

Yad Vashem

Shoah Resource Center

The International School for Holocaust Studies

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Herschel Grynszpan: 1921–1943?

Jewish assassin of a German diplomat in Paris. Born into a Polish-Jewish family in Hanover, Germany, Grynszpan escaped to France in 1936. In early November 1938 Grynszpan found out that his family, along with thousands of other Jews born in Poland, had been deported from Germany back to Poland. As neither country wanted to take responsibility for the deportees, they had dumped them in a no-man's-land on the German-Polish border. Grynszpan was outraged, and decided to assassinate a German official in protest. On November 7 he entered the German embassy in Paris and after being introduced to Ernst vom Rath, the embassy's third secretary, Grynszpan shot him at close range. Grynszpan immediately turned himself in, and vom Rath died two days later. The Germans used the assassination as an excuse to launch the Kristallnacht pogrom all over Germany and Austria.

After the German invasion of France in 1940, the French authorities surrendered Grynszpan to the Germans. In 1942 Nazi Minister of Propaganda Joseph Goebbels planned a sensational show trial, intending to show the connection between Grynszpan and a Jewish conspiracy to cause war in Europe. However, the trial never took place, and Grynszpan's fate is unknown. However, he most probably did not survive the war.