

Gazeta

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

Fay and Julian Bussgang, Editors

Jewish Foundation for Christian Rescuers/ADL

A few months ago, Frank Morgens of New York was honored by the President of Poland both for his wartime underground resistance activities and for his post-war work dedicated to aid Polish Christian rescuers.

Morgens escaped from the Warsaw Ghetto and survived the war on forged Aryan papers. Much of the time, he was hidden with his wife, their two children, their mothers, and two friends in an attic in a small Polish town.

Morgens and his wife Marie, who now live in New York City, never forgot the brave young Polish Catholic woman, Wala, who aided their escape and sheltered them at the risk of her own life. Since their arrival in the U.S., they have tried to do as much as possible to acknowledge the moral courage and decency of Christian rescuers.

In 1986, Morgens joined Rabbi Harold Schulweis and eighteen others in establishing the Jewish Foundation for Christian Rescuers. The JFCR, now affiliated with the Anti-Defamation League, is headquartered at 823 United Nations Plaza, NY 10017. Last year, the JFCR provided stipends to 750 Polish Christian rescuers who are elderly and in need.

Morgens has dedicated himself to the work of JFCR and has been its liaison to Polish rescuers. In 1992, Morgens became the third recipient of the "Rabbi Schulweis Award". This award was made possible through a grant from AAPJS member Harvey Sarnet.

Reparations for Polish Jews

In spite of the widely proclaimed sympathy for the victims of the Holocaust, the rights of Polish Jews are still not being fully recognized by Germany nor treated as a priority by the leadership of the World Jewish community.

The Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany announced a reparations agreement with the Germans on October 30, 1992. Despite the fact that the Conference was to provide integrated representation of Jewish interests in negotiations, Nazi victims who are still residing in Eastern Europe were excluded from the agreement. As the World Jewish Congress admitted recently, "the lack of coverage for Nazi victims still residing in Eastern Europe is a serious shortcoming of the agreement".

The issue that particularly affects the aging survivors residing in Poland, most of whom are of limited means, is that they have been denied parity treatment in collecting reparations for their war-time experiences. Under the current terms of the agreement, only Jews who have left their country qualify for reparations. It is ironic that an agreement made by the Jewish leadership represented in the Claims Conference would encourage Hitler's goal of a "Judenrein" Poland!

We urgently need to remind the German Government and the World Jewish Congress to be more sympathetic to the plight of Jewish survivors still remaining in Poland.

Letter from the President:

October 1993

Dear Members,

We started the 1993-94 season with a well attended board meeting on September 27th in my house. We had a lively conversation on all the topics included in our agenda. We decided that from now on, the *Gazeta* will come out three times a year, in Fall, Winter, and Spring. We shall try to find a sponsor for each issue at a minimum of \$500, and we will give them, of course, proper credit. We would be delighted if anyone among our readers would help in locating an interested person or business.

Antony Polonsky reported that Volume VIII of *POLIN* is at the publisher, Volume IX is practically ready, and plans are being made for Volumes X and XI. He also told us that Littman, our publisher, is coming out with a book of selected articles from the first six volumes of *POLIN* which is to be used mainly as a school text book.

We are planning an event, to be organized with the help of Professor Roman Szporluk of Harvard's Ukrainian Center, on the subject of Jewish-Ukrainian relations. In the future, we shall try to include talks on relations with the Baltic countries and possibly the Czech Republic since, in the past, the people we now call Polish Jews lived in that entire area.

On January 19, the Bussgangs will host a meeting at their home in Lexington and will discuss their three months in Poland this past spring. They will be joined by David Gershfield, Harvard '90, who spent the year in Warsaw teaching English at a public high school.

We are planning a theater party in May for Isaac Bashevis Singer's play "*Schlemiel the First*", but we do not yet have a firm date. Genia Shrut is in charge of all our invitations and mailings. Do call her if you have any questions or ideas.

We have heard from several of you that you enjoy receiving the *Gazeta*. If you have not yet sent in your membership renewal, please do so today, using the simple form in the back of this issue, in order to insure your continued subscription.

Please let us hear from you. We welcome your comments and contributions.

Irene Pipes, President

Warsaw Conference on Rescuers of Jews

Report by AAPJS Board Member Genia Shrut

In early July, I attended a two day international conference in Warsaw on Rescuers of Jews during the Holocaust, entitled "Can Indifference Kill?". The two days were extremely well attended by rescuers - Poles- as they are called now, "the Righteous Ones", as well as by scholars from Israel, Poland, England, Sweden and the United States.

Honoring the Righteous Ones was combined with scholarly presentations. Among the well known personalities who attended were: former Polish Prime Minister Rakowski, Chairman of the Social Democratic Party Kwaśniewski, Ambassador W. Bartoszewski, Minister B. Gieremek, editors Jerzy Turowicz and Marian Turski, former Deputy Prime Minister of Sweden Per Ahlmark, Professors Israel Gutman, Yehuda Bauer, Jan Ciechanowski, Jan Karski, Zbigniew Brzeziński and Bernard Wasserstein, Conference Chairman Roman Kent, and our own George Szabad and Rafael Scharf.

Tribute was paid to the Righteous Ones by the Israeli government. They received medals as well as honorary Israeli citizenship. As Israeli Ambassador Miron Gordon so poignantly put it - behind each of these people lies a personal drama of those who saved and those who attempted to annihilate both the saviors and the saved.

What struck me personally were the Jews, or mostly Jewesses, since more of them survived, who six or seven years ago would not have been comfortable attending a conference on this subject. They "came out of the closet". As they have gotten older, and the conditions in Poland somewhat changed, they felt a terrible need to talk about themselves on a one to one basis.

On the other hand, the general public does not easily absorb scholarly objectivity in presenting unpleasant facts. Therefore, during presentations of Professors Bauer and Brzeziński, some members of the audience reacted by making bigoted remarks. While listening to them (I could not help it because they were in back of where I was sitting), I relived my own past during the war years on the "Aryan side" when I was compelled to listen to similar anti-Semitic bigoted comments.

Most impressive to me was the speech by former Vice Prime Minister of Sweden Per Ahlmark who emphasized how to stand up against anti-Semitism, since it is the first

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step that leads to disaster. "Anti-Semitism always starts with Jews but never stops with them. When an anti-Semite attacks Jews, he attacks all of us." The other speech that I was impressed with was by Irena Sendler, a well-known Polish rescuer, who stated, "There can be no discussion if we do not talk about the pogrom in Kielce in 1946." Mrs. Sendler released a lot of emotions.

Professor Yehuda Bauer stated that hope for a quick end to anti-Semitism in Poland was futile. It will take four to five generations for educative efforts to take effect. The dialogue between Jews and Gentiles is important, although it will take time and effort to change attitudes. It is much more difficult in Poland because of the absence of Jews there. Instead, there are three million ghosts that one will have to cope with for many years to come.

My own impression was that though there was a conference, and we have to appreciate that the first step was made, there were actually two monologues that eventually, in many generations to come, hopefully will lead to a dialogue.

I would like to include a story of our own home town survivor who was there - his name is Gerald (Jurek) Kaiser. He lives in Arlington, MA, and his rescuers were there. Professor Kaiser teaches mathematics at the University of Massachusetts and is 53 years old. His speech, cited below, was given by him during the conference while honoring his rescuers. It was quite moving.

Talk Given at Warsaw Conference by Gerald (Jurek) Kaiser of Arlington, MA

"Like many of you here, I have often struggled with the question: What makes any person able to risk their life and those of their loved ones in order to save the life of a stranger? As an academic and a teacher, I would like to believe that education plays a key role. I have tried to answer the question with phrases such as 'inner strength' and 'moral courage'. But these phrases always left me feeling somewhat uneasy, because they seemed to substitute a *name* for an *answer*.

Just a few weeks ago, while discussing the purpose of this conference with a friend, I remembered a story from the *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* by Mark Twain. Huck meets Jim, a black man who ran away from slavery. He is ultimately faced with the dilemma whether or not to turn Jim over to the authorities. Huck is not an educated

man and knows nothing of inner strength or moral courage. In fact, Huck is merely a boy. The society in which he lives holds that it is *natural* for a black man to be a slave, and that it is Huck's *moral duty* to turn Jim in. Huck even believes that he will go to hell if he does not turn Jim in, since Jim is someone's property. *But his heart won't let him do it!* And after pondering the matter, he decides that he must follow his heart, even if it means eternal damnation.

Stanisław and Jadwiga-Wanda Włodek, who were the first to take me into their home when my parents were in a Nazi labor camp, had education. Stanisław was a school principal, and his wife Jadwiga-Wanda was a teacher. But their sons Janusz and Krystyn, who took care of me for six months after Stanisław had to flee and Jadwiga-Wanda was taken to Auschwitz, were only children. They knew exactly what they were doing, since their neighbors, who got caught hiding Jews, were summarily shot. When things got dangerous for Janusz and Krystyn, Stanisław moved me to the house of his sister Teofila in another village. Teofila's husband, Franciszek, was a shoemaker and not a highly educated man. But this couple and their children Mirek and Renia were also rich in love and compassion. I lived with them very happily for two years, until my mother came to claim me. I refused to go, and Teofila did not want to give me up. But my mother had lost her husband, and she survived the camps only to see me again. And so Teofila made a *second* sacrifice and let me go. I know that it broke her heart, for I still remember her taking me outside and trying to explain her decision to me, tears streaming down her face.

What role does education play? Surely love and compassion teach by example. But my experience suggests that *formal* education plays no role whatsoever."

Polish Diplomats Saved Jews in 1938

Two accounts appeared in a recent issue of *Nowy Dziennik* (Polish Daily News) about aid given to Jews by Polish Consuls abroad.

On February 28, 1938, a medal was issued by the Association of Polish Jews in Stettin, which was inscribed, "To the Consul General H. Szklarek in recognition of his caring assistance". This medal was recently conveyed to the Polish Consul General Jerzy Surdykowski in New York by Professor Lucjan Dobroszycki of YIVO. The medal will be deposited in the Museum of the Polish Foreign Service. (cont. on p.4)

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The other account concerns Polish Consul L. Przybylski in Munich. In September 1938, he issued a Polish passport, on the basis of a fictitious certificate of Polish citizenship, to Benno Rothenberg, a German Jew, thus permitting him and his two little daughters to leave Germany. The article indicates that Polish Consuls in Bern, Switzerland and in New York further assisted the Rothenbergs by extending the validity of the passport. In August of this year, the daughters turned over the passport of their deceased father and other related documents to the US Holocaust Museum in Washington. Long-time AAPJS member Jerzy Głowczewski, as a friend of the family, was instrumental in arranging this transference.

Board Member Profile - George Szabad

George Szabad has been a vice-president of our organization almost from its inception and has been one of its most supportive members.

George was born into an assimilated Warsaw Jewish family in 1917 in Nizhni-Novogorod where his family had fled during the First World War. When the Russian Revolution ended, they returned to Warsaw. George completed his secondary education there and was admitted to the University of Warsaw.

Because of growing tension and intolerance in Europe, his mother and step-father (his own father died when George was quite young) decided in 1934 to emigrate to the United States. They thus avoided the fate of most of their relatives who perished.

George adapted quickly to America. He entered Columbia Law School and became an editor of the Law Review. While at Columbia, he met his wife and lifelong companion Shirley (Meyers) whose untimely death occurred last winter after a long illness.

After law school, George worked in New York and then moved to Washington where he was in charge of appellate litigation in the Department of Labor. He served briefly in the Coast Guard and went on to the O.S.S. Research and Intelligence Service. After he was discharged, he joined the State Department.

In the late 40's, George became a partner in a New York City law firm. In 1952, he became president of a small old-line company listed on the New York Stock

Exchange. Later, he moved on to the mini-multinational Burndy Corporation. He remained at Burndy until he retired as Senior Vice-President in 1982 and as Member of the Board in 1988.

George has been active in civic life, both locally and nationally. In Scarsdale, NY, where he and his family lived for nearly forty years, he served four years as Village Trustee, a term as Mayor, and several years as Member and then President of the Board of Education. He was also President of the Town Club.

Nationally, both he and Shirley have been very active in the American Jewish Committee, the oldest human relations organization in the United States. He is currently Honorary Vice-President and is particularly involved in inter-group activities, above all, the Polish-American Jewish-American Task Force of which he is a founding member. He is also Chairman of the Center on Immigration and Acculturation.

George is a member of the Board of Overseers of the Tauber Institute at Brandeis University and Secretary - Treasurer of the Burndy Library for the History of Science and Technology. He also serves as Secretary-Treasurer of the Dibner Fund, a private philanthropic foundation created in 1957 to support educational and charitable organizations, primarily in the field of the history of science and technology. He is a member of the original Board of the Dibner Institute in Cambridge, MA.

George and Shirley were a remarkable team and always worked together closely and harmoniously. As Shirley's health deteriorated, they moved to the Quadrangle, a continuing care retirement community in Haverford, Pennsylvania. George nursed Shirley devotedly during her last illness. Her death has understandably been a heavy blow to him. He has been sustained by the love of his son Peter and his daughter Ellen, their spouses, his three grandsons, his "foster" grandchildren, and his great-grandchildren.

George has continued to be active in Polish-Jewish affairs. He was an organizer and participant in the International Conference on Christian Rescuers held in Warsaw in July and reported elsewhere in this issue.

George's mind is as lively as ever, and he has more energy than many people twenty or thirty years younger than he. He still has much to contribute to those causes which are dear to his heart, of which the creation of a better Polish-Jewish understanding is of the utmost importance.

Jewish Film Festival Features

Polish Films

The 1993 Boston Film Festival highlights new films from Poland, which are based on racial intolerance and the Holocaust.

On November 11 at 5:45 PM, *Birthplace* will be shown at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts. This masterful documentary is about the return of a Polish Jew, Henryk Grynberg, to his native village to learn the fate of his family.

The Opening Night Benefit, to be held at the MFA November 11 at 7:15 PM, will feature *Moi Ivan, Toi Abraham*. This movie is about a nine-year-old Jewish boy's forbidden friendship with a Christian playmate

On November 14 at 3:00 PM, *All That Really Matters* will be at the Coolidge Corner Theater in Brookline. It is based on the true story of the survival, during the war, of a Jewish poet, Aleksander Wat, his wife, and son.

On November 16 at 8:00 PM, *Happy New Year* will be shown at the Coolidge Corner Theater. In this movie, set in the late 60's at the time of the student rebellion in Warsaw, the daughter of a high government official who is

Jewish falls in love with the leader of the student uprising. Dr. Antony Polonsky will introduce the film and place it in its historical context.

These films will be in Polish with English subtitles. There are many other films from other countries. For ticket information, call (617) 965-5226.

AAPJS Panel at Harvard-Radcliffe Hillel

A panel discussion "Witnesses from the Lost World" has been scheduled for December 2, 1993, 7:30 P.M., at Harvard-Radcliffe Hillel in Cambridge. Speakers will include Dr. Halina Nelken, Dr. Julian Busgang, Dr. John Saunders, Boruch "Bill" Frusztajer, and Professor Roman Sporkuk. Moderator will be Professor Antony Polonsky.

The speakers will describe the Jewish community of pre-World War II Poland and recount some of their personal wartime experiences. The program was organized by Mrs. Alexandra Watkins, Chairperson of the Outreach Committee of the AAPJS.

Our members, as well as students, are cordially invited to attend, at 74 Mt. Auburn Street, Cambridge.

American Association for Polish-Jewish Studies
1583 Massachusetts Avenue
Cambridge, Massachusetts 02138
telephone (617) 547-7701