



# *Gazeta*

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Jewish Life & Culture



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## Message from Irene Pipes

President of the American Association  
for Polish-Jewish Studies

Founder of *Gazeta*

Dear Members and Friends:

We have a couple of exciting recent events to report on.

The Institute of Jewish Studies in London hosted a conference on June 2 about “Warsaw, the Jewish Metropolis” in honor of the 75<sup>th</sup> birthday of Antony Polonsky, our esteemed editor of the *POLIN* series. The conference convened specialists on this topic from several countries and moved the topic forward in ways that will be apparent to all when the studies are soon published.

Speaking of publications, I am pleased to announce that Volume 28 of *Polin* will soon appear and will deal with a novel topic: Although Jewish life in Poland is commonly associated with the Hebrew and Yiddish languages, modern research shows that, for almost two and a half centuries, Polish also played an important role. This means Jews were not as isolated as had been thought but had more interactions with the people and culture around them. In the new volume of *Polin*, scholars engage in a first investigation of this topic, focusing on the interwar years but also looking at what came before and after. The studies include discussions of Haim Hahman Bialik’s poetry translated into Polish, the influence of Polish writers on Sholem Asch’s early plays, and mutual perceptions of Poles and Jews in the work of S. Y. Agnon. We hope that these path-breaking articles will appeal to any one interested in literature, in Poland, and in Polish, Yiddish, and Hebrew creativity.

Irene Pipes  
*President*

[aapjstudies.org](http://aapjstudies.org)



Irene Pipes

# Message from Tad Taube and Shana Penn

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

We are proud to partner with the American Association for Polish-Jewish Studies (AAPJS) in the production of the quarterly publication *Gazeta*, now in its second online edition. We are also pleased to collaborate with AAPJS' Vice President, Dr. Antony Polonsky, in his capacity as Chief Historian of the POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews, on a global initiative to further the study and proliferation of Polish Jewish history and culture. The Global Education Outreach Program (GEOP) establishes academic partnerships between the POLIN Museum, the Emanuel Ringelblum Jewish Historical Institute, and universities and research institutions in Poland, North America, Europe, Israel, and Russia. The GEOP will provide new, much-needed opportunities in research and collaboration on an international scale (see p. 25). We are also involved in the Polish Jewish Studies Initiative to broaden and diversify the academic curricula within accredited Polish Studies programs to be inclusive of Poland's multi-ethnic history (see p. 32). These programs and many more activities featured in this issue of *Gazeta* aim to support a new generation of scholars and cultural caretakers and creators. We hope that *Gazeta* continues to be a major forum for conversation and dissemination across generations.

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



Tad Taube



Shana Penn

## HISTORY & CULTURE

# Jewish Heritage in Lviv Today—A Brief Survey

By Jason Francisco, Associate Professor,  
Film and Media Studies, Emory University



Jews were among the first residents of the city known today as Lviv, Ukraine—known in Polish as Lwów, in Russian as Lvov, in German as Lemberg, and in Yiddish as Lemberik. From the city’s founding in the mid-thirteenth century, Jews provided capital and crucial international trade links, and within a century were granted equal

rights in the city, occupying a quarter just adjacent to the city hall. In subsequent centuries, the Jewish community grew steadily, its population reaching 110,000 by the eve of the Second World War, making the city a major center of Jewish life in Eastern Europe. The Holocaust decimated Jewish life in the city, which today

is home to some 1,200 Jews. To speak of the Jews in Lviv today is to speak of both a legacy and an enigma. It is to speak of an annihilated world that can be traced but not quite followed, whose relics can be found but not wholly grasped. Five Jewish locations can be called emblematic of this predicament. ■

### 1. GOLDEN ROSE AND INNER CITY JEWISH QUARTER

The inner city Jewish quarter was both an integral component of the multicultural city and for centuries an insular unit in the specifically Jewish world of the city. It contained synagogues, ritual bathhouses, kosher slaughterhouses, hospitals, schools, and communal offices. The accompanying photograph [Figure 1 and cover photograph] was made in this inner city Jewish quarter, in an eighteenth-century building with a view onto the site of the famous Golden Rose Synagogue. Small, nested in a courtyard without a street entrance of its own, square in plan and with a very high ceiling to allow light from all sides throughout the day, the Golden Rose was one of the pearls of Jewish architecture in Europe from 1582 until the Germans destroyed it in 1943. Today, only a portion of the north and east walls exist, including the main entrance, visible in the picture. The roof of the once-exquisite house of God is today the sky itself, and the ruptured site is an overtly fraught space, at once riveting and abject.



Figure 1: View of the Golden Rose from the former Kehilla House in the inner city Jewish quarter, Lviv, 2014



## 2. THE VUHILNA STREET SHUL



Figure 2: Fragments of paintings in the Vuhilna Street Shul, Lviv, 2014

Figure 2 depicts the paintings still visible in the Jakob Glazner Shul, the oldest remaining Jewish communal building in Lviv. Opened in 1844, it survived the war and was converted into a gymnasium under Soviet rule. Today, though in great disrepair, it serves as the headquarters of the Sholom Aleichem Jewish Culture Society. The paintings in its light-filled sanctuary are slowly crumbling and today bear an uncanny resemblance to an early modern European map of the world—as altered by the rupture of the Holocaust.

## 3. THE FORMER JEWISH HOSPITAL

One of Lviv's architectural highlights is the Municipal Maternity Hospital, formerly and still colloquially known as the Jewish Hospital, built in 1899 next to the old Jewish cemetery on Rapoport Street [Figure 3]. Designed in a neo-Moroccan style, it was topped by a dramatic tricolor dome ringed by Stars of David. The hospital's management once played a key role in the structure of Lviv's Jewish community. It controlled all Jewish cemeteries in the city, as well as bathhouses, ritual slaughter facilities and most of the charitable funding, in addition to owning and managing properties in the city. The hospital was widely considered the finest in the city and one of the best in Poland, and served the entire city, not Jews only. No plaque or marker exists to describe the building's history.



Figure 3: Moonrise over the former Jewish hospital, Lviv, 2014

#### 4. KRAKIVSKY RYNOK

In the wake of the Holocaust, many Jewish communal sites were repurposed, generally without public acknowledgement, such that many locals remain ignorant of these sites' Jewish history. The accompanying photograph shows the current state of Lviv's old Jewish cemetery, once one of the largest in eastern Galicia, with graves dating to the mid-fourteenth century. After the Nazis destroyed it, the Soviets paved it over and created on top of it the city's largest open market, known as the Krakivsky Rynok, specializing in low-end merchandise. Until 2014, no signs or placards indicated the existence of a Jewish cemetery whatsoever. In 2014, a small marker was erected nearby, listing in Ukrainian and Hebrew the names of famous rabbis buried in the cemetery. Still, it failed to explain where the cemetery is actually located, or anything about its history.



Figure 4: Krakivsky Rynok, site of the old Jewish cemetery in Lviv, 2014

#### 5. THE FORMER JANOWSKA STREET CAMP

At the outbreak of war in 1939, Lviv was occupied by the Soviets, and became a destination for refugees from German-occupied Poland, who swelled its Jewish population to over 200,000. Upon entering Lviv in June 1941, the Germans staged a devastating pogrom and destroyed most of the city's three dozen-plus synagogues. By November 1941, the Jews were forced into a ghetto, and massive deportations began to the Bełżec death camp, lasting through the summer of 1942. Over the next year, thousands more were murdered in the Lviv ghetto itself, while thousands were sent to Auschwitz and to the nearby Janowska Street labor camp, where they were immediately massacred in the Piaski ravine, or the nearby Lysynychi forest. When the Soviet Army liberated Lviv on July 26, 1944, around 200 Jews remained alive in Lviv, or about 0.1% of the Jewish population in the city at the beginning of the war. Figure 5 shows the Piaski hill behind the prison complex now occupying the site of the former Janowska Street camp. The camp was the killing ground of some 200,000 people, and Piaski was the largest massacre site in the camp. The bones of the murdered still lie just below the surface of the earth.



Figure 5: Piaski Hill, former Janowska Street camp, Lviv, 2014

All of these locations in Lviv are accessible to visitors today, and easily found, if not easily comprehended. For further information about the state of Jewish heritage in Lviv and in the surrounding region of eastern Galicia, please see my permanent exhibition “An Unfinished Memory” at the [Galicia Jewish Museum](#), and its mirror galleries on [jasonfrancisco.net](#). ■



# Discovering the History of a Lost World

By Dr. Tomasz Cebulski  
Founder  
Polin Travel

I always wanted to become a chemist to follow the family tradition. History as such seemed to have little value for a growing boy focused on the future. History was dull and limited to memorizing dates and facts. At the same time, history seemed to be omnipresent in the rapidly changing Poland. As always, things omnipresent are the easiest to be taken for granted and to be out of perception. History became a daily reality as, almost overnight, Russian as a second language was replaced in my school with English. Overnight the teacher retrained herself in Shakespeare without realizing how much Pushkin was still present in her teaching. Western products and chains replaced the misery and shortage-ridden economy of late Communism. Overnight I lost my pen pal from Russian Omsk, and even the “Dynasty” and “Miami Vice” series on TV were of little comfort. History was in the air bringing the wind of change, but we rarely focus on the air we breathe.

Even my little town of Oświęcim felt the change with the establishment of the International Youth Meeting Center. It is a German institution that brings 20,000 to 30,000 German students a year to educate them about the place, which with this new wind of change was no longer called “Obóz w Oświęcimiu” but rather “KL Auschwitz.” The Center also promotes Polish-German dialogue and reconciliation. For me, the most fascinating aspect was the foreigners, real foreigners from the other side of the Iron Curtain. They were so different but at the same time so much like us with their universal teenagers’ anxiety. Soon I started to travel with the educational projects to Germany, and that was like travel to the moon.

This was only the beginning of my fascination with travel and exploring otherness. Otherness had been part of Poland for centuries, but in the course of two totalitarian

systems in the 1940s and ’50s was changed into an almost homogenous monoculture, a mere shadow of the rich diversity of the past.

Teachers can change your life, and my new chemistry teacher had a unique talent for discouraging me from science within just a few classes. Around the same time I enrolled in a WWII-related summer volunteer project in London to practice my English, but by some coincidence the London option was canceled and a Warsaw project was offered as a replacement. Warsaw seemed an epicenter of the socialism from which I had tried to run. There we were, a bunch of teenagers with rakes, wheelbarrows, and machetes in the center of Poland’s capital in an overgrown jungle hiding some 200,000 cemetery stones. We were engaged in the cleaning project of one of the largest Jewish cemeteries in the world, 83



Dr. Tomasz Cebulski, front right (in checked scarf and brown hat), with a Taube Jewish Heritage Tour group in Kazimierz

acres of jungle contributing to the veil of silence about the Jews in Poland. The project, seemingly overwhelming and impossible, enabled us to regain the land stone by stone, one human story after the other. The depth of history started to fascinate and lure me in, but even more fascinating was the silence and confusion caused by any questions about who those people were, why Korczak “the Pole” was there, what happened to all those people, and why no one seemed to remember. The gate of Okopowa Jewish cemetery in Warsaw to this day marks

for me the entrance into some other civilization, the civilization of Warsaw Jews, which in the 1920s and ’30s was probably the most culturally, politically, and spiritually developed Jewish civilization in the world.

I also later had a 3-month experience of Communist life in the Negev desert. Yes, I was a kibbutznik, experiencing the dawn of the communal system, which seemed to have been lost with the capitalistic urge for individualism. Travel became a part of my life, an educational addiction that took me through London,

the South African township of Ermelo, and Stockholm, among many other places. In between, I kept returning to Kraków to study International Relations, later followed by Middle Eastern Studies. My university studies would not have been complete without hundreds of genealogy research projects that became my new passion. Genealogy research became my way of breaking the veil of silence about Polish Jews. This veil seemed to be paralyzing for both Jewish families interested in uncovering their family history as well as for local Poles who often



## *Discovering the History of a Lost World, Continued*

were the only repositories of memories about the Jewish part of their town or village. Although archival records were always very helpful and emotional to work with, meeting a person who was the family neighbor and had witnessed both personal and community history always took me to a completely different level, a level of “touching history.”

Over the years the Holocaust and KL Auschwitz became my points of expertise. After receiving many guiding and teaching certificates, I decided to reenter Jagiellonian University in Kraków to pursue my PhD research focusing on the contemporary shape of Auschwitz memory and its meaning to humanity.

The persistent urge to explore just the tip of the iceberg called the civilization of Polish Jews has never abandoned me. The new POLIN Museum of History

of Polish Jews is successfully trying to fill in the void of this lost civilization by presenting the milestones of its history. Another persistent thought that is now becoming my new scholarly interest is humanity’s inability to prevent genocides. As good as we are in commemorating, mourning, and educating about the history of genocides, with the Holocaust remaining the ultimate example, humanity has not yet learned the hardest lesson about its prevention. We shall not be surprised again. ■

For more information, see:  
[www.jewish-guide.pl](http://www.jewish-guide.pl)

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## EDUCATION

# My *Mi Dor Le Dor* Experience

By Klaudia Siczek  
Graduate, *Mi Dor Le Dor*  
A Jewish learning and  
leadership program,  
Warsaw

I left my home in Chicago and arrived at Warsaw's Chopin airport in mid-October 2014. Right away at the baggage claim I was warmly greeted/welcome by an impressive and colorful advertisement promoting the Grand Opening of the Core Exhibition of POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews. "That's my grandpa's project!" I thought, filled with pride [Klaudia's grandfather, Marian Turski, is the chairman of the Council of POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews]. On the way to my grandparents' home I saw another advertisement at the top of a building. "Wow," I thought, "This is not just a small, niche museum."

On the week of my arrival, my grandparents took me to the Opera to see *The Merchant of Venice*. I read the synopsis to prepare myself, noting the explication of anti-Semitism in the play. "What a coincidence," I thought. During the Opera's



intermission I saw an exhibit displayed in the side hall entitled "Jewish Athletes in Poland." "Another sign," I thought.

It was only after this third coincidence that I realized they were not just random signs. Needless to say, until I was here, I had no idea what an enormous impact the Museum has had on Warsaw culture and public opinion, nor on the culture and public life in Poland that has led to the existence of this Museum. This is partly because American media's coverage was modest, and also

because before my arrival in my parents' and grandparents' homeland, I had only recently become engaged in Polish-Jewish relations. Despite being the granddaughter of Marian Turski and Halina Paszkowska, I grew up in a house in the suburbs of Chicago where my Jewish "half" wasn't really explored, and for most of my life all things Polish, related to history, especially Jewish history, were simply remote. When I was growing up my priorities were limited to being accepted by Christine and Cathy's group of friends, and I thought the best course



## *My Mi Dor Le Dor Experience, Continued*

of action would be not to stand out too much. I used to think, “The more American I am, the cooler I will be to them, and the less mean they will be to me.” Therefore, my parents’ accent, the food they prepared, and all of their interests were completely unacceptable to me and I wanted to have nothing to do with them. This led to a decade of focusing on fitting into my social circle rather than looking at my family’s history. (I also developed a continuing interest in discovering techniques to make mean kids less mean.)

Eventually there came a time when I started becoming more interested in my roots. I had a few occasions to interact with Polish-Jewish Poland in Chicago, but I was still an observer rather than a participant. Even though I began asking my grandparents more questions, I often didn’t have enough background knowledge to understand their answers.

Then, last fall, I decided to move to Poland for an indefinite amount of time to do undefined things. All I knew was that I wanted to be closer to my grandparents and to experience something new.

I’m very grateful that a few weeks after my arrival I was granted the opportunity to join *Mi Dor Le Dor* – a program run by the Taube Center for the Renewal of Jewish Life in Poland Foundation, whose aim is to train young educators, tour guides, and ambassadors of Polish-Jewish life in Poland. We regularly met to discuss assigned readings, to present projects, to meet with the thinkers and doers of the Polish-Jewish community, and to get familiar with places in Poland that are significant to Jewish history. Thanks to this program, I read articles that I wouldn’t otherwise have come across; I heard speakers that I wouldn’t have had a chance to listen to; and I saw murals I wouldn’t have discovered.

Not to mention that I made some of my first Warsaw friends through this program!

One of my favorite projects done with *Mi Dor Le Dor* was the “Narrative” project. We were randomly assigned to a Polish Jew about whom we did research and whose story we were to weave into a potential tour of Warsaw for American university students. We were supposed to present this person’s story in the context of the history of Poland/Warsaw/Kraków, and to choose a place in Warsaw or Kraków that was relevant to this individual where we would hypothetically stop and present the story to a tour group.

It was a great project and exercise for several reasons. First of all, I personally absorb history much better when it is told through an individual’s life story, rather than through historical events, and I think this could be true for visitors on a tour as

## *My Mi Dor Le Dor Experience, Continued*

well. Secondly, this exercise helped us to make historical connections that we may not have experienced otherwise, because we were studying someone through whose lens we might not otherwise have looked.

In my case, I was assigned a person about whom I knew little (Chaim Zelig Słonimski), and to whom, frankly speaking, I didn't initially feel connected (I'm an artist, he's a scientist, therefore I thought we spoke very different languages). I love presenting thoughts, and the thought of leading this hypothetical tour (I led tours in Chicago) was exciting for me despite my initial qualms, so I delved into it. It turned out that this scientist was also a writer. It also turned out that a machine whose design he influenced is in the Museum of Technology in the Palace of Culture (where a car made by my other grandpa is displayed). And it turned out that he tried to make science accessible

to the masses. I became engrossed in my studies of him, learned more about 19<sup>th</sup> century Jewish Poland, and opened up a delicious can of intellectually-stimulating worms that I probably wouldn't have otherwise opened.

The longer I'm in Poland, the more meetings I attend with *Mi Dor Le Dor*, the more questions I have for my grandparents. Although the questions become challenging, I'm better able to understand the answers. With every answer comes another layer of connection and understanding – between myself and my grandparents, as well as between the Polish-Jewish past and present.

And greater understanding is really the most important thing. ■

For more information about *Mi Dor Le Dor*:  
<http://www.centrumtaubego.org.pl/mi-dor-le-dor>

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# Hillel Professionals Explore Poland's Jewish Revival, Contemplate Student Encounters

By Lisa Kassow  
Hillel Director  
Trinity College

*“How do you feel about including people in your Jewish community who have not practiced Judaism for generations? How far do you fight to get them back?”*

Although these questions resonate in a contemporary context, they were posed by Poland's Chief Rabbi Michael Schudrich to a group of Hillel professionals during a text study at the Nożyk Shul in Warsaw about 16<sup>th</sup> century Talmudic Responsa to the issue of *anusim*, forced converts after the Spanish Inquisition, who wanted to rejoin the Jewish community after many generations of assimilation. The 400-year-old Hebrew text could have been written with young Poles in mind who are still discovering that somewhere along the line they had Jewish roots, seventy years after the Holocaust and thirty years

post Communism. Along with others whose relatives always knew they were Jewish, they make up groups of young adults such as Gimel in Kraków and ZOOM in Warsaw, the third generation now writing their own chapter of Jewish life in Poland. Their spirit of inclusion, acceptance and pluralism is leading the way for the next generation of “Polish Polish Jews,” those who have always called Poland home and will continue to do so as they proceed on their rich Jewish journeys in the place where 1,000 years of Jewish history and culture flourished.

Engaging with these inspiring young Jews was just one of the unexpected surprises encountered by our group of thirteen Hillel professionals from the U.S., Israel and Russia who traveled to Poland for a heritage study tour, joined by my husband Dr. Samuel Kassow as scholar-in-residence. As a Hillel director passionate about

global Jewish Peoplehood and the spouse of one of the lead historians of the new POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews in Warsaw, I was excited to share recent developments taking place in the Jewish community of Poland with my Hillel colleagues. The trip was organized by the Taube Center for the Renewal of Jewish Life in Poland Foundation, in partnership with Hillel International and expertly guided by Helise Lieberman, Taube Center director (and former Hillel director herself), and Aleksandra Makuch, assistant director. Together we explored the renewal of Jewish community in Poland in conversation with many creative, forward-thinking leaders who are changing the narrative from one concerned primarily with the death of Polish Jewry to one embracing the rich past as a foundation for the present and future. As Dr. Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, POLIN Museum chief curator,

told us, “The mission of the new POLIN Museum is to tell the rich 1,000-year history of Jewish Polish coexistence and conflict, the full spectrum of interactions. Jews were *of* Poland, not just *in* Poland.”

As Hillel professionals, our work is focused on Jewish identity-building with young adults. We were impressed and inspired by current efforts by young Jewish leaders such as Emil Jeżowski who is reestablishing *HaSzomer HaTzair*, the Zionist Youth group started in the early 1900s in Poland, Agata Rakowiecka, director of the Warsaw JCC whose clientele looks like they would be equally at home in hipster Brooklyn, and Anna Chipczyńska, the second woman and first Progressive Jew to direct the organizational body of the Jewish Community of Warsaw. These young Jews are choosing their identity – based on their collective history, culture, religion, values,



Hillel International professionals and Taube Center staff at JCC Warsaw

and beliefs – identifying as contemporary Jews in their society, the new generation of “Polish Polish Jews.” Another unanticipated surprise for our Hillel group was encountering Poles who dedicate their lives to the preservation of Jewish heritage, while honoring the multicultural, multilingual past of their country that included centuries of Jewish life. Master’s degrees in Jewish Studies are now offered at multiple universities throughout Poland, training scholars to delve deeply into the texture of life as lived by millions of Jews throughout a millennium. This is particularly evident at the Auschwitz Jewish Center, where the 400-year Jewish history of the Polish town of Oświęcim (Jews were once 60% of the population), is displayed through an

interactive exhibition, and the only surviving synagogue has become a vibrant center of learning. Seminars such as *How Can I Fight Prejudice* and *Understanding Evil* are offered to Polish and international students as well as law-enforcement officers, linking the intolerance and irrational hatred that caused the Holocaust to current issues of the growing immigrant and Roma population in Europe. We grappled with the idea of spending a night with Hillel students in the town of Auschwitz-Oświęcim, to take advantage of the Center’s rich offerings and to *daven* the morning *shacharit* prayers in the modest, lovingly restored synagogue there before visiting the camps.

This message of honest engagement with the past to inform the present was



## *Hillel Professionals Explore Poland's Jewish Revival, Contemplate Student Encounters, Continued*

emphasized by Dr. Sebastian Rejak, Special Envoy of the Minister of Foreign Affairs for Relations with the Jewish Diaspora, whose involvement with Jewish life began with the study of religion, first his own Catholicism, and then a scholarly focus on Jewish Studies. Dr. Rejak characterized the current Polish-Jewish relationship as one that requires *dibur emet*, Hebrew for “honest, open talk.” We heard a consistent message from Jakub Nowakowski, director of the Galicia Jewish Museum, and others: many Poles not only embrace the memory and legacy of Jewish life by wearing the yellow daffodil to remember the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising each April 19; they also take on the responsibility of maintaining Jewish material culture such as renovation of synagogues and cemeteries throughout the country. This brings up a question of whose responsibility is it to maintain the physical traces of memory and heritage in the former

epicenter of Jewish life? In places where there are no Jews left, who is tasked with preserving the memory, and why? In response, Dr. Rejak referred to the Hillel saying from Pirkei Avot, Ethics of the Fathers, “*B’makom she-ein anashim, histadel l’hiyot ish*—In a place where no one behaves like a human being, you must strive to be human.” (Avot 2:5)

These questions and interactions challenged the assumptions about Polish-Jewish relations with which our Hillel group came to Poland. With the opening of the POLIN Museum, the new JCC in Warsaw, and the well-established JCC in Kraków where we shared a magical Shabbat dinner under the stars with 200 people, now is the moment for Hillel International to forge new relationships in Poland in support of global Jewish Peoplehood in the place where it grew to its fullest expression over a period of a thousand

years. My hope is that through Jewish heritage trips, as well as the creation of a Hillel presence in Poland with the Gimel generation, students will have the opportunity to unpack their own unique connections to their cultural birthright, adding layers of resonance and meaning to their Jewish identities, not only as stewards of Jewish heritage but as agents of innovation and growth. ■

For more information, contact Lisa Kassow at: [Lisa.Kassow@trincoll.edu](mailto:Lisa.Kassow@trincoll.edu)

*Now is the moment for Hillel International to forge new relationships in Poland in support of global Jewish Peoplehood in the place where it grew to its fullest expression over a period of a thousand years.*

## New Notions of “Polonia”: Polish- and Jewish-American Students Dialogue with Polish Foreign Ministry on Taube Study Tour

For the second consecutive summer, Polish- and Jewish-American students participated in the Taube Center’s *Exploring Poland/Polin: Heritage Study Program*, supported by the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The program was created to meet the growing interest among American students with Polish and Jewish roots in exploring Poland, its complex history and its multicultural heritage. The program’s design, with its balance between site visits, presentations, discussions and experiential opportunities, meetings with peers and community leaders, and peer-to-peer learning, maximizes impact on the participants.

During one of the study tours, participants were invited to meet with former Ambassador Joanna Kozińska-Frybes, now Deputy Director of the Department for Consular and Polonia Affairs, on August 10 at the Foreign Ministry. The Hon. Kozińska-Frybes emphasized how important it



Participants in the Taube Center’s *Exploring Poland/Polin: Heritage Study Tour*, with The Hon. Joanna Kozińska-Frybes, Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs (fifth from right)

is for the Ministry to promote inclusivity with respect to the Polish diaspora; strengthen the diaspora’s ties to Poland; and foster connections to Poland’s Jewish heritage among Poles living in Poland and abroad. She said, “It is important for Polish Americans to recognize the Jewish past of Poland and to build links with the Jewish past of which they are not aware.”

Patricia Nowakowski, a graduate student at University of Illinois at Chicago and a first generation Polish-American, described (in Polish) how, growing up in Chicago and attending Polish schools and even visiting Poland during the summers, she had no knowledge of the importance of Jewish culture and history on Polish history.

Inspired by this program, she is considering pursuit of Polish Jewish studies.

While some of the participants had previously been to Poland, they all agree that *Poland/Polin* has taken them to places they never before visited and has opened their eyes to new perspectives on Polish history and society. The participants are already involved in different activities related to Polish culture in the U.S. and will now also serve as this program’s ambassadors. Several expressed desires to return to Poland for advanced study. ■

<http://centrumtaubego.org.pl/exploring-polandpolin-heritage-study-tour-summer-2015>

# How to Teach a 1,000-Year History?: Holocaust Educators Study Poland's Jewish Past & Present

By Rabbi Batshir Torchio  
Senior Educator  
Jewish Community Center  
of San Francisco

Poland today is filled with a stream of voices that recall the darkest suffering under German Nazi occupation and the oppressive rule of Communism, and at the same time, revitalization of Jewish life and culture abounds. The fluid narrative that links past and present is complicated and dynamic, especially here in Poland where a thousand-year history of Jewish cultural and religious diversity was eclipsed and buried by the devastation of the Holocaust. Yet the seemingly impenetrable shadow that settled here in the east is lifting. New ways of remembering and commemorating, reflectively and creatively, are healing this place and its people. The enormous impact of Jewish presence in Poland starting in the 10<sup>th</sup> century is told in the POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews that opened in Warsaw last year. This story and these memories, more personally rendered, are exchanged in beer gardens throughout Poland, and in the living rooms of Catholic Poles

and newly identified Polish Jews who come together to witness each other's histories and experience.

It was into this vibrant space that four fellow educators and I came this summer to learn more about Poland's past and present as we pursued professional interests relating to Holocaust education, Polish history, and the re-emergence of Jewish life in Poland. Our intensive learning will be applied to the work we do in the Bay Area and abroad. Our itinerary consisted of a one-week educational journey in Kraków meeting academics and community leaders in the revival of Jewish life in Kraków and throughout Poland, and participation in the week-long Polin Academy Summer Seminar (PASS) at the POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews, where together with Polish and European educators, we helped develop strategies to effectively disseminate the wealth of knowledge contained in the Core Exhibition to international visitors. Our trip

was made possible through the generous support of the Taube Foundation for Jewish Life & Culture, San Francisco-based Jewish LearningWorks (The Curriculum Initiative), POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews, and Phyllis Cook of the Jim Joseph Foundation. We are also grateful for the countless professionals on the ground who generously guided our work.

The culmination of our research and learning will be shared at a symposium in San Francisco in Spring 2016. Stay tuned for time and location. But for now we wanted to share a few impressions of our time together in Poland that include a reflection on the tension between questionable anti-Semitic graffiti and rousing, celebratory Shabbat services we attended. As Jim McGarry, Director of the Sr. Dorothy Stang Center for Social Justice and Community Engagement at Notre Dame de Namur University wrote, "As I took a Kiddush cup from the tray





Educators with Dr. Jonathan Webber (in cap) at the Galicia Jewish Museum in Kraków



Educators Dr. Benjamin Owens, Adrian Schrek, and James McGarry with Dr. Aleksander Skotnicki (wearing tie) at the Stradom Dialog Center in Kraków

offered me in the social hall at Etz Chaim in Warsaw after Shabbat services — while I felt the weight of evidence of anti-Semitism, I also felt clearly and strongly the blessing of this trip in the honoring of Jewish tradition and in the witnessing of its rebirth.”

Dr. Ben Owens, Department Chair for Theology at Woodside Priory School, asked the question, how is visiting Auschwitz-Birkenau different for a Jew and a non-Jew? He answers from the place of being a Catholic theologian and educator “by profession and devotion” and comes to understand his soul’s journey as inextricably tied up with the past, present, and future of the Jewish people. “The People of Israel in the experience of Exodus, in the repeated struggles for survival and flourishing, Israel in multiform diaspora and exile — this Israel, this People,

has been for me a light to the nations.”

Maia Ipp, Associate Director of Creative Writing at the San Francisco School of the Arts, introduced our group to different ways of thinking about commemorative space, using the POLIN Museum as an experiential playground of personal connection to the past. And Mark Davis, Director of Humanities at the Monterey Coast Preparatory in Scott’s Valley, is committed to creating safe spaces for learning. He was inspired to bring lessons of responses to bullying back to his students through the use of personal narratives of Holocaust victims.

The fall of Communism in 1989 opened the possibility for all Poles — Jews and non-Jews — to explore all that was lost as a result of the Holocaust. A new

narrative emerges, and with it the growth of Jewish communities, a more heterogeneous society, and freedom to identify with Jews around the world more openly. The interest of the Polish public in Jewish history and culture is growing at a tremendous rate as can be seen in the proliferation of Jewish organizations and Jewish studies at the University level. The annual Jewish Culture Festival — a week-long celebration in Kraków — attracts as many as 25,000 participants. It is now, having just celebrated its 25<sup>th</sup> year, an international event that hosts leading musicians, artists, and academics expert in Jewish culture from around the world. For sure this is a profoundly exciting moment not only for Polish Jews, but for the people of Poland, and by extension, the universal conversation about healing together. ■

## MILESTONES

# Krzysztof Czyżewski Receives 2015 Irena Sendler Memorial Award from Taube Philanthropies

*Award in memory of “Righteous Gentile” Sendler who rescued Jewish children from the Warsaw Ghetto recognizes Polish citizens for preserving Jewish heritage.*

On July 3, during the Jewish Culture Festival in Kraków where the first Irena Sendler Memorial Award was presented to Festival director Janusz Makuch in 2008, Taube Philanthropies Executive Director Shana Penn presented the 2015 Award to a pioneer in multicultural engagement in Poland: Krzysztof Czyżewski, a social activist, scholar, and founding director of the Borderland Foundation (Fundacja Pogranicze) in Sejny.

The Borderland Foundation combines hands-on cultural activism with literary and intellectual endeavors to recover the East European

borderlands’ diverse and multilingual heritage. Its humanistic goal is to overcome regional and nationalistic divisions and to build bridges between local ethnic groups, thus promoting dialogue among various, and at times conflicting, identities, memories, and religions (<http://pogranicze.sejny.pl/?lang=en>). As she presented the award to him, Penn said of Czyżewski’s work, “This isn’t nostalgia. This isn’t utopian. This is radical recovery of memory for the purpose of civic and multicultural engagement.”

Czyżewski was one of the first activists to foster a multicultural heritage in Poland after the fall of Communism, in which Jewish culture plays a major part. He established the Borderland Foundation in Sejny in 1990, the Borderland Center of Arts, Cultures, and Nations in 1991, and Borderland Publishing House (Wydawnictwo Pogranicze), as well as the



Krzysztof Czyżewski accepts the Sendler Award. Photo: Łukasz Olearczyk

magazine *Krasnogruda*, in 1993. For his efforts, in 2014 he received Israel’s prestigious Dan David Prize.

As he accepted the award, Czyżewski thanked Taube Philanthropies and called himself a “man of the borderland” who had always been fighting for the inclusion of Jewish heritage in the living stream of culture. He cited several lessons he had learned from Jewish

## *Krzysztof Czyżewski Receives 2015 Irena Sendler Memorial Award, Continued*

heritage and tradition and acknowledged there could be no new Poland without the memory of shared Polish-Jewish heritage. He noted, “We often are the builders of bridges, yet making it to the other side is only half of the bridge – because what the bridge really enables is the return, the return to ourselves.”

Czyżewski also observed, “Our world gets ruined from the top down, so we won’t save it unless we start building centers of the world in small towns and unless we respect small numbers. The number of children saved by Irena Sendler is huge, but it is based on a small number added to a small number, an individual human being added to an individual human being.”

The 2015 Irena Sendler Award co-recipient is Dr. Jan Kulczyk, a Polish businessman who donated the largest single gift (more than \$6 million) to the new

POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews in Warsaw. Dr. Kulczyk died unexpectedly at the age of 65 on July 29. Taube Philanthropies will host a memorial program at the POLIN Museum in October. ■

*“We are bridge builders, enabling the return to ourselves.”*

For more information about the Irena Sendler Award, see:

[nagrodairenysendlerowej.pl](http://nagrodairenysendlerowej.pl)

<http://www.taubephilanthropies.org/sendler-memorial-award-to-krzysztof-czyzewski>



# 25 Years of the Jewish Culture Festival in Kraków

By Janusz Makuch  
Founder/Director  
Robert Gądek  
Deputy Director  
Jewish Culture Festival  
in Kraków

In celebrating the 25th anniversary of the Jewish Culture Festival in Kraków, we decided not to look back at our accomplishments, but instead to celebrate Kazimierz – the Jewish quarter of Kraków and home to the Festival for these 25 years – and also other Jewish quarters around the globe.

The lectures about various aspects of life in Jewish quarters were delivered by many eminent personalities, including author and journalist Ruth Ellen Gruber, Francesco Spagnolo (Curator, Magnes Museum of Jewish Art & Life, Berkeley, California), author and scholar Martin Pollack, Adam Schonberger (MAROM Budapest), as well as Meron Benvenisti (former Deputy Mayor of Jerusalem under Teddy Kollek), and Anna Azari (Israeli Ambassador in Poland). Samuel Norich, editor of *The Forward*, presented pre-war photographs of Jewish quarters in Europe

## BY THE NUMBERS:

- 11 days
- 300 events
- 168 artists, instructors, and lecturers from 6 countries
- 30,000 international audience members
- 57 volunteers from 7 countries

**Theme: the quarter**  
(for the 25th anniversary)

made by Alter Kacyzne for *The Forward*.

But our understanding of *quarter* was much broader – we examined it not only through the lens of urbanity but also as a living space. To that end, our lectures also discussed the gendered nature of Jewish space/ language/culture with Shana Penn (Taube Philanthropies; Graduate Theological Union, Berkeley, California),

Edyta Gawron (Jagiellonian University), Bożena Keff (Warsaw University) and Joanna Lisek (University of Wrocław). The development of new space for the Jews in Poland post-1989 was discussed by key figures in Poland's Jewish revival, Monika and Stanisław Krajewski and Konstanty Gebert.

Music has always been the trademark of the Festival, presenting the diversity of Jewish culture at a high artistic level. The artists selected for the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary program packed the Tempel Synagogue (main musical venue of the Festival) every night. In addition to the groups that were most important to the Festival's development (The Klezmatics, Frank London and Yaakov Lemmer, La Mar Enfortuna, David Krakauer and Shlomo Bar), we also presented artists who are already creating the future of Jewish culture in their own



Closing night “Shalom on Szeroka” concert on July 4. Photo: Michał Ramus

Jewish quarters, including Polish Alte Zachen and Beryozkele, Israeli Kutiman Orchestra, Shai Tsabari with Ahuva Ozeri, and on the Festival secondary stage, a variety of bands and DJs who represent the contemporary music scene in Israel (Garden City Movement, Lola Marsh, Buttering Trio, Ori Alboher).

The Festival, as always, reaches its peak during the Saturday night open-air concert on Szeroka Street. For more than seven hours, all performers from the Festival played Jewish music in all possible genres

for an audience of almost 20,000 people. Thanks to live streaming online and being broadcast on Polish national TV, this spectacular concert reached tens of thousands more and ensured the concert’s status as one of the most significant cultural events in Kraków.

In celebrating the quarter-century anniversary of the Jewish Culture Festival in Kraków, we celebrated Jewish life in Poland, from the quarter outwards. The Festival has played an important role in creating a space for the still growing Jewish community

in Poland and remains a bridge between Jews and non-Jews both in Poland and abroad. See you next year in Kazimierz, the Jewish quarter of Kraków! ■

For more information about the Jewish Culture Festival in Kraków, see:

<http://www.jewishfestival.pl/index,en.html>

# Galicia Jewish Museum Is Expanding

By Jakub Nowakowski  
Director  
Galicia Jewish Museum,  
Kraków

Since its establishment in 2004, the Galicia Jewish Museum, located in Kazimierz, the old Jewish district of Kraków, has become one of the most important institutions commemorating the Jewish past and taking part in the revival of Jewish life in contemporary Poland. In the past five years, the Museum's visitor numbers increased by over 90% (within the last ten years, the Museum was visited by over 320,000 people) and the number of guided museum tours increased by over 70%. In 2014 alone, the Museum hosted more than 800 educational events, and an additional 200+ cultural and artistic events.

The increasing number of visitors, as well as the comprehensive development of our events, educational programs, and other activities, has led to a need for more space. In 2014, we decided to expand the Museum and increase its area by over 50%. The additional space is

located in an historic building adjacent to the Museum with unique, post-industrial character that perfectly harmonizes with the current Museum space. Originally, the building was used for the Steinberg Family Arts and Woodworks Factory, owned by Joachim Steinberg and established in 1902. By 1922, the company had 70 employees and a 70-horsepower engine. In 1927, the factory employed 140, but in 1932 due to the economic crisis, the number of workers fell to 35. Steinberg was a member of B'nai B'rith and beginning in 1928 was the president of the Association of Jewish Handicraftsmen Shomer Umonim. After WWII the building served many different purposes, but suffered from years of neglect.

The expansion will create a separate space to host events, cultural and educational programs, and house our



temporary exhibition program. With this expansion, the Museum will also ensure that a vital landmark of the Jewish urban fabric in Kraków will be properly preserved and used in the best possible way, with the space itself teaching about the past it represents and becoming part of the revival of Jewish life in Poland.

Among the major sponsors of the project so far are: Taube Foundation for Jewish Life & Culture, Koret Foundation, JDC Poland, Zygmunt Rolat, Wingate Foundation, Michael Traison, Association of Cracovians in Israel, as well as 100 individuals from all over the world. ■

To learn more about the project or to support it, please visit: [www.galiciajewishmuseum.org](http://www.galiciajewishmuseum.org)



# Polish Foreign Ministry Honors Three American “Ex-Pats”

**O**n June 2 in Warsaw, the Director of the Taube Center for the Renewal of Jewish Life in Poland (Taube Philanthropies’ Warsaw branch) Helise Lieberman, Chief Rabbi of Poland Michael Schudrich, and Executive Director of the Jewish Community Center of Kraków Jonathan Ornstein were awarded the prestigious Bene Merito Medal by the Polish Minister of Foreign Affairs Grzegorz Schetyna at a ceremony at the Foreign Ministry.

Each recipient received a medal and a plaque that reads, “For a friend of Poland in recognition for contributions made to the promotion and strengthening of the Republic of Poland on the international arena.” At the ceremony, Minister Schetyna thanked Lieberman, Schudrich, and Ornstein for their respective contributions to advancing Polish-Jewish relations.

Previous Bene Merito awardees include former



L to R: Bene Merito Award Recipients Jonathan Ornstein and Helise Lieberman; Minister of Foreign Affairs Grzegorz Schetyna; and Award Recipient Chief Rabbi of Poland, Rabbi Michael Schudrich.

Minister of Foreign Affairs,  
Righteous Among The Nations  
and Honorary Citizen of Israel  
Władysław Bartoszewski;  
Former Prime Minister Marek  
Belka; former Speaker of  
the Knesset Shevah Weiss;  
and U.S. Senator Barbara  
Mikulski. ■

For more information, see:  
[http://www.mfa.gov.pl/en/news/bene\\_merito\\_distinction\\_for\\_contribution\\_to\\_building\\_polish\\_jewish\\_relations](http://www.mfa.gov.pl/en/news/bene_merito_distinction_for_contribution_to_building_polish_jewish_relations)

## IN THE NEWS

### Polish Pension

Polish Army veterans and Polish citizens who had been detained by the Nazis in ghettos, camps, or prisons or were forcibly deported to the Soviet Union are eligible to receive a small pension from Poland's Office for War Veterans and Victims of Oppression. Until now, applicants living outside Poland, in order to receive these benefits, had to appoint a proxy in Poland, which

made applying for payments very difficult. Recently, the Polish government has ruled that persons living abroad can also apply for these payments directly if eligible. The monthly payments are about PLN 400, or approximately U.S. \$130.

Those who think they might be eligible should submit an official application as soon as possible. All

forms must be filled out in Polish. The World Jewish Restitution Organization (WJRO) is helping to provide information for those who wish to apply: [www.polishrestitution.com/pensions](http://www.polishrestitution.com/pensions).

The Claims Conference may also be helpful to applicants: <http://www.claimscon.org/survivor-services/>. ■

### Petition to the German Government for Cemetery Restoration

Dr. Hannah Weinberg and Norman Weinberg of Buffalo, NY, became involved in Jewish cemetery restoration in Poland ten years ago, when they successfully restored Dr. Norman Weinberg's family's cemetery in the small town of Ożarów with the assistance of Chief Rabbi of Poland Michael Schudrich as well as the cooperation of the local town leaders. The town now caretakes the cemetery. The Weinbergs then proceeded to organize similar cemetery restorations

and long-term caretaking in other Polish towns. It was and is ambitious, and they realized that serious funding would be needed to carry on their efforts. To that end, the Weinbergs established the Poland Jewish Cemeteries Restoration Project (PJCRP), of which Norman serves as executive coordinator.

The PJCRP is petitioning the German Government to "take responsibility and pay their fair share of the costs for restoration and maintenance of more than

By Vera Hannush

1,200 Jewish cemeteries German forces desecrated and destroyed and for fencing in and memorialization of the thousands of mass graves German forces created during German occupied Poland." The PJCRP issued the Petition to the German Government in 2005, which now has over 55 million signatures worldwide (both Jews and non-Jews). We encourage all of our colleagues to sign the petition. ■

For a detailed list of signators, visit: <http://www.pjcrp.org/list22.html>

## CONFERENCES & SCHOLARSHIP

# POLIN Museum Announces GEOP Research Fellowship Program

The mission of the Global Education Outreach Program is to promote Polish-Jewish studies internationally by supporting research and scholarly exchange on the history and culture of Polish Jews. POLIN Museum partners with universities and research institutions in Poland, Europe, North America, Israel, Russia, and Australia.

GEOP supports doctoral and postdoctoral fellowships and seminars, visiting lecturers, conferences, and workshops. We welcome applications and proposals from scholars at all stages of their careers and in all relevant academic disciplines, including history, political science, literature, art history, musicology, theater studies, philosophy, religion, sociology, anthropology, and law.

*This program was made possible thanks to the William K. Bowes, Jr. Foundation, Taube Foundation for Jewish Life & Culture, and the*

*Association of the Jewish Historical Institute of Poland.*

### **Call for Applications: POLIN Research Fellowships for Doctoral and Postdoctoral Candidates**

POLIN Museum's Global Educational Outreach Program is offering up to six **doctoral and post-doctoral fellowships** for from three to five consecutive months in residence at POLIN Museum and the Jewish Historical Institute (ŻIH). The fellowship stipend is \$2,000 per month.

Our goal is to support scholarship on Jewish history and culture in the territories of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and its successor states and a new cohort of scholars expert in this field. Fellows will draw on POLIN Museum's core exhibition, resource center, library, and collection and on its expert staff. They will also have access to the archive, library, and collection of the

Jewish Historical Institute. In addition, they will be able to take advantage of libraries, archives, and academic institutions' research centers in Warsaw, Kraków, and elsewhere in Poland.

Fellows will be provided with a working space in a building situated between POLIN Museum and the Jewish Historical Institute. POLIN Museum will offer assistance in finding housing in Warsaw.

Fellows will have the opportunity to:

- present their work-in-progress in a monthly seminar and receive feedback from their colleagues
- participate in the full program of lectures, workshops, and conferences at POLIN Museum and the Jewish Historical Institute
- conduct research in archives and libraries in Warsaw and Poland



## *GEOP Research Fellowship Program, Continued*

- consult with an assigned mentor from POLIN Museum, the Jewish Historical Institute, or other academic institution in Warsaw or Poland.

### **Requirements**

Candidates for fellowships may apply for a period of between three and five months and must have a working knowledge of Polish and English. Applicants from any discipline related to the history and culture of Polish Jews may apply. Applicants from doctoral programs from the United States and Canada should be ABD. Those from Israel and Europe should be within two years of completing their PhD. Post-doctoral candidates must have completed a PhD within the past five years.

### **The Application Process**

Applicants should submit their curriculum vitae (no longer than four pages), a detailed statement of current research (up to 2,000 words), and one writing sample (no more than 25 pages). Applications should be submitted in English in PDF format to [GEOP@polin.pl](mailto:GEOP@polin.pl).

Two letters of recommendation should be submitted directly by the recommenders in English by e-mail to [GEOP@polin.pl](mailto:GEOP@polin.pl).

### **Application Deadline:**

**November 30, 2015**

### **Deadline for letters of recommendation:**

**December 13, 2015**

Decisions will be announced by March 2016.

Fellowships may start as early as September 2016, and should be completed no later than August 2017.

For more information, please email: [GEOP@polin.pl](mailto:GEOP@polin.pl)

### **Call for Applications:**

#### **Research Workshops**

**We invite individuals and institutions to propose three-day research workshops to be held at POLIN Museum** on topics related to the history and culture of Polish Jews, including new perspectives on public history, museums, and cultural memory. We especially encourage interdisciplinary and comparative approaches.

GEOP covers three hotel nights in Warsaw for 15 workshop participants, and coffee and lunch breaks during the whole event. We also offer venues and organizational support before and during the workshops. We will support up to four workshops a year.

### **Proposals for workshops should contain:**

- short biography of the workshop facilitator
- workshop subject and its contribution to the field (up to 2,000 words)
- suggested workshop dates
- proposed workshop participants (up to 15, with at least 5 confirmed)
- list of institutional partner(s) and their contribution

**Deadline for workshops in 2016: December 20, 2015.**

**Decisions will be announced by January 30, 2016.**

Submit proposals to [GEOP@polin.pl](mailto:GEOP@polin.pl).

For more information, email: [GEOP@polin.pl](mailto:GEOP@polin.pl).

## GEOP INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

### “From Abraham ibn Yakub to 6 Anielewicz Street”

A major international conference, “From Abraham ibn Yakub to 6 Anielewicz Street,” took place from May 11-14, 2015 at the POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews with the goals of enabling scholars to become familiar with the permanent exhibition at the POLIN Museum and of evaluating the present state of knowledge of the history and culture of Polish Jews. The conference was generously supported by the William K. Bowes, Jr. Foundation and the Taube Foundation for Jewish Life & Culture and was organized within the framework of the POLIN Museum’s Global Education Outreach Program (GEOP). The two bodies organizing it were the Museum and its partner, the Emanuel Ringelblum Jewish Historical Institute, based in Warsaw.

The conference, which was attended by more than 430 scholars and members of the

general public from at least 13 countries including the U.S., Israel, France, the UK, Germany, Lithuania, Ukraine, and Poland, was the largest and most important discussion of the history and culture of Polish Jews ever to be held in Poland.

This distinguished group of scholars came together to assess the state of the field and to chart future directions for research. Participants remarked repeatedly how honored they were to be invited, how happy many of them were to be in Warsaw for the first time, and how excited they were to have the opportunity to visit the Museum and its recently opened core exhibition. The four days of the conference were marked by stimulating interactions and the opportunity to renew old and make new friendships. The long history of Jews on Polish lands was thus explored in the evocative and beautiful

By Dr. Antony Polonsky  
Chief Historian, POLIN  
Museum

Vice President, AAPJS

environment of the Museum before a large and receptive audience.

Among the issues discussed were: the transformation of the historiography of Polish Jewry in the last thirty years and the changes in the legal situation of Jews in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and their role in its economic life; the problems inherent in the transformation of Jews from a religious and cultural community linked by a common faith into citizens or subjects of their respective countries in the context of the partitioned Poland of the 19<sup>th</sup> century; the deterioration of the situation in Poland in the late 1930s and the extent to which this facilitated the Nazi genocidal plan in relation to the Jews; and the reconstruction of Jewish life after 1944 in the face of the difficult conditions created by the imposition of an unpopular Communist regime

## *GEOP International Conference, Continued*

and violence, often directed against Jews.

The proceedings of the conference will be posted on the websites of the POLIN Museum and the Emanuel Ringelblum Jewish Historical Institute. In addition, a

one-volume publication is envisaged made up of conference papers. This remarkable event will pave the way for the successful implementation of the goals of the Museum's Global Educational Outreach Program. ■

For more information on the conference, see:

<http://www.polin.pl/en/conference-may-2015>

## DR. ANTONY POLONSKY RECEIVES A FESTSCHRIFT AT INAUGURAL CONFERENCE

The May conference was also marked by the presentation to Antony Polonsky of a Festschrift. The volume, *Warsaw. The Jewish Metropolis: Essays in honor of the 75<sup>th</sup> Birthday of Professor Antony Polonsky* was introduced by Dr. Moshe Rosman of Bar Ilan University, Israel. Warsaw was once home to the largest and most diverse Jewish community in the world. It was a center of rich varieties of Orthodox Judaism, Jewish Socialism, Diaspora Nationalism, Zionism, and Polonisation. In 2010, a three-day conference was hosted by the UCL Institute of Jewish Studies devoted to the entire history of the Warsaw Jewish community: from its inception in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century and its emergence as a Jewish metropolis within a few generations to its destruction during the German occupation and tentative re-emergence in the post-war period. This volume is made up of the papers presented at this pioneering conference and describes the emergence and destruction of one of the most influential communities in Jewish diaspora history. ■



Dr. Antony Polonsky



## “From Galicia to New York: Salo W. Baron and His Legacy”

By Dr. Antony Polonsky  
Chief Historian, POLIN  
Museum  
Vice President, AAPJS

Between May 26-29, 2015, an international conference was held in Kraków and Tarnów to commemorate the 120<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of Salo Wittmeyer Baron. It was sponsored by the Salo W. and Jeannette M. Baron Foundation, the Knapp Family Foundation, Arizona State University Center for Jewish Studies, the Institute of Jewish Studies at Jagiellonian University, the Institute for Israel and Jewish Studies at Columbia University, the Taube Center for Jewish Studies at Stanford University, the Galicia Jewish Museum in Kraków, and the Muzeum Okręgowe in Tarnów.

Salo Baron was undoubtedly a great historian. He was astonishingly productive. His magnum opus, on which he worked closely with his wife, Jeannette Meisel, is *A Social and Religious History of the Jews*, which began as a series of ten public lectures delivered in spring 1931 with

the title “Jewish Society and Religion in their Historical Interrelation” that were intended to show the interplay of these general forces “in the long historical evolution of the Jewish people.” This was transformed into a three-volume overview of Jewish history (two of text and one of notes and bibliography) published in 1937, which subsequently became the basis for his unfinished 18-volume work with the same title. He intended to write two more volumes covering the modern era and was still working on volume nineteen in his nineties. Volume seventeen was devoted to the history of the Jews in Poland and Lithuania down to 1648. He wrote widely on other topics, and the Hollis catalogue lists more than thirty books under his authorship.

Among his other interests were the Jewish struggle for political and social integration, Jewish communal self-government, and

historiography on which he produced a valuable volume *History and Jewish Historians* (1964). In addition, he was one of the editors of the quarterly *Jewish Social Studies* from its inception in 1939 and a consulting editor of the *Encyclopaedia Judaica*.

His appointment as Nathan L. Miller Professor of Jewish History, Literature and Institutions at Columbia University after protracted negotiations in December 1929, a post he held until his retirement in 1963, was the first such appointment in an American University and was only preceded in Europe by the granting to Majer Bałaban in autumn 1927 of a chair in Jewish history at the University of Warsaw. Baron’s holding of the chair began the enormous expansion of Jewish studies at American universities and many of the departments that were subsequently established were headed by his pupils. He was clearly an inspiring

## *Salo W. Baron and His Legacy, Continued*

teacher. Among his most notable pupils one could mention Bernard Dov Weinryb, author of *The Jews of Poland: A Social and Economic History of the Jewish Community in Poland from 1100 to 1800* (Philadelphia, 1973) and Filip Friedman, who studied with him at the Jewish Paedagogium in Vienna. Friedman, who was later to be the first chair of the postwar Jewish Historical Commission in Poland and who was one of the pioneers of Holocaust Research and author of the path-breaking *Roads to Extinction: Essays on the Holocaust* (New York and Philadelphia, 1980), was brought to the United States by Baron, who wrote a moving obituary after his premature death. Another of his pupils was Yosef Yerushalmi, who succeeded him at Columbia, holding what is now the Salo Wittmayer Baron Chair of Jewish History, Culture and Society. He was also the mentor of such

notable scholars as Abraham Duker, Oscar Janowsky, Lucy Dawidowicz, Arthur Hertzberg, Oscar Handlin, and Zvi Ankori.

At the conference, different aspects of his work were discussed by scholars from the United States and Poland. In the keynote address, Antony Polonsky, Chief Historian of the POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews, examined the significance of Salo Baron's Legacy for Polish-Jewish history today, while Edyta Gawron discussed Baron's experience as a student at Jagiellonian University. Baron's treatment of Ancient and Medieval History was considered by Edward Dąbrowa of Jagiellonian University; Martin Goodman, Wolfson College, Oxford University; and Robert Chazan, New York University, whose paper was read in his absence due to illness. The following session examined Baron's writings on Central and East European

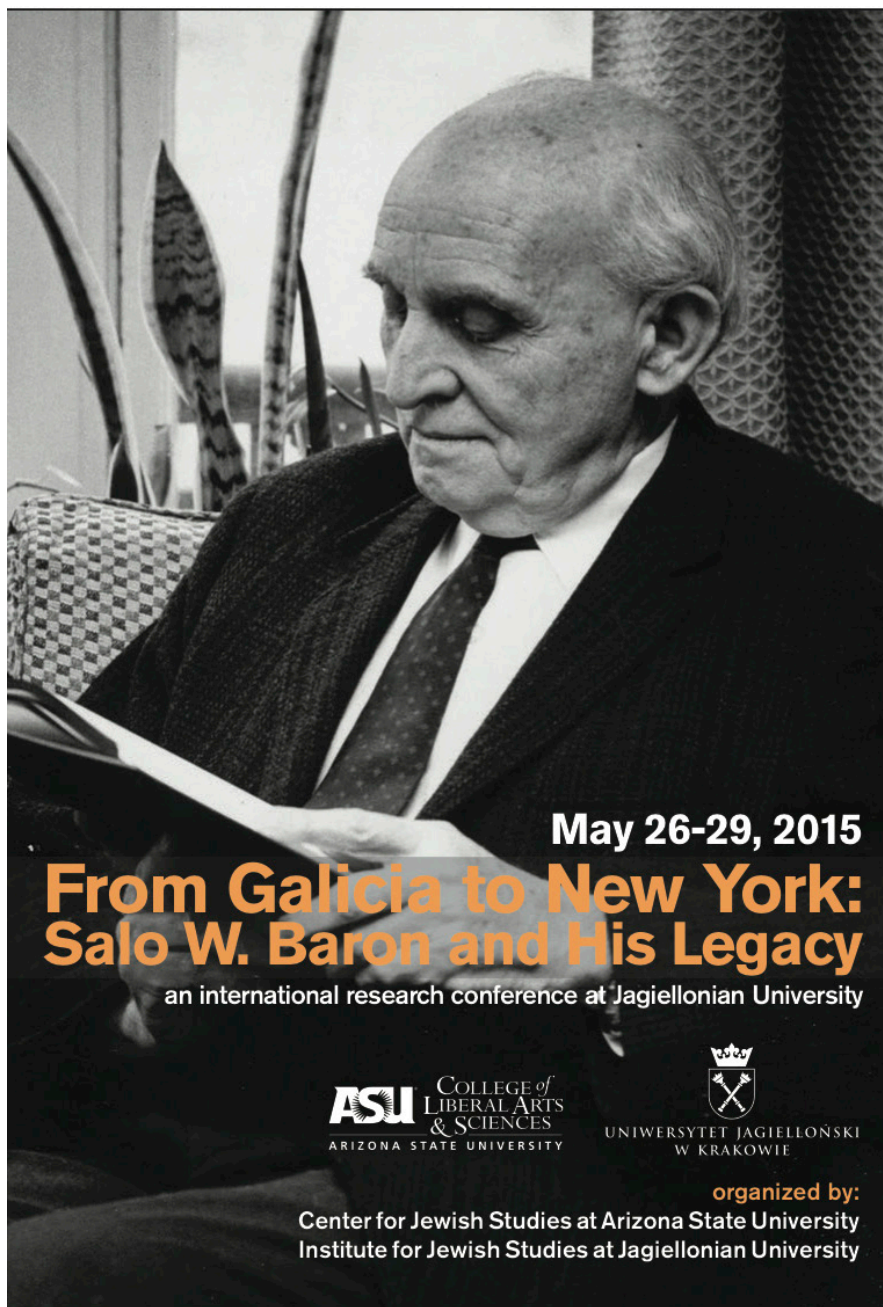
Jewry with contributions by Adam Kaźmierczyk and Michał Galas of Jagiellonian University.

The following day was devoted both to Baron's view of capitalism, with an important contribution by Todd Endelman, University of Michigan, emeritus, and to discussions of Baron's activity in the United States and on behalf of refugee scholars by Zachary Baker, Stanford University; Evelyn Adunka of Vienna; and David Engel, New York University. A further session, addressed by Hasia Diner, New York University; Eric Goldstein, Emory University; and Beth Wenger, University of Pennsylvania, was devoted to Baron's views on American Jewry. The final session in Kraków was dedicated to Baron and Galicia, with stimulating papers by Rachel Manekin, University of Maryland; Marsha Rozenblit, University of Maryland; and Natalia Aleksion, Touro College.

## *Salo W. Baron and His Legacy, Continued*

The last day was taken up with an excursion to Tarnów, which enabled the conference participants to see both the Baron and Wittmeyer houses in the main square and some Baron graves in the cemetery. Baron's daughter Shoshana gave a moving account of her memories of her father, and the staff of the Regional Museum in Tarnów provided a tour of Jewish Tarnów and an account of the history of the Jews there.

The conference was a most stimulating event, ably organized by Hava Tirosh-Samuelson, Director, Center for Jewish Studies at Arizona State University; Edward Dąbrowa, Director, Institute of Jewish Studies, Jagiellonian University; Michał Galas of the Institute of Jewish Studies, Jagiellonian University; and Anna Cichopek-Gajraj of Arizona University. We look forward eagerly to the publication of the conference proceedings. ■



**May 26-29, 2015**

**From Galicia to New York:  
Salo W. Baron and His Legacy**

an international research conference at Jagiellonian University

**ASU** COLLEGE of LIBERAL ARTS & SCIENCES  
ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY

UNIWERSYTET JAGIELLOŃSKI  
W KRAKOWIE

**organized by:**  
Center for Jewish Studies at Arizona State University  
Institute for Jewish Studies at Jagiellonian University



## Polish Jewish Studies Initiative: July 2015 Update

By Dr. Jessie Labov  
Center for Slavic and  
Eastern European Studies  
Ohio State University

**In** April 2015, the Polish Jewish Studies Initiative held its second annual workshop, dedicated to furthering the conversation between scholars and activists who are working at the intersection of these two fields. We met at Princeton University for a two-day session which focused largely on POLIN, the new Museum of the History of Polish Jews in Warsaw. Participants included those who were closely involved in the development and curation of the Museum, scholars in Polish and Jewish studies who reflected on the potential impact of the Museum, as well as several people in related fields who were learning about these developments for the first time. We were pleased to welcome representatives from three major cultural institutions as well – YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, the Adam Mickiewicz Institute, and the Polish Cultural Institute in New York

– who contributed their own perspective on program development and advocacy for this field. The detailed program and list of participants can be found here: <https://pjsw.princeton.edu/>.

In our second year of coordinating events to promote the intersection of Polish and Jewish Studies, we have identified a clear need to open a stronger channel of regular communication and exchange of ideas between scholars in Europe, North America, and Israel. In addition to establishing our own web presence, we will be making active use of existing platforms (such as <http://www.pol-int.org>), mailing lists, and institutional newsletters relevant to Polish and Jewish Studies. We are planning to hold an intensive seminar in Poland in the summer of 2017, which will bring together researchers from these different

geographic contexts. Leading up to this event, we will continue to convene regularly at professional conferences and at our annual workshops.

Meanwhile, the PJSI has organized three sessions at the upcoming ASEEEES convention in Philadelphia (November 19-22, 2015); <http://aseees.org/>

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### **Sat, Nov 21, 8am:**

“Sciences of Culture, Cultures of Difference: Poles and Jews as Ethnographers and Sociologists, 1920-1950” (Sarah Zarrow, Grażyna Kubica-Heller, Katherine Lebow, Olga Lienkiewicz, Leila Zenderland, Jan T. Gross)

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### **Sat, Nov 21, 3:45pm:**

“Polish Jews Come Home: from POLIN the Journal to POLIN the Museum” (Sean Martin, Karen Underhill, Joanna Mazurkiewicz, Nichole Freeman, Irena Grudzińska-Gross)

## *Polish Jewish Studies Initiative: July 2015 Update, Continued*



Polish Jewish Studies Initiative Workshop at Princeton University, April 2015

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### **Sun, Nov 22, 8:00am:**

“Three Histories? Revisiting Polish/Jewish Historiography” (Karen Auerbach, Sarah Zarrow, Joanna Sliwa, Rachel Rothstein, Natalia Aleksion, Antony Polonsky)

For more information about the Polish Jewish Studies Initiative, contact Karen Underhill ([kcu@uic.edu](mailto:kcu@uic.edu)).

The third annual workshop of the Polish Jewish Studies Initiative, “Doikeyt and Diaspora: Polish Jewish Territories in the Cultural Imagination” will take place in April 2016 at the University of Illinois at Chicago. For more information about this event please contact Karen Underhill. ■

## FILMS

# “The Touch of an Angel” (Dotknięcie Anioła)

By Marek T.  
Pawlowski  
Director

*A Polish-German co-production, 2015 Academy Awards candidate in the category of feature documentary. Powerful testimony and memories of Henryk Schoenker, who narrowly escaped World War II.*

“The Touch of an Angel,” inspired by Henryk Schoenker’s memoirs, reveals unknown facts about his hometown, Auschwitz, which became a symbol of the destruction of the Jews. Leo Schoenker, Henryk’s father, was the last chairman of the Jewish Community in the town. Months before the actual founding of the concentration camp and following German orders, Henryk Schoenker established the Bureau of Emigration of Jews to Palestine. Summoned by Eichmann to Berlin, he duly reported on the activities of the Bureau in the hope of saving

thousands of Jews willing to emigrate. During his meetings in Berlin with Rabbi Leo Baeck, Schoenker discussed the tragic situation of the Jews in Europe. Baeck, a leader of Jews in Germany, predicted then the future developments: “The Jews are going to be squeezed like a lemon and the peel is going to be thrown into the furnace.”

After years of research by a team of historians, Zoyda Art Production, the makers of the film, found evidence of the activities of Schoenker’s office. A researcher from the Auschwitz Jewish Center, Dr. Artur Szyndler, discovered supporting documents in English at Yad Vashem. They had been submitted simultaneously in 1939 to the German authorities and to the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, and are held today in the AJJDC archives in New York.

One of the colorful figures in the film is John Gottowt,

a Jewish actor (born Isidor Gesang), a star of the German silent cinema. In 1921 he played Professor Bulwer in the classic silent film “Nosferatu.” Until recently, German sources gave 1933 as the year of his death, the time when he was banned from working as a professional actor. In fact he was shot in 1942 in the town of Wieliczka, outside of Kraków, by one of his former fans, an SS officer, who remembered him from his performances in Berlin. His execution was witnessed by Henryk Schoenker who was a small boy at the time and was hiding under the bed in Gottowt’s room. The dog assisting the SS officer detected the boy’s presence, but the boy was able to distract the animal by giving it sausage. Seventy years later, Henryk testified about the murder.

The film examines the tragic choices of those who find themselves in life-threatening situations. In Poland, the country under the strictest Nazi rule of all occupied countries,





Henryk Schoenker at Auschwitz-Birkenau

any form of assistance to a Jew meant death. Many refused to help out of fear, and some who helped did so for personal gain. This painful and very complex subject continues to be an actively discussed and debated topic in Poland today. According to Schoenker, Auschwitz was a city in which Jews lived in close union with non-Jews. A few of the Jews who survived retained good memories of the prewar days. The survivors were then scattered all over the world, like Schoenker, who now lives in Tel Aviv.

Film director Marek T. Pawlowski embraced an original approach by combining archival footage and photographs with actors who blend into the historic background. The director

calls this technique “archi-collages” (inspired by the fact that Schoenker is a painter). The characters remain silent, and scenes are short. The hour-long film was built on the basis of 25 hours of interviews covering six years of Schoenker’s war experience. And who is the angel in the story? One has to see the film to find the answer.

Schoenker remembers a strange boy who predicted the creation of Auschwitz long before it became a reality. He remembers a woman who saved his family’s life by sharing her food. He remembers the people who were too consumed by fear to help, and those who selflessly risked everything. It’s not just a wartime story, but a testament to how even the

smallest gesture can have great consequences.

The film presents previously unknown information about the existence of the Bureau of Emigration of Jews to Palestine, run by Schoenker’s father. His noble plan could have saved thousands, but it failed. What went so terribly wrong in this place, which later became infamous for its gas chambers? Schoenker speaks about it boldly, looking directly into the eyes of the viewer, giving the film an almost metaphysical intensity. ■

For more information about the film, visit <http://zoyda.pl/> or contact producer Małgorzata Walczak [zoyda@wp.pl](mailto:zoyda@wp.pl)

## BOOKS

### Joshua Zimmerman, *The Polish Underground and the Jews, 1939–1945*

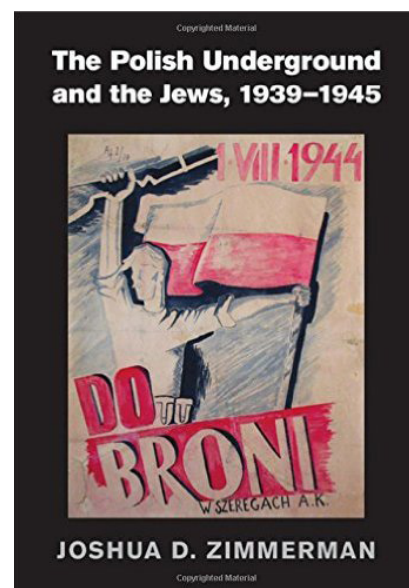
Prof. Joshua Zimmerman of Yeshiva University in New York has just published *The Polish Underground and the Jews, 1939–1945* (Cambridge University Press, June 2015). This new book examines one of the most contentious issues in the history of Polish-Jewish relations: the attitude and behavior toward Jews during World War II of the Polish Underground (The Home Army), which reported to the Polish Government-in-Exile in London. This book is the first full-length scholarly treatise in any language to provide a thorough and balanced examination of the Polish Underground's attitude and behavior toward Jews during World War II. Zimmerman analyzes the military, civilian, and political wings of the Polish Underground to elucidate his findings. He uses a variety of archival documents, testimonies, and memoirs to show that the reaction of the Polish Underground to the disastrous

fate of Polish Jews was immensely varied, ranging from compassionate aid to acts of murder.

Professor Ivan T. Berend of the University of California in Los Angeles wrote a very positive review of the Zimmerman book, calling it “a wonderfully researched, documented and written book – a real page-turner.”

Zimmerman holds the Eli and Diana Zborowski Professorial Chair in Holocaust Studies and East European History at Yeshiva University. He received his PhD in comparative history from Brandeis University. He has published several other books on Polish-Jewish topics. ■

Reviewed by Julian and Fay Bussgang



## Recommended Reading

“The best time to read is summer.”

– Alice Hoffman,  
*The Marriage of Opposites*

To assemble a recommended reading list, we asked several colleagues what they were reading this summer.

■ **Dr. Eleonora Bergman, Ringelblum Archive, Jewish Historical Institute**

Ezra Mendelsohn, *Painting a People. Maurycy Gottlieb and Jewish Art*, Brandeis University Press, Hanover and London, 2002.

*Women and the Holocaust. New Perspectives and Challenges*, Ed. by Andrea Pető, Louise Hecht, Karolina Krasuska, Instytut Badań Literackich PAN, Warszawa 2015.

(Series: Witnesses of History) Władysław Bartoszewski, *About Żegota – a confidential account from half a century ago*, Literatura Faktu PWN, Warszawa 2013.

■ **Dr. Ari Kelman, Jim Joseph Chair in Education and Jewish Studies, Stanford University**

Geneviève Zubrzycki, *The Crosses of Auschwitz: Nationalism and Religion in Post-Communist Poland*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006.

■ **Dr. Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, Chief Curator, POLIN Museum**

Glenn Kurtz, *Three Minutes in Poland: Discovering a Lost World in a 1938 Family Film*, New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2014.

Fania Lewando, *The Vilna Vegetarian Cookbook: Garden-Fresh Recipes Rediscovered and Adapted for Today's Kitchen*, Berlin: Schocken, 2015.

Louise Steinman, *The Crooked Mirror: A Memoir of Polish-Jewish Reconciliation*, Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2014.

■ **Dr. Antony Polonsky, Chief Historian, POLIN Museum**

Cecile Esther Kuznitz, *YIVO and the Making of Modern Jewish Culture: Scholarship for the Yiddish Nation*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014.

Simon Rabinovitch, *Jewish Rights, National Rites. Nationalism and Autonomy in Late Imperial and Revolutionary Russia*, Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2014.

Grzegorz Rossoliński-Liebe, Stepan Bandera, *The Life and Afterlife of a Ukrainian Nationalist. Fascism, Genocide, and Cult*, Stuttgart: Ibidem Verlag, 2014.

■ **Dr. Dariusz Stola, Director, POLIN Museum**

Eva Hoffman, *Lost in Translation: A Life in a New Language*, New York: Penguin Books, 1989.





## OBITUARIES

May 2, 1924-July 20, 2015

# Theodore Bikel

Photo: Jewish Culture Festival in Kraków

## Tears Through Laughter

By Tad Taube  
*Chairman, Taube  
Philanthropies*

Each of the more than 2,000 times my friend Theodore Bikel rose to the stage as Tevye in “Fiddler on the Roof,” he reminded Jews and non-Jews alike of the Jewish culture that has thrived so vibrantly across generations in Europe. His work served as a shining symbol of the Judaism that has outlasted pogroms, ghettos, and genocide. Theodore Bikel was laid to rest last month, but Theo’s role as the champion of Yiddishkeit, in every sense of the word, will never cease to exist.

My first encounter with this man proved to me just how special he was—an internationally renowned personality, no doubt, but above all, a warm, kind-hearted man committed to preserving and enriching

Jewish culture. It was the summer of 2004, and I had just left the stage of the Tempel Synagogue after greeting the 900 guests at that year’s Jewish Culture Festival in Krakow, when a kind-eyed man with a beard and a cap approached me. He complimented me on my Polish and expressed how honored he was to meet me. I always wondered if he knew that the honor could not have been more my own.

Thereafter, we became close friends. We had something significant in common — we were both among a small, at the time, group of Jewish leaders committed to the revival of Jewish life and culture in Poland. It was a bit of an uphill battle changing the conversation from Poland as Jewish graveyard to a new Poland with a vibrant, burgeoning community of Jews of all ages. We sought a story of a Jewish rebirth; many in Poland were learning for the first time they had Jewish roots. We both left Europe at a young age, but

what I came to realize as I grew older was that neither of us had truly left at all.

He grew deeply committed to the Jewish Culture Festival, returning every summer to wrap us in his music, often with his late wife, Tamara Brooks, who was a concert pianist/conductor and performed alongside him. The massive growth of the Festival to more than 25,000 patrons from across Europe, Israel and the United States, was certainly due in part to his presence year after year.

A true renaissance man of our time, Theo regaled and enlightened us through music, sharing the breadth and depth of his love for Jewish heritage and its interplay with other folk and cultural traditions. He was, perhaps, best known in mainstream culture for his musical theater and film performances on Broadway and in Hollywood, but he was also active in human-rights causes spanning decades. He marched in the U.S. civil rights movement,

## *Theodore Bikel, Continued*

advocated for freedom for Soviet Jews, and protested South African apartheid. He lobbied Congress on why the federal government should support the arts. Theodore Bikel was wholly Jewish, as Leon Wieseltier so accurately articulated just weeks before we lost Theo: “He knows how we daven and he knows how we demonstrate.” Wieseltier wrote, “The range of his Jewishness is as exhilarating as it is rare.”

In 2010, Theo was nominated for the Drama Desk Award for outstanding solo performance in “Sholom Aleichem: Laughter Through Tears.” This one-man theater piece on Sholom Aleichem was followed by a documentary film, “Theodore Bikel: In the Shoes of Sholom Aleichem,” which has been showing at film festivals worldwide. I was so proud to be a part of supporting what would become two of my dear friend’s final projects.

Theo closes his performance in “Laughter Through Tears”



Tad Taube (top) with Theodore Bikel and Tamara Brooks

implored the audience to remember the “Fiddler” playwright through laughter. This advice has always resonated with me in terms of how I thought of Theo, too. Nearly 10 years ago, Theo sent me a congratulatory video message for my birthday. Naturally, he presented it through song—to the tune of “If I Were a Rich Man.” While

I have kept the recording, I have never needed to play it. His soothing voice has never left me, constantly bringing me to tears through laughter. I think this would have made him smile. ■



February 19, 1922-April 24, 2015

## Władysław Bartoszewski

By Dr. Antony  
Polonsky

Władysław Bartoszewski, who died of a heart attack in Warsaw in April of this year at the age of 93, was one of the great figures in Polish public life in recent times. Born into a Catholic family in Warsaw, he grew up next to Warsaw's Jewish district and had many Jewish friends. He became active in the Polish resistance to Nazi occupation and was imprisoned for a period in the Auschwitz concentration camp from which he was released in spring 1941 as a result of the intervention of the Red Cross, for which he had been working. He returned to underground activity and was one of the founders and principal organizers of the Council for Aid to Jews, code name Żegota, which provided material and moral support for Jews persecuted by the Nazis. For this activity, he was designated by Yad Vashem as one of the "Righteous Among The Nations." When asked by the journalist Michał Komar why he had risked his life on behalf of Jews, he replied,

"Because I could not have done otherwise."

He strongly opposed the Communist takeover of Poland and was an active member of Mikołajczyk's Polish Peasant Party. He was also a founding member in 1946 of the All-Polish Anti-racist League. His activity aroused the ire of the Communist authorities and he was accused of spying and imprisoned for nearly ten years before being released in 1954 on grounds of ill-health. He continued his oppositional activity and also wrote extensively on Polish-Jewish topics and on the Second World War. In all, he wrote more than forty books. His writing was not to the taste of the rulers of the Polish People's Republic, and in 1970 he was not permitted to publish his work in Poland for four years. An active supporter of Solidarity, he was again briefly imprisoned after the imposition of Martial Law in December 1981. He took an active part in the conferences in the 1980s that led to a

major breakthrough in Polish-Jewish relations and the understanding of the Jewish past in Poland. He was one of the founders of the yearbook *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry* and contributed to it on a number of occasions.

After the negotiated end of Communism in Poland in 1989, he became the country's ambassador to Austria between 1990 and 1995 and subsequently Foreign Minister from March to December 1995 and again from June 2000 to October 2001. A fluent speaker of German, he made a major contribution to the Polish-German reconciliation that has been a core of the new Europe that has emerged since the collapse of Communism. This was a role that came to him as somewhat of a surprise. In an interview in 2009 he observed, "If someone had told me, 60 years ago, when I was standing on the assembly square in Auschwitz, that I was going to be friends with Germans, citizens of a democratic and friendly



## *Władysław Bartoszewski, Continued*

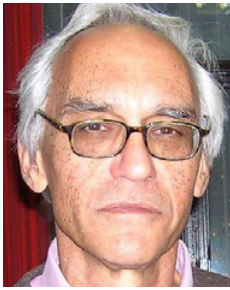
nation, I would have said they were cuckoo crazy.”

He also played a major role in the Polish-Israeli and Polish-Jewish reconciliation and often remarked how proud he was to have been made an honorary Israeli citizen. He was a member of the council of POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews and always played a positive role in its discussions. An eloquent speaker, his rapid-fire delivery led him to be dubbed “Uzi.” He was a great moral authority, whose lifelong motto was “Be decent.” At the commemoration of his ninetieth birthday, he was awarded a medal by President Bronisław Komorowski inscribed, “To the one who dared to be disobedient.”

In a speech a few days before his death, he remarked: “We need to keep our dignity and values, such as tolerance, friendship, and the ability to make sacrifices across ethnic or religious boundaries. We can dream that one day this will become the norm for

our children. Because future generations of Jews, future generations of Christians, and future generations of Muslims — hopefully not extremists — will have to live together on this planet whether they want it today or not.”

He will be sorely missed. We extend our sympathy to his wife, Zofia, and his son, Władysław Teofil Bartoszewski, reviews editor of *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry*. ■



October 26, 1940- May 13, 2015

## Dr. Ezra Mendelsohn

By Dr. Antony  
Polonsky

**Dr.** Ezra Mendelsohn, who died tragically of cancer in May of this year, was one of the pioneers of the rediscovery of the Polish-Jewish past. For many years he was a Professor at the Institute of Contemporary Jewry, Hebrew University, and after his retirement became the Rachel and Michael Edelman professor emeritus of European Jewry and Holocaust Studies at Hebrew University. He completed his doctorate at Columbia University in 1966 and subsequently moved to Israel where he spent his entire academic career. A highly creative thinker, he wrote widely on many topics, including the Jewish labor movement, the history of Jews in Eastern Europe, modern Jewish politics, and modern Jewish art and music. At the time of his death, he was working on a volume of articles dealing with universalism among Jews. He also served as co-editor for many years of *Studies in Contemporary Jewry* and

more recently as an editor of *Zion*. He was also an editor of the monograph series of the Center for Research on the History and Culture of Polish Jews.

Among his books one could mention *Class Struggle in the Pale* (Cambridge, 1970), a pioneering study of the Jewish labor movement; *Zionism in Poland: The Formative Years 1915-26* (London and New Haven, 1981), which is still the standard work on the topic and awaits a sequel dealing with the period from 1926 to 1939; and *Jews in East-Central Europe between Two World Wars* (Indiana, 1983), a remarkable work of synthesis that has also been translated into Polish. Also worthy of note are his brilliant survey *On Modern Jewish Politics* (New York and Oxford, 1993) and his remarkable account of one of the first Polish-Jewish artists, *Painting a People: Maurycy Gottlieb and Jewish Art* (Lebanon, NH, 2002). His interest in Jewish art derived partly from his family background,

which included a number of artists and scholars, including the painter Raphael Soyer. As he wrote in the preface to this book, "Three of my uncles, the Soyer brothers, were artists in New York, and while I admit that I took little interest in their work when I was a child, I see now that they had a profound influence upon me. I was extremely fortunate to grow up in a family that honored learning and was imbued with Jewish idealism."

His work received considerable recognition. In 2003 he was awarded the Orbis Prize of the American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies for the best book in Polish History in that year. In 2005 he was granted a Lifetime Achievement Award in Jewish Scholarship by the National Foundation for Jewish Culture, and in 2008 he received the Bialik Prize of the Shazar Centre in Jerusalem for his book *Painting a People: Maurycy Gottlieb and Jewish Art*.

## *Dr. Ezra Mendelsohn, Continued*

Mendelsohn was an active participant in the series of academic conferences that took place in the 1980s and led to the revival of Polish-Jewish studies. One of the highpoints of the Oxford conference in September 1984 was his lecture “Interwar Poland: Good for the Jews or Bad for the Jews?” Brilliantly delivered, it sparked an extensive and heated debate and was subsequently published in *The Jews in Poland* (edited by Chimen Abramsky, Maciej Jachimczyk, and Antony Polonsky, Oxford, 1986) and frequently quoted. Ezra was a member of the Editorial Board of *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry* and contributed an important article to Volume 8 on the historiography of Jews in interwar Poland.

To our regret, he was unable to attend the International Conference held in Warsaw at the POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews. One of the sad obligations of the organizers was to mark his death on the second day of

the conference. We will long remember his scholarship and striking personality. He was deeply dedicated to a socialist and humanist understanding of Zionism and at the 2012 conference at YIVO on “Jews and the Left” made a moving plea for an Israel organized on these principles. We extend our deepest condolences to his wife and family. ■





June 24, 1950-July 29, 2015  
**Dr. Jan Kulczyk**

**W**e mourn the loss of Dr. Jan Kulczyk, Distinguished Benefactor of POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews, who died on July 29 at the age of 65.

Dr. Kulczyk was Poland's wealthiest businessman and an influential entrepreneur throughout Central and Eastern Europe. He was a generous philanthropist and a patron of many cultural institutions in addition to POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews.

A third-generation Polish businessman, born in 1950, Dr. Kulczyk founded and directed Kulczyk Investments S.A., headquartered in Warsaw with offices in Dubai, Kiev, London, and Luxembourg. His son, Sebastian, has headed the firm since 2013. In 2012, Dr. Kulczyk and New York real-estate magnate Larry Silverstein established the Warsaw-based Kulczyk Silverstein Properties. He also established a philanthropic foundation, which his daughter, Dominika, oversees.

Dr. Jan Kulczyk was a leader in Polish cultural and civic life. He served as the Board Chair of Green Cross International since 2007. Kulczyk Investments was a strategic sponsor of the Polish Olympic team. Dr. Kulczyk received many prestigious awards, including the "Patron of Culture 2012" award from the Minister of Culture and National Heritage for supporting the POLIN Museum. In June 2015, he was awarded the Officer's Cross of the Order of the Rebirth of the Republic of Poland by the President of Poland, Bronisław Komorowski, for outstanding achievements in activities to support and promote Polish culture and national heritage. The Taube Foundation also recognized Dr. Kulczyk as the co-recipient of its 2015 Irena Sendler Memorial Award.

In describing his gift to the POLIN Museum, Dr. Kulczyk spoke in metaphors that resonate with us today as we grieve his passing: "For me, POLIN Museum is

a moral compass. It teaches us that there are no shortcuts without tolerance, respect, and forgiveness. It reminds us of our obligation to leave a trace of all that we value when we are no longer here." These words are made all the more powerful in light of his passing. Dr. Kulczyk fulfilled his obligation to leave a trace of what he valued during his lifetime. We extend our deepest condolences to the family of Dr. Kulczyk, including his daughter, Dominika, and his son, Sebastian. ■



Photo: Jason Francisco



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