

Szołom Mostowlański

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He chose Florence, in 1932, to study Medicine and graduated on time, on the eve of the promulgation of the racial laws. He passed the State exam to practice the profession, but those laws precluded him from any work opportunity in Italy. Thus, he decided to return to Brest, site of the conflicts between the Russian Empire and the Polish nation; he did not survive the Nazi occupation which, between 1941 and 1942, annihilated the city's Jewish community.

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Education in Brest

The youngest of four brothers and sisters, Szołom Mostowlański was born on 1 August 1914 in Brest-Litovsk, in the Russian Empire at that time, to Szmul, a merchant, and Rachil Sokołowska¹. After the First World War Brest became part of the Polish Republic with the name of Brześć nad Bugiem (today Brest in Belarus); an important commercial hub, the city was the site of a significant Jewish community, which in 1897 numbered about 30,600 people, almost 66% of the entire population. The city population, which had expanded until 1914, was almost halved in 1921 due to the evacuation and severe damage it suffered during the war, and only returned to pre-war levels in 1938. The Jewish community, which had also been growing until the outbreak of the war (in 1913 it included more than 39,000 residents, about 68.5% of the total population), was reduced to about 15,600 people in 1921. Although it had increased to about 25,000 inhabitants in 1938, it was significantly reduced compared to the pre-war period, a sign of people's tendency to emigrate also

¹ ASUFi, AC, SS, b. 681, f. 17794, «Mastowlanski Szolon» [sic], enrollment form at the University of Florence, 20 December 1932. For his brothers and sisters see *Belarus Births Database*, lastname «Mostovlyansky» <<https://www.jewishgen.org>> (accessed upon registration 20 December 2021).

on account of a climate of discrimination that the local administration supported².

A rigorous student

Szołom attended the public high school named after the Polish general Romuald Traugutt and graduated in May 1932; he then emigrated to Florence where he enrolled in the School of Medicine. He graduated on 12 July 1938 with the grade 100/110; the adviser to his thoroughly researched thesis in otorhinolaryngology entitled «La formula acumetrica a mezzo dell'audiometro» [The audiometric formula with the audiometer] was Luigi Umberto Torrini, a lecturer and secretary of the Fascist Union of medical doctors in Florence, who, a few months later, would manage the expulsion of Jewish professionals from the medical register³.

Later Szołom began interning at the hospital of Santa Maria Nuova and, in the same year, successfully passed the State exam at the University of Parma to practice medicine⁴.

In Brest, among the victims of the Nazi genocide

At this point, we lose track of him. He returned to Brest, which in September 1939 was occupied by Soviet troops under the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact. On 22 June 1941, which is the starting date of Operation Barbarossa, the city fell under German control; on the same day a few dozen Jewish men were

² *Brest - Encyclopedia of Jewish Communities in Poland*, entry translated from Hebrew by Jenni Buch and edited by Ellen Stepak, in Shmuel Spector (ed.), *Pinkas Hakehillot Polin*, vol. 5, Jerusalem, Yad Vashem, 1990, available at <<https://www.jewishgen.org>> (accessed on 20 december 2021).

³ *Ibid.*, certified translations of the birth certificate and high school diploma, 28 April 1933; list of the exams taken and minutes of the graduation exam, 12 July 1938. Biblioteca biomedica, Università di Firenze, *Tesi storiche*, T.L.64.5, Szolom Mostowlanski, «La formula acumetrica a mezzo dell'audiometro», typewritten thesis including a handwritten file containing 29 audiograms, School of Medicine and Surgery, Department of Otorhinolaryngology, a.y. 1937-38. On Torrini see Lucrezia Nuti, *Alessandro (Sándor) Bieber* (2021).

⁴ ASUFi, AC, SS, b. 681, f. 17794, «Mastowlanski Szolon» [sic], student transcript including labs and practicums; «Elenco dei candidati che hanno superato l'esame di Stato nella sessione dell'anno 1938 per l'abilitazione all'esercizio della professione di medico-chirurgo [...]», GU n. 248, 20 October 1942, «Supplemento ordinario», p. 12.

rounded up and killed, while in early July the Nazis carried out mass executions of about 4,000 men. The ghettoization of the Jews began on 15 November, and the gates were closed on 15 December⁵.

On 17 November 1941, Szolom received an identity document provided by the Nazi authorities to Jews aged 14 and over -- a total of 12,000 people received these IDs. In the following days, his brother Saul (1903) and his sister Chaja (1892?) were also registered⁶. Between 15 and 16 October 1942 the Polizei Bataillon 310, the Reserve-Polizei-Kompanie Nürnberg, units of the Gendarmerie and the local Schutzpolizei-Dienstabteilung proceeded with the «liquidation» of the ghetto: many people were killed right there, whereas the survivors, on the order of a few thousand, were taken to Bronna Góra, an area about 110 km to the east, and shot to death in the subsequent days⁷. It is very likely that Szolom and his family died during this operation or in the roundups that took place in the weeks following the search for the few survivors who had managed to hide in the ghetto or nearby areas.

When the city was liberated by the Soviets on 12 July 1944, with the exception of a few survivors, almost all of the city's Jewish population had disappeared during the extermination process⁸.

Archival sources

- ASUFi, AC, SS, f. «Mastowlanski Szolon» [sic].

⁵ See *Brest - Encyclopedia of Jewish Communities in Poland*, cit.; Christopher R. Browning, *Nazi Policy, Jewish Workers, German Killers*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2000, pp. 118-124; Wolfgang Curilla, *Die deutsche Ordnungspolizei und der Holocaust im Baltikum und in Weissrussland 1941-1944*, Paderborn, Schöningh, 2006, p. 862.

⁶ *The Brest Ghetto Passport Archive*, ad nomen <<https://www.jewishgen.org>> (accessed upon registration 20 December 2021); see also Pages of Testimony in *The Central Database of Shoah Victims' Names*, ad nomen <<https://yvng.yadvashem.org>> (accessed 20 December 2021).

⁷ *Brest - Encyclopedia of Jewish Communities in Poland*, cit.; C.R. Browning, *Nazi Policy*, cit., pp. 138-139; W. Curilla, *Die deutsche Ordnungspolizei*, cit., pp. 337-339, 379, 667, 682-683, 928.

⁸ See *Brest - Encyclopedia of Jewish Communities in Poland*, cit. For the historical context see Christian Gerlach, *Kalkulierte Morde. Die deutsche Wirtschafts- und Vernichtungspolitik in Weissrussland 1941 bis 1944*, Hamburg, Hamburger Edition, 1999; C.R. Browning, *Nazi Policy*, cit., pp. 116-142, and the bibliography in *The Untold Stories. The Murder Sites of the Jews in the Occupied Territories of the Former USSR* <<https://www.yadvashem.org>> (accessed 20 December 2021); see the entry dedicated to Brest in the portal <<https://www.yadvashem.org>>.

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