

On 13 May 1941 the Consistory of the Israelite Religious Community of Luxembourg requests permission from the Gestapo to hold services undisturbed¹

Letter from the Consistory of the Israelite Religious Community of Luxembourg, signed by the chief rabbi,² the president,³ the office manager,⁴ the vice president,⁵ and members of the Consistory, to the Luxembourg Gestapo, for the attention of Gestapo Chief SS-Obersturmbannführer Dr Hartmann,⁶ Luxembourg, dated 13 May 1941 (carbon copy)

In connection with the incidents that occurred in the synagogue on Friday, 9 May 1941, at 7.30 p.m.,⁷ of which your Einsatzkommando⁸ has been informed, the Consistory of the Israelite Religious Community of Luxembourg takes the liberty of submitting the following observations to you:

- 1) We request most respectfully that the necessary measures be taken to ensure that in the future our services can be held in the synagogue without disturbance.
- 2) We would like to point out that in the Old Reich, on the basis of special orders issued by the authorities and the Gestapo, with the latter having been given sole responsibility for Jewish affairs, the Jews are able to conduct their services and religious practices undisturbed, and this is guaranteed by special directives. We hold out hope that we shall not be treated any differently.
- 3) Moreover, the Jews in the Old Reich are afforded the opportunity, under the auspices of the Jewish Culture League⁹ and upon receiving official approval, to hold film screenings and stage musical events and theatre performances among themselves. All of these

1 ANLux, FD-083:38, Consistoire israélite – Correspondance, 1940–1942. This document has been translated from German.

2 Robert Serebrenik.

3 Louis Sternberg.

4 Siegmund Leib.

5 Alex Bonn (1908–2008), lawyer; vice president of the Consistory of the Israelite Religious Community of Luxembourg from May 1940 to April 1941; emigrated to the United States in April 1941; president of the Luxembourg Bar Association, 1958–1960; president of the Council of State of Luxembourg, 1979–1980.

6 Dr Fritz Hartmann (1906–1974), lawyer; SS-Obersturmbannführer; head of the Gestapo office in Koblenz from 15 Jan. 1940; leader of the Einsatzkommando of the Security Police and the SD in Luxembourg and head of the Gestapo office in Trier from 8 March 1941 to 9 April 1943; subsequently transferred to the Waffen SS; arrested in 1946; sentenced to death in Feb. 1951 by a war crimes tribunal in Luxembourg; later pardoned; on 19 Dec. 1957 expelled to the Federal Republic of Germany, where he worked as a lawyer in Düsseldorf.

7 On 9 May 1941, members of the National Socialist Motor Vehicle Corps disrupted the Sabbath service at the Luxembourg City synagogue, threatening the worshippers, destroying the synagogue's furnishings, and declaring that they intended to blow up the building. A few days later, Chief Rabbi Serebrenik was threatened and severely assaulted in the street. The Gestapo closed the synagogue shortly thereafter.

8 The Einsatzkommando of the Security Police and the SD in Luxembourg was established on 15 August 1940. It was headed by Wilhelm Nölle, who headed the Gestapo office in Trier until March 1941.

9 The Jewish Culture League created employment opportunities for Jewish artists and organized theatre and opera performances, concerts, film screenings, lectures, and exhibitions: see PMJ 1/71 and 84. It was disbanded in Sept. 1941.

events are announced in the *Jüdisches Nachrichtenblatt*,¹⁰ which is approved by the Gestapo. We have made no claim to this authorized opportunity to exercise a Jewish cultural life.

4) The facts stated above are the result of the right conferred on the Jews to assemble not only for religious practices and worship-related activities, but also for presenting and performing Jewish culture. The ban on assembly applies only to purposes beyond the merely religious or cultural.

5) Pursuant to a directive issued by the Chief of the Civil Administration, the Jewish faith, like all other religious faiths, is granted the right to assemble in its places of worship for religious practices.

The Consistory can use the synagogue located at 40 Liebfrauenstrasse for religious purposes, while the facilities in the building at 71 Neypergstrasse, which have been approved by the Gestapo, are used for emigration and social welfare work.

In view of what has been outlined above and in light of the fact that only the synagogue is left to us to maintain our religious life, we hope that you will examine what we have submitted and ensure that we can hold our services in the synagogue at 40 Liebfrauenstrasse as well as carry out our work undisturbed in our office facilities at 71 Neypergstrasse.

With the highest esteem¹¹

¹⁰ The *Jüdisches Nachrichtenblatt* appeared twice weekly from Nov. 1938 to 1943, censored by the Reich Ministry of Public Enlightenment and Propaganda. As the only Jewish newspaper permitted following the pogroms of November 1938, it served as the official bulletin of the Reich Association of Jews in Germany and informed the Jewish population of new antisemitic laws and regulations as they were issued.

¹¹ No record exists of a response to this letter.