

Shoah Remembrance Among Polish Millennials: What Motivates Volunteers in Polish Jewish Event?

Pamięć O Zagładzie Wśród Polskich Milenialsów: Co Motywuje Wolontariuszy Do Uczestnictwa Przy Wydarzeniach Polsko- Żydowskich?

Polonyalı Y Kuşağı Arasında Shoah Anması: Polonyalı Yahudilerin Etkinliğine Katılan Gönüllüleri Ne Motive Ediyor?

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Abstract

In 2018 a strikingly worrying survey report was presented by Richard Allen Greene, CNN News Editor: memory of the holocaust in Europe is fading and anti-Semitism finds its justification in the mind of one in five respondents to CNN poll. More specifically, the report uncovers that 32% of Polish millennials who took part in the survey know 'nothing' or 'just a little' about the Holocaust. Taking into account that Germany-occupied Poland was the main centre to Nazi systematic destruction of European Jews, the number seem to be igniting certain concerns. Consequently, this research is conducted with one particular purpose, namely - to answer what motivates Polish millennials to active and voluntary participation in undertakings aimed at preserving the memory of the Holocaust. The brief introduction to work consists of a historical context to Polish-Jewish relations for the last one hundred years. Although the relations of the two dates back over one thousand years, what matters to this work most is Polish attitudes towards Jews during the outbreak of the Second World War and Polish reaction to German campaign of genocide. Secondly, on the example of the Daffodils Campaign, annual event organized by the Museum of the History of Polish Jews in Warsaw, it was enquired into what motivates Polish millennial volunteers to participate in the undertaking that since 2013 aims at preserving the memory of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising and the Holocaust. Thanks to a direct discussion with Ewa Budek, Coordinator of Public Programs and actual initiator of the Daffodils Campaign, Dorota Siarkowska, Coordinator of Educational Programs, Joanna Garsztka, Senior Volunteer Specialist and Małgorzata Zajac, Marketing Research Director; the author attempts to obtain the following information: (a) the number of Polish millennials participating in the voluntary work during the Daffodils Campaign. (b) the motives of the volunteers and their aspirations (c) the assessment by my interviewees of educational needs among Polish millennials to preserve the memory of the Holocaust. Thirdly, in the conclusion there are presented possible recommendations for further research into how to effectively encourage young non-Jewish adults to take an active part in future Polish Jewish events aimed to raising knowledge about the Holocaust.

Key words: Holocaust; Shoah; Genocide; Nazi concentration camps; Jews; Anti-semitism; Millennials; Poland

Abstrakt

Pamięć o Holokauście w Europie słabnie, a antysemityzm znajduje usprawiedliwienie w opinii jednego na pięciu z respondentów, którzy wzięli udział w badaniu sondażowym przeprowadzonym przez CNN w kilku krajach Europy - wynika z raportu przedstawionego w 2018 r. przez Richarda Allen Greene, redaktora CNN. Raport ten ujawnia również, że 32 proc. polskich millenialsów, którzy wzięli udział w powyższym sondażu, określa swoją wiedzę o Holokauście jako „niewielką” lub „zerową”. Biorąc pod uwagę, że okupowana przez Niemców Polska była głównym ośrodkiem hitlerowskiej polityki systematycznej zagłady Żydów w Europie, tak wysoki odsetek budzi zaniepokojenie. Niniejsza praca ma na celu odpowiedzieć na pytanie: „Co motywuje polskich millenialsów do wolontaryjnego i aktywnego uczestnictwa w przedsięwzięciach mających na celu podtrzymanie pamięci o Holokauście?”. W krótkim wstępie autor przedstawia historyczny kontekst stosunków polsko-żydowskich na przestrzeni ostatniego wieku. Mimo, że stosunki obu narodów sięgają ponad tysiąca lat, najważniejsze dla niniejszej pracy są polskie postawy wobec Żydów podczas II wojny światowej i reakcja Polski na niemiecką kampanię ludobójstwa. Następnie, na przykładzie Akcji Żonkile (corocznej inicjatywy organizowanej przez Muzeum Historii Żydów Polskich Polin w Warszawie), praca przedstawia motywacje polskich wolontariuszy do uczestnictwa w przedsięwzięciu, które od 2013 r. ma na celu podtrzymanie pamięci o Powstaniu w Getcie Warszawskim i Holokauście. Dzięki bezpośredniej rozmowie z: Ewą Budek, koordynatorką Programów Publicznych i inicjatorką Akcji Żonkile, Dorotą Siarkowską, koordynatorką Programów Edukacyjnych, Joanną Garsztką, starszą specjalistką ds. Wolontariatu oraz Małgorzatą Zajac, główną specjalistką ds. Badań z Działu Marketingu uzyskano następujące informacje: (a) ilu polskich millenialsów uczestniczy w wolontariacie podczas corocznej Akcji Żonkile; (b) jakie są motywacje wolontariuszy i ich aspiracje; (c) czy istnieje potrzeba zwiększenia edukacji wśród polskich millenialsów w celu podtrzymania pamięci o Holokauście. W podsumowaniu sformułowano możliwe rekomendacje dla dalszych badań z zakresu motywacji, tj. w jaki sposób skutecznie zachęcać millenialsów pochodzenia nieżydowskiego do czynnego udziału w kolejnych wydarzeniach, mających na celu poszerzenie i podtrzymanie wiedzy o Holokauście...

Słowa Kluczowe: Holokaust; Zagłada; Ludobójstwo; Nazistowskie Obozy Koncentracyjne; Żydzi; Antysemityzm; Milenialsi; Polska.

Özet

2018'de, CNN Haber Editörü Richard Allen Greene tarafından endişe verici bir anket raporu sunuldu. Bu rapora göre Avrupa'daki Holokost hatırası azalmakta ve anti-Semitizm endişe verici bir şekilde artmakta. Rapora göre CNN anketine katılan beş kişiden biri tarafından hatırlanmakta. Daha spesifik olarak, raporda ankete katılan Polonyalı Y Kuşağı üyelerinin %32'sininin Holokost hakkında "hiçbir şey" bilmediği veya Holokost hakkında "sadece bir miktar" bilgi sahibi olduğu ortaya çıkıyor. Almanya'nın işgal ettiği Polonya'nın, Nazilerin Avrupalı Yahudilerin sistematik yokumunun ana merkezi olduğu göz önüne alındığında, yeni nesillerin bu durumunun kaygı verici olduğu görülmekte. Sonuç olarak, bu araştırma, belirli bir amaçla, yani - Polonyalı Y Kuşağı üyelerinin, Holokost hatırasını korumayı amaçlayan girişimlere aktif ve gönüllü olarak katılımlarını neyin motive ettiğini cevaplamak için yapılmakta. Çalışmaya girişte, son 100 yıldır Polonya-Yahudi ilişkilerine tarihsel bir bağlamda değerlendirilmekte. İkili ilişkilerin bin yıl öncesine dayanmasına rağmen, bu çalışmanın en önemli yanı, İkinci Dünya Savaşı'nın başlaması sırasında Polonyalıların Yahudilere yönelik tutumları ve Polonya'nın Alman soykırım kampanyasına tepkisidir. İkincisi, Varşova'daki Polonya Yahudileri Tarihi Müzesi tarafından düzenlenen yıllık etkinlik olan Nergis Kampanyası örneğinde, Polonyalı Y Kuşağı üyesi gönüllülerin, 2013 yılından beri Varşova Gettosu Ayaklanması'nın hafızasını korumayı amaçlayan girişime katılımlarına neyin yol açtığı sorgulanmakta. Bu bağlamda, Ayaklanma ve Soykırım Kamu Programları Koordinatörü ve Nergis Kampanyası'nın kurucusu olan Ewa Budek, Doğrudan Eğitim Programları Koordinatörü Dorota Siarkowska, Kıdemli Gönüllü Uzmanı Joanna Garsztko ve Pazarlama Araştırmaları Direktörü Joanna Garsztko ile doğrudan görüşülmüş ve aşağıdaki hususlarda görüşleri alınmaya çalışılmıştır: (a) Nergis Kampanyası sırasındaki gönüllü çalışmaya katılan Polonyalı bin yıl sayısı. (b) Gönüllülerin motivasyonları (c) Holokost hatırasını korumak için Polonyalı Y Kuşağı üyelerinin ülkedeki eğitim ihtiyaçları. Üçüncüsü, sonuçta Yahudi olmayan genç ve yetişkinleri, Holokost hakkında bilgi edinmeyi amaçlayan gelecekteki Polonya Yahudi etkinliklerinde aktif bir rol almaya etkin bir şekilde teşvik etme konusunda daha fazla araştırma için olası öneriler oluşturmaya çalışılmıştır..

Anahtar Kelimeler: Holokost; Shoah; Soykırım; Nazi toplama kampları; Yahudiler; Antisemitizm; Y Kuşağı; Polonya

INTRODUCTION

Poland has a very special place in European history. Specifically, when we speak of Second World War and experience of the Holocaust, Poland appears at the forefront of any history textbook. The reason for this is rather self-evident, that's before German invasion in September 1939, interwar Poland was a home to 3.3 million Jews what constituted about 10% of the total population of the country. Polish Jewry were the largest concentration of Jews in Europe of the time. Warsaw, the capital, as one of the major points on the map of Jewish diaspora (in 1864 Jews amounted to approximately 33% of the general population). In fact, the city became a centre to cultivation of Jewish religion, culture and politics. All of these things changed with German and Soviet invasion of Poland. With the outbreak of the IIWW the country was divided into two spheres of influence. Although the two totalitarian regimes (Nazi-Germany and Soviet Russia) untiringly advocated murder of civilians based on their ethnicity, it was Hitler's Germany that had an exclusive plan to eliminate the Jews under any circumstances. Although hostility and prejudice against Jews was a commonly practiced German policy since the very beginning of Hitler's reign, the official mass murder of Jews began with the provoked by Nazi pogroms in June and July 1941. Later, in December 1941, Hitler personally took the decision to exterminate all European Jews, so called - the Final Solution to the Jewish Question. Consequently, this decision led to the killing of 90% of Polish Jews and two thirds of the total Jewish population in the Old Continent put all together. Discussed numbers suggest that although the Holocaust is an exclusively Jewish wartime hardship, it is also an inseparable and undeniable part of Polish history. Speaking of attitude of Poles towards Jews, what is especially significant here, is that antisemitism and hostility against Jews never were a norm by mainstream Polish society before and during the Second World War.

Interestingly enough, Polish authorities were the only one from Western Allies who took a direct action at halting the killing of Jews. It was Polish Prime Minister Władysław Sikorski who openly issued an appeal to condemn crimes against Jews in Europe. Among many operations undertaken by Poles to help civilian Jews during the war, the most prominent ones were: the actions organized by Żegota [ʒɛ'gɔta] (the Polish underground humanitarian organization aimed at helping Jews) which succeeded in saving thousands Jewish lives, Home Army ban on discrimination of Jews and in the event of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, several attempts aimed at aiding the Jews in their combat. Still, we should remember not everything about Polish- Jewish relations was positive. However, cases of antisemitism-turned-into-crimes (in comparison with other courtiers who withdrew benefits from the Holocaust) were far rarer and never belonged to official line of Polish government.

Today Poland remains as a colossal Jewish graveyard, the place where Germans built their death camps and conducted unimaginable mass slaughter. The remnants of Treblinka, Sobibor, Belzec, Auschwitz and with the inclusion of the former eastern territories of Germany to Polish People's Republic, also Stutthof and Gross-Rosen - stand today as a prove to German mass murder committed on Jewish population and remind humanity of what should not be allowed to repeat again. It seems that after the collapse of communism, sovereign Poland took a great interest in re-establishing relations with Israel. The country holds a number of annual events commemorating Jewish history, culture and, in particular, the Holocaust. Jewish Festival in Krakow is the largest such event (according to Program Report of 2018 edition of the festival; 33,343 persons took part in the main program and accompanying events). The scale of this and other initiatives forecast a rather positive future for keeping the memory of the Jewish culture and the experience of Shoah among Poles. However, the report presented by Richard Allen

Greene reveals that memory of the Holocaust in Europe is fading and anti-Semitism finds its justification in the mind of one in five respondents to CNN poll. Although the survey was carried out on more than 7,000 people across Europe with more than 1,000 respondents in Austria, France, Germany, Great Britain, Hungary, Poland and Sweden. What is most important to this paper is that the report uncovers that 32% of Polish millennials who took part in the survey know 'nothing' or 'just a little' about the Holocaust. This finding brought the attention to focus in this work on Polish young adults. The discussion with Mrs. Ewa Budek, Coordinator of Public Programs at POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews and initiator of the Daffodils Campaign, and her co-workers helps to answer the posed question: What motivates young adults in Poland to volunteer to work on events cultivating the memory of Polish Jews after the Holocaust?

THE DAFFODILS CAMPAIGN

The Daffodils Campaign was first initiated by POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews in 2013 to commemorate the 70th anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. Daffodils are associated with dr. Marek Edelman, the last commander of the Jewish Combat Organization who used to place daffodils at the Monument to the Ghetto Heroes in Warsaw, Poland and at other sites associated with the extermination of Jews. It was Mrs. Ewa Budek who picked up personal custom of dr. Edelman and successfully turned it into the mainstream. Daffodils became the well-recognized and legible symbol of remembrance of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising in Poland. Every year on 19th of April (the day the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising started) volunteers of the campaign distribute paper daffodil pins and historical handouts to remind of this historical event. The campaign is widely popular in all Polish cities. Since recently, the reach of the campaign extends abroad to such places as Berlin, Munich, Prague. However, the organizers don't stop

there. The reason for this is that the Holocaust is associated with one picture, that is the one where Jews don't make any combat attempts to relieve themselves from the grip of Nazi. The event of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising changes this picture and shows the great bravery of the Jews who dared to oppose their oppressors. The POLIN Museum desires daffodils to be globally adopted as a symbol of Remembrance of battle for the honour of the Jewish people, and a protest against the world's silence and inaction to what was happening to Jews in occupied Poland. The discussion of pictures of the Holocaust is an interesting subject, it requires a separate paper on its own.

Returning to the core of this paper, below there are results of discussion with POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews staff on the motivation of Polish millennials to participate in events preserving the memory of the Holocaust.

MOTIVATION OF POLISH MILLENNIALS

The numerical overview of volunteers' participation is the following: In the first edition of the campaign in 2013 there were 530 individual volunteers. In comparison with the latest edition of the campaign in 2018, there were 800 individual volunteers plus volunteers from partnering educational facilities (approximately 200 persons). In both cases, Polish millennials [age range: 18-28 in 2018] constituted a strong component, translating to even a half of the total number of participants. When asked of previous volunteering experiences singular participants pointed to their involvement in Great Orchestra of Christmas Charity. None of the volunteers was previously involved in Polish Jewish things and the Daffodils Campaign was the first such a chance to them to contribute to educational activation of local and global communities.

According to the POLIN Museum evaluation form that has been distributed and filled-in by each respective volunteer in 2018, around 70% of the total number of participants are primarily

motivated by the desire for keeping the memory of the important historical event. As Ms. Dorota Siarkowska, Coordinator of Educational Programs says: *“Participants indicate also the curiosity, the desire to learn about the past and, in particular, the interest in the events of the Second World War, as other key motives for their voluntary involvement in the campaign.”* Insignificant number of millennial volunteers have any direct family connection to the event of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising or to the Holocaust itself. Interestingly enough, although the organizers of the campaign accredited numerous celebrities to ambassadorship of the campaign, famous individuals don't have a weighty influence on increasing the number of volunteers. Joanna Garszka, Senior Volunteer Specialist draws the attention that celebrities play a different rule, she says: *“More rather than coaxing people into becoming volunteers, personalities who are the ambassadors to our campaign build a special atmosphere of the initiative. According to our internal report Fr. Adam Boniecki and Zofia Wichlacz - young actress, play the salient roles. The first of the two inspires trust among our volunteers, whereas Ms. Wichlacz is a person with whom our volunteers can identify; it is the case because 90% of our volunteers in 2018 are young women who share the same sense of obligation to keep the memory of the past events”.* However, what should also be mentioned here is that thanks to engagement of famous people who appear on TV with daffodils pinned to the lapels of their jackets, the reach of the campaign reaches national and global spread. Mrs. Ewa Budek brings up an interesting phenomenon to our discussion. Mrs. Budek draws an attention to the fact that the jump in the number of individual volunteers from approximately 550 in 2017 to 800 in 2018 was driven by politics. Particularly, by the controversial legislation of the amendment to the Act on the Polish Remembrance Institute (in Polish: IPN) in January 2018 which foresaw financial penalties and imprisonment to anyone for the wording "Polish death camps". This and other provisions of the act met with a

disapprove from international public. With Anna Azari, the ambassador of Israel to Poland appealing to change the specifics of the law. This occurrence in the natural way stirred the involvement of citizens to educate and learn more on the past and Polish part in the history and the Holocaust.

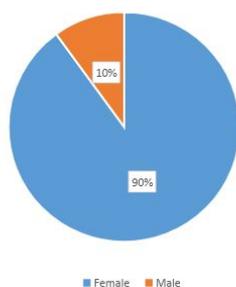
To the question on whether millennial volunteers eagerly engage in other Shoah-related initiatives organized by POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews in Warsaw, Dorota Siarkowska replied that they never had any problems in organizing volunteering sections they needed for assisting other undertakings. *“Usually our educational projects require the assistance from 20 to 30 volunteers. We never troubled with finding willing helpers. In fact, we aid other organizations in this regards. The museum has a database of over 500 permanent individual volunteers, among them millennials, who on the behalf of museum attend external events such as Singer's Warsaw Festival”-* adds Joanna Garszka.

Below, numerical representation of number of individual volunteers at The Daffodils Campaign in respective years and the percentage of female vs. male participants in the last two editions of the campaign:

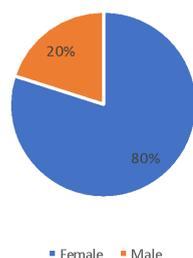
Table 1. Number of individual volunteers at The Daffodils Campaign

YEAR	TOTAL NUMBER OF VOLUNTEERS
2013	530
2014	400
2015	550
2016	550
2017	550
2018	800

Female vs. Male volunteers in 2018



Female vs. Male volunteers in 2017



The above presented data and the result of the conversation create a rather positive picture. However, when taking into account the report by Richard Allen Greene, one question comes to mind: is there a special need to increase the knowledge on the Holocaust among young Poles? In the assessment of interviewees, the report although very suggestive, should not be treated as a major threat. Most of the young adults who enrol to voluntary participation are considerably equipped with the elementary knowledge on the Holocaust. The truth is that seldom few of entrants to the voluntary works know little on the Holocaust, but the primary purpose of the campaign is to educate and spread the awareness on the event of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising and, in the entirety, the experience of Shoah. Consequently, that's where campaign successes in realizing its purpose. Important is that young Poles, self-declaratory, appear to share a great interest in discovering the facts on the happenings of the Second World War, including the history of the Polish Jews. Dorota Siarkowska says that POLIN Museum "found its way" to communicate with volunteers at the Daffodils and with attendees of other educational

programs. Siarkowska says: "It is important to present the past in comparison to contemporary phenomenon. In this way the participants seem to acquire a greater understanding, rather than reading pure historical facts or formulas. Such interaction is crucial".

CONCLUSION

The research is based on a direct discussion. However, this sole and central source to this research turned out to be a goldmine for finding answers to posed questions. The internal reports of POLIN Museum on motivations of volunteers engaging in museum's activities offers a meaningful glance at motives of Polish millennials to participate in non-Jewish events in its entirety. As promised at the end of this paper, there is a presentation of possible recommendations to further research into how to effectively encourage young non-Jewish adults to take an active part in future Polish Jewish events aimed at raising knowledge about the Holocaust. Based on aforementioned and, in particular, the discussion with POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews stuff the key element should be focused on how to encourage male young adults to get involved. Mrs. Zając, the head of the marketing research department, says that this element is being investigated. So far, based on museum's internal research, the popular concept of the volunteering in Poland is associated "with a biblical image of Good Samaritan and is possible only when one has plenty of time". These two characteristics are at odds with how young Polish men like to see themselves. The evaluation forms conducted in this research indicate that what is important to these young men are: "The personal profits the one can withdraw, something that could be used in professional life". Also "the image of volunteer should be redrawn into more masculine, rather into the one of a hero than a Casper the Friendly Ghost." This should be solved by moulding a right communication with the construction of the right image most suiting and desired by these young men. In terms of

presenting educational material, these favourably should always relate to contemporary problems. Thanks to such presentation millennial audience tends to better understanding of the events of the past. The variety of problems of the contemporary world offers unlimited relation between the anti-Semitic mechanisms that occurred in previous century, for instance, the modern-day prejudices towards refugees and even economic migrants. Such issues although incomparable with the scale of the Holocaust seem to have a common thread and catch the attention of young adults.

In personal opinion of the author the general prospects for developments in the area of motivation of millennials look fairly optimistic and the practical outcomes should result in long term effects.

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