

Volume 27d

Albert Fuchs

***My Experiences From November 9th to 16th, 1938***  
***(Written on November 19, 1938 on the way from Strasbourg to Paris)***

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ABSTRACT

Author describes the events of several days beginning with November 9, 1938, later to become notorious under the name of Kristallnacht. He refers to himself as a 'German patriot,' born into a family of important jurists. He is a respected lawyer, married to a German woman. He fought in World War I and was decorated with the Iron Cross. Some days earlier his licence to practice law was rescinded. From the radio he learns of the assassination in Paris of the German diplomat vom Rath by the distraught Jewish refugee Grynspan and the subsequent outbreak of violence against Jews in many German cities. Receives late night phone calls which warn him of imminent dangers. He meets with friends who are equally distraught and learns of the widespread violence ravaging the city. Jewish banks and shops are demolished, and a Jewish hotel is attacked, its residents are cast out and beaten. Describes the orders that were given by the local SS, regulating their treatment of the Jews.. Learns that his cousin has committed suicide and reports in detail on the factors that led to his desperate act. Realistic description of the violence and bloodshed in the city - many Jews arrested, homes are looted, older people savagely beaten.

Following another phone call warning him of impending arrest, he leaves home for the relative safety of his country cottage. His wife and son bring provisions, wife returns but son joins father. Author lists the names of his immediate family and circle of friend who had been arrested and sent to Dachau. Describes the Nazi edicts against the Jews. For the first time begins to consider the option of emigration. Decides to leave Germany for France - for which he has an entry visa. Carrying only a small travelling bag he successfully passes the border control. Reveals his feelings about Germany. Throws his World War I medals from the window of the moving train. Once he reaches Strasbourg he telephones his family to

'announce his successful flight.'

#### Editorial Note:

The decision to publish this memoir marks a change in our usual selection procedure. In most previous cases the memoirs have been personal accounts of extensive wartime experiences covering months and years in the lives of survivors. This remarkable manuscript is a first-hand report on the events of several days, sparked by the outbreak of violence against Germany's Jews in what since been named 'Kristallnacht.' In effect it was a national pogrom instigated by the Nazis; it took many lives and destroyed numerous synagogues and Jewish businesses.

In this brief account we have a vivid description of the situation that confronted Germany's Jews as they were overtaken by these violent events. The events that began on November 9, 1938 marked the end of whatever hopes the German Jews may have had about accommodating themselves to Nazi rule. Our author is a typical representative of a large segment of upper middle class Jews whose allegiance to Germany was reflected in their unswerving patriotism, their intermarriage, their remoteness from Judaism. Their initial response to the events of November 9, 1938 was shock and disbelief. In a matter of days their world was changed. This disturbing narrative is a dramatic record of how one individual witnessed and coped with those sudden and unexpected days.

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#### KEY WORDS

Munich Beer Hall Putsch  
World War I  
Vom Rath  
Grünspan  
National Socialism  
SS  
Karlsruhe  
Dortmund  
Gaistal  
Ettlingen  
Herrenalber  
Dachau  
Mannheim  
Rhone River  
Strasbourg, France

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