

Abstract

This thesis deals with the issue of memory and remembering in the post-communist area. In particular, it examines the form, extent and success of the Holocaust reflection and coping with the past on the example of the speeches of Czech and Polish presidents from 1993 (Václav Havel), or 1995 (Aleksander Kwaśniewski) until the access to the European Union in 2004. Author of the thesis assumes that the fall of Communism and the restoration of the democratic establishment represented a significant impetus for the countries in question to deal with their past. At the same time, they try to prove that the Holocaust memory politics of key political representatives of the Czech Republic and Poland has been one of the important factors in the creation of their post-communist democratic identity – and not only with respect to an unofficial demand of the unifying Europe to cope with the heritage of the past. Through the analysis of selected presidential speeches, the thesis identifies and evaluates the image of Holocaust created by the Czech and Polish presidents on the one hand and the weaknesses in the Holocaust memory politics of both actors on the other. After theoretical and conceptual introduction (chapter one), the experience with the Holocaust in Poland and the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, and the transformation of the Holocaust cultural memory in these countries after 1945, respectively 1989 are described (chapter two). Last, central chapter is concerned with the analysis of selected speeches by Václav Havel and Aleksander Kwaśniewski. Approaches to the Holocaust and Holocaust memory politics of the presidents are summed up in the end of the chapter and final results of the analysis are presented in the conclusion of the thesis.