



THE SECOND CHANCE

by Brigitte B. Nussbächer

Have we learned from the mistakes of our ancestors? Do we take the opportunity, not to participate when the world turns against Israel again, but to stand up for Israel?

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1. THE ESCALATION

Night of the Broken Glas 1938



During the Night of the Broken Glass 1400 synagogues burned, Jewish civilians were mistreated, arrested, murdered

Exactly 85 years have passed since the "Reichskristallnacht" – the Night of the Broken Glass (trivializingly named after the shards of destroyed window panes; in reality much more was destroyed!

That night from November 9 to 10, 1938, in which 1,400 synagogues burned in the German Reich and 7,500 Jewish stores and other institutions (including schools and orphans homes!) were destroyed. That night, when Jewish civilians were abused, threatened, arrested and murdered in the open street (in the presence of police) by the SA, the "Sturmabteilung" (the paramilitary fighting organization of the NSDAP). The exact number of dead is not known. It is estimated that over 1,300 died that night and afterwards as a result of it.



Today we know that Kristallnacht marked the transition from discrimination against German Jews, beginning in 1933, to their systematic expulsion and oppression. Beginning on November 10, 1938, Jews were deported to concentration camps. Ultimately, these actions culminated in the Holocaust, (the stated goal of exterminating all Jewish life) and resulted in over 6 million Jews murdered. How was this possible in "civilized Europe" and under the eyes of world public opinion?

The Black Shabbat 2023



On Black Shabbat, Hamas terrorists captured over 20 towns in Israel, mistreated and killed Jewish civilians

On October 7, 2023, Israel experienced a new "Kristallnacht" - a Black Shabbat. At dawn, Hamas terrorists from the Gaza Strip broke through the border with Israel. They destroyed over 20 Israeli cities and villages and caused a terrible bloodbath. They kidnapped over 230 hostages and abused, tortured and murdered over 1,400 Jewish civilians.

"There were scenes of horrific cruelty, barbarism, mutilation, dismemberment, rape. Couples and family members were tied together and burned alive; entire families had their organs removed while they were still alive; children were forced to watch their parents being tortured and killed; parents were forced to watch as their children's eyes were gouged out and their heads smashed in. Living rooms, kitchens, cribs and toys, baby cradles, bathrooms, lawns, cars - everywhere the coagulated blood of murdered Jews." (Source: Israel Today, Stan Goodenough, 10/29/2023).

Even three weeks later, not all of the partially dismembered and burned bodies have been identified.

What will be the consequences of October 7, 2023?

As rockets continue to be fired at Israel, Israel fights back and attacks the Hamas-infested Gaza Strip. At the same time, Hezbollah (another Islamist terrorist organization) in northern Israel also begins firing rockets at Israel. Iran, whose stated goal is to destroy the Israeli state, is also threatening.

After centuries of Jewish persecution, programs and wars, will the world watch another attempt to destroy the Jews?

Will we understand this time what the demand of the hour is?

Will we realize that this is our chance to show that we have learned from the past? Will we be willing to stand up for Israel? Will we be among those who make a difference?



2. SURPRISE OR LOGICAL ESCALATION?

The Antecedents: Germany from 1933

Was Europe, was the world surprised in 1938? Were there causes to believe, that this was only a temporary madness, the crime of a mob?

No! The anti-Jewish policy of the National Socialist German government began already since Adolf Hitler came to power in January 1933. A few facts:

- In April 1933, there was the first centrally controlled terror campaign in the German Reich: the boycott of Jews.
- This was followed in the same month by the Professional Civil Servants Act and the Law on Admission to the Bar, as a result of which some 37,000 Jews lost their professional livelihood in Germany.
- In September 1935, the Nuremberg Laws were enacted. The "Law for the Protection of German Blood and German Honor" prohibited marriage and sexual intercourse between Jews and non-Jews. The Reich Citizenship Law created different classes of citizens.
- From the end of 1937, rapid forced expropriations began to emerge. SA thugs beat thousands of Jewish business owners out of their stores, businesses and homes ... and took over these.

Kristallnacht was indeed an escalation of hostility towards Jews - but at the same time a logical continuation of the anti-Semitic acts that had already been going on for years.

The Antecedents: Israel from 1948

Is the Hamas attack on "Black Shabbat" October 7, 2023 a surprise? Is it only a temporary madness, the crime of a mob?

No. Israel has been attacked regularly since UN General Assembly Resolution 181 of November 29, 1947, which called for the establishment of a Jewish and an Arab state, because the Palestinians and the other Arab countries refused (and some still do to this day!) to accept a partition of Palestine.

- *The first attack came at midnight after the proclamation of the Jewish state by David Ben Gurion on May 14, 1948, from the five Arab countries: Egypt, Syria, Jordan, Iraq & Lebanon.*
- *In 1973, Israel was attacked by Egypt and Syria on the most important Jewish holiday, Yom Kippur.*
- *In between there was the blocking of the Suez Canal to Israeli ships in 1956, which led to the Suez Crisis, and the announcement of an Arab attack in 1967 (by Egypt, Syria and Jordan) which Israel prevented through the Six-Day War.*
- *In 1982 terrorist groups attacked Israel from southern Lebanon, in 2006 2 soldiers were kidnapped by Hezbollah. This led to the two Lebanon wars.*

As for Gaza in particular, Israel withdrew completely from the territory in 2005. But even that did not bring peace.

- *Years of shelling Israeli cities with several thousand rockets from Gaza led to Operation Cast Lead in 2008, which ended with a unilateral cease-fire declaration by Israel in January 2009.*



- *Hamas and other Palestinian groups continued to fire rockets toward Israel, particularly in the second half of 2012, with rockets reaching Tel Aviv and Jerusalem for the first time and causing total disruption to daily life for more than a million people in Israel. Israel responded in November 2012 with Operation Cloud Pillar, which ended with a cease-fire that same month...*
- *... but did not bring peace. In July 2014, Israel opened Operation Strong Rock in response to renewed, sustained rocket fire from Hamas and other Palestinian militant groups from Gaza. This ended in August with an indefinite ceasefire.*

But since then, rocket attacks on Israel have continued on a regular basis. For example, in May 2019 when we flew to Israel, 800 rockets had been fired from Gaza the day before.

But what is considered a disaster in other parts of the world (and leads to war) has become the sad normality here. Israel tries (mostly successfully) with its defense system "Iron Dome" to intercept the rockets and render them harmless ... and the world looks away!

The "Black Shabbat" is indeed an escalation of the hatred of Jews and the aggression of Hamas - but at the same time a logical continuation of the already years-long attacks.

3. REACTIONS OF THE WORLD

1938 – The Conference of Évian

Even before Kristallnacht, the flow of Jewish emigrants from Germany was increasing. In this situation, the United States proposed an international conference, which finally took place in Évian in July 1938 and was attended by Great Britain, France, the Netherlands, Belgium, Switzerland, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Ireland, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and almost all Central and South American countries. Poland and Romania sent observers.

The governments of the participating states were aware at the time that the Jews in Germany and Austria were almost completely deprived of rights and that thousands of them had already been murdered or driven to their deaths. Nevertheless, none of the 32 participating countries agreed to accept a larger number of the threatened Jews.

Great Britain, in an attempt to calm the situation in Palestine, imposed rigid admission restrictions on this area as early as November 1937, even though they had promised the Jews a "national home" in the Balfour Declaration of 1917. In 1938, in view of the threat of war and in accordance with the wishes of the Arab states, England reduced the immigration quota for Palestine once again: to a maximum of 20,000/year.

Some 125,000 people lined up before U.S. consulates in late 1938 (by 1939, the number had grown to 300,000) to obtain one of only 27,000 visas issued to immigrants under the quota system of the time. In the second half of 1941, the U.S. State Department set even stricter quotas on immigration, despite reports of mass murders committed by the Nazis. This was justified by concerns for internal security.

Switzerland admitted about 30,000 Jews, but also turned away about the same number at the border. Bolivia accepted about 30,000 immigrants. Another 15,000 Jews managed to escape to China, and another 600 made their way to the Dominican Republic.



Had it not been possible for the countries to accommodate more refugees? Contemporary figures refute this thesis. Germany, for example, took in more than a million refugees in 2015/16, (the majority from Syria), as well as more than a million Ukrainians in 2022. And these are only the official numbers, in fact they are significantly more. (Source: <https://mediendienst-integration.de>)

2023 – The UN General Assembly



The UN resolution of 27.10.2023 does not mention Hamas or its atrocities of Black Shabbat.

2023 after the terrible attack by Hamas, there are a number of so-called solidarity visits, but little practical support was visible.

And just 2 weeks later, by a 2/3 majority of 120 votes; 14 against (respect to Austria which has learned from its past!) and 45 abstentions, the UN General Assembly resolution of Oct. 27, 2023, calls for an immediate ceasefire by Israel, as well as the immediate provision of water, food, fuel and electricity, and "unimpeded" humanitarian access for ... Palestinians in Gaza.

The resolution does not name the terrorist organization Hamas, does not condemn Hamas's atrocities on October 7, and does not affirm Israel's right to self-defense under international law.

The fact that even countries such as Germany, which claim that Israel's security is part of their reason of state, do not vote against the resolution, clearly shows how much (or how little!) the verbally promised solidarity is worth, when it comes to deeds!

And what happened on October 15? The UN Security Council has passed - without dissenting votes! - a resolution that is binding under international law. Once again, Israel's right to self-defense is not mentioned, and once again there is no condemnation of the Hamas massacre.

Instead, days of ceasefire are demanded from Israel - without consideration and without regard for the hostages, who have been in the hands of the terrorists for over 40 days!

And this despite the fact that Israel has already taken daily humanitarian pauses, lasting hours, to allow aid to reach the civilian population.

So who needs these days-long ceasefires and who is being supported by them? You guessed it: Hamas!



At this point I would like to quote the German Federal Chancellor, who said: "I consider the demand for an immediate ceasefire or a long pause - which is more or less the same thing! - NOT right. Ultimately, it would mean that Israel should let Hamas recover - and let it buy new rockets again." ... and then carry out further attacks on Israel. (Olaf Scholz in Der Spiegel 12.11.2023)

And that's what the UN is calling for!

4. THE NEXT PHASE

The Holocaust

**The sad truth is that Nazi Germany perfected mass murder in a terrible way, writing the darkest page in world history.
But the sad truth is also, that they would never have been so successful, if they had been met with determined resistance.**

Denmark has the rare honor of being the only country in Europe occupied by Nazi Germany that courageously resisted the Nazi regime's attempt to deport its Jewish citizens and saved 99% of them. In 1943, in just three weeks, Danish fishermen managed to evacuate almost all the Jews to neutral, unoccupied Sweden.

Finland, Germany's ally since 1941, did not extradite most of its Jews. Bulgaria, also an ally of Germany, saved about 50,000 Jews.

These examples prove that determined resistance could successfully thwart German extermination plans.

However, the situation was quite different in Eastern Europe, where 5 million Jews lived - in areas that today belong to Ukraine, Poland, Belarus, Moldova, Romania and Lithuania. In the former tsarist empire, the state, church and people ruthlessly cracked down on Jews as early as the 19th century, restricting them with special laws and persecuting them with pogroms.

These countries were also occupied by Nazi Germany at the end of 1939 (Poland) and in the summer of 1941 (Ukraine, Belarus). The hatred of Jews they already knew from their own past...

In many towns in Western Ukraine Jews were killed without an explicit order of the Nazi occupiers. In the mass shootings by German and Ukrainian police units, about 100,000 were killed in Babiy Yar near Kiev alone. In total, about 1.5 million fell victim to the Holocaust in Ukraine.

Romania under the military dictatorship of General Ion Antonescu and the "Iron Guard" organization also ordered in 1941, before Romania entered the war on the German side, that all Jews were to be deported and had about 350,000 Jews almost completely exterminated. Here, too, soldiers of the German Wehrmacht, Romanian military, police units and members of the civilian population took part in the murder.

In Poland, Jews were repeatedly killed and injured as early as 1935. Often their stores were also looted. In 1937, the number of Jewish students was halved at some universities (through introduced quotas as well as segregation through seating arrangements). Many upper-level jobs were inaccessible to Jews. Massacres were also carried out in Poland after the occupation by Nazi Germany (e.g. near Jedwabne), partly with the active participation of Polish citizens.



Auschwitz is one of the extermination camps, in which more than 3 million Jews were killed.

In 1940, the construction of mass extermination camps began. Unlike other concentration camps, where, in addition to individual murders, inmates died primarily as a result of systematically induced disease and malnutrition as well as excessive labor, the extermination camps served the immediate purpose of murdering those deported there.

Is it a coincidence, that all the extermination camps, in which more than three million people were murdered between 1941-1945 (mainly by gas chambers), in what is often called an industrial form: Auschwitz-Birkenau, Madjanek, Belzec, Sobibor, Treblinka are located in today's Poland and Bronnaja Gora and Maly Trostinez in today's Belarus?

The Silence of the Church



Most churches, too, kept silent during the Holocaust - or endorsed it.

In Germany, 96 percent of the population belonged to Christian denominations. Two thirds of them were Protestant, the other third Catholic.

Within the churches, one could have known and - since it is clearly written in the Bible - should have known, that the Jews are God's chosen people, with whom he has made an eternal covenant (Gen. 15:18; Ex. 34:10; Jeremiah 31:31-33).

And that whoever blesses Israel, will be blessed, while whoever curses Israel will, incur a curse. (Gen 12:3; Gen. 49:9; Num. 23:24; Deut. 30:7).



However, many were influenced by the teachings of the Church Fathers gathered at the First Church Council (in the year 325). They thought, that Jews were "God's murderers," condemned and unworthy of the grace of God and man. That Israel had forfeited its role in God's plans and that Christians were now the new Israel (replacement theology)... even though Paul clearly states in Romans 11 that God has not rejected his people, that he does not reclaim his gifts and does not revoke the promise of his election.

Neo-Protestant congregations were not necessarily different. The German Pentecostal Church, passed a resolution in 1938, (27 days before Kristallnacht!) supporting Hitler's anti-Semitism and revising the church constitution in accordance with the Nuremberg Race Laws: "The removal of the Jews from the community of our people, as from other peoples, is for us a process according to divine providence and will." (Source: Israel Today, Charles Gardner 09/26/2023)

Although the Bible - the foundation of the churches - originated with Jews; although it contains the history of Judaism and the promises of the prophets for Israel; and although the redeemer of Christianity, Jesus, was a Jew, the churches did not stand up against the extermination of the Jews either!

It was ultimately the collaboration of (almost) all with the Nazi regime that contributed significantly to the murder of the European Jews or made it possible in the first place on this scale.

The Hidden Heroes



To this day, there are unknown people who saved Jews and risked their own lives to do so. They are honored in Yad Vashem.

And yet there were people in all countries, who thought differently and, above all, acted differently. Who were ready to risk a lot to save Jews from extermination (in Eastern Europe the Germans executed not only those, who protected Jews themselves, but also their entire families).

There are the prominent examples like Oskar Schindler and Corrie ten Boom, but some more. Some gave ration cards to Jews, others false papers, or helped them escape to less dangerous locations. And still others gave shelter to Jews - sometimes for a few days, but sometimes for years.

In a world of total moral collapse, there was this small minority who displayed extraordinary courage in upholding human values. There was a line for them, that they were not willing to cross.



Some of them are honored as "Righteous Among the Nations" in the Holocaust Memorial in Jerusalem, but many remain simply the "hidden", unknown heroes.

All these people are proof, that everyone makes its own decisions in the end - and is therefore also responsible for them. That no mass dynamics, no ideology, no persecution are so strong, that the human mind would no longer be able to distinguish good from evil and to take an independent position.

As Viktor Frankl, (Viennese Jew, neurologist and psychiatrist), who survived the concentration camp, wrote in his book "Man's Search for Meaning":
"Man is the being, who decides, what it is".

"Living ultimately means nothing other, than bearing responsibility for the right answering of life's questions, for the fulfillment of the tasks set for each individual in life; for the fulfillment of the demand of the hour."

And (even in a concentration camp!), "everything can be taken away from a person, except the ultimate human freedom to adjust to the given circumstances in one way or another."

These hidden heroes teach us that EVERYONE can make a difference.

New Beginnings after the War

It is not yet 80 years since the Holocaust. The world expressed horror after the liberation of the death camps, but few were willing to accept the survivors after the war.

The United Nations gave the Jews a chance to establish their own state in their original homeland, only to strongly advise against it afterwards. When the Israelis (650,000 in all and a large number of them Holocaust survivors) defended their independence in 1948 against 160 million Arabs, there was little support from the countries, that verbally voted for a Jewish state.

In the years after the war, the various countries more or less dealt with their own contribution and the responsibility for the Holocaust that this created.

The generation that came later, was sure that they would act differently. "Never again!" was the motto.

Europe and the world recovered.

Even Germany, which was completely destroyed at the end of the war, flourished again. From ashes and ruins, progress and economic growth slowly grew - despite occupation zones and the division of the country into the West-oriented Federal Republic (FRG) and the Soviet-oriented, communist Republic (GDR). Even this wound was finally healed: 50 years after the beginning of World War II and 51 years after Kristallnacht, (exactly on November 9, 1989!) the Berlin Wall fell and made the reunification of Germany possible. Who likes, can believe in coincidences thereby. For me it is a clear sign of grace and a new chance.



***The question is: how do we deal with this second chance? As individuals, as Germany, as nations?
Will we keep our promise "Never again"?***



What the future will look like is also up to us - will we seize the opportunity?

Our Chance – Today!

Even today, countries are arming against Israel and threatening its destruction. And where does Europe stand? Why have there been wild demonstrations in almost every European capital and many other cities since October 7, in which hate slogans against Jews are shouted (mainly without any consequences)?

In Germany, the number of anti-Semitic incidents has increased by 240% in recent weeks! The fact that 86% of the million(s) of refugees, Germany has taken in since 2015, come from countries that question or deny Israel's right to exist (Syria, Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan, Turkey) certainly contributes to this. And leads to the question of how far Germany is practically living out its commitment to stand with Israel and Jews...

In the UK, over 600 anti-Semitic incidents have been reported, in the US, Jewish students say they are afraid to leave their rooms, and in the Caucasus, mobs are taking over public institutions looking for Jews to lynch. (Source: Israel Today, Telegram 10/30/2023)

And where do we stand - each and every one of us individually?

We are the grandchildren of the WW2 generation and we still know the history of our grandparents first hand. We should know if they persecuted Jews or protected them at that time - we know from movies, books, stories what happened during those years and how it happened. No one can hide behind cluelessness.

We have a chance - every single one of us!



Every single one counts, everyone can make a difference!

We have the chance NOT to participate when the world turns against Israel again and we have the chance NOT to repeat the mistakes and sins of our ancestors.

Christians have the chance to pray for Israel's and Jews: "O Jerusalem, I have appointed watchmen over your walls, who shall not be silent all day and all night. Who shall remember the LORD without giving you rest, give him no rest until he raise up Jerusalem again, and makes her the praise of the earth" (Isaiah 62:7) We can be those watchmen!

But even apart from prayer, we have the chance to be very active in standing up for Israel and helping practically where we can - even if it's just small things, they may have a big impact.

We have the chance to show Israelis and Jewish people around us, that we respect them, love them and that we stand by them.

*We cannot undo the past, but **we can help shape the present and build the future: by our words and even more by what we do and what our lives say.***

Will we seize this opportunity, will we make the difference?!



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