FOLIA 371

Annales Universitatis Paedagogicae Cracoviensis

Studia Politologica 29 (2022)

ISSN 2081–3333

DOI 10.24917/20813333.29.4

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Polish politics in education about the Holocaust as exemplified by Auschwitz on the basis of the changes in 1989. And what was it like in the U.S.? Can we draw on the American politics of memory in the context of the Holocaust?

Introduction

The 1989 Autumn of Nations has changed both the social memory and the history of KL Auschwitz educated in Poland. It seems to be a bold hypothesis, which is not the case when both terms are associated with polity and politics. The article aims at describing and explaining changes in the Polish policy of Holocaust education on the example of Auschwitz. Auschwitz is discussed through the prism of a living memorial and geographical space historically related to events. Politics is analyzed using categories connected to social memory, its relationship with history, places of memory, and within two political systems, i.e. socialism and democracy. Following that, American policy is similarly described and explained in this context. A living memorial of the Holocaust, considered a global promoter of the Holocaust education, is located in the U.S. It is called the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

Konzentrationslager Auschwitz (KL Auschwitz) was founded in 1940 by the Nazis, motivated by the need to carry out a wave of mass arrests among the Polish population. As early as 1941, Himmler designated the concentration camp in Oświęcim as a site of the extermination of Jews [Archiwum Państwowego Muzeum Auschwitz-Birkenau 1960: 1]. In the years 1940–45 KL Auschwitz was composed of camp I Stammmlanger – KL Auschwitz I and, inter alia, the camp in Birkenau – KL Auschwitz II, but also many sub-camps [Kucia 2005: 10]. Over a million Jews were killed in KL Auschwitz, mainly in Birkenau. The second largest groups of victims were Poles – ca. 70–75 thousand. In Auschwitz, the Nazis killed many citizens of other countries and ethnicities [Archiwum Państwowego Muzeum Auschwitz-Birkenau 1960: 2]. Auschwitz was the epicenter of the Holocaust – the event in which two-thirds of European Jewry, or 6 million Jews,

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were exterminated, and 3 million of them were Polish Jews. [Young 1993: viii – Preface, 154]. The commemoration of this place, located in Poland, a country filled with the topography of Nazi crimes, is associated with the memory of those who survived and the policy of Poland's post-war governments as the former Nazi camp, Auschwitz, became a state institution, i.e. a state museum, by virtue of an Act governments [*Ustawa* z dnia 2 lipca 1947 r. *o upamiętnieniu męczeństwa Narodu Polskiego i innych Narodów w Oświęcimiu* (Dz.U. z 1947 r. Nr 52, poz. 265)]. However, after the Second World War, Poland found itself in the zone of Soviet influence. That was the time of the Cold War rivalry between the Eastern and Western Bloc. In the Eastern bloc, the memory of the victor of World War II – the USSR, which liberated the Nazi camps – was present as official history [Pomian 2006: 191–196]. It was not until Poland became a democracy that the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum became a tool with which the Polish state pursues the goals of politics of memory, and not official history.

With the origin of the Auschwitz memory site thus outlined, it is evident why politics in the context of education about the Holocaust in Poland, based on the example of the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum, requires consideration in terms of social memory, and its relationship with history, sites of memory, and their use in politics in a given historical context. In 1925, Maurice Halbwachs was the first to define collective memory as non-personal remembering in the interests of a group. According to Halbwachs, man as a social being without other people is deprived not only of language but also of memory [Halbwachs 1980: 51–87]. In Polish literature on the subject, collective memory is identical to social memory [Kubiszyn 2019: 30]. The memory of the Holocaust is maintained and shaped by tradition, the media, politicians, and public institutions, including schools and museums [Erll 2018: 164]. However, the most critical role in the commemoration process is played by politicians because as it is only them who can define constitutive norms, values, and symbols that are put on the political market [Kącka, Piechowiak-Lamparska, Ratke-Majewska 2019: 67]. Today, this is termed the politics of memory [Chwedoruk 2018: 232–235]. For this reason, the main contributor to the politics of commemoration in a sovereign democratic state is the legally elected authorities or the current ruling party, and, to some extent, the opposition. It is politicians who decide when to celebrate anniversaries and establish institutions and places related to the sphere of memorization. Both the number and size as well as infrastructure thereof provide information on what a particular state wants to convey through them.

Such institutions as the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum are special sites of memory and should not be viewed in the way they are interpreted by Pierre Nora, who is the most well-known scholar studying sites of memory and describing them as monuments or works of art, that is, every cultural phenomenon connected with a group's past and evoking images [Erll 2018: 45–47]. If we were to understand the existence of Auschwitz in this way, this would involve a narrow understanding of the politics of memory concerning only the problem of sites of memory – e.g. their preservation. Given the extensive scope of activities of such institutions as the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum, these places are associated with a broader concept of the politics of memory – understood as strengthening of public discourse about the

past, both inside and outside the country concerned, through various forms of institutionalization of such discourse [*Polityka historyczna* 2006]. In Poland, places such as Auschwitz rely on the Ministry of Culture as cultural institutions, as public education centers are governed by the Ministry of Education. Auschwitz is, therefore, a tool with which the Polish state implements the goals of the politics of memory. Such a goal could be, for example, to introduce compulsory education on the history of the Holocaust to schools and the museum could be required, for example, to conduct research in this area and use the results in the form of exhibitions or other educational activities. The politics of memory is therefore associated with "soft" development of an image of the past, and the state is responsible for history, not imposing history [Tokarz 2012: 15–36]. In undemocratic countries and countries with defective democracy, such a policy is often associated with history imposed from above by the state – the nationalization of history [Tokarz 2012: 15–36] or the state's view on history, which is then referred to as historical politic [Chwedoruk 2018: 232–235]. The history of Auschwitz is multifaceted, and the purpose of the institution, assigned to it by the democratic Polish state is to show all these aspects, which is included in the statute provided by the Ministry of Culture to the museum: the institution's goal is to disseminate the history of KL Auschwitz, understood as a concentration and death camp in 1940–45 [*Zarządzenie Ministra Kultury i Dziedzictwa Narodowego* z dnia 19 lutego 2013 r. *w sprawie nadania statutu Państwowemu Muzeum Auschwitz-Birkenau w Oświęcimiu*].

Commemoration of Auschwitz and in Auschwitz after the war

The first public exhibition in Auschwitz was created mainly by former Polish prisoners of KL Auschwitz I: amongst others, Wincenty Hein, Tadeusz Hołuj, Alfred Woycicki, Tadeusz Wąsowicz and Kazimierz Smoleń. Block 15 was to be the opening block [Archiwum Państwowego Muzeum Auschwitz-Birkenau, *Zasady rozplanowania muzeum...* 1947: 131] and addressed the "predatory nature of Germany" [Archiwum Państwowego Muzeum Auschwitz-Birkenau, *Projekt organizacji Muzuem...* 1946–1947: 112] towards Poles [Archiwum Państwowego Muzeum Auschwitz-Birkenau, *Zasady rozplanowania...*1947: 20] throughout history – that is how they approached Nazi crimes. The exhibition in block 15 was supposed to emphasize "certain features of the German nation" that brought misfortune to its neighbors, including extermination of the Slavic region [Archiwum Państwowego Muzeum Auschwitz-Birkenau, *Zasady rozplanowania...* 1947: 20]. Blocks 5–11 and 16–18 were to be devoted to the history of the KL Auschwitz I and only one block (4) was to be related to the death camp – KL Auschwitz II, i.e. Birkenau [Archiwum Państwowego Muzeum Auschwitz-Birkenau, *Zasady rozplanowania muzeum...* 1947: 21–23]. The death camp in Birkenau, located 3 km from Auschwitz I, was to remain a reserve without any exhibitions. Thus, the emphasis was not on the destruction of the Jews but on living and working in the prisoner camp of the Auschwitz I. In terms of nationality, the largest number of prisoners in Auschwitz until the deportation of Jews were Poles who, according to the policy of the Nazis, were to be Germanized or destroyed. In the exhibition blocks, the focus was on the destruction of a prisoner by conditions of living, eating, slave labor, which

led to death due to infectious diseases and physical exhaustion [Archiwum Państwowego Muzeum Auschwitz-Birkenau, *Zasady rozplanowania muzeum…*1947: 21], as well as the destruction of the resistance movement by shooting and hanging [Archiwum Państwowego Muzeum Auschwitz-Birkenau, *Tymczasowy mały przewodnik…*1947: 3–7]. These plans were to a large extent implemented, which is confirmed by the description of the exhibitions in the guide published in the early days of the center's operation [Archiwum Państwowego Muzeum Auschwitz-Birkenau, *Tymczasowy mały przewodnik…,* 1947: 3–7].

The concepts of the establishment of the museum prove that they were the result of collective memory in the interest of a given group – the Polish nation. This would not be the reason to deny the validity of social understanding of history if this interpretation did not claim to be a scholarly history [Pomian 2006] and was not associated with defective codes of memory. The existence of the first issue is confirmed by the fact that the center's purpose, under the Act, was to collect and gather evidence about Nazi crimes in Oświęcim, and to study it scientifically [Cichocki 2005: 15–16]. Collective memory, however, is not the same as scholarly history. History is perceived as continuous and universal, unbiased and disinterested, intellectual, complex, linear and using scientific language [Kubiszyn 2019: 38]. By contrast, memory is discontinuous, partial, emotional, simplified, alive, and rooted in the present, subjective, and it uses metaphorical and poetic language. Defective codes of memory relate to the so-called diminishing of the role of Birkenau, with KL Auschwitz being a historical place and the epicenter of the destruction of Jews from all over Europe, which took place in occupied Poland. However, the problem of the exhibition thus proposed has a broader historical context which will be discussed below.

Power over the memory of Auschwitz and history in the Auschwitz center

In 1945 Bolesław Bierut brought Poland under the control of the USSR, and two years later, he became the head of the Polish puppet government controlled by Joseph Stalin [*Układ o przyjaźni, pomocy wzajemnej i współpracy powojennej między Związkiem Socjalistycznych Republik Radzieckich i Rzecząpospolitą Polską,* (Dz.U. 1945 nr 47 poz. 268)]. The nationalized Polish media at the time show the interpretation of Poland's memory politics under communist rule*: prison walls collapsed under the powerful blows of the Stalinist Army*, which was supposed to demonstrate, according to the media, *the superiority of socialism over capitalism* [Wolff-Powęska 2005]. In the times of the Polish People's Republic, Auschwitz had a political function to fulfill – it was expected to strengthen solidarity with the USSR (through Auschwitz, the authorities promoted the USSR as an ally of Poland in the fight against the Germans, who, as was claimed at the time, were intent on destroying the Slavic people) [*Układ o przyjaźni, pomocy wzajemnej i współpracy powojennej między Związkiem Socjalistycznych Republik Radzieckich i Rzecząpospolitą Polską,* (Dz.U. 1945 nr 47 poz. 268)] and against the heirs of imperialistic Nazism – as the USRR depicted Western bloc (mainly New York bankers and London oil men) with which the Eastern bloc was in Cold War conflict

[Huener 2003: 76–80]. This goal was achieved by denying the predominantly Jewish character of the Holocaust in Auschwitz and, incidentally, in other Nazi camps in Poland, Czechoslovakia, and the GDR which viewed the victims in political or national context rather than an ethnic or religious one. Communist universalist ideology was intended to reduce the emphasis on the Jewish dimension of the events [Alexander 2002: 5–85]. Thus, it became possible to show the scale of Germany's crimes against many nations occupied by the Nazis [Alexander 2002: 64]. It was perfectly illustrated by an exhibition in Block 4 in the times of the Polish People's Republic: it described the annihilation of Jews as extermination of millions. In this block, instead of the number of ca. 1.5 million murdered Jews, as determined at that time by the Jewish Historical Institute [Archiwum Państwowego Muzeum Auschwitz-Birkenau, *Centralna Żydowska Komisja Historyczna w Polsce*...1947: 24], the number of 4 million victims of various nationalities was provided, based on the findings of the Soviet Extraordinary State Commission for the Investigation of the Crimes of German-Fascist Aggressors [Trojański 2019: 32–40]. For this purpose, a map was hung with arrows running from various deportation sites, pointing to Auschwitz, but no mention was made of the fact that the victims were mainly Jews [Huener 2003: 123–227]. It is only in the context of the extermination process that the guide mentions Jews [Smoleń 1974].

In Auschwitz, therefore, history was present in the form of an official record. So those were accounts about the camps and the Second World War of the USSR, which purported to be a scholarly history [Pomian 2006: 191–196]. They were written in third person and there were even references to archives that, at the time, were exclusively under Soviet control. A breakthrough did not come until after 1989, and was related to the collapse of the Eastern Bloc. It was then that it became possible to recover the history of Auschwitz. The results of Polish People's Republic's policies were felt for many years after the fall of communism. Even in 2008, the majority of Poles believed that it was their nation that suffered the greatest loss of life as victims of Auschwitz [Cowan, Mailes 2017: 24]. The official history of Auschwitz under communist rule in Poland was disseminated through state ceremonies, factory tours, the educational system [Kucia 2005: 68–70] in which the history of the destruction of Jews was part of the fate of Poland, and even the topic of fighting in the Warsaw Ghetto was depicted as a Polish-Jewish insurgency [Szucha 2008: 114–115]. In the times of the Polish People's Republic, the percentage of foreign tourists in Auschwitz was small compared to Polish visitors, as evidenced by internal memoranda kept in the museum's archives [Archiwum Państwowego Muzeum Auschwitz-Birkenau 1971]. Conveying the Soviet message across the Iron Curtain was difficult, but also reaching the Eastern Bloc with the West's message about the destruction of Jews was as difficult. That is why the two memories – Polish and Jewish – could not be compared with each other. It was Pope John Paul II during his pilgrimage to his homeland in 1979 who first made the Poles aware of the essence of Auschwitz. The Poles did not understand the message of his sermon. It brought about the first conflict over religious symbols and in fact, over memory [Young 1993: 120–121].

The first country to follow Israel and include the Holocaust in national history

Israel was the first country to include the Holocaust in national history and to commemorate it in the form of the museum-memorial site of Yad Vashem. The U.S. quickly followed suit. The American Holocaust Museum in Washington "grew" on the wave of interest in the past that came about in the second half of the twentieth century – the so-called memory boom [Sodaro 2018: 12–15]. Memory boom is associated with the culture of memory, and in the U.S. also with popular culture, which promoted a "flood" of autobiographies and memories, as exemplified by the popularization in the U.S. of the Diary of Anne Frank [Cowan, Miles 2017: 32] or Elie Wiesel's book entitled *Night* [Fallace 2008: 25–28]. The first trial of the Nazi Adolf Eichmann in Israel was broadcasted on main American television channels. It was the first step towards raising the awareness of American society, which in the 1960s had little or no knowledge of the Holocaust [Fallace 2008: 25–28]. The Eichmann trial showed the uniqueness of the Holocaust as well as the banality of evil [Arendt 2010]. Nazi guilt has changed into that of "everyman" [Alexander 2016: 3–16]. The debate of scholars who tried to deal with the Holocaust carried a political message that people have the capacity to be victims as well as perpetrators, therefore there is no question of legitimizing or distancing themselves from the suffering of the victims or the responsibility of the perpetrators [Alexander 2002]. Thanks to it, the problem of the Holocaust became a national problem; therefore the Holocaust Museum was erected in the very heart of the U.S. capital, and people entering the museum from Raoul Wallenberg street can see the symbol of Washington behind them – the Washington Monument. It is proof that the Holocaust in the memory of Americans was on a par with the fathers of American democracy.

The memory boom promoted Halbwachs' categories, which had been dormant for many years [Halbwachs 1992: 25–28]. His work made it possible to explain why the U.S., whose citizens were not Holocaust victims, addressed the Holocaust to such an extent as to build a national monument, or more precisely a national "living monument," which term will be discussed further. The explanation why the Holocaust became part of American memory was Halbwachs' approach to collective memory [Halbwachs 1992: 25–28]. He defined collective memory, not only through the prism of what communities or their ancestors experienced in the past, but also through what they hold in memory [Alexander 2002]. In 1978, President Carter, on the basis of the aforementioned grass-roots debate on the Holocaust in the U.S., appointed a special commission (President's Commission and Holocaust Memorial Council) to propose how Americans should face the past violence [*Report to the President. President's Commision on the Holocaust*, September 1979]. In 1979, this commission, chaired by Elie Wiesel, suggested that a living Holocaust memorial be erected to put Jewish victims at the center, containing a museum, a Holocaust education center, and a Committee on Conscience, giving America a signpost on how to deal with the crime of genocide in future [Weinberg, Elieli 1995: 20]. Since the 1970s, thanks to culture, science, civil society, and American politics, the Americans have kept the memory of the Holocaust. This is supervised by the United States Holocaust Memorial Council established by Congress in 1980 [*An Act to Establish the United States Holocaust Memorial Council*].

American metaphor of the Holocaust that changed the post-war global landscape

The museum in the U.S. is devoted to the history of the Holocaust and places Jewish victims at the center of its remembrance. To enable the Americans to understand what the Jewish people had experienced, the planners used a number of arrangement techniques – after entering the museum, visitors feel as if they were in prison – which is reflected by steel structures and brick [Weinberg, Elieli 1995: 25]. The exhibition space is winding, dark and cramped – this is supposed to intensify the experience of Jews transported and chased to death along roads they did not know, until their annihilation in gas chambers. Enabling Americans to understand the horror of Jewish victims was to force appropriate action in the event of violations of human rights (in a spirit of democratic values). Identification with the victim at the Museum in Washington takes place at the entrance to the permanent exhibition. Visitors are given identification cards with the history and personal data of the victims. Visitors walk through the three floors of the exhibition together with these tragic heroes, knowing that their stories will not have a happy ending. The personalization of the Holocaust ends with oral stories – of witnesses and survivors [Weinberg, Elieli 1995: 71–72].

Education about the history of the Holocaust is the primary task of the museum, but its aim is also to educate on how to prevent similar crimes in the future. The Holocaust becomes a metaphor here. It is to serve as a weapon in the fight for human rights [Weinberg, Elieli 1995: 165]. This metaphorical vision of the Holocaust, understood as universalism, which does not in any way contradict the uniqueness of the Holocaust (as did the USSR), was developed in a 1979 report [*Report to the President. President's Commision on the Holocaust,* September 1979]. Imperialism, which until the Second World War was identified only with the benefits of civilization, started to be viewed through the metaphor of the Holocaust. After the war, imperialism began to be seen in terms of the subjugation of non-Western nations, and anti-imperialist movements came to the fore, mainly in the U.S., Great Britain and France. Due to the narrative of the Holocaust in Western civilization, a socio-political inversion took place that freed non-Western nations (primarily from the eastern and south-eastern regions of the world) from imperialist Western domination. In this way, the post-war global landscape changed radically, establishing new sovereignty and laying the foundations for economic globalization.

However, Elie Wiesel, as chairman of all American bodies involved in the construction of the museum, saw the Holocaust as an "ontological evil" [Alexander 2016; Alexander 2002]. If his interpretation of the Holocaust had been expressed in a museum, such a perception of evil would have made it impossible to understand the Holocaust, and therefore would be of no political utility. Thus, Wiesel's view was in contradiction to the vision of the museum proposed by the Council. Eventually Wiesel had to resign as chairman of the council responsible for the construction of the facility [USHMC & USHMM Leadership2003]. The Council delegated the presidency of the future museum plans to Michel Berenbaum. Thanks to his plans, the museum is a place dominated by chronology and a pedagogical dimension, which is not only to commemorate the

Holocaust, but also help to understand it – by empathizing with the role of a victim. In educating about the Holocaust, the museum emphasizes the value of human rights that the Jews were deprived of by Nazis, and the role of observers [*Remarks by Dr. Michael Berenbaum The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Presentation to a Joint Meeting of the Museum Development Committee and the Content Committee January 20, 1988, The National Gallery; Exhibition Story Outline Presented to the Content Committee The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum May 11, 1988*]. All that for the purpose of strengthening civic attitudes. The Holocaust metaphor proposed by American society since the 1970s has traveled across all Western bloc countries.

Fight over the Holocaust memory – Western Europe versus the Soviet Union

Western Europe struggled with the Second World War for a long time because its favorable opinion about itself was shattered [Cywiński 2014]. The slow inclusion of the Holocaust in European remembrance showed the way towards Europe's responsibility for decisions how to conduct not only the politics of memory, but also national and international politics. Europe owes that to the United States and to the universalization of the Holocaust problem. In the first few years after the war, almost every Allied country wanted to express its suffering, commemorating the heroism in the fight against the occupant and publicizing its participation in the liberation [Wolff-Powęska 2005] But it was in Western countries behind the Iron Curtain that, over time, it became possible to fit the Holocaust into national history, which was initiated by the United States and Israel since the 1950s. It happened at a time when the USSR was trying to internationalize the history of Auschwitz through the museum. It was doomed to failure because the universalization of the Holocaust in the West concerned the uniqueness of Jewish martyrdom and civil rights, while in the countries of the Eastern bloc – communist universalist ideology was supposed to reduce the emphasis on the Jewish dimension of the events [Alexander 2002].

Knowledge about Auschwitz began to take on an international dimension thanks to former prisoners, within the framework of the International Auschwitz Committee (IOC). In 1985, the exhibition "Auschwitz – a crime against humanity" opened in the very United Nations building [Cebulski 2016: 131]. Thanks to the IOC, today Birkenau is not a reserve without worthy materialization of memory. However, those events took place under the auspices of the then Ministry of Culture [Huener 2003: 160]. The authorities saw that they could no longer remain silent on Birkenau. The issue of commemorating Birkenau, in the form of a competition for a monument on the site, announced by the IOC in 1957, was communicated globally. Famous names in the jury of the competition helped the cause: Giuseppe Perguini (Italy), J.B. Bakema (Netherlands) or Henry Moore (Great Britain). They were leading artists and architects. The entries came from all over Europe and even from around the world – from 658 artists [Young 1993: 32–141]. The finalists' works resulted in a metaphorical architectural composition referring to what Birkenau was. When work on it was completed, the Soviet domination of "camp discoveries" suppressed the story of the Holocaust with

the inscription [Alexander 2002: 64]: *Place of martyrdom and death of 4 million victims murdered by Nazi genocides 1940–45* [Kucia 2005: 30].

Including Auschwitz in the memory of the European community was not possible until after the collapse of the USSR. However, the decline of Soviet politics entailed first confrontations between what Poles in the USSR had been taught and the memory of nations on the other side of the curtain. As an expression of a symbolic demonstration of strength, Oswiecim Catholic faithful's, led by their priest, in 1988, placed a cross, called "papal cross," near Auschwitz, which cross was part of the altar during John Paul II's visit to Birkenau. This exacerbated the conflict with the Jewish community, which saw the cross as a step towards the appropriation of Auschwitz. Kazimierz Świtoń protested in defense of the cross, encouraging people to plant more crosses. It was only in free Poland that the conflict was legally resolved with the entry of the Act of May 7, 1999 on the protection of the sites of the former Nazi death camps [*Ustawa* z dnia 7 maja 1999 r. *o ochronie terenów byłych hitlerowskich obozów zagłady* (Dz.U. 1999 nr 41 poz. 412)]. From the legal point of view, it is very important to use the terms "temporary civil structures" and "construction devices" – the crosses placed there met the definitions and thus were allowed to be removed.

Political transformation in Poland and the beginning of the end of the state's monopoly on the perception of history

The fall of the mainstay of Marxist totalitarianism, i.e. the USSR, changed the fate of Poland and all nations that had been under Soviet rule. It allowed for a return to the democratic Europe, eliminating such a tragic division into the enslaved East and the free European West [Krzemiński 2010: 9–10]. The transition of Poland to a democratic society required many changes in the context of the politics of memory, changes in the field of ensuring political rights, which not only concern electoral rights, but also the rights to freedom of speech and opinion. This meant an end to the state's monopoly on history, to censorship over history, and an end of official history.

After the collapse of the USSR, the meaning of Auschwitz began to change. It does not mean that the exhibitions have changed significantly in terms of exhibits. The exhibitions were redefined based on historical findings. The history of the Holocaust has been recovered by providing actual numbers of victims killed in Auschwitz-Birkenau, and by indication of their ethnic identity. With a substantive description of Birkenau having been produced, the history of the entire KL Auschwitz was recovered. From 1990 to 1994, the issue of inscriptions at the foot of the monument still divided the scholarly community. The blank plates that could be seen at the time were evidence of an ongoing redefinition. Nowadays, each of them has an inscription in 23 languages: *the place where the Nazis murdered about one and a half million men, women and children, mainly Jews from various European countries.*[1] The exhibition development at Birkenau took even longer. In 1994, according to the center's internal memorandums: *the factual description of the Birkenau in the form of plaques and the translations into Hebrew and*

[1] Based on the author's visit to Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum.

English were still not ready [Archiwum Państwowego Muzeum Auschwitz-Birkenau 1994]. Nevertheless, Jewish symbolism has grown stronger in the Auschwitz Memorial Museum since 1989 [Kucia 2005: 312]. The systemic change was thus related to the new politics of memory in the context of the Holocaust adopted by the new political elites. Polish academic circles and politicians in the democratic Poland were in favor of including the Holocaust in the history and historical consciousness of Poles [Cebulski 2016: 169–174]. It was manifested not only in the redefinition of Auschwitz or other memory sites related to the annihilation of Jews, but also in making the history of Holocaust a compulsory subject of education since the end of the 1990s of the 20th century [Trojański 2008: 9]. The first courses for teachers and methodologists on the history and culture of Jews were organized only by the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw. The Auschwitz center helped a great deal thanks to pioneering studies in this field in Poland – Totalitarianism – Nazism – Holocaust (1998), carried out in cooperation with the Pedagogical Academy in Krakow. Today, such education is provided by hundreds of private and public entities [Lusek 2021].

A shared vision of the future in Europe thanks to Auschwitz

Contemporary Polish politicians are in favor of shaping the politics of memory in Poland in the context of the Holocaust, following the example of the policies of Western European countries. They see in the Polish raison d'état pursuing a policy of memory in the context of the Holocaust, emphasizing the need to build a European community based on a shared vision of the past, which was tragic for each nation that makes up this community [Smolar 2006: 7–12]. An expression of this is the signing by Poland on January 27, 2000 of the so-called Stockholm Declaration, obliging the country to provide Holocaust education [Szuchta, Trojański 2012: 5–6]. Magdalena Nowicka-Franczak points out that along with the political transformation in Poland, new threads related to the putting straight of the history of the Holocaust were included in the collective memory [Nowicka-Franczak 2017: 20]. In the sovereign Poland, debates became possible about Poles being the perpetrators of collective suffering during World War II, including debate about Jedwabne, triggered by the book by Jan Tomasz Gross entitled *Neighbors*. Eventually, the figure of a witness of the Holocaust, who was deemed passive and powerless in the face of the Holocaust, was also reevaluated. In 2001, the President of Poland, Aleksander Kwasniewski, apologized to the Jewish people for the Jedwabne murder. However, the far-right circles, even in the face of the IPN's research, denied the murder of Jews by Poles. Dariusz Gawin in his book *Memory and Responsibility* [Gawin 2005] even blamed historical revisionism in the context of the Holocaust for changes in the humanities and politics [Gawin 2005]. In his opinion, it attacks the legitimate forms of collective memory that are important for the duration of any political order. However, even in spite of disputes, the politics of Holocaust remembrance is based on facts, not censorship. The statute granted by the Minister of Culture and National Heritage specifies in detail the scope of activities of the Auschwitz-Birkenau Museum, which includes the commemoration and documentation of the extermination and martyrdom of the victims of the German Nazi concentration and death camp Auschwitz-Birkenau,

referred to as "KL Auschwitz." Poland's contemporary politics of memory is also based on cultural dialogue, which is reflected in the creation of the International Center for Education about Auschwitz and the Holocaust (ICEAH), which, pursuant to the government's decision, is designed not only to educate teachers and leaders of extracurricular education in the field of the Holocaust, but also to educate on the fate of all Auschwitz prisoners. At the same time, it is intended to initiate cultural exchange and dialogue within the cultures of commemorating Nazi crimes, which was marginalized in Poland for a long time [*Oświęcimski Strategiczny Program Rządowy, Etap II 2002–2006*]. Many ICEAH projects aim to familiarize Polish teachers with the way of education in museum memorials outside Poland. An example of such a project is a project prepared together with Yad Vashem. As part of it, there is an exchange between Polish and Israeli educators. Thanks to the project, participants from both Israel and Poland are more aware of the role and importance of memory for Jews and Poles. It shows that the politics of memory in the context of the Holocaust in the democratic Poland is truly democratic. The existence of different cultures of remembrance of Auschwitz does not hamper promoting education about the multi-faceted history of Auschwitz. To this end, the ICEAH invites educators from many countries. One of the most important ICEAH projects as part of educating foreign educators is the Summer Academy at the Auschwitz Memorial Museum. It is aimed at English and German-speaking participants from different parts of Europe and the world. Participants of Summer Schools organized at the Memorial Site take part in field activities and educational activities prepared at the ICEAH (e.g. about the tragic fate of Jews, Poles, Roma, Soviet prisoners of war and the fate of all other groups of victims detained and murdered in Auschwitz).[2]

USA – from grassroots education about the Holocaust to education on a national and global scale

There is no governmental department of culture in the U.S. to promote American culture, but there is a strong civil society – which itself is concerned with establishing an agenda of topics that it should address at the national level – as was the case with the Holocaust. While there is a department of education in the U.S., education policies are determined by individual states of the U.S. Although the first lessons in American schools about the Holocaust were taught as early as the 1970s, it was only after the establishment of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington that relevant knowledge was spread in the U.S. This involved not only curricula of Holocaust developed by the Museum (which is the only organization authorized to develop national curricula), but also extensive educational programs for teachers from all over the U.S. as well as for students, scientists and numerous groups from around the world. Currently, an interesting program of the museum is available within the framework of the William Levine Family National Institute for Holocaust Education – History *Unfolded*. It is a crowdsourcing project involving the public – especially students – to search for

[2] Based on an interview with the Director of the International Center for Education about Auschwitz and the Holocaust, Andrzej Kacorzyk, 03.2022.

articles in local American newspapers from 1933–1945 to reveal and evaluate what ordinary people knew (or should have known) about the events of the Holocaust. The project complements the exhibition and initiative of Americans and the Holocaust, which was opened on the 25th anniversary of the museum's opening, i.e. in 2018 [*American and the Holocaust. Artifacts from the Museum's Collection*, 2020]. Americans are still holding themselves accountable that they could have done more in the context of the Holocaust. This exhibition shows the faults of the U.S. in the face of the Holocaust such as ignoring the role of Karski, who provided news to the U.S. authorities about the ongoing Holocaust or refusing to accept Jewish refugees, including the ones from the famous Ship Saint Luis. America is not afraid to tackle difficult topics at the national level. However, it is only an apparently negative image of the U.S.[3] Thanks to the subject captured in such a way, the U.S. are becoming an example for the world of how to deal with difficult cases in the nation's history.

Conclusions

Both Auschwitz and the American Holocaust Museum are historical museums with an educational function. Thanks to them individuals learn what it means to belong to a group and nation. In the case of Poland people also understand what it means to be part of Western civilization, which gave birth to Plato, Aristotle or even St. Thomas Aquinas. Thanks to the centers that take up the subject of human freedom in the U.S., the Boston Tea Party will always convey a message that there was a real cause to fight for. Both institutions are imbued with authority and widely regarded as trustworthy sources of information. All that is because they are based on scholarly history. In the case of Auschwitz, such a change could only take place in a free Poland, thus the Autumn of Nations in 1989 changed both the social memory and the history of KL Auschwitz educated in Poland. Thanks to the inclusion of the Holocaust in the framework of education in Poland, the history was recovered and the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum was made more credible. It does not prevent Poles from perceiving Auschwitz as a symbol of their suffering, but at the same time they are historically aware of what Auschwitz was and what its historical core is. The exhibition at the Washington Museum is an example of the American way of telling a story about the Holocaust, in which the history of Jews in the times of the Third Reich is an example of what regimes are capable of. The museum is not an authentic memory site like Auschwitz, but the story told there guarantees its authenticity – which is shown from the perspective of victims, witnesses and survivors – these are indeed narratives of memory, but all this is enriched with the history of the Holocaust itself, understood as a scholarly history emerging from authentic exhibits and items.

What Poles, and above all Polish politicians, can learn from the example of the museum in Washington is, first of all – the functioning of civil society, thanks to which topics for politics can go bottom-up. This is not the only lesson that Poles can learn. Americans are not afraid of difficult topics. In Poland, it still seems that we have learned the lesson

[3] Based on the author's visit to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

of addressing difficult topics, as evidenced by Gross's book, and yet, as it turns out, a lot remains to be learned in this subject. In 2011, studies were carried out on adolescents aged 15–19. Their results show that 41% of them have not heard of the crime. This is the result of not using the information in the public space after the heated debate that was expected to change it. As a result, the information shifted to the periphery of memory and was not activated in the test situation [Szuchta 2012: 29]. This event has not been included in the school framework, and teachers do not take up the topic, so the memory of Jedwabne may become blurred as new generations of youth enter adulthood.

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Polish politics in Holocaust education as exemplified by Auschwitz based on changes of 1989. How did it look like in the U.S., a global promoter of teaching the Holocaust lesson?

Abstract

The aim of the article is to discuss the framework for the transformation of Polish politics in the context of education about the Holocaust in Poland, as exemplified by Auschwitz in the aspect of the so-called historic breakthrough, which was the lifting of the Iron Curtain. The politics is analyzed through categories relating to social memory, its relationship with history, memory sites, and their application in politics in two political systems: totalitarianism in the form of socialism, and democracy. The article shows Poland's politics of memory in the context of this issue as, firstly, tantamount to the politics of memory of the Eastern Bloc under the leadership of the USSR and the breakthrough that occurred after the victory of the Western Bloc under the leadership of the United States, which changed Polish politics. The U.S. also attaches great importance to education about the Holocaust, as evidenced by the location of one of the largest and most well-known Holocaust Memorial Museum, on a par with the Auschwitz Memorial Museum and Yad Vashem. The article also outlines the American politics of memory in the context

of the Holocaust to attempt an answer the question whether Poland can learn a lesson from the politics. The work is based on the author's visit to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum funded with a grant from the Faculty of International and Political Studies of the Jagiellonian University for research activities and on the data provided by Jeffrey Carter, Management Officer & Institutional Archivist.

Key words: memory, history, politics, education, Holocaust, Poland, the U.S.