

Duty and Compassion

WEBINAR
22.03.2021

Polish Diplomacy Working
Against the Holocaust



80 years ago, in 1941 in the Swiss capital of Bern, Polish diplomats began the so-called passport operation in cooperation with Jewish circles, the aim of which was to rescue Jews from the Holocaust. Aleksander Ładoś, Konstanty Rokicki, Abraham Silberschein, Chaim Eiss, Stefan Ryniewicz and Juliusz Kühl, otherwise known as the Ładoś Group, issued false passports and citizenship certificates of Latin American states to Jews under the threat of the Shoah. Their bearers would then be interned and later exchanged for German prisoners of war – they had a chance to avoid transportation to death camps and thus to save their lives.

For several years now the Pilecki Institute, in cooperation with Polish and foreign partners, has been conducting archival research and scientific studies into the activities of the Ładoś Group. One of the results is the 2019 publication of *Lista Ładosia* (The Ładoś List, English ed. 2020), which contains the names of more than 3,000 people to whom the passports were issued. Today we know that the operation of the Ładoś Group was not an isolated case, but formed part of broader activities of the Polish diplomacy both before and during the Second World War. Other Polish diplomats also offered assistance to Jews, for example in Leipzig, Istanbul and Tokyo. New archival findings and testimonies, discovered years after the fact, both inspire historical research and resonate with the public. The activities of Polish diplomats have recently been described among others in the “Daily Mail”, “Israel Hayom” and “The Jerusalem Post”.

Online webinar inaugurates the Year of the Ładoś Group established by the Polish Parliament, and is also part of the celebration of the National Day of Remembrance of Poles Rescuing Jews under German Occupation. On this occasion, we will present our trilingual Polish-English-German website “Passports for Life”, which in an appealing form presents the current state of knowledge about the operation of the Polish diplomats based in Bern. We will meet with an international panel of experts, journalists reporting on the subject and witnesses to history – the descendants of the Survivors. We will discuss historians’ latest findings and future research perspectives. An analysis of individual operations aimed at rescuing Jews, which were undertaken by Polish diplomats in various circumstances and in different parts of the world, is conducive to a general reflection on the role of diplomacy when confronted with genocidal policies. The German plan to exterminate all Jews in Europe, implemented alongside warfare, posed an extremely tough challenge for diplomatic posts across the continent. It presented them with new tasks and responsibilities as well as affected the decision-making process. How to respond to the pleas of those in need of rescue? How to handle subsequent waves of refugees? Is it right to limit the activities to providing consular protection to one’s own citizens? Can we today draw a line between the activities undertaken as part of official duties and those that resulted from a moral imperative or the ethos of public service?

Diplomacy is one of the tools of the state. Do the activities of individual diplomats and diplomatic posts testify to the countries' varied attitudes towards the Holocaust? Do they help us better understand the responses of various political communities to genocide? What was the reaction of states experiencing different circumstances, such as the collaborators with the Third Reich, members of the anti-Hitler coalition, neutral countries? What were the actions of the states that retained their full traditional potential, and what were the actions of those that were destroyed and placed under occupation and thus continued to operate exclusively in the form of underground or émigré structures?

Inviting you to join us for a discussion with international experts, we hope that our reflection on the experiences of Polish diplomats during the Second World War will bring us closer to answering the above questions.

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Webinar Programme

3.30–3.40 PM (CET) / 10.30 – 10.40 AM (EST)

Opening

Wojciech Kozłowski PILECKI INSTITUTE

3.40–4.20 PM (CET) / 10.40-11.20 AM (EST)

Part I. Passports for Life

Presentation of the website passportsforlife.pl

Anna Miszczyk PILECKI INSTITUTE

The Voice of Survivors

Chris Pleasance (“Daily Mail”) interviews Heidi Fishman – daughter of the Holocaust Survivor Ruth “Tutti” Fishman née Lichtenstern

4.30–6 PM (CET) / 11.30 AM – 1 PM (EST)

Part II. Wartime Diplomacy. How Governments Responded to the Holocaust (roundtable)

Moderator

Jakub Kumoch EMBASSY OF THE REPUBLIC OF POLAND IN TURKEY

Panelists

John Cornell PILECKI INSTITUTE

Kinga Czechowska NICOLAUS COPERNICUS UNIVERSITY

Marek Kornat INSTITUTE OF HISTORY OF THE POLISH ACADEMY OF SCIENCES

Mordecai Paldiel YESHIVA UNIVERSITY AND TOURO COLLEGE IN NEW YORK

6.30–8 PM (CET) / 1.30 – 3 PM (EST)

Part III. Secret Diplomacy. Diverse Ways to Rescue Jews

Moderator

Hanna Radziejowska PILECKI INSTITUTE

Panelists

Olga Barbasiewicz JAGIELLONIAN UNIVERSITY

Eldad Beck ISRAEL HAYOM

Bernd Karwen POLISH INSTITUTE IN BERLIN – LEIPZIG BRANCH

Monika Maniewska PILECKI INSTITUTE

Biograms



Olga Barbasiewicz PhD is Assistant Professor at the Institute of Middle and Far East of the Jagiellonian University in Kraków. She holds an MA and a PhD in Political Science as well as an MA in Japanese Studies. She was awarded with a Ministry of Science and Higher Education scholarship for outstanding young scholars (2018-2021).

In her current research, she focuses on memory politics, Japanese-Korean relations and migration studies in wartime East Asia (Japan, Shanghai). The curator of international exhibitions. Author and editor of numerous books and articles, such as Barbasiewicz, O. (2016). *Pomniki i miejsca pamięci w relacjach międzynarodowych. Wpływ pamięci na stosunki japońsko-amerykańskie z perspektywy Japonii*, IKŚiO PAN, Barbasiewicz, O., ed. (2018). *Postwar reconciliation in Central Europe and East Asia : the case of Polish-German and Korean-Japanese relations*. Peter Lang., Barbasiewicz, O. (2019). *Ambasador RP w Japonii Tadeusz Romer i żydowscy uchodźcy wojenni na Dalekim Wschodzie*. Instytut Polski w Wilnie.



Eldad Beck, Berlin-based journalist and author. Born 1965 in Haifa, Eldad studies Arabic and Islam at the Sorbonne university in Paris.

He was Middle East affairs correspondent of the IDF Radio and the newspaper “Hadashot”, Paris based correspondent of the IDF Radio, the Jerusalem Report, the Jerusalem Post and Israel’s Channel 2. 1997-2000 project coordinator in east Africa and the PA territories for an Austrian governmental Organisation. Between 2000-2002 he was Vienna-based correspondent of the Israeli daily “Maariv”. From 2002 till 2016 he was Germany and Central Europe correspondent of the Israeli daily “Yedioth Ahronot”. Since 2017 he is the Europe correspondent of the daily “Israel Hayom” - the most circulating newspaper in Israel.



John Cornell PhD, received his Bachelors in Music from the University of California, Berkeley, and continued his studies in Modern European History at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.

He received his PhD there in 1997, specializing in modern French musical culture. He moved to Warsaw in 2008, and has been working with the Pilecki Institute since 2016, aiding with programs such as their database of post-war testimonies “Chronicles of Terror” and directing their workshop series “English in Academia”. As an adjunct with the Institute’s Center for the Study of Totalitarianisms, his current research projects concern relations between the Polish Government-in-Exile and the British Government during the Second World War, and the work of the Polish Government with the United Nations War Crimes Commission.



Kinga Czechowska, a historian, a researcher at the Institute of National Remembrance in Bydgoszcz, a PhD candidate at Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń. She has been working on her doctoral dissertation “The Jewish Question and the Polish Diplomacy, 1932-1939” (supervisor: Professor Krzysztof Kania). She presented her findings at variety of workshops, seminars and conferences in Poland (Warsaw, Kraków, Poznań) and abroad (Potsdam, Oxford, Sussex). For her research she was given numerous scholarships, most notably by The De Brzezie Lanckoronski Foundation and the Polonia Aid Foundation Trust. Her main research interests concern history of Polish diplomacy, history of Polish-Jewish relations and history of Holocaust. diplomacy, history of Polish-Jewish relations and history of Holocaust.



K. Heidi Fishman grew up in West Hartford, Connecticut. After graduating from Williams College, she received both an MA and an EdD in Counseling Psychology from Western Michigan University. As a psychologist at Dartmouth College, she specialized in working with people with eating disorders and histories of trauma. While Heidi always knew her mother and grandparents were Holocaust survivors,

she didn't start researching their story until she retired. Five years of investigation led to *Tutti's Promise* (2017, MB Publishing, Bethesda) which, while fictionalized for the purpose of allowing conversations among characters, follows the Lichtensterns' true story from May 10, 1940, in Amsterdam through two Nazi camps, liberation, and resettlement; the book contains a significant number of original documents. K. Heidi Fishman won the Joseph Zola Memorial Holocaust Educator Award from the Maurice Greenberg Center for Judaic Studies at the University of Hartford. *Tutti's Promise* was designated by the National Council for the Social Studies and the Children's Book Council as a Notable Trade Book for Young People and has won numerous other awards.



Bernd Karwen, a graduate in German as a Foreign Language, Polish Studies and Political Science from the Leipzig University. He complemented his studies in Warsaw. Since 1999 an employee of the Polish Institute in Leipzig (since 2008 the Leipzig Branch of the Polish Institute in Berlin). He has worked among others on historical projects such as the commemoration of the “Solidarity” movement,

“Polenaktion”, “Warsaw Ghetto Uprising” and “Warsaw Uprising”. He is also a member of the Scientific Council of the “Weimar Meetings with History” („Weimarer Rendez-vous mit Geschichte”). He runs various projects pertaining to literature (program for the Leipzig Book Fair), music and dialog (e.g. the Leipzig European Forum – an annual debate on the problems of the European Union). He translated Mieczysław Weinberg's biography into German (D. Gwizdalanka, *Der Passagier. Der Komponist Mieczysław Weinberg im Mahlstrom des zwanzigsten Jahrhunderts*, Wiesbaden 2020).



Prof. Marek Kornat is a historian. He received his Doctorate at the Jagiellonian University in Kraków (2000), later defending his post-doctoral thesis at the Institute of History of the Polish Academy of Sciences (2005), and becoming a full Professor in 2015. He currently works at the Institute of History of the Polish Academy of Sciences, and lectures at the Faculty of Law and Administration of Cardinal

Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw. His academic interests are focused primarily on the history of Polish diplomacy and international relations in the 20th century, and also on the history of Polish political thought and Sovietology. Professor Kornat has been a scientific visitor at, among others, the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique in Paris, Columbia University in New York, the Leibniz-Institut für Europäische Geschichte Mainz, and the Institut der Wissenschaften vom Menschen in Vienna.

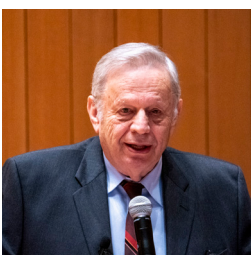


Jakub Kumoch PhD, a political analyst, co-author and editor of *The Ładoś List: An index of people to whom the Polish Legation and Jewish organizations in Switzerland issued Latin American passports during the Second World War*, as well as author of other publications on the activities of the Ładoś Group. In the years 2016–2020 he was the Ambassador of the Republic of Poland to Switzerland and Lichtenstein

and currently serves as the Polish Ambassador to Turkey. Earlier he had worked for almost 15 years as a journalist. He was also an analyst at the Centre for Eastern Studies and the Polish Institute of International Affairs.



Monika Maniewska, a historian, archivist, and graduate of the Faculty of History of the Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń. Co-author of *The Ładoś List: An index of people to whom the Polish Legation and Jewish organizations in Switzerland issued Latin American passports during the Second World War*. Manager of the Archives Acquisition Team at the Pilecki Institute.



Mordecai Paldiel PhD, the former Director of the Department of the Righteous at Yad Vashem, Israel's Holocaust authority, is a lecturer at Yeshiva College (at Yeshiva University) and Touro College in New York. Born in Belgium, Dr. Paldiel and his family of six fled to France where they were rescued by a Catholic Priest who was able to smuggle the entire family into Switzerland. Dr. Paldiel, a leading

authority on rescue during the Holocaust, has written several books including *The Path of the Righteous: Gentile Rescuers of Jews during the Holocaust*, *Whosoever Saves One*

Life: The Uniqueness of the Righteous Among the Nations, Sheltering the Jews: Stories of Holocaust Rescuers and German Rescuers of Jews: Individuals versus the System. In 1991, Dr. Paldiel was the Ida E. King Distinguished Visiting Scholar of Holocaust Studies at the Richard Stockton College of New Jersey. He received a B.A. from Hebrew University and an M.A. and Ph.D. in Religion and Holocaust Studies from Temple University.



Chris Pleasance, is the Mail Online's Chief Foreign Reporter, leading world news coverage on the world's most-read English language news site. He has reported extensively on the war against ISIS, Europe's migrant crisis, North Korea's nuclear programme, and most recently the Covid pandemic. He tweets @chrisplayance



Hanna Radziejowska, is director of the Pilecki Institute in Berlin, coordinator, curator, producer, and scriptwriter of cultural and museum projects. Together with Jack Fairweather, she has curated the exhibition "Der Freiwillige. Witold Pilecki und die Unterwanderung von Auschwitz" which has been awarded the "Historical Event of the Year 2019" prize for the best exhibition and is located at the Pilecki Institute in Berlin. In

2019 her exhibition "Houses of Glass" won the Mayor of Warsaw's exhibition award in the category "Best Event on Architecture".