

Letters to the Editor from The Times of Trenton

Thursday, June 17, 2010

What really happened in 1946 Kielce pogrom

When longtime journalist Helen Thomas said that the Israelis should go back to wherever they came from, columnist Richard Cohen, in "The Jews couldn't go home" (June 10), pointed to what happened in Kielce, Poland, on July 4, 1946, a year after the end of World War II. Going home, he said, resulted in some 1,500 Jews being killed "not by Nazis, but by Poles."

What?

In 1946, Poland was occupied by Russia. That June, a vote of confidence in the Communist government was allowed, and the unofficial results showed some 80 percent against it. In good Soviet fashion, the count was falsified to show the opposite, and ways to discredit the Polish people got under way.

In July, a mob of 150 attacked an apartment house in Kielce, because it had been reported that Jews were killing Christian children in the cellar. All 40 Jews were killed. They were communists in good standing, recently arrived from the Soviet Union, undergoing military training, with permission to own and use firearms -- forbidden under penalty of death for ordinary residents of Poland. Most of the Jews were found shot, so certainly not by civilian Poles. The most virulent attackers were workers from a local steel mill, the majority hired days before the attack and gone the day after. (By the way, the house had no cellar.)

The slaughter was staged by the Soviet authorities. The purpose was to depict countries behind the Iron Curtain (like Poland and Hungary) as depraved and unable to control themselves with respect to Jews. The Soviets took pains to destroy evidence, but there's no doubt that they directed and carried out this tragedy.

There are good reasons to support Israel, and smart "PR" to insist that Jews are safer there. But don't lie about who was responsible for killings behind the Iron Curtain 65 years ago.

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Hamilton