

Gazeta

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Nomadic Shtetl Archive, *The Mirror Façade*.
Photograph by Natalia Romik. Used with permission

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Message from Irene Pipes

President, American Association
for Polish-Jewish Studies

Founder of *Gazeta*

Dear Friends,

We are alarmed by the Russian invasion of Ukraine, impressed by the Ukrainian defense, and proud of Poland's solidarity with Ukrainian refugees and soldiers. This is an impressive example of civic action in a time of crisis.

POLIN Museum in Warsaw is again open and things are gradually returning to normal as the pandemic wanes. We have a new series of book talks at the museum. We have already had stimulating discussions on Eliyana Adler's *Survival on the Margins: Polish Jewish Refugees in the Wartime Soviet Union*, Moshe Rosman's *Categorically Jewish, Distinctly Polish: Polish Jewish History Reflected and Refracted*, and Allison Schachter's *Women Writing Jewish Modernity, 1919–1939*. We look forward to future discussions on Natan Meir's *Stepchildren of the Shtetl: The Destitute, Disabled, and Mad of Jewish Eastern Europe, 1800-1939*, and Sonia Gollance's *It Could Lead to Dancing: Mixed-Sex Dancing and Jewish Modernity*. (See our Book Announcements section for more details on some of these authors and titles.)



Irene Pipes

In February 2022, an online conference celebrated the publication of Vol. 34 of *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry*, which is dedicated to the structures of Jewish self-governance in Eastern Europe, beginning with their origins and ending in 1939. It was organized by the Institute for Polish-Jewish Studies and the Institute of Jewish Studies, University College London, and co-organized and supported by the Embassy of the Republic of Poland in London, and the Polish Cultural Institute, London with the assistance of JW3, a leading Jewish cultural venue in London, and the American Association for Polish-Jewish Studies. The forthcoming Vol. 35 will examine the influence of Polish Jews, Polish Zionism, and Polish culture in general on the development of the Yishuv (the Jewish settlement in Palestine) and the state of Israel, including their effects in Poland.

In May, Tomasz Kuncewicz, the Director of the Auschwitz Jewish Center Foundation in Oświęcim, was named the 2022 Irena Sendler Memorial Award recipient. This award, granted by Taube Philanthropies, honors the Polish social worker who saved Jewish children from the Warsaw Ghetto during the Nazi occupation. Tomasz has provided visionary leadership for the center and strengthened the vital connection between the town, the Nazi killing ground, and the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Memorial and Museum. You can read about this award and others, along with many things we celebrate in these yet tumultuous times.

I hope you are all well and that we shall be able to meet in person soon again.

With best wishes,

Irene Pipes
President

Message from Tad Taube and Shana Penn

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



Tad Taube



Shana Penn

This issue of *Gazeta* offers many opportunities to look at significant events, people, and ideas from new perspectives. Our lead article is a good example. In it, architect, curator, and Holocaust researcher, Natalia Romik, describes her quest to find some of the unusual, lost places where Jews hid during the Holocaust and bring them back to mind for investigation and contemplation, to enrich our understanding of Jewish experience in Nazi-occupied Poland, and contribute to a new approach to Holocaust scholarship. Her exhibition project *Hideouts. The Architecture of Survival* uses the tools and techniques of contemporary art and archeology to describe nine hiding places, most of them very unexpected.

An article by historian John Efron talks about Roman Vishniac, whose iconic photographs of pre-war Poland have shaped our perception of Jewish life in Europe prior to the Holocaust. While Vishniac is best known for these photographs, he did much more—both in the variety of his subject matter before and after the Holocaust and in the scale of his work—literally tens of thousands of surviving images. Read the article to discover a wider lens into Vishniac’s life and work and to learn where his entire body of work now resides.

Discovery can be so startling that it makes us stop and rethink a basic position. Articles by Konstanty Gerbert and Jakub Łysiak discuss how the conflict in Ukraine has brought Poles and Ukrainians closer together in a way that is historically unusual. “War on Ukraine is about our shared futures,” writes Gebert. And Łysiak, of the Taube Center in Warsaw, describes his experiences with refugees at the border and the assistance that the Taube Center is providing for them.

Uncovering history is not always comfortable, as historian Moshe Rosman notes in his article about his latest book. It can challenge old ideas, make us rethink our views, and even bring to the surface events or ideas we might rather forget. But it is essential to arriving at any kind of truth in Jewish history, he argues, and indeed history in general.

These articles, and the others offered here, provide fresh and sometimes surprising insights. For this issue of *Gazeta*, we hope that you, the reader, will gain as much and more from its contents.

Tad Taube and Shana Penn
Chairman and Executive Director

FEATURES

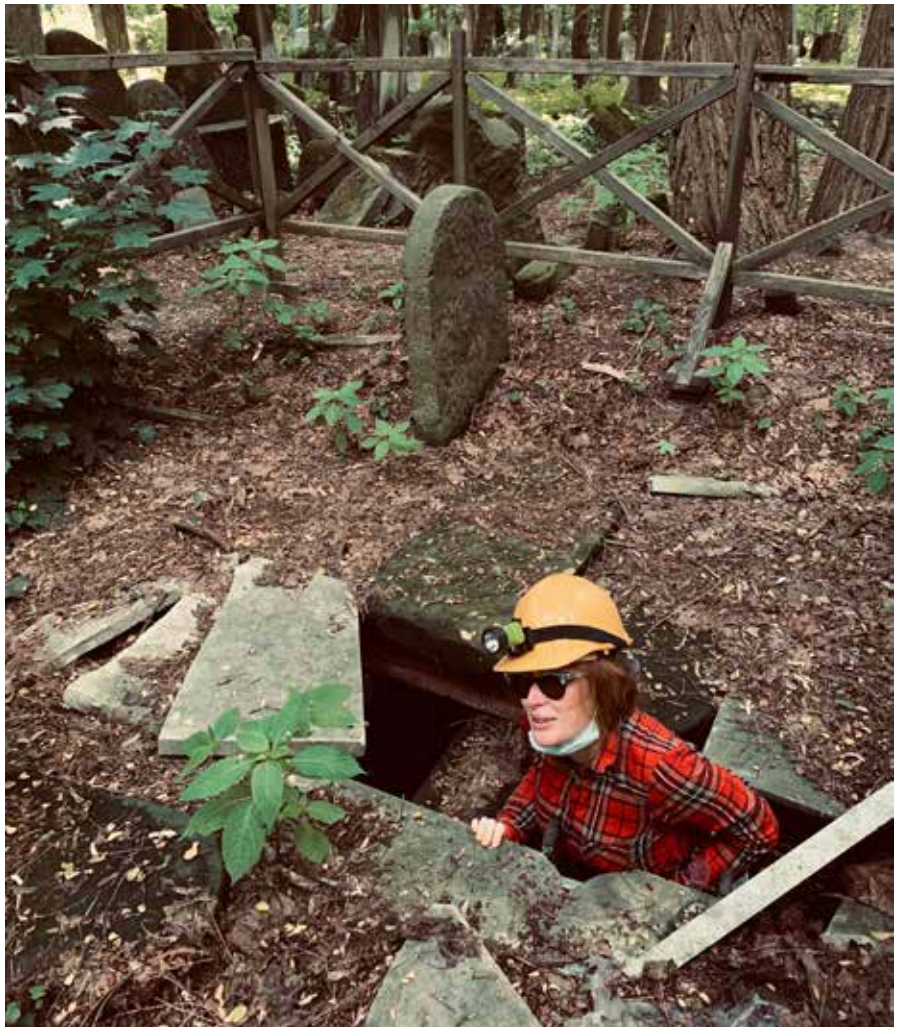
Hideouts. The Architecture of Survival

Natalia Romik

Editors' Note: This essay is the curator's discussion of her multi-sited and multidisciplinary project. Romik received this year's Dan David Prize. (See Awards Announcements in this issue, p. 52).

THE TEAM

Artists, architects, curators, and historians never create alone. Scholarly research and creative work rely equally on collaborative effort, background work, and support in practice and theory that often remains invisible to the public. Donors, curators, research specialists of distinctive fields, and friends stand behind every artistic work. In the case of my exhibition, *Hideouts. The Architecture of Survival*, it was through many years of such group effort that we were able to explore the history and architecture of nine places in Poland and Ukraine in which Jews hid during World War II. The project was co-created with a wonderful team



Natalia Romik at Warsaw's Jewish cemetery on Okopowa street where Abraham Carmi hid between 1939 and 1942.

Photograph by Rafał Żwirek, Warsaw, 2021. Used with permission

of curators (Kuba Szreder and Stanisław Ruksza) and researchers (led by Aleksandra Janus). It also engaged dozens of experts who contributed to a multifaceted research process

in Poland and Ukraine. At the opening of the exhibition, which was unveiled at the Zachęta National Gallery of Art in Warsaw in March 2022, the team was honored

with perhaps the longest roll call of acknowledgments in the history of this prestigious venue. Their roles cannot be overestimated: they joined forces in performing queries and expert examinations, navigating us through the maze-like corridors of the Verteba and Ozerna caves, supervising the examination of a gravesite in Warsaw's Okopowa Street Jewish Cemetery, within the strictures of *halacha*, making sculpture casts within Lviv's impenetrable sewage system, and analyzing archaeological objects. The project rests on specialist work in ethnography, history, geodesy, monument conservation, dendrology, speleology, and archeology. The exhibition is a summation of research conducted as part of post-doctoral projects, and supported by the Gerda Henkel Stiftung and the Foundation for the Memory of Shoah, two institutions that enabled me to conduct my research process over more than three years, beginning in 2019.

It was the architecture of this category of hiding places —nearing almost complete erosion and material oblivion now—that was the starting point for reflecting on the

Scholarly research and creative work equally rely on collaborative effort, background work, and support in practice and theory that often remains invisible to the public...The project rests on specialist work in ethnography, history, geodesy, monument conservation, dendrology, speleology, and archeology.

fate of Jews hiding from the Holocaust. We managed to create sculptures which are an artistic and scholarly tribute to the architecture of survival: the hiding places built and used by Jews during the Holocaust. In light of Russia's barbaric invasion of the sovereign state of Ukraine, the exhibition has gained a new dimension. Because of our strong partnership with the Center for Urban History of East Central Europe in Lviv and the active participation of many of our Ukrainian colleagues in the project's artistic and research

process, we decided to have the entire exhibition's material translated not only into English but also into Ukrainian.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

About six million Jews perished in the Holocaust, half of them being Polish Jews. It is estimated that in occupied Poland during World War II, about 50,000 Jews survived in hiding on the "Aryan side," another 80,000 managed to survive the concentration camps, and 170,000 to 180,000 survived in the Soviet Union. In total, the Polish Jewish population surviving the war stood at some 250,000–350,000 or about ten percent of pre-war Polish Jewry. The subject matter of Jews going into hiding and the assistance they received has appeared in various research contexts of the Holocaust, but we had little knowledge about the architecture of the hiding places themselves for several reasons. A major reason was because of sites' erosion, but also because the researchers had been focusing their lens on those in hiding and their rescuers.

It was under extreme circumstances that an extraordinary variety of temporary architec-



The research room.

Photograph by Jakub Celej. Used with permission

tural forms came into being, enabling Jews to survive in hiding—not only from their Nazi persecutors, but also from other outsiders, including the so-called *shmltsovniks* (those who handed Jews over for financial gain) and the Polish “blue police,” formations subordinated to the local commanders of the German police.

THE CASE STUDIES AND THEIR GEOGRAPHY

I sought to reconstruct the spatial dimension of the membrane stretched tensely between each hideout interior

and its exterior, as I proceeded to apply the methods of art and architecture to chosen cases: a cellar hiding place in a residential dwelling in Siemianowice Śląskie, where Chajka Klinger, a Hashomer Hatzair organization activist, stayed in hiding; a bunker built inside a grave at the Okopowa Street Jewish Cemetery in Warsaw, the hiding place of Abraham Carmi; and the inside of a tree trunk of a 650-year-old oak named Józef in the village of Wiśniowa in Polish Subcarpathia, in which the Hymi brothers hid. The exhibition also

features stories and sculptural casts obtained through our research of a hideout located in a private house in Zhovkva/Żółkiew in Ukraine, a hideout in a municipal sewage system (Lviv/Lwów, Ukraine), a hideout in the Verteba cave (Ukraine), a hideout in the Ozerna cave (Ukraine), a wardrobe from Huta Zaborowska (Poland), a hideout in the convent of the Immaculate Conception Sisters (Jarosław, Poland), and a hiding place in the basement of a tenement house (Lviv/Lwów, Ukraine).

EXHIBITION STRUCTURE AND DESIGN

Mobile in its format and thus easy to adapt to different museum spaces, the exhibition is comprised of a sculpture room, where one can contemplate sculptural forms created out of hideout casts, and a research room, exhibiting the outputs of the work conducted by the research team. Both are closely related, complementary, and provide a basis for understanding the complex yet unobservable processes that transpired in these places of hiding.

I envisioned the sculptures as mirror-like “seals” or “imprints” of historical hiding places. Their making involved the use of a classical sculptural casting technique. The exhibited hideout representations—the outcome of a collaborative effort of Aga Szreder, Olek Konoschenko, and Rafał Żwirk—are a labor-intensive process of applying silicone to a variety of surfaces, such as a 650-year-old tree, walls of a limestone and gypsum cave, or sepulchral chamber brickwork at a Jewish cemetery. Once the silicone structure hardened, the gypsum master model and

It was under extreme circumstances that an extraordinary variety of temporary architectural forms came into being, enabling Jews to survive in hiding—not only from their Nazi persecutors, but also from other outsiders, including the so-called shmaltsovniks (those who handed Jews over for financial gain) and the Polish “blue police ...”

scaffolding were applied to it, in order to protect the form of the future sculpture. In the final step, accurate one-to-one casts of hideout sections were created from acrylic-and-silica mixture. When completed, they were sent to the Piotr Pelc Conservation Studio in Wrocław. There, they were silver-plated using a method well-known in monument conservation and applied to sculptures and sacral architecture, involving a sophisticated process of applying the highest quality

silver flakes on sculpture surfaces, and subsequent polishing and protective coating of those, resulting in irradant mirror-like sculptures.

The final shimmering effect is a deliberate measure aimed at elevating this otherwise modest architecture or unobtrusive architectural reality, whether it be a fragment of moldy masonry in an urban sewage system, a plaster wall section with an inscription saying “Ha-Shomer” in the Verteba cave, or a section of sepulchral brick wall in a Jewish cemetery. The use of lustrous reflective surfaces has also been a constant in my artistic and architectural practice.

Projects such as the Nomadic Shtetl Archive and JAD (comprising mobile vehicles touring around former *shtetls*, and filled to the brim with archival material from the Jewish Historical Institute) presented mirror bodywork. This bodywork reflected its surroundings, becoming virtually invisible once in a densely built up area and reflecting the sunset, a local synagogue, *mikvah*, or a nearby pre-burial house. At the same time conversations



View of the park in Wiśniowa.
Photograph by Przemysław Kluźniak (ArchiTube). Used with permission

about property restitution, local pogroms, or lack of knowledge about the synagogue's functions were conducted inside the Nomadic Archive, the residents saw themselves reflected in the irradiant lustrous surfaces.

The silver on the casts of hiding places is a tribute to the amateur or dilettante architects, who applied haphazard tools at their disposal (a spoon, a bucket, or a dull pair of tin snips)—mostly in the nighttime, for fear of their neighbors—to build hiding places invisible to the eye of their mortal enemy.

The exhibition modules were designed by the Senna

*In light of Russia's
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Kolektyw architecture and exhibition development collective. These have the function of presenting the nine casts as seemingly levitating objects. They are set on cube structures and held by steel rods that do not touch the silver surfaces, so as not to erode or fracture them.

**SYNTHESIS AND
CONSISTENT
PRESENTATION—
THE RESEARCH ROOM**

In designing this space, we were inspired by collection exhibition tables (with sloping glass display cases) that were prevalent in 19th century museums of natural history. Set on industrial-style steel legs, they are a model approach to presenting the findings of an interdisciplinary investigation of nine hideout case studies. Each display table has embedded monitors that screen video documentaries (directed by Peter Prestel and produced with grant support of the Gerda Henkel Stiftung), featuring interviews with specialists in various fields, geodetic spatial analysis, and research documentation.

In addition to the texts describing the effects of the historical investigation, the hiding places, and the family histories of those concealing others and those in hiding, the velvety display surfaces also hold objects found through archaeological research (we conducted excavations at one of Warsaw's Jewish cemeteries, in a shelter located in a Lviv tenement

house at Ormiańska Street, and the same city's sewage system), as well as archival documents and photographs, geodetic scans of the hiding places, maps, memorabilia, and expert opinions (e.g. dendrochronological analysis of the Józef oak, or the steps located in the tree's hollowed interior).

Taken together, all these elements constitute a comprehensive review of the multi-year scholarly investigation into the architectural and historical specificities of each hiding place, and into the convergent personal stories of the shelter providers and those hiding there. Upon completing this article, the exhibition materials and the work of Matan Sheffi, a historian at the Jewish Historical Institute, enabled me to reach out to Shabtai Bakfajn, a survivor who once occupied the Lviv tenement house hideout, and to reconstruct the fate of his family.

THE JÓZEF TREE CASE STUDY

The case study that opens the exhibition is the extraordinary story of the Józef tree, which holds to this day the secret

Above all, we are able to open a discussion about the ways in which the history of the Holocaust in small towns, villages, and forests still remains on the fringes of accessible knowledge, how much remains to be investigated, and how much of this history needs to be reclaimed for social memory.

of two Jewish siblings once hiding in it (known among the local population as the Hymi brothers). The more than 650-year-old Józef oak grows in the park on the grounds of the palace and manor complex in Wiśniowa, in Poland's Subcarpathia region. The local community retains the memory that the tree was a wartime hiding place for Jewish brothers, which is also confirmed by a postwar account by a journalist named Julian Pelc. In a written statement he made in 1961,

now held in Washington, DC, he testified that the inside of that tree retains the signs of human presence. The Józef oak is a chimney tree, hollow inside nearly through its entire height. During the war, there was an entrance that made its interior accessible to humans. Today, this is overgrown and only a small crack in the trunk allows for inspection of the interior. On the inside of the tree there clearly are a dozen wooden steps and metal brackets.

For Dawid and Paul Denholz, who came from nearby Frysztak, this was probably one of many hiding places. After escaping in 1942 from the Płaszów camp in Kraków, they hid in the surrounding forests, fields and farms. Some former neighbors came to their aid, others posed a mortal threat to them. They were the only members of their family to survive the war, and after it ended, they both settled in the United States.

I came across information about the hideout in the old oak tree soon after I started to look into the subject. Staff at the Tourism and Cultural Center in Wiśniowa, which is housed in the 16th century Mycielski estate, boast about

the remarkable history of the Józef oak tree, which contributed to it being named European Tree of the Year in 2017. It was also probably the tree, painted by Józef Mehoffer, that appeared on the pre-war 100 zloty banknote. The inhabitants of Wiśniowa have also heard that several Jewish brothers hid inside this oak during the war and were supposedly helped by Rozalia Proszak. Things that could not be found in the archives were discovered through the cooperation of experts from many fields. Extended examination of the site began in August 2019, with participation of Jerzy Bielczyk, the dendrologist mandated to look after the oak. He accompanied us on our first look inside the hollow tree from a hoist, when we filmed its trunk from the inside using an endoscopic camera. We discovered several wooden steps supported by metal brackets, according to experts, undoubtedly made before World War II. There are more buckles inside, some of which may have served as handrails.

As for the brothers and their name, we were sure from the beginning of our work with

anthropologist Aleksandra Janus on this case that “Hymi” could not have been their real name. We only learned their real names when—at the time Aga Szreder was taking a silicone mold of the tree—we encountered Dorota and Wiesław Salamon, who were at the time working on a book about the local school. They were the first to tell us that these brothers were Paul (Pesach) and David Denholz. Soon after, we managed to contact their daughters living in New York, Manya Berenholz and Helen Schwarz. They shared with us their family archives, which enabled us to reconstruct, at least in part, theirs and their families’ wartime fate. Some claimed that they returned to this place after the war.

Standing today at one of nine display tables devoted to the Józef tree hideout, we can learn about the fate of the Denholz brothers, inspect 3-D scans of the tree, read expert reports on the wooden steps and acquaint ourselves with the endoscopic measurements of the tree. Above all, we are able to open a discussion about the ways in which the history of the Holocaust in small towns, villages, and forests remains on the fringes

of accessible knowledge, how much remains to be investigated, and how much of this history needs to be reclaimed for social memory. This exhibition was created in the hope that interdisciplinary research and experiments with various forms of commemoration can make their small contribution to safeguarding us from this historical tragedy ever being repeated. ■

Natalia Romik, PhD, is an architect, artist, and interdisciplinary scholar whose work explores the Jewish architecture of memory. Among her many exhibitions, she was a consultant to the core exhibition of POLIN Museum and co-curated its 2018 Estranged: March '68 and Its Aftermath. A member of the Senna architecture collective, she holds a Gerda Henke Stiftung Foundation Fellowship and is this year's winner of a Dan David Prize.

Breaking the Frame: New School of Polish-Jewish Studies. An Introduction

Edited by Konrad Matyjaszek and Irena Grudzinska-Gross
(Peter Lang Publishers, 2022)

Jan T. Gross

If a graduate student asked me what language to acquire in order to most productively study the Holocaust today, I would advise them to learn Polish. The sheer variety and volume of research studies concerning the subject in the Polish language is phenomenal and, in the last twenty years, probably unequaled by writings about the Holocaust in other languages. In a way, this should not come as a surprise. After all, half of all the European Jews murdered in the Shoah were Polish Jews, that is, citizens of Poland. Add to this that all the major extermination camps were situated on the territory of German-occupied Poland. And factor in also that in occupied Poland scores of Jews had been killed in situ, in or near their places of residence, among, in full view and with occasional participation of, their non-Jewish neighbors. In other words, the Holocaust is a centerpiece of 20th century Polish history. Little wonder

that so many interesting writings analyzing it have been lately produced in the Polish language.

One should rather ask why it took so long for this literature to come about. To begin with, the history of the war and the German occupation of conquered European states was a fraught subject for national historiographies, primarily because the Nazi regime and its actions as the occupying power were horrific. After the war, all preferred to frame their wartime national experience as the history of resistance. But the facts on the ground were different. In many parts of Europe complicity and collaboration with, rather than resistance to, predominated. It took a long time for national historiographies to catch up with what had actually happened. As Mark Mazower put it, “for much of the war... Europeans fell into line and contributed what [the Germans] demanded

anyway. After 1945, this was conveniently forgotten.”

Inside the uncomfortable story of giving aid and comfort to the enemy was the story most difficult to confront and to narrate: collusion in the persecution of European Jews. As Saul Friedländer put it in his magisterial study about the extermination of the Jews, “Not one social group, not one religious community, not one scholarly institution or professional association in Germany and throughout Europe declared its solidarity with the Jews (some of the Christian churches declared that converted Jews were part of the flock, up to a point); to the contrary, many social constituencies, many power groups were directly involved in the expropriation of the Jews and eager, be it out of greed, for their wholesale disappearance. Thus Nazi and related anti-Jewish policies could unfold to their most extreme levels without the interference of any major countervailing interests.”

In Eastern Europe, which became part of the Soviet bloc in the years after 1945, the subject of extermination of the Jews was additionally suppressed from public discussion because of the Soviet stance that all peoples were to be portrayed as victims of German-fascist atrocities in equal measure. The flagship museum of wartime atrocities at the site of the Auschwitz-Birkenau Camp in Poland offered an eloquent demonstration of the Communist elision of the Jewish catastrophe. A million Jews were murdered there in gas chambers, yet, for as long as Poland was ruled by the Communist Party, the word “Jew” did not appear in the official exhibit commemorating “international victims of fascism” brought there from all over Europe.

In the West also, it took time before extermination of the Jews emerged as a legitimate subject of scholarly research. When Raul Hilberg decided to write a doctoral dissertation — it would become the founding classic in Holocaust studies, *The Destruction of the European Jews* (1961) — his academic advisor, Franz Neumann (like

Inside the uncomfortable story of giving aid and comfort to the enemy was the story most difficult to confront and to narrate: collusion in the persecution of European Jews.

Hilberg, an exiled Austrian Jew and an early student of Nazi totalitarianism), warned him that such a dissertation topic would offer little chance of getting him a university appointment.

Once the academic study of the destruction of European Jewry was set in motion, the subject was framed as a confrontation between Jews and Germans. This captured the gist of Nazi-German genocidal policies launched against the Jews. But in time such a conceptualization began to show its limitations. It was becoming clear that the local context mattered. Jews lived for centuries enmeshed in European societies, and they had to be extricated from there in order to be sent to their deaths. In order to conceptualize the intricacy of the process, a third term

was needed comprehending the role of other actors in addition to Jews and Germans. Hilberg came up with a felicitous suggestion. In 1992, he published *Perpetrators, Victims, Bystanders: The Jewish Catastrophe, 1933–1945*. One word from its title, “bystanders,” supplied the third term and made a phenomenal career in Holocaust historiography’s vocabulary. Today, I believe, scholars of the Holocaust would be inclined to recognize terms such as “facilitators” and/or “beneficiaries” as a more fruitful rendering than “bystanders.”

In Poland, the 2000 publication of my book, *Neighbors: Destruction of the Jewish Community in Jedwabne*, triggered an intense debate concerning Polish-Jewish relations during the war and spurred the development of new Holocaust scholarship. By the 60th anniversary of the Jedwabne mass murder on July 10, 2001, a new monument was unveiled that no longer falsely attributed the killings to German perpetrators, and the president of Poland, Aleksander Kwaśniewski, gave a moving

public apology. In 2002, after the newly established Institute of National Remembrance formally opened legal investigation of the crime in Jedwabne, it published a two-volume compendium of sources and studies about a wave of mass murders of Jews by their fellow-citizens during the summer of 1941 in the Białystok and Podlasie regions. It established that Jedwabne was but one among many such episodes of extreme violence.

The Polish Center for Holocaust Research was founded at the Polish Academy of Sciences in Warsaw in 2003. It has published annually *Holocaust Studies and Materials* (Zagłada Żydów. Studia i Materiały), a large volume of close to a thousand pages. The sixteen volumes published so far, together with monographs presented under the Center's imprint, constitute the backbone of the "New Polish School of Holocaust Studies." There is no uniform methodology or approach in this widely proliferating subfield of historical and cultural studies, save two characteristic features. One is to recognize ego documents

as valuable sources providing solid empirical grounding for the study of the Holocaust. And the other is to focus on the under-studied web of relationships between Jews and the local non-Jewish population in that process.

Ideally, one should be able to end this essay on a matter-of-fact note, except that the Holocaust is not a historical subject like any other. In Eastern Europe it is not a historical subject at all. Firmly situated in the present, it plays a crucial role in debates about the wartime heritage of Polish (or, for instance, Ukrainian or Lithuanian) collective experience. The manner in which the mass murder of the Jews was carried out became a key element in negotiations over a "usable past," vigorously pursued in national debates after countries in the region regained full sovereignty. The recognition and subsequent discussions of widespread complicity of local people in the persecution of Jewish fellow-citizens plays out differently in different countries.

In Poland, the new awareness of complicity strikes at the core of the society's self-image as a victim. This traditional topos

of victimhood was reinforced during the war, when Poland's neighbors invaded the country and subjected its population to organized violence. How to domesticate the suddenly emerging public knowledge that the victim — the non-Jewish Poles — was simultaneously also a victimizer of their fellow-citizens, the Jewish Poles? Little wonder that an intense and intellectually fertile exploration of this "difficult past," carried out in the works of the new Polish school of Holocaust studies, ran into a politicized "backlash" (Piotr Forecki's term) from a conservative and nationalistically minded segment of society. After the coming to power of the xenophobic and populist Law and Justice party (PiS) in 2015, an official "politics of history" began targeting the new historiography as offensive to Poland's national dignity.

In January 2018, the Polish parliament passed a law criminalizing any attribution, "against the facts," of deeds committed by the Nazi occupiers to the agency of the Poles. This was widely understood as an effort to prevent further mention of the

local population's complicity in the persecution of the Jews. However, the Polish state did not need new instruments to prosecute historians for writing uncomfortable truths about the Holocaust. Jan Grabowski's essay in this volume (of the book) describes the latest chapter in the criminalization of historical writing on the subject, where he, together with the co-founder of the Polish Center for Holocaust Research, Professor Barbara Engelking, is the victim, or the hero, as the case may be.

We now have in Poland a bifurcated reality with respect to presentation of Holocaust-related issues in the public domain. On one hand is an original research literature in a full range of subfields in the humanities — a good sampling of which is presented in this collection of essays. On the other is the well-funded effort by the government and its acolytes to distort Holocaust history in Poland. This false narrative promoted by the PiS regime relies on the claim that Polish society overwhelmingly engaged in providing assistance to Jewish fellow-citizens during the

In Poland, the new awareness of complicity strikes at the core of the society's self-image as a victim.

war. At a ceremony in the Auschwitz Camp Museum on International Holocaust Remembrance Day in January 2018 — at the exact moment when the Polish parliament was passing the notorious law, which evoked international protests — Polish Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki found it opportune to say that “Yad Vashem is still missing a special tree for Poland — a Polish tree” in recognition of Polish society's exemplary contribution to the survival of the Jews during the war.

Arrogance and mendacity will not change history. It will not change what historians know about history, either. But for the public at large, it will diminish and distort knowledge about history of their own country. It will take time before public opinion surveys asking the question, “Who suffered more during the Second World War — the Poles or the Jews?” will show a change in the consistent pattern, where most

respondents answer: Poles.

“My fellow Americans,” declared Abraham Lincoln in the 1862 State of the Union Message to Congress, “we cannot escape history.” This wisdom applies to my fellow Poles as well. It is not good, and probably not even possible in the long run, for Poles to remain ignorant about their own history. At least now they have a chance to inform themselves about what happened during World War II, thanks to the New Polish School of Holocaust Studies. ■

Jan T. Gross, PhD, is professor emeritus at Princeton University and one of the world's leading historians of 20th century Poland. His many books include Neighbors: Destruction of the Jewish Community in Jedwabne. He is one of three co-editors of War Through Children's Eyes: The Soviet Occupation of Poland and the Deportations, 1939–1941.

OF SPECIAL INTEREST: POLAND AND UKRAINE

PERSONAL ESSAY

War on Ukraine Through the Lens of a Polish Activist

Jakub Łysiak

I'm sure it comes as no surprise that I haven't slept much in the past months. I bet you can relate. At first, my sleeplessness was caused by the anxiety brought about by the Russian aggression on Ukraine and the fate of innocent civilians trapped in the middle of a war. After two restless nights, I decided that—if I can't sleep anyway—I might as well put this time to good use. That was the first time I drove my car to the Polish-Ukrainian border.

On the day the Russian invasion started, I attended a peaceful protest at the Russian embassy in Warsaw. Later, I joined another group that was showing support at the Ukrainian embassy.

I soon realized that it wasn't enough.

I went to my boss, Helise Lieberman, the Director of the Taube Center for Jewish Life & Learning in Warsaw, to let her know that I'll be taking some time off to help at the



Jakub Łysiak.
Photograph by Maciek Jaźwiecki. Used with permission

When I arrived in Przemysł on a cold Saturday morning, February 26, I encountered omnipresent and overwhelming chaos.

border. She responded that I should do it on company time and that the Taube Center would immediately get involved in relief efforts and start fundraising for the refugees.

We didn't have to wait long for our amazing community to respond. One of our key clients, Jeff Kosowitz, whom I know quite well (as I visited his family *shtetl* with him), was the first person who made a donation to the cause and actively promoted the fundraiser among his friends and family.

The pictures I took during my first trip to the border served as an incentive for the fundraising effort. At first, I didn't exactly have a plan; I simply decided to go to the frontier city of Przemysł and bring somebody to Warsaw.

When I arrived in Przemysł on a cold Saturday morning, February 26, I encountered omnipresent and overwhelming chaos. Nothing was arranged yet, crowds of confused people were desperate for help, as many of them fled their homes as they stood. One of the volunteers helped me by writing in Ukrainian on a piece of paper: **WARSAW. 3-4 SEATS. FREE OF CHARGE.**

The next couple of days were simply driving back and forth, getting some sleep, sometimes in my own bed but more often in my car. I don't think I'll ever forget my passengers. Among them were two women with a teenage boy who were trying to get to the Warsaw airport. They were hoping to join their family in Italy. I met a woman who wanted to go to Kraków to stay with her friend. I called my friend from Kraków and he came to take her. We spent a couple of hours waiting for my friend to come, talking and decompressing from the shock. I couldn't help her but found someone who could. I traveled with a mother who wanted to join her son who has been living in Warsaw for the past couple of years. But unfortunately, not everyone had someone they could turn to.

All in all, I took eight trips to the border and back, taking over fifty people all the way to Warsaw.

We could always count on the support of Helise and other friends, who donated their personal money to cover my fuel expenses. Then, a friend of mine offered his small van. That was when I changed my



Jakub with a Ukrainian family on their way to the Taube Center bus.
Photograph by Jakub Łysiak. Used with permission

sign to: WARSAW. 6 SEATS.
FREE OF CHARGE.

This also gave me an idea. For our tour program, Taube Jewish Heritage Tours, we use the services of several small, private bus companies. After a few calls it turned out that most of our business partners were ready to help. On the night when the highest number of refugees (over 130,000) crossed the Polish border, we actually managed to move 400 people! I spent that night at the Korczowa reception point, which was adapted for this purpose from a shopping mall.

According to the current Ukrainian wartime legislation, men aged 18-60 are not allowed to leave the country. That's why there are mostly women and children among the refugees. At first, many of them were overwhelmed and reluctant to get into a stranger's car. I don't blame them. When that happened, my Ukrainian friend would assure them over the phone that I can be trusted.

I could tell that everyone was extremely exhausted, because as soon as my car got warm, they would fall asleep. After a short nap,



A Ukrainian family during their first meal in Poland.
Photograph by Jakub Lysiak. Used with permission

my passengers would wake up extremely hungry, so we quickly developed a routine of stopping for a delicious lunch at a roadside diner.

A few waitresses spoke Ukrainian, which created a basic level of comfort for my new friends.

I could see that many of them were embarrassed that someone had to pay for their meal. They often claimed not to be hungry. But after traveling with a young mother, who kept passing out due to exhaustion, it was clear that offering food was

A few waitresses spoke Ukrainian, which created a basic level of comfort for my new friends.

not optional. After some convincing, they would agree to eat something with me and I could tell that they really enjoyed a warm meal.

I did too, as it was a great feeling to have a rare moment of peace and quiet over a bowl of hot soup.

It has to be said outright: the Russians are indiscriminately

attacking civilian targets in Ukraine, with a seemingly deliberate, deranged focus on hospitals and care centers. During my trips to the border I met many groups of sick, disabled, and elderly people in need of immediate medical attention. My heart shattered into a million tiny pieces when I learned about a group of fourteen cancer patients. They were all children. Thanks to financial support from the Taube Center, they were moved to hospitals in Lublin and Warsaw.

Honestly, it was hard for me to hold back tears. I'm sure it

was part exhaustion and part an emotional rollercoaster of fear, confusion, but also gratitude and joy when families were reunited. After a few days I understood why it was sometimes so difficult for my passengers to eat something. My stomach was also turned upside down from all the stress and would often refuse to accept food. I couldn't imagine how much worse it was for my new friends, many of whom had to leave everything behind and run for their lives.

On day 4, the stress took its toll on me. On my way to the border I actually had to stop a few times and even contemplated turning away: I couldn't bear telling one more person that my car was full and I wouldn't be able to help them.

I have to admit that sometimes we would squeeze more people into a car than was legally allowed; we couldn't afford to separate families. The police officers at the border implied that patrols in the vicinity would turn a blind eye to such a violation of traffic rules. One time instead of eight passengers, I had a group of eleven people, with an adorable addition of a dog and a stuffed kangaroo.



Kangaroo mascot given by the volunteers at the border.
Photograph by Jakub Łysiak. Used with permission

The care and concern directed toward the refugees probably has something to do with the deeply rooted war trauma that is still present in so many Poles.

Apart from providing transportation, the Taube Center is continuously helping in many different ways. We are buying fuel that is used for power generators in a tent city on the Polish side of the border. We are also able to smuggle fuel in small cans all the way to the Ukrainian side. It is delivered to tents and cars waiting to cross the border

and sometimes even used to fill up the trucks of Ukrainian soldiers.

One Saturday morning I got a call about a truck that was going back to Ukraine. It was half empty and it would be a wasted opportunity not to fill it up with aid. The Taube Center spent over \$2,000 on medical supplies and food. Two other organizations I contacted donated tactical clothes and even more food. Most of the cargo was sent to the soldiers fighting in Eastern Ukraine.

Never in my life have I thought that I would come so close to seeing the consequences of a war with my own eyes. Living in Poland means that, from the day you are born, you are surrounded by the legacy of our complicated and often brutal past. I come from a small town in western Poland, called Skwierzyna which, for a very long time, was actually a part of Germany. After World War II, it ended up within Polish territory, albeit under the control of a Soviet-installed communist regime. I am a historian by passion, deeply dedicated to Polish-Jewish relations by trade, and my background of studying and teaching

about the Holocaust made the experience even more profound. If the scenes in front of me were presented in black and white, they would be eerily similar to the pictures I know from various accounts of World War II.

Despite those grim comparisons, there was one positive development that I didn't see coming. For the past several years, the Polish authoritarian-leaning government and various right-wing grifters were promoting a strong anti-Ukrainian narrative based on historical resentments.

I think that the refugee crisis exposed this strategy for what it truly was: an artificially manufactured paranoia designed to achieve short-term, cheap political wins. In reality, the reaction of Polish citizens to this huge wave of evacuees was overwhelmingly warm and welcoming.

Honestly, a few short months ago I wouldn't have thought that we were capable of such a united, grassroots initiative. The care and concern directed toward the refugees probably has something to do with the deeply rooted war trauma that is still present in so many Poles.

My heart shattered into a million tiny pieces when I learned about a group of fourteen cancer patients. They were all children. Thanks to financial support from the Taube Center, they were moved to hospitals in Lublin and Warsaw.

At this point I want to emphasize that the support for the Ukrainians comes primarily from ordinary citizens. Even now, more than three months since the war started, the involvement of the Polish right-wing government is really limited to not interrupting the work of volunteers and the donations of concerned citizens from all over the world.

To many of us who are helping, it is clear that any governmental intervention would inevitably lead to the creation of refugee camps, which would—as history teaches us—lead to alienation and marginalization of war victims. It is thanks to the commitment of everyday people that such camps do not exist!

Even though such manifestations of solidarity are extremely encouraging and inspirational, I do realize that the crisis we're currently facing is not likely to end anytime soon. I can only hope to maintain my energy to provide long-term assistance. Luckily, I'm getting all the support I need from the Taube Center in Warsaw and its amazing international community. We keep receiving generous donations that keep us going. ■

To help us with our mission, you can donate via this link: <https://kbfus.networkforgood.com/projects/54341-t-kbfus-funds-help-for-ukrainian-refugees-in-poland>.

To learn more about the Taube Center's activities, please visit www.taubecenter.org.

Jakub Łysiak, General Manager of Taube Jewish Heritage Tours, studied at the University of Warsaw and at Tel Aviv University. He has held cultural tour positions at the Embassy of Israel in Poland and the Embassy of Poland in Israel.

COMMENTARY

For a Polish Jew Like Me, the War on Ukraine Is about Our Shared Futures

Konstanty Gebert

As a Jew growing up in Poland, I participated in the Polish democratic opposition of the 1970s, then the pro-democracy Solidarity movement, and finally the anti-communist underground of the 1980s. I was very aware that some of my fellow militants were antisemitic, and that at times this antisemitism, not a love of freedom, could be the main motivation of their actions.

Yet I had no doubt that if we won and secured freedom for all, antisemites included, it would have been well worth it. Thirty years of an independent and free Poland have given me no reasons to question that commitment, even though antisemitism remains a visible presence, occasionally threatening and always obscene.

When Russia first invaded our eastern neighbor one month ago, some around the world were puzzled about how Jews could so easily



Konstanty Gebert.
Photo by Mateusz Skwarczyk, Agencja Gazeta. Used with permission

support Ukraine, given what Jews suffered there during the Shoah. Neither have Poles forgotten about the fierce Ukrainian-led massacres of World War II, which claimed the lives of 120,000 Poles, even if they remember the Russian occupation up to World War I and after World War II.

But here in Poland, and in neighboring countries in Central Europe, there was no question about supporting Ukraine. Figures and institutions like the Chief Rabbi, the Union of Jewish Religious Communities, POLIN Museum, and local

Jewish community centers, as well as other Jewish institutions and organizations, immediately expressed solidarity with Ukraine.

To understand this, you need to consider the value of freedom.

Freedom is something many outside observers take for granted, having, like their parents, enjoyed it all their lives. Even though I have spent more than the first half of my life deprived of its blessings, I no longer think twice about writing and publishing what I think, under my own name, and without fear of repression.

Similarly, the Ukrainians, despite the dysfunctional, heavy-handed and corrupt state that emerged after independence, eventually won their freedom at the price of blood, during the Maidan Revolution of 2013–14. This is the freedom Russia would now take away from them.

The yearning for freedom is why I publicly endorsed the Ukrainian Orange Revolution of 2004. Some other Jewish observers, no less knowledgeable about East Central Europe, criticized me by stressing that “Ukraine is not Poland.” In other words, they reasoned, the Polish experiment in democracy could not be expected to succeed in its eastern neighbor—and, given the heavy legacy of Ukrainian antisemitism, did not deserve to be supported there.

Set aside the fact that Jews and Poles taking a common position on anything since WWII—or 1989, to be more generous—is in itself a stunning development. Those who do not understand our support for Ukraine overlook another fundamental thing: This is not about the past. It is about the future. As Marta Kubica, executive director of the Poland office of the European Leadership Network, an NGO dedicated to strengthening European-Israeli relations, has said: “Political quarrels have been set aside, and we’re finally looking in the same direction: the future.”

To be sure, Ukrainians have not yet fully owned up to the

unspeakable suffering they inflicted on Jews and Poles alike, if not equally, during World War II. But Poles, too, have yet to fully acknowledge their own role in the violence against Ukrainians and Jews before, during and after the war. Ukrainians, Poles and Jews who lived under the former Soviet Union will, like the Russians, have to make a reckoning of their roles as both victims and servants of the bloody Soviet system. This is not to say that history is just a cruel mess, full of unacknowledged and unpunished crimes everybody is guilty of. We can make sense of history, and different crimes are not equal to each other. But in order for this reckoning to take place at all, we need freedom.

And freedom is what the war is all about. You might have seen the brief scenes, bravely recorded on smartphones in occupied territory, of a Ukrainian woman in Sumy explaining to the Russians manning a military checkpoint that, under the Ukrainian constitution and the country’s privacy laws, she is not obligated to show them her ID. Or unarmed civilians in Melitopol blocking the way

of a Russian army convoy, chanting “Go home! Go home!” — and not stopping or scattering even as a nervous infantryman starts firing into the air. Or Ukrainian women singing the Ukrainian national anthem in front of the Russian-occupied city hall in Berdyansk.

Only after denying Russians their freedom could Putin send his army into Ukraine to deny Ukrainians the same. Poles and Jews support Ukrainians under the old Polish revolutionary slogan, “For our freedom and yours.” The Russian army could adopt a counter-slogan: “For your oppression and ours.” Russia had become a corrupt and lawless dictatorship just as Ukraine was ceasing to be one. Their smaller Western neighbor was becoming, to Russians, an alternative to their dictatorial present. The only way to protect that present was to destroy the alternative. Hence the missiles against Kyiv.

The Polish Jewish community has prepared reception centers for Ukrainian refugees near the border, and in Lublin, Łódź and near Warsaw. Thousands of people have already been assisted. “How

many of them are Jewish?” a journalist from a Haredi publication asked in a phone interview with Poland’s Chief Rabbi, Michael Schudrich. “I don’t have the faintest idea,” answered Schudrich, “but I know they were all God’s children.” The journalist hung up and a minute later called again, not to apologize but to angrily comment that he “doesn’t need to be preached at.” “Oh, but he does,” Rabbi Schudrich told me.

The pure evil of the Russian invasion is beyond debate. But does it amount to genocide? We tend to be queasy around possible overgeneralizations, fearing that as a result, the experience of the Shoah may be banalized. Moral decisions, in international not less than in interpersonal relations, need to be informed by factual knowledge. According to the international legal definition enshrined in the UN convention, genocide is criminal action “undertaken in the intent to eliminate, in whole or in part, an ethnic, national, religious or racial group.” What counts, therefore, is the intent of the perpetrators, not their acts per se, which might constitute crimes of another kind. It is doubtless that Russia is guilty

Those who do not understand our support for Ukraine overlook another fundamental thing: This is not about the past. It is about the future.

of committing in Ukraine war crimes and crimes against humanity on a massive scale. There is no evidence yet that it intends to exterminate Ukrainians as a people

When Zelensky, in his address to the Knesset, drew analogies to the Shoah, the Israeli and broader Jewish reaction was legitimately one of universal condemnation—which detracted attention from the ambiguous position the Jewish state had taken toward the conflict. Having said that, Zelensky is certainly to be excused for invoking the Shoah—what else could an embattled Jewish president do when speaking to the parliament of the Jewish state? But this does not make his analogy factually correct or politically effective.

There is more. Israel has already once chosen security interests over moral

considerations, by refusing to consider the Armenian genocide a genocide, in order to placate Turkey. We now see analogous developments regarding Ukraine, with the shameful official treatment meted out in Israel to gentile Ukrainian refugees, which was only belatedly and grudgingly rescinded. The question is no longer can Israel afford to support Ukraine, given what this can do to her relations with Russia, but can it afford not to, given what this does to herself.

Freedom is never given once and for all. Shameful democratic backsliding, not just in Poland but in Hungary and Slovenia, demonstrates this all too clearly. And there is no guarantee that Ukraine, if it manages to repel the Russian onslaught, will become a democratic showcase, happily engaging in debate about the sins of its past. It is legitimate to be skeptical.

But there can be no doubt that if Putin wins, freedom will not have a chance. Or imagine Poland after such a victory, say, ten years from now. Between Putin’s brutal terror, and our homegrown autocrats, freedom would not stand much of a chance.

Should Jews care? If this were a Monopoly game, and if there were a “Get out of history free” card, I wouldn’t blame those who would grab it in order to show it to the next jackbooted thug who came to break down their door. But good luck to anyone who thinks the men with guns will play by the rules of the game. Or believe it’s a game at all. ■

Author’s Note: I wrote this comment in the early days of the war, and it took some time before I found a Jewish news outlet interested in publishing it. Since its JTA publication on March 30, 2022, the fighting in Ukraine has taken almost apocalyptic proportions, with the wholesale destruction of cities under Russian missiles and bombs, the intentional slaughter of civilians by Russian troops, and allegations of genocide made not only by the embattled president of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelensky, but also by his US counterpart, Joe Biden, and by the Polish Prime Minister, Mateusz Morawiecki. Taking a stand is no longer only a geopolitical necessity, it is also—as I argued in the above essay—a moral necessity. By now this should be self-evident to all.

Poles and Jews support Ukrainians under the old Polish revolutionary slogan, “For our freedom and yours.”

And yet Jews feel uneasy at some of the internal and historical contradictions this conflict presents.

One area of contention is the history of 20th century pogroms and World War II genocide in Ukraine, committed with the participations of individuals and organizations today referred to in that country as national heroes, for their role in opposing the Soviets. Ukraine has still not accepted full responsibility for these historical crimes, and some current heroes—such as soldiers of the Azov battalion—still embrace neo-Nazi symbols. Yet grotesque accusations of Nazism leveled against Ukraine as such by President Putin, and vile Russian threats of putting Azov POWs on trial for “Nazi terrorism” have made unbiased discussion of this painful issue particularly difficult.

It seems self-evident that an embrace of Nazi symbols is not an innocent gesture,

and whoever does that bears the subsequent burden of proving, in deeds not in words, the genuineness of any ulterior break with this past commitment. It should be just as self-evident that the Azov regiment, which grew out of the Azov battalion, played a heroic role in defending Mariupol from Russian invaders, and deserves the gratitude of any freedom lover. And it is beyond debate that branding any nation with the Nazi tag is not only absurd, but redolent of that selfsame ideology, which certainly today characterizes the Russian state much more than any individual units in Ukraine. Reality remains complex, even if complexity tends to make us uncomfortable.

Konstanty Gebert is a veteran Polish journalist, Jewish community figure, and former underground activist in Warsaw.

REPORTS

Republication of Teodor Jeske-Choiński's *Poznaj Żyda*

Antony Polonsky

Teodor Jeske-Choiński (1854–1920) was a prolific Polish novelist and literary critic, best known for books like *Gasnące słońce. Powieść z czasów Marka Aureliusza* (The Dying Sun. A Story from the Times of Marcus Aurelius, 1895), which describes the decline of the Roman Empire, and *Tiara i korona* (The Tiara and the Crown, 1900), an account of the conflict between Emperor Henry IV and Pope Gregory VII. A deeply committed Roman Catholic, his belief that Western Christendom had taken over the best traditions of Greek and Roman civilization underlay his deeply conservative convictions. As a result, he condemned positivism, the dominant ideology in Poland in the third quarter of the 19th century, which sought to modernize the country through the development of capitalism and the emergence of a strong middle class. He characterized the progressive ideas linked with this movement as similar

Jeske-Choiński's profoundly conservative view of the world led him to become close to the National Democratic movement and an implacable opponent of the Jews, whom he saw as a force seeking to destroy the values inherent in Western civilization.

to the decadence which had preceded the collapse of the Roman Empire. His works were banned during the communist years in Poland, but in recent years he has become something of a cult figure on the Polish far right and a number of his works have been republished, among them *Gasnące słońce* and *Tiara i korona*.

His profoundly conservative view of the world led him to

become close to the National Democratic movement and an implacable opponent of the Jews, whom he saw as a force seeking to destroy the values inherent in Western civilization. He expressed his antisemitic views in a number of works, *Neofici polscy* (Polish Converts, 1904), in which he set out his view of the destructive impact of Jewish converts on Polish culture, *Historia Żydów w Polsce* (The History of Jews in Poland, 1919) and *Żyd w powieści polskiej: studium* (The Jew in Polish Literature: A Study, 1920). His views on the need to defend Christian civilization against the detrimental influence of world Jewry, dominated by the anti-Christian views of the Talmud, are most clearly expressed in *Poznaj Żyda* (Know the Jew, 1910), in which he claimed that the Jews were a parasitic tribe which “for six centuries have adhered to our skin in order to suck our sweat and blood.”

This treatise has now been republished by the right-wing publishing house Media Narodowe, which has received financial support from the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage. Its publisher, Przemysław Holocher, a leading figure in the far-right National Movement (Ruch Narodowy), has claimed that the book is not antisemitic, although he has also asserted that it demonstrates that those Jews “who adhere to the Talmud and the idea of the Chosen People” remain immersed in “deep ignorance.” It is only one of several such antisemitic books published in recent years, including Stanisław Michalkiewicz’s *Studia nad żydofilią* (Studies on Judeophilia, 2012), Marian Miszalski’s *Żydowskie lobby polityczne w Polsce* (The Jewish Political Lobby in Poland, 2017) and his *Chamy i Żydy w dzisiejszej Polsce* (Boors and Jews in Today’s Poland, 2020)—a reference to the way the political divisions were described by Witold Jedlicki).

Anna Tatar of the anti-fascist organization Nigdy Więcej (Never Again) in conversation

with the daily newspaper *Rzeczpospolita* pointed out that Holocher “has praised the expulsion of Jews from Lithuania and anti-Jewish pogroms.” According to her, the republication of *Poznaj Żyda* lacks any introduction explaining its historical context or criticizing its views. In her view, “it is quite simply an antisemitic publication.” If such pamphlets are published on the grounds that they are historical documents, they should be provided with an explanation of their context. It is distressing that antisemitic publications are widely available. ■

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

Auschwitz Jewish Center Foundation Reports Auschwitz Jewish Center Creates Digital Collections Catalogue

Maciek Zabierowski

The Klugers were an average Polish Jewish family in 1930s Oświęcim, a town southeast of Kraków. Symcha and Fryda had nine children and lived in a two-story house behind one of the synagogues in the old town. In addition to being a *melamed* (educator), Symcha was known in the community for his Saturday afternoon sermons, which he delivered in Oświęcim's Great Synagogue. The family also ran a small chicken store on the ground floor of their house.

The Holocaust destroyed this family as well as Oświęcim's Jewish community, which made up 60 percent of the prewar population. Of the Klugers, only three siblings survived: Szymon, Bronia, and Moses. Szymon was the only family member to return to the town and lived there, from 1961 until his passing on May 26, 2000, as the last Jewish resident.

In 2014, the Auschwitz Jewish Center Foundation (AJCF) renovated Szymon's home



Kluger family photo, taken before the war.
Courtesy of the AJCF

and opened Cafe Bergson, a popular spot for locals and a cultural hub.

When Szymon passed away, the AJCF received his large collection of personal

belongings that contributes to a greater understanding of the Jewish history of the town. In its most recent project, the Center is digitizing this unique collection together with Małopolska Institute of Culture in Kraków to preserve the historical record and make it more accessible to the public.

In 2022, the artifacts from the Kluger collection will become part of an online database of the museum's holdings. This project will give public access to a bilingual Polish-English listing of about 600 artifacts, 3,500 photographs, and 4,500 documents, which tell the story of the local Jewish community of Oshpitzin (guests in Yiddish). Among them are also 400 excavated Judaica from the Great Synagogue of Oświęcim, which was destroyed by the Germans in 1939, and artifacts from the world renowned Jacob Habermeld Liquor Factory, whose products won international recognition in interwar Europe and the USA.

“We want to ensure that everyone in the world is able to browse our collection and engage with the story of Oshpitzin” says Tomasz Kuncewicz, Director of the



Kluger family house today.
Photograph by Maciej Zabierowski. Courtesy of the AJCF

AJCF. “To accomplish that before the pandemic you had to come to our physical site and that usually meant taking a detour from a visit to the neighboring Auschwitz Memorial. This is no longer a limitation as people are becoming more used to digital experiences and we want to offer them one.”

The online catalogue, a digital inventory of the collection, is the first step in AJCF's digital transformation. With support from the local government of Małopolska province and international donors, the Jewish Museum in Oświęcim

is planning to digitize its entire collection and provide free access to its holdings in the next three years.

“Through these efforts, we hope more people will get to know the Klugers and other families who were part of 400 years of vibrant Jewish life in the town,” says Kuncewicz. ■

Note: The digitization project of the Kluger Family collection was made possible with support from the Cultural Promotion Fund of the Polish Ministry of Culture, National Heritage and Sport.

Auschwitz Jewish Center Foundation Reports Teaching Anti-Hatred in Oświęcim

Maciek Zabierowski

This spring, the Auschwitz Jewish Center Foundation (AJCF) in Oświęcim will run the eighth iteration of its hybrid course “Anti-Discrimination Education Academy” with 20 local teachers. This course, the first of its kind in the region, prepares educators to bridge the gap between teaching the history of the Holocaust and reflecting on its lessons today.

“The Academy’s aim is to equip teachers with knowledge and tools to address the rise of antisemitism, racism, homophobia and other types of hatred, and to help create and sustain classrooms free of prejudice and exclusion,” said Tomasz Kuncewicz, Director of the AJCF.

Humanities teachers from primary and high schools in southern Poland will take part in an intensive six-week course to study past and present manifestations of hatred as well as collaboratively design tools and lessons to integrate these topics in their classrooms. The course will

Humanities teachers from primary and high schools in southern Poland will take part in an intensive six-week course to study past and present manifestations of hatred as well as collaboratively design tools and lessons to integrate these topics in their classrooms.

include online instruction and an in-person session in Oświęcim, where teachers will learn about the once vibrant Jewish heritage of the town at the Oshpitzin Jewish Museum, operated by the AJCF, and visit the former camps at Auschwitz-Birkenau.

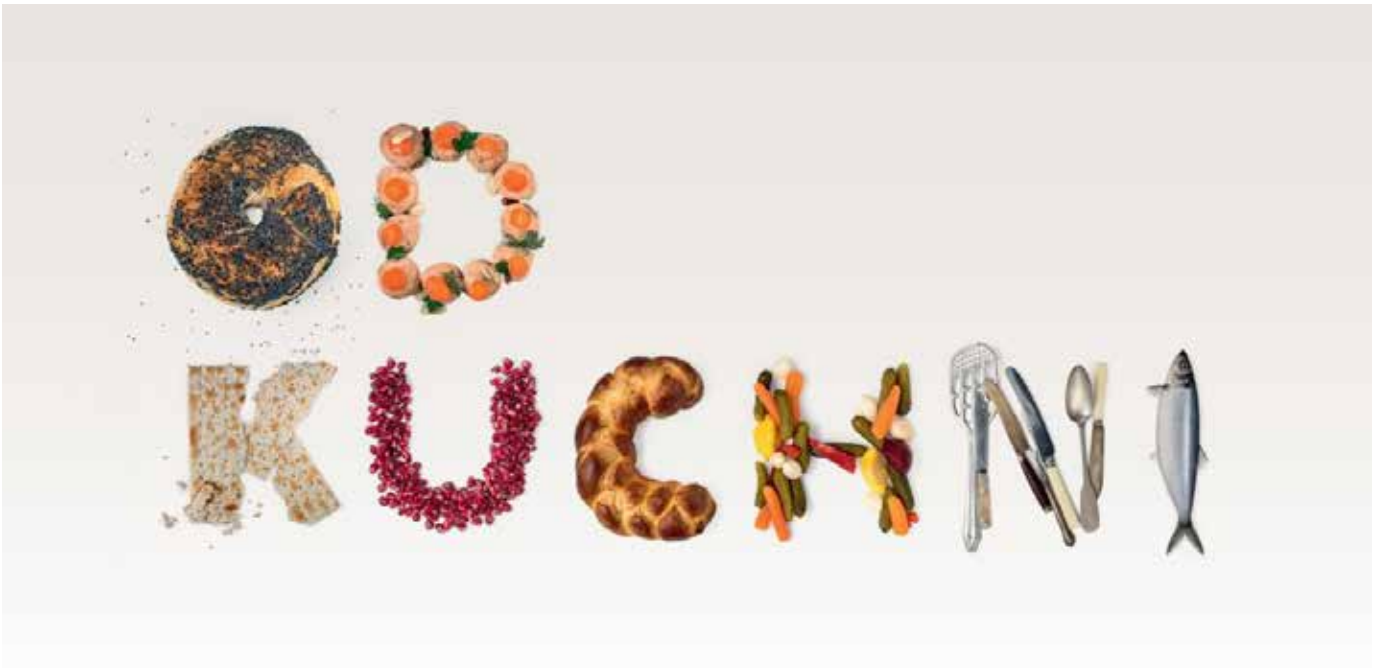
“The Academy started in 2018 with an in-person seminar where teachers learned how to implement a single lesson about past and present

exclusion of minorities. Today, the course has evolved into a hybrid program, partially in-person and partially virtual, allowing participants to pilot the lessons they create and come back together with their cohorts and other alumni to debrief successes and challenges,” explained Maciek Zabierowski, who heads the project. “To date, the alumni network includes 150 educators throughout Poland.” ■

Note: This project is made possible with the generous support of the US Consulate in Kraków and the EVZ Foundation under the framework of their program “Facing Antisemitism and Antigypsyism.” In the upcoming school year, the Auschwitz Jewish Center Foundation will launch an initiative based on the current academy, which aims to double the current impact by reaching another 150 teachers, thanks to a grant from the EEA Fund.

EXHIBITIONS

What's Cooking? Food for Thought at POLIN Museum



What's Cooking? official poster.

Courtesy of POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews

What's *Cooking? Jewish Culinary Culture* explores the Diaspora's many culinary traditions over the centuries. Curators Magdalena Maślak and Tamara Sztyma tell a tale about Jewish food that is simultaneously a story about Jewish religion, culture, and history. They show how certain dishes became widespread worldwide due to countless migrations throughout history, from

the Middle Ages to the 19th and 20th centuries. They analyze the vital role of the rules of *kashrut*, as well as modern interest in breaking away from that tradition and rediscovering culinary roots. Four tables, sculpted by Anna Królikiewicz, reference the main thematic threads of the exhibition: tradition, diaspora, modernity, and memories. Visitors are encouraged to join in seeking an answer to

the question, What is Jewish cuisine?

The exhibition opened at a time when Warsaw was receiving a steady flow of Ukrainian refugees in need of shelter and food, and POLIN Museum's Warsze restaurant was preparing free hot meals featuring Jewish specialties and delivering them directly to those in greatest need. The exhibition runs until December 12, 2022. ■

Hideouts. The Architecture of Survival at the Zachęta National Gallery of Art

Exhibition by Natalia Romik

On March 30, 2022, Natalia Romik's exhibition, *Hideouts. The Architecture of Survival*, opened at Zachęta National Gallery of Art in Warsaw. The exhibition—a tribute to the creativity, determination, and will to live of Jews who

hid from the Germans and their accomplices in occupied Poland—is part of artist and architect Natalia Romik's long-term project by the same name. (Her discussion of the exhibition is featured in this issue of *Gazeta*.)

Hideouts. The Architecture of Survival will be displayed at Zachęta Gallery from March 31 to July 17, 2022. From August 4 to November 6, the exhibition will be at TRAFU Center for Contemporary Art in Szczecin.



Entrance to the exhibition at Zachęta Gallery of Art. Photograph by Aleksandra Sajdak. Used with permission.

Yiddishland Pavilion at the 2022 Venice Biennale

This year's 59th Venice Biennale—one of the art world's longstanding and most celebrated events—includes a historic Yiddishland Pavilion. What makes the Yiddishland Pavilion groundbreaking in the context of the biennale's established organization around national country pavilions is its diasporic and transnational identity of an imagined space across and between national identities. Yiddishland is conceptualized more as a networked “territory” than a particular place, and its “citizens” self-identify and connect through their shared Yiddish language and culture.

By challenging the framework of national pavilions, Yiddishland also represents a world without borders, and as such, stands against war and its after-effects of migrations and displacements. Curators Maria Veits and Yevgeniy Fiks consider the start-point of the Yiddish language from the 12th century, but are mainly



Curatorial map of Yiddishland sites at the 2022 Venice Biennale.

concerned with its contemporary outgrowths. In their curatorial statement, they write:

“Since the 1970s, a new and largely post-vernacular Yiddish culture... has started to develop in many, often unexpected, locales around the world and to reappear in music, theatre, literature, TV series, and contemporary art, especially in the US. This phenomenon was in parallel to and a continuation of the surviving secular Yiddish culture that descended from prewar culturati circles of Vilnius, Warsaw, Moscow, and

New York. Hence the map of Yiddishland at the biennale includes such diverse parts of the world as Lithuania, Ukraine, Hungary, Poland, Mexico, China, Japan and more.” ■

The hybrid format of online and offline events will run through November 2022.

For information about exhibits, performances, and programs, see the website: yiddishlandpavilion.art.

CONFERENCES

Reflections on Roman Vishniac: 1922–2022

Symposium at UC Berkeley

John Efron

Over the last two years the Magnes Collection of Jewish Art and Life at the University of California, Berkeley, has largely been closed to the public due to COVID-19 restrictions. To celebrate both the acquisition of the Vishniac Archive and the public reopening of the collection, The Magnes hosted a two-day event on May 1 and 2, 2022. The first day offered an open house featuring a digital display projected on newly acquired screens of Vishniac's photographs of Jewish life from Eastern and Central Europe from before and just after World War II, as well as from Israel in 1967. The second day presented a virtual symposium with internationally acclaimed scholars discussing the historical context and visual content of the Vishniac photographs.

Roman Vishniac (1897-1990) was one of the most renowned and celebrated

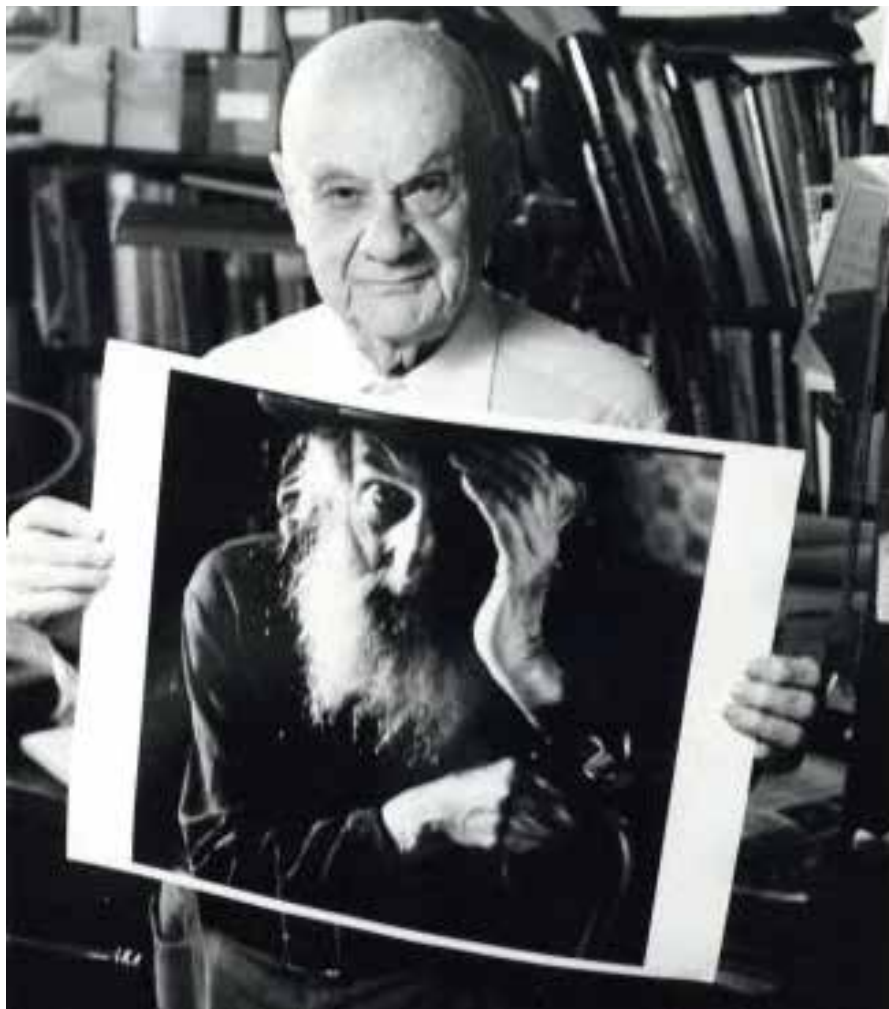


Photo of Roman Vishniac holding one of his photographs.
Courtesy of The Magnes Collection of Jewish Art and Life, UC Berkeley

photographers of the 20th century. Though his interests were highly varied, and his subject matter diverse, he is best known today for his intensely intimate photographs

of Jews in interwar Eastern Europe. He published these images in 1983 in his book, *A Vanished World*. It was a publication that ensured his global recognition.



“Inn Polna, 1938,” photograph by Roman Vishniac.
 Gift of Mara Vishniac Kohn © The Magnes Collection of Jewish Art and
 Life, UC Berkeley



“Cracow, 1939,” photograph by Roman Vishniac.
 Gift of Mara Vishniac Kohn © The Magnes Collection of Jewish Art and
 Life, UC Berkeley

When Vishniac traveled around Poland and today’s Ukraine between 1935 and 1938, that world had, of course, not yet disappeared. Eastern Europe was still home to millions of Jews and was the heartland of European Jewry as a whole. By 1945, European Jewry had been decimated in the Holocaust and thus Vishniac’s photographs, though little did he know it when he took them, would prove to be one of the final visual mementos of a now lost civilization.

Though an accomplished and innovative nature and science photographer, Vishniac was also, from an emotional and affective point of view, a keen recorder of the human condition.

Just as the few survivors of the world Vishniac recorded ended up very far from their roots, his photographic legacy

landed in a place that he may never have imagined—The Magnes Collection at the University of California at Berkeley. In 2018, Vishniac’s daughter, the late Mara Vishniac Kohn, who lived in the Bay Area, donated, along with all intellectual property rights to her father’s work, his entire archive. Appraised at \$38.5 million, the Roman Vishniac Archive comprises more than 30,000 images, along with audiovisual documents, correspondence,

and memorabilia. It is the largest single gift of art The Magnes has ever received, and it is the third largest gifted collection ever received by UC Berkeley.

Subjects of the photographs include street life in Europe's capitals between the wars, extensive documentation of Jewish life in the borderland regions of Eastern Europe before World War II, immigrant and disenfranchised communities in New York City in the 1940s, studio portraiture of eminent 20th century intellectuals and artists, as well as photographs he took in Israel in the immediate aftermath of the Six Day War of 1967. Vishniac was also an innovative science photographer, a pioneer in the field of microphotography, the photography of specimens as seen through a microscope. He was also an avid nature photographer and was especially fond of storks. Vishniac returned to Europe in 1947, where he had been sent by the American Yiddish newspaper, the *Forward*, to take photos of the remnants of Jewish life.

Just as the few survivors of the world Vishniac recorded ended up very far from their roots, his photographic legacy landed in a place that he may never have imagined—The Magnes Collection at the University of California at Berkeley.

Roman Vishniac was born into a well-to-do bourgeois family near St. Petersburg, but raised and educated in Moscow. In 1920, he joined his family in Berlin where he would live for the next nineteen years. Vishniac was one of a significant number of Jewish intellectuals, authors, and artists from Eastern Europe living in Weimar Berlin, a bubbling cauldron of cultural and artistic experimentation. Berlin was also a vibrant center of photography and film. The photograph's ability to provide what the German-Jewish critic Walter Benjamin called "mechanical reproduction" of the visible

without subjective human intervention proved alluring and valuable to a generation that had just witnessed the unambiguous brutality of war. Journalism, propaganda, advertising, art, and literature all expressed faith in the power and veracity of photography. To a postwar generation, it was a medium that seemed capable of representing truth—and since truth, as the old adage went, is the first casualty of war, then the documentary power of photography stood to offer the unvarnished truth as opposed to language, which had been used and abused in the service of propaganda.

Vishniac's photographs in the interwar years were notable for many reasons. From a technical point of view, he took multiple, rapid shots courtesy of what was then the new 35mm film technology. He was also a keen recorder of the human condition, making him a reliable and trustworthy documentarian.

This becomes most evident after the collapse of the Weimar Republic when Vishniac took photographs

of Berlin street life. After the Nazis came to power in January 1933, he documented the consolidation of Nazi rule and the persecution of Jews. There were considerable risks for a Jewish photographer memorializing what Germany was becoming, and, so as to have an alibi if stopped and interrogated, Vishniac had his young daughter Mara accompany him, to stand, for example, in front of a shop window bearing a poster of Hitler, and capture the image. From a technical point of view, it meant that such photographs were somewhat “staged.” Vishniac’s strategy to avoid detection by the Nazi security apparatus and by self-appointed protectors of the *Volksgemeinschaft*, serve to remind us of the irony that to successfully expose the truth in a totalitarian society can sometimes necessitate subterfuge and the creation of what we might call truth gaps.

Beginning in the mid 1930s, Vishniac traveled far from Berlin photographing Jews. He vividly captured street scenes with people going about their daily business, walking, reading, working,

and even preparing for a new future as was the case when he captured three Dutch Jewish boys at a Zionist camp in 1938 working in a quarry in Weiringermeer, their wooden clogs making their national origins unmistakable. From the Ukrainian city of Mukachevo in Zakarpats’ka Oblast’ we see the *meshorerim* (choir singers) in full voice at the house of Rabbi Baruch Rabinowitz, a Hasid wearing his *shtreiml* and *kapote* as he strides purposefully along a snow-covered cobblestone street in Kraków in 1939. A grandfather talks to his granddaughter in Warsaw, Rabbi Leibel and the *shammes* (synagogue caretaker) sit together in the Polish town of Lask sometime between 1935 and 1938, and Vishniac takes us into the classroom where we see a teacher and his students in a *cheder* in the town of Slonim in today’s Belarus.

The photographs Vishniac took of impoverished Jewish communities in Poland, Ukraine, Lithuania, Belarus, and Czechoslovakia during the late 1930s were taken at the behest of the American Jewish

Joint Distribution Committee representatives in Berlin, who asked him to travel to Eastern Europe to document daily life in the *shtetl* in order to raise awareness about them. The Jews in Vishniac’s photographs were mostly all poor and nearly all religious. Among them were Ukrainian rabbis and their young pupils, Warsaw porters, women in the marketplace, and rural Jews of Subcarpathian Rus. Eventually, it was these photos that became iconic and made Vishniac a household name. Indeed, they served as a visual memorial when they were published in *A Vanished World*. The photographs are remarkably powerful, from both an artistic and highly personal collective sense of remembering. In the first published collection of his photographs, Vishniac’s *Polish Jews: A Pictorial Record* (1947), Abraham Joshua Heschel, who wrote the introduction, eulogizes these Jews: “Outwardly they may have looked plagued by the misery and humiliation in which they lived, but inwardly they bore the rich sorrow of the world and the noble vision

of redemption for all men and all beings.” But along with the Jews he photographed, we must not forget that there were vast numbers of secular Jews and middle-class Jews in the cities whom he did not depict or was not commissioned to depict, despite the fact that educated and professional Jews were among the majority of Poland’s three million Jews in 1931. The Jews who appeared in the photographs, therefore, do not stand for all of Eastern European Jewry, and, we must readily admit, the Joint Distribution Committee did not want the depictions of happy, secular working-class or worldly Jews, for that would have compromised their essential charitable fundraising. Understood in this light, we get a clearer picture of Vishniac’s assignment, its higher purpose, and the way he carried it out.

For Jews of Eastern European origin, Vishniac’s work, rather than splintering or reducing the past to a single trope, de-atomizes the Jewish experience, allowing the viewer to fill in the gaps and see themselves as links in

Vishniac was one of a significant number of Jewish intellectuals, authors, and artists from Eastern Europe living in Weimar Berlin, a bubbling cauldron of cultural and artistic experimentation.

the chain of Jewish history. These photographs allow one to identify with the subjects and their lost world of the past. The evocation of pathos engendered by Vishniac’s photographs derives from a sort of *ex post facto* premonition. We know what Vishniac’s subjects don’t know. Namely, their fate.

Beyond these images, the archive at The Magnes contains photographs Vishniac took of immigrant communities in New York City in the 1940s; and safely at home in New York, he took up studio portraiture. The images are a stark contrast to those he took in interwar Europe. Here were some

of the most distinguished intellectuals, musicians, and artists of the of 20th century. Like him, they were Jews who had managed to find a safe haven in the United States. There was Bronislaw Huberman, the Polish-Jewish violinist and founder of the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra, the arresting photograph of Albert Einstein at his desk at Princeton University, taken in 1942, and in the same year, a portrait of the great Polish-Jewish artist, Arthur Szyk.

Vishniac also made a trip to Israel in the immediate wake of the Six Day War in 1967. Many of these photographs have him as the subject, presumably taken by his wife, Edith, who accompanied him on the trip.

The Vishniac Archive is valuable but fragile and requires great care. A planned five-year program of processing, digitizing, and cataloguing the Vishniac Archive is underway. The archive contains some 35,000 items, including 7,000 photographic prints, 1,000 contact prints, more



Ernest Kaufmann, center, and unidentified Jewish youth wearing clogs while learning construction techniques in a quarry, Werkdorp Nieuwesluis, Wieringermeer, The Netherlands, ca. 1938, Photograph by Roman Vishniac. Gift of Mara Vishniac Kohn © The Magnes Collection of Jewish Art and Life, UC Berkeley

than 11,000 negatives, over 11,000 slides, 1,500 photographic prints of or about Roman Vishniac, and some 1,500 items categorized as ephemera, which include awards, datebooks, diaries, documents, correspondence, and papers. Many of these items are in a precarious

state. Time is of the essence. The work of year one will entail physical stabilization of negatives and slides and the identification and numbering of all materials. Years two and three will see the entire archive digitized while years four and five will see the completion of

a fully accessible digital catalogue, the work on which will have begun in year three. Through the generosity of an anonymous donor, The Magnes has just received a \$1 million gift to carry out this important work.

Roman Vishniac's life spanned the bulk of the 20th century, a period of unbounded Jewish suffering and triumph. Vishniac lived it and photographed much of it. The Magnes is now tasked with preserving that which he preserved—precious images from a vanished world. ■

John Efron, PhD,
is Faculty Director of the Magnes Collection, Director of the Center for Jewish Studies, and Koret Professor of Jewish History at the University of California, Berkeley.

42nd IAJGS International Association of Jewish Genealogical Societies Conference Goes Virtual

Where We Lived, the 42nd IAJGS International Association of Jewish Genealogical Societies Conference, will take place virtually this year, from August 21 to 25. Pre-recorded and live-streamed sessions will cover a broad range of themes, including “American Jewish History through the Lens of Literature: Cookbooks” (Jonina Duker) and “Bubbie, Who Are You? Finding the Names in Your Family Tree” (Janice M. Sellers), to DNA research presentations, including “DNA and Endogamy: Making Sense When Your Matches Don’t Make Sense” (Adina Newman), and many more listed on the conference schedule.

The International Association of Jewish Genealogical Societies (IAJGS) is an umbrella organization of more than ninety Jewish genealogical organizations worldwide. The IAJGS



IAJGS official poster.
Public domain

envisions a global network of Jewish genealogical research organizations and partners working as one effective and respected community, enabling people to succeed in researching Jewish ancestry and heritage. ■

To register and view the conference schedule, please visit:

<https://s4.goeshow.com/iajgs/annual/2022/virtual.cfm>.

Emanuel Ringelblum Jewish Historical Institute Commemorates 75th Year

In honor of its 75th anniversary, the Emanuel Ringelblum Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw, together with the Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies at Yale University and the Yeshiva University Emil A. and Jenny Fish Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies, hosted an international conference in Warsaw on May 23–26, dedicated to bridging historiographical and disciplinary divides.

The conference included two keynote speakers: Prof. Samuel Kassow, historian, Emanuel Ringelblum biographer (Trinity College, Hartford CT) and Prof. Naomi Seidman, cultural studies, Sara Schenirer biographer (University of Toronto, Canada).

Presenters discussed the continuities of Polish Jewish culture before, during, and after the Holocaust in areas like biography, geography, language, politics, gender, secularization and traditionalism, literary and artistic production, legal practices, documentation, memory studies, and Jewish-Christian relations.



The Jewish Historical Institute, 2016, on the 73rd anniversary of the Nazis' destruction of the Great Synagogue, which used to stand next to it.

Photograph by Grzegorz Kwolek. Courtesy of the Emanuel Ringelblum Jewish Historical Institute

“Let the past, both the tragic one from the war years and the more distant one, related to the centuries-long presence of Jews in the land of Polin, still be met with the interest and attention of young generations here,” wrote the President of the Republic of Poland, Andrzej Duda, in the letter read during the opening ceremony.

“If the Ringelblum Archive were to disappear forever, historians would have to rely on German documents, various Polish sources and the few memories of the survivors,” said Prof. Samuel Kassow. “Scholars would deal with the changes in the German occu-

pation policy and the attitude of Poles to Jews. But they couldn't say much about how the Jews themselves lived then. Murdered Polish Jews would become a mass of anonymous victims without their identities. Of course, there would be testimonies and accounts of the survivors, but they would only convey what they already knew after the war events and not the votes of Jews recorded on an ongoing basis,” he added. ■

The conference was streamed, and all lectures are available to watch: <https://www.jhi.pl/en/articles/bridging-divides-polish-jewish-conference-75-jhi,5658>.

Operation Reinhardt and the Destruction of Polish Jews Conference at POLIN

This conference, organized to mark the 80th anniversary of “Operation Reinhardt,” presents the newest research on the Holocaust in Poland. Although the Nazi operation to exterminate Jews in German-occupied central Poland during 1942–43, remains the primary focus, the conference organizers are interested in the broader process of the destruction of Jews from 1941 until 1945 within the territory of the pre-war Second Polish Republic.

The conference is scheduled to convene at POLIN Museum from November 27 to 29, 2022. Should the COVID-19 pandemic prevent this, the meeting will be held either online or in a hybrid format. Details will be announced in advance.

The museum invites researchers from Poland and abroad to participate in the conference.

Conference organizers include POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews, Polish Center for Holocaust Research, Polish Academy of Sciences, Warsaw, State Museum at Majdanek, German Nazi Concentration and Extermination Camp (1941–44), Lublin, Center for Holocaust Studies at the Leibniz Institute for Contemporary History, Munich-Berlin, and US Holocaust Memorial Museum, Washington, DC. ■

For more information go to:
<https://www.polin.pl/en/call-papers-international-conference-operation-reinhardt>.

New Realities of Jewish Heritage in Europe Conference Marks 10th Anniversary of Jewish Heritage Europe

Ruth Ellen Gruber

An international conference in Kraków this summer marks the 10th anniversary of Jewish Heritage Europe—www.jewish-heritage-europe.eu—an expanding web portal to news, information, and resources regarding Jewish monuments and heritage sites all over Europe.

Held June 26–27 in association with the Kraków Jewish Culture Festival, the conference was organized by the Galicia Jewish Museum in Kraków, which hosted the event, in collaboration with the Taube Center for Jewish Life & Learning Foundation in Warsaw and Jewish Heritage Europe. The Foundation for the Preservation of Jewish Heritage in Poland (FODZ), which celebrates its 20th anniversary this year, was a partner.

A project of the Rothschild Foundation Hanadiv Europe, Jewish Heritage Europe was developed in response to a call for effective strategies regarding the restoration, use, upkeep, and documentation of Jewish heritage sites across Europe.

Through its news feed, special articles, and social media, JHE fosters communication, expertise, and information exchange among individuals, institutions, and organizations. Its resource collections provide a unique, searchable database of reports, links and reference material.

The conference opened with a conversation with JHE Coordinator Ruth Ellen Gruber looking back at her more than three decades of involvement in the Jewish heritage field. This year also marks significant anniversaries of her ground-breaking books *Jewish Heritage Travel*, first published thirty years ago in 1992, and *Virtually Jewish: Reinventing Jewish Culture in Europe*, published in 2002.

Conference sessions consisted of small panels on concepts related to Jewish heritage issues. These include:

- Old Challenges, New Solutions—ranging from technology to funding to digital reconstruction.
- Jewish Heritage and the Arts—as inspiration and also setting.

- Photographers of Jewish Heritage—different styles; different objectives.
- Jewish Heritage as Education—using physical sites to teach about Jews, Jewish history, Jewish heritage.
- Strategies—strategic thinking regarding restoration, use, upkeep, protection, on both local and wider levels.
- Jewish Heritage—Who Is It For? This is a key question both in countries whose Jewish population was decimated in the Shoah and in places where synagogues and cemeteries are abandoned by population shifts and dwindling congregations.
- Ukraine—a special session will discuss the impact on the war on Jewish heritage and its implications on research, site maintenance, and collective memory.

Ruth Ellen Gruber is Director of Jewish Heritage Europe and former Distinguished Visiting Chair in Jewish Studies, College of Charleston.

ANNOUNCEMENTS BOOKS

Book Essay

Categorically Jewish, Distinctly Polish

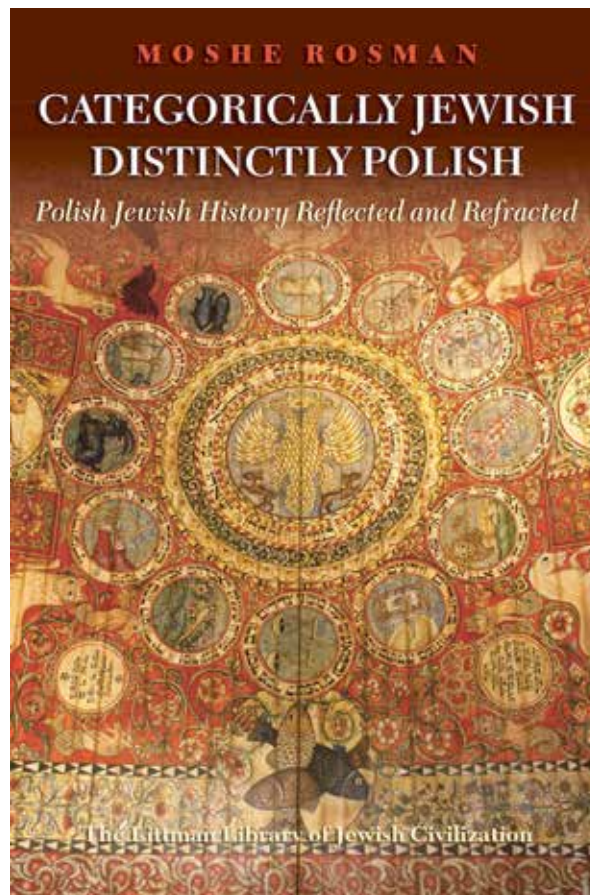
By Moshe Rosman

Oxford and Liverpool: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2022

Moshe Rosman

I have been writing *Categorically Jewish, Distinctly Polish* for more than thirty-five years. It presents a thematic, as opposed to a chronological, survey of some key components of the Jewish experience in the early modern Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. These are the relations between Jews and others, the Jewish community, the lives of Polish Jewish women, and Hasidism. The section on historiography surveys ways in which this history has been portrayed. The introductions, both the general one opening the book and those prefacing each unit, weave a common context for studies originally conceived separately.

In *Categorically Jewish, Distinctly Polish* I argue that the marriage of convenience between the Jews and the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth was a dynamic relationship that,



though punctuated by crisis and persecution, developed into a saga of achievement and stability. The book's conclusion is a bid to consider the unspoken "So what?" readers may be asking at the end of this extended attempt to prove the central postulate. My answer is that this book is a response to new questions

put to the sources. These questions have led to new perspectives, changing the narrative and meta-narrative in manifold aspects.

I have tried to hew to the "reformed positivism" that I advocated in previous work (*How Jewish Is Jewish History?* 2007). Research, evidence, close reading, rational enquiry, the positivist assumptions that historical description really does have a referent, and that logic or empirical proof can confirm new knowledge—these still are the touchstones of the

historical endeavor. This positivism, however, is a reformed one. It is self-conscious about its epistemological assumptions, its interpretative principles, its rhetorical strategies and devices, and its practitioner's meta-historical biases. It is both critical and self-critical.

Some readers of Jewish historiography may find certain features of this book unexpected. There is the personal nature of the narrative, the degree to which I insert my own history, experiences, and opinions into the presentation of history. I do this because a historian's own history always exerts a significant influence over how he or she analyzes and interprets any given source or phenomenon. This raises the issue of objectivity. I will only point out that one's own background does not simply predispose to certain biases, it also raises new questions, prompts original insights, and permits comprehending human actions in various contexts from new perspectives.

Another aspect of my historical sensibility, expressed in this book, is my willingness to label and discuss meta-history. I write in Chapter 3, "Most historians today would prefer to write history that is not a component of some meta-history. Rather than project the Big Story, which entails beliefs and assumptions about History writ large, they want to tell a small story, history that stands on empirical findings and logical reasoning." I go on to note that despite the prevalent desire to



Moshe Rosman.
Wikimedia Commons

refrain from writing the grand narratives of previous generations, "it has been demonstrated that even small-bore histories imply larger frameworks." Like the scientific paradigms of Thomas Kuhn's celebrated *Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, meta-histories, as paradigms of historical knowledge, are unavoidable. Yet they ultimately collapse in confrontation with new methods, new perspectives, and new sources. Such confrontation, in turn, fosters the creation of new meta-histories.

I contend that not only is meta-history ineluctable, it does not necessarily precede historiography. It can grow out of historiographical research. The historiography of Israel

Ba'al Shem Tov and Hasidism surveyed in the book is a useful illustration of this process. *Categorically Jewish, Distinctly Polish* challenges some veteran meta-histories. For example, in opposition to much conventional historiography on the subject, I conclude that in the Polish Jewish experience achievement and stability outweighed persecution and crisis. I assert that the catastrophe in the wake of the mid-17th-century persecutions was on its way to amelioration within one generation, instead of lasting into the 18th century. I contend that Hasidism was born in a context of relative vitality, rather than emerging from the persecution and impoverishment of a putative 18th-century extended emergency. In my reading, Jews viewed the Polish politico-economic infrastructure as fundamentally legitimate.

One prominent characteristic of the 20th century's so-called Jerusalem school of Jewish history research was its insistence on viewing the Jews as an agent rather than an object of history; a protagonist in the drama of history, not just a victim of it. Jews had a hand in shaping their own history as

surely as any other group did. They both played the metaphorical cards dealt them by others and fashioned cards they could deal. *Categorically Jewish, Distinctly Polish* adopts this stance, along with nuance. For example, I have explored both the attitudes of Polish authorities toward the notion of Jewish autonomy and the attitudes of Jews toward the authorities: how Jews were treated, how they sought to influence such treatment, and how they treated others. Related to exploring Jewish agency is tackling topics that may reflect negatively on Jewish society and Jewish individuals. Given that Jews were not always passive victims, Jewish behavior was not always salutary either. This book displays, for example, a willingness to discuss the weakness and failures of Jewish autonomous institutions, including aspects of the vaunted Va'ad Arba Aratsot (Council of Four Lands). Jewish violence, irresponsible indebtedness, unsavory behaviors in the wake of the Khmelnytsky depredations, and a certain dualism in relating to Polish authorities are further counter-examples to various past portrayals tending toward idealization.

I have explored both the attitudes of the Polish authorities toward the notion of Jewish autonomy and the attitudes of the Jews toward the authorities: how Jews were treated, how they sought to influence such treatment, and how they treated others.

On the other hand, I do not regard description of Jewish strengths as apologetics. I view the attention paid to women in various essays of this book as one of the breakthroughs of my research. I hope to have demonstrated that it is possible both to write Jewish “her-story” in the Polish context and to have it transform the overall historical narrative. As 20th-century Jewish historiography emphasized Jewish agency, the essays herein display Jewish women as historical principals. Here too I have made a meta-historical statement. My claim is that Jewish women’s theoretical status was as cultural observers and cultural and social facilitators. However,

the observer role was in the process of gradual transformation throughout the early modern period as part of a general democratization of knowledge, affecting many men as well. For its part, the facilitator role was maintained and even enhanced. Moreover, a reader can learn here of fierce opposition to gender role transformation and how such opposition was met obliquely, rather than head-on.

The Talmud quotes Rabbi Joshua of Peki’in: “It is impossible to convene the *beit midrash* [academy] without proffering new teaching.” One way to understand this statement is that the *raison d’être* of the scholarly endeavor is to create new knowledge. Would that readers of *Categorically Jewish, Distinctly Polish* feel they have learned something new, worthy, and perhaps even edifying. ■

Moshe Rosman is an Israeli historian specializing in the history of Polish Jews. He is a professor emeritus at the Koschitzky Department of Jewish History, Bar-Ilan University.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

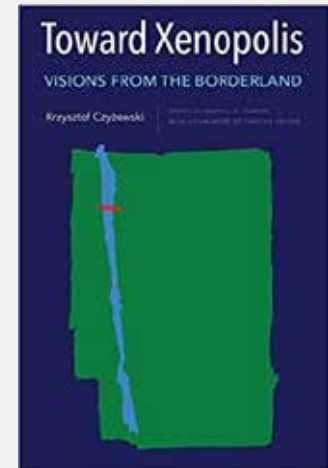
Books

Toward Xenopolis: Visions from the Borderland

By Krzysztof Czyżewski

Rochester Studies in East and Central Europe
University of Rochester Press, 2022

This volume features the work of Krzysztof Czyżewski, a founder of the Borderland Foundation (Fundacja Pogranicze) in Sejny, Poland, who explores questions related to the creation and maintenance of civil society in communities with diverse populations. Writing from his research and experience at the border of Lithuania, Poland, and Belarus, Czyżewski offers examples, such as the xenopolis (the city of others), of community-building approaches throughout the world. In its three main sections—concepts, places, and practices—the book shows how cultural bridging between concepts and practices may offer a new map of Europe. Framing essays by specialists in Central and East European history introduce Czyżewski’s work. ■



The World beyond the West: Perspectives from Eastern Europe

Edited by Mariusz Kalczewiak and Magdalena Kozłowska
New York and Oxford: Bergahn Books, 2022

The World beyond the West focuses on Eastern Europe’s status as an “Other,” tied ambiguously to the Western imagination through historical processes of colonialism and Orientalism. Placing Eastern Europe at the heart of its analysis, the book explores encounters with distant lands through politics, travel, migration, and exchange while decentering the region’s most familiar narratives and recasting its history. ■

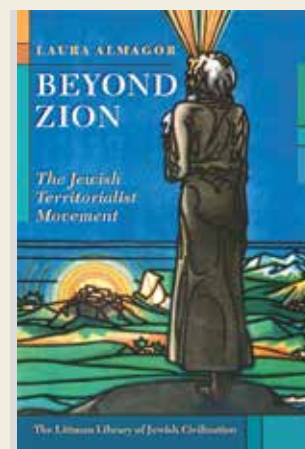


Beyond Zion: The Jewish Territorialist Movement

By Laura Almagor

Oxford and Liverpool: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2022

The Jewish territorialist movement of the early 20th century searched for areas outside Palestine, from Uganda and Madagascar to Australia and Suriname, in which to create Jewish settlements. In the years after World War II, as the colonial world order changed, the territorialists moved from negotiating with the European colonizers to negotiating also with the non-Western leaders of decolonizing nations. Almagor reconstructs the activities and ideologies of Jewish territorialism as represented by Israel Zangwill's Jewish Territorial Organisation (the ITO) and the Freeland League for Jewish Colonization under the leadership of Isaac Steinberg. Though their efforts were soon overtaken and forgotten with the establishment of the state of Israel, their writings reflect geopolitical concerns that resonate today in debates about colonialist attitudes to peoplehood, territory, and space. ■

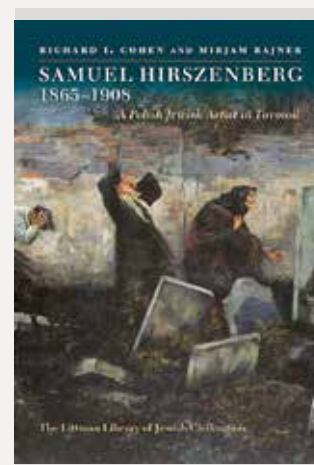


Samuel Hirszenberg, 1865–1908: A Polish Jewish Artist in Turmoil

By Richard Cohen and Mirjam Rajner

Oxford and Liverpool: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2022

This illustrated study presents a detailed portrait of Samuel Hirszenberg, whose artistic work intertwined modernism and Jewish themes and influenced later artists of Jewish origin. Born into a traditional Jewish family in Łódź in 1865, Hirszenberg became attached to Polish culture and language as he pursued his artistic calling, which included studies at the School of Art in Kraków, then headed by Jan Matejko. Hirszenberg traveled widely, for personal, financial, and security reasons. In Jerusalem, where he moved in 1907 and adopted the world of humanism and universalism, he expressed more personal aspirations and concerns in his art. Prof. Marcin Wodziński of the University of Wrocław has praised the book, noting that “Hirszenberg is an important and original, yet understudied artist, and this very readable and richly illustrated biography, based on much new material, will be enjoyed and cited for many years to come.” ■

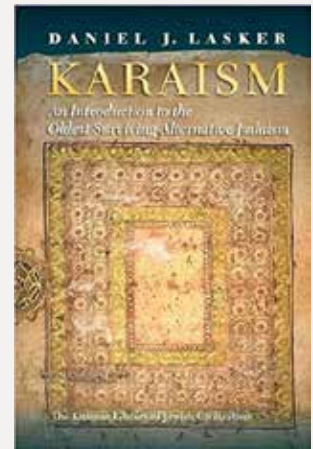


Karaism: An Introduction to the Oldest Surviving Alternative Judaism

By Daniel J. Lasker

Oxford and Liverpool: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2022

This is the first book to present a comprehensive overview of Karaite Judaism, which emerged in the 9th century in the Islamic Middle East as an alternative to rabbinic Judaism. Karaites base their practice solely on the written Torah and do not accept the oral one as expressed in rabbinic literature. Lasker notes that Karaism has been a part of Judaism for twelve centuries, providing an intellectual challenge to the majority form of Judaism. He examines the obscure origins of Karaism, describes its golden age, and continues the story through the period of migrations and the Holocaust. In this readable and accessible account, he describes Karaism's unique religious practices, beliefs, biblical exegesis, and literary accomplishments, as well as its current revival in Israel. ■

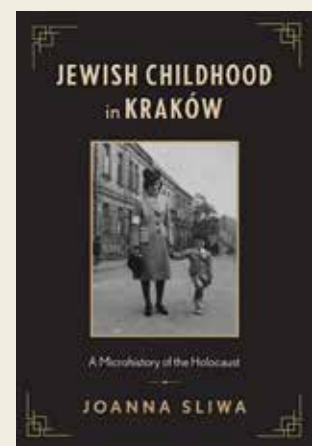


Jewish Childhood in Kraków: A Microhistory of the Holocaust

By Joanna Sliwa

New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2021

Awarded a Wiener Holocaust Library Ernst Fraenkel Prize, *Jewish Childhood in Kraków* examines the history of Kraków under Nazi occupation through the words and lives of Jewish children and youth. Sliwa analyzes evidence gathered from the records of the Jewish community, Jewish families, Polish neighbors, and German authorities as a basis for exploring the Holocaust in Kraków, site of a ghetto and a camp at Płaszów, and in Poland in general. Sliwa argues that the memories and perspectives of the children constitute a unique and important body of historical evidence. “Ultimately,” she explains, “this book is an effort to understand the past and to reflect on the position and responses of young people during humanitarian crises.” ■



ANNOUNCEMENTS

Awards

Tomasz Kuncewicz Honored With Two Awards: Taube Philanthropies' 2022 Irena Sendler Award

Taube Philanthropies has named Tomasz Kuncewicz, the Director of the Auschwitz Jewish Center Foundation (AJCF), in Oświęcim, Poland, as the recipient of its 2022 Irena Sendler Memorial Award. Under his leadership since 2000, AJCF has made exceptional progress in preserving Jewish memory and material heritage in Oświęcim, the town in closest proximity to the Nazi extermination site at Auschwitz-Birkenau. In announcing the award, Taube Philanthropies praised Kuncewicz's efforts to strengthen the vital connection among the town, the Nazi killing ground, and the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Memorial and Museum, where the gruesome history is narrated and preserved for millions of visitors from around the world.

"Tomasz Kuncewicz and his team of educators, curators, and heritage conservationists have created a seminal educational complex, the Auschwitz Jewish Center Foundation, located in reconstructed physical spaces representing pre-war Jewish life — including a synagogue, a



AJCF Director Tomasz Kuncewicz.
Courtesy of AJCF

home, and a park — and breathed new life into them for contemporary educational programs that teach about the Holocaust and promote understanding and reconciliation," said Tad Taube, Chairman of Taube Philanthropies and Honorary Consul of the Republic of Poland in San Francisco.

People of all ages and backgrounds gather at the restored sites for educational workshops, exhibition tours, and cultural events that trace the repercussions of both hatred and resistance to oppression in World War II to contemporary world events. Especially noteworthy is the Great

Synagogue Memorial Park, opened in 2019 in the center of Oshpitzin, where Jews once constituted nearly 60 percent of the residents. AJCF restored the the Chevra Lomdei Mishnayot synagogue to its pre-war condition and reopened it in 2000. Although it has neither a rabbi nor a local congregation today, the synagogue provides visitors with a sanctuary for prayer, reflection, and solace.

About the Irena Sendler Award

Taube Philanthropies established the Irena Sendler Memorial Award in 2008 in honor of Polish social worker Irena Sendler, a "Righteous Among the Nations," who saved Jewish children of the Warsaw Ghetto during the Nazi occupation. The award is presented annually to those who have been exemplary in preserving and revitalizing Poland's Jewish heritage. Nominations for the award are reviewed by a panel of Taube Philanthropies advisory board members and Jewish cultural leaders in Poland. ■

Medal of Warsaw Ghetto Uprising Award

Tomasz Kuncewicz, Director of the Auschwitz Jewish Center Foundation in Oświęcim, was honored on April 19 at POLIN Museum, with the Medal of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. Announced every year on the anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, the award is bestowed by the Association of the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw and the Association of the Jewish Veterans in Poland. It honors those who defend human dignity and fight antisemitism, xenophobia, and ultranationalism. At the award ceremony, Lesław Piszewski, President of the Warsaw Jewish community, praised Kuncewicz's fight to preserve the memory of the Jewish presence in Oświęcim through his educational activities and work to create anti-discrimination programs. As President Piszewski said in his remarks, "for Tomasz Kuncewicz, opposing hatred is patriotism. It teaches young people that diversity is not a threat but an opportunity and wealth, and true patriotism does not exclude anyone,



Tomasz Kuncewicz.
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but strives for knowledge, understanding and empathy.” The president also praised Kuncewicz’s success in bringing Jewish and non-Jewish Poles together by bringing important contributions of artifacts, stories and memories to the center of these exchanges. ■

Dan David Prize: Natalia Romik

Natalia Romik, postdoctoral fellow at the Foundation for the Memory of the Shoah, Paris, has been honored with a Dan David Prize for 2022. Romik is a public historian, architect, and artist whose work focuses on Jewish memory and commemoration of the Holocaust in Eastern Europe, particularly Poland and Ukraine. She has curated exhibitions, participated in rebuilding sites of remembrance, and begun the Nomadic Shtetl Archive Project, designed to engage local communities in remembering lost Jewish lives in small towns.

Romik's solo exhibition *Hideouts. The Architecture of Survival* is on view at the Zachęta National Gallery of Art in Warsaw and TRAFÖ Center for Contemporary Art in Szczecin until November 2022. She was a consultant for the design of the POLIN Museum core exhibition and took part in revitalizing the synagogue in Chmielnik in



Natalia Romik.
Photograph by Maciej Jaźwiecki. Courtesy of POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews

Romik is a public historian, architect, and artist whose work focuses on Jewish memory and commemoration of the Holocaust in Eastern Europe, particularly Poland and Ukraine.

Poland. Since 2016, she has been a member of the Senna architecture collective, responsible for an acclaimed exhibition at the Museum of

Jews in Upper Silesia in Gliwice and a permanent exhibition at the Brodno Jewish Cemetery in Warsaw entitled *Beit Almin: Eternal Home*.

The Dan David Prize, established at Tel Aviv University in 2001, “recognizes the work of historians, art historians, archaeologists, digital humanists, curators, documentary filmmakers, and all those who deepen our knowledge and understanding of the past.” ■

Marian Turski Receives Honorary Doctorate

Gazeta congratulates Marian Turski, president of the Association of the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw and president of POLIN Museum Council, on receiving an honorary doctorate from Maria Curie Skłodowska University (UMCS) on March 23, 2022. The award of “doctor honoris causa” is the highest award given and the greatest recognition by the university for people of outstanding achievement.

A celebrated social activist, historian, and journalist, Marian Turski was recognized by Prof. Dr. Hab. Iwona Hofman, director of the Institute of Social Communication and Media Sciences, for “noble fulfillment of his mission as guardian of the memory of Polish-Jewish history, restoring faith in the driving force of freedom of expression and the deep moral dimension of the commandment ‘Do not be indifferent’ that becomes a



Marian Turski.

Photograph by Maciej Jaźwiecki. Courtesy of POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews.

universal human obligation to one’s fellow man and the world.” This “Eleventh Commandment” was originated by Roman Kent, long-time chairman of the International Auschwitz Committee, who used this expression during his speech in 2015 on the occasion of the 70th anniversary of the liberation of the camp.

In his acceptance speech, Turski made numerous references to the current situation in Ukraine, saying, “Our indifference must be overcome with any kind of

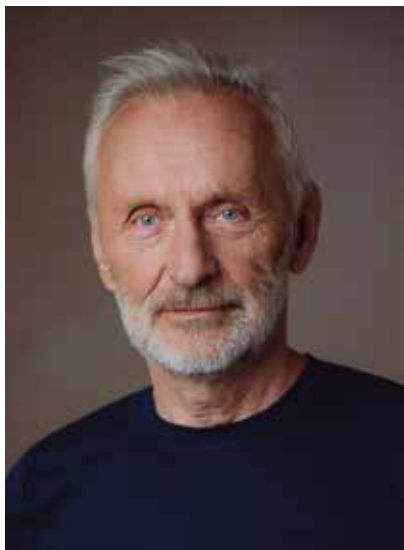
help we can afford. They (the Ukrainian people) are fighting for freedom, so each of us should think about how we can help them. Today it’s about not being indifferent.”

At age ninety-five, Marian Turski is still extremely active. He is the head of the historical section of the weekly *Polityka*, the long-term president of the Association of the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw, president of the International Auschwitz Committee since 2021, one of the co-founders of the POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews, and president of the Museum Council. He has devoted his life to working for human rights, for which he has received high awards both in Poland and abroad, including the Commander’s Cross with the Star of the Order of Polonia Restituta, the gold medal of merit for culture Gloria Artis, and the Honorary Prize of the UN Commissioner for Human Rights. ■

Andrzej Żbikowski Receives 2021 Hirschowicz Award

During a ceremonial gala at the Jewish Historical Institute (ŻIH) in Warsaw on May 12, Prof. Andrzej Żbikowski and the Świątokrzyski Shtetl Educational and Museum Center in Chmielnik received the 2021 Maria and Łukasz Hirschowicz Award. Żbikowski, a distinguished historian, received it in recognition of scholarly achievements, and the Świątokrzyski Shtetl Educational and Museum Center was recognized for its contributions to the commemoration of Jewish heritage. The award was created in 2001 by Maria Hirschowicz, a professor of sociology who died in 2007, and is presented annually by the Jewish Historical Institute to recognize work devoted to Jewish issues in Poland.

Andrzej Żbikowski directs the Scientific Department of the Jewish Historical Institute, with which he has been associated for almost forty years. He is also a co-founder of the Center for Research on



Andrzej Żbikowski.
Photograph by Grzegorz Kwolek. Courtesy
of the Jewish Historical Institute

the Extermination of Jews and a lecturer at the University of Warsaw. His works about the Warsaw Ghetto and Ghetto Uprising include the first full edition of Jürgen Stroop's report on the liquidation of the Warsaw Ghetto.

The Świątokrzyski Shtetl Educational and Museum Center was established in 2014 to commemorate the Jewish presence in pre-war Kielce voivodeship. Chmielnik today has a population of fewer than 4,000, but before the Holocaust had around 9,000 residents, 80

Przemysław Batorski

percent of whom were Jewish. The museum and educational center are housed in an 18th century synagogue and attract thousands of visitors from Poland and abroad each year. A wide range of educational and cultural programs explore the life and times of Khmelnytskyi Jews and Jewish customs, dance, and cuisine.

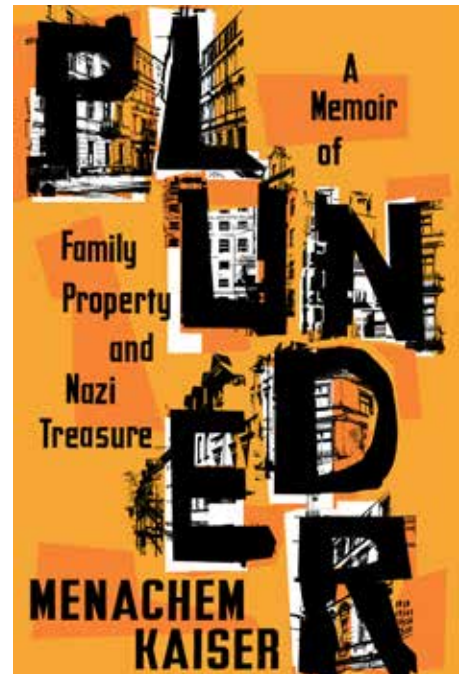
Representatives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the diplomatic corps, local government authorities, cultural institutions, and Jewish communal organizations attended the ceremony. "Today we will celebrate efforts to spread both the unique history of the Jewish community in Poland and their sudden and brutal destruction," said Yacov Livne, Israel's ambassador at the ceremony. "Recently, in Poland and Israel," he continued, "we celebrated the anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. It is crucial to continue research on this period for the sake of our common history." ■

Sami Rohr Prize for Literature Awarded to Menachem Kaiser

Menachem Kaiser has received the 2022 Sami Rohr Prize for Jewish Literature in non-fiction for his book *Plunder: A Memoir of Family Property and Nazi Treasure* (Mariner Books, 2021). In the book, Kaiser, a resident of New York City and grandson of a Holocaust survivor, describes his attempt to reclaim the family's apartment building in Sosnowiec, Poland. Among his many improbable encounters and findings he discovers that his grandfather's cousin not only survived the war but wrote a memoir while a slave laborer in a secret Nazi tunnel complex. Kaiser's remarkable journey raises questions about physical and spiritual legacy that go beyond personal quest. ■



Menachem Kaiser.
Photograph by Beowulf Sheehan. Used with permission



ANNOUNCEMENTS ACADEMIC PROGRAMS

International MA Program in East European Jewish Studies at University of Wrocław

The Taube Department of Jewish Studies at the University of Wrocław has launched a new International MA Program in East European Jewish Studies, taught entirely in English. Beginning in October 2022, the program will offer classes and seminars focusing on three key areas of Jewish life and experience in Eastern Europe. The first examines Hasidism, the second centers on Yiddish literature and society, and the third explores the modern history of Polish Jews. The program also offers a unique course on Applied Jewish Heritage, developed in collaboration with the Taube Center for the Renewal of Jewish Life in Poland.

The International MA Program in East European Jewish Studies, headed by faculty chair, Prof. Marcin Wodziński, features small classes, generous studentships, and a close-knit community of scholars and students from



International MA Program in East European Jewish Studies at the University of Wrocław.

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all over the world. For more information visit

<https://judaistyka.am.uni.wroc.pl/2022/03/24/international-ma-programme-in-east-european-jewish-studies/>. ■

GEOP: Global Education Outreach Program

June 28–30, “Jewish Initiative and Agency under Communism,” an International Conference at the University of Wrocław

Throughout most of the 20th century in the Soviet Union and from 1945 in the East Central European “people’s democracies,” Jews, along with other citizens, were victims or objects of the arbitrary policies of the communist state. The authoritarian model severely limited political subjectivity, restricting citizen initiative or agency. It is not surprising that decades of historical research on Jews under communist regimes studied them first and foremost as objects of the politics and policies of communist states and their various institutions.

The conference sought to promote an emerging new paradigm in the research of Jewish experience under communism. Its participants—

scholars from Europe, Israel, and North America—presented instances when forms of resistance or innovative reactions by Jewish elements to “Jewish policies” of the state produced unintended effects. The papers addressed such questions as, When and how did Jews influence their own political and legal situation in the different communist states? What were the boundaries of Jewish political, cultural, and social subjectivity and agency under communism? Specific topics discussed in this context were modern Jewish transnationalism, Holocaust commemoration and memory, elements of pre-Holocaust continuity and post-Holocaust Jewish life, global history, and micro-history.

July 6, “Hideouts. The Architecture of Survival,” International Conference at POLIN Museum

Natalia Romik’s exhibition *Hideouts. The Architecture of Survival* is presented at the

Zachęta National Art Gallery and in the Trafo Center for Contemporary Art in Szczecin. The conference accompanying the exhibition will focus on three main topics. First is new methods and approaches to studying past violence and the Holocaust with non-invasive tools, technologies, and artistic research. Second is site specificity: conservation, preservation on site, and commemoration of material traces of the Holocaust in East Central Europe. Third is artistic interventions and research practices as a tool for changing local memory culture and working with a local heritage. (For a more in-depth look, see Natalia Romik’s discussion of her project, and the exhibition announcement, in this issue of *Gazeta*.) ■

OBITUARIES

Ellen Frank

April 26, 1946–December 16, 2021

Tressa Berman

Ellen Frank was a maverick and artist who left university teaching to pursue her creative dreams. She nonetheless remained a teacher and educator until her passing at the age of seventy-five. The Spring 2020 issue of *Gazeta* reported on her global project, *Cities of Peace*, a series of approximately six-by-eight-foot paintings illuminated with gold leaf, each one a tribute to a world city that has been traumatized by war. Honoring each city's history and culture, the 2020 Polish installation at the Galicia Jewish Museum in Kraków was created and unveiled there as part of the Auschwitz Liberation Initiative. The monumental work, *Turnings: Sparking Light*, commemorated the 75th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau.

Ellen Eve Frank was born in Los Angeles on April 26, 1946. She earned a BA from the University of



Ellen Frank
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“Combining all her skills as a teacher, scholar, and artist, she touched many peoples’ lives and created magnificent paintings.”

California, Berkeley, an MA in English literature from Yale University, and a PhD in English literature and the visual arts from Stanford University. As a Fulbright Fellow from 1971 to 1973, she pursued graduate studies at the Courtauld Institute of

Art in London. Before leaving academia to pursue a full-time career as an artist, she was an assistant professor of English at the University of California, Berkeley, from 1973 to 1977. Her book, *Literary Architecture: Essays Toward a Tradition: Walter Pater, Gerard Manley Hopkins, Marcel Proust, Henry James*, was published by the University of California Press.

In 2004, Frank founded The Ellen Frank Illumination Arts Foundation (EFIAF), describing it as “a change agent, using art as a driver of peaceful coexistence among former enemies.” A year later, she created the Illumination Arts Atelier, teaching manuscript illumination and illuminated painting. Interns were accepted to work with 22-karat gold leaf, silver leaf, copper leaf, linen, vellum, paper, papyrus, and egg tempera. Upon embarking on the projects, her husband, composer Stephen Dickman, said, “We talked to some people about it, and most of them said

no, it's going to be too much work for you, don't do it. But she did it anyway. She proved everyone wrong. Combining all her skills as a teacher, scholar, and artist, she touched many many peoples' lives and created magnificent paintings."

Jerusalem, the first Cities of Peace work created at the Atelier, premiered at the Laurie M. Tisch Gallery in New York in 2005, and was exhibited at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine four years later, along with eight other Cities of Peace paintings. The project's website describes the works of art as "the vehicle, the context, for understanding suffering in war-torn cities... and the value of cultural diplomacy as a force for peace-building."

Frank herself stated that "through understanding the history and beauty of these great cities that have suffered strife, we can participate in the beauty of recovery and peace."

Dickman, who joined his wife at each city she was working, invariably found that "she would already have a group of twenty or thirty young people surrounding her and happy to come and work on



From the Auschwitz Liberation Project: *Turnings: Sparkling Light*. 23 karat gold leaf, red, champagne gold, palladium leaf, aquarelle on Belgian linen, 69" x 104," 2020.

the painting. She included everybody." As she messaged to the world on the Cities of Peace website: "The works we create with artists, scholars and students the world over, purposely embrace beauty: eschewing images of violence is a governing principle. Neuroscience supports my commitment to beauty. Images of violence stimulate neural pathways to rage, whereas beauty stimulates the brain's capacity for peace and compassion."

Frank's many awards included grants from the National Endowment for the Arts, the Ford Foundation, the American Institute of Graphic Arts, the Pollock-Krasner Foundation, the New York State Council on the Arts, and the New York Foundation

for the Arts. In 2018, she was named a Fulbright Specialist in Peacebuilding and Reconciliation, a program established by the US Department of State.

Her husband is traveling the world to secure a permanent home for the twelve Cities of Peace paintings and affirm Frank's legacy as an artistic ambassador for peace. ■

For more information about the Cities of Peace Illuminated, please visit: CitiesOfPeace.org

Tressa Berman, PhD, is an anthropologist, art curator, and managing editor at Gazeta.

Daniel Passent

April 28, 1938–February 14, 2022

Antony Polonsky

Daniel Passent, who died in February at the age of eighty-three, was a leading Polish journalist, who for more than sixty years was associated with the weekly *Polityka*. Born in Stanisławów, his mother was a nurse and his father an agronomist who were both murdered in 1944. He had no memories of them because he was hidden on his own, above all in the district of Praga in Warsaw. As he wrote in 2018: “I was saved by Poles and Jews and my parents were betrayed by Poles; both were citizens of the Polish state.”

He began his journalistic career in 1954 writing for the journal *Sztandar Młodych*, one of the main instigators of the political unrest which led to the coming to power of the national communist Władysław Gomułka in October 1956. He also wrote sketches and monologues for cabarets such as *Pod Egidą* and *Dudek*. He is best



Daniel Passent
Wikimedia Commons

known for his connection with *Polityka* in which his first article, with the characteristic title “Is Econometrics a Bourgeois Science?” appeared in 1958. One of his major journalistic coups was his publishing the memoirs of Adolf Eichmann in 1961.

Describing his relationship to the journal, he wrote in 2018, “In *Polityka*, I fulfilled my dream to become a writer of feuilletons.” Certainly he was a master of this genre which he used to promote his vision of the open, pluralistic, and

tolerant society which he hoped Poland would become and to give his opinion on a wide range of issues, political, international, and cultural. His authority was widely recognized. According to Jerzy Baczyński, the present chief editor of the paper, speaking at his funeral, “Daniel was more than a journalist at *Polityka*. He was *Polityka*.” He also adapted well to the Internet, publishing from 2006 on the *Polityka* website a blog with the punning title “En passant” and teaming up with his daughter Agata Passent to produce a podcast in which he discussed his life, values, work, and journalism in Poland. From 2012 he was the host of a radio program on TOK-FM with the title “Passent’s Guests.”

He had a stipendium at Princeton in 1962–63 and in 1980 held a Nieman fellowship at Harvard. Between 1990 and 1994,

while in Boston, he edited *World Papers*, a summary of international affairs which was appended as a supplement to more than twenty newspapers in different countries. Between 1997 and 2001 he was Polish ambassador to Chile.

Passent was a prolific author. Among his many books are *Rozbieram senatora* (I Undress a Senator, Warsaw 1973), an account of his trips to America; *Choroba dyplomatyczna* (Diplomatic Illness, Warsaw, 2002), a description of his service as ambassador; and *Passa: z Danielem Passentem rozmawia Jan Ordyński* (Warsaw, 2012), an extended interview with Jan Ordyński. His last book, *W 80 lat dookoła Polski* (Around Poland for Eighty Years, Warsaw 2018), is a selection of his journalism and an account of recent Polish history.

Among his decorations are the Commander's Cross of the Order of Reborn Poland and the Golden Cross of Service. Passent was a unique individual whose contribution

to Polish journalism was enormous and who will be sadly missed. We express our condolences to his wife Marta Dobromirska-Passent and his family. ■



3D scan of Józef oak tree.

Photograph by Przemysław Kluźniak (ArchiTube).

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If you would like to suggest an author or article for the next issue of *Gazeta*, or submit one yourself, please email: info@taubephilanthropies.org. The submission deadline for the next issue is **September 15, 2022**.

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



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