

The Three-Day Pogrom (in May¹ 1937)

We have deemed it necessary to reprint the description of the pogrom on Jews which Polish hooligans perpetrated over three days - from Saturday 19th to Monday 21st May, which was published in *Vorwärts*² [The Forward] on 27th May 1937, by Abraham Litman.

This description conveys an image of the conditions in which our brothers in Częstochowa lived in the last years before their complete destruction:

“Shabbes”, 19th May[sic], at half past ten in the morning, as the cantor in the City Synagogue was ending the Musaf prayer, a Jew suddenly entered and announced that a Jew had shot a Pole in the street. A great panic immediately ensued. People quickly threw their prayer-shawls off and began running home. The streets were already filled with startled Jews, all hurrying home.

Until six in the evening, only a few attacks were carried out against Jews. But from six to eleven at night, the pogrom on Jews spread over various streets. We left the house and made our way to the Aleja, but there I witnessed a horrifying scene. The hooligans had torn off the Aleja’s benches and were using them to hack at and break the windows.

But, waiting for the “nechume” [consolation], you could’ve give up your “neshume” [spirit]. By the time the police patrols arrived, the hooligans had broken into the larger shops on the Aleja and the neighbouring streets [and] looted the merchandise, thus turning dozens of Jewish merchants into paupers.

The police patrols were “on guard” everywhere, but, after all, the hooligans are “their own”, while the Jews are, in the end, “alien”.

The Jewish Kehilla contacted the Jewish Sejm members in Warsaw, asking them to intervene with the higher powers. But, sadly, their intervention was of little help.

Sunday was a little calmer. Police patrols appeared, which somewhat hindered the hooligans in their destructive activities. On Monday, the Jews still feared opening their shops and stalls. Hundreds of victims registered their losses with the Jewish Kehilla. My personal situation - continues the informant - is very difficult. I trade almost exclusively with Christians and our relationship with them has become very strained. And who knows if anything will change for the better? Even the liberal Christians now hold that it is undesirable to do business with Jews.

The Mayor even published a proclamation in which he appeals for calm, due to the international disgrace. The proclamation did bring some peace, but the blows we received produced a feeling of humiliation within us, a feeling that our possessions and lives are there for the taking. Darker elements saunter about openly and freely. Our fates are in the hands of the Government... But it does not fulfil its obligations towards its Jewish citizens!

¹ [TN: In *Tshenstokhover Yidn*, p.178, the date is given as June 19th-21st, as is in other sources.]

² [TN: *Jewish-American Yiddish newspaper*.]

On Tuesday the 22nd at dawn, the city was struck by a barbarous attack on the New Study-Hall. The hooligans tore inside and toppled the modern cooker, which had cost 1500 złoty. They also wrecked the Holy Ark and tore the Torah scrolls... Jews weep and sit "shive" [7 days of mourning]. The vandals were not content with the desecration, but also set fire to several Jewish shops!

The terror continues to reign, and how this will all end, nobody knows!"

These were the conditions under which our brothers lived in May [sic] of 1937 in our dear Częstochowa.