

To: Mr. Piotr Kuczera
Mayor of Rybnik

Dear Mr. Kuczera,

Thank you so much for your positive letter. I was very moved by your attitude concerning the history of Rybnik Jews and the history of your lovely city. I think it reflects on the better part of the Polish and Silesian approach to the past and a humanistic-liberal approach to the future, concerning educating the public, and in particular, the young. I, as an educator, believe that your approach is on the right track.

My great-grandfather, Leopold Manneberg, was an educator in the Jewish community of Rybnik in the second half of the nineteenth century. His son, Josef Manneberg (my grandfather) was born in Rybnik and established his home and business at Jan Sobieski 15, where my aunt Rosel was born in 1902, my uncle Ernst was born in 1903, and my father Hans Leopold was born in 1918. During the plebiscite of 1921 part of my family decided to take German citizenship since their language at home was German, but my grandfather, my grandmother and my father took Polish citizenship. Luckily most of the family emigrated to British Mandate Palestine in 1938 and 1939 prior to the Second World War. I was born in Tel-Aviv, and when the State of Israel was established we all became Israeli citizens.

The Idea of establishing a Jewish extension of the Rybnik Museum at Jan Sobieski 15 would be complementary to the actions taken nowadays in Gliwice where they are establishing a Jewish extension to the Museum at the historical entrance hall to the old Jewish cemetery. As far as I know they received much support from European funds for this project. Unfortunately, the old Jewish cemetery in Rybnik was destroyed by the Nazis during the war, but the remains of the deceased were transferred to an open lot adjacent to the "Manneberg house" in the back. I know that there was a disagreement between the Jewish community in Katowice concerning the rights to the lot of the old Jewish cemetery, which is now a public park in the center of the city. It might be a good idea to solve this dispute by making a small monument near the Manneberg house, which will be an attraction for tourists from abroad. Maybe this monument could display electronically the collection of photographs of the original Rybnik Jewish cemetery that Malgorzata discovered. Those photographs are in the possession of the Gliwice museum.

By the way, I am in the process of publishing a 2-volume historical biographical novel (in Hebrew), in which important parts take place in Rybnik, based on the story of my family. The story starts in the second half of the eighteenth century in Loslau (Wodzislaw Salskie). During the nineteenth century part of the family settled in Rybnik. The book was accepted by a commercial publishing house, and is now being edited. It should be published sometime during 2016. If the "Manneberg House" educational project will materialize, my intention is to have the book translated into English. Thus it might be used as background material for visitors from abroad (Germany, U.S.A., and others) at the Center. It would also be good material to promote Rybnik as a tourist attraction.

Thank you for your invitation. I would like very much to meet personally and talk in a peaceful atmosphere in Rybnik. Unfortunately we have no plans to visit Rybnik in the near future. We visited your lovely city 3 times in the past (twice together with my cousin Michael Manneberg, Ernst's son, who now lives in Switzerland), and in the coming year we plan to visit the U.S. However, the educational project is being taken care of by Mr. Yair Rubin, representing the Ghetto Fighters' Museum in Israel. As far as I know he will participate in a seminar in Poland in the middle of July and he intends to coordinate a meeting with you around July 24th. Of course if the whole project materializes, I'd be more than happy to visit Rybnik again and meet you and your staff at the Municipality and the Museum. If you need any advice, or if it's important for you talk to me directly, this is always possible to do through Skype.

For the last few years, Mrs. Malgorzata Ploszaj has assisted us with her profound knowledge and we rely on her completely for her professional judgment. We are in constant contact with her via e-mail.

If you need any more information, please don't hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,
Dr. Eli Manneberg
