



UNIMAGINABLE

HOLOCAUST COMMEMORATION EVENT
Education International Conference

Auschwitz–Kraków
27–28 January 2015

HOLOCAUST COMMEMORATION EVENT

Education International Conference

Auschwitz-Kraków

27-28 January 2015

During an interview about the upcoming anniversary of the liberation of the Nazi death camp, Dr. Piotr M. A. Cywiński, director of the Auschwitz Memorial and Museum, said: “The 70th anniversary will not be the same as previous big anniversaries. We have to say it clearly: it is the last big anniversary that we can commemorate with a numerous group of Survivors. Until now, it has been they who taught us how to look at the tragedy of the victims of the Third Reich and the total destruction of the world of European Jews. Their voices became the most important warning against the human capacity for extreme humiliation, contempt and genocide. However, soon it will not be the witnesses of those years, but us, the post-war generations, who will pass on this horrible knowledge and the crushing conclusions that result from it.”¹

Not only the survivors are passing away, but also the female and male teachers who remember the war from the conversations while sitting at the table with their parents and grandparents. Those are people who went to

Auschwitz, usually when they were in their teens, to watch the exhibition in silent, but rapt attention and go to the wall of death. Those female and male teachers that visit the Auschwitz Memorial today with subsequent generations of their students know best how the young have a different mode of experiencing those peculiar pilgrimages. Tucked into long lines of visitors, discreetly urged onward by guides, looking at teenagers taking photos of themselves with the barracks as a background, they ask themselves, is this what we meant, did we do everything we could to make this real to our students, “(...) that the road to the most terrible tragedies is surprisingly simple. All you need is social frustration, a bit of demagoguery, an imaginary enemy, a moment of madness... (...)”. Those female and male teachers ask if millions of visitors are enough to make common the knowledge that, “ (...) Peace is a very fragile construct and you can never assume that any *acquis communautaire* is truly obtained for good (...)”.

¹ All of the quotes from the interview with dr. Piotr M. A. Cywiński

http://70.auschwitz.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=14&Itemid=118&lang=pl

WE WERE THERE – OUR MEETINGS

On 27 January 1945 we heard a grenade blow up near the gate of the camp. We immediately took a look from the blocks and saw several Soviet scouts, with rifles ready to shoot, who were coming our way from the direction of the gate. We quickly hung on poles white bed sheets with red stripes sewn on (from the fillings of block pillows) in the form of a red cross. When they saw us the scouts lowered their weapons. I knew the Russian language so I spoke to the scouts: “Zdrastwujtie pabiediteli i oswoboditeli”. They responded “Uže wy swobodnyje”.

ex-prisoner **Anna Łuszczewska-Chomicz**

Archiwum PMA-B, Oświadczenia, t. 75, k. 9-14

In 2005 the United Nations, made 27 January International Holocaust Remembrance Day. The first official celebration of this day was held in 2006. Since 2008 the representatives of our organizations – ITU, GEW, National Education Section of “Solidarity” and ZNP with the representatives of the Friedrich Ebert Foundation have met every two years for those celebrations. In 2010 we were joined by female and male representatives from other unions – VBE from Germany, GÖD from Austria and PDSZ from Hungary. In 2010 – seminars for young female and male teachers representing ITU, GEW, ZNP, National Education Section of “Solidarity” and VBE were added to the schedule of the meetings.

2008 – 63rd anniversary of the liberation of the Auschwitz camp

The celebrations were devoted to the tragedies of families of many religions and nationalities that suffered and died in the camp and the motto of the celebration – “Lost families” – was chosen because of two historical anniversaries – in 1943 German Nazis created two so-called

family camps in Birkenau for Romani and Jewish families. The majority of prisoners in those camps died or were murdered in the gas chambers.

Paweł Sawicki/jarmen

Fragments of memories of prisoners of the camp:

The last time I saw my mother she was crying, kneeling near the wires and she was saying goodbye to four younger children that were being led to the train station. I never forgot that, you cannot forget this, it comes back in your dreams.

It was terribly dark and terribly cold. The wind was blowing, we were afraid of Germans and the surrounding darkness. We cried. We prayed. From time to time somebody called out: mom, dad. The older people tried to calm us but it did not help much. We were hungry.

When I saw my younger siblings for the last time, my sister said to me, as a goodbye: you are going away and we are going to be burnt alive. Those were her last words. I will never forget them.

2010 – 65th anniversary

The anniversary was accompanied by a conference of ministers of education from more than 30 countries, organized by the Ministry of National Education, and the opening of a Russian exhibition about the liberation of the territory known as the Auschwitz I camp.

The chairman of the International Auschwitz Council, prof. Władysław Bartoszewski asked how much truth about the terrible experiences of totalitarianism we managed to impart to the younger generations:



“I think much of that truth we did, but not enough. (...) Today each one of us has the access to knowledge about the on-going spreading of hate speech and racism, contempt and antisemitism; about genocide or condemning innocent people to death in many parts of the world. The question is: do we do anything with this knowledge? Can we stand beside the victims? Or are we on the side of all of those who knew and did nothing to help?”.

2012 – 67th anniversary

It was, at the same time, the year of the 70th anniversary of the beginning of the mass genocide of Jews in Birkenau gas chambers. During the anniversary celebrations a unique relict was presented – the only saved door to the gas chamber from one of the crematories that were blown up by the Nazis during the final evacuation of the camp. Everybody present paid their respects by one minute of silence to Kazimierz Smoleń who died that day. Kazimierz Smoleń was a prisoner of Auschwitz and the director of the National Auschwitz-Birkenau Museum in the years 1955-1990.

Pnina Segal, who was liberated from Birkenau on 27 January 1945 as a six-year old girl, spoke on behalf of ex-prisoners. While telling her story, she mentioned a metal bowl that she held while waiting for soup: “I already knew

that I had to wait for the bottom of the pot to get more potato skins than water. I searched for the ends of the bread, the crust, because I thought they had more bread in them. I do so to this day and my family and friends know that the first and last piece of bread is always mine. I want to thank everybody that listened to the history of my life and I will keep telling it to the future generation”.

The Minister of Culture and National Heritage Małgorzata Omilanowska talked about the current meaning of the moment of the liberation of Auschwitz camp by the soldiers of the Red Army: “The historical fact of the liberation of the camp marked the beginning of the road that we still travel on, trying to understand something which cannot be understood and talking about something for which there are no words in any language. We will never be liberated from the burden of Auschwitz. On the 27 January 1945 the Auschwitz-Birkenau camp ceased to exist as a genocidal German death factory and began existing as eternal remorse by the whole of humanity”.

2014 – 69th anniversary

In 2014, 70 years passed from the beginning of the deportation of Hungarian Jews to camp. It was the biggest genocidal operation in the history of the Auschwitz camp. The deportation process of the Hungarian Jews was

documented by the Germans on more than 200 black-and-white photographs that are today one of the most important pieces of evidence of the atrocity. The faces of the victims from this documents were the visual symbol of the whole celebration.

In 2014 there were also celebrations of the 70th anniversaries: the shutdown of the so-called Zigeunerlager in Birkenau, the deportation of 13 thousand Poles arrested during the Warsaw Uprising to the Auschwitz camp, the genocide of Jews from the shutdown Łódź ghetto and also the Sonderkommando prisoner revolt in Auschwitz.

“Sometimes when somebody heard that I was going to Auschwitz, they would ask: »Why are you coming back to this?« There was one answer: »Because it exists« – ex-prisoner of Auschwitz Zofia Posmysz said in her speech – Allow me to express gratitude also in your name for this place, this object named the Auschwitz-Birkenau Museum exists, that work put into keeping its authenticity does not stop. The last verse of the camp song »Birkenau« said:

»And a grave you will not have, my friend,
a handful of ashes will be scattered by the field wind,
That is not important though, you are just one of the many,
the many of those forgotten by the world«.
The fact that we have been here for nearly 70 years, gives us hope that the world will not forget”.

Fragments of accounts from subsequent celebrations come from the webpages:
<http://70.auschwitz.org/index.php?lang=pl>
<http://70.auschwitz.org/index.php?lang=en> (English version)
and from the page:
http://pl.auschwitz.org/m/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=838&Itemid=12



INTERNATIONAL DAY TO COMMEMORATE THE HOLOCAUST VICTIMS 2008

Joint Symposium and Commemoration of the Teacher and Education Unions of Israel (ITU), Poland (NSZZ Solidarność and ZNP), and Germany (GEW)

Kraków – Oświęcim, January 26/27 2008

Joint declaration (draft)

On the occasion of the International Day of Commemoration to honour the victims of the Holocaust, delegations of Teachers and Education Unions of Israel (Histadrut Hamorim), Poland (NSZZ Solidarność and ZNP) and Germany (GEW) convened for a joint commemoration on January 27 2008 at the former Auschwitz concentration camp. The day before they came together at an International Symposium that was set up by these unions in Kraków to debate recent developments of anti-semitism, racism and xenophobia and to exchange information and experiences of their struggle for tolerance. With these activities the unions wanted to send a clear and visible message showing their national and international commitment to foster education for tolerance, for the respect towards other human beings, for non-violent conflict solving and to promote the living together of people and nations in peace – disregarding any differences of religious or ethnic origins.

As heads of their delegations the four presidents issued the following public statement:

The Holocaust victims oblige us to do everything that is in our power,

- to prevent such atrocities against mankind in the future
- to condemn any kind of violence, terror and war and any forms of genocide
- to reject and punish any denial of the Holocaust as historical event either in full or in part
- to denounce any manifestations of anti-semitism, racism and xenophobia and any discrimination against minorities and to fight against them whenever they occur
- to empower and encourage people – individually as in communities and nations – in living together in a sense of tolerance, mutual respect and acceptance of people with different ethnic or religious background
- to contribute in developing an understanding that differences in traditions and cultures must be seen and acknowledged as enrichment – diversity as a chance.

Being unionists and at the same time professional educators we are facing a particular responsibility to educate young people and the next generations in committing

themselves to humanity, civil awareness and living together in peace – by also confronting them adequately with the Holocaust and its remembrance. We therefore welcome each and every pedagogical activity and initiative in this respect implemented by members of our unions on national as well as on international level, not only in the context of International and National Days of commemoration – there are many more opportunities in daily life to deal with any kind of anti-semitism and discrimination.

We declare our obligation to promote such commitment. International co-operation among education unions as well as under the umbrella of Education International, the Global Union Federation in the field of education provide a lot of opportunities to do so.

At the same time we demand from the respective International Organisations and at the same time from the national governments, especially from the education ministers that they allocate the necessary human and financial resources that are needed to cope with the necessary pedagogical and preventive challenges in dealing with the Holocaust and with current tendencies of anti-semitism, racism and xenophobia. Furthermore we urge the national governments to provide their full political and moral support to such work.

The Holocaust shall never happen again – in no way – nowhere in the world. International Day of Commemoration to honour the victims of the Holocaust Oswiecim, January 27 2008

Joseph Wasserman **Stefan Kubowicz** **Sławomir Broniarz** **Ulrich Thöne**
General Secretary President NSZZ President ZNP President GEW
Histadrut Hamorim Solidarność/SKOiW



Seventy years ago, in autumn of 1944, dr. Földi was deported from Hungary to Auschwitz along with his wife and two of their children. Near the ramp the SS-man asks dr. Földi about the age of his son. He answers, telling the truth: “He is twelve years old”. After this the SS-man asks the boy: “Wo ist die Mutti?” (Where is your mother?) and he sends him to the left: “Lauf nach Mutti!” (Run after your mother!). Delivering his testimony as a witness during the Eichmann trial in Ivit, dr. Földi speaks those words in German. Using this language makes a shocking impression. It is shocking how dr. Földi changes the language. It is beyond a shadow of doubt that the German language is a language of executioners. That is why such a seemingly innocent questions as: „Wo ist deine Mutti?“ (Where is your mother?) is a death sentence to the boy.

The German language is my language and also the language of my female and male colleagues. Unquestionably we are descendants of many executioners and victims. The trauma does not end. Humiliation, deportations and mass murder had and still have consequences not only for the direct victims and executioners but also for their children, grandchildren and their descendants. Dealing with this trauma and defeating it is the task of many generations.

This type of thinking has a long tradition in the Education and Science Workers’ Union (Gewerkschaft Erziehung und Wissenschaft – GEW). From 1961 GEW and the Israeli Histadut Hamorim keep their relations very much alive and those relations are supplemented since 1968 by regular seminars for female and male colleagues from both countries. Those close relations have resulted in a plea for joint action of female and male teachers and educators who are members of trade unions from Israel and Poland, from Germany and Austria, so from countries that equally important for perpetrators and victims of the Shoa. In 2010 this appeal became the incentive to ask a common question: “Who, if not us, should give a good example when accounting for Shoa?” We know full well the dangers that threaten the future generations that come from right-wind radicalism, anti-Semitism and xenophobia. This is why we must strengthen those generations and show them how to effectively stand up to menacing barbarity.

On the 26 of January 2010 the presidents of Histadut Hamorim, Independent Self-governing Trade Union “Solidarity” (NSZZ “Solidarność”), Civil Servants’ Union (Gewerkschaft Öffentlicher Dienst – GÖD), Union of Training and Education (Verband Bildung und Erziehung – VBE) and Education and Science Workers’ Union (GEW) met in



Oświęcim and made a solemn declaration, that they will actively deal with the unimaginable crimes of the Shoa and help deal with this trauma. We are united by a common will to strengthen the memories of these events and we do this because of the passage of time. We want to be constantly and intensely working to point out, explain and present the menace that is a gradual exclusion of people in all of its forms. We will search for appropriate paths that the youth of today could go on and face this problem. To accomplish this goal we will need both a modicum of distance but also emotional closeness.

In 2010 we have achieved another major breakthrough because we have begun to implement a new formula for organizing memorial celebrations. We want, above all things, for our young colleagues from Israel, Poland, Austria and Germany to meet and for them to – remembering the Nazi regime – work together to defend and strengthen human rights everywhere and forever.

It's about support for the attitude of tolerance, respect and acceptance for other people, regardless of their religion or ethnicity. All of this is done in a world that is shrinking thanks to new methods of communication and travel. Because of this I am very happy that our appeal from 2010 has become today, on the 70th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz, a common issue for all of Education International.

Berlin, 30 December 2014

Ulrich Thöne

ex-president of the Education and Science Workers' Union

Dear colleagues and friends,

In November 2005, the United Nations adopted a resolution (resolution 60/7) to declare January 27 as an annual International Day of Commemoration in memory of the victims of the Holocaust. In the preamble to this resolution it was written that “the Holocaust, which resulted in the murder of one third of the Jewish people, along with countless members of other minorities, will forever be a warning to all people of the dangers of hatred, bigotry, racism and prejudice”. Education systems in countries around the world, teachers' organizations, teachers and educators should take this obligation and commit to fulfill this task of constantly educating against racism, hatred, Antisemitism and prejudice. Only we can!

January 27 marks the day of the liberation of Auschwitz death camp from the Nazis (27.1.1945) and this same date was declared by the Israeli Government and Knesset as the day of combating racism.

No one will disagree with the notion that the Holocaust is an integral part of European history and as such must be an integral part of every school and education institution's curriculum. Not only to learn and never forget but also to learn the Holocaust's lessons in order to be able to prevent these events from reoccurring in the future.

The Israel Teachers Union, through its “Fellowship of Educators to Combat Racism and Antisemitism”, sees this theme as a most important objective for action. ITU initiates and carries out several activities to complete the actions of the Israeli education system. ITU is confident in its belief that the teachers have the most central role in bestowing this theme and its values. ITU believes this is also true internationally.

ITU focuses on 6 purviews:

1. Seminars for teachers – 2-3 seminars annually, 2 days long, dozens of teachers participating. Each seminar dedicated to one central theme with lecturers from the academy. The focus is both theoretical and pedagogical.
2. International seminars – together with the teachers' union from Germany, GEW, taking place both in Israel and in Germany. For one week we hold mutual discussions on issues of Antisemitism, racism, the Holocaust lessons etc.
3. Awarding the “Shalom Levin Prize” – in the name of ITU's second General Secretary, Dr. Shalom Levin, this prize is given to schools for a unique activity teaching the Holocaust and educating against racism.
4. Publishing educational materials – via ITU's web site, including pedagogical materials to be used within the classroom.





5. “The March of the Living” – as an ITU initiative, each year dozens of teachers take part in this march, which is around the time of the official Holocaust Memorial Day in Israel.
6. Participating in international conferences dedicated to the Holocaust themes, especially the joint biannual conference for German, Polish, Austrian and Israeli teachers unions. Teachers are the key educators against Antisemitism and racism. The lessons of the Holocaust are the medium and the first purpose of Holocaust teaching is knowledge – knowing what happened, remembering what happened, but also learning to understand that the Holocaust is a unique event of Genocide, and because of that it has a singular name – Holocaust.

The universal lesson means educating the individual to live in a society with no hate, with no racism or prejudice. a society that accepts and honors one another, especially the different, the diverse, the frail, the stranger. We all need to learn how to appreciate and value people and groups by their actions and deeds rather than by their race, color, status, religion etc.

From our past experience we've learned that teachers are the most important agents and as such, they must raise and carry the flag. Only and especially through education

can we bestow these values and teachers' organizations have the key role.

The Israel Teachers Union, together with its “Fellowship of Educators to Combat Racism and Antisemitism”, calls upon all our fellow teachers and educators all over the globe:

- To renew our commitment to educate the future generations to combat both racism and Antisemitism
- To praise tolerance and human dignity.
- To strongly act for the annulment of prejudice and stereotype of minorities.
- To help stop the slander of people with different views or life style.
- To consistently make use of the humanistic, dignified way of conflict resolving.

Let us all together say, loud and clear:

NEVER AGAIN!!!

Joseph Wasserman
General Secretary ITU

WE ARE IN AUSCHWITZ AGAIN

On the 16 of December 1985, during a nationwide meeting of the representatives of the Polish Teachers' Union (Związek Nauczycielstwa Polskiego – ZNP) in Warsaw, a ZNP National Teacher's Peace Movement was created.

The movement's task was to put into life the message contained in "Declaration on Preparation of Societies for Life in Peace", that was put into life as a Polish initiative by the United Nations General Assembly in 1978. The ZNP Teacher's Peace Movement proposed that 27 of April should become a Teacher's Day of Remembrance and Peace. The site of the main celebrations of this day was always to be Oświęcim. The date and location were to commemorate the death by starvation of teacher Marian Batko who – like Saint father Maximilian Kolbe – sacrificed himself to save the life of a fellow prisoner.

For decades the celebrations have the same scenario: assembly in front of the "Arbeit macht frei" gate, a Silent March from the gate to the Wall of Death and the monument to those murdered in Brzezinka, with a stop next to the Marian Batka commemorative plaque. The generations of male and female teachers, male and female students change. "We remember! Never again!" Here, in Poland, we are good at remembering. Here in the ZNP we also

react fast. When on the 13 of December 2006 the president of Iran Mahmoud Ahmadinejad publicly declared that the Holocaust is a myth, the Polish Teachers' Union called on the international teaching community for solidarity in opposing this statement – Holocaust denial. In 2007 the Union organized a visit to Auschwitz for the female and male members of the Education International European Committee on Equality.

But on this January day in 2008 we ride to Auschwitz together – Jews, Poles and Germans. We begin as always and together we pass the gate of the Auschwitz I camp. The snow is crunching under our feet. Our female and male colleagues from Israel put on additional scarves. In their country the temperature is plus twenty degrees. Gad Dai is among us. He has a request – he would like to commemorate his loved ones near the Wall of Death. Do we mind? Of course we do not mind....so Gad Dai begins to read a list of his loved ones that were murdered here, in Auschwitz. This list seems endless. He gets choked up and not only him. We stand silent, not knowing how to move away from this wall. Engulfed in scarves, a small, petite man that look like a Jewish archetype, a figure transferred straight from the pictures sold to tourists in

the Sukiennice. He has just moved us to a new area of remembrance.

And the same thing will happen in two, four and six years. During each meeting in Auschwitz. This will happen when young teachers join us. Every female participant, every male participant arrives here equipped with different historical knowledge, different myths. The differences are not only between nations and generations but also inside them. Those are difficult questions. What more can we know about Auschwitz? Here we are good at remembering. We just have to take care to say Auschwitz and not Oświęcim and a Nazi, not German, concentration camp. So, what more can we learn about the Holocaust? And still every year we leave moved by this and with a promise to return in two years time. We were not moved in such a way by history lessons or even participation in other Holocaust celebrations, although they were touching and carefully pre-

pared. Because it is those meeting that make us aware that history and memory are step-siblings just as Tony Judt said while adding: “But I profoundly believe in the difference between history and memory; to allow memory to replace history is dangerous. Whereas history of necessity takes the form of a record, endlessly rewritten and re-tested against old and new evidence, memory is keyed to public, non-scholarly purposes: a theme park, a memorial, a museum, a building, a television program, an event, a day, a flag. Such mnemonic manifestations of the past are of necessity partial, brief, selective; those who arrange them are constrained sooner or later to tell partial truths or even outright lies – sometimes with the best of intentions, sometimes not.”¹

We meet with Jews and Germans so that celebrations do not replace history – this is purpose of this project for us.

Sławomir Broniarz – ZNP president

¹ Tony Judt and Timothy Snyder, *Thinking the Twentieth Century*, New York, Penguin Books, 2013



The Independent Self-governing Trade Union “Solidarity” (Niezależny Samorządowy Związek Zawodowy “Solidarność”) has defined the goals of its activities in its statute. Among those goals are: dissemination of the rules of democracy and defending universal humanitarian values, shaping an active attitude of action for the good of Poland and the defense and promotion of culture and broadly defined education. The National Education Section of “Solidarity” (Krajowa Sekcja Oświaty i Wychowania NSZZ “Solidarność”) takes up diverse activity that encompasses patriotic education, organizing contests, seminars and celebrations related to the history of Poland. One of the projects, in which members of “Solidarity” take part, is the International Holocaust Remembrance Day. Together with trade unions from Germany, Austria and Israel we try to educate the younger generation, so that we will not allow for a new Holocaust to happen in the modern world.

Teaching about the Holocaust was given the proper dimension after the 1989 system changes. Next to the commemoration of the murder of Polish soldiers in Katyń and other Soviet Union death camps, there also was a focus on intensified display of the problem of the annihilation of Jews and also a focus on the history of the Jewish people on Polish territories. The constant media mentions of “Polish death camps” have made it clear that there is a need to intensify education about

this issue to eliminate a term that is incompatible with the historical truth.

The new core curriculum reform has placed the Holocaust in elementary school in history and social studies classes. The student characterizes the life of the population on occupied Polish territories, taking into account the fate of the Jewish people. On the secondary school level the issue of the annihilation of Jews is talked about during social studies classes. In referring to the Holocaust and other crimes against humanity, students learn humanity, students learn to what kind of consequences can extreme nationalism lead to and considers examples from history and modern ones, how stereotypes and prejudices impede relations between nations today.

In post-secondary schools, apart from history classes, there is a rich analysis of literary works that touch on this issue. In the extended programme the student characterizes the politics of the III Reich regarding the occupied European populace, including the Nazi plan to exterminate the Jews and other nationalities and social groups. He describes the attitudes of Jews regarding the politics of extermination, including the uprising in the Warsaw ghetto and also analyzes the attitudes of the Polish society regarding the Holocaust; he evaluates the stance of the populations and governments of the Western world and the Catholic Church towards the Holocaust. As a part of international projects teachers and students have established and continue cooperation with schools from different

countries, including Germany and Israel. An important topic of this cooperation is also the issue of the Holocaust.

The word Holocaust comes from the Greek language – Holokauston means “totally burnt”, “turned to ash”. We would like to give a reminder that during World War II 6.9 million Polish citizens died, including 3 millions Polish Jews, so the Holocaust is the joint property of those who have been turned to ash.

The participation of Solidarity in a project related to the Holocaust is a substantial element of the historical activity of the Union. Participation in meetings, workshops or seminars is not only highly educational but also a deeply touching event. Thanks to those cyclical meetings we have the opportunity to know many educational projects, teaching methods and to discuss many visions of education. a joint visit in the National Auschwitz-Birkenau Museum is the most touching event. Participation in official celebrations and giving tribute to those, who were murdered in the camp, leaves a permanent mark on our hearts. a bouquet of flowers laid next to the Wall of Death symbolizes that “We remember and we will not forget”.

As a trade union that associates Polish teachers, we are aware that the among the teacher’s tasks there is not only

teaching, which has as its goal the transfer of knowledge, but also bringing one up in the spirit of respect of every human being, making no distinction as far as nationality, language, religion etc. Teaching about the Holocaust and the tragedy of war – every war – should become a source of creating universal attitudes where values such as: good, solidarity, social justice, freedom are key elements of an upbringing. Getting to know other cultures, traditions and history of other nations allows for the underscoring of respect for individuality and diversity. In the XXI century, despite the dramatic experiences of World War II, we still have to deal with armed conflicts and genocide. We must teach the younger generation mutual respect and tolerance, so that the Auschwitz tragedy is never repeated, so that young citizens consciously take part in the public life of the country and the world.

“Those that are responsible for war are not only those that directly declare it, but also those that do not do everything in their power to stop that war”. (John Paul II)

Ryszard Proksa

president of the National Education Section of the Independent Self-governing Trade Union “Solidarity”



WE WILL NOT FORGET!

16

The Civil Servants' Union (GÖD), which has about 230,000 members, is the second largest among seven trade unions of the Austrian Trade Union Federation (OeGB). The Civil Servants' Union is the reflection of the professional structure of civil services. It is made up of 26 federal branches, according to a wide spectrum of civil services. Teachers are a very strong group among the civil servants.

The Teachers' Trade Union as a part of GÖD (GÖD-Lehrer) has also been represented, for decades, in international organizations, where it strives to be in contact with other organizations and to become direct partners and friends. It is, therefore, necessary, on the one hand understand the goals of other teacher trade unions and, on the other hand – to present your own position.

The terrifying events of the XX century, and primarily the crimes of National Socialism, must be seen as a warning for future generations. Seventy years after the end of World War II it is getting harder and harder to find witnesses of those frightening events. Those witnesses can give us the authentic view of those events. So it is mainly

us, the teachers that have the responsibility to inform the young people that have been entrusted to us and to sustain their vigilance, so that similar disasters cannot be repeated in the future.

Austrian teachers make an important contribution to this. In our schools the Nazi period is analyzed as a part of many taught subjects and information is also provided about the terrible crimes done during this time. Important elements of such a message are trips of students and teachers to death camps in different countries. Things that can be seen and physically felt can be better remembered than something that is known only from tales. It has to be mentioned that trips to Auschwitz and Birkenau have been, for many years, a permanent part of the education program of many of our schools. It is our important contribution to not allowing extremism and racial hatred access to the hearts and mind of young people. This challenging task should also be continued in the XXI century and there is fear that also in the future we would have to spend lots of energy to meet this challenge.

To meet this goal, the opinion-shaping media should also form a clear position about the last armed conflicts in Israel and in the State of Palestine. One has to be sorry to note that in many instances the European media again feature an anti-Israeli attitude that blames only one of the sides of the conflict. In this situation Education International should strive for an objective approach. It is an obvious responsibility of the Teachers' Trade Union as a part of GÖD, to take an appropriate position and to express it in a clear manner.

GÖD-Lehrer is very happy to see that Education International, according to the initiative undertaken on 26 January 2010 by the teacher organizations from Israel, Germany, Poland and Austria, gives greater attention to this matter and treats it more objectively and also devotes additional funds to activities related to it. It gives the guarantee that this problem will not lose meaning and the educational initiatives will still be realized.

Roland Gangl
Helmut Skala



STATEMENT OF THE FEDERAL BOARD OF THE UNION OF TRAINING AND EDUCATION (VBE)

In the context of 30 January 1933, a date that marks the beginning of the Nazi regime in Germany and end of the Weimar Republic, close to 80 years ago, we hereby declare:

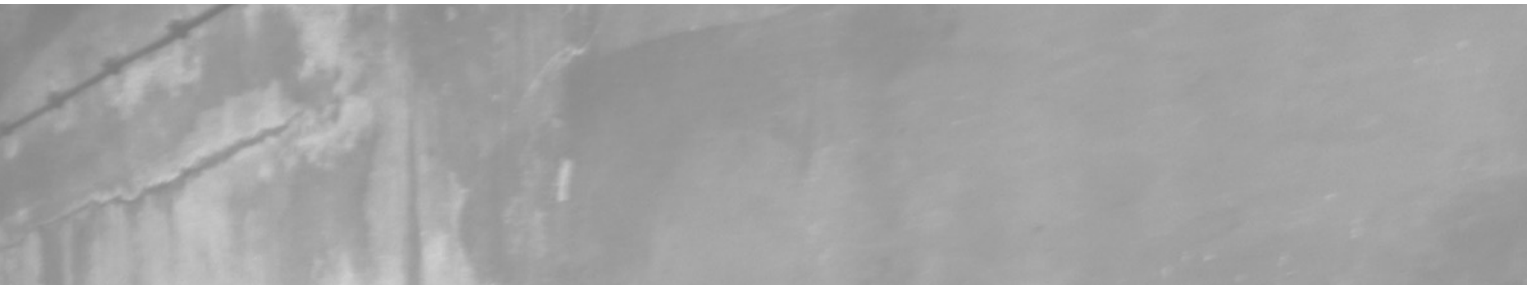
Looking at it from a historical perspective the German society is continually responsible for sustaining the memory of the experiences of national socialism and for strengthening of our democracy.

It is obvious to us that school has an important contribution to make in strengthening of civic attitudes, civic courage and the ability to coexist in social spectrum of life. However fighting the ideas of right-wing extremism and violence requires joint action by all groups of our citizens. Human rights and responsibilities that are a basis of our democratic society must be a part of our everyday lives.

We consequently argue for a careful look. In a democratic society freedom means not only the right to individual personality growth but also the responsibility to respect other people. Good interpersonal relations, tolerance and civic courage are the goals of school education, which can be realized more effectively when they are a feature of our society.

The Federal Board of the Union of Training and Education calls upon all female and male citizens to make democracy a part of their lives and by protect it by such means!

An act of the Federal Board from 25 January 2013





They expected the worst – but not that which was
UNIMAGINABLE. – **Charlotte Delbo**

For example we stoped arguing if it's terrible and inhumane that they beat us. In our understanding the specifics were the most important: should we get beaten in the face or in the kidneys? Better to get hit in the face as long as its not with a stick so that the skull does not break. – **Władysław Bartoszewski**

A frightening thing about which there are no words! I want to say: animalization...but no! We are a whole hell worse than animals! – **Witold Pilecki**

The biggest foundation of education and formation for a world that wants “no more”, remain the brick buildings seen behind the gate with the “Arbeit macht frei” sign. This is why this heritage of German terror has a chance to become – in Poland, not in the USA or Israel – a leaven for a new generation. Let us not miss this. – **Piotr Cywiński**

To hear every word and forget none. –
August Kowalczyk

We – the dead – accuse! –
**anonymous female Czech
prisoner**

Night, night without end. There is no dawn. –
Tadeusz Borowski

It has happened, so it can
happen again... It can happen
anywhere. –
Primo Levi

Auschwitz begins in every place where people
look at a slaughterhouse and think: those are
only animals. – **Theodor Adorno**

We have a terrible premonition,
because we know. –
Zalmen Gradowski

Here they imprisoned my family and burned
everyone. Here they took my name and gave
me a number instead. I was no longer Merka
Szewach – I was a number. –
Merka Szewach

MY DEAR MOTHER, WHO WAS SENT TO THE GAS CHAMBERS

Mother's day, 19/2/96

22

Tomorrow everyone, little and mature, young and old, everyone will endlessly seek for the appropriate gift on this special, unique day called "mothers' day", the day they want to honor and cherish their mother.

No! For eternity, I lost that darling, holy being called Mom!

You were brutally taken from me, together with my younger sister, on the darkest, evil day by the Satan, Dr. Mangle, who was in charge of the selections in the extermination camp Auschwitz, where millions of our people were murdered.

It was June 4th, 1944

I don't remember how you were separated from me, since it all happened in a blink of an eye and the malicious hand, deciding your fate, pointed towards the furnace. And this way you went, facing your destiny in the gas chambers, where you returned your pure, untainted soul to the all mighty in heaven.

For an invisible, unknown, incomprehensive reason, God almighty has long forsaken his chosen people, abandoning them to Satan's hands to do as he pleased. We learned of your brutal end not long after you left us.

Since then, I couldn't utter the dear word "mother"! I just remember you then, now and forever, my lips silently mumbling the word "mother", shedding endless tears.

Dad, I and Yocheved, my sister, survived that hell, coming back for you when the war ended, praying to find someone... We were scattered to all world's ends, each one to his destiny, reuniting after many years in our tiny homeland, called "Israel".

Over the years I remained alone, since all my beloved dears, survivors of that horrible hell, left this world.

With time, I raised a family to be proud of. My first born daughter, long shall she live, who carries your name and my son, shall his life candle shed light, were raised, according to your wish, in our Jewish heritage and they also raised co-memorable families.

I beg your forgiveness for not doing my best to save you from that valley of death and your bitter, cruel end, but believe me there was no way of doing that, not for me, not for million others.

My heart is torn, hurting from the fact I have no burial place to attend, to pour my heart's bitterness, to pay my last respect to you.

May you rest this peace, your memory blessed for ever

Your beloved, loving son and brother

Israel Efrati – Zoltan Deblinger

(My father wrote this when he was 71 years old! He never stopped missing his mother and sister!)

Zipi Dvir, ITU



The Deblinger Family, 1938



In this publication we have presented the most important information about the Jewish-German-Polish project which is comprised of: participation in the International Holocaust Remembrance Day celebrations and a seminar that accompanies the celebration. This endeavour is possible because of the factual and financial support of the Friedrich Ebert Foundation.

We are aware that the texts sent by the representatives of trade unions taking part in the biannual meeting are very different in their form – from general thoughts to statements that are official organization positions in their character. We did not try to standardize them because also the statements of participants of the official celebrations in Auschwitz are very different from each other – from private memories to political declarations. This diversity is valuable in and of itself, because it shows how different are the reactions to the Holocaust and methods of dealing with this topic.

Special thanks to Zipi Dvir (ITU) for agreeing to publish her father's letter and family photos in our publication.

This publication was made possible because of the generosity of the GEW, which financed its release. Manfred Brinkmann (GEW) is the author of the photographs.

Editing of the Polish version – Dorota Obidniak (ZNP)

Translation – Michał Zdancewicz

Graphic design – Lena Maminajszwili/masz

Set-up and printing – studio reklamy i wydawnictw masz

