



1938

Chapter One

1938: The Year of Fate

HERMANN SIMON

Kurt Jakob Ball-Kaduri, who in 1944–47 had already started to collect reports from the persecuted German Jews in Palestine and who deposited his own memoirs at the Yad Vashem Archive in Jerusalem, wrote the following about the year 1938: “From the start of 1938, one had the feeling that disaster was on the horizon, that we no longer had time for lengthy planning and preparation for emigration.”¹

If, before 1938, many Berlin Jews thought they could work around the uncomfortable circumstances, that feeling vanished at the start of 1938. Finally, it became clear to all that they would have to leave the place they called home. Yet in many cases, those affected saw little chance of emigrating. Emigration required entrance visas to another country, and these were by no means easy to obtain. The visas required financial guarantees from relatives or friends living in the countries concerned, and not every Jew in Germany had such connections. Nazi laws, moreover, made it extremely difficult to transfer money and other assets abroad. Many Jews simply did not have the necessary amount of property and were unable to raise the travel expenses—even in the rare cases in which one could pay in German currency.

Early March 1938 saw the enactment of the Nazi “Law on the Legal Status of Jewish Religious Associations,” which stripped Germany’s Jewish Communities of their status as religious organizations. Berlin’s Community now became an association and was registered as such. “This law,” Ball-Kaduri noted, “shook up most Jews terribly. Actually it was not surprising that the law was implemented. . . . Remarkable, rather, was the fact that the Communities had been allowed status [as an official religious community] for so many years under the Nazi regime. . . . Nonetheless, the loss of this status made a terrible impression. Everyone now knew that the last hour of German Jewry had sounded, that this was the beginning of the end, and that one could no longer expect a slow development but

instead a rapid sequence of events.” Berlin’s Jews, too, were desperate, and “a deep wave of pessimism spread among them.”²

Harassment

Ball-Kaduri reported on raids in areas of the city where Jews often assembled, including a trap set up on the busy shopping street, the Kurfürstendamm: “If a passer-by breached certain pedestrian codes—for example by cutting diagonally across the street instead of crossing at right angles, or starting to cross at a yellow light instead of waiting for it to turn green—he would be stopped. Aryans got off with a warning, while Jews were taken to the police station and kept there overnight, verbally abused and sometimes mistreated.”³

This kind of bullying became more and more frequent over the course of the year, and not only on the Kurfürstendamm. There were several pedestrian “traps” in Berlin. One of them was at the junction of Berliner Allee and Lothringenstrasse in the Weissensee district—the intersection at the approach to the Jewish cemetery. The Jewish Community put up a large enamel sign warning its visitors not to jaywalk “for their own good.” The sign, which has been preserved, was mounted on a stand at the cemetery’s exit. When precisely it was placed there is not known, but it must have been after August 1939—when the Community was forced to append the initials “e.V.” (*eingetragener Verein*, “registered association”) to its name. As early as September 1938, the Jewish Community’s board was urgently reminding people to “observe road traffic regulations.” “Members of the Community have been punished with severe fines for breaching road traffic regulations,” it announced in the *Berliner Gemeindeblatt* that month. “If the person concerned is unable to pay, there is prison instead of a fine—a punishment that can, in any case, be imposed in all cases deemed serious. We are thus publishing the road traffic regulations for pedestrians and drawing the special attention of our Community members to the fact that they should follow the regulations to the letter. In particular, it should not be overlooked that the road may only be crossed on the green light, and that it is forbidden to cross when the light is still yellow.”⁴ There followed an extract from the road traffic regulations concerning the “pedestrian code.”

Hans Reichmann, the syndic of the Central Association of German Citizens of Jewish Faith (Centralverein deutscher Staatsbürger jüdischen Glaubens) described similar traps set up during the months of June and July 1938:

The smear campaign stopped.⁵ The word was now that “the Jewish question is being solved by law.” How many times have we heard that already! The Berlin

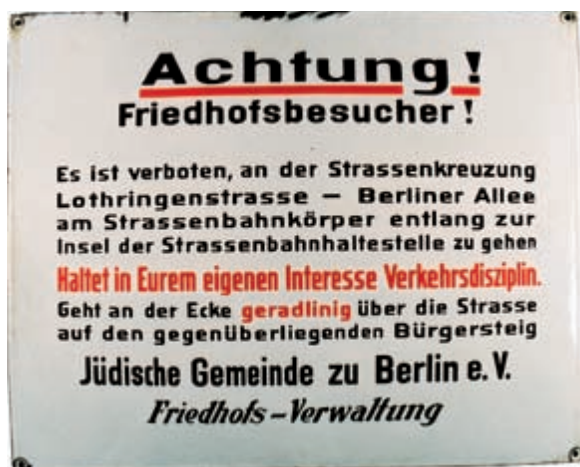


Figure 1.1 Sign posted at the entrance to the Jewish Cemetery in Weissensee

police ordered that special Jewish license plates be put on cars to discourage Jews from driving. Detectives stopped those violating traffic regulations at main traffic points. Traps were set up in front of the Jewish hospital on Iranische Strasse and at the crossing in front of the Jewish cemetery in Weissensee to catch Jewish pedestrians jaywalking. They were fined by the police—indeed, given the highest 150 Reichsmark penalty, while Aryan offenders had to pay one Reichsmark. We searched until 8 P.M. for an employee of the Philo publishing house who had left his apartment [for work] at 3 P.M. but had not arrived by 3.15 P.M. We sought in vain for him at hospitals, at the missing persons center, at the police stations. The notorious police station on Grolmanstrasse lied to us, saying that he wasn't there. He turned up that evening. He had been caught failing to observe a traffic light, and for this Grolmanstrasse made him sit there for five hours. . . . Then came prosecution. This, too, was a contribution to the legal resolution of the Jewish question.⁶

As Ball-Kaduri relates, all aspects of Jewish life in the city were particularly tense in 1938. “Cultural life in the Jewish Cultural Union [Kulturbund], in orchestral organizations, and so forth, continued. But in a forced way. One constantly had to reckon with arrests.”⁷ Reichmann recalls:

Throughout the whole summer there were raids on Jewish cafes and restaurants. . . . The notorious police chief Schneider would suddenly appear and seal off these establishments with a contingent of police cars, police constables, and criminal police officers. He would then make harmless visitors show their identity papers, knock the cigarettes out of the mouths of elderly people, put handcuffs on anyone who protested, and then race off to [the police station at] Alexanderplatz with his booty of thirty, fifty, or sixty people. There the captured were held for

days, even weeks—because the Jewish question is of course now being solved “legally.” No Jewish establishment, not even an isolated restaurant, was safe from these lightening raids.⁸

A range of Nazi laws and regulations passed in the course of the year made the lives of the Jews ever more difficult and contributed to considerable uncertainty about what would come next. Two striking examples were the law requiring the registration of Jewish assets (passed April 26) and the requirement that all Jewish-owned firms to be marked as Jewish (passed June 14).

Certainly, many saw the second supplementary decree on the Implementation of the Law on the Amendment of Family and First Names enacted on August 17, 1938, as particularly humiliating. The law stipulated that as of January 1, 1939, the names Sara (for women) and Israel (for men) be affixed by default to any Jew whose first name was not included on an official list of allegedly “Jewish” first names. This appended list had been issued by the Ministry of the Interior on August 18, 1938, and comprised 185 male and 91 female names.⁹ The fact that Jews had to register the name change in person with the authorities was yet another form of harassment.

Interestingly, the list contained very few Biblical names. In a May 1986 lecture given at the Jewish Museum in Eisenstadt, Austria, Marie Simon pointed out that in this compilation of names “one can see the discriminatory intention . . . to brand the Jews with names that were displeasing, even repulsive.” Yet “this intention was not thoroughly realized.” The list reveals “a chaotic variety of forms, which not only suggests that heterogeneous sources were probably used but also that various people contributed to the lists of names, from which the index was then compiled—a selection of the strangest names.”¹⁰ Marie Simon recalled her reaction to the regulation as a pupil at the Jewish school on Wil-snacker Strasse: “When the supplementary names . . . were imposed on all Jews in 1938, this measure, although despicable, provoked laughter among us. The Jewish women had been elevated to nobility—Sara means ‘princess.’ The men were honored as ‘fighters for God.’”¹¹

Dress Rehearsals

In the next chapter of this volume, Christian Dirks examines in detail the so-called *Juni-Aktion*, the Nazi roundup of “asocials” that took place in the spring and summer of 1938 and included the arrest of about 1,500 Berlin Jews. In the course of the campaign Jewish shops were vandalized and smeared with slogans.

Suffice to say here that all Jews with previous offenses—and this included those who had been punished by the police for breaching road traffic regulations—were considered “asocial.”

Reproduced in Dirks’s article is a series of photographs acquired by the Centrum Judaicum in the 1980s depicting some of the vandalism that took place during the *Juni-Aktion*.¹² My maternal grandfather, Hermann Jalowicz, a lawyer whose practice was at Prenzlauer Strasse 19a, noted the following in his unpublished diary entries for June 22 and 27, 1938: “Outside children are smearing slogans on the doors and windows of Jewish shops. Later, other Jewish signs were also painted—the nameplates of the Jacobis, Egers, and Michelsohns, for example—and mine as well. After a few days, the policeman from our station came and demanded that we clean the signs. A long discussion with the Berlin authorities. The result: the Jews cleaned up what others had defaced.”¹³

This comment by Reichmann was surely on the mark: “Since June, the Jews have had no peace. Over the summer they have lost their sense of feeling for nature. We no longer notice that the sun is shining; it no longer warms us. We have no sense of summery ease; the harmony of nature disturbs us. We are wounded, but our wounds are invisible. We are bleeding internally.”¹⁴

To a certain extent, the so-called *Polen-Aktion* orchestrated by the Nazis on October 27 and 28 served as another dress rehearsal for the pogrom that would take place on November 9, 1938, and for the later deportations as well. Some 17,000 Jews of Polish nationality all across Germany were affected. Many had been living there for decades. Others were born in Germany and had no links with Poland whatsoever. In the words of Trude Mauer, all “were put on remand pending deportation, to be transferred literally at the last minute to the country where they were still nationals but which was no home for them, and which indeed had sought to exclude them forever.”¹⁵ It is difficult to say how many Berlin Jews were affected by this deportation. The number was probably around six thousand. The first expellees were allowed to enter Poland; the rest were detained in the border areas, above all in Zbaszyn (Bentschen), under unbearable conditions.

“Disaster was in the air,” Ball-Kaduri recalls of the situation as it unfolded in the days that followed. “In early November came the news that the Jew Grüns-pan [Herschel Grynszpan] had shot the German diplomatic official von Rath [Ernst vom Rath] in Paris. A few days later came the news of his death . . . and the corresponding commentary in the German press. We now knew that terrible things would happen in the days ahead, but no one knew what. No one could conceive of what was to take place.”¹⁶



Figure 1.2 The Kurcer family, forced from Berlin during the *Polen-Aktion*, shown here in January 1941 in the Wolbrom Ghetto, Poland. *Left to right*: Jacob Kurcer, his wife Rosa Zuckermann Kurcer, and Adolf Kurcer



Figure 1.3 Jews forced from Berlin during the *Polen-Aktion* of October 1938 at a station on the Polish border

The Terminology of *Kristallnacht*

Since 1987, I have again and again asked eyewitnesses what term they use to refer to the events that unfolded on the night of November 9–10, 1938. When did certain names take hold? No one can really remember. Some call it the “pogrom,” others “the night of the burning synagogues,” others *Kristallnacht* or “the night of broken glass.” Increasingly frequent in Germany today is the linguistic hybrid *Reichskristallnacht*.

We still do not know when the terms *Kristallnacht* or *Reichskristallnacht* first came into use. At Berlin’s Centrum Judaicum, Christian Dirks recently raised the question in an Internet discussion forum for historians, eliciting a range of responses. It was suggested, for example, that the term *Reichskristallnacht* was a joke invented by the famous comedian Werner Finck similar to an epithet then circulating in reference to a popular starlet—*Reichswasserleiche* (Water-Corpse of the Reich)—who had twice “drowned” on the Nazi screen.¹⁷ But this theory has little credibility. Nor was the term *Kristallnacht* first used, as Michael Cullen suggests, by the Nazi economics minister Walther Funk in a notorious meeting held on November 12 at the Reich Ministry of Aviation.¹⁸

As Erika Ising wrote in 1989, “the reconstruction of the origin and occurrence of *Kristallnacht* [and] *Reichskristallnacht* is, as before, difficult. The written sources prove *Kristallnacht* to be the original term.” The author continues that this evidence has, “however, only been available since around 1950.”¹⁹

In fact, as early as November 1945 the newspaper *Berliner Zeitung* used the term “Kristallnacht” in scare quotes.²⁰ On November 8, 1945, another Berlin paper, the *Tagesspiegel*, reminded its readers that the days of the pogrom and “the subsequent days were commonly known as “Kristallwoche.”²¹ That *Kristallnacht* was already used in November 1945 suggests at least that the term was in use during the Nazi period. Up to now, there has been no firm evidence that the term was created by the Berlin vernacular of the time, and it is uncertain whether such evidence will ever come to light.

In a 1978 letter to the editors of the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, a Berlin reader who had worked near the New Synagogue in Mitte referred to the events of November 9–10 as “Kristallnacht, which we in Berlin called the *Tag der Deutschen Scherbe*”—the Day of the German Shard. This unique designation is especially interesting for its apparent irony.²²

The November Pogrom

What is certain is that the night from November 9 to 10 utterly changed the lives of Berlin’s Jews. At first it was only the synagogues, shops, and property that fell prey to an orgy of burning, looting, and destruction! Soon it would be people themselves. It must have been dreadful for the Jews to see their synagogues burn. Josef Goebbels personally gave the order to destroy the Fasanenstrasse synagogue in the western part of Berlin, as he notes in his diary.²³ Many eyewitnesses can still picture this burning synagogue, which smoldered for days. Over sixty years later, Ernst Günter Fontheim, a schoolboy at the time, recalled:

The place of worship was one of the most beautiful synagogues that I had ever seen, both from the outside and the inside. . . . On the morning of November 10, I went to school as usual. My neighborhood, Westend, had no Jewish shops. Nor did I pass any synagogues on my way to school. So I had no idea that a pogrom was underway. It was only when I arrived at school that I heard terrible accounts from my classmates, most of whom lived in Jewish neighborhoods—horror stories of smashed shop windows, plundered Jewish shops, burning synagogues and prayer rooms, and so forth. When the bell rang at 8 A.M., not a single teacher appeared, neither in our class nor in the classroom across the hall. That was unheard of. We just sat, dejected, in our classroom waiting.

Later . . . the door to the teachers’ room opened, and they all came into the classrooms with worried faces. Our teacher, Dr. Wollheim, entered our classroom, closed the door behind him, and said that the safety of the school could no longer be guaranteed and that the school would therefore be closed, effective immediately. We were all to go home. He gave us the following instructions: not to loiter

anywhere; to go straight home so that our parents would know that we were safe; also not to go in large groups, which could attract the attention of Nazi gangs, but instead in groups of two or, at most, three. . . .

The Adass-Schule was near Tiergarten station, and my route to school thus took me via S-Bahn from the Tiergarten station to the Heerstrasse station. I lived five minutes from the Heerstrasse station. After what I had heard, I naturally looked out the window, and between the Zoo and Savignyplatz stations, I could see the synagogue on Fasanenstrasse, right next to the S-Bahn overpass. This was the synagogue where I had had my bar mitzvah three years earlier.

As the train passed the synagogue, I could see a cloud of smoke rising like a column from the central dome—the synagogue had three domes. It gave me such a shock that I forgot everything Dr. Wollheim had told us. At the next stop I leapt from the train and ran back as fast as I could to see what was happening. On a pavement opposite the synagogue there was a crowd of people being held back by the police. There was a lot of anti-Semitic . . . shouting. I stood there in the middle, oblivious to the danger, completely hypnotized by the sight of the burning synagogue—that was all I could think about.

. . . The Adass School, like most of the other Jewish schools, never re-opened. My parents thought it wise, in view of emigration, that I learn English as quickly as possible.²⁴

As elsewhere in the city, firemen stood at the ready on Fasanenstrasse—but only to protect neighboring properties. The next morning when the fire had gone out they withdrew. A photo of the burning synagogue went out around the world and was printed on November 13–14 in the *Pariser Tageblatt*, a German-language newspaper founded by Germans in exile.

The great New Synagogue on Oranienburger Strasse, was on fire, too. Alexander Szanto, who worked for the Berlin Jewish Community between 1923 and 1939, reported in detail on the pogrom in his largely unpublished memoirs:

On the morning of November 10 . . . the telephone rang in my apartment. I recognized the voice of the agitated man at the other end as that of the porter [Julius Wainschel] at our Community quarters. “Don’t come. Fire at 30,” he shouted and hung up. It was not hard to decipher the meaning of this abbreviated message. The Community’s main office was at 29 Oranienburger Strasse and its Economic Aid Office was at number 31. Between them stood number 30, the proud and beautiful building of our venerable synagogue. Clearly, fire was raging there. But why was he warning me to stay away? Could nothing be saved? It was clear that the caller with the fearful voice, who had not dared to give his name, was not only himself at risk but also knew that anyone else who rushed to scene would also be in danger. He did not call to ask for help but to give a warning.²⁵

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Figure 1.4 The Fasanenstrasse synagogue in flames, November 10, 1938

Figure 1.5 A photograph of the burning Fasanenstrasse synagogue printed in the *Pariser Tageblatt*, November 13–14, 1938

Szanto further recalled that, after receiving more and more bad news, he arranged “a meeting at midday at a neutral place near the Community office” with Dr. Bruno Mendelsohn, head of the Economic Aid Office.

From there we learned more about the situation and contacted Heinrich Stahl, the chairman of the Community. We only got confirmation of news that had already come in. All of the Berlin synagogues had been set on fire; all had more or less been burned. Fire had ravaged only the interior of the main synagogue at 30 Oranienburger Strasse, from which the alarm had first been raised. The rapid intervention of the porter [Wainschel] and some other brave people had kept the flames from spreading. A fireman was in the building at the time. Next door, the premises of the Economic Aid Office appeared to be intact but were occupied by SS officers. In the meantime the SS were said to have left the main office on the



Figure 1.6 Kracher Ladies' Wear, Potsdamer Strasse 104 in Schöneberg



Figure 1.7 Destroyed business on Leipziger Strasse, November 19, 1938

other side of the synagogue, but we weren't sure because the gate was locked. The ground-floor windows had been smashed, the inside of the rooms demolished. Approaching via side streets, we then tried to get into the rear courtyard of the complex though a back entrance, and we managed to make contact with Wainschel, who told us that the SS officers were lounging . . . in the front offices and freely rewarding themselves with beer and wine after their "heroic actions" of the previous night. His wife [Berta, née Landbrand] and his children [Isidor, b. 1927, and Leo, b. 1930] were forced to wait on the "heroes," get them drinks, clean their boots. We could get little more information out of this completely broken man.²⁶



Figure 1.8 The café and confectionery of Isidor Dobrin on Spandauer Brücke 7

Figure 1.9 After the pogrom

A frequently printed photograph of the New Synagogue in flames bears in its caption the date of November 9–10, 1938, dates that, in fact, are incorrect. The photograph is a postwar fabrication. We know this because the synagogue’s small east dome, including the entire tower that supports it, is missing from the image. Seeing this photo for the first time in the late 1970s, I originally assumed that the picture had been taken during the [American] bombing raids that took place in 1943, on the night of November 22–23, 1943. However, in his 1990 book *Der beherzte Reviervorsteher* (The Courageous Policeman), Heinz Knobloch clearly demonstrates that smoke and flames were retouched to a postwar photograph taken in April 1948 by a photographer named Heinscher from the Haupttelegraphenamnt (Central Telegraph Office), which stood opposite the synagogue.²⁷ Elsewhere, I have written about how this came about.²⁸

Jewish shops, and not just synagogues, were devastated in the course of the pogrom. The city was a terrible sight, above all in the commercial districts, for example around the Kurfürstendamm in the western part of the city on Alexanderplatz in Mitte.²⁹

The Colombian ambassador Jaime Jaramillo Arango described the night’s events in a report to the Colombian president, Eduardo Santos: “To get a view of it by day . . . we set off about 10 A.M. to look at the scene of the events. We were of course curious to catch a glimpse of the horror on display in Berlin as well as in all other German towns: destruction, plunder, burnt-out synagogues, a

certain vigilantism—images that Dante himself could not have conceived, since the torments bear the refined mark of this century.”³⁰

The Secretary of the Colombian Embassy, Rafael Rocha-Schloss, described the situation to his Foreign Minister, Luis López de Mesa:

Yesterday afternoon and evening large groups of onlookers passed through the street and observed the scene of the destruction solemnly and in silence. One had the impression that an entire nation was ashamed.

JENŐ GHYCZY,
ADVISOR TO THE
HUNGARIAN
EMBASSY IN
GERMANY,
NOVEMBER 12,
1938

I can remember the so-called Kristallnacht very well, in fact. When that young man [Grynspan] shot the German diplomat official [vom Rath] in Paris, my father said, “If he dies, something terrible will happen.” We all knew that.

WALTER TICK (FORMERLY TIKOTZKI, SON OF THE PROPRIETOR OF THE WÄSCHE-TIKOTZKI BUSINESS ON ALTE SCHÖNHAUSER STR. 42), BERLIN, 1994

As we neared our apartment on the Kurfürstendamm [on the night of November 9–10], we were suddenly astonished to see a group of people armed with iron bars systematically smashing up all of the large shops on the street. The destruction was targeted at Jewish property, and, since I was driving slowly and discreetly, I could see how these barbaric acts were being carried out along the street. Some of the vandals smashed in the windows, as others forced their way in, destroying furnishings and throwing the goods into the street, where they were . . . looted. Here and there on the street corners, under cover of darkness, stood a few cars from which people wearing the black uniforms of the SS . . . gave orders and led the vile devastation. This spectacle at the heart of Berlin was truly horrific; shards of glass windows littered the pavement, goods were shredded, and the shops were filled with rubble. And so it was that, the next morning, Berlin’s population had to be present at the largest demonstration of vandalism of modern times.³¹

Rocha-Schloss’s Brazilian colleague, Themistokles de Graca Aranha, also reported on the devastation in the western part of the city:

I myself saw how shops were devastated in broad daylight on the Kurfürstendamm, one of Berlin’s main shopping streets, which contains most of the city’s luxury shops. Police stood by doing nothing, watching the frightful spectacle with approval. They seemed to regret that they couldn’t take part in the looting themselves. On the nonaction of the police, Dr. Goebbels has said that they did not feel they were in a position to intervene against this justified and spontaneous declaration of will on the part of the German people. After all, Hitler’s Minister continued, there was a justified revolt against the Jews; they were enemies of the German race.

It would be wrong and indeed ridiculous to comment on this assertion by the Reich Propaganda Minister, which shows the shamelessness expressed in such general declarations.³²

It was virtually impossible to resist the riots of the night from November 9 to 10, 1938. Nonetheless, there was some resistance, both on the part of foreign diplomats working in Germany and Berlin Jews themselves. The Colombian diplomats, for example, came into conflict with the authorities as they photographed damaged shops in the area around the Zoo station. When ordered to

hand over their camera, they bravely resisted—an incident that put severe strain on German-Colombian relations.³³

Recently, the resistance of two Jewish boys during the pogrom has been discovered. The teenagers rescued the Torah scrolls from their synagogue on Berlin's Markgraf-Albrecht-Strasse, the Friedenstempel (Temple of Peace). David Zwingermann (now David Hamilton) provided me with a detailed written account of these events. On the morning of November 10, Zwingermann, then aged fourteen, and his younger friend Horst Löwenstein discovered twelve undamaged Torah scrolls in the burned-out synagogue. They were still intact within the Holy Ark, which had very thick oak doors. The two boys carried the scrolls through the entrance into the street without anyone noticing. "Nazis in uniform, supporters and onlookers, were on the steps, the sidewalk, and in the street. . . . I tried to hail a taxi and managed to get one. Luckily the driver, a White Russian by birth, was willing to take the Torah scrolls." Zwingermann's mother subsequently arranged for the scrolls to be stored with a Jewish tea importer from England, and some time later they were returned to the congregation. The head of the congregation, Elieser Ehrenreich (1883–1941, d. Ravensbrück) learned of the action both from Rabbi Ladislaus Eliezer Berkovits (1908–92) and from a personal report by Zwingermann. He sought to make arrangements for the two boys to emigrate. He was only successful in the case of Zwingermann, who left Germany for England on December 2, 1938, with the first *Kindertransport* to England. Löwenstein was murdered in Riga on November 30, 1941.³⁴

Incidentally, these two boys were not the only ones who saved Torah scrolls from the Friedenstempel that day. The Berlin rabbi Max Nussbaum, who was able to emigrate in 1940 and later held office in Hollywood, California, stated in 1958 that he, too, had saved a Torah scroll from the ruined synagogue. Nussbaum had learned of the riots after a phone call in the wee hours of the morning from the American journalist Louis Paul Lochner. Lochner told him that the synagogues were burning.

We met immediately in the street when it was still dark and went to the synagogue known as the Friedenstempel in west Berlin. The synagogue was on fire. The fire service was there but only protecting the neighboring buildings. Our *Chasan* [prayer leader] stood next to the burning synagogue and led me inside secretly through a back door. The Aron-Kodesh [Holy Ark] was already open; Torah rolls had been pulled out and ripped up using great strength. Half of the pews had been chopped up. I went behind the Torah Ark without being seen and was able to grab a small Torah scroll that was still in there, pull it out, and hide it under my

We looked out of the window [and saw] men and women with axes and long iron bars which they used to break open large wooden chests. This hacking was the only sound that could be heard in the street.

WALTER TICK, 1994

We have already written to you in support of the emigration of the two boys Horst Löwenstein and David Zwingermann, who committed an act of self-sacrifice in helping to save 12 Torah scrolls from the Friedenstempel. In the meantime, David Zwingermann has been helped to emigrate, while Horst Löwenstein is still waiting for his final exit permit. We would be most grateful if this boy could also soon enjoy the benefits of being sent away.

ELIESER EHRENRICH TO DORA SILBERMANN (AT THE DEPARTMENT FOR YOUTH AND WELFARE), LETTER DATED JANUARY 10, 1939

Figure 1.10 The boys Horst Löwenstein, center, and David Zwingerman, right, next to the Torah scrolls they rescued from the synagogue on Markgraf-Albrecht-Strasse during the pogrom. At left is the tea importer who hid the scrolls until they could be safely returned to the congregation. Photograph courtesy of David Hamilton, London



They hacked everything to pieces with the axes. The shattering glass also made a lot of noise. Most of the women there had prams, but there were no babies in them. They brought the prams in order to put as many goods in them as possible. That way they could drag off more than they could carry.

WALTER TICK, 1994

raincoat. We went back out and, although the SS men looked threateningly at us, we were able to go our own way, undisturbed. I was able to take the little Torah scroll home with me.³⁵

In 1958, Nussbaum continues: “Today this Torah scroll is located in the Aron-Kodesh of our temple in Hollywood. It is very well known there, and during processions, especially Simchat Torah [the Celebration of the Torah], I always carry it through the synagogue.”³⁶

That the accounts of Zwingermann and Nussbaum differ slightly is not surprising in view of the fact that both statements were made years after the event. Nonetheless, the complete destruction of the synagogues on the night of November 9–10, 1938, remains a fact.

In the face of relentless Nazi censorship, Jewish intellectual opposition to the regime, though muted, was often ingenious. Of the Jewish press after 1933, two quotes in particular could have served as mottos: “The truth must be spread in cunning ways” (Bertolt Brecht) and “A satire that the censor understands is a poor satire” (Karl Kraus). Thus, the *Jüdisches Nachrichtenblatt* couched its comments on the events of November 9 in a review of the film *Chicago*, which had recently been screened by the Jewish Kulturbund: “A city goes up in flames and firefighters stand by without taking any action. All the hoses are poised, the ladders have been prepared. . . . But no hand moves to use them. The men wait for the command, but no command is heard. Only when the city . . . has burned

down and is lying in cinders and ashes, an order arrives; but the firefighters are already driving away. A malicious invention? An ugly tale? No. The truth. And it was revealed in Hollywood.”³⁷

There are also known instances of protest on the part of non-Jewish Berliners—though this was admittedly but a drop in the ocean. An anecdote has been passed down regarding Lieselotte Henrich, then a young civil servant, who would later become the well-known ancient historian Elisabeth Charlotte Wel-skopf. Coming from work in the late afternoon of November 10, she saw shards of glass and noted the looting. Her colleagues had also related something of what was going on, so she was therefore informed. As innocently as possible, and in a deliberately naïve tone of voice, the young woman declared to the onlookers that “surely, the Communists were responsible. Nazis would never have done such a thing; only Communists were vandals. . . . And look at how valuables have been destroyed here—only the Communists would do such a thing.” The police advised her to move on. She did, but after traveling a few stops by train, she again announced, “We must explain and inform. The Communists did this.” To the degree that it made people stop and think about what the Nazis had allowed to happen, even this small act of resistance was meaningful.³⁸

The pogrom resulted in the arrest of around 12,000 of Berlin’s Jewish men, most of whom were delivered over to the concentration camps at Sachsenhausen and Buchenwald. The conditions were appalling, as detailed descriptions testify.³⁹ Nonetheless, for some, arrest actually meant salvation—only, of course, for those who were later released from the concentration camps. This is because anyone who had been in a concentration camp was deemed particularly “at risk,” and Jewish foreign organizations then made special efforts to help them emigrate. This was the case for Herbert Eger, a lawyer from the district of Pankow, whom the B’nai B’rith Lodge helped to emigrate to England with his family after his release from Sachsenhausen. His son recalls:

In November 1938, my father was summoned by the Gestapo. This was nothing unusual, since he was the secretary of the [Pankow] congregation and it had happened frequently.⁴⁰ Each time, he would take a toothbrush, soap, and a towel with him just in case he was kept there—except this time! On this occasion, he didn’t come home. Of course, the Gestapo didn’t answer any requests for information. Then we heard rumors that a truck full of men had been seen driving toward Oranienburg. My mother thought that they had perhaps taken my father to the Sachsenhausen concentration camp. A few days later she and I drove there to try to drop off a package for my father . . . but it was impossible. On the way there, we saw groups of prisoners on the road who were being marched to the camp.

Herbert Eger was released after a few weeks. His son continues: “He never told us much about his experiences in the concentration camp. But after his death [in 1953] my mother told me that he used to wake up almost every night screaming, and that this was linked to what he had gone through in the camp.”⁴¹

In a few cases some of those arrested on November 9 were set free due to the fact that there were still some upright and respectable policemen in the city. My grandfather Hermann Jalowicz, whom I mentioned earlier, was one of them. He was arrested immediately after the pogrom and brought to the police station on Alexanderplatz, where a policeman recognized him: “Good Lord, how did you end up here, then, Dr. Jalowicz?” Jalowicz briefly filled him in, and the policeman expressed astonishment: “That’s ridiculous; they haven’t even looked at your papers. Be so good as to leave this hospitable place right away. Please don’t take this the wrong way—but I think it best if you follow me. I’ll accompany you to the staff exit and you can leave by the back.” There the pair shook hands warmly and bade one another farewell.⁴²

The situation changed radically after the pogrom of November 9, 1938. There was nothing left for the Jews in the Reich to hold on to. Only downfall remained.

- 1** Kurt Jakob Ball-Kaduri, Sachsenhausen concentration camp (1938), Yad Vashem Archive, Jerusalem (YV), 01/46, p. 2.
- 2** Kurt Jakob Ball-Kaduri, *Vor der Katastrophe. Juden in Deutschland, 1934–1939* (Tel Aviv, 1967), pp. 126–28.
- 3** *Ibid.*, 128.
- 4** *Jüdisches Gemeindeblatt*, 18 September, 1938, p. 5.
- 5** The “smear campaign” refers to the *Juni-Aktion*.
- 6** Hans Reichmann, *Deutscher Bürger und verfolgter Jude. Novemberpogrom und KZ Sachsenhausen*, ed. Michael Wildt (Munich, 1998), p. 81.
- 7** Ball-Kaduri, *Vor der Katastrophe*, p. 131.
- 8** Reichmann, *Deutscher Bürger und verfolgter Jude*, p. 81.
- 9** Winfried Seibert, *Das Mädchen, das nicht Esther heißen durfte. Eine exemplarische Geschichte* (Leipzig, 1996), pp. 266 ff.
- 10** Marie Simon, “Zunz als Begründer der Onomastik im Rahmen der Wissenschaft des Judentums,” in *Kairos: Zeitschrift für Judaistik und Religionswissenschaft* 30/31, Salzburg (1988–89), pp. 130–32. A sample of the names—Abel, Abieser, Abimelech, Abner, Absalom, Ahab, Ahasja, Ahaser—is provided by Saul Friedländer, *Nazi Germany and the Jews*, vol. 1, *The Years of Persecution, 1933–1939* (New York, 1997), pp. 254–55.
- 11** *Ibid.*, p. 129.
- 12** Hermann Simon, “‘Bilder, an die Dante nicht im Traum gedacht hätte’: Neue Quellen zum Novemberpogrom in Berlin” (paper presented at a meeting of the Porta Pacis Association), in *1938: Vom Pogrom zum Völkermord*, ed. Martina Weyrauch and Peter Borowsky (Berlin, 1988), pp. 21 ff.
- 13** Diary of Dr. Hermann Jalowicz (1877–1941), in the possession of the author. Mention is made of the lawyers Herbert Eger and most probably Moritz Jacoby and Dr. Felix Michelsohn.
- 14** Reichmann, *Deutscher Bürger*, p. 84.
- 15** Trude Maurer, “Abschiebung und Attentat. Die Ausweisung der polnischen Juden und der Vorwand für die ‘Kristallnacht,’” in *Der Judenpogrom 1938*, ed. Walter H. Pehle (Frankfurt am Main, 1988), p. 53.
- 16** See note 1.
- 17** The Swedish actress Kristina Söderbaum, later married to the director Veit Harlan, played the lead role in his 1938 hit film *Jugend*. Söderbaum embodied the Nazi ideal of the Germanic child-woman whose threatened purity had to be saved. If her honor could not be saved in the film, she had to drown. In fact, Söderbaum’s characters drowned in just two of her films, but this sufficed to earn her the nickname “*Reichswasserleiche*” (Water-Corpse of the Reich).
- 18** Michael S. Cullen writes that Funk “has the dubious distinction of having coined the term ‘Kristallnacht.’” See “Der genius loci hat viele Facetten,” *Der Tagesspiegel*, 6 November 1998, in a special supplement for the American Academy in Berlin, p. 4.
- 19** Erika Ising, “Kristallnacht—Pogromnacht: Schlußpunkt oder neue Fragezeichen,” in *Der Sprachdienst* 6 (1989): 169.
- 20** Ursula Lampe, “Hintergründe der ‘Kristallnacht,’” *Berliner Zeitung*, 13 November 1945, p. 3.
- 21** *Der Tagesspiegel*, 11 August 1945, p. 4.
- 22** Albert Tilmann, letter to the editors, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 27 November 1978.
- 23** Friedländer, *Nazi Germany and the Jews*, p. 272.
- 24** Transcript of audio interview with Ernest Guenter Fontheim conducted by Beate Meyer on May 26, 1999, p. 31.
- 25** Alexander Szanto, *Im Dienste der Gemeinde, 1923–1939* (London, 1968), collection of memoirs, M.E. 838, p. 211, Leo Beck Institute, New York (LBINY).
- 26** *Ibid.*, pp. 212–13.
- 27** Heinz Knobloch, *Der beherzte Reviervorsteher. Ungewöhnliche Zivilcourage am Hackeschen Markt* (Berlin, 1990), p. 156.
- 28** Hermann Simon, “Abschließende (?) Bemerkungen zu einem historischen Foto,” in *Museums Journal* (October 1998): 44–45.
- 29** For an interesting account of events in the area around Alexanderplatz, see Horst Helas et al., *Juden in Berlin-Mitte* (Berlin, 2000), pp. 79 ff.
- 30** Jaime Jaramillo Arango to the Colombian president Eduardo Santos, letter dated November 12, 1938. See Simon, “Bilder, an die Dante,” p. 27.
- 31** Colombian diplomatic envoy, Rafael Rocha-Schloss, to the Colombian Foreign Minister, Luis López de Mesa, November 16, 1938, *ibid.*, p. 24.
- 32** Embassy advisor Themistokles da Graca Aranha to the Brazilian Foreign Minister, November 21, 1938. This document is located in the archive of the Brazilian Foreign Office and was shown to me in 1998 by the Brazilian consul general in Berlin.
- 33** For a more detailed account, see Simon, “Bilder, an die Dante,” pp. 24 ff.

34 See Hermann Simon, “Aber ein stiller Widerstand glühte weiter. Einige Gedanken zum Novemberpogrom—Wie zwei Jungen zwölf Thorarollen aus dem ‘Friedenstempel’ gerettet haben,” in *Die Welt*, 9 November 1998, p. 35.

35 Continuation of the eyewitness report of July 11, 1958, YV 01/222, p. 2.

36 *Ibid.*, p. 3.

37 *Jüdisches Nachrichtenblatt*, 30 December 1938, p. 3. English translation in Friedländer, *Nazi Germany*, p. 284.

38 Note from Marie Simon to the author, September 1998.

39 On Sachsenhausen, see for example, Siegmund Weltlinger, “Hast Du es schon vergessen?” (lecture at the Berliner Gesellschaft für christlich-jüdische Zusammenarbeit on January 28, 1954), pp. 9 ff.; Reichmann, *Deutscher Bürger*. On Buchenwald, see Ball-Kaduri, YV 01/46, pp. 5 ff.

40 The reference here is to the synagogue association in Pankow.

41 “Herbert Eger und die Jüdische Gemeinde in Pankow,” in *Jüdisches Leben in Pankow*, ed. Inge Lammel (Berlin, 1993), pp. 140–41.

42 See note 38.