KEYNOTE ADDRESS

Frontiers of Memory: The Jews in the Changing Landscapes of Poland

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Introduction: Landscape as "Chronotope."

Landscape has a peculiar ability to synthesize time (memory of the past) and space (culturally meaningful territory). It is a symbolic place to which memories have been attached. Thus, landscape can be described by the concept of a chronotope, introduced in the theory of literature by Mikhail Bakhtin. For Bakhtin (1981:84) chronotope meant "the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature." Borrowing this concept, we may say that in the field of collective identities a chronotope is a locus in which time has been condensed and concentrated in space (Gillis 1994:14). In other words, chronotope means a real but symbol-laden and often mythologized place in which events important for the construction of a group's identity either actually happened according to the group's vision of the "viable past" or are symbolically represented by-for example-monuments, the very arrangement of space, and its social functions.

In particular, when two communities dwell on the same territory they tend to tum it into the chronotope of their respective identities. This situation may, and indeed almost always does, lead to a conflict over landscape, since both groups try to symbolically mark their presence in the same physical space. In case of a minority group, the situation is more difficult because the dominant group tends to monopolize and control the means of symbolic expression to support its claim to the territory as its "property." In such a way, landscape becomes battlefield: a place in which groups compete for the fullest possible representation of their identities, trying, according to the means at their disposal, to structure the landscape and invest it with the meaning appropriate with respect to their identities.

The conflict over the landscape does not stop when one of the competing groups no longer stays in the competition. It turns into a passive conflict of memories. Landscape becomes an arena of both remembering and forgetting, but now it represents only the memory of the surviving group. The memory of the group that perished and its material representations can in such a situation be manipulated in an unrestricted way by those who remained. Landscape preserves what the group wants to remember; what the group wants to forget is destroyed, neglected, or preserved in a distorted way. Sometimes it is a natural process: when there is no proper memory-keeper, no

strong-enough community that would remember its past in an appropriate way, the acts of remembering carried out by the members of other groups inevitably must be distorting. As James Young (1993: 117) observes, "the problem is not that Poles deliberately displace Jewish memory of the Holocaust with their own, but that in a country bereft of Jews, the memorials can do little but cultivate Polish memory." Much more often, however, the memory of the perished groups and the landscape representing this memory is distorted by those remaining on purpose.

The intention of this essay is to present several examples of such (mis)representation of the Jewish past in the small towns and villages of south-eastern Poland. In the final part, an attempt will be made to present briefly the most important battlefield of Jewish and Polish memories: the area of the former death camp Auschwitz-Birkenau.

The Jewish Past in the Landscapes of South-Eastern Poland

Rzeszaw: Between Preservation and Manipulation

The town's most important landmarks of its Jewish past-two large synagogue buildings, located next to each other-are relatively well-preserved. The first, the Old Town Synagogue, was built in 1617 and at present houses local Archives and the Jewish History Research Center, an institution that collects documents related to the history of the Jews in the Rzeszow region and promotes studies of the history of ethnic and religious relations in the area. The second one-the New Town Synagogue, built in 1686-serves as an art gallery. Both have plaques explaining the basic facts of their history.

The park-like square next to the synagogues covers the area of the oldest Jewish cemetery in Rzeszow, which was already closed for burial purposes well before WWII. There is no plaque explaining the history of the place, but the square bears the name of the Ghetto Heroes, which somehow indicates its connection with the Jewish history.

There is a more general issue related to the name "Ghetto Heroes Square," which after WWII was given to many places in the former Jewish quarters of the Polish towns to commemorate the ·Warsaw Ghetto uprising. It was indeed a decent act to commemorate the Ghetto fighters, but one must ask why the pattern was to commemorate the fighters, identified with heroes, and not the men, women and children who were murdered because they were Jewish? As a matter of fact, there are Ghetto Heroes squares in many Polish towns~ there are, however, no Holocaust Victims squares. It seems that we are dealing here with the case of the heroization of death. The death of the ~he~o fighters fits well the Polish historical paradigm of glorifying those who dIed In a hopeless fight. It was therefore much easier to be assimilated into the Polish mental landscape and subsequently into the landscape of Polish towns than the tragedy of the Holocaust. Moreover, the focus on the heroization of death equalizes, consciously or not, the situation of the Jews and the Poles: the latter had many heroic fighters also. The unique fate of the Jews, the Holocaust, did not find an expression in Polish landscapes, a fact that would

perhaps help to explain why, according to sociologists, a significant part of contemporary Polish society believes that Polish and Jewish sufferings during WWII were similar or comparable. In the research conducted by Ireneusz Krzemmski's team, 32 percent of the Polish respondents claimed that Poles and Jews suffered equally. On the other hand, one must note that 46 percent chose the answer "Jewish nation suffered more than Polish" (Koimmska-Frejlak, Krzeminski 1996:98).

Coming back to the old Jewish cemetery in Rzeszow, being now the park-like square named after the Ghetto Heroes, one must say that there is actually a commemorative monument in its area. It is not, however, a monument commemorating the Jews of Rzeszow but quite an impressive figurative sculpture with a plaque containing the following text: "On this site of the blood-soaked soil from the battlefields, places of execution, and martyrdom of the Rzeszow region this monument has been placed as a symbol of our thousand-year-Iong fight for freedom, national independence, and for the betterment of life of our society." The monument, erected by the local Communist authorities in the 1960s, is a clear sign of a symbolic manipulation aiming at presenting the Communists as heirs of the Polish patriotic tradition. The inscription says in fact that the Communist Party is an integral part of the Polish tradition, that the Communist attempts to change the social structure are as noble as the Polish fight for freedom and national independence, that both can refer to the ancient lineage of the "thousand-year-long" history, and that the word "our" means both: Communist and Polish, which in consequence leads to the equation of these two terms. Moreover, the monument is actually a kind of a symbolic tomb since it has not been the sculpture itself but rather the "blood-soaked soir' which has created the monumental value of the place. Whatever motivated the Communists, consciously or unconsciously, to put that kind of tomb-like monument in the former Jewish cemetery, the objective result is that the Jewish past of Rzesz6w, in this place at least, has been put in oblivion and the Communists have managed to present their distorted vision of history, which identified their political program with "Polishness," in a form of the monument dominating the landscape.

We may thus say that the landscape of Rzeszow is a mixture of the attempts to preserve the town's Jewish past, unintentional, but rather symptomatic, heroization of the death of the Jews, which distorts the truth of the Holocaust, and the Communists' manipulation aiming at finding legitimacy for their rule in the Polish society.

Zolynia: Exclusion

When a visitor approaches Zolynia, a small town between Lancut and Lezajsk, it is difficult not to see a large sign proudly informing that the town was awarded a military cross for the support given by its inhabitants to the resistance movement during WWII. That means that the memory of the war is carefully preserved by the people of Zolynia. However, as it turns out after a closer inspection, the memory is rather selective.

In the comer of the town's main square there is a small monument, crowned with a wing-stretching eagle, the Polish national emblem. !he plaque on the monument says that it was erected "To the memory of the, Inhabitants of Zolynia, murdered by Hitlerites and fallen for the Fatherland In the years 1939-1945." Then, a list of several names follows. The people whose names are on the list are exclusively Poles. One must thus ask a question: What happened to the other inhabitants of Zolynia, the Jews? The answer is not very difficult: They too were "murdered by Hitlerites" and their number was much larger than the number of the Poles ~xecu~ed by.the Nazis for supporting or belonging to th~ partisan troops In neIghbonng for~sts. However, the "Community of Zolynia," which erected the monument In September 1983, did not find it appropriate to put the names of the Jews on the monument.

That could mean only that for some reasons the "Community of Zolynia" has symbolically excluded the Jews from the ranks of the fellow town-dwellers. As it happens, at present the concept of an "inhabitant of Zolynia" refers only to the Polish inhabitants, for there are only Poles living there. By projecting this situation onto the past, the local Poles exclude the Jews from the town's collective memory. It is clearly a sign of the homogenization of both the mental and the physical landscape. The Jews were eliminated physically by the Nazis, the memory of ~he Jews has been eliminated symbolically by the Poles. The monument in Zolynia says in fact: "This is Poland, the land of Poles, who have their own, glorious and tragic, but exclusively Polish, history."

The phenomenon of exclusion has, however, its historical dimension too. The Jews, from the Polish perspective, belonged to the alien world: they were not, in fact, perceived as full members of the "community." The indifference of many Poles to the Holocaust could be partly explained by this fact: the murdered Jews were perceived as alien; they did not quite belong and, what follows, their history was a separate stream of events, sometimes overlapping with the Polish history but generally going its own way. In the process of homogenization, the history of Poland was identified with the Polish history and the Zolynia monument is a tool of the symbolic control over the landscape by that dominating vision of history.

The political dimension is also quite interesting here. The monument was erected in 1983 when the regulations of the Martial Law, introduced in 1981, were gradually relaxing. As a sign of that relaxation, the Communist-military authorities tried to show again their devotion to Polish history and tradition. Institutions were established, like the infamous, extremely nationalistic "Patriotic Society Grunwald," in order to show how carefully the ~uthorities preserve Polish history. Since nothing could happen at that time in Zol~nia wit.hou~ th~ ~on~ent of the local party authorities, one may expect that the ldeolo~cal ~usttfl~atIon of such a consent referred precisely to that policy of relaxatton, Includlng conceSSIons for the local commemorations of the Polish tra~ition. The commemoration of the other traditions would mess up the clear pIcture of the authorities' intentions and could make obstacles in the attempted process of building legitimacy for the Martial Law rulers.

The landscape of Zolynia, defined by the monument that seals the triumph of the Polish memory, is an example of the battlefield of memories in which one of the parties was defeated by exclusion, which--even if not intentionally-followed the matrix of Polish-Jewish relations and the pattern of its transformation. The landscape of the nearby Lezajsk presents a similar example: that of segregation of memories. In Lezajsk-unlike in Zolynia -there are the material embodiments of both Jewish and Polish memories; the former exist, however, exclusively within the Jewish memory, the latter within the Polish.

Leiajsk: Segregation

For the Poles, Lezajsk is known as a site of a beautiful baroque church with a famous organ. The church has been for a long time the local center of Virgin Mary worship and a destination of the pilgrimages of the Polish Roman Catholics. For the Jews, the Lezajsk cemetery is the burial place of Elimelekh (1717-1787), a disciple of Dov Ber and intellectually the most powerful leader of the third generation of Hasidism, the teacher of Menahem Mendel and Jacob "The Seer" of Lublin. Visits of the pious Hasidim to Elimelekh's tomb on the anniversary of his death is probably the earliest example of the characteristic Hasidic pilgrimages to the burial places of the tzaddiks in the region.

The striking picture of two streams of pilgrims, visiting two different sites in the same town without knowing anything about each other, represents symbolically the separation of the two groups, their mutual alienation which, translated into the language of landscape, meant that although the Jews lived in the same physical space as the Poles, they occupied an entirely different cultural space. "It might seem strange," Diane K. Roskies and David G. Roskies (1979:45) observe, "that two nations living on the same soil would have an entirely different relation to the same place, but that's the way it happened. Jewish geography is simply not the same as goyish geography."

The central point of the landscape of Jewish memory in Lezajsk is thus the tomb of Rabbi Elimelekh, condensing in one place the spiritual tradition of Hasidism in the region and symbolizing the richness of Jewish spiritual life. The landscape of Polish memory, embodied in the baroque church and the miraculous painting of Virgin Mary, symbolizes Roman Catholic spirituality, the power and richness of the Church, and-to a large degree-Polish identity. The Polish memory is, however, the memory held by living people, permanently occupying the physical space of contemporary Lezajsk, while the Jewish memory exists outside that space, only periodically having been brought into it by the Jewish visitors.

Przeworsk: Destruction

In Przeworsk, a small town east of Lancut, the Jews made up half of the pre-war population and had developed a rich community life since the time of their settlement in the sixteenth century. Of particular fame was the community's rabbi, Moses Sofer, and later on, in the twentieth century, the local library, a center of study and intellectual life. The synagogue building in

Przeworsk did not have the luck of that in Lancut, and was leveled to the ground by the Nazis who also removed gravestones from the Jewish cemetery in town using them to pave yards In the local sugar refinery. After the war, the des~crated space of the cemetery become the most important battlefield of memories in Przeworsk. Immediately after the war, the area of the cemeterj remained empty and untouched until the time of the major road construction project aimed at building a new section of the road connecting Rzeszow and Przemysl. The construction work did damage to the southern side of the cemetery. In 1969, a huge monument commemorating the twenty-fifth anniversary of the liberation of the town was erected. The area of the monument, known as pomnik Walki i M~JiczeIistwa (monument of Fight and Martyrdom), partly invaded the western side of the cemetery. Eventually, in the beginning of 1980s on the remaining part of the cemetery, a bus station was built by the decision of the municipal council. Mr. Jan Sasak, a local stonecutter and at that time member of the council, voted against. Since he had been outvoted, he recommended to at least put a sign indicating the previous character of the place. His idea did not find support and Mr. Sasak decided to do something on his own. In the north-eastern comer of the cemeterylbus station he put a modest stone with the inscription commemorating the Jews murdered during the war. A few years later the stone was moved, without Mr. Sasak's knowledge and consent, to the south-eastern comer, next to a taxi stand, a place less convenient for the visitors. Apparently the former location of the stone was designed for some commercial purposes. The history of the place is rather exceptional, since the sites of the Jewish cemeteries in the region, even if empty and unprotected, are generally not used for construction projects. It shows, however, a certain general pattern of removing---consciously or not-the Jewish memory from the landscape. Building the road and building the bus station exemplify a "functional approach" to the sites of Jewish memory: the Jews are no longer here, the gravestones were already removed by the Nazis, life must go on, and the local people need roads and bus stations. The lack of sensitivity in this approach can be interpreted in terms of an open or latent anti-Semitism but it can also be accounted for by the generally low level of sensitivity, being a result of the war period (the road construction), and the process of forgetting, combined with an increased focus on the political events in 1980s (the bus station). It seems that all three factors have played a role here. . The interpretatio~ of the monument from 1969 might be slightly dIfferent. It was a conSCIOUS atteII!pt to present the Communist vision of his~o.ry, ~repared in a particular way so that it could serve the purpose of legItImatIng the authorities. The date of the erection of the monument cojn~i.des,. however, with the governmental campaign of the official anti-SemItIsm In Poland, a fact that could influence the decision about the location of the .monument or at least could silence possible hesitation about its appropna~eness.. The ~onument itself is a very interesting example of the . CommunIst manIpulation of history. It consists of two separate structures: the

first, vertical one, is made by three columns, symbolizing probably three decades of the COlnmunist Poland, with the Polish national emblem in its communist version: an eagle without a crown (the crown, the symbol of royalty, was removed by the Communists from the pre-war emblem). Below it one can see another emblematic eagle, this time the symbol of the first historical dynasty ruling in the lands of Poland since the end of the tenth century, the Piast dynasty. That eagle does not have a crown either, since the title of "kings" of Poland was granted to the dynasty after the emblem had been established as its symbol.

We have here a clear attempt to anchor the Communist rule in the Polish history, to present it as a logical and legitimate stage in the history of the Polish statehood. In fact, the Communists often positively referred to the time of the Piast dynasty, juxtaposing it to the later period of multinational Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. The reason for this could be strictly political: the borders of the Commonwealth reached far into the areas that later on become the western parts of the Soviet Union (and now regain andlor construct their identities as independent states of Lithuania, Belarus, and Ukraine) or ideological: the Commonwealth, according to the official Communist interpretation of history, was a belligerent, expansionist state based on serfdom and an egoistic exploitation of its resources by aristocracy. Moreover, the "homogeneity" of Poland from the time of the Piast dynasty was often presented in opposition to the "negative" multinational character of the Commonwealth and the Republic of Poland from the period 1918-1939: In such away, the Communists suggested that the forced homogenization of Poland after WWll, being a result of the war and the post-war change of the borders, meant in fact a "return to the roots" of Polish statehood.

The second part of the monument, an upside-down pyramid, slightly resembling a memorial candle, has on its front wall the symbol of the Polish Military Cross and an inscription that says: "To the heroes of the revolutionary struggles, trusty sons of the Przeworsk soil, those who fought against the oppression of the pre-War right wing Polish government, against the Nazi occupant and against the forces of reaction for the national and social liberation, for socialist Poland." The vision of history expressed in the inscription identifies actually the pre-War, "capitalist" Poland and the post-War anti-Communist groups with the Nazis. National liberation has been identified with the communist political program that consequently excludes the non-Communist mernbers of the Polish resistance from the officially approved pantheon of national martyrs. Together with the symbolism of the eagles, the inscription makes the Communist attempt clear: Polish history had its telos, that is, the "socialist" Poland, and those who did not participate in the process of its "materialization" do not belong to "Us." Consequently, according to the communist Manichean vision of the world, they belong to "Them," to the enemy. For the Jews, there was no place for them in that vision either. Their difference was dissolved into two main camps defined according to the lines of the political division. For them, as for the Jews, there was no place in the communist homogeneous vision of Poland, exactly as

there was no place for them-although for dif~eren~ reasons-in the equally homogeneous vision of Poland produced by natIonalists.

The history as represented by the landscape of Przeworsk has been thus falsified in a twofold way. The Jewish memory has been erased by the destruction of its site and removed from the officially approved and monumentalized vision of history. The Polish memory has been denied by the official, communist symbolism and narrative. The only attempt to preserve the Jewish memory was an initiative of a single person and took a form of so-to-speak "counter-monumentalization": the x:nodesty and aut~enticity expressed in Mr. Sasak's memorial stone juxtaposes It to the communist monument.

Auschwitz: Conflict of Memories

The area of the Auschwitz-Birkenau death camp has become probably the most important battlefield of Jewish and Polish memories. For the Jews, Auschwitz symbolizes the Holocaust, the event which was a condensed history of anti-Semitic persecutions and, in tum, a symbol of Jewish uniqueness in the face of annihilation. For the Poles, Auschwitz has always been present in national memory as the site in which the Polish mythology of a besieged nation, oppressed by their neighbors (in this case the Germans) was anchored. The individual memories of suffering, the stories passed from generation to generation in families, created a particular climate in which children were brought up, growing up with a strong conviction that Auschwitz is one of the sacred places, or perhaps the sacred place of Polish national memory of heroic struggle against all odds, and of the victimization that has become the cornerstone of Polish identity.

This private construction of identity was eagerly transformed by the Communist authorities into "an element of the symbolic ideological construction, legitimizing the political status quo. The State Museum in Auschwitz became a symbol of 'state nationalism,' representing Polish national martyrdom, the official interpretation of Polish-German relations throughout history, and the place of Poland in the world" (Mach 1995:19). In this way, paradoxically, even if most of Polish society would not, at least admittedly, accept the Communist ideology, it would nevertheless synchronize its own collective memory with the ideological construction imposed upon them.

The overlapping of private and official memories could take place partly because of the fact that other memories of Auschwitz left the Polish mental landscape together with their bearers. When the "Jewish memory was departed" James E. Young (1993: 116) writes, "the Poles ... were left alone with their own, now uncontested memory of events." This has led to the oblivion of the predominantly Jewish victims of the camp as well as to the polonization of the way the c.amp itself was represented on site and in memory. As Mach (1995 :21).nghtly observes, "the Jews appeared ... in the [Museum's] exhibition as citizens of particular countries, including Poland, and not as an ethnically homogeneous category, sentenced as such by the Nazis to extermination. The problem of Jewish martyrdom was neglected, in accordance with the interest of

the Communist authorities for whom the important point was to show the historical Polish-German conflict, not the tragedy of the Jews."

Fortunately enough, the democratic transformations in Poland have opened up a possibility to undo that particular connection between the private and public neglect of the Jewish Holocaust, including its presentation at the site of the Auschwitz-Birkenau camp. A deliberate attempt of the post-1989 Polish governments and the Museum staff has resulted in substantial re-shaping of the exhibition and in bringing Jewish memory into the place. This process was a part of a broader development marked, on the one hand, by the growing number of Jewish visitors, and, on the other, by the need for a re-definition of Polish identity.

Jewish visitors, survivors and their children, by intensifying their visits to Poland, inevitably retrieved Jewish memory and made Poles confront an image of history different from their own. The Poles themselves had to face their internal problem of refurbishing their collective memory and finding its new meaning in a situation where the official Communist discourse had disappeared. An important part of this process has consisted of efforts to re-think the national past and to re-define the relations between Poles and other nations, Jews being one of the most important. A memory-constructing activity, liberated from the pressures of the official Communist interpretation, as well as from the anti-Communist counter-interpretations designed only to negate the official picture, has led to different results, and it is much too early to say what kind of new public memory-identity complex will emerge from the endless debates (Mach 1995:22).

On a practical level, however, the meeting of Jewish memory with the efforts undertaken by the Poles to re-construct their identity, has so far resulted not only in a changed presentation of the two memories on the site of Auschwitz, but also, what seems to be the opposite side of the coin, in heating up Polish-Jewish debates about Auschwitz and its place in their respective identity-constructs. It may seem paradoxical, but after years of oblivion and falsification of historical truth, the new situation, with its openness on both sides, has opened up old wounds and created new ones. It is, however, impossible to escape such conflicts, especially if we once again make clear that, as Young (1993: 117) says, "Auschwitz .. .is part of a national landscape of suffering, one coordinate among others by which both Jews and Poles continue to grasp present lives in light of a remembered past."

One of the most painful examples of the conflict of memories and identities in Auschwitz had its beginning last year. On June 14, 1998, Kazimierz Switon put up a tent on the site of a quarry adjacent to the building of the so-called "Old Theater" in which the poisonous gas Zyklon B had been stored during Auschwitz's operation as a death camp and which from 1984 housed the Carmelite convent until it was moved in 1993-after a long and stormy debate-to a new location in the vicinity of the camp.

Switon, a leader of the underground trade unions in the 70s, later on an unsuccessful businessman and for a short time member of Parliament, as a self-proclaimed leader of a "Movement for Rescue of the Polish Nation"

began a hunger protest against the all~ged ~lans for rem:>ving from the. site of the quarry the so-called "Papal cross, an elght~mete~-hlgh cr?~s at WhICh t~e Pope John Paul II had prayed in Birkenau dunng his first VISIt to Poland In 1979. The cross was placed at the quarry on the night of July 26, 1989 by Stanislaw Gorny, a parish priest from Oswiecim (the actual name, in Polish, of the place known to the world ~s ~u~chwit~), appa~ently to commemorate the tenth anniversary of the Pope s VISIt, but In fact It was clearly an act of protest against the agreement according to which the Carmelite convent should move to another location. When this eventually happened, the cross
became the next issue of debates. Many Jews argued that the cross in this place can be interpreted as an attempt to Christianize Auschwitz, neglecting the fact that the victims of Auschwitz-Birkenau were predominantly Jewish, and dominating the 1andscape of the camp site in display of a triumphant Christian attitude. Many others emphasized that the cross in this place offends the Jews who had been persecuted under this sign for centuries of Christian anti-Semitism, or-as Rabbi Ioskowicz (1998) put it-that the 1 ews cannot pray in the presence of the "idols." For some Poles, however, the cross would be a very appropriate sign of commemoration for those who were executed on the site of the quarry or who died there because of harsh conditions of work and maltreatment and who were predominantly Polish and Catholic. More generally speaking, for the Roman Catholics the cross could be expressing their belief in redemption of human sins and their hope in salvation. Whatever the interpretations might have been, however, the way in which the cross ha~ been put in its present place clearly indicates that the real motives were rather those referring to the argument over the Carmelite convent. For those, quite numerous in Polish society, who could not put up with the Convent having been moved because of the, as they would put it, "pressure of the Jews," the protest of Kazimierz Switori was a defense of the right of the Poles to do in Poland what they want, in particular to use their religious symbols in places related to their narratives of the Polish heroism and martyrdom. This line of argument has become particularly important when Kalman Sultanik (one of the vice presidents of the World Jewish Congress) suggested-and Pinchas Ivienachem 10skowicz repeated-an idea of extraterritoriality of Auschwitz. In more general terms, Switon's action and the support it received in Polish society expressed a crisis in the Polish thinking about Auschwitz: when the official Communist interpretation of Auschwitz has disappeared together with the system that supported it, when Poland became open for other interpretations of Auschwitz, the usual Polish perception of Auschwitz as a place of m~rdomof the Poles and one of the sacred sites of Polish identity has been senously shaken. In such a situation of crisis, the tendency to defend th~ ~?rono.tope (Auschwitz-interpreted "Polish way") becomes evident. wIton S ,actIon can be ~hus seen as an attempt to defend the perception of AuschWItz as an excluslvely Polish chronotope in the situation when such an interpretation is by no means obvious in Poland any more.

Switori. terminated his hunger protest after a few weeks, but kept residing in his tent and called for creating a "valley of crosses" on the site of the quarry. He initially called to put there 152 new crosses to commemorate 152 Poles shot in the executions on this spot. By August 11, 1998 (the day primate Glemp issued an appeal to stop erecting crosses), more than 1()() were brought there by private persons, different "committees for defense of the cross" and other organizations, supported by fundamentalist Catholic radio "Radio Maryja" and its press organ Nasz Dziennik. The appeal of the primate Glemp, as well as the comments of some other members of the Church hierarchy in Poland, clearly condemning Switoti's action as an abuse of the holy symbol of Christianity, have been rejected by Switori., who openly questioned the authority of bishops. On the other hand, Switori. 's supporters have been labeled by Bishop Tadeusz Pieronek as "anti-Church," who do not respect the official Church authorities and even question some of the dogma. The division between some bishops, supported by the voice of primate Glemp (although he had a sort of twisted way to go to eventually condemn SWiton), and more fundamentalist priests, indicates a radicalizing cleavage in Polish Catholicism and shows two possible ways of its development: an ecumenical, liberal Catholicism of the Second Vatican Councilor a fundamentalist, nationalist and xenophobic Catholicism of "Radio Maryja." An interest of Marcel Lefebvre's ultrafundamentalist movement in the events in Auschwitz is very symptomatic: Lefebvre, excommunicated by the Pope in 1988, thought reconciliation with Judaism as the biggest sin of Roman Catholicism and the biggest danger to the Church.

In more general terms, it looks like the hierarchy of the Church in Poland did not use the opportunity to solve unequivocally the conflict between the "modernizers" and supporters of the traditional role of the Church in Poland: engaged in politics and connected with national values. The events in Auschwitz showed clearly, however, that the division of opinion within Polish Church is really significant or, as Stanislaw lanecki (1998) put it, the Polish Church speaks different languages.

When the number of crosses in the quarry exceeded the planned 152, Switon changed his "ide010gy of commemoration." From the commemoration of the Polish victims he switched to the celebration of "Polishness": his next call was to have 1032 crosses (in addition to the "Papal" one) on the site by May 3, 1999 (Polish Constitution Day)-to commemorate the anniversary of the Polish statehood which is at the same time the anniversary of the Christianization of Poland (the year 966). Therefore, instead of being a sign commemorating individual victims, the cross has turned into an emblem of nationhood and has been placed within the traditional context of defining Polish national identity as first and foremost Catholic. The slogans put on the banners near crosses and the inscriptions on the crosses leave little doubt that it is precisely the nation which is on this site-its chronotope-defined by reference to its martyrdom and its sacred, religious connection. One of the most popular lines frequently used in the context of the crosses in Auschwitz goes "Only under the cross/Only under this signlPoland remains Poland/ And

a Pole a Pole." ("Tylka pod krzyzemiTylko pod t~m znakiemiPols~a jest PolskaJA Polak Polakiem.") Part of the Chur.ch hIerarchy ha~ notIced a potential danger of such identifi~atio~. For B l~hop ~ade~sz Pleron~k for instance the claim that the cross IS a sIgn of natIonal IdentIty means In fact negation' of the true meaning of the ~ro.ss, ~ince national identity. is ass~med here to be more important. For a ChnstIan It should be the OpposIte: natIonal identity, as well as an identity of any person, becomes meaningful only in cross and through Christ (Oszajca 1998).

Here Auschwitz becomes a battlefield of two different approaches to national identity: the traditional, religious, and related to the Polish martyrdom during the war on the one hand, and the modem, se~ular~political, related rather to the shared civic culture than to the sphere of tnbal ntuals, on the other. In its political aspect the problem, especially its international dimension, from the very beginning was going beyond the competence of the local authorities. Surprisingly enough, the central authorities too proved not to be quite up to the task. In the first comments the government tried to create an impression that the whole matter is entirely an internal problem of the Roman Catholic church in Poland since it deals with religious symbols. Later on there were attempts to put the governmental passivity on the complicated legal status of the quarry, which apparently tied the hands of the government. It looks like the government, being itself in a rather difficult political situation and facing its declining popularity while carrying out several necessary but sometimes painful economic and social refonns, was seriously afraid of being assigned a label of "the enemy of the cross" and losing its "ideological" legitimation in the Catholic country. Thus, when the government eventually decided to take an active attitude, the efforts were made to give the highest possible legislative status to the decisions concerning the quarry and to secure beyond any doubt the legal-procedural character of the planned actions. A special law concerning protection of the former Nazi death camps was passed to the Parliament and accepted, after a stormy debate, on April 10, 1999. According to the law, there will be a protective zone of 100 meters around the areas of the eight death camps, in which any economic activities, construction projects, and gatherings will require a special permission of the local administration. According to some politicians of the ruling coalition, the law has been prepared with a clear idea in mind: to put an end to the "big scandal taking place in the area of the quarry in Auschwitz, which undermines the authority of the Roman Catholic . church and the Polish state." (Gazeta Wyborcza daily, April 12, 1999) As a reaction to the decision of the Parliament, Switon next erected a 241 sl cross and also suggested a national referendum to decide on his new idea to build a church in the area of the quarry. The government, however, backed by the parliamentary legislation, started to show signs of determination. Different representatives of central and local authorities gave public statements announcing that the situation in Auschwitz will be terminated in the moment the new Jaw will be officially announced as binding, that is on

May 25. Shortly before this date Switon, facing the government's determination, had shown a variety of uncoordinated reactions, varying from a sort of a "compromise" offer to the threat of blowing up the whole area. Because of the latter, Switon was arrested on May 27 and as a result of the subsequent search of the area an explosive was found. On May 28 early in the morning, a special military unit of the Ministry of Interior removed all the crosses but the "Papal" one and transported them to the St. Francis Monastery in Harmeze near Auschwitz. At the same time, the government's spokesperson announced that the "Papal cross will remain -the main element in the area of the quarry" (Kublik and Pendel 1999). In such a way the government intended to solve the problem (some would say-to clean up the situation before the Pope's visit to Poland scheduled for the beginning of June) radically but without causing too much public opposition. The latter indeed turned out to be rather minimal; it appears that a concerted action of the legislative and church authorities was quite successful.

The problems that have been expressed on the occasion of the conflict in Auschwitz are, however, far from being solved. The multidimensional crisis expressed throughout the year of the conflict includes the crisis of the way the Poles had interpreted Auschwitz, together with the lack of a viable alternative to the tradition of Auschwitz as a chronotope of Polish martyrdom and identity, the crisis within the Roman Catholic church in Poland, including the growing divisions within the hierarchy and between the hierarchy and regular churchgoers, the crisis of Polish identity and the crisis of Polish politics, including the legitimation crisis of the state. Only in the first dimension the conflict has clearly its "Polish-Jewish" aspect. However, because of the fact that all the dimensions of the crisis are intertwined, the danger exists that the conflict between the Polish and the Jewish interpretations of Auchwitz may be generalized, separated from its roots and included into other aspects of the crisis situation as well. It means, for example, that the language of anti-Jewish sentiments may infect the religious, cultural, and political discourses to a much larger degree than it does at the moment.

After one year, the situation in Auschwitz has returned to its starting point which the Poles-after the events of the past year-would like to present as a sort of a compromise, and which is equally unacceptable for many Jews as it was year ago, before Switoti's protest. However, the support Switoti's action gained in large sectors of Polish society and the level of emotions involved, together with a visible weakness of both church and state • authorities, have to be taken into account. Israel Gutman had this in mind when in an interview for the Polish daily Rzeczpospolita said that for the time being one has to accept the existence of the "Papal" cross-although its presence in Auschwitz is a wrong thing-as a starting point for further negotiations (Rzeczpospolita daily, September 12-13, 1998). One may expect such negotiations to be long and stormy but even this would be better that the present situation in which there is no authority in sight (speaking of the Polish

side) that would have the courage to ne~otiate .a~d would have an idea of compromise different than leaving everythl~g as It IS. And t?at means that ~he potential for the next rounds of the conflIct of Inemory IS far from beIng
exhausted.

Concluding Remarks

The review of different landscapes in south-eastern Poland presented in this essay has shown different forms of conflict between the Jewish and the Polish memories, expressed in the chronotopes of Jewish and Polish identity. Oblivion, exclusion, segregation, destruction, the attempts to preserve and monumentalize, together with the resistance of the material sites of Jewish memory, are the activities through which the chronotopes have been created. There are of course several other types of activities, for instance an extremely interesting phenomenon of the commercialization of Jewish memory, which have not been analyzed here. (More on this see Halkowski 1999:232-233) An example of an open conflict of memories has been presented in the discussion of the recent events in Auschwitz.

The communist manipulation of history turned out to be an important factor that has to a large degree contributed to the creation of the landscapes in their (still) present form. In fact we can speak of three types of memory as expressed in the landscape: Jewish, Polish, and Polish-Communist, the latter created artificially to serve a political purpose.

One can assume that the communist chronotopes will gradually disappear together with the mythological vision of history they have contained and supported. However, as the example of Auschwitz illustrates, they could be replaced by equally mythological, nationalist visions and corresponding chronotopes. One can of course hope that in a democratic society it will be more difficult to institute one version of memory as the only valid one and that there will be attempts to do justice to the Jewish chronotopes in Poland. However, for the time being, it would be difficult to expect that in the country that faces a multifarious crisis, including identity crisis, a plurality of chronotopes will be anything more than a hope for a rather distant future.

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