

to the real Wailing Wall (also known as the Western Wall). This has already happened with many notes from Kielce, which have already been delivered to Jerusalem thanks to rabbi Schudrich.



THE OFFICIAL OPENING of the Room of Blessings was preceded by the unveiling of the bust of Jan Karski, which was a gift to the Institute for the Culture of Encounter and Dialogue from Professor Karol Badyna of the Academy of Fine Arts in Krakow. The same artist also created the Kielce “Karski bench”, the first such sculpture to appear in Poland back in 2005.

DURING THIS EVENT, which we organized as part of the 20<sup>th</sup> National Day of Judaism, our special guest from Argentina rabbi Abraham Skórka said: “I am hugely impressed by everything which is taking place today in Kielce. It is all incredibly important to me, but also above all to Kielce itself, which is of such profound importance to Jewish-Polish relations and heritage. May God bless the organizers for the work which has been carried out in this town.”

ON THE 27<sup>TH</sup> OF JANUARY 2017, the Jan Karski Society once again organized special celebrations connected with the international Holocaust Remembrance Day in Kielce. Our prayers included our Jewish neighbors who died in death camps and ghettos. The meeting began by the Menorah monument (erected by my family) dedicated to the victims of the Kielce ghetto. Next, we mentioned Irena Sendlerowa – the square opposite the

town house at 7 Planty Street is named after her. The subsequent part of our prayer was by the bench dedicated to Karski and the plaque with a prayer by Pope John Paul II, which he had inserted into the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem. The places named above are part of a route of remembrance which includes places connected with the tragic history of Jews of Kielce and those who tried to stop the Holocaust.

EACH OF THESE INITIATIVES required substantial financial resources. We are doing everything in our power to secure funds, but we cannot manage everything by ourselves. We will be eternally grateful for any assistance, financial or otherwise. We will use it to continue our work for the benefit of the residents of the city, but also all those who are striving to create dialogue and reconciliation.

Bogdan Białek  
PRESIDENT OF THE JAN KARSKI SOCIETY

Jan Karski Society  
25-508 Kielce, ul. Planty 7, Poland  
Account number:  
Deutsche Bank Polska S.A. 00-609 Warszawa  
ul. Armii Ludowej 26  
Swift Code: DEUTPLPX  
Deposits in PLN:  
PL28 1910 1048 2116 2981 3042 0001  
Deposits in USD:  
PL71 1910 1048 2116 2981 3042 0003

e-mail: [biuro@jankarski.org.pl](mailto:biuro@jankarski.org.pl)  
tel. +48 412010238  
[www.jankarski.org.pl](http://www.jankarski.org.pl)



## Jan Karski Society



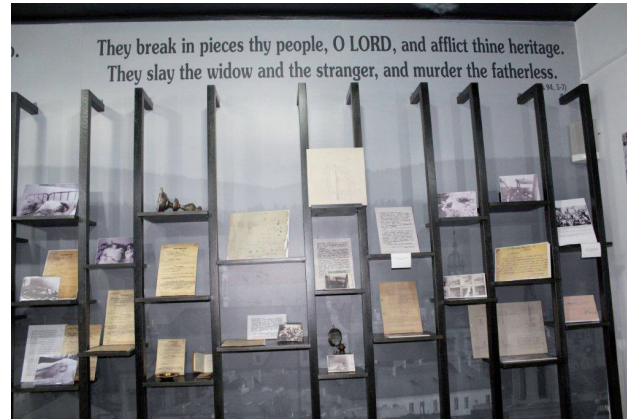


THE JAN KARSKI SOCIETY will this year begin its 12<sup>th</sup> year of activities. For the past two years, the home of our organization has been a town house at no 7 Planty St in Kielce – on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July 1946, the Jewish residents of this address were murdered, an atrocity carried out by the local militia, army and civilians. Although it is forever marked by traumatic memories, it is also a place where, prior to WWII, the culture and tradition of the local Jewish community was very much alive and well.

THANKS TO OUR WORK, this town house has become a home for memory, dialogue and reconciliation, a mission carried out by the Institute for the Culture of Encounter and Dialogue, which we set up there. On the 4<sup>th</sup> of July 2016, the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Kielce pogrom, our Society's headquarters became a gallery, home to the permanent exhibition titled *Remember the former things of old*, dedicated to the victims of the pogrom. Alongside factual information about what transpired there, it also features



documents from the investigation and selected court files. We also use the exhibition to show the broader historical context and the general mood which prevailed following the end of the War. The exhibition is innovative and dynamic in its design. In time, it will be regularly updated and expanded. The exhibition also features content relating to the history of the Jewish community in Kielce, dating back to when they began to settle in our town in the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. This part of the exhibition includes artifacts which we managed to secure, not without effort. These include a relief sculpture of a lion saved from a wartime fire which once was used to decorate the Kielce synagogue, the *Atar* and *tefillin*, the stamp of the Security Forces of the Kielce ghetto, a cover for the Torah (meil) which comes from the Chmielnik region, and our most prized possession – a Torah scroll. The *Rodale* came to us from Łomża (in the east of Poland) from a most surprising source. It was found by Mr Piotr Bańkowski in the Kielce town square back in January of 1945 and was for many years kept by the Łomża Research Institute. The original ram skin had become worn out and the *Rodale* has now been handed over for restoration.



I AM APPEALING ON BEHALF of our Society for gifts of any artifacts relating to religion, culture, tradition and every day life of the Jews of Kielce. They will be exhibited with all due care, becoming a prized part of our exhibition. After the show featuring information about the Kielce pogrom was unveiled, we saw how much of an impression it made on visitors, and so I have decided to include in it a special place of contemplation, reflection and meditation. Visitors need the right sort of space in



which to pause between the exhibition and exiting back out onto the streets. This space has been named the Room of Blessings and was officially opened on the 15<sup>th</sup> of January 2017 in the presence of the Kielce bishop Jan Piotrowski, the Chief Rabbi of Poland Michael Schudrich and rabbi Abraham Skórka from Argentina (a friend of Pope Francis), whose grandparents came from Końskie, near Kielce. In the Room of Blessings one can read and meditate upon the words taken from the Sermon on the Mount, the Book of Psalms (fragments of the Jewish morning prayers), as well as those pronounced by Pope Francis, rabbi Michael Schudrich and those composed especially for us by rabbi Abraham Skórka and bishop Jan Piotrowski. In the window of the Room of Blessings we have installed a remarkable stained glass window representing “the tree of life”, and next to that a replica of the Wailing Wall, where anyone who visits can leave behind their own blessing. We will collect these blessings at regular intervals and send them to Jerusalem, to our friends who will take them

