

## MID-YEAR 2008 PROGRESS REPORT AND UPDATE

Friends of the Forum continues to grow and the Forum for Dialogue Among Nations is expanding its service offerings as interest increases for Polish/Jewish Dialogue. Reprinted below is the mid-year 2008 progress report and update for members of Friends of the Forum.

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Dear Friends of the Forum,

I am pleased to send along our mid-year progress report on efforts by Friends of the Forum, and the Forum for Dialogue Among Nations, to build Polish/Jewish dialogue.

As many of you know, **Forum founder Andrzej Folwarczny and I crossed the country in April** to meet with supporters and program partners in Boston, New York, Washington, Chicago and Los Angeles. Board member Nancy Civin joined us for much of our time in New York.

Over a two-week period, we **met with more than 30 people who are potential program partners for student trips to Poland**, representing more than 25 universities, synagogues and other institutions. Now, we are working with the most interested of these to develop specific schedules, budgets and funding venues for student trips in 2009. We look forward to updating you soon on the first scheduled trips, which are a key goal of Friends of the Forum.

During our visit in April, we were able to meet with more than 50 Friends of the Forum, renewing connections and identifying new opportunities to expand our work across the United States. **Special thanks are in order to Rich Sussman, Sigmund Rolat, Tony Martin, Heidi Ulrich, Doris Haims, Barbara Yaroslavsky, Keath Blatt and David Lehrer** for arranging and hosting meetings for us. We're thankful, as well, for all the ideas and offers of support that came from so many of our Friends across the United States.

As you would expect, the Forum has been expanding its activities dramatically in Poland, with the **major contribution of their new program director, Agnieszka Chrabolowska**. Agnieszka completed a degree in sociology at the Georgetown University and at the University of Warsaw where she obtained an MA for the thesis *The Complex Identity of Poles with Jewish Origins*. She co-organized the Gniezno Convention, which was the biggest meeting of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam in Poland. Previously she worked at the Adam Mickiewicz Institute as the secretary of the "Polish Year in Israel" project. With Agnieszka on board, everything is moving faster at the Forum. Among the major developments at the forum so far this year.....

- Since March, the Forum has been implementing The Teacher Training program. To ensure the quality and proficiency of its staff, the **Forum is organizing a yearlong instructor's course** for its most dedicated trainers. This project involves two training sessions in Warsaw, five study tours to Lodz, Krakow, Auschwitz, Lublin and

Majdanek, and Tykocin (a Jewish Shtetl), and a summer training program. Each visit involves location tours and conversations with historians or people involved with Polish-Jewish relations, while workshop study sessions will be designed to increase the facilitating skills and trainers' knowledge of the subject.

- The Forum **has joined the Museum of History of Polish Jews in organizing The Poland-Israel Youth Encounters Program**. This program is based on the assumption that to overcome stereotypes it is crucial for young Jews and Poles to get to know each other. In the frame of the project, students spend one day discovering Jewish history in Warsaw and participating in workshops and discussions. The Forum is responsible for the scenarios and conducting the workshops.
- Along with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Poland, the Forum has co-organized a conference covering the issue of **Anti-Semitism in Poland and action taken to fight it on different levels**: government, non-governmental organizations and Polish Catholic Church. The outcome of the conference is a plan to establish a Coalition Against Anti-Semitism, which would be a platform of exchanging ideas and information.
- Since the beginning of this year the Forum has **reached over 1,800 polish students with its workshops and tours of Jewish sites**. A new project, "School of Dialogue" will be implemented in September. It will be a series of four workshops for one class, to enable a more profound work and learning process. The Forum has already closed the recruitment process, due to major interest among Warsaw high schools.
- Along with the Polish Consul General of Los Angeles, Mrs. Paulina Kapuscinska, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Forum has **co-organized a visit of Jewish leaders from Los Angeles**. The week long study tour included Warsaw, Lublin, Belzec, Rzeszow, Oswiecim, and Cracow.
- Thanks in part to connections cultivated with Friends of the Forum, **over 150 students from the North American Federation of Temple Youth (NFTY) participated** in a meeting with Polish students, organized by Forum. Both organizations plan a closer cooperation for the future.
- This summer, the Forum **hosted leaders of the American Jewish Committee**, as part of its longstanding exchange program with AJC. The program included meetings with the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Poland, Mr Radoslaw Sikorski, Israeli Ambassador to Poland David Peleg, journalists, intellectuals, and many others.
- The Forum **coordinated the visit of a freelance journalist from New York, Donald Snyder**, who is working on the story of Irena Sendler, who saved over 2,500 Jewish children during the Holocaust. Mr. Snyder has been meeting with people who survived thanks to Irena Sendler.

And the year is only half done! What's next?

- The Forum has started recruiting a group of outstanding young Polish professionals to participate in the second half of Forum's annual exchange program with AJC. These young Polish leaders will discover Jewish life in the United States, learn more about the work of AJC, and gain insights into American Jewish perspectives on Polish/Jewish dialogue. This year's **program will take place in September and will bring Andrzej and his group to Washington, D.C., Chicago and New York. Friends of the Forum is working with the Forum and AJC to provide opportunities for FOF members to meet these visitors, and Andrzej**, during the September 7-14 visit.
- Andrzej and I will add Los Angeles and Boston to his U.S. itinerary in September, including **meetings with potential program partners for future student and adult trips**. We will look to set up at least one general meeting with FOF members in each city we visit.
- The **Forum has received grants for two trips to Poland** for American Jewish leaders, and Friends of the Forum is helping Andrzej recruit a strong group of candidates for these trips. The trips will take place in late October and early December.
- We have identified and made initial connections with **an impressive group of young Polish professionals in Chicago**, the Polish American Awareness Foundation, and look forward to joint programming with them in the future. I attended their initial fundraising program, a tribute to Jan Karski developed in concert with the Illinois Holocaust Museum, this spring.
- We also expect to **bring Andrzej back to the States in November** to meet with new and old friends in New York, Boston, Washington, Chicago, Los Angeles, San Francisco and other cities. Many of the people we met on our most recent travels have offered to host meetings or develop speaking platforms for Andrzej during this visit, and we are greatly encouraged by the show of support. **If you believe you could develop a program or host an event in your city, please let me know ASAP, as I am already working on our November calendar.**

Thank you all for your interest and support for Polish/Jewish dialogue. I look forward to meeting with you later this year as Andrzej and I visit your cities. Please contact me regarding any questions or ideas you have regarding our work.

Sincerely,

Michael Rosenbaum

Chair  
Friends of the Forum