

# Cracow's Glinik – World War II Executions Place, Forgotten over the Years and Restored to the Collective Memory. Preliminary Results of Archaeological-and-Exhumation Research

Krzysztof Tunia<sup>a</sup>

The article is the first English-language publication presenting the topic of one of the places of executions during World War II in Cracow, bearing the local name of Glinik. It was located in a claypit for a brick factory operating nearby before the War. Executions were carried out in Glinik from mid-November 1939, basically until the end of 1943. The victims were mainly brought from the Cracow prisons. In the post-War years, it was decided not to carry out exhumations in Glinik. Only several stone obelisks were erected there, and in 1967 a larger memorial was built to commemorate the victims shot in Glinik. The area was only granted the status of a war cemetery in 2012. In the years 2013–2015, exploration works were conducted in the area of Glinik using archaeological research methods. This work was focused on finding the exact location of the place of executions, carrying out exhumations and reburying of the human remains. As a result, 25 graves were located, and the remains of 125 people were excavated from these graves. In many cases, small artefacts were found with them. In only one case, was it possible to identify the remains by name, based on a found identity document. And she is the only certain identified victim of Glinik. The anthropological analysis showed that the vast majority of victims were men (114 persons), while there were 11 women. The cause of death in most cases was a gunshot to the head. All the skeletons were subjected to DNA tests, with the aim of possible future identification of the victims. Their remains were reburied in an interreligious ceremony in Glinik, in two mass graves in the foundation part of the existing monument there. An important stage in restoring the memory of those shot in Glinik were such undertakings as the renovation of the memorial in 2016–2017, which is the dominant feature of the war cemetery. One of these commemorative activities was also an exhibition devoted to the events in Glinik, organized at the Museum of the Home Army in Cracow in 2020, together with accompanying publications. In preparation, there is also a historical-and-archaeological monograph devoted to the war and post-war history of Glinik.

KEY-WORDS: World War II, Cracow, Glinik, the place of prisoners' executions, archaeological-and-exhumation works, restoring the memory of the victims

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<sup>a</sup> Institute of Archaeology and Ethnology, Polish Academy of Sciences, Sławkowska Street 17, 31–016 Cracow (Poland); e-mail: ktunia@gmail.com; ORCID: 0000-0002-1243-6536

Glinik – one of the terrifying names in wartime Cracow.<sup>1</sup> It was there, in the village of Przegorzały near Cracow, and later – from 1941 – in Cracow-Przegorzały (Krakau-Wartenberg), that one of the places of execution during World War II was located.<sup>2</sup> It was located in a claypit for Salomon Finkelstein's brickyard operating nearby before the War (Figs 1 and 2). This area was locally known in Polish as Glinik (the name means “the claypit”).<sup>3</sup> This location was well in line with the tendency to search for secluded places for the liquidation of prisoners in the vicinity of Cracow (Kotarba 2012: 47; 2013: 297). The victims were mainly brought from the court prison at 3 Senacka Street in Cracow, the so-called St. Michael's prison, as well as – probably – from the prison of the German Security Police at 7 Montelupich Street. Executions were carried out from mid-November 1939, basically until the end of 1943. Perhaps also later, sporadic shootings took place in this place (Kotarba 2012: 48; 2013: 293).

It would seem that the tragic history of this place would have been worthily commemorated in the immediate post-War period, when the memory of the fate of the victims shot there was still fresh. But, the history of this area was different from other places of martyrdom in Cracow. In 1945, the exhumation of people shot in Cracow-Krzesławice was carried out,<sup>4</sup> and in many cases their identity was established. It was a similar situation in Cracow-Kobierzyn. However, similar work was not undertaken in Cracow-Przegorzały. The reasons for this could not be determined, and there is only speculation. The only decision made then was to buy the area of the former clay pit and create a memorial site on it. The abandonment of exhumation works in Glinik soon after the end of the War has in many respects had an impact on explaining the issues related to this site.

Immediately after the end of the occupation, thanks to the efforts of the local population, wooden crosses were erected in Glinik. It was probably also in those times that the first commemoration of an unspecified shape, not recorded in any sources, was created there, the base of which, measuring 0.7 x 1 x 0.8 m, made of fragments

1 This article is a slightly extended version of the Polish-language text which appeared in the post-conference publication of the Historical Museum of the City of Cracow, titled *Miejsca (nie)pamięci*, Cracow 2019 (Tunia 2019).

2 The change of administrative affiliation was introduced by a decree of the General Government (*Regierung des Generalgouvernements*) of May 28, 1941, which entered into force on 1 June of that year. At that time, the areas of the surrounding 27 rural communes and parts of 2 other communes, including the area belonging to the village of Przegorzały (then Wartenberg), were annexed to the city of Cracow, *Verordnungsblatt für Generalgouvernement*, No. 51, June 20, 1941.

3 Today, the area at Bruzdowa Street in Cracow.

4 Protocols from the exhumation in Krzesławice, Archive of the Historical Museum of the City of Cracow, ref. MHK R, inventory no. 425/1.



Fig. 1. Cracow-Glinik. Location of the former claypit for Salomon Finkelstein's brickyard.



**Fig. 2.** Cracow-Glinik. Arrangement of the graves (A–Ż). M – Memorial erected in 1967, renovated in 2016–2017, C – contemporary erected iron cross on the mound. Research in 2013–2015 – measurements and drawings by M. Podsiadło; 2018 by I. Pieńkos and T. Borkowski; 2019 by T. Borkowski.

of worked stone, was discovered during the excavations in 2015. As the building material, waste material of a stonemason’s workshop, which was “reutilizing” German tombstones obtained from some cemetery, probably from the western territories of Poland, was used (Tunia ed. 2015: 9, Figs 67, 68). In 1949, the area

of the former claypit was bought from the heirs of S. Finkelstein, and probably soon afterwards the gradient of its slopes was reduced, and bushes and trees were planted, without any inquiring into which part of the purchased land the graves of the victims were located. It was at that time that this area underwent significant transformations. During this period, or shortly before, garbage was transported to the area of Glinik. In several places, during excavations, clusters of various types of waste of post-war chronology were found there. In later years, the grassy area of Glinik also served as a recreation area.

The decision to construct a more permanent memorial, in the form of a granite boulder, was made in 1955. The memorial was unveiled on August 22 of the following year. Another memorial – with a paved square in front of it – was unveiled in Glinik on October 19, 1967. During its construction, as discovered during the excavations in 2015, one of the mass graves was disturbed (Tunia ed. 2015: 6–7, Fig. 18). In the same year, a small obelisk with an inscription was erected nearby. In the following years, this area did not draw the interest that was due to a memorial site, and it was only on October 12, 2012 that the site was granted the status of a war cemetery.

It is worth mentioning that the crimes of the German occupation authorities in Cracow-Przegorzały have been investigated since the late 1940s. There have been – and are – further investigations aimed at trying to explain as many aspects of Glinik's history as possible. The first one was initiated in 1949 by the District Commission for the Investigation of Nazi Crimes in Cracow, the next ones – opened in the 1960s – were run by the same institution. The third one was started in 2009 by the Branch Commission for the Prosecution of Crimes Against the Polish Nation of the Institute of National Remembrance in Cracow (Woźny 2013: 67).

The wartime history of this area, based on a critical analysis of all sources available at the time was compiled by Ryszard Kotarba (2012; 2013). His important conclusions – in terms of archaeological work – were the suggestion that no more than 300–400 people must have been shot there, as well as the conclusion that it is basically impossible to reliably determine the identity of the victims (Kotarba 2012: 55, 60; 2013: 295). It is also worth mentioning that other publications give different, usually higher, numbers of people shot there, reaching as many as 1340 (Ścisło 1981: 9). One should also note the tendency to gradually increase the number of victims in publications over the years, starting from the immediate post-War period. The topic of the war crime in Glinik was discussed in a number of press and Internet publications, in a polemic with R. Kotarba's study (Bujas-Spyra 2013), and even in a bachelor's thesis written at the Institute of History of the Jagiellonian University at Cracow (Rolińska 2016; 2017).

In 2013–2015, exploratory work was conducted in the area of Glinik using archaeological research methods (Tunia ed. 2013; 2014; 2015). Its purpose was to determine the area of the execution site, carry out exhumations and rebury the found remains. These activities, conducted by the Institute of Archaeology and Ethnology of the Polish Academy of Sciences – Mountain and Upland Archaeology Centre in Cracow, were conducted – under the direction of the author of this text – on behalf of the Małopolska Voivodship Office in Cracow.

The fieldwork was preceded by archival research by Marzena Woźny (Woźny 2013), whose aim was to obtain information helpful in the archaeological work – mainly to collect data on the location and shape of the graves. This archival work covered both historical sources and materials published on the wartime and post-war history of Glinik, including the only reliable study of this topic by Ryszard Kotarba, mentioned above.

The fieldwork in 2013 began with archaeological prospection using geophysical methods employed in non-destructive archaeology – such as magnetic, electrical-resistance and Ground Penetrating Radar methods. The first two were carried out by the team of Marcin Przybyła's *Pryncypat* company, the third by the team of Jerzy Ziętek from the University of Science and Technology in Cracow (in Polish Akademia Górniczo-Hutnicza im. Stanisława Staszica w Krakowie, abbrev. AGH). These methods generally did not meet the expectations. The factors that hindered the conduct of geophysical research and the interpretation of the results in the area of Glinik were the type of soil, significant transformation of the terrain and heavy saturation with ferrous garbage. Ground Penetrating Radar surveys had a particularly low efficiency. Based on the relatively indistinct anomalous zones registered in the magnetic and electro-resistance studies, a series of excavation test units was marked out, and the location of others was proposed based on the morphology of the terrain.

Proper archaeological-and-exhumation research was conducted in the seasons 2014–2015. As a result, a series of excavation units were made throughout the entire former clay mining site and on its outskirts, some of which – where graves were discovered – were combined into open area excavation units. Their depth ranged from 2 to over 4 meters. During the excavations, it was possible to identify two zones where the burials of people shot in Glinik were located – the western zone, covering the flat area located to the NW of the present-day mound with an iron cross, and the eastern zone, in the area of the monument with the paved square dedicated to the victims of Glinik (Fig. 2). In these zones, 25 graves were located – they were marked with letters (A–Ž). Four graves (A, F, M, N) were located in the western zone. The other twenty-one were in the eastern zone. In total, the remains of 125 people were

excavated from all the graves. Graves in which one person was buried prevailed in Glinik. Eight such single graves have been discovered. Remains of two people were discovered in two graves, three individuals in five graves, four in one, six in two, seven in two and eight in one. The large grave was N with the remains of 10 people. Graves K and U contained the remains of 12 people. The largest was grave C with the remains of 26 people. It had the shape of a ditch, about 7 m long and about 2 m wide. It was partially damaged during the construction of the monumental memorial to the victims of this place in 1967. In two cases, a stratigraphic arrangement of the graves was observed. In grave B, most likely, a younger burial with two persons was dug into an older one, containing five persons. The lower part of the pit of grave J was dug into the deeper grave K. It was also observed that the bodies of the deceased were tightly packed in relatively small pits.

An anthropological analysis, performed by Anita Szczepanek, showed that the vast majority of the victims were men – 114 people. The remains of women – 11 people. The cause of death was also established. Most of the time it was a shot to the head (see Fig. 5). It was also found that those buried in Glinik were mostly adults, who died at the age of 20–35. Material for DNA tests was obtained from the skeletons, and the DNA tests were performed at the Department of Forensic Medicine of the Pomeranian Medical University in Szczecin, with the aim of possible future identification of the shot persons.

During the research, much information was collected about the ritual of death accompanying the executions – pre-mortem binding of hands behind the back, blindfolds, wooden poles to which the victim might be attached when the executions were carried out (Fig. 3), etc. The small objects found on the victims say a little about them. As the vast majority of them were people brought to the place of execution from prisons, they had already been deprived of most of their personal belongings. Nevertheless, in a number of cases single objects were found. For example, prayer books (by the three skeletons in grave L), a set of corrective glasses in a leather case by one of the skeletons in grave Z (Fig. 4), fragments of a necklace made of white and red beads by another skeleton in this grave, fragments of two rosaries with beige and black plastic beads found by other skeletons in the same grave, a Bakelite cosmetic box by one of the people buried in grave C, a watch in a silver case with a leather strap and a steel buckle in grave D (Fig. 5), a silver medallion on a chain belonging to one of the people buried in grave P, a brass medallion on a chain with a bullet hole in grave L (Fig. 6), a double-sided black plastic lice comb with the signature of the manufacturer “Matador”, found with the remains of one of the people buried in grave Y, etc. A large number of buttons were obtained, including the particularly interesting buttons from the uniforms of former Polish State Railways (Polskie Koleje Państwowe, abbrev. PKP) employees, discovered



**Fig. 3.** Cracow-Glinik. Grave P. Wooden pole used during executions. Photo: K. Tunia.

with the remains of two people in grave N. In the same grave, one of the skeletons was missing the bones of the lower part of the limb below the knee, which must have been replaced with a wooden prosthesis reinforced with poorly preserved iron elements.

Time-consuming conservation work and examinations of small movable objects found with the dead are still in progress, the analysis of which broadens our knowledge of Glinik's victims. Determining the identity of the victims encounters, over time, difficulties which are rather insurmountable. As a result of archaeological research in Glinik, it was possible to determine the name of only one person, and she is the only victim of Glinik identified with certainty. It is Zofia Eichenbaum née Kühn, identified on the basis of the identity card (*Kennkarte*) found in the grave. Based on



**Fig. 4.** Cracow-Glinik. Grave Z. Set of corrective glasses in a leather case purchased from the optician K. Zieliński, Kraków, Rynek Główny 39. Photo: K. Tunia.

archival data, it was established that in the early years of the War she was a milliner and the owner of the “Zofia Kühnówna” company located in Cracow, Burgstrasse No. 36 (Grodzka Street). The Eichenbaums lived at 29/1 Westring (Dunajewskiego-Podwale-Straszewskiego Street). Zofia’s remains were found in grave B, in the part where the chronologically “younger” dug-in grave with two skeletons was located. It cannot be ruled out that the skeleton in the immediate vicinity is the remains of her husband – Leon. The victim was holding the remains of a suitcase filled with a variety of items. This proves that they were detained outside the house (while escaping?) and directly – as Jews – escorted to the place of execution. Both were registered after the War at the Yad Vashem Institute in Israel as missing during the Holocaust. The presumed date of their death, determined on the basis of the Kennkarte and data from Yad Vashem, is the end of 1941, the time when the Cracow ghetto had already been established (Kotarba 2022: 49 ff.).

It is also worth mentioning that one of the people buried in grave U is a high-ranking German (Wehrmacht?) officer, with whose remains an epaulette with insignia (*Rangabzeichen*) for a major was found. The time of his execution is 1943 or later. This was determined on the basis of the remains of the uniform and equipment, including the remains of model 43 trousers – the so-called *Rundbundhose* (Sáiz 2009: 40–43).



**Fig. 5.** Cracow-Glinik. Grave D. On the left hand, watch in a silver case with a leather strap and a steel buckle. On the skull is visible a bullet hole. Photo: K. Tunia.

In 2018–2019 on the eastern outskirts of the zone explored in 2013–2015, supplementary excavations were carried out under the auspices of the Search Department of the Office of Search and Identification of the Institute of National Remembrance headed by Tomasz Borkowski. They did not lead to the discovery of further wartime graves (Borkowski 2019; 2020).

Based on the results of the search in the area of Glinik, it can be stated with high probability, bordering on certainty, that during this search the remains of almost all the victims shot and buried there were located and excavated. The results of archaeological work negatively verify the information previously published about



**Fig. 6.** Cracow-Glinik. Grave L. Brass medallion with a bullet hole. Obverse – the Sacred Heart of Jesus, reverse – Our Lady. Photo: K. Grzyb.

the number of victims killed and buried there, and the allegedly observed large transports of people destined for execution. However, it is impossible not to note Ryszard Kotarba's important, universal reflection here that it is not important to bid on the number of victims – their tragedy remains the same regardless of the number... (Kotarba 2012: 67).

All the remains were buried in an interreligious ceremony in Glinik, in two mass graves in the foundation part of the memorial. These ceremonies took place after each year's excavations and exhumations – on October 29, 2014 and October 21, 2015 (Figs 7 and 8).

An important stage in restoring the memory of those shot in Glinik were several undertakings, which consisted of the renovation of the memorial dedicated to the victims buried under it in 2016–2017, which is now the dominant feature of the war cemetery, and the placement of an information board nearby. One of the commemorative activities



Fig. 7. Cracow-Glinik. Preparations for funeral ceremony on October 21, 2015. Photo: K. Tunia.



Fig. 8. Cracow-Glinik. Interreligious funeral ceremony on October 29, 2014. Photo: K. Tunia.



**Fig. 9.** Cracow. Street information pole with a poster advertising an exhibition about the wartime history of Glinik at the Museum of the Home Army in 2020. Photo: K. Tunia.

included an exhibition devoted to the war history in Glinik, organized in 2020 according to the script by Krzysztof Tunia at the Museum of the Home Army named after General Emil Fieldorf “Nil” in Cracow (Figs 9 and 10), together with publications accompanying this exhibition (Fig. 11; Tunia 2020a; 2020b). In preparation, there is also a historical and archaeological monograph devoted to the wartime and post-war history of Glinik.

*Translated by Monika Sobejko*



Fig. 10. Cracow. Fragment of exhibition devoted to the wartime history of Glinik at the Museum of the Home Army in 2020. Photo: K. Tunia.



Fig. 11. Cracow. Publications accompanying exhibition on the wartime history of Glinik at the Museum of the Home Army. Photo: K. Tunia.

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