

VARIATIONS ON A LEGEND:
DICTIONARY OF THE KIELCE POGROM.
A BOOK OF KNOWLEDGE,
ETHNOGRAPHY, LEGEND,
AND NARRATIVE.

APPROVED: 

Dr. David Frank

BY

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A THESIS

PRESENTED TO THE ROBERT D. CLARK HONORS COLLEGE OF THE
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Dr. David Frank

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VARIATIONS ON A LEGEND: DICTIONARY OF THE KIELCE POGROM is an attempt to use an ethnographic technique and scope of inquiry to understand the events on July 4, 1946, in the town of Kielce, in south central Poland. Conceptually, this study focuses on the reinterpretation of the events, and their cultural dissemination in the Polish and Jewish worlds.

This thesis, written at the University of Oregon, under the tutelage of professors David Frank, Kenneth Liberman, and Sharon Sherman, is based on fieldwork and research in Poland, and the United States. This book-length project is the culmination, the final focus, of my independent undergraduate project in "Trace Studies in a Jewish Context."

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INTERSPERSED WITH HISTORICAL RELATIONS
AND POLITICAL INQUIRIES.

ILLUSTRATED WITH ENGRAVINGS.

By JONAH BENJAMIN BOOKSTEIN

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PROF. S. SHERMAN.

MCMXCIII

INTRODUCTION

LEGEND AND LOCAL KNOWLEDGE

Yet whatever the politically motivated manipulations one
 perceives behind the scenes, the fact remains that the crowds in Kielce

Before the turn of the century, in Polish villages and towns, as the
 Catholics would never let Jews build a synagogue which was as tall as
 a church. The Jews therefore built their synagogues into the
 earth, sometimes at the bottom of hills, digging down, so that from
 the inside the synagogue was very tall and spacious, as should be
 houses of worship. They would then refer to King David who said
 "In the depth of the space, I am praying."* The Jews' world prayed
 from the depth of King David's space, the Catholic world was
 comforted that their church was closest to heaven.

Jews are no strangers to massacres, and yet — J. B. B. seems large in
 permanent symbolic and legendary importance in both the Jewish and Polish
 psyche is the July 4, 1946, pogrom in Kielce. No matter whatever motivated
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 major emigration of Jews from Poland, and the transformation of Poland in
 the memory of Jews abroad the world. An analysis of Polish-Jewish
 relations after World War II is a journey into fundamental structures which
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 between two peoples so bonded to their victimization and martyrology at the

¹ For example, *The International Conference on the History and Culture of Polish Jewry in*
 1988. Many of my references are from sources written in the last

* *A Big Jewish Book*, Jerome Rothenberg, editor. 1978. New York: Anchor Press

INTRODUCTION

LEGEND AND LOCAL KNOWLEDGE

Yet whatever the politically motivated manipulations one envisions behind the scenes, the fact remains that the crowds in Kielce acted more than responsively to the initial spark, a fact not lost on the Jews in Poland at that time. . . as far as the Church was concerned, the Jews were now siding with Poland's enemy's, namely the Communists, and so should be prepared to bear the consequences. . . . The signals were all too clear for thousands of Jews, as they began to flee, often illegally crossing the border. . . . Poland, after close to nine centuries, could no longer be considered a home.

— Iwona Irwin-Zarecka (1989, 49)

Jews are no strangers to massacres, and yet one which looms large in paramount symbolic and legendary importance in both the Jewish and Polish psyche is the July 4, 1946, pogrom in Kielce. No matter whatever motivated the crowds, as Iwona Irwin-Zarecka notes, Kielce was the catalyst for the last major emigration of Jews from Poland, and the transformation of Poland in the memory of Jews around the world. An analysis of Polish-Jewish relations after World War II is a journey into fundamental structures which support Polish and Jewish identities. Only in the last decade has dialogue on the subject reached international proportions¹ necessary for rapprochement between two peoples so bonded to their victimization and martyrology at the

¹ For example, the International Conference on the History and Culture of Polish Jewry in Oxford, 1986; and in Jerusalem, 1988. Many of my references are from sources written in the last ten years.

hands of the Nazis (also Russians, and Ukrainians, and Arabs) (Ash 1977).² Kielce lies on this active fault-line of victimization, and is representational in vastly different ways. Poles envision themselves as a nation occupied by the tyrannical Communists, whose internal affairs have been controlled by foreign entities. Jews envision themselves as victims of the Poles, who are incurably anti-Semitic and want to finish Hitler's work. By examining narrative tendencies, portraying ethnographically the complexity and symbolism of the Kielce pogrom, I hope to contribute to Polish/Jewish rapprochement. This study necessitates a cultural critique of narrative, requires critical dialogue, and the acceptance of subjectivity.

Myths, legends, and folktales are all forms of prose narrative (Bascom 1965). Myth lies in the realm of the remote past, in an other worldiness, and is sacred in attitude. Legend is fundamentally about human experience in the recent past, and may maintain sacred or secular ties. Folktale's primary function is entertainment, whereas the primary function of the myth is historical and for the purposes of identification with culture and heritage. A legend's primary purpose is for explanation of phenomenon, and retention of cultural values.

For Freud, myths were metaphorical and allegorical — traditional tales which hid deeper meanings. The details of a story were Freudian symbols of the universal truth. Carl Jung saw myth as a revelation of psychic tendencies of a society. For Jung, myths contain "archetypes,"— traditional expressions developed over thousands of years. These archetypes are symbols which

² A reference to Timothy Garton Ash's introduction to Hann Krall's *Shielding the Flame*. "Each martyrology felt compelled to exclude the other." Other scholars have commented on the attraction of both Poles and Jews to their victimization. Perhaps this preoccupation with victimization, as forwarded by A. Memmi and Fanon, is symptomatic of occupied or oppressed peoples.

society depends upon for explanation and identity (Lenardon and Manford, 1971).

Narratives of the Kielce pogrom divide into two overarching narratives, one Jewish and one Polish. Many of the narratives that aim to explain what happened in the pogrom are legendary in form and content. Narratives providing meanings, and explanations in original ways, often infused with pieces of popular belief, legend, or myth. The mythical elements of these narratives support cosmological and supernatural beliefs and may relate to historical events (Bascom 1965).

Certain elements of folk narrative about Jews and Poles are incorporated into narratives about the Kielce pogrom. These elements have provide the symbolic bases for narratives in affecting certain social institutions (Lenardon and Manford, 1971: 26). Narratives about the pogrom reflexively augment certain institutions (e. g. the Polish Church, Solidarity, United Jewish Appeal, Anti Defamation League, March of the Living) and their goals. The importance of symbols and legend cannot be overemphasized. The symbols and legends American Jews employ create world views, educational systems, global-political agendas, cultural institutions and fund raising organizations. These symbols and legends are all too often ignored.

Polish legends about Jews have roots in traditional Polish folk culture and religion: Jews are the descendants of the Christ killers, and are people who used Catholic blood for their ceremonial bread — they are a strange, foreign people, cast as near devils who lived in a separate world. Jewish legend about Poles claims Poles are *am ha aretz*, literally “people of the earth,” meaning simple minded, backwards, and barbaric. Association with

Poles was therefore restricted by the Jewish community, and limited to business transactions and certain government interactions. The significance of the role of legend in the Kielce pogrom, and the pogroms legendary status today, demand an examination of these legendary elements.

Current references to, or studies of the Kielce pogrom exclude how Poles in Kielce tell the story of the pogrom. Listening to Polish Kielcian's narratives of the pogrom and their reconstruction of the event, illustrates the local knowledge necessary for deep understanding. Narratives, encased in context, exemplify the complexity of the event. The narratives of the Kielce pogrom themselves do not lie in a vacuum but have been subjected to the fierce political swings of contemporary Poland since her independence after World War I. The legends about the Kielce pogrom of 1946 are deeply imbedded in Polish/Jewish relations. Variations on the legend of the pogrom, caught in layers of historical sediment, must be included in the complex study Polish/Jewish relations.

Representations of the pogrom, in the folklore of contemporary Kielce, offer insight beyond the scope of documentary evidence. Few residents of the town have access to the historical renderings of the events, some of which are being published now after the fall of the Communist system; none had access to them before that system collapsed. The events stewed in the transitory memories of the town's residents, passed from a generation of witnesses, or participants, to later generations. The pogrom, as seen in narratives, is no more fictional, or less influenced by legend, than any historian's construction of the events, which is a function of the historian's position, and agenda. The reports and books on the Kielce pogrom enter the body of legend about Polish and Jewish relations in the post-war period.

Narratives by residents of Kielce about the pogrom portray the pogrom's graphic, yet banal, nature. The banality of a phenomenon is as associated with distance from the period, as with the callous nature of Polish-Jewish relations after the Holocaust.³ The major section of *VARIATIONS ON A LEGEND*, the *DICTIONARY OF THE KIELCE POGROM*, is based on critical dialogue. Critical dialogue is an effective tool for understanding these local perspectives. Various accusations of guilt (whose directions are as fluid as the ground beneath a pendulum), which blame 'agent provocateurs' for responsibility for the pogrom, must be illuminated and discussed through careful analysis.

SYMBOLISM & NARRATIVE

Ethnographers study the symbols and meanings of a contemporary culture, in a personal, usually solitary way, in order to contribute to not only better understanding of another people, but also for self-reflection (Marcus and Fisher 1986). In describing these symbols and meanings in writing, the ethnographer employs metaphor in analyses and description. Subjects do this all for themselves without the cognitive machinery, the methodological constructs, or paradigmatic procedure expected and played out by the ethnographer (Marcus and Fisher 1986).

The pogrom is symbolic of the attitudes of Poles towards Jews in Kielce in 1946. Poles, either to abjure blame, cast blame, clear their conscience, or improve the town's image, have created explanations to assist with their metaphors and symbolism of the event. Jews also employ the event as a symbol, little interested in the how, why, when, or the what, which so

³ I am referencing Hanah Arendt's influential *Eichman in Jerusalem, a Report on the Banality of Evil*. Actions which at first seem gruesome, become normalized, and denial runs rampant in the callous nature of two feuding ethnic groups. (i.e. Bosnia, Sudan, Israel, etc.)

preoccupies Poles. For the Jew in 1946 and today, only the mass-murder is significant. To some Poles, the pogrom's symbolism derives from historical victimization — how other people have caused problems for Poles — who, if left to their own accords, would never get into such trouble. To some Poles, the pogrom remains a symbol for the inevitable consequences of maintaining treacherous allegiances (i.e. with the communists). The pogrom is also historically symbolic for the Jew's self-image as victims—Kielce being the last of the pogroms which were to end with the creation of the Jewish State. For many Jews, the pogrom is synonymous with Poland—a land of hate and mediaeval Catholic doctrine and mentality.

ETHNOGRAPHY OF NARRATIVE

An ethnographer is focused on government produced, historical documents, as is the focus of a historian. Though these documents offer historians broad insights into the minutes and meetings of a society's upper command, they exclude many kinds of knowledge. An ethnographer's quest, through dialogue and socio-political archeology, is an attempt to gain greater insight into the narratives and legends of a culture and their inherent meanings. The Kielce pogrom of 1946, a microcosm of the millennia-old relationship between Poles and Jews, has not been approached ethnographically.

Variations on the legend of the pogrom are unavailable to most persons outside of Kielce; their impact and essence is often glossed over by historians, writers, and encyclopedias. My task is to explore these variations of the Kielce pogrom in the context of the macro-conflict, and to illuminate the unlit pathways, where the historian is afraid to venture.

Meaningful structures or elements in a culture, such as narrative, legend and folktale, are produced, perceived, and interpreted. Ethnography

delves into their purposes. This "thick description" is interpretive of the flow of social discourse, capturing the "said" or subject of this discourse for close examination (Marcus and Fisher 1986, 4-9). Doing ethnography, as one eminent anthropologist noted, is "like trying to read (in the sense of 'construct a reading of') a manuscript — foreign, faded, full of ellipses, incoherences, suspicious emendations, and tendentious commentaries, but written not in conventionalized graphs of sound but transient examples of shaped behavior" (Geertz 1973, 9). The final result, a written anthropological manuscript, is likewise an interpretation of the faded manuscript. A work of fiction Through careful analysis, ephemeral, yet meaningful structures can be concretized. The non-ephemeral, the "all too real," structures of the pogrom, of the conflict, and of the microcosm, are fictional only in interpretation.

Alexander Hertz adeptly illustrated in *The Jews in Polish Culture* that "It is not the few Jews in Poland who are the source of the anti-Semitism but certain deep and wide-ranging diseases that eat away at society in which those Jews live" (1961). Those diseases, learned from a reconstruction of events in the form of legend, form part of the local knowledge of Polish/Jewish relations. After the war, a well-known Jewish doctor offered a similar prognosis of Polish anti-Semitism to journalist S. L. Schneiderman. The doctor remarked, "Polish anti-Semitism is a pathological phenomenon" (1947, 16). The "Jewish bogey in Poland's internal and foreign foes," (Hirszowicz 1986) which Communists retained into the 1980s, recurrently surfaced in fieldwork for the DICTIONARY. Yet, none of the fieldwork (e.g. interviews, or research) could have been completed without the cooperation and assistance of Poles. Did this observed pathological hatred cause the massacre of Jews in Kielce? If so, what is the pathogen — what structure of belief can, as a virus, contaminate the whole body and soul of a human-

being? Is there an inoculation, a cure? Many Jews sympathetic or devout to the Communist regime in the few years following the Shoah, believed that the firm hand of the Communist government, coupled with the "new society," would cure the victim. Most Jews doubted that this victim, cursed with some pathogen which destroys only the soul, was curable after the Kielce pogrom, and fled Poland for their lives (see Appendix: Interview #16).

In Poland, during martial law in 1982, filmmaker Marcelem Lozinski, interviewed residents of Kielce, attempting to uncover what happened there, after more than thirty years of official Communist silence. His film captured, in unrehearsed testimonies, the untapped, unexpurgated narratives of residents of the town, before the pogrom's concealment from popular history was revealed by the Solidarity movement. Solidarity's campaign for freedom of information included uncovering past secrets. In the 1980s, Solidarity helped bring the pogrom out of Poland's historical dustbin, printing articles about the pogrom in its newspapers (Irwin-Zarecka 1986, 160). In 1986, the Polish Church and Communist government commemorated the event, standing firmly against anti-Semitism, insisting that in 1946 their positions had been the same (Irwin-Zarecka 1986, 161). Yet, on July 4 of the same year, the government arrested ten members of the Freedom and Peace Group who had placed flowers outside the building where the pogrom began (Reuters 1986), commemorating the 40th anniversary of the pogrom. Members of the Freedom and Peace Group were released and ordered to pay the equivalent of one-hundred and forty dollars. The event and the anniversary went unnoticed in the official press, but the Catholic weekly *Tygodnik Powszechny* called the pogrom "one of the saddest events in Polish post-war history." The

Communist regime would not relinquish claim to the truth of the pogrom, and consequently anyone opposing their version, was viewed as treasonous.

With the fall of communism, old symbols and communist legends were reviewed, recycled, or discarded. Consequently, Lech Walensa urged Poles, in 1990, to abandon the pretext that the pogrom was caused by a Soviet provocation, and called for the establishment of a plaque in memory of the victims. He stated it did not matter who initiated the pogrom and in whose interest they acted, the fact remains that the killers were Poles and the crime took place on Polish soil.⁴ The Kielce pogrom is under greater scrutiny in Poland than any where else in the world. Poles[†] are attempting to reconstruct the series of events and are embarking on historical investigation in the mechanisms of the pogrom. Their attempts to illuminate the Kielce pogrom will shed light on one of the darkest sides of Polish-Jewish relations. Within Poland, books are being published, and historians are engaged in research for subsequent books, essays and another movie. Though many Jews in the small community of Polish Jewry are engaged in academic and professional disciplines, none are involved in researching the pogrom. Parallel battles for understanding past atrocities abound in the United States, Canada, Israel, and in many other nations. In Poland, the study of the pogrom (or the refusal to do so) has in itself become a cultural process steeped in symbols.

WESTERN LEGEND

Western legend and local knowledge regarding Poland and the Kielce pogrom have been constructed, or in other words, have developed unidimensionally. Certain major artistic, literary, and institutional

⁴British Broadcasting Corporation, Summary of World Broadcasts, reporting on stories by Warsaw Radio and Polish Press Agency (PAP), June 6, 1990.

endeavors in the last decade, have been highly influential. Their impact does not necessarily derive from their dedication to standards of academic excellence, documentary rigor, historical accuracy, or regards for local sensitivity. Rather, they borrow from, and perpetuate overarching Jewish narrative regarding Poland, and in some cases even create purposeful and historical alterations — though not without genuine intent.

Alan Dershowitz, in his best-selling book *Chutzpah*, characterizes the event in Kielce 1946, in the most base terms. In essence, his treatment of the pogrom is the “standard” Jewish narrative, which assists in understanding the overarching Jewish narrative. He begins his treatment of Polish anti-Semitism in emotive description, taking the reader to an un-named Polish town where Jews had been gathered by the Nazis in the central square, on July 28, 1942. He quotes Martin Gilbert, and writes that the old and young were summarily executed, the others marched off to the concentration camps. Dershowitz marks his own ironic epiphany — that there are children playing in the square in the 1980s: “teenagers were flirting, adults were buying produce.” Dershowitz is deeply unnerved, because there is no marker, or commemorative plaque.⁵

⁵Dershowitz, it appears, believes that the children are purposefully, or at very least unconsciously, insulting the memory of those Jews. However, in lieu of the obscurity with which the memory of Jewish martyrdom was preserved by the communist regime, the blame must not be hastily cast at the children, or even their parents. The children never heard about the round-up of Jews specifically, or any event which might compromise the Communist vision; a besieged Polish nation, because the terrible nightmare of the Holocaust was subsumed under the general victimization of Poles under Nazi occupation. In the eyes of the Communist educational framework, the Holocaust, and more specifically, the murder of three million Polish Jews, was indistinguishable from the martyrdom of six million Polish comrades. Fortunately for the memory of that vanished Jewish world, and for our reinterpretation of this world, in contemporary “free Poland,” the role of memorials, and general education is moving towards acknowledgment of the unique suffering of Jews during the war (Young, 1992: 32).

When breaching the subject of the pogrom, Dershowitz reduces the complex and utterly tragic aftermath of the war into simplistic and ultimately legendary terms.

Few families remained intact, but some remnants were determined to try to rebuild Polish Jewry. They came back to their homes, only to find them looted and occupied by locals, some of whom were angry at their return and disappointed that the Nazis had not completed their work. In the town of Kielce, on July 4, 1946, a year after the Germans had withdrawn, local Poles murdered more than forty Jewish survivors and wounded another sixty (Dershowitz 1991, 146).

Dershowitz's implication is that the pogrom occurred because Poles spontaneously rose up to finish Hitler's work. He then writes that "to this day, no one has ever investigated the Kielce pogrom, beyond the hands-on perpetrators" (Dershowitz 1991, 147). Dershowitz's treatment of the pogrom is potentially more misleading than the usual reference to the pogrom in articles about Polish anti-Semitism or the end of the Shoah. Ultimately we all reduce our own views of life into simplistic constructions or terms; however, without a multifaceted approach, these reductions impair mutual understanding.

Although *Chutzpah* was a national best-seller before a paperback edition was printed, the "best-seller" popularity of *Chutzpah*, has not equalled the base level impact of *Shoah*. Claud Lanzman's shocking film *Shoah*, attempts to explore the human nature of the extermination of six million Jews, by interviews with victimizers, (e.g., SS officers, camp officers, train operators), survivors, and witnesses. Consequently, *Shoah* explores anti-Semitism still alive in Eastern Europe, and attempts to illustrate the more-than-vestigial anti-Semitism still present in Poland — hate which

caused the disappearance of Holocaust survivors after the war — and the series of pogroms culminating with Kielce. As one friend put it, *Shoah* could be re-titled, *Look at the Polish Anti-Semites*.

After its premiér in Paris, the official Polish press lashed out against the film for being anti-Polish. The Polish government even lodged a formal complaint with the French government which had supplied some funding for the movie (Polonsky 1990, 9-10). When the film was aired in Poland, many rejected its division of European society into murderers, victims, and bystanders.⁶ However, few intellectuals could come to terms with the base, crude anti-Semitism featured in the film.

The film has permeated the conscience of the world Jewish community.⁷ *Shoah* presents a certain image of the Holocaust, and it has irreversibly changed the way Jews relate to Poles, and Poland. The culminating effect has been that the pogrom in Kielce is “concrete proof” of the hereditary anti-Semitism of the Polish nation.

Jan Karski, the Polish underground courier who tried to bring the horrors of the death camps to the world’s attention, supports Lanzmann and his film strongly. For Karski, the film tells about the Holocaust, and is apolitical. He writes that those “[who saw] the Holocaust were Poles. And they were not intellectuals, city-dwellers and educated persons, but peasants

⁶To borrow the phraseology of the title of Raul Hirshberg’s latest book about the Holocaust *Murderers, Victims, and Bystanders*.

⁷Let me relate an incident with my great-aunt, herself born in Poland: She immigrated with her family and my grandfather from the Polish town of Zyrardow in approximately 1914. When I informed her that I was travelling to Poland for the summer, her first reaction concerned the film *Shoah*. She said that after viewing Poles in the movie, and remembering what her father had said about the vicious boycotts of Jewish businesses at the beginning of the century, she would never want to go back to Poland.

and people from small cities who lived close to the death camps. And it is not Lanzmann's fault that they are presented as they are" (1987, 95-96).⁸

Lanzmann made a film about the mechanism of the Holocaust. Not about the Poles' — or any other nation's — attitude towards the Jews, not about attempts to help. . .

The film will shape the consciousness of millions of people.

It will teach the results of intolerance, anti-Semitism, racism and hatred. The Pope underlined this, praising the film and its director.

But critics of the film preferred to ignore the Pope's remarks.

One may regret, as I do, that Lanzmann did not mention in his film the problems involved in helping the Jews in Poland, France, and Hungary, Holland, Denmark, or Bulgarians. Therefore I see the necessity of making another film, one as great and powerful as *Shoah*, a film that would shape the consciousness of Mankind (1987, 96-97).

Unfortunately, in Karski's embrace of the film's message on the evils of intolerance, he does not see how the film itself has created such intolerance. For Jews, *Shoah* is not a film just about the Holocaust — it is a film about people who watched Jews go to their deaths, and still are anti-Semitic. It is about unfeeling Germans, who describe with little remorse their activities. It is about survivors who relate to the documentary history book of film, the unimaginable suffering and ordeal.⁹

⁸ From an interview with Jan Karski in *Tygodnik Powszechny*, March 15, 1987. The English translation was published in the summer of 1987 in *Dissent*. From Polonsky 1990, *My Brother's Keeper*.

⁹ Visual images generally create a stronger impact than written description. Lanzman's ten year effort with the film underscores his salient understanding of his film's potential impact.

Shoah aided the advancement of mutual understanding between Jews and Poles—for Poles in Poland. Poles confronted the legends laid down by the Communist regime which included grossly exaggerated altruistic claims by the general population regarding the saving or aiding of Jews; the legend claiming ignorance of what the Nazis were accomplishing in their very presence; and the legend of the repatriation of Jewish property, without malice or injury, to all Jews who wanted it back. (The situation during the war, as understood today, creates much Jewish trauma.) To Jews, the gnawing and painful attitude of Polish peasants Lanzmann presents, lasts as a permanent image, unlike the testimony of Karski, who risked his life to bring the fate of the Jews to the world's attention. Several Polish friends of mine have hypothesized that Jews who lived in America during the Holocaust, and their descendants, have painful guilt for not having done (or been able to do) enough to persuade the American government to bomb the death camps. These feelings have caused American Jews to exact retribution (in the form of prejudice and hate) upon Poles. By focusing on the faults of another group, he continued, they don't have to look at their own mistakes during the war, or afterwards. This theory, however, might borrow from anti-Semitic notions of Jew's real power. For if they would have had the influence to affect such change, they would have. One of the most pertinent exhibits in the new United States Holocaust Museum, in Washington D.C., focuses on the American government's decision making process, as to whether they should bomb the camps. The arguments made during the World War II for a policy of non-intervention, are the same arguments being made now about the West's refusal to bomb Serbia.

Search For the Disease

The latest major legend creating and perpetuating institution in the Jewish world, draws from the Jewish legend of the callous Pole. This institution, pioneered by an American-born Israeli, brings Jews by the thousands each year to search out Lanzmann's account of the Holocaust. This popular tour unites American and Israeli Jews, creating proto-ritual in a pilgrimage to sites of pure destruction.

One of the most recent institutions based on Jewish myths, and designed to forge belief in those myths, is the March of the Living. Concentrating on the destruction and rebirth of the Jewish people, March of the Living adapts the sacred myth of the ingathering of the Jewish people to their ancestral home, and the popular belief that Jews will never be safe in the Diaspora. The March focuses exclusively on Poland and the ruins which lie there. But the March tells an incomplete story.

The March, traveling proudly with Star of David emblazoned jackets, is actually a bus caravan of Jewish students on a death tour, cruising monuments of destruction. Escorted at times as requested, by anti-terrorist units of the Polish army, the fancy busses cruise through the Polish countryside punctuated with hundreds of ruined Jewish cemeteries.

The major extermination camps are visited: Majdanek, Auschwitz, and Treblinka, maybe Belzec and Sobibor. Prayers are recited, ribbons laid, and custom March of the Living *yartzeit*¹⁰ candles lit. The Marchers walk from Auschwitz, to Birkenau waving Israeli and American flags. The students stops in Kielce to visit the site of the infamous pogrom and the mass grave at the Jewish cemetery on the outskirts of town. The students visit some ruined or converted synagogues, including Kazimierz Dolny where the old wooden

¹⁰Jewish memorial candles.

shule is a cinema. They meet the aging men of the Nozick synagogue in Warsaw — representatives of the last days of Polish Jewry. They visit the monuments to the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, interspersed among nondescript housing projects. They visit the ancient Remu *shule* in Krakow.

Along the way, in the Polish countryside which remains greatly uninfluenced by modern society, the March will undoubtedly feel uncomfortable at the stares of villagers, as they watch a passerby spit on the ground at their feet. When they are told that this is the foundry of anti-Semitism, few can argue, for this is what the March sees. When they arrive in Israel, the redemption of the Jewish people, the students participate in Israeli Independence Day. Students on the March of the Living take a Death Tour pilgrimage of Poland. Most importantly, through the direction of the American Israeli ideologue of the March, the youth see that even after the fires died at Birkenau, Jews were not safe in Poland, and are not safe in the Diaspora.

The March is not a small event, rather every spring three to five thousand youths spread out over all of Poland beginning on Yom Ha Shoah, Holocaust Memorial Day, and return eight days later to Israel in time for Israeli independence day. The grand sweeping hand of generalization, and depersonalization, characteristic of Jewish pilgrimages which flock to Poland, and resulting resentments in specific Polish communities, illustrate the latest trend in the thousand year history of Polish Jewish relations. It is the "disease" Jews search for and find, amid the ruins of the Polish Jewish World. Ironically, while they search for the "disease," they facilitate its growth and spread.

An American Jewish teenager was interviewed by Polish television during the 1992 March of the Living. Accordingly, she related her distaste for

Poland, to the whole Polish nation. The news carried footage of the March's deluxe tour buses cruising the country-side — in stark contrast to the transportation opportunities of most Poles. The buses roared through Kielce as well, with Israeli flags in the windows, and army patrols. In choosing to ignore a very basic understanding of human nature, the March invades. The leaders of the expeditions believe they have an inalienable right to do what they do. Their legacy of the Shoah justifies their intrusiveness into the highly homogeneous Polish world, which in actuality values warmth and hospitality to the visitor. Imagine the response of a poor, downtrodden, inner-city community in the United States, to a similar parade of wealth and conspicuousness to a similar invasion? Sensitivity is vacant, the cultural institution and belief system perpetuated, and barriers to further dialogue are strengthened and fortified.

Dershowitz's *Chutzpah*, Lanzmann's *Shoah*, and *The March of the Living*, are paradigmatic to overall Jewish Western legend about Poland. The legends they perpetuate solidify the image of the Kielce pogrom as a continuation of the trend of Polish anti-Semitism. Students of Dershowitz's *Chutzpah*, Lanzmann's *Shoah*, and *The March of the Living*, which includes most Western Jews, need not investigate or understand the Kielce pogrom. This aversion from a nuclear component of the overall conflict between Poles and Jews helps perpetuate legend. This has resulted in some Jews rebuffing Polish Catholics' overtures of rapprochement. Based upon the legacy of the aforementioned highly influential works, unraveling the Kielce pogrom, and subsequently the series of narratives which explain what happened, is an act of defiance. There exists no place in the structural framework of those highly influential social phenomena for understanding, however, this work is just such an attempt.

FIELDWORK



SURVEY OF LITERATURE 32

Women on a park bench

Kielce July 1992

REFLECTIONS 33

FIELDWORK

"Fieldwork begins when someone decides to do fieldwork."

(Georges and Jones 1980, 23)

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MY EXCURSION INTO LOCAL KNOWLEDGE

When Urbansky said that the Jews were killed for no particular reason, I flinched. Years of training (as a listener to peoples feelings and attitudes towards Jews) told me that there was no such thing, and how could a supposed intellectual pronounce such misconceptions. I repeatedly asked about nationalist parties, but he refuted [their influence]. He relies on Communist information with its inherent, insubstantiability. I felt like grilling him for some reason. To squeeze something out. Why the Jews? Why Kielce? He wanted a commission formed (as the Israeli ambassador had told him he would,) but hasn't pursued this issue himself. He said Jews lived all over town when they returned, and courts settled the disputes over property. The city gave them the buildings. . .

—Excerpt from journal, July 1992.

The creation of this work results directly from the advice of a thesis advisor to do fieldwork. Honestly, the thought of conducting a fieldwork study on the Kielce pogrom seemed out of my league. Yet, the more I digested the idea, and thought about what little I could discover in the States, the choice was obvious: I had to go to Kielce. Going to Kielce, a town of great infamy, especially in the Jewish world, and investigating how a pogrom against Jews survives in the reality of Kielce today, became my passion. Since 1946, Kielce has been a continual spring of mistrust and pain. I wanted to reach the source of the pogrom, the source of this spring. Why did this

happen? How could the Kielce pogrom happen one year after the Nazis were defeated? I could not get past this monstrous impediment in the path of understanding between Poles and Jews. Conducting an oral testimonial project became a way for me to see the pogrom through other lenses. I cannot escape being an American Jew trying to confront Poles and Jews with a more lucid picture of Kielce. Will this confrontation yield peaceful results, as opposed to the models of friction discussed previously?

Shortly after beginning my study of Polish/Jewish relations, I realized Kielce's importance to Polish/Jewish relations, and its legendary nature in the Jewish world. Kielce has been immortalized as the last chapter of the Holocaust. That role is not the primary focus of this project. My intent is to address deep wounds and pain that still effect the relationship between Poles and Jews. On one hand, I have some of the sweet memories passed on to me from my grandparents about their lives in Poland. The beautiful elegies of shtetl life in Singer's tales and Buber's Hassidic tales, move me. On the other hand, there are the tales of horror — the loss of communication with our family members following the outbreak of the war, and their eventual murder by the Nazis. The land of my origin was defiled and razed by the Nazis and the Poles. The sacred, holy life which nurtured my maternal grandfather remains a ruinous memory.

There is a strong connection between my personal history and my plans for fieldwork. Such connections are acknowledged and accepted by scholars (Georges and Jones 1980, 34). My first journey to Poland, the summer before I had even conceived of the planned fieldwork in Kielce, taught me about Polish culture and life, and initiated my connections to the small Jewish community. My second journey, under different circumstances,

had a specific mission. I visited the towns my family had not lived in for over half a century, but in Kielce I had a purpose.

And I never wore a kippah, or told anyone I was Jewish.

TECHNICAL ASPECTS OF FIELDWORK

Planning

Initially, I planned to record the oral testimonies of elderly residents of Kielce to collect what they remembered about the pogrom. I hoped to dispel common inaccuracies and misconceptions about this specific event by discussion with witnesses. I have not discovered previous fieldwork or exploration of this topic in the United States. Once in Poland, I quickly learned that a handful of professional academics are currently studying the pogrom guided by the research questions I've outlined.

I decided that their many years of study would help me understand the events. Consequently, I developed two initially tangential fields of inquiry, interviewing professionals who have studied the history of Kielce and the pogrom, and interviewing elderly residents on the streets of Kielce.

The Interviews

Every encounter with a Pole, with whom the subject of the pogrom arose or didn't arise was significant and recorded fastidiously in my journal. However, I first reviewed the work of Bruce Jackson, Robert A. Georges and Michael O. Jones, and relied on a past seminar on Harold Garfinkel and ethnomethodology. I borrowed techniques from the aforementioned veterans, but also relied on my own methods (Georges and Jones 1980, 11) to collect information, based on observations, dialogue (discussed below), and social historical documents (e.g. newspapers). The folklore collection guide by B. A. Botkin (1938) contains many items I looked for:

TALES: local anecdotes, jests, and hoaxes; place-names and local legends; tall tales and tales of American legendary heroes; animal and just-so stories; witch tales and related lore; devil tales and related lore; ghost tales and related lore; tales of lost miners, buried treasure, ghost towns, and outlaws; fairy and household tales.

LINGUISTIC "FLOATING" MATERIAL: localisms and idioms, folk and popular similes and metaphors, wisecracks and humorous expressions, nicknames, coinages and new word formations, curious street and shop signs, mottoes, slogans, inscriptions in memory books, trade jargon, samples of speech, conversation, sermons and prayers, and local, proverbial, and popular sayings.

GROUPS, GATHERINGS AND ACTIVITIES: accounts of religious gatherings, cults and sects. . . accounts of foreign enclaves, colonies, nationality and isolated groups, and other "islands" and pockets of culture; interviews with fortune tellers. . . and local story-tellers. . . and beliefs and customs (lucky signs, omens, taboos, miscellaneous superstitions. . .)

— Botkin (1938, 14-16)

The DICTIONARY contains many entries which reference some of the items in the list above. Although this list is not specifically designed for historical ethnography, or folklore, many of the most interesting discoveries I made fall within Botkin's field. More contemporarily is William Bascom's (1965) "Forms of Folklore: prose Narratives," which breaks down certain characteristics of the prose narrative. This chart outlines my classification of material as Myth, Legend, or Folktale.

from: "Forms of Folklore: Prose Narratives" by William Bascom
Journal of American Folklore - Vol. 78, 1965

Formal features			
Conventional opening	None		Usually
Told after dark	No restrictions		Usually
Belief	Fact		Fiction
Setting	Some time & some place		Timeless/placeless
Time	Remote past	Recent past	Any time
Place	Earlier/other world	World as is today	Any place
Attitude	Sacred	Sacred or secular	Secular
Principal character	Non-human	Human	Human or non-human
Form of prose narrative	MYTH	LEGEND	FOLKTALE

Initially, I found two informant/translators in Kielce, both of them students. One studies English Literature in Warsaw; the other studies English in Kielce. They volunteered to translate for me, lead me around the town, and be my Polish eyes and ears. Not only was the prospect of practicing English exciting, but also they were interested in the pogrom. As the time passed, they became more and more engrossed in the material, questioning their own versions of what had happened. We would speak candidly about Polish opinions of Jews, popular beliefs of *Zydokommuna* and legends about blood libels, the Catholic Church, and their shallow knowledge of Polish Jews who before the war, comprised 30% of the town's population. Neither of them remember talking to their grandparents about the pogrom, and had only heard of it in the last five or six years.

Dialogue

Representations of another culture, or in this case a specific event in that culture, cannot come without an active exchange. Dialogue is a "two dimensional exchange, [an] interpretive process. . . being necessary both for communication internally within the cultural system and externally between systems of meaning" (Marcus and Fischer 1986, 30). This exchange must then be reconstructed through writing aimed at the reader. There is a third-person dimension to dialogue, namely, the underlying assumptions, non-verbal communication, and symbolic expectations which influence the exchange (Lacan 1979). Marcus and Fischer (1986) note Geertz's ability to understand a "native's point of view" realizing the juxtaposition of the experience-near and the experience-far phenomenon:

In ordinary conversation, there is a redundancy of messages and mutual correction of understandings until agreement is mutually established. In cross-cultural communication, near or local concepts of the cultural other are juxtaposed with the more comfortable, experience-far concepts that the writer shares with his readership. (Marcus and Fischer 1986, 31)

There exists also the "dichotomy" of distinction between the researcher and the subject (Georges and Jones 1980, 21). To what extent the researcher is being observed, and questioned by the subject, is difficult to gauge. Dialogue conducted with attention to context and methodology, is a powerful cross-cultural tool, and was one of my primary means for investigation.

The interviews my translators and I conducted followed two main types of dialogue, which I will label "formal" and "informal." I conducted informal dialogue in Polish, utilizing my translators, who would provide, in most cases, on the spot translations. Initially, we made inquiries of specific

older people walking, or standing, or sitting on a bench along *Ulica* *review* Sienkiewiczza or Planty (street), or in the nearby park. Interviewing elderly men and women sitting on public benches along a street or in the park, was usually more effective than approaching someone who was walking. In cases in which someone sitting down, or selling something along the street, we were not hurried to approach our specific topic. Even if the potential *change* informants were sitting, we usually stood, for bench space in the shade is at a premium on a summer day in Kielce. In the shade, with the informant *risk* comfortable, we could *shmooze* about many other things. If a potential informant was walking, there was an immediacy to get their opinions down about the topic. *to talk about. Some had time to prepare before our*

Upon introducing myself in broken Polish, saying "I am an American, I am in Poland for the summer, and I am studying Kielce," my translator would expand upon this in eloquent Polish. "He is interested in stories about the town, maybe from the war," they would say. Gradually, in a friendly manner, subjects mentioned the pogrom, with some helpful *not* guidance by our questions. In cases in which the informant we approached was walking, some of the intimacy, gained when breaching the subject of the pogrom in a gradual manner, was lost. The process of recording these conversations is discussed below. After each interview, I would debrief with my interpreter(s) to make sure I understood everything and record notes. With the exception of one interview, I do not think any of the informants *rk* knew that my primary goal was to learn about their views of the pogrom, but I never hesitated to explain that I was an American, and that I had Polish *ot* ancestry. In that one interview, the informants, two men in their 60's, *skipped* skipped any of the niceties which I was accustomed to, and point blank said

with my return to the states, an issue. In Poland, Jews and gentiles who

they weren't in Kielce when the pogrom occurred (see Appendix: Interview #6).

The second type of dialogue I term "formal." I told the informant directly that I was in Poland, to study the pogrom. With the consent of the informant I kept my tape recorder in full view. The informants were encouraged to add anything they thought relevant, and we would exchange small parts of our own personal backgrounds, and my reasons for engaging in this study. Usually they wanted to know the names of the towns — Stawiski, Lomza, and Zyrardow — from which my family emigrated. I explained to informants we interviewed according to my "formal" technique, "who" I was and "what" I came to talk about. Some had time to prepare before our interviews, some did not. In retrospect, I wish I had delved more into informants' personal histories. Where, when, and what did they study? Where and when were they born? What was the ancestry of their parents, and when did they move to Kielce? Why are they a historian/journalist/factory worker? Although I did collect this type of information, I was not fastidious in acquiring it. I was conscious of not wanting to create an open-ended field of inquiry, but I am left having to approximate dates of birth and other personal information.

ETHICAL IMPLICATIONS

Bruce Jackson (1987) devotes a small section of his standard fieldwork textbook, *Fieldwork*, to a discussion on ethics. He opens the chapter on "Being Fair," with a quote from Hippocrates, "If you can do no good, at least do not harm." Formal interviews were conducted only with the consent of the subject. However, my technique for recording casual interviews has been, upon my return to the states, an issue. In Poland, Jews and gentiles who

knew I was doing hidden microphone recording in my casual interviews, were not surprised and understood my dilemma and solution. I had no ethical problem as long as the subjects remained nameless. If I had announced myself on the streets of Kielce and had told people who I was, with tape recorder visible, my informants would not have been as responsive or candid. This would have hampered my effectiveness as an observer. It would have altered my study in terms of success of fieldwork process, in interpretation, and analysis of what I had collected. I was not prepared, nor did I think it wise, to continue along that approach. Rather, the hidden microphone offered my informants and I substantial freedom. The use of Informants' real names in transcripts and in my final project — without their knowledge — would be improper. In my transcription, and textual analysis I use descriptions, pseudonyms, or letters. I did not photograph my subjects, but I undoubtedly retain a strong mental image of how they looked, acted, and spoke.

I did not lie to subjects I interviewed formally or casually. I did not pay them, or reward them for their information, as was a common mistake in early anthropological studies. Jackson (1986, 267-269) notes that if a researcher foresees any potential gain (e.g. film rights) from the project, he should compensate the subjects. Emotionally, compensating subjects for their — at times callous, at times sincere — remarks, was not a concern. Money influences people in strange ways, especially in Kielce which is struggling financially. What about the honesty of the subjects? Might they not tell a grand tale in anticipation of much desired dollars? At a base level, paying witnesses to the gruesome massacre of Jews for their personal reflections was beyond my capability as a Jew.

I have recorded informants' opinions, set them down, and critically analyzed them, as writers do. I was not "up-front" about many things, especially my nationality and my hidden microphone. Yet, we must contextualize this mini-debate. Except for very recent works, manuals on folklore, and fieldwork usually deal with either an assumed "exotic" tribe in a remote area, a Native American tribe, or "back country" Americans who retain old customs, beliefs, or stories.¹¹ Neither Poles, nor the situation in Kielce fit neatly into any of the above models. Until 1988, Kielce and Poland were ruled by martial law. Poles, (similar to Jews in telling you how they feel more often than you would like to hear it), are justifiably suspicious of journalists. They lived in a state which spied internally, and planted among citizens moles who represented the internal security services. I cannot judge whether the perceived paranoia was justified. I can acknowledge its presence and the genuine fear which has resulted. Regardless, my Polish associates' advice was constructive in helping me reach my final decision to conduct covert recordings, without the naming of names.

TIME & PLACE

Poles are very conscious of anniversaries. In fact, they celebrate their birthdays to coincide with their Name Saint's holiday. Small rural villages and larger towns make pilgrimages to special road-side shrines on specific days. The Communist regime played along those lines of commemoration by such acts as inscribing dates in the base of Stalinist statues (which are all but gone), and creating special holidays regarding the liberation of Warsaw by the Red Army. I chose to conduct my interviews in Kielce in the two weeks

¹¹ None of them discuss a descendant of a potential victim investigating the opinion of witnesses in a town which butchered 42 of his kind forty-six years ago.

leading up to, and several days past, the anniversary of the actual pogrom. Several subjects, especially those who actually witnessed the pogrom, or who are actively researching the pogrom, made note of the purposefully coincidental time of year. During my reasearch, a short documentary film entitled "Kielce 1946," was shown on Polish Television in honor of the anniversary of the pogrom. According to newspaper reports, a small memorial service was conducted in front of the building one year earlier, with Jewish survivors in attendance.

All my casual interviews were conducted within several blocks of the Planty Street house, where the pogrom began. My formal interviews were conducted in homes and offices. Kielce's old downtown section, where elderly people congregate, shoppers shop, teenagers parade, and Gypsies "panhandle," is not large. I felt the proximity to the location of the massacre would evoke interesting results. I attempted six or seven interviews in front of the actual house (of which only two resulted in substantial dialogue), opening with the question:

"*Szepraszam Pan/Pani* . . . (excuse me miss/mister), could you tell me what these plaques are about? This is an American student friend of mine who is visiting town, and is interested to know what happened here."

INTERPRETATION

In addition to my own preconceptions, my translators also had theirs. Olympia, who has lived several years abroad in England, spoke confidently in English, but at times paraphrased what she had hope the people would have said, not what they actually said. (I discovered upon reading translations of transcriptions of some of my interviews.) Magda, though not as fluent, and

sometimes paraphrasing complicated expressions into simpler ones, rarely strayed from the testimony of a informant. I could not have ventured out onto the streets of Kielce without the assistance of these two women.

Therefore, the small variations in interpretation, or lack of verbatim translations/transcriptions, is outweighed by their invaluable assistance.

SURVEY OF "LITERATURE"

I quickly realized after a survey of basic reference materials and a survey of other articles that there is little information, at least in English, about the pogrom. The *Encyclopedia Judaica* is the primary source for most references on the Kielce pogrom. Recently, a new reference work, the *Encyclopedia of the Holocaust*, edited by Israel Gutman, includes a short description of the post-war events, in its "Kielce" entry. The writer of this section, Sinai Leichter, relies on *The Kielce Book* (1958), and *About Our House Which Was Devastated* (1981), written in Hebrew and Yiddish by former residents and survivors, which document testimony on the pogrom.

Three books published in the late 1940's discuss the Kielce pogrom. Stanislaw Mikolajczyk's, *The Rape of Poland: Pattern of Soviet Agression* (1948), Arthur Bliss Lane's *I Saw Poland Betrayed* (1948), and S. L. Shneiderman's *Between Hope and Fear* (originally written in Yiddish in 1947). Mikolajczyk, the leader at that time of the Polish Peasants Party (PPL), wrote his book after he went into exile. Mikolajczyk's section on the pogrom illustrates ultra-nationalist political expediency. His narrative was a missing ingredient, in my attempt to capture accounts of the pogrom from a wide and inclusive spectrum.

Arthur Bliss Lane is a sympathizer with anyone who is a potential victim of communism, and presents summaries of fascinating discussions with the political elite at this juncture in Polish history.

S. L. Shneiderman, a Polish born Jewish journalist who returned to Poland just after the war, has the most comprehensive chapter on the pogrom. His opinions are now highly valued in Poland, and his books have been translated into Polish.

Michael Checinski, a Pole who now lives in the United States, devoted a chapter in his book *Poland, Communism, Nationalism, and Anti-Semitism* (1982), to an in-depth analysis of the macro-political conflict which surrounded the still cloudy chain of events in Kielce. He states that he conducted extensive interviews with key governmental figures before emigrating from Poland.

Many books and articles written in Polish were helpful, including the most recently published works. Tadeusz Wiacek's popular *Zabic Zyda* (1992), is the first book to capitalize on the popularization of the pogrom. Bozena Szaynok's, *Pogrom Zydow W Kielcac* (1992), though aimed at a similar market as Wiacek, wrote the whole volume herself based on five years of research. *Antyzydowskie Wydarzenia Kieleckie*, by Zenon Wrona and Stanislaw Meducki, a thick book published by the city of Kielce, is the first in a three volume set. This book is discussed in length below. Their chronology of the events is very helpful.

NARRATIVE REALITIES

While conducting my fieldwork, I believed that it almost didn't matter what really happened that particular day of the pogrom, but rather what people believe happened and what form of narrative they created about the

pogrom. The Kielce pogrom is a soft spot on the Kielce soul, and that these conversations about the past could not overlook the event. Many of my narrators utilized selective memory, and rationalizations. I very much doubt that narrators in my casual interviews knew I was Jewish, due to the candidness with which they expressed Jewish prejudice in my presence. I was ever conscious that a narrator's response was determined in some fashion by their presumptions of what my expectations were. This response was minimized in the covert interviews. Yet clearly, my informants were more concerned with what an American should or shouldn't hear, than what a Jew should or shouldn't hear.

The "dichotomy" between inquirer and informant, or between translator and informant, is not clear-cut or consistent (Georges and Jones 1980: 3, 21). Often, I let the informant be the expert, informing me about something which I did not understand. My responses then were based on the narrative, and our dialogue. In the complicated realm of translator-aided fieldwork, the experience-near phenomenon (Geertz 1973) becomes more pronounced. Facial expressions, attention-span, reactions — all take on significance. Even in formal interviews, my intentional discomfort at an answer, or seeming interest were designed to provoke, and illicit responses.

MORE REFLECTIONS

I entered into dialogue with preconceptions about my translators, as they were Poles, I a Jew. During my previous visit to Poland, I began to develop a sense of how the elderly generation reacts to informants about the past. If I lent a kind ear, people would talk. If I could listen sympathetically to stories of victimization, of outlandish legends, or folktales (such as two nuns scurrying about town spreading the rumors of the children's murder)

with a compassionate demeanor — I was successful. I do care what these people have to say. My attitude, or posturing, was not a preconceived manipulation technique. I had been told that no one would talk to me. Yet I found every man, and many women, eager to share at least a little bit of their memories with me. Men were much more willing to talk than women. Men were also always “too young to have fought the Nazis,” or were *partizans*.

Jewish American 52

OVERARCHING PERSPECTIVE

Commentator 39

Witness 43

Academic 45

Sub-Commentator 53

THE KIELCE POGROM

OVERARCHING JEWISH NARRATIVE

Survivor	41
Survivor after 40 years	50
Jewish American	52

OVERARCHING POLISH NARRATIVE

Communist	39
Witness	43
Academic	45
Anti-Communist	53

Where on this earth shall I put a gravestone for you my
 people. . . . Your remains have been scattered upon a thousand
 cemeteries. Your Memory the graveyard wind blows like sand.

—Eliasz Rajzman¹²

In Kurosawa's unforgettable film *Roshomon*, Kurosawa probes the boundaries of what we term "reality." His series of characters retell compelling, yet fundamentally competing, narratives about a tragic event that left a thief in custody, a woman with torn clothing, and her male companion dead. Kurosawa begins his film after the event. We can only reconstruct what happened based upon four testimonies: a witness, an accomplice, a villain, and a dead hero.

Narratives of the Kielce pogrom present an equally perplexing set of competing realities. As in Kurosawa's *Roshomon*, we are left with a series of possible answers, and many questions. There are two overarching narratives: one Polish; one Jewish. There are, as well, variations on each overarching narrative as American Jews, for example, have versions of the Kielce pogrom that differ from those told by survivors. Polish narratives also vary depending upon the immediate perspective of the narrator. Variations in each set of overarching narratives reflects the advancement of specific, though not necessarily contrived, agendas.

7/9 Planty St.

The apartment building where the pogrom began.

Photo June 1982, by JRS

¹² Translated by Rafael Scharf, in Monika Krajevska's, *Time of Stones*. Interpress, Warsaw, 1983.



7/9 Planty St.

The apartment building where the pogrom began.

Photo June 1992, by JBB.

It can be inferred that these "leaders" were an underground right wing nationalist movement, who included the pogrom. Proof of the anti-Semitism of the right-wing, especially the Peasant's Party was not difficult to discover - for they regularly published anti-Semitic literature, and were linked with other "attempted" pogroms, and murders of Jews returning to their former homes after the war.

THE COMMUNIST NARRATIVE

Derived from statements of the Communist authorities following the pogrom, S. L. Shneiderman's series of interviews in *Beyond Hope and Fear*, an article in *Glos Ludy*, 5 July 1946, and interviews conducted in Poland in 1992.

THESE ARE THE EVENTS ON 4TH OF JULY 1946:

Shouting 'Long Live Anders,' a mob descended upon the Jewish house on Planty street in Kielce. Dr. Sewren Kahane, President of the community frantically phoned the deputy governor of Kielce, saying that some five thousand people had besieged the house. Right-wing supporters in the mob began to throw rocks at the building, and taunted Jews to come out. Some armed bandits began firing at the windows.¹³ The Jews bravely defended themselves, shooting back. Soon, the mob stormed the building, throwing Jews out of windows and doors to the masses outside. The army and militia were sent in to break up the bloody riot, but could not shoot into the crowds, and their warning shots into the air did nothing. They couldn't get through to the house! The deputy governor would not order the militia to fire into the crowd for fear of causing too many casualties. The fire brigade came and aimed their hoses at the crowd, but their hoses were soon cut, and they had to flee. Finally, when extra reinforcements came from outside Kielce, the army could restore order over the whole town, imposing a curfew. In the aftermath of the anti-Semitic canard, thirty-four were killed and over a hundred Jews were injured, most seriously.

¹³It can be inferred that these "bandits" were members of an underground right wing nationalist movement, who were known to conduct armed raids at night. Vice Premier Gomulka blamed Deputy Premier Stanislaw Mikolajczyk, head of the Polish Peasants Party of collusion with the "anti-Semites" who incited the pogrom. Proof of the anti-Semitism of the right-wing, especially the Peasant's Party was not difficult to discover - for they regularly published anti-Semitic literature, and were linked with other "attempted" pogroms, and murders of Jews returning to their former homes after the war.

Three days after the events, a Polish Military trial sentenced nine of the perpetrators to death, three were convicted of lesser penalties. This swift and effective trial proved, in the honor of Poland and the interests of the masses and democracy, we will up-root this wild grass of anti-Semitism from Polish earth.

We deplore this act of anti-Semitism by these reactionary bandits and followers of General Anders National Front. They spread the Blood Libel virus from Czarist Russia. It's high time we should expel the carriers of Hitlerism from our midst. The forces of 'reactionism' in Poland have suffered a great decline, and they are trying with this pogrom to get back some of their power. Didn't Hitler begin with pogroms against Jews which then engulfed all of Europe?

Didn't we destroy Roman Dmowski's pogrom movement? Didn't this pogromist kill the first president of reborn Poland with his Anti-Semitic propaganda? Of the thirty-four victims, thirty-two were Jews and two were anti-Fascist Poles. Those thirty-four victims put a responsibility on all Polish people before the eyes of the world.

It's not enough to condemn this action. It is not enough to separate us from those fascist beasts! We have made an appropriate example of those murderers. The world should know that Poland fights, without mercy, against those people who want to continue Hitler's work.

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THE SURVIVOR'S NARRATIVE

Based on statements collected by S. L. Shneiderman, articles in the *Folk-Styme*, and fieldwork in 1992.

WE WERE NOT WANTED IN POLAND

Perhaps we Jews should have foreseen it. Perhaps we could have read the signs more closely. We were not wanted in Poland.

In December 1945, someone lobbed a hand grenade into our central building, nearly injuring many people. It was a miracle no one was killed. Then the anti-Semitic literature began to appear. Such *tzurris* we need after Hitler? They claimed we used Christian children to make our matzah. How could this happen?¹⁴ We knew, the Peasants Party was behind it. Did I dare return to the small town where my parents were buried before the war? Jews are pulled off trains, they are beaten when they return to the small villages—the Poles think we still have gold and they don't want to give up their house, all the things they stole from us when the Nazis marched us out of town. In Kielce we were trying to rebuild our lives.

In May, Dr. David Kahane, chief chaplain of the Polish Army and Michael Zilberberger, general secretary of the Jewish Communities of Poland, went to visit Cardinal Hlond. They wanted him to speak out against these blood libels. He refused to see them or heed their call for his office to send a pastoral letter in which he would condemn anti-Semitism. Dr. Tannenbaum, from the World Federation of Polish Jews in America, arrived in June, a month before the pogrom, to denounce the killings of over a thousand Jews

¹⁴See Alan Dundes, ed. 1991. *The Blood Libel Legend; a casebook in anti-Semitic folklore*. Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press.

since the end of the war. Cardinal Hlond saw him, but the Cardinal only said he would study the reports.¹⁵

Very early on the morning of the fourth of July, an agitated crowd began to gather in the courtyard outside our Planty Street house. Then a group of militiamen arrived and arrested Jacob Kalman! They said he had kidnapped children. Poor Jacob was mentally retarded. He didn't know what was going on! After a while, Dr. Kahane brought him back.

Then two uniformed men arrived—were they militia? Army? Anders? Who knows—there were so many *meshuganas* running around with uniforms and guns, who could tell who was who! They said they were from the army and started throwing everything around searching the place. They found some pistols and took them. I remember when they left the house they screamed, 'And now we'll settle accounts with you!'¹⁶

The mob then started throwing rocks threw the windows. Dr. Kahane tried to call the police. The mob broke into the house—the part which was a dormitory for the young people. There were hundreds of Poles, cursing and yelling, men and women. They started beating us with bars and axes, and then I got thrown out of the building. I don't remember anything else. I woke up in a hospital bed, and they said I was in Lodz. I couldn't move for a month, they said I was lucky to live. I said to the Doctor, 'What for?'

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¹⁵ Before the war, Cardinal Hlond had spoken out in support of the Polish boycott of Jewish businesses.

¹⁶ S.L. Schneiderman, *Between Fear and Hope*, 1947. p. 91. Schneiderman arrived in Kielce just after the pogrom and as a talented journalist, interviewed many of the victims and negligent army and militia officers. He concluded that the right-wing, probably the National Front, and certainly with the unwritten consent of the Church and the Polish Peasants Party, had engineered this canard and massacre.

THE WITNESSES NARRATIVE

A composite of two narratives, both elderly men interviewed in Kielce in June 1992.

THEY PROVOKED THIS THING

"It was the UB.¹⁷ I know. When it happened, I was standing on the other side of the street. You could see, standing under the awnings of one of the buildings two or three security men from the UB. They were speaking in Russian to a Soviet advisor. Everybody knew they were there. It was a provoked event. It wouldn't have happened without a provocation. But people were very angry. You know, at this time in Poland, the communists were taking over. And there were many Jews in the Communist regime. For example, Berman, was in charge of the whole party! But not just Berman. So, you see people were upset that the Jews were helping to promote communism, and there was a provocation.

"It all started when this boy came back and told his father that he had been kidnapped by Jews. The father told the men in his factory. It was a very big factory, and they walked from the factory to the house on Planty street. They started yelling, and throwing rocks at the Jewish house. The Jews shot out the windows, and the crowd stormed the building. People were coming from all over town, you could hear many gunshots when the militia came. But the militia only shot into the air. But the men from the factory — they were brutal. They were killing Jews with bricks, and pipes. I saw one man pick up a rock and drop it on a Jews head! This thing was terrible. The pogrom was terrible.

"After the pogrom, Kielce was boycotted by the government in Warsaw. The Jews in the government considered Kielce a penal town. The

¹⁷ "Urząd Bezpieczeństwa," State internal affairs police.

roads were bad, nothing was built until 1968. That wasn't fair. Because the Soviets, and the UB they provoked this thing. It wouldn't have happened. . . The Communists wanted it so people wouldn't remember that they had altered the referendum. You know, all the officers in the army were Soviet. The Chief at Head-quarters, Czewaszczenko, was Soviet. Very few officers were Polish, you know. In my opinion, if it were only Polish people in government and army—it wouldn't have happened. It wouldn't have come to this. Because our people would have looked at this differently, and would have put it down immediately. The Soviets kept control by putting Poles and Jews against each other in Kielce.”

At the beginning, people only observed the movement of the militia and
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 people could do the same. The first victims were inside the building and they
 and shot. They were shot. Later, some Jews were taken by the soldiers and
 from the building into the courtyard next to the building. The Jews
 were taken from the building and given into the hands of the people and they
 killed them with iron pipes and bricks, and stones. Thirty-six Jews died
 were taken up by the crowd in the courtyard, and six more died in the
 building.

There is a report of Jews being killed on trains the same day, July fourth,
 1946. I have spoken with many witnesses, but those [Jews killed on
 trains] traveled along with the forty-two from the massacre in Kielce. It
 is impossible to determine how many Jews were killed on trains [that were in]
 the region on that day. Many of them were buried 'without a word.'
 One witness, a priest, for an article saw three Jews killed and suspected
 were with cattle. He had heard many shots and screams all along the
 street.

THE POLISH ACADEMICS NARRATIVE

A composite narrative derived from interviews with two Polish academics in Warsaw, Kielce and Krakow.

IT WAS A SIGN FOR THE PEOPLE

"The pogrom was started by the militia and the Polish army. They started it. Maybe the militia was upset about the role of Jews in the security. . . For whatever reason, they were the ones who began the shooting.

"They killed the first person in Kielce. And it was sign for people, for Polish people who were standing around the building, that they could do likewise. You see, the Polish army and the militia were beginning a massacre. At the beginning, people only observed the movement of the militia and Polish army. But when they started to shoot and to kill, it was sign that the people could do the same. The first victims were inside the building and they were shot. *They were shot.* Later, some Jews were taken by the soldiers and militia from the building into the courtyard next to the building. The Jews were taken from the building and given into the hands of the people and they killed them there with iron pipes and bricks, and stones. Thirty-six Jews died in the house and by the crowd in the courtyard, and six more died in the hospital.

"Now reports of Jews being killed on trains the same day, July fourth, is accurate. I have spoken with many witnesses, but those [Jews killed on trains] is not counted along with the forty-two from the massacre in Kielce. It is impossible to determine how many Jews were killed on trains [that were in] the vicinity of Kielce that day. Many of them were buried 'without a word.' One witness I interviewed for an article saw three Jews killed and suspected many more deaths. She had heard many shots and screams all along the train."

[Beginning of narrative explicitly from Prof. Stanislaw Meducky.]

"Now as far as Poles being killed in the pogrom, there were two. Two Poles were 'mistaken' for Jews. Apparently, [other] Poles pointed out these specific people to the crowd [believing they were Jews] and they were killed. There is no police documentation of this of course, only the testimony of witnesses.

"Probably the militia started the pogrom. There was a little boy who went somewhere. And his family was looking for him and they couldn't find him. His father called the police and then he went to the church as well, you know, to get some help. When he came back home his son was at home. It turned out that he had gone to see his family outside Kielce, twenty kilometers from Kielce. So the father went back to the police and just to report he had found his son. This boy didn't admit that he [had gone] to see his family. You can even talk to this boy, because he's still alive. He went on to become member of the security service. So he made up a story for his father.

"This boy's . . . family [and neighbors] were gathered in [their] house [waiting for the boy]. Given the pressure, he made up a story. 'Where have you been,' they asked him.

"He reported: 'I was just walking along the street and one guy comes up to me and he asks me to help him to carry a parcel to his home. When we reached the building, he caught me and he put me into his cellar.'

"And there he was kept in this cellar. Somehow, he managed to escape. So he came back home. So one of the neighbors asked him, 'What kind of language did they speak? Were they Polish?'

"And he's saying something like, 'The Gypsies.' But they weren't Gypsies. So who can it be? Only Jews.

"If they were Jews, then, there would be gossip spread around in Kielce [and] in Poland that Jews are killing Christians for blood for the [ir] matzah. You know the Church had never really discounted this, at this time.

"In 1946, the Jewish Committee in Poland had a meeting with the Polish Bishop in Lublin. There was a meeting of the Jewish Committee with the Bishop in Lublin. They wanted him to comment on the pogrom.

"He said that he couldn't make any protest against it as such, but the Catholic Church is against any murder in general, so naturally, [the Church] is against the murders in Kielce. Then, the Bishop said that he couldn't say for sure that this story about the ritual and the child being taken for blood is true or not.

"You see, underlying the whole incident was the [belief] that, Jesus Christ was betrayed and was sentenced to death by Jewish people. The boy and his father emphasized this aspect of the whole [betrayal] myth [read: falsehood].

"The father, the brother-in-law, and [the] son went to the police station to report about the . . . But on the way to the police station they were passing these buildings, this very building where the boy was supposed to be kept. There was a group of Jewish people there standing. This little boy just pointed at one of the men and said, 'This was the guy.' So they reported it to the police.

"The policeman, who was on duty, sent three or four people to check on this and they took the Jew to the police station and, of course, he didn't know anything. They checked in the building and there was no cellar in the building, because it's very close to a river.

"The boy started to say that they were keeping him in another cellar. Three policemen left the police station to check the building. The police

station was just right on the corner where Sienkiewicza and Buczka Street is. There's a bank there. The police station was there, so it's very close [to the house on Planty St.]. On the way they were talking about what they were going to do. Saying, they heard a child was kidnapped, and they were going to check. People were listening to [the policeman], and people started gathering.

"There was a lot of confusion, already, you know, tension. The policeman on duty reported the whole thing to the chief. The news spread around very quickly, so, when the chief arrived at the station the leader of the Jewish Committee [was there]. They caught this Jew, remember? This leader of the Jewish Committee tried to phone everywhere—to the secret service and to the party and everywhere just to clear the thing up.

"But it was still light and people were gathering. It was a crowd. There were two people out fighting, people were gathering and the whole tension starts immediately. Policemen were sent again, more, more policemen were sent to the place. People were already, knocking at the door. Trying to get in.

"Undoubtedly, it was the police who started beating the Jews up at the very beginning. After the police force, people starting pouring in the house, looking around. Then the army was sent, about twenty soldiers.

"The only thing the army did was that they asked Jewish people to give [up] all weapons they had. They said, if you don't give us the weapon you've got at home, we're going to take it. Some of the Jews gave their weapons, some didn't. Some Jews had permission to keep a weapon at home. Even now people just don't know who first started shooting.

"Dr. Kahane was the leader of the Jewish Committee. He lived in this very building, the leader of the Jewish Committee and he was shot while he was talking, trying, to get some help.

"Most of the victims were not shot. . . Ten women had their bones broken and head crashed, smashed. One woman again head smashed, but also some other, injuries. And twenty men, again, head smashed. Only, three men were shot. . . ."

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We Thought That Hitler Had Killed All of You

When the Soviet Army captured Kielce on January 16, 1945, only two Jews remained of what had once been a twenty-thousand-strong community. However, during the eighteen months that followed, about one hundred and fifty Jews—former residents who had survived the camps or were in hiding in the forests, and Jews who had never lived in Kielce—gradually gathered in the former community building at No. 7 Planty Avenue. Most of them lived on funds sent by the Joint Distribution Committee, forming a kibbutz and waiting for an opportunity to go to Palestine.

The hatred of the Poles towards the Jews was so intense that whenever a former Jewish resident appeared in town he was greeted with the words: "What? You are still alive? We thought that Hitler had killed all of you." Rumors spread that masses of Jews would soon return to reclaim their former houses and belongings. The incident culminated at the end of 1946 when a woman ran through the streets shouting that the Jews on Planty Avenue were killing Polish children and drinking their blood. Another rumor was spread that a Polish boy had been killed in the basement of the community building and his blood used to make matzah.

On July 1, mobs began gathering around the building. When the police were called in all they did was to confiscate the few licensed weapons that the Jews had. Appeals to local church dignitaries were dismissed with the excuse

SURVIVORS NARRATIVE

40 YEARS LATER

From the *Encyclopedia of the Holocaust* (1990), by Sinai Leichter.

Based on P. Citron's *The Kielce Book: The History of the Kielce Community from its Foundation to Destruction* (1958, Hebrew); and D. Stockfisch, *About Our House Which Was Devastated* (1981, Hebrew and Yiddish).

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On July 1, mobs began gathering around the building. When the police were called in all they did was to confiscate the few licensed weapons that the Jews had. Appeals to local church dignitaries were dismissed with the excuse

that they could not intercede for the Jews because the latter had brought communism to Poland. On July 4 the mob attacked and massacred forty-two Jews and wounded fifty more. The central Polish authorities in Warsaw sent in a military detachment and an investigation committee. Order was quickly restored, and seven of the main instigators and killers were executed. The missing Polish boy was soon found in a nearby village.

Thus the thousand year history of the Jews in Poland came to an ignominious end with a medieval-style pogrom, an event that touched off a mass migration of hundreds of thousands of Jews from Poland and other countries of eastern and central Europe who had somehow survived World War II and the Holocaust.

In 1946 the tomb with the names of the forty-two victims that had been erected in the Kielce Jewish cemetery was destroyed by the local Poles. It was rebuilt in 1987, when the chairman of the Kielce Society in New York, William Mendal, also erected an iron fence around the cemetery. The monument for the forty-five children killed in 1944 was rebuilt as well.

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THE JEWISH NARRATIVE

From *Chutzpah*, by Alan Dershowitz (1992), p. 146.

Completing the Nazi's work

"When the war finally ended and the Germans retreated in 1945, the few Jewish survivors [in Poland] emerged from their hiding places in the sewers, the forests, and the makeshift bunkers. Few families remained intact, but some remnants were determined to try to rebuild Polish Jewry. They came back to their homes, only to find them looted and occupied by locals, some of whom were angry at their return and disappointed that the Nazis had not completed their work. In the town of Kielce, on July 4, 1946, a year after the Germans had withdrawn, local Poles murdered more than forty Jewish survivors and wounded another sixty. When Catholic Primate of Poland, Cardinal Augustus Hlond, was asked to condemn the mass murder, he stated that the Jews had brought it on themselves. Because some Jews had become Communists, the cardinal reasoned, it was understandable that Polish nationalists would kill all the Jews of Kielce, even the children."

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But the Communists had forgotten to remove the telephone from the boardinghouse. A rabbi, informed that the mob was being provoked to attack the place, phoned the local army headquarters to appeal for protection. Troops soon arrived under the command of a Russian colonel. The colonel—who was, of course, familiar with the entire plot—was surprised to see that the crowd on which his men were scheduled to fire had not yet gathered. He had to change his plans. Lacking all pity, he sent his men against the boardinghouse, killing forty-one of its Jewish occupants and

ANTI-COMMUNIST NARRATIVE

From Stanislaw Mikolajczyk's *The Rape of Poland*(1948).

The Workers Crossed Everybody Up by Escaping

Attacks on Jewish populations were simultaneously ordered in diverting the attention of the west from the boldly corrupt Referendum. In Czestochowa the people were told that a camel—part of the Red Army's livestock— would be displayed in the market place. When people had gathered to view the animal, Security Police raced through the crowd shouting, "The Jews are killing our people!" A riot was narrowly averted by a quick thinking priest who stood up and branded the shouting as a provocation.

In Kielce, Major Sobczynski, the Security Police officer responsible for the murder of Kojdar in Rzeszów, now ordered foundry workers to gather at a certain time in the market place for a meeting. His plan was to point to a Jewish boarding house that fronted on the market place and to have his operatives shout that Polish children were being killed there. Major Sobczynski hoped to produce a rush on the building, in which case the army would open fire on the crowd. This would add to the terror of the times.

But the Communists had forgotten to remove the telephone from the boardinghouse. A rabbi, informed that the mob was being provoked to attack the place, phoned the local army headquarters to appeal for protection. Troops soon arrived under the command of a Russian colonel. The colonel—who was, of course, familiar with the entire plot—was surprised to see that the crowd on which his men were scheduled to fire had not yet as gathered. He had to change his plans. Lacking all pity, he sent his men against the boardinghouse, killing forty-one of its Jewish occupants and

wounding fifty others. In hope of arousing the impending crowd to an overt act against the army he ordered the dead thrown into the streets. Any movement of the crowd would have been his cue to shoot into the gathering.

The workers, however, crossed everybody up by escaping while en rout to the scene of their intended slaughter.

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OF
THE

KIELCE POGROM

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COLLOQUIUM
SEU DISPUTATEM
PICTURA EST POGROMU

BY JONAH BENJAMIN BOOKSTEIN

FELLOW OF ROBERT D. CLARK HONORS COLLEGE, UNIVERSITY OF OREGON

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DICTIONARY
OF
THE
KIELCE POGROM

Continens

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SEU DISPUTATEM
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THE AUTHOR ASSURES THE READER THAT HE OR SHE WILL NOT
HAVE TO DIE IF THEY READ THIS BOOK.

- MILORAD PAVIĆ

I. A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE *DICTIONARY OF MISTRUST*

Beyond the glaring headlines of current international chaos, I repeatedly came across references to a pogrom in the Polish town of Kielce, in July of 1946, while studying post-Holocaust, Polish/Jewish relations. The varying references had eroded, lost, succumbing to the weathering of time.

I heard the name Kielce uttered in the same breath as Auschwitz. I read the stories of survivors being murdered after the Holocaust by Poles. I heard they even killed us *after* the war! I scanned the conventional wisdom of the Polish Communist authorities, and the emotionalism and sparseness of Jewish sources. I was driven by a gnawing belief that what had happened in Kielce would forever be caught in the dust swirls of history, justifying causes and politicians, hate and mistrust, as it had done for the previous forty years.

What little information I could gather was incomplete and perplexing. And it was then that I realized I had to go to the Kielce — *to the source of this epilogue of the Holocaust*. Yet once there, I was faced by a series of competing realities, each seemingly containing pieces of truth, yet placed together, truth was elusive. It was as if each had pieces of a puzzle, yet together, the puzzle had too many pieces. I continued gathering and recording information, journeying continuously from Kielce to Warsaw, to Krakow and back, yet I knew that the real issue had not surfaced, or it had, in the wrong place.

While attempting to rest my mind during a break, I happened upon a book I once purchased many moons before I had begun this exploration into the pogrom — *The Dictionary of the Khazars*. *The Dictionary of the Khazars* is a historical novel by Milorad Pavic, a recreation of a mythologized original version written by Joannes Daubmannus in 1691. Daubmannus, a Polish Jew, published a listing of sources on the question of the Khazars, a powerful empire which vanished before the first millennia leaving only clues about their society. Daubmannus had tried to create, “. . . [a] format [which] made it possible to include the sundry material which had been amassed and lost through the centuries by those who, with quills in their earrings, use their mouths as ink bottles. The work was published in the form of a dictionary about the Khazars and entitled *Lexicon Cosri*” (Pavic 1989). The book's fate brought it to the battlefields of destruction, as the Inquisition destroyed all but two copies of the original five hundred in 1692. Those two copies, one made from silver, the other written in poison ink, continued to wreak havoc upon whoever possessed them for hundreds of years — until they too were destroyed. Caught by the parallel symbolism, — of the events and the mission to illuminate the obscure — and influenced by the impact and wisdom of the *Dictionary of the Khazars*, I designed to create such a DICTIONARY about the Kielce pogrom.

I have tried to come as close as possible in the DICTIONARY to an event that happened more than two decades before my birth, in a country whose language I only retain a peripheral knowledge. However, this perspective has allowed me unique access to the conflict and the tragic events which unfolded that hot summer day. Rather than limit my project, the perspective has ensured that I introduce and examine the many concurrent understandings and points of view.

The pogrom is a wound on the Polish and Jewish soul. Today, its legacy prevents Jews from seeing Poles as human beings. Today, it provides another opportunity for Poles to claim victimization, scapegoating the Soviets. Today, it endures as my task— drawing me to reconstruct a world I never knew, to live in the heads of people I am not, to listen endlessly to painfully graphic accounts of a gruesome event—for we must span the canyon of mistrust and build bridges.

II. COMPOSITION OF THE DICTIONARY

Like a dictionary, this book can be opened and read at any point. Like an encyclopedia, this book contains not just definitions, but history, cultural symbolism, biography and documents. Like a glossary, it provides explanations of people/places/events which surface in the narratives. Organized alphabetically, not chronologically, one will quickly learn to examine the woven fabric of history. The book is a compilation of knowledge, a reference work on the Kielce pogrom, and Polish/Jewish relations, but also of mistrust and the Kurosawa's Roshomon phenomenon. The contents have been gathered from many sources, mainly Jewish and Polish in origin. Sources are referenced and listed at the end.

III. HOW TO USE THE DICTIONARY

1. **Order.** The order in which the information is given is only parenthetically alphabetical. The entries are presented in boldface type. When available, year of birth is given. Literal as well as metaphorical definitions are provided in the description of each entry.

2. Meaning. Unlike a conventional dictionary where meanings are succinct and listed in order of their frequency in use, in this unconventional dictionary, meanings are complex and are not in any order regarding frequency of use. The DICTIONARY responds to the series of narratives about the Kielce pogrom. Each narrative answers the question: What happened in Kielce in 1946? The DICTIONARY is my attempt at interpreting, comprehending and reflecting upon the various answers.

3. Function. The information provided in any entry or sub-section, relates in some pertinent manner to illustrate, pronounce, or identify key concepts, feelings and ideas which have affected the conflict. Therefore, the function of the DICTIONARY is to provide a cohesive medium, which can translate knowledge about the Kielce pogrom.

4. Reference. Before most interviews I have put some pertinent information (e.g. style, translator, and source). More extensive details on interviews are located in the Appendix.

Wherever they surface in the work, entries are in boldface type with superscript symbols identifying their nationality. Jews will be noted by a Star of David "★" and Polish Catholics by a cross "†." With these symbols and notations, the reader can know a person's lineage; if a certain person or item will be covered in more detail; or identified from another source somewhere else in the manuscript. Many pictures and some illustrations garnish the pages of the DICTIONARY as historical and environmental aides. Unless otherwise noted pictures were taken by the author. I am purposefully setting up this dichotomy between Poles and Jews in an effort to show the real-life dichotomies that exist.

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Prowokacja

Referendum 30 June 1946

Poles Ask Death for Kielce Guilty

Jews Plead for Visas

Warsaw Radio Blames Anders

S. L. Shneiderman

Wladislaw Sobczynski

Israel Szmuelajwicz

On the Ruins of my Hometown Kielce

Bozena Szaynok

What happened after?

How did it start?

Who'se to blame?

Krzysztof Urbanski

Tadeusz Wiacek

My Narrative

☆ † ☆ † ☆ †

ANDERS, GENERAL WLADISLAW† (1892-1970)

General Anders was arrested by the Soviets in 1939, but released in 1941 when the Germans attacked the Soviet Union. After the Sikorski-Manski agreement, he became the leader of the Polish Army in USSR. When news of the Katyn massacre reached the Home Office in London, tensions rose considerably. Anders used this opportunity to leave the USSR, having already endured terribly harsh conditions, and even starvation. Anders and his army moved south to Iran, then to Palestine, and finally Sicily, where they fought against the Germans, for the liberation of Poland, in Italy. Included in his ranks were Jews, such as Menachem Begin, and some outspoken anti-Semites.

Stalin used the Katyn massacre blow-up to break off relations with the Home Office, and Szikorski in 1941. Szikorski wanted the Red Cross to investigate what had happened in Katyn. Stalin used this request as an excuse to break off relations with the London based Polish government-in-exile. He then concentrated his energies on the "Moscow Poles," Poles trained and backed by the Soviets. Anders was anti-Communist, and refused to be co-opted by the Soviets. This animosity carried over into post-war Poland, when the Moscow Poles (a.k.a. the Lublin Group, after the location of the first Soviet-installed government) ran the show in Warsaw, and blamed the random killings of Jews, and eventually the Kielce pogrom, on General Wladislaw Anders and his supporters.

Anders was strongly allied with Stanislaw Mikolajczyk, and was forbidden to return from exile by the postwar Polish Government. Anders died in exile in 1970.

BLASZCZYK, HENRYK (1936-) — When he was nine-years old, he disappeared for three days. His three days out in the country-side, eating delicious cherries at the friend of his father's, sparked the Kielce Pogrom. Henryk Blaszczyk still lives in Kielce.

According to S. L. Shneiderman,[☆] a Polish-born Jewish journalist who returned to Poland after the war, Henryk Blaszczyk was missing from July 1 through July 3, 1946. Shneiderman's post-war epilogue of the fate of Jews in Poland, *Between Fear and Hope*, which was published in 1947 in New York, contains two chapters devoted to the Kielce pogrom. Several stories still circulate, as they did in 1946, as to Henryk Blaszczyk's whereabouts, all of which claim to come from interviews with him. Henryk Urbanowicz, a Polish Socialist Leader and acting governor of the region, gave Shneiderman this series of events: On July third, Mr. and Mrs. Blaszczyk reported to the militia that their nine-year old son had been missing for three days (Shneiderman 1947). On July 4th, the couple returned to the militia with their son in tow. He had returned the previous night. Henryk claimed he had been tricked into carrying a parcel to the house occupied by Jews [Planty St. #7/9], and then imprisoned in the cellar. "He claimed he had been starved, and maltreated, that he had seen the bodies of murdered Christian children in the cellar, and that only by great luck had he succeeded from escaping from this torture-chamber" (Shneiderman 1947, 88). This story spread through the town, and crowds were already gathering by nine a.m. in

the courtyard of the Jewish community house demanding justice, and to revenge. "[I] was at Florbeka St. where a man gave [me] a parcel and told [me] to carry it. Once under police protection after the pogrom, Henryk's story changed. He explained to reporters, including Shneiderman, that he had been met by a friend of his parents, Tadeusz Bartoszynski, who had taken him to Bielaki, a village more than ten miles from Kielce. He had not told his parents he was leaving home. He did not remember if they had walked or driven, and replied that the Bartoszynskis have "marvelous cherries," which he wanted to taste again. Shneiderman reported that the boy had said several people arrived at the Bartoszynski's house after sunset the first evening, and met with Tadeusz Bartoszynski for a considerable amount of time. Henryk Blaszczyk actually stayed at Mr. Pacek's house, a neighbor of Bartoszynski, and Pacek was never called in for questioning during the trial held after the massacre. According to W. H. Lawrence,[†] reporter in Poland for the New York Times, one of these "peasants" instructed Henryk to tell this "falsification," and that, "... police officials have a good clue as to the whereabouts of this man, although he had not been arrested by midday."¹⁸ Shneiderman reported that Bartoszynski had threatened to beat the boy if he did not comply.

Local Kielce historian, Zenon Wrona,[†] sets the calendar of events differently: Walenty Blaszczyk, Henryk's father, reported his son missing to the Municipal Civil Militia station, #45 Sienkiewicza Street, at eleven p.m., July 1, 1946. On July third, Henryk set out on his way home carrying cherries given to him by Jan Bartoszynski. At seven o'clock in the evening, he arrived home and was asked by Antoni Pasowski, the owner of the house,

¹⁸W. H. Lawrence, "Poles Declare Two Hoaxes Casued High Toll in Kielce Pogrom", *NY Times*, 6 July 1946.

where he had been. The boy's father stated later that Henryk had answered to Pasowski; "[I] was at Herbska St. where a man gave [me] a parcel and told [me] to carry it to a house. . ." He said that he arrived at the house, the package was confiscated, and he was placed in a cellar. Pasowski asked whether these people had been Gypsies or Jews, and the boy answered that they must have been Jewish (Wrona and Meducki 1992, 89).

According to Wrona, the father and son duo went to the militia station early in the morning, told Sergeant Edmund Zagorski their story, and said that the boy could identify the Jews who abducted him. By 8:30 a.m., Zagorski ordered the arrest of the Jew. Wasting no time, the Blaszczyks, four militia men, and Lance Corporal Stefan Kuzminski rushed the mere few blocks around the corner to the Planty St. house where they arrested Kalman Singer[‡] (who was mildly retarded), and took him to the militia station. At that point Dr. Sewryn Kahane,[‡] chairman of the Jewish community, came to the station to ask for Singer's release, because, "[he] could not have held the boy in the cellar just because there were not any cellars in the house" (Wrona and Meducki).

A group of nine militiamen and some detectives left to investigate the claims of Dr. Kahane, entered the building, and searched the premises. The militiamen told the crowd that the boy had escaped from the cellar, as the detectives searched in vain for a cellar. The detectives returned to the militia office and the militiamen surrounded the building. Major Wladyslaw Sobczynski[†] ordered officers from the Ministry of Public Security to replace the militiamen. From here Wrona's play-by-play is difficult to follow. Phone calls between ministries and officers; official reports are quoted, being made, and excerpts from conversations are inserted with no obvious sources.

[‡] See Krystyna Kaspero, "Kielce-4 lipca 1946 roku" ["Kielce-July 4, 1946"], *Przegląd Żydowski*, no. 36, Dec. 4, 1983, 83.

However, there are several reports indicating that the militia, once in the house, began throwing Jews out of windows to the angry crowd.¹⁹

Intensive details of Henryk Blaszczyk's ordeal are not the tender of most of Kielcians' recollections. The material available to most researchers into the event has only been unfrozen from secrecy in the last few years. The official silence about the pogrom, and its exclusion from the educational system in Kielce, have not allowed "details" to exist. Rather, what people heard in the weeks immediately following the pogrom, is all that was ever made available until 1980. The brief period of openness which accompanied Solidarity's birth created an atmosphere in Poland which allowed articles about the pogrom to be published. Some of the first articles were featured in *Tygodnik Solidarnosc*, the Solidarity newspaper.²⁰

Even with the publication of new articles about the pogrom, because of the many years which passed, the secrecy of government documents, and witnesses' contradiction, the picture of what happened to the young boy is difficult for researchers to nail down decisively. For example, one witness **Andrzej Drurzenski**† who has been featured in **Tadeusz Wiącek's**† book about the Kielce Pogrom, *Zabic Zyda*, does not view the boy's disappearance as the only catalyst to the Kielce Pogrom:

This interview conducted with Magda, with full consent of informant.

The interview was transcribed and translated from the Polish in Poland.

(See Appendix)

¹⁹ At one point in the description, Wrona writes, "There were some accidents of beating a few Poles." Perhaps lost in translation was a more sensitive way of reporting this occurrence. This sounds as if Wrona feels it was an accident, where he intends that the crowd mistook some Poles for Jews.

²⁰ See Krystyna Kersten, "Kielce-4 lipca 1946 roku" ["Kielce-July 4, 1946"], *Tygodnik Solidarnosc*, no. 36, Dec. 4, 1981, 8,9.

Magda: You were telling me about these boys who were kidnapped?

Drurzenski: Yes, there are many different things. Two or three days before, I don't remember exactly, one boy, a few years old got lost.

M: So you spoke about a few boys and I also heard earlier that history of the boy who was gone, and after some time he came back home and he was telling people that the Jews had captured him.

D: Yes, that's it. We heard that, we as workers, we heard that this boy had been lost, we were working in UZWM²¹ [a factory]. His uncle was working here. We learned that he had been found, and from this boy they found out he was captured by Jews. And when his uncle came back to work he told about this to his colleague that the boy had been found and had been kept by Jew. So all the people were very upset, but it didn't start from this boy, it started from the girl. When workers from UZWM learned that Jews, some people are beating Jews on. . . They ran there anyway.

On Planty they thought, every one was certain about this boy, they didn't know that it was started by this girl. They were absolutely sure that it was because of the boy. They ran, and nobody knew, and they didn't report this in the press, that the girl. Everybody thought it was the boy.

M: I always heard the same thing [about the boy].

D: And all the time people are speaking about this boy, and I was there from the very beginning. I know that nobody thought about this boy down there on the square. It was started by a drunk man who was looking for his girl. And afterward [the] wife of this drunk came there and I think they were living very near, because she came in a very plain skirt.

²¹ Apparently now the KZWM, the Kielce Factory of Metal Products.

Wearing an apron. She dragged out her husband who was sitting and he didn't pay attention to anybody. He was sitting, this poor father near the gate. And she took him and started to beat him on the shoulders :

M: And then she took him back home.?

D: Yes and then she dragged him back home. So nobody really remembered about this girl [who was missing apparently]. All people thought about the boy. Because the boy at least half the city knew that he got lost.

Was there a girl? Studying the local interpretations of the pogrom, many such stories, rarely heard in historical analysis, suppressed by the Communist monopoly on truth, bubble to the surface. Sorting out the whereabouts of this nine-year old boy provides some Poles with assurance that he was used in some elaborate mechanization to rid Poland of her Jews.

He himself eventually grew up and worked for Polish Security, and still lives in Kielce.

BLOOD LIBEL, The Legend of — Nine year-old **Henryk Blaszczyk** told his father and the Kielce militia that he had been kidnapped by men speaking a strange language and held tied up in a basement. In this basement, he claimed, there were at least a dozen other Christian children being held (Checinski 1982, 23). No matter from what angle one views the events of that led up to the Kielce pogrom, all can agree that nine-year old Henryk said he was kidnapped.

Accusations of ritual slaughter have historically sparked thousands of pogroms, and was especially politically expedient especially in Czarist Russia

just thirty years before Kielce.²² The term itself, "pogrom," is a Russian for "thunder," and used in relation to a violent riot, accompanied by murder and pillaging. Pogroms against Jews occurred during times of severe political crisis, or Christian Holidays and the term is generally reserved to describe attacks on Jews in Eastern Europe from 1888-1922, except for the series of attacks in Poland after World War II (Mendes-Flohr and Reinharz 1980, 328-9). Usually a dead child was required for "evidence," but this was not needed in Kielce.²³

The legend lives on until today, as illustrated by an interview in the film *Swiadczenia*. A Catholic clergyman of Kielce, interviewed for the film during the period of martial law, explained candidly to Marcel Lozinski²⁴ that the issue of Jewish ritual murder had historical truth. Statements of Catholic clergy after the massacre did little to debunk this legend incorporated into the pogrom in Kielce. In one statement the Church wrote that since, "detailed knowledge of the background of the event is lacking. . . ." they could not issue a final opinion in the matter. The Polish Church's statements never ruled out the possibility that Jews actually performed ritual slaughter with Christian children. S. L. Shneiderman, during my interview with him in May 1993 (see appendix), was adamant that I look at Stephan Cardinal Wyszynski, and his comments after the pogrom. According to Shneiderman, after the pogrom Wyszynski called in the press. "He told them 'I was attending the Beilis trial.'²⁴ At the trial they discovered many documents that

²² For example the Easter Pogrom on April 6-7, 1903, in Kishniev, Bassarabia. There were three major periods of pogroms, 1881-1884, 1903-1906 and 1917-21. In Lwow, over a hundred Jews were killed by the army, in a state sanctioned pogrom.

²³ After the lies of the Nazi's, S. L. Schneiderman hypothesized in 1946, the Poles need not produce evidence, just the claim was enough.

²⁴ Mendel Beilis (1874-1934) was tried in Kiev from 25 September through 25 October, 1913. On March 20, 1911, the mutilated body of a twelve-year-old Gentile boy, Andre Yushchinski, was found in a cave on the outskirts of Kiev. The right wing press immediately accused the Jews of killing the child in order to use his blood for ritual purposes. Although the police possessed incontrovertible evidence that a gang of thieves was responsible, the chief district attorney, pressured by anti-Semitic interests, disregarded the

show Jews using matzah.' You see, nothing was said then that the Jews were not using blood" (Shneiderman, from interview 1993).

The Church was outraged especially, "because it was witnessed by children," excluding reference to the Jewish children killed in the pogrom. Because the child from this blood libel still lives today, most legends about the pogrom in Kielce exclude the belief that Jews actually killed or kidnapped a Christian child. Many residents still remember the accusations of kidnapping from 1946, but not all heard that it was a hoax. The theme of ritual slaughter appears then as a group error, a riot's miscalculation. The church and many Poles explain that in essence the pogrom was a mistake, but an honest one.

They never explicitly denied the accusations of ritual murder.

BOOKSTEIN, JONAH BENJAMIN[☆] (1969-)

I could visualize their destiny as if it were sketched out before me. At first it looked so serene, even lazy, like the surface of our river, unbroken by waves. Then suddenly it began churning, and caught in a whirlpool, it plunged into an abyss.

—Ida Fink,[☆] *A Scrap of Time*.

I would really like to go back. I lived on Szenkeiwicza street. The main street in Kielce [in Polish Kielce], number 48 or 49. Near the rail-road station. It used to be named after the station, Kolejowa Ulica. But then they changed it to Szenkiewicza. The house where the pogrom happened after the war was right behind where I lived.

[☆] Interviewed in May 1992. My cousin by marriage and survivor of Auschwitz at age 15.

—Henry Kay²⁵ [Chilek Kozubski]²⁵

As I walked down Sienkiewiczza Street from the railroad station, past two story apartments with downstairs storefronts, Kielce looked serene. Henry's description of where Planty Street and the small drainage stream intersect with the main boardwalk were quite accurate. It had been over fifty years since he was there, and perhaps if not for my aunt he would be here with with me.

"To tell you the truth I have mixed feeling about Poland. I feel sorry when I hear things are bad. Mostly I have nostalgic memories left of my childhood in Poland," Henry told me before I left.

The park and lake remain. Henry had a relative who rented out boats on the small lake. Downtown, according to some elderly women I talked to sitting on a bench, was almost untouched by the war. They pointed out a few new buildings, and the bank. Lining the streets are boutiques and household goods stores, electronics from Japan, clothes bearing the insignia of Addidas, or Nike, money changers, cafes with watery coffee and *zapiékanka* (bread with cheese, mushrooms, and spicy ketchup). Gypsy women holding small children, or infants in rags begging for money stand on almost every corner. Portable orange kiosks deal in bootleg cassettes, panty-hose, and sweet, oily pastries. Rotund men behind wooden carts sell vegetables, cleaners, blue-jeans, and cheap perfume. Their wares sprawled on the sidewalks, country women hawk small blueberries, flowers, canned

police report and instead insisted on pursuing the blood libel against the Jews" (Mendes-Flohr and Reinhartz 1980, 332-3). Beilis was arrested in 1911 and languished in prison for over two years before the trial. His trial recieved world-wide attention. The blood libel was considered a medieval phenomenon. The trial and accusations undoubtedly had an impact on the Jewish communities in Tzarist Russia, and their feelings of security dwindled further. Beilis was acquitted.

²⁵Interviewed in May 1992. My cousin by marriage and survivor of Auswich at age 15.

fruits, weaving, bottles and pans. Trees shade the pedestrians, drunks and bystanders and elderly men. The ground floor of the corner house where Henry lived, Sienkiewicza and Planty, is inhabited by a dime-store merchandise shop. The original building entrance on the main street has been boarded up, but the building is in good shape. Fresh dark yellow paint, and small balconies with wrought iron bannisters, stand out against green backdrop of the small park across the stream which runs parallel to Planty street. With cement banks, and polluted water, the stream resembles a drainage ditch, not an active ecosystem.

OF ALL THE PLACES TO GO

The great inferno which decimated Polish Jewry did not spare Kielce. Most of Kielce's 35,000 Jews were killed in the Shoah. Afterwards, in the chaos and turmoil, several hundred thousand Jews remained in Poland, onehundred and fifty to two hundred and fifty in Kielce. On July 4, 1946, the future of Polish Jewry received its final blow. Spurned by rumors of a Jewish murder of a Catholic child, a heavy mob descended on the Jewish apartment complex at 7/9 Planty St. and during the course of many hours - beat, pummeled, hacked and shot to death forty-two Jews.

I went to Kielce to conduct a folklore study of the pogrom, and because that is where Henry is from. Henry was terribly excited, but friends thought I was foolish to return to that cursed and probably unsafe town. Once in Poland, and then in Kielce, the pogrom consumed me as I interviewed witnesses, bystanders, professors, students, and journalists. I was caught in a whirlpool. Not one which kills, but rather spins you around ruthlessly, and spits you upon the shore to contemplate your journey—It was not unlike being spat from a whale, and journeying to the city Niniveh. The Kielce

pogrom is a paradigm, the preeminent example, invoked in literature, speeches, and memorials, of Polish anti-Semitism. Kielce was not an isolated event, but the largest, and most gruesome attack on Jews since the end of the Shoah in Poland. Perhaps as many as two thousand Jews were killed in Poland in the years following the war. There were pogroms in other cities, isolated village disappearances, and ambushes, but Kielce remains a pivotal event wrapped in the thick causality of a thicker web of agendas—little studied outside of Poland, but often discussed. Kielce was the epicenter of the last after-shock of the Shoah, and usually the implied locality of the cliché “They killed us even after the Holocaust!”

I came from Poland. Actually, my grandparents left Poland, found Detroit, and raised a family. But Poland was not discussed during my childhood in Detroit; the topic only surfaced much later. Poland represented the eternal, external Jewish enemy for my family comfortable among the tall oaks of Michigan. Poland, the pure evil, which places us as Jews, as the eternal good. Poland, a cruel and dumb people who helped throw us in the fires of Auschwitz. Poland, the unforgettable image of peasants mocking Jewish victims of the Nazis, captured in Lazmann’s film *Shoah*. When I returned from Poland, in fall 1991, the seams of the fabric began to tear, and Poland returned to the family in much different fashion than I could have imagined. I realized that much of my prejudice was related to watching Claud Lanzman’s *Shoah*. There was amazement and skepticism. “Of all places to go,” was my paternal grandmother’s response.

According to S. L. Shneiderman, near the end of the carnage on Piłsudski

Street, four militiamen —Stefan Mazur, Kazimierz Nowakowski, Jozef Sitwa,

“Dziś Warszawa, July 11, 1946. From Chocimki 1982.

BOYS IN THE WOODS — The Polish government expedited the prosecution of twelve of the more than one hundred persons arrested on July 4th 1946, in an effort to show a strong retaliation against the underground Nationalist forces, and to project an image of "anti-Semite fighters" to the world at large. This first trial was billed as a test case, while the prosecution began an "investigation. . . against the perpetrators of the provocation: [the] findings cannot yet be revealed, but they, too, will be made public before long. . ."²⁶ Nine of the defendants including two militia men would be executed by order of this military court. Among the many peculiarities of the event, the admissions cards to the trial were signed by Kielce Security Police Chief, **Major Wladislaw Sobczynski**.[†] Sobczynski had been arrested following the pogrom, released, and then was noted for escorting to Kielce the investigating committee which arrived from Warsaw.

Piled on a table in front of the judges during the trial were bloodied kitchen knives, axes, stones, and iron bars which let off the faint smell of dried blood. Most of the people crammed into the small provincial courtroom were soldiers with weapons. Many of the defendants, upon examination, claimed a sort of frenzy came over them at the thought that the Jews had killed or kidnapped Polish children. However, militia members **Stephan Mazur**[†] and **Kazimierz Nawokowski**[†] did not claim that they had been overcome by such panic. When asked, on the stand, if he shot Mrs. **Fisz**,[✱] Mazur answered; "I never miss a target even if it is a mile distant" (Shneiderman 1947, 105)

According to **S. L. Shneiderman**, near the end of the carnage on Planty Street, four militiamen — **Stefan Mazur**, **Kazimierz Nowakowski**, **Jozef Sliwa**,

²⁶Zycie Warszawy, July 11, 1946. From Checinski 1982.

and Antoni Pruszkowski — realized that some Jews lived over on Leonarda Street: *but at any moment the group believed "the boys in the woods," the*

The four men charged over to Leonarda Street, and found Mrs. Fisz, her three-week old infant, and a family friend, Mr. Moszkowicz. The *lib had* militiamen ordered them out of the house, and to march down the street. Groups of people began following the group as it headed towards the outskirts of town. Mazur stopped a truck, and forced Moszkowicz and Mrs. Fisz, with the child, to get in. They drove towards the nearby woods. As Shneiderman records:

Everyone who has studied the events in Kielce can agree on some things. Na Pruszkowski told [Moskiwitz] to address himself to Sliwa, whom he described as the chief of the security police. But Sliwa refused even to listen. The trucked stopped near a village three miles from Kielce. The victims were ordered to get out. They implored their kidnappers and offered them ransom money. The bandits. . . asked for the money. Mrs. Fisz gave them seventeen American dollars, a gold pin and three rings. Upon receiving the ransom, the hoodlums suddenly drew out their guns. Mrs. Fisz and Moszkowicz began to run towards the woods. Shots resounded, and Mrs. Fisz, struck in the head, fell dead. Moszkowicz managed to reach the woods unharmed. . . .

On the Following day, Moszkowicz returned to the Kielce police to tell them about the tragic epilogue of the pogrom. The four murderers were arrested (Shneiderman 1947, 95-6).

When asked why he killed the baby, Nawokowski declared that he didn't want the child to be an orphan. Shneiderman describes the defendants as speaking with a "strange composure," as though, "they were not speaking

to a court which had the power to condemn them to death." Shneiderman wrote that at any moment the group believed "the boys in the woods," the underground "patriots," would crash through the doors and whisk these patriots off to safety. Perhaps the defendants wouldn't have been so glib had they known that the building was heavily guarded and surrounded by the army.

CHECINSKI, MICHAEL—

Everyone who has studied the events in Kielce can agree on some things. Namely that there many loose ends. Each loose-end seems to multiply into half-a-dozen other unanswerable questions. In *Poland, Communism, Nationalism and Anti-Semitism*, Michael Checinski spends his chapter on the Kielce pogrom analyzing a handful of these loose ends, hoping to bring understanding of the event closer—though he ends by saying that until the secret files of Polish and Soviet police are opened to real historians, we may never know for sure who indeed was trying to gain from the bloody massacre.

Where was **Henryk Blaszczyk**, a nine year old boy, for three days? Was he lured into the hands of Tadeusz Bartoszynski, a friend's of his father's, who would use his disappearance for political ends? Bartoszynski's testimony was only reported by the opposition paper *Gazeta Ludowa*, not by the pro-government press. Checinski believes this evidence helps illuminate crucial mechanisms of the "**provocation**":

Witness Tadeusz Bartoszynski, a 42-year-old farmer from the village of Bielaki, testifies that little Henio Blaszczyk cam to him on

Monday evening (July 1). The boy stayed overnight with his neighbor, whose name was Pacek. The boy remained in Bielaki throughout Tuesday. On Wednesday morning (July 3) he set out on his way back to Kielce. The boy's visit did not seem odd to the witness as Blaszczyk's father had a small holding in the neighborhood. The boy often called on the witness and played with his children. (Checinski 1982)

S. L. Shneiderman, who was one of several international reporters allowed to interview Henryk Blaszczyk after the incident, claimed that this acquaintance of his father's had instructed him to accuse the Jews of his disappearance—least he be beaten. The whole Bartoszynski family was arrested, but later released, never facing trial.

Before leaving Poland, Checinski interviewed people who were employees of the Kielce District Public Security Office at the time of the pogrom. According to one woman, Mrs. Eta Lewkowicz-Ajenman, the office conducted an intensive investigation of the pogrom, monitored by a group of Soviet advisors. She claims that immediately following the pogrom, the office had established that the boy had been abducted by two men in the vicinity of Konskie, where they instructed him to blame the Jews for his disappearance (Checinski 1982). She maintains that the question of the boy's initial disappearance was not the concern of the court trial. From Shneiderman and others we know that the trial was primarily interested in the accused, and whether they had hurt or robbed any Jews.

During Checinski's interview with Mrs. Lewkowitz-Ajenman, the name of a Soviet advisor pops up, bolstering his belief, backed by many others, that the Soviets had a strong role in the pogrom.

ELA: . . . The mother and little Henryk were, incidentally, questioned by a Soviet advisor as well in my presence.

MC: What was the advisor's name?

ELA: Dyonim. . . I no longer recall his function or military rank.

(Checinski 1982)

Checinski, now considered an authoritative expert on Soviet affairs, appearing on such television news programs as McNeil/Lehrer, looked into the case of this Dyonim. Apparently, he was a highly trained Soviet intelligence officer, stationed in Kielce only a month before the pogrom named Mikhail Aleksandrovich Dyonim (Denim), and worked at the Soviet embassy in Tel-Aviv, in military intelligence, from 1964-1967. Checinski notes that the involvement of Soviet or Polish intelligence in the pogrom, would not contradict their political agendas. "The mass emigration of Jews from Poland played into the hands of the Soviet Union by overloading the Displaced Persons camps in Western Zones of Germany and Austria, and taxing British rule in **Palestine**, which is where most of these Jews wanted to go" (Checinski 1982). The pogrom was also a pretext for tightening the Soviet grip on an unstable Poland.

Checinski then aims his microscope at the "fuzzy" role of the young boy's father, Walenty Blaszczyk, in his son's disappearance. Checinski points to the investigation by a former chief of the District Public Security in Kielce, Colonel Adam Kornecki. (Col. Kornecki's name does not surface in the first volume of documentary material published in 1992, by **Prof. Stanislaw Meducki** and Zenon Wrona.) According to Col. Kornecki, Walenty Blaszczyk had been employed by the Kielce District Public Security Office under the alias of "Przelot," and had infiltrated the local faction of the right-wing National

Armed Forces (NSZ). The NSZ had instructed Blaszczyk to fake his own boy's disappearance. Once Blaszczyk informed his superiors of the NSZ's plan to undermine the Jews, the Ministry of Public Security planned the pogrom to discredit the NSZ. Kornecki claims to have questioned Blaszczyk about the implications of the NSZ and government secret plans in 1946 and 1961, where Blaszczyk maintained he had not wanted to provoke a pogrom, just to frighten Jews from returning to Kielce to reclaim their property.

During the military trial, held three days after the pogrom, Walenty Blaszczyk was never accused or called as a witness. Checinski, who has not had access to any high-level security documents (many of which still remain secret), points an accusing finger at the elder Blaszczyk. Shneiderman, too, believes that Blaszczyk was working inside the NSZ.²⁷ It was suspicious, Checinski points out, that the Polish authorities never admitted the involvement of Polish militiamen, security officers, or military personal in the pogrom (Checinski, 1982: 27). (He does list the names of senior officers docked rank for dereliction of duty.) However, during the trial, two militiamen were sentenced to death, and their guilt was known publicly. Months after the trial, according to Zenon Wrona, many members of the security apparatus had to account for their actions, and some were put in jail.

The following persons were dismissed from their posts in August 1946 (Wrona 1992): Henryk Urbanowicz (vice governor of the Kielce district), Zofia Machejak (head of province Information and Propaganda), Major Kazimierz Konieczny (deputy division commander), and others. In December 1946, seven soldiers from the militia were acquitted of charges of theft and battery, one was convicted for two years. Also in December, an undetermined number of soldiers from the 2nd Warsaw Infantry Division, the 4th regiment

²⁷(I am uncertain if Shneiderman believes Blaszczyk was a double-agent, or sincere.)

of infantry in Kielce were tried, and one soldier not from that division was sentenced to life imprisonment. Most revealing, however, is the Supreme Court Martial of the December 13, 1946. The Supreme Court Martial, in Warsaw, tried Major Wladislaw Sobczynski, Col. Witkor Kuznicki, and Maj. Kazimierz Gwiazdowicz. Only Kuznicki was sentenced, and to just one year's imprisonment.²⁸ He was paroled in 1947, and died the following year. Gwiazdowicz was killed in Laos in October 1964, and Wladislaw Sobczynski died in 1988 in Warsaw (Wrona 1992, 100).

Checinski proves his conviction that the Polish Army had taken part in the slaughter, focusing on the testimony of a Jewish victim of the pogrom, Mr. Israel Terkieltaub and again Mrs. Eva Lewkowicz-Ajzenman. Terkieltaub was in the room when Dr. Kahane was killed:

Soon [after the pogrom started] three army lieutenants arrived [at the Jewish Community's building]. At that moment, I was in the room of Dr. Kahane, the chairman of the congregation. When the officers entered the room, Dr. Kahane had the receiver in his hand was trying to get in touch with the city, but by then the telephone was out of order. The officers said they had come to take away the arms, which some of the Jews had permission to carry. One of them came up to Dr. Kahane and told him to keep calm because everything would soon be over. . . and then he crept up on him from behind and shot him at close range through the head. (Checinski, interview #25, 1982)

Lewkowicz-Ajzenman is subsequently quoted about a scene at the mass burial. One of the Jewish survivors, (Debski) from the pogrom apparently

²⁸The documents pertaining to these high-level military trials were not available in 1982 when Checinski wrote his chapter.

took part in the funeral. Debski pointed out a certain officer in the Polish Army who he remembered disarming the residents of the house. This issue of when, and how, the Jews in the house were disarmed is disturbing. It appears, from many sources, that after the crowds had surrounded the house, the army officers had orders to disarm the Jews. Checinski notes that the disarming of Jewish residents of the house by the Polish army was never mentioned in trial. Each time the informant of the Polish army arose during the trial, the topic was forcibly changed for security reasons. Checinski relies on Stanislaw Mikolajczyk's 1948 book, published in London, *The Pattern of Soviet Domination.*, for his interpretation. Mikolajczyk, a staunch anti-communist, suspects a certain an officer named Krawczyk, had been actively complicit in the massacre (see MIKOLAYCZYK).

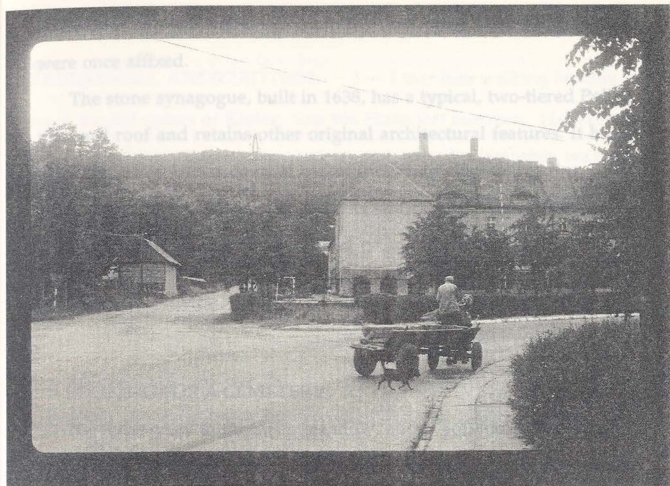
Zenon Wrona writes that, at around ten in the morning, one-hundred soldiers and militiamen arrived, and the crowd of several hundred grew quiet. Some of the forces went into the house, and Lieuts. Marian Rypyst and Jdrzejczyk ordered the Jews to hand over their weapons. Only six or seven pistols were collected, as some Jews withheld their weapons claiming, rightly, legal licensing. The following series of events are presented by Wrona in conflicting accounts by different witnesses to the crime. 1) Many witnesses report that militiamen and Polish army soldiers were pulling Jews out of the house to be pummeled by the crowd. Becasue the entire building was devastated during the pogrom, it appears that the crowd did enter the building, probably with the complicity or blind-eye of the militia or army. 2) Some witnesses report seeing troops firing into the windows. 3) Some witnesses saw Jews flung out of windows into the crowds. The riot had spread across town, as Jews in other buildings, or even suspected Jews were attacked by the crowds. Jews on trains in the region were also attacked. By 3:30

in the afternoon, with tanks in the streets and troops on every corner, Kielce was silent.

Checinski finishes his quest for certain definitives by pointing the finger of blame at the Communists. Checinski agrees with **Arthur Bliss Lane**, former United States Ambassador to Poland, that the Polish government was well aware that the doctored results of the **referendum**, would be "overshadowed by the more spectacular and tragic event of the pogrom—with all those American and British correspondents in Poland" (Lane 1948, 249. In Checinski 1982, 34).

CHECINY —While I was discussing the Jews of Kielce with Polish residents of a Kielce retirement home, the name of a Jewish town, Checiny, just outside of Kielce, surfaced. Checiny, they insisted, was a Jewish town, as opposed to Kielce which was just 30% Jewish before the war. Today, Checiny is a preserved relic from the days Israel Szcauzlewicz² describes—the cobblestone streets, wooden homes, and the ruins of the castle built by Queen Bona. Checiny is a fossilized shtetl. Jews were only allowed to live in Kielce in the middle of the nineteenth century. Before then, Jews commuted with their goods and services to the Kielce markets from Checiny. As one current Jewish travel book notes:

Quaint little houses and shops cluster around the market square and the former synagogue, giving the authentic feel of the old shtetl.



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and the former synagogue, giving the authentic feel of the old shtetl.

Some buildings still show places on the door posts where Mezzuzahs were once affixed.

The stone synagogue, built in 1638, has a typical, two-tiered Polish mansard roof and retains other original architectural features. It has been converted into a cultural center including cinema, reading room/library, and games hall. There is still Hebrew inscription inside the ping-pong room, and the vaulted ceiling and massive door (Ellen-Gruber 1992).

LOOKING FOR A CEMETERY

The ferns grow in the steep meadow, and if you look closely, bending down so the bugs and grass get in your face, you can spot little strawberries smaller than the pennies. Except for the gas-guzzling drone of the Krakow-Kielce road, the birds serenade you from hidden away parts of oaks and maples, birch and blackberry.

One cannot find the ruined cemetery of Checiny without help of the farmers who live on the small road out of town. They can direct anyone up through the apple orchard, past the barking dogs and squawking chickens, and over the ruins of an old wall. In another one hundred or two hundred feet, you can see the well worn and damaged remains of two *matzevahs*. As you walk up the steep hill, you pass a large apple tree. Tangled amid roots a *matzevah*, with a carved lion, is barely noticeable. From here you can see all the way to Kielce. That is all that remains of the Checiny cemetery.

On my way out of town I passed an old man walking a snail's pace. The way he looked at me, I thought he hadn't seen a Jew in person since 1940.

DRURZENSKI, ANDRZEJ† (1924 -) — I met him walking his dog in front of the old palace of Kielce, now the Historical museum. He was leading a small tan colored dog, who jumped up and sat in his lap when we sat down on a park bench to speak. He wore rose colored glasses, and his hair was unnaturally red for his age. He was not born in Kielce but settled there after the war. During World War II, he lived in an apartment building in Warsaw, which overlooked the Jewish Ghetto. The terrible images and experiences as a witness to the Warsaw Ghetto, seen through his apartment window, haunt him even more than his exposure to the Kielce pogrom. For months on end he witnessed the suffering in the ghetto, whereas in Kielce, he merely caught a glimpse of the terror which lasted one day.

Drurzenski worked in the UZWM, the factory where **Henryk Blaszczyk's** father Walenty also worked. As we spoke, workers on a roof of a nearby historic building cast inquisitive looks in our direction. Our benches faced the grand Baroque entrance to the Kielce Historical Institute; our backs toward the landmark tower of the central sixteenth century church in Kielce. His memory of the events differs from other witnesses, though he maintains his is the most accurate.

This interview conducted with Maagda, with full consent of informant. The interview was transcribed and translated from Polish, in Poland. (See Appendix)

Discussion of a witness named "Fornal" who appears alongside the informant in Tadeusz Wiacek's book Zabic Zyda.

A. Drurzenski: So this man. his name was Fornal, that was his name.

Malgosia: In the morning Furnal . . . from my apartment to get the milk. I

D: And he was saying there was a provocation from the very beginning. Me, you know, I don't agree really with this Furnal. Because his father was at that time was in the Fire department, he was working there. And I don't know for what, afterward he was saying he was there on the square.

M: This father? We would like to thank you

D: Yes. His father was there, and this boy was absolutely certain, and also frightened of his father. Now, yes? You are from Warsaw?

M: Yes he couldn't be there, he was very young.

D: He wasn't there. I used to know Mr. Furnal. He was an officer in the fire department. And if I could see him I would know that he was there. Why is he telling such fairy tales? Anyway this Furnal was a very small kid then.

M: He was eleven.

D: Now he is telling that he was not really exactly in the square, but that he was standing on one side. Standing with this Militiaman. And this Militia was shooting at the windows. He was shooting Jews. And he is stupid. He is saying rubbish. He invented something in his mind, I don't know what to do with this guy here—with these witnesses who are saying such rubbish.

I have also some friends and he was absolutely sure that the army was there, and they put up machine guns and were shooting the Jewish windows, and the Jews were shooting back. And I told him if such shooting took place, on the square, [when] people were standing there, people could be afraid, there could be no people.

M: How much time did it [take]?

D: In the morning I went from my apartment to get the milk, I think it was eight in the morning, and when I came it was just before nine, I saw army. From UB, they just prevented us from going to the square, I think it was two o'clock in the afternoon.

M: So that was the end, after there was nobody there?

D: Yes.

M: Thank you. We would like to thank you

JBB: When was he born?

M: You are from Warsaw, yes? You are from Warsaw?

JBB: What year?

M: In which year he wants to know?

D: In 1924, you know my friend I could tell you such things about the ghetto, I was in the ghetto. I was all the time in the Warsaw Ghetto...

ERETZ YISRAEL— See PALESTINE.

„Folks-Szlyme“

יארקס = שטימע

צייטשריפט פון דער פוילישער ארבעטער-פארטיי (פ. מ. ר.)

דער פוילישער ארבעטער-פארטיי פון דער פוילישער ארבעטער-פארטיי (פ. מ. ר.)
 Konto P. K. O. Nr. 865 „Folks-Szlyme“ Łódź, Lipiec 1946 יולי 1946 M. Kaufman, Łódź, Praskiulski

ופערברען

ד' זין פון דער דעוואקאציע - און די יידן

אויסגעצויגן און פארברענט. און דער
 פוילישער ארבעטער-פארטיי פון דער
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דער פאגראם איז קעלץ

דער פוילישער ארבעטער-פארטיי פון דער פוילישער ארבעטער-פארטיי (פ. מ. ר.)
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FOLK-STYME, Newspaper of the Polish Workers Party, Lodz, (1946-1989)—

Published after World-War II as a Yiddish language, Polish Jewish newspaper, *Folk-Styme* [say Folk-Shtimeh] was an organ of the communist party. Never regarded as respectable outside of those Jews who avidly read it, *Folk-Styme* was a source of Yiddish and communist companionship. Publication stopped in 1989(?), to make way for a non-communist, Polish language newspaper, which still includes some Yiddish. It is read by the oldest generation of Polish Jews, and its writers all wrote for the *Folk-Styme*.

These articles are translated from Yiddish by Ruth Kelman, from copies I obtained at the Folk-Styme archives, Pl. Grzybowska, Warsaw. In the small archival room, bound volumes of musty yellowed pages stand in random stacks .

POGROM IN KIELCE SHAKES UP WORLD'S CONSCIENCE

Big Protest Meeting in New York.

[New York, July 1946] The Federation of Polish Jews in America organized a large protest in New York. In this recent meeting more than 600 Jewish organizations in North America participated. Former director of United Nations Relief Agency, Herbert Lehman, sent a telegram, in this telegram he condemned the pogrom with the sharpest words. The cowardly and beastly attack on men and women in Kielce, and other places, writes Leaham, has shaken up the conscience of the world.

Polish Authorities are undertaking strange [intensive] means to end pogroms. Leaham also says that England should quickly open the gates of Eretz Yisrael to

Jews because only a massive immigration of Jews to Eretz Yisrael can assure the safety of many European Jews. The telegram of the Chair of the Committee for Foreign Affairs in the U.S. Congress, Blume, who telegraphed his protest against the pogrom in Kielce which was organized through underground reactionary elements. In this telegram he assured the assembled people he will not stop fighting to pull out by the roots this inheritance of fascism.

The Polish activist Leon Korzinski, gave a speech and [showed] that murderers are going to be quickly judged. This shows there is good will in the Polish Administration. He spoke in the name of the American Independent Workers. All six million workers will make sure the protest against the pogrom in Kielce will reach not only the ears of President Truman, but also the Vatican.

President of the Organization of Polish Jews, Dr. Joseph Tennenboim, sharply attacked the English government who helped organizers of the Anti-Semitic actions in Poland. If American financial support of England is going to support fascists in Poland we should oppose this support. Tennenboim demanded that America should refuse to allow people from General Anders[†] group entrance into America. U.S. should not allow such people in, if they have some responsibility for this pogrom.

Dr. E. Zomersztayn, in his address said that Jews, together with the powers of the world democracy, must fight for victory of democracy over fascism. And incidence in Kielce is evidence of this fight.

THE POGROM IN KIELCE

WITH EXCERPTS TRANSLATED FROM THE
POLISH PAPER GLOS LUDY

[WARSAW July 6, 1986] A new and terrifying piece of news has shaken the community in Poland.

In Kielce, armed bandits from "NSZ"²⁹ have in a barbaric way, killed 32 Jews and wounded 42. This pogrom was carried out with the accompaniment of proclamations in honor of the sadly famous General Anders. This is one more in a long series of attacks by "NSZ."

²⁹ In Yiddish, "Nun Samech Zayin."

This shedding of innocent blood in Kielce will put a question to the masses, "How long will this go on?" We must declare a holy war against those who are destroying Poland's name before the world. We have to fight back.

There should be a peoples war against these bandits in order to get rid of the shame they have brought to Polish People. We should say that progressive elements of Poles want to get rid of this anti-Semitic element. Evidence of that is that two of our comrades in the PPR³⁰ have given their lives to defend the Jews in Kielce.

We see also in the energetic reaction of our brother paper *Glos Ludy*. We are reprinting the editorial that was printed in *Glos Ludy* July 5, 1945 [1946] .

We just got word of the pogrom in Kielce. We are using the word pogrom with full weight of meaning. We deplore this act of anti-Semitism by these reactionary bandits.

It's high time we should expel the carriers of Hitlerism from our midst. The forces of "reactionism" in Poland have suffered a great decline, and they are trying with this pogrom to get back some of their power. Didn't Hitler begin with pogroms against Jews which then engulfed all of Europe?

Didn't we destroy Roman Dmowski's pogrom movement? Didn't this pogromist kill the first president of reborn Poland with his anti-Semitic propaganda? Thirty-four victims, Thirty-two Jews, and two poles, anti fascist. Those thirty-four victims put a responsibility on all Polish people before the eyes of the world.

It's not enough to condemn this action. It is not enough to separate us from those fascist beasts! We need to make an appropriate example of those murderers. The world should know that Poland fights without mercy against those people who want to continue Hitler's work.

In the honor of Poland and the interests of the masses and democracy, demand that we pull up by the roots this wild grass of anti-Semitism from Polish earth.

³⁰In Yiddish, "Peh, Peh Raish."

We [the Folk-Styme] have nothing to add to the words of *Głos Ludy*.

GIEROWSKI, PROF. JOSEPH A.† (1920's-) — Director of the Research Center for Jewish History and Culture in Poland, at Jagiellonian University, Gierowski insists that Kielce was one of the more important towns with an influence of Nationalist forces.³¹ He left Kielce in Feb. 1945 to attend University in Krakow. Gierowski was part of the underground press during the World War II in Kielce. He describes the press as not anti-Semitic, but that it neglected the situation of Jews. The press's main goal was to publish radio reports of the BBC. According to Gierowski, there were two main factions during the war—the Home Army, with allegiances to Sikorski, and then Mikolajczyk, leaders of the government-in-exile in London, and the Nationalists. The latter had special guerrilla units which fought in the woods, and ancient hills around Kielce. This special force was vehemently anti-Soviet, compared to the Home Army, and connected to the fascist, right-wing ONR. Gierowski maintains that the attitude and atmosphere in Kielce was anti-communist, and the Communist government in Kielce after the war was weak. Nationalists, Gierowski said, talked about the occupation of Eastern Poland, and the Jews. “Now [in 1992] they are more proud because [they were] anti-communist.”

GOMULKA, WLADISLAW† (1905-) — The struggles for political domination and influence over Poland, and Stalin's sudden death, brought

³¹ I interviewed Prof. Gierowski at the Research Center on Jewish History and Culture in Poland, Krakow, in August 1992.

Wladislaw Gomulka to power. The 1956 bloodless revolution referred to as "Polish October," promised a more open, non-Stalinist, and democratic socialism—what would be branded "[their] own path to Socialism" (Shneiderman 1959). "Workers and students, teachers and writers, the declassed middle class and even the devout Catholic masses—everyone saw in Gomulka the only national figure capable of uniting the various hostile forces within Poland in a common resolve to avoid civil war" (Shneiderman 1959).

Born in Krosno, in Southern Galicia, Gomulka's father emigrated to the United States but returned. Gomulka attended school until he was fourteen, then went to work in the Boryslaw oil fields. In Boryslaw, he became active in the Communist youth, and by 1931, as a member of the Polish Communist Party, was arrested and sentenced to four, then seven years in prison. Gomulka and other political prisoners jailed near Lodz, were released as the German war machine approached. Gomulka fled to Lwow but returned to Nazi-occupied Warsaw. In Warsaw, he helped organize the Communist underground, then worked behind Soviet lines before the 1944 Warsaw Uprising. In Lublin, he joined the provisional and Soviet created Lublin Government, in December 1944. He was appointed Deputy Premier under Edward Osobka-Morawski[†] in 1945. After the war in 1946, Gomulka moved with the communist government to Warsaw. In 1947, he was appointed director of the Ministry of the Recovered Territories, and continued to serve as Secretary General of the Polish United Workers' Party (P.Z.P.R.). Two years later Gomulka was accused at the Third Plenum of the Central Committee of the P.Z.P.R., by Boleslaw Bierut,[†] General Secretary of the P.Z.P.R., of Titoism (Shneiderman 1959). Marshal Tito was seen as a

"diversionist" and an American agent, who were the ardent enemy of the Stalinist world. Gomulka was again imprisoned in 1951 for almost five years.

When Gomulka emerged from years as a prisoner of the Stalinist regime in Poland to the enthusiasm of all of Poland, the dust of the Kielce pogrom had settled, and solidified, so that it was indistinguishable from the other wreckage left in the wake of World War II. However, Gomulka's part in 1946 was crucial to the alleged government cover-up. In 1946, Gomulka, then Vice Premier of a Poland drifting between civil war and anarchy, sought to make the Soviet option more palatable to the Polish nation. (Ironically, he helped install the Stalinist regime which would turn on him.) Gomulka joined the Communist chorus accusing the Right-Wing elements, those legal and illegal, of plotting and carrying out the vicious anti-Semitic incidents across the countryside. He blamed his political adversary Deputy Premier Stanislaw Mikolajczyk of collusion with the "anti-Semites" who incited the Kielce pogrom.

In the ensuing power struggle in 1956 between the Natolin and Pulawska Street factions, anti-Semitic mudslinging surfaced in political rhetoric. In gaining control of Poland between 1945-47, Communists unanimously condemned anti-Semitism as fascistic, and anti-Polish—vestiges of the Nazi monsters who had razed Polish lands. However, in this political infighting, Jews again became a political tool, and many were dismissed from the government and other public institutions. Michael Checinski estimates that 50,000 Jews emigrated, many of whom had only recently immigrated from the Soviet Union.

The Natolin Communist faction, named after the lodge where the group met, represented a potentially Jewless communist Poland, which wanted to replace Gomulka with General Moczar†. Moczar claimed Gomulka

was soft on those cosmopolitan, bourgeois Jews, for Gomulka refused to purge the government of Jews (Hirszowitz 1986, 201-8). Whether a historical coincidence, or a maneuvered pre-conceived idea, many Jews occupied sensitive positions of power in post-war Poland. Many leading Communist in the Security services and other agencies were of Jewish ancestry. The feelings that a foreign power, to which Jews were included, controlled Poland and her future, had not faded since such accusations began in the 1930's (Irwin-Zarecka 1989). To Moczar, a Polish socialism meant one bereft of Jews.

The Pulawska Street faction argued, conversely, that anti-Semitism was reactionary, a popular liberal notion, and consequently, they received Jewish support. Moczar's 1950's attempts failed, Gomulka prevailed, and Poland believed in the promise of a more open society. Gradually, his other policies of reform weakened Gomulka, and by 1959, Jews were secretly purged from the military, security apparatus, and the higher parts of the Party. In 1962, with Moczar's order that the Ministry of the Interior do background checks on 50,000 people, the future of many of Poland's remaining Jews was fixed (Gebert, lecture at Jagiellonian University, 1992).

In the wake of the 1967 Six Day War, the Soviet Union condemned Zionism and Israel, and Poland severed ties with Israel. Polish Jews were accused of dual loyalties, and all Jews were suspect for their possible "Zionist connections," as a serious threat to Poland's national interests (Irwin-Zarecka 1989, 60. References Lendavi 1972). Gomulka, who said in 1946, "the Polish Fascists. . . have surpassed their masters, the Nazis, in spreading anti-Semitism in Poland," blamed Jews for economic shortages, and the repression of the student uprisings, and called Jews a "Fifth Column." In March 1968, students filled the protesting against encroachments on democratic freedoms, restrictions of free intellectual debate, and broken promises of the Polish

October (Irwin-Zarecka 1989). Troops were sent in, and universities closed, but the students were not held accountable for their own actions. Rather, Gomulka reached for that ace, up the sleeve of any Polish politician, and trumped the Jews.

The government succeeded in seizing control of a nation headed toward internal revolt, and kept power from Moczar (though, paradoxically, his ideology succeeded). Gomulka aimed his gun at "Polish communists of Jewish descent," a politically mixed group who held positions in the party, media, sciences and culture (Gomulka and Polonsky 1990). Tens of thousands of Jews left Poland after being fired from the government, professions, professorships, and managerial positions—24,000 in just eighteen months. Children and students were harassed and threatened, and cemeteries and synagogues were desecrated. Jews were literally told to "go to Israel." The "Zionist Cosmopolitans and revisionists" had led the students astray, in conjunction with "Western Imperialism," in an attempt to undermine the Polish social order. This propaganda and harassment culminated in the final significant exodus of Polish Jewry in 1968. Only some 30,000 Jews, remained in Poland.³²

In the late 1970s, the Communist anti-Semitic campaign backfired. Anti-Semitism was delegitimized by the Polish intelligencia, a group persecuted for opposition to authoritarianism. By associating anti-Semitism as something "Communist," it made anti-Semitism a foul thing. This paradox enabled the underground Solidarity press to openly challenge Jewish stereotypes—for they were challenging the Communists (Konstanty Gebert 1992).

³² Many Jews who remained in Poland were elderly. They could not uproot themselves so easily. Many of their children did not want to leave their parents alone, and stayed in Poland.

ISRAEL— See PALESTINE.

JUDEOCOMMUNISM (*Zydokommuna*)— The instinctual Polish claim of “Judeo-communism,” Jewish responsibility for communism and Communist rule in Poland, lies at the heart of legendary structure of the Jew in post-Holocaust Polish society. Poles (almost unanimously) disassociate themselves with the communist government which ruled for more than forty years, seeing it as an imposition, even an occupation. This disassociation occurs despite the historical fact that that millions of Poles backed communism and kept it in place. Therefore, by attributing responsibility for this imposed system upon Jews, any harm to Jews is seen, and justified, in the light of harm against an inherent enemy of the state. Though most Poles I interviewed condemned the violence of the **Kielce** pogrom, (some even defending the rights of all ethnic minorities), most narratives about the pogrom and its alleged provocation revolve around a Polish resentment for “Jewish Communism.”

Antony Polonsky,⁵ in his introduction to *My Brother's Keeper: Polish Debate about the Holocaust*, identifies the feelings gave rise to the Kielce pogrom as stemming from *Zydokommuna* and jealousy. His premise is derived from the feelings of those that actually carried out the horrific deeds, the thousands of Poles who filled the streets that bloody day. “[The deaths] were provoked partly by fears that returning Jews would seek to regain their property and partly by the feeling that the regime, in which there were a number of prominent Jewish communists, was the realization of pre-war fears of Judeo-communism” (Polonsky 1989). Some debate in Poland which has surfaced on war-time relations has blamed Jews themselves for Pole's

indifference to the fate of the Jews—did not the Jews greet the Soviets with enthusiasm when Poland was being invaded from the East in September 1939? (Irwin-Zarecka 1989, 164). “In this morbid accounting of mutually inflicted harm, both Jews-as-Communists and Jews-as-Communist-sympathizers provided good reasons for understanding, if not actually condoning, anti-Jewish sentiments and actions” (Irwin-Zarecka 1989).

S. L. Schneiderman illustrates that the Kielce pogrom was blamed by Poles on the now legendary theme of Judeocommunism. Polish Cardinal Hlond† did not attribute the pogrom to racial tensions, property rights, propoganda, or the legend of blood-libel. He believed that “Jews occupy the leading positions in Poland’s government and endeavor to introduce a governmental structure which the majority of people do not desire” (Shneiderman 1947, 113). Years earlier, at the zenith of Polish boycotts against Jews, Hlond said in a 1939 pastoral letter that Communism, as introduced by Jews, promoted “atheism, bolshevism and revolution.”

Micheal Borowitz† (1986) suggests that Poles were convinced by appendages of Nazi propaganda that the Judeo-Communists had taken over the Polish government. Pre-war, post-war, and later official propaganda either by the Catholic Church, or Right-Wing, pre-war nationalists, and post-war nationalists instilled the popular belief of *Zydokommuna* into current narratives about the Kielce pogrom.

THE JOKE

The following joke was recorded on Sienkiewicza Street in Kielce, in July 1992. Two men, who appeared to be in their 60s, were approached. I approached them in the way I approached most informants (see Fieldwork section above). Of all the informants I interviewed, they alone, I felt, knew I

was Jewish. They skipped any nicities, and started to discuss the pogrom. They both claimed to have been outside of Kielce when the pogrom occurred.

There are three Jews sitting on a park bench in Warsaw. One Jew says to the other. "You know where my brother is? He is in the Soviet Union helping to set up socialism."

So the next Jew says: "You know where my brother is? He is in France, helping to set up socialism."

So the third Jew says: "My brother is in Israel."

The others respond, "is he helping to set up socialism?"

The third one says, "What are you crazy. not in his own country!"

The two men, and my interpreter laughed out loud.

KAY, HENRY — See KOZUBSKY, CHILEK

KIELCE — Situated in the oldest mountains in Europe, the Góry Świetokrzyskie, Kielce is about half-way between Warsaw and Krakow. It is hard to estimate the impact of centuries existing as it did between these two rivals, Poland's two greatest cities. Perhaps she suffered a middle child syndrome, unable to match up in any regards to the heady, sure, cosmopolitan, and dominating Krakow, or the spoiled, more Polish, Warsaw. The mountains around Kilece are rolling forested hills, once much greater in stature, but millions of years of erosion have brought them to hill status. The woods have been places of refuge for centuries, hiding the innocent and guilty alike.

Records show that Jews have lived in Kielce region since the 14th century (Urabanski 1989). The Jewish community was officially established in 1868. By the turn of the twentieth century, about one-third of Kielce was Jewish, as Jews had moved to Kielce from nearby villages. In 1921, the Jews in the city numbered 15,550, 37.6% of the population; in 1931, the number of Jews was up to 18,083. Gutman estimates that in 1939, on the eve of the German's invasion, there were 24,000 Jews (1990: 1, 800). Polish historians note two separate years of actual conflict between the Jews and Poles before the end of the 19th century. In 1847, one Jew was expelled, and in 1852, 101 Jews were expelled from the town - although the motives for the expulsion are unclear. The community was diverse and supported many institutions. There were several Yiddish newspapers, many youth clubs, soccer teams, social services, a and theater troupe. There were several Jewish banks, an association of Jewish merchants and artisans, and old-age home, orphanage, library, and high-school.³³

The Germans overran Kielce, on September 4, 1939, just five days after the outbreak of the war. Jews were immediately subjected to forced labor, beatings, killings, and some sent to concentration camps. The ghetto was established in 1941, in accordance with an official order by Stadthauptmann Hans Drechsel, the German civilian administrator of Kielce. Jews were brought to the ghetto from Lodz, Vienna, Poznan, and outlying areas. By the end of 1941, 27,000 Jews were crammed into the ghetto. Random executions began in 1941, and August 20, the liquidation of the ghetto began (Hoffer 1982). All but two thousand able bodied Jews were shipped to Treblinka by August 24. The children of the Jewish orphanage, and the sick, were executed

³³ *Sefer Kielce*, Jerusalem, 1957. One of the hundreds of Hebrew, English, or Yiddish Memorial books written by former residents of towns in Eastern Europe.

before the deportation. The two-thousand remaining Jews were placed in work camps in Kielce, and were eventually shipped to Buchenwald or Auschwitz in 1944. In the last act by the Germans in Kielce, forty-five Jewish children were executed in the Kielce Jewish cemetery (Gutman 1990: 2, 800-801).³⁴

After the war, one hundred and fifty to two hundred and fifty Jews returned to Kielce, many of whom survived in the Soviet Union, some who survived in camps, hid in the forests and returned to reestablish themselves and rebuild. The apartment building, No. 7/9 Planty Street, given to the community to house religious and social organizations sat near the major boardwalk in town, Szenkiewicza Street. Most of the Jews lived on funds sent by the Joint Distribution Committee. The building housed members of a kibbutz who waited to emigrate to Palestine, and the beginnings of a "Kahal" (community organization and functionaries). It all met a disastrous, and brutal end on Thursday, July 4, 1946.

THE KIELCE CEMETARY

The cemetery is now a field with just over a dozen standing graves, a large mass grave for the victims of the pogrom, and memorials for victims of the Holocaust. The tomb erected for victims of the pogrom in 1946, and erected by the community, was destroyed the same year. It was rebuilt in 1987, by William Mandel, chairman of the Kielce Society of New York, who also erected an iron fence around the cemetery. At the entrance stands a monument fashioned from ruined *matzevot*, pieced together into a cement block.

³⁴The *Encyclopedia of the Holocaust*, states the the children were killed in 1944, however the tomb reads 1943.



Witnesses were quick to draw **Mass Grave for Victims**

The Kielce Cemetary

One plaque built after the war, near the fence reads:

TU SPOCZYWAJA ŚWIETE PROCHY NASZYCH 45-CIORGA
NAJDROŻSZYCH NIEWINNYCH DZIECI ZAMOR DOWANYCH W
BESTIALSKI SPOSÓB PRZEZ NIEMIECKICH ZBRODNIARZY

DNIA 23 MAJA, 1943 R.

NAJMLODSZE 15 MIESIECY - DO 15 LAT

HERE LIES THE HOLY ASHES OF OUR 45 DEAREST INNOCENT
CHILDREN MURDERED IN BEASTIAL WAY BY GERMAN CRIMINALS.

23 MAY, 1943

YOUNGEST 15 MONTHS - UP TO 15 YEARS.

KIELECKIE SCYZORYKI (The Kielce Pocket-knife)—

Kielce, The Pocket Knife of Poland

The switchblade is a surprise tool, a weapon drawn in heated and often spontaneous conflict. A concealed upper-hand, enabling one to defend oneself, or use especially harsh, piercing language. A pocketknife can also be used for peaceful, practical, daily functions. Kielce has no enshrined, holy pocketknife, yet there are two variations surviving in Kielce of this folkloric expression. One *Kieleckie Sczoryki*, literally the "Kielce pocket-knife," was more familiar to older men, who believe that the term originates from men's short-fuses. In an argument over a woman, the older men thought, men in Kielce were quick to draw their knives.

The younger generation related a slightly altered version of the pocket-knife metaphor. Referring to Kielce as "the pocket-knife of Poland," one man in his mid-twenties thought the term might come from the many knives used to kill Jews. Contrasting the differences between samples of the older and younger generations we can reach a few conclusions. Associating Kielce with the pocket knife predates the Holocaust, and the pogrom, for the older generation didn't associate the term readily with the killing of Jews. If Poles were to actually refer to Kielce as the "pocket knife of Poland," it would have been after either the **1918 pogrom**, or 1946. The latter expression connotes "handi-work," work that needed to be done, that maybe only some—city or individual—had the capability. The younger generation grew up in the shadow of the Kielce pogrom, which was never publically discussed until 1980, and certainly excluded from school lessons. Solidarity's attempt to undermine the Communist regime used the legacy of the Kielce pogrom as a pocket knife, just one of many tactics. The fist plaque cemented to the wall of the apartment building where the pogrom began, refers to the terrible events, and that Lech Walensa[†] is to thank for its creation.

Though the pogrom was blamed in 1946 by the Communist regime on the agents of the **Polish Peasants Party**,[†] and **General Ander's Army**, undoubtedly, Poles hostile to the regime viewed the events differently. The pogrom was a sign, the deed that "needed to be done," to warn to the **Judeocommunists** in Warsaw that they weren't welcome. Whether this was regarding their welcome in Poland as Jews or as Communists is difficult to distinguish. Jews chose to see the pogrom of 1946 as a definitive signal as many fled to **Palestine** or America while they still could.

Both renditions of the "Kielce Pocketknife" do not appear in the reports or research of **S. L. Shneiderman**, **Michael Checinski**, or the reporting

of **W. H. Lawrence**[†] for the New York Times. Professor **Krzysztof Urbanski**[†] of the Kielce Historical Institute and a resident historian at the Museum and Narodowy w Kielcach and Professor **Stanislaw Meducki**,[†] from the Pedagogical University of Kielce, respected and published historians, had not heard of the term. Perhaps as reporters and academics, the layperson's idiom was not captured in their inquiry. The term represents, in part, how certain segments of the Kielce population cope, or choose to understand the events which unfolded.

To Jews, the pocket knife idiom is all too true. For those residents of Kielce who wanted to do away with *Zydokommuna*, they were stuck with "it" for forty more years.

KOZUBSKI, CHILEK[☆] (1924 -) — "To tell you the truth I have mixed feeling about Poland. I feel sorry when I hear things are bad. Mostly I have nostalgic memories left of my childhood in Poland." These are the thoughts of my cousin Henry Kay, of Toronto, Canada. Henry is married to my mother's first cousin Sylvia. Born Chilek Kozubsky, in Poland in 1924, Henry is my only living relative who survived the Holocaust. He is a small man of maybe five feet tall, who has grown cucumbers, managed properties, and overseen construction for forty years. For my brother and I as children, Henry was one of our heroes, though we only saw him two or three times a year. I never discussed with him his life in Poland or the Holocaust until a family wedding in April 1992.

This narrative is a reconstruction of a phone interview. Henry spoke slowly enough for me to capture much of the dialogue on paper. The words

in italics are those of Sylvia, his wife, who was on another phone in the same house. I had called on the pretense of comparing his narrative about Poland with my great-Aunt's, who left Poland when she was just seven. Needless to say, their narratives differed greatly. In my analysis of their accounts of life in Poland, I realized the value of Henry's narrative. For Henry's narrative is not unique, but representative of many Jews of the same generation, who grew up in Poland, identifying with Polish culture. His expressed desire to go back to Poland is indicative of his fondness for this country of his birth, regardless of the tragedy which befell him there. Subsequent interviews elicited fascinating information about life in Kielce before the war, the Jewish community there, the terrible poverty his family lived in, and the pogrom of 1918.

Poland is a nice country, sometimes I miss it and I would like to go back for a visit. I would never move back, but just to go for a little while. I had some friends who weren't Jewish but I don't remember their names, one was the son of a policeman. I am still friends with some of my childhood friends from Poland. Ignaz Shpereman, [lives in Burlingame, CA] was my best friend. I saw him. . . five years ago. The first time since the war. We lived in his grandfather's building, and during the war, in the ghetto, my sister worked for his mother. Domestic work.

In May 1946, my aunt brought me over to Canada. You know I am survivor. I am not bitter. Some of his friends won't even discuss it, the topic of Poland or the war comes up and they turn off. Not Henry. I don't discuss Poland much, or the war. They always ask him to speak at the shule for Holocaust memorial day, but he won't. I am not a good speaker . . . I am private person. He doesn't discuss it with anyone.

JBB: Do you still speak Polish?

I can pronounce words, it is hard for me to make a statement. You know I stopped speaking Polish when I got married. Or since 1948. If I am with some Poles I can sometimes get the grammar right, and try a little, but I don't speak it anymore.

I left Auschwitz January 19, 1945. They transferred us to Austria. That was the last time I was in Poland. . . . First Mauthausen, then "Berk," then "Apensee," near Saltzberg. That is where I was when the war ended. I never wanted to go back [to Poland] until two years ago. My friend Joseph Cooper [a retired cantor] went. He led a group from the synagogue. But he didn't have a good time, he was disappointed. We were good friends as children, from the same town.

You know I never wanted to speak about the war, I am a private person. I haven't claimed retribution³⁵ [pause] I am glad I survived, why should I get paid for it? I tell you my philosophy Jonah, when you do harm, you can't repair it with money. This is my own philosophy. I don't want to be paid for losses, or suffering. [pause] I wanted to be free from obligation from anyone. [pause] Not paid off, you understand?

I was in Italy for three years after the war in. . . a refugee camp. From June 1945. In May 1948, my aunt brought me over to Canada.

By carrying a grudge, many people I know—carrying unhappy [things] is not important. It is in the past. I don't carry a grudge *He doesn't carry a grudge, he is not bitter. . . . I was too young for this to*

³⁵All survivors, and some children of survivors are eligible for money from the German government. Each survivor can choose to receive around \$150 a month. Germany also pays war debt to Israel, mainly in the form of Mercedes buses for public transport. Sylvia spoke up saying: "Everyone told him to take the money. They would ask me to ask him, but he wouldn't do it. At least take it and give the money to Israel or something, but he never would."

make an impression. I would do anything to survive. I wouldn't hurt someone else to survive, but I would do anything to survive, that's what I thought about. Sometimes I envied my dead friends, the peace. I would never end it myself, you understand. If it ended, I would be happy, but I wouldn't do it myself...

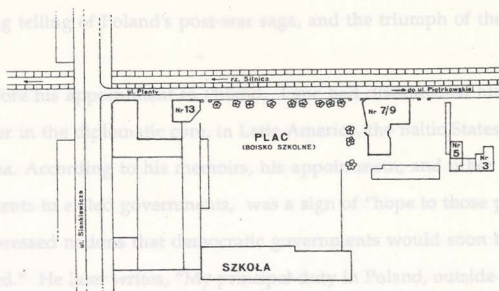
JBB: *Did you receive any assistance from non-Jews?*

No, I didn't. None. I had no money to pay them. You remember I was alone after 1939, I was—what year is now—I was fifteen. Sure non-Jews helped Jews, but you had to have money. I was just a poor boy.

Henry was taken to build Plaszow, a concentration camp for Jews in the Krakow area. He built the camp, and was eventually taken to Auschwitz from there. He escaped from Plaszow twice, but was captured³⁶. As a child I remember a story, I believe told to me by my parents, or a cousin, that he escaped twice, and the third time he fled into hiding. I was told that they didn't kill him because he was very strong.

In 1935 my grandmother and father went to Israel. Their name was Bornstein, my cousin was in *hachshara* Hashomer and went to Israel in 1933. He brought them over two years later, and a younger sister. My mother's two brothers . . . and sister went to Israel. They were triplets. One ended up in Toronto, my Aunt Sonya [Lubinsky], one went to Haifa. Aunt Pearl, Sylvia's mother, would visit Aunt Sonya every week. *Aunt Sonya was like Henry's grandmother. What a decent woman she was.*

³⁶From conversation in Detroit.



Map of intersection of Sienkiewicza and Planty Streets.

You know Jonah, write to me when you get there to Poland, and maybe Sylvia and I will come visit you there. I would really like to go back. I lived on Sienkiewicza street. The main street in Kelce [in Polish Kielce], number 48 or 49. Near the rail-road station. It used to be named after the station, Kolejowa Ulica. But then they changed it to Sienkiewicza. The house where the pogrom happened after the war was right behind where I lived.

I would really like to go back.

LANE, ARTHUR BLISS† (1894—1956) — Arthur Bliss Lane, United States Ambassador in Warsaw from July 1945 through February, writes about the Kielce pogrom in *I saw Poland Betrayed* (1948), his post-ambassadorial

memoirs. This "report to the American people," as the book is subtitled is a compelling telling of Poland's post-war saga, and the triumph of the Stalinist regime.

Before his appointment to Poland, Lane had distinguished himself in a long career in the diplomatic core, in Latin America, the Baltic States, and Yugoslavia. According to his memoirs, his appointment, and other assignments to exiled governments, was a sign of "hope to those peoples of those oppressed nations that democratic governments would soon be established." He later writes, "My principal duty in Poland, outside of the protection of American interests was, under the terms of the Yalta decision, to report to my government regarding conditions in Poland in connection with the elections which were to be held in January 1947."

Lane gave his diplomatic papers to the newly formed Provisional Government of National Unity, a conglomerate of the Soviet-backed Lublin Government, mainstream, and far-right nationalist groups. On July 19, Lane's relations with the Unity government took a turn for the worse. Polish President Bierut told **W. H. Lawrence**, staff correspondent of the *New York Times*, that in Lane's words, "I was *persona non grata*, [and] had little understanding of the Polish People and could not and would not appreciate their problems" (1948, 254). Lane's relations with this government were further worsened when his team of observers dispersed throughout Poland to cover the referendum on June 30th, were systematically harassed. He watched in dismay as the representatives of the Lublin Government doctored the January elections. He ordered the United States Secretary of State to order him back to Washington, in protest of the elections, and to show American condemnation of the fraudulent "democratic" process. In his letter of resignation to President Truman he wrote, "I feel that I can do far more for

the cause of the States and Poland if I should revert to the status as private citizen."

In *I Saw Poland Betrayed*, Lane is highly sympathetic to the plight of Poles, and Poland, who he feels were betrayed by the West, and consequently fell under Soviet domination. He also writes sympathetically of the plight of the "Jewish race," and presents a balanced account of the pogrom, quoting from government, anti-government, and Jewish sources. His description of events in Kielce before the pogrom represent one of few non-Polish observations of the atmosphere leading up to the pogrom:

For many weeks before the pogrom, a strong anti-Semitic feeling had been developing in Kielce with credence given to vicious rumors such as: the Warsaw Government was dominated by Jews; the few Jews living in Kielce all had been repatriated from the Soviet Union and were not Polish Jews but Russian Communists; Jews were receiving preference in distribution of UNRRA and other relief supplies; the Jews were engaged in the ritual murder of Polish Gentile children. These rumors must have reached the government, for we learned from government sources in Warsaw that as far back as may the Security Police in Kielce had been warned by the Ministry of Public Security that trouble was brewing and that an uprising might be expected.

Lane's chapter "Referendum and Pogrom," continues by outlining his discussions with high ranking politicians and church officials in the wake of the pogrom, and with Jewish, and independent sources. He concludes his assessment of the pogrom with no definitive answers. "Although," he wrote, "I

had no definite proof that the government instigated the Kielce pogrom, I wondered, in view of the unbelievably inefficient manner in which the U.B. and the militia had handled the affair, whether it might not have seriously welcomed the opportunity to denounce, as responsible parties, its principal critics, including the Roman Catholic Church, Mikolajczyk and the underground movement" (1948, 251).

LAWRENCE, WILLIAM H.† (1916—1972) — When W. H. Lawrence died in 1972, he was national affairs editor of A.B.C. News, a position he had held for nearly ten years. However, his professional career as a journalist had begun forty years earlier, when he landed a job as reporter for *The Lincoln Star* in 1932. His determined reporting brought him to the *New York Times*, where he served as a foreign correspondent in Moscow, Guam, Okinawa, Japan, during World War II; the Balkans, Poland, South America; and then the Korean War in 1950 and 1951. Lawrence was a respected and accomplished journalist known for bad manners, and speaking his mind, according to fellow correspondents, including S. L. Shneiderman.

Lawrence was in Warsaw's Hotel Polonia with other Western journalists, convened to cover the national referendum in Poland. Consequently, Lawrence filed daily reports in the wake of the pogrom, covering not only government accounts of the tragedy, but the trials, and other repercussions. His articles appeared initially front page, abutting stories on the first bombing of Bikini Atoll, the kidnapping of British officers and general increasing of refugee pressure in Palestine, Fourth of July reports about President Truman, and the fatal shooting of two "negroes" by a white Freeport, Louisiana policeman in New York. Lawrence's "objective" writing

constrasts most other sources about which discuss the pogrom. Committed to journalistic ethics, Lawrence wrote detailed accounts of government comments and charges, Church statements, the military trial proceedings. The sub caption for one of his last pieces about the pogrom, dated July 9, 1946, reads, "3 Declare Innocence at Trial in Kielce—5 Defence Lawyers Fail to Get Delay. Judges Withhold Names. Government for Quick Verdict—Would Lay Anti-Semitism to al All Who Oppose Regime."

The New York Times

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NEW YORK, SATURDAY, JULY 6, 1946.

ARMY MAN ASSAILS AWARD TO FIRM MAY 'SPONSORED'

Col. Slezak Tells Senators the Grant to Batavia (Ill.) Plant Hurt Morale in the Area

GENERAL HITS 'PRESSURE'

May's Efforts to Aid Garsson Called Unfair by Campbell — Testimony by Campbell

By ROBERT A. LOFFTS
Special to The New York Times
WASHINGTON, July 5.—Army officials here today said that an "ill-considered" award to a large plant in Batavia, Ill., had hurt morale in the area. Col. Slezak, former chief of the War Relocation Authority, testified before the Senate today that he had learned that the award was "ill-considered" because it did not meet any of the important criteria. Other concerns in the War Relocation Authority, which did better jobs but did not get the award were satisfied to the extent that morale and production were improved. The Senate War Relocation Authority committee was told.

Col. John Slezak, former Executive Officer of the Chicago Ordnance District, said he could not conscientiously recognize the Batavia Metal Products Company of Batavia, Ill., for the award because it did not meet any of the important criteria. Other concerns in the War Relocation Authority, which did better jobs but did not get the award were satisfied to the extent that morale and production were improved. The Senate War Relocation Authority committee was told.

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Poles Declare Two Hoaxes Caused High Toll in Pogrom

Boy, 9, Admits Story That Jews Slew 15 Children Was Lie—Other Victims Lured to Death by Safety Pledge—40 Killed

By W. H. LAWRENCE
By Writers in the Boy That Times

KIELCE, Poland, July 5.—As the pogrom would result in a new mass death in Poland's worst anti-Jewish outbreak since the end of the war was mounted today, it was revealed that two grotesquely cruel hoaxes had played a prominent part in carrying out the plan of the anti-Jewish elements. One hoax was perpetrated by a 9-year-old boy who said he had been prompted to tell a deliberate lie that he had been kidnapped, held in Jewish headquarters in Kielce for three days and had escaped, after having seen the bodies of fifteen Jewish children whom the Jews had killed.

The other occurred when several men in Polish Army uniforms went to the Jewish headquarters in Kielce, under siege at the time, promised a number of leading Jews an immediate release through the mob outside and then turned them over to the crowd, which beat and killed them.

STUDY IS ORDERED OF NEGRO DEATHS

Deputy Names L.S. Greenbaum to Investigate Shootings by Freeprot Policeman

Special to The New York Times
ALBANY, July 5.—Governor Dewey today appointed Lawrence S. Greenbaum, New York City attorney and chairman of the State Board of Social Welfare, to investigate the fatal shooting of two Negro brothers by a Freeprot, L. J. policeman last February and subsequent legal action that resulted in the assassination of the brothers.

The Governor's action was based on a petition from three residents of Albany and District District Attorney James N. Gehrig or District Attorney Robert J. Quinn.

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BRITISH INSISTENT ON U.S. MILITARY AID IN PALESTINE ENTRY

Rejection of Plan for 100,000 Is Forecast Unless Burden Shared on That Basis

ARAB VIOLENCE HELD SURE

London Is Also Worried Over Soviet Attitude on Issue and Mid-East Aspirations

By HERBERT L. MATHEWS
Special to The New York Times
LONDON, July 5.—It has become increasingly clear in London that unless the United States is willing to share the military as well as the financial burden of admitting 100,000 Jewish refugees to Palestine, Arab violence will soon likely intensify to implement that clause of the Anglo-American inquiry committee's report.

The British are unhappy and worried over the American attitude toward them on the Palestine question, but it is obvious that they firmly believe that America is making it too sure that they are capable of doing and they also feel that America do not correctly understand their position.

The situation can be put bluntly and correctly in two ways: The first is that the British position in the Middle East is vital to the existence of Britain as a world power, and that the continuance of its responsibility is considered absolutely necessary. The second is that the British want to do justice to the Jews as well as the Arabs, but they want the United States to share the shock and burden of Arab reprisals.

CANADA PROCLAIMS U.S. DOLLAR PARITY

Exchange Adjustment, Linked to OPA Abandonment, Aims at Easing Inflation Trend

Special to The New York Times
OTTAWA, July 5.—The Canadian Government, still in the process of price control in the United States, strengthened its own pre-control structure tonight and pegged its dollar at parity with the American dollar to ease the inflationary pressure which arises from an exchange rate that is below the American dollar.

Finance Minister J. L. Flaherty told the House of Commons that effective at 7 P. M. Eastern standard time) the Canadian dollar will hence be adjusted to parity with the American dollar.

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By WALTER D. HARRIS
Special to The New York Times
MOSCOW, July 5.—A clash between 19 Soviet soldiers and 19 German soldiers in the Berlin sector today was reported by the Soviet press.

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Colonel
Slezak and
Slezak, Gen. T. S. Hamilton, former
chief of the Chicago Ordnance
District, refused to answer the colonel
told the committee he did not

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By C. L. BRUCE
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LOZINSKI, MARCEL[☆] — A noted director of Polish birth, his son still lives and directs films in Poland. Marcel Lozinski lives and works in Paris. During martial law in 1982, Lozinski interviewed Polish witnesses of the Kielce pogrom, attempting to uncover what happened there, after more than thirty years of official Communist silence. His movie, filmed for a French film company, captured the raw narratives of the residents of the town, before the incident received wide-spread attention in Poland. These raw interviews could not be captured today, for the subjects would be too conscientious of the effect of their versions of this monumental event. The film is also, or consequently, considered "biased" by journalist **Tadeusz Wiacek**.

Interview from May 10, 1988, on Radio Wolna Europe. Interviewed by Irena Lasota. Translated from French into Polish for Tadeusz Wiacek's book (1992, 120-130), and consequently into English for this work.

Irena Lasota: The film we are going to discuss today lasts for twenty-six minutes. In the first scene, there is footage from the Polish Record of National Events, from 1946. During that documentary footage there were scenes of the Jewish burial, victims of the Kielce pogrom, that took place on the fourth of July, 1946. The bodies of the dead persons were put into a mass grave, and over the grave you could see crying, families of those victims and those who survived the pogrom. These scenes were accompanied by a pathetic and very poetic commentary. Afterwards come the titles of the Video-Nova company film. Following are the speeches by the witnesses.

Today in my studio, I'm talking to Marcel Lozinski, the director of this film ["*Swiadkowie*"]. Now, let us start maybe with the attempt to present to our audience, what this film is about? The film has been still shown in Poland only twice. At the Polish Catholic Intellectual Club in Warsaw and Krakow. In January, it was shown at a conference in Jerusalem dedicated towards the History and Culture of the Polish Jews. The film was also seen by acquaintances. Video cassettes are just now in circulation, but we must take for granted that most of our listeners know nothing about the film, and haven't seen it. Let's try to reconstruct, simply, in such a boring way, how the film was produced.

Lozinski: It just goes to say. It is in fact not even a film in the proper sense. It's rather a strange collection of testimonies of people who saw the pogrom. The assumption is such that we were talking exclusively with people who saw that, and were present at that place, who in a sense, in one way or another, survived the pogrom. And concerning what this film is not about.

It is not a historical film. It is a film which obviously, reconstructs in a subjective way, what these people saw — the terrible events of July 1946. But also it is maybe a story of people today. In a sense....

Q: The film which lasts for 26 minutes is very compact and produced in an extraordinarily logical way, where each scene is a consequence of the previous one — as if there were arranged there, three or four parts of that pseudo-film. Could you please tell me in which way you have arranged them?

A: The first part is a description of the house which exists today. It is a description of the people of those times who came to that place, more or less between 1945 and 1946, who either were coming back

from the Nazi concentration camps or from the Soviet Union, and were treating the place simply as a place of temporary residence. A place of certain transit. A place from which they wanted to depart still onward. The other part, part two, I entitled during the arrangement and production, "In The Way We Saw Them." That is, in what way the citizens of Kielce perceived Jews before the war.

Q: And just after the war ?

A: After the war [there is] the description of the house. People are dressed in black clothes, maybe grey. People are poor. Very widespread poverty. Two dozen people in just one room! There were about 150 persons, more or less in that building.

Part number three is related to the beginning of the pogrom. There arises a rumor in Kielce as if Jews murdered one, or a few children, to make [matzah] with blood. It is not a new story. In fact in the Tzar's Russia, Jews as you know were fed mainly on the blood of the Christian children, and the same was obviously the case in Kielce. There circulated a rumor, and then the whole factory starts to work. The factory that was located on the outskirts of Kielce. I mean when I say the factory starts to work, it means the people employed there. The people employed there came right to the house which was situated at 7/9 Planty street. And it is a description of that terrible pogrom, threatening and full of fear.

Q: When you decided to produce that film, on the basis of certain intellectual preparation, the knowledge of some facts —did that knowledge change during the production of the film, and what news has reached you and your team concerning new [facts]?

A: I must say not that much. I was acquainted with two or three possible hypotheses that explain the provocation. Accordingly it might have been equally well a provocation made by the Soviets in order to show that Poles are still a nation that is not mature, unable to steer their own destiny, their own fate. They need some care from their brother, in this context.

The second possible hypothesis is that it might have been a Polish provocation to cover those forged political polls that took place, as you know, four days beforehand, so to distract the attention of the Western press. Because this referendum was the breakdown, the first such breach of the Yalta agreements. The breach in free democratic elections.

I think that the main reason for producing this film, however, was a certain feeling of shame—that feeling that can't be broken by some people. Although, it seems that just speaking of that may have in a way, to those people, even helped to unlock something placed deeply within themselves. That something which is definitely a trouble to them. It is a thing which marked, I think forever, many of the witnesses. However, despite that it could be cleansing for them, they preferred not to speak of it. Another explanation for producing the film, was just simply ordinary fear. Nobody knew who stood behind it. It hadn't been explained until now the reasons for [the pogrom] and we don't know what the consequences may be.

And finally, reason number three, is that we couldn't say that we were producing this for the Video-Nova film company. We didn't explain for whom we were producing the film. We couldn't say that we are producing it for the Polish television and not for the feature

film company. We were saying that we were collecting some sort of data. Actually, those people wanted to know to whom they were speaking. They were not sure, in fact, what the use of those interviews could be made then. . .

On the whole, in the whole film, if we are to speak of anti-Semitism, you could see two anti-Semites. The lady who is the owner of the confectionery. She said things that I couldn't put into the film, because they seemed to me atypical. There was such a statement they couldn't put in, in which she said [Jews were] an abhorrent nation. She lived in that home [Planty street]. She said—"I even didn't come upstairs to put my clothes on the clothesline, because I didn't want to see them at all." Another lady who was mentioned in the beginning of the film as a philologist, a linguist. That lady said that, "you never know what the chances for our Christian children could be if the Jews were still here [in Poland]."

Q: There's also the so-called controversial statement made by a priest which certainly can hardly qualify as the anti-semitic one, if we understand the word anti-Semitic in its normal sense³⁷. But that statement attracts the attentions of the people who would like to see in the film, anti-Polish elements. Lets us remember that the priest speaks of the unexcluded possibility that in fact some time ago, it is probable that Jews killed for Matzah and now there are still transfusions.

A: Yes, that's true, there is still a priest who is, let's say, ambiguous.

³⁷ Is the interviewer expressing doubt that the Priest is an anti-Semitic, or that his statement might be construed as anti-Semitic? Hopefully in the process of several translations of this article to its present form, the statement's original intent was changed. i.e. substituting "certainly," for "hardly." She is correct that the priest's statement is picked out for just such reasons. The film is not full of statements such as the priest the philologist, or the confectionery store owner. Most of the witnesses express the events in banal terms.

I think that the movie is important. Yes, because it's kind of a testimonial. These people said what they are thinking about Jews.

Bożena Szaynok,† a doctoral student at the University of Wrocław, wrote her master's thesis on the Kielce pogrom. During a teacher's education seminar at the Jewish Historical Institute, during the summer of 1992, she presented a lecture and a discussion about the pogrom. At least twice a year the Institute sponsors an educational seminar, devoted exclusively to Jewish subjects, so that Polish teachers will have a better understanding of Polish Jewish history and culture to pass on to their pupils. By learning in a relaxed atmosphere, but intensely, members of the Jewish Historical Institute report that the teachers leave with a better appreciation for Jewish history and culture. Szaynok showed the movie, *Świadkowie* to the group of Polish teachers. These are some of her reactions to the film:

Based on interview in June 1992.

The movie is very strange. . . The director of this film decided to choose common people from Kielce, people from the street, from the [Planty] house. They only talk about Jews in Kielce, about pogrom in Kielce. Some of them talk about Jews in Kielce before the war. Some about Jews in Kielce after the war. Some of them believed in this gossip, about ritual . . . slaughter. Some of them didn't believe.

There was a priest who believed that maybe this ritual slaughter happened in the middle ages. But this film is not a pleasing portrait of Polish people. They were typical people. The movie portrayed typical attitudes, common thinking about Jews in Poland, and about responsibility — the Jew's responsibility for communism in Poland, about . . . rich Jews and typical attitudes, typical [rumors] . . .

I think that the movie is important. Yes, because it's kind of a testimonial. These people said what they are thinking about Jews. And I think very often Polish people, when they are thinking about Jews they think;

"Okay, maybe we were guilty, but they were guilty too. Maybe we took part in pogrom, but they were rich and they were responsible for communism in Poland."

I think this kind of thinking isn't good, because there—how to say—there are two things, not the same things because I think that we must take responsibility for this pogrom because we made it. The Jews in the security and the Jews connected with Communism is another story. We can't—how to say — blend, connect it. They are not the same story. Because one is connected with history and the second is connected with morality.

And I think that some Polish people don't want to think that we are responsible for the pogrom. I think those people in this movie were good examples of this traditional Polish thinking about it. During the discussion after the movie it was the same story. . . . And it was interesting. I saw it during the discussion after the movie, some people, some teachers saw how Polish people can think about Jews — so primitive, so naive. I think that's it is good some people that saw it. . . . The movie was on Polish television one year ago. Of course on the fourth of July. One year ago. But I think you must remember that the appearance of a Jewish subject in Poland is connected with new possibilities because of the new government . . . (See Appendix)

MEDUCKI, PROFESSOR STANISLAW † —

There are too many things which are really unknown to people yet.

For years, you know, the whole documentation, all the papers were secret. Because all the parts, were trying to take some -- get some profits.

From interview (see appendix)

Professor Stanislaw Meducki lives on the outskirts of Kielce, in a two story flat-topped house ringed by lush gardens. His house looks very similar to houses one might see in a small Israeli town, such as Hadera, or Afula, or on a Moshav—down to the square pre-fabricated floor tiles, contoured door handle, and the short shaggy dog. Over tea and imported cookies, we talked about Kielce, and his laborious task of sifting through thousands of declassified governmental documents pertaining to the events in Kielce on July 4, 1946. Meducki teaches history at the Pedagogical School in Kielce, and just recently published a book with Zenon Wrona (now deceased), and has collaborated with **Professor Krzysztof Urbanski**, of the Kielce Historical Institute.

Always cordial, and willing to answer questions, Prof. Meducky maintains some opinions which — to Jews — present a strange juxtaposition. On one hand, he fervently believes that the residents of Kielce need to build a museum, or more respectable monument, to the Jews who lived there, and in memory of those who died in the pogrom, but on the other hand, he sees the Polish and international world guided, historically, by the force of the Jew. These opinions are not so antithetical to a Polish academic who is dedicated towards a fair rendering of history—that Jews occupied a large

segment of the population before the war, and were transported from the Kielce Ghetto to Treblinka—and the victimization of his people by the Superpowers' shuffle for regional power. At times, he would speak critically of the anti-Semitism of the Catholic Church, but in the next breath he would exonerate the killers of Jews after the war for having committed racist crimes. Rather, he believes the crimes, and murders were acts of robbery, and the victims happened to be Jews.

Interview conducted at the home of Prof. Meducki, in formal style. Olympia interpreted the conversation. Where there is mention of a "he" it is Prof. Meducki, and I have left it to emphasize the paraphrasing that might have been at work in that particular juncture.

MEDUCKI: The Communist authorities were trying to draw people's attention back on certain things that were happening here. . . . And at the same time they were trying to blame the National Democracy for what happened. . . . The press and the media in the United States, which belong to the Jewish people, caught the idea [that the National Democracy movement planned the pogrom].

The communists started noticing that the natural enemy of the Jews in Poland was National Democracy because National Democracy was very much anti-Jewish... Even up till now, people in the States still think that it was the National Democracy's fault because, you know, that was what was said in the United States by the Polish attaché.

JBB: Right, and that was the Communist line?

A: Yes. That was the only information they could get at that time. . . . It's really a shame because even the Jewish cultural

organization in Poland . . . were following the same line—I mean them blaming National Democracy for what happened in their paper.

It was so easy to blame National Democracy for what happened, because the National Democracy was the underground movement after the war. They were publicizing a lot of things which were anti-Jewish. Saying mainly that there were a lot of Jews in the Polish government.

One of the more perplexing issues is trying to determine which post-war police, government, secret service, or municipal agents were of Jewish origin. Just as there are Russians claiming Stalin was a Jew, so too, determining ancestry after the war was and is not always easy. Some figures, such as Jakub Berman, Secretary of the Communist Party, are established to be Jews, other more minor players are less recognizable as Jews.

Meducky: . . . The police chief in Kielce was Jewish. . . His name was Komanski.

JBB: And the head of the Communist Party?

A: He was Jewish as well. But in the time of the pogrom, the former chief of the police was in Warsaw by that time. And the mayor of the town was a Jew as well. . . He ran away with the money, the town money, just before the pogrom.

Q: Really?

A: This was quite a natural thing. Before the war Jewish people were neglected, and they were criticized over their political life. The Communists. . . they wanted to show to people that they were treating everyone equally. So that's why they allowed a lot of minorities into

their government. And it seems the Jewish minority was one of them, the most important one. It was natural that they admitted them to the government. That was their line to show that they were treating the people equally.

It was a very attractive idea, I mean, to show that these Socialists and at the same time Jews, were treated as human beings. There was one more thing—there were some Polish communists in the Soviet Union . . . that came here together with the Russian Army.

The Polish Committee of . . . National Liberation . . . This was started in Lublin and was the very beginning of the Polish Communist's government. A lot of people in this government were Jewish. In this very first Communist government in Poland, that came to Poland from the Soviet Union.

Q: Even though they were Polish Jews?

A: No. Even though. . .

During the conversation Prof. Meducky would listen very closely to what Olympia would say, and when he heard something that was not right, he would stop her. When Olympia conveyed something precisely how he wanted it, he would follow her statement with: "Tak, Tak." Or "Yes, Yes."

Though he believes some members of the Polish community feel that the Jews themselves provoked the pogrom, Meducki feels these claims are "ridiculous." Possible pro-Zionist motives existed which support these claims. Showing the world the vulnerability of the Jews in Poland would exert pressure on Britain to let Jewish refugees settle in Palestine. Meducki said we couldn't rule this out completely, but he himself doesn't subscribe to this logic, owing especially to the lack of evidence.

Meducki: There could be a possibility that Jewish people, in order to be able to emigrate to Palestine, [created] this pogrom. Because the British government was restricting emigration from these Eastern countries to Palestine. Since there were such pogroms in Hungary, in Yugoslavia, and other countries as well, not only in Poland . . . they just wanted to show to the world that they were in danger here. See?

You asked [me] for the scientific approach so [I am] trying to give you the possibilities. [I] want to do [my] job.

JBB: I can see he's getting every angle.

A: It's the wrong thing to do — to accuse Polish people of being, of having some in-born anti-Semitism. Because it's a wrong thing to say because people are anti-Semites all over the world and it's not a [purely] Polish feature.

He says that he was traveling all over the world, and he was meeting anti-Semites all over the world. That's why he's saying it's really impossible now to talk about some very objective approach to this problem.

So the situation right before the pogrom. The first thing was this "National Democracy," working against Jewish people. The second thing was that the Catholic Church was never really for the Jews, they were always against the Jews. The third thing was that there was a very uneasy atmosphere connected with the UB, the secret service, which was led by the Jews, by Komanski as chief of police.

Q: In Kielce or in Warsaw?

A: I n Kielce there were a lot of Jews in the [secret] police at that moment. There were a lot of arrests — putting people into jail. . . . The atmosphere [in Kielce] was against this. By the same token it was against the Jews.

During our conversation, Prof. Meducky had in front of him the manuscript for his book which was at the publishers. It has since been published by the city of Kielce. According to PAP, the Polish Press Agency:

Kielce, Feb. 12, 1993: The first part of the documents concerning the murder of Jews in the central Polish town of Kielce in 1946 has just been published.

The book by Polish historians Stalislaw Meducki and Zenon Wrona, entitled *The Anti-Jewish Kielce Events, July 4, 1946* reveals the long hidden truth about the Kielce pogrom. For years the incident has clouded Polish-Jewish relations. Not all the questions can be answered without access to security service, Police and military information service obliteration files, the authors claim.³⁸

Prof. Meducki and his colleague are trying to publish the information to clear-up the shroud of mystery which still blankets the event. "What we are doing now, we want to make it more clear and more known. . . . So we decided to print all the documents we can print." Included in the book is an English language "chronology" of the incident which began Monday July 1, 1946. Arguably, the incident began centuries before, the pogrom only being another incident in a centuries-long conflict. Unfortunately, the documents and the chronology lack proper context in which to place the events.

³⁸ Polish Press Agency. Feb. 12, 1993.

Meducki: [The chronology] is based on documents. . . . Minute by minute what happened.

JBB: But based on whose documents?

A: Interviews with the witnesses. Mostly these are court documents.

Q: Court documents, produced by the Communists?

A: By the Communists, and people who saw it, the witnesses.

The witnesses were interviewed by the Communists. . . .

This is going to be the first volume, just documents from the court. The second volume is going to be with the documents coming from the political parties, and also the report of the Polish Parliament. With commentary, because . . . this report made by the Polish Parliament is false. There are a lot of untrue things in it. What do you want to know?

Q: I want to know what happened the morning . . . actually, tell me what the situation in the town was like just before the pogrom.

A: Do you mean political situation or what people felt?

JBB: What people were, politically, feeling.

A: All-right, so after the war we have a Ministry of Propaganda and Information in Poland. So now he's going to present what the documents are saying about the entire feeling before the . . .

There are three types of documents. The first are: military document; and then second type are documents which were made by the secret service; and the third by the ministry of information.

What do you think about that?

JBB: There were cases when Jewish people were killed.

What don't you think that this is like some sort of robbery?

A: People were killed after the war, but it wasn't because they were Jewish. It was either because they were rich, so, it was just an ordinary robbery thing, or because it was a member of secret service.

JBB: That killed them? Mr. Urbanski, he was researching the civil

A: Yeah. No, not secret. I'm saying that the reason why some Jewish people were killed after the war was not because they were Jewish, most of the time, but because they were either rich. It was an instance of ordinary robbery, or because they were in the secret service. So it wasn't just 'A Jew — let's kill him.' It was just a political fight.

We've got here 1948, and this is the document saying about the cases where the Jewish people were killed. A member of the police force. It was like a voluntary police, right? One, what is preferred? Again, Communist party. Three, some other party. Two, official, an government official. Four. . . when they asked him why did you kill

JBB: Okay, that's great. But let me ask a question. What is this graph?

[Meducki held a graph breaking down the various murders in the years following the war through 1948]

JBB: And this question might sound a little jabbing. The people who reported the Jewish killings had no incentive to say they were killed because they were Jews, but had incentive to say they were killed because of something else.

A: Yes.

JBB: Yet there are many eye witnesses of Poles killing Jews after the war just because they were coming back to claim their house. What does you think about that?

A: But don't you think that this is the same as just a robbery?

JBB: No...

A: There wasn't such a case in Kielce.

JBB: Okay, in Kielce...

A: One of my friends, Mr. Urbanski, he was researching the civil court cases, where some killings were involved, or some abuses against Jews. And it turned out that a lot of Polish people in Kielce were testifying for the Jews. If the Jews were claiming their houses. They were testifying for them, not against them.

JBB: In Kielce?

A: Yeah. There were cases where, you know, Jewish people were killed because they had a lot of gold or money or... During the pogrom, one or two policemen just killed a woman and child only because they wanted to get [their money]... So he killed the woman and two-month child... And when they asked him why did you kill the child as well, then he said because the child would be suffering without his mother.

But there is another side of all this...

We began to discuss events that followed the pogrom, as the Polish

Government tried to create public demonstrations against the violence in Kielce. S. L. Shneiderman speaks of the ineffectiveness of these attempts because many factory workers empathized with the residents of Kielce.

Prof. Meducky echoed these sentiments. The government induced protests never manifested into anything tangible, and probably confirmed popular worker sentiment that the government was somehow involved in the Kielce massacre.

Some simplify the causes of the Kielce pogrom and see it as a purposeful provocation for specific geo-political aims (e.g. Stanisław Mikolajczyk). Prof. Meducki forwarded some plausible theories as to just why the Soviets would have wanted the Kielce pogrom to happen:

Meducki: The Russians wanted from the United Nations, to have a protectorate, over Libya, but they were refused. They said it was the British who had the protectorate. But they wanted to have their own [influence] somewhere in the Mediterranean area. They were trying to look for some other solution. So what they wanted to do, they wanted to support the idea of Jewish people's emigration to Palestine and at the same time — together with the flow of Jewish people — they wanted to send their own people with them.

The Russians had a very great contribution to the creation of Israel, of Jewish state. . . The British were . . . were against Israel. That's why, the Russians had their own [reasons] for sending Jews to Palestine. But Jewish people were clever and they didn't allow the Communists . . . They had the state, but they didn't allow the Russians [agents] in. . . Since they couldn't send their own people there officially, but they could [try to] do it, through this channel.

These assertions contribute to the role of Poland as perpetual victim to the whims of greater bullies. Rarely is the question ever asked: Just because "outside forces"—Soviets, communists, rightists, and Jews—wanted it to happen, why did the people of Kielce so willingly commit these brutal murders?

The following discussions focus on certain civic aims of the city of Kielce, and Prof. Meducki's own reasons for being drawn to the subject of the pogrom. Kielce civil authorities are now devoting attention to the legacy of the pogrom, and Prof. Meducki has been appointed as Kielce's academic spokesperson regarding the pogrom. Olympia and I were surprised by the story of the conference.

THE UNWANTED HERITAGE CONFERENCE

Meducki: The title of the conference subject is . . . Unwanted Heritage.

JBB: Unwanted Heritage?

A: And, you know, there [have been] chosen twelve towns. All over the world and in Europe, which have the Unwanted Heritage. One of them is Nuremberg. And Gory, where Stalin was born. The prison, where the prison is where people who were trying to escape across the wall . . . In all the cities which have got sort of . . .

JBB: Dubious?

A: . . . history.

JBB: And what's the other cities?

A: Gurst is a city in France where the camp was, where the Jews were gathered. Braunow, where Hitler was born. Kielce. 'Hoyesveld.'
[?]

JBB: Are you representing Kielce? Or are there other people coming to talk about Kielce?

A: We are going there with the mayor of our town.

JBB: How many people from Kielce?

A: Only me and the mayor. . . I don't like the idea, going to represent Kielce there. Our task would be to explain everything, to try to clear it up.

JBB: That's what's going to be happening at the . . .

A: Um hmm. There is a suggestion . . . that there should be a museum of Holocaust in this particular building [on Planty Street], to make people know that we do remember about that and we do feel . . .

JBB: That is your proposal?

A: We want to have an exhibition of the Jewish history in this town.

JBB: And [have you] proposed this to the city?

A: Yes, at the moment, but the authorities are very much for it. Of course, there are arguments against that, but in any case . . . as soon as [we] have the money. You know, there's no money for anything at the moment.

JBB: They could get money from a Jewish organization.

A: I don't want to. I want it to be done by the Polish community. These documents, this book will be published with the city's money.

JBB: And do you think of your role as trying to explain what really happened?

A: . . . It's going to be in the third volume.

"He" is a reference to Prof. Meducki.

JBB: Does he feel he is compromising by working with the city?

A: He's saying no.

JBB: Because he might have something that's embarrassing to the city.

A: No, he's saying that no one cares what he's writing. He says: why did I start this at all? I was on my holiday in Spain.

ON HOLIDAY IN SPAIN

The reasons why this local historian, Prof. Meducki, began his quest into the Kielce pogrom, illustrates the permanent "unwanted heritage," the permanence of infamous association, accompanied by the name of the town, for Jews and others in the world.

Meducki: I was on my holiday in Spain. . . And there was a hotel and restaurant and there was a coach from Portugal. A lot of people got off. And my car was [of] Polish [origin]. When these people saw the car they came up.

"Ah, you're from Poland." They said. So, you know, they were asking questions, how's everything in Poland.

JBB: In Polish?

A: Yeah.

JBB: Were they older people?

A: They were Jewish, from Israel. So they asked me "Where exactly are you from?" Somebody [in our group] said from Kielce. And they just became so cold.

JBB: Yes?

A: Nothing else, you know. So I became very interested about why. . . Now the Kielce authorities have got their own business in this museum and everything because they want to clear the atmosphere. They want good relations with the Jews and with Israel. So they want to break this barrier.

There was a — the last huge excursion of Jews in Kielce was surrounded and escorted by the police.³⁹

JBB: Yes, yes, yes. It was like that all over Poland.

A: But it was the Jews who wanted protection. It means something, right?

JBB: What do you think of that?

A: It was stupid of them. But you know, remembering what happened years ago, they can't know what the situation is now. I think that they put [off] the possibility of good relations again by claiming this protection of the police.

JBB: Unreal.

A: What's unreal?

JBB: I just heard about this last night. I am very involved in trying to understand why this tour happened. Because it is, I think, very dysfunctional. It is creating more problems than it is stopping.

A: I wanted to ask the Israel ambassador in Poland why. I can't understand that kind of behavior on Jews part.

JBB: But the president of Israel was here.

A: Yes, he had a very warm reception here.

*

*

Prof. Meducki is trying to formulate his final conclusions without access to documents that may not be released in his life-time. As of now, he thinks that the militia is to blame for the events: perhaps they could have stopped things before they got out of hand, yet the militia helped to inflame

³⁹Prof. Meducky appears to be referring to the March of the Living, which has taken to stopping by the mass grave of Jews murdered in the pogrom, in the Kielce Jewish cemetery.

the situation. His confidence in the notion of "provocation" is based on his general interest in geo-political affairs. To be stuck with the legacy of the brutal event, without its origins, and ultimately its symbolism joined to the Soviet grip tightening around post-war Poland, would be a hard load to bear for this consciences man. He believes he can redeem his city, already a fallen angel from the days of his birth.

MEMORY *n., pl. -ies*. 1. Ability to remember. 2. act or fact of remembering. 3. all that a person remembers. 4. person, thing, or event that is remembered. 5. length of time during which the past is remembered. 6. reputation after death. 7. **in memory of**, to help in remembering; as a reminder of. [*L. memoria < memory* mindful. Doublet of MEMOIR.]⁴⁰

What instruments of recollection produce our memory of an event? Memories can convict the guilty, or be dismissed as faulty. Memories can evoke sorrow and joy—the whole gamut of emotions. Memory can be created, where one has forgotten. Memories haunt and attack, and can disappear with a quick blow. Some believe in a collective memory, or a memory which records events in our life, before we even remember remembering.

Each street-side chat was an exercise for residents of **Kielce**, to share their memories. However, they were sharing them with an American student (with his own agenda, and peoplehood). Is what they remember what they will share? In a post-communist society, the sharing of

⁴⁰*Thordike-Barnhart, Comprehensive Desk Dictionary*, Doubleday & Company, INC., Garden City, New York, 1955.

information is still subject to the paranoia of communist times, but conversely, the exercise enables informants to retaliate against the official silence of some forty years. Recording narratives—sifting through the local significance of the event—placed me in a position to record the constructed memories of an event rarely publicly discussed.

The following vignettes were culled from my fieldwork. Raw family observational data appear in appendix.

NEAR, NOT VERY CLOSE
RECEPTION AT THE KIELCE HISTORICAL
INSTITUTE AND MUSEUM

Waiting for the return of Prof. Urbanski[†], we asked the receptionist, a grey haired man[†] with an ample belly, if he knew anything about the pogrom. He said softly, coming near us, that he was “near, not very close.” Then we asked a man[†] who passed by with a coffee maker, if he had been witness to the events of that fateful Thursday in 1946. He nervously said it was a very traumatic experience for him, then a child of 11—“the gunfire and riots” he remembers well. The receptionist seemed eager to partially disclaim the testimony of the man with the coffee maker, an obvious witness. The receptionist said that it happened over a large area [which is true], and “one person could not have seen everything.”

The receptionist said initially he did not want to talk about the pogrom, he hadn't seen it, he said, shaking his head and retreating to his chair. However, when there is a fire people go outside to watch, they don't go indoors. If the army stood by, surely he could have.

☆ † ☆ † ☆ † ☆ † ☆ †

THEY MUST HAVE BEEN PAID LOTS OF MONEY

We stopped a woman,[†] who appeared to be in her late fifties, on Planty Street, just in front of the building where the pogrom occurred. We were directly in front of the memorial plaque in Polish, Yiddish, and English, and asked her what happened here.

She seemed slightly disturbed by the discussion. "No one in my family was a witness, we were not here. I learned about it in the newspapers." We asked if she had read the journalist's book, *Zabie Zyda*, which had just reached the bookstores. She had read **Tadeusz Wiacek's** book. "It must have been terrible. I wouldn't have watched it. That boy and father must have been 'paid' lots of money. Those communists provoked it."

I asked my interpreter how something like this could have happened, and she replied that it "was easy to provoke. There was lots of anti-Semitism. Jewish people were richer than Poles. After the war [there were] many Jewish people in the government. People here didn't like the government or Jews. . . I don't think there is anti-Semitism in Kielce anymore."

Or Jews. . .

☆ † ☆ † ☆ † ☆ † ☆ †

THEY HAD GREAT SOCCER TEAMS

Standing in the same place, on the same clear-blue-sky day, we stopped a gray-haired man,[†] with a friendly smile. We asked him directly about the pogrom. "I saw the crowd, and came closer, but I couldn't see anything. My neighbor went to jail for eight years—he pointed out a Jew to the rioters. Two

thousand workers had come over from the factory. . . I took part in the funeral." Then he switched to his memories of the Jewish community before the war. "They had good soccer teams [the Jews]. There was Maccabi, and Hapoel—they were good, I used to go watch their matches."

☆ † ☆ † NO † NO † NO † KILL ☆ † KENEDY

Interviews with four older men in Kielce Park. One is very old, no

Folklore, legend, and memory are fatally intertwined. They live out the same life, await the same fates. To those residents of Kielce who remember life after the war, there is a wide-spread conviction that the town was neglected after the war by the central communist government in Warsaw because of Jewish ministers. These Jews held a grudge against Kielce until they succumbed to the **Gomulka** power struggle. When these Jewish ministers were purged from government in 1968, the Kielcian feels, Kielce was no longer ignored. Construction was initiated and road repairs resumed.

This legend has been passed on to generations born after the tumultuous late 1960's. Even historians in Kielce, though providing no factual information to justify this perception, tend to agree. We might have made a mistake by killing those Jews in 1946, some subjects seemed to say, but we didn't deserve to be boycotted for the next twenty-years by the Jewish controlled central government. (As dedicated historians had told me: In 1918, when those Jews were killed at the theater, it was a coincidence that the victims were Jews. The Jews controlled the food stuffs, and people were hungry - we are exonerated. And everyone knows that the 1946 pogrom was provoked by outside sources.) The failure of our town to recuperate quickly after the war, was also the fault of non-Kielcians, the Jewish ministers in

Warsaw. Residents of Kielce have created, and perpetuated a series of legends by which they are depicted as victims.

☆ † ☆ † ☆ † ☆ † ☆ †

HOW COULD IT BE NO ONE KNOWS WHO KILLED KENNEDY

Interviews with four older men in Kielce Park. One is very old, no teeth, and only speaks a few words. Two are very talkative, one seeming much more educated, than the rest. He spoke with a more refined language, always asked the most interesting questions. One wore a Chicago Bears hat, has a relative in Chicago. Recorded with hidden microphone, with Olympia.

[Part way into conversation]

Olympia: How could it remain like that, the nickname of *Kieleckie Sczoryki* ?

Old Man[†]: Oh you know it is always like people are playing around. They got drunk; small hooligans. And if someone was angry at someone else maybe he would stab him with a knife. But not attacking like that. Maybe it was because of a girl or something. . .

Most of the people [in Kielce] were against communists. In Poland there were approximately two million communists who were ruling Poland against the other's will.

I[†]: Yes was there such a pro-Polish group such as "KPN"⁴¹

OM: Yes there were.

OM2[†]: Yes I have to say in Kielce there was not more [Nationalists] than in Radom. Radom was more famous for that. We can say that in

⁴The patriotic, nationaist, fascist group "Confederation of Independant Poland".

our *iskra* [park] it wasn't only there. But if there was any special organization, I don't know.

OM3[†]: There were strikes. A lot of them also in Kielce.

OM2: Yes they were in Ostrowiec. But people were afraid because if that happened one was sent to the UB⁴² and they put a plank on him and start to beat him on his kidneys and he was *Kaput*.

I: In Kielce UB was very strong?

OM2: Yes this is the truth, don't translate this to the gentleman.

He should know how it was.

OM2: Don't twist that, you don't know what they were doing in UB.

OM: She is a very young girl [i.e. Olympia].

I: Why shouldn't I show him this, I am showing him everything.

OM3: After the war [she] wasn't here so how could she remember. That was the time when if someone didn't come to work for one day. The rest of the month they had to stay at home. If someone said anything against communism—they sent him for a few years to jail. Stalin was a god and nobody was allowed to criticize him.

OM: When Stalin died, communists cried.

I: So that means that UB moved there [Kielce] in 1945?

OM2: Yes.

OM: And he died in 53 or 52 [Stalin].

OM2: You ask about UB?

OM: UB yes, since 45.

⁴² Internal affairs, Communist Police

OM2: After 56, UB was dismantled. In 56 I was in Labydy, I was in the technical school and I remember how it was. They were wearing uniforms w/ arms.

I: So what was UB Doing?

OM2: They were defending the communists regime. It was like "militzia" but militia was to fight thieves and UB was only to defend communist regime. No one was allowed to say anything.

I: One, he has two questions. One is about *Kieleckie Scyzoryki*. The second, somebody told us recently, there was a saying *Wasze Ulice, Nasze Kamienice* ["Your streets, our houses"].

OM3: Yes, Jews were saying this, and that was the truth because most of the houses were owned by Jews. And most of the shops were Jewish. In the fields, in the country there were no Jews. But they were just trading, just trading. That means that most, all of these houses was Jewish property. All downtown, all these old houses were former Jewish properties. If somebody told you this is the truth that on one side of the street the Jews were walking and on the other street the Poles—this isn't true. Before the war I was in Kielce so I know how it was.

OM2: But you know there was some truth in this because many people were saying that all of Poland was such a tolerant place, it was said in history. But also a few people, sometimes who made trouble for the Jews. Well, it happens. Jews were cowards. They were always afraid of Poles.

OM3: But the pogrom took place in '46.

I: Yes, we saw the memorial plaque it was founded by Walensa, yes?⁴³

- because Yes. such a "penal town," because of the Jewish pogrom.

I: Somebody told us, and you know it was even very unpleasant for me to translate this, two nuns screamed that the Jews are murdering children. It happened that some boy got lost, people were saying that he was killed by Jews to drain his blood for matzahs, but I don't know if this is the truth.

- This is not the truth.

I: And what those nuns said, is it true?

OM2: No.

OM3: First time I heard about nuns.

OM: Somebody who is hostile against the church says such things.

OM2: No. I heard this, but it wasn't reported in the press.

I: Isn't it true that this pogrom had been planned by UB?⁴⁴

OM2: Yes. It could be that they wanted to spread out the hatred.

I: But it was hatred towards Jews.

OM3: They were trying to make people argue amongst themselves.

OM: Afterwards Kielce suffered because in Warsaw Jewish ministers were ruling.

OM2: There were penalties. Kielce became a penalized town. They didn't receive any donations—nothing. There weren't receiving anything from Warsaw for development.

OM3: Nobody was building anything in Kielce.

I: No, this is not the truth.

⁴³ This is NOT a direct translation from any part of this interview, rather Olympia wanted

⁴³ The subjects having raised the issue of the pogrom, enables us to continue discussion on the topic.

⁴⁴ I asked the translator to ask this question.

- Yes, you gentlemen think that now there will be something

OM: Daddy didn't tell me, or mother. This was a real thing, because it was such a "penal town," because of the Jewish pogrom.

I: Yes, because Jews were in the government.

OM: Yes, from '65 they started to build some things. Even now, Jews are in the government. Kielce was basically the least developed town.

[aside] **Interpreter:** They are saying that after this pogrom that a lot of people in government were Jews. And if anyone found out you were from Kielce you couldn't get into any university in Poland. You couldn't make any career. And Kielce was really neglected, nothing was built.⁴⁵

JBB: Because pogrom happened?

I: Yes, because pogrom happened, and because of Jews in the government.

JBB: But is that the same anymore?

I: No that's not the same anymore...

OM: No, now we have development. We have over three-hundred thousand inhabitants. But we don't have many tourists coming.

OM3: And now there is no hatred towards Jews.

OM2: Before it was somehow controlled. Walensa was in Israel and apologizing for these things.

⁴⁵This is NOT a direct translation from any part of this interview, rather Olympia wanted to make me understand the situation better, embellishing her own narrative about the pogrom, with the subject's responses. Nobody I interviewed said this. After translating the subject's responses, she added her own embellishments.

I: ~~is not~~ But you gentleman think that now there will be something better, that there will be a synagogue in Kielce or maybe somebody will be able to recreate some kind of Jewish atmosphere.⁴⁶

OM3: Hitler killed all those Jews. They were to turned into the ashes in the crematories, in the ovens. Just only a handful of Jews survived.

OM: ~~cool~~ Maybe yes, but all of these were Poles, Polish last names.

OM2: They [were] baptized. They sometimes changed their names. But even if he was a typical Jew, or had a Jewish last name, but you know this is the end of the twentieth century.

OM3: Not [all] in your place is good, that's the truth, we have also some information.

JBB: ~~and~~ There is racism in the United States against Jews, Blacks, Asians...

OM2: How could that be? Jews in the states are the biggest capitalists.

OM3: That is what we are getting from our media. They [Jews, probably Israelis] are persecuting political prisoners. People from Lebanon. People have rights. Let's say all those 'injun' [Indian, i.e. Native American] films, you know. How they were persecuted, and now they have their own rights.

OM: ~~And~~ And they were selling blacks.

OM3: You are the people who are asking the questions, so now I want to ask a question. I want this gentleman to answer. How could it be that in America, such a nation, such a truthful speaking, so tolerant,

⁴⁶Either my translator shows an incredible ignorance of the situation of Jews in Poland or she is trying to illicit a response to the possibility that another wave of Jews might come to the community, such as happened after World War II.

I'm not saying Christian one, and somebody killed this Kennedy, and such a long time passed, and nobody knows who did it? You have FBI and the service it's really unbelievable.

Mikolajczyk, Stanislaw† (1901-1967)—

I looked down on the familiar land and what was left of the cities I had known, and this whole flight was an affront to all reason. I, who had been Prime Minister of my country, could not land there now. I must fly over my country and countrymen I loved. I must fly to Russia and gain, in effect its permission to return. There was meaning and symbolism in all this. It was as if Poland were a vast storm area, and we must now circle it and call ahead to Russia for the right to land (1948, 121).

In language such as this, leader-in-exile of the Polish Peasants Party, Stanislaw Mikolajczyk, describes his situation and that of Poland's after World War II. *The Rape of Poland*, was written after he went into exile, driven out by his imminent arrest by the Soviet-backed government. Mikolajczyk is unabashedly pro-Polish, nationalistic, and anti-Communist. The PP were known for anti-Semitic activities before, during, and after the war. Mikolajczyk, and the government-in-exile in London during the war, had great popularity with the West undoubtedly because of their anti-Communist activities. His version of the events (see above: A Pogrom) are unique, and present a valuable narrative account of the atmosphere in Poland in the period surrounding the Kielce pogrom.

KIDNAPPED BRITONS

ORLICKI, JOSEF †— A retired army officer, who in 1983 published a popular (50,000 copies), albeit misleading account of Polish/Jewish relations. Orlicki, among other things, blames the 1946 Kielce pogrom on Zionist agents eager to persuade Jews, by any means necessary, to emigrate to Palestine. His book centers around evidence most researchers consider as weak. His scenario could have written about such a provocation in Iraq, when Zionist agents bombed a synagogue to encourage Jews to flee. (If only Zionists had done this in the 1920's.)

PALESTINE — In the wake of World War II, Britain still maintained its policy of restricting Jewish refugees from entering Palestine. Palestinian Arabs successfully lobbied Britain to keep Jews from entering Palestine, even as international pressure grew for a Jewish homeland. Within Palestine, the Zionist underground used many terrorist tactics, sometimes as reprisals to British actions. In the period of the Kielce pogrom, several factions fought for control of the newly liberated Poland. Within those groups was a wide spectrum of political opinion, and regard for Jews. Interestingly, within Palestine, three major groups fought for control—Brits, Jews, and Arabs. Within these various camps, representatives of many political ideologies waged their war against their own, and the others. Palestine was the scene of random political violence, lynching, bombings, kidnappings, snipers, and turf wars. The following articles illustrate the atmosphere in Palestine on July 4, 1946, the day of the Kielce pogrom.

KIDNAPPED BRITONS

FREED IN PALESTINE

3 Are Dumped in Packing Case in Tel Aviv --- Extremists Proclaim 'Independence'

By Clifton Daniel

By Cable to The New York Times

JERUSALEM, July 4 -- True to its promise, Irgun Zvai Leumi today released the three kidnapped British officers it was holding as hostages for the lives of its two comrades whose death sentences were commuted yesterday by Lieut. Gen. Sir Alan G. Cunningham, High Commissioner of Palestine.

The three officers reported this afternoon to the central Police station of Tel Aviv. . . They were abducted sixteen days ago from the Officer's Club in Tel Aviv.

Upon commutation of the death sentences of the two Irgun Zvai Leumi men yesterday the organizations illegal radio immediately announced that the officers would be released.

The officers stated that they were conveyed from their place of detention in a large wooden packing case. After travelling fifteen minutes they were released in Shandal Street in the center of Tel Aviv. They were unharmed and in good health.

While it released the three officers, Irgun Zvai Leumi issued a virtual declaration of war against British authorities today...

INFORMERS REPORTED SLAIN

Trial and Execution of Two Czech Jews Bares Secret Court

By Wireless to The New York Times

JERUSALEM, July 6--Two Czechoslovak Jews, kidnapped from their Haifa apartment in the early hours of last Wednesday, are believed to have been executed after trial by a so-called Jewish People's Higher Court, the Palestine Government said today.

This was the first intimation of the existence of such a tribunal.

The two men, Otto Freund and Benjamin Papanek, visited Meshek Yagur on June 28, the day before the settlement was searched. The kidnapers, according to an official statement,

suspected these men of having informed the Police of the location of secret arsenals although the statement categorically denied that they had any connection with the police or military authorities.

The two men were recently demobilized in Prague, and returned to Palestine to resettle in civilian life. No underground organization has so far claimed their "arrest" or "trial".

An indication of Arab-Jewish relations are fundamentally unchanged by the current political events came today with a report from the Arab village of Naneh, that its elders had expressed deep regrets over thefts from neighboring Jewish settlements, plantations and vineyards during the recent [British] military operations.

PENAL TOWN—

This was a real thing, because it was such a "penal town", because of the Jewish pogrom. Yes, because Jews were in the government.

[see Appendix: interview #2]

Several residents of Kielce I interviewed believe that because of the pogrom, Kielce was penalized after the war. This popular belief centers around the supposition that Jews in the central government in Warsaw boycotted Kielce for what had happened. Residents believed that roads were left to disrepair, and that no public works were authorized. **Bozena Szaynok**, in her fieldwork, also heard such comments from the residents of Kielce. Some residents believed that they were discriminated against when applying for jobs, or for admission into a University. The common belief was that "if you were from the Kielce, you had no chance." Things change in 1968, residents would say, noting the year when **Wladislaw Gomulka** dismissed Jews from the Communist Party, and the government for good.

Prof. Stanislaw Meducki, who studies the history of industrialization in Kielce, confirms that there might have been some penalties, but that the claims are mostly the result of human nature:

There was a tendency to punish the town. By the government. Oh, they wanted to get rid of the Polish Bishop. . . Because Kielce is a center, like a capitol of the Kielce district . . .

They wanted to make it a different district?

Yes. . . maybe there is a conviction still in Kielce, that Kielce wasn't granted any funds to build anything. That they got rid of a lot of people in Kielce authorities and they moved them to some other district. It's not true, this was just a common conviction. [My] job is, doing research on the history of industry. . . From documents and from [my] research; the funds which were granted to Kielce were not [different].

It always happens that whenever someone grants you some funds you always think that it's too little, that it's less than it should be.

[see appendix: interview # 7]

POGROM OF 1918— In 1918, as many as four Jews were killed in a pogrom in Kielce, in an ominous foreshadowing of events to follow. During a production of the Yiddish play, *Mishpit*, by Shalom Aleichem, Polish nationalists disrupted the proceedings. All Women were told to leave. The Jewish men who were injured or killed, were assaulted by this mob that entered. **Henry Kay**, a son of a survivor of the 1918 pogrom, who now lives in Toronto, remembers the story about the brutal incident:

The play the "*Mishpit*" is about a sentence. That is what *mishpit* means in Yiddish. A Jewish man was convicted and sentence to die of starvation and hunger. The man dies in the lap of his daughter who has come to offer him her breast to suckle to keep him alive. I remember hearing about this because my parents were at the theater then. . . the Polish Theater in Kielce. And my father

escaped out the back door disguised as a woman. You know, with my mother's scarf over his head. They were sitting in the first row on the right-side, so they were near the exit, that's how he escaped!

[see Appendix: Interviews]

The pogrom of 1918 is rarely discussed in relation to the Kielce pogrom of 1946, which prominent Polish historians of Kielce refer to as a riot.

Professor Adam Massalski,[†] Deputy Rector, Pedagogic University in Kielce, who has documented and written extensively on life in Kielce before World War II explains the killing of at least four Jews in light of food shortages in the last year of World War I. Jewish people, he said in our interview at his office, were in charge of food stores. Hungry, angry people, looking for food, went breaking windows and killed some people. They were killed, not because they were Jews but because of economic conditions, it was "not political." He pointed out that the city council of Kielce had a large presence of Jews, and there were several Jewish newspapers in Kielce in 1916, as an indication of the relative harmony he believed prevailed in Kielce after World War I.

Professor Krzysztof Urbanski, a resident historian at the Museum Narodowy w Kielcach, saw the events differently. On November 11, 1918, four Jews were killed in a theater, after Jews had begun a demonstration for autonomy. An argument had developed when rival Jewish groups argued over Jewish political matters, which ended with riots in the streets and Poles killing Jews. There was, Urbanski insists, no involvement from the Polish State [in reference to State involvement in 1946]. The significance of the 1918 riot[†] / pogrom is that it occurred during a period of Polish national independence. Occupied by Russia, Austria-Hungary, and Germany for much

of the past three hundred years, the proud Polish nation was independent. The symbols of this independence; Pilsudsky,[†] the renown Polish general, the Catholic Church, Dmowski, and Polish, a language kept remarkably well intact during those years of foreign occupation — created a new nationalism-fueled xenophobia. A pure Polish state could not be home to Jews. Other European countries also posed similar questions about the Jewish problem, as were many Jews themselves.

Though both Urbanski, and Massalski view the events of 1918 as apolitical, it bodes ominously, a foreshadowing of events in Kielce during Polish "independence" after World War II. In both 1918 and 1946, the storms of war had not ended, but on the horizon was the possibility of an independent Polish nation. One expression of those nationalist feelings was, perhaps, a series of riots that targeted Jews. It is difficult for a Pole, historian or not, to convince a Jew that the reason a group of Jews were killed in Poland, at any time, was something other than anti-Semitic in origin. Zosia G., a Jew and historian in Warsaw affiliated with the Jewish Historical Institute, argues that 1918 was not a pogrom. It was, she argues, unlike the Lwow pogrom which claimed the lives of over a hundred Jews. Kielce was "normal," and Jews were used to this sort of violence.⁴⁷

The pogroms of 1918 and 1946 were hardly isolated incidents. Beginning in the early 1900's Polish nationalism increased; born from the resentment of an occupation by Tzarist and Austro-Hungarian empires. Roman Dmowski,[†] founder of the modern Polish nationalist movement, urged Poles to be strong. Dmowski believed Poles must learn from their enemies, be defensive and aggressive against Ukrainians and Jews. He scoffed

⁴⁷ I interviewed Zosia the first week of February, 1993, during the winter program sponsored by the New York based, Ronald S. Lauder Foundation.

at the romantic notion of a "brotherhood of nations" and instead argued for Polish national interests (Gomulka, Polonsky; 1990). In 1938, Poland joined the greater European community in pressing for a solution to the Jewish problem. The Polish government called for an international forum on the issue, and backed the transfer of Jews to anywhere in the world, though they were under pressure from Zionist organizations to call for an independent Jewish homeland in **Palestine** (Rosenblum, 1991: 478). In the years preceding both wars, Poles boycotted Jewish businesses, which drove many Jews to emigrate.

PROWOKACIA [Polish] - Polish understanding, as expressed in narrative, about the **Kielce** pogrom, revolves around the fervent belief in provocation. "Provocation," and its non-grammatical cousin "incite," are political realities. In narratives about the pogrom, the legalistic term "*podzeganie*" meaning "incite" is usually absent.

[Interview with man, a former soldier, selling blueberries on main street. See Appendix: Interview #1

Interviewer: Do you remember any events in Kielce after the war?

Soldier[†]: I remember the pogrom. I was here. I came with the Polish Army.

I: Did you see it?

A: Yes. We were loading lorries at station going to Lodz and then we heard that the pogrom is going on. I found a stand-in and rushed to the place.

I: What did you see?

A: Well what? There were Jewish⁴⁸ people there and they [Poles] were killing them!

I: About the army. . . Did they do anything?

A: The army couldn't do anything, we were in the army, the army didn't have rights to interfere — it wasn't our job.

I: Well how did it start?

A: Probably someone spread around the gossip that two children were kidnapped and that the Jews were kidnapping children for their blood and [they're] using their blood for matzahs. You know miss, you know miss, for *Szwienta*⁴⁹ and you see this building here,⁵⁰ it happened there. And they caught a guy from this building and people started gathering around. And I wanted to save his life and stop people from finishing him off. So I took out a stack of packaged [bound] money—and threw them into the air. And people jumped after the money. [He exaggerates a throwing gesture which causes us to laugh.]

JBB: Did he save his life?

I2: Did you save his life?

A: Well it's difficult to say miss because I saw him running and people catching those one-hundred notes — You know miss I saw one [Jew] lying on the ground. And I saw a big stone. And he [rioter] lifted it and threw it on his [the Jews] head.

I: What did you do? —

A: You know it was so unpleasant. You know I couldn't do anything. I was in the army. The police [militia] and the UB were there.

⁴⁸ Uses *Zydki* an affectionate form of the noun.

⁴⁹ Means "Holiday" and usually reserved for Christmas.

⁵⁰ Two blocks away.

I: Did the police do anything?

A: Well the police. The police. There were three of them and they killed one [Jew]. And there was a trial, later on they were taken to court. But I can't say what happened. I didn't see that, I only heard what happened there, it wasn't in Kielce.

I: Why, why did they do this?

A: Probably for the Jews [zydki] money or something. I don't know. It was the so-called Urząd Bezpieczeństwa [UB].

I: Why do you think it started?

A: It was a provocation, a hidden provocation. Someone wanted it to start. Someone had some business in that. . . To evoke this mess. But you know me myself, I come from, maybe you've heard about, Treblinka. This camp Treblinka seven kilometers from Warsaw. There were these sweeps and they were taking people to Treblinka. You know they were catching Jews and everyone. And you know there were transports going. And you know they were shooting and I saw this...

You know I was there yesterday in Treblinka. I was there myself [formal usage]. You know I have my family there. I have a sister there. I only have one left. On my way to see her I always visit Treblinka to see what it is like and you know — and what ever it would be like— you can translate this to him— If it's going to be a Pole or a Jew he is a human being. And you can't do this such things. Even if it is a Black man its a human being. And people shouldn't do such things.

☆ †

The unanimous Polish opinion is that Jews did not spill blood, but rather that another force, group, power incited the Poles to vent their

collective hatred upon the Jews — in what they, at the time, thought was a Jewish provocation [i.e. the kidnap of Christian children]. From the moment the dust began to settle, each side, and there are many, has pointed its the finger of blame at the other for inciting the riot. The most noted historians of Kielce themselves, still debate the possible motives, and motivations, of the incendiary event. Conspirators said to have initiated the events cover the gamut, from Zionists to ultra-nationalists, and opinions continue to surface. Blame is a trans-ethnographic phenomenon, Poles and Jews have no monopoly on assigning, or relinquishing blame. Facts appear to uphold and prove cases of guilt, but in Kielce, those that died on the firing line, after quick sentencing for crimes committed in the massacre, were united in admissions of guilt. There is no interest in the Jewish world for debate on the provocateurs who incited the riot — it appears easily enough to Jews that the Poles needed little, if anything, to provoke violence against Jews. To Poles, the issue of blame is of tantamount importance, secondary to Kielce's role in Solidarity's birth, and initial successes. This gap between Jewish and Polish understandings is most evident in the set of competing narratives.

REFERENDUM (June 30, 1946) - The Polish people went to the voting booths to cast ballots in the first vote since the end of the war to determine the fate of Poland. A vote for the Communists would abolish the senate and be a vote of confidence for the Soviet-style communist regime headed by Premier Edward B. Osobka-Morawski. A vote against the Communists, would signify a victory for Polish Peasant Party leader, Deputy Premier

Stanislaw Mikolajczyk. As is the nature of Polish politics — both claimed victory.

The Referendum ballot contained three questions:

1. Are you in favor of the abolishment of the Senate?
2. Are you for making permanent, through the future Constitution, the economic system instituted by the land-reform and nationalization of the basic industries, with maintenance of the rights of private enterprise?
3. Are you for the Polish Western frontiers as fixed on the Baltic and on the Oder and Neisse? (Mikolajczyk 1948, 161)

According to **Arthur Bliss Lane**, police tactics against the Polish Peasants Party before the referendum had already tainted the process. Members of the Peasants Party had been arrested, and their groups forbidden from meeting. The opposition posters were nowhere to be seen—for they had all been torn down or posted over. The government's campaign slogan "3 Razy Tak" ("three times yes") was painted and plastered on thousands of buildings. Men driving along Polish streets in various cities yelled the catchy political slogan from moving vehicles (Lane 1948, 241-2). Lane reported to Washington that the only obtainable evidence that the ballots were counted accurately came from official Polish government sources. Polls conducted by American observers report that most voters checked "No" on the first question.

The government announced on July 8, 1946, that the left-wing parties had won a 60%-40% split. Mikolajczyk countered that the results, "had been fraudulently counted."⁵¹ He told the press that an honest tabulation of the votes would have resulted in the rejection on a unicameral Parliament by an 85% to 15% margin. United States and British officials, in reply to accusations

⁵¹ W. H. Lawrence, *NY Times*, 9 July 1946.

of improprieties in the referendum tabulation, indicated that although it did not conform with the Yalta and Potsdam declarations, Mikolajczyk did not have a complete check on the outcome.⁵²

Lane notes three separate examples when impartial observers were impeded from their assigned tasks. In Kielce, the Security Police arrested the American representatives on charges of distributing "antistate" handbills. Both were released after the polling booths were closed. In Bialystock, an American military attaché was apprehended. In Poznan, a *Time* magazine correspondent, John Scott, was held and cross-questioned for almost five hours by two Soviet officers (Lane 1948, 243). The two officer's conversation with the Ministry of Public Security in Warsaw, which resulted in his release was conducted, to his surprise, in Russian.

Checinski arrives at the conclusion that the left wing needed a smoke screen, the pogrom, to cover up major election fraud. Former correspondent S. L. **Shneiderman**, in a conversation in May 1993, now echoes a similar analysis. At least twelve foreign correspondents were in Poland by June 30 at the behest of the American government. "Because of the significance of the . . . referendum," wrote Lane, "our government urged that as many representatives of American newspaper and press association correspondents as possible be sent to Warsaw to report developments" (241). Post-communist historians generally agree that the voting in the June 30 referendum was rigged in order to wrench control of Poland away from the anti-democratic, though grass-root right-wing, composed of the National Armed Forces (NSZ) and the Polish Peasants Party (PSL). Other groups, such as the Christian Labor Party, also opposed the "three times yes," and they were forced to close on July 19, 1946. The Lublin Poles, in collusion with Soviet advisors and policy,

⁵² W. H. Lawrence, *NY Times*, 9 July 1946.

intended to incite a riot against Jews and frame the right wing. This exhibition of violent intolerance on the right wing, could then justify their claims to serve and protect the entire Polish nation. The left wing's assertions about anti-Semitism and the right wing is confirmed by survivors of the pogrom, and historians. However, the Soviet-backed Communists appear to have used the issue for political expediency.

POLES ASK DEATH FOR KIELCE GUILTY

 Trial starts tomorrow -
 Pogrom Toll reaches 43 -
 Second Plot Broken Up

By W. H. Lawrence

By wireless to The New York Times

WARSAW, Poland, July 6 - The Polish government today demanded the death penalty for the persons responsible for the Kielce pogrom, in which thirty-nine Jews and four Poles were killed and announced that the first trial before a military court would start Monday.

As three more Jews died in Kielce from injuries today, the Polish Foreign Office confirmed to correspondents. . .

The Foreign Office also announced that an attempt had been made Thursday—the day of the Kielce riot - to start an anti-Semitic riot in Czestechowa but without success.

According to the spokesman, the demonstration was built around the appearance in the public market of a camel, which is a rarity in Poland and attracted a crowd. When anti-Semitic slogans began to be shouted by the camel owner the police promptly arrested the man and his camel and the crowd dispersed.

The Kielce trial beginning Monday will be one of a series.⁵³ There will be at least six defendants, including a militiaman.

⁵³ There was never another.

The government spokesman demanding the death penalty and prompt execution after trial, from which there is no appeal, was Vice Premier Wladislaw Gomulka, Secretary General of the Polish Workers Party, which is the equivalent of a communist party.

M. Gomulka at the same time sought for political reasons to link the Kielce anti-Semites with his political opponent, Deputy Premier Stanislaw Mikolajczyk.

"The policy of negation of the Polish Peasants Party, and the NSZ (National Armed Forces) having been unable to win a victory in the referendum, is now trying to push the country into the abyss of civil war and anarchy," M. Gomulka said.

"Evidence of this is the pogrom of the Jews in Kielce. The Polish Fascists who until now were so enthusiastic whenever they saw M. Mikolajczyk have now surpassed their masters, the Nazis, in spreading anti-Semitism in Poland."

... News of the Kielce riot is spreading rapidly among the Jews in Poland, although it has not received wide publication in the press.

Jews Plead For Visas

WARSAW, Poland, July 6 (AP)- Frightened Jews crowded the corridors of the Hotel Polonia today seeking military permits from the United States Military Attaché for transit through Germany en route to France. Others sought visas from Czechoslovak authorities that would permit them to leave Poland bound for France, the United States or Palestine, via Czechoslovakia...

Warsaw Radio Blames Anders

By Wireless to The New York Times

LONDON, July 6 - Blame for the Kielce pogrom was placed on "General Ander's agents" in a home broadcast of the Warsaw radio reported today by British Broadcasting Corporations Monitoring service.

Referring to "the pogrom and murder of some scores of Jews" in Kielce Thursday, the broadcast declared that, "while these bestial murders were taking place inspirers of the pogrom were making speeches and raising shouts of 'Long Live Anders.'

"While waiting in the house of the (governor), I asked a soldier who sat in the corridor if he knew what had caused the pogrom. He replied candidly that the massacre had started because 'the Jews kidnapped

SHNEIDERMAN, SAMUEL L. ☆ (1906-) Born Szmuel Loeb

Sznejderman, on June 15 in the picturesque town of Kazimierz, Poland, in south-central Poland. Shneiderman reached the United States. in 1940, and became a naturalized citizen in 1949. He attended the University of Warsaw from 1927-30, and edited *Trybuna Akadematica*, from 1927-31. He then moved to Paris, where he was a correspondent for Jewish newspapers in Poland until 1939. He covered the Spanish civil war, an event which crops up in his later writings that is a reference point in his understanding human actions. Shneiderman came to the United States in 1940, and embarked on career as professional freelance writer, primarily interested in Jewish communities, Yiddish and Eastern Europe. His return to Poland in 1946 to write about the plight of Jews after the Holocaust, culminated in his testimonial book published in 1947, *Between Fear and Hope*. Over the last five decades, he has been published in a wide variety of U.S., European, and Israeli newspapers and journals, authored a dozen books, as well as authored or translated poetry before and after World War II.

Journalists had not been allowed to travel to Kielce when reports reached Warsaw of the events which took place in Kielce. Initially, they were informed that only a handful of Jews had been killed. The next day, hours before sunrise, Shneiderman and other foreign journalists headed out by car to Kielce. The town was literally occupied by the army. Armed men stood on every street-corner stood. Shneiderman went straight to the governor's residence, which was also surrounded by soldiers.

While waiting in the house of the [governor], I asked a soldier who sat in the corridor if he knew what had caused the pogrom. He replied candidly that the massacre had started because, "the Jews kidnapped

Christian children and hid them in their house. . . " This was the answer of a soldier who had been chosen to guard the governors residence. . . even this hard-bitten soldier had accepted the fantastic story as true" (Shneiderman 1947, 87).

In dramatic and stylized reporting, Shneiderman describes the town, those officials who had been chosen to entertain questions on what happened, and the Jewish victims. The story given by the Ministry of War, that the police and military had done everything to stop the events, did not convince Shneiderman. He trusted the opinions of Jewish victims, and even bystanders. He also had the opportunity to interview **Henryk Blaszczyk**, whose disappearance, however intentional or accidental, helped incite the hatred of the Poles of Kielce.

From the police station, we went to the scene of the massacre. The sight of the large, modern apartment house on Planty street was the ultimate in ruthless havoc. Where there had been doors and windows, there were now gaping holes. Furniture inside had been smashed, the bedding torn to shreds. The immense courtyard was still littered with blood-stained iron pipes, stones, and clubs, which had been used to crush the skulls of Jewish men and women. Blackening puddles of blood still remained. From the window frames hung the rags of the cloths of the victims who had struggled with the assassins. Blood-drenched papers were scattered on the ground—sticky with gore, they clung to the earth though a strong wind blew through the yard (1947, 91-2).

He returned to Kielce three days later for the mass burial, which he describes with a knowing cynicism. For he believes that some of the faces in the thousands who followed the forty trucks carrying the forty adults and two children to the cemetery, had participated in the pogrom, but were marching, so as to evade suspicion. Workers with red banners, and a tightly guarded group of Jewish survivors crowded into the cemetery.

I interviewed Shneiderman in his home in Manhattan in May of 1993. He has lived in the same book lined apartment for decades with his wife. He was leaving in a few days for Tel Aviv, where he and his wife have an apartment, and where one of their children live. Shneiderman speaks with a thick Yiddish accent. Along his walls hang dozens of small paintings with mainly Jewish themes. Bookshelves line the walls, filled with books in Yiddish, Polish, Hebrew, and English. I do not know how many visitors he receives, but from the tone of the women who helps them full time, I was not so unique. Shneiderman sat down with me at his living-room table, and we discussed Kielce.

Shneiderman: All of them wanted to get rid of the Jews. . . At the same time the Zionists movement organized "briecha," the escape. . .

The Chief of Security forces, Berman, he said to me, "we know they hate us, and want to get rid of us." He managed to save Poland from Stalin's persecutions. They're were no political trials. None. Jakub Berman played an important role in this.

At the trial was Rozanski, whose real name was Goldberg. His father was editor of the Zionist paper "Heint." What is going on here? That this Jew was in charge of the execution trial. I saw the execution.

He invited me to see it, and some security came and got me in the morning.

One of them tore off from the rope and ran. He ran away, but they shot him. Rozanski had a cousin in Italy. He was arrested after the pogrom, sentenced for fifteen years, but served three. He got sick. Called his cousin, who was then in Warsaw. I want to tell you something, he said.

And he was buried in the Jewish cemetery, next to his mother's grave. She had died before the war. Rozanski organized the arrests in Kielce.

JBB: What do you think of Checinski?

A: He lives in America now.

JBB: What about Henryk Blaszczyk?

A: Blaszczyk is very important in Poland now.

JBB: Did his father work for the NSZ?"

A: No question about it. Have you seen the film of mine, *The Last Chapter*? My very own pictures from the pogrom are in the movie. At the big communal grave -- there were Soviet Security faces, with their faces to the public, their backs to the grave, watching me photograph them.

Today their are Poles interested, Jews interested. The main story is I get five or six letters a month. In Polish.

(He sat looking through his copy of *Between Hope and Fear*, wrapped in white butcher paper. It is the only edition ever published.)

There was another important thing. Cardinal Wyszynski. Stephan Cardinal Wyszynski. At the time of the pogrom he called in the press. He told them "I was attending the Bayliss trial. (A trial in the Soviet

Union, where a Jew was accused of killing a young boy for making matzah in 1911.) At the trial they discovered many documents that show Jews using matzah."

You see, nothing was said then that the Jews were not using blood.

JBB: Have you read anything by Israel Szmuelajwicz?

A: Oh, Yes.

JBB: You knew him.

A: He is coming from Kielce. He himself was born in Kielce.

JBB: He wrote in the Folk-Styme?

A: Folk Styme, Folk-Styme.

JBB: He wrote an article called "My Hometown Kielce." How reliable is he?

A: He is a reliable man. . .He is a good writer, very sincere.

Maybe a little primitive.

JBB: What was his background? He was born in Kielce, do you know when?

A: No.

JBB: Did he survive the war in Poland?

A: YES of course. He was here.

JBB: He didn't go to Russia?

A: Well, I don't know.

JBB: Have you ever heard of the Kieleckie Scyzoryki?

A: The little pocket knife? Doing the research. . .Checinski,

[who says] that he men who really organized these Jewish communists.

I don't know him. I never wrote about him. It's really unpleasant to write about it. But his name was mentioned recently, I saw it, in some

Warsaw papers. But I don't trust him. It was possible. He was a security man, he was a security man and he, he did his job.

JBB: So it's a possibility.

A: Sure.

Anyway, every group: the Communists, as well as the anti-Fascists, the anti-Semites, all of them participated. All of them participated.

✱ †

When he said this, I felt as if I was hearing something I desperately had wanted to hear—a strong, unwavering conviction about guilt, blame, and innocence. His conviction doesn't mean he hates Poles. On the contrary, he maintains close contact with Poland, and Polish writers, and receives books, articles and papers from friends and associates

SOBCZYNSKI, MAJOR WLADYSLAW † — (? - 1988) — Major Sobczynski

was the Chief of the District Public Security office in Kielce. According to Michael Checinski, he was an agent for the Soviet secret police (NKVD) until 1942, and a notorious anti-Semite. According to some sources, he worked for the Public Security office in Rzeszow before the small pogrom there in late 1945, and was then transferred to Kielce.

Checinski notes that before the Kielce pogrom, Sobczynski had received intelligence reports [though sources have not said from whom!] long before the pogrom, that anti-Jewish riots might erupt in the city. He passed these on to Major Jan Zabawski (who had contacts with Soviet security) in the Ministry of Public Security in Warsaw, but no action was taken. He never stood trial

and was cleared of any wrongdoing by Major Zabawski who was convinced Sobczynski had acted in good faith during the pogrom. Sobczynski, after charges of "dereliction of duty" were dropped, was promoted to the directorship of the Passport Bureau at the Ministry of Public Security, a key intelligence post. He continued his career using influence and patronage. "During the 1968 anti-Semitic campaign," reports Checinski, "Sobczynski, then a retired colonel, could be heard making rabid anti-Semitic utterances at various party meetings."

According to Zenon Wrona, a local Kielce historian, Sobczynski had ordered the city fire brigade to disperse the crowd with water. The hoses were cut soon after the brigade arrived.

SZMUELAJWICZ, ISRAEL[☆] — (1902-?)—

S. L. Shneiderman remembers Israel Szmuelajwicz's reporting as a Jewish journalist, and knew him in Poland. In the Yiddish language *Folk-Styme*, which appeared after the pogrom, Szmuelajwicz published a memoir "On The Ruins of My Home Town Kielce." I have not been able to find any further bibliographic information regarding him, other than confirmations from Shneiderman that he existed, and was from Kielce. Based upon biographies of another octogenarian Yiddish journalist I interviewed, and my understanding of the historical context of a Communist Yiddish paper, I have reconstructed an imaginary history for Szmuelajwicz. The life-histories of these Yiddish journalists are running commentaries, living narratives, of the situation of the Polish Jew after the Holocaust. I claim no academic credibility.

for this narrative—it is rather exploratory, and hypothetical—however it was constructed from actual narrative, and historical situations.



Some people move between the nights and days, others traverse the moments we blink our eyes. When Szmuelajwicz and his family escaped to the east as the Germans descended upon Poland, it happened in that space of time. To those who blinked they seemed to vanish into the cold air. To those who didn't blink, they saw a desperate, poor family scurry on board train after train until many days of hunger later, they reached Uzbekistan, and Israel's father could breath again, for he had been holding his breath it seemed for days. Szmuelajwicz hired out as a logger to feed his children, wife and parents, and pay for a small room above a bakery. The heat of the ovens below kept the family from freezing — the same winter most of the Szmuelajwicz's friends and family were herded onto cattle cars, and taken North to Treblinka. During the summer, dreams of Kielce kept Szmuelajwicz and his wife occupied when they're was no longer anything to discuss.

When Szmuelajwicz returned, callused of hands and heart, he sought employment with a Yiddish newspaper, as he had been employed in Kielce before the war. They asked if he had received an proper education while in the Soviet Union. He understood, said "yes," and signed-on as a freelance reporter for the Lodz based, *Folk-Styme*. The new Polish government transferred Szmuelajwicz with his family, to Wraclaw to settle the newly acquired German town. His pieces for the *Folk-Styme* embodied the revolutionary tone, and jargon of the communist regime. Each time he sat down to write, he applauded himself for his effective, diatribe-laced, communist slant. He wrote so convincingly — that when his children

moved to Israel in 1948, they told friends over coffee of their ardent Communist father, renouncer of all his Jewish roots. "Move to Israel," he said, "and what will I do? Drain swamps?"

"On the Ruins of My Home Town Kielce" was taken from the yellowed and stained pages of the July 6, 1946 *Folk-Styme* :

ON THE RUINS OF MY HOMETOWN KIELCE

By Israel Szmuelajwicz⁵⁴

[I remember the] day at end of summer when I left my home town Kielce. A town with a large population of more than 25,000 people. A well brought up [raised] Jewish Cultural Workers Youth. There was a well organized Professional union with various political positions, libraries, sport organizations, weekly Yiddish papers such as *Der Kielce Leben*, "My life in Kielce," hundreds of Jewish shops and workshops...[illegible]

... The stormy winds of the last World War, sent us to Uzbekistan, I never stopped thinking and longing for my hometown Kielce. Although we knew that terrible things were happening in back home under the occupation of the Hitlerist bandits. We came back a little while ago to Pzemysze⁵⁵—my first thought was to go back to Kielce and find out what was left.

It was a wet depressing day in January. I was traveling by train, night was falling. We thought we were traveling through Checiny where many Jewish tailors, shoemakers and carpenters used to produce their goods and bring them to the bazaar in Kielce. . .

We used to make trips to admire the beautiful old shule, which Queen Jadwiga built 500 years ago in Checiny. [I] see before me narrow spires of the great castle in Checiny we used to climb to look for the spot where the heart of the wonderful princess was walled in, because she betrayed her master. Now I'm seven kilometers from Kielce in a little place called Slowik. Which was a wonderful vacation spot. Some unending forests where we used to spend our free time...

As always, the trains station in Kielce had little activity. And I see among the workers at the station old familiar faces and several well know drunks are wandering around the station

⁵⁴ *Folk-Styme*, July 1946.

⁵⁵ A small town in the Kielce district of Poland.

who I knew before the war. Even some of the same prostitutes are there. Among arriving passengers I recognize several students and some of the Poles who used to picket Jewish businesses before the war and throw stink bombs into shops. The same ones who caused the well know bloody events on the first of May, 1938. It seems that nothing has change in my town. Everything is at it was.

When day begins to dawn, I leave the train station and go farther along the streets of my town. I go through a certain small street, though the market place—the same streets which I saw once upon a time. They even have the same color walls and doors. The walls tell of great many Jewish *tzuris* and pain. But now there isn't even a trace of Jewish shops, workshops. Specialists in shoe manufacturing have disappeared. No more portrait makers whose pictures used to adorn thousands of homes across the land in towns and villages. No more Jewish children. Not even one Jewish child remains in town.

I am sitting on Planty Street number seven in a house. Almost all the Jews in town live here, and alas the Jewish committee and Religious Union. The Jews of Kielce are telling me of their experiences and everybody is talking at once, and everyone has a lot to say. Now Moishe Marowitz is telling me exactly how the Jews of Kielce were deported to Treblinka and how Hitlerists killed Jews of my home town Kielce. Now Laser Horendorf is telling about terrible and bitter experiences they had to go through in various concentration camps and the great day when the Red Army freed them.

Now the old tinsmith, Beryl Friedman, and he is telling me almost without end about the great *tzuris* and pain they all had to suffer. The hell they went through under Hitler occupation. How they all wait to see the great wonderful day when the Heroic Red Army—together with of allies wipe out [paper torn].

Now survivors are preparing for a new life. Each has his plans for the future. I am remembering the great Dr. Kahane, President of the Jewish community in Kielce. My dear friend Hersh Dovid Fienkouchen and both of these men are taking care of the few Jews who are left. They are thinking very hard how to make life easier for the rescued ones.

I was [also] in Kielce three days before the terrible pogrom. At that time I was at the cemetery to find my father's grave, but it was impossible. I looked for hours inside the cemetery and didn't find it. The gravestone was ruined like hundreds of others. But even though old graves were ruined in Kielce, there were many new ones. There are dozens of mass graves, where hundreds of Jewish victims are lying. There is also a mass grave

of 42 Jewish children, whom the Germans took away from their parents, and shot them right in the cemetery and threw them into this large grave.

Now there is a fresh grave and that is the grave of our brother Dr. Kahane, Hersh Dovid Fienkuchen, Moishe Morowitz, Beryl Friedman, Laser Horendorf, and others who were preparing for a new life. They had their plans but they were killed in a terrible way by the Polish reactionary elements. They were killed by inheritors of Hitlerism. . .

. . . And now I'm sitting in the hospital in Lodz. I am sitting by the side of the wounded Jews from my home town in Kielce. I'm listening to their descriptions of these terrible experiences that they went through during the eight hours on Thursday the fourth of July, 1946.

I'm looking at their beaten heads and their beaten faces, and the look in their eyes which tells of endless Jewish pain. I look and my own eyes fill with tears, and my heart bursts from pain. Once there was a Jewish community in Kielce.



I imagine a letter which Szmuelajwicz would have written to me, after he learned I was writing a book about the pogrom:

"Dear Mr. Bookstein:

"Young man, this is not something which my emotional state can handle. What more is there to learn? General Anders rightist militias were trying to smear the good name of Poland. If we have full control of Poland, without the interference of the reactionary elements, anti-Semitism would have ceased to exist. The perpetrators were killed, justice is done.

Sincerely,

Israel Szmuelajwicz.

SZAYNOK, BOZENA[†]—(1961 —)

[†]The Polish first degree is called a Magister. It is somewhere between a B.A. and a M.A. in the United States.

Of all the people that I've interviewed, she was the most knowledgeable and seemingly most evenhanded. I think if anybody has approached the truth about what actually happened, she has. It really impressed me when she talked about the Polish people needing to be embarrassed about this, that they needed to accept the responsibility for it. I don't think that the other historians I've spoken to have reached such similar conclusions. They more see it as an isolated event in history. . .

— *Reflections after interview with Bozena Szaynok.*

She has a human quality that seemed to be lacking in my discussions with other historians. Perhaps her empathy with the victims, her refusal to see the events as purely chronological, brought her credibility. The event was not easily understood, she flatly stated, and there are many competing stories and motivations. Though her young age would suggest she might use the popular anti-Communist political movement as a filter for her research, she has not. When I asked the question, "Why did the pogrom happen?" her first response was that it was anti-Semitism. It was a combination of factors, but anti-Semitism was the connecting factor. None of the other factors independently were strong enough to have motivated the series of events leading up to the massacre. Regardless of her intensive research, she was called immature as a historian, and a Jewish sympathizer, or even Jewish.

We met, appropriately enough, in the upper floor of The Jewish Historical Institute, the Z.I.H., in Warsaw. Szaynok began in 1985 to write her masters thesis in history on the pogrom.⁵⁶ For three years she gathered

⁵⁶ The Polish first degree is called a Masters. It is somewhere between a B.A. and a Masters in the United States.

materials, testimonials, and documents. Finally in 1992 her work, *The Jewish Pogrom in Kielce, July 4, 1946*, was published by the Stefan Batorego Foundation, in Warsaw.

For many years Kielce was a taboo subject because it wasn't good for Polish Communists to talk about the Jews. Of course, after the 1968 when they caused this immigration, the last immigration, of Jews from Poland. But for many years it was taboo subject. For instance, when I was writing this book about Kielce some archives were closed for me. I *couldn't use them*. But I was happy, because in the end when I was finished writing this book I got permission to use the archives. It was beginning of the "round table"⁵⁷ in Poland (see appendix: Interviews).

One of her articles was previously published by Yad Va Shem. Her contacts with Yad Va Shem were made during her three month visit to Israel in the late 1980's. She journeyed to Israel to learn Hebrew in an *ulpan* and to interview Jewish witnesses and survivors of the pogrom. In Israel she met what I consider to be one of most interesting survivors of the Kielce pogrom. Not only was he injured in the pogrom, but his father had been injured in the **pogrom of 1918!**

JBB: Are you familiar with the pogrom in 1918?

Szaynok: Yes.

Q: Do you believe it was a pogrom?

A: Yes. And I talked about with one man, I met him in Israel and his father was hurt in 1918, in Kielce. . . and he was hurt in 1946.

Q: In 1946?

⁵⁷Discussions between Solidarity and the Communist Government.

A: Yes. And he showed me a scar on his hand. . . He was hurt at the beginning when the pogrom started and he was beaten and he was unconscious. He didn't remember much because he was taken to the hospital.

Q. So did you talk to him about 1918?

A: No, because I talked with him about the 1946 pogrom in Kielce and he only said to me that his father was hurt in 1918. . . He did say that [the pogrom] it started in the theater in Kielce. I don't remember exactly, but it started in the theater in Kielce and I have some information about it in my notes. I don't remember exactly, but it was [powerful] experience to talk of this with these people.

I have constructed the following narrative from the first part of our conversation (see appendix: Interviews, for the complete text.) I have edited the interruptions and the awkward searches for correct English words, to provide for a more readable document.

What happened after the pogrom

The evening of the fourth of July, Kielce was under a police curfew. . . It started from evening of the fourth of July. The next day a commission came from Warsaw to Kielce, including the Minister of Security, Radkiewicz^A. He was very influential man in Poland. He was responsible for security in the years following the war.

The trial followed soon thereafter, with twelve people on trial.⁵⁸

This first trial was official, and it was staged for journalists. Only one of

⁵⁸ Szaynok used the word "process," which is a literal translation of the Polish. The term seems less accusatory than our English "trial."

the twelve was from the militia, the others were civilians. Nine of the accused were sentenced to death, by hanging. They were hung two days after the trial. I talked with lawyer who took part in this trial in Kielce. He told me that before the court sentences, some people asked the defense to write a letter to the Polish President, and ask him not to have death sentences. But it was very sad because the defense asked before the judge handed over the sentence, *not* to have the guilty killed. The lawyer said to me that it was rather obvious that the sentence would be death. Of course they wrote this letter, but the Polish President didn't help them, and they were hung two days later. and it was made two days after.

The militiaman was hung, but the women was sentenced to ten years in prison. Of the original people tried, only one still lives today. He had gotten seven years. He was the only defendant who said he did not take part in the pogrom. The other eleven persons pleaded guilty to taking part in the pogrom.⁵⁹ I talked with this man in 1989. He feels he wasn't ever guilty. He is a very old man.

HOW DID IT START?

JBB: So, according to what you've gathered, the security forces began it. What about the rumors in the town about the child, the Jewish people stealing a Christian child? You've heard them?

A: I talked with him...

⁵⁹ The trial was billed as a trial of the instigators, however, one look at the accused should have been enough to dispel that euphemism. In fact, they were individuals who carried out some grotesque cruelty, but they probably were not conspirators. However, Schneiderman's notes about their complacency, due lend credence to his belief that they were at least some were aligned with the Nationalists, the "boys in the woods."

JBB: The person that was supposedly kidnapped by the Jews?

A: It was started on the first of July. **Henryk Blaszczyk**, is his name. He left his home and decided to go to his friend in a village near Kielce. He didn't tell his parents. And his parents didn't know what happened with Henryk and they started to look for him. When he came back to Kielce, he knew that he did something wrong, and not to tell his parents where he had wanted to go. And he said to his parents when he came back that he was kidnapped by an unknown man and that he was taken to a cellar? . . . He said he spent last three days in the cellar, and escaped from this place one day ago. One of the neighbors asked Henryk Blaszczyk if this man was Jewish or Gypsy and this little boy said that he was maybe, maybe he was a Jew because . . .

Q: How old was he?

A: Nine. And he said that maybe this man was a Jew because he spoke an unknown language. And I think I must say that it was very difficult in Poland to think that the Polish children are kidnapped by the Jews or Gypsy. That was the beginning of the story...that was the first moment when the Jews appeared in the story. On the next day the father and Henryk Blaszczyk and one of the neighbors went to militia.

Q: That day? July fourth?

A: The day before.

Q: They went July third?

A: Yes. The next time they went in the morning on the fourth of July. They told the policeman [militiaman] that the boy was kidnapped by the Jews and he was taken to the cellar and so on. The policeman believed that story and the policeman decided to send policemen to the Jewish building, to the building where the Jews lived.

Q How many?

A: At first it was about 10 persons, and the second -- because there were two battles -- there was two group of policemen. In the first there were about 10 persons and next group was about 14 persons. The policemen believed in this story and they talked with people along the street in Kielce telling them that this boy had been kidnapped by the Jews.

Q The policemen.

A: Yes, the policemen.

Q According to who?

A: According to this boy's story.

Q So this man . . .

A: Yes, because they went -- the boy and his father went to the policeman and they said about this boy that this boy was kidnapped by Jews and the policeman believed him.

Q But [Henryk Blaszczyk] told you that the policemen then on their way to the Jewish house told people that story.

A: Yes. But not only this boy, but I read some articles . . .

Q Testimony?

A: Testimony, yes, testimony of witnesses from Kielce. They wrote that the policemen told them that this boy was kidnapped by Jews and now, they are going to the Jewish building to check. This was the beginning. So, some people decided to go with the police and they went to the Planta Street house. It was the name.

Q Yes, I've been there. . . .

A: This was the beginning because the information about this boy very quickly spread, in Kielce, and I wrote that in *Planta Street* there was about 15,000 people in that day. —only the security. . . I know

Q: On the street? Communist Party and communist influence

A: Yes, on the street. Of course not from the beginning, but during the pogrom, because it lasted about nine hours. . . . During the pogrom there were about 10-15,000 people in the street. As I said, from the beginning the people only cried against the Jews but when they saw that the police and soldiers were shooting inside the building — when they saw that the police are against the Jews too — they started to do the same. When I spoke with some people, they said they weren't sure

what happened. They * heard many * reasons why * the pogrom

I asked Szaynok about the story of the nuns who spread the rumor about a **Blood Libel**, and the **Kieleckie Scyzoryki**. She was not familiar with either of these legends, but had heard about two priests, who are also mentioned in Zenon Wrona and **Stanislaw Meducki's** chronology. These two priests, according to a story told to her by a priest in Kielce, now deceased, had tried gone to talk with people during the pogrom. However, the priests were instructed soldiers to leave, and not talk to anyone. Consequently, the priests left. I know that there was a resolution in Israel against this book.

His opinion, it is very stupid. I have read the book. . . I think this

WHOSE TO BLAME? stupid. It is impossible. But maybe some people believe it.

Q: Do you think that people in Kielce, who live in Kielce, are more likely to blame Jews for the pogrom or do you think people in all of Poland will start to blame Jews?

A: No, no, no. When I talk with people in Kielce, they said to me that the security is responsible for pogrom, U.B. . . . They didn't think about Jews in U.B., Jews in security—only the security. . . I know that they think about the Communist Party and communist influence in Poland. But I think that the people in Kielce are the same like other Poles.

Q: Did anybody in the movie "Swiadkowie" talk about that it was planned by Jewish security agents to get Jews to leave Poland?

A: Yes, some of them talk about Jews in security, that they were communist and they were in the security.

Q: When I spoke with some people, they said they weren't sure what happened. They'd heard many reasons why the pogrom happened, and one of them was that Jews had planned it so that the rest of the Jews in Poland would leave and to Israel. They designed it and planned it. Have you heard this?

A: Yes. It was written by **Josef Orlicki**.

Q: Orlicky. And he's a historian?

A: No, I think he's connected with nationals, national movement in Poland. He wrote this book I think in 1987, but I'm not sure, but I know that there was a resolution in Israel against this book. His opinion, it is very stupid. I have read the book. . . I think this opinion is very stupid. It is impossible. But maybe some people believe it.

THE FUNERAL PROCESSION FOR THE VICTIMS OF THE POGROM
Kielce 1946

Professor Krzysztof Urbanski, is a resident historian at the Museum Narodowy W Kielcach, and published an inexpensive, but comprehensive book in Polish about the Jews of Kielce. We met in his office, and as he spoke, archives. His understanding of the situation in Kielce after the war must be given great weight. His work conflicts directly with the testimonies of survivors published in Hebrew and Yiddish language memorial books published in Israel.



THE FUNERAL PROCESSION FOR THE VICTIMS OF THE POGROM
Kielce 1946

he repeatedly flipped through pages of a book he had written about the pogrom but was as yet unpublished. Urbanski's narrative is thoroughly researched and based on the records of the city of Kielce and other Polish archives. His understanding of the situation in Kielce after the war must be given great weight. His work conflicts directly with the testimonies of survivors published in Hebrew and Yiddish language memorial books published in Israel

Interview conducted in formal style, June 1992, in Kielce. Magda translated the interview simultaneously. For further notes —see Appendix: Interview #11.

Urbanski: Before the war in Kielce there was 18,000 Jews, five-hundred survived. We had many, many cases, historically researched, that the Poles were helping Jews during occupation. In '45 there were some people from certain Jewish groups, also from Kielce, and survived approximately 200 people just from Kielce. But also Jews were coming from the other cities. The municipality gave them the house on Planty, but that was not the only house. The other place where there was many Jews, it was the house on Budka Street. These were two buildings where Jews were gathering.

And in this building on Planta there was a kibbutz, immigration kibbutz. . . . Kibbutz Ihud, organization for immigration. There was a kind of hostel, there was a kitchen. These Jews were coming, they were staying in Kielce, but some others were just sleeping one night and then they were going to the West. And those who lived before the war

in Kielce, very often they were coming back to their apartments and

they were claiming them back. . . . army from Russia there were many, many

Q: people. Other Poles were not there?

A: Where?

Q: "So In these houses. . . delicate situation," he continued. "They were

A: No, these were the houses especially prepared for the Jews by the municipality.

T: No, he asked if there were Poles present in the houses [the Jews] had to abandon during the war. . . .

A: Yes, they were living, but if somebody came back and was asking to give him back the apartment — usually they were getting [their] apartments. Jews were getting their apartments back. With getting apartments back there was no problems, but the buildings, real-estate had to be given back by the church but it was always very efficient. We have documents — if you were an owner, basically during three or four weeks you could have your real-estate back.

In most cases, these houses were sold through the court very fairly and [the Poles] were leaving. In most cases they were leaving [town], but many of them remained. Some people were hired to be responsible for the buildings. They were Poles, they were signing and also they were leaving.

Regarding the possible motivation of the Polish crowd that day, Urbanski pointed out that he was not trying to rationalize things. He was trying to show an atmosphere surrounding the events, because he firmly believed that the motivation was Jewish involvement in communism and the security apparatus, or UB. He was convinced that all levels of the Kielce

society would have felt that way. "Jews were on the side of Communists in many cases because in the people's army from Russia there were many, many such people. It was not against typical Jews; it was against the Communist government, the communist force introduced by Moscow."

"So Jews were in a very delicate situation," he continued. "They were representing, in many cases, the government, which most people connected [with] Moscow. For instance, Mintz and some other people who were very high ranking in the government, [were Jews]."

"It was a fight between the London backed government and the communists, and the Jews were caught in between." But I had to know, he said, that many Jews were involved in the security.

"Right after year '45 when the Russian army came, and the Polish Security Service came into being, many people in the intelligencia were arrested [by the] UB. So also it was caused somehow by Poles, but also by Jews who played a telling roll in this organization." Historically he is correct, there was a relatively higher number of Jews in the security forces in the early communist period following the war. However, these Jews in the communist ranks had renounced their Jewish identities. They were Jews by birth, but divorced from the community. They very often came from extremely poor backgrounds in pre-war Poland. Communism gave them a hope for the future, which they did not find in awaiting the messiah, as did the masses of Eastern Europe Jews. The largest pre-war Jewish organization in Eastern Europe, where nearly 50% of world Jewry lived at the time, was the Bund (Mendes-Flohr and Reinhartz 1980, 527). The Bund was unashamedly socialist, and non-Zionist.

"There is one more thing very interesting," Urbanski said as we finished our conversation, "The Kielce pogrom is now very well known, but

the pogrom in Kielce was not the biggest one. A lot more Jews were killed in 'Dambeen' when the Germans left and Russians did not come. Peasants burned. . ."

One more piece of folklore which has yet to be investigated.

WIACEK, TADEUSZ † (1950?-) In his smoke filled library, lit by only a table lamp, we discussed the Kielce pogrom. It became apparent by his smooth demeanor that he had discussed the events and issues quite often. He mentioned the different theories surrounding the pogrom; UB and communists, Orlicki's Zionist agents, Jan Sobczynski, and a Soviet agent who specialized in "Jewish affairs," who consequently worked in the Soviet embassy in Israel. He maintains that no-one can be sure who started it — but he does believe that there was a hidden-hand which guided the events from the start.

Wiacek was born and raised in Lodz, where he had the opportunity to make Jewish friends. It was from these associations that he first learned about the pogrom in Kielce, however, he was left with many unanswered questions. (Many of his closest friends fled from Poland in 1968.) Wiacek became active in pre-martial law, underground journalism and Solidarity, and it was this involvement that rekindled his interest. He decided to investigate the events surrounding the pogrom more closely. He has now become a well-know journalist, and lives with his family in Kielce.

Because of his journalistic and personal curiosities, he set about to create a popular book on the "hot" issue, which was published in 1992 under the title, "Zabic Zyda!", or "Kill Jews." His introduction speaks of the pogrom

as an event in history, not commenting on its legendary significance for Jews, or for Kielcians:

[Translation of the Introduction]

On July 4, 1946, there was a Jewish pogrom in Kielce whose victims were several dozens of people. This event shamed the whole world, not only shame that city, but also for the whole of Poland.

For many long decades, the Kielce pogrom was given a curtain of silence, no one was allowed to mention it in publication. It was not until after 1980, that there started to be published articles, memoirs, documents and videos concerning the tragedy. Removing the curtain of silence brought up all the very base questions. Who started the Kielce pogrom, and who was interested in provoking it? What was the exact schedule of those events? Why was it that they were allowed to happen? Who stood behind those people who provoked the pogrom? Who got some benefits from the crime? Finally, was the pogrom inevitable?

These and many questions we try to answer in this book, being conscious of the fact that not all the mysteries of the Kielce tragedy have been completely dug up so far. Many of them haven't been revealed up until now. Not all of what we present will be the true the presentation as it was in fact. What is important however is to present almost all the collected data, including facts, documents, reports, as well as hypothesis, commentaries, and other opinions.

To Kill a Jew is a book that consists of voluminous excerpts of publications about the topic, which have been published in the Polish press, as well as a deposit of original but unpublished material. This

material are memoirs of witness of the pogrom, as well as some of the documents. The reading of this book will let you swallow the large amount of problems related to that globally, very well-known pogrom of the Jews.

- T.W. (Wiacek 1992, 5)

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Taduesz Wiacek

* * *

The book opens with minutes of the pogrom, by the late Kielce historian, Zenon Wrona;[†] some documentary notes; two articles about Marcelem Lozinski's^A film *Swiadcowie*, one an interview, one a

commentary by Wiacek, and the testimony of five witnesses; and analysis by half-a-dozen Polish[†] intellectuals. Though his name graces the cover of the book, only two articles by Wiacek are included in the volume. As someone I discussed the book with noted, "He just re-published [the material] with his name." However his motives to popularize and present certain ideas about the pogrom are laudable.

Zabic Zyda is one of several books published in Polish about the events in Kielce. Wiacek tried successfully to capture the various theories which have been presented since 1980. The book however contains little, if any, information on how research was done, or how interviews were selected. Leaving the reader unsure as to why we are reading these particular peoples recollections. As with many Jewish issues discussed in Poland, Jews are recognizably, though discernibly absent — though there are three testimonies by people with Jewish names. Wiacek relies on the information of two historians who are considered Polish experts on certain Jewish issues.⁶⁰ However, their reputation is limited to Poland. Nothing is included by **Bozena Syaznok**, the doctoral candidate in history at University of Wraclaw, whose work is the most comprehensive and impartial. Wiacek's book is another document in the growing "documentary folklore," and is a basis for new popular beliefs about the pogrom.

Towards the end of our conversation, and several cigarettes later, Wiacek spoke of the Jewish constituency of the post-war Kielce communist party. I was insistent upon a clarification of the various theories, especially the **Judeocommunist** paradigm. If he was subliminally saying that Poles'

⁶⁰An undergraduate student in Krakow who helped translate the tapes of interviews with these historians said; "many leading professors were kicked out of their jobs in 1968, including Jewish ones. The result was that poor academics filled the myriad of spaces in the ranks of the nations University system.

fears were justifiable, how sympathetic was he towards the victims? If I couldn't understand those fears, how sympathetic was I towards Poles?

The line of justification between condemnation, and condonation is one that Jews and Poles might continue to draw in different, though parallel, lines.

At the new United States Holocaust Museum, the visitor learns about the Kielce pogrom. The pogrom has been affixed to the conclusion of the Nazi genocide of Eastern European Jewry by these major institutions, and many historical works. However, the pogrom is not the epilogue of the Holocaust, it is the epilogue of Polish/Jewish relations, and consequently, its placement, by Jewish historians, as the last chapter of the Holocaust is fundamentally misleading.

The widespread harassment of Jews in Poland after World War II, was the epilogue of one thousand years of Polish/Jewish relations. There is no final chapter to the Holocaust. Survivors, films, and novels carry the pain into this generation. The Jewish world carries the pain, and the images of the Shoah as a communal memory. The current struggle by revisionists who refute that the Germans systematically murdered millions of Jews, is another saga of the horror. Battles for memory, blame, and understanding in Germany and elsewhere in Europe, are part of the legacy of the Shoah.

The Kielce pogrom was not carried out by Germans, but by Poles. The killing of Jews after the war was a reaction; to the fear that Jews would reclaim their property; the greed for imaginary riches; a false dream of a national purity; and the popular belief that Jews were responsible for the Communist occupation of Poland. The dream of a pure Poland, espoused by Dmowski and others, predates World War II, and is not an adaptation of Nazi ideology, but part of the purist ideology which swept Europe at the turn of the century. The greed-mongers who robbed and killed Jews after the war, did so in the

My Narrative

At the conclusion of the exhibits about the Shoah in Yad Va Shem, and in the new United States Holocaust Museum, the visitor learns about the Kielce pogrom. The pogrom has been affixed to the conclusion of the Nazi genocide of Eastern European Jewry by these major institutions, and many historical works. However, the pogrom is not the epilogue of the Holocaust, it is the epilogue of Polish/Jewish relations, and consequently, its placement, by Jewish historians, as the last chapter of the holocaust is fundamentally misleading.

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lawless times of a weak and fluid government, where several powers vied for control.

The Poles who killed because they feared Jewish reclamation of property, saw themselves in fundamental competition with Jews. The inability for those Poles to view the Jews as human, and consequently endowed with human rights, was a consequence, not only of the anti-Semitism of the society before the war, but also the state of general depravity which followed.

The legend of Judeocommunism, that Jews were communist sympathizers, and facilitated its spread, did not begin, and has not ended in Poland. Across the world, communism has been attributed to Jews, not because some of its biggest proponents have been historically Jews, but because no other people are historically so geographically dispersed, or politically powerless.

The role of the Soviet Union in the Kielce pogrom, and the investigation into possible links, has deflected criticism away from the local Kielce municipality, and Poles themselves. However, it is apparent from many reliable witnesses that the Soviet Union operated behind the scenes of the massacre, and could have been behind the disappearance of Henryk Blaszczyk.

When the Kielce pogrom is placed as the last chapter of the Shoah, the historical realities of Polish/Jewish relations are purposefully ignored. The tragedy in Kielce began centuries before it happened, the pogrom only being another incident in a centuries-long conflict between Poles and Jews, and the twentieth-century conflict between democratic, and un-democratic forces. Not only is its placement faulty. Most often, the explanation of the events are

fictitious, legendary, and incomplete. By relocating the pogrom from history into legend, we avoid the painful process of understanding what happened, and usually conclude by castigating Poland. Relegation of the pogrom to a post-script of the Shoah draws parallels we would like to see between the Nazis and Poles, and the danger of Exile. We often invoke the words "the Kielce pogrom," along side the names of the Nazi death-camps in Poland.

Along with mention of the pogrom in histories of the Shoah, are the general abuses Jews suffered under the Poles. Often, representations of Polish atrocities, in narrative or historical writing, or popular culture are considered more despicable than those of the Germans. However, this phenomena sheds light on the deep feelings of identification we have with Poland. We resent and condemn Poland and Poles so heavily for what happened after the war, because they were our neighbors. Our revulsion at the atrocity is part of our feelings of betrayal. Popular Jewish feelings about Germany exclude any feelings of neighborliness gone astray. We are told of the assimilated German Jews who thought they would never be victims of their *Deutschland*, but our response is not consistent with betrayal.

Although they lack concrete (read documentary) proof, Soviet, Polish and Jewish authorities, nonetheless exploited the Jewish victims of the Kielce pogrom. The resulting flight of Jews allowed for the Polish policy of reconstructing Poland into an ethnically homogeneous state, Soviet policy of control of Poland, and the Jewish hope that Britain would open the gates of *Eretz Yisrael*. Now, the exploitation of the blood of the victims continues.

The Communist system in Poland has been trashed and composted. Its larger-than-life monuments in Stalinist style have been torn down.

Poland is once again "free." The economic situation, though not in constant decay, is nonetheless difficult. Inflation is high, wages low. Jews have once again surfaced as perpetrators of the Communist caused fiasco. Whereas Poles were told in 1946 of the right wing plot to embarrass the Polish nation by perpetrating the Kielce pogrom, today the Communists are perpetrators. The vehement anti-Communist mind-set contemporarily assigns blame for the provocation of the Kielce pogrom on communists. Ironically, because of the highly influential legend of Judeocommunist, Jews themselves are seen as partially responsible for the actions of the angry crowds. A city venting its communal rage at an imposed communist system, has become a legitimate justification for the pogrom.

Historical parallels are as dangerous as they are helpful. We can trivialize and compartmentalize certain events, reducing their importance or relevance. Conversely, parallels allow us to co-illuminate events which have become legendary, by relating one set of historical events with which we are familiar with, with another set, which cannot understand. With this in mind, as a Jew I am morally obligated to discuss the Kielce pogrom as an event not unlike the massacre at Dier Yassin, in order to curtail feelings of moral correctness we might assume by assigning full blame on Poles for Kielce.

DIER YASSIN

The Arab village of Dier Yassin was located in a largely Jewish area near Jerusalem. As with other Arab villages, it had signed a non-aggression pact with its Jewish neighbors, as early as 1942. When fighting broke out in

1948, the village did not ask for protection from the Arab Higher Committee (Flapan 1987, 94).

On April 9, 1948, LEHI and Irgun soldiers slaughtered unarmed residents of Dier Yassin for an entire day. According to documents filed by the Red Cross, and the British, Jewish soldiers had lined men, women, and children up against walls and shot them. This premeditated attack was not the first attack by the far-right against civilian Arabs in Palestine, but it proved to be the most gruesome, cost the most lives, and drove fear into the whole Arab community.

"The ruthlessness of the attack at Dier Yassin shocked Jewish and world public opinion alike, drove fear and panic into the Arab population, and led to the flight of unarmed civilians from their homes all over the country," wrote Simcha Flapan in his posthumously published book, *The Birth of Israel, Myths and Realities* (1987). Mainstream Jewish fighting organizations like the Haganah condemned the massacre, confirming that it was not a military operation, but a cold-blooded massacre. The attack had been approved by the highest ranking Irgun members, and was in line with their policy of destroying Arab communities in an effort to solve the demographic problems of partition.

The attack "sowed panic among the Arab population," (Flapan 1987), and led to the flight of Arabs from Haifa and Jaffa in the next three weeks. Though the upper echelon of Jewish leaders condemned the attack, apparently none did anything to stem the vigilante style violence, and indiscriminate killings by the underground. In July, Ben Gurion ordered the sinking of the Irgun's arms shipment aboard the *Altalena*. This action proved he could step forward against the brutality of the Irgun, had he so desired, before the events in Dier Yassin. Instead, the flight of Arabs helped

the demographic balance of the emerging Jewish state, which fit Ben Gurion's pragmatic path towards a Jewish state.

By the end of the war in 1948, the IDF, and before it the Haganah, through burnings, demolitions, and mining, had demolished three-hundred and fifty Arab villages and towns which were within areas designated for to the Jewish state (Flappan 1987, 96). There was an overt policy of harassment, rumor-mongering, and property destruction, the looting of livestock and equipment, in an effort to evacuate the Arab populations. Yigal Allon, commander of the Palmach, ordered a rumor to be spread in the Lake Huleh region, five days before the declaration of the state. The rumor was that all the villages in the area were to be burned, and that the Arab population should flee while there was still time. The implementation of these policies has come to light almost forty years later, and summarized by Simcha Flappan, and other historians.

The analogies, and parallelisms to the Kielce pogrom are eerie and painful to elaborate. However, we can not deny that in an effort to create a more homogeneous Jewish state, leaders of all Jewish fighting organizations unofficially colluded on the policy of fear-mongering. Whether by the violent massacres of the Irgun, or the rumors of the Palmach, the motives were identical. Within Poland after World War II, Jews represented to many Poles (especially the far-right), a fifth column, who would support the Soviet Union as they had when Stalin annexed half of Poland in 1939. In Israel, Arabs were seen as a fifth column who would rise up against the Jewish state after the Declaration of Independence. There were many attacks on Jews before Kielce, but Kielce's impact "encouraged" the majority of Jews to abandon their former homes, villages, and property, to save their lives. So too, Dier Yassin was not the first attack against unarmed Palestinian Arabs,

however it was the impetus for thousands of Arabs to flee. After Dier Yassin, as in Kielce, those who fled knew they were not welcome in their former homes.

Jews rightfully bemoan the terrible looting that accompanied the occupation of Jewish properties by Poles during the war, yet are weary to admit the reality of atrocities accompanying the establishment of Israel. After the expulsion, or flight of Arab communities, (or even before), Jewish soldiers systematically looted the vacated communities as the residents fled in haste. Reports by then high-ranking soldiers, now high ranking politicians, confirm the looting, and other atrocities. The policy of property confiscation was legalized in 1950 with the enactment of the Absentees' Property Law. The Property law stated that "any Arabs who left their places of residence between November 29, 1947, and September 1, 1948, either to go to areas outside of Palestine or to areas within Palestine that were occupied by active Arab military forces, would be considered absentees and their property subject to appropriation by the Custodian of Enemy Property (an office soon replace by the Custodian of Absentee Property)" (Flappan 1987, 106). This law legalized the theft of Arab property, under the rubric of confiscating enemy property.

Several years earlier in Poland, claims courts were hearing property disputes involving Jewish property settled by Poles, who at the time acted with full complacency of the ruling authorities. The Polish Church, as did the Jewish State, became the possessor of absentee properties after the war in such "legalistic" channels. Most Jews or Arabs never had a just hearing to reclaim their property. Today, legal channels in Poland have opened through which some Jews have been able to reclaim former property.

The placement of the issue of Arab and Jewish absentee property side-by-side, is not to say that the situations are identical. There was no systematic

genocide of the Arabs who inhabited land slated by the Zionist government to be Israel. The German war machine's *einsatzgruppen* conducted thousands of massacres which dwarf Dier Yassin numerically. Over three million Polish Jews lost their lives. Whereas three hundred and fifty Arab villages were destroyed, many thousands of Jewish villages were lost. These are not the figures, nor the tragedy I wish to compare. The parallels which must be drawn between Kielce and Dier Yassin, between Polish/Jewish relations and Jewish/Arab relations, lie in the historical competition of two peoples, and their cohabitation of the same lands. Those people's with some semblance of real power—namely Poles in Poland, Jews in Israel—reacted with parallel atrocities once the specter of national freedom appeared immanent. Utilitarian means led to the grass-root, and systematic political isolation of both groups. Just as I have separated Kielce from the Shoah, so too, Polish atrocities in must be viewed as part of another system of relations. Poles are not Germans, Jews are not Nazis, and Hitler was not a Ben Gurion.

There is no parallel campaign to reclaim Jewish property in Poland, as there No rhetorical debate about the Arab/Israeli conflict is complete without reference to the massacre at Dier Yassin. Along with a litany of charges against Israel (e.g. Kuneitra, Sabra and Shatilla, the Temple Mount massacre), Dier Yassin plays a pivotal role. Palestinians can rightly argue that at the actual location of the former village, no signs are left to the memory of the village which once stood—nor is their any effort underway by Israelis to accept responsibility for the policy of forced evacuation. The Kielce pogrom is likewise a must-reference for any discussion of Polish/Jewish relations. Jews rightly argue that Poles have never fully accepted blame for the massacre, and have not made real attempts at remembering nor educating about the atrocities which happened after the war.

The falsehood of the voluntary Palestinian exodus from Palestine/Israel prevented Israelis from accepting any responsibility for the Palestinian refugee problem, nor their right for repatriation (Flappan 1987, 118). This refugee problem has proved to be one of the foundations of the present conflict. Jews had hoped the expulsion would create a stronger and more stable Israel. Yet ever since, she has been fighting a war against Palestinians bent on reclaiming their historic homes.

Polish legend surrounding the exodus of Jews after the war is nonexistent, rather in its place are the series of legends explaining Jewish involvement in Communism, and blame for the German invasion. Those Poles who had thought that by homogenizing Poland, Poland would be stronger, succumbed to the great weight of the Soviet Union, as Western nations backed away from supporting the anti-Semitic state. Both the Palestinian exodus from Israel, and the Jewish exodus from Poland contain bitter irony.

There is no parallel campaign to reclaim Jewish property in Poland, as there are movements for reclaiming all or parts of Palestine. The movement that does exist is small, and less for purposes of reclamation, than for the purpose of correcting past wrongs. Jews do not want to return to their historic homes in Poland, but use the occupation of those homes by Poles after the war, in part, as the psychological framework for their policies regarding Palestinians. And justifiably, for those Jews do not want to loose the homes they now occupy as they lost the whole world of European Jewry one generation ago.

* * *

Checinski asks a powerful question: "Who stood to profit most by the uproar caused by the pogrom, both in Poland and abroad, and who hastened

to reap all the possible political benefits?" (Checinski 1982, 32). This question cannot be asked by historians of the Shoah, because the machinations at work in Poland were not the policies of the Nazis, or other fascist regimes during World War II. Polish Historians of the pogrom have, unfortunately, dwelled on this issue, forsaking the painful soul-searching of accepting or assigning full responsibility for the carnage and resulting flight of Jews. I hope this study has opened another avenue of insight. In the face of this analysis we must ask ourselves: Has our adherence to victimology—as Poles and as Jews, as victims of the Nazis—disabled our ability to identify communally with the suffering of the other?

☆ † ☆ † ☆ † ☆ † ☆ †

I am confident that every impartial and unprejudiced reader of this work will agree with me that anti-Semitism has been used against the authoritarian assumption that the welfare of a state on the whole can be protected and developed at the expense of any one section of the population is worse than illusion; it is madness. No state is really stronger than its weakest organ. The weakness of the part contaminates the whole. Under conditions where government creates a policy of setting one section of the populace against another, government is bound to weaken itself. The facts of Polish history since the Great War seem to me to give experimental demonstration of the sounds of the democratic conception of well-being.

—Dr. Simon Segal^A, *Serbonne, Paris, 1938*

Dr. Segal eloquently established the conflict that resulted in the most brutal war earth has ever seen. Many of his observations ring true today. The forces of democracy and authoritarianism seem again battle for the souls of human kind. The authoritarianism of the neo-Nazi right in Germany, Cambodia, and Serbia, as well as fundamentalist forces in India, Egypt, and Algeria, to name just a few examples, exhibit the deep ethnic and religious rifts which are emerging in economically, and environmentally stressed societies. Instead of recognizing the great mixture of ethnic and religious make-up of the New Poland, ultra-nationalists choose a call towards

CLOSING NOTES ON THE PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY

The World is in crisis. It is generally held that in Europe two systems are confronting each other in a death struggle. The system of democracy, with its free institutions, cooperative enterprise and freedom of faith, of thought, of research and of association faces the system of centralized authoritarian control of all institutions of life, political, economic, educational, religious and social. This book is a study of the confrontation of the two systems in the new Poland, with special reference to the role, in this confrontation, of anti-Semitism. The study inquires not only how and why anti-Semitism is being used and what it is doing to the Jews, but what it is doing to non-Jews. The inquiry has been objective as I could make it. I have depended only on Polish and non-Jewish sources and on such first hand information as has been at my disposal. I am confident that every impartial and unprejudiced reader of this work will agree with me that anti-Semitism hurts those who use it just as much as it hurts those it is used against. The evidence shows that the authoritarian assumption that the welfare of a state on the whole can be protected and developed at the expense of of any one section of the population is worse than illusion; it is madness. No state is really stronger than its weakest organ. The weakness of the part contaminates the whole. Under conditions where government creates a policy of setting one section of the populace against another, government is bound to weaken itself. The facts of Polish history since the Great War seem to me to give experimental demonstration of the sounds of the democratic conception of well-being.

- Dr. Simon Segal^A, Sorbonne, Paris, 1938

Dr. Segal eloquently established the conflict that resulted in the most brutal war earth has ever seen. Many of his observations ring true today. The forces of democracy and authoritarianism seem again battle for the souls of human kind. The authoritarianism of the neo-Nazi right in Germany, Cambodia, and Serbia, as well as fundamentalist forces in India, Egypt, and Algeria, to name just a few examples, exhibit the deep ethnic and religious rifts which are emerging in economically, and environmentally stressed societies. Instead of recognizing the great mixture of ethnic and religious make-up of the New Poland, ultra-nationalists choose a call towards

purification. Jews, occupying the lowest rung of the ladder were to get off first. This hatred carried over into the war, and later surfaced, in many regards, by the actions of the crowds in Kielce. Today we must heal ethnic divisions in an effort to stem the growing tide of authoritarianism. As Segal noted, only a fervent belief in a multi-ethnic society can create the strongest and most open society. Anything less, and government, or in our current case, the global union of nations, is threatened.

Pogroms occur with unfortunate regularity. By whatever name media, insurgents or governments use to describe the carnage: in East Timor, Peru, Azerbaijan, Kurdistan, Guatemala, Dier Yassin, Sudan, and Bosnia.

The world is in crisis. The purpose of this study is not to indite, but to create a medium by which the multi-layered conflict of Polish/Jewish relations, anchored in the mire by exclusive victimologies, can be openly and freely discussed. Poles and Israelis, grappling with the issues of a changing global power structure, and monetary flow, are nestled in precarious positions. Undoing these positions requires, in some regard, grappling with interconnected pasts, and current symbols, and legends. The Kielce pogrom, shackled together with other events, deserves Polish and Jewish attention.

Poland and Israel face paradoxically similar confrontations between two forces which Segal illuminates. Like Segal, I have tried to be as objective as possible—but unlike Segal—I know the consequences. The weakened state of Poland lost a unique culture and millions of citizens, that of the Eastern European Yiddish speaking Jews. The world stage is again facing extinctions of unique worlds, human lives are again fodder for the drum-beat of authoritarian rule. When will the world listen?

-Eugene, 1991-1993

Appendix

Part One: Interviews

The following interviews were most influential in the completion of this study. I have not include each minor interview, but the most important ones.

Soldier

Old men in park

Receptionist

Man with coffee maker

Andrej Drurzenski

The "jokesters"

Women on Planty St.

Soccer Fan

Bozena Szaynok

Prof. Stanislaw Meducki

Krzysztof Urbanski

Tadeusz Wiacek

Henry Kay

S. L. Shneiderman

Prof. Joseph A. Gierowski

Mike Zucker

Part Two: Pertinent Materials

Photos

Notes from U.S. Holocaust Museum

¹ Hans Rydzik, an affectionate name for most women.

² Means "Holiday" and usually reserved for Christmas.

Interview #1
 Soldier
 male: age (70)
 Kielce, June, 1992
 Ul. Sienkiewicza

Interview with man selling blueberries on main street. Interview led by Olympia, Magda was also present. Microphone hidden, and interview conducted in archway of building entrance as slight drizzle fell. Interview was transcribed directly from tape into English by Olympia.

O: Do you remember any events in Kielce after the war?

A: I remember the Pogrom. I was Here. I came with the Polish Army.

O: Did you see it?

A: Yes. We were loading lorries at station going to Lodz and then we heard that the Pogrom is going on. I found a stand in and rushed to the place.

O: What did you see?

A: Well what? There were Jewish⁶¹ people there and they were killing them!

JBB & O: About the army...Did they do anything?

A: The army couldn't do anything, we were in the army, the army didn't have rights to interfere - it wasn't our Job.

O: Well how did it start?

A: Probably someone spread around the gossip that two children were kidnapped and that the Jews were kidnapping children for their blood and [they're] using their blood for matzahs, you know miss, you know miss for *Szwienta*⁶² and you see this building here, it happened there. And they

⁶¹ Uses *Zydki* an affectionate form for most nouns.

⁶² Means "Holiday" and usually reserved for Christmas.

caught a guy from this building and people started gathering around. And I wanted to save his life and stop people from finishing him off. So I took out a stack of packaged [bound] money - and threw them into the air. And people jumped after the money [shows a throwing gesture which causes us to laugh]

JBB: Did he save his life?

O: Did you save his life?

A: Well it's difficult to say miss because I saw him running and people catching those one-hundred notes - You know miss I saw one [Jew] lying on the ground. And I saw a big stone. And he [rioter] lifted it and threw it on his [Jews] head.

O: What did you do?

A: You know it was so unpleasant. You know I couldn't do anything. I was in the army. The Police [Militia] and the UB were there.

JBB & O: Did the Police do anything?

A: Well the Police. The police. There were three of them and they killed one [Jew]. And there was a trial, later on they were taken to court. But I can't say what happened. I didn't see that, I only heard what happened there, it wasn't in Kielce.

O & M: Why, why did they do this?

A: Probably for the Jews⁶³ money or something. I don't know. It was the so-called Urząd Bezpieczeństwa.

JBB & O: Why do you think it started?

A: It was a provocation, a hidden provocation. Someone wanted it to start. Someone had some business in that...To evoke this mess. But you know me myself, I come from, maybe you've heard about, Treblinka. This camp Treblinka 7km from Warsaw. There were these sweeps and they were taking

⁶³See note above.

people to Treblinka. You know they were catching Jews and everyone. And you know there were transports going. And you know they were shooting and I saw this...

O: Have you heard of the "Switchblade of Kielce"?

A: Can you be specific, I know people from different cities have different names...

A: -no answer-

JBB: Was Kielce treated badly after the war?

A: You know I was there yesterday in Treblinka. I was there myself [formal usage]. You know I have my family there. I have a sister there- I only have one left. On my way to see her I always visit Treblinka to see what it is like and you know - and what ever it would be like - You can translate this to him - If it's going to be a Pole or a Jew he is a human being. And you can't do this such things. Even if it is a Black man its a human being. And people shouldn't do such things.

O: Was Kielce treated badly after the war?

A: Yes, yes, for a long time they didn't allow to build anything in Kielce - they didn't give any money. Only after a few years they invested money in Kielce.

O: Why was that?

A: Well it was badly - You know someone was doing dirty work.

O: Did it have to do with politics?

A: Yes sure.

O: Was it because there were a lot of Jews in the Government?

A: Yes, but also there were a lot of Soviets. You know all the officers in the army were Soviet. The Chief at Head-quarters was Soviet, Faszten Czewaszczenko. Very few officers were Polish you know. They beat poles and

Jews... In my opinion, Miss, if it were only Polish people in Government and Army it wouldn't have happened. It wouldn't have come to this.

O: Why?

A: Because you know our people would have looked at this differently and would have put it down immediately.

O: So it happened because of Russia?

A: It's difficult to say after so many years. We have clear proof seeing as they martyred our officers.⁶⁴ I am drawing a conclusion from that they did this. The Russians put Poles and Jews against each other... One Jew [a victim] was a member of a veterans organization.

JBB & O: When did the last Jew leave Kielce?

A: No no, you can see them still. Yes, you can see a Jew here.

M: Are they assimilated?

A: You wouldn't recognize one in the streets now. No one wears Jewish outfits anymore - when you see an excursion here, or to Treblinka - you can see them wearing their outfits...

At midway point in interview, those who made the transcription of the tape lost track of which old man was speaking specifically. After reviewing the interview, I divided the me and placed the right identity with the right text, according to what I remember. I am confident that the voice of each informant remains consistent throughout the interview. The transcript excerpts used have been "repaired." I have put in some missing words which make comprehension easier. The full transcript is included in the section APPENDIX. The first English version was transcribed from an orally recorded translation of a Polish transcription of the secretly recorded interview.

⁶⁴ The incident at Katyn.

Interview #2
Old Men in Park
males: (80+), (60), (65), (50+)
Kielce, July, 1992
Iskra Kielcach
Kielce Park
Reception area

Interview with four older men in Kielce Park. One is very old, no teeth, and only can speak a few words (80+). Two are very talkative, one seeming much more educated, than the rest (60, 65). He speaks with a more refined language, and asks the most interesting questions. One wears a Chicago Bears hat and has a relative in Chicago. Recorded with hidden microphone, with Olympia.

Ages

OM: 50+

OM2: 60+

OM3: 60+

OM4: 80+

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Interview #3 + #4
 Receptionist /
 Man with coffee Maker
 males: (70's), (60's)
 Kielce. June 1992
 Kielce Historical Institute
 Reception area

This interview was conducted with Magda, in formal style, with full consent of subject. The interview was transcribed and translated from Polish. Notes from interviews. Interviews not recorded. Present were JBB and Magda. Magda translated. Interviews in lobby of Kielce Historical Institute.

We asked the receptionist if he knew anything about the pogrom, he said he was "near not very close." And seemed to want to put us off, as we were trying to locate Prof. Urbanski.

Then we asked a man who passed by with a coffee maker, who said it was; "a very traumatic experience for him at age 11. The gunfire and riots."

The receptionist seemed eager to partially disclaim the testimony of the man with the coffee maker, an obvious witness. The receptionist said [*which is true*] that it happened over a large area, and one person could not have seen everything.

[Notes from journal]— *The receptionist said he had not wanted to talk about the pogrom, he didn't see it. However when there is a fire people go outside to watch, they don't go indoors. If the Army stood by, surely he could have.*

I am told no will want to talk about the pogrom, yet every-one does.

Interview #5
Andrzej Drurzanski
male: 69
Kielce, June 1992
Kielce Historical Museum.

This interview was conducted with Magda, in formal style, with full consent of subject. The interview was transcribed and translated from Polish, in Poland. Full text in Polish available from Folklore Archives, University of Oregon. Drurzanski appears in Tadeusz Wiacek's book, however, we just saw him walking his dog. Somehow, he and Prof. Urbanski, who was walking by (we did not know it was him,) got into an argument about the pogrom. After their heated debate, which kept my Magda, my interpreter fascinated, we asked him if he would like to talk about the pogrom.

As we spoke, workers on a roof of a nearby historic building cast inquisitive looks in our direction. Our benches faced the grand Baroque entrance to the Kielce Historical Institute; our backs toward the landmark tower of the central sixteenth century church in Kielce.

Interview #6
Women in The Jokesters
male: 70+
Kielce, July 1992
In front Ul. Sienkiewicza

Magda and I approached two men who were standing along the street. We introduced ourselves in the manner described in the section FIELDWORK. Much to our surprise, the men said they were not in Kielce when the pogrom happened. Of all the informants, they alone knew immediately what we wanted. Then one of the men told a joke about Judeocommunism, which is located in the section JUDEOCOMMUNISM. The joke made my interpreter laugh, and the old men laughed, for at least a minute. Magda translated the joke, and conversation after we walked away from them.

For each person who stopped, (and there were three), at least four walked by without stopping. Many said they were in a hurry.

Interview #7
Women in front of house
female: 50+
Kielce, June 1992
In front of #7/9 Planty St.

Interview conducted with Olympia with hidden microphone. Man stopped and was eager to talk about Kielce. The full notes from his interview are contained in the entry MEMORY. Interview conducted with Olympia and I stopped some people walking along the sidewalk, in front of the building where the pogrom in 1946 began, #7/9 Ul. Planty. One woman in her 50s agreed to stop and talk with us. The full notes from her interview are contained in the entry MEMORY. Interview conducted informally with microphone hidden.

The most interesting comment she made was that she, "wouldn't have watched it."

For each person who stopped, (and there were three), at least four walked by without stopping. Many said they were in a hurry.

Interview #8

Doctoral student Bozena Soccer Fan

female
male: 60+

Kielce, June 1992

Z.L.H. In front of #7/9 Planty St.

Tape III - Side A

Interview conducted with Olympia with hidden microphone. Man stopped and was eager to talk about Kielce. The full notes from his interview are contained in the entry MEMORY.

Of all the people we approached on the street, informally, he spoke about Jews in a positive manner. He spoke of pre-war Jewish soccer teams, and as he looked across the street, he had a small smile. He remembered the names of soccer teams of the Jewish community, and the funeral of the victims of the pogrom.

Q The civilian militia?

A No, no - it is the name of police. Milizia. In 1946 it was militia in Polish language. Because some members of militia were against the Jewish people in security. And some reasons were connected with Polish army because the beginning of pogrom was made by the militia and the Polish army. They started ...

Q They started it?

A Yes, they started to shoot.

Interview #9

Doctoral student: Bozena Szaynok

female: late 20's

Warsaw. June 1992

Z.I.H., Jewish Historical Institute

Tape III - Side A

Interview conducted formally, in English. During my first visit to the Z. I. H., Adam Biletsky told me about a graduate student who would be giving a presentation about the pogrom that very day. I attended the presentation, and then arranged to meet Bozena later in the week for a lengthier discussion.

Q. Why did the pogrom happen? Why do you think it happened?

A. Why? There was -- but driven, were independent, I don't know how to say in English. The first -- it was connected with anti-Semitism. I think the second reason, it was due to attitude of UB, and I think the second part of reasons was connected with attitude of security both in Kielce. His name was Sobczynski and I think he might think to develop pogrom. And I think some reasons are connected with militia, the police.

Q. The civilian militia?

A. No, no -- it is the name of police. Militia. In 1946 it was militia in Polish language. Because some members of militia were against the Jewish people in security. And some reasons were connected with Polish army because the beginning of pogrom was made by the militia and the Polish army. They started . . .

Q. They started it?

A. Yes, they started to shot.

Q. To shoot?

A. To shoot and they killed the first person in Kielce. And it was sign for people, for Polish people who are standing around the building that they could make the same because the Polish army and the militia make it -- it was provocation because at the beginning people only observed the movement of militia and Polish army. And when they started to shoot and to kill, it was sign that the people can make the same. And it was beginning, the first victims were inside the building and they were shoot, shot. They were shot. And later some Jews were taken by the soldiers and militia and taken from building to the -- how to say -- it is a place near the building. They were taken from the building and they gave Jews in hands of people and they killed them.

Q. They gave all the Jews? How many?

A. It was killed -- there was killed 36.

Q. In the house?

A. No. In house and before this house. Were killed 36 and in hospital died six more and it was 42 persons.

Q. And what about people being killed on the train?

A. It was another story because the people killed in train, they were not counted in number.

Q. There were four killed on the train?

A. I think it was more number because it is difficult to say how many people were killed in the train because some of them were -- how to say -- put in the -- I don't know how to say in English.

Q. Were put in the earth, were buried.

A. Yes. And we have no information where and how many. I wrote articles, one of the victims of that and he said that he said that he saw three

persons were killed in train but he was sure that the number was more bigger because he heard shots and he said that he was sure it was more people killed.

Q. A person on the train?

A. In train and near the train.

Q. A Jewish person?

A. Not only because during the pogrom I think it was possible that some Polish people could be killed too because it was only -- some people show you and say that you are Jew and sometimes it was reason that they killed.

Q. So you think some of the victims were Poles?

A. Yes, maybe it is, maybe it is possible that some Polish people were killed. I know about two Polish people who were killed during the Kielce pogrom.

Q. You know of them because of the information the police wrote?

A. No, information -- no finding documents about it.

Q. Just from eye witnesses?

A. From witnesses, yes.

Q. And what happened the next day?

A. The next day -- of evening of fourth of July in Kielce was police hour. You know what is the police hour? It started from evening of fourth of July and the next day from Warsaw came special commission, a security ministry and something else and some else and they started to result in ...

[Pause in tape]

A. Next day. And some commission came from Warsaw to Kielce, the Minister of Security, Radkiewicz.

Q. Was he Jewish?

A. Yes, before the sentence. And he said to me that it was rather obviously that they will be death sentences. And of course they wrote this

A. No, he was very important person in Poland. He was responsible for security in these years. And what else? It was beginning of preparing of sentences? Court sentences.

Q. How many people?

A. At the beginning it was twelve persons. Sentences court and . . .

Q. The court sentenced . . .

A. Yes, and how to say this thing, the people are sitting and . . .

Q. The trial. *he got 10 years in prison, 10 years.*

A. Trial, okay. In Polish language, process. And the first trial was official and it was made for and the first trial was accuse 12 persons, one woman and . . . *that he took part in pogrom because 11 persons said*

Q. Were they all civilians?

A. No, one man from militia, only one man. And there was nine death sentences and it was made. *man said that he didn't take part in pogrom and he*

Q. Nine people were killed. Were they hung? *he got only 7 years.*

A. Yes, hung. *make to him, very high court, in Kielce, and he thought*

Q. How much longer after? *ago and he's old person.*

A. Two days after. And I talked with lawyer who took part in this trial.

He was in Kielce. And he told me that before the court sentences some people asked them to write a letter to Polish president and ask Polish president about not to make death sentences. But it was very sad because they were asked before . . . *to*

Q. The trial? *to make it 7 years ago.*

A. No, during the trial but before the saying of court sentences.

Q. Before they were sentenced. *because it was the subject of my work.*

A. Yes, before the sentence. And he said to me that it was rather *of work.* obviously that they will be death sentences. And of course they wrote this

letter, but president, Polish president didn't help them and it was made two days after.

Q. On July 6.

A. Uh huh.

Q. And was the policeman hung also?

A. Yes.

Q. The policeman, the woman.

A. No, woman got 10 years in prison, 10 years.

Q. Have you talked to any of the people that were tried?

A. Only one person is still live. And he got 7 years, but he was only one person who didn't say that he took part in pogrom because 11 persons said that they took part pogrom.

Q. They pleaded guilty.

A. Yes. And only this man said that he didn't take part in pogrom and he isn't guilty and he said to me that maybe that's why he got only 7 years.

Q. And you spoke to him.

A. Yes. But it was three years ago and he's old person.

Q. And you've been researching this for how many years?

A. Seven years.

Q. The pogrom.

A. No, I work three years, but it was seven years ago.

Q. That you decided to.

A. Yes, I started to make it 7 years ago.

Q. Is that when you started university?

A. Um hmm. During study. Because it was the subject of my work.

When the student in Poland finish study they must write some kind of work.

And it was subject of this work.

Q. What about the -- so according to what you've gathered, the security forces began. What about the rumors in the town about the child, the Jewish people stealing a Christian child? You've heard them?

A. I talked with him, with this type. *boy was kidnapped by the Jews and*

Q. The person that was supposedly kidnapped by the Jews?

A. But it was started on 1 of July. Henryk Blaszczyk, his name. *living where*

Q. How do you spell that?

A. I write it. And he left his home and decided to go to his friend in the village near Kielce. He didn't say about it his parents. And his parents didn't know what happened with Henryk Blaszczyk and they started to look for him. And when he came back to Kielce, Henryk Blaszczyk, he knew that he made something wrong not to say parents where he wanted to go. And he said to his parents when he came back that he was kidnapped by unknown man and he was taken cell?

Q. A cellar. *policeman*

A. A cellar, yes. And he spent last three days in the cellar, and he escaped from this place one day ago. And one of the neighbors asked Henryk Blaszczyk if this man was Jewish or Gypsy and this little boy said that he was maybe, maybe he was Jew because . . . *boy and his father went to the policeman*

Q. How old was he? *boy did this boy was kidnapped by Jews and the*

A. Nine. And he said that maybe this man was a Jew because he spoke unknown language. And I think I must say that it was very difficult in Poland to think that the Polish children are kidnapped by the Jews or Gypsy. And it was beginning of the story because it was the first moment when the Jews appeared in the story and on the next day the father and Henryk Blaszczyk and one of the neighbors went to militia. *she and they wrote that*

Q. That day? July 4? *that the boy was kidnapped by Jews and now they*

A. The day before.

Q. They went July 3?

A. Yes. And the next time they went in the morning on the fourth of July. And they said to policeman that the boy was kidnapped by the Jews and he was taken to the cellar and so on. And the policeman believed that story and the policeman decided to send the Jewish building, to the building where the Jews lived, policemen.

Q. How many?

A. At first it was about 10 persons, and the second -- because there were two battles -- there was two group of policemen. In the first was about 10 persons and next it was about 14 persons. And the policemen believed in this story and they talked with people in the street in Kielce and they told them that this boy was kidnapped by the Jews.

Q. The policemen.

A. Yes, the policemen.

Q. According to who?

A. According to this boy's story.

Q. So this man . . .

A. Yes, because they went -- the boy and his father went to the policeman and they said about this boy that this boy was kidnapped by Jews and the policeman believed him.

Q. But this man told you that the policemen then on their way to the Jewish house told people that story.

A. Yes. But not only this boy, but I read some articles . . .

Q. Testimony?

A. Testimony, yes, testimony of witness from Kielce and they wrote that the policemen told them that this boy was kidnapped by Jews and now they

are going to the Jewish building to check this building and it was beginning. And some people decided to go with the police and they went to the Planty Street. It was the name.

Q. Yes, I've been there.

A. And it was beginning because the information about this boy very quickly spread, spread in Kielce, and I wrote that in Planty Street there was about 15,000 people in that day.

Q. On the street?

A. Yes, on the street. And of course not from the beginning, but during the pogrom because it was about nine hours. The pogrom lasted about nine hours and during the pogrom it was about 10-15,000 people in the street. And as I said, from the beginning the people only cried against the Jews but when they saw that the police and soldiers shoot inside the building and when they saw that the police believed and the police are against the Jews too, they started to make the same.

Q. Are you familiar with the pogrom in 1918?

A. Um hmm.

Q. In Kielce.

A. Yes.

Q. Do you believe it was a pogrom?

A. Yes. And I talked about with one man, I met him in Israel and his father was hurt in Kielce.

Q. In 1918?

A. Yes. And he was hurt in 1964.

Q. 1946.

A. 1946. And he told me -- how to say -- scratch?

Q. Scratch?

- A. Is cut.
- Q. A scar?
- A. Yes, scar in his hand.
- Q. He had?
- A. Yes, he had, and he was hurt at the beginning when the pogrom started and he was beaten and he was unconscious and he didn't remember much because he was taken to the hospital, but . . .
- Q. So did you talk to him about 1918? A. No, because I talked with him about pogrom Kielce and he only said to me that his father . . .
- Q. Was hurt during 1918.
- A. And he said that before it started in theater in Kielce. I don't remember exactly, but it started in theater in Kielce and I have some information about it in my notes. I don't remember exactly. But it was big experience to talk of this with these people.
- Q. Yes. Do you -- have you heard the story about the nuns?
- A. Nuns?
- Q. Yes. You know, nun, a black with the convent.
- A. A priest?
- Q. No, no. Two women, nuns. Do you know what a nun is?
- A. Nuns, no.
- Q. A nun is the woman who wears the black who works for the church.
- A. Um hmm.
- Q. How do you say in Polish?
- A. I think it's kind of monks?
- Q. Yes, but women.
- A. For women, uh huh. No. No, I only heard about priests, about priests.
- Q. What did you hear?

A. That they were during the pogrom and they wanted to talk with some people from crowd and it was impossible because the soldiers said to priests not to talk and go away. And they decided to come back.

Q. And who told you about that?

A. I read about it in testimonies and I talked with one priest from Kielce but he's dead now. He died -- I don't remember, a few years ago.

Q. He was in the movie.

A. No, no, no. Not the same priest. No, no, no.

Q. What did you think of the movie? I didn't understand any of it.

A. You understand nothing, okay. The thing is very strange. This movie, because the director of this film decided to choose common people from Kielce, people from the street, from the house. And they only talk about Jews in Kielce, about pogrom in Kielce. And some of them talk about Jews in Kielce before the war. Some about Jews in Kielce after the war. And some of them believed in this gossip, in gossip about ritual . . .

Q. Slaughter.

A. Slaughter, yes. And some of them didn't believe. And this priest believed that maybe these things happened in middle ages and maybe Jews made it. But this film is not pleasant of Polish people.

Q. It doesn't make them look good.

A. Yes. Because they were typical. It was -- there was typical attitudes, the common thinking of Jews in Poland, about responsibility -- Jew's responsibility for Communism in Poland, about . . .

Q. For Communism?

A. Yes. About rich Jews and typical attitudes, typical gossips.

Q. Do you think that's important?

A. This movie? Hmm, I think yes because it's kind of testimony. These people said what they are thinking about Jews. And I think very often Polish people when they are thinking about Jews they think okay, maybe we were guilty, but they were guilty too. Maybe we took part in pogrom, but they were rich and they were responsible for Communism in Poland.

Q. Or for the secret service?

A. Yes, okay. And I think it isn't good, this kind of thinking, because there -- how to say -- there are two things, not the same things because I think that we must take responsibility for this pogrom because we made it and the Jews in security and the Jews connected with Communism is another story. And we can't -- how to say -- blend, connect it. They are not the same story. Because one it is connected with history and the second is connected with morality. Not morality, I don't know the name in English. But maybe morality. And I think that some Polish people don't want to think that we are responsible for that and I think those people in this movie were good examples for this traditional Polish thinking about it. And during the discussion after the movie it was the same story.

Q. Do you think that people in Kielce, who live in Kielce, are more likely to blame Jews for the pogrom or do you think people in all of Poland will start to blame Jews?

A. No, no, no. When I talk with people in Kielce, they said to me that the security is responsible for pogrom, but not security . . .

Q. U.B.? *And isn't a Nazi?*

A. U.B., yes, U.B. And they didn't think about Jews in U.B., Jews in security, only security. Only security, but I know that they think about that Communist party and Communist influence in Poland. But I think that the people in Kielce are the same like the other people. *is very stupid.*

Q. Did anybody in the movie talk about that it was planned by Jewish security forces to get Jews to leave Poland?

A. Yes, some of them talk about Jews in security, that they were Communist and they were in the security. Yes, because it is . . .

Q. But about wanting to make them leave for Israel?

A. I don't understand.

Q. I heard when I spoke with some people, they said, they weren't sure, they'd heard many reasons why the pogrom happened, and one of them was that Jews had planned it so that the rest of the Jews in Poland would leave and to Israel. They designed it and planned it.

A. Well.

Q. Have you heard this?

A. Yes. It was written by Jusef Orlicky (?).

Q. It was written by?

A. Yes. And the responsibility for pogrom is connected with Communist party.

Q. What is his name?

A. Jusef Orlicky. And this was written in his book. Jusef Orlicky.

Q. Orintzky?

A. O-r-l-i-c-ky.

Q. Orintzky?

A. No Orintzky -- Orlicky.

Q. Orlicky. And he's a historian?

A. No, I think he's connected with nationals, national movement in Poland. He wrote this book I think in 1987, but I'm not sure, but I know that there was -- how to say -- resolution? There was resolution in Israel against this book. Yes, because he has tried, his opinion, it is very stupid.

- Q. Have you read the book?
- A. Yes. But I think this opinion is very stupid. It is impossible.
- Q. Yes, but people believe it.
- A. Maybe. Maybe. I think that people believed in so much things. Why not?
- Q. Have you heard the expression that Kielce is the Polish switchblade, pocketknife -- that Kielce is the Polish pocketknife?
- A. Pocketknife?
- Q. Do you know what a pocketknife is?
- A. No.
- Q. Like, you know, a knife . . .
- A. Uh huh. No, I don't think so.
- Q. You haven't heard this?
- A. No.
- Q. I've heard this expression about Kielce by people from Kielce.
- A. But I heard something, another interesting. People in Kielce told me that the Kielce were not rebuilt after the war, after the pogrom . . .
- Q. Because of the pogrom.
- A. Yes, because of the pogrom and it was kind of -- how you say . . .
- Q. Punishment.
- A. Punishment, it was kind of punishment and it was very interesting.
- Q. And that they couldn't get jobs or go to the university?
- A. Yes, yes.
- Q. Did you hear that?
- A. Yes.
- Q. I heard that too.

A. And they said it was kind of punishment, of course punishment made by Jews in government, in Polish government.

Q. And it would be hard to prove something like that.

A. But I think it is wonderful to talk to these people in Kielce about it. And that's why I think this movie was interesting.

Q. Did it mention that in the movie?

A. Um hmm. And it was interesting, I saw it during the discussion after the movie. But some people, some teachers from _____ saw how Polish people can think about Jews because so primitive, so naive, and I think that's why this film was, it was good by some people that saw it.

Q. Has it been shown on Polish television?

A. Yes. Yes, it was, but I think about 9 or 10 years ago.

Q. It was made in 1987.

A. Yes, and I think it was in the same year in Poland.

Q. Carl Manson made this film?

A. No, no, no. I think that you ask about Shoah.

Q. No.

A. No, no. This thing was shown in Polish television but I understood that you ask about a show made by Lanzsmann. It was in Polish television too.

Q. Yes, no, I didn't.

A. But this movie was in Polish television year ago. Of course on 4th of July. One year ago. But I think you must remember that the appearance of a Jewish subject in Poland is connected with new possibilities because you know about it, yes.

Q. Yes, that I've been studying.

Q. Was written by who?

A. For many years it was taboo subject because it was, it wasn't good for Polish Communists to talk about the Jews. Of course, after the 1968 when they are responsible for this immigration, the last immigration, Jews from Poland. And for many many years it was taboo subject. For instance, when I was writing this book about Kielce some archives were closed for me. Yes, I couldn't use it, but I had happy, happiness because in the end when I was finished writing this book I got permission to use it because it was beginning of the "round table" in Poland.

Q. The new government?

A. No new government. It was beginning of talking between the Communist and Solidarity in Poland. And then something was changed.

Q. So did you publish a book on . . . ?

A. Yes, it will be published by I don't know exactly when because the publishers have troubles with _____.

Q. In Polish, obviously.

A. Yes, in Polish, and as I said to you yesterday, some part of the book will be published in Russian and English.

Q. And have you seen this book?

A. Yes.

Q. What do you think of this book? It's a journal (?).

A. Yes, I know. But I don't know -- it isn't his work. It's kind of anthology. But I think it isn't honest to publish not his articles, not his work.

Q. Under his name?

A. Yes.

Q. So he didn't write the whole book?

A. No. The first . . .

Q. Was written by who?

A. [Meducki] and Wrona. . . write a book about Jews in Kielce before the

Q. Yeah. . . his book, but I don't know him personally. And I think you

A. And the second, it's part of testimonies, some parts from archives.

That is only about 15 pages. And the next part of book, I think it wasn't good idea to put part of book -- how to say -- literature between the documents.

Q. It's a book of literature?

A. Yes. A book of literature. And this book is about the Jews, about -- okay, another person. But it isn't connected with them. It's fiction. And the next is article written by [She lists articles. . .] And the last is too, not only by Didovynozak but _____, and he [Wiacek] published under his name. . . after the war in Poland, about 1950, between 1944-46 it

Q. And do you know of Wrona? . . . because you have no materials,

A. Yes. . . documents about it, to say exactly how many. And I think that

Q. Did you meet him before he died?

A. Yes. He was my friend. And we published with Zanak the documents about the pogrom in Kielce and historic -- how to say . . .

Q. Journal. . . realist who came from United States to Poland and they

A. Journal, yes, in Poland. And we think the most interesting documents about Kielce and pogrom, and it was published last year before Zanak write.

And I think it isn't good book because it's only information, only . . . information without explaining. . . newspaper. And they believed in this version.

Q. Analysis?

A. Yes. Without analysis, without explaining. And I think it isn't good to publish it without analysis because the subject I think needs explaining before because only documents give not true information about . . . published the

Q. So you know Urbanski? . . . connected with

Q. The Nationalists in London.

A. Urbanski, I know that he wrote a book about Jews in Kielce before the war. I know his book, but I don't know him personally. And I think you don't know about it, but . . .

Q. It means kill Jews?

A. Yes, kill Jews as an order. And . . .

Q. Why is the Kielce pogrom so well known? Why is it -- 1000 Jews were killed after the war in Poland. Why the pogrom in Kielce?

A. Okay. Because it was in one place, in one day, and about 42 persons were killed in the town with big number of soldiers, of policemen. There was a big power of security. And I think it was made after the war and when you say about Jews killed after the war in Poland, about 2000, between 1944-46 it was killed 1-1/2 thousand and maybe 2000 because you have no materials, you have no documents about it, to say exactly how many. And I think that the reason that the Kielce pogrom is so well known is that it was in, as I said, in the center of town and . . .

Q. And the world, what about the world's reaction?

A. Some journalist who came from United States to Poland and they believed in official version.

Q. In the official version?

A. Version, yes, Communist newspaper it was called the [Glos Ludy]. It was name of this Communist newspaper. And they believed in this version.

Q. And the version was?

A. That it was made by the underground army. They connected with government in Israel, in London. And every time after every pogrom, before the trials, before the court sentences, Communist newspaper published the responsibility for the pogroms is connected with . . .

Q. The Nationalists in London.

A. Yes, Polish government in London with underground army, and it was kind of politician fight, because you know how politician situation after the war. It was changing government, and I think some of it is connected with reason of pogrom, but it is another story.

Q. Have you read the "Folk Stymy"?

A. No. But I know some articles from *Folk Stymy* because it was published in documents and I read it in documents with some commentary. And I think that Kielce -- how to say -- it's one of events in Polish history in which Polish people have to -- how to say -- I don't know the name of this word in English. It's kind of when the people are red in the face.

Q. Blush.

A. Blush -- make _____.

Q. Embarrassed.

A. Embarrassed, yes. And next question.

Q. So you think they might be embarrassed about it.

A. Because as I said at the beginning, it's very easy to describe Kielce pogrom to write, what happened, what policemen and soldiers were doing during the pogrom. It's very easy because there are documents and newspapers and talking with some persons. But understand is very difficult because, I don't know if you read about it, about half of victims were killed, they weren't shot, but they were killed with iron things, with wooden things, and it was made by hand, by people's hand. They had to catch the victim. And I talk yesterday during discussion that when I was writing this book about Kielce I met with two workers from Kielce and they were on Planty Street on that day and they were talking about killing one Jewish man, one Jew, and they told me about people who were throwing stones and they told me about this man that he was standing and later he was -- how to say --

underneath, and he was killed by the people who were from this town. And the similar story was told in this movie, a similar story. Maybe it is the same. But for me it was shock to observe the kind of talking about it without any emotion and sometimes they smiled and they talked to me with smiles when they were without any emotion, without any sympathy. It was a big shock for me and I couldn't understand that they didn't feel -- how to say -- human feelings. Because this man, he said, because it was easy to imagine what this man felt. And it was one of the most, not cruel -- I don't know how to say in English, but experience to talk with people from, not only from Kielce but about this pogrom. It was interesting to observe how people talk about it. And in this movie it was the same problem.

Q. Thank you very much.

#

NARRATIVE

Of all the people that I've interviewed, she was the most knowledgeable and seemingly most evenhanded. I think of anybody that's approached the truth about what actually happened, she has. It really impressed upon me when she talked about the Polish people needing to be embarrassed about this, that they needed to accept the responsibility for it. I don't think that the other historians I've spoken to have reached such similar conclusions. They more see it as an isolated event in history and that it doesn't have bearing now. But I think I need to interview them again for that, for me to be definite about that.

I think she knows that the film brings out the vulgarity in people in a way that she could . . . It brings out a barbarity that in an academic paper you can't bring out. And I don't know if that's what I'm trying to bring out

necessarily by my ethnographic study. I don't even know if ethnographic is the right word for it. I feel more like I'm studying people who study the pogrom in one sense. On the other hand, I'm also discovering how Poles today approach pogrom, but I'm really only doing it in Kielce and among historians, so it's not really a full picture. I'm learning a lot, but what about my results.

J.B.B

T: There are too many things which are really unknown to people yet. For years, you know, the whole documentation, all the papers were secret. Because all the parts, right?, were trying to take some -- get some profits. The Communist authorities were trying to draw people's attention back on certain things that were happening here -- away from. And at the same time they were trying to blame the National Democracy for what happened here.

Q: Right, in London.

T: And in the United States as well. Because they had their army here in Poland, right? Right, and the press and media in the United States which belong to the Jewish people just, you know, caught the idea and they were working on that. So, you know, it was then when they started noticing the natural enemy of the Jews in Poland which was National Democracy because National Democracy was very much anti-Jewish.

Q: Anti-Semitic, yes.

T: He's saying that even up to now people in the States still think that it was the National Democracy's fault because, you know, that was what was said in the United States by the Polish attaché in the United States.

Interview #10
Historian Stanislaw Meducky
male: (50's)
Kielce. July 1993
Prof. Meducky's home
Tape V

Interview with Prof. Meducky conducted formally. Olympia translated the interview "T" is Olympia. "Q" is JBB. I have put in an "O" when the statement was obviously that of Olympia and not a translation of something that Meducki said.

T. There are too many things which are really unknown to people yet. For years, you know, the whole documentation, all the papers were secret. Because all the parts, right?, were trying to take some -- get some profits. The Communist authorities were trying to draw people's attention back on certain things that were happening here -- away from. And at the same time they were trying to blame the National Democracy for what happened here.

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Q. Anti-Semitic, yes.

T. He's saying that even up to now people in the States still think that it was the National Democracy's fault because, you know, that was what was said in the United States by the Polish attaché in the United States.

Q. Right, that was the Communist line.

T. Actually, yeah, that was the only information they could get at that time so, you know, it was spread around at that time until now.

T. It's really a shame because the even the Jewish cultural organization in Poland . . . and it seems the Jewish identity was one of them, the most

Q. Which one?

T. It was like Jewish organization in Poland. The paper would probably have the name. They were following the same line -- I mean blaming National Democracy for what happened.

T. What he is saying, why it was so easy to blame National Democracy for what happened, because the National Democracy was in the underground movement after the war so they were publicizing a lot, a lot of things which were anti-Jewish. I mean, saying mainly that, you know, there were a lot of Jews in Polish government.

O. I just asked is it true that the police chief in Kielce was Jewish. He says yes. His name was Komanski.

Q. And the head of the Communist Party?

T. He was Jewish as well.

Q. What was the name?

T. (Name not audible). But in the time of the pogrom, _____, the chief of the police, was in Warsaw by that time.

T. And the mayor of the town was a Jew as well.

Q. Was Jewish?

T. Yeah. He ran away with the money, the town money, just before the pogrom.

Q. Really. He's saying that this was quite a natural thing.

He's saying that before the war Jewish people were neglected and they were criticized over their political life. But, you know, the Communists after the war, they wanted to show to people that, you know, they were treating everyone equally. So that's why they allowed a lot of minorities into their government and it seems the Jewish minority was one of them, the most important one. It was natural that they admitted them to the government. That was their line to show that they were treating people equally.

Not only in Poland but all over the world. Blum, who was Jewish and a Socialist . . . A social democracy. He's saying now it was a very attractive idea, I mean, to show that these Socialists and at the same time Jews, were treated as human beings. If a Jew had to lend us money then, you know, he wasn't a . There was one more thing -- there were some Polish companies in the Soviet Union . . . that came here together with the Russian Army. In the Polish Committee of . . . National Liberation . . . This was started in Lublin and this was the very beginning of the Polish Communist's government. And a lot of people in this government were Jewish, in this very first Communist government in Poland that came to Poland from the Soviet Union. Right, so this was, you know, a sort of sword in the National Democracy's hand because they could blame or they could say or claim that this government was Palestine (?) backed, that that was not Polish government, it was Jewish government imposed on them.

Q. Even though they were Polish Jews.

T. Even though .

Q. I want to know more about the actual events, if he could talk a little bit about what he thinks happened, what led up to the pogrom immediately.

T. The Polish community was suspecting even that . . . just people, they were suspecting that it was the Jews themselves who evolved the pogrom.

He says that it's ridiculous, but it might have been possible, you know. There could be a possibility that Jewish people, in order to be able to emigrate to Palestine, right?, just evolved this pogrom. Because British government was restricting emigration from these eastern countries to Palestine. So since there were such pogroms in Hungary, in Yugoslavia, he said, and other countries as well, not only in Poland, so you know, in order for it to be easier to emigrate from Poland to Palestine, they just wanted to show to the world that they were in danger here. See?

T. Because, you know, you asked him for the scientific approach so he is trying to give you _____. He wants to do his job.

Q. I can see he's getting every angle.

T. He's saying it's the wrong thing to do to accuse Polish people of being, you know, having some in-born anti-Semitism because it's a wrong thing to say because people are anti-Semite all over the world and it's not a Polish feature.

T. He says that he was traveling all over the world and he was meeting anti-Semites all over the world. That's why he's saying it's really impossible now to talk about some very objective approach to this problem.

Q. Does he know that I'm doing also, in addition to interviewing historians, I'm also interviewing folklore.

T. He's saying that, you know, a lot of research is being carried out now at the moment in Kielce about Jewish affairs.

T. He was just telling me that, you know, being Jewish at the moment can be kind of snobbery. That's what I told you about today.

Q. What did he say?

T. He was _____ that they went somewhere and there was one Polish, right?, a Polish nobility, people from Polish nobility, and one of them said, "Well, you know, one of my grandfather's was Jewish." And the other guy said, "Oh, you're such a snob." It was sort of fashionable to have someone . . .

Q. Now.

T. Yeah. So their situation right before the pogrom, the first thing was this National Democracy, right, working against Jewish people. The second thing was that the Catholic Church was never really after, for the Jews, they were always against the Jews. The third thing was that there was a very uneasy atmosphere connected with the UB, the secret service, right, which was led by the Jews, by Komanski as chief of police.

Q. In Kielce or in Warsaw?

T. In Kielce. Right, there were a lot of Jews in the police at that moment. So, you know, there were a lot of -- they were doing a lot of arresting, putting people into jail, all those things, so, you know, the atmosphere was against that. But by the same token it was against the Jews.

Q. So what they are doing now, they want to make it more clear and more known, better known to people, so they decided to print all the documents they can print. And he's got here the . . .

Q. This is his book?

T. Yeah, a description of the whole event.

Q. That he wrote?

T. Yes.

Q. This is based on what he has lived?

T. It is based on the documents _____. Minute by minute what happened.

Q. But based on whose documents?

T. Interviews with the witnesses.

T. Mostly these are court documents.

Q. Court documents, produced by the Communists.

T. By the Communists. And people who saw it, the witnesses.

I just asked him if the witnesses were interviewed by the Communists, and he says yes. This is going to be the first volume, you know, just documents from the court. And the second volume is going to be with the documents coming from the political parties. And also the report of the Polish Parliament. With commentary. Because these reports . . . So this report made by the Polish Parliament is false. There are a lot of untrue things in it. What do you want to know?

Q. I want to know what happened the morning . . . actually, tell me what the situation in the town was like just before the pogrom.

T. Do you mean political situation or, you know, what people felt?

Q. What people were, political.

T. General feeling.

Q. Yeah.

T. All-right, so after the war we have a Ministry of Propaganda and Information in Poland. So now he's going to present what the documents are saying about the entire feeling before the . . .

T. There are three types of documents. The first are, you know, military document, and then second type is, you know, documents which were made by the secret service, and the third one was by the ministry of information.

Q. There were cases when Jewish people were killed.

T. But don't you think that this is the same as just a robbery?

Q. No. You repeat this.

T. People were killed after the war, but it wasn't because they were Jewish. Right? But it was either because they were rich, so, you know, it was just an ordinary robbery thing, or because it was a member of secret service.

Q. That killed them?

T. Yeah. No, not secret. I'm saying that the reason why some Jewish people were killed after the war was not because they were Jewish, most of the time, all right?, but because they were either rich, so it was an instance of ordinary robbery, or because they were in the secret service. Right? So it wasn't just a Jew -- let's kill him.

Q. It was just a political fight. So look, we've got here 1948 and this is the document saying about the cases where the Jewish people were killed. A member of the police force. Almost it was like a voluntary police, right?

Q. One, what is preferred? Again, Communist party. Three, some other party.

Q. Two, official, government official. Four.

Q. Okay, that's great. But let me ask a question. What is this graph?

T. It's the same thing.

Q. Those were killings from after the war until 1948?

Q. And this question might sound a little jabbing. The people who reported the Jewish killings had no incentive to say they were killed because they were Jews, but had incentive to say they were killed because of something else.

T. Yes.

Q. Yet there are many eyewitnesses of Poles killing Jews after the war just because they were coming back to claim their house. What does he think about that?

T. But don't you think that that this is the same as just a robbery?

Q. No. You repeat this.

T. Okay. He's saying that there wasn't such a case in Kielce.

Q. Okay, in Kielce.

T. He's saying that one of his friends, Mr. Urbanski, he was researching the civil court cases, right?, where some killings were involved or, you know, some abuses against Jews. And it turned out that, you know, a lot of Polish people in Kielce were testifying for the Jews, you know, if they were claiming their houses, right? They were testifying for them, not against them.

Q. In Kielce?

T. Yeah. But there wasn't such a case reclaiming his or her house, you know, people didn't want to give it back and they killed. But there were cases where, you know, Jewish people were killed because they had a lot of gold or money or . . .

During the pogrom, you know, one or two policemen just killed a woman and child only because they wanted to get them . . . So he killed the woman and two-month child . . . And when they asked him why did you kill the child as well, then he said because he would be suffering without his mother.

But there is another side of this, that, you know, after this pogrom Polish authorities were trying to organize a lot of -- not demonstrations -- manifestations, right?, against the pogrom, but in some Polish factories people just didn't want to go to these manifestations.

Q. What's a manifestation?

T. Like a demonstration.

Q. A protest.

T. A protest, yeah.

You know, gatherings of the workers. Sort of formal protest against the pogrom, but a lot of the workers didn't want to go, didn't want to contribute.

Q. Who started the pogrom?

T. Probably militia.

There was a little boy who went somewhere. And his family was looking for him and they couldn't find him. His father called the police and then he went to the church as well, you know, to get some help. When he came back home his son was at home, right?, it turned out that he had gone to see his family outside Kielce, 20 kilometers from Kielce. So the father went back to the police and just to report he had found his son.

This boy didn't admit, you know, that he went to see his family. You can even talk to this boy because he's still alive. He went on to become member of the security service. So he made up a story for his father. What the situation was is that he came back home, this boy, you know, all the family were gathered in the house and all the neighbors, so he made up a story. "Where have you been," they asked him.

So he was reporting, "I was just walking along the street and one guy comes up to me and he asks me to help him to carry a parcel to his home." So he's saying, "So when we reached the building, he caught me and he put me into his cellar." And there he was kept in this cellar. And he managed to escape somehow. So he came back home.

So one of the neighbors asked him, "What kind of language did they speak? Where they Polish?" And he's saying something like, "The Gypsies." But they weren't Gypsies. So who can it be? Only Jews. Alright? If that were Jews, then, you know, there would be common gossip spread around in Kielce or in Poland that they are killing Jews for the blood for the matzah.

Q. Killing Christian children?

T. Yeah. Isn't it Catholic Church, you know, saying that this was the truth?

Q. Yes. The policeman who was on duty sent three or four people to
T. So in 1946, right, the Jewish Committee in Poland had a meeting with
Polish . . . with the Bishop in Lublin. So there was a meeting of Jewish
Committee with the Bishop in Lublin. And they wanted him to comment on
the pogrom. He said that he can't make any protest against it as such, but the
Catholic Church, you know, is against any murder in general, so naturally
they are against it. And then the Bishop said that he can't say for sure
that this is true or not.

Q. About the child.

T. About the child and about the blood being taken.

Q. Right, about the blood.

T. About the ritual. And he said that he can't really declare his . . .

Q. So, before the pogrom in Kielce, he says the Church was very anti-
Semitic.

T. Yes.

Q. Does he have any -- did he talk to anybody? I mean, has he talked to
people who remember hearing things in church?

T. He's saying that he hasn't talked to anyone about that.

Right, the underlying whole _____ emphasizing that,
you know, Jesus Christ was betrayed by Jewish people and was sentenced to
death. So, you know, they were emphasizing this aspect of the whole.

So the father with his brother-in-law and his son went to the police
station to report about the . . . But on the way to the police station they were
passing these buildings, this very building where the boy was supposed to be
kept. There was a group of Jewish people there standing. And this little boy
just pointed at one of the men and said, "This was the guy." So they reported

it to the police. The policeman who was on duty sent three or four people to check on this and they took the Jew.

To the police station and of course didn't know anything. And they checked in the building and there was no cellar in the building. Because it's very close to a river. So there is only water. So this boy started, you know, to say, you know, that they were keeping him in some other cellar, not underneath. When the three policemen were going to check the building, right?, you know, the police station was just right on the corner where Sienkiewicza and Butchka (?) Street is. There's a bank there. The police station was there, so it's very close to . . .

Q. It's only a block away.

T. Yeah. But on the way they were talking all the time what they are going to do. You know, a child was kidnapped so they are going to check on that. So people were listening to that, people started gathering. There was a lot of confusion already, you know, tension. So the policeman on duty, you know, reported the whole thing to the chief.

So, you know, the news spread around very quickly, so, you know, when the chief arrived at the station there was also the . . . The leader of the Jewish Committee also arrived and tried to . . . They caught this Jew, right? And this leader of the Jewish Committee tried to phone everywhere really, you know, to the secret service and to the party and everywhere just to clear the thing up.

Q. But it was still light and . . . People were gathering. It was a crowd, you know. There were two people out fighting, you know, people were gathering and the whole tension starts immediately. So the policemen were sent again, more, more policemen were sent to the place. And people were already, you know, knocking at the door. Trying

to get in, so . . . He's saying that undoubtedly it was the police who started beating the Jews up at the very beginning. And then, you know, after the police force, you know, people starting pouring in the house, right? Looking around. And then the army was sent, about 20 soldiers.

Q. Did the soldiers do anything?

T. The only thing the army did was that they asked Jewish people to give all weapons they had.

Q. Then?

T. Yeah.

Q. Right then.

T. Uh huh. So if you don't give us the weapon you've got at home, we're going to take it.

Q. That was after the pogrom had started.

T. During. During the pogrom. Some of the Jews gave their weapons, some didn't.

I said some Jews had permission to keep a weapon at home. He said yes, they did, but, you know, in spite of that.

So, you know, then until now people just don't know who first started, you know, shooting. Dr. Kahane, he was the . . . Leader of the Jewish Committee. He was shot when he was talking with . . . Because he lived in this very building, right?, the leader of the Jewish Committee and he was shot while he was talking, trying, you know, to get some help.

Q. Were most of the Jews killed by gunfire or another way?

T. No, most people were just, you know, had their . . .

T. Ten women had their bones broken and head crashed, smashed, alright? One woman again head smashed, but some other, you know,

injuries. And 21 men, again, head smashed. And only, right . . . three men were shot.

Q. Can you read all of those?

T. Do you want -- because this is basically what I said, but, you know, with medical terms. Do you want it?

Q. It's interesting.

T. Okay, so I'll read it in Polish and then I'll translate it, right? Because there are a lot of medical terms so I want to think about it.

Q. Right, so now, you know, the case was that they were saying that only one child was killed, but you know gossiping. But people started saying that more and more, you know, that there were more children captured . . .

Q. But the motivation, though, was the Christian child.

T. Yes. And then, you know, it's a crowd, you know.

Q. I don't know. I'm not Polish. Tell -- you know what I mean.

T. You know, emotions start working, you know, they just don't -- people stop thinking. People don't think when there is a crowd, that something happens, something bad, something against . . . And then, you know, this objection against the government.

Q. Objection?

T. Yeah, against the government, against the authorities, Jews in the authorities. You know, everything . . .

Q. Be more specific . . .

T. That's what he's saying.

T. And he says it's not only in Poland. It's like, you know, everywhere.

Q. I studied Polish-Jewish relations, so . . .

T. You want me to translate it?

[Break]

T. You know, it started from a very little thing, and then it grows, grows, grows, and emotions . . . But he can't say if it wasn't -- if the authorities didn't allow to happen.

But his opinion is that the authorities, the police could cut it . . .

Q. Whenever they wanted.

T. Yeah.

T. At the beginning, you know, stop it. But they let it go. And he doesn't know, maybe, perhaps, you know, it was the Russians who had the . . .

Q. Agents?

T. No, role in that. The chief of the security service. Undoubtedly he was also in the Russian security service. He was working for the Russians. When he was in Rzeszow, when he was the chief in Rzeszow there was pogrom there as well.

Q. Could he spell his name.

T. Sobczynski.

Q. Right, I've heard of him.

Q. And then he was transferred to Warsaw.

T. Yes.

T. He was connected with the intelligence service.

Q. UB.

T. Yeah. No, KGB.

Q. KGB.

T. He was in Poland but, you know, secretly he was working for the KGB.

T. He's telling his story.

Q. His story.

T. You want me to translate it?

[break]

T. The Russians wanted from the United Nations, right?, to have a protectorate, protection over Libya, you know, but they were refused. They said it was the British who had the protection. But they wanted to have their own [influence] somewhere in the Mediterranean area. They were trying to look for some other solution. So what they wanted to do, they wanted to support the idea of Jewish people emigration to Palestine and at the same time together with the flow of Jewish people they wanted to send their own people with them.

T. He's saying that, you know, the Russians had a very great contribution to the creation of Israel, of Jewish state. He said that the British were there so the British were against Israel. That's why, you know, the Russians had their own _____ sending Jews to Palestine. But Jewish people were clever and they didn't allow the Communists. They had the state, but they didn't allow the Russians in.

Q. But Russia voted for the Jewish state, yeah.

T. Yes there's much... But, you know...

Q. And Britain didn't. were very few Jews who survived, but there were

T. So, you know, they couldn't send their own people there officially, but they could do it, you know, through this channel.

Q. So what I've heard, there were many big forces playing, bigger political pictures, bigger political agendas -- all had some interest in a pogrom happening. _____'s professor? Or what did he say?

T. Um hmm.

Q. The only common thing that I have found in this is that they all wanted to play on Polish fears of Jews. Is this true?

T. He's saying not, because there were very few Jews left in Poland at that time, so people weren't afraid of them. he town.

T. Have you been in the Jewish Institute?

Q. Yes, I've been doing research there. I read, I read Yiddish.

T. He's saying that there are a lot of, you know, very thick _____ there where you can find all this, descriptions of every case of, you know, survivors and the Jews in Poland. Every single case, they have to report it and describe it. He's saying that when the Jews were reporting that they were saved by Poles.

Q. During the pogrom?

T. Yeah. No, during the war. You can study a lot of the cases . . . He's saying that you can find in these files there at the Jewish Institute in Warsaw that, you know, there are very different attitudes of Jewish people toward Polish people. Because some of them were saved, some of them weren't. So, you know . . .

T. A lot of Jewish people also accuse other Jewish people . . .

Q. I know that some Jews were Communists and some Jews were Zionists, and there's much . . . But I, you know . . .

T. So, you know, there were very few Jews who survived, but there were a lot of Jews in the authorities. And the Bishop Wyszynski, he even accused Jewish people of bringing Communism to Poland.

Q. Rozanski?

T. Yeah.

Q. He was _____'s predecessor? Or what did he say?

T. One of, yeah.

Q. What did he say?

T. He said that _____ as well . . .

Q. What happened to Kielce after the pogrom?

T. There was a tendency to punish the town.

- Q. By? The title of the conference subject is . . . Unwanted Heritage.
- T. By the government. Oh, they wanted to get rid of the Polish Bishop that And. Because Kielce is a center, like a capitol of the Kielce district . . . in the military service, you can be in a sort of a civil service. And
- Q. They wanted to make it a different district. He sent to Israel.
- T. Yeah. They wanted a conviction, maybe there is a conviction still in Kielce, that you know, Kielce wasn't granted any funds to build anything. They got rid of a lot of people in Kielce authorities and they moved them to some other district. He says that it's not true that this was just a common conviction. Because his job is, he's doing research on the history of industry. What he knows, right, from documents and from his research is that, you know, the funds which were granted to Kielce were not, you know, collected and the other district . . .
- T. It always happens that whenever someone grants you some funds you always think that it's too little, that it's less than it should be. He's going to be there, to attend one of the conferences.
- Q. Which one? In France where the camp was, where the Jews were
- T. Innsbruck.
- Q. Innsbruck, Switzerland.
- T. In Austria. now, where Hitler was born. Kielce.
- Q. In Austria. When?
- T. In August? End of September. He says do you know that the Kielce pogrom is treated as the last period of Holocaust? other people coming to
- Q. Yes. Tell me about that.
- T. It's just, you know, this is a perception of Jewish people. If you go for this exhibition about the Holocaust at Yad Va Sham.
- Q. Has he been there?

T. Yeah. The title of the conference subject is . . . Unwanted Heritage.

Q. Unwanted Heritage.

T. And, you know, in Austria the situation is if you want to . . . If you want to be in the military service, you can be in a sort of a civil service. And you can do that in Israel as well. I mean you can be sent to Israel.

T. So if you don't want to be taken to the military service in Austria, you can, you know, do the service in any organization all over the world, social organization. So he's coming back now to this conference on Unwanted Heritage, which means, you know, he's chosen twelve towns. All over the world. In Europe, which have the Unwanted Heritage. And one of them is Nuremberg. And Gory, where Stalin was born. The prison, where the prison is where people who were trying to escape across the wall . . . In all the cities which have got sort of . . .

Q. Dubious.

T. . . . history.

Q. And what's the other cities?

T. Gurst is a city in France where the camp was, where the Jews were gathered.

Q. Gurst.

T. Yeah. Braunow, where Hitler was born. Kielce.

Q. Which town?

T. Hoyesveld.

Q. And he is representing Kielce? Or are there other people coming to talk about Kielce?

T. They are going there with the mayor of our town.

Q. How many people from Kielce?

T. Only him and the mayor.

- Q. Just you two are going for Kielce.
- T. He's saying that he doesn't like the idea, he's going to represent Kielce there.
- T. So their task would be to explain everything, to try to clear it up.
- Q. That's what's going to be happening at the . . .
- T. Um hmm.
- T. There is a suggestion . . .
- T. So he made a suggestion that there should be a museum of Holocaust in this particular building, you know, to make people know that we do remember about that and we do feel . . .
- Q. That is your proposal.
- T. So what they want to do is they want to have an exhibition of their Jewish history in this town.
- Q. And has he proposed this to the city?
- T. He has, _____ at the moment, but the authorities are very much for it.
- T. Of course, there are arguments against that, but in any case . . .
- Q. When does he think it will happen?
- T. He's saying as soon as they have the money. You know, there's no money for anything at the moment.
- Q. They could get money from a Jewish organization.
- T. He doesn't want to. He wants it to be done by the Polish community.
- T. Because these documents, his book will be published with the city's money.
- Q. With the city's money.
- T. Yeah.
- T. A lot of his book will be translated into German and British -- English.

- Q. And does he think of his role as trying to explain what really happened?
- T. He's saying it's going to be in the third volume.
- Q. Does he feel he is compromising by working with the city?
- T. He's saying no.
- Q. Because he might have something that's embarrassing to the city.
- T. No, he's saying that no one cares what he's writing. He says: why did I start this at all. I was on my holiday in pain one day. And there was a hotel and restaurant and there was a coach from Portugal. A lot of people got off. And his car was Polish. So when these people saw the car they came up. Ah, you're from Poland. So, you know, they were asking questions, how's everything in Poland.
- Q. In Polish?
- T. Yeah.
- Q. Were they older people?
- T. They were Jewish, from Israel. So they asked him but where exactly are you from? Somebody said from Kielce. And they just became so cold.
- Q. Yes?
- T. Nothing else, you know. So he became very interested about why. So you know, he thought that it was that . . .
- Q. Because, you know, now the Kielce authorities have got their own business in that in this museum and everything because they want to clear the atmosphere. They want good relations with the Jews and with Israel. So they want to break this barrier. There was a -- the last huge excursion of Jews in Kielce was surrounded and escorted by the police.
- Q. Yes, yes, yes. It was like that all over Poland.
- T. But it was the Jews who wanted protection. They claimed . . .

T. It means something, right?

Q. What does he think of that?

T. It was stupid of them. But you know, remembering what happened years ago, they can't know what the situation is now. So he thinks that they put away the possibility of good relations again by claiming this protection of the police.

Q. Unreal.

T. What's unreal?

Q. I just heard about this last night. I am very involved in trying to understand why this tour happened. Because it is, I think, very dysfunctional. It is creating more problems than it is stopping.

T. He wanted to ask the Israel ambassador in Poland why, and he says well, I can't understand that kind of behavior on Jewish part.

Q. The Israeli ambassador couldn't understand it.

T. Yeah.

Q. But the president of Israel was here.

T. Yes, he had a very warm reception here. [My] wife is just now finishing her book about Jewish culture in Poland.

Q. That's very interesting.

T. She's done some publications already.

Q. President Herzog's grandparents, and my great grandparents are buried in the same cemetery, we think, we're not sure.

[Meducki mentions name of Bozena Szaynok.]

T. She is Jewish.

T. He says I'm not against Miss Szaynok, but that's what I heard.

JBB. Does he know Bozena?

T. No.

- Q. He doesn't know her.
- T. No.
- T. He's been told . . .
- JBB. And what is his impression? Why does he bring her up?
- T. He knows her work, right?
- T. And sometimes his impression is that she's not very faithful to the documents.
- T. That she's sort of biased. But because she's very young, she's starting doing historical research . . .
- T. Just starting to be a historian . . .
- T. She's concentrating on Kielce itself and he's saying that it's impossible to concentrate only on Kielce because this is a very large subject and it's got connections everywhere, so you can't focus on a very tiny . . .
- T. Also it's got connections with international politics and everything.
- T. And this is the key to . . .
- Q. And it was the event in Spain that sparked all of his interest. And what year did this happen?
- T. Five years ago.
- Q. And this set him off.
- T. And then he persuaded one of his friends to join him.
- JBB. Who?
- T. Well, he's dead now.
- T. So they are publishing this after . . . both names.
- T. So later he was going to Spain for some research on Jewish affairs here after the war, after the pogrom.
- T. But he died.
- T. He's saying it's not easy but you can't pretend it didn't happen.

- T. In Kielce some people are just saying why should we go back to this.
- T. But it's a fact that some of the people who were prosecuted after the pogrom were killed. There were just people taken and . . .
- T. Before the court case started, trial started they knew what the sentence was going to be.
- T. So, you know, the people _____ in Kielce before the court trial started.
- JBB. Ask him where he got the candlesticks.
- T. He just bought them.
- JBB. At an antique store?
- T. He got them from his father.
- T. But all his possessions were left on the other side of the border.
- T. The Soviet Union.
- T. His father lived in Kielce before the war.
- T. In 1935 they went to the eastern border.
- T. Later when he came back here, he had to leave all things there.
- Q. So he got these after he left Russia.
- T. Everything was left there.
- T. But most of the things he's got here he just bought.
- JBB. They're very attractive and I just wondered.
- T. It's from a Polish factory. Now there is a theater there. One of the best theaters in Warsaw.
- JBB. What is the name of the . . . ?
- T. The factory -- Norbleen.
- Q. Norbleen. The theater.
- T. The theater presentations. Very good.
- Q. Thank you.

[Conversation between Olympia and I after interview with Meducki.]

T. But on paper it looks more.

Q. More authentic.

T. More authentic, yeah.

Q. And he kept referring to it over and -- I mean, he kept referring to the papers even though you had tried to get him to talk about it. And the -- and he smoked the cigarettes, but he would only do so with your accomplice-meant. You know, he would only take you as an accomplice. And I kept trying to get him to take responsibility in a sense, you know, to say yes. You know?

T. Uh huh.

Q. But he never really would. And the psychology of the professor, that was interesting. He was -- I felt that when he thought Bozena was Jewish, that that in a turn was saying that's why she's coming to certain conclusions, because she's Jewish. That if she was Polish she would be coming to other conclusions. And then there was the thing about her being young. So there were two condescension's; one that she was Jewish and one that she was young. Both have -- they would have influence, it's true. But why her interpretation should be less authentic than his, I don't understand.

T. And you know, I thought when you asked the questions about how are you doing your research, I thought you wanted to prove him sort of -- I mean to find out whether he was really in that for a long time. I expected something like ten years. But five years from the very first idea.

[Tape Off. End Side A.]

Jews; it was against the Communist government, Communist
 introduced by Moscow.
 M translates
 U: And the Jews were also used, for instance, in
 people do not like. Of course, there were also Poles, but there were many
 Jews.
 Interview #11
 Historian Krzysztof Urbanski
 male: age (50's)
 Kielce, July, 1992
 Prof. Urbanski's office,
 Kielce Historical Institute
 Tape VIII - Side A

Interview conducted formally. Magda translated simultaneously. This interview was transcribed into Polish by Tadeusz, and subsequently translated into English by Piotr; thus ensuring that the original translation had been accurate. This is not the full interview. Several sections on unrelated topics were not transcribed, or translated due to time constraints.

PROF. URBANSKI: So Jews were in a very delicate situation. They were representing in many cases government, for most of the people connected being subjected to Moscow. For instance, Mintz and some other people who were very high ranking in the [Lublin (?)] government,

MAGDA translates to JBB:

U. We can find more of such people who are playing such role.

JBB. I cannot understand why Poles were murdering Jews. It was only caused by they were against the government?

U. This is not a case of murdering Jews. It was a fight between the community was against, was connected very closely to the London government.

U. And was against the government of the Communists, and the Jews were on the side of Communists in many cases because in the people's army from Russia there were many many such people. It was not against typical

Jews; it was against the Communist government, Communist link force introduced by Moscow.

M translates: many cases historically researched that the Poles were helping

U. And the Jews were also used, for instance, in security, an organization people do not like. Of course, there were also Poles, but there were very many Jews.

JBB. And he says that he understands.

U. And there was one more thing. Right after year '45 when the Russian army came and Polish Security Service came into being, many people have been arrested from Intelligencia and the people, the organization making arrests was UB and so on. So also it was caused somehow by Poles, but also by Jews who played telling and trolling in this organization.

M translates: the Planety. Kibbutz Hudu, organization for immigration.

U. Of course, I am not trying to rationalize the Kielce events, but I'm trying to show an atmosphere that it was not really against the Jews but against these Communists and UB.

M translates: when they were coming back to their apartments and they were

JBB. To these workers were conscious that these Jews are in power, that they are ruining the country?

M. Yes, I think so.

M translates from JBB:

M. Did those Jews who came here to Kielce?

JBB. If it was Polish nationalistic.

U. There were people, Nationalists who were against creating for those Jews some kind of comparatives.

JBB. Did you ever think about this?

U. Yes, there is my nice book, not very small to sell, 5000 is not so much, one can buy it. Before the war in Kielce there was 18,000 Jews, survived 500. We had many, many cases historically researched that the Poles were helping Jews during occupation. In '45 there were some people from certain Jewish groups, also from Kielce, and survived approximately 200 people just from Kielce. But also Jews were coming from the other cities. When the municipality gave them on Planty the house, but that was not the only house. The other place where there was many Jews, it was the house on Budka Street. These were two buildings where Jews were gathering.

And in this building on Planty there was a kibbutz, immigration kibbutz.

M. Where it was, on the Planty?

U. Yes, on the Planty. Kibbutz Hudu, organization for immigration. There was a kind of hostel, there was a kitchen. These Jews were coming, they were staying in Kielce, but some others were just sleeping one night and then they were going to the west. And these were living before the war in Kielce, very often they were coming back to their apartments and they were claiming them back. He came, so they were giving them back, the apartments in Kielce and there were single families also in Kielce.

JBB. (M) Other Poles were not there?

U. Where?

JBB. In these houses.

U. No, these were the houses especially prepared for the Jews by the municipality.

M. No, he asked if there were Poles present in the houses they had to abandon during the war and when they were coming back.

U. Yes, they were living, but if somebody came back and was asking to give him back the apartment usually they were getting apartments. Jews were getting their apartments back. With getting apartments back there was no problems, but the buildings, real estate has been given back by church but it was always very efficient. We have documents if you were an owner, basically during three or four weeks you could have your real estate back.

M translates:

U. In most cases, these houses were sold through the court very fair and they were leaving. In most cases they were leaving a road, but many of them remained, hired some people who were responsible for the buildings. They were Poles, they were signing and also they were leaving. And these people were managing the houses.

JBB. (M) He asks if there were any groups.

M. No, nothing. After the war it was kind of like martial law. There were some political movements, not only groups but sort of parties who would not accept Jews or _____. For instance, National Democracy Movement, they had their own relation toward Jews, but to create kind of a group in a city screaming hate Jews -- no, it was nothing like that.

M translates:

U. People were angry on Jews because they were representatives of the people's government and that's why there was certain evil involved. There is one more thing very interesting. Pogrom Kielce is now very well known, but the pogrom in Kielce was not the biggest one. A lot more Jews were killed in Dambeen when the Germans left and Russians did not come. Peasants burned . . . that's it.

Interview #12
Journalist Tadeusz Wiacek
male: (40's)
Termin Kielce, July, 1993
Home of Mr. Wiacek's home
Tape IV

I wrote down these lines during a discussion with Henry, and read them back to him to make sure I got the information correctly. This was the interview conducted formally. Due to technical equipment failure, the recording was inaudible enough to render it unfit for transcription. Interview conducted in Polish, nephew of Maria Zaborowska translating.

[partial notes after interview.]

In the smoky, book-lined room, Wiacek answered smoothly. Usually. When I got to understand him was when he spoke of Jewish constituency of post-war Communist Party in the city. Was communism something the Jews of Kielce were trying to impose? How many were communists? Where do justification and scapegoating cross-over? He was very kind to break from his vacation for me.

Interview #13

Henry Kay

male: 64

Toronto, December 1992

Home of his daughter Gloria

I wrote down these lines during a discussion with Henry, and read them back to him to make sure I got the information correctly. This was the third of three interviews I have conducted with Henry as of May 1993. I interviewed Henry three times, once in Detroit in April 1992, in May by telephone, and in December, in Toronto. The text of our most lengthy conversation, in June 1992, is included in the section KOZUBSKI, CHILEK.

The play the "Mishpit" is about a sentence. That is what *mishpit* means in Yiddish. A Jewish man was convicted and sentence to die of starvation and hunger. The man dies in the lap of his daughter who has come to offer him her breast to suckle to keep him alive. I remember hearing about this because my parents were at the theater then. . . the Polish Theater in Kielce. And my father escaped out the back door disguised as a woman. You know, with my mother's scarf over his head. They were sitting in the first row on the right-side, so they were near the exit, that's how he escaped!

Interview #14

S. L. Shneiderman

male: 84

Manhattan, May 1993

The Shneidermans' apartment

Interview conducted formally, in S. L. Shneiderman's living room. This is a partial section of full interview, which includes material I have used.

S. L. Shneiderman: All of them wanted to get rid of the Jews. That Jews should escape. At the same time the Zionists movement organized "briecha", the escape. . .The Chief of Security forces, Berman, he said to me, "we know they hate us, and want to get rid of us." He managed to save Poland from Stalin's persecutions. They're were no political trials. None. Jakub Berman played an important role in this.

At the trial was Rozanski, whose real name was Goldberg. His father was editor of the Zionist paper "Heint". What is going on here? That this Jew was in charge of the execution trial. I saw the execution. He invited me to see it, and some security came and got me in the morning.

One of them tore off from the rope and ran, He ran away, but they shot him. Rozanski had a cousin in Italy. He was arrested after the pogrom, sentenced for fifteen years, but served three. He got sick. Called his cousin, who was then in Warsaw. I want to tell you something, he said.

And he was buried in the Jewish cemetery, next to his mother's grave. She had died before the war. Rozanski organized the arrests in Kielce.

JBB: What do you think of Checinski?

S: He lives in America now.

JBB: What about Henryk Blaszczyk? *was born in Kielce, do you know*

S: Blaszczyk is very important in Poland now.

JBB: Did his father work for the NSZ?

S: No question about it. Have you seen the film of mine *The Last Chapter*? My very own pictures from the pogrom are in the movie. At the big communal grave -- there were Soviet Security faces, with their faces to the public, their backs to the grave, watching me photograph them.

JBB: Today their are Poles interested, Jews interested. The main story is I get five or six letters a month. In Polish. *research Chelinski (who says) that (He sat looking through his copy of Between Hope and Fear, wrapped in white butcher paper. It is the only edition ever published.)*

S: There was another important thing. Cardinal Wyszyński. Stephan Cardinal Wyszyński. At the time of the pogrom he called in the press. He told them "I was attending the Bayliss trial. (A trial in the Soviet Union, where a Jew was accused of killing a young boy for making matzah in 1911.) At the trial they discovered many documents that show Jews using matzah." You see, nothing was said then that the Jews were not using blood.

JBB: Have you read anything by Israel Szmuelajwicz?

S: Oh, Yes.

JBB: You knew him.

S: He is coming from Kielce. He himself was born in Kielce.

JBB: He wrote in the Folk-Styme?

S: Folk Styme, Folk-Styme.

JBB: He wrote an article called My Hometown Kielce. How reliable is he?

S: He is a reliable man. . .He is a good writer, very y sincere. Maybe a little primitive.

JBB: What was his background? He was born in Kielce, do you know when?

S: No.

JBB: Did he survive the war in Poland?

S: YES of course. He was here.

JBB: He didn't go to Russia?

S: Well, I don't know.

JBB: Have you ever heard of the Kieleckie Scyzoriki?

S: The little pocket knife? Doing the research. . .Chęcinski, [who says] that he men who really organized these Jewish communists. I don't know him. I never wrote about him. It's really unpleasant to write about it. But his name was mentioned recently, I saw it, in some Warsaw papers. But I don't trust him. It was possible. He was a security man, he was a security man and he, he did his job.

JBB: So it's a possibility.

S: Sure. Anyway, every group: the communists, as well as the anti-Fascists, the anti-Semites, all of them participated [t]here.

Interview #15
Prof. Joseph A. Gierowski
male: 70+
Krakow, July 1992
Jagiellonian University

I scheduled an interview with Prof. Gierowski, through the Research Center on Jewish History and Culture in Poland, which he directs. We discussed, without a tape recorder, about the Center, his field of expertise, and finally his memories of Kielce during the war. I jotted down some notes. The full notes of our interview, pertaining to Kielce, are contained in his entry GIEROWSKI, PROF. JOSEPH A..

When the senior Mr. Zucker heard about the Kielce pogrom, his son remembers forty-seven years later, they liquidated their assets immediately and left Poland within weeks.

The significance of Mr. Zucker's story lies in its historical relevance. Many histories of the Shoah quote figures on Jews who survived the war, and their status, as well as provide figures for after the war. But this unique personal perspective gave me an account of a particular family, and their response to the pogrom. Their response typifies much historical truth, and was consistent with other sources about the period.

Excerpt from:

*The World Must Know: A history of the Holocaust
as told in the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum
By Michael Berenbaum (1993, 207-8)*

Interview #16

Mike Zucker

male: 64

Los Angeles April 1993

by telephone

On July 4, 1946, a mob of Poles attacked the 130 Jews who had returned to the town of Kielce. Before the war, 24,000 Jews lived in Kielce; the 130 who were

A friend of mine suggested I contact Mr. Zucker, a survivor of the holocaust, and a native of Kielce. Mr. Zucker grew up in Kielce. When the Germans invaded, Mr. Zucker survived the war in hiding in Poland with his parents. After the war, his father was one of just a few Jewish lawyers left in Poland, and consequently set up an office. He hired employees, and filed the claims on behalf of Jewish victims. When the senior Mr. Zucker heard about the Kielce pogrom, his son remembers forty-seven years later, they liquidated their assets immediately and left Poland within weeks.

The significance of Mr. Zucker's story lies in its historical relevance. Many histories of the Shoah quote figures on Jews who survived the war, and their status, as well as provide figures for after the war. But this unique personal perspective gave me an account of a particular family, and their response to the pogrom. Their response typifies much historical truth, and was consistent with other sources about the period.

emigration to the American Zone of occupied Germany, which had been a trickle immediately after the war, intensified as panicked Jews sought to leave Poland.

Excerpt from:

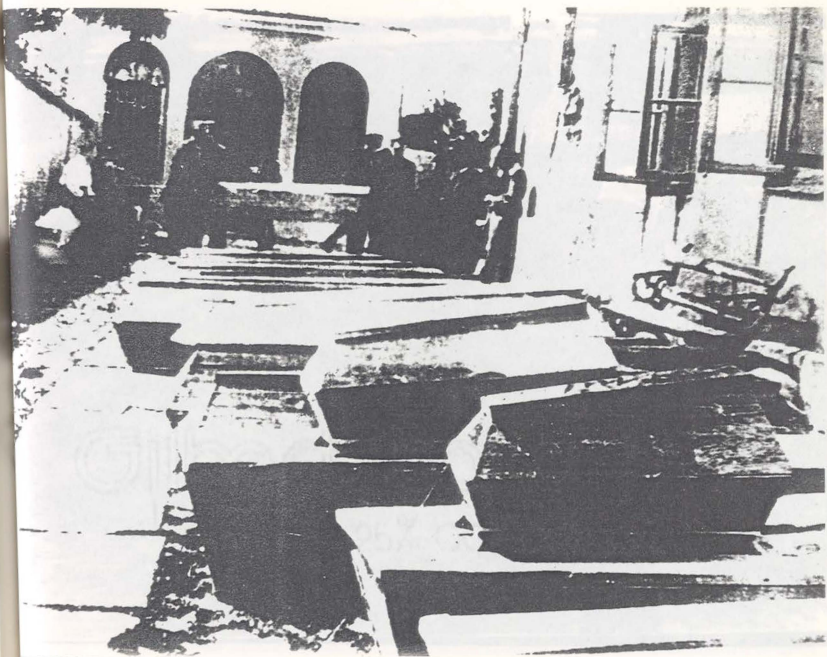
*The World Must Know: A history of the Holocaust
as told in the United States Holocaust Museum.*

By Michael Berenbaum (1993, 207-8)

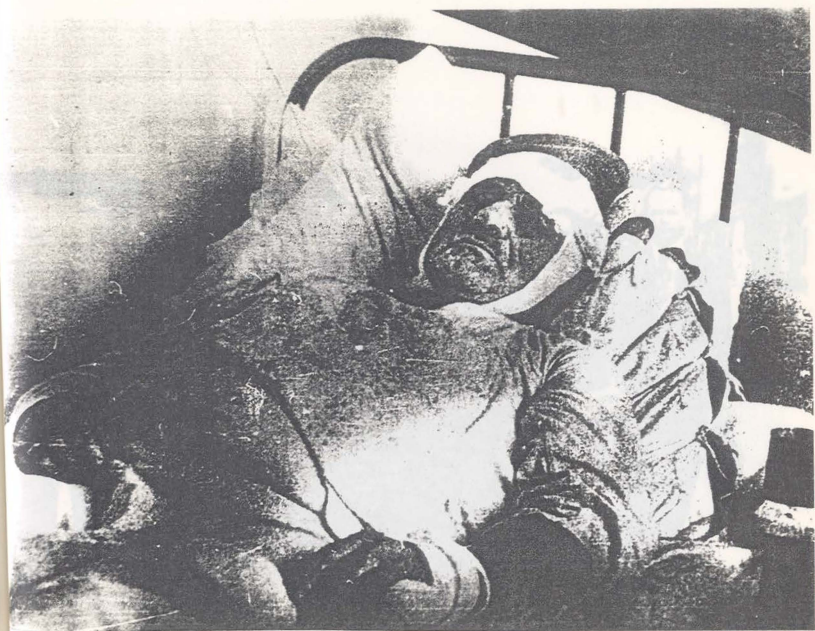
On July 4, 1946, a mob of Poles attacked the 150 Jews who had returned to the town of Kielce. Before the war, 24,000 Jews lived in Kielce; the 150 who were targets of the Poles were survivors who had come home looking for their families and their homes. The Kielce pogrom was inspired by the age-old blood libel that was part of the classic pattern of anti-Jewish violence: the mob believed that Jews were killing Christian children and [using] their blood to bake Passover wafers. In Kielce, the Poles were also stirred by fears that the Jews would reclaim lost property.

Appeals were made to church leaders and civic authorities to intervene in order to prevent the massacre. The church was silent, and the police response was to confiscate weapons held by Jews. The only priest in town who protested the pogrom was removed from his pulpit within the week.

The news of the Kielce pogrom spread like wildfire throughout the remnant of the Jewish community of Eastern Europe. It was as though nothing had changed. Jews throughout Poland understood that it was not safe to return home; the future lay elsewhere. Illegal emigration to the American Zone of occupied Germany, which had been a trickle immediately after the war, intensified as panicked Jews sought to leave Poland.









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