

# Gazeta

Newsletter of the American Association for Polish-Jewish Studies  
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Fay and Julian Bussgang, Editors

## Fifteenth Anniversary Celebration

On the evening of June 14, 2001 the American Association for Polish-Jewish Studies celebrated its fifteenth anniversary at an elegant and delicious banquet at the Harvard Faculty Club in Cambridge.

Organized by Lilka Elbaum, the evening featured two distinguished guests—Professor Richard Pipes, who shared his recollections of prewar Poland, his home until October 1939, and Roman Totenberg, virtuoso violinist emeritus of the Boston Symphony Orchestra, born ninety years ago in Poland, who graciously performed for us.

The talk given on this occasion by Irene Pipes, president of the AAPJS, can be found later in this *Gazeta*.

## Walter Laqueur at Brandeis, October 17

Distinguished author Walter Laqueur will discuss his new book *Generation Exodus*, on Wednesday, 17 October 2001 at Lown Auditorium at Brandeis, 4:00–6:00 PM. A reception will follow the talk. All are welcome.

Laqueur's book published by Brandeis University Press, provides an account of the fate of young Jews who fled the Nazis and escaped to other countries or remained in hiding in Germany. Among them were some who later became well-known figures, such as Henry Kissinger, and various academic and political figures.

Laqueur is co-chair of the International Research Council and holds the Henry A. Kissinger Chair in National Security Policy at the Center for Strategic & International Studies. He specializes in Soviet successor states; U.S. foreign policy, and issues of terrorism. He is the author of many books and has published numerous articles in newspapers and periodicals.

Laqueur' books include *The Dream That Failed: Reflections on the Soviet Union*, Oxford University Press, 1994, and *Fascism: Past, Present, and Future*, Oxford University Press, 1996.

## The Tragedy

We join with all Americans in expressing the feelings of sadness and shock at the recent terrorist attack on this country and extend our sympathies to the families and friends of the many innocent victims.

## Exhibit "Jews in Poland Today"

The photographic exhibit "Jews in Poland Today," September 18-28, 2001 at the East Central European Center, Columbia University, 420 West 118th Street, New York, illustrates the relationship between today's Poland, Israel, and Jewish events in Poland. The opening, originally scheduled for September 13, was delayed due to the tragic events at the World Trade Center.

The exhibit is sponsored by the Polish-American Business Council, the Consulate General of the Republic of Poland, Orbis Hotels, Adamba, and Doma Exports.

## Educational Project in Poland

The American Association for Polish-Jewish Studies, Project Guggenheim, and the Batory Foundation are jointly sponsoring a pilot project to make educational materials concerning Jewish history and culture available to Polish elementary schools.

The initiator of the project, AAPJS Board member, Hans Guggenheim, traveled to Poland to organize an effort in the Lublin area. A group of teachers and scholars held a meeting to discuss and assume tasks. Sample lessons will be videotaped to illustrate the methodology, and written materials suitable for grades five and six, as well as for middle-school grades one to three, will be prepared. Experimental sessions will be held in the Lublin area. Results will be evaluated before wider distribution.

Cooperating with Mr. Guggenheim is Prof. Monika Adamczyk-Garbowska, head of the Center for Jewish Studies at Maria Curie-Skłodowska University in Lublin.

## Talk by Mrs. Irene Pipes, President, on the 15th Anniversary of the American Association for Polish-Jewish Studies

Harvard Faculty Club, June 14, 2001

First of all I would like to thank Roman Totenberg for his performance and present him with this book which was published in Poland in connection with the exhibit "And I Still See Their Faces" that was organized by Golda Tencer in Warsaw and brought to Boston University with the help of Rabbi Polak, of the Boston University Hillel, and Lilka Elbaum.

I have a hard time believing that I have lasted fifteen years as president of the AAPJS. When I took it on I had no experience or knowledge how to direct any organization. But being in America we all adapt and learn on the job.

George Szabad, who regrets not to be with us, reminded me the other day on how I felt and reacted fifteen years ago. We had a very exciting board meeting in my house with the idea of naming a new president. The outgoing president lived in Washington and was not able to run the organization from day to day, thinking it was an honorary position only.

I was chosen purely because there was no one else the board thought had the time, knew both Polish and English, and was most interested in the work we wanted to do. I was not at all sure it was enough, but I had no choice and accepted.

I am not sure how much I have really learned but know enough to carry us through. We published to date thirteen volumes of *POLIN* and an Index of the first twelve with Antony Polonsky, who is doing a fantastic job as editor-in-chief. The next four volumes are being prepared already.

We originally had Blackwell as our publishers, but with Volume 8 we switched to the Littman Library in London, which is doing a better job and at a much lower cost. We sponsored nineteen other books on related subjects such as those by Władysław Bartoszewski or Samuel Willenberg.

Julian and Fay Bussgang have been editing the *Gazeta* for the last ten years, our newsletter which comes out three times per year.

We hold open meetings every few months, usually in the Harvard Hillel House. Among our many distinguished guest speakers were Jan Gross, who spoke to us before anyone was aware of the Jedwabne horror, Ambassador from Poland to Israel, Jan Dowgiałowski, Rabbi Ben Zion Gold, who normally would be with us today but had a cataract operation this morning, Professor Ruth Wisse, Ezra Mendelsohn, Zbig Brzezinski, Rafael Scharf, Jan Karski, Saul Bellow, Ewa Hoffman, and many others.

What I am particularly pleased and proud of is that we managed to do all of this without the help of any foundation or outside institution. We rely completely on our membership and a few donors who give us more than the \$100 per year. It is not that we have not tried to get foundation money, but we have not succeeded. The things we cannot do and would like to do are for example, helping students with grants to study Polish-Jewish subjects in Israel, Poland, or in the U.S.

What we set out to do, and I think are doing a good job on, is preserving the history of Polish Jewry on an international basis, focusing attention of the American and world public on what is most significant and precious in the legacy of Polish Jewry, helping to organize conferences such as the one in Jerusalem in February 1988.

Before I end I want to mention our most devoted board, many of whom are here tonight and those who are not could not make it for very valid reasons. We started out with only a small group of my friends and that spirit has remained with us. The board is much larger now, but if we were not friends to start with, we are now.

Our board meetings are very well attended; they are eager not just to discuss the agenda and make decisions, but to see each other, and socialize for a while after the meeting. I am most grateful to them, for they do the jobs that other organizations pay to be done, such as mailing invitations or the *Gazeta*. We spend practically no money on secretarial help, so all we receive is used to pay for translations into English and mailing costs.

We are very glad that Kiki Kosifski could make it from New York and especially meaningful on the tenth anniversary of Jerzy's death. We are also happy to welcome Paweł Potoroczyn from New York, Tomasz Kierul and Natalia Kościelna, and Phyllis Myers from Washington. A very special thanks to Lilka Elbaum who took charge of organizing this dinner, and we are grateful to her.

Let us hope we shall be able to celebrate in equal good fashion our next anniversary.

**Please RENEW Your MEMBERSHIP!**

## Bruno Schultz Paintings

Bruno Schulz (1892–1942) was a high school art teacher in the town of Drohobycz, then a part of southeastern Polish, now in the Ukraine. In his leisure time he painted, drew, sketched and wrote. He translated Kafka's *The Trial* into Polish. His best known book in English is *Streets of Crocodiles*."

Schulz's paintings, art work, and writings were powerful and became even better known and acclaimed after the war. The Polish poet Jerzy Ficowski, noted for his interest in Polish Jews, discusses Schulz's legacy in *Letters and Drawings of Bruno Schulz With Selected Prose*, Harper and Row Publishers, New York, 1988.

At the beginning of the occupation, Schulz was protected by a German who liked his paintings and ordered him to paint murals in his house for his little boy about children's stories. Schulz apparently also painted frescoes in other Gestapo-occupied buildings. According to a Drohobycz survivor, Izidor Friedman, the artist was shot on the street in 1942 by a Gestapo agent.

Earlier this year Polish art specialists announced that during their visit to Drohobycz they had discovered these wartime murals in a private home and broached the idea of converting this house into a Schulz museum.

A few months later, two emissaries from Yad Vashem arrived secretly in Drohobycz and paid the occupants of the house for the removal of the Schulz murals.

Yad Vashem confirmed it has the murals and intends to restore them and place on display. They stated the removal was approved by the local authorities and by the occupants of the home. Poland prohibits removal of art from the country without official permission. It is not clear whether Ukraine has a similar law.

In Poland and even among the Jewish community in Ukraine, controversy continues whether Schulz's paintings were a cultural heritage that belonged in his home town, Drohobycz, his home country, Poland, or in Israel, the homeland of the Jewish people.

## Children of the Holocaust Speak

The Association of the Children of the Holocaust in Poland has just published Volume 2 of the book *Dzieci Holocaustu mówią...*, edited by Jakub Gutenbaum and Agnieszka Latała. The book contains over thirty accounts of members of the Association who are Jewish child survivors and by and large still live in Poland.

Volume 1 containing the initial sixty-five accounts was published by Northwestern University Press in 1998.

## Polish Genealogical Records, 9/12/2001

A talk entitled "Best-Kept Secrets of Polish Genealogy: Books of Residents and Other Lesser-Known Sources" will be presented on Sunday, 9 December 2001 at Temple Reyim in Newton, Mass. at 1:30 PM. Speakers will be Fay and Julian Bussgang, editors of *Gazeta*, who have done extensive genealogical research in Poland in the past few years. The meeting will be jointly sponsored by the Jewish Genealogical Society of Greater Boston and the American Association for Polish-Jewish Studies. A fee of \$3.00 per person will be charged at the door. Refreshments will be served.

The Bussgangs will describe genealogical resource materials other than metrical records. In addition to the extremely valuable Books of Residents (*Ksi'gi LudnoŃci*), other records—Survivor Records, Ghetto Lists, Passport Applications, Professional Journals, and Military Records—will be illustrated. Most of these records are relevant for non-Jews as well as Jews.

There will be time for questions after the talk.

Temple Reyim is located at 1860 Washington Street (Route 16), Newton, near the Newton-Wellesley Hospital, quite close to Route 128. The Green Line Woodland "T" stop is within walking distance.

If you would like more information about the Jewish Genealogical Society of Greater Boston, please visit the Web site: <[www.jewishgen.org/boston](http://www.jewishgen.org/boston)>.

## Book by Andrzej K. Kunert

This month a book *Poles-Jews, 1939–1945*, describing Polish-Jewish interaction during World War II, was issued by the Council to Preserve the Memory of Struggles and Suffering (*Rada Ochrony Pamięci Walk i Męczeństwa*) along with the Institute of National Heritage and Publishing House Rytm. The book was published in Polish, English, and German and contains over 140 documents assembled by historian Andrzej Krzysztof Kunert, known for his works on the wartime underground.

The book includes a discussion of efforts by the Free Polish Government in London to mobilize the Allied powers to save Polish Jews.

## Court Ruling

The regional court in Suwałki, Poland dismissed charges against Jan Tomasz Gross, author of *Neighbors*, who was sued by the Association Against Anti-Polonism for defaming the Polish nation. The court upheld a lower court decision finding no intentional malice. The court's decision is final and not subject to appeal.

**Board Member Profile: Charles Merrill, Jr.**

Board Member Charles Merrill has long taken a special interest in Poland and the fate of European Jews.

While a student at Harvard College, Merrill visited Berlin, Vienna and Prague under Nazi control, and saw the frightening poverty in the Warsaw Ghetto and the SS mistreating an elderly couple wearing yellow armbands. Later, during the war Merrill served in the 141st Infantry Regiment and Fifth Army Headquarters, and encountered soldiers of the Anders Army in Italy.

After the war, Merrill taught for a year in Vienna and Graz as a Fulbright scholar and spent two years in Paris as an aspiring novelist. He developed an affection for Poland and described the country's suffering in his recent book, *The Journey: Massacre of Innocents*, 1996. He also wrote a novel about a Polish-American high school girl in Massachusetts, *Emily's Year*, eventually translated into Polish and a half dozen other languages. Other books are *The Great Ukrainian Partisan Movement and Other Tales of the Eisenhower Years* and *The Checkbook: the Politics and Ethics of Foundation Philanthropy*.

A recently published book, *An Uncommon Friendship, From Opposite Sides of the Holocaust*, by Professor Frederic Tubach of the University of California, Berkeley, incidentally gives an extraordinary tribute to Merrill, telling of his generosity and compassion. Tubach, a German Christian, in telling about his post-war friendship with Bernat Rosner, a Hungarian Jew, relates how Rosner, an Auschwitz survivor, had had the good fortune to meet a GI by the name of Charles Merrill, Jr. Merrill sponsored his immigration to the United States, became his mentor, and helped Rosner attend prep school and then Cornell University and Harvard Law School.

In 1957 Merrill founded the Commonwealth School, a unique, independent co-ed high school located in Boston's Back Bay, and served as its headmaster until his retirement in 1981. Merrill provides an account of the early history of the school in his book *The Walled Garden: the Story of a School*.

Merrill continues as a member of Commonwealth's Board of Trustees. He served as Chairman of the Board of Trustees at Morehouse College, a black college in Atlanta, Georgia. He has been a trustee at Hampshire and Marlboro Colleges. He has served on visiting committees to Harvard's Divinity School and School of Public Health and has acted as a consultant to Beth Israel Hospital.

Since 1990 Merrill has funded a scholarship program that now sends each year some fourteen Czech students from Palacky University in Olomouc, to eight or nine American colleges and universities. He has also provided financial support to public and private schools in the Kraków area.

In April of this year he was given special recognition and the title "*Amicus Poloniae*" [friend of Poland] by the Polish American Congress of Eastern Massachusetts.

Merrill has been a member of the board of AAPJS since 1986.

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## **Wajda Asked to Make a Movie**

The July 28 issue of the Polish weekly *Polityka* has an open letter from Adam Krzemiński, a current events commentator, editor, and columnist of *Polityka*, appealing to the Oscar-winning film director Andrzej Wajda to produce a movie dedicated to the 1941 tragedies in Jedwabne and Radziłów.

Wajda is known for having directed such famous movies as *The Wedding*, based on the play by Stanisław Wyspiański, *Korczak*, with a screenplay by Agnieszka Holland, *Ashes*, based on the novel by Stefan Żeromski, *Ashes and Diamonds*, based on the novel by Jerzy Andrzejewski, *Pan Tadeusz*, and many others movies known both in Poland and abroad.

Krzemiński suggests to Wajda how important it would be if he produced the painful historical account about the fate of Jews in the "potato and beet" section of Poland.

## **What About the Future?**

Also in the July 28 *Polityka* issue is an interview by Barbara Łopieńska with philosopher Jacek Hołówka. Hołówka, an expert in ethics, had served as Vice Rector of Warsaw University and taught at American universities.

Hołówka bemoans the fact that Polish people have a false image of their society, supported by their pride in Polish bravery, history, literature, and art that carries the notion that all Poles have high standards and aspirations. Now, there is the shocking revelation that the society also has many uneducated, cynical, brutal, crude, and thoughtless individuals.

What should be done about it? Hołówka thinks that to turn things around, a larger proportion of Poles should receive higher education. He believes television programming could eventually make people see themselves in a mirror, as if it were, and face how they have failed in their behavior.

### **David Sklar (1924-2001)**

David Sklar, valued member and supporter of the AAPJS and the husband of Board member Klara Sklar, passed away unexpectedly on 27 July 2001.

Sklar was born in Różany near Słonim, then in Poland, now in Belarus. He attended school in Słonim until the war broke out in 1939. Because of the proximity to the border with the USSR, his family was able to evacuate to the Soviet Union. The end of the war found them in Bukhara, in Central Asia.

When the war ended the family repatriated to Poland, and David made his way to Germany. There in a Displaced Persons camp, he became an interpreter for the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA) since he knew English. In 1947, because he had uncles in America, he was able to emigrate to the U.S. David and Klara met in the DP camp in 1946 and were married in 1947 when she arrived in the U.S.

David's family had been in the lumber business in Poland, near the famed forests of Białowieża. He continued in the lumber business in the United States, first, in Portland, Maine, and since 1949, in Nashua, New Hampshire. He operated a saw mill and a wood products factory with Klara's assistance.

Sklar was a thirty-second degree Mason and was active in many community and industry organizations. He served on the Board of Southern New Hampshire Medical Center for seventeen years (formerly Memorial Hospital), and of the Arts

and Science Center of Nashua. He had been President of the Association of Wood Manufacturers and chairman of the Brush Manufacturers Division.

Our sincere condolences to his wife, Klara, and their three sons, Joseph, Daniel and Mitchel, their spouses, and five grandchildren. The Board has voted to dedicate the next volume of *POLIN* to David's memory.

### **Mayor of Jedwabne Resigns**

Krzysztof Godlewski, mayor of the town of Jedwabne, resigned shortly after the July 10 commemoration of the 1941 Jedwabne massacre. He was joined by Stanisław Michałowski, head of the town council. Godlewski cited as the reason for his resignation the fact that the other town councilors refused to acknowledge the truth and objected to a road leading to a memorial to the slain Jews.

Godlewski stated that he had been the subject of personal attacks because he supported the commemoration of the Jewish victims. He affirmed that many other town leaders and citizens continue to deny that Poles took part in the massacre.

## The Secret

A new movie called *The Secret*, produced by Noemi Schory (Israel) and directed by Ronit Krown Kertsner, was shown at the Jewish film festivals in San Francisco and Vancouver. It depicts the stories of four Catholic Polish citizens who have discovered their Jewish roots.

One of the stories is about Agnieszka Ziątek, a young woman whose father is a lecturer in Polish literature. Her mother, who is Jewish, never disclosed her religious heritage to her daughter. Agnieszka, brought up as a Catholic, discovered at age fifteen or sixteen that her mother's maiden name, Weintraub, was a Jewish name. Since then Agnieszka has developed a keen interest in her Jewish roots, become active in the Jewish community in Warsaw, and even traveled to study in Israel.

Another story is that of Leszek Piszewski who four years ago was elected president of the Jewish Community of Warsaw. Born in Szczecin, he began to suspect that his father, who did not discuss the past, was Jewish. When he was also around sixteen Piszewski immersed himself in the task of trying to understand what being Jewish meant. He decided to become circumcised and traveled to Israel. He is the only one of three siblings to return to Judaism.

The third story is of the priest Roman Waszkinel-Weksler. His account is in the book *The Last Eyewitnesses: Children*

### President Kwaśniewski at Jedwabne

On 10 July 2001 the President of the Republic of Poland, Aleksander Kwaśniewski, deposited a wreath at the memorial stone for Jewish citizens who perished in Jedwabne and delivered a moving speech to those assembled. We have summarized below his remarks.

Kwaśniewski acknowledged that sixty years ago, during the German occupation, a crime was committed against the Jews of Jedwabne during a day of hatred and cruelty. While the investigation is still in progress, we know enough to face the truth, and the judgement of our conscience. It was a crime that cannot be explained away. Unarmed and helpless Jews, including women and children, were herded into a barn and burned alive. The terrified screaming of the victims still revolts the memory of those who witnessed it.

We do not know whether the German occupiers encouraged those deeds, but we know with certainty that among those who were persecuting and committing them were Poles. There is no doubt that in Jedwabne citizens of Poland perished at the hand of other citizens of Poland.

Poland and Jedwabne may have been under German occupation, and the Nazis may have inspired the crime, but Polish citizens should have been bound by the proper rules of behavior of a civilized country with many years of multi-ethnic and multi-religious tradition. Those who participated in the hunt were killing, setting on fire, committing a crime not only against Jewish neighbors but also against the Republic of Poland, against its history and splendid tradition.

The name Jedwabne has become tragic for its current inhabitants. It has become a word evoking in human memory the message of demonic fratricide. For the death, injustice, and suffering of the Jews in Jedwabne, Radziłów, and other towns, which cast a grim shadow on the history of Poland, the responsibility lies with their perpetrators and inciters. We cannot talk about a collective responsibility of all the inhabitants of a town or of the nation. Each person is

of the *Holocaust Speak*, Northwestern University Press. Roman's parents entrusted him to a Polish Catholic couple who adopted him. He discovered at age thirty, long after he had become a priest, that he had been an orphaned Jewish child.

It is estimated that somewhere between fifteen thousand and thirty thousand Catholics in Poland have Jewish roots, many of whom are unaware of their heritage.

### Jewish Soldiers in the Free Polish Army

Polish television recently presented a documentary *Za wolność naszą i waszą* (For your freedom and ours) about Jewish soldiers in the Polish Second Corps (the Anders Army) in World War II, including the battle of Monte Cassino. Parts of an interview recorded some time ago in Poland with board member Julian Buszgang, who fought with the Second Corps, are included in the film.

An exhibition dedicated to the Anders Army is being prepared by the Piłsudski Institute of America in New York, 180 2nd Street (tel.: 212-505-9077). The organizer Ms. Grażyna Jonkajtys-Luba is planning to have a section dedicated to the participation of Polish-Jewish soldiers in the Second Corps. Memorabilia and photographs of the Anders Army will be on display.

responsible for his own acts. Sons do not inherit the guilt of their fathers.

However, we cannot be allowed to say that this was long ago, these were others. A nation is a community of individuals and generations. Therefore, we must face the truth. We must say that this is how it was, this is what happened. Our conscience will be clear if in recalling those days, we will always carry in our hearts horror and moral indignation. Let us pay tribute to the victims and say, never again.

We are gathered here with all the people of our nation who have a feeling conscience, with the civil and clerical moral leaders, reinforcing our commitment to basic values, honoring the memory of those murdered, and expressing our sorrow and shame.

Because of this crime we ought to beg forgiveness of the shadows of the dead and their families. Therefore, today, as President of the Republic of Poland, I ask forgiveness. I ask forgiveness in my name and in the name of all Poles whose conscience is moved by this crime, in the name of those who believe that we cannot be proud of Polish history if we do not feel at the same time pain and shame for the evil that Poles caused to others.

We express today our words of regret and bitterness, not because it is expected of us, but because we feel it. To respect man and love people, to turn evil into good.

### Righteous Gentiles in Jedwabne

While the horrors of the mass murders in the burning barn in Jedwabne on 10 July 1941, and in Wąsosz and Radziłów dominate the news, we must remember that there were a few righteous gentiles who had the courage to save Jews from the other "neighbors."

Attending the commemoration of the Sixtieth Anniversary was Stanisław Ramotowski, who in 1941 hid several Jews in Dziewicin near Radziłów. He has been recognized by Yad Vashem as being "Among the Righteous of the World." Anna Bikont reports in *Gazeta Wyborcza* that Ramotowski, today

86 years old, warned his neighbors, the Finkelsztejns, of impending danger. Finkelsztejn's daughter, Rachela, later became his wife.

Another participant in the Jedwabne anniversary was Icchak Lewin who came with his three grandsons from Israel and carried a plaque, "Salute the Poles who helped Jews." Lewin, his wife, and two children were kept in hiding under the floor in a home in Wiêno for two and a half years by a Jedwabne resident.

Bikont writes that Antonina Wyrzykowska of Jedwabne gave shelter to and saved Szmul Wasersztajn—whose deposition provided the key account of the events—and six other Jews. She was also honored as "Among the Righteous of the World." The Ramatowskis and Wyrzykowska left Poland after the war because of threats from Polish neighbors. Wyrzykowska did not attend the ceremonies as she is still fearful. Lewin's rescuer is afraid to disclose his name.

Leon Dziezic from Przestrzele also hid Szmul Wasersztajn. His son, Janusz Leszek Dziezic, felt forced to leave Jedwabne recently because they lost all their friends when his father first gave an interview in the daily *Rzeczpospolita* and then appeared in the Agnieszka Arnold documentary *Neighbors*.

## The 60th Anniversary of the Tragedy in Jedwabne

by AAPJS Board Member Genia Shrut

On the 9th of July, 2001, on the eve of the mournful ceremony, we joined in Warsaw the twelve-member delegation of the National Polish American–Jewish American Council, co-chaired by Mr. Leonard Grossman and Professor Stanisław Blejwas. We were received by Israel's ambassador to Poland, Mr. Szevach Weiss, and later attended a symposium on "Christianity, Judaism, and Universalism" at Warsaw University. An inspired pronouncement by Professor Andrzej Gregorczyk and the contribution by Hans Guggenheim, referring to the philosophy of Levinas, were the highlights of this meeting.

In the early morning hours of July 10th some fifteen hundred people, mostly Catholic Poles, left Warsaw for Jedwabne in buses escorted by police cars. In Jedwabne we walked to the site of the old Jewish cemetery. It was for me a very emotional march. We walked in the middle of the street, between lines of police and undercover agents standing on the sidewalks. The inhabitants of Jedwabne were watching us from their windows and balconies. It was raining; the atmosphere was tense, perhaps hostile. The local people must have felt that people from abroad and big cities were coming to judge them. I couldn't help thinking of what happened here sixty years ago.

The monument to the victims of the massacre stands inside the rectangle of stone blocks delineating the outline of the burned barn. We heard the beautiful, moving speech of Poland's President Aleksander Kwaśniewski. The speech by Szevach Weiss followed, and I was glad and proud that it was the ambassador of Israel who represented the Jews and spoke on their behalf. Prayers were sung by American cantor Jacob Malowany.

Back in Warsaw we attended a reception at which President Kwaśniewski honored Mrs. Anna Wyrzykowska and Mr. Stanisław Ramotowski, who saved several Jews of Jedwabne. He also honored the two people who revealed the truth about the massacre—the documentary film director Agnieszka Arnold and Professor Jan Tomasz Gross.

The next day our delegation was again received by the President.

Polish-Jewish relations were the topic of our meetings with Minister Maciej Musiał, parliament member Andrzej Folwarczny, American Ambassador Chris Hill, and the representatives of Catholic intellectuals, Messrs. Piotr Cywiński and Zbigniew Nosowski.

The trip to Warsaw and Jedwabne was a moving and thought-provoking experience.

### New Movie on Będzin

Mira Reym Binford of Quinnipiac College has recently completed a film, originally started by Arieh Ben-Tov of Jerusalem, who died in 1996, about the Jews of Będzin.

Binford, producer also of the film *Diamonds in the Snow*, was born in Będzin. She and her mother escaped from a German camp and were sheltered by Poles. The Polish "aunt" tinted Mira's dark hair to make her look less Jewish. Będzin has a warm spot in Binford's heart, and she has traveled back several times to visit.

### Shimon Peres in Warsaw

Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres paid a visit to Poland in August and declared that Jews want to open a new and better chapter in their relations with Poland. Perez, born in Poland, said on behalf of Israel, "We extend a hand to the new Poland."

Perez laid a wreath at the Monument to the Heroes of the Warsaw Ghetto. He also met with a group of Polish Jews and presented medals of "The Righteous Among the Nations of the World" to two Polish women.

#### To: American Association for Polish-Jewish Studies

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## **Museum of the History of Polish Jews**

Pope John Paul II sent a letter of support for the Museum of the History of Polish Jews being created in Warsaw. The letter expresses the hope that “in accord with the convictions of the initiators of this work in progress, the popularization of knowledge about Polish-Jewish relations, as difficult and painful as this process may be, will contribute to the elimination of stereotypes, antipathy, and mutual grudges.”

The letter asserts that the creation of the museum as a memorial and an educational center for future generations deserves special attention, as it presents the history of Poles and Jews, who are closely linked to each other.

In addition, Prime Minister Buzek met with the Committee to Support the Construction of the Museum of the History of Polish Jews and expressed interest in securing public funds to support the project.

The chairman of the committee, Marcin Âwi'cicki, thanked the Prime Minister and pointed out that support of the Polish government is critical in order to encourage other governments and organizations to participate in the establishment of the museum.

Major supporters to date include the Association of the Jewish Historical Institute, the Foundation for Polish-German Cooperation, and individuals in Germany, Sweden, Great Britain, and elsewhere who trace their origins to Poland.

Future plans of the committee include archeological work on the site of the museum, a program for future research, and a creation of traveling exhibits for other Polish museums, libraries, galleries, and archives. Visual records of objects proposed for inclusion are being registered in a computerized data base.