) for recognition as refugees. They did not want to return to their country of origin because they were afraid of being persecuted by the communist regime. Refugee status was granted them in 1951.

The files bear the final mention that the two women left Belgium two years later – for which destination, though, is unclear. Maybe they sought their fortune beyond the Atlantic.

For the Arolsen Archives, the digitization of the approximately 3,000 files is an important step insofar as they complement already existing extensive IRO files and a plethora of documents from concentration camps in their online archive. Thanks to the cooperation with the National Archives of Belgium, researchers can now better retrace and analyze the routes taken by Jewish migrants in the period after the end of World War II. Until December 1946, the files were set up by the Belgian branch of the Intergovernmental Committee on Refugees. From 1947 on, the records were created by the International Refugee Organization (IRO).



Je soussigné déclare n'avoir  
encouru  
aucune condamnation.

*(Signature de l'étranger)*

Heller E'va

# MAPPING HOLOCAUST-RELATED SITES IN THE UK

The United Kingdom has developed the UK Holocaust Map, a new digital resource to map sites and documents relevant to the Holocaust and Nazism in Britain.

The website, developed by AJR and the Department for Levelling up, Housing and Communities (DLUCH), [www.ukholocaustmap.org.uk](http://www.ukholocaustmap.org.uk) helps communities across the country learn about their local connections to the Holocaust, Jewish refugees, and British responses to Nazism.

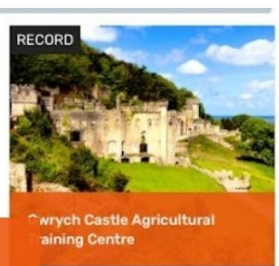
Alex Maws, Head of Educational Grants and Projects at the AJR and member of the UK delegation to the IHRA, commented:

"Recommendations for teaching and learning about the Holocaust published in 2019 by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) encourage the study of the local dimension of the Holocaust. This is perhaps much easier for teachers to accomplish in countries that were occupied by the Nazis or which collaborated. In Britain, this guidance is often overlooked, in large part because teachers themselves are not

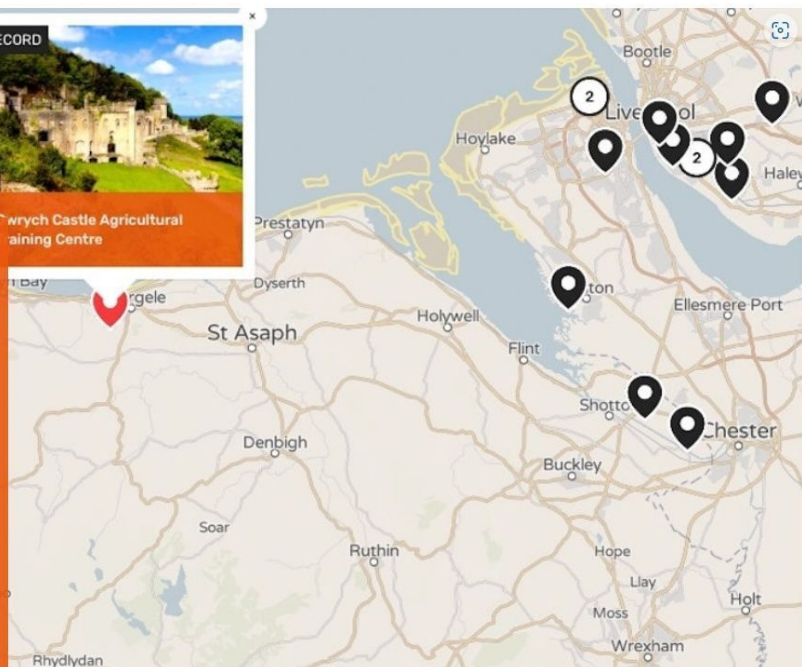
Cemaes Amlwch  
Nebo, Anglesey  
Dulas  
Llanbabo Moelfre

THE UK HOLOCAUST MAP

**Discover the UK's sites of Holocaust memory – those places relating to the victims, survivors and refugees of Nazism as well as rescuers, liberators and aid givers.**



Cwrych Castle Agricultural Training Centre







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# HITLER'S BROTHEL BY STEVE MATTHEWS. FACT-CHECKING

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If one were to rely solely on the information on the cover and in the afterword, one might think that Steve Matthews' book *Hitler's Brothel* (2020, Big Sky Publishing) would have the potential to become one of the crucial voices in the discussion on the moral condition of an individual in an extreme situation.

Originally from the UK (and having lived in Australia for more than three decades), the nearly seventy-year-old experienced author assures in the book that, as part of his extensive research, he has read tens of thousands of pages and hundreds of hours of documentary material on the Holocaust, made two visits to Poland, during which he visited the site of the former Auschwitz camp, and even had the opportunity to speak to several people who experienced the war. The research is to culminate in a fact-inspired story "about an aspect of the camp system that only a few knew existed", revealing "one of the darkest secrets of the Second World War" (as it reads in the From the Author section and on the back cover). This dark secret is, according to Matthews, the existence of the puff or camp brothel. However, he probably did not know that Tadeusz Borowski, a former Auschwitz prisoner, had already written about this kind of institution in 1946 (in his short story *U nas w Auschwitzu*). The book *We Were in Auschwitz*, in which Borowski's text appeared, was then published in Munich with an edition of 10,000 copies. Former female prisoners, among others, Seweryna Szmaglewska in her memoirs *Dymy nad Birkenau*, first published in 1945 (the book was also translated into English), and Zofia Kossak in her book *Z otchłani* (*From the Abyss*), which appeared in print in 1946, also wrote about the existence of the camp puff. On the other hand, since the end of the last century, many scientific studies have been published on the subject (for example: Christa Schikorra, *Prostitution weiblicher Häftlinge als Zwangsarbeit*; or Robert Sommer, *Die Häftlingsbordelle im KZ-*

*Komplex Auschwitz-Birkenau*).

In claiming, therefore, that the existence of the camp puff was a secret kept for years, Matthews is, in effect, either exposing his ignorance and lack of a deeper understanding of classic camp literature or seeking to sensationalise it to attract the reader's attention. Indeed, it is significant that the book - published in 2020 in Australia and therefore intended for a reader unfamiliar with the symbolism of Auschwitz - bears the scandalous title: *Hitler's Brothel*.

By asserting that he has done extensive research on the subject, the author suggests he has some expertise and a broader-than-average competence to speak on historical issues. In reality, however, Matthews' book did not only fail to provide any revealing findings about the history of Auschwitz or anything new about the existence of the camp's brothel, but in both areas, failed to provide anything at all that was consistent with, or at least close to, the historical truth. The novel is a fabrication from beginning to end, based solely on the author's imagination, stereotypes and even prejudices. It contains so much historical rubbish, so obvious even to the layman that it is difficult to understand why the Polish publisher included information on the cover suggesting that the events it describes are true. The historical realities of the Second World War, the Holocaust and Auschwitz itself, painted in the book and intended as a backdrop to the narrative, reveal the author's complete lack of knowledge in all possible areas: geographically, geopolitically, chronologically and finally, about the social and psychological



process and not a phenomenon that happened overnight. In January 1940, the gas chambers were not in existence yet, and no one at the time even imagined the direction the plan for the "final solution to the Jewish question" would take.

The picture of the various groups of prisoners in the book is highly simplistic, and the author uses well-established, sometimes very pernicious stereotypes in describing them. This is how, for example, he portrays the Jews as entirely passive in the face of the Holocaust, incapable of undertaking any self-defence themselves. An extreme example of the construction of such an image is the utterly untrue story of the revolt of the Sonderkommando members in KL Auschwitz presented in the book. The reader learns from it, among other things, that it was an initiative of the Poles, members of the off-camp conspiracy, developed as early as January 1940, which is an absurd claim from a historical point of view.

In presenting a vision of history that the revolt of the members of the Sonderkommando was, from the beginning, the idea of the Polish underground - which not only devised the plan for the uprising and

equipped the prisoners with weapons but also conducted training in shooting and throat-cutting at the camp - the author, firstly, negates the existence of a Jewish underground organisation at Auschwitz and, secondly, deprives the Jews of one of the most heroic pages in the history of their self-defence and devalues the heroic initiative of the Sonderkommando members in fighting not only for their lives but also to halt or at least slow down the Holocaust taking place at Auschwitz.

It should be noted at this point that Matthews appears to have no knowledge or understanding of who the Sonderkommando members were and their situation in the camp. He states that "the club [puff - note W. W.- M.] was to be used by the kapos [...] who maintained discipline by beating their fellow prisoners, and the dirty pigs from the Sonderkommando who worked in the gas chambers and crematoria" (he goes on to refer to these two groups collectively as "scum"), and in the following passage emphasises that "it was open to anyone who played a role in the smooth running of the camp, provided they were not Jewish" (p. 155). In many other passages, he mentions Kapo and Sonderkommando members in the





The book portrays women in a sexist and offensive way. The author treats them solely as sexual objects. Almost all of them are alluring and entice men with their charms and treat sexual contact instrumentally as a tool to achieve their ends. Even the heroine, a member of a Polish partisan unit, a 'true beauty', is, in fact, only the commander's mistress. Although she "hid her long blonde hair under a cap" (p. 160), wears men's clothes and carries a machine gun (p. 147), "the only action she has seen so far has been in the bedroom" (p. 249).

A reader familiar with the realities of the war and the attitude of Polish society towards the occupying forces may be astonished to learn that a Polish woman arrested by the Germans, upon learning that she is to work in the camp puff, declares to her friends: "My husband was a miserable, drunken jerk. The Germans shot him, and I don't regret it at all. [...] At least I'll have some sex, and let me tell you, I'm hoping for something better than what I'm used to. And hopefully, it will last a little longer" (p. 167). Romances between Polish women and German soldiers were also depicted unbelievably. The author states explicitly that during the occupation, the seduction of Germans by Polish women was a common phenomenon, to which the occupation authorities gave their full consent, and that "sexual activity between Germans and Polish women began to be considered not only acceptable but also necessary - it was, in fact, a kind of commercial transaction" (p. 75). This view is confirmed by the character of Tina, the mistress of Fischer, commander of the fictitious sub-camp in Wiśnica - a Polish woman whose affair with a German officer is supposed to ensure her safety and prosperous life during the war. In doing so, she enjoys amazing, unrealistic privileges - when she visits her family for a few days, the commandant provides her with a car and personal chauffeur. Tina attends official meetings (even though the commandant has a German wife) with top German officials, including Adolf Eichmann and Reinhard Heydrich. She also indulges in reproaches and quarrels, forbids Fischer to have contact with other women, and, when she catches

him cheating, throws him out of the bedroom (in his house), resulting in the commandant spending the night on the sofa in his study (p. 265). It is difficult to acknowledge that a relationship would have been possible during the occupation where a Polish woman "threw her weight around" in the home of an SS officer, humiliating and forcing him to submit to her will.

Members of the Polish resistance are portrayed in an infantile, even caricatured manner. They are more reminiscent of a merry band of jovial mockers and carefree pranksters, prone to falling into pathetic exaltations, than responsible, militarily organised underground soldiers. They live together in the same house and use their first and last names as pseudonyms. Matthews thus builds a narrative about the Polish underground solely based on his perceptions, stereotypes and pop culture representations straight out of American cinema, without even bothering to verify and consider basic historical facts. He is unaware, for example, that in January 1940, the Home Army did not yet exist.

As far as the image of Poles is concerned, three main features are highlighted in the book. The first is drunkenness - even at conspiracy meetings, when discussing relevant issues and planning actions, "vodka flows in streams". The second is anti-Semitism, of which there were only a few noble exceptions. The author suggests that it was common for Poles to gather in the streets of cities during the march of Jews to the ghetto and spit on them. It also states that the chimneys and furnaces of the crematoria were installed by specialists who came specially from Warsaw for this purpose (suggesting that they were Poles). It describes the Polish population's negative and contemptuous attitude towards the camp prisoners in January 1940, completely ignoring that until 1942, Poles were the largest ethnic group among the prisoners. Ignoring the realities of the occupation, he concludes that for Poles, the war was, in fact, "a fantastic opportunity" (p. 79) to profit at the expense of the murdered Jews from shady (using the book's language) deals with the





with ruins and piles of corpses still piling up in the wasteland after the blitzkrieg (the author uses this name to describe the Invasion of Poland, also known as the September Campaign). Astonishing misrepresentations can be found in the chapter on the liberation of Auschwitz. The reader will learn, among other things, that the Russians and the British liberated the camp. In one scene, a British soldier recalls his experiences at the supposedly previously liberated Bergen-Belsen camp (actually liberated in mid-April 1945, almost three months after Auschwitz), while another passage suggests that his next objective will be to capture Berlin (which lies in a straight line about 250 km east of Bergen-Belsen). It would follow that the British advancing from the west (interestingly, in Matthews' book, the other western Allies, including, for instance, the Americans, do not feature at all) passed through the entire territory of the Reich before apparently turning back to the west to stage the final capture of the German capital.

One chapter describes the visit of Adolf Eichmann and Reinhard Heydrich to KL Auschwitz, during which Polish partisans made a rather inept attempt to assassinate the two dignitaries. From the descriptions, it can be concluded that this action supposedly took place in the second half of the summer of 1942, when in fact, Heydrich was already dead, having been killed in Prague in May 1942.

The author seems to neglect the fact that the Second World War was a dynamic process but instead presents it as an unchanging phenomenon over time. The content is characterised not so much by dating errors but by descriptions of events occurring when they could not have happened. Thus, the scene set in January 1940 makes reference to the Germans shooting Russian prisoners of war (their de facto allies at the time). The same temporal







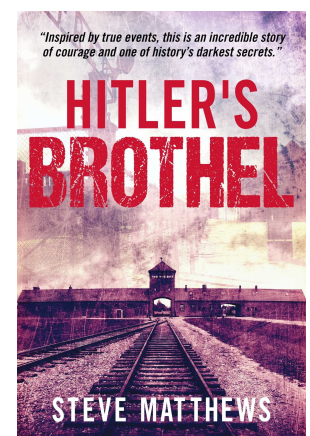
to July 1944, six months before the liquidation of the gas chambers and the liberation of KL Auschwitz.

The misrepresented image of Auschwitz created by Matthews is complemented by inauthentic, exaggerated fantasies of the camp's macabre and unrealistic prisoner behaviour, such as the walks of female Puff prisoners throughout the camp, including a tour of the crematoria. The story of the existence of the camp brothel and its rules contains so much untrue information and has been reproduced by the author in a way that has so little to do with the historical reality that in virtually no aspect can it be considered to carry any degree of truth. In Matthews' book, the tragedy of women sent to work in the camp brothel was treated instrumentally, merely as sensationalism and a pretext for naturalistic, even pornographic descriptions in some cases. Some of the author's portrayal of characters, ludicrous scenes and infantile dialogue causes embarrassment to the reader.

Virtually every thread the book addresses contain major or severe factual errors. The above indicated are just some of the long list of reasons why it is not worth reaching for this novel. While assuring the reader of his deep knowledge of this subject, Matthews is yet another author who creates a novel purporting to contain elements of realism and probability but is, in reality, a work of fantasy devoid of factual value from beginning to end. The extent to which such publications can significantly harm the memory of the dramatic history of Auschwitz and its victims can be demonstrated by fragments of reviews posted on internet blogs, proving that not everyone distinguishes between this type of pseudo-camp fiction and authentic memoir literature. We read in them, for example: "The author [...] does not mince words and shows in a rather brutal way what happened in the camps" , "he conveys in an



Steve Matthews  
*Hitler's Brothel*  
Big Sky  
Publishing  
2020



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# „REM INCLUSIVE“ NEW EDUCATIONAL PROJECT

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For the next eighteen months, the Stutthof Museum in Sztutowo, the Internationales Bildungs- und Begegnungswerk gGmbH in Dortmund, and the Schwarzenberg Association in Berlin will be implementing the project "REM Inclusive". It is addressed to people with disabilities, as well as to teachers, educators, and students who want to work in the field of inclusive education in the future. During the project, 150 participants will share their experiences and knowledge in this area. On 7 March 2023, the project's opening conference will be held online, to which you are cordially invited.

Visits to memorials of former concentration and extermination camps are an essential addition to the traditional educational process in schools. They are also places where one can see and understand the tragedy of the victims of National Socialism with their own eyes. The visit helps shape young people's civic attitudes and awaken their empathy and respect for differences. However, only some people realize that certain groups of people are excluded from this type of education.

It is rarely possible to enter the

memorials commemorating the victims of National Socialism without using stairs. The texts on the exhibits are sometimes written in a language that not everyone can understand, and black-and-white photos are often of poor quality and not particularly rich in contrast. Descriptions of objects, exhibitions, or guides written in Braille or sign language are rather exceptions. This means that most of the memorial sites do not meet the requirements of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in terms of inclusive participation. According to this document, people







It has been divided into 8 modules.

**Module 1** (7 March 2023): Project opening conference. Meeting with professionals in the field of education in memorial sites, historical and civic education, and inclusive education from Poland, Germany, and the Netherlands.

**Module 2** (March 2023): Online meetings presenting new approaches to inclusive education in memorial sites - examples from different countries.

**Module 3** (April 2023): Online meeting presenting the best practices in the field of inclusive memory culture.

**Module 4** (April 2023): Online presentation of the most important projects related to historical education and memory culture that consider the needs of people with disabilities. This will be preparation for the planned "Future Search" conference in the Stutthof Museum in Sztutowo in April.

**Module 5** (April 2023): A 3-day "Future Search" conference in the Stutthof Museum in Sztutowo. Participants will work on proposals for tools and guidelines to improve the quality of tours and education for people with special needs. 80 people from three countries will participate in the conference.

**Module 6:** Methodological workshop for



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# ARMED AND CIVILIAN RESISTANCE OF POLISH JEWS DURING HOLOCAUST

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We invite you to send abstracts to the conference "Armed and civilian resistance of Polish Jews during Holocaust" that commemorates 80th Anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. Application deadline is 15 March 2023. The conference will take place in Warsaw, 16-17 October 2023.

The purpose of the conference organized by Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw is to present new research of various forms of armed and civilian resistance of Jews against Nazi Germany genocide. The interest of the conference is focused on: the uprisings and resistance in the ghettos and camps, as well as participation of the Jews in regular armed forces and partisan units.

Separate interest is vested on the civilian forms of resistance. We invite also the researchers of historiography and social imagery. The conference will be held in Polish and English. Abstracts should be sent in either of the languages (300 – 500 words), as well as bio note. Please indicate language of the presentation, and send all to e-mail: [conference@jhi.pl](mailto:conference@jhi.pl)

The conference will take place physically in Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw and will be transmitted via Internet. In case of the pandemics of COVID-19 (or other unforeseen circumstances) a

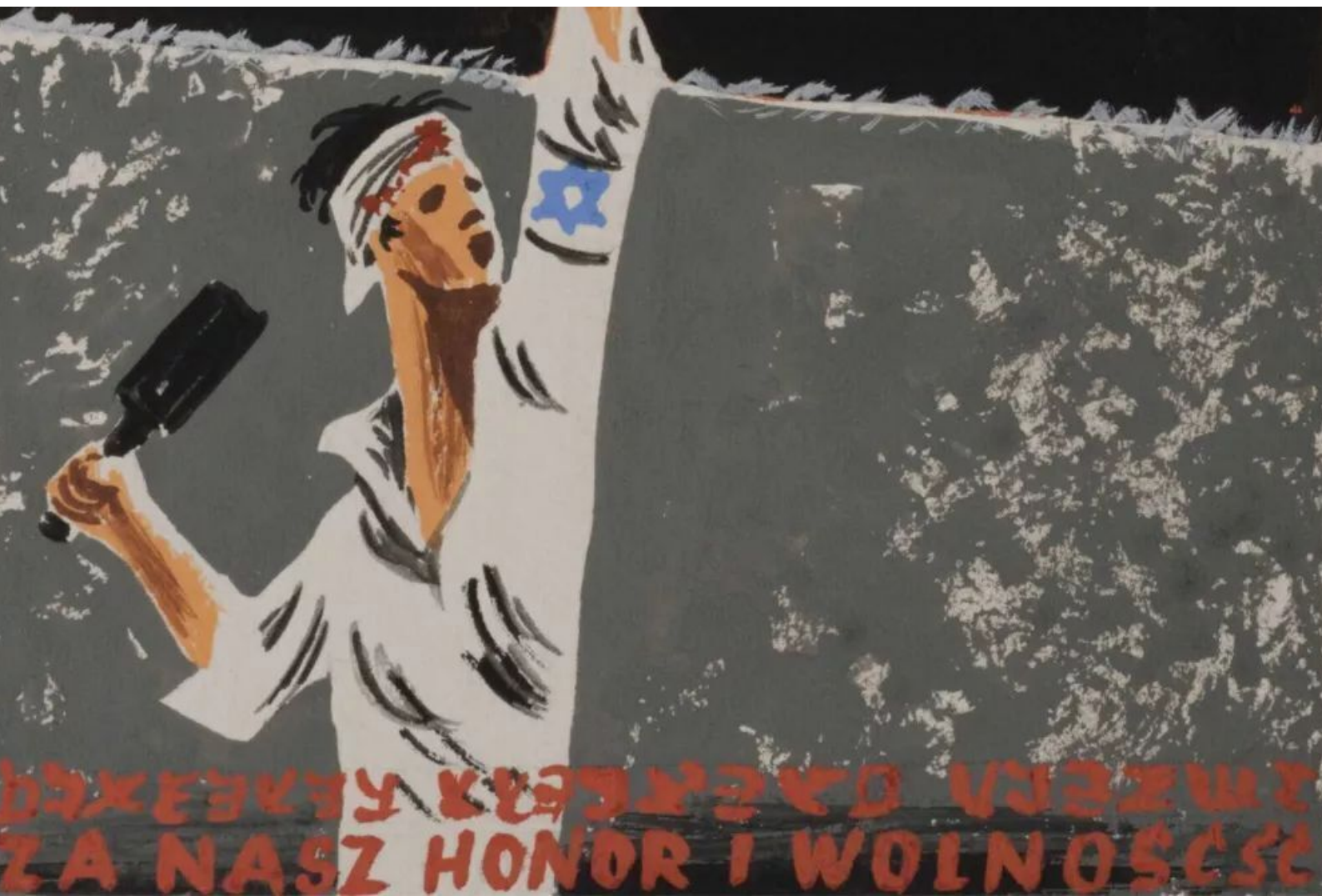
physical meeting in the described date is not possible, the conference will be held online or in hybrid formula. The conference participants, in the event of replacing the stationary formula to a different one, will be informed in due advance. The conference proceedings will be held in the preferred language of presentation, without a translation.

The organizer will provide accommodation (with breakfast) on 15/16.10.2023, 16/17.10.2023 and food (lunch, coffee/tea during the breaks and dinner on 16.10.2023). Jewish Historical Institute will have right to publish the presentations, via online transmission and digital recording.

Deadline for application is 15th March, 2023. Invited conference participants will be informed by 30th June 2023.

The conference committee: August Grabski, Katarzyna Person, Piotr Weiser, Joshua D. Zimmerman





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# PRESENTING HOLOCAUST RESOURCES IN THE DIGITAL AGE

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At the end of last year, over 40 experts from Germany, Austria, the Netherlands, Italy, Greece, Ukraine, Poland, Czechia, Hungary, UK, USA, and Israel gathered at Yad Vashem in Jerusalem to participate in the international workshop "Challenges in Presenting Holocaust Resources in the Digital Age: Initiatives in Accessibility to Holocaust Archival Sources and New Ways of Presenting Digital Archival Content". The workshop was organized within the framework of the EHRI project, together with the Foundation "Remembrance, Responsibility and Future".

Collecting sources from the Holocaust period is the basis for research, education and commemoration. In the digital age, open, online access to this material has a key role in facilitating these activities. The gap between the amount of archival documentation amassed by Holocaust collection holding institutions and the rate at which this material is made available online has engendered conflicting views regarding the degree of information necessary for presenting the documentation in the proper context, i.e. extensive metadata vs. just getting the material out there with minimal descriptions and information.

At the same time, the demand for online access has spurred the creation of innovative, new tools, platforms and resources for presenting digital archival content. These may take the form of traditional online archives with expanded search capabilities, including cross-database links, data visualization and more. Other initiatives encompass platforms that allow the user to contextualize,

interpret and visualize Holocaust sources.

The workshop provided a platform for showcasing such initiatives, and an opportunity for discussing challenges and dilemmas in online accessibility and presentation of Holocaust archival sources. Several participants demonstrated innovative methods and tools for providing access to new online databases and for cross-linking databases from two (or more) institutions in order to better serve research of scattered Holocaust related data. A number of the initiatives presented involve the incorporation and use of archival sources in geo-mapping and virtual reality projects, and digitally-guided physical tours of Holocaust period sites. Additional presentations addressed curatorial methods of presenting Holocaust sources and items through online and virtual exhibitions, and the integration of many micro-history collections into one online resource. In a session on new approaches to online Holocaust survivor testimonies, participants were





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**PUBLISHER**

Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum

**EDITOR-IN-CHIEF**

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