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Betty Scholem on Anti-Semitism in Berlin (November 20, 1923)

In the crisis-ridden years after World War I, anti-Semitic attacks were carried out in many cities in Germany. During the period of hyperinflation, some of these attacks escalated into pogrom-like riots. Violence erupted, for example, in Beuthen (Upper Silesia) in October 1923 and in the Scheunenviertel district of Berlin, which was inhabited mainly by Eastern European Jews, in November 1923. The rioting in the Scheunenviertel was triggered by rumors that Eastern European Jews had deliberately bought up the emergency currency being issued by the city as unemployment assistance, with the result that it could no longer be paid out. Thousands of the unemployed entered the quarter, rioting, beating up local residents and passers-by, and looting shops and apartments. One of the charges leveled against the police was that they intervened too late.

Berlin, November 20, 1923

My dear child,

[. . .] There were *no* pogroms in Berlin. But anti-Semitism has penetrated and poisoned the people to such an extent that from all sides you can hear curses against the Jews—completely in the open, and with a lack of embarrassment that has never before been seen. [. . .]

Kisses, Mum

Source of English translation: Gershom Scholem, *A Life in Letters, 1914-1982*. Edited and translated by Anthony David Skinner. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002, p. 129.

Source of original German text: Betty Scholem and Gershom Scholem, *Mutter und Sohn im Briefwechsel 1917-1946*. Edited by Itta Shedletzky with Thomas Sparr. Munich: Verlag C.H. Beck, 1989, pp. 94-96.