

Account given by Rabbi Max Abraham from Rathenow (excerpt), 1934

Already in 1930, as the National Socialism was only first on the rise, I was attacked and abused by the SA storm leader (Sturmführer) Jackzentis. The storm leader Jackzentis was a notorious layabout and brute. I filed charges against him and he was sentenced to three months prison for grievous bodily harm. [...]

On 26 June [1933], at 11 in the evening, I arrived in Rathenow from Berlin. The National Socialists had obviously been tipped-off, and my fate was sealed. To reach my flat in the Große Milower Straße I had to take a dark sandy path, the Askanierdamm, which is about 150 metres long and very poorly lit. While on the train I had worked on my next confirmation speech, I was still preoccupied with my thoughts. Suddenly someone was blocking my way. I looked up, a man I didn't know dressed in civilian clothes was standing in front of me. As I politely asked him to move aside, he started hitting me. I thought he was a drunk, repulsed I turned away from him and went back the same way. He followed and caught up to me after about three metres. Again he began attacking me and knocked my glasses off. I was utterly helpless in this moment, I'm very short-sighted. The bloke screamed at me: 'don't ever dare walk along here again!' After searching for a long time I finally found my glasses. [...]

The steps of my assailant had faded away, the way to the street in front of me was free. I took my house key in my hand to be able to unlock the door quicker. Just before I had reached the intersection someone leapt out from a hiding place. At first I thought it was someone else because this assailant was accompanied by a girl. Only when he was right in front of me did I recognise that it was my enemy from before. Again he started pounding into me wildly. I fought back and hit him with the key I was still holding in my hand. Obviously he wasn't expecting that, he let off, startled. I seized the chance to reach the Große Milower Strasse.

The assailant had apparently recovered from the shock and took up the chase again, so I called for help. People gathered around, I asked them to summon the police.

A policeman had requested that I accompany him to the station. Meanwhile my enemy had also turned up there. He swore vilely at me. 'Jewish sow! That's the rabbi of Rathenow! The dog attacked me!' The policeman listened calmly.

At the station I asked them to take down the personal details of the assailant because I wanted to officially report the incident and have charges laid. No one listened to me, and instead they held a confidential conversation with my enemy. The outcome of this conversation was that they told me that I was under arrest. Only now I realised the situation I was in, and right then a group of SS and SA men entered the station. The SS and SA men started hammering me with blows and threatened that I'll pay dearly for having attacked an SA leader. The police, under whose 'protection' I was, didn't do a thing.

As I was abused for the first time here right in front of the police, I didn't really feel the physical pain; instead, I began to choke, full of disgust. That this could happen in Germany! I didn't fear for my life – in this moment it had lost its value.