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The 2nd Polish Memory Conference: *Studies on Memory in Poland and of Poland*, Warsaw, 5–7 December 2019

The fact that studies on memory are not temporary fashion, but extensive, interdisciplinary, dynamically developing area of research, may be attested by the *2nd Polish Memory Conference: Studies on Memory in Poland and of Poland* (Polish: *Studia nad Pamięcią w Polsce i o Polsce. II Polska Konferencja Pamięcioznawcza*), which was held in Warsaw on 5–7 December 2019. The Conference, organized by the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology of the Polish Academy of Sciences and the Maria Grzegorzewska University, was held at the University of Warsaw Library. It had an interdisciplinary character, with sociologists, culture anthropologists, historians, literary scholars, and legal professionals participating in it.

The Conference was opened with a session during which Marek Kucia (Jagiellonian University), Maria Lewicka (Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń), Ryszard Nycz (Jagiellonian University), Robert Traba (Polish Academy of Sciences), and Barbara Törnquist-Plewa (Lund University) took the stand. The discussion was led by Anna Wylegała (Polish Academy of Sciences). During this plenary session, the speakers considered the issue of interdisciplinary nature of memory studies and discussed how this feature affected the research methodology. In this context, the issue of “methodological nationalism” – i.e. the research carried out on one nation – was raised. Will the research on memory in Central and Eastern Europe allow us to avoid this methodological nationalism? And maybe the specific conditions of the region, which experienced two totalitarianisms, foredooms us to researching “sad things” and “macabre topics” and it is not the question of methodology but rather of the subject matter? Will cultural memory soon dominate this part of Europe as well, or will there be a return to daily life? The debate, however, was not based on generalized reflections only, as specific examples of memory research were given as well.

This discussion opened wide fields for conversations, but it also revealed the point of sharpest dispute, thus encouraging everyone to further debates, this time within

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individual panels. Their topics included *inter alia*: new theories of memory, collective memory from a linguistic perspective, memory and gender, memories of local communities, memory in urban space, museums – and specific panels concentrating on former Yugoslavia and on memory in Poland and Ukraine. Yet, here I would like to focus on a panel directly linked to the contents of this issue: *Juridization of Memory in Poland and Central-Eastern Europe* (Polish: *Jurydyzacja pamięci w Polsce i Europie Środkowo-Wschodniej*). This legal panel, proposed and organized by Michał Stambulski (University of Zielona Góra) and myself, was moderated over by Jolanta Sawicka (University of Warsaw), with Emilia Kowalewska (Polish Academy of Sciences) acting as the commentator.

The panel was started by Filip Cyuńczyk (University of Warsaw) with the paper *State Memory Policies in Central and Eastern Europe during the Period of Democratic Transitions and the Problem of Instrumentalization of Law* (Polish: *Państwowe polityki pamięci w Europie Środkowej i Wschodniej okresu transformacji demokratycznej a problem instrumentalizacji prawa*). The author presented his research in the form of a comparative list of memory policies of several countries of Central-Eastern Europe. Thus, it was possible to avoid “nationalist methodology”, in line with the suggestions given at the beginning of the conference.

During my presentation, *Lustration in Poland in 2019: An Excess of Memory?* (Polish: *Lustracja w Polsce w 2019 r. – wobec nadmiaru pamięci?*) I tried to answer questions regarding several recent controversies connected with the Polish lustration process. Has the vetting model changed in Poland over time, or were these only quantitative changes regarding the number of people covered by lustration? What constitutes an excess of memory when it comes to vetting – and what is the correct level of such memory?

The third speaker was Michał Krotoszyński (Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań), presenting a paper *Transitional Justice and Politics of Memory during the VIII Term of the Polish Sejm* (Polish: *Rozliczenia z przeszłością i polityka pamięci w VIII kadencji Sejmu RP*). In his presentation he argued that there exists a close relation between the constitutional crisis with which we are currently dealing with in Poland, and the settlements with the past: both past ones and the most recent ones, the latter including: changing streets names and reducing the pensions of former communist security bodies officers.

The last paper, *Liberal Democracy and Conflicts over Memory* (Polish: *Demokracja liberalna wobec konfliktów o pamięć*), was presented by Michał Paździora (University of Wrocław). The researcher referred to an issue which is extremely important today: conflicts of values solved within liberal democracy. He emphasised that it was not through democratic negotiation of the meaning and importance of values that such disputes were solved, but rather that this was done by transforming social imagination, part of which is collective memory.

The presentations were followed by a heated discussion over juridization of memory. This, I hope, is evidence that the legal panel was an important and much-needed voice during the 2nd Polish Memory Conference.

Organizers of the conference have far-reaching plans: to create a community of Polish researchers of memory, which will co-operate internationally with other groups and researchers, including cooperation within the structures of the Memory Studies Association. We would also like legal professionals to participate in the creation of this community and in the research on memory during future Polish Memory Conferences.