

Kristallnacht

The Night of the Broken Glass

November 9th and 10th, 1938

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The Night of the Broken Glass

November 9th and 10th, 1938, Nazi officials and Hitler-Jugend perpetrated a pogrom on Jewish homes, synagogues and businesses throughout Germany, Austria, and the Sudetenland.



The Boerneplatz synagogue in flames during Kristallnacht (the "Night of Broken Glass"). Frankfurt am Main, Germany, November 10, 1938.

-US Holocaust Memorial Museum



The synagogue in Oberramstadt (a town in southwestern Germany) burns during Kristallnacht. Oberramstadt, Germany, November 9-10, 1938.
— US Holocaust Memorial Museum



A private Jewish home vandalized during
Kristallnacht (the "Night of Broken Glass" pogrom).
Vienna, Austria, November 10, 1938.

— Bildarchiv Preussischer Kulturbesitz



Storefronts of Jewish-owned businesses damaged during the Kristallnacht ("Night of Broken Glass") pogrom. Berlin, Germany, November 10, 1938.

— Bildarchiv Preussischer Kulturbesitz

Why?

German officials blamed Herschel Grynszpan, a 17-year-old Polish Jew, who shot Ernst vom Rath, a German diplomat on November 7, 1938.

A few days earlier, German authorities expelled thousands of Jews of Polish citizenship living in Germany from the Reich; Grynszpan had received news that his parents, residents in Germany since 1911, were among them.



Herschel Grynszpan

USHMM, courtesy of Morris Rosen

In 1940 Grynszpan was turned over to the Germans by the Vichy government, but the date and place of his death have never been clarified.

Ernst vom Rath died two days later. Propaganda minister Joseph Goebbels, declared that 'World Jewry' had conspired to commit the assassination.

"The Führer has decided that ... demonstrations should not be prepared or organized by the Party, but insofar as they erupt spontaneously, they are not to be hampered."

-United States Holocaust Memorial Museum



**Joseph Goebbels, German propaganda minister, speaks on the night of book burning. Berlin, Germany, May 10, 1933.
— National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Md.**

Prior to Herschel Grynszpan...

A long history of anti-Semitism, anti-Semitic propaganda, and discriminatory laws led up to the events of Kristallnacht.

From 1933 until the outbreak of war in 1939, 400 decrees and regulations restricted all aspects of public and private lives.

Jews were restricted from schools and universities, doctors and lawyers were severely limited in their practices, and Jewish businesses were “Aryanized” and turned over to non-Jewish Germans.

Jews were effectively unable to earn a living as they once did, or at all.



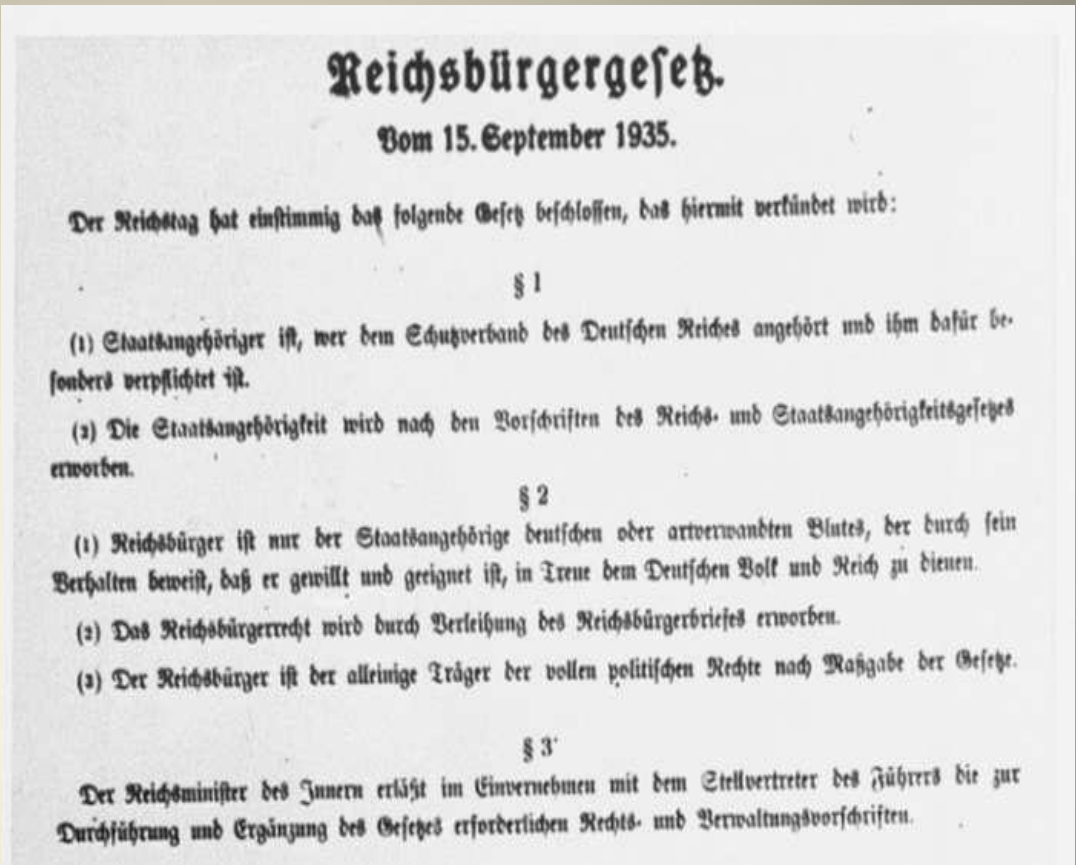
- Prewar photograph of Jewish business owners David and Janka Penner in their dry goods store. In 1940 David and Janka left Berlin, going to Belgium and France. They were then interned separately by the French police before escaping to North Africa. Berlin, Germany, 1932–1928, —*US Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of Ilona Penner Blech*

Anti-Semitism Continued...

The Nuremberg Race Laws of 1935 demonstrated a pivotal change in anti-Semitic legislation—defining Jews as a racial rather than a religious group.

This legalized the persecution of Jews and also included Germans who were not practicing Judaism or had not done so in years.

The laws excluded Jews from Reich citizenship.



**Text of the Reich Citizenship Law of September 15, 1935 and the Law for the Protection of German Blood and Honor of September 15, 1935 (Nuremberg Race Laws).
—US Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of National Archives and Records Administration, College Park**

In August 1938, German authorities decreed that by January 1, 1939, Jewish men and women bearing first names of "non-Jewish" origin had to add "Israel" and "Sara," respectively, to their given names. All Jews were obliged to carry identity cards that indicated their Jewish heritage, and, in the autumn of 1938, all Jewish passports were stamped with an identifying letter "J".

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Passport issued to Frida Felicie Perl in February, 1939. It is stamped with a red "J" and includes the middle name Sara in order to identify the owner as Jewish.

Back to Kristallnacht...

- Violence erupted through the morning hours of November 10th
- Many of the perpetrators wore civilian clothing to pose as an “outraged public.”
- The rioters destroyed 267 synagogues throughout Germany, Austria, and the Sudetenland.
- Many synagogues burned throughout the night, in full view of the public and of local firefighters, who had received orders to intervene only to prevent flames from spreading to nearby buildings.



On the morning after Kristallnacht local residents watch as the Ober Ramstadt synagogue is destroyed by fire.

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Brand der Synagoge in Buehl
1938 Burning of Synagogue in Buehl



* With permission from Stadtgeschichtliches Institut: Stadt Buehl

SA and Hitler Youth members across the country shattered the shop windows of an estimated 7,500 Jewish-owned commercial establishments, and looted their wares. Jewish cemeteries became a particular object of desecration in many regions.



Germans pass by the broken shop window of a Jewish-owned business that was destroyed during Kristallnacht.

National Archives and Records Administration,
College Park

The Impact of Kristallnacht

Kristallnacht claimed the lives of at least 91 Jews between the 9th and 10th of November.

Up to 30,000 Jewish males were taken and transferred from local prisons to Dachau, Buchenwald, Sachsenhausen, and other concentration camps.

Significantly, *Kristallnacht* marks the first instance in which the Nazi regime incarcerated Jews on a massive scale simply on the basis of their ethnicity.



Newly arrived prisoners, still in their civilian clothes, and after shaving and disinfection, stand at roll call in Buchenwald concentration camp shortly after Kristallnacht.

US Holocaust Memorial Museum

Kristallnacht intensified the emigration of Jews from Germany in the months to come.

The German government blamed the Jews for the pogrom and imposed a punitive fine of one billion *Reichsmark* (some 400 million US dollars at 1938 rates) on the German Jewish community.

Historians have noted that after the pogrom, anti-Jewish policy intensified and was concentrated more and more concretely into the hands of the SS.



Jewish men arrested during Kristallnacht are forced to march through the town streets under SS guard and to watch the desecration of a synagogue before their deportation. —US Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of Lydia Chagoll

Moreover, the passivity with which most German civilians responded to the violence signaled to the Nazi regime that the German public was prepared for more radical measures.



Local residents watch the burning of the ceremonial hall at the Jewish cemetery in Graz during Kristallnacht (the "Night of Broken Glass"). Graz, Austria, November 9-10, 1938

-Dokumentationsarchiv des Oesterreichischen Widerstandes



On the morning after Kristallnacht, local residents watch as the synagogue is destroyed by fire. The local fire department prevented the fire from spreading to a nearby home but did not try to limit the damage to the synagogue. Ober Ramstadt, Germany. November 10, 1938.

—*US Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of Trudy Isenberg*

Survivor Testimony

Mr. Leo Silberman



