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Kristallnacht on Film

From Reportage to Reenactments, 1938-1988

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1 hour, 12 minutes, 29 seconds

Speakers: Professor Frank Biess and Lawrence Baron

Transcribed by: Rachel E Lieu

[Holocaust Living History Workshop](#)

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Time Transcription

00:00 [Holocaust Living History Workshop]

00:06 Susanne Hillman: Good evening! I'm delighted to welcome you all to today's Holocaust Living History Workshop featuring Professor Emeritus Lawrence Baron. This has been a trying week for many of us, and as I said to Professor Baron the other day, hosting a workshop provides some much-needed semblance of normalcy. And on a more serious notes, I think it also offers a valuable opportunity to learn from history, which is something that the Holocaust Workshop is about, of course. I would like to thank the UC San Diego Library and the Jewish Studies Program for continuing their support of the Holocaust Workshop. Before we start our main event today, we would like to take a moment to pay tribute to a Holocaust survivor who, in the [19]90s, surprised the world with an unflinching memoir of her youth in Vienna, her time in Theresienstadt, and her imprisonment in Auschwitz - Ruth Klüger. Some years ago, we were going to invite her to come down to speak at the Holocaust Workshop and fires broke out, which prevented her from taking the train down to San Diego. However, Ruth Klüger was at UC San Diego before and it is now my pleasure to introduce the person who brought her there, Professor Frank Biess, a history professor, scholar in modern German history, and Ruth's neighbor - former neighbor - in Irvine. Frank?

01:38 Professor Frank Biess: So, good evening. It's a very sad task to pay tribute to Ruth Klüger because she died last month at her home in Irvine, just a few weeks short of her 89th birthday and I'm going to show you a image of her. Hold on. Ruth was a Professor Emerita at the University of California, San Diego. She was a distinguished scholar of German literature who taught at Virginia, Princeton, and Irvine. She was an expert on [Heinrich von] Kleist, [Friedrich] Schiller, and [Rainer Maria] Rilke, wrote on catastrophes in German literature, on female readership, on poetics, and on old people in literature. She was also the author of this internationally acclaimed Holocaust memoir. Susanne has already mentioned it. The book was originally published in German in 1992. The title was *Weiter leben. Eine Jugend*. It sold over 300,000 copies. It's been translated into seven languages and a modified English version entitled, *Still Alive: A Holocaust Girlhood Remembered*, appeared in the US [United States] in 2001. Many of you may know the book. Ruth was born in Vienna and came into the orbit of Nazi Germany after the annexation of Austria in 1938. The picture above here shows her as a seven-year-old girl. The picture on the left is with her older half-brother who she adored. Vienna was a city that hated children, Jewish children to be precise, as she wrote in one of her characteristic sentences. In September 1942, Ruth and her mother were deported to Theresienstadt and from there, to Auschwitz. She survived Auschwitz due to a quote, act of pure goodness, as she writes. Another prisoner told her to lie about her age and say that she was 15 during a selection. She was then transferred from Auschwitz to another forced labor camp. When the camp was evacuated, she

and her mother escaped during one of the so-called death marches in January 1945. They lived in underground for the last two months of the war until May 1945. Her father, her brother, and her grandmother were all killed in the Holocaust.

04:12 Professor Frank Biess: To me, this book remains one of the most intriguing, moving, and most reflective memoirs, easily on par with classic books by Primo Levi or Elie Wiesel. Ruth's memoir is the only one that is written, that I know of, from a distinctly feminist perspective and that recounts the experience of a teenage girl. Much could be said about this book and I've taught it with, I think, great success in my introductory lower division course on 20th Century World History. Perhaps its greatest strength is the rejection of redemptive memory of the notion that the Holocaust somehow made you a better person. As Ruth writes in her characteristic tone quote, you learn nothing there in Auschwitz and least of all, humanity and tolerance. The camps were the most useless, pointless establishments imaginable. That is the one thing to remember about them if nothing else. I was at the commemorative site in Auschwitz, actually, earlier this year for the first time in my life. This is a picture from there and I could not help imagine little 11-year-old Ruth there behind the barbed wire. Ruth was an amazing public speaker. As Susanne mentioned, she came to UCSD actually several times. The last planned visit in 2016, we had to cancel, but a few years before that, there were close to a thousand students in Mandeville Auditorium. After the reading, one student asked her how her survival influenced her attitude toward religion and her answer was also quite telling. I do not believe in God. I believe in posterity, she replied. You could have heard the proverbial needle drop at that point.

05:59 Professor Frank Biess: In January 2016, she was invited to speak in the German Parliament on the occasion of Holocaust Remembrance Day. She ended her speech by praising Chancellor Merkel's decision to admit more than one million Syrian refugees. Ruth was famous for her acerbic, unforgiving, often brutally honest statements. She hated grandstanding and sentimentalism and she would take you down if she detected something like this. I remember her reply to an overeager German TV journalist who once asked her, Frau Klüger, how did you get to Auschwitz? By train, how else? was her response. She was rightfully proud of her many prizes and awards, but she also commented and I quote, If a certain animal species is almost extinct because it has been hunted so intensely, then the few remaining survivors are treated especially well. But there was also a very soft and gentle core to her sometimes grumpy exterior. As Susanne mentioned, I was fortunate to get to know her personally. We were neighbors in Irvine. She loved children and she was very nice to my baby boy when he was born. In fact, her memoir ends with a scene between her granddaughter and her mother, over 100 years old at that point, who had survived the Holocaust with her. So let me conclude by citing this last passage from *Still Alive*. More than 90 years between them her mother and her granddaughter but whenever they were together chatting and touching, they met in a present that miraculously stood still for them. Time frozen in

space made human, perhaps, redeemed. Our troubled world is poorer without Ruth Klüger, but she continues to live in our memories and in her writings and we will make sure that her book will be read by many more generations of students. Thank you.

- 08:05 Susanne Hillman: Thank you very much for this beautiful tribute, Frank. That was very moving and beautifully illustrated. I loved the picture of her as a little girl. That was certainly not the Ruth I imagined from reading her book. Now we turn to the main topic of today's program, reporting on and reenacting the pogrom known as Kristallnacht. Kristallnacht, or Crystal Night, occurred in November 1938. On the night of the 9th and 10th of November, Nazi leaders launched a brutal assault on Germany's Jewish community. When they were done with their ghastly work, more than 1,000 synagogues lay in ruins, 7,500 Jewish-owned businesses, Jewish-owned stores had been damaged and looted, 30,000 Jewish men arrested and put into concentration camps, and close to 100 Jews murdered. Historians consider Kristallnacht a turning point in German and German-Jewish history. What is the visual evidence of this pogrom?
- 09:19 Susanne Hillman: In the following talk, Professor Lawrence Baron will provide an answer to this question. We will have some time to answer your questions at the end of the lecture. Please use the Q&A function at the bottom of your computer. I will take note of the questions and I will bring them up in order as they are received at the end. For many years Professor Baron taught History at San Diego State University. He was also the supervisor of my honors thesis on Dorothea Mendelssohn and Henriette Hertz. And that work would later bring me to study at UC San Diego under, or with, Deborah Hertz. So, I'm particularly pleased to introduce him today. Professor Baron has published widely. His works include the modern Jewish experience in world cinema and projecting the Holocaust into the present. He was recognized as one of 50 key thinkers on Holocaust and genocide studies. And now over to Laurie Baron.
- 10:26 Lawrence Baron: Well, thank you, Susanne. Glad you mentioned about your honors thesis. That was - I was going to mention it if you didn't. And I also want to thank Yekta, who is helping us with the audio and visual tonight. And so, I have this thing that I do, which is I write overtures to all my lectures. My lyrics tend to be better than my voice, but with apologies to Hannah Senesh, let me begin. [Singing] Dark night, dark night - We thought it would never end - The synagogues burning - The shattering windows - The relentless beatings - The roundups of men - A glimpse of the Shoah when shards became bodies - The world needs repairing - If not now, then when? [Speaking] When Kristallnacht broke out, the Ministry of Propaganda, run by [Joseph] Goebbels, briefed the German press to take no pictures for the time being. It permitted only a handful of stills surveying the ruins rather than the rampage, to be wired abroad. The Associated Press smuggled out photos and wired some of these to London and New York and the most damning of which, and

Yekta this is where we can go to the first picture, this is probably the most damning picture that got out. Like I said, they didn't allow pictures of burning synagogues. They didn't allow pictures of Germans actually committing violence against Jews, or rampaging and ransacking stores, or of the Jewish men being marched off.

12:29 Lawrence Baron: What they allowed were sort of sanitized pictures. I'll show you another set in a second, but this is the one of a synagogue and it's a very deceptive one. This is the Prince Regent's Synagogue in a residential neighborhood of Berlin and there were fears that it might set fire to the nearby buildings and this building, apparently in back of it, was gentile-owned. It's hard to see. You can see the dome a little at the top, but basically, it's difficult to show that it's a synagogue. And that's the most damning photo that came out. If we could go to the next set of photos. These are more typical and this is a photo, you'll know, it's the aftermath. And often, there's pictures of Jews cleaning up the glass, sweeping it up, but it's basically of stores that are ruined. Well, with the notable exceptions of the Berlin Olympics in 1936 and the permission to grant it to an American filmmaker, Julian Bryant in 1937, Goebbels prohibited foreign camera crews from operating independently in Germany after newsreel coverage of the SA [Sturmabteilung] boycott of Jewish businesses and the burning of books in 1933 had tarnished the Nazi regime's international reputation. So, when they, when they said no pictures, they really were talking more about photojournalists and not about people who were shooting film. And there was basically no film because representatives of the American newsreels met on November 18th to jointly produce an exposé of the recent outburst of Nazi antisemitism, but realized they were severely handicapped by what they called a dearth of film footage available to make a vigorous presentation to the public.

14:24 Lawrence Baron: In lieu of such clips, newsreels focused on first the protests that arose in America and they were widespread. There was good press coverage as Deborah Lipstadt talks about in her book about the American press coverage. There was wide coverage in the, in the United States. There wasn't revulsion. Most Americans, when asked, did they approve of Kristallnacht, they said no. And the sorts of things that were available, there were these big protests first. Roosevelt denounced what had happened. He never used the term Jew, but he denounced what had happened and in the first newsreels coming out right after Kristallnacht, they showed these protests. They showed Roosevelt and they showed other representatives. Herbert Hoover is the one who comes to mind for me, and Hoover condemned what had happened to the Jews. But he also emphasized, which was very typical of American media then - and by the way, of both Christian and Jewish organizations - to emphasize that the attacks were both against Jews and Christians. And so he talked about that, but basically, there were no pictures. There was no camera that had caught on film what had happened. The next month, there was, there were documentaries about the refugee crisis that Kristallnacht had caused.

- 15:49 Lawrence Baron: And the best one of these was done by *The March of Time*. Now, if you don't know *The March of Time*, it was called pictorial journalism and it basically was a, a newsreel that sometimes had documentary footage, but when it didn't exist they reenacted things, they dramatized things. And they were able to do this when American newsreels were discouraged from being able to do anything negative towards Hitler, in part because they depended on all their footage on the Nazi government. It had to be cleared before it came to the United States or it was taken by German camera people. In this particular case, *The March of Time*, they were known for dramatizing things and they had made the first really anti-Nazi newsreel in 1938, which was called *Inside Nazi Germany*. In December 1938, they made *The Refugee — Today And Tomorrow*. It blended documentary footage of Jews arriving in London and less so in the United States, but also in Holland. And then some dramatized scenes of what might happen to Jews if they stayed in Germany, but basically it was only through listening to the narration that you could figure out vaguely what happened during Kristallnacht. And they said, the Jews were victims not of warfare but of an intolerance and persecution unparalleled since the dark ages. Determined to drive all Jews from their professions and businesses, stormtroopers and the dreaded secret police have pursued and hounded every Jewish shopkeeper.
- 17:31 Lawrence Baron: The invasion of Czechoslovakia, and then later in 1939 of Poland, eclipsed references to Kristallnacht the newsreels produced in 1939. After the advent of war in September of 1939, the United Jewish Appeal for Jewish Refugees and the Joint Distribution Committee produced a film called *Humanity Calls* and it's here where we actually get our first motion pictures of Kristallnacht, though they're not as good as one would expect. But it opens saying, Today, Jewery faces one of the most terrible ordeals throughout its history. And, as it opens, you see these pictures of these shattered front windows of stores, but there actually are, is some camera footage, live camera footage, and so you see people walking by these broken store windows. But that's all. And so that's basically what happened in 1939 and I should stress, we often say American Jews didn't pay any attention, but the fact of the matter was, the very fact that there was a United Jewish Appeal was a product of a reaction to Kristallnacht. The Jewish community had been trying throughout the [19]30s to create a united front against Nazism that could raise money for the victims and it was only after Kristallnacht that the United Jewish Appeal was formed. As Roosevelt slowly abandoned the policy of American neutrality, Hollywood Production Code, which was the internal Hollywood censorship agency, approved the making of explicitly anti-Nazi films. Up until that point, and maybe we can deal with this in questions, they had avoided directly criticizing Nazi Germany until the movie in 1939, which was not about Nazi Germany, but it was a, *I was a Nazi Spy* and it was about a spy ring in the United States.

- 19:30 Lawrence Baron: In any case, we start getting movies that are anti-Nazi. It's allowed, and some of them vaguely allude to Kristallnacht and one directly talks about it. And that one was Charlie Chaplin's *The Great Dictator*. He had begun making that in 1938. He was worried about the censorship, both from the US [United States] government but [Franklin] Roosevelt encouraged him in [19]39, seeing that we were drifting to war. And the head of the Production Code Administration also was a big fan of Chaplin's and he said, Normally I might, you know, censor some of these things, but your picture is such a fine piece of great screen art that I don't want to intrude on what are hardly more than technical violations of our regulations. And the film portrays, if you remember, it's about a barber who looks like the wannabe Hitler in the movie, Hynkel, and about mistaken identity. And the barber, Hynkel, becomes friends with a German officer whose life he saved during World War I and that man protects him. But then when that man gets arrested, the SA which had, or the stormtroopers - who had earlier on almost hung the barber - go for revenge to his house and this is the scene of Kristallnacht. So, they're marching, they're singing Nazi songs, turning over Jewish carts, breaking windows as they go along and then they realize they're at the home of the Jewish barber. They go into the courtyard and then, as you hear noises of shouts and people being beaten and shots, basically, you see a picture of a canary in a cage - metaphorically representing the Jews. Chaplin and Paulette Goddard run upstairs and then you see a bomb thrown into the barber's shop. It explodes and you see smoke and that's Kristallnacht. It's a little misleading because it gives you the impression that Kristallnacht was really about a personal vendetta of these SA men against the barber.
- 21:42 Lawrence Baron: But in 1940, before France is invaded in March of 1940, a very strong anti-Nazi movie was made called *After Mein Kampf My Crimes [Après "Mein Kampf", mes crimes]*, directed by a Polish expatriate Alexandre Ryder and a Moroccan Jew Jacques Haïk. And this presented the first substantial recounting of Kristallnacht. It indicted Hitler for his crimes and then it went from his coming to power up until 1940, things that he did to Germans, the night of the long knives, the Reichstag trial, what happened in, in Vienna in 1938, but also Kristallnacht. And the Kristallnacht scene is quite powerful, but everyone knew who was watching this, that it was, these were reenactments because the actors came out at the beginning. They told you, these are reenactments. At the end, they told you who played the various roles, but it has the scene of a guy by the name of Ernst and Ernst, not Ernst van Rath who was assassinated, is a Jewish teenager whose parents have been exiled or expelled from Germany to go to Poland. They ended up in the camp that was between Poland and Germany. This is what triggered Kristallnacht because then he went and assassinated a German official in France and then that led, eventually, when that man died of his wounds, to Kristallnacht in, in November. In any case, this film shows a mob gathering. Ernst has been staying with an uncle of his, but it appears it's in Germany not in France. He's very angry about what's happened to his parents. His uncle encourages him to take some sort of action so

- he can maybe trigger a revolution among the Jews. He goes to shoot this SS leader. It's not [Ernst] van Rath. It's not a diplomat. But somehow, the SS seems to know ahead of time, or SA seems to know ahead of time, and they capture him and they beat him to death. And here's, then, the scene and you'll see what transpires.
- 24:08 [Film clip] [What is it? An accident? No, a murder attempt. It's a Jew. What's going on? He wanted to kill Commissioner Berger. We will not tolerate this. Well, here's one, there. And this is the pogrom, under the guise of retaliation the worst instincts of violence and cruelty will be able to be unleashed. In the hospital, the Brown Shirts burst in and insist the patients receive them standing in a respectful attitude. Some of these patients have just undergone serious operations. Attention! Yes, he died, now nothing can compel him to salute Hitler's men. Thousands of men are arrested and interned in concentration camps where they are subject o convict work, 17 hours daily. Infernal tortures are inflicted on them. Nazi government, having organized the pogroms completes the work, not only by prohibiting insurance companies from paying victims what they deserve but from requiring all Jews in Germany by decree a collective fine of 1 billion Marks.]
- 35:32 Lawrence Baron: There are lots of mistakes in there. First the, the name of the person, that it happens in Germany, that it seems like this revolt is kind of a local thing, that it didn't - it's spontaneous. And actually, this is what the German government claimed - that it was a spontaneous riot against Jews out of their anger over the assassination of [Ernst] van Rath, and there's other problems in here as well. But there's a lot that's actually, they get right and I want to focus on that. For example, the idea of the people in the hospital, that actually happened in Nuremberg. The hospital was raided, a Jewish hospital was raided, and patients were made to stand at attention and a number of them fainted and died. So that happened. Obviously, the burning of the synagogues, the wrecking of the stores, all these things happen. But I want to stress, you know, people knew that this was, much of this was recreation and this was a typical thing done in documentaries in the [19]30s and [19]40s and [19]50s. Even from the beginning of documentaries in the 1920s, *Nanook the North*, which is usually seen as the first great documentary about Eskimo life, had real Eskimos but they were reenacting their rituals. These weren't the rituals as they really were occurring. They were re-enacting them for the camera and so this was a kind of typical thing. But I want to stress what else is going on in here.
- 27:59 Lawrence Baron: Think of the sequence of the burning synagogues. The first synagogue you see there is the façade of the Grand Synagogue of Paris, which was not involved in this at all, followed by footage of collapsing buttresses from an unnamed structure. It segues into frames of burning buildings superimposed on a still of the Fasanenstrasse sanctuary - and if you could show the pictures. I'll show you a photograph and if you look carefully, you'll see what I'm saying is true. This is one of the great synagogues of Berlin, the Fasanenstrasse Synagogue, and that

picture is basically the same picture you see in there. It was taken in 1938 before Kristallnacht and the way we know that, even in the movie, is because there's no destruction inside. It's basically what the picture is and they've superimposed smoke to make it seem like that's happening there. Most people know what the Fasanenstrasse Synagogue looked like after Kristallnacht because there's a famous photo that was taken several years later and they kind of, at least when we see that in retrospect, people often see that rather than this intact building. But this was something that they did. Where do these pictures come of burning buildings? They're not of Berlin. They're not of Germany during Kristallnacht. I suspect, and I've been unable to fully identify them, but I think they come from a movie called *Siege*, which was about the siege of Warsaw, where there was an American cameraman who documented that siege and the burn and the blitz and the burning of buildings, so I expect that's what's happening there.

29:43 Lawrence Baron: *Après Mein Kampf* was re-edited in a shorter English version that came out later in 1940 after Britain was at war. It tended to emphasize the foreign policy of Hitler. It reduced the eight-minute scene of Kristallnacht that appeared in the French, into a 30-second scene with none of the burning of the, of the synagogues in there. Very little, and even the one scene where we see the SS men and they're on a truck and they're yelling or standing before Jewish stores that have been daubed with Jew, all of those are from 1933 where we did have pictures. Now that's the SA boycott and also the burning of books. So, this was something that was done as a propaganda piece to get people to resist the onslaught of Germany. It didn't work. But the important thing for us is that once the war breaks out, the Allies tend not to dwell on, you know, Kristallnacht is overshadowed by the war. And unless you get something like Frank Capra's *Prelude to War*, where he looks at what happened before the war broke out, you don't get Kristallnacht in there at all and you get a very American, a very sort of ecumenical version. There is broken glass in a ch-, at a religious building in Frank Capra's *Prelude to War: Why We Fight*. That's the first edition, first film in the *Why We Fight* series. But one of the things you see in there is that you see a church window and a rock going through it, and then behind that, you see a picture of Hitler, and most of the time when they talk about religious persecution, they talk about persecution of Christian churches. There is some mention of Jews. There's a showing briefly of a synagogue that was burned, they say, in Berlin in 1934 - which is not Kristallnacht - and they show the headline from American newspapers, a headline about Kristallnacht, but that's it.

31:49 Lawrence Baron: And it was really up to the Jewish advocacy organizations to bring Kristallnacht to the attention of the world and the United Palestine Appeal, Hadassah [The Women's Zionist Organization of America], a number of other Jewish organizations make movies during the 1940s, trying to raise money to help relief for Jews who are caught behind lines. And the one that I like the best is called *They Live Again*, which was made by Hadassah and Junior Hadassah, appealing for donations to support the Youth Aliyah to Palestine. Now some of you may know

this story, just a book came out recently, but there's a group of Jews who left Poland - young Jews - who trekked through the Soviet Union and managed eventually to get to Tehran, and they got basically isolated in Tehran. They couldn't get out, and so basically Hadassah was making this to get the Tehran children to Palestine, and they eventually did get them there. But it begins with the window-smashing scene from *After Mein Kampf*, not saying it's a dramatization but rather talking about Hitler's plans against Jews and saying this is part of a policy. They didn't use the term genocide yet, but this is about the killing of Jews and they say, when they show the picture of the burnt synagogue, they say, the synagogue was besmirched because the synagogue symbolized justice and brotherhood. After the war, the atrocity footage shot by the Allied troops liberating concentration camps, of course, didn't talk about the Holocaust, about Kristallnacht. They were interested in what had happened in these camps and that's the focus. So we have all these newsreels that come out of Germany, that come from the Allies, both from the Russians, the Americans, and the British. There's no mention of Kristallnacht, or if it is mentioned it appears in the movies, the documentaries, that came out about the Nuremberg Trials.

33:47 Lawrence Baron: And even there it's problematic if you know your Nuremberg Trial history. It only tried crimes that were committed in more than one country, the rest of the crimes were supposed to be tried in the country where they occurred, and it only tried crimes, at least the crimes against humanity, that were committed in conjunction with the waging of the war. And Kristallnacht did not fit that criteria. The only place it enters into one of the documentaries that the Americans made, is when there's testimony about Goering demanding this atonement fine of one billion marks basically to confiscate all that wealth. And the way they related it in the Nuremberg Trials was that this was used towards the war effort, to bolster, to get ready for building the weapons that would be used in World War II. But the next places where Kristallnacht popped up, very briefly, were in Germany, in the occupied zones by German filmmakers dealing with what had happened. The West German film was called *In Those Days*. It was made in 1947 and it was the first post-war feature film to simulate Kristallnacht, but it was problematic. It had this idea that there was this car, this old Volkswagen, and it had been purchased early on in the war, and then it followed what had happened to the seven people who owned it during the course of the war. So, you see their stories, and it's about how Nazism affects these people. But most of the stories are love triangles or little things done within the backdrop of what's happening in Germany in the war with the exception of one, which is about a Jewish woman married to a gentile man.

35:57 Lawrence Baron: She wants to - she's thinking of getting a divorce because she's transferred her store, her family store, to her husband so it would be under his name, and not be owned by a Jew. And she thinks they should get divorced, and she's no longer able to drive a car because Jews were forbidden to drive a car. But he decides he wants to stay with her. They go back to the shop, to the store that

they own. He mentions there's all these white letters that have been daubed on the storefront. He never says the word Jew, and the word Jew is never said. And all of a sudden, a bunch of youths, and what we think are stormtroopers but they're all plain clothes - which is by the way what had been requested by the SS that, and by the SA - that people when they went against the Jews, not wear their uniform, so it'd be seen as a civilian-spontaneous protest. But in any case, we see them come into the town and start wrecking store windows. The couple goes back to their country home where they commit suicide by gassing themselves in their house. But it's this one little story and, as I mentioned, they don't say it's Jews. It was actually a movie that came out of the East Germans, on the Soviet Zone, which was much more forthright in portraying what had happened during Kristallnacht. This was called *Marriage in the Shadows* made by a director by the name of Kurt Maetzig and he has a scene - this is about two actors, an actor, two actors, a Jewish actress, and a gentile actor. And the Jewish woman is so un-Jewish, at least at the beginning of the movie and I think this was to get German audiences to identify with her, that until about a third of the movie, you don't even realize she's Jewish. They go to a resort and then she's denied admission at the resort, at a seaside resort, and then things start to happen. And basically, this man marries her. He doesn't love her but he wants to protect her. He marries her and he consigns her to stay in their apartment which becomes her ghetto.

37:52 Lawrence Baron: He has another lover, who is his co-star in a play. And a night after their triumphant premiere, he's looking out the window, and all of a sudden, he sees all these Germans descend on stores and start breaking windows and yelling. He goes into the street and in a very powerful scene, we see people with axes, people with large rocks, people, you know, basically looting. He goes to a policeman and asks the policeman, Can you stop this? And the policeman says, Yeah, I am under orders not to stop it, you know, and I can't do it. And finally, he goes to his wife in her apartment and he says, you've got to stay here. But I think, you know, if you stay here and you're married to me, I can protect you. In the end, as the Jews are being deported in 1942 and [19]43, they commit suicide. Now, why did Maetzig make this movie? Because it's the story of his mother. His mother had been divorced by her gentile father. Rather than face deportation, the possible deportation, she committed suicide.

39:07 Lawrence Baron: Maetzig had lost his job. He had been a German filmmaker but he was then expelled from the bureau that oversaw the making of films, the Nazi bureau, and so when he came back - he had been in the Soviet Union - when he came back, he wanted to get this off his chest. And he based it out also on a real story of a famous German actor, Joachim Gottschalk, who was given demands. His wife was ordered, with their son, to be deported to Theresienstadt, and the Germans advised him to divorce her and he'd be okay. He refused and they committed suicide. But it's a very strong movie and the way it comes out in the Soviet zone, so there's nothing about synagogues being burnt, just the stores, but in

a very, very powerful scene. And it was the only movie that was made in either zone that was shown in all four. And though the love story, the star-crossed love story obviously had all sorts of melodramatic appeal, it was difficult to ignore what happened to this Jewish woman and Kristallnacht in it.

40:22 Lawrence Baron: But once the Cold War leads to the full separation of the two Germanies, East Germany is less interested in promoting what happened to the Jews and more interested in promoting just anti-fascism and the big capital is to blame, the industrialists and the aristocrats. And so, that disappears. And in West German cinema, Kristallnacht also disappears as Germany, you know, they argue the good Germans. They make a distinction between the Nazis and the good Germans. The good Germans, some of them kept quiet but they internally, they protest it to themselves. And there really isn't, there's a movie made in the 1960s about Bernhard Lichtenberg. He was a Catholic priest who protested Kristallnacht and every day would say a prayer for the Jews. He was arrested and the movie about him, which was a very successful television movie in Germany, mentions Kristallnacht but it doesn't show it. And Kristallnacht disappears except for this footage from *After Mein Kampf*, where it starts to appear in documentaries as if it's real footage. And I usually show, I show many more clips when I give this lecture and we're not dealing with this kind of technology, but my first memory of learning anything about the Holocaust was in 1956 in an American documentary called *The Twisted Cross*.

41:59 Lawrence Baron: It was one of the first - it was to celebrate the, or commemorate the 10th anniversary of the end of the war, and the Nuremberg Trials. And I remember the scenes of all the bodies at the end of the war, but they do have a scene of Kristallnacht. They mix it up with the SA boycott, as is frequently done, and with the burning of books, but the important thing is they have the scene - but it's from *After Mein Kampf*. It's not the real footage and NBC, who produced it, made this big point that this was from documentary footage that had been confiscated from previously unavailable German sources. They just didn't warn people about this, that that wasn't the real film. All right, so I'm gonna fast forward now and just talk a little bit. What happens in almost all the documentaries that are produced in the 1960s, 1970s, and 19 early 80s when they deal with Hitler, and some of them you know. Some of you might know the Israeli film about the Holocaust, *The 81st Blow*, which was the first Israeli film, came out in the 1970s. Some of you probably know the genocide episode from *The World at War*, but there's a bunch of others that come out, and they all use the *After Mein Kampf* scene - or they use photos, and this is one of the other interesting things that happens because of the dearth. There were um, photos that were taken of Kristallnacht. They didn't get out into the West in 1938, but many of them were recovered, either from private sources or from German government records in 1945 and 1946, and they were recovered, by the way, by Holocaust survivors. There was what was called the Historical Commission of the Jews from the liberated Jews in the US [United States] zone and they built an

archive. And so, we have over a thousand photos and some of these photos, you know the famous one of the Baden-Baden Synagogue burning and of the Bamberg Synagogue burning, but other things came out as well. For example, some of you may - let's show the picture from my film, the photo section again. The last one there.

44:24 Lawrence Baron: So some of you, I'm sure if you've been to Berlin, you know the new synagogue, the Oranienburgerstrasse, and this is what it looked like before Kristallnacht. And this picture starts popping up after the war, in 1946. Now, there's problems and they say that this is Kristallnacht. There's problems because the Oranienburgerstrasse Synagogue was the only one that was spared in Berlin. And it was spared because a policeman who, he broke up a crowd trying to burn it. And he said you shouldn't burn it because it's a historical landmark and protected by the law, and he was listened to. But it got bombed by Britain in 1943, so there were these - it wasn't in flames, it just got bombed. It wasn't totally destroyed and so you get these pictures after the war that, again, superimpose smoke and flames on the picture. And these start appearing in Holocaust documentaries as well. In the 1980s there's a shift and part of this is really because of survivors. There's less interest in finding, you know people would love to have the original footage, but now there's much more of an emphasis on survivor testimony, which is something that came out of the [19]70s. So that when you have documentaries you have much more of survivor testimony. If there's film, you use it. If there's stills, you use it. But basically, the focus now is on survivor testimony - and sometimes perpetrator testimony as well - and there's two movies that come out in the 1980s, early 1980s.

46:10 Lawrence Baron: There's a German one called *The Yellow Star* produced in 1981 and one produced by the Wiesenthal Institute, *Genocide*, which won an Academy Award for best documentary in 1982. And they start using new materials that are facsimiles of what happened. We do have pictures of a burning synagogue, but they're from Riga from 1941. The Germans had this weekly record, newsreel, of what, how the front was going, *The Deutsche Wochenschau*. And when they occupied Riga, they took pictures of the occupation and according to them, there had been a massacre of, you know, Why am I skipping on this? Not- it's not- they're not Lithuanians, but I'm skipping on who it is there. But the important thing for us is that this massacre, then, supposedly triggered a wave of pogroms not by Russia, not by the Germans, but by the locals who then attacked the synagogue and burnt the synagogue and so that, they were willing to show. And the burning synagogue of Riga ends up in a number of these Holocaust documentaries that come out in the 1980s. There's also other footage, which was from a training film for a group that kind of like civil engineers who cleaned up the rubble, and they were showing how they cleaned up the rubble from the Dresden Synagogue and that was also used in these films.

- 47:55 Lawrence Baron: But it wasn't until the 50th anniversary of Kristallnacht, which occasions six documentaries from the two Germanies, the United States, and Israel. So let me conclude by briefly singling out innovations presented in two of them. Produced by ZDF Guido Knopp's *When the Synagogues Burn - November Pogrom 1938* opens with a graphic scene of the plundering and wrecking of Jewish shops, but it turns out it's the scene from *Marriage in the Shadows*, which I had already talked about. And he discloses at the beginning that this is a recreation because the rest of what he does is he tries to use all sorts of creative ways - eyewitness testimony, animation of stills so it looks like there's action, stop-action sequences, and other special effects - to create a simulation of what Kristallnacht would have been like.
- 48:48 Lawrence Baron: But it was an American documentary that came out on ABC. Actually, it was a PBS documentary, but it had Howard K. Smith, the news anchor at that time for ABC. *Kristallnacht the Journey from 1938 to 1988* which filled in the lacuna and this is an important lacuna. In the 1980s, when there were all these commemorations for the 50th anniversary, all of a sudden people started donating pictures and even films that were in their own homes, that were in home collections. Home movies, home pictures that started coming out, and one of these was a movie, from a home movie that people knew about since the 1950s but had never been made public until the 1980s, that had been made in a town called Bielefeld, and the man who made it basically wanted to document his village. And it's called *Schönes Bielefeld, 1933-1953* and he caught a glimpse of Kristallnacht while it was occurring. And later, in the next decade, in the 1990s, a new one of these films would come to, would emerge from a little town called Buehl. So, we now actually do have footage from Kristallnacht. And I'm going to show you this and I show you this because it not only shows something that's disturbing to watch this synagogue burn, but it shows you the bystanders. And I think there's, some are just you know curious but some of them are enjoying what's happening. It also shows you the fire department not trying to put out the fire, but rather hosing down things around it that might burn. So let's run that.
- 50:40 [film clip] [Kristallnacht in Buehl / Courtesy of Stadtgeschichtliches Institut Buhl]
- 52:50 Lawrence Baron: And that's it. We have that. If you go to the US [United States] Holocaust Memorial Museum website and put Some Were Neighbors and put either Bielefeld or Kristallnacht in YouTube, you should be able to get the Bielefeld footage which, like I said, focuses as much on the bystanders as it does on the building going up in flames. Until the discovery of these, what we call found footage, the impulse to employ staged scenes that approximated what had occurred on Kristallnacht was not intended to be deceptive. As I said, it was standard practice in many of the documentaries made in the 1930s, [19]40s, and [19]50s, and by the way, has come back as a practice. You watch a lot of documentaries now,

- particularly those coming out of the BBC, and they often have dramatizations, so it's recurred.
- 53:42 Lawrence Baron: But in the 1960s there's what was called the Cinéma Vérité movement, and that led to more of using more authentic footage. And then by the [19]70s and [19]80s, we have the survivors becoming the primary thing. With higher expectations for the veracity of historical documentaries and the expanding trove of archival evidence, some filmmakers have become more vigilant about distinguishing between original and dramatized footage. And there's very powerful films that came out in Germany for the 70th anniversary and they tend to use Bielefeld. You don't see *After Mein Kampf* anymore. Nonetheless, in many movies that are more broadly about the Holocaust or about Nazi Germany, you still see *After Mein Kampf* appear. Scholars of the Holocaust have an obligation to point out the constructive, constructed, and interpretive nature of all documentaries even when they only feature first-hand footage. As Bill Nichols, who's the leading expert on documentaries, puts it, History does not repeat itself except in mediated transformations such as memory, representation, or re-enactment. Thank you.
- 54:52 Susanne Hillman: Thank you very much, Laurie. That was very fascinating. I'm sure our audience shares this assessment. So I have a few comments that people made, or questions rather. I'll begin with a comment. Eva regrets that you weren't able to show all of your clips that you talked about, and I share that regret, and I think probably many other people too - but that would have probably been logistically challenging. There's a question from somebody, an anonymous question. Why, how do you explain this resistance to identify the victims of Kristallnacht as Jewish in many of these films?
- 55:40 Lawrence Baron: Okay. In the [19]30s, it's very clear that within the movie industry. There was a movie made about the Rothschilds in 1934, a very popular movie. Germany had said that if there's any movie that's critical of the Nazi regime, or seems to be creating sympathy for the Jews, they would hold the studio responsible and would boycott all. It would ban its films from distribution in Germany, and Germany was a large market for Hollywood. So, when there was a meeting held after this movie came out with some people. I think it's a very sympathetic movie towards the Rothschilds, but the segments of it end up in the *Der Ewige Jude*. The Nazis excerpted it, to show how rapacious the Rothschilds were. And basically, they decided that the movie industry is perceived as being controlled by Jews. It shouldn't be pro-Jewish, it shouldn't be anti-Jewish, it shouldn't be anti-Nazi, because you're not supposed to slander a country. And the US [United States] government went along with this because we were still neutral. We had a lot of trade with Germany until [19]39 and [19]40.
- 56:56 Lawrence Baron: And so that's one reason. The defense agencies, the ADL [Anti-Defamation League] and the AJC [American Jewish Committee] and church agencies concluded that it's much better to stress that both Christians and Jews

were victims because it makes support for anti-Nazism much more ecumenical. And that was basically the strategy even during World War II. Even as it's occurring, there was a bureau that monitored movies - a government bureau - and there's a famous thing where the AJC [American Jewish Committee] writes and he says, we'd like to see movies focusing on what's happening to the Jews. And they get this response saying, well, we don't want to do that because, you know, Hitler says that we're fighting this war on behalf of the Jews. So, you know, we're not averse to showing that Jews are being hurt along with Poles or, you know, French or whatever, but we're averse to focusing just on what happened to the Jews. And so between that and the movies feeling that they had to do it, you don't really get - what I call the first Holocaust movie is made in 1944, and it's a movie called *None Shall Escape* and it's a prelude to the Nuremberg Trials. It's a kind of recreation of a trial that hasn't occurred yet, of a guy who was a German in charge of a Polish village where he did terrible things to the Poles. But really terrible things to the Jews, in fact, has, shows for the first time a deportation of Jews, shows even a mass shooting of the Jews.

- 58:27 Lawrence Baron: But that's the first one and it does have the Polish element and it's interesting. It also has, if you can get to see it, you can find it now. It has a wonderful speech by a rabbi. And he gives, he gives an impassioned speech on Jews have to fight now because they've always been, you know, they've just been tolerated and how insulting it is to be tolerated. And, you know, we can't accept that. We need to be accepted. And that's when they shoot all the Jews because he's riled them all up. And the head of the studio that made it, Sam Cohn of Columbia, says when he first heard this speech he said, oh, no rabbi would say that! And he was right. It turned out the speech was written by a man, by, who was, by Lester Cole, who was a communist. And he had taken the speech from a speech that was given by a Spanish communist in 1938, and just substituted Jew for communists in there, and workers. But that's the first time you get that and even then there's a great reluctance. At first, you don't - I've done this, looking at these movies in the, right after the war - and though they mentioned characters are Jewish, it's often within lots of other victims and it really isn't until the late [19]50s, at least in movies, American movies, that you get movies that are based around Jewish characters. And, you know, *The Diary of Anne Frank* of course is one and *The Young Lions*, *Me and the Colonel* come out 1958-59. *Verboten!*
- 1:00:10 Susanne Hillman: Okay, we have a very interesting question from Ray. How do you explain that there is such a high cost charged by German rights holders for using some of the rarest footage documenting Third Reich crimes, such as the one of the Bielefeld Synagogue or the Latvian Einsatzgruppen group in Riga?
- 1:00:32 Lawrence Baron: Yeah, Latvia! Why couldn't I think of Latvia?
- 1:00:36 Susanne Hillman: And the second question that Ray is raising is, should descendants of the perpetrators profit from these important historical records?

Because the attendee notes that this footage, the original, is held at the Bundesarchiv.

- 1:00:51 Lawrence Baron: Yeah. The Bielefeld one was held in a, in the city archive and I tried to get copies of, photographs of it for the article that this talk is based on and I just couldn't get in touch with the family. But as far as I know, they made it available to the Holocaust Museum gratis and they're not making money off of it. But one of the problems, when you're making documentaries, are these fees and that's why people often go to stock footage, like *After Mein Kampf*, which has achieved the role of stock footage. If you go to Kristallnacht stock footage, you'll get, from a number of the companies, *After Mein Kampf*. And as far as I can tell, there's no stakeholders in there who own the copyright to it and so that's what happens. But these expenses, anybody who, you know, who does movies or does photos knows how expensive these things are and they really make it impossible to give presentations. And the US [United States] government has made it more difficult recently. It's very difficult now to copy clips, at least if you're not doing it yourself to have any. If you go to a store and try to create a very professional presentation. Under [Donald] Trump there's been a crackdown on copyright and most stores won't do it for you anymore.
- 1:02:13 Susanne Hillman: Yeah, that's interesting to consider because, as Ray was mentioning, this practice of charging such high costs to original footage is particularly problematic when we're seeing Holocaust deniers out there and it would seem that it's particularly important that original, authentic footage can be used, right?
- 1:02:38 Lawrence Baron: Yeah. No, I mean, I agree. And it's part of a bigger problem. I didn't talk about this, but I watch a lot of Holocaust documentaries and I often see they'll say, well and German Jews were being, and this was being done to German Jews in the 1930s and they're pictures from the Warsaw ghetto. They're stock pictures and it's people, a lot of documentary filmmakers are very sloppy. They go, you know if there's something of someone being persecuted, they think it's this place, at this time, and it's often wrong. And I think part of that is they're driven by, at least in part by, the expenses of looking more deeply. It's really hard to, I mean this, that I found *After Mein Kampf* when I started this, there's a book on Hitler in Hollywood by Tom Doherty, and that's the first time I ever came across that. He talks about the coverage of Kristallnacht and he said, well he said, you know, the newsreels didn't do a very good job because they were dependent on German footage and there was nothing that came out.
- 1:03:40 Lawrence Baron: The Hollywood studios concluded they couldn't make it because they had this dearth of footage. And that got me thinking. I said, well I thought I saw Kristallnacht in documentaries. I did, but it wasn't really Kristallnacht. And then I went searching for this, and I just started ordering all these documentaries. And there's a couple of companies that specialize in old World War II movies and 1930s newsreels, and I just came across *After Mein Kampf* by chance. And it's mentioned

in a lot of places. Well, we know this isn't real because the way it's photographed. It's clearly not an amateur taking pictures. It's clearly, you know, he's staged it out, he's blocked out the shots But people couldn't find it and it just kind of fell in my hands.

1:04:30 Susanne Hillman: Okay, we have a question from Victor. Why did East German film focus more on anti-fascism as opposed to events like Kristallnacht?

1:04:42 Lawrence Baron: Okay, well in 1938, actually yeah, one of the interested - the Soviets actually were very good in the [19]30s before they signed their pact with Hitler. And one of the first great Holocaust movies is Dr. Mamlock, *Professor Mamlock* which comes out in 1938. It's a Russian movie and it has this Jewish doctor, you know, fired from his practice, marched through the streets, humiliated. It's very powerful. But after the war, a lot of the filmmakers who came back - German filmmakers and Polish filmmakers by the way - came back from the Soviet Union but they found their relatives dead. They wanted to make stories about what had happened and they made some of the best movies about the Holocaust. I noticed you're having one coming up is *The Last Stop*. It's a film from 1948 made in Auschwitz by an Auschwitz survivor, who wasn't Jewish but nonetheless, a Jew plays a very important role in that film. But something happens in 1948. Israel becomes a state. The Soviet Union is second only to the United States in recognizing it because it thinks that Israel because many of its leaders are Russians and are socialists, is going to be pro-Russian, didn't turn out that way and they very quickly turn - and they don't want to make movies that make people sympathetic to Jews. And so you have this anti-Nazi thing because West Germany is perceived as a continuation of Nazi Germany. You know, Adenauer surrounds himself with a lot of people who are more than compromised and if you think that Nazism is a product of you know, industrial capitalism and Junkers, then it's the continuation. So it's, that's what they focus on. And they don't make their first film about Kristallnacht until 1988.

1:06:35 Susanne Hillman: That's pretty late.

1:06:39 Lawrence Baron: Yeah.

1:06:41 Susanne Hillman: One year before the end of the DDR [Deutsche Demokratische Republik]. We have another question from an anonymous attendee. How do you, this is more, not about the footage so much or the film on Kristallnacht, but about Kristallnacht itself. How do you explain that such a large and destructive action could be carried out and coordinated in the comparatively short amount of time? Who was behind it? Who organized all this?

1:07:13 Lawrence Baron: Well, it's [Joseph] Goebbels. We know that Goebbels is the organizer and in a certain sense, it's the last gasp of the SA. You know, the SA had lost their leadership in [19]34. Goebbels was the head of it. They were for more

violent, less systematic ways. They engaged in a lot of wild actions against Jews throughout the [19]30s, but the SS was more professional, you know, internment. They get their internment by the arrest of the 30,000 men. But it was well organized by Goebbels and in a certain sense, it had to do with an assassination that happened in 1936 of a German official in Switzerland. And it was during the Olympics, and they couldn't act on punishing the Jews, by a Jewish man. But they had a contingency plan that was formed after the assassination of [Wilhelm] Gustloff in [19]36 Switzerland.

1:08:16 Susanne Hillman: Yes, right in the Davos.

1:08:19 Lawrence Baron: Yeah! And so it was a kind of contingency plan that was there and when the opportunity came, they used it. And it was something that worked well for the SS. They had been wanting to arrest Jews. It worked well for [Hermann] Göring who wanted to hasten the pace of Aryanization and take away, you know, expropriation of Jewish property. And he did that with the atonement fine and the wreckage. He was angry at the wreckage because he wanted that to be taken over by the government. And the SA had their chance to express themselves, their last great hurrah. So, but what's amazing about it is not so much that, but how many, it was done fully in the open, as you can see, and how many people. We have so many accounts of people not cheering, school classes, teachers bringing their school classes to watch it happen, and there's other aspects of it I didn't talk about. Wolf Gruner has been doing this research on home invasions, which were, even a larger number of those were committed than even the destruction of stores, in which they went into people's houses, ransacked the houses, took the Jewish man away. And we have photos of those now. But so, this was done in in full sight and there wasn't great protests. You know, there aren't many people. I mean, this one cop and one policeman in Berlin, you know, was a kind of oddity saying, spare this building.

1:09:50 Susanne Hillman: Yeah, chilling to consider right? And I do believe that the Germans, many of them, did not really appreciate the destruction. Except of course the SA, but they didn't like the disorder.

1:10:05 Lawrence Baron: Right.

1:10:06 Susanne Hillman: Which is why there was no second pogrom. That was the one big one, right?

1:10:09 Lawrence Baron: Yeah.

1:10:11 Susanne Hillman: And that was that it.

1:10:12 Lawrence Baron: And we actually have public opinion polling. The SD reports, the Sicherheitsdienst, who tried to monitor things through informers doing public opinion. And then there was Sopot, the people who went to Scandinavia from the

- resistance, who tried to get an idea from informers. And most of them say the majority of people, they didn't mind that Jews were having their property taken or even arrested. They did mind the violence and the destruction.
- 1:10:40 Susanne Hillman: Mhm. One person is asking whether this destruction and violence occurred in multiple cities in Germany.
- 1:10:48 Lawrence Baron: Oh yes. All over.
- 1:10:50 Susanne Hillman: It was all over the place.
- 1:10:52 Lawrence Baron: And it's throughout the greater Reich, it's not just in Germany. Vienna was probably - in Vienna, all but one synagogue was destroyed, so -
- 1:11:01 Susanne Hillman: Mhm. Well, I think that concludes today's event. I would like to thank Laurie Baron for a very interesting, informative talk, and I hope you will uncover more such important information. I would also like to thank Frank for the beautiful tribute to Ruth Klüger, and I thank Yekta for having organized all this logistically, and of course, I thank everybody who has joined us today. I would like to draw your attention to our next event, which will take place on January 21, 2021. It's called Yiddish Glory: The Lost Songs of World War II and it will feature Anna Shternshis and Psoy Korolenko. It will be a combination of lecture and music.
- 1:11:52 Lawrence Baron: I'll just say I've heard it and it's great!
- 1:11:56 Susanne Hillman: Oh!
- 1:11:58 Lawrence Baron: I've heard them performing. They're terrific.
- 1:12:00 Susanne Hillman: Oh, thank you for that endorsement! And as you said, in the future, I think this it's going to be in April, we'll have another event dedicated to film, *The Last Stage*. So anyway I hope everybody will have a good rest of the year. Good holidays, although it's still a bit in the future. And I'll see you in January! Good night, everybody, and thank you, Laurie.
- 1:12:22 Lawrence Baron: Thank you!