

Gazeta

Newsletter of the American Association for Polish Jewish Studies

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1583 Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge, MA 02138, (617)547-7701

Fay and Julian Busgang, Editors

New Publications of the Association

Volume 7 of *Polin* will appear at the end of January, in the year of the fiftieth anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising. It includes a special section to honor this anniversary and contains memoirs and documentary material which shed significant new light on the Jewish experience in Warsaw under the Nazis.

In addition, our Association is one of the sponsors of a new *Library of Holocaust Testimonies* to be published by Vallentine Mitchell and Company of London. Three members of the editorial board - Antony Polonsky, Ben Helfgott, and Rafael Scharf - are closely associated with our Association and the British Institute for Polish-Jewish Studies.

Two volumes will appear under the imprint of the *Library* in early 1993, both with introductions by Antony Polonsky. The first, Sara Rosen's *My Lost World: A Survivor's Tale*, relates the author's experiences in the Tarnów Ghetto and her escape to Bucharest. Jakob Gerstenfeld-Maltiel's *My Private War: One Man's Struggle to Survive the Soviets and Nazis* is the author's account of his life during the wartime Soviet and German occupations of Lwów. He finally survived by masquerading as a civilian auxiliary to the German Army in Dnepropetrovsk.

Our Association is also sponsoring *The Jews in Old Poland 1000-1795*, edited by Antony Polonsky, to be published by I.B. Tauris in the spring. It contains material from a conference in September 1986 at the Jagiellonian University in Kraków on *Jewish Life in Pre-Partitioned Poland*.

Ivo Pogonowski, a member of our Board, has written *Jews in Poland: A Documentary History*, a comprehensive historical atlas with a detailed exposition describing the history of the Jews in Polish lands. He has graciously donated 100 copies to the Association. All these volumes, as well as earlier publications, can be obtained directly from our Association. Prices are: *Polin*, Volume 7 - \$35, *My Lost World* - \$25, *My Private War* - \$25, *The Jews in Old Poland* - \$40, and *Jews in Poland: A Documentary History* - \$20.

Fifty Years After the Holocaust:

The Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw is planning an International Conference on March 29-31, 1993. The Conference will commemorate the 1943 uprising in the Warsaw Ghetto and discuss the various forms of Jewish resistance during the Holocaust. General and moral problems of resistance and recent research on various aspects of the German occupation will be discussed by noted scholars from Poland and abroad. Presenters will include Prof. Daniel Grinberg, Director of the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw, Prof. Yitzhak Arad., Prof. Lucjan Dobroszycki, Prof. Antony Polonsky, and Prof. Jerzy Tomaszewski,

To attend, please contact as soon as possible: The Jewish Historical Institute, ul. Tłomackie 3/5, 00-090 Warsaw, Poland, Tel: 27 18 43, Fax: 27 83 20.

Events at Brandeis University

A number of people connected with our Association have spoken at Brandeis University recently. Natan Sharansky, the Russian-Jewish activist, spent a week as Visiting Professor in November and spoke to Professor Antony Polonsky's classes on "The Russian-Jewish Experience" and "The Soviets and the Holocaust". Marian Turski, historical editor of the Warsaw weekly *Polityka* and a member of President Lech Wałęsa's Council for Polish-Jewish Relations, spoke on "Why Did It Take So Long Before An Uprising Took Place in the Warsaw Ghetto?" Halina Nelken, art historian and a member of our Board, gave an account of her experiences in Nazi occupied Kraków and in Auschwitz and other concentration camps.

In April, the Near Eastern and Judaic Studies Department will sponsor an all-day meeting in honor of the 50th anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising. The general theme will be "Jewish Resistance to Tyranny Over The Ages." Lectures will be given on this topic in the Maccabean, medieval, and modern periods. Members of the Association are welcome to attend.

We will keep you informed about other events.

Letter from the President

In October, we had our first panel discussion. It was hosted by Jerry Weisenberg of the Council of Christians and Jews at a synagogue in Worcester. Panelists Julian Busgang, Witold Von Henneberg, Halina Nelken, and Jan Saunders told of their experiences in Poland before and during World War II. The discussion was lively and interesting and well received.

We have thought of having similar meetings in other temples or before student organizations. If you belong to a group that would be interested in hosting a discussion of different aspects of Jewish life in pre-war Poland and/or during the Second World War, we would like to hear from you.

In November, Robert and Patricia Trevisani opened their beautiful home to us for a lecture by Board Member and author Charles Merrill. Charlie gave a broad ranging account of the transition to democracy in Poland, comparing it to the pre-war situation when he first traveled there as a student. He has had many trips to Poland and adopted the Warsaw Sirena as the symbol of the Commonwealth School in Boston which he founded.

Our December Board meeting was well attended. Marian Turski, visiting from Warsaw where he is the editor of the well-known journal Polityca, was our special guest. He contributed some interesting facts to a discussion on German reparations, a problem which has since been aired in the New York Times. Any of our members or readers who are entitled to receive reparations should contact: Claims Conference, 15 East 26th Street, Room 1303A, New York, NY 10010.

In March, we expect to have Kazimierz Dziewanowski, the Polish Ambassador in Washington, as our guest speaker. In April, Stanisław Barańczak, Professor of Polish Literature at Harvard and a renowned poet, will read some of his poetry. For subsequent meetings, we hope to have Zvi Gitleman, Professor of Political Science and Judaic Studies at the University of Michigan and Gershon Hundert, Professor of Jewish History at McGill University. Invitations for these programs will be sent to those on our mailing list.

Board Member Julian Busgang and his wife Fay are going to Poland for three months with the International Executive Service Corps (IESC), an organization of retired executives who help developing countries. We are grateful to them for putting together and editing this issue of Gazeta, even though they are busy preparing to leave in early February. We are looking forward to hearing about their experiences when they return.

Please keep in touch with us and let us know your thoughts about our activities.

Irene Pipes

The Jan Karski and Pola Nirenska Award

Professor Jan Karski, a member of our Board and well-known as a Polish Underground emissary to the West, has established at YIVO an award to honor the memory of his late wife, the highly acclaimed dancer, Pola Nirenska. In 1942, Karski was smuggled in and out of the Warsaw Ghetto and then to England to warn Western leaders that the Nazis had embarked on a policy of mass-destruction of European Jewry.

The endowment of \$100,000 is intended to make possible an annual award of \$5000 to an author who describes contributions to Polish culture and science by Polish Jews or Poles of Jewish origin. The prize will be known as the Jan Karski and Pola Nirenska Award.

The chairman of the jury which will confer the prize will be Dr. Lucjan Dobroszycki, Senior Research Associate at YIVO and Professor of History at Yeshiva University. Members of the jury are: the Research Director of YIVO; the Research Director of the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw; Dr. Józef Gierowski, Professor of History and Director of the Research Center of Jewish History and Culture in Poland at the Jagiellonian University in Kraków; Czesław Miłosz, poet and Nobel prize winner; and Jerzy Turowicz, Editor-in-Chief of *Tygodnik Powszechny*.

This award is of great value in fostering Polish-Jewish studies and in creating a better understanding of the destroyed civilization of Polish Jewry...

Preservation of Jewish Monuments

The Jewish Heritage Council (JHC), chaired by Hon. Ronald S. Lauder, has undertaken a program of saving surviving synagogue buildings and cemeteries in Eastern Europe. The JHC is a subsidiary of the World Monuments Fund, founded in 1965 to conserve cultural heritage worldwide.

One of the JHC projects of special interest to the members of AAPJS is the restoration of the Progressive Temple (Synagoga Postępowa) of Kraków, built in 1860-62, which is the only intact 19th century synagogue left in Poland. During World War II, the temple survived because it was used as a stable by the occupying German forces. The temple needs extensive restoration to return it to a usable condition.

Surviving Jewish monuments in Poland range from the ruins of the synagogue in Działoszyce to a beautiful war memorial in Kazimierz Dolny constructed from fragments of demolished Jewish gravestones. There are 250 surviving synagogue buildings in Poland. Unfortunately, only a few of them can be restored.

To contribute to this effort, write World Memorial Fund, 174 East 80th Street, New York, NY 10021. For further details, contact Samuel D. Gruber, Director of the JHC, at the same address, tel. no. 212 517-9367.

Board Member Profile

Rabbi Ben-Zion Gold, recently retired Director of Harvard-Radcliffe Hillel, was born in Radom, in central Poland, into an observant Jewish family with Hasidic connections. His father, a merchant with considerable Jewish learning, represented the Orthodox political party Agudas Yisrael on the Radom City Council.

Rabbi Gold had a traditional Jewish education, which he describes movingly in *Conference on the Jews of Poland between Two World Wars*, edited by Gutman, Mendelsohn, Reinhartz and Shmeruk.

As a child, Rabbi Gold attended *cheder*, but even there, the outside world was beginning to penetrate the previously closed sphere of Orthodox Judaism. After 1918, *cheders* were subject to Polish government inspection and were obliged to offer instruction in Polish language, history and arithmetic, all provided by non-observant Jewish teachers or even by non-Jews.

After *cheder*, Ben left home to study at the Preparatory for *Yeshivat Hachamei Lublin* in Rachów. His education was cut short by the German invasion of Poland, and he spent the war years under Nazi occupation. Unfortunately, almost all of his family perished during the Holocaust.

In 1947, Rabbi Gold came to the United States. He received his M.H.L. from the College of Jewish Studies in Chicago in 1952 and his B.A. from Roosevelt University the following year. In 1957, he received an M.H.L. at the Conservative Jewish Theological Seminary in New York and was ordained a rabbi. In 1958, he became the Associate Director of Harvard-Radcliffe Hillel, and in 1965, its Director.

When Rabbi Gold came to Harvard in 1958, Jewish life at the university was in a largely inchoate state, even though Jews made up nearly a fifth of the student body. Through a unique combination of personal integrity, intellectual honesty and deep commitment to the fundamental values of the Jewish tradition, Rabbi Gold transformed this situation. Hillel has since flourished, as has a pluralistic vision of Jewish religious life at Harvard. His Sabbath morning Torah discussions have drawn a devoted following, and the solemnity and piety of his High Holiday services have attracted a large congregation. Plans are now under way for a new and larger building for Hillel activities.

In his retirement, Rabbi Gold will have more time for reflection, writing, and leisure, but his many friends and admirers are convinced that his impact on Jewish life at Harvard and in Cambridge will remain as great as ever. He continues as Rabbi of the Worship and Study Congregation of Harvard-Radcliffe Hillel where he teaches Rabbinic and Yiddish literature. A book of Rabbi Gold's essays and memoirs, entitled *Tradition and Contemporary Reality*, was published in 1990.

Notes from a Journey: Reflections on Auschwitz

by Rafael F. Scharf

First Installment:

For an old Cracovian to return to the place of his birth after an absence of half a century is a bizarre, dreamlike experience. Cracovians always had, and retained, a very soft spot for that little city. They considered it "special", "lovable" - warts and all, in some way superior to all others. (In the eyes of the inhabitants of Warsaw, Lwów, or Łódź, this was, of course, pretentious nonsense.)

What brought me to Cracow recently, however, was not the pull of nostalgia but the call to participate in a conference of writers and scholars from many countries on the "Future of Auschwitz".

In view of the continuous criticism and dispute concerning the management of that hallowed ground, the Polish Ministry of Culture, which is nominally the ultimate authority governing the camp site, is seeking guidance and solicits informed views on how to deal with questions which arise at every turning point and bedevil Polish-Jewish relations.

The problems are many and complex. Leaving aside the philosophical issues, which are in a category of their own, and touching only on practical issues, which "history" is the Museum to show and through which texts, captions, exhibits, artifacts? Having acknowledged and shown the predominantly Jewish victims of Auschwitz, how to give due weight to the very large number of non-Jewish victims?

How is the dignity and the integrity of the site to be preserved in view of the nature of mass tourism? How is the vulgarization of the place to be prevented, with thousand of people of all cultures and ages milling around, in need of occasional relief and refreshment, looking for "souvenirs" to take away? How are people to be prevented - the terrain is vast and cannot be strictly supervised - from placing in various spots, no doubt with the purist intention, their own signs, plaques, or symbols?

How are the guides, who every day of their working life have to relate the gruesome story in accurate detail, to be educated? How are they to retain their freshness and sincerity and not get numb or even blasé?

Standing on the site of the gas chamber, one must, to preserve one's sanity, use all one's strength to repel the imagery which assaults the senses. How and where is the viewer, the pilgrim, given an overview of Jewish society and culture, what these millions of murdered people believed in and created and stood for and what was lost to the world with them?

(to be continued in the next issue)

Special Thanks

We extend special thanks to some of our major donors:

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Halina Nelken Lectures in Canada

In November, Board Member Halina Nelken lectured in Montreal and Toronto on "Jews and the Struggle for Polish Independence as Reflected in Art". Her lectures were sponsored by the Polish-Jewish Heritage Foundation.



We hope you enjoy our newsletter. We welcome your comments and suggestions. We would like to remind those of you who have not yet joined or renewed your membership to do so; the Association needs your support to continue its work. Subscribing members and above receive the latest volume of Polin.

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