



Photo: Borderland's Documentation Centre

Gazeta

Volume 22, No. 3
Fall 2015

A quarterly publication of
the American Association
for Polish-Jewish Studies
and Taube Foundation for
Jewish Life & Culture



Editorial & Design: Fay Bussgang, Julian Bussgang, Shana Penn, Vera Hannush, Alice Lawrence, Maayan Stanton, LaserCom Design. Front Cover Photo: Borderland's Documentation Centre. Back Cover Image: Moshe Rynecki

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Message from Irene Pipes

President of the
American Association for
Polish-Jewish Studies
Founder of *Gazeta*

Dear Members and Friends,

I have recently returned from spending three weeks in Poland, most of it in my native Warsaw and three days in Lublin. We also visited Zamość, a beautiful small town that was never destroyed, evidenced by its original and beautifully preserved 18th-century architecture. Each visit to Poland brings some surprises. This time it was the general level of prosperity, the high prices of food, rents, real estate values, and the crowded high-priced restaurants. Everywhere you look there is a “remont” (“renovations”) sign: people are replacing doors, windows, and whole kitchens, for most of the houses were built in Soviet times out of poor-quality materials. It looks almost as if everyone owns a car, judging by the bumper to bumper traffic, even though a gallon of gas costs \$8.

I had the pleasure of meeting Dr. Dariusz Stola, the new director of the POLIN Museum, who loves his work and is doing a great job. He told me that about 7,000 people visit the Museum every day. He kindly arranged a guided tour for me and my granddaughter. One has to visit the Museum many times to see it all and appreciate the work that went into it.

On behalf of the AAPJS, I would like to welcome Wlodek Bartoszewski, who plans to work with us in the future. Patronymic son of the celebrated World War II resistance fighter, he is an academic historian who has written extensively on Polish Jewish history. He and his wife and two daughters live in Poland.

Happy Holidays to all,

Irene Pipes
President

aapjstudies.org



Irene Pipes

Message from Tad Taube and Shana Penn

Chairman and Executive Director
of the Taube Foundation for
Jewish Life & Culture

We are pleased to join with the American Association for Polish-Jewish Studies to present this third online issue of *Gazeta*, a quarterly publication dedicated to reporting on Polish Jewish studies and related projects in Poland, the United States, and elsewhere. This issue has a gratifying proportion of news that is positive, even upbeat. The POLIN Museum's director, in his report on the first full year of operation, describes a strong public interest in the newly opened Core Exhibition, which has drawn rave media reviews and visitors from around the world. Other stories report on innovative cultural and social bridge-building programs in eastern Poland, on the continued appeal and success of the summer study tours hosted by the Taube Center for the Renewal of Jewish Life in Poland, and on the imaginative and moving new Shoah exhibit at the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum. Equally impressive are the many book and film reviews, which attest to a growing interest in frank explorations of Polish Jewish life before, during, and after the Nazi occupation.

Gazeta's mission is to provide insight about people and events across generations, cultures, and social perspectives. This issue does exactly that, and also something else. Its stories describe the fruition of years of work by many dedicated people in lands stretching from Poland to Chicago to California. Granted that the world offers many serious challenges, we hope you will enjoy this moment of fulfillment.

Best regards,
Tad Taube and Shana Penn
Chairman and Executive Director



Tad Taube



Shana Penn

HISTORY & CULTURE

Invisible Bridge, “A Tale of Coexistence”

By Krzysztof Czyżewski
Founder of the Borderland
Foundation and the Borderland
Centre of Arts, Cultures,
and Nations

“A Tale of Coexistence” is an ongoing program of the International Centre of Dialogue in Krasnogruda, on the Polish-Lithuanian border, and the Borderland Centre in Sejny. Its concept and philosophy grow from the idea of deep culture, embedded in the social and natural environments and oriented toward the long process that leads to social transformation. Developed by the Borderland Centre, the program seeks a new, more extensive form of art and education based on dialogue and human coexistence. “A Tale of Coexistence” was launched in 2013-14 with “Medea: Other – Different – Own,” which included an art and education workshop, two symposiums, a dramatic happening, and a concert.

The next phase of the program is “Invisible Bridge,” which opened on the 25th anniversary of the Borderland Foundation (founded 1990) and will run until May 2016.



Village of Bridge Builders, International Centre of Dialogue in Krasnogruda, August 13-23, 2015. Photo: Borderland’s Documentation Centre

Its title refers to one of the biggest challenges facing the contemporary world – the art of building bridges in diverse multicultural urban and regional communities. Taking inspiration from Italo Calvino’s book *Invisible Cities*, “Invisible Bridge” emphasizes the value of immateriality in the art of building that which is human, that which constitutes the connective tissue of social value and solidarity.

“Invisible Bridge” will be a permanent artistic installation-sculpture in Krasnogruda Park that will serve as the core for the art of building bridges in the contemporary world. It will never be closed or completed. Two towers symbolizing art and knowledge – and also separate identities, cultures, and individuals – frame the bridge’s structure. Travelers seeking to cross need to obtain the “access code” by

deciphering a rich system of signs and symbols within the structure.

History is full of broken bridges on religious, national, and social frontiers. Today's multicultural world faces the challenge of learning the art of building bridges that lead to dialogue, reconciliation, and the strengthening of social bonds. "Invisible Bridge" is a journey deep into the memory of the borderlands, a place where people transcend themselves, encounter others, and try to build a community of dialogue. Whether construction of the bridge turns out to be cleansing or destructive will depend on the knowledge gained of the secrets of its construction.

How can we use heritage and historical experience to build a culture of solidarity in a world of growing divisions, inequality, and exclusion? "Invisible Bridge" confronts us with questions about the art of coexisting

"Invisible Bridge" is a journey deep into the memory of the borderlands, a place where people transcend themselves, encounter others, and try to build a community of dialogue.

with others and the risk of transgression, but also with the blurring of borders, the clash of traditional values with innovation and globalization, and the endangered community and the ethos of dialogue.

The bridge-building is done through local memory and the creativity of the inhabitants, through arts and education workshops attended by the residents of Sejny and the fifteen villages within the region of Krasnogruda, among whom are Poles, Lithuanians, and Russians. The names of the workshops hint at their content: "Bridge," "Word and Story," "Deep Song,"

"Music of Place," "Childhood Secrets," "Art-Mask," "Nature," "Weaving," "Image and Modern Media," "Bridge Library," and "Pantry." The workshops are hosted by renowned artists, cultural animators, and teachers experienced in teaching art in multicultural communities.

"Bridge Academy" is a series of seminars based on books, movies, texts, and other activities that provide a basis for discussion. The invited participants and guests include animators of intercultural dialogue through art, social activity, and science from various parts of the world, including the Caucasus, the Balkans, the United States, Uganda, Colombia, Israel, Ukraine, Norway, and Lithuania.

Adaptable as a space for meetings, workshops, and educational events, the bridge will also be available as a gallery space for exhibits and multimedia presentations.

Invisible Bridge, continued

Most importantly, the bridge will be the scene of theatrical spectacles, symbolically connecting the shore of Krasnogruda – a specific local community contributing to its construction – with the shore of “Others,” a partner community representing global factors such as innovation, painful memories, minorities, and the natural environment.

Although the bridge in Krasnogruda is fixed and permanent, the bridge-building concept is portable and mobile. Plans are therefore underway to build invisible bridges in other regions and countries, including Norway, Israel-Galilee, and Mostar in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The International Centre for Dialogue in Krasnogruda was opened in 2011 in the former mansion of the family of Nobel Prize winner Czesław Miłosz. Its activities, including workshops, courses, scholarships, and

“Invisible Bridge” confronts us with questions about the art of coexisting with others and the risk of transgression, but also with the blurring of borders, the clash of traditional values with innovation and globalization, and the endangered community and the ethos of dialogue.

publishing, are related to the multicultural heritage of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. ■

<http://pogranicze.sejny.pl/?lang=en>

Krzysztof Czyżewski, a social activist, scholar, and pioneer in multicultural engagement in Poland, is the founding director of the Borderland Foundation (Fundacja

Pogranicze) in Sejny. The Foundation, established in 1990, combines hands-on cultural activism with literary and intellectual endeavors to recover the East European borderlands’ diverse and multilingual heritage. Mr. Czyżewski also established the Borderland Centre of Arts, Cultures, and Nations in 1991 and Borderland Publishing House (Wydawnictwo Pogranicze), as well as the magazine Krasnogruda, in 1993. His publishing house was the first to print Jan T. Gross’s transformative historical account Neighbors (Sąsiedzi) in 2000. In 2014 he received Israel’s prestigious Dan David Prize. In 2015, he was the co-recipient of the Irena Sendler Memorial Award, given annually by Taube Philanthropies to Polish citizens who have been exemplary in preserving and revitalizing their country’s Jewish heritage.

Ringelblum Archive Full Edition: Why So Late?

“There is no doubt, that the discovery of Dr. Ringelblum’s archive is a turning point in our knowledge of the history of the Warsaw Ghetto,” wrote Hersh Wasser after the retrieval of part of the remarkable archive that had been clandestinely assembled and then carefully buried during the Nazi occupation. “Materials and documents in this archive will be the basis of any work about the lives of Warsaw Jews – the heart of Polish Jewry.” The first trove, in ten tin boxes, was retrieved on September 18, 1946, owing partly to Wasser’s recollections. The second part, in two milk cans, was found almost accidentally four years later, in December 1950.

Wasser was one of the few survivors of the group that had organized and carried out a comprehensive and systematic effort, right under the noses of the Nazis, to preserve documents about life in the Ghetto. The documentation

and research were done under the code name *Oneg Shabbat / Oyneg Shabes* (Joy of Shabbat), conceived and led by distinguished Polish Jewish historian Emanuel Ringelblum. Operating by consensus, raising funds among themselves, and using methods developed at YIVO, the group believed that their efforts would provide testimony to the history and fate of the tens of thousands of Jews who had been forced into the Ghetto during the German occupation.

We do not know how big the group was, perhaps not more than a few dozen members. Of the people gathered around Ringelblum, some were already well known, like Janusz Korczak and Perec Opoczyński. Others became known for their work in the Ghetto, like Rabbi Shimon Huberband or pedagogue Aron Koniński. We can also imagine that if they had survived, Menachem Linder and Jerzy Winkler would have

By Dr. Eleonora Bergman
*Emanuel Ringelblum Jewish
Historical Institute, Warsaw*



Unpacking the first part of the retrieved archive, after September 18, 1946. Photo: Emanuel Ringelblum Jewish Historical Institute

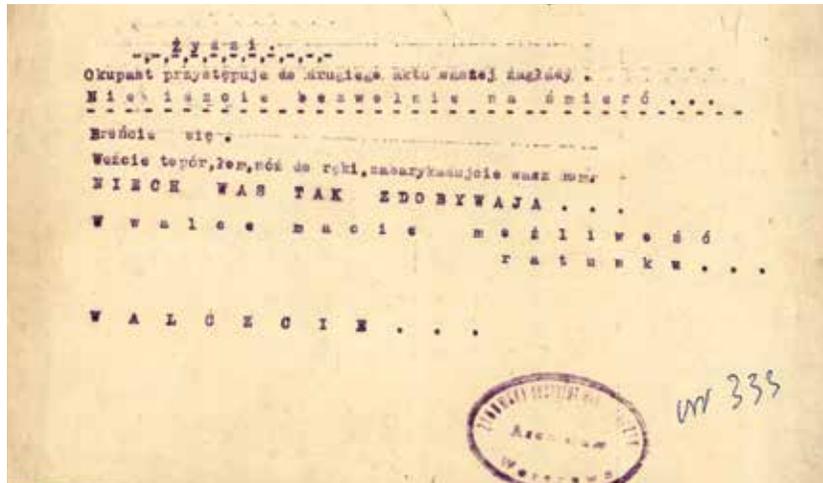
become great economists, Cecylia Słapak would have continued her pioneer gender studies, and Yechezkel Wilczynski would have published numerous articles on the history of Polish Jews in the 19th century.

The group had collected enough material by early 1942 that they started to plan a synthesis. They gave their project the title “Two and a Half Years of War”

*Ringelblum Archive,
continued*

and the subtitle “Reflections, Evaluations, and Perspectives for the Future.” It was to be a book of over 2,000 pages, divided into four parts: General, Economic, Cultural-Scientific-Literary-Artistic, and On Social Welfare. They expected it to describe the history of the Jews under the Nazi occupation – total annihilation being beyond their imagination, despite their dealing with death every day. But they never succeeded in completing their planned work.

The group hoped that after the war the documents would be retrieved and quickly made public. The retrieval occurred as hoped (except for some items never located), but the publication process moved slowly. In 1986 Joseph Kermish wrote in the introduction to his edition of selected archive documents, *To Live with Honor and Die with Honor*, published by Yad Vashem: “It is most regrettable that only a very small part of



“Call to Resistance” flyer of the Jewish Fighting Organization.
Photo: Emanuel Ringelblum Jewish Historical Institute

The archival material reveals the internal tensions within the Jewish community.

The unimaginable persecution brought out both the best and worst in those enduring it...

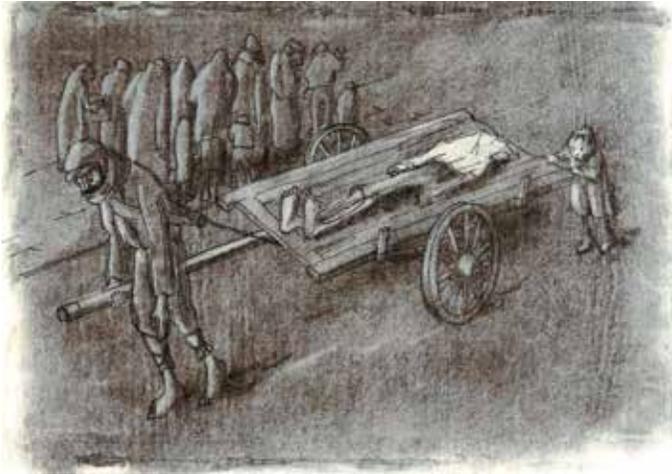
We know that some of the earlier publications were censored. But as so much time has already passed, our edition may remain free of such reservations and paint a full picture of the hardships of Ghetto life.

the [Oneg Shabbat] materials has been published in spite of Ringelblum’s desire that ‘after the war it will be necessary to publish as fast as possible’ the material collected with so much toil, devotion and risk.

Much too much time has passed.” Therefore, it is legitimate to ask, What makes the task so difficult?

There are some good reasons. The first is just the sheer volume – more than 35,000 pages of material, much of it copies of copies, representing some 6,000 documents, many of them in handwriting, many damaged and hardly legible. Approximately 90% are in Polish and Yiddish, more or less half and half, the remaining 10% in Hebrew and German. Much of the material remains anonymous, though thanks to slips of paper that Wasser attached to documents before he left for Israel in 1948, we know a little more about the work of individual members of the group.

The documents cover a vast range of topics. The



Drawing by Rozenfeld (first name unknown), *Death of a Cart Driver's Wife*. Photo: Emanuel Ringelblum Jewish Historical Institute



Irene Pipes (second from right) and others visit the Ringelblum Archive.

archive's leaders drafted a plan embracing some ninety subjects. Separate plans were done for other Jewish communities and ghettos, for Jewish youth, for Polish-Jewish relations, for German-Jewish relations, etc. Not everything was completed, and the division of collected documents into thematic units has been a challenge.

Ruta Sakowska started the systematic plan for the full edition in the early 1990s, after the great political change in Poland. From her vision of some twenty volumes, we came eventually to thirty-five. Beginning in 1996, the project got a new impetus with a grant received from the Polish Government in 2012 for approximately \$700,000.

So far, fifteen volumes have been printed, five more will be issued this year, and the remaining ones are in various stages of preparation. The project should be completed by the end of 2017.

When the Archive was packed in August 1942 and February 1943, no order could have been kept. During our work on the new catalogue, many things were discovered, and pieces of files were put together. However, editor Tadeusz Epsztein wrote: "The present division of the materials facilitates access to particular documents, but it does not solve all the problems concerning search for concrete persons, institutions, localities, or subjects." We hope that for this kind of research the Internet edition will be most helpful.

The final problem lay in the contents themselves. The archival material reveals the internal tensions within the Jewish community. The unimaginable persecution brought out both the best and worst in those enduring it. We learn how people in the Warsaw Ghetto reacted to the challenges brought with every new wave of deportees and refugees. Were the editors afraid of showing this to the larger public? We know that some of the earlier publications were censored. But as so much time has already passed, our edition will remain free of such reservations and paint a full picture of the hardships of Ghetto life. ■

<http://www.jhi.pl/en/blog/2014-10-08-ringelblum-archive>

SCHOLARSHIP & CONFERENCES

“Curating Culture/ Making Memory”

By Vera Hannush
Taube Philanthropies

POLIN Museum’s Chief Curator To Speak at Bay Area Venues

POLIN Chief Curator Dr. Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett will be the keynote speaker at the conference “Curating Culture/Making Memory,” organized by the Graduate Theological Union’s Center for Jewish Studies, UC Berkeley Jewish Studies, and the Magnes Collection of Jewish Art & Life on April 3, 2016. Local scholars, curators, and guest speakers including Dr. Jeffrey Shandler (Chair and Professor of Jewish Studies, Rutgers University) will engage Dr. Kirshenblatt-Gimblett in discussions about POLIN Museum and the broader themes of the relationship between social history and civic life in Poland, and new developments in Jewish culture.

The conference will kick off with a special screening of “Raise the Roof,” the compelling documentary produced by Cary and Yari Wolinsky, which



Dr. Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett. Photo: POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews

chronicles the reconstruction of an 18th-century wooden synagogue that serves as the centerpiece of the POLIN Museum.

The synagogue reconstruction project is the brainchild of Handhouse Studio, whose co-directors, Rick and Laura Brown, will be featured guest speakers at the film showing and during the afternoon discussions (handhouse.org). ■

Dr. Kirshenblatt-Gimblett will also speak at the Contemporary Jewish Museum (April 4), JCC San Francisco (April 4), and Stanford University (April 5). For more information, please contact: info@taubephilanthropies.org

“Doikeyt, Diaspora, Borderlands: Imagining Polish Jewish Territories”

By Dr. Karen Underhill
*Department of Slavic
& Baltic Languages & Literatures
University of Illinois at Chicago*

Preparations for the 3rd Annual International Polish Jewish Studies Workshop

On April 10-12, 2016, the University of Illinois at Chicago’s Program in Polish Jewish Studies will be co-hosting the 3rd Annual International Polish Jewish Studies Workshop, entitled “Doikeyt, Diaspora, Borderlands: Imagining Polish Jewish Territories.” This three-day academic conference and workshop will be devoted to exploring key developments and new directions in the growing field of Polish Jewish studies, with a particular focus on changing scholarly approaches to Polish Jewish territories, both geographical and imaginary. The partner hosts of the workshop are Princeton University, Ohio State University, the Adam Mickiewicz Institute, and the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research.

The workshop will combine scholarly panel discussions with cultural public programming and bring members of the Polish and Jewish diasporas together at

the UIC campus to explore the complex cultural and historical dynamics that link these communities to each other and to their shared heritage.

Panels will explore a variety of key questions. As our use of concepts such as Polin, Yiddishland, the Polish Lithuanian Commonwealth, and borderlands changes, how is that altering how we study and teach the history and cultures of this pluralist and multilingual region, and how is it affecting research agendas, methodologies, and the types of curricula we create? How are postnational and transnational scholarly paradigms influencing our understanding of the cultural spaces we encounter, such as the cosmopolitan café, the Polish interwar political arena, and modernist art movements? The discussion of such questions will deepen the analyses begun in the two previous gatherings of the Polish Jewish Studies Initiative, at Ohio State and

Princeton, on the cultural politics of Polish Jewish discourse and memory within contemporary Poland today.

Building Momentum and International Cooperation

The Polish Jewish Studies Initiative, founded in 2013, is an international and interdisciplinary working group of scholars from the humanities and social sciences involved in research and teaching at the intersection of Polish and Jewish studies. Research and public engagement at this exciting intersection have been growing and changing rapidly. We designed the Polish Jewish Studies Workshop as an annual forum that facilitates conversation and exchange of ideas among the international actors who are involved in the transformation of Polish Jewish narratives but who rarely have the opportunity to share their expertise in one place. The workshop also welcomes the directors

Doikeyt, Diaspora, Borderlands, continued

of engaged philanthropic organizations that are playing a central role in encouraging the reevaluation and transformation of narratives of the Jewish past and present in Poland.

The April 2016 workshop will convene approximately 40 scholars and representatives of cultural institutions from Poland, the United States, Israel, and France for a program of panels, featured keynote lectures, and cultural programming open to the public, including a film showing “Raise the Roof” (The Gwoździec Synagogue Project), an evening musical performance, and an art exhibition on Polish/Jewish Avant-gardes of the interwar period that will be installed at UIC’s Daley Library.

Participants and keynote speakers will include individuals who have pioneered new approaches to understanding Polish and Polish-Jewish space, and

scholars who are offering new paradigms for understanding the emergence and historical trajectories of Polish and Jewish modernities. Among them are POLIN Museum lead historian Dr. Samuel Kassow of Trinity College; Krzysztof Czyżewski, founder and director of the Borderlands Foundation in Sejny; Karolina Szymaniak of the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw and founder of the Yiddish cultural journal *Cwiszn*; Marcin Wodziński, director of Jewish Studies at the University of Wrocław and lead historian of the POLIN Museum; Andrzej Leder, whose recent book, *Przeźniona Rewolucja (Sleeping through the Revolution)*, revises our understanding of Polish modernity; historian Kenneth Moss, director of Jewish Studies at Johns Hopkins University; and Jonathan Brent, director of the YIVO Institute for Jewish Studies in New York.

The opening of the POLIN Museum represents the most visible and striking example of recent changes in terminology and understanding. With the opening of the museum’s Core Exhibition, the term “Polin” has reentered public discourse. It shifts the language that educators, the media, and communities worldwide are using to talk about Poland as a space of both shared and separate cultural histories: Jewish, Polish, Polish-Jewish, and also more broadly pluralist, inclusive of multiple ethnic and linguistic traditions and experiences. Similarly, since the 1989 transition to democracy in Poland and the former Soviet republics, the term “borderlands” (*Pogranicze*) has transformed the way that Polish and Polish-Jewish scholars talk about these same territories. Rather than viewing and teaching from the perspective of the sovereign or the occupied, majority-Catholic nation-state, scholars are increasingly approaching

historically Polish lands as a space of multilingual and multicultural *encounter*, in which each culture has been shaped by and through its constant interaction with other cultures and languages native to the region. At the same time, the concept and uses of “multiculturalism” are put into question, as scholars explore the dynamics of dominance and peripherality in Poland’s pluralistic society.

Indeed, the very concepts of nativeness and otherness, exile and belonging, heritage and responsibility are being reconsidered in an age that emphasizes postnational and transnational models for understanding how societies and cultures develop, as well as how diasporic and émigré communities understand their relations to the lands and territories of their ancestors.

Doikent and Diaspora

Two terms that have historically carried strong emotional resonance within

The concepts of nativeness and otherness, exile and belonging, heritage and responsibility are being reconsidered in an age that emphasizes postnational and transnational models.

Polish Jewish narratives are *doikent* – a Yiddish term meaning “hereness” – and diaspora. How are these terms, together with the concept of the multicultural or pluralist borderland, acquiring new resonance within scholarly and communal discourses, particularly as hybrid postnational or transnational models for the construction of the Jewish, Polish, and Polish Jewish cultural imaginaries?

In a June 2013 speech to the Sejm, then-Polish Minister of Foreign Affairs Radosław Sikorski introduced a new vocabulary, explaining that the term “Polish diaspora”

would now be understood to include not only ethnic Poles living outside the country, but all those living throughout the world whose ancestors once emigrated from historically Polish lands. He welcomed Jews worldwide to consider themselves part of the Polish diaspora, and asked the Polish government to think of them this way as well.

Simultaneously, within American Jewish communities, whose younger generations have for over half a century visited Poland exclusively as a place of Holocaust commemoration, educational heritage programs are now taking shape that understand Poland and former Polish territories as sources of heritage, self-knowledge, inspiration, and living Jewish identity. The language used by such programs draws on and revives the concept of *doikent*, affirming Ashkenazi Jewish culture as native to and inseparable from the European lands in which it developed.

Doikeyt, Diaspora, Borderlands, continued

To examine how these changes are being reflected in the academic world, the 2016 UIC gathering will include a “hands-on” workshop in curriculum development. It will introduce the Polish Jewish Studies digital humanities initiative, geared toward producing curriculum materials and syllabi for online dissemination to educators seeking to bring the study of Polish and Jewish cultures and histories together in the classroom, and to encourage dissertation projects in Polish Jewish studies. Interested participants and institutions will meet following the conference to discuss plans to create a summer graduate institute in Polish Jewish studies curriculum development. ■

Current sponsors of the 2016 workshop include the Adam Mickiewicz Institute, the Stefan & Lucy Hejna Fund at UIC, the Copernicus Program in Polish Studies at the University of Michigan, and the UIC Fund for Polish-Jewish Studies.

The events of the 3rd Annual Polish Jewish Studies Workshop will be held April 10-12, on the campus of the University of Illinois at Chicago, and are open to the public.

For more information please contact Karen Underhill,
UIC Department of Slavic & Baltic Languages & Literatures
kcu@uic.edu



Pale of Settlement, 1835-1917
(Jewish Virtual Library)

“European Jewish Cemeteries”: A Cross-Disciplinary Conference

By Ruth Ellen Gruber
Jewish Heritage Europe

A cross-disciplinary conference on Jewish cemeteries in Europe, held October 25-28 in Vilnius, Lithuania, gathered some 60 experts from more than a dozen countries and touched on a wide range of topics within the broad framework of theory, policy, management, and dissemination of information.

Organized by the Rothschild Foundation (Hanadiv) Europe and hosted by the Lithuanian Jewish community, the conference was a specialized follow-up to the working seminar on managing Jewish built heritage held in Kraków in April 2013.

The conference had three core aims:

- To review the achievements since Kraków, including new trends in technology
- To explore key issues through a series of roundtable and panel discussions

- To encourage future collaboration among participating individuals and organizations, exploring how they can work together, encourage cross-border opportunities, and consider further strategic co-operation.

Participants also were taken on visits to half a dozen Jewish cemeteries and sites of mass graves in Vilnius and several other towns: Pabradė, Švenčionėliai, and Švenčionys.

The introductory keynote on today's needs and challenges was given by Dr. Michael Brocke, Professor of Jewish Studies at the Steinheim Institute in Germany, and a noted scholar on Jewish cemetery preservation, documentation, and epigraphy.

Specific sessions at the conference focused on:

- The value of a Jewish cemetery (Jewish law; honoring the dead;

education; tourism; cultural heritage; art and architecture; historical source through epitaphs and inscriptions; genealogy, etc.)

- Cemetery restoration — what to do; how to do it; historical perspectives
- Ownership and accessibility of information
- Different approaches to preservation: fencing; documentation
- Jewish cemeteries as part of European and World Heritage (including efforts to get Jewish cemeteries including on UNESCO's cultural heritage roster)
- The role of the Internet in documentation; dissemination; attracting interest in preservation
- Advances in the use of technology
- Cemeteries and scholarship
- Building stakeholder relationships — among and between owners and other

European Jewish Cemeteries, continued

interested parties (Jewish communities; descendants; municipalities; NGOs, etc.)

There was also a session devoted to the situation of Jewish cemeteries in Lithuania (which are owned by municipalities).

The conference concluded with a screening of “A Town Called Brzostek,” an award-winning film by Simon Target that documents, step by step, the process of restoring and rededicating the ravaged Jewish cemetery in the village of Brzostek, in southeastern Poland, spearheaded by UK scholar Dr. Jonathan Webber, whose grandfather came from the town. Webber introduced the film and spoke about the experience.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hEimaiyrmos>

Several key themes emerged from presentations, discussions, and what conference participants saw on the ground during site visits.



The Jewish cemetery in Švenčionys, Lithuania. Photo: Ruth Ellen Gruber

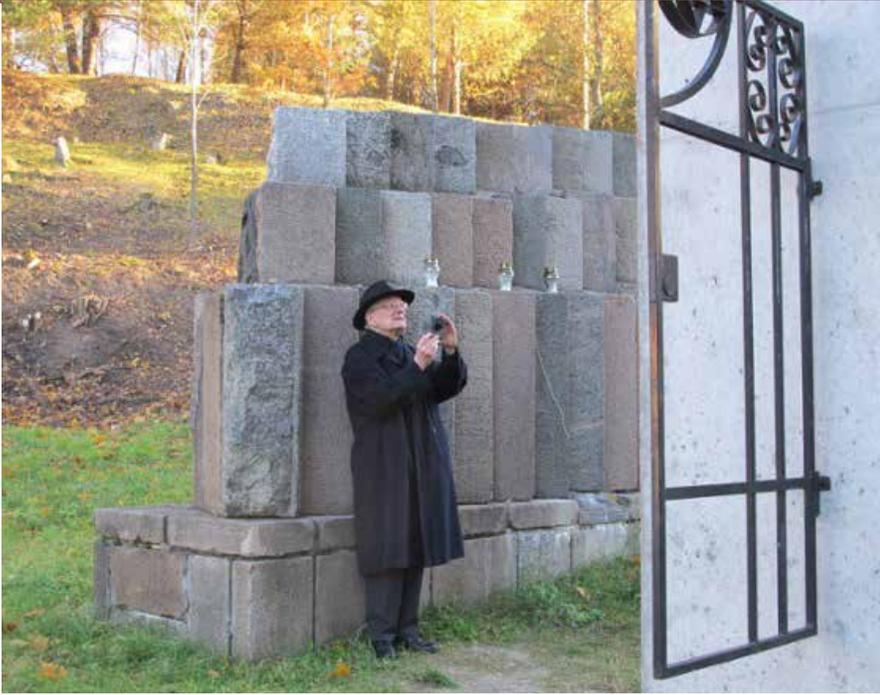
These included:

- The difference in general approaches in cemetery care, preservation, and management. This was perhaps best illustrated in the contrast between what can be called the “macro” and “micro” approaches

The macro approach is best illustrated by that of the recently created European Jewish Cemetery Project ESJF, funded by private donors and the German government, whose aim, as outlined by its CEO Philip Carmel, is to erect fences around as many Jewish cemeteries in Europe as possible, but not engage in other clean-up, restoration, documentation or further maintenance.

“We are a macro type organization,” he said. “We don’t have attachments ... to the inside of a cemetery. We deal with protection and preservation, not renovation and restoration. We think that the fact that we can protect a site from the outside will make it easier for [others] to come in [and work on restoration].”

This was in sharp contrast to the “micro” approach as outlined by Jonathan Webber, with the Brzostek project, and by Dr. Michael Lozman, who has spearheaded the restoration of more than a dozen Jewish cemeteries. These approaches emphasize close cooperation and involvement with local



Dr. Michael Brocke photographs the memorial at the Vilnius Užupis cemetery, made from gravestones that had been plundered and used for construction under the Soviet regime. Photo: Ruth Ellen Gruber

people in carrying out and maintaining Jewish cemetery projects: Lozman’s method fences cemeteries, for example, but with low fences aimed at being indicators of boundaries rather than as physical protection.

Webber described his approach as “Jewish cultural diplomacy.”

He said: “Don’t just parachute in and fix a cemetery – involve the local people, make them feel that it is their project. I wasn’t aware how much the locals wanted to learn about their own local history of their village. I used a local contractor for the work, for example. And I worked with the priest;

I didn’t just invite him to come to the dedication but to officiate together with me and the Chief Rabbi to make it a genuinely interfaith affair. I wanted to make an impact on the local people. It was done in a spirit of dialogue – that Jewish heritage today belongs to everyone. We can’t expect people to look after Jewish heritage today unless they feel that it is theirs.”

- The need to establish and publish “best practice” guidelines that could serve as models for municipalities, Jewish communities, NGOs, and individuals on the ground; a number of participants raised this issue — as did some of the local stakeholders who met during site visits

“There is a need for practical but sustainable solutions,” said Martynas Užpelkis, who coordinates Jewish heritage preservation issues for the Lithuanian Jewish community. “There are no standard practices; there is a lack of knowledge. There is a need for setting standards, or developing and monitoring management plans for each cemetery; for training and counseling [...] local people who want to help ask basic questions. Can we produce guidelines?”

- The value of new technologies in cemetery documentation, research, restoration

These include, as discussed by forensic archaeologist Dr. Caroline Sturdy Colls, new non-intrusive techniques such as ground-penetrating radar and other tools that can explore Jewish cemeteries, determine grave sites and boundaries, and find other information even when all surface evidence

European Jewish Cemeteries, continued

of the cemetery has been destroyed. Other techniques, as demonstrated by Jay Osborn, show ways in which digitizing old maps can help find borders. And Prof. Leonard Rutgers discussed new techniques that can aid in reading even very weathered inscriptions.

- The need for collaboration on international and interdisciplinary levels on Jewish cemetery work

“We should create a network of people and institutions that takes care of cemeteries to have a permanent platform to exchange ideas and have a common voice,” said Dario DiSegni, the president of the Italian Jewish Heritage Foundation, echoing a number of other participants. ■



Conference participants at the Jewish cemetery in Švenčionėliai, which was fenced and restored through the efforts of Dr. Michael Lozman. Photo: Ruth Ellen Gruber

<http://www.jewish-heritage-europe.eu/2015/11/04/european-jewish-cemeteries-a-cross-disciplinary-conference/%E2%80%9D>

There is a video on the conference, with excerpts from some of the presentations, produced by participant Tomasz

Wiśniewski, a long-time researcher, writer, and documentarian from Białystok, Poland:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kD4wR23TLig>

Rywka's Diary: The Writings of a Jewish Girl from the Łódź Ghetto

Edited by Dr. Anita Friedman

Harper Collins Publishers, 2015

“**R**ywka Lipszyc began the sole surviving volume of her Łódź Ghetto diary shortly after her 14th birthday. She filled more than 100 handwritten pages over six months from October 1943 to April 1944, and then suddenly stopped. A year later, a Soviet doctor, accompanying the Red Army’s liberating forces, found it near the ruins of the crematoria in Auschwitz-Birkenau. If the diary’s journey suggests the path Rywka took toward almost certain death, its pages tell a far deeper story. For in it Rywka struggled to understand and express herself, capturing both the physical hardships of life in the Ghetto and the emotional turmoil of coming of age during the Holocaust.”

So begins Alexandra Zapruder’s introduction to *Rywka’s Diary*, recently published in a newly revised second edition by Harper Collins in the United States. In this volume, edited by Dr.

Anita Friedman of Jewish Family and Children’s Services in San Francisco, we become intimately acquainted with fourteen-year-old Rywka. As Zapruder, fellow contributors, and the diary text itself demonstrate, this young woman derived enormous strength from her deeply rooted faith, even while struggling with the overwhelming challenges of Ghetto life. As the excerpts below demonstrate, Rywka’s belief enabled her to cultivate hope for a better future, a hope built around her love for her family, her love of work, and her love of writing.

Rywka survived Auschwitz and Bergen Belsen; her fate afterwards is unknown. Nevertheless, as Hadassa Halamish (the daughter of one of Rywka’s surviving cousins) writes at the end of her contribution to the volume, “Rywka had the good fortune to come back to us. To this day, I feel her inside me. I feel a pressing need to tell her

By Dr. Yedida Kanfer

Coordinator of

Education Services

Jewish Family & Children’s

Services Holocaust Center

Tauber Holocaust Library

story, to bequeath it to future generations ... Rywka was blessed with a name – a name given to her by God. All those who read Rywka’s diary will keep her name alive.”

[Friday] February 11, 1944

“Write! ... Only write! ...

Then I forget about food and everything else, about all the trouble (it’s an exaggeration). May God grant Surcia health and happiness, at least for suggesting to me this wonderful idea that I write a diary. Sometimes when I’m about to write I think I won’t write anything, and when I start writing, there is so much to tell about and I don’t know where to begin ...

Oh, it’s Friday again! Time goes by so fast! And for what? Do we know? What’s waiting for us in the future? I’m asking this question with both fear and youthful curiosity. We have an answer to this, great answer: God and the Torah! Father God and Mother Torah! They are our parents!

Omnipotent, Omniscient, Eternal!!! It's so powerful!!! In front of this I'm just a little creature that can hardly be seen through the microscope. Well ... oh, I'm laughing at the entire world – I, a poor Jewish girl from the Ghetto – I, who don't know what will happen to me tomorrow ... I'm laughing at the entire world because I have a support, a great support: my Faith, because I believe! Thanks to it I'm stronger, richer and more worthy than others ... God, I'm so grateful to you!!! ...

[Monday] February 28, 1944

... Oh, now Mommy would be very happy with me ... she'd be so glad! It wasn't given to her. She only knew pain, suffering and destitution. In short, she only knew this terrible, terrible life struggle ... unfortunately ... she was defeated.

Well, I'd like to write a little about it ... Mother!? What does it mean? Who is this creature called mother, who with great pleasure suffers and gives birth to a new life ... new. There is a part of her in this new life. Oh, isn't this mother powerful? Extraordinary, mighty? No doubt, yes! Nobody can do what she can do. Nobody. Even pain and suffering make her happy, there is evidence of that.

This young woman derived enormous strength from her deeply rooted faith, even while struggling with the overwhelming challenges of Ghetto life.

First: how much she suffers before and after she gives birth to a tiny creature, hoping that in the future that tiny creature will be her pride. Or when this tiny creature gets sick? She will fight this sickness day and night, until she beats it ... or until she drops. Oh, only a Mother can do that! She can understand and sense everything. This outwardly delicate woman ... but at the same time an all-powerful Mother! ...

Will I be a mother one day? Will I be powerful? I don't know why I've written this just now. I've been thinking about it for a long time ... I feel like a mother to my brother and sisters. Perhaps there is a difference between those things – a factual, tangible difference. I haven't created them (*my siblings*). They were created by the same person who created me, she gave us life (*why am I even writing this?*).

[Monday] January 17, 1944

Yesterday when I was walking in the street, I was dreaming

... I had this picture before my eyes: a barely lit room, warm. A few kids are sitting at the table, they are busy with something or they are listening to what I'm reading. I'm reading about the Ghetto, I'm telling them stories and I can see their surprised eyes. It's boggling their minds that something like that could happen ... Oh, I wish this time would come. I long for it so much. ■

Rywka's diary has been published in many other countries and translated into French, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, and Slovak. Hebrew and Polish language editions of the book are currently in progress.

<http://www.harpercollins.com/9780062389688/rywkas-diary>

Editor Dr. Anita Friedman leads Jewish Family and Children's Services (JFCS) of San Francisco, one of the largest and oldest family service institutions in the United States. The JFCS Holocaust Center, which originally published Rywka's Diary in cooperation with Lehrhaus Judaica, is dedicated to the documentation, research, and remembrance of the Holocaust.

IN THE NEWS

Postcards from the Warsaw Ghetto Are Donated to the Jewish Historical Institute Collection

On November 3, a never-before-seen set of 39 postcards sent from the Warsaw Ghetto to Lisbon, London, and Paris were added to the archives of the Emanuel Ringelblum Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw.

The postcards were presented to Dr. Paweł Śpiwak, Institute Director, by Dr. Anita Prazmowska, a prominent historian at the London School of Economics who took possession of the postcards after Tamara Deutscher, to whom most were addressed, passed away.

Tamara Deutscher, originally from Łódź, left Poland shortly after the start of the war. When her family was imprisoned in the Warsaw Ghetto, she was living in London. The correspondence paints a chilling picture of life in the Ghetto, including the constant hunger (“I received two packages of sardines for which I am eternally grateful.”), and the



Photo: Emanuel Ringelblum Jewish Historical Institute, Warsaw

unremitting cold (“...could we possibly get some clothes? Some warm underwear, stockings and a warm blouse or sweater.”).

Tamara Deutscher’s executors decided to present this heartbreaking family correspondence to the Jewish Historical Institute, which is the world’s leading repository of Warsaw Ghetto documentation. “The Jewish Historical Institute is the archive to which researchers and families turn to search out

information concerning Jewish history; hence, this is where the priceless Ringelblum Archive is housed – we should not scatter the sadly scarce testimonies documenting life in the Ghetto,” states Marian Turski, who serves on the Institute’s board and is the driving force behind the transfer of this gift to the Institute, which has been collecting such treasures since 1947. ■

A New Museum Dedicated to Poles Saving Jews

By Julian and
Fay Bussgang
Co-editors
Gazeta

The Ulma Museum in Markowa, south of Łańcut, between Rzeszów and Jarosław, is the first in Poland to commemorate Poles who helped save Jews. According to historians, 2,900 Jews were helped by more than 1,600 Poles from that region. Some 200 of these Poles were murdered by the Germans for aiding Jews. The museum is named for the Ulma family. Józef and Wiktoria Ulma hid eight members of the Szall and Goldman families in their home in Markowa. The Ulmas and their six young children, as well as the Szalls and Goldmans, were murdered by the Germans in March 1944. In September 1995, Yad Vashem recognized the Ulmas as Righteous Among the Nations.

The museum will post the names of both rescuers and victims from the “trans-Carpathian” and the exhibitions will also depict Polish Jewish relations before World War II, during the



Rendering of the Ulma Museum in Markowa

occupation, and after the war. A replica of the house of the Ulmas will be at the heart of the exhibition.

The cost of creating the museum, more than 7 million zlotys (about \$1.87 million U.S.), is being provided by the regional administration and the state.

The Museum of Jewish Soldiers in World War II

By Julian and
Fay Bussgang
Co-editors
Gazeta

Israel has created the Museum of Jewish Soldiers in World War II to honor the 1.5 million Jewish soldiers who fought in Allied armies in Europe and the Pacific, and the thousands more who fought with the Underground and partisan groups. Established during the commemoration of the 70th anniversary of the end of World War II, the museum is part of the Armored Corps Memorial (Yad LaShiryon) in Latrun, east of Jerusalem.

During a visit to Israel in 2014, Agnieszka Magdziak-Miszewska, former Polish ambassador to Israel, noted that an extraordinarily high percentage of these Jewish soldiers were Polish citizens or sons of Polish citizens who had migrated to other countries before the war. Some fought as part of the British Army or Royal Air Force, others with the Polish Second Corps (the Anders Army), which fought in the Italian campaign as part of the



Rendering of the Museum of Jewish Soldiers in World War II in Latrun, Israel

British Eighth Army, or the Polish Berling Army, which was part of the Soviet Army.

Poland's Central Military Archives in Warsaw contains diaries, letters, photographs, and other personal effects recovered from soldiers' remains, in addition to well-documented personnel files. However, Polish law does not permit the transfer of the effects of a fallen soldier to any museum without the permission of the soldier's family, unless it can be proved that no one related to the soldier is still alive. The museum in Israel is eager to trace the relatives of any Polish Jewish soldiers who died in action in World War II.

The complete list of names of Polish fallen soldiers, compiled by the Warsaw Central Military Archives, can be inspected at their website, www.caw.wp.mil.pl/pl/101.html, under the file heading *Depozyty*. Leading the process to collect materials and information about the soldiers is a task force headed by Brigadier General (ret.) Zvi Kan-Tor and the museum's head curator, Dr. Tamar Ketko.

Anyone who has information about Polish Jews who were fighters during World War II is requested to call +972(0)8-9224764 or fill out the online form at www.jwmww2.org/show_item.asp?levelId=65023

MILESTONES

POLIN Museum Update

By Dr. Dariusz Stola
Director
POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews

The Opening of POLIN Museum's Core Exhibition on October 28, 2014, has rightly been called a Grand Opening. For years the Museum had been operating as a cultural program or "Museum without walls," then as a Museum without its largest and most important component. The unveiling of the Core Exhibition has elicited an enormous response both in Poland and abroad, with visitor numbers reaching unprecedented highs. Aside from visits by the presidents of Poland and Israel and hundreds of friends and donors of the Museum from around the world, the opening was attended by thousands of Warsaw residents, while tens of thousands watched a video of the inaugural concert online. During the following two months we catalogued several thousand press articles and Internet, radio, and TV broadcasts mentioning the Museum, including nearly all Polish newspapers and many members of the international



Children's programming at POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews.
Photo: POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews

press. By all measures, those who supported the Museum through the years of its construction have reason to be proud.

Many Visitors

Widespread media coverage and positive reviews have enabled us to reach millions of people who otherwise would not know about the Museum. Over 1 million people have visited the Museum to date, and our programs (temporary exhibitions, cultural events,

and educational programs) have attracted over 70,000 participants. Approximately 70% of visitors to the Core Exhibition are Polish; the rest come from many countries, with Israel, Germany, and the United Kingdom in the lead.

The exhibition has attracted many prominent figures. Following visits by the presidents of Poland and Israel, we welcomed the current and former prime ministers of Poland, the

speakers of the Sejm, ministers and deputies, and official delegations from the United States and Germany. We also welcomed delegations of the Knesset and the Bundesrat, the former president of the Supreme Court of Israel, and ambassadors of many countries from Australia to Ukraine. No less significant were visits by religious leaders, including 50 Catholic bishops (almost the entire Polish Bishops' Conference) and the Patriarch of the Orthodox Church in Poland. We have also received artists and writers (including Steven Spielberg), business leaders, and many eminent scholars.

Visitors find the Museum an interesting, often fascinating experience and one that alters their perception of the past. Several thousand have left comments on slips of paper handed out at the Core Exhibition exit, many deeply moving:

I was surprised to learn about the ancient history of

Jews in Poland. As a Jewish woman, I knew a lot about the Holocaust but nothing about the long relationship between my people and Poland. (Marcelle, Israel)

I am a Polish Jew and the history of Polish Jews represents my roots ... I couldn't imagine not visiting this "house of meetings," so here I am again, for the fourth time. (Daniel, Stockholm, Sweden)

[I will remember] that there was a ghetto in my town. (Artur, Przysucha, Poland)

Exhibitions and Conferences

In the year since the Grand Opening we have hosted two large-scale and two smaller temporary exhibitions. "How to Make a Museum?" described the creation of the Museum from an idea in 1993 to full realization. "Roman Vishniac. Photography: 1920-1975,"

prepared by the International Center of Photography, featured photographs by the outstanding 20th-century photographer. "The Faces of the Ghetto," an exhibition of pictures taken by Jewish photographers from the Litzmannstadt Ghetto, was prepared by the Topographie des Terrors Foundation in Berlin and the State Archive in Łódź. "My Jewish Parents, My Polish Parents," prepared by the Association of Children of the Holocaust, told the stories of Jewish children born between 1939 and 1942, presenting both their Jewish parents and their adoptive Polish parents who rescued and raised them. One of our staff told me he had never seen so many people cry at any of our exhibitions.

To introduce the Core Exhibition to experts in various related fields, we have organized several conferences. Museum professionals and exhibition technology specialists from over a

POLIN Museum Update, continued

Visitors find the Museum an interesting, often fascinating experience and one that alters their perception of the past.

dozen European countries, Israel, Japan, Korea, Turkey, and India gathered at the European Association of Jewish Museums conference and at the conference of the Network of Design and Digital Heritage. “Interculturalism in Historical Education” drew 250 educators from Europe. Historians from around the world attended “From Ibrahim ibn Yakub to 6 Anielewicz Street,” the largest conference on the history of Jews ever to be held in Poland, as well as “Peretz and his Circle,” a conference marking the 100th anniversary of the death of I. L. Peretz. Both were organized within the framework of the Global Education Outreach Program (GEOP), funded by the William K. Bowes Jr. Foundation and the Taube



Crowds in POLIN. Photo: POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews.

Foundation for Jewish Life & Culture.

Education and Cultural Outreach

Thanks to a generous grant from the government of Norway, the Museum runs a large and diverse educational program. We offer various forms of historical and civic education, largely through workshops (on 40 topics) conducted in the Core Exhibition and in our Education Center. From October 2014 to August 2015 some 14,000 students took part in over 750 workshops, educational tours, and meetings with Holocaust survivors. We provided these activities free of charge, and we subsidized the transportation costs for some school groups from economically depressed

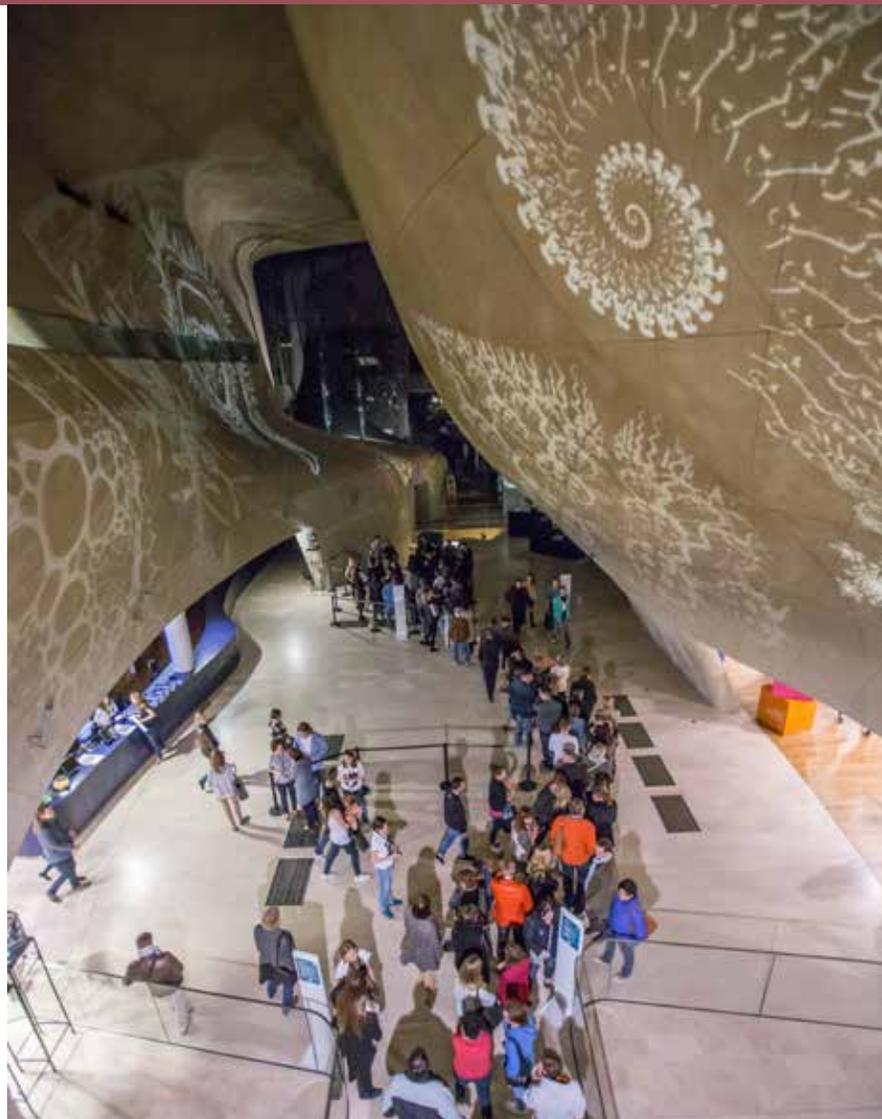
regions. “Faces of Diversity” presents Jewish culture and history within a wider framework of coexistence between different ethnic, religious, and social groups. By August 2015, over 16,000 people had taken part in its 200 events.

In order to reach more schools, we are working with a group of experienced teachers and teaching methodologists – POLIN Ambassadors in various parts of the country – who promote the Museum’s educational program. Since the opening of the Core Exhibition, 350 teachers have taken part in seminars, as well as in workshops based on the USC Shoah Foundation’s IWitness platform.

Our cultural program has remained as vast and rich as in 2014. Particularly

“I was surprised to learn about the ancient history of Jews in Poland. As a Jewish woman, I knew a lot about the Holocaust but nothing about the long relationship between my people and Poland.”

successful were the music projects: 25 concerts of all kinds of music, from classical to rock to sound experiments, including four concerts by the Sinfonia Varsovia orchestra featuring music by Jewish composers. We also hosted several theater performances. Every week we organize public lectures and debates, book presentations, and film screenings. The number of users of our Internet portals, *Virtual Shtetl* and *The Polish Righteous*, has grown by 25%. “Museum on Wheels” is a multimedia exhibition about the history and culture of Polish Jews that visits small towns across Poland. In 2015,



“Night at the Museum,” May 2015. Photo: POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews

during a three-month tour, it visited 18 towns and four music festivals.

POLIN Award

To celebrate the first anniversary of the Grand Opening, on October 8-11, we prepared “Made in Polin” – a three-day festival of music, art, performances, cultural workshops, and public debates united by a common theme: the journey

of transformation. We also presented our inaugural POLIN Award, intended for persons or institutions working to safeguard the memory of Polish Jews and build respect among Poles, Jews, Europe, and the world. This year’s award went to Tomasz Pietrasiewicz, founder and director of Grodzka Gate-NN Theater in Lublin. ■

Polin.pl/en

JCC Warsaw Celebrates its Second Anniversary

JCC Warsaw celebrated its second anniversary over the last weekend of October. Saturday evening began with Havdallah followed by an (almost) all-night celebration, featuring a concert of works by local Jewish composers and a visual performance depicting pre-war Jewish life in Warsaw. On Sunday all ages gathered for brunch and mural painting on the JCC's front wall.

Among the 250 celebrants were the Israeli Ambassador Anna Azari and five rabbis from three different Warsaw congregations. Cooperation, diversity, and openness are key ingredients accounting for the JCC's widespread appeal. ■

<http://www.jccwarszawa.pl/?LangId=2>



The JCC Warsaw community painted a mural on its walls to celebrate the second anniversary. Photo: Alex Ertel



The JCC Warsaw team, from left: Agata Rakowiecka, Director; Maria Niziolek, Children and Families Program Coordinator; Marta Saracyn, Program Director; Aleksandra Rendak, Visual Communications Manager.

AWARDS

How Michael Alpert Brought Klezmer into the 21st Century

By Jake Marmer
Poet, critic, and educator

This article is excerpted from forward.com, September 12, 2015, and is reproduced with permission.

The scent of herring; Towlsh spectacles; dusty, tragedy-laden archives; scratchy vinyl records you wouldn't want your friends to know about – these are the things one sometimes associates with Yiddish culture. For more than three decades, Michael Alpert has worked hard on preserving and reviving an Eastern European Jewish tradition that is precisely the opposite of the herring-infused stereotypes; one bursting with life, worldliness and sophistication. Renowned for his work as an artist, ethnographer and educator, Alpert is a member of the seminal Jewish bands Brave Old World and Kapelye and has been a key figure in the klezmer revival since the late 1970s.



Michael Alpert at the 21st Jewish Culture Festival in 2011. Photo: Wojciech Karlinski

Unlike various other musical traditions that have been passed steadily across generations, klezmer is defined precisely through its lack of continuity. It is characterized by the abyss that separates contemporary klezmer from the once-blossoming musical culture of Eastern Europe. Today's klezmer is necessarily reimagined – that is, recast into new life, not only by means of preservation of the music itself, but also through artists' ability to

wrap the inherited music in their personal dreams and aspirations and, above all, in storytelling.

Klezmer is a nomadic music filled with culture-traversing reverberations of the Balkans, Eastern Europe and the Middle East, as well as the intermingling flavors of Africa and Western Europe. Like his music, Alpert is the consummate traveler; he plays multiple instruments and is conversant in more than a dozen languages. He did not

Klezmer into the 21st Century, continued

inherit his vision of the Jewish musical tradition from his family or the community he grew up in; he gradually shaped it, bridging disparate pieces, thriving on frictions. In the late 1970s, when he first attempted to play klezmer, he experienced a pivotal moment while driving home with his friend and bandmate Mark Samos.

“Here’s this music that’s supposed to be ours,” Alpert recalled himself thinking, “and yes, I identify with it in a certain way, but we don’t know how to play it anywhere near as well as, say, I know how to play Serbian music, or Croatian music, Macedonian music, or Irish music. I said to Mark: ‘I feel that I don’t totally belong in the world of all this other stuff, and here’s this stuff that’s supposed to be ours and I don’t feel like I belong here. I’m not sure where I do belong.’ I really hit the bottom there. And Mark said: ‘You know, Michael, that’s probably the most Jewish feeling I can imagine.’

To Alpert, to be engaged with Yiddish culture is to treat it not as a box in which to enclose one’s identity, but as an opening out of which to gather the various strands.

And that was – ping! – the beginning of an upward climb. And I realized, ah, right ... that’s why. That experience took me through many years.”

This early peak experience, now a part of Alpert’s personal mythology, is telling. Ambivalence about one’s Jewishness is a well-worn artistic trope of modernity. Yet, one’s ability to treat this ambivalence with much-needed complexity, as an opening for an identity that is both ancient and apt for the 21st century, is an impressive feat.

To Alpert, to be engaged with Yiddish culture is to treat it not as a box in which to enclose one’s identity,

but as an opening out of which to gather the various strands. And perhaps that’s precisely what draws so many students in North America and Europe to Alpert’s classes and concerts – and to a whole slew of well-attended popular festivals, workshops and concerts focused on exploration and reinvention of the Yiddish culture of which Alpert is a part. ■

<http://forward.com/culture/music/320680/how-michael-alpert-brought-klezmer-into-the-21st-century/#ixzz3oOzQV7d3>

The Late Dr. Jan Kulczyk Is Honored at the Irena Sendler Award Ceremony & Memorial Tribute

On October 13 Taube Philanthropies commemorated businessman and entrepreneur Dr. Jan Kulczyk (who passed away suddenly on July 29 at age 65) at a special ceremony at POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews. Taube Philanthropies is grateful to its co-hosts: POLIN Museum, Association of the Jewish Historical Institute of Poland, and the Polish National Opera.

Dr. Kulczyk was Poland's wealthiest businessman, influential throughout Central and Eastern Europe, as well as a generous philanthropist and patron of many cultural institutions. In 2012, he donated the largest single gift (more than \$6 million) to the POLIN Museum. He founded and directed Kulczyk Investments S.A., headquartered in Warsaw with offices in Dubai, Kiev, London, and Luxembourg. In 2012, Dr. Kulczyk and



Dominika Kulczyk (center) accepts Taube Philanthropies' 2015 Irena Sendler Memorial Award on behalf of her late father, Dr. Jan Kulczyk. Tad Taube (left, Chairman) and Shana Penn (right, Executive Director) present the award at POLIN Museum.

New York real-estate magnate Larry Silverstein established the Warsaw-based Kulczyk Silverstein Properties.

“Dr. Jan Kulczyk embodied the deep awareness shared by so many Poles that Jewish history is integral to their national history,” said Tad Taube, Chairman of Taube Philanthropies, who presented the award. “Jan truly understood the spirit of collaborative giving, as demonstrated through his joining the international effort

to support the Museum.” In describing his gift to the Museum, Dr. Kulczyk spoke prophetically: “For me, POLIN Museum is a moral compass. It teaches us that there are no shortcuts without tolerance, respect, and forgiveness. It reminds us of our obligation to leave a trace of all that we value when we are no longer here.” ■

<http://www.taubephilanthropies.org/taubephilanthropies-honors-polish-billionaires-role>

Kraków Jewish Culture Festival Receives Prize

By Vera Hannush
Taube Philanthropies

The Jewish Culture Festival in Kraków has received another prize in its long list of honors, this time from the International Biennale of Architecture Kraków. In October 2015, the Biennale’s international jury listed the Festival’s temporary space, the “Festival Quarter,” as a winner in the category of “Completed Projects” in this year’s theme, “Human Dimension of Urban Space.”

The Festival Quarter was designed to highlight two meanings of “quarter”: the quarter-century anniversary of the Festival and the theme of the “quarter” as concept and place, specifically Jewish quarters around the world. The structure was designed by Kraków-based BudCud (Agata Woźniczka and Mateusz Adamczyk) and served as a special performance and gathering space adjacent to the Old Synagogue and diagonally facing the Galicia Jewish Museum. This unique space was used for workshops



The “Festival Quarter” at night. Photo: Michał Ramus

and concerts, replete with pop-up café, bookstore, and printing press that sold posters and t-shirts. Within the city limits the Festival Quarter was wildly popular and drew crowds for its varied events.

Creating a multipurpose space whose form perfectly echoes its function of housing different kinds of human interaction, from dance to making art to listening to lectures, the structure quickly became a landmark and tourist destination, a fact recognized

by the International Biennale of Architecture. ■

<http://jewishfestival.pl/fkz-quarter-awarded-during-the-international-biennale-of-architecture,441,news,en.html>

EXHIBITIONS

“Shoah” Exhibit at Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum

The unveiling of the new Jewish exhibit “Shoah” at the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum in June 2013 received modest media attention, even though its ceremonial opening was attended by Polish and Israeli government leaders. Innovative in both design and narrative, the exhibit makes clear that the State Museum, which during the communist era downplayed or brazenly denied the Nazi genocide at Auschwitz-Birkenau, now respectfully recognizes the fate of European Jews as the largest victim group at this death camp. The exhibit also presents a remarkably sensitive and compassionate memorial by Yad Vashem to the Jews of pre-war Europe, which, refreshingly, is absent the typical teleological narrative asserting the inevitability of the Holocaust. In a broader context, the exhibit represents the depoliticization of a historically politicized site, and offers a stunning example

The new exhibit succeeds in being meditative more than informational, a memorial more than a museum. It is a tribute to the lives of those who were murdered, and an example of Poles and Israelis collaborating on Holocaust remembrance.

of how to metaphorically lay to rest the Jewish individuals who perished in the Nazi genocide.

I visited the new exhibit in July 2013, a few weeks after it opened, in the company of Dr. Anna Sommer-Schneider, a Jewish historian and a longtime State Museum docent who was born and raised in Oświęcim, the town bordering the death camp site. I had been familiar with the site through my professional connections as a journalist and later a staff member of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial

By Shana Penn

*Taube Philanthropies;
Center for Jewish Studies,
Graduate Theological Union*

Museum. Although my colleague Anna and I had witnessed numerous efforts to authenticate both the exhibit and the site since the 1990s, neither of us was prepared for our emotional responses to the “Shoah” exhibit. It seemed to have landed on earth from a planet governed by peace and compassion, bypassing the worn-out litany of blame and denial.

“Shoah” is a minimalist exhibit meant to complement the State Museum’s permanent exhibition. Dr. Avner Shalev, “Shoah” chief curator and member of the State Museum’s International Council, recalls, “We decided to impart as concisely as possible ... how Auschwitz-Birkenau was a component – albeit a central one – of the larger and more complex story of the Shoah. The title, “Shoah,” alerts us instantly to the exhibit’s focus, which is not exclusively the Jewish experience at Auschwitz-Birkenau but more broadly

“Shoah” Exhibit, continued

the fate of Europe’s Jews in the Nazi genocide. Three of the gallery spaces depart from a strictly historical narrative to present artistic installations that give names and faces to more than 4 million Jews, including 1.5 million children, murdered in the Holocaust. The children’s display, the fourth gallery, was created by artist Michal Rovner, who had worked on Yad Vashem’s permanent exhibition in Jerusalem. It is made of tracings of fragments and details from children’s artworks – 10,000 pieces in all – that had been created in ghettos and camps. Rovner transposed these delicate images onto bare white walls that wrap around a second-floor gallery space, to share with viewers how the children could “document the essential thing they were able to hold onto their viewpoint.” The innocence of children is set against the brutality of the death camp, which can be seen through the second-floor windows.

The first and final galleries, “The World That Was: Jewish Life Between the Two World Wars” and “Book of Names,” establish a gripping sense of humanity. Immediately upon entering the first gallery, the viewer is enveloped by a cinematic montage of Jewish men, women, and children from interwar Europe. Family film clips show ordinary Jews leading their everyday lives, full of vitality. The viewer cannot be stationary but must circle around the space to take in all of the images, to keep apace with the personalities revolving around the viewer. The urge is to embrace the people in the films, to hold onto their fleeting images, protect their memory.

In the fifth gallery, the “Book of Names,” is an enormous, interactive book containing 4.2 million names of Jewish victims, which Yad Vashem had collected and stored in a database to preserve the full name of each Jewish victim in the Holocaust, accompanied

by a birth date, hometown, and place of death, clearly printed on the meter-high pages. “The goal was to create an everlasting, permanent memorial,” notes Shalev, “one that would encompass both their inconceivable numbers as well as their individual identities.”

Artistic elements and installations are usually considered inappropriate in the somber museums that document the Holocaust. “But since Auschwitz-Birkenau is authentic itself,” Shalev explains, “we didn’t have to add more artifacts; plus, it would have been costly. Most important, we are not telling a story of authenticity; we are telling a story of humanity.” In addition, the national exhibits at Auschwitz-Birkenau, which have functions distinct from the permanent exhibition and are created independently of the State Museum, can take unconventional risks in the presentations of their

countries' experiences. The curators aimed to humanize and personalize the experiences of each and every human being. Beginning and closing with human beings, the exhibit elicits an immediate response of dignity, pride, and connection with a collective inheritance of Jews and Europeans and their diasporas. Neither Anna nor I had expected such a tender rendering, a loving homage to real people, and certainly we never expected to observe such reverence at Auschwitz-Birkenau, the ghastly antithesis of compassion.

The new exhibit succeeds in being meditative more than informational, a memorial more than a museum. It is a tribute to the lives of those who were murdered, and an example of Poles and Israelis collaborating on Holocaust remembrance. Today, as the World War II generation passes on and as the site's long-term budget for conservation, education,



"Book of Names," fifth gallery in the "Shoah" exhibit at the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum

and remembrance receives substantial government subsidies, it is an opportune time to contemplate future directions for the Auschwitz-Birkenau site and State Museum. The "Shoah" exhibit reflects and informs such conversation. ■

"We are not telling a story of authenticity; we are telling a story of humanity."

***-Dr. Avner Shalev
Chief Curator,
"Shoah" Exhibit
Chairman,
Yad Vashem Directorate***

BOOK REVIEWS

Jewish Publications in Poland

By Maayan Stanton
Taube Philanthropies

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CHIDUSZ

A two-year-old monthly magazine produced in Wrocław, *Chidusz* aims at a Jewish readership in Poland. It offers news and special interest articles on national issues, Israel, and other Jewish communities around the world, along with stories on Jewish religion, customs, history, and culture, including a section on language and literature.

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CWISZN

The mission of this small quarterly publication, as its Yiddish name *Cwiszn* (“between” or “among”) suggests, is to honor the great Yiddish literature of the past and transmit it to Polish and Jewish culture today. The predominantly female editorial team combines Yiddish culture with the wealth of artistic possibilities of contemporary Polish Jewry. It is a publication of the Shalom Foundation, a

Warsaw NGO committed to the memory and legacy of Yiddish culture.

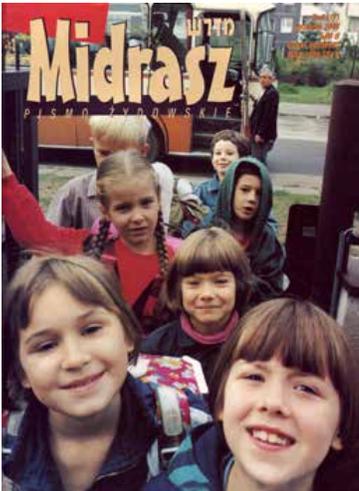
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KWARTALNIK HISTORII ŻYDÓW / JEWISH HISTORICAL QUARTERLY

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MIDRASZ

Midrasz, published every two months, is the most widely read Polish publication devoted to Judaism and Polish Jewry. Established in 1997 as a response to growing interest in Judaism from Polish Jews, gentile Poles interested in Judaism, and Poles who recently discovered their Jewish roots, it continues its educational mission of discussing Jewish culture, religion, history, and current events in sophisticated intellectual reportage and essays.

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STUDIA JUDAICA

Studia Judaica is a scholarly journal of the Polish Association for Jewish Studies. Members of the Association publish their articles on any topic within Jewish studies, with subjects ranging from history and archeology to religion, culture, and linguistics. Contributions by non-members must be related to Polish Judaism.

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Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry, Vol. 28 “Jewish Writing in Poland”

By Dr. Antony Polonsky
Chairman
Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry
Chief Historian
POLIN Museum

This is a major study of topics that have rarely been discussed in English, especially Jewish literature written in Polish. The articles should appeal to all students of literature and particularly to those interested in Polish, Yiddish, and Hebrew creativity understood as a rich cultural polysystem.

The issues discussed in this volume are best understood in the context of a path-breaking article by Chone Shmeruk, “Hebrew-Yiddish-Polish: A Trilingual Jewish Culture,” published in 1989 in *The Jews of Poland between Two World Wars*. Shmeruk argued that in addition to “the traditional culture that was still predominant in Poland between the two world wars, three modern post-Enlightenment cultural systems existed among Polish Jewry.” These systems “were generally distinguished by linguistic and ideological characteristics. The cultural systems in the Jewish

languages –Hebrew and Yiddish – were usually identified with defined Jewish nationalist ideologies. Hebrew culture relied on Zionist ideology, whereas modern Yiddish secular culture was built primarily by Bundists and their adherents, and to a lesser extent by Zionist socialists, Folkists, and those Jewish communists who did not advocate the assimilation of Jews.

Alongside these cultural systems there also existed a Polish cultural system in which the “striving for Jewish self-preservation [was] less apparent.” Shmeruk distinguished between “the thin stratum of Polish intelligentsia of Jewish descent, including renowned Polish writers, who were totally assimilated into Polish culture and identified themselves as Poles – even despite certain sporadic expressions of Jewish self-identification to which they were pushed by hostile

forces over which they had no control,” and those Jews “whose exclusive or partial cultural language was Polish” but who were either “Zionist in ideology or nonaffiliated and politically apathetic” and “certainly never denied their Jewish identity.”

He concluded:

The true and great power of this culture lay not in isolation of these linguistic areas but in their interaction, an interaction that included the traditional religious cultural system as well. The full picture of the culture of Polish Jews can only be perceived by approaching it as a polysystem in which the power of its components comes from the force of their mutual, dynamic interaction, and not in their isolation.

Certainly, as Shmeruk suggests, the cultural creativity of Polish Jews since the Enlightenment

has found expression not only in Hebrew and Yiddish but increasingly in Polish. There has been mutual and dynamic interaction between the cultural systems, but until the end of Communism the trilingual Jewish culture of Poland was little studied. In this volume, scholars from Poland, the United States, Israel, Italy, and Argentina investigate writers from across this spectrum and consider how they saw their Jewish (and sometimes Polish) identity, and what they thought of the authors in the other linguistic or cultural camps. Together their work constitutes a first examination of Jewish literatures in Poland from the point of view of both linguistic and geographic diversity. The interwar years serve as the reference point, but material on the period before World War I and since 1945 is also included.

The volume comprises six sections: new research on Jewish literature in Polish,

The cultural creativity of Polish Jews since the Enlightenment has found expression not only in Hebrew and Yiddish but increasingly in Polish.

including discussions of less known works by Janusz Korczak and Julian Strykowski; Polish-Yiddish-Hebrew literary contacts, with important pieces on Y.L. Peretz's early work, the translation of Haim Hahman Bialik's poetry into Polish, the influence of Polish writers on Sholem Asch's early plays, and the reception of Joseph Opatoshu's novels in interwar Poland; mutual perceptions represented by the images of Poles and Poland in the work of Jewish writers and of Jews in the work of Polish authors, for instance, in the work of Hebrew Nobel laureate S.Y. Agnon and the Polish writer Stanisław Vincenz; avant-garde art and modern ideologies with discussions of Bruno Schulz's graphic

works and why Communism appealed to some Jewish writers; questions of identity with a special focus on Julian Tuwim, one of the greatest Polish poets, an assimilated Jew attacked both by Polish nationalists and Yiddish intellectuals; and different "exiles," understood both literally and metaphorically and encompassing works created in Poland, Israel, and Argentina.

In spite of this wide range of themes, the coverage of the topic is not exhaustive. There are still very few studies of Polish-Hebrew literary contacts, and although more has been written about Yiddish writers in Poland there are still areas requiring comparative perspective. It is hoped that the themes and motifs discussed in this volume will inspire further research in this complex field. ■

<http://www.littman.co.uk/cat/polin-28.html>

Native Foreigners: Jewish-Polish Poetry between the World Wars

Selected and Translated by Aniela and Jerzy Gregorek. Illustrated by Jerzy Feiner
Cross-Cultural Communications, 2015

The eleven poets who wrote the fourteen poems presented in this magnificent book lived in Poland between the two world wars, during an era of ever-present dusk. Their world still contained rich light, however, and many (though not all) of the works here reflect their experience of a world that burst with love, family, and a special Jewish warmth.

While their voices carry an aura of immortality that I hope this volume will help them to achieve, as deserved as those of Yiddish poetic geniuses like Abraham Sutzkever and Abba Kovner, these poets wrote in the vernacular Polish language that inhabited the gentile time and space in which they lived. As the title *Native Foreigners* suggests, they felt foreign in their own land. Translators Aniela and Jerzy Gregorek note in their introduction that the book's "subtitle deliberately breaks with the convention of placing the word Polish in front of the

word Jewish, as a compound adjective." An excellent point, since the concept that the poetry was written by Jews living in Poland differs markedly from that of rooted or accepted Poles who also happened to live as Jews.

Celina Becker, at least momentarily, resented the confines of her linguistic limitations. As a poet, translator, and critic for Warsaw's *Our Review* and author of a 1935 Russian anthology, she was brilliant in Polish, Russian, and German. In "To the Jewish Language" she mourns, "Nobody taught me to love you." She suddenly yearns for the "worthless gibberish" of Yiddish, "something suddenly fires a fervent homesickness." She expects "nobody, nobody" to understand "how bitter I feel and unspeakable, how raw" that the tragically ruined Yiddish language sounds "more unfamiliar than all foreign languages," and

Reviewed by
Alyssa A. Lappen
Author, journalist, and editor

"that I don't know how to express even the simplest words in a language differently from Mickiewicz, Puszkina or Heine."

The lives of all these poets were stamped out prematurely, often at times and places unknown, but their voices boast an eternal Jewish spark, a soul that will never die, regardless of how desperately tyrants may try to extinguish it.

As if to confirm the efforts of those tyrants, the book opens with a dark offering from Władysław Szlengel (1914-1943), also a satirist and writer of cabaret lyrics. "Nothing New" is as valid today as when originally written, probably in the late 1930s, foreshadowing the anonymous Jew. The many common blood libels bandied about through the ages, within all regions and eras, come clawing. It opens:

*I walk my sad road
for two thousand years.*

The poem stacks up all the usual slanders: that Jews poison water wells, cast spells over cattle, mix matzoh with children's blood, make war at will, kidnap young boys for every holiday and pluck out their lifeless eyes.

As the accompanying pen-and-ink sketch by Jerzy Feiner (1933–2008) suggests, such deadly ideas populated the darkest minds (sometimes unfortunately the vast majority) in every culture throughout history and across every corner of the globe, into our own day, from the ancient Middle East to 7th-century Arabia to Medieval Persia to 20th-century Russia. And of course Poland. The Jew, however, survives, indeed lives, in spite of them, the poet's precise point.

While the use of a few accusations here may have been limited to certain regions or eras, some are deeply embedded in Islamic cultures and societies across time. These harken to many foundational verses in the Quran itself. For example, Sura 2, verse 61, which curses the Jewish people, "And they

The lives of all these poets were stamped out prematurely, often at times and places unknown, but their voices boast an eternal Jewish spark, a soul that will never die, regardless of how desperately tyrants may try to extinguish it.

were covered with humiliation and poverty and returned with anger from Allah [upon them]. That was because they [repeatedly] disbelieved in the signs of Allah and killed the prophets without right. That was because they disobeyed and were [habitually] transgressing."

Yet not all the poems are dark and brooding. Irma Kanfer (1920-?) in "Jewish Actors" celebrates the lives of Yiddish theater stars, especially Miriam Orleska (ca. 1900-1943?), who performed with the Vilna Troop (*Vilner Troupe*), which ironically prospered in 1915 after the Germans occupied Vilna and rescinded Tsarist proscriptions of Yiddish theater. Yiddish groups performed across the

region in Warsaw, Bucharest, and Moscow; Kanfer celebrates the vivacious spirit that inhabited the Jewish theater scene for several decades. Feiner's matching sketch likewise features costumed Jews dancing, arms thrown aloft in welcome of an audience of Jews from five regions and eras.

Of course this poem, too, harkens back to the dusk that hung over Poland's Jews between the wars, noting that overseas travel and acclaim was but a dream, and the actors must "drag" through travails.

The homeless, Jewish actor smiles to himself like a child in a dream.

Through London, Paris, Brussels,

New York, and Rio de Janeiro,

with a cigarette in his mouth sick on nostalgia

drag, drag

day, night

Jews—wanderers—actors.

Maurycy Szymel (1903-1942), who published four poetry titles, including three in Polish

Native Foreigners, continued

and one in Yiddish, writes here “About Lost Shabbat.” Six of this work’s seven stanzas sing of the small jobs and treasured remembrances from bustling, happy Shabbat preparations and meals, of the tiniest details, from a shabby chair, carrots, and chicken soup to a mother’s wrinkled hands, wine fermented from raisins, a crackling kitchen fire, and roasted coffee in a brass mortar.

*A polished candelabra,
filled with the liquid gold
of evening, flowed through
the humid window.*

*A stocky, pockmarked
deliveryman, squat like a
mushroom,*

*rumbled through the
backyard gate.*

....

*The shadows of flickering
candles made the room
more quiet,*

*and Spring smelled deeply
on the dark, uneven street.*

*When I sat on the threshold
I could hear*

*the sky brushed by the
wind, washed by the moon.*

But this gorgeous work, too, laments,

*there is no way back to the
home which faded away,
to the table beside my
brother and sisters,
nobody to light the Sabbath
candles.*

In a 1926 poem, Szymel simply treasures his Shabbat memories, “where candle light shivers and flickers on a table,” and after his father’s Kiddush “the moon cuddles its face to the window” and “I hear / a certain fairy tale about miracles.”

Even near “Death,” Szymel celebrates life. While horrified by “your passionate, autumn eyes, / through which death peers,”

*. . . when I lay my forehead
to the wall,*

*it smells of your neck, lips,
your hair,*

and hay,

*and water green with frogs
and stars.*

*So I caress the table,
windows, lampshade,*

*like your warm breasts in
the dark ripened by night.*

*And when we nestle face to
face,*

*I understand there is no
death.*

While few in number, the poems speak volumes. But one could also easily fill an entire review with the fourteen amazing Jerzy Feiner sketches. As a boy in Warsaw he experienced the destruction of Jewish life. The translators report that he created these works “during a period of intense creativity, as he sequestered himself in his home in Los Angeles,” and drew from his childhood memories to create images to match the works. Feiner created “piles of drawings” from which the translators then chose. ■

Alyssa A. Lappen, author of *The Minstrel’s Song* (Merrick, NY: Cross-Cultural Communications, 2015), received the 2000 Ruah award for spiritual poetry. An investigative journalist and editor, she has several areas of expertise, including economics, business, finance, and the Middle East and Islam.

Hitler's Furies: German Women in the Nazi Killing Fields

By Wendy Lower

Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2013

H*itler's Furies: German Women in the Nazi Killing Fields* is a pioneering study of the 500,000 young German and Austrian women who went to the eastern front during World War II, tasked with helping to carry out the Third Reich's imperial mission. The Nazi conquest of Eastern Europe, notes Wendy Lower, an American historian of the Holocaust, required the mobilization of all Germans. Men and women alike were called upon to participate in all campaigns, from the reproduction of the Aryan nation to the colonization of the eastern front and the genocide of Europe's Jews. "The systems that make mass murder possible do not work without the broad participation of society," argues Lower, "and yet nearly all histories of the Holocaust leave out half of those who populated that society, as if women's history happens somewhere else." This pervasive gender-blindness, concludes Lower, accounts for how German

women, in their overlooked roles as accomplices and perpetrators, "got away with murder."

Lower, a Claremont McKenna College professor of the Holocaust and genocides, conceived of the book during a 1992 research trip to Ukraine to access newly opened Soviet archives containing German records of the Nazi occupation of the East. In Zhitomir, once Heinrich Himmler's headquarters, she came across German reports listing thousands of women who had relocated to the eastern front, starting in 1941, to support colonization of the territories for Aryan settlement. She makes ample and primary use of postwar investigations and trials to probe the lives of 13 representative women and examine why so many did what they did; to what extent they were aware of the moral and legal consequences of their actions; and why the criminal justice system overlooked them during

Reviewed by
Shana Penn

*Taube Philanthropies;
Center for Jewish Studies,
Graduate Theological Union*

the lengthy era of postwar tribunals.

Coming of Age in the Third Reich

As Lower explains, between 1941 and 1944, ambitious young women who had internalized the Third Reich's racist ideology headed to the eastern front, seeking careers, paychecks, independence, romance, and adventure. The sheer number of women who relocated to the eastern front – nurses, teachers, secretaries, wives, and lovers – establishes their importance in genocidal warfare and imperial rule. The German Red Cross trained 640,000 women, 400,000 of whom were placed in wartime service, mostly sent to battle zones in the east. Of the 500,000 women trained in support positions such as radio operators, filecard keepers, flight recorders, and wiretappers, around 200,000 served on the eastern front. They worked in offices, among the occupational elite,

Hitler's Furies, continued

and in the killing fields of Eastern Europe, where the worst atrocities were carried out. Thousands of women witnessed mass murders; many were accomplices to the Judeocide, while still others also perpetrated atrocities.

Lower argues that these were ordinary women from a variety of backgrounds – educated and uneducated, poor and well-to-do, provincial and urban, Catholic and Protestant – who were not known to exhibit violent tendencies either before or after the war. What drove them to kill? Were they programmed for murder? According to Lower, “The varied experiences of German men and women in the eastern occupied territories as they became direct witnesses, accomplices and perpetrators of the Holocaust broadened and deepened their anti-Semitic behavior. Anti-Semitism there took on many forms, more elaborate and extreme than in the Reich, where sustained, visible

violence was not tolerated and the “Bolshevik” threat was not directly encountered. Judeo-Bolshevism was... a powerful mobilizing ideology of the war... and for some the anti-Semitic ideas absorbed there [on the eastern front] were not discredited by the defeat of Hitler’s Germany.”

Not Just Imitating Men

Hitler's Furies belongs to a growing scholarship about the nature of German women’s cruelty in World War II and its historical perception. U.S. religious-studies scholar Susannah Heschel has written that women’s cruelty is typically “presented with a sense of surprise, transgressing gender expectations, whereas men’s cruelty is discussed without reference to their gender, as though the connection between atrocity and maleness is self-evident.” Heschel introduces the notion that female perpetrators were not just “male imitators,” an idea

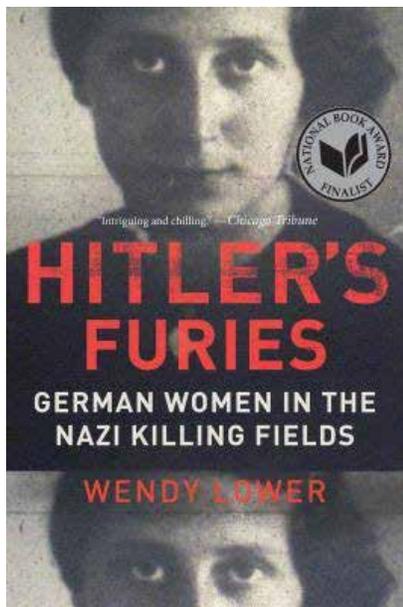
that Lower develops as she illustrates women’s individual actions and motivations for complicity and cruelty under various circumstances.

Lower does not directly or comprehensively converse with the gender research that predates her work, such as Gudrun Schwarz’s study of violent SS wives and Elizabeth Harvey’s focus on teachers in Poland who looted Jewish possessions. Prior to her own research, Lower asserts, the scope of women’s participation in the eastern massacres remained ambiguous, and the possibility of female culpability had been neglected and under-examined. She insists that a serious consideration of women’s diverse roles in the Third Reich was a “historical blind spot,” despite the fact that the subject is hardly new in academia or the media. She examines the gender-specific causes of women’s violence and perpetration of atrocities, enriching an

analysis succinctly put forth by Heschel almost a decade earlier. Notes Lower, “The role of German women in Hitler’s war can no longer be understood as their mobilization and victimization on the home front. Instead, Hitler’s Germany produced another kind of female character at war, an expression of female activism and patriotism of the most violent and perverse kind....”

Exploiting a Gender Stereotype

After the war, sexism and anti-Semitism conspired to rule out women’s wide-ranging complicity in the Nazi genocide, an argument that Lower ably presents in the final chapters. Many former Nazis and wartime criminals slipped comfortably back into civilian life. While this is broadly known, *Hitler’s Furies* provides a cynical twist. When faced with the possibility of a criminal conviction, female perpetrators presented



Pervasive gender-blindness, concludes Lower, accounts for how German women, in their overlooked roles as accomplices and perpetrators, “got away with murder.”

themselves as apolitical women, who had been far from the machinery of killing, incapable of crime because they were women and mothers. In postwar Germany, Lower writes, the male judiciary remained skeptical

of statements that described atrocious female behavior. It was difficult to locate the accused women most of whom had returned to Germany or Austria, got married, changed their surnames, and could not be traced by their maiden names. The evidence of their crimes was often hazy, unsubstantiated, or too difficult to locate.

As long as German women are consigned to another sphere or their political influence is minimized, half the population of a genocidal society, in historian Ann Taylor Allen’s words, is “endowed with the innocence of the crimes of the modern state” and placed “outside of history itself.” *Hitler’s Furies* is Wendy Lower’s attempt to reinsert women’s political agency into the historical record of Nazi Germany to be duly accounted for, for better or for worse. ■

<http://www.hmhco.com/shop/books/Hitlers-Furies/9780547863382>

FILM PROJECTS

“Who Will Write Our History”

By **Roberta Grossman**
Producer

“Who Will Write Our History” is a feature-length documentary about historian Emanuel Ringelblum and Oyneg Shabes, the secret archive he created and led in the Warsaw Ghetto during World War II. The film is based on the book of the same name by historian Dr. Samuel Kassow.

There are challenges to telling any historical story. “Who Will Write Our History” may be more challenging than most. There are no living Oyneg Shabes survivors to tell the tale. The setting (the Warsaw Ghetto) is a place that no longer exists and which was visually documented primarily by the Nazis (for their own propaganda purposes) and mostly in black-and-white photography. Despite these obstacles, the very point of the archive was to allow the unique individuals who created it to speak beyond the grave to the future. We are striving to employ effective story-telling strategies in order



to fulfill their wishes to be heard and remembered. My 2008 film “Blessed Is the Match: The Life and Death of Hannah Senesh” was heavily laced with Hannah’s diary entries, letters, and poems, writing that conveys her inner life. But we told the story from the point of view of Catherine Senesh, Hannah’s mother, who survived the war. This approach supplied not only a before-during-and-after account (Hannah was murdered in 1944), but a riveting emotional lens on Hannah’s life. “Who Will Write Our History” will similarly rely on Emanuel

Ringelblum’s wartime writing, but the story will be framed by the writing and point of view of Rachel Auerbach, one of only three survivors of the more than sixty members of the Oyneg Shabes collective.

Rachel Auerbach was born in Galicia in 1903. After completing undergraduate and graduate studies in psychology, philosophy, and history, she became a member of the Polish-Jewish literary elite. A prolific Yiddish and Polish author, historian, and essayist, Auerbach was romantically linked with the Yiddish poet Itzik Manger. In 1939, as she was preparing to flee Warsaw to join her family in Galicia, Emanuel Ringelblum asked Auerbach to stay, saying “We don’t all have the right to run away.”

At Ringelblum’s request, Auerbach ran a soup kitchen in the Ghetto while simultaneously, in her writing, recording the voices of its inhabitants. In March 1943 she



Dr. Samuel Kassow



Rachel Auerbach testifying in the Eichmann Trial.

crossed to the Aryan side of Warsaw where she continued her writing and worked with the Jewish underground. Among Auerbach’s most powerful pieces is “Yitzkor,” written in 1943:

I saw a flood once in the mountains. Wooden huts, torn from their foundations were carried above the raging waters. One could see lighted lamps in them; and men, women and children in their cradles were tied to the ceiling beams. Other huts were empty inside, but one could see a tangle of arms waving from the roof like branches blowing in the wind, waving desperately toward heaven, toward the riverbanks for help. At a distance, one could see mouths gaping, but one could not hear their cries because the roar of the waters drowned out everything.

*And that is how the Jewish masses flowed to their destruction. Sinking as helplessly into the deluge of destruction.**

Even before the end of the war, Auerbach was active in recording survivor testimony. And once the war ended, along with fellow Oyneg Shabes survivor Hersh Wasser, she worked tirelessly for the rescue of the archive. Due to their efforts the first cache was dug up in 1946. Auerbach ruefully remarked that she had been more successful in saving documents than people.

Rachel Auerbach moved to Israel in 1950 where she was the founding director of the Department for the Collection of Witness Testimony at Yad Vashem. A key figure in the Eichmann Trial, she helped ground the prosecution’s case in survivor testimony.

Auerbach was a powerful and prolific writer, with a cinematic eye for the close-up, the telling detail. She spent the rest of her life writing and rewriting her wartime diary and essays. She wrote about Ringelblum, the archive, and the Jewish intellectuals

who perished in the Shoah, publishing two memoirs and countless articles in Yiddish and Hebrew.

Until now the vast majority of Auerbach’s writing had never been translated. Happily, Dr. Samuel Kassow is translating two of her books into English. It is the rich trove of Auerbach’s wartime and postwar writing that will provide the point of view and narrative spine for “Who Will Write Our History.” The words of Auerbach, voiced by Academy Award-nominated actress Joan Allan, can be heard by [clicking here](#) to view a five-minute sample reel for “Who Will Write Our History.” ■

For more information contact Roberta Grossman, rgrossman@katahdinproductions.com

*Excerpted from David Roskies, *The Literature of Destruction: Jewish Responses to Catastrophe*.

“Chasing Portraits”

By Elizabeth Rynecki
Producer

When Moshe Rynecki bundled his life’s work of over 800 drawings, paintings, and sculptures into a series of parcels during the Nazi invasion of Poland in 1939, he thought he was just being cautious, and expected that it would likely be a matter of weeks to months before the collection could be reassembled.

Instead, he survived nearly four years under the occupation before he was ultimately deported and murdered at Majdanek. After Poland was liberated, Moshe’s widow Perla was able to recover just a single bundle of work – about 120 paintings. “Chasing Portraits,” a feature-length documentary film currently in production, follows the story of Moshe Rynecki’s great-granddaughter, Elizabeth, as she attempts to locate her great-grandfather’s lost art.

Elizabeth grew up surrounded by her great-grandfather’s works, prominently displayed

Although “Chasing Portraits” is a specific story of a quest for lost art, the film’s central message is universal – we are all caretakers charged with preserving history and sharing culture.

in her parents’ and grandparents’ homes, without knowing much beyond the fact that the paintings were completed in Poland in the 1920s and 1930s. Despite her lack of knowledge of the stories behind the works, Elizabeth grew up with a front-row seat to the Polish-Jewish community revealed in the art. Her great-grandfather was an ethnographer of sorts, exploring and documenting the daily rhythm of life for Poland’s Jews in the interwar years. Painting artisans and laborers, scenes from inside the synagogue, religious study, and moments of leisure, he captured a time, a place, and a culture virtually annihilated by the Holocaust.

Elizabeth’s pursuit is a web of diverse elements: tantalizing clues left in handwritten letters found in an archive in Canada, photographs of previously unknown Rynecki paintings in Polish newspapers from the 1930s, obstacles put up by private collectors and auction houses, windfalls of unexpected assistance, and ultimately serendipitous discoveries. Sorting through archives, crowd-sourced clues, and other hints of the past, Elizabeth discovers not only the work of her great-grandfather previously thought lost forever, but details of his once thriving art career.

Filming for the documentary has taken Elizabeth on a series of journeys in Canada, Poland, Israel, and the United States. In October 2013 the “Chasing Portraits” crew travelled to Toronto to meet with a private collector whose parents bought a bundle of Rynecki paintings from a Łódź farmer after the war. A year later the crew visited Warsaw to film at the

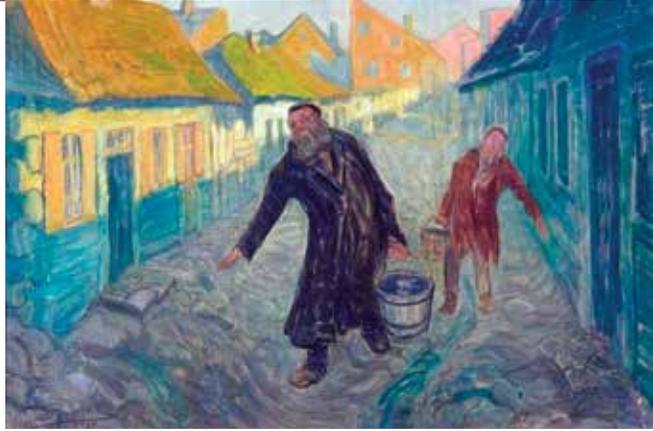


Elizabeth Rynecki with her great-grandfather's artwork.
Photo: Shoey Sindel Photography

Jewish Historical Institute, which has 52 Rynecki paintings, the National Museum in Warsaw, which has two works, POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews, which includes a photograph of a Rynecki painting in its Core Exhibit, and to meet with a private collector. More recently, in May 2015 the film team returned to Warsaw for further interviews and follow up, then went to Israel to see more Rynecki paintings. In July 2015 the project filmed footage in New York City with collectors and experts on Holocaust-era looted art. Filming is set to wrap in late 2015 in the San Francisco Bay Area, and the project will then move into post-production (turning the raw footage into a completed film) in 2016.

Although “Chasing Portraits” is a specific story of a quest for lost art, the film’s central message is universal – we are all caretakers charged with preserving history and sharing culture. ■

Learn more about the film and watch the three-minute trailer online: www.ChasingPortraits.org.



Moshe Rynecki

EDUCATION/HERITAGE TOURISM

A Journey of Learning: 1,000 Years of Polish Jewish History along the Vistula River

By Raquel Rosenbloom
“Exploring Poland/Polin”
Study Tour participant,
August 2015

With Polish Foreign Ministry support, the Taube Center for the Renewal of Jewish Life in Poland offers ten-day summer study tours for Polish-American students, focused on the Jewish history and multicultural heritage of Poland. I was fortunate enough to participate in this year’s August trip. Our theme was “1,000 Years of Polish Jewish History along the Vistula River.”

I found out about this opportunity through my grandparents, Fay and Julian Bussgang, who, for as long as I can remember, have had strong connections with my family’s Polish heritage and the Jewish community in Poland. My grandfather was born in Poland, and his family escaped in 1939. Since 1989, when they took a trip to Poland with their three children, he and my grandmother have been involved in the Polish-Jewish community, working both in Poland and staying connected overseas.

The diversity in our group and our excellent leaders and engaging guides opened my eyes to perspectives and opinions about Poland and its place in world history and its own history.

In 2008, we took a family trip to Poland which I will never forget. My grandparents were our guides and we visited major sites in Warsaw, Kraków, and most importantly, my grandfather’s home city, Lvov (today, Lviv, Ukraine).

Though our 2008 trip was an incredible experience, I was only thirteen at the time and had yet to learn about the Polish language and history beyond my family’s own story. When I learned of this study trip, I was excited to travel to Poland among a group of other Polish-Americans who were eager to learn and

connect with their histories. The group was made up of thirteen young Polish-Americans, most of whom hailed from Chicago. A fraction of us were still in our undergrad years; most were recent grads, had their master’s degrees, or were enrolled in graduate school. About half the group was Jewish, the other half was predominantly Polish Catholic. When I arrived, I was surprised to find that I was one of the few jet-lagged ones of the group, as many of my peers had been studying in Poland over the summer or visiting family around the country.

Our journey began in Kraków, exploring the medieval history as well as the Kazimierz neighborhood and the flourishing Jewish culture of today. On the very first morning, on our way to Kazimierz from our hostel, we walked on Dietla Street, right past the house where my great-grandmother was born.

The whole group stopped with me to take a photo to send to my family at home. That was the beginning of visiting sites where the history was so palpable and powerful for each of us. During our time in Kraków we explored the Schindler Museum, Wawel Castle, Jagiellonian University, and the Rynek Underground Museum, and had dinner with volunteers from the Kraków JCC. We spent a day visiting Auschwitz and Birkenau and the Auschwitz Jewish Center before continuing along the Vistula River to Warsaw. On the way to Warsaw we stopped in Sandomierz and Kazimierz Dolny. These beautiful small towns challenged stereotypes of the shtetl concept. We learned that “shtetl” literally means “small town,” and that these shtetls were always a mixed population of religions and places of coexistence. In Warsaw we visited the Old Town, went to the top of the Palace of Culture and



Raquel Rosenbloom (left) with the “Exploring Poland/Polin” group in the Kashubia region of Poland.

Science, saw the Warsaw Uprising Museum, and spent time in the gorgeous new POLIN Museum, among other highlights. One of the best parts of being in Warsaw was the people we got to meet and talk to. We met with a Warsaw Uprising fighter who was thirteen when the war broke out and made his way through the sewers carrying messages during the fighting. We also were lucky enough to meet with representatives from the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and discuss with them what the trip meant personally to each of us.

Then we continued on, along the Vistula River. We drove to Gdańsk, stopping in Toruń and Malbork to see the Gothic-era architecture and the birthplace

of Copernicus as well as the impressive castle (Malbork) built by the Teutonic Knights. What I will never forget about that day is the heat. It was 43 degrees Celsius, which is 109 degrees Fahrenheit! Being on the coast was especially welcome after that. We stayed in Sopot but spent the majority of our days in Gdynia and Gdańsk. We visited the new Emigration Museum in Gdynia and the European Solidarity Center in Gdańsk, each of which tells a powerful story. A definite highlight of our time in the north was our visit to the Kashubia region, where we learned about the traditional food, dress, and music, and attended a pottery workshop. We ended our trip in Gdańsk, exploring the charming old town and with

A Journey of Learning, continued

one last dinner on the water. Though we had scheduled “framing the day” sessions for each morning and evening, we didn’t require them. While at dinner or going on to the next activity, we naturally engaged in lively debates and discussions about the events and ideas of the day. Many of us in the group were planning ways to return to Poland. I hope that the Taube Center for the Renewal of Jewish Life in Poland Foundation and the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs know how grateful we are for the experience and continue in the future to bring students on such amazing journeys. ■

<http://www.21stcenturypolonia.pl/>



Raquel Rosenbloom at a pottery workshop in the Kashubia region of Poland.



Moshe Rynecki



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