

Strassler Center students Hana Green and Daan de Leeuw organized, together with five colleagues, the “26th Workshop on the History and Memory of National Socialist Camps and Killing Sites: Bodies and Borders,” which took place in Łódź, Poland, from 4-10 September 2023. The Strassler Center supported and co-financed this academic event through a donation made in memory of Roman and Hannah Kent. In addition to being longtime supporters of the Strassler Center, Hannah and Roman Kent were both born and raised in Łódź and survived the Holocaust. It was therefore all the more appropriate that the Strassler Center made a generous donation in their name.

Founded in Germany, the Workshop on the History and Memory of National Socialist Camps and Killing Sites has been held annually since 1994. This international academic event, organized by and for emerging scholars, practitioners, and educators, provides an interdisciplinary and democratic forum dedicated to academic research on Nazi camps and killing sites. In particular, the topics of persecution, forced labor, mass murder, and the Holocaust, as well as their representation in various historical cultures, are discussed. To maintain the Workshop’s continuity and sustainability, every candidate is allowed to attend three times: as speaker, participant, and organizer. Both Green and de Leeuw had participated as speakers in the previous editions (co-organized by Strassler Center student Emil Kjerte) and together helped orchestrate the most recent one in Łódź. Unique in structure, the Workshop does not have permanent institutional affiliation and, as such, the organizing committee, location, and theme change annually and are democratically determined by the participants each year.

The 26th edition was planned in association with the Center for Jewish Studies at Łódź University and Viadrina University in Frankfurt Oder, Germany. Together with the seven members of the organizing team, 15 speakers and 9 participants (including Strassler student Lauren Ashley Bradford (G4)) attended the Workshop, totaling 31 people present in Łódź. This year’s edition focused *Bodies and Borders* as analytical categories to study and understand Nazi concentration camps and killing sites, addressing questions pertaining to the spatial- and forensic turns in Holocaust studies. With these themes in mind, the papers transgressed established frontiers between disciplines and were organized in four distinct panels: *Sealing, Crossing, Transcending Borders; Materialities of Bodies; Negotiating Bodies: Friendship, Sexual Violence, and Social Dynamics in the Holocaust;* and *Proximities to Violence*. Together, these panels addressed myriad questions at the macro, meso, and micro level related to bodies and borders and were in conversation with other emergent themes across the field of Holocaust and genocide studies.

In addition to the academic discussion, the Workshop consisted of two field trips, three keynote lectures, and a film screening. A daylong excursion was undertaken to Radegast station and Chełmno death camp. Radegast station was the site whence the Germans deported Łódź ghetto inhabitants, Jews as well as Sinti and Roma, to the Chełmno (Kulmhof) killing center. There, some 172,000 people were murdered in gas vans, their bodies dumped in mass graves in a nearby forest, between December 1941 and March 1943 and in June-July 1944.

The group also traveled to Piotrków Trybunalski, the site of the first ghetto in Poland, and to the Rakow forest memorial site. Following this excursion, we were fortunate enough to have a virtual talk with survivor Mala Tribich MBE. A Piotrków native, Tribich told us about life in Piotrków Trybunalski before the war, her wartime experiences, and the fate of her family. .

The agenda featured three keynote lectures from prominent scholars in the field. The first was a “walking keynote” through the former Łódź Ghetto by Dr. Adam Sitarek, director of the Center for Jewish Studies at Łódź University. Following our first panel, Dr. Natalia Judzińska delivered a keynote about the current refugee crisis at the Polish-Belarusian Border as well as the importance of scholar-activism. Finally, following our day trip to Piotrków Trybunalski, Dr. Natalia Romik gave a keynote address on Holocaust Hideouts and the architecture of survival. These three keynotes provided meaningful context for our discussions and panels and greatly enriched our program.

In cooperation with the Center for Jewish Studies at Łódź University, the Workshop organizers hosted a public film screening of *Fotoamator* [Photographer] by Dariusz Jabłoński (1998). Taken by the chief accountant of the Łódź Ghetto, Walter Genewein, color photographs were discovered in a second-hand bookstore in Austria. Using Genewein’s images and the recollections of Dr. Arnold Mostowicz, the last surviving witness of the events portrayed in the slides, the film examines Jewish life in the Łódź ghetto.

Together with several members of the 26th Workshop organizational team, de Leeuw and Green are coordinating the publication of an edited volume with a selection of papers from the Workshop’s program with Metropol Verlag, a German press. This publication will be part of a series of volumes associated with the Workshop.

Green and de Leeuw, along with Lauren Ashley Bradford (G4), look forward to attending the 27th Workshop which will be held in Utrecht, The Netherlands, in fall 2024.