



THE
NIGHT
OF
**BROKEN
GLASS**

EYEWITNESS ACCOUNTS OF
KRISTALLNACHT

EDITED BY

UTA GERHARDT & THOMAS KARLAUF

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Praise for *The Night of Broken Glass*

'The testimonies about the pogrom of November 9 and 10, 1938 and its sequels, assembled in this volume, describe what the authors deemed to be the height of Nazi barbarism. In reality, these events were but the faintest of preludes to what was about to happen to the Jews in Germany and in occupied Europe. Nonetheless, these reports carry a poignancy of their own that overwhelmingly evokes the suffocating and terror filled atmosphere of Jewish everyday existence in the Reich during those November days and the immediate pre-war months.'

**Saul Friedlander, Pulitzer Prize winner and author of
*The Years of Extermination: Nazi Germany and the
Jews, 1939-1945***

'This riveting book prints a collection of 21 eyewitness accounts by German Jews of the terrible night of 9 November 1938, when, on the orders of Adolf Hitler and his propaganda minister Joseph Goebbels, bands of stormtroopers all over Germany and Austria burned down more than 1,000 synagogues and smashed up some 7,500 Jewish-owned shops. The value of these testimonies lies above all in their detail and immediacy. Mostly they confirm the picture we already have from other sources, though few are as vivid as these.'

The Guardian

'An exceptional array of eyewitness accounts ... this fascinating collection honours the Holocaust's victims, as well as the sociologist who preserved their memories.'

Times Literary Supplement

'This selection of poignant eyewitness accounts of Kristallnacht, originally collected by the Harvard sociologist Edward Hartshorne in 1939 and subsequently

forgotten, provide a unique and harrowing insight into the terrible events of the night of 9 November 1938.'

The International History Review

'Taken together, these survivors' voices bring the focus back onto what is essential: human lives, their preservation and loss.'

Forward Magazine

'heartrending testimony of Nazi racial hatred.'

Tribune

THE NIGHT OF BROKEN GLASS

Eyewitness Accounts of Kristallnacht

Edited by Uta Gerhardt and Thomas Karlauf

Translated by Robert Simmons and Nick Somers

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EDITORIAL NOTE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In August 1939, Harvard University organized a prize competition with the title 'My Life in Germany Before and After 30 January 1933', for which more than 250 submissions were received from all over the world. The bundle of documents has been preserved since 1958 in the Houghton Library at Harvard in 25 boxes under the signature bMS Ger 91; the alphabetical list of the 263 authors can be viewed at

<http://oasis.lib.harvard.edu/oasis/deliver/~hou01275>. In 1940, Edward Hartshorne, one of the three initiators of the competition, made a selection from the reports on the November pogroms to which he gave the title *Nazi Madness: November 1938*. This work was not published; the plan did not advance beyond editorial preliminaries. The bundle of documents was, however, preserved among Hartshorne's papers.

Of the 34 manuscripts that Hartshorne chose from this more limited group, the editors have selected 21. Not included are 13 shorter, purely descriptive, texts ranging from one to nine pages in length. These are extracts from the recollections of Elisabeth Braasch (Harvard file 35), Ernest Frank (66), Benno Kasten (104), Kurt Meissner (154), Mara Oppenheimer (171), Margarete Steiner (226) and Annemarie Wolfram (247; with 25 pages of the only longer text that was not included here); the authors of six other texts could not be identified, because the excerpts are not attached to names and Hartshorne used the original numbering of 1939-40. No concordance of the original and the Harvard numbering exists that would make a simple correlation possible.

The texts were edited in accordance with the copies Hartshorne had made and compared with the originals. In doing so, it turned out that the secretary, Mrs Wilson, was extremely reliable (misspellings such as *Xirkusgasse*, *Tuerkuscher Tempel*, or *Rathaus* instead of *Bethaus* were rare exceptions). Here the editors would like to express special thanks to Professor Dr Detlef Garz. He made available to us the microfilms in the Harvard holdings that were prepared in connection with a research project carried out by the Carl von Ossietzky University in Oldenburg in the second half of the 1990s; the project, led by Detlef Garz, which seeks to make a systematic evaluation of all the reports, has been pursued at the University of Mainz since 2002.

The passages regarding 9 November that Hartshorne chose are for the most part taken from longer reports (Carl Hecht's was the only report he planned to reproduce *in toto*, and even then with the exception of two introductory paragraphs); however, he made no cuts within the selected reports. The editors of this volume have followed the same policy. The Rosenthal manuscript represents an exception; its transcript is found complete in Hartshorne's papers; because its 128 pages would have exceeded this volume's limits, the editors have decided to include only pages 9-51. In the case of the Abraham manuscript, two introductory paragraphs were restored in order to make it easier for the reader to understand; two sentences at the end of the Schwabe and Rodeck manuscripts were omitted because in each case they opened a new subject.

As Hartshorne conceived it, the text would follow the chronology of events and be divided into three parts, each consisting of seven reports.

The name of Herschel Grynszpan (Grynspan, Grünspan, etc.) was standardized, as was that of the legation

secretary vom Rath (often given in the manuscripts as *von* Roth) and that of the propaganda minister (often given as Göbbels); acronyms such as NSDAP, SS, SA, etc. were also adapted to the usual form (i.e., without full stops). On the other hand, stylistic peculiarities, including Austrianisms, were retained in the reports from Vienna, along with the occasional use of English expressions (e.g., 'concentration camp'). Excessive use of emphasis by means of the use of underlining, capital letters, and spaced-out words was reduced in the interest of legibility and replaced by italics. Subtitles were retained only when their meaning was made clear by the passages selected. Occasional additions by the editors appear between square brackets.

The numbers given at the beginning of each text correspond to the original 1939–40 numbering with which Hartshorne worked, while the numbers between parentheses refer to the current Harvard numbering. Information in the brief biographies preceding each text is taken from the cover sheets of the originals, from the accompanying letters, and the texts, as well as from the editors' own research. It often proved impossible to discover what happened to the contributors later on, or even their date of death. However, it can be broadly assumed that, with the exception of Siegfried Wolff, who emigrated to Holland and was murdered in Auschwitz in 1944, all the authors survived the war, since they had been able to leave the European continent in time.

The number of footnotes had to be kept to a minimum. Basic information regarding the events of 9 November will be found in the introduction; individual names and contexts are explained only on their first occurrence. The footnotes were produced by Thomas Karlauf. The editors thank the Buchenwald and Sachsenhausen Memorials for information on individual prisoners. The editors owe special thanks to Robin Hartshorne, who made the materials from his

father's papers available to us and gave us access to many documents that were used in preparing the afterword. Finally, we would also like to thank Christian Seeger of Propyläen Verlag, who spontaneously supported the project and shepherded it into print with his usual care.

Uta Gerhardt and Thomas Karlauf
Heidelberg and Berlin, June 2009

FOREWORD

The testimonies to the pogrom of 9 and 10 November 1938 and its sequels, assembled in this volume, describe what the authors deemed to be the height of Nazi barbarism. In reality, these events were but the faintest of preludes to what was about to happen to the Jews in Germany and in occupied Europe. Nonetheless, these reports carry a poignancy of their own that overwhelmingly evokes the suffocating and terror-filled atmosphere of Jewish everyday existence under the Reich during those November days and the immediate pre-war months.

These texts were written one or two years at most after the events and the countless details they relate, often vividly rendered, fit into the overall historical picture that we know so well today. Minor mistakes of interpretation in fact add to the sense of complete authenticity carried by each of these testimonies. They tell of the organized nature of these 'outbursts of popular anger', of the relentless and thuggish savagery of the SA, SS and Hitler Youth involved in the orgy of destruction and humiliation; they tell of the sheer perversity of the perpetrators and of their inventiveness: an old lady, for example, forced under SA supervision, hammer in hand, to herself destroy all the precious objects in her apartment; and much worse of course. But many of the witnesses also stress that Germans in different walks of life appeared embarrassed by the savagery of the regime and, at times, did not hesitate to express their empathy for the suffering of their Jewish neighbours. The voices of some of these German supporters (Marie Kahle and her family, among others) are included in the volume.

A few of the narratives offer lighter moments in the midst of the overall gloom. For instance, one cannot but be pleased in imagining the adventurous escape of Rudolf Bing and his wife from their house in Nuremberg as they slid down from their bedroom window on tied sheets while the mob was breaking down their front door. Generally, however, the narratives dwell on quite different scenes: the groups of Jews huddled in the waiting-room of the Berlin Bahnhof am Zoo, because these railway-station waiting-rooms remained some of the rare public places to which access was not yet forbidden to Jews; the endless queues of Jewish women in front of foreign consulates, as male Jews in their tens of thousands had been arrested and shipped off to camps - Buchenwald, Sachsenhausen and Dachau. Much has been written about camp existence, even during the pre-war period, yet the wave of sudden arrests of Jews, about 40,000 of them, created new and unexpected conditions in which the sadism of the SS guards found an ideal outlet. The constant beatings for every and any reason, the hours-long roll-calls in freezing weather, the repeated 'exercises', which on each occasion left a few of the old and sick inmates dead, the cramped barracks, the lack of food, the torturing thirst and the one constant fixation: How fast would getting a visa lead to release from the camp and allow quick departure from the country?

At times, a few inmates themselves drifted towards very problematic choices. Thus, Kurt Lederer, a Viennese physician, arrested and sent to Buchenwald before November 1938, improvised a small 'subcamp' in one of the buildings, in which, with the help of the camp authorities, he kept mentally ill inmates to avoid additional chaos among the prisoners; at one point, he was in charge of 150-60 people. As controlling the mentally ill without adequate medicine became increasingly difficult, one of the SS guards offered help: the physician could choose twenty of

the most difficult cases and hand them over. He did. Ultimately, some thirty-five patients disappeared: they were 'killed in the bunker'. Did the physician foresee this outcome? Thus, even in these early testimonies, we at times approach that 'grey zone' which Primo Levi described many decades later when reflecting on human behaviour in the death camps.

In this volume, over and above the bare facts, readers will discover an extraordinary array of details about Jewish attitudes, perceptions, and reactions during these fateful months. They will grasp a wealth of aspects defining the atmosphere that suffused the world of central European Jewry in the penultimate phase of its existence, moments before its final doom.

Saul Friedländer

INTRODUCTION: 'THUS ENDED MY LIFE IN GERMANY'¹

Thomas Karlauf

9 November 1938

At about 9.30 on the morning of 7 November 1938 Herschel Grynszpan, a 17-year-old Polish Jew, entered the Hôtel de Beauharnais at 78 rue de Lille, which had since 1814 been the site of the Prussian, later the German, embassy in Paris. The porter's wife was the first person he met in the courtyard. He said he had an important document to deliver and wanted to speak to an embassy secretary. Frau Mathes directed him to the corresponding door. Grynszpan rang and repeated his business to the aide who opened the door. After he had sat for a short time in the waiting room, he was shown into the office of the legation secretary, Ernst vom Rath.

A few minutes later the aide heard loud cries. He raced back and found the legation secretary lying wounded in the corridor. While two of his colleagues saw to the wounded man, the aide led away the assassin, who had put down his revolver and put up no resistance, and handed him over to the police officer posted in front of the embassy. The severely injured vom Rath was taken to the nearby Alma Clinic, where he was immediately operated on.

Herschel Grynszpan's parents had emigrated from western Russia to Germany in 1911 and settled in Hanover. After the reconstitution of Poland at the end of the First World War, they acquired Polish citizenship, but remained in Hanover, where his father first worked as a tailor and later eked out a living selling junk. In the summer of 1936, when

he was fifteen years old, Herschel fled these impoverished conditions and travelled through Belgium to Paris, where he was taken in by one of his father's brothers.

In late October 1938, Grynszpan received terrible news. On 31 March, the Polish government had announced that all Poles who had lived abroad for more than five years would lose their Polish citizenship. New passport regulations were issued to that effect on 30 October. This measure was aimed above all at Polish Jews living in Germany and would have left them stranded there. The Reich Foreign Office sought to prevent this from happening by expelling Polish Jews before the deadline. On 27 and 28 October, the police and the SS arrested about 16,000 Jews throughout the Reich, transported them to a point on the Berlin-Poznan railway line just short of Zbąszyń, and then herded them over the Obra River. The Polish authorities denied them the right to cross the border, so they wandered about for days in the no-man's land between Germany and Poland, in pouring rain and without food or a roof over their heads. Grynszpan's parents were among these deportees.

'My heart bleeds when I think about our tragedy,' Herschel said in a note he left for his uncle on the morning of the assassination. 'I have to protest in such a way that the whole world hears my protest, and that is what I intend to do.'² Then he bought a revolver in a gun shop and took the metro to the German embassy. The rumours suggesting that Grynszpan's attack might have had a private motive, since both he and vom Rath frequented homosexual milieus, have no foundation in fact.³ It was pure chance that Grynszpan was sent to the office of vom Rath, who just happened to be on duty on Mondays.

The following morning, Professor Georg Magnus, the director of the University Surgical Clinic II and his chief physician, Dr Brandt, arrived in Paris. The two doctors,

sent as an 'expression of the Führer's sympathy, made a visible impression on Herr vom Rath', wrote the German ambassador, Graf Welczek, in the report that he prepared for the Foreign Office that evening.⁴ Vom Rath's condition, which Magnus and Brandt had described in their first bulletin as promising, deteriorated rapidly in the course of the day. Hitler, who by sending his personal physician had shown his unfailing instinct for the explosiveness of a situation, immediately promoted the young diplomat to the rank of Gesandtschaftsrat I. Klasse (legation councillor first-class), two floors up, even though he had only recently been appointed a legation secretary.

Grynszpan's desperate act immediately reminded people of the Gustloff case which had occurred only a few years earlier. On 4 February 1936, David Frankfurter, a medical student, had fired five revolver shots at the Nazi party's regional group leader, Wilhelm Gustloff, in his apartment in Davos, killing him as a protest against Germany's policy regarding Jews. Gustloff's body was transported with great ceremony from Switzerland to Schwerin, where Hitler attended the burial. In his speech, the Führer blamed international Jewry for the crime and described Gustloff as a 'holy martyr' and 'the first genuine martyr for National Socialism abroad'.⁵ However, because the Winter Olympic Games were to begin in Garmisch-Partenkirchen two days after Gustloff's assassination, no anti-Jewish reprisals were taken at that time.

In November 1938, there were neither Olympic Games nor foreign powers whose reactions had to be taken into account. On the contrary, after the Munich Agreement, in which the western powers had only five weeks earlier caved in and accepted the transfer of the Sudetenland to the German Reich, the National Socialist regime was more powerful than ever. Many people in Germany were awaiting

the opportunity finally to strike and initiate a great, nationwide action against the Jews.

On the basis of the first reports from Paris, the Propaganda Ministry had advised the press to give the assassination 'the greatest attention' and to emphasize that this act 'was certain to have the most serious consequences for Jews in Germany'. On 8 November, the tension was ratcheted up another notch, and the next day the German News Bureau announced that vom Rath was expected to die.⁶ In Berlin, 'an oppressive anxiety like that felt before a storm' prevailed that morning, as the journalist Ruth Andreas-Friedrich noted in her diary. When she asked Heinrich Mühsam, a colleague who had been dismissed and whom she had stopped to see on her way to work, whether vom Rath was likely to die, he replied: 'Of course he will die. Otherwise the whole thing would make no sense ... Don't you know that political incidents usually occur only when everything has been prepared down to the last detail?'⁷

When at about 4.30 p.m. on 9 November vom Rath finally succumbed to his injuries, practically the entire state and party leadership had assembled in Munich. On the preceding evening, Hitler had inaugurated the annual commemoration of the failed putsch of 1923 by giving a speech in the Bürgerbräukeller. The programme for 9 November included an 'informal gathering of the NSDAP leadership' at the City Hall, whose concluding high point was to be the swearing-in of new SS units in front of the Feldherrenhalle at midnight. Just how the news of the death of vom Rath - who was now referred to only as an envoy or party member - reached Munich by telephone between 5 p.m. and 6 p.m. is not absolutely clear. What is clear is that at the party leadership's dinner in the Rathaus, Hitler had an intense conversation with Goebbels, who was seated next to him.⁸ Immediately afterwards, Hitler

surprised the other guests by leaving and having himself driven to his apartment on the Prinzregentenplatz, where he prepared for the midnight ceremony. He obviously considered it more prudent not to be directly connected with the speech that Goebbels was about to deliver.⁹ He could count on his propaganda minister. Hitler's preference for blanket verbal authorization, leaving precise intentions open to interpretation, was 'typical of the unstructured and non-formalized style of reaching decisions in the Third Reich'.¹⁰

At this time Goebbels was on top form. On 10 November, when Ernst vom Rath's life still hung by a thread, Goebbels wrote 'If only we could release the wrath of the people right now', as if he couldn't wait for the diplomat to die.¹¹ Did the cynical Goebbels really believe in the wrath of the people? Didn't he see it instead as an instrument that had only to be correctly manipulated? An SD memo of January 1937 concerning the situation of Jews in Germany had stated that 'the wrath of the people is the most effective means of depriving Jews of their sense of security... . This is all the more comprehensible from a psychological point of view because Jews have learned a great deal from the pogroms of recent centuries and fear nothing more than a hostile mood that can turn against them at any time.'¹² In November 1938, 'the wrath of the people' (*Volkszorn*) was one of Goebbels's favourite expressions. When the right moment comes, he noted on the day after the riots, it would be necessary to 'let things take their course'.¹³

Goebbels knew that by instigating a pogrom he could score points with Hitler. A large-scale action against the Jews would help him, put him once again at the centre of things and strengthen his position (which had been weakened by his affair with the actress Lida Baarova) in the delicate power mechanism of the Third Reich. Among all the Nazi

paladins, Goebbels certainly had the keenest ear for Hitler's obsession with driving Jews out of Germany by any means. As they sat cosily with the old guard in Hitler's favourite café the previous evening, discussing 'all possible questions' until 3 a.m., the two of them had probably already arrived at an agreement on their options with regard to the attack in Paris.

In the particular situation of 9 November, Goebbels sensed a unique opportunity to steal a march on his greatest rival, Hermann Göring, who had taken over one office after another and since 1936 had enjoyed enormous power as plenipotentiary for the Four-Year Plan. Göring had recently proven his ruthlessness in the Blomberg-Fritsch affair and in the annexation of Austria; but during the Sudeten crisis of late September, he had for the first time been among those who hesitated and urged caution. Since then his star had been on the decline. Göring had repeatedly spoken out against anti-Jewish demonstrations because they only further aggravated the Reich's economic difficulties, particularly with regard to the currency problem.

'Gentlemen, I have had enough of these demonstrations,' he said indignantly and with his characteristic theatricality during the extraordinary meeting he called two days after the pogroms. 'They do not harm the Jews, but rather me, because as the final authority I am responsible for the entire economy.'¹⁴

Four years earlier, in the run-up to the Nuremberg party rally where the 'race laws' were promulgated, there had already been conflict between authorities regarding the 'Jewish question'. Under the motto 'This city must become free of Jews (*judenfrei*)', almost every German community had come up with its own perversities, and the attacks on Jews had been threatening to get out of hand. On 20 August 1935, Hjalmar Schacht, then the Reich's Minister of Economic Affairs, had called a meeting of leaders at which

he complained about the 'serious damage to the German economy being done by the exaggerations and excesses of anti-Semitic propaganda'.¹⁵ Consequently, interior minister Wilhelm Frick issued a statement informing regional governments that 'individual actions against Jews ... must absolutely stop.'¹⁶ However, the head of the Gestapo, Reinhard Heydrich, had already decreed that 'in order to collect information regarding Jews in Germany ... a Jewish registry should be drawn up.'¹⁷ In the regulations issued in August 1935, three basic tendencies of the November pogroms are already clearly foreshadowed: the centralization of state intervention, the prevention of spontaneous actions and the protection of German economic interests.

All the steps taken served one and the same goal, about which there was general agreement: the Jews had to be expelled. 'Jews have to be expelled from Germany, indeed from Europe as a whole,' Goebbels wrote after a long conversation with Hitler at the end of November 1937. 'It will take a while, but it will and must happen. The Führer has made up his mind on this point.'¹⁸ The question was only in what way this goal could best be achieved without inflicting too much damage on Germans. Moreover, the state and party leadership were confident that in implementing the necessary measures they could count on the support of the population.

At the previously mentioned meeting with the minister for economic affairs in August 1935, Adolf Wagner, the Gauleiter of Munich-Upper Bavaria, acting as the Führer's representative, put on record his view that 80 per cent of the population called for 'a solution to the Jewish question in line with the party's programme; the Reich government has to respond to this demand, otherwise it will suffer a loss of authority.' To reassure other participants in the

meeting who were less inclined to take immediate action, he added that 'this need not happen all at once.'¹⁹

With the annexation of Austria in March 1938, the 'Jewish question' acquired a new dynamic, and suddenly everything had to move very fast. Of the approximately 520,000 Jews who had been living in Germany in 1933, only about 360,000 were still in the country; now there were in addition some 190,000 Austrian Jews (of whom about 170,000 lived in Vienna). The Germans immediately increased the pressure. In a very short time, they not only implemented in Austria all the laws and regulations that had for the past five years made life increasingly difficult for Jews in the Old Reich, but also introduced numerous new rules to coerce the Jews to hand over all their possessions and then leave the country. In the spring of 1938, there were further, even more violent, riots and, in the context of the so-called 'June action', 1,500 Jews were sent to concentration camps. When at the international conference on refugees organized by the United States in Evian in July, all of the thirty-two participating states declared more or less openly that they could not increase their immigration quotas, the German press commented scornfully on the conference's failure and let it be known that, since no other country would accept the Jews, no meddling in the question of how Germans dealt with the 'Jewish problem' would be tolerated. In August, the first Central Office for Jewish Emigration was set up under the direction of Adolf Eichmann.

It was against the background of the stepping-up of anti-Jewish measures in Austria and the successful expulsion of the 16,000 Polish Jews at the end of October, the prestige won in Munich, the inaction by the international community, and also the growing pressure among party members, especially in the ranks of the SA and the Hitler Youth, to finally get rid of the Jews that, on the evening of 9

November, Hitler unleashed his propaganda minister. The fanatical thirty-minute hate speech that Goebbels delivered (and of which no verbatim record has been preserved) before the party bigwigs who had gathered in the great hall of the Munich Rathaus was received, as Goebbels himself noted in his diary, with thunderous applause: 'They all immediately dashed to the telephones. Now the people will act.'²⁰

In his speech, Goebbels had made it clear that the Nazi party would have to 'organize and implement' everything, but should not 'outwardly appear to be the instigator of the demonstrations'.²¹ The district and local group leaders and SA leaders throughout the Reich were instructed to set the corresponding actions in motion - and these instructions were understood to mean also that 'Jewish blood should flow.'²² In the meantime, Hitler received the national leader of the SS and the head of the German police in his apartment on Prinzregentenplatz. Himmler was obviously surprised. Although he had himself given an inflammatory anti-Jewish speech to the SS Standarte 'Deutschland' the preceding evening - 'We will force them out with unparalleled ruthlessness'²³ - he found it annoying that Goebbels had been quicker to seize the opportunity and had been able to use the Paris attack to further his own interests. In this awkward situation, Himmler fell back on his position as supreme protector of order: a clever tactic that led to the SS - and in particular the head of the secret police and the SD, Reinhard Heydrich - emerging from the events of November as the great winners. When Heydrich, who had been awakened in his hotel room around 11.30 p.m. so that he could examine reports from the Munich Gestapo, asked how the police and the SS should respond, Hitler told him - on Himmler's advice, according to Ian Kershaw²⁴ - that the SS should keep out of it, but that the

police should ensure that the pogrom was carried out in an orderly way.

Heydrich did not have much time to transform his orders into specific actions. His telegraph to all police chiefs, which went out around 1.20 a.m. - 'Flash, urgent, pass on immediately!' - was completely unambiguous. The police forces received orders not to hinder the 'demonstrations' likely to occur throughout the Reich, and to intervene only if German property was endangered. 'Businesses and apartments belonging to Jews are only to be destroyed, not plundered.' The police actions were to be led by the local state police departments or by security police inspectors, who were also expected to see to it that 'as soon as the events of this night allow the use of the regular officials', as many Jews as 'could be accommodated in the available holding cells' were immediately arrested. At first, only male Jews who were healthy, not too old, and if possible, wealthy, were to be arrested and transported to the concentration camps concerned after consultation with camp officials.²⁵ Barely 64 hours had passed since the shooting in Paris.

On the morning of 10 November, synagogues all over Germany were put to the torch. The fire brigade was allowed to intervene only if the fires threatened to spread to neighbouring buildings. Thousands of apartments were demolished during that night, and thousands of Jewish businesses were smashed to bits in the course of the following day. The broken glass that piled up in the streets gave the night the ironically euphemistic name of *Kristallnacht*, 'the night of broken glass'. It is estimated that 400 people were murdered or driven to suicide. About 40,000 Jews were arrested, and 30,000 of them were sent to Dachau, Buchenwald or Sachsenhausen,²⁶ where they were subjected to the cruellest harassment. Those who were lucky enough to be able to prove that they had the necessary visas and were about to emigrate were released;

the number of Jews who died in concentration camps as a result of the 'November action' is estimated to be about 1,000. Whereas in the first half of 1938 only about 14,000 Jews had emigrated from Germany, the number of emigrants now rose dramatically. By the end of 1939, about 100,000 Jews had left Germany, and another 100,000 had left Austria. Most of those who remained were poor or old.

During lunch in the Osteria in the Schwabing area of Munich, Goebbels gave the Führer a report. 'He approves of everything. His views are very radical and aggressive.'²⁷ Others were less enthusiastic; Göring, who had travelled back from Berlin the previous night and had not been informed, telephoned Hitler to complain about the enormous economic damage that had been incurred. While Goebbels was busy winding down the actions before 'mob rule took over'²⁸ and instructing the press to play down the events - 'no big headlines on page one, no pictures for the time being'²⁹ - Göring was preparing for the Saturday morning meeting, at which the next steps to be taken against the Jews were to be coordinated with account taken of economic considerations. The declared goal of the 12 November meeting, which lasted several hours and in which representatives of all the departments concerned participated - over a hundred persons from the interior, finance, economic affairs and justice ministries, from the Foreign Office, the Reichsbank, and so on - was the complete exclusion of Jews from German economic life. The idea of the new measures was to isolate them and put them under pressure so they would be forced to leave Germany rapidly and in large numbers. Heydrich had had Eichmann specially brought in from Vienna in order to report on his experiences there.

The decisions made on 12 November can once again be traced in essence back to Hitler himself. In 1936, in his

memo on the Four-Year Plan, he had already demanded that 'the whole of Jewry be held responsible for all the damage individual examples of this criminality have done to the German economy and thus to the German people'.³⁰As retribution for Gustloff's murder, he suggested that Jews be subjected to collective punishment, but at the time this plan was not realized because of bureaucratic reservations expressed by the ministries, and especially because of Göring's concerns. Now Göring took up the idea and on 12 November issued an order to the effect that the Jews, as 'atonement' for their hostile attitude toward the German people, should pay a fine of one billion Reichsmarks. The no less obscene idea that the Jews themselves not only had to see to it that the damage was repaired but also that all monies proceeding from insurance claims were to be confiscated by the Reich was also Hitler's; it occurred to him while he was lunching with Goebbels at the Osteria. Göring implemented this proposal in his own 'Order on the restoration of the appearance of the streets by Jewish businesses'.

Whereas the two speakers at the 12 November meeting, Göring and Goebbels, sought to outdo each other in outlining perverse means of harassment - should Jews continue to be able to walk in German forests? What restrictions should be put on their use of railway sleeping cars? - Heydrich reminded them of the question they were there to discuss. He asked whether, in view of the fact that it would probably be eight or ten years before the last Jews left Germany, it wouldn't make sense to provide them with a special badge. Göring ridiculed this suggestion - 'A uniform!' - and recommended for his part the construction of ghettos, which Heydrich rejected, however, pointing to the impoverishment and criminality to which that would lead. This went on, back and forth, for hours: in its brutality, cynicism and bureaucratic laziness in conceiving

regulations whose sole goal was to destroy the lives of hundreds of thousands of people, the record of the meeting on 12 November 1938 was every bit the equal of the Wannsee conference in January 1942.³¹

In the early afternoon, as the meeting was about to end, Göring indulged in a grim prediction of what German Jews could expect: 'If within any foreseeable future the German Reich is involved in some conflict with another nation, it goes without saying that here in Germany we will think first of all of settling accounts with the Jews.' Two and a half months later Hitler, in his notorious, often-cited speech delivered on 30 January 1939, which he later liked to claim was given on the day war broke out, said almost the same thing, but with significantly more aggressiveness and the crucial difference that he then immediately named 'world Jewry' as the instigator of a possible war: 'If international Jewish financiers inside and outside Europe should succeed in plunging nations once again into a world war, then the result will be not the bolshevization of the world and thus the victory of Jewry but rather the annihilation of the Jewish race in Europe.'³² It was this poisonous symbiosis of madness and calculation that made it possible for the death of a legation secretary to become the pretext for the greatest organized pogrom in modern history.

'I am reminded of what an Aryan in a Düsseldorf cinema experienced,' we read at the end of the memoirs of Harry Kaufman, a young man who was able to emigrate in late 1938. 'It was in 1937, when people were not yet so firmly convinced that Jews were to blame for everything. An insurance company was showing a promotional film about the consequences of a traffic accident. After the accident took place, on the screen there appeared in large letters the question: "And who is to blame for this?" A joker in the cinema shouted: "The Jews!" People laughed so hard that

for several minutes you couldn't hear a word.'³³ The mirth in the cinema gives us a good idea of the country's mood on the eve of the pogroms: most people didn't know what to make of anti-Semitic agitation. It probably wouldn't do any harm to reduce somewhat the influence of Jews in economic life, as the government had already been successfully doing for years, and maybe it would actually be best for the Jews to leave Germany, sooner or later. But why this fervour, this strident rabble-rousing? After all, the Nazis' conspiracy theories were sometimes positively ludicrous. The joker in the cinema had put it in a nutshell.

How the November pogroms were received by the German people and to what extent they approved of them is still a subject of controversy. Can the indifference that according to sources characterized the great majority of the population already be seen as an indication of 'passive complicity' (Kulka/Rodrigue), or does the awkward silence point instead to an 'embarrassed distance' (Frank Bajohr)?

³⁴ In endeavouring to arrive at a balanced judgement it should not be forgotten - as Peter Longerich recently emphasized again - that in the Third Reich there was no such thing as public opinion built on the free expression of personal views. Under National Socialism, 'public opinion' always meant 'the public opinion staged, controlled and manipulated by the regime'. In this area, 'in which the guiding principles and interpretive models were reproduced', it was very dangerous to confide one's views to another person unless one was sure that this other person shared them.³⁵

As a result, there are few documents that provide reliable answers to the question as to what most Germans thought in November 1938. The government-commissioned reports on the situation and public opinion, including reports made by local offices regarding the success of the measures