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MY EARLY YEARS

I was born on the 18th February 1920, in Altleiningen, a village in the Rhineland Palatinate roughly half-way between Kaiserslautern and Ludwigshafen.

By 1930, when I was ten, my father was already dead and I lived with my mother, and Martha my three-year-old sister in the house of my Jewish Grandfather. He was then 80 years old and required care and attention since he suffered from a double hernia.

Grandfather did not own the house. He had been given the tenancy of it by a former employer, with a verbal undertaking that he could live there as long as he wished. It was a modest house built against a steep hillside. The ground floor was effectively a cellar and a stable. A pair of front doors opened on to a staircase which led to the first floor where we lived in two large rooms. The water supply was a tap in the stable. The lavatory was in the garden which ran beside the house along the bottom of the hillside. At the back of the garden was a wall, ten feet high and twenty five feet long, retaining the hillside, on which we grew grapes.

Mother, Martha and I were baptised Christians in the Evangelical Protestant Church. In a history of the area published in 1980, Grandfather is named, and described as the last Jew in Altleiningen.

I grew up in troubled times. After making great sacrifices for four years in the Kaiser's war, the German people found themselves defeated and humiliated, only narrowly avoiding a revolution similar to that which had occurred in Russia. The enormous reparations bill levied on Germany by the victorious Allies meant that people already poor became poorer.

This was the time of the Weimar Republic, and Germany had a democratic, pluralist form of government. The Head of State was the President, a position roughly like that of an elected monarch. The Reichstag was Germany's Parliament. The position of Chancellor was roughly equivalent to our Prime Minister. He would be the leader of the Party with a majority in the Reichstag, called upon by the President to form a government.

In the years 1923/24 the German currency collapsed with Inflation totally out of control. People who had saved for their own security suddenly found that their savings had vanished. Money was printed at an unprecedented rate, rapidly becoming worth little more than the paper it was printed on. I clearly remember, as a child, being given millions of deutschmarks to play with.

At this time the Rhineland of Germany was garrisoned by a French army of occupation. They withdrew in 1927. Their departure was a cause for celebration among the younger people though there was some apprehension among older folk that a stabilising influence might be departing. By this time I was attending primary school in Altleiningen, and a detachment of motorised French troops, in the process of withdrawal, stopped for one night in our playground.

The previous day our "Gemeindediener", a sort of town crier came round the village dressed in his dark blue uniform and ringing a hand bell. "Tomorrow" he proclaimed, "a detachment of French troops will have a break in our midst. The community is requested to make these soldiers welcome, and make their short stay as pleasant as possible. After all they are only people like us". I gathered that the authorities were afraid that some of the young nationalist firebrands would make a demonstration which might have provoked trouble.

I was too young at this time to be interested in political figures but there are a few names which I recall. Chancellor Ernst Stresemann must have earned much affection for his efforts to improve things. When he died I saw a lot of the older people in the village in tears. I can still visualise the

face of President Friedrich Ebert on the postage stamps. He was an agnostic, a lapsed Catholic, and when he died the Catholic Church was unwilling to conduct the funeral. The burial Service was in fact carried out by a minister from the Protestant Church in Heidelberg. His name was Hermann Maas¹, and he was destined years later to change my life.

After Ebert came President Hindenburg, the man who had commanded Germany's armies during the war. He was a product of the old military aristocracy, a very conservative nationalist. He was not likely to feel any sympathy, let alone enthusiasm, for the democratic principles now being tried out in Germany.

The voices of the supporters of democracy began to be drowned by the clamour of the Nationalists on the one hand and the Communists on the other. A traveller going about his business would arm himself with a swastika under one lapel and a hammer and sickle under the other.

As the Twenties drew to a close, the people of our village were listening more and more to the demagogue who promised easy and painless solutions to all of Germany's Problems. In that state of flux Germany entered the harsh and violent Thirties.

THE VIOLENT THIRTIES

With the advent of the Thirties came the great depression to add to Germany's misery. The effect was devastating. Seven million Germans found themselves unemployed. It was as if a malevolent force was at work to demoralise the German people.

Early in this period I encountered a new phenomenon at school. One day in class our teacher made an unjustified and very offensive remark about Jews. He must have known that, although a Christian, I lived with my Jewish Grandfather. I think I would have been considered at that time a well-behaved pupil, but I immediately stood up, left the room, and went home for the rest of the day. To be fair, I must record that next day the teacher apologised to me in front of the class for his "slip of the tongue".

However, this was symptomatic of a change that was taking place in school. We were being constantly indoctrinated with songs and slogans of a narrow nationalist kind. For example:

Siegreich wollen wir Frankreich schlagen

We will triumph over the French

Der Rhein ist nicht Deutschlands Grenze sondern Deutschlands Strom

The Rhine is not Germany's border, but Germany's stream

There now appeared to be as many political parties as days in the year. Anyone counselling caution or appealing to reason was being sneered at, or worse. One morning, right outside our house, a young man from a neighbouring village told a group of young fanatics what he thought of their behaviour. He had to flee for his life.

Now Hitler's Sturm Abteilung (usually shortened to S.A. and meaning Storm troopers) appeared more and more openly on the streets. They were commanded by a loathsome character called Röhm. These brown-shirted bullies were Hitler's street fighters. They strutted everywhere, waving their swastika flags and singing their "anthem" the so called Horst Wessel song, by far the best known of the Nazi songs:

Die Fahne hoch, die Reihen fest geschlossen

¹ <http://www.maasfoundation.com/en/thierfelder.html>

With banners high and ranks firmly closed
S.A. marschiert in ruhig festem Schritt
The S.A. march with a calm, firm stride
Kameraden, die Rotfront und Reaktion erschossen
Comrades, the Reds and reactionaries whom we've killed
Marschieren im Geist in unseren Reihen mit
March in spirit with us in our ranks

In that period of the early 1930s, no government seemed capable of surviving for more than a few weeks. Elections came round ever more frequently, until people got fed up with them. You would hear comments like "we can't go on like this." Is it surprising then that some listened when Hitler promised them "Give me four years. I will give you work. I will give you bread."

He did not say "I will give you a dictatorship." "I will open concentration camps to lock up anyone who disagrees with me." "I will kill every Jewish man, woman and child that I can lay my murderous hands on." "I will take you into a war which will destroy Germany."

Nazi Slogans covered every available wall:

Wer macht uns frei - die Hitler Partei
Who liberates us - the Hitler Party
Deutschland erwache - Juda Verkrache
Germany awake - down with the Jews

I found that even some of my close friends were beginning to think aloud "Let's give Hitler a Chance. We can always kick him out again if he is no good." (wishful thinking)

The last Chancellor who could be regarded as a democrat was Chancellor Brüning. He represented the Catholic Centre Party, something like our Liberal Party. He introduced a number of emergency regulations ("Notverordnungen") to try to cope with the economic situation. He was ridiculed. You heard people singing on street corners a parody of a popular song of the day:

Auf dem Brüning seiner Glatz ist der Notverordnung Platz
The best place for the emergency regulations is on top of Brüning's bald head

He did not last long. Hindenburg sacked him and installed in his place that doyen of the Establishment von Papen. I liken him to a latter day John the Baptist. It was he who paved the way for the coming of the great Messiah Adolf Hitler, and he was duly rewarded when Hitler came to power.

In the election of 30th January 1933, Hitler gained a wafer thin majority. It was his chance and by Jove, he took it.

A Nazi slogan of the period was:

Wir werden weiter marschieren, für uns gibt es kein zurück
We shall march on further, for us there is no turning back
March on they did. All the way to El Alamein. All the way to Stalingrad

To begin with, Grandfather did not take them very seriously. He had a word for them: "vernagelt" literally in English "nailed-up." That is, people with totally closed minds. On one occasion two storm troopers stopped him in Altleiningen "What are you doing here?" they asked, "we thought all you Jews were being hanged." "Oh" said the old man, now well into his eighties,

"If you people have made up your minds to hang me, just go ahead. After all, I've had my time, but please don't hang me too high." "Why?" they asked. "If you wanted to lick my backside I wouldn't want you not to be able to reach it" he answered. The two brown shirts roared with laughter and went on their way. Weeks later, travellers to nearby towns came back asking if the joke that was being told about him was true.

Grandfather never allowed himself to be cowed by them. We were to go through bad times. We were to have our roof tiles and our windows smashed, but no Nazi ever entered our house.

At the beginning of 1933, we did not notice a lot of difference apart from pinpricks. The songs of the SA became more violently anti-Semitic, more bloodcurdling. A couple of examples which I remember were:

Wenn das Judenblut vom Messer spritzt Geht's noch einmal so gut

When Jewish blood spurts from our knives things will go twice as well

Schleift die langen Messer an dem Bürgersteig

Sharpen the long knives on the pavement

Lasst die Messer flitzen in den Judenleib

Let the knife dart into Jewish flesh

Ja Blut muss fließen, Blut muss fließen

Blood must flow yes blood must flow

Wir scheissen auf die Freiheit der Judenrepublik

We shit on the liberty of the Jewish Republic.

One song even went back to the Old Testament:

Oh God, send us another Moses

To lead his people to the promised land

Open the Red Sea for them Lord

But when they're in the middle, close it up.

Then we can all have some peace.

I remember Labour Day, 1st May 1933, when the Nazis, sworn enemies of socialism set out to seduce the workers by appearing more like Socialists than the Socialists themselves. There were flowers and bunting and even a Maypole. The brown-shirted roughnecks supervised a day of merry-making.

All over Germany, in preparation for the day, people deemed it a patriotic duty to display at least one swastika. In April I had been a casual visitor in the home of my school-friend Lothar Bonn. I was surprised to see his mother making by hand a swastika flag, with tears running down her face. Apart from running a grocers shop, they were also in charge of the Post Office, so they were under some pressure. I asked her why she was sad. "Look" she said, "instead of our beloved black, red and gold tricolor, we have to display this cursed sign." Maybe she had a premonition. Her son Lothar, together with another of my classmates was to be killed in the coming war.

When Labour Day dawned, only our house and one other at the far end of the village belonging to Herr Glaser, an ex-schoolteacher, were not flying a swastika. Everybody listened to the Führer's broadcast. He addressed the men and women listening as his "Genossen" and "Genossinnen", words implying comradeship. "I am one of you," that was his style. As an orator

he was an expert. His speech reached a climax, and there was the inevitable chorus of "Sieg Heils" followed by the Horst Wessel song.

That year laws were passed designed to separate Jews from the mainstream of German life. Now came a watershed in my life.

Most of my friends by now belonged to the Hitler Youth. To their credit, a number of them, when they found they could no longer associate with me, tried to persuade me to join. With my blond hair and non-Jewish appearance, I was acceptable and I did go with them a few times. There were lessons in beating the drum and blowing the trumpet. Then came the ultimatum, "are you going to join or not?". I told them I must first consult my Grandfather.

I spoke to Grandfather next morning and his reply was unequivocal. In effect he said that he would disown me if I joined them. My respect for him was such that there was then no question of my joining.

I cannot pretend that I was happy about this, for I had no illusions about the future. In making that decision I cut myself off from my friends and from all social life in the village. From now on I would become the target for the anti-Semites. The prospect was a lonely one.

In 1933 when I was 13, I left school and became the family breadwinner. This did not involve thinking about a career. Jobs were difficult for anybody to find, and doubly so for somebody labelled a Jew. I had to take anything I could get. During summer and autumn I got casual agricultural work either threshing or working on the grape harvest. In the threshing season I worked with a bunch of local old men, and they proved to be real mates. They weren't afraid to voice their opinions about what was happening in Germany. I remember them saying "we would rather have Paul working with us than one of those cheeky Hitler Youth louts. Tell him to do something and he will get on with it. Tell one of them and the chances are that he'll denounce you and you'll have to answer to some local Nazi upstart."

They actually proved their quality as mates. We had just finished the threshing for Herr Müller the local baker, and the next customer was Johannes Jotter, the Nazi mayor. He took on all the others but not me. To my amazement they confronted him with an ultimatum "Take him on with us or find yourself another threshing gang." He then really had no alternative but to engage me.

There are some events in that period which remain in my mind, such as the death of Hindenburg, the burning of the Reichstag and the "night of the long knives."

It was a shock to us all when we heard that the Reichstag was burning. Who started the fire is anybody's guess. A mentally retarded Dutchman was executed for the offence, but it certainly suited the Nazis to see it burn. Up in smoke went our Parliament, the Communists got the blame and the Nazis used it for propaganda and to justify rounding up political opponents.

The Night of the Long Knives was when the S.A. got cut down to size. They had served their purpose in helping to place Hitler in power. Now their leaders got too big for their boots and saw themselves as a power in the land in their own right. To use a Nazi phrase, this made them candidates for Sonderbehandlung - Special Treatment. Hitler used his black uniformed Schutzstaffel (S.S.) men whose oath of allegiance was not to Germany but to him personally, for the task. Röhm, Schleicher, and some other prominent brown shirts were killed that night, and many more arrested. The S.A. still existed after that, "brown shirts" could be seen guarding the routes at the 1936 Berlin Olympic Games, but their power was gone.

My sister Martha started school in 1933, just as Hitler came to power. At first, when her teacher was Fräulein Lili Leser she was very happy. Miss Leser married the Altleiningen Minister, Karl Imhoff, and went with him when he was transferred to Wattenheim. From then onwards Martha became progressively either ostracised by the other children or the object of their Jew-baiting. This last activity was virtually encouraged by a teacher who actually wore his brown shirt

uniform at school. Eventually in the autumn of 1938 she was told, as were Jewish children throughout Germany, to go home and not come back. That was the end of her formal education in Germany.

By the year 1935, I had come to the conclusion that there was no future for me in Germany. It was like swimming all the time against an increasing current. One evening I spoke to Grandfather and told him that I would like to emigrate to another country. He simply said "You cannot leave us in the lurch at a time like this. We all depend on you." I recognised where my responsibilities lay and resolved to accept them whatever happened.

When Pastor Imhoff left to go to Wattenheim, a new Minister, Pastor Kranzbühler arrived in Altleiningen, together with his wife and a bachelor brother. The bachelor brother proved to be a fanatical Nazi. He wore his storm trooper uniform all the time, and started to make his presence felt. He took it upon himself to instruct every shopkeeper in Altleiningen, in the name of the Nazi party not to serve the Jew, Herr Rosenzweig. When he made this speech at the baker, Herr Müller asked him to repeat it. When he got to "in the name of the Nazi party" Herr Müller cut him short. "Herr Rosenzweig," he told him, "has been a customer of this shop for about 50 years, and if he so wishes I'll serve him for another 50 years. If you Nazis don't want to patronise my shop, that won't break me either, and if you don't get out quick, I'll kick your backside down these steps."

About a week later the bachelor brother left Altleiningen and I never saw him again. Unlike Herr Müller, both butcher shops and one grocer, Herr Seitz, put notices on their doors, "Juden sind hier unerwünscht" - "Jews not welcome here." All pretty ludicrous since my old Grandfather was the only Jew in the place. However, I resolved never to put foot in any of those shops again. It was decided that I would go every Thursday morning to Eisenberg to collect our weeks supply of meat.

I was familiar with Eisenberg, about five miles from Altleiningen. The nearest synagogue to us was in Grünstadt, but in Eisenberg there was a small Jewish prayer room above a shop. The owner of the shop, Herr Samuel Kahn, acted as preacher and Kantor.

Grandfather used to go there on foot on the holiest of the Jewish days of observance. Because it was a long walk for a man of his age, I used to accompany him from the time I was about ten. It was there that I met the butchers, Herr Julius Schwarzschild and his father-in-law Herr Heinrich Michel. The members of this small Jewish congregation assumed that I too was Jewish. This led to an embarrassing moment when they asked when I would be made bar mitzvah. Grandfather got out of this by saying that I did not yet know enough Hebrew.

At home, when Grandfather celebrated a Jewish festival I took part in the various rites and formalities which would be the norm in a Jewish household.

At the same time I was active in the Protestant Church in Altleiningen, which I attended regularly and where I was confirmed on 9th April 1933. I was assistant bell-ringer and boiler attendant. It could be said that I was leading a religious double life with one foot firmly in the local Evangelical community, and the other, by force of circumstance in the Jewish community.

On my shopping trips to Eisenberg I passed, alongside a path between Wattenheim and Hettenleidelheim a billboard on which was fixed the latest copy of *Der Stürmer*. This disgusting publication was the work of Julius Streicher, the Gauleiter of Franconia, a man destined to sit among the leading Nazis in the dock at Nuremberg in 1936, and be condemned and hanged for his crimes.

It had a single message - hate the Jews. They were ravishing German women, defiling "German blood". Its cartoons depicted grotesque, evil, hook-nosed, fang-toothed Jews clawing at young blonde innocent German girls. The thought of being accused in this filthy paper of associating with an Aryan girl filled me with horror. I was a normal teenager. I found girls attractive and I

had my fantasies and indeed my opportunities. However, the effect of *Der Stürmer* was to make me avoid female company altogether.

One Thursday I made my regular trip to Eisenberg. To reach Schwarzschild's butcher shop one had to mount half a dozen steps up to the door. Barring my way were two storm troopers. "Don't you know this is a Jewish shop", they asked. "I'm a Jew myself" I replied. Surprised, they stood aside and let me enter. It amused me to observe that they both looked more Jewish than I did.

Inside, was old Herr Michel. He was usually a jovial character, but now he looked on the verge of breakdown. Tears were running down his face. Although he was old enough to be my grandfather, we were on Christian name terms. "Oh Paul" he said, "we are all lost. That bandit Hitler has supreme power and our lives are in his hands." Inwardly I was inclined to agree with him, but I tried to find words of comfort.

"Look Heinrich" I said, "have you ever seen a tree go on growing until it reaches Heaven. They either collapse under their own weight or someone comes along and cuts them down, I am certain that I shall live to see the end of them." "I wish I had your confidence", he replied.

On the crest of the hill, high above our house and overlooking Altleiningen was a ruined castle. Here, in 1935, a Hitler Youth summer camp was established. They came from all over Germany, about a hundred at a time. They stayed for about a month, and were then replaced by a new group. The road to the castle ran up the hillside, behind and above the roof of our house. There was also a footpath up to the castle and this led right past our front door.

The Hitler Youth had to carry all their water up to the camp in buckets from a supply in the village. They used the footpath which meant a succession of these young louts passing our front door all day. It didn't take them long to learn that this was the house of an old Jew. At first it was sporadic shouts of the "Jews Out" variety. Later came the Jew-baiting songs, which became progressively more virulent and more obscene.

Later in 1936/37 came the stone throwing and window smashing. Then they took to hurling larger stones from the road above our house, which smashed the roof tiles, so that water poured in when it rained. This caused so much damage that the bedroom ceiling had to be heavily strutted with timber to stop it collapsing. My cousin Willi who was a carpenter did this for us with wood which he cut in the forest. At first I was naive enough to ask the police to intervene but this was a waste of time. They would not or could not do anything about it. All summer the Hitler Youth made our life a hell, and we used to look forward to winter for a little comparative peace.

Under the terms of the Versailles Treaty, the Rhineland was demilitarised. Germany was not allowed to garrison soldiers there. Hitler now sent his soldiers back across the Rhine. The French, who might have been expected to react most strongly, effectively did nothing. So many things might have been different if they had called Hitler's bluff at that time.

The Nuremberg Laws stripped the Jews of all civic rights. I found myself barred from all places of entertainment, parks etc. I was classified "an enemy of the State". In common with all Jewish men I was obliged to assume "Israel" as my second forename. Mother and Martha similarly had to adopt as their second name "Sara". In case even this failed to make us instantly identifiable our identity cards carried a large red "J".

My Grandfather's eldest daughter Mina, was married to a Roman Catholic, Jakob Ernst. They lived a few miles away, in Freinsheim, in a tiny two-roomed tenement. One day Jakob received a summons to appear at the Local Council Offices. They asked him how he got on with his wife, and he told them that he had no complaints. Then they told him that it had been brought to their notice that she was neglecting her home and her husband. "You seem to know a lot more about my domestic affairs than I do" said Uncle Jakob.

"So you are not willing to leave her" they said. He confirmed the point. "In that case we shall have no alternative but to take you both into custody." Uncle's reply was brief and to the point. He promised that anybody trying to force a way into his house would get a bullet in the chest. He had a revolver, a Souvenir from the war. They never came after him again. He had called their bluff.

In 1937, I got a job for the Highways Department doing maintenance on a stretch of road leading to Bad Dürkheim. I worked with a middle-aged chap from Tiefenthal, tarring and filling in potholes. Like workmates the world over we would sit and chat together during our meal breaks, so he was familiar with my background. One day he asked me if I thought there were more good people in the world than bad ones. When I said that I did, he replied "I don't understand you. After all that you and your family have had to put up with, you still have faith in human nature." I told him his judgement was based on observing only the people around him, whilst mine was based on mankind worldwide.

By an incredible coincidence, I met this man again in 1946, doing exactly the same Job on exactly the same stretch of road. I was then wearing the uniform of a British soldier. He was delighted to see me, and reminded me of our conversation nine years and a world war previously. He now agreed with me.

When the Nuremberg Laws branded me an enemy of the State, my employment on the roads was terminated. Maybe they thought I might sabotage the road or blow up a bridge. Once again I found myself out of a job.

I said earlier that we had a little peace when the Hitler Youth camp closed down for the winter. On one occasion however, during the winter of 1937/38, the local yobs decided to get in on the act. One night a pane of glass was shattered in one of our windows. We looked on it as an isolated act of malice, nothing more, and covered the hole with a piece of cardboard. Next night the same thing happened, and again on the following night. We had no police to protect us so we had either to protect ourselves or submit.

Next night I took Grandfather's walking stick and put on a hat and an overcoat. I ensured that one of the pair of front doors was securely bolted, but left the other ajar and took up "sentry duty" behind it. I didn't have to wait long before I saw two figures approaching in the dark. These were the culprits, two boys acting big by breaking the Old Jew's window. Before they could do it again I challenged them, brandishing the stick, but they turned and ran. I went back behind the door and waited. Sure enough back they came, and there followed a re-run of their first approach.

I realised that this was a game they could keep up all night at my expense. Our house lay back 20-30 feet from the road. I thought if I crossed the road and hid on the other side I would be between them and their line of escape if they were to come back. Across the road lived Herr Wink. There was a stack of firewood beside his house, and it was behind this that I hid.

After a while I heard them coming again, but to my astonishment there were not two but a large crowd of the young hooligans, at least thirty, and they had at their head a local Hitler Youth leader. They stopped outside our house. Now I was in a dreadful dilemma. I knew that if they saw me I faced at least a beating-up. At the same time I knew that I had left the door unfastened, and that it would not be long before they noticed it. Inside the house Grandfather lay ill in bed and Mother and Martha were defenceless.

I decided bluff was my best hope. I came out, walked direct to the leader and asked him what they were up to. It was very dark and I had just emerged from somebody else's garden. He clearly didn't recognise me and replied. "Tonight we're going to show the old Jew who is master in this place."

I said, "I happen to be the old Jew's grandson" and with that I moved as quickly as possible through the crowd towards the door where I paused to shout "If your Führer thinks he's going to win a war with you lot it's a black outlook for him." A shout went up and they rushed forward but I was inside and the bolts were closed. They stayed a while banging on the door and screaming obscenities. Perhaps then they felt a little foolish for they went away, and we had no further trouble from them for a good while.

I found a temporary Job in the nearby forest. I was planting trees, a job usually carried out by women. There was I, a seventeen year old virgin among a bunch of very bawdy women. My face was usually red. One day Frau Wick, a large lady, came to work with a round hole in the front of her apron in an appropriate position. Another woman, Fräulein Müller asked where the hole came from. "You're never going to believe this," said Frau Wick, "but my old man can be very tempestuous in pursuit of his favourite pastime. I didn't have time to take the apron off, hence the hole." All the ladies screamed with laughter, and I blushed.

Come early spring 1938 and I was again looking for a job. Eventually Herr Eckhaus, a Jewish friend in Grünstadt used his good offices to get me fixed up in a furniture factory owned by a Jew, Herr Seelenberger. He didn't want to take me on but I imagine Herr Eckhaus employed a measure of Jewish arm twisting to persuade him. He gave me a job as a primary stainer and polisher. He was not to know that the young man he was so reluctantly engaging would later be in a position to render him a service, perhaps save his life. There is a time for sowing and a time for reaping, and what a man sows, that in turn he will reap.

Grünstadt was about eight miles from Altleiningen. Getting there was no problem, for with some of my earnings whilst working on the roads I had managed to buy myself a bike. I had some difficulty getting the hang of the Job, how to handle the staining brushes and how to mix the different kinds of polish. It was not uncommon for Herr Seelenberger's arrogant son Gustav to clip me round the ear for some small flaw in my work, but I gritted my teeth and stuck it out. I enjoyed a good relationship with my workmates, Jews and non-Jews alike. Grünstadt was a busy town dominated by a works producing earthenware and glazed tiles, and the furniture factory where I was working. Outside the Station there was a billboard displaying the Nazi daily newspaper. I would read the news there then go home and convey it to Grandfather, who was now confined to bed. There was a sufficiently large Jewish community for the town to have a synagogue. There was even a Jewish School, with a teacher Herr Lion. I started to take weekly lessons from him with a view to joining the faith. My reasoning was that since I was treated as a Jew I might as well actually become one.

It was about this time that the wall in our garden collapsed, right on the spot where I had been standing a few minutes earlier. A small difference in timing and I would surely have been buried alive. Not for the first, nor for the last time, I thought I must have a guardian angel.

I used to dream a great deal. They were usually terrible nightmares in which I was trying to defend myself against the Nazis. Mother would tell me in the morning that I had been walking in my sleep, looking for a stick. One dream I remember vividly. I was looking out of our window and saw the sky filled with aircraft. I was struck by the smooth curved lines of these planes, with no sharp corners. When, later in England, I saw a spitfire for the first time, I recognised it as the plane in my dream. Next morning I told Grandfather and Mother about the dream. They both said that it was a clear sign that another war was not far away.

Summer turned into autumn and Grandfather's condition visibly deteriorated. The poor man was in great pain and there was little one could do to help. One day Herr Seelenberger enquired about his condition. I told him that he was very poorly, and that a bottle of wine might do him good, Herr Seelenberger walked away as if he hadn't heard me. As events worked out it would have cost him nothing to pass on a bottle of wine. He wasn't to be allowed to enjoy much more of the contents of his cellar.

REICHSKRISTALLNACHT

In the autumn of 1938, the assassination in Trance of Von Rath, a German diplomat, by a young Jew, Herschel Grynszpan, sparked off an orgy of violence and destruction against Jews and Jewish property. On 9th November the carpet of broken glass outside Jewish houses and shops throughout Germany gave that date the name by which it is still known, Kristallnacht. Göbbels propaganda machine openly incited violence. The theme was: "German people cannot be expected to tolerate such dastardly international terrorism by a gang of Jewish villains. Nobody should be surprised if there are some excesses when the German people feel compelled to give vent to their natural anger." It was a blatant invitation to every hoodlum to create mayhem.

Furthermore it was designed to promote the fiction that Jews needed to be locked up for their own safety. The "Schutzhaft Jude," the protective custody Jew, had arrived.

I went to work that morning in the usual way. From the position where I worked in the factory I could see the main road, and also the boss's luxury house next door. Sometime during the morning, one of my workmates drew my attention to a commotion outside. There was a motley crowd of 20-30 civilians led by half a dozen uniformed storm troopers. They went past the factory and up to Seelenberger's house. Half an hour later they came back, with Herr Seelenberger, his wife and their son Gustav in front of them.

We learned later in the day that the mob had rampaged through the house smashing everything in sight. Every bottle of wine had been smashed against the walls of the cellar.

The entire workforce was summoned downstairs to a meeting in the Assembly Shop. Herr Weil, the chief polisher, stayed where he was and signalled me to do the same. He was Jewish, and severely handicapped, being a cripple and virtually deaf and dumb. He indicated by signs that if we went downstairs we might well get beaten up.

After about half an hour my workmates returned. The meeting had been called to inform the workforce that the factory was now in new hands, and that they should carry on working as usual.

When lunchtime came I had a quick snack, then got on my bike to see what was happening in the town. I went in the direction of the Synagogue, and was shocked and horrified by what I saw. A mob was busy wrecking the building and its contents. I saw them throwing the sacred Torah scrolls through the Windows.

I returned to the factory. At five o'clock I distributed my tools among my workmates, and said goodbye to them. They refused to take me seriously, and said that nothing untoward would happen to me because I was not a Jew. "Don't bet on it" I told them.

I had visions of being waylaid on my way home up the narrow Leiningen valley, and I put my bicycle pump in my pocket so that I might use it to defend myself. Surprisingly the road and the village were deserted. It was as if the Population was shutting itself off from what was happening, by retiring behind closed doors and shutters.

I found Mother and Martha in an extremely nervous state, and Grandfather very ill in bed. I decided it would be best to prepare them for the worst, and told them that I thought somebody might come for me that evening. After I had eaten I started to write a letter to my cousin Willi Thron, who was then in hospital badly injured in a fall on a building site, but the letter was never completed.

There was a knock on the door, I looked down from the living room window and could see two uniformed policemen. They asked, very politely if I would let them in. What else could I do? I went downstairs and opened the door for them. They came up and into the bedroom where Grandfather lay in bed. They sat down near the bed, asked him how he was feeling and generally

engaged in small talk. This went on for about half an hour, and I ran out of patience, I asked them what they wanted since they had clearly not walked all the way from Wattenheim police Station to talk about the weather.

Then, almost reluctantly it seemed, they came to the point. One of them mumbled an apology to Grandfather saying "We are very sorry but your grandson Paul has to come along with us. I proposed changing into my best clothes, but they told me "That won't be necessary. You'll be back home in a day or two. It's only an investigation."

I said goodbye to Grandfather. He was weeping like a child. Mother and Martha were also crying as I took my leave of them. Then I left the house in the Company of the two policemen.

We walked up the lane towards the castle ruins, and I indulged in a little sarcasm. I said "They must consider me a really dangerous criminal to have sent two hefty policemen like you to pick me up. I hope you've got the handcuffs ready." They said they didn't think that would be necessary. "You never know" I told them.

We crossed the valley and climbed the hill on the further side to Wattenheim., and here they shut me up for the night in the local lockup. This was a small building in the school playground, the sort of place where the local drunk might be put to cool off on a Saturday night. It may have been customary to put such lock-ups in school playgrounds, for there was a similar one at our school in Altleiningen.

It was a room about seven feet square with a single window secured with a metal grill. There was a rough bunk and a straw mattress, and nothing else whatsoever. Next morning I was woken by the voices of children. Their faces were pressed to the window and their voices were calling to other children to come and have a look at the Jew.

Towards midday the two policemen came back and took me to the police Station. I was taken into a room with a dining table and invited to sit down. The lady of the house brought me a delicious meal. An awful thought crossed my mind "Henkersmahlzeit" - the hangman's meal, but that didn't stop me tucking in and enjoying it. The policemen then took me in their equivalent of a Black Maria to the district jailhouse at Grünstadt.

It was a sizeable building. I was led along a corridor where I nearly bumped into my Jewish religious teacher, Herr Lion. In passing he whispered "Tonight we are meeting here," reminding me ever so gently that on this evening he would have been giving me my religious instruction. Further down the corridor I spotted my boss, Herr Seelenberger, talking in a very agitated manner to one of the warders. He must have been going on about his factory, for I heard the warder tell him, very rudely, that he could stop worrying about his factory as it was already in new hands. "Aryanised" was the Nazi expression for it. Others might call it robbery with violence.

I cannot remember what transport was used to take us from Grünstadt to Ludwigshafen. Certainly it would not have been anything luxurious. What I do remember vividly is a very large hall, possibly a large dance hall, to which we were taken. It was packed to bursting point with a mass of frightened, anxious, bewildered Jewish men. To look for anybody particular in that packed hall would have been like seeking the needle in the proverbial haystack.

I did in fact spot Herr Schwarzschild, the butcher from Eisenberg. He was in a very emotional state, and asked me if I knew where we were going. When I shook my head his eyes filled with tears and he said "They are taking us to Dachau Concentration Camp." It embarrassed me to see a tall strong man in tears. I tried to comfort him by saying so like "Things are never as bad as they seem."

Suddenly an order rang out for us to get out of the hall and line up in the middle of the road. In the scramble to get out I lost sight of Herr Schwarzschild and once again found myself along

among strangers. I remember thinking "This is my destiny. These people are my people and my fate is irretrievably bound up with theirs."

It took them a little while to get us all lined up. I looked down the road and could see that the route we were to take was on both sides lined with armed S.S. guards at about ten yard intervals. It was about midnight. The order came to move off and the sad column made its way towards Ludwigshafen Station. As we drew near it we saw a flood-lit raised platform on which was a brass band. It was in keeping with the Nazi sadistic sense of humour that we should be seen off with a selection of all the familiar Jew baiting songs.

We were entrained in single-compartment carriages with narrow wooden seats. The train moved off. There were no stops. As long as we remained passive the S.S. guards did not interfere with us. We travelled through the night and stopped next morning in a marshalling yard which somebody familiar with the area identified as being just outside Munich. Then the shouts rang out "Raus, raus, schnell, schnell." Out, out at the double.

How we got our first real taste of what they were capable of. As we alighted we could see the S.S. guards, armed with rifles behaving like beasts gone mad. Any poor soul who was not quick enough and agile enough in picking his way through the maze of railway lines to the line of cattle trucks waiting on the further side of the marshalling yard, stood a good Chance of getting a rifle butt rammed in his back.

My youth and agility saved me, but oh, there were men there, fifty and even sixty years old for whom I felt pity. Many, like Herr Seelenberger, were accustomed to a rich, comfortable life. Once we were inside the cattle trucks the doors were slammed and bolted and locked on the outside. Then this pathetic human cargo was on the move again, but only for half an hour or so. The train stopped and the doors slid back. Once again the horrible "Raus, raus, schnell, schnell." We had arrived at Dachau. I had become a protective custody Jew.

THE PROTECTIVE CUSTODY JEW

I was recently asked what were my first impressions of Dachau, Frankly I think I had been so traumatised by the events of the preceding 8 hours that I formed no clear Impression at all. I recall it now as very frightening and deeply depressing. The buildings were painted a sombre grey. Around the camp was an eight foot high, electrified double barbed wire fence, and around that a water-filled moat. At intervals there were guard towers, each manned by four S.S. men armed with machine guns. An extensive Tannoy system crackled loudly with harsh voices barking Orders. In front of us was the entrance gate, crowned with its infamous slogan ARBEIT MACHT FREI, work makes you free.

We were ordered forward through the gate, then to turn left up a concrete path, and there halted. An S.S. officer addressed us.

"You have now arrived in Dachau K.Z. Discipline here is strict, as you'll very soon find out for yourselves. The duration of your stay here is indefinite so you may as well try to make the best of it. You will in due course get an opportunity to notify your family with a post card which will tell them that you are well. You will only be required to sign it. You will be issued with a uniform. On the left breast of your jacket will be a number and on the right breast a red and a yellow triangle sewn together to make a Star of David. You may have noticed that the wire fence around this establishment carries a lethal current of electricity. If you should take it into your hands to end your miserable lives on that wire, let me assure you, you would need to be very fast and nimble. Let me draw your attention to those towers, and the guards you can see in them, armed with machine guns. Nothing would give them more pleasure than to take a potshot at any one of you who even steps on to the grass where I am now standing. You are at all times confined to the

roads and paths. You will be issued with a hat. This will have to be smartly removed any time you speak to me or any of my colleagues."

He turned and walked away, leaving us standing to attention, and there we were for the rest of the day. Later we could see a batch of new arrivals lined up near the entrance gate beside the building where the Camp Commandant had his office. These were Austrian Jews and were already in a pitiful state on arrival. Some were so distraught that they had already lost the will to live. Soon after arrival they chose to walk towards the wire. We heard the rattle of machine gun fire and knew that someone had chosen his own way of escape. In Nazi-speak he had died of heart failure.

In the evening we were escorted to our so called sleeping quarters. It was a room about 10 yards square. The number of occupants, this is Gospel truth, was 200 men. That meant two men per square yard. It afforded just sufficient space for one person to squat between the legs of the person immediately behind him. Although all the Windows were wide open it was difficult for those unfortunate enough to be in the centre to get enough air to breathe. Anybody moaning, or in any way drawing attention to himself was dragged out into the vestibule and beaten. It was heart breaking to hear them screaming. I kept telling myself that if I could survive this for three weeks I would be a tougher and stronger man at the end of it.

This obscene routine lasted three days. For those three days we were non-persons, not even officially recognised as prisoners. On the second afternoon it was surprisingly sunny and warm for November. We had been left outside standing to attention again, and since we had had nothing to eat or drink for two days, we were parched. An S.S. man came round with a bucket of cold water. Never did water taste so good. I would not have thought it possible that I would mentally have blessed a man in S.S. uniform.

A short while later another S.S. man arrived, behaving true to type. He worked himself up into a rage shouting and swearing at us. Finally he shouted at the top of his voice, "Well you miserable assembly of humanity, where is your God now? Why doesn't he come and get you out of this Hell?". Some of the more devout among us started to intone "Schema J'Israel," -"Hear oh Israel. The Lord thy God is the only one. Thou shalt love Him with all thy soul and all thy being." It was a very moving moment, and I felt the presence of God.

I was now desperately hungry, but my luck was in. Beside me was a middle-aged chap who had had the foresight to cram his pockets with Sandwiches before he was arrested. He still had some left and shared them with me.

Some time on the third day we were taken to the shower room and ordered to strip and hand over our civilian clothes. We took a hot shower and were then sprayed with ice-cold water from what appeared to be a fire-hose.

After that we got our uniforms. The uniforms for Jews were different from those of the other inmates who wore a woolly textured material with black and dark green stripes. Ours was a much thinner material, rather like pyjamas with blue and white stripes. All that we were permitted to wear under this was a very thin vest.

Then came the haircut. The Camp barber was a very chatty fellow, a political prisoner. We were shocked when he told us that he had been in there since the camp opened in 1933. First the clippers were taken all over the head, and then the remaining stubble was soaped up and removed with a cut-throat razor.

Now we got our permanent sleeping quarters, a room of the same size as that in which we had squatted for the past two nights but now accommodating only 50 rather than two hundred men. Each block consisted of four such rooms together with ablutions and communal toilets. I was in Room U of Block 18, immediately below one of the guard towers. There was a tiled range to heat

the room. Sleeping was a two-tiered arrangement, the floor and a sort of shelf above it. There were rough straw mattresses and one blanket was provided to be shared by two prisoners.

Finally we got our first meal. All 200 occupants of Block 18 were lined up outside on the road. Two S.S. men appeared. One carried a Container in which were slices of dry black stuff, which they called bread. The other had a Container of black liquid brewed from some sort of home-grown coffee substitute. We each got a slice of "bread" and a mug of "coffee".

At the end of this feast one of the two guards popped the catch-question, "Is anybody still hungry". An elderly chap at the far end of the line was foolish enough to step forward. I shall never forget the beating that they gave him. One of them then addressed us all. "Understand this" he said, "Once and for all. You have no right to demand anything, no entitlement of any sort whatsoever." So ended our third day in Dachau.

The camp already had a population prior to our arrival, There were basically three categories, politicals, homosexuals and "work-shys". The largest group of these were the political prisoners, which in the main meant Communists.

The Nazis delegated some measure of authority to certain of these, using them in the administration of the camp. They were empowered to punish their fellow prisoners for any infringement of the rules, a power they used freely. Each block had a block leader and block clerk, and each room had a room leader. In the camp outside, the "administrators" were called KAPOs.

Our block leader was a Bavarian called Himsl or Himsel. He had a name for us Jews, "Goaskop" - Goatshead. The block clerk's name was Neugebauer, rather more polite than the others, indeed sometimes almost jovial. Our room leader was known by his first name, Joseph or Sepp.

When we were allocated to our rooms, the various contingents were mixed up. Apart from me only one other man in the room came from the Rhineland. Most of them were Austrians, with a few Czechs. I learned why the contingent from Austria had arrived in such a bad state. They were first accorded degrading and humiliating treatment on the streets of Vienna. Then they were subjected to individual ill-treatment on the journey. For instance two were obliged to sit opposite each other, each slapping the other's face. Another was forced to sit staring into an electric light bulb for hours. I became friends with a young Austrian of my own age, [Fritz Fränkel](#) from Vienna. We tried between us to keep an eye on some of the older ones who seemed to have lost all self control and self respect.

On our first day in our new living quarters, we had raw salted herrings for our evening meal. I was so ravenously hungry that I can remember eating them without first cleaning them, just like an animal.

A chart was fixed in each room showing the symbols on their uniforms which indicated the various ranks of the S.S. officers. We were required to learn these by heart and heaven help anybody who got it wrong. To address an officer one was required to stand to attention, smartly remove one's hat, and say "Protective Custody Jew number so and so wishes to speak to Herr Abteilungs (or Sturmabteilungsleiter or whatever his rank was) on the following matter."

The daily routine was for us to assemble morning and evening on the square, to be counted by an S.S. guard. In addition one or two S.S. men would inspect our quarters each morning and there was trouble for anybody whose bed or locker was not as tidy as it was ordered to be. Fritz and I had our work cut out to keep some of the older men out of trouble on these inspections.

Apart from these formal routines, we were left under the supervision of Sepp & Co. We were allowed to go outside the block, but only into the space between it and the next block.

The food gradually improved. Three times each day a few men from each block were detailed to go to the kitchen and fetch the food in large sealed Containers. Inside the kitchen one could see a long row of what looked like huge pressure cookers. I became quite partial to their green pea soup.

When we went down to the Assembly Square we had to pass the punishment block. I can think of nothing in the world more depressing than that dreadful place. It was sealed off behind gates and fences topped with seemingly endless coils of barbed wire. We could see the prisoners undergoing punishment. They were forced to walk backwards and forwards between two points carrying a rock on their shoulders. They no longer looked like human beings. It was not uncommon for us, going early morning to the parade ground, to see some poor devil's body hanging from the top rail of the entrance gate.

Sometimes our tormentors would carry out a spot check to see if anyone was wearing anything other than the permitted vest under their uniform to keep out the bitter cold. One day we were down on the parade ground waiting for the S.S. guard to arrive. An elderly man in front of me started to panic. He had somehow got hold of a pullover and was wearing it. I told him quickly to duck down, take it off and pass it to me.

With it tucked inside my jacket I started to walk back to Room 4. Unfortunately another old chap in the back row thought I was skiving at everyone else's expense and started to make a fuss. I couldn't possibly dither or get into an argument. Much as it went against the grain I slapped him hard across the face and walked past. I got rid of the pullover and was just back on the parade ground in time for the arrival of the S.S. guard.

Later the man I had slapped approached me. He had been told the truth of the matter. He apologised and told me I had been correct in slapping him.

There was a main thoroughfare running through the camp where visitors like high-ranking S.S. Officers, even Himmler himself, and foreign visitors came to inspect the camp. To give these foreign visitors the Impression that Dachau was a happy place, we had to learn cheerful marching songs. When they were present we would be marched up the main thoroughfare singing our heads off. The last verse of one of the songs went:

Soon the time will come for us

Holdra Hio Holdra Hio Ho

To be freed from protective custody

Then we shall happily make our way home

Whether it's snowing, or the roses are in bloom

It was permitted for money to be sent into Dachau, though the prisoner would not necessarily receive it all. There was a canteen where sweets and cakes could be bought, all at prices double those outside the camp. Although I could not, for obvious reasons expect to receive money from home, I was not penniless, because I received tips from some of the wealthier Jews for whom I could perform some service.

The only other Rhinelander in room h was a middle-aged lawyer, Herr Blum, from Frankenthal. He was a gentleman in the very best sense of the word. Herr Seelenberger and his son Gustav were in room 3. Herr Schwarzschild was accommodated somewhere else and I saw very little of him.

In one of his few sociable moments, our room leader Sepp gave us an account of how he came to be a long term prisoner in Dachau. He had been one of Hitler's earliest followers in Munich, and

expected to rise high in the movement, but a jealous neighbour had denounced him as an enemy of the Party and he had finished up a prisoner. Well, that was his story.

One morning in room 4, an incident occurred which illustrates the sheer sadistic, bloody-mindedness of the S.S. The door burst open as though blown in by a hurricane. An S.S. man whom we had never seen before nor ever saw again stormed in. There was no time for anyone to jump to attention. He went through the room with both fists swinging at the faces of its occupants. Then, without saying anything, he stalked out. I had been performing some chore at the far end of the room and he gave me a miss. I had the dubious distinction of being the only one in the room not to have his face punched.

One of our number was Blumenthal, a Viennese comedian. He was nearly as broad as he was tall with an outsize head and huge ducks feet. He looked what he was, a comic. We were outside the block one day when the guards in the tower ordered him to come across. "Go on Jew" they ordered, "make us laugh."¹

Blumenthal was a pro. He drew their attention to all the defences of Dachau, to the moat and the barbed wire, to the electric current and to themselves and their machine guns. "But" he boasted, drawing himself up, "in spite of all that I still managed to get in here."

They roared with laughter, "Alright Jew" they shouted, "now let us see you try to get out."

I got on well with my fellow prisoners. One day Herr Blum called me over to his locker. He opened it and showed me its contents, bread, cake and chocolate. "These things are mine" he said, "but they are also yours. You can help yourself to anything you require." On other occasions our "Supervisors" Sepp, Himsel and Neugebauer shared their meagre rations with Fritz and me. They told us that we would soon get out of Dachau, and that we should then get right out of Germany, and tell the world what was happening. In that they saw their only hope of ever themselves being released.

I had noticed that Herr Seelenberger had become very uncommunicative and that a lot of sores began to appear on his face and body. I thought the bitterly cold weather might be responsible, for there were plenty of people whose bodies were plastered with frostbite. It cannot have been easy for his son Gustav to humble himself by coming to ask for my help.

I mentioned earlier that the "politicals" who were given authority over us also had power to hand out punishment. They could be as bloody-minded in this respect as any Nazi. The same "Supervisors" who shared rations with Fritz and me were systematically beating Seelenberger, venting on him all their pent-up feelings of resentment and hatred.

The foolish man had been boasting about his success, his factory, his wealth, his importance. To these Communists he was a bloated capitalist, the representative of everything they considered evil, the enemy, and he was at their mercy.

Gustav said that I appeared to be on good terms with these fellows, and asked me to intercede with them before they killed his father. I told him that I was only a prisoner like him, and didn't think I could have any influence, but that I would try. I told Fritz about it, and he didn't think much of the idea.

Still, I did approach them. I told them that I worked for Herr Seelenberger, and that he was an exemplary boss who treated all his workers with kindness and generosity. I have no way of knowing how much they were influenced by this, but it is a fact that the persecution stopped.

More brutal and callous than Sepp and Co. were the KAPOs who policed the open spaces of the camp. They wore ordinary prisoner uniform, but were distinguished by white arm-bands on which were printed in black the letters K.A.P.O. We had a taste of them early in January 1939

when there was a heavy snowfall. The Jewish prisoners were detailed, under KAPO supervision, to clear the snow.

Some were issued with large shovels, the others with heavy, unwieldy wooden wheelbarrows. The snow had to be collected and dumped in the moat. The KAPOs shouted their Orders, "Come on, at the double." They meant exactly that, everything had to be done at running pace. The men with the wheelbarrows were expected to run with them to and from the moat. Imagine if you can the plight of an elderly unfit man trying to do this.

Fritz and I persuaded Sepp to let us stay in the room and get it shipshape for inspection. Instead, we gave it a quick once-over then positioned ourselves near the door where we were able to help several of those in a state of near collapse. As one of these unfortunates staggered past, one of us would push him out of the way, grab his wheelbarrow, and take his place. We would have to make one or perhaps two round trips with it before finding a blind spot out of sight of the KAPOs. There we dumped the barrow anywhere convenient and sneaked back to our room for another try.

There was a first-aid centre tucked away in a corner of the camp. It was considered by the prisoners that anyone who reported there capable of entering on his own two feet would come out, very rapidly, in a worse state than he went in. Consequently all who could, stayed away from it, and even those in real need of treatment preferred, if not to grin then at least to bear it.

One such was Herr Sandeck., a man from Vienna who was suffering severe frostbite. None of us would have put a penny on his survival. Many years later I met him by Chance in England. He was now Mr. Saunders, and a Civil Servant.

The most vivid of my memories of Dachau was the escape. I cannot remember the date. I can remember the weather - it was cold and wet. About 11 o'clock in the morning a siren sounded, I had never heard a siren before and found the sound of it very eerie. A prisoner had escaped and everyone in the camp was to be punished for it, yes everyone, including the S.S. guards. The only ones excused were those actually on guard duty.

We were assembled on the parade ground, S.S. guards, KAPOs, politicals, protective custody Jews, the lot. We were called to attention and then left standing there to attention for 24 hours, until 11 o'clock next morning. It was a bitterly cold, wet night and with no protection but their flimsy uniforms men began to collapse. A number of them died on the parade ground that night. It was heartrending to see a man collapse near you and be unable to lift a finger to help or comfort him.

When the 24 hours were up, we were allowed to go back to our rooms and resume the usual routine. That was not the end of it. A week or so later we were all again summoned to the square in the middle of the day. This time it was to witness the return of the luckless fugitive. I hope never to witness anything comparable with it again.

After a little while we heard a monotonous drum beat from far off. It took perhaps half an hour before the procession finally entered the camp compound. The poor man had a large drum strapped to his shoulders, and it was he who was beating it. Two guards walked either side of him, two in front and two more behind him. They were all armed and carried coshes.

He had to cover the whole circumference of the camp beating the drum but that was only the start of the poor devil's ordeal. When he came back level with the parade square, facing his enforced audience, they strapped him to a leather-covered trestle. Two hefty S.S. men stood behind him, wielding oxtails, yes oxtails! Alternately each of them struck him fourteen times using all their force. It was agony to watch, God knows what it was like for the poor man himself.

From there he was dragged to the "cooler", a concrete dungeon about 4 foot x 4 foot. We never saw him again.

We later heard on the grapevine how he had managed to escape. He was what they called a "trusty". His Job was to clean and generally maintain the cars of the S.S. men. To do this he was allowed to go outside the boundary fence, and even permitted to wear overalls. The temptation was too great. He was within sight of the Swiss border when they picked him up.

In late January 1939, our jailers must have come to the conclusion that we no longer needed to be protected from the wrath of the German public. A slow, gradual release of prisoners began.

Among the earliest to go were the Seelenbergers. Before he went, Herr Seelenberger sought me out, and told me I had saved his life. He expressed "deep-felt gratitude" and promised that when he got back to Grünstadt he would send my wages to Mother as if I were still in his employ. This greatly heartened me because I knew what a help this would be to her.

Shortly afterwards it was Herr Blum's turn to go. He asked me for my home address and told me that he would write to Mother and let her know how I was. I asked him to do me a further favour, to which he readily agreed. From my tips I had accumulated 15 deutschmarks, a useful sum in those days. I gave it to him to send on to her. I had utter confidence that this man would see that the money reached Mother, even if it was confiscated when he was leaving the camp.

As the numbers fell, our conditions improved. We had more space and were actually supplied with three-tier beds. One could feel a relaxation of tension. Freedom was in the air and our spirits rose. In January, I received the sad news from home that Grandfather had died. Later Mother told me that after I was taken away he would ask each morning "Isn't the boy home yet" then weep when told not. His condition deteriorated to such a degree that our Minister, Herr Kranzbuhler, arranged for him to be taken to a Jewish care unit in Mannheim. He died two days later and is buried in Mannheim Jewish Cemetery.

I was looking forward to being home for my 19th birthday on 18th February 1939, but the days came and went and my name was not called. The 18th came, and I was still in Dachau. That afternoon one of my companions told me that we had to be at an assembly later in room 3. When the time came, we trooped along to room 3 and I got the shock of my life. My fellow prisoners were giving me a birthday party.

I think they must have spent every penny they had in the canteen, and it was all laid out there. They had created a sort of stage. Not only Herr Blumenthal but other entertainers from Vienna, Berlin etc. put on a performance. I was absolutely speechless. It was without question one of the most memorable occasions of my life.

It is a measure of the improving state of our spirits that I was moved a few nights later to play a practical joke on the others in my room, by "remaking" their beds. At bedtime it was pandemonium but it was all taken in a very good spirit.

Next morning, 23rd February we had finished our chores and were anxiously awaiting the arrival of the block clerk, with his list of names for release. When I heard him call "Paul Rosenzweig" I literally jumped high in the air.

They required us to sign a document undertaking not to divulge to anybody outside what went on in Dachau. We were warned that if for any reason we were brought back there again, it would be "curtains" for us.

After we had put on our own clothes, we were loaded on to cattle trucks again and returned to the marshalling yard outside Munich. There was a delay there. I understand that the Nazis were negotiating with the Munich Jewish Community to pay our fares to Mannheim. Eventually we were in the train, apparently in some reserved compartments. There were no guards. We were free.

3 ½ months in Dachau allowed me to observe human "behaviour after the thin veneer of civilisation has been stripped off. It is not pretty. I do believe however, that I came out of there a stranger man than when I went in.

ESCAPE FROM GERMANY

The train took us through the night to Mannheim. Among my companions there were two named Reölen, distant relatives of the Rosenzweigs, from Rockhausen. This would be 30-40 miles from Mannheim and they had no cash for the fare so I helped them out from the little money that I had. This left me unable to go all the way by train, but I was within walking distance of Freinsheim, where Aunt Mina lived.

I was young, the sun was shining and I was walking through the pleasant countryside of the Rhine plain with its lovely and, to me, familiar villages. After two or three hours walking, I spotted Freinsheim, lying in a depression among gentle, vineyard-covered hills. It is a very old town, still with its defensive walls and ramparts.

Aunt Mina, Uncle Jakob and dear cousin Willi made a great fuss of me when I arrived, and I stayed there overnight. Next day, Willi came to the Station with me and saw me on to the train to Grünstadt, from where I caught the local train up the valley to Altleiningen.

Our house was empty when I got there, but I found a way of getting in. After a while I heard a key in the lock and hid behind a chest of drawers to give Mother and Martha a surprise. It was a joyous moment for us all.

Mother showed me a letter which she had received from Herr Blum. He had written some very nice things about me. He enclosed with it, not the 15 DM that I handed him, but 30 DM.

I asked her if she had received anything from Herr Seelenberger. She had heard nothing from him and indeed had passed him one day in the street in Grünstadt, when he turned his head away and walked on.

According to Mother, I had been released because she, on someone else's advice, advised the authorities that I had all my papers ready to emigrate from Germany. I asked her if she knew something that I didn't know, and she confessed that she had invented this in order to get me home. I wondered how long it would be before somebody wanted to know why I was still here.

The following week I was asked to visit Pastor Kranzbuhler, our Minister, at his house. He asked me into his study and as we sat down he said "I'm pleased to see you home again, safe and apparently sound, but why didn't I see you in Church on Sunday morning?" I told him that with my shaven head I felt self-conscious and afraid that someone in the congregation might object to me in their midst. "Come next Sunday" he said "and if anybody should raise so much as a whisper against you I will deal with them." This is the same minister whose brother tried to stop the village shop-keepers from serving us.

Then he asked me to tell him what had happened in Dachau. I hesitated, then asked him for a solemn promise that anything I told him would go no further. He gave me that promise and I told him all about it. While I was talking, one of the most rabid of the local Nazis, Herr Lackner, went past the window. Kranzbuhler said to me, "Fifty like him are not worth one of you."

The following Sunday, I went to Church. There was no hostility from anyone in the congregation. However, none of them spoke to me, nor I to them.

On Friday morning a postcard arrived, with a summons I dreaded. "Paul Israel Rosenzweig is required to appear at 9 a.m. on Tuesday at the Headquarters of the Geheime Staatspolizei (GESTAPO) at Neustadt. This I felt was the crunch, and I badly needed advice. It is my good fortune that I turned to my cousin Willi for that advice.

His assessment of my problem started from the premise that the Nazis still regarded me as an enemy of the State and would never trust me. That meant either they had to get rid of me or put me somewhere where they could keep an eye on me (Oh God, not back in Dachau I thought) "The Army" said Willi. "Whatever you do, if they ask you to join the Army, don't refuse. That would leave them free to do as they like with you. What you have to do is play for time, even show some enthusiasm for the idea."

The idea of fighting for Hitler didn't appeal to me at all, and I said so. Willi was patient and explained what he had in mind. "Play them at their own game and pray that they swallow it" he said. All over Germany at that time people were diligently researching their family trees to establish their pure Aryan origins. "Tell them that before you become a soldier you would like to do the same" Willi advised.

I left him feeling more hopeful. On Tuesday morning Mother and Martha wished me luck, and I left early in order to get to Neustadt by 9 o'clock. I was admitted to a small Office where a middle aged man in civilian clothes was already seated at a desk. He was not at all what I had expected a Gestapo man to look like, quite human in fact. He told me to sit down and asked me my age. He looked me up and down, then said, "You are a strong young fellow. The Concentration Camp doesn't seem to have done you any harm. How did you like it in there?" I told him I was not allowed to discuss it. "That's your luck", he replied.

After that the interview followed amazingly closely the scenario that Willi had proposed. The Gestapo man's last words to me were "You run along and find your family tree, and when you've got it all together, report back here."

I never did find my family tree, though I'm still on the lookout for it. If anyone finds it please let me know. I'll sell it for firewood.

I found myself a pick and shovel Job on the nearby motorway. We were digging a long deep trench to allow water to drain away from under the motorway. I was happy to find myself working alongside some of my old workmates from the days of the threshing machine. The only fly in the ointment was that we were supervised by a young local SS man. One day we were sitting in a wooden hut having our lunch, without a Nazi anywhere in sight. One of the old men ventured a prophesy, "One of these days", he said, "our great Führer is going to take it upon himself to march into Russia. If he does I'll bet Joe Stalin will show him the way home." One of the other men cautioned him for speaking like that in front of me, who might report him. "Don't worry about Paul" he replied, "he is one of us."

Suddenly, out of the blue, we found we had another great worry. Our house had been sold over our heads. We had been Aryanised and the new owner wanted us out. It had been sold to a Herr Frank. Every week without fail, his wife would come to our door, holding her little boy's hand, asking when we were going to clear out. One time I lost my cool and shouted at her "Soon I hope. Not just out of here, but out of this country too." The little boy who held his mother's hand, Otwin Frank, is now Mayor of Altleiningen.

Our only hope lay in getting out of Germany, and I needed help. I started my search for that help by going to the Jewish Coram unity Centre in Ludwigshafen. A rather stand-offish young official there refused to help me in any way. I was told "We can't help you, you're not a Jew"

I went home feeling very dejected. I felt certain that war was fast approaching, and the ground seemed to blaze under my feet. I thought of a saying of Grandfathers, "When the need is greatest, God is nearest." In utter despair I told Mother I was going back to Ludwigshafen, and that I would not allow myself to be fobbed off. The same young man was there whom I had seen before, together with a young lady. He greeted me with the words, "You know we can't do anything for you, you're not a Jew." I replied that he could do something for me. He could put up a bed for me since I was not prepared to leave until I had got help.

It occurred to me later that they would have had to be very careful in dealing with somebody coming to their door as I had done. It would have been a very convenient way for the Nazis to have established agents abroad by sending them out via a Jewish Organisation as refugees.

Anyway, when I dug my heels in, their mood changed. I was given three names and addresses. Two were in Berlin and the third was Hermann Maas in Heidelberg. I went home with my spirits lightened. I immediately sat down and wrote letters to the two Berlin addresses, and I told Mother, "Tomorrow I shall go to Heidelberg to find this Pastor Maas."

I went to his house to meet him for the first time. He had a sad face. His manner was straightforward and I felt that here was a man I could trust. We went into his study, and once seated he came straight to the point. "What can I do for you?" he asked. Without reservation I poured out our story to him. When I finished he looked me straight in the eye. The simple words that he spoke then are etched in my memory. "Your worries are over. Your case and your sister's are now in my hands. I shall try to get you out of here as quickly as possible." It was a wonderful moment. I felt as if the weight of the world had been lifted from my shoulders.

He explained that the most likely place where we would find refuge was England, but even there were problems.

Also that he was flying to London each month to meet representatives of the Society of Friends (the Quakers) to create a "way-out" for people like us. Cautiously I asked him if he could do anything for our Mother. He said with regret that their first priority was young people and children. Finally he asked me about our financial position. I told him that because of the various meetings and Interviews, I had lost a lot of time off work and that we were pretty short. He put 15 DM on the table for me to pick up, and told me if we needed further assistance in the interval while waiting to leave Germany, just to send him a postcard and tell him the amount we needed.

As I left, he told me he would contact my by post as soon as he had any Information. I expressed my heartfelt appreciation and left with the deep impression that I had encountered an angel disguised as a human being.

I went back to work with hope in my heart and a firm resolution not to say or do anything that could put us at risk, but to toe the line in all respects. When people cheered Hitler's Speeches, I cheered. When they sung his praises, I agreed with them. I kept my thoughts to myself.

Things began to progress and Mother frequently had to come to my place of work after the morning post had arrived to fetch me to go to Consular Offices and similar places to collect documents necessary for our emigration. It began to look as if I would be going before Martha, which I thought was dangerous. I went to see Pastor Maas again. He agreed with me and said he would try to ensure this did not happen.

I told Mother one night that if I got to another country, and that country went to war with Germany, I would volunteer to fight with them. I was naturally very anxious at the thought of Mother being left alone in that old damp house. I wrote to her brother, my Uncle Eugen in Stuttgart, asking him to give her shelter. To my sorrow and disappointment he refused to have anything to do with it. Thereafter I neither had nor wanted any further communication with him and have no knowledge of what happened to him and his wife.

At last we received confirmation from Pastor Maas that Martha and I had been accepted to enter Great Britain as refugees. Martha left first on 12th June 1939 to travel on one of the Kindertransports. I went with her as far as Frankfurt, which seemed to be an assembly point. I met up there with Herr Schwarzschild, the butcher from Eisenberg, who was seeing his own daughter Margot off on the same transport

Within a week, we received wonderful news that Martha had arrived safely, and had found a kind and living foster-mother in a widow, Mrs. Kennedy, in Minishant, Ayrshire, Scotland.

By now I had most of my papers ready. I had my passport and visa and various certificates from the local authorities, church register etc. I lacked only one document, an exit permit, a slip of paper without which I would not be allowed out of the country. That piece of paper had to be issued by the self same Gestapo Headquarters at Neustadt to where I was supposed to be delivering my family tree. I waited and waited, and frankly began to panic a bit. I decided to go back to the Ludwigshafen Jewish Community Centre to see if they could help. The same young man was there but this time he gave me a friendly reception. When I told him my problem, his reaction left me speechless.

He put a phone call straight through to the Gestapo H.Q. "What are you lot up to?" I heard him say, "Here's an enemy of the State, a young man whom you are trying to get rid of, who is doing his best to oblige you, and you are keeping him hanging about waiting for his exit permit." He put the phone down. "You should have it within the next few days" he told me. And he was right.

During my last few weeks in Germany, I had been having lessons from a lady in Grünstadt, to get a smattering of English. When I left after my last lesson, she remarked "Well you are off now to a new start. I hope you will find yourself a nice tame English girl and settle down there."

"Hope for the best" I replied, and took my leave. Before leaving Grünstadt I decided to have a last look at the news stand opposite the Station. There in black and white I was able to read a typical Nazi send off. "We are happy to announce the departure from this country of the Jew Rosenzweig, Good riddance! One less mouth to feed."

"The pleasure is all mine" I thought.

The time I dreaded had come. I had to say goodbye to Mother, and leave her alone among those barbarians. What choice did we really have? Her only hope lay in me getting out, and subsequently being able to fetch her out. I left that beloved, frail, little lady in our house, at the bottom of the stairs. As the train pulled out from Altleiningen Station, she waved from one of the upstairs Windows, and that was the last time I saw my Mother.

I broke the journey at Freinsheim to say goodbye to Aunt Mina, Uncle Jakob and Willi. These were the only people in Germany to whom I said goodbye. I had a few personal possessions which I thought I might lose at the border. I left these with Willi, and he returned them to me in 1946.

I caught the train from Ludwigshafen. It ran beside the river through the romantic Rhine Valley. At Cologne I changed on to a transcontinental train where I shared a compartment with two middle aged ladies. One was an ardent Nazi from Bremen, travelling to Belgium to sell some property. The other was a very cultured lady with a command of six languages who was travelling back to England from Yugoslavia. She appeared to guess what I was doing on the train and when we were briefly alone in the compartment, warned me to be careful what I said in front of the lady from Bremen.

The German lady asked me where I was off to, and when I said England, she really went for me. "I can't under-stand how a young man could even contemplate leaving Germany just when our country under its beloved Führer is about to flourish as never before in its proud history."

We reached Aachen and the German Frontier control officers came through the train calling "Passports please." As soon as they saw the big red 'J' on my passport I was ordered off the train into a small brick building and ordered to strip. They went through all my belongings, but there was nothing there for them to find.

When I got back into the compartment, the German lady remained quiet. The penny had obviously dropped. The other lady was kindness itself. When the Belgian Frontier Guards came

aboard the train, she did all the talking in French on my behalf. Indeed she took me under her wing all the way to Victoria.

The train moved forward into Belgium, and I knew that I had escaped from Nazi Germany.

I had spent my 19th birthday in Dachau. On my 20th birthday I joined the British Army. I changed my name, and I started a new life.

*He has delivered my soul in peace
From the battle that was against me
For there were many with me*

(Psalm 55)

APPENDIX

For many years until his death early in 1989, I maintained a correspondence with Karl Imhoff, once the Minister in Altleiningen, and later in Wattenheim. On an anniversary of Kristallnacht, he wrote to me on that subject. These are his words:

"At the end of the war I was given the task of compiling a history of the congregation and parish of Wattenheim. This is what I wrote about the events of Kristallnacht."

"Our community was struck with terror by the happenings on 9th November 1938, known as the Reichs-Kristallnacht. All over Germany synagogues were set ablaze. The Chairman of our Church Elders, Herr Armbrust, spoke to me in a scarcely controllable fit of excitement. He said "Herr Pastor, synagogues too are places of worship and one should not tamper with sacred places such as these. You'll see there will be no good end to this." That was the voice of one man whose inner being was still nourished by a Christian belief and not confused by propaganda, but it was a voice in the wilderness.

"In Hettenleidelheim (a nearby village), lived a Jewish family called Michel. Old Herr Michel, a butcher by trade, had a struggle to eke out a living from his shop. His married son worked as a book keeper in the earthenware factory, Hagenburger Schwalb. They arrested Herr Michel Junior a few days prior to Reichskristallnacht for embezzlement. The money went to a trustee of the Nazi Party in the works. He had put pressure on Herr Michel and in order to maintain his position, Herr Michel had committed the offence. They arrested the Nazi too, but the case against him was suppressed and he was released. All the guilt was diverted on to the Jew.

"At Kristallnacht, young Mrs Michel was alone in her house with her two little children. A further child was expected to be born at any time. Some bandits from elsewhere arrived in a car. They chased the Jewish family out of the house, and started to smash everything inside the house. Jars of fruit preservatives, together with the radio, were flung through the Windows. Then they sliced open the feather-filled bedding, and the feathers were scattered on to the street. Every window was smashed."

"To crown it all, they forced the young woman to gather all the pieces of broken glass with her bare hands. She did that until the blood streamed from her hands. The poor soul was forced to spend the night together with her two children out in the open. She was not seen in Hettenleidelheim again. She and her two children were put into a concentration camp."

"The local police must have been put in the picture beforehand. They stood nearby, together with the local Party boss, and watched. In all probability they were there on the instructions of their State leaders, to ensure that these bandits were able to carry out their dirty work undisturbed."

"The following day, the writer passed through Hettenleidelheim. He spoke to people of both denominations, Catholic and Protestant, but they were literally paralysed with fright. Nobody had the courage to try to interfere. The terrorisation of the population had already reached such proportions. One man, a neighbour of this Jewish family, told the writer that he would have liked to have taken the pregnant woman and her children into his own home but was too frightened to do so for fear of retribution against him and his own family. So he did nothing."

"Had I known that you were in the Wattenheim police lock-up that night I would have included that item in my history."

I actually knew this woman's husband, Simon Michel. He was quite handsome and highly thought of by the members of the small congregation at Kahn's prayer room in Eisenberg. When Herr Kahn was not available, it was Simon Michel who used to lead the prayers.

I have recently learned what happened to some of the Grünstadt Jewish Community whom I have mentioned.

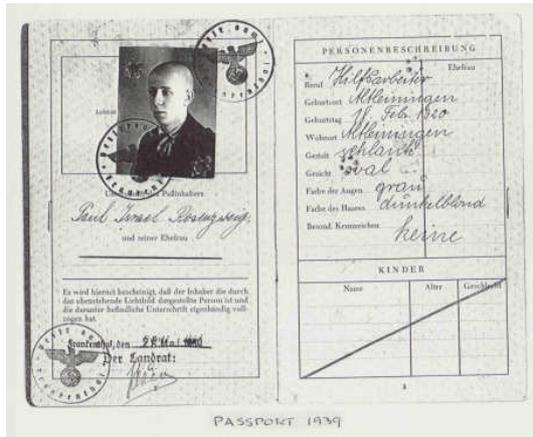
Heinrich Lion, my religious instructor, having been released from Dachau, left Grünstadt in September 1939 to live in Frankfurt. During the war he was arrested and deported to a camp in the East, where he was killed.

Gustav Seelenberger got away from Germany to Chile, where he still lives.

In 1942, his parents, like our Mother, were deported to Auschwitz, and consumed in the Holocaust.



Paul Rosenzweig 1939



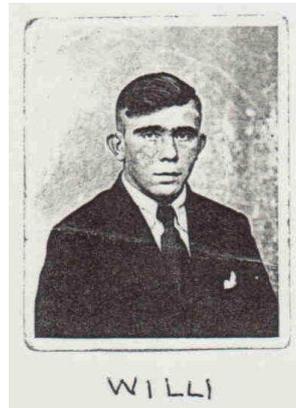
Passport, issued Mai 1939



Mother Klara



Sister Martha



Cousin Willi



Reginald Pringle, formerly Paul Rosenzweig in 2005 at the age of 85



47 HAUPTSTRASSE, ALTLEININGEN (IN 1987)

THE ORIGINAL HOUSE HAS BEEN MODIFIED
BY THE ADDITION OF ROOMS IN THE ROOF
SPACE. THE PHOTOGRAPHS ARE TAKEN
FROM THE FOOTPATH LEADING DOWN FROM
THE CASTLE