THE JEWISH PRESS
America's Largest Independent Jewish Weekly Newspaper

Po-Lin

By: [Shmuel Ben Eliezer](#)
Wednesday, September 13, 2006

Report From Foundation For The Preservation Of The Jewish Heritage In Poland

For the last two weeks I have written about cemetery restoration in Poland. This week I present a report from the Foundation for the Preservation of the Jewish Heritage in Poland, which has done tremendous work in the field. The first half of 2006 has been a busy time for the Foundation for the Preservation of the Jewish Heritage in Poland. The Foundation has cleared up ten Jewish cemeteries and fenced four of them, erected monuments or memorial plaques commemorating pre-war Jewish communities in five towns and is currently restoring four synagogues.

Cemetery restoration has always been a priority for the Foundation. In Poland there are 1200 Jewish cemeteries, most of them totally neglected and forgotten; they are now begging for restoration. Taking care of Jewish cemeteries in Poland is an enormous challenge, which requires not only energy and perfect management, but also a considerable amount of money. The Foundation could not carry this gigantic task alone. Many of its restoration projects are therefore conducted in cooperation with another organizations, such as the Heritage Foundation for Preservation of Jewish Cemeteries (Avoteinu), the PJCRP, the Yad LeZehava Holocaust Research Institute, the Lomza Jewish Cemetery Foundation, and several small Polish organizations created by Polish enthusiasts who care about the Jewish cultural and religious heritage. A complete list is to be found at the Foundation's website www.fodz.pl.
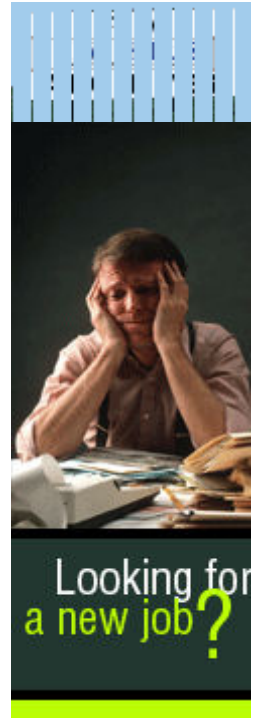
The Foundation is also cooperating with *landsmanshaften* from all over the world and many private donors.

Restoring cemeteries is not the only way of saving the memory of Polish Jews from falling into oblivion. In 2006 the Foundation participated in five projects commemorating pre-war Jewish communities in Jaroslaw, Koszalin, Wielen (Filhene), Slupsk (Stolp) and Mogilno. In Jaroslaw, Koszalin, Wielen and Stolp monuments were erected, and in Mogilno a memorial plaque was fixed.

From among these, the Slupsk commemoration project has been the most spectacular. The Foundation supervised the erecting of a monument that is a reconstructed section of the fence of a huge, pre-war Slupsk synagogue that was destroyed by the Nazis in 1938 during *Kristallnacht*. The monument was founded by the descendants of Rabbi Max Joseph, the rabbi of Slupsk from 1902 to 1936, and erected by the Foundation in cooperation with the municipality. The ceremony of unveiling the monument was attended by Rabbi Max Joseph's family, representatives of the Jewish community in Poland, the president of the city of Slupsk and his deputy, the consul general of the Republic of Germany, and a representative of the local bishop. A letter sent by Israel's ambassador to Poland was read. The ceremony was also witnessed by a crowd of Slupsk citizens and several representatives of local media. The monument, erected in the very center of the city, is an important testimony to the city's engagement in the task of commemorating its Jewish community, which for centuries had been an integral part of Slupsk's social, religious and cultural life.
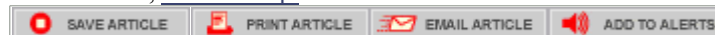
Synagogues

Restoring synagogues in Poland is very difficult; the Jewish community in Poland is very small, and not only unable to financially support all the restoration, but actually does not need that many synagogue buildings. Therefore the foundation, besides coordinating construction and renovation is also establishing new functions for the restored buildings. The aim is to make the synagogue buildings useful for local people and, at the same time, preserve their dignity as reminders of the bygone Jewish world.

The foundation is currently restoring four synagogues, all of which are registered monuments: a Renaissance, 17th century synagogue in Zamosc, a Neogothic 19th century synagogue in Ziebice, and two synagogues in Krasnik: a 17th century Baroque great synagogue and a 19th century small synagogue. The condition of these buildings when they were returned to the foundation was catastrophic – roofs were leaking and about to fall. Today all the essential construction work is completed and the foundation is gathering funds for continuing restoration.

The Zamosc synagogue is the most splendid Renaissance synagogue in Poland. Together with the Old City of Zamosc, it is a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The Foundation, together with the city's authorities and local non-governmental organizations, intends to turn the renovated synagogue into a center that will house various local initiatives, especially those connected with culture and heritage.

It will also feature Jews who contributed to the intellectual, religious and cultural history of the region such as Icchak Leibusz Perec or the Dubno Maggid.

Detailed information regarding the Foundation's activities can be found at its website, www.fodz.pl.

SAVE ARTICLE   PRINT ARTICLE   EMAIL ARTICLE   ADD TO ALERTS

Write a message for this story

MEMBER MESSAGES   0 messages published on this story