

NEVER AGAIN

heeding the warning signs



Austria, ca. 1938: A woman sits on a park bench marked "For Jews Only," after German authorities implemented anti-Jewish laws. *US Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of The Wiener Library*

The 2013 Days of Remembrance invite us to look back 75 years at the events of 1938 and how citizens and countries responded to signs of impending war and the Holocaust.

In the pivotal year before Nazi Germany invaded Poland and launched World War II, intervention could have saved many lives. Why did so many fail to respond to the warning signs and what lessons do their actions hold for us today?

WARNING SIGN: TERRITORIAL EXPANSION



German troops cross the border from Germany into Austria at the Kiefersfelden crossing. *Dokumentationsarchiv des Österreichischen Widerstandes*

Anschluss March 11-13
German troops enter Austria, which is incorporated into the German Reich. This is known as the *Anschluss*. German authorities quickly implement anti-Jewish legislation that encourages an atmosphere of hostility toward the Jewish population.



Hilde Kraemer (far left) and her friends, Germaine and Dee Dee, at school in France, ca. 1938. *Courtesy of Jeanine Surwit*

The Anschluss accelerated persecution and violence against Jews in the Reich. As a result, Hilde Kraemer’s parents, living in Germany, encouraged her to emigrate from France, where she was in boarding school. With relatives in New York as sponsors, Hilde immigrated to the United States in the summer of 1938. In 1942, her mother and stepfather were deported to Auschwitz, where they perished. Hilde’s half-brother Alfred obtained passage to the United States in 1941 with the aid of a Swedish nurse and Jewish and Quaker aid organizations. Hilde and Alfred reunited in the United States.

**Hungarian
Anti-Jewish Laws**
May

**Evian
Conference**
July 6–15

**Mauthausen
Opens**
August 8

**Decree Requiring
Jews to Bear
“Jewish” Names**
August 17

**Central Office
for Jewish
Emigration Opens**
August 20

**Munich
Agreement**
September 29–30

**Deportation of
Polish Jews**
October 26–28

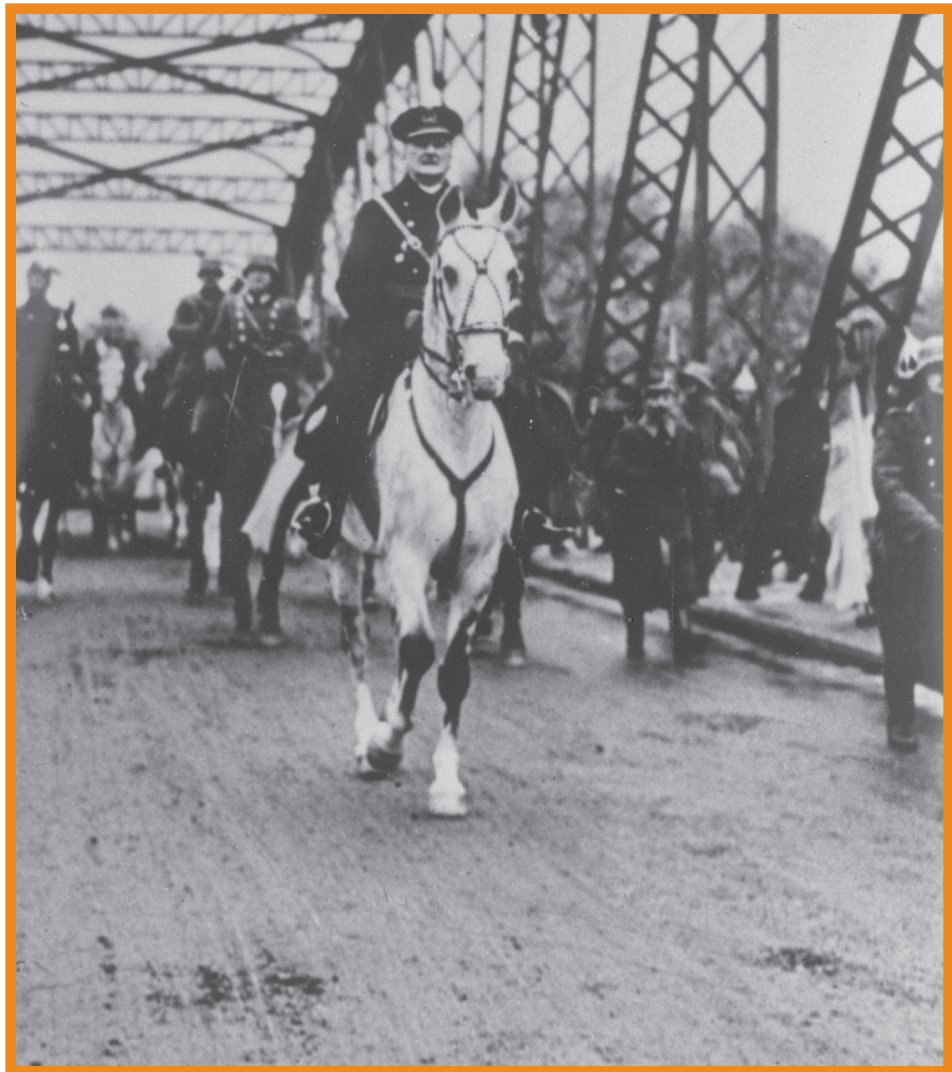
Kristallnacht
November 9–10

**American
Jewish Joint
Distribution
Committee**
November

**Decree Making
Jewish Ownership of
Businesses Illegal**
December 3

**Kindertransport
Begins**
December

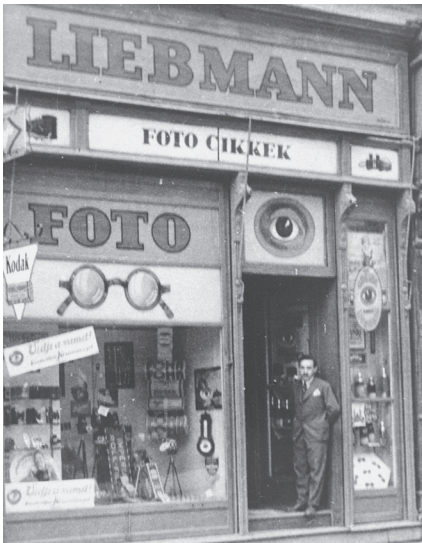
WARNING SIGN: DISCRIMINATION SPREADS



Regent Admiral Miklós Horthy, who ruled Hungary from 1920 to 1944. *US Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of Yad Vashem Photo Archives*

Hungarian Anti-Jewish Laws May

Following Germany’s example, Hungary adopts comprehensive anti-Jewish laws and measures, excluding Jews from many professions.



View of the Liebmann optical and photographic supply store in Szeged, Hungary. *US Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of Bela Liebmann*

Bela Liebmann, a native of Hungary, served in the Austro-Hungarian army during World War I and was decorated for saving 120 German soldiers. After the war, he became a photographer and owner of a photographic equipment store in Szeged. Liebmann was one of hundreds of thousands of Jews whose lives were adversely affected by anti-Jewish laws that restricted their access to social and economic opportunities. Conscripted for forced labor, Bela survived the war. His wife and daughter were killed in April 1945 by retreating SS soldiers.

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RESPONSE: FROM THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY



Period postcard of Evian-les-Bains, France. *US Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of Martin Smith*

Evian Conference July 6–15

Intensified persecution in Germany led more Jews to try to emigrate, which required a nation to allow them to enter. In response to increased refugee demand, US President Franklin D. Roosevelt convened a conference in Evian, France. There, representatives from 32 nations discussed their immigration policies. Delegate after delegate expressed sympathy for the refugees, but most countries, including the United States, refused to alter their immigration policies to admit more of them. Only the Dominican Republic agreed to accept a large number of additional refugees.

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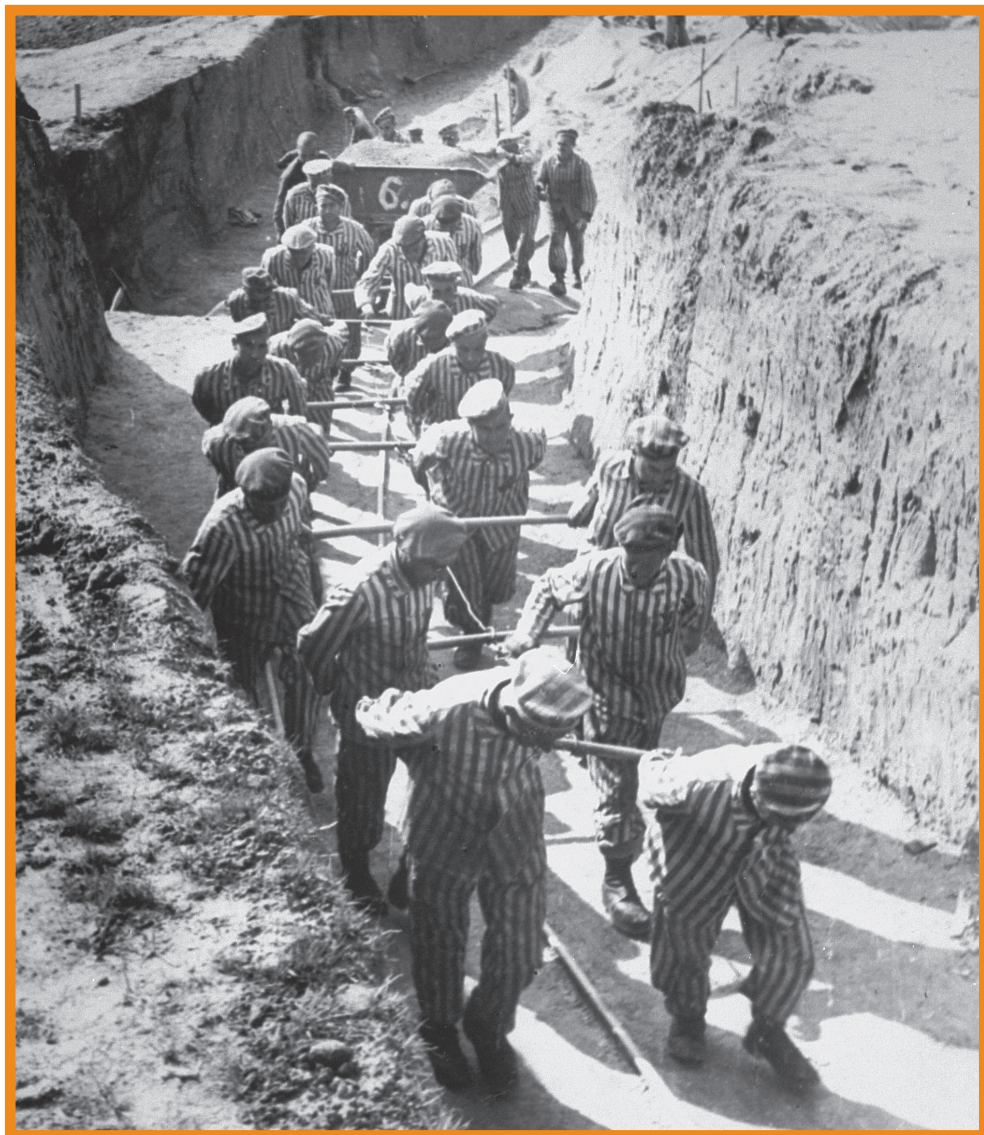
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WARNING SIGN: SYSTEMATIC PERSECUTION



Prisoners in the quarry at the Mauthausen concentration camp in Austria. *National Archives and Records Administration*

Mauthausen Opens August 8

SS authorities open the Mauthausen concentration camp in Austria, expanding the concentration camp system started in Germany in 1933 and taken over by the SS in 1934 to detain real and perceived enemies of Nazi rule.



Mauthausen, 1942. *US Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of Archiv der KZ-Gedenkstätte Mauthausen*

By the end of 1938, Mauthausen held nearly 1,000 prisoners, mostly convicted criminals and so-called asocials. By December 1939, the number of prisoners had increased to more than 2,600, including political opponents, homosexuals, and Jehovah’s Witnesses. Prisoners were detained for indefinite periods without being subject to judicial or administrative oversight. An estimated 197,464 prisoners passed through the Mauthausen camp system between August 1938 and May 1945. At least 95,000 prisoners died there. More than 14,000 of those who died were Jewish.

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WARNING SIGN: **LEGAL DISCRIMINATION**

DEMANDS JEWISH NAMES

Germany Orders Jews to Take 'Israel' or 'Sarah'

BERLIN, Aug. 19 (AP).—Germany acted to give all Jews names easily recognizable as Jewish by decreeing today that after Jan. 1 every Jew with a non-Jewish first name must add Israel or Sarah.

The Ministry of the Interior will compile a list of names that are considered Jewish, and then every Jew who has a name not on the list must add Israel if he is a man, Sarah if a woman. Jewish infants may receive only Jewish first names.

At present there still are an estimated 500,000 Jews in Greater Germany, and it said in official circles that relatively few of them have Jewish names. Names like Siegfried, Alfred, Eugene, Lieselotte, Hannelore and Elsa are common in Jewish families.

The new decree exempts Jews of foreign nationality.

The New York Times, August 20, 1938, page 5

Decree Requiring Jews to Bear “Jewish” Names August 17
German and Austrian Jews without recognizably “Jewish” names are required to adopt the middle names “Sarah” or “Israel.”



Studio portrait of the Zwienicki family taken in 1921. From left to right, Selma Zwienicki holding her daughter, Liesel, Benno, Josef Zwienicki, and Gerd. US Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of Jacob G. Wiener

On *Kristallnacht*, Josef Zwienicki fled from his home believing that his presence posed a threat to his family. When SA men failed to find him, they shot and killed his wife, Selma, and arrested his son Benno. Following Benno’s release, surviving family members departed for Canada in May 1939. An updated marriage certificate for the Zwienickis issued in March 1939 included the required middle names “Israel” and “Sarah” and stated that Selma was “found dead” on November 10, 1938.



WARNING SIGN: **FORCED EMIGRATION**



Viennese Jews wait in front of the Polish consulate to obtain entrance visas to Poland in April 1938. *US Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of Österreichische Gesellschaft für Zeitgeschichte*

Central Office for Jewish Emigration Opens August 20
SS officials establish the Central Office for Jewish Emigration in Vienna to streamline Jewish emigration from Austria. Prospective emigrants are required to pay an exit fee and give up virtually all of their property when they leave the country.



The Goldstaub family in front of their home on Tongshan Road. Pictured from left to right are Adolf, Camilla, and Erich Goldstaub. Erich's cousin Harry Fiedler sits between them in the pedicab. Shanghai, [Kiangsu] China, ca. 1945. *US Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of Eric Goldstaub*

After being forced by Austrian police and SA members to scrub streets in Vienna with other Jews, Viennese-born Erich Goldstaub vowed to secure visas so his family could emigrate. Following the procedures of the Central Office for Jewish Emigration, Goldstaub eventually secured travel papers from the Chinese embassy for himself and 20 family members. On *Kristallnacht*, German police detained Goldstaub's father and his store was looted. SA members detained Goldstaub, releasing him only after he produced his travel papers and ship tickets. Goldstaub and his family left Austria and arrived in Shanghai, where they survived the Holocaust.

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RESPONSE: FROM NEIGHBORING NATIONS



German annexation of the Sudetenland, 1938. *US Holocaust Memorial Museum*

Munich Agreement September 29–30

In 1938, Germany acquired new territories using the threat of war. Following the *Anschluss*, Germany sought to annex the Sudetenland, a region of Czechoslovakia settled largely by ethnic Germans. On September 29, 1938, British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain, French Premier Edouard Daladier, Italian Prime Minister Benito Mussolini, and Germany’s Adolf Hitler signed the Munich Agreement, which ceded the Sudetenland to Germany. Czechoslovakia was not permitted to attend the conference. In March 1939, six months after signing the Munich agreement, Germany violated it, occupying the Czech lands of Bohemia and Moravia.

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WARNING SIGN: **FORCED EXPULSION**

Deportation of Polish Jews October 26–28

Germany expels about 18,000 Jews of Polish origin who reside in the territory of the Reich.



Herschel Grynszpan under arrest. *Courtesy of Yad Vashem Photo Archives*

German-born Herschel Grynszpan, the son of Polish Jews, moved to Paris in 1936. After learning that German authorities deported his parents from Hanover to the Polish frontier, Grynszpan shot Ernst vom Rath, the third secretary of the German embassy in Paris, on November 7, 1938. The Nazi regime used the diplomat’s death two days later as justification for unleashing the *Kristallnacht* pogrom of November 9–10. The Vichy government in France turned Grynszpan over to the Germans in 1940. The date and place of his death have never been clarified.



Jewish refugees in Zbąszyń after expulsion from their homes in Germany. *US Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of Instytut Pamięci Narodowej*

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WARNING SIGN: TARGETED VIOLENCE

Kristallnacht November 9–10

On November 9–10, the Nazi Party and paramilitary groups organize anti-Jewish violence, known as *Kristallnacht*, throughout Germany, Austria, and the Sudetenland. Synagogues are burned, Jewish homes and businesses are looted, about 30,000 Jewish men are arrested, and at least 91 Jews are killed.



Studio portrait of Gustav Straus.
US Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of Henry Straus

Gustav Straus was a traveling salesman who lived in Essen, Germany. On November 10, the Gestapo detained Straus and thousands of other Jews. He was sent to the Dachau concentration camp. Straus was carrying this picture postcard with him when he was arrested and mailed it to his wife while en route to the camp. After his release several weeks later, Straus and his family obtained US visas and left Germany.



The ceremonial hall at the Jewish cemetery in Graz, Austria.
US Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of Dokumentationsarchiv des Österreichischen Widerstandes

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RESPONSE: FROM RELIEF ORGANIZATIONS

American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee November

Numerous international organizations supported refugees seeking to emigrate. Founded in 1914, the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC or “Joint”) raised and distributed funds to aid Jewish populations in eastern Europe and Palestine. After the Nazis came to power, the JDC assisted Jews who remained in Germany and those who had fled. Immediately following *Kristallnacht* in November 1938, the JDC ran an appeal in New York City newspapers asking for contributions to aid refugees. In all, the JDC assisted at least 190,000 Jews who left German-controlled territory between 1933 and 1939.



Jews in the Sudetenland wait for a train to safety in November 1938. More than 20,000 Jews left their homes after Germany annexed the Sudeten areas of Czechoslovakia. The American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee provided aid for them. *The American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee*

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WARNING SIGN: ECONOMIC EXCLUSION

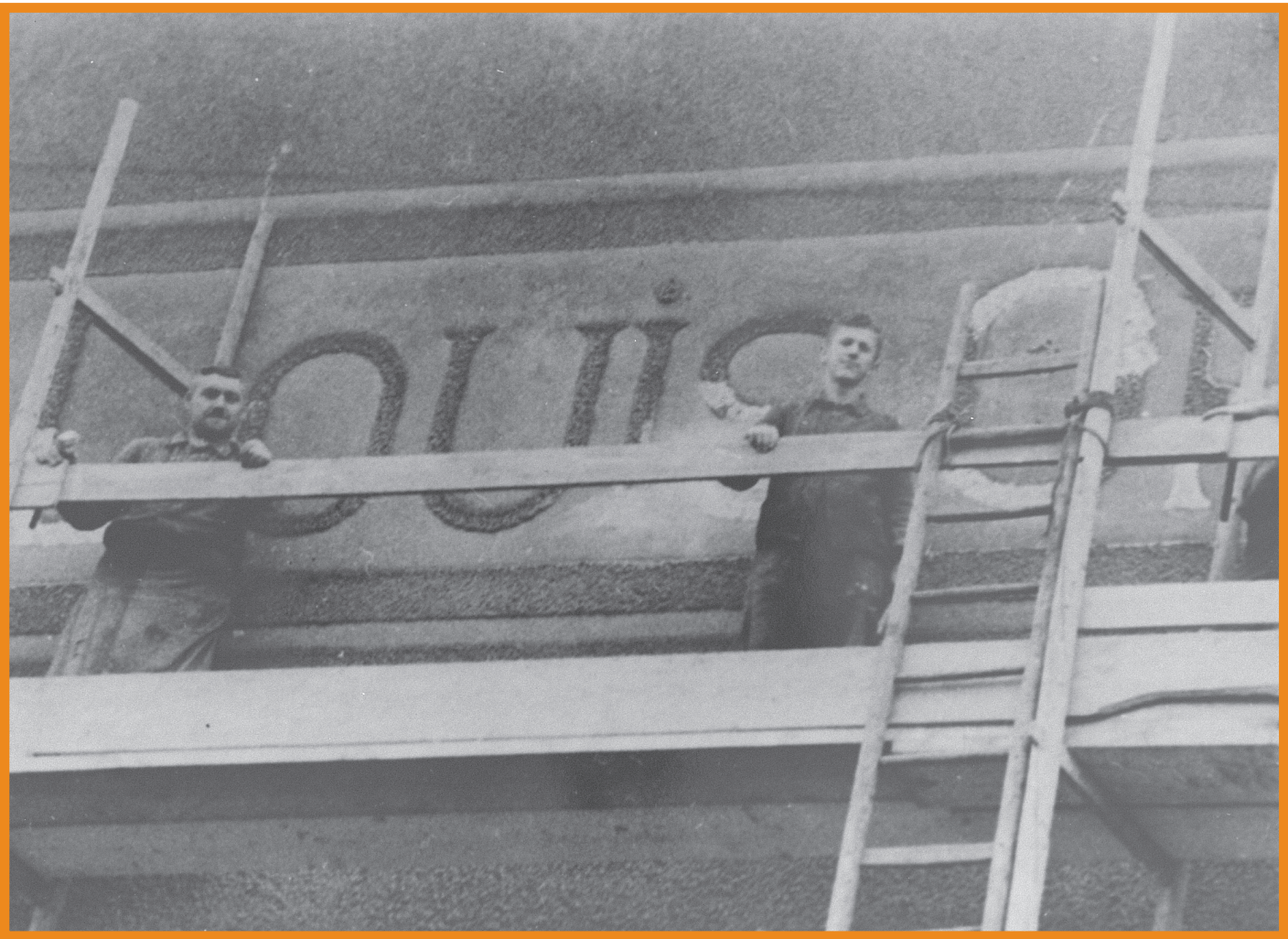
Decree Making Jewish Ownership of Businesses Illegal December 3

In December 1938, the German government issues a decree mandating the “Aryanization” of all Jewish businesses. German authorities force Jews to sell immovable property, businesses, and stocks to non-Jews, usually at prices far below market value.



Ernst Silten with his granddaughter.
US Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of R. Gabriele Silten

Dr. Ernst Silten lived in Berlin with his wife and family. In 1938 German authorities forced Ernst to sell his pharmacy for well below market value to an “Aryan” German. Ernst’s son and his family then relocated to Amsterdam, where they were later joined by Ernst’s wife. Ernst remained in Berlin, where he eked out a living with financial support from former employees and non-Jewish friends. He refused to go into hiding. In March 1943, the German police detained Ernst. To avoid being “relocated in the east,” a Nazi euphemism for deportation, Ernst committed suicide.



German laborers remove the name of Louis Oppenheimer from the front of his “Aryanized” firm.
Leo Baeck Institute

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RESPONSE: FROM INDIVIDUALS AND ORGANIZATIONS

Kindertransport Begins December

The term *Kindertransport* encompasses a series of rescue efforts to bring Jewish children to the United Kingdom between 1938 and 1940. As a result of efforts made by many private citizens and aid organizations, who had to guarantee each child's transit costs, care, education, and eventual emigration from Britain, the United Kingdom admitted between 9,000 and 10,000 primarily Jewish children from the Greater German Reich. The first Kindertransport arrived on December 2, 1938, bringing some 200 children from a Jewish orphanage in Berlin that had been destroyed during *Kristallnacht*.



Two hundred Jewish refugee children, members of the first Kindertransport from Germany, arrive in Harwich, England.
Instytut Pamięci Narodowej

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NEVER AGAIN

heeding the warning signs

While warning signs are undoubtedly clearer in hindsight, reflecting on the events of 1938 challenges us to consider what might motivate us to respond to indicators of genocide today. History teaches us that genocide can be prevented if people care enough to act.

Our choices in response to hatred truly do matter, and together we can help fulfill the promise of “Never Again.”