



0. STALKING A MADMAN - Story Preface

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Kristallnacht ("Night of Crystal") occurred on November 9-10, 1938, throughout Germany, Austria (which Hitler had annexed) and in parts of Czechoslovakia's Sudetenland (then occupied by the German military). Also called the "Night of Broken Glass," the event targeted Jewish synagogues, homes and businesses. This image depicts the shattered stained-glass windows of the Zerrennerstrasse synagogue in Pforzheim, Germany, as it appeared on November 10, 1938. Online via *Stadtarchiv Pforzheim* (Pforzheim State Archive).

With their increasing "legal" authority, Nazis began direct attacks against Jews on Kristallnacht, "the Night of Broken Glass."

- Engineered by Joseph Goebbels, Hitler's troops began a virulent rampage against Jewish businesses and synagogues, on the evening of November 9, 1938, and continuing into the next day.
- That night, the Nazis burned nearly 200 synagogues throughout Germany.

The following day - next to Psalm 74 verse 8, in his Bible - Bonhoeffer penned in the date of Kristallnacht. It is the only date contained anywhere in his Bible. The verse reads:

They said in their hearts, let us plunder their goods! They burn all the houses of God in the land...Oh God, how long is the foe to scoff? How long will the enemy revile your name?

As Nazi oppression worsened, Bonhoeffer stepped up his activism.

He became involved in the plot to assassinate Hitler. He explained this apparent inconsistency with Christian beliefs to his sister-in-law, Emmi Bonhoeffer:

If I see a madman driving a car into a group of innocent bystanders, then I can't, as a Christian, simply wait for the catastrophe and then comfort the wounded and bury the dead. I must try to wrestle the steering wheel out of the hands of the driver.

By June of 1939, Bonhoeffer was able to get out of the country. Originally fleeing to the safety of America, he returned to Germany in a few weeks. His reason:

I have come to the conclusion that I made a mistake in coming to America...I shall have no right to take part in the restoration of Christian life in Germany after the war unless I share the trials of this time with my people.

Keeping his work undercover, Bonhoeffer continued his political resistance and helped to smuggle fifteen Jews to Switzerland in a mission called "Operation 7." The Nazis arrested him in 1943 for his anti-government resistance.

Weeks earlier, he had announced his engagement to Maria von Wedemeyer.

See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/STALKING-A-MADMAN-Agent-of-Grace>

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/STALKING-A-MADMAN-Agent-of-Grace>

Media Stream



Maria von Wedemeyer - Photo and Brief Bio

Public domain image.

Quoted passages from *Dietrich Bonhoeffer: Called by God*, by Elizabeth Raum, as noted above.

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Maria-von-Wedemeyer-Photo-and-Brief-Bio>



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