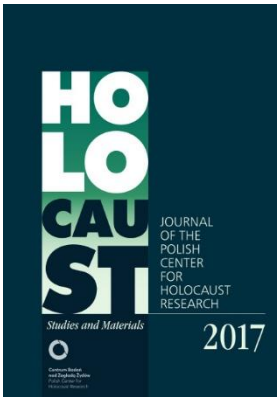


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# *The Holocaust in a "Museum of life" (the Polin Museum and its trouble with the genius loci of the Muranów district)*

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# The Holocaust in a "Museum of life" (the Polin Museum and its trouble with the *genius loci* of the Muranów district)

The Museum of the History of Polish Jews is the fruit of work undertaken by many wonderful people, who played a part in its creation. It was a difficult, laborious undertaking that required great dedication. In 2006, I joined the team in order to develop with Barbara Engelking the conception of the Holocaust gallery (at the first stage, Havi Dreyfuss and Jakub Petelewicz also worked with us). After eight years, the exhibition was opened; it was eight years of wonderful cognitive adventure. I am grateful for that and wish to thank each and everyone with whom I could cooperate. I am proud of this magnificent work that is the Core Exhibition and I frankly share the feeling of well-deserved satisfaction with those who completed this project.

The Museum of the History of Polish Jews is now open and the Core Exhibition has been made available to visitors since October 2014. The event was greeted with gasps of admiration from Poland and all over the world, and also with justified joy. However, the times of euphoria have already passed. We should conclude this stage and start thinking critically about what we have created. The time of the realisation of museum's mission has begun. In my opinion, one of the most important elements of this mission is to ensure that the functioning of the Core Exhibition is perfect. It is our obligation to aspire to make it spread the creators' message in the most complete way. For this reason, frankly speaking, I am annoyed by this constant admiration of the museum and its exhibition, this propaganda of success that is close to exaltation, this continuous thinking in the categories of "the best museum in Europe and probably in the world." This is all the more offensive because such exclamations of euphoria are uttered by those who currently manage the museum; therefore, in an honestly immoderate way, they are praising themselves. Such endless self-satisfaction seems to me pointless and dangerous. It obscures the horizon, affects intellectual clear-sightedness and critical sense, overpowers and puts to sleep to the pleasant melody of "success, success, success" that is easy on the ear. I would prefer to look at the functioning of the museum and its Core Exhibition function in their surroundings from a critical perspective.

* * *

Undergoing profound transformations, the modern – or it should rather be called 'post-modern' – institution of museum opens itself to inspirations from new technologies, new humanities, and also from architecture. In the contemporary museological discourse, the function and identity of the museum, the character of its relations with the surroundings (natural environment and urban fabric), its place in the field of social communication and its role in the space of public debate are again defined. The dichotomous division into 'content' and 'form', into that, which has been deposited inside and that, which constitutes the external cover of such deposit, is fading away. The architectural concept includes not only the shape of a building but it also creates a special place in space and as a work of art conveys a message itself. It is not a neutral container for artifacts/objects, which are hanging on the walls or are put in display cases, but a way of communicating. For these reasons, created by visionary architects, museums that are built today are so spectacular that they change the nearest surroundings and often become new symbols of the cities in which they are located. Berlin has the Jewish Museum, designed by Daniel Libeskind (opened in 2001), and, alternatively, the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe, designed by Peter Eisenman (unveiled in 2005), that with an underground museum and amazing form (a huge site covered with concrete blocks or stelae) counterbalances the nearby Brandenburg Gate. Tourists visit Bilbao only to see Frank Gehry's exceptional Guggenheim Museum (opened in 1997), delightfully situated on the River Nervión that flows through the city into the Atlantic Ocean. Undoubtedly, the Museum of the History of Polish Jews in Warsaw has become one of the most dominant architectural features in the capital. The simple body of the building hides an impressive interior that resembles canyons eroded by water and rooms illuminated by the sun that are wide open to the surrounding space. However, the exhibition itself is located underground.

Every historical museum preserves remnants of the past. Therefore, collecting and preserving traces of the past or telling about the past, it enables one to be in contact with the bygone, to commune with it, hence it contributes to our memory. How we remember the past is determined by the pressure of today since individual memory cannot free itself from the influence of the social frameworks that shape it.[1] In other words, the past materialised in museums inevitably becomes a product of the present that organises it.[2] In the Polin Museum, the Core Exhibition's main objective – as one may read in the promotional material, catalogue and guidebook – is to present 1,000 years of

[1] Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, trans. Lewis A. Coser (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

[2] Tony Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum: history, theory, politics* (London–New York: Routledge, 1995), p. 129.

the history of Polish Jews. The exhibition invites one to, to use the promotional phrase, 'a journey through the ages'. During this journey, one visits all the most important places of the Jewish presence in the Polish land, face all the most important events related to this presence: from "the first encounters" to "the Final Solution to the Jewish Question" and even further, to the postwar years and the phenomenon of Jewish life that was revived after the Holocaust. With such a rich message, which includes a number of topics and fundamentally influences the understanding of not only the past but above all the present, the exhibition demonstrates the significant role of the Polin Museum in the formation of collective memory.

* * *

What gives an identity to a place, what constitutes its aura? Ilya Kabakov, a Ukrainian-born conceptual artist, who has lived in the United States since the late 1980s, answers:

> When talking about the aura of a place, we do not talk about individual objects, buildings or historical events related to a specific place that need historical research. One talks rather about numerous cultural 'layers' focused in a given place. One discusses experiencing the historical depth, about overlapping images that one feels when being in a given place; one talks of activating memory that determines the multilayered structure and polyphony of a place. […] This means that besides the material […] there is also something elusive, spiritual, an atmosphere that pervades the place and surrounds the sky above our heads and the ground and grass under our feet. It surrounds not only what we can see but also what we cannot see, gaps, voids, spaces between things; the meaning of these voids and gaps is as important as the meaning of objects since these voids say and mean as much as the objects.[3]

Modern museums no longer have the character of a separate building since the border between the building and the surrounding space is fuzzy. A museum opens outwards, to the immediate neighbourhood, to the urban landscape and the city (or rather a part of it) becomes its part, becomes an extension of the exhibition. Similarly, museums devoted to history, including those that depict the Second World War and thus the Holocaust, open to the surrounding landscape, absorbing it somehow and making it an integral element of the exhibition. The complex of the Yad Vashem Holocaust Museum is located on a height in Jerusalem and the new museum building resembles a horizontal triangular prism. Intersecting the peak, both its ends jut out of the slope, which creates a dramatic effect. The visitors enter the museum over a bridge and finish their visit on the brink of a precipice. At the end, the museum visitor's path leads to an extensive terrace with a breathtaking panorama of Jewish estates scattered

[3] Ilya Kabakov, *Public Projects or The Spirit of A Place* (Milan: Charta, 2001).

picturesquely around the green hills of Jerusalem. There, the terror of the Holocaust finds a peculiar consolation or redemption; the visitors are fortified with a beautiful view, which apart from aesthetic values also has an ideological message – a radiant vision of the Jewish state that is somehow emerging from the Holocaust ashes. The exposition in the Museum of Jewish Heritage in New York, located at the tip of Lower Manhattan, where the River Hudson enters a harbour bay, ends with a huge window. The view is the last chapter of the story about the Jewish fate in the 20th century. Emerging from the bay waters, is Ellis Island, a symbol of America as the promised land for immigrants, and Liberty Island nearby with the Statue of Liberty, or "Liberty Enlightening the World" as its official name is, a well-known icon of New York, the United States and the whole world of Western democracies built on the foundation of values that in the language of the French donors are: *Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité*.

The building of the Museum of the History of Polish Jews transforms space into place and conducts a dialogue with it, in which the speech of history alternates with the speech of the present. When one erects a museum, one literally makes a statement about history, the present and the future. Simultaneously, discussing what is and what shall be, is inevitably connected with manifesting the advantage over the past. Our present determines the way in which the bygone appears in collective memory. "In some respects we know it [the past] better than those who lived in it," Dawid Lowenthal notices.[4] This is worth thinking about if one wishes to treat the Museum of the History of Polish Jews as an coherent statement about the past, inscribed in a specific "here" and "now".

The Polin Museum is situated in the very heart of Jewish Warsaw, where the Jewish district was formed in the middle of the 19th century. The interwar Warsaw had the largest Jewish population in Europe and was the second biggest Jewish city – after New York – in the world. Here, the heart of the Jewish community which lived in the city until the final extermination, until the total destruction of this area, was beating. The museum's building has been constructed exactly in the place of the foundations for the barracks of the Crown Artillery built towards the end of the 18th century. In the 19th century, the barracks were turned into a tsarist prison; in the period between the First and the Second World Wars, a military prison was located there. During the German occupation and when the ghetto was established, it was a Jewish prison that was dubbed 'Gęsiówka'. After the Gross-Aktion Warsaw, the Judenrat was situated there from September 1942. When the uprising in the ghetto was suppressed and the former closed district razed to the ground, the complex of Konzentrationslager Warschau (the Warsaw concentration camp), also called 'Gęsiówka' similarly to the Jewish prison in the ghetto, was built there, stretching along Gęsia Street, from Zamenhofa to Okopowa Streets.

[4] Dawid Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), p. 190.

I am inclined to state that either the museum as a building, blended in with its surroundings, or unfortunately, the Holocaust gallery itself does not sufficiently use such a unique, absolutely one of a kind place, this *genius loci*. Designed by Natan Rapaport, the Monument to the Ghetto Heroes is an internationally recognisable icon. With an architecturally inspiring and symbolically ambiguous fissure of the building, the museum is centrally located in front of the monument's façade. Originally, this fissure – some say it is the crossing of the Red Sea – was supposed to direct with its axis directly to Rapaport's monument. But it is not. The monument somehow escapes the museum's axis; it is standing a little bit to the side. It can be faced centrally only while looking from the window of the temporary exhibitions. Sometimes this window is curtained, which is an ostentatious example of the museum turning away from the heritage of the place where it stands. It is as if Rapaport's monument, which glorifies the heroes and victims of the Warsaw ghetto uprising, a little disturbed, by something constituting a somewhat inconvenient neighbourhood reminiscent of something, which the museum does not wish to exhibit so much. The Museum of the History of Polish Jews and its Core Exhibition do not confront this place, whose phenomenon was not emphasised or presented clearly enough. As if nobody wanted to face the "Muranów challenge" and respond to it completely. One may remember that the museum stands 400 metres from the Umschlagplatz Monument designed by Hanna Szmalenberg and Władysław Klamerus, unveiled in 1988, and in front of the museum's building, there is a 1946 commemorative plaque in the shape of a manhole – the first commemoration of the Warsaw ghetto uprising in the city.

Being an institution of culture that shapes the memory of the Holocaust, the museum seems to act with special care as if it was walking in a minefield. This is understandable. Despite the dynamic growth of research and historical studies that are often of crucial importance, the experience of the Holocaust still has not been accepted and 'worked through' in Poland. It is quite the reverse. Sociological research reveals a visible regression of social consciousness. Poles entrench themselves in positions related to heroism, agony and dignity. With their suffering, Jews are still treated as rivals for the palm of martyrdom.[5] A question remains whether such care and conservatism are what one would expect of the Museum of the History of Polish Jews. The museum's attitude towards the *genius loci* of the Muranów district could be interpreted in the categories of peculiar 'oblivion', which is indicated by memory researchers as well as cultural anthropologists, especially those who represent a broadly understood spatial turn in the humanities. Stanisław Kapralski wrote about this kind of 'oblivion' analysing the cultural landscape that was left by the Polish Jews in the space of contemporary Poland. Lowenthal and Luhmann state: "[We] forget about the fact that forgetting is never an innocent process. We forget what we do not wish to

[5] See Antoni Sułek, "After 'Złote żniwa'. An Attempt to Assess the Social Impact of the Book," *Polin. Studies in Polish Jewry* 27 (2015): 399–412.

remember, communities forget what in the opinion of their members is against their interest, and both processes have their, often neglected, moral dimension: 'To forget,' as Herbert Marcuse observed, 'is also to forgive what should not be forgiven'."[6]

The Holocaust gallery is situated in the centre of the events, which it presents to a large extent. Visitors are standing exactly on the *Himmelweg* of the Warsaw Jews. This is how the Germans referred to a path between a changing room and a gas chamber in concentration camps. Below, there is the old track of Zamenhofa Street, between Gęsia (present-day Anielewicza Street) and Stawki Streets, where the Umschlagplatz was located. Driven to trains, all Jews from the Warsaw ghetto were compelled to go this way. Columns of people gathered from different part of the ghetto were streaming into this small square in front of the museum of today. They could go in one direction only: via Zamenhofa Street to the loading platform and then to a train and later to gas chambers. Unfortunately, due to the current form of the exhibition, this is not so obvious to the visitors. They can only rely on information received from guides, who do not, at least for the time being, demonstrate the highest level of competence. This is a great loss because in the context of museums of the Holocaust from other parts of the world (and the Holocaust gallery is indeed a story, included in the global narrative about centuries of Jewish presence in the Polish territory, about the Holocaust), it should be stated that there is no other museum that could justify its location than the Warsaw museum being located, literally, in the area of the Holocaust. The Polin Museum had a unique opportunity to include in the exhibition area a specific place, specific topography, specific 'there and then' of the ghetto and the Holocaust confronted with 'here and now' of the contemporary Muranów district and therefore show the great tension, the dynamism of time, and the intensity of the Holocaust experience then and now.

A spectacular example of this disruption of the heritage of place, or 'forgetting' about it, is artificial rubble in the gallery devoted to the postwar years. It looks as if it is made of papier-mâché, whereas the authentic rubble of the Muranów district that was unearthed during the archaeological excavations conducted when the museum's building was under construction could have been be used. The real rubble of Muranów, the rubble of the Warsaw ghetto could be treated as a special object presented in the Core Exhibition. The reconstructed synagogue from Gwoździec, built in the 17th century, that the museum justly boasts of and the rubble of the Muranów district – two poles of the Jewish fate in this land. The promotional material emphasises that the museum was created in the heart of the Jewish district in Warsaw, in the heart of the ghetto. The Core Exhibition is located underground, that is it literally penetrates the moonscape of the destroyed ghetto, it is to some extent sunk into the foundation made of rubble.

[6] Sławomir Kapralski, "Battlefields of Memory. Landscape and Identity in Polish Jewish Relations," *History and Memory* 12(2) (2001): 37.

This is the last foundation that supported the life and suffering of Polish Jews, the foundation on which they stood – still alive, yet irrevocably sentenced to death. While walking through the exhibition, one has this rubble under one' feet – one could even hear it crunching. But these bricks extracted from the Muranów sanctuary were simply thrown away. Moreover, documents (announcements) issued by the Judenrat, bottles of different shapes and colours (it is incredible that they have survived intact), cutlery, dishes and other objects of this type were found. These artifacts were not included in the exhibition at all. They were only presented at the temporary exhibition devoted to the museum's construction.

Among these excavated objects, there is a teaspoon embedded in a branch. This teaspoon comes exactly from the place where the museum's building was constructed. The teaspoon is from the ghetto; a once organic tissue coiled itself around it. Being an incredible object that gives the shivers, it is full of meanings and huge semantic energy. Above all, this is an authentic object that neither imitates nor represents anything. It is itself. It exudes a unique aura. Dug out from this land, the teaspoon is a voice that reaches those who are living here and now. If this awfully trivialized slogan "Museum of life" is to have any sense, the branch with the teaspoon embedded in it reveals it. The teaspoon is surely lying on the warehouse shelf. Carefully catalogued, neatly packed and – metaphorically speaking – once again buried with earth, interred, hidden from the world.

* * *

Established by Zygmunt Rolat's Remembrance and Future Foundation, the Polish Committee for the "Those Saved to Their Rescuers" Commemoration pushed the idea to erect a monument to the Righteous in a close vicinity of the museum, in a one-of-a-kind spatial buffer zone, breaking the connection of the museum complex with both this place and *genius loci* as we call it. Why did the board of directors agree so quickly to this action and, what is more, willingly applaud it? In August 2014, the director, Dariusz Stola, quoted in *Gazeta Wyborcza*, "I do not know any reason to oppose an initiative undertaken by a group of Polish Jews rescued from the Holocaust, who wish to show their appreciation and remind everyone about the heroism of the Righteous." There are, of course, no reasons to cease commemorating the Righteous and nobody suggests it. However, there are far too many reasons, from architectural to moral, not to do this precisely here, close to the Museum of the History of Polish Jews that is situated at the very heart of the former Warsaw ghetto, where the Jews, cut off, as Chaim Kaplan wrote in his diary, by the two walls, were suffering and dying alone. When they were walking along the Warsaw *Himmelweg* towards the Umschlagplatz and gas chambers, crowds of the Righteous were not standing beside them. They were walking all alone in a march that Rapaport represented on the eastern side of his Monument to the Ghetto Heroes. Paraphrasing director Stola's words, one might say: "There is no reason to commemorate the heroism

of the Righteous precisely here, where the Jews were left on their own, where they suffered and died alone."

I am trying to understand the attitude of the Polin Museum's director. Perhaps, it is all about a peculiarly understood defence of the Polish reason of state? It is possible that he is governed by Mikołaj Rej's paraphrased message: "Let it be known by all and sundry foreign nations that Poles have a forest of Righteous of their own"? Perhaps, his stance is a result of an anachronistic understanding of a museum that is only a container for objects, gadgets, multimedia devices, etc.?

New museology perceives a museum institution and its building differently, that is as an event in the urban space. The museum building gives it an individual character, co-creates its substance and form. New museology emphasises an active presence of museum institution in political and social life, as well as its responsibility to organise or rather provoke a public debate about controversial issues, oppressed values, and excluded groups. The visitors should participate in these debates and a museum practice should be based on such categories as museum experience, theatricality, exhibition performance, eventfulness. From this perspective, a museum is a cultural phenomenon that radiates towards the outside, both into the sphere of public debate and the urban space of a part of a city.[7]

The authorities responsible for establishing the framework of politics of memory, within which the Museum of the History of Polish Jews is supposed to operate have an ambivalent attitude towards the Holocaust. On the one hand, the presence of the Holocaust gallery in this chain of events related to the history of Jews in the Polish land is obvious. The museum takes pride in the story about the Holocaust, the uniqueness of the gallery design, its spatial organisation that is aesthetically different from other parts of the exhibition. In the Polin Museum, two temporary exhibitions devoted to the Holocaust were created. Seven months before the Core Exhibition was opened, an exhibition on Poles rescuing Jews,

[7] Although the literature devoted to the subject of museum studies, which is dynamically developing in the world is impressive, the number of publications in Polish is not high. I should mention an excellent, synthetic description of such issues in Andrzej Szczerski's article: "Kontekst, edukacja, publiczność – muzeum z perspektywy „nowej muzeologii"," in *Muzeum sztuki. Antologia*, ed. Maria Popczyk (Cracow: Universitas, 2005), pp. 335–344. Piotr Piotrowski's book, *Muzeum krytyczne* (Poznań: Rebis, 2011), is written from a double perspective of a theoretician and an engaged practitioner. The first extensive, competent and critical presentation of the achievements of contemporary museology written in Polish may be found in Anna Zięþińska Witek's book, *Historia w muzeach. Studium ekspozycji Holokaustu* (Lublin: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Marii Curie-Skłodowskiej, 2011) – the first part entitled „Muzea – zarys zagadnień teoretycznych", pp. 15–131. Amongst the ocean of foreign publications, I should mention two books that have already become classics of new museology and were for me a source of knowledge and inspiration: Eilean Hooper Greenhill, *Museums and the Shaping of Knowledge* (London–New York: Routledge, 1992); Tony Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum...*

entitled 'They risked their lives – Poles who saved Jews during the Holocaust', was arranged in a still empty building (opened from 7 March to 14 April 2014). It is difficult not to regard this decision as a meaningful example of the politics of memory that the Museum has planned to follow. The second exhibition was entitled The Face of the Ghetto – Pictures Taken by Jewish Photographers in the Litzmannstadt Ghetto, 1940–1944 (opened from 28 January to 30 March 2015). At the same time, the Polin Museum quite evidently does not wish to be treated as another Holocaust museum. And rightly so if the historical horizon of the exhibition includes – to use the promotional phrase – one thousand years. Nevertheless, one may have an overwhelming impression that the narration of the whole exhibition, but above all numerous enunciations of propaganda type have a visible problem with representing the extermination of Jews and including this subject in promotional presentations. Undoubtedly, the main obstacle is the museum's slogan, which determines its identity and is supposed to make it a museum that is immediately recognisable among other institutions of this type, being a characteristic proper name: MUSEUM OF LIFE. Repeated like a mantra and reproduced endlessly at any occasion and in any context, the phrase has already lost any content. Completely trivialised, it has acquired the self-ridiculing power. It is a pity that the management and people responsible for the promotion do not see it. This slogan has become counter-effective because it has been exhausted to death.

A spectacular example of 'forgetting' about the Holocaust or 'leaving it aside' because it did not match the vision of the Polin Museum as a MUSEUM OF LIFE is a promotional video entitled unpretentiously *Muzeum życia* [A museum of life]. During about three or four minutes, a feast of colours and shapes, images and texts is moving in front of the viewers' eyes; the Core Exhibition is presented in snapshots of fragments that catch attention easily. One can also see a lot of young and very young people watching, drawing, discussing and strolling around the museum. Not a single scene, not a single second or word that can be heard from the screen is in any way related to the extermination of Jews, which is the subject of one of the galleries of the Core Exhibition. The Holocaust is not presented in the video. A thousand-year history of Polish Jews is depicted as the undisturbed current of a mighty river that swiftly flows from Ibrahim ibn Yaqub to President Bronisław Komorowski. The place where the museum is located has been completely disregarded. It is only an ordinary place where the museum was built, nothing more. In exactly the same way, the socialist realist diehard architects thought about the postwar Muranów, attacking Bohdan Lachert who created the estate of Muranów Południowy (South Muranów). Rubble as foundations for the future estates and crushed-brick concrete as basic building materials determine the peculiarity of Muranów. Lachert's project directly alluded to the realities and symbolism of ghetto rubble heaps. A new residential quarter was supposed to be both an example of modern socialist realist housing development and a monument extended in space that commemorated a unique

place after the ghetto. This concept would later be repeatedly criticised and modified. Today, the Polin Museum fits the tone of social realist thinking to some extent. What rubble, what ghetto, what Holocaust – the creators of the propaganda video seem to say – the construction of new life in new Poland is still ahead of us. We are a MUSEUM OF LIFE, thus we do not wish to display rubble and corpses. This whole history of the extermination of Warsaw Jews, Polish Jews, European Jews is so sad after all. We look into the future, count on young people and promote life.

I do understand that this is supposed to be a MUSEUM OF LIFE. Still, one cannot pretend that there is continuity in the Polish Jewish history and that nothing happened. The Polish Jews, the European Jews were, in reality, put to death. There is only a void left. This gap is an indispensable element of thinking about the Holocaust and the Polish Jewish history. The whole story about the thousand-year Jewish history in this land is fake and artificial. The phenomenon of reviving the Jewish life here and now cannot be understood without this real void. Keeping silence on the Holocaust dramatically reduces the field of the museum's interaction. Are sentimental stories supposed to replace a serious consideration of the fate of Jews and Poles who lived together as well as separately? Stories such as those presented in *Polin*, a film in which the director Jolanta Dylewska presents fragments of private footage shot before the war, Piotr Fronczewski reads narrative commentaries and every scene is given a nostalgic sigh that it was beautiful.

The 71st death anniversary of the death of Emanuel Ringelblum took place in March 2015. The Polin Museum of the History of Polish Jews ignored this fact completely. Not even a short mention was made on the website or in the March programme; nor is there a single reference to this event in the museum's activity. Nothing. Silence. I do understand that not everyone knows who Emanuel Ringelblum was, when and how he was killed and why he is important for the Museum of the History of Polish Jews. But still, in the museum, there should be a person who has such knowledge. This negligence, abandonment or oblivion is all the more outrageous given that Emanuel Ringelblum is one of the protagonists of the Holocaust gallery at the Core Exhibition presented in the Polin Museum on Morchedaja Anielewicza Street 6. Managed by him, the Underground Archive of the Warsaw Ghetto is a fundamental source base for the gallery, whereas Ringelblum himself was an absolutely exceptional figure among the Polish Jews before the war and became a symbol of intellectual resistance during the Holocaust. With his wife Judyta and son Uri, Ringelblum was hiding in a shelter at Grójecka Street 81 – in total, there were 38 Jews. The shelter was denounced. On 7 March 1944, the Germans and the Polish 'Blue' Police forced all of them out and led them to Pawiak Prison, including Mieczysław Wolski, the property owner who hid them, and his teenage nephew, Janusz Wysocki. Ringelblum was shot and died in the ruins of the ghetto on 10 or 11 March. It is possible that his remains rest under the foundations of the Polin Museum

because executions of Poles and Jews brought from the 'Aryan' side of Warsaw to the ruins of the ghetto were often carried out in the courtyard of the former barracks of the Crown Artillery. But March in the museum passed under the banner of performances given by the actually brilliant satirical cabaret Pożar w Burdelu [A fire in a brothel] – nine shows in that month.

The Polin Museum of the History of Polish Jews is indeed a MUSEUM OF LIFE. We are constantly being reminded of it and we should remember it once and for all. Ringelblum was simply unlucky. He is dead.

Translated by *Katarzyna Kaszorek*