

Information on pogroms that took place in the town of Pogost, Igumen County in 1919-1921

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Early in the morning of **February 26, 1920**, regular units of the Polish Army entered the town. The Jews had already been frightened by the tidings of pogroms which the Polish soldiers had done in neighboring towns, so those Jews who had relatives or good acquaintances in the villages fled there hoping to wait out the pogrom. Those Jews who stayed in Pogost, closed their stores and hid all the goods. Some handed the goods over to their Christian neighbors for safekeeping. Those who had valuable finery and gold, hid them in secret places.

The Polish officer, who was commanding the soldiers, at first headed to the house of the town **Rabbi Haim Rivkin**. But the Rabbi and his family were not home since he moved them beforehand to another village not far from Pogost. Then the Polish officer commanded his soldiers to find the Jews' gold and valuables and to deliver everything to him. However, when the Polish soldiers first attempted entering Jewish homes, the Jews were not letting them in. They re-enforced their doors and nailed their windows shut with wood boards beforehand. Then the Polish officers began setting the houses on fire with the Jews inside. The big fire then started. The Jews began to flee their homes, and the Polish soldiers were shooting at them like at aiming targets. There was a horrible brawl. Half an hour later several local Christians approached the soldiers and asked them to not set any more houses on fire because they were afraid that the fire would damage their houses as well, but by that time half of the town was already on fire.

Almost all of the houses in Pogost were wooden, only three of them were brick houses. In these houses were living the wealthy Jewish families **Alperin** and **Gordon** and also the local orthodox priest. Alperin and Gordon decided to pay off the Polish soldiers and offered them 100 gold coins. The Polish soldiers took their gold, but then entered the houses of these wealthy Jews and plundered them. One Jewish family had been burned down in their house (the family of **Bunim Darishinsky**). On that day about 15 Jews were murdered, many Jews were injured and burned. Some of them later died. Half the town burned down. Several Jewish children ended up orphans. Many of the Jews who waited out the pogrom in the villages, found their homes burned down upon their return to Pogost. Polish soldiers left the town only next morning. After their departure the town was a miserable picture. In many places where the houses stood before, there were only brick chimneys left. After this pogrom about ten Jewish families left Pogost for good.

Witness: Haim Daichik

Before the revolution there were about 1,000 Jews living in Pogost. The town had three synagogues. Most of the Jews were craftsmen, they made shoes, clothing, vine woven ladles, manufactured leather. Many were either doing small business in town, or traveling from village to village to sell their small merchandise. Some families were buying hide of domestic animals or dairy and hauling them to Igumen and Berezino to sell. Several Jewish households were pretty wealthy, but the majority of the Jews were very poor. On early morning of **February 26, 1920** Polish soldiers entered Pogost from the direction of Berezino. They started knocking on Jewish house doors, which were pointed to them by a few local Christian inhabitants, and demanding gold and warm clothing. The Jews were not opening the doors, then the Polish soldiers started setting the houses on fire. The arson ceased only after a few local Christians led by the priest approached the Polish officer and asked him to stop, otherwise the fire could damage the Christian houses and the local church. Polish soldiers were trying to kill those Jews who were fleeing their burning homes by shooting at them. Thus they have killed **Peysakh Levin and his wife Doba**. Thus more than half of the houses in the town were burned down and about 50 Jews were murdered or injured. The Polish soldiers left the town next day, and the Jewish community buried all of the pogrom victims in the Jewish cemetery before Sabbath.

Witness: Nohim Zorin

Our town of Pogost stands away from the main roads. Here Jews and Christians used to live amicably. Pogroms never happened. Jews were mainly settling in the center of the town and engaging in their trade. There were tailors and cobblers and blacksmiths. There had always been more Jews in town than Christians. The town has three synagogues and a church. At the end of February Polish soldiers arrived to town. They demanded from the Jews all of their gold, jewelry and warm clothes. But the Jews were not eager to do so, and then the Polish soldiers began setting Jewish houses on fire. A big fire had begun. The priest from the local church urged Polish soldiers to stop the arson. During the arson a Jewish family of 5 (last name is unintelligibly written) had completely burned down in their own house. Several more Jews ended up with severe burns and died afterward. The Polish soldiers were shooting at the Jews and demanding their gold under death threat. Overall about 20 people died during and after the pogrom. Half the town had burned down and a portion of Jewish families left the town.

