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President Obama Meets with Jewish Community of Warsaw



President Obama meeting with members of the Warsaw Jewish community.

This past Friday, May 27, 2011, the President of the United States, Barak Obama, began his visit to Poland by laying a wreath at the Warsaw Ghetto monument and by meeting with leaders of the Jewish community including survivors, Righteous Among the Nations as well as Polish government officials.

The President was first greeted by Michael Schudrich, Chief Rabbi of Poland who then introduced Minister Wladislaw Bartoszewski, currently a Minister in the Chancellery of the Prime Minister as well as a Righteous Among the Nations who as a very young man helped to establish Zegota, the organization sponsored by the Polish government in exile to save Jews from the German death camps. Mr. Piotr Kadlcik, president of the Jewish Community of Poland was also on hand to greet the President.

Obama proceeded to lay a wreath at the foot of the monument and stood there, head bowed, in apparent prayer and meditation.

After the wreath laying ceremony, the President greeted 25 individuals who are leaders of the Jewish community, survivors and Righteous. The Righteous were very moved by the President's concern for them and said: "We spoke about our visit in Washington in 2009; we were invited by president Obama to visit Capitol on International Holocaust Memorial Day, January 27. The most important thing for me was that president Obama was talking so beautifully and warmly about Righteous Among the Nations and his words were spread all over the world." - said the chairman of Polish Society of Righteous Among the Nations Mrs. Anna Stupnicka-Bando, after she was asked by press about her conversation with president of the United States.

Among those Obama met was Halina Szpilman, the widow of Wladyslaw Szpilman, the Holocaust survivor featured in

Roman Polanski's Oscar-winning film "The Pianist." Obama kissed Szpilman, a retired doctor who lost her husband in 2000, on both cheeks. Monika Krawczyk, director of the Foundation for the Preservation of Jewish Heritage in Poland, was heard urging Obama to do all he can to support Israel, saying, "It's the only Jewish state we have." Obama assured her that the United States would be there for Israel.

Vice-chairman of Polish Society of the

"Director of the Foundation for the Preservation of Jewish Heritage in Poland, was heard urging Obama to do all he can to support Israel, saying, 'It's the only Jewish state we have.'"

Righteous Among the Nations Mr. Józef Walaszczyk underlined that president Obama was talking very kindly with each one of the guests, "We took this as a sign of great respect. Our conversation was very warm and private, nothing was forced; everything happened with a smile, the president shook everyone's hand and ladies even got a kiss on their cheek". Mr. Walaszczyk added that in his conversation with Obama he mentioned that he is 92 years old. President asked him what he should do in order to keep such a good condition, "Eat everything and keep young girls around" Mr. Walaszczyk answered and then the president laughed".

Lastly, Obama viewed the Museum of the History of the Polish Jews being built across the plaza from the monument. He received

Continued on page 38



President Obama receiving a plaque from Sigmund Rolat and Marion Turski, commemorating his visit to the future home of the Museum of the History of Polish Jews. Mr. Obama promised to return to Warsaw for the opening and bring his two daughters.