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Is it Possible to Be a *Moral Witness* in Post-memory of the Holocaust? The Case of the International Summer Institute Teaching about the Holocaust at the Centre for Holocaust Studies/UNESCO Chair for Education about the Holocaust at the Jagiellonian University

...And there shall be in Warsaw and in every other Polish city some fragment of the ghetto left standing and preserved in its present form in all its horror of ruin and destruction... and every day we shall twine fresh live flowers into its iron links, so that the memory of the massacred people shall remain forever fresh in the minds of generations to come, and also as a sign of our undying sorrow for them.

Julian Tuwim *We, Polish Jews*

Marianne Hirsch describes the term of post-memory in the following way: „we are related to its [memory] object or source not by a recollection of experienced events but by an investment of imagination, creation”.

See: M. Hirsch, *Family Frames: Photography, Narrative and Postmemory*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press 1997, p. 22.

Introductory Remarks

The study on memory was initiated in a laboratory setting in XIX century by Hermann Ebbinghaus and continued in the natural environment by James Galton. Durkheim addressed the notion of social memory by his interest in commemorative rituals in early societies safeguarding social cohesion and common morality. Through membership in religious, national, or class groups that people are able to acquire and

then recall their memories at all. Maurice Halbwachs³⁴⁴ opposed his former teacher Henri Bergson who treated memory as primarily a subjective experience, focusing on social groups forming the “communities of memories”, the term that usefully explains diverse/conflicting collective memories within large “groups”, such as nations and/or ethnic groups. The renaissance of memory studies dates back to 1970s and 1980s.

More and more attention is paid nowadays to the concept of transnational or non-national memory, and the cultural reflection on memory coupled with collective remembrance are omnipresent in the research, discourse, art and education. Talking about memory of the Holocaust we cannot omit the term “trauma” (etymologically meaning injury or wound) deriving from medicine and psychology. In Greek, traumas mean “wounds”, leaving a scar. The pioneering work in the field of traumatic memory initiated by Pierre Marie Félix Janet (1859-1947), French philosopher and psychologist lecturing at the Sorbonne, College de France and at the Harvard Medical School, proceeding Sigmund Freud in connecting past events to present moments in life and using the term “unconscious”. Freudian psychoanalysis, along with Freud Walter Benjamin's and Theodor Adorno's Freudian-inspired reflections of 1920s and 1930s, shed more light on understanding of traumas. There is an assumption that trauma can be cured by psychotherapy. The question arises, whether the trauma of the Holocaust can be cured as well and/or at all? Henry Krystal, a survivor himself, in his critique of psychoanalytical uselessness of the term “trauma”, underlined that the core of trauma is *helplessness* facing annihilation³⁴⁵. We claim that certain educational initiatives aimed at the memory of the Holocaust in fact, although not always consciously, engage its audience in such a way as to empower educators to overcome the overwhelming feeling of helplessness when facing mass atrocities. We will return to this notion a bit later however, followed by a presentation of a case documenting almost 10 years of experience with the program of the International Summer Institute Teaching about the Holocaust (ISITH), which can serve as an example of a “positive” encounter with past trauma and memory of the Holocaust.

Annette Wieviorka called our times *The Era of the Witness*³⁴⁶ referring to past trauma of the Holocaust, memory and testimonies of the survivors. The term „witness” will soon become a term of the past, therefore the term „moral witness”³⁴⁷, in our opinion, has a potential to enhance autobiographical accounts to a larger audience of educators carrying on the message enriched with ethical implications.

³⁴⁴ M. Halbwachs, *Spoleczne ramy pamieci*, Warszawa: PWN 1969.

³⁴⁵ After Henry Greenspan in: H. Greenspan, S. R. Horowitz, É. Kovács, B. Lang, D. Laub, K. Waltzer & A. Wieviorka, *Engaging Survivors: Assessing 'Testimony' and 'Trauma' as Foundational Concepts*, „Dapim: Studies on the Holocaust”, vol. 28, issue 3, 2014, p. 215.

³⁴⁶ A. Wieviorka, *The Era of the Witness*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press 2006.

³⁴⁷ Sara Horowitz rightly noticed that the term „moral witness” does not have precise definition and has various connotations depending on the context. See: H. Greenspan, S. R. Horowitz, É. Kovács, B. Lang, D. Laub, K. Waltzer, A. Wieviorka, *op.cit.*, p. 204. D. LaCapra, *Representing the Holocaust: History, Theory, Trauma*, NY 1994; D. LaCapra, *History and Memory after Auschwitz*, Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press 1998; D. LaCapra, *Writing History, Writing Trauma*, Baltimore, London: John Hopkins University Press 2001.

The term „moral witness” carries a „positive” component implying that the trauma of the Holocaust can be a subject of „working through”, though not always by the witnesses but by subsequent generations, forming what Marianne Hirsh calls a phenomenon of post-memory.

This term, referring to moral obligation chosen by some individuals, may be useful in explaining the phenomenon of non-memory of the Holocaust in so many areas in contemporary Poland, where no memorial plaques exist, in towns and villages where Jews constituted a majority or a significant minority. A phenomenon of enriched memory in some cities and towns is accompanied by non-memory of the Holocaust. Freud’s earlier concept of repressed memory inspired psychological and psychoanalytical research related to the notion of memory and his terminology of “working through” (of repressed, traumatic memories) has been adopted by Paul Ricoeur³⁴⁸ and Dominique LaCapra. The analysis of data from empirical research³⁴⁹ stimulates many questions for further research, and one of them is whether educational initiatives related to the Holocaust memory can create a network of “working through”, „moral witnesses” instead of denying, distorting the dark history of Poland during the WWII?

The Case from the Center for Holocaust Study/UNESCO Chair for Education about the Holocaust

The example of the International Summer Institute *Teaching about the Holocaust*, an annual program held at the Center for Holocaust Studies and earlier at the Section for Holocaust Studies at the Institute of European Studies of the Jagiellonian University since 2006, may serve as a post-memory encounter with memory and trauma of the Holocaust with ultimately positive outcomes. The program was initiated by Tess Wise, the founder and the Chair of the Holocaust Memorial Resource and Education Center of Central Florida, USA. Born in Szydłowiec, Poland, the great-granddaughter of the chief rabbi of Warsaw (1920s) and the first Jewish member of the Polish parliament after regaining freedom in 1918. Wise, a Holocaust survivor and Holocaust education expert, initiating first the educational institutions in the USA and later the ISITH, being herself a first eye witness of the history of the Holocaust, ensuring the memory of the Holocaust and establishing the program for post-memory generation. Her numerous initiatives are an example *per se* of enormous energy and will to transform an individual and collective trauma into social action to empower teachers, first American and with time also Polish.

The aforementioned institutions with other co-partner institutions: Yad Vashem. The Holocaust Martyrs’ and Heroes’ Remembrance Authority, The International

³⁴⁸ P. Ricoeur, *Pamięć, historia, zapomnienie*, Kraków: Universitas 2006.

³⁴⁹ J. Ambrosewicz-Jacobs, *Młodzież wobec Żydów i Holokaustu. Z komentarzami prof. dra hab. Antoniego Sulka, dr hab. Michała Bilewicza i Roberta Szuchty*, “Nigdy Więcej”, no. 21/2014, p. 36-39.

Center for Education about Auschwitz and Holocaust at the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum and the Jewish Galicia Museum in Kraków, the International Youth Meeting Centre in Oświęcim/Auschwitz, the Auschwitz Jewish Centre in Oświęcim and since 2014 the Historical Museum of the City of Cracow and the UNESCO Chair for Education about the Holocaust successfully cooperated implementing the ISITH, which since 2006 has had ten editions. The Centre for Holocaust Studies (CHS) conceptualized the program and has been the chief organizer of the Summer Institutes since its establishment as an independent unit at the Faculty of International and Political Studies of the Jagiellonian University in 2008³⁵⁰. From 2009 the strategic partner of the CHS JU has been the Illinois Holocaust Museum and Education Center in Skokie, USA. Among the Polish co-partners are: the International Center for Education about Auschwitz and Holocaust at the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum, the Jewish Galicia Museum, the International Youth Meeting Centre in Oświęcim/Auschwitz, the Auschwitz Jewish Centre in Oświęcim, and in 2014 the Historical Museum of the City of Cracow³⁵¹.

The mission of the ISITH, specified in 2006, is the sustainable integration of the Holocaust education into Polish schools with the goal of building an open, pluralistic and inclusive society in which prejudice, discrimination and antisemitism are condemned and rejected.

The rationale of the program is relevant in the light of new historiographical discussion on the collaboration of individual ethnic Poles and their compliance in the Holocaust, in many localities, as well as with regards to the empirical studies in Germany which can serve as a model to diagnose social attitudes. The study commissioned by the German Parliament in 2012 revealed the „guilt denial” and the Bielefeld University studies in 2008 indicated the „Holocaust fatigue” by 67% of surveyed Germans³⁵². The aforementioned phenomena result from „exaggerated moral expectations” directed at German students whose reaction, apart from the Holocaust denial and fatigue results also in secondary antisemitism³⁵³.

³⁵⁰ Several recognized American institutions joined in the ISITH, to name: The Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies, University of Minnesota (2007), Museum of Jewish Heritage: Living Memorial to the Holocaust in New York (2008), State of California Center for Excellence on the Study of the Holocaust, Genocide, Human Rights and Tolerance, California State University, Chico (2008).

³⁵¹ The main sponsor of the Summer Institute is Claims Conference. The Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany. The project has been also supported by different American funds and trusts, inter alia: Michael H. Traison Fund for Poland, The Elisabeth Morse Genius Charitable Trust, Taube Foundation for Jewish Life & Culture, Segal Family Foundation. Private donors, some of whom wish to remain anonymous, have generously contributed to the Summer Institute’s budget.

³⁵² D. Fleshler, Does Education Fuel Anti-Semitism?, *Forward* February 17, 2012 <http://forward.com/opinion/world/151531/does-education-fuel-anti-semitism/> (accessed: 3.05.2015).

³⁵³ J. Ambrosewicz-Jacobs, *Antisemitismus und Einstellungen zum Holocaust. Empirische Untersuchungen in Polen*, [in:] *Jahrbuch für Antisemitismusforschung* 23, 2014, Zentrum für Antisemitismusforschung, Berlin, Metropol Verlag, p. 168-180.

The crucial objective of the program is to provide Polish teachers with present research about the Holocaust and its impact on present and future history. The historical, social, religious and moral context of the Holocaust that the participants study during the week of training can assist them with their work with students. It is very important to create a common ground for teachers to share the ideas and experiences with other colleagues, non-governmental organization members, university lecturers and researchers, to learn from each other, and consequently build a network of competent educators.

During the ISITH participants have many opportunities to broaden knowledge, reflect on, and sometimes verify their opinions. The lecturers and experts invited to work with participants make them aware that teaching about the Holocaust is not only talking about dates, numbers and simple facts, but above all it is sensitizing students to the dangers of intolerance, prejudices and xenophobia. Therefore, it is crucial to provide participants with practical skills how to refer to the Holocaust in the context of human rights and fundamental values. Such an approach seems extremely important nowadays when racist and nationalistic ideas are getting more and more popular among the younger generation. A responsible and thoughtful approach as well as carefully chosen methods and strategies are required from teachers, otherwise lessons about the Holocaust can result in strengthening of prejudices and negative stereotypes. The Summer Institute experts - recognized academics, educators, museum curators and experts from the United States, Israel and Poland share their expertise and experience with teachers. They assist participants on which sources, materials and teaching tools to use, and which methods and strategies to apply.

The target groups of the ISITH are Polish teachers, teacher trainers, educators, young leaders working for nongovernmental organizations and doctoral students of the Holocaust studies³⁵⁴. In 2014 thanks to the new partner in the project: the Ukrainian Center for Holocaust Studies in Kiev, two school teachers and one young leader from Ukraine took part in the program. One teacher from Azerbaijan and two others from Russia also attended the Institute in 2014³⁵⁵.

Besides taking part in presentations, lectures, practical workshops, film sessions participants go for study visits to memory sites and historical places. A study visit to Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum in Oświęcim is the central point of the program. Each year there are participants who get to visit Auschwitz-Birkenau for the very first

³⁵⁴ There are usually more women than men taking part in the training (the proportions are 80% women and 20% men). The average age of a participant is between 35-45 years. The majority of the whole number of participants are history, social studies and literature teachers, usually from small towns and villages all over Poland.

³⁵⁵ The recruitment for the Summer Institute is carried out according to the specific criteria. Candidates must prove their involvement in projects and other activities with the aim to memorize victims of the Holocaust and preserve Jewish heritage in the local context. The priority have teachers who have not yet participated in courses, trainings or post-graduate Holocaust studies, who live and work in small towns, and thus have not easy access to workshops or trainings offered mainly in big Polish cities. The final group of participants should be as versatile as possible in the aspect of the region of Poland where a school is located, there is also a restriction made that from one school only one teacher can be accepted. Each year twice or three times more candidates apply to the Summer Institute than places available.

time, mainly because they come from distant parts of Poland. For all of them, this is the rare opportunity to take part in a guiding tour especially tailored for this specific group of visitors³⁵⁶. Field trips to museum and memorial sites are often difficult to organize because of the shortage of time and financial limitations. Sometimes teachers' anxiety and uncertainty with regards to their students being prepared enough for such a visit, are an obstacle to organize the trip. A workshop with specific guidelines illustrating how teachers should work with students before visiting a memory site is run by one of the Summer Institute experts who is an active teacher, teacher-trainer and education expert about the Holocaust. The structure and content of the study visit to Auschwitz-Birkenau preceded by a preparatory workshop can encourage teachers to teach outside school classroom, "I realized that I must move from the place I live and teach about the Holocaust in sites of executions. It is a completely different dimension and awareness"³⁵⁷.

The most touching moment of each edition of the Summer Institute is a meeting with the Holocaust survivor. Oral history and testimonies given by individuals are considered extremely powerful means of teaching and sensitizing students about the trauma of the Holocaust. Different stories, different experiences, different personalities of speakers, different strategies used by these special guests to the Summer Institutes substantially enrich the educational offer of the ISITH³⁵⁸. Personal testimonies that are directly heard and recognized are valued by educators who are allowed to get closer to the experience of the trauma of survivors. The biggest impact on educators in particular is having met with survivors who emanated peace and forgiveness, were not stuck in trauma and overcame their horrible experience. This was the case of Henryk Mandelbaum, a member of Sonderkommando in Birkenau, a direct witness of genocide of more than 400 000 of Hungarian Jews, who escaped from the *death march*.

Feedback from the ISITH Participants

Over a span of ten years, the educational program of the Summer Institute has been systematically evaluated³⁵⁹. Teachers look forward to answering several questions:

³⁵⁶ The guides, who are experienced museum curators and experts in creating exhibitions, provide them not only with historical facts and data, but also are open for specific, sometimes, difficult questions.

³⁵⁷ Quotation from the evaluation of the Summer Institute, 2010. Transl. Katarzyna Kopff-Muszyńska.

³⁵⁸ Professor and writer, Nechama Tec; writer, Miriam Akavia; Birkenau Sonderkommando member, Henryk Mandelbaum; fugitive from the Sobibór death camp; Tomasz (Toivi) Blatt; prisoner of five death camps, Bernard Offen; history professor, Shimon Redlich; the author of a heartbreaking book: *I still see her haunting eyes*, Aron Elster; members of the Association "Children of the Holocaust" in Poland, Zofia Radziszewska and Emanuel Elbinger were guests of honor of the previous Summer Institutes.

³⁵⁹ Different evaluation methods are used during and after completion of each edition of the seminar: participants evaluate the program content and the lecturers' performance filling in questionnaires at the end of each day of the seminar, overall evaluation of the Institute is conducted on the last day of the course, after each lecture a session of questions to a lecturer is held, on workshops teachers are encouraged to speak freely and share opinions with an expert and other participants.

how to get students more interested and involved; what language should be used to communicate with youth about the Holocaust and Polish-Jewish relations; where to find best sources and useful teaching materials, feasible lesson scenarios, informative websites, downloadable or easily accessible visual materials (films, or film fragments, witnesses and survivors' testimonies); how to verify historical sources; how to write educational projects; which aspects of the Holocaust need in-depth study and special focus; how practically implement interdisciplinary approach to teaching about the Holocaust? Some teachers even name specific topics that should be presented during lectures or workshops. Some of the problems they face include organizational issues, for example: how to start cooperation with an Israeli school and initiate youth exchange program? Teachers also address complex issues such as: how to change negative attitude of the local community to the Holocaust education or how to fight *anti-Semitic legends* still present in collective memory? In the light of the rise of recent anti-Semitic and neo-Nazi attitudes in some states of Central-Eastern Europe and an emerging neo-fascist political parties such a Jobbik in Hungary, such issues are particularly relevant. In Eastern Poland, where before the WWII there was a strong support for the radical political movement of the National Democrats (Endecja) the negative stereotype of Jews still presently prevails as was revealed by Mikołaj Winiewski and the team of the Institute of Social Studies of the Faculty of Psychology at the Warsaw University.

There are numerous motivations why teachers decide to apply for the program. Some participants stated that they feel they need to get gain a deeper insight into the topic they teach, and the Jagiellonian University has a reputation of providing the right circumstances necessary to discuss difficult issues in unbiased and multi-perspective environment. Teachers have expressed their need for support and guidelines in their work. They are well aware how important passing the knowledge about the Holocaust to young generations is, and they know why they should teach about the Holocaust, but what they are not sure about is how to do it in an effective and interesting way. Reaching out to young people is a real challenge³⁶⁰.

The majority of the Summer Institute participants graduated from universities or teachers' colleges ten or more years ago, and since then have not had many opportunities to participate in the university course or training. They are happy to change places for a week and become students again: "I am really glad that such initiatives for teacher development are undertaken on the university level. It is a wonderful time: a teacher in the role of a student", one teacher writes in the evaluation form³⁶¹. Participants appreciate the chance to meet renowned university professors, experts and

³⁶⁰ The Summer Institute program is constructed carefully to meet the teachers' needs. It is multi-faceted, consists of several components which combined together have potential to live up to expectations of the participants. Since 2006 it has been systematically improved and developed in response to suggestions of the experts and participants. The seminar was extended from 5 to 7 days, and more practical workshops, new topics, visits to memory sites and historical places, museums and more visual materials were included in the agenda.

³⁶¹ Quotation from the evaluation of the Summer Institute, 2014.

researchers whose names they know from publications or public discussions; they praise not only lecturers' professionalism, wide topic knowledge and true involvement but also their openness for discussions with "an average school teacher". It is equally important that the experts shorten the distance between themselves and listeners thus creating a safe learning environment and building a friendly atmosphere. "It is important for me to have a chance to meet in person people who I know only from literature. Their involvement, dynamics, carefulness, professionalism, dedication to the topic and "god's spark" of the lecturers' (...) give me strength in my efforts, touch me and let me feel gratitude, that they share their knowledge, and with such care listen to their interlocutors", another teacher comments³⁶².

Participants look forward to developing and increasing teaching skills and abilities in the course of numerous active workshops offered in the Summer Institute agenda³⁶³. The workshops offering strategies and materials useful in teaching about the Holocaust on history and literature classes are included. Teachers are mainly interested in interactive workshops during which they have an opportunity to try out new teaching methods. Workshops presenting visual materials such as photography, cartoons, testimonies, documentaries and feature films are welcomed. Using visual materials is considered by many teachers as one of the most effective way to arouse students' interest. The participants of all previous Institutes indicated this component of the agenda as especially useful for a teacher in a classroom. Thanks to academic knowledge provided by lecturers, usefulness of methods, strategies and materials presented on workshops teachers get inspired for their own work: "To my understanding the Summer Institute is not as much for teaching as for inspiring for further research. It is also about making one aware how diverse is the topic"³⁶⁴.

In 2012, a survey was conducted among the participants of seven institutes (2006-2012)³⁶⁵. The aim of the survey was to discover which methods and strategies, specific teaching tools and sources, topics and issues included in the Summer Institute agenda are most interesting for students, and especially useful for teachers in their everyday work. The survey's results are interesting with respect to teachers' opinions, and suggestions how the educational offer of the Summer Institute should be improved and developed, and if the program should be continued on advanced level. The general findings of this specific survey coincide in many respects with opinions and reflections provided by the participants of all nine editions of the Summer Institute (2006-2014).

In the evaluations the vast majority of participants share the opinion that the most effective and useful teaching methods and strategies presented during the Summer Institute are: visits to memory sites, museums, local historical sites, meetings with

³⁶² *Ibidem*.

³⁶³ In response to this particular demand the number of practical workshops has been systematically increased.

³⁶⁴ Quotation from the evaluation of the Summer Institute, 2013.

³⁶⁵ Evaluation of the International Summer Institute Teaching about the Holocaust, 2006-2012 by E. Buettner, K. Kopff-Muszyńska, CHS JU [manuscript].

witnesses and the Holocaust survivors, using different visual materials, explaining historical context through individual stories³⁶⁶. Many participants of all previous editions of the Summer Institutes expressed willingness to take part in more advanced program in teaching about the Holocaust, and suggest the organizers offer a master training for keen graduates. The Centre for Holocaust Studies JU together with the Illinois Holocaust Museum and Education Center in Skokie are now constructing the agenda of such training for those graduates whose initiatives in teaching about the Holocaust and preserving Jewish heritage locally have brought visible and positive results. There are three fields of interest that seem especially timely, thus necessary for teachers and local leaders who could be invited to participate advanced training. Firstly, present anti-Semitism, including cyber hate and the use of IT in teaching about the Holocaust; secondly, teaching about the Holocaust in local and international contexts (museums, exhibitions, memory sites) and thirdly, methodology of teaching about the Holocaust with the special emphasis on the use of visual materials.

External Evaluation

In 2010 an evaluation was conducted by an external surveyor, Dr. Magdalena Gross³⁶⁷. Dr. Gross based her study on participant observation, teachers' interviews, informal talks and interactions, and the survey with open-ended questions. She identified three areas for possible improvement of the Summer Institute: *Conflict Resolution* and *Support, Absence* and *Abnormality*, and *Personal Biographies*. The survey showed that teachers need more support and advice how to respond to anti-Semitic remarks or jokes in the classroom, how to deal with other teachers, parents or directors' negative attitude to teaching about Polish-Jewish relations in the context of the Holocaust. Gross quotes a teacher during one workshop: "Once, after a two hour lesson using testimony, we were finishing class. There was a reflective silence. Then, slow and steady, one of the boys growled: Jude. I had no idea what to do, I nearly died. Can you help me? How would you respond"³⁶⁸. In Gross' opinion in the agenda of the Summer Institute there should be space for a conflict resolution workshop, a place for sharing fears, exchanging reflections.

The next area for the agenda improvement, called by Gross: *Absence* and *Abnormality*, results from the lack of general knowledge about the Jews, as one teacher said: "The main questions my students face are 'who are they?' 'where did they come from?"; the other added: "It wasn't until I invited an original (real) Jew to class, a Jew without the curls, you know, that my students understood that a Jew could also be, let's

³⁶⁶ The fact that so many teachers point out these methods and strategies as especially appropriate and interesting, does not necessarily mean that they use them in the classroom, simply because of mentioned above organizational, financial problems or time limitations. Therefore, it can be questioned if teachers really use these methods, or, maybe, they theoretically know they are appropriate and effective, yet, they do not or cannot use them on regular basis.

³⁶⁷ Recommendations for 2011 Summer Institute, Magdalena Gross (for CHS JU internal use).

³⁶⁸ After M. Gross.

say, a taxi driver- they just don't know... they don't know what Jews are, what they looked like or what they did...". The majority of Polish students do not have many opportunities to meet "a real Jew", consequently their image of a Jew is shaped by stereotypes they can find in Polish literature or films like "Fiddler on the roof". The Summer Institute agenda includes lectures and workshops advising how to teach historical background but, what is lacking, in Gross' opinion are strategies on how to address the feeling of emptiness provoked by absence of the Jewish residents in local communities that some teachers and students may become aware of: "This lack of knowledge is coupled with a distinct "feeling" that there were Jews "somewhere" in their town, or in their history, but they are unable to really place the Jews within the history of their towns and Polish history - thus there is a kind of absence met with an apartness met with an abnormality because of lack of knowledge"³⁶⁹. In this aspect, teaching about Polish-Jewish history, their mutual relations, the Holocaust must include both: "real time activities with Jewish people, Jewish culture, and Jewishness" as well as discovering local history, its people and places. Her survey illustrates that for many teachers personal biographies and experiences are the most important and essential reason why they study and teach about the Holocaust. Therefore, Gross makes a suggestion that in the Summer Institute agenda there should be a place for a workshop to help teachers become conscious of those personal motivations.

Teachers may belong, in our opinion, to *milieux de mémoire* and/or *lieux de mémoire* emphasized by Pierre Nora as ranging "from symbols, monuments too pedagogical manuals, institutions, commemorative events, exhibitions, honorific dates and personages"³⁷⁰. Those educators attending described above annual Summer Institutes are driven by their "intention to remember" which is the form of reconstructed post-memory. Their intentions are not always verbalized for various reasons: too big group to reveal personal motivation, lack of awareness of own reasons for often very deep and long lasting interest in the Holocaust, feeling responsible for the memory but not knowing why. Pierre Nora³⁷¹ and Pierre Vidal-Naquet³⁷² (1992, 23) separate subjective memory from the objective history underlying it. Memory is the dialect of particular loci: regional, local, familial, ethnic, in contrast to historiography. There can be tensions or even opposition between them. This distinction, however, is questioned by many scholars, similar to questioned distinction between individual/personal and collective, cultural, social, national, public and popular memories. For Pierre Nora "(m)emory is blind to all but the groups it binds... History on the other hand, belongs to everyone and to no one..."³⁷³. The Summer Institutes attempt to merge the history and memory of the Holocaust and the existing gaps between new historiography and the content of published textbooks

³⁶⁹ After M. Gross.

³⁷⁰ P. Nora, *Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Memoire*, "Representations" no. 26/1985, p. 7-24.

³⁷¹ *Ibidem*, p. 9.

³⁷² P. Vidal-Naquet, *Assassins of Memory: Essays on the Denial of the Holocaust*, NY: Columbia University Press 1992, p. 23.

³⁷³ P. Nora, *op.cit.*

after the 2008 educational reform, which selectively present Polish Righteous without the context of attitudes of Poles toward the Jews during the Holocaust and omit the shameful topic of individual collaboration.

A subsequent response to Gross' recommendations came in a form of new workshops introduced to the Summer Institute agenda: one focusing on lecturer's personal biography and experience (*The Holocaust as a personal experience of a contemporary man*, a workshop given by a professional psychologist and the chair of the Jan Karski Association in Kielce) and the other dealing with the issue of absence of Jewish neighbors in the local history (*AntySchematy2 as the way of taking care of memorial sites and teaching about the Holocaust*, a workshop run by the leader of the non-governmental organization called Antyschematy2). Responding to the third area for improvement of the Summer Institute called by Gross, conflict resolution and support in the agenda the space was made for a panel discussion with the Holocaust education experts. Participants can ask the experts questions, and can talk about their fears, difficulties, and problems as well as mutually reflect.

School Curriculum as an Obstacle

When asked what difficulties in particular they encounter in teaching about the Holocaust and complex Polish-Jewish history, teachers always indicate the new national school curriculum as an objective and considerable obstacle. The new curriculum, introduced into secondary schools in Poland in 2008, allows less time for all school subjects, especially in high schools (lyceum). Time limits make it really difficult to thoroughly study many issues included in the curriculum, and this also concerns teaching history, literature and social affairs (the only school subject which is given the same amount of time as before the new curriculum was introduced, is Religious Instruction). Moreover, the Polish literature and history courses are not synchronized in junior and senior high schools. Consequently, students in a junior high school read literary texts related to the Holocaust without prior knowledge of its historical context which they learn later in a senior high school. Not always, because of numerous reasons (financial limitations, sometimes parents' or students' reluctance or lack of interest) it is possible for a teacher to do extracurricular activities related to the Holocaust. Therefore, not all participants to the Summer Institute can take students to memory sites, museums, organize meetings with the witnesses or watch chosen films. Some teachers complain that their students do not have opportunities to meet Israeli peers because their schools are not interested in exchange programs, although they are sure that such contacts will positively contribute to eliminating negative attitudes some students have towards Jews. Another obstacle to teach students about the Holocaust in attractive and modern way is a limited access, or no access at all to the Internet during lessons. Teachers claim they are well aware that teaching about the Holocaust requires a delicate and thoughtful approach, however, they do not find such an approach in neither the curriculum nor in school textbooks.

Antisemitism and attitudes of Poles during the Holocaust

According to Jean-Paul Sartre³⁷⁴ antisemitism results in own fears and uncertainty, and actual Jews are irrelevant, because they are created by antisemitism. Polish studies conducted by the team of Ireneusz Krzemiński revealed that the level of education affects a traditional antisemitism but does not make impact on modern antisemitism. Younger people are less anti-Semitic and more often react against it³⁷⁵. Nonetheless, the participants of the ISITH state that they often encounter the wall of indifference or even outright aggression when they start to talk about “Jewish issues”. *Again about those Jews!*, they can hear from their students. It is important to take into account, as reported by teachers, students’ general lack of interest in global and Polish history, as one teacher put it, *the WWII is as a distant and “cold” topic as Polish wars with Sweden in the 17th century*. Teachers indicate that negative attitudes, indifference or unwillingness to talk about the Polish-Jewish past is partially the consequence of demographic and social changes in the Polish society. The generation continuum has been broken up and few young people live in multi-generation families where present and past history exists side by side.

Teachers seem to attribute a reluctance to learn about the Holocaust and Polish-Jewish relation to such causes as lack of contact with older member of families or lack of interest in history in general. In the AJC study conducted in 1995 in Poland 77 percent of young people aged between 20 and 24 (as compared with 86 percent of the adult population) considered knowledge about the Holocaust to be very important for Poles³⁷⁶. As later studies indicated the main source of information on Polish Jews and the Holocaust for Polish youth are media, and far less comes from school and families. In AJC-commissioned research in 1995, 54 percent of young people stated that Poles had done enough to help Jews. An opposite view was expressed by 18 percent of young people. Fourteen percent of young people and almost twice as many adults (26 percent) believed that Poles had done as much as they possibly could under the circumstances.

In Jolanta Ambrosewicz-Jacobs national random surveys Polish students most frequently answered the following question: “Do you think that Poles helped Jews during the war?” with “Yes —as much as they could” (46 percent and 52 percent in 1998 and 2008, respectively), or “It is difficult to say” (43 percent and 31 percent in 1998 and 2008, respectively). Only nine percent of the students surveyed in 1998 (29 percent from the experimental classes) and 11 percent of those surveyed in 2008 responded, “They could have done more,” while two percent of students in both surveys chose the response, “They did not help them at all”³⁷⁷.

³⁷⁴ J.P. Sartre, *Rozważania o kwestii żydowskiej*, Łódź: Wydawnictwo Futura Press 1992.

³⁷⁵ I. Krzemiński (ed.), *Antysemityzm w Polsce i na Ukrainie raport z badań*, Kraków: Scholar 2010.

³⁷⁶ See: W. Bergmann, *Anti-Semitic Attitudes in Europe: A Comparative Perspective*, “Journal of Social Issues,” vol. 64, no. 2/2008, p. 343—362.

³⁷⁷ See: J. Ambrosewicz-Jacobs, *Holocaust Consciousness among Polish Youth after the 1989 Collapse of Communism*, [in:] *Jewish Presence in Absence: The Aftermath of the Holocaust in Poland, 1945–2010*, eds. F. Tych, M. Adamczyk-Garbowska, Jerusalem: Yad Vashem 2014, p. 729–730. The study presented in this publication was co-financed by the International Task Force

In the questionnaires administered during the ISITH, beyond school context teachers point out the negative role of the media which, in their opinion, usually present Poland as a mono-cultural and mono-ethnic country, at the present time and in the past. The image of Poland as multi-ethnic and multi-religious country seems strange or even threatening to many students. It definitely does not encourage them to study Polish-Jewish past. What is more, the image of Poland as always and forever one-nation country combined with patriotism understood as national egoism open the door for nationalistic ideas, and consequently discourages young people from facing and dealing with difficult issues including different attitudes of Poles towards the Jews and the Holocaust. Polish-Jewish relations during the Holocaust remain a taboo topic or are severely affected by historical politics, a new form of “censorship” aimed at creating a positive image of Poland abroad at all costs and bringing back to memory forbidden, erased from curricula and forgotten history of Poland during communism. The architecture of the Holocaust is one of these topics and it is represented according to international current historiography, as long as it does not touch the attitudes of Poles during the Holocaust³⁷⁸.

Concluding remarks

The trauma of Polish Jews whose fate was not met with compassion from their Catholic Polish neighbors, in Poland, still remains in an area of non-memory. The area of non-memory is still vast in many European countries, for example in Hungary, Baltic states, Ukraine, to name a few. In the historiography of National Socialism crimes (terminology used in Germany) forced sterilizations in Germany of about 350 000 people on the basis of 1933 legislation to prevent hereditary diseases or the euthanasia program with approx. 200 000 victims (including approx. 5000 children below age 3) within the framework of so called T4 action³⁷⁹ are well known to historians but less to general public³⁸⁰.

The program of the ISITH hopes to eliminate taboo topics, and hopefully, aims to create the space for *moral witnesses* of generation of post-memory of the Holocaust. The memory of the Holocaust in Poland does not remain congruent and every now and then, a nation outcries when someone, as exemplified for example by President Obama or the director of the FBI James B. Comey, unfortunately misre-

for Cooperation on Holocaust Education, Remembrance, and Research (ITF) (currently the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) and the Fondation pour la Mémoire de la Shoah. The research included a national survey carried out on a representative sample of 1,000 17- to 18-year-old high school students, carried out ten years after the first survey in 1998. Both the 1998 and 2008 national surveys were carried out by the CEM Market & Public Opinion Research Institute, Kraków.

³⁷⁸ J. Ambrosewicz-Jacobs, R. Szuchta, *The intricacies of education about the Holocaust in Poland. Ten years after the Jedwabne debate, what can Polish school students learn about the Holocaust in history classes?* “Intercultural Education”, vol. 25, issue 4, July 2014, p. 283-299.

³⁷⁹ The cryptonym of the action to murder mentally ill patients refers to the address of the headquarters of the program at 4 Tiergartenstrasse in Berlin.

³⁸⁰ I. Loose, Aktion T4 <http://www.gedenkort-t4.eu/de/vergangenheit/aktion-t4> [accessed: 2.05.2015].

presents Polish history. There are many reasons for this outcry: lack of recognition in the larger world of Polish suffering, deeply hidden shame caused by behavior of one's own neighbors or family members and at the end - in many former shtetls - occupying Jewish houses which once belonged to murdered Jews.

In Poland the "transmission" model of education still prevails. In this mainstream model, teachers, taken as the authority, transmit the knowledge, beliefs and values accepted by society or by certain groups in society. The term "alternative" is applied to new, innovative and progressive educational projects, established mainly by individual teachers within the traditional system. They offer new models as alternatives to parts of the standard curriculum. The ISITH aims to empower Polish educators, both teachers and NGO's activists to fill the gap between history and memory, precisely, between the new historiography of the Holocaust and the collective post-memory of the destruction of European Jews. Teachers, agents of transmission, together with artists, civil society activists and scholars support cultural memory and pass it, in the form of texts, commemoration ceremonies, buildings and other manifestations to future generations. Work of Polish artists and educators can be an expression of mourning, more than half of century after the loss of Polish Jews, mourning still absent in majority of society. Thus another question arises: can artists and creative individuals, involved teachers and students make an impact on the majority of society increasing its awareness of this loss? Bringing back faces and names of the victims contradicts what the perpetrators attempted to do: first dehumanize, and then eradicate people, their names, their faces and lastly, the memory of their existence.

Before the fall of communism, the polonization of Jewish victims was commonplace in the curriculum. The attempt to regain the memory present during 1980-1989 led to the changes in historical consciousness of Poles and has started with rejection of ideologization, interest in forbidden history. The reform was initiated by teachers (resolution against falsifying history in schools around 1980). The "white stains" discoveries were treated as a form of opposing communism. First new curricula were initiated in 1981 indicating the presence of the Red Army on Polish land on September 17, 1939. The ideologization was rejected and grew interest in forbidden history („white stains" discoveries were treated as a form of opposing ruling the state communists).

The Holocaust is taught both to teachers and to students of different educational levels. In 2004 the Holocaust appeared for the first time as a history topic in the General Exam of School Achievement (*matura*). Admiring so many Polish non-governmental organizations for their creative work, we have to bear in mind individual teachers, educators, NGOs activists who bring about changes in students' attitudes and raise their awareness of the Holocaust. Since the 'Hebrew class' at the VIII Lyceum in Kraków in the mid-1990s initiated by teacher of biology Janina Górz many teachers in Poland created their own programs and projects. Robert Szuchta, co-author with Piotr Trojański of the first program about teaching the Holocaust in Poland, and the first textbook on the Holocaust, became leaders in that field and well known internationally experts of pedagogy of the Holocaust.

Polish teachers often work individually, motivated by their personal conviction that the Holocaust must be taught to the younger generation, because students must be informed about what happened to Jewish people on Polish soil. Some of them lack institutional support or are even discouraged by their school principals from participating in teacher training. We can hope, however, that Polish teachers will introduce the new historiography of the Holocaust in schools, also in the junior high schools (middle schools), despite the curricular framework, since they consist more than 50% of participants of ISITH, organized annually since 2006 in Krakow by the Center for Holocaust Studies of the Jagiellonian University with the Illinois Holocaust Museum and Educational Center, the Yad Vashem and other partners.

Julian Tuwim had a dream “so that the memory of the massacred people shall remain forever fresh in the minds of generations to come, and also as a sign of our undying sorrow for them”³⁸¹. This dream belongs now to the area of post-memory and teacher trainings are example of commemorative educational practices intended to keep the memory of the Holocaust alive by the means of teaching Polish, Ukrainian, Russian students by the ISITH graduates and hopefully, introducing new initiatives in the local communities and creating new memorial sites as meant by Pierre Nora. The witnesses are transmitting to educators their personal recollections of the fear, hiding, and discrimination, experience of death and concentration camps or work at the Sonderkommando in Auschwitz. The rest of historical facts has to be constructed from lectures, workshops, watching photography exhibitions, work with authentic documents and memorial sites visits: State Museum Auschwitz-Birkenau, Shindler Factory Museum and Auschwitz Jewish Center.

Perhaps not enough space was dedicated earlier to the concept of *moral witness*, but the aim of careful description and evaluation of the ISITH, which for 10 years developed the collective memory and shaped moral attitudes toward the past and toward the present, was aimed to demonstrate the case study. The presented case study of the ISITH attempted to illustrate. how in the area of post-memory of the Holocaust, those who learn, study documents, listen to the survivors and teach may become carriers of memory and become *moral witnesses*. If they want to learn the truth about the past, feeling obliged to remember the suffering of Jewish nations killed on Polish soil, they become *witnesses* in a symbolic way with a *moral* duty to pass the knowledge about the genocide of Jews to their students, creating empathy, providing emotional experience, developing skills to analyze historical facts and building the competencies to learn not only *about* the Holocaust, but *from* the Holocaust.

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³⁸¹ J. Tuwim, *My Żydzi polscy/We, Polish Jews*, ed. Ch. Shmeruk, Jerusalem 1984, p. 19.

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