



# Gazeta

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## Message from Irene Pipes

President of the American Association  
for Polish-Jewish Studies

Founder of *Gazeta*

Dear Members and Friends,

Two important events took place in Poland this summer. The XI Conference of the European Association for Jewish Studies was for the first time held in Krakow. It was organized by the Jagellonian University with the help of twelve other institutions interested in promoting Jewish Studies. It was attended by nearly 1,000 scholars. The largest group of about 200 people came from Israel. Antony Polonsky gave the keynote lecture, the theme of which was “Polish Statehood and the Jews: Reflections on the Century of Polish Independence.” At the same time, there was a meeting of the selection committee of the Gierowski-Shmeruk Prize for the best book published on the history and culture of Polish Jews by authors linked with Polish scholarly institutions.

The second event, the 38th annual International Meeting of the Association of Jewish Genealogy Societies, took place in Warsaw in conjunction with the POLIN Museum and the Emanuel Ringelblum Jewish Historical Institute, and was attended by more than 800 people. This was the first time that the annual meeting was ever held in a former communist country.

On a sad note, I shall mention that Harvard University is planning a memorial service in Memorial Hall on September 21 for my late husband Richard.

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

Trying to establish the truth about something is challenging when the facts are disputed or strong emotions are involved in the outcome. This issue of *Gazeta* offers a number of essays and items that discuss the most recent scholarship and debates about the Polish Jewish relationship and its many outcomes, effects, and residues since the German invasion of Poland. Among our three lead articles, one employs a detailed historical analysis to explain how escapees from ghettos and camps in occupied Poland were able to survive, or not, in environments that were unfriendly to Jews. Another essay offers a reassessment of the life of Irena Sendler, who became an iconic Righteous Among the Nations once her covert efforts during the Nazi occupation were revealed and publicized decades after the war. The most topical of the three essays is an overview of the Polish government's recent decision, owing to domestic and international outcry, to revise its proposed law curbing public debate of Poland's role in the Holocaust.

Our issue also includes shorter items involving personages known for their insistence on uncovering truths. One is a review of *Flights*, a novel by Olga Tokarczuk, the first Polish author to win the prestigious Man Booker International Prize. Another is the obituary of the provocative French filmmaker Claude Lanzmann, of *Shoah* fame. Yet another obituary, this one for Richard Pipes, reviews the life of an influential and highly regarded scholar who never stopped exploring the world, and inside himself.

As the overall mission of *Gazeta* is to engage with the scholarship of Polish Jewish history to the present day, we hope that this Summer edition will shed new insights into the topics at hand and encourage further research and debate.

Tad Taube and Shana Penn  
*Chairman and Executive Director*

## FEATURES

# Szymon Datner's "Little-Known Category of Hitlerite Crime" – 50 Years On

Tomasz Frydel

In 1970, writing in the aftermath of the so-called anti-Zionist campaign of 1968 in Communist Poland, Szymon Datner – a Holocaust survivor and preeminent scholar of the Holocaust in Poland – raised the delicate issue of Jews who had escaped the ghettos and camps of German-occupied Poland: “I estimate the number of Jewish survivors – mainly with the help of the Polish population – at approximately 100,000 people. We also estimate that at least the same number of victims [100,000] was captured by the organs of the occupation and fell victim to criminal acts” (Datner 1970: 29). Datner ended his article with a plea: “It is imperative that research into this little-known category of Hitlerite [Nazi] crime is continued, as well as determining the institutional and personal responsibility of its perpetrators in every individual case” (Datner 1970: 29).

Some two decades later, speaking in a less guarded



The deportation of Jews from Mielec, 1942.  
Photograph from the Yad Vashem Archives. Used with permission.

tone in Solidarity-era Poland, Datner stated in an interview that the Holocaust “cannot be charged against the Poles. It was German work and was carried out by German hands. [I] must state with all decisiveness that more than 90 percent of the terrifying, murderous work was carried out by the Germans, with no Polish participation whatsoever” (Datner 1986:

247). “On the other hand,” added Datner, “the Polish-Jewish problem in those days, if I can put it that way, lies in the approximately 250 to 250,000 Jews who tried to save themselves.” Datner’s formulation of the “Polish-Jewish problem” of the Holocaust has served as the moral and historical yardstick of Polish responsibility.

## Night Without End

To date, the most systematic effort to investigate this issue was undertaken by scholars affiliated with the Polish Center for Holocaust Research in Warsaw. The result of this five-year collaborative research project, led by Barbara Engelking and Jan Grabowski, is a two-volume study entitled *Dalej jest noc. Losy Żydów w wybranych powiatach okupowanej Polski* [*It Is Still Night: The Fate of Jews in Selected Counties of Occupied Poland*]. The title “It Is Still Night” is taken from a poem by Czesław Miłosz, *The Journey* (*Podróż*), published in 1942. An abridged English-language version of the two volumes, *Night Without End*, is forthcoming.

The inspiration for the study was Jan Grabowski’s previous book, *Hunt for the Jews: Betrayal and Murder in German-Occupied Poland* (2013), set in the county of Dąbrowa Tarnowska. The period following the “liquidation actions” of ghettos from mid-1942 to

*We, Polish Jews growing  
wild in forests, feeding  
our terrified children  
on roots and grass; we  
crawling, crouching,  
bedraggled and unkempt,  
armed with an antique  
shotgun obtained by  
some miraculous feat of  
begging and bribing.*

– “We, Polish Jews,”  
Julian Tuwim, 1944,  
translated by  
Antony Polonsky

1945 has subsequently come to be known as the “third phase” of the Holocaust or as some German policemen referred to it – the “hunt for Jews” (*Judenjagd*).

The massive publication contains micro-histories focused on this period in nine counties of occupied Poland: eight in the General Government (GG) and one in Białystok District.

The study examined four districts in the core territory of the GG (with the exception

of Radom District). Other major Polish regions still await a similar treatment.

The findings largely confirm the intuitions of Datner and other historians about rates of escape, survival, and mortality. Taken together, the selected counties held a population of 140,000 Jews (5-10% of the population). Of this number, approximately 2,500 survived (less than 2%). The median escape rate from ghettos in all counties was 10%. In all nine counties, approximately 30% of Jews in hiding survived, while more than 60% did not live to see liberation. The book also highlights the fact that the complicity of segments of Polish society in the Holocaust was primarily a rural phenomenon.

## Poland’s Holocaust Law

The book appeared this year in the midst of controversy following the Polish Parliament’s adoption of an amendment to the Act on the Institute of National Remembrance, specifically Article 55a. Among others, the amendment made it a crime to “ascribe Nazi crimes to the

Polish Nation or to the Polish State” and would penalize “slandering or libeling the Polish nation” by accusing it of being complicit with the Holocaust, with imprisonment for up to three years.

Ironically, the timing of the ruling party’s heavy-handed attempt to shape historical truth – which caused an international social media storm and a diplomatic crisis between Poland and Israel – only helped to launch the publication by giving it the best media exposure that a book can expect. *Dalej jest noc* was sold out within days of the book’s premiere at the POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews in Warsaw on April 22, 2018.

### **The Devil in the Details**

The controversy signaled the worrying ascendance of the Holocaust into Poland’s culture wars, with all its crudities, while revealing a surprising level of misunderstanding on all sides.

The greatest confusion may lie in what readers may take to mean by death “as a result of the actions” of Poles. Indeed,

the strength of the current study is to foreground how segments of Polish society impeded Jewish survival in this specific stage of the Holocaust. However, it would be an oversimplification to suggest that in all cases there was a direct line between Polish complicity and Jewish death. Rather, the question of the fate of Jewish fugitives during the so-called *Judenjagd* presents historians with a multivariate problem. The survival strategies applied by Jews were often as complex as the local circumstances they came into contact with, as were the causes of their death.

While it is important to formulate the findings within macro-level statistics, the real strength of the studies lies in their attention to local realities. Here, the enormous regional differences are striking. For example, while in Miechów county more than 12% of Jews in hiding were killed by members of the Polish underground, by contrast, less than 1% were killed in Dębica county – both within District Krakow. While the escape rate from one town, such as Mielec, could be as low as 1%, just 20

km. south in Radomyśl Wielki that rate was closer to 10%. Likewise, the highest rate of Jewish survival occurred in Złoczów county (47%), which likely reflects Eastern Galicia more broadly. The reason for this disparity is threefold: 1) the relatively late liquidation of its ghetto (spring 1943); 2) the shorter duration of the *Judenjagd* as a consequence (approximately one year); and 3) the greater level of Polish-Jewish solidarity in the region (likely due to the shared threat of Ukrainian nationalists). Such local variations could be multiplied.

### **The Case of Dębica County**

As the author of the Dębica county study, I was struck by the significance of situational factors, localized patterns of violence, and social dynamics in tipping the scales of the fate of Jews in hiding. In one instance, after a so-called pacification action of a village for the shelter of Jews, in the subsequent few weeks locals preemptively captured more than thirty Jews in the surrounding region out of fear for a similar German reaction. Under the lens of a

micro-history, genocide often presents itself as series of homicides in accelerated form.

There is no doubt that peasants denounced and directly participated in the capture of Jewish fugitives, leading to their murder. But the major power structure that acted as a conveyor belt of captives to the German or Polish “Blue” Police – certainly in the context of Dębica county – was a kind of village surveillance system consisting of village heads, village guards, rotating “hostages,” foresters, and the like instituted by German authorities. The overwhelming majority of peasants accused of collaboration after the war had ties to this system. The forces of anti-Semitism and greed played an important role, but this system of pressures formed the institutional baseline that determined the range of behavior.

The oppressive picture that emerges from the study is of an entire society retooled by the occupation authorities from the village level up for the purpose of producing Jewish death.



Jews building barracks in the Dębica Ghetto, 1941.  
Photograph from the Archive of the Regional Museum in Dębica. Used with permission.

Further, under the “identity politics” of a racist occupation, people tended to fall back on their ethnic identities, and the studies confirm that Jewish life was often assigned a lower value from that of ethnic Poles. One consequence of this was that the fugitive Jews in the countryside – “growing wild in forests,” “bedraggled and unkempt,” to evoke Julian Tuwim’s poem – were largely left outside the institutional support of the Underground State, though here, too, marked regional differences can be observed.

The overall difficulty of drawing a clear line between

Polish society and Jewish mortality lies in the fact that Jewish survival was often intertwined with broader dilemmas that compromised village societies, such as ongoing hunts for Soviet POWs, roundups for forced labor to Germany, and the general social breakdown caused by the occupation. The struggle for Jewish survival at times clashed with the survival strategies adopted by village collectives, even if the latter were not the target of the same genocidal assault.

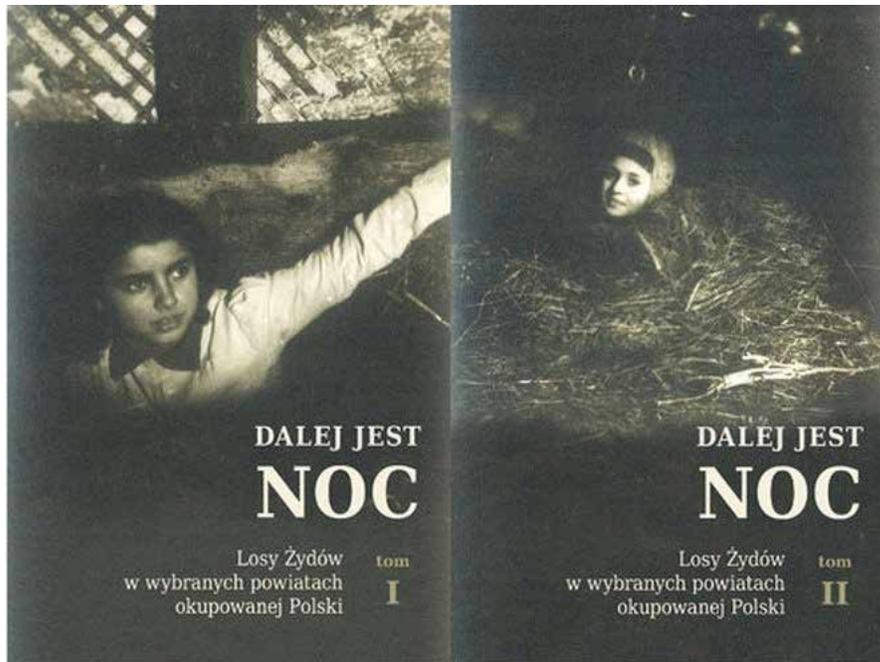
Paying attention to the above factors can yield more explanatory power than reducing the matter to

a monolithic understanding of anti-Semitism (as widespread as it was) or the conventional framework of perpetrators, victims, and bystanders. In fact, the notion of “bystanders” quickly dissolves under the complex reality of a micro-history. In studying the anatomy of the “third phase” of the Holocaust on Polish territories, Datner’s call to determine the “institutional and personal responsibility of its perpetrators in every individual case” requires the most precise analytic tools.

It is not often that a two-volume academic study – counting almost 1700 pages in length and characterized by Talmudic footnotes – is sold out within days of the book’s premiere. It would appear that a large section of the public is interested in the unadorned truth of the Holocaust in Poland, even if – as when Datner first raised the “Polish-Jewish problem” – its ruling political party is not.

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**Tomasz Frydel** is a PhD Candidate in the Department of History and the Anne Tanenbaum Centre for Jewish Studies at the University of Toronto. His dissertation examines village society and the Holocaust in German-occupied Poland. He is currently a Claims Conference Saul Kagan Fellow in Advanced Shoah Studies. ■

# The Amendment of Poland's Controversial Holocaust Legislation

Antony Polonsky

In a surprise move at the end of June, Mateusz Morawiecki, the Polish Prime Minister introduced legislation in the Polish parliament which was rapidly passed, and which significantly modified the amendments to the law on the prosecution of crimes against the Polish Nation passed in late January. The most controversial of these amendments held that:

1. Whoever claims, publicly and contrary to the facts, that the Polish Nation or the Republic of Poland is responsible or co-responsible for Nazi crimes committed by the Third Reich, as specified in Article 6 of the Charter of the International Military Tribunal enclosed to the International agreement for the prosecution and punishment of the major war criminals of the European Axis, signed in London on 8 August 1945 (Polish Journal of Laws of 1947, item 367), or for other felonies that



The site of the 1941 massacre in Jedwabne, in which the town's non-Jewish residents murdered approximately 1,600 of their Jewish neighbors. Image courtesy of Jason Francisco.

2. If the act specified in clause 1 is committed unintentionally, the perpetrator shall be liable to a fine or a restriction of liberty.

3. No offence is committed if the criminal act specified in clauses 1 and 2 is committed in the course of the one's artistic or academic activity.

These sentences were now removed from the legislation. The following clause was however retained:

Protecting the reputation of the Republic of Poland and the Polish Nation shall be governed by the provisions of the Civil Code Act of 23 April 1964 (Polish Journal of Laws of 2016, items

380, 585 and 1579) on the protection of personal rights. A court action aimed at protecting the Republic of Poland's or the Polish Nation's reputation may be brought by a non-governmental organisation within the remit of its statutory activities. Any resulting compensation or damages shall be awarded to the State Treasury.

Article 53p. A court action aimed at protecting the Republic of Poland's or the Polish Nation's reputation may also be brought by the Institute of National Remembrance. In such cases, the Institute of National Remembrance shall have the capacity to be a party to court proceedings.

In addition, clauses relating to the penalization of the denial of crimes "committed by Ukrainian nationalists and members of Ukrainian units collaborating with the Third Reich" remained in the legislation.

The amendment of the legislation was accompanied by a joint statement by Prime Ministers Morawiecki and Netanyahu. In it they

condemned "every single case of cruelty against Jews perpetrated by Poles during...World War II" but also noted "heroic acts of numerous Poles, especially the Righteous Among the Nations, who risked their lives to save Jewish people." In addition, it declared that "We have always agreed that the term 'Polish concentration/death camps' is blatantly erroneous and diminishes the responsibility of Germans for establishing those camps" and argued that the wartime Polish Government-in-Exile "attempted to stop this Nazi activity by trying to raise awareness among the Western allies to the systematic murder of the Polish Jews." The declaration condemned anti-Semitism and anti-Polonism and affirmed that "[w]e believe that there is a common responsibility to conduct free research, to promote understanding and to preserve the memory of the history of the Holocaust."

The response to the modification of the controversial legislation and the declaration has been mixed. In Poland, Prime Minister Morawiecki attempted to justify the change, arguing that "nothing

[has] really changed. Criminal charges were never the main goal of the law; remaining civil and legal measures will have the same impact. Our goal was to change world opinion, and that goal has already been achieved." The changes were widely welcomed by liberals, although some expressed regret that the law had not been entirely repealed. The Catholic Church has supported the government decision to modify the law. According to Bishop Rafał Markowski, chairman of the Church's Commission for Dialogue with Judaism:

We're satisfied the clauses which caused controversy and provoked serious unease have been removed. I experienced this unease in talks with Jewish community representatives, with whom we very much depend on good relations.

Nationalists were critical. Robert Winnicki, Polish member of parliament and leader of the right-wing nationalist Ruch Narodowy political party tried physically to block the podium in parliament to prevent debate over the amendments. Internet

commentary claimed that “the Jews have again brought Poland down on its knees” or described the government as “pro-Jewish.”

Jewish reactions have also been mixed. Szewach Weiss, a former Israeli ambassador to Poland observed:

I am satisfied [with the repeal]. I believe that Poland and Israel will return to the common path on which they were embarked. We must not forget the past but we need to go forward. I hope we will return to the good relations which existed six months ago... We need to develop our educational programs and mutual cultural relations between our young people, to develop our scholarly institutions and encourage historical and sociological research.

Lesław Piszewski, President of the Jewish Community of Warsaw said that the Jewish community in Poland was “very pleased” with the government’s decision to repeal the criminal provisions in the law that he hoped would help restore Poland’s relations with the Jewish diaspora, with Israel

*Yehuda Bauer claimed the law still allowed the pursuit of civil suits against self-critical Polish historians.*

and with the United States.

This position was shared by the World Jewish Congress whose president, Ronald Lauder, said the organization was “pleased that the Polish government has recognized the untenable nature of its new Holocaust law.”

Initially, the Yad Vashem Holocaust Memorial Museum welcomed the move, claiming that the government’s reversal was “a positive development in the right direction” and that “correct way to combat historical misrepresentations is by reinforcing open, free research and educational activities.” It seems to have changed its position as a result of the intervention of Yehuda Bauer, the Nestor of Holocaust scholarship in Israel. In a radio interview, the 92-year-old said the backtracking on the law and the signing of a joint statement with Poland was “a small achievement and a very big mistake, bordering on betrayal.” He claimed that

the statement downplayed the involvement of Poles in the mass murder of the Jews and exaggerated the importance of Polish rescue activities. In addition, he claimed that the law still allowed the pursuit of civil suits against self-critical Polish historians.

This seems to have led Yad Vashem to criticize the “highly problematic wording” of the joint statement:

A thorough review by Yad Vashem historians shows that the historical assertions, presented as unchallenged facts, in the joint statement contain grave errors and deceptions, and that the essence of the statute remains unchanged even after the repeal of the aforementioned sections, including the possibility of real harm to researchers, unimpeded research and the historical memory of the Holocaust.

In addition, it was claimed that the legislation still made possible the pursuit of civil suits against those who, it was claimed, had falsified history and “reverses the explicit exception that was made for academic research and artistic

endeavor in the wording of the amendment.”

Critical views were also expressed by Naftali Bennett, the Israeli Education Minister and the Yesh Atid Party leader Yair Lapid.

The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum cautiously welcomed the changes, but felt they did not fully address the problem raised by the legislation. In its statement the USHMM acknowledged

the recent amendment to Poland’s problematic Act on the Institute of National Remembrance (IPN) as a first step towards addressing part of the problem with the legislation. However, this revision does not secure a future for Holocaust education, scholarship, and remembrance.

The statement continues:

[A]lthough the Government of Poland has removed the possibility of criminal prosecution under the terms of the IPN law, it is still possible for the state to engage in civil proceedings against persons who accuse “the Polish nation or the Polish state

*Repealing the amendment... has to be seen as a major concession on the part of the Morawiecki government.*

of being complicit in Nazi crimes committed by the Third German Reich.” The arbitration of historical facts does not belong with courts or legislative bodies. It belongs with rigorous scholars and educators committed to documenting historical truth and advancing accurate, thoughtful, open discourse.

The statement expressed its appreciation for the dialogue it had undertaken with the Polish government and hoped that this would continue. But it remained focused on its “primary concern, which is the potential for intimidation, self-censorship, and politicization, rather than a shared belief in the need for an ongoing, honest engagement with the past.” It also supported the statements of Yehuda Bauer and the historians of Yad

Vashem concerning the law. Concluding, it affirmed:

[W]e remain encouraged by and stand in solidarity with those Polish scholars whose research informs a fuller understanding of the Holocaust and with those Polish educators who are teaching future generations the vitally important history of the horrific events that took place on Polish soil during the Nazi German occupation.

Yaakov Nagel, one of the two Netanyahu confidants who secretly negotiated the agreement with the Polish government, defended it as follows:

Here is a country that prides itself with having passed a law that they say will restore national honor, and half a year later they cancel it... This is a great achievement for the State of Israel... We had a law that everyone said was terrible, and we got rid of it without giving them anything in return. There is nothing wrong with the statement.

He also claimed Yad Vashem’s chief historian, Dina Porat, had confirmed that the joint

statement was historically accurate. Certainly, when he presented the agreement and the statement in Tel Aviv, Netanyahu thanked Porat for assisting in the work that led to the agreement.

Perhaps the most judicious assessment of the situation was that made by the chairman of the Yad Vashem Council, Rabbi Israel Meir Lau, who, in an interview with Ynet, claimed he understood where Netanyahu was coming from and that he believed the Prime Minister's intentions were good.

Referring to the hostility of some Holocaust survivors, he pointed to their criticism of Israel's establishment of diplomatic ties with Germany. In his view:

There are two perspectives here that can't always be reconciled...One is diplomatic-political, which focuses on Israel-Poland relations today, in 2018, and the other is emotional and scientific, taken by scholars of Jewish history in World War II. The latter looks at the past—without taking into consideration the significance of the relations between the two

*The issuing of the joint [Poland-Israel] statement is a necessary step in ensuring these matters are discussed by historians and not subject to legal adjudication.*

countries—and the former focuses on the present and future, with a more forgiving attitude toward the Poles as individuals.

Repealing the amendment, criminalizing some forms of Holocaust discourse, which has led to so many bitter exchanges in the last six months, has to be seen as a major concession on the part of the Morawiecki government. The issuing of the joint statement, which does deal both with the good and bad aspects of Polish behavior, however superficially, seems to me a necessary step in the return to a more civil discussion of the complex, difficult and contested aspects of Polish-Jewish relations during the Second World War, and to

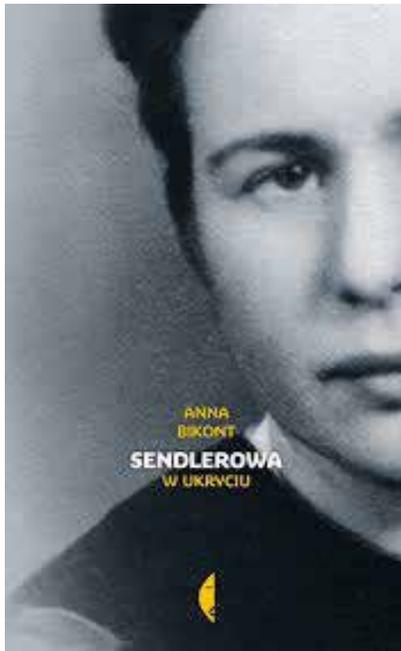
ensuring that these matters are discussed by historians and not subject to legal adjudication. ■

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

# A Quite Non-Obvious Woman. *Sendlerowa. W ukryciu (Sendlerowa: In Hiding)* By Anna Bikont

There is no one interested in East European history who has not heard the name of Irena Sendler. Besides Jan Karski, she is the best known Polish Righteous Among the Nations. On Amazon.com, her eight English language romanticized biographies are for sale, and there is at least one fictionalized American-Polish television movie of her life, as well as several documentaries, and some theatre plays. In Poland, there are awards in her name, streets and schools named after her. This current year has been declared by the Polish Parliament as “The Year of Irena Sendler.”

It is obvious that with such mass production, a sketch version of her life, character and motivations is most often idealized, or at least simplified. She was a heroic woman, acting bravely in very difficult times – her life story does not require any embellishments. And yet, most of the books about her, as well



Jacket image for *Sendlerowa. W ukryciu (Sendlerowa: In Hiding)* by Anna Bikont.

as the TV movie, turn her into a stereotype. There are untrue facts and characterizations repeated from book to book, easy images copied without corrections. She is presented as a modest Catholic woman, moved by her good heart to save Jewish children, whom she selflessly walked out of the Warsaw Ghetto. In his request to the Speaker of the Sejm, asking to make her a person of the year, Marek

## Irena Grudzińska Gross

Michalak, the then Rights of Children spokesman, said about her: “The example set by the heroic actions of Irena Sendler teaches us that people cannot remain passive and silent when they are aware that someone nearby is suffering harm. She acted in a real, sincere manner, being completely indifferent to any accolades or honors. She always considered the most important honor was the Order of the Smile granted to her by children.” The parliamentarians approved her candidature, asking, in a show of modesty: “Would we be as courageous?”<sup>1</sup>

Similar to the American story of Rosa Parks, who sat down in a “for whites only” section of the bus because “she was tired,” Irena Sendler, a leftist social worker and skillful organizer, is turned into a person acting on her womanly instinct.

There is now a book that makes clear that this sentimental image of Irena Sendler can

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1 <https://sprawiedliwi.org.pl/en/news/2018-be-year-irena-sendler>

be discarded. I am referring to Anna Bikont's biography *Sendlerowa; In Hiding*, published last year in Poland by Czarne. Bikont presents the documented history of the activities of her protagonist, as well as of several children that survived the war, sometimes in part thanks to the help of Irena Sendler. She calls her protagonist "a quite non-obvious woman." The book starts with the stories of the children, as recalled by their adult selves and checked against whatever documentation is available. Before we even meet Sendler, we learn about their conditions of survival and what activities, ruses, and risks were involved in saving them.

After approximately fifty pages we turn to Irena Sendler. We are then ready to grasp how unrealistic the stories we previously heard about her are. The saving of Jews, both children and adults, in Warsaw during World War II was a very difficult and complicated business, requiring enormous courage, planning, money, organizational support, and networks of people willing to host the escapees or transport them to other places. In Żegota, the underground organization that helped Jews, Irena Sendler was responsible for placing

*Bikont did not want to write another false biography of a paper saint. Sendler was a real heroine whose life was full of dramatic events and upheavals.*

children who left the ghetto in apartments, always insufficient in number, or finding places for them in convents where they were relatively safer. She did not walk them out of the ghetto - they were smuggled by her collaborators. She was a logistics person, often without direct contact with her charges. It is unclear how many children she helped to safety, but it was definitely less than the number of 2,500 that is ascribed to her as a badge of honor. Let me repeat: she was an extremely courageous woman who does not need to be propped up by artificially pumped up numbers. There were several hundred children that she helped to hide. When we read the stories of those who survived, we see the enormity of her work.

In the first chapter of the book, Anna Bikont sets the tone by citing a survivor, Margarita Turkow, who remembers a mother of another survivor

saying that her daughter never lied. "So how did she survive the war? Margarita wondered" (p. 16). In fact, the problem that Bikont had to deal with, and hence the title "In Darkness" - which can also mean "In Hiding" -- is that her protagonist did not report truthfully about her past. Her wartime deeds are hidden, not only because of temporal distance separating us from it, but because so many people died during that time - and with them their memories and stories. Documents were burned, archives were destroyed. But there is also the defective memory of those who survived, with their traumatic silences and intentional obfuscation. The five years of war destroyed cities and lives, and marked forever those who survived. People had to hide their identity with false documents, moving into new places, with new people. After the war they were like exiles from foreign lands: they did not, could not, dwell on past humiliations and losses. Their memory was often faulty and changeable.

This was a real problem for Bikont, who did not want to write another false biography of a paper saint. Sendler was a real heroine whose life was full of dramatic events and

upheavals. Here I mention just a couple of examples (and as an inducement to read the book, as yet available only in Polish). Catholic by birth, Irena Sendler was a pre-war leftist, a social worker helping poor women with contraception. During the war, she had a Jewish lover who lived in the ghetto, and whom she married when the war ended and she was able to divorce her former husband. After the war, she joined first the Socialist Party then the Communist Party, remaining a member until the Communist Party was dissolved after 1989. At various moments of her life, she did not feel like exposing the above facts. When she was recognized finally for her rescue activities, she seemed to gradually succumb under the pressure of the ever-more active public effort at making her a Good Woman. Bikont was in a real bind: she did not want to undermine Sendler's noble reputation, and she also had to paint her life in all of its complexity.

Before writing, Bikont met several survivors, went through archives, books and manuscripts. Although it is difficult, many things can still be fact-checked. Irena Sendler's story often looked different from what she told herself. When the reputable

journalist, Teresa Torańska, met the inconsistencies in Sendler's life, she abandoned her biographical project altogether. But now the need to learn the history of the Second World War is more urgent than ever. We are losing the generational survivors, but also the craft of history is itself divided. One side is the official, state-sanctioned history, sometimes called "identity history." It is supported by major investments into the Institute of National Remembrance, new museums, monuments, school manuals, and other official narratives. In this history, Irena Sendler is portrayed strictly as the selfless Polish Catholic who stands for the masses of Poles who helped the Jews.

There is another kind of history, one that could be called dissident history, which does not start with essential identities (a Pole, a Jew, a communist, a patriot), but rather, begins with the in-depth description of what happened, who did what, and what were the consequences of such acts. The dissident historians, most of them women, write about the extermination of Jews without following the rules of patriotic discretion – they look at the evidence, not at honor. They do analyze the context of events

but do not use it to relativize crimes and suffering. They do not call on human nature and the fog of war to whitewash massacres and killings. Their writings follow the networks of individual biographies, not the requirements of national interest. And they let in the feeling of empathy.

Anna Bikont's biography of Irena Sendler is an example of that second type of writing and it shows how useful such an approach to history can be. The book is much more than a biography. It is a partial but profound description of the reality of war. Its writing required enormous stamina, wisdom, and modesty. The book is dense, factual, quick, and emotionally exhausting. Its text is supported by copious footnotes – everything is documented. The stories the reader encounters in the book are almost unbearable. What makes the reading of *Sendlerowa: In Hiding* possible is the empathy that drove the author in her research and writing. If she was able to excavate that truth for us, to live with this material, we also have to face it. It's high time. ■

***Irena Grudzińska Gross*** is Professor at the Institute of Slavic Studies, Polish Academy of Sciences.

## REPORTS

# Letter From Warsaw On The Ghetto Uprising Anniversary

Samuel Norich

On a warm and cloudless spring day, on April 19, 2018, Warsaw residents and Jews from abroad remembered the ghetto uprising that began on this day in 1943. One in three or four people you passed on the streets in the center of the city seemed to be wearing the

yellow paper daffodils being handed out by young women and girls at metro stations and bus stops, daffodils marked with the words “Warsaw ghetto uprising” and the date it began. A siren sounded all over the city at noon, and when it ended an impressive official ceremony began in

front of the iconic statue of the ghetto fighters by Nathan Rapoport erected in 1948. The president of Poland, Andrzej Duda, spoke, as did the Israeli ambassador, Anna Azari, and Ronald Lauder, the president of the World Jewish Congress. An unofficial ceremony two hours later at Mila 18, the site



A ceremony commemorating the 75th Anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. Image courtesy of Hanna Olszewska-Cohen.

of the bunker in which some of the leaders of the uprising had been cornered and killed by Nazi troops, a ceremony organized by Jewish visitors from the U.S. and Canada provided a sharp counterpoint to the claims heard in President Duda's speech.

Duda had sought to emphasize that the ghetto fighters were Polish citizens, that they had "flown both the Jewish blue-and-white flag, as well as the Polish red-and-white flag," that they received "rifles and machine guns" from the Polish underground, that the Polish government-in-exile in London brought news of the uprising to the BBC. He made much of the fact that the SS commander in Warsaw, General Juergen Stroop, wrote in his reports to Berlin that "Polish bandits had joined the Jews in firing on SS troops." In an indirect reference to Poland's recent Holocaust law, Duda said that "those who talk about Polish co-responsibility for the genocide of the Jews hurt both of us."

Not long after the official ceremony ended with a military honor guard and the reading of the names of

*President Duda sought to emphasize that the ghetto fighters were Polish citizens, that they had "flown both the Jewish blue-and-white flag and the Polish red-and-white flag."*

people and organizations that aided the ghetto uprising, another ceremony began at Mila 18. Organized by Fay Rosenfeld, the daughter of Warsaw survivors who found refuge in Montreal, and Ann Toback, executive director of the Workmen's Circle, who led a delegation touring Poland, this ceremony featured readings in Yiddish and English from poetry written by Jewish socialists and socialist zionists during the ghetto, as well as a reading from Vladka Meed's memoir, "On the other side of the Wall," written by the ghetto fighter and courier in 1947. It was read by her son, Dr. Steven Meed, and it was a passage in which Vladka complained bitterly

over the refusal of the Polish underground, the Home Army, to provide arms to the ghetto uprising. What few weapons they did receive from Polish sources largely came from another underground force, the People's Army, a communist unit. That was never mentioned by Duda.

The official commemoration was followed in the evening, in the same venue, by a public concert with a symphony orchestra and full chorus, and a sound and light show projected on a skyscraper that stands on the site of the former Great Synagogue, destroyed by the Nazis during the early days of their occupation of the city. The orchestra and chorus performed a segment of Beethoven's 9th Symphony, with words to "All men are brothers" sung in Hebrew. ■

*Samuel Norich is the president of the Forward and has served as executive director of the Forward Association since 2000. He was the publisher of the English and Yiddish Forward for 19 years until 2016.*

# Opening of the Taube Department of Jewish Studies at the University of Wrocław

Reported by  
Taube Philanthropies

On June 18, 2018, the recently named Taube Department of Jewish Studies at the University of Wrocław University opened its new home in a historic 18th century building on the Isle of Sand on the banks of the Oder River in Wrocław. Support from Taube Philanthropies, the Koret Foundation, the Kronhill Pletka Foundation, Adam Heimath, and others enabled the department's move into the new, renovated space.

Professor Adam Jezierski, President of the University, and Marcin Wodziński - a historian of Hasidism in Poland, former Chief Historian of POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews, and now Chair of Jewish Studies library, greeted guests and sponsors. Professor Marcin Cieński, Dean of the Faculty of Philology, presented future plans for reconstruction of the refectory that once abutted the building, and Monika Jaremków, Head of the Jewish Studies library,



Exterior of the building at University of Wrocław that houses the Taube Department of Jewish Studies.

Photograph by M. Marcula. Used with permission.

treated everyone to a lively history of the building itself.

With this much-needed expansion, the Jewish Studies program can now house its extensive Jewish library collection, to which Taube Philanthropies first donated books fifteen years ago. As Shana Penn, Taube Philanthropies Executive Director, stated in her remarks at the inauguration and ribbon cutting ceremony: “When Taube Philanthropies Chairman Tad Taube, Koret Foundation President Dr.

Anita Friedman, and I visited the Jewish Studies office two years ago, we were virtually heartbroken to witness piles of boxes, piled high one on top of another in a rather small room. We realized we could help make a difference.” The new library is a fully functional, state-of-the-art facility worthy of the highly respected academics at the Taube Department of Jewish Studies, including its Chair Professor Marcin Wodzinski. The original capital grant of \$100,000 awarded by Taube



Hallway in the Taube Department of Jewish Studies at University of Wrocław lined with paintings by Mira Żelechower-Aleksiun. Photograph by M. Marcula. Used with permission.



Taube Philanthropies' Shana Penn performs the ribbon-cutting at the opening ceremony. Photograph by Anna Włoch. Image courtesy of Irene Pletka.

Philanthropies encouraged other donors and Wrocław University itself to reach the goal of finding and renovating the new space. Located in one of the most picturesque sites in Wrocław, with its freshly renovated interior and beautifully restored furniture, one would be hard-pressed to imagine a more prestigious and fitting quarters for Jewish Studies, its faculty and ever-growing student body.

Established twenty years ago, the Department of Jewish Studies has grown into an independent department as part of the Faculty of

Letters. “This new home is a great contribution toward the development of Jewish Studies in Wrocław, but it is also important for the field of Jewish Studies more generally in Poland and in Eastern Europe,” declared Professor Wodzinski, adding that “without the support of Taube Philanthropies, the refurbishment of and move into our new space would be simply impossible.” In 2017, Taube Philanthropies awarded an additional grant of \$100,000 over four years to support the department’s general operations.

Proud to be a part of this exciting new chapter in the life of Jewish Studies at Wrocław University, Penn announced at the ribbon-cutting ceremony an additional \$25,000 grant to support faculty research, with \$1200 earmarked for the publication of a new collected volume, translated into Polish, of Yiddish women poets, titled *My Wild Goat: An Anthology of Yiddish Female Poets*, in honor of the unveiling. ■

## ANNOUNCEMENTS AND REVIEWS FILMS

### *Who Will Write Our History?* Premieres at San Francisco Jewish Film Festival

Adam Schorin

“If none of us survives, at least let that remain,” wrote historian Emanuel Ringelblum in 1944 in his final letter before his death. In the Warsaw Ghetto, Ringelblum led a clandestine group of journalists, scholars, rabbis, and community leaders in maintaining a daily record of life in the ghetto and the crimes of the Nazis. Of the several dozen people in the Oyneg Shabes group—a codename meaning “the joy of Shabbat”—only three members survived and were able to recover the majority of the archive—35,000 pages—after the war.

The story of the Oyneg Shabes archives was not widely known until the publication of Samuel D. Kassow’s 2009 book *Who Will Write Our History?: Rediscovering a Hidden Archive from the Warsaw Ghetto*. A new film, also titled *Who Will Write Our History*, tells the story of Ringelblum and the Oyneg Shabes group through



Director Roberta Grossman with actors Karolina Gruszka (Judyta Ringelblum) and Piotr Glowacki (Emanuel Ringelblum) on set in Poland. Photograph by Anna Wloch. Used with permission.

interviews with contemporary historians, archival footage, dramatizations, and the text of the archive itself. Written, directed, and produced by Roberta Grossman, and executive produced by Nancy Spielberg, the film had its world premiere on July 21st at the 38th San Francisco Jewish Film Festival.

The film has received stellar reviews. Robert Albanese, program director at the Vancouver Jewish Film Festival, called it, “the most

important film on the subject since Claude Lanzmann’s *Shoah*. Nothing short of a masterpiece.” Jonathan Brent, Executive Director of Yivo said, “The film is overwhelming, monumental, and the story remains both terrifying and oddly exhilarating.”

In an interview with the Jewish Film Institute, Grossman said, “I honestly believe this is the most important unknown story of the Holocaust. I hope my film



Andrew Bering portrays Israel Lichtenstein as he prepares the first cache of the archive.

Photograph by Anna Włoch. Used with permission.

will change that in a way only a film can do, [by] making the story accessible to hundreds of thousands of people around the world.” ■

*More information about Who Will Write Our History, including a trailer and clips, can be found at: <http://whowillwriteourhistory.com>.*

*Adam Schorin is Assistant Editor of Gazeta.*



Scholar Sam Kassow with his daughter (and actor in the film) Serena Kassow.

Photograph by Anna Włoch. Used with permission.

## ANNOUNCEMENTS AND REVIEWS BOOKS

### *From Kraków to Berkeley: Coming Out of Hiding* By Anna Rabkin

Mal Warwick

She was born Haneczka Rose in 1935 in Kraków, the youngest of three children of a well-to-do Polish-Jewish family. She became Anna Rozak at the age of six when her parents sent her into hiding with a Catholic family to evade capture by the Gestapo. In England at the end of the Second World War, she took on the name Anna Rose. At the age of 18, she was adopted by an Austrian-American family in New York and became Anna Wellman. Finally, upon her marriage to New York businessman Marty Rabkin, when she was 24, Anna took on the name that appears on the cover of her magnificent new memoir, *From Kraków to Berkeley: Coming Out of Hiding*. This is the odyssey of a Holocaust survivor whose experience parallels in some ways what so many refugees today are facing.

#### **The odyssey of a Holocaust survivor**

“I have lived in Berkeley, California, for many decades,”



Author Anna Rabkin speaking at an event for her book *From Krakow to Berkeley: Coming out of Hiding*.  
Courtesy of the author.

Anna writes in her preface, “but my life story spans continents. While it is common to describe life as a journey, mine has been a literal one: from my family’s frantic flight across Poland; my escape from the ghetto and then from Lwów; to being shipped off to England; to my quota-defying immigration to New York and subsequent migration to California. I have traveled across oceans and through waves of cultural and political change. Each place on my journey and each period left its mark on me.”

Anna describes that journey with consummate skill, bringing up from her prodigious memory for sensory detail the remarkable story of her evolution from a shy young Polish girl who didn’t start school until the age of ten to the supremely accomplished woman who holds master’s degrees in city and regional planning and history, served for fifteen years as Berkeley’s elected City Auditor, and spearheaded the Berkeley Public Library’s first, \$4 million fundraising campaign.

## **A troubled search for identity**

Unsurprisingly, the most moving stories in the book concern Anna's childhood in Kraków, Lwów (now Lviv in Ukraine), and England. Her desperate longing for her parents, who had simply disappeared, and her troubled search for identity (after her Polish guardian had her baptized in a Catholic church), are especially poignant. As she reflected on much later, "Jewish, Catholic, Polish, British, American — who was I?" Anna's experience as a refugee shuttled from one country to another is similar to that of the unwilling migrants who are flooding across national borders in the 21st century.

## **Life in an ideally diverse community**

Anna was 27 when she and Marty arrived in Berkeley. At this remove, it seems she might not have found a more welcoming community anywhere. "My block," she writes about the street where she has been living since 1964, "was unusually active and diverse. It was home to several immigrant families, five of whom were Holocaust survivors." While that block

is by no means typical of the city, its diversity certainly is.

Following her election as Berkeley City Auditor in 1979, Anna reflected, "Survival is sweet revenge. I had not only survived the war, created a family and developed relationships with people of all backgrounds, but during the campaign, I had overcome the fears and feelings of worthlessness that a hateful ideology had instilled in me. I had proved to myself that neither my gender, religious or immigrant background were insurmountable obstacles. I could participate in public life and even be elected to office. My community's acceptance would transform my life." It's difficult to imagine a more inspiring and life-affirming statement than that.

## **A foreshortened timescale**

*From Kraków to Berkeley* is structured around a foreshortened timescale. The twenty-seven period encompassed in parts one, two, and three (covering Poland, England, and New York in succession) occupies two-thirds of the book. Part four deals with Anna's time in California since 1962. The final forty years are

compressed into about forty pages. Having tried myself on several occasions to write a memoir, I understand. I found it damnably difficult to write with complete candor about people who are alive with whom I may have had complicated relationships.

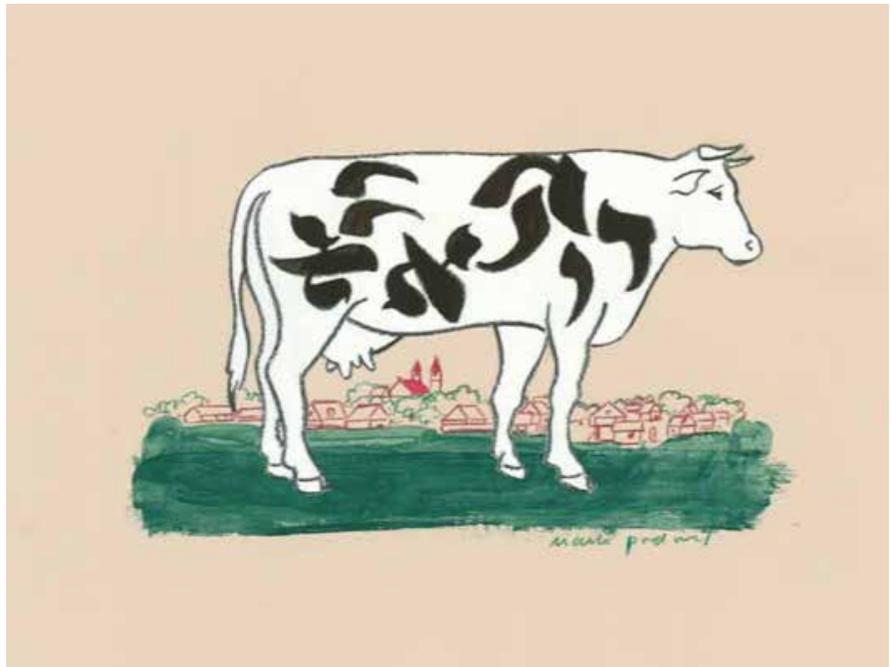
In the interest of full disclosure, I'm proud to state that Anna and I have been friends for many years. In addition to our connections through Berkeley politics since the 1970s, we have met almost monthly for more than thirty years in a dinner group she mentions in her book, and her late husband, Marty, was a member of my company's board of directors for 25 years. However, I must make it clear that, our friendship aside, this review of Anna's memoir is not one whit more positive than it fully deserves. ■

*Reprinted with permission by Mal Warwick. Mal Warwick is an author, blogger, entrepreneur, and impact investor who is one of three partners in One World Play Project, and founder and chairman of Mal Warwick Donordigital.*

## *Kaddish for Dąbrowa Białostocka*

Mark Podwal

Yiddish proverbs offer wonderful wit and timeless wisdom. Among my favorites is: “If you want to give God a good laugh tell Him your plans.” Although for many years I had wanted to visit Dąbrowa Białostocka, the shtetl where my mother was born, I never planned on creating a series of artworks on that town. Eventually, an incentive to visit Dąbrowa came from its mayor to participate in a conference on the history of the town’s Jews. The visit resulted in a series of 18 paintings and drawings, that together offer original views of a Polish shtetl, which by 1899 had a Jewish population that was 75% of the town’s total population. Currently, no Jews live there. Prints of the artworks have been exhibited at the Museum at Eldridge Street, Bialystok’s Zamenhof Centre, and the Yiddish Book Center, which has published the series as the book, *Kaddish for Dąbrowa Białostocka* with English and Polish texts.



One of Mark Podwal's illustrations from his book *Kaddish for Dąbrowa Białostocka*.

In essence, this series of 18 (*Chai* or “Life” in Hebrew) is both a visual diary of my trip to Dąbrowa and a portrait of a world that has disappeared. The drawings reflect what I saw in Poland and what I heard from elderly Dąbrowa residents interviewed in a film, screened at the conference, discussing reminiscences of their former Jewish neighbors. The art includes humorous unexpected juxtapositions. Since numerous bisons roam

the nearby Bialowieza Forest and many Polish companies use bisons in their logos, a drawing of a Hanukkah Lamp has bisons instead of the traditional lions. As white storks nest in Poland more than in any other country, storks appear on a Simhat Torah flag and a stork makes its nest on a Polish havdalah spice box tower. Another havdalah spice box is in the shape of a corn poppy, Poland’s national flower.

*As a New York artist whose works are in collections worldwide, these eighteen pictures, representing imaginings of my Polish roots, are among my most cherished works.*

In *Dąbrowa On My Mind*, the leather strap of a tefillin for the head encircles how the town looked in a 1938 photo. A herring, a common shtetl food, is sandwiched in a bialy, the bread invented 70 km away in Białystok, the city which adds its name to Dąbrowa to differentiate the town from others in Poland with the same name. An acorn among seven dreidels suggests the meaning of Dąbrowa, which is “oak forest.” A round matzoh in the sky represents how Passover is always celebrated under a full moon.

Although the Germans burned Dąbrowa Białostocka to the ground in 1941, this series is not about the events of the Holocaust. Nevertheless, a broken menorah covered with

oak leaves, another reference to the meaning of Dąbrowa, indicates that Jewish life in Dąbrowa Białostocka has been shattered. As a New York artist whose works are in collections of institutions worldwide including the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Victoria and Albert Museum, Yad Vashem, the Israel Museum, the Vatican, and the Jewish Museums in Berlin, Prague, and New York, these eighteen pictures, representing imaginings of my Polish roots, are among my most cherished works. ■

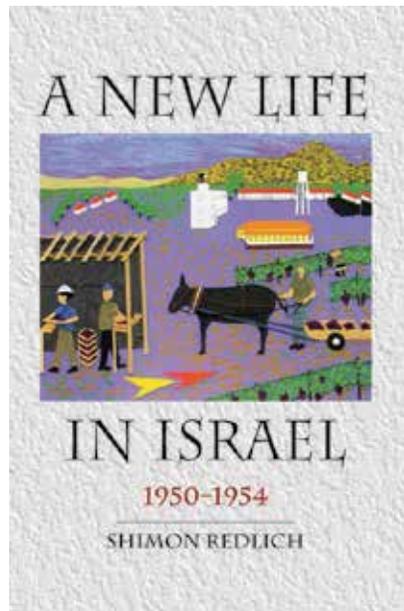
*Mark Podwal is an award-winning author and illustrator whose work has appeared in the the New York Times, and in numerous collections, including the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Yad Vashem and many others. His illustrated monograph, Reimagined: 34 Years of Jewish Art by Mark Podwal was published by Glitterati, Inc.*

# *A New Life in Israel: 1950-54* By Shimon Redlich

Antony Polonsky

On May 23, 2018 at University College London, the Institute for Polish Jewish Studies organized a presentation by Shimon Redlich, the noted historian of Russian and Soviet Jewish history of his latest publication, *A New Life in Israel, 1950-54* (Academic Studies Press, 2018). Professor Redlich has already reflected on his survival during the Holocaust in *Together and Apart in Brzezany* (Indiana University Press, 2002) and about the immediate postwar period which he spent in in Łódź: *Life in Transit, 1945-1950* (Academic Studies Press, 2010).

*Together and Apart in Brzezany: Poles, Jews and Ukrainians, 1919-1945* (Indiana University Press, 2002) is both a history of the town of Berezhany (Polish – Brzeżany) based on extensive interviews with survivors from the town and secondary literature in Polish, Ukrainian,



Jacket image for *A New Life In Israel: 1950-1954* by Shimon Redlich.

Hebrew and Yiddish and a personal memoir of the author who was born in the town in 1935. It combines serious and archival-based study with oral testimony, which is becoming increasingly difficult to collect as the few remaining survivors die and thus gives us a clear and nuanced picture of the circumstances of life in a typical Jewish shtetl, an environment in which a major part of East European Jewry were still living in 1939 and gives a tragic account of how

this world was destroyed during the Second World War.. Professor Redlich has made a remarkable effort to transcend narrow ethnic perspectives in telling this sad and shocking story. He has interviewed an extensive group of Jewish, Polish and Ukrainian survivors and his knowledge of the general history of the town and area enables him to confront their testimony (often subjective and sometimes inaccurate) with the historical record. This is a moving and impressive book, a major contribution to the complex ethnic and social relationships of East Galicia (West Ukraine) which has a significance that extends far beyond the context of local or regional history. It has already been translated into both Polish and Ukrainian.

*Łódź: Life in Transit, 1945-1950* uses the technique employed in *Together and Apart in Brzezany* of combining historical research with interviews of survivors

*This is a major contribution to the complex ethnic and social relationships of East Galicia, which has a significance that extends beyond local and regional history.*

from the period to investigate the situation of Jews in Łódź in the immediate post-war period. At this time, Łódź was the largest Jewish community in Poland and the center of Jewish life in the country. The history of this community illustrates many of the problems which Jews faced in the re-establishing themselves here after the Holocaust. Most eventually left and the reasons for this provide a tragic commentary on Polish-Jewish relations during the Second World War. Professor Redlich's book illustrates these matters in a new and innovative manner and constitutes a major contribution to our understanding of the subject.

His new book, *A New Life in Israel, 1950-54*, is an

account of his arrival in Israel and his adaptation to and integration into Israeli society. The story revolves around three locations and contexts: Kibbutz Merhavia, the town of Afula, and the Israeli army. As in the earlier volumes, Redlich combines personal recollections with interviews and historical records. The book presentation began with a short video about revisiting Kibbutz Merhavia, which was followed by a presentation by the author and a question and answer session. ■

## Olga Tokarczuk Wins Man Booker International Prize

*Flights*, written by the Polish author Olga Tokarczuk and translated by Jennifer Croft, won the Man Booker International Prize 2018. The £50,000 prize (around \$67,000) “celebrates the finest works of translated fiction from around the world,” as written on the prize’s website, and has been divided equally between the author and the translator.

Though the first Polish writer to win the prize, Tokarczuk has long been at the forefront of the Polish literary world. The year after *Flights* was first published (under the title *Bieguni*) in 2007, Tokarczuk won the Nike Award, one of the country’s highest honors in literature. In 2015, she won the award again, for her novel *Księgi Jakubowe* (*The Books of Jacob*), a 900-page epic about Jacob Frank, an eighteenth-century Polish-Jewish merchant who claimed to be the messiah. In an interview connected to *Księgi Jakubowe*, Tokarczuk

*“I was naive. I thought Poland would be able to discuss the dark areas of our history.”*

– Olga Tokarczuk spoke of “horrendous acts” committed by Polish “colonizers,” and immediately fell under attack from the Polish far-right. She received death threats and her publisher, Wydawnictwo Literackie, hired her bodyguards for a week. “I was naive,” Tokarczuk said. “I thought Poland would be able to discuss the dark areas of our history.”

Croft, who is also translating *Księgi Jakubowe* into English, is an American who received her MFA in Literary Translation from the University of Iowa, and has lived in Poland and Argentina. She



Man Booker International Prize winner Olga Tokarczuk in 2017. Photograph by Martin J. Kraft. Wikimedia Commons.

is a recipient of a Fulbright grant and has received funding from PEN and the National Endowment for the Arts; in addition to Polish, she translates from Ukrainian and Spanish. “The hardest part [of translating *Flights*] was also the best part,” Croft said, “and that’s that Olga is such an open and curious person. She never shies away from challenges herself.”

*“I don’t believe in national literatures. I believe that literature is a kind of alive being, which can pop up in one language and then in another language. So this is another miracle—literature.”*

– Olga Tokarczuk

*Flights* is what Tokarczuk calls a “constellation novel,” a work that, as Croft has said, “brings lots of different ideas and stories and voices into relationship with one another via the lines the reader draws between them.” There’s a seventeenth-century Dutch anatomist who discovers the Achilles tendon by dissecting his own amputated leg. Chopin’s sister shepherds her famous brother’s heart back to Warsaw. A Polish woman living in New Zealand must return to her native country to

poison her terminally ill high-school sweetheart.

Lisa Appignanesi, chairwoman of the prize’s panel of judges, said, “by a series of startling juxtapositions [Tokarczuk] flies us through a galaxy of departures and arrivals, stories and digressions, all while exploring matters close to the contemporary and human predicament—where only plastic escapes mortality.”

“I don’t believe in national literatures,” Tokarczuk said in her acceptance speech in London. “I really do believe that literature is a kind of alive being, a creature, which can pop up in one language and then in another language. So this is another miracle—literature.”

*Flights* was published in the United States on August 14, 2018, by Riverhead Books, an imprint of Penguin Random House. ■

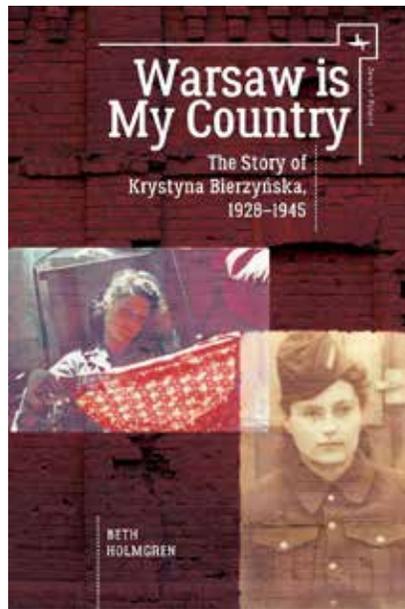
# *Warsaw is My Country: The Story of Krystyna Bierzyńska, 1928-1945*

By Beth Holmgren

Tressa Berman

Beth Holmgren (Slavic and Eurasian Studies, Duke University) met Krystyna Bierzyńska – now Christine Stamper – in Christine’s adopted hometown of Newport Beach, California, where she was serving as a docent for the Modjeska Foundation. At the time, Holmgren was working on a biography of the Polish American actress Helena Modjeska, but was immediately engaged by Christine Stamper’s own personal history as a Jewish Holocaust survivor raised by Christians in Warsaw. It would be years later before the two women would finally collaborate on this newly released and astonishing tale of creative survival, cultural identity, and historic biography.

This book tells the story of Christine Stamper (born Krystyna Bierzyńska), an unconverted Polish Jew adopted by Christians, from her birth in Warsaw in 1928



Jacket image for *Warsaw is My Country: The Story of Krystyna Bierzyńska, 1928–1945*.  
Image courtesy of the author.

*Her story uncovers the overlapping lives of Catholics and Jews through the tortured routes of relocations, economy, war, and history.*

to the war’s end in 1945. Her story tells not only of her life in the urban world of Warsaw, but how she served as a

sixteen-year-old orderly in the midst of the 1944 Warsaw Uprising. Her narrative is also a story of Warsaw – her “country” – in how it uncovers the overlapping lives of Catholics and Jews through the tortured routes of relocations, economy, war and history.

After her family fled to southern Poland, she returned to Warsaw an orphan – one that had learned how to conspire and “pass” as a non-Jew. The book details her life in relation to two very different Warsaws: a modern mix of art and culture, and an occupied city infused with the cause of overthrowing Nazi rule. Hers is a Warsaw story, a biography that demonstrates how, in urban interwar Poland, the lives of liberal educated Catholics and acculturated Jews intersected in common causes.

In her interview with Academic Studies Press, Holmgren relays that her

“most pressing concern” was to “tell Christine’s story well,” and also to take care not to overtax her subject. As Holmgren shares, “I worried about the toll that these interviews would take. But Christine was quick to share funny stories—about the time she showed off her knowledge of curse words to her big brother, mainly to grab his attention, or the moonshine still she was paid to guard in wartime Warsaw.” We learn the good news that Christine was reunited with her brother, Dolek, an officer in the Polish II Corps, after the war.

Krystyna Bierzyńska’s remarkable story gives insight to the life of an acculturated Jew who was not assimilated, and in larger part tells the story of the complicated relationship of Jews and Christians in the Polish capital. ■

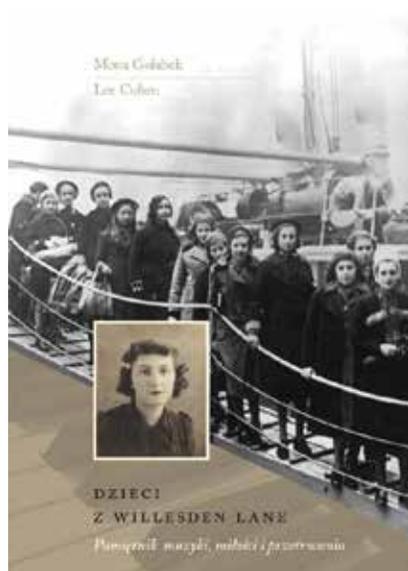
*Tressa Berman, PhD, is  
Managing Editor of Gazeta.*



Author Beth Holmgren and Christine Stamper (formerly Krystyna Bierzyńska) at a reading in Newport Beach, California, on March 10, 2018. Image courtesy of the author.

*Dzieci z Willesden Lane. Pamiętnik muzyki, miłości i przetrwania (The Children of Willesden Lane: A Diary of Music, Love, and Survival)*  
By Mona Golabek and Lee Cohen  
Polish translation by Bożena Keff

Set in Vienna in 1938, and in London during the Blitz, *The Children of Willesden Lane* (published by Austeria and Taube Center, 2018) tells the true story of Lisa Jura, a young Austrian Jewish pianist who dreams about her concert debut at Vienna's storied Musikverein concert hall. With the issuing of new ordinances under the Nazi regime, everything for Lisa changes, as she is torn from her family and sent on the Kindertransport to London. Her music enables her to survive and thrive. The American classical piano virtuoso, Mona Golabek, is the daughter of Lisa Jura and Polish-born French resistance fighter Michel Golabek. Her book for young adults has been reprinted in the tens of thousands and distributed to high school students across the U.S. as well as translated into German, Hebrew and now Polish, her paternal



Jacket image for the Polish edition of *Dzieci z Willesden Lane (The Children of Willesden Lane)* by Mona Golabek and Lee Cohen.

*Her music enables her to survive and thrive.*

family's native language.

Ms. Golabek visited Poland for the first time this past June to participate in two book promotions in Krakow and Warsaw as the guest of her co-publishers Austeria and the Taube Center for the Renewal of Jewish Life in Poland

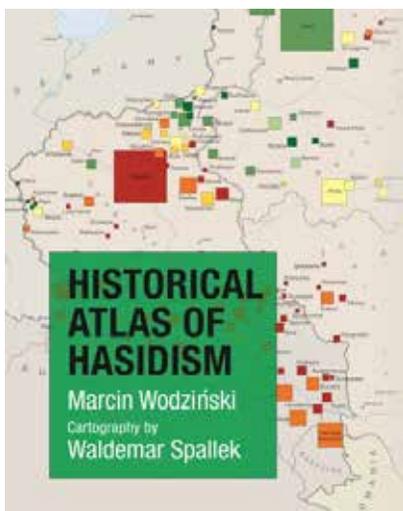
Foundation, in partnership with the Galicia Jewish Museum and the Austrian Cultural Forum. She also performed a musical theatrical performance of her internationally acclaimed one-woman show, *The Pianist of Willesden Lane*, in each city to enthusiastic audiences. The education department of the Galicia Jewish Museum is preparing teacher training materials for middle school and high school students. The Polish edition was made possible with grants from Taube Philanthropies and the Libitzky Family Fund. Additional support was provided by the Taube Center's *Sefarim* Jewish Studies Book Publishing Project. ■

## New Works by Marcin Wodziński: *Historical Atlas of Hasidism (Cartography by Waldemar Spailek), and Hasidism: Key Questions*

*Historical Atlas of Hasidism* (with Cartography by Waldemar Spailek) is being hailed as the first cartographic book on the Hasidic movement of the modern era. The book features seventy-four large-format maps, plus illustrations, charts, and tables, making it a unique visual finding guide on the development and expansion of Hasidism through its dynasties, courts, and synagogues from before the war to its post-Holocaust re-emergence.

The book demonstrates how geography and the socio-religious factors interact, giving rise to various forms of spiritual leadership. As Hasidic centers sprang up, so did the communities around them. Drawing on extensive GIS-processed databases of historical and contemporary records to the present, this is the most complete picture to date of this thriving and diverse religious movement.

Moshe Idel, author of *Hasidism: Between Ecstasy and Magic*, has lauded the book as “the richest and most updated illustrated history...of Hasidism in modern

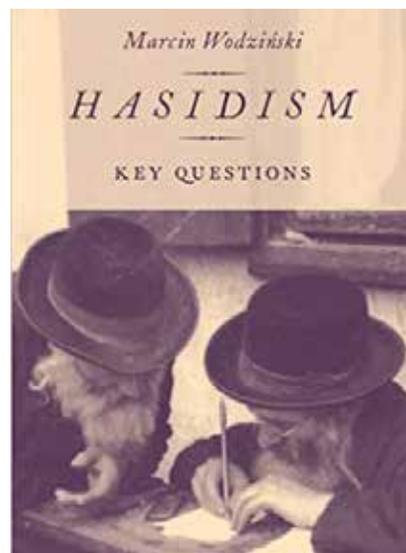


Jacket image for *Historical Atlas of Hasidism* by Marcin Wodziński with cartography by Waldemar Spailek.

times. A must for understanding this most vital aspect of Judaism.”

### **Hasidism: Key Questions**

As one of the most important religious and social movements to have developed in Eastern Europe, Hasidism has influenced key aspects of Jewish life in Eastern Europe since the eighteenth century. *Hasidism: Key Questions* addresses the longitudinal history of Hasidism to the present day through the multi-disciplinary lenses of gender, demography, geography and religion, tracing the movement’s



Jacket image for *Hasidism: Key Questions* by Marcin Wodziński.

rise and decline over more than two centuries. Critical to his approach, Wodziński’s engrossing analysis addresses not only the leadership of Hasidism, but is novel in its approach to investigate Hasidism’s communities of adherents. By including a wide range of methodologies – from archival to visual materials – the book covers “key questions” that link it to related disciplinary frames, which together provide multi-perspectival answers about one of the most important religious movements emanating from Eastern Europe. ■

## *What We've Been Unable to Shout Out to the World*

Jakub Berski

### The New Permanent Exhibition at the Emanuel Ringelblum Jewish Historical Institute

The main event of a multi-year project to preserve and commemorate the secret Archive of the Warsaw Ghetto was the opening of a new permanent exhibition at the Jewish Historical Institute, built around the presentation of the original documents gathered by Emanuel Ringelblum's underground group.

#### **The building as an exhibit**

The tour of the exhibition starts in the main hall on the ground floor. The original pre-war floor shows signs of the fire that broke out on 16 May 1943 after the Germans blew up the nearby Great Synagogue. The pre-war Central Jewish Library, currently the home of the Jewish Historical Institute,

served as the headquarters of the Jewish Social Self-Help organization. In the fall of 1940, a social worker in the ghetto, esteemed historian Emanuel Ringelblum, established an underground network of activists who gathered at the Self-Help building on Saturday afternoons to collect and compile Holocaust documents. The group was named Oyneg



At the entrance to *What We've Been Unable to Shout Out to the World*, the Jewish Historical Institute's new permanent exhibition. Courtesy of the Jewish Historical Institute.

Shabes, Yiddish for “joy of Sabbath,” called so not only because the meetings were held on Saturdays.

### **What we’ve been unable to shout out to the world**

A plaque with the inscription “What we’ve been unable to shout out to the world” hangs above the stairs leading to the exhibition, quoting 19-year-old Dawid Graber, who participated in the concealment of the first part of the Archive. He wrote, “What we were unable to shout out to the world, we buried in the ground.” As he hid the boxes and cans containing the documents, he hoped that future generations would recall the suffering of Jews but also recognize the accomplishments of the archivists who “had the courage to do it.” The wall around the plaque is covered with pieces of brick like those displayed in the center of the exhibition on the first floor. According to the creators, one side symbolizes the basements used for the Archive; the other, the ghetto wall.

### **Two tables**

The exhibition is contained in one room on the building’s

first floor and is composed of six main elements. The first, next to the stairs, includes two tables, which are in front of the central part of the exhibition.

### **The first table**

On the first table lies two event calendars. The upper one presents the most important events of World War II with particular consideration given to the successive stages of the Holocaust (from the outbreak of the war, through the creation of ghettos and camps, up to the Red Army’s landing in Warsaw). The captions are brief and outline the historical context for the second axis of events (and for the entire exhibition). In other words, they set the stage for the history of the Archive of the Warsaw Ghetto.

The brief notes introduce the founders of the Archive as well as the activity and publications of Oyneg Shabes, which included the first information about the mass murder of Jews. They include a moving note by Ringelblum, who, after hearing a BBC report on the mass killings,

declares that Oyneg Shabes is fulfilling a historical mission by notifying the world of the Holocaust and that its work “may have saved hundreds of thousands of Jews.” We will hear about the facts presented here once again near the end of the exhibition, next to the original documents.

### **The second table**

The thirty-six founders of the Archive are sitting symbolically at the second table, which is located across from the first. We can read the retractable panels to learn who they were, what they did in the Archive, and how they died. There are over one hundred such panels (three per person) and reading them all takes quite a bit of time.

The tabletop also presents information on the diversity of Oyneg Shabes, which comprised representatives of various communities and political parties who wrote in different languages, but – in the words of Ringelblum – had a common mission that they were ready to make the ultimate sacrifice in their service to the people. They

wanted to tell their story to as many Jews as possible “in the simplest and most faithful way.”

### **The basement**

As we enter the main part of the room, we pass by the words from Graber’s testament, which display his concern about whether they would be able to bury “what we were unable to shout out to the world” in the ground.

There is a corridor imitating the basement which runs through the middle of the room. It leads up to the original milk canister used to conceal the second part of the Archive discovered after seven years. This is the central point of the exhibition. It is surrounded by a tall brick wall, the raw nature of which is supposed to symbolize not just the basement but the ghetto in general, the space where the Archive was created. The corridor/basement dividing the inner room in two is aesthetically impeccable. Its creators spared no effort to make it into an old and dirty basement to exhibit the one true and important thing: the milk canister.

*The Oyneg Shabes had a common mission and were ready to make the ultimate sacrifice in their service to the people. They wanted to tell the story of Jews “in the simplest and most faithful way,” to quote Ringelblum.*

### **More about the authors**

There is an installation made of wooden columns to the left, which is also dedicated to the people associated with Oyneg Shabes. Several columns display the bios of Ringelblum’s associates, the abbreviated versions of which are found at the second table. According to the creators, this segment is meant to refer to the destroyed ghetto, the landscape following its liquidation, and introduce an element of anxiety and chaos. Visually, the installation is flawless, but it raises the question of whether two parts of the room, or about half of the exhibition space, should be dedicated to the bios of the Archive’s creators.

This question is even more legitimate as all of the bios are available on every display. They could be installed in the table, eliminating the need to open over one hundred drawers and saving considerable space.

### **Last words**

The wooden installation is next to a display holding four original fragments of the testaments of those who arranged and concealed the Archive. In the summer of 1942, just before the document boxes were closed, Dawid Graber, Nachum Grzywacz, Izrael Lichtensztajn, and his wife Gela Seksztajn, an artist, placed their last wills and testaments inside. “As I am writing this, I am at work. The date is 30 July 1942, the time is 6 PM. [...] I do not know my fate. I do not know if I will be able to tell you what happens next. Remember: my name is Nachum Grzywacz.” “I have to die but I did what I had to do,” wrote Gela Seksztajn. “I hope that the memory of my paintings survives. Farewell my colleagues and friends, farewell Jewish nation.” Beside the text, there is a crayon drawing entitled “Sleeping

Girl” by Gela Seksztajn. Her paintings are once again remembered after 75 years.

### **View from above**

We take a metal footpath that runs along the basement wall to go the right part of the room. There are two quotes at its start. The first is from Abraham Lewin, who expresses the will of the Archive’s creators: “We want our suffering, the labor pains of Moses, to be covered for future generations and the entire world.” The second is a fragment of the moving narration of Gustawa Jarecka: “The final stage of displacement is death,” which was also released in print at the opening of the exhibition. Here, the author writes about the suffering of a dying nation at the time of an extensive liquidation campaign: “We have nooses on our necks. When they loosen up for a moment, our screams come out.” This is mandatory reading. The scan of the full document is available on the Institute’s website.

### **The post-war history of the Archive**

Along the footpath, there are four short videos covering



Rachela Auerbach and Hersz Wasser, surviving members of Oyneg Shabes, examining the first recovered cache of the archives in 1946.

Courtesy of the Jewish Historical Institute.

the history of the discovery, excavation, and subsequent protection of almost 30,000 documents that make up two of the three discovered parts of the Archive. We follow the footpath from the story of the Archive’s creators and discovery to the right part of the room, where the most important part of the exhibition is on display: the original documents presented to the public, many for the very first time.

### **In the simplest way possible**

The curators of the exhibition wanted to use the simplest possible means to continue

Ringelblum’s mission (as written on the second table): to depict the tragedy of Polish Jews in the simplest form. This kept the exhibition from being overloaded with multimedia presentations, which, as museums throughout the world are currently learning, quickly become outdated and unattractive. The premise and performance of the exhibition focuses on the documents themselves. This is the right way, because modern forms of multimedia are very expensive and it would be a shame to clutter up the Jewish Historical Institute with poor animations and cheap displays.

### **Documents first**

That is why the final part of the exhibition is composed of a few simple displays featuring selected documents of the Archive. According to Paweł Śpiwak, the director of the Jewish Historical Institute and one of the curators of the exhibition, “It strikes with its minimalism, the frugality of its measures, and its toned-down colors: grey, black, and white.”

The displayed documents include the letter sent to

OyNEG Shabes from Rabbi Szulman about the killings of Jews in Chełmno on the Ner, dated 21 January 1942. It is complemented by a fragment of the report of Szlama Ber Winer, who, after his escape from Chełmno, said: “During dinner, I received the sad news that my beloved parents and brother are already in their graves. By one, we were back at work. I tried to come closer to the deceased to see my relatives for the final time.”

### **The first ones**

The next segment displays reports from the deportations in Lublin, the first documents about the camp at Sobibór, a fragment of the first press bulletin released by Oneg Shabbat, and the transcript of the BBC radio report accompanied by Ringelblum’s moving message about his mission, as shared at the first table. These documents provide proof of the fact that it was OyNEG Shabes who received the first information of the Holocaust from eyewitnesses.

### **From prayer to postcard**

The exhibit includes materials which show the diversity of the Archive. The fragment of Abraham Lewin’s journal about deportations from the Warsaw ghetto is accompanied by the aforementioned report of Gustawa Jarecka: “The final stage of displacement is death,” as well as the statistics of those murdered during the great ghetto liquidation, and the “Special fasting prayer for contemporary times,” which was created by the rabbis in the Warsaw ghetto in December of 1942. There is also a postcard that was thrown out of a train to Auschwitz, addressed to a family in the Warsaw ghetto: “We just left Płońsk, our entire family and all the Jews. Be alert, because we’re going to a wedding. Goodbye, Dawid.”

### **About the ghetto in the ghetto**

The exhibition focuses on two elements. First, it presents the creators of the Archive and carries out their last will to have their names remembered; second, it presents their work in numerous original documents, which will be rotated with others over time.

As the depository of the Ringelblum’s Archive, the Jewish Historical Institute has fulfilled another element of OyNEG Shabes’s testament. The group coordinated by Paweł Śpiewak did it well.

### **Onegszabat.org**

The exhibit was opened along with the website at onegszabat.org, which can be considered an online version of the permanent exhibit. It includes scans of the Archive’s documents, the bios of its creators, and information on the discovery and subsequent protection of the collections. Much like the exhibition, the website is rather small, which makes it much easier to learn the story of Ringelblum’s Archive. ■

*This article originally appeared in Polish on April 23, 2018, in Chidusz: <https://chidusz.com/czego-nie-mogliśmy-wykrzyczec-swiatu-ringelblum-wystawa-zydowski-instytut-historyczny-zih-warszawa-recenzja-wystawy>. Reprinted with permission.*

## “I can neither be silent nor live.” An Exhibition on Shmuel Zygielbojm

Jewish Historical Institute;  
Ilana Slomowitz and  
Aveda Ayalon

Professor Shmuel Zygielbojm (1895 – 1943) was a political activist associated with the Bund socialist party; since February 1942, he had been a member of the National Council of the Polish Government in Exile in London. As a member of the Council, he informed the world about the tragic fate of Polish Jews under German occupation. Facing the defeat of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, and above all—as a sign of protest against world’s indifference towards the Holocaust of the Jews—he committed suicide on 12 May 1943.

Zygielbojm addressed his suicide letter to the Polish president and prime minister. In it he wrote, “My life belongs to the Jewish people of Poland, and therefore I hand it over to them now.”

In May, the Jewish Historical Institute opened an exhibition in his honor: *Shmuel Zygielbojm: I can neither be silent nor live*.



Banner for the exhibition on the Jewish Historical Institute's website, with an image of Pola Dwurnik's oil painting of Shmuel Zygielbojm. Courtesy of the Jewish Historical Institute.

“Bund”—the first part of the exhibition—presented Zygielbojm’s prewar biography on the background of his union, political and local government activity.

The next part told the story of Zygielbojm’s family relations; having escaped from Warsaw in January 1940, he left his wife and children in the capital. He realized he wouldn’t see them ever again. The only document remaining from a three-year period of separation are letters exchanged between Zygielbojm and his family. Unfortunately, his answers didn’t survive.

Most likely, they were burned during the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. The third part of the exhibition was dedicated to World War II. A timeline told about events from its beginning through Shmuel Zygielbojm’s escape to the West, his inclusion into the National Council, and his arrival in London.

The central part of the exhibition was dedicated to the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising and Zygielbojm’s reaction to the struggle of Jewish insurgents.

– Adapted from the Jewish Historical Institute’s website.

Editor's Note: Attending the opening of the exhibition were Shmuel Zygielbojm's nieces, Ilana Slomowitz and Aveda Ayalon. They write about their experiences below.

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As I write this account of my experience of attending the opening of this exhibit in Warsaw, I am once again reminded of the many mixed emotions that I experienced on this, both my sister Aveda's and my first time visiting Poland.

Just being in Warsaw for the first time, the city my father, Faivel, and his family lived in, concretized the images and stories I had heard from him as a child. But the impact of the devastating persecution of the Jews and the cost to his family took on a very different dimension and brought it all to life in a deeply profound way.

Walking through the streets of Warsaw and seeing the imposing poster of Pola Dwurnik's portrait of Shmuel at many bus stops, advertising the exhibition, hit home and made me realize just how significant this exhibition was and how much weight



Aveda and Ilana, Shmuel Zygielbojm's nieces, at the seventy-fifth commemoration of Zygielbojm's death at the monument in his honor on Edelman Street.

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

and importance was being placed on it. Standing at the memorial on Edelman street in Shmuel's honor for the seventy-fifth commemoration of his death and witnessing the number of wreaths that were laid and the many speeches made by so many dignitaries made me realize that this was a far bigger deal than I had appreciated. Zuzanna Goldfinger accomplished a great deal in pulling this event together with such care and intricate attention to detail on every level.

I was very impressed by the austere layout of the exhibition, wonderfully

designed by the Tatemono team, and by the professionalism and attention to detail and to the extent of research that was given to the exhibit. As a result of that I learned so much more about Shmuel's life story than I had previously been aware of. This was truly a great gift for me.

I am humbled and honored to have been present at this event. In all honesty I had not appreciated the magnitude of effort and the numbers of dignitaries and press that it attracted. His tragic life has now been recognized and honored in a most befitting manner and I am so grateful to each and every one of you that contributed to this superb exhibit and to the memory of his courageous and selfless sacrifice.

There is a deep sadness in me however that my father Faivel was not alive to witness this, knowing how devoted he was to keeping his brother's memory and sacrifice alive.

With much appreciation,  
Ilana Slomowitz n e  
Zygielbaum

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Some months ago, I received a letter from a woman called Zuzanna Benesz-Goldfinger from the Jewish Historical Institute, inviting me to the opening of an exhibition about my uncle Shmuel Artur Zygielbaum.

I had never heard of Zuzanna, or the JHI, but her mail set off a chain of events culminating in my sister Ilana Slomowitz and myself visiting Poland for the first time at the beginning of May. For me it proved to be an extraordinary experience. It also allowed me a personal tikkun.

On the way to the commemoration ceremony at the Zygielbaum memorial on Edelman street, we suddenly saw a poster at a bus stop, with a picture of Shmuel Zygielbaum, announcing the exhibition. I was astounded. I had no idea what to expect at the ceremony. There were all these dignitaries making speeches, and laying wreaths upon wreaths of flowers, and Soviet-style soldiers saluting, and it was almost surreal.

And now we get to the exhibition itself.

*“My life belongs to the Jewish people of Poland, and therefore I hand it over to them now.”*

I think the strength of the exhibition that Zuzanna curated was in its sparseness. It was small, very focused, giving a survey in chronological order with the aid of photographs, letters, articles, recordings, and maps of Shmuel’s life, activities, and ultimate tragic suicide.

Zuzanna had asked me if I would make a speech. I said that I would gladly say a few words, definitely not a speech, and that I would like to talk not about Shmuel himself, as I was born two years after his death, but about my father, Faivel, one of Shmuel’s younger brothers.

This provided me with the opportunity for my tikkun.

Faivel devoted his life to keeping Shmuel’s narrative and sacrifice alive in the Jewish public’s eye. For decades he published literally hundreds of articles, participated in memorial evenings, and wrote a book,

Der koach tsu shtarben (in English, The Strength to Die).

Unfortunately, in all my years growing up in South Africa, I never really appreciated Faivel’s dedication to our family history. I never accompanied him on his numerous trips to Poland, never saw where they lived in Warsaw, never was able to read his book until now, after a few years of studying Yiddish. And there I was, in Warsaw, standing at the opening of an exhibition about his brother, and very moved by the large crowd in attendance and by the honor bestowed upon him.

I am not religious, but I do wish that Faivel could have seen it for himself: his daughters present at an exhibition in honour of Shmuel Artur Zygielbaum, and I know that he would have been very grateful to Zuzanna for making it all happen.

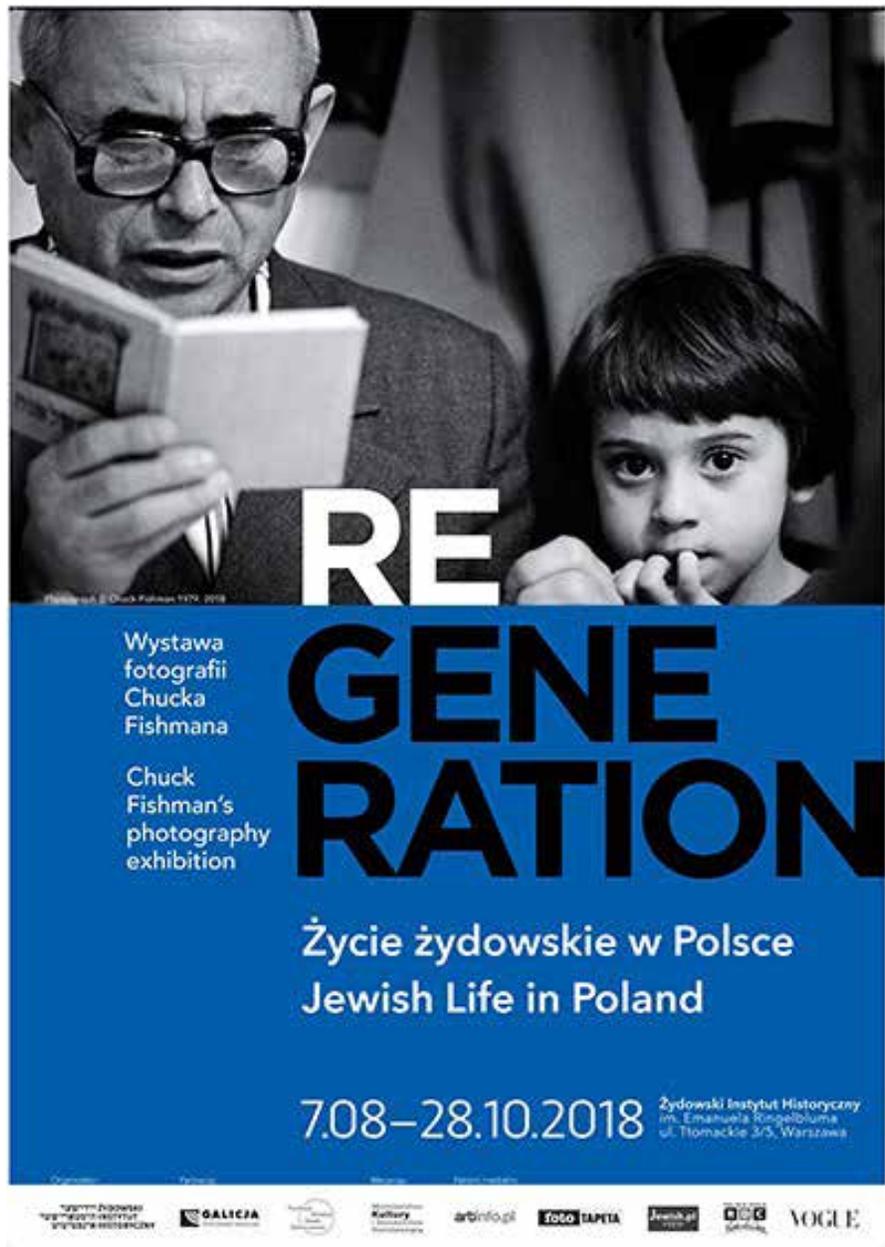
Aveda Ayalon  
nèe Zygielbojm

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*For more information, visit <http://www.jhi.pl/en>. The exhibition opened on May 11 and was on display until July 22.*

## Chuck Fishman Photography Exhibit Opens at Jewish Historical Institute

In August, the Emanuel Ringelblum Jewish Historical Institute (Żydowski Instytut Historyczny) in Warsaw will show an exhibition of photographs by the outstanding American photographer Chuck Fishman (see *Gazeta*, Spring 2017). For more than forty years Fishman photographed the Polish Jewish community, creating an unusual picture of the everyday life of four generations of Poles: from people struggling for the survival of Jewish tradition and culture in communist Poland of the 1970s and 80s, to their grandchildren and great-grandchildren more and more aware of their identity in contemporary world. ■



Poster for Chuck Fishman's exhibit *Re-Generation: Jewish Life in Poland* at the Jewish Historical Institute.

### Janusz Korczak Conference in Seattle

The first International Janusz Korczak Conference will be held on August 22–25, 2018, at Seattle Pacific University. The conference’s title is *Education for Excellence, Diversity, and Respect: Transformative 21st Century Innovations*. With sessions like “Korczak in the Classroom” and “Participatory Democracy and Korczak’s Ideas Today,” the conference will focus on engaging an international community of students, teachers, researchers, social workers, child-rights advocates, and policymakers with the theories and pedagogical practices of Janusz Korczak. The conference is organized by Seattle Pacific University and the Janusz Korczak Association of the USA.

View the conference program and/or register at: <http://korczakconference2018.com/>.

### Urban Jewish Heritage Conference to Take Place in Krakow

The Ironbridge International Institute for Cultural Heritage at University of Birmingham and the Foundation for Jewish Heritage are hosting the Urban Jewish Heritage Conference on September 3–7, 2018, in Kraków. The theme is “Presence and Absence” and the conference is being held as part of the 2018 European Year of Cultural Heritage. Presenters and panelists will discuss, among other topics, the cultural heritage and landscape of modern-day Poland, sites of memory, and the role of Jewish heritage tourism today. The conference will take place at the Villa Decius in Kraków. For more information, visit: <https://urbanjewishheritageconference.wordpress.com>.

### International Conference on Jewish Genealogy In Warsaw, August 5-10, 2018

*by Fay and Julian Bussgang*

Genealogy has become a passionate pursuit for many people, and international Jewish genealogical conferences have grown enormously since the first conference in 1981. In August 2018, the International Association of Jewish Genealogical Societies (IAJGS) held its annual conference in Warsaw for the first time. Outside of Jerusalem, London, Paris, and Toronto, all previous conferences have been in the United States. Therefore, it is a major event for the conference to be held in Poland, which once had the largest Jewish population in the world.

The Jewish genealogical conference in Warsaw has stimulated much interest, with expected attendance near 1,000. Many attendees will

combine the conference with visits to their ancestral home towns. Two very important institutions in Warsaw connected to Jewish history - the POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews and the Jewish Historical Institute - will be partnering with the IAJGS.

In addition to approximately eight concurrent sessions a day, including workshops and panel discussions, meetings of special interest groups (SIGs), films, and displays of genealogy merchandise were part of the program events.

For additional program information, please visit: <http://www.iajgs2018.org>.

### **European Association of Jewish Studies Conference**

The 11th Congress of the European Association of Jewish Studies (EAJS) opened on July 15, 2018 by Antony Polonsky (Chief Historian of POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews), speaking on

*Polish Statehood and the Jews: Reflections on the Centenary of Polish Independence*. The conference convened over five days with plenary talks by luminaries in the field, including a keynote address by Irene Zwiep (University of Amsterdam, Netherlands): *And Now for 'Something' Completely Different: Leopold Zunz and the Cultural Turn in Jewish Scholarship*.

Roundtables, panels and workshops addressed timely themes, such as Teaching Jewish History and Culture at Universities; Humanities in the Mirror: Writing Jewish History in a Digital Key; localized Jewish studies in Krakow, and historical and archaeological histories – from Rome to ancient Israel. Scholarly exchanges and opportunities for graduate students were provided by EAJS Emerge, a forum for EAJS post-graduate student members and emerging scholars to discuss their research with one another and to engage with more senior

academics. From Talmudic studies to contemporary Jewish arts and histories, the conference concluded with multiple panels on anti-Semitism and its re-emergence in the world today. Overall, the conference program reads as a comprehensive compendium to Jewish thought that guides many of the issues facing the Jewish world today. ■

## Workshop on Jewish-Slavic Relations held at the POLIN Museum

Antony Polonsky

From June 15-17, a workshop on the representation of Jewish-Slavic relations in museums and Internet databases was held at the POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews. It was organized within the framework provided by the Global Education Outreach Program of the Museum, in cooperation with the Sefer Center for the University Teaching of Jewish Civilization of the Institute for Slavic Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences and the Commission on Slavonic and East European Studies of the Committee of Historical Sciences, Polish Academy of Sciences. Funding was provided by the Taube Foundation for Jewish Life & Culture, the William K. Bowes, Jr. Foundation, and the Association of the Jewish Historical Institute of Poland. It was attended by nearly thirty scholars from Poland, Russia, Germany, the Czech republic, Latvia and the United States.

This was chaired by Professor Antony Polonsky, Chief Historian of the POLIN Museum and was made up of Dr. Valery Dymshits, European University at Saint. Petersburg, Justyna Koszarska-Szulc and Joanna Krol of the POLIN Museum and Professor Gabriella Safran of Stanford University. It was devoted, above all to unpacking the phrase “Jewish Slavic relations.” There was general agreement that although the situation of Jews in Central Europe and Georgia would also be considered, the workshop would concentrate on the Jewish community which developed in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and the states which partitioned it at the end of the eighteenth century. Almost all the participants dealt with the Jews of this area and it was agreed that, in the words of the Yiddish writer, Peretz Markish, “[J]ust as a heart cannot be cut up and divided, so one cannot split up the Jewish people into Polish

Jews and Russian Jews.”

After opening addresses by Professor Dariusz Stola (Director of the POLIN Museum) and Dr. Viktoria Mochalova (Head of the Sefer Center), the initial roundtable sought to set the goals and tasks that the workshop should address.

The term “Slavic” was more problematic. It only came into general use in the late nineteenth century and was much more widely used by Russians than by Poles. In the earlier period, society in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth was divided into the noble stratum (the *szlachta*) and the mostly unfree peasantry, while towns, whether under the control of the monarch or owned by the nobility, were small and lacking in influence. The Jews were in an ambiguous position. On the one hand they were, in some ways, an estate similar to the other estates into which the society of the

Commonwealth was divided. On the other hand, they were a pariah group, proponents of a religion regarded as false and harmful by the dominant Roman Catholic faith. They enjoyed a degree of security because of their relations with the monarchy and the nobility, but this was fragile and tended to break down in times of disorder. These factors need to be taken into account in the attempts to create master narratives in Jewish and general historical museums in the region as well as in Central Europe.

The participants of the conference were then given a tour of the POLIN Museum conducted by Justyna Koszarska-Szulc, who was also one of the curators of the museum's temporary exhibition on 1968. The tour enabled conference-goers to see how these issues were treated in the context of the museum. It was followed by a session devoted to accounts of how they were dealt with in museums in Moscow, St. Petersburg, Riga, Vilnius, and Prague. This was chaired by Dr. Artur Markowski of the POLIN Museum and its

*[J]ust as a heart cannot be cut up and divided, so one cannot split up the Jewish people into Polish Jews and Russian Jews.*

participants were Dr. Zhanna Alfimova, Jewish Museum and Center of Tolerance in Moscow, Dr. Maria Kaspina, Museum of the Jewish History in Russia, Alexander Ivanov, European University at St. Petersburg, Ilya Lensky, Director of the Museum "Jews in Latvia," Ilona Murauskaite, Vilna Gaon State Jewish Museum and Dr. Lenka Ulina, Jewish Museum in Prague.

In the evening, the workshop was opened to the public for a stimulating and amusing lecture by Professor Gabriella Safran, author of a highly praised biography of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century Russian-Yiddish writer, S.Y. Ansky, *Wandering Soul: The Dybbuk's Creator, S. An-sky* (Harvard, 2010). The topic of Safran's lecture, the core of a forthcoming monograph, was "How Jewish Jokes Migrated West." She regaled the large audience with a series of jokes in

Yiddish, Polish and Russian and her presentation was followed by a stimulating discussion.

The first session of the second day of the conference was devoted to a roundtable discussion on how meta-narratives on ethnic relations could be presented in Jewish and general museums. This was followed by two sessions on how Internet portals, databases and other electronic resources could be used in preparing museum exhibitions and for disseminating more widely the research of historians. It illustrated clearly how important it was for professional historians and programmers to work closely together and understand each other's work.

The final session dealt with case studies of how Jewish-Slavic relations were represented in the core exhibitions of a number of museums. Alexander Ivanov, European University at Saint Petersburg, gave an account of how Jews, Cossacks, Koreans and others in the Jewish Autonomous Region of Birobidzhan were represented

in Soviet museum exhibitions of 1930s, Dr. Victoria Mochalova of the Sefer Center discussed the iconography of blood libel accusations in Poland and their presentation on museums and Akvile Naudziuniene of Vilnius University examined how the goals of multicultural history and tolerance education were pursued in the Vilna Gaon State Jewish Museum. Marina Scherbakova, Heidelberg University then analysed continuity and change in the Judaica curatorship in the Soviet and post-Soviet Jewish museums in Tbilisi in Georgia, and the session concluded with a presentation by Dr. Deborah Yalen, Colorado State University on the field notebooks of I.M. Pul'ner, a Soviet ethnographer of the interwar period, whose research had a major influence on museum display then. The first session on the final day continued with case studies. Dr. Valery Dymshits, European University at Saint Petersburg discussed the work of David Goberman as a researcher of Jewish and Slavic folk art and how his artistic heritage could be

better exploited. Ilya Lensky described the problems of representing the Jews in the regional museums of Latvia, Dr. Lara Lempert, Martynas Mazvydas National Library of Lithuania examined the similarities and differences between Jewish archives and museums as educational tools, and Dr. Renata Piąkowska, POLIN Museum analyzed how artistic works were used in the POLIN Museum core exhibition to illustrate the relations between Jews and their neighbours. The final roundtable attempted to sum up what the participants had learned from the workshop. It was agreed that the exchange of information and the establishment of closer personal ties between those involved in museums in the regions was most valuable. The absence of those working in this field in Ukraine and Belarus was greatly regretted. The participants also stressed the importance of contacts between Jewish and general historical and ethnographic museums. For the professional historians, the presentations of those involved in created electronic databases were a

revelation. They highlighted the importance of digital media for the popularization of the findings of historians and their display in museums. All in all, this was a most valuable workshop and the participants heartily thanked the organizers and looked forward to future meetings on this and similar topics. ■

## Jagiellonian University Awards Tad Taube with Highest Honor

Tad Taube, Krakow-born founder of Taube Philanthropies, has been awarded an honorary doctorate from Jagiellonian University in Kraków for his work supporting academic Jewish studies and Jewish life in Poland. Mr. Taube is the only philanthropist among very few non-academic honorees — including the Dalai Lama, Mother Teresa of Calcutta, and President Woodrow Wilson — to receive this distinction in the course of the award’s 200-year history.

“I am delighted that the most important of titles conferred by the Jagiellonian University will be bestowed upon a person who has made an outstanding contribution to the development of Jewish Studies in Poland,” wrote university rector Professor Wojciech Nowak, MD, PhD, in a letter congratulating Mr. Taube.

The custom of awarding the honorary doctorate dates back to the 1810s. The university,



Jagiellonian University Rector Wojciech Nowak awards an honorary doctorate to Kraków-born Bay Area philanthropist Tad Taube. Image courtesy of Jagiellonian University.

founded in 1364, is the oldest in Central Europe and one of the most esteemed universities in Europe. Each honorary doctorate nominee goes through a rigorous selection process that includes vetting by faculty committees and an external peer review.

Mr. Taube’s journey to Kraków marks a return to a place with major significance for his family. His father earned a law degree from Jagiellonian University in

1928, a few short years before Mr. Taube’s birth in Kraków in 1931. Less than a decade later, in 1939, he and his parents left Poland for the safety of the United States just before the start of World War II. Family members who remained in Krakow were tragically caught up in the Holocaust.

“There are almost no words to describe what it means to stand in the very hall where my father received his law diploma ninety years ago,



Tad Taube delivering his remarks at the ceremony in the Aula, the room in Collegium Maius in which Tad's father received his law degree in 1928.

Image courtesy of Jagiellonian University.



Jagiellonian University Rector Wojciech Nowak unveils the law diploma and related documents of Tad Taube's father, who graduated from Jagiellonian in 1928.

Image courtesy of Jagiellonian University.

in a country he loved, at a university that gave him the chance to lead a successful life in Poland and the United States,” said Mr. Taube. “This award is a gift, and I am humbled and grateful to the Jagiellonian University for honoring me.”

Mr. Taube's mission in Poland through Taube Philanthropies began more than two decades ago. In 2003, the foundation established the Jewish Heritage Initiative in Poland (JHIP) to strengthen the institutional life of Polish Jews, further awareness and appreciation of Jewish heritage and contemporary Jewish life among Jews and others, and foster positive interest in Poland among American Jews. ■

*“There are almost no words to describe what it means to stand in the very hall where my father received his law diploma ninety years ago, in a country he loved, at a university that gave him the chance to lead a successful life in Poland and the United States.”*

– Tad Taube

To view photos from the award ceremony, visit:  
[www.uj.edu.pl/wiadosci/uroczystosci/-/journal\\_content/56\\_INSTANCE\\_LkI0Dsxdgc5/10172/140101149](http://www.uj.edu.pl/wiadosci/uroczystosci/-/journal_content/56_INSTANCE_LkI0Dsxdgc5/10172/140101149)

# Taube Philanthropies Announces Recipients of the Tenth Annual Irena Sendler Memorial Awards

## Kansas High School Teacher Honored at the Royal Castle

On June 11, 2018, San Francisco-based Taube Philanthropies founder Tad Taube and Polish Culture Minister Piotr Tadeusz Gliński presented the first of two annual Irena Sendler Memorial Awards to Norman Conard, a renowned educator from Kansas who, together with his high school students, brought the untold story of Irena Sendler to public view, illuminating her historical importance and enabling the world to celebrate her anti-Nazi activism in her own lifetime and in perpetuity. Conard is the first American to receive the award.

“Through his innovative teaching, centered on unsung heroes throughout history, Mr. Conard has built a bridge of Holocaust memory between Poland and the United States,” said Mr. Taube.

The award in Irena Sendler’s name honors Polish citizens committed to strengthening



American high school teacher Norman Conard (second from right) receives the 2018 Irena Sendler Memorial Award from Tad Taube, Shana Penn, and Culture Minister and Deputy Prime Minister of Poland Piotr Gliński.

Image courtesy of Taube Philanthropies.

Polish-Jewish relations and preserving Polish Jewish heritage and Holocaust memory. Conard was chosen as a special recipient to commemorate the tenth anniversary of Sendler’s passing in May 2008, since it was his assignment—combined with the pursuit of his students—that brought her anti-Nazi activism out of the shadows.

“The life of Irena Sendler is one of great heroism and bravery. Getting to know this wonderful person was life-changing for me and my students,” said Mr. Conard. In the fall of 1999, Conard encouraged high school

students from Uniontown, Kansas (population 247) to research Sendler’s work and present their project to the National History Day program. Their efforts took the form of a play, *Life in a Jar*, which depicts Sendler’s heart-stopping rescue mission to smuggle children out of the ghetto and into the safety of adoptive families, convents and orphanages during the war. Since the play was developed, it has been performed almost 400 times throughout the world, adapted into feature and documentary films, and released as a bestselling book in the U.S.

## First Musician Receives Sendler Award During the Krakow Jewish Culture Festival

On June 28, 2018 at the 30th Jewish Culture Festival, Shana Penn of Taube Philanthropies presented the 2018 Irena Sendler Memorial Award to Ola Bilińska, an acclaimed musical artist and researcher of Yiddish language and culture. Bilińska is the first musician to receive the award.

“From the 20th century to present time, the Jewish people have expressed a recurring anxiety that the Yiddish language is dying. However, just at the very moment when this fear seems close to being realized, a new generation arises to embrace *Yiddishkeit*. Ola Bilińska represents the tremendous conviction and endeavor of this new generation whose work ensures the survival of this unique and historic culture,” said Ms. Penn.

Upon receiving the award, Ms. Bilińska said, “In the face of misunderstandings, conflicts, festering wounds and lack of dialogue, one of the routes to overcoming these obstacles is art. And the purest and most abstract



Ola Bilińska receives the 2018 Irena Senderowa Memorial Award from Shana Penn and Helise Lieberman at the Jewish Culture Festival in Kraków. Photograph by Michał Ramus. Courtesy of the Taube Foundation.

of the arts – music – perhaps works the most profoundly, because it operates at the level of emotions; it refers to the deepest, most unnamed layers of our humanity.”

Bilińska’s research and performances bring traditional songs, both popular and obscure, back to life by providing them with a modern, compelling form. In doing so, she honors artists of the past and illuminates the wealth of Yiddish culture on the contemporary stage. Leader of the popular folk group Babadag, she also contributes to Muzyka Końca Lata and collaborates with Raphael Rogiński, SzaZaZe, Horny Trees, Andrzej Smolik, and Daniel Pigonski, among others.

### About the Irena Sendler Memorial Award

The Irena Sendler Memorial Award was created in 2008 by Taube Philanthropies in memory of Irena Sendler whom Yad Vashem named a “Righteous Among The Nations.” Each year, in commemoration of the May 12 anniversary of Sendler’s passing, the award is presented to Polish citizens who have been exemplary in preserving and revitalizing their country’s Jewish heritage. Nominations for the annual award are reviewed by a panel of Taube Philanthropies advisory board members and Jewish cultural leaders in Poland. For more information about Sendler, the award, and previous recipients, visit: <http://nagrodairesendlerowej.pl/>

## Seventh Annual March of Remembrance Held in Warsaw

This year's July 22 Marsz Pamięci (March of Remembrance) was held in honor of Shmuel Zygielbojm, the Bund activist who petitioned the Allies to intervene in the mass murder of Jews in Poland. This year is the seventy-fifth anniversary of Zygielbojm's

death. The March, organized for the seventh year by the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw, commemorates the beginning of deportations from the Warsaw Ghetto to Treblinka (July 22, 1942) and pays tribute to the largest prewar Jewish community in Europe. The March proceeded

from the site of the former Umschlagplatz on Stawki Street to the Jewish Historical Institute. ■



Marian Turski, Holocaust survivor and journalist, participates in the March of Remembrance. Photograph by Grzegorz Kwolek. Used with the permission of the Jewish Historical Institute.

## Jewish Culture Festival Director Receives “Friend of Israel” Recognition

During the closing night concert of the Jewish Culture Festival in Krakow, the outdoor audience of 15,000 people watched as Janusz Makuch – the Festival’s co-founder and long-time director – received the distinguished title “Friend of Israel” from Hon. Anna Azari, Israeli Ambassador to Poland, together with a personal letter from Reuven Rivlin, President of Israel. Israeli embassies throughout the world, on the occasion of Israel’s 70th anniversary, had chosen one person from each country to receive this honorable distinction.

*From the letter by President of Israel Reuven Rivlin:*

“This year the State of Israel is celebrating its 70th anniversary and during this year we want to recognize exceptional people who have made a special contribution to promoting Israel and its culture and you are certainly one of



Israeli Ambassador to Poland Anna Azari presents the Friend of Israel Award to Janusz Makuch, founder and director of the Jewish Culture Festival. Photograph by Bogdan Krężel. Used with the permission of the Jewish Culture Festival.

them...[D]uring this festive year, I want to thank you for your inspiring initiative and untiring activity and to wish you personally, and all people involved in continuing this beautiful Kraków tradition, many more successes. I send you my thanks and deep appreciation on behalf of the State of Israel.” ■

[www.taubphilanthropies.org/  
friend-of-israel-recognition](http://www.taubphilanthropies.org/friend-of-israel-recognition)

*“This year we recognize exceptional people who have made a special contribution to promoting Israel and its culture.”*

**– President of Israel  
Reuven Rivlin**

## Dariusz Stola is *Gazeta Wyborcza*'s Person of the Year in Culture Category

**D**ariusz Stola, Director of POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews, was chosen by readers of *Gazeta Wyborcza* as the newspaper's Person of the Year 2017 in the category of Culture.

*Gazeta Wyborcza* nominated Professor Stola “for exhibitions and other activities of the museum that elucidate Jewish and Polish history in a non-obvious, complex, interesting, and courageous way — without avoiding difficult topics.”

At a gala at *Gazeta Wyborcza*'s Warsaw headquarters on Friday, May 25, Professor Stola thanked the *Wyborcza* editorial board for the nomination and the readers for their votes. He emphasized that he won the prize as a distinction for the museum and he thanked the entire team of POLIN Museum. ■

For more information, visit: [www.polin.pl/pl/aktualnosci/2018/05/28/prof-dariusz-stola-czlowiekiem-roku-2017-w-dziedzinie-kultura](http://www.polin.pl/pl/aktualnosci/2018/05/28/prof-dariusz-stola-czlowiekiem-roku-2017-w-dziedzinie-kultura).



Dariusz Stola, Director of the POLIN Museum, was voted *Gazeta Wyborcza*'s Person of the Year.

Photograph by Magda Starowieyska. Courtesy of the POLIN Museum.

## Officer of the French National Order Presented to Konstanty Gebert

Fay and  
Julian Bussgang

On June 7, 2018, Pierre Lévy, the French Ambassador to Poland, presented Konstanty Gebert, a Polish-Jewish journalist, with the insignia of the Officer of the French National Order of Merit. The ambassador referred to Gebert, who writes for *Gazeta Wyborcza*, a major daily newspaper published in Warsaw, as a “great connoisseur of France.”

Born in 1953 in Warsaw into a secular family with Jewish roots, Gebert became a Jewish activist in the late 1970s and was co-founder of the Jewish Flying University, which tried to educate young Polish Jews about Judaism. In 1989, he co-founded the Polish Council of Christians and Jews. In 1997, he founded *Midrasz*, a Polish-Jewish monthly, and served as its first editor.

Gebert is the author of ten books, including *54 Commentaries to the Torah* (2005) and *Living in the Land of Ashes* (2008), a book about



Konstanty Gebert speaking at the National Order of Merit award ceremony at the French Embassy in Warsaw.

Image courtesy of the French Embassy in Warsaw.

postwar Polish Jewry. In terms of his relationship to France, he authored the book *Magia słów: Polityka francuska wobec Polski po 13 grudnia 1981 roku* (*The Magic of Words: French policy toward Poland after December 13, 1981*).

Gebert has been involved in the European Council of Foreign Relations as an associate policy fellow and taught university courses in Poland, Israel, and the United

States. He serves on the boards of the Dutch Jewish Humanitarian Fund and the Einstein Forum in Potsdam, Germany. ■

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

## General Announcements

### **Polish/Israeli Leadership Initiative**

The first meeting of the Polish/Israeli Leadership Initiative was held on May 24-29. This new program, the very first program of its kind, aims to create a platform for cooperation and ideas exchange for a community of Polish and Israeli public opinion leaders. It was designed to address the tensions that had arisen between the two countries after the controversy related to the passing of an amended Remembrance Law in Poland. The program is addressed to two groups: Israeli alumni of Forum for Dialogue study visits and Polish Friends of the Forum, who have similar professions, interests and levels of social or political engagement. *Forum* considers these individuals crucial for the future of public debate and opinion making in both Israel and Poland.

For an overview, please visit <http://dialog.org.pl/en/polish-israeli-leadership-initiative-2/>

### **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 elds 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.

#### **International GEOP academic conference November hopes. Jews and independence of Poland in 1918, November 29–30, POLIN Museum**

The conference will fill in the void in the historical awareness concerning the history of Polish Jews and in the study of their problematic relations—with the administration as well as with non-Jewish residents

of reborn Poland. The main emphasis shall be laid on the presentation of varied attitudes and opinions voiced by the Jewish communities on the basis of new archival sources, including the sources available only in the Jewish languages.

Confirmed keynote lecture will be delivered by Professor David Engel from New York University. This lecture will launch the new lecture series accompanying the temporary exhibition *In King Matt's Poland. 100th Anniversary of Regaining Independence*.

For more information please see: [www.polin.pl/en/event/international-academic-conference-november-hopes-jews-and](http://www.polin.pl/en/event/international-academic-conference-november-hopes-jews-and).

#### **Lectures by Professor Gabriella Safran, Professor Shlomo Avinieri and others—new lectures from the GEOP Distinguished Lecture Series are available online!**

We invite everyone to listen and watch podcasts and

videos from our latest lectures online:

Podcasts:

- Professor Anna Landau-Czajka, *Zionism in Poland, Poland in Zionism*: [www.polin.pl/en/event/zionism-in-poland-poland-in-zionism](http://www.polin.pl/en/event/zionism-in-poland-poland-in-zionism) (in Polish)
- Professor Shlomo Avinieri, *Theodor Herzl and his vision of a Jewish state: ideas and the reality*: [www.polin.pl/en/event/theodor-herzl-and-his-vision-of-a-jewish-state-ideas-and-the](http://www.polin.pl/en/event/theodor-herzl-and-his-vision-of-a-jewish-state-ideas-and-the) (in English)
- Professor Itamar Rabinovich, *Ichhak Rabin. The Ultimate Native Born Israeli*: [www.polin.pl/en/event/icchak-rabin-the-ultimate-native-born-israeli-leader](http://www.polin.pl/en/event/icchak-rabin-the-ultimate-native-born-israeli-leader) (in English)

Videos:

- Dr. Michał Trębacz, *How to draw the attention of an indifferent world? Szmul Zygielbojm's struggle to stop the extermination of Jews*:

[www.polin.pl/en/event/how-to-draw-the-attention-of-an-indifferent-world-szmul](http://www.polin.pl/en/event/how-to-draw-the-attention-of-an-indifferent-world-szmul) (in Polish)

- Professor Gabriella Safran, *How Jewish Jokes Migrated*: [www.polin.pl/en/event/how-jewish-jokes-migrated-a-lecture](http://www.polin.pl/en/event/how-jewish-jokes-migrated-a-lecture) (in English)

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

### **GEOP Research Fellowships for Doctoral and Postdoctoral Candidates for 2018/19**

We are happy to inform that the third GEOP Research Fellowships for Doctoral and Postdoctoral Candidates have been awarded.

The fellows for the academic year 2018/2019 are:

- Dr. Stephan Stach, Institute of Contemporary History of the Academy of Sciences, Czech Republic, *Ringelblum's Trustees: The*

*Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw (1947-1989) and the Emergence of Shoah Memory during the Cold War*;

- Dr. Grzegorz Rossoliński-Liebe, Freie Universität Berlin, Germany, *Polish City Mayors and the Jews in the General Government: Collaboration, Occupation, and Administration*;
- Jan Rybak, European University Institute, Italy, *Everyday Zionism in East-Central Europe: Building a Nation in War and Revolution, 1914–1921*;
- Pierce Mackenzie, Cornell University, USA, *Life and Death for Music: A Generation's Journey across War and Reconstruction, 1926-1953*.

For the details on the GEOP Research Fellowships for Doctoral and Postdoctoral Candidates, please go to: [www.polin.pl/en/news/2017/11/02/call-for-applications-geop-research-fellowships-for-doctoral-and](http://www.polin.pl/en/news/2017/11/02/call-for-applications-geop-research-fellowships-for-doctoral-and).

### **Third edition of the GEOP Doctoral Seminar**

On June 13, fourteen participants of the third edition of the GEOP Doctoral Seminar finished the meeting cycle of nine seminars in 2017/18. The participants met monthly to discuss progress and present their PhD dissertations on the history and culture of Polish-Jewish studies. They had an opportunity to meet with experts in their fields, attend the GEOP lectures and meet with the GEOP Research Fellows.

The next edition of the Doctoral Seminar will start in October 2018. For more information please see: [www.polin.pl/en/nauka-i-zbiory-dzialalnosc-naukowa-pobyty-badawcze-i-warsztaty/geop-doctoral-seminars](http://www.polin.pl/en/nauka-i-zbiory-dzialalnosc-naukowa-pobyty-badawcze-i-warsztaty/geop-doctoral-seminars).

### **GEOP supported the 11th EAJIS Congress**

Global Education Outreach program proudly supported the 11th EAJIS Congress *Searching for the Roots of Jewish Traditions* on July 15-19. Within GEOP the panel Jewish Museology Section was organized, gathering over thirty researchers to ponder together on the contemporary Jewish museums, its history, heritage, memory and identity, among others.

For the details of the Congress please see: [www.eajis2018.uj.edu.pl/en](http://www.eajis2018.uj.edu.pl/en).

## PERSONAL ESSAY

# Jewish Studies at the University of Wrocław

Katarzyna Andersz

When I came for the interview to be admitted to the then two-year-long Jewish Studies program at the University of Wrocław, the past year I had rejected an offer from University College London, given up supposedly great studies at the Warsaw University, and started a dissatisfying BA program in Wrocław. I don't remember much from that first meeting, maybe except for the fact that it was taking place in a really small room (all too small to be the office of all faculty), stocked with books, papers, funny drawings, postcards with quotations, and pictures from students. To my surprise, it is in the evening courses that were then taking place only two days a week that I discovered the quality and atmosphere I was looking for.

Almost exactly nine years ago my first class was "Introduction to Jewish Studies," taught by Professor Marcin Wodziński. The reading list was several



Katarzyna Andersz and Dr. Jan Paweł Woronczak on a trip to the Jewish cemetery in Mikulov, Czech Republic. Image courtesy of the author.

academic articles in English. Some people blinked at hearing the assignment to read, maybe about several dozen of pages *in English* for the following week. I was quite content though, because having experienced one semester of studying Jewish history at a university elsewhere, my conviction was that all professors just assign to read books which they authored, and then

thoughtlessly repeat their content during the class. It was different in Wrocław, where the texts constituted only the beginnings of discussions, and where the lecturers wanted to teach us the ability of critical reading. One could also see that they really want to engage us in whatever topic they were covering, that they were really passionate, and—to put it a little childishly—

smart. Every now and then we would hear that one of our lecturers is speaking at a conference at some prestigious university, publishes a book that changes the view with which certain topics are being perceived, is engaged in creating the exhibition at the POLIN Museum in Warsaw, or does something else that really brings a new quality into various fields of Jewish studies. We had visiting scholars coming just for us (among them such names as Moshe Rosman), which is not a standard way of teaching at most Polish universities. All of that was encouraging and inspiring, and not only for these who wanted to further pursue academic career. The general feeling that I think our lecturers wanted to convey was that there are always places we can go to and study, academic projects we can take part in, expeditions we can organize, and they will always help us to achieve our big and smaller goals. Many of us took part in Erasmus

*It was different in Wrocław, where the texts constituted only beginnings of discussions, and where the lecturers wanted to teach us the ability of critical reading.*

exchanges in Potsdam, Berlin, Southampton, and elsewhere, many also studied later in the Swedish Paideia Institute for Jewish Studies, at Heidelberg University—to recall just these places that I personally remember. I got admitted to the Polish-Israeli Youth Exchange (PIYE) program at the POLIN Museum, which consisted of one semester studies at the Tel Aviv University, and then I eventually stayed in Israel for a while, working in Yad Vashem's Righteous Among the Nations Department—I am quite sure, without

exaggeration, that none of these opportunities would have happened if not for my engagement in academic and non-academic projects in professor Wodziński's department.

Two years of Jewish Studies at the University of Wrocław were filled with field trips, various non-academic events, projects, and meetings with students from other universities. Whereas it is considered a norm in Poland that academic lecturers keep their distance, the faculty of the Centre for the Jewish Culture and Languages (as it was then called) was doing everything to shorten that distance. They were equally engaged in our Purim *shpiels* and Hanukkah celebrations, as they were in their academic research. They had time for us, much beyond the standard office hours. Dr. Jan Paweł Woronczak went with a group of about ten of us to a picturesque Moravian town, Mikulov, where we worked on

documenting the remaining tombstones at the local Jewish cemetery. Following in the steps of his father, professor Jerzy Woronczak, he taught us the art of deciphering the old Hebrew letters and converting the dates. It was one of the best summers my friends and I have ever had and after several years still uphold that view; successive students of the Department still go to Mikulov, work on the cemetery, and drink the fantastic local wine. I don't want to sound like I am diminishing the qualities that lecturers in other departments have, but whereas meeting a devoted teacher at university is generally considered luck, in the Jewish Studies Department it was a common occurrence. Professor Wodziński managed to build a team of smart, emphatic, engaged and passionate people whom we could consider teachers, guides for our research and careers, and friends indeed.

When we celebrated the opening of the new space

that the Taube Department of Jewish Studies was given in a historical building just across the place where the two swamped rooms I remembered were, it was nice to discover that we still keep on making new friends there. The yard where the celebrations took place was filled with people that I met long time after my own graduation, and I haven't even been living full-time in Wrocław since then. What is also worth emphasizing, is that even these who didn't have academic aspirations became in many ways influenced by the experience of Jewish Studies and now pursue careers in related fields. It is not my intention to list all the places that my friends work in, but many of them have satisfying and rewarding career paths, thanks to the bug that has bitten us during the studies. As an author for *Chidusz* Jewish Magazine (which my friend, Michał Bojanowski, also the alum of the Centre for the Jewish Culture and

Languages, has founded) I am happy to have the opportunity to almost regularly write about the achievements of the faculty members and their new books. My studies at the Jewish Studies Department (or the Super-Centre as someone coined the name back then) significantly helped me to build a solid knowledge base, a network of professional contacts and gave an inspiration and encouragement for doing what I do now. I find it very uplifting to see that in *Chidusz* we are able to work with some of the Department's most fantastic students and alumni, either as our interns or coworkers. In this, and in a hundred different ways, I will always be thankful to professor Wodziński and his truly exceptional staff for their work that doesn't seem to slow down but, on the contrary, only accelerates. ■

*Katarzyna Andersz is a journalist and editor at Chidusz Magazine, published in Wrocław.*

## OBITUARIES

### Richard Pipes

July 11 1923—May 17 2018

Richard Edgar Pipes, who died in Boston, Massachusetts on May 17th, was both an eminent historian of the Tsarist Empire and the Soviet Union and a public intellectual who made a major contribution to the formulation of U.S foreign policy in the last decades of the Cold War. He was born in Cieszyn, in former Austrian Silesia, the only son of Mark Pipes, a member of a prominent Lwów family, and Zofia (usually known as Zosia) Haskelberg, who, like her husband, came from an acculturated Jewish family from Warsaw. Both of Richard's parents were bilingual in Polish and German, a language which Richard described as "the English of those times." Richard owed his bilingual facility in languages (he spoke near perfect Russian and wrote impeccable English) to his upbringing.

Mark was a devoted Polish patriot and served in the Legions established by Józef



Richard Pipes in Warsaw in 2004. Photograph by Mariusz Kubik. Wikimedia Commons.

Piłsudski to fight for Polish independence alongside the Central Powers. After Polish independence, he opened a chocolate factory in Cieszyn, which was the first in Poland to produce milk chocolate—one of its specialities was the "Prince Polo" chocolate bar, still popular in Poland today. The factory ran into difficulties during the depression and Mark then moved to Warsaw, where, through his contacts in the Piłsudski Legions, he was given a contract to import

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"colonial goods" for the Polish Army. Richard (or Ryszard as he was known in Polish) by then attended the Kreczmar Gymnasium, a private secular high school founded in 1907 and the first secondary school in the Russian partition to use the Polish language. It was attended by many children of acculturated Jewish families, including the writers Antoni Słonimski and Leopold Tyrmand and the Sovietologist and editor of *Survey*, Leopold Łabędz. The general atmosphere of the school was tolerant, although some of the students were ardent anti-Semites. Among the teachers was the esteemed Polish medievalist, Marian Małowist - who could not obtain a post at a Polish university because of anti-Jewish prejudice - and Jan Żabiński, who taught geography and was also the co-founder and director of the Warsaw Zoo. After the war, he and his wife Antonina (née Erdman) were awarded the decoration of "Righteous among the Nations" for hiding

Jews in the by then closed zoo. Ryszard remembered both fondly, although his initial encounter with Żabiński was marred by his falling asleep in his class.

When the war broke out Mark was able to use his trading contacts to obtain false Bolivian passports for himself, Zosia and Ryszard. They managed to travel via Breslau to Italy in October 1939 immediately after the Polish defeat. A large number of their friends and family went to the main Warsaw station to see them off. One of them took with him the Pipes' family dog, which the family felt compelled to leave behind. The dog clearly sensed what was happening and at the last minute jumped out of the arms of the person holding him, boarded the train and hid, re-appearing at the door of their compartment near Breslau. Richard has described in his autobiography, *Vixi: Memoirs of a Non-Belonger*, the nightmarish experience of travelling through the deserted battlefields with their ruined equipment and dead bodies. His lifelong conservatism was clearly in part a product of his

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awareness of how thin is the crust of civilization and how easily it can be ruptured by violent and destructive forces.

When the Pipes family arrived at the German-Italian border on the Brenner pass, the Gestapo were clearly suspicious. However, the fact that this so-called “Bolivian” family had their dog with them convinced them of their authenticity, as this would not have been the case in their prejudiced view of the world had the travelers been Jews. Richard has described his reaction on arriving in Rome: “It was still summer—the sky was all blue and there were white marble buildings everywhere. I thought I had arrived in heaven.” His main interests at the time were art

and literature, which remained lifelong passions and he spent the months waiting for a United States visa in Florence studying art history. Late in life he returned to this field, writing a book-length article, “Russia’s Itinerant Painters.”

The Pipes family was able to travel from Lisbon to New York in 1940 and settled in Elmira, New York, where they again began to produce chocolate. Richard now wrote to a large number of American colleges, seeking financial support and part-time work and was admitted to Muskingum College (now Muskingum University) in Ohio. In his junior year, he was drafted into the Army Air Corps and sent to study Russian at Cornell. There, he met his future wife, Irene Roth, who was a student of architecture. She came from a similar acculturated Jewish background—her father Marcell hailed from Busk in East Galicia and her mother, Maria, from Warsaw where they settled after Polish independence, and where they had common acquaintances. Like the Pipes family, they had miraculously

escaped from Poland in 1940. Irene and Dick (as he was affectionately called) were devoted to each other throughout their seventy-two years of marriage, although given that both had extremely strong personalities, they sometimes clashed. In his autobiography *Vixi* Dick wrote of her as follows:

We complemented each other perfectly: to paraphrase Voltaire, she assumed command of the earth, I of the clouds, and between us, kept our little universe in good order. Her charm, beauty, and *joie de vivre* have never faded for me.

My marriage was for me a continuous source of joy and strength. In a book which I dedicated to her after we had celebrated our golden wedding anniversary I thanked her for ‘having created for me ideal conditions to pursue scholarship.’

Richard Pipes graduated from Cornell in 1946 and received his doctorate in history from Harvard University in 1950.

He became a full professor there in 1958, holding the Frank B. Baird Jr Chair until his retirement in 1996. From 1968-1973, he was Director of its Russian Research Center. His doctoral dissertation, which reflected his lasting interest in national questions, was published under the title, *The Formation of the Soviet Union: Communism and Nationalism, 1917-1923* (1954). Perhaps his most impressive work is *Russia Under the Old Regime* (1974), which abandoned chronology and examined different aspects of the pre-revolutionary past—the peasantry, the church, the machinery of state and the intelligentsia—thematically. Its key argument was that the main reason for the failure of Russia to evolve into a liberal constitution was its character as a “patrimonial state,” in which the Tsar not only ruled but also owned his domain and its inhabitants, thereby making impossible the development of the concepts of private property and individual freedom. In a later work, *Property and Freedom* (1999), he explored these links on a larger

world canvas. Other notable works include: *The Russian Revolution* (1990), *Russia Under the Bolshevik Regime* (1994) and *The Unknown Lenin* (1996), summarized in *A Concise History of the Russian Revolution* (1995), and *Communism: A Brief History* (2001), which stress the conspiratorial nature of the Bolsheviks and the continuities between Russian and Soviet history. Pipes’ commitment to liberal conservatism emerges clearly in his two-volume biography of the liberal politician Peter Struve, *Struve: Liberal on the Left, 1870-1905* (1970) and *Struve: Liberal on the Right, 1905-1944* (1980). Two of his books examine Soviet-American relations, *U.S.-Soviet Relations in the Era of Détente* (1981) and *Survival Is Not Enough: Soviet Realities and America’s Future* (1984). One of his most moving and revealing books is his autobiography, published in 2003, in which he writes:

There are various reasons for writing an autobiography, but for me the most important is to get to know oneself. For if one has lived to a ripe

old age, as I have, one's life is a long story whose earlier chapters are clouded in darkness. Are we the same over these decades? Can we still understand what we have once said and done, and why? To write an autobiography is akin to doing an archeological dig, with the difference being that the digger is also the site.

Dick was greatly encouraged by the collapse of the Soviet Union. He was also saddened by the failure of the country to develop towards a constitutional state. In 1999, he observed:

I was very hopeful in '91, '92, that they would take a more democratic course. I don't think there's the slightest chance communism will come back...but it's entirely possible that they'll go to some kind of authoritarian regime — and that would be consistent with their traditions.

Richard Pipes remained active until the near-end of his long life. He produced his final book, *Alexander*

*Yakovlev: The Man Whose Ideas Delivered Russia from Communism*, in 2015 and also published several articles in the *New York Review of Books* in the following year. As his son Daniel wrote, "He remained lucid, if increasingly short of memory, until the exact turn of 2018, when an exhausted body and mind gradually failed him." He was a unique individual and will be sorely missed. We express our deepest sympathy to his wife Irene, long-standing President of the American Association for Polish Jewish Studies, to his sons Daniel and Steven and their four children, Sarah, Anna, Elizabeth and Mark. ■

## In Memory of Abram Henryk Prajs

Michael Schudrich

When was the last time a horse attended a Jewish funeral? This question, weird as it may sound, does have a precise answer: Sunday April 29, 2018, at Warsaw's Okopowa cemetery. Polish military custom has it that cavalrymen's funerals are attended by cavalry horses – and lieutenant Abram Henryk Prajs of blessed memory had been a soldier in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Light Cavalry Regiment of the Polish Army. Therefore a horse – unsaddled and bedecked in black – accompanied him to his grave, as did an honors guard of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Light Cavalry with sabers drawn, but in reconstructed uniforms. For the 3<sup>rd</sup> Light Cavalry, with whom lieutenant Prajs had gone into battle, is no more: the battles it had fought in Poland's doomed war against the German invasion in 1939, had been its last.

Prajs was 23 then: his squadron conducted a successive raid into Germany on September 3<sup>rd</sup>, wreaking



Photograph of Abram Henryk Prajs and his daughter Małgorzata, at Prajs's home in Góra Kalwaria.

Image courtesy of Centropa.

havoc behind enemy lines, but then had to withdraw under continuous Luftwaffe bombardment. Ten days later in Olszewo they clashed with general Heintz Guderian's armored army, losing over 30 officers and men. There, on the battlefield, he was made commander of his squadron, which had lost its commanding officer. Prajs, wounded in battle, withdrew with his bloodied unit – only to be taken prisoner by the Soviets, who invaded Poland

on September 17. He was 101 when he passed away at home in his native Góra Kalwarja – or Ger, as the Hassidim had called it in Yiddish.

Born in a poor and pious artisan family, Abram Chaim – he adopted the Polish second name Henryk only in the army – lost his father in a bandit attack when he was three. The family gave him a strong Jewish identity – Prajs studied in cheder and joined the General Zionist youth

movement, and in the army received weekly payments from the quartermaster to buy himself kosher food that the military did not provide – as well as a strong Polish patriotic one: his father had, on Poland’s declaration of independence in 1918, participated in the disarming of occupying German troops. “I had been happy twice in my life – he used to say – when I joined the army in 1937, and when I heard that Israel had been proclaimed in 1948”. Between these two dates lies a history of despair.

Eventually liberated from Soviet captivity by having concealed his officer rank, Prajs returned to Góra Kalwaria in late 1939 and was rejoined with his family. But in January 1940 the Germans created a ghetto in Góra Kalwarja: in a testimony with the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw, Prajs described, after the war, the atrocious conditions which prevailed there. One year later, as the population of ghetto was being deported to the ghetto in Warsaw, Prajs, spurred on by his mother, fled. 36 members of his family died, either in

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the ghettos, or eventually in Treblinka and Majdanek.

Prajs survived, hiding with Polish families: the Pokorskis, the Kurachs, the Majewskis, in the countryside. They are all recognized as Righteous Gentiles by Yad Vashem. Mrs Pokorska delivered one of the moving eulogies at his funeral.

When the war ended Prajs returned to Góra Kalwarja and spent his entire life there, marrying in 1949 a local Polish woman. He frequently attended, for as long as his health permitted, holiday services at Warsaw’s Nożyk shul, where he would read prayers in a beautiful, pre-war Polish Hebrew. He was overjoyed at the post-1989 rebirth of Polish Jewish life.

He is survived by his daughter, 6 grandchildren and 5 great-grandchildren. The family, friends, the Warsaw

Jewish community and various dignitaries, including the Polish minister for veterans affairs, the mayor of Góra Kalwarja with the flag of the city, and representatives of the army, attended his funeral and eulogized him. The honors guard of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Light Cavalry stood at attention, displayed his military decorations and gave him military honors. Not surprisingly: this unprepossessing Jewish man had, after all, been Poland’s last surviving cavalryman who had fought in the war of 1939. ■

*Michael Schudrich is the Chief Rabbi of Poland.*

## Claude Lanzmann

July 11, 1923—July 5, 2018

Claude Lanzmann, who died in Paris on July 5, 2018 at the age of 92 was one of the great documentary film-makers of the late twentieth and early twenty-first century. Best-known for his revolutionary masterpiece *Shoah*, a nine and a half hour film which abjured documentary footage and a musical score and was based only on interviews, often conducted in the places where mass murder had taken place. Lanzmann was born into a secular Jewish family with roots in Eastern Europe, the eldest of three children. His parents separated in 1934 and he became radicalised in the 1930s, partly as a result of his experience of antisemitism in his school in Paris.

Under the Nazi occupation, his father and the three children moved to the country. He continued to attend school in Clermont-Ferrand, helping to smuggle arms and ammunition to the resistance. After the war, he was an active member of



Director Claude Lanzmann in 2011, at the Literaktum Festival in San Sebastián, Spain.

Photograph by Iñigo Royo. Wikimedia Commons.

the French left, working at the journal *Les Temps Modernes* with Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir, who was his lover for nine years. He subsequently remained in touch with both Sartre and de Beauvoir, and, long after the affair had ended, de Beauvoir provided much of the financial support for *Shoah*. A prolific journalist, Lanzmann wrote for a number of journals, including extensive accounts for *Le Monde* and *Les Temps Modernes* of the situation in Germany.

## Antony Polonsky

Lanzmann had long been fascinated by the cinema. Immediately after the war, he spent some time in Israel and his first film, a three hour documentary, *Pourquoi Israel* (*Why Israel*, 1973) was the product of his discomfort at the portrayal of the Jewish state as a colonial enterprise by his friends—he had edited a special issue of the journal *Les Temps Modernes* with Sartre on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

*Shoah*, his masterpiece, appeared in 1985 and grew out of this film. He was approached by an Israeli official to make a two hour documentary about the Holocaust from the “Jewish point of view.” However, when the initial research had still not been completed far beyond the budgeted eighteen months, the Israelis withdrew their support. The project would take over eleven years to complete and would result in 350 hours of raw footage which was condensed into

a mammoth nine-and-a-half hour epic (originally thirteen hours).

The epoch-making character of this film has been widely recognized. According to Richard Brody, writing in the *New Yorker* on 6 July 2018:

...*Shoah*, the crucial cinematic confrontation with the Holocaust (a word that Lanzmann hated), changed the history of cinema with its absolute absence of archival footage, with its incarnation of history in the present tense as a first-hand, first-person act of political engagement. It changed political history with its journalistic revelations and its moral insights.

What lay at the heart of Lanzmann's vision was his realization during his first trip to Poland that the sites of mass murder were actual physical places. In his autobiography, *The Patagonian Hare* (English edition, 2012), he wrote:

I knew that the subject of the film would be death itself. Death rather than survival. The film

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would have to take up the ultimate challenge; take the place of the non-existent images of death in the gas chambers...For twelve years I tried to stare relentlessly into the black sun of the Shoah.

In spite of Lanzmann's statement, the other major theme of Shoah is, in fact, survival. The film contains interviews with former members of the Sonderkommando forced, on pain of death, to prepare other Jewish prisoners for murder and with Jewish resistance fighters in the Warsaw Ghetto. In his view, this is justified since survival has to be seen as an act of resistance.

Lanzmann was an aggressive and intrusive interviewer. He showed little compassion

for those he interviewed and indeed provoked them to speak of their deepest feelings, forcing the viewer to confront the terrible human cost of survival under the Nazi regime. One of the most compelling interviews is with a former prisoner at Treblinka, Abraham Bomba, a professional barber, interviewed while cutting a woman's hair in a barbershop in Tel Aviv, who tells of giving women haircuts minutes before they were to be gassed. Bomba begins to describe the arrival of transport from his native shtetl but breaks down and cannot continue. Pressed by Lanzman he gives an account of how he was forced to cut the hair of his wife and sister, able only to share a brief embrace before the final parting and their deaths.

The film has been widely praised. Roger Ebert called it "one of the noblest films ever made," and *Time Out* and *The Guardian* in London were among those who ranked it as the greatest documentary of all time. It had a major impact on Poland and was clearly a major factor in inducing the

literary critic, Jan Błóński, to write his article “Biedny Polacy patrzą na ghetto,” in *Tygodnik Powszechny* in November 1987, a major turning-point in the discussion of Polish-Jewish relations in post-war Poland. When the film was first shown in Paris, it was bitterly attacked by the official Polish press as an anti-Polish provocation and the Polish government even delivered a note of protest to the French government which had partly financed the film. However, in the spring of 1985 the Polish embassy in London, whose minister-counselor had played a key role in facilitating the participation of scholars from Poland in the Oxford conference on Polish-Jewish relations in September 1984, approached the Institute for Polish Jewish Studies in Oxford and suggested that it organize a showing of the film in Oxford (in fact the British premiere of the film), at which prominent Polish and Jewish scholars would be present and would discuss the film. The showing took place, with the participation of both the Polish and French embassies, in late September. Among those

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who took part in the all-day discussion that followed, and which I chaired, were Claude Lanzmann himself, Jerzy Turowicz, Professors Jerzy Tomaszewski of Warsaw and Józef Gierowski of Krakow, Józef Garliński and Rafael Scharf of London, Michal Borwicz of Paris, and Abe Brumberg of Washington, D.C.

The discussion was heated, partly because of the abrasive personality of Lanzmann, but it enabled an important circle of opinion makers in Poland to see the film. Reports on the screening and discussion reached the Polish press and the Oxford showing was one of the factors that led the Polish government to finally allow the screening of the film in Poland. When it took place, reactions were mixed. Most

Poles rejected Lanzmann’s division of European society during the Holocaust (particularly in Poland) into the murderers, their victims, and the bystanders, largely unsympathetic to the fate of the Jews. Yet many were shocked by his interviews with Polish peasants living in the vicinity of the death camps, in which they revealed the persistence of crude antixemitic stereotypes in the Polish countryside. For Catholics - the overwhelming majority of Poles - Lanzmann’s argument that Nazi anti-Semitism was the logical culmination of Christian anti-Semitism was also unacceptable. But the film, too, forced a re-examination of many strongly-held attitudes.

Lanzmann subsequently used the 350 hours of footage he had accumulated in the making of *Shoah* to produce several other films. The first of these, *Visitor From the Living* (1999) was an interview with Maurice Rossel, a Second World War Red Cross official who had written a glowing report on the Theresienstadt ghetto. This was followed by

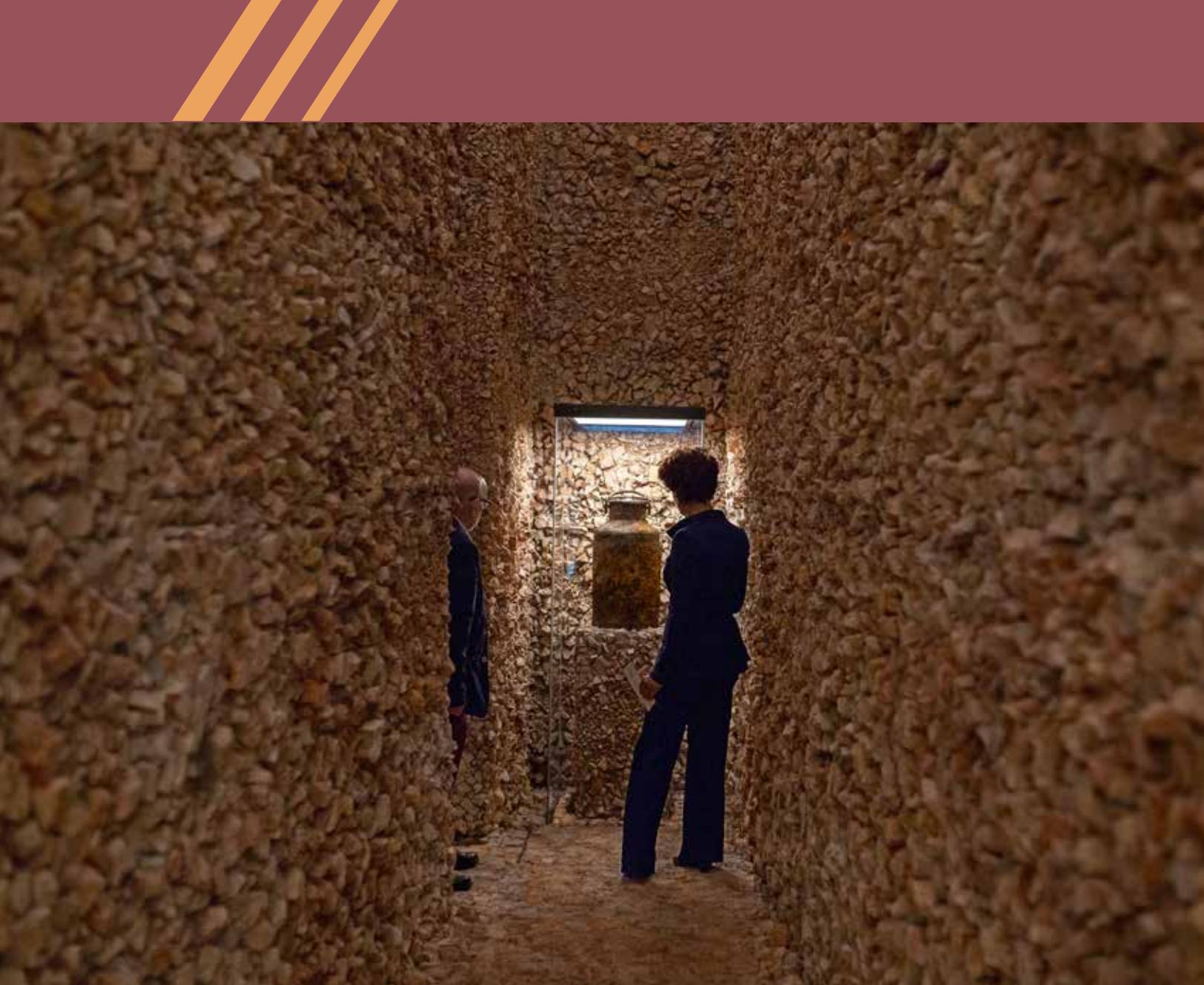
*Sobibor, October 14, 1943, 4 p.m.* (2001) an account of the uprising and escape from the Sobibor death camp.

In 2010 he produced *The Karski Report*, a 42 minute interview with Jan Karski in which the Polish resistance fighter described his mission to the West in November 1942 during which he attempted to inform Western leaders of the Nazi plans for the mass murder of the Jews of Europe. There was clearly a strong affinity between him and Lanzmann. Lanzmann was the first person to induce Karski to express publicly his attempt to bring the Jewish tragedy to the attention of the world and to persuade him to talk about it, about which he had been silent since 1945. When some Poles in London attempted to prevent the showing of the film in Oxford in 1985, Karski telephoned me from Georgetown to make sure I would not give in to this pressure. “This is a film which the Poles *must see*,” he told me.

He returned to the issue of the Theresienstadt ghetto in his final film using this material, which also includes new

footage, *The Last of the Unjust* (2013). This was an extended interview with Benjamin Murrelstein, a Viennese rabbi who was the last *Judenälteste* of the ghetto. Murrelstein, who survived the war, was credited with saving the lives of thousands of Jews by facilitating their emigration, but his collaboration with the Nazis led to his ostracism after the war. The film again demonstrates Lanzmann’s extraordinary ability to empathize with those Jews who hoped to work with the Nazis to save Jewish lives.

In 2011 Lanzmann was made Grand Officer of the Legion d’Honneur, and in 2013 was awarded an honorary Golden Bear by the Berlin film festival. He was married three times: to actor Judith Magre, German writer Angelika Schrobsdorff and epidemiologist Dominique Petithory (whom he married in 1995 and who survives him). Claude Lanzmann was a man with uncommon energy and charisma. As one of his friends observed after his death, “We all assumed he was indestructible.” He will be sorely missed. ■



Taube Philanthropies' Shana Penn (center) and the Jewish Historical Institute's Jan Paweł Śpiewak (left) at the entry to the Institute's new permanent exhibition on the Oyneg Shabes Archive. Image courtesy of Taube Philanthropies.

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](mailto:info@taubephilanthropies.org). The submission deadline for the next issue is **October 8, 2018**.



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