

Pogonowski - Reflections from 4

predating World War II, there was no significant Czech resistance to the communist takeover by the Soviets like there had been in Poland. Soviet news releases of the pogroms in Hungary followed a policy similar to that used in Czechoslovakia. Namely, they received relatively low or non-existent amounts of promotion in the Western press.

Actually the 1946 wave of anti-Jewish riots under Soviet occupation was preceded with an earlier similar wave in 1945 in all areas that the Soviets had occupied and converted into their satellite empire. The earliest was on May 2, 1945 in Košice, Czechoslovakia, which was followed on September 24, 1945 in Velké Topolčany in eastern Czechoslovakia, where a riot was perpetrated by uniformed police and military under the Soviet control. It lasted 6 hours and wounded 49 Jews. The riot engulfed neighboring villages. Anti-Jewish riots followed in the Czechoslovakian towns of Chynorany, Krásno on the Nitra River, Nedanovce, etc. [Kersten, op. cit., pp. 134 - 135; see also Martin Gilbert, *Atlas of the Holocaust* (London: Michael Joseph, 1982), p. 241.] No show trials were staged after all the pogroms in Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland, and Ukraine. An exception was made of the riot of the July 4, 1946 in Kielce which was advertised as much as possible in the media because the Soviets wanted to accomplish more in Poland than simply to press Jews to emigrate. The Soviets wanted to present Polish people to the world as anti-Semites in order to strengthen the Soviet totalitarian hold on Poland without arousing pro-Polish sympathies in the West.

The Eruption of Violence in Kielce

The Kielce Pogrom was an event provoked by the Soviets in conjunction with their attempt to Sovietize Poland that started in 1944. They were successful, but not flawless, in making it look as if there was just a random uprising of Polish gentiles against Jewish citizens. Although the Soviets took pains to destroy much specific evidence relating to this event, they made a number of mistakes that clearly reveal that this was a staged event, one that could only be provoked and carried out by the Soviet authorities in charge. To this day, the Soviet Union (and now Russian) authorities have refused to release their official files containing information relating to these events, files that would corroborate other indications that this was a Soviet-provoked event. Some of the Soviet mistakes in staging the Kielce Pogrom will be discussed. In particular: (1) Twelve of the victims were found to be killed by gunshot wounds, though the general Polish citizenry alleged to have randomly conducted the violence did not have guns, as was admitted in the show trial which followed. (2) Soviet authorities had firm control of the populace; there was no right of free assembly, including the formation of crowds in the streets, in Soviet-occupied Poland. (3) Soviet security leaders thwarted efforts by the local district attorney, who wanted to take actions to stop the violence. (4) After the initial violence was ended, it was re-ignited by secret police agents who apparently attempted to pose as steel mill workers. (5) Normally stern and brutal security police turned temporarily friendly as they spread false rumors of ritual killing of Christian children by Jews. (6) A selected group of people were permitted to cross a perimeter of sentries that surrounded Kielce; Catholic priests attempting to break up the violence were not allowed to pass. (7) A clumsy Soviet-style show trial was hastily held five days after the event that purported to show the complicity of the general Polish population in this event; the inconsistencies in the conduct of the trial itself provided ample evidence of the Soviet plot to institute the violence in Kielce.

The focal point of the Kielce Pogrom was a residential compound at 7 Planty Street. Most of the occupants were Jewish, and many were members of the communist party. Among the residents were members of an armed "kibbutz" composed mainly of people who had recently arrived from the Soviet Union. Some were former German prisoners, and others had escaped captivity by hiding in forests or in homes of Polish Christians. The kibbutz members were undergoing military training and thus had permission from the Soviet-led authorities to own and use firearms. This fact was well-known in Kielce, because the kibbutz members would occasionally parade through town with their firearms. The only other residents who had permission to be armed worked for the Soviet terror apparatus in Kielce. Ordinary residents of Poland, people who did not work for the Soviet terror apparatus, were not allowed to be armed. There was a death penalty for the illegal possession of firearms.

On July 3, 1946, a cobbler and secret police informer, Walenty Błaszczuk, whose UB code name was "Przelot," reported to the local police that his eight-year-old son Henryk was missing. The boy had been given a ride out of town on July 1, 1946, and upon his return was abducted by Antoni Pasowski, a Jewish agent of the Office of State Security, the UB. Henryk was taught by Pasowski to say falsely that he was kidnapped and held at 7 Planty Street. Further, he was coached to say that he saw dead bodies of recently missing children at that location. (Kersten, op. cit., p. 129.) On July 4, the boy was released by Pasowski and returned home. He went with his father to the police station to cancel the missing child report and to tell the false story of his abduction, the story that was fabricated by Pasowski.

Next, the boy was manipulated by Pasowski to falsely identify a passing Jew as his abductor who, the boy was made to say, held him in the basement of the compound at 7 Planty Street. There was one critical problem with this completely false accusation: 7 Planty Street in actuality did not have a basement! Meanwhile, a crowd was permitted to gather and a rumor was planted about the attempt of "another" ritual murder of a Christian child in addition to the supposed murders of previously missing children. A crowd of 200 to 300 people was allowed to form in the streets. Later communist propaganda expanded the number to 15,000 people. Some people in the crowd were allowed to move toward the compound at 7 Planty Street. The staged riot in downtown Kielce was under tight control at all times by the Soviet-led police force.

At 10 a.m. on July 4, before the crowd members reached Planty Street, 15 to 20 police officers, including five or six officers of the Informacja arrived at the compound. The officers of the Informacja were men unknown in Kielce. Once there, they were in control of who could and could not approach, enter, or leave the compound in which Henryk Błaszczuk claimed to have been imprisoned. The uniformed police were ordered to enter the building but were met with automatic gunfire from the Jewish occupants. One officer and one patrolman were killed, and several uniformed men were wounded. After the gunfire from the compound, the security officers and policemen attacked and began shooting the trapped Jews and expelling them out of windows into the street. In Soviet-controlled Poland, of course, the uniformed military, the secret police, and the local police officers were Soviet-controlled forces, not independent Polish forces.

An interesting thing happened at about 11 a.m., one hour after the start of the riot. The local district attorney, Jan Wrzeszcz made a plea to those in charge of the security forces to allow Wrzeszcz to work with the local police force to put an

immediate end to the violence. (Szaynok, op. cit., p. 37.) Those in charge of the security forces rejected his plea. The plea was made to NKVD supervisor Col. Shpilevoi and to Maj. Sobczyński-Spychaj, head of the local security forces. Shortly after the plea was received, telephone calls were made to key security leaders in Warsaw. The office log of Sobczyński-Spychaj contains notes of his telephone conversations with Stanisław Radkiewicz, who was the Minister of Public Security, and with Jakub Berman, a Jew who was at the time the main Soviet agent in the ruling Polish Politburo in charge of all security matters. Clearly, the Soviet agents wanted the provocation to continue, and wanted to thwart all efforts to stop the violence.

Despite the best efforts of the Soviet agents to keep the riot going, the violence stopped on its own before noon. The riot was restarted at noon when a hit squad of secret police agents disguised as workers arrived from a local steel mill. Many of them were hired shortly before the pogrom and of course, since they were not real steel mill workers, did not report to work after the July 4 pogrom. They came to the site of the violence armed with pieces of scrap steel, which they were ordered to leave at the murder site as tangible evidence that steel workers were involved in the violence. Before departing the hit squad was addressed by Antoni Błaszczuk, an older brother of Henryk (who was used to provoke the riot). The departure of the storming party from work was organized by the personnel manager in the steel mill who at the same time served as the district head of the voluntary riot police, the "ORMO" and was an agent of the UB. [Krzysztof Kąkolewski, *Umarły cmentarz: Wstęp do studiów nad wyjaśnieniem przyczyn i przebiegu morderstwa na żydach w Kielcach dnia 4 lipca 1946 roku* (Warszawa: von borowiecky, 1996), pp. 96, 142-143.] The riot was allowed to spread in the form of sporadic killings and robberies. Shortly after 2 p.m. a train was attacked at a station, Piekarzowa, near Kielce. Several Jewish passengers were killed by a mob led by agent's provocateurs that controlled the railroad personnel during the Soviets to draw attention away from the election? The Soviets considered the conquest and control of Poland to be one of the most important Soviet gains of World War II. The Yalta Accord made by the attack.

In the meantime, a crowd of onlookers was allowed to gather in the streets. The security men were repeatedly spreading a rumor that a "Jewish ritual murder of another Christian child" might be in progress. Police and military men spoke to the crowd in an unusually friendly fashion and abandoned their usual stern and authoritarian demeanor. (Szaynok, op. cit., p. 62.) The rumor that the Jews were murdering Polish Christian children was connected with earlier reports about missing children who were allegedly kidnapped to be used for blood transfusions and then murdered. These rumors were spread by agent provocateurs, who thus kept attracting people to the scene of the riot. After 6 p.m., the pogrom came to an end as security forces arrested 62 rioters. In all, throughout the city of Kielce and its outskirts, thirty-nine Jews and two gentiles were killed. Other deaths followed among the wounded.

Some of those wounded but not killed by the security officers were killed by the mob that included the bogus steel workers. The question is who was permitted to cross the perimeter of sentries around downtown Kielce at that time? Krzysztof Kąkolewski, an investigative reporter and writer, determined that it was a hit squad of secret police agents in civilian clothes. These people pretended to be a mob while in reality they were agents acting under strict orders. The few bystanders who joined the fake mob of disguised secret police agents were marked with chalk on their backs by two secret policewomen. Those marked bystanders were later put

on trial along with others including uniformed men who were not a part of the UB operation. Secret police agents disguised as civilians were exempt from any charges in exchange for strict secrecy about their mission and were permitted to keep the items stolen from Jewish victims. Obviously, if they broke their silence, they would incriminate themselves in the murders and robberies of Jewish victims. (Kąkolewski, op. cit., pp. 92 - 94, 143 - 144, 149 - 150, 159.)

Some of the murders in the Kielce violence were committed by common criminals who robbed and murdered their victims as the riot was permitted to spread. However, many of the murders could only have been committed by members of the security forces. In particular, bullet wounds were discovered in twelve of the murdered Jewish victims. Bullets could originate only from the uniformed police, soldiers, and functionaries of the security forces as the mob members did not have any guns (as was admitted in the show trial). Dr. Seweryn Kahane, the head of the local Jewish association, the "kibbutz," was murdered by an Informacja officer who shot him in the back of the skull. He was executed because he became an inconvenient witness to the provocation.

A few days later, another inconvenient witness died under unexplained circumstances after he testified about the violence staged in Kielce. He was Albert Grynbaum, a Jewish officer in charge of a county office of the UB, who helped to organize the defense of the kibbutz and testified about the provocation.

Early in his book, Chęciński identifies a highly-ranked Soviet intelligence agent, Mikhail Aleksandrovich Dyomin or Demin (Chęciński, op. cit., pp. 25-26), who was assigned in 1946 to Kielce, a relatively unimportant town in central Poland. This apparently inconsequential location was hardly consistent with his rank and qualifications. From all indications, Dyomin's assignment was to bolster the Soviet pressure on the Jews to emigrate and at the same time to create a dramatic diversion to draw attention from the Soviet falsification of a crucial Polish election referendum, which was to "legitimize" the communist government in Poland.

Why it was necessary for the Allies was a cornerstone of the post-war Soviet empire, an accord that the Soviets liked very much because it gave them the biggest empire in Russian history. However, the Soviets were concerned that the United States could back out of the agreement at any time, since the Yalta Accord's status in the United States was only as an executive agreement and not as a Congressionally-ratified treaty. The Yalta Accord gave the Soviets a number of rights, including the right to control Poland and other so-called "satellite states" in the form of a Soviet "zone of influence" that was accepted and recognized by the Western Allies. The same Yalta Accord demanded that the Soviets guarantee free elections in Poland. The Soviets desired to illegally control the elections in Poland, confirm a previously-installed Soviet-controlled communist puppet regime, and thus solidify their political strangulation of Poland, while simultaneously not provoking the sympathy of the American public. The Dyomin assignment was therefore crucial: to engineer a series of situations in which the Poles could appear to be persecuting Jews, Nazi-style, so that a fed-up American public would welcome or ignore Soviet attempts to clamp down on Poland and stop the apparent persecution of Jews by the Polish gentile population. The Soviets realized they had an enormous amount to gain by prominently portraying Polish people as anti-Semitic to the American and West European public.

Pogonowski
Reflections on Kielce
Continued in the October issue