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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**SHOAH FOUNDATION SETS NEW INTERNATIONAL EDUCATIONAL MISSION,  
EXPANDS EFFORTS TO OVERCOME PREJUDICE, INTOLERANCE, AND BIGOTRY**

*Original mission to videotape over 50,000 testimonies has been completed.*

**Los Angeles, CA; Friday, August 17, 2001**

Having completed its original mission of videotaping 50,000 testimonies of eyewitnesses to the Holocaust, Survivors of the Shoah Visual History Foundation today announced a new and equally urgent mission. Building on the extraordinary accomplishment of collecting almost 52,000 video testimonies, the Foundation will now dramatically expand its international efforts to overcome prejudice, intolerance, and bigotry through the educational use of the testimonies.

The initial mission was urgent, a race against time to collect and preserve the personal experiences of Holocaust survivors and witnesses before it was too late. "When we began in 1994, most were in their 60s, 70s, and 80s," said Douglas Greenberg, President and CEO of the Foundation. "In seven years we have collected 51,661 video testimonies from survivors, rescuers, liberators, and other eyewitnesses, by far, the largest collection of videotaped Holocaust testimonies anywhere in the world."

"Our new mission, with its emphasis on worldwide education to prevent catastrophes such as the Shoah, is equally compelling, and it also must be pursued relentlessly before it's too late. The shift in our work over the next few years will be dramatic in scope and will introduce new products and programs here and abroad."

Steven Spielberg, who founded the non-profit Foundation in 1994, said: "That original mission was a dream that became a remarkable reality. Every survivor had an astonishing eyewitness account to tell so that the horrors of the twentieth century might not be repeated in the twenty-first. They wanted their stories to be heard and taken to heart. Each survivor is, therefore, a teacher, putting a real face, a real voice, a real experience directly in front of this and future generations. I am proud of the dedication and innovation that made it possible for survivors to fulfill a promise they made to those who did not survive. "The archive is their perpetual link to our expanded long-range objectives of remembrance and education."

Recent technological innovations at the Shoah Foundation will speed up the indexing and cataloguing of all the testimonies at a rate eight times faster than previously estimated.

*(more)*

The testimonies in 32 languages collected from 57 countries will be completed in just four years with greater efficiency and effectiveness. The result will be what the Foundation believes is the largest publicly available video database in the world, usable by scholars, teachers, students, and, eventually, the general public.

The groundbreaking system, developed in-house, has over 23,000 key word links to the 117,000 hours or 13 years of video. When complete, it will be possible to search the entire archive of video almost as easily as text.

“We believe this system for indexing and searching video is unique, and we hope to share what we have learned with organizations and institutions with similar missions,” added Greenberg.

The Foundation has already produced award-winning educational products. Its first CD-ROM has been enthusiastically received in schools throughout the country. A Foundation-sponsored pilot education initiative in five U.S. school districts has met with remarkable success using the CD-ROM and the Foundation’s Academy award winning film, *The Last Days*.

A second CD-ROM, in German, is now being introduced in schools throughout Germany. This project, generously supported by Bertelsmann, Burda Media, Springer Verlag, and others is but the first of a series of efforts aimed at achieving the Foundation’s educational objectives in Europe and in other parts of the world as well. The Foundation has also produced documentaries that have reached millions in this country and abroad. *The Last Days* won the 1998 Academy Award for Best Documentary Feature Film. *Survivors of the Holocaust* won two Emmy Awards in 1996 and a prestigious Peabody Award. *The Lost Children of Berlin* earned a 1998 Edward R. Murrow News Documentary Award.

Most recently, the Foundation commissioned five distinguished international directors to produce documentaries using testimonies in their own languages drawn from the archive for television broadcast in those countries. Three of the five films have already debuted and received lavish praise in the Polish, Hungarian, and Argentinean press. The others will be shown in, Russia and the Czech Republic later this year. A subtitled version of the entire series, *Broken Silence*, will be broadcast on HBO’s Cinemax Channel in 2002.

“Education is the key. We will focus primarily on underserved students and young people. The Foundation will create a new, fully staffed Education Department with an annual budget of \$2 million. We also hope to develop partnerships with allied organizations and institutions to create and distribute innovative educational products and programs,” said Greenberg.

“Additionally, this new mission will require a comparable expansion of our fund-raising efforts among institutions, corporations, individuals, governments, organizations, and other granting institutions.”

Individuals interested in supporting the efforts of the Shoah Foundation are encouraged to call 818/777-4673 or write to P.O. Box 3168, Los Angeles, CA, 90078-3168. The Foundation’s homepage is [www.vhf.org](http://www.vhf.org).

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