

Ezriel Ben-Moshe

The Pogrom of 20th May¹ 1919

When the pogrom on the Jews broke out in 1919, I was [only] four years old, yet I am unable to erase the images of it, which were etched into my memory and which loom before my eyes to this day.

I remember my father's warning in the early hours of that Thursday morning - "*Do not dare to go out on the street*". I felt that something out of the ordinary was about to happen. I saw great concentrations of Poles from other cities, among whom the "*Hallertschikes*"² stood out in particular.

From moment to moment, the tension rose and, suddenly, the Jews began closing their shops and fortifying the entrances to their homes.

And then the hordes of vandals swarmed. Villains and men of the "underworld" fell upon the Jewish shops, which they broke into and robbed. Horrifying cries of "*Death to the Jews*" echoed in the air and those unfortunate Jews, who were unable to disappear from the plunderers' sight in time, were killed on the spot.

From the windows of our rooms in Szama Tennenbaum's building, I was able to observe these horrific events as they occurred.

One Jew, who had failed to conceal himself in time, ran from house to house, from door to door, trying to escape from the cruel hands of the rioters. Because all the entrances were sealed, the vandals caught him and beat him until he bled. He fell near the entrance to the building of the *melamid* Pinkus Arkusz and Gold. The Jew tried to protect himself, but his strength had left him and they did not stop until they saw a puddle of blood surrounding him.

There was a moment's silence - we thought that the worst was over. And here came a well-dressed Pole, who examined the profusely-bleeding body and apparently ascertained that the victim was still breathing. I thought he had come to offer aid to the severely wounded man, but the "kind Pole" kicked the body several times (the victim's name was Zvi [Hersz] Działoszyński).

The commotion in our house, inside which our neighbours had also gathered, was colossal. Women fainted and burst out crying. My father demanded that the gate be opened, to go out and bring the dying man inside, but the neighbours opposed this, saying that the blood-thirsty mob might force its way in, making more victims.

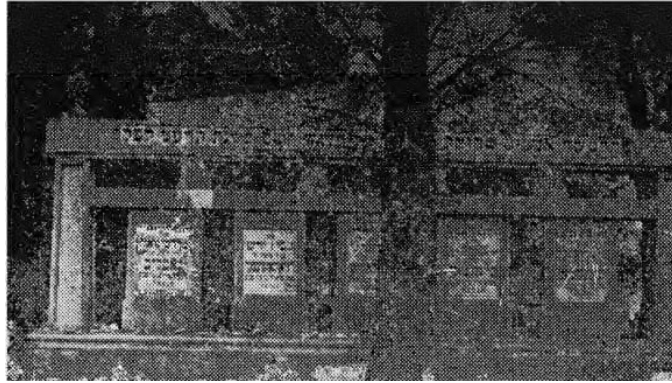
On that same day of bloodshed, Jews were murdered in different parts of town. The rioters were especially successful at the abattoir, where several *shoichets* were killed. Below, we present a list of the Jews murdered on that cruel day:

Mojsze Nisanowicz³, Mojsze Brokman, Zvi Hersz Działoszyński, Anczel Cymerman and the *shoichet* Reb Nechemie Gotlib *hy''d* - two of his colleagues were severely wounded at the abattoir.

¹ [TN: In *Tshenstokhover Yidn*, p.171, the date is given as May 27, as is in other sources.]

² [TN: *Yid.*; followers of the anti-Semitic Polish General Józef Haller.]

³ [TN: In the subsequent article and also in the records, the surname appears as *Nasanowicz*.]



The combined tomb of the five 1919 pogrom victims

Fifteen Jews were severely injured, and thirty-seven slightly injured.