

109 (10/2026)



MEMORIA

MEMORY • HISTORY • EDUCATION



HISTORICAL DOCUMENTS LINKED TO WW2 TRANSFERRED TO MEMORIAL INSTITUTIONS WITH THE SUPPORT OF THE AUSCHWITZ-BIRKENAU FOUNDATION

COLONIALISM,
NATIONAL
SOCIALISM AND THE
LIMITS OF
HISTORICAL
COMPARISON

44TH SESSION

OF THE
INTERNATIONAL
AUSCHWITZ
COUNCIL

HAMBURG
STRENGTHENS

EDUCATION TO
FOSTER CRITICAL
HISTORICAL
AWARENESS

CAN HOLOCAUST
DENIERS BE
STOPPED?

A DEBATE AT THE
JEWISH HISTORICAL
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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

Our e-mail: memoria@auschwitz.org

Please do share information about this magazine with others, particularly via social media.

All editions: memoria.auschwitz.org

SAVE THE DATE: INTERNATIONAL EDUCATIONAL CONFERENCE ON THE 80TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE CREATION OF THE MUSEUM. JUNE 28-30, 2027

The year 2027 marks the 80th anniversary of the establishment of the Auschwitz-Birkenau Museum and Memorial at the site of the former German Nazi concentration and extermination camp. "We had no idea if we would survive or not, but there were talks about some kind of a memorial... [...] we only knew that the humanity must not forget about the crimes committed in Auschwitz," stressed in one of his interviews Kazimierz Smoleń, an Auschwitz Survivor and the second director of the Museum.

On this unique occasion, we would like to invite experts and colleagues from different fields of knowledge to join us to discuss the state of memory about WWII and the atrocities perpetrated by the German Nazis and their accomplices during that time as well as the new challenges and chances emerging nowadays.

The International Educational Conference, organised by the International Centre for Education about Auschwitz and the Holocaust, will take place on June 28-30, 2027, in Oświęcim.

More information, including the application process, will follow in due time.

We encourage you to take a look at the summary of the International Educational Conference "Remember. Is Memory Enough in the 21st Century?", which took place on June 30-July 2, 2025.

All panel discussions can be found in our Youtube channel.

REMEMBER

Is Memory Enough in the 21st Century?
Czy pamięć wystarczy w XXI wieku?

30.06 – 2.07.2025



MEMORY INSCRIBED IN THE LANDSCAPE: NEW MEMORIAL SITES AT GUNSKIRCHEN AND AFLENZ

xIn October 2026, two new memorial sites linked to the Mauthausen camp system opened in Austria. Gunskirchen, in Upper Austria, and Aflenz, in Styria, lie more than 200 kilometers apart and have very different histories as camps. Yet both projects face a similar question: how can one commemorate a place where, more than 80 years on, the material traces of the crimes are almost invisible?

The new Gedenkort Gunskirchen (Gunskirchen Memorial Site) opened on October 6 on the grounds of the former subcamp, which in the final weeks of the war became a place of unimaginable suffering. In April 1945, more than 20,000 people, almost all of them Jews, were sent there after death marches. The unfinished camp in the forest was severely overcrowded and lacked sanitary facilities, food and water. According to the memorial site's own materials, some 250 people died there every day. On May 4, 1945, the camp was liberated by soldiers of the US Army's 71st Infantry Division.

Today the forest has almost completely covered the traces of the camp. This is why the designers chose to intervene in the terrain as little as possible. Glass steles along the route take visitors through five main themes: the journey to Gunskirchen, how the camp operated, the prisoners' living conditions, liberation, and the postwar history of remembrance. The aim is not to reconstruct the camp but to help visitors read a place where only fragmentary remains have survived.

The digital layer is an integral part of the project. QR codes lead to an extensive archive of photographs, documents, testimonies, and audio and video material. There are also 360-degree views and 3D models, and the entire trail can be walked virtually. Survivor testimonies carry particular weight, among them those of Edith Eger, Shaul Spielmann and Daniel Chanoch. Some of the recollections have also been recorded by present-day actors and other well-known figures, so that the witnesses' voices can continue to be heard in the future.

The campaign for a fitting memorial went on for many years. As early as 2010, the Mauthausen Committee Austria, together with Survivor Daniel Chanoch, began pressing for its creation. Chanoch himself, who died in 2024, did not live to see the project realized.

On October 18, twelve days after Gunskirchen opened, the new Aflenz Memorial in Styria opened to the public. This was the site of the Leibnitz-Aflenz subcamp, set up in February 1944 to serve the German armaments industry. More than 900 prisoners were forced to extend underground tunnels in an existing quarry, where armaments were later produced. At least 78 prisoners died in the camp. Before the war ended, the camp was liquidated and the prisoners were driven on foot toward Ebensee. Those who were sick or unable to march were murdered.

Here, too, no buildings from the former barracks camp remain visible. For decades, the land was farmed. The project, based on a concept by the artist Milica Tomić and the landscape planners of studio boden, deliberately refrains from re-creating structures that no longer exist. Instead, new paths trace the former camp boundaries and mark the sites



Aerial image of the US Army made on 20 April 1945 r.
National Collection of Aerial Photography, Sortie 104W7C70143

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On 23 October, a ceremony was held at the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage in Warsaw to transfer historical documents related, among other subjects, to the Second World War, the Holocaust, and German Nazi concentration camps. The documents were secured by the Auschwitz-Birkenau Foundation through international cooperation following the cancellation of a controversial auction in Germany in November last year.

A collection of documents relating to the history of the Auschwitz, including prisoner correspondence from different periods of its operation, was transferred to the Museum Archives. Among the oldest materials is a document sent on 17 December 1940 by Jan Sworzeń, prisoner no. 56, who was deported to Auschwitz in the first transport of Polish political prisoners on 14 June 1940. It is a printed notice to his family concerning the rules for sending Christmas parcels. Jan Sworzeń died in the camp on 6 January 1943.

The collection also includes an extensive handwritten manuscript by Arthur Liebehenschel, commandant of Auschwitz in 1943–44. The document was created in 1947 during his imprisonment in Poland, in connection with preparations for his trial before the Supreme National Tribunal. The notes, bearing his handwritten signature, constitute an important source for research into the functioning of the camp and the responsibility of its perpetrators.

Other materials connected with the history of Auschwitz include prisoners' letters, family correspondence, documents concerning the sending of parcels and money, as well as death notifications. Particularly important are those sources that reveal the individual fates of people whose stories have often survived only in fragments within camp documentation.

"Behind every document lies the tragedy of a particular person, sometimes of a group of people. Each of these stories forms part of the greatest tragedy in the history of Europe. We cannot allow the fates of individual people to remain outside the historical, archival and scholarly legacy, to end up in collectors' drawers, private storage spaces or amateur files. When that happens, from the perspective of the Shoah as a whole and the history of the camps, the actual presence of a particular Victim disappears," emphasized Dr Piotr M. A. Cywiński, Director of the Auschwitz Museum.

The event in Warsaw was attended by Minister of Culture and National Heritage Marta Cienkowska; Nathanael Liminski, Minister for Federal and European Affairs, International Relations and Media of North Rhine-Westphalia; Wojciech Soczewica, Director General of the Auschwitz-Birkenau Foundation; as well as representatives of the diplomatic corps, museums, archives and memorial institutions.

"Documents are becoming increasingly important witnesses to history, and it is on them that we must base a responsible policy of remembrance. A policy that protects authentic sources, ensures the conditions for independent research, and allows us to understand the past in all its

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Konzentrationslager Auschwitz

Folgende Anordnungen sind beim Schriftverkehr mit Gefangenen zu beachten.

- 1.) Jeder Schutzhaftgefangene darf im Monat zwei Briefe oder zwei Karten von seinen Angehörigen empfangen u. an sie absenden. Die Briefe an die Gefangenen müssen gut lesbar mit Tinte geschrieben sein u. dürfen nur 15 Zeilen auf einer Seite enthalten. Gestattet ist nur ein Briefbogen normaler Größe. Briefumschläge müssen ungefüllt sein. In einem Briefe dürfen nur 5 Briefmarken à 12 Rpf. beigelegt werden. Alles andere ist verboten u. unterliegt der Beschlagnahme. Postkarten haben 10 Zeilen, Lichtbilder dürfen als Postkarten nicht verwendet werden.
- 2.) Geldsendungen sind gestattet.
- 3.) Es ist darauf zu achten, dass bei Geld- oder Postsendungen die genaue Adresse, bestehend aus: Name, Geburtsdatum und Gefangenen-Nummer, auf die Sendung zu schreiben ist. Wenn die Adresse fehlerhaft ist, geht die Post an den Absender zurück oder wird vernichtet.
- 4.) Zeitungen sind gestattet, dürfen aber nur durch die Poststelle des Konz.-Lagers Auschwitz bestellt werden.
- 5.) Pakete dürfen nicht geschickt werden, da die Gefangenen im Lager alles kaufen können.
- 6.) Entlassungsgesuche aus der Schutzhaft an die Lagerleitung sind zwecklos.
- 7.) Sprecherlaubnis und Besuche von Gefangenen im Konzentrationslager sind grundsätzlich nicht gestattet.

Der Lagerkommandant.

Absender:

Meine Anschrift: Schutzhaftling-201e

Name: Sworzeń Johann

geboren am: 17.V.1911 K. Auschwitz O.S.

Gef.-Nr. 56 Block 3. Postamt 2.

Herr Leon

Sworzeń

KRAKAW

Ośiedle Oficerskie

Nr. 8.

3 3

Deutsches Reich



Other transferred materials document, among other things, everyday life in ghettos, the fate of families separated by persecution and forced labour, and attempts to maintain contact with relatives. The Jewish Historical Institute received, among other items, a collection of 85 postcards belonging to the Markowicz family from Wieruszów. Their correspondence from 1941–1943 documents the fate of family members sent to various forced-labour camps. The State Archive in Łódź, in turn, received documents relating to deportations from the Łódź ghetto and the functioning of its administration.

The ceremony in Warsaw marked the symbolic conclusion of a process that began in November last year, when more than 600 original documents from concentration camps, ghettos and other sites connected with German crimes during the Second World War were due to be auctioned by an auction house in Neuss, Germany. They included prisoners' letters and postcards, administrative documents and personal testimonies of persecution. International protests led to the cancellation of the auction.

Thanks to cooperation between the Auschwitz-Birkenau Foundation, the authorities of the state of North Rhine-Westphalia, German memorial institutions and private donors, more than

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Thanks to cooperation between the Auschwitz-Birkenau Foundation, the authorities of the state of North Rhine-Westphalia, German memorial institutions and private donors, more than 600 historical documents were secured. The first 433 of them were entrusted to the Foundation during a ceremony at the Parliament of North Rhine-Westphalia on 30 January 2026. Some of the collections had already been transferred earlier to memorial institutions in Germany.

The operation to secure the archival materials, halt the auction and carry out the fundraising effort would not have been possible without the personal involvement of partners from North Rhine-Westphalia, who supported the Foundation pro bono. Particular thanks and recognition are due to Matthias Schreiber of the Parliament of North Rhine-Westphalia, Ekkehardt Thiesler, Chairman of KD-Bank, and notary Klaus Oertel. Their professional advice, expert knowledge and organizational support at every stage were invaluable to the success of this sensitive mission.

"When news emerged last year that an auction house near Düsseldorf intended to put hundreds of objects connected with the Holocaust up for auction, it provoked widespread outrage. That outrage was heard particularly strongly in Poland, here, where the German perpetrators committed most of their crimes. And rightly so, because it is difficult to accept that mementos of Holocaust victims, letters from concentration camps, or yellow stars should now become objects of trade and collectors' items. History is not a commodity. History is a responsibility we carry," said Minister Nathanael Liminski.

The preservation of these documents was made possible through the involvement of the Auschwitz-Birkenau Foundation. As Wojciech Soczewica, Director General of the Foundation, emphasized, the decision to begin purchasing documents from the private market was not an easy one, as the Foundation had not previously engaged in such activity.

"The Foundation's actions had a universal dimension, because they concerned the protection of heritage connected with many memorial sites across Europe. At the same time, it was important for us to secure documents showing the fate of Polish victims, both those imprisoned in camps and those murdered in the East. We are pleased that we were able to ensure that these priceless testimonies would be transferred to Polish state institutions and serve future generations," Wojciech Soczewica said.

An important element of the entire process was also the establishment of cooperation with the Yad Ezer L'Haver association in Haifa. When some of the documents reached Israel after the auction was cancelled, the Auschwitz-Birkenau Foundation began efforts to recover these authentic testimonies of crime.

COLONIALISM, NATIONAL SOCIALISM, AND THE LIMITS OF HISTORICAL COMPARISON

Can Auschwitz be placed within the longer history of European colonial violence? Do practices used earlier in Africa help us understand National Socialism? Or do such comparisons, rather than explaining history, begin to blur its essential differences?

For years, these questions have fueled some of the most intense debates in European historiography and memory culture. In a new exhibition, the Deutsches Historisches Museum (German Historical Museum) in Berlin examines not only the two systems of violence themselves but also the history of comparing them.

Controversial Kinship. Colonial and National Socialist Violence, on view from October 16, 2026, to April 11, 2027, is, the museum says, the first exhibition anywhere devoted entirely to this question. Rather than offering a single answer, it sets out to show where the question of the links between colonialism and National Socialism came from, how the answers to it have changed, and where the limits of historical comparison lie.

Colonialism, fascism, and National Socialism were already being compared in the 1930s. An important moment came with Italy's invasion of Ethiopia in 1935. To many anti-colonial intellectuals, the brutality of Fascist Italy was nothing entirely new. They saw in it an extension of methods that the European powers had long used against colonized societies: violence, racial hierarchies, territorial conquest, forced labor, and the stripping of rights from entire groups.

The exhibition does not, however, adopt this interpretation as a ready-made key to twentieth-century history. Instead, it shows how the debate itself evolved over the decades that followed.

"My original intention was simply to historicize this debate—not necessarily to take a position, but to show that it has been going on since the 1930s, through the postwar period, and right up to the present day," said Raphael Gross, President of the Deutsches Historisches Museum.

The history of comparison itself is one of the exhibition's central themes. The museum asks under what historical circumstances scholars, intellectuals, anti-colonial activists, politicians, and Holocaust survivors compared colonialism, fascism, and National Socialism, when such comparisons were analytically useful, and when they became tools of political polemic.

Central to the whole project is the distinction between comparing and equating. European colonialism developed over centuries and involved many empires and vast areas of the world. National Socialist rule over much of Europe was far shorter. The two systems differed in their political contexts, aims, dynamics, and structures.

At the same time, there are areas where comparison can raise important questions. Among the themes the exhibition examines are repression, racism and antisemitism, conquest and settlement, concentration camps, collaboration, resistance, forced labor, industrialized extermination, and the visibility and invisibility of extreme violence.



Photo: David von Becker, DHM ©

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Displayed alongside material on colonial history are objects directly connected with National Socialism, including items of SS uniform and postwar drawings by Vladimír Matějka, a former prisoner of Sachsenhausen and Dachau. These juxtapositions are not meant to suggest that the histories shown were the same. Rather, they are intended to prompt questions about similar mechanisms, symbols, and language of violence.

The exhibition also reminds visitors that historical comparisons are not made in a vacuum. They are formulated by specific people at particular moments, often in response to the political controversies of the day. Since the 1930s, comparisons of colonialism, fascism, and National Socialism have served very different ends. They have been a tool of anti-colonial critique of the European empires and a way of interpreting fascism, but they have also figured in later disputes over memory.

"We hope that the ideological charge, which has grown much stronger over the past twenty years, can be brought back once more to a more factual debate—to the facts and realities that people need to know before they enter into these disputes," said Stephan Malinowski.

This statement aptly describes the role the museum sees for itself in the debate. Visitors are not handed a ready-made position but are given the knowledge to judge the strength of the various arguments for themselves. In the exhibition's epilogue, historians representing different perspectives have their say, so the question of continuity or rupture is not settled once and for all.

Photo: Julia Baier, DHM ©





Photo: Julia Baier, DHM ©

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44TH SESSION OF THE INTERNATIONAL AUSCHWITZ COUNCIL

On 21 October 2026, the 44th meeting of the International Auschwitz Council was held at the Chancellery of the Prime Minister in Warsaw. Among those attending was Minister of Culture and National Heritage Marta Cienkowska. The meeting was chaired by Prof. Dariusz Stola.

Dr Piotr M. A. Cywiński, Director of the Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial and Museum, presented the Council members with a report on the most important events and activities carried out at the Memorial since the previous meeting.

Among the significant events, he mentioned the commemoration of the 86th anniversary of the deportation of the first Poles to Auschwitz, which on 14 June was disrupted by individuals attempting to turn the ceremony into a political demonstration. As a result, the Museum is considering changes to the organization of future commemorations in order to ensure that they proceed in a dignified and safe manner.

The Director also spoke about the anniversary of the liquidation by the Germans of the family camp for Roma and Sinti in Auschwitz II-Birkenau. "These commemorations are becoming increasingly extensive. We can see that more and more young people are taking part, and that representatives of increasingly high political rank are also attending. It has taken years, indeed decades, for participation in these commemorations to become a permanent part of the calendar of important remembrance events," he emphasized.

An important theme of his presentation was the protection of historical documents connected with German Nazi concentration camps and the Holocaust. The Director recalled the actions taken following an attempt to auction in Germany a collection of more than 700 documents from the Second World War. Thanks to cooperation between the Auschwitz-Birkenau Foundation, German institutions and donors, a significant part of the collection was secured. Documents relating to other camps, ghettos and sites of persecution are to be transferred free of charge to the appropriate memorial institutions.

"If a document ends up in private hands, then in reality that person and their fate are placed outside the broader history. In a sense, it is as if the person were being put away in a drawer. I believe that situations in which we can show just how much these documents enrich the archives of memorial institutions should be publicized strongly, so as to help create a certain ethical imperative among as many people as possible," Piotr Cywiński said.

One of the issues presented during the meeting concerned seven watercolor representation of faces of Roma and Sinti created in Auschwitz by prisoner Dina Gottliebová-Babbitt on the orders of SS physician Josef Mengele. According to media reports, the daughters of the late Survivor have brought legal action in California seeking the return of the original works. The Museum is preparing for legal proceedings, stressing that the portraits constitute unique documentation of crimes committed in the camp.

"Very few documents concerning the tragedy of the Roma family camp have survived. These portraits are among the most important of them," the Director emphasized. He also recalled that the International Auschwitz Council had already adopted an unequivocal position on the



Photo: Bartosz Bartyzel

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barracks in the area of the former women's camp have already undergone preservation work or are currently being treated. Another stage of work to secure the ruins of the gas chambers and crematoria in Birkenau has also been completed, including the installation of new support structures for surviving fragments of reinforced-concrete ceilings. Work is also underway on historic buildings at Auschwitz I, including the roof of the former main guardhouse.

Among the next investments, the Director mentioned the planned reconstruction of the historic former potato storage building near Birkenau, co-financed by the European Union. The building will retain its historic external form, while its interior will house storage facilities, workshops and support spaces for conservation staff. This will make it possible to relocate part of the technical infrastructure from the grounds of the former camp to a suitably adapted building. At the end of his report, Director Cywiński spoke about the forthcoming presentation of the exhibition *Auschwitz. Not Long Ago. Not Far Away.* at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C. The exhibition, prepared by the Auschwitz-Birkenau Museum in cooperation with the Spanish company Musealia, will be presented at the American museum from the beginning of 2027, during the period in which its permanent exhibition is being changed.

"For me, this is a truly important and quite moving moment. The fact that our exhibition will be there and will serve our friends in Washington is a testimony to the closeness of our cooperation," Piotr Cywiński emphasized.

Following the discussion, the International Auschwitz Council adopted a resolution confirming the conclusion of its position from September 2001, according to which the watercolors created in the camp by Dina Gottliebová-Babbitt are the property of the Auschwitz Museum and should remain in its Collections. The Council also discussed educational activities connected with the exhibition *The Extermination of the European Roma in Block 13* on the grounds of the former Auschwitz I camp. The debate resulted in the unanimous adoption of a resolution emphasizing the importance of education about the genocide of the Roma and Sinti.



Photo: Bartosz Bartyzel

barracks in the area of the former women's camp have already undergone preservation work or are currently being treated. Another stage of work to secure the ruins of the gas chambers and crematoria in Birkenau has also been completed, including the installation of new support structures for surviving fragments of reinforced-concrete ceilings. Work is also underway on historic buildings at Auschwitz I, including the roof of the former main guardhouse.

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UNPUBLISHED GERMAN ARCHIVAL MATERIALS FROM FRANCE'S ECPAD AT THE WARSAW RISING MUSEUM AND THE PILECKI INSTITUTE

The Warsaw Rising Museum, the Witold Pilecki Institute of Solidarity and Valor, and ECPAD, the French military audiovisual archive based in Ivry-sur-Seine, have signed a strategic three-way cooperation agreement.

The agreement gives the Polish institutions access to unique Second World War photographs previously unknown in Poland, opens up the vast holdings of the French archive, and marks the start of a partnership of great significance for research on Polish history.

The meeting was attended by Étienne de Poncins, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the French Republic to the Republic of Poland; Karol Madaj, Director of the Witold Pilecki Institute of Solidarity and Valor; and Jan Ołdakowski, Director of the Warsaw Rising Museum.

The agreement rests on three pillars:

- Unique photographs and their scholarly analysis. German press photographs from the Second World War, until now largely unknown in Poland, have been transferred to the Pilecki Institute and the Warsaw Rising Museum. They document the September 1939 campaign, occupied Poland, and areas of present-day Ukraine and Belarus. In many cases, complete sequences of negatives have survived, not just the individual frames selected by German propaganda. Together, the two institutions will critically analyze, identify and catalog the material before making it available to researchers.
- Access to the vast holdings of the French archive. The agreement opens the door for Polish historians to one of Europe's largest military audiovisual archives. Together with their French partner, the Pilecki Institute and the Warsaw Rising Museum will make ECPAD's holdings available in their reading rooms, so that researchers can consult them without leaving Poland.
- The beginning of long-term cooperation. This is the first partnership on such a scale between Polish institutions and ECPAD. It lays the groundwork for further archival searches, research projects, fellowship programs and joint publications. Joint work on the history of the Second World War is in keeping with the idea of the Weimar Triangle and is becoming a forum for dialogue between Warsaw, Paris and Berlin. A photographic exhibition is planned for Paris, Berlin and Warsaw, reflecting on the experience of the Second World War in the context of Russia's aggression against Ukraine.

Materials transferred to the Polish institutions

In the first stage of cooperation under the agreement, the Polish institutions received a collection comprising:

- 23 photographic albums (approximately 1,200 photographs);
- 3,431 photographs from 1939–1940 (including images from the September 1939



Photo. Michał Zajączkowski / Warsaw Uprising Museum

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A separate part of the archive is the so-called German collection: materials produced by German propaganda companies (Propagandakompanien). After the surrender of the Third Reich in 1945, these materials were secured by the US Army and later divided among the Allies. The companies included experienced professional photographers and camera operators among their members.

Under an agreement between the Propaganda Ministry and the Wehrmacht, the companies were incorporated into the German armed forces and accompanied the troops in campaign after campaign. ECPAD's German collection contains more than 353,000 photographs and 1,128 film titles, including 171 editions of the newsreel *Die Deutsche Wochenschau* and some 946 documentary films and so-called Kulturfilme produced between 1927 and 1945.

The battle for the capital and wartime destruction

At a studio presentation, the Warsaw Rising Museum showed unique visual materials depicting the Wehrmacht's operational preparations and the scale of destruction in Warsaw in September 1939. They included images of German soldiers writing inscriptions on bombs before air raids, as well as the immediate aftermath of the bombing, including the ruins of the Warsaw University of Technology's Chemistry Building at 3 Noakowskiego Street.

Completing the picture of wartime destruction are photographs from right-bank Warsaw showing soldiers posing on the dismantled parts of a carousel against a backdrop of damaged tenement buildings on Grochowska, Kordeckiego and Komorska Streets.

Photo: Michał Zajączkowski
Warsaw Uprising Museum

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HAMBURG STRENGTHENS EDUCATION FOR CRITICAL HISTORICAL AWARENESS

Hamburg is taking further steps to strengthen education for democracy and the culture of remembrance. In the future, a visit to a memorial site commemorating the crimes of National Socialism will be a compulsory part of the curriculum for all students beginning in Grade 5.

The aim is to deepen knowledge of the history of these sites and of the Nazi policies of persecution and extermination, and at the same time to anchor democratic values, historical responsibility, and reflection on exclusion and discrimination more firmly in schools. Visits will be free for students. The Authority for Schools, Family and Vocational Education and the Authority for Culture and Media have drawn up joint recommendations on suitable educational and memorial sites, which name eight memorial sites and educational centers in Hamburg for school groups to visit.

A culture of remembrance that combines commemorating the victims of National Socialism with critical reflection on its history is one of the essential foundations of a free and democratic society. Schools make an important contribution here by fostering critical historical awareness in young people, along with the ability to think and act democratically. That is why history curricula and social studies already provide for a visit to a memorial site commemorating Nazi crimes as a complement to regular lessons. In the future, beginning in Grade 5, such a visit will become a permanent, compulsory part of the curriculum. This is to ensure that every student in Hamburg visits a memorial site at least once during their schooling.

Ksenija Bekeris, Senator for Schools, Family and Vocational Education, said: "Democracy, the rule of law and human dignity are the foundation of how we live together. But they cannot be taken for granted. Education for democracy is particularly important to me, and schools play a key role in it. They are places where the principles of our free and pluralistic society are taught, both in lessons and in everyday interactions. Memorial sites show powerfully where exclusion, antisemitism, racism and ideologies of contempt for humanity can lead. Making visits to memorial sites compulsory will allow us to link history teaching even more closely with putting education for democracy into practice, while strengthening the role of schools as key places for learning democracy."

Dr. Carsten Brosda, Senator for Culture and Media, said: "Through visits to memorial sites, we want to spark curiosity in Hamburg's students that leads them to ask their own questions about our history and about our responsibility for a life in freedom based on knowledge and critical thinking. After all, the work of remembering and commemorating does not end at the gates of memorial sites; it is a task for society as a whole. Especially at a time when there are renewed attempts to declare the past a closed chapter, we want to strengthen remembrance of the crimes of National Socialism, and with it both an awareness of how important it is to live in freedom and diversity, in democracy and peace, and a commitment to these values."

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society. This means that a visit need not be limited to a memorial on the grounds of a former concentration camp. A visit to a memorial site should also be properly prepared in educational terms and followed up afterwards in class.

Eight memorial sites and educational centers are recommended in Hamburg.

Seven of them commemorate Nazi injustice and its victims:

Neuengamme Concentration Camp Memorial
Bullenhuser Damm Memorial
Stadthaus Remembrance Site
denk.mal Hannoverscher Bahnhof Memorial
Fuhlsbüttel Memorial Sites
Poppenbüttel Memorial
Israelitische Töcherschule Memorial and Educational Site

One memorial site commemorates World War II and its aftermath:

St. Nikolai Memorial

In addition to the memorial sites in Hamburg dedicated to the victims of National Socialism, there are other suitable educational and memorial sites elsewhere in Germany and abroad that school groups can visit. So that students can take part in such visits free of charge, and to keep the organizational and administrative burden to a minimum, schools can cover costs such as admission fees, guided tours and travel from their own budgets.

Teachers will receive support in the form of a collection of materials and quality criteria to help them choose suitable memorial sites commemorating Nazi crimes and to prepare and follow up their visits. The Institute for Teacher Training and School Development (LI) also runs regular professional development courses on memorial sites and educational visits. Key information is available on the Institute's website.

Further information on the eight Hamburg memorial sites, along with background and teaching materials for teachers, is available at website.



View from the watchtower of the barracks, the roll call yard, and the crematorium. The grounds of the Neuengamme concentration camp.
Photo: 25th Belgian Fusiliers Battalion in Neuengamme, 1945. (Ang 2004-795)

STORKS OVER AUSCHWITZ

Fellowships at Auschwitz for the Study of Professional Ethics (FASPE) promotes ethical leadership for today's professionals through annual fellowships, ethical leadership trainings, and symposia, among other means. Each year, FASPE awards 80 to 90 fellowships to graduate students and early-career professionals in six fields: Business, Clergy & Religious Leaders, Design & Technology, Journalism, Law, and Medicine. Fellowships begin with immersive, site-specific study in Germany and Poland, including at Auschwitz and other historically significant sites associated with Nazi-era professionals. While there, fellows study Nazi-era professionals' surprisingly mundane and familiar motivations and decision-making as a reflection-based framework to apply to ethical pitfalls in their own lives. We find that the power of place translates history into the present, creating urgency in ethical reflection.

Each month one of our fellows publishes a piece in Memoria. Their work reflects FASPE's unique approach to professional ethics and highlights the need for thoughtful ethical reflection today.

A stork passed overhead during my tour of Auschwitz-Birkenau as a Law Fellow with FASPE in the summer of 2025. This sight called to mind a senior staff member's self-described "disturbing" remark that Auschwitz was the only place in the world they had ever witnessed the bird in flight.

Struggling weeks later to write a more academic reflection paper, I could neither shake the image from my head nor explain why it struck me so deeply. This poem poses that question through a series of vignettes meant to evoke the unease of the place and the personal and professional introspection the program sparked. It is intended to be read aloud.

====

There guides answer delicate questions from Turkish doctors and Swiss lawyers
asking righteous how the wicked could stomach the constant killing.

Scant few connect his liking for paychecks and six weeks' vacation.

There students suffer lectures about children's sketches
protected by plexiglass in the Czech barracks.

Some snicker and scurry around like kids do.

There chimneys mark out ranks as terracotta soldiers,
silent, stoic, and decades into ceaseless sleep.

The others creep upon one's thoughts unseen.

There a gatehouse lurks unspeakably obscene
in selfies clicked by thick-skulled visitors.

On second glance it seems weak, sickly.

There ballast crunches where God, ashamed, hid
his face from women men selected.

Just past sight the tracks stop.

Spend a scorching summer's day there
to look, see; to listen, hear; to weep.

I think what stirs your soul will be the sky.





CAN HOLOCAUST DENIERS BE STOPPED? A DEBATE AT THE JEWISH HISTORICAL INSTITUTE

The Emanuel Ringelblum Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw hosted a debate titled *Can Holocaust Deniers Be Stopped?*, the latest in its series *Ethics in Holocaust Research*. The panelists were legal scholar Prof. Aleksandra Gliszczyńska-Grabias; Dr. Piotr M. A. Cywiński, Director of the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum; and political scientist Prof. Piotr Forecki. Dr. Zofia Trębacz moderated. The debate was organized as part of the work of the Polish National Node of the European Holocaust Research Infrastructure (EHRI).

The point of departure was the growing presence in public debate of statements that not only distort the history of the Holocaust but also openly challenge established facts. The discussion quickly went beyond the textbook forms of denial, however, such as denying that the gas chambers existed or disputing the number of victims.

Piotr Forecki drew a distinction between denial and legitimate historical revision based on new sources and research. In his view, the particular problem in Poland today is not so much outright Holocaust denial as distortion: relativizing and suppressing facts about how parts of Polish society behaved toward Jews.

"The biggest problem we face is a Polish variant of denial, one that rests on discrediting recent, highly rigorous, and extremely well-documented research," Forecki said. He pointed to the concept of "deflective negationism," a form of denial that works by shifting emphasis, diverting attention, and minimizing or relativizing uncomfortable parts of history.

One of the central themes of the discussion was Jedwabne, which the participants presented not only as the site of a specific crime but also as a symbol of a wider dispute over responsibility and memory.

"If you call Jedwabne into question, you can by the same token call a whole range of other studies into question, and challenge Polish complicity in the Holocaust as such," Forecki said.

He stressed that the significance of Jedwabne goes beyond the history of a single town. It also points to other crimes committed in the region and to the question of the place of local communities in the history of the Holocaust. In Forecki's view, the problem is made worse by the way the subject is handled in education, where crimes committed by Poles are sometimes presented as isolated incidents.

Aleksandra Gliszczyńska-Grabias pointed out that existing legal instruments are not a sufficient response, especially when they are applied slowly or ineffectively. She cited Holocaust denial cases that can go on for years, and the reluctance of the justice system to take judicial notice of even fundamental historical facts.

"In cases involving proponents of the 'Auschwitz lie' or people who distort the truth

Debata: „Czy można zatrzymać negacjonistów?”

prezenterka
dr Zofia Trębacz

goście
dr hab. Aleksandra Gilszczyńska-Grabias
dr Piotr Cywiński
prof. UAM dr hab. Piotr Forecki

data
czwartek, 15 października 2026
godzina 18.00

miejsce
Żydowski Instytut Historyczny,
ul. Tomackie 3/5



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other side simply stops listening," Cywiński said.

He described the Auschwitz Museum's approach, comparing it to medical triage. Rather than devoting most of one's energy to people who knowingly and consistently deny history, it is better to reach, above all, those who lack knowledge or have questions or doubts but are not acting in bad faith. Only when denial gains significant social and political reach does it call for a direct legal and institutional response.

The discussion also kept returning to the way societies use history to build their own identities. Piotr Cywiński warned against a model of memory that serves the need for national pride, one in which uncomfortable events are pushed to the margins.

"For me, pride is almost like a poison, something very dangerous. I see history as a set of warnings that should lead us to caution or greater wisdom in our actions, rather than to pride," he said.

The debate did not produce a single answer to the question in its title. It did show, however, that countering denial requires action on many levels at once: law, education, historical research, the responsibility of public institutions, the language of debate, and the workings of online platforms.

Perhaps the most important conclusion, though, concerned how the problem itself is understood. Denial does not begin only at the point when someone rejects the existence of gas chambers. It can take far subtler forms: cherry-picking facts, shifting responsibility, relativizing research, discrediting testimony, or presenting uncomfortable history as a threat to national identity.

JEWISH RELIGIOUS LIFE DURING THE HOLOCAUST THROUGH PRIMARY SOURCES

From May 18 to 20, 2027, the University of Manchester will host the international research workshop Jewish Religious Life During the Holocaust: An Exploration of Essential Primary Sources, organized by the Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in cooperation with the Centre for Jewish Studies at the University of Manchester.

The workshop will examine Jewish religious life during the Holocaust and in the first years after the war, with particular emphasis on primary sources created between 1939 and 1950. The organizers want to concentrate on documents that deepen our understanding of the religious, social and communal experiences of Jews subjected to persecution, ghettoization, deportation and mass murder.

Each participant is to present a single document or a set of related sources and place the material in its historical context, explaining its religious, theological, linguistic or social significance.

Among the topics to be covered are rabbinic responsa written during the war, reactions to Nazi policies of persecution, spiritual resistance, questions of conversion, religious life in ghettos and concentration camps, how rabbinic networks operated, the religious identity of people living in so-called mixed marriages, and postwar questions about rituals of death and burial.

A key premise of the project is that religious experience during the Holocaust cannot be reduced to a matter of keeping or losing faith. The sources reveal a far more complex picture: efforts to maintain religious practice in the face of extreme danger, the search for halakhic answers to unprecedented situations and the preservation of communal rituals, but also doubt, conflict and shifts in identity.

The Manchester workshop is part of a broader Mandel Center research initiative on religion and the Holocaust. One planned outcome of the meeting is an academic sourcebook with explanatory essays, intended primarily for university teaching. Where necessary, the documents will also be published in translation so that the material can reach a wider readership.

Researchers at various stages of their careers, from doctoral students to professors, were invited to apply. The deadline for applications was October 20, 2026.

The workshop is one of the Mandel Center's initiatives to advance



**„Jewish Religious Life During the Holocaust:
An Exploration of Essential Primary Sources“**

University of Manchester
May 18–20, 2027

Organizers: Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel Center for Advanced
Holocaust Studies, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum; Centre for
Jewish Studies, University of Manchester.

"NEVER AGAIN." HOW CAN THE MEMORY OF NAZI CRIMES BE PRESERVED?

What will become of the memory of the crimes of National Socialism once the last witnesses are gone? How can authentic sites and the material evidence of these crimes be protected in a world increasingly dominated by digital media? And how can attempts to relativize history be countered? These questions are the starting point for the exhibition **NIE WIEDER! Gegen das Vergessen der NS-Verbrechen** (NEVER AGAIN! Against Forgetting Nazi Crimes), on view at the Bundeskunsthalle in Bonn until May 2, 2027.

The exhibition's curators start from the premise that European remembrance culture is at a moment of fundamental change. In the coming years, very few Holocaust survivors and other victims of Nazi persecution will still be able to speak about their experiences in person. Surviving testimonies, documents and objects, and the sites where the crimes were committed, are therefore becoming ever more important, as are the ways in which they are interpreted and passed on to future generations.

The exhibition is divided into five sections: Knowledge, Sites of Crime, Memorials, Memory and Future. Each explores a different aspect of the responsibility to preserve memory. The first is concerned with research and the communication of facts. The



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The question of authentic sites features prominently. Former camps, sites of mass murder and other historic places are not only places of remembrance and mourning but also material evidence of what happened. Preserving, documenting and further researching them is becoming increasingly important in a world in which the authenticity of images and testimonies is at times called into question.

The Bundeskunsthalle also shows that memory is not confined to documents and museum display cases. It is shaped by monuments, family recollections and stories passed down from generation to generation, and also by art. Works by artists such as Christian Boltanski, Gerhard Richter, Harun Farocki, Käthe Kollwitz, Zoran Mušič, Józef Szajna, Luc Tuymans and Natalia Romik therefore form an important part of the exhibition. They deal both with the crimes themselves and with their afterlife in social memory.

The final section of the exhibition, devoted to the future of memory, is particularly significant. One of the projects on display is an interactive digital testimony by Holocaust survivor Eva Umlauf, which lets visitors put questions to her and receive answers she recorded in advance. New technologies can help preserve individual stories, but they also raise questions of authenticity, context and the limits of replacing direct encounters with digital ones.

Yet the exhibition is not only about ways of remembering. The mechanisms that "produce forgetting"—denial, relativization and the political instrumentalization of history—are another important theme. At a time when images are easily manipulated, material evidence becomes all the more important.

NIE WIEDER! is a joint project of the Bundeskunsthalle Bonn, the Buchenwald und Mittelbau-Dora (Buchenwald and Mittelbau-Dora) Foundation). Contributors to the exhibition include memory scholar Aleida Assmann, Meron Meron, Holocaust survivor Eva Umlauf, who shares patronage of the exhibition with the Minister of State for Culture and the Media, Volker Bouffier.

NIE WIEDER! Gegen das Vergessen der NS-Verbrechen

Bundeskunsthalle, Bonn
until May 2, 2027

Curators: Henriette Pleiger, Jens-
Christian Wagner, Rikola-Gunnar
Lüttgenau

The "Never Again" of the title is presented here not as a self-evident declaration but

WHAT I COULD CARRY

I didn't expect to bring anything back from Auschwitz. Thirty years later, I'm still holding a bar of soap. In 1996, I travelled to Poland with a group of about forty Greek Cypriot Orthodox Christians. The trip itself had been organised by Orthodox Christian friends of ours in Poland, with the blessing of the Orthodox Church in Poland.

During our visit to Auschwitz, an elderly Jewish man accompanied our group through the site. I do not know how his presence with our group had been arranged. At the time, I thought of him simply as the man guiding us through what we were seeing.

Inside the museum, I moved slowly from room to room, looking at objects: shoes, suitcases, hair. Things that once belonged to people. Now they stood behind glass, silent, arranged, almost ordinary.

At some point, I learned that the hair had been used to make everyday items.

That stayed with me.

It wasn't only the loss. It was the transformation. The quiet way something human could become something usable. Something stripped of its story.

I remember watching other visitors as they moved through the space. Some leaned closer to the glass, reading quietly. Others stepped back, as if distance could make it easier. No one stayed for long. We kept moving, as if something in us could not bear to stop.

At one point, I caught my reflection in the glass, faint and out of focus, layered over the objects behind it. For a moment, it felt like

I didn't belong to the present, but neither to that past. Just a visitor passing through something that could not be entered or understood.

I tried to imagine the lives behind the objects, but the attempt failed. There were too many. Too much. My mind could not hold them.

I remember the moment I started crying. It came suddenly, without warning, as if something inside me had reached a limit.

I stepped aside, not wanting to be seen, though I don't think anyone was paying attention. Everyone there seemed to be carrying something invisible.

I walked past the crematorium. I won't describe it. Not because there is nothing to say, but because whatever I say would be smaller than what it is.

Some experiences don't stay with you.
They exceed you.

As I moved through Auschwitz, a thought kept returning to me.

How far can a human being fall?

I thought about animals. We sometimes describe extreme human cruelty as "animalistic," but standing there, the comparison seemed unfair to animals. Animals kill out of necessity—for food, for survival. What I was confronting was something else: human beings



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That stayed with me.

It wasn't only the loss. It was the transformation. The quiet way something human could become something usable. Something stripped of its story.

I remember watching other visitors as they moved through the space. Some leaned closer to the glass, reading quietly. Others stepped back, as if distance could make it easier. No one stayed for long. We kept moving, as if something in us could not bear to stop.

At one point, I caught my reflection in the glass, faint and out of focus, layered over the objects behind it. For a moment, it felt like I didn't belong to the present, but neither to that past. Just a visitor passing through something that could not be entered or understood.

I tried to imagine the lives behind the objects, but the attempt failed. There were too many. Too much. My mind could not hold them. I remember the moment I started crying. It came suddenly, without warning, as if something



I thought of what he had told us only hours earlier.

I picked it up.

It smelled like roses.

The scent felt almost absurdly gentle after the day I had just lived. I stood there looking at this small, ordinary object and thinking about the elderly man outside the gates of Auschwitz.

I had never made a habit of taking soap from hotel rooms. I had stayed in hotels before and had never felt the slightest need to take one home.

But that night in Poland, I did.

The next morning, I packed it in my suitcase.

Later, perhaps because humor gave me somewhere to hide what I was really feeling, I sometimes turned the story into a dark joke.

"You know," I would tell friends, "I went to Poland. I visited Auschwitz. And I brought back a bar of soap."

I would see the surprise on their faces and then add:

"Don't worry. It's from the hotel.

Rose-scented."

Perhaps we laughed.

But I kept the soap.

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memoria.auschwitz.org

PUBLISHER

Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Paweł Sawicki

ASSISTANT EDITOR

Agnieszka Juskowiak-Sawicka

EDITED BY

Bartosz Bartyzel
Marek Lach
Łukasz Lipiński

CONTACT

memoria@auschwitz.org

