

Restoring, Commemorating and Educating

Last year, I crossed the gate of the Holocaust memorial in Bardejov for the first time . The boards seemed much smaller from the outside than from the inside. In fact, they were tall, massive, and hiding something. Many names, dates. Families whose names remained only engraved in marble. Why are they there? Who's there? Who put them there?

How many people pass by the Jewish complex in our city every day and don't even really know what is behind its walls? If I'm not mistaken, there should be six buildings. There are many stories in these buildings that, unfortunately, we will never know. And although we won't know that much anymore, thanks to skillful hands, these monuments were able to be renovated.

Buildings have been decaying for many years , they didn't have an owner... how is it possible that they lost their value? Later, the complex was taken over by a hardware store. I remember how I used to run there as a child and ask myself the questions, "what is on the floor?". She leaned over the railing and wondered, "what is down there, at such a depth, why do I hear drops of water?". I entered my grandfather's office and behind the chair I saw some kind of inscriptions nailed on the wall, which I did not understand. Today my questions are already answered. The questions that popped into my head have their answer, and that's only thanks to the fact that the building has become a museum or gallery. A complex that worships the souls of the departed, whose voices can still be heard in the walls. Even if we can't hear them, by crossing the threshold of the door we know that real life existed here. All objects that are already in glass cases belonged to someone. Restoration and commemoration of history is a very important factor in our life. Thanks to this, we can remember, for example in this particular example, the horror experienced by the people of our city. Not only ours, but also the whole world. All that follows from this is that we must in no way forget what our ancestors experienced. Do not allow this genocide to be repeated.

In addition to renewal and reminder, education is equally important. We, the young, are the generation that still has the opportunity to hear the stories of the survivors. To hear real witnesses who experienced all this evil on their own skin, but unfortunately our children, or our children's children, will no longer have such an opportunity. For them, all this will be just a part of some distant history that happened many years ago. They will think that something like this will not

befall us anytime soon. But we cannot know that. There was, is and will be evil in the world. There will always be someone who will spread hatred towards others. We certainly can't stop it by reminding them enough, but at least we can reduce such hatred. Worship is also hidden under the concept of reminding. A nice act of honor is our Holocaust memorial. On the blackboard there is a link to every single name of an innocent, murdered person. Yes, we don't know if every single one is engraved in stone, but at least all of them that we know of. By lighting a candle every year, we honor their memory with at least a small gesture, and their eternal light shines in the corner of two plaques.

Although several hundred girls from our city were saved at the beginning of this genocide , let's not forget that later the evil stepped on their heels and swallowed them up. Time passed and the extermination became more and more intense, until 1942 83% of the community was exterminated here. Yes, this percentage sounds terrible, and the real number would be even more terrifying, but this is not about percentages, nor about statistics or approximate numbers. They are real people who have lived a full life here like us. Without fear because they did not know their destiny. In a split second, everything turned into a huge ordeal.

6 million lives just like that, for nothing. Just for the simple hatred of a dictator who built an army and incited hatred. A friend was suddenly an enemy, a traitor. Almost with the snap of a finger, Bardejo's Jewish community disappeared completely. How could humans allow such a disaster to actually happen? Unfortunately, the past cannot be changed, but the least we can do is to constantly remind ourselves of it. To worship those who have succumbed. To teach the next generations to respect each other. To make it known that we are all equal. No one is more or less.

The real question is how someone is capable of harboring such downright disgusting hatred, but what is even more frightening is that even in this 21st century there are those who deny the Holocaust. Perhaps all these remains are insufficient evidence? Railways. Wagons. Concentration camps. Photos. The theories that these holocaust deniers circulate are extremely absurd. With a catastrophe as huge as this, one should not even think that the Holocaust never happened. Maybe we have little evidence? In my opinion, we have more of them than we would like. Our greatest proof is all the survivors who have the memories of the concentration camps deeply etched in their

souls. Their stories are hard to hear in themselves. None of us could ever imagine, and certainly do not want to imagine, the atrocities that took place behind the barbed wire of the camps.

What is the real purpose of all the memorials, films and other various forms that remind us of this tragedy? Teach us? No doubt. Scare us? Maybe yes. But that's not bad. Fear will make us respect such situations, it will make us worry about the possible repetition of history that may come again. Nowhere is it written that a similar fate cannot overtake us.. No one ever wants to experience labeling with visible symbols , exclusion from society, restriction of human rights, bans on assembly, or all kinds of disgusting practices.

We cannot change the world. Not even improve it yourself. Small steps are important. Everyone has to start on their own. We cannot dictate to others where to step, how to behave, what traditions to follow, and what religion to follow. I believe that we live in a more advanced age, where the past has taught us so much that we will never witness something like this on our own skin. After all, we are already a few steps ahead. Let's not allow evil and hatred to take over the world like a plague. Let's have our own opinion, our own head, let's spread goodness among ourselves. Let's not create differences based on race, nationality or religion. Let's all be equal.

Our future is up to us. He is our reflection. We are its mastermind. We are the only ones who can influence how it turns out. We can do it?

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