

Statements of Częstochowa Bishop Dr. Teodor Kubina on the 1946 Kielce Pogrom Father Jan Związek

1. Introduction

Sixty years have passed since the Kielce events of July 4, 1946, but their remembrances are deeply imprinted in the memory of town inhabitants and in the Polish public consciousness. Their incredible character has escaped comprehension from the very beginning, especially so as the war and postwar experiences did not warrant any action of this kind.

At the turn of nineteenth and twentieth centuries some 28 per cent of the Kielce inhabitants were Jewish. Since 1902 Jews had their own synagogue there.¹ Their number grew steadily and in the interwar period amounted to over one third of the town population. Trade and crafts were traditional Jewish occupations, but Kielce Jews took all kinds of ordinary jobs as well. They maintained their national and religious customs, but also actively participated in the public life, being members of various political and social organizations. Coexistence and cooperation followed a normal course and peaceful civic relations were not infringed. Anti-Semitic excesses were forbidden by Polish law. The police had the duty to “eliminate” such excesses with due determination. Kielce Jews contributed to the relief action for Jewish refugees deported from Germany in 1938, but also contributed generously to the public fundraising organized in support of Polish defense forces prior to WWII. During the German Nazi occupation of Poland Jewish population met with sympathy and received help, including shelter from the Nazi persecutions. That help was provided despite the fact that rescuers risked imprisonment at concentration camps or even their own life.²

The situation in Częstochowa and its district was analogical, including the attitudes, except for the fact that the number of Jewish inhabitants surpassed Kielce several times. Certain steps were undertaken to prevent similar tragedy. The mayor of Częstochowa met with municipal security forces and city councilors in order to coordinate pacifying actions. Yet it was the Bishop of Częstochowa, Dr. Teodor Kubina, who proved to be the most active initiator of such measures. The bishop put on the line his entire authority attained in the Częstochowa society in his long service since the interwar period. During the German occupation Kubina was tireless in his efforts at organizing relief for the impoverished and for refugees from all over Poland. In 1946 his name was signed under the municipality pronouncements addressed to the local population to discourage anti-Jewish assaults. Both the local government and public opinion ascribed to the bishop much merit for the mollifying the atmosphere in town and preventing riots. Scholars have been of the same opinion on Kubina’s role.³

2. Kielce Pogrom

¹ S. Meducki, *Wstęp*, [in:] *Antyżydowskie wydarzenia kieleckie 4 lipca 1946 roku. Dokumenty i materiały*, t. 1, Kielce 1992, p. 7.

² *Ibidem*, vol.1, pp.8-10.

³ S. Meducki, *op.cit.*, p.7; J.Związek, *Życie i działalność biskupa Teodora Kubiny (1880–1951)*, in: *Rocznik Świętochłowski* R. 1: 1999, pp. 7-31; unfortunately Bishop Kubina himself never recounted his reflections on the Kielce murders nor his role in preventing a pogrom in Częstochowa.

Due to the anti-Jewish Nazi policy on July 1, 1945, there were only 212 Jewish survivors in Kielce, while prior to WWII the number of Jewish inhabitants amounted to 15,000 people. Native Kielce Jews were dispersed all over town. Still, about 120-150 Jews were located at 7, Planty Str. in a large tenement house. Those were refugees from various Polish towns or from abroad, mainly on their way to Western Europe or to Palestine.⁴ Local administration's decisions to reinstate Kielce Jews in their prewar apartments, houses or workshops did not rise any objections of Polish inhabitants. They did, however, resent the policy of the central administration and their appointing Jews as high municipal officials. Besides, former officers and soldiers of the Soviet army, and in fact all Jews released from Soviet camps, were perceived as the representatives of Soviet administration and its cruel policies. Many Jews were believed to hold posts in the militia and army headquarters and to have played a big role in the hated Soviet regime which was then being imposed upon Poland. After the war hardships of life seemed to affect Poles more than Jews, since the latter were receiving help from the state and from abroad Jewish organizations. Many Jews sold their properties and left for Western Europe.⁵

Such were the social circumstances of the Kielce pogrom. What remained was the crucial question of its causes. The most obvious answer would be to put the blame on the bigotry and ignorance of the uneducated mob, whose primitive instincts were too powerful to control. The government sources claimed some conservative political groups had instigated the pogrom out of resentment of Jewish role in postwar Poland. The official propaganda had it that anti-communist underground was responsible for the pogrom, the National Armed Forces (NSZ) guerilla groups in particular, supported by the followers of General Anders, whose army left the Soviet Union and did not return to communist Poland. The opponents of the communist regime suggested it was the chief of the Security Bureau (UB) in Kielce who unleashed the violence prompted by the central UB headquarters. Their goal was to scandalize the West and overshadow the outrage at the rigged referendum. Some pointed to the first secretary of the communist party (PPR) as the principal initiator of the pogrom acting in retaliation for the political opposition of the Polish Peasant Party (PSL). There were also voices indicating the Soviet security forces (NKVD), who would have wanted to compromise Poland and stifle resistance against Soviet domination. Moreover, they were supposedly trying to push Jews with military training to emigrate, so that they would join the fight for the new Jewish state in Palestine. Zionist would have supposedly incited anti-Jewish incidents to encourage emigration. The world Jewish opinion held it that the pogrom resulted from Polish anti-Semitic resentments.⁶

The communist propaganda must have necessarily blamed the Church for such occurrences. The tragedy took place at the territory of the cathedral parish, whose priest was Canon Roman Zelek. Early in the riots he went to Planty street, but security officers did not allow him to get near the Jewish house. When the provincial governor arrived at the parsonage the canon signed a joint statement, but the document was not published. In the afternoon several priests went to the scene of crime, but the crowd was already gone. The Kielce bishop Czesław Kaczmarek could not avoid denunciations despite the fact that he left the town prior to the pogrom for a health resort to cure his heart condition.⁷

The spark that set off the riots was the rumor of a kidnapping and ritual murder. A Polish boy, Henryk Błaszczuk, was supposedly imprisoned by Jews at Planty 7, from

⁴ S. Meducki, op. cit., vol. 1, p.12.

⁵ Ibidem, vol. 1, pp. 13-14, 201-202.

⁶ Ibidem, vol.1, p.15-16; Żaryn, *Kościół a władza w Polsce (1945–1950)*, Warszawa 1997, pp. 102-104.

⁷ S. Meducki, op.cit., vol. 1 p. 16; J. Śledzianowski, *Ksiądz Czesław Kaczmarek biskup kielecki 1895–1963*, Kielce 1991 pp. 103-104.

where he claimed to have escaped by a cellar window. The alleged news spread like fire. At 9 am. on July 4, 1946, a crowd began to surround the building at Planty 7. [...]

The death toll of the riots was 39 murdered Jews and two Poles. In the evening several people were arrested at random. Obviously the investigation involved maltreatment of the suspects. Defense witnesses, even the policemen (militia), were not interrogated. Records of police interrogations of military and militia witnesses were lost. In court the commandants and officers of security forces were acquitted or avoided any but very lenient sentences, while the investigation against non-military persons was very harsh and with infringement of legal procedures. It was never resolved what General Franciszek Jozwiak, the police (MO) chief, implicated in his order to the Kielce province MO chief to “reach an agreement” with the chief of UB in Kielce. No satisfactory answers were offered to the problem who started shooting or why Jews were disarmed by the police despite having the license to carry guns. The trial of twelve Kielce inhabitants accused of the crime brought before the Warsaw Supreme Martial Court (on a special session in Kielce) failed to meet many procedural requirements. Even the firing squad was brought to Kielce before the verdict was announced.⁸

The Kielce pogrom did result in defaming Polish society in the eyes of the Western world. Jews disregarded Polish help during the occupation. Polish underground was defiled and Polish-Jewish relationship maimed for decades.

The sentences were pronounced by the judges of the Supreme Court in Warsaw as early as on July 12, 1946 and they were severe. Capital punishment for nine people, life sentence for one, and ten years of prison with the loss of civil and public rights and forfeiture of property (The Supreme Military Tribunal passed the sentence on July 11, 1946).⁹

Records of police interrogations and justification of the sentence were focused on the public attitude towards the communist regime, based on the Soviet model, of the police – security apparatus correlation, and of the communist party (PPR) stand towards the PSL party, while the Jewish question seemed to be of least concern, although it might have fitted the political purpose perfectly.

The response of the Catholic clergy during the riots could have been crucial. Related documents were held at the Diocesan Curia in Kielce, but security officers confiscated them on January 12, 1952 in connection with the political charges brought against Bishop Czeslaw Kaczmarek. In 1990 historians were granted access to the records for scholarly study. Other files were preserved abroad.

According to an eye witness Wladyslaw Dzikowski, trade unionist, some soldiers of the Internal Security Corps entered the building at Planty 7 first, followed by policemen (militia men), and then by civilians. Most of the murdered were shot.¹⁰

Roman Zelek, the local parish priest, said that about 11.00 am he headed for Planty, but was stopped by uniformed persons. At 2.30 pm he received a phone call from a deputy attorney at Kielce Court requesting him to turn up at the scene of riots, because the soldiers might be forced to fire. Canon Zelek consulted Father Jan Danilewicz, a delegate of the Diocesan Curia, who lived at the parsonage. Upon the arrival of the local governor, Eugeniusz Wislicz-Iwanczyk, both priests took seats in his car and headed for the crime scene, followed by three other clergymen in a private car. By that time the crowd dispersed and the clergymen retreated home. Yet, it is a known fact that the phones were blocked at the time and hence the governor arrived at the parsonage in person, despite having a

⁸ S. Meducki, op.cit., 1 pp. 16-18.

⁹ Report of the execution of the convicts in: *Antyżydowskie wydarzenia kieleckie*, 1, p. 212.

¹⁰ J. Śledzianowski, op.cit., pp. 102-103.

broken leg in a cast. At the same time his deputy summoned representatives of political groups to inform them that the Curia did nothing to stop the riots. The very same Negotiating Commission issued a statement to the effect that the riots had been launched by the “forest bands” of the NSZ, Freedom and Independence (WiN), and Home Army (AK). A representative of one of the participating parties refused to sign the document claiming its text was falsified.¹¹

On July 5, 1946 the governor invited Canon Zelek to a meeting concerning the riots. He also notified the priest in a separate note, that an official delegate of the Bishop agreed to co-sign a joint proclamation to the inhabitants of Kielce. Father Zelek went to the meeting with a Curia affidavit. In their joint declaration the governor and the Curia delegate, Jan Danilewicz, postulated that:

- 1) the events be objectively and thoroughly investigated by the Provincial Prosecutor’s Office with some delegates of the administration, Church, and Kielce social organizations; the case will be brought to the Court to be judged, and the verdict will be made public;
- 2) the actual perpetrators will not avoid due punishment regardless of their ethnic or religious identity.

The authors of the declaration continued with an appeal to the Kielce population “in the name of God, of Polish honor, and good name of our city to stay calm and restrained, and to trust the authorities to do their job.” A part on the friendly coexistence of Poles and Jews before the war and Polish help during the occupation followed. Yet the publication of the declaration was deterred by the local UB (security), whose officials were already in charge of the entire matter, including the pacification of the town in the weeks to follow.¹²

Meanwhile the Diocesan Curia issued a special pastoral letter to be read in all Kielce parishes without any comments next Sunday, July 7. The message of the letter was that the full data on the 4 July events was not available, but in the name of all Catholics the Curia expressed regrets. The appeal to the Catholic population of Kielce to stay calm and restrained was repeated.¹³

Those facts indicate that the Kielce clergy (with Father Roman Zelek in particular) and the local Diocesan Curia did their best in the circumstances. Some of the Church declarations were not published (as was also the case with the governor’s statement) due to the ban of the UB security police.

3. Polish and Jewish communities in Częstochowa

In interwar Poland Częstochowa was a center of intense economic, religious, cultural, and social life of the Jewish community. The number of Jews amounted to 21 per cent of the entire population. The 1939 census was 137,623 inhabitants, including 28,480 Jews¹⁴.

¹¹ Ibidem, p.103; R. Gryz, *Państwo a Kościół w Polsce 1945–1956: na przykładzie województwa kieleckiego*, Kielce 1999, p. 147-149.

¹² J. Śledzianowski, op.cit., p. 105-106.

¹³ Ibidem, p.10.

¹⁴ Z. Grządzielski, *Z problemów opieki i kształcenia młodzieży żydowskiej w Częstochowie w latach 1912–1939*, [in:] Z. Jakubowski (ed) *Z dziejów Żydów w Częstochowie*, Częstochowa 2002, p. 45. (further: *Z dziejów Żydów w Częstochowie*).

Jewish inhabitants of Częstochowa followed their own religious practices and customs, spoke their own language, developed their own culture. Zawodzie district was their main neighborhood. Polish law on minorities warranted them religious autonomy and functioning as an isolated social group, governed by their own administration and religious rules¹⁵, although they must have affected somehow the entire city. Remarkable Jewish cultural activity manifested itself in various societies and, most prominently, in numerous publications produced in Jewish printing houses. There were plenty of Jewish workshops. Products of Jewish goldsmiths adorned not only the synagogue interiors, but also some Catholic churches.¹⁶

The old synagogue was located at Nadrzeczna, after general renovation in the late 1920s it was one of the finest examples of Jewish synagogal architecture in Poland, destroyed early during WWII. The other, “new” synagogue, so-called “Progressive Synagogue”, was built at the beginning of 20th c., to become a property of the entire Jewish community just before WWII. Orthodox hassids congregated at numerous prayer halls.¹⁷

The one to take care of the synagogue renovation and decoration was the Chief Rabbi Nachum Asz, the most distinguished figure of the Jewish community in Częstochowa. Coming from an Orthodox family with scholarly Talmudist traditions he was a brilliant student and continued his study of Jewish lore all his life, holding the post of a rabbi in several communities. Arriving in 1894 in Częstochowa he was already renowned and esteemed for his knowledge and wisdom. Religious life of the community was obviously his priority, but Rabbi Nachum did also organize relief and welfare actions for the needy. His relations with the Catholic church were always marked by tolerance and respect, as was his friendship with Bishop Kubina, whom Asz used to pay visits at home. Jewish inhabitants followed the example of their Chief Rabbi and took part in every patriotic ceremony held by the Polish authorities.¹⁸

The most tragic chapter of the Jewish history in Częstochowa started with the German occupation of the city in 1939. Soon, from December 1, all Jews over ten years had to wear a white armband with a Zion star on their right arm under penalty of prison. All Jewish shops and institutions were also marked by such a star. All Jewish property, including personal belongings, were to be reported to the German administration. Curfew was imposed and nobody was allowed to change their place of abode without permit. [...] In spring 1941 mass resettling of Jewish population from the town center and western section into the Zawodzie area began. A ghetto for all Częstochowa Jews (about 50,000) was established there officially on April 9, 1941, by Stadthauptmann Richard Wendler. [...] Despite the terror and cruel anti-Jewish repressions religious and cultural did not cease in the ghetto. [...]

[for more information on the war period see the studies of Wiesław Paszkowski and Feliks Tych in the present volume].

Prevailing peaceful coexistence of Poles and Jews in Częstochowa after many generations eventuated in the two communities developing numerous bonds, including personal friendships. Many Poles risked their lives to help Jews, primarily children,

¹⁵ J. Sztumski, *Kulturotwórcza rola społeczności żydowskiej w Częstochowie*, [in:] *Z dziejów Żydów w Częstochowie*, pp. 63-64.

¹⁶ Ibidem, pp. 70-72; A. Jaśkiewicz, *Złotnictwo wotywnie regionu częstochowsko-wieluńskiego. Studium z zakresu sztuki prowincjonalnej i ludowej XVII-XIX wieku*, Częstochowa 1982 p. 42-43.

¹⁷ J. Mizgalski, *Życie religijne częstochowskich Żydów w XX wieku przed holocaustem*, [in:] *Z dziejów Żydów w Częstochowie*, pp. 93-100.

¹⁸ Ibidem, pp. 100-104.

during the occupation. The rescue operations were often carried under the auspices of the diocesan parish priest Boleslaw Wroblewski, assisted by the St. Jakub parish priest Wojciech Mondry, St. Zygmunt parish curate priest Tadeusz Wisniewski, and St. Barbara parish curate priest Teodor Popczyk. The cathedral, diocesan parish and parsonage bordered on the ghetto territory. Despite German posts, trusted people escorted Jewish children out of the ghetto. Father Wroblewski installed them at convents' orphanages, mainly at the Servants of Virgin Mary convent at Piotrkowska street, and also with Polish families. Even more perils were connected with false baptism certificates issued by the priest for Jews. On August 16, 1996 a relative of Father Wroblewski, Andrzej Albrecht, who was a little boy at the time of WWII, signed an official statement to the effect that his uncle, priest Boleslaw Wroblewski, clad in a woolen flying cap and plain clothes (no cassock) used to go out with his friend, St. Zygmunt parish priest (although it must have been curator priest of that parish, Father Tadeusz Wisniewski, not the 70-year-old Father Franciszek Mirecki), saying, e.g.: "...Today we'll have to visit several Jewish families off town. It's not only children, who are there, many adults too, who want to pass as Christians now. Baptism is a sacrament of our Church. They have their own church, but cannot attend it. I'm just giving them these certificates so that they can show them to the Germans, if needed. I don't pour holy water on them, if they don't want to, but I do make the sign of the cross over them when giving them that paper, so that Jesus Our Lord has them in His care. He was also born into a poor Jewish family, and the Ten Commandments, as you know, God gave us through Moses, who was not a Christian, either. We have the same God. I trust He will forgive me the deception. When human life is at stake, papers don't matter."¹⁹

Father Tadeusz Wisniewski was also providing Jews with Catholic birth (baptism) certificates. Gestapo sequestered part of the parsonage, just by Father Wisniewski's living quarters, to set up their station there. And the priest was issuing false documents in his room, confident that he was beyond suspicion there. Father Teodor Popczyk of St. Barbara parish, who was also teaching religion at Częstochowa vocational schools, did the same. On June 15, 1943 in his parish office he gave a baptism certificate to a Jewish (or a Gypsy)-looking man. The man was arrested the same night at a shelter at 7 Kamienic street. Tortured, he disclosed it was at St. Barbara parish office that he received the document and in the morning he turned in the young priest. Father Popczyk tried to escape through a window, but was shot by a gendarme and died the next day.²⁰

The rescue actions were focused primarily on Jewish children and the convents played a major role in this activity. Beside the above mentioned Servants of Virgin Mary, other convents providing shelter included Sisters of the Holy Family of Nazareth, Sisters of the Resurrection, and Sisters of Mercy working at the Girls Reformatory at Paulinska 12. Many of the cases were never made known. The number of the saved Jewish children nor adults is therefore hard to assess.²¹

¹⁹ A. Albrecht, *Ksiądz Pralat Bolesław Wróblewski. Wspomnienie sprzed pół wieku*. Testimony recorded 16.07.1996. – Personal files of Father Bolesław Wróblewski, at Archiwum Archidiecezjalne w Częstochowie, sygn. III 226.

²⁰ J. Związek, *Martyrologium kapłanów diecezji częstochowskiej w czasie II wojny światowej*, [in:] *Częstochowskie Studia Teologiczne* vol. 4:1976, p. 271; J.Związek, *Służyć do końca*, [in:] *Niedziela* R. 39: 1996, nr 37 (173) C p. I–II; J. Pietrzykowski, *Walka i męczeństwo. Z wojennych dziejów duchowieństwa diecezji częstochowskiej (1939–1945)*, Warszawa 1981, pp. 89–91.

²¹ J. Pietrzykowski, *Cień swastyki nad Jasną Górą :Częstochowa w okresie hitlerowskiej okupacji 1939-1945*, Katowice 1985, p.180=181.

In prewar decades Częstochowa, despite being a flagship of Polish Catholicism, was also a place of mostly harmonious coexistence of two religious groups, that were Polish Catholics and Jews. The unanimity was manifested in everyday life and human relations. Jewish hospital of the Jewish Welfare Society at Zawodzie admitted Jewish and Catholic patients. Catholic clergy of Częstochowa were not hostile towards Jews. The predominant tolerance and cooperation were best illustrated by the local administration with many Jewish councilors, as well as by the political activity of Jewish parties and groups.²² An instance of joint cultural ventures was the exhibition held in Częstochowa in April (8-22) of 1934, entitled “Częstochowa Polish and Regional Book”. The exhibition was organized under the auspices of the Kielce governor, Jerzy Paciorkowski, and Częstochowa Bishop Teodor Kubina. The exhibits included precious volumes from the Jasna Góra Monastery and from Father Wroblewski’s library, but the case No. 4 held old and new Jewish publications presented by the Jewish community. The works of Rabbi Nachum Asz were prominent, such as *Unzer Flicht in di Tag fun Noyt* (Our Duties at the Time of Misery), Częstochowa 1926; *A Traystvort farn Yiddishn Folk* (Words of Consolation) Częstochowa 1924; *Kos Nychumym* (Words of Consolation in Hebrew), Częstochowa 1932; *Oylot Shabbat* (On the Shabbat Rest), Częstochowa 1934. Moreover Rabbi Nachum Asz lent some of the most valuable books in his private collection to be shown at the exhibition.²³

The proportion of Jewish population in the towns of Częstochowa Diocese was high, sometimes amounting to 50 per cent. Their number was recorded in diocesan charts (except for the Częstochowa city parishes). It was characteristic of Jewish communities to welcome Bishop Kubina on his canonical visits of inspection to various towns. Jews often erected their own gates of honor for the celebrated guest. A rabbi or delegate of the community would greet the bishop in their vernacular. Bishop Kubina would return greeting with some Hebrew phrases. Jews would also take part in farewell ceremonies.²⁴

Rabbi Nachum Asz was known to visit Bishop Kubina at the Diocesan Curia. Those leaders of two religious groups had much in common. First, they were both involved in the restoration of independent Poland. On more everyday life level they considered it their responsibility to provide for the most needy. It must have been important for the bishop to learn more about the Holy Land and religion of the chosen people. According to the Curia staff Bishop Kubina received a copy of the original Hebrew Bible as a gift from the chief rabbi.²⁵ Such contacts must have contributed to the religious and ethnic accord in town. It did not, however, rule out differences of opinion, nor, unfortunately, anti-Jewish incidents that disturbed the peace. Besides Polish Catholics made use of various Jewish services on daily basis, be it economic dealings, medical or legal.

Upon the liquidation of the ghetto only the tiny fragment of prewar Jewish population survived in Częstochowa, mainly the inmates of HASAG labor camps, with

²² R. Szwed, *Samorząd miasta Częstochowy w latach 1919–1925*, [in:] R. Szwed, J. Mizgalski, W. Palus (eds), *Częstochowa w pierwszych latach Polski Odrodzonej*, Częstochowa 1994, p. 48–49; R. Szwed, *Radni miasta Częstochowy w latach międzywojennych (1918–1939)*, [in:] R. Szwed, W. Palus (eds) *Spółeczeństwo Częstochowy w latach 1918–1939*, Częstochowa 1997, p. 42–43; R.W. Szwed, *Wybory do sejmku ustawodawczego w okręgu Częstochowa–Radomsko w 1919 r.*, [in:] *Częstochowa w pierwszych latach Polski Odrodzonej*, pp. 18–19, 26–27

²³ *Wystawa książki polskiej oraz regionalizmu Częstochowy i okolicy*, Częstochowa 1934, p. 43–44.

²⁴ Based on witnesses’ testimonies and remembrances.

²⁵ No mention of the gift was found, however, in Bishop Kubina’s personal records.

new transport of workers arriving from Lodz, Plaszow, and other towns. On January 17, 1945, the liberation day, there were just 1,518 former Jewish inhabitants left in Częstochowa, including 1,240 Częstochowa born Jews.²⁶

4. Postwar Local Press on Jews

With the end of the occupation there were hardly any mentions of Jews in the local Polish press. An interview that Polish Primate August Hlond granted to the Chief Rabbi of Poland Professor Zelberger was published in March/April issue of *Niedziela*, a Catholic Diocesan weekly. Primate Hlond gave his condolences and expressed his grief upon the tragedy of the Jewish people at the hands of Nazis. He also referred to the Polish help during the occupation and his own efforts in that respect while in France. Denouncing new wave of anti-Jewish violence in the world Primate Hlond said such incidents in Poland were unforgivable. The conclusion indicated that positive attitude towards Jews was prevailing all over Poland. The interview was not, however, authorized by the Primate, and included some additional political lines, which were disavowed by *Głos Katolicki* in Poznan.²⁷ In early June *Niedziela* informed of a Jewish theater opened in Wroclaw, the city being a major Jewish center, next to Lodz.²⁸ A brief note on Jews in Palestine was published after the Kielce pogrom.

Częstochowski Głos Narodu (from 1946 *Głos Narodu. Informacyjny Dziennik Demokratyczny*) was similarly, or even more reserved on Jewish issues. This paper reported a trial against perpetrators of an 1938 anti-Jewish pogrom in Nuremberg.²⁹ News on hunger strikes declared by Jews, whom the British did not allow to settle in Jerusalem were also published.³⁰ In 1945 the editors commemorated the anniversary of the baptism of fire of Warsaw Jews rising heroically in arms against the hitlerites.³¹

5. Reaction of Częstochowa local government and Catholic Church to the Kielce Pogrom

In 1946 Częstochowa was in the Kielce province (voivodship) despite the fact that its population was twice as big as that of Kielce, whereas Częstochowa Jews outnumbered the Jews of Kielce several times. Upon receiving news of the bloody riots in Kielce the local administration was determined to prevent any social unrest and the like occurrences in Częstochowa. Maintaining order in the city was the mayor's responsibility. He was officially notified of the Kielce pogrom and he was the one to initiate appropriate preventive measures. At the time the mayor of Częstochowa was Dr. T.J. Wolanski.

As evidenced by documents at the State Archives in Częstochowa, in particular a report the mayor submitted to the Province Governor's Office, Social-Political Dept., on July 9, 1946, the following security measures were undertaken when the Kielce news arrived. On July 7, the Mayor met twice with Bishop Kubina, who co-signed a proposed proclamation to Częstochowa inhabitants. The mayor wanted the text to be published in the 8th July edition of *Głos Narodu*, but forgot the paper had a double Sunday-Monday edition and therefore the proclamation could be (and was) published on Tuesday (the 9th). The same day the proclamation was also placarded all over town. After the meeting with the

²⁶ J. Pietrzykowski, *Hitlerowcy w Częstochowie w latach 1939–1945*, Poznań 1959, s. 195–196.

²⁷ *Ks. Prymas w sprawie żydowskiej*, *Niedziela* R. 16: 1946, nr 13, p. 102.

²⁸ *Śląsk Dolny terenem kolonizacji żydowskiej*, [in:] *Niedziela* R. 16: 1946, p. 179.

²⁹ *Proces o zajścia antyżydowskie w Norymberdze*, in: *Głos Narodu* R.2: 1946, p. 80.

³⁰ *Strajki głodowe Żydów*, in: *Głos Narodu* R.2: 1946, p. 88.

³¹ *Getto żydowskie w Warszawie*, in: *Częstochowski Głos Narodu* R.1: 1945, nr 57, p. 4.

mayor, Bishop Kubina instructed Częstochowa clergy to exhort their congregations at Sunday services to disbelieve any rumors of blood libel and counteract any anti-Semitic incidents. The bishop himself condemned the perpetrators of the Kielce pogrom in his sermon at the evening mass at the Jasna Gora Monastery. He stated categorically that ritual murder was a lie and urged the congregation to do their best in their localities to prevent any anti-Jewish excesses in Częstochowa.³²

Next day, on July 8th, the mayor summoned representatives of Częstochowa intelligentsia to a meeting. He entreated them to join his efforts at calming the emotions in town stirred by the Kielce news and ensuing rumors. In response to Mayor's appeal the nine people strong Committee Against Anti-Semitism in Częstochowa was called into being and a resolution declared. Mayor Wolanski pointed to four anti-Jewish incidents in Częstochowa, which had been crushed in the bud, and rumors of kidnapped Christian children which were spread indicating intense anti-Jewish sentiments in town. They were allegedly "grounded" in a killing of a 15-year-old girl (Katarzyna Wozniak), whose body was found in a clay pit, and the supposed arrest of a tailor Chil Toper suspected of the murder.³³ Earlier, in June 1946, two Jews traveling from Koniecpol to Lower Silesia were killed and thrown out of a Lublin-Wroclaw train. The suspects in that case were soldiers or militia men.³⁴

6. Proclamations to the Inhabitants of Częstochowa and Częstochowa Powiat

The crucial event of that time in Częstochowa was the publication of the proclamation addressed "To the Entire Community of Częstochowa", whose text was settled upon on July 7 (printed in *Głos Narodu* and placarded in town on July 9). The document was signed by the Częstochowa Bishop Teodor Kubina, by the chairman of the City Council Karol Zajda, by Mayor T.J. Wolanski, by chairman of the Powiat Council Stefan Rekas, and by Powiat governor Jozef Kazmierczak. The Kielce murder of 32 Jews (several were yet to die of injuries) and 2 Poles was absolutely condemned in the text. The fact that the murdered would have not survived the hell of the hitlerite occupation without Polish Christians help was reminded. The morally responsible and actual perpetrators of the Kielce pogrom trample on the human dignity and "committed a terrible form of crime against the Christian commandment to love your neighbor" and the general human principle "thou shall not kill". The crime resulted from bigotry and unjustifiable ignorance. The perpetrators should be punished. Regretfully, Częstochowa was not quite free from people, albeit a few, who strove to incite analogical anti-Jewish acts in the city. Everybody denounced blood libel, and those who disseminated rumors about ritual murders were either criminals or ignoramus. In conclusion the authors of the document appealed to all inhabitants of Częstochowa to stay calm and resist any excesses against Jewish population. Christian morals would stop Częstochowa people from any violence against their neighbors of different nationality or religion.³⁵

Not later than the very next day (on Wednesday, July 10th, though it was written on July 8th), the next proclamation "To the Entire Community of Częstochowa and Częstochowa Powiat" was released. It visibly lacked the signatures of major city officials.

³² Do Urzędu Wojewódzkiego – Wydział Społeczno-Polityczny w Kielcach. Sprawa mordu kieleckiego, Archiwum Państwowe w Częstochowie (skrót: APCz), Sygn. ZMCz 107 p. 2–3.

³³ Ibidem, p.3.

³⁴ Do mgr. Adama Wysokińskiego w miejscu. – Sprawa mordu kieleckiego, p. 14.

³⁵ *Do ogółu społeczeństwa m. Częstochowy*, „Głos Narodu” R. 2: 1946, nr. 159, p. 1 (July 9th, 1946); *Antyżydowskie wydarzenia kieleckie*, vol. 2 p. 112–114.

Instead, it was signed by representatives of the judiciary, trade, and cooperative organizations. Still, at the top of the list of 23 names was the signature of Bishop Teodor Kubina, followed by an official of Diocesan Court Alojzy Jatowtt, editor of *Niedziela* Priest Dr. Antoni Marchewka, and others. Again, the perpetrators of the Kielce pogrom were condemned. Emphasis was put on the Christian and Polish traditions of restraining from violence towards another human being. Representatives of Częstochowa intelligentsia seemed determined to oppose any fratricidal crimes and fights. They referred to the preceding proclamation and repeated the plea to “oppose the maneuvers of those, whose vile political intention is to provoke the befuddled and unaware to commit crimes and spread lies, which can incite or cause the crime”.³⁶

It is important to note that, beside bigotry and ignorance, the authors of the second proclamation blamed also those with “vile political intention”. They also stressed the fact that the previous statement was issued by “the highest Church dignitary of our Diocese and by the city officials.”³⁷

Neither did Bishop Kubina miss the conference of Mayor Dr. Wolanski with local intelligentsia on Monday July 8th. It was a third meeting concerning the Kielce pogrom with Bishop Kubina, Alojzy Jatowtt, an official of Diocesan Court, and Father Antoni Marchewka, editor of the *Niedziela* Catholic weekly. Other participants included distinguished figures of the Częstochowa courts, prosecutor’s office, prominent physicians, merchants, cooperative movement representatives, and others. Bishop Kubina addressed them, speaking of the dangerous state of minds in town which can be skillfully and wickedly employed by the elements, who meant harm to the Polish nation and state. A significant fragment of the bishop’s address was quoted by *Głos Narodu* on July 10th: “The fact that occurred nearby [in Kielce] was a tragedy, contrary to the Catholic teaching and the Scripture. Sadly, the accusations against Jews are not new, from time to time they have been reoccurring in people’s minds and poisoning them. I state that blood libel is based on lie. I do not know who spreads such rumors, but whoever it is, they are not good Poles, because they mean to attract the attention of the world on our state and defame it. We have already heard voices from abroad that indicate a lack of confidence in our capacity to control the situation at home. Such voices are a blow to the warranty of our independence. The psychosis that possesses blind, inflammable masses must be denounced by the Church, by the intelligentsia, and by the entire Nation. We need as many sources of guidance, of education as will reach the masses to enlighten them and eradicate any evil and barbaric ignorance – concluded His Eminence Bishop Kubina.”³⁸

Mayor Wolanski, on his part, entreated Częstochowa intelligentsia to explain to the people that the Kielce events were in fact directed against the Polish nation, not the Jews. He said: “This action is not about murdering so and so many Jews. The point is to compromise Polish nation in the eyes of the world. We have to fight for the good name of Poland, and also for the moral condition of our society, for its moral values.” Mayor Wolanski proceeded with his address bringing up the authority of Bishop Kubina, but declaring that if the state security demanded it, the local administration was determined to use any measures, including repressive ones. The participants postulated that the results of the investigation in Kielce be published in press. At the Bishop’s suggestion, the members of the Board of the League Against Anti-Semitism, set up at the previous meeting, were elected. The Board included: Father Alojzy Jatowtt, lawyer Zychlinski, Dr. Jaron, advocate

³⁶ *Do ogółu społeczeństwa m. Częstochowy i powiatu częstochowskiego, Głos Narodu R. 2: 1946, nr. 160, p. 1.*

³⁷ *Ibidem, p.1.*

³⁸ *Doniesie przemówienie ks. Biskupa Kubiny na konferencji inteligencji częstochowskiej, Głos Narodu R.2: 1946, nr. 160, p. 5.*

Bielobradzki, chairman Dembski, Dr. Borkowski, and a co-chairman of the Merchants' Association Ordon.³⁹

Bishop Kubina's speech at the conference of Częstochowa intelligentsia had major impact. As previously, he blamed the bigotry and ignorance of the Kielce mob, guilefully led on by political elements. The Kielce events were not actually aimed against the Jewish population, but against the Polish nation, defamed in the eyes of other nations. Still, Bishop Kubina was tireless in his efforts to prevent any similar occurrences in Częstochowa. Even the city officials relied on the bishop's authority and activity to maintain peace, as can be inferred from a confidential note of August 29 concerning the situation in Częstochowa after the Kielce pogrom and addressed to the Voivodship (Provincial) Information Bureau in Kielce. An anonymous author from the Sub-Division of Mass Propaganda in Częstochowa Poviát Bureau of Information and Propaganda reported that, with the public opinion calmed down by the statements signed by Bishop Kubina, the political parties and Propaganda Division resumed their activity.⁴⁰ The reverence that the bishop commanded was partly due to his position in the Church, but also earned with his patriotic activity during the German occupation, when the bishop was in various ways extending help to the victims of Nazi terror. What he was best remembered for were the relief actions to feed the most needy inhabitants of Częstochowa.

The question arises about the character of such a close cooperation of Bishop Kubina with Częstochowa officials. It seems to have had no other but strictly humanitarian and national aspect. It did not involve any ideological compromise. Six months earlier, on January 30, 1946, in his address to the diocesan consulters and deacons Bishop Kubina declared openly: "The battle for a new world has begun now. And two camps have been already consolidating: the materialist camp, which wants to build this new world without God, and the Christian camp, who wants to ground it in God. The battle between the two is inescapable, because the two are opposites in basic assumptions and perspectives on the world and human life."⁴¹

7. Press Releases on the Kielce Events

In 1946 local Częstochowa press included a daily, *Głos Narodu*, and *Niedziela*, a weekly published by the Diocese. The news of the Kielce pogrom appeared in *Głos Narodu* on July 6th. According to this report, it were some Kielce fascist provocateurs who made a young boy lie about being kidnapped and imprisoned by Jews. As a result, outraged inhabitants of Kielce crowded at Planty and attacked Jewish dwellers of a big building. In the pogrom 34 people were killed and 42 injured. Officers of the public security forces arrived at the scene of unrest. 62 suspects were arrested, including some militia men. A special commission was set up in Warsaw by the Ministry of Public Security and Ministry of Justice and sent to Kielce to investigate the crime. The case was to be tried summarily.⁴² The Sunday-Monday (July 7-8th) issue of the paper had just an information on the protest of Kielce workers against the crime.⁴³

³⁹ Ibidem, p. 5; this speech especially abounded in assertions incompatible with the teaching of the Church and with the earlier utterance of Bishop Kubina.

⁴⁰ Pismo Powiatowego Oddziału Informacji i Propagandy w Częstochowie do Wojewódzkiego Urzędu Informacji w Kielcach, on the public response to Bishop Kubina's statement; in: *Antyżydowskie wydarzenia kieleckie*, vol. 2, p. 115.

⁴¹ T. Kubina, *Przemówienie do konsultorów diecezjalnych i dziekanów*, „Wiadomości Diecezjalne” R. 16: 1946, p. 10.

⁴² *Straszna zbrodnia w Kielcach*, „Głos Narodu” R.2:1946, nr. 157, p. 1.

⁴³ *Robotnicy kieleccy potępiają zbrodniarzy*, „Głos Narodu” R. 2: 1946, nr 158, p. 1.

The crucial documents, namely the statements of Częstochowa officials headed by Bishop Kubina, were published in *Głos Narodu* on July 9th and 10th (on Tuesday and Wednesday). The first was a proclamation „To the Entire Community of Częstochowa”, signed by five officials of the Częstochowa local government with Bishop Kubina (the text was not only written, but also edited in the ready-to-print form at the City Hall).⁴⁴ It was also placarded all over Częstochowa. The very day the official release on the Kielce pogrom⁴⁵ was published in press. The next day the other proclamation, “To the Entire Community of Częstochowa and Częstochowa Powiat”, was printed (this time without any signatures of government officials).⁴⁶ A report on the “Kielce Criminals in the Summary Court”⁴⁷ supplemented the proclamation side by side. The third item on the Kielce pogrom in the July 10th issue of *Głos Narodu* was the address of Bishop Kubina to the representatives of Częstochowa intelligentsia.⁴⁸ For the next three days (July 11-13th) the paper reported the trial in Kielce, witnesses testimonies and the sentences.

The public opinion in Częstochowa and vicinity, but also in the Western (Regained) Territories, could also seek information in *Niedziela*. The earliest information on the Kielce pogrom in this diocesan weekly was published as late as in the August 21-27 issue. The authors of an editorial actually formulated a moral evaluation of the assault. They underscored its incompatibility with the teaching of Christ and the fact that the Catholic Church always condemned such crimes. Moreover, they were contradictory with the Christian traditions of Polish nation which involved providing shelter and help to refugees from abroad, including Jews. All the circumstances of the crime should be clarified as soon as possible. The editors were positive that the perpetrators were not true Catholics.⁴⁹ The “Home” section of the weekly included basic facts on the pogrom: the number of killed – 2 Poles and 39 Jews, and the information that nine suspects were sentenced to death and two to long-term imprisonment by the Supreme Military Tribunal.⁵⁰ Important news about the arrest of the chiefs of the Security and police (UB and MO) in Kielce were printed in the subsequent edition of *Niedziela*. The charges against them concerned dereliction of duty during the riots.⁵¹

It seems justified to inquire why *Niedziela*, a weekly published by the Częstochowa Diocese, was so late and so laconic on the Kielce events. The question is all the more warranted with the Częstochowa bishop so deeply engaged in preventing any similar assaults in his town. The answer is probably simple. The position of the Curia in this respect was clearly formulated from the very beginning, as the inhabitants of Częstochowa were well aware of due to the publications of *Głos Narodu*, and there was no need to repeat all the information.

8. Conclusions

All of the above attests to the commitment and energy, that the bishop of Częstochowa, Dr. Teodor Kubina, put into appeasing anti-Jewish attitudes in Częstochowa and preventing any violence similar to the Kielce pogrom. Having been notified of incidents and instances

⁴⁴ *Do ogółu społeczeństwa m. Częstochowy*, „Głos Narodu” R. 2: 1946, nr 159, p. 1.

⁴⁵ *Komunikat oficjalny o pogromie w Kielcach*, „Głos narodu” R. 2: 1946, nr 159, p. 2.

⁴⁶ *Do ogółu społeczeństwa m. Częstochowy i powiatu częstochowskiego*, „Głos Narodu” R. 2: 1946, nr 160, p. 1.

⁴⁷ *Zbrodniarze kieleccy przed sądem doraźnym*, „Głos Narodu” R. 2: 1946, nr 160, p. 1.

⁴⁸ *Donosile przemówienie ks. Biskupa Kubiny na konferencji inteligencji częstochowskiej*, „Głos Narodu” R. 2: 1946, nr 160, p. 5

⁴⁹ *W imię sprawiedliwości*, „Niedziela” R. 16: 1946, p. 235.

⁵⁰ *Pogrom w Kielcach*, „Niedziela”, as above.

⁵¹ *Aresztowania w Kielcach*, „Niedziela” R. 16: 1946, p. 243.

of animosity manifested towards Częstochowa Jews, Bishop Kubina was determined to act swiftly and forcefully in close cooperation with the local government officials. He saw the causes of the hostility in ignorance and bigotry of people, whose resentments were aptly used by some people with political agenda. In general opinion Częstochowa owed its peace and order in those days to Bishop Kubina. This opinion was additionally confirmed by local officials and reiterated in reports to the Security Bureau.

To have a full picture it is necessary to mention that Bishop Kubina was not the only representative of the Polish Episcopate to denounce publicly the Kielce pogrom and protect Jewish population. Polish Primate, Archbishop August Hlond spoke in similar tone at an interview, which he granted to American journalists after the pogrom. Archbishop Hlond emphasized that the Kielce events were irreconcilable with the Catholic teaching and repeated that the Kielce clergy attempted to counteract, but Father Roman Zelek was not allowed near the riots. A representative of the Diocesan Curia in Kielce agreed on a joint proclamation signed by the governor of Kielce district (voivodship), but the Security did not release it. The unrest in town was greatly reduced by a Diocesan statement read in all Kielce churches on Sunday of July 7th. Archbishop Hlond reminded his interlocutors of Polish help to Jews during the occupation and his own efforts in France. The words of Archbishop Hlond were in fact the official stand of the Catholic Church in Poland on the Kielce pogrom of July 4th, 1946.⁵²

Analogically, in the 21 July edition of *Tygodnik Powszechny*, a Krakow Catholic weekly, an editorial was printed to the effect that Polish nation, being true to its Christian upbringing, never took part in massive prosecutions of Jews, who found safe refuge for coexistence in Poland since the 13th c. Since direct perpetrators of the Kielce crime have not been found, the arrests of the Security and Militia chiefs in Kielce were rightful.⁵³

The last question remains to be answered and that is about the evaluation of Bishop Kubina's facing the anti-Jewish unrest in Częstochowa. Polish Primate Archbishop Hlond criticized "a bishop" for too close cooperation with the state authorities in issuing public statements, whose message was not always congruent with the teaching of the Church.⁵⁴ Częstochowa proclamations did, in fact, abound in political assertions, but again, their message was for the most part consistent with and directly referring to the Catholic teaching.

The press controlled by the communist parties (PPR and PPS) held Catholic clergy co-responsible for the Kielce events, blaming Archbishop Hlond, Diocesan Curia in Kielce, and – the irony of it, Częstochowa Bishop, Teodor Kubina.⁵⁵

⁵² Oświadczenie kardynała Augusta Hlonda, prymasa Polski, złożone wobec dziennikarzy amerykańskich w sprawie pogromu kieleckiego. Warszawa 11 VII 1946 r. in: *Antyżydowskie wydarzenia kieleckie*, vol. 2, p. 117–118. A record of the hearing that Lublin Bishop Stefan Wyszynski granted to a delegation of the District Committee of Jews in Lublin in 1946, as quoted in: *Antyżydowskie wydarzenia kieleckie*, vol. 2, p. 116–117 – in not a reliable source, because it was written in Warsaw on October 10, 1953, at the time when Bishop Wyszynski was imprisoned by the communist regime.

⁵³ *Zbrodnia kielecka*, „Tygodnik Powszechny” nr. 29 p. 1; repr. in: *Antyżydowskie wydarzenia kieleckie*, t. 2, pp. 123–125.

⁵⁴ Z. Wrona, *Kościół wobec pogromu Żydów w Kielcach w 1946 r.*, [in:] *Pamiętnik Świętokrzyski. Studia z dziejów kultury chrześcijańskiej*, Kielce 1991, p. 299.

⁵⁵ *Ibidem*, p.285; D. Libionka, *Antysemityzm i zagłada na łamach prasy w Polsce w latach 1945–1946*, [in:] *Polska 1944/45–1989. Studia i materiały*, vol. 2, Warszawa 1997, pp. 153–165.