

Summary

The presentation "Political conditions of the activity of the Memorial Site and the Museum of KL Auschwitz - Birkenau" is a political look at the changes that have taken place at the Memorial over the last 70 years. The author presents the slow maturation of the institution to transform a place of tragedy for a million people into a universal centre for teaching about human rights and crimes against humanity.

Oświęcim was a multicultural city before the start of the war. The majority of the inhabitants were Jewish (60%). In their memoirs, they emphasised how important it was for them to have friendly relations with Poles. The town was characterised by small-scale entrepreneurship and a well-developed railway. The latter was to be one of the factors that determined the future location of the camp.

After the outbreak of World War II, the Jewish community was deported to nearby ghettos. Auschwitz was transformed into Auschwitz. The Gehenna began. Killing and indifference to death is one of the main memories of the witnesses of the crime (prisoners, SS men and inhabitants of Auschwitz and its surroundings).

Shortly after liberation, there were many discussions. How to develop the site? How to commemorate this crime? The answers were not clear. After two years, the Museum was established.

At first the site was subjected to socialist-realist indoctrination. Not long afterwards, international exhibitions were introduced and scientific research was initiated.

The author also presents the slow process of democratisation of the Museum. 1979 was a very important year for the institution, when Pope John Paul II visited the site and the place was added to the UNESCO list.

The 1980s and 1990s showed that the place still aroused great emotions. Religious and national conflicts broke out in the vicinity of the Museum. The dispute over the Carmelite nunnery, the "Świtonia crosses" or the "Supermarket around Auschwitz" were loud. These were so sensitive that the Polish government had to resolve them with a special law.

But it is also a place of dialogue. On the site of Oświęcim, in the shadow of Auschwitz, institutions were also established that began to uphold human rights and fight against the pathologies of public life. The International Youth Meeting Centre, the Centre for Dialogue and Prayer or the Jewish Centre were established.

After the rejection of communism, the Museum too had to take a fresh look at its heritage. The new opening was mainly the establishment of the International Auschwitz Council, the creation of the International Centre on Auschwitz and the Holocaust. The Polish state, knowing the seriousness of this place, created a special government programme to support the development of the infrastructure around the Museum. Finances have not been forgotten either. These have always been insufficient. That is why a special "Endowment Fund" was created in agreement with many countries. Dozens of institutions and countries contributed money to its operation.