

## Lesson 1 Studying the Holocaust

### Background on the Kristallnacht Pogrom

Class Copy

In the first half of 1938, numerous laws were passed in Germany restricting Jewish economic activity and occupational opportunities. In July 1938, a law was passed requiring all Jews to carry identification cards. Later that year, 17,000 Jews of Polish citizenship, many of whom had been living in Germany for decades, were arrested and relocated across the Polish border. The Polish government refused to admit them so they were interned in "relocation camps" on the Polish frontier.

Among the deportees was Zindel Grynszpan, who had been born in western Poland and had moved to Hanover, Germany, where he established a small store, in 1911. On the night of October 27, Grynszpan and his family were forced out of their home by German police. His store and the family's possessions were confiscated and they were forced to move over the Polish border.

Grynszpan's seventeen-year-old son, Herschel, was living with an uncle in Paris. When he received news of his family's expulsion, he went to the German embassy in Paris on November 7, intending to assassinate the German Ambassador to France. Upon discovering that the Ambassador was not in the embassy, he shot a low-ranking diplomat, Third Secretary Ernst vom Rath. Rath was critically wounded and died two days later, on November 9.

Grynszpan's attack was interpreted by Joseph Goebbels, Hitler's Chief of Propaganda, as a direct attack against the Reich and used as an excuse to launch a *pogrom* against Jews. This *pogrom* has come to be called *Kristallnacht*, "Night of the Broken Glass."

On the nights of November 9 and 10, rampaging mobs throughout Germany and the newly acquired territories of Austria and Sudetenland freely attacked Jews in the street, in their homes, and at their places of work and worship. Almost 100 Jews were killed and hundreds more injured; approximately 7,000 Jewish businesses and homes were damaged and looted; 1,400 synagogues were burned; cemeteries and schools were vandalized; and 30,000 Jews were arrested and sent to concentration camps.

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Hand Copy

### STUDENT HANDOUT - Heydrich's Instructions, November 1938

*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 [Security Service]

*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.

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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*

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## Lesson 1 Studying the Holocaust

*Handwritten note:* Original copy

### STUDENT HANDOUT - Letter by Margarete Drexler to the Gestapo

Letter by Margarete Drexler to the Gestapo  
Mannheim, 24 November 1938  
Margarete Drexler, Landau Pfalz Suedring St. 10

To the Secret State Police Landau (Pfalz) The sum of 900 Marks\* in cash was confiscated from me in the course of the action of 10 November. I herewith request to act for the return of my money, as I need it urgently for me and my child's livelihood. I hope that my request will be granted, as my husband died as a result of his injuries during the war — he fought and died for his fatherland with extreme courage — and I am left without any income. Until recent years you could have found a photo of my husband on the wall next to the picture of Generalfeldmarschall von Hindenburg in the canteen of the 23 Infantry regiment in Landau. This was done to honour his high military performance. His medals and decorations prove that he fought with great courage and honour. He received: The Iron Cross First Class, The Iron Cross Second Class, The Military Order of Merit Fourth Class with swords. The Military Order of Sanitation 2 class with a blue-white ribbon. This ribbon is usually bestowed only upon recipients of the Max Joseph Order, which accepts only members of the nobility. I can only hope that as a widow of such a man, so honoured by his country, my request for the return of my property will not be in vain.

With German greetings,  
(signed) Frau Margarete Drexler Widow of reserve staff surgeon Dr. Hermann Drexler  
Presently in Mannheim, 11 Kant St.

Enclosed: 6 photos of medals and decorations.

*\*In 1938, 2.49 Marks = \$1.00 U.S.*

[NOTE: Margarete Drexler was deported to France in October 1940 with the other Jews of the Pfalz area. She died in the Gurs camp. The date of her death is unknown.]

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