

Gazeta

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Fay and Julian Busgang, Editors

Letter from the President

Dear Members and Friends:

I have recently arrived from a two week stay in Poland and thought I would share with you some of my impressions. I have visited my native land quite often since 1959 and have observed the changes over the years.

On the whole, the changes for the better are to be seen everywhere. Warsaw at night looks and feels like a western metropolis. Luxury stores abound. Well-to-do people earn good salaries, are well dressed, and drive new model cars. On the other hand, the older retirees who are over seventy years old receive 700 zloty (about \$200) per month and cannot manage without the help of their children or friends. For those who retired in the last ten years, the pension amount depends on the earnings.

Among the people I met who are interested in our work were Professor Jerzy Tomaszewski, who considers POLIN the best publication of its kind; Joanna Ronikier, author of the book "W ogrodzie pamięci" (In the Garden of Memory), who is now working on a biography of Korczak; and Dr. Joachim Russek, director of the Judaic Foundation in Kraków, who plans a special memorial meeting to honor Felek Scharf.

It was also the week of the Jewish Festival in Warsaw organized by the Shalom Foundation. They gave a performance in the Jewish Theater of "Dybuk" that was on a very high level, especially knowing that the majority of the actors are Poles who learned Yiddish.

At our last board meeting on October 4, we voted to include Professor Irena Gross of Boston University and Dr. Joanna Michlic, a researcher at Brandeis University, on our board. Both have accepted.

On the practical side, I would like to ask all the paid-up members of AAPJS to let us know if you have not received issues of POLIN or Gazeta. Please notify us of any change of your mailing and/or email address.

With best wishes for a Happy Chanukah,

Irene Pipes

POLIN: Studies in Polish Jewry, Vol. 17 **The Shtetl: Myth and Reality, Littman Press**

The shtetl is one of the key concepts for our understanding of the Jewish past in Eastern Europe. Although today most Jews live in big cities, the majority of Jews in Poland historically lived in villages and small towns known as shtetls. Even as late as 1931, only 43% of Polish Jews lived in towns with a population of more than 20,000. The shtetl was thus the main context and arena for Jewish life in Poland, but much of what we know today about *shtetl* life comes from literary accounts rather than historical research.

Volume 17 attempts to redress that imbalance. Among the topics covered are the Jewishness of the shtetl; Polish-Jewish relations and social relations in the shtetl; inter-religious contacts; the Hasidic conquest of shtetl life; cultural evolution in the shtetl; Polish shtetls under Russian rule and Soviet shtetls in the 1920s; as well as a contemporary account of returning to visit a shtetl. Other articles consider how shtetl life has been reflected in Hebrew, Polish, and Yiddish literature.

The "New Views" section analyzes the work of the Russian Jewish writer Lev Levanda and the interwar correspondence of a Polish Jew, Wolf Lewkowicz. There are also two articles on the G'siówka concentration camp established by the Nazis to clear the remains of the Warsaw ghetto. A special section is devoted to considering whether the incidents in Przytyk in 1936 constituted a pogrom, while another is devoted to discussing two important documents illustrating Władysław Gomułka's attitude toward Jews.

The principal editors are Antony Polonsky, the Albert Abramson Chair of Holocaust Studies (a joint appointment in the Department of Near Eastern and Judaic Studies at Brandeis University and the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington D.C.), and Shimon Redlich, professor of modern history and director of the Rabb Center for Holocaust Studies at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, Beer Sheva.

Łódź Ghetto Remembered

The 60th Anniversary of the liquidation of the Łódź ghetto was commemorated by the entire city of Łódź, as well as by many visitors from all over the world. More than 1400 survivors and their families attended the events. During the war, the ghetto contained over 200,000 Jews, including some 20,000 from other countries of Europe. Called the Litzmannstadt Ghetto by the Germans, it was the last ghetto in Poland to be liquidated. The final transport to the death camps occurred on August 29, 1944.

During the commemoration, prayers for the dead were said in the two Jewish synagogues and in a nearby church. The Honor Committee for the observances included President of Poland Aleksander Kwaśniewski, President of Israel Moshe Katsav, Prime Minister of Poland Marek Belka, former President of Poland Lech Wałęsa, Head of the Polish Government Committee Investigating Wartime Crimes Leon Kieres, and Executive Director of the American Jewish Committee David Harris.

At one of the first events, people gathered at the Jewish cemetery in Łódź for prayer and commemoration. This cemetery, with its 230,000 graves, is the largest Jewish cemetery in Europe.

After the ceremonies at the cemetery, some 5,500 people participated in a memorial march to the Radegast train station, the station from which the last transport had been sent to Auschwitz sixty years previously. Jerzy Kropiwnicki, the president of Łódź, who organized the program, opened the ceremonies at Radegast. Among the Polish dignitaries attending the events were Marek Belka, prime minister of Poland, Leszek Miller and Jerzy Buzek, both former prime ministers, and Ryszard Kaczorowski, former president of the Polish Government-in-exile in London. The many distinguished speakers at the event explained the role of Jewish citizens of Łódź in the history of the city, the tragedy that befell them, and the importance of educating young people as to the consequences of hatred and cruelty.

A special reception for the survivors was held in the Poznański Palace (formerly owned by a wealthy Jewish industrialist) at which three people were honored for their work to improve Polish-Jewish relations. Tova Ben Zwi, who was born in Łódź and now lives in Israel, spends weeks at a time in Łódź. Daughter of a cantor, Ben Zwi has recorded Yiddish songs of the ghetto and visits schools in Poland, using music to teach tolerance and understanding. The second honoree was Eugene J. Ribacoff, president of JOINT (the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee). JOINT has been active in Poland for many years, giving financial aid to Jews in need and sponsoring worthwhile projects. Also honored was Abraham Zelig, chairman of the Organization of Former Łódź Residents in Israel.

A gala concert was held in the Great Theater with Warsaw Symphony musicians, the Kraków radio choir, a cantorial choir from Jerusalem, and three well-known cantors: Benzion Miller of Brooklyn, N.Y., Alberto Mizrachi of Chicago, and Yaacov Motzen of Toronto. The symphonic orchestra played the oratorio "Prophet Isaiah" by the well-known composer from Łódź, Alexander Tansman. Among the speakers were Ron Huldai, mayor of Tel Aviv, sister city of

Łódź; David Harris, executive director of the American Jewish Committee; and Bernie Farber, executive director of the Canadian Jewish Congress in Ontario.

Culminating the observances was the planting of memorial trees in a newly created Park of Survivors. Each survivor was invited to dedicate a recently planted tree.

In addition to the commemoration of Jewish victims, there was also a commemoration for gypsies who had been annihilated by the German occupiers.

Late in the evening on August 30, a most remarkable concert took place in the Old Square (*Stary Rynek*), once the center of the Jewish quarter of Łódź. It was entitled *Niewidzialni* (those who can't be seen). A director conducted an invisible orchestra. Only instruments could be seen resting on the chairs; the music was from a recording. The sole performer was the acclaimed American cantor from the Fifth Avenue Synagogue in New York Joseph Malovany, who sang traditional Jewish songs—"Kaddish," the prayer for the dead, "El Mole Rachamim" (Oh Merciful God!), and "Sh'ma Israel" (Hear, Oh Israel!). It was a very moving performance.

The city of Łódź rolled out a splendid welcome for the survivors, making all the arrangements, providing transportation to and from and seating at the various events, and sponsoring several receptions. Many young people—university students, boy scouts, girl scouts, paramedics—volunteered to assist the visitors, whether by passing out information, acting as guides, or providing free bottles of water.

Mayor Kropiwnicki, Mr. Jarosław Nowak, the chief organizer, their hard-working staff, and the entire city of Łódź are to be commended for their efforts in making this a meaningful event for survivors and their families.

Annual Zaleski Lecture Series at Harvard “The Conquest of History: Toward a Usable Past in Poland”

This year's speaker for the three Zaleski lectures in Polish History at Harvard University was Professor Antony Polonsky of Brandeis University. The lectures, which took place at the Harvard Center for European Studies in Cambridge, were very well attended.

The three topics covered by Professor Polonsky were: "The Years 1939–1989 in Polish Political Consciousness" (October 26), "The Debate About the Massacre in Jedwabne" (October 27), and "Recent Debates about Polish-German and Polish-Ukrainian Relations" (October 28).

These three lectures sought to investigate the impact on the way present-day Poles see the past in the light of three separate but interrelated phenomena. The first of these is the extent to which the traditional Polish belief that the study of the past has clear and obvious lessons for the present is still valid today. The second is the way the Poles' idealized vision of the past of their country as “martyr and hero,” once necessary to sustain the difficult and long-lasting struggle for national independence, has been undermined since 1989. The last is the weakening of interest in the past in Poland under the impact of the need for national consolidation, of globalization, and the development of a mass culture. It is influenced by the post-modernist concept that the past is merely an ideological construct in which individuals or groups use a different version to serve their own agenda and tell their own “story.”

The first lecture analyzed the debates about the history of Poland since 1939 that have taken place since the end of Communism and examined how they have affected the attitudes of the wider public. The second and third lectures investigated different aspects of the debate about Poland's “dark past.” This “dark past” is a key element in collective memory and concerns those aspects of national history that provoke shame, guilt, and regret and which still need to be integrated into the national collective identity. The principal topics examined in these two lectures were the Polish-Jewish issue, Polish-German relations, and the painful and disputed Polish-Ukrainian past relations.

Polonsky concluded that, in Poland, history has formed a vocabulary for debate and a space for politics to an unusual degree. That is to say, that cultural, intellectual, and political figures in Poland are prone to argue from history, using images and stories from the past to frame their discussions about the present. It is not clear to what degree this predilection is shared by the wider society, which may be why the popularity of history has declined in Poland in relation to the spread of mass politics and mass culture. Yet, one of the most significant phenomena of the last fifteen years in Poland has been the emergence, concretization (also in political life) of competing positions in the sphere of memory and in relation to the national past. This development, together with the abandonment of long established myths, is a painful process but a necessary part of the creation of a democratic and pluralistic society.

This annual lecture series is sponsored by Mrs. Marylina Weintraub, widow of Professor Wiktor Weintraub, in honor of her uncle, August Zaleski. Zaleski (1883–1972) held important Polish diplomatic positions before the war and

became president of the Polish-government-in-exile in Great Britain. He served for twenty-five years, from 1947 till 1972, the longest term of any Polish president.

Holocaust Era Life-Insurance

In October, U.S. District Judge in New York Michael Mukasey dismissed twenty lawsuits filed by survivors against the Italian insurance company Assicurazione Generali. Judge Mukasey ruled that Holocaust era claims against foreign insurance companies or governments are the domain of the executive branch of the government and not of federal courts.

The U.S. Government has sanctioned the International Commission on the Holocaust Era Insurance Claims (ICHEIC) as the body to which claims should be submitted and where they should be resolved. Unfortunately, in the view of many survivors, the Commission has adopted certain policies that favor insurance companies and do not reflect the interests of the survivors. Some of the plaintiffs indicated that they may appeal the ruling.

POLIN

Paid-up members of AAPJS receive the annual copy of *POLIN*, a scholarly journal of Polish-Jewish studies sponsored by AAPJS. Volume 16 is currently being distributed; volume 17 is to be issued before the end of the year. The Littman Foundation has now made available all past volumes of *POLIN*, which can be “printed on demand” for \$29.95 each.

Centennial of Isaac Bashevis Singer

Isaac Bashevis Singer, whose name was originally Icek-Hersz Zynger, was born one hundred years ago on July 14, 1904, in Radzymin, near Warsaw. Singer emigrated to the United States in 1935 and settled in New York. He was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1978.

Singer's many books, almost all originally written in Yiddish, include *The Family Moskat*; *Gimpel the Fool and Other Stories*; *When Schlemiel Went to Warsaw and Other Stories*; *Enemies, a Love Story*; *My Father's Court*; *The Manor*; *The Estate*; *A Friend of Kafka*, and many other stories, including books for children. His writing provides a sentimental portrayal of traditional Jewish life in Poland and depicts many universal themes of human behavior. His work has been translated into many languages, including English, and in recent years into Polish by Michał Friedman of Warsaw. Isaac Bashevis Singer died in 1991 in Miami, Florida.

Isaac's older brother, Israel Joshua Singer, was also a writer and an inspiration to Isaac. Israel was the author of *The Brothers Ashkenazy* and a contributor to *The Jewish Daily Forward*.

Jerzy Ficowski

Polish poet Jerzy Ficowski, born in Warsaw in 1924, celebrated his eightieth birthday in August. A special event, organized by publication houses, Polish Radio, TV Program II, and the city of Warsaw was held in his honor in the Stanisławowski Theater in the Royal Łazienki Gardens in Warsaw. The program included a concert of classical music and the readings of Ficowski's prose and poetry. A special message from the president of the city of Warsaw was presented.

Ficowski is particularly well known for his writings dedicated to gypsies and to Jews. His wife, Bieta Ficowska, is President of the Association of the "Children of the Holocaust" in Poland.

Czerniewice Investigation

Dateline, the newsletter of the World Jewish Congress, reported in August 2004 that the Polish official investigation into the World War II era murder in January 1943 of thirteen Jews in the village of Czerniewice, 100 km south of Warsaw, has been closed.

Three villagers were convicted of the murders in the 1950s, but the investigation was re-opened in 2002 when the remains of the victims were discovered in the forest.

The investigation was closed, because it was concluded that none of the perpetrators were still alive.

PAJA

PAJA, the Polish/American/Jewish Alliance for Youth Action, Inc., a relatively new tax-exempt organization, was started by Dennis Mislner of Baltimore, Maryland.

PAJA is dedicated to lessening the prejudice which exists between Polish Christians and Jews. Its current goals include: 1) providing a single "place" where people can find timely information about events relevant to the Polish-Jewish dialogue; 2) conveying some basic knowledge of Judaism to young people in Poland who know very little about it; 3) imparting more positive information about the history of Jews in Poland and about the Righteous Among the Nations of the World, people who helped Jews during the German occupation; and 4) helping young Polish people meet and have direct conversations with their counterparts from America and Israel—especially providing opportunities for dialogue between young Polish students and groups of Jewish youth from Israel and the United States who come to Poland to visit the death camps.

Mr. Mislner, an American, moved to Kraków, Poland, in order to carry out the objectives of his organization, and his remarkable initiative is already producing results. PAJA's initial experience has been that the interest in a Polish-Jewish dialogue among Polish students is strong, and a number of young people have volunteered to participate. PAJA has organized a youth board and a working group of students in Kraków and elsewhere in Poland who work closely with Mr. Mislner.

See <<http://www.polishandjewishyouth.org/>>.

Wooden Synagogues

Maria and Kazimierz Piechotka published recently an English edition of a book about wooden synagogues in Poland: *Heaven's Gates; Wooden Synagogues in the Territories of the Former Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth*, Krupski i S-ka, Warsaw 2004. The book illustrates, describes, and pays tribute to the now lost architectural features of the old wooden synagogues that are a monument to Jewish culture in Poland.

The Polish version was published in 1996, and in 2000, the Piechotkas received the Jan Karski and Pola Nirefska Prize for their work in bringing back from oblivion "the art and architecture of synagogues erected by Polish Jews on Polish soil." The Piechotkas have received much recognition as art historians and authors of architectural and town-planning projects. Kazimierz Piechotka, who is now a noted architect, participated in the Warsaw Uprising as a young man.

Lessons and Legacies – Conference VIII Brown University, Providence, RI

A major conference on Holocaust topics, the Eighth Biannual Lessons and Legacies Conference, took place in November 2004 on the campus of Brown University in Providence, R.I., under the general direction of Professor Omer Bartov of Rutgers University. Participants included leading Holocaust scholars from the United States, Israel, and other countries.

Holocaust Memorial Day in Great Britain: Thursday, 27 January 2005

A reception for survivors of concentration and extermination camps and those who were liberated by the Allies, as well as liberators and medical staff who worked at the camps, will take place the morning of January 27 at St James's Palace. Her Majesty, the Queen, and His Royal Highness, the Duke of Edinburgh, will attend.

The St. James's Palace reception will be followed in the afternoon by the fifth national commemoration to mark Holocaust Memorial Day at Westminster Hall in the Palace of Westminster. The BBC will broadcast the national commemoration later in the evening.

Next year will be the sixtieth anniversary of the end of World War II, and the liberation of the concentration and extermination camps. The theme of the British commemoration at that time will be *Survivors, Liberation, and Rebuilding Lives*.

Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts

After an initial meeting in the Nożyk Synagogue in Warsaw, an organization of Jewish boy scouts and girl scouts has been formed.

Gruss-Lipper Digital Archive

YIVO, Institute of Jewish Research, announced the largest private gift in its eighty-year history. The Gruss-Lipper Foundation donated a multi-year \$654,000 to create an online digital archive, making the YIVO material from the 1900 to 1950 era, especially the Holocaust period, available on the Web. Documents will be scanned and digitized and the database will be searchable.

Dr. Joanna Lipper, a member of the YIVO Board of Overseers, is the daughter of noted banker Joseph Gruss, who came to the United States from Lwów, Poland.

The Gruss-Lipper Digital Archive on Jewish Life in Poland is expected to become fully available by 2006.

Critique of Norman Davies Book

The recently published book, *Rising '44: The Battle for Warsaw* by Norman Davies, has received a lot of publicity, as its appearance coincided with the sixtieth anniversary of the uprising by the Polish Underground to liberate the capital city before Soviet troops entered it. As is known, the Soviets halted their advance, the uprising collapsed, and the city was destroyed. Many Polish fighters and civilians perished. Others were expelled from the city and sent to camps and forced labor.

While the Davies book has been widely acclaimed, there has also been some criticism of it. In the 24 June 2004 issue of the *London Review of Books*, John Connelly, a historian from the University of California, criticizes Davis for focusing on the "romantic" aspect of Polish courage to rebel against occupation while failing to give a realistic assessment of the actual history. He questions why Davies did not present the complete picture with the negative sides of the Uprising as well—the predictable loss of lives both among the fighters and the civilian population.

Connelly also feels that the picture painted by Davies praising Polish rescuers of Jews is too one-sided, in that it does not relate any of the misdeeds of Poles toward Jews. In addition to Jedwabne, Connelly writes, "Polish researchers have located twenty-three other towns where Poles massacred Jews. Ignoring this research and citing no sources, Davies claims that 'the number of reports about massacres with a similar scenario' to Jedwabne can be counted on the fingers of one hand."

The reviewer notes that while some decent and courageous Poles saved what is estimated to be about 40,000 Jews, many Poles were callous and indifferent toward Jews, and some were denouncers and perpetrators. Connelly also criticizes Davies for calling the 1930s a time of "increasing reconciliation and integration" and claiming that Warsaw Jews "had the same right and inclination to be regarded as Poles as New York Jews had to be regarded as Americans." In reality, the 1930s was a period when anti-Semitism in Poland was on the rise and Jewish students were first made to sit separately in classes and then not allowed to attend universities at all.

Connelly acknowledges that Davies does well to emphasize the Polish resistance to Nazi occupation and their courage to defy Hitler, but he feels a historic account should be more complete and look at the 'black pages' of history as well.

Roald Hoffmann

The magazine *Chemistry* of Autumn 2003 focuses on immigrant chemists whose lives were packed with history and drama. One of them is Professor Roald Hoffmann of Cornell University. Hoffmann was awarded the 1981 Nobel Prize for chemistry jointly with Kenichi Fukui of Japan "for their theories, developed independently, concerning the course of chemical reactions." Hoffmann's biography is on the Nobel Prize Web site (www.nobel.se)

Hoffmann, born in Żółciszewo, Poland on July 18, 1937, comments that he "came into a happy Jewish family during dark days in Europe." He was named after Roald Amundsen, the Norwegian Antarctic explorer. Hoffmann's father Hillel Safran was a civil engineer, educated at the Lwów Polytechnic; his mother Clara (née Rosen) was by training a school teacher.

Żółciszewo was under Russian occupation from 1939 until 1941, when it was invaded by the German Army. His family was sent to the ghetto and then to a labor camp. Hillel Safran smuggled his wife and little son out of the camp in early 1943. For the remainder of the war, they were hidden by a Ukrainian in the attic of a schoolhouse in a nearby village. Hillel, who remained in the camp, was killed during a breakout attempt in 1943. Roald and his mother were freed by the Red Army in 1944, and they moved first to Przemyśl and then to Kraków, where he finally began school. His mother remarried and Roald took on the name of his stepfather, Paul Hoffmann.

In 1946 they left Poland for Czechoslovakia. From there they moved to a displaced persons' camp, Bindermichl, near Linz, Austria. In 1947 they went to another camp in Wasseralfingen bei Aalen in Germany, then to Munich. They came to the United States in 1949.

Roald attended public schools in Brooklyn, where he learned English, his sixth language. He then went to Stuyvesant High School, known for science. Summers he used to go to a camp in the Catskills.

In 1958 he entered Columbia College as a premedical student and in 1958 began graduate studies at Harvard. He received his Ph.D. in 1962 and was named a Junior Fellow in the Society of Fellows at Harvard. His last year there he worked with R. B. Woodward, himself a Nobel laureate in 1965. In 1965 Roald assumed a position at Cornell University, where he is now the John A. Newman Professor of Physical Science.

Hoffmann is married to Eva Börjesson and has two children—Hillel Jan and Ingrid Helena.

Irena Sendler

Anna Mieszkowska is the author of a new book, *Matka dzieci Holocaustu: Historia Ireny Sendlerowej (Mother of the Children of the Holocaust: the Story of Irena Sendler)* published by Muza, Warsaw 2004.

When the war broke out, Irena Sendler was working in the Department of Social Services of the city of Warsaw. She almost immediately engaged in the conspiratorial work of the PPS (Polish Socialist Party). She secured a pass to enter the ghetto as a sanitary worker to help in the fight against infectious diseases. The Germans feared the spread of typhus so much that they permitted Polish sanitary workers to enter the ghetto with medications and food supplies several times a day.

The book is based on interviews with Mrs. Sendler, who lives in a home for the elderly operated by nuns in Warsaw and although now ninety-four has an exceptionally clear mind. Sendler described how different houses in the ghetto, or groups of houses, were organized to look after the children and also provide them some education. As the situation worsened, in December 1942, she began participating in the activities of Żegota, the organization formed by the Polish Underground to assist Jews. She became the leader of Żegota's effort to help Jewish children escape the ghetto.

It was not a simple process, because parents had to make the wrenching decision whether or not to part with their child. Sometimes at issue were the "good looks" of the child and whether they spoke good Polish.

In the end, she and her team saved more than two thousand Jewish children. Some of them are today members of the Association of the "Children of the Holocaust" in Poland and still keep in touch with her.

One of the children she saved is Michał Głowicki, a well-known writer in Poland, who wrote the introduction. He points out that Mrs. Sendler saved significantly more people than Oskar Schindler, whose deeds were popularized by Spielberg's movie *Schindler's List*.

Mrs. Sendler was awarded the Karski-Nirefska Prize and was also recognized by Yad Vashem as one of the Righteous Among the Nations of the World. She is still relatively little known, although four girls in Kansas discovered her story in 2001 and performed plays about her to earn money to travel to Poland to visit her. (See *Gazeta*, Fall 2003.) The Mieszkowska book may bring her deeds to the attention of a wider public, particularly after it is translated into other languages.

Jedwabne Discussion Continues

Anna Bikont's book, *We from Jedwabne (My z Jedwabnego, Prószyfski-i-Ska., Warsaw 2004)* was reviewed by Stefan Zgliczyfski in the Polish daily *Trybuna* (nr. 323, Aneks, 3.VIII.2004). Zgliczyfski calls it the most important book about Poland and the Poles to appear in postwar Poland. He feels that Bikont's book will allow Poles to understand better the behavior of many Poles toward Jews under the German occupation and the enthusiasm with which Germans were welcomed in the rural, eastern section of Poland, Podlasie, as a relief to Soviet occupation.

Bikont's book follows up on the storm generated by the publication in Poland of the book *Neighbors* by Jan Gross. She worked for four years to present and review many documents and witness accounts and concludes that anti-Semitism in the area was not a marginal phenomenon but quite strong among some officials of the Home Army (AK). Even in recent years, the truth is not being fully accepted. The former mayor of Jedwabne, who participated in the commemoration of the Jewish victims, as well as some of the neighbors whose families had hidden and saved Jews, were forced to leave town.

Zgliczyfski regrets that anti-Semitism in Poland has not yet disappeared, even after sixty years.

The Rafael F. Scharf Memorial Plaque

On Sunday, November 21st, 2004, the Center for Jewish Culture, 17 Meisels Street, Kraków, will unveil the Rafael F. Scharf Memorial plaque. The occasion will include a chamber music concert performed by the Strauss Ensemble of Vienna. For additional information, please see the Web site <www.judaica.pl>.

Agnieszka Holland in Boston

From October 17 to November 18, the National Center for Jewish Film at Brandeis University presented a series of Holocaust films. On October 24, the film *Europa, Europa* (1989-90) was screened. This film, based on the true story of Salomon Perel, describes the experiences of a Jewish boy whose family lived in Germany but was sent back by the Germans to Poland. The family ended up being confined in a ghetto after the German invasion. Salomon first escaped to the USSR, then was captured by the Germans. He presented himself as a *Volksdeutscher* and was enlisted to fight in the Wehrmacht. He was then sent to a school in Germany for *Hitlerjunge* (Hitler youth). This is how he survived.

Agnieszka Holland, director of this prize-winning film (Golden Globe, 1992), was a special guest at the showing. She discussed how she got involved in making the film and answered questions from the audience. The producer of the film was Artur Brauner, born in Łódź, himself a survivor. Brauner and Holland were greatly disappointed when a German panel failed to nominate it for an Oscar as the best foreign film.

Also shown in the series was an earlier Brauner/Holland film, *Angry Harvest* (1984-85). This dramatic film describes the account of how in 1943 a rich, hard-working, lonely Polish Catholic farmer, Leon Wolny, tries to hide and save a Jewish woman, Rosa Eckert, who had escaped from a train taking Jews to a Nazi death camp. The woman spends the daytime hidden in his cellar. The farmer first just helps, but then falls in love with her. Wartime situations are vividly depicted, ending in tragedy. The film was nominated for Best Foreign Language Oscar.

To: The American Association for Polish-Jewish Studies (AAPJS)

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The Letters of Sala Garncarz

Princeton Alumni Weekly of November 17 reports a fascinating story how Ann Kirschner '78 discovered her mother's hidden letters from the wartime era.

When the war broke out, her mother, Sala, was fifteen, the youngest of eleven children of a poor Jewish family in the town of Sosnowiec. In 1940, the order came for her bookish older sister, Raizel, to report for work at the Geppensdorff labor camp. Sala convinced the family that she would fare better and went in Raizel's place.

Not many camps permitted correspondence, so few letters or postcards from this era have survived, but Sala miraculously saved some three hundred pieces of correspondence from friends and family while being interned in various camps.

After liberation in Czechoslovakia, Sala met an American soldier, Joseph Kirschner, who brought her to New York to be his bride.

Ann Kirschner is planning to organize an exhibit of her mother's letters at Yeshiva University. The letters have to first be translated from German, the mandatory language for such correspondence, and also decoded for secret messages that were being conveyed in such a way that the censors could not understand them.

Dreyfus Exhibit

The Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw (IH) presented an exhibit called "Zola and the Dreyfus Affair: Intellectuals and the Struggle for Social Justice." This exhibit was originally shown at the University of Pennsylvania under the sponsorship of the Beitler Family Foundation from September 8 to October 8, 2004.

The trial of Captain Alfred Dreyfus (1859–1935), a Jewish officer in the French Army, took place exactly a hundred years ago. Dreyfus, falsely accused of spying for Germany, was demoted and deported for life to Devil's Island off the coast of French Guyana.

The famous article, entitled *J'Accuse* (I Accuse), by Emile Zola, the French writer, was published on January 13, 1898. Zola wrote passionately in defense of Dreyfus and against the anti-Semitism that had motivated the false accusation and sentencing of Dreyfus. The demand for justice by Zola and other intellectuals caused the Dreyfus case to be reopened. Dreyfus was rehabilitated in 1906 and eventually reinstated with the rank of major. He was later decorated with the French Legion of Honor.

The exhibit has traveled widely in the United States and abroad. The Warsaw presentation was supervised by Dr. Eleonora Bergman of IH.

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