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Inside review

Functional and Content Programme of the Main Exhibition. Museum of the Second World War in Gdańsk, pp.75

The 'Functional and Content Programme of the Main Exhibition of the Museum of the Second World War' presented for review was developed in January 2016 by a group of known and valued historians led by the director of the institution, Prof. Paweł Machcewicz (seconded by dr hab. Rafał Wnuk, Prof. at KUL; dr hab Piotr M. Majewski, and dr Janusz Marszałec). Right in the Introduction, the authors unveil the main idea behind the exhibition and a certain tension which will accompany it. The tension, unnecessary as it seems to me in its specific version, builds around two contradictory goals set for the exhibition. One of them is bound to win anyway. The question is: which one should win? The authors write that most of all 'it is the mission of the Second World War Museum in Gdańsk to create a modern facility telling the story of the war as the gravest cataclysm of the 20th century'. The argument given in support of the so construed sense and goal of the institution is the fact that there is no museum either in Europe or the world 'which would show a comprehensive picture of the developments and nature of the conflict'. Only against that prime goal, the authors seem to admit, comes the second goal, namely 'to show the world what the war-time experience of Poland', and in the same sentence they add: 'and other countries of Central and Eastern Europe was like, in many aspects different from and little known to the Western Europe and countries outside Europe'.

Therefore, one should ask the question about the actual purpose of the exhibition and whether it is possible to present the Polish experience of the Second World War – unusual and exceptional as it was – by weaving it only into the canvas of a broader presentation of the history of war seen as a cataclysm, pathology included, without being lost. This is because that broader narration follows a different order, not only in chronological terms (this is the least problem), but also in terms of content, interpretation, symbolism, etc.

The exhibition, even though in fragments it does immerse the visitor in the Polish war experience, is generally devoted to a totally different topic. The intention is that when leaving the exhibition, the visitor should know that the war was immense evil, and that the Germans responsible for its outbreak infected virtually all participants in the conflict with war pathologies, i.e. elements of total war. The ensuing conclusion is: No war, not now, not ever! This is a bit too little for such a conceptual and organisational effort.

Stereotypes to which all of us, humans, succumb have their interpretative power, and this is because their power stems from drawing false conclusions from true information. The nations being the potential addressees of the exhibition live in stereotypes, and in different ones. In other words, a broader narration of the Second World War is bound to come out in some specific version, only in this case the version is not necessarily Polish. This will only make the attainment of the goal (if actually adopted!) defined as giving the visitor a closer insight into the truth about Poland and Poles of the 20th century and about our exceptionality, more difficult. With all due respect for the authors of the exhibition, it seems that their ambition is to complete an exhibition project which will prove acceptable to the addressee theoretically described as: 'the world', 'the recipient', and to align the language with the 'global' tone of that recipient (with the leftist myths of totalitarian systems and the war, plus the existing stereotypes accepted) so that the viewer (foreigner) can gain a better understanding of the Polish history too. On the other hand, the exhibition should aim at presenting the Polish experience and confronting it with the potentially known stereotype views of the Second World War shared in the world (varied as it is anyway). In effect, in its current version the exhibition does not allow the visitor to confront his own, limited perception of the years leading to war, its course, and its aftermath because all the authors of the exhibition do is to confirm his limited perspective whilst ascribing the sense universality to it.

My comments of general nature will become more comprehensible when I pass to the details (below). Before this happens, however, it needs to be said that my criticism of the main format the exhibition is given does not negate the need for such a

facility to exist (and I think Gdańsk is a good location), or the need to create the above indicated tension, though on the Polish terms. What does the latter mean? To get a hint, one should turn to the Museums of the Holocaust, from Jerusalem to Washington (I have not seen them all, but have visited both the IYV and the site in the US capital). What the Jewish authors do is: they put the history of the Holocaust in the centre of the war, and the facts and interpretations relating to the cataclysm, human attitudes and experience are woven around it. This interpretative pressure initially reduces the visitor to either accept or reject the Jewish view of the history, but then, after a deeper reflection it reveals the universal side of the story told of the years of the Second World War. The authors of the Polish exhibition should reach for the same tool. Hence, the initial two paragraphs of the introduction should not only be reversed in order, but also follow the sense of the thus construed format. The Polish story needs to be told first to exert a building pressure on the visitor, the pressure which will tear apart his perception of the Second World War. Then, under the pretext of e.g. the engagement of the Polish Armed Forces on all fronts of the war – easily achievable as it is – tell the visitor that he can blend his prior knowledge of the war with the content of the exhibition.

The authors of the exhibition split it into blocks (1. The Road to War, 2. The Horror of War, 3. The Long Shadow of War) and then into sections.

In Block I (sections 0 and 1), the authors rightly stress the importance of the Versailles order beneficial primarily to the nations of Central and Eastern Europe, the Polish included (though not Germany's allies, e.g. Hungary). However, section 1.2 begins a stereotype narration, that is a leftist liberal story of the bad Fascism-Nazism on one side (by the way, I am not sure why Italy is mentioned there, as it is not shown in contrast to anything, say the problems of France as a democratic country going through trouble or the USA and the way out of the democratic liberal crisis) and bad Stalinist Bolshevism on the other side. However, coming to the civil war in Spain (2.1) the authors take the side of a visitor with democratic and liberal views who will easily allocate negative scores to both sides of the conflict while at the same time retain warm feelings for the "Republicans" or the leftist vision of the war in Spain. It

would be better to add strength to the message by complementing Ernest Hemingway or George Orwell with people of the rightist Catholic sensitivity, e.g. Josemaria Escriva (see: A. Vasquez de Prada, *The Founder of Opus Dei*, vol. 1-3, Kraków 2003 – especially vol. 2, pp. 11 et seq.) or Salvadore Dali. The vital question about the sense of the conflict dwindles in the attempt to avoid judgment from the position of superiority. Importantly from the Polish point of view, we miss the experience of the Second Polish Republic and the Papal Encyclicals of 1937 which damned both Nazism and Bolshevism on the grounds of the social doctrine of the Church (by the way, the facts given about the Third Reich overlook the information about anti-Christian dimension of Nazism). In Block I, the authors also give an example of the Japanese militarism, but make no mention of the USA. The remaining part of section 2.1 (the genesis of the war) is done well. The Polish context, i.e. the Second Republic of Poland, is depicted well, although so laconically that the whole message – the effort to reconstruct Poland Reborn after 123 years of subjection – gets lost. The same first generation (people born in the 20th century) who benefitted from the struggle for the Independent country previously continued by at least 5 generations, was brought up in the spirit of patriotism and passed the test when called to defend their Homeland just like their predecessors. Not knowing that reality it is hard to comprehend the Polish attitudes during the Second World War (e.g. capability to conspire, the 1863 National Government, self-governance, etc.). Moreover, it does not seem absolutely important to dwell upon the question whether the system was authoritarian after 1926 – even though it actually was such! What is vital is to hint the existence of a fundamental problem to the visitor (Piłsudski supporters vs nationalists), i.e. the question about who the sovereign is: the civic state, or the nation identifying itself as Polish (which is not the same as the notion of Poland of the Piasts, or Poland of the Jagiellonians; instead, it comes down to the tension between the Sanation state which captured control of public space in the name of responsibility, and self-governed Poland based on the systemic principle of auxiliaryity). The search for the optimal system (e.g. the idea of corporationism, Christian nationalism, democracy in the Morges Front version, etc.) progressed in the epoch when democracy was in crisis and the awareness of the totalitarian dehumanization was deepening. Section 2.2 – Gdańsk: it would be worth

devoting a sentence or two (see: M. Bogucka) to the historic and economic significance of Gdańsk for the First Republic of Poland, also in the context of Vistula being the river which constituted a major economic and transport node; this is because from the Polish point of view the Second Republic of Poland continued the First Republic of Poland. Sections 2.3 and 3 close the time before and up to the outbreak of the war well. There is no mention of the true problem which Poland Reborn faced and actually never coped with, namely its national minorities, especially the strong ones which contested the existence of the Polish state, as well as those which were neutral or took the restitutionary position (e.g. up to 1926 the political representation of the national minorities would always be in opposition, even at the times of deep crisis).

Sections 3.1 and 2. To me, the message should synthesise the main idea to a greater extent. In the narration as it is now, the visitor is actually focused on the September events seen from the perspective of Gdańsk and Gdańsk Pomerania (60 thousand fatalities by the end of 1939 – primarily in Pomerania). I understand that the authors wanted to begin with an important detail (the doubt being whether the war began here only) and go on to a general view. The overall, synthetic message comes down to saying that the aggressors' prime goal was to physically annihilate the Polish elite. That is true, although the nature of the war was that of total annihilation, hence it was also waged against defenceless civilians (Wieluń – photographs from the local Museum, or Warsaw – the famous photographs by J. Bryan instead of his film shots) (Sections 3.3, 4, 5 – Warsaw defence and siege). In its proposed version, the exhibition merely touches on all those aspects. The visitor is further informed of the resistance staged by the Polish Army.

(Sections 3.6 and 7)

(Section 3.7) The message revealing the effects of the Soviet-German alliance of 28 September 1939 is very important, however the sentence which reads that the Soviet Union never intended to give back the land it captured after the 17 September is unclear, just as the fact that the English did not explicitly condemn the entry of the Red Army into the Polish land. At a certain stage in the exhibition, perhaps preferably

at the moment when the Polish goals of the war are discussed, it would be best to say that the Polish did not waive their own land, homes, estates, etc.

Block II. The horror of war.

General comments:

Sections 4 and 5, and 6 – represent an attempt at describing the initial years of the war in the global scale. The message would make sense, had the authors put the Polish aspect in the very centre (e.g. Narvik, Polish Armed Forces engaged in the battle of France of 1940, etc.; the Polish Navy, Battle of Britain – Polish divisions) so that the visitor could link the global events with the information on the Polish involvement in defending independence of the European countries invaded by the Germans – the motto: ‘for our and your freedom’ – going back to the Poles of the 19th c. and participation of the Polish officers in struggle for national liberation. In this way, the visitor would learn why the Polish who found themselves outside their own occupied country took up the roles they knew from the past. The essence of this reversal of the narration comes down to “making continuously sure” that the visitor (whatever his origins might be) does not lock himself up in his own stereotypes he brought in when entering the museum, but instead discovers a version of the Second World War unknown to him (perhaps stereotypical too, as there is no other). The visitor should not be lulled intellectually. The Museum of the History of Germany in Berlin can set a good example of understanding the educational task of the historical message a museum conveys; there, the visitor gets a clear picture of the German history, i.e. a picture which relates to the character of the contemporary German who functions in a contradictory tradition – that of the heir to the responsibility for the whole Old Continent (Roman Empire of the German Nation) and that of the descendant of the Prussian imperialism (the thread first occurring in the 17th century). The contemporary Pole, just like the German, is rooted in tradition and without the latter it is hard to comprehend them, just as their reactions to the contemporary challenges.

It is worth to stop and think what we want to say about ourselves in the context of the Second World War; the key words which characterise and at the same time limit us

are: martyrdom (from the point of view of the Catholic Church the 20th century is the age of martyrs, and the Polish with their own history identify with that universal narration) and devotion, injustice and naivety, openness and tolerance, and at the same time belief in anti-Polish plots, etc. Indeed, the general message is: this nation is exceptional living under pressure from both imperialist and totalitarian systems, forced to build everything from scratch time and time again, rooted deeply in the Polish spirit through God and culture, willing to go into far-reaching devotion, composed of individualists who are at the same time deeply attached to family solidarity. That main message can, of course, be expressed in different ways, still, it should be non-verbally present and clear in the story told by the museum. In section 6, the authors want to signal that the war which broke out in Poland was new in nature carrying traits of genocidal warfare and in that very shape it spread all over the world “taken up” by all sides. In this way, the authors convey a message where war becomes a phenomenon corresponding with common responsibility – possibly of humanity as such (e.g. 6.3 – the bombings). This leads to putting history in a relativist perspective, since ‘humanity’ will also be the victim, patched up of selected cases which do not add up to mass (national) experience (e.g. Section 6.2 – the tragedy of Leningrad). In this way, the authors try to hint that identification with the drama of the Second World War is possible, if the times are approached from personal perspective, without references to national myths, or memory of the Polish shared experience. Obviously, no one suggests adopting a similar stratagem in an analysis of the Holocaust relating solely to the Jews. It is as if the Polish had no experience of their own (including memories and myths), or as if it were not worth showing here, on the Polish soil. This is hard to accept! (e.g. 6.5 – hunger: the narration dwells on exceptionality of the hunger suffered in the ghettos, and then passes to scattered examples from other sites of occupied Europe).

Section 7.0-2. The most challenging task is that of conveying the message on the attitudes of the national minorities of the Second Republic of Poland and their approach to the Polish tragedy. This is because there is no single picture: the German minority behaves like the Fifth Column, but we have noble examples of patriotism (Bishop J. Bursche); the Jewish minority is the victim of the German occupants (but

do they care about the situation Poland found itself in?) but not absolutely of their Soviet counterparts (victims for class reasons, and co-perpetrators of the Polish tragedies, supporting the NKVD and Soviet administration in the Eastern Borderlands); the Ukrainian minority violates the pre-war coexistence to collaborate with the Germans after 1941; similarly - the Lithuanians turn anti-Polish under any occupation and in this respect collaborate with the enemies of the sovereign state of Poland. On the other hand, we have “rightful” Ukrainians and brave Jewish fighting hand in hand with the Polish (see e.g. the Monte Cassino cemetery). The tough message is this: those who fought the Germans and the Soviets during the Second World War to have the Polish state put back on the political map of the Old Continent were the Poles alone, not its national minorities.

In that section, however, the authors turned to another issue: occupation and the phenomenon of collaboration. Taking the Polish point of view, it would be worth mentioning that e.g. whilst collaborating with the Germans, Hungary went far to be of assistance to Poland (up to the country’s seizure by the Third Reich) and the Polish (to name e.g. the story of the Antall-Slawik friendship ending with Henryk Slawik’s death at the concentration camp of Mathausen-Gusen). In the present shape, one gets an emotionally cold picture, as if the creators of the exhibition were disinterested in the context of the place and history of the Poles in the years of the Second World War.

Even section 7.2, i.e. Soviet annexation of subsequent fragments of Central and Eastern Europe in 1939 – 1940, is shown from a global perspective without reference to the Polish experience (see: the Vilnius region).

Section 7.3. Admittedly, Japan’s case is interesting in terms of discovering the facts.

Section 8.0 The German war against Poland, just like the war the Soviets waged, involves a whole range of repressions, some accompanying the liquidation of the state and almost all forms of community life: murders, arrests, camps (lagers), expulsions (deportations), loss of jobs and forced labour, impoverishment, economic exploitation, etc.; see; e.g. the program www.straty.pl). The Polish experience is important because it is universal and reveals the entire range of repressions the invaders – occupants

resorted to. That Polish fate will result in loss of lives (about 3 million Poles and about 3 million Polish Jews), the onset of the Polish exodus (over the whole time of the war covering virtually the whole world), and physical losses to property (see: calculations in USD for Warsaw, a publication edited by W. Falkowski). The intended message: practically each Polish family lost a family member, a part of its property, and existential continuity from the pre-war times. Those synthetic communications should be backed with a brief description of the Polish territory under the German occupation (split into the GG and the annexed regions) and Soviet occupation. In their main description, the authors try to convey a sense of exceptionality of the Polish fate – the cattle car is here properly displayed. However, section 8.1 (German and Soviet crime inflicted on the Polish nation) misses a clear indication who occupants considered to be the Polish elite, and the shortfall includes missing the exceptional fate of the Catholic clergy (Dachau, 861 victims) and their stance (Father Maksymilian Kolbe, or the chaplains of the Warsaw Uprising; 108 blessed). What is also missing is a clear indication that in the territories incorporated into the Reich the Germans imposed unusual terror with the view of Germanising the areas; the Soviets, on the other hand, did not resort to mass murder but limited themselves to slaughter events (Katyń, etc.) while employing deportation as the method of wiping out the Polish and injecting the Soviet prevalence in the Eastern Borderlands (the fact mentioned in section 8.2). Genocide in the South-Eastern Borderlands consisting in the slaughter of the Polish civilian population by the Ukrainians (minimum 100 thousand people) is spun off the history of the Polish experience to become an independent topic. As such, it is shown in combination with the cleansing perpetrated by the Ustaše of the Independent State of Croatia. Having done this move, perhaps it was worth to continue the topic to go into the approaches adopted by the hierarchs: Stepinac and Szeptycki (section 10).

The fragment devoted to deportations would be fine, had the authors not resorted to a similar trick to emphasising the all-embracing scale of deportations during the Second World War (not only the Poles, but Jews as well; many other states employed that form of repression). The history of Polish resettlements and deportations, expulsion and loss of property is by all means worth highlighting and reporting over time:

beginning as early as in 1939 with those expelled from the territories annexed into the Reich (see: the IPN studies in Poznań) and ending practically with the liberation of Europe in 1945. Most Polish in exile remaining largely dispersed (in the Third Reich alone there were about 1.2 million Poles wondering whether to return or not). Some, e.g. the children of the “inhuman land”, had already lived in the new reality for several years (e.g. in Africa, New Zealand, or Mexico – practically on all continents). That was one of the reasons (with later waves of the times of communist Poland adding to the phenomenon) why about 1/3 of the nation, i.e. about 16 million Poles, lives in exile. In other words, Polish expulsions are so unique in their scale and permanence that it is difficult to fit them into the mould of the global experience.

My comments on sections 8.3 and 4: Forced labour and concentration camps, are similar: the Polish thread here is only secondary (there is no mention of CAPT. Pilecki and his underground mission inside the camp, which is a topic of particular significance opening a huge field for discovery; there is no mention of the fate of Polish women in Ravensbruck, or that of the above-mentioned priests, including Father Kolbe and his stance grown from Christian love for the fellow-neighbour, etc. Such examples pave way for a broad range of interpretations on e.g. the clash of paganism with the might of Catholicism, the faith dominating among the Polish). Interesting in this context, on the other hand, is the message unnamed by the authors, that is an attempt to create a section devoted to euthanasia and exemplify it with a Pomeranian case (mental hospital in Kochorowo). This could be the occasion to recall the dramatic events in the hospital in Gostynin and the suicide of dr Mikulski.

Section 9. The authors have treated the history of the Jewish nation as an autonomous story, separate from other topics. Surely, the Holocaust must be shown separate and highlight clearly the Germans’ role as the creators of the racist law imposed on the occupied Polish territories. However, even here there is place for the Polish viewpoint: e.g. the Righteous (9.3) are mentioned on the margin of the Holocaust story which follows the line of the history of the Jewish nation. Still, the story of Poles saving Jews (on the Aryan side) is an element of the history of the Fighting Poland, including the Polish Underground State, and of the impact the underground structures

and the Polish government in exile exerted on their own society, functioning despite the occupants' law and external factors, primarily the US and UK governments where we stood up as the main diplomatic force supporting the Jewish cause in the free world. How can one fail to play that trump-card phenomenon in the Polish history? It is true that the Holocaust was actually launched as of 1941 under the slogan of "Judeo-Communism" (Ponary included). Nevertheless, what should have been shown is the dynamics of the war where up to 1942 inclusive neither the Jews, nor the Polish had an idea about or understand the German decision to wipe out the Jewish nation; the local extermination developments did not trigger mass solidarity among the Jews in GG, nor did they give the Polish Underground State a clear understanding of the German plans (and this is not a grievance, but a fact). This is important to understand the Polish and Jewish behaviour, their attitudes. For the sake of historic truth too, one cannot categorise the representatives of all eastern nations as collaborators (as e.g. Snyder does), because the Polish (unlike the Ukrainians and Lithuanians, others too) did not form any separate military structures to carry out extermination jobs (there is no comparison with the Blue Police or forced labourers).

Section 11 is a major section devoted to conspiracy, including 11.1 – The phenomenon of the Polish Underground State: the presentation is done very well, but the message can be elaborated on, i.e. devoted more space. For instance, the exposition introduces E. Zawadzka 'Zo' and Jan Piwnik 'Sulky', but there was "too little" space to inform that they were 'Cichociemni' paratroopers (two of more than 300 people), or name the origins of the formation, or their place on the map of the immense Polish armed effort (the Polish Armed Forces – Home Army, but also Polish participation in e.g. the intelligence structures of other underground organisations, including the French F-2 espionage network, see: section 12). Without the Polish perspective in the centre, individual fragments of the exhibition, though developed very well, waste the chance they open (e.g. to restore the 'Pomeranian Griffin' in the public memory as an arm of the Polish conspiracy operating in Kashubia – noteworthy: linked to the national movement of which the authors remain silent, and in effect it becomes lost among other European 'partisan' movements). It seems to me it would have been better to focus on the clashing targets and tragedy of the Home Army in the Eastern

Borderlands, where the formation fought e.g. the Soviet-Jewish guerillas (e.g. Koniuchy) subject to the external power.

The Warsaw Uprising of 1944 is rightly confronted with others, the Paris one in particular, but this should be done in order to state it plain and clear that the Polish nation rising arms in hands to fight for independence was not given the right to sovereignty from either of the sides, unlike France in August 1944. This should be a large outcry accompanied by an overview of the Polish memory of the Uprising (live to this date).

Sections 14 and 15 trigger no reservations in their form proposed by the authors. They show e.g. the western powers yielding to Stalin's influence and going against their own declarations contained in the Atlantic Charter, thus causing loss of independence yet another time, also by Poland.

Section 15.2 makes sense, although one should consider whether the baby is not thrown out with the bath water here; the authors devote the part to polemics with the German message and memory of the end of the war shown as the time when German civilians turn into the gravest victim of the world conflict (the entry of the Red Army, rapes and plundering, expulsions). The issue calls for deeper thought towards the creation of a section which would be polemical when set side by side with the messages of other nations (e.g. German, Russian, Western, or Jewish; this, however, needs to be done carefully so as not to hurt the feelings and memories of other nations; after all, we ourselves do not like when our right to cherish our own history is questioned).

Section 15.3 – 'Ambiguous liberation' – the name is not too fortunate. The narration in this part is very good, e.g. due to the fact that the authors show the fate of the independence underground movement from the perspective of the map of the Second Republic of Poland. Obviously, one would wish to see more of the ZWiN, NZW [*National Military Union*], NSZ [*National Armed Forces*], and other formations, including the phenomenon of the NSZ Świętokrzyska Brigade, or the last 'forest fighters' with Radziwonik and Franczak heading the list.

Block II ends with the end of the war and Hiroshima: its overall message is not clear. The purpose is to settle accounts with the Third Reich crime, but the topic could be dealt with broader using the long history of the “Katyń lie” (the latter thread is non-existent).

Block III – The long shadow of war: just as in the previous blocks, the history of the Polish nation is skipped from the main message; the authors universalise the consequences of the war by mixing examples instead of showing the values on the example of the Polish experience (e.g. the Estonian’s suitcase rather than the figure of Grażyna Lipińska or rev. Władysław Bukowiński who also transpire universal values, even though through the prism of the Polish dramas and attitudes, and of the post-war evil which this part of Europe shed in 1989 – as the authors rightly write).

The map of Poland and the story of migrations, border changes, just as the entire section 17 – all this should and is shown in the exhibition. Of course, the unpunished crime touches on the question of the responsibility of the Third Reich and the German felons – from Eichmann, through Mengele, as well as those who are still tracked in South America or Ukraine. Nevertheless, it would be worth continuing the topic to include a Polish case of injustice in that very context, that is not only the example of Moczarski’s Jurgen Stropp, but also Stalinism in Poland (e.g. the typical post-war fate of the Warsaw insurgents – members of the ‘Zośka’ battalion and J. Rodowicz ‘Anoda’).

Section 18. The message carries traits of ideology, especially when one enters the field of the values of liberal democracy and European Union, the contemporary challenges included. The intention is right, but at the same time difficult to carry through because of the limited possibility the authors (and not only them, but everyone, the reviewer included) have to develop an objective view of the contemporary reality and threats. The authors are most certainly right wanting to highlight the exceptional nature of the ‘Solidarity’ movement in the years 1980-1981 and to show it as a proposal for Europe, also for today. However, the programme linked thereto and the symbols which illustrate the ‘S’ are: John Paul II and Erazm Ciołek’s photos of holy masses, the

presence of the cross at the place of work – generally the presence of Christianity in public life. This message is missing.

The fragment entitled *Wiadrownia* does not fall under my review, as it does not link directly to the main exhibition.

SUMMARY

I do not want to repeat myself, but I must say that in my opinion the authors made a strategic choice where the Polish viewpoint on the history of the Second World War is “buried” under pseudo-universalism, some version of the world history. War and its consequences have become the collective protagonist. The message, because it conceals the lines of thought available for presentation, is so general that it verges on the infantile. The visitor will leave with the conviction that he knew it all even before stepping in (though this will obviously be untrue). I am using the word “some” not incidentally, because hiding behind the screen of objectivism the authors themselves avoid a clear declaration of what they are guiding the visitor to. That is why there are many interesting elements (exhibits, records), alas unutilised. To me, it seems that the Museum of the Second World War based in Gdańsk should show the Polish story of the tragedy of the years 1939 – 1945 and of the long-lasting presence of its consequences (physical, political, Polish collective memory, etc.). In other words, the Museum is for the world, but tells about Poland and the Polish – about who we are today, and why we are what we are: loving freedom, Catholic, patriotic, etc. and most of all – proud of our history.

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