

Gazeta

Newsletter of the American Association for Polish-Jewish Studies
1583 Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge, MA 02138, (617) 547-7701

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Fay and Julian Bussgang, Editors

Plans for AAPJS October Conference

Planning for the October Conference is going well. The theme, "Living Side by Side" will explore the historical relationship in Poland of Jews and Christians who interacted but, for the most part, led separate lives.

The introductory lecture is to be given by Professor Benjamin Nathans of the University of Indiana. It will deal with the nature of the various concepts of Jewish identity which fought for dominance in Poland and the outcome of this struggle.

Professor Blejwas of Connecticut State University will discuss the assimilationists. Professor David Roskies, of the Jewish Theological Seminary, will give an account of the "Lost Art of Yiddish Storytelling". Abraham Brumberg will describe the history of the General Jewish Workers' Alliance (the BUND), and Professor Lech Głuchowski of the University of Toronto will talk about the "Myth and Reality of the Jewish Role in the Post-War Communist Apparatus". A round-table on "Jewish Life in East-Central Europe Since 1989" is also being planned.

The evening preceding the Conference, a reception will be held at the home of Irene and Richard Pipes which will enable us to socialize informally.

On Monday, October 14 (Columbus Day), there will be a guided walking tour of early Jewish Boston. The tour will cover the North and West Ends which contain many historical buildings of interest. Among them, we will see the North Church from which the signal was given to Paul Revere that British troops were advancing on Boston. The tour will end in the recently restored Vilna Shul on Beacon Hill, now a Jewish Cultural Center.

It should be a stimulating and enjoyable weekend. We hope many of our members and friends will attend. Please fill out the registration form in the back of this issue. We look forward to seeing you in Boston.

Please Renew Your Membership!

Apology for Kielce Massacre

The Polish Government has issued a letter of formal apology for the pogrom which took place 50 years ago in Kielce, a small city in south-central Poland.

In July 1946, 42 Polish Jews were killed in a hysterical mob attack. The victims, refugees who had survived the war in the Soviet Union, were on their way to Palestine. While in transit through their former homeland, they were temporarily sheltered in Kielce.

The wanton violence was blamed on a so-called "blood libel" accusation and a rumor that a Polish child had been abducted by a Jew. It was later claimed that the pogrom was a Communist provocation, but the Communists, in turn, blamed the Nationalists.

This and other incidents of post-war killings in Poland of surviving Jews have become symbols for Jews everywhere of an unrelenting anti-Semitism which could not be blamed on Nazi occupiers. Unwillingness on the part of successive governments to acknowledge and apologize for what had taken place has led to bitterness in the Jewish community.

Fortunately, the situation is changing. In January, at a World Jewish Congress meeting, Ambassador Krzysztof Śliwiński presented a letter from the new Polish Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dariusz Rosati. The letter clearly labeled the Kielce pogrom an act of Polish anti-Semitism and called what happened "our common tragedy". Rosati stated, "The new democratic Poland deeply regrets and bemoans the entire injustice inflicted on Jews. We would like to ask your forgiveness... We are ashamed that this tragedy occurred in Poland."

POLIN IX Launched in London

Vol. IX of POLIN was introduced in March at a meeting of the Institute of Polish-Jewish Studies, our counterpart in England, held at the Polish Cultural Institute. Rafael Scharf gave some very moving remarks about the importance of POLIN and introduced Professor Chimen Abramsky who addressed the group.

Letter from the President

Dear Members and Friends,

We would like to welcome Marshall Goldman to our Board. He is a true example of a very busy man who finds time for an unbelievable number of organizations and scholarly work. We also would like to welcome to our membership Aviva Green, David Griffel, Roman Kent, Richard Orez, Richard Schifter, and Irene and Robert Szulman.

Because of the great cost of mailing, this will be the last GAZETA sent to those on our list who have not responded. If we do not hear from you by the end of June, you will no longer receive our mailings. Please join our organization or, at least, let us hear that you are interested in our work. Please fill out the form on the back page of this issue and mail it to us.

Our last two meetings were very successful. Lillian Handlin gave a short introduction and then led an interesting discussion based on Volume VIII of POLIN. We launched Volume IX at the same time, and those who are members should have received their copies by now.

The afternoon with Saul Bellow was lively and crowded. His subject, "Jewish Responses to Anti-Semitic Writers", made many of us think of books written by well-known authors who felt compelled to introduce an anti-Semitic element into their novels.

I would like to remind everyone once more to please make hotel or other living arrangements for our Conference, October 12-14, 1996. Official invitations will be mailed out in mid-summer. A Conference Registration form can be found on page 7.

Irene Pipes

Sensational Find in Praga

The building at 50/52 Targowa Street in the Warsaw suburb of Praga, now used as a warehouse, was once a Jewish synagogue. While this was known, the recent discovery of a mural on its walls came as a total surprise. The 1934 painting represents people praying in front of the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem.

Of the 400 synagogues that existed in Warsaw, only a handful survived the war, and no murals have been preserved in any of them. The new find, therefore, is considered extremely significant.

United Restitution Organization

The World Jewish Congress has announced the formation of the United Restitution Organization which will assist former Polish citizens with claims for return of property. Although there is, as yet, no general legislation for restitution to people outside Poland, in some cases, owner's rights have been reinstated.

For information, contact: URO, 570 Seventh Ave., Room 1106, New York NY 10018, Tel. 212/921-3860.

Rev. John Pawlikowski Honored

Rev. John T. Pawlikowski, O.S.M., Ph.D., of the Catholic Theological Union in Chicago, was recently awarded the Army Cross of Merit by the Government of the Republic of Poland. The award was presented by Władysław Bartoszewski, Foreign Minister of Poland, during his visit to DePaul University in Chicago. Father Pawlikowski was honored, in particular, for his work on improving Polish-Jewish relations.

In 1994, Father Pawlikowski received the annual *Człowiek Pojednania* Award (Person of the Year in Reconciliation) from the Polish Council of Christians and Jews in Warsaw.

The honoree is a Council member of the US Holocaust Museum, Co-Chair of the National Polish American - Jewish American Council, and Vice Chair of the American Association for Polish-Jewish Studies.

Page of History Foundation

In April 1991, private citizens in Poland and abroad established a foundation, named "Page of History", dedicated to the commemoration of the presence of Jews in Poland. The foundation's chairman is Professor Jacek Kochanowicz.

The intent of Page of History is to commission appropriate works of contemporary Polish artists to be placed in localities which formerly had large Jewish populations. Each of these works will have a theme from the Old Testament to emphasize the common spiritual heritage of both Catholics and Jews.

The first project, a four meter statue of Moses bearing the Tablets of the Ten Commandments by noted sculptor, Professor Gustaw Zemła, was unveiled in Łódź on November 5, 1995.

For further information about the foundation, readers can contact Vice Chairman John Pomian at 9 Abingdon Gardens, 40 Abingdon Villas, London W8 6BU, U.K. Tel./Fax: 0171-938-2663.

Comments re: *SHTETL* on the Internet

The recent showing by PBS of producer Marian Marzyński's film, "Shtetl", has generated a flood of comments on the Internet. They can be read on the World Wide Web at: <http://www.wgbh.org/frontline>.

The film has already won the Grand Prix of Cinema du Reel, Paris, March 1996. Some viewers find it deserving of an Oscar, while others are highly critical of what they consider as misrepresentations damaging to the image of Poles and harmful to already sensitive Polish-Jewish relations. Comments continue to flow via e-mail both to wgbh and to: grunberg@clarity.com.

Victor Zorza Mourned

Noted Kremlinologist and syndicated columnist, Victor Zorza, died in London on March 20 at age 70. He was born as Salek Wermuth in Kołomyja, Poland (near Lwów). Escaping the Germans, Zorza made his way to Russia as a young teenager. He ended up in a Soviet labor camp, but somehow managed to make his way to Kuibyshev where he was befriended by the famed Russian-Jewish writer, Ilye Ehrenburg. With Ehrenburg's help and a new identity as Victor Zorza, he escaped to Persia and then to England where he served in a Polish Air Force unit of the RAF.

After the war, Zorza lived in London and became a regular contributor to *The Manchester Guardian*. Having developed superb expertise in Soviet affairs by reading and analyzing the Soviet press, he accurately predicted the Sino-Soviet split, the fall of Khrushchev, and the invasion of Czechoslovakia. Widely recognized for his great insights into the Communist world, he was named, in 1968, Journalist of the Year in Britain. He later served as a syndicated columnist for *The Washington Post*.

When his 25-year old daughter, Jane, became ill with cancer, Zorza and his wife, Rosemary, returned to England. There, they became interested in hospice care as a way of providing comfort and peace to the terminally ill. In 1980, they published the book, *A Way to Die*, a moving account of the family's experiences. Zorza later traveled to Russia to promote hospice care.

In June 1994, through a set of fortuitous circumstances, Zorza rediscovered his sister, Ruta, still living in Poland. They were reunited after more than fifty years of each thinking the other had not survived.

Zorza leaves his son Richard of New York City.

The Jan Karski-Pola Nireńska Awards

Jan Karski, retired professor of Georgetown University and Board Member of AAPJS, is well-known as the Polish underground courier who brought the first horrifying reports to Western leaders about the fate of Polish Jews under Nazi occupation. Karski's late wife, the renowned dancer and choreographer, Pola Nireńska, was a Polish-Jew whose family perished during the Holocaust. Upon her death, Karski donated money to YIVO to establish a \$5,000 annual award to honor her memory. The award is intended to enhance an understanding of the destroyed civilization of Polish Jewry and to further Polish-Jewish studies.

The Karski-Nireńska Award is bestowed upon authors who have published works documenting or interpreting contributions to Polish culture and science either by Poles of Jewish origin, whose culture and language were Polish, or by traditional Polish Jews, who wrote in Yiddish on predominantly Jewish themes.

The Pola Nireńska Award, similarly endowed, will be granted annually by a jury of distinguished dance professionals for contributions to the international dance community. This second award has no restrictions on the nationality of the recipient or on the type of contribution to the art of dance.

Nominations are welcome. For additional information, contact Dr. Allan Nadler, Director of Research, YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, 555 West 57th Street, Suite 1100, New York, NY 10019.

Medal of the Righteous

A Polish immigrant, Zofia Bernat-Śliski, of Chicopee, Massachusetts, was recently honored by Yad Vashem for helping save a Jewish friend during the war. Dan Kyram, Consul General of Israel, presented the award at a special ceremony in Springfield.

Bernat-Śliski was nominated by Zofia (Bloch) Novick of Sweden. The two met before the war as youngsters in Poland. During the German occupation, Bernat-Śliski was sent to work on a farm in Germany. In 1942, Novick wrote to Bernat-Śliski that all her family were dead or missing, and she begged for help in joining her friend.

Bernat-Śliski helped Novick procure false papers and get a job on the same farm, thereby saving her life. Bernat-Śliski never sought an award, but Novick nominated her and urged her to accept it.

Supermarket Across From Auschwitz

Auschwitz (Oświęcim) was recently the site of a new controversy. When the town of Oświęcim approved the development of a large supermarket/mall opposite the main entrance to the camp, Jewish organizations raised objections.

Municipal officials, as well as the Director of the Museum, did not see a problem, because they viewed the project as simply a redevelopment of a currently neglected site facing the camp entrance. Currently, there is an old small store and an abandoned factory.

President Kwaśniewski expressed his unhappiness over the project, and Prime Minister Cimoszewicz asked local officials to reconsider the permit. The development of the mall was suspended, and the project appears to have been abandoned.

YIVO

YIVO Institute for Jewish Studies, originally founded in 1925 in Wilno, Poland, had been housed in a New York mansion on Fifth Avenue for 39 years. Temporarily relocated to 555 West 57th Street in 1994, it plans to move soon to more spacious and modern quarters at 5 West 16th Street near Union Square.

To consolidate historical Jewish collections, YIVO will join the American Jewish Historical Society, now on the campus of Brandeis University, the Leo Baeck Institute, and the Yeshiva University Museum in a combined Center for Jewish History.

The YIVO Library contains over 350,000 books and periodicals, and its Archives hold over 22,000,000 documents. Among its treasures are 600 memorial books of Jewish communities in Poland, records from the Warsaw, Łódź, and Wilno ghettos, photographs from Eastern Europe, rabbinical papers, documents of the Jewish Labor Movement, *landsmanschaft* records, personal memoirs, and some communal records.

During last year's reorganization, a discovery was made of a signed sketch by Pablo Picasso of the Yiddish artist Mane-Katz and a letter from Albert Einstein, member of YIVO Board of Directors, discussing the importance of preserving the "spiritual and moral traditions of the Jewish people".

Arrangements have been completed with Lithuania to permit recently discovered documents from the prewar Wilno YIVO archives to be brought to New York for photocopying.

Jidele in Warsaw

Jidele (pronounced Yiddele), a Jewish youth in Yiddish, is the name of a new socio-cultural quarterly publication in Poland. Although some Jewish people question the wisdom of the name which translates into Polish as *Żydek*, "little Jew" or "Jew-boy", the editors declare that they are young and Jewish and proud of it.

This winter's issue of *Jidele* contains a range of topics about Jews and Judaism from all over the world, reports from Israel, articles about to-day's Jewish community in Poland, its history and culture, and letters to the editor from non-Jews as well as Jews.

An article of special interest in this issue reports on a panel discussion about the impact of anti-Semitism on political activity by Jews and the return and preservation of Jewish properties. Much of the debate centered on whether minorities in Poland, and in particular, Jews, should have guaranteed representation, as they did in the prewar Polish *Sejm* (Lower House of Parliament). The German minority still has such a guaranteed representation.

Another article of interest discusses what schools were attended by Jewish children in prewar Poland. Of the 3.1 million Jews in the 1931 population census, there were 350,000 youngsters who were required by law to attend school. A vast majority of the Jewish elementary school-age children attended Polish public schools, even if the language spoken by parents at home was Yiddish.

In the school year 1934/35, 24,000 children attended Hebrew schools, while 12,000 children were in schools with instruction in Yiddish (87 schools). In certain cities, like Wilno, the percentage of children attending Yiddish schools was much higher. However, even among the children attending public schools, there was private instruction in Hebrew and Yiddish.

New Hotel in Kraków Jewish Quarter

The municipal authorities of Kraków have returned the old Mikvah building, situated on the corner of Szeroka and Miodowa Streets in historic Kazimierz, to the Jewish Community. The Community, in turn, has leased out most of the building to the Ariel Café, located nearby. Ariel will operate a second restaurant-café downstairs in this building, while upstairs, there will be a 40 room hotel catering to tourists.

"KEDEM" - International Project to Create a Museum of Jewish History in Poland

Recently, the City of Warsaw donated 13,000 square feet of land in the vicinity of the Monument to the Heroes of the Ghetto to be used as the site of the future home of a Museum of Jewish History in Poland. This challenging project, named "Kedem" (from the past), will portray the long and rich history of Polish Jewry. It will serve to counterbalance the experiences of the Holocaust as conveyed by museums located at the site of former death camps on Polish soil.

The Mayor of Warsaw, Marcin Świącicki, spoke at the ceremony donating the land. He told those assembled that it is important that an institution be created to document the 1000 years of Jewish culture which flourished in Poland and radiated to other countries. Council Member Maciej Gielecki added that it would also be important to have an exhibit dedicated to righteous gentiles to correct the distorted opinion abroad caused by anti-Polish propaganda.

The Museum will have exhibition space, classrooms, and offices. It will use modern, high-tech display facilities, including documentary films, photographs, and models. The archival collection, library, lecture hall, temporary exhibition space, and research staff will remain at the current location of the Jewish Historical Institute on Tłomackie Street.

The International Committee is headed by Ronald S. Lauder, President of the Lauder Foundation, and the Honorary Committee is chaired by Former Israeli President, Chaim Herzog. The team of developers is led by Jeshajahu Weinberg, whose projects have included the Museum of the Diaspora in Tel Aviv and the US Holocaust Museum in Washington, DC.

Additional information is available from Dr. Grażyna Pawlak, Executive Director, Kedem Project, ŻIH, ul Tłomackie 3/5, 00-090 Warszawa, Poland.

I Kept My Promise

Jacob Birnbaum, member of AAPJS, is the author of a recent book, *I Kept My Promise*, recounting his experiences during the Holocaust. Birnbaum, who grew up in Piotrków Trybunalski and Dombrowa, Poland, survived six labor camps. Through Facing History and Ourselves, Birnbaum often lectures to school children about his experiences. The book is published by Jason R. Taylor Associates, Lexington, MA

Art Project Installed in Wieliczka

Perry Gunther, a New York artist, believes that being in a place you wish to depict lends critical insight and inspiration to the work of an artist. This is what motivated Gunther last fall to go to Wieliczka (near Kraków), a town famous for its salt mines that contain underground chambers full of carvings in salt crystal. At one time, Gunther's grandparents owned a hardware store in the lower *Rynek* (market square), and his mother was born in Wieliczka.

The artist wished to create site-specific art appropriate to his family's heritage. Based on talks with his mother and other Jews from the town of Wieliczka, Gunther built a full-scale wooden house with various materials and artifacts in and around it. Planning for the project took two years. The Museum staff was very helpful to Gunther during that time.

The exhibition of Gunther's artwork, entitled "*Me'ayin Bata - Where Do You Come From - Skąd Przybywasz*", opened on October 19, 1995. It is the last stop on the regular underground tour for approximately three thousand visitors a day.

The artist is now working with Hebrew Union College in New York to bring the exhibit to America.

New Participant in Dialogue

Jan Grosfeld, a Polish Catholic of Jewish descent, has been named by the Polish Catholic Church as Secretary of the Polish Episcopal Commission for Dialogue with Judaism. Since Catholicism originates from Judaism, Grosfeld believes that there should be close ties between the two religions.

ND Leader Dmowski Honored in Warsaw

Roman Dmowski (1864-1939), was the leader and founder of the right-wing Polish National Democratic Party (ND-*Endecja*) in pre-war Poland. Anti-Semitism was a key element of his ideology. He declared "Poland for the Poles", thereby excluding Jews, Belorussians, and Ukrainians, and urged a boycott of Jewish stores.

Recently, the City Council of Warsaw named the intersection of two major streets, Ulica Marszałkowska and Aleje Jerozolimskie, *Rondo Romana Dmowskiego*. It is startling to those who remember the violence of the *Endeks* that Dmowski would be so honored in modern Poland.

Echoes of the Past – Pszon Reminisces, Grynberg Responds

Negative feelings about Jews came to the fore in the reminiscences of Mieczysław Pszon published in November in *Tygodnik Powszechny*, a highly regarded lay Catholic weekly in Kraków. Pszon, a veteran journalist was interviewed shortly before his death.

When Pszon entered Kraków's Jagiellonian University in 1934, Catholic Polish students were being attracted either by Fascism or by Communism. To him there seemed to have been no middle ground.

Being conservative, Pszon became active in the local *Stronnictwo Narodowe* (National Party). Nonetheless, he claimed to have been friendly with "Socialists and Jews". In his view, the model of anti-Semitism in Kraków was different than elsewhere in Poland, because Jews there were "Polonized". Pszon saw Jews in Congress Poland (the area under Russian domination), and especially in Wilno, as belonging to a different nation, since Jews there lived in a separate world and spoke a different language.

Pszon judged Jews to be one of the most destructive elements in Polish society, having no interest in the existence of the Polish state. He was referring to the "nationalist" state as opposed to the "federalist" state that included Jews, Belorussians, Ukrainians, and Germans in addition to Catholic Poles.

In his view, Jews did not support the Polish drive for independence in World War I. He protested that the "Jewish lobby" had succeeded in imposing clauses in the Treaty of Versailles, designed to protect minorities, which he felt interfered with Poland's sovereignty.

Pszon becried that the Jews, a mere 10% of the population, played such an important role in Poland, being prominent in the economic life of the country and in the professions. He argued that in Kraków, before World War II, 90% of doctors and 60% of lawyers were Jewish. To him, the way to solve this "problem" was to support Zionism and emigration of Jews to Palestine.

Pszon felt that the "Jewish problem" in Poland was obvious, which is why the Nationalists (*Endeks*) could persuade many Poles that if the "problem" were solved, their economic difficulties would disappear. Nonetheless, he thought it was fortunate that such opinions never resulted in the same "phenomena" as in Germany.

A few issues later, *Tygodnik Powszechny* published a response by Professor Henryk Grynberg, a noted

Polish-Jewish writer, who left Poland in 1968. Years later, he returned and created the documentary, *Birthplace*, containing an unforgettable scene with the discovery of his father's grave. Grynberg said he regretted disputing Pszon's views when Pszon could no longer answer his objections, but he felt compelled to respond to Pszon's comments, because Polish Jews also were no longer here to defend themselves.

First of all, Grynberg objected to Pszon's linking Jews and Socialists, as Jews held many different political views. He also disputed the claim that Jews living in Eastern Poland were un-Polish and a "separate nation". He noted that Jews in the eastern territories traditionally aligned themselves with Catholic Poles to the dismay of ethnic Ukrainians and Lithuanians.

In response to Pszon's claim that Jews were a "destructive" element and played a disproportionate role in commerce, Grynberg asked, "And what is so bad about economic activity? "How is trade destructive?"

Grynberg saw an inconsistency between the objection that Jews had not assimilated and the complaint that there were so many Jewish lawyers and doctors, a fact giving testimony to their assimilation. He also mentioned that the reason so many Jewish lawyers turned to private practice was that they could not become judges and prosecutors.

In response to Pszon's objection to the international Jewish community "forcing" the inclusion in the Versailles Treaty of a provision to protect minorities, Grynberg stated that no law-abiding citizen should have found such an inclusion objectionable. Jews had understandably requested this protection in response to pogroms perpetrated by the Polish Army in 1919.

As for loyalty to the state, there were fewer Jews in Poland than Ukrainians or Belorussians and not many more than Germans or Lithuanians. These other ethnic groups were often in conflict with the state, but the National Democratic Party focused only on Jews.

Grynberg particularly disagreed with Pszon's saying that Jews were a "destructive" element in Poland. To him, the Nationalists were the destructive element. Their narrow-minded viewpoint distracted people from solving the real problems of needed agricultural reform and unemployment and fostered the alienation of ethnic minorities, thus contributing to Poland's defeat in 1939.

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AAPJS's Second Conference
in Cambridge, Massachusetts

Living Side by Side: Jews and Poles

OCTOBER 12-14, 1996
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RECEPTION IN CAMBRIDGE
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Special Rate for Advanced Registration

Name(s): _____

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October 12: Evening Reception _____

October 13: A.M. Session _____ Lunch _____ P.M. Session _____ Post-Session Reception _____

October 14: Morning Walking Tour of Historic Boston _____

Cost per person (Please fill in number of persons and total dollar amount for each category):

Conference, including Lunch, Receptions, Tour: __ @\$125 = ____ (\$100 if paid by August 1!)

Sessions only, no Lunch, Receptions, or Tour: Student: __ @\$20 = ____

Other: __ @\$50 = ____

Additional Contributions to Help Defray Cost of Conference Are Most Welcome: _____

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