



"Polonia," the largest ship of the line that travels from Poland and Vienna to Haifa and Tel Aviv, ca. 1936. Poster, The Central Zionist Archive. Courtesy of POLIN Museum.

Gazeta

Volume 26, No. 3
Fall/Winter 2019

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



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Message from Irene Pipes

President, American Association
for Polish-Jewish Studies

Founder of *Gazeta*

Dear Members and Friends,

I am happy to let you know that on November 4, 2019, at the Collegium Novum of Jagiellonian University, Joanna Lisek was awarded the Józef A. Gierowski and Chone Shmeruk Prize for the best scholarly publication in the field of the history and culture of the Jews in Poland for her book, *Kol Isze. Głos kobiet w poezji jidysz, od XVI w. do 1939 r* (Kol Ishe. The Voice of Women in Yiddish Poetry from the 16th Century to 1939). This prize was established by the Institute of Jewish Studies at Jagiellonian University and the Department of Jewish Culture and History at the Marie Curie-Skłodowska University in Lublin in cooperation with the Marcel and Maria Roth Foundation. (Please see pp. 50-51 of this issue of *Gazeta* for a detailed announcement of this event.)

On September 22, the second Jewish Roots Workshop was organized at the JW3 Jewish Center in London by the Institute for Polish-Jewish Studies. Its theme was how the understanding of genealogy can illuminate the fate of Jewish families during the Holocaust and help to locate long-lost relatives.

Also in September, *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry* produced its volume on Jews and music-making in the Polish lands. The volume will launch in January 2020 at a conference at the Polish embassy, where the main themes of the volume will be discussed. It will be followed by a concert given by Katy Carr, an award-winning British singer who has made a career performing Polish popular songs from the inter-war period to World War II.

We congratulate our colleagues on their achievements and look forward to the upcoming year's events. Wishing you all the best for the festive season,

Irene Pipes
President



Irene Pipes

Message from Tad Taube and Shana Penn

Chairman and Executive Director,
Taube Foundation for Jewish Life
& Culture



Tad Taube



Shana Penn

The feature stories in this issue of *Gazeta* make frequent use of two words—memory and history—that have great meaning for Jews everywhere, but especially those of the Polish lands and their descendants in the diaspora. We hold in memory thoughts about people and places that are part of our being and help make us who we are. We pass the legacy of memories to the next generation through history, which is our narrative of ourselves and our heritage.

To see how these two words play out, consider the feature article by Antony Polonsky analyzing the rise of political populism in Europe and its attempt to rewrite history for partisan ends. When memory and history become subservient to political dreams of creating national and ethnic solidarity, the study of history suffers, argues Polonsky, and with it possibly the position of Jews and others. Very different is the use of memory and history in our other feature article, which shows what carefully and sensitively deployed thinking can create. Author Dorota Liliental, an actress by profession, explains how she applied empathy and imagination to the writings of her great-grandmother, giving humanity and personality to someone whom she had previously known only as a name.

Fortunately, we have aids and safeguards for the use of memory and historical imagination, such as the actual remains of what happened—objects, documents, images. This issue of *Gazeta* offers many notices about such aids, such as the project to digitize the Dr. Janusz Korczak archives in Vancouver and the recent public showing of a prized, century-old Jewish artwork at The Magnes Collection in Berkeley, to mention just two. Aids to memory and history help us stay on the path of truth while revealing the remarkable creativity, determination, and humanity of our forebears.

Tad Taube and Shana Penn
Chairman and Executive Director

FEATURES

The Rise of Populism and the Threat to History

Antony Polonsky

Memory is blind to all but the groups it binds. History, on the other hand, belongs to everyone and no one, hence its claim to universal authority.

—Pierre Nora

In August 1939, Shimon Dubnow wrote a letter to the editors of the Paris-based Yiddish monthly *Oyfn sheydveg* with the title “What Should One Do In Haman’s Times?”¹ He singled out two aspects of the crisis with which the Jewish world was confronted. The first was what he described as the “counter-revolution,” the attempt to undo the achievements of the French Revolution and its successors in laying the foundations for the system of constitutional, liberal, and democratic states. The second was Hitler’s “system

1 S. Dubnow, “Vos darf men to in homen’s tsaytn? A briv tsu der redaktsiye fun Oyfn Sheydveg.” *Oyfn Sheydveg* 2 (August 1939), 3-7.



Participants in the 2018 Independence March wave Polish flags, ONR flags, Forza Nuova flags, and Italian flags. ONR is the National Radical Camp—a far-right movement in Poland that takes its name from a pre-WWII fascist group. Photograph by Jacek Smoter. Used with permission.

of extermination,” which he described as a new version of Haman’s plan “to destroy, to slay, and to cause to perish, all Jews.” Obviously, the situation we face today is not comparable to that of 1939. However, we are seeing the widespread undermining of democratic principles and the triumph of an illiberal populism in Europe and beyond. We are also seeing an attempt to undermine the

achievements of scholarship in documenting where Jews are to be located in the long history of Europe and how the success and failures of integration and acculturation should be evaluated. This has gone along with attempts to rewrite the history of the Holocaust so as to diminish the responsibility of what Raul Hilberg has described as “bystanders,” a not always appropriate term.

The rise of populism has a number of roots. In the first place, it is a reaction against the Reagan- and Thatcher-era marketization and globalization since the 1970s. In East-Central Europe, it is characterized by a distaste for those who have profited from the introduction of market reforms after the collapse of communism in the area. It is also linked with a national identity politics. It is everywhere a reaction against so-called liberal elites—from Trump’s America to Kaczyński’s Poland and Bolsonaro’s Brazil—that are perceived by their opposition as lacking in patriotism. Linked with this has been the fear of immigration and its associated xenophobia. It is also clear that the new legitimacy that authoritarian regimes enjoy — from Putin’s Russia to Xi’s China—has undermined the attractiveness of the liberal democratic model in much of the developing world.

The rise of populism has been accompanied by an attack on history as a scholarly discipline. Until recently, it seemed that real progress was

The rise of populism has been accompanied by an attack on history as a scholarly discipline.

being made in understanding the origins and character of the genocide which the Nazis perpetrated during World War II against the Jewish people. This research was often accompanied by acrimonious debates that have only been possible in situations where the political culture permitted a public reckoning with the more dubious aspects of the national past, and where there was a high level of acceptance of the practice of national self-criticism. However, these exchanges seemed to have led to some degree of consensus. Not surprisingly, they have gone furthest in Germany, first in the Federal Republic and subsequently in the united Germany established in 1989. Starting with the controversy aroused by publication of Fritz Fischer’s *Griff nach der Weltmacht* in 1961, German historians have undertaken a thorough and complex re-examination of their country’s past, which culminated in the *Historikerstreit* of

the 1980s, the debate over Daniel Goldhagen’s *Hitler’s Willing Executioners*, and that between Martin Broszat and Saul Friedländer on the validity of survivor testimony. The research they produced has greatly clarified the problems of how the Nazis came to power, the nature of the regime they established, and how they came to adopt and implement their anti-Jewish genocide. Analogous attempts to “overcome the past” have been undertaken most notably in France and in the Netherlands, Belgium, Austria, and Switzerland, and elsewhere in Western and Central Europe.

In East-Central Europe, such debates, with one exception, that of Poland, only really began in 1989–91 with the collapse of communism in the region. In the Polish case, a debate on the question of the responsibility of the local population for the fate of the Jews in the Nazi genocide did begin immediately after the war, but was stifled by the imposition of a rigidly Stalinist regime in 1947, and resumed in the 1980s. Elsewhere, both in the states

which during war were allied with the Nazis and in those areas where no state-level collaborationist regimes were established by the Nazis, such as Lithuania, Belarus, and Ukraine, discussion of this complex topic only began in earnest after the end of communism. Since then there has been considerable dispute about the role of General Ion Antonescu in Romania and Father Tiso in Slovakia, as well as the conduct of the Nazi satellite regimes in Hungary and Croatia. There has also been a good deal of debate in Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania (and rather less in Ukraine and Belarus) about the participation of local militias and nationalist partisans in the mass murder of Jews.

These internal national debates have often been very vigorous, and extend beyond national borders, especially among Poles, Lithuanians, Belarusians, and Ukrainians. They have highlighted the common problems in these four countries, as they come to terms with the “dark past” that hangs as a shadow of shame, guilt, and regret. The debate among historians

The debate among historians offers the best chance to move the historical facts forward, beyond the interpretations of politics.

offers the best chance to move the historical facts forward, beyond the interpretations of politics. In northeastern Europe, after the collapse of the community system, the first stage of approaching such issues has generally been from a moral point of view—a settlement of long-overdue accounts, often accompanied by apologies for past behavior.

In this now second stage, focus is increasingly placed on careful and detailed research based on archives and reliable first-hand testimony. Unfortunately, this approach to history has been challenged of late on political grounds. What is needed is to find some common ground through ongoing public and scholarly examination of the facts. The conflict is, however, more deep-rooted and reflects a clash between two views of society. One sees society as made up of different

and often competing groups in which understandings of the past may differ, and in which a reckoning with the negative aspects of the national history is necessary for building a pluralistic, outward looking, and tolerant polity. It sees the nation as something which emerged in particular circumstances and whose identity can change over time. The other view is centered on the nation and the community of which it is composed, which is seen as primordial and transcending the individuals of which it is comprised. As Pierre Nora has argued, this can be framed as a conflict between history and memory. And as Brian Porter-Szűcs puts forward in the Polish case, this is why history is vitally important for the ruling Law and Justice Party (Prawo I Sprawiedliwość, PiS), for which it is “the biography of the national community and the source of the traditions and values that hold everything together.”² As it came under

² Brian Porter-Szűcs, “Meritocracy and Community in Twenty-First-Century Poland.” *Shofar: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Jewish Studies*, 37, 1 (Spring 2019), 87.

PiS control, the Institute for National Memory defined the goal of historical study in 2016 as follows:

Historical policy refers to the interpretation of facts, lives, and events and is assessed according to the interests of the society and the nation, as an element that has a long-range character and constitutes the foundation of state policies. Historical policy is a type of history that serves to shape the historical consciousness of society, including economic and territorial consciousness, as well as to strengthen public discourse about the past in the direction of nurturing national bonds regardless of the momentary policies of the state.³

The issue here is not historical truth as such; instead, history is important because it is the “long-range ... foundation of state policies.” It is those stories that a community tells and retells in order to establish a bond between generations and to teach young people what “we” believe—one of

Many scholars in the countries of Eastern Europe have made a contribution to a nuanced, archival-based and dispassionate account of the difficult problems of the Holocaust. We need to continue to pursue this approach and to find ways of reaching a wider, transnational audience.

those factors that must never be contested or debated. To quote Porter-Szűcs again:

The supporters of PiS complain about historical accounts that refuse to clearly identify who is a hero and who a villain, who a victim and who a perpetrator, who a martyr and who an oppressor. When historians say (as we are inclined to do) that our scholarship should reveal the complexities, nuances, and multiple perspectives of the past, we are directly repudiating the role that PiS believes we should play . . .

What was lacking [in the scholarly historiography] was a clear, unambiguous account that was sanctified by public commemorations, evoked in lofty speeches, immortalized in inspiring films and novels, and above all taught to everyone in school. PiS wants to establish a canon of stories that everyone knows, that everyone evokes to identify the good guys and the bad guys, that everyone treats with solemnity and reverence as the unquestioned and unchanging core of their shared identity.⁴

Official custodians of memory in Lithuania and Ukraine, such as the Genocide and Resistance Research Centre of Lithuania and the Centre for Research of Liberation Movement in Ukraine, are also committed to this concept of history and enjoy some support from their respective governments. The same process can be observed in Belarus, although it is less pronounced and often takes a neo-Soviet form. In Germany,

3 Quoted in *ibid.*, 87.

4 *Ibid.*, 87-88.

the more liberal concept of historical scholarship does seem to be holding its own, but is also under fire. This is not the only challenge we face. More moderate critics of what one can describe as “critical history” have claimed it devotes excessive attention to the “dark past” of the Holocaust and the suffering of the Jews, in particular.

To respond effectively to this new intellectual climate in the context of the general rise of populism will not be easy. One would like to believe that there is a reverse Gresham’s law in historical scholarship: that good history will drive out the bad. There are many scholars in the countries of Eastern Europe who have made a contribution to a nuanced, archive-based, and dispassionate account of the difficult problems of the Holocaust. We need to continue to pursue this approach and to find ways of reaching a wider, transnational audience. It will show how similar situations gave rise to similar reactions, and that the issue is not one of a unique “national guilt.” Also useful is the notion

of “conceptualization,” which helps to explain the complex, complicated, and contradictory nature of the Holocaust and how it can be studied as a transnational and European process. In addition, we need to take as a model in our analysis the notion of an “integrated history,” as practiced by Saul Friedländer.

Our goal should be to encourage scholarship based on a wide range of sources, from a variety of points of view and in different locations, that will ultimately make possible a degree of normalization in the attitudes of Poles, Lithuanians, Belarusians, and Ukrainians to the now disputed past, and to their relations with their Jewish neighbors and citizens. ■

Antony Polonsky, PhD, is Chief Historian of POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews.

The Legacy of Regina Lilientalowa: Ethnographer and Scholar

Dorota Liliental

Regina (Gitla) Lilientalowa (1875-1924)—an ethnographer, publicist, history teacher in a school for Jewish girls, mother of two, and a female intellectual among male scholars—was my great-grandmother. Her many books included *Jewish Superstitions*, *Jewish Betrothal and Wedding*, *Beliefs, Superstitions and Practices of the Jews*, *Jewish Legends on the Exodus from Egypt*, *The Jewish Child*, and three volumes of *Jewish Holidays, in the Past and Present*. Thanks to the books she has written, the rituals, fables, legends, songs and proverbs of the world that seemed to have been expunged by Shoah can be revived today.

Ninety-five years have passed since my great-grandmother died. There was a time in my life when I hardly knew anything about her. Perhaps because, even though I knew my family was Jewish, there were still many taboos in our conversations. Some



Regina and Natan Liliental.
Courtesy of Dorota Liliental.

of my Jewish friends grew up not knowing they were Jewish. After the wave of anti-Semitism in 1968, many Jews were forced to leave Poland. Jewish families who stayed tried not to “stigmatize” children. Adults were not eager to tell us about the atrocities of the war. They also did their

best to camouflage their Jewish identity. Their aim was not to make us feel different from the rest of the society. All in vain. The silence around us made us ask questions, search, and slowly fill in the void.

I was lucky to have a great-grandmother who was well-

known and who authored books and publications. Many of her works survived in archives, including private letters and photographs that had been sent overseas in the mid-1920s. I know what she looked like.

While most of my other relatives perished without a trace, my great-grandmother left an amazing heritage. It has become of great importance to me, not only as a source of precious knowledge, but foremost as a determinant of my own identity. Thanks to her, I have become familiar with the culture of my Jewish ancestors, with their rituals and traditions, and with the way their national self-awareness transformed over the years—something that my relatives, perhaps with the exception of my aunt living in Israel, were no longer able to pass on to me.

Thanks to my great-grandmother, the world that existed before the Shoah is no longer an empty space to me. It has been brought back to life. When I want to invite friends for Rosh Hashana or for a seder, when I act in films in which Jewish traditions and

*Lilientalowa often referred to her own experience from childhood. For example, in **The Jewish Child** she recalled a Purim shpiel performance that she saw as a thirteen-year-old girl in Sandomierz.*

rituals play an important role, I “ask” my great-grandmother questions. Her books have become an important point of reference. I now feel included in the bloodline of my Jewish religion and culture.

Regina Lilientalowa was born in 1875 in a little town called Zawichost near Sandomierz. She was the eldest of nine siblings, and she was raised in a traditional home. Her father, Moses, was the great-grandson of an outstanding Talmudic scholar, Rabbi Akiva Eger. In her works, Regina often referred to her childhood experiences. For example, in *The Jewish Child*, she recalled a Purim-spiel performance that she saw as a thirteen-year-old girl in Sandomierz. On another occasion, she described an amulet worn by her uncle

Alter, her mother’s brother. Amulets of this kind, with the Hebrew letter “he” on it, and a fragment of a psalm on the other side, used to be given by mothers to their children.

My great-grandmother translated a collection of Jewish songs and *tkhines* (women’s prayers) into Polish. She was one of the first translators of stories written by Isaac Leib Peretz, the “father of Yiddish literature” in Poland. Among Jewish writers, she treasured him the most. Since her early youth, she belonged to the close circle clustered around him and was often invited to his home for Shabbat. She believed that Peretz had a profound sensitivity to the fate of the Jewish people, to their sorrows, joys, and longings. She also believed that legends, fables, superstitions, proverbs, rites, and songs were the key to understanding the spirit of the Jewish nation. And thus, she wanted to reach the hearts of Polish readers through his literature, believing that it would help eliminate antagonisms between the nations.

Witnessing the escalation of anti-Semitism, Regina thought

she could do something to prevent the exodus of Jews to Palestine. At the same time, she wanted to prove that the repressed Yiddish language could be used for sophisticated literary creativity. She considered Yiddish culture to be equal to others. According to her, the true representatives of that culture were the common Jewish people, not the assimilated Jews. In 1905 she wrote a courageous manifesto of her views, “*It’s Time...*”, which was published in the 26th and 27th issues of *Ogniwo* magazine. In it she criticized attempts to enforce foreign, allegedly higher, standards on Jews, depriving them of their own identity. Three years before the Czernowitz Conference, she demanded respect and recognition for Yiddish as the language that truly expressed the Jewish soul and intellect. At the same time, she assured Polish readers that distinctiveness did not signify animosity. Instead, she claimed, getting to know another culture through its folklore could be an enriching experience.

Her article ignited a lot of controversies, even among Jews themselves. The

Lilientalowa believed that the legends, fables, superstitions, proverbs, rites and songs were the key to understanding the spirit of the Jewish nation.

assimilators questioned the sense of Yiddish culture, blaming it for condemning the Jewish people to cultural and economic exclusion. According to them, religion, and praying in Hebrew, should be the only factors distinguishing Jews from Poles.

Most of her life, Regina struggled with poor health and financial difficulties. She was the mother of two children and worked as a history teacher in a Jewish school for girls. Despite many duties (though as we know from some letters, she hated cooking), she used to spend long hours in the library on Tłomackie Street or in her home office, studying and collecting material for new works.

When I think about my great-grandmother, I am impressed with her diligence, her thirst for knowledge, her command of many foreign languages. But

I also admire her courage, her progressive and independent views, her unsatiated and inquisitive mind. It is worth emphasizing that she avoided following the pattern that was typical of other Jewish girls who had received their education at Polish schools. Many of them felt lost after returning to their *shtetls*, and they often ended up marrying Polish men. Such marriages implied access to higher financial status, a more affluent life, and upward mobility, but eventually it meant cutting ties with families through assimilation.

At the time that my great-grandmother was growing up, neither religious nor secular Jewish schools for girls existed. It was before Sara Shenirer founded Beis Yaakov schools for girls. And so, nine-year-old Gitla Eger was the only Jewish girl in her class at the progymnasium in Sandomierz. It was there that she became known as Regina to the non-Jewish world.

She married my great-grandfather, Natan (Nuchim) Liliental in an Orthodox synagogue in Szczebrzeszyn, and shortly thereafter, she

moved to Warsaw, where she pursued her education, auditing classes at the “Flying University.” The lectures for women were held at private homes, since the Czarist authorities in partitioned Poland did not allow them to study. At first, Regina became fascinated with Polish folklore. For a while it seemed that she had become immersed in Polish culture for good. However, there was one professor who inspired her to do research on the culture of her own nation. His name was Ludwik Krzywicki and he was a sociologist, but also a socialist, sensitive to issues of poverty and social inequality.

As a result of her studies, Regina started to look at the rites she knew from her childhood from a more secular and sociological perspective, and then dedicated her life to documenting Jewish folklore as a valuable cultural and historical contribution. Influenced by leftist perspectives, she remained nonetheless faithful to her *shtetl*, and through her books she became an ambassador for it.

Regina passed away on December 4, 1924, as a result

I admire her courage, her progressive and independent views, her unsatiated and inquisitive mind.

of an ill-fated surgery. She was at the peak of her creativity, at work on the fourth volume of *Jewish Holidays*, and had just begun working in collaboration with the magazine *Yidische Filologye* (Yiddish Philology). Her text, *Ayin ha-ra* (Heb. The Evil Eye) was published a few months after her death. Jacob Szacki (Yankev Shatzky), one

Lilientalowa considered the status of the Yiddish culture to be equal to others.

of the founders of YIVO in New York, called her the only woman *talmid khochem* (in Hebrew, an honorific given to men who are religious scholars and well-versed in Jewish law) in a posthumous article published in New York on January 7, 1925, titled “Der tod fun a yidene talmid khochem” (The Death of a Female Religious Scholar).

“It is an obligation for all the Jews and every other nation,

having respect for their past, to eternalize things that have gone by. One must hurry to do so, since the field of Jewish folklore is almost intact, and life erases the old traditions step by step,” she wrote in the preface to *Jewish Holidays*. The rich and fascinating Ashkenazi culture she immortalized in her books is still an open space. Exploring it, protecting and continuing it means overcoming the evil done by the Shoah. That culture is like regained life that we can pass on to the next generations. As Lilientalowa’s great-granddaughter, I feel responsible for preserving it. ■

Dorota Liliental, an actress living in Warsaw, is the great-granddaughter of Regina Lilientalowa. She recently played the role of Halina in Roberta Grossman’s feature documentary Who Will Write Our History?

COMMENTARY

Michał Bilewicz's Professorship

This essay offers background to reports in the press in October of this year that President Andrzej Duda is holding up the award of a professorship to Michał Bilewicz, a leading Polish social psychologist in the Department of Sociology at the University of Warsaw. Professor Bilewicz has investigated conspiracy theories, the roots of prejudice and xenophobia, and intergroup conflict in Poland, Germany, Armenia, Israel, and Bosnia. At the university he is Director of the Center for the Study of Prejudice. He is also Deputy Chair of the Psychology Committee of the Polish Academy of Sciences and a member of the board of the International Society for Political Psychology.

Bilewicz is Vice-President of Forum for Dialogue, the largest and oldest Polish nongovernmental organization engaged in Polish-Jewish dialogue. From 2005 to 2006, he held a Fulbright scholarship



Professor Michał Bilewicz. Courtesy of Humanity in Action. Wikimedia Commons.

The only responsibility of the President is to sign the decision reached.

at the New School for Social Research in New York, and in 2015 he was awarded the prize of the Polish National Center for Scholarship (Narodowe Centrum Nauki) in the human and social sciences and art. His doctoral thesis was titled “Between the Need for a Positive Identity and That of Collective Auto-Verification. Reactions to Threats to the Status of One’s Own Group,” and his habilitation thesis (required for promotion to full

Antony Polonsky

professor in Poland) had as its theme “The Psychological Conditioning of Polish-Jewish Relations. Inter-Group Contact, Collective Moral Emotions and the Scapegoat Mechanism.” His impressive list of publications includes several co-edited books, among them *Uprzedzenia w Polsce* (Prejudices in Poland, 2015). He has been one of the organizers of studies of the emergence of hate speech in Poland, both in relation to gay and lesbian rights and anti-Semitism.

On March 13, 2018, he gave a lecture as part of a conference at POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews on the fiftieth anniversary of the anti-Zionist campaign in Poland, which led to the emigration of at least 13,000 Polish Jews. His theme was “The Epidemic of Hate Speech. How Near to March ’68 Are We?” This made him the target of attacks from right-wing publicists, among them Krzysztof Bosak, one of the leaders of the

National Movement, and Artur Warzocha i Rafał Ślusarz, both senators of the ruling Law and Justice Party. In a public statement they asked: “What steps does the Minister of Culture and National Heritage intend to take to bring to an end this debate which harms Poland? Is the representative of the Minister of Culture on the Council of the Museum conscious of events like the lecture of Professor Michał Bilewicz where dubious scholarly theories like ‘secondary antisemitism’ are expounded?” Bilewicz had used the term secondary antisemitism to describe the negative reaction of some in Poland to arguments that some Poles had aided the Nazis in murdering Jews.

Bilewicz’s right to express his views was upheld by Professor Marcin Pałys, Rector of the University of Warsaw, who gave an eloquent defense of academic freedom: “The role of scholarship is not to fulfill the expectations of politicians but to seek the truth and to understand the mechanisms which govern our world. What happened in

the past few days is alarming. Professor Bilewicz’s speech was evaluated by politicians who criticized his research because it did not serve Polish *raison d’état*. I regard this as the complete negation of everything which we understand by academic freedom, the freedom to conduct research.”

To understand the situation, one needs to remember that there are two types of professorships in Poland: institutional and presidential. Someone who has successfully submitted a habilitation thesis, as did Bilewicz, is entitled to an institutional professorship. The award of the title “professor” is also an honor conferred by the President and is the highest rank in academia. The President is not responsible for granting this award or evaluating the scholarly achievements of an individual, which used to be the responsibility of the Central Commission for Academic Titles and Degrees, and is now, after recent university reforms, handled by the Council for Academic

Excellence. Bilewicz has passed this hurdle.

The only responsibility of the President is to sign the decision reached. Although he cannot veto such a decision, it appears he can delay it indefinitely. In a letter to Bilewicz, the President’s chancellery wrote, “The regulations [for awarding professorships] do not lay down a time limit [for the President’s signature].”

One can only hope this delay is caused by the pressure of business and is not politically motivated. ■

NEWS REPORTS

The Case against Jan Tomasz Gross is Dropped

Antony Polonsky

In September 2015, Jan Tomasz Gross, the Polish-born author of such important books about the Holocaust and its aftermath as *Neighbors* (Princeton, 2001), *Fear* (Princeton, 2006), and *Golden Harvest* (Princeton, 2012), published an article, “The East Europeans Have No Feeling of Shame,” in the online edition of the German newspaper *Die Welt*. In it, he argued that in the refugee crisis, which resulted from the civil war in Syria, the countries of the region had shown themselves “intolerant, illiberal and xenophobic,” and “incapable of remembering the spirit of solidarity that carried them to freedom a quarter-century ago.” This failure to show compassion for the refugees was a consequence of the attitudes which prevailed in the area “during the Second World War and the subsequent years.” Discussing the behavior of the Poles, he stated that they were “deservedly proud of their society’s anti-Nazi resistance,” and were the

largest group of those who had been decorated by Yad Vashem in Israel as Righteous among the Nations for their heroism in saving Jews during the war. However, during that war, they had also “killed more Jews than Germans.”

The statement was widely attacked in Poland, and the representative of the Polish Foreign Ministry, Marian Wojciechowski, censured it as “untrue, historically harmful and insulting to Poland.” After the coming to power of the government of the Law and Justice Party in November 2015, the Public Prosecutor’s Office in Katowice sought to prosecute Gross under Article 133 of the Polish penal code, which lays down that anyone “who publicly insults the Polish Nation or the Polish Republic may be subject to a penalty of three years’ imprisonment.”

In late November of this year, Marta Zawada-Dybak, spokesperson for this office, announced that the prosecution

was being dropped. In taking this action, the office had consulted the Commission for the Prosecution of Crimes against the Polish Nation, the Historical Bureau of the Institute for National Memory, the Department of History of the University of Silesia in Katowice, and a number of individuals. According to her: “Their opinions show that there are no unambiguous and convincing figures on the number of people of German and Jewish nationality who lost their lives as a result of the actions of Poles during the Second World War. The estimation of the number of victims remains a matter for investigation by historians and to the present arouses much controversy and polemics of a scholarly nature.”

A crucial factor in reaching this conclusion was the testimony provided by the historian Piotr Gontarczyk, a leading right-wing publicist. He argued that there do not exist reliable scholarly studies which could confirm that during World War

II Poles killed more Jews than Germans. According to him, it is also not possible to state unequivocally that such an opinion is false. “The scholarly world and public opinion in Poland and abroad, as a matter of course [*w oczywisty sposób*], regards this issue as lying within the boundaries of scholarly debate.”

Marta Zawada-Dybak went on to say that it was not the function of the Prosecutor’s Office to resolve disputes of a historical character. In his article, she noted, Gross had not intended to insult the Polish nation nor the Polish republic, which was a condition for prosecution under Article 133. His statement was part of a longer article which also highlighted the heroic behavior of Poles during World War II.

Zawada-Dybak further noted that from the investigation, which also involved taking statements from the author of the article, it was clear that he expressed his opinion on the responsibility of the Poles for the death of Jewish victims as a scholar, a historian, and sociologist with the aim of stimulating

scholarly investigation. Given the scholarly character of his actions and also guarantees of a general character (*gwarancji o charakterze powszechnym*), he made use of the right to freedom of speech to express his opinion.

Freedom of speech, Zawada-Dybak continued, according to the Polish Constitutional Tribunal and the European Court of Human Rights, is not limited to the expression of opinions which are widely accepted or regarded with indifference, but also includes those which “insult, shock, disturb or arouse unease” (*obrażają, szokują, przeszkadzają lub wprowadzają niepokój*).

We welcome this decision and the arguments used to justify it, which underline the crucial importance of open debate and tolerance for the functioning of a pluralistic and democratic society. ■

Chabad Regains Use of Kraków Synagogue

For the past three months our world in Kraków has been flipped upside down. We woke up one day in July to find out that the synagogue we had been praying in for years was locked, with armed, masked guards preventing us from entering its doors. Orthodox Jews are obligated to pray three times a day in the synagogue. It is a second home for the locals and a lifeline for tourists who need a place to pray, learn, and meet other Jews in the community. The leadership of the Jewish Gmina Żydowska (religious congregation in Kraków), which owns and controls all of the synagogues in the city (as well as all public Jewish property which was restored to the Jews in Kraków), decided to lock us out of our synagogue along with our prayer shawls, books, phylacteries, and everything which was stored there for years.

For the first few weeks we prayed in front of the bolted gates in silent protest to show

the gmina's president (and his daughter, the vice-president) that we viewed their actions as egregious, that we would tell the world of the injustice against Jews in Kraków (ironically perpetrated by Jews in Kraków!), and that we would not give up. When it started to rain and the weather turned, we realized that although we were not giving up, we were moving to a nearby catering hall, graciously offered by its owner, Mr. Berenholtz, a true *tzaddik*.

At the same time that we were pleading to the world to fight against the injustice—for which we received support from presidents, chief rabbis, Jewish and non-Jewish leaders all over the world—we also pursued a legal course of action in order to get the court to acknowledge that what took place was not only unjust, it was also illegal. Rabbi Gurary hired a lawyer from Warsaw, Mr. Giertych, who said our case was strong because it was true, and the truth should prevail. He said, however, that

Rabbi Avi Baumol

it would take time and money, something the gmina had much of because of the revenue coming in from all the property they own and control. We, however, did not.

Three months have transpired, and it has not been easy. We were maligned time and again, but we kept fighting. We alerted the world, and specifically the Jewish world, to the injustice taking place in Kraków, but we felt that while there was much sympathy and pledges of encouragement, our efforts were seemingly futile. We kept praying that as the Jewish year closed, and our community felt much like the Israelites wandering in the desert, we would somehow find a way back to our shul, to the Izaak Synagogue, and pray there for Rosh Hashana.

Wednesday morning, during Shacharit morning services at the catering hall, Rabbi Gurary received a call from our lawyer, Mr. Giertych—a holiday miracle! The judge had ruled in our favor, the

seizing of the synagogue by the gmina was unjust, and the court agreed with our claim that while there is a larger ongoing court case about the synagogue, it was nevertheless wrong to kick us out of our house of prayer. Mr. Giertych was coming that day with the court decision in hand to present to the leadership of the gmina, instructing them to immediately give us back the keys and let us back in our synagogue. On that day, the Jewish community of Poland had light, joy, happiness, and honor. We came

together, our Sefer Torah in hand, to pray the first prayer in three months. We danced, rejoiced, and thanked God for the wonderful gift for our community.

Let this sign join our Rosh Hashana symbols which usher in the new year with sweetness, justice, godliness, and unity. And let us hope that this remarkable event is just the beginning of favorable decisions God grants us in our quest to unite the entire Jewish community of Kraków, root out corruption, expand the

gmina to include every Jew in the city, and return to be a shining city of Torah, Jewish brotherhood, and peace. ■

For more on this story, please visit: <https://blogs.timesofisrael.com/a-bright-day-for-jews-in-krakow/>.

Rabbi Avi Baumol is Emissary of Shavei Israel in Kraków.

ANNOUNCEMENTS: IN BRIEF

Leadership Change in the Union of Jewish Religious Communities

The board of the Union of Jewish Religious Communities in Poland (ZGWŻ) has announced a change in leadership. Klara Kołodziejska-Połtyn has replaced Monika Krawczyk as its new chairwoman.

Kołodziejska-Połtyn was entrusted with this position in September 2019. She previously worked for the Jewish community in Wrocław, where she served as the community's official chairperson since November 2018.

ZGWŻ organizes religious and cultural life for its members nationwide and helps Polish Jews in a variety of legal matters, both communal and personal, including representing them in the process of recovery and restitution of property. ■

Warsaw's Great Synagogue Brought Back to Life with Miniature Model

Juliette Bretan

From the miniature Star of David on the tip of its roof, to the small crowd assembled around its feet, everything at the opening of Warsaw Miniature Park's new model of the Great Synagogue felt pleasant and homey. But there was certainly more to the story than that. In the shadow of the miniature of the stocky, sprawling Saxon Palace, Thursday's opening also meant Warsaw was united, once again, with its synagogue—and with the Jewish legacy in Poland. “We were living together once—and maybe it's possible once more,” says Konrad, a staff member at the park. “It's an extremely important building in Warsaw's history.”

The forty-odd guests who assembled in the park's courtyard to attend the official opening were met with the model of a building which was not only once seen as an architectural triumph, but also represented a golden age in Polish-Jewish relations. And



Model of the Great Synagogue in the Warsaw Miniature Park.
Courtesy of Park Miniatur.

the 1:25 scale model could well become the jewel of the Miniature Park's collection too. As the balmy Warsaw dusk set in, above blossoming pilasters, the iridescent tiles on the synagogue's bulbous, belvedere crown sparkled a captivating gold and bronze in the setting sunlight. Around to the side, a yawning cut-out hole, trimmed with amputated columns, exposed

the synagogue's once-famed interior to peering guests, where rows upon rows of unadorned wooden pews peered toward the podium. But that gaping wall was also a clear reminder of the destruction that the synagogue had faced. Those truncated columns framing its core may have immediately brought to mind the still-standing carcass of Warsaw's Saxon Palace—

but they could also stand for the presence of Jewish people in Poland and in Warsaw today.

In bygone times, the pews beneath were once home to an extensive and talented Jewish community. Today, they lie empty. It would also come as no surprise that the outside of the synagogue lacked the spray of meticulously rendered miniature figures which feature in the park's other models. Konrad, however, sees the building as a symbol of the successes of Polish-Jewish activity. "It's an integral part of Polish history as well," he says. In fact, when the synagogue opened on September 26, 1878, the Polish rabbi and preacher Isaak Cylkow had implied similarly. The Progressive community had funded the synagogue's construction, which began in 1875. Its design by prominent Polish architect Leandro Jan Marconi was allegedly inspired by the façade of Łazienki Park's Palace on the Isle. When finished in 1878, it could seat 2,200. The Torah ark was built from cedar imported from Lebanon.

It might have taken those 19th-century builders three years to erect this bastion of Warsaw's Jewish community, but even in miniature, it was a painstaking year before construction was completed. "The most difficult part of the process was to create a plan of the miniature, because the building doesn't exist anymore," explains Konrad. But even their usual strategy to gather plans and photographs of the original came across an immediate snag. "The Germans destroyed the archive," he says. "There are fragments, bits and pieces. You gather them all together and it's a bit like detective work."

The result was detective work with a splash of innovation: the model is the first in the park's collection to possess working electricity. The miniscule, Promethean globules of golden light mark a promising future for the park, ever-growing in popularity—but more importantly, [they] showcase the significance of the synagogue within its collection of key buildings across Warsaw's history.

Jews made up a third of Warsaw's population during the inter-war era, and the synagogue embraced assimilation between both Poles and Jews in the city. One day, it would host celebrations of state events, including the anniversary of regaining independence; the next, Christians alongside Jews would pile up the stairs, framed by two oversized menorahs, and into the exquisite interior to hear what was considered a legendary choir. Along with the horrific fate of Warsaw's Jewish community, the synagogue was bombed and destroyed on May 16, 1943. The park's model brings something of the former history of this small segment of Warsaw—and of Warsaw's history—back to life. ■

Editor's Note: This article is excerpted from a longer version which appeared in The First News, Warsaw, reported by journalist Juliette Bretan, August 9, 2019. Reprinted here with permission.

Archive without Borders: Korczak Digital Archive

Jerry Nussbaum

Janusz Korczak is one of the true moral heroes of the 20th century. Born Henryk Goldszmit, he was a Polish Jewish author, pediatrician, and humanitarian; a trailblazer in the field of children's rights; and for decades, an orphanage director, whereby he put his pedagogical philosophy into practice. He died, as he lived, alongside his children, at the hands of the Nazis in the Treblinka concentration camp in 1942.

Dr. Korczak's legacy is profound and remains influential. He was a pioneering advocate for children's rights, and his writings were integral to the 1989 United Nations Charter for Children's Rights. He also lives on in Polish (and Polish Jewish) culture. At Poland's 2018 centennial independence celebrations, he was named one of the twenty-five most influential Poles of the past century. Nevertheless, his writings, which are so urgent and relevant to pressing issues of the current day, often remain inaccessible to



Janusz Korczak with children.
Courtesy of the Janusz Korczak Archive.

scholars, practitioners, and the public. Although some writings are well known, countless others gather dust scattered in archives around the world or remain untranslated and therefore broadly unavailable. Until now.

In 2017, the Janusz Korczak Association of Canada (JKAC) initiated a project and assembled a consortium of organizations, including the Institute of History and the Digital Humanities Laboratory at the University of Warsaw, The Korczak Foundation of

Poland, and the Faculty of Education at the University of British Columbia, to establish the Korczak Digital Archive. The archive will revolutionize the availability and accessibility of Dr. Korczak's writings in a free, digital online archive. The Korczak Digital Archive represents an essential step in the mission to broadly disseminate Dr. Korczak's legacy and to bring his writings to bear on the challenges of today. Our recently published (2018) English translation of Dr. Korczak's most important writings is a great example of what should become widely available through the Digital Archive.

The Janusz Korczak Association of Canada is uniquely positioned to spearhead this critical undertaking. Founded thirty years ago, it has become among the most active organizations that promote Dr. Korczak's legacy, particularly to an English-speaking audience, translating and publishing

books, promoting academic research through scholarships, hosting public lectures, seminars, and symposia, and recently organizing the first university course dedicated to Dr. Korczak's legacy at the University of British Columbia. JKAC strives for the dissemination of knowledge about Dr. Korczak's work and ideas in order to better integrate them into contemporary legal, social, and pedagogical theories, and to make them the basis for cooperation among educators, child welfare workers, researchers, physicians, lawyers, and children's rights activists. With this in mind, we forge close ties with organizations and individuals actively involved in child welfare, centered on key areas of Dr. Korczak's pedagogy. The association, in cooperation with other institutions, annually honors three outstanding activists in the field of children's rights, social work, or pediatrics. A key feature at each award ceremony is an introduction to Dr. Korczak's legacy and its relevance to contemporary issues. These activities are made possible by the support of generous donors. JKAC

We envision an active entity that will host and sponsor initiatives such as scholarships, conferences, lecture series, and forums for discussion and collaboration.

also has a long track record of international collaboration in Canada and the United States as well as in Poland and Israel, which are homes to the majority of Korczak-related archives and scholars.

We have already made significant progress in making the Korczak Digital Archive a reality, including the development of its digital structure and securing the cooperation of several of the leading archives that house Dr. Korczak's works. Once launched, the Korczak Digital Archive will immediately become an indispensable resource for scholars and practitioners in the vanguard of children's rights, as well as the general public. The archive, which will be universally accessible and free to use, will represent by far the largest digital collection of Dr. Korczak's writings (and

Korczak-related documents) in the world. It will not only provide a forum to access Korczak materials, but will also enable a community without borders. It will initially operate in English and Polish and expand to other languages over time.

Following the launch, the consortium plans to build the archive into more than a passive repository for digital documents. Rather, we envision an active entity that will host and sponsor initiatives such as scholarships (including to review and update the archive), conferences, lecture series, and forums for discussion and collaboration. In sum, our vision is for the archive to serve as a vital resource to bring new life to the works and legacy of Dr. Janusz Korczak for the benefit of all humanity.

For more information about the archives and Dr. Korczak's publications, lectures, and symposia based on his work, please contact www.januszkorczak.ca. ■

Jerry Nussbaum lives in Vancouver where he is the president of the Janusz Korczak Association of Canada.

YIVO Receives the Archive of Nachman Blumental

The YIVO Institute for Jewish Research recently received the archive of noted historian, scholar, and Holocaust survivor Nachman Blumental.

The archive, which has not been seen for more than seventy years, “is a very significant addition to the YIVO Holocaust collection,” said Dr. Stefanie Halpern, Acting Director of the YIVO Archives, adding that the archive “is the largest North American repository of original documents on the Holocaust and is one of the most important of its kind in the world.”

Born in 1905 in Borszczów, Austria-Hungary, Nachman Blumental collected ethnographic and historical documents for YIVO prior to World War II and was a member of the association Friends of YIVO. “Given Nachman’s early associations with YIVO, it is fitting that his archive is now with YIVO

to be processed and preserved and shared with the world,” said Jonathan Brent, CEO of YIVO.

Blumental, who survived the Holocaust in the non-German occupied part of the Soviet Union, lost his first wife, Maria, and his three-year-old son, Ariel, and six of his seven siblings. After the war, he traveled across Poland to collect survivor testimony and original German documents concerning ghettos, camps, and sites of mass murder. He served as an expert witness in the trial of Rudolf Höss and Artur Liebehenschel, both of whom served as commandant of Auschwitz; Amon Göth, the SS officer who commanded the Kraków-Płaszów concentration camp; and other post-war trials against Nazi perpetrators. His archive includes materials he collected while in Poland and documents about his work in the war trials. Some of the materials he collected were used as evidence during the

Nuremberg war crimes trials in 1945–46.

Blumental’s archive also contains a number of unique and original Nazi documents, such as materials he gathered while investigating the murders of his wife and son by the Blue Police (Polish officers who collaborated with the Nazis), and songs and poetry from the ghettos, including many original documents from the Łódź ghetto.

The collection contains handwritten dictionary cards, in languages including German, Yiddish, and Polish, that formed part of *Słowa niewinne* (Innocent Words), the dictionary of German words that Blumental published after the war. Blumental considered language the Nazi’s greatest weapon, and his dictionary documented how they used language as part of their campaign to exterminate the Jews. The dictionary is made up of words whose meaning

shifted with Nazi usage, such as in the case of the Auschwitz concentration camp's entry and exit book, where "exit" was used as a euphemism for "murder."

Blumental passed away in 1983. "The legacy of Nachman is in his understanding of the power and importance of memory and direct testimony in comprehending the horrors of the Jewish experience during the Holocaust," said Brent. The collection was donated to YIVO by Blumental's son, Miron Blumental. "I did not wish my father's personal archive, a product of decades of intensive and emotional work, to be shut in a dark room," he said. "I wanted it to be preserved and used by researchers everywhere."

Reprinted with permission from YIVO Institute for Jewish Research press release, June 25, 2019.

YIVO will process and digitize this important collection to make it available to the world. To do this, it is embarking on a fundraising campaign to raise \$300,000.

For more information about this campaign, please contact Elina Bloch, Director of Foundations and Grants, ebloch@yivo.cjh.org.

Holocaust Sites in Lviv: Virtual Tour of the “City of (un)Memory”

The Center for Urban History in Lviv (former Lwów, Lemberg) has created a virtual tour of the city’s Holocaust sites. Posted on the center’s website, “City of (un)Memory” guides the visitor through the ghetto that the Germans organized after their armies swept east through European Russia in 1941. It describes the process of ghettoization, daily life for the imprisoned residents, and liquidation in 1943. Texts illustrated with historic and contemporary photographs and reproductions of documents, along with excerpts from diaries and official documents, vividly convey both the methodical approach of the killers and the desperate situation of the victims.

The concentration of Lviv’s Jews in a ghetto occurred in two stages, beginning in November–December 1941, when about 60,000 residents were forced to resettle. Nazi security police and Ukrainian Auxiliary Police enforced the resettlement, which was accompanied by theft of Jewish

property and the execution of several thousand persons deemed unfit for work.

As in other conquered European cities, the Nazis fenced the ghetto, leaving only a few access points, and directed the residents to establish their own civil administration, the Jewish council (*Judenrat*) and social services (*Jüdischer Ordnungsdienst*). Periodically, the German authorities mounted “actions” in which they corralled large groups of Jews and executed them or sent them to Bełżec death camp. The second stage of ghettoization began in August–September 1942 and brought the rest of Lviv’s Jews into the ghetto. Jews now had access to the city only while working.

The end began in 1943, with a reorganization that changed the ghetto to a Jewish camp (*Judenlager*) administered directly by the SS. Liquidation came in June, when 5,000 to 6,000 persons were deported to Sobibor death camp, 10,000 to 12,000 were executed locally, and

about 2,000 were moved to the Janowska slave labor camp. At least 3,000 committed suicide.

The virtual tour is part of “Lviv Interactive,” a project of the Center for Urban History in Lviv, and based on the street exhibition “Lviv, Lwów, לעמבערג, Lemberg’43: City of (un)Memory,” mounted at a dozen sites throughout the city during 2018. That exhibition was itself part of “Lwów, לעמבערג, Lviv, Lemberg’43: City that Did (Not) Survive. Commemorative Events for the 75th Anniversary of the Liquidation of the Ghetto and Janowska Concentration Camp in Lviv.” ■

A version of this article originally appeared on Jewish Heritage Europe: <https://jewish-heritage-europe.eu/2019/05/05/ukraine-city-of-unmemory/>. Reprinted here with permission.

More Than Holocaust: Bringing Jewish History to the Polish Classroom

How Centropa and the Galicia Jewish Museum Are Building Sustainability and Measuring Impact

Edward Serrota

Bringing Holocaust education to schools in Poland and an interest in a town's local Jewish history to high school students is undeniably important. The questions we at Centropa pose are: How do we develop a sustainable model that teachers can use for years? And how do we measure that impact?

Centropa was founded in 2000 so that we could preserve Jewish memory in the lands where it had been wiped out, then disseminate our findings to the widest possible audience. We interviewed elderly Jews still living in Central Europe, combined their stories with old family photographs, then uploaded the documents and images to the internet. We never used video, and our interviews did not focus solely on the Holocaust. And one criterion: all our interviewees had to still be living in Europe. No one had ever tried anything like this before. By 2009, Centropa teams had worked in fifteen European countries, met with 1,216 elderly Jews,



Teachers at a Centropa seminar in Białystok, November 2015.
Courtesy of Centropa.

and digitized 25,121 family photographs and documents.

In Poland, Centropa's interviews were supported by the Austrian Culture Ministry, the Taube Foundation for Jewish Life & Culture, the Koret Foundation, and the Claims Conference. With a team of seven interviewers headed by journalist Anka Grupińska, between 2003 and 2007, we interviewed sixty-eight Jews living in six Polish cities and digitized 1,206 of their privately held

photographs and documents. The Taube Foundation donated the entire Centropa Polish interview archive to POLIN Museum in Warsaw.

As soon as our website went live, Polish teachers wrote to tell us how much they wanted to use our content, mostly because our interviews offered something fresh, something quite different: personal narratives that began with stories and pictures of grandparents and stretched across the decades to

grandchildren today. In 2010, we teamed up with the Galicia Jewish Museum and began a series of focus groups to ask teachers what they needed to bring Jewish stories to life for their students. How could we create programs that teachers could access and want to use year after year?

Between 2011 and 2013, the US State Department, the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung Foundation, and the Koret and Taube foundations provided grants that let us turn our Polish archive into an enormous traveling exhibition based on the Centropa interviews, produce two multimedia films, and launch a website in Polish. With those tools in hand, we began holding weekend seminars throughout the country, and since 2011 we have held nine seminars for a total of 247 classroom teachers. In addition to the foundations named above, the Kronhill-Pletka and David Berg foundations have made these programs possible.

Our seminars have taken place in Białystok, Wrocław, Lublin (twice), Warsaw (twice), and Kraków (three times). We continue to query our teachers



Students making civil society presentations at the Galicia Jewish Museum in Kraków, October 2018.

Courtesy of Centropa.

to ask how they use our content and what they think of it. Typical teacher responses summarize our work best:

The Centropa website in Polish is a godsend because it includes your films, other teachers' lesson plans and content we can download and use. I recommend it to every teacher in our school. (Anna Niemirska, Wrocław)

The best thing about the Centropa seminar was I got to meet teachers who, like me, are full of passion about teaching Polish Jewish history. That means I now have a network and you have given us great content to use.

(Katarzyna Bekier, Pabianice)

Based on the responses of students and teachers alike, we are making an impact on how thousands of young Polish students see their towns' Jewish history as something that belongs to them, as well as to us. ■

For more information on the work of Centropa, please visit www.centropa.org.

Edward Serrota, director of Centropa, is a writer, photographer, and filmmaker who, since 1985, has specialized in the Jewish heritage of Central Europe.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Books and Publications

Borderland: On Reviving Culture

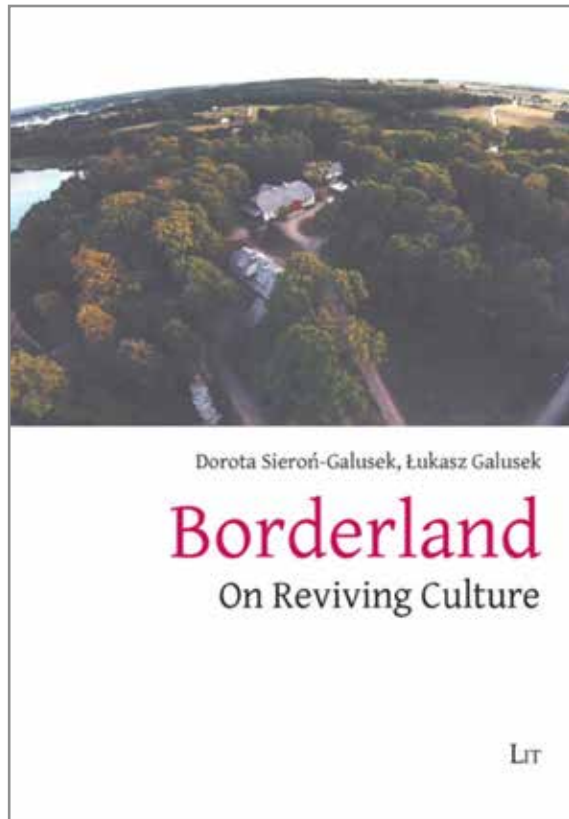
By Dorota Sieroń-Galusek and Łukasz Galusek

LIT Verlag, Vienna-Zürich, 2019

Borderland: On Reviving Culture is the story of the Borderland organization, which consists of two intersecting entities—an international NGO, the Borderland Foundation, and the more locally and nationally focused Borderland Centre of Arts, Culture and Nations—situated in the far northeastern corner of Poland, near the Russian, Lithuanian, and Belarusian borders. The book’s authors trace the practices of this inter-ethnic borderless space from its post-war displacements to its present-day example of what Ian Watson (Director of the Theatre Program and the Urban Civic Initiative, Department of Arts, Culture and Media, Rutgers University) describes as an “example that offers an alternative to a world in which the ‘Other’ is a provocation to a hate that undermines everyone’s humanity.” Furthermore, as scholar Irena Grudzińska Gross explains, the book “is an act of bringing the reader into a cultural and ethical community. The territory this community occupies has no borders and does not require passports. May it host

a community of people as large as possible.”

The authors bring together expertise in interdisciplinary research, in keeping with the Borderland philosophy. Łukasz Galusek is a scholar of the culture and art of Central Europe, in particular the links between space, memory, and identity. He works at the International Cultural Centre in Kraków. Dorota Sieroń-Galusek’s field of academic interest is cultural education, in particular biography as a source of knowledge on the formative role of culture. She works at the University of Silesia. They have been following the work of Borderland, both at close quarters and from further afield, for many years. ■



Polanim: From Poland to Israel

By Karolina Przewrocka-Aderet

Czarne, Warsaw, 2019

Karolina Przewrocka-Aderet is a journalist and correspondent of *Tygodnik Powszechny* from Israel. Co-author of the anthology *I Won't Leave Them*, about Jewish guardians during the war, she also wrote—together with Father Adam Boniecki—*In the Holy Land*, a personal, richly illustrated guide through Israel.

In Israel they call themselves Polanim (“Poles”). Although they have lived in Israel for years, they are still collectively connected to their place of origin. They share their attitude toward Poland, depending on the year and circumstances of the departure. They share a sentiment toward culture and language, and the longing for what is best known to them: smells, flavors, landscape, way of thinking or behavior incompatible with the Middle East reality.

The author tells their stories. They are tragic, sentimental, and sometimes funny. We read about a group of Jews who left Warsaw for Palestine on bicycles in 1934; about Włocławek, which in the spring of 1948 prepared a ceremony to



declare the independence of the country; about the Gomułkovo district of Tel Aviv, inhabited by emigrants from the 1950s, and the Polish architects participating in the construction of the city. About those who returned to Poland, and about those who created a substitute for Poland in Israel. ■

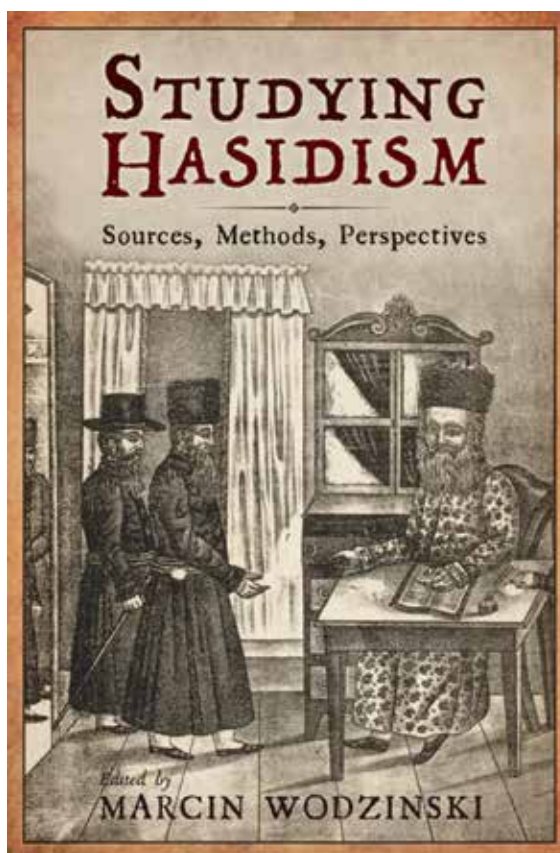
Announcement credit: <https://ajcf.pl/en/polanim-z-polski-do-izraela/>.

Studying Hasidism: Sources, Methods, Perspectives

Edited by Marcin Wodziński

Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, N.J., 2019

Hasidism, a Jewish religious movement that originated in Poland in the 18th century, today counts over 700,000 adherents, primarily in Israel, the UK, and the US. Popular and scholarly interest in Hasidic Judaism and Hasidic Jews is growing, but there is no textbook dedicated to research methods in the field, nor sources for the history of Hasidism that have been properly recognized. *Studying Hasidism: Sources, Methods, Perspectives*, edited by Marcin Wodziński, an internationally recognized historian of Hasidism, aims to remedy this gap. The work's thirteen chapters draw upon a set of different sources, many of them previously untapped, including folklore, music, macrodata, and material culture, to demonstrate what is still to be achieved in the study of Hasidism. Ultimately, this textbook presents research methods that can decentralize the role that community leaders play in the current literature, and reclaim the everyday lives of Hasidic Jews.



Eternity Now: Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liady and Temporality.

By Wojciech Tworek

SUNY Press, Albany, N.Y., 2019

Wojciech Tworek's new book, *Eternity Now*, draws on both mystical sermons and the legal writings of Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liady (1745–1812). The book provides the first account of the historiosophical dimensions of early Chabad doctrine, spawning a movement formed in 18th-century Belarus that developed into one of the most influential streams of Hasidic Judaism. Challenging the commonly held view that Shneur Zalman was primarily concerned with supra-temporal transcendence, Tworek reveals the importance of time and history in his teachings. Tworek argues that the worldly dimensions of Zalman's thought were largely responsible for the rapid growth of Chabad at the turn of the 19th century and fostered its transformation from an elitist circle into a mass movement. Tworek's readings of Hebrew and Yiddish sources demonstrate the implications of these ideas not only for male scholars but also for non-scholars, Jewish women, and even non-Jews. Philosophical and kabbalistic thought joined together to form a model of religious experience attractive to a broad audience, laying an ideological foundation for the



missionary messianism that was to become a hallmark of Chabad in the 20th century.

Wojciech Tworek is a Ray D. Wolfe Postdoctoral Fellow at the Anne Tanenbaum Centre for Jewish Studies at the University of Toronto.

Announcement credit, SUNY Press:
<https://www.sunypress.edu/p-6774-eternity-now.aspx>.

Volume 32 of *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry*. “Jews and Music-Making in the Polish Lands”

Antony Polonsky

Volume 32 of *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry*, edited by François Guesnet, Benjamin Matis, and Antony Polonsky, has as its theme “Jews and Music-Making in the Polish Lands.” It will be published in January 2020 by The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization.

As elsewhere in Europe, in Poland musicians of Jewish origin produced an astonishing variety of music of all genres and styles. However, this important phenomenon has been largely eclipsed by the attention paid to the role of Jews in musical life in German-speaking Europe. In this area, valuable research has been undertaken on the notorious Wagnerian polemic, *Das Judenthum und der Musik*, and its many echoes on the part of music in the Jewish national revival, on music as an aspect of Jewish popular culture, and on specific studies of composers who self-identified as Jews or had Jewish antecedents. Reviewing the

Musicians of Jewish origin produced an astonishing variety of music of all genres and styles in Poland.

large body of scholarship that has resulted, Philip Bohlman of the University of Chicago has claimed that “the contemporary dilemma confronting the modern study of Jewish music [is] that it has become a field trapped in a discursive space between Jewish Studies, cultural studies, and the anthropology of music.” This is certainly an accurate description of the problems involved in the research on this topic. However, we see the dilemma he identifies as an opportunity to examine the different aspects of Jewish musical life in the Polish lands from a multidisciplinary and transnational perspective. What the editors have attempted to do is not to define what may well be undefinable—Jewish music—but rather to explore the

activities and creativity of musicians of the “Mosaic faith” in the many fields in which they worked in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and its successor states from 1750 to the present.

The volume is divided into sections. The first examines the character of traditional cantorial and religious music and the way this was transformed by the changes in Jewish religious practice starting in the middle of the 18th century. In traditional Jewish religious practice, the role of the cantor (*khazan* in Hebrew and *khazn* in Yiddish) was to recite the often very lengthy Shabbat liturgy and holiday services. From the late 18th century, cantorial music changed dramatically under the impact of new developments. Hasidism, which spread throughout Poland-Lithuania and its successor states, regarded singing and dancing as crucial tools for reaching the appropriate state of mind during prayer.

The second section deals with the role of Jews in popular musical culture in Poland. Performances by Jewish musicians for non-Jewish audiences go back a long way here. Jewish klezmer musicians seem to have performed at non-Jewish weddings and other social occasions. Yiddish popular songs developed strongly in the second half of the 19th century. Many of these were produced by the popular itinerant bards described as the “Broder singers,” among them Mikhl Gordon, Velvl Zbarzher (pseudonym of Benjamin Wolf Ehrenkranz), Elyokum Zunser, and Abraham Goldfaden. In the inter-war years, in independent Poland, composers, poets, song lyricists, and performers of Jewish origin came to play a prominent role in the Polish popular music industry, as was also the case in the United States and the Soviet Union. Jews were also prominent in the Polish-language literary cabaret of the inter-war years, especially in Warsaw. Other than in Italy in the 17th century, the Jewish engagement with high

European musical culture (also referred to as “art music” or “classical music”), as composers, virtuosi, conductors, *impresarios*, patrons, publishers, critics, teachers, musicologists, editors of musical journals, and even piano manufacturers, was largely a phenomenon of the 19th century, including in Poland. The subject of the third section focuses on this development, including the Wieniawski brothers: Henryk Wieniawski, violinist and composer and his brother Józef, who was a pianist and composer. Another notable figure was Adam Minchejmer (Munchheimer), conductor of the Warsaw Opera. By the 20th century, the number of composers of Jewish origin had increased considerably. Among the most important were the twelve-tone composers Jerzy Koffler, Jerzy Fitelberg, and Władysław Szpilman, who remained in Poland, and Bronisław Kaper, Henryk Vars, Roman Ryterbrand, and Alexander Tansman, who went abroad. Of note was Mieczysław Weinberg, who remained in Russia, during the World War II and

wrote the remarkable opera *The Passenger*, recently performed at the Israel Opera in Tel Aviv.

The next section considers the way Jewish musical creativity was affected by World War II. It examines songs in Yiddish and Polish remembered by young survivors of the Łódź ghetto; the way wartime experience was reflected in the songs of Polish Jews who fled to the Soviet Union and how music produced in Vilna before the war provided a bridge to the post-war Jewish generation in Poland. The final section deals with the afterlife of klezmer in Poland since the end of communism in 1989. The klezmer revival is certainly one the most visible and controversial aspects of the popular surge of interest in the Jewish past, traditions, and heritage which has developed in recent years in Poland and elsewhere in East-Central Europe. It is the hope of the editors that the publication will make this rich musical heritage better known and will also lead to the wider performance of the many beautiful works described in the volume. ■

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Exhibitions

a tsigele: one little goat. El Lissitzky's Chad Gadyo at 100: (1919-2019) Magnes Collection of Jewish Art and Life

Francesco
Spagnolo

One hundred years since its first publication, *Chad Gadyo*, an illustrated version of the famed Passover song by the Russian Jewish artist El Lissitzky (Lazar Markovich Lissitzky, 1890–1941), was displayed by The Magnes Collection of Jewish Art and Life at the University of California, Berkeley. A rare copy of this work was gifted by Ira Fink and Penni Hudis of Berkeley in honor of the founder of The Magnes Collection, Seymour Fromer (1922-2009), on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of his passing.

El Lissitzky's illustrations follow and augment the "Story of the Goat"—a song that concludes the Passover seder—with evocative images, accompanied by Yiddish and Aramaic texts. The Passover song was first printed in Prague in 1590 and is widely known (and sung) across the global Jewish diaspora. It tells of a father buying "one kid" (*chad gadyo*, according to the Ashkenazi



Iz gekumen di kats un fartsukt dos tsigele. Veoso shunro (Yiddish and Aramaic: Then Came the Cat and Devoured the Kid. And Came the Cat) by El Lissitzky. Courtesy of The Magnes Collection of Jewish Art and Life.

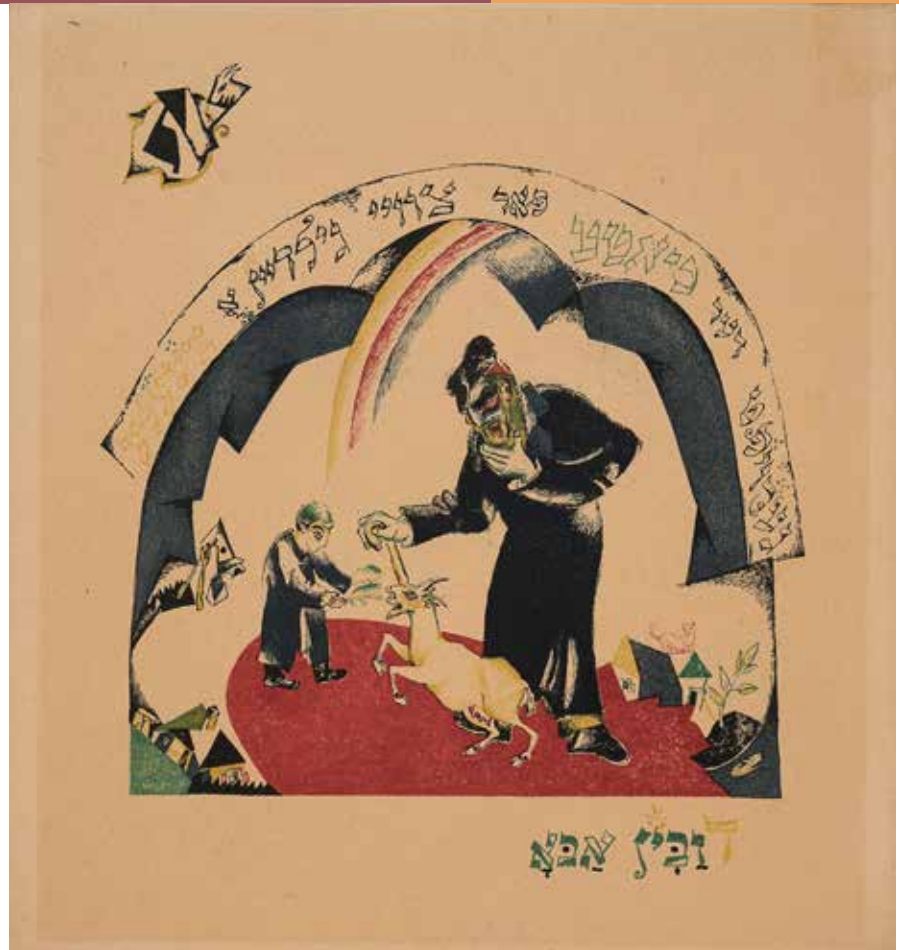
pronunciation of the original Aramaic), or "a little goat" (*tsigele*, in Yiddish), for two coins. It continues with a cat eating the goat, a dog biting the cat, a stick hitting the dog, fire burning the stick,

water quenching the fire, an ox drinking the water, a slaughterer butchering the ox, and, in a theological ending, the Angel of Death killing the slaughterer, and God slaying the Angel. Each of the

song's ten verses is captioned, illustrated, and numbered on a dedicated plate.

El Lissitzky published *Chad Gadyo* in Kiev in 1919, in an edition of seventy-five copies (only about twelve of which can still be traced in public collections worldwide). Since then, the connections between the artistic Russian avant-garde and early 20th-century Jewish ethnography have become more evident. The careful documentation of Jewish folklore that had begun in Czarist Russia and continued in the Soviet Union inspired many artists to create innovative works that combined traditional motifs with new expressive forms. Folktales, proverbs, and songs, as well as visual motifs from synagogue murals and gravestones, were not only collected and preserved in Soviet archives, but also transformed into literature, music, theater, film, and visual art by a new generation of socially concerned artists and intellectuals.

Created at a time of great cultural renaissance and increasing physical danger for the Jewish communities of



Gekoyft der tate far tsvey gildeyn a tsigele. Dezabin abo (Yiddish and Aramaic: The Father Bought a Little Goat for Two Coins. The Father Bought) by El Lissitzky. Courtesy of The Magnes Collection of Jewish Art and Life.

Eastern Europe, this stunning work projects the power of preserving cultural memory through art and activism into our day. In the early 1980s, El Lissitzky's lithographs had already inspired the American artist, Frank Stella (b. 1936), to create mixed-media works, entitled *Illustrations after El Lissitzky's Chad Gadyo*. Following the recent gifts of the Taube Family Arthur Szyk Collection and the Roman Vishniac Archive to The Magnes, the acquisition of El Lissitzky's *Chad Gadyo* marks the beginning of a new season

of renewed interest in Jewish visual culture at the University of California, Berkeley.

Note: The exhibition was on view at The Magnes from August 28 to December 13, 2019. ■

For more information please visit: www.magnes.berkeley.edu.

Francesco Spagnolo is Curator of The Magnes Collection of Jewish Art and Life at the University of California, Berkeley.

Gdynia-Tel Aviv at POLIN Museum

Gdynia and Tel Aviv are 3,000 kilometers apart, but you will be surprised to learn how much they have in common. Both were founded at more or less the same time as seaports, gates to the world, and both soon turned into elegant summer resorts and modern harbors. The two cities share characteristic Modernist architecture and Polish Jewish history. You have an opportunity to get acquainted with the similarities and differences between them at the *Gdynia-Tel Aviv* exhibition at POLIN Museum until February 3, 2020.

The exhibition takes you on a trip to two seaside cities built from scratch at the beginning of the 20th century. Gdynia and Tel Aviv played similar roles in the history of their countries—they represented the dreams and aspirations of the newly independent Polish state and of a Jewish nation determined to establish a new home in Palestine. Tel Aviv, founded in 1909, was to become the “first Hebrew city.” Gdynia, founded



Poster from the exhibition *Gdynia – Tel Aviv*.

Courtesy of POLIN Museum.

in 1919, was envisioned as the “Polish gate to the world.” Being a modern seaport, it was to serve as an exit gate for people and goods. Tel Aviv, on the other hand, was to serve as an entrance gate for the tens of thousands of immigrants flocking in with the aim of building the future Jewish state. These representative functions combined with the beginning of the new century provided an opportunity to realize ambitious urban design plans.

Gdynia and Tel Aviv also share dominant colors: blue referring to the sea, and curcuma yellow—the color of the sun and the sand. These colors can be easily spotted in the exhibition, among others on the inter-war propaganda and commercial posters, as well as in promotional leaflets.

Gdynia and Tel Aviv quickly grew to be recognized as vital seaports and fashionable summer resorts. Everyday life in the two newly established cities is visible in the archival photographs, films, documentaries, drawings, and paintings displayed in the exhibition, as well as in the elements of the Modernist tenement buildings’ interior designs. You will see annual celebrations of urban holidays—the Sea Fest in Gdynia and Purim parades in Tel Aviv. You will also have a chance to admire architectural models of iconic buildings produced especially for the exposition.

New cities and their founding myths attracted and inspired many artists from



Photograph from the exhibition *Gdynia–Tel Aviv*.
Courtesy of POLIN Museum.



On the beach in Tel Aviv.
Courtesy of POLIN Museum.

both countries. The exhibit includes original artworks—some from Polish collections, some shipped from Israel just for the occasion, such as *A Harbor in Jaffa* by Reuven Rubin from 1923. Intriguing drawings by Nahum Gutman, in which the artist presented his own autobiography inscribed in Tel Aviv’s founding myth, also arrived from Israel. Years later the drawings were used as illustrations in his book *Small Town and Few People in It: Stories from the First Years of Tel Aviv*. The exhibition also boasts Gutman’s oil paintings with genre scenes presenting the oriental charm of Jaffa, as well as Tel Aviv’s coat of arms, which the artist designed. Paintings by Ludwig Blum present the panorama of “white Tel Aviv.” The Baltic coastline and Gdynia loom in the “seascapes” by Władysław Strzemiński, drawings by Janusz M. Brzeski, or artistic compositions by Michalina

New cities and their founding myths attracted and inspired many artists from both countries.

Krzyżanowska and Kazimiera Pajzderska.

Works by contemporary Polish artists such as Maria Kiesner and Maurycy Gomulicki serve as a bridge between the past and the present. Photographer Wojciech Wilczyk has produced a pictorial essay on the Modernist architecture of Gdynia and Tel Aviv, presenting today’s appearance and context of the selected iconic buildings. Modernist architecture is also a leading theme of cityscapes by painter Maria Kiesner.

The *Gdynia–Tel Aviv* exhibition coincides with the celebration of the 110th anniversary of the founding of Tel Aviv, as well as a centenary of Gdynia’s founding and the opening of the Bauhaus School of Design, a German academic

institution whose program shaped the modern urban landscape of many cities in Europe and Israel.

The exhibition was produced in cooperation with the Gdynia City Museum, under the honorary auspices of Wojciech Szczurek, the Mayor of Gdynia, and Ron Huldai, the Mayor of Tel Aviv, as well as the Israeli embassy in Warsaw. ■

- Curator: Dr. Artur Tanikowski
- Production curator: Ewa Witkowska
- Exhibition Design: ONTO STUDIO | Kaja Nosal, Anna Wręga
- Key visual for the exhibition: Marcin Władyka | Headmade Studio
- Art projects: Maurycy Gomulicki, Maria Kiesner, Wojciech Wilczyk

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From Home to Home at Galicia Jewish Museum

Tomasz Strug

The exhibition *From Home to Home. The Story of the War Wandering and Survival of the Pisek Family* opened on November 7, 2019, at the Galicia Jewish Museum in Kraków. It tells the story of the Pisek family through diaries and pastel drawings that bear witness through the eyes of Irena Pisek.

If today we decided to travel a route over 12,000 kilometers long, we would have to fly by plane for fifteen hours or sit behind the wheel of a car for 153 hours. For a pedestrian it would require 2,300 hours of continuous hiking or nearly 100 days of uninterrupted walking. The Pisek family made such a trip, over three years, from the end of August 1939 to December 1942. They were supposed to leave home only for a moment and not go too far, but the turmoil of war drove them into the unknown, through the tracts of Europe, Asia, and the Middle East.

It was not an easy way, nor easy to talk about. Irena Pisek succeeded—with the help of



Lviv by Irena Pisek.
Used with permission of Galicia Jewish Museum.

pictures and words—only a few decades after the end of the war. Her pastel drawings, along with handwritten memories in Polish, inspired this exhibition.

The exhibition was made possible in cooperation with:

- Institute of Jewish Studies, Jagiellonian University
- Centre for the Study on the History and Culture of Kraków's Jews

- Herzl-Thon Center of Israel Studies and Polish-Israeli Relations
- Israel Institute

For more information, please visit: www.galiciajewishmuseum.org.

Tomasz Strug is Deputy Director and Chief Curator at the Galicia Jewish Museum in Kraków.



Siberia by Irena Pisek.
Used with permission of Galicia Jewish Museum.



Teheran by Irena Pisek.
Used with permission of Galicia Jewish Museum.

ANNOUNCEMENTS CONFERENCES AND SEMINARS

There's No Yiddish Culture Without Women

Froyen Vinkl Seminar, Center for Yiddish Studies

Katarzyna Markusz

Yiddish culture could not be born and survive without women. They (we) support it, care for it, and develop it. On August 29, participants of the research session at the Center for Yiddish Culture in Warsaw talked about women's place in Jewish culture.

"The whole world is filled with evil spirits," said Piotr Grącikowski from the Ossolińscy National Institute. "There is no equivalent for the word 'demon' in Yiddish, the term 'bad' was used instead. Everyone, regardless of intentions, can cast a bad spell on another person. For children, mainly boys and men studying the Torah, demons are especially focused on them, trying to interrupt their lives." Women had fewer responsibilities than men. According to the lecturer, they were to take care of lighting the Shabbat candles, remember to separate the piece of cake and throw it into the fire when baking, and comply

*"The world is divided
into many worlds."*

– Kadia Mołodowska

with the recommendations regarding *niddah*, or monthly waste. There were also special charms to protect the girls.

Women had really difficult lives, as shown in the presentation of Anna Ciałowicz of the Pilecki Institute, "Slaves, Maids, Houseworkers: On the Liberation of the Most Oppressed." The lives of maids were not easy. They functioned in difficult conditions, they could not always count on a salary, because it was considered that having a place to sleep and some food should be enough for them.

Some women had different problems. "A shy and cautious woman who did not write about the most drastic matters"—that's what Bella Szwarcman-Czarnota said about the writer Kadia

Mołodowska. Mołodowska was born in Bereza Kartuska in 1893. She was a teacher, and in 1935, she left for the United States. To be able to support herself, she finished a course for milliners, although later she did not work in this profession. She wanted to be independent. She wrote both poetry and prose. She was interested in the world of the rich and the poor. "The world is divided into many worlds," she noted. She was surprised to discover Jewish families who did not speak Yiddish, and among whose children she taught. It was from them that she learned Polish and began to read Mickiewicz and Słowacki.

A research session on women in Jewish culture cannot do without the mother of the Jewish Theater. Mirosława Bułat is working on a biography of Ester Rachel Kamińska, who is "enshrined in the history of theater with a number of unforgettable

creations.” At the age of twelve, she left her hometown, Porozów, to go to Warsaw, where she lived with her sisters and started working. “It was like a *shtetl*,” remembered Kamińska, who on Pawia Street was surrounded by relatives and had to pay close attention to what she was doing, because everyone around her was gossiping eagerly. To become an artist, she had to get rid of an innate sense of shame. Her personal and professional life, combining raising children with theater performances, brought about life dilemmas, and results in a fascinating story.

Another interesting woman is Sara Shenirer, who left an intimate journal in which she did not report historical events but rather her internal struggles, her maturation and personal problems, filled with a sense of humor. Unfortunately, there are editorial problems with punctuation, different spellings of some words, or abbreviations that are difficult to decipher. This diary is the only Shenirer document written in Polish. As presented by Joanna Lisek from the University of

Wrocław, the author not only speaks and writes in Polish, she is also deeply immersed in Polish culture.

Note: The research session on women in Jewish culture took place as part of the Isaac Bashevis Singer Festival in Warsaw, organized by the Shalom Foundation. ■

Katarzyna Markusz is an independent journalist and researcher in cooperation with the Center for Yiddish Culture in Warsaw.

GEOP Conference: Jews against Nazi Germany during World War II, at POLIN Museum

Krzysztof Persak

The conference organized by the POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews on the occasion of the eightieth anniversary of the outbreak of World War II explored Jewish participation in the fight against the Third Reich and its allies, and resistance to the Nazi policy of extermination. The academic partners of the conference were the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw, the Polish Center for Holocaust Research of the the Polish Academy of Sciences, and the Institute for Contemporary History in Munich – Center for Holocaust Studies.

The conference brought together scholars from Poland, Israel, the United States, the United Kingdom, Belarus, and Germany, who delivered twelve presentations divided into three thematic panels: Armed Resistance, Jews in Allied Armed Forces, and Civil Courage. The participants discussed armed struggle as well as organized and individual civil resistance. A million Jewish

soldiers fought in the ranks of Allied armies, including the Polish Army, Red Army, and US Army. Jews formed underground organizations and participated in partisan formations in many countries as well as against the Nazis in both Jewish ghettos and even in death camps. Other important issues discussed were Jewish acts of individual heroism, efforts to document the Holocaust, and the role of Jews in helping Jews hiding “on the Aryan side.” The conference contributed to a better understanding of Jewish efforts to save lives and defend human dignity in the face of the Nazi genocide.

The distinguished speaker of the conference was Marian Turski—a Łódź ghetto and Auschwitz survivor and the Chairman of the Council of POLIN Museum. His keynote lecture, “Bearing Witness to History: Accounts of Civilian Resistance,” was delivered on the evening preceding the academic panel, and was met with wide audience interest and attendance. In his

moving talk, Turski referred to experiences and memories of his own conspiratorial activity in the ghetto.

The conference, as part of POLIN Museum’s Global Education Outreach Program (GEOP), was sponsored by Taube Philanthropies, the William K. Bowes Jr. Foundation, and the Association of the Jewish Historical Institute of Poland.

Recordings of the conference and the keynote lecture will be made available at <http://www.polin.pl/en>. ■

Krzysztof Persak, PhD,
is Senior Historian at
POLIN Museum.

Conference on The Great Power and Poland, 1919–2019, at University of Warsaw

Antony Polonsky

To commemorate the 100th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Poland and the United States, the Jan Karski Educational Foundation together with its sister organization, Fundacja Edukacyjna Jana Karskiego, hosted an international conference of Polish and US experts on diplomacy and public administration on August 20, 2019, at the University of Warsaw. The Great Power and Poland: 1919-2019 also celebrated the centennial of Georgetown University's Edmund A. Walsh School of Foreign Service, the thirtieth anniversary of the start of Polish democratic transformation, and the twentieth anniversary of Poland's membership in NATO. Conference panels focused on two key themes: values and interests in Euro-Atlantic relations and the consequences of the return of power politics.

The program featured a ceremony by the Jan Karski Educational Foundation and Fundacja Edukacyjna

Jana Karskiego bestowing Professor Peter F. Krogh, Dean Emeritus of the Welsh School of Foreign Service at Georgetown University, with the Spirit of Jan Karski Award.

A special reissue (in Polish) of Jan Karski's book, *The Great Powers and Poland: From Versailles to Yalta*, accompanied the conference and award, which took place on October 4, at the University of Warsaw. ■

Symposium on Silesian Synagogues: A Thousand-Year History that Disappeared in One Night

The symposium *Silesian Synagogues: A Thousand-Year History That Disappeared in One Night* took place in Wrocław on November 6-7. It was organized by Wrocław University of Science and Technology in cooperation with the Bente Kahan Foundation. The event focused on questions related to the destruction of Jewish heritage in Silesia during the Holocaust. One panel focused on historical issues and the other was dedicated to Silesian synagogues.

Program themes addressed the role of Silesia's Jewish heritage in today's public sphere, research into the region's Jewish heritage, and the methodology for documenting what is lost and inaccessible. The panel on the synagogues of Silesia examined the state of preservation, attempts to document and restore the buildings, historical buildings in use (in the Czech Republic, Upper

Silesia, and Lower Silesia), archaeological studies of the New Synagogue (*Synagoga na Wygonie*), and the digital reconstruction of the New Synagogue. Participants also discussed proposals for the development of important historical sites in European public spaces, illustrated with the example of the square left after the burning down of the New Synagogue in 1938. The proposals consisted of concepts put forward by architects and a discussion of ways to commemorate important historical sites in general. ■

For more information, please visit www.pwr.edu.pl.

Annual Conference of Association of Slavic, East European and Eurasian Studies (ASEEES) in San Francisco, November 23–26

The 51st annual convention of the Association of Slavic, East European and Eurasian Studies (ASEEES) was held in San Francisco, California, November 23–26, at the Marriott Marquis. A selected roster of speakers on subjects related to Polish Jewish Studies included:

Karen Underhill, University of Illinois at Chicago, USA

“From Imagined Homeland to Spectral Demand: Taking Mickiewicz into Diaspora in Postwar Yiddish Literature.”

Karolina Szymaniak, University of Wrocław, Poland

“Unmasking False Legends. Ethnography and Intercultural Capital in the Polish-Jewish Contact Zone.”

Natalia Aleksium, Touro College, New York, USA

“Microhistory of Emotions: The Afterlife of War-Time Relationships in Lwów.”



Shana Penn and Lech Wałęsa, Solidarity leader and former President of Poland, at the ASEEES Conference.

Agnieszka Wiercholska, Freie Universität Berlin, Germany

“Jewish Agency in Survival and Relationships with the non-Jewish Local Population, the Case of Tarnów.”

Tomasz Błaszczak, University of Vytautas Magnus, Kaunas, Lithuania

“Migration of Orthodox Clergy during the Polish-Lithuanian Conflict.” ■

For full conference program information please visit: www.aseees.org.

Annual Conference of the Association for Jewish Studies (AJS), San Diego, December 15-17

The annual conference of the Association for Jewish studies is the largest annual international gathering of Jewish Studies scholars in the world. With more than 1,100 attendees, over 190 sessions, a major book exhibit of leading publishers, cultural programming, and gala banquet, the conference provides a unique opportunity to share ideas and explore the world of Jewish studies scholarship. The conference was held this year, December 15-17, at the Hilton San Diego Bayfront Hotel in California. Of interest to Polish Jewish Studies, this year's speakers included:

Karolina Koprowska,
Jagiellonian University,
Kraków, Poland

“The Memory of the Birthplace in Post-War Yiddish Literature.”

Beata Szymków, Stanford
University, USA

“Anti-Jewish Violence and the Emergence of the Polish State: Lwów 1918.”

Joanna Zofia Spyra,
University of Bergen, Norway

“Unruly Bodies and Imaginary Enemies: Mental Health of Jewish Immigrant Women in Argentina in the Interwar Period.”

Wojciech Tworek, University
of Wrocław, Poland

“Staging Hasidism: The ‘Yossele Schumacher Affair’ in a Hasidic Yiddish Play ‘Vi iz Yossele.’”

Karen Auerbach, University
of North Carolina, Chapel
Hill, USA

“Reckoning with the Jewish Past on Stage and on the Page in Immediate Postwar Germany and Poland.” ■

GEOP News

Marian Turski – “Bearing Witness to History: Accounts of Civilian Resistance” lecture online

Jewish civilian resistance during the Holocaust—was it at all possible? Is the most vulnerable group within a community, paralyzed by terror and fear, capable of putting up a resistance at all? Resistance in the sense of rescuing at least some people from extermination. Resistance in the sense of clinging to hope, of a will to survive and to fight, of dignity.

In his lecture, Marian Turski discussed his own resistance activity in the ghetto.

Marian Turski, a historian and journalist, has directed the historical section of *Tygodnik Polityka* since 1958. He is a Vice President of the International Auschwitz Committee and author or co-author of numerous books. He is the Vice Chairman of the board of the Association of the Jewish Historical Institute of Poland and the Chairman of the Council of the Museum of the History of Polish Jews.

For a recording of the lecture in Polish please visit <https://www.polin.pl/pl/wydarzenie/opor-cywilny-w-oczach-swiadka-historii>. ■

Jews against Nazi Germany during World War II

The conference, organized jointly by POLIN Museum, the Emanuel Ringelblum Jewish Historical Institute, the Polish Center for Holocaust Research of the Polish Academy of Sciences, and the Institute for Contemporary History in Munich – Center for Holocaust Studies, explored both armed struggle and organized and individual civil resistance. Jewish soldiers fought in the ranks of Allied armies, including the Polish Army, Red Army, and US Army. Jews formed armed underground organizations and participated in partisan formations in many countries.

The conference, attended by representatives of the Polish Ministry of Culture and National Heritage, and the embassies of Israel and Germany, marked the occasion of the eightieth anniversary of the outbreak of the war.

Recordings from the conference are available at <https://www.polin.pl/en/event/jews-against-nazi-germany-during-world-war-ii>. ■

GEOP Research Fellows for 2020 announced

POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews and the Emanuel Ringelblum Jewish Historical Institute announce the recipients of the three-month doctoral fellowships and five-month postdoctoral fellowships.

The fellows for the year 2020 are:

- Agata Jankowska, Department of History and International Relations, Faculty of Arts, University of Szczecin.
- Dr. Meghann Pytko, modern East-Central European history with concentrations in gender studies and Jewish studies, Northwestern University.
- Dr. Yuri Radchenko, Vasyl' Karazin Kharkiv National University.

We congratulate them and wish them much success!

More about the program and the GEOP Fellows is available at: <https://www.polin.pl/en/news/2017/11/02/call-for-applications-geop-research-fellowships-for-doctoral-and>. ■

ANNOUNCEMENTS AWARDS AND APPLICATIONS

Olga Tokarczuk Receives 2018 Nobel Prize in Literature

Reported by *Gazeta*
Editorial Team

On Thursday, October 10, Polish writer Olga Tokarczuk was named the winner of the 2018 Nobel Prize in Literature. The Swedish Academy, which administers the prize, wrote that Tokarczuk won the award “for a narrative imagination that with encyclopedic passion represents the crossing of boundaries as a form of life.” The prize was not awarded in 2018, in the wake of a scandal involving sexual assault and financial misconduct within the Swedish Academy, and so was given this year instead, along with the 2019 prize, which went to Austrian writer Peter Handke.

Tokarczuk has long been one of Poland’s most eminent novelists. Her experimentation with genre and form shined a light on Poland’s multiethnic heritage. She is also an outspoken political voice, often critical of the current government. Writing in *The New York Times* after the murder



Olga Tokarczuk at the Frankfurt Book Fair, 2019.
Photograph by Harald Krichel. Wikimedia Commons.

Her experimentation with genre and form shined a light on Poland’s multiethnic heritage.

of Gdańsk mayor Paweł Adamowicz earlier this year, Tokarczuk said, “In a healthy, normal society, people can disagree with one another, even have diametrically opposing views, and this does not at all mean that they must hate one another. The Polish authorities, however, have

made the division of Poles their primary task.”

Her career is studded with many prestigious literary awards, including Poland’s Nike Award, which she has won twice, as well as the 2018 Man Booker International Prize, which she won for her novel *Flights*, translated into English by Jennifer Croft. Her widely praised novel *Księgi Jakubowe* (The Books of Jacob), about the 18th-century religious leader Jakub Frank, will appear in English in 2021.

Tokarczuk’s win has had a mixed reception in Poland, largely due to her political activism.

The city of Wrocław offered free public transit to anyone carrying one of Tokarczuk’s books, and banners congratulating her were hung in several cities. Donald Tusk, the President of the European Council and former Prime Minister of Poland, wrote on Twitter, “What a pride and joy! I will boast about it

in Brussels as a Pole and a faithful reader.”

That enthusiasm, however, doesn't speak for everyone. Right-wing journalist Rafał Ziemkiewicz offered Tokarczuk his congratulations but also included her among Polish artists who he believes “owe their awards to the fact that Western left-wing salons want to support Polish agents in the fight against the ‘nationalist regime.’”

“I've tried reading some, but I've never finished any,” Piotr Gliński, Poland's Minister of Culture, said about Tokarczuk's books a few days before she was awarded the prize. After the announcement, he wrote on Twitter, “It is proof that Polish culture is appreciated all over the world.” ■

ROBERTA GROSSMAN AND SAMUEL KASSOW HONORED AT YIVO AWARDS GALA

On November 20, 2019, the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research in New York City honored Roberta Grossman and Dr. Samuel Kassow at their Gala Award Dinner, hosted by writer and producer Nancy Spielberg.

Roberta Grossman is an award-winning documentary filmmaker who has written, directed, and produced more than forty-five hours of film and television. Her films tell stories of ordinary people doing extraordinary things in the name of justice. Grossman wrote, produced, and directed *Who Will Write Our History?* In 2014, she directed *Above and Beyond*, a film about the American Jewish pilots who volunteered to fight for Israel in the 1948 War, produced by Nancy Spielberg.

Dr. Samuel D. Kassow is the Charles H. Northam Professor of History at Trinity College, and is recognized as one of the world's leading scholars on the Holocaust and the Jews of Poland. He is widely known for his 2007 book, *Who Will Write Our History? Emanuel Ringelblum, the Warsaw Ghetto, and the Oyneg Shabes Archive* (Indiana University Press). An award-winning lecturer, Professor Kassow is also a Fellow of the American Academy for Jewish Research. ■



Roberta Grossman



Dr. Samuel Kassow



Film producer Nancy Spielberg with honorees Roberta Grossman and Dr. Samuel Kassow at YIVO's 2019 Gala Award Dinner. Photograph by Todd France Photography. Used with permission of YIVO Institute for Jewish Research.

Joanna Lisek Awarded Gierowski and Shmeruk Prize

On November 4, 2019, Joanna Lisek, Alicja Maślak-Maciejewska, and Maria Cieśla received awards as part of the Józef A. Gierowski and Chone Shmeruk Prize for the best scholarly publication in the field of the history and culture of the Jews in Poland. The award was conferred in the Collegium Novum of Jagiellonian University. The prize was established by the Institute of Jewish Studies at Jagiellonian University and the Department of Jewish Culture and History at Marie Curie-Skłodowska University in Lublin, in cooperation with the Marcel and Maria Roth Foundation. It is dedicated to the memory of two outstanding scholars, Professor Józef A. Gierowski, Rector of Jagiellonian University from 1981 to 1987, and Professor Chone Shmeruk, Head of the Center for Research on the History and Culture of Polish Jews at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem from 1983 to 1991. Cooperation between them led



Joanna Lisek with her prize-winning book, *Kol Ishe*.
Photograph by Karolina Koprowska. Used with permission.

to many scholarly initiatives in the study of the Jewish past in Poland, including the creation of what later became the Department of Jewish Studies at Jagiellonian University.

First prize was awarded to Joanna Lisek of the Department of Jewish Studies at the University of Wrocław for her book *Kol Isze. Głos kobiet w poezji jidysz (od XVI w. do 1939 r.)* (*Kol Ishe: The*

Voice of Women in Yiddish Poetry from the 16th Century to 1939). In this path-breaking volume, the author analyzes how Yiddish poetry by women became a separate field as women developed strategies to express themselves. At the award ceremony, Professors Eugenia Prokop-Janiec and Magdalena Ruta praised the volume as “a major effort of recovery, whose goal is both to make possible the appreciation of the creativity of women in Yiddish and to recall the work of authors whose work has been little known and appreciated.”

Second prize was granted to Alicja Maślak-Maciejewska of

the Institute of Jewish Studies at Jagiellonian University for her book *Modlili się w Templu. Krakowscy Żydzi postępowi w XIX wieku. Studium społeczno-religijne* (They Prayed in the Tempel. The Progressive Jews of Kraków in the Nineteenth Century: A Socio-Religious Study), a detailed investigation of the Jews linked with the Tempel, the Progressive Jewish synagogue in Kraków. Third prize went to Maria Cieśla of the Historical Institute of the Polish Academy of Sciences in Warsaw for her book *Kupcy, arendarze i rzemieślnicy. Różnorodność zawodowa Żydów w Wielkim Księstwie Litewskim w XVII i XVIII w.*

(Merchants, Lease-Holders and Artisans. The Varied Occupations of Jews in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania), a remarkable and detailed account of the occupational diversity of the Jews in Lithuania.

The large number of entries to the competition and their high quality is a tribute to the progress which has been made in recent years in the development of Jewish studies. It bodes very well for the future. ■

Yiddish Book Center Fellowships

The Yiddish Book Center, based at Hampshire College in Amherst, Massachusetts, is accepting applications from recent college graduates for its fellowship program devoted to Yiddish and modern Jewish literature and culture. Fellows work for a year as full-time staff at the center, gaining professional experience in Yiddish language and Jewish culture and contributing to major projects. Each fellow works in one or two main project areas, such as bibliography, communications and publication, digital collections, educational programs, translation, or Yiddish education. ■

The application deadline for the 2020–21 Fellowship Program is January 5, 2020, at 11:59 p.m. EST. For more information visit: <https://www.yiddishbookcenter.org/educational-programs/graduate-students/apply-fellowship-program>.

YIVO Opens Fellowship Applications

The YIVO Institute for Jewish Research in New York City has opened applications for fellowships in a variety of fields.

East European Jewish Studies: The Professor Bernard Chosed Memorial Fellowship and the Natalie and Mendel Racolin Memorial Fellowship for doctoral or postdoctoral research in East European Jewish studies.

Baltic Jewish Studies: The Abram and Fannie Gottlieb Immerman and Abraham Nathan and Bertha Daskal Weinstein Memorial Fellowship in Eastern European Jewish Studies, the Abraham and Rachela Melezin Memorial Fellowship, and the Maria Salit-Gitelson Tell Memorial Fellowship for doctoral or postdoctoral research in Lithuanian Jewish history.

Polish-Jewish Studies: The Aleksander and Alicja Hertz Memorial Fellowship, the Samuel and Flora Weiss Research Fellowship, and

the Maria Salit-Gitelson Tell Memorial Fellowship for doctoral or postdoctoral research on modern Polish-Jewish history, including the Holocaust and Jewish contributions to Polish literature and culture.

East European Jewish Literature: The Vladimir and Pearl Heifetz Memorial Fellowship and the Vivian Lefsky Hort Memorial Fellowship for an undergraduate, graduate, or postgraduate researcher in Eastern European Jewish literature. The award may be applied to the literature of Eastern European Jewish diasporas on any continent.

East European Arts, Music, and Theater: The Joseph Kremen Memorial Fellowship for an undergraduate, graduate, or postgraduate researcher in Eastern European Jewish arts, music, and theater. The award may be applied to work on Eastern European Jewish diasporas on any continent.

American Jewish Studies: The Rose and Isidore Drench Memorial Fellowship and the Dora and Mayer Tendler Endowed Fellowship in Jewish Studies for doctoral or postdoctoral research in American Jewish history, with special consideration given to scholars working on the Jewish labor movement.

Eastern European Jewish Studies: These fellowships may be combined with the above fellowships or awarded separately: The Dina Abramowicz Emerging Scholar Fellowship for postdoctoral research on a topic in Eastern European Jewish Studies. The Workmen's Circle/ Dr. Emanuel Patt Visiting Professorship in Eastern European Jewish Studies. ■

The application deadline is January 15, 2020. For more information, please visit: <https://www.yivo.org/Fellowships>.

ANNOUNCEMENTS ANNIVERSARIES

75th Anniversary Commemoration of the Liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau

On January 27, 2020, an international gathering will commemorate the 75th anniversary of the Soviet Red Army's liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau at the Auschwitz State Memorial and Museum. "The event will probably be the last of those big anniversaries with the participation of such a large group of survivors, former Auschwitz prisoners," said Dr. Piotr Cywiński, the director of the Auschwitz State Memorial and Museum. "I hope they will come here from all over the world as was the case in 2015."

The year 2020 will also be special due to two related historical anniversaries and commemorations: the twentieth anniversary of the adoption of the Stockholm Declaration, under which the Task Force for International Cooperation on Holocaust Education, Remembrance, and Research was established (today the International Holocaust Remembrance

"The event will probably be the last of those big anniversaries with the participation of such a large group of survivors, former Auschwitz prisoners. I hope they will come here from all over the world as was the case in 2015."

– Dr. Piotr Cywiński

Alliance), and the fifteenth anniversary of the adoption of January 27 as International Holocaust Remembrance Day by the United Nations General Assembly. Both events took place on January 27, the anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz. Consequently, the major international commemoration event will be organized at the Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial and Museum.

Five years ago, about 300 survivors, witnesses of the history of Auschwitz, met in front of the Gate of Death at

the former Birkenau camp in order to commemorate the seventieth anniversary of the liberation. Commemorative events were organized under a giant tent constructed over the gate. Last year, more than 250 television stations broadcast the event internationally, and over five hundred million people watched the commemoration live.

This coming year, the survivors will meet again, and the event will once more be broadcast for the entire world to see and remember. ■

Remembering Marek Edelman in 2019

Gazeta Editorial Team

Before we say goodbye to the year 2019, *Gazeta* wishes to remember the centennial of Marek Edelman's birth and the tenth anniversary of his passing. At the start of this outgoing year, he was officially named a patron of 2019 in Łódź, where he lived and worked as a cardiologist, and in Warsaw, where he fought as a partisan commander in the 1943 Ghetto Uprising, and then in the 1944 Warsaw Uprising. He died in Warsaw on October 2, 2009, at the age of 90.

The last surviving commander of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, and one of the few survivors from the Warsaw Ghetto, Edelman was a cardiologist by profession and a well-known social and political activist—from the Bund to anti-Nazi resistance to the Solidarity movement.

Said to be a fighter of unusual skill and courage, this 24-year-old commander survived the 1943 uprising to participate in the 1944 general



Marek Edelman in his apartment by Zelwerowicza 34a in Łódź ca. 2010. Photograph by Katarzyna Łukasik. Courtesy of The Marek Edelman Dialogue Center.

Warsaw uprising against Nazi occupation. He was among the 20,000 to 30,000 Jews who stayed in Poland after the Communist Party's 1968 anti-Semitic campaign. Despite the fact that his wife and children left Poland in the late 1960s, he remained. "Someone has to stay here with all those who died," said the brave activist who emboldened three post-

war generations to rebuild democracy and Jewish life in Poland.

By the 1970s, few Poles knew anything about the Warsaw Ghetto or its uprising. The communist government had made a point of systematically erasing Poland's past, leaving the postwar generation with *białe plamy*—history's blank spots. Then in 1976, the anti-communist underground published a book-length interview with Edelman conducted by author Hanna Krall. Forty thousand copies sold with remarkable speed and the *białe plamy* began to fill in. Edelman became Poland's only famous living Jew, and the post-war generation began to learn about its Jewish history.

"Marek awakened my generation," stated Holocaust researcher Anka Grubińska in a 1990 interview with Shana Penn, Executive Director of Taube Philanthropies. This reclamation of Polish Jewish heritage became a meaningful

expression of anti-communist resistance, and it imbued the 1980s Solidarity movement with respect for Poland's Jewish heritage, fragile and inconsistent though it was.

He could be a tough pragmatist, even to the point of seeming heartless. Edelman would tell a story in which he characterized himself as having been "merciless" during the war. As a young messenger for the ghetto hospital, he carried documents that allowed him to rescue a few Jews from trains transporting them to the gas chambers. He consciously saved those he thought most capable of aiding the coming ghetto revolt. Only those who experienced the horrors of the Warsaw ghetto, he said, could understand the decisions he and others were forced to make.

Edelman was known to state his strong opinions bluntly and did not mince words—when confronting injustice and hypocrisy.

Making such tough life-and-death decisions did not preclude, and perhaps heightened, Edelman's capacity for empathy. He often spoke of the courage exhibited by those Jews who chose to stay with their families,



Marek Edelman at the Jewish Cemetery on Okopowa Street, in front of a monument commemorating members of the Bund and Cukunft who fought during the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, ca. 1948–1950.

Used with permission of the Jewish Historical Institute.

even when staying together meant the strong accompanied the weak to a certain end. What others condemned as shameful meekness Edelman saw as courage that was as great, he said, as that of those who fought the Nazis with homemade weapons.

"These people went quietly and with dignity," he said. "It is an awesome thing, when one is going so quietly to one's death. It is definitely more difficult than to go out shooting."

He fought hard for his Jewish and Polish identity. He was a witness who gave tough,

honest testimony with his life. Even after his death, his influence continues to reverberate among citizens who champion democracy and Jewish cultural revitalization in Poland.

On every April 19 after the war ended, Edelman would receive a bouquet of yellow daffodils from an anonymous person. He would lay them at the Monument to the Ghetto Fighters in memory of those who fought and died.

Inspired by Edelman, POLIN Museum has commemorated the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising every year on April 19, with hundreds of volunteers distributing yellow paper daffodils to fellow citizens across Poland to raise awareness of the uprising, and its enduring significance. In Łódź, the Marek Edelman Center for Dialogue, an award-winning cultural and educational program, teaches the multicultural and multiethnic history of Łódź and its influence on today's social reality, with emphasis on Jewish culture, history, and Polish-Jewish relations. A future-looking institution, its programs cater to local, national, and international audiences. ■

OBITUARY

Dr. Przemysław “Yosl” Piekarski (1952–2019): The Yiddish Guru of Kraków

Agi Legutko

September 24, 2019, marks the end of an era. One of the most prominent and passionate representatives of the post-war generation of Polish Yiddishists, Dr. Przemysław “Yosl” Piekarski, passed away in Kraków, after a long battle with cancer. Philologist, linguist, orientalist, researcher, translator, and educator, Dr. Piekarski was a senior lecturer at the Institute of Oriental Studies and an adjunct faculty member at the Center for Comparative Studies of Civilizations at Jagiellonian University. An active member of the Jewish community, he was an enthusiastic propagator of the Yiddish language and culture, teaching Yiddish since the late 1990s, first at the Lauder Foundation in Kraków, then at the newly reorganized Jewish Studies Department of Jagiellonian University, the Jewish Culture Festival, the Kraków JCC, and many other venues. His motto was, “Whoever saves a life saves the world, and whoever



Przemysław Piekarski.
Photograph by Andrzej Czaplński. Used with permission.

preserves a language preserves the memory of a people.”

His profound interests in Indian civilization, the Hindi language and literature, Hindu, Christian, and Jewish mysticism, translation studies, and Judaism left an everlasting impact on generations of students. In addition to his articles on Hinduism, his publications included, among others, *Manual of Yiddish (Hebrew) Script* (with Julia Makosz), *A Universal Polish-English and*

English-Polish Dictionary (with Andrzej B. Lewkowicz), *Not Only Bollywood* (co-edited with Grażyna Stachówna), and *Theater of The Orient: Conference Proceedings*. His Polish translations offer a glimpse into interests ranging from Yiddish literature (Abraham Joshua Heschel’s *The Ineffable Name of God*, and Moshe Shklar’s *My Words, My Songs*, and a collection, *Sing Me a Song in Yiddish*) through Louis Frédéric’s *Dictionary of Indian Civilization* (from French), to English literature, such as Aidan MacFairlan’s *The Diary of a Teenage Health Freak* and Lucy Maud Montgomery’s *Anne of Green Gables*. Recent blogs on Judaism were featured on the Małopolska’s Virtual Museums.

Przemek, or Yosl, as friends and students called him, was a true Renaissance man: a versatile scholar, a polyglot, and an erudite who transfixed his audiences. A man of many

talents and passions, he loved to share his seemingly endless knowledge with others. Full of curiosity about the world's cultures and their languages, he often said that "eyn shprakh iz keyn mol nisht genug" (one language is never enough), in line with a proverb, "Those who know many languages live as many lives as the languages they know." Indeed, Przemek lived many lives in Polish, English, Hindi, Persian, French, Russian, Hebrew, and Yiddish.

Born on September 15, 1952, in Wałbrzych, he lived most of his life in Kraków, graduating from the Polish Philology Department at Jagiellonian University in 1976. In 1986, he received his PhD in Indology from the Institute of Oriental Studies at Jagiellonian University for his doctoral dissertation, "The Zones of Lexics in Hindi: A Statistical Approach." For decades, he shared his passion for Hindu civilization and culture, teaching at his *alma mater* and organizing memorable trips to India for nearly thirty years.

Overflowing with inexhaustible energy, he was an unforgettable teacher who taught with his entire being: through music, stories, food, trips, and even dance!

He was also a true *mensch*. All who knew him remember his warmth, kindness, and genuine care for other human beings, his constant smile and optimism, and his friendship and support for students with whom he often stayed in touch years after their graduation. He was an engaging speaker, and his lectures on Indology remained in students' memory decades later. Overflowing with energy, he taught with his entire being, through music, stories, food, trips, and even dance. Students recall him playing a recorder, bringing *samosas* to class, and personally demonstrating the figure of the dancing Shiva. His passion for the subjects close to his heart was contagious. Those who accompanied him to India still talk about the experience years later; those who learned Yiddish with him remember

his love for Yiddish songs and Chava Alberstein. He was a true inspiration. Indeed, many of his students, like myself, followed in his footsteps.

Przemek was a student of Professor Chone Shmeruk, a giant scholar of Yiddish literature who was instrumental in establishing the field of Yiddish studies in mid-1980s Poland. Przemek passed Shmeruk's legacy to us, the next generation of Yiddishists. When I was pondering the thesis topic for my MA in English literature and translation studies, Yosl suggested I consider writing about Isaac Bashevis Singer's short story, "The Last Demon" (Mayse Tishevits). He had promised Professor Shmeruk to write about this unique story but never got around to it, and it gnawed at him that he hadn't fulfilled Shmeruk's wish.

I happily followed Przemek's advice, wrote my thesis on translation as a crosscultural event, comparing Yiddish, Polish, and English versions of this story, and by proxy fulfilled the promise Przemek made to his Yiddish teacher,

becoming in a sense a
“grand-student” of Shmeruk.
I enjoyed researching and
writing my thesis so much
that I decided to pursue an
academic career. Thank
you for all you taught me,
Przemek!

Przemek was a charismatic
Yiddish guru, whose
insatiable appetite for life and
love for knowledge deeply
affected all those around him.
He lived his life to the fullest
but left us much too soon. He
is survived by his wife, four
children, six grandchildren,
colleagues, and thousands
of students, many of whom
remember him as the best
teacher they ever had. May
his memory be a blessing.
“Zolst hobn a likhtikn gan-
eydn, Yos!” You should have
a bright paradise, Yos! Those
who wish to leave a tribute to
his memory, may do so on his
Facebook page. ■

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Chad Gadyo. Drawn and lithographed by Eliezer Lissitzky, Kiev, 1918–19.
Courtesy of The Magnes Collection of Jewish Art and Life.

If you would like to suggest an article or author for the next issue of *Gazeta*, or submit one yourself, please email: info@taubephanthropies.org. The submission deadline for the next issue is **February 28, 2020**.

We accept queries and submissions for feature articles of no more than 1500 words, and up to 500 words or less for all other announcements or reports.



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