

Gazeta

Newsletter of the American Association for Polish Jewish Studies

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Fay and Julian Busgang, Editors

Conference Planned as 10th Year Celebration of AAPJS

The American Association of Polish Jewish Studies is ten years old! To celebrate, we are planning an exciting conference in Cambridge, MA on October 8-10, 1994. Participants will be invited from England, Poland, and Israel as well as the United States. The tentative program is as follows:

Saturday, October 8: Welcoming Reception at the home of Irene and Richard Pipes in Cambridge. Entertainment by a Klezmer Band.

Sunday, October 9: 9:00-9:15: *Welcome*: Antony Polonsky; 9:15-10:30: *Hasidism as a Reflection of Jewish Spirituality*: Arthur Green; 11:00-12:30: *Interpenetration of Two Worlds: Interactions between Jewish and Polish Writers*: Jadwiga Maurer; 2:00-4:00: *Inheriting the Polish Jewish Past: Envisaging its Future*: Round table discussion with Jan Błoński, Zbigniew Brzeziński, Ben-Zion Gold, Israel Gutman, Allan Nadler, Magda Opalska, and Jerzy Tomaszewski; 4:00-5:30: Coffee; 5:30-6:30: *Yiddish Folk Songs in Poland: Recital and Analysis*: Robert Rothstein; 7:30: Cocktails and Dinner, Speaker to be Announced.

Monday, October 10: Trip to New Hampshire to view fall foliage at its best. Lunch at the country home of Mr. and Mrs. Charles Merrill.

Sun. April 24 - Talk on Piłsudski and His Policies Towards Nationalities

Andrzej Garlicki, Professor of History at Warsaw University and chief literary editor of the Warsaw weekly *Polityka*, will speak in Boston on "Piłsudski and His Policies Toward Nationalities". This talk, sponsored by AAPJS, will be given at 4:00 PM on Sunday, April 24th in Boylston Hall at Harvard University.

Survivors Gather at Washington Holocaust Museum

(Report by AAPJS Board Member Eugenia Shrut)

Last February I attended, in Washington, DC., a two day conference of the American Gathering of Jewish Holocaust Survivors, entitled "From Holocaust to New Life". The American Gathering of Jewish Holocaust Survivors was instrumental in conceiving and building the Holocaust Museum. Visiting the Museum was part of the conference. My impression was that the Museum has an excellent design and is well-equipped to convey the facts of the Holocaust to the broad public.

There is a very large number of documentary films and photographs, mostly taken by the Germans, and a surprising number of authentic exhibits. Sensitive persons are not directly exposed to the most gruesome pictures, as these films can only be seen when willing visitors push the buttons.

Fifty years have elapsed since the time when I was myself an inhabitant of the Warsaw Ghetto and then hid on "the Aryan side". Now, I anxiously watched the enlarged photographs, which I had already seen so many times, thinking that perhaps I might recognize in these pictures somebody I missed in the past.

The aim of the conference was to assure the continuity of attesting to the truth. The survivors of the Holocaust are slowly dying out. Simultaneously with the conference, there was an "alumni" meeting of Holocaust teachers and the two gatherings repeatedly met in common sessions to assure the live contact between the eyewitnesses and those who will continue to spread the truth in the years to come. I was deeply touched by the dedication of the survivors who made this Museum possible and of the teachers, Jewish and Gentile, trying to convey to the younger generation the enormous truth which the human mind finds so difficult to comprehend.

Letter from the President:

Spring 1994

Dear Members:

Let me start by saying that we are all very excited about the idea of having a conference this fall to celebrate our Association's ten years of existence. The meeting will review what has been achieved in the last ten years and the tasks that lie ahead of us. It will be a day and a half filled with activities, both scholarly and social.

Every member of our Board has been assigned a job, and we are busy planning this event which will take place in Cambridge, MA on October 8 - 10, 1994. We very much hope that many of you will come. Please let us know as soon as possible if you are planning to attend, because we have to arrange for accommodations, meals, etc. A formal invitation will be mailed to our members.

On February 6, we had the honor to host a dinner at the Union Club in Boston for Professor Józef Andrzej Gierowski. Professor Gierowski is the former Rector of the Jagiellonian University in Kraków and the founder and first director of the Research Center for the Study of the History and Culture of Jews in Poland. He is also involved with the Judaica Foundation which has recently established a Center for Jewish Culture in Kazimierz, the former Jewish quarter in Kraków (see related article).

Quite a few of our Board members came to the dinner for Professor Gierowski, and President John Silber of Boston University was our special guest. Professor Gierowski spoke to us of his hopes to establish a closer link with the universities in the Boston area and to encourage students from the United States to come to Kraków to study at the Center. Professor Gierowski also gave a talk at Brandeis University on the following day.

On March 16, Father Waldemar Chrostowski, one of the key figures in resolving the dispute over the Carmelite monastery in Auschwitz, spoke at Brandeis University. The topic of his talk was "Auschwitz: Polish Sensitivity, Jewish Sensitivity".

We extend our warmest congratulations to Board member Dr. Jehuda Reinharz who has recently been named President of Brandeis University.

Once more, I would like to urge you to join our organization, for we need your support. However, if you would like to be taken off our mailing list, we would appreciate your letting us know.

Irene Pipes, President

Mickiewicz and "Foreign Blood"

Jadwiga Maurer, whom we are hoping to have speak at the 10th Anniversary Conference of AAPJS in October, is the author of the book *From a Foreign Mother...On the Subject of Mickiewicz's Ties with the Jewish World* (Polish National Foundation, London, 1990). Maurer is Professor of Polish Literature at the University of Kansas. It is well known in Poland that such noted literary figures as Słonimski and Tuwim were of Jewish descent, but it is less well known and certainly less accepted that Mickiewicz, considered to be Poland's greatest poet, had Jewish ties.

A book on a similar theme is *Of Jewish Descent; Distinguished Polish Families Once of Jewish Blood* by Mateusz Mieses (WEMA, 1991, Warsaw). Mieses deals with many famous Polish figures of Jewish descent. He also describes the controversy between various historical sources as to whether Barbara née Majewski, the mother of Adam Mickiewicz, was the daughter of a Frankist Jew who had converted. Although there is a dispute about the facts relating to the mother of Mickiewicz, there seems to be no dispute that his wife, Celina Szymanowska, was Jewish and was born to a Frankist family. (Frankists were followers of Jacob Frank, active in Poland in the 18th century, who began as an "anti-Talmudist" and eventually converted to Christianity.)

The books by Mieses and Maurer have generated considerable controversy in Poland. Some people, like Professor Alina Witkowska, doubt the propositions of Maurer; Witkowska also questions whether anyone should worry about the genealogical roots of Mickiewicz (Letter to the Editor, *Polityka*, nr. 44/92). She argues that basically, all that really matters is that Mickiewicz was a great Polish poet.

Kazimierz Koźniewski, who recently reviewed the book of Jadwiga Maurer in Poland (*Dziś, Przegląd Społeczny*, Warsaw, March 1994), does not agree with Witkowska. He points to the wealth of Jewish contributions to Polish literature, art, music, and science, and asserts that it is not irrelevant whether or not Mickiewicz was of Jewish descent, especially now that the Jewish population of Poland has been decimated.

Koźniewski concludes that one source of the cultural wealth of Poland was the multi-ethnic character of its population. He states that this is something Poles should be proud of and acclaim, not try to hide or dispute.

A Center for Jewish Culture Established in Kazimierz, Kraków

(excerpts from an article by Joachim Russek,
Director of the Judaica Foundation in Kraków)

Kazimierz, the old Jewish Quarter of Kraków, was founded as a separate town by King Kazimierz the Great in 1335. Through the centuries, Jews formed in Kazimierz a culture with brilliant achievements in literature, art, music, and religion. Here, the famous Talmudic scholar Rabbi Moses Isserles, known as Remuh, had his academy. Today, his grave and synagogue are places of pilgrimage.

On the eve of World War II, the Jews of Kraków numbered 70,000, 25% of Kraków's population. Their life as a flourishing community ended in the Holocaust, but their memory remains in the hearts of many. It is thus very appropriate that a Center for Jewish Culture has been established here, on a street named for Rabbi Meisels.

The Center for Jewish Culture in Kazimierz, which opened at the end of November 1993, came about as the result of a revival of interest in Jewish history and culture in Poland that began in the mid-1980's. The lively Festival of Jewish Culture, held in Kraków each summer for the past three years, is also indicative of this revival. The Research Center for the Study of Jewish History and Culture in Poland, established in 1986 as a department of Jagiellonian University, helps to channel and expand this growing interest through research, publications, and education.

Professor Józef Gierowski, organizer and Director of the University Research Center, first formulated the idea of establishing a Center for Jewish Culture. An early proponent was the late noted author Jerzy Kosiński who felt that the legacy of Kazimierz was more important than that of Auschwitz. Mark Talisman made a great effort to secure financial support in the US., and the Polish-American Joint Commission generously sponsored it.

The Center for Jewish Culture, in addition to providing a modern conference center, will offer cultural events, operate a library, prepare and distribute publications, promote research on Kazimierz, support restoration efforts, and arrange heritage tour itineraries. It will also help descendants of Kraków Jews connect to their past by assisting them in genealogical searches.

The Center for Jewish Culture operates under the auspices of the Judaica Foundation with Janusz Makuch as Director. A second stage is in the planning to build an adjacent facility which would provide much-needed office space, guest rooms, and a kosher restaurant. A long-term goal is to build a hotel to complete the complex.

Opening of Center of Jewish Culture in Kraków - Report from Rafael Scharf

In December last year, I was privileged to speak in Kraków, my home town, at the opening of The Center of Jewish Culture - a splendid new building erected in the very heart of the old Jewish quarter, on the ruins of a former synagogue. Excerpts from my opening address may convey the nature of the occasion:

"The event which impressed me most was a visit to a school (VIII Liceum Ogólnokształcące im. Stanisława Wyspiańskiego), not far from the place where I lived over fifty years ago. I was brought into a class where, to my astonishment, sixteen and seventeen year-old boys and girls were being taught Hebrew! The lessons are extra-curricular and fees are charged, which shows that both the pupils and their parents have a genuine desire for this to take place. I engaged in a conversation with the boys and girls to discover their motivation behind what, in the circumstances, must appear an exotic pursuit. The motives, clearly, are not simple to articulate. There is, at the base of it, a fascination with the State of Israel and an unquestioned admiration for it. It appears that the visits of Israeli youngsters in Poland and the personal contacts that ensue are of inestimable value. Also, there is some vague desire to connect with a past which has a Jewish dimension. On leaving the class, to a resounding 'Shalom', I said to the teacher (in an audible aside) 'Whatever happens in Poland in the future, nobody will be able to turn these young people into anti-Semites'.

This is patently true. But I shall go beyond that. It seems to me - and I am no starry-eyed idealist - that a new era is dawning in the sphere of Polish-Jewish relations. That the traditional, old-style Polish anti-Semitism, with its grotesque variant of 'anti-Semitism without Jews', has at last collapsed under the weight of its absurdity. That a new generation is coming into its own, free from that virus and immune to new contamination.

The last elections, where for the first time the anti-Semitic card was not played, since it has become clear that it is no longer effective, confirms my observation. Sporadic statements to the contrary or isolated incidents will not totally cease. Given the long history, this would be too much to expect. Privately held sentiments, among the older generation, may continue to linger. But as a force and a threat, anti-Semitism in Poland is vanishing beyond the horizon.

Hearing Hebrew spoken in a Polish classroom has filled me with hope."

Rafael F. Scharf

October Conference Matching Grant

Preparations for the October 1994 Conference (see p.1) are in full swing, and we have started a fund drive to raise the \$15,000 needed to meet conference expenses. We would be most grateful for your tax-deductible contributions to AAPJS. Three of our Board Members have already pledged substantial funds, some in the form of a matching grant which will effectively double donations made by *Gazeta* readers.

Registration for the conference is \$100 per person. It would greatly help us in planning the Conference if you would send your Registration to us as soon as possible. A registration form is printed below for your convenience. All checks should be made out to: **American Association for Polish Jewish Studies**. For additional information call (617) 868-5340 or (617) 497-1289.

Please fill out this registration form and send it with your check to:

American Association for Polish-Jewish Studies
October Conference
1583 Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge, MA 02138.

Number of Persons Planning to Attend: _____

Name (s) _____

Address _____

Telephone number _____

Registration Fee Enclosed \$ _____ Additional Contribution \$ _____

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