



1980
United States
Holocaust Memorial Council

United States Holocaust Memorial Council

September 15, 1988

Dear Mayor:

This year, 1988, marks the fiftieth anniversary of a dark chapter in human history. On November 9-10, 1938, SA, SS and Nazi stormtroopers disguised in plain clothes destroyed Jewish property and arrested Jews en masse throughout Germany, Austria and the occupied Sudetenland. This action marked a new brutal and violent phase in the German Government's policy of legalized persecution begun in 1933. It led to the eventual murder of six million Jews and millions of others; and the enslavement and starvation of peoples throughout Europe. The event was called "Kristallnacht" by the German public, which deliberately coined an innocuous phrase which shielded and made a mockery of the actual destruction of life, limb and property.

This anniversary will be observed during the week of November 6-13 in a variety of ways across America -- synagogues will be lit each night during the week of commemoration; motorists will drive with their headlights on; there will be special messages from United States Congressional Members; there will be community-sponsored programs with eyewitnesses, survivors and their children; there will be lectures, sermons, films, readings, requiems; and there will be television specials broadcast in many parts of the country.

We invite you to join the United States Holocaust Memorial Council and the nation in remembering this Night of Pogroms by issuing a special proclamation. A sample is enclosed as well as "Background on the Night of Pogroms" which we hope will be helpful. An educational booklet and a subtly poignant poster are also available free of charge from the Council (see order form also enclosed).

We are grateful for your participation in the Days of Remembrance commemoration that takes place each spring. We hope that you will join us now in this very special anniversary observance.

Sincerely,

Harvey M. Meyerhoff
Chairman
U.S. Holocaust Memorial Council

Benjamin Meed
Chairman
Days of Remembrance Committee



NIGHT OF POGROMS

"KRISTALLNACHT"

NOVEMBER 9 AND 10, 1938

*"I myself could scarcely believe that such things
could occur in a twentieth century civilization."*

**Franklin Delano Roosevelt
President of the United States
November 15, 1938**

U.S. Holocaust Memorial Council
2000 L Street, N.W., Suite 588
Washington, D.C. 20036
(202) 653-9220

CONTENTS OF EDUCATIONAL BOOKLET
NIGHT OF POGROMS, NOVEMBER 9-10, 1938

Background on the Night of Pogroms

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the Literature

Suggested Program Ideas for Schools and Community Observances

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Photograph of Burning Synagogue in Wiesbaden,
Germany, November 9-10, 1938
Map of the Destruction of the Synagogues, 9 November 1938

Resources

Sources of Additional Information and/or Materials
(Holocaust Resource Centers)

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ORDER FORM

Send Night of Pogroms booklet _____ Send Poster _____

Name

Street Address

City

State

Zip Code



United States Holocaust Memorial Council

Background on the Night of Pogroms

"Dead silence -- not a sound to be heard in the town. The lamps in the street, the lights in the shops and in the houses are out. It is 3:30 a.m. All of a sudden noises in the street break into my sleep, a wild medley of shouts and shrieks. I listen, frightened and alarmed, until I distinguish words: Get out, Jews! Death to the Jews!"*

With methodical precision during the night of Wednesday, November 9th, and early morning of Thursday, November 10th, 1938, SA, SS and Nazi stormtroopers, disguised in plain clothes, assembled in pre-arranged meeting places and fanned out to selected targets in the Jewish communities of Germany, Austria and the occupied Sudetenland (the Third Reich). Following Gestapo instructions, these Nazi agents axed windows, demolished furnishings, wrecked houses, smashed store fronts, ravaged merchandise, torched synagogues, and arrested thousands of Jews. As the well coordinated destruction took place, most "neighbors" just watched.

By Friday morning, November 11, nearly 100 Jews were dead, 7,500 Jewish businesses had been destroyed, 275 synagogues had been razed or burned, and 30,000 Jews had been arrested, the majority of whom were sent to the German concentration camps of Dachau, Sachsenhausen and Buchenwald. Carpets of crushed glass and debris covered the streets in the towns and cities of the Third Reich.

The German public labeled this event "Kristallnacht" or Night of the Broken Glass. Some American newspapers dubbed it "Black Thursday," while others, comparing the destruction with the physical attacks against Jews in Czarist Russia, called it the Night of Pogroms.

Within days of the event, Hermann Goering, Reich Minister of the Four-Year Plan, issued the Decree Eliminating the Jews from German Economic Life. A 25 percent "flight" (thousands of Jews, in response to "Kristallnacht," began seeking refuge in other countries) tax on all Jewish property being removed from German territory and, in a perverse maneuver, levied a fine of one

*Bentwich, Norman. "Kristallnacht: Pogrom in Emden." Jewish Youth Comes Home. In: Eisenberg, Azriel. Witness to the Holocaust. New York: The Pilgrim Press, 1981, page 84.

billion marks (\$400 million) on the Jewish communities to compensate for the damages wrought by the Nazis. Goering expropriated all remaining Jewish businesses by transferring their ownership to "Aryan" hands. Thus, surviving Jews were not only robbed and assaulted, but they were made to absorb the cost of destroyed property belonging to them without any means of income.

Panic pervaded the Jewish communities. Thousands packed Western European and American consulates pleading for exit visas. Only a small percentage managed to escape, since the total requests far exceeded the stringent immigration rules and regulations established by such countries as France, Great Britain, the United States, Canada and others. In desperation, some Jews committed suicide. A few thousand others managed to emigrate to Shanghai (China), British-controlled Palestine, South America, South Africa and Australia. Of approximately 560,000 Jews remaining in the Reich at the time of "Kristallnacht," a group representing barely one percent of the total population, about 160,000 were able to get out (nearly one out of every three.)

"Kristallnacht" marked the intensification of a 5-year anti-Semitic program initiated by Adolph Hitler, Chancellor of Germany, soon after he assumed power in 1933. Between January 30, 1933, and November 9, 1938, through a series of laws, Jews had been systematically denied their civil rights within the German community and gradually deprived of the right to gainful employment. The violent physical violations of November 9-10 were the first attacks on Jews to go beyond the borders of Germany, affecting incorporated Austria and the newly occupied Sudetenland.

These events were widely reported in the United States media. News stories filled the front pages of papers and close to a thousand editorials were printed. Americans reacted initially with outrage. Offers of humanitarian relief spanned the entire political, religious and social spectrum of U.S. society. The local and national press and radio echoed the ordinary citizen's empathy; pledges streamed from parishes, congregations and school districts to adopt and shelter Jewish families and their children. Calls for an economic and political boycott of Nazi Germany poured into Washington from trade unions, civic associations, parent-teacher associations as well as from leaders of both political parties.

On Tuesday, the 15th of November, President Franklin Roosevelt announced the recall of Hugh Wilson, the U.S. Ambassador to Germany, and issued a special press release expressing shock and dismay. Notwithstanding the public outcry, the Department of State decided not to alter U.S. immigration laws.

The events of November 9-10 were a significant advancement of the Nazis' "final solution of the Jewish question." Within two months following "Kristallnacht," Hitler, in a major address to the German Parliament, promised the destruction of the Jewish people throughout Europe should there be war. Thus, the Jews were inexorably consigned to the Nazis' Kingdom of Night.

Under what pretext had the Nazis unleashed such blatant criminal violence against the Jews at this time? In Paris, France, on Monday, November 7, 1938, Herschel Grynszpan, a teenage immigrant Jew, shot Ernst vom Rath, the Third Secretary in the German Embassy in Paris. Grynszpan was protesting the Nazi Government's forced expulsion of his family from Germany back to Poland as part of the Nazis' anti-Jewish policy (known as the Zbonszyn Incident).

Following on the news of vom Rath's death at 4:00 p.m. on November 9, what purported to be "spontaneous" attacks on Jews, synagogues, and other Jewish property broke out throughout the Third Reich. These were surreptitiously organized by local Nazi Party officials, instigated by the anti-Semitic Reich Propaganda Leader, Dr. Josef Goebbels. The actions were carried out by SA and SS men in plain clothes, as well as other Party members. As the depredations spread, and murder and mayhem were mingled with arson against synagogues and Jewish-owned stores and shops, uniformed police cordoned off the areas and did not interfere with the ongoing handiwork of the perpetrators. Firemen stood by only to prevent the spread of the raging fires to Aryan property. Meanwhile, the Gestapo carried out their orders to arrest 20,000 to 30,000 preferably affluent Jews. The rampage continued unabated all that night and well into the next morning.

The Nazis attempted to camouflage their viciousness under the cloak of vindication, but the world decried these acts as barbarism. The tremor of protest over "Kristallnacht" soon passed, however.

As for the 17-year-old Herschel Grynszpan, for over a year the French developed elaborate plans to bring him to trial. The proceedings were never initiated. He fell into the hands of the Nazis after their occupation of France. Dr. Josef Goebbels was to have staged a showcase trial, but again the plans were never carried out. No records have emerged since the war disclosing conclusive evidence of this young man's fate.

Fifty years later, why should we commemorate this event? Americans should remember the tragedy of "Kristallnacht" as an event which demonstrates the need for national resolve to respond to government-sponsored persecution anywhere in the world. Remembrance also calls for national rededication to the principles of tolerance and freedom of choice which form the very foundation of our democratic society.

"...Anyone who closes his eyes to the past is blind to the present. Whoever refuses to remember...is prone to new risks of infection.... We must erect a memorial to thoughts and feelings in our own hearts."

Excerpt from a speech by the President of the Federal Republic of Germany, Richard von Weizsacker, May 8, 1985, on the 42nd anniversary of the conclusion of World War II.

"Seeking to forget makes exile all the longer. The secret of redemption lies in remembrance."

Jewish Wisdom [Baal Shem Tov (ca. 1700-1760)].

September 1988

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City of Cambridge

IN CITY COUNCIL

October 17, 1988

MAYOR VELLUCCI
VICE MAYOR WOLF

- WHEREAS: In 1933, the Nazi Government of Germany came to power, unleashing a reign of terror and persecution; and
- WHEREAS: On November 9-10, 1938, the Nazi Government instigated systematic and nationwide violence directed against all Jews of Germany, Austria and the Sudetenland; and
- WHEREAS: Such governmentally organized abuse was preparatory for the eventual annihilation of Jews and other peoples disdained by the Nazis; and
- WHEREAS: The people of the City of Cambridge continually rededicate themselves to the protection of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness for all; now therefore be it
- RESOLVED: I, Alfred E. Vellucci, Mayor of the City of Cambridge, in the belief that the people of this great land, the United States, will always strive to overcome prejudice and inhumanity through understanding, vigilance and resistance, I hereby declare November 6-13, 1988, as the week of remembrance of the Night of Pogroms; and be it further
- RESOLVED: That the City Clerk be and hereby is requested to prepare a suitably engrossed copy of this resolution to be sent to The United States Holocaust Memorial Council, 2000 L Street, Suite 588, Washington, D.C., 20036-4907.



City of Cambridge

7.

IN CITY COUNCIL

October 17, 1988

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VICE MAYOR WOLF

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- RESOLVED: That the City Clerk be and hereby is requested to prepare a suitably engrossed copy of this resolution to be sent to The United States Holocaust Memorial Council, 2000 L Street, Suite 588, Washington, D.C., 20036-4907.

In City Council October 17, 1988.
Adopted by the affirmative vote of 9 members.
Attest:- Joseph E. Connarton, City Clerk.

A true copy;

ATTEST:-

Joseph E. Connarton
Joseph E. Connarton, City Clerk

Order #7

S-588

M. Vellucci & VM Wolf re: resolutions
declaring November 6-13, 1988 as the week of
remembrance of the Night of Pogroms.

In City Council,

October 17, 1988

10-17-88

M. Vellucci & VM Wolf

Order Adopted

9-0-0-01