



Video Conference Project Yad Vashem - MKG



Holocaust Documentation Centre in Jerusalem

The International School For Holocaust Studies (ISHS) in Yad Vashem in Jerusalem has offered Maximilian-Kolbe-Gymnasium (MKG) in Cologne / Germany the opportunity to organize a video conference with witnesses of the Third Reich.

Video Conference Project

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- The focus of the project is the question of whether it is useful to interview people who lived through the Third Reich, even over long distances.
- The situation in this type of interview is a special one as the interviewer and the person being interviewed do not know each other and have to communicate through a medium over long distances.
- If a video conference can be organized and held successfully, this medium can be used to provide a new global frame for interviews with experts.



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When the Prime Minister of the German state NRW (= North Rhine Westphalia), Dr. Jürgen Rüttgers, paid a state visit to Israel on 11.06.08, he agreed on expanding school projects between Germany and Israel.



20 teachers from NRW
participated in this state visit.

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Dr Noa McKayton, the head of the German department in Yad Vashem, and Theo Schwedmann of the regional government in Münster (NRW) coordinate school projects and courses in Israel and Germany.

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Participating students of MKG:

- Braun, Janine
- Flamm, Jasmin
- Fricke, David
- Fuest, Janina
- Jäckel, Kathrin
- Orlando, Ornella
- Sobisch, Marcella
- Tschiersky, Simone
- Tüpprath, Marco
- Yosif, Niewen



video conference team of MKG

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Learning as a different experience:
A new communication situation as a challenge.



the classical interview situation:
people face each other

the situation in a video conference:
communication over long distances



The video conference coordinator assists the interviewers and the witness being interviewed

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Our interview partner and witness of the Third Reich during our video conference on 29.10.08 – Naftali Fürst

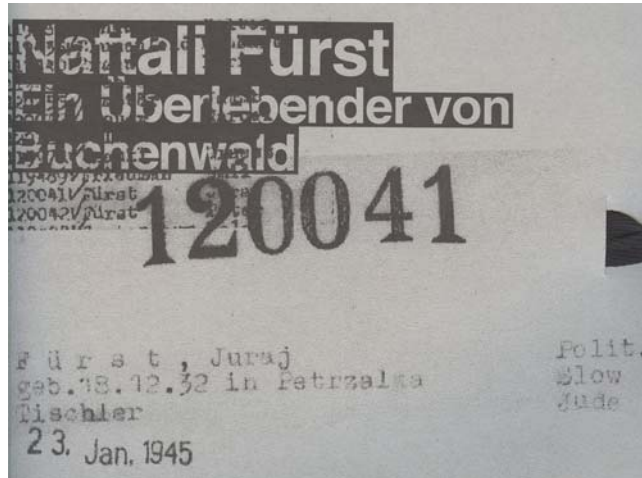
He survived his imprisonment in various concentration camps and today lives in Israel.

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Preparation for the video conference – briefing on 16.10.2008

Good questions don't fall into your lap, they need a solid background information.



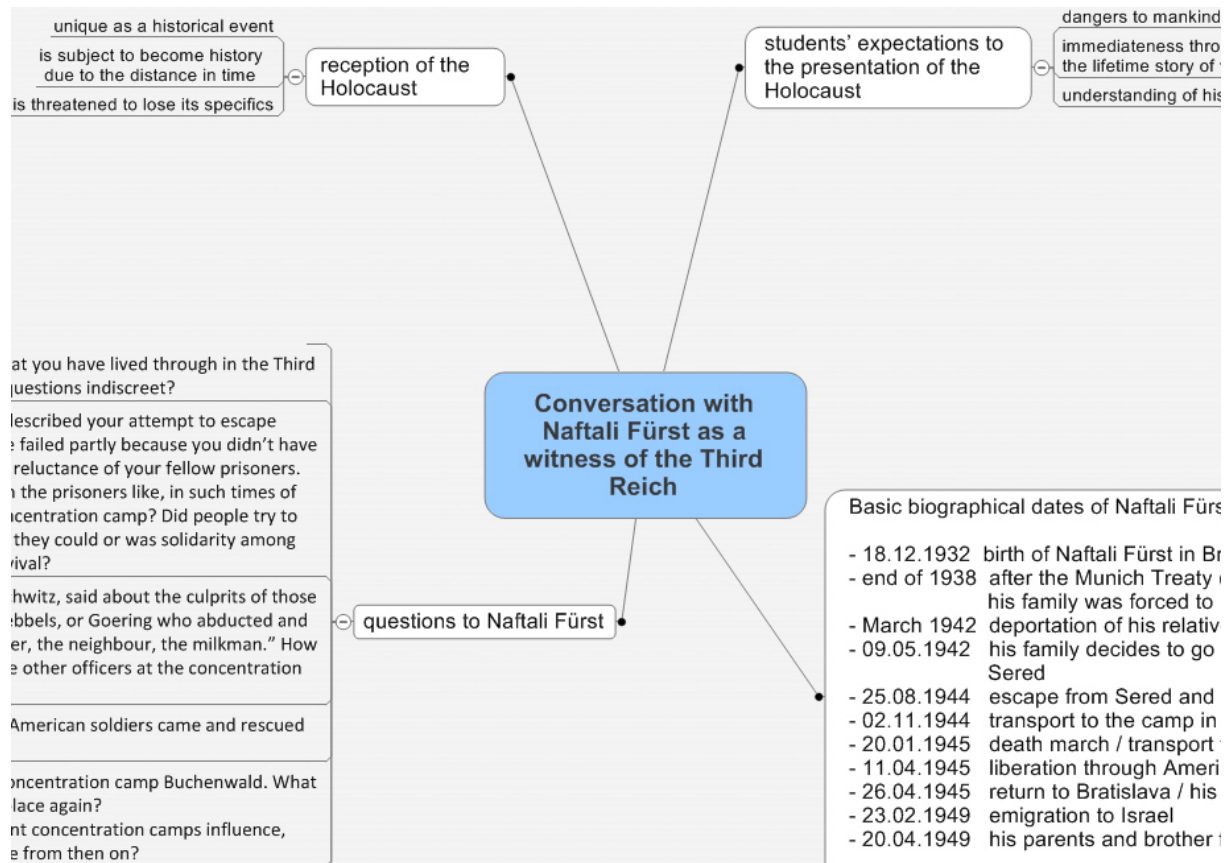
Dr Noa Mkayton (ISHS) and Theo Schwedmann (BR Münster) provided a lot of material for the documentation.

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Preparation for the video conference – briefing on 16.10.2008

The questions are collected and then structured in form of a mind map:



(Excerpt from the mind map)

The process of preparing the video conference can be divided into 4 stages:

reception of the Holocaust

What do we already know from our history textbooks?



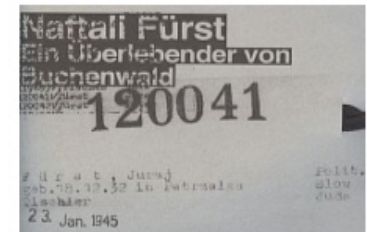
students' expectations for the presentation of the Holocaust

classroom discussion: ideas on the blackboard

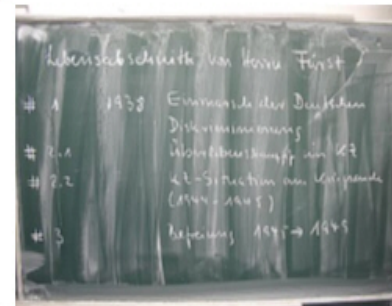


Basic biographical dates of Naftali Fürst

basic biographical dates on N. F.:



questions to Naftali Fürst

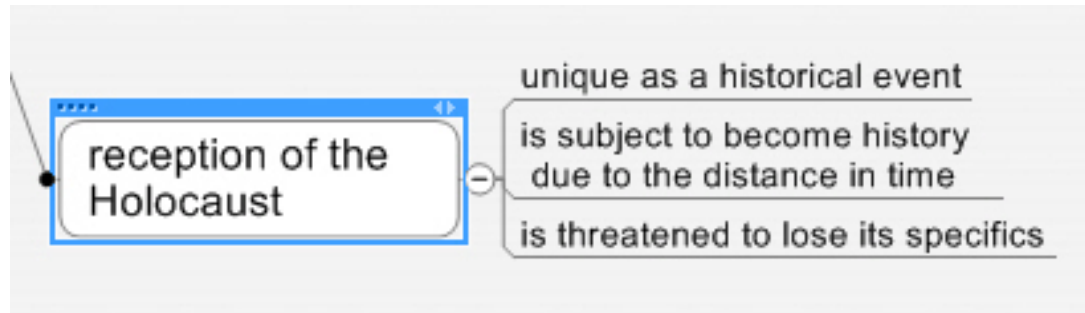


structure according to stages in his life

- invasion of the Germans
- life in the concentration camp
- situation in the concentration camp at the end of World War II
- liberation and emigration

Videokonferenzprojekt Yad Vashem - MKG

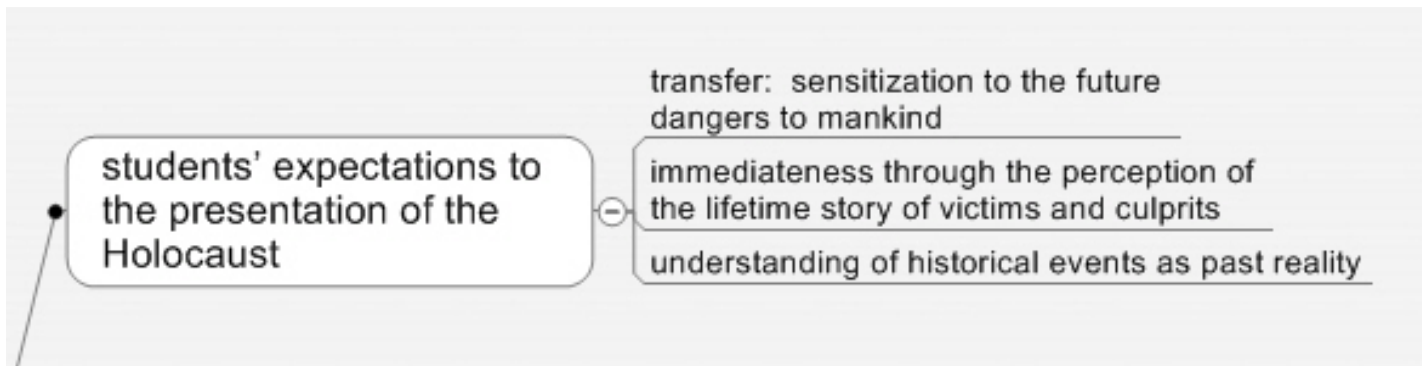
Preparation for the video conference – briefing on 16.10.2008



Our history textbooks provide answers to these questions, thus we don't need to ask them to our witness.

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Preparation for the video conference – briefing on 16.10.2008



Only questions which meet these criteria should be asked to the witness.

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Basic biographical dates of Naftali Fürst

- 18.12.1932 birth of Naftali Fürst in Bratislava
- end of 1938 after the Munich Treaty (Münchner Abkommen) his family was forced to leave their home
- March 1942 deportation of his relatives to death camps
- 09.05.1942 his family decides to go "voluntarily" to the work camp Sered
- 25.08.1944 escape from Sered and arrest through the Gestapo
- 02.11.1944 transport to the camp in Auschwitz-Birkenau
- 20.01.1945 death march / transport to Buchenwald
- 11.04.1945 liberation through American soldiers
- 26.04.1945 return to Bratislava / his family survived
- 23.02.1949 emigration to Israel
- 20.04.1949 his parents and brother follow Naftali to Israel

- 11.04.2004 visit to the concentration camp Buchenwald



The different stages in Naftali Fürst's life are being analysed in different groups.



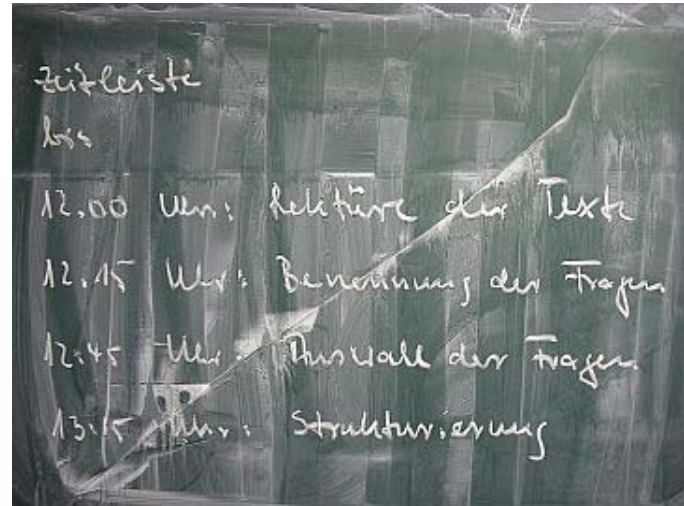
Jasmin, Marcella and Simone deal with Naftali Fürst's expulsion from his family home



Kathrin and Janina work on his struggle to survive in the concentration camp.



David and Marco study the situation at the end of World War II. Janine and Ornella focus on Naftali Fürst's emigration to Israel.

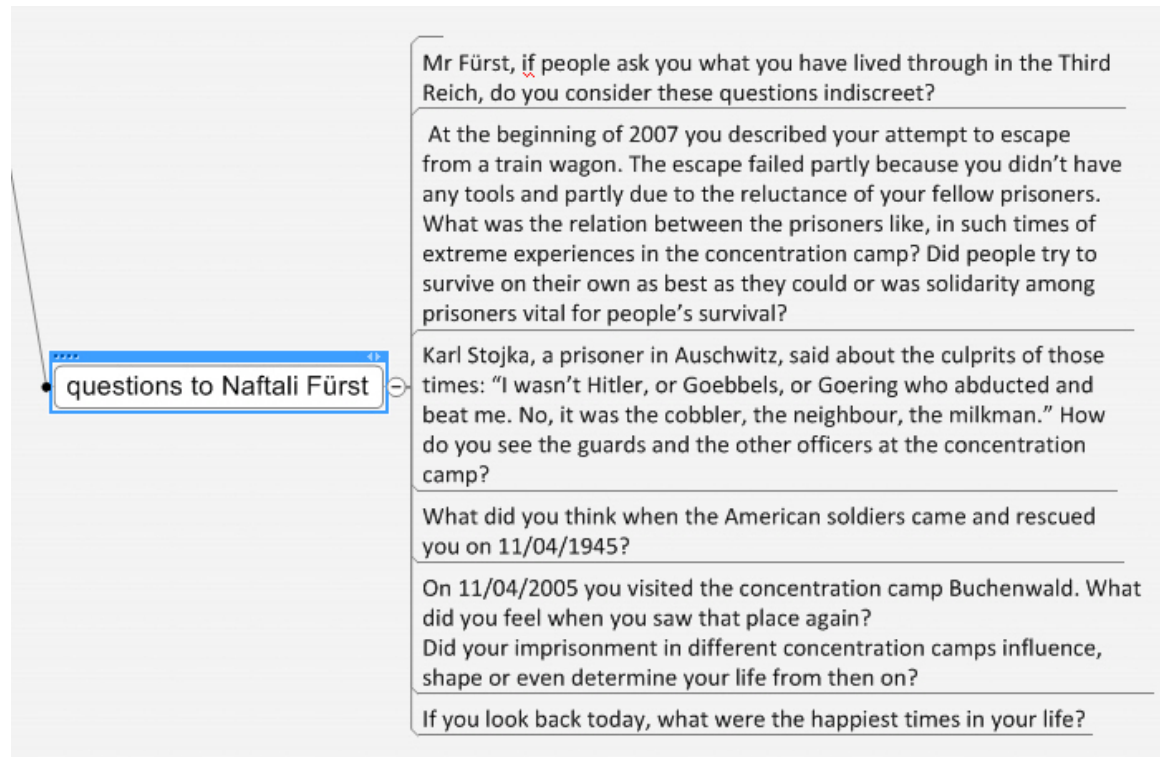


A timetable is necessary as all good things have to come to an end.

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Preparation for the video conference – briefing on 16.10.2008

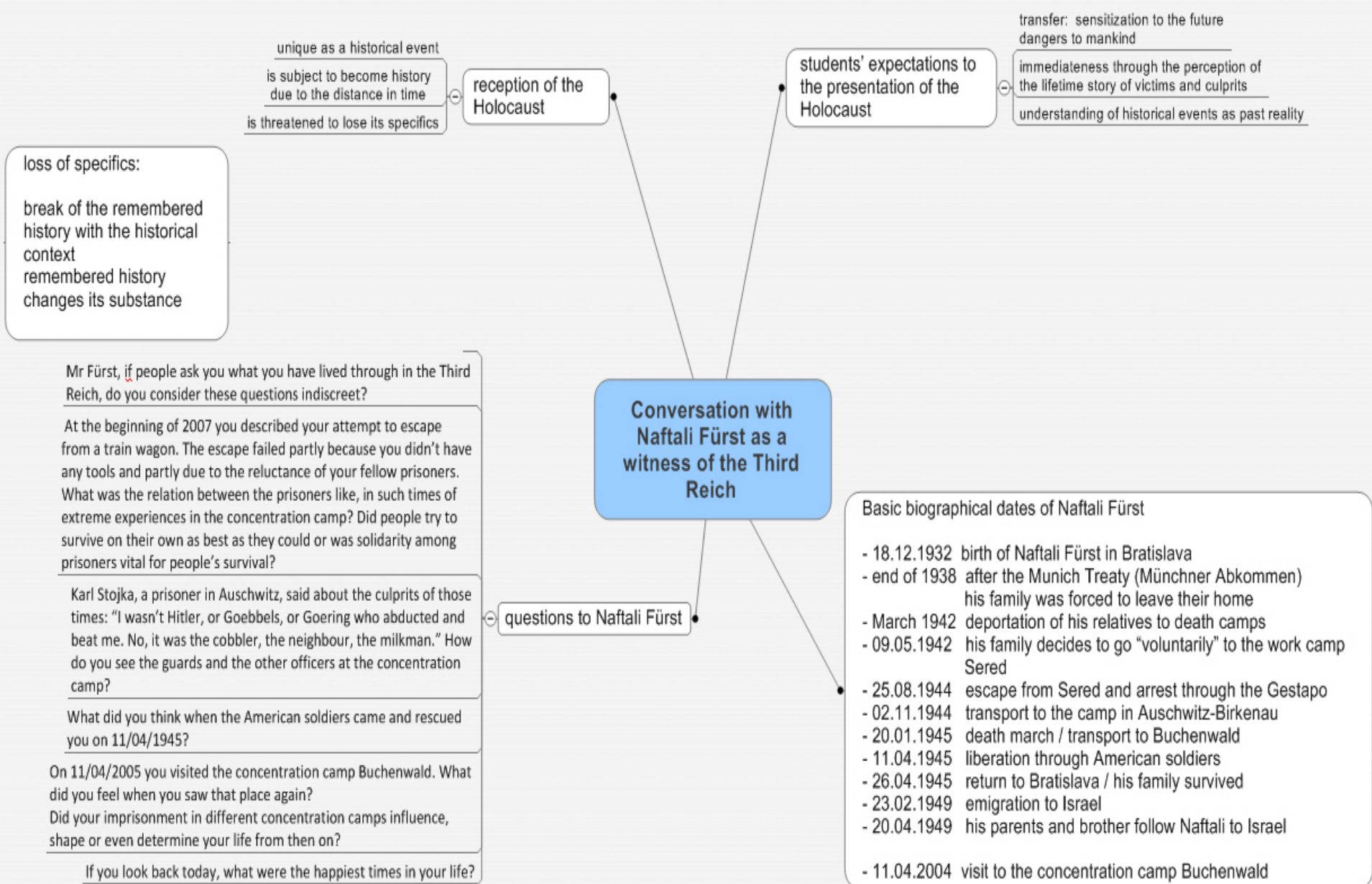


(Excerpt from the list of questions)

The questions are collected and then structured in form of a mind map..

Preparation for the video conference – briefing on 16.10.2008

The results structured in a mind map



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Planned stages of the interview during the video conference on 29.10.08,
10:00 to 11:30 a.m

Videoconference on 29.10.2008

Yad Vashem / Int. School for Holocaust Studies, Jerusalem –

Maximilian-Kolbe-Gymnasium, Koeln

Session: 11:00 -12:30, Israeli Time

Time and Duration	On- Air Content	On-Air Location	Speaker
11:00 – 11:15 15 min	Welcome & Intro.	Yad Vashem (YV), Kolbe-Gymnasium (MKG)	Dr. Noa Mkayton, Uriel Kashi (ISHS) Lena Zint, Teresa Weismann, Katrin Fankhauser (Praktikantinnen) Jochen Hindrichs. (MKG)
11:15 – 12:00 45 min	Meeting with Naftali Fuerst	YV	Naftali Fuerst, Dr. Noa Mkayton
12:00 – 12:25 25 min	Questions to Naftali Fuerst from Students	YV, MKG	Dr. Noa Mkayton, Naftali Fuerst, Students
12:25 – 12:30 5 min	Wrap-up and good byes	YV, MKG	Dr. Noa Mkayton, Naftali Fuerst, Students

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Without the necessary technical equipment it would be impossible to organize such a project.



After long efforts we found Cologne Polytechnic as a partner for our video conference project.

Cologne Polytechnic is a member of Deutsches Forschungsnetz (DFN = German Research Network).

As Cologne Polytechnic and ISHS in Yad Vashem use the same transmission record in their video conference we can ensure the transmission.

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Video conference on 29.10.08



An hour before the conference, Axel Kotitschke from Cologne Polytechnic explains necessary discipline while speaking and other important rules to obey throughout the video conference.



After an introduction of ten minutes, Kathrin (on the left) takes over responsibility for the sound engineering and Marcella (on the right) is responsible for the recording technique during the next two hours.

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Video conference on 29.10.08



At 9:50 a.m. the video conference connection between Cologne Polytechnic and Yad Vashem is set up..



Thanks to the technical administrators the conference can start even earlier than planned. The quality of sound and image are good. The connection remains stable for two hours, until the end of the conference

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Video conference on 29.10.08

The planned and the actual stages of the interview.

Time and Duration	On- Air Content	Speaker
11:00 – 11:15 15 min	Welcome & Intro.	Dr. Noa Mckayton, Uriel Kashi (ISHS) Lena Zint, Teresa Weismann, Katrin Fankhauser (Praktikantinnen) Jochen Hindrichs. (MKG)
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12:25 – 12:30 5 min	Wrap-up and good byes	Dr. Noa Mckayton, Naftali Fuerst, Students

Time and Duration
10:50 – 11:00 15 min
11:00 – 11:40 45 min
11:45 – 12:45 60 min
12:50 – 12:55 5 min

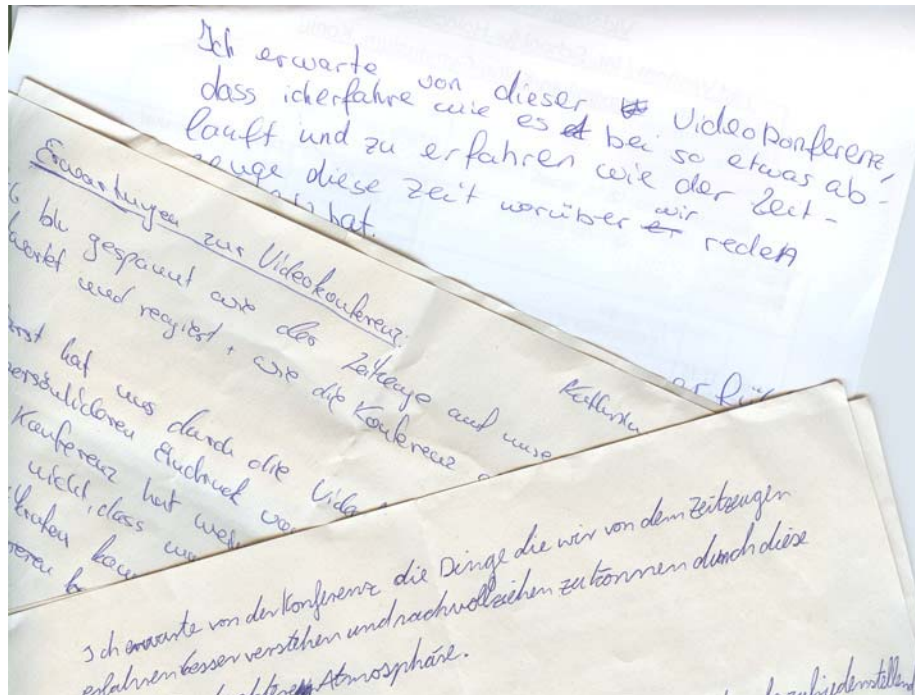
The time for questions was clearly extended. Nevertheless, the dialogue between Naftali Fürst and Dr. Mckayton in the second stage of the interview is important to familiarize the students with the witness. This stage should, however, not have been extended any further as the students might have become impatient.

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Video conference on 29.10.2008 – Feedback und open issues

Before and after the conference the students were asked to make notes on their expectations and their actual experiences.



It was important to do that immediately after the conference.

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Video conference on 29.10.2008 – Feedback

Expectations:

I would like to ...

- learn more than the things written in our history textbooks
- learn to understand feelings and different perceptions
- have an immediate personal contact
- find out how a video conference works

Experiences:

I have ...

- got first-hand information
- gained insight into the perspective of an immediate witness
- had a personal contact
- learned to appreciate the medium of a video conference

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Video conference on 29.10.2008 – Open issues

Two topics were too complicated to be discussed fully and to have come to a satisfactory conclusion:

- the special situation of an infant-survivor (perception of the culprits, perception of the hierarchy among the prisoners etc.)
- the ethical question: a different judgement of the moral behaviour of the victims, e.g. the clear distinction in the motivation of moral or amoral behaviour.

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Video conference on 29.10.2008 – Experiences and insights

1. The witness of the Third Reich and the group of students need to be informed about the project and its aims in due time.
2. The video conference technique needs to meet international standards and must be tested beforehand.
3. The interview partners need a plan with the different stages of the interview.
4. The group of students needs to learn about the biography of the witness.
5. The questions to the witness need to be elaborated from the biography and structured with the help of a mind map. Before that it has to be clear which questions should be asked and which ones should out of principle not be asked.
6. The witness and the students need the help and support of a video conference coordinator.
7. Before the conference basic general rules on how to speak and how to behave during the interview should be established.
8. The different stages of the interview should contain an equal amount of presentations and questions.

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Video conference on 29.10.2008 – Our conclusions:

- The interview with a witness of the Third Reich over a long distance was an important and useful project and a great personal experience for the students.
- In spite of the technical particularities, this form of interview enables a communication over screen and microphone which seems as if the interview partners were talking face to face.
- A video conference still is, even at university, an exclusive project. Careful preparations are vital to its success, otherwise, this means of communication cannot be used globally for interviews with experts.



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Video conference on 29.10.2008 – Bibliography

Literature on the person of the witness, Naftali Fürst (a selection of titles)

- [Kurzbiografie von Naftali Fürst](#) [pdf]
- [Naftali Fürst, Schilderung der Transporte in die Konzentrationslager](#) [pdf]
- [Naftali Fürst, Buchenwald - Der Kreis schließt sich \(Auszug\)](#) [pdf]
- Naftali Fürst, Wie die Kohlestücke in den Flammen des Schreckens, Neukirchen-Vluyn 2008 (ISBN: 978-3-7975-0207-0)
- Joachim Wiesner (Hrsg.), Naftali Fürst – Ein Überlebender von Buchenwald, Unterrichtsmappe, Bregenz 2007
- More information on N. Fürst is provided [here](#).

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Video conference on 29.10.2008 – Literatur

Literature on video conference projects

- [Merkblatt: Sprechdisziplin und andere Verhaltensweisen bei Videokonferenzen \[pdf\]](#)
[= Does and Don'ts: How to speak and behave in a video conference, German Initiative for Network Information]
- [Realisierung von Videokonferenzen \(Deutsche Initiative für Netzwerkinformation e.V., März 2008\) \[pdf\]](#)
[= How to organize a video conference]

More information on video conferences and network information is provided by [Deutsche Initiative für Netzwerkinformation](#) e.V.

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What's next?



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The European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA)

In focus

Diversity Day, a FRA Youth event to promote diversity among young people in Europe, 10 November 2008 [10-10-2008]

Diversity Day, a FRA project piloted in [2007](#) aimed at promoting understanding for principles of equality among young people in Europe, will take place this year on 10 November in Vienna. Following a series of activities throughout the year, the project will culminate in this large-scale event bringing together more than 2,000 young people between 12 and 18 year old from Vienna and neighbouring towns in Hungary, Slovakia and Czech Republic. In addition to dealing with issues around fundamental rights and equal opportunities, this year's edition will contribute to the participants' awareness of the benefits of diversity in liaison with the [2008 European Year of Intercultural Dialogue](#). Educational workshops, an intercultural stage programme and interactive stands are among the activities planned at the event.

To know more about the programme, please visit the event's website at: <http://www.diversityday.eu>

The video conference will be presented and evaluated on 8.11.-10.11.08 at a conference of the European Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) in Vienna.

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Video conference on 29.10.2008

This project can be found on the internet at:

<http://www.mkg-koeln.de/sources/projekte/videokonferenz/index.htm>

