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Overcoming Silence. Examples of good practice related to education about the Holocaust in Europe.

### Abstract

The history of WWII and the Holocaust gives many examples of moral dilemmas, hostile attitudes and violence, norms and values that challenged the basic conditions of human existence and the development of civilisation. Nonetheless, vernacular memory does not represent many historical facts and in many European countries disparities grow between family and public memory. The central theme of this text is that there is a growing gap between historiography and education related to the Holocaust predominantly in Central Eastern Europe. The most recent historiographical research in Poland and elsewhere tackles the issue of individual collaboration. The topic of collaboration, challenging collective national identities, is not present in the majority of new textbooks. In those textbooks, written for example in Poland following the 2008 educational reforms, the real context of rescuing Jews in a climate of fear of one's own neighbours is omitted. A general lack of bad memories should be challenged. The lack of sustained institutional effort to incorporate shameful facts concerning the murder of Jewish co-citizens into curricula and textbooks distorts national identities. Part of the text describes good practice in Sweden at the political, research and educational level and part will deal with feedback from experienced Polish teachers who implement meaningful educational programmes dealing with the Holocaust.

### Key words

Holocaust, memory of the Holocaust, education about the Holocaust

*I have lived in Lublin for many years, and nobody made me aware about its history. I have heard about Majdanek...but I couldn't imagine that so many people (Jews) lived here."*

## Introduction

The Holocaust<sup>i</sup> was the unprecedented mass murder of Jews that took place in the heart of Europe and Western civilization and which erased vibrant communities and their culture. The mass killing, in profound contradiction to the values of the Enlightenment, was predominantly, but not exclusively, industrial. More than one million victims died or were killed in the fields of Europe and almost half of all the victims died from hunger or diseases or were murdered in ghettos. Two-third of the Jews considered by Nazi Germans and their collaborators as racially inferior subhumans were killed. In addition 200 000 disabled people were also victims of mass killings and almost 3 million Soviet prisoners of war and about 2 million ethnic Poles were victims of Nazi Germany. While national communities remembered their own victims, the Jewish communities and their culture were erased from collective memories and identities for almost a half of century in Poland and elsewhere. In Western states remembrance of the Holocaust started in the 1960s and 1970s. In several Central Eastern states it is still silenced even now.

Each society has a duty to pass on recognized and legitimate cultural achievements to following generations (Ricoeur, 2006, 82). It is equally valid that a society passes on both its and its ancestors cultural failures to following generations. The history of WWII and the Holocaust gives many examples of moral dilemmas, hostile attitudes and violence, norms and values that challenged the basic conditions of human existence and the development of civilisation. Nonetheless, vernacular memory does not represent many historical facts and in many European countries disparities grow between family and public memory. For Theodor Adorno, as he outlined in his essay *Erziehung nach Auschwitz* (1970), the main goal of education was to not allow Auschwitz (a trauma for philosophy itself) to be repeated (see: Kranz, 1998, 140). In his essay he also argued for more self-awareness and more self-criticism in relation to collective identities.<sup>ii</sup> Analysis of the processes related to the development of memory of the Holocaust and education about the Holocaust in Central Eastern Europe indicates that Adorno's arguments remained wishful thinking since so many societies prefer to stick to default memory.

The central theme of this text is that there is a growing gap between historiography and education related to the Holocaust in Central Eastern Europe (all of Europe lacks empirical studies on this subject). Part of the text describes good practice in Sweden at the political, research and educational level and part will deal with feedback from experienced Polish teachers who implement meaningful educational programmes dealing with the Holocaust. This feedback is based on the outcomes of focus group interviews (FGI) and individual interviews. Attention is drawn to the case study of the Grodzka Gate-Theater NN as an outstanding example of good practice methods for overcoming the silence related to the Holocaust in Poland.

### Emerging problems with the dark past

The new book *Bringing the Dark Past to Light. The Reception of the Holocaust in Postcommunist Europe*, edited and with an introduction by John-Paul Himka and Joanna Beata Michlic (2013), analyses the processes involved in new developments related to the memory of the Holocaust, “the European paradigm of *lieu de mémoire* and the universal icon of evil” (IX) in post-communist countries. The editors and authors reveal the dynamics of the process underlying various approaches to this (competitions in suffering) and the implications for education (the human rights framework). In Poland, however, education about the Holocaust is seldom embedded in the framework of human rights. A picture of the division into Western Europe and post-communist Europe is already set out in the book’s preface. In the latter, according to the editors, the memories of Stalin’s crimes, “the memory of the Gulag” and the identity of victimhood are obstacles “to coming to terms with a dark wartime past” (X). In Poland the sense of victimhood in reference to the memory of the Holocaust relates predominantly to the memory of the brutal occupation by the Nazi Germans and not to Soviet crimes, unlike, for instance, the Baltic States where victimising narratives of “double genocide” prevail.

Occupied Poland was the site of the murder of almost 5 million Jews, including 3 million Polish Jews and is still often imagined by Jews as a graveyard. The Polish landscape is marked by the existence of the remains of concentration camps and six death camps built in occupied Poland by the Nazi Germans: Kulmhof in Chełm on Ner, Bełżec, Sobibór, Treblinka, Auschwitz-Birkenau and Majdanek.<sup>iii</sup> After the war Polish soil was literally marked ground, for example in Chełm

where the surface was covered by small, sharp ground fragments of human bones (Shalcross, 2010, 172). This is a painful landscape or “memoriescape” (Appadurai, after: Schwab, 2010, 30), a heritage of the Holocaust, challenging for material preservation and the moral obligation to witness the mass atrocities committed primarily against Jews but also including other groups of victims.

The German and Soviet invasion in 1939 produced a dual occupation which became the dominating influence on the collective identity and memory of Poles. Until the fall of communism in 1989 family memories and public memory were in conflict. In public commemoration Poland was liberated by the victorious Soviet Union and remembrance of the Home Army (AK), the biggest anti-Nazi resistance movement in occupied Europe, was forbidden. AK members were tortured and murdered in prisons, and the Warsaw Uprising was non-existent in official memory. After 1989 the two narratives merged, the “white stains” were filled up but the grand narrative of WWII is still full of discrepancies of a different kind and Poland remains torn between Jedwabne, symbolising collaboration with the Germans, and Katyń (more than 20 000 victims), a symbol of the mass murder of the Polish elites by the Soviets. From September 1939 onwards, after the partition of Poland between the Third Reich and the Soviet Union, the Jedwabne area was occupied by the Soviets for a period of 20 months. Massacres took place at Jedwabne and other locations in the region, which had been subject to the strong influence of Stronnictwo Narodowe and their policy of excluding Jews from public life from the beginning of the XX century onwards. Similar murders took place in other nearby towns and villages in the Łomża and Białystok regions (a province called Podlasie) in north-eastern Poland in June and July 1941.

The attribution of victimhood remains intact, despite a very big debate on the involvement of ethnic Poles in killing Jews in Central Eastern Europe. Gabriele Schwab, herself “belonging to a nation of perpetrators” (99) asks a very crucial question: “(...) why human beings become vulnerable to committing violence against other people if they themselves are victims of systemic violence” (99). This question is very relevant to European states, and in particular the Baltic States and the Hungarian, Polish and Ukrainian context of the Holocaust. Attachment and attribution of victimhood create forged collective memories and identities.

In my view there is a significant problem in the growing discrepancy between new studies and education. The most recent historiographical research in Poland and elsewhere tackles the issue of individual collaboration. The topic of collaboration, challenging collective national identities, is not present in the majority of new textbooks. In those textbooks, written for example in Poland following the 2008 educational reforms, Jedwabne is described in one chapter in only one textbook and mentioned in only a few lines in a few other textbooks. The real context of rescuing Jews in a climate of fear of one's own neighbours is omitted.

These conflicts should be discussed as a reflection of educational gaps in the Polish and other educational systems. A general lack of bad memories should be also challenged. The lack of sustained institutional effort to incorporate shameful facts concerning the murder of Jewish co-citizens into curricula and textbooks distorts national identities. Comparison with other similar studies in Europe and beyond will allow one to reveal affinities and divergences in patterns of behaviour in various states in relation to their historical past, social identity and collective memory. There is a need to evaluate the attempt to bring back the memory of Jewish neighbours in some of the states of Central Eastern Europe, a process in which there is an ongoing effort to renovate monuments, restore destroyed cemeteries and rebuild synagogues. The number and scope of such initiatives indicates that civic institutions and individuals are intensifying their efforts to teach their fellow citizens about the Holocaust however their impact should be assessed in detail because too often it is motivated exclusively by the individual concerns of teachers or representatives of local non-governmental organizations.

The silence of a nation of persecutors had characteristic features described by Gabrielle Schwab (2010): “The infamous German silence about the Holocaust was never successful... as the silencing of violence never is. The Holocaust was “everywhere and nowhere” (100). Children felt and incorporated their parent’s unspoken experience. The second generation knew about “secrets and horrors” (100). A pertinent question for Poland would be whether the Holocaust was also “everywhere and nowhere” since the land was so marked by the genocide of Jews occurring on this very land: in towns and villages, the back gardens of Polish households, forests and death camps. When Claude Lanzmann (2011) was working on his film “Shoah” he knocked on the door of Henryk Gawkowski in Małkinia at 1.30 in the night and the driver of locomotives pulling

trains with Jews from Europe to Treblinka was happy that, after 35 years or so, he was able to tell what he had experienced because no one had asked him about it before.

Antony Polonsky (2009) brings well documented data on the murder of Jews carried out by Lithuanians in Lithuania, Ukrainians in Western Ukraine and Romanians in Romania. Those historical facts are still denied or downplayed in the countries listed above. In Lithuania and other Baltic countries there is a deeply rooted belief in a “double genocide” as victims of two totalitarian Nazi and Soviet systems. The pattern of divergent trajectories is not only typical of Poland. In Lithuania, for example, “Lithuanians and Jews do not listen to each other when lamenting their own tragedies” (Veisaite, 2000, 208). This pattern is present not only in Lithuania, but in all the Baltic states.

Romania<sup>iv</sup> was a state allied to the Nazis which was responsible for the murder of more than 400,000 Jews during WWII on the territories of present-day Ukraine and Moldova. Attitudes toward the Holocaust are slowly changing in Romania and there is an effort to accept responsibility and commemorate the victims. The Elie Wiesel<sup>v</sup> Commission of inquiry attributed this to the process of integrating the Holocaust into the history of Romania. In Moldova, as Diana Dumitru noticed (2008, 301): “Reviving Jewish community life seems easier than working through the past and remembrance”.

### What can we do? Examples from Europe

As the report of the OSCE/ODIHR rightly stated “The image of the Holocaust in World War II aiming today’s youth is based on a variety of sometimes conflicting images” (*Education on the Holocaust....2006*, 150). Those images are created or affected by the politics of national memory, debates or discussions in the media, commemorative ceremonies and rituals in the public arena, documentary and fiction films, school lessons and still present, but slowly less determining, knowledge from family memories. Sometimes the internalization of family memories and a desire to maintain a positive image of one’s family may contradict official knowledge, as in case of widespread compliance with National Socialist crimes in Germany (see: Harald Welzer, Sabine Moller, Karoline Tschuggnall, Opa wa kein Nazi. Nationalsozialismus

und Holocaust im Familiengedächtnis, Frankfurt am Main, 2002. Quoted in: Education on the Holocaust....2006, 150). According to Harald Welzer persecutors constructed a worldview where there was no place for guilt feelings.

Sweden, undoubtedly one of the leading states in the world in terms of Holocaust awareness, initiated a national campaign in 1998 under the leadership of Prime Minister Göran Persson which was aimed at increasing knowledge about the Holocaust among young people. This crucial initiative was followed in 2000 by the Stockholm International Forum on Holocaust Education, Remembrance and Research attended by a significant number of high level representatives from 50 countries. Sweden, along with the UK, promotes a nationwide programme of research in the field of education about the Holocaust, surveying students' and teachers' attitudes. This is an example of an outstanding contribution in the area of studying Holocaust consciousness. The establishment in 2003 of the Living History Forum (LHF), a governmental body within the Ministry of Culture, in order to implement commitments articulated in the Stockholm Declaration is another example of exceptional responsibility. The LHF serves as a major resource for school teachers and students. One recent development is the introduction in 2011 of teaching about the Holocaust and other genocides at the compulsory secondary school level and at upper-secondary level.

It is worth underlining this effort as the myth of neutrality dominated in Sweden for decades after WWII in a similar manner to other countries, and complicity in the Holocaust was for a long time a taboo topic. This myth was challenged in the nineties by an American historian Steven Koblik ("The stones cry out. Sweden's response to the persecution of the Jews 1933–1945", 1987), Paul A. Levine ("From Indifference to Activism. Swedish Diplomacy and the Holocaust 1938–1944", 1996), Sverker Oredsson ("Lund University during the Second World War", 1996), journalists Maria-Pia Boëthius, Bosse Schön, Maciej Zaremba and others.

In 2000 the Swedish Research Council undertook a government assignment to develop a special research programme with regard to "Sweden's Relations with Nazism, Nazi Germany and the Holocaust". The program resulted in numerous studies conducted by scholars of several universities, based on various disciplines and theoretical perspectives, research on empirical data

designed to clarify various issues, i.e. the establishment of Nazi groups in Sweden or the relations of the Swedish Scientific Community with Nazism and Fascism or the study of Eugenics (“Racial Hygiene”) in 1930-1950.

Sweden is one of the few countries where a governmental agency, the Living History Forum (LHF), conducts nationwide surveys. Several studies were generated by the assumption that knowledge of the Holocaust may affect attitudes toward diversity and raise awareness of contemporary genocides. The study “Antisemitiska Attityder och Föreställningar i Sverige” (2006) was funded and commissioned by the Living History Forum and the Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention. The LHF also commissioned a survey of 10 000 teachers (5081 respondents). The teachers surveyed believed that education about the Holocaust is very important since it is more open to the examination of moral issues than other subjects.

Knowledge and memory of the Holocaust was surveyed in seven countries (Austria, France, Germany, Poland, Sweden, the United Kingdom and the United States) in research commissioned by the AJC study “Thinking about the Holocaust 60 Years Later. A Multinational Public-Opinion Survey, March - April 2005”. This revealed that knowledge about the Holocaust was greatest in Sweden. The AJC study of the adult population in 2005 revealed that the highest rate of correct answers with regard to the number of murdered Jews was in Sweden (55%). The studies prove the genuine and remarkable effort of Sweden in the area of the Holocaust knowledge and awareness.

Empirical study in Poland.<sup>vi</sup> Focus group interview (FGI)<sup>vii</sup> with expert teachers

The paucity of research in the area of education about the Holocaust generated the study discussed here. The FGI in the study of the Center for Holocaust Studies of the Jagiellonian University were used to explore an area of the study on antisemitism, attitudes of youth toward the Holocaust and the determinants of successful educational programmes, all related to the history and culture of Polish Jews and the Holocaust. The purpose of the FGI was not to provide representative results, but to give an impression of the perceptions of our survey results and opinions on key factors related to the education of the expert teachers questioned.

The study consisted of a FGI with a group of teachers from high schools and middle schools (*gimnazjums*), selected with the aim of exchanging views based on their experience in the specific field of extra-curricular education. The criterion for the selection of expert teachers was their interest in teaching about the history and culture of Jews and the Holocaust and their involvement in site visits in which they took youth to memorial sites or museums related to the Holocaust. The research was based on an interview protocol. The discussion lasted 120 minutes.

The interview touched upon the subject of evaluating programmes designed to build up students' sensitivity to national and ethnic minority issues and tolerance, while mainly focusing on a discussion about programmes which combat antisemitism, increase knowledge about Jewish culture and commemorate the Holocaust. The teachers were asked to point out the determinants, elements and conditions which influence extra-curricular programmes for teaching tolerance and increasing the sensitivity of students in the area of national and ethnic minorities.

The study revealed that teachers rarely take the opportunity to create their own programmes and therefore do not gain new and valuable experience in this area. Most of the projects implemented in Poland are amateur projects which are mainly the result of a need „coming from the heart” of the teacher and therefore created from the perspective of personal needs and passion. These projects are not usually preceded by a diagnosis of the situation in the community which should be the initial step before the preparation and implementation of a programme. *These programmes do not have the objective of improving the situation because it is not known what this situation is, and therefore it is not known what should be emphasised and which areas require action – explained one teacher.*

Sometimes teachers don't create separate programmes for building tolerance and sensitising pupils to minority issues. This content is introduced into the subject programmes for various subjects on the curriculum. Teachers emphasised that it is very important to assess the needs beforehand and to determine whether the programme is needed at all and if the problem which the programme is intended to counter actually exists in the given group. *Some programmes are inadequate. For instance in Warsaw some programmes are carried out in schools in which the*

*problem does not exist at all, for instance where there is no antisemitism or xenophobia (for instance in the best Warsaw high schools). Programmes which aim to change negative attitudes towards Jews and other minorities should be adjusted to the situation and implemented in communities where there is such a need (in specific towns, in specific schools).*

Formulating a clear objective for the programme was the key factor. Teachers stated that it was important to embed the programme in the local community, to set it in the local reality of the town, the area, the school and the family (local context can both help and damage the programme): *These are children from a specific background and this should not be overlooked. Take the recent idea to send help to the children in Warka. That is a misunderstanding, sending someone from the outside. The same mistake was made in Jedwabne. Very often these programs aren't adjusted to the situation. I have a very critical opinion of the activity of all those NGOs in this field.* It was stated that teachers often don't take into consideration that the programme might end in failure: *You should convince yourself in the first place and not count on a spectacular success.* All educational activities must be precisely planned, scheduled and carried out with consistency, underlined the expert teachers. Otherwise success is unlikely, and what is more, the programme can even have negative effects.

The need to find an appropriate institution with which one can cooperate in carrying out the programme was highlighted. It was emphasised that teachers cannot carry out the activities themselves (teachers are not ‘experts on everything’ and should not take on this role). It was mentioned that while museums and other institutions have set prices for such services, attempts should be made to convince institutions to support such valuable initiatives free of charge. Support can also take the form of offering the use of facilities, giving tours for free or organizing a seminar. During the FGI it was emphasised that *teachers cannot be responsible for everything. The problem is that various programmes/workshops are offered at a price and the money isn't always there. The most important thing is that young people don't pay for anything themselves. When they have to pay there is a feeling that not only do they force this on me but I have to pay for it as well so financial support from various institutions/ organisations is essential. For us, in Oświęcim, this wasn't a problem at all – I was even a bit surprised. Look for allies in the neighbourhood (for instance concentration camp survivors).*

The teachers were asked why the realisation of some of the extra-curricular programmes ends in failure and why few teachers decide to create an original educational programme. Apart from the aforementioned elements which, when absent, hinder the chances of success, the respondents emphasised unrealistic expectations of the teacher and an unrealistic formulation of the objectives of the programme. Another variable was a lack of evaluation of the degree to which the objectives are being met, not drawing conclusions from previous programmes.

Teachers, it was inferred, do not examine the degree to which their objectives are being met as the project unfolds. Therefore they cannot determine which of the goals they have set have been reached and which have not. As a result it becomes impossible to compare various versions of a programme in terms of their effectiveness. A specific style or atmosphere generated by the values promoted in the school, the values represented by the teachers and examples of attitudes they give can have both a positive and a negative impact on a programme. Sometimes the teacher may be unaware of this “hidden school agenda”.

Questions asked by pupils such as “why did we learn about this?” or an indifferent attitude are a signal to the teacher that the programme has not met its objectives. A positive signal is an initiative from the students, who, for example, declare a will to participate in future projects. It was also emphasized that the evaluation of a project’s success is done over time. The respondents concluded that those projects that are successful are the ones which “activate the pupil, propelling him or her into undertaking various activities”. *Classes in the Majdanek Museum, working with various documents provide a great method for “activating” pupils. The students pay for the class with their physical activity for the museum. This is a very good idea.* A positive effect is an appearance of a feeling of togetherness and bonding among the participants in the programme.

The respondents were asked to reflect on the cooperation with NGOs in carrying out extra-curricular programmes. The conversation included several critical comments pointing to the shortcomings of such cooperation: lack of preparation regarding the subject and teaching methods, undermining teacher authority, eliminating the teacher from the learning process, a

short-sighted perspective on the part of non-governmental organizations – concentrating on the quick implementation of a grant project. *Very often organizations act on the basis of single ‘actions’ – they get a grant and in a short time perspective (two, three months) they have to do something with it. And they don’t care what happens with a given project later.*

Some positive opinions were also formulated regarding the teachers' own cooperation with NGOs. As an example, there was cooperation with the “Grodzka Gate – Theater NN” Centre. The Grodzka Gate – NN Theatre Centre, founded in 1990, is a local government cultural institute in Lublin, a city located on the trade route between Vilnius and Cracow and inhabited by 40 000 Jews before WWII. The activity of the Centre is anchored in the theatre which dominated its programme in the 1990–1995 period. This institution has been deeply involved in the process of commemorating past Jewish presence in Lublin (e.g. in 1994 a seminar was organized on the “Jews of Lublin” followed by a publication). Its rationale is to bring this past presence back to the collective memory of Poles (this institution has been collecting photos, testimonies and interviews with inhabitants of prewar Lublin since 1997). The “House” project brings memory back through archival research and the collection of all possible documents (plans, lists of inhabitants) related to one particular house (existing or non-existing).

The initials NN – Nomen Nescio (name unknown) is symbolically aimed at turning attention away from the artists themselves and directing it towards the creative process of art performances and working for the preservation of the cultural heritage of the city and for education. In 1992 the Centre moved back to the fourteenth-century Grodzka Gate, at that time in a heavily damaged state, which up until 1939 was also called the Jewish Gate and which since the XVI century has separated the lower Jewish City and the Upper Christian City. The Center reconstructed its headquarters, and adjoining townhouses, reinvigorating this part of Lublin's old and dilapidated city centre. The programme activities directly refer to the notion of memory and are particularly associated with restoring the memory of Jewish life in Lublin. In its programmes the Center invoke the symbolic and historical meaning of its location, the Grodzka Gate and of the city of Lublin, a meeting place of cultures, traditions and religions.

In Białystok the „Jewish Heritage Trail” programme and in Łódź the painting of shop signboards of old Jewish shops by children were listed as examples of action carried out in urban areas. It

was emphasized that the support of NGOs is vital when carrying out large projects, if only for financial reasons. At the same time it was noted that the involvement of NGOs is not needed when carrying out smaller, in-school projects. Teachers see themselves in the role of the person responsible for passing on knowledge about Jewish heritage and the Holocaust to the next generation: “*We knew that the history of the Jews from Sobków had never been written down by anybody although Jews had been living here for many years. Therefore we thought that discovering this would be an interesting experience for our students.*”

Experts identified key elements attributed to the success of educational programmes aimed at combatting antisemitism. A realistic assessment of the possibilities and the limits of educational intervention is crucial, introducing context related concepts and information about motives and manifestations of anti-Semitic attitudes as well as the early development of civic education allowing students to analyse global developments and their relation to students’ daily experience (*Education on the Holocaust....2006, 171, 187*).

Education about the Holocaust cannot be treated as a remote subject, in isolation from, for example, the antisemitism that is on the rise today around the world. Teachers must be equipped with manuals, lesson plans and training. Textbooks, manuals and teacher’s kits are being published in Poland,<sup>viii</sup> but usually they are given to teachers attending in-service training. They should be introduced even earlier, during the college-level studies of future teachers of history and literature. Support given to teachers by the school system (for example, more flexibility in scheduling, so that teachers can fill in for their colleagues who need to attend workshops or take study trips) is equally important. A less obvious point is that teachers also need to be trusted: if they have the desire to teach about Jewish history and culture in Poland, if they want to participate in workshops on Holocaust education, it is because they truly feel responsible for future generations.

Education about the Holocaust in Poland varies between two approaches: one perceives the Holocaust as a metaphor for all genocides, and the other sees it as local, regional history, as a genocide that happened right here, before our parents’ and grandparents’ eyes. Like most teaching in Poland, teaching about the Holocaust is not usually aimed at the natural curiosity, creativity and interests of the child, and does not encourage active participation or original

thought. The “Grodzka Gate – Theater NN” Centre’s letter-writing project for schoolchildren is one example of good practice. Learning history in an authentic way is more powerful than reading about events in a textbook. The role of the teacher in a visitor-oriented approach to education at memorial sites is radically different from the traditional classroom role. Instead of teaching ex-cathedra, the teacher is involved in the educational process as a consultant or a moderator. Teaching in the traditional, conventional format about the genocide, i.e. transmitting knowledge, is very limited and does not present the subject in all its depth. Today the Holocaust in Poland is taught by many means outside the classroom, and developed and implemented by NGOs and even non-formal groups. There are hundreds of such projects all over Poland.<sup>ix</sup>

Memorial sites transmit the traumatic legacy of the Holocaust. They have a unique potential to confront us with the darkest past of European history and with the uniqueness of the Holocaust. Wresting the past from fictions and legends, as Miłosz called upon us to do, is the mandate of all memorial sites, and it is a special task for places that hold the memories of distinct ethnic and religious “communities of memory.” Their mandate should not be obscured by conflicts of memories. On the contrary, they should respect the value of all these memories, should correct their distortions, and should integrate them among different communities and within the individual, to make a better civil society and better citizens.

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<sup>i</sup> The term denotes the direct genocide of Jews in the years 1941-1945 or in some definitions includes the years of isolation, discrimination and persecution between 1933 and 1945. The Yiddish term *khurban* means destruction. See: Marcuse, 2006, 488.

<sup>ii</sup> Theodor Adorno wrote: "The critique of culture is confronted with the last stage in the dialectic of culture and barbarism: to write a poem after Auschwitz is barbaric, and that corrodes also the knowledge which expresses why it has become impossible to write poetry today." Original quote in "Prisms", 1955, MIT Press (reprinted London, 1967).

<sup>iii</sup> Auschwitz and Majdanek were concentration and death camps at the same time. While, for example, the French camps were operated by French collaborators, the camps built in Polish territory annexed into the Reich and ruled by Germans, the “General Government”, were operated by Germans. Thus, the strong reactions of the government of contemporary Poland and the Polish public against the cliché “Polish camps” expressed in the media and in President Obama’s speech in 2012. John Connelly (2012) in the November 14 issue of “The Nation” eloquently explained the sensitivity of Poles regarding the cliché.

<sup>iv</sup> In the pogrom in Iasi (in 1941) 15,000 Jews were killed by squads of Romanian soldiers and policemen. In the Odessa Massacre, also in 1941, over 19,000 Ukrainian Jews was murdered. In June 2011 the Iasi pogrom was commemorated with the attendance of representatives of the

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government and church.

<sup>v</sup> Elie Wiesel, survivor of Auschwitz and Buchenwald, author of 50 books, laureate of 131 doctorates *honoris causa* and the Nobel Prize in 1986.

<sup>vi</sup> Parts of the paper were based on the research project: Jolanta Ambrosewicz-Jacobs, "Attitudes towards Jews and the Holocaust among Polish Youth" which was conducted in 2008-2011 at the Centre for Holocaust Studies, Jagiellonian University, Kraków, supported by grants from the International Task Force for Holocaust Education Research and Remembrance (currently the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance), La Fondation pour la Mémoire de la Shoah and the Jagiellonian University in Kraków.

<sup>vii</sup> A qualitative study conducted by means of an FGI was carried out on April 17<sup>th</sup> in Krakow in a professional studio located on Rakowicka St. 17, apartment 8 by the CEM Market and Public Opinion Research Institute for the Center for Holocaust Studies of the Jagiellonian University. The FGI planning included defining the problem and research questions, defining the target group of teachers selected for their expertise in the field, choosing the moderator and developing the script that guides the moderator in interviewing the group. I would like to thank many persons for their involvement and cooperation in the study. In particular I would like to thank Szymon Beźnic for conducting interviews and writing reports and Elisabeth Büttner and Agnieszka Zajączkowska for their work on individual interviews and for their contribution to parts included in this text.

<sup>viii</sup> See as an example: *Auschwitz. Pamięć dla przyszłości. Teki edukacyjne IPN* (Warsaw 2003).

<sup>ix</sup> Guidelines for in-class and out-of-class follow-up learning have been tested in practice. These activities include co-operative learning, independent student research in a library or archives, thematic seminars and workshops, project work using museum collections, school exhibitions with photographs or art, theatre presentations, oral history projects, articles, poems, and film scenarios. Students may participate in restoration and maintenance work at memorial sites.

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