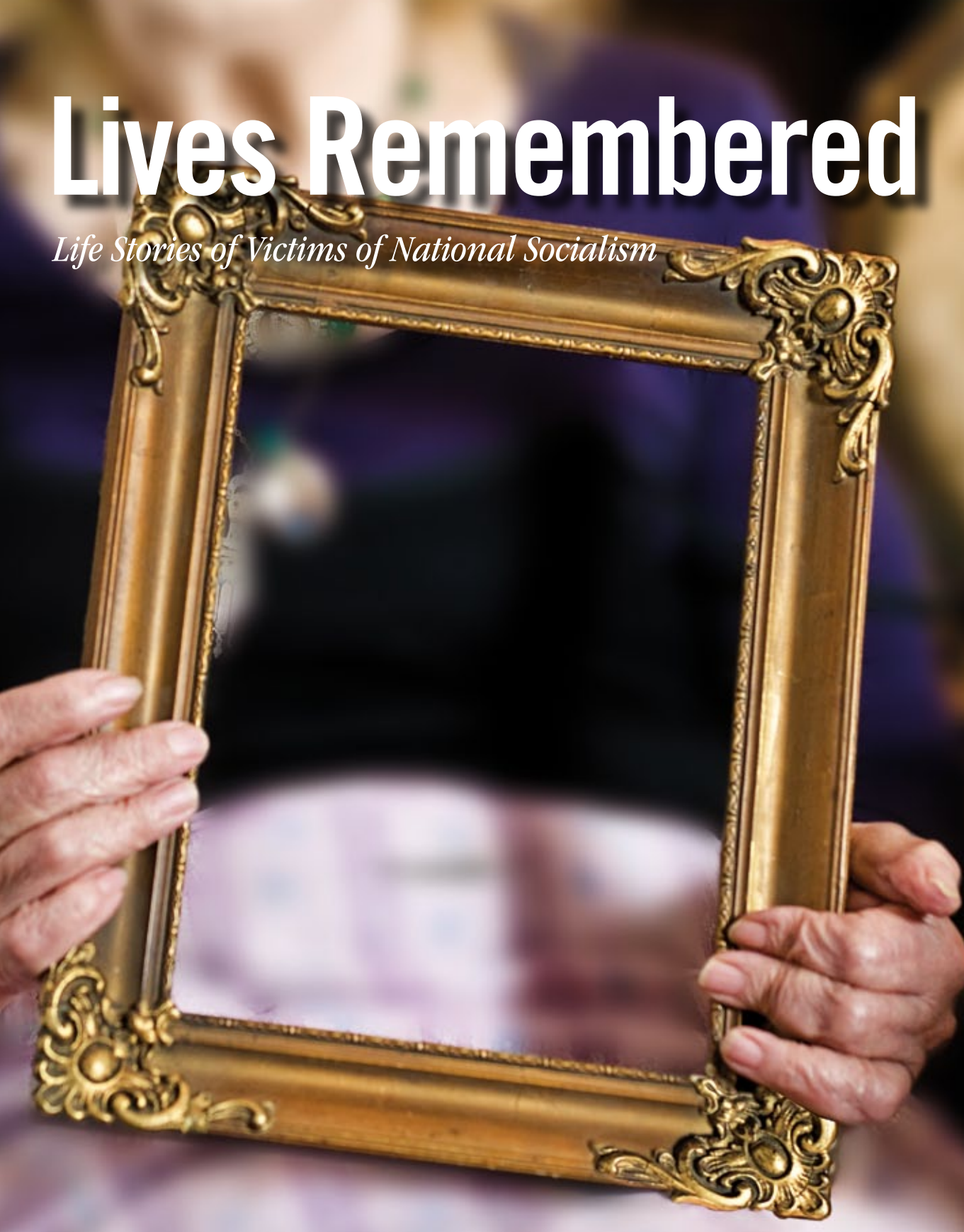

Lives Remembered

Life Stories of Victims of National Socialism

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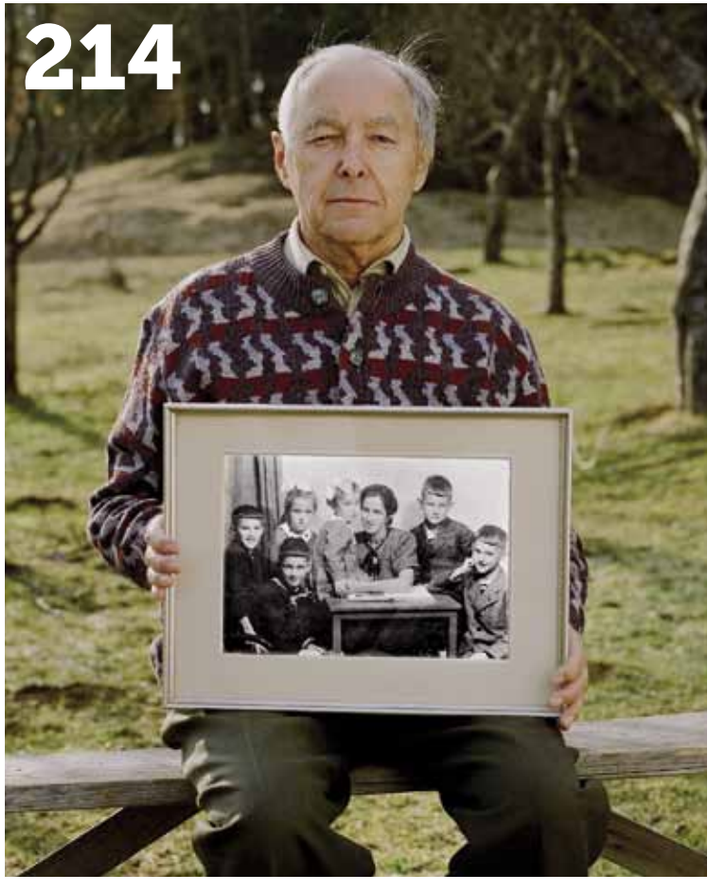


Preface

Fifteen years ago, the establishment of the National Fund signified a change in the way the Republic of Austria dealt with the victims of National Socialism. The National Fund was the acknowledgement and expression of a new, responsible Austrian identity. At the same time, it was an acknowledgement of the fact that many Austrians actively participated in the crimes of the Holocaust and others deliberately looked the other way. As a result, since the 1990s, Austria has been particularly aware of its special responsibility.

The establishment of the National Fund of the Republic of Austria for Victims of National Socialism was a fundamental step towards the victims of the Holocaust; symbolic assistance from Austria. During the course of the last 15 years, Austria has continued on this path with the establishment of the General Settlement Fund and the Reconciliation Fund, with the Art Restitution Law and finally with the agreement to restore the Jewish cemeteries.

In viewing the life stories of survivors highlighted in this volume and the achievements of the National Fund to date, it becomes evident how necessary and important its establishment was – from the aim of making direct payments to the victims as at least a symbolic gesture, to the sponsorship of projects for scientific research and commemorative work.

I would like to thank the many dedicated people who play a part in this vital work of the National Fund and I look forward to the further activities of the National Fund with great optimism.

Fritz Neugebauer
Second President of the National Council

Autobiographical **Testimonials as Individual Landmarks** of Collective Memory

Dr. Renate S. Meissner, MSc

One of the major concerns of the National Fund of the Republic of Austria for Victims of National Socialism is safeguarding the memory of Austrians who, for one of the many reasons the Nazis managed to devise, fell victim to that murderous regime.

The National Fund was established in 1995 to document Austria's acceptance of its responsibility for the victims of National Socialism. During the course of its fifteen years of activity, over 30,000 people have entrusted their life stories to us, usually as part of the process of filing applications for a symbolic compensation payment that we have been commissioned to disburse. Many of these life stories were told in face to face interviews, even more in writing by applicants who have contacted us from 78 different countries.

In addition to their significance as a unique source of contemporary history, autobiographical memories not only help to create a critical awareness of past wrongs on the part of young and future generations but are also often an important step towards the "world outside" for the affected persons themselves. Although official acknowledgement of individual suffering was notoriously long in coming, the opportunity to present their personal story to the public, even 70 years after the event, meant for many people a validation of their experience and gave them a sense of certain closure. One applicant expressed this as follows:

"*I am glad that you chose to publish my story. In fact, I can't really believe that, after so many years, my story is being recognized for the first time as the story of a victim of National Socialism.*"

The 15th anniversary of its foundation gives the National Fund an opportunity not only to present an account of what it has achieved in its fields of activity, but also to give the victims a voice and to make their testimony available to a wider public.

This volume contains 33 autobiographical testimonials from almost all groups of victims recognized by the National Fund: Jews; Roma and Sinti; Carinthian Slovenes; deserters; people persecuted on political grounds; so called asocials; Jehovah's Witnesses; Viennese Czechs and people who experienced the horrors of Spiegelgrund as children; and from one of the "righteous".

In addition to revealing information on the various reasons for which people were persecuted during the National Socialist era, which even historically interested readers are unlikely to be aware of in detail, these stories give an insight into lives marked by

persecution on a daily basis. They also bear witness to people who were themselves not persecuted by the Nazis and who were willing to help those that needed help most, thus enabling some to survive.

How did the various texts come into being and how did they end up in the archives of the National Fund? All texts were written by applicants for the purpose of providing details of their persecution. In addition to asking for a few biographical data required for processing, the application forms also offered applicants the opportunity to outline their stories of persecution in greater detail. In addition to this, many applicants chose to enclose letters, notes, diary entries as well as fairly comprehensive life stories written especially for their application. In order to offer a balanced portrayal of the different groups of victims, the texts are supplemented here with additional documents, which resulted partly from a request to the authors to expand on the existing text; some were sent to the National Fund by applicants on their own initiative with the request for publication. Consequently, the autobiographical testimonials presented here differ with regard to their literary form, their dates, their original intention and their length.

For the autobiographical testimonials by Jewish authors, we have selected a special format of autobiographical writing for this volume: the diary. For children and teenagers, the diary was where one recorded day-to-day events; adults on the other hand often used it as a way of coping with the persecution they were suffering and, in some cases, also to document events for their children and the following generations.

Almost all of the autobiographical notes of Carinthian Slovenes are the results of interviews and the same applies to Jehovah's Witnesses.

In the case of the Roma and Sinti, the submissions made in the application form regarding their persecution are generally rather matter of fact. In order to be able to document the persecution of this group more fully in this volume, we have drawn on interview transcripts from the project "Mri Historija" conducted under the auspices of the association "Roma Service".

Despite the fact that these stories of persecution are all different and that their authors belong to different groups of victims, what they all have in common is the insight they allow us into suffering, discrimination and horrendous brutality. In addition to this, they all owe their existence to the determination of these

people to share with others what they went through in their lives. They conjure up the incomprehension, the helplessness, the fear that all of us would feel in a comparable situation and the traumas that they sustained and, by doing so, they serve as a warning to present and future generations never again to allow such a regime to come to power again. They must be read as an attempt to render the indescribable describable and the incomprehensible understandable. But they are also a testament to hope, the will to survive and the need for such experiences to be carefully documented so that they may contribute towards a more peaceful future.

The fact that the numbers of contemporary witnesses are now rapidly dwindling gives rise to the question: How can the awareness of the Holocaust be passed on to future generations? The facts of the Holocaust will endure only in the form of their cultural reconstruction in narratives, among which the life stories of people with first-hand experience take pride of place. They enable an ever new, personal and immediately accessible approach to these historical events. They succeed not only in reconstructing the past but also in re-substantiating it.

The transformation of remembered facts into narrative and into collective memory can be viewed as an exercise in bridge-building. It is a dialogue, if a mute one, between the authors of the autobiographical testimonials and their readers. Enabling the passage of personally experienced stories into the social consciousness and hence also into the collective memory is the purpose that this publication hopes to serve.

The importance for the applicants of the documentation of their life stories and of the opportunity to talk about their experiences to the staff of the National Fund was expressed as follows by David Vyssoki, the Medical Director of ESRA[1]:

"The fact that they were actively listened to by competent and interested staff, that their biography and medical history was recorded and documented are acts that are perceived as recognition by the survivors, as interest expressed by the state and by society in their story and their suffering. This is precisely what can put an end to their speechlessness and silence, as a first step towards new coping strategies for survivors."[2]

[1] From the outset the National Fund has been in close cooperation with ESRA, an initiative founded in 1994 for the psycho-social and socio-therapeutic support of victims traumatized by the Holocaust and of the "second generation".

[2] David Vyssoki, *Die Bedeutung des Nationalfonds der Republik Österreich für Opfer des Nationalsozialismus aus therapeutischer Sicht*, in: Nationalfonds (ed.), *In die Tiefe geblickt*. Lebensgeschichten, Vienna 2000, p. 9.

Transformed into written life stories, the memories of past suffering become a means for the person at the centre of this drama of coming to terms with that suffering. And for all of us each individual story goes on to form a landmark in the collective memory.

We would like to thank those who, by entrusting their stories to us, have allowed us to share their experiences and who willed us to make them available to the public in the spirit of the pledge "never again".

Dr. Renate S. Meissner, MSc, born 1959 in Vienna, ethnologist and Jewish Studies scholar. Deputy Secretary General and Scientific Director of the National Fund of the Republic of Austria for Victims of National Socialism. Author of numerous publications on, among other things, Yemeni Jewry; most recently *Nationalfonds der Republik Österreich für Opfer des Nationalsozialismus: Die Lebensgeschichten der Opfer – mehr als eine historische Quellengattung* (in: *War nie Kind*, Parlament Transparent 2008); *ÜBER LEBEN. Erinnern im Kontext des Nationalfonds* (in: *Die „Wahrheit" der Erinnerung*, StudienVerlag 2008).

**My name is Kurt Flussmann. I was born in Vienna in 1923.
Now, in my old age, I have decided to put down my story in writing, because I think it is important that what my generation has lived through will never be forgotten ...**

Kurt Flussmann
Applicant to the National Fund

Life Stories as Textual Memorials

The Collection of Memories from the Archives of the National Fund of the Republic of Austria for Victims of National Socialism

Mag. Dr. Manfred Müller

I

The National Fund of the Republic of Austria for Victims of National Socialism has been collecting "life stories" for years. The texts form an integral part of the work of the Fund and, even more importantly, they provide a basis for a new perspective on the history of Austria in the 20th century. The individual memories archived here represent a departure from the picture of the Second World War and of the lives of the persecuted sections of the population that has been established over decades by official historiography. By focusing on private life, a collection of "life stories" such as this often enables the personal perspectives and the day-to-day lives of the persons concerned to be portrayed more accurately than is possible with the methods commonly employed in historical research.

As is inevitable in view of the years it has taken to accumulate, the textual corpus is not homogeneous. Diary entries are found side by side with interviews, letters next to autobiographical recollections: fragmented memories, in many cases buried or suppressed over many years, are arranged here in narrative form – partly written at the request of the National Fund, which means they were written 60 or more years after the event, and partly written directly after or even during the events they undertake to describe.

As a whole, this compilation of many individual voices forms an integral part of the history of the Third Reich. Here, the individual texts take on a role similar to that of the epitaphs on medieval gravestones: as is the case with epitaphs, these biographical texts, together with the dates of the lives of the people who wrote them, secure their place in the memory of the future generations.

II

Moreover, this act of "codifying historical figures" has always been a central function of literature or, more generally, of any kind of text. Remembrance is only possible if there is a source it can feed on and a collection of data that it can refer to. In this light, writing down life stories and collecting life testimonials become an integral part of effective remembrance work, be it on a large or on a small scale.

An extraordinary example of the way in which biographies can be treated is the 1990 novel *Friedhof der bitteren Orangen* by the Carinthian author and Büchner Prize winner Josef Winkler. In this novel, the focus is on people whose remembrance had literally been buried. His heroes and heroines – if that is what you can call them – are people excluded from the official version of history: persecutees, outcasts, whose bodies were dumped, naked and without coffins in the graves of a Neapolitan paupers' cemetery to be covered with a shovelful of lime. No gravestone recorded their names or the dates of their death.

Winkler's novel attributes a brief story to each of these dead, which relates the cause of their death, their tale of woe and sometimes a few details of their daily lives. According to the author, the novel is a "literary cemetery" in which these people are buried for a second time. Firstly, those persecuted throughout their lives are given a final, virtual place of rest and secondly and more importantly, Winkler's book succeeds in doing what historiography failed to do: the life and suffering of these wretched people is documented and hence immortalized. Biographies previously kept secret or deemed unimportant and worthless become part of the memory of generations to come.

III

The selection of the texts presented in this volume illustrates the heterogeneity of the life stories archived at the National Fund: well formulated excerpts from diaries and letters stand beside interview transcripts and brief statements. However, the texts also have a great deal in common. They came into being as a result of the need to document what had originally been raw experience; to pass on the personal stories to others; to add another personal and at times different perspective to the existing take on history. Often the reason for writing is very personal. The diary entries in particular are often intended as documents for the writer's own children:

But for us, the most difficult time of our lives, in which upset and suffering were just piled up on top of one another, made looking back and describing thoughts which shall one day retell you the events of your early youth impossible. So now I will try and add, in few words, what you and we have been through in these 1 ½ years before we finally found a little peace, freedom and reflection in our room in Shanghai. (Elsa D.)

Often the tone of the diary entries is characterized by uncertainty as to when the recipients of these private messages will actually get to read them:

Who knows where on the planet Mädi will read this all one day. Once citizens of this city, we are no longer wanted here – ostracized and despised. We rack our brains over in which corner of the world we could rebuild a home. These are difficult days full of worries for your parents. May you, dear child, never experience anything like it, and may you be destined for a happy and prosperous future. We wish you this for your birthday. Papa & Mama. (Elke Aufricht)

Accordingly, the diaries are, on the one hand, intimate and moving documents and, on the other, they feature certain omissions, particularly as a result of the desire to spare the children certain details:

As of today, we have been living in Vienna for 7 weeks, terrible things have been happening, of which I would rather not speak. (Elsa D.)

The private nature of the diaries and letters, which reflects the writer's concern for specific readers, is also what fundamentally sets them apart from the other texts contained in this volume, the intended recipients of which are first and foremost adults in general, people with an interest in history. Furthermore, the purpose for which these texts were written is different from that of the diaries: they are generally not intended for a family history but as information on a crime. While the diaries were conceived for a small group of recipients, the interviews and statements given on request are documentary notes for a larger audience with diverse interests. Additionally, many of these texts serve to justify the writer's claim and form the basis for a compensation payment, as is demonstrated by the following two excerpts:

Since then I have suffered from high blood pressure, for which I have been receiving treatment for about 45 years. I had to prematurely give up my career as a result of it. My poor health can be traced back to the events of that time. (Kurt Püringer)

The mental scars were never healed. We were constantly ill, psychologically ill. It still hasn't gone away, believe me, I carry it with me always, always. (Walpurga Horvath)

A characteristic of many texts from this second group is the time that has elapsed between the events and their narration. While the diary entries were written for the most part very close to events that were still in progress at the time,

rendering distance impossible, some of the interviewees and authors of the statements had maintained their silence for decades:

After the war, people in the area questioned me. They were curious, but I didn't say a word. They wouldn't have believed me anyway. Why tell someone, who then goes and tells everyone that he has been made a fool of? (Anton Müller)

In some cases, the great temporal distance between events and their fixation in writing entails the fact that much is summarized in hindsight – some details are highlighted, others probably forgotten or left out. In this special form of summary, the historical assessment of events has already been incorporated. As a result, in some texts intimate memories lead into statements with a clear educational aim, which are conceived as lessons for the reader:

As a contemporary witness, I occasionally work in schools to speak of the monstrous [crimes committed] against children and young people during the National Socialist era. The stay in Spiegelgrund brought with it suffering, pain and death. For the regime, we were undesirables, inferior, unworthy of life. And I find it very beneficial when people […], with a lot of effort and time, highlight these crimes of the Nazi regime and ensure that they are never forgotten. (Rudolf Karger)

IV

The differences in form and style, the different dates when the texts were written and the different categories of recipients for whom they are intended render the textual corpus extremely varied. The archives of the National Fund therefore contain a collection of sources which is second to none.

The people who here disclose parts of their life story always *tell stories*, also in a literary sense. This does not mean that the credibility of what is said and written is to be doubted; however, it does mean the texts are more than *mere source material*. What is written becomes part of the cultural history of Austria, just as it is part of the history of 20th century private life. Firstly, the life stories in the archives of the National Fund, with their demands, their at times rigid composition and the high priority they give to veracity, document the most varying of narrative traditions and values and are therefore literary testimonies to the methods and means of expression of the most diverse segments of the population and environments. This

makes them samples of the first order for the analysis of the traditions of oral and written narration and of the techniques of letter and diary writing. Secondly, the collected texts enable a closer look at the effects of political events on individual persons and on whole sections of the population.

However, in addition to all that, these stories gain particular importance on account of the circumstance that, through them, the memory of National Socialism and the Second World War, which was for decades in many respects more of a "perpetrator's memory" than a "victim's memory", develops a new and a more balanced foundation: in this way, the memories of the day-to-day lives of soldiers in the German Armed Forces present in many Austrian post-war families stand in contrast to the life stories of those suppressed, expelled and murdered.

Only with the aid of a "memory shared by victims and perpetrators", as Aleida Assmann put it, can a past which contains crimes such as those perpetrated under National Socialism be effectively dealt with. The merit and the importance of the life story archive of the National Fund of the Republic of Austria for Victims of National Socialism lie in its ability to fill these gaps, thus also completing the historical picture of Austria in the 20th century.

Mag. Dr. Manfred Müller, born 1969 in Zell am See (Salzburg), German scholar. Degree in German Studies and the History of Art from the University of Vienna, Secretary General of the Austrian Literary Society (Vienna), lecturer at the Institute for German Studies at the University of Vienna, active as an editor, exhibition curator and as planner and host of countless literary events. Scientific publications primarily on Austrian post-1945 literature, incl. on Michael Guttenbrunner and Alexander Lernet-Holenia. Most recently: *Reise in die Nachbarschaft. Zur Wirkungsgeschichte der deutschsprachigen Literatur aus der Bukowina und Galizien nach 1918* (co-editor, Vienna: LIT Verlag 2009).

My father often spoke about the past, with great clarity and objectivity. I therefore grew up with a certain understanding and sensibility towards political developments, which was unusual at the time. Imparting knowledge about National Socialism in Austria, particularly to young people, was of great importance to my father throughout his whole life.

Michaela Hecke-Rebhann
Daughter of Dr. Fritz Maria Rebhann, an applicant to the National Fund

Lizzi Jalkio with her mother Emmy Katherine Mahler and her brothers Peter and Henry

PHOTOS: LIZZI JALKIO

Every day is **farewell**

Lizzi Jalkio, USA, born 1924

Lizzi Jalkio was born on 17th May 1924 and lived with her parents Georg and Emmy Katherine Mahler and her brothers Peter and Henry in Gmünd, Lower Austria. The children were raised as Christians, although they were of Jewish origin. Mrs. Jalkio's father was the owner of a factory, which was aryanized after the *Anschluss* in 1938. In September 1938, the family had to leave Gmünd overnight to escape deportation and moved to Vienna, where they lived in a two-room apartment in a boarding house.

Georg Mahler tried to find work in any European country, but it proved to be impossible. They tried to emigrate, spending days standing in line at various offices and departments. They finally obtained a visa for the Dominican Republic. In 1945, the whole family moved to the USA.

In 1938, during their persecution and flight, Mrs. Jalkio's mother wrote a letter to her children. She wanted them to remember everything – their happy childhood in Gmünd, their house, their family life, their father's work. She also wanted to explain her feelings, her fear and sadness about how their life was changing. By writing them this long letter, written in English, which they were to read as adults, Mrs. Mahler wanted to justify her actions to her children.

My dear children
Some day the time will come, when you start to look at your life, your childhood and us, your parents with critical eyes. Much will seem different than it really was. The house in which we lived, the little garden in which you played, enormously huge - and so much fruit, and the tree you always climbed, it was so gigantic, the road to school so far...

You had everything your heart desired. You also were rich. You will think of the forest, so cool and shady, and through which one could walk so far, to the end of the world, without reaching the end of the forest. All this you will think of some time when you are grown. Only as a child can one feel the stalks of wheat clapping overhead while walking through the fields. Never again are there as many shiny bugs, as many colorful butterflies, and now your eyes are too far from the ground to see all the flowers that grow down there. Sometime later, when you begin to get old, it will all come slowly back.

You were quite happy as children, for you had much freedom. Your knees always came through your stockings like patterns of embroidery. Your dress was always full of spots and often torn. Every evening I put you in the tub and washed carefully around your bruises, but nevertheless you were allowed to do anything that would not harm you. You jumped over ditches and slid down banisters. Once a shiny bit of rock tempted you to search for treasure in the children's room wall, and the sofa had more than one broken spring. No closet closed, and all the keys had disappeared. Pete tried his first knife on the table. Our home was not beautiful, or orderly, but it was wonderfully "at home".

When one of you was sick, there were sad days, but I believe that even your illnesses were nice memories. You were fussed over, and little presents made you forget even big hurts. Will you ever forget Christmas with the big trees and the many lights? Will you forget your birthday cakes with as many candles as the years you counted? You didn't get much but your greatest wish usually came true.

Sometimes in the evening we sat together and discussed things we might not like about each other, you would discuss back and forth and find that everything was OK but that I should not have so many headaches. At that time, I was very happy.

Today everything is changed. We are torn from our quiet middle class life, what happens to us, hated hunted animals, lays in God's hands. Recently, you have seen your mother cry frequently. I'm afraid. I have such terrible fear, not for me, God knows, not for me. I cannot protect you children from what is going to happen now. Don't become bad, if people are mean and nasty to you, please don't be unhappy no matter what happens. When every one despises you, when every one mistreats you, I'll still love you forever. You are my pride and my happiness, you're my life, whatever I do I think only of you. Later many things will appear wrong that we have done today, you will blame us for things that you have missed, things we should have done differently, but we are not in charge of things right now. Whatever comes, it is not our fault. When you are grown in a few years, you will read this letter, it's a long, long letter and everything is true. If sometimes I've hurt you, please forgive me, just be as forgiving with me, as I was with you. This letter is my justification children, be gentle and true judges.
your mother

March 1938
Children, do you remember our house in Gmünd? It was ground-level and completely misbuilt. The hall is a little tube, there is hardly room for the mirror and the little table in front of it, and for my large pantry, named the library, which I show with pride to all my visitors. It contains all the treasures that grow in the garden, fruits and vegetables preserved for winter. The little house was painted yellow when we first moved in, though today one cannot recognize the color any longer, the grapevine grows up to the roof. In the fall we will harvest grapes and in the spring the little apricot tree against the wall is covered with blossoms. The garden fence is hidden behind lilac bushes and everyone that passes admires my roses. They look up at the windows and call a greeting. The windows are always open, even in the evening when the lights are on. There are no drapes on the windows, there is nothing to hide. There is nothing to see by us that you wouldn't see in all the other little homes.

To get to the living room, you must go through the kitchen, then you get to the children's room, "the barn", undisputed property of the children. Each has their own place to hide his treasures. The furniture is mangled. Here they play, do their homework, here the children entertain their friends. Even my se-

wing machine has a little place here. The children prefer to spend most of their time where I am, therefore I moved to the children's room. I belong, am their playmate, highest authority in differences, and still the respected person. The children obey, they come when I call, my orders are irrefutable and my laws are obeyed. It gets pretty loud sometimes, but noise does not disturb me. I write my letters here, read books, still as intently as I did as a child. Sometimes I forget to see to a meal, but then we just eat a little bit later, it's not so important. Since Henry goes to kindergarten, the others are long since in school, I get lonely - it's too quiet in the house. I have nothing to do and I become my husband's employee now that he can use me in the factory of which he is director. The factory has grown a great deal in the last few years and even though there is much unemployment in our little border city, there is a great lack of useful employees.

When I get home in the evening, we have much to talk about. Every day the children have so many adventures and they have to know exactly how my office looks and what the workers said and did. Their newest game is factory and they all want to be carpenters or wood turners.

I believe the workers like me. In my division there are mainly woman. They all have their little worries and sadnesses to talk over with me. One has a sick child at home, the other's husband drinks, and wherever some advice or a good word does not help, a little gift surely does. At season's end there is a party. There is dancing and singing, drinking and eating and all at my expense, but we are having a wonderful time.

Sometimes it gets very late when I get home. Then I can't control if all teeth are well brushed, and ears are washed, but my first path is always to the children. They are in bed, there is much rebellion when I try to turn off the light. Then there is still much excited conversation in the children's room, the light goes on and off a few times, the children still read a bit in bed, which is really not allowed, so I don't know about it, finally at eight or eight thirty everything becomes quiet. When I awake at night, I hear the children breathe and I am very happy.

The windows of our bathroom, the biggest and most luxurious room of our house, look to the fruit and vegetable garden and the window is much used. It is much too far to go through the door, and I must confess in shame that I also

rather climb through the window. Next comes the dining room. Then there is the blue drawing room. It is painted bright blue and really a guest room and usually occupied. Friends miss the train and sleep here, they come for a day and stay a week, you can rest here. It is very nice at ours.

For 15 years, the garden was a piece of ground, today I have many little trees, every year a new one is added. We have chicken and pigeons, cats and dogs. Almost everything is changed, only the garden gate is the same. It can't be closed, it's always lopsided. Each year I have it repaired, but nothing helps, and just for that I love it most. In front of the house is a meadow, and in the morning when the sun shines, thousands of yellow flowers open their eyes. Further along is an old cemetery. One can hardly recognize the graves anymore. It doesn't make you feel sad at all, when the weather is nice, the children play there. The most beautiful flowers are there and little trees learn to grow there, and five minutes further there is the forest as beautiful in snow, and rain, and sunshine, even mysterious.

On the meadow path my children learned to run and banged their knees bloody. On the first little hill from which one can see our house, Lizzi stopped on the way home and said: "I'm so glad I live here, I have such good parents here". Each year we hid Easter eggs under a tree and the children first fearfully and the[n] confidently formed friendships with animals, bugs and butterflies. They are good children, average children, none are super beautiful of [or] super intelligent, none has noticeable talents, but they love animals and flowers and are happy to be alive. There is a lot of laughter and singing by all of us, and things are very very good.

Everything is fixed and in order. My husband has a high life-insurance. When we are old, we will sit on our bench in the sun and do nothing. When Lizzi is eighteen she will have a nice sum of money. She can then start something or get married. She is taken care of. We also have insurance for Peter. Perhaps he will succeed my husband in the factory, but first he should travel and get to know the world. For that you need money and we also save for the littlest one.

Every year for Christmas I start to save for a big trip in the summer. I'd like to see Prague or Berlin or go to the ocean. But when summer comes, I've already been

so happy about my plans, that there is really no need to travel. I get postcards from my friends. I don't envy them. It is most beautiful at home.

My husband has many honorary titles as becomes respected people, but he cares little for politics nor does he enjoy going to meetings. Once a week he has a card party and sometimes we go to a movie, that's all. One thing everyone envies us. We always have the best and newest radio and each evening the whole wide world comes into our house.

On the radio I also heard Schuschnigg's last speech and I knew that now everything is over. Our whole life up to now has shattered to pieces for me at this instance. I still realize that I got up, and for the first time closed the windows and drew the drapes. Not only the world has changed, but we also become different, somehow sick. I think a leper must feel like that, as we felt. We knew the Nazi regime from stories and knew what to expect. We believed much was exaggeration, but what we did believe was still enough. All night long there was noise and singing in the streets, we wouldn't have slept anyway. We listened to the radio. All of this is not too long ago, just the same, I've forgotten most of it. Was this the night of the torchlight parade that my children could no longer see? Was this the night the German troops and SA crossed the border? I do not know. I only know that I begged my husband to take us across the border, to leave everything. My God, women follow their instinct. But my husband did not want to desert the factory, which he had built up from a very small start. Nor the insurances and everything else. He closed his eyes tightly and thought nothing could happen to us. For much decorated frontier soldiers existed special evaluations. What would anyone want to do with our faultless lives? There are many Jews living in Germany and they seem to be doing alright. Probably one will not earn as much and perhaps the children will have to be sent to a foreign country, but one must carefully think about it all. One must not act rashly.

Then there came a Sunday on which we went out. The red Swastika flags screamed from the roofs and people greeted each other helplessly with the new Heil Hitler greeting. They greeted us also and we did not know how to answer. They told us that now everything would be OK. There would be work and bread. One old woman explained, "for us it sure is lucky that Hitler came to this country, the Nazis would have ruined us completely"[sic]. One man explained to me that finally now there would be

fairness. Now workers will finally be able to work and he'll be in the office. I carefully asked him if he understood something about that work. He answered "no, but I'm a long time illegal, and that is enough!" The next day was a workday and as always we went to the factory. It seemed to me that it somehow did not smell as good of wood. I fancied the whole factory smelled like a beer hall. If the admiration had somewhat diminished the drunkenness was still here. The new factory foreman, who presented himself to my husband, he was the same who until now was a trustee foreman of the former regime, and had been the representative of the social democrats, didn't stand on very steady legs. Suddenly there were nothing but "illegals". Each wanted to command. There was no work done on this day. In the evening I was at home with the children, my husband in the factory, when a policeman and a SA man appeared in my home. Where did I hide my husband? I will be strongly punished for any lies. My husband was picked up at the factory and came home under guard. Then there was a house search and anything of any value was confiscated. The little bank, the bankbook of my oldest, my jewelry, our important papers, insurance policies and all the money I had at home. They pulled apart the beds, threw apart the linens and clothes and each tried to be stronger and more knowledgeable than the other. Both took me aside later, and neither realized that the other had apologized to me. We have to do this. It's orders. My husband is ordered to report at the police station daily and we are alone again. The children would like to know why they have taken everything from us. Lizzi cries about her gold chain and Henry would like his bank back. I believe there might have been two Schilling in it. The maid asks how will she now get paid? The house looks as if burglars had been there and we all are stunned.

We then get the house back in order, put the children to bed and discuss what may come next. It's no longer possible to cross the border. We can manage some time with our supplies. Perhaps they will let us charge milk and meat until my husband gets his money from the factory again. Naturally we have to save as much as possible. We must let the girl go, after all an aryan girl can't work for Jews. The girl says her crying goodbyes. She tells us that she never had such a good life as she had with us. In order to pay her, I give her linen and clothing. She will marry soon and can well use them. A few days later she is back, with the police. I can only let her go when the Party permits it.

Meanwhile it's the first of the month and my husband wanted to get his salary. His secretary who worked for him for 14 years, now provisional administrator, gives

him 200 Schilling with the remark that workers have to manage on this salary, so this amount should be enough for him too...

Then the next week all workers and employees of the factory got double salaries by orders of the party, at the factory's expense. My husband also got this gift so at that moment even we enjoyed the overthrow. We receive money from Vienna, lent us by aryan friends. Every day you hear about new house searches but we have little more to lose.

Many of our aryan friends remain faithful, there are some that wait for us in their party car at the edge of town and take us driving. When we go through towns we close the curtains. The car is the only place where we can talk. Everyone is afraid of everyone. Company comes only at night and in order not to be seen, through the bathroom window. The maid does not sleep by us anymore, so we can risk it. We sit whispering in the darkened room. An employee of my husband who came to see him during the day, gets barred from the party and fired. I have very brief contact with my neighbor. The letters are hidden in the bushes. She does not dare to speak to me. Her husband is an employee and she trembles for her bread. The children come crying from school, there was name calling and rock throwing, they are excluded from all celebrations and field trips. During classes they learn what "race" is and what terrible people Jews are. Since there are few Jews in our city, in each class there sits a single helpless child as an example of the depraved race. Just the same, the children have to continue in school. Many teachers are embarrassed by these meannesses being used here on innocent children, some think of a few more private nasty things to advance themselves.

On the street few greet us now. Most look away because they are ashamed. They all were good acquaintances. Many times there is name calling, and I avoid taking the children out with me. They should not hear this. One does not enjoy going out anyway. One does not want to show what and how one feels. One does not dare to look anyone in the face, and often I hear gossip about someone just noticing how conceited I am, I don't even answer their greeting. I do not see greetings anymore, I don't see faces anymore, I only see the party sign.

Meanwhile the factory is being "aryanized". In other words it is taken from the former owners for a ridiculous low prize. This small amount they don't actually

receive, but they have to agree, because otherwise the party will find some reason to send the owners to the concentration camps. So each "non-aryan" tries to sell his factory as fast as possible to "aryanize". My husband goes to Vienna every week to find buyers and to negotiate, the other days he continues to go to the factory. He wants the factory, the labor of his life, to be handed over in complete order to his successor. A ridiculous endeavor. The many new regulations, which George studies far into the night, and which no one understands. The price control regulations which forbid any price increase and make calculations impossible, the rapid rise of cost of materials, the continuous gatherings and air-raid practices, the many secret publications which the provisional administrator keeps very confidential, but which my husband has to try and explain to him, the vacations that irreplaceable workers now take, the bureaucratic super-organization of official and semi-official positions that suddenly everyone commands. All of this makes any orderly or intelligent work impossible. The only clinch to a successful business is good relations with the party.

George walks around with a stoic face. He comes home every day a year older. I don't dare to ask him anything. We never were so one as now but neither knows what the other thinks or feels. What did the children think, who were brought up as Christians and can no longer go to church? We were careful not to speak or ask and I don't know anymore. We all tried so hard not to let the others notice, we were so sorry for the others that we forgot about ourselves and so it was not so bad. Also, it all went so fast. One day the minister came to our house to assure my husband that there is no race theory in the church, only Christians. It's all right that Aryan Paragraph might keep us out of the "Animal Rescue League" but the church cannot be forbidden and my husband must continue to belong to the Presbyterian congregation for the children's sake. He suggested that our son become a minister where there are no questions about race. A few days later he came in the dark to ask us not to come to church. Friends of many years are suddenly party celebrities and don't know us anymore. It also happens that a party member gets barred because it is found that he had a Jewish grandmother or great-grandmother, that is a terrible disgrace. Since I was born in Czechoslovakia, a family tree with aryan grandmothers is offered me for sale. A brand new sales item, that seems to be very popular.

Finally a buyer for our factory is found. A former competitor declares himself ready to take over the factory, only if my husband, whose work seems indispensably vital, continues the leadership of the enterprise. The new owners come to Gmünd,

one is "Obersturmführer" of the SA, they eat with us, and then negotiate with the district leadership of the NSDAP, demanding a written guarantee that my husband can retain the leadership of the factory without hindrance. The District Leader explains that it is against policy of the party spirit to put such a promise in writing, but that he gives his word of honor, that my husband, being indispensable and also an old frontier officer, may work the required time without any interference at the factory, and that he and his family will enjoy the complete protection of the party. A few days later there is a sign on the factory "aryan enterprise" and another on my garden gate: "Heer live Jews". This being misspelled bothers me even more.

My whole life now is waiting. If the children are out, I fearfully await their return. Once the littlest one comes home with a bloody nose. A rock hit him. He pleads with me, could he perhaps not be called Henry anymore, because that makes him be a Jew and he doesn't want to be a Jew anymore. I wait for the older ones, they often arrive breathless because a group of adolescents hunted them. I wait for my husband, who comes from Vienna, not in the car, but walking with heavy suitcases. It is a running of the gauntlet through rows of small town houses. Every window grins contemptuously and the flags menace still more. Nothing happened to us, we only saw. A little old farmer, who was chased bleeding through the town carrying a board around his neck: "Aryan pig, buys from Jews".

A crying woman, they picked her husband up to send him to the concentration camp. The children saw him for the last time, under arrest, on the way to the railroad station. The doctor's windows are shattered by rocks, the lawyer's door was nailed shut during the night. He could not get out into the street for two days. The first dislodging begins. Good friends of ours, rich people, they own the biggest food warehouse in the district. I believe the great-grandfather started the business from scratch. They are intimate with everyone. They are big blond people, but they are completely Jews. Their business is a goldmine and the baker next door, now a district leader of the NSDAP wants the business. The owners do not want to sell. They have their home here, their fields, they hang on to their home. They have many friends and believe nothing can happen to them. The next day the business has a provisional leader, because some so called tax obligations in arrears were suddenly discovered. The owners must leave their house immediately and stand destitute in the street. They later lived with friends and got a few of their personal belongings back. They are now in Vienna. What they live on, I don't know.

Meanwhile, each week a worker from the factory comes at night to warn me. Some once fired worker wants to get my husband into the concentration camp. I should see to it that he does not come back to Gmünd. The minister also warns me, and the district leader of the NSDAP explains now, that since the factory now works on ammunition needs, the business must now be made "Jew-pure". He does not remember ever having made a promise. My husband is called to Vienna, but not to be fired. He is sworn to the new government. The general, who pledges him under oath to keep State Secrets […] confidential, explains, to the protestation of my husband – if there are not racial obstacles – that his ancestry is completely irrelevant, one needs decent wares, as received from him until now. Later he visited my husband in his office in Vienna, waited for an opportunity to speak alone with him and said, word for word: "I'm sorry, I can't help you in any way, I really don't know if perhaps I will myself sit in a concentration camp tomorrow, but I'm ashamed to be German." My husband comes back again, and I lay awake many nights and wait. The children breathe quietly in their beds, they sleep. My husband doesn't sleep, I hear it. He waits, as I, if they will come to get him, today, this night as yesterday the little shoemaker, who committed no crime, but being a Jew, as the week before the banker, nothing happened to him, but I believe during such a night he finally decided to leave this job. Once in the morning he explained to me he was going to Vienna to find a replacement for himself and I stayed alone in Gmünd.

My maid has meanwhile married, from my house. I pinned her wreath, I helped her sew her gown as it is the custom of the land. I baked her big wedding cake. Now she is a homemaker and needs many things. Suddenly she has many demands. She still should get vacation, and some Sundays she didn't take off. She finds many things, so a great deal of my kitchen furnishings belong to her, and since Jews have no rights, she is right. Where do all these terrible people come from suddenly? I did know them all after all. We pushed baby carriages together in the sun, we visited our children together as they lay in the hospital with scarlet fever, we exchanged recipes and met each other mushroom hunting in the woods. They were people like myself. Today, they are wild animals. I'm afraid of all of them. Suddenly it is forbidden to go to the barber, so I cut the boy's hair myself. It is forbidden to buy in this or that business and workers bring necessities into the house in the dark. Now the first refugees from the Sudetenland come over the border. What are they escaping? I've lived on the border for 15 years and there never have been disagreements or persecutions. The border is occupied. At night one hears heavy footsteps in the streets. The bor-

der patrol, the shoemaker, the carpenter and the baker they all go to protect their fatherland. And then, late at night a policeman comes to see me again. He knows for sure that we will be deported in three days, because of espionage danger, and he cannot stand to see this, we should leave as soon as possible. I send the children to notify all other affected families and we all pack with feverish speed. We all know there is no return. There are important papers to guard, letters to burn. Only the bare essentials are to be taken – what we can carry. And on a Saturday afternoon, at two, the garden gate closes for the last time behind us. At that time I believed I would never again be able to laugh or cry. I believed that now I went into the wide world without heart. It was a great silliness. After all, I took my children with me. At the depot there were troops of Sudeten, there was singing and gathering. The train was overcrowded and we got to Vienna at 12:30, six hours later.

We arrive in Vienna very tired and subdued. George waits for us at the depot. It's good to be together again. He has meanwhile looked for and found an apartment, two rooms with use of the kitchen. It's a deep fall. We don't sleep alone in the beds and are cross when we wake up in the morning, but I have the nicest, smartest landlady in the world. I learn from her to watch every penny, that a bit of extra water does not hurt the meal and makes it much cheaper, and I learn from her many wisdoms, sayings that her grandmother always said and which contained all the wisdom and humor of the Jewish race. So even the Jewish grandmother has something good.

We worked with feverish haste on our departure. By accident, we come to the Dominican Republic. The Vienna Council of the same is also a business friend of my husband. By chance, the landlady's son has just shipped out to there the same day we moved into their house. I find a description of the country in an old newspaper. We apply for an entry visa. At the same time we register for the United States. My husband tries to find a job in any of the European countries, everything falls through. George gets a contract as manager of a Yugoslavian factory, that falls through because the government does not grant a work permit. A Swedish factory that negotiates with my husband has a factory-fire, my husband gets offers from almost all European countries but somehow everything is impossible. Only Santa Domingo is left. We spend our days on the street. We stand at the passport office, at the city hall, at the revenue office, etc., etc., etc. There are so many papers to fill out, to sign, it looks as if one would try with all means to keep us from departing.

We already have the boat tickets, have to exchange them for a later date; and I have the strong feeling that if we don't leave still this year, we will never get out.

The children are in school again, except Lizzi, who is fourteen, stays home. The children go to aryan school against my energetic protest. The school superintendent explains that the children are Christians and belong in an aryan school since both parents are Christians. Anyway, even my father was not a Jew by faith. I try to explain to him the race question. At this time in Austria apparently only the Jews understood the answer. Peter comes home every day with new problems. He is to write an essay on how a Hitler Youth spends his free time, or how Hitler's takeover was the happiest time in his life, or the theme: "How my father has now received a job again." etc. etc., the littlest one begins to greet Heil Hitler, he learns with unsteady hands how to draw a Swastika. I speak again to the town school board, this time I succeed in convincing the man that by the new laws we are considered Jews and the children are registered in a Jewish school. This school is in another district and the road to it is long. Every day the children are brought there and picked up. Lizzi and I divide this disagreeable task. It wouldn't be so bad that it is so bitterly cold, in spite of the cold, the Hitler Youth makes it hell-hot for us. The bloom of today's German youth perform their heroics here. They ambush the littlest ones that come from the Jewish school, armed with sticks, to beat them and scare them. It is so bad that the principal, who is a National Socialist himself, has to frequently call the police to help chase the gangs.

Since I could not bring along the winter things, my children aren't dressed warm enough. They get the flu and stay home a couple of weeks. My husband stands on, daily in one or another office. I start to learn what there is to learn. I learn to sew gloves, I learn to knit fine dresses, I take a cooking class, learn to drive and since I'm really diligent and perhaps also capable, I learn an amazing amount in a short time. Who knows how I will earn money in a foreign country.

From Gmünd we receive news that our house, our furniture, even clothing and linens have been confiscated by the party. I was supposed to have left debts, which were now covered. Seems strange, I was supposed to have owed these to the Jewish grocer who traveled overseas months ago. There is no address to find. This lie was not even well invented. The little store had existed for about a year and I had on rare occasion bought little things for cash of course, but in such a short time I couldn't

have, no matter how I tried, made debts of over 1000 Schilling. We very carefully tried to investigate and also asked the minister what we possibly could do, but got word that most of our things had been carried off before, and that in his view, we should accept the loss. To my luck one of my friends moved to Vienna at this time. She shipped my sewing machine, as hers, and a suitcase of winter clothing and a lot of kitchenware. All of this is now in Vienna and we happily greeted each piece. The winter clothing was urgently needed. It was bitterly cold. The time has passed racingly fast. In the fall we came to Vienna, the children brought colored leaves home and we made a wreath around the lampshade. Now they have built a snowman on the balcony. This balcony had to replace the garden and the meadow and the street. Often there was a ban on going out for Jews and the children were hungry for fresh air. Otherwise I think they have felt quite satisfied. They played "poor" and I'll never forget how they laughed over the goose I brought home, which lasted us over a week and filled us just the same. The end of this good animal was a poem written by the children. It ended with the mother hanging the carcass on the lamp, puts a pot of potatoes under it and each may smell the bones.

We are very short of money. George has claims with his company but it is impossible to collect. An urgent letter from my husband results in a phone call from the new owner of the factory. He forbids the continuous molestation, he will see to it that my husband will not find time in the concentration camp to write further letters. My landlady who overhears the telephone conversation and sees the fear in my face, asks immediately: "He threatens with concentration camp, he owes your husband money?" She does not know that this man has other reasons to be angry with us. When the man was in Gmünd, to view the factory, he was a guest in our house. He ate with us, and I'm a good cook. Pretty soon he felt quite well. He ordered wine and explained that the visit with us could not do him any harm. He stands too high in the party. Under his protection other employees of the firm also come, there is laughing and joking and as other guests before forgot the time at our home, it happened to him and it's two o'clock in the morning before he leaves. The next day he is called before the district leader of the NSDAP. He asks for an accounting. One is completely oriented. One knows what has been eaten or drunk or spoken; he should account for himself. To his indignant question – if they had been observing him – he gets the answer – not him, but my husband who perhaps might be a communist. Somehow he talked himself out of it, for him the happy evening had no serious consequences, but he resented us for it. Perhaps because after the wine he divulged that he has the bad

The passports of Georg and Emmy Mahler from September 1938

Lizzi Jalkio's parents George and Emmy in the USA

luck while searching through his ancestry to run into a great-grandfather that had the none too aryan name of Jakob Deutsch.

Finally we get the visa to the Dominican Republic. I don't know the date anymore, but I know it was on a Friday and that we went the same day to pay for the tickets. A relative helped us out, the sewing machine went, the money was here. Since that day, the whole time in Vienna is nebulous. Nothing is really true. Every day is farewell. The bad signs on the stores don't really hurt any longer. One sees them and soon one will not see them again. A trip to the Vienna woods, the night, the spotlight make everything more unreal. The farewell to my father, who lies in the cemetery, the finest and best of all people that lived on this earth and who, my God, for this I thank you for all days, did not have to live through this. I visit my old aunts who live high on the fourth floor of an outlying street away from the overthrow and the happenings of the times. They no longer read the paper, they know nothing of laws about Jews. They come and go as they please into stores and coffeehouses. They know nothing about it all and obey no rules; and so far nothing has happened to them. The one does not understand why I want to leave, she only knows she is old and she likes me. She makes me promise to come back. She begs with trembling voice, which I so love and which once enthralled thousands in the opera, "I will see you again, you will surely come back." I promised everything. I kissed her hands. I will never see her again.

We did not get the French visa. Only a travel visa for two days, so we are condemned to stay a month longer than expected in Vienna. Things are going pretty miserably. When it gets very cold, the children go with a shopping bag to buy coal. And I leave the house daily with filled shopping bags. I sell dishes, books, everything indispensable. This is the time of Ernst Rath's [secretary to the German ambassador] murder in Paris. I lived through the tenth of November in Vienna, and even if it should be terrible in the foreign land, children, after this day nothing can seem terrible and intolerable.

Do you remember, it was a cold sunny day. I did not let you go to school. The papers were full of mass atonement. All Jews are guilty and conscious of their guilt. One saw them creep along the houses, we all were afraid. I went to my class in the morning, the street was at that time quiet. An hour later on my way home, everything was changed. On the street were screaming gangs of people. On one

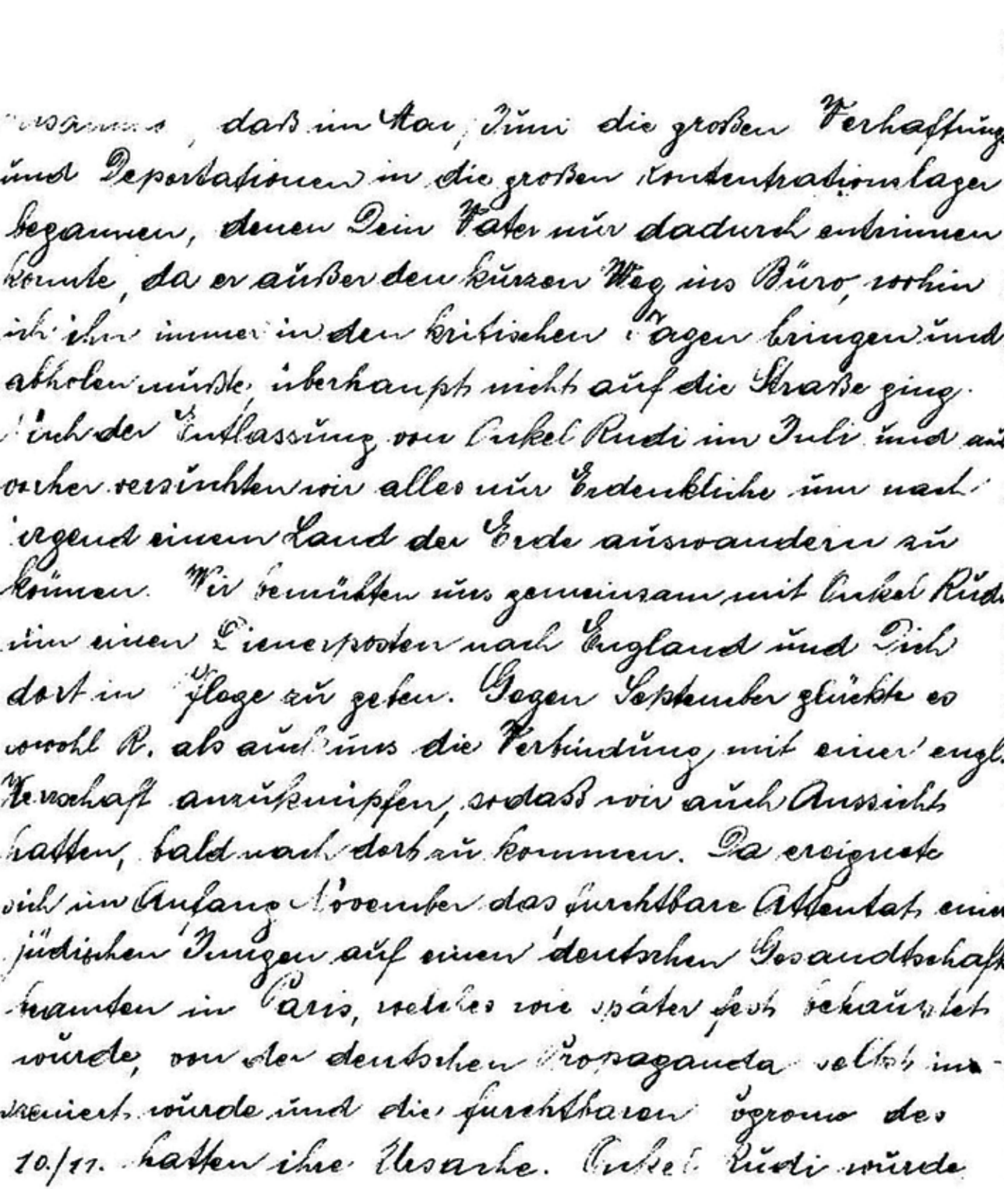
corner a group of battered Jews were driven into Nazi headquarters. On the next street, stores were plundered, rattling windows splintered and I'm afraid to walk on.

Further on, a young woman runs across the street. She holds a small child by the hand. She has not yet reached the other side when a pack of boys storm over her. They beat the woman who runs screaming on, still holding the child. A man stumbles by, his face a bloody clump of meat. He surely sees nothing, blood runs in his eyes. On the next street the temple burns. I stop at the corner, I cannot go on. Then a fat woman starts a conversation with me and I go home with her, under the protection of her big party insignia, I let her tell me that they also burned the temple in her district and that it serves the Jews right, I slip in the door and am home. Meanwhile the phone rings. A friend calls they just picked up her husband, I should hide my husband. My God, where? An old man comes to us, they just trampled his son before his eyes. From our windows one sees the street. Troops of SA people go into the houses. They lead groups of ten to fifteen men into the party headquarters. I see them go into the house across the street, they go to the house next door, then I hear footsteps on the stairwell. I believe I stuck a piece of bread into my husband's pocket, "Goodbye George, somehow I'll get you out." And then the steps became softer and to us, no one came.

One has seen much suffering and heard about much suffering in the next few days. We were four families in the small apartments. Many people were displaced and then somehow, somewhere slipped under. One became so small from fear that you had room in the smallest place.

A few days later, the firm paid a small part of George's claims. I don't know why. I believe everyone felt somewhat responsible for the misery and everyone wanted to appease his guilt. I've heard of more similar cases.

It's been going better with us lately. We have again enough to eat, we have a warm room, we could even buy the necessities for the trip. We sent our luggage to Bordeaux and the time to our departure we lived like gypsies without linen, without dishes, however it went. For Christmas we had a tiny little tree with lights and I saved a fir branch, I take it with me to the foreign land. Goodbye homeland, beautiful loved homeland. My grandparents lived here and are buried here, my parents also spoke German and loved you and we grew up here. Man's will can chase us from here but can never take our homeland. With God's help we will see you once again.



An excerpt from the diary of Edith J.'s mother Elsa D.

PHOTOS: EDITH J.

Now **which hand** is **Jewish** and which is **Aryan?**

Edith J., Australia, born 1928

Mrs. J. was a so called "first grade half-caste" (*"Mischling I. Grades"*). When she was ten years old, her family had to leave their apartment and move in with her grandparents in Vienna. Her family's entire possessions were confiscated, her father lost his managerial post and was imprisoned for four weeks – his release was dependent on him leaving the country. In August 1939, Mrs. J. and her mother were able to flee by ship to Shanghai, to where her father had already been able to emigrate in April. After nearly seven years in Shanghai, the family traveled by ship to Sydney on a 28 day voyage, where they were able to start a new life. Mrs. J.'s paternal grandmother was murdered in Dachau; her grandfather took his own life to escape deportation.

The first of the following diary entries by Mrs. J.'s mother, Elsa D., was written in early summer 1938. There are then no entries for a long time due to the political situation, the persecution and the subsequent escape. Mrs. J.'s mother only writes again in fall 1939 in Shanghai, describing the events retrospectively: from the upheaval in Vienna in 1938 and the difficult family circumstances to the preparations for their flight and daily life in exile in Shanghai.

Vienna, early summer 1938

And now, in March, the great upheaval has occurred. This event had desperately sad consequences for us. Your darling Papa lost his job and we had to give up our beautiful house. Within 14 days we had moved in with your grandparents in Vienna. As of today, we have been living in Vienna for 7 weeks, terrible things have been happening, of which I would rather not speak. When I explained that you are a "half-caste", you looked at yourself so closely and replied: Now which hand is Jewish and which is Aryan? They're both the same! This is how you spoke at the age of 9 ½.

Shanghai, fall 1939

Today I found this book in my hands again and I don't even know how it could be that I haven't written in it for 1 ½ years. But for us, the most difficult time of our lives, in which upset and suffering were just piled up on top of one another, made looking back and describing thoughts which shall one day retell you the events of your early youth impossible. So now I will try and add, in few words, what you and we have been through in these 1 ½ years before we finally found a little peace, freedom and reflection in our room in Shanghai.

April 1938. After our move from Teesdorf to Vienna, the first terrible event was the arrest of Uncle Rudi, who was imprisoned in Vienna until August. I don't wish to write of the great persecution and suffering of the Jews in Vienna, as it is not possible to describe in only a few words. I shall just summarize that in May/June the mass of arrests and deportations to the large concentration camps began, which you father was only able to escape because, with the exception of the short journey to and from the office, on which I accompanied him on the crucial days, he never went out on the street.

After Uncle Rudi's release in July, and beforehand, we tried everything we could think of to be able to emigrate to anywhere on Earth. Together with Uncle Rudi, we strove to get jobs as domestic help in England and to be able to put you into care there. Around September, both R. and we managed to make contact with a noble English family, so that we had a chance of soon being able to go there.

In early November the terrible assassination attempt by a Jewish boy [Herschel Grynszpan] on a German embassy official [Ernst vom Rath] took

place in Paris, which, as was later insisted, was a set up by the Germans as propaganda, and gave rise to the abominable pogroms of the 10th/11th. Uncle Rudi was arrested again and you father could only be saved from arrest as I, as an aryan, was able to stop the Gestapo people from forcing their way into the apartment.

Our nerves were already so shot due to the many commotions and the renewed arrest of Uncle Rudi that we all, together with your grandparents, decided to gas ourselves. Its completion was only prevented by the evening visit of a friend. Afterwards, we spent many thousands of Mark to provide for the emigration of Uncle Rudi and your dear father, but without success. In the meantime R. & J. had received the English permit, but despite this, Uncle Rudi had to remain in prison until mid-January '39 before he was released. In February, after 7 months imprisonment, he was finally able to travel to England with Aunt Ilka in order to take up a post in which he still remains today. Despite the war, he is generally content, he just has a lot of work. Unfortunately, our permit was rejected and thus our hopes of a legal emigration vanished.

We fell into the hands of a swindler, who promised to get your dear father to Belgium. And so on 6.1.39, I traveled with your father to Cologne. The man was revealed to be a swindler and your father attempted, with a few other men, to cross the border on his own initiative. However, he was arrested and sent to a detention center in Trier. I tried to get your father out of there but I was turned away and forced to travel back to Vienna immediately, where, upon my arrival (my feelings on the journey are barely describable), I was picked up by the Gestapo for questioning. My only escape was the speediest emigration, and at the time there had only been one possibility: a ship ticket to Shanghai.

After days of running around and queuing at various travel agencies for hours, I was finally able to gain passage on 10th February, but coincidentally, on this day of all days, your father was brought to Vienna and released as no wrong-doing on his part could be proven. He was given a four week period within which to emigrate and we then, on 25th March, traveled for the second time to Genoa, where your dear father boarded the Conte Biancamano, which was to arrive in Shanghai on 26.4. After a 2 day stay in Venice, you had measles there, I traveled back to Vienna, where I lived with the grandparents until our emigration and not

Edith J. with her mother Elsa D. on the journey into exile in Shanghai

Edith J.'s father Anton D. in August 1937 at the Edelweißspitze on the Großglockner

The cotton mill (weaving factory) in Teesdorf, which was managed by Anton D. from 1924 to 1938

Edith J.'s father Anton D.

a lot happened. I prepared for our departure and there was a great deal of running around to be done.

Your father recorded his experiences in Shanghai in his diary, and I will just briefly sketch them out. After months of trouble and running around, he was able to find work with Mr. Ing. Robitschek, a textiles expert who intended to establish a textiles advisory office, where he still works today. In July, I finally succeeded in gaining passage for us, as the threat of a war was becoming more immanent. On 30th June, we traveled for one last time to Tannwald to see my loved ones one more time, from where we, after an 8 day stay and a difficult goodbye, traveled back home. On 30.7. we traveled to Trieste, where we boarded the ship on 2.8. for the great trip around the world.

The journey lasted 26 days and was delightful. Neither of us was even seasick. You often proved yourself as a nurse and nanny. You were, and still are, generally very independent. I will briefly list our ports of call on this journey: Venice, Brindisi, Port Said, Suez, the Red Sea, Aden, Bombay, Colombo, the Indian Ocean, Singapore, Hong Kong, the China Sea, Shanghai! We arrived here on 28.8. and your father was already waiting at customs. Having shaved off his mustache and lost 12 kg, we almost didn't recognize him. I also want to add, that you even made friends with a few Chinese gentlemen on the ship and a few pictures of one of these men were sent in.

Your father was already earning a small wage, had received small amounts from Aunt Trude, Uncle Rudi and a friend from France and had saved, so he had already been able to take a room for us in the district of Hongkew (occupied by the Japanese) 737/11 Broadway, where we still live today. By local standards, the room is nice and clean and we have finally found a small new home where we can live as free people and must not always fear what tomorrow will bring.

On 30th August, there was, as a welcoming surprise, a particularly strong typhoon which put the whole district under water and unfortunately also our ground floor room, where there was 10 cm of water at midnight during the flood. It was a great shock. There was nothing we could do but flee upstairs to the first floor, and by morning the water had receded. The commotion immediately gave me a touch of fever and I had to stay in bed for the day. The

room was full of mud and the bottom of both large trunks had gotten wet, so I spent two days doing the laundry. There wasn't too much damage, so this reception was soon forgotten. The weather in the fall was tolerable and you were soon able to find your feet in this new city.

On 1.11. you were enrolled in the Jewish school in Seymour Rd. and, as an independent young lady, you had to go into town alone twice a day. Then, in the first days of September, the Second World War broke out in Europe. Although China has been at war with Japan for 2 years and Hongkew is occupied by the Japanese, we actually do not feel the war here, thank goodness, except for the small rise in the price of groceries, which forces us to live even more modestly with the small funds that are available to us. We have to obtain our food from the Aid Committee, but we always cook something extra too. On 15.11., I went to the laundry "Mars", where I have to work all week from 7am to 7pm (ironing) for $10 a week. We still regularly receive mail from your grandparents and they are, thank goodness, healthy and still able to live in peace.

January 1947: Arrival in Sydney

And so we traveled towards our new homeland with high hopes! The journey from Shanghai to Sydney took 28 days. The ship was overcrowded – no water, bread, butter and many of the eggs had gone bad. A cyclone was raging in Australian waters, so our ship was forced to turn back and seek shelter in a bay. We finally reached Sydney in one piece on 28th January 1947, where dear Walter was already waiting for us. He was very kind and managed to rent 2 rooms for us with use of the kitchen with a lovely Swiss lady, Mrs. Yoehl, in Carlingford. It seemed to us like we were in heaven. Mrs. Yoehl had laid the table beautifully and a marvelous supper had awaited us. In the evening, we had a little look around and admired the glorious view. You found work easily. You already found a job on the third day, at Sperling. You learned many new things. But after a year, you changed to a new boss and work, I have heard, to the full satisfaction of your boss, Mr. De Lorenco. It wasn't so easy for our dear father to find work. During the first months, he worked as a weaver and then he found work as a managerial assistant, which he really enjoyed. A few weeks later, you father was even manager of the company. He was very unhappy in this position. Perhaps it is hard for you to understand how he felt, and I can't explain it very well. In short, he gave up the job and now he works the whole day alone on a

machine, it's just, as you know your dear father yourself, he works too hard and often returns home very tired. […]

You, my dear child, have also got to know the serious side of life, and I thank you, my beloved Toni and you, dearest Edith, for all the goodness and love that you have shown to me.

The family of my father, Otto Aufricht
Taken in Vienna, Austria.
If there is a date on the back of this picture, it is inaccessible.
My father was born in 1900. Perhaps you can estimate a date from that.

The family of Alice Hirschfeld's father, taken in Vienna: Father Otto Aufricht seated, beside him Alice Hirschfeld's grandmother Emma; back row from left to right Uncle Erwin, grandfather Julius, Uncle Eugene

seated: my father, Otto Aufricht, and his mother, Emma
standing in the middle: Otto's father, Julius
standing behind Otto: his brother, Erwin
standing behind Emma: Otto's other brother, Eugene

PHOTO: ALICE HIRSCHFELD

… may you be destined for a **happy** and **prosperous future**

Alice Hirschfeld, USA, born 1936

Alice Hirschfeld was born to Jewish parents in Vienna on 2nd July 1936. Shortly after the *Anschluss*, her father was dismissed and "replaced by aryan personnel". The family's entire possessions were confiscated; Mrs. Hirschfeld's parents even had to hand over their wedding rings.

In February 1939, Mrs. Hirschfeld, then a child of 2 ½, fled by ship from Geneva to Ecuador via Panama with her parents Elke and Otto Aufricht. The emigrants suffered as a result of the unaccustomed climate, the poor hygienic conditions, the mosquitoes and diseases. In July 1940, the family was able to travel to California, where they had relatives.

Mrs. Hirschfeld's mother, Elke Aufricht, wrote her last diary entry before her escape in 1938. Nearly one year later and already in exile, she continued her diary.

Vienna, 15th July 1938

On the second of the month, Mädi [little girl] celebrated her second birthday. Her talking doesn't seem to want to progress. In recent days, however, she has been starting to repeat what she hears. It is still unclear but, with a little imagination, understandable. She already has all her milk teeth (20 teeth). The growth of each tooth, particularly the molars, always brought with it restlessness, irritability and loss of appetite; when she got her last 2 molars, Mädi even had a temperature of 39°! Now this is all done with, thank goodness, the child is lively and cheerful and has been potty trained for a long time. Who knows where on the planet Mädi will read this all one day. Once citizens of this city, we are no longer wanted here – ostracized and despised. We rack our brains over in which corner of the world we could rebuild a home. These are difficult days full of worries for your parents. May you, dear child, never experience anything like it, and may you be destined for a happy and prosperous future. We wish you this for your birthday.
Papa & Mama

Geneva, Italy, 1st April 1939

On 28th February, four weeks ago, we crossed the German border as emigrants, inasmuch as we were leaving our homeland and house to settle somewhere overseas. This is already our second stop; the first was Milan, where you spent 4 weeks with your Aunt Gisa, and we are now in Geneva where we are to embark. The chart for our voyage follows the route Panama, Ecuador, last stop Los Angeles, where Aunt Ani lives. On 13th March 1938, Hitler occupied Austria, that criminal whose goal in life is the extermination of Jewry, and a torturous time began for us then – expropriation and a campaign of persecution crowned by the critical 9th November. During these days, the Jews were raided and beaten and the Jewish men were herded up and incarcerated in concentration camps. Unspeakable suffering, blood and tears flowed over our heads, and we also reached the point, as did many of our fellow Jews, that we packed up our things and left.

The day after tomorrow is Seder night [first night of Passover]. We will celebrate it together, isolated in a distant land. As our forefathers once left Egypt, we too have left our homeland. May the Almighty also show us mercy that we may again create a home in the world out there. We are happy that you, my child, have not yet grasped the situation with your young mind, have not yet comprehended the change in time and surroundings. The little girl jumps and hops happily around, talking to pebbles by the sea as if we were here for pleasure and not as emigrants. Mädi easily understands what she hears and already speaks a few scraps of English and Italian and has generally good pronunciation.

Mrs. Hirschfeld's mother describes her arrival in South America, the culture shock and her attempts to adapt to the completely new conditions in a letter to her sister.

Guayaquil, Ecuador, 11th June 1939

Dearest sister and family!

We arrived a week ago today and immediately sent a card informing you. Today, we received your first letter. It gave us great pleasure and now we want to describe our impressions and experiences so far. We left Colón [Panama] on the 30th of last month. I must say, in the end we were happy to be leaving there. The climate there is unbearable, particularly in the rainy season, which lasts from May to December. It's like a sauna, and the nights bring no relief. It is even harder to bear when there is no possibility of building a life and living is very expensive. On top of this, the government of Panama also determined that the deposits of $ 85 per person will simply not be returned to immigrants who do not leave the country within a year. Our ship was moored in Buenaventura, the Columbian port, and we went into the town for a while, where we got a foretaste of South America. On the ship, we were warned to shut the doors securely and even the portholes were all locked in port because of the thieves.

On Saturday afternoon we arrived in Salinas [Ecuador]. The big ships moor in Salinas, as the water is too shallow in Guayaquil. We disembarked and were brought to land. The area consisted of a few hotels, a few natives' huts, a very beautiful beach and a not too hot climate, relatively speaking. But the hotels! I won't be forgetting the "El Pacifico" on the Pacific Ocean any time soon, although it is a so called 'better hotel' costing 15 Sucre = $ 1 per person. You walk up noisy wooden steps into the room, which could not be any more primitive but was all the more dirty. The toilet is also in the room. Otto had to wait at customs until two in the morning and I was in a terrible mood as I had seen a mouse scurry right through the middle of the room. The food is similar, you eat it along with the ants, we were warned about the water and drank mineral water. In the morning, instead of at 7 we traveled at half past 9 to Guayaquil in one of the streetcars included with the voyage. It was 150 kilometers away, which we covered in 5

hours. The engine broke, but the driver simply filled it with a banana skin and it worked again. The single train track took us right through the jungle where, every now and then, we saw a few natives' huts, although "huts" would be a bit generous, its like seeing the stories of Karl May come to life before your eyes.

Then we finally arrived here, and a gentleman from the committee was there to advise the people. There wasn't enough accommodation. However, a few days earlier, 100 refugees had arrived and on our ship there were 74, so everything was pretty full. The lodgings that we got here were an improved version of those in Salinas. […] After four days, I changed lodgings as I found them particularly horrible. These impressions greet the Europeans in their first days, on top of this there are plagues of mosquitoes and other insects which bite and sting the white newcomers. As you can imagine, the atmosphere among the newcomers is pretty grim.

But after a few days, the feelings of horror begin to recede and one begins to reconcile oneself with reality. There are emigrants here who have already been here for a few years and have been able to settle in because they had to. […]

The first days were filled with dealings with the authorities. […] We were at the American consulate. At first we only got an appointment for next week and today he said to us we first have to state our exact address by letter, and only then can he request our papers from Vienna. You have to wait for everything here. *Mañana* is the keyword here. Everything will happen, but not until *mañana* (tomorrow).

However, we have still not been able to reach a decision about where to live. In the view of the committee and in our own opinion, Otto has the best chance of finding something here in Guayaquil as most of the tourism and companies are here. So it is easiest to find a job here, even the committee has given him a prospect. They need a French-English-Spanish correspondent, but as always *mañana*. First they must hold a meeting and the matter will only be decided later.

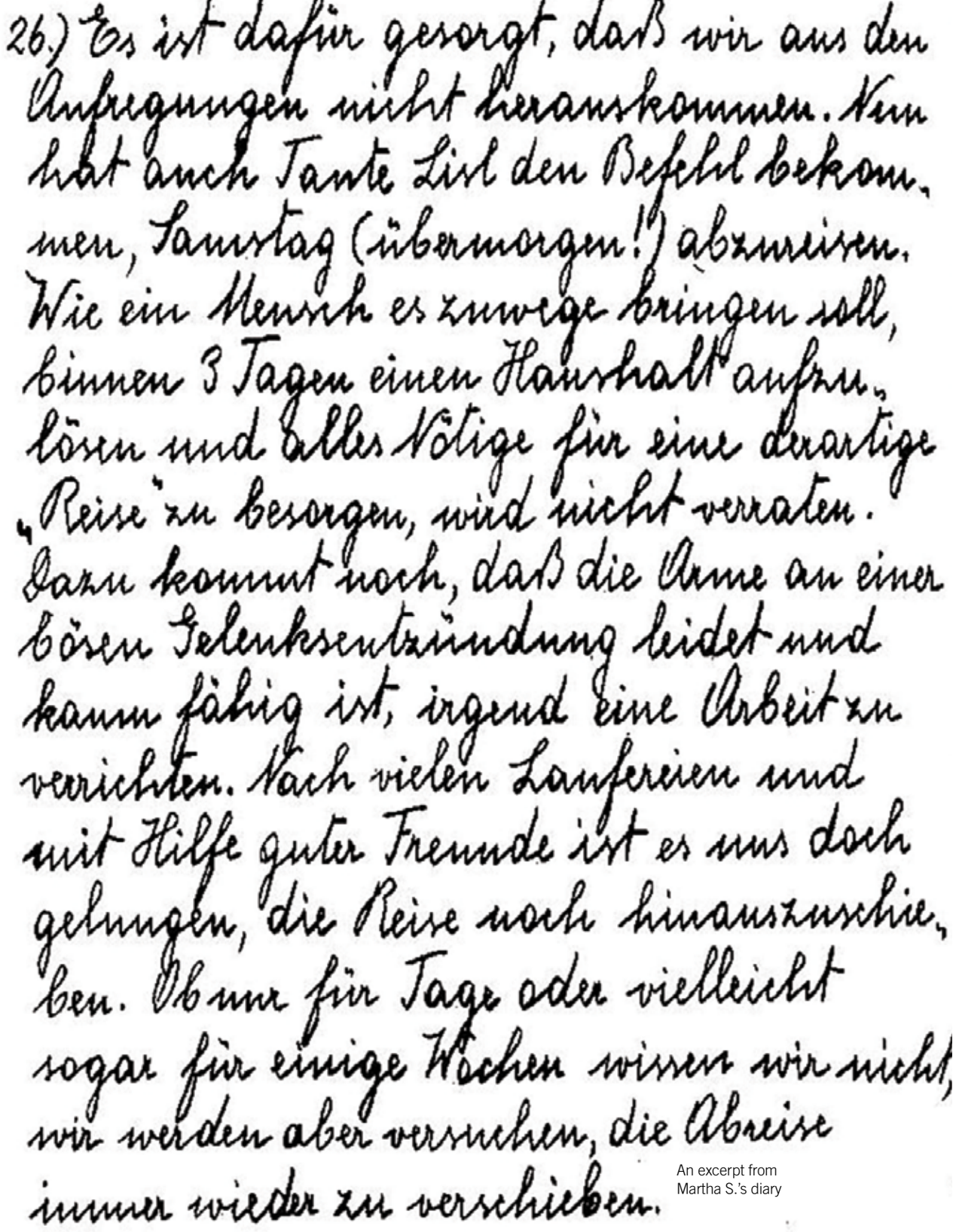
The downside is that the sanitary conditions are very poor. There is a considerable danger of catching malaria or typhus. Quito, which lies 2,800 m above sea level is apparently better in this regard but is already overflowing with immigrants. Living is also supposed to be cheaper up there, but on the other hand

it is very demanding for the heart due to its altitude and the chances of finding a job are very small. The third town, d. L. Ambato, where the climate is the best and it is also very cheap, also comes into consideration. It lies 1,800 m above sea level but is a nest without prospects. So if we have to live off our money, we will chose Quito or Ambato, but should Otto find something then we will of course stay here.

It would be of great use to have our things here, and as I don't know when and if we shall go to Los Angeles, I would like to redirect the two trunks here. I have been thinking about maybe setting up a little boarding house here. They must definitely already be there by now as they were with us on the ship "Fella" and must have arrived in Los Angeles in around mid-May. I wanted to unpack various things on the ship and put in the non-essentials but the ship's officer didn't allow me, as a lot of marble, which was to be unloaded in L.A. was loaded on the trunks. It is probably best if you ask for information at the local branch of the shipping line "Italia" in L.A.

Please be so kind and inquire about sending them to Guayaquil – how long it would take and how much it would cost. As long as I don't have my things here I can only sit around in the pension which is much more expensive and uncomfortable. I will only be able to write to you with specific details at a later date. We have arrived in a very unfamiliar world and have not yet really got used to things. It used to be much easier, now the government only wants to grant permits for industry and agriculture. Businessmen and representatives have almost no prospects. On the other hand, with a trade or some kind of industrial manufacture it is possible to be very successful.

The land is still very uncultivated and undeveloped. There would be space for a few million more people, but the immigrants are supposed to cultivate it and hand over the money. The ship with the 100 immigrants was also in Salinas and the committee took part in negotiations about their disembarkation here, but without result. They are also beginning to write in the newspapers here that too many Jews are entering, although they bring thousands of dollars with them. Hitler has boosted the economy in the whole world; they are all profiting from our misfortune and trying their best – the democratic countries maybe even more so than the others.



26.) Es ist dafür gesorgt, daß wir aus den Aufregungen nicht herauskommen. Nun hat auch Tante Lisl den Befehl bekommen, Samstag (übermorgen!) abzureisen. Wie ein Mensch es zuwege bringen soll, binnen 3 Tagen einen Haushalt aufzulösen und alles Nötige für eine derartige „Reise" zu besorgen, wird nicht verraten. Dazu kommt noch, daß die Arme an einer bösen Gelenksentzündung leidet und kaum fähig ist, irgend eine Arbeit zu verrichten. Nach vielen Laufereien und mit Hilfe guter Freunde ist es uns doch gelungen, die Reise noch hinauszuschieben. Ob nur für Tage oder vielleicht sogar für einige Wochen wissen wir nicht, wir werden aber versuchen, die Abreise immer wieder zu verschieben.

An excerpt from Martha S.'s diary

PHOTOS: PETER S.

When will we be able to **live again**?

Peter S., Austria, born 1937

Mr. S. was born to a Jewish mother in Vienna in 1937. His father Otto S. was forced to retire as he was an "aryan" married to a Jew. From 1938 to 1945, the family lived in the apartment of an aunt. His mother's relatives gradually disappeared – the uncle, aunt and maternal grandmother of Mr. S. were deported and murdered, other relatives were able to flee to the USA. His maternal grandfather survived Theresienstadt but died a year later from the effects of his incarceration.

Survival in Vienna was – aside from the "normal" events of the war – dominated by an ever present fear, uncertainty and the attempt to disguise the terrible reality from her growing son.

Throughout these years, Mr. S.'s mother, Martha S., kept a diary, in which she confided her fears, desperation and worries about her family but also her nascent hope that everything would be good again.

8th March 1938
The lad said "Mamama" for the first time today.

9th March 1938
This morning I discovered his first tooth! (½ mm in length!)
Little Peter is such a rascal; whenever I cough, he imitates me and laughs in amusement. The lad can sometimes be very headstrong, he often cries when something is taken away from him and he tries to crawl after the things he wants.

13th March 1938
The great, long-feared catastrophe has befallen us. What is to become of us?

16th September 1938
Today was a bleak day. The thoughts of the looming outbreak of war won't leave me. It's a feeling of the inescapable which bears down on me so terribly. Will we all perish or will we be able to live, allowed to live? At least for as long as our child needs us?

10th November 1939
Exactly one year has passed since I stopped writing and left these two pages empty in order to record the events of that 10th November 1938 here at a later date.

At around midday we suddenly heard several detonations, they sounded like explosions. A little later, a very agitated Aunt Grete arrived at our house and informed us that the temples had been blown up and that there would be terrible pogroms today. Unfortunately, her fears proved not to be unfounded. Many people were thrown out of their apartments. Some were dragged to the station without being able to take anything with them or even put on a coat and brought to the Polish border. Countless people were arrested and put in concentration camps. All Jewish shops were closed down, all Jews still in employment were dismissed. A "fine" ["*Sühneleistung* – atonement tax" or "*Judenvermögensabgabe* – Jewish capital levy" of 20, later 25 % of the total assets of Jews if these amounted to more than 5,000 Reichsmark] of one billion Mark was imposed on the Jews. One week later, we were triumphantly informed that the "poor" Jews still had so much money that much more could be raised. (The fact that the "fine" was again raised a few days ago, because the sum demanded had not yet been reached is unimportant.) Oh yes, I nearly forget to mention the reason for all this: A 17 year old boy [Herschel Grynszpan], moved by confused thoughts of revenge, had shot a member of the German embassy [Ernst vom Rath] in Paris.

1st March 1939
The great farewell has now begun. This morning Uncle Franz departed, the first of the close relatives. In around three weeks, Aunt Grete and Renee will travel to America. Who knows when and where we shall see each other again. Who knows if we will ever meet again. Certainly the young among us will in all likelihood have enough time before us to be able to meet again someday. But my parents! Will they still have time to wait for years until we can all be together again, somewhere abroad or – faint glimmer of hope! – here in our homeland? We still don't know where we will end up, whether it will be possible for us to live somewhere with Lisl and Paul, something we all desire. Time is passing and we are still waiting for the replies from Greece and America, on which we are pinning all our hopes. But it is curious! Despite everything, I am filled with indestructible optimism. I truly believe that things will soon be good again, not only for us, but that throughout the world, this shameful relapse into barbarism will be followed by a renewed ascent. That the nationalistic madness will finally run its course and people will devote their strength to better goals. I have the unwavering hope that after the misery of this time in which we are condemned to live, our child will grow up in a time when the world again strives upwards, in which culture, freedom and justice will no longer be meaningless words.

11th May 1939
[…] Today the lad congratulated Grandpa on his birthday. In the grandparents' new apartment, which is fortunately friendly and well situated. Poor mother will certainly find it very difficult to become accustomed to the strange new environment. My parents have lived in the area around Zimmermannplatz [in the 9th district of Vienna] for over 40 years. Twenty-nine years in the same apartment and now they have been evicted and have to seek a new home at their age. And it is not even certain whether they will be "allowed" to remain there!

21st September 1939
This war is completely different to how the most intelligent, experienced people imagined it. They were convinced that no country in Europe would be spared the

most terrible catastrophe. But now the war in the East seems to be over, while that which is unfolding in the West can hardly be described as war. What the intentions of those leading the war are is a complete mystery to all of us. No one can even begin to predict how and when the fighting will end. We have no idea as to what is happing in the world around us. We just notice that groceries and other necessities are becoming scarce at an alarming rate. In the face of all this, we can still speak of luck, as Papa's job and income seem to be fairly assured and the danger of enlistment seems – at least for the time being – to have been averted. But who knows what the future holds.

21st October 1939

Uncle Paul departed yesterday. On an "officially ordered emigrants' transport" to Poland. Ten days ago he was summoned, with many other fellow sufferers, to the offices of the Jewish Community where they were encouraged to voluntarily sign up for emigration to Poland. The first transport is to depart in a few weeks. Should insufficient numbers sign up, the Gestapo would take matters into their own hands. On Sunday, the instruction to standby for immanent departure was issued and the day before yesterday the order was given to assemble at the station on the following day. Our dismay was indescribable. From one day to the next, all the necessities had to be gathered, which was no mean feat given the terrible shortage of groceries and goods. What luck to have such good friends in a terrible situation! Thanks to their help we were able to equip Uncle Paul for his sad journey. The farewell was short but weighed heavily on our hearts. Who knows when we shall see each other again. One day, perhaps when you have grown my child, such things will be, I hope and believe, unthinkable: Tearing people, who have never committed even the most minor crime, away from their families and transporting them like prisoners to a foreign land, to an unknown destination and subjecting them to forced labor. Were it not for the signs that this torture will maybe soon be over, I wouldn't be able to stand it.

26th October 1939

It has been ensured that we won't escape further upset. Now Aunt Lisl has also received the order that she must depart on Saturday (the day after tomorrow!). They don't let on how a person is supposed to dissolve a whole household and gather everything necessary for a "journey" of this kind within three days. In addition to this, the poor thing is suffering from a terrible inflammation of the joints and is hardly capable of doing anything. After running many errands and with the help of good friends we were able to postpone the journey after all. We don't know whether for a few days or even for a few weeks, but we will try to keep on postponing her departure.

24th November 1939

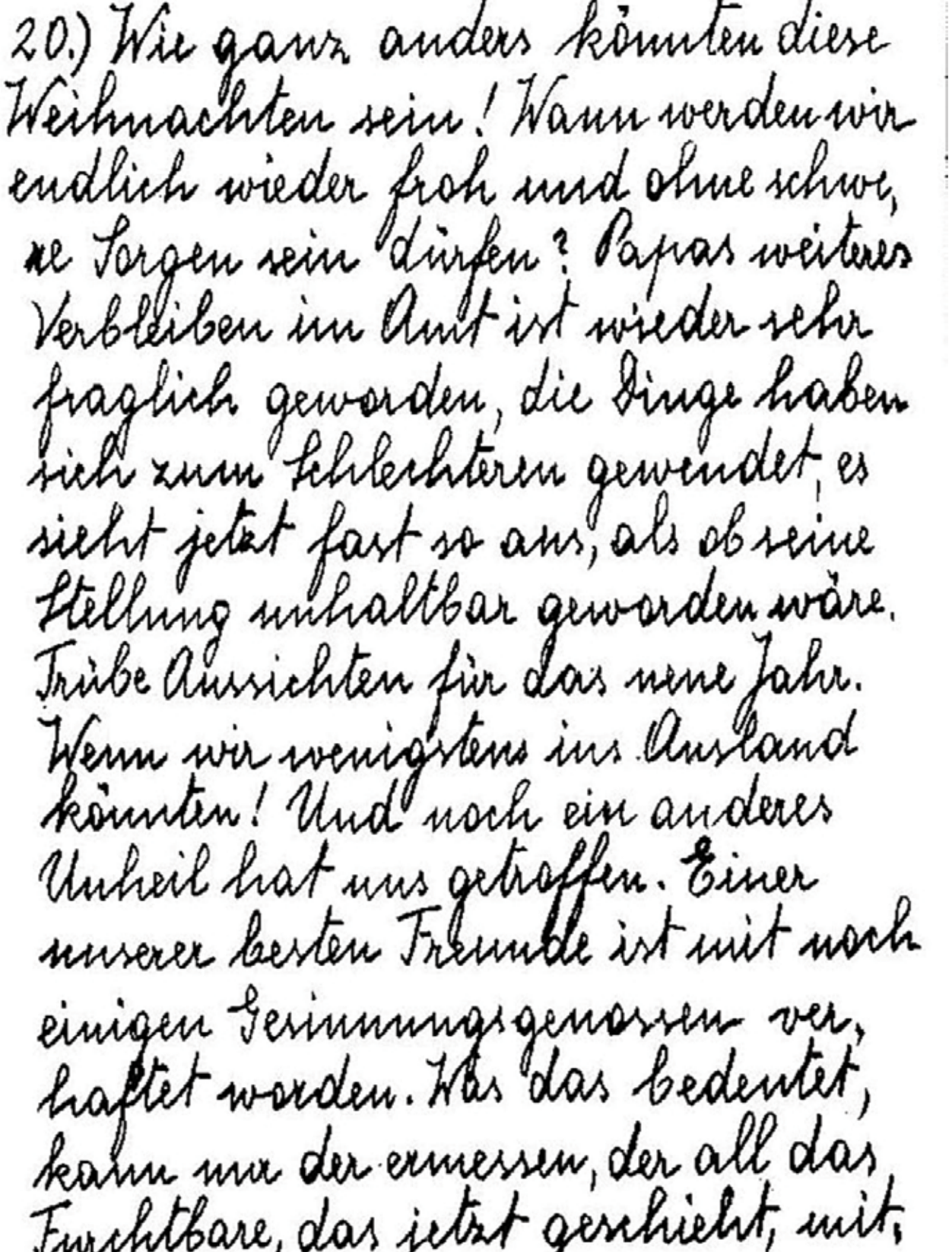
Finally, in a roundabout way, we received a sign of life from Uncle Paul. He is with his other companions in Lemberg (Russian territory) and appears to be doing very well. A weight has fallen from our hearts. Although unfortunately – at least for the time being – we couldn't reach him directly, we all really hope that this and many other things will change in the not to distant future. As the emigration operation has been put on hold for the time being, we also need not fear that Aunt Lisl must go.

20th December 1939

How different this Christmas could be! When will we finally be allowed to be happy and carefree? It has again become dubious whether Papa will be able to remain in his position. Things have taken a turn for the worse, it almost looks as if his position will become untenable. Dismal prospects for the New Year. If only we could at least move abroad! And another disaster has befallen us. One of our friends and some of his comrades have been arrested. Only someone who also has to experience all this awfulness can judge what that means. At least a glimmer of hope during these days: Uncle Paul has sent another telegram. He is well, we needn't worry about him.

10th February 1940

Finally, finally a longer message from Uncle Paul! He is well, he is able to earn a little and has been kindly taken in by Mrs. Sch. (Aunt Grete's best friend) and her family, who were apparently also forced to move from their home in Krakow to Lemberg. So, what can be read from the card by everybody seems very positive. However, according to a certain code which we determined in advance, we are able to exchange messages which are not meant for everybody. Through this, we also learned that Paul is very disappointed in the State, the establishments of which he was always very taken with, and that he would really like to get out of there, which is unfortunately not possible. How long will this all last? In fall, many people said it couldn't possibly go on past the spring. And now spring is here and no end is in


20.) Wie ganz anders könnten diese
Weihnachten sein! Wann werden wir
endlich wieder froh und ohne schwe,
re Sorgen sein dürfen? Papas weiteres
Verbleiben im Amt ist wieder sehr
fraglich geworden, die Dinge haben
sich zum Schlechteren gewendet, es
sieht jetzt fast so aus, als ob seine
Stellung unhaltbar geworden wäre.
Trübe Aussichten für das neue Jahr.
Wenn wir wenigstens ins Ausland
könnten! Und noch ein anderes
Unheil hat uns getroffen. Einer
unserer besten Freunde ist mit noch
einigen Gesinnungsgenossen ver,
haftet worden. Was das bedeutet,
kann nur der ermessen, der all das
Furchtbare, das jetzt geschieht, mit.

sight. Peter dear, you can't know how lucky you are that you have no idea of what is going on around you. When I ask the little lad: "What do you dream about?" he replies instantly "about Uncle Paul". And yesterday he spoke of his wish that "Uncle Paul should come down from Lemberg". If only he could!

16th April 1940

How much longer will the war last? When I read the news of the outrageous coup de main against Norway and Denmark last week, I thought, now it must soon be over. The world must finally rebel and do away with these vile tactics. But so far, nothing to this effect has happened. Denmark goes along with it, pleased of the "protection", only Norway is fighting for its freedom. I keep asking myself how it is possible that millions of people are silently inflicted with the most terrible suffering, calmly letting themselves be violated. It can only be the lies which exert this monstrous influence, the lies which are drummed into the people daily and hourly through the newspapers and the radio, the lies that everything that happens is the best and most wonderful, indeed the only possible way forward. And unfortunately, there are enough idiots who believe everything. They notice nothing of what is actually going on around them. The few Jews who are still here are tortured in the vilest of manners, the remaining population is being bled dry through taxation and collections. How much longer?

24th April 1940

A few days ago, poor Aunt Lisl was terribly afraid of being locked up, because the lad had made subversive comments. On the *Führer's* birthday, a statue of him had been erected in front of the town hall. As Peter walked past, he called out loudly "Auntie, will the man topple down?" A worker, who was hanging decorations nearby, murmured in an undertone "Nope, it might still take a while." Whereupon Aunt Lisl quickly hurried away.

20th May 1940

And the war again. Now it seems hopeless. The most terrible outcome thought of so far will become reality. Germany will triumph if there is no last minute miracle. Within five days, Holland was "overcome", the greatest strongholds of Belgium were bulldozed, victories which were only forced through the most brutal and ruthless of tactics and through new secret "weapons". This terrible struggle is costing many lives, the war is bringing horrific devastation to previously peaceful

countries. And the rest of the world seems to be frozen in terror. Nothing is being done to save Europe. Unbridled violence will reign, until, in ten or twelve years, a new war will break out. When will people have finally learned and put an end to this insane mutual destruction? Will we, will our child ever live to see such a time? Again we are faced with the necessity of emigration, as soon as we can. A boundless dejection, almost bordering on desperation has seized me. Our little lad is our only consolation.

22nd May 1940

Aunt Lisl came with good news yesterday. She had received a card from Lemberg, written by an acquaintance of Uncle Paul, which, among other news, also contains his address. Finally! After ten months, we finally know where he is. Aust Lisl is overjoyed and has written several letters and cards. Hopefully they will reach him. What will he have to tell us, what unimaginable adventure has he lived through, he and the many others who were mercilessly swept along by these events.

11th June 1940

A black day! That which has been feared for so long, Italy's entry into the war, occurred yesterday. Finally the man who calls himself "*Duce*" has deemed the time opportune to seize with ease whatever he can in order to claim a magnificent victory with Germany. And for this, countless more people now have to face a miserable demise. But everyone is thrilled, the people here in the pension [on holiday] are also delighted and I am slowly beginning to be noticed for my lack of participation in the general rejoicing. The radio bellows incessantly, from early morning until late at night. Reports of victories are broadcast again and again, only interrupted by descriptions of the desperate situation in Paris which border on sadism. How is it possible that there are so many people who are otherwise good-natured and reasonable, but who seem to believe that although the war is terrible, wars must exist by their nature. That there would always be disputes which could only be resolved with weapons. Oh but why? Why can't intelligent people, who are actually concerned for the well-being of their people, as statesmen should be, manage to bring matters to a satisfactory conclusion using peaceful methods? If we had state leaders, this would be easily achieved but unfortunately, with potentates who have repressed their people for years with brutal violence and now send them to enslave foreign peoples as well and whose only argument is the most terrible weapons, it cannot. Are wars to keep recurring after all?

26th June 1940

[...] The owners of the pension are discriminating against us by reducing our provisions which are anyhow not very ample. It couldn't have gone unnoticed that we don't share their political opinion. They've even got it in for Peter. The husband of the proprietor, an old man who's not capable of anything anymore, seems to have got it into his head to teach our lad the "German salute". And little Peter, runs up to the old man every time he sees him, as if he wants to tease him, and asks: "Can cats fly?" The old man: "Come here you, raise your hand and say *Heil Hitler*." [...]

23rd August 1940

Still no news from Uncle Paul. I am so fearful and anxious, I can barely think of anything else. Strangely, when he left and we didn't hear anything from him for weeks, I was completely calm and told myself and the others that, given the circumstances, there was no other way. Why can't I be so carefree now too? And then the other thing! It now seems almost certain that Germany will win the war. I await this end with inexpressible horror. Not only on a personal level but also because of the new war which will then be unavoidable in a few years.

21st October 1940

[...] A card has arrived from a close acquaintance of Uncle Paul in Lemberg with the news that they had received a message from him. He was somewhere in central Russia in a camp, working. He was well, just not able to write abroad at the moment. A great weight has been lifted from me, I feel happier and more cheerful than I have for a very long time. [...]

6th January 1941

So, that which we had feared for so long has finally happened. Papa was pensioned off, effective from 1st January. It was exceptional that he was able to keep on working for almost three years. Most of the others in his position were already pensioned off after a few weeks or months. Only the particular way in which he was employed and his tirelessly tough fight enabled Papa to stay on for so long. The pension is small, about a quarter of his previous salary. [...]

4th February 1941

Aunt Lisl came to see us yesterday with terrible news. The rumor that has been

circulating for a while is true, namely: all Jews must leave Germany by a certain (immanent) time. So the so called operation Poland is to be resumed after all, it having been ceased shortly after Uncle Paul's "departure". And this time it seems to be deadly serious. The Jewish schools and re-training courses were closed down immediately. Many people have already been summoned to give details of their living arrangements and other circumstances. We are shaking with nerves for poor Aunt Lisl. It would be awful if she also had to leave now. It probably won't affect the grandparents, I hope that they will set an age limit and at least leave the old people over 70 in peace.

20th February 1941

Every time we visit the grandparents I am in a terrible mood afterwards. We now know that there is no age limit. Everyone is being sent away, small children, the elderly, even the sick are being taken from hospital and deported into the unknown, into misery. High point of the depravity: the Jewish Community has to supply packages of provisions which are then distributed at the station by the National Socialist stewards. The whole thing is then filmed and shown abroad, where it is also explained how well the Jews are being treated here and how happy and satisfied they supposedly are to arrive in their new homeland. Poor, poor mother! And I must watch as she continues to deteriorate and I can't help her. Grete in America, Paul somewhere in Russia, I know how much she suffers at the thought that she may never see them again. It horrifies me to wonder how these two old people will survive such a "relocation". When will these horrific crimes finally be atoned? When will we be able to live again?

24th February 1941

Aunt Lisl brought news which once more gives us a little hope. She has heard that anyone who has an *Arbeitsbuch* [I.D. with information on professional training and employment status] and finds themselves a job can stay here, or at least postpone their departure. She and Papa will now try and get any old work, which they will hopefully manage with the huge workforce shortage. […]

10th March 1941

After many long speeches, the Lend-Lease Act [material support of England by the USA through delivery of war materials, among other things] has finally been enacted in America. Will this bring salvation? All our lives depend on it, as so far

the Germans have notched up more victories than the English. The information that is trickling through about the preparations for the spring offensive gives rise to great anxiety. And if the war doesn't end with a German victory in the spring either, if, in the "best-case scenario" as some are saying, it lasts another two years? I fear terribly that it will be too late and an English victory will no longer be able to help us. Meanwhile, the deportations continue. The poor are in a terrible state, they have nothing to eat, can't find work and in most cases are living in terrible accommodation. And this fate threatens my elderly parents and Lisl. Every day we are terrified that that what we dread will occur, we don't know if the *Arbeitsbuch* can protect them. And in addition to all of this, still no sign of life from Paul. How much longer will we be able to bear all this?

16th March 1941

Aunt Lisl brought good news yesterday. The transports to Poland have been stopped. No one knows why this sudden stop took place. Whether foreign or domestic politics are behind it or mere panic and confusion are the cause, who knows? Regardless of which, we are in any case happy that the grandparents and Aunt Lisl don't have to leave. Our joy is, however, subdued by the fact that our relatives and all others who had to go to Poland with them are doing terribly.

24th March 1941

Good news! Finally, finally, a sign of life from Paul. Not a direct message from him – that seems completely impossible at the moment – but a card from Lemberg, written by a gentleman whom Paul had met there. This man writes that he had received a letter from Paul Müller dated 30.1. of this year with the message that he was in good health but found it very difficult not to receive any news of his relatives in Vienna. We can really sympathize with him! I am very, very happy that we [have received] a sign of life from him finally.

16th April 1941

[...] After several days of fighting, Yugoslavia is as good as annihilated; the German army is advancing everywhere without it looking as if the opposition was really in a position to do anything against it. Our hopes have once again reached rock bottom, everything looks dismal again. Don't lose your nerve, remain optimistic, that is easier said than done, it is so, so difficult.

23rd June 1941

The long awaited, part feared, part hoped for has happened. War with Russia! This "friendship", much extolled in the German press didn't last so long after all. We are placing much hope on this Russian intervention and believe that the war will soon be over as a result. But will it have the end that we desire? A new problem and a great new worry. And there are more. All hope of finally contacting Paul is now definitely lost. And our poor relatives in Poland!

2nd July 1941

It's crushing, dreadful. After a little more than a week since the beginning of the war, it seems that mighty Russia will not fare any better than all the other countries so far. One special announcement follows another, reports of victory are continuous. My mood is of similar desperation to one year ago in Eichgraben [near Vienna]. But at least then there had been the hope of American and Russian aid. Now it really seems as if even these two will not able to get anywhere. Who can help us now? Hopeless!

11th August 1941

Something terrible happened today which will, I fear, have terrible consequences. When I was sitting in the garden of the pension with the lad, eating our lunch, the girl called me into the room – a policeman wanted to speak to me. He informed me that I had to be at the police station in Pitten [district Neunkirchen in Lower Austria, Peter S. and his mother were ostensibly there for a summer break] and he had been ordered to take me there. I wanted to know why but he just shrugged his shoulders, he didn't know. Of course, I had a good idea what it was about but still fostered the tiny hope that it was about stealing laundry. But when I saw the officer's face when we entered (of course I took the lad with me), it told me all I needed to know. He asked me if my name was Sara, whether I was a Jew. My registration form had been filled out incorrectly. My husband would be punished for forging documents. This was followed by an endless, torturous interrogation until I was finally released with the instruction to inform my husband and return immediately with the documents. Poor, poor Papa! Peter said: "If the bad men want to do something bad to our Papa-bear then I'll burst into the room with a saw and hammer and chop up everything that they need."

13th August 1941

Today was a bad day! Poor Papa arrived yesterday evening. This morning he went down to Pitten in the pouring rain, where he was ordered to return in the afternoon. It took two and a half whole hours until he came back out and the whole time I had been waiting for him with Peter in front of the door. And what he had to tell me was bad enough. He can, at all events, expect to be punished. How and to what extent is still completely unknown.

5th September 1941

When will these torturous times finally reach an end? I can hardly bear what the poor grandparents and Aunt Lisl are having to go through. Now they may only shop in especially established shops, where they can barely get the most necessary groceries and Aunt Lisl has to queue for hours. Unfortunately that's not the worst of it. It is feared that they must vacate the flat within the next few days and will be stuck in some hole or other with strangers. So far they have been spared this misfortune which has befallen so many Jews. But the reason for the evictions deserves to be recorded. The sub-tenants had sometimes looked out of the window. The lovely gentlemen opposite – the men from the Gestapo – didn't like this and therefore, all Jews living in the street must leave their apartments. There is, however, still a small ray of hope, the matter should be decided in two to three days.

20th September 1941

Our life now consists of eternal highs and lows between hope and desperation. Nothing came of them staying in the apartment, they have to be out next week. All three of them will be put in a room with two strangers! It's not even possible to picture how awful that is. Grandpa is in the hospital and still doesn't know of this misfortune. And since yesterday, they, like all other Jews, must wear this hateful yellow patch with the writing "Jew". When will we finally be able to live again? For a while, things were starting to look more hopeful but now we are being continually "beaten". And every day we ask ourselves more desperately whether we will be able to bear this all much longer.

9th October 1941

Now it won't be much longer before we can no longer take the outrageous amount of torture and suffering. The "operation Poland" has recommenced! This is unimaginably horrific. People who have committed no crime will be torn from their loved ones, regardless whether old or sick. They have to have packed a few

belongings (their remaining possessions are then stolen by the state), are locked up for a week and then a "transport" of these unfortunates leaves for Poland. For innumerable people, this "summons" is equal to a death sentence. Starvation awaits them in the unknown, where there is no chance of work or support. It means that by the end of March, all Jews must have left Vienna. There has to be a miracle by then! We can't stand this constant worrying for so long, whether the grandparents and Aunt Lisl will receive a summons. Today, they moved into their new "apartment", they were not given the opportunity to recover from the upsets and plagues they have survived so far, which now seem trivial to them. Now they are waiting for the terrible event. How I often envy those who still believe, who find strength and hope in prayer. But us? Where shall we turn?

20th October 1941

Our situation is unchanging in its awfulness. After a few days of relief, having found out the operation Poland had been put on hold until the new year, we found out that it is continuing after all. Its enforcement is even more horrific than before. People are being intercepted on the street and have to have their belongings packed and be ready to be "deported" within two (!) hours. No goodbyes, they are hardly able to inform their friends and relatives! Each person may take 20 Mark with them, woe betide the unfortunate who is found to have more. He is punished with the confiscation of his suitcase. Day after day we wait for it to affect us. As long as Grandpa is still in hospital we are still hopeful that at least the grandparents will be spared. But poor Aunt Lisl! She is in despair, hardly dares to go onto the street anymore and no longer visits us. Her suitcases and rucksacks are packed and ready for a sudden departure. We visit them daily. These visits are so terribly depressing! And we can do nothing but wait for a miracle to save us all.

22nd October 1941

Amongst all this wretchedness, Peter is our only sunbeam.

24th November 1941

Every day, we have to continue to prepare ourselves for the eventuality that the grandparents and Aunt Lisl will be deported. It is a dreadful state of affairs, it can almost not be described as living. Horrific stories are being told, innumerable tragedies are taking place. Even the way in which the unfortunates are accommodated in the run up to their deportation is unimaginable. Eighty

people are crammed into one classroom! In addition to all of this, there is the uncertainty of what awaits them at their destinations. Not one person has written from there! And we just have to watch and can do nothing, nothing at all, to help. All of these unfortunates, who are being handled like dangerous criminals, are helplessly and defenselessly at the brutal mercy of a "state authority" which desires only their annihilation. And there is still no end in sight. Which of us will manage to survive it all? Our friend Hans, Aunt Klara's husband, sentenced to twelve years imprisonment said during her last visit: "It can't last any longer than a year now". And then: "Freedom or death".

27th November 1941

I have to keep repeating it: We would sink hopelessly into gloom and misery were it not for little Peter.

20th December 1941

After a short break, the horrific torture of the deportations to Poland continue again. Again, we have to wait, trembling in fear, for the news that it is the grandparents and Aunt Lisl's turn. None of the people who have already had to leave have written yet. What happens to these unfortunates? America's entry into the war, on which we had placed so much hope, seems not to be having any effect on our fate, at least not for the time being. I fear that the help will come too late, we will no longer be around to see it. It sometimes seems presumptuous to believe that we can all escape unscathed from this pandemonium when so terribly many people are perishing. But I can't do anything but hope that we will all see better times in the near future. We couldn't survive without this hope.

31st December 1941

The last year is over. It brought much misery with it. We can only hope that the new year now beginning will be better and that our wishes will be granted. I cannot imagine having to bear this life any longer. Will we ever be able to recover from it? I will certainly not be able to. I often feel, with terrible clarity, that everything has fallen apart inside me. This devastation can never be repaired. I'm no longer young enough to recover. Now, as the summer of my life is coming to an end and I look back, a bitter realization occurs: it could have been different. Too late! What can still happen? Indeed! The strange thing about hope is, it never disappears entirely. Of all the seasons, I have always loved the fall the most. Could

it not also be the nicest time of my life? It's just there is much melancholy and the pain of parting in all fall beauty. The tender longing of spring is over, the stormy summer is over. How I often long for someone with whom I could share all my troubles. What a ridiculous thought! All who are close to me have so much to bear themselves that it's impossible to burden them further. Only someone who has no troubles of their own could help me with my heavy baggage. Selfish complaints! They must take second place behind my other worries.

29th January 1942

[…] It's a wonder how much a person can stand after all! The terrible burden of the last four months is the almost unbearable fear of losing the grandparents and Aunt Lisl. The horrific deportations continue. Sick people, even those dying, are carried off to the station and must leave for unknown hardship. The unfortunates are not allowed to write, you just hear rumors that the places to which they are brought are terribly infested. And such a fate threatens our loved ones! We tremble and wait and can do nothing, absolutely nothing to avert the dreadful fate. One can only hope that by some unexpected stroke of luck they remain safe. Then there is the constant dreadful worry about Uncle Paul which never leaves us. Will we ever see him again? And when? When will this most awful of all wars finally be over? We believe unwaveringly in a positive outcome, but which of us, we keep asking, shall be alive to see it?

31st January 1942

What luck that we have our child! Our [life] would be terrible, miserable.

7th February 1942

Again we can live a little longer. The transports to Poland have again been temporarily stopped. No one knows for how long, they might start again next week or it could take months. But we are modest and pleased that the nagging doubt has left us, for a while at least.

9th February 1942

Aunt Lisl, who already has so much to bear, has taken on a new worry. She is taking care of a child whose mother cannot care for it herself. The grandparents of the child, with whom he had been staying, had to leave. Little Walter is a sweet-natured, well behaved child […].

19th February 1942

The future stretches before us like a barren desert. Just here and there are tiny oases, small glimmers of hope which just about suffice to stop us from going under completely. But otherwise: bleak. The war doesn't seem to want to end. The more it spreads, the further its end is delayed. And we incorrigible optimists had hoped that America's entry would accelerate it. The war has already afforded terribly many victims. Not only those who fall at the fronts. Also from our circle, acquaintances and relations who had to perish in Poland. We ask ourselves in dismay, what right we have to emerge from this chaos unscathed.

28th March 1942

Now we have experienced after all that which we so feared when the war broke out and which we had so far wonderfully been spared. Air-raid warning! The horrible howling of the sirens awoke all four of us at once from a sound sleep. It was around half past two in the morning. Peter jumped straight out of bed and shouted angrily: "What is that? Stop it immediately, I don't want to hear it!" He wasn't afraid, just angry. Aunt Hilda got him dressed and we all went down to the cellar, to the air raid shelter. In response to Peter's question we bet on who could be dressed and in the cellar the fastest. […]

21st April 1942

We have had three terrible days. There was havoc as never before, almost two thousand round-ups took place. The grandparents and Aunt Lisl fled to us, as somebody had said it could maybe be helpful to not be at home. If someone had said to me a few years ago that such things could happen I would certainly have said "No, things like that can't happen these days". People who have never committed even the most minor of crimes – not even against the state which is so awfully persecuting them – are being hunted down, rounded up and treated like dangerous criminals. No, much worse! A criminal has at least a cot in his cell and gets his meals. These unfortunates are crammed into small rooms, three have to share a mattress. After a few days, they are "loaded" on to trucks, like sardines they are taken to the station and then they depart towards misery, hunger and for many towards death. It seems like a joke that everybody has to sign a paper prior to departure, stating that they voluntarily waive the right to all the possessions they are leaving behind. Yes, the Germans are the noblest civilized race in the world, as it said in the paper recently. Our loved

ones escaped this fate this time. That means it will now be peaceful for a few days. And then? Oh, if only one could pray!

23rd April 1942

We can breathe out again. The danger has passed again, one hopes that it will be calm for a while now. No one can know for sure. But we have become so poor and so modest that just a better, more optimistic mood is enough for us. But there is of course still no reason for us to be carefree. […]

18th May 1942

After a very brief period, during which the round-ups were a little less terrible, they have begun again but are much worse. It gets worse and worse. Until now they had always stopped in the evening, but now they "work" the whole night through. Such a horrible thought! People are dragged out of bed in the middle of the night and carried away without being able to see family and friends again. A few days later they depart for an unknown destination, which spells death for most. For what crime are these unfortunates being so badly punished? Had we not seen it ourselves we would not be able to believe that such bestiality existed. And this is our life now. Waiting and trembling from one day to the next. And still no sign of a change!

16th June 1942

The worst thing is awaking every morning. Like wild animals which had been restrained by sleep, the terrible things all overcome me. This daily awakening is indescribably sad. I remember everything immediately: how the telephone rang at half past five in the morning on that black day and Grandpa told us that Lisl had to go. We drove there immediately and arrived just as she was about to be the last to board the fully loaded truck. We could only give each other a quick hug, and then she was "loaded". My parents then explained to us: The stewards came at around midnight. The younger inhabitants of the apartment had to pack the whole night in order to be ready early in the morning. Our poor Lisl remained very brave all night and also tried to comfort my parents. The transport left the day before yesterday. We heard that the trucks would be driving over the Schweden Bridge at between two and five o'clock in the afternoon and we all stood there to see her one more time. Sadly on this day a different arrangement had been made and with heavy hearts we had to leave again without being able to catch one last glimpse of her. Our only hope remains that she survives it well and that this terrible time will soon be over.

29th June 1942

A dark day for me has reached a close. I was at the funeral of an aunt. As the only relatives among a few friends of the deceased, my parents had defied the ban on driving to also attend. She had not died of natural causes; she left this unbearable life voluntarily. Another victim (how many now?) of this torturous time. I am full of regret and blame myself for no longer taking care of her in her loneliness. Too late! How many more times will these bitter words hurt me?

1st July 1942

I often astound myself that I manage to find the strength to live and to bear all of this dreadfulness […] those who can work will get just enough to eat so that they don't starve. But the elderly who can't work? Simply letting them starve would be in keeping with all of the other bestiality. Aunt Lisl is young and, if also a little delicate, so healthy. I am certain we will see her again, she will survive. But the elderly grandparents?

4th July 1942

Children are ungrateful. Peter never asks after Aunt Lisl, and never talks of her. And he had always liked her so much, he surely loved her more than he loved me. He mentions her rarely and only in passing. […]

25th July 1942

We still haven't suffered enough misery until now. The day before yesterday, the grandparents were deported, exactly six weeks after Aunt Lisl. I feel numb from this new and most awful blow. My hope that the old people would be spared this fate was in vain. Although this awful day is ingrained upon my memory forever, I want to try, as far as possible, to calmly describe what happened on this day. At around 10 o'clock in the morning, the housekeeper of their building informed us by telephone that my parents were to be collected. We drove there and were, for once, able to enter the building. They had been packing all night. Grandma was admirable. She welcomed us calmly and smiling, as if she was about to go on holiday, she consoled me with loving words when she saw my despair. In the afternoon, I received another phone call, my parents were still in the apartment.

I drove there again and stayed until they were picked up at half past six in the evening. Those are the bare facts.

19th August 1942

There is something very strange about Peter's behavior regarding the disappearance of his grandparents and Aunt Lisl. At first, it hurt me that he never asked after them and then I realized that he purposely avoids the subject. He knows that there is something very different and sad about these sudden departures. It is completely different to when Aunt Hilda and Uncle Robert go on holiday and promise to be back soon. He was there for the terrible goodbye. He finds everything about it strange and he doesn't want to speak of it. It is the same for him as for me. Although I cannot stop thinking about it, I avoid speaking about it. It is awfully painful, like touching an open wound.

21st October 1942

Yesterday, it was three years since Paul left us. A sad anniversary! None of us ever thought then that we would still be apart in three years time. And the separation is not the worst of it. If only I had the slightest news of him, and from all of our other loved ones. It is horrific being completely cut off, unimaginable that human minds are able to come up with such evil as the writing ban. When will all the terrible crimes now being carried out against defenseless people finally be atoned? How many will survive to see the end? I have never been so despairing and lacking in hope as now. I still haven't told anyone because I can't bring myself to voice it: I no longer believe that any of my loved ones will survive this all. No one can imagine what depths of torture and pain this realization brings me. Were it not for Peter, who of course still needs me, I think I could easily decide not to drag on this miserable life anymore. It was not so long ago that, despite everything, I still had hope. But now I see more and more clearly that absolutely nothing is happening to bring this war to a swift conclusion and with it bring about our redemption. America has been in the war for nearly a year and hasn't undertaken anything in the slightest to influence events. One just waits. What does it matter if, in the meantime, a few thousand more Jews, Czechs and Poles perish?

23rd October 1942

Meanwhile, brutality against the few Jews who still remain here continues. They

get no flour, no pasta, no pulses, eggs, milk, cereals, fish, no meat, vegetables, fruit. What else is there? Pretty much only bread and potatoes. You can imagine what that means if you consider how hard it is for us to feed ourselves when we have had these groceries available to us, albeit in small amounts.

14th November 1942

Finally there is hope again. After a long period of deepest despair and hopelessness we can finally breathe out again. For more than a week now things have been rapidly progressing in Africa. For the fist time since the beginning of the war the great successes are on the other side and that gives us justifiable reason to feel encouraged again. It should just go faster!

30th December 1942

[...] I'm living with an indescribable state of mind, if you can even call it living. Whatever I do or say, see or hear, wherever I am, the torturous thoughts of my loved ones don't leave me for a moment. What are they having to go through? You hear such terrible things about the fate of the unfortunates. No signs of life, only torturous uncertainty. Apparently people are permitted to write from Theresienstadt, a few have already written, but my parents haven't yet. What will have happened to them? Will I see them again, will they be able to hold out to the end? We started this year full of hope as well. It did not materialize. But despite everything, we believe that the new year won't disappoint our optimism.

5th February 1943

Yesterday the first message from Theresienstadt arrived. Oh, I would rather it hadn't! A card with insignificant news, written by Papa. And no word, no greeting, not the smallest mention of Mama. I am numb with pain, I don't think I can stand this torture for much longer. Or can there be a harmless explanation for this card? Oh hope! I can't give up entirely.

8th February 1943

I would never have thought before that if someone can only think of terrible things, they are also in a position to continue living as if nothing had happened. I do my daily tasks, everything necessary that has to be done for Peter is done. Nothing can be left out. But I suffer indescribably. And keep searching for explanations. Maybe they are living apart and are each only writing for themselves in order to

receive double the permitted amount of cards and care packages? Oh, if only that were the case!

10th February 1943
I am still hopeful and wait daily for mail. Will it not come? Will I really not [receive] any sign from my darling, lovely mother?

8th April 1943
Things are going terribly downhill for me. I don't think I'll be able to stand this state of despair and hopelessness much longer. I'm often scared I'll go mad. But hopefully I'll be spared that. The hope that I will see my loved ones again decreases from one day to the next. It would be nothing short of miraculous if they were to come back. And I know, as long as I live, I will never get over losing them in such a terrible way. Is there any [point] at all any more?

12th April 1943
I had a huge surprise this morning. I received a letter from Aunt Grete in America. […] Grete had apparently written to my parents and received no reply. "[…] Where are [they] and are they alright? How is your family? Nothing from Paul." […] Unfortunately, I wasn't able to provide her with any consolation, only that: "Parents in Theresienstadt since end of July, only news from Papa on one occasion. Lisl left end of June, location unknown. Nothing from Paul. We are well. Lots of love, Martha". Poor sister! How she will suffer now too. The words in her letter upset me terribly. Nothing from Paul! Until now, I had always hoped that she had already received news of him. Russia and America are allies, so it must be possible for the people in Russia to write to America. I don't want to think about it but cannot stop. The same thoughts won't stop going round and round in my head.

3rd May 1943
Yesterday was a joyful day! We received a card from Mama. After months of torturous waiting. She is alive, healthy and well! (To the extent that those poor people there in exile can be well.) But it means a lot for me to know that she is there. I almost had no more hope! She also only writes about herself, and the reason for this behavior is probably that, in doing so, she can receive more mail and packages. What a shame that I didn't receive the card a few weeks earlier, I could have written something different to Grete and saved her unnecessary worry. Now I only want one thing: that a miracle may happen and I also receive a sign of life from Paul and Lisl!

11th May 1943
In the last difficult weeks, I wouldn't have thought it possible that cares and worries would become more bearable, that my hopes would rise again so soon. This was brought on, above all, by Mama's card. As improbable as it seemed that she was still alive – now the improbable has come true. Maybe it is foolish to draw conclusions about other cases from this one. Paul and Lisl's circumstances are unfortunately completely different, but despite this I am hopeful for both of them. Because despite everything which can be said to prove the impossibility that they could survive everything which they will surely have to bear, it is also possible, as in Mama's case, that they are alive and healthy and we will be able to hold them in our arms again sometime. And that this happens as soon as possible, because the war is going more favorably than ever.

9th June 1943
How much longer will it last? The terrible war continues. There are people who still [give] it three or four more years. We don't believe that. We can't believe it, as otherwise we would completely despair. It is progressing from our point of view, but slowly, much too slowly for our impatience. And every week, every day longer endangers our loved ones further. We too will probably not be spared if the war lasts even longer. It is very probable that Papa or I or both of us will be "deployed" somewhere in the Labor Service, as it is so nicely termed. I don't even wish to speak of the multitude of suffering that this war has caused the whole world. There are no words strong enough to express what would be said about it.

11th June 1943
Today it has been one year since we last saw our poor Lisl. How has she been getting on during this whole, terrible year! Is she still alive? Oh how I hope, I hope she survives this terrible time. […]

11th August 1943
When we returned home from holiday, we found two cards from Theresienstadt. One from Mama and the other from Aunt Johanna. At first we were overjoyed.

But then we were again filled with torturous doubt. For on the card which was signed "Mama and Grandma", "Frieda Better" was recorded as the sender. That alone would not have been so terrible, it could have been necessary to give another name for some reason or another, what crushed me is that the card is not in Mama's handwriting. Why oh why didn't she write the card herself? Can there be a reason for this?

18th September 1943

Two cards arrived from Theresienstadt, one from Mama and one from Auntie. It seems they have got private quarters, two different addresses are given instead of "Gu 306" as previously. But what drives me to worry and despair is that there is still no word from Mama written in her own hand. What can be the reason for this? This and the events in Italy are shattering me again. It's just terrible. One week ago our hopes and cheery expectations had reached a peak and now this terrible disappointment!

11th October 1943

After a long period of hearing nothing, yesterday we received a card from Theresienstadt from Frieda Better. But our joy only lasted a few seconds. I saw immediately that the card was not in Mama's handwriting. What is the reason for this, why doesn't Papa finally write, what does it mean? Each card like this drives me further to fear and despair. It is strange, this raising and dashing of hopes. There are days on which I am very optimistic, but these are becoming few and far between. Then there are days when it seems that all hope is lost that I will ever see Mama, Paul and Lisl ever again. I can't even begin to describe my mood. I would really like to give up on this life and were it not for Peter, who knows whether I wouldn't have already done it.

25th October 1943

The days of deepest despair are becoming more frequent. My hope of ever again seeing the three most beloved and dear to me after my husband and child has almost reached rock bottom. I have heard more horrific things about the fates of those deported to Poland. It is so supremely terrible that I can't bring myself to write it down. But since then I have been sick, completely decimated. Our poor, sweet Lisl, defenselessly delivered to these murderous beasts! This degree of suffering that a being so innocent and good through and through as she has to suffer can only be imagined. No, I cannot express what terrible pain is coursing through me. And I have to bear it alone – I cannot and will not let Papa, who is still hopeful, also bear this terrible burden.

29th October 1943

I have been confined to my bed for two days. Today I got up, although I am not completely recovered. But my work is needed in just about every area and besides, I can't stand lying in bed any longer. I've got tonsillitis. The headaches, which lasted several days, and my at times high temperature were more unpleasant than the sore throat. But what are these physical complaints compared to the mental anguish that I have to bear?

8th November 1943

Good, relatively speedy progress is being made on all fronts, in Russia and in Italy. Relatively! If we didn't have to fear for people, for whom each day at war spells mortal danger, we could be well satisfied with this tempo. But no, under no circumstances can this be said. This terrible war has been raging for four years and two months, and still no one can guess when it will be over. The last World War lasted four years and three months, but months before, everybody could reckon with it not lasting much longer. Now all cleverly calculated predictions have failed. It is only certain that it will be fought to the bitter end. How long?

13th March 1944

The 13th March, a meaningful date. Our misfortune commenced six years ago today. At first though, our lives didn't change. But fear of something terrible, inevitable, was there. And the inevitable happened. It happened on 9th November and with it, the beginning of the terrible persecution of the Jews. The shops were closed down, property confiscated. Then my parents had to vacate the apartment where they had lived for decades. The war broke out, a few weeks later, Paul was deported. Soon after, Lisl had to give up her flat as well. And then the endless chain of terrible torments did not cease. Sadistic minds came up with new ways to torment us on a daily basis. The reduction of the food rations, the armbands with the Star of David and cramming people into mass accommodation weren't the worst of it. The most terrible thing, of which we lived in daily and hourly fear, were the deportations. In the end, this blow struck us too. It will soon have been two years since Lisl and my parents left. The war appears to be taking a turn for

the better. But just one question keeps returning to haunt me: will they also live to see the end, will we finally see each other again?

16th March 1944

Even if we did not have any great worries, this life that we have been forced to live would still not be a pleasant one. We are not "living" anymore, just existing. Just work and duties from early in the morning to late at night […].

7th June 1944

The invasion, the long awaited and hoped for invasion has finally begun! Yesterday morning in Normandy. The day before, the fall of Rome was reported and yesterday, the commencement of the invasion. Two very promising reports for us. There are people who are already predicting the war to be over in August or early November at the latest. I cannot share such optimism. I have already been disappointed too often. But at any rate, our prospects aren't looking too bad. The withdrawal in Italy is progressing unexpectedly rapidly. Of course, no one can say how things will progress in France. But the beginning was promising. So here's hoping!

17th June 1944

Peter is feeling better, but I am feeling all the worse. After an initial noticeable improvement after my visit to the doctor, in recent days I have suffered a catastrophic setback. And I don't know whether my poor physical state is a result of my mental anguish or the other way around. Particularly in the evenings, I feel so miserable that I only have one desire: to lie down and be released from everything. Papa and Peter? Oh, they would get over it, I don't believe that I am irreplaceable. The knowledge that life has nothing left to offer me has prevailed in me. Sometimes I can buck myself up, try to gather myself. It is as if I heard a voice: "What have you done with your life!" And the guilt bears down on me, the guilt that I have ruined my life myself. But then everything is once again drowning in hopelessness. I feel as if I cannot stop myself sliding downwards and want to cry for help! A cry for help that nobody can hear!

19th July 1944

The war continues. Unendingly. At the beginning of the invasions many people were saying, full of hope, Papa included, "Only until the fall!" But progress in France is terribly slow. On the other hand, the Russians are advancing at a

tremendous pace, they are only a few kilometers from the East Prussian border, but sadly that alone will not suffice to end the war. All sides are now fighting with such embitterment, as if the war had only just begun and had not been going on for five years. Or they all want to do everything in their power to end it. Terrible, this murder can only be termed as terrible!

21st July 1944

An assassination attempt on the *Führer*! Sadly, it failed. The whole world could have been released, the war could have been over tomorrow if it had succeeded. What a shame! The conspirators and perpetrators were generals. They will have to pay a terrible price for wanting to free people from this monster. But it has also become clear now what a lie the claim was that the entire armed forces remained unwavering in their fidelity to the *Führer*. What will happen next? I fear it will not be positive for us.

24th August 1944

Yesterday I received a card from the Aunt who is also in Theresienstadt. It is crushing. The card leads me to believe with certainty that my dear Mama is no longer alive. It is still not directly stated on the card, but the Aunt wrote that she is often in Papa's company and that Papa received food from Grete via Lisbon. So Mama was not mentioned at all. How awful! How I had always hoped to see her loving, kind hearted eyes again, to feel her tender touch, the only person for whom I was still a child, who loved me unconditionally! It must have been so bitter for her, not to have had any of us around her. Oh, to think I know nothing of what has happened to her! Poor, poor Mama! When Paul had to leave, she said knowingly "I will never see him again." And despite this she was full of optimism and comforted me when she had to leave herself. Oh, dear Mama, if only I could see you once more so I could tell you how much I love you!

26th August 1944

That was a tough week! The alarm sounded every morning. They only flew over, except on one occasion, but this one time was severe. Buildings in the center of the city were hit for the first time, in the fifth and seventh districts. So, you see we are not as safe as we thought we were. Strangely, I am not at all afraid. Unlike Aunt Hilda! I don't know whether to laugh at her or be annoyed. I just worry that she will make Peter scared, which we have so far managed to avoid.

2nd October 1944

It has been nearly two months since we received that letter in which we were ordered to give notification of a couple with a "mixed marriage" [a marriage between a Jewish and an "aryan" partner] with whom we could move in within 5 days. Thanks to Papa's efforts, it seemed that the matter had been dealt with, although I was terribly worried again after the 10th September. But on Saturday, a man from the Reich Regional Accommodation Office came and viewed the apartment, looking in every nook and cranny, recorded everything in great detail and then declared that as the apartment actually consisted of two apartments we would now have to make do with one, consisting of one larger room, a kitchen and a smaller room. All of Papa's protests – that Aunt Hilda was the main tenant, that he needed his room to work and so on – were brushed off with a shrug. Today, Papa spoke to a few people who are knowledgeable in these matters and received some fairly comforting information. Above all that the apartment cannot be withdrawn from the main tenant and the sub-tenants cannot be evicted. It would, however, be possible for the apartment to be deemed too large and one room confiscated. So for now we can only wait and see.

23rd October 1944

What more will we have to deal with? Until now we had thought that nothing more or worse than that which has already occurred can happen to us. But it seems the worst is yet to come. A few days ago, a decree was issued for the establishment of the so-called *Volkssturm* [territorial army designed to act as a home guard]. All men between 16 (!) and 60 who have not yet been conscripted into the armed forces must register. They don't receive a uniform, just a weapon, and will be "deployed" wherever necessary. That means they will be a kind of partisan or sniper, who the opposition will certainly also deal with afterwards! And Papa, who has so far been unfit for service also has to register. This is another hard blow. We can see no way out of this terrible situation. We are caught like a mouse in a trap. So this is what the long awaited and longed for end of the war looks like!

25th October 1944

It was five years yesterday since Paul had to leave. Who of us would ever have thought back then that after five long, terrible years, we would still be apart and not have the faintest idea of each others' whereabouts! Of course we said goodbye with heavy hearts, but we were optimistic! "In a year at most we will all have survived this unscathed," we said to each other. Now five years have passed and look at what has happened in these years. My parents and Lisl deported as well and I don't even know if any of them are still alive. I think of my distant loved ones daily, always, with pain and longing.

1st December 1944

It is a strange feeling, having an enemy and not knowing who he is. We live quietly and don't harm anybody and there is somebody in our surroundings who is always doing things to us. It began with the charges in Leiding [a small place near Pitten]. Later, the notification to the employment office came, which was obviously the cause for my "deployment". Then one day, the housekeeper of our building was approached by an unknown woman wearing the Party emblem. This woman knew of my work from home and declared that she wanted to "harm" me, I would have to go to work in a factory. Two weeks ago, a man from the local branch [of the National Socialist party] came to order Papa to join the clearing work. Papa could only escape this by showing his doctor's certificates. And for now, the last thing to happen in this merry dance was another summons in this matter concerning the apartment. Due to a complaint.

1st January 1945

A terrible year has passed, and a much worse one, or so it seems, lies ahead of us. We will see when we reach its end and be relieved if we were wrong. That is if we live to see its end. Our prospects are in any case dismal. A German offensive has been deployed in the West which has so far proved successful. And in the East there has been fighting in and around Budapest for weeks. The city is being doggedly "defended", which actually means mercilessly destroyed. Life there must be hell. In a few months we will have this hell here, but to a much greater extent. Only a miracle can save us. But the time for miracles seems to be well and truly over.

20th January 1945

The appalling war! Millions of people are stubbornly letting themselves be killed, are letting their apartments be destroyed without making even the slightest attempt to rebel. When will the madness finally have finally run its course? I think about the near future with dread. Will the bombs destroy us, will the war kill us, will we die or starve when we flee? I can't see how we can be saved!

21st March 1945

In addition to the great worries, there are repeated smaller horrors, which in themselves are ultimately also bad enough. No gas, no light, no water. The apartment is getting run down, nothing can be cleaned properly, nothing gets repaired any more. One just doesn't have the time or the mind for it. It could all be broken again tomorrow! We are also neglecting ourselves. Even Peter's weekly bath poses difficulties, it is often not possible at all.

24th March 1945

This week there were two more big raids, although we noticed them to a lesser extent, as this time they rather affected the outer districts. It could be our turn again next. It is curious how quickly most people's despair is replaced by hope, not only ours, when given cause by the current status of the war. At the moment things are looking very good again, the advance in the West is progressing fairly rapidly, the big cities on the Rhine have already fallen. So we are hopeful again!

2nd April 1945

Yesterday a breakthrough was reported south of Wiener Neustadt. If things continue at this rate, they could be in Vienna in four to five days. There are whisperings that Vienna is to be declared an open city. I don't believe it after everything we have heard so far from the powers that be. It is, however, remarkable that there are no preparations for a defense to be seen being made anywhere in the city. A sad Easter with the loveliest spring weather! But Peter got his Easter rabbit cake and Easter eggs and candy and books and Reichsmark. He was very happy and contented, despite the fact that he has also been infected by the general agitation and – as far as I can tell – is well aware of the events unfolding around him.

4th April 1945

The agitation increases by the hour. Yesterday morning it was announced that Vienna "will be defended to the last breath". That means that the fate of Budapest and many other German cities awaits us. There are posters everywhere: Vienna was declared a defense zone. Women and children are recommended (!) to leave the city. Nothing is mentioned of their accommodation. There are also not many who leave. All others, us included, are busily furnishing the cellar to make it habitable. How much longer can it last? The Russians have already reached Baden according to the latest report.

6th April 1945

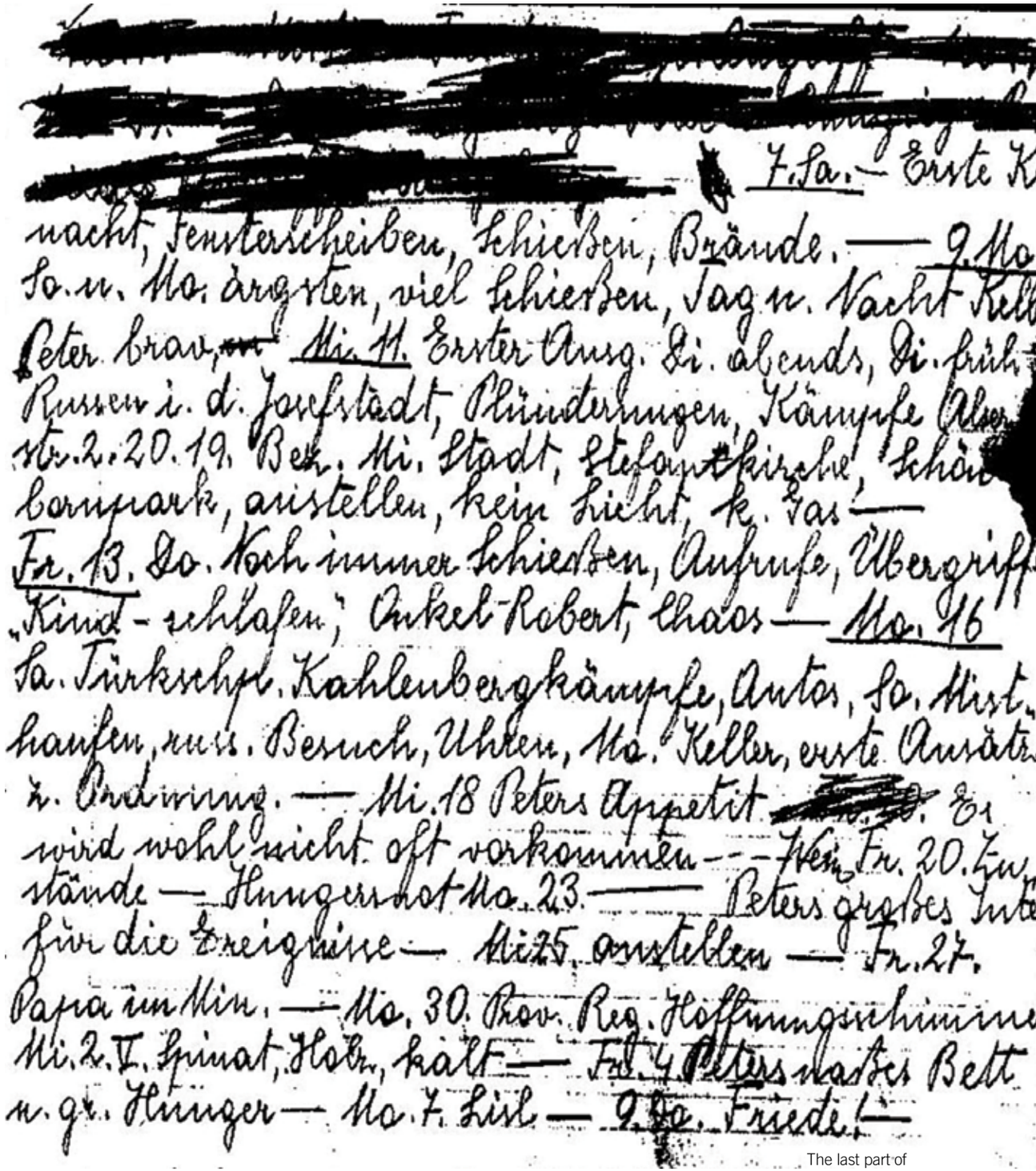
Yesterday at between 4 and 5 in the morning I suddenly awoke. A muffled "boom boom" had awakened me. The first canon shots. The fight for Vienna has begun. They are not yielding, they want to "defend" Vienna, that means turn it into a pile of rubble and destroy its inhabitants. But hopefully they won't succeed in carrying out this noble intention. It is curious how calm I am now. And it almost seems as though many of the Viennese are no longer so afraid. For they are standing in long queues in front of the shops, as many goods have been cleared for sale at the last minute, and are not being scared away by the incessant thunder of the canons. Peter participates livelily in all that is happening. With his good memory, these difficult days will probably stay ingrained on his mind forever.

11th April 1945

We have now survived the worst of it unscathed. I now want to describe chronologically what happened on these days. On Friday, at six in the evening – Peter was already asleep – the thunder of the canons and fire from the artillery was so bad that we decided to spend the night in the cellar. Peter slept like a baby in his cellar bed and unexpectedly so did I, only poor Papa was in a bad position. In the morning we re-entered the apartment to cook and clean up etc. It almost seemed as if the noise of the battle had quietened down a little. But after lunch there was suddenly a loud bang. The window panes rattled and shattered, dust filled the air. What had happened? A grenade had hit the neighboring house. It only cost us seven window panes. But now we will have to move into the cellar once and for all. Everyone else in our building came too. We didn't spend the whole time in the cellar, we sometimes hung around in the hall in front of the cellar door and sometimes even dared to go into the courtyard when it got a bit quieter. In the evening we returned to the apartment to eat supper. But the whistling of the grenades and the glow of the huge fires was so disconcerting that we hurried to get ourselves back to the cellar. Sunday, 8 am, a beautiful day for an excursion, but the thunder of the canons, the whistle of the grenades and the rat-a-tat of the machine guns and rifles was very bad all day. Only now and then did we take a few steps into the courtyard. Papa called them "prison walks". In a quieter moment we risked a look at the street. You can imagine how we felt what we saw a canon standing a few steps away from our building!

From 7th April 1945 until the liberation in May 1945, only fragmented entries exist. For Dr. Peter S., this seems to document the total disappearance of his mother's remaining energy.

7th Sat. – First night in cellar, window panes, shooting, fires – 9th Mon. – Son. and Mon. the worst, much shooting, cellar day and night, Peter well behaved, Weds. 11th First walk outside, Tues. eve., Tues morn. Russians in Josefstadt, pillaging, battles, Alserstr. 2nd, 20th, 19th districts Weds. City, St. Stephan's, Schönborn Park, queuing, no light, no gas – Fri. 13th Thurs. Still shooting, calling, attacks, "child – sleep", Uncle Robert, chaos – Mon. 16th Sat. Türkenschanz Park, battles on the Kahlenberg, cars, Son. Dung heap, Russ. visit, watches, Mon. Cellar, first signs of order. – Weds. 18th Peter's appetite It probably won't happen very often – wine. Fri. 20th Conditions – starvation Mon. 23rd – Peter's great interest in events – Weds. 25rd queuing up – Fri. 27th Papa in Min. – Mon. 30th Prov. gov. glimmer of hope. Weds. 2nd 5. Spinach, wood, cold – Fri. 4th Peter's wet bed and great hunger – Mon. 7th Lisl – 9th Thurs. Peace! –



The last part of Martha S.'s diary

Susan Course's mother
Hertha Langer

PHOTO: SUSAN COURSE

It is **a good country** to which you are headed

Susan Course, Australia, born 1933

Susan Course was born on 27th December 1933. She was almost five years old when she left Vienna with her family in August 1938. At this time, one uncle was already in a concentration camp, another uncle had committed suicide to escape persecution. After the Langer family's arrival in Australia on 7th November 1938, Susan's father Peter Langer had great difficulties finding work. In Vienna he had been a respected lawyer – in Australia his qualifications were not recognized. Because they spoke German, her parents were also suspected of being spies and were reported to the police by their neighbors.

The following diary entries were written by Susan's mother, Hertha Langer, who had kept a diary since her childhood, from which the first entries are taken. A short entry more than twenty years later gives an insight into her feelings living in exile during the war.

Vienna, 24th December 1919

Christmas Day Today, on Christmas Day, I received the diary. My brother and I had been awaiting this day with eager anticipation. I got up in the morning and was excited all day long. But most of all after lunch. I just didn't know what to do with myself. My sister, who is only three, passed the time by singing. Grandma and Grandpa finally arrived. They came straight to us children. My sister was very funny and boisterous.

At 5 o'clock, our servant girl, Poldi, called us for tea. After teatime we went back to our rooms. I suddenly heard my brother shout, "The bell rang", for the bell was a signal that we were to come. We hurried into the study. This year I was very pleased with the decorations. A large Christmas tree, which reached from floor to ceiling, had been erected. My sister stared at the Christmas tree with wonder. When I had gazed at the Christmas tree for long enough, I moved on to my toys. I received four books, a

needlework box, a beaded jewelry making set, a nine men's morris and checkers game, a knife and tissues, a calendar, an inkwell and this diary. I received it from Aunt Elsa. I played with my new things for the whole evening

Vienna, 9th November 1920

A Day from my Youth: Today I awoke very late. I quickly got dressed; my little four-year-old sister had also already been dressed. My little sister is called "Paulinchen" or little Pauline. Paulinchen was very happy, as today she had gym. We left the house at half past nine and the gym class lasted from 10–11. We had to run a few errands. As soon as these were done, we returned home. In the afternoon, I had gym class. When I returned home, I had a snack, practiced piano, bathed and ate supper and went to bed.

Vienna, 14th January 1921

A Day from my Youth: School didn't begin until 9 today. We had the following subjects: religious education, geography, French, German. The recesses were great fun as always. When I arrived home after school, my little sister was eating lunch. She is too young to eat with the others. In the afternoon I had gym. In the evening, however, before and after supper, I sat and confided the day's happenings to you, my diary.

Australia, 27th May 1941

My father died on 6th April. I only heard about it on 7th May. I will never see him again. Sometimes I do not believe it is possible that we will survive this war. I cannot foresee an end to it.

In a letter to a relative, Hertha Langer describes the anticipation and preparations for their arrival in Australia.

Australia, 6th February 1939

Dearest Lottchen, above all, I would like to heartily congratulate you on your birthday. You are standing at the gates to a new future, and we wish you the best for the coming year. We will celebrate your birthday together in our thoughts. You've already moved quite a lot nearer to us and we can hardly wait for the day when we can pick you up from the ship. We have all left so much that was beloved behind us in Vienna, and it's not easy to get over it. We want to believe that we and you will succeed in finding a new homeland. It is a good country to which you

are headed. You don't need to worry about Peter not yet having found anything. It was his intention from the beginning to wait for various people and begin something together with them. I believe that there are considerable opportunities for an upstanding man.

Peter answered an advert for you and received the following answer: *I am in receipt of your letter in regard to your sister Mrs. C. Müller. The appointment committee has asked me to tell you that we are very much interested in what you tell us about your sister. On her arrival in the middle of March we will be very glad to interview Mrs. Müller, when she would be able to supply us with her testimonials and full details of her work. It is quite possible that we may have a vacancy in which Mrs. Müller might be interested.*

That sounds very good. I don't think you will have any difficulties at all in finding a position. We hoped that you would send us a telegram when you left Vienna. We are very anxious to find out if everything went okay. I assume that you will really board the ship in Southampton on the 10th. Hopefully the notorious Bay of Biscay will treat you kindly.

Suzi also sends her heartfelt congratulations, but she wanted to write you absolutely nothing apart from that she saw a dead dog on the street. When I told her that wasn't an appropriate subject for a birthday, she said I should also write that a dog at the station was so cute. Next week she returns to kindergarten. In theory, we can move into our new house in two weeks, but we will still have to wait a long time for our furniture. Last week we sent a telegram to Kubischek requesting the departure date and name of your ship. He answered: 14th February, steamer […]. That means we will barely receive our furniture by the end of March. Since we have rented the villa from 1st March we will have to buy so much just to provisionally run the household.

Your first letter from outside Germany will be cause for great celebration for us and we are anxiously awaiting it.

We wish you a pleasant and calm voyage and once again congratulate you warmly.
Hertha Peter Susi

… how wonderful it is **to be free**

Victor Gans, USA, born 1910

Victor Gans was born on 2nd October 1910. He was a businessman and ran a shop with his family in Linz.

In his diary, which he wrote retrospectively in Shanghai, Victor Gans describes the unrest in Austria shortly before the *Anschluss*, the situation following it and the first arrests, including his own. A while later, Victor Gans was released under the condition that he leave the country within six weeks. The subsequent time is shaped by organization in preparation for his departure. However, during the course of the November pogroms, Victor Gans and his brother Rudi were arrested again. They volunteered for forced labor in Puchenau in order to avoid the concentration camp Dachau, which was already notorious in 1938. Finally, that which everyone had feared came to be. Victor Gans, his brothers Rudi and Gustav and his brother-in-law Luis were deported to Dachau.

Victor Gans' 90-page diary, from which the following excerpt is taken, was provided to us in English by his niece Gila Shapiro.

DRAWING: GILA SHAPIRO

Victor Gans drew this sketch of the Dachau camp

Not a day passed which did not bring new arrests and acts of terror against the Jews. One day, it was July 12th 1938, when I was downstairs in the shop, I had a call from Valy suggesting that I come immediately upstairs. Immediately I sensed what was up. I really was not a bit excited when I took a cigarette, knowing that it would be the last time for quite a while. Then I went upstairs where two Gestapo men were already waiting for me. Unfortunately, I did not have any second thoughts when they assured me that I would only have to make a few declarations and explanations at headquarters, and failed to take anything along. Fact was that they took me without hesitation to the police prison in the Mozartstrasse. Valy cried a lot, but I kept my cool, keeping the old proverb in mind "who beds down with dogs is bound to wake up with fleas". Living in a country run by gangsters and criminals, I had to expect anything since I was not considered a human being, but a Jew.

At prison they went through the paper work, had me empty my pockets and took away everything including my suspenders. Then I was moved to cell number six, on the ground floor, and I found myself in the company of many fellow Jews. Hugo Mostny was "cell commander" – he was there since the very beginning, Eisenberger and Fried, one man from Vienna, another one from Ebensee, Dr. Schneeweis from Steyr and later Koblitz and Mr. Heinrich joined us. They all stared at me and fired numerous questions anxious to know what was happening on the outside. How is this one and that one, they wanted to know, sitting hopeless on their mattresses, staring into the empty space. And all the time the same question comes up "why and for what reasons?" All of these men were hard working, honest and decent people, there for no other reason than being Jewish. Irony or paradox was the fact that the man from Ebensee had long before converted to Catholicism and so had Fried and Hugo Mostny and embraced Protestantism. With respect to Mostny, there may have been an explanation for his arrest for he was said to be a homosexual, although with people such as Capt. Roehm and his friends such deviation should hardly prove reason for incarceration.

After I was only a few hours in that cell, Mr. Heinrich and I were transferred to a single cell on the third floor. In the past, I had read about cells without handles on the doors, darkened windows with heavy iron bars, mean jailers and such things usually found in prisons; now I had the chance to see them for myself. The jailer, his jingling key chain in hand, escorted us upstairs, opened a heavy door and led

us into the single cell. Not a single word was spoken. After all we were murderers, thieves, bandits or – in the eyes of the Third Reich – worse yet – Jews: a squeaky noise and we were alone, facing the door covered with metal sheets and a hole in the middle through which we could be watched. Underneath this observation hole was another opening for passing the "meals". There was a slight similarity between the food and the cell which was painted green, a sickening shade, as mean looking as the knobless door. Above was an opening for ventilation, covered with shades which opened into the corridor. To the left was a water closet, the only item providing relief in the cell, a washbasin and also a faucet with running water; right next to it a small, improvised table built right into the wall and a small designed bench. Designed for one person. Opposite stood an iron bed. To the right of the door there was a big window, on the inside a rather thin mesh, but heavily barred on the outside. The view was into a corridor with lots of traffic of people coming and going. This was our cell: 4ft long and 7 ½ ft wide, apparently home for quite a while. We were just about to look around a bit when the cell door opened again to admit another guest; none other than my cousin Friedl Fried. Right after the door closed behind him, he plunked himself down on the mattress exclaiming, "Everybody can kiss my ass!" This was our trio. To begin with, we discussed all the most recent happenings; this was followed by estimates how long we would be kept there. It is a human reaction – that anybody imprisoned is softened up for all sorts of confessions and thefts – finds some comfort to resort to through language and expressions which allow him to let some steam off.

They came to fetch us after two hours when they took us to a room on the 1st floor. There, in line with the requirements and provisions for all hard criminals, we were photographed from all sides, then fingerprinted and then back to our "home cell". I was unable to check myself when a policeman during the procedure said "so now you cannot take anything anymore which does not belong to you". I simply replied, "So far things that were taken from us were never yours before". The policeman even smiled knowingly.

I must confess that most of the policemen – with very few exceptions – were not too bad. The main reason for that may be that they had not turned into brutes as yet, that they knew we were innocent and, last but not least, the new regime had also dealt them a blow to a certain degree. Up till Hitler's takeover, the Austrian police enjoyed a lot of prestige and authority which had been taken from them by

the SS which ran everything. Police, more or less, had become night watchmen while Germans from the Third Reich, loud-mouthed and obnoxious, handled all administrative matters. You could read their faces when gray-haired policemen, with rank of inspectors, had to stand at attention in front of young punks in SS uniforms. We had such a pleasure when a young hoodlum in SS uniform, by the name of Martin, came into our cell, asking everybody's name, age and why we were in jail. When Heinrich replied, "This I really do not know" he was given the simple answer, "Because you are a Jew". He made no bones about it although Goering had just previously declared that nobody would be imprisoned simply for being a Jew. Needless to say, we had to jump to attention when this young Martin interrogated us. In view of the fact that his visits always occurred during the night when we were in our shorts, we were not exactly presentable. He always brought quite a following of policemen who stood at attention at proper distances. They had not fared too well either. A few months before they would have dealt with such a young punk differently – a kick in his ass would have done the trick. Now under the Third Reich, it was "attention" in front of these miserable characters. […]

It was *verboten* to keep the hands on the back and there was a good reason also for this madness. Being in jail was bad for anybody, but worse still for heavy smokers and only those who do [smoke] can sympathize with their plight. Hour after hour in a cell without a smoke can drive one to insanity. Now and then one of the lucky ones found a butt in the corridor. This treasure was hidden and there was the problem also about the necessary match. This was arranged with the help of the *Fatzis* (those who brought the food or did some cleaning jobs, frequently prisoners who had been there over a long period of time, or who were favored by some guards for one reason or another.) These "middlemen" knew their ways around to get cigarettes and matches, but unfortunately they were few and far between. It was a lucky day when one came across such winners during a walking session. It was an exciting moment when one of the men indicated he had a butt – which meant to get behind him and not to draw the attention of the guard – and with his hands in the back one finally managed to get hold of the smoke. That explains the prohibition of holding one's hands on the back. Nobody can realize how I suffered; particularly during the first week, when I longed for a cigarette even more than liberty and freedom. Freedom only meant a chance to smoke to ones heart's desire. […]

Occasionally we were lucky and managed – in the morning when the cell door was opened or when the opening in the door was not shut – to see a few trees and green leaves in the street. It was with childish pleasure that we cherished the sight of it and every Saturday – a special celebration – when relatives were permitted to bring us fresh underwear and linens. A reminder that there was still an outside. Valy brought me shirts, shorts, socks and even another pair of shoes. It was wonderful and yet so terribly sad to know your beloved wife [was] so near and yet we were not allowed to see or speak with them. […]

We were all haunted by the thought of "Dachau", the notorious concentration camp. I shall never forget the night when we all jumped up awakened by noise. Smetana, who still had his watch due to oversight, said it was 3 am. We knew that this was the hour when those destined for Dachau were picked up. Soon we heard the opening of the heavy iron door and footsteps coming closer and closer. We held our breath and there were no words to describe how one feels during those seconds of uncertainty – whether we had been "selected". Footsteps approached our door and then… they bypassed us. Another door was opened and we heard clear and distinctly: "Samuely, get going". Then another door: "Guertler on your feet." So they caught old Samuely. He was said to have made some derogatory remarks about the regime in the park. If true, he would have had enough reason, that poor fellow. […]

One night – it was already past 11 pm – the door opened again and an old gentleman was admitted. Distinguished looking, of small build and neatly dressed, just as if he had been planning to join a garden party. He came without toothbrush, shorts, shirt or soap. Just as they found him in Bad Ischl, he was picked up, accused by a local prostitute that he had made improper advances to her. Looking at the old man, it would have been funny, were it not so sad to know that even a prostitute's word was good enough to get the old man in jail, as long as he was a Jew. The next morning he was taken to the office to confess. He refused. He was kicked in his chest so severely that he was black and blue and we all admired his courage considering his age. He had told them to kill him or shoot him but he would never confess to anything he did not do. He was really a brave old man. And so life went on. […]

Finally, after three weeks, a man from the Gestapo came to take Fried and me to the examination room. Who can describe the joy and elation? Everything

was forgotten and a thing of the past. The Gestapo man told us that we had to walk from the prison headquarters, something we dreaded, because we looked like criminals. Three weeks without a shave and wrinkled garments – we were an embarrassing sight. Meanwhile, we were joined by Victor Spitz (a friend), who had been kept in another jail for the past three months and was to be released just as we were. Carefully I inquired whether it was not possible to be taken there by car. Sure enough, I was successful and that was how we got to the Langgasse in an open car. On the way I saw my brother Gus, who was riding his bicycle. He followed us and as we left the car I had a chance to tell him that we were to be released. In passing, I also saw our house and noticed that the store windows were rearranged. It was a beautiful summer day and I was amazed how life was going on as before, for in the dark cell one felt as if all wheels had come to a standstill. One could not conceive that women were still doing their buying; that people were still sitting in coffee shops and that life was going on as if nothing had ever happened. After an eternity, I was to live again behind doors which had handles, to smoke whenever I pleased and to go wherever l liked. It was almost beyond imagination. […]

Finally I signed that I had told the truth and nothing but the truth and was told that I had to leave "Greater Germany" within a period of six weeks. I agreed heartily, hoping that aryans would take over our business in the meantime. I also assured him that I wanted to get away as soon as possible and that it was the red tape from officials that had prevented me so far. He replied that this was my business and that I would not have any peace from the Gestapo and there was always Dachau, so the best thing I could do was to beat it as fast as possible. Then I was finished and allowed to leave on my own – without a guard.

Again, nobody can understand how I felt that moment. I did not walk, nor did I run – I practically flew the steps till l reached the street and Valy. With a beard, without a collar and in my get-up, I looked terrible, so Rudi raced for a taxi. We waited behind a door and then drove once again back to the prison to pick up my things. Back in the cell I said goodbye to my cellmates as they watched sadly how I put my things together and had to promise each one to bring regards to their loved ones. Watched by a guard, I could not keep track of all my assignments, but pressed the hand of each fellow, whose eyes followed me as I left. I went back to the cab and then home. Else Fried, her boy and my in-laws treated me to a warm

welcome. Before I could go to the badly missed bathroom, Rudi managed to snap my picture for I wanted it as a visual reminder, but unfortunately something had gone wrong with the camera and I never got the shot. What a luxury to sit again in a bathtub to shave. What a feeling – like a big shot or host – to wear clean things again. All this – a good cup of coffee – cake – bread and butter – and a cigarette smoked unhurriedly and in the open. Life was worth living again. Those who find life boring should get themselves locked up, for only then will they appreciate how wonderful it is to be free. […]

[November 7th 1938] was the day when we read in the paper that a young Jew named Grünspan [Herschel Grynszpan] had shot a German in Paris [embassy official Ernst vom Rath] and, needless to say, we worried what hardship and additional reprisals it would bring upon us Jews. The following morning – it was just about 8 am – when I was busy burning mother's mementos – I heard the door bell ring. Two Gestapo men were there to arrest Rudi and me. […]

I thought of Valy and mother; all the things which still had to be taken care of and grew more exhausted and despaired. I would have badly needed a cigarette in this misery as I kept asking myself "why oh why?" Had we not always tried our best to live decent and upright [lives], working hard? Had we not been born and raised in this country to do right with our fellow men, our employees and always with the goal in mind to be just equal to others, never more. But that was not to be, for we were Jews, demoralized individuals, and never the same. Forgotten were all the sacrifices Jews made for their county and homeland, forgotten the many graves of Jewish soldiers who had given their lives for their country during the World War. Forgotten the many Jewish doctors, scientists and artists who had made Austria famous in the world. Schnitzler, Zweig, and Feuchtwanger – all producers of trash according to this band of gangsters and killers. […]

November 15th. I shall never forget that day. The cell doors opened at 3 am with a bang and a policeman, list in hand, called off my name and that of Plaschkes and the other man, whose name I forgot. "Get everything together and assemble in the corridor." Eisenberger, whose name was not called out, attempted to say something comforting – maybe a transfer to another work camp, but surely not Dachau – while the policeman proceeded to other cells calling out names. I heard the names of Rudi and Gus but I was beyond thinking straight as I put my things

together in a hurry. The food parcel, received the day before, I also took along, more correctly, what was left of it, and I thought of poor Valy and my folks. They did not allow much time for thinking, however, and we were rushed, in twos, into the office. There we were given the belongings taken from us upon admission and then back into the corridor – formation – the *Fatzis* – gave us black coffee and those who had cigarettes were permitted to smoke. Everybody looked worried – 25 or 30 of us – like a herd of cattle waiting to be slaughtered. […]

I was thinking of Valy, how she will cry when she finds out. Then I thought of Mom and Dad and Liesel and her little adorable boy. Louis was on our transport and I wondered what the kid will say when Daddy was gone for so long. And Uncle Rudi, Gus and Vicki, all gone; who will play horsey with him now and crawl around on the floor? Oh Eric, could you have seen your Uncle Gus then; pale and with deep rings around his eyes he stared in front of himself, shaken more than the others. One could see how much he suffered. Probably he thought of dear Mella who was working hard in England. How will she take it when she finds out? Words cannot say what went on in everybody's mind. If one of us had ever sinned, then in the night, on our way into the unknown everything was atoned. […]

We still could not believe that we were heading for Dachau. We went into the direction of Salzburg, but still hoped that we would wind up somewhere as a road construction crew. So much was already known about Dachau that the mere word or thought of it caused horror. […]

We passed the town of Dachau and shortly thereafter the concentration camp itself. […] To begin with, when our car stopped outside the camp at the *jourhaus* [gatehouse and working quarters of the SS], the gate with the inscription "Work makes you free," opened, we were marched inside and taken over immediately by two SS men. They began yelling and cussing immediately and made it evident to us that whatever we had heard about the place was for real. Our drivers, watching from aside, grinned. Hats in hand with whatever we carried, we headed straight for the punker. Thousands of Jews were standing there – all motionless and silent. Some were in civvies – which we could not figure out – but we were to learn it soon enough. We were marched to the end of the road, passing the many fellow Jews. Stop. About face. Then we were right across the new arrivals, mostly from Vienna, who had arrived shortly before us. Nobody was allowed to move or talk

and we had to stand like statues. Several SS men walked around us and began to question in typical Prussian accent: "Where do you come from?" Answer: "Linz." "What is your profession?" "Merchant." "How much did you earn?" "RM 500 per month." To his comrade he said aside: "Did you hear – RM 500 – that pack of Jewish pigs and swindlers." One man moved just a little bit and was immediately bawled out for it. "Stand straight you pig, or I will teach you how." The SS men circled around us, stood still and they were apparently waiting for someone to make a move. We had to stand there, tired from the long trip, hardly anything inside, and with our eyes front without blinking while our nerves were ready to burst. The altitude of Dachau is fairly high and it was quite cold at this time of the year. My fingers were stiff, held the briefcase and I prayed not to move. The people from Vienna across from us were deplorable sights – wrinkled suits and quite dirty. What they had to endure on the long journey, but more about that later. The two SS men left and two others took over. Same procedure as before – all SS men were very young – very abusive and brutal. […]

After six hours came the command: "March." If you have not gone through such an experience, you could never understand the relief to move one's legs again. Inside the barrack we were inspected by barbers – quick shaves for those that needed them. The tempo reminded me of the story where the barber on the run shaves a rabbit along the way. In the next room were two or three prisoners. One printed my name on a label and gave it to me. As he put the tag into my hand he whispered, "Keep your chin up – do not lose your nerves." […]

On to another chamber, where SS, with sticks in their hands, were supervising. Long tables manned by prisoners and SS. Again we emptied everything – and taken away – itemized lists were made of one's remaining belongings – all at rapid speed. I was allowed to keep RM 50; then on to the next room. A prisoner gave me a heavy pair of boots and another one shaved my head and my mustache. Gus was across from me and I will always remember the moment – too deeply engraved in our hearts and minds to ever forget. Now we were transformed into real criminals. It was not the loss of one's hair, but the loss of the last shred of human dignity. Looking at each other was another experience and for this time of the year, it was certainty not the most ideal hairdo. But I remember that Ben Akiba [Rabbi Akiba, Jewish scholar, ca. 50 to 136 AD; meant is King Salomon] once said – there is nothing new under the sun. Among the Romans only those of high positions

were allowed to wear their hair short. Maybe one day we too may find recognition for having worn our hair that short. Bald headed and bare foot (we had to take off our top coats, shoes and hats before) with the newly issued work shoes in our hands, we entered the bath. In passing I was issued a pair of socks. Undress – a warm shower and there was an SS who completed the "treat" by hosing us with ice-cold water. Another SS watched for those who blinked or showed any sign of anxiety. They were given beatings. In addition, they had to open their mouth and the hose – with all its force – was directed into the poor man's mouth who almost choked – but who cared? Again it was poor Mr. Verstaendig who got the worst of it. We three brothers and Louis came off not to bad. We were most attentive and smelled danger in advance. We also did our best in the shower and I acted as if I customarily took a shower every Nov. 15th with open windows and draft going through and ice cold water to boot. Thus I spoiled their fun and hastened the whole procedure. […]

In the rooms intended for 50 each, 200 were squeezed in. There were 800 prisoners in the whole block instead of 200. There were no beds. Along the wall were some wooden frames and straw on top. That was our sleeping facility. But to use it seemed heavenly. Since 3 am on our legs, the ride in the police car, followed by standing six hours at attention, followed by these most nerve wrecking experiences, the constant fear of the SS and not to do something wrong. We intended to fall down and go to sleep immediately, but our nerves would not let us. Now we were in Dachau. […]

I call the civilized world as a witness to ask how it was possible in the 20th century to put that many innocent people in such a sophisticated modern slaughterhouse. How could the rest of the world have kept silent and unwilling to […] cry out against these bloodthirsty tyrants [despite all the means of communication available to them]? Why did they permit to allow, and even welcome, official representatives of these gangsters in their midst as diplomats? Instead they should have treated them for what they really were – killers and gangsters. How could the rest of the world stand by as hordes of bloodthirsty young killers for pleasure do away with Germany's and Austria's great artists, politicians and the cream of intellectuals? These thoughts went through my head as I tossed around till I finally dozed off mercifully. The 15th November was a thing of the past, but neither I, nor anybody who was with me, will ever forget that day. […]

Each block had a block fuehrer – all members of the SS death division – the pick of the most depraved, demoralized and cruelest of all Nazi organizations. They arrived there as teenagers and received their "training" there. None of them were allowed to leave the camp, so they never saw anything but death, murder and torture and they proved themselves as obedient and quick pupils of their trade. There were about 1,500 of these teenagers, some 14 to 16, in the camp. It was their duty and job to watch over the prisoners, whose work took them away from their immediate quarters, but still within the prison compound. The size of the camp was equal to a fair sized town. These youngsters carried rifles and bayonets for protection. The ratio was about one to two prisoners for each of these guards. They also had to patrol the camp, to man the watch towers and so they got to the blocks only in the morning and at noon to take prisoners to work. After a period of this type of duty, they advanced to fuehrer of camps where they were in charge of supervision.

I want to leave the details aside for a moment to write a word about this devilish organization and how it was run. A block was made up of four so-called "rooms". Each block had one block elder. He was a prisoner, aryan of course, who had been there for at least five years. He was responsible to the block fuehrer for everything that happened in his domain. Each of the four rooms also had a room elder – one who had been there at least three years. These room elders were under the block elders and were responsible to him. Both block and room elders had indisputable power and authority over their inmates – just like an SS man. If something went wrong in a block, severe punishment was dished out to the block elders. This explains why most of these characters were as tough as the SS for they had to protect their own hide. In addition, each block had its own block correspondent, the liaison between the block and the *jourhaus*. He was, naturally, also a prisoner of long standing. He kept files, handed out instructions and kept records for the block. Each block also had a purchasing agent (each prisoner was allowed to receive RM 15 per week from his relatives) and with this money the agent made purchases. Prices at the prison store were outrageous – it would have made merchants on the outside burst with envy – and so the business was quite lucrative for the camp. Food was not quite as high as clothing and toiletries. Shorts, for an example, which cost RM 4 anywhere, were RM 8 and so it went on with almost everything. It was the agent's job to do the shopping for his inmates. […]

The hospital ("*Revier*") was small and very difficult to get into. One would have to tell an attendant what was wrong and only after he (also a prisoner) confirmed that it was necessary, could one see a doctor, but only if one could really hardly crawl. The sick were brought before a young SS man who had in his hand something similar to a window pillow. Again a question what was wrong, and if the applicant was not half dead he got the pillows over his head before being dismissed. Those who managed to actually see the doctor did not have to worry, because before long he would find himself on the way to the crematory near Munich. The daily mortality was between 16 and 17. Not always as a result of illness, as I will tell you later. […]

Saturday afternoons and Sundays were days of rest – naturally only in the theory. No prisoner – if he had anything to do – was expected to walk alone on camp streets; he had to run. Should a call go out for the formation of block elders, for example, or correspondents – food carriers, etc. – everybody within hearing distance was expected to pass on the order so that the commands were complied with promptly. Should an SS man enter a block, the first person who saw him had to call the rest to attention and everybody had to drop whatever he was doing till the SS man said, "Carry on". At 8 pm the outer door of the block was closed; whoever opened it after that was shot without warning or question. […]

The slightest deviation was punishable by 25 lashes – a threat to all of us and a favorite pastime. This punishment was dished out to the punker, but if the situation called for setting an example, all the prisoners would be called out to watch together with a company of SS in their steel helmets and ready-to-shoot-weapons. Everybody formed a circle. In the middle is a bock, same as is used by athletes, and the prisoner was strapped to the contraption. An SS officer started beating his rear. The skin bursts usually after the second time, and goes on until the prisoner collapses. This beating took place while another one counted. More than once he made a "joke" saying that he was he was not "quite sure" and started counting all over again while blood – raw flesh – and a final whimper indicated that he was still "alive". […]

It rained an awful lot. [Aryan prisoners] wore winter uniforms, caps and gloves! We Jews wore summer uniforms, no headgear and no gloves. We froze most of the time. Our hands and fingers were blue and swollen, but who cared? We marched

and marched. Those who collapsed were perhaps better off. But the worst was the SS snooping around. In heavy, warm coats, always the cigarette dangling from the mouth, and a loaded pistol at their side – even during the marches. These bastards stopped the columns, lectured on the worthlessness of these Jewish packs and, to put emphasis on their sermon, more than one got a beating. If an old man collapsed, the SS kicked him with his feet and dragged him up. All this while it was pouring and, naturally, everybody got dirty. Another SS [man] would come across the group later, object to their dirty appearance, and dish out more punishment and beatings.

There were some room elders who tried to avoid encounters with the raging SS; so they ordered us to turn right or left, only to bump into another brute, for SS were everywhere. Later, whenever they saw SS, they began to yell and cuss, acting like furies, just to appease the SS who were "pleased" with their discipline. After the "performance" things went back to "normal" for a while. But there were always those who found pleasure in exposing their men to SS encounters. Our room elder, fortunately, belonged to the first category and was a real fine and decent person. He was accused of having been active in the Social Democratic Party. He had been in Dachau for three years. Though he had witnessed every day murder, killings and the most inhumane treatment of prisoners, and had gone through these tortures in person, he remained *mensch* (a human being). He was always friendly and polite, and he would never raise a hand against anybody. In the evenings we often talked and he told us about his hometown, the longing for his family and everything that he had endured and may still have to go through.

He also mentioned that we Jews were not merely brought there on account of what had happened in Paris. Fact was that three weeks prior to this incident they were working overtime in Dachau to get uniforms and everything ready three weeks before Greenspan fired the fatal shot – the Germans had made up their minds to put the Jews into concentration camps. The Paris affair was just a welcome clincher. They would have no problem finding another excuse had Greenspan not come to their help, though they had taken everything tangible from the Jews, the Germans in their orderly fashion still wanted and needed a "justification". The Paris shooting was as good an excuse as any to demand billions from the Jews in compensation. Additional comments are really unnecessary. […]

Saturday afternoon was supposed to be free, just as for aryan prisoners, but the Jews had to assemble again. It rained in torrents and the storm was dreadful. We were drenched to the skin – no headgear. After three hours there was an announcement over the loudspeaker: "All Jews with businesses worth more than a million Mark report". This message had to be repeated several times. I did not see anybody step forward. Perhaps it was meant as a joke that fell flat, but the SS did not mind. Inside the *jourhaus* they looked down on us through the windows of the "special gala". The oldest man in block 26 was 89 years, the next 87 years and there were quite a number between 70 and 80. It was a miracle how these old men survived. Occasionally they had to be supported a bit. To the SS they were not old folks, but "Jewish pigs" and, just like the physically handicapped, the invalids and deformed, they had to stand and endure the rain, cold and all the other torture that we, the physically fit, found almost impossible to bear. No one dared to assist the old man who had just collapsed, lying in a puddle of water. To help him would mean "25" or being pulled up on the tree.

Civilized world, take a look at this 80 year old man – you countries which claim to represent civilized society, how could you stand by as this grandfather had to finish life, killed and tortured by juvenile murderers! You stood by as world literature was destroyed, watched rape, burnings, killings, thousands upon thousands rotting away in concentration camps, children denouncing their own parents, hate propaganda, the destruction of irreplaceable art, and even permitted these inhumane hordes to open propaganda offices in your own countries. The world simply attended lectures on Germany, continued to buy its blood-drenched merchandise. Your indifference was inexcusable. The worst offender was business and industry which kept on buying German goods drenched with the blood of thousands of innocent people. Do not try to calm your conscience by speaking of "exaggerated rations" – "rationalizations that these fantasies were and could not be true." Yes, Mr. Businessmen, they are true. I saw the old man die there at the assembly. Some guards held his body but were not allowed to remove the corpse yet. Officially he was still alive till his name had been properly checked off in the elaborate filing system. In Munich the stoves in the crematory were never turned off. Among the prisoners were deaf-mutes. People in their late 80s were beaten in public. There was no dastardly crime or torture which had not been put into operation, tried out during "gala specials" and you kept saying "there must be reasons for it!" After six hours in pouring rain, without any cover, headgear

or protection, many caught deadly illnesses there, which expedited them to the crematory. With no change of clothing, we fell on our mattresses, soaking wet: the body heat was the only drier. […]

In the afternoon we were permitted to take a walk through the block street if you had your KZ number sewn on in place. That afternoon we met several other Linzers and Austrians. It was a sad reunion. We also met people from Vienna where mass arrests began on November 10th, 1939 by the thousands. All prisons and schools were crammed. The mob went wild. There was hardly any food. There were special jokes. To shave a man's head, leaving a tuft of hair in the middle (very funny) meant treatment by SS death-head division and the even more cruel transport commando. Each transport had an additional car for the bodies of those "who tried to escape". Actually many had been beaten so badly that they could not possibly sit anymore among the "living" and found their relief through a bullet through the head.

I remember an ancient man who dragged himself to the assembly area. After the beatings and insults he received, I wondered whether these beasts had fathers and mothers or a heart in their chest. Could they still be called "human beings"? I doubt it. During World War I, where the motto was "an eye for an eye", even then army hospitals cared for friend and foe. There was always an unwritten law to assist the helpless, the old and the sick. But these universal laws did not apply to the Third Reich.

They made pretenses and even passed out postcards to write home that everything was well – feeling fine, please send money, etc. The latter was not a humanitarian act. The camp store had to do business and needed money. As the postcards were censored many times – by the block and room elders, the officials and even at the *jourhaus* – it was impossible to say something factual. It was not even possible to warn relatives not to say anything wrong or derogatory in their 14 lines – the same number we were allowed – and not a word more, censored all the way. Most realized the danger and knew the score. Dr. Brunner received a letter from his wife, part of it cut out by the censor with the comment, "The next time, it will be your neck". The danger that he was in is hard to comprehend and there was no way to warn his wife. An aryan, sick and tired of writing "I am well and doing fine," he refrained from writing anymore. He was called to head quarters where a letter from his wife

complained that she had not heard from him in a long time. End result: 25 lashes. His wife could not imagine what her letter had done. […]

There were more releases, particularly in our block. Some days as many as 10 or 20 were released, but only those from Germany – none from Vienna. A father was called; the son had to stay – heart-rending scenes. Even the briefest farewell always culminated in an embrace and tears. Everybody cried. There were no SS in sight. "I am so happy to see you leave dad, give my love to mom." Father: "Keep your chin up boy. We will pray for your at home that G-d will have mercy and send you home soon." The block elder broke up the scene. The released prisoners had to assemble in front. Whatever they could spare, they left for the others. Every evening hopes and expectations grew. Tomorrow maybe it is my turn. But the "show" went on. […]

Imagine, once in a while, especially when we got back in time on Saturdays, the block clerk would take out his guitar, play some old, almost forgotten, songs and we would hum along. He played for half an hour and sang of brooks, meadows, mountains and birds enjoying their freedom. How beautiful life used to be. How sad to recall these moments in song from one's childhood and youth. The clerk sang an old love song, full of passion and longing. One could grasp what these farm people were dreaming about. Though every day could be the last day, nobody gave up hope and nothing could get them down. […]

Occasionally, when we were half asleep, we could hear shots. One never knew the circumstances. Someone may have stepped outside to call it off or maybe he had been dragged outside but, whatever the circumstances, it was another load for the crematorium. […]

We were relatively lucky. I was bodily thrown out by the block elder. Rudi's face got slapped once (also not too bad) and Gus got a kick in his behind. Maybe we helped matters a bit because we never gave in, stood straight like a candle, answered in a military manner and did everything humanly possible to avoid becoming marked or known. […]

Then word spread that there would be an inspection by big shots. We were just working on a side street when, lo and behold, we saw a bunch of prisoners playing

football on the green in front, of the camp nursery. And, no end to wonders, a group of Austrian prisoners, among them Mayor Bock from Linz [Dr. Wilhelm Bock, Mayor of Linz 1934–1938, survivor of Dachau], stood in formation and began singing Austrian melodies. There were simply marvelous, beautiful voices among them. It was Saturday, prisoners were talking to each other and smoking, some playing soccer, and others formed a choral group. How dare anyone say life in a concentration camp was not wonderful! All that terrible propaganda in foreign countries! This must have been the impression of the inspectors. Too bad they did not return a few minutes later. The talented producers at Dachau could have shown them a different act for an encore. The doors had not closed behind the visitors when the SS returned, asking whether we had lost our senses. A moment later there was nothing to remind anybody of the singing or the soccer players. But my friend the inspectors missed that part and the lecture we had to endure. By the way, did you have a chance to look at the punker or the trucks taking away the garbage and human bodies, tortured to death, heading for the crematory? Please do come back, gentlemen, to take a second look and see what you had missed before. […]

Mail from Valy. Every Jew from Linz was to be evacuated to Vienna. Only those still working at the Jewish Community could remain for the time being. The same message was sent to other Linzers. We had been made homeless. The poor women – how would they manage? Poor Liesl and her little boy and our parents. All the tension and excitement and we three men were in the concentration camp. We worried endlessly as to how they would manage. Could we not return to Linz? Were our homes completely destroyed or occupied? Have the women been physically mistreated? There were so many questions and problems and no answers. And worst, no idea how long we would be in Dachau. There were daily releases – but only Germans. Would there be a special edict for Austrians? So far three Linzers had been released and yesterday Richard Pick. When will our turn come? […]

A short time later, Victor and his brothers were released and were able to emigrate via Shanghai to the USA, where Victor Gans passed away in 1994.

Eva A. in kindergarten aged 5

PHOTOS: EVA A.

So, now this **flirting** is well and **truly over** …

Eva A., New Zealand, born 1924

Mrs. Eva A. was born in 1924 in Vienna. In her diary, which she received in 1934 as a reward for good grades in school, she describes the direct consequences of the *Anschluss* on her life: like so many other Jewish schoolchildren, she was also no longer permitted to attend school.

Vienna, 29th April 1938

We have been thrown out of school due to our race. So, here is the sequence of events:

We heard about it yesterday from the newspaper and all four of us met at a quarter past 9 to take our books back. When we were at Am Schüttel [2nd municipal district of Vienna] we saw Kurtl!!! Juli and Boxi over on the Lände [3rd district]. We were meshuga, suddenly we saw Katz, Beran, Fast and Baar, also carrying their books back. Lily had already met up with Juli, she spoke to him (!) and asked what was going on. He said he was going to the school in Hessgasse and we were going to the Radetzky School. Then we went upstairs, Katz fetched Lindner from the geometry room (he went bright red) and handed in the books. Heinzl Baar asked us what school we were going to, he was generally very nice, Katz was a little bit arrogant. […] Then came Spovi, we said goodbye to him, he wished us all the best and said he was sorry to lose us, his good Latin students. Then came Prof. Walter, he saw us, spoke movingly to us, you could see that it was hard for him and I just wanted to cry. Then we went in to see Didi [Headmaster], he was also very nice and told us we would be going to a school in the 20th district, horrible!!! Then he offered us his hand, even though he doesn't even know us.

Risa and Viktor S., the parents of Mrs. A. henceforth tried desperately to get a "permit" to enable their daughter to enter England. They also requested help in this matter from acquaintances in Great Britain.

Vienna, 25th October 1938

Dear Mrs. & Mr. E[…], dear Mrs. P[…],
I was very pleased to receive your l[ovely] letters, I had been eagerly awaiting them. […] We continue to be grateful for your efforts. Eva's best friend has been adopted by a rich London family. I wrote to Mrs. B[…], her foster mother, and requested her to locate Mrs. W[…] in Woburn House in order to speed up the permit. At the same time, I wrote to her to inform you of the outcome of her discussion with Mrs. W[…] I still haven't received a response, although Mrs. B[…] went away recently and I don't know if she has returned yet.

In this mail I am again sending you a "sample of no value", ice candy made by Eva. Each piece should be wrapped, but as I want to send more sweets than paper and the weight is limited to ½ kg, I left them unwrapped. I hope you didn't have to pay anything upon their receipt? Or did you? We thank you warmly for your pictures, they gave us great pleasure.

I wanted to reply to you by return mail, but I was in such a bad mood and I didn't want to inflict it upon you in my letter. Our caretaker had told us that we will receive the eviction notice on 1st November and that is a heavy blow for us, as we have no prospects of emigrating at all. Firstly, we have invested a lot in this apartment, where we have been living for 18 years, wallpapered everything immaculately, built in furniture, installed a slow burning stove etc. Secondly, moving is expensive, as I will have to have all of the ovens set up again, and who knows where I can move to. It is extremely difficult to get a new apartment, in most cases you have to take a large apartment with other people. What a pleasure! If Eva were to be safe in your care, then nothing else would matter to me, then my greatest worry is taken care of and I would somehow manage to bear everything else. You don't know how happy you should be, dear Mrs. P[…], despite being separated from your husband. I would do any job and accept any lot if I could pitch my tent somewhere abroad. As my husband is already 62, it is hard for us to pack up and leave, especially for as long as we draw a small pension here.

[…] In addition to her English lessons, Eva has also resumed her French lessons. She is almost perfect in the latter. She has also learned to type all by herself, she has already finished one book as practice and is now working on the second, which covers business letters etc. She is very fast considering she has not been learning for very long. […]

Maybe this time my package is the first in a series of three! I see, dear Mrs. P[…], that you are just as superstitious as I, although in my case the superstition was always well founded.

We send our warmest greetings to you all, also to the dear children and look forward to hearing from you soon.
Affectionately, Risa S[…]

Vienna, 21st November 1938

Dear Mr. E[…],
Your two letters gave us great pleasure. […]

We thank you from the bottom of our hearts for your intervention at Woburn House and await the arrival of the permit with great joy. I will then get everything in motion so that Eva need not stay here a moment longer than necessary. Unfortunately, it now takes much longer to deal with the formalities than it did with Mrs. P[…].

Taking on around 20 refugees is really a noble, humane deed, were there many such people in your country or in other countries then I wouldn't be so worried about our fate. I know that everything that you do for us and for others, you do out of the goodness of your heart and despite this I hope that Eva will be able to make up for a small part of your efforts and expenses by working for you.

Mrs. P[…] knows my modern apartment furnishings, I have to give up at least a part of them, as I will be allocated 1–2 rooms at the most. And before I sell them, I wanted to ask you if you or your friends could have any use for them, I would gladly give them to you. And as some of the things anyhow belong to Eva, I would send these to you, if the transport is not too expensive.

[...] Thank you again for everything, I know you don't like to hear it but I can't help saying it to you.

All the best to you, your dear family and Mrs. P[…], warmest greetings from my family,
Yours,
Risa S[…]

In February 1939, as a 14-year-old girl without her parents and having to fend for herself, Mrs. A. finally reached Great Britain. Mr. and Mrs. H., who knew Mr. E. but had never met Eva or her family, were prepared to give her a home and she was to help look after their 3-year-old son. In England, Eva A. wrote letters to acquaintances in order to obtain entry visas for her parents. The following reprinted letter was written by Mrs. A. in English.

England, 2nd May 1939

Dear Mr. E[…],
I really don't know how to begin this letter, because I have got to beg for something again, and that isn't easy indeed.

Well, to make it short, my parents in Vienna lost their monthly pension they got from the school, and for that reason they are forced to leave the country at the earliest possible moment. They get now a little monthly sum from the assurance, but that's hardly enough for 1 person and far too little for two. So, if there is no other possibility, my mother will go alone first and is therefore looking for a domestic job now. She would of course have preferred to come over with a guarantee, but as things are now the principle thing is to get her out as quickly as possible, and the circumstances don't matter.

She is really perfect in housework and cooking […], and she is now learning the English cooking and special dishes for ill persons. Besides, she knows dressmaking […], knitting, and makes lovely models of leather belts and gloves, her English is quite good, and she is perfect in German shorthand and typewriting. (I think there are still some more things she knows, but I can't remember them as there are so many).

I hope it won't be very difficult to find some sort of job for her as she knows so many things, one's only got to know the right people, and that's why I write to you as you are in connection with the committees and hostels while Mr. H[…] and I are not. I do hope you don't mind my troubling you again, but you must understand, this question being so actual now I get hold of every possibility I can find to help my parents.

What my mother really wants is to get in a household, where she could, besides her work, have a certain social position, I mean, where she isn't just treated as a servant but where her abilities and intelligence and education are recognized and appreciated. (For inst. to look after children or their studies or for German lessons or conversation connected with housework of course, or to look after other servants or to sell belts or gloves etc.) But I needn't tell you that these are only wishes, and she and we all would be ever so happy to find any job which enables her to come over to England. Is it perhaps possible to find a place in the hostel for her?

I don't yet know what I am going to do about my father, I want to bring him in a home for people over 60 years, but you need a guarantee for at least 30 £ a week, and I couldn't get that till now. But my mother could come first alone, and then we both could try to help my father.

I enclose a photo of my mother, you might need it. Please could you answer me as soon as possible, for my mother is waiting for good news, and I know this terrible waiting in Germany only too well.

I am going to the Polytechnic now and attend an English course for foreigners, I really feel perfectly happy here and can't help thanking you once again, though Englishmen don't like that very much, do they?

How are you and your family? Please give my love to Mrs. E[…] and your children and don't forget Mrs. P[…].

I sincerely hope you don't mind, and I am looking forward to your letter,
Yours very thankfully,
Eva

In the meantime, her parents' apartment in Vienna was confiscated, including furniture and a wonderful art collection. Viktor S., the father of Eva. A., also had lost his pension as a former professor at the Business School. In Vienna, Risa S., the mother of Eva A., strove towards her emigration.

Eva A. in New Zealand
aged 80

Wedding photo of Risa und
Viktor S., Eva A.'s parents

Vienna, 12th May 1939

Dearest Mrs. P[…],

I haven't heard from you for so long, I've even forgotten if you or I were the last to write. But that is unimportant. How are you? Do you have a lot to do and what news do you have of your dear husband? How is the E[…] family? Please be kind enough to send them our warmest regards, maybe he will find some time to write to us again. What is your husband doing? We don't hear anything from him anymore. He is in any case very busy and also has good reason not to seek us out. I would have written to you a long time ago, but I have experienced so many unpleasant things recently that I really didn't have the patience or the time. As you know, since early April we have been living in the 1st district […], where we share an apartment with another family, very nice, fine people. He was a doctor and is now retired. We get on splendidly, and it would all have been good had we not received a letter on the first morning in our new apartment from my husband's employer, informing us that his pension was to be stopped, effective from the following day, 1.4. You can imagine the effect that this had on us; I just stood there, surrounded by boxes and suitcases, and could hardly find the energy to organize it all. Since then, negotiations have been carried out but there is very little prospect of success, so we also have to think about packing our suitcases and seeking asylum somewhere. In addition to this, due to an error we are also obligated to pay a contribution of 1200 M. We've already filed a request for its cancellation but are still waiting for the matter to be dealt with. In the meantime the execution official came, who reserved the contents of our apartment for the time being and we at least managed that the execution of the matter would at least be delayed until we hear of the cancellation. Please don't mention this to Eva should you speak to her. I don't want to worry her unnecessarily. […] Apart from the fact that the move consumed so much money, we now have to keep a very tight budget to be able to somehow keep our heads above water until we emigrate. Are you surprised, dear Mrs. P[…]? You wouldn't have thought that when you last visited us! You can console yourself that I wouldn't have thought it either! As, however, we are modern people, we just have to go along with it all and I hope, despite all that has happened, that I don't lose my good humor, although I'm often close to it. The only thing that gives us strength are the letters from Eva, who is doing well in school there and is praised by the teachers and who continues to be tremendously happy. She has become a brave and independent person in this short time. I also received a letter from Mr. H[…] recently, who

spoke charmingly about Eva and this of course gives us strength and courage to overcome all things unpleasant. I now work for about 16 hours a day, sometimes longer. In the mornings I attend a cookery course, I am asked why as I have already mastered this art, but I would like to achieve perfection and also add a few new starters etc. to my repertoire. When this course is finished, I will start to work in arts and crafts again etc. I generally return home at about midday, then I have to first cook our lunch, do the chores, write letters, study English, sew, darn, mend. In short, the day is simply not long enough. Now and then one or two of the few friends that we still have come to visit and so I often don't even get to think about what a poor devil I have actually become. So if you have a little time, pity me, but no, I don't want that, instead please have a look around in your close and not so close surroundings to see if you can maybe find a "madam" who would like to enjoy some Austrian cooking presented in person by myself. I would also work with children – I sewed everything for Eva until she was 12 years old – or as a companion, in short, whatever suits. One month before our pension was stopped an acquaintance offered me such a good position which I refused at the time, because I would never have dreamed that we would lose the pension. When I asked her about it again recently, the job was naturally already taken. As far as I have heard, a married woman can now only accept a job as a housemaid when the husband is already abroad. Now maybe in our case an exception can be made in that my husband draws a pension here of 135 M a month which just about suffices for one person but is of course far to little for us both to survive on. Of course, we are also looking for a guarantor for my husband who will enable him to find a place in an old age people's home or somewhere, but this will probably be far more difficult than finding a job for me. Furthermore, if I had a job I could pay for the home from my wages, but most important is, of course, how to find one? Please don't think badly of me if I exploit your energy, cleverness and prudence and request that if you can be in any way of help to please do it, maybe through committees etc. You can recommend me to anyone with a clear conscience. I will not bring shame upon you, just as Eva didn't. I can and want to work, and for my husband a noble patron will have to be found. There are so many where you are, you just have to bump into the right man! So please don't be angry, Mrs. P[…], I know you are a good sort and take it upon yourself to help all those who come to you. I wish that I could do it – it is always nicer to be able to help than to ask for help, believe me. My whole life long, the former was the case and even if it is now different, I hope that I will soon find my way back to my customary position.

Please send […] my regards to the entire E[…] family and our warmest wishes also to you,
Yours,
Risa

After Great Britain joined the war, Eva A. was torn away from the family with whom she was staying and brought to a refugee camp as an "enemy alien". This time was marked by loneliness, homesickness and terrible fear for her parents. She expressed her feelings at the time in a poem, written in English:

When I behold the babe in mother's arms
Cent'ring upon herself a wealth of care,
Or when I watch home's rich and peaceful charms
And always watch, and never have my share –
Then melancholy overcasts my mind
And pain with icecold hands my poor heart grips
Bleak misery bursts through the outer rind
That fixed the smile upon reluctant lips –
For then I feel such longing in my heart
For my home town, for father, mother dear,
My troubled soul finds no escape, no rest
From utter helplessness, benumbing fear;
Yet, louder than all, rings this one voice in me:
"Rejoice! You are in England – the land where man's still free!"

Despite their efforts, Eva A.'s parents were unable to emigrate. They were picked up by the Gestapo on 27th May 1942 and deported to Minsk, where they were murdered. Today, Mrs. A. lives in New Zealand, but she has never forgotten Vienna.

Music at home at the Reichenfelds, ca. 1935
Father Ernst, Aunt Grete, sister Eva, mother Klara, Hans Reichenfeld on the cello (from left to right)

PHOTOS: HANS REICHENFELD

… I think **I'll play** my **cello** instead

Hans Reichenfeld, Canada, born 1923

Hans Reichenfeld was born in Vienna on 26th February 1923. From late April 1938, he was, as a Jew, no longer permitted to attend the Academic High School there. He was able to complete the school year at a high school in the 2nd municipal district of Vienna. In August 1938, Hans Reichenfeld left Austria. He was accepted as a pupil by a school in Great Britain.

When German and former Austrian nationals on British territory were declared "enemy aliens" and detained in detention camps after the outbreak of the Second World War, Hans Reichenfeld was also detained in 1940 and sent to Canada. In 1941 he returned to Great Britain. From 1944 to 1947 he served in the Royal Air Force. In 1952, he was able to complete his medical degree in London. Today, Hans Reichenfeld lives in Canada.

Isidor Ernst Reichenfeld, Hans Reichenfeld's father, was a general practitioner in Vienna and was arrested during the 1938 November pogroms. He remained incarcerated until March 1939. A few days after his release, Isidor Ernst Reichenfeld and his wife Klara were also able to emigrate to Great Britain.

Hans Reichenfeld recorded the events and direct consequences of the *Anschluss* of Austria to the German Reich in his diary from his perspective as a Jewish student at the Academic High School in Vienna. His autobiography "On the fringe" was published in 2006. The German translation by Katherina and Ludwig Laher with the title "*Bewegtes Exil. Erinnerungen an eine ungewisse Zukunft*" was published in April 2010 by the publishing house Theodor Kramer Gesellschaft in Vienna.

Vienna, 7th April 1938

For me the "upheaval" initially had the pleasant result that there was no school for eight days. On the first day back at school there was then a celebration for the "aryan" students. Afterwards, the provisional director of the institute, the gym teacher Schmidt, held a marvelous speech for the Jews at the Academic High School in which he rambled on about Jewish world Bolshevism and explained that we were now a guest population and should behave as such. He would, however, ensure that we wouldn't be tormented. Then we had just under two weeks of "school". Of course it wasn't anything like usual school. Firstly, the Jewish teachers had been thrown out immediately, so we no longer had a Latin teacher. Then we had class in the afternoon from Monday to Wednesday and in the morning from Thursday to Saturday, because the *Stubenbastei* has moved in with us due to military billeting. So we only had four hours every day instead of five. But of these four hours, one, two or even three were often canceled because some bigwig or other had come from the Reich. And when we did have class, it was sometimes the case that the teacher simply declared that he had a headache and couldn't teach and we should do what we want, which our chemistry teacher Milan did twice. The Christian students behaved honorably, of course they wore the swastika without exception, but so far not a single person has stirred up trouble. When Jewish benches were introduced and the Jews had to sit on one row of benches and the non-Jews on the other, after class Wagner said to us: "Such nonsense! It used to be such a nice area, we chatted and cheated together on tests and now it's all over."

The teachers have to greet us with "*Heil Hitler*" at the beginning and the end of each lesson, but so far they are still all nice to us, only the geography teacher Waldemar Waldner […] is stricter with the Jews among us. When we were discussing Palestine, he also said, "Now that the Jews are being gradually ejected from Europe, they are just searching for a new homeland in Palestine."

Now we haven't had school since 2nd April and I've been running from consulate to consulate but I've already had to give up, because there are no job prospects anywhere for doctors.

Recently, I was walking through *Viktualienhalle* [Indoor market in the 3rd municipal district of Vienna] one afternoon, when an SA man nabbed me and

I, along with many others, had to sweep the hall. They really enjoy doing that, making Jews rub off all of the Schuschnigg writings, to the great amusement of the Viennese rabble. People were standing packed into the hall to watch the marvelous show. I didn't care at all, I even had to laugh sometimes when I saw the people standing there for hours, excitedly watching a few Jews sweep the floor.

But there must also be very courageous people in Vienna, not just the nasty rabble. Yesterday in front of the opera house I saw that the words painted on the tram stop, "One people, one Reich, one Führer, on 10th April" [day of the referendum] were painted over in red, in front of the opera! That really requires a great amount of courage. There are also many posters which have been torn down. It's just that all this can't change anything now.

Heß, the "*Führer's*" deputy, is speaking now, but I won't listen to him, they all say the same things anyway. I think I'll play my cello instead.

Uncle Ludwig had an accident today, but thank goodness nothing happened to him. He just had a little concussion and a few scratches. Maybe I'll visit him tomorrow.

Vienna, 28th April 1938

In school, the initial difference was that the Jewish students had to sit on the row of benches on the right and the non-Jewish students on the left. The other students were very decent and I can't complain about the teachers either. On the contrary, Bauer even spoke condemning the Nazis a few times. You could tell from his demeanor that he wasn't very enthusiastic about doing the Nazi salute before and after every class. On Monday, we had gym class and on the next day Scholz asked him not to test us to which he replied, "Well what can I do, I have to do many things I don't like doing!" Then we had to recite Homer. When we were done, Bauer remarked: "Çernik, you've been reading from the book since the 20th verse and I'll tell you now, if you think you're going to pass because of how you are dressed, and for all I care you can tell the world, and if you want I'll give it to you in writing, you won't pass my class through supposed achievements in Greek, because as far as I'm concerned being German means doing some work." Çernik is namely a super-Nazi and also (or maybe because of this) the worst student in the class. Yesterday he said something similar: it would not bother him if he were to

fail those who are bad in his subject. Regardless of whether they sat there or there. But today the opportunity to also fail the Jews was taken from him because today we were thrown out of the Academic High School. This happened as follows: as usual, we arrived at school at 8 am. But the bell didn't ring, then it was five past 8, ten past 8, quarter past 8 and it still hadn't rung. We thought Nowak had gone mad. Finally, at 8:25, the bell began to ring. A few minutes later, Bauer entered the room with the main register. Then of course we knew how many it affected. Then a list of names of the Jewish students was drawn up with dates of birth and whether they had borrowed anything from the school. Then came the "Principal", gym teacher Schmidt, and said to us that we should give back the borrowed items by 11 o'clock and were to find our way to Zirkusgasse tomorrow at 11 […]. Then we were dismissed. We said our goodbyes to our Christian schoolmates and went home.

Birthday tea, ca. 1935
Cousin Bobby, sister Eva, cousin Fritz, Hans Reichenfeld (from left to right)

Left: Sunday in the Vienna Woods, ca. 1935
Sister Eva, Hans Reichenfeld, father Ernst (from left to right)

Hans Reichenfeld today

Chava Guez
with her father
Josef Friedländer,
Vienna 1940

PHOTOS: CHAVA GUEZ

Back then, in the **beautiful city Vienna**

Chava Guez, Israel, born 1936

Chava Guez was born Eva Friedländer on 1st August 1936 in Vienna. Josef Friedländer, Chava Guez's father, was arrested during the November pogroms 1938 and incarcerated in the concentration camp Dachau until April 1939. From November 1939 to February 1940, the whole family was detained in a transit camp in Vienna. In September 1940, the Friedländer family managed to flee by sea to Palestine. However, the British mandatory government prohibited the immigration to Palestine and detained them in a camp in Athlit on the Palestinian coast until December 1940. They were then deported to Mauritius where they were detained in a camp until the war was over. Today, Chava Guez lives in Israel. She describes her memories of her last days in Vienna in a fictional diary. This text was already published in a similar form in the weekly paper "*Die Furche*" on 15th April 1988 (year 44/no. 15).

I can't simply write a "diary" about my childhood, you know? But I can describe individual days from a period of time, which used to seem to me like a whole, long lifetime. I can also hardly write in German anymore, although German was supposed to have been my native tongue.

Day one

It is nearly sunset and in the room where I lie in my cot (on the floor?), the last rays of sunlight shine in. I can clearly see my parents in front of me, they are arguing about something.

Day two
In Vienna, it is raining and water is collecting between the cobblestones. I have beautiful trousers with gaiters on. They get sprayed with mud because I am splashing around in the water. Am scolded. Is all very funny, we laugh. My parents on my left and on my right.

Day three
Snack time. My little friend Peter and I crawl under the heavy embroidered table cloth. We are bored so we get some scissors and cut almonds out of the table cloth. Get strict punishments. Peter, where are you? Do you still remember me?

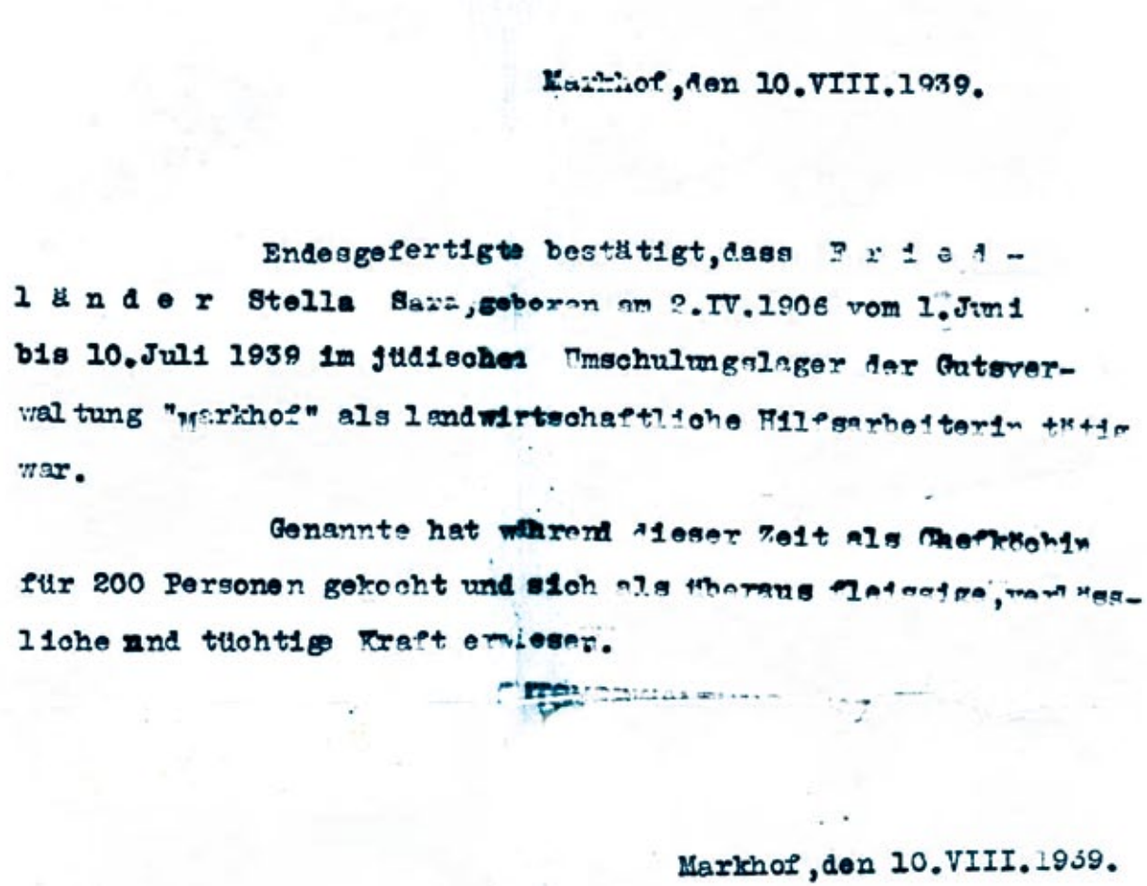
Day four
Am to make a curtsy in front of a friend of Mama. But I refuse and am sent into the dark corridor. Won't apologize at all costs.

Day five
Day trip. Go carefully down the steps to go bathing in the Danube with Mama and Papa. A day among nature. Pebbles hurt.

Day six
Great excitement. An apparently very important speech on the radio. All terribly excited. Lots of coming and going. Lots of new faces. Questions without answers.

Day seven
Even more excitement. Fight. Papa only leaves the house late at night. Wake often during the night. Dark curtains are hung. Papa disappears and Mama stays out for hours. Stay with Grandma and Hermine. House very quiet.

Day eight
Begin Kindergarten. Nervousness. Many, many unknown children. Cry pitifully. Educational measure: am put in the "parrots' cage". Terror. Stop crying. Children dance around the cage. Have learned my lesson. The kindergarten is in a dilapidated house. Memory of compulsory afternoon nap still vivid today. Not very heartening. Narrow beds. Little sleepers everywhere. Then bliss: wandering home in the evening and fresh chestnuts. Fall in Vienna. Very, very chilly.



Markhof, den 10.VIII.1939.

Endesgefertigte bestätigt, dass F r i e d l ä n d e r Stella Sara, geboren am 2.IV.1906 vom 1.Juni bis 10.Juli 1939 im jüdischen Umschulungslager der Gutsverwaltung "Markhof" als landwirtschaftliche Hilfsarbeiterin tätig war.

Genannte hat während dieser Zeit als Chefköchin für 200 Personen gekocht und sich als überaus fleissige, verlässliche und tüchtige Kraft erwiesen.

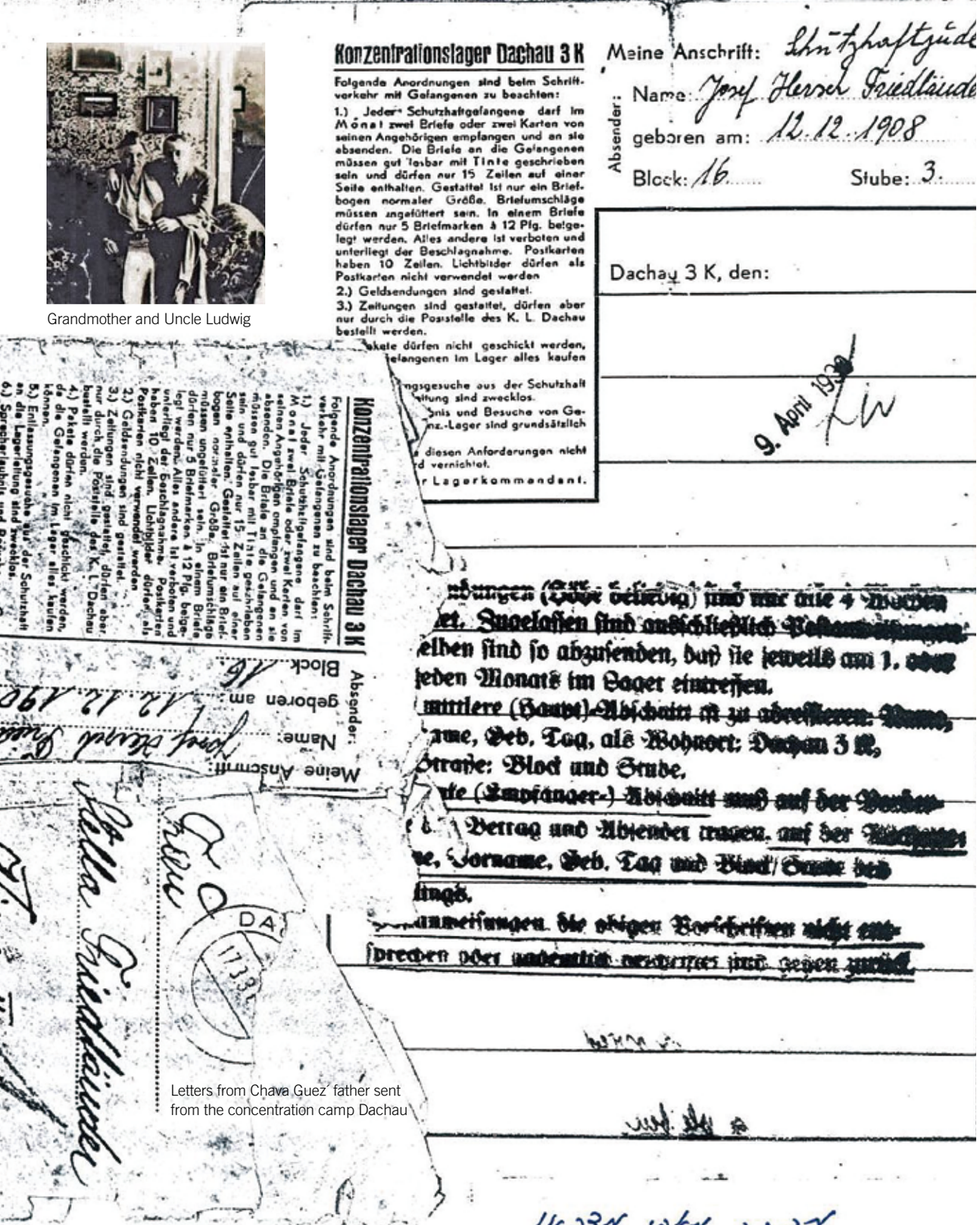
Markhof, den 10.VIII.1939.

Estate administration certificate for "Markhof" dated August 1939, issued to Stella Friedländer, the mother of Chava Guez

Left: Chava Guez during a boat trip on the Danube in 2001

Wedding photo of Stella and Josef Friedländer, the parents of Chava Guez, Vienna 1933

Grandmother and Uncle Ludwig



Letters from Chava Guez´ father sent from the concentration camp Dachau

Day nine

Aunt Mitzi. Says the child has to go to the Prater one last time. Aunt Mitzi in soft and cuddly fur coat. Suddenly a policeman. Am not afraid. We are both standing in front of a show booth, two knights in armor ride towards each other. Tournament. Policeman says, child must unfortunately go to the police station because Jewish. Detailed memory of police station, as from the raised ground floor barbed wire up the whole house maybe all the way up to the sky. Fall asleep. Wake up when the sun is setting. Go home. Happy again.

Day ten

Invited to play. Am brought home quickly because said something naughty. Don't know what anymore, but later hear I had said "Dr. H. should kick the bucket".

Nighttime

Heavy boots kicking against the front door. "Quickly! Open up!" Go flying on to the floor as I am pulled out of bed. Everything is higgledy-piggledey. They are searching for Papa.

Day eleven

Lonely. House empty. Very quiet. Grandma motionless. Door bell. Grandma at the door. "What do you want?" and me (oh bliss) "Papa, where is your hair?" Papa is back (Dachau) and now everything will be OK again.

Day twelve

Grandma is no more. Dark curtains covering big mirrors. House empties quickly. Furniture, bed linen, paintings, everything.

Day thirteen

The Danube. The ship. At the quay, big, booted men search our paltry luggage. Am not at all scared. Notice everything. Uncle Ludwig, a salami in his hand, runs very quickly so as not to miss us. How will I remember Uncle Ludwig?

Always and forever

A piece of Vienna remains in my heart. Thirty years and one day later. I walk through the streets of Vienna and everything is so foreign to me. Or is it: Vienna, Vienna, only you will stay the city of my dreams?

Kurt Flussmann with Dr. Renate Meissner, MSc and
Mag. Mirjam Langer from the National Fund, June 2009

PHOTOS: FRANZISKA BERGER, NATIONAL FUND

Stations of my life

Kurt Flussmann, Austria, born 1923

Kurt Flussmann was born on 19th January 1923 in Vienna. In January 1939, he arrived in Great Britain on a *Kindertransport*. In 1940, he was deported from Britain to Australia as an "enemy alien".

The life story of Mr. Flussmann was recorded during the psychotherapeutical work of Franziska Berger of the Consiliar Liaison Team at the ESRA psychosocial center in Vienna. The abridged version published here was compiled by editors at the National Fund.

Childhood

My parents had already separated before I was born and each had a new partner. I lived with my aunts, Paula and Camilla, two of my father's sisters, who – although both over 50 – took care of me. When I was naughty, I remember they used to call me "Kurti". I remember that Aunt Paula used to like playing Halma with me and she always won. Although my aunts were very loving, I nevertheless missed that feeling of security which, in my opinion, only parents can provide.

When I think back to my parents, I can remember that my mother worked a great deal. She was very attached to my grandmother and helped her out in her grocery store in Ottakring. She was a very hard working and capable woman. She always seemed to be busy. My father worked in the travel agent's, Schenker & Co. He often went on business trips to Italy and traveled a great deal. My father was a thoughtful person and I remember him being strong and powerful. There was little communication between us and, in truth, I was scared of him. As a child, I took turns living with my mother for two days in the 16th district and then two days living near my father with my aunts in order to maintain contact with both. It was a constant to-ing and fro-ing. However, it was left to my aunts to raise me.

I attended elementary school in the 2nd district of Vienna and four years of high school. I was not a particularly good student and I found it difficult to learn. Geography and history appealed to me the most. After school, in accordance with the wishes of my father, I attended an international hotel management school which was situated in Kurrentgasse in the 1st district. Father wanted me to work in a hotel business in Italy one day. But fate had other ideas.

Teenage years

Everything changed when the Germans marched in on 12th March 1938. They were uncertain times and my family could think of nothing else but how they could get me out of the country to safety.

One of my aunts worked at the Jewish Community. Thanks to her good relationship with an acquaintance, who was also employed there, she was able to get me on the list for the *Kindertransports* to England. For a whole year, my aunts prepared me for the fact that I would have to go to my Aunt Eva in England. She would make sure that nothing happened to me. Of course I was aware of the pressure and fear during this time, but I was young and still relatively carefree and didn't know what lay ahead of me.

Sometimes my aunts sent me to a Mrs. Siegel in Novaragasse with a basket of eggs. My aunts took care of the elderly lady and often sent her little bits and pieces. It was a fifteen minute walk, and I was very careful of the valuable eggs. I didn't look left or right, I just tried to complete my journey as quickly as possible. Mrs. Siegel did card readings – and she had predicted me a lively and active future.

Building in Kleine Pfarrgasse in the 2nd district of Vienna. Mr. Flussmann attended elementary school here
Other photographs: The apartment building of Berta Bieler, the mother of Kurt Flussmann, in the 16th district of Vienna

I would go on long journeys, she said. Of course, no one could have known just how right she was…

Finally, in January 1939, a week before my 16th birthday, I was secretly brought to the station Westbahnhof, where many other children and teenagers had gathered. Everything was done very quickly and with the greatest care. My aunts once more drummed into me that I should be good, and the farewell from my parents was brief and composed in order to avoid becoming too emotional. At this time, all contact with my relatives in Vienna was lost.

I was on my way to a completely unknown future, equipped with only the bare necessities, in a little knapsack. The train journey took us via Holland to the port Hoek van Holland [today an area of Rotterdam] and from there we traveled to Harwich on the East Coast of England on a Dutch ship. It was my first ever journey on a ship and I was incredibly impressed. We were then taken from Harwich to London by train. Aunt Eva, my father's third sister, had emigrated to England from Romania and was waiting for me at the station. As we hadn't met each other before, my name was called out. Like all the children, I had a sign round my neck on which my name and my destination were written.

Aunt Eva had a small boarding house in London, where I now lived in a guest room. It was the first time I had had my own room. Initially, I stayed inside most of the time, going out only for short walks or trips to the cinema. My aunt had English guests in the house, to whom she served breakfast and small meals. She was very busy. As I had already learned to speak English well at school, I soon settled in. Aunt Camilla was able to follow me from Vienna a few months later. Aunt Paula didn't manage…

I soon got an apprenticeship with a jeweler, Mr. Joe Freeman. However, he only let me do work which had nothing to do with the jewelry profession. He mainly used me as an errand boy. I delivered personal documents from my boss, who had started to transfer valuables to America, to the American Embassy. I didn't learn anything relevant to the profession so, feeling superfluous, I gave up the apprenticeship. In 1939, I got a temporary job at a hotel on the East Coast, in Eastbourne, in Folkstone near Dover. I remained there until my internment [as an enemy alien] on 10th May 1940.

In June 1940, I was picked up from breakfast and brought to Liverpool in a great hurry by two officials, along with other refugees. Transports were put together which were to take us out of the country. My aunts had no idea – all contact was broken. I was given no information either and was simply carried off like a prisoner. The transports were to either go to Canada or to the Isle of Man [the biggest internment camp for enemy aliens was located there]. Unknown to me however, my ship, the "Dunera", was the only one to sail to Australia.

The journey

The English loaded us on to the "Dunera" like criminals. With just a toothbrush and the bare necessities. To reassure us, they promised us that we would be back soon. On 10th July 1940, the "Dunera" left Liverpool.

Apart from us refugees, there were also Italian and German prisoners of war on board. We were penned in below deck and for two months were not allowed up on deck; the English guarded us with their bayonets at the ready. We had to relieve ourselves on the floor. I slept for the whole journey on a table. The food was brought to us by sailors. We were so terrified, we had no self-esteem left. It was miserable. Not only due to the constant fear that we would be torpedoed and sunk, but we also had no idea how long the journey would last and where we were going. Now and then, we were allowed up on deck, but that was all. We were held like prisoners. We were completely helpless.

When it started to get warmer on the ship, after eight days, we were finally told that we were not on our way to Canada but to Australia. The passage to Canada had been too dangerous. Another ship [the "Arandora Star"], which had departed a week before us, had sunk with 1,200 people on board after being hit by a torpedo. That was a great shock.

The mood among my fellow travelers was very subdued. We consisted solely of men aged between 16 and 60. A few were seriously ill and segregated from us. The first stopover was in Sierra Leone on the West Coast of Africa. Of course, we were not allowed above board, and so it was through a porthole that I caught a glimpse of an African for the first time in my life.

In Perth, Western Australia, the Italians and the Germans were finally allowed to disembark and the majority of the refugees, who were being awaited

by relatives, were allowed off in Melbourne. For me and the remainder of the travelers, a few hundred people, the journey continued to Sydney. On 6th September 1940, we were finally received there by the Red Cross, which was waiting with food parcels.

We were then rounded up for a further transport and I was sent to New South Wales, where several camps had already been set up at the desert station Hay. A few thousand people lived here. For 33 months, we weren't permitted to leave the camp. They imprisoned us behind barbed wire as "prisoners of war".

Camp life

The atmosphere in the camp was depressing. Our future was uncertain and we lived from "day to day" without plans or things to do. There were 18 people in each barrack. The dining hall and the camp management were located in one big barrack and the sports field was in the middle of the camp. The days had little structure. The only activity strictly adhered to was the "9 o'clock parade" in the morning. Although we weren't woken up especially, it was clear that we were to appear dressed and punctually for the parade, which was held by Lieutenant O'Neil, a half-Australian. Each day we were counted, always the same ritual. Then, for the rest of the day, there was nothing to do. We just vegetated, without purpose or foreseeable end. Modest opportunities to do some sport, handball or football, were offered if we fancied a change. We were able to play chess, make music or we chatted amongst ourselves.

One time, we put on a show. The title was "Say Hay for Happy and you be Happy in Hay". This show was above all about happiness and laughing. It entertained us and lifted our morale. The camp inhabitants performed, sang and made music. It was very successful.

Then Major Leighton from England arrived at camp Hay and tried to put an end to our unjust fate. He was, so to speak, the mouthpiece of the English government. He was our advocate. Dr. Gelis, a lawyer, was also employed as liaison officer and tried to mediate between the camp management, Major Leighton and us inmates. He tried to settle our future. All those who were married and had families or children were allowed to return to their relatives in England. That was in spring 1941. I also considered returning but it seemed too dangerous. I didn't know what would await me during the passage or in England.

After the attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941, Major Leighton had a work camp set up in Tatura in the state of Victoria to where we moved on his advice in 1943. The climate and the surroundings were better and healthier for us there. We could do gardening and grew vegetables ourselves, which we then gave to the kitchens.

An incident occurs to me when I hear the song "*Brüderlein fein*". Mr. Georg Willner, an old man, always buoyed me up: "Brother, just stick it out, it will all be okay in the end", he often consoled me when he saw that I was feeling down. He was very intelligent, was a good carver and improved our hut in Tatura.

In order to escape further inactivity, after 33 seemingly endless months I decided to join the work battalion. I wasn't really working voluntarily in this battalion but what else could I have done? But when I saw that more and more people were joining the work battalion, I went with them. I was about 19 years old – at the time I couldn't see any other alternative.

We worked for an Australian fruit grower, who also accommodated us, and we picked oranges and peaches to prepare ourselves for life after the camp and to get used to freedom. Then we were sent to the Australian army, the Pioneer Corps, which had been set up by the government and our work battalion received the uniform of the Australian army. The train tracks had different gauges in each Australian state, and our task was to carry the heavy boxes of ammunition from one set of train tracks to another in the border area between Albury and Victoria. Depending on the demand, we often worked for many hours on end.

Through the Red Cross, I heard in Victoria that my father and his partner had been deported from France to Auschwitz in 1943. That was all I heard of my relatives during this time.

After one and a half years, I was classified as unfit for service – I suffered from depression – and was honorably discharged from the Australian army. After my release, I tried as a 20-year-old to find my feet in Melbourne, which I didn't really manage. I found a job at a wine company called "Winn's Wines", where on one occasion I carried some heavy loads. Again, I had to stop due to my health.

After the war – Sydney – London – Vienna

In 1945, I went to Sydney and lived as a sub-tenant with a married couple from New Zealand. I thought it would do me good and worked for a few months at the post office and sorted the letters. And then I again fell into a deep depression. I fell into a hole, so to speak, a sort of paralysis. I was treated with electric shock therapy and valium – there wasn't any other treatment back then. The depression had begun during my camp and army time but now it had become particularly bad.

As I didn't want to become an Australian citizen, I was sent back to Great Britain in 1947. It was a great relief to meet with my aunt when I arrived and to see that she had survived unscathed. We were both surprised and overjoyed to see each other again! I remember traveling through London on a double-decker bus and seeing all the destruction. The years had also left traces of destruction on my soul. At the age of 23 there was and remained permanent damage to my health. The depression continued to return. In the Australian camp, the hopelessness led to the state of mind that "life had passed me by" and this contributed to my resignation. I didn't have any influence over my life. Things happened and I could only let them. There wasn't anybody with whom I could talk and that led me to a kind of "inner emigration" which I never completely escaped.

In 1948, Mr. Flussmann traveled to Germany to work there as a translator. In the same year, he also found his mother, who had survived the war in Belgium. He often visited her there until her death in 1978. His father had been murdered in Auschwitz. In 1952, Mr. Flussmann left Great Britain for the last time. From 1952, he worked as a sailor on freight ships and oil tankers in Europe and overseas and he worked in service as a steward. He spent the winters on the Canary Islands. The sailor's house "Scandia" in Antwerp where Mr. Flussmann often lived after being at sea was closed down, thus putting an end to his voyages in 1961. In the same year he returned to Austria.

I didn't know anyone in Vienna either, for I had left as a young man. Wherever I went, I remained without a homeland and without roots. The feeling of not belonging anywhere stayed with me. Just as in my childhood…

Looking back

Today, as a sick, old man, I have to say that I found my life to be a difficult enterprise. I could never be relaxed in making decisions, was existentially always under pressure to make a move and my opportunities were limited. Subsequently, I stopped making plans. I lived my life in the moment. A life spent constantly trying to survive.

I often met people, thank goodness, who were touched by my story and who then helped me. But I always remained reliant on whatever help was given – and continue to be today.

Even today, looking back, I don't think that I could have done anything differently. My life hit a dead end that I struggled to overcome. It was a ruined life. That's how I see it today…

Nevertheless, the good Lord was merciful to me. He showed me the whole world: I was in Russia, America, Canada, South America, Brazil, and many other places. However, fear and pressure were my constant companions, wherever I found myself. Prof. Hamburger, my doctor in Amsterdam, once said to me: "You will never be rid of the barbed wire in your head…".

Mr. Flussmann has been living in the Sanatorium Maimonides Center, a Jewish retirement home in Vienna, since 1981. His greatest wish is to once more visit the grave of his mother in Putte (Belgium), who is buried there in the Jewish cemetery "Frechie Stichting".

Jenny de Nijs at the dance school, 1937

PHOTOS: ROMAINE DE NIJS

… even the **greatest love** doesn't help

Jenny de Nijs, Australia, born 1923

Jenny de Nijs was born Eugenie Schulhof on 1st June 1923 in Vienna. Her family was Jewish. Her father Leopold was an account and tax advisor, her mother Caroline an artist. Her uncle, the architect Leopold Kleiner – he was an assistant to Josef Hoffmann, a famous Viennese art master and co-founder of the "*Wiener Werkstätte*" – provided her with access to an artistic education as a young child. From the age of four to fourteen, Mrs. de Nijs was able to attend the young people's art class of Franz Cizek at the School of Applied Arts Vienna, which meant a great deal to her. Children were taken seriously here, encouraged and supported, and through this, Jenny was also able to gain an insight into many techniques such as painting, woodcut, embroidery, clay and plaster work and paper cutting, thus gaining a sold artistic foundation and an understanding of art which would later open many doors for her.

Mrs. de Nijs' original diary was provided to us by her daughter Romaine de Nijs. In it, the then 13-year-old describes her life in Vienna on her way to becoming an adult: dance school, friendships, excursions, holidays, thoughts about the future and particularly her first friendships and teenage crushes – in short the usual highs and lows of teenage life. Towards the end of her writings, the in the meantime 17-year-old describes saying her goodbyes and the emigration of friends and relatives and finally, from Australia, she retrospectively describes the events surrounding the emigration of her own family.

Jenny de Nijs had to leave Austria with her parents on 9th August 1939 and emigrate to Australia, where she died in 2002.

20th November 1936

[…] What do people do when they are unhappy? This question can only be answered by the fact that it's different for everyone. And to the question: what do people do when they are unhappy in love, the same answer must be given. Unfortunately this is how I feel at the moment. This year I can no longer understand why I was so in love with a guy last year. Next year I won't be able to understand this year's crush, even though that's unimaginable now. When I'm older and I read this, I'll laugh. Just so I don't forget – last year it was Erich Steger and this year it's Igor Dian Lindberg. Of course I'm only writing it here on the condition that nobody reads it. When Dian goes to England I'll be alone again, even though I've never spoken to him. It still feels different. I'll write to him in England, even if he doesn't know who I am. Hedy loves him too. Eva and Erika are both loved but it is not this way for us, but times change and people change too. I've got my old diary for day-to-day things but this one is just for personal stuff. […]

26th November 1936

Today, Anny said to me that Dian is vulgar, but I don't believe her. Apparently she knows him. I know that he is leaving for Oxford in early January. I don't know the address yet. [...] I can't imagine that he's vulgar. I just drew on myself so that I can see how I'll look when I'm 40. Unfortunately only stupid boys run after me. Of course Dian doesn't. Maybe secretly. He always looks at me so strangely. Dian will be gone by the time I have my new ice skates but without him, ice skating is boring. It is nice to be loved, even by idiots. You can always be true to someone else instead. Tomorrow we will get our grades, I'm so scared! […]

2nd December 1936

Erich was at school today, and I've forgotten Dian a bit because I haven't seen him for so long. Erich is so good-looking, and my old love for him has reawakened. I'll call him again tomorrow. Hopefully he'll come back to school again sometime. Forgetting is so difficult. I'm sort of torn between them. It's not so easy. I could choose more easily if Dian and Erich would come to school. At least I hope so. […]

2nd January 1937

Now Christmas is over too and a new year has begun. It was lovely in Lunz and we danced a lot. And why didn't Richard dance with me? He only had eyes for Ilse.

Irmtraut fell in love with Kurt S. I'm not at all jealous of her on his account. She gave him a littler skier [brooch]. My pigtails haven't grown very much. My pen is writing funnily today. For Christmas, I got 1 windbreaker, 1 scarf, 1 pair of trousers, 1 bag for skiing, 1 hat (velvet), 1 pencil, 5 Schillings and 1 paintbox. Everyone is luckier in love than me. I still can't ski properly. The slope down from Maiszinken was great. Hopefully Ilse and Irmtraud will come again at Easter. But I don't think they really liked it. Now life is starting to get serious. Christl Ciompetro [Christl Giampietro: Austrian singer and actress] is singing on the radio at the moment. At least we have chemistry tomorrow, but I don't like physics on Tuesday. On the one hand, Richard is lucky that he doesn't have to go to school any more. I don't know if I still love Dian. I need to see him again. Maybe he'll come to school one more time before he leaves. Maybe he's already left. I wish I was still in Lunz. I was still there at this time last year. So that I don't forget, the people on the card are: Zelinka (castle director), Skede (doctor), Prokopp (forest ranger) and Lengauer (previous forest ranger). I want to have really long pigtails by summer. […]

21st January 1937

I don't know if I still love Dian. A miracle after three months. Yesterday when we were ice skating I saw someone that I liked but he wasn't good-looking. I sent Erwin over to him but he refused to be paired off. He is right anyhow. And if he knew that it was me? It's possible that Erwin told him and he wasn't interested. He could have been glad that I wasn't looking at him. What a shame I can't go ice skating today. Hopefully he will be there tomorrow. His mother is also called Jenny. A twist of fate. We will have to see if anything happens. I'm not very hopeful, I just hope he's there tomorrow. His name is Kurt Kronbacher.

2nd February 1937

I'm lying in bed with the flu again. On Saturday we're going to Schladming for a skiing holiday. I'm really looking forward to it. There's someone else that I like from ice skating now. He's chasing after Hedy more than me, even though she has Erwin, and he's also going with two other girls. He has already danced with Hedy and Dita and linked arms with Steffi (to make someone else jealous). They are very conceited. His name is Josef but they call him Bongo because he always got into fights at school. He's a real rogue. He's maybe 18. There's another Joseph that I call Gigerl and he's even dumber. […] The third one is called Josi, and he's after Dita, but she can't stand him. […]

Zehnten (Schulschluss), Skeele (Zeugnis)
Professor (Förster), Langsamen (früher Förster),
Bis zum Sommer möchte ich recht lange Zöpfe

Donnerstag, 7. Jänner.

Ich liege im Bett mit Schnupfen und Nasenbluten.
Eigentlich hätte ich eine Strenge zum Lernen, aber
obwohl mir fad ist, habe ich keine Freude dran.

8.VII.38.
Ich denke dabei
wie das zu malen.
Wie ich dran denke,
freue ich keine
Farben mehr.

Farben von Kalkarten

An excerpt from
Jenny de Nijs' diary

Donnerstag 21. Jänner.

Ich weiß nicht ob ich Dir
nach 3 Monaten! Gestern auf dem Eis
war einer, der hat mir gefallen, aber

1st April 1937

I haven't written for ages, a lot has happened. The skiing course was really nice. I left with a torn ligament on my left ankle. And then we were in the East, in Lunz am See. It was really nice and very entertaining. It snowed hard and we danced a lot. Now I have been back at school for two days and am madly in love with Heinz (I have been for a long time). He is very tall, I only come up to his elbows or a little higher, he is very tanned and looks like a rogue. He's really cute. He normally wears a blue jacket, gray trousers and a black rubber coat. I once saw him ice skating with Edi Kern and two girls. He seems very sweet, and whenever I have said anything about him he was always coincidentally walking past. I'm always thinking of ways to get closer to him. Maybe Martha will invite us both to her house. Stupidly, he's already in the eighth grade, so I won't have him for much longer. He wanted to join the anti-aircraft tank division in the military but they didn't accept him because he's short sighted, but he's so cute. I wish I had a photo of him. The photo of Edi's pretty pointless because he looks so different now. I much prefer Heinz though. Maybe I'll be lucky. On 19th March we had a dance. It was such fun. I hope everybody liked it. In the summer we're going to Abbazia [Croatian: Opatija, in present-day Croatia]. I love Heinz so much, I can only hope. He looks at me a lot but we've never spoken to him. He's so much older. […]

6th May 1937

Heinz may be a cad but I still love him anyway. Even if I had been closer to Dian, there´s no point in thinking about it anyway. The sea lies between us. In that case, I'll stick to my cad. I sent him the drawing and he said that I was a silly girl. I can't be offended by a cad. Mama and Papa were in Italy for three weeks.

Heinz was really surprised that I didn't look at him today, but he's started to really chase me. Maybe he'll dance with me when we go to Semmering. We'll have to see. And if not, it's not a disaster. Apparently he has a telephone, but he's not listed in the directory. He lives at Brucknergasse 7. Today I got an "A" in German. Wednesday was hiking day. […]

28th July 1937

We have spent the last three weeks in Lunz. It was boring, but it seems I've found the one for me here. His name is Walter Kraus and sadly he's only staying until Sunday, that's two days. He is just as God made him, a "child of nature" to be compared

Jenny with her mother Caroline

Above left: Jenny de Nijs

A picture by Jenny de Nijs, felt sewn on cloth, produced in the art class of Franz Cizek

with Siegfried or the young Hohen-Esp [character from the novel "The Bears of Hohen-Esp" by the German novelist Nataly von Eschtruth]. Unfortunately there's not much doing. I can't talk to him and he doesn't talk to me, and smiling at each other doesn't get us very far. Daily routine: morning – bathing (he arrives at half past 12), at lunch time we sit at a neighboring table, in the afternoon – sleeping and strolling, in the evening we sit quite far from one another in the garden and afterwards, walking by the jetty. I don't think he really likes dancing and modern things. He is blond, not particularly tall, has wavy hair and brown-gray eyes, a small nose and is very cute and good-looking and is fearless and stormy in all he does. Hopefully something will happen. He's got a sister and his mother is with him and so is a horrible blond girl. I forgot to write that I cut my hair in April and now I have a *Rolle* [hairstyle popular in the 1930s]. I'm so sorry I lost my pigtails. I've got a French pen-friend. Her name is Annette […]. I met Heinz on 4th May […]. At the moment I can only think of Walter. […]

4th October 1937

Now we've been back at school for quite a while. So far it was really good. We spent a lot of time with Heinz. Recently (he's already signed up), he picked us up from the tower to say goodbye and we weren't there. For the first few days we were terribly sad of course (Steffi and I), but we consoled ourselves. […]

Now I've been at the School of Applied Arts for seven years. I was with Professor Cizek every morning for seven years. I've grown very fond of him. I have always enjoyed going there and all of my knowledge is thanks to him. Because even talent can become lost if it isn't treated properly. I don't know what I will do in the future. We don't learn drawing at school, I'm too old for Fichtegasse (young people's art class of Prof. Cizek) and too young for the School of Applied Arts Stubenring. Most of all, I would like to be an actress, of course, but it won't come to anything. I'm not a talented writer, but I've still got time. Schmikl shut down her dance school, so now I don't have any opportunities (that means I will have to look for some) to practice my sentimental and funny dance routines. I'm hoping to find a good solution for the former and the latter. I went to the cinema and saw "Novel of a Con-Man" [French comedy], which I really liked.

I love Lotte Lehmann's [German singer and writer] books: "Orplid, my country" and "Beginning and Ascent". They are so real and naturally written, you

feel as if the story is really true. I think I've written enough today. I'll write down the poems that I wrote for my parents in here. My writing is much too big, from now on I'll keep writing much smaller so that my diary will last a lot longer.

I should have written more about Erich at the beginning of my diary so that I don't forget things: I often phoned him using a fake name, until he realized. I often see him in the park and at school. I used to really love him. He always flirts with me now but I haven't flirted back for ages. Dian was in Vienna. I only saw him in passing.

5th November 1937

Heinzi looks really cute in his uniform. I really like Edi too, but I'm in love with Guido Totzl. He's very shy and has gorgeous blue eyes. He used to wear glasses but now I'm used to seeing him without them. He is Elfi Totzl's brother. I might have a small party on the eveing of the 13th. Edi, Guido, Heinzi, Erich, Peperl, Maxl, Kurt Wiesner, Steffi, Ilse, Irmtraut, Dita, Erika and Edith Lebmann can come. The day before yesterday I went to the cinema and saw "Unexcused Hour"! [Austrian comedy with Hans Moser] and yesterday I was at the Burg and saw a "Christi Nachfolgespiel" ["Das Nachfolge-Christi-Spiel" by the Austrian poet Max Mell] with [Raoul] Aslan [Austro-Greek actor and Director of the Burg Theater].

I have just realized that I will never see the two American girls at the School of Applied Arts, Janet Frey and Barbara Slade, ever again. They are already back in America. So far I'm doing well in Latin. I'm curious as to what will happen with Guido. We haven't spoken much yet because he's so shy. I love him a lot. Wiesner always buys us a lot for 10 Schilling. We also always have milk at 10 am which costs 10 Groschen a day. We also had dancing class. Such fun. Recently, Edi and Heinz were at practice and we weren't so we stood outside for ages and they smoked and we talked a lot. Hopefully the party will be interesting.

6th November 1937

Guido is sick. He's not allowed to dance and has to go to bed at half past seven. At first he didn't want to come to my party but now he's coming after all, thank goodness. He smokes Astor. Today I went to dance class and stayed afterwards for the practice. I would like it if I could always go to the practice. I danced with

Edi a lot. The entire quadrille [a five part dance]. Now I am getting better at it. Heinzi wanted to dance a waltz with me but the practice was already over. I really like both of them, but most of all I like Guido. Even when he's not allowed to dance.

13th January 1938

It's two months today since my little party. It was great. We played lots of forfeit games […], including "may I ask, may I hope". And contrary to all expectations Guido and I were together and of course I was overjoyed. He hugged me tenderly in the little dark room and gave me countless kisses. During spin the bottle, he said, "I want three kisses and for the bottle to stop where I want it to." Of course, I hypnotized the bottle to point at me, and it did. So then I turned and wished for three kisses and Heinzi cursed because I only asked for so few and it pointed at him, and he gave me ten. Strangely, I landed with Guido in nearly every game, which of course made me very happy. They stayed at my house until half past ten. Kurt didn't get anywhere with Erika as it seems she has fallen in love with Edi (which she told him). Hysterical as always. Erich was also very nice to me. And that was the evening.

I also went ice skating with Steffi and Erich and to the cinema to see "Manege" [German drama with Attila Hörbiger], "Florentine" [Austrian comedy with Paul Hörbiger], Broadway Melody 1938" [American musical with Robert Taylor] and "Fledermaus" [German screen adaptation of the operetta by Paul Verhoeven] […].

On 7th December it was the "*Krampus*" gathering. Guido wasn't there but it was a lot of fun. Elfi Totzl was there. I danced a lot with Kurt.

On 18th December there was a dance for the seventh grade girls. It was really nice. I asked Guido if he was allowed to dance yet and he said no, but then he danced after all. Not for long, but once with me, twice with someone I don't know, a vixen dressed in green who Heinzi and Edi were also interested in, and once with Edith L. But it was still very nice. […]

On 11th December, Mama had an operation, it was terrible but now she is getting better.

At Christmas we were in Lunz. Dita gave me an eau de cologne "Pastel Blue", Ilse gave me stockings from Palmers, Steffi green writing paper and Irmtraut three checkered handkerchiefs. Kurt sent me a small orange cloverleaf and a letter which I found very sweet. New Years Eve was great fun – we spent it with four boys from Hackenberg [a mountain in the 19th district of Vienna] […]. They were pursuing us terribly but these days that doesn't interest me at all. I'm so worried about my grades, if Papa takes me out of school I'm done for. On the 26th I'm going to the theater with Kurt and Edi. […] On the 22nd there's a dance evening with class 7 a (!) and the big dance on the 7th February in Münchnerhof. I'd like to be on the committee. Steffi is getting a white taffeta dress with cornflower blue. And Edith's is pink with silver. I still don't know. Guido's arm is in a sling again, he left school early today. I hope he's okay, I love him so much.

Little Heinzi […] is so sweet. It funny how little children like me so much, much more so than older ones (for basically we're all children). Richard left for Africa (Casablanca) today. Carlo has perseverance, he writes to me nearly every week, even though I haven't written to him for ages. […] Mitzi's 15-year-old brother Fritzl died today. He had a ruptured appendix and pleurisy. Poor thing. By the way, I have also had a new perm since 6th December. […]

TRÄUMEREI AM RADIO [original version]
Ich höre alte, verklungene Melodien
Aus dem alten, kaiserlichen Wien
Hymnen auf Franz Joseph und Elisabeth
Ach es ist schon dahin und es war doch so nett.
So lieblich, schmeichelnd, zart und weich
Wie alles im Wiener Kaiserreich.
Der Kaiser ist verschieden, verschieden die Kaiserin,
Verschieden der Fiaker, verschieden das alte Wien.
Ein wildes Tempo ist eingetreten in diese Ruhe
Es gibt keinen Walzer mehr, sie sind versperrt in einer Truhe …
In der Truhe der alten Zeit, sie öffnet sich nicht wieder;
In ihr ist alles zarte, weiche, auch die Wiener Lieder.
Fort, fort ist alles, weit, weit zurück
So weit reicht nicht mehr unser Blick …
Noch heute ist der Wiener seinem alten Wien anhänglich,
Doch leider ist ja alles, was schön ist, vergänglich!!?

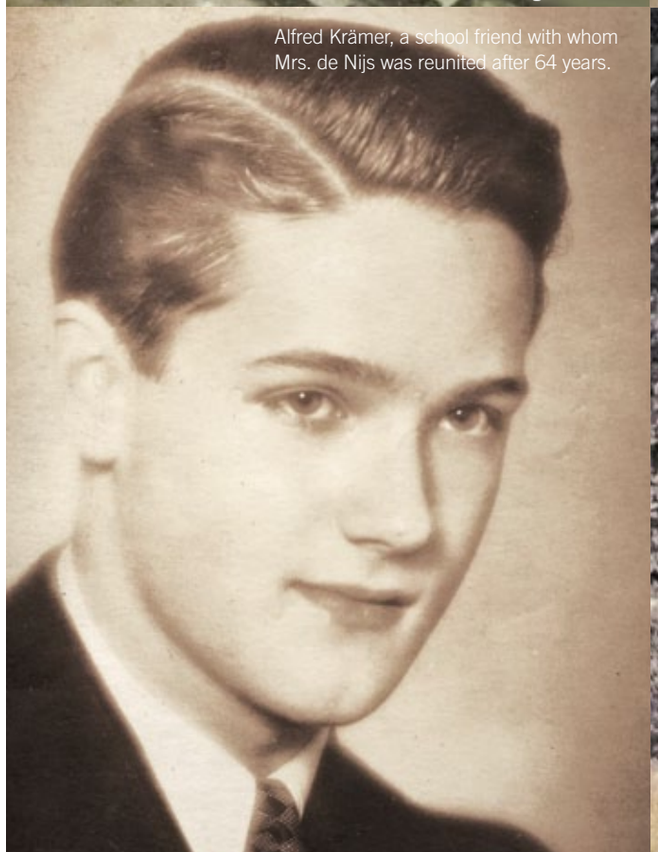
28th May 1938

I haven't written for a few months. Sadly, absolutely everything which is beautiful and nice is over. The coup was on the 13th March and everything nice was taken from us youth. We are no longer allowed to go dancing or to meet with certain people, even the greatest love doesn't help. So now I want to write about the last nice event.

The big dance in Münchnerhof was held on 7th February (incidentally there was supposed to be one at Hübner which has now been canceled). I was in the second-to-last couple on the committee […]. I wore a yellow dress with pink tulle and a very nice hair-do. Steffi had a white dress, Edith Zeiß a white silver lamé dress, Lily Oblass a pink one Edith Lebmann a white one with tulle and flowers and Elfi Totzl a white silver lamé, very nicely tailored. Guido had a tuxedo on, Erich too; Heini his uniform, the old Austrian one. Edi had run away to Paris after getting an "F" but luckily soon returned. Guido didn't dance much, and when he did it was only with me and, unfortunately, Gerti Holzinger (I think he's probably together with her, nonetheless, I still love him). In any case, I was very happy. I also danced quite a lot with Heini, the last dance was a waltz (the last time I danced with Heini, although we went ice skating twice with him and Edi at the ice rink (goodbye as well)) and it was there that I spoke to him for the last time. I said to him that his friend Klaus was a caricature, which he then told Klaus immediately. I also used to dance a lot with Erich, who I haven't seen for a long time now, he's in the same position as me. I used to dance with Erich Fischer very often, he stayed here (oh what joy) and (I still get together, despite the circumstances), with Ernstl Neuhofer. And with Hans Schimpf and loads of others. Guido's parents are lovely. He kissed me for the second-to-last time at the dance. It was in the schnapps bar, fantastic, in front of Holzinger and Heini, who, by the way, also kissed in front of us. But Guido's kisses were are and my favorite. He is so sweet, sensitive and tender, darling Guido, I think I will always love him, I have never been so in love. Even though I see him so seldom and know so many other boys, he is the only one in my heart. There are other little affairs but he is, I think, my second or third great love, and it is really so great even though I'm sure he doesn't love me any more. The memory of how happy we were is enough, when we had each other. I wish it was still like that. So the dance was amazing, Ernstl also kissed me upstairs in the gallery even though

Jenny and her mother on a skiing vacation

Jenny de Nijs



Alfred Krämer, a school friend with whom Mrs. de Nijs was reunited after 64 years.

Jenny as a baby with her father

I already told him three times that I only like him as a friend and am in love with Guido. Kurt danced with almost no one but Lily Oblass. It finished after 2 am but it was really amazing. Prof. Stur, Prof. Kreis and […] Seidelhofer also danced with me.

Since then, I have often been walking with Ernstl, which never passes without a kiss. Sometime Ilse came too. Then there was the dirndl dance, it was also great. Edi, Guido, F. Kern, Pappas Demetris, Ernstl, Nutschi, Lehrner and others were there. It was the last time that I danced with Guido. And then it happened. Kurt was very decent, I spent a lot of time with him, and the same goes for Ernstl. Soon after, Eva left for ever for Brno. I'm going to miss her terribly. On that day there were: Kurt, Ernstl, Edith Zeiß and I. We were at Teddy Herzbaum's house. Kurt left in the evening with Edith, and Teddy went straight to the kitchen and didn't come back for a long time. Mizzi, Eva's girl, cried about Evi in the room next door, the farewell was really sad. So I was alone with Ernstl. The room was dark and I stood at the window and looked down on to the brightly-lit street. He came to me and asked, "Do you still love Guido?" to which I of course answered yes. He said that made him very sad, because he really liked me. I said, "Well, you know, I like you a lot too, you come just after Guido." He said that you always have to have lots of boys in reserve and it's amazing that I have one great love when I could have anyone I wanted. To which I replied, "Love is only for two, but you can have feelings of friendship for lots of people". He listened to this and then gave me a very long kiss. I like him a lot but there is no second Guido for me, whether it's a crush or real love. I can't tell the difference – one day I'll be able to. I went walking with Ernstl, Pappas and Nutschi a few more times.

And then I had to say farewell to Guido. It was on our last day in my beloved Marchetti school. We met in the afternoon and went for a walk. He said how awfully sorry he was that we couldn't be together any more. Of course, I was too. I even cried about it. But I still love him, and as long as no one really perfect turns up, I won't fall out of love. We spoke for a long time. We talked a lot and it was very interesting and he kissed me for the last time as softly and tenderly as ever and it was mixed with many, many tears. We loved each other so much. He said that he had never been in love before and with me it was the first time. He falls in love so seldomly but when he does, then

deeply. He said he will continue to love me and we agreed to think of each other every day when we wake up. Then he kissed me a lot more, about twelve more times, but each time several kisses, and I cried the whole night through, for I will never find someone as perfect as Guido. I don't want to find anyone else. Now I hardly see him at all, and only in passing. Yesterday, I was at my old school and he looked at me so sadly, I could have cried. It's terrible that we can't be together.

It's great in Albertgasse. The professors are very strict, especially the history and geography professor. He is, however, only 30 years old. His name is Emil Thiel and it seems he wants to turn my head, because he flirts with me for the whole lesson and tests me constantly, in every lesson, and I still don't know anything. Now I always look at him as if I am in love so that he doesn't make me take an exam to move up a class. He's very good-looking and brazen, but he's no Guido. Steffi and Edith come and visit me pretty often. There are also younger ones in my class. Manfred Keitsch, Alfred Kramer and E. Lessing are really cute. In the a. [aryan] eighth grade, that means the high school diploma is already done, I met the Hungarian from Lunz again as an SA man. He spoke to me straight away. At school he doesn't speak to me but [after] class we sometimes meet in the hallway and talk a little. He's really cute. In the j. [Jewish] eighth grade there is also a really cute guy, although I haven't seen him for four days. He's tall with black hair (the SA man is blond) and very thin. I wonder, or rather I don't want to know, what my grades are. It's not looking good. I hope to pass all my subjects, I don't want an "F". But it is fate. I hope that Emil will be kind and maybe I will still be able to learn everything in time, I hope so!!!

8th July 1938

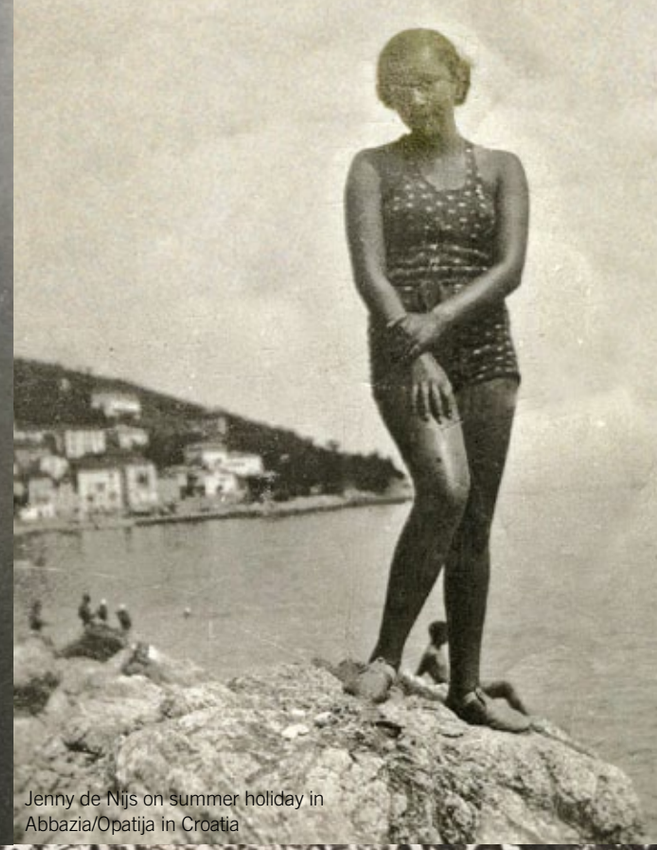
I got off lightly in history. Emil was charming. He kept saying, don't despair beautiful. And he asked me simply: Athens, Sparta, Peloponnes, war, Persians, wars, Rome to the Persian wars. I passed, thank goodness. He was so sweet, always calling me by my first name and favoring me over the others. He only ever said hello to me and gave me his hand. He was really sweet and he also gave me the address of Nacio Herb Brown [American songwriter and composer of musicals and film scores ("Singing in the Rain")] in Los Angeles. Unfortunately, that's over now. You go to school for nine years, slave away

to finish it like this. Kaschtanek gave me an "A" in chemistry and also in religious education and conduct classes, a "B" in French and I won't mention the rest. I went to the cinema with Lotte, with whom I'm quite close now, and we saw "Rose-Marie" [American musical] with Jeanette MacDonald and Nelson Eddy. It's not good to go to the cinema, because then you are envious when you see how happy others can be and I can't have my sweet Guido any more. Who knows who he's with now. I haven't seen him for so long. He's probably gone to the countryside – he needs to recuperate because he's always so sick.

I bumped into Kurt not long ago. He was very nice. Edith Z. has got diphtheria. I was heartsick when I spoke to him, as I realized how much he was suffering and that he needed me. God, we used to be such good friends. How often he wanted to talk me out of being with Guido (I could always have let myself be talked out of it) and I often sat with him in the park in the pouring rain and helped him get over Erika's moods. I also met Pappas, he was very nice. I nearly met Ernstl. But when I saw him, I couldn't look because I had started to cry and I didn't want to upset him. At the moment I'm reading "Katrin becomes a soldier" by Adrienne Thomas [German author] and it's seriously good. Fredl is going to Paris soon. He's really cute, but I can't fall in love with him because I only love Guido. It doesn't make sense but I can't dictate my feelings. We were so happy once and in the evening, when I go into my dark bedroom, I can feel his lovely kisses, first three, then I give him one. And then we got closer and closer until we felt that we could never be apart. I know for sure that I can only see him for afar at the most, if at all. And definitely no kissing. Oh, why did it have to be this way? Dear God, what have I done to deserve this?

I have started going to Mrs. Zels in Trautmannsdorffgasse (no. 19) to learn dressmaking and mollino [a type of fabric] embroidery. That makes me think of Ilse's brother Julo in Linz, who we always called Mollino. Farewell Linz, farewell Ilse!!! For ever? Of course. By the way, just so I don't forget, I got the best grades in German for my essay "Why are sensible recreational activities necessary?" But I still only have a "C" in German. So mean, this stupid German (Walter Gaus). We didn't get our grades until 7th July instead of on the 2nd, because a cap bomb was fired (Gaus' political protest). Now everything has been resolved. Wrongly, of

Jenny de Nijs as a young lady



Jenny de Nijs on summer holiday in Abbazia/Opatija in Croatia

The family in happier times: (from right to left) Mother Caroline Schulhof, Aunt Fini, a family friend, Jenny's father Leopold Schulhof and friends; front left: two-year-old Jenny

course. Four people didn't get their grades (presumably the perpetrators). It's all irrelevant, who cares anyway? I've never been in a mood like this before. There are no nice things left in life. Fate took my friends, and with them all joy. But it's not so bad. There's still Helmut, Fredl etc. and not forgetting my lovely, sweet Mama and Finny. But I would give up 1000 admirers, as I had before, for just one. I don't need to write who that is. It's terrible to see your religious fellows suffering so. Due to ten percent who are guilty, the other ninety percent, the innocent, have to be unhappy. But I have faith in our Creator. Our ancestors have already survived such difficult times – after all, everything has an end. But who knows what will happen next? He knows that come what may, retribution comes to everyone. Everything will be as God wills. I can't think of my personal happiness when so much suffering prevails. Don't the happy people see this, have they no compassion? God has compassion, for he steers his creations and not a few who have lost their way. May everything change for the better, if you think that is right – Amen.

Dear God, as I am sending you my thoughts and immortalizing them in this book, then please know that I always and forever only want one thing – for nothing to happen to my parents and grandmother. My happiness only takes second place.

27th November 1938

It's so sad. On the 13th one year ago, I was so happy, I had my little party. Now there is nothing nice left. Krämer sent me such a stupid letter from Paris. I'm not even going to reply. Keitschl is in America. We are probably going to Australia!

2nd February 1940

And we're here! I'm two years older, always older. Today is 2nd February 1940, but I don't want to get ahead of myself – everything in order. I will try to remember every detail since I last wrote.

We now find ourselves in the last months of 1938 – please follow me!

In around November, the last days of November, by beloved Uncle Arthur traveled to America. I can't even think about it. The first in the family to travel

towards a new homeland. Unfortunately, or thank goodness, I barely mentioned Arthur, or not at all, because my head was full of stupid trivialities. Only now do I now realize how much he meant to me. Wasn't it a lovely feeling, trying to find friends, or rather new friends and that the uncles, aunts and others were there was equally a matter of course. You could feel that they were there and, if you wanted, you could take the phone, dial five numbers and hear their voices. I'll never forget the day that Arthur came for the last time. I didn't find it hard to say goodbye to Susi, but when Arthur then came alone, nice and blond (Finni has been living with us for the last year) with a case in his hand, although not a suitcase, but a case filled with little things that he loved, couldn't take with him, yet didn't want to throw away. Everyone spoke, holding back their tears, and ate sausages, nice ones which he had brought with him. To me at least, they tasted as if they had been mixed with salt. We made smalltalk about his passport and visa and tried to put off the final farewell. It was a Saturday and Arthur said he was leaving on Monday but we all knew that it would really be Sunday. He spoke as calmly as ever: "It's fine, I'll come again tomorrow". We all knew that he wasn't coming again.

Right then Papa called and said that Mama was to meet with him immediately. An opportunity had come up to fly to Australia – a crazy possibility – to the end of the world. Initially nothing came of it – but Mama rushed off in her brown muskrat coat and so saved herself from saying goodbye to our sunshine. But Arthur had to go and Finny was too soft to say goodbye, just like that, to a brother who she more than loved in every way and who had been there since she was born. They ignored me – Arthur was trying to comfort Finny but he wasn't in a much better state himself, but what was I to do? I was terribly hurt that he just gave me a kiss and said goodbye – for isn't it possible to love an uncle terribly – and said, you poor thing, I didn't bring anything for you. That had never happened before. Every time he came to see us, especially on birthdays, he pulled something out of his pocket and even if he was playing at a concert and I was watching, he took the sour drops that he was eating out of his pocket and gave them to me. Then the door closed, we both sobbed and watched Arthur from the window as he boarded the 63 [streetcar] for the last time and waved at us as he passed. Finny continued her cooking in tears and we had to calm ourselves. When Mama arrived home at midday, always carefree and laughing, yet very

busy, both sat on the bench and everything seemed fine – but a piece of each of our hearts had gone with Arthur.

And then letters and the last money and *Straßenbahnmarken* [emergency money] arrived for Finny from Hamburg and then a card from each station. Then we became more modest and waited longingly for letters, which came every three of four weeks and when we read them it felt for a minute like every Tuesday at home in Schönbrunnerstraße, when the whole family always sat together in the dining room [and] Poldi brought us powdered candy (I don't know how he always knew I liked them so much). Grandma always liked to say "how much longer?", Arthur and Poldi played piano and we made jokes – gallows humor! Wasn't it nice?

Then, four short weeks later, it was Poldi's time to leave. To America, of course – to Arthur who did not yet have any work except a few small concerts but who felt at home there. That was enormously comforting. And so Poldi, who had never traveled further than Kaltenleutgeben or Znojmo or once, during his childhood, to Opatija, and who was the most hopeless traveler, set off across the big water. He spent his last day and evening (night) before leaving at our house so that it was easier for Grandma, with whom he had lived his whole life. He left her without difficulty (at least, he didn't let it show). As always, just one sentence, which he always said, was missing: when he was to return. She stood by the kitchen window as she always did when she was expecting one of her children. She always stood there half an hour before they were expected and looked up Pfarrhofgasse to Taborstraße where the O, C or V streetcars stopped by Café Niebauer. These streetcars took you into town or to Schwedenplatz, past the patisserie. Poldi used one of these streetcars when she watched him leave for the last time, and he turned and waved and then traveled to ours with the 63.

It was a nice evening. Dr. Kapralik and Mrs. (Kamiluschka) were at ours. The next day also passed smoothly. At lunch time, we had Poldi's favorite dish, green bean goulash, made by Finny […] and Grandma phoned to hear her dearest son once more before his great journey. Of course we couldn't hold back our tears and most of the beans ended up in the garbage. A few days before, I had walked through the deep snow in a fur coat and boots and the red-blue gloves,

Jenny, Leo and Caroline (Lintschi) Schulhof on their way into exile

The D.M.S. "Sibajak", with which the Schulhof family traveled from Rotterdam to Colombo

new at the time, and went to see Mr. Kindl at the travel agent's on the Gürtel. I only remember this now because Poldi said to me "I'm sure that one day you'll enjoy thinking of this stroll with your uncle". And really, every time I took that route alone, I saw him walking beside me in the snow. And then we entered the warm room, and all we could hear of the cold winter were the snow shovels, and the family was waiting, for it was Tuesday. Without Arthur – and one week later – without Poldi. In the evening, Ivan, Finny's friend, came. Later on, he came to ours every evening and helped us through many sad hours and cheered us up. Finally we all stood by the window and saw Poldi cross the street for the last time, like Arthur, except it was a dark evening and Papa accompanied him. Then I stood alone at the small window and, with my eyes full of tears, looked through the park behind which Poldi's brown and beige patterned coat had just disappeared. Papa had bought him a few shirts, a new hat and gloves and a pullover – very sweet of him. And then we waited for letters, which we received every week from Arthur and Poldi, but of course it's not the same. At least they were together. Since then there had been personal greetings for my birthday, many kisses for Jenny or special letters every three or four months. And I love my uncles soooo much and I'm sure they don't think about me even half as much as I do of them. Well – little niece, many seas away from here – she used to be so sweet – but not more.

The Reisz spouses, our neighbors, left. They were very nice people. Then Lotte, my best friend at the time, left for Palestine and more and more acquaintances left. I attended the Art School Kallus until July. They were both very nice people and I learned a lot from them and will never forget what I owe them. I met lots of girls there. I was very good friends with Lily Bass, a lovely girl. An affidavit arrived from Finny and Grandma in February. But they had registered too late, so had no chance of leaving. I prayed and wished fervently to be able to get to America. To Poldi and Arthur. It was also certain that Finny and Grandma would be able to go, but unfortunately it wasn't my destiny, or maybe I'll be able to go there sometime in the future. Oh, so I don't forget – I gave Poldi the fountain pen with which I had been writing this diary since the beginning, and then I wrote with a gold one, which I lost and now I'm writing with Papa's old red one. If I were to continue writing now, I would surely forget half of it. So I will save it for the future so that I can describe everything that happened until today in detail – I still have so much to write. I've been

thinking about Guido the whole time, I'm not sure if I still love him, but I know that if he were here or if I could see him or talk to him, I would love him so much, I wouldn't be able to stop. I seldom saw him in Vienna, I spoke to him often on the telephone, at least three times a week. Right at the end, he was in the Labor Service, so we didn't even have time to meet and say goodbye, we just spoke briefly on the telephone on the day before I left. Maybe it was better that way.

9th March 1941

Goodness, how time flies. I haven't managed to write for ages, not in any book, at least not in this one. I would so like to write about the present, but everything in order. It is hard to concentrate after such a long time. In any case, it wasn't easy to say goodbye to Vienna, which I loved so much and where I had such fun. Shortly after Poldi left, we celebrated New Year. It wasn't too bad. Ivan was there, and Coronicar, and it was very entertaining. When we were sitting in the dining room with the green fireplace, drinking *sekt* and drinking to each other's health, none of us knew what 1939 would bring. We only stayed in our beloved apartment until mid-March and then we had to leave the building. I said goodbye to my lovely red bedroom, which had been freshly painted, to rot in Hamburg. The furniture was lying around, emptied, and ready to pack. I dusted the poles on my bed for the last time and caressed the mattress for the last time with my eyes and thought about all the people who had sat on it and the memories flooded back as they are doing now, forever inextinguishable in my blood! Poor Finny was really sick and had to lie down among the chaos. She lay on the ottoman with the same pattern as the bedroom curtains and was pushed to and fro. The Meißner plates were wrapped in newspaper. I quickly bought new crockery with Mrs. Anna. And I didn't dream that I would never see any of it again. I still continued to hope. And then we moved to Taubstummengasse 15. It was a nice building. The apartment was furnished with one bedroom, nice and white, and a beautiful smaller room in the Biedermaier style. We took our sofa bed with us. Then later, we bought a new radio and a square table and two Persian rugs, a Shiraz and a Bochara. We spent some pleasant but worried days with Mrs. Schlichter and every evening, Spiegelkarl, Dr. Werner or Ivan came and we made coffee in the glass machine. We also had a telephone. We corresponded with people in Australia. When our permit was rejected, I was

On the journey – Jenny de Nijs

Above left: On the way
to a new homeland – Jenny's mother
Caroline Schulhof

Jenny de Nijs and her
daughter Romaine de Nijs

pleased but then, after all that, it was approved after all. We bought tickets for the voyage and then all of a sudden, we were to leave the next day. It all happened so quickly, we didn't have time to think and ultimately it was the only way to escape. And so the 9th August approached and I will continue to write later. I'm tired.

1938 was a year of great suffering for our whole family …

Věra Bezecná, Czech Republic, born 1922

Věra Bezecná was born a member of the Czech minority in Vienna on 18th February 1922. Her father, Eduard Vencl, was a co-founder of the Czech school system in Vienna and a professor at a Czech middle school of the Komenský-Association. The *Anschluss* of Austria heralded the beginning of the persecution of the Czech minority. Attacks on individuals, restaurants, shops and schools were part of daily life. Employees of the public services had to remove their children from the Czech schools if they wanted to keep their jobs. The Czech school system was destroyed and the majority of Czech associations and institutions was dissolved. Věra Bezecná's father was also dismissed from the teaching service.

At the end of the 19th century, during the Austro-Hungarian monarchy, my grandparents Josef Vencl and Marie, née Fischer, came to Vienna from Bohemia in order to settle there as workers. My father Eduard, born in Vienna on 10th February 1890, one of four children, graduated from the University of Vienna. He served at the front as an Austrian officer during the First World War, where he was badly injured. In 1919, after the establishment of the school association Komenský, he worked there as a middle school teacher. He stopped working there in 1938, when the provisional director Dr. Appelt refused to grant the extension of his contract. […] At that time, my father was given a warning and he was strongly advised to leave the "Ostmark" as quickly as possible. Due to the tense situation at the time, he was issued with a Czechoslovakian passport – until this time he had been an Austrian citizen since birth. The passport was supposed to protect him from being imprisoned. Czechoslovakia, as it existed at the time, was the sole receiving country. He was not able to flee to the USA or to any other country. My father belonged to the elite of the Viennese Czechs – their imprisonment was even reported in the British press in 1938.

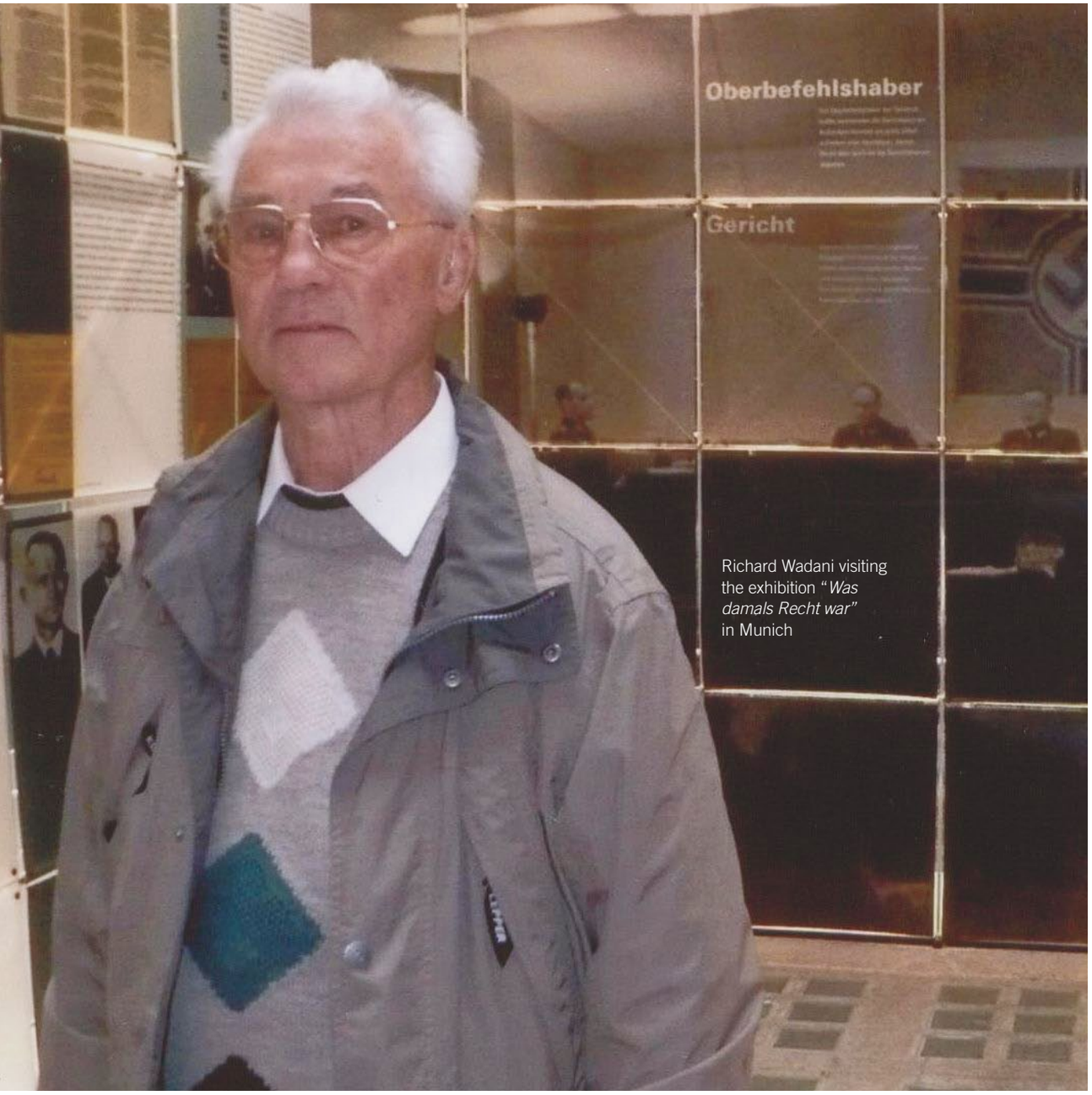
My mother, Marie Vencl, née Führing, and I had to remain in Vienna at her parents' apartment, until my mother succeeded in obtaining the emigration approval from the Nazi authorities. […] In the Protectorate [Bohemia and Moravia], I was not able to study and during the Second World War our whole family was banned from entering the "Ostmark", which was particularly tough for our family because my aged grandparents lived there. They lived in the ruins of Vienna and were not allowed to go to their daughter in Prague, who was a member of the Protectorate.

1938 was a year of great suffering for our whole family…

At the end of the Second World War, there was not democracy in the ČSR until 1948, but then there was a new dictatorship and my mother wasn't even allowed to go to her parents' funerals in Vienna. I studied law at the Charles University of Prague, but the Communist putsch saw students sent to prison and now, after more than 60 years, I can say with pride that I was in the Ruzyně prison like the Czech president Havel.

Excerpt from a letter written by Dr. Věra Bezecná:

I would like to express my thanks for this additional payment [from the National Fund]. At the same time, I would also like to express my great warmth towards my former homeland, which I had to leave in 1938 and to which I have never lost my connection. Since then, I have been living in the Czech Republic, and the unifying Europe helps me to overcome my feelings of dividedness.



Richard Wadani visiting the exhibition "*Was damals Recht war*" in Munich

PHOTOS: RICHARD WADANI

I was a **deserter**

Richard Wadani, Austria, born 1922

Richard Wadani was born to Austrian parents in Prague on 11th October 1922. His family were Social Democrats. From July 1937 to December 1938, he completed an apprenticeship in Prague as a mechanic. His family then had to return to Vienna, the hometown of his mother, because after the *Anschluss* of Austria to the German Reich, Austrians, who were now German nationals, no longer received work permits. In Vienna, Mr. Wadani had to work as a simple laborer as his apprenticeship was not recognized. In 1939, he was conscripted into the German Armed Forces. He deserted the army due to his political convictions and was able to flee to England, where he decided to fight for the liberation of Austria in the English army. He was viewed as a "deserter" and "traitor to the German people". Even after the war, Mr. Wadani continued to suffer for a long time on account of the conduct of his fellow Austrians and the Republic of Austria.

Richard Wadani (center) as a member of the Czech Foreign Legion in England, London July 1945

I didn't lose any property and, until my flight, I wasn't persecuted either. I was a deserter and risked my life so that I no longer had to fight for Hitler's Germany and hence also against Austria.

As a result of my anti-Fascist upbringing, political motivations were decisive for my decision to desert. In 1944, I deserted and subsequently served in the CS Army [Czech army] in England. I returned to Austria in 1946. Looking back on this part of my life, I sincerely regret that my first attempt to flee to the Eastern Front in 1942 was unsuccessful.

I only began to suffer injustice after the war because for decades, deserters were cursed as traitors to the Fatherland and also discriminated against by "official" Austria. Living under such mental strain was not easy for us deserters and still remains difficult today.

Today, Mr. Wadani still appears as a contemporary witness and as an advocate for the concerns of the deserters and conscientious objectors. In 2007, he was awarded the Decoration of Honor of the Republic of Austria for Services to the Liberation of Austria.

… sentenced to death

Kurt Püringer, Canada, born 1924

Kurt Püringer was born on 13th January 1924 in Vienna. He attended grammar school there, before being called up to the Reich Labor Service and to the German Armed Forces. His father had been a member of the Fatherland Front, the single party of the Austrian *Ständestaat* ("corporate state"). Kurt Püringer's political views motivated him to carry out acts against the German Armed Forces. After the war, Kurt Püringer was able to continue his education in England and study medicine. Dr. Püringer then emigrated to Canada, where he still lives today.

From late 1944 until the end of the war in 1945, I worked against Nazism as a member of the German Armed Forces, by providing civilian clothes for soldiers who wanted to break away from the forces. I was caught shortly before the end of the war and arrested near St. Pölten, tried by court martial, found guilty and sentenced to death. I escaped during a Russian bombardment and remained hidden until the Russian occupation of eastern Austria. Then I returned to Vienna, where my parents lived. Since then I have suffered from high blood pressure, for which I have been receiving treatment for about 45 years. I had to prematurely give up my career as a result of it. My poor health can be traced back to the events of that time.

Michaela Hecke-Rebhann
with a photo of her father

PHOTO: WALTER REICHL

… on the run after **undermining military morale**

Fritz Maria Rebhann, Austria, born 1925

Fritz Maria Rebhann was born on 12th May 1925 in Vienna. He was a member of a resistance group within the German Armed Forces and was arrested as a deserter due to his political views and on suspicion of going A.W.O.L.

In January 1945, I went on the run from the German Armed Forces to escape immanent arrest for undermining military morale. In early February, I was arrested near Würzburg and imprisoned in the local Armed Forces' Prison. From there I was transferred to Nuremberg for sentencing but I was able to escape from custody during an air raid and make my way to Vienna where, equipped with fake papers, I awaited the invasion of the Red Army.

After the war, Mr. Rebhann studied history and journalism and worked, among other things, as a journalist and in various fields of cultural politics. The development of nature conservation in Austria to protect the historical landscapes was a concern of his, for example. He also worked as a publicist and published numerous books on contemporary history, political and cultural subjects, including the trilogy *"Das Einsame Gewissen"*, published by Herold Verlag; *"Bis in den Tod: Rot-weiß-rot – Österreichs Untergang im März 1938"*, published by the Bundesverlag and *"Die Braunen Jahre – Wien 1938–1945"* published in the Edition Atelier by the Wiener Journal Zeitschriftenverlag. Dr. Fritz Maria Rebhann died in 2000.

In the flap text of one of his books is written: "Grief work is necessary, coming to terms with the past is necessary, preoccupation with this past is a necessary requirement".

Antifascism and tolerance, dealing truthfully with history, fostering understanding of the circumstances of an era; these were – as we were informed by his daughter in a letter – the essential guiding principles of the author. Thus a literary life's work exists in which Dr. Rebhann, even as early as the 1960s, endeavored to reappraise contemporary history.

… we **didn't want** to have anything to do with **this war**

Gottfried A., Sweden, born 1920

Mr. A. was born in 1920 in a small Styrian village near Leoben. His father was harassed and persecuted as early as the era of Austrofascism due to his Social Democratic views, which affected the whole family. After the outbreak of the Second World War, Mr. A. was conscripted into the military and was assigned to the Mountain Infantry where he was trained to be a medic. During his training, he was often abused due to his family's political views. When he was finally sent to the Russian front in Finland and Norway, where he despaired at the acts of war, his plans to desert began to take shape. He then carried out this plan with a comrade. After a few failed attempts, the pair finally reached neutral Sweden. Once there, however, they had to sit out months in prison before, in 1943 – around one and a half years after their flight –, they were able to contact the future Austrian Federal Chancellor Bruno Kreisky and were able to move freely again.

I had seven siblings. We weren't badly off financially: we lived off Father's work and owned some arable land and small livestock. Our father was a Social Democrat, our mother was religious and we were brought up in the democratic spirit. I went to elementary school until the age of twelve and then spent two years at the further education school in Donawitz. The teachers were sadists and the classes were tough. The Catholic Church was very powerful and I was forced to go to confession from the age of eight to 14.

I had to begun to work when I was still young, watching the cattle and goats and helping out in the garden. There wasn't much time left for school work or hobbies. When I left school, I did various jobs; I was a hodman, a forestry worker etc. until I turned 18 and got a job as a turner in an ironworks in Donawitz. Unemployment was rife and we weren't in a position to think of further education.

My father was a miner and was sometimes laid up in bed after a mining accident. He wasn't afraid to speak the truth and to stand up for his political views. He was therefore constantly harassed by the conservatives around him. During the First World War, the army had hung him up by his feet and whipped him for protesting against the war. Under the Dollfuß regime in the 30s, the Social Democrats were persecuted. We had to sneak round the back of the store to buy our groceries. They threatened to fire my father from the mine if he didn't allow himself to be signed up to the fascist Home Guard. When he refused, he was provided with a uniform which then disappeared into the closet.

Civil war

On 12th February 1934, the Civil War broke out, in which the Home Guard were deployed against the Socialist forces. The Italian military – if rumors were to be believed – were at the Brenner Pass, ready and waiting to enter the country and assume power if it seemed necessary. My family also joined in and delivered supplies and ammunition to our units. The railway intersection Bruck/Mur was supposed to be captured, but the government troops were too powerful and after a week the fighting was over.

This was followed by persecution of the Social Democrats, with house searches and arrests. The Socialist leader Koloman Wallisch, with whom my father was acquainted, fled to the mountains where he was captured. On 19th February, after

a [short] trial, he was hanged. My father was arrested and returned home after a month of torture.

On 25th July, the illegal Austrian Nazis staged a coup, which failed in Vienna but succeeded in other parts of the country. The gun battle went on for a week and during this time we remained passive. Afterwards, there were secret meetings in the woods between the Social Democrats and the Communists. Once, we found a Nazi weapons store, which we handed over to a Social Democrat representative. When the owners noticed the weapon theft, they came and vandalized the house and dug up the garden. They threatened to blow us up. Later, they burned down our barn, but that was where we had hidden the weapons.

The Austrian Nazis were always the worst and there were plenty of them in Leoben, even among our relatives. We were constantly spied on.

The German occupation

We all became German citizens over night. On 12th March 1938, the radio informed us that the German troops had crossed the Austrian border. It was immediately clear who followed the devil. Farmers threw their forks aside and swaggered around in their black and brown uniforms as a sign of their new worthiness. Everyone was urged to obtain swastika flags and hang them in their windows to greet the country's liberators. Many complied out of fear – I hung black paper flowers in the window (which I still had from a fair), but that was taken to be a mockery and a raging Nazi tore them down and hung a flag for us.

One day, while in Leoben, I was walking along with my hands in my pockets when the SA, the SS and the Austrian Legion [Unit of Austrian National Socialists in the German Reich from 1933 to 1938] marched past. I received a sudden blow to the head. When I regained consciousness, an SS officer was leaning over me and informed me that I must salute when the flags go past and promised that next time I would be punished more severely. After this, I didn't like going into town.

My father was deemed a Jewish lackey. He secretly helped a few Jewish businessmen to flee across the Swiss border in a truck; they left eight hunting rifles behind, which we hid.

Three weeks after the Germans had marched in, our house was surrounded by about 50 Austrian Nazis and some ten of them stormed in with bayonets at the ready. We recognized them – they were old friends and neighbors who had often visited us and eaten with us at our table. Now they came with a different attitude: they pushed us up against the wall and shouted at us to hand over our weapons, flyers and typewriters, after which they searched high and low, smashing our furniture, cutting open mattresses and breaking open the floor. We were scared to death. When they didn't find anything, they took our father with them and abused him for a week.

In order to keep unreliable people under control, my older brothers – and others – were called up to the German labor or military service. This involuntary change of environment achieved the desired result on weaker-minded people: an acquaintance, who had previously described himself as a Fascist Communist returned from this retraining as a true Nazi. I had to cease work at the ironworks and was put to work on the lathe producing shells.

The neighbors bothered us constantly with their spying. Our father was threatened with prison and it seemed that he was only saved by the fact that he had managed to rescue injured colleagues from a gas explosion at the mine. When they wanted to decorate him for his deed, he answered: "Wear the medals yourselves, you snotty-nosed kids!" Then he was left in relative peace.

In November 1939, I was called up to the army for the first time but, upon the request of my employer, I was exempted until further notice with the argument that I already worked in the war industry. One day, a works policeman with whom I went to school stood behind me to check up on me and to provoke me. I told him to get lost. He said that he had to keep a special eye on the "young red ones". So I took a screwdriver and attacked him. He went to the office and made a phone call. Barely ten minutes later, four SS men were there and they took me to the headquarters. Once there, I had to listen to the lies that the works policeman had told about me. Then the SS gave me a very short hearing: "You are charged with refusal to work and exacting revenge against the police". Straight away, the two SS men took me under the arms and into their local. "Take off your shirt and lie on the bench!" Then I was tied up and they both whipped me until I bled. The pain caused me to faint. When I came to, the two SS men dragged me out of the room

and put me on a chair in front of the *Hauptsturmführer*. He said, it wouldn't be the last time I was punished. Then I had to sign a paper saying that I injured my back in an industrial accident. Before I was allowed to go, they warned me to keep my mouth shut: "You know that your whole family is on the black list for Dachau!" When I arrived home, my mother asked me why I looked so pale. When she saw my bloodied shirt that was stuck to my back, she was shocked. I told my parents everything but we couldn't say anything. Until my conscription, every time I was off work sick, the works police appeared at my door with a thermometer. 39 degrees wasn't a fever – get in the car and off to work! Sometimes I considered suicide.

One day, when I was at the restaurant "Glück auf" in Seegraben, I greeted the owner as usual with a hello. The owner, Franz Lösch, now a legitimate Nazi, no longer approved of the customary greetings and barked at me that in his restaurant, he would only be greeted with "Heil Hitler". While I drank my beer, I studied the map hanging on the wall on which the German advance was marked with pins. Lösch approached me and taunted: "What do you understand of this map, boy?" He didn't realize that I was already looking for a way to flee the danger zone.

German military training

In January 1941, I received a renewed call-up from Berlin, which was to be complied with within 24 hours or I was to be court-martialed. Unfortunately, the master, who had twice helped me to avoid conscription said, "Mr. A., this time I can't help you". I presented myself at the nearest barracks in Leoben and from there, I was sent to Saalfelden in Salzburg. I was recruited into the Mountain Infantry and allocated to a mountain medic reserve unit in order to be trained to be a medic for the next eight months.

There were four companies of medics, primarily composed of doctors, medics, priests and seminarians. The sadistic commander drove four men to suicide, and older men suffered heart attacks when they were forced to run in the snow in full kit. Being chased up the hills belonged to the training – I was used to running in the mountains from home.

After two months of training, our company was assigned a Sergeant as our commander, who had been decorated with the Knight's Cross in the Polish

campaign. I was shocked, because I knew him. He was a policeman from Judendorf near Leoben who our family knew well. Soon after, I was called into his office. Full of hostility and mocking, he said to me: "If I hear that you have been making political statements, you will be immediately demoted to the punishment battalion. Special leave is out of the question." Then he shouted, "About turn and out!"

One day, I had to scrub the corridor and the stairs. When I had reached the last step, he came and checked whether everything was clean with his finger. "Pig!", he shouted at me and took the bucket with the dirty water, went up a few steps and emptied it. "Continue!", he shouted. "What a pig!", I said to myself. He must have heard me. That same night at midnight, I was awakened. "Soldier A., fall in with your rucksack!"

I was completely shocked and stood there, barefoot and in my underwear, in the barracks yard in March. Then I had to pack bricks into my rucksack and run and lie down to the tune of his whistle. At the same time, I had to call, "I must not say 'pig' to an order!" For an hour he chased me across the yard like this, it was a big as a football field. Then he shouted, "Take the bricks out of your rucksack and get back to the barracks!" I collapsed in front of the door and crawled back on all fours until I fell, half-unconscious, into bed.

One day at the end of March, the whole company marched out to train. The commander was my "acquaintance" from Judendorf again. On the way back, we saw where the farmers had been spreading muck. He suddenly shouted: "Soldier A., step forward, lie down, crawl, roll and up, march, march, run!" Then he told me, he would make a good National Socialist out of me. I looked and stank like a pig. In the barracks, he ordered me to "line up in the yard in perfect dress in one hour, the *Führer* is speaking." I didn't have anything else to wear, so I stood in my wet uniform and froze.

After training, I was sent to a driving school in a monastery in Bregenz on the Bodensee, near the Swiss border. From there I wanted to flee across the border, but I changed my mind when I heard that four comrades had been caught attempting to flee – their death sentences were read out when we were lined up to serve as a warning to us. After completing driving school, I was ordered back to Saalfelden and had to help train recruits. One day, when we were outside and marching, I was

put in charge of a group who were to be drilled […] up and down the mountains. But I was young and there were people much older than me in the group, so when we came to a little lake, I ordered communal bathing. It was June and the water was warm. But then the company commander appeared and ruined our fun. I was punished with two weeks arrest with only bread and water. Sympathetic comrades pushed sausage and bread to me through the bars.

War command

One morning in July, we had to line up in three ranks and we were told our fates. We were divided into two groups to be transported to Africa and to Russia. I had agreed with a friend that we would desert and join the English if we were sent to Africa. But I was ordered to Russia. We marched to the station and were transported to Germany in freight trains. We slept in Munich where I met a young girl, and with her, I tried to forget the seriousness of what was happening. The day after, we continued to Hamburg, where an air raid brought us back to bitter reality and gave us a glimpse of what awaited us at the end of our journey.

At the station in Copenhagen, Mountain Infantrymen thronged towards us from all directions: A loudspeaker called "Holidaymakers on their way to Germany by train, please take your seats…", but in reality of course, the train was northbound to Helsingör [Denmark], where we had to pull down the blinds and were brought across to Sweden by ferry.

In Helsingborg [Sweden], Swedish officers embarked and were invited to spend some pleasant time with their German counterparts. Around 200 soldiers – mostly Austrians – were squeezed into the overcrowded train and tried to dispel the boredom and uncertainty with singing and games of cards behind the lowered blinds.

In Kiruna we were able to disembark and stretch our legs. The thoughts of escape were at the front of my mind as we traveled through neutral land and I waited for an opportunity but the train was well guarded and the friendly relations between the German and Swedish officers did not bode well. We had also been warned: whoever tries to escape will be seized immediately and brought back.

The train rolled endlessly on and in mid-July we arrived in Narvik [Norway], where we were put up in barracks while we waited to be transported further.

There was mass destruction in Narvik, the port was blown to bits and full of sunken ships. Freight ships docked with the coffins of fallen soldiers. I walked around the town and met lots of Norwegians. They could tell the difference between Germans and Austrians and knew the *Edelweiß* emblem, the symbol of the Mountain Infantry which we had on our sleeves. I gave them tobacco and got talking to fishermen, who had their boats anchored next to the war ships. A Norwegian teacher approached me at a cemetery – he wanted to help me escape to Sweden. But I was mistrustful and didn't know if it was a trick. I didn't know in which camp to place him.

To the front

On 25th July – after ten days rest – I was taken on board a transport ship with 2000 men and left Narvik that afternoon. We had heard that the ships were dangerous. When we came out of the fjord, we joined a convoy of ten similar war ships and were escorted by German ships. But danger was lurking on the open sea, and when, during the night, we were level with Tromsö, all hell broke loose. Ships in front of and behind us were torpedoed and blown up, ammunition exploded and the death cries of men and horses – who were standing tied up on the front deck – resounded through the night. Debris, hats and other loose objects [floated] in the water. When we docked in Hammerfest the next day, five transport ships were missing from the convoy and thousands of young men were gone forever, swallowed up by the sea on the coast of a foreign land. For them, the war was over before it had begun.

A few days later, we approached Kirkenes without further interlude. But there I received another shock. When we docked at the port, Russian prisoners of war – guarded by SS men – were in the middle of unloading a ship. It had been discovered that a bottle of wine was missing from the hold and ten Russians were taken and forced on to a truck which took them to the cemetery, where they were shot.

In Kirkenes, we were given our fighting gear and were transported to Petsamo [Finland, today Russia] the next day. There were mass graves there, containing thousands of fallen soldiers. We traveled into Russia and over the first bridge that was guarded by the Waffen-SS and through the window we saw people in the German Labor Service who were doing heavy work on the street. After a further

ten kilometers, we crossed the river Liza where we were divided into Mountain Infantry regiments and began the march to the front.

It was a hideous and shocking picture that greeted us on our march through the grim and artillery riddled Tundra landscape. Mutilated bodies lay at the side of the road, the smell was horrific and difficult to bear. They were mainly fallen Russians, as the Germans had already been removed, and they bore witness to the fact that there had been recent battles there. They were the terrible remains of Dietl's [Eduard Dietl, German General] first failed attack on Murmansk [Soviet Union] on 21st June 1941. We knew what we were heading towards, that we were to fill the holes in the German army and on this path which led to death, we had a preview of our own fate. I felt sick and couldn't eat for a week afterwards.

Under fire at Murmansk

It was late July and Dietl had already launched a second offensive against Murmansk. When we arrived at the front, we had to get into position immediately. This part of the front was defended by three Mountain Infantry regiments. Bombed-out nature – ridged marshland and stony birchwood forest – provided a desolate backdrop to the theater of war. Behind us was the muffled thudding of the German canons shooting at the Russian defense lines from where fire was returned only sporadically.

At last the order came to attack – suddenly the gates of hell opened and the Russian canons spat their destructive fire over us. I jumped for my life in the hail of grenades and didn't know how I was to help all of the wounded who lay in my path. An artillery attack beside me left me covered in earth and for a while I lost consciousness, but I got up and was uninjured. Surrounding me were fallen soldiers and medics who remained on the ground.

The German attack was broken and the losses could be calculated in thousands of dead and wounded. It was impossible to keep our positions during the Russian counter-attack and during the night the remaining forces withdrew. There followed one or two weeks of static warfare where we were thrown back and forward and involved in close combat. It was hot, and the Liza was full of bodies – the wind blew the awful stink of the fallen across no-man's-land.

We received back-up. A battalion of well trained elite soldiers from the Waffen-SS marched past with resolutely stamping boots, armed from head to toe and called out to us mockingly: "You country bumpkins, we'll take Murmansk in four days, we'll show you." With a signal from the whistle they led us into a renewed attack. But again hell broke out above us, the Russian artillery opened fire on us several kilometers wide. The earth shook and I thought the world was going to end. The elite battalion was mown down and among the desperate cries of the wounded you could also hear helpless whimpering for their mothers. An SS officer tried to force me with his pistol into the worst line of fire so that I would help them, but luckily my own commander came to my aid and saved me from a senseless death. The SS battalion was completely wiped out and the few survivors were taken prisoner by the Russians.

The losses were devastating. The Mountain Infantry regiments had shrunk from 1200 men to just 140 and it was no longer possible to maintain the original detailing. The other battalions had to be banded together. Of the 100 original medics, I was the only survivor who was uninjured. The food was poor and many got sick and died of stomach complaints. The nursing work was inhumanly difficult and I could hardly bear to bandage all of the cripples who had lost arms and legs. The medics were required to fight and to tend to the wounded with equal measures of unwavering courage. We also wanted to collect statistics of the dead and the wounded. Those who didn't manage were threatened with martial law and many disappeared in this way.

Sometimes, I came across wounded Russians in the battle field, who I also treated. Some showed me photos of their families – but the SS put a stop to this type of humanity and ordered me to shoot them instead. I never carried out this order. One time, a Russian soldier came running towards us and I was ordered by an Austrian Corporal to shoot him. When I refused, he grabbed the pistol to do it himself, but the magazine was empty and, to his visible annoyance, the weapon just clicked.

I was shocked and scared by my experiences of war, by the senseless suffering and death, and several times I thought of fleeing and handing myself over to the Russians. But I had seen some men try this and they were mowed down by machine gun fire.

One day, I watched as a Mountain Infantryman from my battalion made a risky excursion into the dangerous terrain in front of the Russian snipers. Armed with a rifle and bayonet and with a blanket under his arm, he began his carefree ascent up a hill. I followed his foolhardy intention through my binoculars. He took stones up with him and, without particularly hurrying, built himself a small barricade. When he was finished, he lay himself down to rest behind his wall. But he had not rested for long before a Russian grenade exploded beside him and startled him. A moment later, another projectile hit his stone wall, shattering it. He screamed and I ran up to him and succeeded in dragging him to safety behind a rock. He had been wounded in the calf by the shell splinters and I applied the first bandage before carrying him back behind our lines.

His name was Franz S., 18 years old, from Vienna. I had heard talk of him before because he was different from the rest and considered to be a peculiar individual. He drank Russian vodka that he found and asked me straight up whether I was a Nazi and in favor of this war. When I denied this, he immediately suggested fleeing together. He said he knew a neutral country – he also mentioned that his father was a Social Democrat. I transferred my new found ally to the main medical station behind the front and didn't take his suggestion too seriously. After a week, he had regained his strength and came running towards me, brandishing a rucksack full of provisions and he had a field map of North Finland that he had stolen from a German officer. We left that very evening.

Escape through Finland

It was evening on 17th September 1941 when we left the front and, under cover of darkness, began our dangerous, uncertain tramp westward. It was cold, it had already begun to snow and we were ill-equipped for the approaching weather. In the rucksack we had supplies for a long journey as well as hand grenades and ammunition for our pistols in case someone should try to stop us. We tried to draw as little attention to ourselves as possible and lay for a while on a plateau in the dangerous vicinity. On the way down we came across an ambulance […] and we [decided] to [requisition the vehicle]. In an unobserved moment, [we carried out our plan].

I had in my pocket a referral to a military hospital in Petsamo which I had written myself and was issued to the injured Franz S. due to internal complications.

He had already faked internal bleeding in the hospital camp by mixing cranberries into his stools which gave a doctor reason to sign him off sick for a few more days. We hoped that the Germans would understand that such injuries required an ambulance and with the patient behind me, I got into the stolen vehicle and drove to the Liza. The bridge was blocked by SS watchmen but the fake referral proved to be an adequate pass and the barrier lifted. With our hearts in throats, we rapidly left the dangerous territory without so much as looking back. After a time, we naturally ran out of gas but coincidence – which was our frequent companion on the way to freedom – saw to it that a German infantryman appeared on a motorbike with a sidecar. He took us with him and drove us to Petsamo. Up to here – but no further – we could use the fake pass and we now had to think of a new plan.

Next they seized the opportunity to travel with a convoy of German trucks. When they were asked the next day by a German officer to give a reason for their presence, they jumped from the moving vehicle and disappeared into the woods. Luckily, they were not followed and were able to continue their journey with another company. The Sergeant Major of this unit issued the escapees with train tickets to travel to Kemi, to where – as they told the officer – their headquarters had been moved. They continued on their way towards Tornea on the Swedish border and got off the train at Kalajoki where they slept with a Finish family by night and reconnoitered the area by day. The next evening, they braved their first step across the Swedish border, along a frozen river.

The escape in Sweden

Our escape was successful and we found ourselves in a free country. I felt safe for the first time during the war. We stopped a bus which was driving the sparsely traveled road alongside the river (Torne Älv) and were able to board. The passengers stared in astonishment at our unfamiliar uniforms but it didn't alarm us, after all, we were in a free country. When the bus finally stopped and some plain clothed policemen boarded and took us with them. We were not in the least afraid. They took us to the police station in Kalix, where we spent the night under arrest.

We thought that the danger had passed and the war was over for us and that the worst that could happen would be to be detained for a while. But we were unwelcome guests and the police were confused about our appearance. At the

police station in Lulea – where we were taken the next day for questioning – we were informed that without further formalities, we were to be taken back across the border.

It was dark when we arrived in Övertornea but we were able to faintly recognize the Finnish border guard on the other side of the Älv. Our pistols were returned to us and we were directed as to how to cross the ice unnoticed. The police's torches lit the way and kept a watchful eye on us as we commenced our lonely walk back. But before we had reached Älvstrand, we managed to diverge from the path and escape in the dark. After aimlessly wandering for a while, we stumbled upon some train tracks which we then followed, and during the night we arrived undetected in Haparanda.

Aware of the risks, we knocked at the first house that was lit. An astonished family invited us in and we told the daughter, who could speak a little German, our story. They were understanding of our circumstances and let us stay the night. The next day, they gave us civilian clothes and cut our uniforms into strips for rugs and burnt our identity papers. The son of the house contacted a Communist and we were advised to move south or to go to the *Volkshaus* in Gällivare. During the night, he procured some bicycles for us, on which we left Haparanda.

They didn´t want to accommodate us at the *Volkshaus* in Gällivare and in the hotel where we stayed the night, they called the police, who arrived to pick us up. Again we were brought back to Lulea and then back to the border. We understood that we would have to fight for our lives and on the way to Haraparanda – where we sat unguarded in the back of the car between two policemen – we opened the doors and threw ourselves out of the car, which was traveling at a fair speed. Of course, we were soon recaptured. The police threatened to shoot us if we tried to escape again and restrained us by tying us up with belts. In Kalix, we were handcuffed and were then driven at full speed to Övertornea. There, we were accompanied to the border and handed over to the Finnish police.

We were placed under German military guard, consisting of five or six officers and soldiers, and awaited our fate in a barrack. We heard them telephoning with Rovaniemi [Finland] and understood from the conversation that the Gestapo were going to come and pick us up. But when the Germans went to eat, leaving

only one soldier to guard us, we seized our last chance. Franz asked to be able to answer the call of nature and when the soldier went out with him, I sneaked through the door and ran. Somehow, my comrade managed to free himself and I saw that he was running towards the river. I found my way northwards, heard that the Finnish police were chasing me with dogs and, several times, narrowly escaped capture. Under cover of darkness, I eventually managed to make my way down to the river and crossed at a frost-free pond-like area. Riding on a tree trunk, I reached the Swedish side.

Mr. A. was discovered by Swedish police. He fled through the woods and arrived at the same house where he had been taken in two days previously. There, he met up with his comrade. After three days, the pair traveled south on a freight train in the dark. When they were discovered by a railway worker, they again fled into the woods. They continued their journey south by night on stolen bicycles. By day, they slept in barns and nourished themselves with cranberries and stolen milk. Franz was stopped by police for having no light on his bike and taken to the police station. Mr. A. continued his journey alone and slept on a farm where he was awoken the next morning by two policemen and taken to the criminal investigation department in Stockholm.

I was interrogated for a week. The Commissar, Sandell, had sadistic tendencies and threatened me with all sorts of reprisals while pulling at my hair and my ears. I was interrogated in several languages but played dumb and pretended not to understand anything. Finally, however, a policeman arrived from Lulea and identified me. I also learned that Franz was here at the criminal investigation department too and was being interrogated in another room.

We were given a written deportation order and were put on a train going north, accompanied by two policemen. One of the policemen was a Nazi sympathizer and carried out his assignment with great relish. He threatened me with a "direct shot" if we tried to escape. As I celebrated my 21st birthday on the journey he gave me some cake and congratulated me on – what he hoped was – my last birthday. But in Haparanda the police were waiting and they informed us that a telegram had arrived from the [Swedish] Minister for Social Affairs Gustav Möller, according to which the deportation order was not to be enforced. It was my comrade who had written a letter to the Social Democrat minister and a helpful policeman by the name of Tuvesson from the criminal investigation department had delivered it to him by hand.

The Nazi sympathizer made a final effort by driving over to Finland and giving them our names and describing the course of events. But we were finally saved and were pleased to be able to stay in prison in Lulea.

The prison

The prison was a depressing, old-fashioned building which was heated in winter by means of a large, centrally-placed wood-fired oven. At first I found it warm and pleasant to spend our days there, much nicer than lying in Murmansk. But days, weeks and months passed without anything happening – no one seemed interested in us. It was called detention, but really we were in prison. We heard no news and I didn't understand why we were locked up like criminals – we hadn't done anything bad. On the contrary, we had distanced ourselves from evil. Later, I understood that as German deserters, we were considered a delicate matter which was best left alone. In the war year 1943, Swedish neutrality had sensitive nerves.

For nine months I sat alone in a cell of 2 x 3 meters, with no one to talk to in my mother tongue. I wasn't permitted to see Franz and at first, I didn't know where they had locked him up. The only interruption of this monotony was one hour of wandering around the prison yard, which was cold and miserable in the winter. Towards the end, the uncertainty and idleness had become unbearable and I thought that I was going to go mad. I broke out in cold sweats and threw myself against the door, trying to break out. I was plagued by nightmares about the war and being chased by the Gestapo. The food was poor and insufficient – slices of bread, sausage and porridge were on the menu, morning and evening and I felt myself becoming weaker. I sometimes dreamed of goulash and wiener schnitzel.

My mental and physical health deteriorated. A priest came every Sunday but he must have been an ambassador of the devil, because the only thing that he ever said to me, in broken German, was that I was supposed to be extradited. When I complained of pain in my diaphragm and was taken to the hospital barrack, I was received by the doctor who felt it his place to accuse me of shirking my duties in the German medics' service. He blathered something about the "blood of our German brothers" and told me I should be ashamed of myself for letting my countrymen die. That was his entire treatment – presumably he thought that that was the appropriate medicine.

I had to spend a month with a terrible toothache before being taken to hospital in Lulea for treatment. Unfortunately, they pulled out two healthy teeth and left the painful one in my mouth. I had a toothache for several months until the tooth finally rotted away. Later, I was no longer permitted to go to the dentist, which I perceived as a form of torture – there are many ways to torture a prisoner, including by not helping him.

I encountered Fascism in many different guises – in the work clothes of a farmer, the uniform of a policeman, the black robes of a priest and in the white overall of a doctor. In prison, it also appeared in the uniform of the commander. He was a man of extreme good humor, as long as the Germans were doing well. But among the guards there were also decent people with sober political views. […]

One day, I made contact with Franz, who was in the cell below mine, through the so called bush telegraph and using a piece of string we were able to pass notes to each other through the bars of our windows. Together, we composed a letter of complaint to Gustav Möller, to which we never received a reply – the letter probably got no further than the guards. Sadly, our secret contact was discovered with the consequence that Franz was moved to another cell out of the reach of my string.

One day, I heard some people cursing loudly on the stairs and I recognized Franz's voice – then I heard a crash and when I asked a guard what had happened, he told me that my comrade had fallen down the stairs and hit his head. Later, Franz told me himself that a guard had pushed him down the stairs and that was the reason why he has suffered epileptic fits since then.

We succeeded in re-establishing contact over the bush telegraph and in early May, I received the news from Franz that another Austrian had arrived in the prison. They were obviously of the opinion that he wasn't a dangerous influence, because he was put in the cell with Franz. I saw him a few days later when he was marching up and down the prison yard in his fine leather boots. His name was Fürst and he was a Mountain Infantryman from Salzburg. When I had gotten to know him, he bragged about his father's Nazi views and said that he was proud to be a soldier in the German army. However, due to an unfortunate set of circumstances, he managed to miss a call-up and for fear of being punished he

had wandered around northern Norway until he accidentally crossed the Swedish border. He regretted this mistake and had requested his extradition – but they held him against his will.

After months of patient filing with a knife blade, I had nearly succeeded in lifting the window bars when I finally met up with Franz and the new arrival in the yard. They had already come up with an escape plan and we decided to carry it out immediately. In an unwatched moment, we pulled forward a wooden cart and leaned it like a ladder against the wall, a three meter high slab wall with barbed wire, which we climbed up and jumped over. Unfortunately, when he landed on the other side, Franz broke his femur and lay helplessly on the floor as we ran away and tried to escape the city.

During their escape, both men broke into holiday homes in order to take food and clothes. However, they were caught and returned to prison by the police. On 13th August 1942, they were sentenced to three months imprisonment by the court in Nederlulea. They were offered extradition as an alternative. After a total of 16 months in prison, in April 1943, Gottfried A. and Franz S. were finally transferred to an internment camp.

Internment camp

We were taken to a make-shift interment camp in Kalmar-Schloss which was inhabited by refugees of various nationalities. I recovered and began to foster hope for the future. Franz wrote to Bruno Kreisky in Stockholm, who came and visited us and promised to help. Four months later, we were sent to the Langmora internment camp in Dalarna.

During the three-day holiday trip to Sweden, where we were visiting Kreisky, we came into contact with a family called Eriksson who were Social Democrats and had a certain amount of political influence. They helped us to receive permission, after four months in Langmora, to live in Stockholm with this family as our guarantors. We were given a Swedish foreigners' pass but were forbidden from leaving the city for the duration of the war. The extradition order was not lifted until 1946.

Why my friend and I deserted

I was active in an illegal youth group of the "Revolutionary Socialists" for a democratic Austria as early as 1934. The father of my friend was a member of the

Republican Defense League and had taken part in the February Revolt. He was in prison for several years. My father had been imprisoned for the same reason in Leoben for six months and was subjected to physical torture. They didn't care about my mother, who was left on her own with eight children. Only acquaintances and those close to us came to our aid.

To travel from Murmansk to Sweden via Finland was a long way and a difficult decision. But we risked it because we didn't want to have anything to do with this war and wanted a free Austria. In Sweden I was active in the "Austrian Association". Its chairman was Bruno Kreisky.

We lived **under great pressure**

Maria Springer, Austria, born 1923

Maria Springer was born on 27th June 1923 in Innsbruck. Her mother Katherina Entacher and her sister Hilde were persecuted by the National Socialists due to their membership of the Jehovah's Witnesses and were arrested several times. As a result, at the age of seventeen, Maria Springer was already responsible for her father and her young nephew. Furthermore, she also felt obliged to hide and provide for her sister Hilde's husband, Alois Lanthaler, a leading Jehovah's Witness who often sought refuge with the Entacher family. For these reasons, Maria Springer had to give up her job and was under great pressure. It is also due to her courage that she was able to take home and care for her sister's baby when it was born in prison.

When, in 1940, my mother Katarina Entacher and my sister Hilde were sent to prison due to their beliefs as Jehovah's Witnesses, my sister Elsa and I did our best to care for our father Georg and our nephew Walther. In spring 1944, due to the renewed imprisonment of my mother and sister, it became necessary to give up my job as a kindergarten teacher trainee in order to care and provide for my father and my nine year old nephew. On top of this came my moral duty to provide for Alois Lanthaler, who was persecuted and hunted for his beliefs and lived underground. That became a great strain and challenge for me and my nephew. For neither my father [who was not a Jehovah's Witness] nor any of my relatives friends or neighbors could be allowed to suspect a thing. We lived under great pressure and tension. We were never safe from police checks or house searches. This was made all the more difficult by the fact that we only had two ration cards with which we had to provide for three people. That required further sacrifice from us, not to mention my financial difficulties. My savings were all gone.

Sometime in May 1944, I felt brave enough to take action in order to request some relief for my mother and sister. So I traveled to Munich, located the Gestapo department in the police headquarters, and found the responsible Commissar Grimm. The conversation seemed positive. Mr. Grimm gave me cause to hope that I would be able to take home my sister's baby after the birth and he also promised me permission to write and even that I could visit my mother in the Pfettrach camp [today part of Altdorf, Lower Bavaria] near Landshut. And so it came to be that in June 1944, under difficult circumstances, I was able to collect baby Luise from the Aichach prison [Bavaria]. From that time on, both of Hilde's children were in my care.

Mrs. Springer also campaigned tirelessly for her sister's release, as is demonstrated by the following letter from her to Commissar Grimm:

Dear Commissar Grimm,
With reference to a letter from my sister Hilde, I am writing to you today with a special request. During my visit to Aichach for the purpose of collecting Hilde's child, I could not fail to notice how fragile and sick my sister was as she lay there (after two operations on her chest). I cannot see the sense in robbing an innocent creature as mentally and physically weak as my sister of her freedom. And I do not question for a minute that she is innocent. Of course, one has to ask oneself, what good does it do anybody if Hilde is just laying there sick and can therefore not be questioned and is, in fact, merely a burden on those around her. I implore you to understand my meaning.

Please consider these lines, in which I beseech you to please, please exercise some compassion.

Would it not be possible for Hilde to return home until she is back to full health? You could summon her back at any time. Hilde's third operation is approaching and I am doubtful as to whether she will be able survive it.

I have her son with me and her baby daughter. I cannot understand how they can simply be taken from their mother.

I know that during the course of your work you have seen a lot and I can understand that you remain detached. But please try and see the matter from a different perspective – I can't believe that you find my actions to be absurd.

At the time, you granted me the permission to write to my sister as often as Hilde and I wished. But sadly, it seems that it was not to be. For example, Hilde did not receive any of our parcels and a few letters also failed to reach her. We receive post from her twice a month. I cannot find an explanation for it.

I would also like to express a further request. The clothing ration card of my father is among Hilde's possessions – I have to listen to his daily reproaches and complaints; he needs it urgently. Should it be in your custody, please be so kind as to return it to me. Otherwise, could you please organize for it to be sent to my father?

Despite her intercession, Mrs. Springer was unable to help her sister. Hilde Entacher was charged with undermining military strength and was to be brought to Berlin and beheaded. Due to the war ending she was spared this fate and released. Maria Springer's mother Katharina and Alois Lanthaler also survived. Shortly after Hilde's release, her baby died suddenly, just short of its second birthday.

Maria Springer was herself recognized by the National Fund as "righteous" for her acts of courage.

When they took me away it was terrible

Hermine Liska, Austria, born 1930

Hermine Liska was born on 12th April 1930 in Carinthia as the youngest of five children. Until 1938, she had a carefree life on a farm with her four brothers and her parents. The family were Jehovah's Witnesses and soon after the *Anschluss* they came under increasing pressure as a result of their religious convictions. Hermine Liska was taken away from her parents in order to be "re-educated", but despite the separation from her family and the many humiliations to which she was subjected, she remained true to her beliefs. Mrs. Liska's life story has already been published on the website *www.standhaft.at.*

When Adolf Hitler marched into Austria, I wasn't even eight years old. I can still remember the invasion in March 1938 very clearly. A neighbor came to us early in the morning and said "The *Führer* has invaded!". My mother said: "That's no reason to celebrate. Hitler is not our leader – Christ is our leader".

My parents had been active bible scholars (Jehovah's Witnesses) since the 1920s. They rejected all support for the National Socialist regime on religious grounds. That is why our family was persecuted. First my eldest brother Hans: He was sentenced to forced labor from March 1941 to December 1944. Then, from January 1945 until the end of the war, he was in the concentration camp Dachau. In the satellite camp, he had to work in a quarry, where he was starved until he only weighed 45 kilos [99 lbs] and contracted epidemic typhus. After three months imprisonment in the Klagenfurt jail for conscientious objection, my brother Franz, then aged 17, was sentenced to one year at a young offenders institute and sent to the penitentiary Kaiser-Ebersdorf near Vienna. My father was imprisoned in Klagenfurt for three weeks in 1945 but released as he was deemed unfit for prison.

In accordance with my religious upbringing, as a schoolchild I refused to do the Hitler salute and to participate in any National Socialist activities such as singing nationalistic songs and saluting the flag, which was also customary during the daily singing. People tried to convert me by pressurizing me and giving me punishments, bullying me, giving me an "F" grade in conduct and by my demotion from the fifth to the first grade by the School Director Mr. G.

Then, my parents' parental authority was withdrawn because they refused to renounce their faith and in 1941, I was taken to the National Socialist reform school in Waiern near Feldkirchen in Carinthia, 50 km from my home. And that was the worst of all. When they took me away it was terrible. I had never been alone for even a day before. My parents were forbidden to visit. But they took a risk and met me secretly on my way to school. I always wished that I could go home with them. I lost count of how many nights I soaked my pillow with tears. I was homesick and terribly worried about my parents and my siblings. In Waiern, I was able to rejoin the fifth grade of elementary school. But because I refused to give the Hitler salute, my right to attend the high school was withdrawn. Once, they wanted to force me to wear the uniform of the National Socialist girls' movement, but try as she might, the director was unable to get the cardigan past my elbows.

When, after a while, they realized that the re-education wasn't working, I was sent in September 1941 to the Adelgundenanstalt in Munich, a home run by Catholic nuns. My parents were not allowed to visit from February 1941 until 1945 and I was only allowed to receive a letter or a package twice a month. The director threatened that if the letters contained anything about my faith, I would no longer receive them. He also threatened to transfer me to a closed institution if I didn't renounce my beliefs. He sent me there with a nun so that I would know what it was like. It was really frightening, a real prison. The director continued to put me under pressure. Once, he said: "One of your brothers has been conscripted. Follow his example". [One of Hermine Liska's brothers was not a Jehovah's Witness and served in the military.] I replied, "I am not a follower of my brother but a follower of Christ".

Due to the ever increasing bombardment of Munich, in summer 1943, all school children were evacuated to the countryside near Ingolstadt. We were put up by some farmers. I was thirteen years old, and this was when my forced labor began. From then on, I had to do housework as well as working in the fields and the stalls. My education was badly neglected. In March 1944, near the end of my schooldays, I was sent back to the Adelgundenheim in Munich where there were air raids every day and we spent every night in the air raid shelter. Then, my parents' constant requests for my return to Carinthia were finally granted. In April 1944, I was 14 years old and could finally go home. But after only a few days, I was picked up again and taken to the L. Family (Guest House Neuwirth) in Köttmannsdorf near Klagenfurt. I worked there until the end of the war. Without pay, of course. Normally, the daughter of a farmer would be allowed to complete her compulsory year at home, which was refused me.

After the war, my parents enabled me to attend the Women's Vocational School in Klagenfurt for two years. Sadly, I was not able to have a career. Until my brother married in 1953 and took over the farm, I worked on the farm because my mother was very ill. I have been married since 1952 and raised three children, so I never had the chance to have a job.

When I think back to my childhood, despite all the difficulties and deprivations, I am filled with satisfaction that I stayed true to my God and my principles.

The Spiegelgrund Song

Anna Maierhofer, Austria, born 1927

Anna Maierhofer was born on 22nd March 1927 in Vienna. Her mother was a Jehovah's Witness and raised her daughter in accordance with her religious beliefs. Mrs. Maierhofer was expelled from school in December 1940 for writing a religious essay and refusing to do the Hitler salute. In order to remove her from her mother's influence, she was arrested by the Gestapo and taken to the Child Collection Point in Lustkandlgasse in Vienna. Even prior to 1938, this had served as a reception and distribution point for children and teenagers who were taken into public care. During the National Socialist era, the Child Collection Point was responsible for the transfer of numerous children to murder institutions such as *"Am Spiegelgrund"* on the grounds of the *"Sanatorium Am Steinhof"*, to which Mrs. Maierhofer was also sent. Anna Maierhofer died in August 2009 in Vienna.

At *"Am Spiegelgrund"*, she was threatened by the Director of the Institute Hans Krenek in so called *Beugeverhören* [interrogations designed to break the will of the subject]:

"If you don't renounce your faith, you'll never see your mother again."
"If you don't salute Heil Hitler, you'll never see your parents again!"

Mrs. Maierhofer wrote down the following song that used to be sung by the children at *"Am Spiegelgrund"* and described the conditions there:

On the windows are bars of iron,
We are kept under lock and key,
Steinhof is our constant company

If our parents try to come visit
They are cursed and sworn at out loud
Visiting's just not allowed

And when our punishment is over
They give us their hands with cursing disdain
Never come here again!

"Girl, what are you looking for out in the snow?"
"I'm looking for my parents who I lost long ago.
My father died of illness, my mother of poverty
And now they lie dead in the Simmering cemetery."

Mrs. Maierhofer's father, who was being treated in the hospital in Lainz for vascular disease on the day his wife and daughter were arrested, was killed there on the same day with a lethal injection which artificially induced pneumonia. His official cause of death was given as "heart attack due to over-excitement".

Anna's cousin, Regina Markisch, who was unable to speak due to a disability, was in Spiegelgrund at the same time. She was also murdered by lethal injection.

Rudolf Karger at the memorial for the victims of Spiegelgrund. Only one single, treasured fragment of a photo remains from his childhood

PHOTO: WALTER REICHL

I was a **child of Spiegelgrund**

Rudolf Karger, Austria, born 1930

Rudolf Karger was born on 16th July 1930 in Vienna. From 1st September 1941 to 2nd September 1942, Rudolf Karger was in the notorious children's institution "*Am Spiegelgrund*", founded in July 1940 on the grounds of the sanatorium "*Am Steinhof*" in Vienna. Up until 1945, almost 800 sick or disabled children were murdered in the course of the National Socialist "child euthanasia" program. He was subsequently evacuated to Mödling – to the former "Hyrtl'sche Orphanage", a National Socialist reformatory. There, the National Socialist ideology was drummed into the children using the most brutal of methods.

I was born on 16th July 1930 in Vienna and I grew up in a municipal apartment in Ottakring, consisting of one room, a smaller room and a kitchen with no hot water. Most of the time, there were twelve people living there, four of us children. Of the eight adults, generally only three were in employment, the others didn't have a job, they were unemployed. They weren't good times.

When the German troops marched into our beautiful Austria on 12th March 1938, amid great celebration and fanfare, for me and my family it was nothing to celebrate. Firstly, on the night of 12th March 1938, my uncle was picked up from the apartment and deported to Dachau, because a few days before the troops marched in he had dared to say in public: "Who needs A. H. in Austria?" He was grassed up [informed on] and spent two years in Dachau.

My two older sisters, Alice, born in 1929 and Elfi, born in 1927, and I were born out of wedlock, which was considered a disgrace at that time. My mother died in 1936 at the age of 29, when I was six years old and my father wasn't around for us children. When my sister Elfi was born in 1927, my father was only 16 years old and my mother 19. For whatever reason, my father was unwanted by my mother's family and my mother was unwanted by my father's family. And so my two sisters and I grew up without parents. My grandmother on my mother's side had parental authority, but as we were born out of wedlock, the Youth Welfare Office was our legal guardian. In 1938, the Youth Welfare Office was renamed the Reich Youth Welfare Office and we three children were undesired by the National Socialist regime, although we were neither mentally nor physically disabled.

Participation in the "German Youth" [Organization of the Hitler Youth for boys aged 10–14] was compulsory, but I didn't go. One day, in Thaliastraße, a column of the Hitler Youth marched towards me with the German flag. Aged eleven, it didn't occur to me to salute the flag with my arm outstretched. Immediately, the leader of the column separated from the rest and struck me twice because I didn't salute the flag. One time I was picked up by the police after 9 pm on my way home – even at the age of ten, I enjoyed going to the theater. Again I was beaten and my grandmother had to pick me up from the police station late at night. Several times, I also spent the night sleeping on the attic staircase when my uncle was at home. I was terrified of him because he violently beat me for no reason. So I waited in the attic until he left again in the morning. This was all reported to the Reich Youth Welfare Office – were these the reasons for sending me to Spiegelgrund?

And so my guardian – the Reich Youth Welfare Office – cleared the way for me to be sent to the children's institution "Am Spiegelgrund". There, A. H. had doctors and assistants who carried out the party program of exterminating everything which was not fully adequate for his "Greater German Reich". Skilfully, his assistants displayed their willingness to torture children of both genders. We had to endure much suffering and always be prepared to die.

On 1st September 1941, I was moved from the child collection point in the 9th district, Lustkandlgasse, to Spiegelgrund. The 1st September was a beautiful fall day. I don't know which pavilion I was brought to. It was either pavilion 8 or 9. They all looked the same from the outside – they were brick buildings, as they still are today. When I was led into the pavilion, there was not a soul there. So I was able to look around and assess my new surroundings. The doors were locked and there were bars on the windows. The pavilion consisted of a long corridor, a day room, a bathroom with showers, a big dormitory with around 25 beds, a small kitchen and a workroom, all spotlessly clean. At around 4 pm, I heard a loud babbling. The door was opened and about 25 boys of my age came in, accompanied by two nurses, who actually seemed nice. But by the next day, I had realized that they were really very brutal to us.

Some of the atrocities committed against us there are already known. But I would like to recall some of the suffering that I had to endure:

There were beatings every day. Night after night, we had to stand at the foot of our beds, dressed only in our night shirts, which only reached down to our knees – in summer with the windows closed and in winter with them open.

Forced marches. Once we even had to march as far as the police station at the Praterstern. One of us boys ran away and we had to collect him. Spiegelgrund – Praterstern and back again, Praterstern – Spiegelgrund. When we all arrived back at Spiegelgrund, we were completely exhausted. All of our anger was directed at the boy who had escaped and whom we had had to bring back. There were no friendships between us boys, we were galvanized into hating each other. When we were punished, we were always told we had "him" to thank.

Once a week we were given porridge, but not with full fat milk butter and chocolate on it. No. Only with skimmed milk, thin and with lumps. We had to eat that. One of us never managed it. Two nurses stuffed him – opened his mouth, held his nose [and shoved in the food]. He always threw it up on his plate and the whole process lasted until the plate was empty and he had swallowed it all. Meanwhile, we had to watch while standing at attention.

Then we were given the famous vomiting injections, which caused us to throw up and suffer terrible pain. When Dr. H. Gross [Heinrich Gross, infamous Austrian doctor at Spiegelgrund] was questioned during his trial [after the war] as to why he had committed this crime against us, he said calmly that the injections were harmless, they were just to stop us from becoming too high-spirited.

In 1941, the whole group and I "celebrated" Christmas Day. A Christmas tree was put up in the day room, it was completely bare, and we had to stand at attention in front of it for hours. That was my and our Christmas Evening. There was nothing holy for us, let alone presents.

Standing to attention for hours on end, that was a matter of course, day after day.

Once a month, my grandmother was allowed to pay me a short visit. In my presence, they always explained to my grandmother how well they cared for us. That they didn't beat us. I never told my grandmother what they did to us, of the pain and the suffering they inflicted on us. If I had mentioned it, my grandmother would have run to the director's office to complain about what was done to us. And it can't be ruled out that she would then have been deported to a concentration camp.

On one trip outside, I had the opportunity to escape. Out of homesickness I ran home to my grandmother. Less than two hours later, the door bell rang. Two nurses from Spiegelgrund were there to take me back. They assured my grandmother that there would be no consequences for me. But I already knew what would happen to me – the same as happened to everyone who escaped. And I wasn't spared. Barely was I back at Spiegelgrund, I was beaten. So many blows to the head, I thought I had gone deaf. The whole group had to stand at attention at the window in silence. My clothes were torn from my body, and in front of the whole group my hair was shaved off – to serve as a warning. That used to be one of the worst punishments. They didn't only cut the hair, they tore it out. Bloody and bruised, I was then dragged into the bathroom. The bath had already been filled with cold water for me. I was pushed into the bathtub and pushed under many times, so that I couldn't breathe. I fought back, gasping for air and swallowing water and in my desperation I pulled the plug out of the plughole. I was then pulled out of the bathtub and put under the cold shower for a quarter of an hour. It was horrific; I could hardly move and was thrown from the bathroom into the corridor. Crawling on my knees, I had to crawl past the row of my attackers, being beaten all the while. Then they pulled a night shirt over my head and I was taken to the Children's Special Department 15 or 17. The pavilions where there were deaths on a daily basis.

I still have hazy recollections of being put in a cell. I was so hungry and was given painful injections. I only saw men and women dressed in white and who mistreated me. I don't know for how long I was in pavilion 15 or 17. Today, I know that I was

in the clinic of Dr. H. Gross, who removed the brains of the tortured children in the name of science. I remain convinced that I was only spared because I had the wrong kind of brain for Dr. H. Gross. I was then taken to pavilion 11 to join the punishment group. There were about 20 boys there who had fallen into disrepute and who were considered even worse than those in pavilions 7 or 9. The punishments were the same as in pavilions 7 and 9. The only difference – no female nurses, but males. I particularly remember that, among other things, for hours on end we had to pull the sheets off the bed and then put them back on again, perfect to the millimeter.

I had already been in Spiegelgrund for a year, when on 4th September 1942, with 70 or 90 other youths, I was unexpectedly taken to the Nazi reformatory in Mödling. It was the former Hyrtl'sche Orphanage, which had been converted into a reformatory for us "naughty children". There, we were subjected to a strict, mainly military drill and brainwashing. We had to learn everything by heart – about A. H. and his political ideals for the "1000 year Reich".

On 7th July 1943, I was allowed to return to my grandmother. She always tried her best to get us three children back home with her.

My time and my suffering at Spiegelgrund remain alive in me today, as if it had all happened yesterday and not 69 years ago. The experiences at Spiegelgrund were inhumane and the reports of the time glossed over them. We were used as "guinea pigs": we were given various injections, medication was tested on us, we were stood under cold showers and in winter we were wrapped up in wet blankets and much more. This painful one year stay at Spiegelgrund destroyed my childhood, my youth and also my future.

My stay was also cruel because it prevented my further education. There was no school. Scarred by Spiegelgrund, I stood before a hopeless future. The one-time payment from the Austrian National Fund in no way repairs what has been done to me. I was no genius, but also not an idiot. But the stay in Spiegelgrund took away my chance of a better future. I remained at a disadvantage both professionally and financially.

As a contemporary witness, I occasionally work in schools to speak of the monstrous [crimes committed] against children and young people during the National Socialist

era. The stay in Spiegelgrund brought with it suffering, pain and death. For the regime, we were undesirables, inferior, unworthy of life. And I find it very beneficial when people […], with a lot of effort and time, highlight these crimes of the Nazi regime and ensure that they are never forgotten.

As a result of my activities as a contemporary witness, I was honored by the Vienna Provincial Government in recognition of my great services as a contemporary witness, and received the Gold Order of Merit of the Province of Vienna.

No one can **replace a mother**

Maria M., Austria, born 1932

Maria M.'s mother Stefanie S. was murdered in 1940, aged 26, in a Wels hospital. As she suffered from epilepsy, during National Socialism she was deemed "mentally disabled", "unworthy of inheriting" and "inferior". Doctors were obliged to immediately register people with epilepsy to official National Socialist departments. These "terminally ill" were the first to be subjected to forced sterilization and later killed in the National Socialist euthanasia operations. In addition to the official euthanasia actions, people were also murdered in the hospital during the course of the so called "wild euthanasia". The falsified cause of death of Maria M.'s mother was given as "periostitis".

Sadly, I don't have any of my mother's papers. Her name was Stefanie S. She was very sick and had epilepsy. As Hitler had no use for such people, she was taken from us and gassed. Four children were then left on their own. My father was away at war. I am the oldest, I was seven years old. I was first taken to a children's home in Bad Ischl, and later my brother and I were sent to a children's home in Gmunden, in Bahnhofstraße. My sister was sent to a different home and my youngest brother was sent to live with a family somewhere. Had my father been in agreement, we children would also have been gassed. No one can replace a mother. As I didn't know where my mother had gone, I looked at the door each time it opened and thought, now our mother is coming to pick us up. Sadly, it was in vain.

I was so terrified, **I couldn't speak**

Bartholomäus O., Austria, born 1936

The Carinthian Slovene Bartholomäus O. was born in 1936, the fifth of eight children. His parents owned a small farm. His father also had to work as a forestry worker to supplement their income. Mr. O.'s childhood was characterized by terrible fear – of school, where he was only allowed to speak German, and of the uniformed police, who mistreated him and put his family's house under observation in order to expose his family's support of the partisans. As a result of his fear of strangers at the farm, he didn't dare to return home, which – in addition to the psychological strain – brought with it a terrible illness with life-long consequences.

My father was called Batholomäus O. and was born on 27th July 1896. My mother Helene, née P., was born on 2nd May 1900. My father was a forestry worker at the company "Lasch". My parents had inherited a small farm from my grandfather and lived in Zell-Freibach. As my father was already too old to be conscripted into the German Armed Forces, he had to serve in the Zell-Pfarre Air Defense. So he often spent a few nights a week away from home and my mother was at home alone with us children. I was the fifth of eight children.

In 1942, I started elementary school. As we only spoke Slovenian at home, I found school very difficult. In the first grade, I had a teacher who was understanding of my situation. In the second grade, however, it got worse and worse. Police were accommodated in the first floor of the building, above my classroom. One time, in the second grade, I was standing in front of the blackboard and there was a shot upstairs. The bullet went through the ceiling and became lodged in the blackboard, right next to me and the teacher. It only missed us by a few centimeters. I was so terrified, I couldn't speak. The teacher also collapsed in terror. I became so scared of school that I cried and shook everyday when I had to enter the school building.

A few days later, with great disinclination, I arrived at school. There were lots of policemen lined up in rank and file in the square in front of the school building. We had to greet each one with our lifted arms outstretched in the "Hitlergruß" – it was compulsory. I went past them and saluted, as I had been taught at school. Apparently, I was doing something wrong, for suddenly a policeman stepped out of line and slapped me in the face so hard that I went flying and bled from my nose and my right ear. The policeman grabbed me, set me on my feet, and said: "Tell me, how do you salute Hitler correctly?" I stretched my arm out high and shouted "Heil Hitler!" and he chased me away. Now I didn't want to go to school at all. I couldn't concentrate and was terrified.

One day, in winter, I was on my way home from school. Shortly before I reached my parents' house, I saw police marching along the street. I was so terrified that I ran across the Freibach stream, which was cold and partially frozen, and up the hill on the other side to get out of their way, although I was nearly up to my neck in snow. Then I walked alongside the woods to my parents' house. When I reached the door, I heard unfamiliar male voices inside. I thought it was the police. So, wet through, I ran to the barn and hid. Then, I fell unconscious. My mother

was already worried because I hadn't returned home. She looked outside and saw footprints leading from the woods to the barn. That was how she found me. I caught pneumonia and orchitis and kept slipping in and out of consciousness. As the doctor couldn't or wouldn't come, my mother started lighting candles. She thought that I wouldn't survive and she prayed and prayed. In the end, I slowly recovered but I was no longer in a fit state to go to school. That is why I never got further than the second grade.

From 1943, the partisans often came round to pick up food. Most of the time, they came silently in the evening or during the night. My parents didn't have much themselves, but they gave them what they could. It was strictly forbidden to help the partisans.

One day, my father gave the partisans a pig. But someone betrayed him and the Gestapo came and arrested him. He was taken to Klagenfurt and interrogated for three days. He was abused, pushed around and beaten. But he kept repeating that the partisans had come and taken the pig by force and he had been unable to fight back. After three days, he was released but he was constantly observed and checked up on by the police. They came to the house regularly and searched for evidence of helping the partisans. I was always very scared and often hid under the bed. My parents were regularly interrogated and as a result they were terribly desperate and frightened.

Around the end of the war, a scattering of troops, among others *Ustascha* [a Croatian fascist movement in collaboration with the German Reich] and *Weißgardisten* [anti-Communist units fighting alongside the German Reich] came to our house. They helped themselves to our food, using force if they weren't given anything voluntarily, all the while aiming at us with their guns. They found our potato supply and took everything. They also fought among themselves for our milk.

Due to his persecution and abuse by the National Socialists, Bartholomäus O. suffered terrible physical and psychological damage which severely restricts him, even today.

It was as if I had **lost a brother**

Theresia Hafner, Austria, born 1939

Theresia Hafner comes from a Slovenian family in Carinthia. She was born an only child on 11th October 1939 in Matschach/Mače. As her parents supported the partisans, her childhood was characterized by the fear of being discovered or betrayed. As a young child, Mrs. Hafner had to experience the resettlement of her relatives, which deeply traumatized her and her family. Today, she still has trouble sleeping and suffers panic attacks.

Theresia Hafner with
an old photo of her family

PHOTO: WALTER REICHL

I grew up in Matschach as an only child, with my parents Margareta, born in 1910 and Johann Malle, born in 1904. My father was a saw worker and my mother a housewife. We were little "*Keuschler*" [small farmers] – we had a cow, two pigs and a few chickens, in order to be able to survive more easily. We belonged to the Slovene population and were therefore subjected to persecution by the Nazis. We lived in constant fear of our contact with the partisans being exposed, who we mainly supported, as far as I know, by providing food. They often knocked on our window during the night asking for food. My mother was always afraid that we were being watched by the neighbors. She gave whatever she could spare to the partisans.

Then, in May 1944, I experienced the traumatic resettlement of the Kriznar family, known as Bovcar, from the house in which my mother grew up, which was about 100 meters away from us. The Bovcar family was active in the OF resistance ["*Osvobodilna Fronta*" – the Slovene Liberation Front] and was betrayed. As a result, my fragile and badly asthmatic grandmother, Barbara Kriznar, born in Windisch-Bleiberg, two aunts and four uncles were resettled. My grandfather had already died of an illness years before. Three uncles were sent to Dachau. One uncle had shot a Gestapo man a short while earlier.

I can still hear the voice of my grandmother as she said her tearful goodbyes to my mother today. When the convoy with the prisoners and with all the supplies, such as grain, potatoes and above all livestock (cows, horses) stopped in front of our house, the SS man threw my five year old cousin Philipp over the fence where he lay at my feet. Philipp was the son of my Aunt Katerina. He was unable to cope with his terrible treatment his whole life and at the age of 26 he committed suicide. It was as if I had lost a brother.

After the arrest of the Bovcar family, house searches were carried out on us and we were also threatened with resettlement. The ever-present fear in our family has caused me to have difficulty sleeping and emotional problems. I still haven't gotten over these events today.

… and so **I kept quiet** when I was questioned

Ferdinand Hafner, Austria, born 1932

Ferdinand Hafner, a member of the Slovene minority in Carinthia, was born on 5th December 1932 and had five siblings. His mother and his uncle were active in the OF, the "*Osvobodilna Fronta*" (Slovene Liberation Front), which meant that the partisans were frequent visitors to the home of Mr. Hafner's family. From time to time, Mr. Hafner was also used as a messenger. Therefore the family was constantly observed by the Gestapo. For Ferdinand Hafner, the National Socialist era was a time of constant fear. He had to watch as his uncle was shot and his mother arrested. He was deeply traumatized by these events.

I grew up in a large family, with my parents – my father, born in 1901 and my mother, born in 1908 – five younger siblings, the youngest born in 1940; my grandmother, born in 1880, and my mother's brother, born in 1912. We lived in the small village of Sinach, consisting of six small houses, situated on a hillock above Feistritz in Rosental and surrounded by woods. At that time, the village was only accessible by a cart track. There was no electricity; for light we used gas lamps. We had a little farmhouse with three or four cows, calves, pigs and chickens.

Our family was well-known for belonging to the Slovene population and therefore we were persecuted by the National Socialist regime. When the local resistance movement started to become organized, my mother and my uncle became members of the Slovene Liberation Front. My mother worked in military service [as a courier]; my uncle was secretary of the local group Matschach. I remember, I also used to be allowed to go to Klagenfurt to take messages to certain people. The partisans were frequent visitors to our house and they received food and aid.

Ferdinand Hafner with a photo of his mother and his siblings

PHOTO: WALTER REICHL

For me, the Nazi era meant living in a state of constant fear, caused, above all, by school. There I was beaten with the cane for every minor offense – on my back, the palms of my hands and my fingers, and if I moved my hand away, I was hit on the head. I often had to kneel down in front of the blackboard before the lesson if my school colleagues had told the teacher that I had spoken Slovenian. I especially feared the head teacher Kreißmann, who was a fanatical National Socialist. He often locked me in the classroom after class and then he tried to make me tell him about what was happening at home, if I had seen partisans, what people were saying at home and so on. And because he didn't receive a satisfactory answer, I was beaten and slapped in the face. My mother repeatedly impressed on me the importance of not saying anything, so when I was questioned, I kept my mouth shut. This fear of speaking followed me for the rest of my life, and often manifested itself in exams at school – I had great difficulties there – and in my private life too.

Then, in May 1944, I lived through the terrible event that was the death of my uncle. He was betrayed to be a member of the OF resistance movement and shot by a man from the Gestapo on the way from Feistritz to Matschach. This was soon followed by the indescribable shock of my mother's arrest: in the early hours of the morning, an SS unit surrounded our house and mother had to open the front door. We children were all awake and had to watch as an SS man threatened our mother, holding a locked and loaded pistol to her chest. We all thought he was about to shoot her. Then they searched our house. Grandmother was lying sick in bed, as she had suffered a terrible shock upon the death of our uncle. I had to watch as an SS man pulled her out of bed with all her sheets and left her lying whimpering on the floor. Mother was being interrogated loudly in the back room. For us children, the fear was indescribable as we were continuously pushed around. Then mother was arrested, and we children had to watch as she was taken away, her eyes filled with tears. Beforehand, she had asked us to do as our grandmother told us, as father had been in the German Armed Forces since 1942.

Mother was locked up in a prison in Klagenfurt until the fall of 1944. Until the end of the war, we lived in terrible fear of being resettled.

Suddenly there was **only German**

Hemma V., Austria, born 1935

Hemma V. was born into a Slovenian family in Remschenig/Remšenik in Carinthia in 1935. Her extended family lived on a small, leased farm. Hemma V.'s father was conscripted into the German Armed Forces. Before he could carry out his decision to join the partisans on his next visit home from the front, he was killed in action. Mrs. V.'s mother was active in the resistance movement and supported the partisans. Even as a small child, Hemma V. had to suffer awful humiliation and witness many terrible things. At school she was mentally and physically abused, the family was spied on and threatened with deportation. These experiences have taken their toll on Hemma V. and even today she still suffers from panic attacks, nightmares and depression.

I was born in Remschenig. My parents had rented a small farm and we had two cows and two pigs. My grandpa, grandma, a brother and a sister also lived with us. We only spoke Slovenian at home. When the war broke out, my father was conscripted into the German Army. We only saw him one more time and then he was killed in action.

In 1942, I started elementary school in Eisenkappel. Suddenly, there was only German. The teacher wouldn't hear a word of Slovenian, but I couldn't speak any German at all. It was awful. I had to kneel in the corner for hours. As I had big scabs on my legs, a pool of blood always formed around my knees. It hurt terribly. But if I cried, I was beaten with a stick. How often I wet my pants! Sometimes because I didn't know how to ask to go to the bathroom in German and sometimes because I was scared. I was terrified of the teacher and didn't want to go to school any more. I often waited in the woods until the morning was over. Of course, the result of this was that I had to re-sit the class. There were also lots of air raid warnings. Often, these saved me from being punished, because we all had to go down to the cellar.

In 1943, the resistance against Hitler slowly began to pick up pace. In Remschenig we heard talk of it, very secretively, but we hardly ever saw a partisan. One day, three or four "partisans" came to our house. My mother warmly welcomed them and gave them milk, bread and porridge to eat. They asked lots of questions and mother gave them long answers. They also asked why my father didn't change fronts. My mother told then that as soon as my father was on leave from the front, he would join them. The "partisans" said goodbye and nobody in the house suspected a thing. When, a little later, my sister wanted to go to the barn, she saw the police behind the building. She ran back into the house and it was only then that it dawned on my mother that we had been visited not by partisans but by Germans in disguise. Grandma and Grandpa began to wail and we were all absolutely terrified. Although the Germans then retreated, my mother was still deciding what to do. In panic, we grabbed our blankets and went into the woods. We spent the first night there sleeping in the open air. My mother consulted with my grandparents and the next day, my grandparents returned to the house with us children. My mother, however, joined the partisans, where she remained until the end of the war.

Now the Germans started coming more often, asking after my mother. My grandparents told them that the partisans had taken her by force. They also wanted to question me and my sister. They put chocolate on the table and asked us whether we had seen the partisans and our mother. Although we really wanted the chocolate, we didn't say a word – or take the chocolate. They came more and more often. They regularly stayed overnight. They carried straw into the kitchen and slept there. In the yard, the watchmen [stood] with their rifles at the ready. They waited for my mother and the partisans in vain. The partisans only came by when we had hung a white sheet on the clothes line, because that meant that the coast was clear – as we had arranged with the partisans. But we were always scared when unknown partisans came because we never knew if they were just Germans in disguise. The fear remained until the end of the war.

The partisans had a bunker near our house and there were always three couriers. They often came to our house and Grandma gave them food. Shortly before the end of the war, one of them was shot and he died agonizingly 14 days later. My sister [brought] him tea and food, but he couldn't eat because he had been shot in the stomach. One time, the partisans brought a man with a broken leg. They

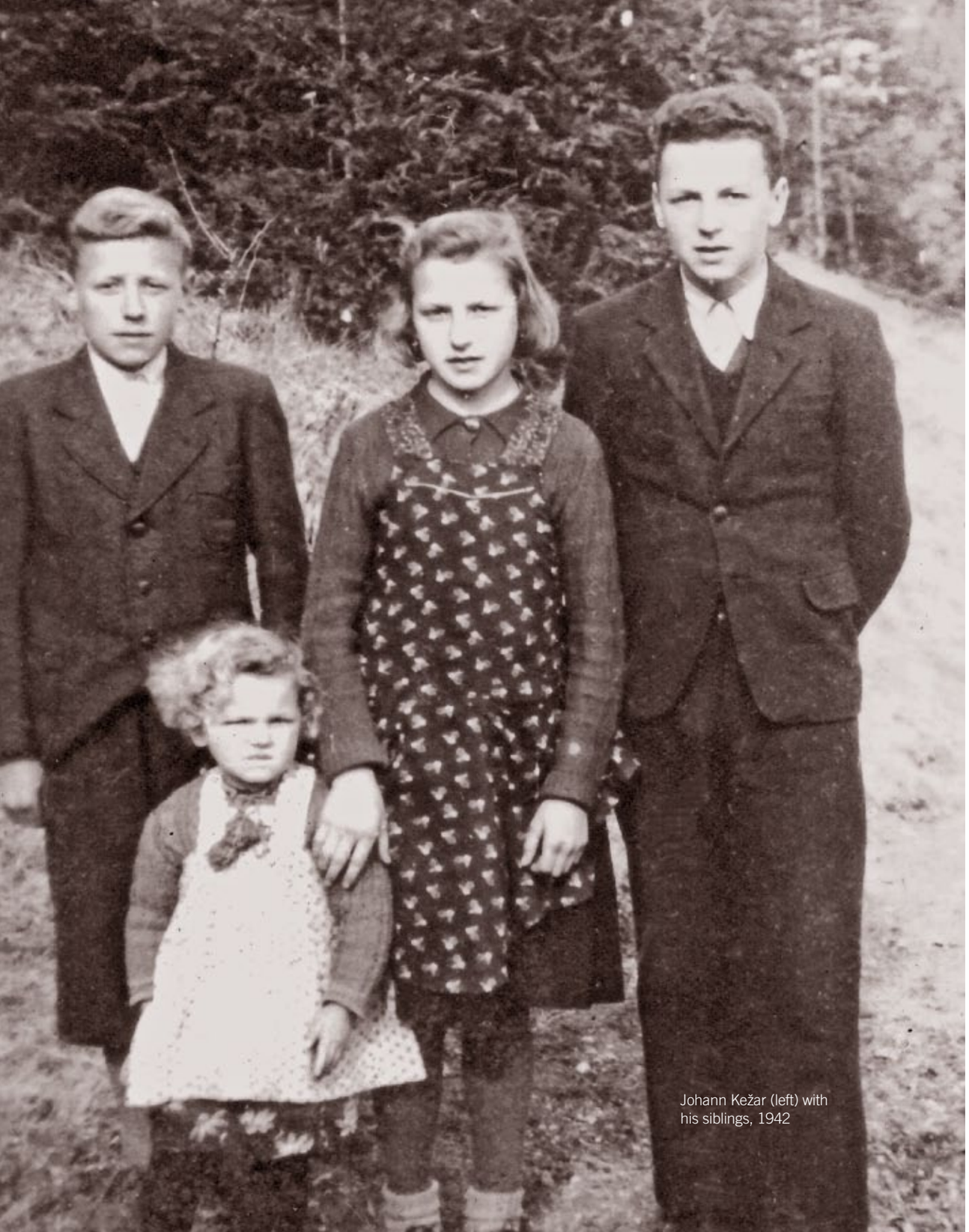
spent the night at ours asleep on the threshing floor and in the morning they took him to a little shed about a half an hour's walk away. It was deepest winter. My sister had to bring him food every day, for fourteen days on end. As this was very dangerous, and in order not to raise suspicion, I sometimes had to accompany her. This was very tiring, as there was a lot of snow on the path.

When around 15 families were evacuated from Remschenig, the Germans came to us as well. As my grandmother was very sick and bed-ridden, they only took my aged 80-year-old grandfather with them. The next day they released him again – it was a miracle. To this day, we don't know why they let him go.

The worst time was when, one day, the Germans brought three of our neighbors to us. With their hands bound together, they had to spend the night on our threshing floor before being deported to Eisenkappel the next day. We were not allowed to help them. When my grandmother wanted to give them something to eat, a German said to her: "Bandits don't need food!" It was terrible, we were all crying. My grandmother was often afraid that we would also be deported like that one day.

I'll never forget the time when the Germans shot a partisan on the bank of the stream near our house. I went over the bridge and saw a blond man lying in the water. He lay there on his back, covered in blood. I can still see this image clearly, how could I ever forget it? Of course, I was also terrified.

When, in May, the war was officially over, hordes of *Ustascha* [a Croatian Fascist movement in collaboration with the German Reich] continued to come across the border. We were very scared of them, as they often shot wildly around the area. My uncle (my mother's brother), who at first fought on the German front, then joined the partisans and then, near the end of the war, was taken captive by the Germans, survived the war. And then he was shot by the *Ustascha* at home on his mountain farm. Oh how we cried.



Johann Kežar (left) with his siblings, 1942

PHOTOS: DANIELA KEŽAR

Our area was called **"bandit-land"**

Johann Kežar, Austria, born 1928

Johann Kežar was a member of the Carinthian Slovene Community and was born on 23rd September 1928 in Horzach/Horce, Carinthia. As a child he had to work on the farm with his mother and siblings, since his father had been conscripted into the army. In addition to the fears for his father, there was also the fear of immanent resettlement and the mental strain caused by constant house searches by the police and Gestapo, as partisans regularly stayed with the Kežar family. One of his brothers also joined the partisans. Johann Kežar was sent to the Labor Service, which it emerged was actually preparation for military deployment. Mr. Kežar suffered greatly as a result of all these strains and his worry for his family.

I was born on 23rd September 1928 in Horzach in the Municipality of Rückersdorf (today the Municipality of St. Kanzian). We were four children. I am the second eldest. My parents owned a small farm. When the Second World War broke out, initially I stayed at home. I was still at school. When I went to the elementary school in St. Primus in 1934, the head teacher spoke Slovenian to us – no one could speak German. After 1935, we had to speak more German at school. In 1942, the armed forces report was read out every morning.

In 1941, my father was conscripted into the German Armed Forces. He was in the Air Defense in Nuremberg for a while, then in Dnjepropetrovsk in Russia and finally in St. Andrä in Lavanttal.

My mother was at home alone with us children. We didn't know how father was getting on. My brother studied in St. Paul, he is a year older than me. I can still remember how difficult it was running the farm alone with my mother. The work was tough, but we had to survive somehow. We also had to deliver a lot of products (milk, butter and other things). There wasn't much left for us to eat. We were starving and constantly feared for our father.

Partisans often came and hid at our house. They asked for food. One time, they were hiding in our attic while the police were searching the farm for them. Mother was constantly interrogated and pressurized. We were suspected of working with partisans. The pressure, the constant house searches, they were enough to destroy you. I was astonished at how strong my mother was.

In December 1944, I was sent to a defense training camp in Eberndorf, where I stayed for a month. Afterwards, I had one month's holiday. In January 1945, partisans were hiding in our house again. They left again the next day. I gave my skis to one of the men because it had snowed so much. Two kilometers away from us, the Gestapo surprised the partisans. They shot one and took the other prisoner. I was terrified that the imprisoned partisan would give me away. He had my skis. It would have been terrible for us. Two days later, the Gestapo came and ordered me and a neighbor to bury the dead partisan. That was a terrible mental ordeal for me.

In February 1945, I was sent to the Labor Service in Hermagor. It wasn't labor at all, it was training for military deployment. We weren't given a single spade,

Johann Kežar with his wife Anna and children, May 2008

Above: Johann Kežar as a choirmaster,1947

Johann Kežar (left) with his parents Janez and Kristina Kežar and his siblings, 1943

just weapons. Then I was sent to Neumarkt in Styria, also in the Labor Service. We were often encouraged to join the SS and some people did this. I was always hungry and tortured by the fear for my siblings and parents. One time, my mother sent me a loaf of bread. I can still remember how good it tasted to me and my comrades. Once, we wanted to escape but an acquaintance advised us to wait. He had access to information. If we had escaped, I don't know how it would have ended. When the war was over, I was allowed to return home. The journey took almost two days. My father also arrived home at the same time.

In spring 1944, my brother Josef was sent to join the Air Defense in Seebach near Villach. After his home leave, in summer 1944, he joined the partisans. This worried us immensely. Our farm was often searched by the Gestapo and mother was often interrogated, because they thought that at some point my brother Josef would appear at home. If they had found him we would definitely have been resettled. Our area was called "bandit-land".

My brother, who returned home after the war, never recovered his health and passed away in 1986. The pressure of "Carinthian, speak German", weighed on me my whole life. Even after the war, our cultural events were repeatedly destroyed by organized *Wurfkommandos* [violent attacks carried out by German speaking Carinthians on Carinthian Slovenes in the post-war years].

Johann Kežar's memories of these events haunted him his whole life. For many years, he was an active participant in the cultural life of the Carinthian Slovenes: as an organist in his local parish and from 1946 to 2008 as the conductor of several choirs of the Slovene Cultural Society "Danica" in St. Primus/ Šentprimož. Johann Kežar died on 16th December 2008.

For we **were asocials**

Ingeborg R., Switzerland, born 1932

Ingeborg R. was born in Vienna in 1932, the child of a Catholic mother and a Jewish father. Although Ingeborg R.'s mother divorced her husband in 1935, she continued to live with him. As "first degree half-castes", Ingeborg R. and her sister were subject to constant observation by the authorities after the *Anschluss*. Her father fled, but many of her relatives were deported and murdered. Mrs. R.'s mother became mentally ill as a result of the persecution and degradation and was sent to the Sanatorium "*Am Steinhof*" after the war. Ingeborg R. and her sisters grew up with their grandmother and in various institutions. Mrs. R. continues to suffer the consequences of that time today.

In September 1938, my father fled to France and joined the Foreign Legion. I also started school in September 1938. I was supposed to wear the Star of David! After Father's flight, we always had to register personally with the police, every month, I think, to prevent us from going abroad. My mother assumed her maiden name again. My sister was born on 5th March 1938 with the name Herta B., father unknown.

As Father's siblings and their families (thirteen people in total) had all been picked up [they were deported to Mauthausen and Theresienstadt and later murdered], a cousin was adopted in Sweden and a cousin in Styria had been hidden, my mother began to fight for me. She finally received permission for me to go to school without wearing the Star of David, under the condition that I was only allowed to graduate from elementary school and only at a certain school (Staudingergasse) which meant a half hour walk to school and back every day.

My mother was unemployed and in the end became mentally ill. It was terrible. In 1940/1941, I was sent to a children's home for the first time, where, among other things, I had to work in the laundry. I was deemed an "asocial Jewish being". My sister was also sent to a home for a few months – the children's institution "Am Spiegelgrund" [on the grounds of the Sanatorium "Am Steinhof"]. The family was split up. At the age of ten, I became very sick, with arthritis and paralysis, and had to be admitted to a hospital for a week.

Near the end of the war, we were registered by the SS stationed opposite [our apartment] as "Jewish rabble", so during the night, we fled through the sea of burning buildings to my grandmother in the 20th District, Rauscherstraße 5, where she hid us in her cellar until the end of the war.

My mother wasn't able to withstand all of this and after two or three nervous breakdowns, she was admitted to Steinhof in December 1945. My little sister was again sent to a children's home and then to foster parents and I was sent to Lustkandlgasse [child collection point of the City of Vienna] and then to a home for trainees. I had to earn my keep by working in the home (washing, cleaning) and in my "free time" knitting and knotting bags. The products were sold – we were asocials. Once a month, when I had finished my "quota", I was allowed to visit my grandmother. The work in the home was sometimes unacceptable. I was undernourished and at the age of fourteen had the weight of a ten year old.

I finished the last class and then, in May 1947, through the home for trainees in Kriemhildplatz in the 15th district, I got a job as a saleslady. In the meantime, my father had returned. My life now began anew. Only my childhood was suppressed. What remains is the fear of fire, gunfire, cellars, darkness and persecution.

When I went to Switzerland with my husband in March 1956, I tried, out of fear of contempt and persecution, to leave everything behind me and to suppress these experiences, to the extent that no one in Switzerland knows of my Jewish past and origins. (Unfortunately anti-Semitism is on the increase again.)

Ludwig W. Adamec, 1950

PHOTOS: LUDWIG W. ADAMEC

The **dignity** of **work**

Ludwig W. Adamec, USA, born 1924

Ludwig W. Adamec was born in March 1924 in Vienna. His father died when he was a child and his mother died in 1940. He was then sent to an orphanage, from which he tried to escape several times. As a result, he was persecuted as an "asocial" and deported to the Moringen youth camp in Germany. The following life story, printed here in the original English version, was written by Mr. Adamec especially for this publication.

In 1938, I was 14 years old and had finished eight years of public school in Vienna, my hometown, when Austria became part of "Greater Germany". I felt grown up and lived with my mother, my father having passed away when I was five years old. I suffered from "wanderlust", the desire to see the world, but as a child of the Depression, there seemed to be no chance that I would ever see my dream come true. Nevertheless, I studied a little English, just in case I might make it sometime.

Finally free from the regimentation of school, I was happy to learn that the government was paying unemployment support for anyone fourteen years and older. Great, I thought, money for nothing! I immediately registered for a weekly payment of a few Mark. But several weeks later, a physician appeared at the unemployment office and proclaimed everyone "fit". "Fit for what?" I asked. "Agricultural labor", he replied. I was about average in weight and height, but did not feel up to that kind of work. I was told that only if I found an apprenticeship could I avoid being drafted. I was fortunate to find an apprentice position as tool and die maker, a profession which was encouraged by the government at the time.

In my spare time I was very fond of watching American movies and I became a fervent lover of jazz. With some of my friends I would visit a dance school on Saturday nights and occasionally met with friends during the week to play American records. We dressed in a particular fashion: jackets long to the knees, narrow pants with high cuffs, and long neckties with a small knot. We were "swing boys and girls" who were subject to scorn by the general public. One time, I was standing in front of a cinema when a company of Hitler Youth marched by. Suddenly, the leader commanded "eyes right!" and then shouted "who stands there" and the boys shouted in unison, "a *Schlurf*". *Schlurf* was the Viennese term for swing boys. Naturally, I did not want to join the Hitler Youth.

My mother died in 1940 when I was 16 years old and left me an orphan. I did not have a close relative willing to be my guardian and I felt old enough to take care of myself. But minors were not permitted to live by themselves, especially if they were playing this outlandish music and having friends over for dancing and jam sessions. The good life came to a quick end. One morning I woke up and went down to the street when someone told me that several of my friends had been arrested. It seems I had slept so well that I did not hear the knock on the door.

I decided to flee. I got on my bike and left Vienna for Passau and there I decided that I should try to escape to Switzerland. It seemed a little too far to go by bike, so I sold the bicycle and went by train to Friedrichshafen and then by ferry across Lake Konstanz to the city of Konstanz. Half of the city was in Switzerland [the city of Kreuzlingen] and in the German half, unlike in the rest of Germany, there was no blackout. By the time I got there, I had spent all my money and, looking for shelter, I went to the Red Cross. A friendly lady immediately took me to a guest house, got me a room, which she locked from the outside, and left.

My misgivings were proved correct, when the next morning a man from the Gestapo came and took me to his office. He interrogated me and wanted to know whether I had come to the city to cross into Switzerland. When I did not confess, he took me to the city jail where I was incarcerated for about two weeks. It was a fearful experience for me. After I was freed because there were no requests for my arrest from Vienna, I decided that I could not cross the Swiss border and returned to my beloved Vienna. I was home for only two days when I was taken to an orphanage.

Then began a period when I repeatedly escaped from custody and was sent to a reform school. Supported by friends, who were awed by my "bravery", I lived without ration cards and permanent shelter until I was eventually arrested by the ubiquitous police checks in Vienna and returned to the institution. Out again, I made another attempt to leave Germany at the Hungarian and Czechoslovakian border, but was arrested by the Gestapo and transported to jail in Vienna.

After serving a term of seven months in prison, I was moved to a Gestapo prison in the Rossauer barracks. I landed in a large cell which held about 35 prisoners who, I was told, were waiting to be freed or sent to a concentration camp. People had heard of "labor camps", for asocial persons "to teach them the dignity of work", but no one seemed aware of the existence of extermination camps. For me, the first inkling of danger came when a tall handsome Roma returned to our cell, crying "Auschwitz my death". I found out that he had escaped from Dachau and was told that he was to be sent to that death camp.

The procedure required that each case was to be decided in Berlin which usually took about a month. In my case I was summoned after only a few days and told that I would be sent to the juvenile camp Moringen "where they will teach you to behave". While they were taking care of administrative details, one man entered the room and announced that another prisoner, whom they had sent off only a few weeks before, had died of circulatory disease. The Gestapo men laughed and enjoyed the joke.

Every few days an official would call the names of prisoners who were either freed or transported to unknown destinations. My turn came and, with some 16 other prisoners, I was transported to the station Westbahnhof. Handcuffed and

guarded by SS guards and two dogs, we were marched to a special train with cells the size of a telephone booth. Four or five men to a cell, I travelled to Linz, Prague, Asch [Aš: north-west Bohemian town on the German border], and finally Moringen. At each town we were held for a few days, to be organized into new groups, according to the destination of prisoners. When we were marched to our train in Prague, one prisoner managed to open his cuffs and jumped under a train which had stopped in the station. I don't know if he managed to escape.

I arrived in Moringen with four or five other prisoners. We were asked about our personal data, one at a time, while the others had to do knee bends or pushups. We were given our uniforms and marched to the Observation Block for new arrivals. To save on the cost of guarding the prisoners, each block was headed by a block supervisor who was an SS officer who delegated much authority to a prisoner, the block elder. The block elder at the time of my arrival died a year later – he was accused of stealing food and did not survive his punishment. The man he robbed was a classmate of mine who also died later.

My block was located in one of the main brick buildings. There was a dormitory with double-decker bunks. At six in the morning, at the command of "everybody up!" we jumped out of the beds, made our beds according to specific instruction, and washed at rows of faucets with cold water. Then we marched to the yard were we were counted and regrouped according to work assignment. Those who were sick, went to the hospital group – they had better be sick, or they were punished for trying to avoid work for the day. Prisoners occasionally resorted to self mutilation, to be moved to a hospital. This was considered sabotage and punished.

The first week in Moringen, I was assigned to work in a salt mine, which was used for storage of ammunition, and later in a quarry. Fortunately, I hurt my foot at a time when a new factory, called "Piller", was started and I was assigned to the new job. I was among eight prisoners with some experience in metalwork and each was assigned four or five helpers to build what were rumored to be giant searchlight assemblies. Eventually, we worked alternate 12-hour day or night shifts, from seven in the morning till seven at night. A Viennese prisoner hoped to get to a hospital from where he could write to his family for food parcels. He asked me to start the metal cutter, so that he could cut the fingers of his left hand.

Only I had permission to operate the machine and I refused his request. I later met him in Vienna and he was thankful that I did not comply with his request. A sadist SS officer, whom we had given the name of a Russian (or German) tank, spent his time at „Piller" beating prisoners. "Where is your work place?" he would ask. "I come from the toilet". Bad excuse. One had to stand in attention until he got tired of beating, or you started spitting out a tooth.

After we returned to our quarters in the evening, we assembled for roll-call which consisted of examination of prisoners for cleanliness of body and garments. The beds had to be made in a particular style. Shoes had to be clean – including the soles – torn uniforms had to be patched. Appells were a major means of chicanery. Prisoners who worked in the quarries were at a disadvantage, they needed more time to clean up. Those who were cited for infractions faced various punishments: lashes, deprivation of food, or sleeping on bare metal beds. Osterman, our block supervisor, held indoctrination classes each evening, and prisoners who did not remember his history lessons would suffer. Punishments were meted out in front of the assembled prisoners. Often, an officer reputed to be an expert, administered the lashes. The prisoner had to count the strokes. If in his agony he stopped counting, he continued to be beaten, until he got his numbers correct. Then he had to acknowledge his punishment, saying: "Ten strokes received with thanks".

Living on a subsistence level, getting repeatedly into trouble, was dangerous for your health. Some unfortunates, who did not have the stamina to survive, were walking skeletons – *Musulmanen*, as we called them. Some prisoners got Red Cross parcels, or food packages from relatives, but those were the fortunate few. When we started the 12-hour shifts, we got all our meals at the same time. We gorged ourselves on cabbage soup or, our favorite, pea soup (which was more substantial), but then we had to wait 24 hours before we got food again. Except for those with access to extra food, we were all undernourished.

After months of observation, prisoners were transferred to one of seven blocks. I was sent to block "E" which was for those capable of rehabilitation. This block was cleaner and whenever some commission came to inspect the camp, they were shown block "E". I continued for a time at "Piller", but then got a job as a cleaner in the SS barracks. My predecessor made the mistake of acquiring a signet ring which was fashioned at "Pillar" from a brass nut. This was sabotage. After the man was thoroughly beaten, the block

supervisor asked for a volunteer for the job. No one volunteered, although I did later, because I felt that it would improve my chance of survival. One could organize food and collect cigarette butts, which were a medium of trade. We were two Viennese in charge of the barracks.

There were two types of SS men: the officers, usually *Reichsdeutsche* [with German citizenship], and the guards who were *Volksdeutsche* [Germans with non-German citizenship], Germans drafted into the SS in the Balkans. Only the officers were in direct contact with the prisoners. The *Volksdeutsche*, some of whom spoke German only haltingly, were the guards, standing in summer and winter on the perimeter of the camp and the various places of work.

One time my survival seemed threatened: I used to listen to Anglo-American broadcasts in the guard quarters, and told selected friends about the news. Some prisoners at "Pillar" discussed the political situation in the toilet, rejoicing that the Allies were about to take Bonn on the Rhein. They were overheard by an SS guard who had sneaked into the toilet to chase the prisoners back to work. He arrested them and they were marched to the head of the Security Service [*Sicherheitsdienst* – SD] and one after another told from whom he had heard the news. It took three days until I was summoned and confronted with the man whom I originally gave the information. The SD chief received me with a diabolical smile: "Now we got you!" People were executed for listening to enemy broadcasts. What saved me was that I had access to German newspapers, and I read that Pyrn on the Rhine [the precise name of the town can no longer be remembered] was threatened. When confronted with my accuser, I said it was Pyrn not Bonn. Bonn – Pyrn, Bonn – Pyrn, he stuttered – the SD chief chose to believe me.

The Allies were approaching and he was a resident of Moringen – it was in his interest to believe me. Any survivors might seek revenge. He asked me what I thought about enlisting redeemable prisoners into the SS to make a last stand against Allied troops. I was honest, telling him that most of us don't know how to shoot a gun, and that, after many years imprisonment, most would want to escape at the first possible moment.

This is what I did after we were evacuated some 20 kilometers to Göttingen. With another Viennese man, I walked through the front line at night, passed American soldiers who did not stop us when I explained that "We are your friends, prisoners from a concentration camp." But that is another story.

Ludwig W. Adamec, 2005

Ludwig W. Adamec left Austria in 1950 and traveled extensively in Europe, Asia and Africa. He moved to the United States in 1954 and obtained a doctorate in Middle Eastern studies. He is now an emeritus professor at the University of Arizona.

I **only** knew **work**

Franziska Jagerhofer, Austria, born 1938

Franziska Jagerhofer was born on 11th October 1938 in Graz. As her family lived in a trailer and her father couldn't work regularly due to a disability, the family was persecuted by the National Socialists as so called "asocials". In 1941, Franziska Jagerhofer's father was sent to the concentration camp Flossenbürg where he died in 1942. The mother of Franziska Jagerhofer was deported to Auschwitz; she survived. Franziska Jagerhofer and her three sisters were sent to different homes and institutions.

At the age of two, I was given to a farmer. Even before I started going to school, I had to work hard in the stalls and in the fields. I didn't know about holidays. As I didn't have the time to study at school, I left after the fourth grade. As a result, I wasn't able to learn a trade and had to work as an unskilled worker all my life. I was never told who my parents were. I was often very miserable and cried a lot because my foster parents treated me like a stranger. I didn't find my mother until I was 25. She told me about her terrible experiences in the concentration camp and about the death of my father in a concentration camp. Working from morning till night was all I knew. I missed having a secure family home. You can imagine how that weighed on me and still weighs on me today.

PHOTO: WALTER REICHL

Franziska Jagerhofer does not possess a single photograph from her childhood or a single memory of her mother from this time

Anton Müller with his tattooed concentration camp number

PHOTOS: VEREIN ROMA-SERVICE

My **number** was **Z6835**

Anton Müller, Austria, born 1924

Anton Müller was born into a Roma family in Zahling/Burgenland on 27th March 1924, the second of five children. From the ages of seven to 14, he worked for neighboring farmers in exchange for board and lodging. From July 1938, all Burgenland Roma, including Anton Müller, had to do forced labor. In 1943, the entire family was then deported to Auschwitz. In 1944, Mr. Müller was sent, via Ravensbrück, to Mauthausen, where he survived to see the liberation. Anton Müller's father, a sister and her children, and a brother, his wife and his children did not survive the National Socialist era.

The following excerpt from the life story of Mr. Müller is taken from an interview in the contemporary witness documentation "Mri Historjia. Life stories of the Burgenland Roma" by the association "Roma Service".

The children and young people went to school and I worked for the farmers. Some of them did seasonal work. […] Then I went music-making in Heiligenkreuz. I learned to play with my father's bandmaster in Heiligenkreuz. I played music from the age of eight until I was 14. I was always working – I made music, worked [for the farmers] and I worked in road construction and on the boring tower. The houses in Zahling, where I worked, are still standing. But the old people have already died. I was only able to go to school for four years, because Hitler was already close by. We no longer dared. So I just had to miss out. […] Things weren't so good at home. Our parents were pleased that I had made my life with the farmers and lodged there. […] I was taken from my job with the farmers and brought there [to Königsdorf for forced labor] and employed as a so called water boy, as an informant. The SS men who were supervising there all came from the local area. […]

After the deportation of the first Roma families from Zahling, the family fled to Styria and went into hiding at a farm in the mountains. However, the men of the family were arrested a short time later. As the mother of Anton Müller was not a Roma and possessed an *Ariernachweis* [proof of "aryan" origin], he was finally freed again. He was called up to the Reich Labor Service but after six months, he was able to return home.

When I returned from the Reich Labor Service, they very soon arrested us. We were deported to Fürstenfeld in a private truck. Once there, we were crammed into cattle wagons and deported straight to Auschwitz. That was in spring 1943. My mother didn't have to go, as she was considered an "aryan", but she didn't want to leave us. My father tried to stop her, but it didn't work. […] They kept saying to us, first in Fürstenfeld, then on the train, that we would get work in Poland, earn money and have a nice life. The younger among us would work, the older would be cared for. This is what they promised us. But when I saw how they were beating people with [rubber truncheons] I knew, of course, that they had lied to us.

When we arrived in Birkenau and the people got off the train, some had to go there, others over there; [older] women here, younger women there. The younger ones joined the workforce, the older ones were sent to the gas chambers. That's how it was. Only the workforce made it into the camp at all. Three days later, I was tattooed. My number was Z6835. They started with number 1 and I was number 6835. […] As soon as you got your number, things got better, because the number meant that you could work. And those who didn't get a number were sent to the gas chambers. We had the same numbers next to the black patches [fabric triangles on the prison clothing]. The black patches were for gypsies [and asocials]; the yellow-red star for Jews [who were arrested as political prisoners]; red was for the political prisoners; green for career criminals and purple for bible scholars [Jehovah's Witnesses] […] There were several areas in Birkenau: one for the gypsies, one for the Jews and so on. They were in double rows and the camp road ran between them. The children and women were also accommodated in separate barracks. But the women who had very young children and babies were put on the ramp with the elderly. My sister also had three children, including a baby, and they incinerated her. […]

If you got sick – suppose you had a temperature of 40 degrees – it was cleverer to work. If you went to hospital, you were gone. You were just given an injection, generally water, and you were dead. Even if you were half dead, you had to go to work. As soon as you got sick, lots of people couldn't work any more, then you didn't have a chance. […]

I worked on constructing the sewers, digging by hand and laying pipes. I also took part in the so called de-lousing. When a new transport arrived, everything was searched through and we had to throw the jewelry into big containers. Where it went, I don't know, but by evening it was already gone. Then they [the newcomers] were sent into the gas room, they received soap and a hand towel and never emerged again. If we had said anything, warned them, we would have been sent in ourselves. 15,000 Hungarian Jews were incinerated in one night, from the train straight to the crematorium. I don't want to think about it. […]

When we had to leave the camp at temperatures of minus 30 degrees, several people just remained lying there. They just froze to death on the spot. Just froze to death. But those who knew how to help themselves a bit took cement sacks which they had used in their work, cut a hole in them and wore them as clothes. If they had caught you, they would have given a beating immediately. And you wouldn't believe how warm paper is – warmer than clothing. […]

I was beaten like an animal, they struck me in the teeth with their rifle butts; another time I [was struck] 25 times. In Birkenau, the men's camp was separated from the women's camp, where my mother was, by a fence. Once she threw me bread over from her side. Just as I wanted to collect the bread, I was caught. An SS man beat me with his "ox's tail" – that's what they called the whip. I had to count along, but I only got to five. For fourteen days, I was barely able to walk and could only lie on my stomach. Despite this, I still had to go to work. […]

At the time of the liberation, I was in Mauthausen. […] Before I was deported to Mauthausen, I spent 14 days in the concentration camp Ravensbrück. Ravensbrück was a stop on the way from Birkenau to Mauthausen. I was with the Russian prisoners and we had to chop wood in the forest. […] In Ravensbrück, the men were castrated. Those who let themselves be castrated were released, but I didn't allow them to castrate me. Then I was sent to Mauthausen. […] Thank goodness I didn't have to work in the quarry. I was one of five prisoners who was able to play an instrument and was assigned to the camp band. […] Our band had

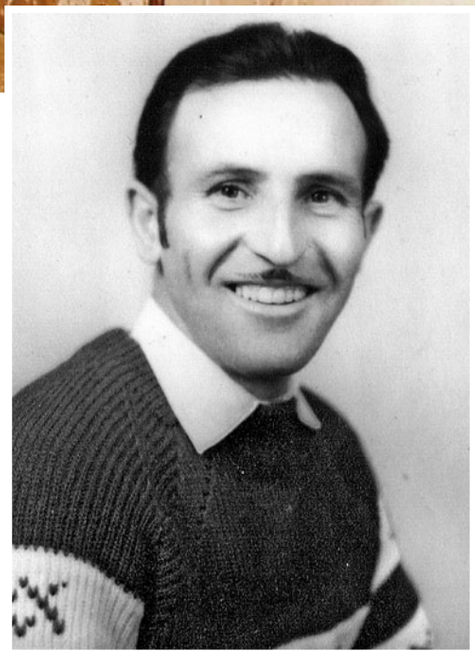
to accompany the workers on their way out – the quarry was about 150 meters away – and play until they had all gone down. Every day. In the evening we picked them up again at 7. […] During the day, I worked in the camp: cleaning the streets and the toilets, emptying the dustbins, cutting hair, anything that came up really. That was our work. In Mauthausen, we were much better off than we were in Auschwitz, because we musicians, and everyone who worked in the camp got a spoonful of soup as a supplement. That's how I was able to stay alive. […]

When I was freed, I thought that the world was my oyster. But many people only died after the liberation. We were able to go where we wanted and do as we pleased. No one could say anything to us. Everywhere glasses [containing food] were being opened and eaten – many got dysentery and died. But I went home […] with an old Roma and he said to me, "If you want to go home with me, then do as I say. Don't eat anything fatty! We will eat dry bread, maybe a little more, and that is how you will stay healthy." And so we went home. I only weighed 35 kilos [77 lbs]. […]

After the liberation by the Americans and a month-long stay in a military hospital, in fall 1945, Anton Müller returned to Zahling. Mr. Müller found the Russian soldiers there – including a few Roma – to be very reasonable and supportive of the Roma. He was able to build a new life for himself. To spare his children from being disadvantaged, he changed his surname. Anton Müller didn't speak of his experiences in the concentration camps for many years.

After the war, people in the area questioned me. They were curious, but I didn't say a word. They wouldn't have believed me anyway. Why tell someone, who then goes and tells everyone that he has been made a fool of?

An old Roma house in Zahling, ca. 100 years old



Anton Müller 1955

Adolf Papai with the portraits of his parents

PHOTOS: WALTER REICHL

If it had lasted another year, there would have been **none of us** left

Adolf Papai, Austria, born 1931

Adolf Papai was born on 28th June 1931 in Langental in central Burgenland, where around 350 Roma lived in great poverty. Less than one third of them survived the National Socialist era. Together with many other Roma from Langental, Mr. Papai's father was deported to Buchenwald and murdered. Mr. Papai himself and his mother and siblings were put in the Lackenbach camp.

The following excerpt from Mr. Papai's life story is taken from an interview (conducted in Romany) from the contemporary witness documentation "Mri Historia. Life stories of Burgenland Roma" by the association "Roma Service".

I was eight years old and already had to go out to work. There were good farmers, for whom I did some small jobs. They were small farmers and they gave us milk and a piece of bread to eat. We were pleased to get something. It was a distance of seven kilometres from us, from Langental via Nebersdorf to Kleinwarasdorf. I used to walk there and I worked in the fields, harvesting potatoes and things like that, and that is how we got something to eat. […] Yes, the other Roma… there wasn't much work. They didn't find any work so they went music-making at the country fairs […] and their wives had to go begging, just so they could survive. […]

And then, in '38, it was announced that we were not allowed to attend school. We learned Croatian in school and once a week we had a German lesson. I went from the first grade into the second, in total I went to school for one and a half years. We had such a good teacher. He let us continue to go to school even when it was already forbidden. He still taught us in spite of this. Then he was found out, he was nearly deported to a camp, that I am sure of. […] His name was Gyöngyes. He was very good to the Roma. […]

He [Mr. Papai's father] was off playing music, and he was on his way home. Right at that time they were rounding up the Roma and they took him with them. They didn't even let him go home. He wasn't far away from our house, and then they took my father with them. They also took my mother, but they let her go again in Fischamend because she had a young daughter who she was still breastfeeding. They left a few behind, if they had small children. In 1941, they didn't take such things into account any more, small children and the like, they deported all of us. […] There were four of us; three sisters and myself, and one was still a small baby, one girl was a bit older, then another, then me, and our mother was very sick. We just hid in the forest. We could hide there in Langental but not anywhere else. […]

In 1941, we were put in a camp. That was around October. I don't know any more. We made wreaths for All Saints Day and our mother had carried them into the village to sell them or exchange them for flour or other food so that we would have something to eat. And I still know, I was tired at the time and I fell asleep on the brushwood at a neighbour's house. And suddenly the "*Poskoschtja*" [name for the Nazis] came and they took us away from there. They threw us on to a car, and they hit us hard too, and then they took us to Lackenbach. […]

I had a little dog. […] I was still a child and I wouldn't hand it over. And when we arrived there in the car, there were already some people there; the *Kapo* [prisoner who supervised other prisoners] and those who had been imprisoned in 1940. And we got off the truck and I didn't let the dog out. And then, one of them took the dog, the poor dog, by the hind legs and hit me with him for so long, until only the hind legs remained in his hand. That was how terrible these people were! Because I didn't let my dog out. […]

I had to sweep the courtyard every day and keep it tidy and everything else that needed doing, cleaning the toilets and such, that was my job. [...] In the morning, at around half past six, we had to line up already. The oldest in the camp or one of those in the courtyard had a whistle, and when it was blown, we had to run and line up and then go to work. […] If it wasn't tidy, we were beaten. But since we knew that, we made sure that we did our work well. They sent us out to dig up roots from the forest to make brushes, rice brushes and so on. [...] The very young children stayed in the stalls but their parents had to go out to work. And the children were left behind in the straw. I still remember, some froze to death in the straw. It was so cold. Many froze to death and a few who didn't freeze grew up together. […]

They killed 250 Roma [from Langental]. They died in Auschwitz. They burnt them, they gassed them. And then we got typhoid when I was in Lackenbach. Many people also died there. […] I brought them water, as there was a well in the camp and it is from this water that the disease came. I was allowed to leave the camp. There was a small spring, so I went there and brought many sick people water from there. But despite this, many people still died. […] They threw them up onto a kind of platform-lorry like lumps of wood and then brought them to a hole. So many died of typhoid. […]

In March 1943, I got out of there and went to Langental, to the hunter. […] They had two cows, and he was the hunter of the Earl Niczky in Nebersdorf [owner of the Nebersdorf Palace]. […] I helped him make wood, small jobs like that. And took care of the two cows and washed them. They always had to be as clean as a whistle. The Earl had taken many Roma from the camp, my mother, my sister and also many for whom he did not even have work, saving their lives. He was one of a kind. […]

After the war, the Papai family's house was still standing – unlike many other houses in Langental. Adolf Papai's mother died in 1949 from the effects of a stroke. His sisters moved to Vienna; he was left alone. Mr. Papai, who, like his father before him, played in a Roma band, married in 1951 and has three children. Despite his brief education, which he was partly able to catch up on by learning with his children, he has remarkable linguistic abilities.

I speak Croatian and German and Romany, Hungarian and the Slavic languages, a little Czech, Yugoslavian best of all, and then Russian too […].

Adolf Papai's wish for the future is that the history from 1938 to 1945 is never repeated.

Adolf Papai with his dog in March 2010

Walpurga Horvath, Sweden 1946

... I stayed, **I stayed alive**

Walpurga Horvath, Austria, born 1923

Walpurga Horvath was born on 15th November 1923 in Trausdorf in Burgenland. The Roma settlement there consisted of three houses in which she and her relatives lived. Mrs. Horvath's father worked in road construction and in the quarry; in winter he made baskets for the farmers which Mrs. Horvath's mother exchanged for food in the villages. As they grew up, Walpurga Horvath and her seven siblings led a sheltered and carefree existence. But shortly after the *Anschluss* of Austria, Walpurga and her sister Stefanie were deported to the concentration camp Ravensbrück, where they were imprisoned for six years. They lived to see the liberation, suffering badly from tuberculosis, in the concentration camp Bergen-Belsen.

The following excerpt from the life story of Mrs. Horvath was taken from an interview (conducted in Romany) from the contemporary witness documentation "Mri Historjia. Life Stories of Burgenland Roma" by the association "Roma Service".

PHOTOS: VEREIN ROMA-SERVICE

It was early in the morning when the SA came. We couldn't see much, you know? It was between 5 and 6 o'clock, because we were on our way to work. It might have even been 4 o'clock. […] We wanted to get dressed, go to work and collect our shears and the other things we needed and take them with us. "You don't need anything, go!" they said to us. […] They didn't even let us put on the aprons that we had with us. […] At that time, my parents happened to be at the house of my uncle, who lived in Großhöflein. They had nice houses there, they are still standing today. If you go down the High Street in Großhöflein you come to a hill, and that's where these houses are. The houses were bought by "*Gadsche*" [term for all non-Roma]. My parents were arrested a year or two later and deported to Lackenbach. […] My sister and my cousin Kathi were deported with me, we three from Trausdorf. […] That was on 25th June 1938. […]

And then we were in Eisenstadt, they rounded us up there, at the provincial government. There was a collection point there, and from there they took us by truck to Fischamend where we stayed the night. We were then deported to the camp in Ravensbrück on cattle wagons. When we arrived, all of the Sinti were already there, many, many Roma, so many women, the Yeniche, all together. […]

They crammed us all in [to the wagons] and drew across the bars, like when animals are transported. No water, nothing. And it was so hot! They didn't make any stops. And those who cried out for water had water thrown over them. […]

There [in Ravensbrück] we had to stand to attention, and from there we had to go into the "big bathroom". There was a large locker room, a dressing room they called it, for the prisoners' clothing – they took our clothes from us and our jewelry, my beautiful necklace from my [confirmation] sponsor. I had been confirmed two or three years earlier. And I had earrings from my mother, like little gemstones – "forget-me-not". I can still picture them today. They took them from me too. […] My mother and my family were sent to Lackenbach. They were sent to the camp one or two years later. […]

Then we were put into barracks. I was in "block 8". There was an "A-side" and a "B-side". There were 50 people. […] We had to dig the ground and make hills of earth. How can I describe it? We dug and made large hills. […] In the scorching, scorching heat, we weren't even given water. Those who collapsed were beaten, or bitten by dogs. […] Near Ravensbrück, there was a factory [an airplane factory]. We went to work early every morning, and in the evening we went home to the barracks, my God! They churned out airplanes, parachutes, military clothing there. I was in the sewing works. I had to sew trousers together and sew on buttons, 110 coats during the night. […]

There was a young girl there, they called her Kapa. She said to Paula, Paula Sarközi from Rudersdorf, "Auntie, are we in Vienna now?" She thought that she was in Vienna. Even then, we used to laugh when we were joking around and asked each other "Auntie, are we in Vienna now?" […] She was taken away. She was such a small, crippled girl. She was probably killed immediately. One time, I heard that there was a collection point for the mentally ill. They took them straight to the gas chambers from there. The old women too. We who worked and were able to work, they didn't let us die. […]

Shortly before the liberation, I was sent to Bergen-Belsen. […] It was hell there. In Ravensbrück, we no longer hoped to go home, we no longer hoped anything, you know? But there was still a small […] reason to live, because we worked. You worked – you did your work and got a little something [to eat]. But in Bergen-Belsen, we arrived in wooden clogs, there was still snow on the ground. I was already sick, and my sister and Pitscha from Margarethen dragged me along. They took me under my arms and walked with me, which wasn't actually allowed. If they had seen me, they would have shot me. And when the supervisor came, they let go of me and I was able to go a little way by myself. I arrived in Bergen-Belsen and I collapsed there. We were all half dead already. My sister could still stand and talk a little. Steffi was my savior. And then came the liberation. We were there for a week, no water, no bed, no food, nowhere to sit or to stand, the barracks had been burned down.

And when we arrived there, we saw from afar: "Now we can heat, it will be warm, there is wood!" There were mountains of wood. We thought it was wood. And do you know what it was? It was the dead. It was the dead: a layer of wood, a layer of corpses, and then the fir tree branches. They lit them with oil before our eyes. And when we saw this, it stank so badly, the dead reared up, like when you put a small chicken in the oven.

And then I became terribly ill, I just lay there. We had no hope left. And then I saw a soldier, regular soldier, not from the SS or the SA – they had already fled,

they were gone. They stationed the poor soldiers there, the normal military. He was so young and he called down to us, "Girl", he must have been from Vienna, "girl, you're coughing so much!" And I thought, "I won't talk to him, he might only be talking to me so that he can shoot me". And so I went in [to the barracks], there were anyhow no beds, no doors. There was nothing but a burnt out ruin. He said, "Don't be afraid, today we will be free, today we will be free".

The woods weren't far away. It was surrounded by huge woods, like in Mauthausen. They always built concentration camps like that. And we heard bombardments and shooting. The tanks came right into the camps, the French and the Scottish, and we said, "Yay, they are wearing skirts!" We didn't know their uniform. It was the British who freed us. One more hour, and I wouldn't be here today. […] You should have seen how quickly they put up their tents. There were people there giving injections, they were only giving injections, for there was nothing to eat and no one could have eaten anyway, everyone was just lying around. Except for my sister and this one girl from St. Margarethen. And the beautiful girls, oh Koki from Bernstein, such a beautiful girl with such beautiful, long, blond hair, she died on that day. Koki. Rosl, Rosalia was her real name. Oh woe!

They took us away from there; they took us to SS homes, they made hospitals, emergency hospitals. There were beds there, three beds in each room. I lay in the middle. And every day they brought children left and right of me. As if God was watching over me. I stayed, I stayed alive.

The Hungarian soldier said "Wali" – he couldn't pronounce Walpurga – "Wali, they went home" when the children died.

"Why can't I go home?"

"No, Wali, you are staying with me!"

And then I cried and said, "My sister is dead too, my sister is dead."

But she wasn't dead. She was just in different barracks because she was healthier. She was in a home, in little settlements with those who were healthier. We were

Walpurga with her daughter Lona and son Karl 1956

infectious – we had tuberculosis and other diseases. […] The Hungarian soldier told me that my sister Steffi was alive. How did he know that?

"She's wearing a red blouse and looks down. She's looking for you."

"Well then, if you see her, tell her that I am alive and that I'm here."

"I always tell her, but she's not allowed to come here."

And he always comforted me with this when I cried. […] She had thought that I was already dead and had been going from mass grave to mass grave laying flowers that she had picked from the fields.

She kept saying, "My sister is dead! My sister's not alive anymore!"

And the doctors said to her, "Here is your sister!" When we were reunited, what joy! We were so happy.

Miraculously, with the exception of a brother and a niece, her whole family survived their incarceration in concentration camps. After Walpurga and her sister Stefanie had spent a year and a half recovering in Sweden, they returned to Austria in 1947. Walpurga and her family were allocated a room in the municipal house in Trausdorf, as all of the houses had been destroyed.

When we returned home, it was wonderful for us, truly wonderful. […] The sadness was gone – home is home. Home is home, even if it is just a hut. Only love, human love counts – financial love, material love, didn't interest us. Although we were happy that we had something to wear and something to eat, the mental scars were never healed. We were constantly ill, psychologically ill. It still hasn't gone away, believe me, I carry it with me always, always.

Today they are **taking** the **Roma away** …

Koloman Baranyai, Austria, born 1941

Koloman Baranyai was born on 31st March 1941 in Katzelsdorf/Niederösterreich. His family belonged to the Roma community. Thanks to the good relationship his father enjoyed with the non-Roma people, for whom he played music and did odd jobs, the family was warned about a raid and was able to flee from the Nazis in time. Mr. Baranyai survived with his family by hiding in the forests of Austria, Hungary and the former Czechoslovakia. His uncle, aunt, their children and his grandmother were murdered in the camps.

The following excerpt is taken from an interview (conducted in Romany) from the contemporary witness documentation "Mri Historia. Life stories of Burgenland Roma" by the association "Roma Service".

PHOTOS: VEREIN ROMA-SERVICE

Koloman Baranyai 1968

First we fled to Hungary. We stayed there for a long time. We lived in the forest. My father always went into the village in the evening. There were businessmen who knew him. They opened the back door for him and let him in. Then my father quickly took the things he had bought and in this way, we had something to eat. And then the Hungarians said to him "Julo, watch out! Today they are taking the Roma away. Make sure you escape with your family!" And so we fled to Czechoslovakia. We also lived there for a long time, again in the forest. We were lucky that they didn't catch us, because lots of people fled from there, but the SS men imprisoned the majority and deported them. […]

We always had supplies. My father always made sure that we also had something to eat, even if there was a great lack of food. He always made sure of this and if there were sometimes no food, he caught rabbits in the forest. If he caught sight of a deer, he killed it and we had that to eat. […]

The *Gadsche* (non-Roma) all knew that we were Roma. They didn't betray us, because they liked my father a lot. My father never said, "No, I can't do it, I can't help you". My father was always willing to help. That is why they always gave him something to eat. They wanted to give him money too, but he said he didn't need money, he preferred groceries. […]

My grandfather, my mother's father, died of worry. […] My grandmother – I don't know which camp she was sent to – was murdered in this camp. We only found out after the war, that she was murdered in a camp. My Uncle Albert, my mother's brother, was sent to Auschwitz. He was murdered there a week or two later with his family, his wife and two sons. […]

The Roma who came back and who had all lived in Hungary had a wretched existence. Their houses were all gone. "Confiscated" by the SS or destroyed by bombs – everything was difficult. Not a single one of us was doing well! How should I say it? No one can really describe it properly. Everyone was sick, very sick. They either had something with their hearts or with their lungs. One after the other, most of them died.

After the war, the family settled first in Heiligenkreuz and then in Baden, near Vienna. When Koloman Baranyai was eight years old, his parents separated. His mother felt forced to leave her two sons with a family of farmers where

they remained until the age of 14. They had to help on the farm and so could only go to school very infrequently. At 14, Mr. Baranyai returned to his mother and began to work for a construction company. But Koloman Baranyai, who had already learned to play the violin as a child, saw music as his true calling.

And he [my father] said to me, "Kalman, what do you want to learn?" He didn't dictate what I had to learn, but definitely a musical instrument. And I had to become a musician. But he did say to me, that I can choose which instrument, he didn't mind. So I began to learn violin, I could already play a bit. We children used to act like clowns, and one day I got my hand caught in a cutting machine and cut off my finger and then I couldn't learn any more. Then I started to learn the viola, but I also found this difficult because of my finger, so I stopped that too. So in the end the double bass became my main instrument. […]

Koloman Baranyai's identity as a Roma, his close relationship with his mother tongue and his identity as a musician are still inextricably interwoven.

Koloman Baranyai, August 2008

Thanks

Special thanks are given to all those who have provided their life stories and personal memories, photographs and documents for this volume.

The hands with the photo frame symbolically holding a lost past in the cover photo are the hands of Ceija Stojka. As a Romany, she also experienced persecution and has recorded her memories in her book *"Auschwitz ist mein Mantel"*. We thank Mrs. Stojka, whose hands represent those of all survivors who often are not even in possession of a faded photo of their loved ones.

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My name is Kurt Flussmann. I was born in Vienna in 1923. Now, in my old age, I have decided to put down my story in writing, because I think it is important that what my generation has lived through will never be forgotten ...

Kurt Flussmann
Applicant to the National Fund

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