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INSTITUTE OF NATIONAL REMEMBRANCE: RESEARCH, EDUCATIONAL AND COMMEMORATIVE ACTIVITIES DEVOTED TO GERMAN "OPERATION REINHARDT" EIGHTIETH ANNIVERSARY EVENTS. REPORT¹

Research on the Holocaust has been present in the activities of the various divisions of the Institute of National Remembrance (*Instytut Pamięci Narodowej*, IPN) since its inception. The Institute actively participates in commemorating anniversaries, playing a significant role in Polish culture, fostering knowledge and remembrance of important, often tragic, historical events. One could use as examples the anniversaries of the beginning of World War II, the transformation of the Union of Armed Struggle (*Związek Walki Zbrojnej*, ZWZ) into the Home Army (*Armia Krajowa*, AK), the outbreak of

¹ The activity of the IPN Cracow Branch, which has been most involved in the commemoration of the victims of crimes against humanity perpetrated during *Aktion Reinhardt*, was discussed by Dr. Roman Gieroń in the previous issue of *Polish-Jewish Studies*, and is therefore dealt with only briefly in this text (see R. Gieroń, "‘Lest We Forget the Victims.’ Report on the Activity of the Institute of National Remembrance Branch in Cracow in Connection with the Eightieth Anniversary of the *Aktion Reinhardt*," *Polish-Jewish Studies* 4 (2023), pp. 481–489, DOI 10.48261/PJS230417en).

the 1944 Warsaw Rising, or the 1943 Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. IPN is naturally one of the main guardians of public remembrance of victims in respect to the above. It also fulfilled this mission in 2022–2023 during the commemoration of the 80th anniversary of *Aktion Reinhardt*,² carried out by the German occupation authorities in the General Governorate and Bezirk Białystok (Białystok province), which was part of the *Endlösung der Judenfrage* (“The Final Solution of the Jewish Question”).

The most criminal stage of the extermination of Jews in the German-occupied Polish territories began in 1941 in the former Eastern Borderlands of the occupied Second Republic of Poland and its western territories incorporated into the Reich (e.g. in Kulmhof extermination camp). It culminated in *Aktion Reinhardt*, which began in the General Governorate in March 1942. The genocide resulted in the deaths of nearly 2 million Jews, mostly Polish citizens, but also citizens of other European countries. On the night of 16–17 March 1942, German police officers, headed by Odilo Globocnik, commander of the SS and police in Distrikt Lublin (Lublin province), carried out the first “deportation” of Jews to the SS-Sonderkommando Belzec (extermination camp in Belżec). From that moment on, for the next year and a half, the German occupation authorities systematically deported Jews from cities, towns and villages in death transports also to other extermination camps, such as SS-Sonderkommando Sobibor and SS-Sonderkommando Treblinka. Immediately upon arrival, Jews were murdered in gas chambers. The liquidation of ghettos action extended to Warsaw, where the largest ghetto in occupied Europe existed. It began on 22 July 1942 and ended on 21 September that year. Over two hundred and fifty thousand Jews were sent from there to Treblinka extermination camp. Many of them – above all the sick, the elderly and children – died already at the deportation site from the bullets and blows inflicted by the members of the German formations, because they could not join the marching columns and thus “disrupted the deportation plan.” *Aktion Reinhardt* came to an end in November 1943, when a total of approximately forty-two thousand Jews were murdered in several locations in Distrikt Lublin – Majdanek concentration camp in Lublin, in

² In German: *Aktion Reinhardt* (series of mass deportations to extermination camps). Hereinafter all such referred to as Aktion.

camps in Poniatowa and Trawniki – over the course of a few days in an operation codenamed cynically *Erntefest* (“Harvest Festival”).

Since, in structural terms, the IPN through its branches and delegations, is organised according to the administrative (and judicial) division of the Polish state within the borders established in 1945, it is obvious that the events accompanying the anniversary of *Aktion Reinhardt* were organised in a special way in the respective units of IPN, which now cover the areas where the Holocaust was carried out by the Germans: the IPN branches in Cracow, Lublin, Łódź (the part covering the former occupation-era province, Distrikt Radom), Rzeszów and Warsaw, as well as the delegations in Kielce and Radom. To a minimum extent – also due to the war in Ukraine – the commemorations covered the area of the former occupation Distrikt Galizien (Galicja province), which now lies almost entirely on Ukrainian state territory. The anniversary commemorations took place at various times according to the local timeline of the Holocaust course of events. For example, the IPN Delegation in Radom was involved in the commemorative events from August 2022 to January 2023, because *Aktion Reinhardt* in this area developed from August 1942 to January 1943.

Three main spheres can be distinguished in the Institute’s efforts to expand knowledge of the genocide perpetrated by Germany: research, educational and commemorative.

The anniversary celebrations with the participation of the representatives of the Polish government, local authorities, churches and religious denominations as well as social and state organisations, including the IPN President Dr. Karol Nawrocki, were started by the Institute and the State Museum in Majdanek on 15 March 2022, on the eve of the 80th anniversary of the first deportation from Lublin.³ Paying respect for the victims, IPN representatives organised or co-organised solemn commemorations of the liquidation of ghettos in particular locations in central and eastern Poland. Often, initiatives already undertaken before, in which the IPN participated, were continued and because of the anniversary the commemoration events were given a special setting and expanded to include accompanying events.⁴

³ See R. Gieroń, “Lest We Forget the Victims,” p. 482.

⁴ This includes the ceremony on 8 December 2021 in Chełmno on Ner commemorating the victims of Kulmhof (Chełmno) extermination camp, whose 80th anniversary fell in 2021. During World War II,

The Cracow Branch of the Institute of National Remembrance was exceptionally active in this field, as its employees co-organised commemorations in eighteen towns in the Małopolska Voivodeship. Similar events were held i.a. in Białystok, Chmielnik, Jędrzejów, Kielce, Radom and Tykocin.

On 9 March 2022, in the Janusz Kurtyka Central History Point of the IPN in Warsaw, the conference “Aktion ‘Reinhardt’ i Zagłada polskich Żydów – w kręgu mechanizmów i sprawców” (*Aktion Reinhardt* and the Genocide of Polish Jews – Mechanisms and Perpetrators) was held. In this way, the Institute of National Remembrance began a research commemoration of the victims of *Aktion Reinhardt*. The meeting was opened by IPN Deputy President, Dr. Mateusz Szpytma and also attended by IPN Deputy President Dr. Karol Polejowski and the Director of the IPN Historical Research Office, Dr. Sebastian Pilarski. The speeches introduced the profiles of the main Holocaust perpetrators (and presented attempts at holding them accountable after the war): Odilo Globocnik (Dr. Soraya Kuklińska, IPN Historical Research Office) and Hans Frank (Dr. Paweł Kosiński, IPN Historical Research Office), as well as the little-known but extremely important handlers of the *Endlösung* machine on a local scale: Wilhelm Josef Blum (Dr. Sebastian Piątkowski, IPN Delegation in Radom), Wilhelm Haase (Dr. Roman Gieroń, IPN Cracow Branch), Wilhelm Atenloh and Fritz Friedel (Dr. Paweł Kornacki, IPN Białystok Branch), the officers of the 1st SS Motorised Gendarmerie Battalion (Dr. Sebastian Drabik, IPN Historical Research Office), and the perpetrators of the crimes against the Jews in Ponary and the Vilnius region (Dr. Monika Tomkiewicz, IPN Historical Research Office).⁵ The speakers’ presentations were preceded by a panel discussion with the participation of Prof. Grzegorz Berendt (University of Gdańsk, Museum of the Second World War), Dr. Martyna Grądzka-Rejak (IPN Historical Research Office, Warsaw Ghetto Museum) and Dr. Aleksandra Namysło (IPN Katowice Branch, Polish History Museum in Warsaw), during which the most important stages of German anti-Jewish policy and the Holocaust in occupied Poland were discussed.

the Germans murdered around two hundred thousand people there, the vast majority of them being Jews from the Warta Land (*Reichsgau Wartheland*).

⁵ See <https://centrumedu.ipn.gov.pl/ph/archiwum-1/2022/28879,Aktion-Reinhardt-i-Zaglada-polskich-Zydow-w-kregu-mechanizmow-i-sprawcow-9-marca.html>, accessed 7 March 2024. The conference and the issues raised there are outlined in this volume by Paweł Kornacki. Some of the papers were published in *Polish-Jewish Studies* 4 (2023).

Another conference discussing the Holocaust, this time on a micro scale – “Akcja ‘Reinhardt’ w regionie kieleckim” (*Aktion Reinhardt* in the Kielce Region) – was held on 7 October 2022 in the town of Chmielnik (Świętokrzyskie Voivodeship) and prepared by the IPN Delegation in Kielce and the “Świętokrzyski Sztetl” Educational and Museum Centre in Chmielnik. The papers delivered by Prof. Wacław Wierzbieniec (University of Rzeszów), Dr. Tomasz Domański (IPN Delegation in Kielce), Dr. Alicja Gontarek (IPN Lublin Branch, Maria Curie-Skłodowska University in Lublin), Prof. Edyta Majcher-Ociesa (Jan Kochanowski University in Kielce), Dr. Karolina Trzeskowska-Kubasik (IPN Historical Education Office), Dr. Agnieszka Dziarmaga (Świętokrzyski Shtetl centre), Dr. Marek Maciągowski (Centre of Patriotic and Civic Reflection in Kielce), and Dr. Jacek Andrzej Młynarczyk (Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń) dealt primarily with local themes of German anti-Jewish policy during World War II, such as: living conditions in the ghettos of the Kielce region, the course of the Holocaust in Distrikt Radom, the end of Jewish towns in the light of *Zwoliner Yizkor Buch* (Zwoleń memorial book), *Aktion Reinhardt* as remembered in the testimonies of Poles on the basis of the materials gathered during the “Nasi sąsiedzi Żydzi” (Our Jewish Neighbours) competition, the destruction of the Chmielnik ghetto and the persecution of Jews between 1942 and 1945. The conference was also accompanied by a concert, *Sztetl. Życie i śmierć miasteczka* (Shtetl. The Life and Death of a Small Town) with an introduction on the Jewish community at that time.⁶

The commemoration of the victims of *Aktion Reinhardt* was in parallel with the 80th anniversary of the outbreak of the 1943 Warsaw Ghetto Uprising on 19 April 2023. To mark the anniversary, the IPN organised a conference entitled “Jewish Resistance Against the Germans in the Occupied Polish Territories,” which was held on 21 April 2023 at the Janusz Kurtyka Central History Point, which was opened by Dr. Mateusz Szpytma. The speeches delivered dealt, among others, with issues related to various forms of Jewish resistance in the Dąbrowa Coal Basin (Dr. Aleksandra Namysło), the Warta Land (Dr. Kinga Czechowska), Polesie (Prof. Grzegorz Berendt), the HASAG factories (Dr. Alicja Bartnicka) and the

⁶ See www.swietokrzyskiszetel.pl/asp/pl_start.asp?typ=13&menu=10&artykul=905&akcja=artykul, accessed 7 March 2024.

Białystok Ghetto (Dr. Paweł Kornacki). Partisan activities of Jews were discussed with the use of individual examples (Wojciech Hanus, Sebastian Piątkowski). In one of the papers, Dr. Tomasz Domański and Dr. Alicja Gontarek presented previously unknown Home Army intelligence documents concerning the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising – the largest Jewish uprising in occupied Europe.⁷

An extremely valuable event from the point of view of research commemoration of the anniversary of *Aktion Reinhardt* was the publication by the IPN of Marek Bem's monograph *SS-Sonderkommando Sobibor. Niemiecki obóz zagłady w Sobiborze 1942–1943* (SS-Sonderkommando Sobibor. The German Extermination Camp in Sobibor 1942–1943) (Warsaw, 2023). In a comprehensive study, the author (recently deceased) described the period of the camp's construction, its operation and crew, the living and working conditions of the prisoners and their uprising. In the final part of the book, Marek Bem also presented, on the one hand, the fates of the survivors and on the other, the history of attempts to hold the perpetrators of the genocide in Sobibor accountable.⁸

A noteworthy contribution of IPN researchers to Holocaust research and remembrance was their participation in the events hosted by other institutions. Dr. Aleksandra Namysło (IPN Katowice Branch), Dr. Martyna Grądzka-Rejak (IPN Historical Research Office), Marta Kupczewska and Paweł Kornacki (IPN Białystok Branch) participated in the international conference “80 lat po Aktion ‘Reinhardt’ (1942–1943): reakcje społeczne i upamiętnienie” (Eighty Years after *Aktion Reinhardt* (1942–1943). Public Reactions and Commemoration) organised on 21–22 September 2022 in Warsaw by the Emanuel Ringelblum Jewish Historical Institute. Dr. Namysło delivered a paper at the International Conference “Operation ‘Reinhardt’ and the Destruction of Polish Jews,” held on 27–29 November 2022 at the initiative of the POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews. Dr. To-

⁷ For a full video recording of the conference, see <https://ipn.gov.pl/pl/nauka/konferencje-naukowe/183358,Konferencja-naukowa-Opor-Zydow-przeciwko-Niemcom-na-okupowanych-ziemiach-polskich.html>, accessed 11 March 2024. Article on the value of historical sources produced by the Home Army counter-intelligence, concerning the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising: T. Domański, A. Gontarek, “Polskie relacje o walce w getcie. Nieznane dokumenty VI Brygady Kontrwywiadowczej Obszaru Warszawskiego Armii Krajowej o powstaniu w getcie warszawskim,” *Biuletyn IPN* 11 (2023), pp. 101–112.

⁸ See <https://ipn.gov.pl/pl/publikacje/ksiazki/194545,SS-Sonderkommando-Sobibor-Niemiecki-oboz-zagłady-w-Sobiborze-1942-1943.html>, accessed 8 March 2024.

masz Domański and Dr. Martyna Grądzka-Rejak participated in the conference “Żydowscy obywatele polskich miast i ich żydowskie dziedzictwo. Rok pamięci Żydów kieleckich” (Jewish Citizens of Polish Cities and Their Jewish Heritage. The Commemoration Year of the Jews of Kielce) organised by the National Museum in Kielce, the Jan Karski Association and the Institute of Jewish Studies at the Jagiellonian University. In addition, Dr. Grądzka-Rejak took part in the conference of the Polish Association for Jewish Studies entitled “Żydzi i judaizm we współczesnych badaniach polskich” (Jews and Judaism in Contemporary Polish Research, Cracow, 28–30 September 2022). Researchers from the Institute of National Remembrance have also dealt with Holocaust matters in scholarly articles published in research journals and collective studies.⁹

A number of popular science and educational works have been produced under the auspices of the IPN. Prof. Sebastian Piątkowski compiled a brochure entitled *Zagłada ludności żydowskiej regionu radomskiego w latach 1939–1945* (The Extermination of the Jewish Population of the Radom Region in 1939–1945),¹⁰ published by the IPN Delegation in Radom. The IPN Delegation in Kielce prepared supplements for the local press: “Życie i śmierć żydowskich Działoszyce. W 80. rocznicę *Aktion Reinhardt* – niemieckiego ludobójstwa Żydów na okupowanych ziemiach polskich”¹¹ (The Life and Death of Jewish Działoszyce. On the 80th Anniversary of *Aktion Reinhardt* – German Genocide of Jews in Occupied Polish Lands) prepared by Dr. Tomasz Domański of the IPN Delegation in Kielce and Dr. Agnieszka Dziarmaga from the Kielce Countryside Museum, and “Niemiecka *Aktion Reinhardt* w regionie kieleckim” (*Aktion Reinhardt* in the Kielce region), as well as an informative text “*Aktion Reinhardt* na okupowanych ziemiach polskich 1942–1943” (*Aktion Reinhardt* in Occupied Polish Lands 1942–1943) prepared by Dr. Tomasz Domański.¹² The IPN Rzeszów Branch produced a history supple-

⁹ These included texts in the academic journals *Polish-Jewish Studies* and *Studia Łomżyńskie*, on the przystanek.historia.pl website and in articles in the local press.

¹⁰ S. Piątkowski, *Zagłada ludności żydowskiej regionu radomskiego w latach 1939–1945*, Lublin, 2022.

¹¹ A. Dziarmaga, T. Domański, “Życie i śmierć żydowskich Działoszyce. W 80. rocznicę ‘*Aktion Reinhardt*’ – niemieckiego ludobójstwa Żydów na okupowanych ziemiach polskich,” *Echo Dnia*, 2 November 2022.

¹² Text prepared for a leaflet promoting the IPN’s participation in the 30th History Book Fair at the Royal Castle in Warsaw, 24–27 November 2022.

ment for the local press concerning Operation Reinhardt in the Rzeszów region and the eastern part of the former Lwów Voivodeship. It consisted of articles by Prof. Elżbieta Rączy (IPN Rzeszów Branch, University of Rzeszów), Dr. Waław Wierzbieniec (University of Rzeszów), Dr. Wojciech Hanus (IPN Rzeszów Branch) and Andrzej Krępa, as well as photographs and archival materials.¹³ The IPN Cracow Branch, in cooperation with local researchers and history enthusiasts, prepared four supplements for the local press. The first presented the Holocaust in Distrikt Krakau (Cracow province) against the background of events in the occupied Polish territories, while the other supplements dealt with the extermination of Jews in Tarnów, Nowy Sącz, Mszana Dolna and Podhale.¹⁴ In addition, a popular science booklet with a map of the Cracow Ghetto should be mentioned, authored by Jerzy Sokołowski and Michał Zajda from the IPN Cracow Branch that outlines the history of the ghetto and enables visitors to find its traces in contemporary Cracow. The booklet was published in Polish and English. All the publications mentioned were distributed free of charge during events organised or co-organised by the IPN.¹⁵

The Archives of the IPN Lublin Branch published on its website and its Facebook profile a selection of archival records related to *Aktion Reinhardt*. Thus, in March 2022, on the eve of the anniversary celebrations in Bełżec, documents from the IPN archival collections concerning the liquidation of the Lublin ghetto on the night of 16–17 March 1942 and the deportation of Jews to the SS-Sonderkommando Belzec, and the photographs from the ghettos in Lublin and Lwów (Lviv) and from Bełżec death camp, were published in the IPN social media. In May 2022 and October 2023 (on the 80th anniversary of the uprising in SS-Sonderkommando Sobibor), another part of the documents was to be presented, this time concerning the German extermination camp in Sobibor.

The heightened public interest, which is natural for such an anniversary, prompted IPN staff to undertake exceptionally extensive activities in the field of Holocaust historical education. With the help of a network of specialised IPN Branch National Education Offices and “History Point” educational centres and

¹³ See <https://rzeszow.ipn.gov.pl/pl8/aktualnosci/161179,Dodatek-Instytut-Pamieci-Narodowej-80-lat-od-Akcji-Reinhard.html>, accessed 11 March 2024.

¹⁴ More in R. Gieroń, “Lest We Forget the Victims,” pp. 485–486.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 486.

collaborating with other institutions, often in smaller towns, IPN employees have offered a diverse array of resources to teachers, students, and individuals interested in the Holocaust and World War II issues. Notably, the discussion panels on the history of the Holocaust, organised by the IPN or with the participation of its employees, deserve special mention. Such were held in Szczecin (26 May 2022), Kielce (19 August), and Bodzentyn (16 September), and in Warsaw on 14 April 2023 during the Congress of National Remembrance organised by the IPN. During the latter event a panel was held, entitled “Walka i opór społeczności żydowskiej podczas okupacji niemieckiej w Polsce” (Struggle and Resistance of the Jewish Community During the German Occupation in Poland) and attended by Prof. Grzegorz Berendt, Dr. Sebastian Piątkowski, Dr. Alicja Gontarek and Dr. Tomasz Domański. The commemoration of the anniversary of *Aktion Reinhardt* was accompanied by the opening of thematic exhibitions. The Institute of National Remembrance promoted the so-called elementary exhibition entitled “*Aktion Reinhardt 1942–1943*” (in two language versions: Polish and English), which was prepared by Sebastian Piątkowski of the IPN Delegation in Radom. It was opened on 15 March 2022 at the Centre for the Meeting of Cultures in Lublin. This exhibition was also displayed in Radom, Piaski, Tarnów, Nowy Sącz, Bochnia, Wolbrom, Dąbrowa Tarnowska, Żabno, Jędrzejów, Chmielnik and Kozienice. Another exhibition, “Zagłada Żydów europejskich” (The Holocaust of European Jews) was displayed in Kielce, Tarnów, Lublin, Olkusz, Nowy Sącz and Żabno. The events of *Aktion Reinhardt* were also referred to in the exhibitions “Niemieckie obozy zagłady” (German Extermination Camps) and “Zagłada Romów i Sinti w Europie” (The Genocide of the Roma and Sinti in Europe). The displays were typically accompanied by a keynote speech delivered by a IPN researcher or educator, along with a commemorative ceremony that included the lighting of candles or the laying of flowers in tribute to the victims. The ceremonies at the monument to the victims of the Lublin Ghetto on 30 January 2023 in Lublin were attended by both students and government authorities (municipal and local) and on 4 August 2022 on the anniversary of the Radom Ghetto liquidation, also by representatives of the Polish Army and the Polish Territorial Defence Force.

Particular units of the IPN also prepared exhibitions on local or biographical themes. The IPN Łódź Branch employees prepared the exhibition “Zagłada

żydowskich miasteczek” (The Holocaust in Jewish Small Towns) shown in fifteen towns in the Łódź Voivodeship (Bełchatów, Kalisz, Kutno, Łask, Łowicz, Łódź, Opoczno, Ozorków, Pabianice, Piotrków Trybunalski, Radomsko, Rawa Mazowiecka, Sieradz, Skierniewice, Tomaszów Mazowiecki, Warta, Widawa, Wieluń, Zduńska Wola, Zgierz, Żychlin). It presented the fate of the Jewish communities of the pre-war Łódź Voivodeship, including the history of the ghettos in the Końskie, Piotrków, Radom and Tomaszów districts, which found themselves within the borders of the General Governorate and were liquidated in the course of *Aktion Reinhardt*. The IPN Delegation in Kielce prepared the exhibition “Nieobecni – z dziejów społeczności żydowskiej w Sandomierzu” (The Absent – from the History of the Jewish Community in Sandomierz), whereas the IPN Cracow Branch presented the exhibition “Przerwana historia. Losy krakowskich Żydów w czasie II wojny światowej” (Interrupted History. The Fate of Cracow’s Jews During World War II.) The IPN Warsaw Branch in turn prepared an open-air exhibition entitled „Prosimy Cię Boże o walkę krwawą...” (We Beg You, God, for a Battle to the Last Man Standing...), marking the 80th anniversary of the outbreak of the 1943 Warsaw Ghetto Uprising.¹⁶ The exhibition was opened on 19 April 2023 by the President of the Institute of National Remembrance, Dr. Karol Nawrocki and Dr. Tomasz Łabuszewski, Director of the IPN Warsaw Branch. In addition, the staff of the IPN Warsaw Branch National Education Office prepared a biographical elementary exhibition devoted to the eminent Jewish educator Janusz Korczak, murdered together with children under his care during *Aktion Reinhardt*.

In the area of educational activities, two competitions addressed to school pupils should be mentioned, organised by the IPN Białystok Branch: “Historia najnowsza Polski w poezji dzieci i młodzieży” (Poland’s Recent History in the Poetry of Children and Young People) and “Wiem, upamiętniam. Zagłada ludności żydowskiej województwa białostockiego w czasie II wojny światowej” (I Know and I Commemorate. The Holocaust of Jews of the Białystok Voivodeship during World War II). The result of the former is an anthology of poems on the Holocaust. As the organisers of the competition argue, the Holocaust is a topic well known

¹⁶ See <https://wystawy.ipn.gov.pl/wys/aktualne/ii-wojna-swiatowa/zaglada-zydow/192652,Prosimy-Cie-Boze-o-walke-krwawa.html>, accessed 10 March 2024.

among young people, evoking unchanging interest and compassion. Participants of the second competition were asked to create a multimedia project describing a place related to the extermination of the Jews in their region, and to design a plaque informing about the history of a specific place in the city space where the Holocaust occurred. The competition winners took part in an educational visit to remembrance sites in the former German extermination camp in Treblinka and concentration camp Stutthof. The final stage of the competition was the lighting of candles at the remembrance sites on 2 November 2022; on that day 80 years earlier, the Germans began the liquidation of smaller ghettos in Bezirk Białystok and the deportation of the Jews to the extermination camps, and on 16 August 1943 they liquidated the Białystok Ghetto, putting an end to the existence of the Jewish community of the pre-war Białystok Voivodeship. The IPN representatives along with the competition laureates lit candles and placed flowers at the remembrance sites.

The educational projects of the IPN Lublin Branch: “Na granicy dwóch światów” (On the Edge Between Two Worlds) and “Na granicy życia, śmierci i nadziei” (On the Edge Between Life, Death and Hope), in which more than a hundred school pupils took part, also encouraged their involvement in the commemoration of the anniversary of German crimes against humanity. Participants in the second project on 13 October 2023 visited Chachmei Lublin Yeshivas (The Yeshiva of the Sages of Lublin), once the largest Talmudic university in the world. They were introduced to the history of the site, the daily life of the Jewish community in Lublin prior to 1939 and its traditions and culture. The young people were then invited to join an educational walk along Lubartowska Street, which used to be the longest artery of the Jewish quarter in Lublin. Historical Jewish buildings were shown, including the former hospital, the family home of the writer Anna Langfus née Szternfinkiel, and the Chevra Nosim synagogue (now the Lublin Jewish Memorial Chamber). The participants watched also the documentary film *Lubelskie ślady akcji “Reinhardt”* (Lublin Traces of *Aktion Reinhardt*), and took part in the workshop entitled “‘Ostatni przystanek na ziemi’ – SS-Sonderkommando Sobibór w relacjach byłych więźniów” (‘Last Stop on Earth’ – SS-Sonderkommando Sobibór in the Testimonies of Former Prisoners). A similar educational walk – “Getto warszawskie. Śladami Janusza Korczaka” (The Warsaw Ghetto. In the footsteps of Janusz Korczak) – was organised on 7 June 2022 by the staff of the IPN Warsaw Branch in Warsaw.

The IPN Lublin Branch National Education Office organised two educational tours. One tour, for students, followed the route from Lublin to Włodawa and Sobibór, under the motto “Ci z Was, którzy przeżyją, niech dadzą świadectwo. Niech świat się dowie, co się tutaj działo” (Those of You Who Survive, Give Witness. Let the World Learn What Took Place Here). The other tour, for teachers, followed the route from Lublin through Wojsławice and Chełm to Sobibór, and was entitled “Śladami zagłady Żydów na Lubelszczyźnie” (Following the Traces of the Holocaust of Jews in the Lublin Region).

The remembrance of the Holocaust and *Aktion Reinhardt* was also present in the IPN activities in media, both traditional (television, radio and press) and modern (internet portals and social media). On 27 January 2022, the National Education Office of the IPN Białystok Branch in cooperation with the Museum in Tykocin, prepared a screening of a video clip about the extermination of the Jewish community in that town during World War II. It was also made available on the website and social media of the IPN Białystok Branch. Dr. Tomasz Domański of the IPN Delegation in Kielce spoke on several opportunities on Radio eM Kielce and TVP3 Kielce about the extermination of Jews – on the general (discussion of the Jewish genocide process in the General Governorate) and local contexts (the Holocaust in Kielce and Chmielnik). He also appeared as an expert in the documentary programme *Aktion Reinhardt w Chmielniku* (*Aktion Reinhardt in Chmielnik*) produced by TVP Kielce and the Świętokrzyski Sztetl association. The press assistant of the IPN Delegation in Kielce, Dariusz Skrzyniarz, prepared a series of posts for the Delegation’s Facebook profile dedicated to the victims of *Aktion Reinhardt* in the Kielce region. Internet users were able to learn about the history of the ghettos in Radom, Szydłowiec and Kielce, and about the tragedy of the Jews on the basis of a unique – on a worldwide scale – testimony of Dawid Rubinowicz, a Jewish boy from Bodzentyn near Kielce, or about the fate of Leon Szpilman, born in Ostrowiec Świętokrzyski – the brother of the famous pianist.

Further, employees of the National Education Office of the IPN Lublin Branch prepared an audio recording on the uprising in SS-Sonderkommando Sobibor (downloadable audio files are accessible on the IPN website under the *Komunikaty w 80. rocznicę* – 80th Anniversary Press Releases tab). In addition, knowledge

about the Holocaust was promoted by the IPN by means of multimedia presentations in the trains of the Łódź Agglomeration Railway.¹⁷ In addition, the Institute's employees recalled the Holocaust during many lectures, open lectures and meetings, which were also held in areas not geographically connected with *Aktion Reinhardt*, such as Gdańsk or Wejherowo. Some of those event recordings are available on the IPN TV Youtube channel. An event accompanying the commemoration of the victims of *Aktion Reinhardt* was the implementation of the IPN international educational project "Obraz Treblinki w oczach Samuela Willenberga" (The Image of Treblinka in the Eyes of Samuel Willenberg). In January 2020, as part of International Holocaust Remembrance Day, the IPN brought from Israel an exhibition of bronze sculptures by Samuel Willenberg – a testimony of a prisoner of the SS-Sonderkommando Treblinka and part of the world heritage of the Holocaust. The exhibition, supplemented by information boards in Polish, English and Hebrew, was the basis for an educational project, including a screening of the film *Treblinka's Last Witness* (in English and Polish), workshops for young people, information boards and a virtual walk through the sculpture exhibition (accessible on the website lastwitness.eu). Ada Willenberg, Samuel Willenberg's widow and Holocaust survivor, contributed to the creation of the exhibition. Between 2020 and 2023, the IPN organised the exhibition in its premises in Warsaw, Lublin, Krakow, Kielce, as well as in the Museum of the Second World War in Gdańsk, Museum of Częstochowa, the Depot History Centre in Wrocław, and in smaller towns, which were important sites of Jewish settlement in the past, such as Chmielnik and Opatów in today's Świętokrzyskie Voivodeship.

On 2 August 2023, in connection with the ceremonies commemorating the 80th anniversary of the uprising of SS-Sonderkommando Treblinka prisoners, the IPN International Cooperation Office prepared its own open-air exhibition, "Obraz Treblinki w oczach Samuela Willenberga" (The Image of Treblinka in the Eyes of Samuel Willenberg), which was displayed on the grounds of the Treblinka

¹⁷ Meanwhile, thanks to the efforts of the IPN Cracow Branch, the documentary film *Aktion Reinhardt w dystrykcie krakowskim* (Aktion Reinhardt in Distrikt Krakau), directed by Jarosław Migoń, was produced and screened in many schools in the region (R. Gieroń, "Lest We Forget the Victims," p. 485).

Museum. The anniversary celebration was attended by numerous representatives of the state authorities, many organisations, churches and religious associations from Poland and Israel. The Institute of National Remembrance was represented by Prof. Karol Polejowski, who stressed in his commemorative speech that the mission of the Institute is to preserve the memory of heroes and victims of 20th century totalitarian states. In addition, the IPN International Cooperation Office initiated the commemoration of the Peretz and Samuel Willenberg family in Warsaw. The cooperation between the IPN International Cooperation Office and Office for Commemorating Polish Struggle and Martyrdom resulted in the preparation of a commemorative plaque (in Polish, English and Hebrew), which was placed on the building on Marszałkowska Street, where Peretz Willenberg painted an image of the Merciful Jesus on the wall during the 1944 Warsaw Rising. As residents of this tenement house believe, this saved the building from German bombardment and saved the lives of the tenants.¹⁸

A discussion of the IPN contribution to the commemoration of the anniversary of *Aktion Reinhardt* would not be complete without mentioning commemorative initiatives in public spaces aimed at paying respect to the victims of the genocide caused by Germans. Commemorative or informative plaques make a lasting mark in individual and collective memory. This is why many such objects have been funded by or with the participation of the IPN. On 9 March 2022, a memorial plaque was unveiled in Mielec. The ceremony was attended by Dr. Dariusz Iwaneczko, director of the IPN Rzeszów Branch and Dr. Piotr Szopa, head of the IPN Branch Office for Commemorating Polish Struggle and Martyrdom. Director Iwaneczko read out a letter from IPN President Dr. Karol Nawrocki, who stated that “it was in Mielec that the Aktion began, which lasted 2 years and claimed 2 million human lives – above all, of Jews who were citizens of the Second Republic of Poland.”¹⁹ The IPN Rzeszów Branch also funded a plaque concerning *Aktion Reinhardt*, un-

¹⁸ The ceremonial unveiling of the plaque was attended, among others, by Samuel Willenberg’s widow Ada Krystyna Willenberg, Israeli Ambassador Jacob Livne, Deputy Speaker of the Polish Sejm Małgorzata Kidawa-Błońska, Chief Rabbi of Poland Michael Schudrich, representatives of the military authorities and residents of the tenement house at 60 Marszałkowska Street. The IPN was represented by IPN Deputy President Dr. Mateusz Szyptma.

¹⁹ See <https://ipn.gov.pl/pl/aktualnosci/160930,Odsłonięcie-pamiatkowej-tablicy-poswieconej-ofiarom-niemieckiej-Akcji-Reinhardt-.html>, accessed 11 March 2024.

veiled on 11 August 2023 in Jasienica Rosielna.²⁰ A plaque commemorating Jewish victims in Nasielsk was unveiled on 3 December 2023 with the participation of the Director of the IPN Warsaw Branch Dr. Tomasz Łabuszewski. In cooperation with the Warsaw Ghetto Museum, a ceremonial unveiling of a memorial matzevah (tombstone) monument, dedicated to the Jews of Żyrardów and the surrounding area murdered by the German occupiers in 1940–1943, took place in Żyrardów on 21 February 2024. The Director of the IPN Office for Commemoration of Polish Struggle and Martyrdom, Adam Siwek attended the event. Another memorial matzevah was unveiled on 21 March 2024 in Łowicz with the participation of the Deputy President of the IPN, Dr. Mateusz Szpytma.²¹

Historical remembrance also includes non-material commemorations in the form of cultural events. To commemorate the heroes of the ghetto, the IPN Białystok Branch together with the Danuta Siedzikówna “Inka” Historical Association, organised the concert *Psalmy Dawidowe* (Psalms of David) on 18 August 2023 at the Ton cinema, an idea conceived by Bogdan Romaniuk of the Ulma Family Foundation “SOAR” and developed by musician, composer, multi-instrumentalist and arranger Mateusz Pospieszalski.²² In turn, in Lublin, on 19 April 2022, employees of the IPN National Education Office took part in a commemorative walk

²⁰ See <https://rzeszow.ipn.gov.pl/pl8/aktualnosci/189193,Odsloniecie-tablicy-upamietniajacej-81-rocznice-Akcji-Reinhardt-Jasienica-Rosiel.html>, accessed 11 March 2024. The Office for Commemorating Polish Struggle and Martyrdom of the IPN Cracow Branch, in collaboration with the Mayor of Pińczów, funded the plaque commemorating Jewish citizens of the Second Polish Republic murdered by the Germans. Commemorative plaques were mounted also in Zakliczyn and Maków Podhalański – in collaboration with the Mayors of these towns (R. Gieroń, “Lest We Forget the Victims,” p. 484).

²¹ See <https://ipn.gov.pl/pl/upamietnianie/biezaca-dzialalnosc-biu/182346,Odsloniecie-tablicy-poswieconej-mieszkancom-Nasielska-ktorzy-zgineli-z-rak-Sowie.html>; <https://ipn.gov.pl/pl/upamietnianie/biezaca-dzialalnosc-biu/197944,Odsloniecie-Macewy-Pamieci-Zyrardow-21-lutego-2024.html>; <https://1943.pl/artykul/osloniecie-macewy-pamieci-w-lowiczu>, accessed 12 March 2024.

²² On 12 March 2023, on the eve of the 80th anniversary of the commencement of the liquidation of the Cracow ghetto by the Germans another March of Remembrance was organised, in which a delegation of the Institute of National Remembrance took part, headed by the director of the IPN Cracow Branch, Prof. Filip Musiał. Similar in its character, the 9th March of Remembrance for the Victims of Kulmhof extermination camp in Chełmno on Ner, organised by the museum of this camp and the District Governor's Office in Koło, took place on 21 April 2022. A special commemoration was held for the Jews deported from more than 50 ghettos established by the Germans in the pre-war Poznań, Łódź, Pomerania and Warsaw Voivodeships. The ceremonies were attended by representatives of the local administration, numerous schools, cultural institutions, military and law enforcement services, clergy, and representatives of the Wielkopolska Region MPs. The IPN Poznań Branch was represented by the Head of the Branch Historical Research Office, Prof. Konrad Białecki (Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań).

organised by the State Museum in Majdanek. It was part of the museum's project entitled "Pamiętamy... 17 marca – 19 kwietnia" (Lest We Forget... 17 March – 19 April), which aimed to show the history of Lublin (including KL Lublin) under the German occupation.

Finally, it should be mentioned that many themes concerning the Holocaust on occupied Polish lands were reflected in the educational activities conducted by the IPN in connection with the commemoration of the Day of Remembrance for Poles who Rescued Jews during World War II. The celebrations had a special dimension in 2023 due to the beatification of the Ulma family and the interest of Polish and world public opinion in the history of this family and the Polish Righteous (Rescuers). On the day of the beatification of the Ulma family, President of the Republic of Poland Andrzej Duda unveiled a matzevah, funded by the Institute of National Remembrance, in the cemetery in Jagiełka that was dedicated to the Jews murdered in Markowa, including those hidden by the Ulma family killed along with them.²³

The above brief outline highlights the significant contribution and involvement of the Institute of National Remembrance, its authorities, and staff of its various divisions and branches in promoting knowledge and fostering remembrance of Holocaust victims, particularly those of the German *Aktion Reinhardt*, most of whom were Polish citizens.

²³ See the report by Dr. Wojciech Hanus in the present volume.