

Salomon Morel

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Salomon Morel (November 15, 1919 – February 14, 2007) was a Jewish partisan, Stalinist official and an accused war criminal. Immediately after the end of World War II, he became commander of the Zgoda labour camp in Świątuchłowiec.^[1] During the rise of the Polish United Workers' Party, Morel acquired the rank of colonel in the political police, or MBP, and commanded a prison in Katowice.

In 1994, soon after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Morel was indicted by Poland's Institute of National Remembrance for war crimes and crimes against humanity, including the "revenge killings" of 1,500 ethnic prisoners from Upper

Silesia (most of them Polish Silesians and German civilians).^[2] After his case was publicized by the Polish, German, British, and American media, Morel fled to Israel and was granted citizenship under the Law of Return. Poland twice requested his extradition, but Israel refused to comply and rejected the more serious charges as being false, potentially part of an antisemitic conspiracy, and again rejected extradition on the grounds that the statute of limitations against Morel had run out, and that Morel was in poor health.

Salomon Morel

Born	November 15, 1919 Garbów Poland
Died	February 14, 2007 (aged 87) Tel Aviv, Israel
Citizenship	Polish, later Israeli
Occupation	Colonel at State Security Services (<i>Urząd Bezpieczeństwa</i>)
Known for	Commander of Zgoda labour camp

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Youth

Salomon Morel was born on November 15, 1919 in the village of Garbów near Lublin, Poland, the son of a Jewish baker.^[3] During the Great Depression, the family business began to falter. Therefore, Morel moved to Łódź where he worked as a sales clerk, but returned to Garbów following the outbreak of war in September 1939.^[3]

World War II

Morel's family went into hiding during World War II in order to avoid being placed in the ghetto.^[3] According to his own *story of courage* in the face of German occupation – that was told by Solomon Morel himself while

in Israel ("*mandolin with him... In his other fist was his Mauser*") – Morel's mother, father and one brother were killed by Polish collaborators during Christmas of 1942. Solomon Morel and his brother Izaak survived the Holocaust hidden by Józef Tkaczyk, a Polish Catholic. In 1983, Józef Tkaczyk was designated as one of the Righteous Among the Nations by Yad Vashem for saving the Morel brothers.^[4]

The official Polish accounts of Morel's wartime activities however, differ substantially from his own story. According to the Institute of National Remembrance, at the beginning of 1942 Salomon Morel and his brother Izaak organised a criminal band to commit robberies in the surrounding villages.^[3] Their criminal activity ended when during one of their robberies they were captured by members of the Polish People's Army.^[3] To avoid punishment Morel placed the blame on his brother, and then joined the Soviet partisans in the Parczew area (see also Parczew partisans), where he worked as a janitor and a guide through the forests.^[3] His two brothers died during the war, one in 1943, another in 1945.^[3]

The Israeli mass media and government presented yet a different version of his life.^[4] The Israeli letter rejecting extradition states that Morel joined the partisans of the Red Army in 1942, and was in the forests when his parents, sister-in-law, and one brother were allegedly killed by Polish Blue Police.^{[4][5]} According to a number of media sources,^[6] Morel claimed that he was at one point an inmate in Auschwitz and over thirty of his relatives were killed in the Holocaust.^[4]

As the Eastern Front advanced, Morel and other communist partisans came out of hiding. In the summer of 1944, Morel organized the Citizen Militia in Lublin.^[3] Later, he became a prison commander at the Lublin Castle, where many soldiers of the anti-communist Armia Krajowa (Home Army) were imprisoned and tortured.^[3]

Zgoda labour camp

On March 15, 1945, Morel became commander of the infamous Zgoda camp in Świętochłowice.^[3] The Zgoda camp was set up by the Soviet political police, or NKVD, after the Soviet Army entered southern Poland. In February 1945 the camp was handed over to the Communist Polish secret service, the notorious Urząd Bezpieczeństwa. Most prisoners in the camp were Silesians and German citizens, while a small number were from "central Poland", and about 38 foreigners.

Sometimes children were sent to the camp along with parents.^[7] Prisoners were not accused of any crime, but were sent by decision of Security Authorities. Authorities tried to convince society that prisoners were only ethnic Germans and former Nazi war criminals and collaborators.^[7] It is estimated that close to 2,000 inmates died in the camp where torture and abuse of prisoners were chronic and rampant.^[5] The camp was closed in November 1945.^[5]

Post-1945 career

Morel continued his career in the prison services, reaching the rank of a colonel as the head of prison in Katowice in 1968.^[3] In 1964 he defended his master's degree on "The prisoners' labor and its value" at Wrocław University's Law School.^[3] Over the course of his career, the communist government awarded him the Cavalry Cross of the Polonia Restituta and the Golden Cross of Merit.^[3] In 1990, after the fall of communism, the General Commission for the Investigation of Crimes against the Polish Nation, precursor to the Institute of National Remembrance, started investigating the abuses carried out at the Zgoda camp.^[3] In 1992, Morel

immigrated to Israel,^[3] where he still received pension from Poland.

Extradition controversy

In 1998, Poland requested that Morel be extradited for trial, but Israel refused.^[4] A reply sent to the Polish Justice Ministry from the Israeli government said that Israel would not extradite Mr. Morel as the statute of limitations had expired on war crimes.^[4]

In April 2004, Poland filed another extradition request against Morel, this time with fresh evidence, upgrading the case to "communist crimes against the population."^[4] The main charge against Salomon Morel was that, as commandant of the Zgoda camp at Świętochłowice, he created for the prisoners in this camp, out of ethnic and political considerations, conditions that jeopardised their lives, including starvation and torture.^[4] The charges against Morel were based primarily on the evidence of over 100 witnesses, including 58 former inmates of the Zgoda camp.^[4] In July 2005 this request was again formally refused by the Israeli government. The response rejected the more serious charges as being false, potentially part of an antisemitic conspiracy, and again rejected extradition on the grounds that the statute of limitations against Morel had run out, and that Morel was in poor health.^[4] Ewa Koj, a prosecutor with the Polish Institute of National Remembrance, criticized the decision, but the Polish Foreign Ministry decided not to press the matter further.^[6] Morel died in Tel Aviv on February 14, 2007.^{[4][8]}

See also

- Czesław Gęborski
- Helena Wolińska-Brus
- Nachman Dushanski, Lithuanian SSR
- John Sack, *An Eye for an Eye: The Story of Jews Who Sought Revenge for the Holocaust*
- John Demjanjuk

Notes and references

1. Gerhard Gruschka, *Zgoda - miejsce grozy: obóz koncentracyjny w Świętochłowicach*, Wokół Nas publishing, Gliwice 1998, ISBN 83-85338-74-8. **(Polish)**
2. "War crime suspect stays in Israel". *BBC*. 7 July 2005.
3. Salomon Morel (https://web.archive.org/web/20060221162029/http://www.ipn.gov.pl/eng/eng_swietoch_sm.html) at the Wayback Machine (archived February 21, 2006), *Institute of National Remembrance*. Retrieved from the Internet Archive. September 05, 2011.
4. Response by the State of Israel to the application for the extradition of Salomon Morel and a report by Dr. Adam Dziurok and Prosecutor Andrzej Majcher on the subject of Salomon Morel and the history and operation of the camp at Świętochłowice-Zgoda. (<http://www.ipn.gov.pl/portal.php?serwis=en&dzial=2&id=71&search=10599>), Institute of National Remembrance, 2005
5. Świętochłowice - Zgoda Labor Camp (https://web.archive.org/web/20060228092635/www.ipn.gov.pl/eng/eng_swietoch_histor.html) at the Wayback Machine (archived February 28, 2006), Institute of National Remembrance, from Internet Archive.
6. Shoshana Olidort. Poland Gives Up Campaign To Extradite Israeli Citizen (<http://www.forward.com/articles/2461/>). *The Forward*. Jul 29, 2005.
7. Adam Dziurok, Obóz Pracy Świętochłowice-Zgoda. (<http://www.ipn.gov.pl/portal.php?serwis=pl&dzial=239&id=3758&poz=3>) Instytut Pamięci Narodowej, 2010
8. "Response by the State of Israel, to the application for the extradition of Salomon Morel". *Israel*. 21 July 2005.

External links

- Response by the State of Israel to the application for the extradition of Salomon Morel and a report by Dr. Adam Dziurok and Prosecutor Andrzej Majcher on the subject of Salomon Morel and the history and operation of the camp at Świętochłowice-Zgoda. (<http://www.ipn.gov.pl/portal.php?serwis=en&dzial=2&id=71&search=10599>)
- 'Israel won't extradite Polish Jew accused of WWII genocide', Ha'aretz, from July 6, 2005 (<http://dotandcalm.com/calm-archive/index/t-10711.html>)
- An official news from 2004.04.30 mentioning Salomon Morel case on the homepage of Polish Embassy (http://www.polandembassy.org/News/Biuletyny_news/News_2004/p2004-04-30.htm)
- 2003 Statement by Prosecutor Ewa Koj, Head of Divisional Commission, for Prosecution of Crimes against the Polish Nation (http://www.ipn.gov.pl/eng/eng_news_high_morel.html)

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| People indicted for crimes against humanity | Recipients of the Order of Polonia Restituta (1944–89)
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