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An Outline History of Rybnik (until 1989)

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Preface

The history and fortunes of each locality always arouse interest. While referring to the coming out publications, one can find the fortunes of the places and their inhabitants in them. The same applies to Rybnik. The social and political turbulence shaped its history in such a way that nowadays at the beginning of the 21st century the history of our town is collected in only four publications (by F. Idzikowski, A. Trunkhardt, E. Drobny and the paper edited by J. Walczak). The last one of them was produced more than twenty years ago. Written during the censorship supervision period, it depicted the history of Silesia and Rybnik from a single perspective only. It is extremely difficult to portray the history of the town, both synthetically and objectively. It requires long-term research and inquiries. However, due to the demand for a brief systematization of the knowledge of the town history, we have decided to publish another volume of the “Zeszyty Rybnickie” [“Rybnik Papers”].

Nearly 80 years ago a similar paper written by Fr Emil Drobny, the researcher investigating the history of Rybnik and the surrounding area, came out. The booklet, which was just about a dozen pages long, in several chapters concisely depicted the history of the town, its development, institutions and offices, as well as the existing facilities. For the inhabitants of the time, particularly those who grew up in the 1920s and 1930s, it was the only concise study informing about former times.

This publication refers to the paper and is supposed to serve to a certain extent as a coherent companion to the history of the town with due regard to the outcome of the latest research and the fact that a vast number of problems can be discussed openly. For the reader, be it an inhabitant of Rybnik or a guest, it will be a lucid lecture placed in a few chronologically organized chapters, enriched by marginal text and photographs. For the sake of the lucidity of the lecture, we have decided not to incorporate the historical research tools. The inquisitive reader should feel satisfied with a brief bibliographic guide and the references in the text indicating the papers in which one can broaden the knowledge of the subject they cover.

Bogdan Kloch
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Preface to the English edition

Dear English-speaking reader. We are offering you this brief work on one of the Upper Silesian towns. It is history in a nutshell which is meant as a companion to the complex, however, really colourful history of this region of Europe. Our book is aimed at all the Europeans. When it gathers wide popular readership among the residents of the United Kingdom, the analogies with the industrial history of England will certainly be drawn. The work, as written in the international language, will enable each European having a good command of peculiar *lingua anglicana* to get to know a certain nook of the Old Continent.

There is a region called Silesia, which Norman Davies has already written about in his account of the history of Wrocław – the capital of the whole province of Silesia. Rybnik is one of hundreds of localities whose existence the world is unaware of. As why should the world know it exists? However, the British traces (or, in a wider context, the international ones) lead also here. What is more, the mining industry, as well as the metallurgical one, worked for the benefit of the war economy of the German Empire, and later of the Third Reich. It can be assumed that at least a tiny segment of the economic life of Rybnik with its all might met head-on with the proud Albion during World War I or World War II. A vast number of the inhabitants of our town have achieved happiness and settled in post-war Great Britain. Hence, the British Isles should be provided with as much as fragmentary information about us, from East-Central Europe, the Younger Europe. All the more, anyone that has studied the history of England in depth should be aware of the fact that it is complex and differs from the way it is commonly depicted on many occasions. Rybnik, our little Homeland, is also such a European jigsaw puzzle in which the wide variety of shades parallels that of cultures and ideologies we have come across in our life. It is only now that gradually we are beginning to appreciate that fact, instead of eliminating or being ashamed of it. We wish that in the English-speaking countries Rybnik and the macro-cosm of Upper Silesia meant more than just an unknown region "in the backcountry of the world". May this work provoke reflection, provide its readers with encouragement to get to know the history of this region or may it come in handy for learning the English language. For one can teach the history of our region in English or by studying it master the language which has become the Latin of the 21st century. Hence, we encourage you to read this book and get to know another World. This historical journey through time also abounds in personages and events... which many a time have their magical power.