

WHAT HAPPENED IN THE YEAR 2013

Jan Karski Society



'Jan Karski – the man of freedom'



'What happened in Kielce after World War II?
– a debate on the anniversary of Pogrom'



Sukkot Shalom – the Israelis celebrate in Kielce

Jaka
Polska?
Jaki
Kościół?

'What Poland? what Church?' We were visited by
priest Jacek Prusak, priest Romuald Jakub Weksler-
Waszkinel and Zbigniew Nosowski among others



Commemoration of children shot in 1943

3rd Kielce Christian-Jewish Meetings 'Szema/Listen'



'Readings with Hanka' –
an international
educational programme



KIELCE
8-13 LISTOPADA
2013



Freedom and Peace
Kielce 8–13 November 2013

The most important events of the year 2013

15-22 March – 3rd Kielce Christian-Jewish Meetings 'Szema/Listen'.



(Menorah of Friendship, Hana Goldszajd and Dawidek Rubinowicz awards ceremony, debates of adherents of Judaism and Christianity, artistic and cultural events).

'Kielce Christian-Jewish Meetings is a unique and exceptional event in the whole country' – Paweł Śpiwak, director of Jewish Historical Institute.

23 May – Celebration of the 70th anniversary of the shooting of Jewish children.



'I would like to address all of you, who today are celebrating the memory of children killed 70 years ago. Promise yourself: I will fight for it never to happen again' – Stefan Zabłocki, a doomed-to-be victim of that crime.

4 July – 67th anniversary of the Kielce Pogrom.



'What happened in Kielce after World War II?' – a debate of historians and members of the Polish-Jewish Association of Mental Health; awarding medals Righteous Among the Nations, Vir Bonus as well as the March of Memory and Reconciliation.

'Ideally, remembering about the Pogrom should be concentrating primarily on the discussion about the victims' suffering and then about providing explanations of why the Pogrom happened' – Professor Bożena Saynok, historian conducting research on the Pogrom.

**August – opening of an international educational programme
'Letters from the ghetto: readings with Hanka so as never to forget.'**

The programme, based on a book entitled 'Letters from Ghetto' published by the Jan Karski Society, was implemented in Brazil, Canada and India.



'Referring to the experiences of Hanka we want to shape and develop respect and tolerance towards others among young people'
– Regina Armentano, Brazil.

18 – 21 September – Sukkot at Korona Shopping Mall



Meetings of young Israelis with Kielce citizens in a shopping mall and with Kielce students at secondary schools.

'When I return to Israel, I will have nice memories and positive comments of my stay in Kielce. What was important for me was the fact that I did not participate in speeches but in a unique and enriching dialogue' – Raaya, a student from Israel.

8 – 13 November – Freedom and Peace Festival

(debates of intellectuals and followers of different religions, artistic and cultural events)



'Through this Festival we want to show that the Independence Day can be a real feast not just a solemn celebration. We do not want it to look like it does in Warsaw, where it is an opportunity for brawling, violence and hatred' – Bogdan Białek, president of the Jan Karski Society.

December – a literary contest for secondary school students entitled 'Karski's Bench'. Winners to be selected in September 2014.



Additionally: subsequent meetings as part of the series entitled 'What Poland? What Church?' initiated in 2012.

'From the perspective of a Jew – Jesus who was a Jew seemed much closer to me' – Priest Romuald Jakub Weksler-Waszkineł.



International Holocaust Remembrance Day

Menorah Monument is dedicated to the memory of 20,000 Jews of Kielce murdered by the Germans. The monument was erected on the initiative of the Bialek family, who also sponsored its construction. The monument was unveiled on 26 August 2007, on the 65th anniversary of the destruction of the Kielce Ghetto. Next to the Menorah, there is a plaque commemorating the Ghetto victims with inscriptions in Polish, Yiddish and English.

27 January

On the International Holocaust Remembrance Day, the members of the Jan Karski Society met in front of the Menorah to pay tribute to the victims of genocide.

‘It is not important how many of us are here today to celebrate this day. Even if there was a handful of people it is important to show our opposition to what happened then. We want to give a sign that we remember about those terrible events and the suffering of the victims’, said Bogdan Białek, President of the Jan Karski Society.

Then, people prayed together for the Holocaust victims. Psalm 23 ‘The Lord is my Shepherd’ was sung, followed by the prayer for the dead, ‘the shot, the killed at gas chambers, the tormented, the starved and the tortured’ and those murdered at concentration camps. A prayer of a deported Jew of an unknown name and the words of a John Paul II prayer at the Wailing Wall were recalled.

In 2005 the United Nations General Assembly established 27 January, the day of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau, the largest Nazi death camp, as International Holocaust Remembrance Day.



15–22 marca

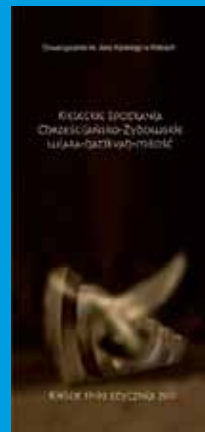
3rd Kielce Christian-Jewish Meetings were held under the cover name ‘Szema/Listen’. More than 1,000 people participated in various events lasting for an entire week, including debates, workshops and artistic performances.

‘Christian-Jewish Meetings are in fact interpersonal encounters. For the rest of my life I will remember an elderly woman leaving a meeting with Rabbi Sacha Pecaric, which was organized by our society in collaboration with the Polish Episcopal Conference for Nationwide Celebration of the 9th Day of Judaism. The woman, holding in her hand a brochure issued by the Polish Council of Christians and Jews entitled ‘Catholic Church on Its Jewish Roots’, asked me ‘Sir, why was this concealed from us?...’ I realized then that the people of Kielce wanted to learn about Judaism and Jews but did not have much opportunity and many sources. The Christian-Jewish Meetings give such an opportunity to them’, said Bogdan Białek during the inauguration of this year’s Meetings.



3rd Kielce Christian-Jewish Meetings

The Kielce Christian-Jewish Meetings are a regular event organized in Kielce since 2011 by the Jan Karski Society. It is an initiative aimed primarily at young people, educators, teachers, catechists and priests. The first Meetings were organized under the cover name ‘Faith – Hatikwah – Hope’. In 2012 the theme of the Meetings was ‘Tikkun’, which means ‘Repairing’.



3rd Kielce Christian-Jewish Meetings



Concert 'Songs of Soul' and prizes 'Menorah of Friendship'

Then, together with Włodzimierz Kac, president of the Jewish Religious Community in Katowice, Bogdan Białek awarded the prizes 'Menorah of Friendship' in recognition of journalistic work with specific regard to works devoted to saving Jewish communities from oblivion. The prizes were presented to two well-known journalists from Kielce, Jadwiga Karolczak and Magdalena Smożewska-Wójcikiewicz.

The next part of the meeting was devoted to a unique concert of outstanding musicians from Kielce, Cracow and Mielec: Gertruda Szymańska (percussion), Michał Braszak (double-bass), Rafał Gęborek (trumpet) and Witold Góral (guitars).

'While arranging ancient songs I could meet many wonderful people. They were Christians living in Kielce, Catholics, Protestants and the followers of the Orthodox rite but also the followers of Judaism from Warsaw and Polish Muslims or Tatars from Kruszyniany in the Podlaskie Region. Working on this project has turned out to be an unusual adventure for us. Thanks to beautiful, several-hundred-year old songs we were able to dwell in time and ponder over the significance and unity of musical and religious traditions of the Great World Religions', said Agnieszka Kowalczyk, a singer and the leader of this artistic enterprise.



On the second day of the Meetings, an awards ceremony was held at Stefan Żeromski theatre. The patrons of the ceremony were Hanna Goldszajd and Dawidek Rubinowicz, young Jews from Kielce and victims of the Holocaust. The prizes were awarded to teachers from Kielce, Dorota Batóg from K.I. Gałczyński Secondary School and Grażyna Pietrzyk from Vocational Schools no. 1, and presented by their founder Yaacov Kotlicki, president of the Kielce Jews Society in Israel and cousin of Hana Goldszajd. 'I am very happy to be here with you today, at this theatre in Kielce which was visited by my parents before the war', he said during the celebration.

Hana Goldszajd and Dawidek Rubinowicz prizes were awarded by the jury comprising Bogdan Białek, Yaacov Kotlicki and Professor Stanisław Żak.

After the ceremony, the theatre stage was taken over by Theatre 21 with its actors with Down's syndrome and also autism sufferers. Their performance entitled 'Portrait' was a compilation of actor's improvisations inspired by the pictures and the text of the book entitled 'Stormy Night' by Michele Lemieux. The actors poignantly spoke about their thoughts and dreams, sharing their fears and anxieties with the audience.



3rd Kielce Christian-Jewish Meetings



The next event of that day was the official closing of a photographic exhibition 'European Roma' by Piotr Wójcik, presented since 1 March at the Museum of Kielce Countryside, the Laszczyk's Manor House, and documenting the life of Roma in Europe. The exhibition was organized prior to this year's Christian-Jewish Meetings. During the closing event, a concert of Józef Merstein-Jochymczyk, a bard of Rom music, was held.



On the next day of the Meetings, at the Cultures Dialogue Museum, a branch of the National Museum, an opening of the exhibition entitled 'Synagogues and Cemeteries of South-East Poland' was organized by the Jewish Historical Institute. The photographs of synagogues, cemeteries and ohels from several dozen towns were presented. The authors of the photographs, Gunter Kuhn, pastor, and his wife, Gerda, presented the results of several years of searching for the traces of Jewish culture in South-East Poland.

The closing of the exhibition was accompanied by a lecture of Professor Tadeusz Sławek, a translator, philosopher and musician. The lecture, which was related to the motto of the Meetings, was financed by the Mayor of Kielce, Wojciech Lubawski, under the project entitled 'In Memoriam to Jan Karski'. The first lecture of the series was given by professor Tadeusz Gadacz during the Meetings in 2012.

'Cracow Reads the Bible in Kielce'

The next event of the Meetings was a debate with Leon Knabit, a Benedictine from the Tyniec Abbey and its former prior, and Boaz Pash, a former chief rabbi of Cracow. The debate took place in the spacious Palace of Cracow Bishops in Kielce, currently the seat of the National Museum in Kielce.

'We listened to the words from Old and New Testament in which there is this calling – 'Listen/Szema', said Bogdan Białek referring to the words of a prayer read by Bohdan Gumowski.

On the same day in the Secondary School no. 9 and Vocational Schools no.1 a workshop for students with Piotr Sikora and Grzegorz Jankowicz, journalists from 'Tygodnik Powszechny', took place.



Rabbi Boaz Pasch: 'The word 'szma/szema' in fact does not mean 'listen' but something else. It means 'obey!' – so listen but do what God tells you to do. 'Szma' is a call – 'Listen Israel!', wait for a list of commandments which will soon appear. But to listen, to be passive, is not enough. There is no metaphor here. 'Listen' means an activity, action, doing something – this is the real faith. When God says to the man 'Listen!' He most of all expects him to do what he is told.



Fr. Leon Knabit: 'In Polish, the word 'listen' develops in different shades of what the rabbi spoke about. First is 'hear' – it is important to hear first.

People usually have good hearing but they don't listen at all. Then, there is 'listen' – which means try to understand the sense of what has been said. Then, finally, there is 'Listen and follow' – put into practice and follow the words you have heard.

3rd Kielce Christian-Jewish Meetings



'Extermination is this kind of experience that makes us validly ask the question: Does God really exist?', said Bogdan Białek at the beginning of a meeting with rabbi Stas Wojciechowicz, priest Manfred Deselers and journalist Krzysztof Dorosz.

'Does Faith Today Make Sense?' – a debate in a Franciscan Monastery.

'Does faith today make sense? What happened in the 20th century overshadowed everything and everyone, irrespective of the fact whether we heard or knew about it. What happened was the Extermination, which changed everything. However, we often live as if it hadn't happened, as if it didn't concern us. Is this the right thing? Isn't the Extermination this kind of human experience that forces us to pose a question: 'Does God really exist?', said Bogdan Białek.

Next, Bohdan Gumowski read a fragment of the book by Elie Wiesel entitled 'Night', which is a shocking account of his stay in Auschwitz-Birkenau. Describing how together with other prisoners he was forced to watch Nazis bestially murder a small boy, the author asks himself a question: 'Is there God?'. Then spoke Stas Wojciechowicz from a progressive Jewish Religious Commune in Warsaw, who said that the Extermination in the history of Jews was not the only experience of incredible suffering, however, it was also its greatest manifestation.

According to priest Manfred Deselers, a member of the International Auschwitz Committee, in the face of the Extermination the question of where is God will always be valid as it is connected with hope that those who die will be provided by God with a new dwelling. 'The belief that God created the man in His own image makes it possible to trust in God. In my opinion, we should also ask ourselves what we do with our calling', said the German priest.

'The belief in God always existed in situations of extermination. In such circumstances you should not accuse God but the man who committed a crime. God created the man and gave him free will. That is why, sometimes, He keeps himself in the background and trusts that the man converts to the good', explained rabbi Wojciechowicz.



From the left: Bogdan Białek, Krzysztof Dorosz, Stas Wojciechowicz, priest Manfred Deselers

According to Krzysztof Dorosz, a Calvinist journalist, the question ‘Where was God?’, asked by Wiesel, has been stirring the minds and conscience of people, including many Christians and Jews, for many years. ‘I think that the question should be: ‘Where was the man then?’. In my opinion, we, Christians, should learn from Jews. The question concerning the cause of the Extermination is about the suffering of a believer and raises doubts that disturb him. ‘Why, God, do you allow this suffering to happen?’, we ask. Such questions accompany people throughout their entire lives and have been asked since the beginning of the world. The Holocaust was a multiplication of the suffering of the man who does not agree with injustice and suffering of innocent people’, said Krzysztof Dorosz.

Meeting with journalist Piotr Mucharski and workshops for teachers.

The editor-in-chief of ‘Tygodnik Powszechny’, Piotr Mucharski, spoke about the changes that took place in Poland in the last 20 years and their impact on the Polish intelligentsia as well as the role of ‘Tygodnik Powszechny’ in public debate. The meeting was held under the series of meetings called ‘What Poland? What Church?’.

In the C.K. Norwid Secondary School no. 9 in Kielce, a conference for teachers called ‘Teaching about the Extermination with the focus on the local history. From the experience of the evil to doing good’ was organized. The participants listened to lectures delivered by professor Olaf Żylicz and Marek Drogosz, PhD, from SWPS University of Social Sciences and Humanities in Warsaw, and Dorota Krzemionka, PhD, from the Jagiellonian University.

Meeting with professor Paweł Śpiewak

The attitude of Judaism towards the Holocaust was the topic of a lecture delivered by professor Paweł Śpiewak, director of the Jewish Historical Institute, in the Regional Public Library in Kielce. This was the last event of the 3rd Kielce Christian-Jewish Meetings.

‘The relation of Judaism towards the Extermination is a key issue. First of all, it provides an answer to the question of whether Holocaust was a unique experience from the point of view of Judaism and, secondly, whether the Extermination had any sense from the point of the divine protection over the world. The Bible says that whatever happens it happens because this is the God’s plan. Therefore, can an event such as the Extermination be part of God’s economy of Salvation, Divine Providence?’, pondered the director of the Jewish Historical Institute.

This year, during the Meetings, we were collecting donations for a hospice built by Caritas charity organization in Kielce.



Meeting with Piotr Mucharski



Workshop with Olaf Żylicz



In a talk with the Catholic Information Agency, professor Paweł Śpiewak referred to the idea of the Christian-Jewish Meetings organized by the Jan KarSKI Society, describing them as ‘a unique event in the entire country’. ‘Such things never happened in the history of Poland. Jews could never talk with Christians and there never were so many Poles interested in Jewish civilization and culture. The organizers should be thanked for their excellent work’.

‘Lamentations of the Heart. To Kielce in memoriam’



From the left: Ewa Piasecka and Jerzy Maksymiuk, Kielce, 4 July, 2013

16 May

The work ‘Lamentations of the Hearts’ by Jerzy Maksymiuk was inspired by the fate of the Kielce Menorah. It was conducted by the composer himself to conclude the celebrations of the 70th anniversary of the uprising in the Warsaw Ghetto. The concert took place on 16 May in the Museum of the History of Polish Jews. On 16 May, 1943, German soldiers blew up the so-called Great Synagogue. The event is now considered a symbolic end of the uprising.

Several weeks after the Menorah, a monument dedicated to 20,000 Kielce Jews killed by Germans, had been unveiled (26 August, 2007), it was damaged. Some stickers with the slogan ‘White power’ appeared and a remembrance tree planted nearby was uprooted. The hooligans responsible for this act also tried to demolish an information plate erected near the monument. In 2011, the Menorah was demolished again. Although the damages were not significant and were promptly repaired by the employees of the Świętokrzyski Voivodeship office, the information spread by the media reached Jerzy Maksymiuk. The composer decided to write a piece of music to commemorate persecuted Jews.

‘For me, it was a very sad situation’, said the founder of the monument and the president of the Jan Karski Society, Bogdan Białek, ‘but I think that it was also a fortunate situation, the so-called felix-culpa. This hooligan offence finally did not harm the Menorah and led to the creation of a great work, which was first performed in January last year during the inauguration of the 2nd Christian-Jewish Meetings ‘Tikkun – Repairing’.

Jerzy Maksymiuk speaks about the genesis of his piece of work entitled 'Lamentations of the Heart. To Kielce in Memoriam'.

'At the end of 2011, I saw on the Internet some photographs from the Warsaw Ghetto. The collection of 130,000 photographs was published by the Yad Vashem Institute. Those disturbing photographs couldn't be watched with peace. Photographs of children, poor, sad, experiencing situations which in normal conditions would never happened to them, stuck in my memory the most. For example a photo with a weak, skinny boy, probably dying, lying barefoot on a pavement and wearing a wretched cap and jacket. In the background there are people passing, a woman is taking a look at the boy, two other boys are not taking any notice of him, maybe they have got accustomed to even more disturbing scenes?'

I am a musician and I express myself through music. On that day, I composed a prayer song, using a scale typical of Jewish songs. Emotions had to escape naturally.

I could not put aside this composition of mine for a long time. Shortly afterwards, I read in newspapers about the damage of the Menorah in Kielce. The editorial office of 'Charaktery' magazine which I have been reading for some years has its seat in Kielce. I wrote a letter to the editor-in-chief, Bogdan Białek, telling him that I would compose a piece of music to express my protest against what had happened. I told him I even had a main motif, a prayer of a woman mourning someone, ready. It was obvious that this piece of music, and also my conducting it, were a gift. I kept my promise and I wrote 'Lamentations of the Heart' for orchestra and soprano.

The piece was played for the first time on 15 January, 2012, conducted by myself, in a Kielce Music School. It was performed by the musicians of the Kielce Philharmonic Orchestra with Anna Karasińska, soprano. On a screen, some old photographs of Kielce Jews from the times of Holocaust were presented. Many wept when the soloist sang in Polish and Yiddish: 'I ask you, I beg you to make the heaven a better place for them than here'.

The music and the pictures worked. I have an impression that I have done something for this small boy from the photograph, who was dying on a pavement. And also something for our hearts and conscience. And for the future.



The premiere performance of 'Lamentations of the Heart' during the 2nd Christian-Jewish Meetings, 15 January 2012.

70th Anniversary of the Shooting of Jewish Children

23 May

On 23 May, at the Jewish cemetery in Kielce, German soldiers shot 45 children aged 15 months to 13 years. We celebrated the 70th anniversary of this sad event to commemorate its victims.



The celebration started at the Jewish cemetery, at the grave of murdered children. The following parts took place at the Menorah monument. The celebration was attended by students and teachers from various schools in Kielce. A short prayer was said by rabbi Joel Nowicki and Adam Sroka, Capuchin frater and the vicar of St. Francis of Assisi parish church in Kielce. The students read out some fragments of the diaries of Hanka Goldszajd and Dawidek Rubinowicz, young victims of the Extermination, as well as the names of all children murdered 70 years ago which had been written on a pavement around the Menorah. Joanna Sobolewska-Pyz, president of the Association of the Children of the Holocaust, also participated in the ceremony. Flowers were brought to the cemetery by the representatives of the Świętokrzyski Voivode.

Also, a special message of Stefan Zabłocki, a prisoner of the Kielce ghetto currently living in Sweden who had managed to flee from a group of children selected to be shot, was read.



The message of Stefan Zabłocki

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen, Dear Students,

45 children, the youngest 15 months old the oldest 13 years old. What kind of a man does one have to be to stand in front of such children and kill them in a cold-blooded manner? And then return home to play with one's own children. Who can imagine this?

At that time not only those 45 children were killed as each of them could probably have their own children, just like me – I have three children, nine grandchildren and one great grandson. In any case, those murderers did not kill 45 children but potentially 150 people.

45 Jewish children – who knows, maybe one of them was a new Albert Einstein or Marc Chagall?

All this evil came from hatred. And hatred is the worst feeling. Hatred destroys not only those who are hated but also those who hate.

In spring 1943 Germans started the liquidation of the Kielce ghetto, where a small group of Jews was living. Our task was to clean the remains of the ghetto. The prisoners of the liquidated ghetto were located in three smaller ghettos. On 23 May, we were all gathered in a square in the ghetto. It was not far from the place where you are standing now, between the streets of Stolarska and Jasna. Everybody was there, the adults and the children. Also my parents. Suddenly, somebody grabbed my neck and pulled me into a small, old house. When I started shouting, telling him I wanted to go back to my parents, he slapped me in the face. I sensed that something horrible could happen. Almost all children were kept in that house. Myself and two of my colleagues, Januszek and Kiwa, saw an entrance to an attic and we climbed there. It was completely dark, we couldn't see anything. Then, we heard children crying and the adult prisoners marched off to new camps. Finally, we heard the roar of cars' engines.

The children were transported to the cemetery and killed there. I and my colleagues were lying in that attic for four days, waiting for a miracle. We only left that place once looking for our parents but the only person we saw was a guard. Luckily, he didn't notice us. On our way back, we found a bottle which we filled with water and a piece of bread. We returned to the attic.

Four days later we heard someone speaking Jewish outside the house. They were prisoners who came to clean the old camp and move some blankets to a new place. On an unguarded moment, they hid us under the blankets and took us to a new camp where we stayed until our deportation to Auschwitz in the summer next year.

What are the conclusions? What can be done for the Holocaust never to happen

Stefan Zabłocki – one of the last living prisoners of the Kielce ghetto. He was born in 1930 in Łódź. His grandparents came from Chęciny. At the beginning of the war, his family moved to Kielce as his parents thought it would be safer there. In spring 1941, Zabłocki was imprisoned at the Kielce ghetto, survived its liquidation in August 1942 and was later transported to Auschwitz and then to Braunschweig where he lived to see the liberation. Since 1945, he has been living in Malmö. He is a retired road construction engineer.



70th Anniversary of the Shooting of Jewish Children

again? In the history of the world there were plenty of various massacres but the Holocaust was unique because this genocide was planned in a cold-blooded way and an entire industry was created for this purpose. Something like this had never happened before and I hope it will never happen again. We need to take care of ourselves not to be ambushed by those who hate. We are never either good or bad. Each of us has an element of evil inside and that is why we need to fight for our entire life against the evil. We need to meet new people, learn about other religions, other cultures, other languages. All people are very similar. For example, nobody wants to be hungry. Of course, there are also differences, but such differences are needed. What would our nature be without such differences?

It is also very important not to judge people according to a group they belong to. Judgements should always be formed individually because in each group there are good and bad people, wise and stupid. We should never assess people according to their origin or their skin colour. It is very important.

We also mustn't be passive when we see that others are getting hurt. We felt very lonely when some of us were murdered and the entire world did not say a word. We have to oppose such evil forces firmly, we have to fight with them so as the world is better. If we didn't fight with one another and did not persecute one another we would create heaven on earth. These are the conclusions of my experiences and I experienced more that a man can experience.

I would like to ask all of you who are here today to commemorate the children killed 70 years ago to promise yourself to fight for it never to happen again, so as all the children in the world have good childhood and could grow up to be wise and good people.



3 July, 2013

Dear Attorney General,

Several days ago, I received a letter from Kielce-Zachód District Prosecutor's Office signed by Renata Olszewska, prosecutor. It was a 'decision to discontinue the investigation on insulting a group of people due to their Jewish ethnicity, i.e. the offence under Article 257 of Penal Code'. I do not know why the letter was addressed to me (the copy of the decision enclosed) as neither I as a private person nor the Jan Karski Society, which I am the president of, filed any offence notification.

It might be possible that Prosecutor Renata Olszewska came to the conclusion that taking into account my several-year experience of fighting anti-Semitism I should finally understand that calling somebody a 'Jewish scoundrel' is not an insult based on ethnic affiliation.

The statement 'these are racially typical Jews' refers to stereotypical features of Jews, however, there is no reference to features describing the race, i.e. biological-physical features, but rather to the features of character, mentality'. It is simply 'irony, sarcasm, mockery' and 'stereotypical thinking about Jews'.

Supported by a court expert in linguistics, Marzena Borowska, the prosecutor Renata Olszewska concludes: 'Stereotypical thinking cannot (...) be considered as insulting as it is historically, culturally or even environmentally conditioned. (...) Taking into account the above-mentioned circumstances (...) the cancellation of the investigation is justified (...) on the grounds that the act does not constitute a criminal offence'.

The main aim of the Jan Karski Society, on behalf of which I am writing to you, is to promote openness and respect towards persons and groups of people of different racial, ethnical, national, religious or cultural identity, oppose all forms of anti-Semitism, xenophobia, racism and other attitudes undermining human dignity.

I have no doubts that the terms and statements under the discontinued investigation are of clear anti-Semitic nature. At the same time, I am surprised at the attitude of the Kielce Prosecutor's Office, as the concession to or the inaction of law enforcement agencies in the face of manifestations of anti-Semitism in Poland are common.

Do you also share the opinion of Prosecutor Olszewska? I would be grateful if you could take a position on this issue.

Kind regards,

Bogdan Bialek,

President of the Jan Karski Society

Correspondence with Attorney General

At the end of June, Bogdan Bialek received a letter from Kielce-Zachód District Prosecutor's Office, which was a justification of the termination of the investigation based on an offence notification filed by a businessman from Kielce (although it was not the president of the Jan Karski Society who filed the offence notification and he learned about the case from that very letter). The businessman complained to the Prosecutor's Office that offensive content concerning his person was regularly published on the Internet, some of which was of anti-Semitic character – he was, for example, called a 'Jewish scoundrel'.

The justification of the decision made Bogdan Bialek write a letter to Andrzej Seremet, Attorney General, who sent his reply in October.

The intervention was successful. At the end of the year, the Prosecutor's Office drew up an indictment against the author of offensive entries.

Correspondence with Attorney General

In August we followed a case connected with a photographer's idea to take photographs of a model posing topless and in bikini against tombs and graves at a Jewish cemetery in Chęciny. 'I wanted to point to the neglecting of this place. The cemetery is forgotten (...). My idea was to make people and institutions responsible for it to take interest in the cemetery and to take care of it,' said the photographer in an interview for 'Gazeta Wyborcza' newspaper.

Commenting a photography session at the cemetery in Chęciny, Bogdan Białek, president of the Jan Karski Society, said: 'In this photograph there is no empathy or compassion (...) Someone lacked good taste and sensitivity. Burial place was insulted'.

Thus seemingly noble intentions met with total misunderstanding. Who should take responsibility for this kind of reaction? Only an artistically educated receiver or maybe also an artist?

In his commentary Białek used a key-word – empathy. It is about empathy, compassion and sensitivity towards those for whom the insulted object is precious because it belongs to the inviolable sacral sphere. It seems that sometimes artists lack these features of character. They have a completely different relation to the reality they want to speak about from the people who live and move in this reality every day.

'The Prayer at the Centre of Modern Art'. Priest Andrzej Draguła, 'Gazeta Wyborcza', 21 November, 2013

Bogdan Białek,

President of the Jan Karski Society

1 October 2013

In response to your letter of 3 July 2013, in which you wrote about receiving from the Kielce-Zachód District Prosecutor's Office a copy of a decision regarding the case no. Ds. 340/13/D on insulting a group of people due to their Jewish ethnicity, i.e. the deed under Article 257 of Penal Code, in which neither you as a private person nor as the president of the Jan Karski Society filed an offence notification, and in which you also expressed your opinion that the terms and statements investigated were of clear anti-Semitic character, I would like to thank you for all information pointing to irregularities in the actions of law enforcement agencies, especially in the cases of such great importance and related to opposing a broader phenomenon of crime triggered by hatred.

I would like to kindly inform you that in connection with you letter District Prosecutor in Kielce was ordered to investigate the circumstances and the case no 1 Ds. 340/13/D of Kielce-Zachód District prosecutor's Office.

The analysis of the files confirmed that the decision to discontinue the investigation was delivered to the Jan Karski Society, while the Society was neither the informer nor the victim of the proceedings. It was not also indicated in the decision as the subject to which the decision was to be delivered.

Presumably, the Prosecutor wrongly regarded the Jan Karski Society as a victim and therefore delivered the decision.

The examination of the case files also pointed to the wrong justification of the decision of 13 June 2013 to discontinue the investigation made by Kielce-Zachód District Prosecutor's Office. On 3 July 2013, a decision was issued to continue the above investigation, which was registered under the number of I Ds. 1025/13 and is currently being continued.

I would like to add that in connection with the raised irregularities and in accordance with an instruction of the Regional Prosecutor in Kielce a procedure has been implemented to assess the regularity of the actions undertaken by the prosecutor responsible for the case.

Andrzej Seremet
Attorney General

4 July

The celebrations of the 67th anniversary of the Pogrom were initiated by a debate on 'What happened in Kielce after the war?' organized by the Cultures Dialogue Museum. The debate was attended by citizens of Kielce, representatives of national Jewish organizations and members of the Polish-Israeli Association for Mental Health.

Lectures were delivered by professor Bożena Szynok, Marcin Zaremba, PhD, and Zuzanna Radzik from the Forum for Dialogue Among Nations, who presented the lecture on behalf of professor Joanna Tokarska-Bakir.

In the audience, who later participated in the debate, there were 20 members of the Polish-Israeli Association for Mental Health, outstanding psychiatrists from Poland and Israel. The Association is presided over by professor Jacek Bomba and professor Haim Knobler.

Bożena Szynok said: 'On 4 July there was a sense of anxiety among the Jewish inhabitants of Planty Street because of a mob that gathered around the building and information about some children kidnapped by Jews. Soon after, militia men appeared in front of the building, followed by some soldiers. Then, the soldiers entered the building, collected Jewish guns and started shooting. We don't know why and we don't know who was responsible for giving such



67th Anniversary of the Pogrom

'We have to remember for one more reason. We hear today that swastika is a Hindu symbol of happiness and not the symbol of contempt, hatred and evil. We have to remember because in Poland, in Kielce, a prosecutor of the 21st century believes that calling someone a "Jewish scoundrel" is not offensive and is not the expression of contempt and hatred. These are the reasons why we have to remember', said the president of the Jan Karski Society starting the March.



67th Anniversary of the Pogrom



an order... This is how the Pogrom started. Militiamen and civilians entered the building. The Jews were robbed, bitten, taken outside in the street and brutally murdered. Military, militia and administrative authorities as well as Communist party officials did nothing to stop the Pogrom.

The most important decision maker in Kielce at that time, the chief of the Security Office, not only failed to undertake any action but also sabotaged the attempts to stop the murdering. Some citizens of Kielce joined the robbery, beating and killing. In the afternoon, some workers from a nearby steelworks came and with some iron tools they carried from the plant they started killing Jews. Then military units came. The situation was brought under control and the victims were transported away.

Marcin Zaremba: 'What was Poland after 1945-46? I call it a great fear. At that time, we dealt with two phenomena. On the one hand, there was the eruption of various kinds of threats, feelings of insecurity and temporality. On the other hand, especially in the initial period, there were the weakness of social control and fear of punishment. The sense of impunity after the war was strengthened by the lack of new institutions which could effectively play the functions of pre-war state organization. Such a state may be called anarchy. The accumulation of fear in certain circumstances of collapse and breakthrough, together with impunity, may lead to violence against other social or ethnic groups. Was Poland unusual at that time? No, it wasn't. (...)



Hunger is worth mentioning. Kielce was uniquely afflicted with hunger. Poland after the war experienced endemic hunger, mostly in the west and north of the country, and especially in the Kielce region. Henryk Błaszczyk recollected that after the war a potato would be divided into four parts. In Warsaw, soups were made from peelings, just like during the war. The picture of the Kielce countryside of that time is the picture of misery and despair. People lived in sheds, trenches or bunkers. This element of reality also influenced moods and the feelings of frustration, dejection and anger. I don't want to say that the mob marching towards Planty street was hungry, but this context is important. All psychological research shows that hungry people are more inclined to aggression.

Another element that must be mentioned is the spread of information and belief that becomes a gossip. There were numerous gossips around after the war, connected with for instance another war breaking out or another money exchange. The spread of magic thinking is one phenomenon of the post-war Polish reality. And it is connected with the Kielce Pogrom in a sense that the information about kidnapped children was spread around the entire Poland. Children disappeared then, they were raped by Soviets, kidnapped by Polish women. We know of at least four such cases. It is also known that Jewish committees would pay 1,000 zloty to families that kept their children. So there were some cases where women kidnapped children to take them to Jewish committees

and receive 1,000 zloty. Some children, already adopted by Polish families were taken away from them by their Jewish relatives, which could have strengthened the gossip that Jews kidnapped Christian children. These are the most important elements of the psychological and emotional landscape after the war.

Professor Haim Y. Knobler: 'Our entire stay in Poland has been subordinated to this debate. In summer last year, together with professor Bomba I visited professor Moshe Kotler, who was then the president of the Israeli Psychiatric Association. The Professor is also the director of two psychiatric hospitals in Israel and a leader of a psychiatric reform in our country. We told professor Kotler that as the president of the Israel Psychiatric Association he had to go to Poland with us to participate in this meeting. I have known professor Koler for almost 30 years. He employed me in the army and then, for the first time, I heard that his parents were from Warsaw. He was born in Israel, but he has a brother and a sister who were saved by Poles in Warsaw and survived the war. Part of my mother's family was saved by Poles. My father's aunt was murdered after the war by Poles in Słomniki. So this Polish-Israeli dialogue is very balanced. Sometimes I defend Poles in the times of the Holocaust and after the Holocaust because Poland was the first country to be invaded by the Soviets and the Germans. What is most important for us in this dialogue under the Polish-Israel Association for Mental Health is the perception of the future. Because the question 'How is anti-Semitism possible after the Holocaust?' is probably the most important one'.



Profesor Moshe Kotler, president of the Israeli Psychiatric Association: 'I would like to mention two things. The human race is relatively young. It is about 120,000 years old. Whether you believe in it or not, we have one mother. It was a black African woman. By the way, it is an exciting experience to be translated into Polish, because I have managed to develop the skill to understand Polish although I don't speak it. I learned to understand it because I wanted to know what my parents spoke about behind my back. Back to the topic, we have to understand that Homo Sapiens was aggressive and that is why it managed to survive. Dialogue, openness and understanding are the only way. This openness, the desire to explore, was for me an unusual experience. I am not a historian but I think that the human nature, and the way we deal with it, is the greatest challenge. To be honest, no psychiatrist and no psychologist will give you the right answer.



67th Anniversary of the Pogrom



In the first row from the right:
Chairman of the Jewish Community in Katowice, Włodzimierz Kac, Mayor of Kielce, Wojciech Lubawski,
President of the Association of the Children of the Holocaust in Poland, Joanna Sobolewska-Pyz



67th Anniversary of the Pogrom



From the left: Zvi Rav-Ner, Manny Bekier, Bartłomiej Walczyński, Edward Walczyński at the Kielce Town Hall

Zvi Rav-Ner: – We have to remember about what was bad also about what was good.

Edward Walczyński and Manny Bekier unveil a plate with the names of Marianna and Józef Walczyński at the monument Righteous Among Nations.



The next stage of the celebration was Righteous Among Nations awards ceremony. The medals were presented to the late Marianna and Józef Walczyński, who during the war, for two years, hid five Jews, including Judka Bekierman, father of Manny Bekier, chairman of the Kiełtzer Society in New York, who together with his family participated in the ceremony. The medals were awarded to the descendants of the Righteous by Zvi Rav-Ner, ambassador of Israel in Poland.

Next, in front of the Menorah, the March of Remembrance and Reconciliation started. The march was attended, among others, by the mayor of Kielce, Wojciech Lubawski, the ambassador of Israel in Poland, Zvi Rav-Ner, the chief rabbi of Poland, Michael Schudrich, rabbi Yehoshua Ellis from Katowice, the chairman of the Jewish Community in Katowice, Włodzimierz Kac, the president of the Association of the Children of the Holocaust and the members of the Social and Cultural Association of Jews in Poland.

The march started from a former synagogue, in front of which there is a monument Righteous Among Nations. A commemorating plaque with the names of Marianna and Józef Walczyński was unveiled and the medals of the Jan Karski Society, Vir Bonus, were awarded to Manny Bekier, priest Wojciech Lemański from the Polish Council of Christian and Jews, journalist Janusz Poniewierski from the Cracow Club of Christians and Jews 'Covenant' and Jacek Dziubel, an ecumenical activist from Kielce.

The next stop of the march was the building at 7 Planty Street, which 67 years ago witnessed the Pogrom. Students from the Juliusz Słowacki Secondary School no. 6 read out the names of the killed Jews.

The march finished at the Jewish cemetery, where solemn Jewish and Polish prayers were said at the tomb of the Pogrom's victims.

18 July – 6 August

In the very centre of Kielce, in Sienkiewicza Street, next to the 'Karski's Bench' we installed an exhibition entitled 'Jan Karski – the man of freedom'. 'Despite all the merits of Jan Karski not many people know about him. This is an educational exhibition', said Bogdan Białek opening the exhibition. He was accompanied by Yaacov Kotlicki, the president of the Kielce Society in Israel, who stated: 'It is a great honour for me, a Jew, to be able to open this exhibition'.

The exhibition 'Jan Karski – the man of freedom' had been earlier presented in New York, Wrocław, Łódź and Warsaw. It reached Kielce through our efforts and the assistance of the mayor of Kielce. It comprises 22 posters presenting the biography of Jan Karski, starting from the years he spent in his hometown of Łódź, through his studies at university, the years of war when he attempted to inform the world about the extermination of Jews to his post-war activities.

The author of the exhibition is Joanna Podolska, director of the Marek Edelman Centre for Dialogue, and the curators are Ewa Wierzyńska and Magdalena Pawlak from the Museum of the History of Poland. The co-organizers include: Marek Edelman Centre for Dialogue, the Museum of the City of Łódź and the State Digital Archives. The exhibition was organized under the auspices of the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage.

Exhibition 'Jan Karski – the Man of Freedom'



Inauguration of an international educational programme 'Letters from the ghetto: Readings with Hanka so as never to forget'

August

The program 'Letters from the ghetto: readings with Hanka so as never to forget' is the outcome of the cooperation of the Society with Regina Koenigsstein and Lia Niski, cousins of Hanka Goldszajd, currently living in Brazil and Canada.

The program is based on the letters written by 20-year-old Hanka from the Kielce ghetto to her family in Siberia. In 2007, the letters were published in the form of a book entitled 'Letters from the Ghetto' by the Jan Karski Society.

The program is of interdisciplinary character and can be useful while teaching many subjects, not only history but also mathematics, chemistry, philosophy or English. Its objective is to shape and develop respect and tolerance for other people among students and help to deal with various conflicts which may happen at school and in everyday life.



17 September – 4 October

At the Cultures Dialogue Museum, branch of the national Museum in Kielce, we opened an exhibition created by Tomasz Kizny entitled 'Great Terror'. This exceptional exhibition had been presented before in Warsaw and Białystok. Its curators were Dominique Roynette and Piotr Wójcik.

The exhibition comprised several dozen old portraits of Stalinist purges' victims, modern photographs of their families and burial places as well as some witnesses accounts.

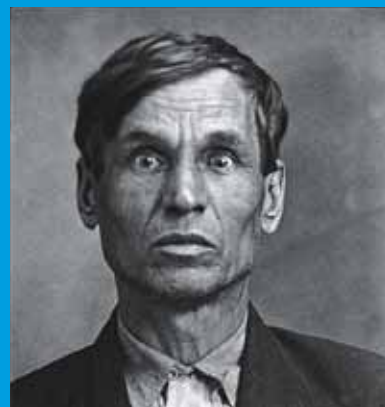
The reproductions of black and white prison photographs of the terror victims together with short biographies from Russian archives were presented. The photographs were taken by the Soviet secret police shortly before the execution of the victims. This last look captured various emotions, from hope to fear, from despair to rebellion. The photographs were made public only in the 1990s.

The archival photographs were complemented with modern portraits and short videos presenting witnesses' accounts, people who are nowadays 80 – 90 years old and the last ones remembering those tragic events. The exhibition also included photographs of mass executions and graves of victims, the location of which had been kept secret by Communist authorities for decades. Nowadays, on the territory of the former USSR approximately one hundred mass graves have been identified whereas the location of the remaining 200 – 250 is still unknown.

Tomasz Kizny is one of the best Polish photographers and the founder of 'Dementi' Independent Photo Agency acting beyond the reach of Communist censorship. He cooperates with historical quarterly 'Karta' and the supplement of 'Gazeta Wyborcza'. The 'Great Terror' project on which he worked from 2008 to 2011 resulted in the exhibition and a book.



'Great Terror' Exhibition



Aleksiej Grigorijewicz Żeltikow, a locksmith in workshops of the Moscow underground. Sentenced to death on 31 October, 1937. Rehabilitated in 1957.

In the years 1937-38, at the height of Soviet repressions, referred to by historians as 'Great Terror', on the order of Joseph Stalin 1.7 million people were arrested of which 750 thousand were shot (with 1,600 executions on average per day) and 350 thousand died in forced labour camps. The terror planned in great detail and managed by Stalin himself was complete, gripping the entire nation of the Soviet Union. People were accused of absurd crimes, such as: participation in counter-revolutionary conspiracy, terrorist organizations or espionage. Victims were buried in secret places and their families were lied to that their relatives had been sent to forced labour camps with no right to exchange correspondence. Implementing the plan of 'Great Terror', Stalin eliminated real and potential opposition and terrorized the entire society.

SUKKOT SHALOM

18 -21 September

Together with some volunteers from the 'Adam le Adam' Jewish Association for the second time we celebrated the Festival of Sukkot in Kielce. For four consecutive afternoons young Israelis were meeting Kielce citizens in a special booth (Hebrew: sukkah) constructed at the 'Korona' Shopping Mall.

Before coming to Poland, the volunteers had spoken with Jews from Kielce, who currently live in Israel. The recordings of those conversations were presented during the meetings at the shopping mall. Additionally, the guests spoke about modern Israel, Jewish customs and traditions. In the mornings they would meet students from local schools. They visited Construction Schools, J. Słowacki Secondary School and K.I. Gałczyński Secondary School, where they were greeted warmly by their peers and teachers.

'Maybe it will become a tradition for myself and my students to visit Kielce every year. Both last year and this year we experienced some kind of a miracle here. The workshops and celebrations of the Festival of Sukkot were just great. It was worth participating in our educational project on Polish-Jewish relations with secondary school students from Kielce and celebrating Sukkot at the 'Korona' shopping mall', said Abigail Moshe, project coordinator from the Israeli side.

'Although I do not have Polish roots, I was a little bit worried, suspicious and full of fears as what could happen here. During my stay in your city my concerns have been dispelled. When I return to Israel I will have nice memories and positive comments of my stay in Kielce. What was important for me was the fact that I did not participate in speeches but in a unique and enriching dialogue' – Raaya, a student from Israel.

Juddah, a volunteer from Israel and a medical rescuer in Jerusalem learned about the project from some people who visited Kielce last year. 'I have heard about it from my friends who had great memories so my expectations were high. I am very satisfied with the workshops at schools. I was particularly moved by a letter from students from K.I. Gałczyński Secondary School, in which they expressed their joy that we came to visit them'.

The concert of Szir Awiz choir from Warsaw was the culmination of the Festival of Sukkot. The choir performed at the shopping mall and presented, among others, works by David Eisentstadt, composer and conductor of the Great Synagogue in Warsaw.



'The festival of Sukkot (Feats of Booths) lasts for seven days which are the reflection of our life. Just like Jews were protected by God, entering sukkah we want to experience the same protection. In one part of the Festival Jews welcome in their booth seven biblical guests: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Aaron and David', said Janusz Daszuta, pastor from the Jan Karski Society.



The letter from students to Israeli volunteer's grandmother of Kielce origins

Dear Madam,

We are students of the K.I Galczyński Secondary School no. 11 in Kielce. We are 18 and 19 years old.

We met your granddaughter during the workshop which took place in our school on 17 September 2013. She told us about your memories and experiences from Poland. We are writing this letter to You because we want to express how sorry we feel that our city causes you such horrible memories.

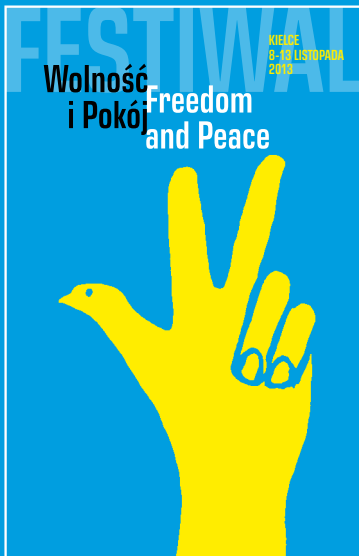
We know the history of our city and we frequently speak about it during our lessons or during meetings with our peers from Israel who visit Kielce. We know that the past can be neither changed nor forgotten. We regret what happened in Kielce in 1946. We want you to know that there are many people in Kielce who make sure the past is not forgotten and who have open hearts – they don't want anyone to be afraid of visiting Kielce. We believe that what really counts is the present. We are trying to use memories to build the future. We are a new generation and we give hope for new and better future.

*Regards,
Friends from Kielce*



Volunteers from Israel with the participants of the meetings at a Sukkot booth.





8-13 November

In November, we organized a five-day Freedom and Peace Festival, comprising concerts, debates, meetings with outstanding artists and humanists as well as workshops for young people. 'A photography exhibition organized by students of the National Film School in Lodz entitled 'Freedom and Peace' was our inspiration. The date is also not accidental. We want to enjoy the independence and freedom remembering about those who experienced wars and persecutions. There is no freedom without the solidarity with the victims of wars, refugees or the persecuted', explained Bogdan Białek. It is important to note that Kielce citizens liked the idea of the Festival. The participation was high at each event of the festival.

Evening of Papusza

The first event of the Festival was an evening devoted to Papusza, a Rom poet. At the Cultures Dialogue Museum a meeting was organized with Angelika Kuźniak, the author of the book 'Papusza', Roman Kwiatkowski, president of the Association of Roms in Poland, Elżbieta Ficowska, widow of Jerzy Ficowski, a Rom culture researcher who 'discovered' Papusza, Sylwester Kwiek, grandson of a pre-war Rom king and Joanna Talewicz-Kwiatkowska, a board member of the Association of Roma in Poland and the editor-in-chief of the quarterly magazine 'Dialogue-Pheniben'. The discussion was led by Małgorzata Kołaczek, secretary of the editorial office of the magazine. 'When I was young I heard that Papusza had betrayed our secrets. It was because in the 1960s there was still living memory about the extermination of the Roma. It was this kind of fear of everything that was not Rom. Each kind of collaboration with the other was considered to be a great risk. The next generations of Roma would be proud of Papusza, I am sure of that', explained Roman Kwiatkowski talking about the sources of hostility towards the Rom poet.

'It is not important whether we are called Gypsies or Roma. We are people. It is important that we respect one another', concluded Joanna Talewicz-Kwiatkowska.

Bronisława Wajs, Papusza (1908 – 1987), a poet writing in the Rom language, originated from the ethnic group 'Poland of the Roma'. She was one of the few Roma women who learnt to read and write. She never attended school. In 1949, Papusza was discovered Jerzy Ficowski who later translated her poems into Polish. The first translations were sent to Julian Tuwim, who had them published. Her abandonment of a hermetic Gypsy world led to an absolute and ruthless ostracism of the poet by the Roma which was the reason of Papusza's serious mental problems. She was a member of the Polish Writers' Association and her poems have been translated into many languages.



Joanna Talewicz-Kwiatkowska



From the left: Małgorzata Kołaczek, editor-in-chief of the quarterly magazine 'Dialogue-Pheniben'; Roman Kwiatkowski, president of the Association of Roms in Poland; Elżbieta Ficowska, Sylwester Kwiek, Angelika Kuźniak, author of the book entitled 'Papusza'.

Concert for the victims of the civil war in Syria

On the second day of the Festival, a concert of Christian, Jewish and Muslim music was held. Following the concert there was presentation of the film entitled 'St. Francis and the Sultan' and a lecture of Shaykh Andrzej Ahmed Saramowicz.

'The world is watching indifferently when in Syria thousands of people are dying and more than two million have had to leave their homes. Superpowers sell weapons to the regime and cannot control the situation in the country. We, Poles, know what suffering is and we also know what solidarity is. We are obliged to show solidarity with the Syrians. Our concert was a meeting place for Christians, Jews and Muslims to show that there is no freedom without solidarity and no peace without solidarity', explained Bogdan Białek.

The choir of St. Nicolas Orthodox church in Kielce, accompanied by Agnieszka Kowalczyk, performed for an audience gathered at the National Museum in Kielce. On the same evening, the Sziw Awiw choir from the Warsaw synagogue presented songs and prayers in Hebrew and Yiddish.

The concert finished with the performance of Sol et Luna group, comprising Saba Litwińska (vocals, harmonium, daf and flutes) and Mieczysław Litwiński (vocals, harmonium, tar, setar, violin, viola, santur). The artists prepared a program related to the Islamic mysticism, including songs by Mieczysław Eligiusz Litwiński (mystic poetry of the East and the West) as well as traditional Persian and Arabic music.



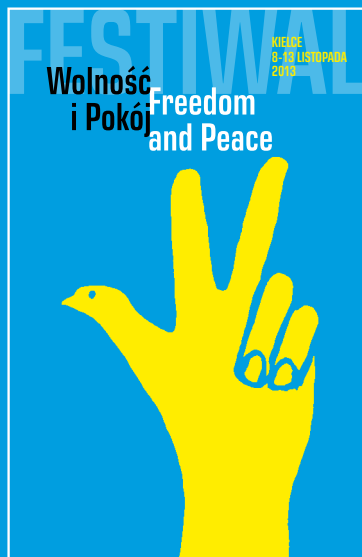
Presentation of the film 'St. Francis and the Sultan'

'St. Francis is an example for both Christians and Muslims of how the interfaith dialogue is possible', said Shaykh Andrzej Ahmed Saramowicz in the introduction to the film's presentation, which took place at a conference room in the Franciscan Monastery in Kielce.

Shaykh Andrzej Ahmed Saramowicz is the founder and coordinator of the School of Sufi Teaching and a teacher of meditation there. He was a student of the late Granshaykh Hazrat Azad Rasool and a translator and editor of Turning Toward the Heart into Polish. Saramowicz is a co-president of the Joint Council of Catholics and Muslims.

The film tells a 13th century story happening during the 5th Crusade of Christians to the Holy Land. St. Francis showed unique bravery crossing the battle line to make peace with the Sultan Maleki al-Kamil. The endeavour is the example of interfaith dialogue, defusing conflicts and reaching agreements.





According to the Shaykh, the film touches the universal truth, namely religious individuality of the man. Mutual respect and understanding make it possible to solve conflicts by means of dialogue. 'As long as people have strong belief and opinion that their religion is right and good for them and others, the dialogue will be very difficult and rather superficial. In his heart, the man must acknowledge the right of another person to their own religiousness. Unless it happens the dialogue will not work', said Andrzej Ahmed Saramowicz.

'After speaking with St. Francis, the Sultan recognized in him a man of deep religiousness, who needs no other religion. The importance of St. Francis for the Muslims was that he came with a mission to speak about peace and God. In fact, those two men had one aim in common – God. The most important thing in a dialogue is to give the other their right to their own religiousness and expect the same from them', emphasised the Shaykh.

Debate 'Where does good in the man come from?'

'The good which is inside the man comes from God whereas the evil comes from the man', agreed priest Jacek Prusak, rabbi Stas Wojciechowski, shaykh Andrzej Ahmed Saramowicz and journalist Jan Turnau. The debate on 'Where does the good in the man come from?', held at the Franciscan Monastery in Kielce, was chaired by Bogdan Białek, who asked the speakers to share their thoughts on the good in the man in relation to their own experiences.

Jan Turnau stressed the conviction that the good comes from God and he mentioned some people from his family and work who gave him the good. He listed the late Tadeusz Mazowiecki, who radiated with the good and was Turnau's 'political father'. Shaykh Andrzej Ahmed Saramowicz told the citizens of Kielce that in his life he had experienced the good coming from many people – his parents, teachers and God. Priest Jacek Prusak pointed to the fact that the good is often seen in victims of the evil, who undergo psychotherapy. He also explained that it is not possible to speak about the good without speaking about the evil. 'The good has different faces and comes from God', he argued. Rabbi Stas Wojciechowski, explaining that Judaism is more practical than theoretical, stressed the fact that a person who expresses the good in words must also do good. Bogdan Białek said that the good is not a media phenomenon because it is boring and readers or viewers chose bad news as it is more attractive.

The debate was followed by a concert of Tytus Wojnowicz with the band Collegium Musicum Sanctae Caeciliae, dedicated to the memory of Christians, victims of violence for religious reasons. The band was composed of: Paweł Rybkowski, violin, Marzena Hodyr, viola, Nadia Bojadziejew, cello and Tytus Wojnowicz, oboe. The concert was sponsored by priest Grzegorz Michalczyk, National Chaplain for Creative Communities.

The main event of the festival – concert ‘One World – One Voice’

On 11 November, the Independence Day, at the Stefan Żeromski Theatre, the main event of the festival took place, namely a unique concert of multi-instrumentalists Włodzimierz Kiniorski and Maria Pomianowska. The concert was also a world premiere of pieces performed under the title ‘Two-Headed Dragon’. The repertoire of this unusual concert referred to a multidimensional music project of Rupert Hine from the 1990s.

Włodzimierz ‘Kinior’ Kiniorski is a multi-instrumentalist, composer and music producer. He is widely known for his involvement in Tiebreak, Graal, Young Power, Izrael or Brygada Kryzys bands. He also cooperated with Stanisław Soyka, Grzegorz Ciechowski as well as Daab, Trebunie Tutki and Twinkle Brothers bands.

Maria Pomianowska is an instrumentalist, vocalist, composer and a lecturer. She holds a PhD in music arts. She plays the sarangi, suka biłgorajska (an ancient Polish string instrument) and cello. She is also engaged in searching for and reconstructing the techniques of playing the ancient Polish string instruments. Travelling to India, China, Korea, Japan and the Middle East, Pomianowska studied the techniques of playing the instruments of Asia.

Opening of the exhibition ‘Freedom and Peace’

The opening of the exhibition entitled ‘Freedom and Peace’ took place after the concert. At the Castle Hill Complex, students of the Department of Photography, Faculty of Direction of Photography of the Film School in Lodz presented their works. The curators of the exhibition, Dominique Roynette and Piotr Wójcik, attended the opening. Background music was provided by WHM jazz trio.

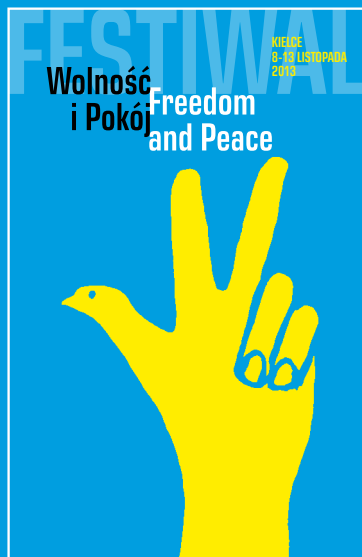
Piotr Wójcik, a lecturer in photojournalism at the Lodz Film School and a former director of photography department in ‘Gazeta Wyborcza’ newspaper, explained that the presented photographs were an interpretation of the slogan ‘Freedom and Peace’ which, despite having different historical reference is still valid. ‘The works are personal, intimate relations of the photographer with the surrounding world. They are a commentary and often a cry of the opposition against the existing order. The exhibition is a journey through various forms of photography, from a classical photo report and documentary to creative solutions.



Maria Pomianowska: ‘The world is shrinking. In the past people thought that the world was a multitude and distinctness of cultures and their members were as if inscribed in their own cultural conventions. Nowadays, we are witnessing the process of treating different cultures as elements of the global culture, which can be used in the creation of a new global identity. The 21st century is about creating one voice, the voice of the world. For me, ‘One World – One Voice’ constitutes an opportunity to speak with the voice of traditions coming from various corners of the world. In music we are able to communicate irrespective of cultural differences. It is a universal language.

I travel the world and see places of violence and war. But even there when people sit together to play music they forget about aggression. This is how music influences our emotions’.





Meeting with Children of the Holocaust and those who saved them. The presentation of the book 'They Knocked on the Door'.

On the day before the closing of the Festival, a meeting with Joanna Sobolewska-Pyz and Helena Rembelska from the Association of the Children of the Holocaust and Tadeusz Stankiewicz, awarded the medal Righteous Among the Nations, was held at the Regional Public Library in Kielce.

The Association of the Children of the Holocaust brings together people saved from the Extermination, who, because of their Jewish origin, were condemned to extermination by the Nazis and sent to ghettos, concentration camps, extermination camps or had to hide their own identity. The members of the Association were either born during the war or at the outbreak of World War II they were not more than 13 years old. Many of those people survived the war thanks to the help of Poles, such as Joanna Sobolewska-Pyz, who several days before the uprising in the Warsaw ghetto was taken out of it. She was three years old then and later was brought up by the family of Sobolewscy from Milanówek.

The medal Righteous Among the Nations is awarded by the Israeli Institute Yad Vashem to the people who during the war saved Jews.

The meeting of those extraordinary people from two environments was the result of the presentation of a book entitled 'They Knocked on the Door'. It was a unique publication edited by Helena Rembelska, Joanna Sobolewska-Pyz and Halina Szostkiewicz and issued by the Association of the Children of the Holocaust in Poland in 2011. One of its main characters is Tadeusz Stankiewicz. The book is a collection of discussions of young students from junior and upper secondary schools in Poland with persons awarded the medal Righteous Among the Nations. The interviews, on the basis of which the book was written, were recorded under a special educational project 'Righteous Among the Nations – Righteous Among Us'.

'We stood in solidarity with Jews. We couldn't stand the humiliation of human dignity, the humiliation of the man. And that's why we had the 'Righteous', said Tadeusz Stankiewicz. During the war his father was a forester near Lublin. He managed to convince Germans to let him employ some Jews to do forest works. Consequently, many of them fled from a ghetto organized in Opole Lubelskie. The parents of Tadeusz Stankiewicz managed to hide about 60 Jews. Unfortunately, following a denunciation most of the Jews were killed and only six survived the war, among them Szloma Szmulewicz (Polish name: Jan) who had fled from a forced labour camp in Józefów by the Vistula River. Szloma was saved by Tadeusz Stankiewicz and his sister Barbara. They remained friends until Szmulewicz's death in 2007.



**Tadeusz Stankiewicz
and Joanna Sobolewska-Pyz**

Lesson of Freedom

The Festival ended on 13 November. One of its last events was the Lesson of Freedom devoted to outstanding figures of the history of Poland, such as Jan Karski, Marek Edelman, Jacek Kuroń and Lech Wałęsa. This unusual lesson for Kielce students was conducted by the minister of education, Mirosław Sawicki, his wife, Paula Sawicka, a president of the Open Republic Association Against Anti-Semitism and Xenophobia, and Jolanta Białek from the Kielce Centre for Patriotic and Civic Thought.



Evening Devoted to the Memory of Tadeusz Mazowiecki

The last event of the Festival was an evening devoted to the memory of Tadeusz Mazowiecki, who had passed away three weeks earlier. The meeting was held under the project 'What Poland? What Church?' The first Prime Minister of the 3rd Republic of Poland was recalled by Zbigniew Nosowski, former editor-in-chief of 'Znak' magazine, founded by Tadeusz Mazowiecki, professor Stanisław Żak, senator of the Polish Parliament representing Komitet Obywatelski (Citizen Committee) and Unia Demokratyczna (Democratic Union) parties, and Bogdan Białek, president of the Jan Karski Society, who in 1990 directed the presidential campaign of Tadeusz Mazowiecki in the Świętokrzyskie Region.

'He was an outstanding statesman, good and wise man, deeply religious Christian, great Pole and inquisitive intellectual. Tadeusz Mazowiecki was a man thinking according to values. He did not make any decisions without thinking them over, that's why he was called a 'turtle'. He was making significant decisions and therefore he had to foresee their possible consequences', said Zbigniew Nosowski.

'He wrote to me that he felt very lonely and he was watching a lot of television lately, especially a soap 'Na dobre i na złe' (For good and for bad). President Komorowski's proposal for Mazowiecki to become his advisor meant a lot to him. He started living again, and he felt needed,' recalled professor Żak.

Tadeusz Mazowiecki (1927 – 2013)

I used to meet the Prime Minister and every time I contacted him it was not easy for me. Sometimes he was capricious. Mean even. Sometimes he would not answer questions and left them as if suspended. He was really a Great Man. He was about to visit Kielce. The Society was planning a meeting with the Prime Minister. He was to be accompanied by Jacek Ambroziak and Olek Hall. However, there were constant difficulties with making arrangements. I sensed something wrong but I didn't pay much attention to it. The Prime Minister always looked bad, he had difficulties with breathing and sometimes he seemed so unwell that we thought we would need to call an ambulance. He smoked a lot.

His solitude and inaccessibility were a mystery. There was a time when he did not hold any public office. He wrote a personal letter to a friend of mine complaining about emptiness in his life, loneliness and abandonment. It was surprising.

He could be surprising. Like for example when in 1989 he contested the so-called Wałęsa 'list' and refused to run in the first partially-free post-war election. And also when he decided to compete with Wałęsa, whom he respected, in the presidential election. Or when he decided to establish a new political party and when he resigned from being its chairman.

That is why there was and will be so much criticism around him. He will not be left in peace. He, who introduced the power of peace and tranquillity into our public life. The only political philosophy that makes sense.

Bogdan Białek

Jaka Polska?

Jaki Kościół?

February – December

In 2013, we continued the series of meetings entitled ‘What Poland? What Church?’ which had started the previous year. Its main theme was taken from the question posed by Juliusz Słowacki in his works, namely ‘Poland, but what Poland?’ and the statement by Adam Michnik: ‘What Poland will look like will depend on what the Polish Roman-Catholic Church will be like’. In 2012 there were three meetings with outstanding representatives of the Polish Church, priests Adam Boniecki, Ludwik Wiśniewski, Tomasz Dostatni and Waław Hryniewicz. Last year, the guests of the meetings were:

1. Fr. Włodzimierz Zatorski, a Benedictine from the Tyniec monastery, founder and former director of the Tyniec Publishing House as well as an author of many books on spirituality, including ‘Przebaczenie’ (Forgiveness), ‘Otworzyć serce’ (Opening the Heart) and ‘Podstawy duchowości lidera’ (Introduction to Leader’s Spirituality).

Fr. Zatorski: ‘We are all responsible for the Church. Lay people in the same way as clergymen. If a priest speaks about politics during his sermon, parishioners should talk to him and tell him it is inappropriate because a church is not a political gallery. If this doesn’t work, they should go to a bishop. You can always look for another church to go to and attend masses said by priests who focus on the Gospel and prayer’.

2. Piotr Sikora, a philosopher, theologian and publicist. He is the author of ‘Credo katolika otwartego’ (An Open Catholic’s Credo) published in October 2012 in ‘Tygodnik Powszechny’ magazine. He wrote: ‘The concept of Christianity and the Open Church does not have good press nowadays. People who favour it are accused of dividing Christians into those who are open and closed, which is the basis for superiority over brothers and sisters who live their faith in a different way’.

3. Sebastian Duda, a lecturer at Postgraduate Gender Studies at the Institute for Literary Research of the Polish Academy of Sciences. He was a journalist at ‘Newsweek Polska’ and an editor of ‘Przegląd sportowy’ magazine. Since 2013, he has been a member of the editorial office of ‘Więź’ magazine. He published ‘Zabiegi terapeutyczne’ (Therapeutic Treatments), ‘Kicz pojednania i chrześcijańska powinność’ (The Kitsch of Reconciliation and the Christian Duty), ‘Bóg jest dla mnie mało interesujący, z Magdaleną Środą rozmawia Sebastian Duda’ (God is not very interesting for me, interviews with Magdalena Środa).

Sebastian Duda: ‘The Church in Poland is locked in the medieval doctrine of Chrystianitas, ordering to change the world in a Christian way, not noticing the ever spreading secularization of society. There is a growing number of people who do not want religion to be mixed with politics. They want politicians to keep their religious beliefs to themselves’.



Fr. Włodzimierz Zatorski



Sebastian Duda



4. Priest Romuald Jakub Weksler-Waszkinel, born to Jakub and Batia Weksler on 28 February 1943 in a ghetto in Stare Świąciany near Vilnius. Several days before the liquidation of the ghetto his mother gave him to the Polish family of Waszkinel. She then said to Emilia Waszkinel: 'You are a Christian, you believe in Jesus so please take this child in the name of this Jew who you believe in and save him. When he grows up he will become a priest'. He was baptised as Romuald Waszkinel and in 1966 he became a Catholic priest. For many years he worked as a lecturer at the Catholic University in Lublin. Currently, he lives in Jerusalem and works as an archivist at the Yad Vashem Institute.

Priest Romuald Jakub Weksler-Waszkinel: 'One day, at the beginning of my stay in Israel, I participated in a Sabbath service in a synagogue. When a rabbi turned to those gathered there I noticed that the listeners started leaving the synagogue. 'The Rabbi will be trouble. He will most probably be fired', I heard from my friends. I was surprised because in the Catholic church it is quite the opposite. But it is this kind of organization that I would wish to have in the Church. A priest should serve his community not the other way round. We have a lot of problems with clericalism'.

5. Priest Jacek Prusak is a Jesuit, theologian, doctor of psychology, psychotherapist, journalist and editor of 'Tygodnik Powszechny' magazine. The author of the book 'Poznaj siebie. Spotkasz Boga' (Learn about yourself. You will meet God).

Priest Jacek Prusak: 'It is weird that the spokesman of the Polish Episcopate speaks about bishops' cars explaining why they have to drive expensive cars which only a handful of Poles could afford. Pope Francis speaks about real problems of modern societies – about loneliness and exclusion of the elderly, the unemployment of the young, who because of this have difficulties in finding their place in life. Unfortunately, the Church in Poland cannot properly diagnose problems from which it suffers'.

6. Piotr Mucharski is a journalist and publicist, the editor-in-chief of "Tygodnik Powszechny" magazine (a meeting with him took place under the 3rd Kielce Christian-Jewish Meetings Szema/Listen).

7. Zbigniew Nosowski, Stanisław Żak, Bogdan Białek – an evening devoted to Tadeusz Mazowiecki during Freedom and Peace Festival.

8. Michał Płoski, an icon writer, Jacek Dziubel, an ecumenical activist and a member of the Choir of St. Nicolas Orthodox Parish Church in Kielce, Bogdan Białek, the president of the Jan Karski Society.

Jacek Dziubel: 'Everyone who has read an Exhortation of Pope Francis will discover something unique. In this document I find thoughts that I have had for a long time, which were the expression of my opposition against the behaviours of certain people. For example, Pope's words that no one is exempted from the duty to accompany the poor, even when they explain that their pace of life makes it impossible, are of great importance to me'.



Fr. Romuald Jakub Weksler-Waszkinel



Fr. Jacek Prusak



From the left: Andrzej Białek, Bogdan Białek, Michał Płoski i Jacek Dziubel

Activity of Bogdan Białek in 2013



1. The organization, in cooperation with pastor Janusz Daszuta, chairman of the Kielce Ecumenical Council, of the 16th Day of Judaism. The celebrations were held at a Methodist church in Kielce. The audience sang songs in Polish and Hebrew and prayed together.

Bogdan Białek: 'This year's motto of the 16th Day of Judaism 'I am Joseph, your brother' was formulated on the basis of the story of Joseph presented in the Book of Genesis. The story is about dramatic events connected with Joseph's relations with his brothers. It introduces the concepts of blame, repentance and reconciliation. It is also a telling illustration of a significant but also difficult dialogue that takes place in this family'.

2. Awarding the Priest Roman Andrzejczyk Prize of the Polish Council of Christians and Jews to priest Stanisław Bartmiński from Krasieczyn, near Przemysł.

Priest Bartmiński has been working towards the Polish-Ukrainian reconciliation for many years. On many occasions he invited children from Ukraine to Poland for summer holidays. In the 1980s, he was engaged in the Solidarity movement whereas during the martial law he organized aid for the imprisoned. As a vicar, he had a forgotten Jewish cemetery situated in his parish renovated, at the entrance of which an inscription was placed 'To Our Older Brothers In Faith'. He also took care of Greek Orthodox shrines and organized common services for Catholics from two rites: Roman and Uniate.

3. The organization of a meeting with Fr. Morris Maurin, a French monk, member and superior of the order of Little Brothers of Jesus in Poland, at the Franciscan Monastery in Kielce.
4. A lecture on Christian meditation at the Cracow Club of 'Tygodnik Powszechny' magazine.
5. Participation in a debate 'Life in the Aftermath', organized by the Forum for Dialogue Among Nations. The film 'Pokłosie' (Aftermath) was presented during the debate, which was aimed at discussing problems of people who try to preserve the memory of Jews in small towns and villages. Apart from Bogdan Białek, Witold Dąbrowski, deputy director of Brama Grodzka Centre, NN Theatre in Lublin and Grzegorz Kamiński, a teacher and educator from Toszek (Gliwice poviát) participated in the debate.
6. Appointment to the Honorary Committee for the Celebration of the European Day of the Righteous. The Honorary Committee was founded by Prime Minister Tadeusz Mazowiecki for the first celebrations of the European Day of the Righteous on 6 March 2013. The Committee's objective is to promote the memory about the Righteous and the establishment of a Garden of Remembrance in Warsaw, similar to the one created by the Italian foundation GAWIRO. The appointment of Bogdan Białek was supported by his 'contribution to the Polish-Jewish dialogue'.
7. Lectures for the participants of the 8th Summer School on the Holocaust at the Jagiellonian University. The program of the School is a joint enterprise of Polish and foreign institutions, such as the Centre for Holocaust Studies at the Jagiellonian University, the Institute for European Studies at the Jagiellonian University, the Illinois Holocaust Museum and Education Centre, the Yad Vashem Institute in Jerusalem, the Jewish Museum Galicia in Kraków, in cooperation with the International Centre of Auschwitz and the Holocaust Education at

the National Museum Auschwitz-Birkenau in Auschwitz, the International House of Youth Meetings in Auschwitz and the Jewish Centre in Auschwitz.

8. Presentation entitled 'My way to the Christian-Jewish dialogue' during the meeting 'The Common Joy of Torah' at St. Andrew Bobola church in Warsaw.
9. Discussion with Jerzy Stępień, President of the Constitutional Court, about the film entitled 'Waleśa' at the 'Helios' cinema in Kielce during a special show for students from the Świętokrzyski region organized by 'Gazeta Wyborcza'.

'I am deeply moved by the film. Maybe because it shows those times just like I remember them. A beautiful film about the great man. It is a pity that it has been made so late', said Bogdan Bialek.

10. Appointment to the Council for the Prevention of Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance at the Ministry of Administration and Digitalization.
11. Lecture at an international conference in Zamość 'Jan Karski – Witness, Emissary, Man'.
12. Appointment to the deputy chairman of the Polish Council of Christians and Jews. The Council is presided by two persons, one representing Christians and the other Jews.

The Polish Council of Christians and Jews was established in 1989. Its main aim is to facilitate mutual understanding of Christians and Jews, overcome stereotypes, promote tolerance and deepen inter-religious contacts. The Council is a member of the International Council of Christians and Jews.

13. Organization of a regular event in Warsaw called 'Close Christian-Jewish Encounters' under the Polish Council of Christians and Jews.

During the first encounter, which took place in November at St. Andrew the Apostle and St. Albert Chmielowski church at Plac Teatralny 20 in Warsaw, rabbi Joel Chaim-Nowicki spoke about the attitude of Judaism to ethically controversial medical procedures. Priest m-trate Włodzimierz Misiejuk spoke about symbols of the Christian Orthodox liturgy. Julia Hartwig, a poet who read her poems about faith, was a special guest of the event.

14. Lecture entitled 'What is the importance of the meeting with Judaism for Christianity?', under the Dominican Faith School at the Dominican Monastery in Wrocław.
15. Chairing a debate organized on the initiative of Cardinal Kazimierz Nycz under the series of debates entitled 'Thinking with Wojtyła...'. The meeting, connected with the future canonization of John Paul II took place at the Warsaw Archbishops' House. Doctor Anna Karoń-Ostrowska from 'Więź' magazine, professor Karol Tarnowski, philosopher from the Pope John Paul II Institute, and Wojciech Eichelberger, psychotherapist, participated in the debate.

16. Meetings with groups from Israel at the Jewish cemetery in Kielce and in places connected with the history of Kielce Jews.



From the left: Janusz Kędracki („Gazeta Wyborcza”), Bogdan Bialek, Jerzy Stępień

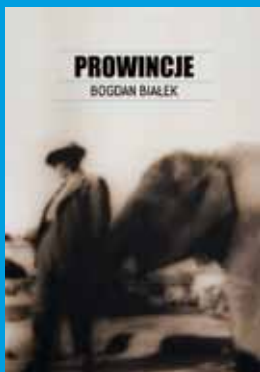




- A testimony of painstaking and persistent work for the understanding between Poles and Jews, of speaking the truth about the history of the two nations and overcoming stereotypes.

- A detailed account of changes in the thinking of Poles about Poland and the world, about other people and other nations.

- A moving picture of the most significant Polish complexes and stereotypes, which are still present in the social and political life of modern Poland.



- A discerning description of Poland at the beginning of the 1980s,

- A recollection of events which are gradually blurring in the human memory,

- A moving reflection on the man's fate entangled in overwhelming social and political processes

'Cienie i ślady' (Shadows and Traces) and 'Prowincje' (Provinces) are the books written by Bogdan Białek, published in the summer 2013 by the Charaktery Publishing House. The publications were connected with the 40th anniversary of Białek's journalistic work. The texts were selected and edited by Piotr Żak.

Bogdan Białek (born 1955) is the president of the Jan Karski Society, a psychologist, founder and editor-in-chief of the Charaktery magazine. As a journalist, he started his work in August 1973 at 'Gazeta Białostocka' newspaper. He moved to Kielce in 1979, after graduating from the Jagiellonian University, Faculty of Psychology. In 1980, he founded one of the first Solidarity paper entitled 'Notes' and became its editor-in-chief. He also worked at the Higher Pedagogical School in Kielce and the Jagiellonian University. In the middle of the 1980s, he cooperated with the Institute of Health Psychology. However, he decided to abandon psychology and in 1990 he created the first regional supplement to 'Gazeta Wyborcza' newspaper. In 1997, after leaving 'Gazeta Wyborcza', he founded and started publishing 'Charaktery', the first Polish psychological magazine 'for everyone'. In time, he established the Charaktery Publishing House, which, apart from its flagship 'Charaktery' magazine, publishes other psychological magazines and books. For many years, he has been involved in Polish-Jewish and Christian-Jewish reconciliation.

On the pages of 'Cienie i ślady' we will find an account of a persistent battle with the virus of anti-Semitism, with a great defence mechanism of denial which has settled until today in the Polish awareness; the battle which is also the testimony, as Wiesław Mysliwski opines, of great sensitivity of the Author to everything that leads to the harm of the ordinary man.

Piotr Gajdowski, 'Lampa' magazine, September 2013

Marek Edelman's dedication to Bogdan Białek: 'To a man who has changed the face of Kielce'. To be praised by Edelman is not so simple.

Anna Bikont, 'Gazeta Wyborcza' magazine (28-29 September, 2013)

The texts included in 'Prowincje' constitute classics of social-interventional reportage, which is gradually disappearing because it is characteristic of, generally speaking, the time of mass scale degradation. Some people, especially the young ones, might find this statement surprising, as we speak about the beginning of the 1990s, about the time in which Poland was becoming sovereign, the time which is officially regarded as the one of great hopes, joy and actions. The prose of life, especially in the provinces, was quite different though. The reportages of Bogdan Białek paint a picture of depressing greyness, impossibility and the fear of tomorrow. This state of spirit triggers the worst features in people, and not only in those who lose something as a result of changes, but also those who in their fight for life or a better position take advantage of different sorts of methods, even the most undignified ones. It is a picture showing almost a complete social disintegration, showing people who, with great meanness, pull this worn-out cloth in their direction. In this collection of depressing pictures there is some optimism, however. Thanks to them we realize how long a path we have travelled in the last 20 years, irrespective of the fact that we do not really know how we have done it.

Andrzej Zieliński, 'Nowe Książki' magazine, February 2014.

Year of Jan Karski

The Parliament of the Republic of Poland declared 2014 to be the Year of Jan Karski.

'It is a very good decision and I hope it will make Jan Karski more popular as, despite his great merits, he is still little known and underrated in Poland. Here, in Kielce, we have been trying to spread the knowledge about our patron for many years. We undertake various initiatives. For example, in 2005 in the main street of the city we unveiled a monument of Jan Karski, we also organized exhibitions and contests about this great man and also a reunion of schools bearing his name,' said Bogdan Białek.

The most recent contest announced by the Jan Karski Society in December is the 'Jan Karski's Bench'. It is a literary contest addressed to secondary school students. It comprises two stages and the results will be published in September. The outcome of the contest will be a book of personal opinions of the Kielce young generation, inspired by the life, mission and achievements of Jan Karski.



The Jan Karski Society was established in March 2005. Its main aim is to conduct activities for the promotion of the attitude of openness and respect towards people and groups of different race, ethnical, national, religious or cultural identity; fighting with all forms of anti-Semitism, xenophobia, racism and other attitudes that undermine human dignity; undertaking actions for the protection of Polish national heritage, monitoring and condemning all incidents of its violation.

*Dear Friends, Dear Sir/Madam,
We will be most grateful for any support you can give to the Jan Karski Society. All funds raised will be used only in order to realize our statutory objectives.*



In winter 2006, together with the Conference of the Episcopate of Poland, we organized in Kielce the national celebrations of the 9th National Day of Judaism.

In front of the house where the Pogrom took place we unveiled a commemorative plaque with the words of Pope John Paul II prayer during his stay in Jerusalem, when he asked Jews to forgive Christians for their sins and called for reconciliation. During the ceremony, Władysław Bartoszewski said: 'The citizens of Kielce can now walk with pride because this city shows everyone in Poland how to deal with difficult problems of the history. (...) Kielce is the first place in Poland which, since we were allowed to speak the truth, has found a way out of lies and cons...'



On 5 July, 2010 a renovated monument of the victims of the Kielce Pogrom was unveiled on the initiative of the Jan Karski Society.

The costs of the monument's construction were covered by private persons from Kielce and the members of Kielce homeland association in Israel and the USA. In 2013, the monument was visited by 20,000 young Israelis.



Marches of Remembrance and Reconciliation in the streets of Kielce, organized annually on 4 July (the anniversary of the Pogrom of 1946) play a special role in the activities of the Society. Their aim is to remind us about the tragic past but also to symbolise reconciliation. The Society organized the march for the first time in 2005. Before then, the gatherings had been private initiatives of Bogdan Białek and Janusz Daszuta.

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