

## Dr. Hansjürgen Gölz on the occasion of the commemoration of November 9, "Reichskristallnacht," 2020

No date in the calendar year has shaped German memory of the 20th century as much as November 9. In a speech on November 9, 2018, German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier called it "a day that reminds us of the light and the shadow in our history." It is a day of contradictions, a light and a dark day." On this day, history becomes tangible; the high point and the low point lie close together.

The 1918 revolution was followed by the Hitler putsch in 1923, which was followed by the Reichspogromnacht, the "Reichskristallnacht," on November 9, 1938, and finally the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 - always on November 9. November 9 is truly a day of destiny for the Germans.

Nov. 9, 1918, is considered the birth of the Weimar Republic. Faced with the foreseeable military defeat of the Germans in World War I, the call for peace and for the abdication of the Kaiser grew louder. Philipp Scheidemann proclaimed the first German republic from the balcony of the Reichstag in Berlin, sealing the end of Hohenzollern rule. The first German democracy was established. After years of political instability, the Weimar Republic was eliminated in 1933 by the didactics of the National Socialists.

There is more. On Sunday morning, November 9, 1923, Hitler marched with General Erich Ludendorff and his faithful to the Feldherrnhalle in Munich. The Hitler putsch failed, and with it Hitler's attempt to seize power by force. The NSDAP was banned and Hitler was sentenced to five years in prison. While in prison, he wrote "Mein Kampf," the NSDAP's program for the next few years.

About the history of the town: When the Vordere and Hintere Siedlung were built in 1938, all the streets in the settlement were named in memory of the fallen Old Fighters. Today's Daimler Square was called Schlageter Square at that time. Immediately after the 2nd World War the streets were renamed, now they were called Bebelstraße, Thälmann-, Liebknecht-, Schuhmacher-, Erzbergerstraße, Ebertstraße and Niemöllerstraße .

Nov. 9 as the fateful day closest to us historically is Nov. 9, 1989. It is a joyful day in our recent history. On the evening of Nov. 9, Politburo member Günter Schabowski surprisingly announced the immediate opening of the Wall at a press conference. As a result, thousands of East Berliners flocked to their city's border crossings. This marked the beginning of reunification.

For a while, this commemoration day was even discussed as the national holiday of a united Germany.

However, a joyful commemoration day it could never have become.

For, again on a Nov. 9, not only did the wall that had separated the two German states for 26 years fall, the day also marked one of the darkest hours in German history, the fall into barbarism. On the night of Nov. 9-10, 1938, SA thugs organized violent attacks on the Jewish population throughout Germany, and synagogues were set on fire. Because the windowpanes of many thousands of Jewish stores were shattered and the displays smashed on the night of Nov. 9-10, the event was popularly known as "Reichskristallnacht." Some 400 synagogues were set on fire, over 7500 Jewish stores were destroyed and looted, 91 people were beaten to death and murdered, and some

26,000 Jewish men and young people were deported to concentration camps, in southern Germany to Dachau concentration camp.

On that November 9, the Nazis commemorated Hitler's failed 1923 coup. At a memorial service in Munich, Goebbels gave the signal to strike out with a diatribe. Propaganda emphasized that the "people's anger" had taken revenge on the Jews. Historian Wolfgang Benz emphasized in his assessment: "the Reichskristallnacht marked the apex of the road to the "Final Solution of the Jewish Question". The physical extermination of the Jewish population had become visible as the goal of National Socialist rule."

Let's take a look at the history of the Jews in Goeppingen and the regional events leading up to "Reichskristallnacht."

Jews lived in Jebenhausen since 1777, Prince Philipp Friedrich von Liebenstein, who took them in and assured them life and rights through his letter of protection. Since the middle of the 19th century many Jebenhausen Jews moved to Goeppingen. In the course of industrialization they found wages and bread in the Goeppingen factories or they founded new businesses themselves. Many of them became great factory owners and business owners, preferably in the textile industry. The first Jewish community was formed in 1867, soon after which the Goeppingen synagogue was built and consecrated in 1881.

From 1935, the laws had increased the legal exclusion and social isolation of Jewish citizens. These are the "Nuremberg Laws," the "Law for the Protection of German Blood and German Honor." According to this law, marriage between Jews and non-Jews was forbidden. Violations of the law were labeled "racial defilement" and were punishable by imprisonment. By 1938 at the latest, Jewish citizens were under acute threat. The violence that came to light on "Kristallnacht" was an unmistakable sign for many Jews that there was no hope for an improvement in political conditions.

In the period from 1933 to 1937, 53 Jews or families had left Goeppingen, in 1938 there were 70 persons and in 1939 73 persons, most of them fled or emigrated to North America. Jewish stores and businesses had to close.

The National Socialists took advantage of this favorable opportunity to finally oust the Jews from economic life. The handicraft businesses, stores and factories were "aryanized", i.e. taken over by Aryan businessmen for cheap money. I remember a big advertisement in 1988 in the NWZ "50 years of textile department store Haux" in Goeppingen. I thought at that time, I would rather not have mentioned this business anniversary with a word.

Even before that, all valuables, money, jewelry, furniture, etc. were taken from the Jews. At that time, many Germans enriched themselves with the inventory of the apartments - valuable furniture, grand pianos or art treasures were looted. Everyone could buy expensive things with cheap money.

From October 1941 Jews were forbidden to emigrate from the German Reich territory. Until then 232 Jews from Goeppingen had fled abroad and saved themselves. Now the organizational preparations for the so-called "Final Solution of the Jewish Question" were underway.

On the course of events of the "Kristallnacht" in Goeppingen.

The action "Kristallnacht" was prepared with a long hand by the NSDAP, there can be no question of spontaneous "people's anger" as the NWZ and GZ report. The Goeppingen state archivist Karl-Heinz Rueß describes the events surrounding "Kristallnacht" in great detail. However, his account of the events, written in 1998, took 60 years to be published!

Rueß writes: "Kreisleiter Imanuel Baptist was called by the Gaupropagandaleitung in Stuttgart with the advice: "in the country the synagogues are burning, the rage of the people is inflamed." A precise order from the SA Ulm finally reached the Geislinger SA . The instruction demanded "that all synagogues be burned down immediately."

The Geislinger SA met in the inn "Kreuz" (opposite the town hall directly at the Rohrach), one drove with two passenger cars and a truck, on which straw was loaded, to Goeppingen. One even followed by bicycle. In front of the synagogue the troop was already expected by the SA-Sturmbannführer. District leader Baptist had the firemen's alarm line turned off. The SA men from Geisligen forced their way into the synagogue. There they set fire to the straw they had brought in with gasoline. The building burned out completely. The fire department was not allowed to go out to extinguish the fire. Their commander, Karl Keuler, was finally allowed to send out a platoon to prevent the fire from spreading to neighboring houses. 50-80 onlookers surrounded the fiery spectacle and accompanied it with anti-Semitic bawling. Because Keuler clearly voiced his displeasure that night, he soon had to resign from his position as fire department commander.

On the night of the pogrom, there was a second job to be done. This had come from the state police in Stuttgart. All male citizens of Jewish faith between the ages of 16 and 65 were to be arrested. They were rounded up at the Dettelbacher Hotel and in the following days transported to the Dachau concentration camp, where they were often mistreated during a prison stay of several weeks. When the men were picked up, apartments were also searched and the furnishings destroyed. At the Lendt department store on Untere Marktstraße, the shop windows were smashed and the displays looted.

A supplement: Two weeks ago I wanted to read about the events of the "Kristallnacht" in the GZ and NWZ. But - nothing! Both newspapers, long since switched to the same direction, report nothing, the NWZ was content with a small short report.

From both Christian churches no public protest is known.

The search for the perpetrators did not begin until the end of 1946, and was set in motion by the Goeppingen Federation of Trade Unions. In 1948, the indictment was presented to the Ulm Regional Court. Fifteen people were accused of breach of the peace, joint arson and serious trespass. The district leader Immanuel Baptist received two years in prison.

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