Gazeta

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1583 Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge, MA 02138, (617) 547-7701 Fay and Julian Bussgang, Editors

Rabbi Ben-Zion Gold: Recollections about Hasidism

by Bill Frusztajer

If audiences' "vote with their feet" is the ultimate test of a presenter's popularity, then the unusually large attendance at Rabbi Ben-Zion Gold's talk on Hassidism has firmly established his credentials as one of the most interesting speakers at the gatherings of our association.

The talk began with a 20-minute reading of a prepared text whose contents fulfilled the promise of the title of the presentation, namely a personal recollection of the life among Hassidim in pre-World War II Poland. The text did not go into deep spiritual values governing the movement but projected a series of vivid pictures of various incidents involving Rabbi Gold's encounters with Hassidic leaders.

The reading ended with an emotional and tragic recollection of the teenage Ben-Zion Gold's assumption that the German occupation of Poland, and the subsequent unimaginable suffering inflicted on Polish Jews, had to be the prelude to the arrival of the Messiah. Holy scriptures did indeed prophesy untold disasters to be followed by the ultimate salvation, and there could be no other explanation in Ben Gold's young mind for God's cruel action.

It was a most vigorous question and answer period that steered the meeting into a discussion of the deeper meaning of Hassidism. One set of questions came from the now mature individuals brought up in immigrant Hassidic homes who sought clarification of some of the stories and pronouncements they remembered from their childhood. Most other questions dealt with the Hassids' spiritual values, their everyday life, the structure of their community and the authority of their leaders. Clearly, there was not enough time even for a cursory description of every aspect of Hassidism, but some of the facts that emerged pointed to the existence of very cohesive social and religious communities and the role of the rabbi as the intermediary between God and individual Hassids. Such was the respect for the leaders, a respect usually well earned on the basis of the rabbi's wisdom and knowledge. Congregation members routinely asked their rabbi to pray for them and requested God's granting specific requests. Rabbis were even invited to participate in business, based on nothing more than the conviction on the part of the owners that even the rabbi's passive role would bring God's blessing and promote the success of the enterprise.

Rabbi Gold delivered a balanced presentation without overt criticism or undue praise of the Hassidic movement. However, in response to one question he informed the meeting that he himself did not become a Hassid and that his father, a deeply religious and devout man, harbored some negative feelings about Hassidism.

There seemed to be no end to questions from the audience, and eventually the chairman adjourned the meeting after Rabbi Gold agreed to stay behind and answer individual inquiries on a less formal basis.

Maryna Falska (Fajngold) Dies

Maryna Falska, former assistant to Janusz Korczak, died in Warsaw on December 16. She was 92.

Falska established with Korczak *Our Home* (*Nasz Dom*) for children in Bielany, Warsaw. After the war, she directed the Jewish Children's Home (Dom Dziecka) in Helenówek, near ¸ódê. She was the leading proponent of Korczak's approach to helping orphaned children and authored publications about Korczak and his methods. At age 84, she completed her doctorate.

Notices of her death appeared in *Gazeta Wyborcza* and *Rzeczpospolita*, as well as in Jewish publications in Poland. Falska leaves no immediate family but many former charges who mourn her death.

Letter from the President

Dear Members and Friends:

Volume XI of POLIN is out, and we plan to send it to all members who have contributed $100 or more. We had some problems getting our copies from the distributor in Oregon, but they have finally arrived. If you do not receive your copy in the near future, please contact us at our address on the front page.

We would appreciate it if you would notify us also if you are not interested in receiving our mailingss or Gazeta*, and we will take you off our mailing list. We hope, of course, that this will not be the case.*

Rabbi Ben Zion Gold spoke to us a few weeks ago about the Hasidim and their life when he was a boy in prewar Poland. We had an exceptionally large and interested audience for this talk. You can read more about it in an article by Bill Frusztajer in this issue.

Julian and Fay Bussgang, Alexandra Watkins and Johanna Ross attended a conference in California on "Examination of Conscience: Polish Church confronts anti-Semitism." You can learn further details about this gathering from the report by Julian.

Representing our Association, Lilka Elbaum, Genia Shrut and I have been meeting with Rabbi Pollak of the Boston University Hillel, his staff and donors to discuss and organize the exhibit "And I Still See Their Faces." The exhibit, which was first shown in Warsaw was put together by Golda Tencer of the Shalom Foundation of Warsaw. The exhibit will display the photographs she collected in Poland of the prewar life of Polish Jews. The exhibit is expected to open in Boston on September 8, 1999.

We are happy to announce that the following have recently joined our association: Barry Strauss, Deborah Cohen, Mary Ellen Feinleib, Robert Riesman, Rose Sklare and Nurit Weiss.

Since it Passover is almost here, I want to wish all of you a most pleasant Seder wtih your families.

Irene E. Pipes

Righteous Among the Nations

In January, the Israeli Ambassador presented "Righteous Among the Nations of the World" medals to 200 inhabitants of Warsaw and vicinity.

Polish–Jewish Writers After World War II

Monika Adamczyk-Garbowska and Antony Polonsky are assembling a translated anthology of selected writings of Polish-Jewish writers after World War II. The anthology begins with a long introduction covering the history of Polish-Jewish writing from the end of the 19th century until today. The book will be published by the University of Nebraska Press in their series "Jewish Writing in the Contemporary World."

Polonsky, board member of AAPJS and editor-in-chief of *POLIN*, is Professor of Eastern European Studies at Brandeis University. Garbowska, temporarily a visiting faculty member at Brandeis on a Fullbright Scholarship, is a professor of comparative literature at the Maria Sk∏odowska-Curie University in Lublin and a translator from English and Yiddish into Polish. She spoke recently about postwar Polish-Jewish writers at Harvard University's European Studies Center.

The selected postwar writers are Julian Stryjkowski (b. Pesach Stark, 1905-1996), Zofia Grzesiak (b. Nechume Szwarcblat, 1914), Adolf Rudnicki (1912-1992), Artur Sandauer (1913-1989), Stanis∏aw Wygodzki (1907-1991), Ida Fink (b. 1921), Leo Lipski (b. Lipschütz, 1917-1997), Bogdan Wojdowski (1930-1994), Henryk Grynberg (b. 1936) and Hanna Krall (b. 1937). The main factor that caused these writers to write on Jewish topics was the Holocaust, which strengthened their Jewish identity.

Some books are available in English, such as *The Journey* and *A Scrap of Time* by Fink, *The Victory* and *Children of Zion* by Grynberg, *Shielding the Flame* and *To Outwit God* by Krall, *Ascent to Heaven* by Rudnicki, *Bread for the Departed* by Wojdowski and *The Inn* by Stryjkowski; many others, however, are not. *Shielding the Flame,* in Polish, is assigned reading in the curriculum of many Polish high schools.

Of course, many of the most popular Polish writers in the inter-war period were Jewish, including Julian Tuwim, Józef Wittlin, Marian Hemar, Antoni S∏onimski and Bruno Schultz. They were in the mainstream of Polish writers and did not write on particularly Jewish topics. However, in 1944, Tuwim did write his moving essay, "We Polish Jews." In general, there was a gap between the assimilated Jewish writers and Yiddish writers. Until 1963, for example, I. B. Singer had never heard of Bruno Schultz.

The book is expected to appear in the year 2000.

Rohatyn Ceremony

This past summer, a group of survivors from Rohatyn (now Rogatin, Ukraine) traveled from the U.S. and Israel to their native town, located north of Stanis∏awów (today's Ivano-Frankivsk), to pay homage to those who were killed during the Holocaust.

Municipal authorities arranged for a commemorative plaque to be mounted on the wall of the former Judenrat building. The returning visitors held a ceremony both at this site and at the site of a commemorative gravestone outside of town on a hill where most of the Jews were shot and buried when the ghetto was liquidated.

English sections of the Rohatyn Yizkor book have been posted on the Website devoted to Jewish Genealogy (www.JewishGen.org), and translations of the Yiddish and Hebrew sections will soon be available.

Rohatyn has an interesting legend. During a Turkish invasion long ago, a beautiful young lady from Rohatyn called Roxana became the favorite of the Turkish sultan and convinced him to spare the town from destruction.

Editor Jerzy Turowicz Dies

Jerzy Turowicz, 86, for many years the editor of the lay Catholic weekly *Tygodnik Powszechy* published in Kraków, died Wednesday following a heart attack.

A philosopher, writer and spiritual leader of the Polish anti-Communist opposition, Turowicz was close to Archbishop Karol Wojty∏a of Kraków, now Pope John Paul II. He became an adviser to the Solidarity trade movement that forced the end of the Communist regime in Poland.

Turowicz edited *Tygodnik* from 1945 until his death, except for a three-year period from 1953-56 when the Polish Communist government asked him to step aside. His was one of the few independent voices in Polish journalism under Communist rule.

As editor of *Tygodnik Powszechy*, Turowicz fought anti-Semitism and published articles and letters addressing the issue.

Following the return of democracy, he became an astute critic of Poland's new government and legislative leaders.

Turowicz has been awarded honorary degrees from Yale University and Boston College.

Programs at Workmen's Circle

Workmen's Circle, 1762 Beacon Street, Brookline, will hold its first lecture in the series "Maken A Lebn" on Sunday, March 7, at 2:30 PM. Dr. Jack L. Jacobs will speak on "The Jewish Worker in Eastern Europe."

Dr. Jacobs is Professor of Political Science at the City University of New York and editor of *Bund at 100*.
Additional information is available at 617-566-6281.

On Sunday, March 21 at 2:30 PM., Fay and Julian Bussgang, editors of *Gazeta*, will speak about the book they have translated from Polish into English, *The Last Eyewitnesses: Children of the Holocaust Speak*, edited by Wiktoria Âliwowska (Northwestern University Press, 1998). The book contains a remarkable collection of 65 accounts by child survivors who remained in Poland and documents a variety of circumstances under which the children survived.

Fay will show a few slidesof the Jewish community in Poland today and tell how she and Julian got involved in translating the book. Julian will then give brief accounts of some of the stories contained in the book. All interested persons are invited to attend.

Polish Art Exhibit

February 22 through March 15, there will be an artistic exhibition by Polish "emotionalist" sculptors, painters, photographers, ceramicists and fabricists at Northeastern University, Curry Student Center, Boston.

Poland and Holocaust Museums

The Polish Embassy in Washington, DC reports the cooperation of the Majdanek Museum, located outside of Lublin, with the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum and many other Holocaust Museums and institutions around the world.

The director of the Majdanek Museum, Edward Balawejder, states that Majdanek provides access to 9,390 relics in its collection for temporary exhibitions. By comparison, the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum exhibits about 4000 documents and 1,000 photographs.

Polish Prime Minister Jerzy Buzek toured the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum as part of a state visit to Washington. He was accompanied by Museum Council Chairman Miles Lerman, Acting Director Sara Bloomfield and Associate Director of International Programs Jacek Nowakowski.

Examination of Conscience: Polish Church Confronts Anti-Semitism: 1989-1999

by Julian J. Bussgang

On January 20, a conference was held at Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles, California, entitled "Examination of Conscience: Polish Church Confronts Anti-Semitism, 1989-1999." Professor Bohdan Oppenheim of Loyola, the organizer of the conference, explained that the topic was in response to the call by Pope John Paul II for the church to examine its conscience before the millenium. Father Tom Rausch, Chairman of the Theology Department at Loyola, elaborated on this theme. Greetings were read from Francis Cardinal George of Chicago and from Cardinal Mahoney of Los Angeles. The panel was chaired by Professor Piotr Wróbel of Toronto.

Professor Andrzej Korbo*f*ski of UCLA gave the lead-off talk on "Sins of Errors and Opportunities Lost" over the past ten years, claiming that when ugly voices have sounded, the Polish Church has been unable or unwilling, to control them, whether it be a parish priest in Gda*f*sk, Radio "Maryja" or the erectors of wooden crosses near Auschwitz. While such incidents have been an embarrassment to the Church and were to a certain degree disclaimed, Korbo*f*ski wondered why they were not dealt with more vigorously.

The three invited panelists from Poland were Bishop Tadeusz Pieronek of Kraków, Krzysztof Koz∏owski, Senator from Kraków and an editor of the Catholic weekly *Tygodnik Powszechny*, and Adam Michnik, editor-in-chief of *Gazeta Wyborcza*, the largest daily in Poland. The emphasis of all three of these speakers was on the progress and accomplishments of the Church in dealing with anti-Semitism over the last ten years, which, as the effects of Nazi and Soviet propaganda begin to fade, has been significant and should be applauded.

Bishop Pieronek reminded the audience of the pastoral letter issued by priests declaring anti-Semitism a sin, recent papal documents and the Church's actions in Poland in reaching out to the Jewish community and renouncing the teachings that Jews were "people marked with the sin of Judas," a major cause of anti-Semitism in the past. This "religious" or "biblical"' origin of anti-Semitism has been eloquently addressed by Pope John Paul II and is probably the greatest step forward by the Church to date.

Senator Koz∏owski and Editor Michnik talked about the fact that since very few Jews remain in Poland, anti-Semitism makes no sense. Poland deserves credit for its steps to confront anti-Semites among the rather small group of nationalist extremists who advocate it. Poland also has good relations with Israel.

During the discussion period, Polish-Americans in the audience challenged the panelists' concern with Polish anti-Semitism when the Jews of the world are, in their view, extremely anti-Polish. Indeed, they said, it is that attitude by world Jewry that engenders anti-Semitism in Poland as a response.

One Polish-Catholic-American asked why the Jews of the world had never apologized for the deaths of Poles after the war by the Communist secret police, which he claimed was one third Jewish. Of course, he did not ask for a similar apology from the Catholics of the world for the two-thirds of the secret police who were Catholic.

The panelists replied to these questions by saying that this conference was not about Polish-Jewish relations but only about the Church's self-examination.

One Polish-Jewish-American attendee said that he was bothered by the fact that the Church and the panelists spoke of Poles and Jews, not of Polish Jews and Polish Catholics. The panelists did not seem to regard Jews as also being Poles, as assimilated Jews saw themselves.

Reflecting on this last comment, I believe that one of the causes of anti-Semitism in Poland today is quite subtle and never discussed. Specifically, it is the position of the Church that a Pole is by definition a Catholic. Of course, it then follows that anyone who is Jewish is not a true Pole. The Church, as the defender of Polish unity and Polish identity, thus inadvertently encourages citizens of Poland to regard Jews as outsiders.

As an example of such an interpretation, we note that Bishop Tadeusz Pieronek, one of the more liberal leaders of the Polish clergy, used in his presentation the phrase that in Poland "*˚ydzi byli obecni.*" (Jews were present) The Polish Jews in the audience were bothered by this phrase, as for them, Jews had been an integral part of Polish society for six centuries and were not just passively "present."

Another comment heard that was hurtful to Jews was, "Since there is anti-Semitism everywhere in the world, why pick on Poland"? In other words, if anti-Semitism exists elsewhere, they should be excused; hardly a moral position. While there may be anti-Semitism in other countries, at least in the U.S. and most western countries, it is not considered publicly acceptable behavior that can occur without sanctions.

As for the Polish Catholic Americans who complained that their anti-Semitism was justified because the Jews of the world are giving Poland a bad name, it should be pointed out that Jews who seem anti-Polish do not denigrate Polish people in general; they are focused on only one issue, the behavior of Poles during the Holocaust and right after the war. It is true that there are more Poles among the "Righteous of the World" than any other national group, but it is also true that many more-than-have-been-acknowledged Polish Catholics were only too eager to turn in their Jewish neighbors to the Germans for some material gain. For many Jews the current occasional outbursts of anti-Semitism bring back the memory of these other events.

When former Foreign Minister Dariusz Rosatti expressed the first official governmental apology for the Kielce pogrom, Jews were encouraged. Unfortunately, however, he was immediately criticized by right-wingers and certain Polish-American leaders for accepting any guilt on the part of Polish Catholics.

Noone who is knowledgeable blames Polish Catholics for being the architects of the Holocaust, but, if complete reconciliation is to be achieved, then this generation, like the Germans, must be willing to recognize the prevalence of wartime betrayals and denunciations of Jews, reported by survivor after survivor, the incidents of pogroms shortly after the war, and the anti-Zionist campaign of 1968 when so many Jews systematically lost their jobs. It is the lack of acknowledgement of these events that makes it so difficult for Americn Jews to forgive and move on.

In summary, the conference was an encouraging event, perhaps heralding a new era in Polish-Jewish relations, but it also leaves us with the recognition that much remains to be accomplished. Realistically, it is extremely difficult for the Polish Church to deal with anti-Semitism unless it reconciles itself to the separation of Church and State. As long as the Church insists that Poland be an exclusively Roman-Catholic country, Jews will continue to be seen as interlopers.

Artur Szyk Remembered

A new English-language Polish-American cultural review, prepared by the publishers of *Nowy Dziennik,* was issued in New York. The January issue of this new monthly, called *New Horizon,* carried an extensive article dedicated to the master illustrator Artur Szyk. The art of Szyk was on exhibit in February at the Spertus Museum in Chicago.

Szyk, who was born in 1894 in ¸ódê, Poland, moved to Paris in 1921 and later traveled extensively in the Orient. He returned to Poland from 1937 to 1940, but in 1940, he came to New York where he lived until his death from a heart attack in 1951.

Szyk painted miniatures and portraits, illustrated books and sketched cartoons and caricatures. Among his best known works are serial illustrations of historical topics, such as a series on the Statute of Kalisz, the 13th century document that was the original Bill of Rights for Jews in Poland. Among his works is a series of 38 illustrations of the American Revolution that was presented to President Franklin Delano Roosevelt by then Polish President Ignacy MoÊcicki.

In 1931, Szyk was awarded the Gold Cross of Merit by the Government of Poland. His most outstanding achievement was the illustrated Haggadah (1934-37), which is popular to this day. He also illustrated *Pathways Through the Bible* by Mortimer J. Cohen (The Jewish Publication Society, Philadelphia, 1946), which he dedicated to his mother, Eugenia Szyk, who perished in Majdanek in March of 1943, and to Józefa, his mother's servant, a Polish peasant woman who voluntarily accompanied her to Majdanek and perished along with her.

New Horizons reports that an Artur Szyk Society was formed in 1991. The mailing address is 1200 Edgehill Drive, Burlingame, CA 94010, Irvin Ungar, chairman. The society's Web page is <www.szyk.com>

My Just War

reviewed by Genia Shrut

Professor Gabriel Temkin, an economist, who in the postwar years served as an advisor to the Polish government, is the author of an autobiographical book, *My Just War* (Presidio Press, 1998), describing his wartime experiences.

In 1939, Temkin, a native of ¸ódê, Poland, fled to the Soviet-controlled eastern part of Poland. In 1942, he was drafted into the Soviet Army. Taken as a prisoner-of-war by the Germans, he survived though he was Jewish, escaped and rejoined the Soviet Army. He took part in battles in the Ukraine, Romania, Hungary and Austria. His vivid description of combat in a Soviet infantry regiment from 1943-1945 makes fascinating reading.

Temkin left Poland in 1968, taught economics at a Canadian university and now resides in Sarasota, FL.

Fundraising Progresses for Museum of History of Polish Jews

The newsletter of the Polish Embassy in Washington reports that one million dollars has been raised so far toward the ten million needed for the construction in Poland of the Museum of the Culture and History of Polish Jews. Representing the Association of the Jewish Historical Institute, Gra˝yna Pawlak, the development officer of the project, held a news conference in Warsaw to report on the progress.

The museum, whose purpose is to preserve the memory of Polish Jewry, will focus not on the Holocaust but on the once flourishing Jewish culture and community in Poland. Documents, photographs, memorabilia and objects of art will serve as an educational setting for those wishing to study and remember Jewish life in Poland. Visitors will have access to various computer data bases with information about Polish Jews.

Art Recovery

The Commission for Art Recovery, a committee of the World Jewish Restitution Organization, is providing claim forms at their web site: <http://www.wjc-artrecovery.org/>. The Commission works in cooperation with the New York State Banking Department's Holocaust Claims Processing Office.

Szmul Zygielbojm Honored

Recently, the Polish Government honored the memory of Szmul (Artur) Zygielbojm by bestowing a commemorative medal in his honor at a ceremony in Washington, DC. Zygielbojm's oldest grandson, Artur, received the medal on behalf of the family.

Szmul Zygielbojm, born in Borowice, Poland was active in the Bund, the Jewish Socialist Workers Party. Under the German occupation, he became a member of the Judenrat (Jewish Council) that was set up by the Germans to interface with the Jewish community.

Zygielbojm escaped from Warsaw in 1939 and made his way to Belgium and then to Britain. His wife and youngest son remained in the ghetto and were later killed. In London, Zygielbojm became a member of the Polish Government-in-exile, representing the Bund and Polish Jews.

In December 1942, when Jan Karski, the courier of the Polish underground, brought the tragic news of the massive extermination of Jews, Zygielbojm sought action by the British to publicly expose the German atrocities to the western world.

Finding himself unsuccessful in mobilizing public attention, Zygielbojm became despondent. On May 12, 1943, in order to attract the attention of the world to the extermination of Jews by the Nazis, he committed suicide. A plaque quoting his final words is mounted in Warsaw next to the Monument to the Heroes of the Ghetto: "May my death be a forceful cry against the indifference of the world..." A copy of the letter is also on display at the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington.

"White Swan" Synagogue

On November 8, a religious service was held in the newly restored White Swan Synagogue in Wroc∏aw that had been burnt down during Kristallnacht 60 years ago. Rabbi Pinchas Joskowitz, the chief rabbi of Poland, officiated. Jerzy Kichler, president of the Jewish Community in Poland, spoke about the events of the night of Nov 9-10, 1938, the "night of broken glass."

Prime Minister Buzek attended the ceremony commemorating the victims of Kristallnacht, as did Cardinal Henryk Gulbinowicz and Consul General of Germany Roland Klies.

Gazeta Wyborcza Going Public

Timothy G. Ash, in *The New Yorker* magazine of February 15, reports that the leading Polish daily, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, will soon be going public. He mentions that the editor-in-chief, Adam Michnik, the deputy editor, Helena Luszczak, and the business manager, Wanda Rapaczy*f*ski, are all three of Jewish origin. Having built the publication business from scratch, they are now expanding into television.

Michnik has declared that he will decline the potentially very valuable new issue stock in order to preserve his intellectual independence and editorial judgment.

Ash calls *Gazeta Wyborcza,* with its circulation of half a million copies on weekdays, the most successful newspaper in post-Communist Europe.

Polish Group Won't Block March

Poles seeking compensation for property seized by the Nazis to build the Auschwitz and Birkenau death camps said Monday that they have abandoned plans, announced in January, to block the Jewish "March of the Living." The two-mile march from Auschwitz to Birkenau is an annual event of young Jews, from Israel and elsewhere in the world, to remember the Jews who died in these camps. In 1998, both Polish Prime Minister Jerzy Buzek and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu participated in the march.

El˝bieta Waluszek, head of the Polish group of people who lost their homes and land in 1941 when the camps were created, said she feared having anti-Semitic groups join the protest and casting her group in a wrong light.

According to Waluszek, Germans evicted 5,000 people from the area, demolished 900 houses and requisitioned the land. Shortly after the war, in 1958, some families got a small amount of compensation for the land, but nothing was paid for the buildings or other losses, Waluszek said.

"We are not protesting against the Jews. We only want respect for our property rights " said Waluszek, who lives in Brzezi*f*ka (Birkenau).

Waluszek's group now plans to hold its own march on March 6 from Auschwitz to Birkenau to draw public attention to their demand for compensation.

Ancient Jewish Cemetery in PrzemyÊl

PrzemyÊl, a town in southeastern Poland very near today's Ukrainian border, was once the third largest city of Galicia after Lwów and Kraków. Before the war, the city had roughly 60,000 inhabitants, of whom one third were Jewish. The initial settlement of Jews dates back to the fourteenth century.

According to "Dateline: World Jewry," published by the World Jewish Congress, efforts are now underway, funded by American Jews, to surround an old sixteenth century cemetery in PrzemyÊl with a fence and to erect a memorial gravestone.

Jewish Heritage Travel

The third edition of *Jewish Heritage Travel: A Guide to East-Central Europe*, authored by Ruth E. Gruber and published by Jason Aronson, Inc., Northvale, New Jersey, is to appear shortly.

Some fifty pages of updated material, both on Jewish heritage sites as well as on the reviving Jewish life in the region, have been added. Countries covered include Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Yugoslavia, Montenegro and Macedonia. The ISBN number for the book is 0-7657-6063-0.

Compensation for Polish Forced Labor

Although Poles received much less than French victims, German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder has rejected the proposal of the Foundation for Polish-German Unity to increase the compensation given to Polish forced laborers and other victims. Another working meeting between the Chancellor and Prime Minister Buzek is planned in 1999.

Gda*f*sk Synagogue Returned

The site that once housed the Great Synagogue of Gda*f*sk has been returned to the Jewish community. The original synagogue, built at the end of the 19th century, was destroyed during the war. A smaller synagogue has been built on the site to replace it.

Some of the preserved artifacts, now in storage in New York City, will be returned.

International Conference on "Polish/Jewish/Music!"

In November 1998, the Polish Music Reference Center and the School of Music at the University of Southern California jointly organized an international conference entitled "Polish/Jewish/Music!"

The conference began with presentations on the history of Jews in Poland by Professor Paul Knoll of USC and by Prof. Piotr Wróbel of the University of Toronto. The introductory talks were followed by Prof. Halina Goldberg of Indiana University presenting Jewish musical contributions in the 19th century. Those mentioned included Edward Wolff, who became a professor at the Paris conservatory, Maria Szymanowska, famous pianist of Frankist descent, violinists Izydor Lotto and Henryk Wieniawski, and the pianist Karol Tausig.

A paper by Dr. Marian Fuks of the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw was read by USC graduate student Diana Diskin. In the paper, Fuks discussed the advent of large synagogues of the 19th and 20th century, with organs, music by choirs and improvisations by Jewish cantors. He noted that Stanis∏aw Moniuszko, the Polish composer, admired the voice of Joel Jaszu*f*ski (d. 1850), and that tenor Gershon Sirota was regarded as the "Jewish Caruso."

Hassidic music tended to be more secular, often connected with dance, and was rarely formally transcribed. Its creators were mostly anonymous. Klezmer ensembles performed at Polish weddings, in country inns and occasionally at festive events. The most famous klezmer poet-composer was Mordechai Gebirtig (1877-1942), whose Jewish partisan song was sung during the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising.

Jews were also patrons of music; the Warsaw Philharmonic was founded by Aleksander Reichman. Jews were often orchestral musicians, but some achieved international virtuoso careers like Pawe∏ Kocha*f*ski (violinist), Gregory Piatigorsky (cellist), Gregory Fitelberg (conductor), Artur Rubinstein (pianist), Wanda Lewandowska (harpsichordist), Bronis∏aw Huberman and Ida Handel (violinists). Polish composers of Jewish descent include Henryk Wieniawski (1835-88), whose father converted to Catholicism. Ludwik Grossman (1835-1915) was known for his operas and also owned a piano factory. Adolf Sonnefeld (1837-1914) composed operettas and ballets. Ludwik Lewandowski (1831-96), violinist and conductor, composed over 300 popular Polish dances.

In the 20th century some of the important Polish composers of Jewish descent were Józef Koffler (1896-1944), the first Polish composer of 12-tone music, Karol Rathaus (1891-1954), composer of piano sonatas, Szymon Laks (1901-83), and Aleksander Tansman (1897-1986), protegé of Maurice Ravel.

Artur Schütz. was the composer of the beloved wartime military song that commemorates the most famous battle of the Free Polish Forces in Italy, "Czerwone maki pod Monte Cassino" (Red poppies at Monte Cassino).

A paper by Dr. Isacher Fater of Ramat Gan, Israel, was also read. Fater noted that contemporary Jewish music developed in three centers—America, Palestine and Poland. It was in Poland that the best conditions for the development of Jewish music existed. Jewish people in Poland delighted both in folk song and liturgical music. There were choir groups, such as "Hazamir" (Nightingale) in Warsaw and ,ódê. Concerts by cantors, symphonic orchestras, opera performances, folk song programs and other Jewish musical events were all very popular with Jewish audiences in Poland, at the very time that in America and Palestine, the question was being posed, "What is Jewish music?"

Professors Philip Cohen and Anna Szpilberg of Concordia University, Montreal, in a talk entitled "The Virtuoso Connection," reviewed the international musical lives and world impact of Leopold Godowski, Ignacy Friedman and Moritz Rosenthal. Samples of their compositions were illustrated at the piano.

Prof. Maria Anna Harley of USC talked about three Polish-Jewish composers who settled in California after the war: Aleksander Tansman (1897-1986), Roman Ryterband (1914-79) and Henry Vars (b. Henryk Warszawski, 1902-77). During the second world war, Vars escaped the Nazis and joined the Second Polish Corps of General Anders.

Dr. Linda Schubert of UCLA further discussed the career of Vars who wrote scores for over 80 films and many TV shows, often anonymously. His breadth of musical experience from leitmotif to full symphony and nineteenth century harmonics allowed him to write scores for popular shows, mysteries, westerns, science fiction films, and dramas. Today, Vars has been almost forgotten in the US, but he is remembered in Poland.

The biographical lectures were followed by a discussion, by Hankus Netsky of the New England Conservatory in Boston, of different styles of Klezmer music and the lives and repertoire of some professional Jewish folk instrumentalists.

The last talk was given by Bret Werb of the National Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, who attempted to find examples of recorded or notated Polish-Jewish music that would supplement a literary survey of the texts presented in the article by the late Chone Shmeruk, "*Mayufes*: A Window on Polish–Jewish Relations." (*POLIN*, Vol. 10, p. 273) "*Mayufes*" derives from the first words of a family dinner Sabbath song, and is thought to meant "How fair you are."

The conference continued with musical sessions featuring music of many of the composers discussed and with presentations reviewing the works of Fitelberg, Koffler and Rathaus.

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Jewish Cemetery in Frampol

Moment Magazine of February reports that for the past fifteen years a group of Polish schoolchildren has helped clean up and care for the Jewish cemetery in Frampol, a town 150 miles southwest of Warsaw. The school's principal and teachers, with the encouragement of the town's priest, are thought to have initiated the project.

Robert Waters, a Washington area dentist, who has made it his obligation to help restore Poland's Jewish cemeteries, says that he has found willing partners in Frampol's Christian schoolchildren. He reports that the gravestones are all standing upright, are clean and have flowers placed on them.

The oldest graves in the cemetery go back to the 1700s. Three mass graves contain 700 bodies of Jews murdered by the Nazis.

Waters wants to provide the schoolchildren with a computer so that they can have access to the wider Jewish world. "The only way to get better relationships between people is through education," he says.

Polish Cemeteries: ¸yczaków and Janowska

The governments of Poland and the Ukraine are actively negotiating maintenance and reconstruction of the Polish Catholic cemetery in Lviv (formerly Lwów, Poland). The ¸yczakowski cemetery is dedicated to the Polish independence fighters who were killed in battles with Ukrainians after World War I (1918-1919).

Unfortunately, there are no indications that the Government of Poland intends to include in its negotiations the sacred grounds of the Camp on Janowska Road in Lviv where about 300,000 Jews perished during the German occupation. At the present time, the grounds of the Janowska Camp, as mentioned in our summer issue of *Gazeta*, are being used for a police dog school and a prison.

Our readers who are interested should communicate with the Polish Embassy in Washington, indicating their desire that Janowska Camp be included in the Polish negotiations with the Ukraine.

Tear off

Filmmaker Herbert Kline Dies

Herbert Kline, a documentary filmmaker, director, author, producer and editor born in Davenport, Iowa, died in Los Angeles on February 5. He was almost 90.

In 1938, Kline made the movie "Crisis" about the German conquest of Czechoslovakia. To make this film, Kline, who was Jewish, bluffed his way into Czechoslovakia by pretending to be a pro-Nazi. Nazi storm troopers carried his equipment and followed his directions before the camera.

In 1940, Kline documented the German invasion of Poland for his film "Lights Out in Europe." After the war, he filmed "My Father's House," (also known as "*Bayit Avi*"), a 1947 report about Holocaust victims.

Kline was nominated for an Oscar for his 1971 film "Walls of Fire," about Mexican artists Diego Rivera and David Alfaro Siqueiros.

Black List?

An Israeli government official denied reports that an advisor to the Israeli Prime Minister had placed Poland on a black list of countries judged to make it difficult to gain access to records regarding the Holocaust. The officia;l, in fact, stated that there was no black list. Apparently, there had been an internal document incorrectly interpreted by the press.

A spokesman for the Polish High Commission to Investigate Crimes Against the Polish People explained that although in a few cases, they had refused Jewish organizations access to records of Jewish properties in Poland, such restrictions were necessitated by Polish law.

The commission did not withhold information about crimes of the Nazis and has assisted Simon Wiesenthal in his investigations.