

Leszek Cichoblażinski Ph.D.<sup>1</sup>  
Tadeusz Wrona Ph.D.  
Management Department  
Technical University of Czestochowa  
Poland

## **THE 6th WORLD YOUTH DAY IN CZESTOCHOWA AS AN EXAMPLE OF A „BIG BANG” EVENT**

### **Lead/Introduction**

The paper under discussion focuses on the event which took place in Czestochowa on August 14-15<sup>th</sup>, 1991. During the 6<sup>th</sup> World Youth Day announced by Pope John Paul the Second the city of Czestochowa was visited by around 1,5 million people from all over the world. This the reason why the VI<sup>th</sup> WYD is a good example of “Big Bang Event”. Czestochowa is the 5<sup>th</sup> biggest pilgrimage centre in the world.

### **1. Presentation of the city of Czestochwa**

Czestochowa has a population of almost 260,000 and is situated 230 km. south of the capital of Poland - Warsaw and 80 km. north of the capital of the Silesia district – Katowice. Its main functions are as follows:

- educational centre – there are some state-owned and private universities with the total number of students of around 40, 000.
- economic centre – it has a highly developed small and middle business and handicraft as well as one of the biggest steelworks in Poland.
- cultural centre – the city has its own theatre, philharmonic hall and museums. It is also a place for the

International Festival of Sacral Music called Gaude Mater.

However, Czestochwa is mainly known as one of the biggest pilgrimage centres in the world. This centre is an over 600-year- old Paulite monastery called Jasna Gora which is famous for the Miraculous Picture of Black Madonna. The picture is a Byzantine icon painted between 6<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> Centuries. This is the reason why the Sanctuary of Jasna Gora may be visited by both – Western and Eastern Christians as well. Pilgrims come to Czestochwa mainly by cars, buses, trains and on foot. It should be stressed that Jasna Gora is popular among pilgrims who travel here on foot. The highest rate of pilgrimage takes place in summer months, particularly in August when many walking pilgrims arrive. Some of these pilgrimage groups contain more than 30, 000 people.

Thus, the function as the centre of pilgrimage is the only international function of Czestochowa, which is a dynamic development factor for both the city and its region as well. Also thanks to Jasna Gora, Czestochwa has got a status of the spiritual capital of Poland. It needs to be stressed, that Czestochowa is the 3<sup>rd</sup> largest pilgrimage centre in Europe, i.e. 4- 5 million pilgrims arrive in the city every year. [see: 1, p.171]. This function is facilitated by the geographical position of Czestochowa. The city is located near the transit roads connecting the East end West of Europe. Czestochowa is also crossed by the high-way which connects the South and North of Europe.

### **2. Transition period**

The year 1991 was the 2<sup>nd</sup> year of the existence of independent Poland since the collapse of communism during which the following historical events took place: the victory of the Solidarity Movement and the breakdown of the communist system in Poland, the pulling down of the Berlin

---

<sup>1</sup> Tadeusz Wrona was the Mayor of the city of Czestochowa at the time of the 6<sup>th</sup> WYD and later was an MP in the Parliament, Leszek Cichoblażinski is a sociologist, his research focuses on problems of restructuring of the Czestochowa region among others.

Wall which was a symbol of the Iron Curtain separating the East and West of Europe and the Velvet Revolution in Czechoslovakia.

At that time Pope John Paul the Second made a decision concerning situating the WYD which is a periodical event and takes place every 2 years in different places in the world. The WYD is the time of prayer and contemplation for young Christians from all over the world. It was the first WYD taking place in the former communist country, which had a very symbolic meaning in itself. The geographical position of Czestochwa created a possibility that young people from the still existing Soviet Union could participate in the event. They came in the number of 100,000. The majority of them left their country for the first time in their lives. Since the time when the Yalta Order was established (1945) the 6th WYD was the first possibility for the meeting of young people from the East and West. [see: 2, p.27]

It should be emphasized that under communism local authorities almost did not exist. There was an administrative body similar to the local government but it was only a facade, had no power and was completely subordinated to the central authorities. Real local government in independent Poland was created in May, 1990. In that situation a newly established local council had to meet such a big challenge at the very beginning of its existence. (Preparations for the 6<sup>th</sup> WYM took more than one year.) Before the presentation of the 6<sup>th</sup> WYD it should be mentioned that Czestochwa was a city with a very low level of investments as a result of a special policy evolved by the communist authorities towards Czestochwa for its being a centre of religious cult.

A similar “Big Bang Event” takes place in Czestochowa every year in the summer time when within 4 months the city is monthly visited by an average of pilgrims 0,5 million pilgrims. (The biggest number is in August – almost 0,6 mln.)

### **3. The outcome of the event**

The 6<sup>th</sup> WYD was an unprecedented challenge for the organizers. Czestochowa with its 260, 000 inhabitants had to cope with the tasks surpassing the size of the city. The organizers had expected 1,1 million people; actually 1,5 million people arrived. [see: 3]

The arrangements involved a wide range of problems concerning technical infrastructure and social issues such as accommodation facilities, organization of trade, security, organization of traffic and road renovation, health care, cleaning up the city among others.

During one-year preparations for the event that multiplied demands in infrastructure and public services, the city authorities tried to plan investments in such a way that they could serve to raise living standards of the inhabitants over a long period of time.

- Accommodation facilities

Apart from the existing accommodation facilities additional accommodation was organised. Private houses, schools and kindergartens were adapted to serve this purpose. Special camping sites were created in the stadiums and eight ones were built up from the very beginning including one designed for disabled people. For that purpose many investments in infrastructure were made. They included sewage system, water supply system and storm sewer system in the centre of the city, near Jasna Gora and in the suburbs. Consequently, the quality of infrastructure in many suburbs significantly improved. Also two big housing estates were

provided with a piece of land with full technical infrastructure ready for building new blocks.

- **Road system**

15 big objectives referring to road building and repairs as well as the building of car parks were accomplished. For the first time in the history of the city concrete bricks for the building of road surface, produced in German technology, were used. Furthermore, two foot-bridges over the high-speed road were built and one new city bus was bought while some others were hired from other cities. All these investments were necessary for both residents and pilgrims as well and served them for a long time after the 6<sup>th</sup> WDM.

- **Telecommunication facilities and city illumination**

A particularly difficult situation was in the field of telecommunication infrastructure. The district of Czestochowa took the 48<sup>th</sup> place out of 49 Polish districts in the ranking referring to the number of people per one telephone line. The 6<sup>th</sup> WYD was a crucial moment in that area for the city. The Spanish company Alcatel gave the city a digital telephone exchange with 1000 lines and then 100 public telephones for magnetic cards were installed. Czestochowa and Warsaw were the only two Polish cities with such public telephones at the time. As a result, a contract with the French Alcatel-CIT for the installation of a new telephone exchange was signed, which, in a short time helped Czestochowa to move to the 24<sup>th</sup> position in the ranking. The modernisation of the telephonic infrastructure had a big impact on the economic development of the city and its district.

Especially for the 6<sup>th</sup> WYD the illumination of the central street, Black Madonna Avenue, was designed by architects. Later, the illumination of the

monastery tower was installed, which made the monastery visible from the main urban axis of the town by night. Both of these investments significantly improved aesthetic impression of the city.

- **Cleaning up the city**

In the time of the 6<sup>th</sup> WYD two municipal companies, which were in charge of the disposal of the city waste, worked day and night. The centre of the city became a big hotel at that time, the place where pilgrims slept, ate and took a rest. After the event the centre of the city was a big dumping place, full of plastic, paper, cardboard, tins and bottles. Owing to good organisation of work after one night the city was cleaned. This fact, concerning that scale of the event, was noticed by the foreign visitors.

It needs to be mentioned that the application of waste containers with plastic bags with the capacity some times bigger than traditional containers was helpful. Another important fact was a new multifunctional street sweeper which was bought from Austrian company MUT. Efficiency of that device was comparable to some traditional ones made in Poland.

Sanitary fittings, especially ordered for the occasion, were also prepared. They were situated in the centre of the city and at the care parks. The surplus of sanitary fittings were given to the sports clubs which installed them on the stadiums and other sports facilities.

- **Health care**

The 6<sup>th</sup> WYD was a very difficult task for the health care system. And here Knights of Malta turned out to be very helpful. Near the Jasna Gora monastery they erected four medical tents. Knights of Malta had also ten new ambulances. At that time mobile rescue patrols were in operation. Moreover, chemists, clinics had health centres were on 24 hours duties. It is worth adding that especially for that

occasion the city authorities bought a new Mercedes ambulance which contained full equipment including an incubator for babies. It was for the first time that such a high-class ambulance was bought in Czestochowa. Another one was bought by the Czestochowa governor. Both of them have served Czestochowa inhabitants till now and are a long lasting contribution of the 6<sup>th</sup> WYD.

### **5. Post Reflection**

Using the finances received from the state budget for the 6<sup>th</sup> WYD, the city of Czestochowa made many investments which have served Czestochowa people for a long time and thanks to them the quality of life in Czestochowa has considerably improved. A significant number of new roads, car parks, sanitary facilities, post offices, shops, a digital telephone exchange and many other things were built. The aesthetic appearance of the city has significantly improved and the main street, Black Madonna Avenue, with its new illumination, has a completely new face. Another very important effect of the 6<sup>th</sup> WYD was the animation of small and middle business in Czestochowa. The event was a huge economic impulse at the beginning of the transformation period. It was visible, particularly in the third sector (services), which had not been highly developed in the centrally managed economy.

Three years later, in 1994, the citizens of Czestochowa evaluating successes and failures of the City Council in the first four-year term acknowledged the preparations for the 6<sup>th</sup> WYD as the biggest achievement of the city authorities at the time. [see: 4] Another important and very difficult for quantitative evaluation effect of the event was the impulse of moral revival. It was very significant after a long period of atheistic propaganda. The symbol of that revival was the honorary

citizenship of the city of Czestochowa received by the Pope. It was the first honorary citizenship received by the Pope in history.

The 6<sup>th</sup> WYD also inspired preparations for the program of transformation of Czestochowa in to the world centre of pilgrimage and tourism which could be the corner stone of the future development of the city.

In conclusion, the “Big Bang” event described above has a completely different impact in developed countries than in the countries coming out of communism. The first countries mentioned above have infrastructure more less satisfying for most everyday needs. A different situation is in the latter ones. In these countries, e.g. Poland, a “Big Bang” event is an opportunity to raise the living standards even if it happens on a small scale. In that case profits are much bigger then costs. The 6<sup>th</sup> WYD is a good example of that kind of impact of a “Big Bang” event.

### **References:**

1. A.Jackowski, L.Kaszowski, Jasna Gora in the system of pilgrimage centers in the world, in: Peregrinus Cracoviensis, Krakow, 3/1996.
2. D.Ptaszycka-Jackowska, A.Jackowski, Pilgrimages to Jasna Gora in the space of the city and its region, Institute of Geography Jagiellonian University, Krakow 1998.
3. Our Czestochowa, Monthly of the Czestochowa City Council, Czestochowa 2/1991.
4. L. Cichoblazinski, E.Gorczycka, The present and the future of Czestochowa in opinions of its inhabitants, Czestochowa 1995.
5. T.Wrona, Five years of municipal authorities in Czestochowa, Local Government, 6/1995.