



# Fritz *and* Kurt

JEREMY DRONFIELD

*illustrated by David Ziggy Greene*

## Reading Guide for Parents, Guardians and Teachers

by Jeremy Dronfield

- **About the book**
- **How it was written**
- **What was left out**
- **Topics on the Holocaust**
- **Teaching resources info**
- **Complete source notes**
- **Suggested reading**
- **Full research bibliography**

# Contents

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Introduction	3
1. What is <i>Fritz and Kurt</i> ?	4
2. Location maps	10
3. Fritz and Kurt: the untold story	11
4a. Beyond the book: topics on the Holocaust	34
4b. Classroom resources	71
5. <i>Fritz and Kurt</i> : a story in 8 objects	74
6a. Suggested reading	77
6b. Bibliography	82
7. Source notes for <i>Fritz and Kurt</i>	86

**CONTENT WARNING: This guide is not intended to be read by children.**

***It contains images and information about historical events which may be distressing or triggering for some readers and unsuitable for children. It is intended as a resource for adults. Use or dissemination of the information or images it contains is entirely the responsibility of the adult user.***

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# Introduction



This guide, written and compiled by author Jeremy Dronfield, is designed to accompany the book *Fritz and Kurt* as an informational resource for parents, guardians and teachers whose children have read or are reading the book.

The guide will help you with the following:

- Answering questions asked by young readers regarding the narrative events in the book.
- In-depth information about aspects of the Holocaust relevant to the story of *Fritz and Kurt*.
- Providing ideas for discussions about the book and its broader history, either at home or in class.
- Full source notes, page-referenced to the book, to help you locate further reading and source materials relating to specific passages.
- A guide to further reading about the Holocaust for adults and young readers, plus a full reference bibliography.
- Information and links to lesson plans and other teaching resources provided by Holocaust educators from around the world.

The guide will be updated from time to time, so please check in to make sure you have the latest revision (see bottom of page). To report any errors, email [guide@jeremydronfield.com](mailto:guide@jeremydronfield.com).



### 1.1 The book – a short synopsis

*Fritz and Kurt* is non-fiction for middle-grade readers aged 9+. A children's re-telling of the book *The Boy Who Followed His Father into Auschwitz*, it is the true story of two brothers from Vienna and their experiences during the Holocaust from 1938 to 1945.

Fritz Kleinmann was fourteen when the Nazis took Vienna in 1938. His little brother Kurt was eight. As Jews, Fritz and Kurt's family were deeply afraid; their mum worked hard to try to get the boys and their two older sisters out of the country to safety, but it was hopeless. Yet, frightened as they were, none of them could have imagined quite how bad things would get.

Fritz and his papa, Gustav, were sent to Buchenwald concentration camp, where they were starved and put to hard labour in terrible conditions. Fritz learned from the older prisoners how to survive, and helped his father and other boys to keep themselves safe from the Nazi guards.

Meanwhile, Fritz's little brother Kurt was given to travel to America as a refugee. In 1941 he embarked, all alone, on a journey that would change his life forever.

After three years in Buchenwald, Fritz heard that his mum and his sister Herta were being deported to Nazi-occupied Minsk. Then came news that his papa was being transferred from Buchenwald to Auschwitz. They all knew what happened to Jews in Auschwitz. Despite the certainty of death, Fritz begged to be allowed to go too. Although his friends tried to persuade him not to go, Fritz preferred to die with his beloved papa than to live on without him.

When they arrived at Auschwitz, mira-



culously Fritz and Papa were not killed – partly due to Fritz's quick thinking. Together they survived two more years of incredible dangers, ordeals and adventures. Fritz's cleverness and courage helped to get them through, but his bravery nearly got him killed when he became involved in the Jewish prisoners' resistance against the SS, plotting escapes and smuggling weapons.

At the same time, in the USA, Kurt was growing up to be an American boy, with a new family. But he still longed for the home and family he'd left behind. Would he ever be reunited with them, or even find out what had happened to them?

*Fritz and Kurt* tells the extraordinary story of how the two brothers made it through to the end of the war and the Holocaust, through unimaginable ordeals, and how the handful of surviving family members were eventually reunited in Vienna.



## 1.2 About Jeremy Dronfield, author of *Fritz and Kurt*

I'm a historian, biographer and novelist. I've written many books about the lives and adventures of extraordinary but little-known people from history. *Fritz and Kurt* is one of them, and by far the most important. It's also the first one written specially for young readers.

After growing up in Wales, I studied Archaeology at university, gaining my PhD from

Cambridge in 1994, before turning to writing popular books, including fiction, history and historical biography. Nowadays, I live in the east of England with my partner and our dog in a pretty little town so old that it was once raided by Vikings.

## 1.3 How was *Fritz and Kurt* written, and why?

### 1.3.1 Discovering the story

The experiences of Fritz and Kurt Kleinmann and their family during the Holocaust first came to my attention in 2013, when I was asked by an intermediary to help find a publisher for an English translation of Fritz's own book, *Doch der Hund will nicht krepieren* ('And still the dog will not die', Innsbruck University Press, 2012). That invaluable book contains the full text of their father Gustav Kleinmann's concentration camp diary, plus a short memoir of the Holocaust by Fritz himself, and an academic commentary by Fritz's friend Professor Reinhold Gärtner.

It proved impossible to find a publisher for the translation. In spite of the extraordinary story it contains, Gustav's diary is extremely difficult to read and understand. He seemingly never intended it to be read by others, and the text is elliptical and patchy, with references to people, incidents and places which are almost never explained.

Fritz's memoir is more readable and easy enough to understand, but is also quite brief and contains narrative gaps.

I was disheartened by my failure to find a publisher, and felt strongly that there was a powerful and unparalleled story here that deserved to be read by as many people as possible. Fritz's decision to go with his father to Auschwitz is

astonishing and deeply moving. I felt that the best thing I could do was to use my academic skills as a historical researcher and my abilities as a writer to tell the story in a way that would be accessible to everyone.

### 1.3.2 Writing the original book

Whereas *Fritz and Kurt* is centred on the two brothers, my original book, *The Boy Who Followed His Father into Auschwitz*, focuses primarily on Fritz and his father, Gustav. I'll explain this difference a little later.

The story of Fritz and his father is, as far as I have been able to determine, unique in the history of the Holocaust. A Jewish father and son surviving *together* through over five years in Buchenwald and Auschwitz is, I believe, unparalleled. Fritz's decision to accompany his father voluntarily to Auschwitz, in the belief that they would both die there, also has no parallel as far as I know. That they both left behind written accounts of what they went through, including a contemporary diary, makes it even more extraordinary.

I began preliminary work on the book in 2015. Before it could be written, I needed more information. The diary and memoir have many chronological gaps and opaque episodes. These had to be filled and clarified through research in books, archives, and interviews. Sadly, Fritz had



died in 2009. However, I eventually managed to locate Fritz's younger brother, Kurt, who had travelled as a child refugee to the United States in 1941 and who in 2015 was still living near New York City.

Through many hours of interviews with Kurt, I came to understand Fritz's decision to go with his father to Auschwitz more clearly. In the pre-Anschluss period in Vienna ('before Hitler came' as Kurt always put it), the Kleinmann family was exceptionally close and loving. They needed to be, as they were relatively poor, living in a two-room apartment in which all six of them shared one bedroom. Kurt elaborated on the portrait left behind by Fritz of an almost idyllic childhood. For Fritz, when the family was torn apart by the Nazis, and knowing that his sister and mother had been deported to the Ostland – probably to their deaths – the structure of his entire emotional world was collapsing. With his father seemingly the only one left, Fritz was consumed by dread; he preferred to die with his dear Papa than live on without him.

Kurt also helped open my eyes to the experiences of the whole family, which form a kind of panorama of the Holocaust. The story of Kurt's life as a child in Nazi-occupied Vienna, his escape to America, sister Edith's life as a refugee in wartime England, and the fate of their mother, Tini, and sister Herta all lie outside the scope of Fritz's book, *Doch der Hund*, and are scarcely touched upon in it. It's impossible to understand Fritz's concentration camp story properly without also understanding the whole story of the family. Therefore, *The Boy Who Followed His Father into Auschwitz*, while focused mainly on Fritz and Gustav, also tells Kurt's story, as well as Edith's, and what happened to Tini and Herta.

However, the core of my research was based around making sense of Gustav's diary – that is, translating it carefully line by line (in some

instances word by word) into English, while tracking down and identifying all the dozens of obscure references to people, events and incidents it contains, as well as filling in the many gaps.

Let's look at just one example of the complexities of working with the diary. Gustav writes that, within a few days of arriving in Buchenwald in 1939, he and Fritz were given jobs as *Lorefahrer*, in which *wir uns bewähren* ('we prove ourselves'). *Lorefahrer* is an obscure term which could be translated as 'truck drivers'. For multiple reasons, that seemed deeply implausible, so I looked deeper. The noun *Lore* can translate more specifically as 'dumper truck', which doesn't help much. Research into German-language sources on prisoner labour roles in Buchenwald revealed that the 'dumper trucks' Gustav is referring to were the steel wagons, running on rails, which carried stone from the camp quarry to the various building sites within the attached SS complex, which was then under construction. The *Lorefahrer* were the teams of prisoners who had the dangerous, backbreaking job of manually hauling the wagons, which could weigh as much as 4 tonnes fully laden. This clarification helped open a very illuminating window on Fritz and Gustav's adaptation to their new existence during the early period in Buchenwald.

That's just one tiny example. The diary is filled with similarly opaque references (see section 3.1 below for more about the diary).

I did the same (albeit with far less difficulty) with Fritz's memoir, building on it by studying the various interviews he gave during his lifetime, and analysing the handful of moments where they conflict on minor points of detail. I traced Fritz's and Gustav's concentration camp records, as well as published or archived eyewitness accounts by their fellow prisoners, many of whom were known companions.



Outside of that core story, I researched the archived records of Kurt's immigration to the United States, Edith's period as a refugee in the UK (see Section 3.2 below), and found obscure records and accounts of the fate of their mother and sister, who were deported in 1942, along with hundreds of other Viennese Jews, to Maly Trostinets death camp near Minsk (see section 3.3 below for a full account of what happened to them).

My research uncovered the full details of what happened to them there. Kurt had long known that his mother and sister had been murdered, and had visited the memorial at the site in 1996. But he didn't know anything about exactly what happened there. Maly Trostinets is barely mentioned at all in English-language accounts of the Holocaust; it was utterly destroyed by the retreating Germans in 1943 and thus never discovered by Soviet forces.

My book was completed and first published in 2018 with the temporary title *The Stone Crusher*. It was later republished in the UK and USA with the new title *The Boy Who Followed His Father into Auschwitz*, and subsequently translated into twenty languages.

### 1.3.3 Adapting the story for children

Following the publication of *The Boy Who Followed His Father into Auschwitz*, I received many messages from readers who had been as moved by the Kleinmanns' story as I had been. Many expressed a wish that their children and grandchildren could read the book, and that it should be available in schools. At first I didn't give it much thought, because I couldn't see any way to adapt such distressing material for children.

That changed after a conversation with one of Kurt's sons, who is a theatrical art director. We talked about alternative ways to tell the story, and how different elements of it are significant to

different audiences. Shortly after, I stumbled across the artwork of David Ziggy Greene. I was especially drawn to a set of speculative book cover designs he'd done for literary classics, such as *Frankenstein* and *The Catcher in the Rye*, as well as his cartoon reportage for *Private Eye*. David's style has a stark angularity which I felt would be perfect for conveying a story of the Holocaust, but also a warmth and humour which would make it accessible and relatable for young children. David was enthusiastic about the idea, and we began exploring the possibilities for uniting my words and his pictures.

The first decision I made was to shift the focus from Fritz and his father to Fritz and Kurt. Kurt's story is told in my original book, but not at length, and this time I felt it was important to place him in the foreground alongside his brother. This would be a children's story of the Holocaust – Fritz was fourteen when the Nazis came to Vienna, and Kurt was eight – and the book should be tuned to their viewpoint and unique experiences. Merely simplifying or abridging the original book wasn't an option; this needed to be an all-new re-telling of the story for young readers.

I went back to my earlier research, dug deeply, finding previously unknown archive material, and managed to make new discoveries, so that this book contains new information and a better understanding of certain key events than was possible in the original.

For example, in his memoir and the various interviews I had studied, Fritz did not describe the period of two weeks as a prisoner in the Prater soccer stadium in Vienna before being transported to Buchenwald. But when researching this new book, I came across two previously unknown interviews Fritz gave near the end of his life in which he did just that, and in which he described, heartbreakingly, his last sight of his mother.



Another example is the November Pogrom, or Kristallnacht. I knew from Fritz's recollections that on Kristallnacht the Kleinmann family were pointed out to the Nazis as Jewish by their neighbours. Surely, I thought, the Nazi authorities must have already known who all the Jews were by that time? With no definitive answer to that puzzle, I skated over it in my original book. Returning to the research, I came across a contemporary account of Nazi storm troopers visiting apartment building concierges during the early weeks of the occupation of Vienna, demanding lists of Jewish residents from them. This confirmed my guess that they would surely have had a record of Jews in the Kleinmanns' apartment building. Around the same time, I happened to re-read Fritz's account (in an interview) of his encounter with the building concierge, Frau Ziegler, and his portrayal of her obstinate, unhelpful temperament. Putting these two elements together, I realised that if the storm troopers visited that building and were met by this formidable woman in one of her typical bad moods, that could explain why they failed to get a list of Jewish people in the building. I reconstructed the scene as it probably unfolded, based around what we know of the process and of Frau Ziegler's personality.<sup>1</sup>

Imaginative reconstruction of real-life scenes has been an important part of telling this story. In some cases, such as the incident with Frau Zieg-

ler and the storm troopers, it's based on inferring from the scraps of evidence available. In other cases, there is rich material. For instance, the soccer scene in the market square that opens Chapter 1 of *Fritz and Kurt* is an imagined event, but every thread in it is taken from the detailed recollections of Fritz and Kurt, woven together to represent a typical evening of play during those last golden days of freedom. The rag ball, avoiding the police, Frau Capek and her stall, blind Herr Löwy, the boys chasing the fire engine horns, cakes from Anker's bakery – all these are real-life details. The slogans painted on the pavements and buildings are taken from contemporary reports of Vienna in the last days before the Anschluss.

Kurt was a vital conduit into the children's perception of that time. The passage in which the boys wonder about Hitler coming to Vienna is based on Kurt's recollection of that time. Throughout his life, Kurt always referred to it as the time 'before Hitler came' and the occupation as 'after Hitler came'. Trauma, it seems, locked his phrasing into that period, giving us a window into an eight-year-old's perspective during those terrifying days.

Dialogue – a fundamental element of human interaction – is essential in bringing scenes and stories to life. For my non-fiction books for adults, I've developed a set of rules about quoted speech. Dialogue is only permitted if it meets one of the following conditions:

1. It's taken directly from primary sources, where conversations are recorded word for word.
2. It can be reconstructed from primary sources, where conversations are not set out in full but are recorded in paraphrased or summary form.
3. In rare instances where dialogue is strongly desirable but we don't have 1 or 2, it may be inferred from conversations that are known

<sup>1</sup> The reconstruction was complex. In his 1997 interview, Fritz named the building *Hausmeisterin* (caretaker/concierge) when he returned to Vienna in 1945 as a Frau Ziegler. However, the 1938 street directory (Band 2, p. 147, WLO) gives the name of the concierge in 1938 as a Theckla Schläha. Despite this, since Frau Ziegler was familiar to Fritz as the concierge in 1945, I assume that she had been acting concierge when he lived there in 1938–1939. Therefore I've chosen to call her Ziegler for convenience. However that may be, since Fritz is very specific about who betrayed the Kleinmann family to the Nazi authorities on Kristallnacht, we can infer that the concierge did not give them away when the Brownshirts called.





to have happened, and where the gist (or at least the outcome) is known.

In this book, to help the story flow smoothly and be fully relatable and immersive for young readers, I have allowed a slightly less restrictive fourth rule:

4. Dialogue can be imagined based on known events and circumstances and knowledge of the personalities, feelings and beliefs of the individuals at the time.

Examples of rule 4 include some of the words said to Fritz by Papa in the book, which I've taken from Gustav's diary; thus they reflect what he was thinking at the time and may well have been said to Fritz also. Frau Ziegler's response to the stormtroopers is inferred from her character (as portrayed by Fritz), and represents a verbal exchange that must have occurred.

By contrast, examples of fully sourced dialogue (rule 1) include Fritz's remarks about his grandfather when he is on the scaffolding and his various conversations with Stefan Heymann, Alfred Wocher and Robert Siewert, all of which are either directly quoted or in some cases reconstructed (rule 2) from Fritz's recollections.

I took other, smaller measures to help make the story accessible for young readers. I translated or anglicised the names of some places in Vienna. 'Im Werd' becomes 'Island Street' (Werd is an obsolete German word meaning 'island', referring to the island between the river Danube and the Danube Canal); 'Karmelitermarkt' becomes 'Karmeliter market'; 'Leopoldsgasse' becomes 'Leopold Lane'; 'Ausstellungsstrasse' becomes 'Exhibition Street', and so on. Similarly, I've used 'oe' and 'ae' instead of 'ö' and 'ä' in names.

A few of the mundane details of camp life have been simplified – such as referring to block seniors (prisoners given a supervisory role in

their barrack blocks by the SS) as 'block kapos' (kapos being prisoners appointed to supervise work gangs), and also used 'kapo' generally to refer to foremen (a subordinate prisoner overseer rank below the level of full kapo).

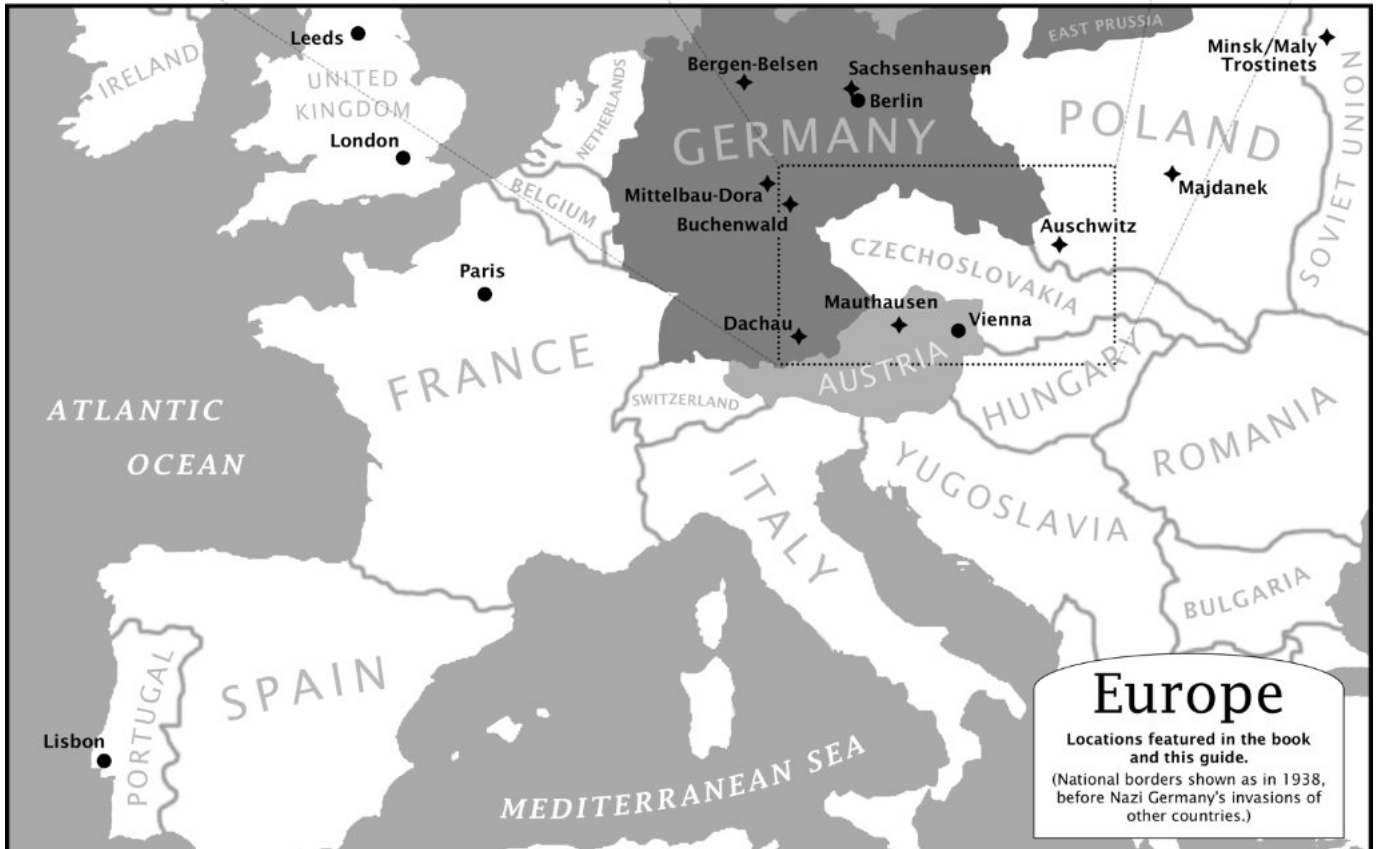
To help children follow the story, in five instances where the names of significant minor characters are not available (either because Fritz did not record them or Kurt could not remember them), I created pseudonyms. These are 'Oskar' (the first civilian to befriend Fritz in Auschwitz), 'Hannes' (the boy who bullied Kurt in Vienna), 'the Neubergers' (the Orthodox neighbours in the apartment building, whose real name I've so far been unable to establish from street directories), 'Lieutenant Schmidt' (the officer who interrogated Fritz after his escape from the train), and 'James' (Kurt's school friend in New Bedford).

Undoubtedly the most challenging and complex part of adapting the story for children has been dealing with the upsetting events narrated in the original book: judging what to omit, what to include and how to convey the horror in an age-appropriate way. While I didn't attempt to ameliorate or minimise any aspect of the Holocaust, some particularly disturbing and harrowing scenes and incidents were either left out or narrated with minimal detail.

Examples include the true extent of Fritz's physical torture in Buchenwald (during the November 1939 reprisals) and in Auschwitz (at the hands of Gestapo head Maximilian Grabner); the exact details of Tini and Herta Kleinmann's murder; the experimental mass killings of Soviet prisoners of war in Buchenwald; and many of the day-to-day incidents of brutality and suffering.

Filling in some of these omitted details for the benefit of parents, guardians and teachers is a major part of the purpose of this guide. In section 3 we will begin to study some of these episodes.





The many distressing incidents and historical details included in my original book *The Boy Who Followed His Father into Auschwitz* had to be given cautious and sensitive handling when retelling the story for younger readers. Some things have been left out altogether, while others that could not be omitted (being essential to understanding the story) are narrated without explicit details.

This section of the guide fills in some of those blanks, in case children in your care who

have read *Fritz and Kurt* have questions about them.

Each subsection includes suggested questions around the story for you to discuss with young readers. You can use the information you've learned from the text to help them think about the questions. How best to convey this information is entirely up to you.

### 3.1 Papa's secret diary

Gustav Kleinmann's concentration camp diary was at the very core of the research for my original book (see subsection 1.3.2 above). However, in *Fritz and Kurt* we experience this part of the story through Fritz's eyes, and he knew nothing of the existence of the diary until after the war. Some of Gustav's written words from the diary have been transformed into dialogue in the book, but other than a reference in the epilogue, 'What Happened After', it is not mentioned.

Gustav – or Papa – began keeping his diary from the start of his period in Buchenwald. It opens with these words:

*In Buchenwald am 2. Oktober 1939 nach einer Fahrt von 2 Tagen Bahnfahrt angekommen. Vom Weimarer Bahnhof ging es im Laufschrift bis ins Lager...*

([Arrived] in Buchenwald on 2 October 1939 after a 2-day train journey. From Weimar train station we went to the camp at a run...)

Unauthorised writing by prisoners was forbidden in concentration camps, and Gustav

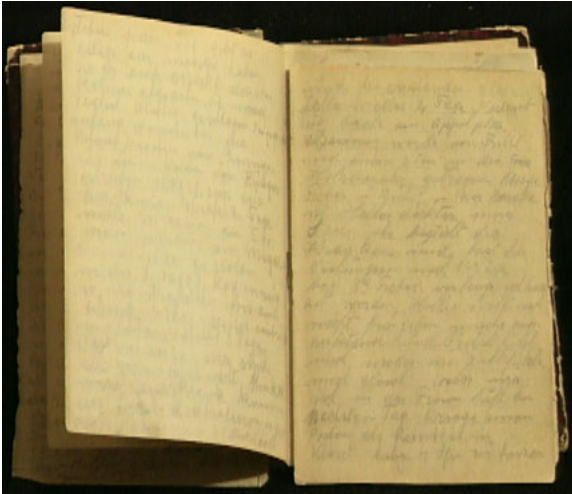
After they first got back to Vienna in 1945, Fritz discovered that Papa had kept a secret diary all the time they were in the camps, recording the things they saw and experienced... It was an incredibly dangerous thing to do, because any kind of private writing was against the camp rules. Fritz was shocked at Papa's daring.

*Fritz and Kurt*, page 341

would have been severely punished – possibly killed – if he'd been found out.

He used a small pocket notebook; where he obtained it is unknown. He might have smuggled it into the camp from Vienna, or possibly obtained it from a fellow prisoner. How he kept it concealed for over five years is also unknown. During one brief period in Buchenwald when he was in charge of looking after a barrack bunk room, he hid it in a bunk. The rest of the time it must have been concealed in his uniform. That



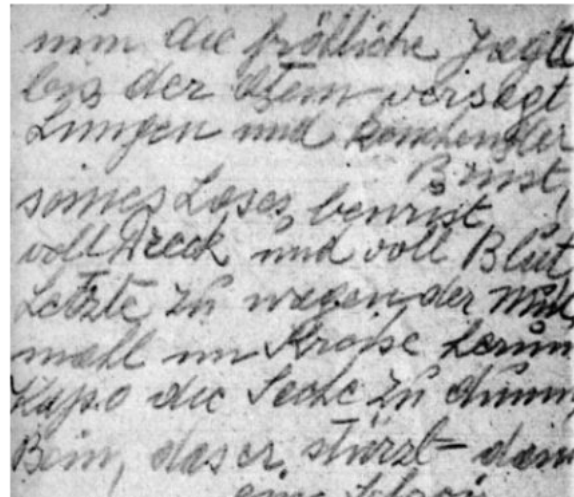


Gustav Kleinmann's diary. (Photo: VHA, USC Shoah Foundation.)

would certainly be the case during moves between camps. On arrival in Auschwitz, the transferred prisoners' uniforms were taken away and fumigated; at that point, Gustav was sure he would lose the diary forever, but luckily the uniforms were not searched (the SS may have reasoned that transferred prisoners were unlikely to be carrying loot-worthy valuables or contraband).

Having begun in October 1939, the diary continues, with gaps varying from days to months, until July 1945, the last pages recording Gustav's long journey across war-torn Germany back to Austria. He wrote in pencil and, partly due to limited space, jotted down only a brief, elliptical account of happenings in the camps, occasionally taking a moment to note down personal observations and feelings.

In addition to the concentration camp diary, the notebook also contains a long poem titled 'Steinbruchkaleidoskop' ('Quarry Kaleidoscope'), which describes the circumstances and events in the Buchenwald stone quarry, an infamous killing ground where prisoners were tormented by SS guards and kapos (prisoners appointed to be overseers) and frequently murdered. The episode in the book in which a prisoner fights to shovel stone into the crushing machine as fast as



Page from Gustav's diary showing a fragment of the poem 'Quarry Kaleidoscope'. (Photo: Reinhold Gärtner.)

it can grind it, is based on an incident described in 'Quarry Kaleidoscope'.

In contrast to the rest of the diary, the poem is very finely constructed, in carefully rhyming and scanning German. It is written apparently without significant corrections or revisions, so Gustav must have composed it painstakingly in his head before writing it down. It begins with the stanza:

*Klick-klack Hammerschlag,  
klick-klack Jammertag.  
Sklavenseelen, Elendsknochen,  
dalli und den Stein gebrochen.<sup>1</sup>*

Translated into rhyming English, we have:

Click-clack, hammer blow,  
Click-clack, day of woe.  
Slave souls, wretched bones,  
At the double, break the stones.

My translation rhymes and scans, but lacks the rhythm and symmetry of Gustav's original, which continues through several pages, detailing horrific crimes by the SS and the spirit of resili-

<sup>1</sup> 'Quarry Kaleidoscope' by Gustav Kleinmann, reproduced in Gärtner and Kleinmann, *Doch der Hund*, p. 39.



ence and fortitude of the prisoners.

The present location of Gustav's diary is a mystery. After his death in 1976 it passed to Fritz. It was studied and transcribed around 1995 by Professor Reinhold Gärtner of Innsbruck University and photographed in 1997 by the University of Southern California Shoah Foundation. But following Fritz Kleinmann's death in 2009, the diary disappeared. It did not pass to any family member, and does not appear to be in the catalogues of any of the major Holocaust archives – the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Yad Vashem, or the Dokumentationsarchiv des Österreichischen Widerstandes in Vienna, each of which Fritz is known to have mentioned as potential recipients of his historic documents.

The search continues.



Gustav Kleinmann, c. 1946. (Photo: Reinhold Gärtner.)

## PAPA'S DIARY

### Topics to discuss with young readers

- Knowing how dangerous it was for himself and Fritz, do you think Papa was right to keep a secret diary in the concentration camps?
- The SS wouldn't let the prisoners in concentration camps write diaries and letters. Why do you think that was?
- If you were Papa, would you have kept a diary? Papa had to choose carefully what to write about (and what to leave out) because he only had a tiny notebook. If you'd been in his place, what things would you have chosen to write about in your diary?



## 3.2 What happened to Edith in England?

Fritz and Kurt had two older sisters. Herta, born in 1922, was one year older than Fritz, while Edith, born in 1919, was the eldest child of the family. A fashion-conscious young woman, Edith worked as a shop assistant and had dreams of becoming a hat designer.

Living at home with the family, in the evenings Edith would often teach her little brother Kurt the piano. She was a lively spirit, and loved nothing so much as going out dancing and dating boys.

Edith was eighteen years old when Nazi Germany invaded Austria in March 1938. In the early weeks of the occupation of Vienna, she was fired from her job, as were thousands of other Jewish people. Both she and Herta were subjected to Jew-baiting in the street. In Edith's case, she was identified to the crowd as Jewish by a



Edith Kleinmann, circa 1936 (Photo: Rebecca Hagler.)

At last, everything was arranged, and on a cold day in January, Edith said goodbye to her brothers and sister and to Mum and Papa, and set out for England. They were sad to see her go, but happy that she would be safe.

*Fritz and Kurt, page 71*

former school friend, a boy named Viktor (or 'Vickerl') Ecker, who subsequently became a member of the Sturmabteilung – the Nazi Brownshirts.

Edith was the only member of the Kleinmann family to escape from Nazi Austria before the outbreak of war. Following Kristallnacht in November 1938, foreign embassies and consulates were overwhelmed by applications from Jewish people wanting to emigrate. The whole application process was extremely difficult to navigate (see section 4.5 below for more about the plight of refugees.)

Taking advantage of a provision in British refugee policy, Edith Kleinmann succeeded in obtaining a visa to travel to the United Kingdom to work as a domestic servant. This went strongly against the grain for Edith, who did not see herself as a housewife, let alone as somebody's maid! But she was willing to endure it. Her mother, Tini, helped her to train as a maid in order to obtain the required reference, and in January 1939 Edith departed for England.

The parting was painful for them all. In later life, Edith was willing to relate stories of life in Vienna, but didn't like to talk about the period after her departure. Her time in England had some great joys in it, but she endured considerable suffering which blighted her memories of it.

Edith's settlement in the UK was helped by the Jewish Refugees Committee (JRC), a charit-



able relief organisation based in London, which had been founded in 1933, and which worked in coordination with the Aliens Department of the Home Office and the Ministry of Labour. The JRC had a branch in Leeds, and it was there that Edith was found a work placement.

Initially Edith worked as a maid for a Mr and Mrs Brostoff, who lived in the suburbs of Leeds. The couple were Jewish, in their sixties and had themselves been refugees – in their case escaping the antisemitic pogroms of pre-revolution Russia.

For the first few months, Edith was able to write home, saying that she was happy, but giving few details. When war broke out between Britain and Germany on 3 September 1939, all communication ceased.

Later that year, at a social club for young Jewish people, Edith met and fell in love with a fellow refugee from Vienna, Richard Paltenhoffer.

Richard had suffered terribly; arrested by the SS in June 1938, he had been sent initially to Dachau concentration camp, then transferred to Buchenwald (which at that time was even more overcrowded and unsanitary than when Gustav and Fritz Kleinmann arrived there the following year). Richard was released in April 1939 as part of a mass amnesty of concentration camp prisoners. He made his way to Switzerland and then to the United Kingdom. When he arrived in England, he still had an unhealed bayonet wound on his leg, inflicted by an SS guard in Buchenwald. With help from the JRC he received medical treatment, settled in Leeds and found a job in a factory making kosher foods.

Edith and Richard were married in March 1940 at Leeds New Synagogue. Because of their refugee status, the marriage had had to be cleared by the Leeds police beforehand. The officiant at the wedding was a Rabbi Fisher, formerly of the Vienna Stadttempel (the synagogue where Kurt

sang in the choir).

Less than three months later, with the evacuation from Dunkirk, the beginning of the Battle of Britain, and the looming threat of a German invasion, the situation of German Jewish refugees in the UK was increasingly tense. A growing paranoia about Nazi ‘Fifth Columnists’ hiding among the refugees exacerbated already existing anti-refugee feelings and propaganda, which was amplified by the right-wing press.

Non-Jewish ‘enemy aliens’ and domestic political groups ranging from the British Union of Fascists to Welsh nationalists had already been arrested and interned. In June, Prime Minister Winston Churchill, responding to the ‘Fifth Columnist’ scare, issued his infamous ‘Collar the lot’ order. In June and July 1940 almost all of the 55,000 German Jewish refugees in the UK – men, women and even children – were arrested and sent to internment camps around the country.

Richard Paltenhoffer was arrested in July. Edith herself only avoided arrest because she was



Edith Kleinmann and Richard Paltenhoffer's wedding day, Leeds, England, March 1940. (Photo: Rebecca Hagler.)



pregnant with their first child. Through the JRC, she lobbied the Home Office for Richard's release, but without success. Edith had to go through the whole of the remaining term of her pregnancy alone, with no husband or family to support her, in an increasingly hostile environment. Desperate to leave Europe entirely, she started applying for herself and Richard to immigrate to the United States, without success.

Edith gave birth to baby Peter in September. Five days later she was notified that Richard was being released from internment.

The mood of the country had calmed and shifted, panic had receded, and the government overturned their punitive over-extension of the internment laws. In parliament, MPs from all parties expressed shame at what they had done. Labour MP Rhys Davies said:

We remember the horror that sprang up in this country when Hitler put Jews, Socialists and Communists into concentration camps. We were horrified at that, but somehow or other we almost took it for granted when we did the same thing to the same people.<sup>1</sup>

Conservative MP Victor Cazalet said:

We have, unwittingly I know, added to the sum total of misery caused by this war, and by doing so we have not in any way added to the efficiency of our war effort.<sup>2</sup>

Edith and Richard were left with a tarnished view of Britain afterwards. In 1948 they moved to the United States, and in 1954 they became US citizens.

*(For a full account of Edith's experiences in the UK in 1939 to 1940, including citations of the*

<sup>1</sup> Rhys Davies, House of Commons, 22 August 1940, *Hansard* vol. 364 c. 1529.

<sup>2</sup> Victor Cazalet, House of Commons, 22 August 1940, *Hansard* vol. 364 c. 1534.

*documentary sources used, see my original book, The Boy Who Followed His Father into Auschwitz, chapters 4 and 6.)*

## EDITH IN ENGLAND

### Topics to discuss with young readers

- British politicians and the government realised that they had made a mistake in locking up Jewish refugees in camps. Do you think there are lessons we can learn today from their mistake? How are refugees treated in Britain in the present day?
- Later in life, Edith was willing to talk about her bad experiences under the Nazis in Vienna, but not what she went through in Britain. Why do you think that might be? She was a single woman in Vienna, but a married mother in Britain – do you think that made a difference?
- When Edith and Richard and their children moved to America after the war, they changed their last name from Paltenhoffer (German) to Patten (English/Irish). Also, they didn't teach their children to speak German, even though they sometimes spoke it between themselves. Can you think of any reasons for that?





### 3.3 What happened to Mum and Herta?

This topic is largely omitted in *Fritz and Kurt*, primarily because neither of the boys knew until after the war what had happened to their mother and sister (although Fritz suspected). Moreover, the details – outlined in the following paragraphs – are extremely upsetting.

After Kurt's departure for America in February 1941, Tini ('Mum') and Herta carried on living in their apartment in Vienna, struggling to survive.

In September 1941, the Nazi regime introduced a law that all Jews in Germany and Austria who were not in camps must wear the yellow star – the so-called Judenstern – a revival of a medieval antisemitic practice. The yellow star had been trialled by the Nazis in occupied territories since 1939, but this was its first appearance inside Germany. Jewish people in Vienna were allotted four stars each, and had to pay for them.

The appearance of yellow stars prompted a new wave of antisemitism. Many Viennese assumed that all the Jewish people had by this time emigrated or been deported to concentration camps and ghettos. They now realised that there were still thousands of Jews among them. There was a new outbreak of persecution and exclusion, and it became impossible for Jewish people to bypass social restrictions, such as the ban on entering non-Jewish shops, which of course was the Nazis' intention.

After one last unsuccessful attempt by Judge Samuel Barnet (who had given refuge to Kurt in America) to obtain permission for Herta to immigrate to the US, Tini had given up all hope of escape for either Herta or Fritz. In October 1941, the Gestapo issued an order banning all emigration of Jews from Nazi territory. A few weeks later, Japan attacked Pearl Harbor and Hitler declared war on the USA. There were now no official escape routes.

'Your mother says that she and your sister have been notified for resettlement.'

Despite the summer warmth, a horrible chill crept into Fritz's bones.

'What does that mean?' he asked.

'It means your mother and sister have been arrested. They're being sent to the Ostland.'

*Fritz and Kurt*, page 180

Tini and Herta survived for another six months in Vienna, still living in the same apartment. Then, around the beginning of June 1942, they were notified that they were to be deported to the Ostland territory, which lay east of occupied Poland.<sup>1</sup>

Occasional deportations of Jews from Vienna to ghettos in Nazi-occupied territory – particularly Theresienstadt in Czechoslovakia – had been going on for several years, but systematic full-scale deportation to the Ostland only began in November 1941, peaking in summer 1942.

Tini and Herta and the other deportees were told that they were going to a new life, and were permitted to take a limited amount of luggage and cash, plus any gear that would be useful in establishing a small settlement. Initially Tini and Herta, along with about a thousand other Jewish women, children and older men,<sup>2</sup> were placed in a detention centre in the former local primary school (where the Kleinmann children had all been students). From there, the deportees were

<sup>1</sup> Former Soviet territory under German occupation was divided into Reichskommissariat Ostland and Reichskommissariat Ukraine. Beyond these regions was a still larger war zone at the rear of the German front line.

<sup>2</sup> Most young and middle-aged men had been sent to the concentration camps by this time.



taken to the Aspangbahnhof train station.<sup>1</sup> There they boarded conventional civilian train carriages, which buoyed up their hopes that they really were going to be resettled.

The train steamed through Poland, and all seemed normal. But shortly after it crossed into the Ostland, it halted; the deportees were brutally disembarked at gunpoint and forced into another train made up of closed freight wagons. In extreme physical and mental distress, they were transported to Minsk. After two days sealed inside the wagons at Minsk train station, the people were disembarked again. After being looted of their luggage and possessions, they were put into trucks and vans heading to Maly Trostinets death camp.

Maly Trostinets, in the outskirts of Minsk, was formerly a small Soviet farming commune; a tiny SS camp had been built there, with no gas chambers or other death camp infrastructure. Hardly any of the deportees ever saw it; a handful were picked to go to the camp, where they had to sort the looted belongings. The vehicles took the others directly to a pine plantation nearby, where a pit fifty metres long and three metres deep had been excavated. The vehicles were met by a detachment from Einsatzgruppe (task force) B. The Einsatzgruppen were drawn largely from SS police departments, especially the Sipo-SD (the intelligence and security police, which rivalled the Gestapo in terrorising populations). The Einsatzgruppen had been formed to commit genocide; their death squads operated throughout the occupied eastern territories, killing millions of people.

Precisely what befell Tini and Herta is not known. But we do know the methods used by the Einsatzgruppen troops at Maly Trostinets at that time. The majority of victims were stripped, then



Herta Kleinmann, circa 1940. (Photo: Kurt Kleinmann.)



Tini Kleinmann, circa 1939. (Photo: Kurt Kleinmann.)

<sup>1</sup> The Aspangbahnhof no longer exists; in its place stands a memorial to the thousands of Jewish people deported from the station.



lined up in batches at the edge of the pit and shot. A small number were gassed in specially adapted vans, an experimental method using fumes piped from the vans' exhausts.

No detailed records were kept, other than those recording the deportations from Vienna. The officer in charge at Maly Trostinets, one SS-Lieutenant Arlt, recorded simply, 'On 15/6 there arrived another transport of 1,000 Jews from Vienna.'<sup>1</sup> That was all. Nobody survived that day, but on other days, one or two deportees did manage to escape and evade the armed cordon surrounding the pine plantation, eventually returning to Vienna with details of what had occurred.

Although around two hundred thousand Jews and Soviet prisoners of war were murdered at Maly Trostinets between 1941 and 1943,<sup>2</sup> the camp is little known, and not even mentioned in

most general histories of the Holocaust. By the time the Soviet Red Army recaptured the region, all trace of the camp had been obliterated by the retreating SS.

Fritz and Kurt and the rest of the family did not find out for certain that Tini and Herta had been killed until after the war ended. Because of the camp's obscurity, none of them knew exactly what went on at Maly Trostinets until Kurt read the first draft of my original book. It had a profound effect on him. Having visited the memorial at Maly Trostinets in 1996, he was glad that at last he possessed the whole truth.

*(For a fuller account of the deportation and murder of Tini and Herta Kleinmann, including citations of the documentary sources used, see my original book, The Boy Who Followed His Father into Auschwitz, chapters 8–9.)*

<sup>1</sup> SS-Lieutenant Arlt, 16 June 1942: file 136 M.38, YVP.

<sup>2</sup> Gilbert, *The Holocaust*, p. 886 n. 38.

## WHAT HAPPENED TO MUM AND HERTA?

### Topics to discuss with young readers

- When Fritz heard that his Mum and sister Herta were being sent away to the East, he guessed that something bad might happen to them. What do you think made him think that? What do you think he guessed it would be?
- Fritz was very upset when he heard that Mum and Herta were being sent away. How do you think it affected him? Did it help that he had his Papa with him?
- When Papa was about to be sent to Auschwitz, Fritz chose to go with him. Do you think that the news about Mum and Herta had anything to do with Fritz deciding to go to Auschwitz with Papa?



## 3.4 The full story of Fritz's torture

In addition to the terrible privations and violence that prisoners were routinely subjected to, Fritz was singled out for extreme torture on two occasions while in the concentration camps: once in Buchenwald in November 1939, and again in Auschwitz in June 1943.

Both episodes are narrated in *Fritz and Kurt*, but meticulous care was taken – in consultation with editors as well as historical and child education advisers – to reduce the upsetting details to a bare minimum suitable for young readers. This section of the guide provides further details. What follows is graphic and may be distressing for some readers, including adults.

### 3.4.1 Buchenwald – ‘the Horse’

On 8 November 1939, an assassination attempt was made against Adolf Hitler by a German anti-Nazi named Georg Elser. Although Elser had no Jewish connections, the Nazi regime followed its usual pattern of blaming all acts against it on Jews.

The SS Totenkopfverbände (Death's Head units, responsible for running concentration camps) reacted with particular violence. Reprisals occurred in many camps. In Buchenwald – as narrated in *Fritz and Kurt* – the Jewish prisoners were isolated in their blocks. Twenty-one of them were picked out and marched away from the main camp, and were shot in the forest. Then the SS guards, under two notoriously violent sergeants, Johann Blank and Eduard Hinkelmann, forced the remaining Jewish men to parade. Every twentieth man was picked out, laid over a wooden table known as the *Bock* (translated as ‘the Horse’ in the book) and brutally whipped. In the book, many details of the whipping are omitted.

The *Bock* was a familiar and terrifying sight to all prisoners. Versions of this device existed in

There was a silent gasp from the prisoners; they knew what was about to happen. Two guards came on to the square carrying a heavy wooden table with a sloping top. This contraption was the Horse, and they were all terrified of it.

*Fritz and Kurt*, page 117

most concentration camps. It was a wooden table, a little larger and taller than an old-style single school desk. It had straps on the legs and top to bind the victim to it.

On this particular occasion, the victims – including Fritz – were stripped of their jackets and shirts, and their trousers were pulled down before being strapped to the *Bock*. They were then whipped. The device used for this was a bull-whip, essentially a weapon rather than an instrument of corporal punishment, made from leather with a steel core. The victim was subjected to twenty-five strokes with this whip, primarily on the buttocks. The final obscene touch of cruelty was that the victim had to count the strokes out loud, and if he lost count, they would start again from the beginning.

### 3.4.2 Auschwitz – the Gestapo

Whipping on the *Bock* (the wooden table described above) was a commonplace punishment, part of the stock routine of the SS Death's Head units. Of all their regular methods, it was only surpassed for cruelty by their practice of hanging people by the wrists, also practised in many if not most concentration camps. In this abominable ritual, the victim's wrists were bound together behind their back; a long rope was tied around the bound wrists, thrown over a branch or beam,





SS-Lieutenant Maximilian Grabner, photographed post-war as a prisoner of the Allies. (Photo: USHMM.)

and the victim was hauled up, often for hours at a time. Sometimes this was done inside buildings, whereas in the early years at Buchenwald it was usually done outdoors in full view of the other prisoners, sometimes making use of the

‘Goethe Oak’, a famous tree in the main camp.

In Auschwitz, Fritz experienced both forms of torture – whipping and hanging – at the hands of SS-Lieutenant Maximilian Grabner, head of the Auschwitz Gestapo.

Fritz had become involved with the Jewish prisoner resistance in Auschwitz-Monowitz. His mission was to befriend German civilian workers in the Buna factories attached to the camp, in order to gather useful information. When one of these civilians was seized by the Gestapo and accused of helping prisoners to escape, he identified Fritz as the prisoner with whom he’d had dealings.

As narrated in the book, Fritz was taken to the camp Gestapo building at the central Auschwitz I camp, where he was whipped and hung up. The details of these practices are omitted from the book. The whipping involved a version of the Bock, and the hanging employed a hook in the ceiling.

Over the course of hours, Fritz was strapped down and whipped, unfastened and questioned. Each time he refused to give the names of resistance members, he was strapped down again. He lost count of how many times he was bent over



*Above left:* The ‘Bock’ (‘Horse’) at Buchenwald. *Above right:* Demonstrating the SS method of hanging prisoners by the wrists. These pictures were taken after liberation, during an exhibition of Buchenwald’s horrors. (Photos: US Army.)



the table, but counted 60 blows in all.

When the whipping failed to elicit any information, Grabner's assistants (two SS sergeants) began the process of hanging Fritz up by his wrists. He was kept hanging in agonising pain while he was questioned, and then dropped to the floor, three times.

Eventually, as told in the book, Grabner called a pause and had Fritz returned to the camp, intending to resume the interrogation on another day. Fritz's life was saved by his resistance friends faking his death and falsifying his identity. However, although he recovered the use of his limbs in a remarkably short time, the hanging had left him with permanent underlying injuries, which plagued him in later life and in the 1970s

forced him to take early retirement.

A few months after the torture, Grabner was found to be involved in corruption and was removed from his post. His records were largely destroyed, and Fritz was able to resume his identity.

*(For a fuller account of Fritz's torture, including citations of the documentary sources used, see my original book, The Boy Who Followed His Father into Auschwitz, chapters 3 and 14.)*

## FRITZ'S TORTURE

### Topics to discuss with young readers

- On the right is a photo of Lieutenant Grabner, the Gestapo man who tortured Fritz and killed hundreds of prisoners. If you didn't know anything about him, does he look like someone who would do something so cruel? If so, can you explain why? If not, what do you think that tells us about judging people from how they look?
- Looking again at the photo of Grabner, compare it with the photo of him on the previous page, taken just after the war. He looks very different. Describe what is different, and talk about why he might have changed so much in such a short time?



### 3.5 Why did Alfred Woche help Fritz?

Despite his torture by the Gestapo, which resulted from his work with the resistance, Fritz continued trying to help the resistance in their covert activities. As narrated in *Fritz and Kurt*, when a German civilian worker in one of the Buna factories, named Alfred Woche, attempted to make conversation with him, Fritz was extremely wary, but gradually relented. Woche became a vital help to Fritz and other prisoners, smuggling out letters to relatives and smuggling in food and even weapons.

Fritz was initially motivated to interact with Woche largely by his desire to contribute to the resistance. But what was Woche's motivation? He was a sergeant in the German army, on permanent disability leave due to wounds, and not by nature inclined to be subversive. He was deeply loyal to Germany, even to the Nazi state and to Hitler. He came to work at the Auschwitz factories believing that the prisoners had been incarcerated for some kind of crime, because surely the Führer wouldn't imprison innocent people? When Fritz tried to explain to him what Auschwitz was, Woche refused to believe it.

The incident that made Woche change his mind is mentioned in *Fritz and Kurt*, but with only minimal detail. It was not uncommon for prisoners who had lost hope and become suicidal to throw themselves onto the electrified fence surrounding the camp and cling on. If the current didn't kill them, a bullet from the SS guards would. The SS typically left the corpses hanging from the fence for days afterwards in order to intimidate the other prisoners. One morning on his way to work, Woche witnessed this for himself. It changed his mind completely, and he accepted the truth about Auschwitz.

From then on, he became devoted to helping Fritz (and later his father), and through them their prisoner friends in any way he could. Fritz later

It was dangerous to argue with a German civilian, but Fritz couldn't help himself. How could someone be so ignorant? The man stared at Fritz, at his shaved head, his youth and his half-starved body. Then he limped away and went back to work.

*Fritz and Kurt*, page 254

wrote: 'For us concentration camp inmates, Woche did more than fulfil his duty. With his behaviour he gave us courage and confidence, he made a decisive contribution to our surviving Auschwitz. Nobody honoured him for that. We, the survivors, owe him a debt of gratitude. After our return to Vienna, Alfred Woche visited us often. We were able to make him aware of how much he had helped us.'<sup>1</sup>

However, questions remain regarding Woche's alleged prior ignorance of Nazi atrocities. As a sergeant in the Wehrmacht, it is not known exactly what his duties had been on the Eastern Front, or what unit he was in, but it is hard to believe that he was entirely unaware of the mass murders of Jews carried out there. The Waffen-SS and Einsatzgruppen (Nazi death squads) were not the only organisations involved; Wehrmacht units took part too, and even if Woche was nowhere near any such events, it is likely that he would have heard reports and rumours. On the other hand, Fritz seems to have believed that Woche's ignorance was genuine, so perhaps the patriotic soldier had dismissed such stories – assuming he heard them – as inventions.

Whatever the case, Woche continued to be doggedly loyal to Germany as a nation. In early 1945, when he was called up to join the *Volks-*

<sup>1</sup> Gärtner and Kleinmann, *Doch der Hund*, p. 160.



turn, the militia formed mainly of old men, men with disabilities, and teenage boys, Woche went eagerly, refusing Fritz's attempt to persuade him to escape. As a loyal German, he was determined to fight for the Fatherland in its last stand against the Allies.

*(For a full account of Fritz's relationship with Alfred Woche, including citations of the documentary sources used, see my original book, The Boy Who Followed His Father into Auschwitz, chapter 15 onwards.)*

### WHY DID ALFRED WOCHER HELP FRITZ?

#### Topics to discuss with young readers

- Alfred Woche said he changed his mind about the Nazis because of the horrible thing he saw one day at the camp. Do you think that's the only reason? Do you think that, as a soldier, he might have already known or guessed more than he admitted to? If so, why do you think he was reluctant to believe that Hitler and Nazi Germany were bad?
- Fritz believed that Alfred Woche was a very good person. And yet he fought for Nazi Germany. Do you think it's possible for good people to do things that are bad? If so, why do they?
- Do you think Alfred Woche's behaviour towards Fritz can help us to understand the neighbours and friends in Vienna who betrayed the Kleinmann family to the Nazis? Papa and Mum thought their friends and neighbours were good people. Why do you think those friends betrayed them when some other friends stayed loyal?





### 3.6 What happened to Papa after Fritz escaped from the train?

As told in *Fritz and Kurt*, Fritz and his father, along with most of the other prisoners evacuated from Auschwitz-Monowitz in January 1945, were loaded onto a train bound for Mauthausen concentration camp in Austria. Fritz's plan that they both escape by jumping from the train was thwarted because his father, Gustav, was too weak to make the attempt. But he persuaded Fritz to go alone.

When Fritz was recaptured and sent to Mauthausen, he expected to find his father there, but found no evidence that he or any of their companions had been in the camp. Fritz had no idea what had happened to his Papa until after the war.

After Fritz's escape, the train called at Mauthausen but was turned away by the commandant, because his camp was already severely overcrowded. The train continued on into south-western Germany. The prisoners in the train were dying from cold and starvation. Some managed to escape by jumping from the train, but Gustav was by now even more physically weakened.

Eventually the train reached the unloading ramp used by the Mittelbau-Dora concentration camp complex, outside the city of Nordhausen. When the prisoners were disembarked, 766 of them were found to be dead. Gustav wrote in his diary: 'Starved and murdered, some frozen to



Entrance to the underground V-2 missile factory at Mittelbau-Dora. (Photo: NARA.)

The train had reached its top speed. Fritz peeled off the loathsome striped uniform with its star badge and camp number. He flung off the striped cap.

Fritz hugged his beloved Papa one last time and kissed him on the forehead. 'Goodbye, Papa.'

*Fritz and Kurt*, page 294

death, and the whole thing not to be described.' Just over three thousand had survived the journey; of those, more than six hundred died in their first two days in Mittelbau-Dora.

Gustav managed to cling to life, and was transferred to a satellite camp fourteen kilometres away at Ellrich. Conditions there were unimaginable – worse than anything he'd experienced in five years at Buchenwald and Auschwitz. Prisoners were dying at such a rate from starvation, exposure, exhaustion and disease that, despite a constant influx of transferred prisoners, the camp population was falling. The prisoners laboured in the nearby underground factory where V-2 missiles were made. Gustav was assigned to a tunnel-digging detail, alongside Soviet prisoners of war.

Still Gustav did not give up. 'One can scarcely drag oneself along,' he wrote in his diary, 'but I have made a pact with myself that I will survive to the end... And every day I say a prayer to myself: Gustl, do not despair. Grit your teeth – the SS murderers must not beat you.'

By April, with American forces advancing on Mittelbau-Dora, the SS began the evacuation. On 9 April Gustav arrived at Bergen-Belsen, which had become the final pool into which a huge proportion of the prisoner populations of many evac-



uated camps had drained. There were two main camps. Gustav and his companions were fortunate in being placed in the extension camp, housed in a former Wehrmacht tank training centre. The main concentration camp was crammed with over sixty thousand prisoners; typhus ran rampant there, and corpses were piled high in mounds.

On 15 April 1945, Bergen-Belsen was liberated by British forces, following a negotiated handover from the surrendering SS commandant and the local Wehrmacht. The area was cordoned off due to the typhus epidemic.

The camps were placed under the direct supervision of a Hungarian regiment which until a few days earlier had been part of the German forces. Most of the Hungarian officers and men were as antisemitic as the SS, and treated the liberated prisoners cruelly, punishing breaches of the rules severely and even taking pot-shots at them. Gustav himself was beaten with a rifle-butt for a minor infraction.

Gustav had had enough. Despite the camps being under quarantine, he and a friend escaped into the surrounding forest; they were shot at by a Hungarian guard, but succeeded in getting away.

The journey home was difficult and long. Re-

gistering as a displaced person with the Allied occupation authorities was complex, and little help was forthcoming. Gustav found work for a time in a German town, before setting out to find his way back to Vienna. He travelled mostly on foot, and some of the way by bicycle, in various large and small groups of ex-prisoners. He stopped off along the way for reunions with former camp comrades who had been liberated.

Gustav took his time, sightseeing and enjoying his freedom. He wrote in his diary that he believed Fritz must be alive and waiting for him in Vienna, and yet, even allowing for delays caused by the fledgling bureaucracy of occupied Germany, he doesn't seem to have been in a great hurry to get there; we could speculate that on some level he wasn't wholly confident about what he would find when he got home – joy or heartbreak. On 2 July he cycled into Austria. He visited Mauthausen out of curiosity, having no idea that Fritz had very nearly died as a prisoner there.

It took Gustav another two months to cross Austria, reaching the Soviet-occupied zone and entering Vienna. Happily his optimism was rewarded, and at last, six months after their parting, he was reunited with Fritz.



*Above left:* When British troops liberated Bergen-Belsen, they found tens of thousands of dead prisoners. The number of bodies was so vast that burial by hand became impossible, and bulldozers had to be used.  
*Above right:* A Hungarian soldier guarding the perimeter at Bergen-Belsen. (Photos: USHMM.)



*(For a full account of Gustav Kleinmann's journeys and ordeals after being separated from Fritz, including citations of the documentary sources used, see my original book, The Boy Who Followed His Father into Auschwitz, chapters 19–21.)*

## WHAT HAPPENED TO PAPA AFTER FRITZ ESCAPED FROM THE TRAIN?

### Topics to discuss with young readers

- Papa took a very long time to reach Vienna after he was freed by British soldiers. That was partly because of delays he couldn't control, but also because he was enjoying being free and travelling. But could there be other reasons? Do you think he might have been afraid of what he would find in Vienna? He had faith that Fritz would survive and be waiting there for him, but do you think Papa might have still worried?
- Papa was so tired out that he couldn't escape from the train with Fritz. And yet he survived several more months in terrible camps. How do you think he might have managed that? He said in his diary that he believed he would survive. Do you think that tells us something about courage and hope ?



### 3.7 What happened to the children of the Karmeliter market?

Before the Nazi occupation, the Karmelitermarkt in the Viennese district of Leopoldstadt (anglicised as ‘Karmeliter market’ in the book) had been the playground for many of the children who lived in the surrounding streets, Jewish and non-Jewish alike. They mingled and played together, including at various times all of the Kleinmann children.

After the war, Fritz researched the fates of fifty-five of those he had known before the German invasion, ranging in age from Kurt’s to Edith’s cohorts.<sup>1</sup> He assembled the following facts.

Of the **25 Jewish children**, 5 (including Fritz himself) survived the camps, and 8 (including Kurt and Edith Kleinmann) either emigrated or hid successfully throughout the Holocaust. The remaining 12 Jewish children (including Herta Kleinmann) were murdered by the Nazis.

Of the **30 non-Jewish children**, 19 remained in or near Vienna throughout the war. Another 11 served in the Wehrmacht; of these only 3 survived at the end of the war.

Fritz recorded the names of all the children he researched:

#### **Jews murdered by the Nazis**

Liesl Durst  
 Fredi Fass  
 Ossi Fass  
 Ossi Goldstein  
 Moische Heller  
 Sarah Heller  
 Hans Hergesell  
 Herta Kleinmann  
 Willi Pasternak  
 Fritz Steiner  
 Gerti Ungar  
 Helli Ungar

Fritz and the other kids ran among the empty stalls, kicking the ball back and forth. Only Mrs Capek, the fruit seller, was still there. She never packed up until it got dark. In summer she gave the kids corn cobs. Most of the boys and girls around here were poor and would take all the free food they could get.

*Fritz and Kurt, page 2*

#### **Jews who survived the camps**

Moritz Goldstein  
 Fritz Kleinmann  
 Robert Löwy  
 Liesl Steiner  
 Rudi Steiner

#### **Jews who emigrated**

Rifka Heller  
 Ruth Hergesell  
 Edith Kleinmann  
 Kurt Kleinmann  
 Hans Schwarz  
 Fredl Silberstein  
 Grete Steiner

#### **Jews who survived in hiding**

Eugen Grünwald<sup>2</sup>

#### **Non-Jews who died in Wehrmacht service**

Ernst Hinterhofer  
 Ernst Jurkovicz

<sup>1</sup> Gärtner and Kleinmann, *Doch der Hund*, p. 179.

<sup>2</sup> Hid successfully in Czechoslovakia. Fritz described Eugen Grünberg as a ‘U-boat’, contemporary slang for a Jew who managed to live ‘below the surface’ of society without detection.



Edi Kalous  
 Viktor Luiskandl  
 Franz Mannsberger  
 Franz Suchovsky  
 Gustav Wenzl  
 Ernst Zumpfl

### **Non-Jewish military survivors**

Franz Hinterhofer  
 Rudi Kalous  
 Pepi Mannsberger<sup>1</sup>

### **Non-Jews who stayed in or near Vienna**

Ernst Apfelthaler  
 Hans Apfelthaler  
 Oswald Apfelthaler<sup>2</sup>  
 Hans Dworschak<sup>3</sup>  
 Anni Ecker  
 Erni Ecker

Viktor Ecker<sup>4</sup>  
 Pepi Haiden  
 Helli Hirschler  
 Fritzi Hirschler  
 Karl Jurkovicz  
 Franz Kivek  
 Hertha Kivek  
 Willi Lavicka  
 Heini Mannsberger  
 Kurt Schuh  
 Otto Suchovsky  
 Roman Theodorowitsch  
 Josef Valenta

It is striking how many of the last names recur across the different lists, showing several families who – like the Kleinmanns – had widely varying fates.

Fritz's friend Leo Meth is not included in the lists compiled by Fritz; after their last encounter in Auschwitz, Fritz appears to have been unable to discover what happened to him. My research has failed to cast light on the question.

Also absent from the lists is Fritz and Kurt's part-Jewish cousin Richard Wilczek. He survived the war, living in the Netherlands with his father, but despite being Kurt's best friend, Richard didn't live close enough to be part of the Karmelitermarkt crowd.

<sup>1</sup> The last names of these three survivors suggest that all three had brothers among the list of the dead. The Mannsberger brothers appear to have had a sibling (or other relation) called Heini listed among the civilian survivors.

<sup>2</sup> The father of the Apfelthaler brothers was sent to the camps as an anti-Nazi political prisoner.

<sup>3</sup> Hans Dworschak was a Catholic and an anti-Nazi.

<sup>4</sup> Viktor, a schoolfriend of Edith Kleinmann, became a member of the SA (the Brownshirts), and was the person who singled out Edith for antisemitic abuse by the mob in 1938.

## WHAT HAPPENED TO THE CHILDREN OF THE KARMELETERMARKT?

### Topics to discuss with young readers

- Thinking about your own friends, can you imagine what it would be like to be sent far away, knowing that you might never see them again?
- Some of the non-Jewish kids turned against their Jewish friends. If you had been one of Fritz's and Kurt's non-Jewish friends, do you think you'd have stayed friends with them after the Nazis came?



## 3.8 Other topics omitted from the book

Many other events and incidents were left out in retelling the story for young readers, in some cases for simplicity, in others because they were judged to be too distressing. Most of the omitted details make up the elements of the relentless, day-to-day atmosphere of death and terror in concentration camps.

This subsection outlines a selection of these omitted topics. For more information on these subjects and on others not covered here, including full source citations and additional notes, see my original book *The Boy Who Followed His Father into Auschwitz*.

### 3.8.1 Experiments in mass killing at Buchenwald

In the middle period of the Holocaust, prior to the official start of the Final Solution, the SS experimented with various methods of killing large numbers of people (see subsection 4.7 of this guide).

Like most concentrations camps, Buchenwald never had gas chambers or other permanent infrastructure for mass killing. These were only found in dedicated death camps. But Buchenwald was one of the sites used for a large-scale experimental programme, codenamed Action 14f14. Beginning in September 1941, the programme was designed to exterminate a large swathe of Soviet prisoners of war.

Action 14f14, which is less well known than the similarly codenamed Action 14f13 (see subsection 3.8.2 below), began in Buchenwald in September 1941, three months after the German invasion of the USSR, when large numbers of Soviet POWs began arriving in the camp. The majority of Red Army captives had been placed in POW camps; the individuals sent to concentration camps were those identified as Jews, intellectuals or dedicated communists.

Initially the Soviet POWs were shot in a firing range inside the main camp enclosure, with loud music played over the loudspeakers to drown the gunfire. This was found to be inefficient and too conspicuous. A disused SS riding school building within the camp complex was adapted for the experiment. The facility was codenamed Commando 99. Prisoners were taken in batches to the building, where they were told they would receive a medical inspection. The men were taken through one at time, via a series of rooms in which examinations were carried out by SS men in white coats. In the final room, the prisoner would be asked to stand against a measuring scale drawn on the wall. The wall was a thin board, with slit at about neck height, concealed by the lines of the scale. An SS guard armed with a pistol stood behind the wall, and when the victim stood against the scale, he was shot in the back of the neck.

The bodies were taken out through the other end of the building, and the killing room quickly hosed down to remove traces of blood before the next victim came through. Loud music played throughout the building to cover the gunshots.

Action 14f14 did not last long. Disposing of the large number of bodies in Buchenwald's single crematorium proved impossible. The SS realised that they needed to develop more efficient methods of mass murder. That task was left to dedicated death camps like Auschwitz.

### 3.8.2 Medical experiments and killing of prisoners with disabilities

Just prior to Action 14f14, the SS implemented Action 14f13, which was designed to kill people deemed 'unworthy of life' – that is, those with physical and mental disabilities.

An earlier programme, codenamed T4, had been carried out across Germany, using special



hospital facilities with gas chambers and mobile gas vans that visited city hospitals. The T4 programme was publicly visible, and caused such an outcry that it was dropped. It was replaced by Aktion 14f13, conducted inside concentration camps. The targets remained the same, although Jewish prisoners with disabilities were the primary focus.

In Buchenwald, Fritz's father, Gustav Kleinmann, was among those subjected to examination by visiting doctors. He wrote in his diary: 'We got orders to present ourselves at the infirmary. I smell a rat.' He was passed fit, but 187 other prisoners with conditions ranging from visual impairment to prosthetic limbs were not so lucky. They were taken away in transports, and the official line was that they were going to a place where they would be assigned light work. Short after, the transports returned, empty except for the men's personal effects.

At around the same time, Buchenwald began a programme of exterminating prisoners carrying tuberculosis. It was headed by SS Doctor Hanns Eisele, who became known to the prisoners as White Death or the Injection Doctor, for the lethal injections he administered to hundreds of prisoners – often based on nothing more than a cursory visual examination. Any Jewish prisoners who were sick or considered troublesome could be targets for his needle. Eisele was also notorious for surgical experiments carried out on prisoners.

### **3.8.3 Gustav's near-fatal injury**

In mid-1942, while in Buchenwald, Gustav Kleinmann nearly fell victim to Dr Eisele's programme of lethal injections.

While working with the transport command (the so-called Singing Horses work detail), Gustav's team was loading sawn logs onto their wagon when one came loose, triggering a catastrophic avalanche of logs. Several men were in-

jured, one of them fatally.

Gustav suffered broken fingers, badly broken ribs, and extensive bruising. He was taken to the main camp infirmary, a notorious place, and placed in a ward next to the operating room where lethal injections were carried out. Periodically patients were selected and taken through for injection. Gustav was not selected because he was expected to die quite quickly from his injuries. He managed to survive with the help of a friendly orderly, and after six weeks was well enough to go back to his block. Friends in the prisoner resistance support network who held clerical jobs arranged for him to be transferred to light work in the camp factory.

### **3.8.4 The Hamber murder and the killings by Martin Sommer**

In early 1941, Gustav was one of several witnesses to a murder that reverberated throughout Buchenwald, almost leading to a prisoner rebellion. On one of the construction sites, an SS sergeant named Abraham, notorious for his violent temperament, brutally attacked and killed a prisoner, Philipp Hamber. There was not even the flimsiest excuse for provocation; it was an entirely spontaneous outburst of rage.

Philipp Hamber, a former film producer, was a labourer on one of the construction haulage teams. For no apparent reason (a misplaced glance or just not liking the looking of Philipp would be enough) SS-Sergeant Abraham knocked him down and kicked him, then dragged him into a foundation trench filled with rainwater, pushing him under the surface with a boot on his head until he drowned.

Although death was a daily event in the camp, something about Philipp Hamber's murder affected the mood of the prisoners in an unprecedented way. There was anger and resentment. Gustav anticipated protests, perhaps even outright rebellion.



From the viewpoint of the SS the incident was a significant problem. The murder had been witnessed by a civilian visiting the site, which meant that an inquiry had to be held. Moreover, Philipp's brother, Eduard, also a prisoner in the camp and a member of the same haulage team, lodged a formal complaint with the camp administration. Eduard Hamber knew he was risking his own life, but believed he might bring about reform in the behaviour of the SS. He was mistaken.

The camp's security personnel interrogated all the men in Philipp Hamber's haulage team who had been there when he was killed. (Fortunately for Gustav, he and his team were overlooked.) In a state of terror, every one of the men denied having seen anything. Eduard was the only one who maintained the truth.

Eduard was taken to the 'Bunker', a cell block in the main camp gatehouse under the command of SS-Sergeant Martin Sommer, a notorious torturer and killer. It was said that no Jew ever came out of the Bunker alive. Four days later, Eduard's corpse was brought out.

Over the following weeks, all the members of the Hamber brothers' haulage team were taken to the Bunker and killed.

The hoped-for rebellion died before it could even begin. This incident – and others like it – probably contributed to the certainty that resistance to the SS by camp prisoners had to be covert and subtle; there was no route via open justice.

### 3.8.5 Fritz joins the SS

Early in his period as a prisoner in Mauthausen, Fritz became involved again with prisoner resistance activities, having been recruited by leading resister Pepi Kohl.

As a last-ditch defence against the Allies, Mauthausen commandant SS-Colonel Franz Ziereis came up with the idea of recruiting German and Austrian political prisoners 'of Aryan



SS-Sergeant Martin Sommer, commander of the 'Bunker' at Buchenwald concentration camp.

blood' into the SS. Those who volunteered would earn their freedom. The resistance decided to take advantage of this offer, the plan being to obtain weapons and training, then at the crucial moment, turn against the SS and protect the other prisoners until the Allied forces arrived.

Due to the circumstances of his arrival in Mauthausen, Fritz had been registered as a non-Jewish political prisoner, and he was among the 120 chosen by Pepi Kohl to volunteer for the SS scheme. Fritz was extremely reluctant; he recoiled at the very idea of putting on the hated SS uniform. But Pepi was persuasive.

The volunteers were taken to an SS training school near Mauthausen for instruction and indoctrination. Whereas the other resistance volunteers kept focused and went along with the training, Fritz found it impossible. Being a part of the SS, even as a resistance mole, felt deeply, irre-





deemably wrong to him. There was no option to quit, so he began to misbehave, hoping to be removed from the course and sent back to the camp. Eventually it worked, and Fritz's brief SS career was over.

The shame of the episode ran deep. In later life, Fritz does not appear to have told any member of his family about it; neither did he include it in his written memoir or any of his interviews, except for one. In the 1970s Fritz was interviewed by fellow Auschwitz survivor and resistance member Hermann Langbein. Perhaps feel-

ing that Langbein was one of the few people in the world who would understand, Fritz confessed his part in this episode.

*(For a fuller account of Fritz's involvement with the Mauthausen resistance, including source citations, see the original The Boy Who Followed His Father into Auschwitz, chapter 19.)*

## MISCELLANEOUS SUBJECTS OMITTED FROM THE BOOK

### Topics to discuss with young readers

- Why couldn't Fritz stand being in the SS for the resistance when the others managed it? After all, it would have given him the chance to fight the SS, which he'd wanted to do in Auschwitz. Did it feel wrong to him because he was Jewish and the other resistance men chosen by Pepi weren't? Or might there be other reasons?
- Look at the photo of SS-Sergeant Martin Sommer on the previous page. If you didn't know anything about him, does he look to you like someone who would hurt people? If so, can you explain why? If not, what do you think that tells us about judging people from how they look?



## Introduction

This section highlights some key aspects of Holocaust history, providing broader context to the events narrated in *Fritz and Kurt*. The next section, 4b, gives information and links on classroom resources on the Holocaust.

This isn't a comprehensive history of the Holocaust. It is a 'starter set' of general topics, each of which has some direct relevance to discussing *Fritz and Kurt* in an educational context.

To avoid clutter, citations are only given

where they are direct quotations or aren't already provided in my books or elsewhere in this guide. For greater depth of detail on each topic, broader coverage, and for full exploration of the source materials, please see the bibliographic sections of this guide including the suggested reading for adults and young readers, and the research bibliography (sections 6a and 6b).

## 4.1 Antisemitism and the rise of Nazism

### 4.1.1 Antisemitism<sup>1</sup>

There is no simple straight line connecting historical antisemitism to Nazism, the Third Reich, and the Holocaust. The processes involved were intensely complicated.<sup>2</sup> This subsection outlines some of the themes and events.

Mistrust and hatred of Jews in Germany did not begin with Adolf Hitler and the Nazi Party. Antisemitism has existed throughout the history of the Jewish diaspora. One of the most enduring antisemitic myths, the 'blood libel', originated in Norwich, England in the 12th century, spread through Europe and beyond, and was associated with intermittent outbreaks of violence and persecution against Jewish communities over the

The Nazis were driven by anger and determination to control everything and everyone... and hated everyone who was not like themselves... Most of all, the Nazis hated Jewish people.

*Fritz and Kurt*, page 6

course of centuries, along with other antisemitic tropes and rumours.<sup>3</sup>

By the early modern period, antisemitism had become endemic in European social and political culture. While its more violent effects came and went in most countries, it was most virulent in the Russian empire, which historically had a large Jewish population. The Russian word *pogrom*, meaning an act of violent destruction, came to be widely used to denote attacks on Jew-

<sup>1</sup> Throughout this guide, the IHRA-recommended spelling is used rather than 'anti-Semitism', which was used in the original *The Boy Who Followed His Father into Auschwitz*. See <https://www.holocaustremembrance.com/antisemitism>.

<sup>2</sup> See Bartov, 'Antisemitism, the Holocaust, and Reinterpretations of National Socialism', Niewyk, 'Solving the "Jewish Problem"', and Heilbronner, 'German or Nazi Antisemitism?' for detailed historiographies of the connections.

<sup>3</sup> Rose, *The Murder of William of Norwich*. The 'blood libel' is the false claim that Christian children were seized and murdered by Jews and their blood used in religious rituals.



ish communities, due to the frequency of such outbreaks in Russia. Many Jews left Russia during the 19th and early 20th centuries, some settling in western Europe, Britain and North America, while the majority settled in the regional

kingdoms of what is now Poland (which historically belonged variously to Poland, the German empire and the Austro-Hungarian empire). By 1939, Poland's Jewish population had grown to around 3 million. They were still not safe from antisemitism, however.

### ***Jewish settlement in Vienna before 1938***

Vienna's history of Jewish settlement and antisemitism is long and complex. The original Jewish quarter – the ghetto – was in the city centre. Several present-day street names refer to their Jewish heritage. Pogroms and expulsions occurred at various times, and Jews were restricted in their legal rights.

In the 17th century, the centre of Jewish settlement moved away from the city centre to the district later named Leopoldstadt, on the island between the Danube river and canal. Jews in the district were expelled by Holy Roman Emperor Leopold I later in the same century. But in 1782, Leopold's successor Josef II began the process of emancipation of Viennese Jews, lifting many of the legal restrictions on them. In 1867 Jews were legally recognised as full and equal citizens.

Again the Jewish population of Leopoldstadt flourished. When Gustav Kleinmann and his wife Tini's parents moved to Vienna in the late 19th and early 20th century, that was where they settled. By the 1930s, most of Vienna's 190,000 Jews lived in the district, and they made up about a third of its population.

From the mid 19th century on, Jewish culture and social life in Vienna centred on the Israelitische Kultusgemeinde (IKG), which kept records of births, marriages and deaths, and organised religious and social programmes. After the Anschluss of 1938, the IKG was forced by the Nazis to use its infrastructure (under the oversight of SS administrator Adolf Eichmann) to handle the administration and welfare of the Jewish population, and was even made to help manage deportations to ghettos and camps.

Antisemitic violence escalated suddenly in that region in 1914 to 1920, first with the Russian invasion at the outbreak of the First World War, and then with Bolshevik pogroms after the armistice. In 1914, large numbers of Jews in the Austro-Hungarian kingdom of Galicia (now part of present-day Poland and Ukraine) fled the advancing Russian army, many of them migrating to Vienna, which triggered yet another spike in antisemitic feeling in that city.

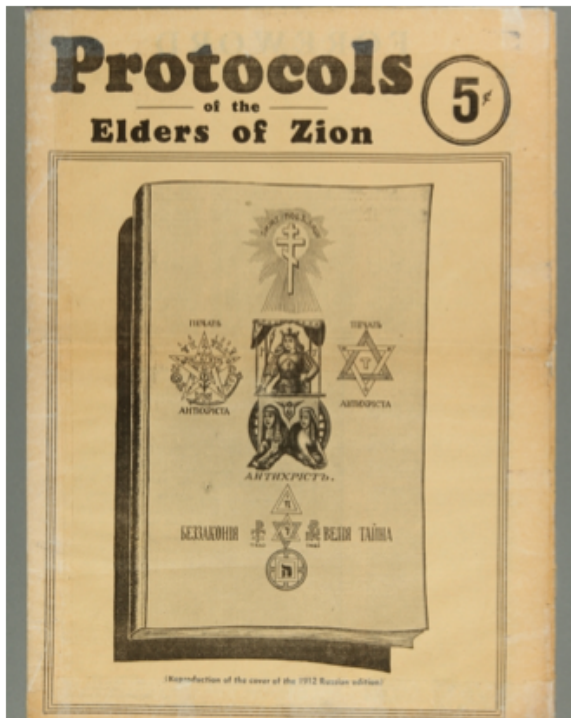
The antisemitism that flourished in the period after the First World War was substantially different and even more pernicious than historic forms. It was influenced by *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, first published in Russia in 1903, which, it was claimed, laid out a Jewish plan to undermine and dominate world society. Although it was revealed as a fake in 1920, the far right continued to believe it. *The Protocols* was, in its way, the blood libel of the modern era, uniting medieval religious superstitions about Jews with contemporary notions of class and capital.

### ***4.1.2 The rise of Nazism***

Adolf Hitler was born in Austria in 1889. Failing to make it as an art student and living in poverty in Vienna, in 1914 he joined the Germany army and served throughout the First World War. After the war he settled in Germany and became involved in working-class politics.

Post-war Germany was in deep recession and political turmoil. The economy had been shattered by the war and was burdened with punitive reparations imposed by the Allies. Parts of Germany had been carved off and given to France and Poland, the Kaiser had been deposed,





Above left: Translation of *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* published by Montreal Anti-Communist Committee, Canada, around 1938. Above right: Advertisement for a book on 'inferior races' published in Nazi Germany around 1941. (Image: USHMM.)

and the government of the newly created Weimar Republic struggled to cope. Germany's ally, Austria, was also crushed, reduced from a large empire to a single state, with parts of its territory given to other countries.

In Germany, hundreds of local workers' parties sprang up. Hitler joined one based in Munich, and quickly took it over. It was renamed the Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei (National Socialist German Workers' Party) – or Nazi Party for short. Like many such parties, the NSDAP were only nominally socialist, using workers' grievances about their economic plight as a vehicle for extreme right-wing ideology, typically virulently antisemitic, nationalist, and militarist in character.

Nazi ideology did not spring from antisemitism, but it had antisemitism at its core (see box below), building on the myth of an international Jewish conspiracy and the widespread belief among Germans that their defeat in the war had been caused by Jewish influence. False claims

were made that ordinary Jews had failed to fight for Germany and that rich and influential Jews had worked against Germany's interests, in league with the Allies, particularly Bolshevik Russia and the United States.

During the 1920s, Hitler's abilities as a powerful public orator helped the Nazi Party become a nationally recognised force, attracting thousands of members and building a paramilitary enforcement arm, the Sturmabteilung (SA, or storm division), whose uniformed storm troopers provided security at Nazi meetings and demonstrations, violently intimidated opposing (often socialist) political opponents, counter-demonstrators and even bystanders, and carried out antisemitic assaults.

The Nazi Party initially attempted to seize the city of Munich by a *putsch* (violent coup) in 1923, hoping to use the city as a base to bring down the Weimar government. This so-called Beer Hall Putsch failed, and Hitler was imprisoned. Although the putsch gave the Nazis a



### ***Relationship between Nazi anti-Jewish ideology and historic forms of antisemitism***

- **Nazism claimed that ‘international Jewry’ was conspiring to destroy civilisation** – specifically Aryan German civilisation – by 1) infiltrating the systems of finance which control industry and capital, and 2) fomenting and disseminating communism and socialism. This idea built on the fake *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* myth, first published in 1903.
- **Nazism conceived Jews as a race rather than just a religion and culture.** Nazism promoted the idea that a Jew (or a descendant of Jews) remained Jewish even if they left the religion or converted to a different one. This was codified in the Nuremberg racial laws of 1935, which deprived German Jews of most of their legal rights, including citizenship, as well as deprecating marriage or interbreeding between Jews and ‘Aryans’.
- **Nazism claimed that Jews had identifiable physiological and mental characteristics.** The common historic belief in a stereotypical Jewish appearance and character was magnified by the Nazis with grotesque caricatures, coupled with ideas about Jewish physiognomy and genetics. Nazi ‘race scientists’ believed, with no evidence, that Jews were genetically predisposed to dishonesty, avarice, and a long list of other character flaws (derived from historic antisemitic tropes), and were therefore an imminent existential threat to German society, its gene pool, and world civilisation.

propaganda boost, Hitler realised that real power lay through the ballot box.

It is sometimes claimed that Hitler and the Nazi Party were elected to government, but this is only half-true. Hitler’s manifesto of German economic reconstruction and prosperity for all, restoration of national pride and traditional values, against the background of prevailing economic catastrophe, brought the Nazi Party to a peak of political influence in the early 1930s, with a strong representation in the Reichstag, the German parliament. In the elections of 1932–33, the Nazi Party took between 33 and 37 per cent of the popular vote, leading to a hung parliament in which they were the largest single party. A group of senior politicians and businessmen, seeing the Nazis as a threat to national stability, but realising that they needed to be appeased somehow, persuaded President Hindenburg to appoint Hitler as chancellor (prime minister). Thinking he was merely an ill-educated street-corner orator, they expected to be able to separate him from his party and exert control over him.

They had misjudged him. Within weeks of taking office, Hitler used a largely imaginary threat of a communist revolution to persuade and manipulate Hindenburg and the Reichstag to grant him and his cabinet emergency powers. The Enabling Act of 1933 effectively turned Germany into a dictatorship, with Hitler as its Führer (leader, the title he’d held within the party since the 1920s). So began the German Reich (empire), also known as the Third Reich, reflecting the claim that the regime was a natural successor to the Holy Roman Empire and the German Empire of 1871–1918.

The Nazification of Germany was swift, transforming the nation from top to bottom. All police, security and non-military intelligence functions were absorbed into the SS. Headed by Heinrich Himmler, the SS (*Schutzstaffel*, guard squadron) had supplanted the SA as the party’s principal security force. It would eventually include the Gestapo (secret state police), Sipo (security police, later Sipo-SD, incorporating intelligence) as well as taking over the existing Kripo

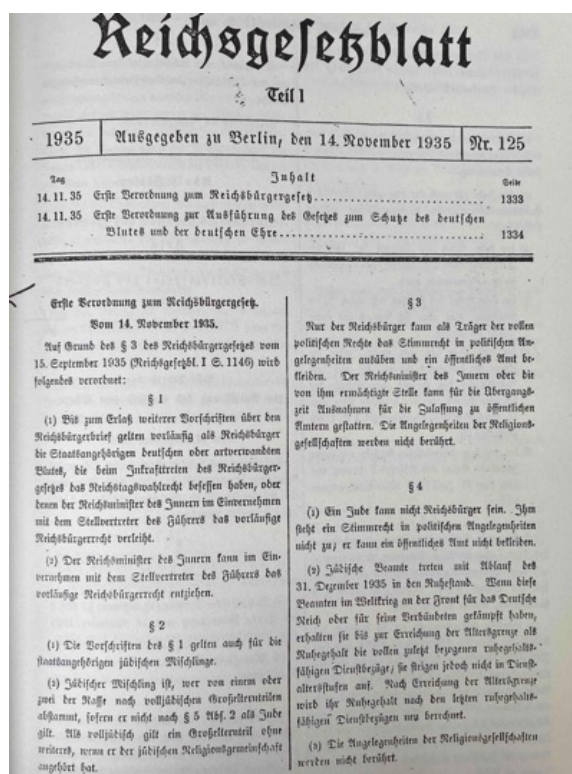


(detective police) and Orpo (regular uniformed police). It also had a military wing, the Waffen-SS, which fought alongside the regular army, and the SS-Totenkopfverbände (Death's Head units), whose primary role was to run concentration camps and (later) death camps.

Antisemitic laws were quickly brought in by the Nazi regime, fully codified in the Nuremberg Laws of 1935, which defined Jewishness as a race and set its criteria, along with the concept of 'purity of [German] blood'. Article 4.1 of the Reich Citizenship Law stated that 'A Jew cannot be a citizen of the Reich. He has no right to vote in political affairs, he cannot occupy a public office.' A Jew was defined as any person who was the offspring of at least one Jewish parent, regardless of religious practice. These definitions later became more all-encompassing. People who were of mixed Aryan and non-Aryan parentage were categorised as *Mischlinge* – hybrids or mongrels. In practice, to be fully acceptable as an Aryan German, an individual was expected to have no trace of 'Jewish blood' in their ancestry.

As well as public office, Jews were forced out of businesses, professions and trades, as well as schools and universities. Jewish influence on German culture was expunged through book-burning and purging Jewish-created artworks. Even scientific research and publications could be condemned if they came from Jewish scientists.

Although concentration camps were established at the start of the Third Reich, they were initially for political prisoners, and putting Jewish people into them simply for the crime of being Jewish did not start until several years later (see section 4.2). Mass murder of German Jewish people did not begin officially until 1941–42 (section 4.7). Initially the Nazis' aim was to force all Jews out of German daily life and out of Germany itself. With life becoming unbearable for Jews, emigration, including to Palestine, was ex-



Front page of the *Reichsgesetzblatt* (the official state proclamation paper) announcing the provisions of the Reich Citizenship Law of November 1935. (Image: Author.)

pected to do the job of making Germany *Judenfrei* – 'Jew-free'. (An alternative term was *Judenrein* – 'clean of Jews'.)

Because of this, some people have made the false claim that 'Hitler was a Zionist'. He was not. The Nazis' ultimate goal was world domination by the Aryan race and the complete eradication of races they judged inferior or dangerous, including Jews and Romanies, and the subjugation of all others.

The conditions imposed on Germany following its defeat in 1918 severely limited the Nazis' plans to re-arm Germany, and thus to bring about their plan of international domination. But gradually, first through stealth and eventually openly, the regime built up its armed forces, until by 1938 it was ready to begin seizing territory in other countries. This started with a bid to acquire regions regarded by the Nazis as naturally 'German', including Austria and the Sudetenland re-



gion of Czechoslovakia. When, in spite of objections from foreign powers, no international consequences occurred, Hitler grew bolder and invaded western Poland on 1 September 1939, dividing the country between Germany and the USSR.

France and Britain, humiliated by their previous appeasement of Hitler, responded to the invasion of Poland by declaring war. The United States, meanwhile, remained neutral and continued to do business with Nazi Germany. The following year, Germany began enacting its plans to conquer most of Europe and ultimately the world through military force. When Germany invaded

the Soviet Union in June 1941, and the United States and Japan entered the war that December, the conflict became global. It would end in 1945 with total defeat for the Axis Powers of Germany and Japan.

With the end of the war, the full extent of Nazi Germany's crimes against humanity – which had been at least partially known about for several years – were discovered by the Allies, with the liberation of the network of concentration camps and death camps. In the next subsection, we look at how that network came into being.

### ***'Samudaripen': the Romani genocide***

Many millions of people were killed in Nazi persecutions and war crimes. In addition to the genocide of Jewish people known as the Holocaust (or Shoah in Hebrew), the Nazis also targeted Romani traveller people for extermination.

Just as Nazi ideology claimed (without evidence) that Jews were genetically predisposed to dishonesty and subversion of Aryan society, Nazis also believed (again with no evidence) that Romanies were genetically coded for criminality. Romanies were subjected to the same genocidal persecutions as Jews. Ultimately, at least 250,000 Romani people were systematically murdered, with some studies calculating a much higher number, possibly as many as 1.5 million. In the Romani language, some historians name this genocide the Porrajmos\* (devouring) or Samudaripen (killing of all).

The Romani genocide has received less attention than the Jewish Holocaust, for many reasons. Endemic anti-traveller prejudice at the time – and still continuing today – has probably contributed. Less thorough record-keeping by the SS is also a factor. The eradication of Romani people was treated as a lesser priority by the Nazis, who regarded Jewish people's imagined genetic traits as more of an existential threat to society than those they attributed to Romanies, and this has had an effect on how seriously the Samudaripen has been taken by some historians.

*\*Some Romani historians dislike the term Porrajmos because its meaning – 'devouring' – can imply the image of a gobbling mouth, which is felt to be inappropriate.*



## 4.2 The concentration camp, death camp and ghetto system

### 4.2.1 Concentration camps

The first Nazi concentration camps for political opponents sprang up within weeks of Hitler coming to power. The SS and SA began by improvising, using whatever land and buildings they could seize. Around Berlin alone, 170 temporary camps were set up.<sup>1</sup>

In March 1933, a rudimentary camp for political prisoners was established in a disused munitions factory on the outskirts of the small town of Dachau, near Munich. It was rapidly developed as a large concentration camp containing tens of thousands of prisoners, forming the nucleus of a major SS complex of barracks and other facilities attached to the camp. The Dachau complex was the model for several of the major concentration

A frightening new word began to be whispered in Vienna. The word was *Dachau*. It was the name of a town in Germany where the SS had built a special type of prison called a concentration camp. People said it was a place of horror.

*Fritz and Kurt*, page 51

camps established in the 1930s, including Sachsenhausen (1936) near Berlin and Buchenwald (1937) near Weimar. Meanwhile, smaller camps proliferated throughout Germany.

The prisoner populations of concentration camps were overwhelmingly made up of political prisoners (primarily communists, socialists and trade unionists), plus a large number of crim-

<sup>1</sup> Wachsmann, *KL*, p. 36.

### **Prisoner brutality: Kapos in concentration camps**

The SS units who ran concentration camps devoted themselves to security, enforcement of rules, punishment, guarding the prisoners, and administration. The day-to-day task of slave-driving the various prisoner work gangs was done by specially appointed prisoners known as kapos, who operated under the oversight of SS guards. Most kapos were extremely brutal, and responsible for many of the prisoner deaths that occurred daily in the camps.

There is a myth that kapos were Jews who betrayed their fellows – and the term is sometimes used in the present day as a slur against Jewish people who are perceived as abetting antisemitism in some way. In fact, the overwhelming majority of violent kapos were criminal prisoners, not Jews. Criminals wore green triangle badges; these ‘green men’ were feared by other prisoners.

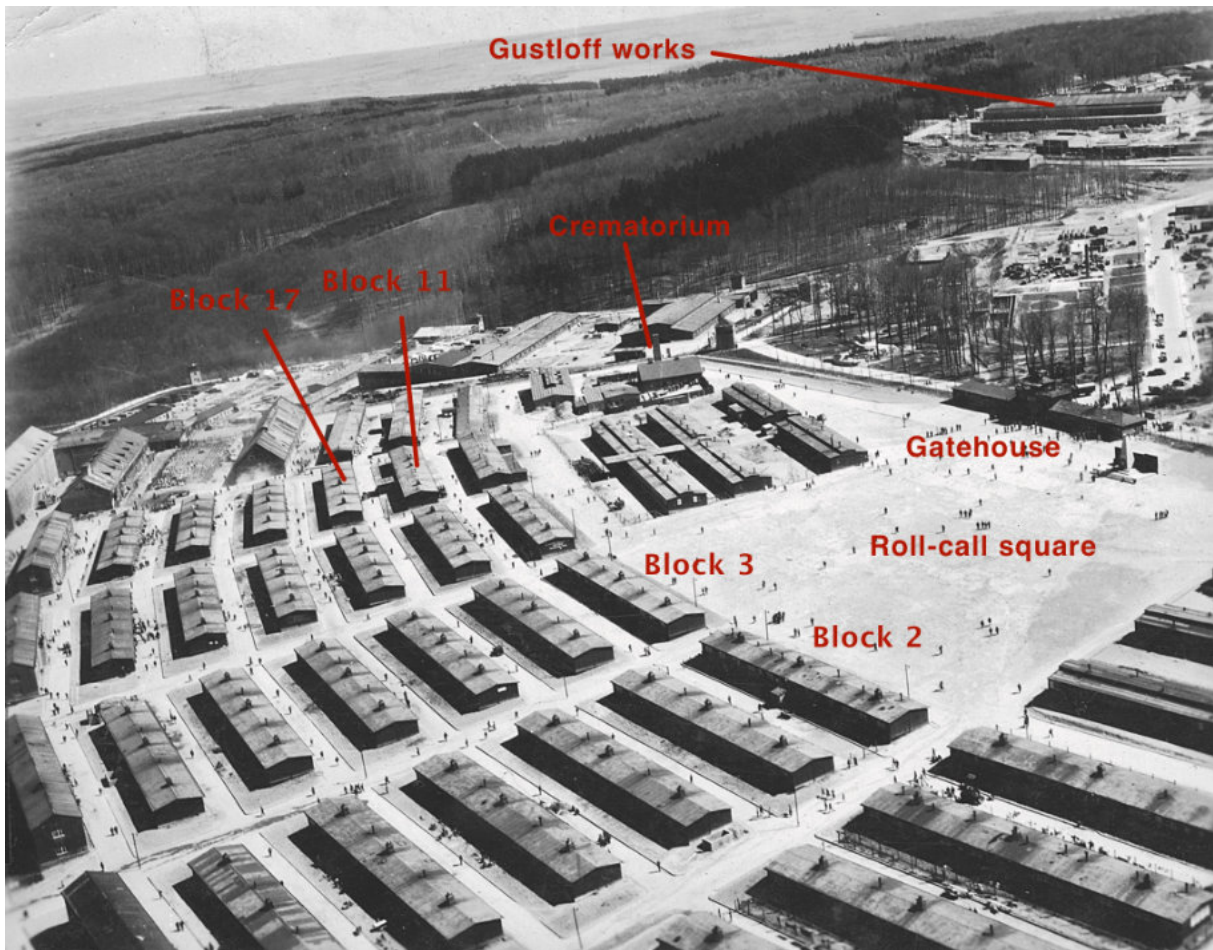
Some Jewish prisoners did serve as kapos, but the number who acted against other

prisoners is extremely small. There were also many Jewish prisoner functionaries who held surprisingly responsible clerical jobs in the camp offices. In many cases – perhaps the majority – Jewish kapos and functionaries used their positions to aid their fellow prisoners whenever they could, and to aid or even run prisoner resistance movements, gathering intelligence, organising sabotage or escapes, and so on. Fritz Kleinmann’s friends Stefan Heymann and Gustav Herzog are examples of functionaries who helped run the Monowitz resistance through their access to record-keeping and other official jobs.

A small number of non-Jewish kapos also helped other prisoners survive and avoid punishment. For instance, Robert Siewert, a political prisoner who was a senior kapo in the Buchenwald construction gangs, founded a programme to train Jewish boys as builders, which saved many lives, including that of Fritz Kleinmann.







Aerial view of part of the main camp at Buchenwald, taken in 1945. At various times from 1939 to 1942, Fritz lived with other teenagers and veteran prisoners in Block 3 (the 'youth block'), and in Block 17, which housed a number of Austrian politicians and artists who enhanced his understanding of politics and culture. Block 2 was for a time the Jewish infirmary (the 'death barrack'). The 'little camp', which housed Fritz and his Papa and the other new arrivals in October 1939 was located to right of the square (looking from the gatehouse); by 1945 it had been replaced by workshop buildings. The Gustloff works, an armaments factory, was under construction in 1942, and Fritz was one of several Jewish prisoners employed on the site as builders. These men were excluded from transport to Auschwitz in October 1942, apart from Fritz, who volunteered to go with his father. The men scheduled for transfer to Auschwitz were segregated into Block 11 before their departure. (Photo: USHMM.)



The stone quarry at Buchenwald. At centre are the rail tracks along which prisoners had to haul wagons filled with stone. As well as a concentration camp, Buchenwald was a large SS base; a small part of the SS barrack complex is visible in the background. (Photo: Musée de la Résistance et de la Déportation, Besançon.)



inals. In addition, as Nazi intolerance spread to more and more categories of people, further categories were added, including anti-Nazi Poles, gay people, ‘asocial’ individuals (long-term unemployed, people with drug and alcohol dependencies, etc.) and Jehovah’s Witnesses. Romani travellers were also targeted; at least 250,000 were ultimately murdered by the Nazis.

From late 1938, in the wake of the

Kristallnacht pogrom (see subsection 4.6 below), Jewish people began to be sent in large numbers to concentration camps, almost all of them men. Many of these men were later released in order to emigrate. But with the German invasion of Poland in September 1939, the Second World War broke out, and the number of emigrations dropped. Austrian and German Jews with Polish ancestry were arrested and sent to the camps – in-

## Auschwitz

Before the First World War, the town of Oświęcim – spelled *Auschwitz* in German – lay in Austro-Hungarian territory at the border with the German empire (a region which is now southern Poland). A market town with a thriving Jewish quarter, Oświęcim had a largely Polish-speaking population despite being ruled from Vienna. Because of its position, the town was an important rail transport nexus and a border-crossing point for migrant workers. The Austrian army had a barracks and military hospital just outside the town.

After the First World War, the Oświęcim barracks passed to the Polish Army. In 1939, with the Nazi German invasion of Poland, the facility changed hands again, taken over by the SS. In early 1940, work began to convert and extend the barracks into a concentration camp. This became Auschwitz I, the kernel of a massive and ever-growing complex. The infamous gateway sign ‘Arbeit macht frei’ (‘work makes you free’) was installed at Auschwitz I.

Most prisoners arriving at Auschwitz at its height never saw that sign. They were taken directly to the nearby Auschwitz II-Birkenau camp, a vast enclosure over a kilometre long by a kilometre wide, intended to hold 100,000 people, and later equipped with rail tracks and unloading ramp, and four large gas chambers. These came into near-constant use in April 1944, when the SS began the deportation of Hungarian Jews to Auschwitz. Most of the women, almost all young children, mothers, as well as old or unfit men, were sent straight to the gas chambers, in such numbers that

the system of killing and cremation was overwhelmed. Those who passed the selection – mostly young men and childless young women – were tattooed with camp numbers and assigned to one of the various camps in the Auschwitz system, where they were put to work.

In 1942, Auschwitz added a third principal camp – Auschwitz III-Monowitz, intended to provide prisoner labour for the colossal Buna Werke, a complex of chemical factories.

Forty additional satellite sub-camps were included in the Auschwitz system to provide prisoner labour to various industries, from farms to steel mills and mines. The complex was scattered over 3,500 square kilometres, an area which contained many other forced labour and prisoner of war camps; the latter were run by the Wehrmacht, but the whole area came under the security authority of the SS.

Auschwitz was evacuated by the SS in January 1945 ahead of its liberation by the Soviet Red Army. The SS blew up the gas chambers and attempted to dispose of all papers and dead bodies, but were unable to cover all their tracks. The majority of the hundreds of thousands of living prisoners were evacuated in the so-called death marches. Those who survived ended up in camps on German soil, such as Dachau, Buchenwald and Bergen-Belsen. Many of them died in those camps or on the marches.

An estimated 1.3 million people died in Auschwitz, over 90 percent of them Jewish.



cluding Fritz Kleinmann and his father, Gustav.

Between 1933 and 1945, the network of concentration camps in Germany and Nazi-occupied territories grew until it numbered over 4,400. Some of the larger complexes, such as Dachau and Buchenwald, had many satellite sub-camps. Auschwitz (founded in 1940) eventually grew to include three main camps (Auschwitz I, Auschwitz II-Birkenau and Auschwitz III-Monowitz) and about forty smaller satellites spread across a huge area of occupied southwestern Poland and linked to an even larger number of forced labour camps and prisoner of war camps.

From 1941, Auschwitz was among the first to be developed to include a new type of facility: the death camp – see box and subsection 4.2.3 below.

#### 4.2.2 Ghettos

As Nazi Germany invaded other countries, millions of Jewish people found themselves suddenly in the Nazi sphere. Germany and Austria

had a total of a little under 750,000 Jewish people in 1933, whereas Poland had 3 million and the Soviet Union about 2.5 million. In occupied cities such as Warsaw and Lodz in Poland, Minsk in the Soviet Union, and Theresienstadt (Terezín) in Czechoslovakia, the Nazi German administrations created ghettos.

Loosely modelled on the ghettos (Jewish districts) of medieval cities, Nazi ghettos were created by identifying a city's predominantly Jewish neighbourhood and securely fencing it in. All the city's Jews were forced into the ghetto, with more brought in from surrounding areas, as well as many more deported from Germany and Austria.

Ghettos became overcrowded, and life inside them was extremely harsh. They were run as if they were fiefs under the Nazi state, each administered internally by appointed Jewish elders under the control of Nazi local authorities. Ghettos had their own small industrial or agrarian economies, which were expected to contribute to



*Left:* Fritz Kleinmann revisiting Auschwitz, circa 1980. (Photo: Reinhold Gärtner.) *Below:* Prisoners from Auschwitz III-Monowitz marching to work at the Buna factories. Most of their uniforms are not the standard striped pattern; supply problems and the growing numbers of prisoners sometimes led to local improvisations in SS camps (Photo: USHMM.)



the wider German economy. Essential supplies were tightly restricted, and starvation and disease were rife. Any resistance was brutally suppressed by the SS.

Eventually, with the implementation of the ‘Final Solution’, most ghettos were cleared and their inhabitants sent to death camps. In 1943, this programme sparked a major uprising in the Warsaw ghetto, in which dozens of German troops died or were wounded, and about three hundred Jewish resisters were killed.

### 4.2.3 Death camps

With the implementation of the ‘Final Solution’ – the programme to kill all Jewish people – which went into full operation in 1942, the SS began creating a new category of camps, which were designed solely or primarily for killing.

The SS had experimented with various ways of mass killing (see subsection 4.7 below), and had settled on gas chambers as their preferred method, with industrial-scale crematoria to dispose of remains.

Auschwitz was one of the first to begin this programme, and its Birkenau camp was among the largest facilities for mass murder, with four large gas chamber/crematorium structures. Auschwitz-Birkenau doubled as a vast camp for holding prisoners. Other camps, such as Treblinka, Chelmno and Sobibor in occupied Poland, were designed exclusively for killing and for servicing that process. Prisoners – mostly Jewish or Romani – were almost all killed immediately on arrival at a death camp. Some, such as Maly Trostinets near Minsk, had no gas chambers; their victims were shot and disposed of in pits.

People who were sent to death camps were told that they were going to a new place in the newly conquered territories, where they would be resettled. Many of them, especially those who hadn’t lived for long under Nazi rule – such as Hungarian Jews – believed this reassuring lie. Very few had any real idea what lay in store for them on arrival.



## 4.3 Austria, Nazi Germany and the Anschluss

*Anschluss* ('joining') was the name given to the formal unification of Austria with Nazi Germany from 1938 to 1945. It began with the German invasion of Austria on 13 March 1938 and was formalised in a plebiscite (referendum) shortly after. However, its history had deeper roots.

Adolf Hitler was Austrian by birth and upbringing, and long nurtured the ambition of uniting his home country with Germany. According to Nazi ideology and Hitler's personal thinking, since Austrians spoke German and shared a great deal culturally with Germany, they should be regarded as *de facto* Germans. This was not in itself a new idea, and neither was it confined to Nazis; although Austria had been the core of a multilingual and multicultural bloc until the dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian empire in 1918, Austrians had long considered themselves German in culture and character, but distinct in national identity. But when the Nazis spoke of Austrians as 'Germans', they were thinking exclusively of 'Aryan' Austrians. Other ethnic groups, such as Jews and Slavs, were not included in their definition of 'German'. There was also an implicit understanding in the Nazi propaganda surrounding their campaign for unification with Austria that 'German' was virtually synonymous with 'Nazi' – in other words, any true German would naturally gravitate to Nazi ideology.

The logical outcome of this thinking for Hitler – along with many Germans and some Austrians – was that Austria should become part of Germany.

The Austrian government in 1938 was a fascist dictatorship under the control of the Fatherland Front party, led by Chancellor Kurt von Schuschnigg. Other influential parties and organisations – the Communist Party, the Austrian branch of the Nazi Party, and the socialist trade

Fritz ... saw that someone had written words all over the ground – on the pavement, on the road, even on the walls – in white paint. The same slogans over and over again.  
*Say yes! Yes for Austria! Yes for freedom!*

*Fritz and Kurt, page 5*

unions – were banned. Gustav Kleinmann – Fritz's Papa – had been an active member of the Austrian Social Democratic Party, which had been driven underground by the state.

But although the Fatherland Front was politically fascist, it was not institutionally anti-semitic, and the Jewish population tended to support it – at least pragmatically, as a bulwark against the threat of Nazi Germany.

Hitler's propaganda campaign for unification hinged on two ideas. First, the ideology of Austria's German character. Second, Hitler's claim that, due to the influence of anti-German powers, 'Germans' (implying Nazi-sympathising Austrians) in Austria were being persecuted. The evidence for this claim was the banning of the Austrian branch of the Nazi Party, the exclusion of Nazi-leaning politicians from government, and exile of the Austrian Legion, a 30,000-strong Nazi paramilitary organisation.

Talks between Hitler and Schuschnigg were strained, and the tense diplomatic stand-off became international news. Schuschnigg was seen by many in the west as a heroic figure standing up to a Nazi bully, and he was featured on the cover of *TIME* magazine, with his slogan: 'We are good Germans, but always good Austrians.' Kurt von Schuschnigg's image in 1938 was in some ways comparable to the portrayal of





*TIME* magazine cover featuring Chancellor Kurt von Schuschnigg of Austria, March 1938. By the time this cover appeared, Austria was under German occupation and Schuschnigg had been arrested. He would spend the period 1938–45 as a prisoner.



Austrian Nazi politician Arthur Seyss-Inquart, installed by Nazi Germany as puppet chancellor of Austria, and removed almost immediately. He was subsequently appointed Reich commissioner of the Netherlands. (Photo: public domain.)

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy in present-day western media.

With intense pressure and open threats from Hitler, in an attempt to prevent a German invasion Schuschnigg agreed to include Nazi politician Arthur Seyss-Inquart in his cabinet. This was not enough to satisfy Hitler.

To consolidate the Austrian government’s position, arrangements were made to hold a plebiscite (referendum) on Austrian independence, scheduled for 13 March. Vienna was flooded with patriotic, pro-independence campaigning. Leaflets were dropped from planes, slogans painted on pavements and buildings, patriotic music played on the radio, and youth organisations paraded through the streets. Jewish newspapers in Vienna joined in the pro-independence campaign, and speeches were given in synagogues endorsing Schuschnigg. The minimum age for voting was set at twenty-four, a ploy to exclude Nazi sympathisers, who were predominantly young.

Hitler, guessing that the plebiscite wouldn’t go his way, was furious; he mobilised German forces near the Austrian border and through secret channels issued an ultimatum to Schuschnigg: call off the plebiscite and give Nazi politicians decisive control in the Austrian government, or face invasion. Schuschnigg refused.

Late on 11 March – a Friday, the start of the Jewish sabbath – Austrian Nazis marched through Vienna. Schuschnigg was forced to resign; his place was taken by Seyss-Inquart. The next day, German forces invaded Austria. Schuschnigg was arrested, along with anyone politically aligned with him. A few days later, Hitler entered Vienna in a triumphal procession.

With the German invasion a fait accompli, Austria welcomed the invaders. Crowds assembled in towns across Austria to greet the soldiers, the Austrian armed forces did likewise, and in Vienna huge cheering crowds greeted Hitler’s





Left: Front page of Viennese newspaper *Das kleine Volksblatt* reporting Hitler's jubilant entry into Vienna, 15 March 1938. (Image: Österreichische Nationalbibliothek.) Film footage of the procession can be viewed at <https://www.britishpathe.com/video/hitler-in-vienna>.

4a

Beyond the book: about the Holocaust



Viennese Jews forced to scrub pro-independence slogans off pavements. (Photo: public domain.)





Storm troopers of the Austrian SA barring Jewish students and academics from entering the University of Vienna. This action provoked a riot among students, which was put down by police. (Photo: public domain.)



The ballot paper for the April 1938 Nazi-imposed plebiscite on the Austrian Anschluss. The Nazi officials who drafted the wording barely even tried to appear impartial. The circle labelled 'Ja' was to be marked to cast a vote for unification with Germany. (Image: public domain.) The text reads as follows:

**Referendum and Greater German Parliament  
Ballot**  
**Are you in agreement with the  
Reunification of Austria with the German Reich  
accomplished on 13 March 1938 [and] agree and vote for the list [of party candidates] of our leader  
Adolf Hitler?**

**Yes                  No**





procession.

Persecution of Jewish Austrians and imposition of Nazi racial laws began immediately. In April, a plebiscite on unification was held, entirely skewed in the Nazis' favour. Jews were barred from voting, the ballot was closely supervised by the SS, and the ballot paper itself was designed to encourage a 'Yes' vote. The result was 99.7 percent in favour of unification with Nazi Germany. Hitler declared himself delighted, and the Anschluss was confirmed. The former Federal State of Austria now became the Ostmark (eastern territory) of Nazi Germany.

Austrian Jews, who numbered around 183,000 (estimates vary), suffered even worse abuses than those in Germany had, or at least more intensely. Anti-Jewish laws and persecutions had taken several years to accumulate and to acquire momentum in Germany, whereas in Austria the full force of the antisemitic regime was imposed overnight.

The Jewish cultural body in Vienna, the Israelitische Kultusgemeinde (IKG), was co-opted to help organise the emigration of Jews from Nazi Austria. This operation was placed under the administrative command of junior SS intelligence officer Adolf Eichmann; the knowledge of Jewish affairs he acquired and the organisational methods he developed in this role led to his later



Adolf Eichmann, circa 1941. (Photo: public domain.)

being appointed as one of the key figures in implementing the Final Solution.

The Anschluss effectively came to an end when Soviet forces captured Vienna in April 1945. It took until 1955 for Austria to become an independent again, with the end of the Allied occupation.



## 4.4 Children in the Third Reich

Children were central to Nazi ideology, regarded as the core of the plan to restore and grow German power, prestige and dominance on Nazi principles. Building the coming generations of leaders and loyal followers was part of it, as well as preserving and enhancing the imagined racial purity and superiority of Aryans.

The role of women in Nazi Germany was integrally tied to this programme. Women's place was defined in the epithet *Kinder, Küche, Kirche*, – children, kitchen, church. This was obviously not a new idea, and the phrase itself pre-dated the Nazis, but it was a key concept in Nazi propaganda, ideology, and social organisation, their role idealised to a degree that was largely unparalleled in western societies even at that time. Women – so long as they were true Aryans – were expected to be traditional, virtuous wives to Nazi men and mothers to the next generation, raised to be loyal to Germany and to Nazi ideals. There were exceptions. Some women – usually unmarried – worked in clerical, farming and factory jobs as well as various other limited roles such as nursing, as was typical in European societies at the time. Women held positions in the SS, and worked as guards in women's concentration camps. But these were exceptions; even young women who worked were expected in due course to become full-time wives and mothers.

### 4.4.1 The Hitler Youth

From infancy, Aryan children were indoctrinated – via schooling and social programmes – with Nazi ideology, including racial theories. Outside of school, they were provided with just one principal social organisation, divided into a boys' division and a girls' division, both under the umbrella of the *Hitlerjugend* – the Hitler Youth, founded in the 1920s, before the Nazi Party came to power, and placed on an official footing in

The world was a scary place in those days, full of dangers and threats: wars, angry people, lots of things changing... Parents worried about how they could keep their children safe in such a world.

*Fritz and Kurt*, page xvii

1933.

The boys' branch was known simply as the Hitler Youth, whereas the girls' branch was the *Bund Deutscher Mädel* – League of German Girls. The age range of the Hitler Youth membership was from 10 to 18 years, including a separate sub-division for under-14s.

From 1936, all pre-existing German youth organisations – including those attached to the church – were incorporated into the Hitler Youth.



A member of the Hitler Youth in 1934. (Photo: Bildarchiv Preussischer Kulturbesitz via USHMM.)





Members of the League of German Girls, Vienna, 1938. (Photo: Dokumentationsarchiv des Oesterreichischen Widerstandes.)



Members of the Hitler Youth marching through Nuremberg, 1933, watched by several senior Nazis, including propagandist Julius Streicher (centre, in light-coloured uniform) and the Hitler Youth leader Baldur von Schirach (standing in car saluting). Among his other crimes, Schirach later succeeded Adolf Eichmann as organiser of the deportation of Jews from Vienna. (Photo: USHMM.)



From 1939, membership of the Hitler Youth became compulsory for all German children. Jewish children, who were officially not German, were barred from membership, and in the early years of the regime they had their own organisations.

In many ways the Hitler Youth was similar to the modern-day Scout and Guide organisations, with a uniform and quasi-military-style discipline and training, coupled with social, educational and cultural activities. In the Hitler Youth all of these elements were infused with Nazi ideology. In addition, the boys' branch functioned as the youth wing of the SA and later the SS, moulding the most able and racially pure of its boys for a future serving that organisation. Older members often took part in the SS's and SA's demonstrations and acts of violence against Jews and other persecuted groups.

Members of the League of German Girls were the counterpart to the boys' division. Their indoctrination was based largely around their future role as wives and mothers. There was a strong emphasis on physical fitness and moral purity (defined according to traditional social values), tied to notions of Aryan beauty.

Unlike youth organisations outside Nazi Germany, the Hitler Youth was central to society, frequently lauded by the party leadership and given a prominent role at political rallies and in hundreds of propaganda films and newsreels.

In 1943, when it seemed likely that Germany could lose the war, Hitler Youth boys aged 16 and over began to be drafted into military service, with the creation of a special *Hitlerjugend* division of the Waffen-SS for the most devoted boys. This division participated in a number of atrocities during the fighting in France and Belgium in 1944–5. In the closing months of the war, teenage boys were also drafted into the *Volkssturm*, the people's force that was hurriedly raised to fight the last-ditch defence of the Third

Reich.

#### 4.4.2 Resistance to Nazi Youth programmes

Some young Germans did not submit willingly to Nazi indoctrination. Underground anti-Nazi youth organisations were formed, notably by communist activists. Others were formed around counter-cultural tastes such as jazz music. In some cases, such groups allowed teenage boys and girls to break away from the rigid gender roles imposed by the state. All of these non-Nazi and anti-Nazi groups were strictly illegal and their activities had to be carried out in secret. If discovered by the Gestapo, the members would be arrested and could even be sent to concentration camps.

#### 4.4.3 Jewish children under the Nazis

As soon as the Nazi Party came to power in Germany – and in other countries as soon as Nazi Germany invaded and occupied them – Jews were subjected to persecution and exclusion. Children were not excepted. Rendered stateless like their parents, Jewish children were excluded from school. Jewish communities formed improvised schools for their children, usually having to make use of inadequate premises and extremely limited teaching materials. Teenagers who had been apprenticed or studying at vocational trade schools had little or no means of continuing their training.

Outside of school, Jewish children were barred from playgrounds, parks and other places of leisure, and in most cases their non-Jewish former playmates turned against them. Most if not all Jewish children experienced antisemitic abuse or bullying, often from children who had previously been their friends.

When German and Austrian Jews began to be



deported in large numbers to camps and ghettos in 1938, children under 16 and women were almost entirely excepted; most of the deportees were men and boys aged 16 and over (such as Fritz Kleinmann). But with the beginning of the Final Solution from 1941 onwards (see subsection 4.7), all Jewish people became liable to deportation to camps and ghettos.

Due to impoverished conditions and confinement, the lives of children in the ghettos (see subsection 4.2.2) were even more restricted than they had been at home.

Younger children deported to death camps – either directly from their home towns or from ghettos – were in almost all cases murdered immediately upon arrival, along with their mothers and most of their other female family members. Only able-bodied, childless women were kept alive, along with those adolescent and older children who were deemed capable of heavy physical work.

At Auschwitz, a very small number of young children were picked out from the selections by SS doctors and kept alive for the purpose of med-



Liberated child survivors in Auschwitz, 1945. Nearly all young Jewish children were killed immediately on arrival in Auschwitz. A very small number were selected for medical experiments, especially twins. (Photo: Auschwitz Memorial Museum.)

ical research. The laboratory run by SS Doctor Josef Mengele held many child subjects, most of them Jewish and Romani identical twins, along with other individuals he was keen to study (such as people with dwarfism). Some of the experiments conducted were surgical – such as amputation of limbs – and often fatal. Some of the research was non-invasive, and focused on observation and measurement. Some of the twins who survived Mengele’s lab recalled their treatment

### ***Unmarried mothers, stolen children and the Lebensborn***

The Nazi fixations on Aryan racial purity and producing future generations led to the establishment in 1935 of the *Lebensborn* (well-spring of life) programme. Its main purpose was to tackle the problem (as the Nazis saw it) of unmarried pregnant Aryan women. The Lebensborn programme ran institutions where these women could give birth, and arranged for the babies to be adopted by appropriate Aryan parents. Around 7,000 babies were born in Lebensborn homes.

Aside from co-opting unmarried mothers, the Lebensborn organisation also played a role in promoting ideals of racial purity and deprecating interbreeding between Aryans and non-Aryans or anyone with any detectable ‘impure’ trace in their ancestry.

The obsession with race and breeding led to another dimension to the Lebensborn: the abduction and re-homing of non-Aryan children who presented a seemingly Aryan appearance. Nazi race scientists were intrigued that parents who appeared to be non-Aryan sometimes produced babies that were blond-haired, pale-skinned, and blue-eyed, all of which were regarded as signature Aryan traits. Thousands of such infants, along with the children of foreign nationals with German ancestry, were taken from their families in Nazi-occupied countries and placed with Aryan German parents. In many cases, the adoptive parents were ignorant of the children’s origin, believing them to be war orphans. Many of the children grew up with no idea of their birth, although some discovered it later in life.



from the medical researchers as having been humane and friendly; but many more were traumatised.

Jewish children were, to a very limited extent, given special consideration for emigration as refugees (see subsection 4.5, box on Kindertransport), but the overwhelming majority were left to their fate.

The effect of trauma on children who survived the Holocaust has skewed our knowledge and perception of their experiences by disrupting their formation and retention of memories. For instance, as narrated in the book, Kurt Kleinmann, who lived under Nazi rule in Vienna for three years, from age 8 to 11, was left with inaccessible gaps in his recollection of that period, interspersed with vivid and distressing memories. To his lifelong frustration, as an adult he could not recall how he felt at the time, either in Nazi-occupied Vienna or as a child refugee in America. He could only infer from his behaviour that he had been in a traumatised state, which was gradually suppressed. He also attributed his rapid loss of the ability to speak German to the trauma he underwent.

Kurt was never in a ghetto or concentration camp, and was able to escape to a safe haven. The long-term traumatic stress suffered by child survivors who didn't escape may be in some ways more complex. Taking Kurt's brother Fritz as an example, in the long term, Kurt may have been the more severely affected of the two. Despite Fritz's far more severe physical and mental suffering, over a longer period, he was seven years older than Kurt, and was with his father for most of their time in the camps. Although Fritz suffered permanent psychological effects from his experiences, there is no indication that they included significant memory disruption.

About 1.5 million Jewish children were murdered by the Nazis. In addition, over 10,000 children with disabilities or congenital disorders



Kurt Kleinmann in 1940, aged 10. This photograph appears to have been taken for his mother's application for Kurt to travel to America. (Photo: Kurt Kleinmann.)

were killed in the Nazi euthanasia programmes. The number of Romani children murdered is difficult to ascertain, but is believed to be in the tens of thousands. The emotional suffering of these children is all but unknowable. Most of the younger Jewish children deported with their families directly from their home countries to the death camps probably had no idea what was happening to them until the moment they were gassed, especially as even their parents had little or no idea what to expect. Those transported from the ghettos in occupied Poland and Czechoslovakia would have been more aware. Some of the victims of euthanasia may also have had little awareness; the programme was carried out initially in special hospital facilities and disguised as medical treatment, and later in killing centres using disguised gas chambers. But rumours about the programme circulated widely among the public, and older children who were conscious of their disabilities would have been aware of the fate in store for them.



## 4.5 Refugees from Nazi Germany

As soon as the Nazi Party came to power in 1933, Jewish Germans with the inclination and the resources to do so began to emigrate. But the vast majority of German Jews remained in Germany. Most lacked the economic means, and even those who could afford it were reluctant to leave their homeland or leave behind the bulk of their wealth (as the Nazi regime would force them to do).

Emigration from Nazi Germany was also restricted by how many refugee immigrants<sup>1</sup> other

<sup>1</sup> As used at this period, 'refugee' is not wholly distinct from 'immigrant'. There was no system for asylum seekers in the modern sense. Most Jewish people travelling to, for instance, the UK and USA did so as refugees from oppression, yet entered those countries on immigrant visas.

Hundreds of Jewish families were applying for permission to move abroad, and all the foreign embassies in Vienna had queues out of the doors and down the street. They moved so slowly that people had to stand in them for days... Hitler Youth and stormtroopers sometimes went along the street beating up the people queuing. The Kleinmanns all took turns holding Edith's place, night and day.

*Fritz and Kurt, page 71*



Jewish people queuing at a Vienna police station to apply for exit visas. (Photo: Österreichische Gesellschaft für Zeitgeschichte.)



Gustav Kleinmann  
 diplom. Tapetierer u. Ledermöbelerbauer  
 geb. 2. 5. 1891 in Tallozie Per. Lymwie  
 Land Polen  
 seit 1905 in Wien  
 Staatsbürgerschaft Staatlos

Tini Kleinmann geb. am 2. 1. 1893 in Wien Deutschland  
 Staatsbürgerschaft Staatlos  
 Edith Kleinmann 1. 6. 1919 geb. in Wien Deutschland  
 Staatsbürgerschaft Staatlos  
 Herta Kleinmann geb. 7. 4. 1922 in Wien Deutschland  
 Staatsbürgerschaft Staatlos  
 Fritz Kleinmann geb. 20. 6. 1923 in Wien Deutschl.  
 Staatsbürgerschaft Staatlos  
 Kind: Kurt Kleinmann geboren 14. 1. 1930 in Wien Deutschl.  
 Staatsbürgerschaft Staatlos

Details of the members of the Kleinmann family – Gustav, Tini, Edith, Herta, Fritz, and Kurt – given as part of the visa application process in 1938. Each family member is listed as ‘Staatenlos’ (stateless) having been stripped of Austrian citizenship by the Nazi state. (Image: American Jewish Historical Society, New England.)

countries were willing to accept. As the plight of Jewish people and other oppressed groups in Germany and Austria grew deeper and more acute, the numbers wanting to leave increased exponentially, while in the United States, the United Kingdom, and most European countries, the widespread popular reluctance to take in the refugees grew stiffer.

In July 1938, four months after the annexation of Austria by Nazi Germany, a nine-day international conference was held at Evian in France to discuss the plight of German Jews and what, if anything, could be done to help them. The Evian conference was essentially just a display of ineffectual concern, and offered sympathy to the Jews and condemnation of Hitler, but no practical aid. The words of condemnation increased following the atrocities of Kristallnacht in November 1938 (see subsection 4.6 below), but there was no significant increase in the immigration quotas.

Hitler was scornful of the apparent hypocrisy of western democratic nations. In January 1939 he commented on the ‘shameful spectacle’ of those foreign leaders ‘oozing sympathy for the

poor tormented Jewish people’ while remaining ‘hard-hearted and obdurate when it comes to helping them.’<sup>1</sup> Hitler sneered at US President Roosevelt’s ‘so-called conscience’.

In fact, Roosevelt wanted to increase the number of refugees into the US, but was hindered by Congress and widespread anti-immigrant and antisemitic feeling. In December 1938, the American Jewish Congress reported that ‘discrimination against the employment of Jews’ in America had been increasing since the rise of Nazism in Germany, and was ‘now at a record high’.<sup>2</sup> Under federal law, the US had an annual quota of 60,000 German Jewish immigrants, but the numbers who were actually granted visas each year amounted to less than half that.

The bipartisan Wagner-Rogers Refugee Aid bill, which sought to allow 20,000 German Jewish children to immigrate to the US was introduced into Congress in February 1939, but was defeated through the intervention of anti-immig-

<sup>1</sup> Adolf Hitler, speech to the Reichstag, 30 January 1939, quoted in *The Times*, 31 January 1939, p. 14; also in Arad et al., *Documents*, p. 132.

<sup>2</sup> *New York Times*, 28 December 1938, p. 5.





ration organisations. In May of that year, the SS *St Louis*, carrying over nine hundred Jewish refugees from Germany, was refused permission to disembark its passengers in the United States. They were returned to Europe, where most of them were later sent to concentration camps. Around half of those individuals died in the Holocaust.

In June 1940, an internal State Department memo advised US consuls in Europe to ‘delay and effectively stop’ immigration into the United States by deliberate use of bureaucratic obstacles ‘which would postpone the granting of the visas.’<sup>1</sup>

The Nazi regime, despite wanting to create a *Judenfrei* (Jew-free) state, also made the emigration process vexatious and punitive for Jews. Various taxes and fines were imposed, including an ‘escaping the Reich’ tax of 30 per cent of the emigrant’s assets. There was also an ‘atonement’ tax of 20 per cent, which was supposed to be a punishment for the ‘abominable crimes’ of the Jewish race (in the words of senior SS officer Reinhard Heydrich).<sup>2</sup> With the addition of bribes and a punitive exchange rate for foreign currency, emigration was beyond the means of many people, and financially ruinous for those who had the money. To make it even harder, securing a visa usually took a long time, and the applicant’s tax clearance often expired before the visa was granted (if it ever was). If that happened, the applicant had to apply all over again. In Vienna, the Nazi authorities had to lend money to the IKG (the city’s Jewish organisation) to help pay for applicants’ travel tickets and foreign currency.

In the UK parliament, MPs from all parties talked about the need to help Jews in Germany and Austria, but Home Secretary Sir Samuel

Hoare warned of ‘an underlying current of suspicion and anxiety about an alien influx’ and advised against mass immigration.<sup>3</sup> Labour MPs George Woods and David Grenfell insisted on a concerted move to save ‘the young generation of a great people’ who ‘have never failed . . . to make a handsome and generous contribution’ to the way of life of the nations in which they settled.<sup>4</sup>

The British plan to save Jewish children was more successful than America’s attempts, but still small in scale (see inset box: The Kindertransport and ‘the One Thousand Children’). A plan to admit children to the British protectorate of Palestine had to be cancelled, in part due to objections from Arab leaders who feared the growth of a Jewish majority in the territory claimed by Zionists.

In the United Kingdom, the attitude to refugees deteriorated further with the start of the Second World War. By April 1940, there were around 55,000 German Jewish refugees in Britain. A fear of ‘fifth columnists’ (Nazi spies) posing as refugees began to circulate and quickly turned into panic, whipped up by the conservative press. During that summer, on prime minister Winston Churchill’s orders, almost all the refugees – men, women and children – were arrested and interned. Some had previously been prisoners in concentration camps. All categories of internees were mixed together, and Jewish refugees sometimes found themselves sharing accommodation with German expatriates who were ardent Nazis. When the ‘fifth column’ panic died down after a few months, the Jewish internees were released. (See subsection 3.2 ‘What happened to Edith in England?’ above.)

Looking specifically at Vienna’s Jewish pop-

<sup>1</sup> US State Department memo, 26 June 1940, reproduced in Wyman, *America and the Holocaust*, vol. 4, p. 1; also *ibid.*, p. v.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted in Cesarani, *Final Solution*, p. 207.

<sup>3</sup> *Daily Telegraph*, 22 November 1938; also House of Commons *Hansard*, 21 November 1938, vol. 341, cc1428–83.

<sup>4</sup> *ibid.*



ulation gives an indication of the overall scale of the issue. By March 1938, Vienna was home to

about 183,000 Jews.<sup>1</sup> Over two-thirds managed

<sup>1</sup> Figures vary from 170,000 to 183,000. Under Nazi racial laws, a further 80,000 citizens of Jewish descent were also potentially classified as Jews.

### ***The Kindertransport and 'the One Thousand Children'***

While western democratic governments remained resistant to Jewish refugee intakes from Nazi Germany, to the point of wilful obstruction, there was slightly more openness towards children. Charities such as the German Jewish Children's Aid and the British Committee for the Jews of Germany worked and lobbied intensively to obtain visas for unaccompanied children to emigrate.

#### ***The Kindertransport***

The most successful programme of child migration was the Kindertransport ('child transport'), which took place in the wake of Kristallnacht (the November Pogrom) and brought around 10,000 minors aged 16 and younger to the United Kingdom between late 1938 and the outbreak of war in 1939. The total number to be allowed into the UK was initially set at 5,000, but that cap was soon removed. Each child had to be accommodated and paid for by charities or private citizens.

On 2 December 1938, the first 200 children arrived at the port of Harwich. They had come from a Jewish orphanage in Berlin destroyed during Kristallnacht. The first transport from Vienna happened shortly after, carrying over a thousand children. Overall, the majority of Kindertransport children came from Germany and Austria, although some were of Polish or Czechoslovakian origin.



Some of the Jewish children from the first Kindertransport on arrival in England, December 1938. (Photo: Instytut Pamieci Narodowej via USHMM.)

#### ***The 'One Thousand Children'***

No programme equivalent to the Kindertransport existed in the United States. Between 1933 and the outbreak of war between the USA and Germany in December 1941, Jewish children escaping from Nazi persecution in Europe immigrated to the United States singly or in small groups. Their visas, travel arrangements, and host families were in most cases organised by the German Jewish Children's Aid charity and the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society.

The children were settled with foster families across America, sometimes arranged through family friends who had already immigrated. Often they were placed in loving homes, sometimes they were not. While some of the children received care and understanding in their communities, some were subjected to antisemitic or anti-German abuse.

Post-war, these Jewish refugees to America called themselves the 'One Thousand Children', in reference to their estimated number, and formed an active social network, of which Kurt Kleinmann was a member. In fact, they numbered around 1,200, still a very small figure relative to the size of the United States population and the numbers taken in by other countries.



to emigrate: nearly 31,000 to Britain, 29,000 to the United States, 33,000 to South America, Asia and Australia, and just over 9,000 to Palestine. Over 21,000 who had emigrated to countries in mainland Europe later came under Nazi rule, and nearly all of those went to the camps. Of the remaining approximately 60,000 Jewish Viennese, 43,421 were deported directly from Vienna to

Auschwitz or to the ghettos of Lodz, Theresienstadt and Minsk (from which most went to the death camps). Almost all the approximately 16,000 others were sent, like Fritz and his father, to Dachau and Buchenwald.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Statistics given in Gold, *Geschichte der Juden*, pp. 133–4.



## 4.6 Kristallnacht – the November Pogrom

On the night of 9–10 November 1938, Jewish businesses, homes and places of worship across Germany, Austria and the Sudetenland (the German-occupied area of Czechoslovakia) were attacked by groups of SS and SA storm troopers, along with gangs of Nazi supporters. The broken glass from shop windows, scattered all over pavements, led to the German name for that incident – Kristallnacht (Night of Broken Glass). The name preferred nowadays by many historians is November Pogrom.

After a relatively quiet summer in 1938, militant Nazis appear to have been looking for a pretext to strike against Jewish communities. In October, two German journalists from the Nazi propaganda paper *Der Angriff* visited the Jewish quarter in the Belgian city of Antwerp, paying particular attention to the thriving Jewish-owned diamond exchange. Behaving intrusively and offensively, the two Nazis provoked an angry reaction from Jewish bystanders, who tried to force the journalists to leave, scuffling with them and injuring one.

In the Nazi-controlled German press, this incident was represented as an unprovoked and violent attack on innocent German tourists by a large gang of Jewish thugs. The *Völkischer Beobachter* warned that any further acts of Jewish violence against Germans ‘could easily have consequences beyond their sphere of influence, which might be extremely undesirable and unpleasant’.<sup>1</sup>

A few days later, in Paris on 7 November, a Jewish exile from Germany shot and fatally wounded Ernst vom Rath, a diplomat in the German embassy. The assassin was 17-year-old Herschel Grynszpan, whose family were then living

There were clouds in the sky over Vienna that November night. Clouds of smoke, thick and rolling, glowing orange from the fires burning beneath. Fritz watched from the apartment window. He could hear the fire engine horns echoing... and it made him feel sick.

All across Vienna, the synagogues were burning.

*Fritz and Kurt, page 57*

in Germany and suffering under Nazi laws. The Grynszpans were Polish emigrés who had been living in Germany since 1911, but had retained their Polish citizenship. Herschel was born and raised in Germany, but was a Polish citizen like his parents. In March 1938, the Polish government passed a law stripping Polish Jews living outside the country of their citizenship. These same people were then expelled by Germany, and found themselves stateless and living in limbo at the German-Polish border. The plight of the Grynszpan family appears to have precipitated Herschel’s shooting of Ernst vom Rath.

The reaction from the German press and gov-



A synagogue in Baden Baden, Germany, on fire, photographed on the morning of November 10, 1938. (Photo: Yad Vashem.)

<sup>1</sup> *Völkischer Beobachter*, 26 October 1938, p. 1, quoted in Loewenberg, ‘The Kristallnacht as a Public Degradation Ritual’, p. 585.



ernment was immediate and furious. Newspapers called the shooting an ‘outrageous provocation’.<sup>1</sup> In Nazi ideology, Jewish people were believed (based on no evidence) to be genetically disposed to attack non-Jews and bring down Aryan civilisation, and were believed (again on no evidence) to be all connected in a conspiracy, all Jews were therefore perceived as implicated in Grynszpan’s action. Collective punishment was therefore seen as appropriate and necessary. That at least was the rationalisation for what followed. Other complex psychological factors were undoubtedly involved in the escalation of prejudice and fear into a storm of violence.

A contributing factor was that 9 November was a red-letter date in the Nazi calendar, the anniversary of the 1923 Beer Hall Putsch, an at-



Herschel Grynszpan under arrest, 7 November 1938. (Photo: USHMM.)

<sup>1</sup> *Neues Wiener Tagblatt*, 8 November 1938, p. 1.



A Jewish-owned shop vandalised during Kristallnacht. (Image: public domain)



tempted coup by the fledgling Nazi Party. That same day, newspapers reported that vom Rath had died of his wounds. Violent action against Jews broke out that evening and carried on throughout the night.

The SS leadership attempted to regulate the violence. At 1:20 am, a telegram was sent from Reinhard Heydrich, head of the Reich Security Main Office (the overall headquarters governing SS police and security departments) to all local police units, setting out regulations for reprisals against Jews. Synagogues were to be burned and their records seized, Jewish businesses were to be destroyed, and all ‘healthy male Jews who are not too old’ were to be arrested. The telegram stipulated that ‘special care’ should be taken to ensure the Jewish men detained were ‘not ill-treated’ and while Jewish businesses were to be

destroyed, they were not to be looted.<sup>1</sup>

In fact, by the time Heydrich’s telegram was even written, the actions outlined in it were already happening, and the instructions to take care were largely ignored. In towns and cities throughout Germany and Austria, Nazis and their supporters came out on the streets. The night’s actions were orchestrated and led by local Nazi Party officials, members of the SS and SA, and the Gestapo.

Almost all synagogues were burned. A few survived structurally, such as the Stadttempel in Vienna, which was attached to other buildings; in such cases the interiors were vandalised. Jewish-owned shops were stripped out and their windows smashed. Jewish homes were invaded and

<sup>1</sup> Heydrich, telegram, 10 November 1938, in Arad et al., *Documents*, pp. 103–4.



SS troopers force-marching Jewish men arrested during Kristallnacht through the streets of Baden-Baden, Germany, 10 November 1938. (Image: USHMM.)



robbed.

At least 30,000 Jewish men and teenage boys were arrested; some were seized out of doors, many were driven out of their homes and rounded up in streets and squares, where they were subjected to verbal abuse from crowds of local people. The arrested men were taken to police stations and, over the course of the following day, interrogated about their political activities, sexuality, and whether they had any criminal involvement. Many of the men were subjected to physical abuse, including inhumane confinement in overcrowded conditions, beating, knocking down and trampling.

Some of the detainees were released immediately. Some older men and most young teenage boys (including Fritz Kleinmann) were let go, along with any women and foreign nationals who'd been swept up in the arrests. In some – though by no means all – cases, decorated veterans of the First World War were released (one of these was Gustav Kleinmann, a highly decorated veteran of the Austro-Hungarian army). This ap-

pears to have been a general rule in Vienna, but not elsewhere.

The majority of the arrested men were transported to concentration camps. Buchenwald, Dachau and Sachsenhausen were all but overwhelmed with the influx. The post-Kristallnacht detentions marked the beginning of mass incarceration of Jews. The next wave occurred in September 1939, when Jews of Polish descent – including Gustav and Fritz Kleinmann – were arrested. Many of those sent to the camps in 1938 were later released in order to emigrate. The same would not be true of those sent in late 1939.

Following Kristallnacht, the Nazi regime continued its collective punishment of Jewish people, extending anti-Jewish laws, expropriating property and shutting down any remaining businesses. A collective fine of 1 billion marks was imposed on the Jewish population. In addition, Jewish business and home owners were ordered to repair the damage done to their properties at their own expense, and any money from



Buchenwald concentration camp: Jewish men arrested during Kristallnacht line up for registration, November 1938. (Image: USHMM.)



insurance claims was to be given to the state.<sup>1</sup>

There had been an increase in the number of suicides among Jewish people throughout Germany and Austria since the rise of Nazi power; in the wake of Kristallnacht, the suicides increased significantly.

Around the world, the press and politicians denounced the actions of Kristallnacht in strong

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<sup>1</sup> These measures were outlined in a decree from Hermann Göring, overseer of the Nazi economic manifesto and later Hitler's deputy, on 14 November 1938 (Mendelsohn and Detwiler, *The Holocaust*, vol. 1, pp. 156–63).

terms. But their words led to only a very small increase in the flow of Jewish refugees accepted by western governments, as outlined in subsection 4.5 above.

The reaction to the atrocities of Kristallnacht among German and Austrian people was predominantly either supportive of the Nazi regime or passive. This prompted an increase in the Nazis' confidence and boldness in enacting anti-Jewish laws and programmes of persecution, in the knowledge that there would be no concerted resistance or effective opposition.





## 4.7 'The Final Solution to the Jewish Question'

Emigration of Jews from Nazi Germany became increasingly difficult from 1938 onwards. The declaration of war by Britain and France on 3 September 1939 effectively ruled out those countries as potential destinations for refugees. In June 1941 Germany invaded the Soviet Union, an enormous commitment of economic and military resources. The invasion also brought millions more Jewish people in eastern Poland and the western USSR under Nazi rule. These pressures combined to accelerate and intensify the Nazi programme to create a 'Jew-free Reich'.

In October 1941, head of the SS Heinrich Himmler issued an order, via the Gestapo, banning all emigration of Jews.<sup>1</sup> The plan for removing Jewish people from German life and society had changed course. A few months earlier, Hermann Göring, Hitler's deputy, acting on instruction from Hitler himself, had ordered the SS to formulate a *Gesamtlösung* (total solution) to the 'Jewish Question'. Göring's term was soon replaced by *Endlösung* – final solution.

In February 1942, a meeting of fifteen Nazi government ministers and senior SS officers was held at Wannsee in Berlin to discuss this 'Final Solution'. The Wannsee Conference was chaired by SS-General Reinhard Heydrich, head of the Reich Security Main Office. In attendance was Adolf Eichmann, who was now head of the SS Jewish Affairs department, Heinrich Müller, head of the Gestapo, plus the minister of justice, foreign undersecretary, and ministers in charge of the occupied territories.

The Wannsee delegates were not there to discuss what to do about Jewish people. That had already been decided – it would be genocide, the extermination of the entire Jewish race. Rather, the purpose was to discuss logistics and ensure

The chief Nazis kept the Final Solution secret, but Jewish people everywhere began to hear terrible rumours. Fritz and Papa and their friends heard of special camps being built where Jewish people were murdered.

*Fritz and Kurt*, page 178

that all departments were informed.

A number of elements were already in place. The SS had already formed an agreement with the Wehrmacht to facilitate the mass murder of Jewish people in the eastern territories. These killings had begun on a large scale as the German



Reinhard Heydrich in 1940. Heydrich was assassinated in 1942 by Czechoslovakian agents operating with the British Special Operations Executive. (Photo: Bundesarchiv.)

<sup>1</sup> Heinrich Müller (Gestapo chief), order, 23 October 1941, in Arad et al., *Documents*, pp. 153–4.





Einsatzgruppen members executing Jewish civilians, Vinnitsa, Ukraine, July 1941. (Photo: Yad Vashem.)

forces advanced the previous summer, carried out primarily by SS Einsatzgruppen – special task forces formed specifically for that purpose and composed largely of members of SS police branches.

Experiments with methods of mass killing had been under way for some time, and in 1942 were still going on. The method used by Einsatzgruppen was execution by shooting, usually a single shot with a rifle or pistol. This technique had also been tried in the mass killing of Soviet prisoners of war. However, it was found that even the members of the Einsatzgruppen and other SS units – who had volunteered for these special duties – were suffering high rates of traumatic stress from carrying out thousands of murders of men, women and children.

An alternative was sought that would depersonalise the murders. Experiments had been done with poison gas. Early attempts – which were still ongoing until well into 1942 – used specially adapted vans, in which exhaust fumes were piped

into the sealed interior.

This was still too inefficient for the numbers of people the SS planned to murder. Instead, purpose-built gas chambers began to be employed, housed in specialised death camps in occupied territories, such as Auschwitz, Majdanek, Chelmno, Sobibor and Treblinka. The killing agent chosen was Zyklon B, a pesticide gas manufactured by the chemical company IG Farben and used for purposes such as fumigating clothing. Zyklon B was colourless and odourless, and in normal manufacture, an artificial warning smell was added. At the request of the SS, IG Farben supplied quantities of Zyklon B without the warning smell.

Although the practice varied, in general it was designed as follows. Jewish deportees were brought to the death camps by rail from ghettos, holding camps, concentration camps, or sometimes directly from their home towns. Usually they had been told that they were being deported to a new life, and brought with them luggage and whatever possessions they could carry.

On arrival at the death camp, they would typically be subjected to a ‘selection’, in which those deemed fit for work (mostly young men and young childless women) were separated out and assigned to labour units. At Auschwitz, those selected for work were often sent to separate sub-camps. At single-purpose death camps such as Treblinka, those who survived the selection were relatively few, and their forced labour was focused entirely on facilitating the mass killings. Among these at all camps were those picked for the Sonderkommando units (see box).

Those who failed the selection – mainly the elderly, children, and mothers with children – were told that they would be taken to be processed, the first step being to strip and shower. Like the ‘new life’, the shower too was a deception. After taking off their clothes and leaving their possessions in a changing room, the prison-





Jewish women and children from Hungary, just after arrival at Auschwitz II-Birkenau. They have been separated from the men and women deemed fit for work and are about to be led to the gas chambers. On the right stands a member of the Sonderkommando, prisoners who were forced to do most of the hands-on work of herding the victims, disposing of remains, and sorting looted possessions. (Photo: Yad Vashem.)



*Left:* Interior of the gas chamber in Auschwitz I. This chamber was in the main camp, and was used on an ad hoc and experimental basis. The gas chambers in Birkenau, which were used for most of the mass killings at Auschwitz, were larger. (Photo: Yad Vashem.)



## Sonderkommandos and the Scrolls of Auschwitz

The use of gas chambers by the SS for mass killings was a means of distancing SS members from the physical act of murder. A further means of separation was to use prisoners to carry out the hands-on parts of the process. These prisoners were called Sonderkommandos (special duty teams). They were Jewish and were forced to do this work.

When transports arrived at a death camp, the victims were handled by Sonderkommandos from the moment of disembarkation to disposal of their remains, all the while under supervision of armed SS guards. Each Sonderkommando team performed a particular part of the process, each with its own – sometimes Yiddish – nickname.

At Auschwitz-Birkenau, Sonderkommandos helped shepherd the arrivals through the selection process, which separated those who would become forced labourers from those who were to be killed immediately. Then they guided the latter to one of the gas chamber buildings. Part of the task was to assure the victims that they were about to be showered and deloused before going to their accommodation. They helped the victims undress in the changing room and set aside their clothes and belongings.

After the victims had been gassed, a Sonderkommando team known as the *Schleppers* removed the bodies from the gas chamber and took them to the crematorium, which at Auschwitz was within the same building as the gas chamber. Before burning, the bodies were examined by other specialised teams and any gold teeth were removed, along with prosthetics. Long hair – which had a value for wig-making – was shorn off. All these items were now the property of the SS, and were handed over for storage. At Auschwitz the storage buildings and their functionary teams were called ironically the Kanada Kommando (because Canada was believed to be a rich and bountiful land).

In the crematorium, the bodies were burned by a further team in industrial-grade furnaces. Bone-crushing machines were used to grind the burned remains down to a powder. This

was handled by a Sonderkommando team known as the *Aschenkommando*. Some felt that this was the worst task of all.

Sonderkommando members were severely traumatised by the tasks they were forced to do, and could become restive and inclined to resist. To prevent this, the teams were periodically exterminated by the SS – a process known as ‘liquidation’. In some cases, these liquidations triggered violent resistance. On one occasion at Auschwitz-Birkenau in October 1944, there was a mass revolt. The Sonderkommandos in Krema IV (crematorium/gas chamber building IV) succeeded in destroying their facility, while some of the team at Krema III escaped from the camp, but were recaptured later (the 2015 movie *Son of Saul*, which vividly reconstructs the work of Sonderkommandos, is based on this event). The rebellion killed three SS guards and injured ten more. Around 250 Sonderkommando prisoners were killed during the rebellion, and a further 200 afterwards.

The lives and thoughts of the Auschwitz-Birkenau Sonderkommandos were set down in writing by a small number of them and hidden, often in piles of cremated ashes, apparently in the hope that they could be smuggled out. When discovered later, these writings became known as the Scrolls of Auschwitz, and they bear testimony to their trauma. Written in various languages, but mostly Yiddish, the papers are fragmentary, and vary in content from narrative accounts of the writer’s deportation and experiences at the camp, to powerful rhetorical polemics. One, written in Yiddish by a Polish Jew named Zalman Gradowski, begins with these words:

*‘Come to me you happy citizen of the world, who lives in that land where there still exist happiness, joy and pleasure, and I will tell you how modern-day common criminals have turned a people’s happiness into unhappiness, changed its joy into everlasting mourning – destroyed its pleasure for ever.’*

(Quoted in Chare and Williams, *Matters of Testimony*, p. 64).



ers were taken into what appeared to be a large shower room, which was in fact a disguised gas chamber. The doors were sealed and Zyklon B funnelled in.

Afterwards, the dead bodies were taken to the crematorium for disposal in industrial-grade furnaces. Meanwhile, the victims' clothes and possessions were searched, sorted and stored. For the SS this was a lucrative source of revenue. And since they believed they were doing a difficult but worthy good deed in destroying the Jewish race, they did not see their crimes as criminal.

Nevertheless, despite this myth, the SS had learned the lesson of the psychological trauma caused by carrying out mass killings in person, and all of the most harrowing hands-on work of mass murder in the death camps was carried out by prisoners, generally Jewish, in units called Sonderkommandos (see box).

While the vast majority of victims of Nazi genocide were Jewish, millions of other people were put to death by the same methods, including Romanians, non-Jewish Poles, Russians, gay people, people with disabilities, and anyone deemed 'unworthy of life'. It did not halt until May 1945, with the liberation of the last remaining camps and the unconditional surrender of Nazi Germany.



Sonderkommandos burning corpses at Auschwitz, summer 1944. The numbers being killed in the Auschwitz-Birkenau gas chambers grew to such a peak that the crematoria were overwhelmed, and the SS took to burning the corpses in open air pits. The photo was taken covertly by a Sonderkommando member. (Photo: Auschwitz Memorial Museum.)



**Six million Jewish people were killed in the Holocaust**, which in the Hebrew language is called the *Shoah*, meaning the Catastrophe.

**At least 250,000, and perhaps as many as 1.5 million Romani and Sinti traveller people were killed by the Nazis.** In the Romani language this is called the *Porrajmos*, which means the Devouring, or the *Samudaripen*, which means Murder of All.

Other victims murdered by Nazi Germany included at least **3.3 million captured Soviet soldiers**, about **1.9 million non-Jewish Polish civilians**, as well as **thousands of political and religious prisoners, gay and transgender people, and people with disabilities.**

Altogether, through battles, bombing, mass killings, disease and starvation, **the Second World War caused the deaths of approximately 60 million people** – equivalent in number to the entire population of England and Wales. The majority of the dead were civilians.



Many English-language school-level and general educational resources are available online, mostly free of charge. Below are some of the educational centres offering lesson plans and associated teaching resources, including teacher training, all offered either online or through in-person attendance.

Note that all the resources linked here are available internationally, but some are structured around specific national school curricula. For the sake of completeness, all have been included.

For more information and suggested reading for adults and children, see section 6a below.

## Based in the UK

### *Centre for Holocaust Education, University College London*

The CHE has produced various sets of online topic-focused courses on the Holocaust designed for UK Key Stage 3 History, with accompanying resources for teachers. In addition, the CHE provides Holocaust-specific CPD training for teachers.

For CHE online resources for students learning about the Holocaust, start here:

<https://holocausteducation.org.uk/teacher-resources/post-it-online-courses/>

Classroom resources, including lesson plans are here:

<https://holocausteducation.org.uk/teacher-resources/materials/>

There is also a CHE textbook for students. It can be bought at various outlets. UK schools can apply to obtain classroom batches of thirty copies for free. There is a training course requirement to apply for free copies. For information, go here:

<https://holocausteducation.org.uk/the-holocaust-education-ks3-textbook/>

### *Heritage Centre North, University of Huddersfield*

Based in Huddersfield, Yorkshire, HCN provides in-person teaching on the Holocaust for primary and secondary school students, starting at UK Key Stage 3. For info about HCN courses, plus how to book, go here:

<https://hcn.org.uk/learning/>

### *Holocaust Educational Trust*

The HET is a UK charity, providing CPD teacher training and classroom resources for school students categorised for ages from primary school to age 16+. Age categorisation is based on the UK's curricular structures.



For HET classroom resources and lesson plans: start here:

<https://www.het.org.uk/teaching-resources>

For information on HET teacher training courses, start here:

<https://www.het.org.uk/education/teacher-training>

## International

### ***United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (Washington, DC)***

USHMM is the United States' principal repository of archives and educational resources on the Holocaust, and a world-leading, encyclopaedic source of information for teachers, students and researchers. USHMM resources include guides to the fundamentals of teaching about the Holocaust and online lessons.

For USHMM teaching resources for schoolteachers, start here: <https://www.ushmm.org/teach>

For teaching materials categorised by topic, go here:

<https://www.ushmm.org/teach/teaching-materials>

For online lessons, go here:

<https://www.ushmm.org/teach/fundamentals/teaching-online>

### ***Yad Vashem (Jerusalem, Israel)***

Yad Vashem is Israel's Holocaust archive, museum and teaching centre. It provides various teaching resources. Although internationally available, Yad Vashem's educational materials for schools are geared towards the US educational system, with categories for elementary, junior high, and high schools. There are two core sets of material:

For Yad Vashem lesson plans, start here:

<https://www.yadvashem.org/education/educational-materials.html>

For the newly launched programme specifically for Jewish schools, go here:

<https://www.yadvashem.org/education/international-activities/jewish-world.html>

### ***Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial and Museum (Oświęcim, Poland)***

Based in Oświęcim around the preserved sites of Auschwitz I and Auschwitz II-Birkenau, this





is the core location for Holocaust research and education, particularly that focused on Auschwitz. The museum offers various teaching resources, most of which are built around in-person visits. However, online lessons are available too, almost all of which are focused on Auschwitz.

For Auschwitz Memorial and Museum teaching resources, this is the starting point:

<https://www.auschwitz.org/en/education/>

For online teaching resources, including themed lessons, go here:

<https://www.auschwitz.org/en/education/e-learning/>

### ***Arolsen Archives (Bad Arolsen, Germany)***

The International Center on Nazi Persecution (formerly the International Tracing Service), based in Germany, holds archived records on prisoners, which have recently been made available online for researchers. The Center also provides a limited range of educational resources, which can be accessed here:

<https://arolsen-archives.org/en/learn-participate/learning-with-documents/educational-resources/>



The Kleinmann family in 1938 (from left: Herta, Gustav, Kurt, Fritz, Tini, Edith). The photo was taken in April 1938, during the Nazi occupation of Vienna. It was Tini's idea, as she feared her family might not be together much longer.

It was taken at the studio of Hans Gemperle in Vienna, as told in the book.

This copy of the photo was sent to Edith after she emigrated to England as a refugee. Tini wrote on the back: *As a reminder of your loving parents and siblings – 27.III.1939.*

(Photo: Peter Patten)



*My Gr.  
and Greeting  
from Tini  
Falling  
Parents & Siblings  
27.III.1939*



This photo of Fritz was taken by the Buchenwald camp Gestapo to go with his mother's application for him to emigrate to America.

Fritz was provided with the jacket, shirt and tie to put on for the photo, to give the impression that prisoners lived normal lives in the camp. He had to hand them back after the picture was taken.

Note that Fritz has signed with his Nazi-imposed middle name 'Israel'.

(Photo: VHA, USC Shoah Foundation)



by Kurt Kleinman

I. Embarking  
 A. Place  
 B. Time  
 C. Incidents  
 1. Showing papers  
 2. Looking over sleeping quarters

II. On Board  
 A. First day

In this school essay, Kurt describes his voyage from Lisbon to the United States as a refugee.

Kurt had been in America for about two years or less and was aged 12 or 13 when he wrote this. His English had improved since first arriving in New York, unable to speak it at all. (Notice that he was still using some of the German-style letters he'd learned in Vienna, including capital T and F – compare with Fritz's signature in the photo on the previous page.)

He describes his adventures on board ship, saying nothing of the terror he was escaping from and giving no impression of separation distress. He had apparently begun to suppress those feelings by the time the essay was written. The aid charity worker who received him off the ship at New York noted that none of the children she met would talk about the situation they had come from.

(Images: Kurt Kleinmann)

I was looking over the ocean and not too large but neither too small. I was not leave Lisbon till six o'clock in the evening and it was only three o'clock now. I decided to go on board and look around. Before I could go on the ship I had to give some sealed papers to a man who was standing at the bottom of the gang-

This photo of Kurt was taken a few months after his arrival in America. He had been given a home by the Barnett family in New Bedford, Massachusetts, and enrolled in the local elementary school. He didn't speak any English at first.

As a refugee from Nazi Germany, Kurt was treated as a celebrity in the local community, and when the class photo was taken, the teacher had Kurt stand out in front of the other children.

(Photo: Kurt Kleinmann)



POLIZEI-häftling Fritz Kleinmann Dafz-Nr. 7290

Beruf: Tapeziererlehrl. geboren am 20.6.23 in Wien

Anschreib-Ort: Mutter: Tini Kl., Wien, Im Werd Nr. 11

Eingel. am: 2.10.39 Uhr von Wien Entl. am: 17.10.42 Uhr nach K L-Auschwitz

**Bei Einlieferung abgegeben:**

<u>1</u> Hut/Mütze	Kragen	Brieftasche/Papiere	Kamm	Spiegel
<u>1</u> P. Schuhe/Stiefel	Binder	Bücher	Kasirmesser	
<u>1</u> P. Strümpfe	Vorhemd	Inv.-Verf.-Karte		
P. Samakchen	Leibriemen	Drehbleistift		
Mantel Sommer	P. Codenhalter	Füllfederhalter	Koffer/Altentafel	
<u>2</u> Rock	Mansch.-Knöpfe	Messer	Schere	<u>1</u> Pafete
<u>1</u> Hose	Kragenkнопfe	Geldbörse	Werksachen:	
Weste	Halsstuch	Schlüssel	Uhr mit Kette	
<u>1</u> Hemd	Taschentuch	Feuerzeug/hölzer	Armbanduhr	
<u>1</u> Unterhose	P. Handschuhe	Tabak	Pfeife	Ringe

Anerkannt: Kleinmann Fritz Tom Klein Effektenverwalter:

This is Fritz's registration card (front and back) from Buchenwald concentration camp. It shows his arrival date, personal details (including possessions he had on him when he arrived, all of which were confiscated), and prisoner number 7290, and his subsequent transfer to Auschwitz.

The reverse of the card lists three packages received from home in 1941-42, including a parcel of laundry and gifts of underwear, shirts, towels and handkerchiefs, not all of which were handed over to Fritz by the SS.

(Image: ITS, Bad Arolsen)

Below is Fritz's entry on the list of prisoners transferred from Buchenwald to Auschwitz in October 1942. It gives his date of birth and lists his occupation as Maurergehilfe (builder's mate).

Fritz's number on the list is [31]9, inserted near the end (and out of alphabetical order), having been added to the transport late as a volunteer.

(Image: ITS, Bad Arolsen)

entnommen am: 3. Mai 1941 Pkaetininhalt ausgehändigt.

22. Okt. 1941 1 P. Sachen Kleinmann Fritz  
1 Pullover, 7 Unterhosen, 5 Handkerchiefe, 3 Taschentücher, 3 Handtücher, 1 Koffer

Dem Geldverwalter übergeben:

am: Kleinmann Fritz

Umschließung bezeichnetes Eigentum habe ich am 193 restlos zurückgehalten.

Effektenverwalter: Fritz

5

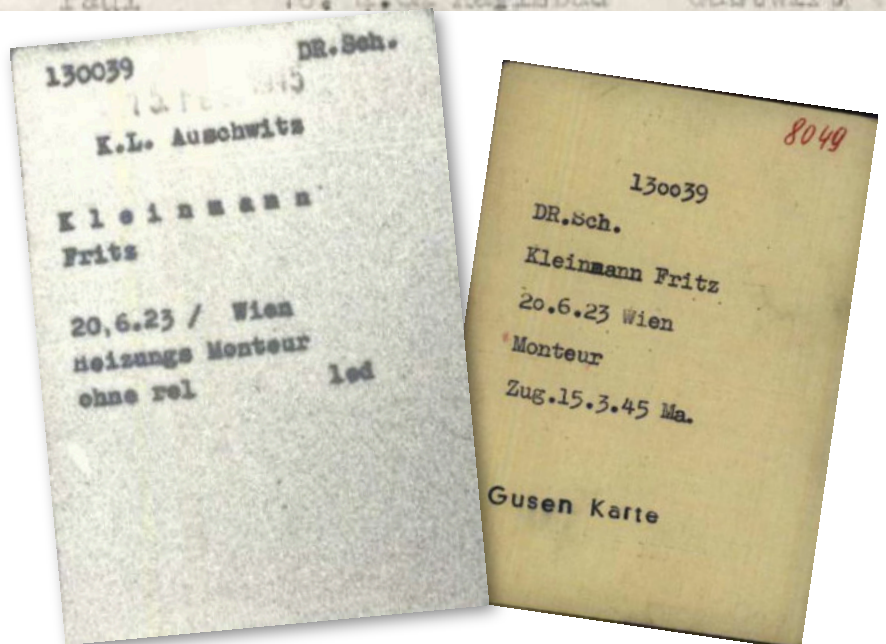
Fritz and Kurt: a story in 8 objects

8. VII/BV. Jude	8 Redlich	Martin	24. 1.05	Dresden	Buchdrucker
9. Sch. Jude	9 Kleinmann	Fritz	20. 6.23	Wien	Maurergehilfe
20. " "	30 Reichl	Paul	16. 4. 34	Kaplabad	Gastwirt

On the right, Fritz's transfer and registration cards from Mauthausen-Gusen concentration camp, showing his new prisoner number as 130039.

Although small, they show some interesting details. His category 'DR Sch' indicates he was registered as a German ('Deutsches Reich') political prisoner – not a Jew (as narrated in the book). Compare with the Auschwitz list above, where his category is 'Sch. Jude'. His occupation is given as *Heizungs Monteur*, or heating fitter/engineer, which seems to have been a deliberate deception by Fritz, probably in a bid to be assigned safe work, a lesson he'd learned from his Papa in Auschwitz.

(Image: ITS, Bad Arolsen)



The number of published books on Holocaust history is vast. Even the best library in the world is unlikely to include them all. A tightly defined search of Cambridge University Library’s catalogue returns 2,432 books in English on the Jewish Holocaust, 1933–45. Looking beyond the English language to books in German, Polish, Russian and other languages, the multitude of titles is mind-boggling. And that’s before you even consider articles and archive material. Most of the books are on highly specific sub-topics, although some are more general.

Despite this vast array, there are relatively few books aimed at non-academic readers. Aside from published diaries and survivor memoirs, most popular Holocaust literature is fiction. Unfortunately, some of the most widely read Holocaust fiction is misleading about the historical realities of camps and ghettos. Many of these titles have been condemned by historians, some of whom have questioned whether fiction can play any legitimate role in telling stories of the Holocaust.<sup>1</sup>

So, where can the general reader begin? For an introduction to Holocaust history with a focus related directly to *Fritz and Kurt*, I suggest starting with my original book, *The Boy Who Followed His Father into Auschwitz*. Reading that book – and, crucially, following the endnotes and the source materials cited – will help orientate you.<sup>2</sup>

Aside from that, there are several accessible and up-to-date books readily available, plus more if you’re able to search more widely – for instance, using university libraries, the British Library or other research-oriented institutions.

There are also informational resources available online. For links, see section 4b, ‘Classroom Resources’. Following the links there will take you to the additional supporting reference information.

## Books for adults

### *General histories of the Holocaust*

***Final Solution: The Fate of the Jews 1933–49* by David Cesarani (London: Macmillan, 2016)**

There are very few general histories of the Holocaust that are easily accessible and up to date. Criticised by some for using only English-language source materials, Cesarani’s book is nevertheless comprehensive in its coverage and very readable.

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<sup>1</sup> See this article by a historian from the Auschwitz Memorial Research Center for an assessment of *The Tattooist of Auschwitz*: <https://viewer.joomag.com/memoria-en-no-14-11-2018>

<sup>2</sup> Some of the original book’s source notes feature again among the source notes for *Fritz and Kurt*, which are given in section 7 of this guide. Bear in mind that new discoveries were made while researching *Fritz and Kurt*, which contains historical insights that weren’t included in the original book.



***The Holocaust: A New History* by Laurence Rees (London: Viking, 2017)**

Slimmer and less comprehensive than Cesarani's book, this is nonetheless readable and reliable.

### ***On Nazi concentration camps***

***KL: A History of the Nazi Concentration Camps* by Nikolaus Wachsmann (London: Little, Brown, 2015).**

A fairly hefty book but with a very accessible narrative approach, *KL* covers the history of the camps from their earliest beginnings through to the Final Solution.

***Auschwitz Chronicle: 1939–1945* by Danuta Czech (London: I. B. Taurus, 1990)**

If you can access a copy of Czech's milestone study, it is an invaluable source of key information for researchers. It chronicles, day by day from 1939 to 1945, all the events, prisoner transfers, SS personnel changes, transport arrivals, selections, escapes, and killings across the core Auschwitz complex.

***United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos, 1933–1945*, edited by Geoffrey P. Megargee (Bloomington, IA: Indiana University Press, 2009–).**

A mammoth guide to all Nazi camps and ghettos, indispensable for researchers; four volumes have been published so far, with three more planned. More information and a link to download **free digital copies** of the first three volumes (covering all the concentration camps), can be found here: <https://www.ushmm.org/research/publications/encyclopedia-camps-ghettos>

### ***Vienna under the Nazis***

***Fallen Bastions: the Central European Tragedy* by G. E. R. Gedye (London: Gollancz, 1939).**

Gedye was a journalist for the *Daily Telegraph*. His book, published while Vienna was under Nazi occupation, gives his eyewitness narrative of the lead-up to the Nazi invasion and the Anschluss. His reporting attracted the attention of the Gestapo, who had him deported from Austria.

***Eichmann's Jews: The Jewish Administration of Holocaust Vienna, 1938–1945* by Doron Rabinovici, transl. Nick Somers (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2011).**

An easily accessible and fairly concise history of how Vienna's Jewish population was affected by the Nazi occupation.

***The Setting of the Pearl: Vienna under Hitler* by Thomas Weyr (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).**

Weyr's book is quite accessible, with a focus on Jewish and non-Jewish life in the



city during the occupation.

### Survivor memoirs

There are far too many memoirs to list all of them here. A selected handful of key texts are highlighted. (For Anne Frank's diary, see the subsection below on children's reading.)

Survivor memoirs, published without historiographical input, can present problems. Even the most good-faith memoir will inevitably contain errors of memory. Take for example Gustav Kleinmann's diary, which is the cornerstone of *The Boy Who Followed His Father into Auschwitz*. In the occasional passages where Gustav wrote retrospectively, a few months after the events, he sometimes made mistakes about dates. I was able to cross-check and correct these rare lapses. A memoir written years or even decades after the event will inevitably be liable to an increased risk of errors. Even the emotions felt at the time can be modified by time and memory.

That doesn't mean that memoirs should be disregarded, but a degree of caution should therefore be exercised with non-contemporaneous personal accounts.

#### ***Night* by Elie Wiesel (various editions)**

One of the classic survivor memoirs. Wiesel, Romanian by birth, was transported to Auschwitz in 1944 when he was 15. He and his father survived the selection and were later transferred to Buchenwald. As with Fritz Kleinmann and his father, their bond helped keep them alive. Tragically, Wiesel's father died in Buchenwald.

#### ***If This Is a Man* by Primo Levi (various editions)**

Another classic memoir. Levi was Italian, and deported to Auschwitz as an adult in 1944. Allocated to the Monowitz camp (the same one as Fritz Kleinmann and his father) he was put to work in the Buna factories. Falling ill in January 1945, he was left behind in the evacuation, and rescued by the Soviet liberation shortly after.

### Fiction for adults

All fiction set in the Holocaust should be treated with great caution. Given the number of works of non-fiction available, the safest advice may be to avoid Holocaust fiction altogether; generally speaking, while the best fiction may be usefully thought-provoking, it is risky to treat it as a source of knowledge or understanding.

Undoubtedly the most widely read book about the Holocaust is the novel *The Tattooist of Auschwitz* by Heather Morris. While it is arguably a good thing that millions of readers have had their consciousness of the Holocaust raised by it, the novel is deeply flawed, containing many historical errors, both minor errors of detail and fundamental errors in its depiction of how Auschwitz functioned and how its prisoners existed day to day. The Auschwitz Memorial Museum in Poland has gone so far as to condemn the novel. For an analysis of its problems, written by one of the museum's historians, see this article: <https://viewer.joomag.com/>



For this reason, I do not recommend any adult-oriented Holocaust fiction.

## Books for young readers

Books on the Holocaust for children – at least books that are factually reliable and therefore suitable for use in an educational context – are almost vanishingly rare. Recommended titles are listed here.

### Non-fiction for young readers

***Understanding the Holocaust: How and Why Did It Happen?* by Stuart Foster et al. (London: Hodder Education, 2020).**

Produced by the Centre for Holocaust Education, University College London, the book is designed for use with the UK Key Stage 3 History curriculum (US 6th–8th grades). UK schools can obtain free copies of the book via the CHE website: <https://holocausteducation.org.uk/the-holocaust-education-ks3-textbook/>. Lesson plans and other resources to go with the book are available online (see section 4b above).

***The Missing: The True Story of My Family in World War II* by Michael Rosen (London: Walker Books, 2019).**

Through recollections, family tales, narrative and poetry, the popular British children’s author tells the story of his own family’s experiences in the Holocaust. It is constructed around Rosen’s quest to learn about the fates of his relatives.

***Diary of a Young Girl* by Anne Frank – abridged for young readers by Mirjam Pressler (London: Puffin, 2015)**

The text everyone must read, a classic of Holocaust literature depicting the anxious plight of living in hiding, beneath the surface of Nazi-occupied society. This edition is abridged and with a commentary to make it accessible for children.

***The Promise* by Eva Schloss and Barbara Power (London: Puffin, 2006)**

Eva Schloss was a childhood playmate of Anne Frank, and hid in the same Amsterdam apartment building. Like Anne, Eva was found by the Nazis and sent to Auschwitz. Unlike Anne, Eva and her mother survived the Holocaust and returned to Amsterdam. Her memoir, written for young readers, tells her story.

### Fiction for young readers

While non-fiction is rare, there is some very popular Holocaust fiction aimed at children. Caution should be exercised in approaching these titles. For example, the most popular work of children’s Holocaust fiction, *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas*, is regarded by historians as





highly problematic and misleading; for an explanation of why this is, you can read a history educator's concise and helpful analysis of it here: <https://holocaustlearning.org.uk/latest/the-problem-with-the-boy-in-the-striped-pyjamas/>.

A handful of historically reliable works of children's fiction on the Holocaust do exist. A few are listed here.

***After the War: From Auschwitz to Ambleside* by Tom Palmer (Edinburgh: Barrington Stoke, 2020)**

Based on real events, this novel tells the story of a group of children who survived the Holocaust and who were brought to England to recuperate, staying in the Lake District. Centred on one boy, Yossi, it deals with Holocaust trauma through brief flashbacks and the boys' stunned reactions to the comforts of peacetime life outside the camps. The Centre for Holocaust Education (see section 4b above) provides materials to support using *After the War* in a classroom setting: <https://holocausteducation.org.uk/lessons/open-access/lesson-materials-to-support-after-the-war-a/>.

***When Hitler Stole Pink Rabbit* by Judith Kerr (London: HarperCollins, 2017; first published 1971)**

The first part of a trilogy based on Judith Kerr's own childhood. Set in 1933, at the time of the Nazis' rise to power, *When Hitler Stole Pink Rabbit* tells the story of 9-year-old Anna. Her father, a Jewish intellectual and writer, is forced to flee Germany just as the elections are taking place that will lead to Hitler taking power. Anna and the rest of the family follow him into exile.

The novel conveys beautifully a child's struggle to understand the nature of Jewishness (Anna's family are secular) and fascism, as well as the pain of loss and dislocation.

***Once* by Morris Gleitzman (London: Puffin, 2005)**

Gleitzman's critically acclaimed novel is loosely inspired by real events, telling the story of a Polish Jewish boy, Felix, placed in secrecy in a Catholic orphanage for safety. He escapes and goes in search of his parents. His naïve innocence is eroded as he stumbles upon scattered signs of the horrors of the Holocaust, struggling, and increasingly failing, to interpret them in a hopeful light through his own made-up tales.

Despite some historical inaccuracies in its premise, setting and narrative, *Once* is a compelling read and can be a helpful adjunct to discussing the impact of the Holocaust on child survivors. As a source of historical information in its own right – including on children's perception of the Holocaust as it was happening – it should be treated with a degree of caution, as the central character's perspective is designed, for literary reasons, to be unique and unrepresentative.



This section lists all the source materials (books, interviews, documents etc.) that were used in researching *Fritz and Kurt* (referenced in the source citation notes in section 7), with the addition of materials cited in this guide.

## Interviews

### *Conducted by the author*

Kurt Kleinmann: March–April 2016, July 2017, August–November 2021

Peter Patten (son of Edith Kleinmann): April 2016, July 2017

Peter Kleinmann (son of Fritz): email interviews, various dates

Richard Wilczek: by letter, April 2016

### *Archived*

Fritz Kleinmann: February 1997: interview 28129, Visual History Archive: University of Southern California Shoah Foundation Institute

Fritz Kleinmann and Paul Grünberg, 1999: reproduced in Knigge and Seifert, *Vom Antlitz zur Maske*, pp. 72–78

Fritz Kleinmann: December 2003: interview for Opfer des NS-Regimes im Gespräch mit Schüler/innen Mini DV 10: Österreichische Mediathek

Fritz Kleinmann: June 2008: interview with David Forster, reported in article ‘Haftort Praterstadion’ for ZDF Sport: article archived at <https://web.archive.org/web/20090604012029/http://fussball.zdf.de/ZDFsport/inhalt/13/0,5676,7229229,00.html?dr=1> (retrieved October 6, 2021).

## Archived and unpublished sources

ABM Archives of Auschwitz-Birkenau Museum, Oświęcim, Poland

AFB Findbuch for Victims of National Socialism, Austria: available online at [findbuch.at/home](http://findbuch.at/home) (retrieved October 1, 2021)

AWK Pogrom: November 1938: Wiener Library, London: available online at <https://www.pogromnovember1938.co.uk/viewer/> (retrieved September 23, 2021)

CJH German-Jewish Children's Aid Records: Center for Jewish History, New York

DFK Letters, photographs, and documents from the archive of Fritz Kleinmann

DKK Letters and documents in possession of Kurt Kleinmann

DOW Dokumentationsarchiv des Österreichischen Widerstandes, Vienna: some records available online at [www.doew.at/personensuche](http://www.doew.at/personensuche) (retrieved September 16, 2021)



- DRG Documents and photographs in possession of Reinhold Gärtner
- FDR Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library, Hyde Park, New York
- FTD Records of the Frankfurt Auschwitz trials: Fritz Bauer Institut, Frankfurt am Main, Germany
- ITS Documents on victims of Nazi persecution: ITS Digital Archive: International Tracing Service, Bad Arolsen, Germany
- JHC Archive of the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society, Boston, MA: I-96 Box 69 Folder 09: Wyner Family Jewish Heritage Center, New England Historic Genealogical Society
- PGM Prisoner record archive: KZ-Gedenkstätte Mauthausen Research Centre, Vienna
- PNY Passenger Lists of Vessels Arriving at New York: Microfilm Publication M237, 675: National Archives and Records Administration, Washington DC
- WLO Adolph Lehmanns Adressbuch: Wienbibliothek Digital: [www.digital.wienbibliothek.at/wbrobv/periodical/titleinfo/5311](http://www.digital.wienbibliothek.at/wbrobv/periodical/titleinfo/5311) (retrieved September 16, 2021)
- YVP Papers and documents: Yad Vashem, Jerusalem: some available online at [www.yadvashem.org](http://www.yadvashem.org)

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The following notes provide chapter-by-chapter source citations and additional information for *Fritz and Kurt*, keyed by page numbers and text snippets.<sup>1</sup> Full details of the sources cited (plus works cited elsewhere in this guide) are given in the Bibliography (see section 6b, above).

Many of the source citations refer to archived documents and interviews (denoted by three-letter abbreviations), some of which are available to the public. Some sources may be difficult to obtain due to their age and/or rarity.

## Chapter 1 – Say Yes!

### page 1

#### ***Fritz squeezed and rolled the bundle until it was round again...***

This scene is an imagined typical play session, taking all its details from various recollections by Kurt (interviews with the author) and Fritz (various archived interviews and memoir *Doch der Hund*), with some circumstantial details from contemporary news sources (see later notes for examples). The dialogue is conceived in the same way and draws on recollections of the way the coming Nazi invasion was perceived by the boys.

### page 6

#### ***... the cause of virtually everything that was wrong with the world.***

This suspicion applied most strongly to Jews and Roma (Romani) travellers. Nazi racial theory held that Jews, as a race, were genetically predisposed to dishonesty, avarice, and a long list of other character flaws, mostly derived from centuries-old antisemitic tropes. Roma were similarly believed to be genetically inclined to criminality. Therefore both were held to be a threat to the ‘Aryan’ genetic pool (see Hancock, ‘Romanis and the Holocaust’). Jews were placed at the forefront of Nazi racial ideology because, unlike the Roma, they were held to be an imminent political, cultural, economic danger to Germany and Europe. Thus, whereas socialists, trade unionists and communists were seen as an even more imminent threat, they weren’t seen as genetically inclined that way and therefore were dealt with more swiftly but less murderously.

### page 8

#### ***Hans’s father was a barber...***

Hans Hergesell was two years younger than Fritz. Although his father, Raimund, wasn’t Jewish, he was a Communist and antifascist, and the family had had to flee Berlin in 1934. Raimund made a point of telling his Jewish friends in Vienna the whole truth about what was happening in Germany (Gärtner and Kleinmann, *Doch der Hund*, p. 182). In 1941, both Raimund and his wife Amalie (who was Jewish) were caught distributing Communist literature. Their daughter Ruth managed to escape to the USSR, but Raimund, Amalie and Hans were sent to the camps. Raimund survived, but Amalie died in Auschwitz in January 1943 and Hans, despite surviving four years in Auschwitz and the death marches, died in Neuengamme concentration camp sometime in February–April 1945. Sources: Entries for Hergesell, Hans, Shoah-Opfer database; Hergesell, Raimund Karl, Gestapo-Opfer (Arbeiterbewegung) database; Hergesell, Amalie,

<sup>1</sup> Page references and snippets refer to the Puffin UK paperback edition (published 2023). Text and pagination in other editions may vary.



Politisch Verfolgte, Shoah-Opfer database, DOW; Lehmann's Adressbuch for Vienna for 1938, WLO.

## Chapter 2 – Shabbat

page 11

**... a blizzard of fluttering white was falling from the sky...**

The main source for the events in Vienna at this time is the British journalist George Gedye, who lived in the city and reported for the UK *Daily Telegraph* and the *New York Times*. In 1939 he published an eyewitness account of the fall of Austria in the book *Fallen Bastions*. He was fired from his job at the *Telegraph* because his book criticised the Chamberlain government's inaction over Austria.

page 13

**It ended: 'Vote YES for Austria!'**

The leaflet message was also printed in the Jewish newspaper *Die Stimme*, March 11, 1938, p. 1.

page 14

**... filled with boys and girls of the Austrian Youth ...**

The Austrian Youth (Österreichisches Jungvolk) was founded in 1936 by the Austrofascist government. It incorporated pre-existing youth organisations, and was in many ways similar to the German Nazi equivalents (the Hitler Youth and League of German Girls), with an emphasis on teaching boys to be soldiers and girls to be wives and mothers. Its attitude to Jews was ambivalent. It had many individual Jewish members, but Jewish youth organisations were not incorporated.

page 14

**People cheered the parade, waving their hats, joining in with the singing ...**

Gedye, *Fallen Bastions*, pp. 287–96.

page 14

**The Austrian Nazi Party was banned by law, but it had lots of secret members.**

Both the Nazi Party and the Austrian Socialist Party (of which Gustav had once been an active member) were banned by the Austrofascist government. The Austrian Nazi Party had many secret members in the country, and the Austrian Legion, a Nazi paramilitary group, organised and campaigned in exile in Germany.

page 15

**There were Mum and Papa, whose names were Tini and Gustav.**

In his memoir (Gärtner and Kleinmann, *Doch der Hund*, p. 49), Fritz recalled that as a boy he always called his father Papa (rather than the more common German word *Vati*, short for *Vater*). He doesn't mention what he called his mother, so presumably she was *Mutti*, or Mum.

page 16

**Gustav Kleinmann, Master Upholsterer**

Based on the wording of Gustav's post-war workshop sign, of which a photo exists. The later workshop was in a different location.

page 16

**Papa was preparing it while his assistant, Mitzi Steindl, sewed the covering.**

This account of life in the Kleinmann household and Gustav's workshop is based on recollections



by Kurt (interviews with the author) and Fritz (various archived interviews and memoir in Gärtner and Kleinmann, *Doch der Hund*).

#### page 17

***He didn't seem like a soldier at all, but he had the medals to prove it.***

Gustav Kleinmann served in the 56th infantry regiment of the Austro-Hungarian army in 1914–18. He fought on the Eastern Front against the Russians, was wounded several times and was awarded Austria-Hungary's second highest decoration for bravery for leading a bayonet charge against Russian defences in 1915. That same year he was wounded and spent time in a military hospital at Auschwitz, whose barracks later formed the core of the Nazi concentration camp.

#### page 20

***It was Kurt's task to do it for them.***

Normally, Orthodox Jews wouldn't ask another Jew to do such tasks for them, as they believe it is breaking the sabbath. It may be that the Neuberger weren't altogether strict in their beliefs, or perhaps they were trying to encourage Kurt to be more religious by involving him in their Shabbos practices.

Kurt didn't recall the couple's name. I've called them Neuberger for convenience. There are several potential names in the building directory (which doesn't include apartment numbers), but no decisive clues as to which is the right one.

#### page 22

***Austrians would vote YES and they'd all stay free.***

The synagogue that evening is described as 'überfüllt' – overcrowded, jam-packed (Gold, *Geschichte der Juden*, p. 77; Weinzierl, 'Christen und Juden', pp. 197–8).

#### page 22

***Fritz and Leo looked anxious, and Kurt's heart instantly started to beat faster.***

This scene takes its details from the regular Friday evening routine of Kurt and Fritz, as recalled by Kurt. The service itself and the circumstances of what follows, with the Nazi demonstration erupting as the synagogue service was ending, coinciding with a news announcement, is taken from eyewitness sources. Kurt doesn't remember the evening – one of several significant trauma-induced blanks in his memory of this period. It has been reconstructed imaginatively here using various sources and knowledge of the personalities involved.

#### page 23

***'... Hitler threatened him, and he's given up! They've cancelled the vote.'***

Gedye, *Fallen Bastions*, pp. 10, 293; *The Times*, March 12, 1938, p. 12. According to *The Times*, newspapers in Berlin that evening claimed that Germany had quashed 'treason' by the 'Marxist rats' in the Austrian government who had been carrying out 'harrowing cruelties' against the people, who were fleeing to the German border in large numbers. With these lies the Nazis justified their move to take over Austria.

#### page 23

***... men of the Vienna police were marching alongside the Nazis...***

See Gedye, *Fallen Bastions*, pp. 287–9 for an eyewitness account of events in Vienna that day and evening. Gedye described the Nazi march as an 'indescribable witches' sabbath'.

## Chapter 3 – The Monster

#### page 28





***The planes' bomb doors started opening.***

Dutch, *Thus Died Austria*, pp. 231–2; Gedye, *Fallen Bastions*, p. 315; see also *Neues Wiener Tagblatt (Tages Ausgabe)*, March 12, 1938, p. 3; *Banater Deutsche Zeitung*, March 13, 1938, p. 5; *The Times*, March 14, 1938, p. 14.

## page 28

***Nazi Germany greets her Nazi Austria and the new Nazi government.***

The leaflet text was also printed in *Neues Wiener Tagblatt (Tages Ausgabe)*, March 12, 1938, p. 3. Control of Vienna's newspapers had been immediately seized by the Nazis. Jewish newspapers such as *Die Stimme* and *Jüdische Presse* were shut down.

## page 30

***In one town, Austrian soldiers greeted the Germans with a parade.***

*The Times*, March 14, 1938, p. 9.

## page 31

***... their group was the Storm Division, and the men were called stormtroopers.***

The term 'stormtroopers' (*Sturmtruppen*) began in World War I, when stormtrooper units were the special forces of the German army. The post-war private militias of the far right adopted the symbolism of the stormtroopers, and when the Nazi Party's enforcement/crowd control unit was formed, it was named the *Sturmabteilung* (Storm Division) or SA. It was later supplanted altogether by the SS (*Schutzstaffel* or Protection Squad), formed as Hitler's personal bodyguard and built by Heinrich Himmler into the umbrella for all policing in Nazi Germany, as well as running concentration camps, intelligence, and forming military Waffen-SS divisions. When George Lucas created 'stormtroopers' for *Star Wars*, the concept was modelled on the Nazi enforcers.

## page 31

***... he was said to be in the town of Linz, only two hours away.***

Dutch, *Thus Died Austria*, p. 232.

## page 31

***Planes flew over constantly, shaking the walls and rattling the windows.***

Dutch, *Thus Died Austria*, p. 233; Gedye, *Fallen Bastions*, p. 315.

## page 31

***They went to shops owned by Jewish people and forced their way in...***

Gedye, *Fallen Bastions*, p. 303.

## page 33

***... and trains loaded with supplies were on every railway line.***

*The Times*, March 14, 1938, p. 9.

## page 33

***Tens of thousands of soldiers poured into the city.***

See Dutch, *Thus Died Austria*, pp. 233–4, 242 and Gedye, *Fallen Bastions*, pp. 303–321 for details of the initial military incursion into Vienna and Austria.

## page 33

***... their hats had silver badges in the shape of a skull and crossbones.***

According to Heinrich Himmler, the skull and crossbones badge of the SS was intended to indicate not 'we will kill you' but rather 'willing to fight to the death'. Similar symbols have been



used by many military units through history, ranging from 19th century British cavalry to units of the present-day US Navy SEALs.

#### page 33

***At night, huge searchlights lit up the clouds over the city...***

Dutch, *Thus Died Austria*, p. 303.

#### page 34

***'... I've worked all my life. I know what work is.'***

Gustav often said this before the Nazi invasion; he didn't believe his family would be victims because they were nothing like the Nazi stereotype of Jews (Gärtner and Kleinmann, *Doch der Hund*, pp. 189–90). Many other Viennese didn't consider themselves Jewish at all, because it was only when the Nazis created the Nuremberg Laws that Jewishness became defined as a race. Before that, it had been purely a religious category – e.g. Wallner, *By Order of the Gestapo*, p. 17, opens his memoir with 'I never engaged in politics, nor was I ever a Jew, though all four of my grandparents were Jewish.' Like the Kleinmann family, schoolgirl Ruth Maier was Jewish but didn't consider herself part of any kind of 'Jewish community' until after the persecutions began (Maier, *Ruth Maier's Diary*, p. 93). The picture was complex and nuanced – for example, although Gustav Kleinmann considered himself Austrian first and Jewish second, and didn't practise the religion devoutly, he was uncomfortable with his daughter Edith dating non-Jewish boys.

#### page 34

***He'd heard from his friend Hans about the terrible things the Nazis were doing ...***

Gärtner and Kleinmann, *Doch der Hund*, p. 182.

#### page 34

***He hurried down the stairs, through the lobby, then ventured warily out...***

Source for this episode is Kurt (interview with the author). Details of the circumstances of what follows are taken from Gedye, *Fallen Bastions*, p. 318–9; Dutch, *Thus Died Austria*, pp. 242–3; *The Times*, various reports March 14–15, 1938; multiple reports in Vienna newspapers (*Wiener Neueste Nachrichten Montagblatt*, *Das kleine Volksblatt*, *kleine Volks-Zeitung*, *NS Telegraf* etc., all by this point Nazi-controlled), March 14–15, 1938. Footage can be viewed in British Pathé newsreel 512.03, which was not released at the time; it is viewable at <https://www.britishpathe.com/video/hitler-in-vienna>.

#### page 35

***... Nazis were taking Jewish people's cars off them for their own use.***

All cars belonging to Jews were immediately requisitioned by the SA and SS. Young stormtroopers drove them recklessly around the city. The cars' former owners were forced to continue providing fuel and maintenance. See Dutch, *Thus Died Austria*, pp. 243–4.

#### page 35

***... a group of boys with hammers were smashing a statue ...***

The statue was of Engelbert Dollfuss, Kurt Schuschnigg's predecessor as Austrian chancellor. Dollfuss was assassinated by Austrian Nazis in 1934 during a failed coup.

#### page 37

***Tanks and vehicles had broken down all over Austria, slowing down the advance.***

Gedye, *Fallen Bastions*, pp. 314–9.

#### page 39



**... police waded into the crowds with their batons, and the stone-throwers fled.**

It's unclear from Fritz's account (via Kurt) who the stone-throwers were. It's most likely they were communist or socialist activists. Known 'Austrofascists' loyal to the Schuschnigg government were already on the run or had been rounded up by the SS by 14 March.

## Chapter 4 – The Connection and the Exclusion

page 41

**Kurt was in his sailor suit, which he only wore on special occasions.**

Despite its prominence in at least two photos of him, Kurt has no memory of this sailor suit. Presumably it was rarely worn.

page 41

**Hardly anything nice happened nowadays.**

This episode is based in part on close reading of the surviving family photograph taken on that day, plus a note added by Fritz to a copy of the photo (DRG) which gives the date and suggests Tini Kleinmann's reason for having it taken. Events leading up to it are based on various sources, mainly Gärtner and Kleinmann, *Doch der Hund*, pp. 183–4 and Kurt's interviews with the author.

page 44

**... Herta, who was made to scrub the clock tower in the Karmeliter market.**

According to Fritz (1997 interview), his sister (which one, he doesn't say) was taken from the apartment building by former schoolfriends and forced to take part in the scrubbing. I infer that this was Herta, since Edith's recollection (relayed via Kurt) is that her ordeal occurred by the police station in Leopoldstadt.

page 45

**Some had been vandalised and robbed by stormtroopers.**

See e.g. 'Report from Vienna regarding the persecution of Jews during 1938' 93771-1375/95, AWK; Gedye, *Fallen Bastions*, p. 354.

page 45

**Local celebrities came here to have their pictures taken.**

The family photo is embossed with Gemperle's stamp. Hans Gemperle's studio was at Taborstrasse 24. He was part of the Wiener Photo Ateliers group. Gemperle was a few years older than Gustav Kleinmann, like him had come to Vienna as a young man seeking work, and had founded his business after serving in World War One (various advertising in Vienna newspapers, 1930s–1941). His photos, including portraits of Vienna celebrities, appeared in Viennese magazines such as *Kamera Kunst* and *Radio Wien*. Not being Jewish, Gemperle's business continued to thrive under Nazi rule. But not for long. He died in 1941, aged fifty-eight (obituary, *Allgemeine photographische Zeitung*, May 1941, p. 73).

page 45

**If he had, he might not have dared to serve them.**

It isn't known why Tini chose a relatively prestigious photographer at a time when she and Gustav were desperately short of money. It may have been because he wouldn't know who they were (their names, which were all Germanic, wouldn't give away their Jewishness). Or perhaps Tini felt that this indulgence would counteract the feeling of debasement they'd been subjected to since the Nazi takeover. And perhaps she felt it was important enough to justify the cost.

page 46



**... you would have to leave behind everything you owned.**

See Cesarani, *Final Solution*, pp. 147ff, 207; Cesarani, *Eichmann*, p. 60ff.; Rabinovici, *Eichmann's Jews* for overviews of the difficulties of emigration.

page 48

**'No! We don't want refugees here...'**

Hitler himself sneered at western governments' inaction over Jewish refugees, calling them hypocrites. In a speech to the Reichstag in January 1939, he said sarcastically, 'the whole democratic world is oozing sympathy for the poor tormented Jewish people but remains hard-hearted and obdurate when it comes to helping them' (quoted in *The Times*, January 31, 1939, p. 14; also in Arad et al., *Documents*, p. 132). In Britain, *The Spectator* magazine (which was then a liberal-left publication) called passionately for Jewish refugees to be given asylum (e.g. *The Spectator*, July 29, 1938, p. 189; August 19, 1938, p. 294).

page 48

**They couldn't even play on the street without being picked on.**

An official ban on Jews using parks and entertainment venues came in on 25 September 1939 (Rabinovici, *Instanzen der Ohnmacht*, p. 196), but seems to have been in effect long before that.

page 49

**... they would all set sail together on a ship to New Zealand.**

Richard Wilczek's grandmother was Tini Kleinmann's elder sister, who married a non-Jew. Richard's mother, Hilda, was therefore half-Jewish and Richard himself only a quarter. Nevertheless, after the family failed to escape from Europe before the war began, Hilda was eventually sent to Auschwitz around 1943. There she encountered Fritz. Hilda survived two years in Auschwitz and Bergen-Belsen. Kurt remembers Richard having gone to the Netherlands, but in fact it was Ostend (Richard Wilczek, letter to the author, April 13, 2016). Richard's father, Viktor, a house painter, was one of the handful of non-Jews who remained loyal to their Jewish friends throughout the Nazi period.

page 50

**The girls were being trained to be faithful Nazi wives and mothers ...**

Fritz estimated (in Gärtner and Kleinmann, *Doch der Hund*, p. 183) that there were 54 children altogether in the Karmelitermarkt group (ranging in age from Kurt's friends up to some who were around Edith's age), of whom 23 were Jewish. Some of the older non-Jews joined the SA and at least one, Sepp Leitner, joined the local division of the SS.

page 50

**... and the Nazis were especially strict about this.**

Despite this misogyny, some women in Nazi Germany managed to have careers. For example, two of Germany's top test pilots, Hanna Reitsch and Melitta von Stauffenberg, were women. (Reitsch, a fanatical Nazi, was a personal favourite of Hitler's.) Women also had roles in administration and – notoriously – served as guards in women's concentration camps.

page 50

**If they couldn't be bothered to run them, they just took all the stock ...**

Gärtner and Kleinmann, *Doch der Hund*, pp. 187–8.

page 51

**The other was Mr Mueller, who sang the chants at the city's finest synagogue...**

Gärtner and Kleinmann, *Doch der Hund*, p. 187. Fritz describes Adolf Braun as chief rabbi, but Lehmann's directory says that he was head cantor, like Herr Müller (1938 directory, Band 1, p.



115; Band 2, p. 147, WLO). He may well have served in both roles.

#### page 51

##### ***People said it was a place of horror.***

Dachau, established in 1933 in a disused factory, was the first dedicated concentration camp. By summer 1938 there were four major operational camps in Germany (plus some smaller ones): Dachau, Buchenwald, Sachsenhausen and Flossenbürg, with several more opening shortly after – including Mauthausen in Austria, which opened in August 1938 (see Wachsmann, *KL*; Cesarani, *Final Solution*; Laurence Rees, *The Holocaust*).

#### page 51

##### ***... they could be called out to wash Nazis' cars or clean toilets.***

Dutch, *Thus Died Austria*, p. 257–8.

#### page 54

##### ***'Come on,' he said to his men, and they moved on down the street.***

This part of the story has been pieced together – see subsection 1.3.3 of this guide for how this was achieved.

#### page 54

##### ***And Papa had one or two Aryan friends with upholstery workshops...***

Fritz recalls (Gärtner and Kleinmann, *Doch der Hund*, p. 194) that after his return to Vienna in 1945, his father was given work by two upholsterer friends until he could get his own business re-established. They were a man named Mrazek and another called Ungar. It isn't clear whether these were the same men who gave him work in 1938. If so, they were Max Ungar, a master upholsterer based at Rembrandtstrasse 11 (moved to Augartenstrasse by 1945) in the 2nd district and (less certainly) Heinrich Mrazek at Schimmelgasse 11 in the 3rd district (later Burggasse 33, 7th district) (1938 directory, Band 1, pp. 846, 1358, WLO).

#### page 55

##### ***Herschel bought a gun, went to the Germany embassy ...***

Herschel Grynszpan was 17 years old when he shot Ernst vom Rath, a diplomat at the Paris Embassy.

## Chapter 5 – Night of Broken Glass

#### page 57

##### ***All across Vienna, the synagogues were burning.***

Kristallnacht (also called the November Pogrom) occurred on the night of 9/10 November 1938, in the early hours of the morning. The SA and SS were instructed not to destroy but only to loot Jewish premises (Telegram from SS chief Reinhard Heydrich, sent at 1:20 am, 10 November 1938, in Arad et al., *Documents*, pp. 102–4). That instruction came late in the night and was ignored.

#### page 58

##### ***When the firefighters arrived, the stormtroopers wouldn't let them stop the flames.***

See various testimony by refugees from Vienna – e.g. 'Report by Robert Steiner, Paris, regarding the November Pogrom in Vienna', 93811-1375/130; 'Report by Oskar Hirschfeld, London, regarding the November Pogrom in Vienna' 93803-1375/123, AWK.

#### page 58



***They said they were searching for weapons, but that was just an excuse.***

See 'Report by Maximilian Loewy regarding the November Pogrom events in Vienna' 93710-1375/60, AWK.

page 58

***... Nazi-supporting neighbours joined in with the stormtroopers...***

Fritz Kleinmann (Gärtner and Kleinmann, *Doch der Hund*, p. 187) specifies two neighbours as ringleaders in the abuse, a woman identified only by the name 'Red Risa' and *Ortsgruppenleiter* (local group leader, a Nazi Party rank) Blahoutek (*sic*). The latter would be Leopold Blahoudek, a bookbinder who lived in the building next door to the Kleinmanns (1938 directory, Band 1, p. 90, WLO).

page 60

***Instead, he pointed at Papa and said to Mr Blahoudek, 'Him. He's a Jew.'***

Fritz describes being betrayed by neighbours very briefly in his book (Gärtner and Kleinmann, *Doch der Hund*, p. 188). In his 1997 interview (but not in the book), Fritz gave the names of these men. He recalled a third man called Schwarz, although no record has been found of a person of that name living in Im Werd 11. Fritz was unable to recall the name of the fourth member of the group, the Nazi official. He seemed slightly confused, and refers to him as the building's Nazi leader, who lived 'on the floor above'. This could be a conflation with *Ortsgruppenleiter* Blahoudek, who actually lived in the next building, and whom Fritz named in his book (see previous note). Fritz recalled Novacek's first name as Fritzl, but the 1938 directory (Band 1, p. 889, WLO) shows him as Friedrich. Another Novacek (possibly related), a cinema projectionist called Karl, remained loyal to the Kleinmanns throughout the Nazi period (*Doch der Hund*, pp. 135, 192). The scene as written in this chapter borrows elements from Kurt's memory of the later raid when Fritz was taken a second time, as well as from accounts of similar raids (e.g. 'Report by Robert Steiner, Paris, regarding the November Pogrom in Vienna', 93811-1375/130; 'Report by Oskar Hirschfeld, London, regarding the November Pogrom in Vienna' 93803-1375/123, AWK).

page 62

***... the truck rumbled along Exhibition Street and past the park entrance.***

Ausstellungstrasse (Exhibition Street), where the main district police station was located (it's still there) was named after the World Exhibition held in 1873 on part of what is now the Prater park.

page 62

***The truck stopped at the main police station...***

The Polizeiamt Leopoldstadt, headquarters of the local uniformed police was at Ausstellungstrasse 171 (*Reichsämter und Reichsbehörden in der Ostmark*, p. 204, AFB). It is still a police station today.

page 62

***They were herded into an old stable building at the back of the police station.***

Narrative based on Gärtner and Kleinmann, *Doch der Hund*, p. 188; additional details from testimonies 'Report from Vienna' 93670-1375/24; 'Report by Alfred Schechter' 93714-1375/62 & 62a; 'Report by Carl Löwenstein' 93824-1375/143, AWK; also testimonies of Siegfried Merecki (Manuscript 166 (156)), Margarete Neff (Manuscript 93 (205)) in Gerhardt and Karlauf, *Night of Broken Glass*; and Wallner, *By Order of the Gestapo*.

page 62

***... already hundreds of Jewish men and teenage boys crammed into it...***

Altogether, 6,547 Jewish people were arrested across Vienna that day and held in various police



stations around the city (Taylor, *Experts in Misery*?, p. 48). A small number of women were caught in the net and were soon released, as were any foreign citizens.

page 64

**What banned groups was he a member of?**

Other questions ranged from whether the prisoner was homosexual to whether he'd ever performed an abortion.

page 69

**... Nazis were reluctant to send war heroes to the concentration camps...**

As late as October 1941, on the eve of the Final Solution, Nazi authorities in Vienna were allowing (or being persuaded to allow) special dispensation for 'highly decorated' Jewish war veterans, such as sending them to Theresienstadt ghetto rather than Auschwitz (Rabinovici, *Eichmann's Jews*, pp. 117, 121–3).

page 69

**All the forms were filled in, the applications were made...**

The Barnets began trying to help the whole Kleinmann family as early as October 1938. These early efforts were not mentioned in the original book *The Boy Who Followed His Father into Auschwitz*, because the affidavit documents only came to light after it was published (see JHC). Fritz and Kurt don't seem to have been aware (or didn't recall) that their parents attempted to emigrate this early. Philip and Samuel (both lawyers) provided proof of income sufficient to support the whole Kleinmann family, whom they described on the affidavits as 'personal friends', a formal distinction, as they only knew of the Kleinmanns through a mutual friend. From other evidence, the go-between appears to have been Mrs Alma Maurer, an old friend of Tini Kleinmann who had emigrated some years earlier and lived in the same town as the Barnets.

page 70

**Fritz and Kurt were not among the lucky ones chosen.**

The first thousand children from Vienna set out for the UK in December 1938 (*The Times*, 3–12 December 1938). Eventually the Kindertransport scheme took over 10,000 children to Britain, a fraction of the places needed. There was no American equivalent, although the German-Jewish Children's Aid organisation worked ceaselessly to organise transports for small numbers. The total number of unaccompanied children accepted by the United States – a vastly larger country than the UK – up to December 1941 was just 1,200. In the decades that followed, these US immigrants became known as the 'One Thousand Children'.

page 70

**But the scheme never happened.**

Fritz Kleinmann, 1997 interview. The Palestine scheme was abandoned when talks with Arab representatives broke down (*Manchester Guardian*, 15 December 1938, p. 11; 18 March 1939, p. 18).

page 72

**... had to take the middle name 'Israel' (for men and boys) or 'Sara' ...**

Reich Ministry of the Interior regulations, August 17, 1938, in Arad et al. *Documents*, pp. 98–99. On treatment when photos were taken see 'Report regarding the mistreatment of the Jewish population in Vienna and the Burgenland' 93993-1375/306, AWK.

page 72

**Fritz felt more angry than afraid at the way he was being treated...**

When Fritz was sent to Buchenwald, his mother kept his J-Card. When she was deported, it was



among some things she gave to a relative. After the war, it came back to Fritz, who preserved the photo but destroyed the rest of the card.

#### page 72

***There was a big international student sports festival in the city.***

Weyr, *Setting of the Pearl*, p. 147.

#### page 72

***Empty shops boarded up, men gone to Dachau or Buchenwald...***

A Jewish overseas aid worker said 'it looked to us just like a dead city', worse than anything they had seen in Germany (M. Mitzmann, 'A Visit To Germany, Austria and Poland in 1939', document 0.2/151, YVP).

#### page 74

***Mum went and warily opened the door.***

Scene based on the recollections of Fritz (1997 interview; Gärtner and Kleinmann, *Doch der Hund*, p. 190). Also Kurt's recollections.

#### page 74

***'You know we've got nothing. We haven't even got food!'***

Tini's words imply that the men had visited several times and taken their possessions and/or money, but Fritz doesn't go into detail in his account of this scene.

#### page 74

***... Papa's old home town became part of Poland.***

Gustav Kleinmann was born in 1891 in the small town of Zablocie-bei-Saybusch (now Zabłocie in Żywiec) in the historic kingdom of Galicia, which was then part of the Austro-Hungarian empire. In 1918 Galicia became part of Poland and western Ukraine. The town of Zablocie is not far from Auschwitz.

## Chapter 6 – The Journey

#### page 78

***'They'll understand I'm not Polish. I fought for Austria, remember.'***

Based on Kurt's recollections (interviews with the author). Kurt has no memory of any painful goodbye at this point. Taken with Gustav's optimistic nature and the outcome after Kristallnacht, one can infer that he believed he could sort the situation out.

#### page 79

***The Metropole was the headquarters of the Gestapo.***

Gärtner and Kleinmann, *Doch der Hund*, p. 190. The Hotel Metropole became infamous in Vienna as a site of Gestapo torture and Holocaust administration. Damaged by Allied bombing, it was demolished after the war and replaced by an apartment block. A memorial to the victims stands near the site.

#### page 80

***They were put in another van and taken to a police prison nearby.***

After the Metropole, Fritz was held briefly at the police prison on Rossauer Lände, not far away. The prison was known to locals as the 'Liesl' and in the 1930s had been used by Kurt Schuschnigg's Austrofascist government for detaining political prisoners. It is still a police detention centre to this day.





## page 80

***SS guards stood at the entrances and exits.***

This episode is based on Fritz's 1999 and 2008 interviews. There is very little eyewitness testimony, as only a few of these men survived. The guards here are referred to as SS for simplicity. In fact they were men of the Vienna Schutzpolizei ('protection police'), the regular city police which by this time had been thoroughly Nazified and incorporated into the SS policing structure. According to Fritz, they were far less brutal than the concentration camp SS.

## page 82

***If that was their aim, they went away disappointed.***

Weindling, *Victims and Survivors of Nazi Human Experiments*, pp. 45–6; Knigge and Seifert, *Vom Antlitz zur Maske*; Fritz Kleinmann and Paul Grünberg interview, 1999. The team of eight anthropologists was led by Josef Wastl of the Natural History Museum in Vienna, a dedicated Nazi. The material gathered was intended for an ongoing exhibition on 'the mental and physical appearance of Jews'. They examined 440 of the 1,048 prisoners, including Fritz's father, Gustav. Plaster casts were taken from 21 of them. The casts were preserved in the museum's archive, and in 1998, one of the victims (who'd been a 16 year old boy at the time), Gustav Ziegler (later renamed Gershon Evan), was reunited with the cast taken of him 59 years earlier. He recalled that the scientists were friendly and gentle with the victims, and in retrospect he regarded the experience as ironically positive, because it effectively disproved Nazi racial ideas about Jews.

## page 84

***Fritz looked out every day, but he never saw her in the crowd again.***

In all his recollections researched for my original book, Fritz never described in detail his time in the stadium or mentioned seeing his mother there. I recently found two interviews he gave near the end of his life, specifically about the stadium period (1999 and 2008 interviews) in which he talked about it for the first and only time. When asked in 1997 whether he saw his family at all during his confinement in Vienna, he said he didn't and was clearly distressed by the question. This glimpse of his mother outside the stadium was in fact the last time he saw her alive.

## page 84

***Dozens of police cars and vans were waiting.***

In 1988, Fritz received compensation for his imprisonment in the Prater stadium, amounting to 860 Austrian schillings (about £53.00). He had a struggle to find witnesses to prove that he'd been held there, since nearly all of his fellow detainees died in the Holocaust (Gärtner and Kleinmann, *Doch der Hund*, p. 190). In 2003 a memorial plaque was installed at the stadium. Fritz was present at the unveiling.

## page 84

***Fritz was pushed into the back seat of a car along with some other men.***

Fritz (1997 interview) is specific about it being a car rather than a van.

## page 86

***'There's a sweater and a scarf and a pair of socks.'***

The package was confiscated and its contents recorded on Gustav's arrival at Buchenwald (Buchenwald personal record card 1.1.5.3/6283389, ITS).

## page 87

***More than a thousand men came pouring out of the wagons...***

Fritz Kleinmann (*Doch der Hund*, p. 12) cites a figure of 1,048 Viennese Jews in this transport, whereas other sources (Stein, *Buchenwald*, p. 116) give 1,035.



page 89

***‘Papa! What are you doing here?’***

Based in part on Fritz Kleinmann interview (1997) and Gustav Kleinmann’s diary (in Gärtner and Kleinmann, *Doch der Hund*).

page 91

***... the men who had come this way before him called it Totenwald...***

‘Report regarding conditions in Buchenwald concentration camp’, 93887-1375/203, AWK.

page 92

***Fritz would learn later that it had 380 volts of electricity running through it...***

Stein, *Buchenwald*, p. 35.

## Chapter 7 – The Little Camp

page 94

***‘This is Buchenwald. You cannot get out of this camp once you are in it.’***

Fritz recalls this speech in his 1997 interview.

page 94

***Papa was 7291, Fritz was 7290.***

Buchenwald personal record cards 1.1.5.3/6283389, 1.1.5.3/6283376, ITS. There were no tattoos; this practice was begun at Auschwitz in November 1941 and was not employed at any other camps (Wachsmann, *KL*, p. 284).

page 95

***... the whole outfit in blue and white stripes.***

The uniforms were initially white and mid-blue. In use they quickly turned grey and dark blue.

page 95

***... scrub in the pools, they were made to sit on stools to have their heads shaved.***

Werber and Helmreich, *Saving Children*, p. 36, describes this process. The arrival of the ‘Polish’ prisoners from Vienna on 2 October 1939 was recorded in photographs, including the disinfectant tubs and head-shaving. The photos are in the archives of the US Holocaust Memorial Museum and the Buchenwald museum. As far as I can tell, Fritz and Gustav are not identifiable in any of the photos, which include just a few of the thousand-plus new arrivals on that day.

page 98

***‘I can’t believe such people have been allowed to walk around free until now.’***

Quoted by Emil Carlebach in Hackett, *Buchenwald Report*, pp. 162–3.

page 98

***In the past few days, thousands of Jewish men had been brought to Buchenwald...***

The intake of ‘Polish’ Jews was highly unusual in scale. See Hackett, *Buchenwald Report*, pp. 113–4. Immediately after Kristallnacht, new arrivals totalled 10,098. There were over 9,000 subsequent departures due to release, transfer or death (about 2,000 deaths in total in 1938–9, not including those who died between Weimar and the camp; *ibid.*, p. 109). The prisoner population of Buchenwald declined steeply from 1938–9, exploding again with the autumn 1939 intake (8,707 during September–October).

page 98



***They were four levels high, and they looked more like shelves than beds.***

There is a detailed description of the ‘little camp’ in 1939–40 by inmate Felix Rausch in Hackett, *Buchenwald Report*, pp. 271–6.

page 100

***‘Yeah, I live right by the Prater. What about you?’***

There is a mystery around the identity of ‘Itschkerl’. Recently uncovered records show that a Jewish prisoner named Jakob Ihr arrived in Buchenwald on the same transport as Fritz. He was indeed from the Prater area of Vienna. However, he was a 31-year old man, born in 1908 (prisoner record documents, ITS). Fritz describes his friend ‘Itschkerl’ as a boy – ‘ein Bursch’. There may be various explanations. Fritz may have conflated two individuals in his memory, both from the Prater district, and mixed up their names. More likely, despite Itschkerl’s age, he might have presented as much younger, physically and mentally, leading Fritz to believe he was a teenager like him. If they talked of home, Itschkerl would likely have mentioned that he lived with his mother (given as his next of kin on his records) which could add to the illusion. Supporting the hypothesis that he presented as younger than he was (and perhaps didn’t admit his real age to his friends), Jakob Ihr evidently joined the bricklaying school for Jewish boys that was later set up in the camp by Robert Siewert; his records indicate that he’d been a metalworker in Vienna, but on liberation in 1945 he gave his trade as mason (this may not be definitive, as at least one adult is known to have trained as a builder in Buchenwald). Jakob’s Buchenwald medical record mentions that he’d had severe measles as a child, which could have affected his neurological development. While in Buchenwald, he was frequently ill (sometimes very seriously) but managed to survive. Jakob did not go to Auschwitz; he survived in Buchenwald until the end of the war. For simplicity, I have taken Fritz’s testimony at face value and treated Itschkerl as Fritz perceived him.

page 103

***‘No, just me. My father’s gone. I live with my mother.’***

Jakob’s mother’s name is given as Netty Ihr (Jakob’s prisoner records, ITS). I haven’t found clear evidence of what happened to her. However, an Ettel Ihr was deported on a transport to Riga ghetto in occupied Latvia in January 1942 (DOW). It is not known whether she survived.

page 105

***We will say yes to life, For the day will come when we are free!***

The song was written by the Viennese songwriter Hermann Leopoldi with words by celebrated lyricist Fritz Löhner-Beda, both of whom were prisoners in Buchenwald. It was commissioned by SS-Major Arthur Rödl, who felt that the camp should have its own song (Silverman, *Undying Flame*, p. 15). Rödl was oblivious to the spirit of defiance in the lyrics. He also commissioned a ‘Jewish Song’ with antisemitic lyrics, but it had been ‘too stupid’ even for him and he banned it (Manfred Langer, in Hackett, *Buchenwald Report*, pp. 169–70).

page 107

***‘You’ll see four times as many red triangles as Jewish stars in here.’***

After coming out of quarantine, Fritz and his father were astonished to learn that Jews made up only a fifth of Buchenwald’s prisoners, even after the huge intake of ‘Polish’ Jews (Fritz Kleinmann, 1997 interview). The vast majority were political prisoners – communists, socialists etc. – most of whom had been sent to concentration camps within months of Hitler coming to power. Even as late as 1939, the Nazis’ main focus with regard to Jewish people was to get them to emigrate. Nazis felt that Jews had no place on German soil, even as prisoners. The organised mass murder of Jews did not begin until 1942.



page 107

***'Leopold Moses at your service.'***

Leopold Moses was born in Berlin in 1900. He was a communist and worked variously as a labourer, salesman and chauffeur. Prior to Dachau he spent time in the Gestapo prison in Berlin. (Prisoner records, ITS). He was transferred from Buchenwald on 12 March 1942 to Natzweiler, but on 17 August arrived in Dachau, where he died in the hospital on 20 August from 'failure of heart and circulation'.

page 108

***The wagon was made of steel and had been loaded with over four tonnes of stone.***

Estimate based on size of wagon and density of broken limestone = 1,554 kg/m<sup>3</sup>. Different sources give the number of men assigned to pull each wagon as between sixteen and twenty-six.

## Chapter 8 – The Stone Crusher

page 112

***They'd put him back with the ordinary prisoners, who would take revenge on him.***

In Himmler's words, the kapo's task was 'to see that the work gets done ... As soon as we are no longer satisfied with him, he is no longer a kapo and returns to the other inmates. He knows that they will beat him to death his first night back' (quoted in Rees, *Holocaust*, p. 79).

page 112

***'We're the stones, Fritz. The Nazis are the machine.'***

Gustav described the stone crusher and likened it to the camp system in his long poem 'Quarry Kaleidoscope', which he wrote in his diary (reproduced in Gärtner and Kleinmann, *Doch der Hund*, pp. 43–4). The shovelling contest that follows is narrated in the poem.

page 115

***'Don't give up. They can't grind us down like this if we don't let them.'***

'They cannot grind us down like this,' Gustav wrote in his diary. 'The war goes on.' Many times he wrote of his determination to survive and his belief that he would do so.

page 116

***... across Germany, the SS took revenge on Jewish prisoners.***

Wachsmann, *KL*, p. 220. . In Sachsenhausen the SS subjected the inmates to intimidation and torture, while at Ravensbrück (a women's camp) the Jewish prisoners were locked in their barracks for nearly a month. But these cruelties paled beside what occurred at Buchenwald. These persecutions took place on 10 November 1939, the anniversary of Kristallnacht. The would-be assassin of Hitler, Georg Elser, was a non-Jewish German communist. Elser was kept prisoner in Dachau until the last weeks of the war, when he was murdered by the SS (see Sayer and Dronfield, *Hitler's Last Plot*).

page 116

***... none was more frightening than Sergeant Blank.***

Hackett, *Buchenwald Report*, p. 51; Stein, *Buchenwald*, p. 119.

page 116

***There was silence again, then another burst of gunfire.***

Hackett, *Buchenwald Report*, pp. 231, 252–3; Wachsmann, *KL*, p. 220. The twenty-one men were taken to the quarry entrance and shot. A few managed to run into the woods; all were tracked down and murdered.



## page 117

***The guards grabbed Fritz and dragged him towards the others ...***

Fritz Kleinmann, quoted in Horský, *Man muß darüber reden*, pp. 48–9, reproduced in Gärtner and Kleinmann, *Doch der Hund*, p. 16n.

## page 117

***This contraption was the Horse, and they were all terrified of it.***

The table was known in German as the *Bock*, a word meaning a trestle, sawhorse or vaulting horse (see Stein, *Buchenwald*, pp. 52, 108–9; ‘Report by Viennese businessman Erwin Mann regarding his imprisonment in Vienna, Dachau and Buchenwald concentration camp’, 93876-1375/192, AWK). Various versions were in use at most concentration camps, some crudely made, some quite sophisticated with slatted tops and loops for the ankles like medieval stocks. Usually they had leather straps to bind the victim face-down.

## page 119

***As Fritz staggered away from the Horse, the next victim was dragged to it.***

The practice was actually far more brutal than depicted here. The victim’s body was strapped to the table top. Sergeant Blank used a bullwhip rather than a cane – a long leather instrument with a steel core – and the blows were inflicted on the victim’s bare skin.

## page 120

***The prisoners called it the Death Block, and few patients came out of it alive.***

In his diary Gustav refers to this place as the Todes-Holzbaracke (death barrack), probably a nickname for a building used for sick Jews after they were barred from the prisoners’ infirmary (block 2, in the southwest corner of the camp facing onto the roll-call square) in September 1939 (see Emil Carlebach in Hackett, *Buchenwald Report*, p. 162).

## page 120

***He was kind and did his best for the patients...***

Dr Paul Heller was born in Prague in 1914 (prisoner records, ITS). He was arrested in September 1939 for being an active member of the Socialist Movement of Students in Prague. At this point his official work detail was in the quarry, so he must have been working as a doctor intermittently, perhaps by special permission. He later served as an official prisoner doctor in Auschwitz. He survived the Holocaust (by which time his only surviving relative was a brother in Cambridge, England) and eventually emigrated to the United States. ‘He was a very decent man. If he could help a person, he would,’ recalled one of his fellow prisoners (obituary, *Chicago Tribune*, September 29, 2001).

## page 121

***... but he was less cruel than some of the other SS doctors.***

Burkett, *Buchenwald Report*, pp. 60–64.

## page 122

***He was a funny-looking man, which did little to make him any less frightening.***

Prisoner Walter Poller, quoted in Pukrop, ‘Die SS-Karrieren,’ p. 79. Poller worked as Blies’s assistant. He recalls that after only a few days in Buchenwald Blies ‘transformed his appearance into a less comical character’.

## page 122

***‘Sir, we have no strength to work because we’re starving.’***

In his account of this episode (*Doch der Hund*, p. 48), Fritz seems to imply that his ‘weeping and



desperate' (weinender und verzweifelter) voice was an act.

page 124

***The next day, he was given light work to do around the camp.***

Gustav's diary is hard to interpret here: '(Am) nächsten Tag kriege (ich) einen Posten als Reiniger im Klosett, habe 4 Öfen zu heizen ...'. The Klosett might have been the latrine in the little camp, or perhaps in the main camp barrack blocks, which had earlier been out of order due to a water shortage (Stein, *Buchenwald*, p. 86). The Öfen (ovens or furnaces) are harder to pinpoint; most likely they were part of the kitchens or the shower block. They were not crematorium ovens, which Buchenwald did not acquire until summer 1942 (*ibid.*, p. 141).

page 124

***'I like to work,' he said. 'It helps me forget where I am.'***

Gustav wrote this in his diary.

## Chapter 9 – A Feeling of Hope

page 126

***... he made a big show of yelling ferociously and lashing with his stick...***

A former amateur heavyweight boxing champion, Willy Schwartz had once been on the board of an Aryans-only sports club in Vienna. He'd been deeply hurt when the authorities branded him a Jew. In fact it was his active role as an officer in the militia wing of Chancellor Kurt Schuschnigg's Fatherland Front that had condemned him; within weeks of the Anschluss he'd been arrested and sent to the camps.

page 127

***They took pity on the boys, and gave them any extra bits and pieces of food ...***

It's possible that Jakob 'Itschkerl' Ihr allowed other prisoners to believe he was a teenage boy for this reason (see earlier note on Itschkerl).

page 127

***As roll call ended and Fritz was about to head off with the other garden workers...***

'Chief kapo'. These prisoners who had kapo-type duties within the camp were actually called block seniors and camp seniors. Here they're referred to just as kapos for simplicity.

page 127

***... Hackmann, a slender officer whose charming smile hid a brutal nature.***

Stein, *Buchenwald*, pp. 44–5, 307; Hackett, *Buchenwald Report*, p. 34. Hackmann's first name is variously given as Hermann and Heinrich. He was later convicted of embezzlement by the SS.

page 129

***'If it's accepted, you'll be released and Germany can be rid of you.'***

The photograph was preserved by Tini and came back into Fritz's possession after the war.

page 130

***A few came back to Vienna saying that lots of people had been killed there.***

The resettlement scheme to a supposed agricultural community in Nisko in occupied Poland was short-lived (Report in Arad, *Documents*, pp. 143–4; Rabinovici, *Eichmann's Jews*, p. 87ff).

page 130

***One of her friends had put her in touch with the Barnett brothers...***



From October 1938 to mid-1941, Samuel and Philip Barnet made repeated, continual efforts to arrange for the whole Kleinmann family to emigrate. Their attempts gradually focused on just the children, since they had the best chance of being accepted (aid charity letters and documents relating to Barnets and the Kleinmann family, CJH and JHC).

#### page 130

***But the American government was still only letting a tiny number of refugees ...***

President Roosevelt – who wanted to increase the number of refugees taken in – could do nothing against Congress and the press. The United States had a theoretical quota of 60,000 refugees a year, but chose not to use it. Instead, Washington employed every bureaucratic trick it could dream up to obstruct and delay applications. In June 1940, an internal State Department memo advised its consuls in Europe: ‘We can delay and effectively stop ... immigrants into the United States ... by simply advising our consuls to put every obstacle in the way ... which would postpone the granting of the visas’ (US State Department memo, June 26, 1940, in Wyman, *America and the Holocaust*, vol. 4, p. 1; also *ibid.*, p. v).

#### page 131

***One of the boys, Hannes, had a scooter and seemed to be taking it apart.***

Kurt recalled the incident that followed, but couldn’t recall the boy’s name (names are a blank in many of his memories of this period). I’ve called him Hannes for convenience.

#### page 136

***... arrange for children to leave Austria was making a special effort for Kurt.***

The German Jewish Children’s Aid organisation scheduled Kurt for a sailing in October 1940, but his visa application was rejected, along with those of 17 other children (archive letters, CJH). They rescheduled him for a transport in February 1941 and this time were successful.

## Chapter 10 – The Road to Life

#### page 137

***He loved books, and had a little collection he kept hidden from the SS.***

Stefan Heymann was a Jewish communist from Mannheim. Formerly a bank employee, he was arrested in May 1933 for distributing anti-Nazi pamphlets. He was tortured to confess to his crime and imprisoned by the Gestapo until 1936, then sent to his first concentration camp (Allied military government case file, 2 May 1945, ITS).

#### page 137

***‘We transferred to the new colony on a fine, warm day,’ Stefan read.***

Anton Makarenko, *The Road to Life: An Epic of Education (A Pedagogical Poem)*, vol. 2, ch. 1. Translation available online at [www.marxists.org/reference/archive/makarenko/works/road2/ch01.html](http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/makarenko/works/road2/ch01.html) (retrieved October 20, 2021). The book is about a Soviet rehabilitation camp for young offenders.

#### page 139

***... the other prisoners called them the Singing Horses.***

Stein, *Buchenwald*, p. 90.

#### page 139

***‘We’re creatures of habit, we humans – you can get used to anything, I suppose.’***

Gustav wrote this in his diary at this time.



## page 141

***Thwack! went his cane on their backsides if they moved too slowly.***

Gärtner and Kleinmann, *Doch der Hund*, p. 57. Schmidt's general temperament and habits are documented by many witnesses quoted in Hackett, *Buchenwald Report*.

## page 141

***One evening Stefan gathered the boys and told them, 'I have to talk to you.'***

This was actually Stefan Heymann together with Gustav Herzog, another veteran prisoner. I've mentioned only Stefan for simplicity. Gustav is introduced later in the book.

## page 142

***There were nice houses for the officers and their families and even a zoo.***

There were also stables, a falconry and a hunting lodge intended for Hermann Göring, who never actually used it. The SS were so proud of Buchenwald that local people could pay one mark to come and look around (Hackett, *Buchenwald Report*, p. 42).

## page 142

***It was known to be safer than most work teams.***

Fritz describes what follows in *Doch der Hund*. He appears to have been transferred to the construction detail on 20 August 1940, after four months in the garden (prisoner record card, 1.1.5.3/6283377, ITS).

## page 145

***... little notice was taken of the Roma people's terrible mistreatment.***

The genocide of Romani and Sinti (a semi-separate Roma people) is known as the *Baro Porrajmos* – a Roma phrase meaning *Great Devouring* – or *Samudaripen*, which means *Murder of All*. Nazis believed that Roma people were genetically predisposed to criminality, and were therefore – like Jews – a threat to the Aryan gene pool. (Unlike Jews, Roma were not seen as an imminent political or economic threat, and this has sometimes been used as a basis for downplaying the Roma genocide as a lower order crime.) The Porrajmos was less thoroughly documented than the Holocaust of the Jews, and estimates of the total number killed vary widely. A minimum of 250,000 is generally accepted, but modern analysis of the evidence has produced a figure of up to 1.5 million Roma and Sinti murdered, out of a European population of around 2 million – i.e. 75% of the population. The methods of killing used were the same as in the Shoah. Around 23,000 Roma were murdered in the gas chambers at Auschwitz. See Hancock, 'Romanies and the Holocaust'.

## page 145

***To Fritz, Robert Siewert was a hero.***

Gärtner and Kleinmann, *Doch der Hund*, p. 72.

## page 146

***'... And you're popular now, Fritz. I'm proud of you.'***

Gustav wrote this in his diary.

## page 146

***Many of them were friends of Fritz's and Papa's ...***

Murders of prisoners – predominantly Jews – spiralled in 1940–41. Across all concentration camps, annual prisoner deaths from all causes rose from 1300 (in 1938) to 14,000 (Wachsmann, *KL*, pp. 224–5).

## page 147





... *the SS built a crematorium inside the main camp.*

This occurred across all camps (Wachsmann, *KL*, p. 225). Cremation is forbidden in Jewish law, and cremated remains are prohibited from cemeteries. However, exceptions are made for those cremated against their will, and ashes sent back from the concentration camps were permitted into Jewish cemeteries from the start.

## Chapter 11 – The New World

page 150

***Kurt's heart was breaking too. 'I'll be good, I promise.'***

Kurt retained no memory of how he felt during this time. He attributed this to the trauma of the experience. He did remember the circumstances of this moment and his mother's anxiety that he would misbehave and be sent back. This continued to come through in the letters she wrote to him in America.

page 152

***He noticed the leather wallet on its string around his neck, and he remembered.***

In later life, Kurt couldn't remember saying goodbye to his mother and Herta. His last memory was of his mother sitting him on the kitchen table and giving him the wallet. The next thing he remembered was being on the train to Lisbon. We don't know when the memory-loss set in (immediately or at a later date), so the narrative here reflects his memory of it now. The 'dream' interlude is an actual memory of an incident that occurred before the Nazi invasion. It feels significant that Kurt so clearly remembered an episode of losing his family then being reunited with them.

The journey that follows is based in part on interviews with Kurt, accounts written by him (including a school essay written shortly after his arrival in the US), and letters from Tini, July 1941, DKK; notes by Fritz Kleinmann, DRG; also data from passenger and crew list, SS *Siboney*, March 27, 1941, PNY, and an arrival interview conducted by the German Jewish Children's Aid representative, CJH.

Page 157

***Although she was Kurt's age, Irmgard was taller than either of the boys.***

Irmgard Salomon's height was recorded on medical inspection as 5 feet, whereas Kurt was 4 feet 6 inches and Karl Kohn was 4 feet 10 inches. Karl was marked as having 'defective vision' and 'pituitary disease'. Kurt's only recorded defect was his differently coloured eyes.

page 157

***... Kurt and his new friends and the refugee families were taken to the docks...***

There was an interval of several weeks in Lisbon, which I've omitted here.

page 161

***'From now on, you'll sleep in your cabin, do you hear?'***

Miss Sneble, who was a member of the ship's complement, complained stridently to the charity rep when they arrived in New York. She'd expected an escort to be provided for the children. She and the ship's purser had been concerned about the children's welfare. The children reported that they'd been fine (rep's report, CJH).

page 162

***The children had been given American flags, and they held them up...***

There is video footage of a ship which appears to be *Siboney* arriving in New York in 1941 (possibly not the same arrival as Kurt's) online at <https://app.nimia.com/video/>



[1259682/342195263-immigration-jew-usa.](https://www.britain.gov.uk/visas-immigration/immigration-jew-usa)

page 162

***Every passenger (other than Americans returning home) had to be inspected ...***

Passenger and crew list, SS *Siboney*, March 27, 1941, PNY.

## Chapter 12 – Child of Fortune

page 164

***She was here to help the kids get to the families they would be staying with.***

The Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society coordinated with the German Jewish Children's Aid organisation to bring children to the USA and look after them.

page 165

***'We hope we can have all your family brought here.'***

Alma Maurer wrote this in a telegram, 9 March 1944, paraphrased by Tini Kleinmann in a letter to the German-Jewish Children's Aid, March 1941, DKK.

page 168

***It was as if he'd been blindfolded and spun round and round...***

Kurt retained no lasting memory of how he felt during this period, apparently due to disorientation and trauma. In later years he often asked the Barnets and others how he had been emotionally, and always received the glib reply 'You were fine.' Judge Barnet fended off inquiries by Kurt's appointed social worker, telling her Kurt was doing fine and providing no details. Although they treated Kurt well and gave him a good life (which not all Jewish refugee children admitted to the US experienced), Kurt was always frustrated by this gap in his memory. In this narrative I've based his emotional state on close reading of photographs and his recorded behaviour.

Trauma appears to have begun affecting Kurt's recall from the start. When the GJCA rep interviewed him in New York on his arrival, he wouldn't talk about any 'worries' he might have about his experiences. Karl and Irmgard were similarly silent about it.

page 170

***'I just have some time to drop you a line...'***

Tini Kleinmann, letter to Kurt, 15 July 1941, DKK.

page 173

***The answer was that they wanted to.***

Writing to the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society in Boston in December 1938, Samuel Barnet asked for extra affidavit application forms because there were 'a number of local people who are interested in bringing friends and relatives from Germany' (JHC). As far as I am aware, none of these applications was successful, and Kurt was the only refugee to arrive in New Bedford.

page 175

***A thousand kisses from your Mum. I love you.***

Tini Kleinmann, amalgam of two letters to Kurt, both dated 15 July 1941, DKK.

page 176

***... but there was little hope of Herta or Fritz ever escaping.***

Tini Kleinmann, letter to Samuel Barnet, 19 July 1941, DKK. Judge Barnet acted immediately, filing the necessary papers and putting up \$450 to cover Herta's expenses (Fritz Kleinmann in



Gärtner and Kleinmann, *Doch der Hund*, p. 83). But it was too late and the bureaucracy too complex and obstructive.

## Chapter 13 – The Final Solution

page 177

***‘From now on a new wind blows in Buchenwald,’ he bellowed ...***

Fritz Kleinmann in Gärtner and Kleinmann, *Doch der Hund*, p. 82.

page 177

***Everyone thought to themselves, Tomorrow it could be my turn.***

Gustav wrote this in his diary.

page 178

***‘My lads are true to me,’ he said. ‘We stick together.’***

Gustav wrote this in his diary.

page 178

***... a plan that they called ‘the Final Solution to the Jewish Question’.***

The ‘Final Solution to the Jewish Question’ (‘Endlösung der Judenfrage’) was agreed at the Wannsee Conference – a meeting held by Reinhard Heydrich, the chief of SS policing and security under Himmler, together with senior officers of the Nazi state – on 20 January 1942. It took place on the orders of Hermann Göring; in a letter to Heydrich on 31 July 1941 he had asked for a ‘total solution to the Jewish question’ (‘Gesamtlösung der Judenfrage’). The number of Jewish people in Reich-controlled areas had vastly increased with the occupation of eastern Poland and Soviet territories after July 1941. In addition to the hundreds of thousands in Germany and Austria, millions more Jewish people came under the power of the Nazis, who decided that the only solution was to kill them all. Hitler authorised the conference and its more-or-less predetermined conclusion, but wasn’t present in person.

page 178

***It was said that in the new camps Jews were killed hundreds at a time...***

Various methods were tried during the first year. Shooting was the initial method, but it was found inefficient. ‘Gas vans’ were tried experimentally, using carbon monoxide pumped into specially modified vans. Finally gas chambers were designed, using Zyklon-B, a commercially made pesticide.

page 178

***It was known as the Ostland, which means ‘East Land’.***

Former Soviet territory under German rule was divided into Reichskommissariat Ostland and Reichskommissariat Ukraine. Beyond these regions was a still larger war zone at the rear of the German front line.

page 179

***People who went to the Ostland were never heard from again.***

Mass transports of Jews began experimentally in 1939. After the establishment of ghettos at Theresienstadt and elsewhere, transports escalated. With the beginning of the Final Solution, death camps began to be set up in the German-occupied territories of Poland and Belarus.

page 179

***The number of Jewish men in Buchenwald had dwindled.***



By March 1942, only 836 Jewish prisoners remained in Buchenwald, out of a total of over 8,000 prisoners of all categories (Stein, *Buchenwald*, p. 128).

page 180

**‘... your mother and sister have been arrested. They’re being sent to the Ostland.’**

Fritz Kleinmann, in Gärtner and Kleinmann, *Doch der Hund*, p. 82. (Tini’s original letter, which Fritz never saw, was not preserved.)

page 181

**One thing was certain – there wouldn’t be any more letters from Mum and Herta.**

Tini and Herta Kleinmann were deported with about 900 other Jewish people in June 1942, one of several transports from Vienna that year. They were taken to the camp at Maly Trostinets near Minsk and murdered on arrival. See the original version of *The Boy Who Followed His Father into Auschwitz* for the full story of Tini and Herta. Neither Gustav, Fritz nor Kurt knew for certain what had happened to them until after the war.

page 183

**‘It’s basically all the Jews still in Buchenwald...’**

At this point (October 1942), only 639 Jews were still alive in Buchenwald. Of these, 234 were employed in building the factory (Stein, *Buchenwald*, p. 128–9).

page 188

**The prisoners travelled down the Blood Road in far more comfort ...**

The date was 17 October 1942, three years, two weeks and one day since Fritz and his father had arrived.

page 188

**At Weimar train station, they were loaded into goods wagons, forty men in each.**

Fritz (in *Doch der Hund*, p. 86) says there were eighty men to a wagon; however, Commandant Pister had ordered a train from the railway company consisting of ten cattle/freight wagons and one passenger carriage for SS personnel (Stein, *Buchenwald Report*, pp. 128–9). Fritz gives the date of departure as 18 October and of arrival at Auschwitz as 20 October; he is out by one day; it was actually the 17th and 19th.

page 188

**‘... Remember, a man can only die once.’**

Gustav wrote this in his diary. He used the stock expression *Himmelfahrtskommando* to describe the journey, which translates literally as ‘trip to Heaven mission’ and is the German equivalent of ‘suicide mission’ or ‘kamikaze order’.

## Chapter 14 – Let’s All Fight!

page 189

**Kurt whipped back his fishing rod and flicked it...**

The location appears to have been Quittacas Pond, a few miles north of New Bedford. The scene described is based on a photograph of Kurt fishing with Sam Barnet.

page 189

**His aunt Helene used to take him and his cousin Viktor fishing ...**

Helene Kapelari was Tini’s sister. She had married a Christian and converted. They were a well-off family. Helene’s husband served in the German army after the Anschluss. Kurt retained a



disturbing memory of seeing him in his Nazi uniform.

page 190

***‘She would like to give you her wonderful fishing gear that she uses to catch trout.’***

Tini, letter to Kurt, 15 July 1941, DKK.

page 191

***... BUY WAR BONDS – LET’S ALL FIGHT.***

Poster issued by United States Treasury Department, 1942; viewable online at <https://collections.ushmm.org/search/catalog/irn520993> (retrieved 28 October 2021).

page 191

***After a while, Kurt sold so many war bonds that he was awarded a medal ...***

War Finance Medals were issued in 1945 by the US Treasury to reward involvement in selling bonds. The medal was silver, with images of a revolutionary militiaman on one side and the iconic Iwo Jima flag-raising on the other. They were marked ‘US Treasury Award / For Patriotic Service’ and engraved with the recipient’s name. There is very little information available on these medals, but it appears that around 40,000–50,000 were struck. There were no fixed criteria to qualify for one, and they were awarded at the discretion of local War Finance committees.

page 193

***Something Kurt said made one of them, James, laugh and say...***

Kurt couldn’t recall the boy’s name. I’ve called him James for convenience.

page 194

***They don’t even get to see a garden, only the walls of the Jewish school.***

Tini refers here to the Piper Heim, a day-care centre and kindergarten established in 1939 for Jewish children in an outbuilding of a destroyed synagogue. It was run by the Israelitische Kultusgemeinde, Vienna’s long-standing Jewish cultural, social and (historically) administrative organisation.

page 194

***Well, darling, I wish you all the best. Herta sends kisses. I love you – Mum.***

Tini, letter to Kurt, 5 August 1941, DKK.

## Chapter 15 – A Town Called Auschwitz

page 195

***Torches dazzled their eyes, and they could hear dogs snarling ...***

There were 405 men on the transport list, but only 404 were admitted to Auschwitz (Czech, *Auschwitz Chronicle*, p. 255). Presumably one had died en route.

page 195

***They were in a station rail yard, standing among the tracks.***

Prior to 1944, when the infamous rail spur and loading ramp were constructed inside the Auschwitz-Birkenau camp, prisoners arriving at Auschwitz disembarked at a spur near the central Auschwitz I camp, and prior to that at the station in the town, from which they marched to the camps.

page 196

***That army base had now been taken by the SS ...***



In early 1915, Gustav was wounded in action and treated at the military hospital in what was then an Austro-Hungarian army base (Gemeinesames Zentralnachweissbureau, *Nachrichten* Nr 190, p. 24; Nr 203, p. 25). The exact circumstances of Gustav's wound are not known, other than that he was shot. The two reports indicate respectively that he was shot in the left lower leg (linken Unterschenkel, January 6, Biala hospital) and left forearm (linken Unterarm, January 11, Oświęcim hospital). Simultaneous wounds in the left arm and left leg sometimes happened when a soldier was kneeling to fire his rifle. Such wounds would probably have occurred during an attack or raid rather than in trenches.

I infer that Fritz didn't know about Gustav's stay at Auschwitz hospital, as he doesn't mention it anywhere in his recollections. Neither does Gustav mention it in his diary. If it weren't for the official records of wounded men, we would never know about this coincidence.

The army base at Auschwitz was built before World War I to guard the border crossing between Austro-Hungarian Galicia and the German territory of Silesia, which was crossed by large numbers of seasonal transient workers (Van Pelt and Dwork, *Auschwitz*, p. 59). After 1918, the base passed to the Polish army, and in 1939 fell to Germany. On 27 April 1940, Heinrich Himmler gave orders for it to be developed as a concentration camp (Czech, *Auschwitz Chronicle*, p. 8).

#### page 196

***Like many things the Nazis said, it was a lie.***

Fritz recalled in his memoir a mantra that the SS would say to the prisoners, 'There is a road to Freedom. Its milestones are: Obedience, Diligence, Honesty, Order, Cleanliness, Sobriety, Truthfulness, Willingness to Sacrifice, and Love of the Fatherland!' Fritz writes that 'We prisoners said ironically, "Walking that way is forbidden!"'

#### page 197

***... where they pumped in the deadly poison gas was disguised as a shower room.***

The first gassings in Germany, using trucks and gas chambers, had occurred in 1939, as part of the T4 euthanasia program (Cesarani, *Final Solution*, pp. 283–5). The first experimental gassings with Zyklon B at Auschwitz were done in August 1941 in Auschwitz I; large, specialised gas chambers/crematoria came into use in Auschwitz-Birkenau in early 1942 (Wachsmann, *KL*, pp. 267–8, 301–2; Franciszek Piper in Megargee, *USHMM Encyclopedia*, vol. 1A, pp. 206, 210). By late 1942, rumours about gassings had spread throughout the concentration camp system and among local populations.

#### page 197

***Fritz noticed a sign painted on the wall saying EINE LAUS DEIN TOD...***

This message was painted on walls throughout the Auschwitz complex.

#### page 198

***They reeked of the chemical used to disinfect them.***

The uniforms were deloused by fumigation with Zyklon B in a special gas chamber. This was the original intended purpose of this poison gas, which the SS adapted for use in the killing gas chambers. For the latter purpose, they asked the manufacturer (a subsidiary of IG Farben) to remove the noxious warning smell which was normally added to it (Hayes, *Industry*, p. 363).

#### page 199

***... Fritz stiffened with the pain, and the 2 and the 9 came out wonky.***

The numbers are recorded in the arrivals list, 19 October 1942, ABM. Fritz's tattoo is recorded in various photos and video interviews. The first recipients of tattooed numbers were Soviet POWs, beginning in autumn 1941. The SS experimented with a stamping device early on, but it hadn't worked very well (Wachsmann, *KL*, p. 284) so they switched to simple needles. No other



concentration camps used tattoos.

#### page 199

***It was vast, built to hold a hundred thousand prisoners.***

Franciszek Piper in Megargee, *USHMM Encyclopedia*, vol. 1A, p. 210. Auschwitz-Birkenau (Auschwitz II) began construction in October 1941 and was operational in early 1942.

#### page 200

***In the yard was a wall they called the Black Wall...***

In his diary, Gustav uses the phrase *schwarze Mauer* rather than the more commonly used *schwarze Wand*. Both mean the same. Its name came from the black-painted screen which protected the brick wall from bullet strikes.

#### page 200

***... two hundred Polish prisoners were shot there.***

Czech, *Auschwitz Chronicle*, p. 259.

#### page 200

***'But we have good nerves, don't we? We can stand it.'***

Gustav wrote these words in his diary.

#### page 201

***... even his own SS commanders were wary of him.***

Auschwitz's commandant, Rudolf Höss, often watched SS-Sergeant Gerhard Palitzsch's executions, and 'never noticed the slightest stirring of an emotion in him'; he killed 'nonchalantly, with an even temper and a straight face, and without any haste' (quoted in Langbein, *People*, pp. 391–2). If any delay occurred, he would put down his rifle and whistle cheerfully to himself or chat with his comrades until it was time to resume. He was proud of his work, and felt not the slightest brush of conscience. The prisoners considered him 'the biggest bastard in Auschwitz' (ibid., p. 392). At around this time, Palitzsch became increasingly unbalanced due to the death of his wife. They lived in a house near the camp, and Palitzsch, who was involved in corruption, obtained clothes stolen from the prisoners in Birkenau. In October 1942 she contracted typhus – probably from lice carried in these clothes – and died. Palitzsch took to drinking heavily and his behaviour became erratic (ibid., pp. 408–10).

#### page 202

***... there were over a thousand Jews from camps all over Germany.***

In all, 1,674 Jewish prisoners had been transferred to Auschwitz in October from Buchenwald, Dachau, Natzweiler, Mauthausen, Flossenbürg and Sachsenhausen, plus 186 women from Ravensbrück (Czech, *Auschwitz Chronicle*, pp. 255–60).

#### page 204

***Those who looked old or unhealthy had to go to the left.***

Fritz demonstrates the thumb gesture in his 2003 video interview. It resembles the iconic gladiator thumbs-up/down live/die gesture, but left/right. He had the impression that it was purely luck which way you were sent.

#### page 204

***Those men were never seen again.***

Czech, *Auschwitz Chronicle*, p. 261. The 186 women from Ravensbrück were declared fit and assigned work separately from the men (ibid., pp. 261–2).



## page 204

***Fritz thought to himself, So this is Auschwitz. We're all doomed to death.***

Fritz wrote this in Gärtner and Kleinmann, *Doch der Hund*, p. 90. He believed that they stayed only a week in Auschwitz before the selection, and in their testimony to the Frankfurt trials in 1963, both he and Gustav stated the time as eight days (Abt 461 Nr 37638/84/15904–6; Abt 461 Nr 37638/83/15661–3, FTD); in fact it was eleven days, from 19 to 30 October 1942 (Czech, *Auschwitz Chronicle*, pp. 255, 260–1).

## page 205

***'They all understand what you did. You've saved us all. I'm proud of you.'***

Gustav wrote as much in his diary. Whether Fritz's action really did save their lives is uncertain. There was a heavy demand for workers for construction of the new Monowitz camp, and the records imply that the intention all along had been to send the transferred prisoners to work there (Czech, *Auschwitz Chronicle*, p. 255). However, the record is unclear, and Fritz and Gustav had the impression that they were all slated for execution.

## Chapter 16 – The Day Will Come When We're Free

## page 208

***They took out their anger on the prisoners.***

By early September 1942 the Monowitz camp had been laid out, but construction hadn't progressed beyond a small number of barracks (between two and eight, according to sources). The rest of the camp buildings had been delayed in order to expedite construction of the Buna Werke factory. The camp officially opened for reception of prisoners on October 28 (Wagner, *IG Auschwitz*, pp. 95–7).

## page 209

***... would house the prisoners working in the factories.***

The Buna Works were named after buna, the synthetic rubber intended to be produced there. Among other applications, rubber was vital in aircraft and vehicle manufacture – e.g. tyres and various shock-absorbing components. The factory complex would also make synthetic fuel and other chemical products for the German war effort. The works belonged to the chemical giant IG Farben.

The war was proving far more intense and difficult than had been expected, and the demand for fuel and rubber was frantic. The company's deal with the SS gave them an unlimited supply of slave labour from Auschwitz for construction and factory work, for which they paid the SS three to four marks a day per person (which went straight into the SS coffers). Besides being cheaper than paying civilian wages, the arrangement gave the company big savings on worker facilities, sickness benefits, recreation and other labour costs. Productivity would be lower because of the poor physical condition of the prisoners, but the company considered the savings worth it (Florian Schmaltz in Megargee, *USHMM Encyclopedia* vol. 1A, pp. 216–7; Gärtner and Kleinmann, *Doch der Hund*, p. 92). Eventually camp inmates would make up about a third of the Buna Werke's total labour force, the rest made up of paid workers from Germany or occupied countries (Hayes, *Industry*, p. 358), many of whom would be drafted labour from enforced schemes such as France's Service du Travail Obligatoire.

## page 209

***Fritz heard from them that Leopold Moses had died.***

Leopold Moses was transferred to Natzweiler on 12 March 1942 (Buchenwald prisoner record card, ITS). He was then moved to Dachau on 17 August, dying three days later from 'failure of heart and circulation' (Dachau death report, 20 August 1942, ITS). It's unclear whether he was





dying when he was moved to Dachau.

page 210

***The young men were brought to Monowitz to work...***

Gustav wrote about the rumours he heard from Birkenau in his diary: ‘In Birkenau [the SS] are sleeping on dollar bills and pound notes, which the Dutch and others bring with them. The SS are millionaires, and every one of them abuses the Jewish girls. The attractive ones are allowed to live; the others go down the drain.’

The actual situation was slightly different but equally horrific. Women who were pregnant or had dependent children were murdered (with their children) on arrival. Healthy women without children became part of the Auschwitz slave labour force, either in Birkenau or other satellite camps.

page 210

***They quickly wasted away to skin and bone, until they couldn't even stand up.***

These victims were known as *Muselmänner* – Muslims. The origin of the term was lost in camp lore. Some said it was because when they could no longer stand, their collapsed posture resembled a Muslim at prayer. The term was used in other camps as well. (See Yisrael Gutman in Gutman and Berenbaum, *Anatomy*, p. 20; Wachsmann, *KL*, pp. 209–10, 685 n. 117; Wladyslaw Fejkiel quoted in Langbein, *People*, p. 91.) By the time the concentration camps were liberated in 1944–5, most long-term prisoners had been turned into *Muselmänner*, and they became emblematic of the Holocaust's victims. But they existed in the camps as early as 1939. Once a person reached this state, the other prisoners tended to avoid them, partly in disgust, partly in dread at the thought that they too might become like this.

page 211

***'It's heartbreaking, I know, but these Nazi murderers will not beat us.'***

Gustav wrote this in his diary.

page 212

***'It was one of the first concentration camps. A lonely place on the moors.'***

Esterwegen was part of a group of camps established in the sparsely populated moors of northwest Germany in 1933. The camps had been set up to incarcerate political enemies – mostly members of the Socialist party. They were run by the SA, who were so chaotically brutal that when the SS took over in 1934 their behaviour seemed civilised by comparison. See Wachsmann, *KL*, pp. 49–52; Joseph Robert White in Megargee, *USHMM Encyclopedia* vol. 1A, pp. 64–6. Esterwegen and the other Emsland camps were shut down in 1936.

page 212

***'You go and ask that guard for a cigarette...'***

Fritz doesn't mention this game in his recollections, but he described it to Kurt.

page 213

***He had faith, and maybe that was why he didn't feel any need for false comforts.***

An alternative reason for Gustav never smoking could be a WW1 injury. Family oral history claims that Gustav was injured by poison gas on the Italian Front. Austria used poison gas in 1916–17, and some Austrian soldiers might have experienced blowback. However, if Gustav's lungs were damaged, he couldn't have kept up with the strenuous work in the concentration camps, so this explanation seems unlikely.

page 213

***Grandpa, whose name was Markus, worked in a bank...***



Fritz's grandfather, Markus Rottenstein (Tini's father), was a clerk specialising in shorthand. He worked for the prestigious Boden-Credit-Anstalt, who were bankers to Austria's imperial family.

page 214

***That had been a close call.***

'Such seemingly small strokes of luck determined life and death,' Fritz wrote when recalling this incident (*Doch der Hund*, p. 101).

page 217

***... and partly because the prisoners were too starved to work hard enough.***

Hayes, *Industry*, p. 358.

page 220

***One of them was Gustav Herzog, who had worked as a journalist in Vienna...***

Buchenwald personal record card and Military Government questionnaire, May 1945, ITS. Gustav Herzog was born in 1908, and was 30 years old when he was arrested by the Gestapo in June 1938 for 'anti-Nazi work for English and American newspapers'.

page 220

***Now he ran the Monowitz records office for the SS...***

Herzog was a clerk from mid-1943, and head of the office from January to October 1944 (Herzog, Frankfurt trials statement, Abt 461 Nr 37638/84/15891-2, FTD).

## Chapter 17 – A Man Far From Home

page 225

***Perhaps one day he would no longer be able to read them.***

This in fact happened. When Kurt returned to Vienna in 1956 and was reunited with his father and Fritz, he could no longer speak German, and they struggled to communicate. In later years, he had to have his mother's letters translated into English in order to re-read them.

page 226

***... Kurt's little nephew, whose name was Peter...***

Peter Paltenhofer (later Patten) and his sister Joan were born in Leeds in 1940 and 1943. At some point after the 'Leeds Blitz' of 1941, Peter was evacuated to a farm in Gloucestershire, a period he now dimly remembers as traumatic.

## Chapter 18 – The Resistance

page 229

***... way these were looked after, compared with how human beings were abused...***

Wachsmann, *KL*, p. 210.

page 229

***Prisoners got ill, and the hospital, run by cold-hearted SS doctors...***

The prisoners who worked in the Monowitz infirmary tried hard to keep it well equipped, but the SS doctors gave little treatment to patients. See Langbein, *People*, p. 142; Irena Strzelecka and Piotr Setkiewicz, "Bau, Ausbau und Entwicklung des KL Auschwitz" in Długoborski and Piper, *Auschwitz 1940–1945*, vol. 1, p. 128.

page 229



***Anyone who didn't get well quickly enough was sent to the gas chambers.***

Both Gustav and Fritz spent periods in the Monowitz hospital, probably with typhus or dysentery. Gustav got well just in time to avoid a purge of sick prisoners who were marked 'to Birkenau' on the hospital records.

page 233

***The kapos were decent men who let their workers take it easy...***

Goltman, *Six mois*, pp. 89–90.

page 233

***Fritz found himself working in one of the main factories...***

Fritz states that he worked as *Transportarbeiter*, transport worker (*Doch der Hund*, p. 113), but doesn't elucidate; this was quite a broad label, and probably denotes fetching and carrying for locksmith technicians within the factory.

page 233

***There was one foreman who was particularly friendly, a man named Oskar.***

Fritz doesn't actually name this pivotal individual. I've called him Oskar for convenience.

page 234

***The groups in each camp passed messages to each other...***

From disorganised beginnings, the Auschwitz prisoner resistance had become an efficient, coordinated network. On 1 May 1943 – a Nazi holiday when the SS operated a skeleton staff – a secret meeting took place in Auschwitz I, at which two resistance factions agreed to cooperate. They were dominated by a Polish group, including a number of former army officers, under the leadership of Józef Cyrankiewicz, who persuaded his people to cooperate with the Jews and the Austro-German politicals. This combined all their various advantages – the Germans' understanding of Germany and the Nazis, which was vital in intelligence, and the fact that Polish prisoners were allowed to receive mail, which enabled them to bring in supplies and communicate with local partisans.

They called themselves *Kampfgruppe Auschwitz*– Battle Group Auschwitz – a measure of their militancy (Langbein in Gutman and Berenbaum, *Anatomy*, pp. 490–91; Henryk Świeboczi, "Die Entstehung und die Entwicklung der Konspiration im Lager" in Długoborski and Piper, *Auschwitz 1940–1945*, vol. 4, pp. 153–4).

They established contact with the Monowitz resisters. Inter-camp cooperation was facilitated by the constant shuffling of prisoners and labour details around the complex. What the Monowitz group brought to the table was its ability to cultivate relationships with civilians and disrupt production at the Buna Werke. Sabotage was extensive and constant. Prisoners in the electricians' detail had managed to short-circuit a turbine in the power plant. Another group, taking advantage of the reduced guard on 1 May, had caused an explosion in the half-complete synthetic fuel plant, while others destroyed fifty vehicles (Florian Schmaltz in Megargee, *USHMM Encyclopedia* vol. 1A, p. 217).

page 236

***The truck stopped outside the Gestapo building...***

In his memoir and interview, Fritz says only that he was taken to the Political Department (Gestapo), without specifying whether it was the main department at Auschwitz I or the sub-department in Monowitz. The involvement of Grabner and the seriousness of the charge suggests that it was probably the main department. On the other hand, at the end of the interrogation he says that Grabner 'went back to Auschwitz with the civilian' (*Doch der Hund*, p. 114); but he also writes that Taute and Hofer took him 'back to the camp' (*ibid.*) which again suggests Auschwitz



I as the scene of the torture. Overall, the balance of evidence favours the latter. In his 1963 statement for the Frankfurt trials (Abt 461 Nr 37638/83/15663, FTD), Fritz stated that this incident occurred in June 1944; as Grabner left Auschwitz in late 1943, this must be a transcription error for June 1943.

page 238

***Over two thousand prisoners had been murdered on his orders.***

Langbein, *People*, p. 329.

page 238

***He spoke with a rural Austrian accent...***

Grabner is described in considerable detail by Langbein, *People*, pp. 31, 185, 322, 329–335.

page 240

***'We'll continue on Monday.'***

Fritz's torture was far more severe than is depicted here. He was beaten with cudgels, then suffered sixty lashes with a bullwhip, in three sessions of twenty. His hanging by the wrists was in fact done with his wrists tied behind his back, a standard method of torture used in concentration camps. He was hung up and let down three times, the last hanging lasting for nearly an hour. Fritz never fully recovered from the long-term effects of his injuries; later in life he had to take early retirement because of them.

## Chapter 19 – A Trusted Friend

page 241

***Two of his old Buchenwald friends, Fred and Max, found him struggling...***

Fred Lustig and Max Matzner. Lustig was an old comrade of Gustav Kleinmann's from the Buchenwald haulage column.

page 241

***The staff were mostly prisoners.***

Wagner, *IG Auschwitz*, pp. 163–92; Irena Strzelecka and Piotr Setkiewicz, "Bau, Ausbau und Entwicklung des KL Auschwitz" in Długoborski and Piper, *Auschwitz 1940–1945*, vol. 1, p. 128.

page 242

***After a while, Gustav Herzog came in with Stefan and another friend, Erich...***

Erich Eisler, an Austrian antifascist.

page 245

***... nobody outside the hospital was allowed to know that Fritz was still alive.***

Only two other conspirators are known. Fritz's friend Jule Meixner, who worked in the hospital laundry, helped him to hide from the inspections. Sepp Luger, a prisoner functionary who handled hospital administration, entered Fritz in the register, although as a clerk it's not clear whether he actually knew that Fritz was alive.

page 245

***... the hardest thing of all for Fritz, having to let Papa believe that he was dead.***

Gustav doesn't mention Fritz's 'death' in his diary. He didn't write anything at all around this time, leaving his diary untouched for many weeks. Possibly the two things are connected.

page 245



***He and Fritz had been inseparable, living for each other.***

Two years earlier, Gustav wrote: ‘Wir sind die Unzertrennlichen’ – ‘We are the inseparables.’ There is no exact equivalent of the noun *Unzertrennlichen* in English. In German it is the name of the bird species known in English as Lovebirds, and is also the German title of the David Cronenberg film *Dead Ringers*.

page 246

***They wrote in the hospital register that, rather than dying, the man had got better...***

The register had only one line for each patient, with their name, number, the date, and what happened to them. It said either ‘discharged’, ‘sent to Birkenau’ (meaning the gas chambers) or a black cross, which meant they’d died.

page 246

***As long as Fritz answered to the other man’s number at roll call...***

The dead man’s friends – if he had any – would have recognised the number. Since such friends aren’t mentioned as being party to the deception, I infer that he had neither friends nor relations in the camp, perhaps having arrived alone.

The entry recording Fritz Kleinmann’s ‘death’ has not come to light; presumably it was among the majority of Auschwitz records that were destroyed before liberation of the camp. Some later hospital registers have survived (and have the format described), but this one is apparently lost. In his recollections, Fritz didn’t give the name of the dead man whose identity he was given. Possibly he didn’t remember; more likely he omitted it for reasons of delicacy. In his 1997 interview, Fritz said that the man was a Jew from Berlin with a prisoner number beginning 112xxx, indicating that he must have arrived in Auschwitz relatively recently (the group from Buchenwald were numbered 68xxx).

page 247

***There no longer seemed to be any hope for him.***

During this time, Fritz grew depressed and even considered suicide. In his published recollections Fritz makes no mention of his suicidal thoughts, but in his 1997 interview he describes them at some length and with strong emotion. He planned to throw himself on the electrified fence, a common act among desperate prisoners. (They knew that if the electricity didn’t kill them, the inevitable bullet from the guards would.) He was dissuaded by Stefan Heymann, who pointed out how devastated his father would be. Even though Gustav didn’t know Fritz was alive at this time, if he killed himself publicly it would become common knowledge.

page 248

***Papa hugged his boy to him, and hope was kindled again for them both.***

Fritz is unclear about exactly how long it was before his father was told about his survival. In his written memoir (*Doch der Hund*), he implies that it was shortly after his transfer from the hospital to block 48, whereas in his 1997 interview he is vague, implying that through necessity the secret was kept for a long time.

page 248

***Grabner had been taking gold, jewels and other valuables for himself...***

Czech, *Auschwitz Chronicle*, pp. 537, 542. Sergeant Gerhard Palitzsch had also been involved and was also removed.

page 248

***The commandant of Auschwitz had been involved in Grabner’s stealing...***

Langbein, *People*, p. 40; Wachsmann, *KL*, pp. 388–9; Czech, *Auschwitz Chronicle*, pp. 537, 812. The new commandant, Arthur Liebehenschel, took over in November 1943. He initiated a shake-



up of the whole Auschwitz complex; staff were replaced and order and discipline were imposed more firmly on the SS.

page 250

***Around the same time, a mysterious fire broke out in the Gestapo offices...***

Prisoner resistance report, 9 December 1943, quoted in Czech, *Auschwitz Chronicle*, p. 542.

page 253

***The man said, 'I haven't met many Germans since I came to work here...'***

Fritz described his conversations and interactions with this man (whose name was Alfred Wocher) at length and in detail in his various recollections.

## Chapter 20 – Fighting Back

page 259

***He was beginning to realise how ignorant he'd been.***

It is not known exactly what Alfred Wocher's duties were on the Eastern Front, or what unit he was in, but it is hard to believe that he was unaware of the mass murders of Jews carried out there. The Waffen-SS and Einsatzgruppen (Nazi death squads) were not the only organisations involved; Wehrmacht units took part too, and even if Wocher was nowhere near any such events, he would probably have heard stories. On the other hand, Fritz seems to have believed that his ignorance was genuine.

page 260

***He loved to see the trains pass through...***

Langbein, *People*, pp. 321–2.

page 260

***Hundreds of bewildered people got down from the wagons...***

There was never a ramp at Monowitz, and the railway did not enter the camp; from 1942 on, standard procedure was that transports went to the 'old Jew-ramp' at Oświęcim train station, or to a spur near Auschwitz I, and from 1944 to the ramp inside Birkenau; however, Fritz Kleinmann (*Doch der Hund*, pp. 129–30) suggests that some transports were unloaded at or near Monowitz, presumably in open ground near the camp, and that men selected for Monowitz arrived with their luggage.

page 261

***... Hanukkah, which often happens at the same time as Christmas...***

In 1943, Hanukkah fell on 21–29 December.

page 261

***... Fritz could no longer believe in a God who loved Jewish people.***

Fritz permanently lost whatever religious belief he had ever had during the Holocaust. He was far from the only one.

page 261

***He was overjoyed when Alfred told him that Fritz and his father were still alive.***

It is not known whether Karl Novacek was related to Friedrich Novacek, who lived in the same building and was one of the friends who betrayed Gustav and Fritz in 1938.

page 262



***His Aunt Jenni, the animal lover with the talking cat, was one of them.***

Jenni and her sister Bertha were deported on the same batch of transports as Tini and Herta, at a later date (Transport list, Da 227, 14 September 1942, DOW). Jenni had no other immediate family. Bertha, who had lost her husband in the First World War, left behind a daughter and grandson (they were not officially Jewish).

page 265

***With the fondest wishes and kisses, your Gustav and Fritz.***

Gustav Kleinmann, letter to Olga Steyskal, January 3, 1944, DFK. The letter was written in pencil on paper apparently torn from a notepad (not his diary).

page 266

***... so many victims that the gas chambers were running twenty-four hours a day.***

At the time of the invasion in March 1944, Hungary had a Jewish population of around 765,000 (Cesarani, *Final Solution*, p. 702). About 320,000 of Hungary's Jews had formerly been citizens of neighbouring countries until Hitler had given those territories to his Hungarian ally. The transport of Hungarian Jews to Auschwitz was masterminded by Adolf Eichmann and the former Auschwitz commandant, Rudolf Höss. The first transports were at the end of April (Czech, 'Kalendarium der wichtigsten Ereignisse' in Długoborski and Piper, *Auschwitz*, vol. 5, p. 201; *Auschwitz Chronicle*, p. 618). Between May and July 1944, Eichmann's organisation sent 147 trains to Auschwitz (Cesarani, *Final Solution*, p. 710). They arrived in Birkenau at the rate of up to five a day, overwhelming the system. Additional gas chambers which had lain dormant were put back into use. Four chambers operated round the clock. The crematoria couldn't cope with the sheer number of dead, and pits were dug in which to burn the bodies. The SS went into a frenzy; so great was the rush to murder each newly arrived batch that gas chambers were often opened up while some victims were still breathing; those who moved were shot or clubbed; others were flung into the fire pits still half-alive (Wachsmann, *KL*, pp. 460–1).

page 267

***... workshop at the Buna factories and Fritz had been transferred to work for him.***

This appears to have happened around May 1944, as Gustav refers to it in his diary immediately after his description of the Hungarian Jews. In Fritz's memoir, he implies that it occurred before Christmas 1943, but the diary seems to rule this out.

page 267

***'The man is anything but a Nazi.'***

Gustav wrote this in his diary.

page 268

***Two of Papa's workers, young Hungarian brothers called Jenö and Laczi...***

Fritz identifies them only by the names Jenö and Laczi. Surviving Auschwitz records show that two Jewish brothers arrived together on a transport from Hungary at about this time: Jenö and Alexander Berkovits (prisoner numbers A-4005 and A-4004; Monowitz hospital records and work register, ABM).

page 269

***The price per coat was one kilo of bacon or half a bottle of alcohol...***

Fritz specifically says bacon – *Speck* – in his memoir (*Doch der Hund*, p.139). Some stricter Jews traded non-kosher foods for bread if they could, and there were Hasidic rabbis in Monowitz who refused all non-kosher food; they quickly starved to death (Wollheim Memorial oral histories: online at [http://www.wollheim-memorial.de/en/juedische\\_religion\\_und\\_zionistische\\_aktivitaet\\_en](http://www.wollheim-memorial.de/en/juedische_religion_und_zionistische_aktivitaet_en)).



## page 269

***He understood how precious these things were to the soldiers...***

Fritz recalled: ‘The behaviour of the English prisoners of war towards us quickly became the talk of the camp, and the assistance they gave was of great value.’

## page 271

***She’d been in the Birkenau camp for a year before coming to Monowitz.***

Richard Wilczek, letter to the author, 13 April 2016.

## page 271

***Papa gave him his spare food and got Stefan to arrange a safe job for him...***

Fritz mentions this encounter in *Doch der Hund* (p. 142) without identifying the young man more specifically. He appears to have been prisoner number 106468, who appears in the Auschwitz III-Monowitz hospital record (ABM) but not in any other surviving Auschwitz records. This serial number was one of a batch issued on 6 March 1943 to Jews deported from Germany (Czech, *Auschwitz Chronicle*, p. 347).

## page 272

***... some of the prisoners were happy to see bombs smashing up the Nazi factories.***

Gilbert, *Auschwitz and the Allies*, p. 308; testimony of Siegfried Pinkus, Nuremberg Military Tribunal: NI-10820: Nuremberg Documents, quoted in Wollheim Memorial, [http://www.wollheim-memorial.de/en/luftangriffe\\_en](http://www.wollheim-memorial.de/en/luftangriffe_en).

## page 272

***... another big concentration camp further east, at a place called Majdanek.***

Majdanek, near Lublin in occupied Poland, was captured by the Red Army on 22 July 1944. Prisoners evacuated to Auschwitz from Majdanek before its liberation reported that all Jews in that camp had been murdered before the Red Army got there (Fritz, *Doch der Hund*, p. 156). Majdanek was the first large-scale concentration camp and death camp to be captured intact. It made headline news in the Soviet Union, but received little attention around the world. When Auschwitz was liberated six months later, it was even less prominently reported, overshadowed by other events, particularly the upcoming Yalta conference (February 1945).

## Chapter 21 – A Desperate Plan

## page 273

***‘I’ve got a better idea. We should escape together, you and me...’***

This conversation actually took place over two meetings between Fritz and Alfred. I’ve combined them here for simplicity.

## page 280

***This was for security, in case he was caught and tortured.***

The friend was Jule Meixner, the hospital assistant who’d helped change Fritz’s identity.

## page 281

***... the road and yards were strewn with rubble and dead prisoners.***

Although many of the bombs fell in open ground, and a few on the surrounding camps, the raid on 18 December 1944 did very heavy damage to several factory buildings (Gilbert, *Auschwitz and the Allies*, pp. 331–2).





## page 283

***They all hoped they would meet again one day when this was over.***

They did meet again. In his memoir (*Doch der Hund*, p. 160), Fritz wrote: ‘For us concentration camp inmates, Woche did more than fulfil his duty. With his behaviour he gave us courage and confidence, he made a decisive contribution to our surviving Auschwitz. Nobody honoured him for that. We, the survivors, owe him a debt of gratitude. After our return to Vienna, Alfred Woche visited us often. We were able to make him aware of how much he had helped us.’

## page 284

***Any prisoners who resisted or tried to escape would be shot immediately.***

Czech, *Auschwitz Chronicle*, pp. 782–3.

## page 284

***The SS divided them into groups of several hundred...***

Gustav Kleinmann’s diary indicates units of 100, whereas other records specify 1,000 as the unit size (Czech, *Auschwitz Chronicle*, p. 786), and Fritz Kleinmann’s memoir mentions three groups of about 3,000; the inference is that the units were organised hierarchically, in military style – company size, battalion size and so on.

## page 286

***... spilling out thirty-five thousand men and women...***

On 15 January 1945, the total number of prisoners in Auschwitz III-Monowitz and its sub-camps was 33,037 men and 2,044 women (Czech, *Auschwitz Chronicle*, p. 779). The other Auschwitz camps took slightly longer to begin their evacuation.

## Chapter 22 – The Death March

## page 288

***... the bang of a rifle or bark of a machine gun echoed through the night.***

Altogether, 50 prisoners were shot dead during the march (Czech, *Auschwitz Chronicle*, p. 786n).

## page 289

***... Birkenau and the other camps were still being evacuated.***

Jews too weak to be evacuated were forced to burn the stacks of corpses around the gas chambers. The crematoria had been dynamited and SS clerks burned records. Some SS staff pilfered from the stores, where the incriminating mountains of loot were also being burned. In the end the sheer scale of the crimes committed in Auschwitz defied all efforts to erase the evidence. Red Army troops arrived on 27 January 1945, a week after Fritz and Gustav left.

## page 290

***They were marched in and kept there for two days.***

Gleiwitz was a sub-camp of the Auschwitz complex. It had been evacuated the previous day (Irena Strzelecka in Megargee, *USHMM Encyclopedia*, vol. 1A, pp. 243–4).

## page 291

***Rumbling and clanking and shuddering, the train began to move.***

Four trains left Gleiwitz that day (21 January 1945), carrying prisoners from a several Auschwitz sub-camps besides Monowitz. The Monowitz prisoners were split between different trains, variously destined for the concentration camps of Sachsenhausen, Gross-Rosen, Mauthausen and Buchenwald (Czech, *Auschwitz Chronicle*, p. 797).



page 291

***The temperature was minus 20 degrees Celsius...***

Gustav's diary gives the temperature as '18 to 20 degrees below zero'.

page 292

***They sucked thirstily on it, munching the snow as if it were food.***

According to Gustav's diary, the hunger eventually became so severe that men killed each other over a scrap of bread. 'We are veritable artists of hunger,' Gustav wrote. The survivors stripped the uniforms off the dead men and put them on over their own to try to stave off the cold.

page 292

***They might not even be on the same train.***

Stefan Heymann and Gustav Herzog were on different transports. Both men ended up back in Buchenwald on 26 January 1945 and were later liberated there (Prisoner record cards; Military Government case files, ITS).

page 294

***He flung off the striped cap.***

In his 1997 interview, Fritz says that he discarded his camp uniform after jumping, but in his written memoir (*Doch der Hund*, p. 164) he places it at the same time as kissing and hugging his father. The latter seems more likely, since his uniform would be of value to the other prisoners to fend off the cold.

## Chapter 23 – The End of the World

page 303

***The officer, a lieutenant called Schmidt, read the note and studied Fritz.***

Fritz doesn't give the officer's name in his memoir (if indeed he ever knew it). I've called him Lieutenant Schmidt to make the story easier to follow.

page 307

***By the next morning, Fritz was horribly ill ...***

Eating ordinary soap probably wouldn't have much effect (although the carbolic in use at the time might). Shaving soap, however, typically contains potassium hydroxide, which is highly toxic and produces severe gastrointestinal symptoms if ingested.

page 307

***He'd been in the hospital for over two weeks ...***

In Fritz's recollections, this period of captivity in St Pölten seemed far shorter than it actually was. Documents indicate that it lasted approximately 20 days altogether, about eleven days longer than he believed.

page 310

***It was built of stone, like a castle...***

Fritz arrived in Mauthausen on 15 February 1945, twenty days after jumping from the train (Mauthausen arrivals list, 15 February 1945, 1.1.26.1/1307365, ITS). Fritz jumped from the train on 26 January 1945 (per Gustav's diary, which agrees, give or take one day, with the record of the train's arrival at Mauthausen (AMM-Y-Karteikarten, PGM), and was entered on the records at Mauthausen on 15 February (Mauthausen transport list, AMM-Y-50-03-16, PGM) – eleven days later than by his own reckoning of his time in custody in St Pölten.



## page 311

***Just one slip and a man might fall with his stone...***

The granite quarried at Mauthausen was intended primarily for Hitler's monumental building plans in Berlin – such as the colossal Volkshalle (People's Hall) and triumphal arch – most of which were never realised.

## page 311

***Fritz expected to be questioned and beaten...***

Assuming that they still believed him to be a spy at this point, there was no real system in place. Suspected enemy agents were typically sent to the Gestapo, and following interrogation (which could last months or even years), they were often sent to concentration camps if it was believed that they could be useful later. But by this stage in the war, operational systems were breaking down. The SS was in the process of improvising ways of dealing with high-value prisoners (including certain intelligence agents), which quickly devolved into panic (see e.g. Sayer and Dronfield, *Hitler's Last Plot*).

## page 314

***His name was Josef Kohl, though everyone called him Pepi.***

Josef Kohl was an accountant from Vienna. He'd been a political prisoner since 1938, initially in Dachau. A well-educated man, he spoke multiple languages (Mauthausen and Dachau prisoner records, ITS).

## page 315

***He wrote the information down on the register ...***

Prisoner record card AMM-Y-Karteikarten, PGM; Mauthausen arrivals list, 15 February 1945, 1.1.26.1/1307365, ITS. Mauthausen had received no documentation from Auschwitz about the transport of prisoners because it did not unload there. Hence Fritz's ability to pass himself off as non-Jewish. His tattoo was noted on his record as a distinguishing feature, but the number, which was meaningless in Mauthausen, wasn't noted down.

## page 316

***'Heating engineer,' he said.***

Prisoner record card AMM-Y-Karteikarten, PGM; Mauthausen arrivals list, February 15, 1945, 1.1.26.1/1307365, ITS.

## page 316

***... Fritz was sent to another camp nearby called Mauthausen-Gusen.***

During this period, Pepi Kohl persuaded Fritz and a number of other political prisoners to join a special SS unit made up of prisoners. The aim was to use the weapons they were given to launch an attack on the SS. Fritz joined, but couldn't stomach wearing the uniform and got himself kicked out very quickly. I've omitted this from the narrative partly because of the relatively complex moral questions Fritz had to deal with – his motives for agreeing to get involved and for backing out. Fritz makes no mention of this episode in either his written memoir or his 1997 interview, and does not appear to have told his family about it. However, he did talk about it in a 1976 interview with fellow Austrian Auschwitz survivor and resistance member Hermann Langbein (Langbein, *Against All Hope*, p. 374).

## page 316

***Many of the prisoners there worked in secret aeroplane factories...***

Robert G. Waite in Megargee, *USHMM Encyclopedia*, vol. 1B, pp. 919–21.

## page 316



***Fritz was put in a labour team in the underground factory ...***

Gusen II transfer list, March 15, 1945, 1.1.26.1/1310718, ITS; Haunschmied et al., *St Georgen-Gusen-Mauthausen*, pp. 144, 172. In his memoir (*Doch der Hund*, p. 170), which is very sketchy at this point, Fritz erroneously identifies the aircraft built here as the Me 109.

**page 318*****'No prisoner may fall alive into the hands of the enemy.'***

Order given on 14 April 1945, quoted in Dobosiewicz, *Mauthausen-Gusen: obóz zagłady*, p. 384. In Himmler's mind, that meant evacuation, and his telegram said as much. But in the mind of Mauthausen commandant Franz Ziereis, it was understood to mean a total liquidation.

**page 318*****... herding the prisoners into the shelter of a disused tunnel ...***

Dobosiewicz, *Mauthausen-Gusen: obóz zagłady*, p. 386. The only prisoners left behind were seven hundred invalids in the hospital, who were too sick to be moved.

**page 320*****On the commandant's order, the explosives would be detonated ...***

The operation was codenamed Feuerzeug – Lighter. The task had been undertaken by the civilian manager in charge of tunnel construction, Paul Wolfram; he and his colleagues were told that their own and their families' lives would be in jeopardy if they botched the job or revealed the secret (Haunschmied et al., *St Georgen-Gusen-Mauthausen*, p. 219ff). Wolfram had laced the entrance with all the explosives he had to hand. It was insufficient, so he added a couple of dozen aerial bombs and two truckloads of marine mines. During the night before the air raid alert, the explosives had been wired up.

**page 320*****He listened to the echoes of twenty thousand people breathing the chilly air.***

It is unclear exactly how many prisoners were herded into the Kellerbau tunnels, partly because of widely varying figures for the number of prisoners in the Mauthausen complex at the time. The total prisoner population of Mauthausen and Gusen has been given variously as 21,000 (Robert G. Waite in Megargee, *USHMM Encyclopedia*, vol. 1B, p. 902), 40,000 (Haunschmied et al., *St Georgen-Gusen-Mauthausen*, p. 203), and 63,798 (Le Chêne, *Mauthausen*, pp. 169–70). Furthermore, not all went to the tunnels – such as the 700 who were too sick to be moved.

**page 320*****... a Polish prisoner who was an electrician had discovered the wires ...***

The prisoner was named as Władysława Palonka – see Haunschmied et al., *St Georgen-Gusen-Mauthausen*, p. 219ff; Dobosiewicz, *Mauthausen-Gusen: obóz zagłady*, p. 387. There were alternative claims that both the camp commandant and the engineer who placed the explosives had qualms and sabotaged the operation themselves.

**page 321*****... a mixture of Vienna police, German air force, and the Vienna fire brigade.***

Fritz Kleinmann in *Doch der Hund*, p. 171; Langbein, *Against All Hope*, p. 374; Le Chêne, *Mauthausen*, p. 165.

**page 322*****For Fritz, Mauthausen was the ultimate horror...***

Fritz recalled of Mauthausen, 'I was utterly demolished there' (quoted in Langbein, *Against All Hope*, p. 82).



page 322

***The whole place stank of unwashed people and rotting corpses.***

One American officer recalled, ‘The smell and the stink of the dead and the dying, the smell and the stink of the starving. Yes, it is the smell, the odor of the death camp that makes it burn in the nostrils and memory. I will always smell Mauthausen’ (George Dyer, quoted in Le Chêne, *Mauthausen*, p. 165).

## Chapter 24 – They All Fought

page 323

***NAZIS SAY HITLER DEAD***

Front page, *Boston Daily Globe*, 2 May 1945.

page 325

***It had been discovered a few weeks earlier by British soldiers.***

The first British troops entered Bergen-Belsen on 15 April 1945, following a peaceful handover of the territory around it by German forces.

page 326

***... unless God himself was helping them.***

Samuel Barnet, letter to Senator Leverett Saltonstall, 1 June 1945; O’Dwyer, letter to Samuel Barnet, 9 June 1945, War Refugee Board 0558 Folder 7: Requests for Specific Aid, FDR. It isn’t clear from Sam Barnet’s letter whether he meant this as an expression of admiration for Gustav’s apparent survival or doubt as to whether it was true.

page 328

***The American army had set up a mobile hospital there.***

The 107th Evacuation Hospital was housed in tents and buildings on the bank of the river Regen where it flowed into the Danube. Fritz does not identify the hospital, only that it was at Regensburg. The 107th EH established a facility at Regensburg on 30 April 1945 and remained there until 20 May – see <https://www.med-dept.com/unit-histories/107th-evacuation-hospital/>. No other American military hospital units have been identified in Regensburg at that time.

page 329

***... an American officer arranged a place for him in a Red Cross car ...***

The original editions of *The Boy Who Followed His Father into Auschwitz* state that Fritz travelled by train back to Vienna, based on a passage in his memoir (Gärtner and Kleinmann, *Doch der Hund*, p. 171). However, in an obscure and rather jumbled section of his 1997 interview, he states that he travelled in a Red Cross car (*Rot Kreuz Wagen*) arranged by an American. It isn’t clear which of these is true – or whether Fritz travelled by both train and car.

page 329

***There had been 1,048 Jewish men on that train.***

Fritz states that the total number on the transport was 1,048. However, Buchenwald arrival records state that there were 1,035. The original editions of *The Boy Who Followed His Father into Auschwitz* used the latter figure. However, I now believe that Fritz’s figure is more likely to be correct. The discrepancy might be accounted for by deaths during the journey to Weimar. (Although Gärtner and Kleinmann, *Doch der Hund*, p. 15n states that 25 died on the road between Weimar and Buchenwald, which doesn’t account for the different totals.) Of the 1,048, only 181 were still alive by the end of 1942. Most of those subsequently died in Auschwitz (S. Rosenkranz, quoted in Gärtner and Kleinmann, *Doch der Hund*, p. 191), leaving only 26 still alive by the end



of the war, including Fritz and Gustav.

page 330

***The Jewish kids he'd known were gone – either emigrated or dead or missing.***

See section 3.7 of this guide for details of what had happened to them.

page 330

***... Fritz would never discover what had happened to him.***

Fritz does not include Leo's name in any of the lists of the victims, survivors or émigrés. Presumably he didn't know Leo's fate after they were separated in Auschwitz. I haven't been able to find any record of Leo's death or his survival. Presumably he was either among the unrecorded dead or vanished among the millions of displaced persons at the end of the war.

page 331

***... the familiar grumpy voice of Mrs Ziegler, the concierge.***

Fritz recounts the following exchanges in his 1997 interview.

page 333

***Fritz fell in love with her and they started making plans to get married.***

Fritz married Hedwig 'Hedy' Wurst on 20 November 1945. In the wedding photo, Fritz still looked extremely thin and unwell, not yet fully recovered from his ordeals. In 1947 they had a son, Peter. The marriage was ill-fated. After an abortive attempt to settle in Israel, they returned to Vienna and in the early 1950s they divorced. Hedy, however, continued to be a close friend of the Kleinmann family.

## What Happened After

page 338

***Two years later, Hedy gave birth to a baby boy, who they named Peter.***

Fritz and Hedy's marriage didn't last. After an ill-fated attempt to settle in Israel they moved back to Vienna and eventually divorced. Their separation was amicable, and Hedy remained a good friend of the Kleinmann family. Fritz later remarried.

page 339

***But they did their best, and enjoyed being together again.***

When they did manage to communicate, Fritz and Kurt tended to argue. Kurt had absorbed the values of the religious, conservative 1940s-50s American Jewish community he'd grown up in, whereas Fritz's influences in the camps had made him into a communist and an atheist. They could not have been more opposite in their values. Gustav couldn't stand conflict in the family and decreed, 'No politics in the house!' after which there were no more arguments.

