

REMEMBERING THE HOLOCAUST

Marek Kaniewski from Katowice (Poland) gives us an update on his involvement with the on-going education project, which was introduced to EurECA at the 2011 conference.

Some of you will recall that the *Remembering the Holocaust* project began following a personal meeting which I had in 2007 with Henryk Mandelbaum, a former prisoner in the German Nazi Auschwitz-Birkenau Concentration Camp. He was a former Sonderkommando worker, who survived and, after WW II, happened to meet the man who had handed him over to the Gestapo during the War. Remarkably, however, Henryk Mandelbaum did not take revenge but forgave him.

Since 2010 I have co-ordinated the project, which has developed from the testimony of Henryk who, while standing among the ruins of the crematorium in Birkenau, **in 2007** turned to me and pleaded, "Marek, please continue to tell people all about this even after I am gone." Henryk Mandelbaum died in June 2008.

The project was not meant to be a one-off event but one which is planned to continue and develop in years to come through various means, including:

- Meetings with pupils in schools.
- Inter-school photo competitions about Jewish Culture in Poland.
- Educational visits to former Nazi concentration camps, including Auschwitz-Birkenau.
- Visits to museums, exhibitions and memorials.
- Meetings with historians.
- Meetings with survivors of the **H**olocaust.
- Publishing a regular bulletin *Remember the Holocaust*

In October 2013 I organised a meeting in my school (Mielczarski State High School) with Werner Oder, the son of Wilhelm Oder, SS-Unterscharführer, an Austrian Nazi murderer during WWII. Wilhelm Oder was an instructor in "special ways of killing Poles and Jews" for those who attended the infamous SS school in Rabka in occupied Poland.



The son, Werner Oder, like many other young men after the war, found Jesus and was able to forgive his father, who died in 1970. Werner rejected the anti-semitism of his father and wrote a book entitled *Battling with Nazi Demons*. At the meeting, attended by pupils and staff from 6 Katowice secondary schools, we heard the story of a young man, burdened with his father's criminal past. He spoke of futile attempts to "airbrush Austrian history from 1939-1945", and gave his personal account of how God had helped him to seek love and forgiveness in his life.

Werner Oder is now a Baptist pastor in the United Kingdom.

MAREK KANIEWSKI