

DOC. 1

The writer Walter Tausk records his experiences in Breslau on 1 September 1939,  
the day the war broke out<sup>1</sup>

Diary of Walter Tausk,<sup>2</sup> entry for 1 September 1939

Friday, 1 September 1939

There is absolutely no doubt that it has started. Yesterday, for example, the entire Jewish hospital was evacuated without notice, apart from the gynaecology unit, hospices, and homes for the elderly, in order to free up 380 beds. While there has been rigorous cost-cutting at other hospitals in the city in recent weeks, here the Gestapo and the military were making a 'negative exception', i.e. they outdid themselves in their inhumanity; anyone who didn't have a fever was sent home, put out onto the street, or otherwise 'relocated' (some to private accommodation, some to the empty rooms of the Community hall on Wallstraße; serious and critical cases were moved to the gynaecology unit). Patients recovering from recent operations (e.g. appendixes) who were barely capable of being transported were evacuated; old people, over 80, who were supposed to live out their days in the converted attics of the hospital, were thrown out with all their possessions and moved in with the terminally ill: everything mixed up haphazardly, in addition the mad and the half-mad. And in the afternoon a long downpour, while the evacuation was under way. A preview of how things will be in the coming days, and of what 'Schittelhuber's war'<sup>3</sup> will bring for the unsuspecting mass of humanity.

*The prospects for my emigration are now zero. On 17 August the most important thing, the fare, was not paid out to me (see the papers attached)<sup>4</sup> and so I really am the victim of my 'dear co-religionists' (may Heaven continue to protect me from them) and my own impecuniousness.<sup>5</sup> Postal correspondence with England is no longer possible.<sup>6</sup>*

This morning, between around ¼ to 5 and 7, planes flew non-stop over the city; bombers, fighters, and other aircraft, all heading east. At 8:30 a.m. the caretaker appeared with a circular decree from the police: 'Get everything ready for sudden blackouts and air raids. Prepare water supplies, above all keep bomb shelters in good condition', etc.<sup>7</sup>

1 Biblioteka Uniwersytecka we Wrocławiu, Ako. 1949 KN 1351–1354. Published in Walter Tausk, *Breslauer Tagebuch 1933–1940*, ed. Ryszard Kincel ([East] Berlin: Rütten & Loening, 1975), pp. 229–230. This document has been translated from German.

2 Walter Tausk (1890–1941), trade representative and writer; converted from Judaism to Buddhism in 1917; wrote articles for Buddhist magazines; casual worker from 1933; deported from Breslau on 25 Nov. 1941 to Kaunas, where he was murdered; author of *Olaf Höris Tod: Skizze zu einer Vollmondphantasie* (1924).

3 Tausk means 'Schicklgruber'. Hitler's opponents commonly referred to him by his father's surname, as a way of pointing out his father's lower-class rural origins and extramarital birth, the latter being cause for suspicions about Jewish ancestry.

4 The enclosure is not in the file.

5 Walter Tausk had been attempting to emigrate since 1936. On 17 July 1939 he received an entry permit for Britain; the travel costs were to be paid by the Relief Association of German Jews.

6 The postal service to Britain was suspended on 1 Sept. 1939 for the entire duration of the war. In the middle and the end of that month, telegraph and telephone services were also suspended.

7 Tenth Implementing Regulation to the Air-Raid Protection Law, 1 Sept. 1939, *Reichsgesetzblatt*, 1939, I, pp. 1570–1572.

Eleven o'clock in the morning: from ten up to now a speech by 'him' broadcast from the Reichstag can be heard over the loudspeaker nearby. For years the same old story: no other nation and no other statesman is more innocent, more misunderstood, betrayed, and maligned than 'him' and 'his people'; no nation and no statesman so exclusively peace-loving, etc. The voice: gurgling, rasping, choking, droning, whining, beseeching, arousing sympathy, and then back to ranting, only to choke again soon after. And of course, everything is the Poles' fault.<sup>8</sup>

Then, of course, the Horst Wessel song was also sung: 'Comrades shot by the Red Front ... march in spirit within our ranks.'<sup>9</sup> This, despite the pact with the Russians.<sup>10</sup> Schittelhuber also laid down the dynastic sequence for the 'cast-iron 1,000-year Reich', 'in case something happens to me' (he wants to 'take to the field as an ordinary private'). After him, the private, comes Field Marshal Göring, and after him (in case of 'something happening') the former medical auxiliary Hess. The house droned with applause, as ever. – At the same time, the troops everywhere were already invading Poland.

8 In his speech to the Reichstag on 1 Sept. 1939, Hitler blamed Poland's alleged violation of the border for the outbreak of war: *Völkischer Beobachter* (Berlin edition), 2 Sept. 1939, pp. 1–2.

9 The full line is: 'Comrades shot by the Red Front and reactionaries / March in spirit within our ranks.' Horst Wessel had published the text of 'Die Fahne Hoch' ('Raise the Flag!') in 1929 in the NSDAP newspaper *Der Angriff*. After Wessel's violent death in Feb. 1930, the poem was set to music and became a kind of party anthem for the NSDAP.

10 Tausk means the German–Soviet Non-Aggression Pact of 23 August 1939.