

Translation of Irena Tumavičiūtė's article in *Veidas*, 10 January 2011, pp 38-39. PDF of the original available at:

<http://holocaustinthebaltics.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/01/2011Jan10TumaviciuteOriginal.pdf>

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SOCIETY

READERS' OPINION

## **Why Doesn't the Catastrophically Shrinking Number of Oswencim/Auschwitz Victims Anger Anyone?**

IRENA TUMAVIČIŪTĖ

Even 65 years later, there is still no clear answer: why do the number of concentration camp victims differ by the millions in different sources?

“**H**ow will I better justify the growing number of museums, books, education programs and films in a society saturated with the Holocaust without waking the specter of Holocaust Denial,”—Norman Finklestein asks in his book *The Holocaust Industry* (2004, page 64 [citation translated from Tumavičiūtė's Lithuanian translation]). No one who writes in an attempt to pin collective responsibility on Lithuanians waves the club of the Holocaust at this brave academic: the author's Jewish relatives perished in concentration camps of the Third Reich and

his parents were prisoners of the Warsaw Ghetto and concentration camps.

Even the highest officials of the state in Lithuania can be accused of imaginary things, one can openly proclaim that there was no Soviet occupation in 1940, that in 1991 Lithuanians were shot “by their own,” one can even disbelieve in God himself, and here just one little word, “allegedly,” printed in the wrong place in free Lithuania can even throw ministry worker Petras Stankeras out on the street.

This recalls subliminally stories from the Stalin period when, it seems, one typesetter got ten years in a concentration camp because in large print in a newspaper, instead of ILGU ILGU METU [“long live”] Stalin, Stalin was wished ILGU LIGU METU [“many long years of diseases”]. Another press worker was similarly punished because instead of writing TARYBU LIETUVA [“Soviet Lithuania”] he wrote TARBU LIETUVA. One could mention more such cases when a changed or omitted letter during the time of Communist occupation caused a person a tragic fate.

In all branches of science studies are conducted, sources encountered are analyzed and conclusions are drawn that constantly correct or even refute data from earlier research. And this is considered a normal thing. But if someone’s “watchful” eye somewhere perceives a belittlement or denial of the Holocaust committed by the Third Reich, where there is no such thing, in several European countries, now including Lithuania, a person can say farewell to his career.

Who can deny that the author of the book *The Holocaust in American Life*, Peter Novick, reading over certain writings from the last two weeks, would not say that there are those confessing “Holocaust theology” in Lithuania.

Even those authors whose thinking stops at six million victims don’t mean just the murdered, but also those who died in the concentration camps. Because during the war in Hitlerian as well as Stalinistic concentration camps most of the victims were carried off by epidemics. They didn’t give foreigners access to calculations of gulag victims, but the victors of World War II “determined” the number of victims of the nationalist camps. They tried to convince the world of these numbers right from the time of the court at Nuremberg that they convened.

## Conclusion of Studies

Nonetheless in the West research continued. The works of some authors were released, translated in many languages, they tried not to notice others, and there were those who were punished for what was perceived as trivialization or denial of the Holocaust in these works.

Nonetheless, even in the officially tolerated literature the number of concentration camps victims sometimes differs by several million.

This can best be seen in the example of Auschwitz. When speaking of Auschwitz, one must keep in mind that this concept includes 17 camps spread out over a territory of 40 square kilometers. In the literature the number of victims varies from several hundred thousand to eight million.

We will present the conclusions of studies by several of the best-known officially recognized authors who have studied the history of the concentration camps of the Third Reich.

Gerald Reitlinger says that much less than a million people died or perished at Auschwitz, of whom approximately 550-600 thousand were Jews and an undetermined number of 300 thousand registered prisoners who were not at the camp the day of liberation. Raul Hilberg believes the number of Jewish victims alone at Auschwitz reached a million (incidentally, this author says that not more than 130 thousand Jews were murdered in Lithuania). Martin Gilbert counted two million Jews killed in the Auschwitz gas chambers (“Atlas of the Holocaust”). Franciszek Piper compared these figures with a table in that same atlas which indicates the number of Jews deported to other concentration camps as well, and determined that by subtracting these numbers from the total sum of Jews provided by M. Gilbert just 1.1 million Jews brought to Auschwitz remain. Eugen Kogon thinks the total number of victims of Auschwitz is “at least 3.5 million but more likely 4.5 million people.”

Students read these books, and one hasn't heard, for example, that someone has accused G. Reitlinger of belittling the Holocaust, or that institutions of justice had taken an interest in these greatly differing number of victims, or had tasked historians to study how such differences arose.

The Frenchman Jean Claude Pressac, considered a revisionist several decades ago, has studied much archival material and many publications, and critically assessed the capacity of crematoria. In 1993 he wrote the book “The Crematoria of Auschwitz.” According to his calculations and research conclusions, the total number of dead and murdered at Auschwitz could have been from 631 thousand to 711 thousand.

Until 1990, [the figure of] 4 million Auschwitz victims, the number dictated by a Soviet “commission of historians,” was officially cited. “Millions” were counted based on the stories of some prisoners and witnesses and statements by former camp commandant Rudolf Hoess at the victors’ tribunal in Nurnberg. But now it is known how R. Hoess was terrorized and tortured so that he would sign the protocols read to him with the “confessions.”

### **The Lie Taken Away from Oswencim**

An essay written in 1983 by a Jew of France, former Auschwitz prisoner Goerges Wellers, called “On the Number of Dead at the Auschwitz Camp,” especially encouraged Polish historians to critically assess the officially recognized figures. He investigated and described material from the different countries and places from where people were deported to Auschwitz and came to the conclusion that, in total, there were 1.613 million people brought to this camp, of whom 1.471 million didn’t return from the camp.

Polish investigators were finally able to make use of the opened Russian archives where many registration books of deaths of prisoners were discovered. Further, the archives of European cities from which people had been taken to Auschwitz were used as well, with the lists of deportees preserved in them; a plethora of published sources were used.

No studies can ever give final results. F. Piper, the most competent researcher on the history of Auschwitz, said in a monograph about Auschwitz issued in several languages in 1993 that the number of dead and perished prisoners could only be from 1.1 to 1.5 million. Incidentally, one of his conclusions was that in many statistics the percentage of non-Jewish prisoners was reduced. He was critical of

authors who only incidentally mention or wholly leave out that Poles, Gypsies and representatives of other ethnicities were annihilated at Oswencim. Even G. Reitlinger reduced the number of non-Jews by half.

Piper was the subject of accusations by several well-known Jews. For example, chairman of the German Jewish Center Council Directorium H. Galinski accused him of antisemitism. H. Baumann asked whether that game with numbers didn't serve to show how deep the anti-Jewish feelings of the Polish nation were. The number of accusations subsided after E. Losinski's article with the eloquent headline "The Lie Removed from Oswencim. Communist propaganda seeking its goal falsified even the number of victims of the death camps."

One of the most serious arguments in the polemic on the numbers exaggerated by the Communists was formulated by the president of the US Polish Historians' Association, Father Dr. Z. Zielinski: "The true horrors of the Second World War cannot be turned into legends. It is not allowable that the children and grandchildren of those who survived the horrors of war should live in the future with the unfortunate harvest of irresponsible and unnecessary distortions of historical facts. I am convinced that the thousand-year and inevitable 'drang nach Osten' cannot be stopped by the myth of 'Auschwitz's four million graves.'"

The international Auschwitz-Birkenau memorial service also released a statement. It said, among other things, that it was necessary to correct incorrect information because it had given foundation to criticism of the essence of the entire memorial.

## **The Number of Victims Debunked**

The author of these lines had the chance to speak two years ago in Dresden with the mayor of Oswencim who said that investigations were continuing but the total number of victims of the former concentration camp comprised over a million.

Why were several generations forced to memorize by heart from school and university textbooks four million Auschwitz victims? This question was answered back in 1998 by curator of Oswencim academic research at the State Auschwitz Museum, W. Dlugobroski: "In Eastern

Europe until 1989 there was a ban in force against doubting four million murdered; Oswencim Memorial Museum workers who dared doubt that figure faced disciplinary cases.”

The four million Auschwitz victims announced by Soviet “historians” to the world only remained in books and photographs.

We have discussed the calculation of victims of only one National-Socialist concentration camp. There are many books, tractates and articles in Western European languages that assess differently the six million mentioned by Stankeras, who did not deny the Holocaust.

Authoritative researchers, including A. Mayer and R. Hilberg, even quote publications by Holocaust deniers (denying the existence of gas chambers). “Let’s let these people speak, if that’s what they want,” Hilber says. “This just encourages researchers to check again that which seems obvious to us.”

Polish historians using archival material and conscientiously performed studies by historians of various ethnicities, including Jewish, debunked the number of victims of the Auschwitz concentration camp. The ambassadors of no country protested because of this, no one was fired from their job...

But neither does this article deny the Holocaust. It only presents that which has been examined in the world so far. Of course, one can say that there is no sense in looking into the numbers when so many people were murdered, but in that case, there is no sense in manipulating and increasing a baseless number of victims either.

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Translator’s notes:

(1) There is text box on the first print page in center of page with photo of author wearing glasses, smiling. The text: “Irena Tumavičiūtė: ‘The number of victims of Oswencim/Auschwitz varies in the literature from several hundred thousand up to eight million.’ Photo: *Veidas* archive.]

(2) Second page: photo of watchtower inside concentration camp fence, no caption. credited to Scanpix.]

(3) A red graphic box divides a paragraph here and cuts across the page into second but not third column. In the section in the first column there is a reproduction of a plaque from Auschwitz in English commemorating four million people who died on top of a black and white photo of a pope with cardinals in attendance looking down at plaques laid on the ground. The caption reads “Pope John Paul II in 1979 prayed for four million Auschwitz victims (A memorial plaque, reading ‘Four million people suffered and died at the hands of the Nazi murderers between the years 1940 and 1945’.

Tumavičiūtė translates the plaque’s English inscription into Lithuanian in the caption. In the second column area of the red graphics box, a color photo of a pope with cardinals in the background is partially obscured by an illegible inscription on a metal plaque.

The caption reads:

“But Pope Benedict XVI in 2006 honored the memory of one and a half million Auschwitz victims. (In 1990 the memorial plaques were quietly changed. They said that the Nazis had murdered almost one and a half million men, women and children at the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp)”

(4) *Veidas* published this, it seems to me, as if it were a letter or commentary sent in by a reader. The nationalist-oriented historical and cultural newspaper *Voruta* published the exact same text by Tumavičiūtė on December 23, 2010, see <http://www.voruta.lt/rubrikos/76/5974>. *Voruta* used the same photographs in the *Veidas* piece, except for the stock photos of the Auschwitz watchtower, but they subsequently disappeared from the *Voruta* webpage. *Voruta* carries writings by ex-politician Romualdas Ozolas, who sent a letter of commendation to fascist marchers through the Lithuanian capital on independence day in 2010. He was also one of the authors of a letter recently published, sent from the Lithuanian Human Rights Association to the European Commission explaining how the Simon Wiesenthal Center had caused anti-Semitism to appear in Lithuania.