

FORUM FOR DIALOGUE AMONG NATIONS

School of Dialogue



Ulanow
March - April 2011

*We are grateful to Cheryl Fishbein
for her support of the School of Dia-
logue program in Ulanow, Poland.*

In brief

Ulanow – Past and Present

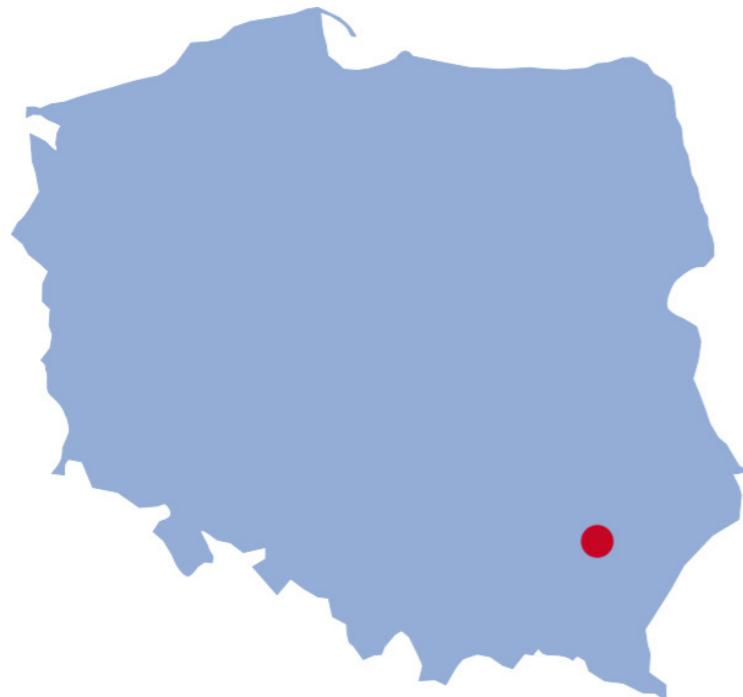
Day 1 – Uncovering Ulanow's Jewish Past

Day 2 – Do we remember enough?

Day 3 – Discovering Ulanow anew

Day 4 – What can we do?

Project and Press



The School of Dialogue in Ulanow is made possible through the generous support of Cheryl Fishbein.

An Introduction

Students in Ulanow know that their southeastern Poland town has a rich history of raftsmen who crossed the San and Tanew Rivers several times a day for 200 years, carrying people and goods from one side to the other. Although the town's prosperity has declined since the 17th century, the residents of Ulanow have strong sentiments towards the raftsmen, a respected and historically significant profession.

So when the School of Dialogue educators told local middle school students that many of the raftsmen had been Jewish, the students were surprised. *Jewish raftsmen?* they thought. That meant there must have been Jewish children in our school.

Previously, the students thought that those worlds were completely distant. They were astonished as they browsed through the pre-war schoolbooks found by the headmaster. Now they know about the Jewish children in their schools, and much more...

The cycle of four-day School of Dialogue workshops took place in March and April 2011 in the Ulanow middle school, which is under the patronage of John Paul II. During the School of Dialogue program, students not only learned basics of Jewish history and culture but integrated Jewish

heritage into the more familiar heritage of their town.

The culmination of the program is one of the most important aspects: students research the often-forgotten Jewish heritage of their town, culminating in a walking tour of the sites. In Ulanow, the students conducted the tour at the end of May, sharing their findings with family, friends, the local community, and town council representatives that they had invited.

Ulanow – Past...

Ulanow is a town located on the banks of the rivers San and Tanew, in the northern part of southeast province of Podkarpackie. Because of its location close to the rivers, the town was a strong center of rafting between the 17th and 19th centuries. It was even called „little Gdansk” (in relation to the harbor-city in the Baltic sea-shore) or „capital of Polish rafting.” The development of the railway system hurt the rafting economy, causing decline of Ulanow’s prosperity.

Before the Second World War, Jews constituted almost half of the population, about 40%. Most of them worked as merchants, tailors and as other kinds of craftsmen, making hats, jewelry, and shoes. They also were engaged in the rafting. About 80% of the Jewish inhabitants of Ulanow were Orthodox. Young Jews had the option to go to religious or public school.

In 1882, director and playwright Arnold Szyfman was born in Ulanow. Szyfman moved to Warsaw and established the Polish Theater (Teatr Polski), where he was the director from 1918 to 1939. Szyfman survived the war under a false name and later returned to his position as

director of the theater.

Between 1940 and 1942, Ulanow was a place where many of the Jews from nearby Rozwadow, Rudnik and Nisko gathered. At the end of October 1942 all of them were deported to the labor and death camps.

Group portrait of the students at the Beit Yaakov religious school for girls in Ulanow, Poland, 1935. Among those pictured are: Sabina Loew (wearing a fur collar coat in the back row), her sister Udl (wearing glasses in the third row from the front, fifth from the left). The teacher is Henche Westereich. Eleven of the pupils survived the war.

Credit: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of Sabina Loew Green





The faces of the past

Abram, Gizela and
Josef Sprung, 1937

Ulanow, Poland

Origin: Organization
of Zamosc

Courtesy of and
credit: Yad Vashem
Photo Archive

Israel Itzhak Silber,
grandfather of Shlomo
Silber. Shlomo Silber was
hidden during the war.

Ulanow, Poland

Origin: Malka Shmron,
formerly Malka Berger

Courtesy of the Yad
Vashem Photo Archive

Credit: United States
Holocaust Memorial
Museum



...and Present



Today, Ulanow is tiny, with little more than 1,500 inhabitants. The town contains an elementary, middle and high school. Additionally, there is a Jewish cemetery, built around 1700, where approximately 150 gravestones survived; the oldest one is from 1825. Thanks to the initiative of the town's Catholic priest, Father Jozef Lizak, the cemetery was cleaned and renovated. The synagogue was burned down by the Nazis during the war. In its place now stands the high school.

According to the town's historical literature, the *mikvah* survived and is used today as a firefighters station. But through careful research and consultation with the director of the local museum, the Forum's educators and their students discovered that the *mikvah* was located next to the synagogue and was also destroyed by the Nazis. In its place today stands a small museum with a Judaica collection composed of artifacts, documents, and photos that were found during renovations.

Day 1 – Uncovering Ulanow's

For the 15-year-old student, their town's past Jewish community is obscure at best. The Forum's educators, Agata and Magda, needed to intrigue them to learn about this new subject. „Lets draw map of your town today, mark the important places, like offices, schools, churches and cemeteries,” Agata, one of the educators asks. „And now, how do you think your town looked before the war?” Students in Ulanow knew little about the Jewish sites of their town, and were surprised during the workshop. Soon, they began to have a more complete picture of Jewish customs, daily life, and local history.

The School of Dialogue participants said that what they liked in the workshop was that they learned about their town's pre-war existence. In the archives, the headmaster of the school found pre-war school books, with grades and remarks about the students' behavior, which was really special and a great visual for today's students.

The participants were able to look through the lists of students and see how many of them had Jewish names. Agata and Magda, also brought photos of pre-war Ulanow. Students

were truly fascinated with all of the artifacts that they could search through.

Students also explored the life of their town's Jewish community through a different angle: the calendar. The students were asked: What were the holidays they celebrated? What was the meaning of their festivals?

By comparing their own holidays to the Jewish ones, they came closer to understanding the rich religious tradition of their former neighbors. They drew timelines, had discussions, and read about the nuances of the numerous Jewish festivals, both small and large.

Jewish Past



“Lets draw map of your town today, mark the important places...” Agata asks. “And now, how do you think your town looked before the war?”

Day 2 – Do we remember enough?

When Jeff, who lives in the Netherlands, was in his sixties, he suddenly became interested in researching his roots. His forefathers were from Poland, a country he has never visited and with which he has never felt a connection. However, he decided to visit and research roots of his family. He walked around the town of his grandfather... "Where did he live?" - he asked himself - "Maybe his house still stands somewhere here..."

This partly-fictional story is read during the second workshop to open a discussion on how Jews are remembered in the students' town. Are they commemorated? In what conditions are sites connected with them? And with regards to Jeff's story: Why did he come? Is it easy to find traces of the past? How would it be if Ulanow was his town, if he had returned to visit?

For the students, it leads to questions of memory: are we responsible for it? Are we responsible for the memory of all citizens, or only that of our grandparents? Is local Jewish history also ours? And if we decide to commemorate it, how should we do it? Magda, one of the educators suggests: Let's think about good examples of remembrance from other places...and let's plan what we could do in Ulanow.

During this second workshop, the Forum's educators help the students plan the tour of Jewish sites that students will then prepare. Especially in Ulanow, students got excited about planning and preparing tour and the challenge that it brings. The project focuses on group collaboration, teamwork, leadership skills, and division of responsibility.

Students from these underdeveloped areas and the countryside are often unfamiliar with groupwork, having rarely had the chance to work actively on a such a project. The School of Dialogue thus promotes new ways of thinking and learning amongst these youngsters, giving them access to resources and skills that they would not have had otherwise.



Day 3 – Discovering Ulanow anew



On their own, the students prepared for several weeks before presenting their walking tour to Agata and Magda, the Forum's educators. They worked together to share responsibilities, planning the route, the timing of the tour, and collecting information about particular places.

During the third workshop, the students took Agata and Magda on the tour. According to the educators, the route was designed smartly, and many students became particularly involved in preparation and guiding. In the course of the tour, the Forum's educators supplement students' knowledge, suggesting places that could be added to the route. Agata and Magda pointed out signs in the doorways, the remnants of *mezuzot*.

The participants became really excited, and began searching for more of these traces of the past in other doorways. They realized the material remnants of the Jewish past are still quite present, and how easily they are overlooked. Students also noted that some of the streets in Ulanow, with their wooden architecture, look very similar to their pre-war appearance.

This day would not be complete without the exercise about Aaron, a fictional Jewish teenager living in Ulanow before the war. Again, questions are posed to the students: How did his day look in 1935? What do you think happened to him? What would he do 15 years after the war?

This is also the moment to talk about the destruction of the Jewish community in the town. Several students noted that they were most impressed with this part of the workshop. According to their curriculum, they had not yet learned about the Holocaust in school. Within the framework of the School of Dialogue, they could talk about the Holocaust based on the very local, individual story of someone in their age, reaching a better understanding of the true tragedy that occurred.

Day 4 – What can we do?



What do we do with all what the students have learned? Usually on the last day, we invite a guest: a local activist or a representative of the government. In the special case of Ulanow, we had the activist and local leader as one person: Janusz Dabek! He works in the town hall, had raftsmen in his family and is also the self-elected archivist of Jewish Ulanow. He showed the students some of his collections, such as pre-war posters in Yiddish and talked about the contribution of the Jewish community to town's development and history.

At this point, students become deeply involved in organizing the Jewish heritage tour for people that had no chance to discover the Jewish past of Ulanow during the School of Dialogue program. The students presented the tour to neighbors, friends, family, and other community members. In this way, many people can benefit from the youngsters' knowledge.

The students become historians, ambassadors, and teachers as they preserve and protect the Jewish presence and memory of their town. The School of Dialogue aims to touch as many people as pos-

Students become historians, ambassadors, and teachers as they preserve and protect the Jewish presence and memory of their town.

Above: Janusz Dabek, the self-elected archivist of Ulanow, sharing pre-war documents.

The Project

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In Ulanow, students invited a representative from the town hall, the deputy director of the high school, the archivist and the director of the local museum, as well as local journalists. Students lead adults through the Jewish cemetery, pointing out old gravestones and explaining the meaning of the symbols engraved on them.

On the place of the war-time mass graves, the headmaster of the school shared witnesses' stories of the tragic shooting after the ghetto's liquidation. Those stories were passed down by her parents, who lost friends and neighbors. She emphasized the fact that the people killed in this place were also students of their school.

Later, the tour stopped on the place where the synagogue used to stand, as well as on the town square. Here, the students talked about the Jewish tradesmen and craftsmen union. In the doorway to one of the buildings, they pointed out remnants of *mezuzot* and explained its purpose. The tour ended in the museum, where its creator and director lead guests throughout the exhibition.

The project undoubtedly influenced Jewish remembrance in Ulanow, as there was little evidence of pre-war Jewish life in Ulanow before the School of Dialogue program.

The attached DVD depicts the tour.

Local Press

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Żydzi byli sąsiadami, zostały po nich tylko wspomnienia

dodano: 21 marca 2011, 19:15 Autor: Zdzisław Surowaniec tagi: Stalowa Wola Żydzi


Kirkut w Ulanowie. (fot. Zdzisław Surowaniec)

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SZKOŁA DIALOGU

Najczęściej czytane

“Once they had Jewish Neighbors”

by Janusz Oginski

Youth from the middle-school in Ulanow completed their work in the framework of the School of Dialogue, an educational program organized by the Forum for Dialogue Among Nations.

Young people from the second grade took part in the program under the supervision of Alina Mroz, German language teacher and Teresa Pracownik, principal of the school. The program consisted of a cycle of meetings during which students from Ulanow discovered Jewish culture and tradition, and the history of the Jews in Ulanow.

Between the wars, Jews constituted almost half of Ulanow citizens. They worked as tradesmen, craftsmen, mostly tailors and even as raftmen. Their fate changed with outbreak of the Second World War [...]

<http://www.echodnia.eu/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20110321/POWIAT0302/159895302>

Local Press

The screenshot shows the homepage of the SZTAFETA news website. The main navigation menu includes links for START, AKTUALNOŚCI, SPORT, KULTURA, ROZMAITOŚCI (highlighted in red), ROZMOWA Z..., GALERIE, INFORMATOR, PLANY MIAST, ARCHIWUM, and TURYSTYKA. The top right features a search bar and links for KSIĄZKI and OGŁOSZENIA. A banner at the bottom of the page reads "ROZMAITOŚCI - NAJNOWSZE" and "PROGRAM TV sprawdź tutaj".

Niektórzy mieli żydowskich sąsiadów
środa, 15 czerwca 2011 10:59 | Janusz Ogiński | LUDZIE

Niektórzy mieli żydowskich sąsiadów

Młodzież z Gimnazjum w Ulanowie zakończyła realizację programu edukacyjnego „Szkoła Dialogu”, któremu patronuje Fundacja Forum Dialogu Między Narodami.

Realizacji programu podjęła się młodzież z klasy II pod kierunkiem Aliny Mróz, nauczycielki języka niemieckiego i dyrektorki szkoły Teresy Pracownik. Program obejmował cykl spotkań, podczas których ulanowscy gimnazjalisi poznawali kulturę i tradycję żydowską, a także historię ulanowskich Żydów.

W latach międzywojennych Żydzi stanowili niemal połowę mieszkańców Ulanowa. Trudnili się oni handlem i rzemiosłem, głównie krawiectwem, wyrabianiem kapeluszy, nawet flisactwem. Ich los odmienił się z chwilą wybuchu II wojny światowej. We wrześniu 1939 roku Armia Czerwona zajęła tereny Polski po rzekę San. Również do Ulanowa wkroczyli sowieci. Zaczęto zaprowadzać nowy porządek. Trwało to jednak krótko, bo po dwóch tygodniach Rosjanie wycofali się za Bug, a na te tereny weszli Niemcy. Wraz z Armią Czerwoną odeszło też sporo ulanowskich Żydów, głównie ci, którzy popierali idee komunistyczne i współpracowali z NKWD. Gorszy los spotkał

“Jews used to be neighbors, now only memories remained”
by Zdzisław Surowaniec

In the middle-school named in honor of John Paul II near Nisko, a second workshop took place about Jewish culture and tradition. One of the elements of this meeting was a tour visiting places connected with the Jewish past in the town.

The School of Dialogue project was organized by the Forum for Dialogue Among Nations. The School of Dialogue is an educational program, whose goal is to broaden student's knowledge about many centuries of Jewish presence in Poland and about their contribution to the social, cultural and economical development of our country.

[...]

http://www.sztafeta.pl/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=3687:niektori-mieli-zydowskich-sasiadow&catid=94:ludzie&Itemid=371

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