

Which lessons about the Holocaust and its historical context are most important to us today

The Holocaust happened. The total number of its victims is estimated at more than 10 million. Jews, Roma, handicapped and politically unsatisfactory. Children. Millions of innocent lives. Millions of defenseless, humiliated, dehumanized, deprived of human rights. It's not just a number, a statistic. These are the fates of specific people, families who had their names, their stories.

More than 70,000 Jewish fellow citizens were deported from the Slovak state, which was supposed to take care of its citizens and protect them. They were deported to the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration and extermination camp, less than 400 of them survived. They were pushed into "cattle", headed for the unknown. Today we already know that the goal was the extermination camps in Poland - Chelmno, Belzec, Treblinka, Majdanek. Man sent man to death, he turned into an animal with a man's mask.

Many of us have forgotten this murderous part of history. Why? Was it a little tragic, a little scary? Do we lack personal experience? Has freedom, humanity, become commonplace to us? Is there good or evil in a person? Questions that weigh our consciousness and conscience. It is the personal guilt of a particular person who lets himself be overwhelmed by hatred or the guilt of a society that cannot estimate the thin line of danger of racism, genocide. The danger is not the deeds themselves, but it begins with words, thoughts. And this is due to democracy and the freedom or mentality of the people to be led, manipulated and controlled. Intentions, attitudes, consequences were bad. The evil, the inexplicable actions not only of Hitler, who unleashed it all really happened. But it wasn't just the bearer of so much misfortune. He found many followers, evil creeping in like a brown plague, calving and waiting for the right opportunity. And therefore somewhere in the background of our thoughts as it has no warning should read - "Remember-Zachary", "Never again".

Despite the facts we already know today, children in schools learn about them, and there are those among us who question the Holocaust. They attack the survivors, saying that they are tales of 6 million, even questioning their statements. They proudly march in places arrogantly in guard uniforms, Canada, have tattooed swastikas and use, promote other symbolism such as number 1488, 88 ... What's more, they are based in the National Council of the Slovak Republic and come up with proposals for employees of non-governmental organizations to wear a visible sign on their clothes. It is sad that so many young people, lawyers, teachers, workers, believe that these fascist deputies could sometimes lead our country responsibly, democratically, maturely, better. In their program statement, they were initially proud to support the ideas of HSĽS, SĽ. Their thinking is marked by demagoguery, pointing to the differences between

people, which contributes to the polarization of society and the radicalization of moods. Isn't the legacy of the Holocaust strong enough for these people?

Let's go back a little bit in history. As early as November 1938, about 7,500 Jews were forcibly exported to the territory of "Nobody", which fell to Hungary. Here they were dependent on themselves in terrible conditions. However, many still believed in the state. Gradually, the Jewish population saw the possibility of salvation in emigration from Slovakia abroad, or in conversion to the Christian faith. After the establishment of the Slovak state, the situation began to escalate significantly and the government began to issue anti-Jewish regulations. In some professions, the number of Jews was defined, and the process of Aryanization began - the transfer of Jewish property to non-Jewish owners or its complete liquidation. This made the Jews an economic and social problem that needed to be solved. Jews were gradually deprived of basic human rights and freedoms. Impossibility to drive motor vehicles, visit parks, swimming pools, cinemas, libraries, markets, theaters, and gradually prohibit students from attending schools or constant bullying in the form of house searches. The visible marking of clothing with a yellow ribbon on the sleeve, later with a yellow six-pointed star of David and registration became the obligation. A star that stands out in the night sky, but it burned on its chest and helped to identify those who became the target of hatred. All this signaled preparations for the start of deportations. Well, and it happened. From March 25 to October 20, 1942, deportations from Slovakia to concentration camps on the territory of today's Poland took place. They were exported in inhumane conditions in freight cars, where there was a lack of water, food, diseases spread, people died. Most of them did not survive the concentration camps and perished in the gas chambers. Thanks to the help of the locals, who risked their lives and did not succumb to anti-Jewish propaganda, some survived. Why did all this happen? People believed the manipulator, the killer, the vision of a better life or job opportunities. The Shoah (Hebrew - destruction, destruction) is responsible for many human lives that could not have been responsible for their own destiny. They were thrown into a water of hatred in which they could not save themselves. Do you see a parallel between the past and the present?

It is not for nothing that it is said that the past, history is the teacher of life. But in many cases today, it looks like the past is our present.

So why is it important to talk about the Holocaust? Holocaust education points to the consequences of racism, anti-Semitism and the stereotyping of any society. Even today, we are confronted with extremist moods, ideas and we must clearly reject them. There are many manifestations of extremism in our society, so it is important to talk about the Holocaust. In a few years, no one will survive. No one tells us our own experience of the extermination camps he experienced day in and day out. We only have hundreds of evidence, books, testimonies from these people. It is young people who are the driving force in society. It is important that they have critical thinking to help them distinguish truth from lies. That they may tell the world

what all evil has happened, that they may pass on the message, and that we will never forget what humanity has gone through. We are all equal. It doesn't matter if we differ in color, religion, origin, we have the same rights. No one should be discriminated against. People are born and grow up in different social environments, they live in families and communities with different social status, educational level. In addition, they are characterized by different abilities, knowledge, skills, talents. The tragic fates of millions of Jews in Europe, including Slovakia, must never be forgotten, and we should constantly remember how far totalitarian ideology and human hatred can go.

Extremism. A word we have come across often lately. In the imagination of people, the concept of extremism is associated with various contents: violence and aggression, intolerance and hatred towards bearers of unspecified otherness, racism, nationalism, xenophobia, the belief in the superiority of the white race. The next most frequent association is ĽSNS and its chairman Marián Kotleba, who for 12% of the respondents of Denník N embodies today's edition of extremism in Slovakia. For some, extremism is associated with fascism, Nazism, and the horrors of World War II. Shaved heads, shaving, guard boots and uniforms, swastikas, etc. In Slovakia, too, we encounter views that describe extremism as a kind of neutral phenomenon, a common deviation from the norm, non-standard behavior, "deviation from the line"; which in itself does not pose any danger. And it is precisely for such views that evil is committed and we return to the unwanted past. Dark places in our history are catching up with us. Mankind bears the traumas of settling with the past in the form of membership in the Hlinka Guard, the Aryanization.

We live in the 21st century, we perceive life more and more and we find that neither anti-Semitism, nor fascism, nor Nazism have ended. They are here and they are among us. It is extremely important to remember the greatest horror in the world. It is important to talk about the Jewish experience, we should realize that it is the experience of all mankind, even though it was largely paid for by the Jews. There is no need to be silent about what Jews and humanity went through during the Holocaust. It is not a distant history, but a history we experience. We have been silent once and that tragic mistake has cost the lives of millions of children, men and women. Let's not let us ever experience such a long, painful, sad silence again.

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