



Kristallnacht+70: Night of Broken Glass

**In Commemoration of the
70th Anniversary of Kristallnacht
Simon Wiesenthal Center 2008**

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INTRODUCTION

What is Kristallnacht?

The term "Kristallnacht" ("Night of Broken Glass") refers to the organized anti-Jewish riots in Germany and Austria, November 9-10, 1938. These riots marked a major transition in Nazi policy, and were, in many ways, a harbinger of the "Final Solution."

Nazi anti-semitic policy began with the systematic legal, economic, and social disenfranchisement of the Jews. This was accomplished in various stages (e.g. The Nuremberg Laws of 1935, which, among other things, stripped German Jews of their citizenship.) One of these steps involved the deportation of Polish Jews who were residing in Germany (est. 56,500). On the night of October 27, 1938, 18,000 Polish Jews were deported, but were initially refused entry into Poland by the Polish authorities. Caught in between, the Jews were forced to camp out in makeshift shelters. Upon hearing that his family was so trapped, 17 year-old Herschel Grynszpan, a student in Paris, shot the third secretary of the German Embassy, Ernst vom Rath, whom he mistook for the ambassador. This assassination served as a welcome pretext for the German initiation of Kristallnacht.

Heydrich Orders Policy of Violence

Reinhard Heydrich (the head of the Reich Main Security Office which oversaw the Gestapo, police and SD operations) sent a secret telegram at 1:20 A.M., November 10, 1938 to "all head quarters and stations of the State Police; all districts and sub-districts of the SD" He gave instructions for the immediate coordination of police and political activities in inciting the riots throughout Germany and Austria. "... The demonstrations are not to be prevented by the police," he ordered, rather, the police are "...only to supervise the observance of the guidelines."

The result of this policy was the first violent pogrom (riot) on Western European soil in hundreds of years. 36 Jews were killed (some authorities have this figure as high as 91); 30,000 more were deported to concentration camps; 267 synagogues were burned and over 7,000 Jewish shops, businesses and homes were vandalized and ransacked.

Immediately after Kristallnacht, a fine of one billion marks was levied, not upon the criminals, but upon the victims, the Jewish community of Germany. Along with the fine came a decision, taken in a conference of Nazi leaders on November 12, 1938, to "Aryanize the German economy, to get the Jew out..." Nazi policy had now moved into the overt destruction of all Jewish life in the Third Reich.

Apathy in the Western World

The violence of Kristallnacht aroused the world to condemn the Nazi actions. President Franklin D. Roosevelt recalled the American ambassador from Berlin stating that he, "could scarcely believe that such things could occur in a twentieth century civilization." However, even the condemnations failed to change western immigration policies. With a few exceptions (e.g. England, which increased its absorption of refugees after Kristallnacht), the doors to safety remained barred. As one leader of German Jewry stated two months after Kristallnacht (January 25, 1939), "From America, nothing tangible (in immigration possibilities) has arrived." With violent anti-semitism now institutionalized, and with few places to flee, the Jews of Germany, Austria, and later, occupied Europe, were trapped and doomed.

Kristallnacht serves as the symbol of that destruction. The synagogues and Torah scrolls that were burned and desecrated, signified, as Rabbi Leo Baeck had earlier realized, that "the thousand-year history of the Jews in Germany had come to an end." It is that noble history and glorious legacy of German Jewry that we remember on Kristallnacht, a legacy of religious scholarship, intellectual creativity and scientific achievement. Nobel Prize winners and rabbinic scholars, businessmen and soldiers, government ministers and social activists all had their worlds shattered, along with the thousands of windows that gave Kristallnacht its name.

The Legacy of Kristallnacht

There are important lessons to be drawn from Kristallnacht, for it served as a bridge experience for both Jews and Nazis. For the Jews, there was the terrifying realization that political antisemitism can lead to violence, even in Western Civilization. It also demonstrated that apathy can still pervade the world when the lives of Jews or other minorities are threatened.

For the Nazis, Kristallnacht taught that while the world might condemn their pogroms, it would not actively oppose them. World opinion, however, taught the Nazis the value of secrecy in the perpetration of future actions against Jews. Added to the complaints of Germans offended by the random violence of Kristallnacht, the stage was set for the "Final Solution"--the organized, bureaucratically efficient genocide of 6,000,000 men, women, and children.

In retrospect, Kristallnacht was more than the shattering of windows and illusions. It portended the physical destruction of European Jewry. As such, this commemoration must be observed both as a memorial and as a warning.

Fact Sheet

Date:	November 9 - 10, 1938
Sites:	Jewish communities throughout Germany and Austria
Perpetrators:	Mobs of Germans and Austrians, acting under instructions of the Nazi hierarchy
Damage:	Arrested and sent to concentration camps (Buchenwald, Dachau, Sachsenhausen): 30,000 Jews (8,000 from Austria)
Murdered:	36 Jews (other sources put this figure at 91) 36 more severely injured
Vandalized and/or set ablaze:	7500 Jewish homes and businesses 267 synagogues (76 completely destroyed)
Pretext:	Assassination of German diplomat, Ernst vom Rath, by Polish- Jewish refugee, Herschel Grynszpan, in an attempt to protest the forced deportation of his family, among the others, to the Polish- German border.

Nazi policy decision based on:

- Causes:
1. Internal Nazi Party power struggles as segments of the party (i.e. The S.A., the propaganda section) wanted a greater role in the anti- Jewish activities
 2. Urge to expedite the exclusion of Jews from German life
 3. Economic factors such as the necessity to raise large amounts of money to pay for the rearmament of the German military
 4. 15th anniversary of Hitler's "Beer-Hall m Putsch" of 1923 created an atmosphere that encouraged street violence
- Aftermath:
1. The Jewish community is immediately fined 1,000,000,000 Reichsmarks; Nazi government confiscates all insurance claims
 2. Nazis expedite plan for "elimination of the Jew from (the) economic life" of Germany established as official policy, November 12, 1938

PERSONALITIES

LEO BAECK (1873-1956)

Rabbi, leader of organized German Jewry during Nazi era. Although realizing that when the Nazis took power, "the thousand year history of German Jewry had come to an end," he refused all offers to escape, insisting that he could flee, "only when he was the last Jew alive in Germany." He was arrested several times and finally sent to Theresienstadt, where he clandestinely taught philosophy and theology. He survived the Holocaust and died in London in 1956.

JOSEF GOEBBELS (1897-1945)

Nazi Minister of Propaganda, who organized the Kristallnacht pogrom, asserting his power and authority in internal Nazi policies.

HERMANN GOERING (1893-1946)

Commander-in-Chief, Luftwaffe, President of Reichstag, Prime Minister of Prussia and second in authority to Hitler. On November 12, 1938, he convened a conference to deal with the results of Kristallnacht, at which time heavy sanctions were imposed on the Jewish community.

HERSCHEL GRYNZSPAN (1821-19?)

17 year-old Polish Jew, living in France, who shot Ernst vom Rath upon hearing of his family's plight (deported from Germany to no-man's land between Germany and Poland). Grynspan was arrested, never tried, and later handed over to the Nazis. His eventual fate is uncertain.

REINHARD HEYDRICH (1904-1942)

Head of Reich Main Security Office, he issued a telegram of instruction to rioters on November 10, 1938. On November 12, he participated in a meeting designed to plan the removal of Jews from German economic life. Later, in 1942, he convened and participated in the Wannsee Conference where the "Final Solution" was adopted.

ERNST VOM RATH (19? -1938)

Diplomat (Third Secretary) in the German legation in Paris. Neither particularly pro-Nazi nor important, his assassination provided the excuse for Kristallnacht.

DOCUMENTS

- Heydrich's Instructions, November 1938 Riots of Kristallnacht
- Telegram 1
- Telegram 2

Heydrich's Instructions, November 1938 Riots of Kristallnacht

Secret

Copy of Most Urgent telegram from Munich of November 10, 1938, 1:20 A.M. To:

All Headquarters and Stations of the State Police

All Districts and Sub-districts of the SA

Urgent! For immediate attention of Chief or his deputy!

Re: Measures against Jews tonight

Following the attempt on the life of Secretary of the Legation vom Rath in Paris, demonstrations against the Jews are to be expected in all parts of the Reich in the course of the coming night, November 9/10, 1938. The instructions below are to be applied in dealing with these events:

1. The Chiefs of the State Police, or their deputies, must immediately upon receipt of this telegram contact, by telephone, the political leaders in their areas -- Gauleiter or Kreisleiter -- who have jurisdiction in their districts and arrange a joint meeting with the inspector or commander of the Order Police to discuss the arrangements for the demonstrations. At these discussions the political leaders will be informed that the German Police has received instructions, detailed below, from the Reichsfuehrer SS and the Chief of the German Police, with which the political leadership is requested to coordinate its own measures:

a) Only such measures are to be taken as do not endanger German lives or property (i.e. synagogues are to be burned down only where there is no danger of fire to neighboring buildings).

b) Places of business and apartments belonging to Jews may be destroyed but not looted. The police are instructed to supervise the observance of this order and to arrest looters.

c) In commercial streets particular care is to be taken that non-Jewish businesses are completely protected against damage.

d) Foreign citizens - even if they are Jews - are not to be molested.

2. On the assumption that the guidelines detailed under para. 1 are observed, the demonstrations are not to be prevented by the Police, who are only to supervise the observance of the guidelines.

3. On receipt of this telegram Police will seize all archives to be found in all synagogues and offices of the Jewish communities so as to prevent their destruction during the demonstrations. This refers only to material of historical value, not to contemporary tax records, etc. The archives are to be handed over to the locally responsible officers of the SD.

4. The control of the measures of the Security Police concerning the demonstrations against the Jews is vested in the organs of the State Police, unless inspectors of the Security Police have given their own instructions. Officials of the Criminal Police, members of the SD, of the Reserves and the SS in general may be used to carry out the measures taken by the Security Police.

5. As soon as the course of events during the night permits the release of the officials required, as many Jews in all districts - especially the rich - as can be accommodated in existing prisons are to be arrested. For the time being only healthy male Jews, who are not too old, are to be detained. After the detentions

have been carried out the appropriate concentration camps are to be contacted immediately for the prompt accommodation of the Jews in the camps. Special care is to be taken that the Jews arrested in accordance with these instructions are not ill-treated...

Signed Heydrich, SS Gruppenfuehrer

TELEGRAPH 1

TELEGRAM RECEIVED

FROM

JR

This telegram must be Leipzig
closely paraphrased be-
fore being communicated Dated November 10, 1938
to anyone. (br)

Rec'd 8:40 a.m.

Secretary of State

Washington.

November 10, 11 a.m.

Violent anti-Semitic pogrom in progress in Leipzig. Three synagogues in flames one next
Consulate burning but fire under control. Hundreds of shop windows throughout city smashed no American
property or lives molested as yet. Fur district badly damaged.

BUFFUM

HTM:DDM

TELEGRAM 2

TELEGRAM RECEIVED

FROM

MY

This telegram must be Berlin
closely paraphrased be-
fore being communicated Dated November 13, 1938
to anyone. (D)

Rec'd 11:20 a.m.

Secretary of State

Washington

614, November 13, 3 p.m.

Stories of violence, ill-treatment, and arrest of Jews during Thursday and Friday come to me hourly. Most
of them cannot be confirmed. Last night, however, I was talking with a number of American pressmen and
they told me that realizing the gravity of the measures they had reported to their papers only events which
had been seen by them personally or by members of their staffs. Certain of the correspondents anticipate
trouble with Goebbels but are in a frame of mind almost to welcome it as they are more than ordinarily
sure of their facts and seething with indignation.

WILSON

JRL

KLP

U.S. CONSULAR TELEGRAMS

- Eyewitness Accounts and Reminiscences
- A Letter by a Firefighter
- A Personal Memoir by Michael Bruce
- Kristallnacht at the Dinslaken Orphanage Reminiscences By Yitzhak S. Herz
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A LETTER BY A FIREFIGHTER

This letter was written by a retired fireman, who remembered "Crystal Night" in Laupheim (Germany)

The alarm went off between 5-5:30 A.M., and as usual, I jumped on my bicycle towards the firehouse. I had a strange feeling when I got there and saw many people standing in front of it. I was not allowed to go into the firehouse to take the engines out, or even to open the doors. One of my friends, who lived next to the Synagogue, whispered to me, "Be quiet - the Synagogue is burning; I was beaten up already when I wanted to put out the fire."

Eventually we were allowed to take the fire engines out, but only very slowly. We were ordered not to use any water till the whole synagogue was burned down. Many of us did not like to do that, but we had to be careful not to voice our opinions, because "the enemy is listening."

Only after one of the party members was worried that his house was going to catch fire, were we allowed to use water. But, even then, we just had to stand and watch until the House of Prayers was reduced to rubble and ashes.

In the meantime, the marshalls rounded up the Jews and dragged them in front of the Synagogue, where they had to kneel down and put their hands above their heads. I saw with my own eyes how one old Jew was dragged down and pushed to his knees. Then the arsonists came in their brown uniforms to admire the results of their destruction.

...Everyone seemed rather quiet and subdued... We had to stand watch at the Synagogue to make sure there were no more smoldering sparks. My turn was from 10-11 and 2-3 P.M. The brown uniforms paraded around to admire their work.

As I was watching the destroyed Synagogue and the frail old Jews, I wondered whose turn would be next!... When would it be our turn? Will the same thing happen to our Protestant and Catholic Churches!

A Personal Memoir By Michael Bruce

Michael Bruce, a non-Jewish Englishman, provided this eyewitness account:

...Hurriedly we went out into the street. It was crowded with people, all hurrying towards a nearby synagogue, shouting and gesticulating angrily.

We followed. As we reached the synagogue and halted, silent and angry, on the fringe of the mob, flames began to rise from one end of the building. It was the signal for a wild cheer. The crowd surged forward and greedy hands tore seats and woodwork from the building to feed the flames.

Behind us we heard more shouts. Turning, we saw a section of the mob start off along the road towards Israel's store where, during the day, piles of granite cubes, ostensibly for repairing the roads, had been heaped. Youths, men and women, howling deliriously, hurled the blocks through the windows and at the closed doors. In a few minutes the doors gave way and the mob, shouting and fighting, surged inside to pillage and loot.

By now the streets were a chaos of screaming bloodthirsty people lusting for Jewish bodies. I saw Harrison of The News Chronicle, trying to protect an aged Jewess who had been dragged from her home by a gang. I pushed my way through to help him and, between us, we managed to heave her through the crowd to a side street and safety.

We turned back towards Israel's, but now the crowd, eager for fresh conquests, was pouring down a side road towards the outskirts of the city. We hurried after them in time to see one of the foulest exhibitions of bestiality I have ever witnessed.

The object of the mob's hate was a hospital for sick Jewish children, many of them cripples or consumptives. In minutes the windows had been smashed and the doors forced. When we arrived, the swine were driving the wee mites out over the broken glass, bare-footed and wearing nothing but their nightshirts. The nurses, doctors, and attendants were being kicked and beaten by the mob leaders, most of whom were women.

Kristallnacht at the Dinslaken Orphanage

Reminiscences

By

Yitzhak S. Herz

At 7 A.M., the morning service in the synagogue of the institution was scheduled to commence. Some people from the town usually participated, but this time nobody turned up. About 7:30 A.M. I ordered 46 people - among them 32 children - into the dining hall of the institution and told them the following in a simple and brief address:

As you know, last night a Herr vom Rath, a member of the German Embassy in Paris, was assassinated. The Jews are held responsible for this murder. The high tension in the political field is now being directed against the Jews, and during the next few hours there will certainly be antisemitic excesses. This will happen even in our town. It is my feeling and my impression that we German Jews have never experienced such calamities since the Middle Ages. Be strong! Trust in God! I am sure we will withstand even these hard times. Nobody will remain in the rooms of the upper floor of the building. The exit door to the street will be opened only by myself! From this moment on everyone is to heed my orders only!

At 9:30 A.M. the bell at the main gate rang persistently. I opened the door: about 50 men stormed into the house, many of them with their coat or jacket collars turned up. At first they rushed into the dining room, which fortunately was empty, and there they began their work of destruction, which was carried out with the utmost precision. The frightened and fearful cries of the children resounded through the building. In a stentorian voice I shouted: "Children go out into the street immediately!" This advice was certainly contrary to the order of the Gestapo. I thought, however, that in the street, in a public place, we might be in less danger than inside the house. The children immediately ran down a small staircase at the back, most of them without hat or coat - despite the cold and wet weather. We tried to reach the next street crossing, which was close to Dinslaken's Town Hall, where I intended to ask for police protection. About ten policemen were stationed here, reason enough for a sensation-seeking mob to await the next development. This was not very long in coming; the senior police officer, Freihahn, shouted at us: "Jews do not get protection from us! Vacate the area together with your children as quickly as possible! Freihahn then chased us back to a side street in the direction of the backyard of the orphanage. As I was unable to hand over the key to the back gate, the policeman drew his bayonet and forced open the door. I then said to Freihahn: "The best thing is to kill me and the children, then our ordeal will be over quickly!" My officer responded to my "suggestion" merely with cynical laughter. Freihahn then drove all of us to the wet lawn of the orphanage garden. He gave us strict orders not to leave the place under any circumstances.

Facing the back of the building, we were able to watch how everything in the house was being systematically destroyed under the supervision of the men of law and order - the police. At short intervals we could hear the crunching of glass or the hammering against wood as windows and doors were broken. Books, chairs, beds, tables, linen, chests, parts of a piano, a radiogram, and maps were thrown through apertures in the wall, which, a short while ago, had been windows or doors.

In the meantime, the mob standing around the building had grown to several hundred. Among these people I recognized some familiar faces, suppliers of the orphanage or tradespeople, who, only a day or a week earlier had been happy to deal with us as customers. This time they were passive, watching the destruction without much emotion.

At 10:15 A.M. we heard the wailing of sirens! We noticed a heavy cloud of smoke billowing upward. It was obvious from the direction it was coming from that the Nazis had set the synagogue on fire. Very soon we saw smoke clouds rising up, mixed with sparks of fire. Later I noticed that some Jewish houses, close to the synagogue, had also been set alight under the expert guidance of the fire brigade. Its presence was a necessity, since the firemen had to save the homes of the non-Jewish neighborhood.

SPEECH DELIVERED IN COLOGNE SYNAGOGUE 9 November 1978

A Plea for Honesty and Tolerance

by Helmut Schmidt, former Chancellor, West Germany

Mr. Federal President

Dear citizens of Cologne,

Dear Jews, Christians and Free-Thinkers in Germany,

The German night, whose observance after the passage of forty years has brought us together today, remains a cause of bitterness and shame. In those places where the houses of God stood in flames, where a signal from those in power set off a train of destruction and robbery, of humiliation, abduction and incarceration - there was an end to peace, to justice, to humanity. The night of 9 November 1938 marked one of the stages along the path leading down to hell...

Epilogue

The tragedy of Kristallnacht was not the destruction. No nation has been free of violence. No nation has been free of the rowdiness of the ignorant. The tragedy, rather, was that government, which should protect the individual and his property against violence, in this instance encouraged and abetted the violence against the Jews. The violence was a joint act by the government and the populace. Early on the day of November 9 a message went out from Gestapo headquarters: "There will be very shortly in Germany actions against the Jews, especially against the synagogues. These actions are not to be interfered with."

- Leonard Baker

THE SIMON WIESENTHAL CENTER

www.wiesenthal.com



An international Jewish human rights organization dedicated to generating change through the Snider Social Action Institute and education by confronting antisemitism, hate and terrorism, promoting human rights and dignity, standing with Israel, defending the safety of Jews worldwide, and teaching the lessons of the Holocaust for future generations. With a constituency of over 400,000 households in the United States, it is accredited as an NGO at international organizations including the United Nations, UNESCO, and the Council of Europe.

Headquartered in Los Angeles, the Simon Wiesenthal Center maintains offices in New York, Toronto, Boca Raton, Paris, Buenos Aires and Jerusalem.

MUSEUM OF TOLERANCE

www.museumoftolerance.com



THE MUSEUM OF TOLERANCE

The Center's educational arm, founded in 1993 challenges visitors to confront bigotry and racism, and to understand the Holocaust in both historic and contemporary contexts. The Museum has served over 4 million visitors with 350,000 visiting annually including 130,000 students. Over 1.5 million children and youth have participated in the Museum experience and its programs. Over 110,000 adults have been trained in the Museum's customized, professional development programs which include Tools for Tolerance, Teaching Steps to Tolerance, Task Force Against Hate, National Institute Against Hate Crimes, Tools for Tolerance for Teens and Bridging the Gap.

CENTER FOR HUMAN DIGNITY - MUSEUM OF TOLERANCE JERUSALEM

www.motj.com

A multi-faceted educational institution and social laboratory in the heart of Jerusalem that speaks to the world and confronts today's important issues – like global antisemitism, extremism, hate, human dignity, and responsibility, and promoting unity and respect among Jews and people of all faiths. A place that teaches that greater than any external threat is the internal divide that separates and reinforces the idea that Jewish unity is not a slogan, but an essential recipe for survival in the 21st century. Housing two experiential museums, one for adults and one for children, a state-of-the-art International Conference Center, Grand Hall, Education Center offering training programs and seminars given by outstanding teachers, rabbis and experts, and a Theater for the Performing Arts hosting important films and concerts.

THE NEW YORK TOLERANCE CENTER

www.nytolerancecenter.org



In the heart of Manhattan, the New York Tolerance Center is a professional development multi-media training facility targeting educators, law enforcement officials, and state/local government practitioners. Modeled after the successful Tools for Tolerance Program at the Museum of Tolerance in Los Angeles, the Tolerance Center provides participants with an intense educational and experiential daylong training program. Through interactive workshops, exhibits, and videos, individuals explore issues of prejudice, diversity, tolerance, and cooperation in the workplace and in the community.

MORIAH FILMS

www.moriahfilms.com



The film division of the Simon Wiesenthal Center, was created to produce theatrical documentaries to educate both national and international audiences. It focuses on the 3,500-year old Jewish experience as well as contemporary human rights and ethics issues. Moriah has produced 10 films to date, two of which have received the Academy Award for best feature documentary, *The Long Way Home* (1997) and *Genocide* (1981).

iACT - CAMPUS OUTREACH

iact.wiesenthal.org



The Campus Outreach division including the dynamic and innovative iACT with its interactive iact@wiesenthal.com web presence was created to forge strategic alliances with campus groups, faculty, staff and students, to foster a new awareness of contemporary human rights, social justice and ethics in today's college and university students. By exposing the truth behind anti-Semitism, hate and terrorism, by fighting for America's energy independence, by promoting human rights and dignity, by standing firmly with Israel, and by celebrating our unique identity as Jews, iACT is creating a strong and effective presence on campuses nationwide and giving a voice to the next generation of global human rights activists.