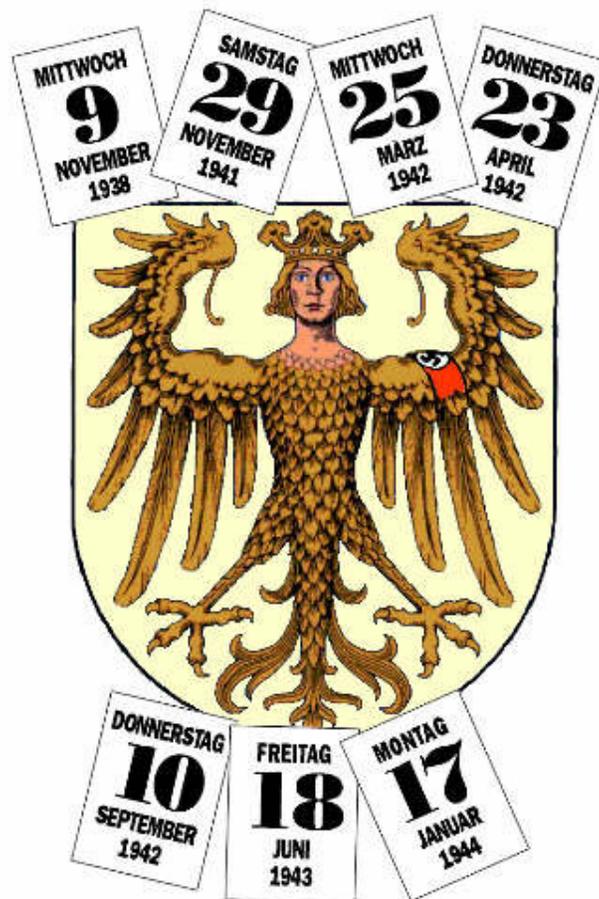


Days of disgrace: “Kristallnacht” in the northern quarter of Nuremberg



It was only the beginning: November 9, 1938 and the dates of the subsequent deportations from Nuremberg
(design: Herbert Kolb)

Nuremberg in November 1938: “The Reich’s Treasure Box” and “City of the Reich’s Party Rallies”, romantic medieval lanes and, at the same time, the capital of the worst anti-Semitic rabble-rouser, Julius Streicher. Yet approximately 5,500 of formerly more than 10,000 Jews lived here, most of them members of old-established families. Their great-grandfathers had moved from the surrounding Franconian villages to the industrial metropolis striving for progress after the abolition of the ban against Jews to settle down here in 1850. Now their offspring, among them outstanding manufacturers, salesmen, physicians and lawyers, was wait-

ing for the situation in their native country finally to calm down after five years of the Nazis in power - or for emigration.

The night of Wednesday, November 9 to 10 in Nuremberg was cold and dry. In the evening the annual torchlight procession of the SA had marched through the city commemorating Hitler's failed revolt in Munich some fifteen years ago. After this demonstration of their strength most of the participants retreated to their "Sturmlokale" (Storm Troopers' premises) in order to celebrate the 1923 "beer hall putsch" in an appropriate manner.

Around midnight the brown idyll was disturbed by the motorized couriers of Nuremberg's SA leadership who announced to the men the state of alarm and a general appeal.

Reluctantly the Storm Troopers obeyed to their new orders, leaving behind the cozy lounges and their beer glasses to gather again at Adolf-Hitler-Platz in the heart of Nuremberg's old city. Some of them already suspected what the reason for this mobilization at night might be: On November 7 the student Herschel Grünspan had shot the German diplomat vom Rath in Paris. He took revenge for his parents who like thousands of Jews of Polish nationality were arrested by the Nazis on October 28 and deported to the German-Polish border, where they were left helpless in no man's land.

The order which was revealed to the Nuremberg SA men in an emotional speech was of brutal clarity: The Jewish population should atone for Grünspan's assassination of vom Rath.

Among those listening in Adolf-Hitler-Platz was "Oberscharführer" (a SA rank comparable to sergeant) Paul Trambauer and his men of SA Storm 14/14, who were allocated the northern quarter of the city as their field of action. After receiving a list of the apartments of Jewish families in this district which had been arranged before by the Gestapo, the horde heated up by beer, pathos and thirst for action panted uphill past the picturesque ancient imperial castle to their operational area. SA Storm 14/14 kicked off its way through Nuremberg's North and in the end their balance sheet would show dozens of destroyed apartments and stores as well as three innocent people bestially murdered in this area only. These men's way was also the path of the German people back from civilization into twelve years of barbarism.

The murder at Café Bamberger

At about 2 am a bunch of Storm Troopers reached until then peaceful Lindenaststraße. Their destination was the Jewish family café and pension of the Bambergers in house no. 21. Karl Bamberger and his wife Olga ran their business not far from the medieval city wall since 1934 as the last restaurant in which Jews could feel safe from animosities and humiliations. They received the approval for the opening only under the condition that the pension would be re-

stricted to long-term tenants, mostly elderly people, who were left alone in Nuremberg after the emigration of their relatives.

As one of the last places warranting a rest of human dignity to Jewish citizens, SA men considered Café Bamberger a particularly enticing target of their vandalism. Inconsiderately they accessed the estate. Within minutes the family's apartment and the restaurant looked like battlegrounds: The sideboard in the lounge was knocked over, the furniture chopped with axes, the valuable oil paintings, among them an original work of painter Arnold Böcklin, cut into pieces. But they were not to be satisfied with the rabid destruction of the inventory only. Fifty-eight year old Karl Bamberger dared to counter the brown mob to defend his family and his estate. With inconceivable cruelty the 'members of the master race' beat and trampled the man to death in front of his wife and son who also were maltreated heavily.

Almost nine years later, in August 1947, a trial took place against the members of the SA Storm 14/14 at Nuremberg-Fürth district court's first division for criminal matters. In the police photos of the defendants one searches in vain for those features which popularly are ascribed to the face of a murderer. The perpetrators were ordinary family fathers -- just like Karl Bamberger.

For his wife Olga "Kristallnacht" was only the beginning of her suffering. In March 1942 she was deported to the eastern Polish camp of Izbica and murdered there as one of 455 Nuremberg Jews.

Under the boots of the SA



Siegfried Astruck
(photo: private)

Only a few blocks away, at the building Untere Pirkheimerstraße 9, another bunch of Storm Troopers was raging. There the bullies broke into the apartment of the manufacturer Siegfried Astruck and his family and crushed all pieces of furniture. In the compensatory negotiations after the war, the carpenter who had been engaged to clean up the mess testified: “Out of 36 chairs only one could be repaired. One of my skilled workers was busy for 7 hours to cut the destroyed pieces into firewood.”

The wrath of the Nazis particularly against the prosperous Jewish families in Nuremberg had even worse consequences for the residents of Untere Pirkheimerstraße 9: Siegfried Astruck, co-owner of “Nürnberger Schildpatt- und Hornwarenfabrik Gustav Astruck” (Nuremberg tortoiseshell and horn product factory Gustav Astruck), founded in 1908, was arrested by the Gestapo out of his bed and the following day transferred together with 81 Nuremberg Jewish men to the concentration camp Dachau.

To bail her husband out from the concentration camp, his wife Trude wrote a desperate petition to the police: “Thus I have nobody who advises me during these difficult days if my husband will not be given back to me ... I ask this letter which is dictated by the great need of a deserted helpless woman not to be comprised as an annoyance and to return my husband soon.” After weeks of fear and uncertainty Siegfried Astruck was released from concentration camp in mid-December. Later the businessman remembered: “I was extremely lucky that I was arrested by older detectives and not by the SA, because some gentlemen I was friendly with were literally beaten to death by the SA, among them a Mr. Löb.”

The salesman Simon Löb lived in the neighborhood of the Astruck family at Mittlere Pirkheimerstraße 22. Like Karl Bamberger, Löb who was a firm man and a combat soldier decorated with the Iron Cross II. Class in World War I, stepped into the way of the intruders. Him, too, had to pay the price for his courage and his faith in the German fatherland honoring its veterans.

An acquaintance of the family met Simon Löb’s wife Emilie a few days after the attack. She told her that the unleashed brutes threw her husband down the stairs and kicked the defenseless and injured man with their heavy boots until he was dead. When Emilie Löb tried to protect her dying husband, she also experienced the frenzy of the of brown shirts: She showed her acquaintance her smashed nose of which a terrible blow had separated one side. The wound was so gapping that she could pull out the bloody cotton compress not only in the natural way downwards but also upwards.



Simon Löb
(photo: private)

“Let’s get out - now!”

Six Nuremberg citizens identified by their names were murdered during these days of disgrace in November 1938, also the former owner of the jewelry store E. Lorch in scenic medieval “Nassauer Haus”, Fritz Lorch. He was in the Jewish hospital in the neighboring city of Fürth recovering from surgery. Like in Nuremberg, the Storm Troopers showed no mercy and tormented the defenseless patient to death.

In their despair nineteen Nuremberg Jews committed suicide. Nevertheless, during the proceedings against the ‘honest men’ of the 14th Storm of the 14th SA Standard the top defendant Trambauer had the nerve to make this statement: “We were very humane toward the people.” The sadistic orgy of “Kristallnacht” revealed the entire brutality of the Nazi regime to the persons affected. To the Jewish citizens of Nuremberg now it was definitely clear that a part of their compatriots apparently had become insane and was trying to kill them while besides a minority of righteous men and women, ‘decent Germans’ were not inclined to do anything about it but to look the other way.

The report of his father’s return from detention by the Gestapo given by Arnold Friedmann is a striking example for the individual effect of the events: “About three days after ‘Kristallnacht’ my father was picked up at his office by the Gestapo. He was locked up at Nuremberg’s Gestapo headquarters for three days and nights. When he returned he had aged by ten years and uttered only one sentence: ‘Let’s get out - now!’”

The Astruck family emigrated to London in May 1939 and later from there to Peru. Emilie Löb, Simon Löb’s widow, left Germany on April 4, 1939. The next day Alice, the widow of

the murdered jeweler Fritz Lorch, notified the municipal registration office about her emigration to the USA.

Guilt without atonement

After the war several suspects were accused of crimes committed during “Kristallnacht” in Nuremberg. One of these trials took place against the former members of SA Storm 14/14 and the proceedings as well as the results were an example of the difficulties of German courts to bring the perpetrators to justice. Though three homicides were committed on November 10, 1938 in northern Nuremberg, detective forces and public attorney’s office had to stop their inquiries because of a lack of evidence. Naturally, there were hardly any Jewish witnesses still living in Nuremberg. Facing the unsuccessful search of the police for witnesses willing to testify, today’s observer must come to the conclusion that all residents of the streets in which the SA had raged just weren’t at home that night. All of them except the Jewish victims and their torturers.

To the victims it must have been the most outrageous scorn when top defendant Trambauer stated on one hand almost being sorry “that the complete destruction of the apartments hasn’t turned out well for lack of time”, and on the other impudently lied to the court (without objections from the judges): “No Jew has been beaten.”

The first division for criminal matters of the district court pronounced the verdicts in the evening of August 19, 1947 after only one day of proceedings: Six former SA men were sentenced to prison for eight to ten months because of major cases of breaching of the peace, two because of simple breaches of the peace to prison for half a year, three were acquitted.

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