



A father and son hug farewell at Gdański Station.
Photograph by Elżbieta Turlejska. Courtesy of POLIN Museum.

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Message from Irene Pipes

President of the American Association
for Polish-Jewish Studies

Founder of *Gazeta*

Dear Members and Friends,

I am happy to report that an annual prize will be awarded to the author of the best book written on the history and culture of the Jews in Poland. The prize will be named after two pioneers of the study of Polish Jews, Professors Józef Krzysztof Gierowski and Chone Shmeruk. Together, they founded the Research Centre on the History and Culture of Jews in Poland at Jagiellonian University in 1986. It has since grown into the Institute of Jewish Studies.

The selection committee has been set up and the first award will be granted in 2018. Professor Michał Galas of Jagiellonian University and Professor Monika Adamczyk-Garbowska of Marie Curie-Skłodowska University are in charge of organizing the event and will help with choosing the book of the year.

I was sorry to miss the launch of *Polin: Volume 30* in London on the theme of Jewish education in Eastern Europe. It shows how Jewish education has long been an active force in the Jewish community, and in economic, political, and social forces. We all look forward to reading it.

Irene Pipes
President



Irene Pipes

Message from Tad Taube and Shana Penn

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



Tad Taube



Shana Penn

There is an old saying that people who don't know history are doomed to repeat it. This issue of *Gazeta* is dedicated to examining a pivotal event that merits renewed attention, partly for its importance in Polish and Polish Jewish history but also for its relevance to the charged political atmosphere in today's Poland.

"As someone who had been visiting and studying Poland since the early 2000s," writes historian Rachel Rothstein in one of this issue's essays, "it surprised me that few American Jews were familiar with the event that had made such a profound traumatic impact on the Polish Jewish community." She is referring to the Warsaw regime's March 1968 campaign to restore discipline to the Communist party and the nation through the persecution of students, labor activists, and Jews, among others. The so-called anti-Zionist campaign caused thousands of Jews to emigrate, though many decided to stay and resist.

Other writers in this issue describe important aspects and repercussions of the purge. Journalist Konstanty Gebert writes from the perspective of a Polish Jewish intellectual who lived through those days. He identifies March '68 as the moment when gentile and Jewish Poles began to see their common interest in resisting the regime. Without the events of 1968, Gebert suggests, the Solidarity movement might have emerged steeped in anti-Semitism.

Mikołaj Grynberg writes from the perspective of a younger generation of Polish Jews who learned about 1968 from their parents. In his recently published book he examines the lives of Jews who emigrated abroad and those who stayed. He was surprised that some of those who stayed were unwilling to discuss their post-1968 experiences. Many alluded to Poland's current political climate: "Can't you see what's going on? Reveal my name in a book now?"

Words like these, which could just as well have been spoken in 1968, remind us of the importance of knowing our history. The events of March 1968 mattered deeply fifty years ago, and they resonate just as profoundly today.

Tad Taube and Shana Penn
Chairman and Executive Director

FEATURES

University of Warsaw Adopts Resolution on the 50th Anniversary of March '68

In March 1968, student protests in Warsaw, Gdańsk, Kraków, Radom, Łódź, Poznań, and other cities throughout Poland, were brutally pacified by the security apparatus of the Polish People's Republic (PRL). On the 50th anniversary of these protests, the University of

Warsaw is hosting a series of special events, including debates, conferences, and exhibitions from February to June 2018. The university senate adopted by consensus a resolution regarding the 50th anniversary of March '68. As noted in the document, "these events, along with those of

June '56, December '70, June '76, and, later, August '80 and the time of martial law, were a manifestation of social resistance and one of the steps to the free Republic. The resolution goes on to state: "For all those who—at the risk of reprisals—participated in the defense of civic rights



The University of Warsaw.
Photograph by Jorge Láscar. Used under Creative Commons license.

and academic independence, the Senate of the University of Warsaw ensures their memory and expresses the highest recognition of their actions.”

The UW Senate “is convinced that the University should likewise maintain the memory of shameful conduct, inconsistent with our academic ethos, that took place at the university at the time.” Meanwhile, the resolution continues, “Submission to political pressure, religious and social discrimination, and the forced removal of scholars and students must remain alive for us as a historical lesson.”

The authors of the resolution recall that “the aftermath of the events of March ’68 was the interference in the autonomy of the University of Warsaw and in the individual actions of members of our community, as well as accompanying acts of anti-Semitism.”

“The memory of these painful consequences imposes on us a special duty to watch, so that freedom of speech, freedom of research, the right



Protesters flee police following student protests near the University of Warsaw in March 1968.

Photograph by Tadeusz Zagorzinski. AP Photo/PAP/CAF.

*Memory imposes on us
the duty to watch, so that
freedom of speech, the
freedom of academic
research, the right to
discuss the history of our
country, and respect for
every human being are
always fully respected.*

to discuss the history of our country, and respect for every human being, which excludes any form of discrimination, are always fully respected. This commitment informed by the violations of the past will

remain the abiding guidelines and truth for our academic community.” ■

The full program of events can be found at <https://www.uw.edu.pl/50-rocznica-marca-68-plan-uroczystosci>.

This article originally appeared, in Polish, on February 23, 2018, in *Więź*: <http://wiesz.com.pl/2018/02/23/senat-universytetu-warszawskiego-przyjal-uchwale-w-sprawie-50-lecia-marca-68/>. Reprinted with permission.

March 1968: Different Things to Different People

Konstanty Gebert

The facts are clear. The suppression of the Warsaw production of a classical patriotic play, *Forefathers Eve*, for its supposedly anti-Soviet flavor, triggered student demonstrations. The 19th-century drama was, in fact, anti-Czarist. Its suppression, and the justification given, shows how cavalier—and paranoid—government treatment of the arts and of free expression in general had become. Such government policies were the underlying cause of student unrest. Police crushed demonstrations, which had followed the suspension from the University of two student leaders, Adam Michnik and Henryk Szlajfer. They were accused of “espionage”—that is, of leaking information on repression to a foreign correspondent. Police and “worker activists” proceeded to attack a protest meeting and Warsaw University went on strike. Other universities followed suit, and a wave of student protest swept the

1968 left its mark on an entire generation. Twelve years later, the young intellectuals of March '68 were among the driving forces of Solidarność.

country. For most observers, student unrest seemed to fall straight out of the blue. It had, however, been preceded by simmering dissent in the academic community and in student organizations, where young people—nicknamed “revisionist toddlers”—criticized Party policies in the name of “true Socialism.” Many of them came from Communist and Jewish families, and that became of crucial importance in the campaign of repression which followed the student strikes. From the early 1960s on, the political police had secretly been accumulating thousands of files on leading personalities in the Party and State administration, culture, science, the national economy and the media. The

subjects’ religious origins fell under scrutiny, sometimes as far as two generations back, and any trace of “Jewish blood” was scrupulously noted. The campaign, which in time assumed nationwide proportions, was designed to single out candidates for blacklisting, and thus ensure the possibility of rapid advancement for “loyal comrades.” This was expected to happen within the context of a major political upheaval. A new nationalistic and authoritarian political faction, led by Minister of Internal Affairs Mieczysław Moczar, intended to take effective control of the party and oust the “vacillating” and “flabby” regime of Communist party leader, Władysław Gomułka.

The student strikes and demonstrations gave Moczar his opportunity. Practically overnight, articles appeared in newspapers nationwide denouncing the student movement as the creation of “Zionist, anti-Polish and anti-Socialist trouble-makers.”

The witch hunt began. Student activists with Jewish surnames found themselves branded as members of a “Fifth Column,” which—said the newspapers—was plotting, with the aid of West German and Israeli intelligence, to bring Communist leaders of Jewish origin, compromised during the Stalinist period, back to power. The charge, however absurd, can be understood as a psychological projection of what the real plotters—the Moczar faction—were in fact doing.

In the first outburst of massive repressions since the 1950s, dozens were jailed, hundreds expelled, thousands interrogated, intimidated and harassed. That experience left its mark on an entire generation. Twelve years later, the young intellectuals of March ’68 were among the driving forces of *Solidarność*. For them, March ’68 still represents the first stirrings of the mass social movement which, through the successive stages of the fledgling opposition of the Seventies, then *Solidarność* and the re-emergence of an independent civil society in the Eighties,

fought to liberate Poland from Communist rule.

For the remnants of Polish Jewry, forced to flee the land they considered also theirs, the campaign of hate was a throwback to the not very distant past of pogroms and genocide.

For them, March ’68 was a period of shame and hate, a disgrace to the country they loved, and which many, even now, consider their homeland. Banned until the fall of Communism in 1989 from returning, even though they now were citizens of the countries which accepted them, they remained involved in the vicissitudes of Poland’s tormented political life. The young generation founded emigré centers, published reviews, and became a crucial factor in organizing support for *Solidarność* before, and especially after Jaruzelski’s coup.

The Jews were not the only group who suffered mass repression, though they were the most visible one. The Polish intelligentsia as such was also singled out for public contempt, for it had bravely supported the student

movement and its demands for freedom of expression in culture, science, and the arts. The purges followed a disturbingly familiar pattern, which in the past had victimized other groups singled out as “enemies of the State”: members of the wartime non-Communist Resistance, peasants who refused to be collectivized, Catholics who took their faith seriously.

Many Poles conveniently overlooked this fundamental difference. The hate campaign never really became popular — anything instigated by the authorities was inherently suspect — but it was not really condemned either. Most people saw the purges as yet another struggle between different varieties of Communists, not a subject of concern for those who never asked to be governed by these Communists in the first place. If anything, the much-publicized nationalism of Moczar’s faction elicited some grudging sympathy from a people long thwarted in its national aspirations.

But such an attitude ignored two crucial considerations.

First, the vast majority of victims was probably not even Party members, and only a negligible number could in any way be held responsible for Poland's political plight. Most were ordinary people who had the simple misfortune of bearing Jewish-sounding names. The purges were supposedly conducted in the interest of the Polish nation, and the silence of the Polish people translated into acquiescence.

The political police, which became the sole victor after Moczar's bid for power, emerged more powerful. The contender himself was crushed. At the height of the campaign the powerful Silesian Party boss, Edward Gierek, threw his support behind Gomułka and probably saved him, only to succeed him two years later. The mastermind of the "Jewish files," Captain Walichnowski, was as late as 1989 a general and the head of the Ministry of the Interior Academy for promising officers. The police and other anti-Semitic and unscrupulous apparatchiks became one of the country's decisive political forces: the country felt their fist in the

Those expelled in '68 considered themselves Poles, and had contributed to Polish scientific, cultural and social life. After emigrating, most settled not in Israel but in other countries, where they tended to blend with the Polish rather than the Jewish diaspora.

military coup of December '81. Even when Communism was already dying, their political power was still felt when in 1988, in a spectacular public relations gesture, Jaruzelski's regime announced its decision to repudiate the legacy of '68.

Had March '68 not occurred, would Polish history have followed much the same course? Jacek Kuroń, the veteran opposition activist, once stated, "Had there been no March '68, "Solidarność might have ended up anti-Semitic." He might well have been right. An old, pre-war and anti-Communist anti-Semite, years after 1968, had

complained bitterly to me that "the Commies can ruin everything, even such a good thing as anti-Semitism." In fact, by making it their banner, the Communists had denied it to those whose hatred of Communism was even greater than of the Jews. ■

Reprinted in part from *Living in the Land of Ashes*, Krakow, Austeria 2008. Used with permission by author.

Konstanty Gebert, an underground activist under Communism, is founding publisher of Midrasz Magazine and former scholar-in-residence at Centrum Taubego in Warsaw. This lecture was presented at the "March 1968 Symposium" co-organized on April 10, 2008, by the Graduate Theological Union's Center for Jewish Studies, University of California Berkeley Department of History, and Stanford University's Taube Center for Jewish Studies.

Recovering Memories of Friendship and Exaltation: Looking Back at March '68

Irena Grudzińska-Gross

The richness and variety of celebrations that marked the 50th anniversary of the March 1968 events make them almost impossible to describe. I will therefore talk about my own experience without attempting a summary. Since I am a “veteran” of the March events themselves, my point of view may be particular, so the reader should be warned. I arrived in Warsaw on March 2, and almost immediately participated in two book promotions (in Kielce and Warsaw) and a couple of public debates. I went to several theatre performances, but I missed the one most talked about. I saw an exhibit, but not its mass attended opening night. I went to one gigantic party but not to several other ones. I participated in one long conference, but had to miss its last day. My missing events depended on a family emergency, ticket availability and, often, lack of information. I moved within non-governmental occasions

Many commentators defined the March events as a Polish revolt for more freedom with the anti-Jewish purges a collateral damage. Were the expulsions of “Zionists” part of Polish history? Polish-Jewish history? Jewish history?

and am not sure how many others were organized by the authorities. I saw the President of Poland only on March 8th at the campus of Warsaw University where he gave a speech asking for forgiveness from those who were “expelled from Poland by communist authorities.” It was quite difficult to hear what he was saying as he was isolated under the strictest security, and those of us who managed to squeeze through security blocks were kept far away from him. We were pretty irritated at being prevented from congregating on campus, where at noon, exactly fifty

years ago, our manifestation began. We made a lot of noise. The words of the President were printed and repeated in all media, so we did not silence him.

Within these performances, debates and conference presentations certain questions repeated themselves. There was a residual interest in the old issue of provocation—the 1968 students were said to have allowed themselves to be exploited by party groups fomenting discord for their own purposes. The work of historians disproved the idea of a mastermind behind the events. It does not mean that the temptation to find a single moving force is completely dead; even Aleksander Smolar said in a recent interview in *Tygodnik Powszechny* that “we were used.” But in the work of historians, the messiness of actions and counter-actions became visible, and the moves and interests of many participating subjects acknowledged. Also disproved was an old conviction of the divide between intelligentsia

and workers; there is a consensus, I think, that 1968 was a generational, rather than a class, revolt as twice as many young workers were arrested for protesting than students.

Polish post-war history is often presented as a sequence of rebellions leading to 1989 -- the steps to sovereignty. If March '68 was primarily a student or young workers revolt, it would fit into the honorable sequence of dates in that Polish fight for independence. If it was predominantly a result of the fight among the party factions, then it did not find its place within Polish history. This was the meaning of President Duda's words about the anti-Semitic purges: they were due to the actions of a body that was external to the Polish people. But what to do with the Jewish aspect of the events? Many commentators, including some March "veterans," defined the March events as a Polish revolt for more freedom with the anti-Jewish purges a collateral damage. Were the expulsions of "Zionists" (as Jews were called) part of Polish history? Polish-Jewish



Photograph of Irena Grudzińska-Gross after her arrest in 1968. Image courtesy of Irena Grudzińska-Gross.

history? Jewish history? Could the anti-Semitic actions be ascribed only to the authorities or did they enjoy a much larger popular support? How essential were they to the social upheaval that happened then? Were they a continuation of previous anti-Jewish manifestations—the 1946 pogroms in Kielce, Kraków and Radom, for example—or were they a case of a vicious Communist one-time action? Were the March events a final act of making Poland free of Jews and in that way, were they related to the Holocaust? Are there Jews in Poland today?

In the context of the celebrations some elements of these questions were being addressed. The promotion of the new book by Joanna Tokarska-Bakir

on the Kielce pogrom was an occasion to refute (again!) the concept of provocation that “explained” or rather tried to explain away the 1946 anti-Jewish explosion. Through meticulous research, she showed the continuity of the “pogromshchiks” war-time activities with their participation in the pogrom itself. The wonderful exhibit on 1968 in the POLIN Museum ends with a wall plastered with today’s newspaper articles whose titles are identical to the ones from the 1968 anti-Semitic campaign. What transpires there is the repetitiveness and continuity of anti-Jewish tropes. The director of the museum may pay for this aspect of the exhibit with his job, as the Minister of Culture

formally expressed his displeasure. During the Polin conference many speakers wondered about the Jewish aspect of the events, though the greatest majority of the papers dealt with very specific issues without attempting any generalizations.

The theatre plays I have seen were written for the anniversary and dealt directly with the mechanisms of the persecution of Jews in Poland. It is very interesting that the March events were (in their last phase) triggered by a theatre performance and that now, fifty years later, theatre became again the place for looking for justice. Two of these plays tried to present the issue of anti-Jewish violence head-on, without explanatory contexts that divert our attention to other, often unrelated things. In Kielce's Żeromski Theatre (in which, by the way, a pogrom took place in 1918), a play titled "1946" (written by Tomasz Śpiewak and directed by Remigiusz Brzyk), aimed at confronting the public with the pogrom in their city that killed over 40 survivors of the

Holocaust. The urgency in the play comes from a feeling of present danger. The play "Justice" (written by Michał Zadara and Nawojka Gurczyńska, directed by Zadara, Teatr Powszechny in Warsaw), is a kind of theatrical intervention. The play tries to locate those who fifty years ago helped to force others to emigrate. The authors wonder if those who can still be identified should be put on trial. The March events are, for the authors, a crime that nobody has been punished for, so justice is not met. The play seems to be a desperate attempt to break the mold of a discourse about the past crimes that make no one responsible. Like the previous play, it searches for the ways to preempt the inevitability of repetition.

A third play I did see—"A Few Foreign Words in Polish," (written by Michał Buszewicz, directed by Anna Smolar, Warsaw Jewish Theatre), deals with the after effects of the March events on the generation of the children of the émigrés. Growing up in Sweden, France, the United States and

Israel, they were confronted with the incomprehensible past of their parents - and especially grandparents - and with their own multiple national affinities. Some of these children came with their parents for the celebrations themselves. For me, it was an amazing moment of recovering, fifty years later, some of the memories of exaltation and warmth of friendship. I know this feeling may have happened because I moved within a bubble of festivities. But it was a real gift. ■

Irena Grudzińska-Gross, PhD, a student leader of the Warsaw University student demonstration in March '68, is Professor Emeritus of Princeton's University's Institute of Slavic Studies. Her books include a volume of essays titled Honor, Horror and Classics; Golden Harvest (with Jan T. Gross); Czesław Miłosz and Joseph Brodsky: Fellowship of Poets; and The Scar of Revolution: Tocqueville, Custine and the Romantic Imagination.

The American Jewish Response to March '68

Rachel Rothstein

As I was working on my dissertation several years ago, I would tell people that I was writing about the aftermath of the 1968 Polish anti-Zionist campaign. While I didn't expect everyone to know what I was talking about, I was shocked when very few American Jews - including Jewish community leaders - did. As someone who had been visiting and studying Poland since the early 2000s, it surprised me that few American Jews were familiar with the event that had made such a profound traumatic impact on the Polish Jewish community. Of course, part of why I was writing the dissertation was because few scholars had delved in-depth into the topic, especially in English. But as I jumped into the research, I noticed that I was finding few documents where I had expected to find them, even in the American archives. So I could not help but wonder, was this a case of forgetting, or did American Jews really not know what

American Jews were not only aware of the Polish government's anti-Semitic campaign beginning in March 1968, but American Jewish leaders immediately mobilized in response as the attacks on both individuals and Jewish institutions in Poland continued.

was going on in Poland at the time?

After spending some time in Polish archives, I discovered that some American Jewish leaders were indeed aware of the campaign, and that they were alerting American Jews to the events in Poland. Polish officials believed that Poland was under attack and that something had to be done to counter the "smear campaign of the Zionist centers."ⁱ Knowing that the Polish authorities were

ⁱ *Protoko* z Narady Partyjno Zawodowej grupy PZPR przy Ambasadzie PRL w Waszyngtonie,* May 16, 1968, Polska Zjednoczona Partia Robotnicza (PZPR) 237/XXII/1618, Archiwum Akt Nowych.

feeling pressure, I returned to the United States to look closer at documents of American Jewish organizations, where I found that leaders of US-based organizations - such as the American Jewish Committee, the American Jewish Congress, B'nai B'rith, the Jewish Labor Committee, and the World Jewish Congress - issued statements (often invoking previous periods of anti-Semitism in the region), mobilized American Jews to write letters to influential figures (including to Pope Paul VI), organized protests, and made appointments with the Polish Embassy, American congressmen, and with the US State Department. The Jewish Telegraphic Agency (JTA) covered the March events, as they were known in Poland, often reprinting statements issued by the American Jewish leadership.

The timing of the March events provided American Jewish leaders with a convenient forum in which to



Tisha B'av Sackcloth and Chains Sit-In at the Polish U.N. mission, August 4, 1968. From the Yeshiva University University Archives, Student Struggle for Soviet Jewry Collection, 4/1.

discuss what was occurring. A month after the anti-Zionist campaign, Jews around the world commemorated the 25th anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. Local Jewish federations encouraged commemoration organizers to include something about the contemporary events in Poland. At the opening of a YIVO exhibit about the 25th anniversary, New York Congressman, Emanuel Celler, used the opportunity to publicly state that it was “sadly ironic that Warsaw, the very city which saw so heroic

a manifestation of man’s indomitable spirit, is now once again the scene of anti-Semitic outrages.” Comparing the ghetto fighters’ heroism to the liberal segments of Polish society then under attack, he stated, “the decent and liberal elements in Poland will gain the freedoms they seek and thus vindicate the cause for which the martyrs of the Warsaw ghetto gave their lives.”ⁱⁱ

ⁱⁱ *Informational News Release - Polish Regime Condemned at Warsaw Ghetto Exhibit,* for period ending 5/17/68, B'nai B'rith Collection, Folder 139 Poland I/II, American Jewish Archives.

Students also organized to voice their outrage. The North American Jewish Youth Council and the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations immediately organized a protest, attended by groups from across the Jewish spectrum, including Hillel, BBYO, B'nei Akiva, Hashomer Hatzair, the National Conference of Synagogue Youth (NCSY), the National Federation of Temple Youth (NFTY), Young Judea, United Synagogue Youth (USY), and the Young Israel Intercollegiate

Council. The Student Struggle for Soviet Jewry organization planned multiple rallies on behalf of both Soviet and Polish Jews. In August, the group organized a Tisha B'Av (Jewish day of mourning over the destruction of the Temple) sackcloth and chains sit-in at the Polish U.N. mission. In September, 1,500 participants boarded a chartered "Freedom Boat" for a Freedom Rally at the Statue of Liberty. They also organized a "Lights of Freedom Rally for Polish and Soviet Jews" Chanukah rally in December 1968, during which participants were instructed to bring their menorahs for a torchlight march from the Polish U.N. Mission to the Soviet U.N. Mission

As the campaign continued, American Jewish leaders also began to call for the United States to revoke Poland's Most Favored Nation (MFN) status, which would have revoked the trade advantages the U.S. had granted Poland in the early 1960s. American Jewish leaders argued that MFN had been granted because the American government believed that Poland could become increasingly

independent from the Soviet Union. Yet, they argued, the anti-Zionist campaign was proof that they had not. The State Department was against such a move, given that this was not in the best interest of American-Polish relations at the time. Furthermore, they were concerned that such a strong reaction could have the unintended consequence of cutting off emigration from Poland, a real concern given the Soviet Union's stance on Jewish emigration. While Poland's MFN was not revoked in the end, American Jewish leaders were clear that the situation in Poland was serious.

Thus, American Jews were not only aware of the Polish government's anti-Semitic campaign beginning in March 1968, but American Jewish leaders immediately mobilized in response as the attacks on both individuals and Jewish institutions in Poland continued. Jewish leaders and students alike came together to issue statements, protest, and send letters of appeal to both the Polish and American governments in an attempt to halt the campaign.

Although American Jews were ultimately unable to stop either the 1968 Polish campaign or anti-Semitism in the region in general, they certainly tried. ■

Rachel Rothstein, PhD, teaches at the Weber School in Atlanta, Georgia. Dr. Rothstein based this article on the paper "Did the Warsaw Ghetto Burn in Vain? American Jews React to the Anti-'Zionist' Campaign," which she delivered at POLIN Museum's conference March '68. Fifty Years Later.

Book of Exodus

Mikołaj Grynberg

I was raised in a home of two living losses. The first was the Holocaust. Ever since I was a child, I was in mourning of people I never knew. The second was '68. I lived among the legends of the people who used to surround my parents and grandparents.

In the *Book of Exodus*, I talk with people whose lives changed dramatically following the anti-Semitic campaign of '68. The main characters are the Jews who left Poland at that time and those who stayed behind. All of the books I know which have touched upon this subject thus far omit the group of Jews who stayed behind in Poland for various reasons that March. I also come from such a family, which is why it was probably easier for me to think that their story should be included in my book.

They were allegedly there, and then they left. I was two



Cover image for *Księga Wyjścia* by Mikołaj Grynberg. Published by Wydawnictwo Czarne, 2018.

or three years old at the time, so I don't remember them. I just knew their first and last names and the strange addresses written down in our phone book. I was used to the memories, but these people were as distant to me as the Wawel Dragon. This was the case until the second half of the 1980s, when I collected my passport from the office of the militia. I was allowed to go, and I went, as some say,

on a tour of Jews scattered throughout the world. I went to Israel, where the legends came to life. The friends of my parents were there waiting for me. Some of them became my family within minutes of our first encounter, and they still are. I went to Sweden and Denmark and once again discovered that these first and last names had human forms.

Back then, I was still too young to comprehend their drama. I was just happy to have found them. After all these years, I have matured enough to tell their stories.

I started preparing in 2015. I quickly convinced the Czarne publishing house to do business. At the same time, a benefactor appeared in the form of the Jewish Historical Institute and the POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews. I was able to start the biggest documentary project of my life.

I had to start looking for subjects. I already knew that

I would not be building a monument to my parents and their friends. I had to reach outside of their community—outside the Jewish young intelligentsia world of Warsaw; a more difficult journey, but a very promising one.

I started my search in the community of Polish Jews in Israel, the United States, Denmark, and Sweden, which were the main destinations of the Jews leaving Poland in the years 1967-72. I quickly learned of an organization associating these communities in all of the aforementioned countries. I found their webmasters: the people with access to the mailing lists. I had no trouble convincing them to send out my letter to everyone. The letter included my name and date of birth and the fact that I was starting work on a new book about people like them. I sent it out and started waiting for response.

When I was equipped with the list of people ready to talk to me, I had to face—in cinematic terms—a production challenge. I had to order the meetings by dates in the calendar. I had to buy

*In the Book of Exodus,
I talk with people
whose lives changed
dramatically following
the anti-Semitic
campaign of '68.*

plane tickets. I had to find accommodation everywhere. I could not take advantage of public transit in Israel and had to rent a car because my subjects were dispersed all around the country. I was there in October, which is the time of many Jewish holidays. You need to know at least a little to know that you are allowed to drive a car on Sukkot or Rosh Hashanah, but definitely not on Yom Kippur.

In the United States, for logistic reasons, I limited myself to the New York area. In Sweden, I traveled by plane and train. In Denmark, I never left Copenhagen. I left home in early October and returned in late December 2016. Before the end of February, I was collecting—or rather attempting to collect—the testimonies of Jews who had stayed in Poland. I was not expecting this to be too

difficult, but the task turned out to be very complicated. So complicated that it was, at times, impossible. A lot of people never accepted my invitation for an interview.

The most common argument was: “Can’t you see what’s going on? Reveal my name in a book now? You are out of your mind to suggest something like this!” The political situation was taking away my characters.

What was supposed to make up the book was turned into the present. I started to have serious doubts concerning the point of publication. Was it my place to put people in such a situation? Is it right to take away the sense of security of some to satisfy the curiosity of others? My potential characters would meet me in other cities. They were willing to travel far by train just so no one would see them. We all know that my face is not recognizable throughout Poland. My subjects were driven by the old rule: risk minimization.

And that’s not all. Sometimes, when I would arrive in X, where I had an appointment

with someone from Y, I would get a text message: “I am very sorry, but I will not be meeting with you after all. I cannot take the risk. I hope you understand.” Of course I did. I was feeling guilty about making them feel so much discomfort. I also had people in Poland who would only talk about interesting things when I turned off the recorder.

I realized that my book was becoming more relevant than I could ever imagine in the beginning. And I also started to lose my footing. I had a lot of blame on me, but the most serious self-accusation was the inadequate outlook on the reality around me. I was briefly thrown off-guard and missed the transformation of the public atmosphere. I was no longer able to say what kind of a reader would receive my book in March 2018. What would the reader make of it? A weapon turned against my characters and me?

As I was filled with doubt, I stopped writing without telling my benefactors or publisher. Time did not heal all wounds and reality was not my friend.

A lot of people never accepted my invitation for an interview. “Can’t you see what’s going on? Reveal my name in a book now? You are out of your mind to suggest something like this!”

I listened to more recorded interviews and thought that I had enough material to write an emigration guide. Unfortunately, it would be outdated and would apply only to Jews in the years 1967-72, a rather useless formula.

I felt that I was falling into a trap. I had involved some major resources and plenty of people in a venture that changed meaning in the meantime. In the simplest of words—the context had changed.

Paradoxically, I was saved by conversations about emigration. My friends and acquaintances started to talk about leaving Poland. Where? With parents? What would we do there? How would we live? Would Poland no longer be our homeland? After some

time, I realized that these conversations were the perfect match to my interviews in Israel, New York, Denmark, and Sweden.

I started writing again in July 2017 and handed the book over to my publisher in October. I never regained my faith in a better world, but I did gain hope that the Book of Exodus could have its share in the discussion. ■

This article has been translated and edited from an article that originally appeared, in Polish, in Książki: <http://wyborcza.pl/ksiazki/7,154165,23018563,mikolaj-grynberg-w-ksiedze-wyjscia-rozmawiam-z-ludźmi.html>. Reprinted with permission.

Editor's Note:

The "Two Views" presented here reference the important exhibition, *Estranged*.

March '68 and Its Aftermath, which contributes to POLIN Museum's series of events in honor of the 50th anniversary of March 1968. The authors, Agnieszka Zagner writing for *Polityka*, alongside Bartosz Bartosik's review from *Więź*, present us with an opportunity to consider a dialogue about not only the exhibition itself, but the critical historical legacy it represents for Poland's past and future.

TWO VIEWS: ESTRANGED (STRANGERS AT HOME)

"I left because I became a stranger in my home."
POLIN about March '68

Agnieszka Zagner

What was the reason for casting out several thousand citizens from Poland, deeming them "strangers"? The exhibit of Warsaw's POLIN museum looks for an answer.

"I left Poland because it was the only country which did not allow me to be Polish," said Professor Dariusz Stola, the director of the POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews, quoting one of the March emigrants at the ceremony dedicated to the opening of the exhibit titled *Estranged. March '68 and Its Aftermath*.

This quote reflects the absurdity of the situation, where several thousand people (the exact number is unknown) were forced to leave Poland. They were Poles of Jewish origin, Polish Jews, or simply Poles who did not learn of their Jewish heritage until the anti-Semitic campaign in the mass media and in the streets, until their colleagues at work started to hunt for Jews, non-Poles, strangers.

To briefly recap: the people who decided to leave received a so-called traveling document which

was issued without the right to return. The traveling document also included the following statement: "The holder of this document is not a citizen of Poland." It was essentially a one-way ticket, or it would remain as such to many people for years.

Controversy surrounding *Estranged. March '68 and Its Aftermath*

The authors of the exhibit wanted to share the reasons, course, and consequences of the events which led to the banishment from Poland of at least 13,000 people, deemed "strangers."

The title of the exhibit has encountered some strong reactions, especially from the government. "The title is a rather controversial one, because if there was anyone treating the Jews living in Poland in the 1960s as "strangers," it was the communists," said Deputy Minister of Culture, Jarosław Sellin, in TVN's "Czarno na Białym (*Black on White*). "Because it is common knowledge that in 1968, Poland was inhabited not by Poles, but by communists."

Professor Stola admitted that he initially wanted to add a question mark, but was convinced that the title expresses two important characteristics of that March:

First, that the objectives of the campaign carried out by the party in power and the authorities of the Polish People's Republic were intended to make other Poles believe that Polish Jews, Poles of Jewish origin, were not the same Poles, that they were strangers, that they had no right to the homeland, that they were not entitled to the homeland regardless of whether they were born here, whether they knew Polish culture, and how many years they had spent working here, that this was not their country. Second, that the campaign made many Polish Jews feel alienated, forced out of their own country.

The core of the POLIN exhibit

The core of the exhibit is composed of an installation made to look like the interior of the Warszawa Gdańska train station, which was the departure point for those

Poles suddenly turned into strangers. A symbolic place of farewells, last words, it includes accounts of both those who left and those who, for various reasons, decided to stay.

As we sit in this arranged train station in 1960s-styled chairs, listening to those who departed and those who stayed behind, we look at the meaningful neon sign with the letters "WAR." This is a part of the original sign, which serves as a canvas and commentary for the events. One letter of the sign is intentionally burned out to symbolize the life at the time, which was falling apart. There is a big screen under the neon sign which shows fragments of movies, including the mechanical dance filmed in a synagogue from Tadeusz Konwicki's *Salto*.

The main color theme of the exhibit expresses the sense of hopelessness and overcoming sadness: deep grey, which is always associated with the Poland of that era. The dark grey stairs lead us to the upper part of the exhibit, which includes the so-

called "March Archive." It is composed of keepsakes, photographs, documents, and everyday objects taken on the road or left to friends. Most belongings and property had to be left behind, including homes and money—a single family was permitted to take no more than five dollars. There are two address books with the exact same content, creating a unique impression. They belonged to Stefan Ulman, who was leaving Poland. He copied the information of his family and friends to three address books in total and hid them in different parts of his baggage for fear of having them confiscated.

Fear of losing contact was common of all emigrants. One of them, Jan Groński was a child back then, leaving with his mother, who also was afraid of losing her address book. He had to memorize the telephone numbers and addresses during the journey. These personal stories are an important part of the exhibit as they lend real faces, names, and biographies to the anonymous thousands.

1- How could this have happened? What was March all about?

The POLIN exhibit starts with the presentation of the context. On one hand, we have the transformations behind the Iron Curtain leading to a cultural and moral revolution; on the other, we see the monotony of the Polish People's Republic, the unavailability of "luxury goods" (like perfume), and a chart that shows that in 1968 only half of Polish households had a radio, only one-third had a TV set, only one in five had a refrigerator, and only 4 out of every hundred had a car. The exhibit demonstrates both of these perspectives on two opposite walls, which "look at each other," but have no interaction.

2- POLITYKA rejected the anti-Semitic campaign

The next segment of the exhibit shows the government's response to the rebellion: the attempt to cover it up with an anti-Semitic campaign in the press, at universities, and in workplaces. One of the posters reads: "We want a party clean



Natalia Romik (left) and Justyna Koszarska-Szulc, co-curators of *Estranged. March '68 and Its Aftermath (Obcy w domu)*, at the opening of the exhibition. Photograph by Maciek Jaźwiecki. Courtesy of POLIN Museum.

of Zionist filth." From the perspective of our office, the fragment dedicated to the staff of *Polityka* is very interesting.

The commentary reads that our weekly was "one of the few who did not join the hate campaign." There is also a quote from the journals of Mieczysław Rakowski, who was *POLITYKA*'s editor-in-chief at the time. He wrote: "I am especially concerned with the well-being of my Jewish

friends and colleagues. I never thought about who was and who was not a Jew. Now I know, because I have been shown a list of employees of Jewish origin. Our office is starting to experience something along the lines of emotional pressure and we feel alone . . . We are trying to save face."

3- They left a sense of emptiness behind

A considerable part of the exhibit is dedicated to the

tremendous void created by the departure of thousands from Poland. Those departed included actors of the Warsaw Jewish Theatre. Among them was Ida Kamińska, who just one year before had become the first actress from the Eastern Bloc to be nominated for an Oscar for her role in *The Shop on Main Street*. On one hand, there was this intense emptiness left behind by the people and their affairs; on the other, there were those who had left and had to start their lives all over again in the countries where they ended up.

The exhibit also includes the project of Krystyna Piotrowska entitled “I left Poland because...” It demonstrates the moving voices of the emigrants, who, in the language of their new country, are completing the seemingly simple sentence. “I realized that I had to leave Poland if I wanted to be a Pole.” “I was unwelcome.” “I became a stranger in my homeland.” “There was no place for me.” “It was no longer my home; we were thrown out.” “There were no



Image from the exhibition.
Courtesy of POLIN Museum.

perspectives.” “They didn’t want the children.” “They didn’t let me be Polish.” “The atmosphere was unbearable.” “I wanted to feel at home and Poland was not my home.” “I couldn’t take it any longer.” .. The final accent is an important memento, a reference to current events in the segment dedicated to contemporary hate speech. ■

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This is a translation of an article that originally appeared, in Polish, in Polityka: <https://www.polityka.pl/tygodnikpolityka/historia/1740900,1,wyjechalam-bo-stalam-sie-obcym-w-moim-domu-w-polin-o-marcu.read>

TWO VIEWS: *ESTRANGED (STRANGERS AT HOME)*

Our Everyday Presence: *Estranged. March '68 and Its Aftermath*

Bartosz Bartosik

Perła Kacman saw her friends off from Poland at the Warszawa Gdańska station. She decided to stay. “I was left almost alone here. Most of my closest friends had gone. They did not lose their homeland. Their homeland had lost them.”

The exhibit takes us to the symbolically reconstructed Warszawa Gdańska train station, where we can listen to the stories of those departing Poland and the ones staying in the wake of the anti-Semitic and anti-intelligentsia campaign. The authors of the exhibit—headed by curators Natalia Romik and Justyna Koszarska-Szulc—faced a difficult challenge: how to present the experiences of March '68 in a cohesive form that would be relevant to a contemporary audience. The hard part was that there are plenty of stories about that March, each one slightly different, and there were various reasons for both emigrating and staying. But

One of the emigrants said: “I left Poland because it was the only country which did not allow me to be Polish.”

they were able to find one common denominator. It turns out that the story of March '68 is a story about all of us, with its long shadow cast over contemporary Poland as well.

“I would like to say that we have not prevented Polish citizens of Jewish origin from moving to Israel if they wished to do so. We believe that every citizen of Poland should have only one homeland, the Polish People’s Republic.” Władysław Gomułka proclaimed during his speech made at the Trade Union Congress on 19 June 1967.

The *Estranged* exhibit presents the story of one of the most important months in post-war Poland. The curators give the floor to the people

who experienced those events first-hand. We hear their stories on the recordings; we read extensive fragments of their journals and notes. The Polish history of the fight against censorship, the student protests, emigration, and the struggle for power in the Polish United Workers’ Party are all presented in a broad historical context, one that enables everyone to understand that the events of March were not coincidental. They were caused by specific cultural, political, and social phenomena.

The authors of the exhibit complement their telling of the story with artistic commentary, the most noteworthy being the famous scene of the eponymous dance from Tadeusz Konwicki’s *Salto*, played on the big screen at the reconstructed train station (Konwicki filmed it in a synagogue-turned-warehouse). The people are dancing as though hypnotized. The dancers assume strange,

mechanical, involuntary positions, as though the dance — something external— is controlling them, and not the other way around. Was this how the rush of emigration from the Poland of Gomułka and Moczar looked? How much of the decision to leave or to stay was conscious and how much of a trick did the winds of history play on the people who seemed to have their lives in order?

The common aspect of the March dramas was the sense of alienation. Regardless of whether they decided to leave or to stay, the people remember that March '68 forced them to redefine their identity. The party in power, and some of the public, questioned the affiliation of people who were feeling at home in Poland to the greater civic and national community. The atmosphere in Poland, their home, was deteriorating, which made them question whether it was in fact still their home. Even though this was not the biggest post-war emigration of Poles of Jewish origin, it was probably the most



Otarci (in English, *Abrasions*) by Leszek Sobocki (1968). From Sobocki's *March '68* cycle, the work is on display in *Estranged*.
Courtesy of POLIN Museum.

dramatic, since it concerned those most assimilated. One of the emigrants said: “I left Poland because it was the only country which did not allow me to be Polish.” The people who left the country usually defined themselves through their “Polishness,” but the community brutally reminded them that they were “strangers” (just like a recent presidential candidate and current public television star acted toward Marek Borowski).

And so, we arrive at the universal message of the POLIN Museum's exhibit. After all, are we not all — potentially or actually — emigrants? The *Estranged* exhibit raises numerous questions. What could force us to leave our home? Can we imagine leaving our whole lives and country behind within only four weeks? The Deputy Marshal of the Sejm of the Polish People's Republic, Zenon Kliszko, stated that the members of the

Znak association opposing the repression of students in March of 1968 were “putting themselves outside of the nation,” reminding us that the civic community is able to exclude not only minorities, but also those taking a stance on their behalf. Are the current accusations of betraying the homeland made by the government and those in its orbit (which are enthusiastically reported by public television) that much different from the narration in the era of Gomułka?

Estranged is a story about all of us: it serves to remind us that, under specific historical, economic, and political conditions, we can all feel just as “estranged” as the emigrants of that March did. This is not about overplaying clichés and emotions; 1968 will not repeat itself on a one-to-one scale. But our language, memories, and culture still carry plenty of weight from that time and the international situation is becoming more similar as well. A satirical drawing displayed at the exhibit depicts the people emigrating

from Poland as protégés of American capitalism, Israeli anti-Poland attitude, and German Neo-Nazism. The cover of a certain rightist weekly from 5 February of this year draws from this exact set of prejudices.

“I will not shake the hand of anyone who believes that the current decisions of Law and Justice relate in any way to the Jewish chutzpah carried out by the party’s apparatus under Moczar in 1968. If such an opinion is presented by an ambassador of a foreign state [authors’ note - Israel], maybe she should be asked to leave our country.” – Law and Justice senator Jan Żaryn for wPolsce.pl, 9 March 2018.

The POLIN Museum’s *Estranged. March ’68 and Its Aftermath* temporary exhibit will be open until 24 September. I do not want to give anything away, but the exhibit does not end too optimistically. The visitors are left with the concerns expressed by Stanisław Barańczak in his poem entitled *If Porcelain, Then Only the Kind:*

*who told you that you were permitted to settle in?
who told you that this or that would last forever?
did no one ever tell you that you will never
in the world
feel at home in the world?* ■

This review originally appeared in Wiesz magazine, March 12, 2018. Reprinted with permission. To see the review online, please visit: <http://wiesz.com.pl/2018/03/12/obcosc-nasza-powszednia/>

INTERVIEWS

“A wave of slander and lies”: An Interview with POLIN Museum Director Dariusz Stola

Norbert Nowotnik
Polish Press Agency

POLIN Museum Director Dariusz Stola on March '68

In his interview with the Polish Press Agency, Professor Dariusz Stola notes that the priority of POLIN concerning the anniversary of March '68 is to show the experiences of the Polish Jews persecuted by the communist authorities, many of whom were forced to leave their homeland. He also said that their situation was dramatic; certain instances involved the separation of close relatives who had no opportunity to return to Poland. The director of POLIN also expressed hope that the exhibition *Strangers at Home* (opened on March 8, 2018) will unite the young generation of today with the people who lived out their youth in rebellion against the Polish People's Republic 50 years ago..

Polish Press Agency: March '68 involved a political crisis, student protests, internal struggles within the Polish United Workers' Party, and also a wave of anti-Semitic propaganda. What does



Dariusz Stola speaking at a press conference for POLIN Museum's exhibition *Estranged. March '68 and Its Aftermath (Obcy w domu)*. Photograph by Magdalena Starowieyska. Courtesy of the POLIN Museum.

POLIN see as the most important element of the 50th anniversary of these events?

Professor Dariusz Stola: Every one of these elements of March '68 is important because every one of them made its mark on the history of Poland and was tied to the other elements. You cannot understand one without the others. March '68 is one of the so-called 'Polish months,' just like October '56, December '70, and August '80. Commemoration of these events is now a customary part

of the Polish historical culture, which is used to the rhythm of anniversaries.

The Museum of the History of Polish Jews is particularly inclined to recollect the events from 50 years ago. Nineteen sixty-eight is perhaps the most important year for Polish Jews during the era of the Polish People's Republic, which I want to stress started in 1952, because the Kielce pogrom of 1946 had even more dramatic consequences as at least 40 Jews were killed and the deadly wave of emigration

from Poland included at least 70,000 people.

March '68 also saw a wave of symbolic violence: slander and lies, the unpunished persecution of Jews and Poles of Jewish origin—who were referred to as Zionists in the communist newspeak. People were fired from their jobs and expelled from colleges, beaten and arrested, forced to emigrate. Jewish organisations and institutions were destroyed. These events led to the departure of almost half of an already sparse community. I am very sad to say that there have been some recent slanderous attacks on the POLIN Museum as well. This institution is the fruit of many years of cooperation and dialogue between Poles and Jews, which is held in the highest esteem of historians and museologists in Poland and abroad. It is commonly perceived as the best example of a credible presentation of the past. The people attacking it are demonstrating the rejection of all dialogue and cooperation and showing that historical truth means nothing to them. The reaction to such opinions is also a measure of the actual mindsets.

March '68 saw a wave of symbolic violence: slander and lies, the unpunished persecution of Jews and Poles of Jewish origin. People were fired from their jobs and expelled from colleges, beaten and arrested, forced to emigrate. Jewish organizations were destroyed.

Polish Press Agency: But there is no way to reduce the events of March '68 to an anti-Semitic campaign.

Professor Dariusz Stola: Of course not. Besides the anti-Jewish propaganda, March '68 was also a conflict amidst the authorities of the Polish People's Republic and its core component was the youth rebellion and its brutal pacification by the authorities. Thousands of students and other young people gained a literal, bodily understanding of the meaning of the "beating heart of the party"—the term used to describe the

club-armed ZOMO officers and ORMO activists. It should be noted that most of those arrested were young labourers and students of vocational schools. But to us, to the Museum of the History of Polish Jews, the most important aspect of the time is the experience of the Jews.

Under these dramatic and sad circumstances, thousands of Jews were leaving their homeland and often their families. For example, the grandparents would stay and the children and grandchildren would leave. The communists would prevent some of them from returning to Poland for many years, not even for occasions such as a mother's funeral. Their visas were simply rejected and they had to apply for visas as foreigners because they were forced to relinquish Polish citizenship before they left. The post-March emigrants departed from Poland not with a passport but with a so-called travelling document. This is the only document I know which states who its holder is not, rather than who he or she is: "The holder of this document is not a citizen of

the Polish People's Republic.”

Polish Press Agency: The post-March emigration included over 13,000 Jews in total; the previous emigration waves included approximately 70,000 Jews who left Poland following the Kielce pogrom and the 30,000 who departed in the period 1949-50 — in those instances, Israel would pay for the emigrants released by the communists. And there was a third wave: about 50,000 Jews left Poland because of the thaw following Stalin's death.

Professor Dariusz Stola: Yes, the post-March emigration is the smallest of the four waves of Jewish emigration from Poland after 1945, but, in directed numbers, it covered almost half of all Jews in the country. The 13,000 people who declared Israel as their destination — and people of Jewish origin were forced to make such a declaration, irrespective of where they actually wanted to go — were joined by a certain number of victims of the March campaign: intellectuals or people in mixed marriages, who left declaring other target countries. These victims included Professor

Leszek Kołakowski, who was fired from the university for criticising the party's policy. I think that we can include around 15,000 people in the post-March emigration. The presentation of the dispute among the various opinions concerning the recently adopted law on the Institute of National Remembrance as a measure of patriotism, or even as a conflict between Poles and Jews, is [also] false and manipulating. Poles are entitled to different opinions and the opinions of the law's opponents are gaining more ground with every passing day. I don't think that there is anyone left who does not see how much damage the law creates, specifically how it has damaged the image of Poland and Poles worldwide, from which it was supposed to protect us. Another recent example of reference to the 1960s is the accusation of the “fifth column,” which came from a certain female deputy. The “fifth column,” means treason, an enemy hidden among your own people — this was what Gomułka meant when he coined the term in 1967.

Polish Press Agency: There are also voices referring

to March '68 claiming that Poles should not feel guilty because of what the communist authorities did to the Jews, that the communist authorities were not representing the will of the Polish nation but rather that of Moscow as they were launching anti-Semitism.

Professor Dariusz Stola: It is true that the communist regime did not represent the Polish public opinion and was never democratically legitimate. But there are two reasons why we cannot dismiss the question of responsibility for March '68 so cheaply and easily.

First of all, the Third Polish Republic is the legal successor to the Polish People's Republic: it honours its international agreements, recognises the rulings of its courts, obeys the laws it introduced unless they were officially changed, and so on. It also pays reparations to the victims of communist repressions. So do we really want it to avoid responsibility only for the injustices of the Polish People's Republic towards Jews?

Second, the fact that the government of the Polish United Workers' Party was not democratically legitimate does not mean that all of its decisions were unpopular and had no public support. In many instances, it had the support of a considerable number of Poles, sometimes even of the majority. The agricultural reform of the 1940s had mass support and we are recognising its effects to this day. The de-Stalinisation policy of 1956 was supported by the masses as well and, at the time, the people supported Gomułka and trusted him; he was unquestionably the most popular political figure right after Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński. And the same Gomułka, although no longer as popular as in 1956 but still respected by many, agreed to the launch of the anti-Jewish campaign in 1968.

He did not have to do so. There was no similar situation in any other communist country at the time. All signs indicate that it was a local initiative of Poland alone. There is no proof that it was inspired by the authorities

of the USSR. What we do know for sure is that some of the oppressors were not only following official orders, that there were people who were not forced to oppress the Jews, who did so under their own initiative.

Polish Press Agency:

How should the Polish state authorities go about commemorating the events of March '68 in the light of current relations with Israel?

Professor Dariusz Stola: We may not be responsible for the events of the past that we had no control over—and the majority of the current Polish population were either born after 1968 or had no part in the campaign at all—but we are responsible for what we are doing with this past today. This is why, as a historian, I am pleading: first, to respect the truth and never cloud or deform it through words and gestures referring to March '68; second, to have these words and gestures serve to draw conclusions from the past for today and tomorrow for the benefit of conscientious and critical thinking; and third, to prevent them from being empty

gestures. If we agree that the anti-Jewish campaign of 1968 was atrocious, we should not be indifferent to the signs of anti-Semitism today, to the hideous hate online, to the scandalous words of certain media representatives, or to the glorification of the anti-Semites of the past —because the cult of the National Radical Camp is exactly that. ■

For the full interview with Professor Dariusz Stola, please visit: <https://dzieje.pl/aktualnosci/d-stola-o-marcu-68-fala-oszczerstw-i-klamstw-bezkarnego-szczucia-na-zydow>

Dariusz Stola is the director (since 2014) of the POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews. Concurrently he is a professor (since 1994) at the Institute for Political Studies, Polish Academy of Sciences.

To Leave or to Stay? An interview with Bella Szwarzman-Czarnota

Agnieszka Drotkiewicz

Agnieszka Drotkiewicz interviews Bella Szwarzman-Czarnota about her experiences of March 1968.

Agnieszka Drotkiewicz: In 1998, Anna Frajlich published a text devoted to March '68 in the journal *Midrasz* where you work as an editor. It was titled “March Began in June.”

Bella Szwarzman-Czarnota: In June 1967, almost a year before the March events, the Six-Day War broke out between Israel and the Arab states. Israel won, and the entire socialist bloc—including Poland, obviously—led by the Soviet Union, condemned the “attack by Israeli imperialistic power” on the Arab countries.[It] thereby gave the signal to launch an anti-Semitic campaign in Poland—convincing the Party “apparatchiks” that “hidden allies of the Israeli aggressor” should be pursued. It is now common knowledge that the ban imposed in March 1968 on the *Forefathers' Eve* theater production directed by Kazimierz Dejmek gave rise to student protests and

manifestations. It would have seemed that those two events had nothing in common, but it soon transpired that they led to an ultimate revenge on Jews—initially only those who represented the Party apparatus. Many people felt emboldened to eliminate Jews, regardless of their positions on the social ladder, from work or from university. They were encouraged to manifest their overt animosity, even hostility, towards Jews.

AD: You were a philosophy student then.

BSC: I was in my final year. We were busy writing our master's theses, so we would meet up in small groups. At some point, our department was closed, and we had to apply to be readmitted...The vast majority of professors and lecturers from our department managed to retain their integrity. It was more complicated with fellow students—some thought that those who felt Polish should stay, while those who felt Jewish should leave Poland. Practically all my Jewish friends decided to emigrate.

They left in turns, and we used to go to the Gdański Railway Station to see them off. I heard dramatic stories of formalities one had to go through before departure. I remember my friend's sister, who arrived home in tears after officials at the Ministry of Internal Affairs forced her to “voluntarily” renounce her Polish citizenship. Right next to her, a Greek woman had been signing her documents—she was off to the country of her grandparents, to Greece, yet was permitted to keep her Polish citizenship. My family too was hit by the repressions—an anonymous voice on the phone, asking if we still enjoyed the taste of Polish bread, or asking to speak with Abram Szwarzman, a filthy Jew. I felt as if I were castaway on a desert island. I had my Polish friends, but very few were willing to acknowledge the anti-Semitic tone of the events—they regarded them in purely political terms. They were hesitant to admit that normal people who had been averse to the authorities were now siding with them. Two years passed before I grew



Bella Szwarzman-Czarnota (in the patterned shirt) as an educator at a TSKŻ summer camp in Dziwnów, 1966.
Courtesy of Bella Szwarzman-Czarnota.

able to talk about these events with new acquaintances, colleagues who came to Poland from Germany to write doctorates on Polish history. I felt they sympathized with my emotions—the emotions of someone who had grown up in the Yiddish-speaking Jewish milieu then was deprived of it all almost overnight.

AD: Have any among those who had emigrated then ever made you feel they were better in some way because they'd left?

*I felt as if I were
castaway on a
desert island.*

BSC: I have never heard anything like that from my friends. They sympathized with my predicament. Sometimes, people would say that it was wrong to stay, thus legitimizing what was happening then. However, none of my friends have ever said to me: “You made the wrong decision to stay.” They knew, anyway, that I had never been adamant about

staying, that it was more like “I’m going to stay for the time being.” They recognized my hesitation, the limbo I was in. I have never heard one word of criticism from them.

Once, I visited my aunt in Śródborowianka, a lodge not far from Warsaw that belonged to the Social-Cultural Association of Jews in Poland and was frequented by Jews from all over Poland and from abroad. It was 1969 or 1970, and Elias Rajzman, a wonderful Yiddish poet from Szczecin,

was staying at the lodge. He said to me: “What’s a Jewish girl like you still doing here? Leave, you won’t find a husband here.” [Laughter.] He saw me primarily as a Jew, rather than a Pole of Jewish origin, whom in a sense I was. I stress that because it’s typical to perceive Jews in Poland as Poles who feel connected with Jewish religion or culture and for whom Polishness is something obvious. This was different, in my case: I am a Jew who feels connected to Polishness, especially to the Polish language.

AD: One could try to assess March ’68 in terms of the dictum “What doesn’t kill you makes you stronger.” Those who left made careers abroad, while in Poland, Jewish tradition has been revived. You once wrote in *Midrasz* that “March was akin to the Shoah.” One must never forget damage and trauma when talking about a success.

Definitely. I can talk about some kind of success myself—had I been living in another country, perhaps, I wouldn’t have become who I am, I wouldn’t write, or translate from Yiddish... Still, I feel I’m carrying a terrible psychological burden left by March. I was deprived for many years

of my family and friends, I experienced awfully bitter personal chagrins—those made me feel terribly lonely at times, and much less trusting than I’d been before. Such experiences transformed me. People may say that “suffering offers incentive for development.” I truly do not wish anyone to owe their development to such dramatic events.

AD: Do you suppose that March ’68 affected women more than men? Was the women’s situation any different from that of the men?

BSC: I would not like to look back on March reflecting on gender differences—that would merely undermine the gravity of what happened. A war was waged against Jews, and against political opponents, regardless of their sex. Anti-Semitic violence is often expressed differently towards women and men, but that is a truism. Both prior to and after March ’68, I experienced anti-Semitism aimed specifically at me, as a girl and later as a woman. March was no exception here. ■

Bella Szwarzman-Czarnota is a writer, editor, philosopher, and translator. She has written extensively about issues related to Jewish women.

Excerpted from To leave or to stay?: Bella Szwarzman-Czarnota and Irena Grudzińska-Gross talk to Agnieszka Drotkiewicz about their experiences of March ’68 and its consequences, which appeared in Estranged. March ’68 and Its Aftermath, a catalogue edited by Justyna Koszarska-Sczulc and Natalia Romik to accompany the exhibition of the same name. Published by POLIN Museum and reprinted with permission.

Krystyna Janda Reflects on *Notes from Exile* by Sabina Baral

Dorota Wyżyńska

Notes from Exile, based on the memoirs of Sabina Baral and directed by Magda Umer, is one of several plays written to commemorate the 50th anniversary of March '68. The play premiered at Teatr Polonia, in Warsaw, on March 9, 2018, and starred Krystyna Janda.

Following is an excerpt from an interview with Krystyna Janda that Dorota Wyżyńska conducted on February 9, 2018.

Dorota Wyżyńska: “I spend my nights at the hotel reading *Notes from Exile* by Sabina Baral, a very special book about the exile of '68. This is a report, so simple, so obvious, so logical, which makes you realize things no one had ever said in the open.” You wrote this in the summer of 2016. Did you know of the play back then?

Krystyna Janda: Not yet. I took the book on vacation in Italy and gave it to Magda Umer to read. Magda decided that we should make it into a

play. I always believed that it would be a tough challenge. And I was right.

This is some very special material about March '68. This book was written not by a historian, not by a writer, but by someone who had experienced everything in person when she was twenty years old.

These are very moving records, which were written rather spontaneously. Sabina Baral returned to Wrocław after many years for a class reunion and she was asked to write a few pages of memoirs. This short text, which flew out of her like a bird, led to a book—a special book, which is written straight from the heart.

These records are hot, emotional, and at the same time completely devoid of sentimentalism. And they include plenty of details we had no idea about, I had no idea about. That is why I was so impressed. Furthermore, they are written by someone who succeeded in life. She

is a professor, has her own business, and was privileged to the great honors and splendors of this world. And she clearly states that none of it would have happened had she not been forced to leave Poland in March 1968.

This is the book of a person representing a generation, which—according to Sabina Baral—entered the world with a bang. It was the emigrants from Poland who were among the pioneers in Silicon Valley and the author contributed to things like development of one of the first Intel 8080 microprocessors, which was a milestone in the evolution of personal computers.

After all the years, she says that she would like to see something of her left behind in Poland. She came to look for some traces, but there are none! She has tried to enjoy Poland's successes throughout the world, but she can see that Poland is no longer her own. I read many books about March '68, I saw a lot of movies,



Krystyna Janda in *Zapiski z wygnania*.

Photograph by Katarzyna Kural-Sadowska/Teatr Polonia. Press materials.

but I have never read such a book like this one, never experienced such reflections.

This is a common, human story, which does not pick at old wounds but instead attempts to analyze, to look at the March emigration from a rather unexpected perspective. We are now gone, and anti-Semitism is your problem.

Sabina Baral stresses the following: “I wrote this book for myself, for you, and as a warning.” As a warning! It must be hard to work on the play when you hear about the events related to the amendment to the law

on the Institute of National Remembrance?

Unfortunately. Whatever you touch, life tends to add some cruel PR. I never thought that I would be taking part in a play about March '68 in such an atmosphere, that I would return to those events and discuss them from the perspective of today.

I couldn't sleep at night. I would read the posts on the amendment to the law on the Institute of National Remembrance. Where is it going to lead us? I am outraged, sad, and ashamed. And amazed to see something

like this happening before our very eyes.

Many people from all around the world made plans to come to Poland and attend the ceremonies commemorating the 50th anniversary of March '68. Many announced their attendance at our premiere. And now they are starting to reconsider coming here at all. International diplomatic visits are being called off. So how will these ceremonies look? The situation is changing as though after a tsunami.

The “side effect” of this work is having to read the disgusting anti-Semitic posts

online under pretty much any material concerning the matter of Jews. There are dozens of hideous and unbelievable posts under every song associated with Jews or performed in Yiddish. I was never aware of the scale of such hate.

The fact that the theaters decided to contribute to the commemoration of the 50th anniversary of March '68, to take a stance, to say something in the words of art, is a wonderful thing. I am very happy that the Polonia Theatre is one of them. What will our play look like? I am doing everything in my power to keep it from becoming a homage celebration. Fortunately, Ms. Baral's book is effectively protecting us from such a situation.

In *Notes from Exile*, Ms. Baral writes the following: "I am who I feel I am. I carry my homeland inside of me. What right does anyone have to tell me where my homeland is?"

In your "Journals," you also covered the beginnings of Krystyna Janda's

Foundation for Culture and the beginnings of the Polonia Theatre.

And I read it with tremendous sentiment, as well. A new chapter in uncharted waters. A great unknown and the fear of what it will lead to. I was not at liberty to write about everything back then, I couldn't reveal all business and human aspects, the harassment. And now I am supplementing the part covering the years 2005 and 2006, the time when we were building the Polonia Theatre, with various official documents concerning the artistic program, the plans, the dreams. They were love letters to officials, which include everything that I did not cover at the time. I am including these letters in the book under the appropriate dates and feel like they complete it.

Those dreams you wrote about in the letters to officials, did they come true?

They did. What's more, no title mentioned by me in the letters was omitted. Everything was done. And this surprised me. I always

considered myself mission-oriented. And mission: accomplished. ■

Krystyna Janda is an actor. In 2005, she founded Teatr Polonia in Warsaw.

This production of Notes from Exile premiered on March 9, 2018, at Teatr Polonia in Warsaw. It was adapted from Sabina Baral's memoir and directed by Magda Umer. The cast of Krystyna Janda and Janusz Bogacki was accompanied by live music. Mr. Bogacki was also the music director. In May, the production will travel to other theaters throughout Poland.

This interview has been translated and edited from the original, which appeared, in Polish, in Co Jest Grane 24: <http://cojestgrane24.wyborcza.pl/cjg24/1,13,22997712,146964,Krystyna-Janda-przed-premiera-spektaku-o-Marcu--6.html>.

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REPORTS

Conference on Volume 30 of *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry*

A one-day conference 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, the Polish Cultural Institute in London and the American Association for Polish-Jewish Studies, was held at the Polish Embassy in London on January 16, 2018. The conference marked the launch of Volume 30 of *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry*, edited by Eliyana R Adler and Antony Polonsky, on the theme of “Jewish Education in Eastern Europe.”

An emphasis on education has long been a salient feature of the Jewish experience. The pervasive presence of schools and teachers, books and libraries, and youth movements, even in an environment as tumultuous as that of nineteenth- and twentieth-century eastern Europe, is clear from the

historical records. Historians of the early modern and modern eras frequently point to the centrality of educational institutions and pursuits within Jewish society, yet the vast majority treat them as merely a reflection of the surrounding culture. Only a small number note how schools and teachers could contribute in dynamic ways to the shaping of local communities and cultures.

Volume 30 of *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry* addresses this gap in the portrayal of the Jewish past by presenting education as an active and potent force for change. It moves beyond a narrow definition of Jewish education by treating formal and informal training in academic or practical subjects with equal attention. In so doing, it sheds light not only on schools and students, but also on informal educators, youth groups, textbooks, and numerous other devices through which the mutual relationship between education and Jewish society is played

Antony Polonsky

out. It also places male and female education on a par with each other, and considers with equal attention students of all ages, religious backgrounds, and social classes.

The conference was opened by welcoming addresses by His Excellency, Arkady Rzegocki, Ambassador of the Republic of Poland, Vivian Wineman, President of the Institute for Polish-Jewish Studies and Ben Helfgot, Chairman of the Institute for Polish-Jewish Studies. These were followed by a conversation between Eliyana Adler (Pennsylvania State University), in conversation with Antony Polonsky (Chief Historian, POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews, Warsaw) on “Jewish Education in Eastern Europe: An Introduction to the Volume.”

The second session, chaired by Eliyana Adler, addressed the issue of Jewish education in Poland in the interwar period and during the Holocaust.

Sean Martin (Western Reserve Historical Society, Cleveland, Ohio) gave an account of Jewish religious education in Polish state schools; Jordana de Bloeme (York University, Toronto) examined the way the Vilna Educational Society in interwar Vilna sought to form the Jewish identity of students in the Jewish school system; and Katarzyna Person (Jewish Historical Institute, Warsaw) gave a moving account of day-care centers at refugee shelters in the Warsaw Ghetto.

The final session, chaired by François Guesnet (University College London) was a round-table discussion with the theme “Education in Times of Political Transformation: Comparative Perspectives.” The participants were Eliyana Adler, (Pennsylvania State University); David Brown (Chief Executive Director, Union of Jewish Students); Tali Loewenthal (University College, London); and Elaine Unterhalter (Institute of Education, University College, London).

The conference concluded with a showing of the documentary film Janusz

Volume 30 of Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry addresses this gap in the portrayal of the Jewish past by presenting education as an active and potent force for change.

Korczak, *King of the Children* directed by Agnieszka Ziarek in 2000. This documentary was triggered by the publication in 1998 of the diaries of the physician, author, and pioneer of children’s education, Janusz Korczak (1878-1942), who died alongside the children in the Warsaw Ghetto’s orphanage in Treblinka. It is based on interviews with people in different parts of the world who had been educated in institutions headed by Korczak, and who preserved a unique attachment to “the old doctor,” as Korczak was known in the interwar period. It formed a moving climax to a fascinating and enlightening day of discussion and debate. ■

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

March '68 at POLIN Museum

In March 1968, Polish universities witnessed a wave of protest. Students and the intelligentsia opposed the restrictions on intellectual freedom and the retreat from the hopes of change which had followed the return to power of the reformist communist Władysław Gomułka in October 1956. They were also inspired by the attempt in neighboring Czechoslovakia to create “socialism with a human face.” The demonstrations, which began at the University of Warsaw, escalated into a mass youth revolt and marked the onset of one of the most complex crises in the post-war history of Poland.

The regime responded with brutal repression of the students and a large-scale antisemitic propaganda campaign, which attacked the Jewish origin of some of the protesters and portrayed itself as ‘anti-Zionist’ since it was ostensibly provoked by the joy and relief manifested by Polish Jews at the Israeli

victory in the Six Day war of June 1967. By appealing to the anti-Jewish resentments still prevalent in some sections of Polish society, the government sought to discredit its opponents. This confrontation took against the background of a struggle for the leadership of the ruling Polish United Workers’ Party (Polska Zjednoczona Partia Robotnicza—PZPR) between the established leadership, many of whom had spent the war in the Soviet Union and some of whom were of Jewish origin. A younger group also emerged, headed by the Minister of the Interior, Mieczysław Moczar, who had mostly been in Poland during the war and who sought to make the party more popular by adopting a more nationalist stance. The purge in the state and party apparatus, carried out under the slogan of combating Zionism, proved a convenient tool to get rid of political rivals and to create new elites. The antisemitic campaign affected the entire community of Polish Jews and

Antony Polonsky

its institutions, forcing at least thirteen thousand people to leave the country.

On the fiftieth anniversary of these events, the POLIN Museum organized a series of commemorative events. These took place against the disturbing background of the widespread articulation of antisemitic views in the media and especially on the internet, provoked by the opposition in Poland and abroad to the changes in the law on the Institute of National Memory which laid down that anyone who publicly and against the facts ascribes to the Polish nation or the Polish government responsibility of co-responsibility for the crimes committed by the Third German Reich or other crimes against humanity, mankind, peace and war crimes— will be punished by a fine or imprisonment up to three years. This same penalty will be applied to those responsible for the gross reduction of the responsibility of the actual perpetrators of these crimes.

It is certainly the case that the use of terms such as ‘Polish concentration camps’ and collective accusations of participation in genocide against the ‘Polish Government’ or the ‘Polish Nation’ is offensive. However, serious doubts were expressed about the use of the law to deal with this problem. In addition although investigation of the Holocaust in Poland in the context of ‘artistic or scholarly activity’ is specifically excluded in the legislation, the vagueness of these terms has aroused alarm. Do they include journalists and students or survivors and their families? Critics of the law were suspicious that it could be used to discourage legitimate investigation. What was alarming was that the attempt to point out these problems was met by a wave of antisemitic invective which echoed in a disturbing way the language used in 1968.

At the same time, concern about the way the antisemitic tropes of March 1968 were now again being resorted to gave a special relevance to the series of events organized by the Museum and ensured a wide audience for them. The



Anti-Zionist protest in March 1968.
Public domain.

first event was a debate held at the Museum on 25 February and organized by the Polish section of B’nai Brith on the topic “How did March 1968 affect social and political changes in Poland. What remains of the inheritance of 1968, 1970, 1976, 1980 and 1989?” It was chaired by Anna Dodziuk, a well-known publicist of Jewish origin and Sergiusz Kowalski, a prominent member of the Polish B’nai Brith. Among those who participated were Jan Lityński, a long-time opposition activist who has remained active in politics

since the fall of communism, Adam Michnik, former dissident, public intellectual and editor-in-chief of *Gazeta Wyborcza* and Piotr Oseka, Professor at the Institute of Political Science of the Polish Academy of Science.

This was followed on March 8 by an improvised theatrical performance, organized with the Shalom Foundation, at the Gdańsk station from which most emigrants from Warsaw in 1968 left Poland and in which actors from the Ester Rachel and Ida Kamińska Jewish Theatre took part.

The participants met under the plaque commemorating those who were forced, unveiled in 1998, with its inscription from Henryk Grynberg, *Here they left behind more than they had (Tu więcej zostali niż mieli)*. They then attended an open-air performance of a short play directed by Agata Duda Gracz, *Packed up, a short story about who did not take what (Spakowani, czyli skrócona historia o tym, kto czego nie zabrał)*.

The following day marked the opening of the impressive temporary exhibition *Obcy w Domu. Wokół Marca "68"* (*Estranged. March 1968 and its Aftermath*), which was curated by Justyna Koszarska-Szulc and Natalia Romik and which gives a vivid and striking account of the events of that year. It contains a section on hate-speech showing clearly the similarities between the language of 1968 and that of today. This has even provoked one of those quoted, who accused a Polish politician of changing his name to hide his Jewish origin, to attempt to sue the Museum. The exhibition will be open until September 24, 2018.



Police chase protesters on ul. Krakowskie Przemiescie in Warsaw, March 8, 1968. From the Instytut Pamięci Narodowej archives.

On the same day a theatrical performance based on Sabina Baral's book, *Zapiski z wygnania (Notes from exile, 2015)* describing her experiences in 1968 took place at the Polonia Theatre. The part of Sabina was played by Krystyna Janda, one of Poland's leading actresses. This was followed two days later by a meeting at the POLIN Museum where the audience could discuss the play with those involved in its production.

On March 10 at the Museum Barbara Engelking, Director of the Polish Center of Holocaust Research at the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology at the Polish Academy of Sciences in

Warsaw, conducted a question and answer session with the writer Mikołaj Grynberg on his recent book, *Księga Wyjścia*, an account of the experiences of Jews who experienced March 1968 and today live in Israel, the United States, South America, Denmark, Sweden and also Poland. There was also a performance at the Polski Theatre of the play, *Kilka obcych słów po polsku (Some foreign words in Polish)*, written by Michał Buszewicz and directed Anna Smolar, based on a series of interviews conducted by Mike Urbaniak in Israel, the United States and Europe.

March 12 marked the premiere of Agnieszka Arnold's film

U Siebie (On one's own), an account of the destruction because of his forced emigration of the career of a rising star of Polish popular music, Michał Hochman, a reflection on what this brutal uprooting meant in terms of the loss of one's language and cultural context.

On March 12 and 13, in conjunction with the Department of Literary Anthropology of the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań and the Department of Polish Literature at the Jagiellonian University in Kraków a two-day symposium on “(Auto)biographical Experiences and Identity. The Writings of the March '68 Generation” was organized at the Museum. This was followed by what was in many ways the central feature of the month of commemoration: a major international conference organized at the POLIN Museum and the University of Warsaw on March '68: *After Fifty Years*. (This is discussed in a separate report in this issue of *Gazeta*.)

On March 17, at the POLIN Museum, Krystyna Naszkowska discussed her



A train of March emigrants departs from Gdański Station. Photograph by Elżbieta Turlejska. Courtesy of POLIN Museum.

book, *Ani tu, ani tam Marzec '68—powroty* (Neither here not there. March 1968—returns) which describes the experiences of those who left Poland in 1968 but returned in the 1990s and now live and work here. Two days later a discussion took place at the POLIN Museum on the ‘language of hate.’ This roundtable, supported by a donation New York-based Fellowships at Auschwitz for the Study of Professional Ethics (FASPE), sought to examine what problems journalists face in describing national religious and political conflict, particularly those conditioned by disputed interpretations of the past. It sought both to examine

the role of the media in March 1968 and today. The panel discussing these complex problems included Professor William Grueskin, former chief editor of *The Wall Street Journal* and today a faculty member of the School of Journalism at Columbia University. It was moderated by Andrzej Skworz, the principal editor of *Press*, and the other participants were Dariusz Stola, Director of the POLIN Museum, Ewa Milewicz, formerly a journalist with *Gazeta Wyborcza*, Sławomir Sierakowski of *Krytyka Polityczna* and Andrzej Stankiewicz of *Onet*. ■

POLIN Museum's GEOP International Conference Report 2018: March '68—Fifty Years Later

Krzysztof Persak

In March 1968, Polish universities witnessed an outburst of protests against the policies of the communist authorities. Students and the intelligentsia opposed the restrictions of intellectual freedom and the withdrawal from post-Stalinist liberalization of the system. The regime responded with brutal repressions and a widespread anti-Semitic propaganda campaign, launched under the pretext of the Jewish origin of some of the protesters. The ensuing purge in the State and Party apparatus, executed under the slogan of combating Zionism, was a convenient tool to get rid of political rivals and to create new elites. The anti-Semitic campaign affected the entire community of Polish Jews, and its institutions, forcing over thirteen thousand people to leave the country. Suppression of intellectual freedom and decline of organized Jewish life were the aftermath of March '68.

Students and the intelligentsia opposed the restrictions of intellectual freedom and the withdrawal from post-Stalinist liberalization of the system. The regime responded with brutal repressions and a widespread anti-Semitic propaganda campaign, launched under the pretext of the Jewish origin of some of the protesters.

To mark the 50th anniversary of these events, which had developed into one of the most complex political crises in the postwar history of Poland, POLIN Museum's Global Education Outreach Program (GEOP) held a major international conference on 13-15 March, 2018. The co-organizers of the conference

were the Institute of History and the Institute of Sociology at the University of Warsaw. The proceedings took place both at the Museum building and at the University campus, where the students' revolt had begun back in 1968.

The conference brought together scholars from Poland, USA, Israel, Sweden, Germany, the Netherlands, Belgium, Czech Republic, and Romania, who delivered 36 presentations divided into nine thematic panels. Among issues intensely discussed were: the anti-Semitic propaganda campaign and the purge of people of Jewish descent from different professions; international response to state-sponsored anti-Semitism in Poland; emigration of Jews from Poland and their integration in new homelands; youth disobedience in socialist countries. The conference featured two round-table discussions on patterns of students' protests between

1968 and 2015 and on the legacy of March '68.

The distinguished keynote speakers were POLIN Museum's Chief Historian, Professor Antony Polonsky, and University of Warsaw psychologist, Professor Michał Bilewicz. The latter's lecture, *Hate Speech Epidemics. Are We Far from March '68?*, provoked wide discussions in the Polish media.

The conference was conceived as part of a wider POLIN Museum program of commemorating the March '68 anniversary. Its core element was a temporary exhibition *Estranged: March '68 and Its Aftermath*. The conference attendees had a chance to visit the exhibition and participate in a podium discussion with its curators, Justyna Koszarska-Szulc and Natalia Romik.

Over 400 people attended the conference, among them former activists of the students' movement and/or 1968 exiles who came to Warsaw to take part in the commemoration events.



From a 2008 production of *Dziady*, a play from 1967 whose production and subsequent cancellation triggered student protests against the communist government. The 2008 production was performed on the 40th anniversary of the play's last public appearance.

Public domain.

Recordings of the conference are available at <http://www.polin.pl/en/conf68>. A publication of selected presentations is being planned.

The conference, as part of the POLIN Museum's Global Education Outreach Program (GEOP), was sponsored by the Taube Foundation for Jewish Life & Culture, the William K. Bowes, Jr. Foundation, the Association

of the Jewish Historical Institute of Poland, and the University of Warsaw. ■

Krzysztof Persak is Senior Historian, POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews

Traces of Memory in South Africa



Johannesburg Holocaust & Genocide Centre.
Image courtesy of Jakub Nowakowski.

On March 11, 2018 Galicia Jewish Museum Director, Jakub Nowakowski, opened the traveling exhibition *Traces of Memory: A Contemporary Look at the Jewish Past in Poland* at the Durban Holocaust & Genocide Centre in South Africa. As a part of the 2018 program, the exhibition will be also displayed at the Cape Town Holocaust Centre and the Johannesburg Holocaust & Genocide Centre.

During his stay in South Africa, Jakub Nowakowski gave several talks and presentations, including meetings with Andrzej Kanthak, the Ambassador of the Republic of Poland to South Africa,

and Tali Nates, the Director of the Johannesburg Holocaust & Genocide Centre. An audio recording of Mr. Nowakowski's speech on contemporary Polish-Jewish relations delivered in Johannesburg on 14 March 2018 is available here:

<https://soundcloud.com/user-858426360/14-march-polish-jewish-relations-in-contemporary-poland>

A traveling version of the GJM's core exhibition has so far been presented in museums and institutions throughout the USA, Israel, Germany, UK and Ireland. Showings of the exhibition in South Africa are co-financed by the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage of Poland.

An article about Mr. Nowakowski's lecture was published in the *South African Jewish Report*, available at the following link: http://www.sajr.co.za/docs/default-source/print-edition/2018-03-23613e7a4047cf6007affdff0000014754.pdf?sfvrsn=df11a13_4 ■

Jakub Nowakowski

Jakub Nowakowski is the director of the Galicia Jewish Museum in Kraków.



Ambassador of the Republic of Poland to South Africa, Andrzej Kanthak; Director of the Johannesburg Holocaust & Genocide Centre, Tali Nates; Director of the Galicia Jewish Museum, Jakub Nowakowski (from left to right).
Image courtesy of Jakub Nowakowski.



Jakub Nowakowski, director of the Galicia Jewish Museum, lecturing on Polish-Jewish relations in contemporary Poland at the Johannesburg Holocaust & Genocide Centre.
Image courtesy of Jakub Nowakowski.

Report on the 5th Annual Polish Jewish Studies Workshop

**Natalia Aleksium,
Halina Goldberg,
and Nancy Sinkoff**

The 5th Annual Polish Jewish Studies Workshop took place at Rutgers University on March 5-6, 2018 with the goal of discussing new research on Polish Jewish history and furthering the international scholarly conversation that began in 2014. *Centering the Periphery: Polish Jewish Cultural Production Beyond the Capital* hosted more than thirty scholars from Poland, Israel and North America who examined topics on cultural production in Polish lands after partition and before World War II, and beyond the capital city of Warsaw. The workshop highlighted new, innovative scholarship by younger scholars who focused on high and low cultures, including dance, music, and literature, translation projects, intercultural exchanges, memorial projects, among others, with several participants employing digital humanities methodologies.

In the opening panel, “Translations,” chaired by Geneviève Zubrzycki (Ann

It was a very special experience for me, and this is not something I often say about academic conferences. Somehow, sitting in an American setting, all of us together: people from Poland, the US and Israel, and re-constructing pre-WWI Jewish Poland, was simply moving.

Arbor, MI), Ofer Dynes (Montreal) analyzed two poems: one by Antoni Słonimski, “Conversations of a Countryman” (1923), when the author visited Palestine, and the other, “Monologue in Plain Yiddish,” by Aharon Zeitlin, written after the war in New York. Reading these two texts together illustrated new insights into the complexities of the authors’ relationships to home and longing, the Jewish national

project in Palestine, and to the diaspora. Karolina Szymaniak (Wrocław) reconstructed the correspondence between Max Weinreich and Jan Bystron to show multifaceted ways of mapping out relationships between Polish and Yiddish cultures, marginality, and expertise in the interwar years. Samuel Zerlin (New York) raised provocative questions about translating into Yiddish texts of classical compositions from the repertoire of Jewish choral societies in Vilna. Jess Olson (New York), Wojciech Tworek (Toronto), Agnieszka Legutko (New York), and Karen Underhill (Chicago) offered their comments and raised additional questions, creating a lively and collegial exchange for all the symposium’s participants.

Leah Garrett (New York) chaired the second panel, “Geographies,” which opened with the presentation of Marcin Wodziński (Wrocław) via video conferencing. While discussing several maps that

showed the geographic shifts of Hasidic centers, Wodziński argued for a careful reading of these maps in temporal and spatial contexts to uncover new aspects of Hasidic networks and the influence of *tzaddikim* (Hasidic leaders). Eugenia Prokop-Janiec (Kraków) used maps to discuss the ways in which Jewish women created Jewish cultural institutions in both historically Jewish and non-Jewish locales of Kraków. Her creative approach showed how close reading of the maps of 1899, 1919, and 1939 revealed deep connections between cultural production, ethnicity, and gender. While Jagoda Wierzejska (Warsaw) was unable to attend the workshop in person, her paper was presented by a proxy. It brought to our attention the changing conception of the “idea” of Jewish Galicia after anti-Semitic violence during the First World War and the Polish Ukrainian War. She cited An-sky and Emil Tenenbaum’s work—among others—to show the gradual disillusionment of Galician Jews with the region of their birth. A discussion was

facilitated by comments and questions raised by Samuel Kassow (Connecticut), Kathryn Ciancia (Wisconsin), Cecile Kuznitz (New York), Sylwia Jakubczyk-Ślęczka (Kraków), and Sarah Zarrow (Bellingham, WA).

Nancy Sinkoff (New Jersey) chaired the next panel, “Traditions.” First, Wojciech Tworek presented on the efforts to create a new religious tradition by the Chabad Hasidic movement, when it moved from the Soviet Union to interwar Poland. With its new center in Otwock, near Warsaw, Chabad developed a ritual associated with reading “The Scroll of the 19th of Kislev” to consolidate its leaderships authority. Uriel Gellman (Ramat Gan) explored the spatial aspects of Hasidic society. By analyzing Hasidic culture in eastern Europe, he made a fascinating case for connecting the perspectives of social and intellectual history with “the spatial turn.” The tour of the Palestine-born singer Bracha Zefira to Poland, in 1929, was the focus of the presentation by Magdalena Kozłowska (Warsaw). She raised interesting questions

of “Eastern otherness” within a region often imagined as “Eastern.” David Fishman (New York), Robert M. Shapiro (New York), Ofer Dynes (Montreal), and Ela Bauer (Tel Aviv) commented.

On the second day of the workshop, the conversation continued with a panel, “Embodiments and Spaces,” with Nancy Sinkoff as chair. Sonia Gollance (Goettingen) argued for a close reading of the dance scenes in I. J. Singer’s *The Brothers Ashkenazi*. She showed how these scenes can be interpreted through themes of pleasure and humiliation to offer a new understanding of cultural shift and crisis as Poland’s Jews modernized. Cecile Kuznitz focused on Jewish urban space in Lublin by examining the Chochmei Lublin yeshivah and the Peretz Folkshoys. These buildings, designed for very different branches of Polish Jews, were united by the concept of creating modern Jewish space in Poland, and reflect the optimistic conviction about Jewish rootedness in the city and region. At the same panel, Kathryn Ciancia (Wisconsin)



Participants in the 5th Annual Polish Jewish Studies Workshop. Courtesy of the workshop organizers.

explored urban space in the Polish borderlands. Examining Łuck in Volhynia, she showed the limits of the civilizing mission that this city's non-Jewish elites envisioned with a majority population that was Jewish and traditional. Uriel Gellman, Marcos Silber (Haifa), and Natalia Aleksiu (New York), engaged the scholars who presented at this session.

The following panel, "High and Low Cultures," chaired by Karen Auerbach (Chapel Hill, North Carolina), began with Marcos Silber's thought-provoking discussion of popular and mass culture in Poland, which led him to

call for a new interpretation of the acculturation paradigm. Zehavit Stern (Tel Aviv) continued this theme by examining the concept of "The Folksy Avant-garde" embodied by Moyshe Broderzon and the Ararat Cabaret Theater in Łódź. Ela Bauer showed how movie theaters, often owned by Jews, as well as the vogue for attending movies, became spaces of cultural renegotiation in the interwar period. She made a compelling argument for close reading of the personal accounts of Polish Jews who had attended movie theaters in small towns. Interlocutors included Natan Meir

(Portland, Oregon), Michael Steinlauf (Philadelphia), Eugenia Prokop-Janiec, and Sonia Gollance.

In the last session, "Audiences," Naomi Seidman (Berkeley) challenged the notions of a strict gender division in traditional schools for Jewish girls by looking at theatrical productions in the Bais Yaakov movement. These performances were often surreptitiously attended and envied by Jewish boys. Sarah Zarrow focused on Cecylia Klawnski's understanding of women's artisanal crafts in Lwów and the ways in which this well-respected communal activist raised the questions

of gender relations, self-sufficiency, and aesthetics in the Jewish community. Sylwia Jakubczyk-Ślęczka (Kraków) gave a fascinating overview of diverse musical activities of Jewish audiences in interwar Kraków and Lwów. Last, Alicja Maślak Maciejewska reconstructed the history of an unrealized attempt to build a monument for Casimir the Great by Polish Jews. Seven years of painstaking research in the Polish press revealed this little-known initiative, which she interpreted as an instance of the limits of integrationist strategies of the progressive Jews in Kraków. Karen Underhill, Samuel Zerín, Zehavit Stern, and Magdalena Kozłowska commented.

As one participant summarized: *It was a very special experience for me, and this is not something I often say about academic conferences. Somehow, sitting in an American setting, all of us together: people from Poland, the US and Israel, and reconstructing pre-WWI Jewish Poland, and especially the 'periphery,' with old and contemporary images, photos, maps, demographics, with*

a group of people who truly care about this lost world, was simply moving, as well as inspiring... I think the workshop format worked really well, and encouraged discussion and interchanging ideas.

The Monday night concert, *Soundscapes of Modernity: Jews and Music in Polish Cities*, presented music of Polish Jews that is little known to American audiences — choral pieces from 19th-century progressive (“Reform”) congregations, compositions associated with Jewish music societies, and avant-garde works by Jewish composers. It was performed to a full house of delighted listeners. The instrumentalists and The Mason Gross Kirkpatrick Choir under Patrick Gardner’s steady baton did a glorious job performing music from the Polish Jewish past. Based on extensive research, the concert included several modern-day premieres of forgotten compositions.

The organizers are now preparing a proposal for an edited volume that will highlight the best work presented at the symposium. ■

Natalia Aleksiuń, PhD, is Associate Professor of Modern Jewish History at the Graduate School of Jewish Studies at Touro College. Halina Goldberg, PhD, is Professor of Musicology at the Jacobs School of Music at Indiana University Bloomington. Nancy Sinkoff, PhD, is the director of the Center for European Studies at Rutgers University.

ANNOUNCEMENTS / REVIEWS

POLIN GEOP Conferences and Opportunities

GLOBAL EDUCATION OUTREACH PROGRAM NEWS

The mission of the Global Educational Outreach Program (GEOP) is to further international exchange in the fields of Polish Jewish Studies and Jewish Museum studies. GEOP is supported by the Taube Foundation for Jewish Life and Culture, the William K. Bowes, Jr. Foundation, and the Association of the Jewish Historical Institute of Poland.

Call for Applications: GEOP Interdisciplinary Research Workshops in 2019

POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews—through GEOP—invites individuals and institutions to propose three-day research workshops to be held at the POLIN Museum on topics related to the history and culture of Polish Jews, including new perspectives on public history, museums, and cultural memory. We especially encourage

interdisciplinary and comparative approaches. Deadline for submitting applications: June 30, 2018. For more information please see: www.polin.pl/en/research-collections-research-global-education-outreach-program/call-for-applications-research-workshops.

GEOP Interdisciplinary Research Workshops

In June 2018, the POLIN Museum will host a workshop within the GEOP Interdisciplinary Research Workshops:

Representations of Jewish-Slavic Relations in Museums and Internet Databases

Organizers:

- Center for University Teaching of Jewish Civilization “Sefer”
- Institute for Slavic Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences
- Polish Academy of Sciences

The workshop will be dedicated to discussions on developing standards of

proceeding with regard to the organization and construction of museum exhibitions as well as internet databases on Jewish-Slavic relations by museums. The socially crucial issue of relations between communities analyzed from both sides—the positive and the negative aspects of those relations—as well as through the diffusion of culture, ideas and rituals will form the basis for debates on exhibition formulas and combining them with the electronic system of supporting education in museums. Scholars from the Russian Federation, USA, Poland and the Czech Republic will attempt to reflect upon the compatibility of the two forms of museum communication. Ideas for exhibitions (some of them virtual) developed by various museums and devoted to the history of Jews all over the world will be demonstrated during the workshop, alongside the electronic systems of databases used by museums in Russia, Poland and the Czech Republic.

GEOP will support the 11th EAJS Congress

GEOP is supporting the 11th Congress of the European Association for Jewish Studies, Searching for the Roots of Jewish Traditions, which will take place in Kraków, Poland, on July 15–19, 2018. GEOP is organizing a Jewish Museology Section that will provide an opportunity to present the experiences of various museums and discuss their activities and the new challenges they face. All subjects related to museology, with a focus on representations of Jewish traditions and the diversity of Jewish life, are warmly welcomed. Lectures devoted to collections, exhibitions, educational and cultural activities as well as the newest technologies used in creating exhibitions are of especial interest.

More information about the Congress can be found here: eajs2018.uj.edu.pl/.

Call for Applications: GEOP Doctoral Seminar 2018/19

In partnership with members of the Polish academic community, POLIN Museum

has established a doctoral seminar devoted to the history and culture of Polish Jews.

Participants from Polish institutions representing such fields as history, literature, anthropology, sociology, art history, Yiddish studies and other are welcome to apply for the fourth edition of the Doctoral Seminar. The aim of the seminar is to integrate young scholars from various fields and academic institutions, and to provide them with access to experts from Poland and abroad. The seminar will also be attended by PhD supervisors, invited senior scholars, and POLIN Museum's international fellows.

Deadline for submitting applications: June 10, 2018.

For details on the Call for Applications, please see (only available in Polish): www.polin.pl/pl/ nauka-i-zbiory-dzialalnosc-naukowa-stypendia-i-warsztaty-dla/seminarium-doktorskie-20162017

For details on the GEOP Doctoral Seminar please see: www.polin.pl/en/nauka-i-zbiory-dzialalnosc-naukowa-pobyty-badawcze-i-warsztaty/geop-doctoral-seminars

GEOP Distinguished Lecturer Series

New lectures online:

- The audio report of a lecture by Professor Eyal Naveh, *A Budding State: Aliyah, Kibbutz, Urbanization*, is available at: www.polin.pl/en/event/a-budding-state-aliyah-kibbutz-urbanization.
- The lecture *Is It Possible for All People to Speak the Same Language? The Story of Ludwik Zamenhof and Esperanto* by Professor Federico Gobbo is available at: www.polin.pl/en/event/is-it-possible-for-all-people-to-speak-the-same-language
- A lecture by Dr. Sharon Geva, *Women in Israel: Myth and Reality*, is available at: www.polin.pl/en/event/women-in-israel-myth-and-reality
- The audio recording of the lecture *How Did We Negotiate Peace for Israel?* by Elyakhim Rubinstein is available at: www.polin.pl/sites/default/files/1.02.2018.mp3

Upcoming lecture:

Dr. Michał Trębacz, *How to draw the attention of an indifferent world? Szmul Zygielbojm's struggle to stop the extermination of Jews*, 6 p.m. on Thursday, April 26

Seventy-five years ago, on the night between May 11 and 12, 1943, when the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising was drawing to an end, Szmul Zygielbojm committed suicide. It was one of the most dramatic protests against the world's indifference in the face of Holocaust. In his suicide note he wrote: "My comrades in the Warsaw Ghetto perished holding arms during their ultimate, heroic battle. I was not meant to die together with them. But I do belong with them, and with their mass graves."

This lecture will be delivered by Dr. Trębacz, head of the Research Department at POLIN Museum. He specializes in history of the Bund, Jewish socialist party, in interwar Poland. He is also interested in biographical studies and the Holocaust history. The author of numerous essays on these subjects, Dr. Trębacz has lectured extensively

in Belgium and the United States.

For more information on the lecture please see: www.polin.pl/en/event/how-to-draw-the-attention-of-an-indifferent-world-szmul.

For more information on the GEOP lectures please see: www.polin.pl/en/geop-distinguished-lecture-series.

Audio-video recordings of the "March '68. Fifty Years Later" conference are now online!

Recordings from the conference March '68. Fifty Years Later, which took place on March 13–15, 2018, at POLIN Museum and the University of Warsaw, are now available online at: www.polin.pl/en/conf68.

The conference was organized within the GEOP framework.

A Voice Rescued from The Holocaust: The Diary of Renia Spiegel

Alex Ulam

Renia Spiegel a Jewish girl born in 1924 in southeastern Poland, kept a diary beginning in January 1939. Three years later, Renia was shot and killed by Nazis on the street, in the city of Przemyśl, along with the parents of her boyfriend, Zygmunt Schwarzer, after they were discovered hiding in an attic outside the ghetto. Renia has been described as the “Polish Anne Frank.”

Zygmunt Schwarzer survived Auschwitz and Bergen-Belsen. After the war, he studied medicine at the University of Heidelberg, in Germany. Upon graduating, he moved to the United States, where he became a pediatrician. In the 1950s, a friend visiting New York from Przemyśl gave him Renia’s diary, which she had crafted out of seven school books sewn together. Zygmunt gave the diary to Renia’s mother, Róża Maria Leszczyńska, who had survived the war and lived in the U.S.

Renia’s diary describes life in wartime Przemyśl, which was divided between the Soviets and the Nazis along the River San, which runs through the city. Before 1941, when the Nazis launched Operation Barbarosa and invaded the Russian section of Przemyśl, most of the city’s Jews lived there, on the Soviet-occupied eastern bank of the city.

When the ghetto was established in July 1942, Renia and her younger sister, Ariana, were forced to move there with their grandparents, with whom they were living. Several weeks later, Zygmunt, who had a work pass, was able to spirit Renia out and move her into the house of his uncle, who, because of his status at a Judenrat official,

RENIA SPIEGEL



dziennik
1939–1942



The jacket image for *Dziennik 1939–1942* by Renia Spiegel. Published by Renia Spiegel Foundation, 2016.

was allowed to live outside the ghetto. He then moved her, along with his parents, to a hiding place in a garret in the town. Meanwhile, Renia’s sister, Ariana, was taken to Warsaw by a Polish gentile

named Ludomir Leszczyński and reunited with her mother, who was passing as a Pole and working in a hotel overrun with Wehrmacht officers.

When Renia's hiding place in the garret was exposed by an informer, the Nazis executed her and Zygmunt's parents in the street, only a day after Ariana had escaped from the ghetto. Ariana survived the war, settled in the US, and received the diary from her mother.

Many years later, at the urging of her daughter Alexandra, Ariana showed Renia's diary to Tomasz Magierski, a Polish-American documentary filmmaker who lives in New York. Magierski was impressed with the diary. He joined Ariana and her daughter in forming the Renia Spiegel Foundation in Renia's memory. In 2016, the Foundation published, in Poland, Renia's nearly 700-page diary (*Dziennik 1939–1942*). Magierski is now leading the effort to have the diary translated into English. He is also working on producing a film based on the diary. ■

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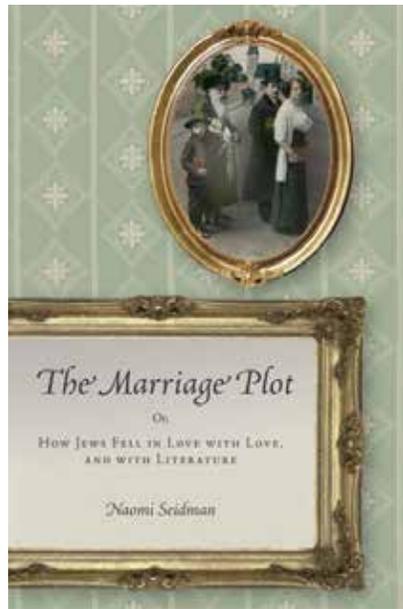
This is an edited and abridged version of an article, "Why Renia Spiegel is Being Called the 'Polish Anne Frank,'" that appeared in the Forward on February 12, 2018: <https://forward.com/culture/394032/why-renia-spiegel-is-being-called-the-polish-anne-frank>. Reprinted with permission.

Alex Ulam is a contributing writer for The Forward.

Naomi Seidman Awarded Inaugural Borsch-Rast Book Prize and Lectureship

The Graduate Theological Union (GTU) is pleased to announce that Naomi Seidman, Koret Professor of Jewish Culture at the GTU's Richard S. Dinner Center for Jewish Studies, has been awarded the inaugural Borsch-Rast Book Prize and Lectureship for her 2016 book *The Marriage Plot, Or, How Jews Fell in Love with Love, and with Literature* (Stanford University Press).

The newly established Borsch-Rast Book Prize and Lectureship will be awarded annually and carries a prize of \$10,000. The award seeks to encourage innovative and creative theological scholarship by GTU graduates and current faculty. The endowment for the Borsch-Rast Prize comes from the proceeds of Trinity Press International, a venture dedicated to the publication of scholarly and often interdisciplinary theological studies. The prize and lectureship honor the joint



The jacket image for *The Marriage Plot* by Naomi Seidman. Published by Stanford University Press, 2016.

The award seeks to encourage innovative and creative theological scholarship by GTU graduates and current faculty.

example and collaboration of Frederick Houk Borsch (1935-2017) and Harold W. Rast (1933-2004).

In announcing Prof. Seidman's receipt of the award, GTU

Dean Uriah Y. Kim stated, "Naomi Seidman's *The Marriage Plot* is a worthy choice as the inaugural winner of the Borsch-Rast Prize, which is among the most generous book awards in the field of religion and theology. Dr. Seidman has set a very high bar for future winners to meet."

Members of the selection committee heralded Prof. Seidman's work for its profound exploration of Jewish cultural attitudes toward love, sex, and marriage. "The Marriage Plot demonstrates a complex connection between literature and romantic practices in nineteenth century European Jewish communities," said Dr. Margaret Miles, professor emerita of historical theology and former academic dean of the GTU. "Readers are sure to be engaged, challenged, and persuaded to rethink our understanding of all sex-gender systems and how they circulate both in literary form

and in the erotic choices we make.”

In accepting the award, Prof. Seidman spoke of the deep gratification she has experienced not only in receiving the award but in hearing from readers from the GTU community whose opinions she cherishes. “My book is about the challenges to community of secularization and modernization, and (despite the title) about the bonds that connect us to one another beyond the nuclear family, on which modern society rests so much weight,” Prof. Seidman said. “At the Graduate Theological Union, all of us have been part of a radical experiment, of what it might mean to imagine community beyond the boundaries of religion and ethnicity, and I’ve been gratified to feel myself embraced by this community over the past twenty-some years.”

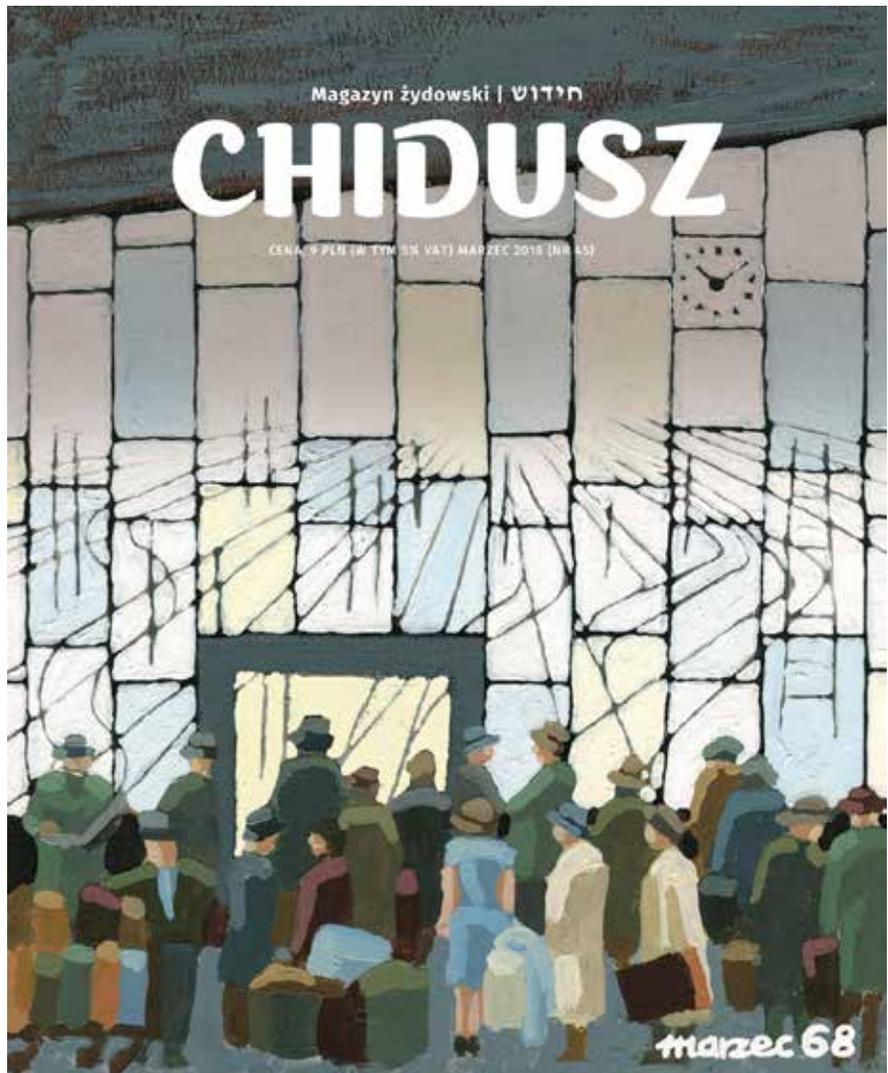
Prof. Seidman’s inaugural Borsch-Rast Lecture will take place this spring at the GTU. The date of the lecture will be announced in the near future.

Members of the selection committee heralded Prof. Seidman’s work for its profound exploration of Jewish cultural attitudes toward love, sex, and marriage.

The Graduate Theological Union is currently accepting nominations of 2017 publications by GTU faculty and alumni for the next Borsch-Rast Book Prize and Lectureship. Nominations will be accepted through April 25, 2018, and the winner will be announced in November. Visit <http://www.gtu.edu/borsch-rast-prize> for more information on the Borsch-Rast Book Prize and Lectureship, including contest guidelines and a link to the online nominations form. ■

Chidusz Publishes Special Edition on March '68

In honor of the 50th anniversary of March '68, *Chidusz*, a Jewish magazine based in Wrocław, published a special edition of the magazine. It features an interview with Konstanty Gebert about Polish-Jewish relations, historian Deborah Lipstadt on Poland's "Holocaust law," and writer and activist Teresa Bogucka on protest in the 1960s and protest today. Jerzy Kowalski, the cousin of filmmaker Agnieszka Holland, writes about his own experience of emigration in 1968. The cover, by Edyta Marciniak, depicts emigrants at Gdański Railway Station in March 1968. The few articles not explicitly related to March '68 include a critical account of Dr. Ewa Kurek's lectures on Polish-Jewish history, the current Political climate, and the story of Purim; the issue also contains an examination of Isaac Bashevis Singer's affairs and sexual harassment in light of the #MeToo movement. Mr. Gebert's



Cover art for the March 2018 edition of *Chidusz* by Edyta Marciniak. Courtesy of *Chidusz*.

article will also appear in *Chidusz*'s third English-language edition, available in print on April 19, 2018. ■

My Old New Sister

Anna Przybyszewska Drozd
and Matan Shefi

It was nothing out of the ordinary. A small family gathering—two sisters, their husbands and children. The only thing that gave away the fact that this was not just another family meeting was the film crew, documenting every facial expression. What brought Dor Glick and the Israeli Channel 10 team all the way to the northern Polish city of Szczecin was something unusual. It was the sisters' first meeting ever.

For more than twenty years, we have been in contact with tens of thousands of Jewish families from all over the world who reached out to us to find out about their families and the places they come from. Even the most seemingly simple questions can be the start of a most challenging journey in time, leading to exciting and unforeseen discoveries.

When Roza Kujawska's granddaughter searched through old family photos,



Half-sisters Rosa and Tzipora, in the front row (left to right), meet with their families in Szczecin, Poland. Photograph by Dor Glick.

Courtesy of the Jewish Genealogy & Family Heritage Center at the Jewish Historical Institute.

Even the most seemingly simple questions can be the start of a most challenging journey in time, leading to exciting and unforeseen discoveries.

she came across a picture of people she had never known about. A man and a woman with two boys, and an inscription on the back: “For my brother’s wife and Roza. From our family—Leon and Szura Berkowicz.” When she

asked her grandmother who they were, Roza told her for the first time the story of her Jewish father, with whom she had lost contact when she was a little girl, just after the war.

Roza Kujawska was born in 1943 in the Soviet Union. After the war ended, her parents were on the way back to Poland. But, as Roza’s mother always told her, “Your father missed the right train.” Roza never saw her father, Idel, again. Having immigrated to Israel, he sent her a letter and his

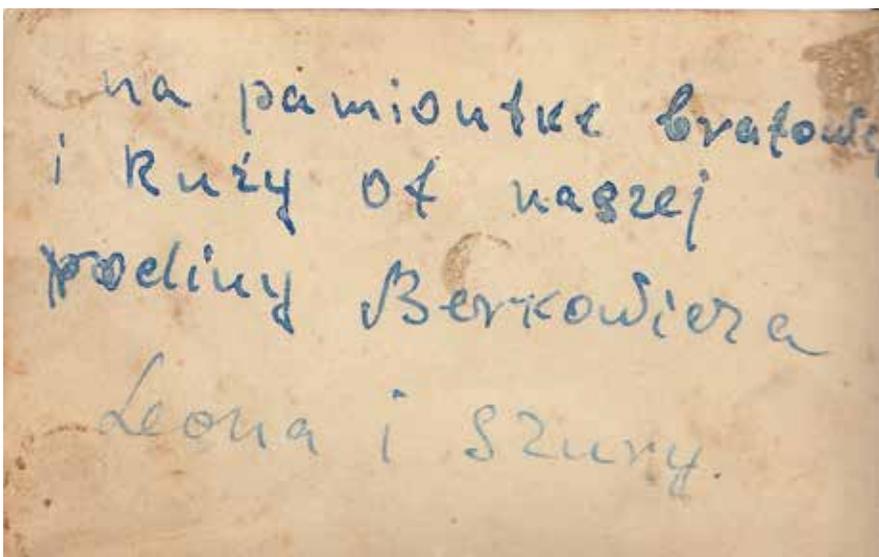
photo, both of which she has since lost.

Leon, Idel's brother, stayed in Poland for a longer time, until he too decided to leave with his family for Israel in the 1950s. Before he left, he contacted his young niece, Roza, for the last time. It is said among the family that Roza's father asked Leon to bring Roza to Israel, but her mother wouldn't agree to it.

Roza kept her wish to find her father to herself. Many years ago, she tried to find him by sending her only keepsake, a photograph of him, to an organization in Israel. She never received an answer. She gave up.

It was Roza's granddaughter who led the search and wrote to us. Immediately, we located family documents in the JHI Archives, and soon after, we also found the grave of Idel and traces of his new family in Israel. He had married again and had two children, Tzipora and Avram.

When we contacted Tzipora, she was immediately willing to meet her half-sister Roza. She doesn't remember



The photograph of the Berkowicz family that Leon Berkowicz sent to Roza and her mother, and that decades later led Roza's granddaughter to search for her Roza's relatives. On the back of the photograph, the inscription reads: "For my brother's wife and Roza, from our family—Leon and Szura Berkowicz."

Courtesy of the Jewish Genealogy & Family Heritage Center at the Jewish Historical Institute.

much of their father, who passed away when she was fourteen, but she remembers him speaking about the little daughter he left behind. Tzipora never thought she would find her half-sister, so she never looked for her.

As a result of the contact, both families met soon thereafter in Szczecin, a Polish town close to the place where Roza

lives today. When Roza's secret wish was realized by her granddaughter, the existence of her new family was revealed to them and to the world. ■

Anna Przybyszewska Drozd and Matan Shefi work at the Jewish Genealogy & Family Heritage Center at the Emanuel Ringelblum Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw.

The 6th Annual Bruno Schulz Festival

**Julian and
Fay Bussgang**

The Sixth Annual Bruno Schulz Festival took place in Wrocław, Poland from October 11 to 21, 2017. Born into a Jewish family, Bruno Schulz (1892–1942) was an outstanding author and artist who lived in Drohobycz (today, Drohobych, Ukraine), a city in Galicia known as the largest source of oil in Europe. Schulz started his career by being interested in drawing and then studied architecture in Vienna. He spoke German fluently, but his primary language was Polish. .

When he returned from his studies, he became an art teacher in the high school in Drohobycz and continued drawing. He soon became known not only for his art but for his writings as well. He authored short stories and two books that won him much acclaim: *Sklepy cynamonowe* (in English titled *Street of Crocodiles*) and *Sanatorium pod Klepsydrą* (*Sanatorium under the Sign of the Hourglass*). Both these

In 2001, a German documentary filmmaker discovered a mural in Drohobych that Schulz had created during the war for the local Gestapo chief, who had admired Schulz's work. A team from Israel managed to remove some of the drawings and secretly transport them to Israel, where they were turned over to the Yad Vashem Museum.

books led to productions of highly regarded theatrical plays and movies. Schulz was recognized by the Polish Academy of Literature, receiving, in 1938, its Golden Laurel Award. Films based on Bruno Schulz's writings have received much attention, including a prize at the Cannes film festival.

Schulz remained in Drohobycz under the Soviet occupation in 1939, and then, in 1941, when the Germans occupied his city, he was confined to the ghetto. In 1942, at the age of fifty, while walking down a street, he was shot and killed by a German officer.

Murals drawn by him for children had been hidden but

were found in Drohobych in 2001 when the city was already part of Ukraine. A team from Israel discovered them in a home formerly occupied by the Gestapo chief of Drohobycz. They quietly communicated with the current owners of the property, removed the murals, and secretly flew them to Israel. These murals are now in the possession of the Yad Vashem Museum in Jerusalem. Following a protest by the museum in Drohobycz, which claimed rightful ownership of the murals, the Drohobycz Museum and Yad Vashem reached an agreement, in 2008, that while these art pieces are the property of Ukraine, Yad Vashem can



Self-Portrait in Cliché-Verre (ca. 1920) by Bruno Schulz.
Image available in public domain.

keep them as a long-term loan.

The first Bruno Schulz Festival was held in Drohobych in 2008. Wrocław followed beginning in 2011. In November 2012, the Polish Senate commemorated the 170th anniversary of Schulz's birth and the 70th anniversary of his death. At that time, the exhibit at the Polish Senate consisted of twenty-four large displays that included Schulz's

self-portrait, drawings of his family, book illustrations, and fragments of his prose. Also displayed was an Epilogue depicting Schulz's death during the German occupation.

Wrocław has continued the tradition of a festival in Schulz's honor and has expanded it to become an international festival of art and literature, including lectures and concerts. ■

For more information on the latest Bruno Schulz Festival, see: <http://brunoschulz.dybook.pl/program-2017/>.

Julian and Fay Bussgang edited Gazeta for over twenty years. Today, they serve as senior contributing editors.

PERSONAL ESSAYS

My Month in Polin

Ariella Goodman

1. Summer Prelude

“So what are your plans for the summer? Heading off to camp?”

“No actually- I’m spending a month in Kraków, volunteering at the JCC there.”

“Oh...” the reply trailed off. This exchange was typical at the end of my year in seminary. As my friends were preparing to leave for Camps Moshava and Stone, I was preparing to pick up on an old interest of mine: Polin. Typically, when I answered about my summer plans, I would receive several raised eyebrows, confused faces, and questions such as “Are there even Jews there to have a JCC?!” or “How on earth did you get involved in something like that?” To the former question, I would respond “There are Poles finding out they have Jewish roots everyday, and the JCC there provides them with a safe haven to undergo



Ariella Goodman and her teacher Shmuel Afek in Kraków.
Courtesy of Ariella Goodman.

that journey.” To the latter question, I would answer “I had a wacky history teacher in high school.”

Last year, in high school, I took a class titled Re-birth of Poland: How Does an Old Nation Write a New History? Typically, when history teachers mention Poland, they depict the country as a mass gravesite for Jews.

Poland means the Holocaust, Poland means pogroms, and if the class was sophisticated enough to get to the postwar period, Poland also means communism. When American students visit Poland, that means all Holocaust and no Heritage—death of Jewry and no revival of Jewry. But our class was different—our class “had seen the truth!” Throughout our trip to Poland,

we learned about Polish Jews seeking to return to their religious tradition and ethnic heritage. We visited two JCCs, one in Warsaw and one in Kraków, both of which host a variety of workshops, brunches, book clubs, films, and ulpan classes for Polish Jews to learn both Hebrew and Yiddish. Our journey around Poland showed us more than just Jewish loss, it also exposed us to Jewish life. Whereas most Americans who travel in Poland never meet an actual Pole, we had partnerships with *two* Polish high schools. In class, we analyzed Jewish history museums in Poland, many different interwar Jewish communities, and the wealth of culture they left behind, the latest scholarly work in Jewish studies, Polish resistance during and after the war, communist Poland, and of course, the renaissance of Jewish life in Poland.

Now you see, my teacher *loved* Polin. And I do too. When I came to Kraków for Shabbat last year, I fell in love with the remarkably preserved city. I was in awe of its parks, medieval castles, synagogues,

I've learned that our people's relationship with the city, and with this haunting, complicated, beautiful and downright tragic country, cannot follow either the March of the Living narrative or that of the blossoming Jewish revival.

and even its fine collection of churches. And as I walked its cobblestone streets, I thought, “Now this is the *real* Poland. Anybody who thinks Poland is something other than this just hasn't come to Kraków.” In Kraków, I could imagine its historic and diverse group of Jews. When we met with non-Jewish tour guides of the Jewish district, I felt endless debt and gratitude to Poles dedicated to preserving my heritage—such altruism, such good!

Months after my trip, I still remembered the buzzing energy and dynamism that I experienced on Friday night the year before at the JCC. As I observed the rabbi's

relationship with the young Polish congregants, and the congregants relishing each opportunity to sing *zemirot* and to hear a *dvar Torah*, I knew I wanted to be more than an outsider, more than an onlooker. I wanted to know the stories and journeys of the Polish Jews at the Shabbat table. So naturally, a month as a JCC volunteer in Kraków sounded like the perfect idea.

2. My Month in Polin

I've now spent several *Shabbatonim* in Kraków, and I constantly vacillate from grimly thinking to myself, “there are no *Yidn* here—that's a completely lost world,” to marveling at how here in Kraków, in a city that has a heartbreakingly small number of Jews, I learned six hours of Torah each Shabbat with the local community. I've had way too many conversations with Poles who continue to perpetrate their historic narrative of victimhood, and choose to believe that American and Israeli Jews have completely fabricated stories of Polish anti-Semitism. I met a JCC volunteer who shared with me

that she dressed up as a Hasid for Halloween, shortly after telling me I was the first Jew she had ever met. But I have also met phenomenal people in Kraków: students of all religious and social walks of life who are studying the city's Jewish history or volunteering to help preserve its Jewish presence.

I came to some new conclusions on this second trip. I've learned that our people's relationship with the city, and with this haunting, complicated, beautiful and downright tragic country, cannot follow either the March of the Living narrative or that of the blossoming Jewish revival. The March of the Living account of history does a disservice to the rich heritage of Polish Jewry, choosing to ignore the centuries of a fascinating and brilliant community that produced the rich stories and philosophy of *Hassidut*, exceptional *yeshivot*, and a thriving secular Jewish culture. Where is the Bal Shem Tov in the March of the Living narrative? Where is Sarah Schenirer? Where's the thriving Yiddish culture? We

cannot allow Jewish teenagers to come to Poland and ignore all Jewish life. Instead, I would ask them to think about the life that once occurred here as well, not solely the death. Think about the culture and communities, not just the concentration camps. Honor and revel in this wonderfully rich canon of text that our Polish Jewish ancestors left us. Don't reduce all of the ideologies, yeshivas, social movements, and literature that came from this Jewish community to anti-Semitism and death. Never forgive the brutal savagery that killed all the Dovodels, all of the Yankels, and all the Rochels, never forget the sheer evil and barbarism that rendered millions of children orphans. Continue to speak up against Polish collaboration and the pogroms and the Poles who say, "Hitler got something right in the Holocaust." But make sure to leave space in the dialogue for pride and passion for the civilization that once flourished on the streets of Kazimierz, of Łódź, and of Warsaw.

The Jewish revival narrative doesn't entirely do it for me

either. Nor does my Heschel High School education (sorry, Shmuel). The sad truth of it all is that for centuries, Christians and Jews did *not* live peacefully amongst one another here. Poland is a historically xenophobic country—and I can say this, and criticize the country's infamous prejudice throughout the centuries, without saying all Poles are evil anti-Semites—and no amount of non-Jewish volunteers at the JCC can clean this country of its blood libels. Furthermore, I believe that Poles need to abandon their unwavering narrative of victimhood, and the excuses that come with this. Poles need to stop blaming Jews for hating them and stereotyping them, and instead, step back and consider that there might be validity and truth to the comments of Jews whose families experienced Polish anti-Semitism firsthand. Instead of claiming that the only perpetrators of hatred and prejudice toward Jews were the Germans, Polish "activists" need to combat their government that has just made it officially illegal

to say Poland had a role in the Holocaust. The Jewish leaders in Kraków must take a stand against such tyrannical actions, against a government whose ultra-nationalism is reminiscent of the 1930s. And the Jews working at the JCC must stop slandering other Jews, pointing fingers at them for having an opinion about Poland that varies from theirs. What kind of *achdut*, what kind of Peoplehood is that? If we want to recreate a truly genuine Jewish language in Kazimierz, we need to fight the urban regeneration that converts shuls and *batei midrash* into bars as well as the rampant cultural appropriation that hijacks and sullies a thousand-year-old tradition and culture. In 2017, I refuse to hear Polish volunteers at the JCC say, “I would rather Poles sell toy Hasidim than kill actual Hasidim.” This kind of logic saddens me. Poland is clearly not as loving of a place if the options we face are either anti-Semitism or creepy, offensive philo-Semitism. To the Jewish leaders in Kraków hesitant or even scared to make a statement that might

Though I believe that a more substantial Jewish future lies in Israel and America, I also believe that both the Jew in Katamon and the Jew in Kraków have a share in our people’s story and future.

“rock the boat,” I offer this: don’t be a politician, be a mensch. Fight the city council who can allow a synagogue to be turned into a club while simultaneously boasting that they strive to preserve the district’s Jewish heritage.

Let’s also be realistic about the country’s Jewish future. In my trip reflection from last year, I wrote that one can imagine Kraków’s Jews who were wiped out by the Holocaust while strolling the streets of the former Jewish District. This summer, however, with the streets full of blonde-haired, blue-eyed Poles enjoying their summer vacation at bars and (*tref*) restaurants, I saw no *Yidn*. As I walked to work everyday, I was shocked to

see a *kippah* on the street. In a neighborhood in which both Hareidim and secular Zionists once lived on the same street, you now find a milieu generally ignorant of and even apathetic to the fact that there was once a whole Jewish civilization here.

So where does this leave me? I’ve mentioned that I don’t want to pretend that there’s something here that’s not, but I also don’t want to dishonor the people who used to live here, and I also don’t want to dishonor Polish Jews such as Stanisław Krajewski who risked his life under communist Poland to teach “closeted Jews” the basics of Judaism, and who continues to this day to promote a more educated Jewry in Warsaw. Though I believe that a more substantial Jewish future lies in Israel and America, I also believe that both the Jew in Katamon and the Jew in Kraków have a share in our people’s story and future.

So I invite my readers to spend a Shabbat at JCC Krakow, to witness the wonderful community that two completely different

Jews—Jonathan Ornstein, an avowed atheist, and Rabbi Avi Baumol, the Religious Zionist rabbi from Efrat—have created together, attracting a wide range of students and stakeholders: from Holocaust survivors in their seventies to Judaic Studies students in their twenties, and converts of all ages who have discovered their Jewish roots and want to dedicate themselves to their ancestral religion and want to do that here, in Kraków.

Some thank yous to wrap this up. Thank you to my parents for always instilling in me a pride and belief in Jewish peoplehood. Thank you to Shmuel, my history teacher and mentor, with whom I may disagree on several aspects of the Polish narrative, but who ignited my love for history and initiated my relationship with this story. I would not be here without him. Thank you to JCC Krakow for taking me on despite my lack of Polish, and for welcoming me into the community and making me feel at home during all of the *zemirot*, *simchas*, and Torah learning. I look forward to my return. ■

Ariella Goodman is a graduate of Abraham Joshua Heschel School in New York City.

AFTERWORD ON ARIELLA GOODMAN'S ESSAY

Shmuel Afek

The idea of teaching a course on contemporary Poland at the Abraham Joshua Heschel High School in New York was born of a desire to expose our students to the unique, exciting transition to Western democracy that Poland has been undergoing since the collapse of communism in Europe in 1989. For students of history, the unique aspects of this process are invaluable. Our students follow a nation that is engaged in self reflection about its own history, and learn how the received narratives of Jewish presence in Poland are being challenged in a deep, thoughtful manner. An additional factor that makes the story of contemporary Poland so compelling, of course, is learning about the “de-assimilation” of Polish Jews, the hundreds of young people rediscovering their Jewishness and the diverse ways in which they are creating a new Jewish presence in the country that once knew an uninterrupted Jewish history of a thousand years.

Organizing a trip to Poland as a centerpiece of the course is a natural outcome of the course and its goals. A trip focused around personal experiences for our students with Polish students of the same age adds a dimension of learning that could not be achieved any other way. The interaction with Polish teens throughout the trip reinforces and further enriches what is learned in the classroom, but also adds new dimensions when the learning becomes personal and self-directed by curious students spending their hours and days together.

Shmuel Afek teaches at Abraham Joshua Heschel School in New York City.

OBITUARIES

Jerzy Jedlicki

June 14, 1930–January 31, 2018

Jerzy Jedlicki (known to his friends as Jurek), a leading Polish social historian, died in January 2018 at the age of 88. He was born in Lwów to an assimilated Jewish family that decided not to circumcise him. As a result, he was able to survive the war (as noted in *Gazeta Wyborcza*, February 2, 2018). He grew up in Warsaw, where his father was a successful chemical engineer, and, along with his brother Witold, a leading émigré Polish sociologist who died in 1995, was baptized by his parents as a Protestant in 1935. His mother, but not his father, was baptized as a Roman Catholic in 1940. When the Warsaw Ghetto was established, the family changed its name to Jedlicki and the two boys were accepted as Roman Catholics by the Jesuits. Jurek, his brother, and mother were able to survive on the Aryan side with forged documents, but his father was denounced by a Polish acquaintance and murdered by the Nazis.

He studied sociology at the University of Warsaw, where he had a distinguished career at the Institute of History at the Polish Academy of Science and where, after 1989, he became head of its workshop on the history of the intelligentsia. However, because of his criticism of the communist government, it was only then that he was awarded the title of full professor. He was also a member of the Collegium Invisibile, an elite academic society established in 1995 and modeled on the Oxford system, it seeks to bring together outstanding Polish students in the humanities and sciences with distinguished scholars for original research.

He joined the Polish United Workers' Party in 1953, but was soon disillusioned when he became aware of how the documents of the history of Polish communism were falsified in official publications. He initially placed his hope in the internal

Antony Polonsky

reform of the party but finally resigned from it in response to the anti-Semitic campaign of 1968. He was a member of the opposition discussion group, the Club of the Crooked Circle (Klub Krzywego Koła), one of the signatories of Memoriał 101, the protest of intellectuals against the proposed changes in the Polish constitution in 1976, and, from 1977, one of the organizers of the Flying University (Uniwersytet Latający) and of the Society for Scholarly Courses (Towarzystwo Kursów Naukowych), which grew out of it. He also conducted private seminars on European political thought at his home—among those who participated were, among others, Marcin Król, Paweł Śpiewak and Adam Michnik. He was a co-author of “The Appeal of the 64” of August 20, 1980 which supported the demands of the striking shipyard workers in Gdańsk and became a prominent member of Solidarity. During martial law was interned from

December 1981 to July 1982. After his release, he wrote extensively for underground publications, especially for *Krytyka*, *Nowy Zapis*, and *Tygodnik Mazowsze*.

After the end of communism in 1989, he was actively involved in the Pen Club. He was greatly disturbed by the persistence of anti-Semitism in democratic Poland, from which he had personally suffered as a child during the war. As a young boy, he was attacked in a streetcar as a “żydek” (roughly, “Jewboy”) and endured hostile references from his classmates to Jews during the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising of April 1943. Most painful for him was his exclusion from active participation in the underground scouting organization when one of his classmates revealed his Jewish origins. Writing of this period in *Gazeta Wyborcza*, on May 3, 2013, he observed:

Anyone with even a superficial acquaintance with the underground press during the war is well aware that antisemitism was then, with a few

Pullquote: Jurek was a gifted and percipient scholar, a person who loved a good argument, a good friend, and a stimulating conversationalist.

praiseworthy exceptions—such as *Biuletyn Informacyjny* or the leftist press—almost universal and that only a small number of the members of the underground became conscious, particularly in 1943, that this gave it a doubtful character from the ethical point of view.

Recent efforts to contradict this aroused his anger: “Why are you today, gentlemen, trying to deny this? That’s how it was and nothing can change it.” On another occasion he wrote:

Hatred of the Jews, contempt and mockery were a part of the culture of Central Europe in the twentieth century and thus also of Polish culture. I do not want to suggest that the whole society

was willing to engage in criminal activity. But the mass murder of the Jews was accompanied by the pleasure (*uciecha*) of a significant part of the the Polish environment (*otoczenie*). This pleasure, this laughter, which accompanied the Holocaust, I remember because I was then on the other, ‘aryan’, side of the wall. Until today, our attitude and also my own has been to flee from this topic, out of a cowardly fear of the dark side of our common past.

This led him to be one of the founders of the Association for Combating Antisemitism and Xenophobia—the Open Republic (*Stowarzyszenia Przeciwko Antysemityzmowi i Ksenofobii—Otwarta Rzeczpospolita*) and chair of its Programming Council. In 2011, he received the Commander’s Cross of the Order of Reborn Poland and in 2015, the Prize of the Foundation for the Support of Polish Scholarship, popularly known as the Polish Nobel prize.

Jurek was a prolific writer. Among his most important

works are *Nieudana próba kapitalistycznej industrializacji. Analiza państwowego gospodarstwa przemysłowego w Królestwie Polskim XX w.* (An unsuccessful attempt at capitalist industrialization. An analysis of state-owned industry in the Kingdom of Poland, Warsaw, 1964); *Klejnot i bariery społeczne: przeobrażenia szlachectwa polskiego w schyłkowym okresie feudalizmu* (Jewels and social barriers: the transformation of the Polish nobility at the end of the feudal period, Warsaw, 1968); *Jakiej cywilizacji Polacy potrzebują: studia z dziejów idei i wyobraźni XIX wieku* (What sort of civilization do Poles need: a study of the history of ideas and social imagination in the nineteenth century, Warsaw 1988), translated into English as *A Suburb of Europe: Polish Nineteenth Century Approaches to Western Civilization* (Budapest, 1999); *Źle urodzeni, czyli o doświadczeniu historycznym* (Badly born, or on historical experience, London, 1993); *Świat zwyrodniały. Lęki i*

wyroki krytyków nowoczesności (A degenerate world. The fears and judgements of the critics of modernity, Warsaw, 2000), translated into English as *A degenerate world* (Frankfurt am Main, 2016), *Błędne Koło: 1832-1864* (Warsaw, 2008) translated into English as *The vicious circle: 1832-1864* (Frankfurt am Main, 2014) and volume 2 of *Dzieje inteligencji polskiej do roku 1918* (Warsaw 2008), for which he was awarded the Jerzy Giedroyc prize. He was also the editor of the other two volumes of this three volume work, which were written by Maciej Janowski and Magdalena Micińska. All three volumes were translated into English as *A history of the Polish intelligentsia* (Frankfurt am Main, 2014).

In his work, he attempted to deflate Polish national myths. In *Jakiej cywilizacji Polacy potrzebują*, he wrote:

...the specific combination of a collective inferiority complex with the national megalomania, which is intended to compensate for this, seems to be typical of the educated strata

of outlying countries.

It is hard and painful to acknowledge even to oneself the peripheral and marginal situation of one's country and its culture. However, without such an acknowledgement it is very difficult to formulate a clear strategy for how to emerge from it.

At the same time, he also stressed that what united all the participants in these painful debates in the nineteenth century was a quality which he shared and which he believed was essential if Poland was to emerge as a successful modern country — hope. Without hope, he reflected that “the humiliated nation would be consumed by worries about the futility of everyday existence.”

Jurek was a gifted and percipient scholar, a person who loved a good argument, a good friend, and a stimulating conversationalist. He stoically bore the pain with which he was afflicted in his last years. His was a voice of reason and tolerance, civilized debate and rational discussion that will be sorely missed. ■

Remembering Sala Garncarz Kirschner

Jill Vexler

Sala Garncarz Kirschner and I never met while I was steeping myself in her life's story. But when we did meet in the tunnel into the New York Public Library, it was an instant and forever kind of a friendship. Unbeknownst to Sala, she had become my story-telling muse, an inspiration for continuing positively in life after profound loss, and my personal guide into a lesser-known aspect of the Holocaust, the Nazi slave labor camp system. Sala, born in Sosnowiec, Poland, on March 5, 1924, died on March 7, 2018. By odd coincidence, March 7, the very day we met, was the opening of an exhibition I curated about her life. Her passing has sparked a rich reflection on our friendship and the lessons that one person can impart to another.

Sala's subversive resistance was to save over 350 postcards, letters, scribbled pieces of paper, and hand-drawn birthday wishes written to her. Allowed correspondence for PR



Photograph of Sala Garncarz, age twelve.
Image courtesy of Jill Vexler.

For 50 years, she kept secret a cache of letters she had squirreled away from Nazi guards. The collection later inspired a book and a play.

purposes and morale, Sala corresponded with family and friends still in the Sosnowiec ghetto. After deportations, two of her sisters and she corresponded labor camp-to-camp until all mail was stopped July 1943. The

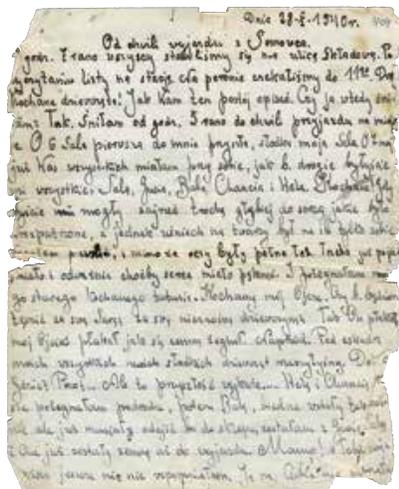
letters took on an almost animistic quality—writers' voices accompanied Sala when lonely and gave her strength to visualize seeing them again. To save the letters, she risked her life and those of her bunkmates by hiding them during Nazi searches. No envelopes allowed, for they took up too much space. Sala clung to her letters through liberation. She found two sisters, and met an American GI, Corporal Sidney Kirschner, whom she married. The letters went with her to the Bronx where she hid them for fifty years.

Written in German to pass censors, the letters are windows into ghetto life. "Mazal tov" adorned postcard corners when Sala's sister Blima got engaged. "A friend left for a wedding but I didn't go because I wasn't at home..." refers to the friend's deportation but not the writer. Her sister Raizel reminds her "to fast on Yom Kippur." A cousin's postcard

describes three horrendous days in Sosnowiec's stadium: hot July sun with no water as final deportations took place. "The small and the grey, old and young, poor and rich," all deported. I read all of the letters over and over, and then again to pick those that told stories the best. Sala was right. Each card had a voice.

As the exhibition deadline approached, Ann Kirschner, Sala's daughter, excitedly sent me a newly found treasure: Sala's first entry in her diary the day of deportation Monday, October 28, 1940: "If you could have looked into my heart, you would have seen how desperate I was; still I tried to keep a smile on my face as best I could though my eyes were filled with tears. One must go on bravely and courageously, even if the heart is breaking." Her preface says it all.

Letters to Sala, the traveling exhibition in English, Polish, Estonian, and Russian could also be named *Lessons from Sala*. Beyond gratitude for the trust to tell her story, knowing Sala enriched my soul, gave me an eye to the future when times are rough,



First page of Sala Garncarz's diary, from Monday, October 28, 1940, describing the first day of the deportation from Sosnowiec, Poland, to Geppersdorf, Germany (today, Rzędziwojowice, Poland). Courtesy of Jill Vexler.

and left me with profound awe at the grace and wisdom of a sixteen-year-old. ■

Jill Vexler, PhD, is a cultural anthropologist and independent curator whose work focuses on prewar Jewish life and Holocaust-related themes. She curated the exhibition Letters from Sala.



Tisha B'av Sackcloth and Chains Sit-In at the Polish U.N. mission, August 4, 1968. From the Yeshiva University University Archives, Student Struggle for Soviet Jewry Collection, 4/1.

If you would like to suggest an article and/or author for the next issue of *Gazeta*, or submit one yourself, please email: info@taubephilanthropies.org. The submission deadline for the next issue is **July 3, 2018**.



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