

# **We need to remember about our fellow citizens who participated in creating the history of our towns and cities, and who today are forgotten.**

## **The Warsaw Ghetto Museum signed a cooperation agreement with the Social and Cultural Association of Jews in Poland.**

Today, a cooperation agreement was signed between the Warsaw Ghetto Museum and the Social and Cultural Association of Jews in Poland. What do you, as chairman, expect of it?

Artur Hofman: I expect as good cooperation as we've had so far and that we will mutually need each other. The Warsaw Ghetto Museum has the support of Jewish communities in Poland, and its director, Albert Stankowski, guarantees that the institution will teach the history of the ghetto in Warsaw and other ghettos in Poland to the Jewish, but above all non-Jewish communities that wish to learn about it. If we take into account the small number of Jews in Poland, our community is quite numerous. At least half of Polish Jews work in the SCAJ, which has several branches all over the country. It will be a challenge for the museum employees to show up in these places – talk and present – and we are going to help with that. To sum up, our currently modest, but in the future – I hope – less modest machine will help the museum as much as possible. We will provide any aid. Any form of help can be discussed.

Mr Chairman, unofficial relations between the Warsaw Ghetto Museum and the Social and Cultural Association of Jews in Poland already exist, and officially – in the context of the agreement you have just signed – its first chapter will be the cooperation in organising the celebrations of the 76th anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising...

Artur Hofman: And I think that we are going to be an example of excellent cooperation and serve as an example for other Jewish institutions, which are fragmented, fight for grants, and spite each other. We are going to set honourable aims and strive to achieve them.

Mr Director, what will be the next stage of cooperation after the end of celebrations of 76th anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising? Are there any plans?

Albert Stankowski: We have a few ideas. But the joint organisation of one of the most important annual celebrations is – both for us and the SCAJ, who has been preparing it since 1948 – a very important signal that we have a common aim, i.e. preserving memory. Mr Chairman mentioned the SCAJ branches located all around Poland. Cooperation with the Polish-Jewish community is very important for the museum, because it will be telling the story of the Holocaust from their perspective. That is why, cooperating with Polish-Jewish organisation is key to us. The Warsaw Ghetto Museum cannot tell their story without their participation, which I have already mentioned during a conference with Prof. Daniel Blatman – chief historian of the permanent exhibition – as well as the participation of Jewish communities. We do not want our history to be told by someone from another country. It is us who have remained here, which legitimises us to tell the story first, from the perspective of Polish Jews. The second issue is the project of commemorating individual ghettos. Their liquidation in the territory of Mazovia, and then the gathering of Jewish people in the Warsaw Ghetto resulted in the annihilation of hundreds of years of Jewish existence in the country's towns and cities. Unfortunately, I have to conclude that the memory about our Jewish compatriots has been wiped out in these places. This year, we are commemorating the 80th anniversary of the outbreak of World War II. I think that 80 years is enough to start bringing back the memory about those people. We hope to do that together with the Social and Cultural Association of Jews in Poland and local governments. The Association Jewish Combatants and Victims of World War II declared that we are going to co-organise these events together. We want to create a single design for all plates commemorating the history of Jewish communities in individual towns. We need to remember about the people – our fellow citizens – who participated in the shaping of the history of our towns and cities, who today are forgotten.

Interview by: Anna Kilian