

Memorial Site
Stalag VIII A

Remembrance for the Future

Kinga Hartmann, Tomasz Sudół, Kazimierz Wóycicki,
Alexandra Grochowski, Frank Seibel, Teresa Korsak

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Meetingpoint Memory Messiaen
Fundacja Pamięć, Edukacja, Kultura
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Introduction

The memory of the Second World War lingers over international relations as a difficult and sensitive issue. This is particularly true in case of Poland and Germany.

Why is it that 77 years after the war ended, the reminiscences of these events still trigger tension between Poles and Germans? Why do Poles so adamantly bring up the story of Warsaw, ruthlessly razed in 1944, never to regain its centuries-worth of monuments, libraries, art?

What to remember and how to commemorate it? What to keep and what to destine to oblivion? Whose and which memories are important? It is a family story, personal memory or social memory of entire nations? Individual memory is so often different from what we immortalize in history textbooks.

The former German prisoner-of-war camp, Stalag VIII A, described and referred to in several articles in this book, was located on the outskirts of the German town of Görlitz. The new Potsdam-established border split the city in two and, from May 1945, the area of the former Stalag was now on the territory of Poland, in Zgorzelec. This fact alone defines this problematic interdependence arising from German historical and moral responsibility being transferred to Polish territory.

After many difficult talks and joint projects, a compromise was worked out between the Polish and Saxon sides, according to which the Saxon association Meetingpoint Memory Messiaen from Görlitz, together with the Polish organization Memory, Education, Culture Foundation and the Zgorzelec local authorities, took over the care of this memorial site, and decided to make it a place of joint work towards a better understanding between Poles and Germans as well as other nations.

On the institutional map of both cities, Zgorzelec and Görlitz, the European Centre Memory, Education, Culture has become the venue for discussion and work on the significance of history and the memory of the tragic events of the Second World War for today's societies, historical and civic education, the role of art and music in difficult circumstances, the dissemination of civic attitudes and the shaping of the future of the border region.

In this publication you will therefore find both the history of Stalag VIII A between 1939–1945, information on the main profiles of the concept of work of the Centre established on its premises, on the work on remembrance

of the former camp of the association Meetingpoint Memory Messiaen e.V. from Görlitz, as well as memories of people who worked for the commemoration of this special place.

This publication is the result of collaboration between Meetingpoint Memory Messiaen e.V and the Memory, Education, Culture Foundation and aims to commemorate the former Stalag VIII A Görlitz.

Kinga Hartmann

Past in our Present

Many people think the past has no particular meaning for the present and does not influence on shaping the future anyhow. In my opinion, such conviction is extremely naive and often plainly harmful.

To create future with others, one should get to know and understand them. One should introduce himself. To tell who you are.

Every one of us introducing himself is forced to share some information. We can say we know someone well only when we can say anything about his past – not only about who he actually is but also whom he was. We understand him the better, the more he told us about himself and we have a confirmation he is true.

The same criteria apply in understanding and getting to know of two societies. We get to know other society by not only knowing its plans for the future but most of all by knowing its collective past. It allows us to better judge its behaviours, reactions, decisions. We can understand ways, directions and burdens of a society only when we are interested in it.

The European Centre Memory, Education, Culture is situated in former Stalag VIIIA where about 120,000 POWs were kept during the war and where died about 12,000 of malnutrition, exhaustive work and diseases.

Perhaps if not for a tiny episode from the history of XX century music, Stalag VIIIA would be one of many POW camp in the history of WWII and there would be no Centre at all. Since here, in camp hard conditions, an unusual musical piece was composed. *Quartet for the End of Time* by Olivier Messiaen had its premiere in a bunkhouse in cold winter night in January 1941.

Here I would like to mention the name of late doctor Albrecht Goetze, who was an initiator of Saxony society Meetingpoint Music Messiaen, his founder and the President of many years. His fascination of Messiaen's works and *Quartet for the End of Time* in particular and circumstances in which it was composed greatly contributed to the founding of the place but also to increase the interest of Stalag VIIIA by the citizens of both towns – Zgorzelec and Görlitz.

Olivier Messiaen was a deeply religious man and it is visible in his rich oeuvre. We must not forget for most of his life he was an organ player in one of Paris churches. A piece almost liturgical, *Quartet for the End of Time* is an obvious reference to the Apocalypse and its exquisite final parts were to demonstrate joining of human soul with God. At least this masterpiece can and is

interpreted this way. It seems all too obvious why such a piece of music could be created here in time of war tragedy.

This obviousness does not make the piece easy to receive, neither is an illustration which can fill the space of memory we are facing now.

Reading the notes themselves, we could forget about the names of those who were here and who survived the apocalypse – of those whose lives ended here and those who, according to Messiaen's thought, met here with God. Since even the most profound art cannot conquer the majesty of death. It would also be a betrayal of the composer's idea to replace memory of death and suffering of actual people with beauty. It would be a denial of his piety if aesthetics obscured human being.

The Centre is located in a pretty, modern building but it still lacks the names of those who suffered and died here. Those nameless persons direct our thoughts towards the past but they also enter our present and should have influence on shaping our future. Getting to know the past we touch often very sensitive elements of Polish-German dialogue. We set in motion this, about what both sides still cannot talk about and try to veil it with silence of oblivion.

The great masterpiece, Messiaen *Quartet*, should show here the historical truth and not cover it up. One should be very careful in the discussion on the role of the Centre as a cultural and artistic hub. It cannot be treated as plain concert hall and a place where, due to particular circumstances, only one musical piece assumes the main role in historical and emotional message.

Quartet for the End of Time has the right to be a symbol of this place and victory of the will of life over death, but we must not forget that the site of former Stalag is an area of extreme suffering and a cemetery.

Let us try then to mark the area of suppression and silence which the music of Messiaen should not fill up but to help us to distinguish.

It seemed the Stalag VIII A on the border of Communist Poland and Communist East Germany should have been a perfect place for demonstration of Polish-German reconciliation, that it could have been possible even in the mid-forties, the beginning of the 50s at the latest according to permanent declarations of friendship between East Berlin and ruled by Communist Warsaw. It did not happen though. GDR did not feel responsible for the period of 1933–45, saying the responsible for crimes live east of Lada River. There lived the guilty of Nazi tragedy while GDR was the land of "anti-Nazis". The terrain of the camp was not commemorated in any way and used for attempts to reckoning with recent past and to support the friendship between PRL and GDR.

Not far from here, also on the Polish side of the border, there was another necropolis established here – cemetery of soldiers of the 2nd Polish Army who died during crossing of Neisse River and during fights near Bautzen.

Rebuilt in the 60s the cemetery with a towering monument of the Piast dynasty eagle from 1978 for years had been used in propaganda reminding of German threat. Post-war history of the Stalag shows neither Polish nor Germans cared about the former camp. In the 60s graves of Soviet soldiers are celebrated by Soviet initiative. Perhaps thanks to their efforts the memory of this place survived after all. In the name "Soviet soldiers" there was deliberate and well thought-out oblivion. But there is also a historical lie. Soldiers called up to the Red Army were Ukrainians, Russians, Byelorussians and probably also other nations of the colonial empire. It was not displayed, not said. There is no cross, not a symbol of any other religion on their mass grave, even though they were not only members of the Communist Party but also of Russian Orthodox, Greek Catholic, and Roman Catholic denominations (there must have been many Poles there from, for example, Żytomierz region) There must have been some Jews and Muslims. Since it was the profile of the Red Army. Still nobody commemorated their names in this place, neither names of those whose remains are hidden here.

The existing monument for the prisoners of the Stalag was erected in the camp in 1976. It was inspired by the efforts of French and Belgian veterans who had to overcome serious obstacles to finalize its building.

The camp memory was cultivated by a Zgorzelec history teacher, Roman Zgłobicki. His tireless efforts however, including establishment of a Memory Chamber in local Secondary Mining School as well as issuing a publication on Stalag and its prisoners, had not given expected results for a long time. Perhaps there was a conviction on the Polish side that one must not return to the topic of the most difficult period of Polish-German relations in the light of Polish-German reconciliation after 1989. That we should talk only about the future. It is not true. Such attitude does not simplify the process of reconciliation between Poles and Germans. Only these ready for an open dialogue are capable of overcoming stereotypes and resentments.

Lack of memory and fear of it is not a characteristic feature of deep province. Various places seem to be so drastically provincial not because they are poor or undercapitalized but due to lack of any stories. An outsider cannot get acquainted with anything because there is nobody who would know the past of the place. Such places are abandoned by young people, and old age of those who remain is even harder.

Silence about the past may have different causes. It might be caused by the lack of reason, inability to talk about difficult matters or may be caused by the need to forget. Caused by the tendency to remember only one's own suffering neglecting the suffering of the others.

Escape and exile of German citizens of eastern part of Görlitz was a great suffering – today's Zgorzelec in 1945. It was a tragedy German population does not want to forget and its memory is cultivated. But we must not forget

what caused it. Remembering thousands of exiled Germans from Görlitz-Ost, we should not forget about Stalag prisoners who were cruising the town in columns for years under guard to perform hard, slave work for German industry, agriculture and private sector.

Existence of the Centre inside Stalag VIII A can be a great Chance to open a new stage not only in relations between two towns but also to give a powerful new impulse for cooperation along the Polish-Saxony border.

Of course, talking about the past is not easy. A true memory place is not created by few, even the most expressive anecdotes. A true memory place is there where actual people meet, a place of difficult questions and dialogue, a place where the present opens itself for the future. And only future saturates with memory has a human extent.

The site of Stalag is an international space. Polish, French, Belgian, Russian, Byelorussian, Ukrainian, British and American prisoners of the camp make this object a truly European memory place. I am convinced it should radiate with all what will happen and be said here. This place requires a wide horizon of thought, great heart and commitment – let Roman Zgłobicki and Albrecht Goetze be symbolic icons of the place. People who wanted to remember and asked for this memory.

Görlitz and Zgorzelec, “Görlitz–Zgorzelec Europe, town”, is not a province but a spot cultivating memory. It is a place nurturing European memory in the very centre of our continent. The memory which is not only the past but it exists in our present and shapes our future.

Let the music piece of Olivier Messiaen, *Quartet for the End of Time* will be a reminder of the past which exists in our present and let it be an inspiration for a brave talk in the Centre supporting memory opened for the future of our European continent.

History of Stalag VIII A (1939–1945)

Zgorzelec is one of these special places in contemporary Poland where existed large POW camps of German Wehrmacht.

Characteristic feature of such places is that most of them are still not commemorated. After the war their residential infrastructure was usually dismantled. Usually monuments or cemeteries are landmarks informing there used to be a POWs camp. Thanks to European Centre Memory Education Culture and Meetingpoint Memory Messiaen e.V. the history of Stalag VIII A returns and has a chance to permanently sink into the consciousness of citizens of German Görlitz, Polish Zgorzelec, and also the borderland region¹.

The General Headquarters of Wehrmacht (Oberkommando der Wehrmacht, OKW) had already in 1938 started the organization of POW camp system establishing relevant offices and units. However in August 1934 the Third Reich ratified The Geneva Convention, it was assumed not to respect some of its articles and even a list of potential violations of international laws was created². It was obvious that in case of war, the mobilization would separate thousands of men from their place of labour and to replace them, new labour force will be needed consisted of POWs. The demand included agriculture, for example, but also arms industry. Spring 1939 all logistic matters concerning the system of POW camps – competence tasks and official subordination rules were established in details. Besides, there were special courses for NCOs organized in Vienna preparing them to work in POW camps.

In the day of the outbreak of war on the 1st of September 1939, then Görlitz was within the administration of Upper-Silesian province of the Reich³. In the military structure it belonged to the VIII Military District

¹ See Joanna Lusek, Albrecht Goetze, *Stalag VIIIA Görlitz. Historia – terażniejszość – przyszłość*, „Łąbinowski Rocznik Muzealny: jeńcy wojenni w latach II wojny światowej”, 2011, nr 34, pp. 27–52; Joanna Lusek, *Na koniec czasu...: ślady pamięci jako filozoficzno-edukacyjny dezyderat powstania Europejskiego Centrum Edukacyjno-Kulturalnego Zgorzelec-Görlitz*, „Niepodległość i Pamięć: czasopismo muzealno-historyczne” 2017, nr 1, pp. 217–236.

² David Foy, *For You the War is Over. American Prisoners of War in Nazi Germany*, New York 1984, p. 17.

³ *Ämtliches Gemeindeverzeichnis für das Deutsche Reich auf Grund der Volkszählung 1939* (zweite Auflage), Berlin 1941, p. 160.

(Wehrkreis VIII) with the headquarters in Wrocław⁴. Görlitz was an important garrison town with I and II Battalion of 30th Infantry Regiment (I–II Bataillon/30. Infanterie-Regiment) stationed there as a part of the 18th Infantry Division (18. Infanterie-Division)⁵. The presence of military in town space was not without significance. In many cases POW camps were located in garrison towns and in the vicinity of military training grounds.

POW Office supervised POW camps in the German Reich (Abteilung Kriegsgefangenenwesen) within the structures of General Department (Allgemeines Wehrmachtsamt) of Chief Headquarters of Wehrmacht. In every Military District there was a commander of POW camps in its headquarters (Kommandeur der Kriegsgefangenen im Wehrkreis) who supervised all camps in the district. For officers taken into captivity there were Oflags (Offizierslager, Oflag), and for NCOs and privates Stalags (Mannschaftsstelllager, Stalag). There were also transitional camps (Durchgangslager, Dulag) where Military District functionaries take the prisoners over and direct them to permanent camps.

Prisoners were transported from operation areas subjected to General Headquarters of Land Army (Oberkommando des Heeres), from prisoners' rallying points (Kriegsgefangenenensammelstellen), temporary POW camps (Kriegsgefangenenlager) to the district subjected to Military Districts to Dulags or directly to already existing Stalags and Oflags. When the war started Germany had not fully developed infrastructure of POW camps. Majority of the camps was still under construction or in the initial phase of construction with use of POWs.

The history of POW camps in Görlitz opens Dulag Görlitz operating the whole September 1939 (in documentation it is also listed as Dulag VIIIA Görlitz). The first POWs were kept here – soldiers of Polish Army. Their first transport arrived at the camp on the 8th of September. For many the stay in Dulag was a short part of their captivity – they were directed to other camps in The Reich from here. The transitory camp was located by the fields of today's Lubańska Street in North-Eastern part of Zgorzelec (then Laubaner Straße). The prisoners were placed in tents and the whole area was fenced with wires⁶. On the 18th of September 1939 there were 8,468 prisoners including 396 officers and 6,398 NCOs and privates, 1,674 civil-

⁴ Archive of IPN in Kielce [dalej: AIPN Ki], 53/4527, k. 36. Obozy hitlerowskie na ziemiach polskich 1939–1945. Obozy jenieckie. Województwo wrocławskie, Warszawa 1969.

⁵ Georg Tessin, *Verbände und Truppen der deutschen Wehrmacht und Waffen SS im Zweiten Weltkrieg 1939–1945*. Vierter Band. *Die Landstreitkräfte 15–30*, Frankfurt am Main 1970, p. 283.

⁶ Roman Zgłobicki, *Obozy i cmentarze wojenne w Zgorzelcu*, Zgorzelec 1995, s. 10. Due to restricted number of sources used in this study many R. Zgłobicki's findings should be verified.

ians (including women)⁷. In the last quarter of 1939 there were about 8,000 prisoners⁸.

Stalag VIII A was located in another place than above-mentioned dulag⁹. However it was officially opened since September 1939 r.¹⁰, it was actually opened only by the end of the year¹¹. Since the outbreak of war until December 1939 it was under construction. It was built by Polish POWs who had to stay the first winter in canvas tents.

Stalag VIII A was calculated for 3000 prisoners, and its maximum capacity was estimated for 15,000 prisoners¹². R. Zgłobicki gives the following camp description: "The proper camp consisted of bunkhouses, first wooden then brick of the following dimensions (30 m × 10, 60 × 10). Inside the camp there were two kitchens for eastern and western prisoners, penal bunkhouse, canteen, theatre bunkhouse, library, chapel, general toilets, playing field"¹³.

Headquarters and also the guards bunkhouses were placed behind the fence. Guards were soldiers from territorial defence units: Landesschützenbataillon 554 and 590. Camp commanders were: Col.k Georg von Kranold (until 16 July 1940), Col. Alois von Bielas (7 August 1940 – 2 July 1943) and Col. Rudolf Teichmann (3 July 1943 until the camp liquidation in May 1945)¹⁴. Camp commander was submitted to commander of POWs in the headquarters of VIII Military District.

In prison camps there was a strictly followed rule of national segregation. Until spring 1940 the only national group was Polish. Mid-1940 there were about 1400 of them¹⁵. Then they were very quickly moved to other camps.

⁷ Ibid. p. 14.

⁸ Tadeusz Sojka, *Zbrodnie Wehrmachtu na jeńcach wojennych w Żaganiu 1939–1945: studium kryminalistyczno-historyczne*, Zielona Góra 1982, p. 54.

⁹ Located in Görlitz – Moys (today part of Zgorzelec – Ujazd), on Łużycka Street on the right side of the road Zgorzelec–Bogatynia.

¹⁰ Stanisław Senft, Horst Więcek, *Obozy jenieckie na obszarze śląskiego okręgu wojskowego Wehrmachtu: 1939–1945*, Wrocław 1972, p. 20.

¹¹ Gianfranco Mattiello, Wolfgang Vogt, *Deutsche Kriegsgefangenen- und Internierteneinrichtungen 1939–1945: Handbuch und Katalog: Lagergeschichte und Lagerzensurstempel*, Band 1. *Stammlager (Stalag)*, Mailand 1986, p. 19.

¹² R. Zgłobicki, *Obozy...*, p. 10.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Joanna Lusek, Albrecht Goetze, *Stalag VIIIA Görlitz...*, p. 27.

¹⁵ R. Zgłobicki, *Obozy...*, p. 14.

Since June 1940 transports with French¹⁶. and Belgian prisoners started to arrive. Summer 1940 there were already about 20,000¹⁷ of them. In June 1941 over 2300 Yugoslav¹⁸ prisoners were sent to the camp.

In January 1942 the first transport of 149 Russian prisoners came to the camp and in September 1943 there were 19,71¹⁹ already of them. Since November 1943 Soviet prisoners became the biggest group in the camp. In January 1945 there were 16,668²⁰ of them.

Since autumn 1943 there were also British prisoners²¹ in Stalag VIII A. There were English, Australians, Canadians, New Zealanders and South Africans. Italian prisoners started coming to the camp in December 1943 when Italy²² when Italy came over to the Allied Forces.

The biggest number of prisoners (47,328) was recorded in September 1944²³. In December 1944 there was a small group of soldiers of Home Army consisted of 37 soldiers taken into captivity after the fall of The Warsaw Uprising and 1,748 Slovaks taken prisoners during national uprising in Slovakia²⁴. At the beginning of January 1945 there came a completely new group: 1800 American prisoners²⁵.

It is estimated about 100,000–120,000 prisoners of different nationalities went through the camp. Specific data for the period between 28 February 1941 – 1 January 1945 are included in the chart below.

Prisoners were treated by the Third Reich as reservoir of cheap labour. Assembled in work formations (Germ. Kriegsgefangenen-Arbeitskommando; Kgf-Arbeitskommando), consisted up to several dozens of men were employed in various sectors of economy – in industrial plants, mines, farms, small private businesses but also in arms industry which deeply collided

¹⁶ 1,850,000 French soldiers were captured including 1,575,000 registered in camps. Part of them was released but about 950,000 remained captives. See. Jean-Louis Panné, *Francuscy i polscy jeńcy wojenni. Braterstwo doświadczeń i świadectwa*, „Pamięć i Sprawiedliwość. Pismo Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej” 2005, nr 2 (8), p. 258.

¹⁷ R. Zglobicki, *Obozy...*, p. 15.

¹⁸ See Chart.

¹⁹ R. Zglobicki, *Obozy...*, p. 15.

²⁰ See also Chart.

²¹ Tyler Fisher, *A medic's war. One Man's True Odyssey of Hardship, Friendship, and Survival in the Second World War*, San Diego 2005, pp. 57–71. The book contains memories of Hugh Jess Fisher compiled by his grandson T. Fisher. See also: Vasilis Vourkoutiotis, *Prisoners of War and the German High Command. The British and American Experience*, Ottawa 2003, p. 32.

²² R. Zglobicki, *Obozy...*, p. 15.

²³ See Chart.

²⁴ See Chart.

²⁵ R. Zglobicki, *Obozy...*, p. 16.

1.04.1943	17,030	-	4,533	-	1,671	-	-	-	9,445	-	29,075	32,679
1.05.1943	16,485	-	4,521	-	1,672	-	-	-	8,624	-	28,726	31,320
1.06.1943	15,239	-	4,510	-	1,606	-	-	-	9,700	-	28,218	31,115
1.08.1943	15,941	-	4,501	-	1,675	-	-	-	9,585	-	28,332	31,975
1.09.1943	15,871	-	4,380	-	1,640	-	-	-	19,471	-	28,600	41,362
1.10.1943	15,742	4,196	4,371	-	1,192	-	23	13,742	-	-	28,379	39,269
1.12.1943	15,609	2,880	4,380	-	1,228	6,135	-	12,445	-	-	36,127	42,768
1.01.1944	15,581	3,188	4,374	-	1,222	7,303	-	12,999	-	-	37,555	44,669
1.02.1944	15,431	2,772	4,381	-	1,413	7,444	-	12,738	-	-	37,495	44,179
1.04.1944	15,299	3,040	4,357	-	1,408	8,216	-	12,919	-	-	36,890	45,239
1.05.1944	15,216	2,987	4,198	-	1,421	8,668	-	13,183	-	-	36,977	45,673
1.06.1944	15,116	2,937	4,196	-	1,498	9,415	-	12,691	-	-	36,918	45,853
1.07.1944	15,080	2,979	4,193	-	1,548	9,024	-	12,696	-	-	37,109	45,520
1.09.1944	15,058	3,712	4,121	-	1,560	3,154	-	14,723	-	-	36,321	47,328
1.10.1944	15,037	3,345	4,115	-	1,560	2,278	-	14,677	-	-	31,840	41,012
1.11.1944	15,031	3,230	4,108	-	1,596	2,241	-	15,332	-	-	32,557	41,538
1.12.1944	14,956	3,179	4,090	37*	1,570	1,660	-	15,930	1,512***	-	32,969	42,934
1.01.1945	14,960	3,243	4,085	37*	1,576	1,641	- **	16,668	1,748***	-	-	43,953

* Soldiers of Warsaw Uprising .

** It does not include American prisoners who got into Stalag VIII A in the first days of January 1945.

*** Slovaks.

Blank places – no data.

Source: Set based on: S. Senft, H. Więcek, *Obozy jenieckie...*, pp. 214–221.

with the Geneva Convention ratified by Germany. Camp commanders in the headquarters of VIII Military District had officers appointed to particular tasks. One of them was responsible for supervision of POWs employment (Abt. Arbeitseinsatz der Kriegsgefangenen). In the VIII Military District there were strictly regulated regions of employment (Einsatzbereich); Stalag VIIIA covered the Southern part of Lower Silesia²⁶.

In the VIII Military District first labour units working in agriculture sector was sent from the Stalag VIIIA²⁷. Number of working units increased with growing number of prisoners in Stalag VIIIA²⁸. Already in 1940 the prisoners were extensively used to work in terrain in many Silesian counties²⁹. Working units were often located in quite distant places. Working Unit of Soviet POWs in Szklarska Poręba's quarry is a good example³⁰, or a unit working in a quarry in Strzelin³¹.

An interesting phenomenon is cultural life of prisoners in the camp. In Stalag VIIIA there were music bands, amateur theatre, a library, orchestras (two Belgian and one French), there were some examples of self-educational and artistic activities. The name of Olivier Messiaen is inseparably connected with Stalag VIIIA. He was a French prisoner number 33533, a composer who during his several-months imprisonment, thanks to favourable circumstances, composed one his most famous pieces – *Quartet for the End of Time*³².

²⁶ Stanisław Senft, *Jeńcy wojenni i robotnicy przymusowi zatrudnieni w rolnictwie śląskim 1939–1945*, Opole 1978, p. 66.

²⁷ S. Senft, *Jeńcy wojenni i robotnicy...*, p. 39.

²⁸ See Chart.

²⁹ Oddziałowa Komisja Ścigania Zbrodni przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu we Wrocławiu, Ds. 48/67. Kommandant Stalag VIIIA, Aufstellung der Arbeitsvorhaben der öffentlichen Hand gem. Verfügung WKK VIII Abt. I b Kgf. V. 10.19.40 [sic!], [X 1940]. Prisoners worked on river regulation, roadworks, leveling land.

³⁰ Archiwum Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej [dalej: AIPN], IPN GK 165/297, k. 3. Telephonogram from Regional Police Headquarters from Jelenia Góra to the main headquarters. Criminal Department in Wrocław, [14.05.1963 r.] On other workin units in Stalag VIIIA see Wiesław Marczyk, *Jeńcy radzieccy w niewoli Wehrmachtu na ziemiach polskich w latach 1941–1945*, Opole 1987, pp. 73–99.

³¹ W. Marczyk, *Jeńcy...*, p. 92.

³² Jerzy Stankiewicz, *Olivier Messiaen. Człowiek i artysta w Stalagu VIIIA w Görlitz. Przewodnik biograficzny na otwarcie Europejskiego Centrum Edukacyjno-Kulturalnego Zgorzelec–Görlitz Meetingpoint Music Messiaen*, Zgorzelec 2014; Jerzy Stankiewicz, *Powstanie Kwartetu na koniec Czasu w Stalagu VIIIA Görlitz (1940/1941). Olivier Messiaen w kregu polskiej inteligencji i artystów*, "Łambinowicki Rocznik Muzealny: jeńcy wojenni w latach II wojny światowej" 2010, nr 33, pp. 105–121; Rebecca Rischin, *For the End of Time. The Story of the Messiaen Quartet*, New York 2003.

Culture, art and sports were the only ways to escape monotony of camp life³³. Substantial form of resistance was participation in religious sphere. Needless to say, Soviet prisoners were totally excluded from these activities.

There was a chapel in the camp serving everyday function of library. There was also some conspirational activities (radio monitoring, political talks). Sometimes sabotage was a form of resistance – sometimes at work, sometimes disease feint and sometimes escapes. Mostly prisoners from working units attempted to escape and mostly they were Soviet prisoners³⁴.

The main problem of prisoners behind the camp wires was malnutrition. According to deposition of Czesław Cieśliński, Corporal of the 1st Regiment of Mounted Fusiliers “[...] we were not beaten only suffered hunger”³⁵. Medical care was also insufficient – there was lack of medicine and equipment. The situation was quite improved by the presence of military doctors among the prisoners whom Germans employed for medical and sanitary works being under Germans’ supervision. Medical infrastructure was not adjusted to the scale of the camp and in case of epidemic hospital was constantly overcrowded³⁶.

Violence was a common phenomenon in the camps. Tadeusz Białkowski, a soldier of 68th Infantry Regiment from Polish campaign 1939 who was imprisoned in the Stalag VIII A in March 1940 said in his deposition that there were some soldiers in the camp beaten with rubber truncheons being regular guards’ equipment³⁷.

The policy of the Third Reich Towards Polish POWs did not follow the resolutions of the Geneva Convention. Nazi propaganda machine was set in motion to maximally use Poles taken into captivity after the lost campaign in 1939. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Third Reich announced that due to the seizure of territory of Poland by Germany and Soviet Russia, Polish state ceased to exist thus it cannot be a subject to international laws. They completely ignored the fact of existence of Polish Government on Exile initially in France and after German aggression on France, in London. In November 1939, German government withdrew their consent for its activity

³³ R. Rischin, *For the End...*, p. 33. On everyday life of prisoners see also Hannelore Lauerwald, *In fremdem Land. Kriegsgefangene im Stalag VIIIA Görlitz Tatsachen, Briefe, Dokumente*, Görlitz R. Rischin, *For the End...*, p. 33. On everyday life of prisoners see also Hannelore Lauerwald, *In fremdem Land. Kriegsgefangene im Stalag VIIIA Görlitz. Tatsachen, Briefe, Dokumente*, Görlitz 1997; Hannelore Lauerwald, *Primum vivere. Zuerst Leben. Wie Gefangene das Stalag VIIIA Görlitz erlebten*, Bautzen 2008.

³⁴ R. Zgłobicki, *Obozy...*, p. 31.

³⁵ AIPN GK 165/274, t. 1, k. 266–267.

³⁶ R. Zgłobicki, *Obozy...*, p. 22–25.

³⁷ AIPN, IPN GK 165/274, t. 1, k. 37. Protokół przesłuchania Tadeusza Białkowskiego, Żagań, 7.10.1960 r.

in Sweden, a country which since September 1939 was supposed to protect Polish interests on the territory of the Third Reich³⁸.

The consequences of this interpretation were dramatic for Polish prisoners. Prisoners suspected of alleged "crimes" on German soldiers or members of German minority in Poland were shot without a trial. Others suspected of "hostile intents towards The Reich" were mostly imprisoned. The Nazi courts usually passed the stiffest sentence.

Jewish prisoners were separated from the rest from their first day in a camp. They also worked in separated working units often exposed to humiliating treatment of guards. At the beginning of February 1941 1523 Jewish prisoners were transferred from Görlitz to the camp in Lublin³⁹.

As it was mentioned above, the treatment of prisoners depended on their nationality – for example, Italians were treated with contempt and brutality because Germans considered them "traitors". Germans treated Belgians, French, British and Americans better but from reports of former prisoners it is obvious they were periods of time they suffered this same bad treatment.

The fate of Red Army prisoners was purely tragic. The total number of imprisoned Soviet soldiers is estimated for 5,7 mln and about 3,3 mln did not survive prison camps. Due to Stalin's decision who refused to sign the Geneva Convention from 1929 Soviet prisoners were treated with utmost cruelty. They were given food rations below necessary minimum, they have no health care, crowded in overpopulated bunkhouses without heating were given especially exhausting works for instance in quarries or in uranium mines. In some camps they stayed outdoors. There were also planned executions of their political officers.

In Stalag VIIIA they were also the worst treated group. They were isolated from the rest of the prison population and every contact with them was strictly forbidden⁴⁰. The prisoners were also decimated by the lack of basic sanitary conditions, diseases, hunger and inhuman treatment by German guards. From the report of Tadeusz Cieśniak: "More than a half of Soviet prisoners was not able to work due to exhaustion with hunger and hard labour and also lack of clothes. Almost every night they snuck to basements in search of rotten potatoes where the majority of them was shot by the guards. The fate of Soviet prisoners had to be very severe judging by the number

³⁸ Under the agreement signed by the Polish government with Sweden before WWII. See. Szymon Datner, *Zbrodnie Wehrmachtu na jeńcach wojennych armii regularnych w II wojnie światowej*, Warszawa 1961, p. 18.

³⁹ R. Zgłobicki, *Liczebność i struktura narodowościowa jeńców Stalagu VIIIA w Zgorzelcu*, „Rocznik Jeleniogórski” 1979, t. 17, p. 86.

⁴⁰ R. Zgłobicki, *Obozy...*, p. 81.

of dead bodies removed daily. The carts were pulled by Russians and they told us bodies were thrown into pits and covered up with lime⁴¹.

From one hand Germans aimed at maximum exploitation of prisoners' labour, from the other they developed a recruitment campaign (depending on nationality) to enlist prisoners to various eastern military formation (Ost-truppen), being formed by Wehrmacht. It is estimated about 10,000–12,000 Soviet soldiers lost their life in Stalag VIII A⁴².

Soviet prisoners were not the only group to which Germans addressed the propaganda campaign for "anti-Bolshevik crusade". The campaign was also addressed to French and Belgians. Germans encouraged them to join various collaboration military formations. Such actions were to create divisions within every national group and to weaken their coherency. Similar operations were applied to Italians confined in the camps.

The matter of crimes committed in Stalag VIIIA requires another research and estimation of its extent. One of the gears of repression machine was penal bunkhouse in the camp. Prisoners were kept there to wait for their punishment⁴³. It was a kind of internal camp jail. Besides there was a penal company. The prisoners there not only had to work hard but they were beaten and abused⁴⁴.

Since January 1945 the process of gradual evacuation of the camp had begun. The prisoners were still used for constructing field fortification prepared before expected coming of the front⁴⁵. Columns of POWs were led on foot towards the west to IX and XIII Military Districts. The march commenced in difficult winter conditions and long prisoners' columns were exposed to air raids.

Not all prisoners were evacuated – all sick and unable to walk were left behind. There is an interesting case of Polish prisoners from the TB hospital in Tangerhütte, who were sent to Görlitz in April 1945, in the opposite direction⁴⁶.

History of Stalag VIIIA, which was the longest operating POW camp in the VIII Military District, ended in May 1945. First Red Army patrols appear in the camp on the 8th of May⁴⁷.

Prisoners who died in Görlitz camp were buried in several places. The victims of epidemic dysentery that took place in Dulag VIIIA, were probably buried in a mass grave in the nearby woods. Dead prisoners from Stalag

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 82.

⁴² Ibid., p. 84.

⁴³ S. Senft, *Jeńcy wojenni i robotnicy...*, p. 162; R. Zgłobicki, *Obozy...*, p. 26.

⁴⁴ R. Zgłobicki, *Obozy...*, p. 26.

⁴⁵ Ibid., pp. 53–54.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 55.

⁴⁷ Ibid., pp. 55–56.

VIIIA were probably buried on the west side of closed sand and clay pit. On the east side of the pit there was a mass grave of Soviet prisoners. There were some burials at Roman Catholic parish cemetery in Pieńsk (Gmn. Penzig) and at Protestant cemetery in Görlitz. Some graves were exhumed after the war (esp. Of prisoners from Western Europe) and rest is still there, unmarked. The Stalag area was taken over by Polish military units in 1945. No archaeological diggings or any other research was carried out in the camp.

In the period of People's Republic of Poland the theme of POWs was frequently used in propaganda as an element of anti-German campaign aimed at Federal German Republic. Many books and press articles were issued on the subject of POWs fate.

By the efforts of former Belgian and French prisoners an obelisk was erected in the camp in 1976 commemorating the place.

Since the end of the 80s annual celebrations used to be held here with participation of military, local authorities and veterans – former prisoners of the Stalag.

In the community of Polish Zgorzelec the matter of Stalag and memory of it for many years did not play any important role. One of the first persons, who after long time of oblivion started regaining its memory was a local history teacher Roman Zgłobicki. He published results of his research in the book *Obozy i cmentarze wojenne w Zgorzelcu*, issued in 1995. National Memory Chamber established from his initiative in local secondary technical school still functions in Zgorzelec⁴⁸.

However, in that period no museum on Stalag VIIIA was been opened neither in Görlitz nor in Zgorzelec. Such institutions were opened in other towns where POWs camps used to be during the war in the VIII Military District. A Museum of Martyrology of Allied POWs was opened Żagań (Stalag VIIIC Sagan and Stalag Luft 3) in 1971 – since 2009 The Museum of POW Camps⁴⁹. In 1965 Central Museum of POWs was opened in Łambinowice-Opole (during the war there were Stalag VIII B and Stalag 344 Lamsdorf)⁵⁰. After 1990 there was a silence about Stalag VIIIA (as many similar places of memory on the map of Poland). Perhaps it was the reaction for previous, aggressive propaganda. Today thanks to European Centre Memory, Education, Culture there is a great chance it would change.

The history of Stalag VIIIA still waits for a thorough monographic study. Lack of the camp archive is one of the biggest problem. However there are

⁴⁸ In 2020, on the basis of an agreement between the school management and the Memory, Education, Culture Foundation, the exhibits were transferred to the European Memory, Education, Culture Centre.

⁴⁹ <http://www.muzeum.zagan.pl/> [online: 28 IV 2017 r.].

⁵⁰ <http://www.cmjw.pl/> [online: 28 IV 2017 r.].

some files of the VIII Military District, but they are fragmented and do not contain information on the POW camps⁵¹. German documents are dispersed in many archives of many countries⁵². Many interesting documents are kept in the Archive of the Institute of National Remembrance – Commission for the Prosecution of Crimes against the Polish Nation. Many prisoners of various nationalities mentioned in their depositions (published and not) the imprisonment in Stalag VIII A.

⁵¹ Microfilms of German documents of the VIII Military District are kept in National Archives and Records Administration in Washington, sygn. T-84/357, T-84/384.

⁵² For example: Archiwum Akt Nowych, Archiwum Państwowe we Wrocławiu, Centralne Muzeum Jeńców Wojennych w Łambinowicach-Opolu, Centralne Archiwum Wojskowe, Polski Czerwony Krzyż, Bundesarchiv-Militärarchiv Freiburg, The National Archives, Kew Gardens.

Memory, Education, Culture Foundation

Work for Stalag VIII A Memorial Site

“When a person loses his memory, it is a grave illness, a disease of the soul and the psyche. When a nation loses its memory, it is the greatest misfortune that threatens the future. [...]”

From Lev Kopelev’s speech delivered in Warsaw during the “Week of Conscience” on 9 April 1992.

Introduction – history of Stalag VIII A

The issue of prisoners of war may often fade into the background when set side by side with the Holocaust and other atrocities and tragedies associated with World War II. And yet, by affecting numerous individuals and their families, and it remains an important part of our recent history and the memory of the Second World War.

Prisoner-of-war camps witnessed both: unprecedented war crimes and uplifting examples of solidarity between people trapped in long-term isolation. These sites also testify to the role of art in human life, even in the face of extremely adverse conditions.

The establishment of prisoner-of-war camps was an important part of the Third Reich war preparations. Offices and institutions responsible for infrastructure, transport, coordination and administrative work were set up as early as 1938.

Prisoners of war were to fill the gap left by the mobilisation of hundreds of thousands of men in all branches of the economy. The Third Reich authorities did not shrink from violating the Geneva Conventions, which prohibited the employment of prisoners of war in the armaments industry and arms transport.

Even before 1 September 1939, the Nazi authorities in Germany began setting up camps for prisoners of war. Camps were designed as sites of containment for officers (*oflag*), privates and non-commissioned officers (*stalag*), and as transit camps (*dulag*).

Stalag VIIIA Görlitz-Moys (present-day town of Zgorzelec-Ujazd) was one of 1,000 prisoner-of-war camps established in Germany and its occupied territories. It was established as a transit camp on 26 August 1939 in Görlitz and was subordinate to the VIII Military District based in Breslau (today's city of Wrocław).

The first transport of prisoners of war, consisting of 8,000 Polish Army soldiers, reached the camp as early as 7 September 1939. The number of prisoners gradually increased, and by the end of October, over 10,000 prisoners of Polish origin, including non-Polish nationals (Ukrainian, Byelorussian, Lithuanian and Jewish), were registered in the stalag.

Immediately after registration, most of the prisoners of war were transferred to so-called «labour commands» outside the camp. The remainder were accommodated in huge canvas tents, each holding 300 prisoners, who had to endure the rainy autumn weather and the first cold months of winter.

The proper Stalag VIIIA, although it had been formally functioning since September 1939, was built by the hands of Polish prisoners of war.

During the Second World War, up until 8 May 1945, when the camp was liberated and liquidated, about 120,000 prisoners of war representing various nationalities went through its gates, including Poles, French, Belgians, Serbs, Slovaks, Soviet citizens, Italians, Americans and soldiers of the British Armed Forces.

The sources estimate the number of victims at 10,000–12,000 POWs of Soviet origin and 500 Italian prisoners.

According to surviving sources, 199 Frenchmen, 68 Belgians, 6 Americans, 28 Yugoslavians and 45 Poles died in the stalag. The latter figure does not include the victims of dysentery prevalent in the transit camp.

One of the French prisoners, taken captive in 1940, was Olivier Messiaen, an outstanding French composer of the 20th century. By a fortunate coincidence, and with the help of his Polish fellow prisoners of war (including Zdzisław Nardelli), he was able to devote to composing his new piece. On 15 January 1941, in barrack 27B, in the presence of about 400 prisoners and guards, the premiere of Messiaen's *Quartet for the End of Time* took place. The composition is today one of the most frequently performed chamber music pieces of the 20th century by the world's most famous musicians.

In commemoration of this eminent composer, the Meetingpoint Music Messiaen association was established on the Saxon side of Görlitz in 2007. The role and significance of this association for the creation and existence of the Centre will be discussed below.

In recalling Stalag VIIIA, one must not forget the German parish priest of St. Boniface Church (now in Zgorzelec), Father Franz Scholz. Making use of his knowledge of the Polish language (he had studied before the war in Kraków, Lublin, and other places), he took spiritual care over the prisoners of Stalag VIIIA, and Polish forced labourers.

The post-war history of this special site is anything but impressive. The stalag did not enjoy much attention by either the Polish or the German side. In the 1960s a small cemetery for Red Army soldiers was established. Many of them must have been Poles from western Ukraine or Belarus, which were incorporated into the Soviet Union after 17 September 1939.

A large boulder carries two plaques: one carries an inscription in Polish: "Honour and glory to the Soviet prisoners of war who died at Stalag VIII A between 1942 and 1945". The plaque was funded by the Polish authorities in 1964. The other one, placed in 1965 by former French prisoners of war, reads in Polish and French: «To the prisoners of Stalag in honour - our companions of all nations who died in captivity. August 1965».

In the early 1970s, the French Association of Former Prisoners of Oflag and Stalags of the Eighth Military District took the initiative to build a monument to commemorate the fate of the prisoners of war and began collecting money among French and Belgian veterans. The monument was erected on the site of the stalag headquarters. The unveiling took place on 22 July 1976, and in 1994, thanks to the efforts of the French veterans, a plaque was added in Polish and French reading «Stalag VIII A, 1939–1945. Tens of thousands of prisoners of war went through, lived and suffered in this camp».

The work and commitment of the local history teacher, Roman Zgłobicki (1937–2010), cannot be overestimated in the preservation of the memory of the former prisoner-of-war camp Stalag VIII A. His research, efforts and collection of materials enabled him to organize in the first half of the 1970s a Chamber of Remembrance devoted to Stalag VIII A in the Technical School of Mining and Power Engineering in Zgorzelec. Roman Zgłobicki is also the author of several publications on the subject of the presence of prisoners of war in this area, including such fundamental books as *Obozy i cmentarze wojenne w Zgorzelcu* (*Camps and Cemeteries of War in Zgorzelec*), which was published in 1995 and remains the main source of information on POWs of the Third Reich in the former Görlitz-Ost.

The camp's history is an excellent illustration of broader phenomena concerning interpersonal relations, the complex fate of individuals affected by the tragedy of war and dictatorship, the role of art and culture, religion and faith in the future, the attitude of societies to memory and its cultivation.

In 2006, Albrecht Goetze, a German theatre director and music aficionado, initiated the Meetingpoint Music Messiaen e.V. association in Görlitz. Goetze, fascinated by the music of Olivier Messiaen, decided to bring out of the oblivion the outstanding composer and to revive the memory of the place itself to both societies. "Music gives wings" is the slogan underlying the association's work: music sets people free, independent, makes them stronger in face of adversity. Moreover, music is so universal that it can unite people from different social, political and cultural backgrounds, and thus cross

borders or even abolish them altogether. The establishment of this association also had a radical effect on the growing interest in the history of the stalag and the fate of the prisoners of war.

On 15 January 2008, the 67th anniversary of its premiere, the sounds of Olivier Messiaen's *Quartet for the End of Time* rang out in an almost mystical atmosphere on the grounds of the stalag, in an unheated military tent. The concert met with great public interest and gathered an audience of about 350 coming from both sides of the Nysa River. This was the first of subsequent annual commemoration concerts.

Since the founding of Meetingpoint Music Messiaen e.V., the association has been working cross-border for the remembrance of the former camp, historical education, music and art, becoming a permanent component in cross-border cooperation between Görlitz and Zgorzelec, and thus between Lower Silesia and Saxony.

II. The Foundation and the European Centre

The establishment of the Meetingpoint Music Messiaen e.V. association in Görlitz led to talks between representatives of the association and the district administration in Görlitz and representatives of the local authorities in Zgorzelec, i.e. the Municipal and Rural Commune of Zgorzelec and the District Starosty of Zgorzelec, concerning a project on the site of the former stalag to commemorate the existence of the camp, and also to create opportunities for cooperation and activities for the regional integration of the two cities and the region. As a result of these negotiations, it was decided to erect a building on the site of the former stalag, a symbol of both the tragic past and the common future. The planned Centre was to become a place of remembrance and meeting; a place where the memory of a difficult historical heritage and a dramatic past would intertwine with modern forms of cultural exchange between communities living at the confluence of three borders, and educational activities looking towards the future in a united Europe.

After many meetings, deliberations and attempts to define the scope of tasks for the implementation of the future project, the Centre for Entrepreneurship Support Foundation, existing since 2002 (presently: Memory, Education, Culture Foundation) was selected as a non-governmental organisation, which proved efficient and experienced in implementation of EU projects. The Foundation agreed to undertake activities concerning the possibility of obtaining funds, drawing up a project application and carrying out the project.

The application, prepared by the Polish side in cooperation with the association Meetingpoint Music Messiaen e.V., received funding in 2009 from the EU program ETC Saxony-Poland 2007–2013. In December 2011, the Foundation accepted (in the form of a notarial deed) the donation of an

undeveloped property from the municipality of Zgorzelec, consisting of plots of land with a total area of 7.2909 hectares, for the construction of an educational and cultural centre. After many adjustments to the plan, the construction began in January 2014. The necessary investor's own financial contribution was provided by the local government bodies of Zgorzelec.

The German partners in the project were the association Meetingpoint Music Messiaen e.V. and the District of Görlitz. In January the following year, the European Educational and Cultural Centre (the original name of the Centre resulting from the project) building was officially opened.

In 2016, the Foundation's Council, after a thorough analysis developed further strategic aims for the Foundation. Its statute was revised, clarifying the objectives and scope of activities. Its name was also changed to reflect the new tasks better. Since 2017, the Foundation has been known as Memory, Education, Culture Foundation. The Foundation owns and manages the European Centre Memory, Education, Culture.

Opened in January 2015, the European Centre Memory, Education, Culture is becoming a unique place, facing both the memory of the cruel time of war and the future of young European generations.

The Centre houses an exhibition, which is going to be gradually extended as the collection of artifacts and data progresses.

Over the years, the Centre has become a venue for many activities bringing the two societies together, especially the young. There have been many concerts, seminars, international projects, workshops and other events for people of all ages. The Centre is also the place where, every year in mid-January, the sounds of Olivier Messiaen's *Quartet for the End of Time* are heard to commemorate the premiere of this work at Stalag VIII A on 15 January 1941. Since 2017, the solemn reminder of this first performance has turned into a several-day cyclical events, the Messiaen Days, dedicated to music, but also to the past and the difficult history of this special place.

Between January 2015 and October 2022 the Centre was visited by several thousand guests - concert audience, participants of workshop meetings, or families of former prisoners of war coming even from such distant countries as New Zealand, as well as tourists visiting the border region.

All the meetings and events were made possible thanks to close cooperation between the Polish and German partners from the local authorities, as well as substantive and logistical support from German employees and members of the Meetingpoint Music Messiaen association.

In 2022, the members and authorities of the association Meetingpoint Music Messiaen e.V., in an effort to place greater emphasis in their activities on matters of education and the cultivation of historical memory, changed the name of the association to Meetingpoint Memory Messiaen, Verein für Erinnerung, Bildung und Kultur.

The drive and commitment put into the work at the Stalag VIII A Memorial by the Foundation and the German association has had an impact on the integration processes of European societies, as the numerous letters of thanks are clear evidence of.

However, in order to ensure stable development of the society in accordance with the regional strategy, it is necessary to take systematic action to shape regional awareness and the resulting civic duties. In a region threatened by unfavourable demographic processes, including the outflow of young people, it is necessary to take decisive action to connect its inhabitants, young people in particular, emotionally to their place of residence. The aim of the Foundation and the Centre's activities, apart from educational and cultural projects raising awareness of the attractiveness of the region in terms of its cultural and historical heritage, is to cultivate the memory of the former German POW camp Stalag VIII A in European societies, mostly Polish and German, as well as outside them. By working to nurture the memory of this place, efforts will be made to promote the dissemination of and respect for the history of the region, and to warn against the dangers arising from the growing rise of nationalist movements in Europe. To this end, efforts are being made to build a permanent, fit-for-purpose structure, both in terms of personnel and finance.

III. Strategic assumptions and objectives of the Foundation for 2017–2023. European Memorial Park

The analysis of intentions and opportunities, past and future activities of the Foundation led the new Board to set strategic goals that would be in line with the character of the place and its role in the region.

The primary objective set out in the 2016/2017 concept is to preserve the memory of the former Stalag VIII A and its prisoners of war.

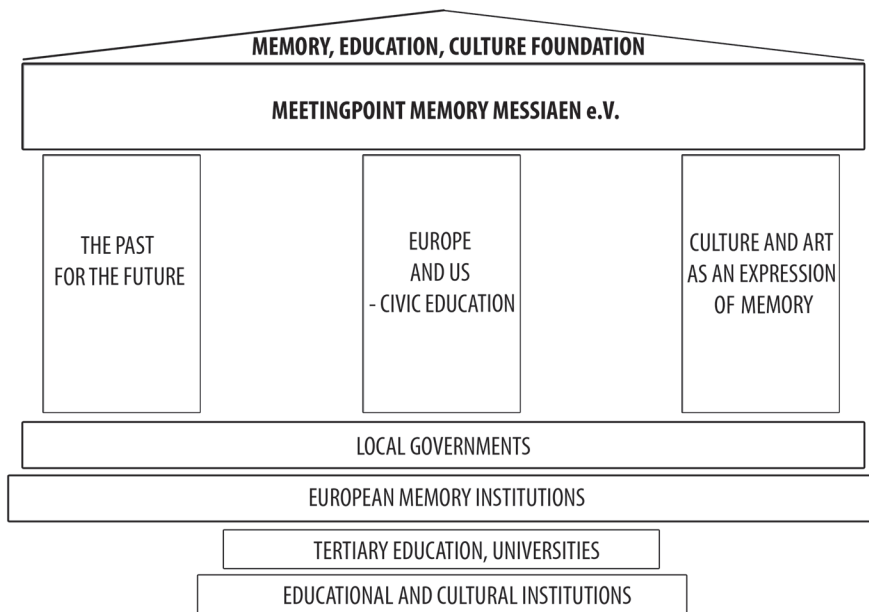
All the activities of the Foundation and MeetingPoint Memory Messiaen carried out in accordance with the concept have one strategic goal: to create the European Memorial Park on part of the former Stalag VIII A site.

This idea includes various activities carried out in many thematic areas, and the preservation of the remains of the camp infrastructure, enriched with information and educational elements. The focal point of this broadly defined spatial infrastructure is the building of the European Centre Memory, Education, Culture and the educational pathways located on part of the former camp grounds.

The decision to create such a comprehensive project required the definition of specific objectives and the planning of activities related to their achievement as well as the search for funding opportunities for individual activities.

A substantive thematic breakdown has been developed and is based on three main pillars:

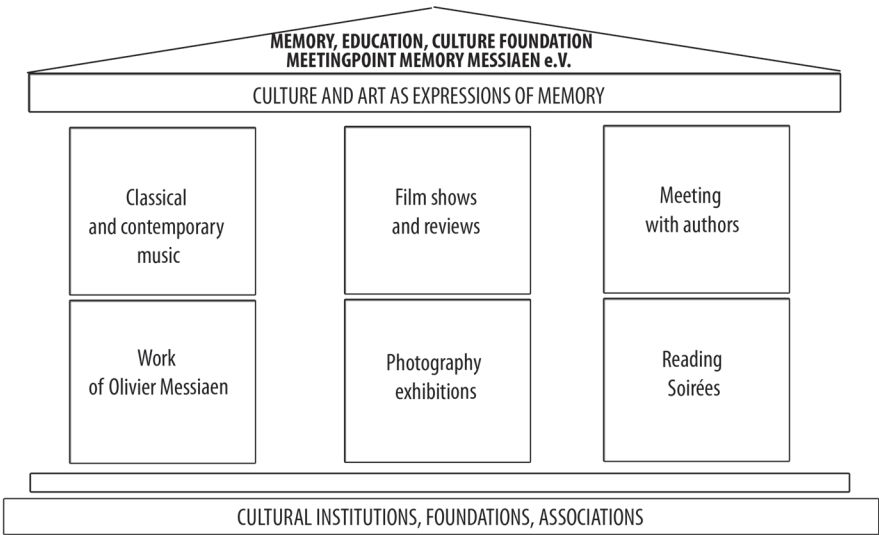
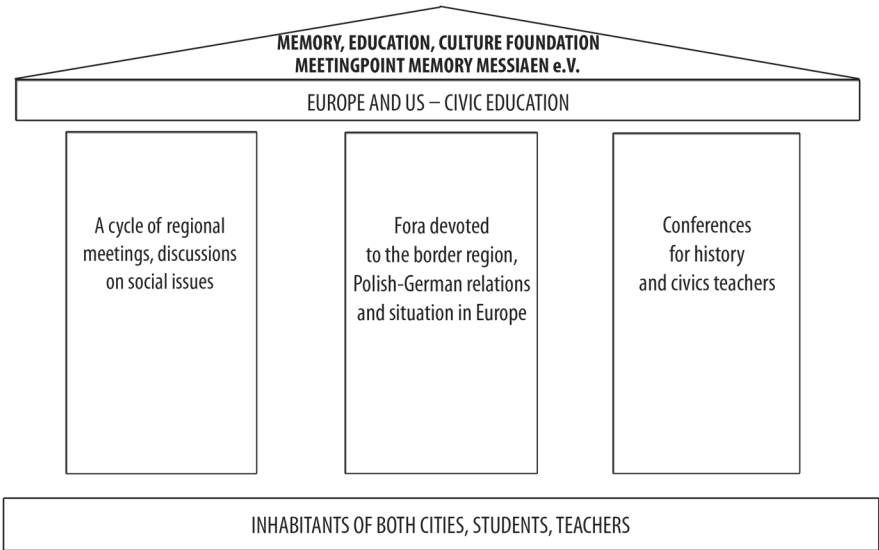
- **The past for the future**
- **Europe and us – civic education**
- **Culture and art as an expression of memory**



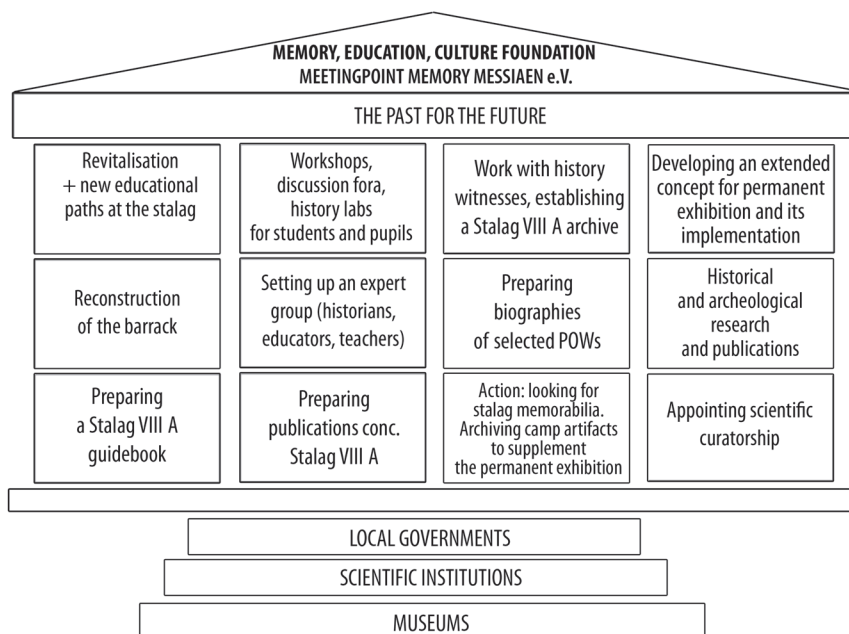
It was assumed that the activities within the presented structure and the resulting thematic blocks will be carried out in parallel, as far as the financial and human resources allow, and that they will complement each other, creating a coherent whole in terms of content.

It should be emphasised that the main aim of all the activities is to perpetuate the memory of Stalag VIII A Görlitz in the region.

The association Meetingpoint Memory Messiaen e.V. in Görlitz was and still remains the main partner in planning and implementing the above-mentioned activities.



IV. Projects and undertakings



The implementation of activities under the “The Past for the Future” profile has been a major and extremely important challenge for the Foundation. This is because this thematic area has been neglected for many years in terms of content, logistics and finances. This profile should highlight the tragic historical nature of the site – within this framework, the Foundation is primarily involved in activities aimed at ensuring that the site is given due respect, as well as laying a solid foundation for multidirectional archival and educational activities.

Between 2016 and 2022, the Foundation and Meetingpoint Memory Messiaen carried out a number of activities that fit into the patterns outlined and served to achieve its intended objectives.

During this time, three major international conferences were held on the subject of camps and prisoners of war, as well as seminars for teachers, historians and experts, and four debates – civic panels. A series of historical workshops for young people was also organised. Five publications were prepared and published. Five exhibitions on historical topics were developed and opened.

In an effort to perpetuate the memory of a person of merit for the prisoners of war and Polish forced labourers of World War II, a plaque in memory

of Fr. Franz Scholz was founded and placed on the wall of the house in Zgorzelec where he lived until 1946.

Another plaque was devoted to Roman Zgłobicki, a history teacher at the then Mining and Energy Technical School, in recognition of his contribution to the restoration and preservation of the memory of Stalag VIII A.

Several music and film festivals have also been organised.

All these activities created a substantive whole for the creation of infrastructure at the memorial site to provide opportunities for education and historical tourism in the border region, i.e. a widely understood museum, tourist and educational facility.

The most important activities included:

- **The projects of the Euroregion Nysa** are co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund Operational Programme and the state budget as part of the Small Project Fund Interreg Poland – Saxony 2014–2022:

- **“Nameless Heroes – Local History of Zgorzelec and Görlitz”**

Implementation period 3 April 2017 – 30 November 2017

and

- **“Small cross-border homelands”**

Implementation period: 3 April 2017 – 31 March 2018.

One of publications created as part of these projects is *Dwie biografie. Jan. B. Gliński i Franz Scholz, or Zwei Leben. Jan. B. Glinski und Franz Scholz* (in Polish and German). An international conference “Stalag VIII A and the European memory of prisoners of war” was held in 2017, and historical workshops for young people and meetings with historical witnesses were organised.

- Two projects entitled **“Stalag VIII A – place of remembrance of the World War II prisoners of war”** co-financed by the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage from the Fund for Cultural Promotion as part of the programme entitled “Memorials and permanent commemorations in the country”.

Project implementation period: 1 September 2019 – 31 December 2019 and 1 April 2021 – 30 November 2021.

Within the aforementioned projects, the square where the obelisk and memorial plaque dedicated to the prisoners of war of Stalag VIII A is located was tidied up in 2019.

In 2021, the cemetery of the Red Army Prisoners of War was cleaned up and an exhibition dedicated to Roman Zgłobicki, a history teacher from Zgorzelec and the author of the first publication about Stalag VIII A, as well as the creator and custodian of the Chamber of Remembrance dedicated to the former POW camp, was completed.

Highly important for the work on developing the infrastructure of the Memorial Park is the implementation by the Foundation in the EU programme INTERREG Poland-Saxony 2014–2020 of the project “To know and understand. Memory for the future. Development of educational networks and civil society in the Polish-Saxon border region”. The implementation of the project is scheduled for 1.01.2019–31.12.2022. The main activities of the applicant, planned in the above-mentioned project, include the revitalization of the memorial paths leading to the memorial stations, including the development and installation of trilingual information boards about the stalag infrastructure, the life of prisoners of war under camp conditions and the biographies of several prisoners of war, as well as the preservation of the remains of the foundations of the camp buildings. Parallel to the investment activities there were also educational workshops for school children from Zgorzelec and Görlitz, as well as classes within the so-called historical-social laboratories with young people in two schools in Zgorzelec and one in Görlitz.

As part of this project, a team of archaeologists and GPR specialists conducted a non-invasive survey of part of the former camp site.

Important events included a conference devoted to the subject of prisoner-of-war camps during World War II and seminars for history teachers. In addition, the project developed the concept of creating an archive of Stalag VIII A. In 2021, the Foundation began searching for archival materials in Poland and other European countries, including Ukraine. The obtained material was catalogued.

The undertakings carried out in the project “To Know and understand” by the Foundation and its partner, the association Meetingpoint Memory Messiaen e.V. are part of a strategic action for the creation of a European Memorial Park on the site of the former Stalag VIII A and the introduction of this place into the permanent infrastructure of professional and educational tourism in the border region of Lower Silesia.

In order to achieve this aim, the project also cooperates with partners such as Förderkreis Görlitzer Synagoge e.V. and Internationales Begegnungszentrum St. Marienthal, which is located in the historic monastery complex in Upper Lusatia in Saxony. In this way, by working together on the history of Stalag VIII A, the Foundation strengthens the memory of this place in the region.

An important strategic action in this area was when the Foundation, in cooperation with the association Meetingpoint Memory Messiaen e.V. joined in developing and launching a project to install a World War II barrack on the site of the former camp. In 2021 the transfer of the barrack, which was located on the German side in Görlitz, was finalised.

The barrack, which was used as a hospital during World War II and converted into offices after the war, was formally donated to the Foundation by

AWO Kreisverband Oberlausitz e.V. The planned reconstruction of the camp barrack is primarily intended to expand the exhibition and educational space devoted to the camp.

Currently, the Foundation and the association Meetingpoint Memory Messiaen e.V. are working on detailed plans for this difficult task, which is the reconstruction of a barrack on the site of the former stalag. In order to realise this undertaking, the Foundation and its partner will be applying to German and Polish institutions, as well as European ones, for help in financing this project.

Of great importance for the border region are two activities that take place every year and in which the Foundation participates as a partner of the MMM association. Both undertakings are international in scope. These are the Worcation and the Messiaen Days Festival.

In pursuit of its strategic goals, the Foundation has been cooperating with schools in the region, organising so-called “historical meetings” for pupils. They take different forms, depending on the age of participants and their preparation for topics related to World War II.

At the same time professional guided tours of the former camp are organised throughout the year in several languages. The Meetingpoint Memory Messiaen e.V. team provides invaluable assistance in this regard.

Very important for the work of the Foundation are contacts with the families of former prisoners of war. They visit the place, often coming from distant continents, hand over memorabilia and photographs. Correspondence contacts are also established.

An important event for the Foundation was the signing in 2021 of an agreement on cooperation in archaeological research with the French and German embassies in Warsaw. Contacts were also established with the Belgian embassy.

As a result of the agreement the Foundation obtained funds which made it possible to carry out non-invasive archaeological research in the above-mentioned part of the former camp.

The Foundation strives to preserve the memory of important events connected with World War II. Every year, ceremonies are organised to mark the end of World War II and the liberation of the camp. Representatives of local authorities, associations, clergy, as well as students and teachers take part in these events.

The Foundation also reminds on its website, and through occasional wreath-laying, of the anniversaries of such events as the outbreak of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, the Kristallnacht in 1938 in Nazi Germany and the liberation of the Auschwitz death camp.

In view of the extent and importance of the tasks, the Board of the Foundation came to the conclusion that it is necessary to expand both the

composition of the Foundation's Council, as well as to establish partnerships with institutions dealing with the subject of the memory of World War II, both in Poland and abroad. This becomes a key task for undertaking new projects, which are priorities for the work on the memory of the former POW camp.

An additional conclusion arising from the experience of the Foundation's work over the last 6 years is the need to set up a Programme Group as an advisory body for substantive analysis, research planning and the creation of a professional archive of former stalag prisoners.

The Foundation has also endeavoured to undertake cooperation on the history of the former Stalag VIIIA with academic centres (universities) and institutions dealing with the subject (e.g. Polish Institute for National Remembrance). An extremely important task is for the Foundation to establish cooperation with relevant institutions in the countries of POWs' origin.

V. General remarks

The activities of the Memory, Education, Culture Foundation aimed at the development of regional and civic awareness, the cultivation of historical memory and awareness of the role of art in social processes are multifaceted, yet geared towards the main goal of creating a European Memorial Park on the site of the former Stalag VIIIA Görlitz.

The above-mentioned system of correlated activities, which may target similar aims or diverse target groups, from the young to the elderly, ensures that the social integration bonds are stronger. In turn, more closely knit relations are indispensable for further development of a functional regional identity on both sides of the river-border.

The motto for this concept are the words of Lev Kopelev from his speech in Warsaw during the "Week of Conscience" on 9 April 1992. His words remain relevant even though 30 years have passed.

The work of the European Centre in Zgorzelec, which is based on cooperation between the Memory Education, Culture Foundation and the Saxon association Meetingpoint Memory Messiaen, serves as a crucial proof that the idea of a European community and the obligations arising from it, implemented with the help and goodwill of decision-making institutions, contribute to the further development of German-Polish relations in accordance with the Treaty between the Republic of Poland and the Federal Republic of Germany on Good Neighbourship and Friendly Cooperation of 17 June 1991, whose 30th anniversary we recently celebrated.

Functioning and strategic development of Stalag VIII A Memorial

PART I

15 years of remembrance work

At the end of 2022, the Meetingpoint Memory Messiaen e.V. celebrated 15 years of existence and 15 years of efforts to commemorate the POWs of Stalag VIII A Görlitz, the camp where between 1939 and 1945 the Germans held a total of 120,000 prisoners of war from all over the world, more than 10,000 of whom never returned home.

Until recently we believed that the times of war, at least in our part of the world, the time of prisoner-of-war camps and murdering civilians was behind us. Reality turned out to be cruel, the sense of security – illusory. In the occupied territories of Ukraine, prisoner-of-war camps are being set up by the Russian army, young men and women are being held there against their will and, against all the rules of war, killed in captivity by drones and bombs.

Our work to keep alive the memory of the tragic events of the Second World War and the fate of its direct victims – prisoners of war – has suddenly taken on a new dimension. It is necessary not only to remember and talk about the past, but also to actively engage with current events and take a decisive stand on them.

We have now looked back at the work we did to commemorate the victims of the Second World War and reflected on the significance of the issue for us: Germans, Poles and Europeans.

Fifteen years ago, Albrecht Goetze, the founder of our association, cycled with young people from various European countries into a small forest outside the city of Zgorzelec. There he met Roman Zgłobicki, a local history teacher, who spared no time or effort in documenting the terrifying history of the stalag and its prisoners. The two organized the first youth meeting, which we now know as Worcation, and which has grown to become something much more than just a gathering. Goetze was convinced that young people especially will be able to understand more about what seems historically distant through the media, art and music. Perhaps most importantly, they will be able to tap into their inner strength to become responsible and active citizens.

The second pillar of our work also has its origins 15 years ago, when the first so-called 'concert in a tent' was held in 2008. The last concert in this format took place in 2014. It was also the first concert without the presence of Albrecht Goetze and, for yet another reason, the beginning of a new phase of our work. On 16 January, after the tent had been dismantled, excavators drove in to dig the foundations for the European Centre Memory, Education, Culture.

As part of our Polish-German cooperation, we were able to give the Stalag VIIIA Memorial some structure and a roof over its head. We also reorganized the internal scheme of our work and cooperation with our partner, the Memory, Education, Culture Foundation.

The concert in the tent evolved to become an every-January event with a historical framework programme: the Messiaen Days – a festival of contemporary music, which is now more clearly than ever linked to this historical site, whose problems and commemoration aims have gained a European context.

Together, we have also succeeded in attracting visitors, further expanding contacts with the families of prisoners of war and, above all, in modernising and deepening the historical and political education of the next generation, which we feel is the most important field of action. Our new educational offer has been available since mid-2022 and has been extremely well received. In three months, we welcomed more than 20 school groups. We are now training young adults who will mentor these groups with us.

In the course of the preparations for the anniversary, however, it also became clear how little information we still have about Stalag VIIIA itself. Of the more than 120,000 prisoners of war who were registered at the camp and used for forced labour throughout the region, we only know about 100 names today. Archaeological research using state-of-the-art technology, commissioned by our partner the Memory, Education, Culture Foundation, has given us new insights into the layout of the camp, and the 3D models that have been made can be used in our further work. Through research in various archives we have enriched our multimedia guide, which was published in 2022, as well as the new information boards that will be placed on the site of the former camp.

This is of great importance, because we see the memorial as an international meeting and educational place, as well as a place for debate and discussion in the European city of Görlitz-Zgorzelec on current German-Polish and global political issues. With the support of local authorities and institutions as well as experts on both sides of the Neisse River, and on the basis of a political consensus between the Federal Republic of Germany and the Republic of Poland, the partners are working to further the knowledge and diverse transmission of the history of Stalag VIIIA, so that the fate of the victims is never forgotten.

But all that has been achieved is only a small part of what still lies ahead. We are trying to forge the horror and uncertainty caused by current events into an inner strength to continue this work, the importance and significance of which have perhaps never been as great as today.

Part II

Lighthouse Project

The European Memorial Park as a Lighthouse

The Memorial Park of the Memory, Education, Culture Foundation and Meetingpoint Memory Messiaen e.V. and its partners is a strategic and long-term lighthouse project. With its impact and the involvement of all sections of society, the undertaking will make our region more attractive, and through innovative research and networking of experts from all over Europe and extensive trans-regional educational work with young people, will show the structural changes in the region as an opportunity and can thus decisively shape the future of the region.

A well-functioning Memorial Park would be an extremely important proof that the idea of the European community and the resulting obligations, implemented with the help and friendly support of competent institutions, contribute to further development of German-Polish relations in the sense of the Treaty of Good Neighbourship and Friendly Cooperation of 17 June 1991, whose 30th anniversary we celebrated last year.

Taking office in 2021, Minister of State in the Chancellery for Culture, Claudia Roth stressed that she was “[...] confident that the democratic parties – also in opposition – in the German Bundestag and in the Lands recognise the emphasis on the politics of remembrance and the culture of remembrance as necessary. These are not things of the past, but policies for the future in a democracy that is under attack in our country.” The topic of remembrance culture also features prominently in the government’s coalition agreement.

The exact modules of the Memorial Park project can be found on the pages 30–32.

Good Practice – Projects and Operation of the Memorial Site Stalag VIII A

Worcation: Working for peace

Worcation, the 2018 European Charlemagne Youth Prize winner, brings together 25 young people from different EU countries, Ukraine and Russia in Görlitz-Zgorzelec every year. For a fortnight, the participants work at the

Stalag VIII A memorial site, taking care of the former camp grounds, taking part in archaeological excavations and creatively dealing with the past of the POW camp. In this way, we are trying to form a basis for the joint and mutually respectful co-creation of a peaceful Europe.

The Worcation project has been held yearly since 2008 and has so far involved around 350 young people from 15 countries in the remembrance work of the Stalag VIII A memorial.

International Messiaen Days: Remembrance through Art

In memory of all those who suffered, feared and hoped in Stalag VIII A, Meetingpoint Memory Messiaen e.V. has been inviting people to a special concert every year since 2008. The French composer Olivier Messiaen proved that music does not create boundaries – it unites and can help people overcome pain and misery. He created his musical masterpiece *Quartet for the End of Time* during his imprisonment in Stalag VIII A and performed it for the first time together with three fellow prisoners in the camp's theatre barracks on 15 January 1941. Today, the quartet is one of the best-known and most frequently performed works of the 20th century. The Meetingpoint Memory Messiaen e.V. commemorates this special event every year on 15 January at the historic site.

The annual performance of the *Quatuor pour la fin du temps*, as Messiaen's piece is called in the original, has become an inspiring and encouraging ritual to start the year for countless people from the Neisse Euroregion. In 2017, the association began to build on this tradition and turned a regular but single event into a festival lasting several days. The aim being to bring together people from both sides of the Neisse River and all over Europe at this unique site of history and music. Here, international artists meet regional history researchers, and the public is invited to experience contemporary music in the historical ambience of the border town, to enjoy guided tours and lectures, and by doing so reconcile the two seemingly irreconcilable: art and war.

Exhibitions

In the European Centre Memory, Education, Culture at the Stalag VIII A Memorial Site there are several permanent exhibitions available to visitors. All exhibitions are in German and Polish, some are also available in other languages.

The Centre also houses exhibitions on:

- Stalag VIII A, presenting the history and everyday reality of the prisoner-of-war camp. The extension, which opened in 2023, displays artifacts from Stalag VIII A as well as personal accounts of individual prisoners of war and their families;

- Roman Zgłobicki, the pioneer of remembrance work in Zgorzelec, under the title “A Passion that saved us from Oblivion”;
- the history of the twin city of Görlitz-Zgorzelec after 1945, entitled “They showed civil courage – citizens from Görlitz and Zgorzelec 1945–1989”;
- the Warsaw Uprising, one of the most important elements in recent Polish history.

In the outdoor area of the Memorial you will also find:

- an exhibition on forced labour in Görlitz. The former forced labour sites can be found in the centre of Görlitz-Zgorzelec with the help of a map;
- an exhibition on Polish prisoners of war in Stalag VIII A “Polish prisoners of Stalag VIII A Görlitz. Their fate and our memory of them”;
- information boards on the educational pathway leading across the grounds of Stalag VIII A;
- sculptures inspired by the music of Olivier Messiaen.

Exploration of the site is recommended in conjunction with a guided tour or using the multimedia guide.

Guided tours

The best way to explore the memorial site of Stalag VIII A is to join an organised guided tour or you can do so individually with the help of a multimedia guide. Guided tours of the grounds and through the exhibitions can be booked by telephone or e-mail.

In cooperation with Europastadt Görlitz-Zgorzelec GmbH, monthly public tours are offered from May to October. In cooperation with the Görlitz Adult Education Centre, lectures and bicycle tours are also held.

You can find out more about other guided tours that offer visitors a new perspective on the Stalag VIII A memorial on our website.

Commemoration days

On the anniversary of the liberation of Stalag VIII A on 8 May, an annual public commemoration ceremony with ecumenical prayer takes place with the participation of German and Polish leaders, the families of former prisoners, the local population and schoolchildren. The foundation and the association are also actively involved in the organisation of other Polish and German commemoration days in the twin city.

Working on the past and researching

Families of former prisoners of war have been coming to the memorial site more and frequently over the recent years. So much so that maintaining these relations and archiving materials and information submitted by them to the Centre for Memory, Education and Culture now form a central

field of activity at the memorial. Through further archaeological and research work, increasing number of details concerning individual biographies of prisoners of war are common to light, and successively made available at the memorial, but also in an online archive to all interested parties.

Educational programme

The Stalag VIIIA Memorial offers a wide range of educational programmes for school classes and young people, ranging from a one-and-a-half-hour guided tour, to a German-Polish memorial trip lasting several days. Each format includes elements of active participation by the learners and uses non-formal educational methods within this framework.

The memorial offers groups assistance in finding a respective German or Polish partner group, as international encounters are a central point of the educational work. The complete programme can be found on the homepage of Meetingpoint Memory Messiaen e.V. or is available as a brochure at the memorial.

The educational programme of the memorial is primarily aimed at schoolchildren, students and youth groups from Germany and Poland as well as young adults from all over Europe. It can be used in both school and non-school contexts to familiarise young people with topics such as captivity, the Second World War and remembrance, and to give them an insight into the individual fates of the prisoners of war held captive in Stalag VIIIA. The memorial offers a wide range of modules.

The offer consists of versatile modules that can be combined with each other. The methods used and topics selected are aimed at young people from the age of 12 and are adapted to the respective needs in consultation with the group leader.

Workshops for teachers and intercultural multipliers

The European Centre Memory, Education, Culture regularly offers workshops for teachers and multipliers. The focus is on non-formal methods in history education. The workshops are aimed at teachers, trainers, multipliers, representatives of educational institutions and organisations, and anyone interested in historical and regional education from the German-Polish border region who would like to learn more about the educational opportunities offered by the Stalag VIIIA Memorial.

In the past years, the following events were held, among others:

- German-Polish teachers' and multipliers' workshop "Understanding History";
- Webinar series "Methods and Tools in Non-Formal Educational Work";
- Seminar "Local History and its Significance in the Process of Shaping Regional Identities";
- Workshop on language animation "Zip Zap".

German-Polish Youth Central Office

Meetingpoint Memory Messiaen e.V. has acted as the central office of the German-Polish Youth Office (Deutsch-Polonisches Jugendwerk [German], Polsko-Niemiecka Współpraca Młodzieży [Polish]) since April 2014. We see our task in supporting institutions and associations from Görlitz and the surrounding area in implementing their ideas for German-Polish youth projects. This also means that we arrange contacts and provide advice on pedagogical methods and language support in implementation of projects. Associations, groups and individuals from Görlitz can apply for GPYO funding for projects on German soil directly through Meetingpoint. But we are also happy to advise all others on the funding opportunities of the GPYO and support them in application and reconciling procedures.

Project “Lighthouse” by the German-Polish Youth Office

The intention of the Lighthouse project is to strengthen and promote German-Polish cooperation and to expand the range of programmes offered by the Lighthouse institutions in the field of international youth exchange. Since 2021, Meetingpoint Memory Messiaen e.V. has also been a Lighthouse for the GPYO.

Our goal as a Lighthouse is to familiarise as many pupils as possible, as well as representatives of extracurricular institutions from the region, with the site of the former Stalag VIII A. We offer an educational programme in this context. Within this framework, we have developed an educational programme that is primarily aimed at school groups but is also open to other interested parties. In addition, as a Lighthouse, we accompany various actors in terms of content and organisation in the preparation and implementation of a visit to the Stalag VIII A memorial site - both in the context of mono- and binational groups. In perspective, we plan that every young person from the region has visited the memorial and ideally has taken part in a German-Polish workshop at least once.

Coordination office for the International Children and Youth Work

The coordination office for the International Children and Youth Work in the European City of Görlitz-Zgorzelec was initiated by the city of Görlitz and taken over by Meetingpoint Memory Messiaen e.V. in 2014. The tasks of the office are to inform young people in Görlitz and Zgorzelec about offers and international projects. One important aspect is the support of non-profit associations, social workers, cultural workers, teachers, etc. with cross-border project ideas and partnerships (networking and advice). The coordination office is a neutral, free and multi-agency information point for all young people and institutions in the city of Görlitz-Zgorzelec.

PART III

Key project

Shaping structural change

Bilateral implementation of the project for the relocation and reconstruction of the World War II RLM 501 barracks

The experience gained from several years of work, in accordance with the statutes and the thematic fields outlined above, has made it possible to undertake a joint project of structural significance as a symbol in the area of the European City of Görlitz-Zgorzelec.

Part of the strategic plan for the Memorial Park is the bilateral project module for the relocation and reconstruction of the World War II barracks type RLM 501 from Görlitz to the Stalag VIII A Memorial Site in Zgorzelec.

Scope and significance of the project

The relocation and reconstruction of the barracks building is of great importance for the implementation of the joint strategy for the development of culture, education and tourism in the European City of Görlitz-Zgorzelec. It will be an example of European objectives completed for joint cross-border activities for the development of cross-border identity and civil society.

Bilateral cooperation and dismantling of the barracks

A complex logistical operation was carried out in 2021. One World War II era building of barracks that stood in Görlitz had to be promptly dismantled or demolished in connection with a planned construction. Due to its historical value, it was finally handed over by bilateral agreement to the Memory, Education, Culture Foundation, which legally manages the site of the former prisoner of war camp, located until 1945 in Görlitz-Ost, now in Zgorzelec.

The Association Meetingpoint Memory Messiaen e.V. was responsible for obtaining permission from the Saxon State Conservator of Monuments to relocate the barracks, preparing the documentation and organising the fundraising needed for the project.

Polish specialists, in turn, carried out detailed scientific research into the structure of the building fabric, surveyed the existing condition and drew up a conservation plan for the individual parts, and dismantled the structure.

After careful dismantling and removal of materials that had lost their use value, the barracks were handed over to the Polish side.

The next phase of the module envisages the reconstruction of the barracks and the creation of a centre for historical education about the Second

World War and social and civic education for a democratic Europe, the only centre of its kind in the Saxon-Polish border region and in the German-Czech-Polish triangle.

The planned location of the barracks will enable its visibility from national road 352, which leads to Poland's border crossings with Germany in Radomierzyce and with the Czech Republic in Zawidów. The building will therefore be an important landmark for the planned Memorial Park. The restored barracks will house a modern exhibition about Stalag VIIIA and the prisoners of this camp. The exhibition will be equipped with a variety of multilingual materials developed according to modern museum methods and technical possibilities.

The realisation of this module will be a prelude to the next project, namely the development of a permanent outdoor exhibition based on the preserved foundations of the barrack and fragments of other elements of the camp infrastructure. This would create an interesting historical and exhibition space for visitors. This type of modern solution is used at many historical memorials (e.g. in Berlin).

Bilateral implementation of the barracks reconstruction and its use

The dismantling of the barracks took place in October 2021. A detailed report was drawn up and a chemical analysis of the materials and paints used in the construction was carried out in laboratories in Krakow. A thorough examination of the materials will ensure that the right substances are used both to rebuild the damaged parts and to preserve the parts that can be used in the construction process.

Concept for using the barracks at the new location

The concept for the use of the barrack is very diverse. On the one hand, it is to be used as a demonstration facility, and on the other hand it is to provide a space for the various educational work of the partners.

Workshop rooms for educational work with new media

workbench for 40 people featuring haptic sources (photos, texts, maps) and videos

extension of the permanent exhibition on Stalag VIIIA with video and media workstations

- videos with eyewitness accounts of former forced labourers
- digital reconstruction of Stalag VIIIA
- a complementary exhibition to the existing indoor and outdoor exhibition (display of archaeological finds, original documents, individual biographies, subcamps, etc.)
- haptic model of Stalag VIIIA.

Historical reconstruction of the barrack interior for demonstration purposes.

Exhibition on the history of the Memorial Stalag VIII A

- Stalag VIII A 1945–1956
- Roman Zgłobicki and the Chamber of Remembrance at the Technical School of Mines and Energy
- Memorial Site Stalag VIII A between 1956 and 2015
- German-Polish cooperation since the 2000s
- European Centre - Memorial Stalag VIII A, since 2015 bilaterally managed in partnership

Target groups

- trips to memorial sites
- school/youth and student groups
- tourists
- families of former prisoners of war (from all over the world)
- local population: Germans, Poles and Czechs (border triangle)

Documentation and research for the project

- video documentation of the relocation of the barracks
- archive research to acquire material for new exhibitions
- archaeological research on the site of the barracks.

Prospects for the future

We are currently in talks with potential sponsors – companies and institutions that could support the realisation of this project. Thanks to fundraising, the dismantling of the barracks and its documentation could be carried out smoothly in 2022. We would like to take this opportunity to thank all donors.

The project “Reconstruction of the RLM 501 barracks” is scheduled to be implemented between 2023 and 2025.

Part IV

Publications

Further, more detailed and up-to-date information can be found in our publications, which are available from us (also online) and through our digital presence on the Internet.

Europejski Park Pamięci. Praca dla przyszłości. Strategia działania i funkcjonowanie Miejsca Pamięci Stalag VIIIA, 2022 r.

The Prisoner of War Camp Stalag VIIIA Görlitz. Didactic Guide for Historical-Political Educational Work at the Stalag VIIIA Memorial Site.

Audio Guide. Memorial Site Stalag VIIIA, 2021.

Praca Przymusowa w Görlitz. Mapa miasta z historycznymi miejscami pracy przymusowej 1939–1945, 2017.

Miejsce Pamięci Stalag VIIIA. Oferta Edukacyjna, 2022 r.

Beauty and Memory

Meetingpoint Memory Messiaen

Direct experience as a work method in a place of memory

Stalag VIII A – a forgotten place

The forest is dense, blades of grass growing tall between wild birch trees. Fifty years have passed by. Luscious lumps of moss gathered on stone relics of a place that remained invisible for modern history.

As of the early 2000s, one of the most historically important sites between Wrocław and Dresden was almost gone. Stalag VIII A, a German POW camp on the South East outskirts of then Görlitz, became invisible among the trees covered in grass, moss and litter. The area of 30 hectares, fate of 120,000 people – everything seemed to have vanished from the consciousness of the new generations living on two banks of the Nysa River. Where once stood dozens of barracks each containing 300 prisoners, oblivious local citizens walked their dogs, dealers and buyers met, scrap metal and old tyres were scrapped. Developers even set their eyes on the land in hope of building a housing estate there.

Nobody paid attention to a fenced rectangle on the west side of the site, a place which somewhat resembled a cemetery after all. Two, three times a year somebody put a flower on a memorial stone with description in French and Polish commemorating 120,000 soldiers held as forced labour by Wehrmacht. The ground is levelled and divided into rows as if actual graves were there – a typical resting place in European culture for remains of persons who kept their dignity despite the fact of physical death.

But the lines giving the place appearance of a well-tended cemetery are deceiving. One thing is certain – it is a mass grave, a hole to which several thousands of nameless bodies were dumped between years 1939 and 1945, mostly soldiers of Red Army - from Ukraine and Belarus mostly – who died of exhaustion. Only many years later former French prisoners came here to honour the memory of long-gone companions. The area, no larger than two plots for detached houses, managed to preserve the dignity of cemetery, at least externally.

Overall, the German POW camp system pursued a brutal logic of using prisoners as labour, deliberately disregarding and destroying their dignity. Even if the murder of prisoners of war was not a systemic objective, many soldiers died in German captivity. This was especially true of Red Army soldiers. They were not protected by the international laws of war, which set standards for the treatment and feeding of POWs.

As early as 1936, the Chancellor of Reich, Adolf Hitler ordered to prepare all aspects of social life to war within four years. For economy it meant estimation of workforce needed to replace the drafted civilian staff. Therefore, Wehrmacht divided the Reich into 21 regions in which soldiers of enemy armies were to be kept and forced to slave labour in German factories. Görlitz belonged to Region VIII, and local Stalag (Germ. Stammlager) received the number VIII A.

The economic pragmatism reduced prisoners to an economy factor and condemned them to anonymity. However, they were still around to be seen by German civilians. The soldiers from Stalag VIII A worked in a small machinery and carriages factory Wumag S.A. (Maschinen- und Waggonbau-Aktiengesellschaft), but also in coal warehouses, in clogs manufacture or at the local baker's or butcher's. It was not possible for the citizens of Görlitz not to notice them at all, however talking to forced workers was strictly forbidden.

Even more perplexing is how radically this aspect of the town and region history was erased from public consciousness – or for all these years it failed to reach the minds. On the German bank of the Nysa, the memory of POWs was passed over and ousted. On the Polish bank the settlers after 1945 exiled from former Eastern borderland to Western Territories were busy adjusting to completely new surroundings, starting their new life. Besides, according to the official version of communist authorities, settling Lower Silesia was actually just regaining territories that were originally Polish - reminding anyone of the German history of the region did not fit the picture.

In the Soviet occupation zone Germans could not talk about their fate during the Nazi era. Even a small mention implying someone's alleged participation in the National Socialist regime could mean unlawful arrest or even death - the Stalin purge. Erasing memories became a survival strategy also after III Reich fall and end of the war.

The question why and how Stalag VIII A, a place of such vast expanse, could be erased from common consciousness is one of the problems the German society Meetingpoint Memory Messiaen has been working on. After all, there were 40,000 prisoners kept and used for forced labour in Görlitz at a time during WWII. In later years their number equaled the number of civilians left in the town.

Together with the Polish-founded Memory, Education, Culture Foundation, the German society wants to restore the memory of past times and

increase awareness of the connection between this historical place, so important for German logistics during the war, and post-war border shift which since May 1945 divides Görlitz into two parts: German and Polish. The starting point is a closer look upon the history of the former camp. From this perspective one can better understand the deep changes that took place in the region of Upper Lusatia and Lower Silesia caused by the war. The text focuses on particular attitude of Meetingpoint Memory Messiaen towards topics of memory and commemoration understood as a task. This approach has to complement activities of the Foundation Memory, Education, Culture. The combined work of these two institutions should create a more comprehensive, maybe even full, picture.

A great name

The oblivion Stalag VIIIA fell into in the social awareness of the post-war generations is even more astonishing concerning the fact it was a very important place for the history of the 20th century music. From summer of 1940 until February of 1941 it was the place of imprisonment of a French soldier and great composer, Olivier Messiaen (1908–1992). He was lucky – being a soldier of a western army he was treated according to rules of Geneva Convention. It meant not only acceptable decent hygienic conditions and sufficient food and water supply but also the right to practice religion and to enjoy physical and artistic activity.

It has to be stressed, Olivier Messiaen was a privileged prisoner. It is important to tell the truth but also to avoid the accusation that Meetingpoint Memory Messiaen efforts on bringing back memory is based on diminishing the Nazi crimes. The composer was lucky: as a French he had better treatment than soldiers of the Red Army. Soviet Union did not sign the Geneva Conventions and Nazis under the National Socialism banner used that fact to treat the Red Army soldiers badly, following their theory of Slavic sub-humans and aggressive anticommunism. Polish prisoners were also treated worse than POWs from France, Belgium or Great Britain.

Olivier Messiaen was also more fortunate. A lawyer from Görlitz, an NCO during the war, Carl-Albert Brüll worked as an interpreter in the camp. He saw “a French Mozart” in Messiaen and with all his power he helped the celebrated prisoner. He delivered him music paper and pencils and secured his liberties thanks to which Messiaen could compose even in the camp conditions.

It was not possible to guess fortunes of war at that time yet. None of the prisoners knew when and if at all he would see his motherland again. The sensitive artist must have been frightened with the situation, the horror. But it was there, in the camp, where he completed one of the most important

pieces of chamber music of XX century: *Quatuor pour la fin du temps* (Quartet for the End of Time). On 15 January 1941, at the camp theatre barracks, Messiaen accompanied by three other prisoner musicians performed his piece for the very first time.

Messiaen was an introverted person and artist, deeply religious and also apolitical, at least as far as politics is understood superficially. But his *Quartet*, albeit totally free from the burden of reality, was an answer to the stark reality around, encapsulating in music the experience of the era. His amazing, expressive composition relinquished the commonly accepted measure division. Thus it challenges the then dominant 4/4 march measure and confronts it with reality which does not accept metric division of time and surpasses it. The phrase “the end of time” may have an apocalyptic vibe to it, but the piece it is infused with hope. The grim look at end of everything earthly resonates in his music with faith in metaphysical reality existing above every sorrow and restrictions imposed by humans.

Music and memory

The work of Meetingpoint Memory Messiaen is based on two main intertwined themes. The first, and more important one, is the remembrance of the POWs from Stalag VIII A Görlitz. The other is music - its spiritual dimension. Music builds bridges in both directions. On the one hand, it is, in a sense, a key to the soul that opens the door to understanding the circumstances of the lives and suffering of the prisoners of war and brings us to the fact that each of these 120,000 prisoners of war was a person with an inalienable dignity; in Messiaen's understanding and his Catholic faith, each a creation of God. On the other hand, music is understood as a universal ‘language’ that can unite people from the most diverse ethnic, religious and social backgrounds. A look at history reminds us of what divides human communities and societies, reminding us of the terror and destructiveness of the National Socialist Third Reich. Music, on the other hand, invites us to connect this memory with an invitation to reconciliation and understanding across all boundaries.

Even if it was invisible before, the former POW camp focused the attention of citizens of the region at the opening of The European Centre on 15th of January 2015, reaching the collective consciousness as a symbol of destructive nationalistic chauvinism which divided European nations and, in consequence, the continent. The fact the border between neighbouring countries – Poland and Germany – was established on the Nysa River and that it shapes the whole region, is a direct outcome of the conflict and war logistics started by Germans, Stalag VIII A Görlitz included.

Almost miraculously, only 9 year safter the Association was established, the European Centre Memory, Education, Culture was built in cooperation

with the Polish side, with the financing of 3.3 million euro provided by the EU Interreg. For this miracle to really happen, people rose above reality, doing what is the true essence of art.

It seemed unimaginable, but on a brisk winter day, 15th of January 2008 the Saxony State Orchestra from Dresden played the Messiaen's quartet in the place of its first performance – this time in a tent put up in a snow-covered woods near Görlitz. However unreal it seemed, the Warsaw philharmonics performed in a hall of a train carriage factory. No matter how it also seemed unimaginable, the Saxony State Orchestra with Rudolf Buchbinder did play in an empty Art Nouveau department store. But it all really happened. And much more – Polish and German regional civil servants go to Brussels and together present a project on preservation of historical memory to the European Commission. All of this was possible because commonly understood “feasibility” was simply not an issue.

Education through Direct Experience

Characteristic of Meetingpoint Memory Messiaen's work are activities directly addressing the recipient, breaking limits and awe-inspiring. This affects the sphere of music but also culture of memory. Emotional stir is the key to true learning – constant, deep and reflective.

A two-week, international summer camp named “Worcation” proved especially effective. It combined work and vacation. A group of over twenty young people from Italy, Poland and Germany – once from Bosnia, Russia and Ukraine – spend two summer weeks in Görlitz-Zgorzelec and learn about the history of Stalag and Messiaen's quartet. A larger subgroup works on the grounds of Stalag – in the first years they cleared the site and assembled notice boards. Now they participate in archaeological diggings under supervision of a professional. A smaller group works with an artist creating metal sculptures which translate the music of Messiaen's quartet into the language of matter and visual form or portray prisoners in very expressive ways.

Every Worcation ends with a commemoration of POWs and presentation of the effects of the young people's work. Four masks depicting reconstructed faces of prisoners have made particular impression recently. For many days young people studied biographical materials on them with additional information obtained from relatives and gave every metal portrait distinctive individual features. Intensive study of personalities and fate of initially unknown persons created an emotional bond and inspired their artistic vision. In the process, four men – Russian, Italian, Belgian and French – emerged as individuals from an anonymous mass of 120,000 prisoners. With the youth's commitment and Matthias Beier's professional attention and guidance, the POWs regained their identity questioned or even totally obliterated by the

war. This experience appealed to young people much stronger than any other ordinary cognitive method of teaching.

The conceptual and aesthetic experience approach may only be reasonable only when based on proven facts. The above described approach to the history of the POWs from Görlitz is an example of a particularly successful methodological concept of Meetingpoint Memory Messiaen.

Influence of Place

Direct connection with a historical place is not necessary for an aesthetic experience to become a valuable and permanent act of memory and remembrance. But if such a place has been recognized and has existed in the collective consciousness, it demands every visitor to dig deep into details and take a position. Such model of influence was strengthened by the establishment of the Centre Memory, Education, Culture.

The building, designed by Christian Weise from Görlitz, serves not only its architectonic function but also corresponds to history and culture of the former camp and music composed there – it refers its aesthetic concept to barracks of Stalag VIII A and a church nave to be reminiscent of the deep piety of Messiaen, a Catholic, composer and a virtuoso of sacral music. The music itself found its place on the façade of the building: the windows form notes from the score of *Quartet for the End of Time*. On a vast wall inside the main hall, the architect depicted the history of the place in its various aspects, which inspires a visitor to explore the site's ambience. As masks created by the participants of Worcation show individuality of four prisoners, so architecture of the Centre exposes features historically mark this place out.

The aesthetic form of the building encourages commemoration not only on an intellectual level, but is an intensely multi-leveled experience. It offers space for reflection on the many facets of human existence. All of it makes this memory place unusual.

Area of German-Polish Tensions

To embed the former German POWs camp in Polish remembrance policy and on Polish ground is quite a challenge. Meetingpoint Music Messiaen was initially a German initiative, which inspired Polish partners from local government to the idea to create an important or even a unique meeting place. Indeed, the premiere of Messiaen's quartet in Stalag VIII A was a milestone in the history of the 20th century music, and today this masterpiece of chamber music is performed in best concert halls in the world by the top-notch musicians. It was never the intention of the project initiators to organize an ordinary concert or event hall in Stalag VIII A, which certainly would attract the audience with great names, but it would be just one more of numerous multi-purpose centres.

When the Centre opened their doors, there were a few warning voices from the Polish side. They said while concentrating on music one must not forget it was a place of torment for many thousands of people and the music should not divert attention from the guilt of German evildoers. As if the project initiators wanted to obscure the wrong made by German Wehrmacht mostly to Poles and soldiers of the Red Army by music!

The perception of the joint German-Polish project changed after the opening of the Centre in January 2015 at the latest. Several years after the opening, the Polish Foundation Memory, Education, Culture and the German association hold very fruitful discussions on the modern forms of memory and commemoration, on the value of formal and informal education or on the meaning of aesthetics for international culture of memory.

Perhaps it is balancing on the edge, but when it works out, very special moments happen, such as regular rehearsals of Europa-Chor-Akademie at the Centre. When two dozen musicians from many European countries sang Mozart's C-Minor Mass, neither Stalag VIII A nor Olivier Messiaen were in the centre of attention. But for both the artists and the audience existential depth of Mozart's music corresponded to the fate of 120,000 people who dreamt, starved, suffered and died in this place.

It was felt even stronger on 27th of April 2017, in the 25th anniversary of Messiaen's death when a conductor and pianist Myung-Whun Chung with soloists of the Saxony State Orchestra from Dresden performed *Quartet for the End of Time* and maestro Chung told about his work with Olivier Messiaen and spiritual meaning of music.

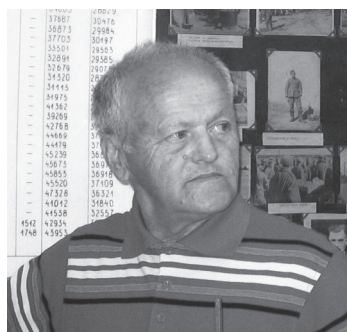
The history of the camp intensifies the impact of music, which drives reception and reflection. Every concert here is different than anywhere else. This is what so precisely determines the special place of this Polish-German project in the European culture of memory rooted in WWII experiences and any other war, every oppression destroying basic values – human freedom and dignity.

People we should remember

The memory of Stalag VIII A and the prisoners of war has been kept alive through the efforts of a few people who, despite unfavourable conditions and the lack of awareness from a wider community, turned their curiosity into commitment, or even passion. It was possible thanks to their patience and persistence into search of witnesses and testimonies, their fascination with music, and their sense of duty in remembering the prisoners of war.

Roman Zgłobicki was one of them.

Roman Zgłobicki



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Who was he? Born in 1937 in Podleszczówka, the Podhajce District, in the pre-war Polish province of Tarnopol Voivodeship, he was the youngest of several siblings. His father, Jan, most likely died before the war. In September 1939, after the German attack on Poland, the eastern territories of the Second Polish Republic were occupied by the Red Army under the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact. During the first deportations of the Polish population from those territories in February 1940, his mother, Elżbieta Zgłobicka,

was deported with her children to Siberia. The eldest brother assumed his father's role and became the guardian of the siblings. He took up work at logging in the taiga, and in an effort to get extra rations for the family, struggled to exceed the set norms. Sadly, the toil prematurely killed the young man due to exhaustion. The mother, in almost superhuman effort, managed to survive with the rest of her children.

Having returned from exile, the family settled in Lubomierz in Lower Silesia. After graduating high school, Zgłobicki enrolled at the Pedagogical Academy in Kraków, majoring in History.

In 1962, as a young history teacher, Roman Zgłobicki was employed at the Mining Technical Secondary School in Zgorzelec. A few years later, the school was extended to include the Power Engineering Technical School.

In 1967, the Technical School was entrusted the care of the Soviet POW cemetery in the outskirts of Zgorzelec, on the right side of the road to Bogatynia. In the large area covered with a birch forest and tall grass, there still were some concrete foundations, fragments of several barracks and concrete fence posts. Close to the site's eastern edge, the only remnant was a fenced square with a large boulder bearing two plaques. The Polish and French inscriptions stated that this place was dedicated to Soviet POWs who died here between 1942–1945.

Nothing seemed to indicate, however, that twenty-something years earlier, there had been guard towers and rows of barracks that witnessed the lives of thousands of suffering prisoners that had taken place here.

As Roman Zgłobicki said in Krzysztof Klimek's documentary film «Echoes of the Past. Stalag VIIIA», he faced a difficult task. There was no documentation and no data available to work with on the Polish side. Despite the declared fellowship, connections with the German town on the other side of the border of the Lusatian Neisse were all but non-existent. If there was any information in the archives in Görlitz, it was not available at that time.

The new task piqued the teacher's interest; he could not understand and could not allow countless people to remain unknown. So Zgłobicki founded a historical circle for students interested in the subject, tasking them with collecting materials about the camp and its prisoners, and started his own search. The research task turned into a passion and commitment to the tragic past of the place. He began to correspond with the veterans' unions in the prisoners' countries of origin and established contacts with numerous former POWs living in the West and their families. Gradually, the documentation was building up: photographs, letters, official papers, memoirs and other memorabilia from the stalag period were obtained. Many witnesses of those times were still around, and he got a considerable response from them. With their accounts, he was able to reconstruct the history of the stalag since its establishment, learn about the prisoners' everyday life, their cultural and spiritual life, how nationality segregation and treatment of the prisoners looked like, locations and nature of unfree labour. It is worth to keep in mind that the Third Reich ruthlessly used stalags prisoners as workforce.

The 1970s were a period of opening up to the West in Poland, which made connections with former prisoners of war possible. He learned from former French and Belgian prisoners of war about the tragic fate of Soviet POWs in Stalag VIIIA, who were not only stripped of their freedom and taken their lives away, but also had to struggle to keep their humanity under the camp conditions.

The collected materials and accounts, photographs and memorabilia, and a model of the stalag, made up an exhibition in the Chamber of Remembrance, which Roman Zgłobicki arranged at the Mining and Power

Engineering Technical School. The Chamber opened in 1973, and by attracting many visitors, it contributed to the dissemination of knowledge about the stalag. It then became a point of contact for seeking information about the camp and its prisoners.

The 1970s saw many former French and Belgian prisoners of war arriving in Zgorzelec. Then the idea of erecting a monument to commemorate the suffering and lives of the prisoners in Stalag VIIIA was born. The French Association of Former Prisoners of Oflags and Stalags of the Eighth Military District initiated building a monument commemorating the prisoners' misery and began collecting funds among French and Belgian veterans. The monument was conceptualized at the Visual Arts Studio in Zielona Góra, and Tadeusz Dobosz, a local artist made its key element. The inauguration took place on 22nd July, 1976. In 1994, through French veterans' efforts, a Polish and French plaque was installed which inscribed "Stalag VIIIA, 1939–1945. Tens of thousands of prisoners of war passed through, lived and suffered in this camp."

Zglobicki and his students tirelessly continued their research, organised popular science sessions, striving to get the fullest possible picture of the events of the past years and the fate of the people who passed through the stalag. He continually corresponded with former POWs from Europe and beyond; based on the collected materials, he started working on a book. "Camps and Cemeteries of War in Zgorzelec" was finally published in 1995 and is still the primary source of information about the prisoners of the Third Reich in former Görlitz-Ost.

In the early 2000s, when Albrecht Goetze came to Zgorzelec in search of the birthplace of Olivier Messiaen's *Quartet for the End of Time*, he found encouraging support in Zglobicki on his idea of commemorating the former camp and prisoners of war with a centre which would serve as a meeting place for young people and educational activities.

Roman Zglobicki was invited to join the team created at the freshly established Foundation Centre for Entrepreneurship Support (the present-day Memory, Education, Culture Foundation). In January 2010, when the project to create the centre took shape, and the process of seeking financial support from European Union funds was launched, he took part in a workshop promoting the project in Brussels at the headquarters of the Liaison Office of Saxony, telling the story of the Stalag and its prisoners.

In recognition of his great merits, Roman Zglobicki was awarded the Gold Cross of Merit, the Gold Medal of the Guardian of National Remembrance Sites, the Medal of the Commission for National Education and the Knight's Cross of the Order of Polonia Restituta. On 6th May, 2010, at a joint session of the City Councils of Zgorzelec and Görlitz, he was awarded the medal Meritorious for Europe – City of Zgorzelec-Görlitz.

Roman Zgłobicki died on 19th August, 2010 in Zgorzelec and was buried here.

He will always be remembered as a modest, devoted, and hard-working man who did everything he could to keep the stories and the fate of the Stalag VIIIA prisoners of war continue to live on.

Albrecht Goetze



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Back in the 2010s, the site now occupied by the architecturally enticing and functional building of the European Centre Memory, Education, Culture was still a birch forest sitting over wide stretches of land covered with tall grass. Remnants of concrete buildings, tall obelisks and mossy memorial plaques were the only evidence of the site being something else than a natural reserve: former Stalag VIIIA was located there between 1939 and 1945.

This was the sight seen by Albrecht Goetze one autumn day in 2002. He travelled from Munich to Görlitz in search of the provenance where Olivier Messiaen, a French composer and a prisoner of this stalag, composed his *Quartet for the End of Time* and debuted its performance at the site together with fellow musicians in January 1941.

Born in Leipzig in 1942, Goetze was a man of many interests, he worked as a theatre director in Hamburg, London and Munich. Also, he was interested in literature, art, and composing. One day, he received the score of Olivier Messiaen's *Quartet for the End of Time* from a friend; upon studying it, he noticed an inscription: "Written in Stalag VIIIA in Görlitz, Silesia, in January 1941". It captivated him so dearly that he decided to see the place where this magnificent work was written. As he recounted the interviews, he felt somewhat disappointed that in Görlitz, no one had heard of Stalag VIIIA. In the eastern part of the city, called Zgorzelec, which belonged to Poland since 1945, someone pointed him to a road leading to the city's outskirts. Goetze was astounded by the landscape, the circumstances of the piece, and Messiaen's heavenly music! Although the inspiration for Messiaen's composition was the *Apocalypse of St. John*, it is not an apocalyptic composition. Instead, it is represented as "a colourful and serene work of praise and ecstasy."

Being radical in his actions, Goetze decided to let go of the life that he had known and moved to Görlitz. "I wanted to spend my life and compose where such music was made," he said in an interview with Hendrik Lasch on 15 January 2011.

But this was not the only purpose of his stay in Görlitz. To support himself, he worked as a music teacher at a theatre there, where he unleashed his talent and directing skills. He eventually developed the concept of the Meetingpoint Messiaen: a meeting and cultural centre to be built on the site of the Quartet. In this way, he could revive the memory of the stalag, remember the French composer's time in captivity, and associate this with the future of uniting science and art with music. The Meetingpoint Messiaen – as he called it – reminded us that the removal of freedom, the existence of fear, and the uncertainty of tomorrow could be conquered through the power of music. He believed that the great force of music could overcome dictatorship.

Roman Zgłobicki – a history teacher at the Technical School of Mines and Energy in Zgorzelec – heard about Goetze's idea that he was inspired by the premiere of the Quartet and visualized building a meeting and exchange centre for the youth at the memorial site. He introduced him to the stalag's history and its prisoners, which he had studied since the late 1960s. However, no one would involve in serious talks with private individuals about building the centre Goetze dreamt of, even though in his first talks with the mayor of the Municipality of Zgorzelec, his colleagues had already sparked interest from encouraging supporters and future partners.

Untiring and full of persistence, Goetze was determined to make his vision come to fruition. In 2007, the Meetingpoint Music Messiaen association was founded, and he became its first president. The association's formation majorly impacted the growing interest in the history of the stalag and the fate of the prisoners of war. It became an institutional partner in discussions with the local authorities on both sides of the border. While some are quite skeptical about the idea, the Municipality of Zgorzelec's local government positively received Goetze's vision. The municipality's mayor, Kazimierz Janik, and his team were actively involved in developing the idea. A foundation was chosen to carry out the work, and an architectural studio was selected from a competition to design the centre. Funding for the project was much needed, for which the concerned parties applied within the framework of the EU ETC Saxony-Poland Programme 2007–2013.

Goetze believed that the birthplace of this world-famous Quartet should not just become a place of pilgrimage for music lovers and admirers of Messiaen. Still, it should make international youth work achievable in this tri-national region. He also pursued his idea of working with children and the youth, introducing them to the world of music and explaining its power, especially the *Quartet for the End of Time*.

The Meetingpoint organises an annual international holiday camp for the young called Worcation, where the younger generation will learn more about the history and fate of prisoners of war in different contexts.

In 2008, on the anniversary of the camp's premiere of the *Quartet*, the first celebratory concert was held in a large tent in the woods on the former camp site, which has become a tradition since then.

On 15th January, 2015, after several months of construction, the European Centre for Memory, Education, Culture (then called the European Educational and Cultural Centre MEETINGPOINT MUSIC MESSIAEN) was opened with a gala concert during which the *Quartet* was performed.

The centre's forerunner was not present during the opening ceremony. In 2012, Goetze entirely withdrew from all projects due to health reasons. His work was continued and taken over by the Meetingpoint under new management with a young team.

Albrecht Goetze died in Berlin on 25th April, 2015.

In 2008, Goetze was awarded the medal For Services to the Europe-City of Görlitz-Zgorzelec in recognition of his commitment which crossed borders, connected generations and united people from the most diverse social groups.

There is a belief on both sides of the border that without Albrecht Goetze and his visionary spirit, his power of persuasion, and his undying persistence: the European Centre Memory, Education, Culture would have never come to existence.

Kazimierz Janik

The birth of the European Centre Memory, Education, Culture on the site of the former Stalag VIIIA will eternally be associated with the person of Kazimierz Janik. The aspiration of Albrecht Goetze to create a meeting centre for the European youth and for honouring Olivier Messiaen's composition of the *Quatuor pour la Fin du Temps* (Quartet for the End of Time) under harsh camp conditions could materialise thanks to Janik's visionary outlook and his passion for the importance of historical memory for future generations.



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During his first encounters with Goetze in 2004, Janik acknowledged the idea of building the centre at the meeting point of three regions, three countries. Because of his decisions, Goetze's concept and vision had the opportunity to become a reality. In 2007, at the request of Mayor Kazimierz Janik of Zgorzelec, the Council of the Municipality of Zgorzelec gratuitously granted 7.29 hectares of the former camp grounds owned by the municipality to the foundation for the centre. This became a solid basis for applying for EU funds.

Kazimierz Janik was a local government officer, a social worker, and a long-time mayor of the Municipality of Zgorzelec. He was born in Stary Las, Nysa County in 1947. After graduating from the General Secondary School and the State School of Technical Mechanization of Agriculture, he continued his studies at the Agricultural Academy in Wrocław.

He spent his professional life in the region, where his first years were fixated on enterprises and institutions related to agriculture. He then became the Head of the Town and Municipality of Leśna.

On 13th June, 1986, the Municipality National Council in Zgorzelec elected Janik as Head of the Municipality. In 1990, he became the first Head of the self-governing Municipality of Zgorzelec and he held this position until 2014.

It is quite a challenge to cite Janik's entire contribution here: his organisational talent and temperament for self-government; his efficiency in action, passion and hard work, which contributed to the development, modernisation, and partial change of the municipality's profile from traditional agriculture to agricultural tourism. The municipality's location in the border triangle allowed him to undertake cross-border activities with partners from Germany and the Czech Republic. Several tourist attractions were created, along with new cycling routes and trails, tourist and recreational facilities. Before the centre was built, Mayor Janik supported the organisation of international youth camps that carried out cleaning and archaeological work at the former prisoner-of-war camp in collaboration with the Saxon side.

Under Janik's guidance, the Municipality of Zgorzelec became one of the best-managed local government units in the Lower Silesian Voivodeship as recognised by numerous awards of distinction for activity, efficiency, and transparency.

Mayor Kazimierz Janik was also a persistent social activist. He accomplished countless essential functions and focused on developing a physical culture of children and youth in the municipality. He also inspired the cooperation of veterans' and soldiers' organisations with schools in the patriotic and civic education of children and youth.

He was repeatedly decorated and awarded for his actions and contributions, including; the Knight's Cross of the Order of Polonia Restituta, the gold medal for Services to National Defence, and the medal of the Guardian of Places of National Remembrance.

He was a councillor of the Lower Silesian Regional Assembly from 2014 to 2018.

Kazimierz Janik passed away on 23rd July, 2022.

He was an admired and a respected man for his directness, wryness, dedication to the region, humour, decisiveness, and outstanding efficiency. Nobody can recall him saying that something was impossible; he just envisioned how things are going to be done and reached for the phone.

He will forever be remembered by those associated with the Stalag VIII A Memorial as a man who made the impossible possible by making quick and important decisions, as the European Centre Memory, Education, Culture commemorates.