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Memorial Tourism – a Turn toward Locality

Abstract

This paper presents the phenomenon of travelling to places of memory, with particular emphasis on their local nature. Examples discussed include places of memory directly related to the miners' profession, in particular those that are devoted to the victims of tragic events that took place in mines. In the last few years tourists have become more interested in places of memory related to mining, which is directly associated with the functioning of the nature-tourist trail called "Following the miners' toil", created on the initiative of the members of "Sokół" Cycling Club, which is a part of PTTK Division in Radlin.

Keywords: tourism, place of memory, mining, tragic event.

Introductory remarks

The past and its representations have always been in the center of man's attention. Recalling the spiritual and material legacy of our ancestors has served as the *spiritus movens* of the functioning of almost every nation or ethnic group. However, not always did the history of many a country and the complicated geopolitical processes occurring in different time periods allow us to properly exhibit this past – one of such difficult periods was faced by Europe from the end of World War II until the late 1980s. The fall of communism allowed the inhabitants of Central European countries to begin to function in a new reality and present previously banned contents that had been addressed only selectively and in such cases not always truthfully presented.

At present, we are witnessing global interest in memory – in the political, social, cultural, as well as scientific dimension¹; "we feel obliged assiduously to

¹ M. Saryusz-Wolska, *Memory boom* (entry), [in:] M. Saryusz-Wolska, M. Traba (eds.), *Modi memorandi. Leksykon kultury pamięci*, Warszawa 2014, pp. 224–225.

collect remains, testimonies, documents, images, speeches, any visible signs of what has been, as if this burgeoning dossier were to be called upon to furnish some proof to who knows what tribunal of history”². Today, everything may be named a testament to the past and thus become subject to memorial practices. “We ourselves,” as a well-known historian says, “purposefully create storage media, e.g. by building monuments commemorating events that we have witnessed. At times, these do not even have to be events characterized by heroic deeds”³.

Multiple and varied representations of memory – found in great numbers and in a myriad of spaces – naturally encourage us to take an interest in them, just as access to information about them in social communication means makes us, including potential tourists, pay attention to these representations. Today, one does not have to be an experienced traveler using professional guidebooks to learn about them – the media, especially the internet, bring these places “within one’s reach.” Therefore, traveling to places commemorating various events, unusual circumstances, as well as the activities of an individual or a group of people is becoming increasingly popular.

Memorial – around the definition

The term “memorial” is not an easy one to define. At present, a tendency prevails to use it to describe “virtually all forms of presence of the past in the present”⁴. Difficulties with clarifying this concept are undoubtedly related to its meaning, as it carries both topographic connotations, as well as metaphorical ones firmly established in the research tradition – the former refer to places marked by certain events in which acts of commemoration occur or occurred, usually near material media (monuments, commemorative plaques, etc.); however, “memorials” are usually defined as topographically-understood spaces associated with heroic or traumatic events, as well as museums, mainly those concerned with the history of World War II, sites of suffering and crime (National Remembrance Sites). Nevertheless, not only specific geographic locations are identified as “memorials” – *lieux de mémoire* proposed by French historian Pierre Nora may be “events and processes, imaginary and actual figures, artifacts, symbols, and other historical phenomena in which «the national legacy crystallizes»”⁵. Therefore, Polish “memorials” might include people (e.g. John

² P. Nora, *Między pamięcią i historią: Les Lieux de Mémoire*, “Tytuł Roboczy: Archiwum” 2009, No. 2, p. 7.

³ M. Kula, *Nośniki pamięci historycznej*, Warszawa 2002, p. 32 (our own translation – D.Ś.-T.).

⁴ A. Szpociński, *Miejsca pamięci (lieux de mémoire)*, „Teksty Drugie” 2008, No. 4, p. 11 (own translation – D.Ś.-T.).

⁵ K. Kończal, *Miejsca pamięci* (entry), [in:] M. Saryusz-Wolska, M. Traba (eds.), *Modi memorandi. Leksykon kultury pamięci*, Warszawa 2014, p. 230 (our own translation – D.Ś.-T.).

III Sobieski, Józef Piłsudski, Edward Gierek, etc.), events (e.g. the Battle of Grunwald, the massacre in Jedwabne, the June 4, 1989 elections, the trade union NSZZ “Solidarność,” queues in the Polish People’s Republic, etc.), products (e.g. Syrena or Polonez cars), literary works (e.g. *Pan Tadeusz* by Adam Mickiewicz, the works by Czesław Miłosz), paintings (e.g. by Jan Matejko or Jacek Malczewski), scientific achievements (e.g. those of Nicolaus Copernicus or Marie Curie), events and places associated with sports (e.g. Kozakiewicz’s gesture, the 10th-Anniversary Stadium, Kazimierz Górski’s team), as well as motifs or toposes processed in the contemporary popular and media culture (e.g. private owners, martial law, the crisis) or in the political discourse (e.g. “Poland as a bridge,” “can-do Poles,” “the rampart of Christianity,” “the Slavic soul”)⁶.

Memorials are always linked to memorial practices. Although one could not possibly name all of them here, at least those concerning eminent individuals can be indicated – these include objects and spaces dedicated to them – monuments, commemorative plaques, obelisks, as well as trees (in Poland, mainly oaks⁷, firs, lindens, pines), streets, squares, estates, parks, roundabouts, as well as the practice of naming institutions, educational centers, associations, or foundations after them. A commendation of particular importance is honorary citizenship awarded by local authorities and Honoris Causa doctorate degrees awarded by universities. There are also examples of commemoration in philately (images on post stamps), numismatics (on coins and bills), and in the form of book publications – albums. Yet another group includes documentary movies and photographic exhibitions.

Memorial tourism

For the purpose of this article, I am going to define memorial tourism as traveling to places that are sites of certain forms of remembrance of the activities of a specific person (people) or of an event. In such spaces we usually encounter symbolic objects indicating the subject of commemoration.

In reference literature, memorial tourism is characterized mainly as part of increasingly popular *dark tourism* and *thanatourism*. Both concepts were first defined in 1996 in the *International Journal of Heritage Studies*: the former by Malcolm Foley and John Lennon, and the latter by Anthony S. Seaton. Dark tourism does not mean the dark side of tourism, as the name would suggest, but tourism related to death in the context of a place where a tragedy took place and of memory about this event. On the other hand, thanatourism means traveling

⁶ See: <http://www.nck.pl/polskie-miejsca-pamieci/> [date of access: 25 Aug. 2015].

⁷ 500 oak seedlings (grown from acorns of the oldest oak in Poland, “Chrobry”), appropriately certified, were devoted to John Paul II and planted all over the country in 2005 and 2006. They are to remind us of the pontificate of the Polish Pope.

where the theme is the need to “get in touch” (actually or symbolically) with death, especially (but not only) violent⁸. Seaton identifies five categories of thanatourism: 1) travel to places of public death or places serving as testaments to it (popular especially in the past, e.g. sites of gladiator fights, Christian executions, etc.); 2) travel to places where mass or individual deaths were registered (e.g. death camps, the road tunnel where Princess Diana died, etc.); 3) travel to places and monuments commemorating the dead; 4) travel to places that are not directly related to an event, but present tangible evidence of death or its stage version (e.g. Lenin’s Mausoleum in Moscow, wax museums); 5) travel to places where stagings or simulations of death take place (e.g. Passion reenactments in Kalwaria Zebrzydowska, Battle of Grunwald reenactments)⁹.

However, memorial tourism, which has a number of supporters, is not a *novum* – its popularity has simply grown in recent times, as places documenting human death and suffering, commemorating battles, especially strategic ones, often shrouded in legend, as well as graves of famous commanders, war heroes, statesmen, etc. have for years been important spots during travel to and the exploration of different parts of the world. Death, disasters, or individual and collective tragedies have always fascinated man, simultaneously arousing horror, as all events marked as adverse, hostile, or destructive on the one hand disturb the existing order and ruin safety, and on the other hand make us reflect on the fragility of our existence. After all, death is the last stage of earthly life, presented and interpreted in many different ways over the millennia, as shown in an extensive study by Philippe Ariès¹⁰. Moreover, one cannot overlook one more issue – namely, the need to experience emotions, including fear or anxiety in direct contact not with death, but with a place identified with it. During the last centuries, in most cases, man could not see places of great tragedies directly, be “face to face” with a space marked by death; however, today it is quite different – thanatourism or dark tourism offer this opportunity, and a number of travel agencies, aiming to meet the needs of tourists interested in this subject, specialize in the organization of such trips¹¹.

In Poland, the most frequently visited memorials include Auschwitz-Birkenau Museum and the Warsaw Uprising Museum; in 2014, the former was visited by 1.5 million people from different countries, and the latter – by nearly 600,000 tourists. In the last few years, the grave of the presidential couple, Lech and Maria Kaczyński, located in the Wawel crypt, has become more and more popular among Polish tourists.

⁸ A. Ziębińska-Witek, *Turystyka śmierci jako zjawisko kulturowe*, „Teksty Drugie” 2012, No. 3, p. 175.

⁹ S. Tanaś, *Tanatoturystyka – kontrowersyjne oblicze turystyki kulturowej*, “Peregrinus Cracoviensis” 2006, Vol. 17, pp. 91–95.

¹⁰ P. Ariès, *Człowiek i śmierć*, tr. by E. Bąkowska, Warszawa 2011.

¹¹ See: P. Różycki, *Zarys wiedzy o turystyce*, Cracow 2009, p. 34.

The turn toward locality

Referring to Seaton's typology, the author wishes to draw the reader's attention to the increasingly common phenomenon of traveling to places commemorating people dying a tragic death. However, these are not canonical memorials entered in registers of the most frequently visited sites of human suffering or death (concentration camps, memorial museums, graves of heroes, sites of natural and technological disasters, etc.) – quite the opposite: these are known to a relatively small group of people, usually enthusiasts wishing not only to share their knowledge with others, but to encourage them to explore these places by means of active participation in different forms of tourism.

The specificity of the aforementioned memorials is the fact that these do not concern "great" history, breakthroughs in the history of a nation or a country, but local history, thus inadequately exposed in global tourism targeted at visitors oriented toward places with an established reputation during their trips. At the same time, one should pay attention to yet another aspect; namely, these are memorials inscribed in the landscapes of "small homelands," which are rarely treated as tourist attractions by the local communities – due to the circumstances of their creation (after tragic events) and the form that they take (collective or individual graves), as well as the fact that they are usually found in ruins, neglected. Only after attention is drawn to them in a different context and local history activists encourage the popularization of knowledge about those does a new perspective on these memorials emerge, thus contributing to their rediscovery. As an example to be discussed here, a place directly related to the professional group of miners has been selected – namely, to the tragic events the victims of which they were.

“Śladami ofiar górniczego stanu” – the traces of victims of the mining profession

Memorial tourism always turns back toward the past, toward intriguing events, characters, sites, and objects. Tourist routes are structured around those, enabling us to head for places associated with them. A large number of them are properly marked and listed in tourism literature or on websites, making information about them accessible – therefore, they themselves are recognized; however, there are also those (difficult to call routes even by taking into consideration different definitions¹²) the recognition and popularity of which is smaller, which does not diminish their attractiveness. This group includes the route

¹² Different definitions of routes are discussed in detail by A. Mikos von Rohrscheidt: *Regionalne szlaki tematyczne. Idea, potencjał, organizacja*, Cracow 2010, pp. 15–21.

“Śladami ofiar górniczego stanu [The traces of victims of the mining profession]”, which was built on the initiative of members of the Cycling Club “Sokół” of the Radlin Branch of the PTTK (Polish Tourist and Sightseeing Society) wishing to popularize places commemorating victims of the mining profession. The originator and person most involved in the project has been Jerzy Gawliczek, a retired professional mining lifeguard, for whom an impulse to act provided studies on mining memorials (also by the author of this article¹³). One should add that tragic events in mines are inscribed in the history of many towns, mainly in Upper and Lower Silesia, where – during the several centuries’ long extraction of coal – numerous memorials devoted to tragically deceased miners, these have never before become the theme of a separate thematic route. It might be surprising, especially since the mining legacy is addressed by the Silesia Province Technological Monuments Route¹⁴, the Miners’ Route¹⁵, the Upper Silesia Mining History Route¹⁶, still not acknowledging unfortunate events occurring in mines. One must mention here that before the year 1989 in Poland it was not always possible to register dramatic events in mines in the collective memory – during the post-war period, subjects clashing with the success propaganda, the vision of the secure state, the welfare state, in which work was waiting for young, eager men in mines, were reluctantly addressed. Accidents and tragedies were very inconvenient for the then authorities; therefore, information about those had to be restricted, and often the actual numbers of victims were not given. For this reason, it appears that attention has been rightly drawn to the dramatic aspects of the functioning of the mining industry, the material media of which are specific commemorative objects.

The aim of the initiators of the project was to “encourage tourists to visit memorials of victims of mining accidents and tragedies; arouse the interest of tourists in the history of the mining industry, marked by a variety of tragic accidents and other events; attempt to create a ‘directions’ database concerning the abovementioned memorials; encourage entire groups of young people and adults to engage in tourism in different forms”¹⁷. What memorials are there in the center of the attention of the authors of the prepared route? At present, it comprises more than 150 different places – these are mainly individual and collective graves of miners, commemorative plaques, statues, sculptures, and even streets,

¹³ E.g. D. Świtała-Trybek, *Miejsca pamięci ofiar katastrof górniczych w przestrzeni industrialnej Górnego Śląska*, [in:] B. Szargot and I. Szpara (eds.), *Miasta i miasteczka górnicze*, Bytom 2009, pp. 143–158; and: *Kamienni świadkowie tragicznych zdarzeń. Mogiły ofiar wypadków i katastrof górniczych w województwie śląskim*, “Bezpieczeństwo Pracy i Ochrona Środowiska w Górnictwie” 2009, No. 2, pp. 49–55.

¹⁴ See: <http://www.zabytkotechniki.pl/> [date of access: 25 Aug. 2015].

¹⁵ See: https://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Szlak_Gwark%C3%B3w [date of access: 25 Aug. 2015].

¹⁶ See: https://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Szlak_Historii_G%C3%B3rnicstwa_G%C3%B3rno%C5%9B%C4%85skiego [date of access: 25 Aug. 2015].

¹⁷ http://www.sokol.radlin.pl/sokol/odznaki/ofiar_r.html [date of access: 28 Aug. 2015].

such as “Dziewięciu z Wujka [Nine from the Wujek Mine]” in Katowice or “Poległych Górników [Fallen Miners]” in Zabrze.



Fig. 1. Memorial in honor of miners tragically deceased in Wałbrzych mines (D. Światała-Trybek)

Victims of the mining profession were considered not only workers dying as a result of an accident or a tragedy, but also deceased prisoners of war working in mines during the Nazi occupation, miners forcibly deported from Silesia to the Soviet Union (after the end of World War II), and soldier miners who died during their compulsory military service in forced labor battalions in the mines. A detailed lists of memorials (including towns, characteristics of given objects and their locations) can be found on the website of the Radlin branch of the PTTK¹⁸.

The locations of the aforementioned memorials differ significantly. These are situated both in public spaces (parks, streets, building facades), closed spaces (mines, e.g. waiting rooms, underground pits), as well as sacral spaces (cemeteries, churches, chapels). The majority of items commemorating tragically deceased miners are found at local cemeteries, exposing the scale of the drama to various degrees. Enormous monuments, collective graves, designated sections (e.g. Aleja Górników [Miners Alley]), compared with individual graves of miners scattered around the cemetery, undoubtedly inform us about their death and

¹⁸ See: http://www.sokol.radlin.pl/sokol/odznaki/ofiar/ofiar_jaktrafic_polska.pdf [date of access: 28 Aug. 2015].

its circumstances in a different way – immediately visible, they speak to those visiting cemeteries extremely well, adding to the drama of the unfortunate events. Here one should emphasize the fact that sepulchral spaces¹⁹ serving as cultural texts rich in interpretative descriptions²⁰ are interesting historical and sightseeing places for tourists²¹.

MIEJSCA UPAMIĘTNIAJĄCE OFIARY GÓRNICZEGO STANU – POLSKA

Część I (stan na 15 marca 2015 r)

UWAGA: Punktacja podana w poszczególnych pozycjach dotyczących mogił zbiorowych jest punktacją tylko prawdopodobną. Dokładna punktacja zależy od tego czy jest to mogiła zbiorowa z pomnikiem czy bez pomnika. Dokładną punktację ustali się po uzyskaniu aktualnego zdjęcia danego miejsca pamięci.

Poniższa tabela będzie systematycznie uzupełniana w miarę napływających informacji o kolejnych miejscach pamięci oraz zdjęć z ujętych już miejsc w tabeli.

Miejscowość	Lokalizacja	Obiekt	Opis	Punkty/Foto
Będzin – Góra Zamkowa	Cmentarz parafialny przy ul. Podzamcze	Pomnik i mogiła zbiorowa	Mogiła zbiorowa tragicznie zmarłych górników braci Boreckich oraz Prochackiego w dniu 28.05.1936 r. w kop. Reden (Zagłębie Dąbrowskie).	2 + 5 
Bielsko Biala	Kościół św. Trójcy Ul. Sobieskiego	Tablica wewnątrz pod chórem	Tablica ku czci represjonowanych żołnierzy – górników, którzy zginęli w kopalniach i kamieniołomach w latach 1949 – 1959.	2
Bochnia	Cmentarz łomunalny przy ul. Orackiej	Mogiła zbiorowa (jedna z kilku) – pomnik	Granitowy pomnik ofiar pożaru w komorze Beust kopalni Bochnia w dniach od 30.12.1875 do 3.01.1876 r.	2 + 5 
Bochnia	Kopalnia Soli, komora św. Kingi na	Tablica	Pamiętnice ofiar pożaru w tutejszej kopalni z dnia 30 grudnia 1875 roku.	2

Pic. 2. List of memorials (fragment)

Source: http://www.sokol.radlin.pl/sokol/odznaki/ofiar/ofiar_gorniczego_stanu_Polska.pdf.

The mining “memorial route” is constantly updated with new sites. At present, it includes mainly towns in Silesia Province²², as well as in the Czech Republic (Ostrava-Karvina Basin) and Kazakhstan. Its authors, aware of the great number of the aforementioned objects in Silesia and the simultaneous impossibility of registering them in person, used the magazine “Gość Niedzielny” to ask people to provide information: “We mean here individual graves of people who

¹⁹ A. Stasiak, S. Tanaś, *Przestrzeń sepulkralna w turystyce*, “Turystyka i Hotelarstwo” 2005, No. 8, pp. 9–42.

²⁰ J. Kolbuszewski, *Wierze z cmentarza. O współczesnej epigrafice wierszowanej*, Wrocław 1985, p. 25.

²¹ S. Tanaś, *Przestrzeń turystyczna cmentarzy. Wstęp do tanatoturystyki*, Łódź 2008.

²² Outside of Silesia Province, places commemorating miners are also found in Bydgoszcz, Koszalin, Mielec, Niedośpielin, Radom, Kielce, Przemyśl, Tarnobrzeg, Wąchock, and many other towns.

died underground”²³. A similar request was also found on a website²⁴. Such initiatives undoubtedly raise the interest of the residents (and not only) in local history, specific places and objects, often previously unnoticed or even overlooked out of ignorance.

An additional element encouraging potential tourists to make the effort and visit mining memorials is the possibility of receiving a “Śladami Ofiar Górniczego Stanu” sightseeing badge (a bronze, silver, gold, or honorary one) from the Board of the Radlin Branch of the PTTK. This badge can be awarded to individuals or groups (from the age of seven) engaged in any form of tourism in the country or abroad. The necessary condition is to document the stay in the form of photographs, in which the memorial with the person applying for the badge should be visible. Each memorial is awarded points according to the applicable terms and conditions (sections/tombs/collective graves of more than two victims – 5 points; tombs/graves with one or two victims per one – 2 points; other sites/objects of remembrance, such as plaques, statues, monuments, obelisks, paintings, sculptures, etc. – 2 points; objects outside the country—1 point extra). A few months after the badge was established, it had been awarded to more than 60 people²⁵.



Pic. 3. “Śladami Ofiar Górniczego Stanu” badges

Source: <http://www.sokol.radlin.pl/sokol/odznaki/ofiar.html>.

²³ P. Kucharczak, *Sokoły odwiedzają mogiły*, „Gość Niedzielny” [„Gość Katowicki”] 2014, No. 35 (own translation – D.Ś.-T.).

²⁴ <http://jasnet.pl/?m=sport&mod=publicystyka&id=37639> [date of access: 25 Aug. 2015].

²⁵ This information was provided by Jerzy Gawliczek interviewed by the author of the article on August 24, 2015.

Yet another possibility of discovering interesting memorials is offered by the Cycling Tourism Commission “Sokół” during regular cycling races organized by it. Since 2014, five such races have taken place in different locations in Poland and the Czech Republic (the 1st: near Radlin and Wodzisław; the 2nd: in the area of Katowice and Mikołów; the 3rd: in the area of Karvina, Orlova, Ostrava, Bohumín; the 4th: in the city of Ruda Śląska; the 5th: in cities Czeladź-Siemianowice).



Pic. 4. Commemorative ticket for race participants

Source: the author's archive.

The aforementioned idea of a tourist “route” is an example of interest in local history and elements of cultural heritage related to the mining industry. One may wonder here why it is so valuable. It appears that its main strength is the way it operates, expressed both in the proposed forms of action (races, the possibility of receiving a badge), as well as in the involvement of tourists, who – if they wish – may register objects of remembrance. In this way, they can not only directly influence the development of the “route” (with places worth seeing identified by them), but also “re-explore” remembrance sites in their local environment themselves. Often we do not see things around that are part of our identity. In communities associated with the mining industry numerous mining memorials are such elements forming the group identity²⁶. One cannot forget also that the initiative of creating the thematic route “Śladami Ofiar Górniczego Stanu” came from a representative of the mining community (a lifeguard providing assistance to injured colleagues), which is of great significance.

In conclusion, one may say that memorials devoted to victims of the mining industry already have their place in cultural and sightseeing tourism. It can also be predicted that their popularity is going to increase, to which mainly members of the Cycling Club “Sokół” are contributing.

²⁶ Tragedies and accidents in mining plants are inscribed in the histories of individual mines, and thus into the lives of many mining families, whose members have directly experienced the threat of death underground (victims of accidents; deaths of fathers, brothers, sons) or have witnessed dramatic events occurring in “their” or neighboring mines.

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