

They can make up their own minds. They can feel their own emotions towards history. I don't want to make people ashamed of history, or guilty, or somehow unpleasant. It is not my goal. It is hard to predict what kind of reaction you provoke."

Still, he can see how his personal perspective and interest might affect the way he educates. On the question of whether it is possible to teach about Holocaust in an unpolitical way or not, he answers.

"Well, everything is probably political. For sure, you can use these maps to educate people about the Jewish history of Poland and the Holocaust. For example, you can show that Jews lived almost everywhere in Poland, which is the most important thing to educate people about. There were Jews in your hometown or in the place you live. You can show them Jewish names on such maps. They can understand that there were people there who felt that the place was their home. They had their own culture, their own specificity, in such places.

And you can also show them more unpleasant elements of our history thanks to these maps. But can we do that without making it political? Hard to say."

He continues on the same topic.

"For example, I consider myself rather a leftist. I realized at some point that when I guide people through our exhibition at Grodzka Gate, I focus mainly on political aspects, such as the activities of Bund for example. People who are more interested in the activities of Meir Shapiro and other religious figures are probably quite disappointed with my tours. So, there is no escape from your own personal views."

THE GRODZKA Gate-NN Theater started as an avant-garde theater in 1990. Over time, it has evolved into something bigger, and today it is a memory institution and museum where the theatrical component is one of many aspects of their activities. Their main focus is to exhibit the multicultural history of Poland and the city of Lublin and educate people about this. Grodzka Gate, which means city gate, was until the mid 19th-century the meeting point between the Christian dominated old city of Lublin and the Jewish neighborhood around the castle. In this sense, the building represents the multicultural Lublin that used to exist.

The memory of Polish Jewry is kept alive in many different ways, both in Poland and in other countries. In some cases, nostalgia for the lost Jewish world is reproducing old anti-Semitic stereotypes while other cases are commemorating the life of the Polish Jewry in its diversity. One obvious anti-Semitic aspect of Jewish nostalgia in Poland is the popular use of "lucky Jews", pictures or figurines depicting Jews with money. They are bought in order to bring economic luck. In other cases, this nostalgia leads to volunteer initiatives cleaning and reconstructing Jewish cemeteries. One aspect of this nostalgia is the growing interest in the Yiddish language, which is an aspect that Piotr Nazaruk returns to as the main path to the Jewish culture of Central and Eastern Europe.

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"These maps are also a testimony of a lost language. Yiddish was a widely spoken language in our part of Europe. That's why it was obvious for their authors that they should also be captured in Yiddish, their language. We have thousands of issues of Yiddish newspapers in Poland being held in libraries, but almost nobody reads them. These maps are also such a testimony of a lost language that existed here, developed here, and flourished, but was destroyed. In my opinion you can't research Jewish history without the Yiddish language. You can't omit the Yiddish press, Yiddish books, Yiddish sources, etc."

Quite recently in Poland, two major museums have undergone a change of leadership for political reasons: The Museum of the Second World War in Gdansk and the Polish Museum in Warsaw. The Polish government has imposed a memory politics that emphasizes national heroism. The Grodzka Gate NN Theater is a municipal institution and Piotr Nazaruk tells me that he does not experience much

of the tension that exists in Polish memory politics.

"Well, it is quite complex. Regarding Grodzka Gate, we are a municipal institution depending on the local council. The Gdansk museum, from what I understand, was a state museum subordinated to the Ministry of Culture. So, from our perspective, central government policy does not affect us so much. I would say that the current government of Poland has no real conflict with the Jewish community. Their main issue is with the depiction of Poles as perpetrators. They want to reflect a more heroic view of the Polish nation – which also is true in a way; you cannot simplify and say that all Poles killed Jews. Central government policy does not affect us that much. Municipal policy is something we have to deal with. But fortunately, from what I understand, we have quite good relations with the city council and the president of Lublin. And our cooperation is very good."

PIOTR NAZARUK TELLS me how he seldom encounters the tensions between different historical views in his work due to the fact that he is working in the city of Lublin.

"In many smaller towns in Poland, there are still some kind of open conflicts. People remember that someone was hiding Jews, and someone was harming Jews; or someone was working with the Germans and someone was working with the Russians."

The battles of cultural memory in Poland seems somehow distant to the everyday work as an educator at Grodzka Gate. Throughout our conversation, Piotr Nazaruk stresses that he wants to give a balanced picture and not to press opinions upon people, but there is one statement that he clearly puts forward in talking about the memory maps. "There is no history of Poland without the Jewish history of Poland.", or even more clearly: "Jews were here".

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