

Editorial & Opinion

'Night of broken glass' signaled start of Nazi Holocaust

By Rabbi Judea B. Miller
and Margery S. Nurnberg

November 9-11 marks the 50th anniversary of *Kristallnacht*, "the night of broken glass." That was the description first used by William Shirer, an American correspondent in Berlin during those terrible three days in November, 1938, when virtually every synagogue in Germany was destroyed. Thousands of homes and businesses owned by Jews were vandalized and burned. The total glass damage exceeded a whole year's production of the Belgian glass industry. That is how Shirer came to give it the lasting name *Kristallnacht*. That week 30,000 German and Austrian Jews were rounded up and sent to concentration camps.

The Nazi pretext for the frenzy of violence and destruction against the 600,000 Jews of Germany was that it was a spontaneous response of "Aryan Germans" to the assassination of Ernst Von Rath, the third secretary of the German Embassy in Paris. He was shot by Hershel Grynszpan, a crazed 17-year-old Jewish student. In October the Nazis had deported 18,000 Polish Jews who were longtime residents of Germany. These unwanted Jews were refused entry by the Polish authorities. Caught in between, the Jews were forced to camp out in make-shift shelters. Many committed suicide. Among these Jews were Grynszpan's parents.

We now know that the riots were well-planned long before the assassination in Paris. German authorities were just waiting for the appropriate opportunity. As early as April of that year, German authorities had ordered an inventory of all property owned by Jews. They

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ordered a catalogue of everything from real estate to fur coats and baby carriages. Finally orders had come down from Reinhard Heydrich, the head of the Gestapo, that "the demonstrations are not to be prevented by the police."

The result was the first violent pogrom (race riot) on Western European soil in hundreds of years. Ninety-one Jews were beaten to death; 30,000 more deported to the concentration camps at Dachau, Buchenwald and Sachsenhausen; 186 synagogues were burned; and 7,000 Jewish shops and businesses were pillaged. Immediately after *Kristallnacht*, a fine of a billion marks was levied not upon the criminals, but upon the victims, the Jewish community of Germany. In addition, all funds from any insurance claims for damages were confiscated by the German government. *Kristallnacht* was more than the shattering of windows and illusions. It marked the physical destruction of German and Austrian Jewry, and the beginning of the destruction of the rest of European Jewry.

This pogrom marked the beginning of the violence of the Nazi Holocaust and the end of a thousand years of Jewish life in Germany. The Jewish community of Germany had long been the most educated, accomplished and well-integrated Jewish community in the en-

tire world. German civilization had been enriched by the cultural contributions of Jewish authors and scientists and artists and musicians and intellectuals. Now Hitler has them dismissed as "aliens torn from the national soil." They were unwanted and despised. The ideology of hatred was given expression in the fury of *Kristallnacht*.

After those three days of violence against Jews and Jewish property, the entire Jewish community in Germany was then taxed to pay for the destruction done against them during this pogrom. When Jews then tried to leave Germany for safer lands, few countries would accept them as immigrants. The Jews of Germany and Austria now found themselves stateless, unwanted. The Nazis first wanted the Jews out of Germany. The "final solution," which became the decision to exterminate all the Jews of Europe, was made by the Nazis when few elsewhere wanted to accept them as refugees.

It is ironic that one the same date, November 10, 30 years later in 1968, the United Nations' General Assembly voted to condemn Zionism as racism, thereby slandering the liberation movement of the Jewish people and trivializing real racism. That first atrocity in 1938 denied the right of Jews to live in Germany. The second in 1968 denied the right of Israel to exist. Both events denied the right of Jews to live.

This awesome anniversary of *Kristallnacht* will be observed by every synagogue in Rochester by leaving lights on through the night of November 9. This is to demonstrate that 50 years after *Kristallnacht* there are still Jews and synagogues, despite attempts to destroy them. The dark night sky will be lit as an affirmation of support for each other and of our hope for the future. Many churches in the commu-

nity have decided to keep their lights on that night, too, and some churches plan to ring their bells at 5 p.m. that afternoon.

The 50th anniversary of *Kristallnacht* will be observed in Rochester with four events during that week. These events are open to the community, and no tickets are required.

On Sunday night, Nov. 6, at 8 p.m. the oratorio *Stars in the Dust* will be premiered at the Interfaith Chapel of the University of Rochester. It was composed by Professor Samuel Adler of the Eastman School of Music and Hazzan Samuel Rosenbaum, cantor emeritus of Temple Beth El. The oratorio is based on the events of *Kristallnacht*.

On Wednesday afternoon, Nov. 9, at 5 p.m. the cornerstone of Temple B'rith Kodesh on Elmwood Avenue will be placed and dedicated. Participants in this service will be survivors of *Kristallnacht*.

During the Friday night service, Nov. 11, a special sabbath liturgy will be presented at Temple B'rith Kodesh to commemorate *Kristallnacht*. Music and poetry in Yiddish and German will be recited by Holocaust survivors. All of these events will mark the continuity of Jewish life and the survival of the synagogue. Whenever bigots have tried to destroy the Jew, they started first with the synagogue, but in Rochester synagogues are alive and well.

The Rochester Commission on Christian/Jewish Relations represents the Genesee Ecumenical Ministries and the Jewish Community Federation. The commission invites congregations of all faiths to join in events commemorating the week of *Kristallnacht*. Let us together vow never again to allow such bigotry and violence against any people anywhere.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Rabbi Miller is chairman of the Commission on Christian/Jewish Relations. Nurnberg is co-chairwoman of the commission and president of Genesee Ecumenical Ministries. She also serves as director of the Department of Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs of the Catholic Diocese of Rochester.

Letters

Vote in accordance with command to love

To the editor:

Strong anti-Catholic feeling defeated Al Smith not only in 1928 but also in his try to be the Democratic nominee in 1924. A man who campaigned in the South for LaFollet in 1924 told me that the only question people asked was, "What religion is he?"

Catholics considered that "one-issue" attack as dirty pool and stupid. Too many Catholics continue to do the same thing with their one issue, abortion. These people would be voting for Pat Robertson, November 8 if he had won the primary — a man who said that God had told him to run for the presidency, a man who implied that God either gave him a bum steer or didn't know that he would lose.

William Rusher, editor of the conservative

National Review, on a TV program admitted that Reagan had no intention of pushing the abortion issue, because the Republican Party only used social issues to divert the attention of voters from economic issues, since 60 percent of the voters disagreed with the party's stand on them.

Catholics would do well to vote for the candidates and the party whose stand on economic issues corresponds most closely to the bishops' economics pastoral and the five papal encyclicals on economic matters, since 80 percent of the laws enacted by Congress deal with economic issues.

Both the papal encyclicals and the bishops' pastoral on economic issues are based upon Christ's commandment to "love thy neighbor as thyself."

Too many people use social issues for their voting for conservative candidates in order to conceal their real reason, which is that conservative office holders will save them money on their federal income taxes.

Walter O'Hagan
Sherman Street
Auburn

Questions article's portrayal of Bush as religious, pro-life

To the editor:

How ironic that after the diocesan Communications Office cautioned all parishes to avoid partisan political involvement, the *Courier-Journal* publishes a "puff piece" on the vice president (C-J Sept. 8: "Bush opposes abortion, favors Reagan policies on Nicaragua"). No one could suggest that this article was either educational or unbiased.

Hopefully voters will remember that this administration, whose policies George Bush is pledged to continue, has:

- 1) Ignored Archbishop Romero's plea to stop support of the Salvadoran death squads.
- 2) Ignored the U.S. bishops' plea to stop military support of the Contra forces.
- 3) Reduced federal support of low-income housing 85 percent, thereby increasing the homeless.

4) Reduced overall aid to education, while claiming to support private — Catholic — schools.

5) Talked constantly of "values" while defending their top aides who have been investigated, indicted and jailed for unethical behavior.

6) Doubled the FICA withholding from wage earners making less than \$50,000, while cutting in half the income tax for those making more than \$100,000.

The list is very long. We are told that "it is morning in America," and those who follow Christ's instructions to aid the less fortunate are dismissed as "bleeding hearts." Is this the "anti-abortion, religious" candidate the article talked about?

Paul R. Stack
Marshall Street
Rochester

Moral test of government is its treatment of defenseless

To the editor:

I recently attended a professional conference on elder abuse and heard a University of New Hampshire research scientist describe his study of New Hampshire nursing homes. The study revealed that at least 10 percent of direct care staff admitted to physically abusing residents; 40 percent of the respondents acknowledged that they had psychologically abused residents.

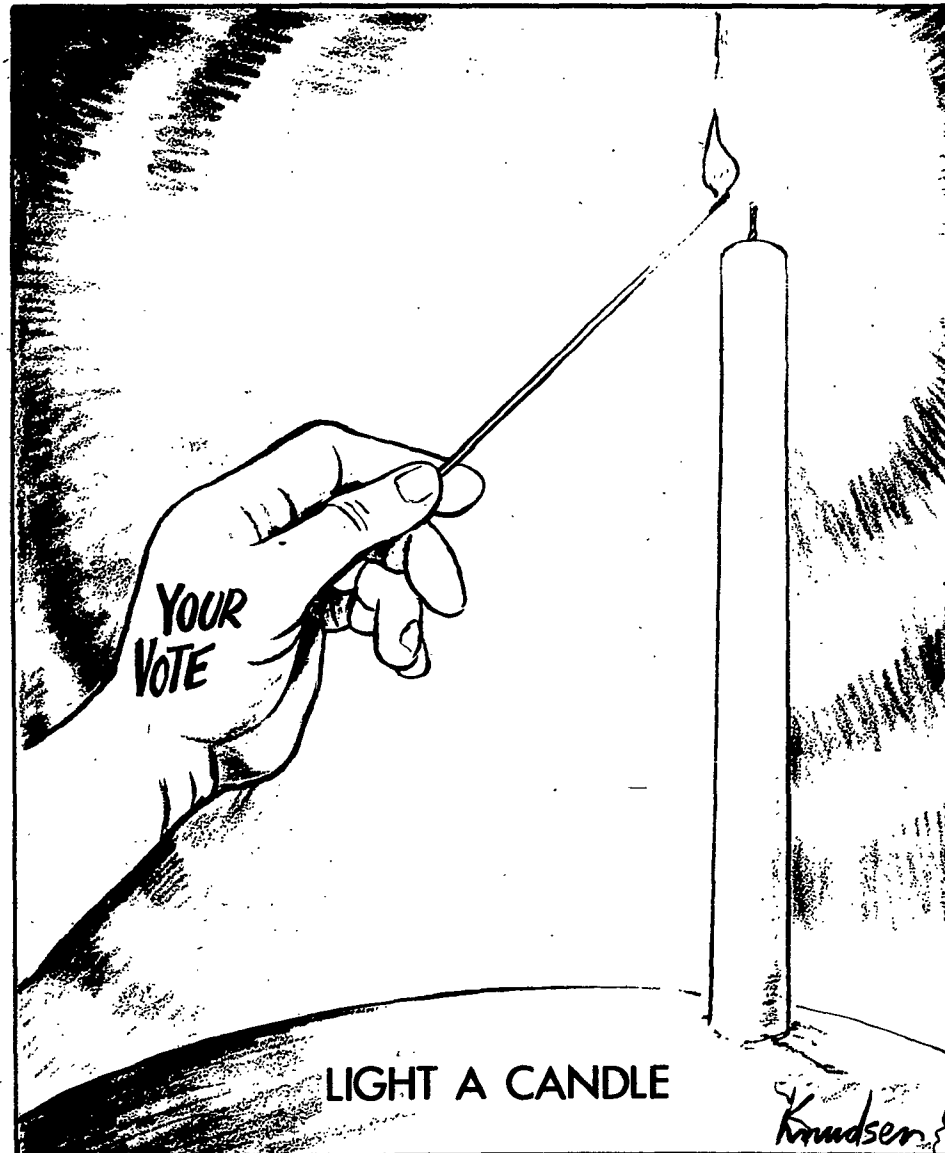
This summer, a Louisiana State penitentiary inmate wrote to me that he was infected with the AIDS virus: "sick for months with swollen lymph glands, diarrhea, cold sweats and vomiting," yet was still required to do strenuous work in the hot sun. My inquiry to the prison warden went unanswered.

Such horror stories, whether documented or

not, are widespread throughout America, but one does not hear candidates for elective office addressing these issues. Neither candidate for the presidency has spoken out about institutional shortcomings. The American Civil Liberties Union, which has fought for the rights of institutionalized citizens, has been attacked by Vice President Bush.

Let's not forget what the late Hubert Humphrey once said: "The moral test of government is how it treats those in the dawn of life, the children; those who are in the twilight of life, the aged; and those who are in the shadows of life, the sick, the needy and the handicapped."

Joel Freedman
North Main Street
Canandaigua



Andrews for vice president is candidate for consistent voters

To the editor:

The seamless garment or the consistent life ethic, or whatever term we wish to use, has made it generally difficult for us to find someone for whom to vote. Both Bush and Dukakis support nuclear weapons, while Bush supports abortion for babies conceived in violence and Dukakis supports abortion on demand.

We have a viable option; the Right to Life Party has nominated Joan Andrews for vice president. She (served a jail sentence) for unplugging a suction-abortion machine. She is totally non-violent. Joan has publicly supported the consistent life ethic. She opposes war, abor-

tion and capital punishment. She is the perfect candidate for us, so it is too bad she cannot win.

If we are indeed serious about the seamless garment, we cannot continue casting our votes for candidates who are inconsistent about the sacredness of human life. A strong vote for Joan Andrews for vice president will help show the politicians we mean what we say about consistency.

Don Peters
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Waterloo