



MR. WEISS (second from left) was able to escape from Germany to Shanghai China, in May, 1940. This picture was taken in Shanghai just after the war.

## KURT WEISS (Germany)

I was in Breslau on Kristallnacht. My grandmother woke me up, "Kurt, leave the house, the synagogue is burning, get out of the house." My grandfather already disappeared, he had German friends to hide him. He was gone. We lived close by the synagogue. It was a beautiful building, many meters high, with two domes, and had been newly renovated. So I ran out, but before I ran out, I grabbed my army pass and put it in my pocket. I thought it wouldn't hurt. About 50 meters, I ran into two Gestapo. SS men. They stopped me. "Are you a Jew?" "What are you talking about," I replied. I took out my army pass and showed it to them, but not the inside page. On the street I passed only the smashed stores, a liquor store with everything poured on the street. Everything smashed, a crystal store. I went to my girlfriend. It was November and it was snowing.

## THE ORDERS WENT OUT

REINHARD HEYDRICH (THE HEAD OF THE REICH MAIN SECURITY OFFICE) SENT A SECRET TELEGRAM AT 1:20 A.M., NOVEMBER 10, 1938 TO "ALL HEADQUARTERS AND STATIONS OF THE STATE POLICE; ALL DISTRICTS AND SUB-DISTRICTS OF THE SD." HE GAVE INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE IMMEDIATE COORDINATION OF POLICE AND POLITICAL ACTIVITIES IN INCITING THE RIOTS THROUGHOUT GERMANY AND AUSTRIA. "...THE DEMONSTRATIONS ARE NOT TO BE PREVENTED BY THE POLICE," HE ORDERED, RATHER, THE POLICE ARE "...ONLY TO SUPERVISE THE OBSERVANCE OF THE GUIDELINES."

# KRISTALLNACHT

THE SYNAGOGUES AND TORAH SCROLLS THAT WERE BURNED AND DESECRATED SIGNIFIED, AS THE GREAT RABBI LEO BAECK HAD EARLIER WRITTEN, THAT "THE THOUSAND YEAR HISTORY OF THE JEWS IN GERMANY HAD COME TO AN END." NOBEL PRIZE WINNERS AND RABBINIC SCHOLARS, BUSINESSMEN AND SOLDIERS, GOVERNMENT MINISTERS AND SOCIAL ACTIVISTS, ALL HAD THEIR WORLDS SHATTERED, ALONG WITH THE THOUSANDS OF WINDOWS THAT GAVE KRISTALLNACHT ITS NAME.

## A SHATTERED WORLD



## Kristallnacht.

Kristallnacht grew out of a tragedy. On the night of October 27, 1938, 18,000 Polish Jews were deported from Germany, but were initially refused entry into Poland. Caught between borders, these people were forced to camp out in makeshift shelters. Upon hearing that his family was trapped, 17-year-old student Herschel Grynszpan shot the third secretary of the German Embassy in Paris, Ernst vom Rath, whom he mistook for the ambassador. This assassination was the pretext for the start of the anti-Jewish violence that became known as Kristallnacht.

Kristallnacht was the first anti-Jewish riot in Western Europe in hundreds of years. Kristallnacht, usually translated as "Night of Broken Glass", was a Nazi phrase referring to the state-organized anti-Jewish riots on the night of November 9-10, 1938. These riots marked a major transition in Nazi policy towards the "final solution of the Jewish question", which ends in genocide. More than 30,000 Jews were deported to concentration camps. More than 1000 synagogues and prayer houses were destroyed or damaged, and over 7000 Jewish shops, businesses and homes were vandalized and ransacked.

The victims paid for the damage. Immediately after Kristallnacht, a fine of one billion marks was levied not upon the criminals, but upon the victims. Along with the fine came a decision, taken in a conference of Nazi leaders on November 12, 1938, to "Aryanize the German economy, to get the Jew out..." Nazi policy had now moved into the overt destruction of all Jewish life in the Third Reich.