

Sz. Herc and Correspondents of the New York "Tog"

The Third Pogrom

In the last years before the War, Polish Fascism began to show its claws ever more brazenly. The Polish Fascists loyally followed the Nazism in Germany - even though they, themselves, were threatened from there [Germany] with the greatest peril, which bore inside it the catastrophe of September 1939. The hatred towards Jews was as strong as the bolstering of the Fascist regime. If one heard the voice of an upright Professor Kotarbiński, or another upright Polish democrat, it was like the voice [of him that crieth] in the wilderness [Isaiah 40:3]. At the time, those who held sway in Poland *Prystorowas*¹, the Duke [?], the *Żeligowskies*² and the Prime Minister, General [Felicjan Sławoj] Składkowski agreed by saying "Owszem!"³

Indeed, during that period, [pogroms in] Przytyk, Minsk Mazowiecki, Brisk [Brześć/Brest], Częstochowa and many more occurred.

It was a Saturday morning, on 17th June 1937. Not far from the Aleja [Najświętszej] Maryi [Panny], the porter Josel Pendrak was approached by a Polish acquaintance of his, the railway porter Stefan Baran, who asked him for money for liquor. Pendrak refused. They began to quarrel and, soon, a fight broke out, during the course of which Pendrak pulled out his revolver and fired two shots at Baran, who fell seriously wounded. Baran died soon afterwards in hospital. Pendrak was arrested and the police conducted an investigation.

In calmer times, such an incident would have ended with that - but not in the charged atmosphere of hatred towards Jews, which the Polish government tolerated and encouraged.

All at once, as if [summoned] by a secret call, suspicious elements began to gather - young Polish ruffians guided by the *Endecja* intelligentsia, who showed them where Jews lived - and the pogrom began with all its bells and whistles, as if it had been tailored in Tsarist Russia and [later] improved on in Poland. They began smashing window-panes, breaking doors and windows, breaking into shops and robbing merchandise, slashing up bedding and letting the feathers fly out into the street, and splitting Jewish skulls. The pogrom lasted for four days, with hardly any interference on the part of Składkowski's police. Over its course, twenty large businesses were ruined and dozens of Jewish shops were completely destroyed.

As reported by the newspapers *Tog* [Day] (New York) and *Volkszeitung* (Warsaw), this is the course of the events:

It [all] began in Częstochowa on Saturday, 19th June, at half past nine in the morning. The Jew, Abram Zelwer, noticed thieves trying to burgle his iron warehouse. He chased the thieves away. Soon afterwards, the porter Stefan Baran - a man of the underworld and a rover himself, who had been in jail several times for criminal offences - started badgering him. It could be that Baran also had a connection with the ejected thieves.

¹ [TN: People like (or followers of) the Polish MP Janina Amelia Prystorowa, who became famous for proposing a bill prohibiting the ritual Jewish slaughter of cattle.]

² [TN: People like (or followers of) Polish MP Lucjan Żeligowski.]

³ [TN: Declaration made by the PM himself, stating that whilst violence to Jews was deplorable, boycotting and shunning them - Owszem! (Of course!).]

During the altercation between Zelwer and Baran, the thirty-six-year-old meat-wagon driver, Josef Pendrak, happened to pass by. He intervened, taking the part of the harassed Jew. During the fight, Pendrak fired two shots from a revolver, killing Baran.

This incident occurred in the morning and yet, in actuality, the pogrom only broke out ten hours later, around six in the evening. Over the course of these ten hours, the *Endecja* Party organised the supposedly “spontaneous” flaring up of “popular anger”. Special messengers on motorcycles were sent, by the *Endecja* headquarters, to the surrounding townships and villages, who mobilised the dark characters who, in fact, filled the streets of Częstochowa in the evening. They were joined by bands of local men of the underworld, as well as school youths and part of the intelligentsia. Together, they set out to demonstrate and throw stones at the Jewish windows. Inscriptions appeared on Polish shops - “Catholics.” The Christians put religious icons and crosses in their windows.

Once the pogrom was already underway, the local police notified the central powers in Warsaw that the incident bore no serious character, and that they would manage without special police reinforcements. The police’s “neutral” stance invigorated the hooligans’ murderous behaviour even more and the pogrom flared up with a wild impetus.

On Saturday night (19th June) after, in the city centre, an array of shops had been demolished and the window-panes of the Jewish homes [and] businesses in several streets had been shattered, the remainder of the night from Saturday to Sunday went by in relative peace.

Meanwhile, however, the frenzied Christian mob began storming Jewish houses on the city’s periphery, robbing and demolishing Jewish houses and anything that came to hand.

Thus, an array of Jewish shops was torn down in Częstochówka (a suburb). Anything of any value at all was robbed or destroyed. In this manner, the residence of the bakery proprietor Ufner was smashed, as well as those of Friszman, Fajwlowicz and Rozenzaft. A terrible attack took place on ul. Warszawska 338, at the home of Kopl Haberman, all of whose furniture and bedclothes were destroyed. In addition, they stole 150 *złoty* from him and wounded him seriously himself, as well as beating his wife.

All this happened on Saturday. (We provide, below, the names of the injured and a list of the streets where the attacks took place in Częstochowa). On Sunday, the hooligans became even more aggressive. If on Saturday they waited until dark, on Sunday they already performed their fine pogrom work in broad daylight.

The sum of the events of the pogrom’s second day (Sunday) was terrible. The part of town in question looked dreadful. Pieces of glass projected from the beautifully arranged shop-windows; broken shelves and bits of merchandise were strewn about on the pavement in front of the shops. Metal blinds had been smashed apart by heavy blows from the benches that usually line the *Aleje*. It was not enough that the hooligans were armed with axes, knives, hammers and iron [rods] - they also utilised the municipal benches in the streets.

Not even the *szkoła powszechna* (public school¹) was spared. But all this went according to a plan: children were sent to this children’s school. Christian children, aged 14-15, broke all the school’s window-panes with stones and smashed up the benches and all the furniture inside it.

¹ [TN: In English in the original.]

This is one of the things the hooligans did. For example, on ul. Jasnogórska, Wajnblum's house was being built [and] it was not yet completely finished. they tore it down, without leaving even one tiny plank.

According to a series of testimonies, respected Christian merchants showed the hooligans which shops were Jewish and what needed to be destroyed. One certain Zygmunt Orłowski, from the Third *Aleja* 36, led the whole band, commanding it with an axe in hand.

A large part of the mob carried valises and satchels with them, with which to be able to take away the stolen goods. Some of the women, barefoot, came to town for the work and fitted themselves with a pair of shoes on the spot, in the robbed shop.

There were cases of the hooligans beating some Christians, having mistaken them for Jews due to their appearance. A comical fact was, that it did not help the apostate Dr Wajnblum at all that he had hung up sacred icons in his window – they still broke all his window-panes.

With the intercession of the *Starosta* [District Administrator] to an array of communal activists, measures were taken to restore the peace. Mayor [Jan Teodor] Szczodrowski also intervened with the *Starosta* as soon as the disturbances began and he also, personally, issued an announcement to the population.

The Deputy Mayor, Professor Dziuba (PPS), attests to having personally seen how the hooligans were looting unmolested. When he drove away from the *Magistrat* (City Hall²) in a motorcar, bands of hooligans hurled stones at him.

On Sunday afternoon, the second day of the pogrom, the situation worsened even further. The Jewish *Kehilla* held a special session and, as a result, telegrams were sent to Prime Minister General Składkowski, the *Wojewoda* [Governor] of Kielce and the District Court Prosecutor. The contents of the telegram were that the situation in Częstochowa was a threatening one and that the Jewish populace did not have the benefit of appropriate protection.

On Sunday evening, a rumour spread to the effect that the real slaughter of Jews would only first take place on Monday. The police telephoned *Kehilla* President Jakow Rozenberg and warned him that they had intelligence that an attack on the *Kehilla's* premises was being planned. With that, the police asked him to ring them immediately when the attack began. But one hour later, the phone in the *Kehilla* premises "suddenly" ceased to function. They approached the Main Post [Office] regarding the repair of the phone. There, they had an excuse at the ready - "We cannot repair the telephone today, because today is Sunday". Thus, the *Kehilla* was, meanwhile, left without a phone.

The entire work, [reminiscent] of the Black Hundreds³, was carried out methodically, according to the meticulously laid plans of the *Endecja* members' pogrom command post. Suffice it to say that, when the pogrom was in full force, the local *Endecja* newspaper, the *Goniec Częstochowski*, published a detailed list of the streets where the Jews had, as yet, not been robbed. The *pogromczykes* had the most accurate information as to which building, shop and even [individual] flat inside a building belonged to Jews.

With nightfall, the situation turned tenuous. The mob, which had gathered in different parts of town, became larger and took on a provocative demeanour – openly threatening that, at night (on Sunday), the real "wedding" would take place.

² [TN: In English in the original.]

³ [TN: Ultra-nationalist movement in Russia, noted for its racism, incitement to pogroms, etc.]

Meanwhile, information was received to the effect that an order had arrived from the Central Government to come out against the *pogromczykes* with full rigor and [that] a special emissary from the Interior Ministry had arrived for that purpose. At about nine in the evening, energetic police deployment could, in fact, be noticed and, within a short while, all the streets were cleared. Seeing that here, on ul. Warszawska that it would be hard to do anything, a gang of young hooligans set off for ul. Garncarska, with the objective of "making merry". But, seeing a large group of Jewish labourers gathered there, they dispersed. Thus, Sunday night passed peacefully.

On Monday morning (21st June), movement in town was very animated - but all the Jewish shops remained closed and strong police patrols stood on the street corners. In the night, at about three o'clock, the funeral of the slain Baran was held under heavy police guard. All day long, Jews streamed to the *Kehilla* premises in order to report the damages they had suffered.

On Monday afternoon, when they became aware that the funeral of the slain Baran would take place that night, a crowd several thousand strong gathered around the hospital, demanding that they be given the victim's corpse. The mood was charged. Individual assaults on Jews began once more. Only after an intervention on the part of the Jewish *Kehilla* did a strong police patrol first arrive, driving away the giant, agitated mob, which dispersed into the nearby alleys.

At around six o'clock in the evening, the news came that there was, once again, unrest in several streets. There had been attempts to set houses on fire. One band stormed the Study-Hall and destroyed everything there. A fire was started on the corner of Mirowska and Garncarska. The fire-fighters, who were called out, extinguished the blaze. In the Old Market Square, a band of Christian women assaulted the mentally ill girl, Kurland, and beat her murderously. On the First Aleja, the cigarette kiosk of the Jewish war invalid, Abram Kawan, was set on fire.

The Mayor's calls for peace were constantly torn down. An illegal announcement by the *Endecja* people, filled with goading and venom, appeared in town. The previous day, a crowd of a couple of thousand had gathered at the grave of the stabbed [?] Baran. "Corresponding" speeches had been held.

On Tuesday (22nd June), *Wojewoda* [Provincial Governor] [Władysław] Dziadosz arrived from Kielce and took over command of Częstochowa. Bishop [Teodor] Kubina turned to all Catholics with an appeal calling them to keep their peace.

This same "spiritual shepherd", however, concurrently assured them that he understood the justified agitation of the Polish masses and that he, too, was of the opinion that the spilt blood of the Pole Baran needed to be avenged. The antisemitic press only printed precisely the part of the Bishop's letter where he validated revenge.

On Tuesday, a delegation of the PPS visited the *Wojewoda* and discussed, with him, the state of affairs in the city. The *Wojewoda* promised that the peace would not be disturbed under any circumstances. That same day, in many factories, work ceased for a short time and a delegate was sent, from each factory, to the *Wojewoda*. Once more, he assured that no excesses [viz. acts of violence] would be permitted. Mounted police constantly patrolled the streets.

On Nadrzeczna, Garncarska and Senatorska streets, on Monday night, groups of workers drove away a band of hooligans that had grouped together to mount an attack - but the police who arrived also drove the groups of workers.

Over the course of Tuesday, numerous telegrams arrived in Częstochowa from relatives abroad, enquiring after the health of their relatives. The telegrams came from America, the Land of Israel, France and England. At that time, American citizen Nuchem Kot happened to be in Częstochowa. He sent a telegram to the American Consul regarding the events, over which the Częstochowa police

interrogated him for many hours.

On Tuesday evening, delegations of Jewish and Polish workers were sent, from a number of factories, to the *Wojewoda*, Dr Dziadosz, to the *Starosta* and [to] the Labour Inspector. The factory workers, Comrades Kozłowski, Liberman, Baluszkiewicz and Entelis declared, before these governmental representatives, that they ardently protested against the fact that antisemitic hooligans were still rampaging in various parts of town. The delegation spoke on behalf of the workers of the following factories: Metros 1 and Metros 2, the Horowicz & Co metal factory, Kosmos, Deres, Zylbersztajn and others.

That same day was Market Day but, for security reasons, the police did not let the peasants into the city.

It is characteristic that the Polish antisemitic press justified the pogrom and spoke of the hooligans' offensives with great delight. They tried as hard as they could to prove that Jewish goods had only been destroyed, but not stolen. The Socialist *Robotnik* [The Worker], on the other hand, did in fact report that there had been robberies.

Such an atmosphere of terror reigned in the city that no lawyer was willing to on the defence of Josl Pendrak.

The bloodied sum total of the pogrom was about 75 injured Jews, some of whom had serious wounds. The material damage to Jewish property reached around 200,000 *złoty*. Some 150 Jewish shops were damaged, of which about thirty were completely plundered. It was the large Jewish businesses on the main streets which emerged with the least damages, because the police's vigilance was stronger there. Those who suffered the most, of course, were the poor Jewish shopkeepers and, first and foremost, the market vendors - who no longer dared open their little stalls in the non-Jewish area in the post-pogrom atmosphere. Around fifty Jewish families were left completely without food and were forced to resort to charity.

Partial Estimate of the Material Damages to the Częstochowa Jews Following the 1937 pogrom

(according to the list sent to the Joint on 6th July 1937)

Damages in Polish *gilden* [*złoty*]:

- 95 partially destroyed shops: broken windows and installations - 15,300; damages in goods - 41,800.
- 28 completely destroyed shops: broken windows and installations - 9,000; damages in goods - 22,000.
- Destruction to two craftsmen's workshops: broken installations - 1,500; damages in goods - 1,000.
- About 25-30 completely destroyed dwellings - 10,000.
- Destruction to farms and gardens - 500.
- Destruction to Jewish *Kehilla property*: synagogues, study-hall, *mikve* [and] abattoir - 10,000.

- Destruction to the New Synagogue - 1,000.
- Damages to the Jewish *Gymnazjum* - 250.
- Besides this, 15,000 broken window-panes - 30,000.

Sum total of damages: 142,350 złoty.

The Victims of the Pogrom in 1937

Murdered:

Nussen Lipowski

Wounded:

Abram Plawner
 Majlich Szapiro
 Josef Częstochowski
 Grylak
 Dr Ignacy Szrajber (*gymnazjum* teacher)
 Lajb Birenbaum
 Abram Czarny
 Icchok Czarny
 Mrs Abramowicz

Dwellings:

Kopl Haberman, shopkeeper
 Heilenberg [Ajlenberg], baker
 Wajsenberg, joiner
 Dr Leopold Kohn, industrialist (a bomb was thrown at his house)
 Daniel Dzialowicz – ul. Jasnogórska
 Redlenski – ul. Narutowicza
 Kuszniir – ul. Narutowicza
 Galster – Third Aleja
 Dr Torbeczko – ul. Katedralna
 Abram Czarny – ul. Warszawska
 Chune Majorczyk – ul. Warszawska
 Josef-Ber Nachtigal – ul. Nadrzeczna 2
 Hercke Dilewski – ul. Mirowska 10-12

Robbed and demolished Jewish institutions, dwellings, businesses, synagogues, study-halls, and communal institutions:

The Study-Hall – ul. Nadrzeczna
 The old synagogue – ul. Nadrzeczna
 The New Synagogue (all the windowpanes were broken) – ul. Wilsona
 The Jewish *Gymnazjum* – ul. Dąbrowskiego
 The People's Bank⁴ – *Aleja 7*
 Craftsmen's Union – *Aleja 12*
 OZE⁵Centre – in Kamińsk [sic Kamyk?], next to Częstochowa
 "Raj Dziecięcy" [Children's Paradise] – toy shop
 Rozenchwajg – sweets shop
 Najman – photographer's establishment
 Strug – wooden products factory, ul. Strażacka
 Perlman – hat shop, ul. Ogrodowa
 Farberg-Kaller – butcher's
 Mali⁶ Berg (Jewish apostate) – "Luna" cinema
 Biber – liquor shop, ul. Narutowicza
 Bialek – Ostatni Grosz, butcher's
 Szpigelman – glass shop, First Aleja
 Altman – grocer's, ul. Dąbrowskiego
 Brzoski – frame factory, ul. Sułkowskiego
 "Sztuka" [Art] – photographer's establishment
 Epsztajn – fruit shop, ul. Piłsudskiego

Businesses and industrial enterprises:

Klinber – timber warehouse, set on fire
 Kamioner – timber warehouse, set on fire
 Abram Brajtler – mill
 Frug – furniture factory
 Rolnicki – book dealership
 Wajnryb – colonial goods
 Rzonsinski – haberdashery shop
 "Plutos" – chocolate shop
 Langer – shoe shop
 Stawski – confectionary

Shops (branches [of business] not specified):

Granek
 Lencyzcki
 Rotmil
 Erner
 "Helena"
 Józefowicz
 Kroze
 Librowicz
 Fiszman
 Galster
 Estrajch

⁴ [TN: According to the address (*Aleja 7*), this was the Bank Spółdzielczy (Cooperative Bank).]

⁵ [TN: Russian acronym of the Society for Safeguarding the Health of the Jewish Population, which in Poland was known as the "TOZ."]

⁶ [TN: As this given name does not appear to exist, we surmise it is either a nickname (possibly "Mały" – "Little") or a misprint; we have as yet been unable to find this individual's name in any records.]

Soon after the pogrom, a few judicial processes, with a bearing on the events, were held. Of the *pogromczykes* arrested - of the 300 hooligans detained, sixty remained in custody - some were tried, and ended up with minor penalties of a few months in jail. Josef Pendrak, on the other hand, had a severe trial – for him, the prosecutor demanded the death penalty.

His trial was prepared with lightning speed - by the thirteenth day after the shooting. He was brought to court with his hands in chains. At the trial, this is how the accused, Josef Pendrak, described the course of the tragic incident:

On ul. Wały [Generała Józefa] Dwernickiego, he had come upon three Christian boys, who were speaking with the son of the owner of the iron warehouse, Zelwer. Just then, Stefan Baran came along, leading a cart. He ran up against him with the wagon's shaft, with the clear intention of striking him a blow. Zelwer needed to go into town, and was fearful. He, Pendrak, offered to escort him there.

The newly-arrived Baran (a twenty-five-year-old giant) came at Pendrak and said, "What do you want, you leprous Jew? Are you such a great warrior?"

At that very moment, Baran threw off his jacket, took up a stone and set upon Pendrak. The latter warned him that, if the stone was thrown, he would shoot. Baran pulled back a little, went to stand behind the three boys, and began throwing rocks. Pendrak retreated and shouted at boys to move away over to the wall. Pendrak then fired the revolver, hitting Baran.

At the *Court of First Instance*, the accused was defended by the renowned Warsaw lawyers, Ludwik Honigwil (a Bundist) and Jan Dąbrowski (Polish Socialist). While the prosecutor wanted the death penalty, the investigating judge was working in the direction of a more lenient punishment. When Adv. Honigwil arrived in Częstochowa, the investigating judge called him over to him and urged him to conduct his defence on the grounds that the accused had merely crossed the boundaries of necessary self-defence when in danger.

At the trial, the prosecutor demanded the death penalty. In the deliberations of the three judges before pronouncing the verdict, the chairman of the court supported the prosecutor's demand, but the other two judges were decisively opposed, and thus the verdict was reached - life imprisonment.

Pendrak's trial was held for a second time on 26th October 1937 at the *Court of Appeals* in Warsaw. The defence appealed in order to achieve two goals: reducing the penalty and changing the motives of the verdict. The two previous defenders were now joined by a third - the famous lawyer Leon Berenson.

The course of the appeal trial was favourable to the defence. In his address, the speaker, Judge Kramer, stressed that, in the course of the trial in the *Court of First Instance*, at the District Court in Częstochowa, no evidence had been provided that the convicted Pendrak had carried out the murder due to racial hatred, as the motive had been given in the District Court's verdict. He also pointed out that Josef Pendrak was known as a decent man, while Baran had been tried and punished numerous times for drunkenness and resisting police.

The *Court of Appeals* did not acknowledge the motive of racial hatred, and also lessened the penalty to thirteen years in prison. The motive given for decreasing the punishment was that Pendrak's attitude towards Baran had been as to an underground character (in the *First Instance*, the motive of

racial hatred was based on a question Pendrak had asked Zelwer at the start of the incident – “What does this *sheigetz*⁷ want from you?”).

Neither the prosecutor nor the defence were happy with the verdict of the *Court of Appeals* and requested an annulment from the *Supreme Court*. Both appeals were rejected and the sentence went into effect.

Josef Pendrak was set free by the prison authorities in Piotrków in September 1939, a few days before the outbreak of the Second World War. The released then came to Warsaw.

Formerly, Josef Pendrak had been a member of *SS-Vereinigte*. During the split in this party in 1922, he joined the Bund, along with the defectors. He also belonged to the Bundist party-militia.

⁷ [TN: Hebrew derogatory term meaning “repulsive creature,” used in Yiddish in ref. to uncouth individuals – not necessarily Gentiles.]