

The Nazism didn't fall down from heaven, it wasn't a natural violence you couldn't avoid. These were cruel acts from Gunzenhausen inhabitants to all of your families.

Let me briefly explain how these terrible acts came around.

Gravestones in the Jewish cemetery were damaged in 1922, and synagogue windows were smashed in 1923. The early existence of a local NSDAP group also led to a latently tense mood in the city.

Middle Franconia was a Nazi stronghold from the start. In the 1932 Reichstag election, the NSDAP received 64.9% of the votes in Gunzenhausen. The non-party First Mayor of the city of Gunzenhausen, Dr. Heinrich Münch unnecessarily joined the NSDAP in 1932, finally made the Nazis presentable and showed himself to be a staunch party member of Hitler and Goebbels until his death in 1935.

After Hitler's appointment as Reich Chancellor on January 30, 1933, Gunzenhausen was the first city in the 3. Reich to rename the market square in Adolf-Hitler-Platz. In April 1933, a Hitler monument was built in the Burgstall forest, the first of its kind in Germany.

In the last free Reichstag election in 1933, the Nazis got 67.1 percent in Gunzenhausen, 23 percentage points more than the national average in Germany.

In March 1933, Jews were physically attacked on the streets of Gunzenhausen, and the windows of many Jewish shops were smashed.

All this contributed to escalate the situation.

At the same time the National Socialists seized power, nevertheless 184 Jewish residents were still living in Gunzenhausen. The state, but also municipal restrictions for them increased noticeably. In the fall of 1933, a commercial advertisement for a Jewish business was lastly allowed to appear in the Altmühl-Bote.

In most cases, the unrestrained anti-Semitic agitation met with lively approval from the residents of Gunzenhausen. This ended in striking expression in the pogrom of March 25, 1934.

With the 'Bloody Palm Sunday', one of the first pogroms in the 3.Reich took place in Gunzenhausen. Up to 1,500 fanatics, by a population of around 5,000. The rage began when a group of SA men led by Obersturmführer Kurt Bär entered Simon Strauss's Jewish inn to fetch a non-Jewish guest who showed solidarity to Strauss, whom they had seen drinking coffee there. When they couldn't find him, Bär and his accomplices forcibly dragged the innkeeper's son, Julius Strauss, out of the inn. Young Strauss was brutally beaten until he fell unconscious to the ground. His parents, who rushed to his aid, were also mistreated and threatened with a gun.

In the result, Jewish residents, some already in their nightgowns, were dragged outside, mistreated and thrown into prison. Two fellow citizens, Max Rosenau and Jakob Rosenfelder, died du the violence that night.

On that day, 35 Jews were imprisoned in Gunzenhausen, including six women. They were forced to do calisthenics and were mistreated by the Nazis.

Kurt Bär and 24 other men were charged in court with rioting against the local Jews, mistreating them and damaging their property. Kurt Bär received a prison sentence of only one and a half years, another twenty defendants were sentenced to between

four and twelve months in prison. A few days later, the sentence was reduced: Bär received ten months, eighteen other defendants between three and seven months in prison; the rest were acquitted.

In the meantime there had been further riots in Gunzenhausen.

On July 15, 1934, Kurt Bär, who was already free although he should have been in prison, broke into the Strauss family's apartment. He attacked Simon Strauss and his son Julius, who had testified against him and his comrades in court, and fired shots at them with his pistol. Simon Strauss succumbed to his injuries right in the place, his son was taken to the hospital with serious injuries, where he had to lie for weeks.

The profound, indelible impression that March 25, 1934 left on the members of the Gunzenhausen Jewish religious community is shown by the fact that in the weeks and months that followed, a first, big wave of emigration began. They could no longer feel safe in their hometown. In a short time, almost 50 of them left the city, mostly hoping to survive the Nazi madness in the supposed anonymity of larger cities. Even blunt threats, especially from the district leader and later mayor Johann Appler, left no doubt. In the fall of 1938, 55 Jews were still living in Gunzenhausen.

In the course of the night from November 9th to 10th, the anti-Semitic attacks organized and directed by the Nazi regime all over Germany also hit the Jewish citizens of Gunzenhausen with full force.

A week after the Reichspogromnacht, the city celebrated the end of the religious community in a conspicuous way by the two synagogue domes were torn down in the presence of a densely packed crowd of spectators. On the following day, the newspaper hailed the "end of Jewish rule".

The exodus began immediately after the Reich pogrom night. With Josef Seeberger as well as Martha and Albert Klein, the last Jewish residents left our town on January 25, 1939, which was then, according to Nazi jargon, "judenrein".

According to the current state of research, there are 107 Gunzenhausen Jews whose lives ended in concentration camps such as Dachau or Theresienstadt, in the gas chambers of Auschwitz and Sobibor, in deportation locations such as Kaunas in Lithuania. If you add the Jewish residents of the Cronheim district, there are a total of 147 murdered victims.

After 1945 no Jewish community was established here again.

It took some time before a constantly growing number of citizens in Gunzenhausen started to come to terms with the local history of National Socialism. When I went to school, I was born in 1951, I never heard a word about that terrible time.

It lasted until the 1980s when digging into our own history began.

This then culminated in the groundbreaking work of Emmi Hetzner and Franz Müller in the 2000s, who, based on the foundations of the city archivist Werner Mühlhäußer, researched the history of Jewish families and their houses in Gunzenhausen in the 20th century.

Since 2020 there has been a German-Jewish dialogue group initiated and founded by the very honored Netanel Yechieli.