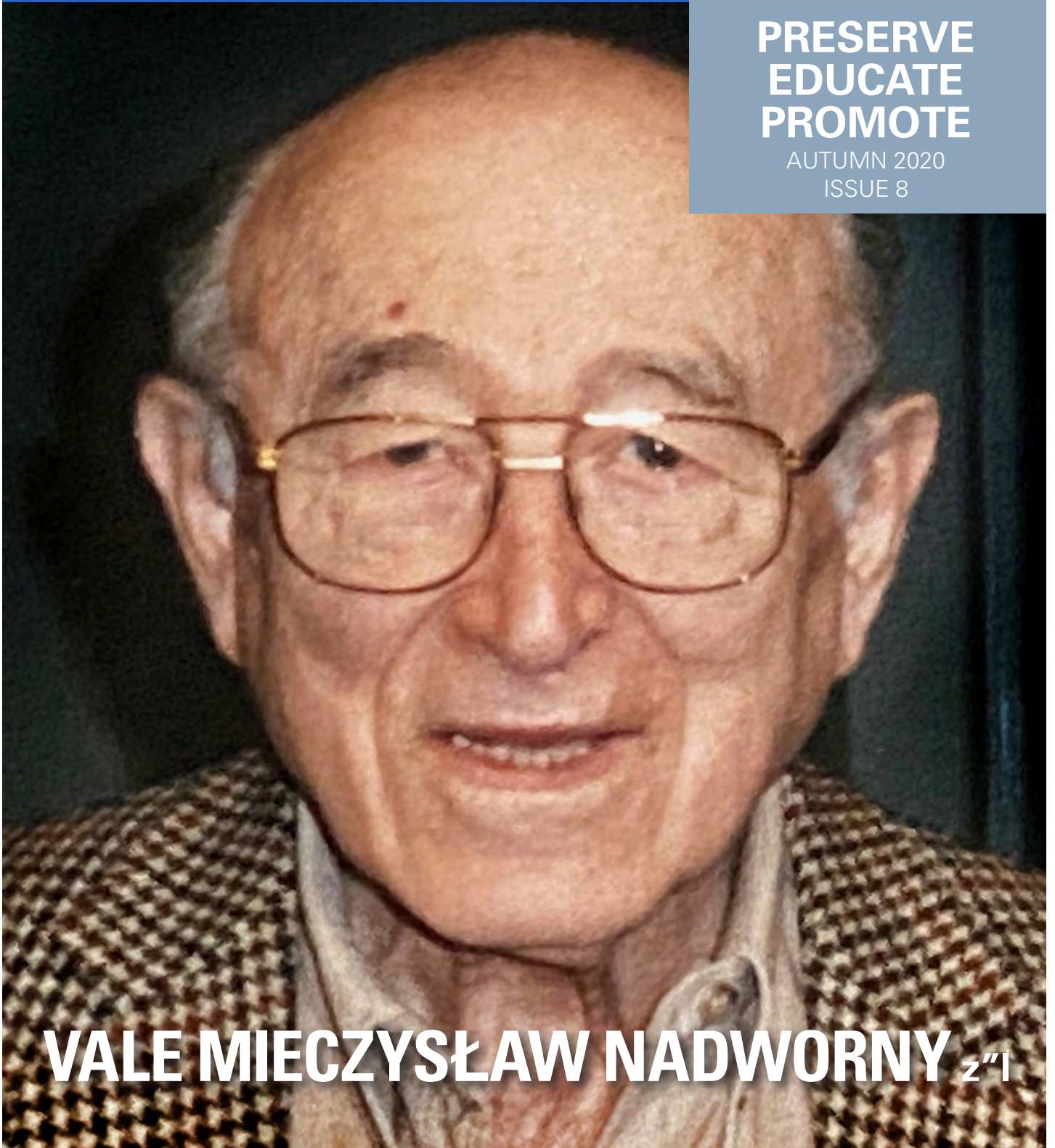


**PRESERVE
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AUTUMN 2020
ISSUE 8



VALE MIECZYŚŁAW NADWORNÝ „I

IN THIS ISSUE	My Thoughts	Page 2-4	Both sides of my family were Polish Jews	Page 16-17
	Welcome to 2020	Page 5	Violent Antisemitic Incidents	Page 18
	Henryk Sławik Award 2020	Page 6-8	People Not Numbers Project	Page 19
	Jews in the Warsaw Uprising	Page 9-10	Greatest Jewish Poet	Page 20-21
	Pabianice Landsmanshaft	Page 11	Liberation of Auschwitz Commemoration	Page 22-23
	Vale Mieczysław Nadworný	Page 12-13	Costa Prize Book of the Year.	Page 24
	Yiddish Theatre in Australia	Page 14-15	Vale Zbigniew Ryszard Leman	Page 24

MY THOUGHTS



Bernard Korbman
Co-President and CEO

The Big Lie

In the big lie there is always a certain force of credibility; because the broad masses of a nation are always more easily

corrupted in the deeper strata of their emotional nature than consciously or voluntarily; and thus in the primitive simplicity of their minds they more readily fall victims to the big lie than the small lie, since they themselves often tell small lies in little matters but would be ashamed to resort to large-scale falsehoods.

It would never come into their heads to fabricate colossal untruths, and they would not believe that others could have the impudence to distort the truth so infamously. Even though the facts which prove this to be so may be brought clearly to their minds, they will still doubt and waver and will continue to think that there may be some other explanation. For the grossly impudent lie always leaves traces behind it, even after it has been nailed down, a fact which is known to all expert liars in this world and to all who conspire together in the art of lying.

Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, vol. I, ch. X

The big lie is alive and well throughout the world. It seems that in this post-truth era, one can say anything one wants. Often, truth has become fake-news, or is at the mercy of those in power. As in the Orwellian world of "1984", facts and memory count for little, and are white-washed by propagandist party hacks.

Below, are three articles, written by historians and journalists, who are concerned about the eradication of history for the sole purpose of nationalistic jingoism and narcissism.

Lithuania's Big Lie

A Lithuanian parliament committee is drafting legislation

declaring that neither the Baltic nation nor its leaders participated in the Holocaust, a lawmaker working on the bill said.

Arūnas Gumuliauskas, chairman of the Freedom Fights and State Historical Memory Commission at the Seimas, made the statement at a conference last month.

The Simon Wiesenthal Centre's Eastern Europe director, Efraim Zuroff, protested the planned legislation, calling it an "outrage" and the "final stage of a long attempt to whitewash massive complicity by Lithuanians" in the murder of more than 95 percent of about 250,000 Jews who had lived in Lithuania when the Nazis invaded in 1941.

The bill will be titled "**The Lithuanian state, which was occupied in 1940-1990, did not participate in the Holocaust,**" according to Gumuliauskas. He is a member of Prime Minister Saulius Skvernelis' Lithuanian Farmers and Greens Union party.

"The Lithuanian state did not participate in the Holocaust because it was occupied, just as the Lithuanian nation could not participate in the Holocaust because it was enslaved," Gumuliauskas was quoted as saying at the conference. "But individual representatives are obviously involved, and it is up to the court to decide."

The US Holocaust Memorial Museum has a different view of the Holocaust in Lithuania.

"The Lithuanians carried out violent riots against the Jews," it writes. "In June and July 1941, detachments of German Einsatzgruppen, together with Lithuanian auxiliaries, began murdering the Jews of Lithuania."

Zuroff said he hoped "common sense will prevail, and the legislation is dropped."

Cnaan Liphshiz *The Times of Israel* 4 January 2020

Putin's Big Lie

In a series of comments in late December, the Russian president appeared to blame Poland for the outbreak of the Second World War.

In the opening scene of the most famous Polish movie of the past two decades, a crowd of anxious, desperate

people—on foot, riding bikes, leading horses, carrying bundles—walks onto a bridge. To their immense surprise, they see another group of anxious, desperate people heading toward them, walking from the opposite direction. “People, what are you doing?!” one man shouts. “Turn back! The Germans are behind us!” But from the other side, someone else shouts, “The Soviets attacked us at dawn!” and both sides keep walking. General confusion ensues.

This scene takes place on September 17, 1939, the day of the Soviet invasion of Poland; the Germans had invaded two and a half weeks earlier. The movie is *Katyn*. The director, the late Andrzej Wajda, had long wanted to film that scene on a bridge, a visual representation of what happened to the whole country in 1939, when Poland was caught between two invading armies whose dictators had jointly agreed to wipe Poland off the map.

Even while that joint invasion was unfolding, both dictators were already lying about it. The agreement to create a new German-Soviet border in the middle of Poland, as well as to consign Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, and Finland to a “Soviet sphere of interest,” was part of a secret protocol to the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, the nonaggression deal between Hitler and Stalin signed on August 23. The secret protocol was found in Nazi archives after the war, though the Soviet Union went on denying that it existed for many decades.

Each side also manufactured special lies of its own. The Germans sponsored an entire false-flag operation, involving fake Polish soldiers—SS officers in Polish uniforms—who launched an orchestrated attack on a German radio station and broadcast anti-German messages. American newspaper correspondents were summoned to the scene and shown some corpses, which in fact belonged to prisoners, murdered especially for the occasion. This “crime,” together with a few other staged “attacks,” composed Hitler’s formal excuse for the invasion of Poland. On August 22, he told his generals not to worry about the legality of the operation: “I will provide a propagandistic *casus belli*. Its credibility doesn’t matter. The victor will not be asked whether he

told the truth.”

<https://www.theatlantic.com/author/anne-applebaum/>

The populist rewriting of Polish history is a warning to us all

The courts are hardly the best place to adjudicate on the lessons of history. Universities, academies, libraries and museums are surely more suited to such debates. So, let me explain how things got to this point.

The Gdańsk Museum of the Second World War opened in 2017 to some fanfare; its distinguishing and unconventional features were to be its special focus both on the global context of the war and on the fate of civilians in the bloody conflict. The main exhibition took eight years to put together. The American historian



Timothy Snyder called the project a “civilisational achievement” and “perhaps the most ambitious museum devoted to the second world war in any country”.

But the populists who had come to power in Poland’s elections two years earlier found this unbearable, preferring to promote a version of events that would airbrush real history and glorify the nation instead. Soon enough the minister of culture and national heritage, Piotr Gliński, dismissed the Gdańsk museum director, Paweł

Machcewicz . A new director, Karol Nawrocki, was duly installed who set about altering the main exhibition – without consulting its authors. The revised approach was to tack closely to government guidelines giving emphasis to a glorification of Polish military actions and to cast Poland as a righteous nation: the museum would be a monument to national martyrology.

Nawrocki, for example, replaced a filmed summary of civilians' experiences in the war with another film altogether, in which the soundtrack includes claims that can only be described as propaganda, with phrases such as: "we saved Jews"; "we give life in the name of dignity and freedom"; "we were betrayed"; "the pope gave hope of victory"; "communists lose"; "we won" and "we do not beg for freedom, we fight for it".

This is populist history. Populist historians tell people – especially those who have voted for them – what they want to hear about the past. Remembering the war is a zero-sum game to them: it's about winners and losers. They care little about the complexities and even less about acknowledging dark chapters of Poland's collective past. What have we really learned from the past?

But for populist historians – and not only in Poland – history is not about learning lessons; it is either a plaything to salve national complexes or a weapon to use in foreign policy (for example, in Polish-Ukrainian or Polish-Israeli relations).

Machcewicz along with the museum's other founding historians, Janusz Marszalec, Rafał Wnuk and Piotr M Majewski, responded to all this with a loud "no". They have sued the new director of the museum over the infringement of their copyright for the exhibition's content and managed to halt other changes to the museum. Machcewicz, describes this saga as "Poland's most important dispute about history in years".

The case, which the courts have yet to rule on, is the first of its kind in Poland and probably in Europe. I can't

think of another example of an exhibition mounted by a major museum being censored by a government because it pays too much attention to civilians and because it insufficiently glorifies the nation. It feels more like the standards that would be applied in Putin's Russia than in a democratic member state of the European Union.

The late Leszek Kołakowski, one of Poland's greatest philosophers, wrote in his essay, *Doctor Faustus*: "We learn about the past to know how to

recognise around us those faces touched by its worst legacy." To me, a young Pole, this surely is the best definition of the point of studying history. It will hardly surprise you that communist censors didn't let Kołakowski publish those words. And now, 30 years after the communist regime collapsed in Poland, history is again being manipulated for political motives. It's as if only one version – that approved by a right-wing government that has overseen countless acts of democratic backsliding is acceptable. Anyone who sees things differently is deemed a public enemy.

When I started looking into the Gdańsk museum dispute as a news story, it felt like a good issue to report – especially as I had studied history at university and am passionate about it. But gradually it became something more deeply personal; I realised that this was about our collective values. And it should be personal for anyone who cares about pluralism and free debate. This is a battle to safeguard history that's not written in black and white, nor aimed at serving a political agenda, but history that inspires us to make connections between the past and today's world. Big words, you might say. But those four historians who are taking on the government have picked a fight that goes far beyond the future of one museum. This has a European meaning. It concerns us all.

Estera Flieger is a journalist with Polish newspaper *Gazeta Wyborcza*

HAPPY NEW YEAR AND WELCOME TO 2020



Izydor Marmur
Co-Vice President

As we are starting the new year we are reviewing the past year, learning from it and planning for an even more successful future.

I reflect on the many projects, meetings,

activities and discussions that took place in 2019.

Listed below are some of the major activities ASPJ held, and were a part of, last year:

December: ASPJ Henryk Sławik Award night

November: Polish Festival at Federation Square

August: ASPJ Genealogy Open Day

August: ASPJ Meeting with the new Australian ambassador to Poland

April: ASPJ Inaugural Oration

April: Katyn-Syberia Memorial Ceremony

February: Polish Sports Festival

More often than not the response has been very positive. Of course, there has also been criticism. We are always willing to accept constructive criticism and engage with those that have a different opinion to us. Through engaging in respectful dialogue we can look forward to better outcomes.

In the past years we wrote, spoke about and confronted actions and opinions by those who threaten the positive relationship between the Polish and Jewish communities in Australia. We will continue to take to task any government, organisation or individual intent on dividing and causing distrust between us. We are committed to expose lies and misinformation wherever it originates, and always seek to present the truth.

ASPJ is not aligned with any political party or ideology.

Over the past years we have formed many friendships and have developed strong working relationships with the Polish Community Council of Victoria, Jewish Community Council of Victoria, Victorian Parliament, religious communities, diplomatic circles both here and in Poland, and other like minded people.

There have been and there will be many challenges facing us both here and abroad. But we will continue in our commitment to build on our achievements and hope that others will join us in our quest for harmonious relations between the Polish and Jewish communities in our unique multicultural Australia.

Whether a personal story, poem, opinion or constructive criticism of our articles, we welcome our readers' contribution to the *Haynt* newsletter. If we deem it suitable to our newsletter it will be published.

Finally, I would like to wish our readers a very Happy New Year.

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ASPJ HENRYK SŁAWIK AWARDS 2019



Natalie Suleyman MP addressing the audience following the presentation of the Henryk Sławik Award

By Karen Pakula

Natalie Suleyman has a uniquely broad view of society. A first-generation Turkish-Cypriot Australian, she is the first Muslim woman to be elected to the Victorian Parliament. As the voice of the west Melbourne electorate of St Albans, she co-founded the parliamentary Friends of Poland Group. And behind the scenes, she is an advocate of ASPJ.

In recognition of her support of Polish and Jewish communities, Natalie has received the 2019 Henryk Sławik Award, becoming the first outsider recipient of the prize since its establishment in 2011. "Natalie fights for diversity, cohesion and inclusion," said ASPJ President Bernard Korbman, presenting the award in December. "Natalie fights for more than tolerance; she fights for acceptance. In her world, the 'other' does not exist."

At the ceremony at the Beth Weizmann Community Centre, Natalie was surrounded by well-wishers and dignitaries from politics and the Polish, Turkish and Jewish communities, including the Polish Consul-General Monika Konczyk, Jewish Community Council of Victoria President Jennifer Huppert as well as diplomatic representatives from Turkey.

In a heartfelt speech, she addressed the crucial role of dialogue between multicultural and multi-faith

communities, especially during such challenging times as these early years of the 21st century. "Interfaith engagement helps us all to learn more about similarities, but also helps us identify our differences," she said. "It is powerful because it allows people to respect one another and work for the greater good of our communities."

"There is no denying that we are currently facing some very real and confronting challenges as a global community," she continued. "And that's why we must continue to work with all communities to ensure racism and discrimination – including anti-Semitism – does not take hold. How we choose to respond to these challenges will define us."

Natalie's personal background reflects the journey of many of our members. She spoke of her parents, Hakki and Ilkay, who migrated to Australia from Cyprus in the 1970s "with nothing more than a suitcase and a hope for a better future". "They worked hard in factories to make ends meet, so that they could be part of the Australian dream: a home, a car and a future for their children," she said.

In addition to her relationship with ASPJ, Natalie works closely with the Polish Community Council of Victoria and the Polish Club of Albion. As such, she has a deep awareness of the contributions of both the Polish and Jewish communities to Australian society. "You have positively influenced every aspect of our

social, cultural, economic and political landscape – and continue to do so today. Your communities' generosity, goodwill and openness towards others expresses the spirit of our cohesive multicultural community."

The Henryk Slawik Award is named in honour of the heroic Polish diplomat who saved thousands of Jews between 1940 and 1944 and was ultimately sent to his death at Mauthausen concentration camp. It is granted to an individual or organisation contributing to the dialogue and understanding between Australian Jews of Polish origin and the Polish-Australian community as a whole.

In his speech, Bernard Korbman outlined the ASPJ mission: "I have faith that by working hard to challenge and change attitudes and stereotypical myths about one another, we can become the model for organisations worldwide on how to listen, which leads to understanding, which leads to respect, which leads to acceptance. To do this we need to work in conjunction with all people of goodwill, no matter ethnicity, nationality or religion."

It is a message that resonates with the evening's guest speaker, 2017 Henryk Slawik Award recipient Frances Prince, who spoke about her experience as a participant on a 2019 multi-faith women's tour of Jerusalem organised by the Jewish Christian Muslim Association. Frances was joined in a panel discussion by fellow tour participants Elissa Roper, a doctoral candidate at Yarra Theological Union; Dr Ayesha Aijaz, a Muslim advocate of interfaith dialogue; and Faye Haskin-Dubrowin OAM, long-standing community organiser and the first woman President of B'nai B'rith Victoria.

And it is a message that is key to Natalie's noble ethos. "Every one of us, regardless of culture or faith, deserves dignity and respect," she said. "Of course, there are often challenges we must face. There are always going to be differences of opinion when you work closely with others, but regardless of these issues, we will continue to promote the hand of goodwill with mutual respect regardless of our differences. That is the key.



Natalie Suleyman MP (centre) with ASPJ board members



Turkish Consul General Arif Eser Torun, Natalie Suleyman MP and Polish Consul General Monika Konczyk



Natalie Suleyman MP with her niece, nephew and parents Hakki and Ilkay Suleyman



L to R: Hakki Suleyman, Turkish Consul General Arif Eser Torun, Natalie Suleyman MP and Dr. Dr Bulent Hass Dellal AO



Members of the Polish Community Council of Victoria



David Southwick MP with Natalie Suleyman MP



ASPJ Co-President, Bernard Korbman



ASPJ Treasurer, Andrew Raicher



ASPJ Co-President, Ezra May



L to R: Frances Prince, Elissa Roper, Dr Ayesha Aijaz, and Faye Haskin-Dubrowin OAM



Natalie Suleyman with her award

JEWIS IN THE WARSAW UPRISING



Prisoners rescued from Gęsiówka concentration camp in Warsaw

Jewish Historical Institute
August 01, 2019

On August 1, 1944, at 5 pm, an uprising broke out in Warsaw. Many Jews also took part in the fighting. Some have participated in the bloody uprising in the Warsaw ghetto, and then fought in the forest with partisans. You do not have to be a psychologist – Antek Cukierman wrote about his companions – to understand what these people felt. I suppose they dreamed all the time when they could stand to fight against the Germans. And this opportunity came on August 1, 1944 and gave them a chance to fulfil this dream.

Cukierman became the commander of the Jewish Combat Organization after the death of Mordechaj Anielewicz in the bunker at ul. Miła 18. Together with Cywia Lubetkin, Marek Edelman and dozens of other fighters, who in May 1943 managed to get out of the burning ghetto, they immediately joined the Warsaw uprising. The independent ŻOB platoon was formed as part of the Home Army. This was the only platoon

taking part in the uprising that was strictly Jewish. However, among the Home Army insurgents there were many more Jews. At the outbreak of the uprising, many of them volunteered for the first fighting group they encountered, not paying attention to the political connotations of the group. Others were involved in the activities of the Polish underground long before the outbreak of the uprising.

It is difficult to estimate how many Jews took up arms in August 1944. Most of them fought and



Samuel Willenberg, Warsaw 1.08.2013

died under the Polish names adopted during the war. Their Jewish origin was often kept a secret from their fellow fighters. They were afraid – not unreasonably – that if it came to light, their companions in arms could scorn them or not let them fight at all. The real threat was that at some point a Jewish insurgent could come upon a “stray bullet”, fired by one of his colleagues. The attitudes of the soldiers to the Jews who fought in their ranks were very varied. Often, there was full acceptance, strengthened by the fighting against the common enemy. The strategies of Jewish insurgents were also different. Samuel Willenberg, a soldier of the Polish Army during the September campaign and a participant in the rebellion in Treblinka, joining the AK “Ruczaj” battalion, gave his real name. He did not want to die – as he said years later – as fictitious Ignacy Popow, the name in his documents at the time.

Not only Jewish men took part in the Warsaw Uprising, but also Jewish women.

At seven o'clock I heard shots – wrote Adina Blady-Szwajger, a doctor and ŻOB liaison – I ran up the stairs. I will never forget this vision. A Polish officer in the the uniform of the Carpathian Brigade! Everyone was crying and me with them. A field hospital was set up in the basement. I approached the commander. It was Major “Pobóg”, I introduced myself, I told who I was and I was immediately counted among the staff of the hospital.

Jewish children and youth also joined the insurgency ranks, just like their Polish peers. Famous for their

bravery were brothers Zalman “Miki” and Perec “Cwaniak” Hochman. After the liquidation of the ghetto, they survived by trading cigarettes on pl. Three Crosses. After the outbreak of the uprising, they immediately joined the fight against the Germans. They served as liaison officers in the Sokół battalion operating in the Śródmieście district. On the streets of Warsaw during the uprising one could hear the languages of many European countries occupied by the Germans – Hungarian, Greek or French.

Some Jews were transferred from Auschwitz to the concentration camp in Warsaw, called Gęsiówka. The prisoners detained there were forced to clear the ruins of the former ghetto. On August 5, the Scout Assault Battalion “Zośka” attacked Gęsiówka and liberated 348 Jews imprisoned there.

The vast majority of those rescued joined the insurgents in front line fighting. For the Poles, the Warsaw Uprising was a patriotic act that resulted in the city’s destruction. For those Jews who survived the annihilation, the Warsaw Uprising made it possible to get out of hiding and regain their own identity. Those survivors took up arms to fight with the Polish troops to seek revenge on the Germans.

“I know that for the majority of people this was a period of most terrible torments. But for me it was a period of wonderfully regained freedom”, wrote Zofia Samsztejn, who was released a year after the war in Gęsiówka.

Natalie Suleyman MP

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PABIANICE LANDSMANSHAFT IN MELBOURNE

By Jack Ekstein

The Pabianice Landsmanshaft of Melbourne was formed in 2006 following my experience on the 2005 adult "March of the Living", organised through the Jewish Holocaust Centre (jhc.org.au).

The "March of the Living" guided tour comprised two sections. The first section was a seven-day Holocaust tour of Poland and the second was a tour of Israel for another seven days.

It was a rollercoaster of a journey and a life-changing experience.

While in Poland I visited my father's home-town of Pabianice and found his family home and place of business, both of which were confiscated by the Polish government.

The only remnants of a Jewish community of 9000 was the plaque of the destroyed synagogue and the totally neglected and dilapidated Pabianice Jewish cemetery, which is labelled a tourist attraction.

I was totally shocked and outraged at what I had discovered at the cemetery, and I was determined to do something positive about it, at least for the 650 Jews buried there.

On returning to Melbourne, I organised a meeting of the Pabianice Jewish community at the Holocaust Centre. It was decided after much discussion to pay for and erect a memorial monument at the Melbourne Chevra Kadisha cemetery at Springvale.

On 3 June, 2007, the Pabianice memorial monument was erected and dedicated. The 65th memorial service was conducted by Rabbi Yirmi Garfunkel.

The Pabianice ghetto was destroyed by the Nazis on 16 May, 1942, and is why the Pabianice memorial service is held every May in memory of those who perished in the Holocaust.

In 2009, the Pabianice website (pabianice.com.au) was established by the late Harry Ciechanowski, and is now



The Pabianice memorial monument in Melbourne.

administered by his daughter, Debra Belleli.

On 14 July, 2012, the Pabianice memorial plaque was erected and dedicated at the Caulfield Hebrew Congregation. Caulfield shule has a long-standing connection with the Pabianice community: one of its founding fathers and past-presidents was the late Simon Roth, who was also a past-president of the Pabianice Society of Victoria. Mr Roth also organised and conducted the annual Pabianice memorial service at the Caulfield shule in the 1950s.

The Pabianice Memorial Book was translated from Yiddish and Hebrew into English by Melbourne translators Bobbi

Zylberman and Sara Brott and was sponsored by the Light family – Dr Ian Light and Eva Light.

The Pabianice Memorial Book was launched on 30 March, 2014, at the home of Marion and Max Nowoweiski. Copies of the book were distributed to libraries around the world.

The English version of the book was published on the Pabianice website on 1 February, 2017, with the help of JewishGen.org through Lance Ackerfeld, of Kibbutz Yiftah, Israel.

This was done to make people aware of their heritage, where they came from, and their ancestors.

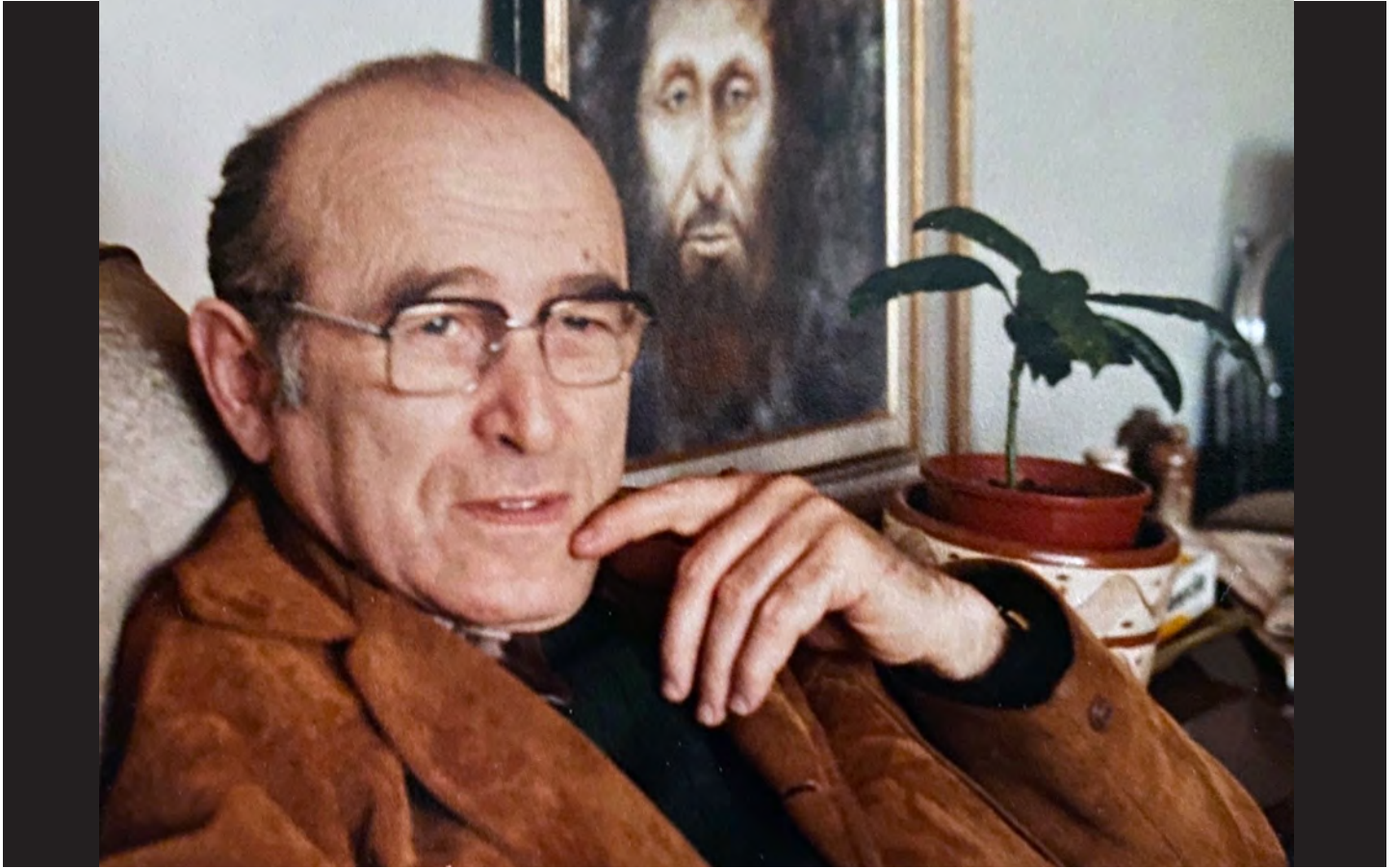
We want this to be a valuable source for the descendants of Pabianice and for those who study the history of European Jewry. It is another link in the chain of our shared Jewish history.

The Pabianice Landsmanshaft of Melbourne is the only active Pabianice Jewish community group in the world. It is a non-profit community group run by volunteers.

I make special mention of Max Lasky and Rachel Engelman, who both help organise the annual Pabianice memorial service.

Jack Ekstein has been president of the Pabianice Landsmanshaft of Melbourne since its inception in 2006.

VALE MR MIECZYŚLAW NADWORNY



Mieczysław Nadworny in the early days of Federation of Polish Jews in Australia

By Adam Warzel

on behalf of the Australian Institute of Polish Affairs

A long-standing member of AIPA and one of the leading activists for Polish-Jewish reconciliation, Mieczysław Nadworny passed away in Melbourne on 22 September 2019. He was 98.

M. Nadworny was born in Chełm and spent the war in the Soviet Union. Most of his closest family perished in the Holocaust.

After the war he settled in Warsaw where he worked in public administration for the Polish Ministry of Prices. Amidst growing Communist sponsored anti-semitism he and his family migrated to Australia in 1960, settling in Melbourne.

In the early 90s, as a member of the Federation of Polish Jews in Australia, he became one of the

initiators of the Polish-Jewish dialogue in Australia. He was instrumental in organising the historic visit of Jan Karski in Australia in 1993 and remained steadfastly involved in building bridges between Polish and Jewish communities in Australia.

As an avid reader of history, he well knew the complexity of Polish-Jewish relations. He was a modest person who never sought the limelight.

With the passing of Michael (Mieczysław) Nadworny the initial phase of the building of the foundations for the Polish-Jewish dialogue in Australia has ended and we have entered a new one. If it was not for the tireless efforts and dedication of people such as Nadworny, the achievements of the dialogue would be less impressive.

Nadworny was the last of the pre-war generation, Poland-born activists who laid the foundations for the Polish-Jewish dialogue in Australia. It is appropriate to name the others: Prof. Andrzej



Mieczysław Nadworny with his wife



Mieczysław Nadworny with daughter Dr. Elizabeth Leder

Ehrenkreutz, one of the leaders of this group, Tadeusz Zygiel, Leon Lew, the participant of the two Warsaw uprisings – Janek David Landau, a stalwart of the organised Polish community – Piotr Koziełł and, last but not least, a prominent Jewish community activist, Shmuel Rosenkranz.

Nadworny was the man of two cultures and two traditions: Polish and Jewish, both of which he understood intimately, moving effortlessly around the meanders of the complicated Polish-Jewish history. Throughout his emigre life, he was committed to building bridges between Polish and Jewish communities.

**In Honour of the late
Mr. Mieczysław Nadworny,
the Australian Society
of Polish Jews and Their
Descendants has renamed its
yearly oration
*The ASPJ NADWORNÝ
ORATION.***

Michael Nadworny was a life member of the ASPJ, having served as Secretary of the World Federation of Polish Jews for many years. In 2007, realising that with only he and the late Masha Weiner left in the organisation, it was time and important to rekindle the organisation to suit the needs of the current generation of Jews and Poles. Michael dedicated his life to an honest and truthful understanding of Polish-Jewish history, and to a peaceful coexistence of both communities, abroad and in Australia.

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YIDDISH THEATRE IN AUSTRALIA. THE FIRST 110 YEARS.

A Story in 4 Acts.

By Alex Dafner & Galit Klas



Act 1: 1909-1939

Modern Yiddish theatre has a definite beginning. It all started in 1876 in Yassi, Romania in the "Green Apple Cafe", with the great singer/composer Avrom Goldfaden, *The Father of Modern Yiddish Theatre*.

Yiddish theatre in Australia however, began in 1909 when Shmuel Wajsberg staged the operetta *Gavriel*, popularly known as *Chinke-Pinke* in Melbourne. Wajsberg deserves the title of *The Father*, as he laid the foundation for the first professional Yiddish theatre in Australia.

His group's repertoire included both *shund*, cheap comedy and more high-brow, literary plays, like those of Jacob Gordin, the Yiddish Shakespeare, Avrom Goldfaden and Jacob Lateiner. Sadly, because of financial problems and disagreements about artistic direction, this Yiddish professional theatre didn't last long.

After the establishment of the Kadimah in 1911, and the hiatus of WWI, two amateur theatre troupes come into being in the 1920s – *The Kadimah Theatre Circle* and in 1927 Yakov Ginter's, *The Yiddish Stage – Melbourne*.

Ginter's group staged some 35 plays from the literary Yiddish repertoire, plays

by Sholem Ash, Yakov Gordin, David Nomborg, Yisop Dimov and Sholem Aleichem. He can rightfully be considered the second pioneer, who prepared the ground for a more sophisticated Yiddish theatre in Australia.

Act 2: 1939-1969

Yankev Weislitz arrived in Australia in 1938. Already a well known actor with the famous "Vilne Troupe", who had toured extensively in Poland, Lithuania and Western Europe with *The Dybbuk* by S. Anski and other productions. In Melbourne, together with Yakov Ginter's group, he formed the Dovid Herman Troupe (after the Director of the Vilne Troupe), a name that became part of Melbourne's Yiddish theatre scene for decades.

In 1939, the Polish Jewish performer, Rokhl Holtzer, arrived and staged *Froy Advokat-Lady Lawyer*. As well as directing, Holtzer played the lead role. She intended to stay for only 6 months, but WW2 intervened and she and her husband lived in Melbourne for the rest of their lives.

Ginter, Weislitz and Holtzer staged 8 Yiddish plays in that one dramatic, fateful first year of WW2 in



Melbourne. In the following 5 decades, the *Dovid Herman Theatre at the Kadimah* staged several plays a year, with 10 or more performances each and some several times over.

Act 3: 1969-1999

In this era the *Dovid Herman Theatre*, increasingly relied on a younger generation of actors, like Yasha Sher and Shieh Tigel and a string of overseas artists and directors. Amongst the great names of the Yiddish theatre who came out during those years were Zygmunt Turkow, Ida Kaminska, Shimon Dzigan; Shmuel Atzmon, Joseph Rotboym, Yosef Shayn and Dina Halpern. Later on, Rosa Turkow also came out every year and staged new plays from Israel, often translations of Hebrew plays, with the *Dovid Herman Theatre*.

Stimulated by the revival of local Australian theatre like at La Mama and the APG's Pram Factory, Fay Mokotow staged an avant-garde production of the great Yiddish poet Itzik Manger's *Megillah Lider*. Its enormous success motivated Fay, Alex Dafner, Henry Nusbaum, Charles Slucki and others, to form the Melbourne Yiddish Youth Theatre (MYTT) at the Kadimah.

This ensemble became very active in the early 1970s and staged Yiddish plays and translations of English plays.

Among its best know works in the 1980s was *The Diary of Anna Frank*, directed by Charles Slucki and translated for the first time into Yiddish by Dobka Apelowicz.

Beginning with the huge success of the *Nigun* concert at the Palais Theatre in 1988, the MYTT embarked on musicals, built around Yiddish songs and English dialogue. After re-staging the *Megilleh* in 1993, they produced Arnold Zable's story of Jewish Migration: *Vu Akhin Zol Ikh Geyn?-Where Shall I Go?* (1994) and *Mazl Tov Cobbers*, by Alex Dafner and Leon Gettler (1995) – based on the history of the first 100 years of Jewish migration to Australia.

In 1998, came *Fiddler Oyfn Dakh – Fiddler on the Roof*, with English dialogue and Yiddish songs, directed by Arlette Pat.

Act 4: 1999 to the present and future

Since *Fiddler* there have been a number of highly successful concerts and theatre performances by local and overseas Yiddish actors and singers, including: "*Ek Velt – End of the World*" in 2012-13, with Evelyn Krape, Tomi Kalinski and Elisa Gray, a musical history of Yiddish theatre in Australia, which also toured at Yiddish theatre festivals in Montreal and New York.

Currently the Kadimah Yiddish Theatre (KYT) is enjoying a strong revival under Artistic Directors Galit Klas and

"Balageneyden" Cabaret

באַלאַגנ-עַדן "קאַבאַרעט"



Melbourne Yiddish Theatre at the Kadimah & Guests

מעלבאָרנער ייִדיש טעאַטער בײַ דער קדימא און געסט

Evelyn Krape. Among their many successful shows was *Balageneyden* (2016), a recreation of a Polish-Yiddish cabaret of the 1930s that included Polish actors and material.

KYT is evolving into a theatre that favours original works and adaptations, which keep Yiddish current. They have expanded their program to include readings and workshops. 2019 has been a particularly productive and outstanding year, beginning with a sold-out *Play Me A Poem* at the National Theatre, followed by *Yiddish Divas*, a standout show at the Melbourne Cabaret Festival, and *The Ghetto Cabaret*, which was re-staged at *fortyfive-downstairs*, to rave reviews in the mainstream media.

110 years after its beginnings, Yiddish Theatre in Australia, with the advent of subtitles, is creating works that speak to new audiences and new generations.

DESPITE MY HUNGARIAN-SOUNDING SURNAME, BOTH SIDES OF MY FAMILY WERE POLISH JEWS.



By Asso. Prof. Rebecca Forgasz

My paternal grandmother, Irene Forgasz (Kutenplan), was born in Drohobych in present-day Ukraine. A survivor of Auschwitz, she would tell me and my sister stories of her experiences during the Holocaust early in the mornings when she stayed overnight at our family home for Passover or Rosh Hashanah (Jewish New Year). Yiddish was her mother tongue and she spoke English poorly. In secondary school, I studied Yiddish for two years, mostly so I could communicate better with her. Although I knew my Booba was from Poland, I had no sense of her connection to the place. Her Polishness was not – at least it seemed to me – part of her identity.

My mother's parents, Ursula Flicker (Biszkowicz) and the late Felix Flicker were both from Bialystok. My grandfather had a younger sister and brother. He went to *gymnasium* where he learnt Hebrew and became a Zionist. When the Soviets invaded Poland in 1941, his family was deported to Siberia. He joined the Polish Army at age 16, and in 1944 was in the regiment that liberated Majdanek. He came to Australia with his family in 1948. As a child, I remember him having a strong sense of connection to his Bialystoker *landsman*, and he organised the Bialystok Ghetto Commemoration every year. But this sense of belonging to the community of Bialystokers was not something I ever felt he specifically nurtured or sought to transmit to his grandchildren. His legacy was about the importance of family, communal service and support for the State of Israel.

My grandmother was born in Lodz, but grew up in Bialystok. Her grandfather was a well-known rabbi, who once met Marshal Jozef Pilsudski, the famous statesman who served as Poland's Chief of State and Minister for Military Affairs in the early 20th century. But her parents were secular and, as a little girl, she would lovingly mock her grandfather's religious observance. She spoke Polish at home and grew up loving Polish literature. Her family was also deported to Siberia after the Soviets occupied Poland, and they spent the rest of the war there.

When I was growing up, whenever my grandmother spoke of Poland, despite her professed connection to the land and the language, she would always say "You go back over my dead body" – and we all knew she meant it! While she never explained why she felt that way, I could only assume that she had felt betrayed, somehow, by the Poles – a view that was certainly reinforced by what I learnt in my Jewish history lessons at school.

So although I grew up with three Polish Jewish grandparents, and was very conscious of being of Polish Jewish background in general, I had no sense of connection to Poland as a place. In my imagination, Poland was a country of black and white, like the



The late Irene-Forgasz (Kutenplan)



Ursula Flicker (Biszkowicz)



The late Felix Flicker

photos I had seen of old Jews in *shtetlach*; nothing more than a graveyard for Jews – a place of death and darkness.

My interest in Poland was piqued in 2002/3 when I spent a year in Oxford doing a Masters in Jewish Studies. While there, I met a Polish woman, Zosia, about the same age as me, who was the librarian at the Centre for Jewish Studies where I was studying. She wasn't Jewish, but had spent time in Israel and was studying Yiddish language and literature at an advanced level. She was living in Oxford with her boyfriend, who was also Polish. They were a hip, intellectual young couple who travelled widely and laughed heartily and shared their generous supply of excellent Polish vodka, brought back from their regular trips to Poland and kept under their kitchen sink.

Zosia's interest as a non-Jewish Pole in Jewish history and knowledge of Hebrew and Yiddish intrigued and bewildered me. I could never before have imagined that such a person existed. Nor had I ever met a Polish person who was not of my grandparents' generation! Suddenly, before me, I had evidence that Poland was still very much a living place – not the barren landscape of my imagination. Indeed, Zosia's description of Krakow, her home town, made it sound like a fascinating place to visit – a preserved medieval city with Jewish history and culture combined with trendy bars and cafes. For the first time in my life, I had a spark of interest in travelling to Poland – notwithstanding my grandmother's dire admonitions!

Many years later, in 2016, that spark was ignited again when I commissioned an exhibition at the Jewish

Museum of Australia, of which I was then Director & CEO, exploring the attitudes of Melbourne Jews towards Poland and the revival of Polish Jewish life. Titled *Can we talk about Poland?*, the exhibition aimed to challenge stereotypes, confront difficult issues and encourage Polish-Jewish dialogue. It was a great success, attracting many Jewish visitors, especially children of Holocaust survivors, as well as non-Jewish visitors of Polish background. We held numerous events in partnership with Polish community organisations. It was a watershed moment in Polish-Jewish relations in Melbourne.

Since that exhibition at the Museum, I have thought more about my own identity as a descendant of Polish Jews. I have come to realise that so much of what I have always considered intrinsically Jewish culture has been influenced by and reflects Polish culture. I have come to a deeper understanding and appreciation of the richness and significance of the 1,000 history of Jews in Poland prior to the Holocaust. And I have become more interested in going to visit Poland – to find traces of the once vibrant Jewish communities, to see for myself the renewal of Jewish life and culture which, to me, attests to the resilience and life-affirming spirit of the Jewish people, and, despite my grandmother's derision of the search for "roots shmoots", to connect to my own cultural heritage.

Rebecca Forgasz is an Associate Professor (Practice) of Community Engagement & Intercultural Communication at the Australian Centre for Jewish Civilisation at Monash University.

VIOLENT ANTI-SEMITIC INCIDENTS ROSE 13 PERCENT WORLDWIDE LAST YEAR, REPORT SAYS

By Emily Tamkin

The Washington Post May 1, 2019

“It feels like almost every taboo relating to Jews, Judaism and Jewish life has been broken.”

So said Moshe Kantor, president of the European Jewish Congress, on Wednesday.

Kantor was speaking at the release of a report published by Tel Aviv University’s Kantor Center in conjunction with the European Jewish Congress.

According to the report, 2018 saw a 13 percent increase in “major violent” anti-Semitic incidents — 387, compared to 342 in 2017.

The result, the report concludes, is that Jewish people begin to doubt their association with places they have lived in for decades. “This sense of turning gradually [into] an outsider is coupled with an ominous feeling of insecurity that reached its peak in October, after the murder of 11 elderly Jews in the Pittsburgh Tree of Life — Or LeSimcha Synagogue,” the report says, referring to the shooting at a synagogue in Pennsylvania by a white supremacist mad at Jewish people for helping refugees.

The most serious anti-Semitic incidents recorded were in the United States, which saw over 100 in 2018 (with 5.7 million Jews, the United States has the largest Jewish population outside of Israel). Next came the United Kingdom (68 reported incidents), France and Germany (35 reported incidents each) and Canada (20 incidents). To register as a “major violent” incident in the report, the incident needed to have anti-Semitism as the proven motivation. The report divides the “modus operandi” of major violent incidents as being physical violence with a weapon, without a weapon, threats, vandalism, and arson. Additionally, cases where multiple people were attacked were counted as one case.

There were considerably fewer anti-Semitic incidents reported in Eastern Europe than in Western Europe, though it should also be noted that there are fewer Jewish people living in Eastern Europe. In Hungary, for example — where there are 47,400 Jewish residents, as compared to 453,000 in France — there were three major violent incidents recorded.

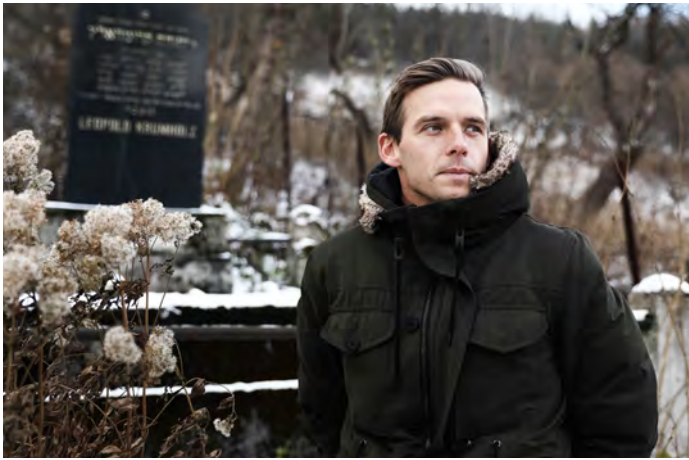
Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán’s international spokesperson has blogged about anti-Semitism in that country as falling, but Orbán himself has incited anti-Semitic sentiment, often casting Hungarian-born Jewish billionaire George Soros as a boogeyman. As the report notes: “The nationalist perception of the need to preserve a nation’s culture against immigration combines with the definition of who is part of the nation and who is an enemy. The Jew has traditionally been conceived as an eternal stranger and an unassimilable alien of society by antisemites.”

And while there were just nine major violent incidents recorded last year in Poland, nationalist extremists protested outside the presidential palace, chanting things like “Enough of Jewish lies!”

The report notes that the catalyst for anti-Semitic incidents varies from country to country, and that, while opposition to Israel and Israeli government policies can lead people to make comments or take action against Jews, “Antisemitism is on the rise, even without an Israeli-Palestinian-Gaza confrontations. We suggest to reconsider the traditional pinpointing at such confrontations as an immediate trigger for the rise of antisemitism. Antisemitic manifestations increase, obviously, for other reasons, as we have tried to explain.”

“Let us exercise a sense of proportion, certainly not underestimating the situation, yet [not] over inflating it either. Let us look around and cooperate with other discriminated groups and minorities,” the report’s introduction states. “Extremist groups cultivate hatred against whoever does not follow their views, not just Jews; the number of hate crimes against the ‘others’ far exceeds the number targeted against Jews.”

PEOPLE, NOT NUMBERS PROJECT



By Andrew Rajcher
ASPJ treasurer

The Australian Society of Polish Jews and Their Descendants is pleased to announce that Polish champion slalom canoeist, Dariusz Popiela, will deliver the 2020 ASPJ Nadworny Oration on Wednesday 3rd August 2020.

Dariusz, a two-time European Champion, a three-time World Cup medallist and Polish Olympian, is Founder and President of the Popiela Family Centrum Foundation.

Dariusz, who lives in Nowy Sącz, has a keen interest in the history of local communities and, when he discovered that there was a mass grave of Jewish victims of the Nazis in nearby Krościenko nad Dunajcem, this became the inspiration for his Foundation's "People, Not Numbers" project.

The goal of the project is straightforward: to build monuments commemorating local Jewish communities murdered during the Holocaust, the monuments bearing the names of all the victims.

According to his Foundation:

We want the memory of the murdered to be observed not just by a "number" or the general expression "Jews". We want people to know about the local inhabitants, to publish their biographies in social media, to reach out to the media and to organise meetings in schools. We want the murdered to be remembered by subsequent

generations. An important element of our project, after the unveiling of a monument, is the fitting of memorial panels.

The panels include the names of as many of the Jewish victims as possible and, where possible, the names of the perpetrators of the crimes.

At the unveiling ceremony at Krościenko in June 2018, Popiela said, "For many years, I trained on the canoe track without knowing that, a few dozen metres away, there was a mass grave of Krościenko residents".

One day, his physiotherapist, who was aware of his interest in history, recommended a visit to the cemetery. A few days later, Dariusz returned with a lawnmower. The cemetery was forgotten, neglected. Now, thanks to the efforts of Dariusz and others, there is a monument with the names of Jews from Krościenko who were murdered there, many of whom



were uncovered by Dariusz himself by combing the archives. Local schools now take care of the site.

In 2019, he turned his attention to Grybów. On 3rd November 2019, a monument was unveiled there, commemorating the 1,700 Jewish citizens of Grybów and the surrounding areas who were first placed in the Grybów ghetto and then murdered in the Bełżec death camp. In line with the name of the project, the name of each person was engraved on the monument placed in the Grybów Jewish cemetery renovated by a team lead by Dariusz. The task of identifying all the names listed on the monument required incredible dedication and hours spent in archives following tenuous leads that could help identify those who perished.

Dariusz Popiela is a truly unique and remarkable individual and someone most worthy to deliver the **ASPJ Nadworny Oration 2020**.

THE 20TH CENTURY'S 'GREATEST JEWISH POET'



Sculpture of Tuwim on Piotrkowska Street in Lodz.

By Myer Siemiatycki -
The Canadian Jewish News November 19, 2019

A 1974 headline in the Yiddish newspaper *Forverts* described the Jewish-Polish poet Julian Tuwim, born 125 years ago in Lodz, as "the greatest Jewish poet" of the 20th century. Writing in the Polish language, Tuwim was the most widely read contemporary poet in Poland's interwar period. His charming children's verses and poetic mastery of the Polish language have won the hearts of successive generations of Poles. His statue sits on the main street of Lodz.

In a starkly monolithic time and place, Tuwim fiercely proclaimed both Jewish and Polish identities. Yet he was also ambivalent and critical of both these identities and traditions. In 1924, Tuwim told an interviewer: "For anti-Semites, I am a Jew and my poetry is Jewish. For Jewish nationalists, I am a traitor and renegade. Tough luck!"

Tuwim befuddled friends and foes alike with his capacity to espouse seemingly incompatible views and positions. Champion of Polish culture, yet critic of Polish ethnocentrism. Self-distancing from Jewish

culture, yet literary foe of anti-Semitism and writer of a searing Holocaust lament poem in 1944 ("We, Polish Jews," the first Holocaust poem written by a contemporary Jewish literary figure). He was staunchly anti-authoritarian, yet after the war, he returned from his New York safe haven to live in communist Poland. His friend and fellow writer Jozef Wittlin declared in exasperation: "Tuwim is the proof that God does exist, for such a stupid man to be such a great poet."

There was remarkable range to his writing: children's verse, cabaret lyrics, love poems, political poems, poems of Polish attachment, Jewish attachment and catastrophist forebodings as Europe hurtled toward the abyss.

Raised in a Polish-speaking Jewish home, Tuwim would be among the first generation of Jewish-Polish literary luminaries to write in Polish for a broad national audience. His popularity undoubtedly fuelled denunciations from ethno-nationalist critics who denounced Tuwim as "culturally alien to Poland," in what fellow Jewish-Polish poet Maurycy Szymel called "a pogrom against Tuwim's right to Polish literature."

Indeed, Tuwim's signature contribution to Polish literature was his inventive, expressive use of the language. The Polish Nobel Prize winner for literature, Czeslaw Milosc, called Tuwim a "virtuoso of lyricism." Literary critic Roman Zrebowicz declared that Tuwim's linguistic mastery gave his work a unique sensual quality: "all of Tuwim's poetry smells as ecstatically as a forest. Each verse has its own particular aroma."

In 1940, while in exile in Brazil, Tuwim wrote a long bittersweet reflection titled, "Polish Flowers," in which he confessed to feeling separated from Poland "by an Atlantic of yearning," declaring "This (Poland) is fatherland/And other countries are hotels." In the same poem, Tuwim denounced the anti-Semitism that was prevalent in prewar Poland: "When the street was ruled by petty middle-class scoundrels/Excellent 'Catholics'/ Except that they had not yet become Christian ... When the rampant braggarts so beat the Jews/That I felt more shame for my fatherland/than pity for my beaten brethren."

He was estranged, yet unable or unwilling to detach from his Jewish identity. Exile and Diaspora, he believed, had rendered Jews a lost, forlorn people. His 1918 poem "Jews" (written at age 24), describes Jews as "People who do not know what a fatherland is/ Because they have lived everywhere ... The centuries have engraved on their faces/The painful lines of suffering." In the poem "Jewboy," written in 1925, Tuwim confronts the Jewish fate of exile: "How did we come to this? How did we lose ourselves/In this vast world, strange and hostile to us? ... And we will never find peace or rest/Singing Jews, lost Jews."

Like many literary and intellectual Jewish contemporaries in Poland and across Europe, Tuwim believed the Jewish future depended on equal citizenship in their country of birth. He was not opposed to the Zionist project, but his own embrace of Polish language and writing ruled out the option of Palestine as a new personal homeland. And yet, Tuwim paid a steep price for his attachment to Poland.

Anti-Semitic attacks on his writing intensified through the 1930s. Tuwim confided about this rejection: "It is difficult to be a stepson with a stepmother. I am going down, it is very difficult for me in this country." A period of ulcers and agoraphobia set in.

Days after Germany's invasion of Poland in 1939, Tuwim was spirited west in an exodus of the country's leading cultural figures. He lived briefly in Paris, and somewhat longer in Brazil, before spending most of the war in New York.

Tuwim and his wife, Stefania, returned to live permanently in Poland in 1946. He was not the only prominent Polish Jew to do so. He believed a Poland under communist tutelage offered the best protection for Jews. In 1947 the Tuwims adopted a Jewish orphan daughter in Warsaw. On his return to Poland, Tuwim moved the buried body of his mother from outside Warsaw to the Jewish cemetery in Lodz. The opening stanza of his poem "Matka" ("Mother") declares: "At the cemetery in Lodz/The Jewish cemetery, stands/ The Polish grave of my mother/My Jewish mother's tomb."

Polish and Jewish together. Julian Tuwim held on to the end. He died in Poland in 1953.

In his lifetime, Tuwim reflected the possibilities and impossibilities of 20th-century Polish-Jewish relations. In the 21st century, Tuwim's poetry reads as a plea for diversity, pluralism and multiculturalism. These were dangerous verses in his day. They remain timely in our own.

The Common Man

Julian Tuwim

When plastered billboards scream with slogans
'fight for your country, go to battle'
When media's print assaults your senses,
'Support our leaders' shrieks and rattles...
And fools who don't know any better
Believe the old, eternal lie
That we must march and shoot and kill
Murder, and burn, and bomb, and grill...

When press begins the battle-cry
That nation needs to unify
And for your country you must die...
Dear brainwashed friend, my neighbor dear
Brother from this, or other nation
Know that the cries of anger, fear,

Are nothing but manipulation
by fat-cats, kings who covet riches,
And feed off your sweat and blood - the leeches!
When call to arms engulfs the land
It means that somewhere oil was found,
Shooting 'blackgold' from underground!
It means they found a sneaky way
To make more money, grab more gold
But this is not what you are told!

Don't spill your blood for bucks or oil
Break, burn your rifle, shout: 'NO DEAL!'
Let the rich scoundrels, kings, and bankers
Send their own children to get killed!
May your loud voice be amplified
By roar of other common men
The battle-weary of all nations:
WE WON'T BE CONNED TO WAR AGAIN!

COMMEMORATION OF THE LIBERATION OF AUSCHWITZ

LIVING IN THE SHADOW OF THE HOLOCAUST



Auschwitz survivor Jerry Wartski with Eva Hussain

By Eva Hussain

Director (Business Development and Marketing) Polaron.
ASPJ board member

I was 9 years old when I went on a school trip to Stutthof along with 30 of my classmates. The memory of the camp, with its peculiar smell and hum, has been accompanying me daily ever since. It's left such a profound mark on my psyche that I didn't dare to return to any of the many sites of annihilation of people for decades. But this year, I did. I went to Auschwitz.

Like millions of other children, I grew up in the shadows of the Holocaust. But in Poland, we called it "the war". We learned about the six million Jews who perished. But we were told they were Polish. We commemorated the anniversary of the liberation every year. But we did it on the 8th of May. And the liberators in my history books were Soviets, not the allied forces. We were taught many other things that are still difficult for me to reconcile with facts as I know them now. The historical narratives seem to be forever shifting, even today. Watching the Holocaust once again being used to boost people's careers and egos before my very eyes brings back a wave of disappointment. The question that always remains in my mind is: "Have we really learnt nothing?" Being at Auschwitz, the

epicentre of evil, on the anniversary of the liberation brought all of those emotions to the fore. But also hope, which, like the rest of my family, I have abundance of.

Speaking of families: in mine, two survivors are still alive. Brothers Arnold and Jerry. Their father and my great grandmother Alta were siblings. Their real names are actually Aaron and Gerszon, but they're also known as Arek and Gienek. This should tell you a lot about the kind of people they are: quiet achievers, happy to integrate, hard workers, occasional vodka drinkers and pierogi eaters. They're also a lot of fun to be around. One is 94, the other one turning 90 in May. The older one can't travel by plane any more but Jerry is very fit and energetic. They live across oceans from each other but speak almost daily. Jerry does come to Melbourne on his yearly visits from New York.

In 1940, whilst my grandparents and their children, including my mother, were living in hiding after escaping the Warsaw ghetto, Arnold, Jerry and the rest of my extended family were in Lodz. Having arrived from the town of Ozorkow, they were housed on ulica Rybna (Fischer Strasse) and forced to work in factories until the Lodz ghetto was liquidated in August 1944. Together, they were transported to Auschwitz. The brothers became orphans within weeks, after a gruelling death march in the dead of winter, with thousands of people dropping dead along the way, including their father Jakub at the age of 39. Arnold and Jerry were eventually liberated in Germany, with the older brother returning to Poland (eventually immigrating to Australia in 1950s) and the younger one immigrating to the US. Until a few years ago, I knew barely anything about what happened to my family during the Holocaust. The little information I did have was pragmatic and devoid of detail. It's only now that I have a fuller picture of what they went through, thanks to the many conversations with Jerry and Arnold, and several trips to Poland. Jerry and Arnold's memories are crystal clear: they remember everything. And I mean everything: the name of their primary school teacher, what they had for breakfast, who won the on-line bridge game and by how many points. As they get

older, they talk. Reliving their Holocaust experiences is clearly painful. Vignettes of what they went through come up from time to time when I see them, more and more often. When they do talk, they sound philosophical. They don't ever talk about the horrors, preferring to talk about other people, objects and events. I bask in their life-long optimism and hope. To learn about what happened to them and my family first-hand is an enormous privilege. I felt honoured when Jerry and his sons asked me to go to Auschwitz with them, as part of an official survivor delegation.

The commemoration of the liberation of Auschwitz was held in Poland on the 27th January 2020. A massive logistics endeavour, with 200 Holocaust survivors, 50 heads of state, politicians, academics, artists, VIPs and families of survivors attending, the event itself was kept stunningly simple. The survivors, many of whom will not be around for much longer, were given the centre stage. The speech by Marian Turski, also a Lodz ghetto and Auschwitz survivor, sent chills down people's spines: "Thou shall not be indifferent". The 11th commandment. He spoke from the heart, in the most eloquent, beautiful Polish you can imagine. He spoke to his daughter and his grandchildren but the message was aimed at all of us. At you, me, our children and grandchildren. Thou shall not be indifferent. These words will resonate with me for the rest of my life.



Ronald Lauder addressing the audience

I didn't ask uncle Jerry if returning to Auschwitz was difficult for him. It clearly was. Difficult and overwhelming. To walk in his own footsteps in this hell on earth, 75 years on, took a lot of courage. But we did it together and stood there, against politicians rewriting history, academics putting their petty arguments forward and society forgetting about what was done here. Jerry does not have a picture of his mother. We've looked everywhere in Poland but just cannot find one. He doesn't really know how she died, either. All we know is that she was most likely taken to Stutthof and killed there, in the sea.



Marian Turski delivers a powerful address

COSTA PRIZE: JACK FAIRWEATHER WINS BOOK OF THE YEAR WITH *THE VOLUNTEER*



Biography of Witold Pilecki, a Polish resistance fighter who infiltrated Auschwitz, hailed as extraordinary.

The former war reporter Jack Fairweather has won the Costa book of the year award for *The Volunteer*, his biography of a Polish resistance fighter who voluntarily entered Auschwitz in order to reveal its horrors to the world.

VALE ZBIGNIEW RYSZARD LEMAN

11 JUNE 1923–2 FEBRUARY 2020



By Izydor Marmur
Co-Vice President ASPJ

Zbigniew Leman fought with the Home Army in the Warsaw Uprising, was an active member in the Polish community and a much respected long-time supporter of the work done by the Australian Society of Polish Jews and their Descendants. He attended most ASPJ functions and promoted goodwill and cooperation with our our organisation in the Melbourne Polish community. Zbigniew was well liked and respected in both communities. During many of my conversations with him, Zbigniew often voiced his opposition to any form of racism and bigotry. He was a mench and my friend.

May he rest in peace.