

**Joseph Goebbels's diary entries concerning the evening of 9 November 1938
and the instructions for the November pogroms¹**

Diary of Joseph Goebbels, entry for 10 November 1938

10 November 1938. (Thurs.)

Yesterday: the traditional march from the Bürgerbräu[keller] to the Feldherrnhalle and then to the Königlicher Platz.² It is a grey November day. Vast crowds of people line the streets. At the Königlicher Platz, the great remembrance ceremony. Very dignified and impressive.

Lengthy talk with Ley.³ He is a good chap. He too gets fed up at times and longs for peace and quiet. He greatly bemoans the fact that he so rarely rubs shoulders with the Führer.

Lutze⁴ complains mightily about the SS. Not altogether unjustly, but partly out of professional envy, too. Himmler has certainly got all sorts of things going.

At the hotel, work: the development of radio and wire broadcasting should now begin in earnest. I now demand precise deadlines.

The theatres in the Sudetengau are calling for large subsidies. I grant them straight away, so that they can start performing again to some extent.

Now, in contrast to earlier times, too many people are concerning themselves with the press.

That does no good either. I order a little corrective action to be taken.

The diplomat Rath in Paris who was shot by the Jew is still in a very serious condition. The German press is really going to town.

The speech of the Führer in the Bürgerbräu evokes quite a strong response at home and abroad.

Helldorff orders the Jews in Berlin to be disarmed completely.⁵ They will surely be in for quite a few other things as well.

1 RGVA, Goebbels papers, fond 1477, published in *Die Tagebücher von Joseph Goebbels*, ed. Elke Fröhlich, part 1: *Aufzeichnungen 1923–1941*, vol. 6: *Aug. 1938–Juni 1939* (Munich: Saur, 1998), pp. 179–181. This document has been translated from German.

2 The NSDAP organized annual remembrance ceremonies and cavalcades to commemorate those killed during the Beer Hall Putsch on 9 Nov. 1923. The attempted coup had been crushed by the police at the Feldherrnhalle in Munich.

3 Dr Robert Ley (1890–1945), chemist; worked from 1921 to 1927 at Bayer and for IG Farben; joined the NSDAP and the SA in 1925; NSDAP Gauleiter for Rhineland-South, 1925–1931; several jail terms and fines for antisemitic agitation; from 1933 Reichsleiter of the German Labour Front; in 1945 a defendant at the Nuremberg Trials; took his own life.

4 Viktor Lutze (1890–1943), retailer; joined the NSDAP in 1922 and the SA in 1923; from 1928 SA-Oberführer for the Ruhr and deputy Gauleiter for the Ruhr; from 1933 chief of police in Hanover and Oberpräsident of Hanover; from 1934 successor to the murdered Ernst Röhm as SA chief of staff; died in a car crash.

5 Correctly: Helldorff. On the occasion of the assassination attempt on vom Rath, the Berlin chief of police announced the results of gun control measures affecting the Jewish population of Berlin that had been introduced during the weeks previously: *Westfälische Landeszeitung: Rote Erde*, 9 Nov. 1938. See Doc. 141, 11 Nov. 1938.

Moscow proclaims world revolution once again. Under the great and wise World Marshal Stalin. But all that rings so hollow. Moscow forfeited all its prestige in the Czech crisis.⁶ That can no longer be made good with rhetoric.

Spent the afternoon working on my new book.⁷ I'm really enjoying it now.

Dietrich⁸ grumbled about the article by Berndt,⁹ which was written at my behest. But [he grumbled] more about Berndt. Good that Berndt is going to a new department.

In Kassel and Dessau, large demonstrations against the Jews, synagogues set ablaze, and shops demolished. In the afternoon, the death of the German diplomat vom Rath is reported. Now it's a fait accompli, however.

I go to the Party reception in the Old Town Hall. Huge amount going on. I brief the Führer on the matter. He decides: let the demonstrations continue. Pull back the police. Let the Jews feel the anger of the people for once. That is right. I immediately give corresponding instructions to the police and Party. Then I briefly address the Party leaders along the same lines. Vigorous applause. Everybody dashes to the telephones right away. Now the people will take action.

A few half-hearted men falter. But I keep yanking everybody up again. We must not let this cowardly murder go unanswered. Let things take their course for once. The Hitler Shock Troop gets going right away in order to clean up Munich. That happens, too, straight away. A synagogue is smashed to bits. I try to save it from being set on fire. But that fails.¹⁰

Meanwhile I talk with Schwarz¹¹ about financial matters. With Streicher about the Jewish question. With Ribbentrop about foreign policy. He too is of the view that one can now pocket Czechoslovakia without resorting to violence. But one must go about it adroitly. Chvalkovski¹² is willing. Whether the others are, too, is not yet known.

6 The Soviet government had pledged its support to Czechoslovakia in the conflict over the Sudeten region, but ultimately it failed to intervene.

7 Probably Joseph Goebbels, *Wetterleuchten: Aufsätze aus der Kampfzeit*, ed. Georg-Wilhelm Müller (Munich: Zentralverlag der NSDAP, 1939).

8 Dr Otto Dietrich (1897–1952), journalist and politician; joined the NSDAP in 1929 and the SS in 1932; Reich press chief of the NSDAP, 1931–1945; from 1934 vice president of the Reich Press Chamber; from 1938 press chief of the Reich government and state secretary in the Reich Ministry of Public Enlightenment and Propaganda; in 1949 sentenced in the ministries trial in Nuremberg to seven years in prison; released in 1950.

9 Alfred-Ingemar Berndt (1905–1945), journalist; joined the NSDAP in 1923, the SA in 1924, and the SS in 1934; from 1933 adjutant of Reich Press Chief Otto Dietrich; head of the Press Department in the Reich Ministry of Public Enlightenment and Propaganda from 1936, of the Literature Department from 1938, of the Radio Broadcasting Department from 1939, and of the Propaganda Department from 1941; from 1943 on Rommel's staff with the Africa Corps; presumed killed in an air raid.

10 The synagogue of the Eastern Jewish congregation Linath Hazedek Agudas Achim on Reichenbachstraße and the synagogue of the Ohel Jakob congregation on Herzog-Rudolf-Straße in Munich were destroyed during the night of the pogroms on 9/10 Nov. 1938.

11 Probably Franz Xaver Schwarz (1875–1947), local public official; joined the NSDAP in 1922; from 1925, Reich treasurer of the NSDAP; from 1935, as a Reichsleiter, directly responsible to Hitler; in 1943 SS-Obergruppenführer; died in 1947 in the Regensburg internment camp.

12 Correctly: František Chvalkovský (1885–1945), lawyer and diplomat; worked as a lawyer, 1908–1914; from 1920 in the Czech diplomatic service; envoy in Tokyo and Washington and from 1927 to 1932 in Berlin; minister of foreign affairs, 1938–1939; envoy of the protectorate in Berlin, June 1939–1945; died in a bombing raid in Berlin.

With Wagner to the Gau.¹³ In addition, I put out a concise circular letter stating what is permitted and what is not.¹⁴ Wagner gets cold feet and fears for his Jewish shops. But I am not deterred. Meanwhile the Shock Troop does its work. And it makes a good job of it at that. I instruct Wächter¹⁵ in Berlin to have the synagogue on Fasanenstraße smashed to pieces. He just keeps saying: 'Honourable assignment.'

SS swearing-in ceremony in front of the Feldherrnhalle. At midnight. Very solemn and impressive. The Führer speaks to the men. Tugging at the heartstrings.

I want to go to the hotel, then I see blood red in the sky. The synagogue is burning. Straight away to the Gau. Nobody knows anything there yet. We order the fire to be extinguished only to the extent necessary for the surrounding buildings. Otherwise, let it burn to the ground. The Shock Troop does tremendous work. Now the reports come in from all over the Reich: 50, then 7[5], synagogues are burning. The Führer has ordered that 2[5,000]–30,000 Jews must be arrested immediately. That will go down well. They are meant to see that our patience is now spent.

Wagner is still somewhat lukewarm. But I stick to my guns. Wächter reports to me that the order has been carried out. We go with Schaub¹⁶ to the Artists' Club to wait for further reports. In Berlin, 5, then 15, synagogues burn down. Now the people's anger is raging. For tonight, nothing more can be done against it. And I do not intend do anything, either. Let things play out.

Schaub has really got going. His old Shock Troop past is revived.

When I drive to the hotel, the windowpanes rattle. Bravo! Bravo! In all the big cities, the synagogues are burning. German property is not endangered.

At the moment, nothing specific can be done any more. I try to get a few hours' sleep.

Early in the morning the first reports come in. There was tremendous rampaging, as was to be expected. The entire nation is in uproar. This dead man will cost the Jews dear. The beloved Jews will think twice in future before simply shooting down German diplomats.

And that was the whole point of the exercise.

13 Adolf Wagner (1890–1944), mining director and publisher; joined the NSDAP in 1922; in 1923 took part in the Beer Hall Putsch; from 1929 Gauleiter of Munich-Upper Bavaria; from 1933 Bavarian minister of the interior and deputy governor; from 1942 no longer executed duties on account of ill health.

14 The Reich Propaganda Leadership sent telexes to the Gau propaganda leaders at 0:30 and 1:40. Their content has not survived, but they presumably called for antisemitic attacks: Wolf-Arno Kropat, *'Reichskristallnacht'. Der Judenpogrom vom 7. bis 10. November 1938. Urheber, Täter, Hintergründe* (Wiesbaden: Kommission für die Geschichte der Juden in Hessen, 1997), p. 113.

15 Werner Wächter (b. 1902), travelling salesman; joined the NSDAP in 1922; from 1932 NSDAP Kreisleiter in Berlin; head of the regional office in District II (Berlin) for the Reich Ministry of Public Enlightenment and Propaganda, 1935–1945; from 1937 in the Reich Propaganda Office in Berlin; head of the Propaganda Staff of the Reich Propaganda Leadership, 1942–1945; SA-Brigadeführer, 1944; arrested by the Soviets, 1945; probably executed in 1946.

16 Julius Schaub (1898–1967), non-dispensing pharmacist; joined the NSDAP in 1920; co-founder of the SS; took part in the Beer Hall Putsch in 1923; from 1933 Hitler's personal adjutant; after 1945 non-dispensing pharmacist in Munich.

I still have all sorts of work to do. Jannings wants to save his film by force.¹⁷ But I can't help him either.

The number of radio listeners has risen to more than 10 million. A fantastic result, which is quite gratifying.

I direct that prohibitions within the entire ministry may be declared only by me. Otherwise too much nonsense takes place.

There is a desire to hold commemorative events and write eulogies on the occasion of the 80th birthday of the Kaiser. I would be in agreement with that if the side that opposes the Kaiser could also have an equal chance to speak. But the reactionaries flinch at the thought of that.

In the elections in America, friends of Roosevelt [are] beaten in many cases. Heavy gains by the Republicans. But that says nothing yet against Roosevelt himself.¹⁸

London abandons the partition of Palestine.¹⁹ Nonetheless, the English will not succeed with that.

Speech by the Führer in the Bürgerbräu meets with a very aggressive response in London and Paris.²⁰ That was indeed to be expected. When one gives warmongers a rap on the knuckles, they shout out.

New reports rain down all morning long.

I deliberate our present measures with the Führer.

Let the violent actions continue or stop them?

That is now the question.

17 Emil Janenz, stage name Jannings (1884–1950), actor; after successes in German silent films, worked in Hollywood from 1926 to 1929; won an Oscar in 1928; appeared in films such as *Der Herrscher* (1937) and *Ohm Krüger* (1941); was awarded the Goethe Medal in 1939; after 1945 banned from performing. Presumably the reference here is to the filming of Hans Fallada's novel *Der eiserne Gustav*, on which Jannings worked for a long while, but without completing it.

18 In the 1938 congressional elections in the USA, the Republicans won 72 seats; the Democrats nevertheless retained the majority. Consequently, Roosevelt toned down his New Deal policy.

19 The Woodhead Commission appointed by the British government published a report on 9 Nov. 1938, opposing the partition of Palestine and favouring a drastic reduction of immigration.

20 *Le Figaro*, making reference to Hitler's speech on 9 Nov. 1938, wrote that the Reich was simply waiting for the most propitious moment to demand the return of the German colonies: 'L'Allemagne et les territoires sous mandat', *Le Figaro*, 9 Nov. 1938, p. 3. *The Times*, on 9 and 10 Nov. 1938, had reported on Hitler's warmongering, his attacks on Churchill, and his conjecture that Britain could become Germany's enemy if a change of government took place: 'Herr Hitler on Democracy', *The Times*, 9 Nov. 1938, p. 14; 'Future German Policy', *The Times*, 10 Nov. 1938, p. 16.