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The racialisation of Jews in Germany before WWII

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Introduction

This paper will explore the processes of the racialisation of Jewish people in the years preceding the Second World War. Firstly this essay will look at Rürup's (1975) argument that organized anti-Semitism was a response to the emancipation of Jewish people in Germany in 1871. Secondly, this essay will look at the rise in Jewish power and affluence in the inter-war years which created jealousy and antagonism that led many Germans to support anti-Semitic movements. Thirdly, this essay will look at the socially constructed concept of 'ethnicity' and how the Jewish ethnicity was reconstructed by anti-Semites and the Nazis to 'dehumanize' and alienated the Jewish people from the rest of the German population by creating a 'them' and 'us' mentality. Fourthly, this essay will look at how the Jewish people were racialised through Hitler's belief of Aryan race supremacy. Fifthly, this essay will look at the Nuremberg Laws that were passed in 1935 that racialised and marginalized Jewish people. Sixthly, this essay will look at the political climate in Germany; filled with unrest and uncertainty, that helped pave the way for Nazism. Additionally, this essay will look at the Kristallnacht attacks that symbolized the growing intensity of the racialisation of Jewish people. Finally, this essay will look at the Nazis use of propaganda in encouraging anti-Semitism and the racialisation of the Jewish people.

Before explaining the processes of anti-Semitic racialisation in Germany 1900-1935 it is important to define the concepts 'racialisation' and 'anti-Semitism' that will be used in this essay. Banton (1997) argues that racialisation is...

...the dynamic process by which racial concepts, categories and divisions come to structure and embed themselves in arenas of social life (Banton 1997, Cited in. Law, 2010:59).

Anti-Semitism is defined by Ackermann and Jahoda (1950) as...

...any expression of hostility, verbal or behavioral, mind or violent, against the Jews as a group, or against and individual Jew because of his belonging to that group (p.19).

The emancipation of the Jews in Germany

Jewish people were granted emancipation in Germany in 1871 after years of oppression. Freeing the Jewish people from age-old restrictions on citizenship, habitation, and occupation had become a self-evident necessity for any modern country (Ackermann and Jahoda, 1950). Rürup (1975) suggested that the politicization of the 'Jewish question' and the rise of organized anti-Semitic movements can be best understood as a belated response to the achievement of Jewish equality. The emancipation of the Jewish people provided a catalyst to anti-Semitic movements as they were seen to be not merely gaining equality, but becoming empowered; which changed the relations between Jewish and non-Jewish citizens of Germany (Rürup, 1975). Rürup's theory that emancipation had led to the origins of anti-Semitic politics in Germany can be applied to the origins of organized anti-Semitism in central Europe. However, it becomes a less satisfactory model when applied elsewhere. Levy (2010) argues that in France, for example, emancipation dated back to 1791, while organized anti-Semitism was prominent in the 1800s. In Russia and Poland, Jewish people won equal rights in 1917 and 1918 respectively. However, organized anti-Semitism had already been present for many years. Rürup's theory focused on the emancipation of Jewish people in Germany, while briefly mentioning Jewish empowerment. It can be argued, however, that it is this latter point that holds more significance (Volkov, 2006).

The emancipation meant that Jewish people had gained equality which enabled them to participate in more areas of German social life. This suggests that the emancipation of Jewish people was not a cause of the racialisation that followed. However, it can be argued that, it may have been a catalyst to the rise of the politically anti-Semitic Nazi Party who believed that Jewish people should not be classed equal to non-Jewish Germans.

The Rise of Jewish Power 1900-1920

Although organized anti-Semitic movements in Germany before World War One were at times 'fashionable', ultimately their beliefs and goals were not sustained. In that respect, the racialisation of Jewish people in the years after the First World War leading up to the Second World War was not a product of earlier anti-Semitism in Germany. However, the early notion of fear that surrounded pre-First World War anti-Semitism was very much a reoccurring theme in post-First World War anti-Semitism that facilitated the rise of Nazism and the racialisation of the Jewish population in Germany.

Lindermann (1997) suggests that it was the 'rise of the Jews' rather than any specific legislative granting of equal rights that prompted the creation of organized anti-Semitic groups. Levy (2010) adds that

Both Jews and non-Jews were astonished by the upward mobility of the Jewish population during the 19th Century: as contributors to the arts and science, accumulation of wealth, leaders of political parties and holders of public offices (p.27).

By 1900, Jewish people in Frankfurt Am Main were paying eight times more taxes than Catholics, and four times more than protestants; a sign of their growing affluence. By 1920 there were around half a million Jewish people living in Germany, accounting for only 1% of the German population. Despite being a small minority, the Jewish people were disproportionately prominent in publishing, journalism, the arts, the free professions, private banking, trade and commerce, and as doctors and lawyers (Wistrich, 2003). Levy (2010) argues that certain sectors responded to the 'lure' of anti-Semitism more strongly than others. One such reaction can be seen as a result of the new mass-circulation daily newspapers that started to thrive in the 1870s. German Jews were closely identified with this media revolution which consequently put many non-Jewish Germans out of work, while reducing the status of others. Many of the key figures of the anti-Semitic movement were newspaper men; embittered by the loss of their profession which they blamed on the Jews (Levy, 2010). Similarly, German Jews were behind the innovation of department stores in the cities. This put small retailers under heavy competition and pressure and many found their way in to anti-Semitic politics. *Anti-Semitic movements everywhere hinged on the fantasies of enormous Jewish power, acquired in wholly illegitimate ways and used with cold efficiency to subvert all that was holy and good* (Levy, 2010:27).

Wistrich (2003) argues that middle class anti-Semitism was undoubtedly simulated by professional envy and jealousy especially among doctors, lawyers, shopkeepers, artisans, academics, business men and students. This was nourished by intense post-1918 propaganda that branded Jewish people with the stigma of wartime profiteering, black market and stock exchange dealings and the responsibility for the defeat in the First World War (Wistrich, 2003).

However, Lindermann (1997) points out that although many Jewish people were becoming more affluent, this was far from universal. Many Jewish slums remained across European cities, where immigrants had to rely on Jewish welfare agencies. Levy (2010) argues that *Those who had stayed in the East were 'prosperous' only relative to the crushing poverty of their neighbors* (p.27).

However, this counter-argument to the seemingly unstoppable advancing wealth and status of Jewish people made no impression on anti-Semites who clung to such exaggerations and overdrawn images of Jewish power as they lent credibility to their warnings (Levy, 2010). Many anti-Semites believed that the 'rise of the Jews' was a product of inherited genetic traits such as heartless realism, soulless materialism and a lust for revenge, enhanced by a religion that followed dishonestly. It was these 'genetic' and unchangeable traits, that anti-Semites believed had armed Jewish people for success. This continuous suggestion that Jewish people were becoming 'too powerful' gave a sense of urgency which simulated mass mobilization. This tactic used by anti-Semites created anger and moral outrage that 'alien Jews' rather than 'real Germans' were advancing. Germany created organized models to 'remedy' this 'injustice'. Banton

(1997) argues that ethnicity is a social, cultural and political resource and so competition for resources can be a motivation for conflict.

Law (2010) found that there can be seen to be an economic determination of cultural and ethical relations; ethnicity is often viewed as an obstacle to the universal progress of humanity which is often characterized by claims that certain ethnic groups are incapable of building capitalist nation states. Norval (1996) found that a cause of the Apartheid in South Africa, was the belief of the white settlers that regulating the black people was in the interest of the economy as they felt they could lead the black people through urbanization and capitalism. In other words, the blatant racism came from the belief of the white people that they were superior. However, this was not the case of the anti-Semitism in Germany. On the contrary, there was a belief that Jewish people were doing better than 'real Germans', and so the cause of their subordination was to put an end to this.

The moral outrage and bitterness caused by the belief that Jewish people were 'stealing' German business enabled Nazism to become appealing, as it sought to end the 'injustices' that German people were facing. This antagonism, embedded in German social life, created division between the 'Germans' and 'Jews'. These 'divisions' racialized Jewish people, placing them in to a different category to the German masses.

'Them and Us': The dehumanizing of Jewish People

This notion of 'them and us', is extremely important to understanding the process of racialisation that led to an anti-Semitic Nazi Germany. Law (2010) suggests that Race ideas have been used in societies in...

...the representation and making of both internal and external hierarchies of difference and belonging (p.3).

This hierarchy of belonging was embedded in Nazi ideology. 'Jews' and 'Germans' became mutually exclusive; Jews were no longer seen as 'German'. Weitz (2010) argues that anti-Semitism emerged as a particular manifestation of the intertwining of racial thinking and nationalism.

Ethnicity refers to the differentiation of groups of people who have shared cultural meanings and descent, produced through social interaction (Law, 2010). The idea of 'ethnicity' is socially constructed and so definitions can change. The ways in which Jewish people were portrayed not only stereotyped, but reconstructed the German people's understanding of the race. Levy (2010) argues that...

...no doubt, the anti-Jewish stereotypes elaborated over time affected the mentalities of those individuals [who supported the movement], providing their anti-Semitism with content and context (p.24).

The idea that a person is born in to an ethnic group suggests that this is part of their identity they can not change. This meant that for anti-Semites, the 'Jewish problem' was a 'sole' problem which enabled all Jews to be persecuted based on the idea that being a 'Jew' will always be their main identity. Age, social class and gender played no distinguishing role; ethnicity was the strongest decider of the Jewish people's fate. Germany wanted to create an ethnically exclusive form of citizenship; a concept used in the justification of anti-Semitism (Ehrenreich, 2007). Weitz (2010) argues that... *...the act of constructing nation and race means establishing boundaries of inclusion and exclusion* (p.55).

It was this notion of 'them and us' that created antagonism against Jewish people. The belief that German-born Jews were not 'German' racialized Jewish people by creating categories of 'German belonging' and 'Jewish outcast'.

The Aryan Race: The Creation of White Supremacy and Jewish Inferiority

The concept of an 'Aryan race' historically derives from the idea that the original speakers of the Indo-European languages, and their present day descendants, constitute a distinctive sub-race of the larger Caucasian race (Banton, 1997). The Aryan race was seen by the Nazis as a 'master race', superior above all others, in particularly a superiority over the Jewish people who were associated with 'cultural sterility' (Blamires and Jackson, 2006). Alfred Rosenberg's book 'The myth of The Twentieth Century' was highly influential among Nazis and intellectuals and helped spread racism across Germany (Baumel, 2001). Rosenberg believed that the downfall of many ancient civilizations was due to colonialization and the mixing of the 'Aryans' with 'inferior races' (Baumel, 2001). The Nazis wanted to maintain the purity of the 'master race' in Germany, and many of the anti-Semitic laws were designed for this purpose. Hitler believed that 'great nations' naturally grew if its members were of a pure 'superior race' while the weakest nations developed through racial impurity (Fischer, 2002). Hitler declared racial conflict against Jewish people a necessity to enable Germany to become a great nation and in order to rescue Germany from the impurity of the Jewish race.

The Nazis introduced clauses known as 'Aryan Paragraphs', in to German society to make certain areas of social and political life solely available to members of the Aryan race. On April 7th 1933, two months after Hitler was declared Chancellor, 'The Law for The Restoration of the Professional Civil Service' (LRPCS) was introduced. The LRPCS stated that civilians who were not of Aryan blood would be dismissed from their positions. This meant that Jewish people could no longer be professors, judges, and teachers or in any Government position. The law passed however, did not define the term 'Aryan' and so a subsequent law was passed three months later in an attempt to define for the first time who was 'Aryan' and who was a 'Jew' (Zenter and Friedmann, 1991). Bendersky (2007) argued that the introduction of Aryan Paragraphs enabled a form of legitimized anti-Semitism based on the belief of scientific racism.

The Nazis developed an Aryan certificate in 1933. This was a document that certified a person was of Aryan race. All employees and officials in the public sector were legally required to have this certificate, to show that they were not Jewish (Bendersky, 2007).

The LRPCS legally enforced the Nazi concept of 'racial difference' between Jewish and non-Jewish Germans.. Gilbert (1985) argues that...

...by giving German non-Jews the status of 'Aryan', this imaginary concept, based upon nonsensical and discredited theories of purity of race,...Hitler formally divided German citizens in to two groups (p.36).

The passing of the LRPCS was a turning point in Nazism and anti-Semitism in Germany, as it was the first time an anti-Semitic law had been passed since Jewish people had been emancipated in Germany in 1871 (Kershaw, 1999). The passing of the LRPCS meant that Jewish people were directly being banned from privileged and superior positions, reserved for 'Aryan people'. This process of racialisation legally divided Jewish and non-Jewish Germans in to separate categories, embedding an idea of racial superiority and inferiority in to German social life.

The Nuremburg Laws

The Nuremburg Laws were anti-Semitic laws that were introduced at the annual Nuremburg Rally in 1935. There had been a rapid growth in anti-Semitic legislation; however there remained a lack of clear definition and method of defining who was considered 'Jewish'. The Nuremburg laws defined what made a person Jewish, making it easier for Nazis to enforce anti-Semitic legislation (Toland, 1976).

The Nuremburg Laws classified that people with four German grandparents were of 'German blood', while those with three or four Jewish grandparents were classed as 'Jews'. People who had one or two Jewish grandparents were classed as 'Mischling' which meant 'of mixed blood'. The Nuremburg Laws developed a 'Mischling Test', a legal test based on a series of questions that determined whether a person was considered a 'Jew' or a 'Mischling' (Mendes-Flohr and Reinharz, 1995).

Mendes-Flohr and Reinharz (1995) argue that the Nuremburg Laws established, for the first time, a clear definition of who were considered citizens of Germany and who were considered to be a 'foreign presence'. The Jewish people were stripped of their citizenship and in turn their rights by these Laws, which legalized anti-Semitism and racial inequality.

The Nuremburg laws were two laws that were passed to isolate, marginalize and dehumanize Jewish people. The first law passed was the 'Law for the Protection of German Blood and German Honor'. This law was passed to protect 'Aryan purity' and safeguard its survival. The Law prohibited marriage between Jewish people and German

citizens; any marriage concluded in defiance would be considered void (Toland, 1976). Sexual intercourse between Jews and German citizens was also prohibited (Baurnel, 2002). The Law also stated that Jewish people were not permitted to employ a female German citizen over the age of 45 as a domestic worker (Toland, 1976). Jewish people were banned from displaying the national flag, the Reich flag or national colors and were only permitted to display 'Jewish colors' (Baurnel, 2002). The second law passed was 'The Reich Citizenship Law' which declared that those who were not of 'German blood' to be state subjects, and only those of 'Aryan' blood were citizens of the state (Berenbaum, 2002).

The Nuremberg Laws stripped Jewish people of their German citizenship and legalized the exclusion of Jewish people from German social and political life. The Nuremberg Laws signified the creation of a clear definition of who were 'Jews' and who were 'non-Jews', racializing Jewish people as an inferior, subhuman category that no longer were citizens of the state.

The Political and Economic Climate that paved the way for Nazism

Wistrich (2003) argues that Hitler's rise to power would not have been possible without the carnage of the First World War which brought with it German military defeat, humiliation over the Versailles Treaty, the economic crisis of the Weimer Republic and the fear that there may be a communist revolution.

In May 1928, the Nazi party participated in the German national elections, securing twelve seats in the Reichstag. However, in the years that followed, inflation began to rise, as did mass unemployment which reached 3 million by the end of 1929; both workers and employers were its victims (Gilbert, 1985). As economic distress and uncertainty grew, the Nazis denounced Jewish 'wealth' and perpetuated the idea of a 'Jewish Conspiracy'. Although Nazism had its roots of support in the Working Class, the development of the Nazi Party led to increased support from the Middle Class due to a mixture of attraction to Nazi Party policies and the economic failures of the Weimer Republic (Levy, 2010).

The 1st January 1930 saw the first Jewish victims of the Nazi era when SA storm troopers were responsible for the death of eight Jewish people. Violence continued to increase over the next nine months as did Nazi seat holders. By 1930 the Nazis had 109 seats in the Reichstag, making them the second largest party in the state. In 1932, Hitler came second in the vote for a president. In further elections, Hitler secured 230 seats in Reichstag; establishing enough power to form a coalition. However, he declined to accept second place; refusing to agree a coalition unless he was chancellor. At an election three months later, both Nazi votes and seats fell. Hitler's opponents declared that the Nazis' power had ended (Laquer, 2006). Hitler was outnumbered by the combined forces of his opponents; the Communists and the Socialists. However, they lacked sufficient unity and

remained too dangerous to combine and so after long negotiations, Hitler was appointed Chancellor on the 30th January 1933.

This suggests that the Nazis power was highly opportunistic. Mass unemployment had led to an appeal in anti-Semitism and Nazism. The political climate was in an equal mess to the economic climate. Hitler's main opposition was the Communists and the Socialists who were in no position to form a Government as they lacked unity and there were fears of a communist revolution. The Nazi party portrayed themselves as the only legitimate solution to the political and economic crisis. The failures of the Weimer Republic and mass unemployment led to Nazi support and anti-Semitic beliefs. The economic and political climate did not directly lead to the racialisation of Jewish people, however, the racialisation of Jewish people was a product of anti-Semitic Nazi ideology which would not have been popular or sustained had the political and economic conditions of Germany not been in crisis.

Kristallnacht: Night of the Broken Glass

The Night of the Broken Glass was a series of semi-coordinated attacks against Jewish community and their property on the 9th and 10th of November 1938, carried out by SA Stormtroopers and German civilians while police officers stepped back and allowed it to happen (Fest, 1974).. The pretext for the violent attacks was the assassination of a German diplomat by a German-born Jew in Paris (Bendersky, 2007). It can be argued that the assassination provided Joseph Goebbels, Hitler's Chief of Propaganda, with the excuse he needed to launch a pogrom against the Jews (The Jewish Virtual Library, 2012). Goebbels argued that the assassination was a conspiratorial attack by 'International Jewry' against the Reich and, symbolically, against the Fuehrer himself (Jewish Virtual Library, 2012).

During the attacks, around 91 Jewish people were killed and 30,000 were arrested and sent to concentration camps. Over 1000 Synagogues were burnt down, 7000 Jewish businesses were destroyed, Jewish homes, hospitals and schools were ransacked and Jewish cemeteries were desecrated (Berenbaum, 2002). It can be argued that that the violent attacks marked intensification in Nazi anti-Jewish policy (The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2012)

The day before the attacks, in response to the shooting, Hitler announced that Jewish newspapers and magazines were to cease production immediately. Fischer (2002) argues that this act was done to silence Jewish people on the attacks that were being planned. Jewish people were already isolated from German society; this act however, isolated Jewish people from one another making communication extremely difficult and silenced Jewish peoples' views. The Government announced that Jewish children were no longer allowed to attend German state schools.

The Night of the Broken Glass illustrates the growing intensity of anti-Semitism. The attacks symbolized the intensifying racialisation of Jewish people through the destruction of their businesses and lively hood and the desecration of their Synagogues. Jewish children were split up from non-Jewish, highlighting the progressing racialisation of Jewish people that was becoming embedded in all aspect of German social life. The Kristallnacht attacks highlight how Jewish people had been singled out and categorized as an unwanted race in Germany.

Nazi use of Propaganda

In 1933, Hitler created the Reich Ministry of Public Enlightenment and Propaganda (RMPEP), headed by Joseph Gobbels, set out to indoctrinate German citizens in Nazi ideology. Propaganda played a significant role in the racialisation of Jewish citizens. Nearly all aspects of German culture were subject to the RMPEP's control; including, theatre, music, film, radio broadcasts, and the press (Huener and Nicosia, 2006).

Anti-Semitism was at the core of much Nazi propaganda, incorporated in to nearly every radio broadcast, newspaper, and film produced in the Third Reich (The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2012). The carefully crafted messages were designed to mobilize the German population to support Nazism's fight against the Jewish population.

In 1936, Kurt Hilmar Eitzen outlined 'Ten responses to Jewish Lackey' in an attempt to convert Germans who did not agree with anti-Semitism. Eitzen (1936) argued in response to German citizens shopping at Jewish stores because prices were cheaper that...

...any crook can sell junk. Jewish crooks have driven thousands of German businessmen to bankruptcy with the glittering trash in their department store palaces. When someone does get good products more cheaply from the Jews than from Germans, it is only because the united Jewish firms force down prices from the manufacturers, which means reducing workers' wages. He who has bought good products cheaply from the Jew should never forget that the curse of a German worker and the tears of his hungry children come with them (Eitzen 1936, cited in, Bytwerk, 2004).

This extract from 'Ten responses to Jewish Lackey' provides an example of the Nazis uses of propaganda to indoctrinate anti-Semitic views in to the reader's head and legitimizes the reasons behind the views, suggesting Jews to be 'crooks' and German children going hungry because of the Jews bankrupting, or reducing the wages, of their parents. Propaganda was both highly powerful and influential, carefully indoctrinating anti-Semitic beliefs in to its viewers' minds.

Shirer (1960) argues that propaganda constantly reinforced and reminded Germans of the 'struggles' against the Jews who were considered to be 'foreign enemies'. Mendes-Flohr and Reinharz (1995) argue that Nazi propaganda indoctrinated many German citizens to believing Jewish people were 'evil' and 'cultural parasites'. The use of propaganda

legitimated the reasons behind the ideologies anti-Semitic themes, encouraging passivity and acceptance of the anti-Semitic measures, while also depicting the Nazi government as 'restoring order' for German Citizens.

Schools played an important role in the spreading of Nazi anti-Semitic ideology. New textbooks were introduced to teach students blind obedience to the party and indoctrinate them with anti-Semitic beliefs. Streicher's popular book 'The poisonous Mushroom' provides an example of the anti-Semitic values children were being taught through propaganda, suggesting that...

...human beings in this world are like the mushrooms in the forest...There are poisonous, bad mushrooms and there are bad ... "poisonous" Jews...However they disguise themselves... Jews they are and Jews they remain...Just as a single poisonous mushrooms can kill a whole family, so a solitary Jew can destroy a whole village, a whole city, even an entire Volk... Our young people...must be warned...They must learn that the Jew is the most dangerous poison-mushroom in existence...the Jew is the cause of misery and distress, illness and death (Streicher, 1938 cited in. German Propaganda Archive, 2012).

Film played a prominent role in Nazi propaganda, disseminating anti-Semitism, the support of Nazism and the intrinsic evils of the 'Jewish enemy' (The United States Holocaust Museum, 2012). The Film 'The Eternal Jew', released in 1940, depicted the Jews as subhuman, cultural parasites, consumed by sex and Money (Huener and Nicosia, 2006). Similarly, the film 'Jew Süß', released in 1940, presented Jewish people in a money-hungry, self serving manor. Cull et al. (2003) argue that 'Jew Süß' was one of...

...the most notorious and successful film propaganda produced in Nazi Germany...millions paid to see a film with a virulent anti-Semitic message (p.205)

Propaganda was a key feature to the racialisation of Jewish people as it reached all spheres of German society from intellectuals, to the youth, and workers. It encouraged passivity and blind acceptance of anti-Semitism enabled the racialized divisions between 'Jews' and 'non-Jews' in Germany, based on popular and reoccurring themes on 'Jewish evils' through a wide range media and educational outlets.

Conclusion: The process of racialisation of Jewish people in Nazi Germany

To conclude, it is evident that the process of racialisation of Jewish people in Germany was a gradual one. The resentment arising from the jealousy of the achievements of a newly emancipated Jewish people was fostered by the political, economical and social turmoil following the First World War. This resentment was therefore provided with the perfect environment for the development of anti-Semitism as the Jewish people presented the perfect scapegoat upon which the nation's problems could be attributed to. When coupled with the rise of nationalism and the birth of fascism, anti-Semitism became a key element of the Nazi ideology and so the process of racialisation developed within the

very core of the constitution of the German state. The radical ideology of the key members of the Nazi party, combined with the calculated use of propaganda and legislation resulted in the racialisation and segregation of the Jewish people. The broadcast of anti-Semitic propaganda fell upon the ears of people both supportive, and susceptible, to indoctrination such as disillusioned middle class, and the easily-influenced youth. The passing of legislation firmly rooted anti-Semitism within the constitution of Nazi Germany, stripping Jewish people of their citizenship and many of the rights that had been gained in the emancipation in 1871. The link between the concepts of 'Aryanism' and 'German identity' resulted in the mutual exclusivity of being 'German' and 'Jewish'. This creation of a separate entity within German society was reinforced by the enforced segregation, and the prohibiting of inter-racial relationships. Furthermore, the enforced isolation and racialisation of the Jewish people, the extent to which is illustrated in the culmination of anti-Semitic feeling, was triggered by the assassination of a Nazi official. This resulted in the aggressive anti-Semitic activity; officially condoned by the state and partially enacted by the German people. This event, Kristallnacht, symbolizes the completion of the process of racialisation and the beginning of the process that would result in the Holocaust.

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