

## **Biography / CV**

Maja Lis-Turlejska, Ph.D. is Professor of Psychology at SWPS University of Social Sciences and Humanities in Warsaw. She was the editor of: *New approaches in psychotherapy* (1979), *New phenomena in psychotherapy* (1991) and the author of: *Traumatic stress: Theories and research* (1998), *Traumatic stress: Prevalence, consequences and therapy* (2002), *Traumatic events and their psychological consequences* (2005). During 2007-2014 she was President of Polish Society of Traumatic Stress Studies. During 2007-2013 she was Board Member of the European Society of Traumatic Stress Studies. Her research interests relate to the consequences of traumatic experiences during World War II (she has done research on concentration camp survivors and child WWII survivors) and to the epidemiology of traumatic stress in the general population. She also investigates a variety of mental health consequences following trauma exposure. Her work has been published in such journals as: *Journal of Traumatic Stress*, *Addictive Behaviors*, *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, *European Journal of Psychotraumatology*. She has completed EMDR training levels I and II.

**Abstract title**

THE CHALLENGE OF RECOGNIZING AND HEALING WORLD WAR II TRAUMA IN POLAND

**Abstract text**

Three issues are worth recognizing about Poland:

- (1) The massive scale of World War II trauma,
- (2) The manifestations of great resilience and power of the human spirit, and
- (3) The challenge of using contemporary knowledge of social and medical science for healing the trauma. Poland belongs to that part of Europe Snyder (2010) calls the 'bloodlands'. The number of Polish Jews, ethnic Poles, and people belonging to ethnic minorities who died or were murdered in the course of WWII amounted to about 6 million. Poland lost about 17% of its pre-war population – the highest percentage among all countries involved (Davies, 2005; Szarota & Materski, 2009). Despite massive traumatization, there are however many great accomplishments of the Polish people following WWII.

One example is the restoration of capital of the country, Warsaw, ruined in 1944; the reconstructed Old Town district is now on the UNESCO list of World Heritage Sites. In addition, Poland was the first country where the communist government fell in 1989, as a result of struggle by the 10 million-strong Solidarity movement. And another example: during the past 27 years, GDP per capita has grown almost 8-fold.

However, the consequences of the historical massive traumatization seem to endure. Several studies show a 30%-40% prevalence of current PTSD in nonclinical populations (Cyniak-Cieciura et al., 2017; Ogińska-Bulik et al., in press; Lis-Turlejska, et al., 2018; Rzeszutek et al., 2017). Such rate of PTSD is much higher than in the Western European countries (e.g. Alonso et al., 2004; de Vries & Olf, 2009). Explaining the reasons for such difference and finding ways to deal with the consequences of World War II trauma in Poland is an important challenge.