

P a s s i n g T h r o u g h

Photographs
on pilgrimage
by Skip Schiel



POLAND: Auschwitz,
Birkenau, Oswiecim,
Pszczyna, Bielsko Biala,
Cieszyn; **CZECH**
REPUBLIC: Frydek Mistek,
Novy Jicin, Hranice, Pferov,
Kojetin, Vyskov, Rousinov,
Brno, Pohorelice, Mikulo;,
AUSTRIA: Poysdorf,
Wolkersdorf, Vienna;
CROATIA: Zagreb, Dalmatia,
Split, Omis, Makarska;
BOSNIA-HERCEGOVINA:
Mostar; **HUNGARY:**
Budapest; **THAILAND:**
Bangkok; **CAMBODIA:**
Poipet, Batambang, Phnom
Penh; **VIETNAM:** Ho Chi
Minh City, Hanoi, Dong Ha,
Quang Tri Province, Hue, Hai
Phong.; **PHILIPPINES:**
Manila, Luzon, Batann
Peninsula, Corregidor, Bicol,
Olongapo, Subic Bay,
Pampanga; **JAPAN:**
Hiroshima, Nagasaki, Osaka,
Tokyo, Narita; **CANADA:**
Toronto, Kingston, Deseronto



Passing Through

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Auschwitz to Hiroshima

The Interfaith Pilgrimage for Peace and Life, 1995

Introduction

The first of two pilgrimages I made, Auschwitz to Hiroshima, began with a convocation at Auschwitz in December 1994, spanned roughly 10,000 miles through troubled areas such as Croatia, Bosnia, Cambodia, Vietnam, and the Philippines and ended in Hiroshima on August 6, 1995. Its impetus came in 1993 when a Japanese Buddhist monk, Brother Sasamori, noticed that conditions prior to the outbreak of World War II paralleled contemporary conditions. He pointed to the increase of hate and violence groups in the United States, the rise of the far right in Europe and the drift toward enlarging the Japanese military as ominous signs. With his order, Nipponzan Myohoji, known throughout the world for its peace pagoda-building, its peace walks and its political activism, he organized the Interfaith Pilgrimage for Peace and Life, 1995. Pilgrims from all over the world—hosted and joined by local groups—walked to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the end of possibly the most destructive war in history, World War II. Ranging in number from 25 to over 600, the pilgrims from all major faiths—and many less common paths—met and prayed with people suffering from war, reflected on the causes of violence, sought and told stories of suffering and hope, and helped catalyze peace activities in many regions.

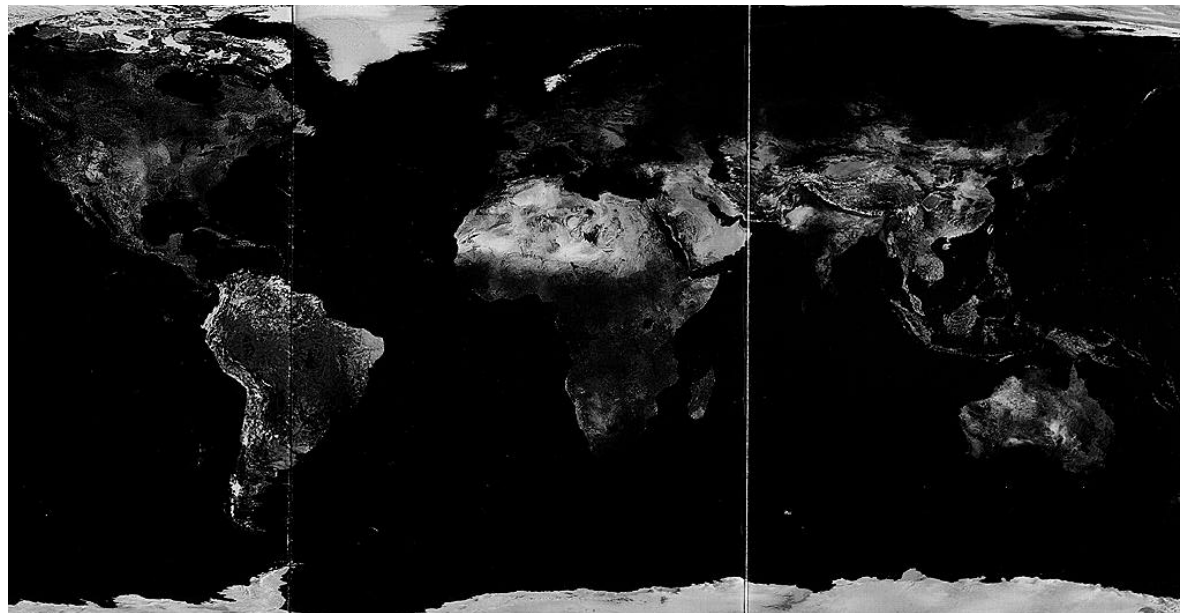
The second pilgrimage I made, On Turtle Island (a term used by many indigenous people for North America), initiated by a Japanese Buddhist nun, Sister Jun, traveled from Plymouth Massachusetts, around Lake Ontario and arrived at the United Nations in New York City in April 1995. During this 1,000 mile, ten week walk, pilgrims concentrated on learning from Iroquois Native American elders and story-tellers about their teachings of peace and justice. Plymouth was chosen because it is an early European incursion site (the first "pilgrims"?), around Lake Ontario because this is where Iroquois people live and New York City because the United Nations would be deliberating about extending the nuclear non-proliferation treat. Motivated by a wish to compare local and global conditions—and depleted of money—I was able to leave the first pilgrimage for three months to join the second.

I needed to find a way to commemorate the end of the war that wasn't limited to celebration, but that also mourned the soldiers and civilians killed and wounded, that reflected on the causes of World War II and on the war's legacies such as the deliberate destruction of non-combatants, that

put our present condition into better focus and that reawakened our awareness of the beauty and power of peace. And that helped us find a way to build peace and bring justice.

Going to sites made sacred by massive killing, preparing with prayer and reflection, traveling in a reverential mode, sacrificing comfort and security, searching for well grounded hope, not sure of outcomes and concluding with the mystery of making and sharing art—all part of pilgrimage—fit well with ageless teachings and traditions. By going back—remembering—we have the opportunity to go forward—to envision through art a better way of living. As Dostoevski put it, "Beauty will save the world."

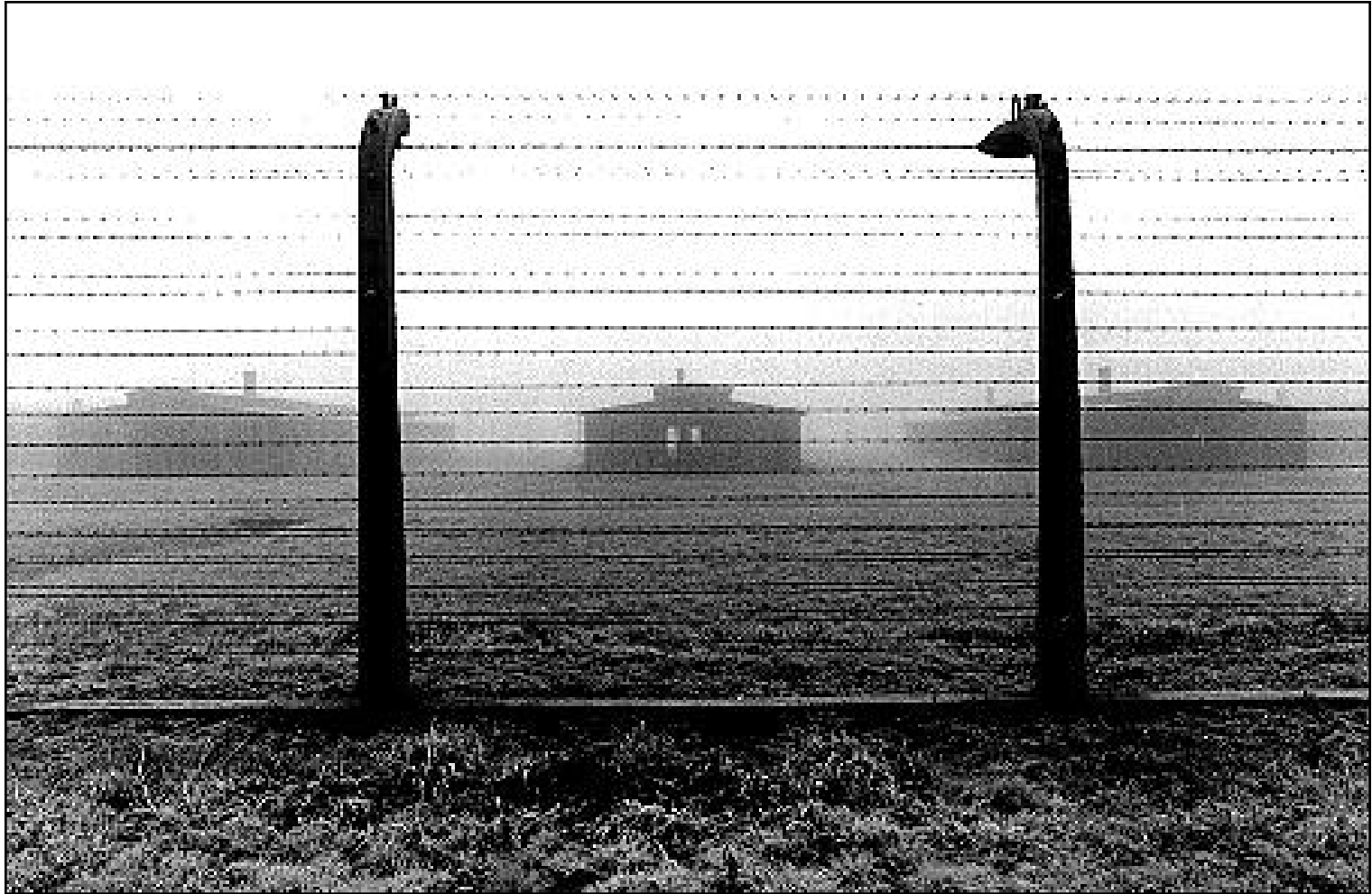
—*Skip Schiel*



1993—Earth Imaging/The Living Earth, Data courtesy of NOAA

Auschwitz
December 1994

Ashes and light



Birkenau



Main gate of Auschwitz



Chanukah at the main gate



Birkenau



Shoes, Auschwitz



Guide at Auschwitz



Auschwitz

Chant to be Used in Processions Around a Site with Furnaces

How we made them sleep and purified them

How we perfectly cleaned up the people and worked a big heater

I was the commander I made improvements and installed a guaranteed system taking account of human weakness I purified and I remained decent

How I commanded

I made cleaning appointments and then I made the travelers sleep and after that I made soap

I was born into a Catholic family but as these people were not going to need a priest I did not become a priest I installed a perfectly good machine it gave satisfaction to many

When trains arrived the soiled passengers received appointments for fun in the bathroom they did not guess

It was a very big bathroom for two thousand people it awaited arrival and they arrived safely

There would be an orchestra of merry widows not all the time much art

If they arrived at all they would be given a greeting card to send home taken care of with good jobs wishing you would come to our joke

Another improvement I made was I built the chambers for two thousand invitations at a time the naked votaries were disinfected with Zyklon B

Children of tender age were always invited by reason of their youth they were unable to work they were marked out for play

They were washed like the others and more than the others

How I could tell by their cries that love came to a full stop I found the ones I had made clean after about a half hour

—Thomas Merton,
assembled from letters home by Nazis