

New Cracow Friendship Society, Inc.

3905 Arthur Avenue North, Seaford, N.Y. 11783

CRACOW

FRIENDSHIP

A NEWSLETTER OF THE NEW CRACOW FRIENDSHIP SOCIETY



NEW YORK CITY

JANUARY - FEBRUARY 2020

ISSUE 306

President

SIMONE HILFSTEIN SCHEUMANN

Vice Presidents

STEVEN RADWAN

BERNICE SLUTZMAN

Treasurer

JACK GINGOLD

Secretary

RACHELE ZUCKERMAN

Comptroller

MARIA HELFMAN

Board of Directors

DOLORES FINDER BERKOWSKY

CINDY PATRYCH BROTMAN

SUSAN KRUL CAREN

RENATA FARAHNIK

ANNA SCHEUMANN GALLEGOS

LEON HILFSTEIN

BONNIE KANTOR

IDA LEWIS

MICHELLE ORES

EVA PFAU

ARTHUR SPIELMAN

SYDELLE SPIELMAN

ELIZABETH SZANCER

Founders

RICHARD ABRAHAMER, z.l.

ELIAS FRIEDMAN, z.l.

BEN GEIZHALS, z.l.

ROMAN GUNZ, z.l.

MAX HILFSTEIN, z.l.

VICTOR LEWIS, z.l.

STEVE MORROW, z.l.

ZIGMUND MORROW, z.l.

EMIL SIEGMAN, z.l.

DAVID TWERSKY, z.l.

MANEK WERDIGER, z.l.

SAM WERTHEIM, z.l.

LARRY ZELLNER, z.l.

Founding President

STEVE MORROW, z.l.

President Emeritus

ROMAN WEINGARTEN, z.l.



Commemoration of the

77th Anniversary of the

Liquidation of the Cracow Ghetto

March 8, 2020 12 Noon

Lake Success Jewish Center

354 Lakeville Road

Great Neck, NY 11020

VISIT OUR WEBSITE: www.newcracowfriendshipsoc.org

תחי מדינת ישראל ועם ישראל

LONG LIVE THE STATE OF ISRAEL AND THE JEWISH PEOPLE

NEW CRACOW FRIENDSHIP SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

President Simone Hilfstein Scheumann

Editor Bernice Slutzman

www.newcracowfriendshipsoc.org

EDITORIAL

In the last three years we have seen a substantial increase in anti-Semitic incidents in the world and in the United States. After a brutal attack in Monsey, New York during Chanukah and several attacks in Brooklyn, an unprecedented response took place in New York City.

On Sunday, January 5, 2020 on relatively short notice a massive rally took place in the city. 25,000 people gathered in Foley Square in Manhattan and marched across the Brooklyn Bridge to Cadman Plaza to show their solidarity with the Jewish community. The theme of the day was NO HATE.....NO FEAR.

It was most gratifying to see people of all faiths and denominations show that ENOUGH IS ENOUGH. Although politicians were there, the event was not a forum for political speeches but rather words of encouragement that they were on our side. The feeling that so many turned out and braved the extreme cold and very windy day warmed my heart. Yes, I was there.

Just one week later, on January 12, another rally was held in Mineola for the same purpose. The turnout for that local event was also gratifying. Over 5,000 people, again of all faiths and denominations, were there to stand shoulder to shoulder with the Jewish community. Yes, I was there too.

At both of these events the mantra in my head was "We will not be victims anymore!" Will these demonstrations make a difference? Truthfully, I don't know, but it's good to know we are not alone.

The Editor

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Greetings and well wishes in 2020 to all our members and their families. What's happening in 2020? Our first event will take place on March 8, 2020 to mark the Liquidation of the Krakow Ghetto. This meaningful program will include two guest speakers from our 3G members. We welcome members and non-members to attend.

Through our newly created Social Action Committee we are planning to partner with existing organizations that are working throughout the country to combat the rise in hate and anti-Semitism. With the continued increase in assaults we must be part of the conversation and take action. Please consider contacting and joining this important committee.

It was a pleasure to get together for an early

Hanukkah celebration in Queens this passed December. What a nice way to meet up with old friends and make new ones. Thanks go to the social committee for their effort and the party's success.

Please email me at ncfs.org@gmail.com with any questions or concerns. The legacy of our families and the future success of this society are in all our hands.

In conclusion, I wish to thank the entire board of directors and all our volunteers for their hard work this past year. Words cannot express my gratitude for their collaboration, efforts and assistance.

Fondly,
Simone

SOCIAL COMMITTEE REPORT

On behalf of myself and the Social Committee, we wish everyone a very happy and healthy new year 2020. Our pre-Chanukah get together was a great success. It was so nice to see everyone together at Ben's. We enjoyed a delicious kosher lunch buffet, lots of latkes and heaping platters of yummy cookies for dessert. Heartfelt thanks to our dear Leon Hilfstein, who made the long drive with his keyboard and talent. Singing along to old favorite Chanukah songs and listening to his renditions of Yiddish tunes, jazz rifts, show tunes and pop songs made the afternoon complete. It was a tender moment when everyone sang happy 100th birthday to Rega Lewis; as well as a hearty happy birthday to Arthur Spielman, turning a young 91 years.

Bringing our members together for special occasions to celebrate a holiday or event is what the Social Committee strives to accomplish. Seeing old friends hug and greet one another and talk for hours on end....watching new friends meet and get to know one another...these are just a couple reasons why these gatherings are so important to us.

We look forward to see you in the near future.

Susan Krul Caren

LISTING OF COMMITTEE CHAIRPERSONS

Cemetery	Bernice Slutzman 516 785-7059 Leon Hilfstein 845 434-7075
Commemoration	Bernice Slutzman 516 785-7059
Membership	Ida Lewis 718 380-3574
Outreach	Dolores Berkowsky doloberko@gmail.com

	Steven Radwan sterad22@aol.com
Social Action	Anna Gallegos NCFS.3G@gmail.com Steven Radwan 718 229-4014
Social Committee	Susan Krul Caren 516 338-4273
Sunshine	Rega Lewis 718 380-3574 Eva Pfau 718 464-0932
Telephone Tree	Leon Hilfstien 845 434-7075
Website	Simone Scheumann 845 623-5222 ncfs.org@gmail.com
Welfare	Renata Farahnik 516 603-3859

SOCIETY CALENDAR

2020

February 9	Board Meeting
March 8	Commemoration
April 19	Board & General Membership Meeting
May 17	Membership Luncheon
June 14	Board Meeting

MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE REPORT

I'm happy to report how pleased I was to receive the swift responses to our Society's 2020 Dues Renewal mailing. This demonstrated that not only do we have a committed and timely responsible membership for renewals but also that our 2G and 3G members wish to be involved/ part of an organization that both honors our forebears and also works to continue building our future as we re-group from the former years. With numerous directions in which to grow, I trust all our eyes will stay focused primarily on the battle against senseless hatred and anti-Semitism which we are sadly being challenged to confront in 2020.

Please keep your membership current by submitting your yearly dues to us: \$25 for single membership, \$40 for couples/family-minors. All adult 2G's and 3G's must apply for individual or family memberships as they are not included in parent's family memberships. Any voluntary contributions along with your reasonable dues payment is always greatly appreciated.

Please pay all dues in arrears now and keep those 2020 dues coming. Complete the 2020 renewal cards and

(very important!) include your e-mail addresses and both home and cell numbers. If you wish "not" to be on the phone chain call list, please request that on your card. However, if and when we need to reach you, it helps to have your contact information.

For questions about membership, please contact me by e-mail: idade747@gmail.com

Wishing you a healthy and happy winter.

Sincerely,
Ida Lewis
Membership Committee
idade747@gmail.com
(718)380-3574

BEST FILMS OF 2019

Greetings of the new year! As one of the 13 jurors who voted for the American Film Institute's "best" list, I watched almost all of the major releases of 2019. My own highly idiosyncratic list (below) once again groups favorite films thematically. Since I interviewed some of these films' artists in my "Reel Pieces" series at 92Y, I'm adding 6 links to the onstage discussions.

Illuminating History:

When They See Us
The Current War: The Director's Cut <https://www.92y.org/archives/reel-pieces-the-current-war-1917>

The Two Popes <https://www.92y.org/archives/the-two-popes-reel-pieces>

Female Directors Rule:

Little Women <https://www.92y.org/archives/greta-gerwig-little-women>

The Mustang

Musical Vision:

Blinded by the Light
Yesterday

Ascending/transcending borders:

The Aeronauts
The White Crow <https://www.92y.org/archives/ralph-fiennes-white-crow>

(Mis)perceptions:

Luce
Richard Jewell

Shakespeare Lives:

The King
Ophelia

Creating Coexistence:

Give Me Liberty
The Best of Enemies

Family Dynamics:

The Farewell
Parasite
Fighting With My Family

Earnest Portraits of Real Heroes:

The Report

Just Mercy

Harriet

Dark Waters

Deft Documentaries:

The Cave

The Edge of Democracy

Ask Dr. Ruth <https://www.92y.org/archives/dr-ruth-reel-pieces>

The Apollo

Making Waves: The Art of Cinematic Sound

The Spy Behind Home Plate <https://www.92y.org/archives/the-spy-behind-home-plate-reel-pieces-annette-insdorf>

Maiden

Wishing you clear vision in 20/20,

Dr. Annette Insdorf

DONATIONS

Susan Krul Caren In memory of her mother, Jean Krul on her Yahrzeit \$36

Luna Kaufman \$200

Toby and Steven Radwan, in honor of the birth of their granddaughter, Chesney Jane born to their daughter

Jennifer and Jason. \$180

Bernice Slutzman in memory of Helga Grunberg, \$36

Tanya and Severyn Zajac in honor of Arthur Spielman on his 91st birthday \$50

NOT LONG AGO, NOT FAR AWAY: THE AUSCHWITZ EXHIBIT THROUGH THE EYES OF A THIRD GENERATION SURVIVOR

By: Felicia Heiney

Walking up to The Museum of Jewish Heritage, I am confronted by a huge, windowless cattle car. Its size is foreboding, a warning of the tragedy told within. Next to me stands my mother, daughter of two Holocaust survivors. Together, yet to ourselves, we read the sign below it. This enclosed space was used to transport thousands of Jews from the isolated quarantine of ghettos to their fate in Auschwitz. Innocent people with lives and families were rounded up like criminals and packed into these dark carriages like sardines, given just a bucket for their waste. The human cargo was packed even more tightly than the cattle were - after all, the cattle were meant to survive the journey. They were not. Many did not make it through the route to the hell on earth that was Auschwitz, dying from heat exhaustion, dehydration, starvation, or disease.

Inside, we meet my mother's friend, Simone Scheumann, and other board members of the New Cracow Friendship Society, an organization first started

by Holocaust survivors from Cracow, Poland. Before World War II, about 3.3 million Jews lived in Poland. Of them, approximately 369,000 survived. Some of them from Cracow who came to America afterwards founded the New Cracow Friendship Society, which is now mostly made up of the children of survivors. My grandmother, Fela Teitelbaum z"l, who was a 12-year-old girl in Cracow when the Holocaust began, was a member, and my mother is now on the board.

After the board of the New Cracow Friendship Society meets, our tour guide, Beata Schulman, greets us with headsets we will use for the duration of the exhibition tour. Like me, Beata is a third generation survivor. She has dedicated her life to studying Jewish history and the Holocaust and now works as the Executive Director of the Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial Foundation, helping to preserve the memory and history of the Holocaust and the remains of the site of Auschwitz-Birkenau. Having her lead us through the exhibit was a very special opportunity and an experience that I am certain we will all remember for a long, long time.

We enter the exhibition, which begins with a map of the world with two points on it: New York and Auschwitz. *Not long ago. Not far away.* I look at the map showing the two points, closer than I had imagined them to be. It's been almost 75 years since the liberation of Auschwitz, and I can't help but think about how near the events of the Holocaust are in other ways: xenophobia, hate speech and hate crimes towards minorities, and discrimination happening right here and now. I am haunted by the words of American playwright Eugene O'Neill, "There is no present or future-only the past, happening over and over again-now." I know that seeing this exhibit is going to be difficult, but maybe I, and all of us, need this wake up call to propel us into action over what's happening now and to prevent things from getting worse.

We move into the history of anti-Semitism, beginning in the Middle Ages. Beata explains that in those times, anti-Semitism was based on religion, with myths such as the blood libel widespread. The blood libel claimed that Jews sacrificed Christian babies to make the matzah they ate for Passover. Scholar Alan Dundes describes the blood libel as "one of the most bizarre and dangerous legends ever created by the human imagination" in his preface to the book *Blood Libel Legend: A Casebook in Anti-Semitic Folklore*.

In the modern era, as the world became more secular, anti-Semitism did too. Anti-Semitic myths shifted from the religious to the cultural, based on perceived group characteristics such as the notion that Jews are dirty and spread diseases like typhus. This may be in part because many of the Jews living in Europe before the war had become quite secular and integrated in European society, which meant that discrimination based

on religious practices or ideals wouldn't necessarily apply to them. In fact, the Nazis' criteria for discriminating against someone they labeled as Jewish was having at least one Jewish grandparent, meaning some of them would not have even been considered Jewish according to Jewish law (a baby is only born Jewish if its mother is Jewish). Criteria that racialized Jews had little to do with their religious beliefs and practices, focusing more on them as an ethnic group and categorizing them based on common heritage and ancestry.

Included in the exhibition is information about the different reactions Jews had to anti-Semitism. Some assimilated in the hopes that becoming more integrated would protect them from the xenophobia they faced. Others, mainly observant Orthodox Jews, believed that since they had survived for as long as they had in their communities, they would continue to do so. There were also Zionists who took the anti-Semitism as a sign that there was no place for them in Europe, and the time had come to emigrate to what was Palestine at the time and return to the Holy Land.

At this point in the exhibit, a toddler's dress is displayed in a glass case. Beata tells us that the little girl's mother emigrated to Palestine, bringing her child's clothing with her. The child and father were supposed to join the mother shortly afterwards, but the Germans took them away before they had the chance. Looking at the tiny, baby pink cotton dress, a lump rises in my throat and my eyes sting with tears. Did someone, perhaps a neighbor, tell this woman the fate of her family? If not, when did she realize they would not be joining her to safety? How long did she pray for their arrival, dream of the moment they would be reunited? If I could hold the dress the toddler never wore again under a microscope, would I find small crystals from the salt of her mother's tears, weeping from the knowledge that she would never hold her daughter again?

In the next room of the exhibition, we learn about how Hitler and the Nazis rose to power. When Germany lost World War I, it also lost much of its territory along with its economic stability, plunging the country into profound social turmoil. Hitler saw opportunity in the political tumult of the time, using his oratory and propaganda skills to move up the ranks of what became the Nazi Party. One of the ways he effectively united the politically divided nation was by finding a scapegoat, a common enemy: the Jews. In his most famous work, *Mein Kampf*, he argued that the Jews' effeminate character was weakening Germany, which needed a strong man of iron to regain power. Nazi propaganda depicted Jews with exaggerated, stereotypically large, hooked noses being greedy and conspiring against Germans to seize more wealth and power. In other imagery they were shown as subhuman, cultural parasites threatening to infect the purity of Aryan German society. It's important to note that all of this happened long before

the implementation of the "Final Solution," or the wholesale annihilation of Jewish people. The Nazis' search for the answer to the "Jewish question" began by marking them as different, limiting the types of jobs they were allowed to hold and thus their ability to economically sustain themselves, and then separating them from the rest of society in ghettos as if quarantining a disease. The path from anti-Semitism and hatred to genocide was not a direct one, but there were many warning signs along the way, stages in which the threshold for hate and violence against a perceived "other" was raised until it had no limit, and no measure seemed too drastic to rid Europe of the despised Jewish people.

But the Jews were not the only group hated by the Nazi Party. The first people the Nazis rounded up and put in concentration camps were political dissidents, ensuring the kind of authoritarianism that stifled contrary opinions and resistance to their regime from within. They then persecuted Roma people, a group who people refer to today as "Gypsies", deeming them physically and racially inferior. The exhibit features photos of Nazi "scientists" examining and measuring features of Roma people, creating masks from their features as models of inferior facial structure, and propaganda posters with photos comparing Roma with Germans, who are presented as paragons of the ideal physical form.

Nazis used certain systems to measure the worthiness or fitness of a people and their genetic traits. The pseudoscience of phrenology, for example, measured the bumps, shape, and size of peoples' skulls and interpreted them as indications of character traits and measures of virtue. Given it was developed by German physician Franz Joseph Gall in 1796, it is no surprise that it valued German features above all others. Phrenology is now infamous for its use by the Third Reich in their campaign of eugenics.

The professed purpose of eugenics was to better the human population. Yet the way it set out to do so was dubious at best. Eugenics is the improvement of the human race through controlled breeding that selects for certain characteristics. Even under the guise of working towards the greater good, playing God has grave consequences. The Nazis' system of classifying who was desirable, whose traits merited propagation and whose didn't, was based on colored triangles. The exhibition displays a poster explaining this code. The triangular shape was an allusion to German road signs, of which triangles represented hazards. A red triangle was used for political prisoners - Germans who dared to defy Nazi ideology. A pink triangle marked out homosexuals. A green triangle was worn by convicts and criminals, often working as *kapos*. *Kapos* were assigned by the SS to supervise forced labor or perform administrative tasks, and were notorious for being more vicious and brutal than *kommandos* who were also overseeing prisoners. There were other colors,

too, all of which could be superimposed on a yellow triangle to form a Star of David, marking out inmates who were, for example, both Jewish and homosexual (coded as a pink triangle superimposed on a yellow triangle). This system was used in concentration camps, yet Jews were forced to wear a yellow Star of David with the word "Jude" on it before they were even placed in ghettos, making them easily identifiable targets.

When Germans began transporting Jews from ghettos to concentration camps, Jews didn't know where they were being taken. The wealthy among them who had traveled packed suitcases, and others filled cloth sacks with their belongings. At Auschwitz, Nazis bribed them, promising to deliver letters to their families if they wrote they were alive and arrived safely (without mentioning the conditions of the camp or the way they were treated). Eager to make contact with their family, Jews wrote the letters, making it easier when the SS showed up in ghettos to put their family, who wanted to reunite with them, into cattle cars to be brought to concentration camps.

Once they arrived to the concentration camps, all of the items Jews brought with them were confiscated. The Nazis would then sort them. The exhibition displays some of the items found after the war - mostly kitchenware items. Many of these were graters, which people used in those days to make food easier to eat for babies and the elderly. Some inmates worked sorting the items stolen from other inmates, an extremely fortunate placement for two reasons: it wasn't physically taxing, and if they could steal things without officers noticing, they could use them (for example, medicine) or exchange them for things they needed such as more food. Indeed, most of the Jews who survived Auschwitz were able to do so because of being placed into jobs that afforded them these kinds of benefits. That said, the average life expectancy for people who survived selection at Auschwitz was only a few months.

The Nazis didn't stop after stealing items prisoners carried with them. They separated men and women, destroying the family structure. They robbed new inmates of their clothing and jewelry, putting them in uniforms. One of these is on display in the exhibit, a shirt and a pair of pants with drab vertical stripes. They shaved inmates' hair. Nazis whose roles were formalized by the title "dentist" (just as Josef Mengele was legitimized by the title of "doctor") even pulled gold teeth and cavity fillings from inmates' mouths. Finally, they tattooed inmates with numbers, depriving them of the basic dignity of having a name. The intention of this process was to strip them of their identity and any sense of self, to break their spirit. In this way, they could be more easily controlled and murdered, both because of the destruction of their own self-conception and the Nazis' ability to view them as subhuman, no more significant or autonomous than branded cattle.

Even so, this method was not foolproof. Some

Nazis still found it difficult to kill prisoners, the blood staining their uniforms and the task of disposing of corpses reminders of the humanity of those being killed. In the next room of the exhibition, we learn about how the methods of these mass murdering events evolved to become more and more depersonalized, freeing Nazis from uncomfortable and inconvenient feelings of guilt. Nazi leadership devised a way to kill prisoners without blood stains or the need to move corpses. On the wall is a precise diagram of the method they came up with, complete with measurements. Prisoners were lined up along the edge of a ditch of a specified width and depth. Officers would then stand a certain distance from them, both to eliminate blood stains and create distance between them and their victims. Prisoners were shot from this distance, causing their corpses to fall into the ditches below, and thus also increasing efficiency. This room of the exhibition also features a video of this process. The demeanor of the SS officers carrying out the murders is chilling: calm and matter-of-fact. For them, it's just another mundane day at work, carrying out the instructions of their bosses. The only one in the frame having a human reaction is, ironically enough, a dog, probably a pet of one of the SS officers. The dog, running back and forth and barking in distress, poses a stark contrast to the SS officers, unfazed by carrying out the work of genocide.

Evidently, however, some SS officers found that even this method weighed on their conscience. So they adopted the use of the gas chamber, an American invention used to kill convicted criminals on death row. The chemical they used was German-developed Zyklon B, first used as a pesticide and then for chemical warfare in World War I. The process of performing mass murders using gas chambers also had a detailed diagram and instructions, which could be seen in the exhibit. Perhaps the most important of these was the way they tricked prisoners into willingly entering the gas chamber. Nazis told prisoners they were going to have the rare opportunity to shower. They were led into a room where they were instructed to undress and hang their clothes on numbered hooks which they were told to remember, as though they were going to come back for their things after washing themselves. Then they were led to the "shower". By the time they realized they were packed in too tightly to wash themselves, it was too late. The door was swung shut and locked behind them and the poisonous gas was released, resulting in bloodless, impersonal murder.

There is a quote on the wall of the exhibition by a man who worked in the gas chamber facility. He said that once prisoners realized they were going to be killed, they began panicking, screaming and climbing on top of each other in an attempt to escape the gas. The situation was so dehumanizing and disorienting, and inspired such desperation that, as he put it, a man would climb on top

his son to try to survive.

After the last scream of the final prisoner to die left their lips, leaving behind a body robbed of its life and spirit, the corpses in the gas chamber were loaded onto an elevator and brought to the second level to be incinerated and reduced to ashes. The exhibition features one of the chambers bodies were put into to be burned. These and the ovens were engineered and manufactured by Topf and Sons. Beata tells us that when Topf and Sons was put on trial after World War II, they feigned ignorance, saying the crematoria they designed were standard ovens and they didn't know what they were being used for. Ultimately, a design feature revealing that the ovens were used for human bodies was the decisive piece of evidence proving the complicity of Topf and Sons in the Holocaust. If it hadn't been for this complicity, Nazis would not have been able to carry out mass murders on the scale that they did.

It is discouraging to realize that they were not the only accomplices. There were many other people who used their money, labor, raw materials, factories, and expertise to aid the Nazis in their attempted genocide. And though the genocide was not ultimately successful and people survived to tell their stories and have children, there are already those who claim that it did not really happen and people who have never even heard of the Holocaust or Auschwitz.

Seventy-five years later, what recourse should there be? How can we try to piece together a past becoming more and more distant, honor the unfathomable number of lives lost, restore dignity trampled long ago? How can we and how should we bear witness?

The final two rooms of the exhibit offer hope. The first contains religious artifacts Jews smuggled into the camps and used during the Holocaust. Beata says that if roll call was at 6, they might wake up at 5 or 5:30 to lay tefillin and pray together. In this way, despite all odds, Jews maintained their identity, their faith, their hope. The final room displays photos of Auschwitz researchers on site, finding, recording, and preserving artifacts. And it gives me hope to know that an authentic, concerted effort is being made to remember, to salvage what remains of the many who did not survive, and to put in the work and effort that goes into fulfilling the command that implores us: *Never forget*.

ISRAEL'S POLITICAL STALEMATE

Several months have gone by since my last article and guess what? We are still in an election campaign. Nothing has changed. I mean nothing at all. This will be an unprecedented 3rd election in less than a year (April 2019, September 2019, March 2020). Israel hasn't had a functioning government since December 2018. Transition governments, which is what we have had, aren't able to pass any major laws. They are caretakers until a new

government is formed. No new budget can be passed so that the previous year's budget (in this case that of 2019) is automatically carried over to the next year and is divided by 12 for the monthly budget. This fact alone has caused tremendous hardship in numerous areas (health, Foreign Ministry, Education, transportation) as no major projects can be embarked upon and even existing ones are facing funding issues. In short, it is a country at a standstill, politically and economically.

One might say diplomatically too. One example is the Trump Administrations "Deal of the Century" the release of which has been delayed numerous times. The Palestinian rejection of the plan outright, before it was presented, notwithstanding, from an Israeli point of view, there may never be a plan as positive as this on the table. Yet the government can't take advantage of it due to the political stalemate, and the fate of the plan, indeed the fate of the Trump Administration, is unclear headed into an election year and the plan may never see light of day.

Militarily too. The events in Gaza continue to afflict the Israeli population. Rockets are fired without warning. Just last night, for a second time, rockets were fired from Gaza towards the location where Netanyahu was giving a campaign speech and he was forced to leave the area. No matter whose side you support, no one wants to see their Prime Minister forced to flee by terrorist rockets. Of course the IDF responded, though not seriously. And there is truth to the fact that there is progress between Hamas and Israel on arranging a long-term ceasefire. But the terms of that ceasefire, the ability to move ahead to negotiate the release of the Israelis being held in captivity or the bodies of the two Israeli soldiers killed in the 2014 operation, can't really be moved ahead with a caretaker government. Similarly, a decision, if that is what is needed, for a full-scale operation is also difficult to take under the current circumstances.

One thing that has not been put on hold is the hateful and decisive rhetoric that categorizes election campaigns. In this case, Israelis have had more than a year of it and at least another 2 months to look forward to. The rhetoric has reached new heights, so much so, that it almost seems the public has become immune to the increasingly viscous verbal attacks on segments of the population.

Perhaps at the core of the crisis is a complete disrespect for the politicians who claim to be running the show. Never has the popularity of the Knesset been lower. Neither the right nor the left are viewed positively. And here is the bottom line, there is no clear cut majority for either side which lends to the prevailing view that the upcoming election won't lead to any decisive conclusion and what we experienced over the past months in terms of attempts to put together a coalition will be most likely what we will experience after the March elections. A

fourth election (no joke) is not out of the question. Despite promises by politicians on both sides that this will never happen, no one believes them. Promise that a 3rd election wouldn't take place were also made and here we are. So what is the difference between 3, 4 or even a fifth election at this point?

Many people (I'm one of them) were deeply frustrated by the way both sides handled the outcome of the previous election. It seemed clear that the results of the September election should have led to a National Unity government. That is what it seems the public wanted and given neither side was able to form a majority government (obvious from day 1), that is what they should have done.

But, looking back, this appears to have been doomed from the start. The day after the election, Netanyahu put together a block of 55 members of Knesset, the right wing and ultra-Orthodox parties and never budged from the demand that they enter a government together. He also never budged from the demand that he be first in a rotation between him and Benny Ganz, the head of the Centrist Blue and White party. Neither of these conditions were acceptable to Blue and White.

The President of Israel, Reuven Rivlin, put a proposal on the table that became known as the President's Plan, which was to see Netanyahu step down after an unspecified period, due to incapacity (he would have to handle his legal battle) but would retain the title of Prime Minister during this period. There was never agreement on how long before he would step down and according to Blue and White, there was never a commitment on Netanyahu's side that he would ever step down at all. Because their main promise to voters and perhaps their main reason for existing was not to sit in a government under a Prime Minister under indictment (following a hearing, the Attorney General indicted Netanyahu in three cases, in one of them for bribery), they were very careful not to accept a deal which even if limited, had them give up on that principle and sit under a Prime Minister under indictment for flimsy promises they never believed. The lack of trust was so great, so deep, that despite numerous offers (at least that were leaked to the press) that would have seen Netanyahu step down after 5 or 6 months, a deal could never be reached.

Were those offers real or just spin? We may never know. Several serious journalists claim they were serious offers made by the Likud, which if true, means that Blue and White has taken a huge gamble not accepting them and going for another election. They may never find themselves this close to being in the government again, though the polls show another election will not change the situation much. But the bottom line was that Blue and White believed these proposals were indeed spin and together with the fact that Netanyahu never backed down

from keeping the block of 55 (which went against other Blue and White promises and those of Kingmaker Avigdor Lieberman to no longer allow for a Haredi dictat on certain policies – recall my previous article on how that agenda has hit a wall) and being second in a Prime Minister rotation, the deal never went anywhere. To the last day, Blue and White suggested that Ganz go first while Netanyahu take care of his legal woes and if cleared, be second in a rotation 2 years down the line. That was a non-starter for Netanyahu, for once he stepped down as Prime Minister, his status in the courts would dramatically change and he (reasonably) felt that he would never be able to come back, even if found innocent in the trial.

Beyond the stalemate, the Likud and Netanyahu began an aggressive campaign to delegitimize the Attorney General, the police and the courts, headed by Likud Members of Knesset Miki Zohar, Dudi Amsalem and others and Minister of Justice Amir Ohana. The attacks against these institutions have reached unprecedented levels and in many ways, the upcoming election is a referendum on them. To be sure, a very large sector of Israeli society believes Netanyahu has been unfairly targeted, that the legal and law enforcement systems have exceeded their legitimate jurisdictions and that the balance between the Judicial, Legislative and Executive Branches, has been undermined.

Like anything else in which two sides hotly contest an issue, the truth is somewhere in the middle. To me it seems clear that Israel is lacking a Constitution which would have put many of these issues to rest. There needs to be term limits for Prime Ministers which would also solve a lot of this mess. As a student of American History, reading about the Constitutional Convention in 1787 is very instructive on how 13 States achieved the compromises that they did after months of debate, with the very future existence of the country on the line, and finally achieve a system that has stood the test of time for over 230 years. True, there was a Civil War in the middle which at the core was a constitutional crisis (secession, slavery) and there is a deep political crisis in the US these days as well (as demonstrated by the impeachment process). But clearly the Israeli political system needs reform. The problem is, there can't be any reform unless there is a government and those running it are responsible enough to see the problem and take the actions to fix it. I don't see that happening any time soon.

In fact, there may not be a political resolution any time soon either. Unlike the British, who went over in droves to Boris Johnson in the recent election (to finally put an end to the Brexit question ripping the country apart these past three years so that the country can move on (and, we hope, partly due to the unacceptable anti-Semitism projected by Labor and Corbyn) this scenario is not likely to happen in Israel. People on the right are

digging in to protect Netanyahu who won the Likud primary against Gidon Saar by a landslide (72%), and will likely request immunity from trial (something he said he wouldn't do) but by doing it, he delays his trial until the Knesset can decide on that immunity (there is no parliamentary majority to grant it right now) but that can only happen once there is a government formed, so expect that to be delayed and delayed. The Blue and White supporters are likely not to disappear either, anxious - no desperate, for a change. Lieberman, after not giving up his promises these past two elections and joining one of the blocks and in a sense bearing responsibility for leading to the third election, is not likely to change his views about sitting with the Haredi parties any time soon either. The polls back this up showing a marginal change in the distribution of seats in a March election. All this means that Blue and White will face the same choices after the March election – sit with Netanyahu as Prime Minister for a period of time if the latter is willing to compromise on that point and step down after a period of time, etc.. Sound familiar? From where I am sitting, that looks like the most realistic (and depressing) scenario. Which if true would raise the question, why spend millions of shekels, subject the public to three more months of hate spewed divisive rhetoric only to get back to the exact situation we already were with the compromises needed to move ahead clear to all?

Have I already said – Stalemate?

Good luck to us all. Perhaps the next time I write, I will have been pleasantly surprised.

Barry Spielman

Oranit, December 2019

AN ILLUSTRATOR'S PATH TO THE WORLD OF IMAGINATION

Will anyone guess that these vivid pictures were created during such dark times? - Jan Marcin Szancer, a Polish illustrator of Jewish origin., asked in his autobiography. The esteemed artist will have a special exhibition devoted to him at the Galicia Jewish Museum in Kraków, scheduled to open on July 1, 2020.

In the world of Polish children's illustration, Jan Marcin Szancer is an institution within himself, known to all who were raised on the poems of Tuwim and Brzechwa, who lost themselves in the adventures of Mr. Kleks, or who grew up with the characters of Andersen's fairy tales. Drawn with a precise line, meticulously accurate, and depicting characters and places that were at the same time whimsical, all came to life with the skill of Szancer's hand for over half a century, starting in the 1920s.

The Master's paintings, drawings, and printsspoke to the imagination of subsequent generations of Poles, not only allowing them to move into unknown worlds, but also shaping their sense of aesthetics and visual taste from an early age - says Jakub Nowakowski, Director of the Galicia Jewish Museum. - Therefore, the need to honor the great illustrator is completely understandable, and I am glad that it fell to our institution to do just that. One of the Museum's goals is to show the history of Polish Jews from a new perspective.

Although Jan Marcin Szancer is known primarily from his multi-colored illustrations, kept in a fairy-tale atmosphere, his biography is far from a fairy-tale. Born in 1902, the artist survived two World Wars and a period of anti-Jewish repression in the 1960s Poland.

No wonder that reminiscing, he asked: how to return to the world of colors, having experienced the horrors of war? –Paulina Banasik the exhibition's Curator says. - And although the exhibition will feature (literally) dark spots from the difficult periods of Szancer's life, we will focus on his illustrated characters and friends who accompanied him throughout his life.

It cannot be otherwise because Szancer is first and foremost an illustrator of children's books - and it is the youngest visitors who will be the main recipients of the exhibition. Thanks to interactive devices, visitors will be able to feel like the heroes of a fairy tale, based on important events in the life of the artist. - We want to invite our guests to the world of Szancer: first little Jan, who is just learning how to draw, older Janek, taking his first steps on the path of his illustrative career, and finally the esteemed Mr. Jan, who even as an adult did not lose his childhood imagination - explains the exhibition Curator. - The exhibition will be entirely "tangible, which will allow not only for seeing it, but also for participation. – adds Paulina.

In addition to several dozen works, out of thousands of the most important and beautiful drawings by Jan Marcin Szancer, the Museum will also feature analog installations specially prepared for the needs of the exhibition: wheels for learning how to mix colors, a double bottom wardrobe or a three-person locomotive. The exhibition will be created in cooperation with a range of Polish and international partners and will include Szancer's original artworks as well as books, postcards, and magazines that contain his illustrations.

While the exhibition will be devoted to younger audiences, on a basic level, it will also include a special narration for adult visitors, focusing on Szancer's story and the history of Polish Jews in the second half of the 20th century. - In this time of growing antisemitism and nationalism, this positive story seems to be more important than ever. Thanks to Szancer's biography and work, the exhibition will become a perfect tool for highlighting the scale and the input of the Polish Jews on an identity of contemporary Poles – says Jakub Nowakowski. The

exhibition will open at the Galicia Jewish Museum in June 2020, as part of the annual Jewish Culture Festival and will be on display through May 2021. There will be many additional events planned around the vernissage [exhibition opening]: a walk around the city in the footsteps of Szancer's heroes or drawing workshops for children with the best of Polish illustrators.

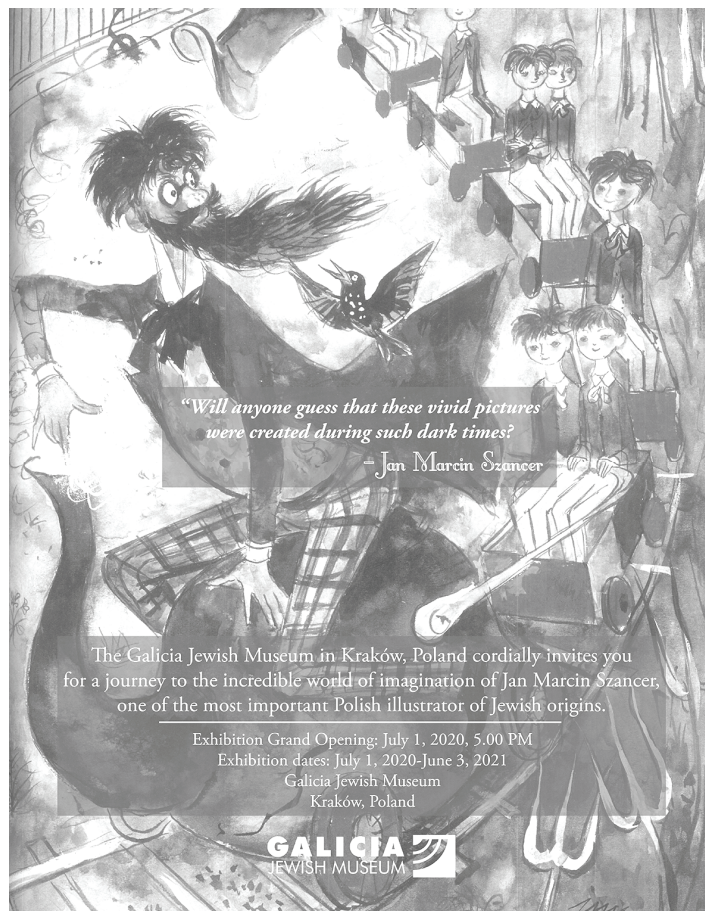
The story of Jan Marcin Szancer shows that it is the rich imagination which helps to survive difficult times. It is worth teaching children how to use it best from an early age, and therefore, we invite you to the Galicia Jewish Museum in June. It will be colorful and inspiring - assures the museum director.

Galicia Jewish Museum is one of the most important Jewish cultural institutions in Poland. Its work is recognized by both the Polish government and individual visitors. The Museum's approach involves two innovative features. Firstly, the core exhibition "Traces of Memory", pieces together a picture of Jewish life and culture in Polish Galicia that can still be seen today, in an interpretation that is informative, accessible, and thought-provoking. The second feature is the synergy created from bringing together the core exhibition with temporary exhibitions, educational programming and cultural events. These supplemental exhibitions and activities build upon the core exhibition's themes, creating a unique atmosphere when juxtaposed in one space.

Among all temporary exhibitions presented in the Galicia Jewish Museum were "Blood" (Jewish Museum London) and "Girl in the Diary", which will begin an American tour in 2020 and will be presented at the Jewish Museum Milwaukee (opening on January 23), Dallas Holocaust Museum (June-December 2020), Contemporary Jewish Museum in San Francisco (January-May 2021) and Holocaust Memorial Center in Detroit (June-December 2022).

The full Museum experience entails not only visiting the exhibitions, but also actively participating in the wide range of cultural, artistic and educational programs we have to offer. Through all of these actions, the Museum not only commemorates the past, but is also taking part the revival of Jewish life in contemporary Poland.

Paulina Banasik
Exhibition Curator
Galicia Jewish Museum
Kraków, Poland



SOCIAL ACTION COMMITTEE NEWS

On behalf of the New Cracow Friendship Society and the newly formed Social Action committee, Felicia Heiney and I attended the Anti-Defamation League's Never is Now Summit against Anti-Semitism and Hate. It was a day full of seminars and discussions about how we can be proactive to "End Hate for Good". Of the 1,800 attendees all ages, races and religions were represented. All who attended can agree that these are violent and terrible times however I left feeling inspired and hopeful that if we work together, we can end this rise in hate. What we learned throughout the day will help guide and inform the efforts of our committee throughout the year. I encourage everyone

RECOMMENDATION

In an effort to make things easier for our members we would like to inform you that we have reached an agreement with Star of David Chapels in that members of the Society will receive a substantial discount with them.

Star of David Memorial Chapels



Everything you need in your hour of need.

Elegant and spacious sanctuaries
located adjacent to New Montefiore,
Beth Moses, Wellwood, Mt. Ararat and
Pinelawn Memorial Park.



"Because in the end, everything matters"

631-454-9600 866-95-SHALOM

ANDREW NOVAK KEVIN GRAY
LICENSED FUNERAL DIRECTORS

1236 Wellwood Avenue, West Babylon, NY 11704
www.starofdavidmemorialchapels.com

SUNSHINE COMMITTEE REPORT

HAPPY EVENTS

ANNIVERSARIES:

January

Joseph & Yolanda Chaikel

Jack & Faye Gingold

Allan & Shelly Spielman

Please submit your anniversary dates and any happy life cycle events to Ida Lewis of the Membership/Sunshine Committees (e-mail address is found below) so that we may congratulate you in our Newsletter regarding your special day/event.

NEW MEMBERS:

We welcome our newest member, Felicia Heiney 3G, granddaughter of Fela Patrych, zlv, & daughter of Cindy Patrych & David Brotman.

DONATIONS:

Mrs. Faye Novotny, in memory of her husband, Benjamin's yahrzeit- \$18

Gabriel Chodorow-Reich, in memor of my grandparents, Mel and Betty Reich \$36

If you have news of any member who would like to receive our blessings, prayers or a mention for health & recovery in our Newsletter, please inform us.

Wishing everyone optimal health in the year 2020!

Ida Lewis 718-380-3574; idale747@gmail.com
Eva Pfau 718-464-0932

We regret to inform you
Of the passing of our

Dear Member and Friend

HELGA GRUNBERG

To the Banyasz and Traulsen Families

Our Sincerest Condolences

MAY HER SOUL REST IN EVERLASTING PEACE



We acknowledge the contribution of the Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany in helping to publish this Newsletter.