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A moral lesson from two different memorials

Moralna lekcja z dwóch odmiennych miejsc pamięci

Abstract. The aim of the article is to present Polish and American policies of remembrance in the context of Nazi crimes, including the Holocaust, which is the biggest of them. It is in these countries that the two largest museums in the world, next to the Israeli Yad Vashem, were formed as a result of the policies of remembrance: The Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum and The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. The history of their formation is as varied as the objects being different. However, The Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum known as *Auschwitz*, and The US Holocaust Memorial Museum as historical museums have an educational function, and individuals learn from them what it means to belong to a group, nation, and civilization. This holds many lessons that can be regarded as moral ones.

Keywords: The Memorial and Museum Auschwitz Birkenau (MMAB), The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM), moral lesson, human rights, Holocaust

Streszczenie. Celem artykułu jest charakterystyka polskiej i amerykańskiej polityki pamięci w kontekście zbrodni nazistów, w tym największej z nich Holokaustu. To w tych krajach w wyniku polityk pamięci uformowane zostały dwa największe na świecie, obok izraelskiego Yad Vashem, ośrodki muzealne upamiętniające ofiary nazistów: Państwowe Muzeum Auschwitz-Birkenau i Narodowe Muzeum Holokaustu w Waszyngtonie. Historia ich powstawania jest różnorodna, tak jak różne są to obiekty. Zarówno jednak ośrodek Auschwitz, jak i amerykańskie Muzeum Holokaustu są muzeami historycznymi i pełnią funkcję edukacyjną, ucząc o przynależności do grupy i narodu, danej cywilizacji. Zawierają one w sobie wiele lekcji, które uznać można za lekcje moralne.

Słowa kluczowe: Państwowe Muzeum Auschwitz-Birkenau, Narodowe Muzeum Holokaustu w Waszyngtonie, moralna lekcja, prawa człowieka, Holocaust

Introduction

The Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum, known as *Auschwitz*, and The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum presents shameful human inheritance as a lesson reminding people of the role of universal human rights derived from critical reflection on morals. The evaluation of human action requires the establishment of specific moral norms. Proponents of natural law refer to a universal approach to ethics. The universal approach is known in science, for example, in linguistics. The NSM (natural semantic metalanguage approach) is based on evidence that there is a small core of basic, universal meanings, known as semantic primes, which can be expressed by words or other linguistic expressions in all languages. What is more, Anna Wierzbicka has researched many languages and found the basic concepts of 65 words.¹ The support of moral law is also based on the assumption of universality – a common and unchanging moral code which is natural law (Latin: *ius naturale*). Depending on worldview concepts, nature is understood as ‘the will of God’ or as a command of reason or an innate sense of justice (psychological picture). Anchoring in nature as a permanent and universal reality is the basis for recognizing natural law as common to all cultures, uniting all people, and constituting common rules of conduct.² Clive Staples Lewis, distinguished many of these universal rules of moralities, such as the law of universal benevolence, meaning kindness in a vast sense, expressed in not harming others, being helpful, and being honest towards others.³ Traces of its existence can be found in ancient China (“Do not do to others what you do not want to be done to you”, Confucius, Confucian dialogues⁴) and in ancient Rome (“People are also created for people so that they can help one another”, Cicero,

¹ A. Wierzbicka, *Semantics: Primes and Universals*, New York 1996, pp. 36–53.

² J. Zabielski, *Prawo naturalne jako hermeneutyczna podstawa etyki uniwersalnej*, “Rocznik Teologii Katolickiej” no. XIV/1, 2015, p. 91.

³ C. Lewis, *Koniec człowieczeństwa*, translated by M. Sobolewska, Kraków 2013, pp. 58, 99-103.

⁴ Confucius, *Dialogi konfucjańskie*, translated by K. Czyżewska-Madajewicz, M. J. Künstler, Z. Tłumski, Wrocław 1976, pp. 37, 117, 121.

On Duties⁵) and in the Bible, i.e., in the Old Hebrew text, where they are mentioned in the Pentateuch, i.e., the first five books of the Bible. The impossibility of asserting moral laws distinguishes a natural law from a positive, human-made law (Latin: *ius positum*), which is based on the very nature of the world's reality.⁶

Social life began to be organized through positive law from the first civilizations (*The Code of Hammurabi*). The sovereign did it, so Plato was looking for an ideal sovereign who could reach these unchanging truths in the course of his study. According to Plato, this knowledge came from the fact that the soul, before it entered the body, lived in the world of divine patterns and knew this world.⁷ Aristotle, called a realist by his contemporaries, was looking for a golden mean, something intermediate between oligarchy and democracy, which would ensure man the realization of his natural rights, which he deduces from reason, and which leads man to what is good for him.⁸ However, in Antiquity, Socrates departs from positive law following critical reflection on morals. In the Middle Ages, the conflict between supporters of natural law (*ius naturale*) and positive law (*ius positum*) flared up. In Thomistic terms, the existence of natural law presupposed divine existence. Therefore, when Thomas Aquinas proclaimed that there must be a catalogue of natural laws over positive law in order for positive law to be just, Marsilius of Padua strongly opposed it.⁹ Over time, positive law began to take natural law into account more often. In the Enlightenment, the idea of a fair distribution of powers rooted in natural law found expression in positive law (*ius positum*) – in participation in power and representation. In France, the idea of *universal rights* that are inherent to all people (*ius naturale*) laid the foundations for a revolution and freed the individual from the bonds of servitude. In the United States,

⁵ *Cyceron, O powinnościach*, translated by W. Kornatowski, *Pisma filozoficzne*, vol. 2, Warszawa 1960, p. 231.

⁶ J. Zabielski, *Prawo naturalne jako hermeneutyczna podstawa...*, op. cit., pp. 91–92.

⁷ Platon, *Fedon*, translated by W. Witwicki, Kęty 1999.

⁸ K. Chojnicka, H. Olszewski, *Historia doktryn politycznych i prawnych. Podręcznik akademicki*, Poznań 2004, pp. 25–27.

⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 63.

natural law (*ius naturale*) provided the rationale for independence. The American Declaration of Independence states that “all Men are created equal, that their Creator endows them with certain unalienable Rights, and that among these are Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness”.¹⁰

Presently, there is no democracy without many ideas being rooted in natural law (*ius naturale*), especially human rights. Democracy is based on the right to vote, to be elected, the freedom of association, the freedom of expression, and the freedom of religion. On the other hand, it is Athenian democracy that condemned Socrates, because democracy is only the rule of the majority and not the rule of morality. That is why Leszek Kołakowski, the famous Polish philosopher, said that “natural law should sit like a relentless demon on the backs of all lawmakers in the world”.¹¹ On the other hand, when analyzing human history, it is easy to deny the universality of natural laws and join relativists. Slavery was considered a natural law and the war was praised and regarded as valuable. Perhaps, then, the postmodernists are right to proclaim, after the precursor who reevaluated all values – Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche, that all these are certain conventions adopted in a particular epoch.¹² Even if the relativists are right, human rights and freedom have these days become values in force in most political systems around the world. However, it was the Nuremberg Laws in opposition to natural law and their subsequent consequences that helped the world to realize the importance of the universal rules of moralities, which is natural law and the need to limit power. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights is an expression of this.¹³

¹⁰ *The Declaration of Independence, July 4, 1776*, <https://uscode.house.gov/download/annualhistoricalarchives/pdf/OrganicLaws2006/decind.pdf> (access 20.05.2022), p. XLV.

¹¹ L. Kołakowski, *O prawie naturalnym*, “Ius et Lex”, no. 1, 2002, p. 154.

¹² D. Robinson, *Nietzsche and Postmodernism*, New York 1999, pp. 34–46.

¹³ *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, United Nation, <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights> (access 20.06.2022).

What does the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum educate?

There are three monuments related to the country's memory policy in the US, those being in Washington D.C., namely the Washington Monument, the Lincoln Memorial and the so-called living memorial on Holocaust. Washington's living Holocaust memorial is dissimilar to 19th-century memorials, which were meant to be ceremonial and instill a unified sense of great history, which guaranteed to avoid complex or controversial topics. In the US, a problematic topic has strengthened the sense of nationality thanks to the US Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM). The monument to the victims of the Holocaust in the heart of the capital of the country of economic power was an example of a change in the policy of remembrance on a global scale, and from that moment on, not only the winners and heroes but also the victims come to the fore.¹⁴ However, it would not be possible without democratic rights i.e., free media, free associations, non-governmental organizations, which were the first to give voice to ordinary people and national minorities, who began to demand that their history be remembered in public discourse. However, their stories were many times fragmentary and often stood in opposition to that of a scholar history. Thus, there was an interest in memory in cultural terms, which was associated with the introduction to science and academic discourse of the term culture of memory, which separated the memory of various communities from the history of a scientist, allowing these memories to coexist in the public domain.¹⁵

The Holocaust memorial in Washington D.C. grew up in tandem with the mechanisms of justice i.e., tribunals, repatriation, expressing regret and remorse, and a promise for a better future. It was also convinced that the monument itself could not fully reflect the past and be a signpost for the future, hence the idea for a museum-memorial

¹⁴ A. Sodaro, *Exhibiting Atrocity: Memorial Museums and the Politics of Past Violence*, New Brunswick, New Jersey 2018, p. 17.

¹⁵ M. Kubiszyn, *Niepamięć - Postpamięć - Współpamięć*. Lublin 2019, pp. 54, 61-63.

site, i.e., a living monument appeared.¹⁶ That was the meaning of the Report to President Jimmy Carter by the Commission appointed by him to propose the best way of commemorating the Holocaust in the US so that it could be a lesson for Americans. Next, The United States Holocaust Memorial Council, established by Congress to build the memorial on the Holocaust in Washington D.C. has been committed to creating a facility that “integrates the crucial roles of remembrance, teaching and documenting both history and human response” – as written by Anna Cohn and David Altshuler, in the report discussing the work on the vision of the museum.¹⁷ Thus, the construction of a great center for Holocaust education on the scale of the entirety of America, and the world was planned (USA is an economic power that is able to spread the products of American culture around the world). Today, the educational center located in Bowie, Maryland, is visited by crowds of students and researchers from all over the world, as well as scholarship holders of the unit within the museum specializing in education about the Holocaust, that being the Jack, Joseph, and Morton Mandel Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies.¹⁸

As Jeffrey C. Alexander writes, the message of the drama about the Holocaust from the first three decades of the second half of the 20th century in the USA, presented a modernized, more reflective version of the Greek tragedy. The significance of this narrative was confined to the statement that evil is in all of us and in every society. It conveyed the message that if we have the capacity to be both the victims and the perpetrators, then there is no legitimacy to distance ourselves from the suffering of the victims or the responsibility of the

¹⁶ *Report to the President. President's Commission on the Holocaust*, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Institutional Archives, no. 2001.165, 1979, p. 9.

¹⁷ *To Bear Witness, to Remember, and to Learn, A Confidential Report on Museum Planning prepared for the United States Holocaust Memorial Council February 28, 1984*, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Institutional Archives, no. 1997.014, 1984, p. 2.

¹⁸ Based on the author's visit to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM), Washington, D.C., and its Archives in Bowie, Maryland.

perpetrators.¹⁹ With time, thanks to American intellectuals of Jewish origin, the data on time, place and torturers were removed from the Holocaust and the Holocaust began to be identified with the „banality of evil“. The trauma narrative of the drama about the Holocaust in the USA changed the social status of Jews, one of the most dominated social groups, once and for all. The Holocaust Museum in Washington, D.C., however, has the strength of combining what is seen with other crimes in the world in terms of preventing wrongs, although in fact, there is not much space here devoted to crimes other than the Holocaust. It is due to the Holocaust becoming a universal metaphor for violating human rights while emphasizing the uniqueness of this event. The ability to write, cast, and produce a drama about the Holocaust has extended to more nations and more marginalized and oppressed groups, even contemporary enemies like the Palestinians for the Jewish-Israeli. The Holocaust has become a metaphor used by contemporary non-Jewish victims. In the United States, and then on a global scale, significant social changes took place, which developed in the context of the narrative about the Holocaust created in the USA. The following nationalities were awarded the role of victims: Africans, Algerians, Vietnamese, Indians, and Chinese.²⁰ The metaphor of the Holocaust gave potent weapons, among others, to the African American Civil Rights Movement. African Americans, playing the role of Jewish victims, struck strong chords of sympathy and identification among white Christian Americans.²¹

The narrative of the Holocaust that took place in the United States caused a socio-historical transformation that has continued since the second half of the 20th century. Through the metaphor of the Holocaust, one began to look at imperialism, which until the Second World War was identified only with the benefits of civilization. After the war, imperialism began to be seen as the enslavement of non-Western nations, and anti-imperialist movements came to the fore,

¹⁹ J.C. Alexander, *On the Social Construction of Moral Universals, The 'Holocaust' from War Crime to Trauma Drama*, "European Journal of Social Theory", vol. 5(1), 2002, p. 32.

²⁰ Ibidem, pp. 39-40.

²¹ Ibidem, p. 46.

mainly in the USA, but also in Great Britain and France. A socio-political inversion took place that freed non-Western nations (primarily from the eastern and south-eastern regions of the world) from Western imperialist domination due to the narrative of the Holocaust in Western civilization. In this way, the post-war global landscape changed radically, establishing new sovereignty and laying the foundations for economic globalization.²²

The question raised by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum is contained in the question of why the Holocaust happened and why no one stopped Hitler; therefore, it concerns the settlement of the Holocaust and shows attitudes worth imitating in the face of the genocide. As we learn from the museum's narrative, one of the Righteous was Swedish diplomat Raul Wallenberg. He used the position to save Jews, as Sweden was a neutral country. However, most of the defenders of the Jews were ordinary citizens.²³ During the opening ceremony of this emblematic center, Elie Wiesel, a leading figure who played a role in the US Holocaust memorial, asked why there was no public outcry in the face of the Holocaust. He left this question unanswered because, as he claimed, there was no answer to it. Although Wiesel chaired the bodies responsible for the museum's construction, the museum's meaning is quite different.²⁴ Wiesel was opposed to his assuming the chairmanship of the President Commission on the Holocaust because he believed that the Holocaust could not be understood and therefore the Holocaust could not be portrayed. After meeting with US President Jimmy Carter himself, he accepted the nomination, and 34 members of the commission working under his auspices decided that the Holocaust could be presented from an audiovisual and analytical perspective. Thus, the aim of the future museum was not to be from then to describe and classify specific units but to theorize and explain. It does not mean that the museum does not have a collection of objects because thousands of

²² J.C. Alexander, *Culture trauma, morality and solidarity: The social construction of 'Holocaust' and other mass murders*, "Thesis Eleven", vol. 132(1), 2016, p. 9.

²³ E.H. Ayer, *The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. America keeps the memory alive*, New York 1994, p. 11.

²⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 13.

items related to the Holocaust have been collected as a result of years of Council members' traveling around Europe, managing undeveloped artifacts and loaning them from institutions. Even in the face of the decision regarding the future museum, Wiesel, as chairman of the Holocaust Memorial Council, continued to promote his vision of the museum dedicated to the purpose of collecting 'memories and tears',²⁵ thus he opposed the theory on the Holocaust. If his vision had won, the visitor would not have understood the reasons leading to the Holocaust. Ultimately, Berenbaum's vision won: "Several principles guide our work. We believe that the story can be told and that the story must remain central. Artifacts, architecture and design are subservient to the tale that is to be told. They are the midwife to the story".²⁶

A trauma-drama museum about the mass murder of Jews

There were many deliberations and political struggles for the discourse on the Holocaust. The choice of Wiesel as chairman of the President's Commission on the Holocaust (established in 1978) by the American authorities was related to the shape of this policy in the USA. From the time of Wiesel's appearance in the American media and public discourse (since the 1950s), Wiesel showed the Holocaust as a Jewish experience, including it in his books (e.g., *Night*). Before the Report of the President's Commission on the Holocaust on how to commemorate the Holocaust in the United States reached the hands of the President of the United States, the issue of commemorating Holocaust victims was the reason for numerous speeches, this time by circles representing

²⁵ *Remarks of Elie Wiesel, Chairman, the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Council at the museum transfer ceremony, U.S. Capitol, April 13, 1983, based on the data provided by Jeffrey Carter, Management Officer & Institutional Archivist of the USHMM, May 1998-April 2022, p. 1.*

²⁶ *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, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Institutional Archives, no. 1997.016.1, 1988, p. 1.*

the interests of the nationalities whose population died in the camps, including the Poles.²⁷ Wiesel strongly opted for the uniqueness of the Holocaust. He claimed that only the entire nation of Jews was condemned to death.²⁸ On the other hand, the monument to the Jews in the capital of the USA seemed to be unrelated to American history.²⁹ It was difficult to transfer what happened in Europe to American soil as it was not related to the American experience. "We must translate the European experience into an American idiom. We must transmit a sense of horror"³⁰ – stated Berenbaum (It was this vision that Wiesel resisted, and so he resigned).

Part of what sets the US Holocaust Memorial Museum apart from other history museums, is that it provides a new kind of interactive engagement with the past that forms a whole new category of a museum i.e., empirical.³¹ Empirical museums focus more on science and creating the visitor experience rather than on a museum's traditional functions which are collecting and exhibiting.³² Instead of discussing the past, the museum subjects its visitors to it. Thus, they can support the victims. An empirical museum driven by a narrative or concept (e.g. in the case of the Holocaust museum in Washington D.C., this narrative is the history of the Holocaust and the concept is about human rights) uses multimedia and interactive exhibitions to enter the visitor into the story it is talking about, making them play an active role and associate with the characters in history.³³ It seems to me that the story in the sense of the narrative in the Washington

²⁷ E. Linenthal, *Preserving memory. The Struggle to Create America's Holocaust Museum*, New York 2001, p. 39.

²⁸ *Presentation of the Report of the President's commission on the Holocaust to The President of the United States by Elie Wiesel, Chairman*, The Rose Garden, The White House, Washington. D.C. September 27, 1979, based on the data provided by Jeffrey Carter, Management Officer & Institutional Archivist of the USHMM, May 1998-April 2022, p. 2.

²⁹ *Report to the President...*, op. cit., pp. 5–6.

³⁰ *Remarks by Dr. Michael Berenbaum. The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum...*, op.cit., p. 1.

³¹ A. Sodaro, *Exhibiting Atrocity...*, op. cit. pp. 23–24.

³² *Ibidem*, p. 24.

³³ *Ibidem*.

Holocaust Museum says more than the objects exhibited by the museum.³⁴

First of all, the visitor gets into the iron elevator like from another era, the elevator is dark and gives one the chills. Then, visitors are taken to the top floor by the elevator. Here, they learn about the accounts of the American soldiers who liberated the camps. The narrative then deals with how the Holocaust happened i.e., the history of the Third Reich in which Jews were described as unwanted citizens,³⁵ e.g., in the form of slogans such as “Jews are not welcome in this city” (“Juden sind in dieser Stadt nicht willkommen”). Ultimately Hitler deprived them of their citizenship under the Nuremberg Laws of the Third Reich which took place in 1935. The Jews were tracked down.³⁶ The museum contains a collection of tools that were used by Nazi pseudo doctors to judge who was a Jew. The persecution of Jews on the eve of the war ended in the *Kristallnacht*, which manifested in the burning of synagogues, Jewish shops and houses. *Kristallnacht* laid the foundations for the mass murder of this nationality. After all rights and freedoms were taken away from the Jews, the only thing that remained was what could be done with them, and the sentence to kill this nation was passed in 1942 in Wannsee, Germany. After such an introduction to the Holocaust, visitors go down to the lower floor, where there is an exhibition leading through the world of the Holocaust i.e., isolation of Jews in ghettos, living conditions, deportation to extermination camps, depriving them of their property before gassing and disposing of the corpses. It is not only an exhibition as it was mentioned, but a spectacle of suffering in which the visitor takes an active part. It was achieved thanks to the artifacts which the visitor has to come into contact with. This is accompanied by a sound coming from the loudspeakers which is harsh Nazi speech about the rat of the Jews. All these elements make the visitor assume the

³⁴ Based on author’s visit to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

³⁵ Based on author’s visit to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

³⁶ E.H. Ayer, *The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum...*, op. cit., pp. 21–23.

role of a victim, forcing the visitor to counteract the criminal acts of the modern world. The last floor is a testimony of survivors.³⁷

The US Holocaust Memorial Museum is not an authentic memory place, nor is it the only museum-memorial built from scratch. Similar museums are to be found in Germany or Israel with Yad Vashem being an example of such. They even have common elements for commemoration e.g. walls with names with all these forms and practices traversing the world and political boundaries, as an example of commemoration.³⁸ In this way, these museums try to create a prosthetic memory for the visitor i.e., a personal, deeply felt memory of an event from the past that he or she had not lived through. They are a product of technology and the media age in which we live. Many of them go beyond the exhibitions of their education, like the Washington Holocaust Museum, which educates teachers, supports research, works with government and civil society to educate about the past and prevent future violence. There is even a space for debate about the past and the future, and they propose an inclusive and democratic approach to the past. At the same time, they charge visitors not for the past, but for the future, becoming Arendt's promise that the past will not repeat itself, a promise that is a social contract that allows us to live together. Nations and countries which built such places from scratch show commitment to a different future.³⁹

Auschwitz – a lesson from two totalitarianisms

Auschwitz, like Majdanek and many such places in Poland, are not only places of remembrance and museum institutions presenting historical exhibitions. They are also the cemeteries of the ashes of prisoners devastated by slave labor, shot in mass executions for any resistance movement by people led by totalitarian ideology,

³⁷ Based on author's visit to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Washington D.C.

³⁸ A. Sodaro, *Exhibiting Atrocity...*, op. cit., p. 24.

³⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 27.

the pronunciation which found expression in concentration camps, because totalitarianism is a modern form of slavery, i.e., ruling over an individual.⁴⁰ Totalitarianism is illustrated by Polish priest and philosopher Józef Tischner's words as being "outside the structure of power, I am nobody".⁴¹ Totalitarian rule followed the recognition of despotic power as a political pathology.⁴² But places such as Auschwitz are primarily extermination camps for Jews. One of the SS doctors, Johnatan Kremer, who personally participated in the selection, wrote the following in his diary: "at 3 am I was with special actions for the first time. Compared to it, Dante's hell seems almost like a comedy. They call it the Auschwitz extermination camp for a reason".⁴³

From 1 May 1945, by the decision of the Prime Minister, those parts of the former camp in Auschwitz associated with the destruction of millions of people, came under the management of the Ministry of Culture and Art, which organized permanent protection there and the nucleus of the museum.⁴⁴ Two years later, the law commemorating the martyrdom of the Polish nation and other nations in Oświęcim entered into force. It was supposed to take place in the form of a state museum.⁴⁵ The development of the exhibition concept was entrusted to a historical commission which consisted of former prisoners of

⁴⁰ K. Kuźmicz, *Jednostka a totalitaryzm. Czy filozofowie przyczynili się do narodzin systemów totalitarnych?*, [in:] I. S. Grat (ed.), *Człowiek przeciwko człowiekowi. Filozofia, polityka i prawo a systemy totalitarne*, Białystok 2008, p. 48.

⁴¹ A. Siwek, *Zrozumieć totalitaryzm*, "Pamięć i Sprawiedliwość", no. 12/1 (21), 2013, p. 13.

⁴² L. Dubel, *Koncepcja totalitaryzmu w ujęciu Aleksandra Hertza*, "Studia Iuridica Lublinensia", vol. 25, no. 3, 2016, p. 237.

⁴³ K. Smoleń, *Notatki do konferencji prasowej. Oświęcim – zarys historyczny*, Zespół Referatów, tom 5, Archiwum Państwowego Muzeum Auschwitz, 1960, p. 3.

⁴⁴ *Apel do byłych więźniów politycznych w spr. Muzeum w Oświęcimiu*, Okólnik nr 5/47, Zespół Materiałów, tom 56, Archiwum Państwowego Muzeum Auschwitz-Birkenau, 1947, p. 16.

⁴⁵ 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).

KL Auschwitz I, i.e., the former concentration camp (home camp),⁴⁶ so it lacked the participation of Jewish survivors, whose memory was related to the camp in Birkenau – KL Auschwitz II (in Birkenau). The significance of the center must therefore have been related to Polish martyrdom, although at the same time they wanted to have an international audience:

“The museum should be international and show the destruction of all the nations that Germany occupied.

The entire museum is divided into 3 parts:

- 1) General part – showing the fate of the prisoner, regardless of nationality or race
- 2) Part of the museum of individual countries in which the countries of Europe will depict the defeat of their nation
- 3) The part that depicts the image of the destruction of Polish prisoners in the camp”.⁴⁷

This concept was related to the Polish collective memory of Auschwitz. Exhibitions according to this concept were organized in the main camp. As a result, the Birkenau camp was in ruins, or, as it is defined – a reserve. There was silence over Birkenau, hence the history of the Holocaust did not appear in public discourse until the end of 1989. As a state museum the center depended on the financial resources of the organizer, i.e., the state and its jurisdiction i.e., legislation and statutes regarding the scope of the center’s operation. It was emphasized that the museum must be a document, however “the Germans stole almost all the materials that could express this great crime”.⁴⁸ The remainder “was in possession of the USSR and not made

⁴⁶ *Protokół z posiedzenia Komisji Historycznej, odbytego w dniu 7 grudnia 1948 roku o godz 18-tej w lokalu przy ul. Grockiej 52 pokój 63, Zespół Materiałów, tom 56, Archiwum Państwowego Muzeum Auschwitz-Birkenau, 1948, p. 66.; Skład Komisji: Sehn Jan – przewodniczący, Hein Wincenty, Hołuj Tadeusz, Kłodziński Stanisław, Myszkowski Tadeusz, Piwarski Kazimierz, Smoleń Kazimierz, Wąsowicz Tadeusz, Woycicki Alfred.*

⁴⁷ *Projekt ramowy Muzeum w Oświęcimiu dr Heina, 1946–1947, Zespół Materiałów, tom 56, Archiwum Państwowego Muzeum Auschwitz-Birkenau, 1946–1947, p. 8.*

⁴⁸ *Apel do byłych więźniów politycznych..., op. cit., p. 16.*

available”,⁴⁹ as written by the second-in-line director of the museum ten years after the center’s opening in the face of the so-called thaw in politics of the USSR, which is essential for understanding why Jewish history was absent in the discourse. The designers of the museum did not know whether the extermination at Auschwitz concerned only Jews as a result of the aforementioned censorship: “When I imagine the structure of the extermination of millions, I have to explain to visitors what was the cause within an entrance hall. A plan to destroy Jews, maybe not Jews”⁵⁰ – said the first director of the center.

The Auschwitz Museum from the last century is an example of how the totalitarian regimes of the 20th century began to use places of remembrance and the past in a violent way,⁵¹ say researchers of the topic (e.g., Johnatan Huener, Marek Kucia, Jacek Lachendro, Peter Novick, Amy Sodaro, Piotr Trojański). The term culture of memory is of key importance for the understanding of such a thesis by many researchers. As far as the memory of Auschwitz is concerned, it is related to the memory of numerous communities of memory, i.e., the collective memory of numerous groups, as well as to the historical policy. The regime of the USSR meant that groups whose discourse stood in opposition to the interpretation of history by the authorities, were not allowed. It was the interpretation of rulers that became the obligatory historical discourse in public institutions such as schools, universities, and the media, all of which were nationalized under state jurisdiction.⁵² The USSR, which liberated the Auschwitz camp, took

⁴⁹ *Sprawozdanie z X-letniej działalności Muzeum w Oświęcimiu-Brzezince*, Sprawozdanie Kazimierza Smolenia, 10.10.1956, Zespół Referatów, tom 4, Archiwum Państwowego Muzeum Auschwitz-Birkenau, p. 3.

⁵⁰ *Protokół z posiedzenia Komisji Historycznej, odbytego w dniu 7 grudnia...*, op. cit., p. 73.

⁵¹ A. Sodaro, *Exhibiting Atrocity...*, op. cit., p. 21.

⁵² R. Szuchta, *Zagłada Żydów w edukacji szkolnej lat 1945–2000 na przykładzie analizy programów i podręczników szkolnych do nauczania historii*, [in:] P. Trojański (ed.), *Auschwitz i Holokaust. Dylematy i wyzwania polskiej edukacji*, Oświęcim 2008, pp. 109-128; W. Choriew, *Ingerencja ZSRR w życie kulturalne Polski (1944–1953)*, “Napis. Pismo poświęcone literaturze okolicznościowej i użytkowej”, no. 6, 2000, pp. 257–265.

control of the evidence of Nazi crimes.⁵³ Hence, the museum was to serve the new regime in showing the advantages of the communist system of the USSR over the countries of Western democracy, which also emerged victorious from the war, and which the USSR was in conflict with due to a different system and willingness to demonstrate the superiority of socialism over capitalism. The USSR portrayed the Western capitalists as heirs of fascist imperialism, among which the USSR regime included in particular America, West Germany and England.⁵⁴ The USSR appeared as a defender of Europe from the yoke of Western imperialism,⁵⁵ which had committed mass murder against the nations in question. The discourse about the mass extermination of Jews did not exist, as it was included in the term of the extermination of millions of citizens of different nations,⁵⁶ which was to fulfill the above-described objective of the USSR. For this reason, the Soviet control over the camps' discoveries made it impossible to tell the story of the Holocaust in Auschwitz, which was legalized under the law.⁵⁷ The emphasis was to be placed on the class struggle and the death of the communists, and Slavic.⁵⁸ Until the 1980s, the fate of Jews was no different from that of Poles, and even the fight in the Warsaw ghetto was presented as part of the struggle of the Polish nation against the occupier according to the authors of school textbooks in Poland.⁵⁹ In the People's Republic of Poland, the emergence of any discourse contradicting the authorities was associated with civil death, as exemplified by encyclopedists who began to provide the public

⁵³ *Sprawozdanie z X-letniej działalności Muzeum w Oświęcimiu-Brzezince...*, op. cit., p. 3.

⁵⁴ A. Wolff-Powęska, *Zwycięzcy i zwyciężeni. II wojna światowa w pamięci zbiorowej narodów*, "Przegląd Zachodni", no. 2, 2005, p. 7.

⁵⁵ *Ibidem*.

⁵⁶ J. Huener, *Auschwitz, Poland, and the politics of commemoration, 1945–1979*, Ohio 2003, p. 123; K. Smoleń, *Oświęcim 1940-45, Przewodnik po muzeum*, Oświęcim 1974, pp. 17–21.

⁵⁷ J. C. Alexander, *On the Social Construction of Moral Universals...*, op. cit., p. 64; 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).

⁵⁸ J. C. Alexander, *On the Social Construction of Moral Universals...*, op. cit., p. 64.

⁵⁹ R. Szuchta, *Zagłada Żydów w edukacji szkolnej lat 1945–2000...*, op. cit., p. 117.

discourse with information about the number of Jews as victims of this former Nazi camp.⁶⁰ Only the liquidation of the censorship of the Polish People's Republic created conditions for education about the extermination of Jews.⁶¹ There are many examples of falsifying the history of the Holocaust in the times of the Polish People's Republic. The Holocaust was even supposed to concern the 'clergy' and millions of people from the occupied countries,⁶² which was a lie. An even greater lie was the inscription at the Birkenau memorial, which also allegedly appropriated the history of the Holocaust and the history of Birkenau. It was not mentioned that Birkenau was its epicenter: "Place of martyrdom and death of 4 million victims murdered by Nazi genocides 1940-45."⁶³ Such an expression of Auschwitz was tried to be internationalized, which was impossible due to the continued interest in the Holocaust in the West, media reports in the USA, statements by Elie Wiesel in the pages of such media as *The New York Times*, which had been going on since the 1950s, and which apogee falls in the 1960s and 1970s.⁶⁴

It was not until the 1990s that Jewish symbols and universal symbols of peace and reconciliation as well as international symbols, finally appeared in Auschwitz. It was the result of systemic changes toward democracy. The center was to be financed by the Foundation for the Remembrance of the Victims of the Auschwitz-Birkenau Death Camp, established on 31 March 1990. The establishment of the International Council of the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum (ICA) also became a breakthrough. At its first meeting, on 25-26 June 1990, this council even demanded an amendment to the 1947 Act, aimed at clearly commemorating the martyrdom of Jews, Poles, Gypsies and other

⁶⁰ P. Trojański, *Wstęp, Wprowadzenie i Opracowanie*, [in:] P. Trojański (ed.), *Auschwitz w okowach polityki. Międzynarodowy Komitet Oświęcimski. Wybór Dokumentów*, Kraków, 2019, p. 41.

⁶¹ *Ibidem*, p. 121.

⁶² K. Smoleń, *Oświęcim 1940-45. Przewodnik po muzeum...*, op. cit., p. 21.

⁶³ M. Kucia, *Auschwitz jako fakt społeczny*, Kraków 2005, p. 30.

⁶⁴ T. D. Fallace, *The emergence of Holocaust Education in American Schools*, New York 2008, pp. 12-17, 26-28.

nations at Auschwitz-Birkenau.⁶⁵ Although the act was not changed, the concept of the exhibitions in Auschwitz was changed thanks to the Council, and the inscriptions that distorted the history were removed: “Works related to the renovation of Block 4 started in the 1990s. They involved installing and developing new photo charts and signatures”.⁶⁶ The changes were intended to show that the main victims of Auschwitz-Birkenau were Jews, that Auschwitz-Birkenau was the epicenter of the Holocaust, and that the Holocaust did not affect millions of citizens of different countries, but the Jews. From the 1990s, the activities of the Birkenau camp began to be compiled in terms of content, as a result of which the memory of Birkenau in Poland was regained: “In Birkenau, in 1995, the works on the clarification of the area were completed and as a result, an exhibition consisting of 68 boards was created”.⁶⁷

Auschwitz – Jewish, but also Polish, Catholic, and of many denominations and nations.

James Young describes Auschwitz as the arena of a Polish-Jewish dispute that began in the late 1980s with the controversy surrounding the Carmelite convent located within the concentration camp in Oświęcim.⁶⁸ Its apogee was a hunger strike by a group of people, headed by Kazimierz Świtoń, in defense of the papal cross and calls for new crosses to be put up in the Gravel Pit near the Museum. It was, however, a demonstration of strength, not peace. The issue of the Oświęcim crosses was not so much religious, but broadly political and was related to the misunderstanding of the uniqueness of the Holocaust as a result of the Iron Curtain and the narrative of the communist authorities. The dispute ended with a settlement at the end of the 1990s. Many factors influenced it. First of all, the renewal

⁶⁵ T. Cebulski, *Auschwitz po Auschwitz. Historia, Polityka i Pamięć wokół Państwowego Muzeum Auschwitz-Birkenau 1980-2010*, Kraków 2016, p. 169.

⁶⁶ *Sprawozdanie z działalności Muzeum za 1994, 1995*, Zespół Materiałów, tom 120c, Archiwum Państwowego Muzeum Auschwitz-Birkenau, 1994, p. 34.

⁶⁷ *Ibidem*, 1995, p. 22.

⁶⁸ J. E. Young, *The Texture of memory*, New Haven, London, 1993, pp. 144–154.

of relations with Israel, the progressive Jewish-Christian dialogue (e.g. the Polish Episcopal Committee for Contact with Judaism), the Act of 1999, which concerned the protection zones of memorial sites (thanks to it, hundreds of crosses were recognized as building structures that had to be removed from the area protecting a memorial site worthy of commemoration).⁶⁹ However, there would be no settlement if it were not for the democratization of Poland, where the state was responsible for history, and not for the politicization of history. This was the case with new disputes, which were being resolved with the help of deliberations and discussions by historians: an example was the use of the term 'Polish concentration camps' by the world press. In order to remove the defective codes of memory from the public domain, the Polish authorities applied to UNESCO in March 2006 to change the official name of the former campgrounds from *Auschwitz Concentration Camp* to *Memorial and Museum Auschwitz-Birkenau Former German Nazi Concentration and Extermination Camp*. Later, there was an appeal in the press by the historian Israel Gutman of Yad Vashem that the official name should be supplemented with the phrase that it was a place of mass murder of Jews. Gutman's proposal was criticized by Władysław Bartoszewski, the chairman of the ICA who made a statement from the position of a Polish historian, stating that Gutman's suggestion does not contain the complete historical truth, because adding such a comment would also have to include information about other victims, including Roma and Soviets and Polish Catholics.⁷⁰

At the end of the 20th century and in the 21st century Auschwitz speaks of its comprehensive history, which was tragic for all Auschwitz prisoners. Examples of this are provided in Block 10 or 11. The latter deals with the reconstruction of what it was – a place of mass executions in the courtyard of the block for the resistance movement. Block 10, which was the site of Clauberg's experiments, is also proof that the

⁶⁹ Ustawa z dnia 7 maja 1999 r. o ochronie terenów byłych hitlerowskich obozów zagłady (Dz. U. z 1999 r. Nr 41, poz. 412).

⁷⁰ D. Spritzer, *Auschwitz Might Get Name Change*, "JewishJournal", 27.04.2006, not numbered, <https://jewishjournal.com/news/worldwide/13028/> (access: 15.10.2022).

history of Auschwitz was tragic to many prisoners. The former director, Kazimierz Smoleń, describes, for example, the issues of experiments on prisoners: "However, Clauberg's activity did not only concern experiments but crimes against humanity – people suffered a physical and psychological mecca". He based his argument on legislation and available source documents.⁷¹

Nowadays, Auschwitz is a place that no longer serves official history but history, thus becoming an element of democracy. On the other hand, many such places are included in the sphere of social memory of many groups.⁷² Only a democratic state can ensure the dialogue of cultures of remembrance. The term co-memory is used in relation to the Holocaust. It is about a supra-ethnic community of memory. All of this takes place within the framework of culture of remembrance, which concerns all nonspecifically scientific forms of using history in the public sphere by various means and for different purposes.⁷³ An example of this is *The International March of the Living*, which began to be organized at the end of the existence of the USSR and concerned the education of the generation of Jews about the Holocaust. Young people from all over the world, including Poland, participate in these marches. In the Millennium Year, Israel's President Ezer Weizman and Polish President Aleksander Kwaśniewski marched side by side.⁷⁴

Although these days Auschwitz operates based on the law from the times of the Polish People's Republic, the purpose of the center is different. It is also based on the statute given by the authorities of democratic Poland i.e., the exhibition in authentic historical places is to convey knowledge about the camp's history (as a concentration camp

⁷¹ *Próba prawnej kwalifikacji działalności Clauberga*, Zespół Referatów, tom 4, Archiwum Państwowego Muzeum Auschwitz-Birkenau, 1956, p. 50.

⁷² A. Stępnik, *Czy muzea martyrologiczne są miejscami historii?*, [in:] T. Krantz (ed.), *Muzea w poobozowych miejscach pamięci. Tożsamość, znaczenie, funkcje*, Lublin 2017, pp. 107–109.

⁷³ M. Kubiszyn, *Niepamięć – Postpamięć – Współpamięć...*, op. cit., pp. 54, 62–63.

⁷⁴ *Sprawozdania z działalności Muzeum za lata 1999, 2000, 2001, 2003*, Zespół Materiałów, tom 120d, Archiwum Państwowego Muzeum Auschwitz-Birkenau, 2000, 34.

as well as a death camp) and create new opportunities for communing with the aura of the place, through conservation activities.⁷⁵ The exhibitions at the museum in Oświęcim are based on material remains, which are both historical sources (testimonies), and historical media (exhibits).⁷⁶ The museum communicates meanings of material remains by means of inscriptions next to buildings and exhibits. The exhibition blocks are a reconstruction of what they were (block 10 was the site of experiments on Carl Clauberg's prisoners, block 11 was a prison in a concentration camp, which was itself a prison). In block 20, the sick and prisoners unable to work were killed with an injection of phenol. The assembly square documents appeals during which those unable to work were sentenced to death. The remaining exhibitions concern what Auschwitz was i.e., a place of extermination of Jews (exhibitions in block 4 and 5) and the suffering of prisoners as a result of living conditions (exhibition in blocks 6 and 7). Exhibitions in blocks 6 and 7 indicate that the prisoners of Auschwitz I were also subject to the extermination process as a result of living conditions (short sleep on bunks for several people, insufficient caloric content of meals to perform many hours of physical work, which was related to the exploitation of the prisoner and the Nazi policy leading to the torment of prisoners, most of whom suffered from death in Auschwitz).⁷⁷ Birkenau (Auschwitz II) is marked with inscriptions and plaques describing what it was i.e. a place of mass executions of Jews, and later Roma. The other blocks in Auschwitz are transformed into exhibitions of countries whose Jewish citizens were deported to Auschwitz. In democratic Poland, the countries can base their narrative on the history of the Holocaust. In People's Republic of Poland, they were supposed to fit in the People's Republic of Poland authority's meaning

⁷⁵ Zarządzenie Ministra Kultury i Dziedzictwa Narodowego z dnia 19 lutego 2013 r. w sprawie nadania statutu Państwowemu Muzeum Auschwitz-Birkenau w Oświęcimiu (Dz. U. z 2013 r., poz. 8).

⁷⁶ T. Krantz, *Krajobrazy pamięci – podmioty kultury – obiekty turystyczne – przestrzenie edukacji. O współczesnych znaczeniach muzeów w poobozowych miejscach pamięci*, [in:] T. Krantz, *Muzea w poobozowych miejscach pamięci. Tożsamość, znaczenie, funkcje*, Lublin 2017, p. 32.

⁷⁷ J. Huener, *Auschwitz, Poland...*, op. cit., pp. 128–131.

of Auschwitz i.e., as the place of extermination of millions of citizens of different countries.⁷⁸

The multi-dimensional history of Auschwitz could come into existence thanks to many factors leading to the collapse of the USSR and its totalitarian rule, and the use of official history. Official history is nothing more than the memory of the victors, which uses the means provided by the authorities and appropriates the name of history. It is introduced into education. It sets the directions for research. The memory of the defeated remains to undermine official history, often through revisionist history. It is a dispute that may seem to be two stories, but in reality, it is two memories. Critical history is opposed to both the first and the second, contrasting a history that requires revision against the background of new data with histories – official and revisionist – identifying themselves with the positions taken at the starting point.⁷⁹ Despite this, even critical history is equated with a political option, namely a liberal system, because it can be cultivated without restrictions only in such a system. The other two, according to Krzysztof Pomian, are authoritarian.⁸⁰

In Auschwitz, the direction of research today is determined by the democratic system, but it seems that it is a museum directly from the last century, which means there is not much multimedia here; there are showcases, descriptions and inscriptions. Its director, Piotr Cywiński, opposes multimedia: “There should not be any room for interactivity, (...), state-of-art educational solutions which are so popular in other museums, also historical ones. Those would be lame, failed attempts at drowning out the natural tone of the place itself”.⁸¹ The permanent exhibitions are based on the object – its natural history is at the center. Meanwhile, in modern museums, the scientific role of an object has been relegated to an auxiliary function. The most important thing is theory and explanation. Opponents of the latter option argue that

⁷⁸ Data based on the author’s visit to the Memorial and Museum Auschwitz-Birkenau and Huener’s book: J. Huener, *Auschwitz, Poland...*, op. cit., pp. 128–131.

⁷⁹ K. Pomian, *Historia. Nauka wobec pamięci*, Lublin 2006, pp. 191–195.

⁸⁰ Ibidem, p. 196.

⁸¹ P. Cywiński, *Epitafium*, Oświęcim 2012, p. 99.

people come to the museum to see the objects and exhibits. According to others, only a combination of objects and meaning will make the history in a museum effective.⁸²

Returning to the collective memory of numerous groups on Auschwitz is related to the selection. This applies to the operation of three groups: historians, broadcasters, and recipients. Historians make the selection first; the state, acting in its own interest as a message sender, also creates certain visions of the past, highlighting selected elements of the past. Tomasz Krantz, referring to Barbara Szacka, claims that the state can do it with the help of exhibition curators.⁸³ However, the influence of the state, based on the example of the Polish state, is superior only in terms of control in the performance of tasks by the museum and in the field of the transmission of knowledge and message, and is limited to the selection of the main internal organs of the museum, and not to appointing museologists whose substantive work cannot be interfered with.⁸⁴ When faced with the message, recipients retain only what corresponds with their experiences.⁸⁵

Certainly, for the older generation, experienced by totalitarian regimes and educated in these systems, a visit to Auschwitz will be a source of historical knowledge, but transmitting knowledge about Auschwitz and the Holocaust to the young democratic generation requires appropriate preparation. Visiting Auschwitz must be preceded by appropriate pedagogical preparation in order not to become only a traumatic experience.⁸⁶ Auschwitz is a cemetery of ashes, a place

⁸² A. Ziębińska-Witek, *Historia w muzeach. Studium ekspozycji Holokaustu*, Lublin 2011, p. 85.

⁸³ T. Krantz, *Krajobrazy pamięci – podmioty kultury – obiekty turystyczne – przestrzeń edukacji...*, op. cit., p. 23.

⁸⁴ Ustawa z dnia 21 listopada 1996 r. o muzeach (Dz. U. z 1997 r. Nr 5, poz. 24).

⁸⁵ T. Krantz, *Krajobrazy pamięci – podmioty kultury – obiekty turystyczne – przestrzeń edukacji...*, op. cit., p. 23.

⁸⁶ M. Kucia, K. Stec, *Edukacja o Auschwitz i Holokaucie w perspektywie badań społecznych*, [in:] P. Trojański (ed.), *Edukacja o Auschwitz i Holokaucie w autentycznych miejscach pamięci. Stan obecny i perspektywy na przyszłość*, Oświęcim 2019, p. 72; M. Kucia, *Auschwitz jako fakt społeczny*, Kraków 2005, pp. 162–163; A. Bartuś, *Jak reagować na zło? Wizyta w Auschwitz a kształtowanie postaw*, [in:] P. Trojański (ed.), *Edukacja o Auschwitz*

for distorting history, and thus the action of two totalitarianisms, is a difficult place for young people and can bring misunderstanding without learning about totalitarianism, human rights, and civic obligations. Without teaching young people about their influence on the world's fate as citizens brought up in a range of freedoms, which also result in duties and responsibilities, the young visitor will be traumatized and helpless.⁸⁷

Conclusion

Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial and Museum and the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum contain a moral lesson about the effects of man's enslavement by man and, thus, the violation of his natural rights. Both the museums hold many lessons, which also can be considered moral. The first lesson is that the authenticity of a place is no assurance that it will become the fabric of historical narratives. The discourse depends on the relationship of power, and in a totalitarian regime, power is concentrated in the hands of a single governing body, which imposes the applicable discourse with the methods of terror, censorship, exclusion, and centrality. The Washington Museum, however, can still be accused of lacking authenticity for two reasons, firstly that it is organized outside the real place of the unfolding history, and secondly that its exhibitions consist of objects that do not belong to the past they represent. However, the authenticity of the place is replaced by the aura, the arrangement of the exhibition, the sensitivity of visitors, brought up in the spirit of democratic freedoms, and the authenticity of visitor's reactions – not agreeing to their limitations on freedom or excluding actions due to different views, religion and ethnic affiliation. Another lesson is that memorial sites are not free from politics; their victims are used in political struggles. This was the case with the fight for the meaning of Holocaust in the USA, and it was also the case with the falsification of the number of Jewish victims in Auschwitz-Birkenau

i Holokaucie w autentycznych miejscach pamieci. Stan obecny i perspektywy na przyszlosc, Oświęcim 2019, pp. 92–93.

⁸⁷ Ibidem, pp. 92–93.

Memorial and Museum under the rule of a totalitarian regime. These fights, however, differed in the selection of the repertoire of tools. In the USA, the content of the future museum was discussed, and each sentence could see the light of day. In the People's Republic of Poland, the holders of a vision of history inconsistent with the authorities were repressed, and their discourse could not be revealed in the public domain. Both memorial sites are associated with conflicts. In the USA, Wiesel's vision of the impossibility of telling the story of the Holocaust collided with the vision of many members of the Holocaust Remembrance Council, including Berenbaum, who opted for the need to develop the possibility of talking about the Holocaust. However, it was not about feuds but about deliberations and respect for different opinions, as evidenced by the fact that at the opening of the museum, it was not Berenbaum who spoke, but Wiesel, who had a considerable contribution to the construction of the museum, which was to prevent the crime of genocide in future. In the People's Republic of Poland, the conflict between them and us was unsolvable. It was about discrediting and defeating opponents, proving one's superiority. Can Auschwitz be a role model with such a history? Does the US Holocaust Memorial Museum have the right to use the name of a memorial if it is not an authentic place? It is worth answering this question that real and symbolic graves can carry an equally strong message.⁸⁸ Regarding Auschwitz, it is worth saying that the destroyed and appropriated graves can be restored to their original form.

To sum up, memorial site museums such as those presented in this paper exist today as a justification for the positive aspects of memory, although memory was often the source of conflicts. They strengthen a culture that respects human rights. In this way, they are linked to democracy.⁸⁹ It assumes that without memory, we will not have signposts against the dangers to democratic structures. The memory of the troubled past understood as a supranational memory, serves as an advocate of human rights, thus natural law. The policy of memory conducted in this way is to ensure the protection of these rights in the future. Memorial site museums become the rationale behind this policy.

⁸⁸ A. Stępnik, *Czy muzea martyrologiczne są miejscami historii...*, op. cit., p. 116.

⁸⁹ A. Sodaro, *Exhibiting Atrocity...*, op. cit., pp. 16–17.

Memory became a pretext for recognizing persecuted groups and a bond for those who were not victims. It has become the basis for building and maintaining political structures that protect against returning to the wrongs of the past, that is, they are a guarantee of human rights, which are the core of the legislation in a democratic regime. Natural law, despite its little empirical character, still sets up barriers to positive law.⁹⁰

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⁹⁰ L. Kołakowski, *O prawie naturalnym...*, op. cit., pp. 153–154.

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