

**“School of Dialogue” Gala
December 15, 2010**

Draft Remarks by U.S. Ambassador Lee Feinstein

Gratulacje! Praca wykonana przez Was oraz Wasze koleżanki i kolegów w ciągu ostatniego roku jest naprawdę imponująca.

I know you are proud of your achievements. The fact that Speaker Borusewicz and so many other dignitaries are here to recognize you, confirms the impact your work is having. What is equally impressive is that you are among many engaged in similar work to learn about the past, to promote tolerance, and to educate people around the world about Poland today.

Your projects celebrate important elements of Poland’s history and heritage. As members of Poland’s diverse multicultural society, Jews made vital and lasting contributions to the development of the humanities, arts, and sciences. The legacy of Jewish writers, poets, architects, industrialists, musicians, and philosophers had a profound and lasting effect on Polish history, culture, and society. In small towns and villages, Jewish artisans and merchants also made important contributions to their communities and

civil society. And, of course, the opposite is also true, as the cultures and history of Poland are so closely linked with the history of the Jewish people.

The shared history brings to mind a book by the novelist David Grossman, called See: Under Love. The book is a fictionalized account of the life and death of the great Polish-Jewish writer, Bruno Schulz. The first third of the book focuses on refugees from Poland, who survived the Holocaust and the War, and resettled in the newly established state of Israel. The refugees, scarred by the war experience, are searching for a sense of place. Different groups of survivors take different approaches to try to orient themselves. One group reads the Polish sports pages to keep up with their old home teams, a poignant symbol of a historical connection of a thousand years, ended by Nazi conquest, brutality, and ideology.

By studying the history of Polish Jews in your towns and neighborhoods, you restore Jewish memory, and show the richness and diversity of Poland's heritage. By promoting greater awareness and understanding of Poland's Jewish heritage, you challenge harmful stereotypes and break down artificial barriers. Your work is important because it helps to promote mutual respect and tolerance – essential elements of Poland's multicultural heritage and Poles' reputation throughout history as champions of freedom.

Throughout the United States, Poles are known as staunch defenders of freedom and human rights. Last week in Washington, sitting next to President Komorowski in the Oval Office, President Obama recalled the 30th anniversary of Solidarity. He also recalled how all Americans had been inspired by brave Poles who fought with determination during the Cold War to regain their freedom. Speaking earlier this year at the 10th anniversary of the Polish-American Freedom Foundation, Prime Minister Tusk said that the freedom Poland fought so hard to achieve in 1989 would be meaningless if Poles had not also embraced the responsibility that comes with that freedom.

The commitment and dedication you have shown in your projects is a clear demonstration that you understand and accept the responsibility to uphold the values on which your freedom is based, something the people of our countries share.

In so doing, you are following in the footsteps of Polish patriots who have come before you. The heroes of Solidarity, as well as Polish Righteous like Józef Walaszcyk, honored by the Forum today, repeatedly risked imprisonment and death, often with little hope of success, to confront inhumanity and to defend their freedom and the freedom of others.

It is an honor for me to address you and a privilege to have the opportunity to recognize your accomplishments. Your commitment to tolerance symbolizes and reinforces the principles that Poles and Americans hold most dear.

I congratulate you on a job well done. I also encourage you to keep up that good work. I urge you to continue to challenge stereotypes, ignorance, and hate speech. Work to promote dialogue and tolerance. Based on what I have heard and seen today, I am confident you will succeed.