January 27th – 75th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz. International Holocaust Remembrance Day

75 years ago, on 27 January 1945, soldiers of the 60th Army of the Red Army’s 1st Ukrainian Front opened the gates of the Nazi Auschwitz camp. The Auschwitz-Birkenau camp complex was the largest German ‘death factory’ during World War 2. Established in 1940 as a quarantine camp for Polish political prisoners, for nearly two years it served primarily as a concentration camp. Following a decision of the Third Reich authorities in 1942 to bring the “Final Solution to the Jewish Question”, it became the largest extermination camp for Jewish people in the entire occupied Europe. Until the end of the war, it remained a concentration camp and a place of suffering and death of many Poles, the Roma, Soviet prisoners and people of many other nationalities from the territories conquered and occupied by the Nazis.

In 1947, the former camp site was transformed into a memorial. “The grounds of the former Nazi concentration camp in Oświęcim, together with all the buildings and equipment found there, shall be preserved for all time as a Monument to the Martyrdom of the Polish People and other Peoples,” reads Article 1 of the Act adopted by the Sejm. Under that same Act, a museum was established in that location. In 1979, the site was inscribed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site under the name “Auschwitz Concentration Camp”. In 2007, the name was changed into “Auschwitz-Birkenau. German Nazi Concentration and Extermination Camp (1940–1945)”. The change, made at the request of the Polish government, was a response to various publications in the world media referring to the Nazi camps in the occupied Poland as “Polish extermination camps”. The new wording proposed by Poland and Israel was adopted with no objections. The new name is to highlight the historical truth of the nature of the camp and to clearly identify it as a product of the German Nazi regime.

Auschwitz concentration camp has taken its heavy toll on the history of the Polish parliamentarism as well. Among over a million victims murdered by the Nazi executioners in the Auschwitz-Birkenau site were deputies to the Sejm of the 2nd Republic of Poland. Their successors, deputies to the Sejm of the 3rd Republic of Poland, recalled their names in the resolution to commemorate the 66th anniversary of the first mass transport of prisoners to the camp (on 14 June 1940).

“We share our sentiments with the words of Pope Benedict XVI who spoke of the lesson for the future of mankind that comes from the place where hatred for people reached its farthest limits. Today we also commemorate our predecessors, deputies to the Sejm of the Republic of Poland whose lives and service ended in the camp:

Józef Bakon

Norbert Barlicki

Zygmunt Cardini

Dominik Dratwa

Gabriel Dubiel

Stanisław Dubois

Zygmunt Gardecki

Ks. Stanisław Hałko

Zygmunt Jaźwiński

Klemens Kaczorowski

Ignacy Kalaga

Józef Karwan

Stanisław Kielak

Kazimierz Kierzkowski

Antoni Kordowski

Józef Manaczyński

Antoni Mizera

Serwacy Niedbalski

Jan Nosal

Stanisław Nowak

Ludwik Piechoczek

Jerzy Pikulski

Zofia Praussowa

Roman Rybarski

Witold Staniszkis

Józef Steinhof

Ks. Kazimierz Sykulski

Kazimierz Światopełk-Mirski

Władysław Tempka

Edwin Wagner,”

wrote the deputies in their resolution adopted by acclamation in June 2006. With this act, the Sejm also established 14 June as the National Day of Remembrance for Victims of the German Nazi Concentration and Extermination Camps.

Germans sent over 1.3 million people of more than 20 nationalities to the Auschwitz-Birkenau site. Approximately 900,000 Jews were gassed immediately after their arrival at the camp. The remaining 400,000 deportees were kept prisoners. Half of them died, including about 100,000 Jews, 64,000 Poles, 21,000 Roma, 14,000 Soviet war prisoners and over 10,000 prisoners of other nationalities. About 90 % of all killed were Jewish. The Auschwitz-Birkenau site has become a global symbol of the Holocaust. In 2005, the UN General Assembly designated 27th January – the anniversary of the liberation of the camp – as an International Day of Commemoration in Memory of the Victims of the Holocaust.

http://sejm.gov.pl/Sejm9.nsf/komunikat.xsp?documentId=D9A9EA5F47DD57D5C12584F200444343