

A One-Day Conference of the Institute for Polish-Jewish Studies

in co-operation with the Polish Cultural Institute
at the Polish Embassy, 47 Portland Place
London W1B 1JH

Thursday 27 November 2008

Forty years on *The March 1968 'Anti-Zionist' Campaign and its significance for Polish-Jewish relations*

To mark the launch of

P O L I N V O L U M E 2 1

1968: Forty Years After

Edited by

LESZEK GŁUCHOWSKI and ANTONY POLONSKY

Published by the Littman Library of Jewish Civilization

In the mid-1960s, public opinion in Poland turned against the Gomulka regime for a variety of reasons. In an attempt to regain public support and divert attention from the real problems, Gomulka adopted an antisemitic stance. On 19 March 1968 he delivered a speech to party activists in which he divided Jews into three categories: 'patriotic Jews', 'Zionists', and those who were neither Jews nor Poles but 'cosmopolitans' who should 'avoid those fields of work where the affirmation of nationality is indispensable'. In consequence, nearly 15,000 Jews—a very large part of Poland's Jewish community—left for Israel, western Europe, and North America, effectively ending Jewish life in the country for over a decade. The events of 1968 were long ignored by scholars but in recent years their importance in the process which led to the collapse of communism has become increasingly evident. This conference illuminates the events that triggered the crisis, the crisis itself, and its consequences.

Reservations essential

Please use booking form enclosed

This conference is co-sponsored by the Embassy of the Republic of Poland and the Polish Cultural Institute. Please note that the programme may be subject to change.

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Conference convenors:

Antony Polonsky and

Lena Stanley-Clamp

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Programme

Welcome and Opening

Chair: Mr Ben Helfgott, Chairman of the Institute for Polish-Jewish Studies

9.00 a.m. Registration and Coffee

9.30 a.m. Welcome

H.E. Ms Barbara Tuge-Erecińska,
Ambassador of the Republic of Poland

Opening Remarks

Sir Sigmund Sternberg,
President of the Institute for Polish-Jewish Studies

Morning Session I

Chair: Prof. Antony Polonsky (Brandeis University)

9.45 a.m. Introduction

Dr Leszek W. Głuchowski
(Brandeis University, co-editor of *1968: Forty Years After*)

**The Hate Campaign of March 1968: What Happened and How Did it Become
Anti-Jewish?**

Prof. Dariusz Stola (Collegium Civitas, Warsaw)

The March 1968 'Anti-Zionist' Campaign from a Forty-Year Perspective

Adam Michnik (editor-in-chief, *Gazeta Wyborcza*)

11.15 a.m. Coffee Break

Morning Session II

Chair: Prof. Dariusz Stola (Collegium Civitas, Warsaw)

11.35 a.m. **Polish Jews in the Post-1956 Era: Identities and Ideological Commitments**

Dr Jaff Schatz (Lund, Sweden)

**Opposing the Communist Regime in the 1970s: The Continuing Role of the 1968
Generation**

Eugeniusz Smolar (Centre for International Relations, Warsaw)

The Institute for Polish-Jewish Studies
(established 1984)

is a non-profit, educational institution devoted to the history and culture of Polish Jewry. It is an associated institute of the Oxford Centre for Hebrew and Jewish Studies.

12.30 p.m. Discussion

1.15 p.m. Buffet Lunch (by courtesy of the Polish Cultural Institute)

Afternoon Session I

Chair: Prof. Jonathan Webber (University of Birmingham)

2.15 p.m. March 1968 Emigrés – A Worldwide Community or Dispersed Individuals?

Dr Leopold Sobel (editor, *Plotkies*)

The Trauma of the 1968 Emigration: Exile or Emigration?

Prof. Anna Frajlich-Zajac (Columbia University)

Those Who Stayed Behind: The Challenge of Re-Inventing Jewish Life in Poland

Bella Szwarzman-Czarnota (associate editor, *Midrasz*)

4.00 p.m. Tea/Coffee Break

Afternoon Session II

Chair: Dr Leopold Sobel (editor, *Plotkies*)

Film Screening

Rachela at the Gdański Train Station

(Rachela na Dworcu Gdańskim)

2006, 50 minutes; director Ewa Szprynger, Poland; colour; in Polish with English subtitles

4.30 p.m. Introduction

Lena Stanley-Clamp (director, European Association for Jewish Culture)

4.40 p.m. Screening of film

This documentary film focuses on the experience of five Polish Jews during the March 1968 events and follows their emigration to Sweden. Documentary material provides a background to the story told from a forty-year perspective. The protagonists reflect on the impact of March 1968 on their lives, their struggles in coming to terms with their loss and feelings of rejection by their home country, as well as with acculturation to Scandinavian society. The title of the film, taken from a contemporary poem, resonates also with references to a classic of Polish literature, *The Wedding* by Wyspiański, and to the Warsaw train station which saw the departure of this migration of Polish Jews.

5.30 p.m. Discussion of film

5.45 p.m. Conference ends

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Notes on Speakers

Anna Frajlich-Zajac, a noted Polish émigré poet, is the author of twelve volumes of poetry. She holds a PhD in Slavic Literature and teaches Polish language and literature at Columbia University, New York. She is the recipient of the awards of the Kościelski Foundation of Switzerland and the W. & N. Turzański Foundation of Toronto, as well as the Knight's Cross of the Order of Merit of the Polish Republic. Her recent books include the bilingual volume *Between Dawn and the Wind* (2nd edition, 2006) and *The Legacy of Ancient Rome in the Russian Silver Age* (2007). She is the co-author of *After March. Vienna, Rome and New York* (2008).

Leszek W. Głuchowski is a Visiting Scholar in the Department of Near Eastern and Judaic Studies at Brandeis University. He received his PhD from the University of Cambridge and has published numerous articles and documents, primarily with the Cold War International History Project of the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars in Washington, DC. He is the co-editor with Antony Polonsky of *Volume 21 of Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry, 1968: Forty Years After*, as well as a contributor to that volume with a critical analysis of communist Poland's military intelligence service. Dr Głuchowski is completing a monograph based on the archives of the Institute of National Remembrance in Poland about Lt. Col. Jerzy Bryn, entitled *A Jew Lost in the Cold War*.

Adam Michnik is the editor-in-chief of *Gazeta Wyborcza*, the biggest Polish newspaper, as well as a historian and political publicist. Between 1968 and 1989 he was one of the leading organizers of the underground democratic opposition to the communist regime in Poland and co-founder of the Workers' Defence Committee (KOR). He was imprisoned many times for his political beliefs and activities, including during the events of March 1968. He was a member of the first non-communist parliament from 1989 to 1991. The laureate of many awards including Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights Award, the Erasmus Prize, and the French Legion of Honour, he was listed by the *Financial Times* as one of the twenty most influential journalists in the world. He is the author of several books, including *W poszukiwaniu utraconego sensu* (In search of lost meaning).

Antony Polonsky is Albert Abramson Professor of Holocaust Studies at Brandeis University and the US Holocaust Memorial Museum, where he is currently a senior fellow. He is the author of *Politics in Independent Poland* (1972), *The Great Powers and the Polish Question* (1976), *The Jews in Poland and Russia* (3 vols, forthcoming), and co-author of *A History of Modern Poland* (1980) and of *The Beginnings of Communist Rule in Poland* (1981). He is the editor as well as chair of the editorial board of the annual publication *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry* and vice-president of the Institute for Polish-Jewish Studies.

Jaff Schatz is founder and former director of the Institute for Jewish Culture in Lund, Sweden, having studied sociology at the Jagiellonian University in Kraków and at the University of Lund, Sweden. Academically his interest lies in the sociology of generational groups, and particularly of the generation of Polish Jewish communists. His book on this subject, *The Generation: The Rise and Fall of the Jewish Communists of Poland*, was published by the University of California Press in 1991. His presentation at this conference, based on interviews with post-1968 Polish Jewish exiles, will focus on the identities and perceptions of Polish Jews after 1956.

Eugeniusz Smolar, a journalist and media manager, is president of the Centre for International Relations, Warsaw. His studies at Warsaw University were interrupted by imprisonment in 1968, after participation in students' protests. Following his release from jail, he emigrated to Sweden in 1970 and completed his studies at the Sociology Faculty at Uppsala University. In 1975, he joined the Polish Service of the BBC World Service and later became its director (1988–97). He was active in the Workers' Defence Committee (KOR) and other democratic opposition groups in Poland, including the Solidarity Trade Union. He was co-founder of the émigré political quarterly *Aneks* and the Aneks Publishing House. Following his return to Poland, he became a member of the Board of Polish public radio and later programme director. He was co-organizer of the twenty-fifth anniversary celebrations of Solidarity and programme director of the international conference 'From Solidarność to Freedom'.

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Leopold Sobel is a historian and a translator. He spent his childhood in Wrocław and Warsaw. In 1964 he emigrated to Israel, where he served in the IDF during the Six-Day War and the War of Attrition. He graduated in history from Tel Aviv University and obtained his PhD from Leeds University. He subsequently worked in various teaching posts in the UK, joined the Ministry of Defence in 1983, and retired in 1992. He is a member of Reunion68 and since 2002 the editor of *Plotkies*, an internet magazine for the March 68 Generation. He is also a contributor to the periodicals *Słowo Żydowskie* and *Midrasz*.

Lena Stanley-Clamp is the director of the European Association for Jewish Culture. Educated in Warsaw and Brussels, she graduated in history from the Université Libre de Bruxelles, and holds a postgraduate degree in education. She has been a contributor to *Jewish Renaissance* and *Encyclopaedia Judaica Yearbooks*. She has organized a number of international conferences, including 'Strengthening Jewish Life in Europe' (Strasbourg 1997), 'Jewish Culture for the 21st Century' (Paris 1999), 'Jewish Identities in post-Communist Europe' (Budapest 2000), and 'Jewish Spaces in European Theatre' (Prague 2003). She is a member of the Council of the Institute for Polish-Jewish Studies and a member also of the International Council on Museums, UK.

Dariusz Stola, a historian, is vice-president of Collegium Civitas, Warsaw, a fellow of the Institute for Political Studies of the Polish Academy of Sciences, and a fellow of the Centre for Migration Research, Warsaw University. His research focuses on international migrations in the twentieth century, the communist regime, Polish-Jewish relations, and the Holocaust. He has published four books: *Communist Poland: Continuity and Change* (2003); *Patterns of Migration in Central Europe* (2001); *The Anti-Zionist Campaign in Poland 1967-1968* (2000) and *Hope and the Holocaust* (1995), as well as over seventy articles.

Bella Szwarzman-Czarnota graduated in philosophy from Warsaw University and completed postgraduate studies at the Institute of Applied Linguistics, Warsaw. For many years she worked for the philosophy department of Polish Scientific Publishers and in the archives department of the Jewish Historical Institute, Warsaw. She is a columnist and associate editor of the monthly publication *Midrasz*. She is a translator of French and Russian literature and of Yiddish poetry, and is the author of *They Girded their Loins with Strength*, a book dedicated to women's role in the Jewish tradition.

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