# Rozliczanie totalitarnej przeszłości: zbrodnie, kolaboracja i symbole przeszłości

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# Abstract
# Crimes, Collaborations and Symbols of the Past

## Research Project

The articles collected in this volume have been written as part of the research project *Punishment, Memory and Politics: Retribution for the Past after World War II*, which was carried out by a group of Polish and French historians and political scientists. This project is an attempt at analysing the similarities and differences in the politics of retribution for the 'bad past' and the totalitarian and dictatorial systems that collapsed due to internal factors or disappeared as a result of wars lost. This kind of retribution has already taken place, in the form of legal disposals (including the punishment of those found guilty) and systemic changes, as well as in the sphere of symbols and the formation of social memory. After World War II, however, the process of retribution took on a special dimension and proved to be long-lasting: over 70 years after the end of the war, investigations and war crimes trials are still under way. The same is true of the dictatorial rule of General Franco in Spain, which in fact only became the subject of heated public debate 30 years after the regime had

collapsed. There are also indications that the process of retribution for the communist system, which broke down in Europe a quarter of a century ago, will not be over soon. Furthermore, in many cases the 'bad past' also involved relations between states (e.g. aggression or forced subordination), and thus the way the politics of retribution is implemented affects current international relations. Therefore, our research project covers a relatively large chronological and geographical area, beginning with the defeat of the Third Reich and its allies in 1945, through the collapse of numerous dictatorships (which began in Portugal in 1974 and then occurred in Chile, South Africa and The Philippines), and ending with the collapse of the communist system in the Soviet bloc from 1989 to 1991.

This volume presents four articles concerning two different parts of one project for which they have been prepared. The first two articles discuss the problem of retribution in the State of Israel (Paweł Machcewicz) – przeniesione – for the crimes committed by the Jews and their cooperation with the enemy (collaboration) and in the Soviet Union – przeniesione – for the crimes commited by the Germans and their collaborators (Andrzej Paczkowski). The other two articles concern Francoist symbols in Spanish public spaces and the way they were perceived after the fall of the Franco regime (Bartłomiej Różycki). They also contain a comparative analysis of how the symbols of the past were restored in Spain, Poland and France. (Amelie Zima, B. Różycki).

## Articles

Paweł Machcewicz, Institute of Political Studies: *Jewish Claims after the Second World War: From the 'Avengers' to Eichmann's Trial*

Machcewicz begins his analysis by referring to the underground group Nakam (Vengeance) founded in 1945 by Abe Kovner

(1918–1987). The group was active for less than two years and its goal was to kill as many Germans as possible. Its members intended to achieve this by poisoning the water supply systems in several large cities. The project was abandoned (due to, among other reasons, the objection of Jewish leaders in Palestine), but several hundred people were found to have been poisoned in Allied war camps. Being illegal, those actions were not revealed for decades. Machcewicz then briefly presents the situation in displaced persons camps, in which the Jewish civil courts sentenced a dozen Jewish prisoners, who had been prisoner functionaries (*kapo*) in the concentration camps, to infamy. The author points out that in Israel alone, Holocaust cases were marginalised because the newly created state highlighted acts of heroism (such as the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising in 1943) rather than martyrology. The forms of punishment for having cooperated with the Germans were defined in the 'Law for Bringing the Nazis and their Helpers to Justice' enacted in 1950. As there were no Nazis in Israel, the law actually concerned Jewish collaborators who survived the Holocaust. There were few trials and half of them ended with acquittal. Stronger public opinion reaction was only evoked by the trial of Rudolf Kastner, a Hungarian Jew, who negotiated with the Gestapo in 1944 to 'buy out' Hungarian Jews in exchange for 10,000 trucks that the British army was expected to supply to the German army. This plan was not implemented, yet he managed to smuggle some 1,500 Jews from Hungary. In 1954, Kastner was accused of collaboration with the Germans and associated embezzlements. As Machcewicz points out, the issue became public as part of a political conflict between the right (the Herut party) and the left (the Mapam party). Kastner was eventually acquitted, but he was killed on a Tel Aviv street in 1957 by a right-wing militant.

A Holocaust-related trial that aroused widespread emotion – not only in Israel but all over the world – was that of Adolf Eichmann, one

of the major organisers of the Holocaust. He was hiding in Argentina when he was abducted by Israeli intelligence in May 1960. In August 1961, he was sentenced to death, a penalty which was reintroduced for this instance. Machcewicz describes all the main threads of the trial and its contexts. He particularly emphasises the position of the famous philosopher Hannah Arendt who observed the trial. In her book *Eichmann in Jerusalem,* she formulates several pioneering and controversial hypotheses, including those about the 'banality of evil' and the role of the Judenrat in the Holocaust. In conclusion, the author states that it was only Eichmann's trial and the accompanying publicity that 'made the Holocaust a key element of the Israeli national consciousness'.

Andrzej Paczkowski, Institute of Political Studies: *Criminals, Traitors and Helpers: Retribution for the War Crimes in the Soviet Union*

The article attempts to show how the Soviet Union dealt with German war criminals and collaborators, which differed from what was practiced in other European countries. Paczkowski believes that those differences were due to the totalitarian nature of the Soviet system (e.g. drastic repression, deep distrust of the state towards its citizens, the use of collective responsibility, compulsory atheism, collectivization of villages) and state structure (deeply centralised multinational federation with Russification tendencies). The fact that the Soviet Union incorporated significant areas whose populations were hostile towards the state and communism between 1939 and 1940 was also important. According to the author, another factor was that the Red Army suffered continual defeats during the first six months of the Soviet-German war, during which more than 3.5 million of its soldiers were captured. Consequently, the collaboration was enormous despite the lack of institutional (state) cooperation. Incorporated in 1940, the Baltic nations attempted to rebuild their

states in close collaboration with the Third Reich. Some Ukrainians shared similar hopes. The Tatars, Cossacks, Kalmyks and some of the North Caucasus nations also began to collaborate with the Germans. Many anti-communists became active in the occupied part of Russia. About two million prisoners of war died of famine, wounds and diseases in winter of 1941/1942. Most of the others joined the Wehrmacht auxiliary forces, which were formed after the *blitzkrieg* had been suppressed lepiej chyba: stopped. Consequently, more than 1.3 million Soviet citizens served in German military and police units, including 150,000 in the national (Estonian, Latvian and Ukrainian) Waffen SS units, and tens of thousands of people performed various administrative functions in the occupied lands.

The authorities' response was radical: in August 1941, all captives were recognised as 'deserters'; subsequent regulations were adopted to arrest and sentence those who collaborated with the occupants (*posobniki*); and on 19 April 1943, the Supreme Soviet of the Soviet Union enacted a decree for war crimes, which dealt with sanctions against 'German fascist criminals', 'homeland traitors' and their 'accomplices'. Most of the crimes listed in the decree were punishable by death or 25 years of forced labour. The first public trials took place in February and March 1943. According to the author, however, Germans were put in the dock only in December 1943, as the trials were primarily against collaborators, 41,000 of whom had been arrested by that time. Many local collaborators escaped with the Germans, and military units consisting of Soviet citizens withdrew westward along with the Wehrmacht. From the end of 1944, German war criminals, civilian collaborators, soldiers fighting in German units and former prisoners of war were prosecuted. Due to ubiquitous suspicion, Soviet citizens who had been deported to forced labour camps by the Germans were also among those prosecuted. Importantly, the Western Allies were committed

to transfer those who were in their occupation zones to the Soviet authorities. All of those tasks were carried out by an extremely complex security apparatus (NKVD, NKGB, military counter-intelligence organization 'SMERSH') and the military judiciary.

Around 4.2 million people went through 'filtration' camps, half of them were sent home, some 800,000 were sent to military service, about 700,000 joined the so-called construction battalions (*strojbataliony*), no less than 350,000 were sentenced to forced labour in gulags, and tens of thousands were shot or hanged by military court decisions. According to unreliable data (as the author stresses), about 320,000 were arrested for collaboration. The majority of them were sentenced to 10 to 15 years of forced labour and 800,000 inhabitants of the Crimea and North Caucasus, the majority of whom were women and children, were deported to Siberia and Central Asia in 1944 under charges of collaboration with the occupants. Military courts sentenced 40,000 German captives for war crimes. Most of the verdicts were issued in an administrative procedure or in trials behind closed doors, although public trials also took place. The persecutions continued for many years: the last death sentence for collaboration was issued and executed in 1979. In the final part of his article, the author raises the problem of attempts to rehabilitate collaborators, which were partially successful in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Ukraine after the breakup of the Soviet Union. In the conclusion, the author acknowledges that the enormity of retribution for the war crimes in the Soviet Union stemmed primarily from the totalitarian nature of the state, the extent of the anti-Soviet activity of various population groups (including non-Russian peoples), and the size of the populations living in territories occupied by the Third Reich. This article is based on extensive, multi-lingual literature and sources published in Soviet times.

Bartłomiej Różycki, The Institute of Political Studies of the Polish Academy of Sciences (PAN), *Symbols of the Past and the Memory of Contemporary Spain*

The author argues that contemporary debates about historical memory (*Memoria Historica*) in Spain focus on the Civil War of 1936–1939 and the first period of the Franco dictatorship. According to Różycki, the dispute over the memory of these events refers to the concept of 'two Spains' – one traditional (national), the other republican (liberal) – which was formed between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The article shows how this dispute affects public spaces. The author uses the example of *Plaza Mayor*, a central square in Madrid, the name of which changed five times in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries depending on the ideological orientation prevailing in the state.

After a brief presentation of the first 'symbolic conflicts' in the period preceding the Civil War, the author extensively discusses the Francoist (national and Catholic) narrative, which was imposed as the official, state and the only acceptable narrative by the dictatorship regime. He draws attention to various aspects (forms) of this narrative: from the new national emblem and anthem, through mass celebrations for the political consolidation of society, to its presence in everyday life (dress code) and language changes (e.g. replacing foreign names with Spanish ones). According to the author, the worship of Civil War victims who fought on the Francoist side was of much importance in this narrative. Hundreds of Crosses of the Fallen were erected in cities and towns, and the monumental basilica, crowned with a 150-metre cross, was built in the Valley of the Fallen (*Valle de los Caidos*). Almost all objects dedicated to Franco – hundreds of memorials and commemorative plaques – were introduced into public spaces during the dictator's lifetime (he died in 1975). Most streets and squares were named after Francoist heroes of the Civil

War. Components of the Francoist ideology, such as Catholicism, patriotism, the cult of the state and historical heritage (the Reconquista, the epoch of Catholic monarchs and the Spanish Golden Age in particular) played an important role in this policy. State symbols also referred to this heritage and an important component of this symbolic imaginarium was the emphasis on 'all-Spain' as opposed to strong regionalisms on the Iberian Peninsula. The author also describes the architecture of the Francoist period with its monumental buildings ('triumphal architecture') and analyses the calendar of official holidays, which combined – as he writes – 'Spanish traditions and new values'. According to the author, linking historical and contemporary themes was a specific feature of the Francoist narrative.

Under General Franco, the republican narrative was pushed into the private sphere, banned and even punished. The power of the official narrative was so great that, as the Spanish social psychologist quoted by the author writes, 'it prevailed not only for the 40 years of the dictatorship, but also in the period of political transformation [after Franco's death] the victims themselves and their families felt … guilty of what had been done to them'. The attitude to the Francoist legacy in the sphere of symbols is discussed in the second part of Różycki's article. He points out that the authors of the transformation consciously 'cut themselves away' from the recent past ('the Pact of Forgetting'). For many years, the 'defrancoization' of public spaces was undertaken locally and regionally, in the Basque Country and in Catalonia (in 1979, the names of 62 streets were changed in Barcelona). It took about a quarter of a century for the situation to change, which happened after the election of the socialists led by radical Jose Zapatero in 2004. The decisive step was the adoption of the Historical Remembrance Law in 2007 which restored the memory of republican victims. Since then, many associations have been formed to deal with exhumations from hitherto hidden

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burial places. Symbols (monuments, plaques, street names) have been removed and anti-Francoist traditions have been introduced. These actions have been part of the contemporary political conflict between the left and the right, as well as conflicts related to regional or even independent tendencies. Leftist circles seek to create the cult of the Second Spanish Republic, the liberal constitution of 1931 and the worship of republican heroes. National symbols, such as the national emblem and anthem, have been changed. New festivities (anniversaries) have been created and some of those abolished by Franco have been restored. This does not change the conflicting character of the current *Memoria Historica.* Różycki concludes that 'torn by contradictions, Spanish democracy' has not been able yet to build a compromise.

Bartłomiej Różycki, The Institute of Political Studies of the Polish Academy of Sciences (PAN); Amelie Zima, Institute for Strategic Research (IRSEM), Paris, *Symbolic Methods of Restoring Memory in Europe: Poland, Spain and Other Cases*

This article contains a comparative analysis of how 'memory was restored' in public spaces in Spain, Poland and France. As a methodological framework, the authors adopt Jan Assmann's thesis on 'cultural memory' and Jacques Le Goff's reflections on the role of 'controlling memory and oblivion' in contemporary societies. In the first part of their article, Różycki and Zima show the methods used by those in power to 'eliminate memory', such as the ban on referring to people and events (and their symbols) which the authorities regard as hostile to them (the Katyn taboo in Poland and suppressing the memory of the victims of the Franco regime in Spain); robbery or destruction of works of art and cultural products depriving the public of access to 'uncomfortable' elements of national tradition; manipulation of history, primarily in study programmes (the glorification

of the 'Piast era' in Poland or the negligence of the former autonomous status of the Basques and Catalans in Spain); and the creation of 'black legends' (the Second Polish Republic in Poland and the 'cursed' eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in Spain as the synonym for the collapse of the powerful state). In the second part of their article, the authors show how the vanquished store memory (e.g. 'the Katyn pit' in the Powązki Cemetery in Warsaw or the statue of Rafael Casanova in Barcelona), and later describe the state after the cessation of violence and control of the dictatorial state. It is the time when old symbols are restored and new symbols are created. Różycki and Zima call it 'making up memory'. One of its most important manifestations is the memory of victims, which is cultivated through a search for secret burial sites, organised by a state institution (Institute of National Remembrance) in Poland and mainly by social organisations in Spain. The authors describe one of the more interesting ways of restoring memory, namely when 'unwanted' memorials established by the old regimes are transformed into new ones or new memorials are created in the sites where the old ones were previously situated. At times, the transformation takes place on many levels: e.g. the monument to the Red Army erected in Legnica in 1945 was created of scrap from destroyed German monuments and dismantled after the 1989 systemic transformation. In Spain, many of the objects commemorating the victims of the Civil War from the Franco faction have been transformed into memorials of all victims of the conflict. Similarly, in Poland (in Zielona Góra), the monument of gratitude to the Red Army has been transformed into a monument to the Heroes of the Second World War. Subsequently, the authors analyse strategies for changing street and square names, whereby old names are replaced either by old ones that existed prior to the dictatorship regime, or by new ones associated with anti-communist or anti-Francoist traditions. They point out that such changes also

took place in the past (e.g. 49 names were changed in Paris alone after the fall of Napoleon). They also reflect on the naming policy in France after World War II, and in particular the cult of General de Gaulle, who helped to stamp out the memory of the Vichy state (some 700 streets and squares were named after the General during his lifetime). Różycki and Zima devote the last part of their article to attempts at restoring the 'lost memory', i.e. measures taken in Poland to commemorate works of art that were robbed (unrecovered) or demolished during World War II. Such actions are taken by institutions, such as the Museum of Lost Art, whose exhibitions are intended to create a sense of regret for the lost elements of the past and to gain knowledge of them. The authors conclude that there may be a conflict over memory and attitude to the past in a pluralist state, but it should not manifest itself in the destruction of symbols and the manipulation of history.