

Eyewitness Account of Pogroms in Lodz (September 9, 1939)

Abstract

“Yarden” belonged to a group of the Zionist youth federation *Haschomer Hazair* in Lodz. The diary Yarden kept comprises four notebooks, which were later found in Vilnius. They contain descriptions of experiences in various Polish cities during the first months of the German occupation. The author’s identity remains unknown.

Source

9 September, 1939

With a leap, the wolf has shed its sheep’s clothing, its fangs bared and hungry for prey. Our neighbours of yesterday, the German inhabitants of Lodz, recovered from their festive intoxication,^[1] lie in ambush for us on the street corner. Now it’s time for action. Bloodthirsty animal eyes watchfully survey everyone passing by.

“Jew!,” a wild voice suddenly snarls. The miserable victim immediately collapses helplessly under the blows that rain down on him. Thugs armed with scissors run wild in the streets. They have the honour of proving to the liberating army that they have absorbed their masters’ lessons very well. Murderously they descend on Jewish passers-by—sparing neither the elderly nor the frail, shearing off beards and pulling out hair until blood flows and their faces shine with enjoyment and laughter. This is their national duty, which they will fulfil completely for the glory of their nation!

The Jews of Lodz are perplexed. Fear has injected its poison into their hearts. It is dangerous to go outside. Just a few hours are enough for the Nazi drug to poison the lives of tens of thousands of people. What does the future hold? How will we endure this?

Our neighbour B was taken to work at the main administration building. After having to scrub the floor, he was ordered to wipe it dry with his jacket. When he hesitated in surprise at this strange request, he was hurled to the floor brutally, and soldiers dragged him along the length and breadth of the room with their strong arms. After his clothes had absorbed enough of the filthy water on the floor, they stood him on his legs, covered in filth and slime, and shaved off a strip of hair in the middle of his head. In this *state*, they threw him out. If I had not seen him with my own eyes when he came home, if I had not heard straight from his mouth about how he was abused by these people from a “cultured” nation, I would never have believed that human beings were capable of something like that. But the jester that is reality is celebrating another great victory. From time to time, he bares his rotten teeth in vile laughter. With his satanic claws he pierces the fabric of the lofty dream, tears it to shreds and sniggers: “This is the reality!” How awful is the realization that we must live in this reality, created by the devil, with no judges, no laws and no protest!

NOTES

[1] This refers to the celebrations after the invasion of German troops in Lodz.

Source of the German transcription: *Die Verfolgung und Ermordung der europäischen Juden durch das nationalsozialistische Deutschland 1933–1945*, Band 4: *Polen September 1939-Juli 1941*, edited by Klaus-Peter Friedrich with Andrea Löw. Munich: Oldenbourg, 2011, pp. 82–83. Available online at: <https://die-quellen-sprechen.de/04-006.html>

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