

EDITORIAL

Justice and Memory - story about Eichmann and Argentina

“Yet we also remember that some 80 years ago, when the Jewish people faced annihilation, the world largely turned its back on us, leaving us to the most bitter of fates.” [<https://mfa.gov.il/MFA/PressRoom/2020/Pages/PM-Netanyahu-s-speech-at-the-World-Holocaust-Forum-2020-at-Yad-Vashem-23-January-2020.aspx>]

A few months ago, we commemorated one of the most important events in the history of the State of Israel in the 20th century - the 60th anniversary of the ‘Adolf Eichmann’s Capture’ according to Wikipedia - Czech version [https://cs.wikipedia.org/wiki/%C3%9Anos_Adolfa_Eichmanna], in the Spanish version ‘Operación Garibaldi’ [https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Operaci%C3%B3n_Garibaldi]. The term ‘capture’ can be considered as something not positive, not in accordance with the law, so I am in favour of the name in Spanish.

A number of books have been written about Eichmann [1, 2], as well as Operation Garibaldi itself, and several films have been filmed: *Operation Finale* (2018), *Eichmann* (2007), *Operation Eichmann* (1961) and it is indisputable that all mankind in history will carry the Kierkegaard’s guilt-consciousness [3] for committing ‘the Shoah’ - שואה (the Holocaust).

The organizer of the Holocaust, Eichmann fled to Argentina after the war, where he hid (along with other Nazis) until the fateful May 1960. One might think that Latin America is a popular seat of war criminals which are tolerated by society...

During a visit to Argentina at Professor M. J. Binetti’s, where we attended joint lectures about Kierkegaard [4-9] with Dr. M. Pavlíková, I visited the Garibaldi Street after a few hours of being lost. The scene of the crime. I managed to get behind the fenced part of an unnumbered piece of land - with the help of a grass cutter who asked me being lost in the street: ‘CASA EICHMANN?’ There were only a few bricks and stones in the place where Eichmann used to live. I was wondering what was left of the man who decided about millions, who was the cause of so much evil...? Nothing. He killed millions and was captured. I stood in that place and had very mixed feelings - I was delighted and at the same time I felt grief that I was standing in a ‘just place’ where justice was done and the human ‘monster’ was caught. Garibaldi Street, a place where the one who controlled the slaughter in Auschwitz used to live.

Since then, other war criminals in Latin America have been afraid of being caught. Everyone was shaking and alert - even Mengele’s son confirmed it when he was visiting his hiding father... They caught Eichmann...

I still have a token on the table by the window - a broken brick, as a sign that there is justice. And at the same time, a reminder of the suffering that the Jews had to endure only because of their nationality. And whatever bad happens to me in my life is nothing against suffering in concentration camps.

The Israelis have not forgotten, nor have I. You may be omnipotent, but if you do evil - nothing will remain after you. The brick also reminds me of the wisdom - חֵכְמָה with which the Israelis overcame all obstacles to achieving justice - and it was not an easy task...

The capture of Eichmann is also important for Israel: As H.E. Zvi Aviner Vapni, Ambassador of the State of Israel, told me in 2018: "With Eichmann being tried, the subject of the Holocaust was opened in society and young Israelis could better understand those who survived the Holocaust but could not talk about it". Shlomo Shpiro wrote similar in his Introduction: "Before the trial nobody wanted to hear of the Holocaust... The young generation in Israel learned through the trial a crucial lesson on its history and heritage, a lesson which is now passed down through the generations." [10]. We must remember the words of B. Netanyahu: "for the Jewish people, Auschwitz is more than the ultimate symbol of evil" [<https://mfa.gov.il/MFA/PressRoom/2020/Pages/PM-Netanyahu-s-speech-at-the-World-Holocaust-Forum-2020-at-Yad-Vashem-23-January-2020.aspx>].

A year later, I watched an evening football game in Buenos Aires together with my friend Professor F. Petrovic after his lectures [11-14]. The River Plate vs. Independiente match was hopelessly sold out and I was surprised together with over 80,000 spectators. Events occurring 27 years ago were remembered before the game that took place on 17 March 2019: "when a pickup truck driven by a suicide bomber smashed into the front of the Israeli Embassy and blew up an explosive device. The Embassy's building was completely destroyed. 29 people were killed and 242 were injured, among the victims were 4 Israelis." [<https://embassies.gov.il/bratislava-en/NewsAndEvents/Pages/Terrorist-attack-on-Argentinian-embassy.aspx>]

As the Jewish community walked around the stadium oval with a memorial banner, everyone stood up and applauded. The Israelis do not forget, but neither do the Argentines.

When I told this story to H.E. Boaz Modai, the next Ambassador of the State of Israel to Slovakia, in 2019, I saw astonishment in his face as well as the pleasure of the act by the Argentinians. He was glad they had not forgotten.

We visited the memorial where the embassy of Israel had been located the next day after the match. We wanted to remember another attack in Buenos Aires from 18 July 1994, where 85 people were killed and hundreds injured from The Asociación Mutual Israelita Argentina [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/AMIA_bombing]. There are the names of victims and one large inscription in front of the building where the assassination took place: 'Justicia y Memoria'...

The question is: Why have the Jews suffered so much over centuries? The answer (hope) can be found for believers in the Bible: "For a brief moment I abandoned you, but with deep compassion I will bring you back. In a surge of

anger I hid my face from you for a moment, but with everlasting kindness I will have compassion on you”, says the Lord your Redeemer (Isaiah 54.7-8).

Every story has a beginning and an end. In relation to Eichmann one asks: Is there any justice? Where was the justice when no police, no government were looking for Eichmann? Why did God allow evil to grow? What is the responsibility of the individual, the Church and society? Who is co-responsible? Why did it all have to happen? Why six million people, including 1.5 million children, had to die?

We have to remain silent. Each word is useless...

The Eichmann's story is a story not only about suffering and human indifference, but also about (our) justice and (our) memory.

Professor Roman Králík

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