

Pogonowski - Kielce from 2

The Kielce riot was not the first time that the method of provocation used in Kielce was employed by the Soviets. A year earlier, in June 1945, Sobczyński-Spychaj was in charge of the UB in Rzeszów where the Soviets attempted to provoke violence by alleging that a ritual murder had been committed by the Jews. A police patrol falsely reported an arrest of a rabbi wearing a bloody apron and standing next to what was alleged to be the body of a girl hanging on a butcher's hook. The false story maintained that behind the rabbi, on the floor, were the dead bodies of 16 children. The provocation did not work because the few Jews in town were forewarned and left Rzeszów. Since the provocation didn't work and those who had bungled the scheme were potentially embarrassing witnesses, the members of the police patrol who reported the allegation against the rabbi were arrested and never seen again. (Kersten, op. cit., p. 110.) A year later, the same man in charge of the security force that attempted to provoke an incident in Rzeszów, Sobczyński-Spychaj, was in the identical position of being in charge of the security office in Kielce in time for the occurrence of the Kielce riots. Sobczyński-Spychaj reported to the Soviet authority Dyomin during the time of the Kielce riots.

In Kielce, the agents who staged the violence on July 4 were paid to do so. According to the deposition of the widow of Col. Wiktor Kuźnicki, the chief of police in Kielce, a man fitting the description of Dyomin delivered to Kuźnicki's apartment the money (in foreign currency) for paying off the agents provocateurs needed for the eruption of violence in Kielce. Kuźnicki died on December 26, 1946 under unexplained circumstances. He was most likely killed on NKVD orders as he became inconvenient because he knew too much about the Soviet provocation in Kielce. This style of eliminating inconvenient people was a familiar pattern in the Soviet terror apparatus. To make sure that the traces of Soviet provocation were eliminated the files of the Informacja attached to the 2nd Infantry Division in Kielce were recently destroyed by fire in November 1989 (it was near the end of communist rule in Poland.) (Szaynok, op. cit., p. 93.)

Some of the specifics of Dyomin's intelligence career are well-documented. Dyomin was the key Soviet agent in the 1946 Kielce provocation, and stayed in Kielce only long enough to accomplish his assigned task. He arrived three months before the outbreak of the riot. He stayed through the riot, interrogated witnesses of the riot, and then two weeks later he left Kielce. Later in his career, Dyomin was stationed in the Soviet Embassy in Tel Aviv in 1964-67 as a specialist in Jewish matters and in 1969 was assigned to the Soviet Embassy in West Germany. In the American literature he was described as a high-ranking officer of Soviet military intelligence, the G.R.U. [John Barron, KGB: The Secret Work of Soviet Secret Agents (New York: Macmillan, 1974), p. 385.]

Military Trials Following the Pogrom

The murders and other crimes committed by the non-Soviet participants during the pogrom were within the jurisdiction of the local civilian court. Instead, the Supreme Military Court, closely supervised by the Soviet Smersh, was selected to try civilian perpetrators of the pogrom. The show trial was preceded by Soviet-style investigations, during which tortures were often used to extract confessions. The role of uniformed men and armed security agents who inflicted bullet wounds in Jewish victims was excluded from the investigations and the show trial of the rioters.

The show trial was conducted from July 9 to July 11, 1946. Though they acknowledged that an organized provocation had occurred (Chęciński, op. cit., p. 23), the military court did not reveal who was responsible. Of the mob, 12 men were tried of which nine were sentenced to death. These included seven of the onlookers who joined in the murders conducted by agents of the terror apparatus, and two uniformed men who were not a part of the UB operation. Those who did most of the killing were never tried. The prosecutor, Kazimierz

Golczewski, a Polish Jew known as an old NKVD hand, consistently violated all normal legal procedures during the trial. He did this with full approval of the three military judges, namely, Marian Barton, Stanisław Baraniak, and Antoni Łukasik. [Antoni Czubiński, Dzieje najnowsze Polski: Polska Ludowa (1944-1989) (Poznań: Wielkopolska Agencja Wydawnicza, 1992), p. 113.] At one point during the trial, Golczewski went as far as to threaten a defendant with additional bodily harm when the man was complaining about tortures inflicted upon him during the interrogation.

The entire show trial was a mockery of the law. It was a Soviet-style show trial conducted in Poland to fulfill political and propaganda purposes. The very conduct of the show trial was proof of the complete Soviet domination of life in Poland. It was absolutely impossible for anyone other than the Soviets to provoke and stage a pogrom in which security forces either directly participated in the riot or stood by and let the pogrom go on under their noses for eight hours. The sentries who were posted around the riot area did prevent Catholic priests Roman Zelek and Jan Danilewicz from reaching the places of the violence, because it was their intention to try to pacify the mob. [Kersten, op. cit., p. 128; also Stanisław Meducki and Zenon Wrona, eds., Antyżydowskie wydarzenia kieleckie 4 lipca 1946 roku: Dokumenty i materiały (Kielce: Urząd Miasta Kielce and Kieleckie Towarzystwo Naukowe, 1992), volume 1, p. 94.] Because of Moscow's control over the Polish communist government, the global Soviet policies determined the events in Poland. This explains why a high-ranking intelligence officer like Dyomin, who was also a Jewish specialist, was sent to Kielce and stayed there only long enough to supervise the staging of the riots, then to interrogate witnesses, and then departed immediately as soon as his short assignment was completed.

The weaknesses of the show trial created a need to announce the arrest of the officers who "did not show enough resolve during the riot." Military and police officers associated with the pogrom were arrested and were given very light sentences by the Military Regional Court in Warsaw on December 16, 1946. (Kersten, op. cit., p. 128.) The most immediate instigator of the Kielce violence, Antoni Pasowski, a Jewish member of the Public Security Agency, was never tried. Henryk Błaszczak was not asked to testify. Other less-advertised trials were held in Kielce on September 24, October 10, December 3, 1946 and March 1947. (Szaynok, op. cit., pp. 74-93.)

Maj. Sobczyński-Spychaj, the head of the Kielce State Security Forces, was promoted to head the regional Informacja soon after the Kielce event. This promotion was typical, for he was in the middle of a long career of being used by the Soviets to betray Poland. According to testimony of Józef Światło (former NKVD and UB agent who defected to the West), Sobczyński-Spychaj was the Soviet agent who was parachuted to Poland during the war and brought with him instructions for the communist underground to collaborate with the Gestapo in betraying to the Germans the organization of the Polish Home Army controlled by the Polish Government-in-Exile in London. While in Poland, Sobczyński-Spychaj worked as radio-code operator for communication with Smersh under the command of Gen. Ivan Serov. Sobczyński-Spychaj was flown to the USSR in 1944 by a special NKVD plane. (Kersten, op. cit., pp. 96, 129.) Later in his career, in the summer of 1950, he was appointed to head the passport office in Warsaw. As the head of the passport office Sobczyński-Spychaj persecuted Jewish applicants for passports. He was reported to have used foul language and threw a number of persons down the stairs. At the request of the Soviets, Sobczyński-Spychaj was promoted to the rank of colonel and was elevated to the head of personnel office of the Ministry of Defense. He was kept in sensitive posts as a useful agent of the NKVD. In June 1958 he earned his high school diploma. He died in 1988 in Warsaw. (Szaynok, op. cit., p. 92.)

Widespread awareness of the Soviet provocation of the riot caused protests

against the death sentences. Demands were made for a full investigation into the affair. Catholic clergy, including then absent Bishop Kaczmarek of Kielce, the opposition parties as well as General Władysław Anders and other leaders of Polish political emigration were named during the show trial as anti-communist conspirators behind the Kielce violence. The show trial could not substantiate any of these charges.

The hurriedly-organized show trial did not give any chance for the defense lawyers to prepare themselves. There was, however, plenty of effort made to bring a large crowd of Polish and foreign news correspondents. The communists counted on the ignorance of foreign reporters of Soviet show-trial techniques and they assumed that Polish newsmen would be too intimidated to report on the abuse of the law. It was clear that for the Soviets, anti-Semitism was a convenient political and propaganda tool used to disrupt Polish society. It also served to identify anyone smeared with anti-Semitism as a "fascist" guilty of collaboration with the Nazis during the war.

Disbelief, Pain, Shame

In Poland, the news of the details of murders in Kielce caused first disbelief, then pain and shame that a Polish mob could be capable of such horrible atrocities and brutal killing frenzy no matter whether the crimes were provoked by the Soviets or not. Throughout Poland meetings were held condemning the pogrom of Kielce as a horrible atrocity. Stanisław Mikołajczyk, the leader of the opposition Polish Peasants' Party, immediately condemned the pogrom. However, reports of his condemnation in the media were censored. The demand for a parliamentary investigation of the pogrom was rejected by the communist government. The Soviet-led government promised the formation of an investigative commission composed of all political parties. It never materialized.

**Pogonowski
Reflections on Kielce
Continued in the November issue**

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