

Welcome to the inaugural edition of *Insight*, the official newsletter of the Australian Society of Polish Jews and Their Descendants.

As this publication is a major vehicle for showcasing our *raison d'être*, this issue contains a brief history of our organization as well as our Mission Statement and clearly defined aims and objectives.

As it happens, this is also my final official 'pronouncement' as President of the ASPJ, so I will allow myself the indulgence of reflecting on the work of our Board over the past three years.

Whether in the corporate world or in the not for profit sector, the success of any organization hinges on the nature of the relationships it develops. To put it simply, the question of how can we get along with one another? becomes one of personal, communal and international importance.

For Socrates, who believed that the unexamined life was not worth living, the quality of a person's love and friendship was a measure of his or her goodness. It is clear from this dictum that truth and honesty must be integral in developing close relationships. Also, the quality of our relationships affects our perceptions of our world and ourselves. Indeed, to understand what it is to be a person or a community in the world, we must look to the particular ways in which it is possible to stand in relation to others.

The concept of reciprocity is also central to good relationships. Real friendship is a moral relationship, one with no hidden agenda where understanding and rationality are the two vital ingredients.

As an organization which has had to adapt to the passing of time and therefore to the needs of its remaining founding members, the younger generation of our community and the changes in global, social and political circumstances, the statement above is an indication of the philosophical foundations upon which my actions are determined.

With a like-minded and outstanding Board, the ASPJ has developed very close ties with the non-Jewish Polish community at diplomatic, government and communal levels.

From the beginning, we have had the full support of the Israeli and the Polish Embassies in Canberra. Their Excellencies Yuval Rotem and Andrzej Jarossznski respectively, have worked tirelessly to promote a greater understanding of the history of Polish Jewry and of the current relationship between Israel and Poland. Also from the Diplomatic Corps, Mr. Daniel Gromann, Consul General of the Republic of Poland and Dr. George Luk-Kozica, Hon. Consul General of the Republic of Poland have been very active in fostering strong ties between the Polish and Jewish Communities in Australia.

On a community level, praise must be given to Mr. Christopher Lancucki AM, President of the Polish Community Council of Victoria and his Board, who have worked very closely not only with our organization but also with the Jewish Holocaust Centre and other JCCV affiliates.

The Australian Institute of Polish Affairs, a long time friend and supporter of the Jewish Community has continued to press forward

and in joint ventures has unflinchingly and with great integrity raised publicly contentious issues regarding Polish - Jewish relations. This honest approach in exploring the myths and realities within our mutual history has allowed for a truly deep friendship to flourish.

Polish House "Syrena" under the Presidency of Zygmund Bielinski and his most welcoming and hospitable Board have partnered and hosted a number of our functions and most importantly, allows for a meeting place where ordinary, non-titled, non-community leaders can meet and exchange views. It is at this strata of society where true heartfelt progress is made. Academics and leaders can shape and set policy, but it is the mindset of the individual citizen of the community that shapes the success or failure of policy.

Negotiations are now underway with President Andrew Korab of Polish House Albion to have similar exchanges of cultural and educational programs.

I would also like to acknowledge my gratitude to Mrs. Pauline Rockman, President of the Jewish Holocaust Centre and to its CEO Mr. Warren Fineberg, for their help in fostering closer relations with the Polish Community.

My gratitude also to the Lamm Jewish Library of Australia, for accepting our books, magazines and DVDs as part of its collection, the Kadimah for the use of their wonderful facilities and the JCCV for its support since the formation of the World Federation of Polish Jews over fifty years ago.

A big thank you to all Board members for the tremendous achievements each one of you achieved in his/her portfolio.

To Izydor Marmur thank you for your amazing support, loyalty and hard work as Vice President. In particular, you have achieved outstanding results in your portfolio of liaising with the Australian Polish Community and the closeness in our relationship is largely due to

your efforts.

To Andrew Rajcher, Treasurer and Chair of liaison with the Jewish Community in Poland. Your generosity and input have literally been awesome. I believe you have more contacts in Poland than most Australian diplomats posted there. It is through your efforts that both the Polish and Jewish communities in Australia are able to be kept informed with current events in Poland and that we can in some small way help support our brothers and sisters in this steadily growing community.

Last but not least, to our devoted administrative guru, our Secretary par excellence, Lena Fiszman. No organizational matter, function or event would achieve success unless under the diligent eye of Lena. You are often the unsung hero of our organization. As I am no Pavarotti I won't start singing now, but indeed all of us truly recognize your hard work and very special skills.

Thank you to everyone for a most fulfilling last three years and I am sure we will keep growing and contributing to our constituents.

Bernard M Brzegowski-Korbman

"Australian Society of Polish Jews and Their Descendants is dedicated to preserving and promoting the historical and cultural heritage of Jewish life in Poland and to fostering understanding between current and future generations of the Polish and Jewish communities"

The Australian Society of Polish Jews and Their Descendants, previously known as the World Federation of Polish Jews (WFOPJ) is an organisation founded by Jewish Holocaust survivors from Poland. Their aim was to create a self-help group which would look after the physical, emotional and cultural needs of the remnants of a once expansive, diverse and vibrant community decimated by the Holocaust.

The Jewish Holocaust Centre in Melbourne, a world-renowned institution dedicated to combating anti-Semitism and any form of prejudice wherever it occurs, is a living testament to the vision and legacy of the founders of the WFOPJ.

Two generations on, the children of Polish Jews who sought a safe haven in Australia feel the need to better understand the rich and complex history of Jews in Poland. We feel an urgency to ensure that the unique and dynamic contribution by the Jewish community to Polish culture and identity is never forgotten by Poles and Jews alike, including those Poles who live in the Polish diaspora. And, finally, we wish to contribute meaningfully to the new emerging Jewish community in Poland and to Poland itself.



Australian Society of Polish Jews
and Their Descendants Inc.

Our aim is:

- To educate and promote an understanding of Polish/Jewish relations throughout history
- To instil within future generations an understanding and an appreciation of their heritage
- To engage in dialogue with Polish Communities, both within Australia and internationally
- To promote an understanding of modern Poland and Jewish life within it
- To support the Jewish community within Poland
- To host relevant speakers, exhibitions, cultural and educational events
- To co-operate with organisations with similar aims and objectives.

Ruth Pearce. Former Australian Ambassador to Poland



Members of both the Jewish and Polish communities filled the meeting hall at Dom Polski "Syrena" in Rowville, on Sunday 25th March 2012.

They heard former Ambassador Ruth Pearce speak of her personal experiences and impressions during her three and a half year tenure as the Australian Ambassador to Poland.

Ms Pearce told the audience of her positive impressions of today's Polish society. She spoke of the warmth with which she was received throughout the country and also of the re-emerging Jewish community there and

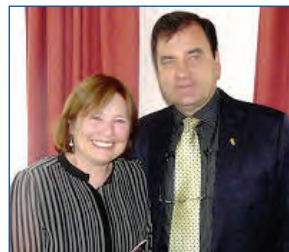
the steps that are being taken to preserve the history of Jews in Poland and the lasting legacy of their contribution to Polish culture.



The afternoon was hosted in conjunction with the Polish Community Council of Victoria and the Eastern Districts Polish Association (Melbourne). The ASPJ thanks both organisations for co-hosting the event.

This was the ASPJ's first major event to be held at Dom Polski "Syrena" and we look forward to being able

to organise more such successful events, together with both organisations, into the future.



Tuesday 13th November 2012

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING and presentation of the HENRYK SŁAWIK AWARD

to a person who has made an outstanding contribution towards the betterment of Polish-Jewish relations

This year the recipients are:

Krystyna Duszniak & Lucyna Artymiuk

7:15pm for the AGM, 8:00pm for the Slawik Award

Jewish Cultural Centre and National Library Kadimah
7 Selwyn Street Elsternwick 3185

Online Bookings: www.polishjews.org.au

Enquiries: Bernard Korbman 0418 194 802
Lena Fiszman 0413 351 852 (AH)

Visit to Melbourne of Rabbi Maciej Pawlak. Poland's First Post-war Polish-born Orthodox Rabbi



The ASPJ was privileged to host Rabbi Maciej Pawlak's visit to Melbourne during the first week of June 2012. Rabbi Pawlak's visit was intended to highlight the fact that there is an emerging Jewish community in today's Poland and that, like him, every day in Poland, someone else discovers their own Jewish identity.



Rabbi Pawlak "in conversation" with Zeddy Lawrence, National Editor of the "Australian Jewish News".

During his visit, Rabbi Pawlak was Guest Rabbi at the Caulfield Beth Hamedrash, Caulfield Hebrew Congregation and Mizrahi Synagogue.

As part of his tour through Melbourne's Beth Weizmann Jewish Community Centre, Rabbi Pawlak was invited to affix the mezuzah on the new offices of the Jewish Community Council of Victoria.

The JCCV also hosted an Afternoon Tea in his honour during which Rabbi Pawlak met many of our community professionals.



The highlight of the week was the public function, held in Melbourne's Holocaust Museum and Research Centre, in which the audience of about 150 listened to



While in Melbourne, Rabbi Pawlak also visited Mount Scopus College's Burwood and East St,Kilda campuses, Bialik College and Yavneh College's Elsternwick campus.

The ASPJ wishes to sincerely thank all those organisations and individuals who either took part during events held during Rabbi Pawlak's visit or who hosted him within their organisations and/or their homes.



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Australian Society of Polish Jews
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News From Poland

Warsaw's Jewish Museum Set to Open October 2013



Warsaw's Museum of the History of Polish Jews is set to be officially opened in October 2013.

The official opening will take place about a year later than originally planned. Financial shortages caused the delay but, with new generous donations coming from both Jewish and non-Jewish sources, it's now full steam ahead to complete the project.

The building, a modern structure in glass and limestone, was designed by Finnish architects Rainer Mahlamaki and Ilmari Lahdelma and its ultimate cost will come close to \$100 million.

Located in parkland opposite the Warsaw Ghetto monument, the new museum is expected to attract around half a million visitors in its first year and will feature not only permanent and temporary exhibits, but will house areas with interactive learning centres for all ages.

For more information, the Museum's website is www.jewishmuseum.org.pl

Australian Rabbi Farewells Warsaw Jewish Community



Australian born Rabbi Daniel Simons and Rebbetzin Shoshana have left Poland after working for three years with the Jewish community of Warsaw.

Originally from Sydney, during his time in Poland, Rabbi Simons helped to establish a Kollel and weekly meetings of the Beit Midrash.

Rabbi Simons also often officiated on Shabbat and during holidays at Warsaw's Nożyk Synagogue.

Rebbetzin Shoshana, soon after joining her husband in Poland in 2009, was active in organising events for women, including monthly meetings every Rosh Chodesh.

23rd Singer's Warsaw Jewish Festival



As in previous years, the Festival, held from August 25th until September 2nd 2012, took place around Grzybowski Square and Próżna Street in central Warsaw, as well as the cafes along the Wisła River and in Praga district.

In addition to the musical and theatrical events, this year's program featured over two hundred other cultural events, including exhibitions, workshops, literary gatherings and film screenings.

Organised by the Shalom Foundation, the Festival is dedicated in memory of Isaac Bashevis Singer.