

Nicola Strouse – First Place Middle, Cornerstone Learning Community

Kristallnacht, “The Night of Broken Glass”: Causes, Effects, and Why It Should Be Remembered

November 9th and 10th, 1938, are commonly known as Kristallnacht or The Night of Broken Glass. Kristallnacht is considered the beginning of the Holocaust. This anti-Jewish pogrom was committed by the Nazis as ordered by Adolf Hitler and his advisors. On that night synagogues and Jewish owned stores, homes, and properties had their windows shattered with rocks, and some were even burned to the ground. Firefighters were not permitted to interfere unless other buildings were in danger of catching on fire, and even then they were only allowed to contain it. This 75th anniversary of that terrible and violent occurrence is a good reminder for us not to let this happen again.

There were many events that led up to Kristallnacht, one of the first being the Nazi Party becoming the only political party in Germany. This was significant because it meant the Nazis had total legal control of what laws were and weren't passed, who was elected etc. On April 1, 1933, Hitler called a boycott of all Jewish businesses, and he set down laws that prohibited Jews from taking jobs in the government or taking civil service positions. In May of 1935 non-Aryans were not allowed to join the military. Around the same time Jews were barred from many public places i.e. movie theaters, pools, hotels etc. All these events were like shaking up a carbonated drink, and that bottle burst when Herschel Grynszpan assassinated Ernst vom Rath, a German embassy official that had been employed to help him while he was studying in Paris. A few days earlier 12,000 Polish Jews had been sent out of Germany. Among them were Grynszpan's parents and sister. In need of revenge he planned to kill the German Ambassador but ended up killing vom Rath. This gave Hitler an actual reason to order the enactment of Kristallnacht. It was the cork being shot out of the bottle, all that pressure had been building and when Herschel Grynszpan shot Ernst vom Rath he, unknowingly, pulled the cork out of the bottle.

Kristallnacht had many effects, nearly all of which were negative for the Jews. Hitler said that Kristallnacht was the Jews' fault. This meant that all the Jews affected by Kristallnacht were left with no assistance from the Government in cleaning up the mess that the Government itself had made. Many laws were put in place to control Jewish lifestyle. For example all Jews lost their driver's licences, they weren't

permitted to own radios, they were not allowed to own or be in possession of any type of firearm, and they had to turn over any precious metals to the government. A curfew was also put into place, but it was only for the Jews. In the summer Jews were not sanctioned to be in the street after 9:00 pm and before 5:00 am. In the winter the curfew was 8:00 pm to 6:00 am.

It is important to remember Kristallnacht because it was the first time the Nazis were openly violent towards the Jews. Kristallnacht is also important to remember because we don't want history to repeat itself, and if remember the negative effects of Kristallnacht and how badly it hurt many people. We can also remember that not many people spoke out either because they agreed with Hitler or because they were afraid to. This will help us remember to speak out if anything like that ever happens again, and we can inspire others to do the same and make a change.

Works Cited

Deem, James M. *Kristallnacht: The Nazi Terror That Began the Holocaust*. Berkeley Heights, NJ:

Enslow, 2012. Print.

"Events Leading Up to Kristallnacht." *The Center for Holocaust and Humanity Education*. 2008-2009.

Web. 17 Mar. 2014. <<http://www.holocaustandhumanity.org/kristallnacht/events-leading-up-to-kristallnacht/>>.

"Kristallnacht: A Nationwide Pogrom, November 9–10, 1938." *United States Holocaust Memorial*

Museum. United States Holocaust Memorial Council, 10 June 2013. Web. 17 Mar. 2014.

<<http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10005201>>.

"Kristallnacht: Background & Overview." *Background & Overview of Kristallnacht*.

American-Israeli Cooperative Enterprise. Web. 27 Mar. 2014.

<<http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Holocaust/kristallnacht.html>>.