

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 SD

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 in neighboring buildings).

b) Places of business and apartments belonging to Jews may be destroyed but not looted. The police is 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, which is 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

PS-3051.

Three days later, on November 12, Goering called a meeting of the top Nazi leadership to assess the damage done during the night and place responsibility for it. Present at the meeting were Goering, Goebbels, Reinhard Heydrich, Walter Funk and other ranking Nazi officials. The intent of this meeting was two-fold: to make the Jews responsible for *Kristallnacht* and to use the events of the preceding days as a rationale for promulgating a series of antisemitic laws which would, in effect, remove Jews from the German economy. An interpretive transcript of this meeting is provided by Robert Conot, Justice at Nuremberg, New York: Harper and Row, 1983:164-172):



'Gentlemen! Today's meeting is of a decisive nature,' Goering announced. 'I have received a letter written on the Fuehrer's orders requesting that the Jewish question be now, once and for all, coordinated and solved one way or another.'

'Since the problem is mainly an economic one, it is from the economic angle it shall have to be tackled. Because, gentlemen, I have had enough of these demonstrations! They don't harm the Jew but me, who is the final authority for coordinating the German economy. `If today a Jewish shop is destroyed, if goods are thrown into the street, the insurance companies will pay for the damages; and, furthermore, consumer goods belonging to the people are destroyed. If in the future, demonstrations which are necessary occur, then, I pray, that they be directed so as not to hurt us.

'I should not want to leave any doubt, gentlemen, as to the aim of today's meeting. We have not come together merely to talk again, but to make decisions, and I implore competent agencies to take all measures for the elimination of the Jew from the German economy, and to submit them to me.'

It was decided at the meeting that, since Jews were to blame for these events, they be held legally and financially responsible for the damages incurred by the pogrom. Accordingly, a "fine of 1 billion marks was levied for the slaying of Vom Rath, and 6 million marks paid by insurance companies for broken windows was to be given to the state coffers. (Snyder, Louis L. Encyclopedia of the Third Reich. New York: Paragon House, 1989:201).

Kristallnacht turns out to be a crucial turning point in German policy regarding the Jews and may be considered as the **actual beginning of what is now called the Holocaust.**

1. By now it is clear to Hitler and his top advisors that forced immigration of Jews out of the Reich is not a feasible option.
2. Hitler is already considering the invasion of Poland.
3. Numerous concentration camps and forced labor camps are already in operation.
4. The Nuremberg Laws are in place.
5. The doctrine of *lebensraum* has emerged as a guiding principle of Hitler's ideology.
And,
6. The passivity of the German people in the face of the events of *Kristallnacht* made it clear that the Nazis would encounter little opposition -- even from the German churches.

Following the meeting, a wide-ranging set of antisemitic laws were passed which had the clear intent, in Goering's words, of "Aryanizing" the German economy. Over the next two or three months, the following measures were put into effect (cf., Burleigh and Wippermann, *The Racial State: Germany, 1933-1945*. New York:Cambridge, 1991:92-96):

1. Jews were required to turn over all precious metals to the government.
2. Pensions for Jews dismissed from civil service jobs were arbitrarily reduced.
3. Jewish-owned bonds, stocks, jewelry and art works can be alienated only to the German state.
4. Jews were physically segregated within German towns.
5. A ban on the Jewish ownership of carrier pigeons.
6. The suspension of Jewish driver's licenses.
7. The confiscation of Jewish-owned radios.

8. A curfew to keep Jews of the streets between 9:00 p.m. and 5:00 a.m. in the summer and 8:00 p.m. and 6:00 a.m. in the winter.
9. Laws protecting tenants were made non-applicable to Jewish tenants.

One final note on the November 12 meeting is of critical importance. In the meeting, Goering announced, "I have received a letter written on the Fuehrer's orders requesting that the Jewish question be now, once and for all, coordinated and solved one way or another." The path to the "Final Solution" has now been chosen. And, all the bureaucratic

mechanisms for its implementation were now in place.



Jews arrested during Kristallnacht line up for roll call at the Buchenwald concentration camp. November 1938. *Lorenz C. Schmuhl Papers*,