



*"This commemoration is not about hatred,  
but to prevent a recurrence of such events.*

*We should never be passive,  
when a person is being harmed."  
(Stefan Zabłocki)*

Stefan Zabłocki, one of the last living prisoners of Kielce Ghetto, and Bogdan Białek

## The 70 anniversary of Kielce Ghetto extermination

## 2012

# Jan Karski Society

Jan Karski (1914 – 2000) was a Polish World War II resistance movement fighter and later professor at Georgetown University. In 1942 and 1943 Karski reported to the Polish government in exile and the Western Allies on the situation in German-occupied Poland, especially the destruction of the Warsaw Ghetto, and the secretive German extermination camps.

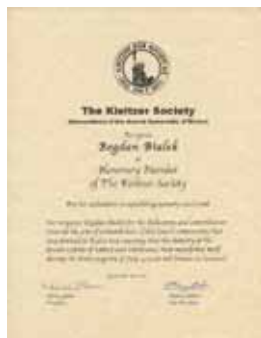


In 2005 the Jan Karski Society erected the Jan Karski sculpture in the main street in Kielce, nearby the place where the pogrom took place. Its total cost was covered by private funds and it is a gift from the Society to the residents of Kielce.

Jan Karski's monument became an integral part of the Kielce city landscape. It has not only symbolical and artistic meaning, but it is also a place where Kielce residents meet and tourists like being photographed.

The Jan Karski Society was founded in March 2005. Its main aim is to act for popularization of openness and respect for people and groups different in terms of race, ethnicity, nationality, religion or culture; to counteract any forms of anti-Semitism, xenophobia, racism or other behaviors which humiliate human beings; to act for saving Polish national heritage – monitoring and condemning all acts of its violation.

The Chairman of the Jan Karski Society is Bogdan Bialek, who is also a publisher and editor-in-chief of the psychological magazine "Charaktery". He received many awards for his social activity, for instance Professor Łukasz Hirszczyk Award, Stanisław Musiał SJ Award, as well as Polcul Foundation Award. He is also a honorary member of the Kiełtzer Society in New York.

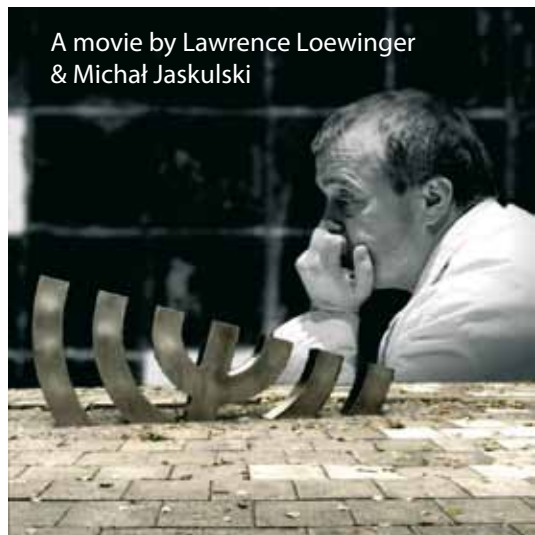


## NOT FOR THE DEAD

([www.notforthehead.pl](http://www.notforthehead.pl))

"Not for the dead" is a title of the film production of which started 7 years ago, by two filmmakers: an American Lawrence Loewinger and a Pole Michał Jaskólski. Its theme is the activity of Mr. Bogdan Bialek and the Jan Karski Society. The filmmakers are trying to present Kielce and Poland of today in confrontation with the difficulties of its history. They have made more than 200 hours of recordings, which document the celebrations held in the town. In Israel and the United States they talked with the pogrom survivors. In Kielce they interviewed the witnesses of the pogrom (official movie website: [notforthehead.pl](http://notforthehead.pl)).

A movie by Lawrence Loewinger & Michał Jaskólski



Eight years of the activity of Jan Karski Society passed. Like the other years, this one was full of ambitious, widespread actions. What is important, they were addressed not only to the inhabitants of Kielce and Świętokrzyskie Voivodeship. In Jedwabne we have started an educational cycle "Different, yet the same". The most significant last year's projects were: 2<sup>nd</sup> Kielce Christian-Jewish Meetings, commemoration of the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Kielce Ghetto extermination and inauguration of two cycles: "What Poland, what Church" and already mentioned "Different, yet the same". Moreover, the annual March of Remembrance was traditionally held on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July – on the anniversary of Kielce pogrom.

We also carried out number of educational-training projects addressed to youth and school teachers, including workshops on Holocaust for educators and competitions for students, related to the history of Jews in Świętokrzyski region.

For the first time we prepared a conference of schools under the patronage of Jan Karski. We also awarded Hana Goldszajd and Dawidek Rubinowicz Prizes.

Due to cooperation with Israeli Adam Le'Adam Society, young volunteers from Jerusalem came to Kielce. For many days, they were meeting with the inhabitants of the city and talking about tradition, Jewish history and contemporary Israel. The primary goal of the coming together of Poles and Jews that was a part of Sukkot Shalom Feast, was to get to know each others and to break stereotypes down.

Altogether in 2012, 6,000 people took part in events organized by Jan Karski Society in 2012.

We must separately mention personal efforts, strictly consistent with Society actions, taken by its chairman, Bogdan Bialek. There were many public speeches and meetings in Poland and abroad as well as press publications.

Last year we also started a major undertaking – the translocation of Zagajski Family's Prayer House and building of the Place of Memory and Reflection "Beit ha Midrasz". Due to high costs, its finalization is expected in few years. When will it end? Only the funds will decide.

Board of the Jan Karski Society

Menorah Monument commemorates 20, 000 Jews from Kielce murdered by German. It was initiated and funded by the Bialek Family. The sculpture was unveiled on the 65<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the extermination of ghetto in Kielce on August 26, 2007.

*Every time I am here I wonder if this Menorah goes down to the ground and is a symbol of death or it goes up as a sign of the renewed life. Thanks to such people like you I am sure that it goes up – said Chief Rabbi of Poland Michael Schudrich.*



The March of Remembrance and Reconciliation plays the special role in the activity of the Jan Karski Society. It is held each year on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July – on the anniversary of 1946 Kielce pogrom. The memorial event reminds of the tragic past but also symbolizes reconciliation. The first March organized by the Society took place in 2005 Earlier events were private initiatives of Bogdan Bialek and Janusz Daszuta.

On the 5<sup>th</sup> of July 2010 the restored tombstone of the Kielce pogrom victims was unveiled. The renovation was initiated by the Jan Karski Society and financed by individual Kielce residents as well as the members of the Kiełtzer Society in Israel and in the United States. 15,000 young Israelis visited the tomb in 2012 (more information on the back cover).

In winter 2006 the Society along with the Polish Episcopal Conference organized the main ceremonies of the 9<sup>th</sup> National Day of Judaism in Poland.

In January 2011 we organized 1<sup>st</sup> Kielce Christian-Jewish Meetings, which later became a cyclic event.

In Autumn 2011 the Society arranged in cooperation with Israeli organization SparkPro a visit of young Israelis in Kielce. Then, young Kielcers made a return visit to Israel.





# Christian-Jewish Meetings Tikkun/ Mending

Rabbi Sasha Pecaric: – *Judaism with its thoughtful historic memory and its focus on future is religion of the present (...). For example, in Tora there is no reference to the Messiah. In social order, there is only "here and now". Tora is not something in between a human and the God. It is obviously a religious law, but secular law is included in its every facet.* "Tikkun Olam" means a certain social order of the world and 'mending' the existing world in which we live. [1]

Jerzy Maksymiuk: – *We still have a problem with tolerance. That is why I wrote this composition. The impulse was information about destroying Jewish monuments in the country. We must struggle with anti-Semitism, oppose it. It is our duty. By writing this composition, I wanted to express my total identification with harassed people. These incidents provoke my profound anxiety. It should never happen.* [2]

The motto that accompanied 2<sup>nd</sup> Kielce Meetings referred to Judaic, yet wholly universal, humanistic conception of mending the human and the world. Rabbi Sacha Pecaric explained its principles to Kielce inhabitants.

The meeting was inaugurated by the world premiere performance of Jerzy Maksymiuk composition "Heart Lamentation, Kielce In Memoriam", conducted by compositor himself. The composition is dedicated to memory of Kielce Jews and it was inspired by Menorah monument (sculpture initiated and funded by Bogdan Bialek and his family). During an inauguration ceremony of Meetings, we awarded Hana Goldszajd and Dawidek Rubinowicz Prizes for the first time. They were funded by Yaacov Kotlicki, a relative of the first patron – Hana, murdered during the war. The prizes are awarded to teachers and educators for their remarkable engagement into promoting tolerance and openness.



[1]

[2]



In 2012 Hana Goldszajd and Dawidek Rubinowicz Prizes were awarded to Dariusz Stępień from Słowacki High School in Kielce (the main prize), priest Jacek Kopeć – the headmaster of Catholics Schools in Kielce, as well as Bernadeta Mechelewska and Izabela Kaleta from Junior High School in Wola Jachowa (golden distinction).

Jury, consisted of Bogdan Bialek, Yaccov Kotlicki and professor Stanisław Żak, justified their choice as follows: "In recognition for remarkable attitude in educating youth in the spirit of respect for dignity of the human person, irrespective of their religion, origins, position and other differences that occur between people".



[6]



[3]



[4]



[5]

# Christian-Jewish Meetings Tikkun/ Mending

Nun Małgorzata Chmielewska:

*– We like to categorize people: this one is right-wing, that one is left-wing, this one is an Orthodox, and that one is a Jew. If the other person is different from me, it means he cannot do good, because only I am good. We often think like this. I am sometimes pushed into these patterns as well. They call me a left-wing Catholic, although I don't even know what does it mean. Every person can do good, everyone has this opportunity. You just have to listen to Jesus words: "Go, sell what you own, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven". But Jesus was not concerned only about possessions, but about a simple willingness to help and ability to help others. [1]*

Stanisław Krajewski, a Jewish community activist, said in debate with Janusz Poniewierski about John Paul II: *– Often, in environment of Polish Jews and even abroad, John Paul II was called "our pope". Partly, it was due to elements of Polishness that unite us, but also to the scale and significance of the efforts he made towards Catholic-Jewish rapprochement. [2]*

Thanks to the Meetings, inhabitants of Kielce had the opportunity to meet many outstanding people, including prof. Tadeusz Gadacz (whose lecture initiated annual cycle of lectures **"In memoriam Jan Karski"**, funded by the President of Kielce), nun Małgorzata Chmielewska, Wojciech Tochman, Prof. Halina Bortnowska, Konstanty Gebert i Adam Wajrak.







Thanks to cooperation with American Embassy in Poland, in Słowacki High School in Kielce, we carried out workshops for teachers on the subject of Holocaust. Dozens of educators from across the state took part in it. Lectures were delivered by Bogdan Białek, Dorota Krzemionka, PhD and Michał Bilewicz, PhD.

Konstanty Gebert said in debate with Wojciech Tochman and Michał Bilewicz on causes of genocide: – *It is based on the idea that the world would be better without a certain group of people. Let it be Jews. Let it be Tutsi and Hutu. Genociders are moral, for them it is not about murdering for the pleasure of killing. Rather, they take pleasure from the thought of helping to make the world a better place.* [3]

Benjamin Ousley Naseman, Consul for Press and Culture from the United States Consulate General in Krakow: – *I believe that we can teach people tolerance for other religions, cultures, ways of life and even thinking. Then, let democracy do the rest. I think that Jan Karski Society undertakes the enormous task, which can influence youth attitude and behavior in the future.* [4]

Michał Bilewicz: – *Instilling in the majority of society the idea that a certain group is responsible for poverty and problems of that majority is basically very simple, although it is some kind of process. It begins always with dehumanization – presenting the other human being as a creature devoid of human features. This is what Nazis did at the beginning. Their propaganda was depicting Jews as rats.*



# Christian-Jewish Meetings Tikkun/ Mending

Monika Krajewska, who teaches Art classes with elements of Jewish culture in Private Primary Lauder-Morasha School in Warsaw and also conducts workshops on Jewish cut-outs and Hebrew calligraphy. She showed the youth around the Jewish cemetery in Kielce, explaining the meanings of symbols on the gravestones: – *What is written on the gravestones, is commemoration of the merits that were most valued in those people lives. Two most significant and explicit symbols – as they tell about the deceased before the reading of an epitaph – are blessing hands and a pitcher with a bowl.*

Special ceremony took place in Kielce town hall. Israeli Ambassador Zvi Rav-Ner awarded the title of honorary Israeli citizenship to Zygmunt Śliwiński and the Righteous Among The Nations Medal to Marian Bania, which was given posthumously to his mother Zofia.

Mr Marian, as a child, was also helping his mother in hiding Jewish family Rubinek. In the testimony made for Yad Vashem Institute, he recalled: ***"I remember that once German have been sleeping in our house and Izrael Rubinek, hidden in the cellar with his wife, had a fit of coughing. I feigned illness, coughing all night, to diverse the attention of the soldiers. I was so scared that they will hear the voices of people getting out of the cellar. I was aware that we can all be killed. My mom often told me she was proud of me".***







Leon Śliwiński was awarded with the Righteous Among The Nations Medal in 1993. Two years before his parents were awarded as well. In April 1943, Leon Śliwiński heroically led his friend Dawid Friedman out of the ghetto and took him to his family home. – ***I wanted to rescue Dawid from death, because I knew that they are taking people from ghetto to extermination camps and kill them there*** – he recalled during ceremony. Dawid received a new birth certificate in the name of Zygmunt Śliwiński – and the caregivers were introducing him as a cousin from Warsaw. He was treated as a family member with love, warmth and devotion.

Neighbors did not guess the real identity of the boy, who was living with Śliwiński family till liberation in January 1945. After pogrom in Kielce, Dawid Friedman emigrated from Poland to Israel. Only in the 1990s, after years of departure he managed to contact his friend. Welcoming him in the airport, Dawid Friedman held a plate with the name "Zygmunt Śliwiński".

Three weeks after the ceremony, Leon Śliwiński died.

The Meetings became the opportunity to recall Dr Marek Edelman, who died in autumn 2009. His friends were present in the evening commemorating the Doctor: Paula Sawicka, Mirosław Sawicki, Józef Duriasz, and Bogdan Białek, author of the book *A Few Things One Needs to Know about the Doctor (Kilka rzeczy o Doktorze, które trzeba o nim wiedzieć)*.

Paula Sawicka, who took care of Edelman in the end of his life, recalled: – *Recently, more and more often we feel the absence of Marek. There is the absence of his voice in public life. There is the absence of his comments about what is happening around us. This absence is not only my experience, but also his friends.*

Marek Edelman was a political and social activist of Jewish origins. He was one of the leaders of the uprising in Warsaw Ghetto and the Knight of the Order of the White Eagle. Also, he was an outstanding cardiologist. Edelman was cooperating with the Workers' Defense Committee. During martial law he was interned. He took part in the Round Table Talks.

Paula Sawicka is the chairperson of the Open Republic of Poland Association. She was an activist of the democratic opposition. Together with Marek Edelman she wrote a book titled *And there was Love in the Ghetto*.



# Christian-Jewish Meetings Tikkun/ Mending

Witold Bereś, a writer and publicist:

– Bialek's book (pub. "Charaktery", Kielce 2011) contains a few interviews – only one of them with Edelman. But how wonderful are conversations with Paula Sawicka, the person who stood by the Doctor in his last days, when he held her hand dying in her and her husband Mirek's flat on Emilia Plater Street in Warsaw... Beautiful, wise stories go beyond the biography of a leader of Warsaw Ghetto Uprising.

The Meetings ended with inter-religious meditation session, which was attended by Christians, Muslims, Jews and Buddhists. Participants of the session were calling to create a new order and peace based on respect for the dignity of others.

– ***We met in inter-religious dialogue, because the true peace and real freedom require respect for others, for every human being. We came to the place named after Saint Francis to learn respect from each other*** – said Bogdan Bialek. Participants of the meeting called to create a new order and peace based on respect for the dignity of others.



Roshi Maria Moneta-Malewska, a Buddhist master, called for unity in which there is no divisions into "my best, your worst". She believes that to achieve it, we need the spirit of awakening and enlightenment, accessible for every person; the spirit that comes with knowledge about pain, wars and pogroms.



Witold Bereś: – *When, thanks to initiative of Bogdan Bialek, Junior High School in Kielce, at Jasna Street, received the name of Jan Karski, Marek Edelman took part in celebrations. He decided to come to Kielce for the first time since pogrom. He said there: – I had been in Kielce the day after the pogrom. I had seen dead people, blood on the pavements. Since then I have never come here. 50 years passed and I am here again. The time weeded out evil from this city. Kielce is now a different, better city. He inscribed his book And there was Love in Ghetto, to Bialek: "For the person, who changed the face of Kielce".*

[www.polskamasens.pl](http://www.polskamasens.pl)



# Christian-Jewish Meetings Tikkun/ Mending

Jesuit priest Jacek Prusak appealed to people not to kill each other in God's name and not to use religion to justify causing pain to others. – *We should remember that we are all made in the image and likeness of God, and not in this or other religion.*

Father Laurence Freeman OSB, Director of The World Community for Christian Meditation, summing up his predecessors' speeches, used a metaphor. He compared representatives of different religions, present at the meeting, to candles lit from one flame. – *It is not important that some of these candles are lit by Christians, Jews Muslims or Buddhists – what really matters is that they represent all religions.*





*"People of many faiths and no doubt some whose doubts were stronger than their faith – stood around the Jewish cenotaph in the city of Kielce, Poland, surrounded by the Holy Cross Mountains. Bogdan Bialek, a publisher and activist in Jewish-Christian relations, a Catholic from Kielce born after the war, had sponsored the Kielce Menorah, placed slopingly in the sidewalk and only half-visible. Was it sinking into the ground or rising from it? It is not for the dead, Bogdan said, but for the living. (...) It is left to Bogdan and a few like him to bear the memory without being crushed by it. **For the living.** The dead don't need to remember; if we pray for them it is more for ourselves than for them. We must remember what is always easier to forget in order to defy the shame of selective memory and the tragedy of amnesia. But the remembering must be purposeful not nostalgic. Lest it might happen again – and the continued desecration of Jewish cemeteries and anti-Semitic graffiti prove this European virus is not over yet – but also so that we can purify religion itself. Religion provided the categories and even the reasons for these inhumanities" – extract from Fr. Laurence Freeman's memories from Kielce, published in the weekly London newspaper "The Tablet", one of the world's best known Catholic magazines.*



# Philip Bialowitz in Kielce

*Philip Bialowitz: – Around the world I am talking about the fighting spirit of the Jewish nation. I hope that my mission will be a success and along with Bogdan we will create a better world without discrimination and genocide.*

In March, Philip Bialowitz, one of the last living participant of the revolt in Sobibór extermination camp, once again came to Kielce by the special invitation of the Society. During this visit he met, among others, with students from Słowacki and Norwid High Schools in Kielce.

Bialowitz was born in Izbica, small town near Lublin. In the time of the war he was a prisoner of German death camp SS-Sonderkommando Sobibor. Currently, he lives in New York and travels all around the world, sharing his story of war experiences. He emphasized that his travels are due to obligation made by runaways from the camp Sobibór. They promised each other that if they survived, they would tell the truth about the camp and Jewish suffering.

As the Society we concentrate on popularizing of our main goals. Therefore, the role of the teachers is so invaluable. What they do is to create awareness of youth, while raising them and instilling the truth about the world in them. Considering that, during 2<sup>nd</sup> Kielce Meetings workshops for educators on teaching about Holocaust were held.





SS-Sonderkommando Sobibor was a German extermination camp, which was functioning in 1942 – 1943. It was situated in the woods, four kilometers from the village Sobibór, near railway line connecting Chełm and Włodawa. In October 1943 prisoners, among them Białowicz, launched the uprising. Prisoners managed to lure the SS guards into farm buildings and then to eliminate them. Thanks to this, almost six hundred prisoners tried to run away.

This incident was the only act of revolt conducted on such a large scale in all extermination camps. In other camps there were only some individual attempts at escape. The flight from Sobibor ended well only for around 200 people and only few dozens of them survived the war. Nowadays, only few of them are still alive. Philip Białowicz wrote down his memories in a book *Promise at Sobibór*. A film "Escape from Sobibor" is based on the events in the SS-Sonderkommando Sobibor.

In the picture, Philip Białowicz is meeting with students of Słowacki High School in Kielce along with the educators Jacek Jaros and Dariusz Stępień. Both of them teach history, are devoted to the Society and engage their students in its actions. Young people from Słowacki High School were main participants of the International Holocaust Remembrance Day. They took part in the March of Remembrance on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July.



# Conference of Jan Karski schools

Bogdan Białek: – *Despite his incredible merits, Jan Karski is still little known and underestimated in Poland. Only three schools have him as their patron.*

The first conference of schools under the patronage of Jan Karski was held in Kielce at the end of March. Main celebrations of two-day-meeting took place in one of the schools – Karski Integrated Junior High School. Students from two other Karski schools from Łódź and Ruda Śląska came there for a visit.

Ewa Wierzyńska from Museum of Polish History and Bożena Łobzowska, president of The Jan Karski International Institute of Dialogue and Tolerance, provided the participants of conference with a detailed biography of the Courier. Adam Jarubas, Marshal of Świętokrzyskie Province, also took part in the conference.



The most important event of the conference was the Jan Karski Competition organized for the eighth time. Besides the participants of the conference, students from two Junior High Schools in Kielce and a school in Samsonów took part in the competition.



The final meeting of the conference was with a journalist Maciej Wierzyński. He is the author of the book *The Emissary in His Own Words* based on hours of interviews with Karski and published in 2012.

During the celebration of naming Integrated Junior High School in Kielce after Jan Karski in September 2004, Marek Edelman said: – *I had been in Kielce the day after the pogrom. There had been dark times in the city, when human life was despised. I had seen dead people, blood on the pavements. Since then I have never come here. 50 years passed and I am here again. The time weeded out evil from this city. Kielce is now a different, better city. The fact that Jan Karski Junior High School is here, is the best proof. You are lucky that you attend the school under patronage of Karski but you do not live in the times of Karski. (...) You have no idea of the world you are living in. Today it is possible to open the Karski school and you receive the permission of President and City Council. (...) You have an integrated school, in which love and tolerance count. It's an important issue, because you are the hope of this city and the world. Patronage of Karski is not so important for guests or officials, as it is for the city itself. I am so glad when I'm looking at your youth. I will repeat what I have already said. During your lifetime, you will have Poland, as Karski dreamed of just beautiful and equal.*



## Translocation of Zagajski Prayer House

In spring, Bogdan Bialek, the chairman of the Society expressed the initiative of moving Zagajski Prayer House into neighbourhood of Jewish cemetery. Currently, the House is situated in the courtyard of the tenement building in the city center. After the translocation the building will be renovated and expanded. As a result the Place of Memory and Reflection "Beit ha Midrasz" will be created. It will be an educational and cultural center led by the Society. This undertaking is very expensive, therefore along with New Space Arts Foundation, the current owner of the object, we try to obtain finances from Norway Funds. Wojciech Lubawski, the President of Kielce, and Janusz Cedro, Świętokrzyskie Voivodeship Conservator – expressed their support for the realization of the project. Content partner of the project is Foundation for the Preservation of Jewish Heritage.





Beit ha Midrasz is a small building (of ca. 54 square meters) situated at Słowacki Street. It was built as a private house of prayer by a well known Kielce investor Herszel Zagajski in 1922. It had capacity of 80 people. During the war, the building was destroyed by Germans, but it survived. After the war it served as a storehouse. It is worth to mention that despite the ongoing devastation, in the interior original frescos, parts of polychrome and Ezrat Nashim (pol. "babiniec" – separate area for women) survived. In Poland only two such buildings have been preserved until modern times.

On the 10<sup>th</sup> of September, in Zagajski Prayer House, Chairman of the Society, Bogdan Białek and New Space Arts Foundation Director, Tomasz Tworek signed agreement including goals and rules of cooperation in translocation project, in presence of President of Kielce, journalists and Voivodeship Conservator.



Portrait of Herszel Zagajski, painted by Zygmunt Menkes, located in the Kielce History Museum, purchased on the auction in New York.

In the first decades of 20<sup>th</sup> century Herszel Zagajski was one of the biggest investors in Kielce. He was the owner of Wietrznia quarry, producing building materials. Zagajski was also known for his social and philanthropist activities. He was a member of City Council, a founder of nursing home and shelter for Jewish orphans.



# What Poland? What Church?

Priest Adam Boniecki – marian, publicist, commentator, long-term “Tygodnik Powszechny” editor-in-chief. [1]

Fr. Ludwik Wiśniewski, OSB – university chaplain and a longstanding activist of the anti-communist opposition. [2]

Fr. Tomasz Dostatni, OSB – former correspondent and Polish Catholic News Agency (KAI) in Czech Republic, committed to ecumenical movement. [2]

It is a cycle inaugurated in spring, which was inspired by Słowacki's question “Poland, but what Poland?” and Adam Michnik's statement: “What Poland will be, depends on what Polish Roman Catholic Church is”. Last year, the cycle covered three meetings with distinguished representatives of Polish Church – priests Adam Boniecki, Ludwik Wiśniewski, Tomasz Dostatni and Waław Hryniewicz.

The guest of the first meeting was priest Boniecki. He discussed the media ban imposed by the authorities of Congregation of Marian Fathers. On the one hand, he admitted he does not feel the need to protest, as possibly the rhetorics of his statement was not sufficiently clear and the task of educating a conscious, tolerant and critical Catholic Intelligentsia, was not yet fulfilled by him and the environment of “Tygodnik Powszechny”. On the other hand, he called himself “a not-finished-off victim of inquisition” and quoted Jacek Kuroń's words: “If you want everyone to like you, join a wind band”.

He was also convincing that we are the witnesses of changes in Catholic Church, which is slowly beginning to withdraw from the role of “fortress”. Now it is opening for people who are mature enough to become religious out of their own choices and not out of social constraints. The guest also proposed a few provocative theses on ostensibility and dispersion of Catholic elites, infantilism which manifests itself in overestimated faith in authority, and also on slowly approaching end of “half-hearted faith”. He also emphasized that a perfect example of Christian, as Jesus understood it, has not much in common with the present one, adding that the Holy Church is full of sinners.

The next event of the cycle was meetings with Dominicans Ludwik Wiśniewski, Tomasz Dostatni and Professor Bożena Szaynok.



[1]



[2]



Guests were talking about problems of contemporary Church: its lack of openness, divisions, triumphalism, "political sectarianism", distrust, dislike for the dialogue with other religions, xenophobia and hypocrisy.

Unanimously, they agreed that "the face of Church is not that of the Gospel". Father Dostatni noticed that divisions within the Church are the legacy of Communism, which caused that we are no longer able to "differ beautifully". He added that he is not an optimist, considering what happens in his environment. Nevertheless, Prof. Bożena Szaynok expressed her optimistic view that despite various negative occurrences in the Church, this institution still seems to her "a space of freedom". Father Wiśniewski commented on his famous letter to the Apostolic Nuncio, published two years before in a newspaper "Gazeta Wyborcza". He denied that he is against the existence of Radio Maryja and he can see its positive role in popularization of religious subjects and gathering listeners for common prayer. Fr. Wiśniewski admitted that his dream is to start a general debate about the role and functioning of Catholic Church among different people with different points of view. He ended with an appeal: "Be wise as serpents and innocent as doves".

Priest Hryniewicz, OMI: Sectarian religiosity is dangerous also in Poland nowadays, where some people degrade and exclude others – is something very bad. What priest Pietkun said is true: manifestation of faith in processions with retinues feretories and celebrations is one thing, another is that faith dwells in the human heart. Faith is something that opens up, shapes us, and allows us to better understand many human matters. I think we should learn religiosity which unite, heal and join, but does not try to divide, disqualify, exclude people from God's friendship nor confines us to belief that we are the only are privileged. These are first thoughts coming to my mind, when we talk about the contrast between faith and religiosity. Perhaps God does not care about religion alone...

Professor Bożena Szaynok – historian from University of Wrocław, author of many works about Polish-Jewish relations, participant of Father Wiśniewski's chaplaincy and author of the book: *Chaplain. Interviews with Father Ludwik Wiśniewski*. [2]

Priest Wacław Hryniewicz, OMI is a theologian, ecumenist, professor emeritus of the John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin (KUL). The former Consultor of Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity, member of Joint International Commission for Theological Dialogue between the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church, as well as of the committee preparing document "Charta Oecumenica". [3]



# The March of Remembrance and Reconciliation

*Bogdan Białek: – We don't want to veil the crime of pogrom by recalling the Righteous. While recalling the pogrom, we shall not forget the Righteous and while recalling the Righteous we shall not forget the pogrom.*

The Marches of Remembrance and Reconciliation play a special role in the activity of Society. The annual march passes through Kielce streets on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July on the anniversary of 1946 pogrom of Jews in Kielce. The memorial event is to remind of the tragic past but also symbolizes reconciliation. The first March organized by the Society took place in 2005. Earlier events were private initiatives of Bogdan Białek and pastor Junusz Daszuta. Last year chairmans of the Kiełtzer Societies in Israel and New York – Yaccov Kotlicki and Manny Bekier – have joined the march for the first time.

Włodzimierz Kac, chairman of the Jewish community in Katowice, and representatives of Jewish society in Warsaw: Anna Drabik (Association "Children of the Holocaust") and Jan Jagielski (Jewish Historical Institute) also came to Kielce for this special occasion. The Social-Cultural Association of Jews in Poland was represented by Henryk Albert. Rabbi Boaz Pash from Cracow, and Rabbi Jehoshua Ellis from Katowice, Zvi Rav-Ner, Israeli Ambassador to Poland and Benjamin R. Ousley Naseman, U.S. Consul for Press and Culture, joined the March as well. A special letter addressed to participants of that ceremony had been written by Jacek Michałowski, Presidential Chancellery Chief in Poland.

The ceremony was opened by Bogdan Białek, the chairman of the Society nearby Menorah monument. He recalled tragic history of Kielce Jews and emphasized that what is important is the memory of the community that no longer exists. Afterwards, Wojciech Lubawski, the President of Kielce spoke. Actor Józef Duriasz read occasional poems and then Jews, Muslims and Christians prayed together. The candles were lit and all participants went nearby, next to the old Synagogue building.

Nearby, there is a monument dedicated to the Righteous Among the Nations – people who risked their lives to rescue Jews during World War II. New plaques with names of the heroes were unveiled: Honorata and Wojciech Mucha from Bronów, Maria and Andrzej Gałęziowski and Zofia Bania from Włochy, near Pińczów as well as Leon Śliwiński from Kielce. All of them are deceased.



Israeli Ambassador Zvi Rav-Ner and Wanda Śliwińska (the widow of Leon Śliwiński) with daughters.

Short prayer was said by Father Wiesław Dawidowski, co-chairman of Polish Council of Christians and Jews, after which the choir of Kielce University of Technology (Politechnika Świętokrzyska) sang the national anthems of Poland and Israel. Then, the chairman of the Society awarded pastor Janusz Daszuta and Włodzimierz Kac with Vir Bonus medals.

Vir Bonus and Femina Bona are the honorary designations awarded to people who contribute to the realization of the Society's aims with their social activity, achievements, attitude and steadfastness. The honored people receive memorial medals.





# The March of Remembrance and Reconciliation

Bogdan Białek: – Today we all humbly bow our heads to the victims of that murder, thus demonstrating our memory and objection to disdain and hatred. The 4<sup>th</sup> of July 1946 was one of the saddest days in history of Kielce and in Polish-Jewish history. Kielce inhabitants killed 42 people with cruelty, only because they were Jewish. Pogrom in Kielce for many decades covered our city with shame.

The March went then for a prayer near the tenement building at 9 Planty Street. 66 years ago, it was a scene of cruel crime on Jews. Along the building, there were placed 42 chairs with surnames of the people murdered in 1946. Students of Słowacki High School were standing next to them. One of the students explained to the assembled why young people should now remember about the tragic events from distant past.

Manny Bekier: – *Polish-Jewish reconciliation cannot be based on polite, expedient ambiguity. It must be built on a foundation of facing our shared history with honesty. It must arise out of an acknowledgment of unpleasant and shameful historical truths. We are heartened by the many positive efforts from the highest Polish government and Kielce officials, and they are greatly appreciated.*

*I would like to acknowledge the mayor of Kielce, for his courage, his sincerity in ensuring that we remember and we commemorate. In particular, I would like to mention the Jan Karski Society, and the tremendous energy and commitment of its president, Bogdan Białek, a remarkable individual that I am proud to call my friend. We, the new generation of the Jewish descendants from Kielce, thank you for your dedication, your courage, and your continuing efforts in the recognition of the Jewish community that once thrived in Kielce.*

In the picture (standing, from left to right): Yaacov Kotlicki, Bogdan Białek, Manny Bekier, and Andrzej Białek.





# 70 Anniversary of Ghetto Extermination

Bogdan Bialek: – *What happened here seventy years ago was not “liquidation” or “extermination” of ghetto. It was a terrible, cruel massacre, which we cannot even imagine and we try to forget.*

In August 2012, 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of ghetto extermination in Kielce passed. Almost 20,000 imprisoned Jews had been murdered by Germans in Treblinka death camp between 20 and 24 of August 1942. Only 500 of them survived the war. Commemoration of anniversary of this tragic events, organized by the Society, lasted for almost two months. Mainly, there were educational activities addressed to Kielce inhabitants, especially to the youth. These activities involved meeting with young Israelis, historical competitions for students, the performance “Post Office” prepared by students of Dobra Chata Center, exhibition of Ewa Trafna’s works, a monodrama “Yosl Rakocer talks to God” by Sławomir Holland and a concert prepared by artists from Jewish Theatre “Majne sztejtele Kielce”.

Stefan Zablocki – one of the last living prisoners of ghetto, who now lives in Norway – was a special guest of 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

At Kielce main square was raised a fence that imitated the ghetto fence. On this fence copies of German documents concerning the ghetto, photographs and information about “a Jewish residential district” were displayed. The installation caught the attention of many Kielce inhabitants. It was placed close to the place where once was the gate to “small ghetto”.

Ghetto in Kielce was established by the German governor of the city on 31<sup>st</sup> March, 1941. Conditions of living there were terrible, also due to extreme overcrowding, namely even ten people could live together in one room. Hunger afflicted the ghetto more than any other hardship. Officially, the food ration per person amounted to just 130 grams of bread every two days – less than a quarter of loaf. In reality, it was even worse. The food shortage was becoming severe, as the German ensured that there was no contact between the ghetto and Polish people.

People exhausted by hunger were prone to diseases. Moreover they were forced to inhuman, grueling work. During 17 months of ghetto existence, about 4,000 people died there. The famine was so sore that attempts were made to climb over the ghetto fence to find even the morsel of food.





Stefan Zablocki was born in 1930. He was imprisoned in ghetto along with his parents. He survived "selection" in August 1942. In May next year he miraculously survived execution of 43 children because he escaped with two friends at the very last minute. Murdered children aged few months to 13 years. Their grave is situated in the Jewish cemetery in Kielce. Stefan Zablocki was a prisoner of Auschwitz and Braunschweig camps. Now he lives in Malmö: – *I wanted to thank Bogdan Bialek for his invitation to Kielce, although it was not easy for me to come here. Jan Karski Society does a good job and this is what convinced me. I wanted to say that this commemoration is not about hatred, but to prevent a recurrence of such events. We should never be passive when a person is being harmed. We felt very lonely when we were murdered and the world remained silent. I have been meeting with young people for years. I tell them that nobody should be judged by their group affiliation. And about the important role of democracy, tolerance and humanism in our lives.*

Among the commemoration events was the premiere of "Post Office" by Rabindranath Tagore, performed by students from "Dobra Chata" in Kielce. The play was directed by Jolanta Bialek and adapted by Bohdan Gumowski and Artur Hofman (chairman of the Social-Cultural Association of Jews). The play of Hindu Nobel Prize laureate was the last performance prepared by the children brought up in Janusz Korczak's Orphanage in Warsaw Ghetto. The premiere took place on the 18<sup>th</sup> of July 1942, a few days before extermination. It was used to familiarize children with death – as an effort to make it something close and deprive it of fear and strangeness. The invitation issued for the premiere 70 years ago said: – *"Something more then text – as it is atmosphere; more then emotions – as it is experience; something more then actors – as they are children".*

Stefan Zablocki: – *Famine was horrible. I was a teenager but I stopped developing physically. I was 15 years old and only 128 centimeters tall, 25 kilograms heavy.*

Zablocki risked his life few times by going through the ghetto fence in order to find something to eat on the other side. As he emphasizes, Poles never did any harm to him, but he recalls one event:

*Once, when I was outside the ghetto, two Polish boys on bicycles saw me. One of them knew me and started screaming: "Jewy, Jewy". I felt that end was near. Luckily, I jumped into a gate and run away. It saved me.*



# 70 Anniversary of Ghetto Extermination

The 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Ghetto Extermination was held under the honorary patronage of Prof. Władysław Bartoszewski. This task was completed due to donation made by Kielce City Hall.

The Association Children of the Holocaust invited young Kielce inhabitants to perform the play Jewish Theatre in Warsaw. On the audience there were also people, who still remember Old Doctor, including Janina Różecka, a nurse who had been visiting children brought by Korczak in the ghetto.

"Following the traces of Jewish neighbors" and "I am not indifferent..." In memory of my peers Hanka and Dawidek" – these are History Competitions addressed to young people. Both of them have caught the attention of many students, even those from outside the Świętokrzyski region. About 80 projects were sent: essays, drawings, multimedia presentations and even one musical composition.





[1]



[2]

[1] In presences of rabbis from Cracow and Warsaw, the plaque commemorating 30 pregnant women executed nearby by Germans in 1942 was unveiled at the building of former synagogue.

[2] Bogdan Bialek and Stefan Zablocki during the meeting with Kielce inhabitants in Voivodeship Cultural Center.

[3] History Competition winners.



[3]



# Adam le'Adam

At the end of September, volunteers from Adam le'Adam Society in Jerusalem came to Kielce. During the Jewish holiday of Sukkot (Feast of Booths), in the afternoons, they were meeting inhabitants of the city in the shopping mall Galeria Echo, where traditional, symbolic sukkah was constructed. Inside, Israeli volunteers were presenting memories of Kielce Jews, who lived now in Israel as well as biblical characters and Jewish traditions of Sukkot. They were also talking about modern Israel. In the mornings, they were meeting Polish students in their high schools.

## Reflections of volunteers visiting Kielce:

*– The warm welcome by the people from Jan Kariski Society and by people we met during that week, didn't give us an opportunity to stay distant – we immediately engaged.*

*– The first time I heard about Kielce was six months before I arrived there. I spent the summer listening to and documenting stories from Kielce – not all of them were pleasant. I had an impression that this is a tough place for a Jew to be in. I came to Kielce and found a beautiful city with beautiful, warm and welcoming people.*



*– I came to Kielce with fear and anxiety;  
this is how I was raised as a young Jewish  
girl living in Israel. Meeting with the people  
of Kielce made me fear less.*





## Different, yet the same



In November, from the initiative of the Society, the first meeting of the cycle "Different, yet the same" took place in Jedwabne. This meeting was dedicated to Islamic culture.

Inhabitants of Jedwabne had the opportunity to meet with Chechens living in Poland and sheikh Achmed Saramowicz. The participants were preparing together Caucasian delicacies: pancakes "shuray tchaepelgish", eaten in that part of the world, and halva.

The meeting in Jedwabne ended with Chechen dance show and exhibition of photos by Marek Maliszewski "In the Middle of the Road...", which shows Chechens living in Łomża.





## Activity of Bogdan Białek

1. An appeal to President of Poland to establish "The Day of Righteous" (along with Anna Drabik, chairwoman of "Association Children of the Holocaust" in Poland and Agnieszka Rudzińska, director of the Museum of the History of Polish Jews).
2. The letter, published in regional edition of "Gazeta Wyborcza", defending Henryk Pawelec a.k.a. "Andrzej".
3. The award from the Marshal of Świętokrzyskie Voivodeship – Świętokrzyskie Victoria, in the category "Personality" [1].
4. Powers of attorney endowed by the Society of Israel-Poland Friendship. The powers encompass commemoration of the victims of German occupation, especially Jews, in years 1939 – 1945.
5. An Appeal to Minister of Justice and Public Prosecutor General to work against anti-Semitism and hate speech in the Internet. It was published in "Tygodnik Powszechny".
6. Protest addressed to Mazowieckie Voivode, against the performance of musical "Korczak" in a former extermination camp in Treblinka. In the result, the performance was not staged.
7. Address to the participants of the March of Life delivered at the Menorah monument. It was the meeting of Poles, Jews and Germans (including the relatives of Nazi murderers) [2].
8. The speech "Kielce Way: Spirituality, Dialogue, Reconciliation" which took place at the opening of Museum of Cultural Dialogue in Kielce [4].
9. Visit of the newly elected USA Consul Ellen Germain and her deputy Brett Dworak in the headquarter of Society [5].
10. Publications: "The Order from God" (tribute to Jan Karski), "Tygodnik Powszechny" (no. 24/2012); "The Language determines consciousness", (on inappropriate use of the word "liquidation" to describe the extermination of ghettos), "Tygodnik Powszechny" (no. 33/2012), an interview in "Przekrój" (31/2012) about Polish – Jewish dialogue, titled "You must become a witness".
11. Cooperation agreement between the Society and the Auschwitz Jewish Center.
12. Debate after a screening of "Pokłosie" movie with Paula Sawicka, Michał Bilewicz, Zuzanna Radzik, Krzysztof Dorosz, Dariusz Jabłoński (movie producer) [3].



[1]



[2]



[3]

# Activity of Bogdan Białek



[4]



[5]



[6]

13. The speech delivered on the site of the former death camp Majdanek, during a promotional event for photography album of works by Leszek Mądzik, titled Majdanek [6].
14. Establishing cooperation with Regina Koenigstein from Brasil (a relative of Hana Goldszajd) in connection with her project "The Letters from the Ghetto: Rereading with Hanka to Never Forget". It is a multidisciplinary project, based on the book *Letters from Ghetto* published by the Society, which aims at introduction of ethical concepts into the curriculum of High Schools in Sao Paulo, Brazil and Toronto, Canada.
15. The meeting with American participants of the program prepared by the Auschwitz Jewish Center.
16. The promotional event for the book *A Few Things One Needs to Know about the Doctor* in Center of Jewish Culture in Cracow.
17. The speech on the Israeli-Polish Mental Health Association Conference in Tel Awiw.
18. The address on The Festival of Life in Oświęcim.
19. Participation in the panel at the Inauguration of the Centre for Thought of John Paul II in Warsaw.
20. The debate "Open Church" in Łagiewniki, organized by "Tygodnik Powszechny" Clubs.
21. The speech on "A Common Joy of the Torah" in Sanctuary of St. Andrzej Bobola in Warsaw.
22. Lecture for the Świętokrzyskie guides (from Polish Tourist and Sightseeing Society) and the tour on the Jewish traces in Kielce.
23. The meeting with "Wieczernik", the Community of Evangelic Faith.
24. Participation in the premiere of a play about Jan Karski in Ruda Śląska.
25. Meetings with Israeli groups on the Jewish Cemetery in Kielce.

Preliminary  
visualization of the  
Place of Memory  
and Reflection  
“Beit ha Midrasz”  
by architect  
Wojciech Kurzeja





## Jewish Cemetery in Kielce

The Jewish Cemetery is under the exclusive care of the Jan Karski Society in Kielce. The order is kept by volunteers, among them students of Słowacki High School and Technical Construction College in Kielce. All planned works (maintenance and cleaning works) should be consulted with Mr Bogdan Białek, the representative of the Jewish Community in Katowice, responsible for the Jewish Cemetery in Kielce (phone 41 343 28 40).

The key to the main gate of the cemetery could be received from Michał, phone number 783 084 183, and Dorota, phone number 782 793 183.

A tour guide recommended by the Jan Karski Society for tours of the cemetery and Kielce sites of remembrance related to the history of Kielce Jews is Monika Łesyszak (phone 668 201 759). The tour guide speaks English and German.

Any donations for cemetery maintenance (cleaning works, green maintenance etc.) would be most appreciated. Please direct your funds to the bank account stated below.

*"Yedioth Achronot" (July, 6<sup>th</sup> 2010)*



*"For the memory of the murdered"*

*"Yesterday in Kielce, after 64 years, a resored tombstone was unveiled to commemorate the victims of the pogrom that happened in the city (...). The speakers in the ceremony were, among others, Yaacov Kotlicki from Israel and Bogdan Bialek from Poland – the initiators of the tombstone designed by the artist Marek Cecula."*



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