

Polish Foundation Restores Structure, Culture

After having been destroyed by Nazi invaders and then neglected by succeeding communist regimes, some 1,200 cemeteries and 200 synagogues have now been renovated by the Foundation for the Preservation of Jewish Heritage in Poland.

However, since some 60 percent of the world's Jews have roots in Poland, much work still remains. This was the message delivered by Monika Krawczyk, 35, Chief Executive Officer of the Foundation, at the annual meeting of the "1939" Club at Congregation Beth Israel.

The Foundation for the Preservation of Jewish Heritage in Poland was established in 2000 by the Union of Jewish Communities in Poland and the World Jewish Restitution Organization. Its mission is to reclaim the properties owned by Jewish religious communities (rather than individual Jews) prior to World War II, to protect and, where possible, to restore those with religious or historic significance.

It also works to teach school children and the general public about Poland's rich Jewish history, and monitors anti-Semitic incidents to make sure they are prosecuted as hate crimes and not as mere vandalism.

Prior to World War II, the Polish Jewish community owned approximately 5,000 properties. Of these, 130 have been turned over to the Foundation, which receives most of its operating income from rents earned by the properties under its management. Additional support is provided by private contributions, while much of the physical labor needed for the restoration work is provided by European Jewish students.

Before assuming her present position, Krawczyk, was an international lawyer. A graduate of the University of Warsaw, she also studied in Israel and was a Rotary Fellow at the University of Toledo (Ohio) Law School.

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-- *Peter L. Rothholz, Contributing Writer*

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