



THE BLACK BOOK OF POLISH JEWRY pub. By The American Federation of Polish Jews in cooperation with The Association of Jewish Refugees and Immigrants from Poland.

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p. 19 The First Mass-Murders

The first of the mass-murders took place when the Nazis shot 53 Jews in the house at Nalewki Street 9. The Jews were arrested and shot by the Gestapo when a Jewish thief, Pinchas Zylberberg, shot a Polish policeman who sought to arrest him.

Senator Kerner relates the following: "One day when we Polish constables came to search the premises of a young Jewish dealer in stolen goods (a notorious criminal), he drew his revolver and fired, killing one of the men and wounding the other. Two days later, Gestapo men surrounded the building where this had occurred (Nalewki Street 9) and arrested not only all the Jewish men who lived in the house, but all the other Jews who happened to be there at the time.

On the morning of the third day all the prisoners, 53 in number, were shot. Just before the execution, the men were divided into three groups, and each group was obliged to dig a grave for its predecessors and bury them (the third group was buried by the Germans).

The story of what had happened was not disclosed immediately. When the Chairman of the Council went to the Gestapo to ask permission to supply the prisoners with food, he was told that their whereabouts could be revealed only two days later, though the men were then dead and buried. The truth came out only a week after the massacre. A collective fine of 300,000 zlotys was imposed upon the Jewish community of Warsaw, all this because a Jew had killed a Polish constable. To raise so large a sum in Warsaw at such a time within the allotted two day period appeared impossible. When all efforts to secure reduction of the fine had failed, the Council decided to pay part of the 300,000 zlotys in cash and the rest in checks drawn against Jewish funds deposited in the banks. The authorities at first agreed, but changed their minds at the last moment and demanded payment of the whole sum in cash. The demand was reinforced with the threat that otherwise five rabbis and five members of the Council would be detained as hostages. The money was found somehow and the danger averted."



A German account of the incident appeared on 1 December 1939, in the *Krakauer Zeitung* which reported from Warsaw, under the heading, "Polish Policeman Murdered by Jews":

"A Polish Policeman in uniform was shot while on duty on 13 November in Warsaw at Nalewki Street 9 by a Jewish gang. A second official was dangerously wounded by a shot. The occupants of the house at Nalewki Street 9 hampered the search for the murderers, who had fled, by offering open resistance. In the meantime the police succeeded in tracing the murderer, a Jew and a professional criminal, Pinchas Jankiel Zylberberg, who on account of the war had been prematurely released from prison. In his possession was found the weapon used for the murder. Because of their reprehensible conduct during the police investigations, 53 male Jews from the house at Nalewki Street 9 were shot".

Among the victims were boys of twelve and thirteen years of age. The Germans later justified the execution on the principle of collective responsibility which they introduced all over Poland.

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