

Gazeta

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TAUBE
PHILANTHROPIES

Editorial & Design: Fay Bussgang, Julian Bussgang, Dr. Antony Polonsky, Shana Penn, Vera Hannush, Alice Lawrence, Maayan Stanton, LaserCom Design. Front Cover: "Clover Leaf Map," a stylized illustration with Jerusalem at the center, adopted by the Jewish Culture Festival to convey its 2016 theme of "diaspora." Illustration: Heinrich Bünting, *Itinerarium Sacrae Scripturae* (Travel through Holy Scripture), 1581. Back Cover: Ride For The Living, 2015, hosted by the JCC Kraków.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Message from Irene Pipes 2

Message from Tad Taube and Shana Penn 3

FEATURE STORY

The Great Yes and My Grandmother's Legacy
By Prof. dr hab. Tomasz Tadeusz Koncewicz 4

SCHOLARSHIP

University of Wrocław's Department of Jewish Studies Receives Capital Grant 9

POLIN Museum and Jewish Historical Institute Announce Recipients of
Global Education Outreach Program (GEOP) Research Fellowships 10

NEW PUBLICATIONS

Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry, Volume 29: "Writing East European Jewish History"
By Dr. Antony Polonsky 12

Poland and Polin: New Interpretations in Polish-Jewish Studies
By Dr. Irena Grudzińska-Gross 13

AWARDS

POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews Honored with
Two European Prizes 15

Taube Philanthropies Names Two Scholars as
2016 Irena Sendler Memorial Award Recipients 17

MUSEUMS

"Paint What You See: The Art of Helga Hošková-Weissová":
New Temporary Exhibition at Galicia Jewish Museum
By Jakub Nowakowski 19

Maria Pietchotka,
one of two 2016
Irena Sendler Award
recipients, in front
of the replica of
the Gwoździec
Synagogue at the
POLIN Museum



CULTURE

Jewish Culture Festival Celebrating 26th Year: June 25-July 3, 2016

By Robert Gądek 21

NEWS

Hillel Opens in Warsaw

By Vanessa Gera 23

A New House of Prayer in Warsaw

By Julian & Fay Busgang 24

Ulma Museum Opens

By Julian & Fay Busgang 25

Menora Info Punkt Opening

..... 26

FILM

The Institute for Polish-Jewish Studies Film Showings

By Dr. Antony Polonsky 27

Two Polish Films at the National Center for Jewish Film

By Dr. Antony Polonsky 28

STUDY TOURS, EVENTS, CONFERENCES, AND FESTIVALS 29

OBITUARY

December 11, 1924 - April 26, 2016

Ryszard Fenigsen

By Dr. Antony Polonsky 32

Message from Irene Pipes

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

Founder of *Gazeta*

Dear Members and Friends,

I am sorry I have to start on a sad note. Rabbi Ben Zion Gold died a few weeks ago. He was a close personal friend, a wonderful human being who understood us all. We had a particular close bond having been both born and brought up in pre-war Poland. But he was not as lucky as I and spent the war years in German death camps, surviving by a miracle. After liberation he had a short time when he was anti anything that had to do with observing Jewish laws. When he was brought and adopted by the Gold family in the United States he went to Rabbinical school. After graduation he came to Harvard to be director of its Hillel. A great crowd came to his funeral both in the Brookline funeral home and to the cemetery.



Irene Pipes

We lost another member of our board, Ryszard Fenigsen, who was born in Radom, Poland in the same neighborhood as Ben. The two compared notes and discovered they lived almost next door. Rysiek, as we all knew him, was very helpful in editing our *Gazeta*. Antony has written an obituary that you can find in this issue.

On the cheerful side we were able to engage Dariusz Stola, director of the POLIN Museum in Warsaw, to come to Cambridge and address us on June 18 at 3 p.m. at the Harvard Hillel. We hope the meeting will be well attended for he can tell us in detail about the Museum and its tremendous success. I read in the last few days that it got two of the highest prizes given to a museum (also see article in this issue of *Gazeta*).

Additionally we sponsored two Polish films at the Jewish Film Festival organized by the National Center for Jewish Film at Brandeis University.

Hope all of us will have a lovely summer,

Irene Pipes
President

Message from Tad Taube and Shana Penn

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

The lead story in this issue of *Gazeta* describes a defining moment in the lives of two people caught up in the madness of the Holocaust. A gentile Polish teenager agrees to hide and care for a little Jewish girl, with all the dangers such a decision might entail. She could have said no, but she said yes, a Great Yes, as the story's author calls it. After the war, the two meet again, to their great joy, eager to keep in touch as they each try to recover a normal life.

Around them a similar story was playing out as Jews made their own defining choice: whether to leave Poland or stay and rebuild life in a ravaged land. For some of those who emigrated, Poland became a symbol of destruction. Others left with the hope of someday reestablishing Jewish life in Poland and honoring those lost – a vision shared with many Jews in the United States and elsewhere.

That hope is now becoming reality, as the stories in this issue document. The revival of Jewish life in Poland is the result of a Great Yes, a decades-long commitment made in Poland and around the world. We are now seeing something once only dreamed of Jewish life, culture, and memory are reemerging, not only at the POLIN Museum or the Kraków Jewish Culture Festival, but in places and events across Poland. We invite you to read on, and to join us in saying Yes in advancing this exciting and deeply gratifying revival.

Tad Taube and Shana Penn
Chairman and Executive Director



Tad Taube



Shana Penn

FEATURE STORY

The Great Yes and My Grandmother's Legacy

*For some people the day comes
when they have to declare the great Yes
or the great No. It's clear at once who has the Yes
ready within him; and saying it,
he goes from honor to honor, strong in his conviction.
He who refuses does not repent. Asked again,
he'd still say no. Yet that no – the right no –
drags him down all his life.*

—*Che Fece ... Il Gran Refiuto, C. Cavafis*



Ina Lancman at the Warsaw Archives, March 2013, during the formal return by the Archives of her father Naftali Hertz Kon's literary estate after the Regional Court ruled in the family's favor

This is the story of my grandmother, Czesława Kisielewicz Strag, and a little Jewish girl. It is a story showing the importance and difficulty of choosing rightly and wisely when time comes

calling. It is a story of one Yes, so simple in its expression and yet so great in its symbolism and consequences. It has exerted a lasting influence on me and continues to pose important questions.

By Prof. dr hab.

Tomasz Tadeusz Koncewicz

Fulbright Visiting Professor, University of California, Berkeley School of Law

Director, Department of European and Comparative Law, University of Gdańsk

History of the Great Yes

Rozalia Kateganer was born in Kańczuga, Poland, in 1935. Her parents escaped at the beginning of the War and arrived in Brzeżany, in the Eastern Borderlands (Kresy), but when persecution of the Jews began there in 1942, Rozalia's mother was captured by the Germans and never seen again. Her father wanted to find someone to hide his little girl. He decided to ask Czesława Kisielewicz, a 19-year-old Polish girl who lived next door, if she would take it upon herself to protect his daughter. Czesława agreed. She had her priest baptize the child and issue a birth certificate under the name of a girl of the same age she knew who had been sent to Siberia by the Soviets. Rozalia Kateganer became Maria Szkolnicka. Czesława tried to move out of her parents' house and find work to support herself and the child but was unable to do so. She was desperate for a

The Great Yes and My Grandmother's Legacy, Continued

solution and sought the advice of her family doctor, whom she knew and trusted. He advised her to send Maria to a Franciscan orphanage nearby in Podhajce. Mother Superior Helena Chmielewska, another remarkable woman with her own Great Yes, was made aware of the little girl's real origins and did not hesitate to receive her. She cared for her with love and dedication.

Maria's father was kept aware of her progress and sent contact information for relatives in the United States, in case he should not survive the war. Indeed, in 1944 he was captured by the Germans and, like his wife, murdered.

After the war, serendipity helped Czesława and Maria to reconnect. Amid the chaos and redrawing of the borders, my grandmother and her family were resettled to Nysa, in southwest Poland. One day, on her way to work, she saw a group of children led by a nun on a bridge over



The author's grandmother (left) and Maria (photo taken after Maria's baptism in Brzeżany)

the Nysa River. As it turned out, Maria's orphanage was also evacuated to Nysa. As unexpected as this meeting on the bridge was, it showed that the bond between Czesława and Maria was real and the two were meant for each other.

Maria started medical studies in Wrocław and became a pediatrician. My grandmother and her family settled for good in Wrocław, where my mother and I were born. Maria eventually joined relatives in the United States, where she married Marek Damaszek, himself a Holocaust survivor.

Throughout all these years Maria and Czesława stayed in touch. My grandmother visited Maria in the United States on numerous occasions, and Maria visited us in Poland. Maria corresponded with and supported Sister Helena Chmielewska for the many years that she lived, and visited her as well.

My grandmother passed away in March 2010. In 2014 Yad Vashem recognized my grandmother Czesława Kisielewicz Strąg, her mother Rozalia Kisielewicz, and Sister Helena Chmielewska as Righteous Among The Nations. Maria lives with her husband in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida.

Why does their history matter now, and how does it resonate with me?

My Translation of the Great Yes

During my law studies in Wrocław, I lived with my grandmother. It turned out that she needed my presence



Poet Naftali Hertz Kon, circa 1934

as much as I needed her comforting voice, strength, warmth, and especially her *pierogi ruskie* and *kotlety mielone*, which she made while singing! I found her stories captivating, yet I was so busy with my studies that I did not really reflect on the deeper meaning of our conversations. I needed more time to grow up and understand what truly matters in life and a case to test my understanding of her lessons. Meeting sisters Ina Lancman and Vita Serf and taking on their father, Naftali Hertz Kon's case was to become

such a perspective-changing experience. Kon was among the last generation of Yiddish poets born in prewar Eastern Europe. He was often imprisoned for his writings, first by the interwar Polish government and later by the Soviets for anti-Soviet writings (including an article about the Holocaust). In postwar communist Poland he was persecuted, imprisoned on the suspicion of spying, and ultimately sentenced for subversive writing. His literary estate was confiscated and never returned. With his family he emigrated to Israel, where he died in 1971.

I met his daughters in 2010 in New York. My mother's school friend, whom I was visiting at that time, took me to a send-off party for Vita. There I learned about Ina's heart-wrenching experience of reading her father's security police file at the Institute of National Remembrance and not finding his confiscated papers. When



Maria Damaszek
at work

Ina asked if I could help find a lawyer in Poland to assist in searching for the papers, I agreed to contact the Regional Warsaw Court upon my return to Poland.

I had no idea that this little Yes would put my convictions and ideals to the most severe of tests and bring back the lessons imparted from my grandmother.

I was not even sure whether the papers survived. Luckily for us, after a five-month search we found them at the Warsaw branch of the Polish State Archives, which had inherited the archives of the Warsaw Regional Court that sentenced the poet. Legally, the return of Kon's papers seemed to be a straightforward matter. The court had never ordered the papers' forfeiture. Kon had never lost the ownership of his papers, and now they legally belonged to his heirs.

The next six years proved how idealistic I was and

The author accepting
Yad Vashem medal
of the Righteous
Among
The Nations and
diploma on behalf
of his family



how unprepared the courts of new Poland were in facing the difficult past and the wrongdoings of their predecessors. The quest turned into an emotionally fraught legal quagmire. We were held hostage to laws not passed and issues not addressed by the young Republic of Poland in dealing with the communist judicial establishment and its crimes.

As the restitution case dragged on and prospects of success grew smaller, my persistence was fueled by the injustices that this man had faced. I began to see Kon's life as an inspiration. His poetry is a powerful testimony of a person who witnessed the destruction of the Yiddish world and culture in the Soviet Republic and in its satellite states. He stayed true to himself and refused to succumb to the political pressures and expectations imposed forcefully on his poetry. He kept saying his No, when everybody around

settled for a comfortable Yes. Writing and poetry underscored his deep belief in the poet's role in a society: speak the truth against all odds. Never back down in your convictions and be ready to defend them. Kon's case was also about an internal fight for my credibility. How could I teach my students about the inherent right to dignity and the rule of law, if I could not enforce these values in a real case?

Finally, after six years and 2,000 pages of legal pleadings, we won custody of the papers. I will always remember the touching moment, in March 2013, when the daughters cried upon the recovery of their father's literary estate at the State Archives. The most moving moment, though, came more than two years later before the Polish Supreme Court in Warsaw. To consider the mission accomplished, I wanted to hear the court declare that

the poet's conviction in 1963 was a sham proceeding, that he was an innocent victim. In June 2015, the Supreme Court acquitted Naftali Hertz Kon and quashed the judgment that found him guilty 52 years before. I felt a sense of closure, and I thought about my grandmother.

My 5 Nevers

Listening to her then had saved me now. She wanted me to grasp life as a process, and not just focus on the final destination. It matters how we live our lives and treat others, what we believe, and what we do. Good life is not about grand gestures, but about little things, a kind smile, an honest word of encouragement, here and now, every day, day by day.

My reflections on her wisdom led me to create my "5 Nevers."

First, never allow the limitations of others to become your own limitations. The moment you allow this, you stop living your own life and

Daughters Ina Lancman (left) and Vita Serf (right) celebrate the return of the literary estate at the Archives with this article's author (center)



start living someone else's. Second, never accept business as usual. Sometimes you have to stand up and let your voice be heard, regardless of what others say and think. Business as usual robs us of the courage to say No to comfortable routine.

Third, never accept the view, "No, that can't be done." Indeed, Kon's case is a testament to this comfortable narrative as people kept telling me all the time: "It can't be done." I reject this philosophy and see it as a convenient excuse for doing nothing.

Fourth, never compromise when fundamentals come into play. Sooner or later shortcuts will catch up with you.

Fifth, never look the other way when injustice happens. Speak up.

My 5 Nevers take me to a final question: How would I have behaved in those dark times? I simply do not know and this

makes me feel uneasy and uncomfortable. It looks like sometimes you can not have all the answers in advance. What I know is that life and its immeasurable diversity will in the end put you to the ultimate test. Then, you will "have it within you," or you won't. The story of my grandmother is about compassion, love for family, affection for the other, and persistence. She has left me this most beautiful and demanding legacy to fall back on in times of weakness, doubt, and discouragement, and gave me strength to believe that these could be more than mere words.

In later years, she recorded a tape for the Sisters of the Family of Mary who ran the orphanage in Podhajce. She said, "The moment I looked into those big eyes, I knew she was mine and what I should do." That was her Great Yes. In Maria's last letter to my grandmother in February 2010, she wrote, "Dear Czesia, my heroine, so

many years have passed but I still remember. You, young and beautiful, had courage to take care of me, a stranger, little, lost, and helpless, when everyone around looked the other way. Be strong and stay healthy for me."

My grandmother's Great Yes will forever live with my family and me. I can only hope that when the day comes, I will have what it takes to make the right choice and live by it. As Cavafis puts it, "It's clear at once who has the Yes ready within him." ■

Tomasz Tadeusz Koncewicz is currently a Fulbright Visiting Professor at the University of California, Berkeley School of Law. He is Director of the Department of European and Comparative Law of the University of Gdańsk and an attorney specializing in constitutional and human rights litigation before European supranational courts (www.tomasz-koncewicz.eu).

SCHOLARSHIP

University of Wrocław's Department of Jewish Studies Receives Capital Grant for Expansion

The Taube Foundation for Jewish Life & Culture has awarded the University of Wrocław's Department of Jewish Studies (DJS) a grant of \$100,000, to be distributed over two years. The grant will support the renovation of the Department of Jewish Studies' new location in Wrocław's historical center, close to the University's main campus. The space will provide an increased number of classrooms, offices, and conference and seminar rooms for the Department of Jewish Studies, as well as the DJS's first designated space for its ever-growing library. The grant will also cover the cost for equipping and furnishing the new space.

The Department is led by Prof. dr hab. Marcin Wodziński, a professor of Jewish history and literature. His fields of interest include Jewish material culture and the social history of Jews in nineteenth-century Eastern

"This is a great contribution towards the development of Jewish Studies in Wrocław... [and] important for the position of Jewish Studies more generally in Poland and in Eastern Europe."

– Prof. Marcin Wodziński

Europe, especially the history of Hasidism and Haskalah.

The Department of Jewish Studies at the University of Wrocław was established twenty years ago, just after the fall of communism. Providing one of the most rigorous Jewish Studies university programs in Poland, the Department has rapidly expanded in the past few years, quickly outgrowing its previous



Dr. Agata Rybińska (left) receives her doctoral diploma from Prof. dr hab. Marcin Wodziński (right) of the University of Wrocław's Department of Jewish Studies



Prof. dr hab. Marcin Wodziński (pointing) teaching students how to read *matzevot* (Jewish headstones) in Sieniawa, Poland

space. In recent years it has grown into an institutionally independent Department of Jewish Studies, part of the Faculty of Letters. ■

www.judaistyka.uni.wroc.pl/judaistyka/index.php

SCHOLARSHIP

POLIN Museum and Jewish Historical Institute Announce Recipients of Global Education Outreach Program (GEOP) Research Fellowships

New scholarly program, GEOP, bolsters the fields of Polish-Jewish Studies and Jewish Museum Studies

The POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews and the Emanuel Ringelblum Jewish Historical Institute are proud to announce the seven recipients of the inaugural Global Education Outreach Program (GEOP) Research Fellowships in Polish-Jewish Studies. There were 30 candidates from 26 universities from the US, Israel, and eight European countries. The seven recipients and their respective research topics are:

Katharina Friedla, Yad Vashem, *Topography, Experience and Memory of Life in Transit: Polish Jews in the Soviet Union (1939–1959)*



Photo: Alicja Szulc/POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews

Sofiya Grachova, Mandel Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, *Science and Ethnic Minorities in Eastern Poland/Western Ukraine, 1921-1947*

Mariusz Kałczewiak, Tel Aviv University/Justus Liebig University Giessen, *“Be Loyal to Poland!” Polish Jews in Argentina and Their Ties to the Old Homeland, 1916-1939*

Urszula Madej-Krupitski, UC Berkeley, *Mapping Jewish Poland: Material Culture, Everyday Life and Identity Negotiations in the Interwar Period*

Alicja Maślak-Maciejewska, Jagiellonian University, *Kraków Progressive Synagogue in the 19th century*

Jolanta Mickute, Vytautas Magnus University, *Modern, Zionist, Feminist: The Politics of Culture, Ethnicity, and Gender in Interwar Poland, 1918-1939*

POLIN Museum and Jewish Historical Institute Announce Recipients of Global Education Outreach Program (GEOP) Research Fellowships, Continued

Natalia Romik, University College London, *Post-Jewish Architecture of Memory within Former Eastern European Shtetles*

The members of the Selection Committee for GEOP research fellowships are:

Antony Polonsky, POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews, Warsaw, Chair

Jan Doktor, Emanuel Ringelblum Jewish Historical Institute, Warsaw

Marc Epstein, Vassar College, Poughkeepsie, NY

Michał Galas, Jagiellonian University, Kraków

Monika Garbowska, Maria Curie-Skłodowska Museum, Lublin

François Guesnet, University College, London

Samuel Kassow, Trinity College, Hartford, CT

Erica Lehrer, Concordia University, Quebec, Canada

Mirjam Rajner, Bar Ilan University, Ramat Gan, Israel

Moshe Rosman, Bar Ilan University, Ramat Gan, Israel

Marc Slobin, Wesleyan, Middletown, CT

Marcin Wodziński, University of Wrocław

Andrzej Żbikowski, Emanuel Ringelblum Jewish Historical Institute

Genevieve Żubrzycki, University of Michigan

Jolanta Żyndul, POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews

GEOP applications are reviewed on an annual basis. For more information, please refer to: www.polin.pl/en/geop

About GEOP:

GEOP aims to strengthen POLIN Museum as an international center for intellectual exchange and collaborations in the fields of Polish-Jewish Studies and Jewish Museum Studies.

GEOP supports research fellowships, scholars-in-residence, post-doctoral seminars, distinguished lectures, conferences, publications, and the development of digital resources. Through GEOP, POLIN Museum partners with the Emanuel Ringelblum Jewish Historical Institute and numerous universities and research institutions in Poland and worldwide.

GEOP is generously supported by the William K. Bowes, Jr. Foundation, the Taube Foundation for Jewish Life & Culture, and the Association of the Jewish Historical Institute of Poland. ■

www.polin.pl/en/geop



NEW PUBLICATIONS

POLIN: STUDIES IN POLISH JEWRY, VOLUME 29

“Writing East European Jewish History”

EDITORS: NATALIA ALEKSUN, BRIAN HOROWITZ, ANTONY POLONSKY

This volume of *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry* consists of scholarly articles devoted to the development of Jewish historiography in three East European hubs: the Russian Empire, Congress Poland, and Galicia in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Jewish history played an important role in the lives of both professional scholars and ordinary Jews living in the Russian Empire, the semi-autonomous Kingdom of Poland, and Austrian Galicia. Beyond providing Jewish historians with a sense of mission and Jewish readers with a connection to the past and its meaning, the production and consumption of Jewish history in Eastern Europe evolved in a broader climate of material and political instability. Many of the historiographical questions that Jewish writings sought to answer remain at the heart of the scholarly discourse of East European Jewish history as a field. Should the history

of Eastern European Jewish history be written primarily in the regional context or alternatively as part of a broader Jewish narrative? What was the nature of Jewish-Gentile relations? Was the Jewish culture that emerged in Eastern Europe *sui generis* or deeply influenced by the exchanges with non-Jewish neighbors?

We have attempted to look beyond established paradigms..., adding to a growing literature that seeks to transcend the trope of Jewish cultural insularity.

We have attempted to look beyond established paradigms by examining the relationship between the writing of Jewish and non-Jewish histories in Eastern Europe, adding to a growing literature that seeks to transcend the trope of Jewish cultural insularity.

By Dr. Antony Polonsky
Editor-in-Chief, Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry
Chief Historian, POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews

We seek to explore the tension between the practice of exploring the Jewish past in the communal setting and the need to inscribe Jews into the social, political, economic, and cultural history of the region. The volume also investigates the relationship between “history” – understood as chronicling the past – and “scholarly history” which sets out to analyze the past in accordance with academic methods that claim objectivity.

Publication of the volume has been possible thanks to grants from the Mirisch and Lebenheim Charitable Foundation, the Salo W. and Jeannette M. Baron Foundation, the Koret Foundation, the Lucius N. Littauer Foundation, and the American Association for Polish-Jewish Studies. ■

www.polishjewishstudies.pl/polin.html

NEW PUBLICATIONS

Poland and Polin

NEW INTERPRETATIONS IN POLISH-JEWISH STUDIES

EDITORS: IRENA GRUDZIŃSKA-GROSS, IWA NAWROCKI

In the Summer 2015 issue of *Gazeta*, Dr. Jessie Labov reported on a Polish/Jewish Studies Initiative that aims to bridge the gap between the two traditionally separate academic domains. The first meeting of the Initiative was held in March 2014 at Ohio State University, and was described in that *Gazeta* article. The second workshop took place in April 2015 at Princeton University, and the third, by this time quite a large conference, was held in April 2016 at the University of Illinois, Chicago. In April 2017 the fourth meeting will take place at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.

We began these encounters, meetings, and conferences with a somewhat modest vision of the interest the topic would inspire. It turns out, however, that the interest is huge on the part of both scholars and donors, and the intellectual and emotional involvement of the

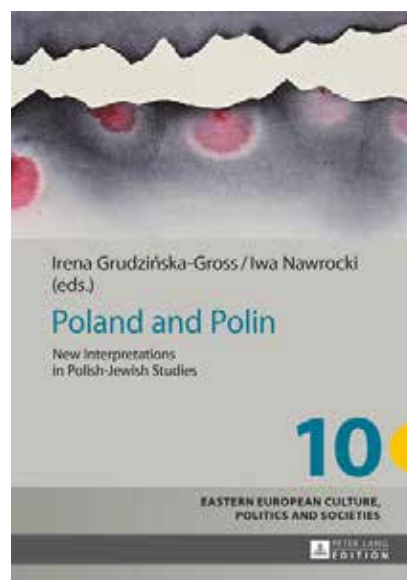
participants is intense. The proof is in the collection of papers delivered at the second workshop, held at Princeton University on April 18-19, 2015. Published by Peter Lang and edited by me and Iwa Nawrocki, a graduate student at Princeton, the volume appeared just in time for the April 2016 Chicago meeting.

The Princeton workshop was organized around the analysis of the then most spectacular event in Polish/Jewish matters: the opening of the POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews. Some conference participants were linked to the creation of the Museum, some were its critics. Other panels had to do with the “Jewish turn” in Polish culture, Polish/Jewish memory work, cultural diplomacy, and the studies of Yiddish culture. There were several divisions among the participants of the Princeton conference. The scholars of Yiddish culture focused on the ways of teaching points of contact between Polish

By Dr. Irena Grudzińska-Gross

*Department of Slavic Languages
and Literatures*

Princeton University



and Yiddish cultures. Some American scholars were interested in complicating and normalizing the history of Jews of Eastern Europe: no more “persecution, passivity, piety, and poverty.” That perspective was shared with the creators of the Museum, who were proud of the Museum showing Jewish pre-Holocaust life in all its vibrancy. Other scholars underlined the difficulty the Museum faces in insisting on the wonders of life in a gallery located deep inside the rubble of the Warsaw Ghetto. These

Poland and Polin, Continued

critics saw in this insistence a way of putting aside the memory of anti-Semitism that accompanied that life and of the Holocaust that cut it short. The same objective would inspire the surrounding of the Museum by the monuments to the Righteous: this was an effort to close the debate about the Second World War in occupied Poland by creating symmetry between Polish and Jewish suffering. The atmosphere of the conference was very heated.

The collection of papers does not represent faithfully the entirety of discussions. No scholar who worked on or in the POLIN Museum contributed to the volume. We do have, however, a very deep and detailed critique of various aspects of the Museum and of the ramifications of its narrative and visual choices. Out of the eighteen papers delivered at the conference, eight are presented in the collection. In addition, the volume contains two papers that were not read

Panels had to do with the “Jewish turn” in Polish/Jewish memory work... The discussions were fierce, voices were raised. The “Jewish turn” is very much on.

during the conference, as well as the conference’s agenda, speakers’ bios, and a report of the proceedings prepared by Dr. Geneviève Zubrzycki. The report delineates the contours of the controversy that erupted among the participants and indicates the main ideas expressed in all the papers and exchanges that took place at the conference. The discussions were fierce, voices were raised. The “Jewish turn” is very much on. ■

*Irena Grudzińska-Gross/Iwa Nawrocki (eds.)
Poland and Polin. New Interpretations in Polish-Jewish Studies, Peter Lang, Frankfurt, 2016*

www.peterlang.com/index.cfm?event=cmp.ccc.seitenstruktur.detailseiten&seitentyp=produkt&pk=89031&concord-eid=266666

AWARDS

POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews Honored with Two European Prizes

This spring, the POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews received two highly prestigious awards: the European Museum Academy Prize and the European Museum of the Year Award.

In 2010, the European Museum Academy established the **European Museum Academy Prize** with the aim of recognizing organizations, researchers, and cultural institutions that create pioneering museums and develop projects destined to influence the development of museological discourse at the international level. This May, the 2016 prize was given to the POLIN Museum. In doing so, the jury wrote:

“POLIN Museum meets the criteria for this prize at its maximum. It is not just an excellent museum but a state-of-the-art cultural institution which reaches diverse publics all over the world. That is why it deserves the title of a ‘Total Museum.’ The diversity and variety of its activities and the scope of its aims and goals makes



The Egg, by Henry Moore, in front of POLIN Museum. The sculpture is given for one year to the museum honored with the European Museum of the Year Award

it a unique institution with a worldwide impact. The institution meets the criteria for the European Museum Academy Prize perfectly.”

“The European Museum of the Year Award is the oldest and most prestigious prize for a museum in Europe.”

The jury additionally noted that apart from its impressive Core Exhibition – a journey through the 1,000-year history of Jews in Poland, the institution also offers the following key elements:

The Global Education Outreach Program, promoting Polish-Jewish studies internationally by supporting fellowships, seminars, lectures, research workshops, conferences, and publications;

The Resource Center, providing free access to Polish and international databases dedicated to Jewish history and genealogy, including My Heritage, USC Shoah Foundation, the Central Judaica Database, etc.;

The Virtual Shtetl portal, containing information about 2,000 towns inhabited by Jews in the territories of Poland, Belarus, Ukraine, Lithuania, and Russia with details on synagogues, cemeteries, and so on. It is a social network created by thousands of users and contributors worldwide;

The Museum on Wheels, a traveling exhibition about the history and culture of Polish Jews that visits 47 towns all over the country. Each town can adapt it to its own history.

POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews Honored with Two European Prizes, Continued

The Prize ceremony will take place during the Annual General Meeting of the Europeana Network Association in Riga, on November 8, 2016.

On April 9, POLIN Museum received the 39th Annual **European Museum of the Year Award**, presented by the European Museum Forum at its 2016 Award Ceremony held in San Sebastian, Spain. The POLIN Museum placed first from among 49 museums representing 24 countries and a diverse range of themes, including the arts, sciences, and history.

The European Museum of the Year Award, the oldest and most prestigious prize for a museum in Europe, was established in 1977 under the auspices of the European Commission. The jury looks for “enterprise and innovation that enhances the public quality of the museum” and “new developments that are likely to have a significant influence in the national and international museum field.”

“This is the first time in the 39 years of the award that a museum in Poland has received this award.”

The jury wrote of POLIN Museum: “The long-shared history between Jewish people and other people of this region of the world is one of a continuously negotiated co-existence through conflict as well as cooperation, integration, and assimilation. For very large and very diverse audiences POLIN now serves as an absorbing place to confront and examine the perpetually relevant questions of how a co-existence, however fraught, can suddenly transfigure into an absolute rupture, into the near eradication of a whole population and destruction of a culture.”

This is the first time in the 39 years of the award that a museum in Poland has received this award. The winner holds The Egg, by the celebrated English sculptor Henry Moore, for the year of the award. ■

europeanmuseumacademy.eu

www.polin.pl/pl/aktualnosci/2015/12/22/polin-europejskim-muzeum-roku-2016

AWARDS

Taube Philanthropies Names Two Scholars as 2016 Irena Sendler Memorial Award Recipients

Award Remembers "Righteous Gentile" Sendler and Honors Polish Citizens for who Preserve Jewish Heritage

Taube Philanthropies has named two scholars whom it will honor with its 2016 Irena Sendler Memorial Award: **Monika Adamczyk-Garbowska**, professor of English and Comparative Literature at the Maria Curie-Skłodowska University in Lublin, who has made significant contributions, in Poland and internationally, to both teaching and publishing in Jewish and Yiddish literature studies; and **Maria Piechotka**, renowned architect and author of several groundbreaking publications that have preserved architectural memory of buildings destroyed in the war, especially wooden synagogues.



Prof. dr hab. Monika Adamczyk-Garbowska

The Irena Sendler Memorial Awards, named for the social worker who saved hundreds of Jewish children from the Warsaw Ghetto during the Nazi occupation, will be presented at two different ceremonies. During the Jewish Culture Festival in Kraków, on July 1st in the Tempel Synagogue, the award will be given to Prof. dr hab. Monika Adamczyk-Garbowska. The award precedes the First Annual Memorial Concert for Dr. Jan Kulczyk (1950-2015), one of the Distinguished Benefactors of POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews, who was an Irena Sendler Memorial Awardee in 2015. The concert will be performed by Diwan Saz, a



Maria Piechotka

world-renowned Israeli-based ensemble, as part of the 26th Jewish Culture Festival. The second award ceremony, for Maria Piechotka, will take place in Warsaw at a future date in 2016.

Honoree Prof. dr hab. Monika Adamczyk-Garbowska (Professor of American and Comparative Literature, Maria Curie-Skłodowska University, Lublin) has made invaluable contributions to teaching and publishing in Jewish and Yiddish literature studies. She is the author, editor, and translator of many books, including key works on the life and legacy of Isaac Bashevis Singer. Her books published in English

Taube Philanthropies Names Two Scholars as 2016 Irena Sendler Memorial Award Recipients, Continued

include: *Jewish Presence in Absence: The Aftermath of the Holocaust in Poland 1944-2010* (2014, co-editor) and *Contemporary Jewish Writing in Poland: An Anthology* (2001, with Dr. Antony Polonsky). Professor Adamczyk-Garbowska has served on the editorial board of *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry*, was the 2006-2007 Ina Levine Scholar-in-Residence at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, and in 2004 was awarded the Jan Karski and Pola Nireńska Prize from the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, in New York, for her research and teaching of Jewish culture and Yiddish literature and language.

Honoree Maria Piechotka was active in the Warsaw Uprising and in 1944 began her efforts to record the architectural detail of destroyed buildings, with a special focus on wooden synagogues. Together with her husband Kazimierz Piechotka, she co-authored several books

on the subject, including *Gates of Heaven: Wooden Synagogues on the Territory of the Former Republic*, published in 1957, which has become the seminal work in the field. In 2000, she and her husband were awarded the Jan Karski and Pola Nireńska award from the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research. Many generations of scholars and architects who study wooden synagogues look and will look to their groundbreaking, pioneering research.

About the Irena Sendler Memorial Award:

Nominations for the annual award are reviewed by a panel of Taube Philanthropies advisory board members and Jewish cultural leaders in Poland. Previous awardees include Janusz Makuch, director of the Jewish Culture Festival, Kraków (2008); Jan Jagielski, archivist, Emanuel Ringelblum Jewish Historical Institute (2009); former President Aleksander Kwaśniewski (2010);

the late Magda Grodzka-Gużkowska, who risked her life to help Irena Sendler rescue Jewish children from the Warsaw Ghetto (2011); eminent scholars Prof. Dr. Maria Janion and Dr. Jolanta Ambrosewicz-Jacobs (2012); Bogdan Zdrojewski, Minister of Culture and National Heritage; Hanna Gronkiewicz-Waltz, Mayor of Warsaw (2013); Malgorzata Niezabitowska, author and journalist; Tomasz Pietrasiewicz, director of the Grodzka Gate—NN Theatre Center (2014); Krzysztof Czyżewski, director of the Borderland Foundation; and the late Dr. Jan Kulczyk, Distinguished Benefactor of POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews (2015). ■

For more information about the award program, please email: info@taubephilanthropies.org

nagrodairenyssendlerowej.pl/

MUSEUMS

Paint What You See: The Art of Helga Hošková-Weissová

NEW TEMPORARY EXHIBITION

By Jakub Nowakowski

Director, Galicia Jewish Museum

“Paint what you see,” is what 12-year-old Helga Hošková heard from her father when, in December 1941, she and her family were deported to the Terezin Ghetto and concentration camp. She spent the next three years of her life there, before being deported further to Auschwitz, Freiberg,

and Mauthausen, from which she was finally liberated.

Many years later she would become a famous painter, but it was in the Terezin Ghetto where her passion for painting was born. “Paint what you see,” the directive spoken by her father, sparked the burning

desire in Helga to capture the everyday life in the Ghetto. She brought with her a sketchpad and a box of watercolors, pastels, and pencils. Remarkably, these supplies would last her for almost the entirety of her three years in Terezin. The first illustrations were created on good-quality



Helga Hošková-Weissová

The Art of Helga Hošková-Weissová, Continued

paper. When this paper ran out, Helga drew on everything and anything she could find. She made about 100 drawings. Hidden by her uncle in a locker in one of the barracks, Helga's diary and illustrations survived the war. Today they are on display at the Galicia Jewish Museum, in Kraków, until June 12, 2016. ■

www.en.galiciajewishmuseum.org



Helga Hošková-Weissová



Helga Hošková-Weissová

CULTURE

Jewish Culture Festival Celebrating 26th Year

JUNE 25-JULY 3, 2016

By Robert Gądek

Deputy Director, Jewish Culture
Festival, Kraków

In a recently published report commissioned by the Kraków Municipality, “Culture in Kraków – the Current Situation and Perspectives for Development,” the Jewish Culture Festival in Kraków was named the most recognizable cultural event of the city. This is a great honor for the Festival, which celebrated its 25th anniversary last summer. Now we are hard at work on the details of the 26th edition, to be held between June 25th and July 3rd, 2016. The main themes are Diaspora and Shabbat.

The Festival will place the common perception of Jews as “eternal wanderers” in the context of the contemporary situation in Europe, including the refugee crisis on one hand and the emigration of Jews from Europe to Israel on the other. It will explore how Jewish political and social experiences have created the unique, diversified phenomenon



David Krakauer. Photo: Jewish Culture Festival, Kraków

The main themes of the Festival are the Diaspora and Shabbat.

called Israeli culture. Musical performances will illustrate Jewish geographical and cultural diversity and show the influence of other cultures: Frank London’s Glass House Orchestra with a complex legacy of Jewish Hungarian culture; the recent project by Israeli Boom Pam with Turkish female rock star Selda; contemporary music by Jewish composers Steve Reich and Osvaldo Golijov presented by the Kronos Quartet; vintage

sounds played by Tel-Aviv DJs from the Teder pop-up bar and radio; prewar Yiddish love songs by Ola Bilińska; and the Israeli Diwan Saz ensemble, to name only a few. The seven-hour-long open air Shalom on Szeroka Street concert, which has become a Festival trademark, will reunite these Diasporas into one. Lectures, workshops, and debates will address historical, social, and cultural aspects. Invited speakers include Diana Pinto, Konstanty Gebert, Stanisław Krajewski, Krzysztof Czyżewski, as well as Edwin Seroussi and Noa Argov.

Jewish Culture Festival Celebrating 26th Year, Continued

Czyżewski's Borderland Foundation will unveil their "Invisible Bridges," and the Kibbutz Contemporary Dance Company will perform at the Festival for the first time.

The Jews have remained true to their ancient traditions in part because of their most important holiday, Shabbat. Observed in many ways by Ashkenazi, Sephardic, Mizrahi, Orthodox, liberal, and secular Jews, Shabbat retains its essence: keeping the tradition. The audience will have a chance to explore and experience Shabbat throughout the Festival week. They will learn about preparing for and celebrating the holiday from lecturers and instructors including Benzion Miller, Michael Wex, Lea Koenig, and Jeff Warschauer. Together they will prepare a pop-up Shabbat in a former *Batei Midrash* (houses of prayer and learning) in Kazimierz.

Shabbat has also become a key element for the Festival's



Kibbutz Contemporary Dance Company (KCDC), Israel. Photo: Uri Nevo

Cheder Café, which has undergone a major renovation to better reflect the Festival themes of connecting generations and connecting tradition with modernity in a Jewish context. The Cheder Café brings to Kazimierz the flavors and ambience of Jerusalem and Tel Aviv. Cheder gives an opportunity to not only taste the flavors of Israel but to encounter Judaism on a very basic — cheder-like — level.”

For those who think there is no Jewish life in Kraków, come and be surprised. Don't worry if you can't make the Festival this year. Thanks to our Cheder Café, the Festival lasts all year round.

See you in Kazimierz – the Jewish heart of Poland! ■

www.jewishfestival.pl

NEWS

Hillel Opens in Warsaw

By Vanessa Gera

*Reprinted with permission of
Associated Press*

A major Jewish organization opened its first chapter in Poland on April 18, the most recent sign of a Jewish revival in the Central European nation that comes even as Jews have been recently fleeing Western European nations hit by Islamic violence.

Hillel International, the world's largest Jewish student organization, celebrated the opening of a branch at a ceremony in Warsaw. Hillel now has a presence in 18 countries.

Leaders of Hillel and members of Poland's Jewish community hailed the group's expansion, saying support for young college-age adults would help further the growth of Jewish life in Poland, connect them to other Jews worldwide, and nurture a connection to Israel.

"We are celebrating today the renaissance of Jewish life in Poland, for Hillel is the future of the Jewish people,"

said Rabbi Yossie Goldman, Hillel's director of global expansion.

Though still very small, Poland's Jewish community has been growing since the country threw off communism in 1989, with families increasingly revealing the secret of hidden Jewish roots to children and grandchildren, prompting some to return to the faith of their ancestors.

Hillel Warsaw's founding director is Magda Dorosz, a 31-year-old who only discovered her Jewish roots when she was 16.

Despite years of progress, some Polish Jews now feel unsettled by the rise to power last year of a conservative and nationalistic party, Law and Justice. While the party doesn't promote anti-Semitism, some Jews fear



Magda Dorosz, Hillel Warsaw Director, second from left

its nationalistic ideology and backsliding on the rule of law leave them more vulnerable. Official speeches didn't touch on that matter. But after the ceremony, Hillel International's director and CEO, Eric Fingerhut, told the Associated Press that "the best antidote to any concerns is a stronger and more vibrant Jewish life." ■

[bigstory.ap.org/article/
organization-opens-center-
poland-amid-jewish-revival](http://bigstory.ap.org/article/organization-opens-center-poland-amid-jewish-revival)

[www.facebook.com/
hillelwarzawa](https://www.facebook.com/hillelwarzawa)

NEWS

A New House of Prayer in Warsaw

By Julian & Fay Bussgang



Photo: Beit Centrum Ki Tov

The Friends of Jewish Renewal in Poland (FJRP) have announced that a new prayer group has been organized in Warsaw, named Beit Centrum Ki Tov, under the umbrella of Beit Polska, Poland's affiliate of the World Union for Progressive Judaism. The new synagogue, located on Nowogrodzka Street, will be a sister community to Beit Warszawa, the Reform congregation located in the suburbs of Warsaw. Beit Centrum Ki Tov is designed to meet the needs of Reform Jews wishing to have a place of worship in the city center.



Photo: Beit Centrum Ki Tov

The new congregation was honored by a very special gift of a torah from Temple Hadar Israel in New Castle, Western Pennsylvania, returning the torah to its country of origin.

Taking part in the opening of the prayer group on April 8, 2016 were both the former rabbi of Beit Warszawa, Rabbi Gil Nativ, and the current Rabbi, Boris Dolin. ■

polishjewsreviving.org/new-prayer-group-open-in-the-center-of-warsaw-called-beit-centrum-ki-tov

www.beitkitov.org

NEWS

Ulma Museum Opens

By Julian & Fay Bussgang

In the [Fall 2015 issue of *Gazeta*](#) we reported that a new museum to honor Poles who saved Jews was being created in the village of Markowa, five miles southeast of the town of Łańcut. The Museum is named after the Ulma family, who lost their lives because they had hidden a Jewish family in their home. It is thought that

some members of “the blue police” denounced Józef and Wiktoria Ulma (who was seven months pregnant at the time), and in March 1944, both the eight hidden Jews and eight Ulma family members were murdered by the Germans. The Ulmas were posthumously recognized as Righteous Among The Nations by Yad Vashem in September 1995.

The Polish daily *Republika* announced that the formal opening of the Ulma Family Museum took place on March 17, 2016. The President of the Republic of Poland, Andrzej Duda, and the Israeli Ambassador to Poland, Anna Azari, participated in the event. ■

muzeumulmow.pl



The Ulma Family Museum. Photo: Marshal's Office of the Podkarpackie Voivodeship

NEWS

Menora Info Punkt Opening

The POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews, in partnership with the Taube Center for the Renewal of Jewish Life in Poland Foundation, has opened up a new space in the center of Warsaw. Located within the popular local café-bakery Charlotte, *Menora Info Punkt* / Menora Info Point (MIP) is a portal for visitors and locals alike who would like to learn more about Jewish Warsaw, past and present, and to engage in its contemporary Jewish life. MIP consists of an office space where café-goers are invited to drop in and ask questions, a meeting room for Jewish organizations and NGOs of all kinds to use for their own activities, and a kitchen designed for cooking workshops.

MIP is located on Plac Grzybowski (2 Grzybowski Square), the same square that hosts the Chief Rabbi of Poland's office, the orthodox Nożyk Synagogue – the only synagogue in Warsaw

to survive World War II – the Jewish Theater, and a renovated pre-war Jewish Warsaw street.

In a celebration of this visibility and openness of Jewish culture, the French café's sign above the entrance advertises bread and wine in Polish, French, and Hebrew; the office's entrance from the café is adorned with a mezuzah; and the door is left open during café hours so that anyone interested in or curious about Jewish life can enter and learn. The kitchen, though not yet kosher, is specifically for workshops and tastings of Jewish cuisine – the first such culinary initiative in Warsaw's burgeoning foodie scene. Charlotte serves blintzes, kreplach, challah, and other Jewish baked goods at this location. ■

www.polin.pl/pl/menora



FILM

The Institute for Polish-Jewish Studies Film Showings

The Institute for Polish-Jewish Studies, sister organization of the American Association for Polish-Jewish Studies, has recently been very active. On March 16, 2016, in cooperation with the University College London Department of Hebrew and Jewish Studies, it organized a showing of the award-winning documentary film *No. 4 Street of Our Lady* (2009), which recounts the incredible story of Franciszka Hallamajowa, a Polish-Catholic woman who, during the Second World War, risked her life, and that of her daughter, to save sixteen of her Jewish neighbors. Before the war, Sokal, a small town in eastern Poland – and now part of Ukraine – had around 6,000 Jews amongst its population. Only about thirty of them survived the Holocaust, half of this number thanks to Franciszka's courage and audacity. She passed herself off as a Nazi sympathizer, entertaining the enemy in her home while hiding, feeding, and caring for her endangered Jewish neighbors whom she had hidden. The film was

introduced by Dr. Joanna Michlic of Bristol University, the author of *Poland's Threatening Other: The Image of the Jew from 1880 to the Present* (2010), recently translated into Polish, and numerous other contributions about Polish-Jewish relations, both during the Holocaust and in the postwar period.

On June 14, 2016, the Institute will host the UK Premiere of *A Town Called Brzostek* (2014) directed by the award-winning Australian director Simon Target, which won the Ewa Pięta award for the best film at the Ann Arbor Film Festival in November 2015; the Humanitarian Award at the Polish Film Festival, Chicago, November 2015; and first prize at the Bucharest Jewish Film Festival. The film follows the story of the British professor Jonathan Webber as he journeys to restore an abandoned Jewish cemetery in a sleepy part of southern Poland. Both the unsuspecting inhabitants of Brzostek and the descendants of Brzostek's

By Dr. Antony Polonsky

Editor-in-Chief, Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry

Chief Historian, POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews



A Town Called Brzostek (2014)

Jews are thrown back into their own past, coming together to witness a once-in-a-lifetime event that firmly cements Brzostek in history. It is a touching and occasionally funny story of common human decency overcoming deep religious division. Among those who appear in it are the historian Norman Davies; Tad Taube, Chairman of Taube Philanthropies; Michael Schudrich, Chief Rabbi of Poland, and the journalist Anne Applebaum. Simon Target and Jonathan Webber will participate in a question-and-answer session after the screening. ■

www.polishjewishstudies.pl

phoenixcinema.co.uk/

PhoenixCinema.dll/

WhatsOn?Film=8629219

FILM

Two Polish Films at the National Center for Jewish Film

By Dr. Antony Polonsky

Editor-in-Chief, Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry

Chief Historian, POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews

The American Association for Polish-Jewish Studies sponsored two new Polish films at the 19th annual film festival of the National Center for Jewish Film, Brandeis University, which took place in Boston between May 4 and 22. The first of these was *Summer Solstice* (*Letnie Przesilenie*) (2015), directed by Michał Rogalski, previously known for light comedies. This searing drama, set in the summer of 1943 in provincial Poland under German occupation, follows two teenage boys. Polish railway worker Romek (played by Filip Piotrowicz) scavenges the train tracks for goods, immune to the fate of the human cargo passing by, while Guido, a German military policeman (played by the German actor Jonas Nay), who has been conscripted because of his love of jazz, is regarded by the Nazis as a degenerate. Guido, who is originally repelled by the tasks the police have to carry out, is gradually corrupted by the all-pervasive brutality of the occupation. With its vivid

characterization and arresting cinemagraphic visual style, the film exposes the brutality of war and the corrosive power of anti-Semitism. It won the award for the best script at the Montreal World Film Festival and the award for best cinematography and best supporting actress at the Gdynia Film Festival.

The second film was *Demon* (2015), directed by Maciej Wrona, who, tragically, took his own life shortly after the premiere of the film. In this chilling, modern interpretation of the Dybbuk legend, Piotr (played by the Israeli actor Itay Tiran) discovers human bones buried in the backyard of the Polish country home of his future in-laws on the eve of his wedding. These are the remains of one of the former Jewish inhabitants of the house. As the wedding celebration's bacchanalia spins out of control, this brilliant story of possession becomes an unflinching, allegorical censure of contemporary Poland, where the absence of Jews and the

failure to confront the legacy of Polish anti-Semitism give rise to ghosts who haunt the country's present inhabitants. Antony Polonsky introduced both films and conducted a question-and-answer session after each screening. ■



Summer Solstice (*Letnie Przesilenie*) (2015):

www.mfa.org/programs/film/summer-solstice



Demon (2015):

www.mfa.org/programs/film/demon

STUDY TOURS, EVENTS, CONFERENCES, AND FESTIVALS

STUDY TOURS

Exploring Poland/Polin Heritage Study Tour

August 2 - August 11, 2016

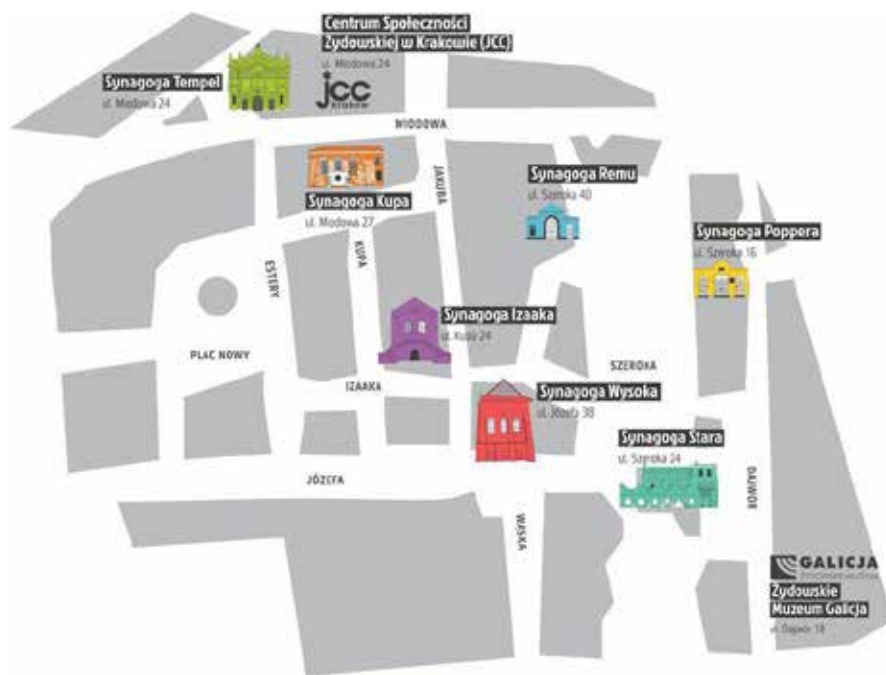
Poland

polandpolin.pl/educators-apply-now-august-tour

**APPLICATION DEADLINE:
JUNE 3, 2016**

This summer, the Taube Center for the Renewal of Jewish Life in Poland is holding a 9-day professionals study tour and development program for American educators, curators, and activists or arts educators who work in the fields of Polish or Polish-Jewish culture.

Participants will examine Poland's dynamic and complex history, explore multiple narratives through different perspectives, and challenge stereotypes and myths. Led by an academic faculty advisor, the program includes sessions with academics and leaders of cultural, civic, educational, and faith-based organizations.



Kazimierz synagogues; Illustration: Galicia Jewish Museum, for 7@Nite (see p. 30)

Connecting both professionally and personally with contemporary Poland, the participants will develop their own educational scenarios and projects for their students and peers, to be implemented after the summer program. ■

EVENTS

Ride For The Living

Ride: June 3, 2016

Accompanying events:

June 2 - June 5, 2016

Auschwitz-Birkenau, Oświęcim, and Kraków, Poland

www.friendsofjcckrakow.org/ride-for-the-living

Ride For The Living is a unique event where participants cycle 55-miles

Study Tour, Events, Conferences, and Festival, Continued

(90 km) from the iconic Auschwitz-Birkenau gate to the Jewish Community Center of Krakow (JCC Kraków) and participate in four days of educational and community programs. Ride For The Living is an annual event under the patronage of Chief Rabbi of Poland Michael Schudrich, who in 2016 will lead the event himself, which honors the Holocaust while celebrating the renewal of contemporary Jewish life in Poland today. JCC Kraków members, staff, volunteers, and friends from around the world will come together to raise awareness and funds for Kraków's Jewish community.

Funds raised from the inaugural 2014 Ride supported a JCC Kraków Holocaust Survivors' Mission to Israel. For most of these child survivors, it was their first time in Israel and their only opportunity to travel as a community. In 2015, riders raised more than \$150,000 to launch new educational

programs and support medical and welfare services for the JCC's Holocaust Survivor members. The 2016 Ride For The Living will support ongoing programming for all generations in the community, including Holocaust survivors, students, and children. ■

Satellite Rides For The Living

June 2 - June 5, 2016
USA

www.friendsofjcckrakow.org/satellite-ride-for-the-living-program

For those who cannot travel to Poland, JCC Kraków teamed up with the JCC Association of North America to offer a satellite Ride For The Living program to JCCs across the U.S. Participating JCCs will hold dedicated Ride For The Living spin classes where participants will symbolically cycle alongside Riders in Poland while learning about the renewal of Polish-Jewish life. ■

7@Nite

June 4 - June 5, 2016
Kraków, Poland

www.facebook.com/7atnite

An annual "Judaism-without-walls" event put on by the JDC Poland, the seven synagogues in Kraków's Jewish district of Kazimierz will be filled throughout the night with concerts, performances, exhibitions, and workshops. This year's theme is "Jews Around the World" and is open to the public. ■

CONFERENCES

Jewish Cultural Heritage: Projects, Methods, Inspirations

June 8 - June 10, 2016
POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews
Warsaw, Poland

www.polin.pl/en/education/conference-jewish-cultural-heritage-projects-methods

The three-day conference will explore issues related

Study Tour, Events, Conferences, and Festival, Continued

to Jewish cultural heritage in contemporary Europe – preservation, animation, engagement, and impact. The issues will be examined through the prism of specific projects and initiatives – historic sites, heritage routes, museums, exhibitions, educational programs, artistic interventions, and new media. Participants will share innovative methods, ideas, and good practices. Creative international networking will be the focus of the third day of the conference. ■

FESTIVALS

Festiwal Singera / Singer Festival

August 27 - September 4,
2016

Warsaw, Poland

www.festiwalsingera.pl

Showcasing Yiddish theater, films, music, and themed artistic exhibitions, the festival aims to “reconstruct” the arts and cultural scene

of interwar Warsaw. The Festival was started by the Shalom Foundation, a Polish initiative to re-animate Yiddish language and culture, on the 100th anniversary of Isaac Bashevis Singer’s birthday in 2004. Singer, the Festival’s namesake, was a Nobel Prize-winning Yiddish language author who captured much of the life and spirit of interwar Yiddish Poland. The Festival includes a recreated street of bookshops, newspaper stands, bakeries, and other small stores, providing a momentary experience of a culture that no longer exists today. ■

OBITUARY

December 11, 1924 - April 26, 2016

Ryszard Fenigsen

By Dr. Antony Polonsky

Editor-in-Chief, Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry

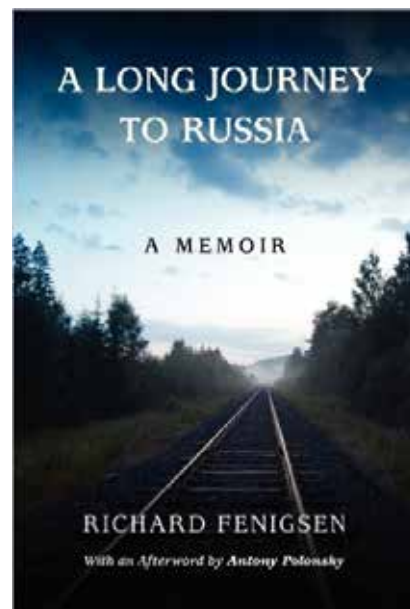
Chief Historian, POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews

Ryszard Fenigsen, a long-standing and active member of the American Association for Polish-Jewish Studies, died on April 26, 2016 at the age of ninety-one. He came from an acculturated Jewish family, in Radom, a town 60 miles south of Warsaw, which, on the eve of the Second World War, had a population of around 80,000, over 30 percent of which were Jews. His father, Ludwik Fenigstein, a trial lawyer with the largest practice in Radom, represented Jewish defendants accused of using violence to defend themselves in the notorious pogrom in Przytyk in March 1936.

Rysiek was a boy of fourteen when the war broke out. In his autobiographical account of his youth, *A Long Journey to Russia* (Waltham, 2013), he gives a vivid picture of the last years before the war, when he was preparing to take his exams to pass from the Tytus Chałubiński Gymnasium to its Lyceum as a preparation for entrance to medical school. He also notes the growing anti-Semitism in the country.

The Nazi invasion of Poland in September 1939 led to a rapid flight to the East to the areas which came under Soviet control as a result of the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact. Many of the refugees were Jews, who were well aware of the threat they faced. They included the Fenigstein family who fled to Lwów (Lviv). Educational institutions were re-opened and eventually Sovietized. Ryszard attended the King Kazimierz Wielki State Gymnasium and Lyceum.

From the spring of 1940, as part of the general hardening of Soviet policy in the region, the Soviets decided to apply to the refugees the policy of mass deportation. Among those arrested and deported in this way in spring 1941 were the Fenigstein family. After a two-week train trip, they arrived in Tursha, a forest settlement twenty-five miles northwest of Yoshkar Ola, the capital of the Mari Republic on the Volga. The Fenigsteins spent sixteen months in Tursha, where both Ryszard and his father worked as lumberjacks.



The Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union made Poland and the Soviet Union allies in the struggle against the Axis Powers. After protracted negotiations, a Polish-Soviet agreement was signed on July 30, 1941, which made provision for an amnesty of Polish prisoners, the release of prisoners of war, and the creation of a Polish army on Soviet territory. Among those released in this way was the Fenigstein family who now journeyed down the Volga to Astrakhan in the hope of making contact with other

Ryszard Fenigsen, December 11, 1924 - April 26, 2016, Continued

refugees from Poland. This trip exposed them for the first time to the vast scale of the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union and greatly shocked them. In comparison, the woods around Tursha seemed almost idyllic. Astrakhan proved to be swamped by refugees of all sorts and the family moved to Kazan and then to Yoshkar Ola. Ryszard worked as a stoker in a boiler room serving a large central heating system and then in an automobile repair facility. He spent his spare time reading widely in Russian literature.

In fall 1942, Ryszard was permitted to enroll in the Yoshkar Ola High School. Rysiek always viewed his time at exile in Russia as the happiest period of his life. He passed the very strict exam at the end of high school in Yoshkar Ola with flying colors and was very proud of this. Throughout his life he retained his love for Russian literature.

After the departure of the Polish Army and the breach

in Polish-Soviet relations in May 1943, Stalin sanctioned the creation of a communist controlled military force. He ended his military career in a Special Anti-Aircraft Artillery Battalion and participated in the march on Berlin.

Ryszard's father and mother were now able to return from Yoshkar Ola to Lublin in Poland where a Provisional Government had been established. They subsequently settled in Łódź, the largest Jewish settlement in postwar Poland, which unlike Warsaw had not been destroyed in the war.

In the fall of 1945 Rysiek entered the School of Medicine of the newly founded Łódź University, where he subsequently became friendly with Marek Edelman, one of the members of the command of the Jewish Fighting Organization in the Warsaw Ghetto. He supported himself during his student years by translating from Russian.

He was subsequently appointed, along with Edelman, as a cardiologist to the Department of Internal Medicine at the hospital of the Łódź medical school under the direction of the renowned physician, Professor Jerzy Jakubowski, with whom he wrote several books, among them *Aktywna terapia nadciśnienia* (*The Active Treatment of Hypertension*, Warsaw, 1962). Rysiek was the youngest person in Poland ever to be appointed to the position of medical docent. He subsequently worked as an internist at the Łódź city hospital and became the secretary of the National Association of Cardiologists. In the early sixties he received a half-year stipend to study in Great Britain and, on his return to Poland, created with his wife-to-be, Kira Bałandowicz, and Marek Edelman, the first Intensive Care unit ward in the Soviet bloc. When during the "anti-Zionist" campaign of 1968, Edelman was dismissed from his post in October, Rysiek, who was still employed, was

Ryszard Fenigsen, December 11, 1924 - April 26, 2016, Continued

able to find work for him in the Madurowicz hospital where their common friend Stanisław Gadzicki was the director. As he wrote in his obituary of Edelman, “I ceded to Marek twenty-two beds at my department.”

Shortly after this, Ryszard himself decided to leave Poland, moving to Denmark with his wife and his elder daughter Alicja, from his first marriage to Irena Henner, a sociologist and radio-journalist. His younger daughter, Janina, from his second marriage to Krystyna-Helena Olszewska, a hematologist, remained in Poland and only later moved to the United States. Rysiek subsequently emigrated to the Netherlands, where he practiced as a doctor until his retirement in 1990. While in the Netherlands, he came to see the institutionalized practice of terminating life as a new incarnation of the totalitarian contempt for individual human life and became an active campaigner against euthanasia. Here he

was again pursued by fate, when Kira died tragically in a car crash in 1983 when she was driving with her mother from the Netherlands to Poland.

Rysiek then moved to Cambridge, Massachusetts, to be with his long-standing partner, Genia Shrut, herself a Holocaust survivor from Kutno in central Poland. He was devoted to her and tended her lovingly in her final illness until her death in October 2003. He subsequently met Rose Sklare, the widow of the sociologist Marshall Sklare. Both in their eighties, they fell madly in love, married in 2007 and led a very active social and cultural life. Sadly, Rose’s gradual mental deterioration led her family to take her away from Rysiek and put her in a sheltered facility, denying him access. This broke his heart and undoubtedly precipitated his death.

Ryszard was a man of great intellect and a fine writer. His best work is his autobiographical *A Long*

Journey to Russia, which he dedicated to his wife Rose. This provides an important contribution to our understanding of the Second World War in Eastern Europe and is also very funny, reflecting Rysiek’s sly sense of humor. He wrote widely on medical topics and on questions of medical ethics, on which he published a number of books and articles. He contributed twice to *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry*, once in the debate on the Przytyk Pogrom and again when he wrote an obituary for his lifelong friend Marek Edelman.

He is survived by his two daughters, Alicja, an author and painter, Janina, a social and linguistic anthropologist, and Janina’s husband Jerzy, twin grandsons, a granddaughter, and two great granddaughters. He was a unique individual, a man of great erudition and charm, and he will be sorely missed. ■



Ride For The Living, 2015, hosted by the JCC Kraków



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