

**Poznań-Prague-Giessen research cooperation
in the area of representation and reception of Shoah
in Central European literatures and cultures**

On January 2014 research team from AMU Institute of Slavic Philology in Poznań (Zakład Języków i Literatur Zachodniosłowiańskich Instytutu Filologii Słowiańskiej UAM) joined the long-term cooperation of the international working team that focuses on representation of Holocaust in the literatures and cultures of the Central European countries (Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia). The coordinator of the Poznań team is Agata Firlej PhD and the members are: Małgorzata Balcerzak MA, Urszula Kowalska PhD, Anna Maria Skibska PhD, Joanna Wolska MA and Bartłomiej Krupa PhD – a historian from AMU.

The other project participants are: Centre for the Study of the Holocaust and Jewish Literature at Charles University in Prague (Pražské centrum židovských studií, Filozofická fakulta Univerzity Karlovy v Praze), coordinated by professor Jiří Holý and Research Circle for Holocaust Literature and Culture in Central and Eastern Europe (Forschungskreis Holocaustliteratur und -kultur im mittleren und östlichen Europa) Slavonic Institute, Justus-Liebig-University in Gießen, Germany, coordinated by professor Reinhard Ibler. Also researchers from Bratislavian Institute of Slovac Literature, Slovac Academy of Sciences (Ústav slovenskej literatúry Slovenskej Akadémie Vied) and University of Budapest declared joining the cooperation. For a few years the problem was also undertaken by researchers from Language and Culture Depart-

ment of the Jewish and Institute of Theory of Literature, Theatre and Audiovisual Arts in Lódz University: the cooperation finished in 2013.

Six international workshops on the depicted topics have been conducted – researchers from Poznań took part in VI Prague International Workshop on May 2014. The post-conference book in English and German will be published in Prague soon. The result of previous workshops was published books: *Šoa v české kulturní tradici a literatuře*. Prague, Akropolis, 2011; *The Representation of the Shoah in Literature, Theatre and Film in Central Europe: the 1950s and 1960s*. Prague, Akropolis, 2012; *Ausgewählte Probleme und der polnischen tschechischen Holocaustliteratur und -cultures: materials for des Internationalen Workshops in Giessen*, 27.–28. Mai 2010. Munich / Berlin, Otto Sagner 2012; *The Representation of the Holocaust in Literature and Film in Central Europe: the 1970s and 1980s*. Prague, Akropolis, 2012.

The main goal of the further cooperation is to recognize and describe the problem of representation of Holocaust in artistic and literary works in Central European cultures as well as reception of this output. We are aware, that this questions in fact reflect deeper differences and similarities between our cultures.

We analyse the problem both in topic (the key motifs, characters and images) and historical evolution (with the passing of time). While in Poland research on artistic representation of the Holocaust has a long tradition, in the Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovakia it still remains in some way outside the realm of scientific reflection. The confrontation of different tendencies allows not only to capture the specificity of the various reflections of historical memory (especially in the context of the historical development of Poland/Czechoslovakia – Nazi occupation, antisemitism, regaining of the independence; Hungary/Germany – Nazi past and common V4 past: remaining in the sphere of influence of communism, stalinism, liberalization, neostalinism, the dissident movement, the break-up of the communist system, the transformation) but also to predict some characteristic problems with reception of artistic works in the particular countries and to explain it (for example very popular in Czech Republic theatre play of Arnošt Goldflam *Doma u Hitlerů* for some reasons can't find any director in Poland).

We are going to develop problems which aren't scientifically categorized yet. Among the most important questions are: how is the image of the Holocaust and its reception changing in the literature as well as in documentary texts in Central Europe? Is it changeable in time? Is it connected with some specific areas of culture, politics, social environment? Are there any signs of the gender differences in the reception of artistic works about Holocaust?

The cooperation of research teams from Poland, Czech Republic and Germany with a participation of Slovakian and Hungarian intellectuals will make it possible to address this topic with a broader and more international approach that will overcome

the current limited national perspective. The broader approach, based on international cooperation, allows to break the current monocultural and monolingual limits and is crucial for understanding the differences and similarities of our cultures. This is a *novum* of our approach. An important aspect of the project is also the involvement of a younger generation of researchers as well as students and postgraduate students of our universities. The theme will be incorporated into the seminars and lectures, we also expect this particular problem can be interesting for Polish, Hungarian, Czech, Slovak cultural activists, artists, directors who want to understand the borders of artistic dialogue between our countries/cultures. Recognizing the differences between us would enable to find more effective way to continue our contacts in the field of artistic reflections of Shoah.

Participation in the project has advantages for the better understanding of the historical and 'psychological' processes that impact on the relations between Central European countries. They have its real influence on mutual perceiving of artistic realizations. By this, the purpose of the better integration of our community can be obtained. It will remind again that the Jewish heritage is our common experience and it binds us together, building the Central-European identity. English-language publication after workshop and the PR activities around it will enable to reach the goal.

Our next purposes are: attending the VII International Workshop in Giessen in Spring 2015 under the title *Holocaustliteratur aus gattungstypologischer Sicht* and VIII International Workshop in Poznań in Autumn 2015 under the title: Reception of the Artistic Works about Holocaust in Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia and Germany. Then we will prepare the common English-language after-conference books and will concentrate on common project of creating Lexicone of the Representation of Holocaust in Central European Cultures.

Agata Firlej, Poznań