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MEMORY OF THE HOLOCAUST AS A DISTINCTION OF MODERN POLISH SOCIETY

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Abstract. The Holocaust is one of the most tragic page in human history. The memory of this crime is not limited to one nation or region. The Holocaust left a bitter mark on societies around the world. In 2005, the United Nations declared the 27th of January as the International Holocaust Remembrance Day. On this day, various national communities, representatives of states, national and international organizations honor the memory of the victims of the Holocaust. This day is an important warning that should guide our decisions today, in light of the powerful slogan "Never Again". This slogan is associated with the Holocaust and other genocides. The European Model of Remembrance under the slogan "Never Again" commemorates everyone who fought against Nazism and Fascism. The victory is not attributed to any particular nation or state. It is primarily about memory and commemoration, not festive parades, because it is a War for Mankind. War is primarily human suffering and sacrifice. The European concept of memory emphasizes the human component of history, not just geopolitics and the military machine. The Day of Remembrance and Reconciliation and the Day of Victory over Nazism in the Second World War do not symbolize the triumph of the victors over the vanquished, but should be a reminder of a terrible catastrophe and an important warning. Our memory is a safeguard against such disasters ever happening again. We – the ukrainian society well knows the price of war, so we cherish Peace.

The Holocaust – "catastrophe אדושה" – is not only a historical phenomenon. In light of the recent tragic events of Russia's brutal war against Ukraine, the denazification of the Ukrainian people by the Russian authorities in the center of Europe, the Holocaust is still today, unfortunately, is acute. This tragic past reminds us how terrible fascism is, which does not recognize humanity and cynically rejects the human right to life.

How relevant is the topic of the Holocaust in modern European society, in particular, in Poland? What is the attitude of Polish society to the events of the Holocaust? The author talks about this in the submitted article.

Key words: Holocaust, memory, stratification of society, relevance.

Introduction. There has been a significant increase in awareness of the history of the Holocaust in the modern History. This is due to the threatening situation in the world, the particular cruelty of this historical event and the need to find a moral basis for confronting this phenomenon today, since societies on all continents feel a lack of ideological narratives. Today, the Holocaust is associated with a moral conviction in the need for confrontation, which today goes beyond national borders and unites Europe and the rest of the world. At the same time, attitudes and assessments of the Holocaust may differ in different countries. Polish scientist of History Professor Jan Grabowski is the first analyst who studied the sociological issue of Polish society at the 2War time. His famous book «The Next Night» tells everybody about difficult situation in Poland under Germany occupation.

The special importance of the Holocaust lies in the fact that it reminds us of the danger of dehumanization. During the Holocaust, the Nazis committed mass murders and violence against Jews and other peoples. Dehumanization is the destruction of human dignity, rights, and humanity, which occurs in acts of genocide and hatred.

Today, there are evidenced by the Nuremberg and Berlin fascist laws adopted during the Holocaust, under which acts of legalized discrimination were committed. The Nuremberg Race Laws are two

racist, primarily anti-Jewish, legislative acts: the Reich Citizen Law (German: Reichsbürgergesetz) and the Law for the Protection of German Blood and German Honor (German: Gesetz zum Schutze des deutschen Blutes und der deutschen Ehre), proclaimed on the initiative of Adolf Hitler on September 15, 1935, at the National Socialist Party Congress in Nuremberg. According to the secret program of 1920, they were unanimously adopted by a session of the Reichstag, specially convened in Nuremberg on the occasion of the party congress. Initially, the Nuremberg Race Laws applied only to Jews. Later, the German National Socialists extended the Nuremberg Race Laws to include Gypsies, blacks, Slavs, and representatives of certain other peoples (Fritz, Stephen G., 2011: 23-24).

Russian troops in Ukraine, on the orders of their leader, are today implementing the denazification of the Ukrainian people, which coincides with the crimes of the fascists during the Second World War. The invaders are committing numerous war crimes, deliberately attacking the civilian population, killing innocent people, using torture and sexual violence against women and children, while showing complete disregard for human life. All this reminds us that dehumanization, a component of acts of genocide and violence, is far from eradicated even in the 21st century.

The main text. It should be recognized that the Holocaust is not only about the history of the Jewish people during World War II, but also reflects the impact of dehumanization on humanity as a whole. It is a reminder that we must be vigilant when faced with prejudice or hatred, so that the painful past does not become someone's future. This means recognizing and confronting hatred, discrimination and violence against people.

The aim of this study is to identify the attitude of the European population, in particular the Polish society, towards the shameful phenomenon of the Holocaust. This will be facilitated by the use of comparative approaches to the analysis of the attitudes of different social groups, the disclosure of the broader context of relationships in outlining the specifics of the Polish experience during the Nazi occupation, a multifaceted analysis of the Holocaust experience in the narrative of its importance for modern Polish society. The categories of witnesses – criminals – victims, adopted in the literature on this topic, do not reveal the complexities of the situation in occupied Poland and hinder the understanding of the dynamics of events and relations not only between Poles and Jews, but also within individual groups. Hence the need for in-depth and interdisciplinary research that seeks answers to a number of key questions and analyzes the perception of the Holocaust, attitudes towards it and the actions of people, institutions and social groups in occupied Poland.

The source base used by the author consists of artifacts, research, archival documents, etc. The analyzed materials are subjected to source analysis and criticism. To describe the phenomena of interest to us, a broad methodology of the humanities was used: not only historical categories, but also anthropological, ethnological, sociological and psychological.

Many scientific studies have been devoted to the issues of the Holocaust both in Ukraine and abroad. The vast majority of them are descriptive, narrative in nature, and among the published literature *we did not find an analysis of the psychological and emotional attitude of Poles towards the issues of the Holocaust and the Jewish ethnic group in particular*. There are also no sociological surveys analyzing the attitude of Polish society to the issues raised. We also find it surprising that the corresponding sociological surveys were not conducted at all, either in post-war Poland or at the present time. There is an interesting fact: sociological surveys on the attitude of Poles towards representatives of the Jewish ethnic group have not been conducted, although the attitude of Poles towards Ukrainians is constantly covered in the Polish press and sociological surveys (*Ostafiński, Witold. 2014*).

The Polish Institute of National Remembrance has initiated in the Parliament new version of the Law on the Establishment and Functions of the Institute. The amendments introduced provisions to expand the Institute's powers: its allowed the identification and initiation of criminal cases against persons who criticize Poles and «transfer» responsibility for crimes against Jews committed during World War II to Poles (*Grabowski, Jan. 2021*).

When you observe the events in Poland through the prism of historical memory, many questions arise. And the most pressing of them boil down to what happened? Why was it necessary to strengthen the Institute of National Memory today? Why is it necessary to openly condemn the «anti-patriots» of Poland?

This situation was caused by the publication of the book: «The Next Night», which published denunciations by Poles against Jews who were hiding from death during the Holocaust at the time of World War II. The well-known Polish historian Professor Jan Grabowski, who has devoted many years to studying the Holocaust, has harshly criticized the working methods of the Polish Institute of National Remembrance (IPN). He noted that the Institute of National Remembrance has become a «toxic organization» that sets itself the task of searching for hackers and destroying its reputation. In his opinion, Poles are considered anti-Semites who approach their history uncritically. «Warsaw claims that the law protects (...) from illegal claims that Poles participated in the functioning of Nazi death camps such as Auschwitz», writes the American edition «Newsweek». During a scientific meeting about Holocaust in Paris Polish delegation disrupted scientific forum with French researchers. J. Grabowski noted that the behavior of the Polish scientific beau monde, whose representatives spoke with cries of indignation when the facts of Poles' participation in the Holocaust were made public, was a shock to French scientists. They noted that they saw the face of the 1930s, the face of hated nationalism, said Prof. Grabowski. In his opinion, the failure of the scientific conference in Paris on the Holocaust will not have a significant impact on Poland's image on the international stage, since «we, Poles, have long had a reputation as «a dark horse», especially after the amendments to the Law on the Institute of National Remembrance», – said Prof. Grabowski. In his opinion, if further acts of violence against Holocaust researchers occur in Poland, the responsibility will lie on the shoulders and conscience of the people who cause this hatred (*Poles' Participation*. 30.04.2018).

A similar scandal also unfolded around the book «The Next Night», which was prepared by nine researchers, who proved with numerous documents that Poles during the war were not only victims, but also witnesses and criminals. The publication and its authors have been attacked by TVP and the right-wing press, and the Institute (IPN) staff are trying to discredit the authors' research.

The system of banning verified information in Poland has also affected education. In an interview with the editor-in-chief of Newsweek, Prof. Grabowski recalled a report by a French scholar who analyzed the main curricula of Polish school over the past 6 years. The conclusion is disappointing: all critical elements regarding the own (Polish) past have been removed from the school curricula. At the same time, the works of Jan Gross, who described the murders of Jews by Polish neighbors in Jedwabne, are mentioned, as well as the publications of Jan Grabowski, who writes that «most of the Jews who hid from the Nazis were betrayed and in some cases killed by their Polish neighbors» (Jan Grabowski. 30.04.2018).

This and other conferences were preceded by events related to the publication of an article in the American newspaper Newsweek: «Udział Polaków w Holokauście» (Poles' Participation in the Holocaust). «Did Poland Participate in the Holocaust?» asks the American «Newsweek» in the headline of an article devoted to the amended law on the Polish Institute of National Remembrance, which allows for the detection, accusation and even criminal liability (with subsequent imprisonment) of a person for informing the community about crimes committed by Poles against Jews during World War II. The Institute calls such historical facts fabricated accusations and unfairly, contrary to the facts "attributed" to the Polish people. It is as if Polish society should still bear responsibility for this today (Newsweek 2018). «Warsaw claims that the law protects (...) from illegal claims that Poles participated in the operation of Nazi death camps, such as Auschwitz». The article also states that during World War II, approximately 3 million Jews, Polish citizens and 2.5 million ethnic Poles died in Poland.

«Despite this, every year, according to the deputy foreign minister of the Republic of Poland, the Polish embassies record about 1,500 cases of accusations of Nazi crimes by Poland, not Germany», the author of the article emphasizes. This applies both to the term «Polish» concentration camps and to allegations of Warsaw's collaboration with Adolf Hitler during World War II. Critics of the bill, both in Poland and abroad, claim that the law is an attack on freedom of speech, specially designed by the ruling PIS (Law and Justice) party, «to silence critics in the context of a historical debate», writes Konstanty Gebert in the Polish *Gazeta Wyborcza*. The researcher claims that it is about «holding a stick over the heads of people who want to discuss the Shoah (the crime of the Holocaust)» (*Świadowie Holokaustu*).

The history of 2WW also says that many Poles helped Jews during World War II, and that over 6,000 trees have been planted in Israel's Yad Vashem in memory of WAR. For another side, the Polish side has also cautiously begun to raise the mentioned difficult issues, which are mainly the concern of the Polish Institute of National Remembrance, since it has the appropriate sources: it stores previously closed and secret archival materials and funds inaccessible to the general public. It is this frankly powerful institution, which employs thousands of officials and scientists, that is gradually exposing and publishing documents that confirm the far from tolerant reaction of Poles to the phenomenon of the Holocaust and the ambiguous position of society on the Jewish question. Despite attempts to prove Poles' tolerance towards Jews, as researcher Emanuel Ringelblum writes: «Taking into account the special conditions in Poland, we must consider the behavior of that part of the Polish intelligentsia, workers and peasants who hid Jews in their homes to be extremely noble, in keeping with the traditions of tolerance in the history of Poland» (*Archiwum Ringelbluma*, 2017: 50), but at the same time the Polish Institute of National Remembrance has uncovered several reports about Poles who hid Jews. The reports were written by their own neighbors, who were guided by different motivations in exposing the unfortunate people. We read in one of the original letters: «Since the Ghetto case has become relevant in Warsaw, I consider it appropriate to inform you that a fat Jew [original writing] named Dickstein, who was the deputy director of the Łódź branch of «Elibor» and who at one time fled Łódź to avoid the ghetto, is hiding in the «Elibor» company at Wolska 103. This is one example how one of the many denunciations to the Warsaw Gestapo begins, which are stored in the archives of the Institute of National Remembrance. The Polish side also cautiously began to raise the mentioned difficult issues, which are mainly the concern of the Institute of National Remembrance of Poland, since it has the appropriate sources: it stores previously closed and secret archival materials and funds inaccessible to the public. It is this frankly powerful institution, which employs thousands of officials and scholars, that gradually exposes and publishes documents that confirm the far from tolerant reaction of Poles to the phenomenon of the Holocaust and the ambiguous position of society on the Jewish question.

Despite attempts to prove the tolerance of Poles towards Jews, as researcher *Emanuel Ringelblum* writes: «Taking into account the special conditions in Poland, we must consider the behavior of that part of the Polish intelligentsia, workers and peasants who hid Jews in their homes to be extremely noble, in keeping with the traditions of tolerance in the history of Poland» (*Archiwum Ringelbluma*, т. 29a. 2018: 34), the Polish Institute of National Remembrance has uncovered several reports about Poles who hid Jews. The reports were written by their own neighbors, who were guided by different motivations, exposing unfortunate people. They reported on practically about everyone and everybody: on more resourceful neighbors, on Polish officers in hiding, on underground workers, etc. Jews who hid, creating a danger not only for themselves, but also for the Poles who gave them shelter. In post-war stories, memoirs and conversations, Holocaust survivors often emphasized that informers were more dangerous than the German police. The worst was expected from the Germans, and among neighbors it was never known who would keep a secret and who would betray.

Polish society at that time was divided into two conditional parts. The first was those who reported on the persecuted or otherwise actively participated in the persecution. The other group was those

who were in hiding and also provided all kinds of assistance to the fugitives. Among them were many people who simply wanted to survive and focused all their energy and efforts on ensuring the survival of themselves and their loved ones. If an issue did not directly concern them, they usually remained indifferent. There isn't known for certain how many Poles were informers and those who actively supported the extermination of Jews. But what is important here is not the numbers, but the motivation and the level of involvement of these people in the aforementioned procedure. This attitude towards others, as Polish researchers claim, is the result of anti-Semitic propaganda, both before the war and during the occupation, which the Germans actively fueled and used. They explained the imprisonment of Jews in the ghettos by the need for protection from Polish anti-Semitism, although this did not prevent them from placing warning signs on the borders of these ghettos about the threat of typhus. It was because of German encouragement that violent anti-Jewish demonstrations began in early 1940, culminating in the Easter Pogrom in March 1940.

Emanuel Ringelblum, a historian and chronicler of the Warsaw ghetto, wrote about these events: «Gangs of anti-Semites, mostly young, moved under the leadership of a German who provided the rear and patronized the actions. The weapons of these gangs consisted of sticks, crowbars, etc. The slogans of the attackers were: «destroy the Jews», «down with the Jews», «long live independent Poland without Jews», etc. The demonstrators smashed windows in shops marked with the Star of David, broke iron shutters, opened shops and looted. Jews they met on the way were beaten, knocked down and beaten until they lost consciousness. Looting shops was the finale of the pogrom, its important goal» (Archiwum Ringelbluma, т. 29a, 2018: 34).

Calls from the Catholic Church and underground organizations to remain calm and not succumb to German provocations did not always find an adequate response. The pogrom was attended by people from the lower strata of society and some of the youth, who suffered from the harsh anti-Semitic rhetoric of radical activists of some ultra-right organizations. The scale of these events was a real shock to the Jews of Warsaw. Although many of them organized themselves, entered the fight and repelled the attackers, a deep pain and a sense of disappointment towards the Poles remained. *Rabbi Shimon Huberband*, who worked with Emanuel Ringelblum, bitterly commented: «They even say that this is a German work, because the Germans are photographing the attacks of the Poles on the Jews. Later they will show the world that the Poles are attacking the Jews. It is only sad that there are Poles who allow themselves to be used and become a toy in their hands, serving other people's purposes. It is even sadder that there are no Poles who would influence these scoundrels to stop their dirty work» (Archiwum Ringelbluma, 2017: 50).

The widespread, aggressive anti-Semitic propaganda and, starting in the autumn of 1941, the death penalty for aiding and hiding Jews (outside occupied Poland, the same harsh system of punishment was applied in the German-occupied regions of the USSR) were to eventually prevent Poles from providing any assistance to Jewish escapees from the ghetto. There were environments where those who escaped could not count on support, but there were also those where the provision of shelter was obvious (for example, the Warsaw Housing Cooperative, which operated in the Żoliborz district of Warsaw).

Given the current level of knowledge, it is difficult to clearly assess the scale of the phenomenon of assistance. Emanuel Ringelblum tried to make such calculations as early as 1943. According to his assumption, no more than 15,000 Jews were hidden in the capital, distributed among 2,000–3,000 Polish families. Taking into account that 2,000–3,000 Polish families act with the knowledge and consent of their closest relatives, we can conclude that at least 10,000–15,000 Polish families in Warsaw helped to hide Jews, which is approximately 40,000–60,000 people" (Dziewczynka. 2011: 282).

We still do not know how many such silent heroes there were. They undoubtedly constituted an elite that understood everything well and showed their humanity and Polishness. Unfortunately, they were not given enough attention after the war, and many of their stories now need to be rediscovered.

Some of them died together with the hidden Jews, and some did not want to talk about it for a long time after the war. They were mostly afraid of their neighbors, who, adhering to anti-Semitic stereotypes, believed that if someone hid Jews, then, they were probably «making money» on them.

Those Jews who survived, mostly left Poland. They had to build a new life. For a long time, they did not talk about themselves or their rescuers.

Ms. Khrystyna Chyger, who was rescued along with her family by the Lviv collector Leopold Socha, described the beginning of a new life this way: «In Israel, no one talked about the war. No one talked about the Holocaust. Everything we went through, whatever we experienced before we got there, was left behind and could not be questioned. This was the attitude of the Jews in their homeland by choice, and in many ways it corresponded to the attitude towards the past that we had developed in our family» (Dziewchynka. 2011: 282; Sprawiedliwi).

Conclusion. There are necessary to many years that have passed for the survivors to heal their traumas, to begin to speak openly about their war experiences. In Poland, it took decades for society to begin to notice and appreciate those who saved Jews, and to talk about Polish-Jewish relations. The commonality of experience of rescuers and rescued people can become a space where Polish and Jewish historical experiences meet and create a common narrative. The extermination of Jews during World War II took place before the eyes of Poles, who themselves were subjected to the terror of the German occupiers. Their humanity was put to the test. Most remained passive about the Holocaust, many were negative towards Jews, some were hostile, and some helped them.

To summarize, we would like to note that during 2World War, terror reigned in the German-occupied territories of the Polish Republic. Its citizens – a multinational community that included Poles, Ukrainians, Jews, Belarusians and Lithuanians – suffered brutal repression, struggled with everyday hardships, poverty and hunger. There were many regulations that regulated the lives of civilians, and failure to comply with them could lead to draconian punishments, even death. Among other things, political and cultural activities, slaughtering farm animals or owning a radio receiver were prohibited. It was also strictly forbidden to help prisoners of war, partisans and Jews. Jews sentenced to extermination by Nazi Germany were forced to go into hiding in order to survive.

Despite the threat of punishment, even death, hundreds of thousands of Poles carried out secret activities, and some of them also helped persecuted

Jews – selflessly or for a fee. However, a positive attitude towards assistance in Polish society was rare and did not meet with general approval. Most Poles remained passive about the Holocaust, focusing on the fate of their own families and fearing repression. This passivity was also a consequence of pre-war anti-Semitism, expressed directly, especially in Roman Catholic and nationalist circles.

Poles' attitudes towards the Holocaust ranged from quiet satisfaction with the atrocities against Jews they witnessed to deep compassion and denial.

At the same time, many individuals were actively hostile to Jews, creating a mortal danger for them. Driven by anti-Semitic motives or the desire for profit, these people collaborated with the Germans and betrayed those who were in hiding. There are many known cases of Poles blackmailing Jews – especially in large cities – that is, demanding money in exchange for not reporting them.

The participation of Poles in hiding Jews took various forms and stemmed from various motives. For some, it was a way to make money – due to the high risk, hiding places were usually provided at exorbitant prices. It happened that payment was deferred and based on the promise of various goods after the war (e.g. money, jewelry, houses, land). It also happened that the «service» provided turned into selfless help or merciless exploitation of those in hiding, materially, or even morally or sexually. Often, the exhaustion of the Jews' financial resources led to their expulsion. For those who provided shelter, this was an extremely difficult and risky business.

The modern Polish party Confederation-Crown party, led by Grzegorz Braun, actively supports the pro-fascist movement in Poland. On December 12, 2023, G. Braun used a powder fire

extinguisher to put out a hanukkah lit for the celebration of Hanukkah in the Polish Sejm building: employees were evacuated due to toxic smoke. Anti-Jewish behavior was not condemned..... It was the Crown that blocked Ukrainian grain on the border with Poland. No one was held accountable. Those who demonstrated prohibited actions motivated by profit, fear, or reluctance reported them. Poles who selflessly helped Jews acted in even more difficult conditions – burdened with finding and organizing shelter, covering living expenses, and often also emotionally sympathizing with those in hiding. It was a heroic undertaking – physically and morally exhausting, requiring courage and perseverance.

The question arises: what next? Poland introduces censorship, does not punish anti-Jewish speeches. Who will be responsible for all such crimes against generations of Europeans?

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