

- ◆ RICHARD S. DINNER CENTER FOR JEWISH STUDIES, GRADUATE THEOLOGICAL UNION ◆
◆ DEPARTMENT OF JEWISH STUDIES, UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA BERKELEY ◆
◆ TAUBE CENTER FOR JEWISH STUDIES, STANFORD UNIVERSITY ◆

present a

SYMPOSIUM

Thursday, April 10, 2008

5 PM to 7 PM

Graduate Theological Union ◆ CDSP Tucson Common Room
2451 Ridge Road • Berkeley



REPRESSION AND RESISTANCE: Communist Poland's Anti-Semitic Campaign and Student Protests of March 1968

PROGRAM

WELCOME

Naomi Seidman, Koret Professor of Jewish Culture and Director,
Richard S. Dinner Center for Jewish Studies, Graduate Theological Union
Tad Taube, Honorary Consul for the Republic of Poland and
Chairman, Taube Foundation for Jewish Life & Culture

SYMPOSIUM

CHAIR: Shana Penn, Visiting Scholar, Richard S. Dinner Center for
Jewish Studies, Graduate Theological Union

PRESENTERS:

Dr. Irena Grudzinska Gross, March '68 student protest
leader, Professor of Comparative Literature and Executive Director,
Institute for Human Sciences, Boston University

Konstanty Gebert, March '68 participant, journalist *Gazeta
Wyborcza* and founding publisher *Midrasz Magazine*

COMMENTATOR: Prof. John Connelly, Department of History,
University of California at Berkeley

FILM

Dworzec Gdański — "Gdansk Railway Station" (2007)
Documentary featuring interviews by acclaimed journalist Teresa
Toranska with Jews who emigrated from Poland in the late 1960s, after
suffering the Communist Party's anti-Semitic campaign.

RECEPTION

Following the panel and film.

BIOS OF SYMPOSIUM PANELISTS



IRENA GRUDZINSKA GROSS is Executive Director of the Institute for Human Sciences and Professor of Modern Foreign Languages at Boston University. A graduate of Columbia University (1982), she taught at Graduate Institute of Liberal Studies at Emory University and Comparative Literature at New York University. Her books include *Czesław Miłosz and Joseph Brodsky* (forthcoming) and *The Scar of*

Revolution: Tocqueville, Custine and the Romantic Imagination (1991), which had several editions in four languages. She edited several books on literature and the transformation process in Central and Eastern Europe and is the author of over 40 book chapters and articles published on these subjects in the international press. Between 1998-2003, she was responsible for the East-Central European Program at the Ford Foundation.



KONSTANTY GEBERT is a Polish journalist and Jewish activist, as well as one of the most notable war correspondents of various Polish newspapers. In 1979 he was one of the main organizers of the “Jewish Flying University,” a secret institution of higher education on topics forbidden by the Communist government of Poland. In 1980 he joined the Solidarity movement and was at the 1989 Round

Table negotiations between Solidarity and the Communist Party. Since 1990 he publishes a weekly political column in *Gazeta Wyborcza*, one of the largest Polish daily newspapers, and in 1997 founded the Polish-Jewish intellectual monthly magazine *Midrasz*. In 2005, he became the Polish representative of the Taube Foundation for Jewish Life & Culture. Author of eight books, his latest include the first set of commentaries on the Torah in Polish, a history of Israel’s wars since 1967, and a panorama of the European 20th century. A collection of essays on contemporary Polish Jewry and a history of Zionism and Israel will be published this year. He is currently a visiting professor at Grinnell College, Iowa.



JOHN CONNELLY, Associate Professor of History, at the University of California, Berkeley, received his Ph.D. from Harvard University in 1994. A comparative historian of Eastern Europe, Professor Connelly specializes in intra-bloc relations from 1945 to 1956, and particularly in educational policy in Poland, East Germany and Czechoslovakia. His publications include *Universities under Dictatorship* (2005), co-edited with Michael Gruttner; “Why the Poles

Collaborated So Little and Why that is No Reason for Nationalist Hubris,” *Slavic Review* 64(4), (Winter 2005); *Captive University: The Sovietization of East German, Czech, and Polish Higher Education, 1945-1956* (2000); “Humboldt Co-opted: East German Universities, 1945-1989” in *German Universities, Past and Future* (1997); and “Communist Higher Education Policies in Czechoslovakia, Poland, and East Germany,” Naimark and Leonid Gibianskii, *Eastern Europe* (1997).



SHANA PENN is a visiting scholar at the Graduate Theological Union’s Center for Jewish Studies, in Berkeley, where she is writing a book about the revitalization of Jewish culture in post-communist Poland. She created and directs the Jewish Heritage Initiative in Poland for the Taube Foundation for Jewish Life & Culture, in San Francisco. Her book, *Solidarity’s Secret: The Women Who Defeated*

Communism in Poland (2005), was awarded Best Book in Slavic, East European and Eurasian Women’s Studies by the American Association of Women in Slavic Studies. She is co-editor, with Jill Massino, of the collected volume, *Gender and Everyday Life under State Socialism* (forthcoming, Palgrave Macmillan). Her writings have appeared in *Beacon Book of Essays by Contemporary American Women*, *Journal of Women’s History*, *Johns Hopkins SAIS Review*, *The Forward* and *Gazeta Wyborcza*.

BACKGROUND

Repression and Resistance: Communist Poland's Anti-Semitic Campaign and Student Protests of March 1968

IN MARCH 1968, the students of Warsaw and other Polish cities took to the streets, demanding freedom of expression and democracy. The Communist authorities, under Party leader Gomulka, responded with a brutal clampdown, followed by a vicious anti-Semitic campaign, which exploited the fact that many student leaders were Jewish; in fact, some were children of members of the Communist elite itself. This campaign followed on the heels of Poland breaking relations with Israel after the six-days war, and purging its military and police of Jews. The anti-Semitic campaign, officially labeled “anti-Zionist” took the form of mass rallies and meetings denouncing the “Zionist Fifth Column”; Jews were expelled from their positions and jobs, students expelled from universities. The government-controlled media preached hatred. Intellectuals in general, not only Jews, were targeted.

As a result, some twenty thousand Jews, almost all of them assimilated and considering themselves Poles – the last remnant of a community of 3.5 million destroyed in the Shoah – left the country over the next two years, stripped of their citizenship and most belongings. Though cultural elites and Church leaders protested the campaign and the purge, many ordinary Poles were pleased by what they saw as the elimination of “Jew-Communists” whom they blamed for the viciousness of Stalinist oppression. Many others, however, were dismayed by this resurgence of racism,

this time with a Communist face. In the Communist party itself, the purge opened possibilities for advancement for younger, ethnically Polish apparatchiks, and enabled the forging of an alliance with pre-war fascist elements, which almost brought interior minister general Moczar, main instigator of the campaign, to power. The departure of leading academic and cultural figures left a gap in Polish intellectual life, and the entire campaign reinforced Poland’s image abroad as incurably anti-Semitic.

Yet the campaign had some paradoxical effects. The generation of 68 student activists became, in the years to follow, the spearhead of the country’s powerful opposition movement, which was to lead to the creation of “Solidarity” and eventually, twenty one years after the March events, to the downfall of the Communist system. Anti-Semitism, through its association with the Communists, became gradually anathema to the country’s patriotic elites, which led to a profound examination of Polish-Jewish relations. The Communist party, purged of its more idealistic elements, became more vicious and corrupt, which accelerated its downfall. And abroad, many march émigrés went on to have exceptional academic and professional careers, while maintaining ties with the burgeoning democratic opposition movement, organizing support for it and promoting its vision of a new, democratic Poland, which ultimately would prevail.



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