

Reflections on Kielce and Communism: The Obstacle of the Kielce Pogrom to Polish-Jewish Reconciliation

By: *Iwo Cyprian Pogonowski*

Putting to Rest World War II's Spirit of Hatred — Part 5

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.

It is speculated by many, including American Ambassador to Poland at that time, Arthur Bliss Lane, that the Soviets purposely chose the exact date of the United States Independence Day holiday to stage the provocation. This choice would serve to maximize press exposure and associated public attention on what otherwise would be a slow news day. Also, it was a day when people did not go to work and could react fully to the dramatic news of the bloody riot. Bliss Lane was among those aware that the July 4 pogrom was staged to overshadow the Soviet election-tampering in Poland and to serve Soviet schemes in the Middle East. The American Ambassador also noted that its purpose was to discredit Polish opposition to Sovietization "especially among Jewish circles in the United States." Both communist and non-communist sources, in Ambassador Lane's words "admitted that it was not spontaneous, but a carefully organized plot." [Arthur Bliss Lane, *I Saw Poland Betrayed* (Indianapolis: Bobbs Merrill, 1948), p. 249.] In spite of U.S. Embassy reports that were cognizant of the realities of the situation, the Soviet aims were achieved because American public opinion was swayed against the Polish people, which was the aim of the Soviets.

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Around the "Fuzzy World" in minutes

And up they went, one by one, all 33 of them... the Chilean miners safely tucked away into their Phoenix 2. After 69 days stuck underground, they were finally brought up to the earth's surface. First came the slim and good looking ones (for a better visual effect as the world's press and public attention was fully focused) with their wives and children cheering as did the millions around the globe watching.

In Warsaw, pedestrians stopped to watch it on live television at shopping centers and train stations, nervously following the preparation and hoping to just to catch a glimpse of the first moments of joyful reunion. And only then, with a sigh of relief, they turned around and went back to whatever they were doing.

And while some American commentators concentrated on how American technology was involved in the rescue effort at the event, such as the drilling rig made by company (here name of the company that bought that add) in Pennsylvania and how without American (here name of the manufacturer), it wouldn't be possible ...also adding more meaning to the event by noting the fact that North Korean TV was also present at Camp Hope.

For me, one good reason to cheer was to hear that there is still something being produced in the US! Not sure if a mass production of drilling rigs will help the ailing economy much but still...

It gets on my nerves to see tooth picks (with a miniature paper Polish flag) that I sometimes use for displays have "Made in China" printed on the box.

We can't even make toothpicks? I mean, really?

I was switching channels from American to Polish TV, and the Polish commentators assumed that one miner may not even want to come up, knowing that his wife and two lovers were all waiting for him up at the opening. Polish presenter wanted to know if it was his wife and both lovers or if it was just one lover and wife? And if so, which lover was she? Kind of like a soap opera on live TV...

Since the day the miners stuck the note on the end of the drill notifying that they were alive, although they had to wait another two months for their rescue, their lives improved significantly.

They were receiving laundry services daily, and three hot meals finished off with ice cream. They could set up cots, which arrived via chute in installments and only required some assembly. They stayed active, played and prayed and communicated with their families and coworkers on the ground.

What's a better display of hope, faith and love? And what better way to advertise?

Rosaries blessed by Pope Benedict arrived through the chute as did cool sunglasses for \$450 each donated by an American company.

After months of uncertainty, it was time for the grand finale, all the excitement that came with it, and yes, the fame and rewards.

A famous British soccer player, who has roots in the coal-mining industry, has invited all of the miners to attend a Manchester United soccer game.

Free sushi, I-phones, and travel offers all followed. One of the miners who is an Elvis Presley fan received a trip for two to Graceland.

Watching the action in Chile live on Polish television via satellite, all Poles around the world chipped in with some comments almost as if we were watching the landing on the moon.

I guess we should be proud too, since there is an actual Polish element to the Chilean story.

Ignacy Domejko, Poland's native son, in Chile known as Ignacio Domeyko, was a famous scientist (also a good friend of poet Adam Mickiewicz) who after the November 1830 Uprising was forced to leave the country. He continued his education in France, which he left after an offer to study minerals and to conduct some lectures at a university in Santiago. He opened a modern lab there and became the greatest geologist Chile ever had by fighting for miners' civil rights, introducing modern technology to the mining industry, bringing the metric system to Latin America, etc.. Chileans thanked him greatly by naming minerals, asteroids, shellfish, towns and even a mountain range after him.

Thirteen of the trapped miners belong to a parish run by a Polish priest ...but he says that he never sees them, unlike their wives, because in Chile, religion is a "woman thing."

Miles away, during my own "exile" in West Brookfield, MA, I'm doing my Polish promotion with the Third Annual Polish Dinner at the Senior Center (public welcome). For the first one, I made a cheesecake, and for the second one - cabbage soup. I wasn't going to make it this year, but when I visited the dentist's office for a teeth cleaning, my hygienist told me that her 10 year old daughter who attended the last dinner with her grandparents liked my soup so much and claimed to have never eaten such good soup before, so what was I supposed to do?

I got my two burners heated up (the only two out of four working) and set up cooking for ...80 hungry people.

I was competing with the "traditional Polish meal" consisting of "cabbage soup" in a shade of grey, several slices of kielbasa (heated) and a gołąbek (1) that comes with a cup of tomato soup that you pour over it, I think, all on one plastic plate.

The school principal, an incredibly funny guy with Polish roots, who we all love, is in charge of reheating the pierogi every year. He brags about serving hundreds of pierogi and gołąbki to parishioners at church festivals, making

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Calendar of Events

Oct 30, Sat, 8 pm, Canto Subito, canto biography of John Paul II by Piotr Rubik, Orchestra, Choir, Soloists at Barnum Theatre, 601 Pico Blvd., Santa Monica, CA, tickets 310 396 2165, email: Bogawa2000@yahoo.com

Nov 11 - 14, Thu thru Sun - Paderewski Festival in Paso Robles, CA

Nov 7, Sun 9:30 am - 4:00 pm. Polish Children's Rainbow Fund's Annual Holiday Fair, Szarotka Retirement Home in Los Angeles.

Nov 20, Sat, 3:00 p.m. PAC Southern Cal Division meeting. Guests are welcome. Page 11

Nov 21, Sun, 1:30 p.m., Friends of John Paul II Ważne Zebranie.

Dec 5, Sun, 10:30 a.m., PNA Meeting. Polish Parish in Los Angeles

Dec 18, Sat, 5 p.m., Traditional Christmas Dinner Celebration at The Polish Club of Laguna Woods.

Jan 2, 2011, Sun, - Polish American Congress Oplatek Luncheon and Awards Banquet. Montbello Country Club's Quiet Canon Restaurant. Award recipients are Stan Czarnota, Frank DeBalogh, and Posthumous Award to Michal and Danuta Zawadzki.

Please send information for the calendar to Bish Petryka - e-mail: zbyskoopet@aol.com ★