65TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE LIBERATION OF THE AUSCHWITZ CAMP
EDITORIAL

Most of this issue of Oś is dedicated to the commemoration of the 65th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz. Inside, you will find reports of the commemorations, as well as the words of former prisoners and politicians that were said during the ceremony at the former Auschwitz II-Birkenau camp. On the last page there is a photomontage that includes portraits of former prisoners, the most important guests of the annual commemoration. We are incredibly thankful to the witnesses of history from over 65 years ago that even though it was incredibly cold they came to the commemoration. We thank them for the fact that as long as they have the strength, they share their experiences with us, as well as young people with whom they share the truth about Auschwitz. In addition, this edition of Oś includes a report on the inauguration of the Forum Pro Publico Bono “Citizens for European Solidarity” at the International Youth Meeting Center. We also congratulate the Center for the Polish-German Youth Prize “Keep Remembrance”, which is given by the Polish-German Youth Cooperation for the workshop project Language of the perpetrators—language of the victims, which has been written about in previous issues. We invite Oświęcim’s youth to IYMC for the workshop Human rights begin with rights of children and the young. In this Oś you will also find an invitation to view films dealing with Jewish topics at the Jewish Center, which are organized together with the Jewish Motifs Association. In addition, on the pages of the Center for Dialogue and Prayer we recommend an extraordinarily interesting and moving history of a missionary Bartholomäa from Münster, who has searched her family in Poland for many years.

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ARCHIVAL PHOTOGRAPHS
OF THE LIBERATION COMMEMORATIONS

A GALLERY OF THE 20TH CENTURY

Photo: A-BSM Archive

1960

1965

1966

1970

1963

1971
On January 27, 2010, 65 years passed since the liberation of the Nazi German Auschwitz Concentration and Extermination Camp.

Early in the morning, staff members from the Auschwitz Memorial paid tribute to the victims and the Soviet soldiers who died fighting for the city and the camp. They placed candles and flowers at the Death Wall in the courtyard of block 11 at the Auschwitz I site, at the monument to the extermination of the Roma in Auschwitz II-Birkenau, at the monument to the victims of the Auschwitz III-Monowitz camp, at the grave in the Oswiecim cemetery that holds the remains of Soviet soldiers who died liberating the camp, and at the mass grave of approximately 700 prisoners who died in the final days of the camp. Mass for the intention of the victims was said at the Oswiecim church of the Divine Mercy by local deacon Krzysztof Strzal. About 300 people, including many former prisoners, attended.

The anniversary was accompanied by a conference organized by the Polish Ministry of National Education for ministers of education from more than 30 countries, and by the opening of a Russian exhibition at the Auschwitz I site dedicated to the liberation. The main ceremonies were held at the Auschwitz II-Birkenau site, attended by former prisoners, the President and Prime Minister of Poland, the Prime Minister of Israel, government delegations from more than 40 countries, the President and members of the European Parliament, members of the Polish Parliament, a delegation from the Knesset, members of the diplomatic corps, clergy, local officials, invited guests, and everyone desirous of honoring the memory of the victims of Nazi Germany.

Former Auschwitz prisoners August Kowalczyk, who also acted as master of ceremonies, Elzbieta Bąkowska, and Marian Turski spoke first. “The 65th anniversary of liberation is now more than a mere historical reality. Faithful to memory, we turn our heart and minds to those who never returned to freedom,” said Kowalczyk. In his speech, International Auschwitz Council Chairman Władysław Bartoszewski asked how much of the truth about the horrible experiences of totalitarianism we have managed to convey to the younger generation. “Please, I believe, but not enough.” Knowledge about what is going on never has, and still does not automatically result in a reaction in the world. In the same way, a capacity for opposing evil does not result from knowledge about the existence of evil, but rather from the moral condition of every one of us. Today, each of us has access to knowledge about the contemporary spread of hatred and racism, disdain and anti-Semitism, about genocidal practices and the sentencing of innocent people to death in different parts of the world. The question is whether we are doing anything with this knowledge. Can we take the side of the victims? Or do we rather stand on the side of all those who knew, but did nothing to help?” he asked. Marian Turski said that “if one saw in those days, there had been more empathy for the Jews in the United States, Great Britain, in every good Europe, in Poland, if there had been more empathy among the Jews, where even if they bomb the crematoria and gas chambers, we would not have avoided the Holocaust but the size of the Holocaust could have been smaller. If we are to live in a world with less intense hatred, we must try to show compassion, understanding and empathy.” After the former prisoners, it was time for the politicians to speak. “For me, it is a matter of great satisfaction that we have more than 30 ministers of education or representatives of ministries of education here because, even though we hope everyone lives to be a hundred and twenty, we must be aware that the time when the witnesses will be gone is not far off. What remains are the memories that are written down, taught, and spoken. These memories prove that everything is done that the crimes that were committed at Birkenau and Auschwitz, and also in Treblinka, Chelmno on the Ner, Majdanek, Mauthausen, and Buchenwald, will never be repeated,” said Polish President Lech Kaczyński.

Prime Minister Donald Tusk stressed the need to discover even a trace of hope in this place so as to not to go away feeling that humanity, culture, and European civilization were complete failures. “It is our duty to continue to return here to give testimony to our memory of this time of the deepest despair and the utmost lawlessness, to give testimony to our emphatic revolt against the organized hatred that has devoured millions of people into gas chambers, against everything of which Auschwitz-Birkenau extermination camp has become a symbol,” he said. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel said that his country would never forget these events or allow them to be forgotten. He felt that the rebirth of anti-Semitism was possible, and should not be permitted. He characterized Auschwitz as the greatest tragedy in the history of the Jews and the worst case of genocide in the world. He thanked the Polish government for its efforts to commemorate the tragedy. He also mentioned that every third person who rescued a Jew was Polish, and that these rescuers risked their own lives and the lives of their families.

In a speech addressed to the participants in the observances, Russian Federation President Dmitry Medvedev wrote that “We should clearly realize that this is not simply a question of memory, as well as disregard for the lessons of history, ultimately lead to tragedy and crime, while trust and mutual assistance help us to withstand the most dangerous threats.” The message was read out in his name by Andrey Fursenko, the minister of education and science of the Russian Federation.

At the conclusion of the first part of the ceremonies, President Kaczyński addressed decorations to Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum Director Dr. Piotr M.A. Cywinski, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Director Sara Bloomfield, and Yad Vashem Institute Director Avner Shalev. They were decorated for their “eminent services in educational and museum work, commemorating the victims of the Nazi German labor camps, concentration camps, and extermination centers, and for their accomplishments in the development of the Polish-Jewish dialogue.”

The Director of the Museum received the Order of Poland Reborn and the foreign guests were decorated with the Officer’s Cross of the Order of Merit of the Republic of Poland.

The observances concluded at the Monument to the Victims of Auschwitz, where the participants placed candles commemorating the victims of Auschwitz while rabbis and clergy of various Christian delegations joined in reading the Forty-Second Psalm.
When in September 1940, as an 18-year-old Pole, I went through the gate under the words Arbeit macht frei for the first time, and I was standing in the roll-call place of camp Auschwitz I, now as Schutzhaftlager Number 427—among five thousand and five hundred other Poles—I never imagined that I would outline Hitler and survive the Second World War. We never imagined that Auschwitz—as Auschwitz-Birkenau and Monowitz—would become the place where the plan for the biological extermination of the European Jews irrespective of their sex or age—the only one of its kind—was put into operation. In the first 15 months of the existence of this horrible place, we, the Polish inmates, were alone. The free world was not interested in our suffering and our death, despite tremendous efforts by the clandestine resistance organization in the camp to pass information to the world outside. In late summer 1941, over 10,000 prisoners of war from the Soviet Army were brought to Auschwitz, and it was on them and on the ailing Polish political prisoners that the poisonous gas Zyklon B was tried out in September 1941. None of the inmates could have imagined that this was “only” a criminal test, a criminal preparation for industrial methods of genocide. Yet this is what was to happen in the memorable years 1942—1943—1944. The construction of the gas chambers and crematoria, and their efficient functioning, were only technical elements in this diabolical project. In Poland, the homeland of David Ben-Gurion and Shimon Peres, and also of Isaac Bashevis Singer, Artur Rubinstein, and Menahem Begin, following the decision from Berlin, the center for the final destruction of the hated Jews was built. The Polish resistance—civil and military—informed and alarmed the free world: the governments of the United Kingdom and the United States had been precisely informed about what was going on in Auschwitz-Birkenau by the last quarter of 1942, thanks to the mission of the Polish courier, the Polish Army reserve officer Jan Karski, and also through other channels. No state in the world, however, believed that, with our joint forces, we could stop this criminal act, yet let us not forget that the role of international consciousness is in your hands need this place of remembrance speaks so extremely meaningfully with its authenticity. This consciousness must be taken into consideration in developing educational policies. If we want these young people to become conscious citizens of our country’s, we must let them become immersed in the significance of Auschwitz. Standing in this place five years ago together with Simone Weil, I announced the establishment of the International Center for Education about Auschwitz and the Holocaust. The center is already in operation. The need for education about Auschwitz and Holocaust seems greater than ever before. Just a few weeks ago, we witnessed an attack on the most recognizable sign of this camp—the Arbeit macht frei sign. At the most basic level, this was a criminal act, yet let us not forget that the role of international neo-Nazis has not been explained yet. This place inspires a particular responsibility: bearing witness to future generations. It is a treasure that must be protected as long as possible. A year ago, we established the Auschwitz-Birkenau Foundation, whose objective is to finance a long-term, coherent plan for the conservation of buildings and objects. So far, the world’s reactions to our appeal have been very positive, and allow us to believe that, with our joint forces, we shall fulfill our obligation. Graves encourage reflection in every normal individual. But there are no graves here. Therefore, in the place where this incomprehensible crime was perpetrated, our reflection must be transformed into a specific responsibility, into a lasting memory of what happened. Much as I did five years ago, I wish with words from The Book of Job, significant for Jews and Christians alike: “O earth, enfold me in my blood, and let my cry have no place.”
ADDRESS BY EDWARD PACZKOWSKI, FORMER AUSCHWITZ PRISONER, CAMP NO. 66 485

It was summer. There was a storage place for bread in block 25. Shortly before evening roll call, when the prisoners were coming back to camp, other prisoners tossed bread through the window and shouted, “Hundert! Hundert!” They missed the window once and the bread fell to the ground. I grabbed that loaf and ran away. One of the prisoners came after me. He chased me. He caught me and wanted to lead me to an SS man. I kissed his hands so he’d let me go, but he didn’t. He said he was afraid because the SS man saw him catch me. In the end, he led me to the SS because the SS man saw him catch but he didn’t. He said he was afraid to lead me to an SS man. I was wondering circumstances 65 years earlier, Mister President of the European Mister Presidents, Mister Prime Ministers, People, especially young people, ask me: What was the worst thing in the camp? Shortly before evening roll call, it was summer. There was a storage place for bread in block 25. When I was in Auschwitz, the camp was almost until the last day. On January 18, 1945, they sent us on the march to Buchenwald. There were thousands on the kommandos where the water and sanitary facilities had been bombed, or during the Death Marches... The lice actually infected me in the last days of the march and I had typhus when the war ended... Was there anything worse than that? The HUMILIATION! The fact that you weren’t treated like a person—a being—including if you were a Jew, and precisely because you were a Jew, you were treated as something even less than an animal. You were an insect—a louse, a chigger, a bedbug, a cockroach that, in the normal, decent, acceptable way of things should be suffocated, stepped on, crushed, annihilated... And that’s why, when people today, and especially young people, ask me—a man who’s lived through everything...—O WHAT DID YOU LEARN FROM YOUR EXPERIENCE?—WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE TO TELL OTHER PEOPLE ALIVE TODAY? Among all the words and lessons I would choose one above all: EMPATHY! The outstanding Polish poet Bolesław Taborski recently wrote a brief poem under precisely that title. Permit me, my friends, to quote it: COMPASSION The most important thing is compassion For everyone on earth. People, animals, the plants too. The rocks, seas, and — again I say — people. It makes life bearable. And its absence dehumanizes. Take the perpetrators of the Holocaust, The devil’s servants on his earth, They pretended to be humans, Nay, superhumans. They were nothing, They knew not what compassion is. My Dear Friends! If the call “NEVER AGAIN AUSCHWITZ” is to be more than a mere slogan or empty phrase, we must learn to understand other people who are DIFFERENT FROM ME, DIFFERENT FROM US! We must show them compassion and understanding! We must try to grasp and accept people different from us, who think differently and have different motives for action—if we want to live in a world without hatred!...
 ADDRESS BY THE PRIME MINISTER OF THE REPUBLIC OF POLAND
DONALD TUSK

We stand in a place where it is difficult to find the right words to speak... This is a place where it may only be possible to speak with the words used by Jan Karski, a courier of the Polish Underground State, a man who tried, in vain, to move the world’s conscience by bringing it information about the extermination of the European Jewry underway in the Polish lands; the Holocaust was a time when the man made in God’s image and after his likeness was shattered.

This is a place that entitles us to ask painful questions: Why was the world silent? Why did the world allow it to happen? Why did alliances, strategies, policies and diplomacy—the whole mechanism of the civilized world—and human beings, turn out to be indifferent to the crime being committed here? What can we do with this knowledge about man that Auschwitz has given us? Will our memory be able to hold on to every one of over 1,000,000 faces that went through this camp? What can we say to the survivors who stand next to us today? To those who have possessed the most painful truth about what man is capable of. Or perhaps only helpless silence—in hope that man will never again be forced to wear a striped camp uniform, be reduced to a number and be cruelly tortured until his last breath—is truthful here. In this place I am searching for even a trace of hope, so that I don’t walk away from here with a sense of the downfall of humanity and collapse of European culture and civilization. It is our duty to continue to return here to give testimony to our memory of this time of the deepest despair and the utmost lawlessness, to give testimony to our emphatic revolt against the organized hatred that herded millions of people into gas chambers, against everything of which the Auschwitz-Birkenau extermination camp has become a symbol.

This little Polish town, Oświęcim, which lies at a crossroads of European railways, became the place where a German concentration camp was established, then transformed into an extermination camp. This place represents a special obligation for all of us, for Europe and the whole world, our special obligation to remember and to give testimony about the Holocaust. This is all the more evident to us Poles, since every Polish family suffered enormous losses during the war—also in this camp. We know the importance of preserving this place of memory intact as a cemetery, a monument, a summons to memory and evidence of the crime, which few want to deny. We must stop the process of decay of its buildings, which is happening with time. This is why we created the Auschwitz-Birkenau Foundation. Its goal of saving this place has been recognized in many countries. I trust that more countries will join in its efforts. The challenges are enormous. Has it ever happened that preservation was needed on such a scale, to save human hair, eyeglasses, dentures and even toys—as evidence of genocide? We want to conserve every single object, for each one is a trace of our brothers. Finally, I also want to remember the soldiers of the Red Army who liberated the camp. For the handful of survivors on 27 January 1945, they became a sign that their ordeal was over. Ladies and Gentlemen, as I thank you for coming to this place, your presence here today, let me express the hope that the crime that took place here will never be repeated, that our memory of those who were murdered here—and in the other extermination, concentration and labor camps and prisons of the Second World War—will serve as a sufficient reminder for the future.
ADDRESS BY THE PRIME MINISTER OF THE STATE OF ISRAEL, BENJAMIN NETANYAHU

Mr. President, Mr. Prime Minister, Polish government ministers, ministers of education, representatives of the Russian Federation and many other countries. Education Minister of Israel, Gideon Saar, Mr. Deputy Minister Yaakov Litzman, Knesset members and members of the European Parliament, Mr. President of the European Parliament and members of national parliaments in Europe.

Dear guests, including you sir, former Chief Rabbi of Israel Meir Lau and Mr. Avner Shalev of Yad Vashem. And above all, all of you who survived the Holocaust and are with us here today, and who spoke in such a moving manner about your agony and suffering.

I would like to thank the Polish government for this historical effort which it has taken upon itself to commemorate the greatest catastrophe that has touched our people, the biggest crime perpetrated against humanity.

We meet here, Poles and Jews at the crossroads of tragedy. Our long common history includes great cultural triumphs and human experiences. We are currently sitting in a warm tent and remembering those who shivered from the cold, and if they didn’t freeze to death they were sent to the gas and burned. And we also remember that one third of the Righteous Among the Nations, those who risked their lives, moreover, risked the lives of their own children and families, to help others, the Poles, we remember. We stand here together, to remember the past. We help build the future of the rule of law, truth and hope for all peoples and all nations, whose representatives are here and for all of humanity.

ADDRESS BY THE MINISTER OF EDUCATION OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION, ANDREY FURSENGO

Dear Mr. President of the Republic of Poland, Dear Mr. Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Poland, Dear Mr. Prime Minister of the State of Israel, Distinguished guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have the honor to be delegated by the President of the Russian Federation to deliver my message to the participants in the ceremony commemorating the 65th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp: “Dear friends!”

The day of January 27 is annually commemorated throughout the world as International Holocaust Remembrance Day. It is the day when Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp was liberated in 1945. Anatoly Shapiro, a major in the Soviet Army, was one of those who opened the gates of the death camp and devoted the rest of his life to fighting against racism and genocide. These are his words: “I want to appeal to all human beings living in this world: join your efforts, prevent the evil that we had to face! People, protect life on Earth!”

Generations who have not witnessed the scourge of war must be made aware of it. It is essential for all of us to realize the scale of the tremendous price that mankind paid for tolerating xenophobia and chauvinism. It is equally important to remember that six million people were executed because of their ethnicity, solely because of the fact that they were Jews. 65 years have already passed since the vanquishing of fascism. Nevertheless, one can still hear the voices of those who endeavor to justify Nazi crimes, as well as to treat the victims and perpetrators, the liberators and the invaders, on an equal footing. Some countries go even further—they make heroes of the Nazis’ accomplices. Such attempts to revise history are unacceptable. We must join our efforts in the fight against them.

We should clearly realize that indifference and apathy, as well as disregard for the lessons of history, ultimately lead to tragedy and crime, while trust and mutual assistance help us to withstand the most dangerous threats.

So it happened in the life of a woman named Miep Gies who was helping a Jewish family in the Netherlands to hide from the Nazis during World War II. She then preserved Anne Frank’s diary for the world—the diary of a young girl that became unique evidence of fascist atrocities.

It happened also in the life of two prisoners of the Buchenwald concentration camp: Fedor Michaylichenko, a Russian soldier, and Israel Lau, a Jewish boy. The child managed to survive in this hell only thanks to the help of a stranger who became the dearest person in his life at the time. When he grew up, he became the Chief Rabbi of Israel.

Today, the tragedy of World War II is a painful warning. It is only we who can secure peace and liberty on our planet. It is we, all of us, who are responsible for this to the present and future generations.”

Dmitry Medvedev

LEARNING TO REMEMBER

If there is one place in the world that should arouse our consciences, that place is Auschwitz-Birkenau—the preserved space of the former Nazi German concentration and extermination camp. Despite the passage of the years, it speaks profoundly to each sensitive mind.

Today, we know how fragile our world is. Sixty-five years after the liberation of Auschwitz, the crime of genocide continues to be committed in various places around the world, as if humanity had learned nothing from the tragic lessons of World War II. For this reason, young people should have an opportunity within the educational system for direct contact with this place on which history has left its awful mark.

The world cannot build a future without remembering the terrible past. Knowledge about the Holocaust and the Teaching of Memory, including the difficult and painful memories, are therefore necessary within the educational process not only to remind the world about the tragedy of the Victims of Auschwitz-Birkenau, but also for memory to spur the younger generation, in particular, to take bold responsibility for the fate of the world.

Katarzyna Hall
Minister of National Education, Republic of Poland
Prof. Władysław Bartoszewski
Chairman, International Auschwitz Council
Dr. Pietr M. A. Cywiński
Director, Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum
Thank you, Mr. President for appreciating our daily labor and the burden of responsibility given us to bear. The truth is that the understanding of the greatest drama of the 20th century by future generations depends on our work and our cooperation. We are aware of this, and we live and work with it day by day.

The Memorial, as well as the form of memory itself were created by all of you who survived the Holocaust and the hell of the concentration camps. It is you who told us of your worst experiences and you who taught us how to listen to that experience. You could have remained silent, but you spoke. I am speaking to you, Dear Friends! I cannot tell you that the world has for certain heard, understood, and grown wise. I share your fears.

Much remains to be done. Man has a long way to go. Yet one thing seems certain to me. Regardless of everything, everything notwithstanding, the victims’ voice shall not fall silent and the earth shall not cover their cry. What was before shall never return, but the time after the Holocaust will never again be a time of sweet innocence.

This place, as the conscience of Europe and the World, can never again be passed by, silenced, erased. This land bears within itself the cry of the victims. And it shall not cover it up. Of this I am sure.

Thank you for being with us. Many will say that we came here to you. But I know well that you have come here to us, not for the first and not—I hope—for the last time. Just as you have been here all these 65 years.

Among us there are people from so many countries, from so many international and state institutions as well as volunteer organizations. Today it seems so easy to think that we know and understand more. The world of today and the world to be made tomorrow depend on all of us, in a direct way.

In the meantime, how often we ourselves are passive towards evil. Yet today there is no war in our country. We are free. And today we need more of the Righteous!

Memory is inseparably connected with this Place. And the fate of this Place depends on us. I would like to thank the Prime Minister of the Government of the Polish Republic for his personal involvement in creating the Perpetual Fund for preserving the authenticity of this Place. I would like to thank Germany for promising support in the amount of €60 million. That is half the needed sum. I believe that other states whose governments and citizens are conscious of the fundamental importance of this Place for our history and civilization will help complete the creation of this Fund. We owe this to the Victims of Auschwitz and all the Victims of the Shoah, but we also owe it to our children. And to our children’s children.
EUROPEAN FORUM “PRO PUBLICO BONO” AT THE IYMC

On 27 January at the IYMC the first part of the two-day Oświęcim Academy Symposium “Human rights in a civilization of solidarity” took place. On this symbolic day, the anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau, the President of the European Parliament Jerzy Buzek, along with former prisoners of the death camp: among them, Zofia Posmysz, August Kowalczyk, and Kazimierz Albin, inaugurated the European Forum Pro Publico Bono “Citizen’s for European Solidarity.” The idea behind the forum is to integrate efforts to build and strengthen the culture of human rights in Europe.

The European Forum “Pro Publico Bono” is the initiative of the President of the European Parliament, Professor Jerzy Buzek. Invited to take part were former President of the European Parliament, because it is within the Parliament, as an institution, that the shape of modern Europe is debated.

The Forum harks back to the memory of Auschwitz. Therefore, the Academy of Oświęcim points to human rights as the cornerstone of civilization, the development of Europe based equally on the memory of the totalitarian past and the guarantees for the dignity and rights of the human being. Because of this, guests of the inaugural Forum were laureates of the Oświęcim Human Rights Prize, in honor of John Paul II: Professor André Glucksman—French writer and philosopher, editor Stefan Wilkanowicz from Cracow—Vice-President of the International Auschwitz Council, and Professor Jerzy Kloczewski—historian.

The participants of the meeting included, among others, the Rector of the Jagiellonian University Professor Karol Musiol, Professor Andrzej Zoll, Professor Grażyna Skapska, president of the Pro Publico Bono Waldemar Rataj, Janina Cunnelly of the Oświęcim Institute for Human Rights, MEPs and representatives of regional, county, city, and municipal authorities.

Before the declaration of the Forum, Professor Jerzy Buzek led the debate on the issues of European solidarity with the participation of Professor André Glucksman, editor Stefan Wilkanowicz and Professor Jerzy Kloczewski.

“When it comes to human rights, think about particular people, such as Marek Edelman, Anna Politkovskaya,” said André Glucksman. He also expressed his belief that Auschwitz as a symbol has not ended: “At Auschwitz, the declaration ‘never again’ has been made many times, but of course there have been many crimes against humanity,” he added. Recalling the situations in Cambodia, Rwanda and Chechnya, he argued that we still need to fight indifference.

“A uniting Europe should be in solidarity when thinking about human rights” stated the President of the EP. In the declaration read out during the Forum, Jerzy Buzek stated: “Today we know that even the most legitimate human rights cannot be reduced to a single system of legal norms and the next set of rules governing social and international life.” He also expressed his faith in the possibility of development of European civilization based on human rights.

Regarding the problem of relating to the role of human rights in Europe, Professor Jerzy Kloczewski noted: “Europeans should remember about human rights and humanitarianism, but also about their own sins. Our common Europe will succeed if we will have a common memory.”

In Stefan Wilkanowicz’s opinion the Forum “Pro Publico Bono” is an initiative that is exceptionally important for Europe and the world. In his memorandum he stated: “I am convinced that it is necessary to transform our civilization, especially in a culture of peace and culture of activity. A transformation so profound that it can seem as if it is a utopia. But this utopia is not a dream, but a display of the direction of change and this is what is most important.” At the conclusion of the discussion, Wilkanowicz said: “Out of Auschwitz-Birkenau comes an appeal to the citizens of Europe and the world, to all people of good will—an appeal for solidarity of activity. Already today let us start looking for ways for further development.”

The IYMC, as an institution that for many years in practice deals with issues of human rights as part of its educational activities, declares its cooperation in the Forum Pro Publico Bono “Citizens for European Solidarity.”

Prof. Jerzy Buzek’s visit to the IYMC was the second in recent years. On September 18 of last year along with former EP President Hans-Gert Pöttering, editor Marian Turski, a former inmate of Auschwitz-Birkenau, and Christoph Heubner—Vice-President of the International Auschwitz Committee, he participated in a panel discussion Europe lost. Europe returned, organized under the project 1939/1989. Time of guilt and a time of hope.
Four years after the liberation of Auschwitz concentration camp, whose victims we honor today, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was proclaimed. Today, we know that even the most legitimate human rights cannot be reduced to a single system of legal norms and the next set of rules governing social life and international law. The civilization of human rights needs to be supported by the culture created in respect for human dignity, the innate freedom and in public spaces—national and international—with the respect for the principle of solidarity.

In which direction will Europe develop and what role in this strategy will human rights play? I am referring specifically to the legacy of Auschwitz, the remembrance of all the crimes of the Holocaust, to the tragic experience of totalitarianism of the twentieth century—Nazism and Communism—and all the crimes of genocide, which are an open wound in Europe’s heritage. I am convinced that any action aimed at searching for new, ambitious targets for the development of our community—its culture and civilization—must first be determined in terms of European history that is symbolized by what Auschwitz is and always will be.

Firstly, I regard it as our commitment to solidarity with the victims of the crimes of the Holocaust and all the crimes of genocide committed in the history of Europe, which have a permanent place in our memory. Secondly, we must do so with a sense of solidarity with those whose memory is and will always remain the cause of pain, personal suffering, but also a source of genuine anxiety about their and their children’s future.

And thirdly, finally, we must, as well as those who will enjoy the benefits in future, take action now.

My hope for the possible development of European civilization based on human rights derive from the fact that I am co-creator and participant in the events of history, which launched “Solidarity” movement in 1980, and which, by the peaceful revolutions by the people of Central and Eastern Europe in 1989-1991, led, as a consequence, to the reunification of Europe, setting the new horizon towards a united Europe.

Solidarity is the value that continues through time and is still an important milestone in our thinking about human rights. So given the fact that the recognition and realization of fundamental human rights are still not widespread everywhere in the modern world, that human rights are not only something to be declared, it must be in their spirit and in them that we educate, a uniting Europe should be in solidarity when thinking about human rights. I declare open the Forum Pro Bono Publico “Citizens for European Solidarity.” To cooperate in creating the Forum I invite, firstly, all of my predecessors from the position of Presidents of the European Parliament. Participants of the Forum will bring together representatives of organizations and citizen’s groups, which are acting in different EU member states and contribute to the promotion of the culture of solidarity.
JEWISH MOTIFS AGAIN IN OŚWIĘCIM

The Jewish Center and the Jewish Motifs Association extends an invitation to peruse the 2009 Retrospective. From 2 February to 23 March 2010 at the Jewish Center there will be another showing of films on Jewish topics. Below we are publishing some of the films we propose. More information can be found on the website of the Jewish Center: www.ajcf.pl.

- 2 February (Tuesday), 5:00 pm
  Radegast, director Borys Lankosz (Poland 2008, 60', D)
  Bronze Phoenix 2009
  In 1941, over twenty thousand West European Jews arrived at the already overcrowded ghetto in Łódź. For the first time in modern history, two distant communities split not only by two centuries of civilization but also by an errancy which had transformed the life of the Western Jews faced each other. The majority of the Polish Jews considered assimilation an apostasy, whereas the German Jews considered their attachment to an orthodox mysticism and isolation from society ignorant. They even felt an animosity against those coming from the East. And here the two groups were forced to meet.

- 9 February (Tuesday), 5:00 pm
  Volunteers, director Mooy Landesman (Israel 2008, 54', D)
  This is a story that opens in the innocence of youth. It is a meeting of young people from various cultures. A saga that continues along the path of life of marriage and children, while at the same time presenting numerous questions relating to one’s sense of being a stranger in a foreign land, of belonging, of one’s identity and nationality.
  In the sixties Collective Communities—the kibbutz offered the Promised Land to the young people of Europe—all for a little bit of daily work.
  Snapshots, directors Dov Gil-Har and Uri Rozen (Israel 2008, 63', D)
  In the course of the last 60 years, the Israeli collective memory has been burned with several never to be forgotten images. A part of Israel 60 events, filmmaker Dov Gil-Har returns to seven of these images, meets the protagonists of the historical moments, and reconstructs the images. The earliest was taken in 1949; the most recent in 1997.

- 16 February (Tuesday), 5:00 pm
  Dluzek Stop, director Irit Shamgar (Poland 2008, 55', D)
  The Israeli journalist Irit Shamgar comes to Poland in summer of 2007 to meet the people, who knew her father and to see the places connected with him. She spends summer in the Lake District, at Dluzek Lake, in the summer cottage belonging to Irene Holland, her father’s wife. She meets friends, who were expelled from Poland in 1968 and who now have arrived for holiday from Sweden, Netherlands, and the USA. Dluzek is a magic place for them. In the sixties, a group of friends bought cottages there to spend holiday together. They went there also in 1968, when they were already “not party members, unemployed.” The father of the film director, a well-known journalist Stanislaw Brodzki, also fell into this category.
  This is a very personal film, which tells about people, for whom March of 68 became a personal tragedy.

- 23 February (Tuesday), 5:00 pm
  And Thou Shall Love, director Chaim Elbaum (Israel 2008, 28', K)
  Bronze Phoenix 2009
  Ohad, who is studying in the special “Hesder” program for orthodox soldiers, experiences profound loneliness while he conceals from others that he is gay. When he calls a religious hotline for help, he is advised that forty days of fasting and repentance will extinguish his homosexual tendencies. Ohad takes the required steps, and after the proscribed period is convinced that he is “cured.” Then Ohad’s best friend Nir returns from the army, and Ohad finds he can no longer evade his feelings and questions about himself and his relationship with God.

My Father’s Palestinian Slave, directors Nathanel Goldman Amrav and Uri Appenzeller (Sweden/Israel 2007, 52', D)
My Father’s Palestinian Slave is a very personal and intimate documentary about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as it lived and experienced in daily mundane life. The young Jewish filmmaker Nathanel has come to stay with his father in Jerusalem for a year, to study film at the Hebrew University. His father is an Israeli professor of Political Science and a veteran peace activist. While staying at his father’s house he meets and befriends Morad, the young illegal Palestinian laborer from the West Bank who works in his father’s garden. The young filmmaker confronts his fa-
• 16 March (Tuesday), 5:00 pm  
Shalom to Europe directed by Dror Moreh (Israel 2008, 90', D)  
In December 2003, Prime Minister Ariel Sharon publicized a plan to pull out of Gaza. In the face of criticism from within his own party, he ordered the withdrawal of 21 thousand Jewish settlers from that area. Father of settlement movement, the general responsible for the massacre in Sabra and Shatila, he became a statesman who devoted himself to working for peace in the Middle East—with full awareness and responsibility he destroyed his life's work. Who was Ariel Sharon? How did he come to take this historic step, which led to the eviction of settlers from Gaza and Samaria, opening the road to peace?

Thanks to him we Live, directed by A. Marek Drażęwski (Poland 2008, 46', D)  
This film presents Willem Hoen- sfeldt, a German officer and, among others, the administrator of a camp for prisoners of war in Pabianice in the first weeks of the occupation, who in 1943 in Warsaw saved the life of the pianist Władysław Szpilman. Willem Honsfeldt, his attitude and experience during the German occupation of Pabianice, and post-war fate can and should be the subject of joint reflection by Poles and Germans. The common history of remembrance of both countries can be placed here—a real foundation for understanding and reconciliation.

• 22 March (Monday), 5:00 pm  
Commander Edelman, directed by Artur Wicek “Baron” (Poland 2008, 86', D)  
Before the war Marek Edel- man was a Jewish activist in the Bund, but in 1943 he became one of the leaders of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising, a year later he also fought in the Warsaw Uprising. After the War, he did not leave Po- land—he stayed as a witness of the Holocaust, but also so that he could fight for human rights. In 1980, he cofounded “Siedem Sto- cie” and during mar- tial law he was imprisoned. In the free Poland he did not stop fighting; he fought for human rights all his life, taking part in the NATO inter- vention in Kosovo… The film Commander Edelman is a docu- mentary of Edelman from the inside, in which, from the perspective of his armchair, he sets the limits of decency. While the whole world around him moves faster and faster…

Aviolent tap dancer. In 1939 his dancing saved is life. Today, he is an old man living in a retirement home. When Avi- gidor dances on the parquet floor of his room, he laughs until he’s out of breath, and with the last ounce of his strength he pushes his tired feet to do a few more steps. For Avigidor, dancing isn’t a hobby and isn’t therapy. It’s the way to survive.

Happy Eyes, directed by Jonathan Rozenbaum (Poland 2008, 64', D)  
The Jewish Community of Warsaw Special Award 2009  
March of 1968 signifies a special moment in Poland’s post-war history. Thousands of Polish Jews were forced to leave their country as a result of an anti-Semitic campaign launched by the Communist authorities. Among them was the film di- rector’s father, who, for many years, was not allowed to go back. Rozenbaum makes use of archival materials and tells the story of his family in a personal as well as per- verse and amusing way. The starting point is a meeting of 1968 emigrants in the Israeli town of Ashkelon, where the director played with his parents when he was a child and where he had his first encounter with… alcohol. The film was made during the documentary workshops entitled March 1968. Farewells and Returns (www.march68.com) organized as part of the Polish Year in Israel 2008-2009.  

Holiday of Lights, directed by Mi- hael Danziger (Great Britain 2008, 52', K)  
A dramatic story about fam- ily affairs and values. Holiday of Lights is the story of a young Jewish English woman who has grown apart from her fa- ther ever since her marriage to a German jew. It is a story of clashes of identities and values, as they happen within the personal family sphere.

Happy Eyes, directed by Jonathan Rozenbaum (Poland 2008, 64', D)  
Avigidor is a tap dancer. In 1939 his dancing saved is life. Today, he is an old man living in a retirement home. When Avigidor dances on the parquet floor of his room, he laughs until he’s out of breath, and with the last ounce of his strength he pushes his tired feet to do a few more steps. For Avigidor, dancing isn’t a hobby and isn’t therapy. It’s the way to survive.

Live life, animation: jonath- an Pasternak (Israel 2007, 5:30')

Matan, animation: Ofer Hassan and Tomer Gilron (Israel 2007, 5:15')

Supper Grupper, animation: Jonni Aroussi and Ben Gen- mor (Israel 2008, 4:55')

Half Baked, animation: Nad- na Pines (Israel 2007, 1:34')

Moon Seek, animation: Daf- na Cohen and Eldad Dabush (Israel 2007, 3:19')

Gary and Mildred, animation: Rivka Press (Israel 2007, 5:30')

True Love Hotel, animation: Ron Ganaaz (Israel 2008, 6:50')

Hardcover & Paperback, animation: Uri Alonim and Moshe Serwalka (Israel 2008, 3')

Kill the Armadillo, animation: Rotem Aharon and Anne Ben-Dor, (Israel 2008, 2:13')

Melodica, animation Jonath- an Wasserman and Amita- j Lew (Israel 2008, 5:36')

A tess has a stain on her dress, animation: Eran Fla (Israel 2008, 4:02')

Boy, director Dmitry Geller (Israel 2008, 16')

Musical Chairs, directors Jonni Aroussi and Ben Gen- mor (Israel 2007, 4')

K – Short Film  
A – Animated Film  
D – Documentary Film
THE END OF SILENCE

This was the theme of this year’s annual recollections at the Center for Dialogue and Prayer. Silence is a way of dealing with traumatic experiences of past and repressing the memories about these events. However, silence can also become a burden on future generations and can extend the length the trauma lasts. One individual who ended the silence within her family and sought out the truth is Sister of the Heart of Jesus and missionary Bartholomäa from Münster. For dozens of years she searched for her father.

When Sister Bartholomäa was 13 years old, she discovered that her mother’s husband was not her father and that her real father was a forced laborer in Germany during the Second World War. His post-war fate was unknown. During her search, Sister Bartholomäa met much resistance, mainly from her own family. Finally, she remained completely silent about this topic. From her uncles she learned that in the days of the war a Pole raped her mother. However, Bartholomäa didn’t believe this story because her mother never spoke badly of her father and knew details of his family. With this information Sister Bartholomäa turned to the civil registry offices in the area, as well as to the Heimatbund (Home-land Organization) in town, where her father had been held. But, she did not find any assistance there and some of the information she sought was destroyed in attacks during the War. Her search stalled for some time, but her desire to find her father never faded.

Several years later, in the 1960s, Bartholomäa read an article about German children of Wehrmacht soldiers abroad. In the hope of getting an answer, she turned to Wehrmacht headquarters from where she was directed to the International Red Cross search agency. However, in 2003 she once again tried to get information and it ended in only getting a document from the Red Cross about the lack of information. That year, Bartholomäa’s mother died. By coincidence, during a lecture in 2004, Sister Bartholomäa got into contact with a Pole, who has helped her since that time in her search. Together they wrote to dioceses in the vicinity of Cracow in the hope of finding any sign of her father. While each diocese sent only negative responses, these attempts seemed hopeless. However, after several weeks there came another letter from the Diocese of Katowice, in which the archivist informed of a second, deeper search for any sign of this family that resulted in finally finding them. In the Baptismal records in Jeleśnia the much sought-after information about her father and family was found. At first this was disappointing: her father died in 1985, however his two sisters were still alive. During the international missionary congress in May 2006, Sister Bartholomäa met the bishop of Tarnów, Wiktor Skworec, who promised to help in making contact. Bartholomäa wrote a letter in which she presented her entire history. After several weeks there came a reply from Faustyna, one of her father’s sisters. Other than several questions about Bartholomäa’s mother, the letter included photographs of her father. This is how she saw him for the very first time. As it happened, the Diocese of Tarnów contacted Jeleśnia in connection with the questions. Thanks to the help of the Diocese, this led to the first personal meeting during which Bartholomäa met her sister Anna and brother Tadeusz. Also, several other things became clear. Why couldn’t the Red Cross find the sisters? Forced laborers had to take German surnames, if their real names sounded too foreign. And this is how, for example, Faustyna was named Maria. Rediscovering the family was impossible, having only their German names, which Bartholomäa’s mother gave in order to find them. All the while, Sister Bartholomäa had to fight the opposition within her family as well as within herself. She was often haunted by the thought: who is her father? Does she have a large family, would she bother those she sought? She thought about various options, however she decided to continue her search and find information about her roots and end the long silence within her family.

Today she is happy that has found her siblings, even though it was necessary to have the help of translators during the meetings. However, there exists a language of the heart, which says more than words. After the visit at the Center for Dialogue and Prayer, Sister Bartholomäa continued her trip to her rediscovered family in Jeleśnia.

Max Sundermann

Based on interviews by Maria Grei and Izabela Staszczyk with Sister Bartholomäa.

Translated from German by Bogusława Owsiany
A miniature set of furniture for dolls has been, and still is to this day, a present of dreams for children. This present is more extraordinary, because it is from the time of the Second World War. And it is made more valuable due to the fact that it was given by prisoners of Auschwitz out of gratitude for help they received.

The set of toys consists of a table, cabinets, a bed, and two nightstands. These were given to Hermiena Niedźwiedzka of Brzeszcze-Budy. Risking his life, her husband Zofia Brecher provided to prisoners food, medication, and even organized a place prisoners could eat in their home and barn. One of Hermiena's sons, Tadeusz, was 11 years old when the war broke out. He also helped his mother get food to prisoners.

The mini furniture was most certainly created in a camp workshop. Made from various types of wood, that was most likely leftover from bigger projects, stand out for their precision and solid quality. Each cupboard is finished with metal, has four legs, while the table and bed have supports with carvings done by hand. The attention to detail is amazing, given the fact that these items were made secretly by those who exposed themselves to further humiliation and punishment.

There are few items dedicated to children that have been preserved. So, the more valuable they are today. These boys, like all other things created with children in mind by camp prisoners, stir and create questions about the limits of human cruelty—because they concern the most vulnerable victims of all wars.

Written in the history of Oświęcim are the activities of legionnaires, who were raised here and led by school inspector Wacław Zajączkowski. The president of the group was Dr. Antoni Słosarczyk.

The beginning of the creation of the Gymnastic Society Sokół dates back to 21 December 1912. Part of this society had a tradition that raised young people in the so-called spirit of independence. When mobilization was announced, the "Sokół" division decided to send the entire team of the Polish Legions and equip them at their own expense.

The president of Sokół, Dr. Słosarczyk, took it upon himself to equip the legionnaires with all needed accessories, while not sparing his own money. The division met on the Oświęcim main square and held a ceremony on 24 August 1914 and the next day, 43 young people left for their destination. Many of the town's people said farewells to the sound of music, as they made their way towards the train station. At later dates, larger divisions left Oświęcim and were added to the II and III Regiments of Polish Legions. From our town and surrounding area, 649 soldiers fought in the legions. 31 August 1914, the Oświęcim County National Committee was formed under the leadership of mayor Roman Mayzet.

Among my memorabilia, I have much material connected to that time period. These are documents, identification cards, articles, letters, and photographs. However, one of the most valuable to me is a fragment of a shell casing that I bought at an antiques shop in Bielsko. It is an incredible piece of memorabilia made by a legionnaire who is not known by name. It is a piece of metal cut from a shell and it is regarded as an emblem that has an eagle in the middle of it—the symbol of the Oświęcim Legionnaires. Next to that appears the words “Oświęcim 1914-1916.”

MINORIAU GANOBIS
On January 27, 2010, sixty-five years have passed since the liberation of Auschwitz, the Nazi German Concentration and Death Camp. The main commemoration took place at the former camp of Auschwitz II-Birkenau. Taking part in the commemoration were former Auschwitz prisoners, the President and Prime Minister of Poland, Prime Minister of Israel, government delegations from over 40 countries, the Chairman and members of the European Parliament, representatives of the Polish Parliament, a delegation from the Knesset, representatives of the diplomatic corps, religious leaders, local social and government leaders, invited guests, and all those who wished to honor the memory of the victims of the German Nazis.