



Anti-Zionist demonstration. Poland, March 1968.



# In Dialogue

## POLISH-JEWISH RELATIONS

YIVO INSTITUTE FOR JEWISH RESEARCH

CONFERENCE PROGRAM

COVER PHOTO:

Poland, March 1968, anti-Zionist demonstration.

Signs read:

*"Popieramy klasę robotniczej Warszawy"*  
[WE SUPPORT WARSAW'S WORKING CLASS]

*"Uczącym się chwała chuliganom pała"*  
[GLORY TO STUDENTS, DOWN WITH HOOLIGANS]

*"Popieramy politykę pokoju i postępu"*  
[WE SUPPORT THE POLITICS OF PEACE AND PROGRESS]

*"Zawsze z partią"*  
[ALWAYS WITH THE PARTY]

*"Oczyścić partię ze syjonistów"*  
[CLEANSE THE PARTY OF ZIONISTS]

YIVO INSTITUTE FOR JEWISH RESEARCH PRESENTS

# In Dialogue

## POLISH-JEWISH RELATIONS

CONFERENCE  
MAY 5, 2019

CO-PRESENTED BY

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**his past year**, tensions between the Polish government and the international Jewish community rose following a controversial law making it an offense for anyone to accuse Poland of participating in the Holocaust or other Nazi crimes.

According to the U.S. State Department, this law “could undermine free speech and academic discourse.” In this context, exploring the history of Polish-Jewish relations is more pertinent than ever.

The 2018-2019 In Dialogue: Polish-Jewish Relations series explores the complex history of Poland, with its shifting borders, focusing in on a shared—but much misunderstood—past of Polish Jews and Christians. It provides historical and cultural tools to foster better understanding of Poland’s history, and of the tensions between history and memory, exclusion and belonging, national ideologies, identities, and antisemitism.

The series culminates in this daylong conference on Sunday, May 5, discussing Polish-Jewish relations in the post-war era, including contemporary issues such as Poland’s controversial law.

# schedule

**9:00am** Check In / Coffee

**10:00am** **JONATHAN BRENT**  
Welcome

**MAGDA TETER**  
Introductory Remarks

**11:00am** **LUKASZ KRZYZANOWSKI**  
**Panel 1** Poles and Polish Society in the Immediate  
Aftermath of the Second World War

**ANNA CICHOPEK-GAJRAJ**  
Violence and Beyond: Jewish Survivors  
in Poland after WWII (1944-1948)

**GABRIEL FINDER**  
Justice Behind the Iron Curtain:  
Nazis on Trial in Communist Poland

**12:30pm** Lunch Break [on your own]

**2:00pm** **IRENA GRUDZIŃSKA-GROSS**  
**Panel 2** The Idea of Żydokomuna in Post-War Poland

**ERICA LEHRER**  
Awkward Objects of Genocide: The Presence and  
Absence of Jews and Jewishness in Postwar Polish Culture

**MAGDA TETER**  
Catholic Church and the Jews in Poland after WWII:  
Grappling with Theology, Communism, and Antisemitism

**KATRIN STOLL**  
Buried History. Traces of the Shoah in the  
Nachman Blumental Collection

**4:00pm** **Discussion**  
**Panel** MODERATOR: **ANDREW SILOW-CARROLL**  
Editor-in-Chief, *Jewish Telegraphic Agency*

**ANNA BIKONT**  
**MOLLY CRABAPPLE**  
**STANISŁAW KRAJEWSKI**  
**MICHAEL STEINLAUF**

# Welcome

## JONATHAN BRENT

JONATHAN BRENT is the Executive Director of the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research in New York City. From 1991 to 2009 he was Editorial Director and Associate Director of Yale Press. He is the founder of the Annals of Communism series, which he established at Yale Press in 1991. Brent is the co-author of *Stalin's Last Crime: The Plot Against the Jewish Doctors, 1948-1953* (Harper-Collins, 2003) and *Inside the Stalin Archives* (Atlas Books, 2008). He is now working on a biography of the Soviet-Jewish writer Isaac Babel. Brent teaches history and literature at Bard College.



# Introductory Remarks

## MAGDA TETER

MAGDA TETER is Professor of History and the Shvidler Chair of Judaic Studies at Fordham University. She is also a fellow of the American Academy of Jewish Research. Teter is the author of *Jews and Heretics in Catholic Poland* (Cambridge, 2005), *Sinners on Trial* (Harvard, 2011), as well as two edited volumes, and numerous articles in English, Italian, Polish, and Hebrew. Her latest book, *Blood Libel: On the Trail of an Antisemitic Myth*, is forthcoming in late fall 2019 from Harvard University Press.



Magda Teter's work has been supported by the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation (2012), the Harry Frank Guggenheim Foundation (in 2007 and 2012), the Memorial Foundation for Jewish Culture, YIVO Institute, and the Yad Ha-Nadiv Foundation (Israel), among others. In 2002, she was a Harry Starr Fellow in Jewish Studies at Harvard University, in 2007-2008, an Emeline Bigelow Conland Fellow at the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Studies also at Harvard University. In 2017-2018 she was the Mellon Foundation fellow at the Cullman Center for Scholars and Writers at the New York Public Library. In 2012-2016, she served as the co-editor of the *AJS Review* and in 2015-2017 as the Vice-President for Publications of the Association for Jewish Studies.

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# Poles and Polish Society in the Immediate Aftermath of the Second World War

LUKASZ KRZYZANOWSKI

The Second World War has left its mark on the lives of individuals, groups and the entire society of Poland. The ultimate violence of the German occupation and Nazi genocide had profoundly transformed society. It deepened pre-existing divisions among Polish citizens and increased the distance both between individuals and groups.

The first few years following the end of the Second World War in Poland were quite unique. The transition between war and peace was accompanied by a great uncertainty and anxiety caused by radical political, economic and social changes. Soon it became very clear that there would be no returning to the old country and its prewar society. However, the new country was also not there yet and its society was still in the making. Although from the very outset the leading role in ruling the country was played by Moscow-assisted communists, the new regime had to struggle in obtaining legitimacy and popular support. That involved addressing questions related to the nation and nationality. Both the state and its Christian majority were in the process of working out their respective policy and attitudes toward minorities, more specifically – the Jews.

This paper explores the ideas, attitudes and fears that shaped Poland and its society in the late 1940s. It was this social reality that served as the backdrop for the few Jewish Holocaust survivors who attempted to return to their hometowns and who interacted with the state administration and the non-Jewish population of Poland. ■

LUKASZ KRZYZANOWSKI received a PhD in the Social Sciences from the University of Warsaw in 2015. From 2016 to 2018, he held a postdoctoral research fellowship at the Freie Universität Berlin (Dahlem Research School POINT Fellow). He was also an Assistant Professor in the Historical Institute at the University of Warsaw.

Krzyzanowski received a number of scholarships, including those from the Faculty of History University of Oxford, Yad Vashem and the Claims Conference (Saul Kagan Fellowship). His award-winning monograph about the return of Jewish survivors to the town of Radom in the immediate aftermath of the Holocaust was published in 2016 under the title: *Dom, którego nie było. Powroty ocalałych do powojennego miasta* (second ed. 2018). The Yad Vashem Publications Committee has recently accepted the book for publication in Hebrew. The English-language adaptation will be published in 2020 by Harvard University Press.

From September 2018, Lukasz Krzyzanowski has served as Assistant Professor at the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology of the Polish Academy of Sciences. His current focus of research is everyday life and social order in the small towns and villages of central Poland under German occupation and in the early postwar period.



# Violence and Beyond: Jewish Survivors in Poland after WWII (1944-1948)

**ANNA CICHÓPEK-GAJRAJ**

This presentation discusses the current state of the field of Polish-Jewish history dealing with the immediate aftermath of the Second World War (1944-1948). This rich contemporary historiography explores wide-ranging facets of the Jewish experience in postwar Poland. Although, in the past, the field tended to focus on violence, today's scholarship often goes beyond that focus, illuminating aspects of postwar Polish-Jewish history which often escape the facile violent/non-violent categorization. The new research examines the everyday struggles of Polish Holocaust survivors, their memories, and their choices in richly contextualized and conceptualized cultural, comparative, and micro perspectives. At the same time, brilliant studies have come out which shed new light on the social profiles of perpetrators thus refining our understanding of anti-Jewish violence (pogroms) in postwar Poland. Drawing on the above studies, the presentation will conclude with some general remarks about the lives of Jewish survivors in Poland after the Holocaust. ■

ANNA CICHÓPEK-GAJRAJ is an associate professor of history at Arizona State University. Her fields of expertise include modern history of Polish/Jewish relations, antisemitism, and post-Holocaust studies in social and comparative history. Her book, *Beyond Violence: Jewish Survivors in Poland and Slovakia in 1944-1948* (Cambridge University Press, 2014) was a Finalist of the 2016 Jordan Schnitzer Book Award and a recipient of the 2015 Barbara Heldt Prize Honorable Mention. She is also the author of *Pogrom Żydów w Krakowie 11 sierpnia 1945* (Warsaw: Jewish Historical Institute, 2000). She currently works on social history of the global postwar displacement of Polish Catholics and Polish Jews in the first twenty years after World War II (1945-1965).



## Justice Behind the Iron Curtain: Nazis on Trial in Communist Poland

**GABRIEL FINDER**

Almost 6,000 German and Austrian Nazis stood trial in Polish courts between 1944 and 1959. Poles had good reasons for wanting to try Nazis in Poland. But unlike Polish show trials of both real and imaginary collaborators, trials of German and Austrian Nazis were generally legitimate, resembling similar proceedings in Western countries. Polish Jewish survivors also had good reasons for wanting to see Nazis brought before the bar of justice. In fact, contrary to conventional wisdom, the Nazi genocide of the Jews in Poland--the Holocaust--generally received its due in Polish trials of Nazis. Indeed,



Polish legal authorities welcomed the participation of Jewish survivors as eye witnesses and expert witnesses. But Jewish participation in the Polish trials of Nazis exacted a cost from and took its toll on the Jews who testified. This presentation will examine the trials of Nazis in postwar Poland from both the Polish and Jewish perspectives, exploring what was gained and what was lost in the trials for the communist regime and ordinary Poles on the one hand, for Polish Jews who remained in Poland after 1945 on the other. ■

GABRIEL FINDER is Ida and Nathan Kolodiz Director of Jewish Studies and associate professor of Germanic Languages and Literatures at the University of Virginia. His various teaching and research interests include the Holocaust, Jewish rebuilding and the revival of Jewish culture in Europe in its aftermath, and Holocaust-related trials. In addition to a B.A. from Brandeis University and a Ph.D. from the University of Chicago, he has a law degree from the University of Pennsylvania and he practiced criminal law for five years, mostly in Israel. He is coeditor with Laura Jockusch of *Jewish Honor Courts: Revenge, Retribution, and Reconciliation in Europe and Israel after the Holocaust* (Detroit: Wayne State UP, 2015), which was named a 2016 National Jewish Book Award finalist in the Holocaust category by the Jewish Book Council; and he is coauthor with Alexander Prusin of *Justice Behind the Iron Curtain: Nazis on Trial in Communist Poland* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2018). He is also coeditor of *Laughter After: Humor and the Holocaust* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, forthcoming 2020), and he is completing a monograph on the postwar Jewish honor court in Poland.



## panel 2

### The Idea of Żydokomuna in Post-War Poland

**IRENA GRUDZIŃSKA-GROSS**

The concept of *żydokomuna*, i.e., of communism having been invented and implemented by Jews to serve their interests has a long history in Poland before, during and after World War II. In today's political culture that concept is used to narrate recent Polish history as that of honor, victimhood and sacrifice. It is polemical history, responding to real or perceived criticism with the aggressive use of the stereotype of Poland persecuted by Others. The years 1939-1989, or even 1939-2015 (when Law and Justice party came to power) are conceived of as a time of continuous resistance to German, communist and post-communist occupations. The communist system is therefore alien to the Polish people and any anti-Jewish activity (for example by the now venerated Cursed Soldiers) is interpreted as a defense against or fending off of communism. ■

IRENA GRUDZIŃSKA-GROSS emigrated from her native Poland after student unrest of 1968. She studied in Poland, Italy and in the United States; she received her PhD from Columbia University in 1982. She taught East-Central European history and literature at Emory, New York, Boston and Princeton universities. She is now a professor in the Institute of Slavic Studies at the Polish Academy of Science and a Guggenheim Fellow. Her books include *Golden Harvest* with Jan T. Gross (Oxford University Press, 2012), *Czesław Miłosz and Joseph Brodsky: Fellowship of Poets* (Yale University Press, 2009), and *The Scar of Revolution: Tocqueville, Custine and the Romantic Imagination* (University of California Press, 1995). She edited books on literature and the transformation process in Central and Eastern Europe and published numerous book chapters and articles on these subjects in the international press and periodicals. Between 1998-2003, she was responsible for the East-Central European Program at the Ford Foundation.



## Awkward Objects of Genocide: The Presence and Absence of Jews and Jewishness in Postwar Polish Culture

**ERICA LEHRER**

Poland's large pre-war Jewish community left its mark on the surrounding postwar society in many ways - cultural, linguistic, artistic - but the long co-habitation of Jewish and Catholic Poles is perhaps most uncannily expressed in the domain of "post-Jewish" material culture. From the ruins and detritus of Jewish communal life to folk art depicting Jews made by Polish peasants, physical traces of Poland's Jewish population continue to exert a special power, illustrating a complex tension between Jewish absence and presence, as well as closeness and distance between these longtime neighbors. Such objects haunt and mediate attempts to come to terms with a wide range of social challenges, from Holocaust memory to capitalist economic insecurity to immigration anxiety, pointing to the ways that Poles and Jews have remained in postwar dialogue in ways that exceed the spoken word. ■

ERICA LEHRER is a sociocultural anthropologist and curator. She is currently Associate Professor in the departments of History and Sociology-Anthropology at Concordia University, Montreal, where she also is Founding Director of the Curating and Public Scholarship Lab (CaPSL). She is the author of *Jewish Poland Revisited: Heritage Tourism in Unquiet Places* (2013); and co-editor of *Curatorial Dreams: Critics Imagine Exhibitions* (2016); *Jewish Space in Contemporary Poland* (2015); and *Curating Difficult Knowledge: Violent Pasts in Public Places* (2011). She curated the exhibit *Souvenir, Talisman, Toy* in 2013 (with the 2014 catalog *Lucky Jews*), and in 2018 co-curated *Terribly Close: Polish Vernacular Artists Face the Holocaust*, both at the Kraków Ethnographic Museum.



# Catholic Church and the Jews in Poland after WWII: Grappling with Theology, Communism, and Antisemitism

**MAGDA TETER**

The Catholic Church in post-WWII Poland found itself in a precarious position: it needed to assure its survival in a communist country, balancing its relations with the communist regime and the faithful; a balance of political pragmatism, theology, and ideology. That balance would also be palpable in the Church's responses to antisemitism, Jewish-Catholic dialogue, and in its transformations in the last three decades of the twentieth century. ■

*[See biography on page 4]*

# Buried History. Traces of the Shoah in the Nachman Blumental Collection

**KATRIN STOLL**

Survivor historians, who documented and researched the persecution and murder of European Jewry within the framework of new Jewish institutions established after liberation from German occupation, faced a specific problem: how to relate to their lived experience and that of their families in their own history-writing on the Shoah? Some used their direct experience as a basis and chose indirect ways of preserving the "I" and the "we" in their historiographical work, while others separated their personal past from their scholarly writings. Nachman Blumental (1902–1983), the co-founder of the Central Jewish Historical Commission in Lublin in 1944 and the first director of its successor organization, the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw, opted for the latter. He was part of a vigorous and immediate effort to collect documentation, also at sites of mass murder. After the Red Army had liberated the eastern parts of Poland in 1944, Blumental travelled to many towns and cities in order to collect Jewish testimonies and German perpetrator documents. The traces of the Shoah contained in his collection pertain to events, places, and people. There is also a trace of the murder of his wife Maria and their three-year-old son Ariel on June 7, 1943 in Wielopole Skrzyńskie near Maria's hometown in Dębica. Blumental visited the area in 1948 and spoke to those who had been present on June 7, 1943. My paper analyzes his hand-written notes concerning the sequence of the events and the involvement of Polish policemen. It addresses the following questions:

How did survivor historians like Blumental cope with the discrepancy between the official narrative that conceptualized the Holocaust as a sole confrontation between Germans and Jews and their personal past that demonstrated the genocidal involvement of their Polish neighbors? What are the characteristic features of Blumental's khurbn research and his attempt at researching the Shoah within an environment that was generally hostile towards Jews and not willing to confront the consequences of the anti-Semitic consensus that united Polish society?

The philologist Blumental who was multilingual and a native speaker of the three languages of the Polish Jews – Yiddish, Polish, and Hebrew – was especially interested in the power of language in the destruction process. The German perpetrators gave new meanings to old words. Blumental investigated the German Nazi Tarnsprache and deciphered the real meaning of the camouflaged words and terms meant to confuse and deceive the victims. He also examined how the Nazi persecution and extermination policy affected the Yiddish and the Polish language. ■

KATRIN STOLL has been a Fellow at the Center for Research on Antisemitism at the Technical University in Berlin since February 2019. From 2015 to 2018 she worked at the German Historical Institute in Warsaw. She is a member of the research group "Early Modes of Writing the Shoah: Practices of Knowledge and Textual Practices of Jewish Survivors in Europe (1942–1965)." As a member of this group she retrieved and safeguarded the Nachman Blumental Collection at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver in 2018 and ensured that 32 boxes containing Holocaust-related material were shipped to YIVO.



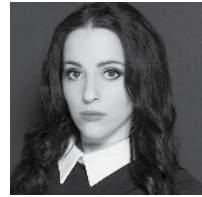
Katrin is the author of *Die Herstellung der Wahrheit* (2012) and co-editor of several books including *Personal Engagement and the Study of the Holocaust* (with Noah Benninga, 2016).

Her research interests include: anti-Semitism; Holocaust historiography and testimonies; Täterforschung; criminal prosecution of Nazi crimes in the Federal Republic of Germany; representations of the Holocaust in Germany and Poland.

**ANNA BIKONT** is a non-fiction writer and a journalist for *Gazeta Wyborcza*, the main newspaper in Poland which she helped found in 1989. She is the author and coauthor of many books, including the bestseller biography of Polish Nobel Prize laureate, poet, Wisława Szymborska. In 2011, she received the European Book Prize for the French translation of her book *My z Jedwabnego*. In 2015, the English version, *The Crime and the Silence: Confronting the Massacre of the Jews in Wartime Jedwabne*, published by FSG, was selected as one of the "100 Notable Books of the Year" by *The New York Times* and won the National Jewish Book Awards for books about the Holocaust. Bikont was a Cullman Fellow of the New York Public Library.



**MOLLY CRABAPPLE** is an artist and writer in New York. She is the author of two books, *Drawing Blood* and *Brothers of the Gun* (with Marwan Hisham), which was long-listed for a National Book Award. Her reportage has been published in the *New York Times*, *New York Review of Books*, *The Paris Review*, *Vanity Fair*, *The Guardian*, *Rolling Stone*, and elsewhere. Her art is in the permanent collections of the Museum of Modern Art, the United States Library of Congress, and the New York Historical Society. She is currently the Spring 2019 artist in residence at NYU's Hagop Kevorkian Center for Near Eastern Studies.



**STANISŁAW KRAJEWSKI**, professor at the Institute of Philosophy of the University of Warsaw, has been doing research in the field of logic and the philosophy of mathematics as well as the philosophy of religion and interfaith dialogue. One of the initiators of the Jewish revival in Poland, after 1989 he was among the founders of the Polish-Israeli Friendship Society and of the Polish Council of Christians and Jews; he has been the Jewish co-chairman of the Council since its inception. Former member of the board of the Union of Jewish Religious Communities in Poland, International Council of the Auschwitz Camp Museum and Memorial. Co-author of the post-war section of the core exhibition in POLIN, the Museum of the History of Polish Jews in Warsaw. Author of many articles and books including: *Jews, Judaism, Poland* (Polish, 1997); *The Mystery of Israel and the Mystery of the Church* (Polish, 2007); *Poland and the Jews: Reflections of a Polish Polish Jew* (English; Austeria, Cracow 2005); *Our Jewishness* (Polish, 2010); *Jews and ...* (Polish, 2014); *What do I Owe to Interreligious Dialogue and Christianity* (in English and Polish; The Judaica Foundation, Cracow 2017).



**ANDREW SILOW-CARROLL** is the *Jewish Telegraphic Agency's* Editor-in-Chief. Previously he served as editor-in-chief and CEO of the *New Jersey Jewish News* and wrote an award-winning weekly column in the *Times of Israel*. He was also the managing editor of the *Forward* newspaper, editor of the *Washington Jewish Week*, senior editor of *Moment* magazine, and a reporter for the *Jewish Telegraphic Agency*.



**DR. MICHAEL C. STEINLAUF** holds an M.A. in Literature from Columbia University and a doctorate in Judaic Studies from Brandeis University. He is the author of *Bondage to the Dead: Poland and the Memory of the Holocaust* (1997), which examines how the experience of witnessing the Holocaust shaped Polish history and consciousness in the half century after World War II. He was a contributing editor to the *YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe* (Yale University Press, 2008), responsible for entries on theater and



performance, and the editor of *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry*, v. 16 (2003), the first collection of studies focusing on Jewish popular culture in Poland and its contemporary afterlife. His writings have been translated into Polish, Hebrew, German and Italian. Professor Steinlauf has also been active in various kinds of Jewish memory work in Poland. He has lectured at the Krakow Jewish Culture Festival and the University of Warsaw, taught in the Musicians' Raft program organized by the Borderlands Foundation in Sejny, Poland, and served as chief historical advisor and curator of modern Jewish culture for the Museum of the History of Polish Jews in Warsaw. He is currently at work on a study of the Yiddish writer and activist Y. L. Peretz.

## upcoming programs at YIVO



MONDAY  
**MAY 06**  
7:00pm

### Memory of the Past and the Battle for a Promising Future

**LECTURE** • Join us for a talk by founder and president of Yahad-In Unum, Catholic priest Father Patrick Desbois. Yahad-In Unum identifies mass Jewish killing sites and collects forensic evidence of the executions, and conducts international workshops and graduate-level seminars to contribute to Holocaust scholarship and the study of genocide.



SUNDAY  
**MAY 19**  
7:00pm

### Rothko Chapel, Little Match Girl Passion, and an Adam Roberts Premiere: Secular Sacred Music

**CONCERT** • A performance of two choral masterworks, Morton Feldman's *Rothko Chapel* and David Lang's *Little Match Girl Passion*, featuring the young artists of the OS Ensemble, led by Raquel Acevedo-Klein, including the performance of a new secular sacred work by composer Adam Roberts, commissioned for the occasion.



TUESDAY  
**JUNE 04**

6:00pm  
Pre-Concert  
Lecture  
7:00pm  
Concert

### A Hebrew Liederabend — An Evening of Hebrew Song

**ANNE E. LEIBOWITZ MEMORIAL CONCERT** • An elegant illuminating retrospective program devoted to classic treasures of secular Hebrew song and the poetry that has inspired this rich variety of musical expression for more than a century. A pre-concert lecture will be presented at 6:00pm by YIVO's Anne E. Leibowitz Visiting Professor-in-Residence in Music, Neil W. Levin.

► Visit [yivo.org/Events](http://yivo.org/Events) for tickets and more information.

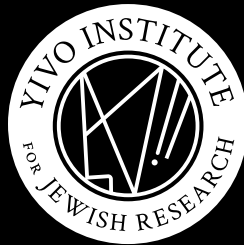


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THANK YOU.



The YIVO Institute for Jewish Research is dedicated to the preservation and study of the history and culture of East European Jewry worldwide. For nearly a century, YIVO has pioneered new forms of Jewish scholarship, research, education, and cultural expression. Our public programs and exhibitions, as well as online and on-site courses, extend our global outreach and enable us to share our vast resources. The YIVO Archives contains more than 23 million original items and YIVO's Library has over 400,000 volumes—the single largest resource for such study in the world.

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