

Conclusion

*“Here, we lived together, doomed to good and bad times.
Here, Jews fought for Poland.
They were a driving force of industry, factories and culture.
Traces of this past deserve to be remembered and respected.”¹*

Częstochowa was and is known, in Poland and around the world, for the Miraculous Picture of the Mother of God, to which pilgrims, from different parts of the world, come. But, like in many Polish cities, in its history – especially in the last three centuries – one finds the experience of multiculturalism. For decades, the socio-economic fabric of the city was co-created by the Jewish community.

It was in this city that Jews were born, married, raised children and did business. They lived and they died. And it was thus from generation to generation. At the same time, they were Jews and residents of Częstochowa. This city was their place on Earth – their Home. Nazism issued a death sentence upon anyone whom they recognised as a Jew. Jews, however, survived.

After the War, Poland was not only the homeland of the survivors, it was also synonymous with their suffering, the tombs of their families and their human dreams. Trauma, state policy and anti-Jewish excesses inspired by antisemitism, prompted many Jews to emigrate from Częstochowa itself, as well as from Poland in general. Those, who remained, endeavoured to arrange their lives anew. With a commitment, they worked for the good of the Polish nation. Called the “enemies of Poland” in 1968, and expelled from their homeland, they felt betrayed by Poland. Bitterness and regret remain to this day.

The few, who despite all the odds, remained in Poland, are the only guardians of the memory of the centuries-long presence of the Jewish people on Poland lands. Members of the Częstochowa TSKŻ have managed to bring this flame of memory to contemporary times. Supported, in recent years, by Częstochowa Jews from abroad, they have accomplished great things for its preservation.

Thanks to their efforts, thanks to the contribution of Zygmunt Rolat, Alan Silberstein and Alon Goldman and thanks to the contemporary residents of the city, interest in Jewish history, tradition, culture and religion has definitely increased. Thanks to the support of the Częstochowa City Council, the contribution of this community to the achievements of this city is widely known, amongst the younger generation of Częstochowa residents also. A series of initiatives, implemented in recent years, allows young Poles and Jews to know each other better. This is a good basis for building trust, based upon mutual closeness, without losing one’s own identity.

¹ The Words of Zygmunt Rolat, from: C.K. Szymański, R. Stefaniak, *Zygmunt...*, op. cit., p. 110.

Mutual respect and tolerance, in practice, is what Częstochowa manages to implement.

There are few people of Jewish descent amongst the contemporary residents of Częstochowa. This does not mean that the memory of the achievements of the many generations of Częstochowa Jews, their importance and their contribution to this city is in danger. The responsibility for the preservation of this memory is the duty of all the residents of Częstochowa. This is a duty that they will surely fulfill.

In memory of Ryszard Welgryn,

a good man, whose path reached the rainbow...