

## The Plot Thickens

*“Te hominem esse memento.”* (Remember that you are a human being.) – A reminder call of the *servus publicus* to a Roman Triumphant.

In 1939 and 1940, a few non-Jews and Jews still had the courage to have personal relationships with each other. The official record shows that, in those two years, 665 Jews and Christians were sentenced to imprisonment for *Rassenschande* (defilement of the Aryan race). On 20 April 1940, a secret order given by the Supreme Command of the German Wehrmacht was implemented; it expelled non-Jews married to Jews and children of a mixed marriage from the German Army, even if all the members in this marriage belonged to a church.

In June 1941 the plot thickened. Heinrich Himmler ordered Rudolf Höss, the Commander of Auschwitz, to prepare this camp to be a vital link for the Final Solution, through the mass-extinction of Jews. The number crunchers of the Nazi machine had done their homework. They realised that Auschwitz alone could not cope with this job, so in September, Maydanek, and in October, Birkenau opened their doors.

These camps were less than 300 kilometres away from Breslau, but at the time they were of no concern to us. We had more immediate problems to deal with. We were prohibited from using public telephones (29 July 1940), and were not allowed to have private telephones. We could no longer use public transport

without the express permission of the Gestapo (1 May 1942), and this permission was only granted to travel to and from work, provided the place of work was, in the opinion of the authorities, far enough away from home. We were not allowed to leave our home after 9 pm in summer and 8 pm in winter (1 September 1939).

My father had to leave his job in the Children's Home and work as a labourer in the local paper-mill in Sacrau near Breslau. My mother had to wash the city's tramcars all night and work as a forced labourer in the FAMO factory (*Fahrzeug- und Motoren-Werke* – Automobile and Engine Works), a German vehicle manufacturer in the early twentieth century.)

The following is the English translation of a letter the children of the Home gave my father when he had to leave them. The letter acknowledges that my father was a very special person, but in addition it expresses the anxiety of these children who were cut off from their parents and their homes and who were in urgent need of care and support. Their ages ranged from six to fourteen years. All of them were deported from Breslau on 3 May 1942 to Izbica with a transport of approximately 1,000 Jewish people. Some were redistributed from this camp to the concentration camps of Sobibor, Belzec and Majdanek, but all of them were gassed and cremated.

*Breslau, 30 April 1941*

*Dear Mr Aufrichtig!*

*A long time; months after months have elapsed, during which you have lovingly cared for us.*

*We always felt that you were closer to us than was required by your job.*

*Your loving care for us is unforgettable!*

*We want our close friendship to continue, even though circumstances force you to leave us.*

*Your advice and teaching was always practical and educational and it will remain with us forever and help us in our future lives.*

Your compassion with our childhood suffering was the best indication of our close relationship.

You never failed to give us practical advice when we needed help. Your kind and fatherly care will remain within our hearts.

Words fail us to express our gratitude to you!

We wish you and your family good health and the opportunity to stay together.

These are our wishes which will always be in our thoughts and hearts.

Your

Young Friends.

The *Private Jüdische höhere Schule* was closed by the Gestapo on 9 April 1941 as Jews were no longer allowed access to higher education, however, Jewish children still had to go to school. Consequently, I had to go back to the *Private Jüdische Volksschule zu Breslau* on 9 April 1941. I stayed at this school until 30 June

Private Jüdische Volksschule zu Breslau  
8. stufig 8. klassig

### Schul-Entlassungs-Zeugnis

*Klauss Israel Aufriedlich*  
Sohn Tochter des *elern. Verstorbenen Rittm. Israel F.*  
geb. den *8. April* 1929 in *Breslau* Kreis *Breslau*  
in die Schule zuerst eingetreten am *8. April* 1935 zu *Breslau*  
Kreis *Breslau* hat die obenbezeichnete Schule seit dem *1. April* 1941  
besucht und ist bei seinem *letzten* Abgange Schüler der Kl. *7* gewesen.  
Während er in die obenbezeichnete Schule besuchte, war

a) der Schulbesuch *regelmäßig*  
b) das Betragen *gut*  
c) der *Fern* *keine* *Leistungsfähigkeit* *nicht* *befriedigend* *merkbar*.

Urteil über die Leistungen:

Hebräisch <i>ausreichend</i>	Rechnen <i>gut</i>
Judentumkunde <i>gut</i>	Raumlehre <i>gut</i>
Deutsch mündlich <i>ausreichend</i>	Schreiben <i>zufrieden</i>
schriftlich <i>ausreichend</i>	Zeichnen <i>gut</i>
Geschichte <i>befriedigend</i>	Musik <i>befriedigend</i>
Erdkunde <i>befriedigend</i>	Turnen <i>befriedigend</i>
Naturbeschreibung <i>gut</i>	Nadelarbeiten <i>gut</i>
Naturlehre <i>gut</i>	Hauswirtschaftlicher Unterricht <i>gut</i>
	Werkunterricht <i>gut</i>
	Englisch <i>gr. d. ausreichend</i>

Bemerkungen *Auf Wunsch nicht bescheinigt werden soll*

Breslau, den *30. Juni* 1942  
*Dr. Sarah S. Weyl*  
Schulleiterin  
Private Jüdische Volksschule  
Hauptbuch-Nr. *1131 (2)*

*Kaufmannsamt bestätigt diese Bescheinigung mit der Befreiungsbefugnis ausgehend von der Befreiung des jüdischen Schülers vom 30. Juni 1942 als Befreiungsbefugnis erteilt.*  
*Breslau, den 30. Juni 1942.*  
*Dr. Sarah S. Weyl*  
Private Jüdische Volksschule

From 30 June 1942 Jewish children were longer allowed to go to school. The note on the reverse side of my final Primary School Certificate confirms this government regulation.

1942 when the law was passed that prohibited Jews from having any kind of school education.

We were fortunate that a very nice Jewish family who had one young son occupied the other room of our two-room apartment in Kopischstrasse 65. We had known the Korngrün family for a long time, as they did not live far from our large apartment which we had to abandon when we moved into the Children's Home. Furthermore, Mr Korngrün was a commercial agent who used to call on my grandfather's business to sell him his wares.

From Thursday, 19 September 1941 onwards we had to wear the Yellow Star of David. It was issued to us on 1 September 1941 against signing the following receipt: "I acknowledge the receipt of one *Judenstern* (Jew-star). I am aware of all my legal obligations on the wearing of the Jew-star and about the prohibition to wear any Orders and Medals. I also understand that I am not allowed to leave my place of residence without the written permission of the local police. I undertake to treat this sign of identification with care and when sewing it on to my outer garment to fold over the excess material. I further acknowledge receipt of a copy of the above." The bottom of the receipt read: "Neglect will be punished with a fine of 150 German marks or six weeks imprisonment. Security laws allowing for more severe sentences remain unaffected."

On Friday, 20 September 1941 the Sabbath service was crowded. The many yellow stars adorned the assembled crowd and left no doubt as to our Jewish identity. A few days later the



This is the Star of David I had to wear from 1 September 1941.

non-Jewish shopkeeper told my mother he was rather surprised that I seemed to wear the star like a badge of honour. I think I was no exception – we all did.

It was a dark and dreary September morning in 1941 when, between 6 and 7 am, a hammering of fists on the entrance door woke us up. “Open up, Gestapo!” My mother opened the door. Two Gestapo officers pushed her aside. “Where are the Jews Korngrün?” They opened the door of the room the family Korngrün occupied, without knocking. The family was still in bed. We were ordered to stay in our room. The Korngrüns had to get dressed immediately, pack some essentials, but not more than they could carry, take bread along for a two-day journey, and leave their tools in the entrance hall (sewing machine, axe, hammer, screwdrivers, bucket, etc.). Mrs Korngrün was expected to dress herself in the presence of the Gestapo officers. She still had the courage to throw them out of the room for a few minutes. The family was not allowed to lock the toilet door, but only keep it ajar.

The Gestapo then sealed their room. They were told that they would be resettled in the newly acquired Eastern Territories of Germany the *General Gouvernement*, so that they, at long last, would have “the opportunity to do an honest day’s work”. Their tools would be collected later, and the contents of their room would be sent to them in due course. It was not an implausible story, as some elderly Breslau Jews had already been moved into transit camps in the close-by country areas of Tormersdorf, Grüssau and Riebnik, and they did write to relatives and friends now and again.

I had to accompany the Korngrüns to help carry their luggage. By tram under Gestapo guard, we went to the Schiesswerdersaal, a local dance hall, where already many Jewish families were assembled, and most of them sat on their rucksacks and suitcases, waiting to move on. The Korngrüns seemed to be a little more at ease meeting so many fellow Jews.

Their six-year-old son Heini cried inconsolably. His teddy bear had been left behind. His mother begged me to get it so that she could comfort Heini on the journey ahead. I went back home, and found the teddy still lying in the hall. I went back again to the Schiesswerdersaal, and what a joy it was for the child to be reunited with his teddy bear and to find comfort from it.

The tools were never collected. Gestapo records show that the transport left Breslau on Friday, 21 November 1941. It was destined for Riga. However, it was intercepted on Tuesday, 25 November 1941 in Kaunas, and 693 men, 1155 women and 152 children, a total of 2000 Breslau Jews were shot in this city on that day. Maybe the teddy bear was of some comfort, before a bullet ended Heini Korngrün's young life.

On 3 April 1942, the law about the wearing of the yellow star was supplemented with the following regulation: "Jews who have



The people in this photo were all shot 48 hours later in Kaunas, Lithuania on 25 November 1941 (693 men, 1155 women, 152 children).

*Helmut Eschwege Kennzeichen Berlin 1981*

Kaunas, am 1. Dezember 1941

**Geheime Reichssache!**

5 Ausfertigungen

~~4~~ Ausfertigung.

Gesamtaufstellung der im Bereich des EK.3 bis zum 1. Dez. 1941 durchgeführten Exekutionen.

Übernahme der sicherheitspolizeilichen Aufgaben in Litauen durch das Einsatzkommando 3 am 2. Juli 1941.

(Das Gebiet Wilna wurde am 9. Aug. 41, das Gebiet Schaul 2. Okt. 41 vom EK.3 übernommen. Wilna wurde bis zu diesem Zeit. vom EK.9 und Schaulen vom EK.2 bearbeitet.)

Auf meine Anordnung und meinen Befehl durch die lit. Partisanen durchgeführten Exekutionen:

4.7.41 Kaunas - Fort VII - 416 Juden, 47 Jüdinnen 463  
6.7.41 Kaunas - Fort VII - Juden 2 514

Nach Aufstellung eines Rollkommandos unter Führung von SS-Ostuf. Hamann und 8 - 10 bewährten Männern des EK.3 wurden nachfolgende Aktionen in Zusammenarbeit mit den lit. Partisanen durchgeführt:

7.41 Mariampole	Juden	32
7.41 "	14 " und 5 komm. Funktionäre	19
7.41 Girkalinei	komm. Funktionäre	6
9.7.41 Wendsiogala	32 Juden, 2 Jüdinnen, 1 Litauerin, 2 lit. Komm., 1 russ. Kommunist	38
9.7.41 Kaunas - Fort VII	- 21 Juden, 3 Jüdinnen	24
11.7.41 Mariampole	21 " , 1 russ. 9 lit. Komm.	31
12.7.41 Babtai	8 komm. Funktionäre (6 davon Juden)	8
14.7.41 Mariampole	39 Juden, 14 Jüdinnen	53
15.7.41 Kaunas - Fort VII	- 17 " , 2 " , 4 lit. Komm., 2 komm. Litauerinnen, 1 deutsch. K.	26
21.7.41 Panevezys	59 Juden, 11 Jüdinnen, 1 Litauerin, 1 Pole, 22 lit. Komm., 9 russ. Komm.	103
22.7.41 "	1 Jude	1
23.7.41 Kedziniai	63 Juden, 12 Jüdinnen, 14 russ. Komm., 15 lit. Komm., 1 russ. O-Politruk.	125
25.7.41 Mariampole	90 Juden, 13 Jüdinnen	103
26.7.41 Panevezys	234 " , 15 " , 19 russ. Komm., 20 lit. Kommunisten	268
	-Übertrag:	3 634

Page 1 of a secret report about the execution of Jews in Kaunas from the Commander of the German Security Police in Kaunas, Dr Karl Jäger dated 1 December 1941, saying the executions were carried out by Lithuanian partisan volunteers.

Rossiskij Gosudarstvennyj Voennyj Archiv v Moskve

Blatt 5.

1136

-Übertrag:

66 159

Monat Oktober:

2.10.41	Zagore	633 Juden, 1107 Jüdinn., 496 J.-Ki. (beim Abführen dieser Juden entstand eine Meuterei, die jedoch sofort niedergeschlagen wurde. Dabei wurden 150 Juden sofort erschossen. 7 Partisanen wurden verletzt)	2 236
4.10.41	Kauen-F.IX-	315 Juden, 712 Jüdinn., 618 J.-Kind. (Straffaktion weil im Ghetto auf einen deutsch. Polizisten geschossen wurde)	1 845
29.10.41	Kauen-F.IX-	2007 Juden, 2920 Jüdinnen, 4273 Judenkinder (Säuberung des Ghettos von Überflüssigen Juden)	9 200

Monat November:

3.11.41	Lasdijai	485 Juden, 511 Jüdinn., 539 J.-Kind.	1 535
15.11.41	Wilkowski	36 " 48 " 51 "	115
25.11.41	Kauen-F.IX-	1159 " 1600 " 175 " (Umsiedler aus Berlin, München u. Frankfurt a.M.)	2 934
29.11.41	" "	693 " 1155 " 152 " (Umsiedler aus Wien u. Breslau)	2 000
29.11.41	" "	17 Juden, 1 Jüdin, die gegen die Ghettogesetze verstossen hatten, 1 R.-Deutscher, der zum jüdischen Glauben übergetreten war und eine Rabbinerschwester besucht hatte, dann 15 Terroristen der Kalinin-Gruppe	34

Teilkommando des EK.3  
in Dünaburg in der Zeit  
vom 13.7.-21.8.41:

9012 Juden, Jüdinnen und Judenkinder, 573 aktive Kommunisten	9 585
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Teilkommando des EK.3  
in Wilna:

12.8. bis 1.9.41	Wilna-Stadt	425 Juden, 19 Jüdinnen, 8 Kommunist. 9 Kommunistinnen	461
2.9.41	" "	864 Juden, 2019 Jüdinnen, 817 Judenkinder (Sonderaktion, weil von Juden auf deutsche Soldaten geschossen wurde)	3 700

-Übertrag:

99 804

Page 5 of the same report. The line dated 29.11.41 shows that this transport consisted of 693 men, 1155 women and 152 children, a total of 2000 from Vienna and Breslau. Some of the Breslau people in this transport are shown in the photo on page 77. This transport also included the Korngrün family. The figure bottom right shows a total of 99,804 people were killed by 29 November 1941. *Rossijskij Gosudarstvennyj Voennyj Archiv v Moskve*

to wear the *Judenstern* have to mark their dwellings as follows. The dwelling must be marked with a *Judenstern* (black print on white paper) similar in size and design to the identification to be worn on the clothing. This mark of identification is to be glued on to the outside of the door frame to the entrance of the dwelling.”

We had to vacate the Kopischstrasse apartment on 10 June 1942, and just two months earlier, the Gestapo collected everything that belonged to the Korngrüns. As always, we were only given 48 hours’ notice to vacate. We were moved to Zimmerstrasse/Joachima Lelewela 5/7 into a four-room apartment with one Jewish family per room, and all of us sharing the small kitchen and bathroom.

It was good to have left Kopischstrasse. After the Korngrüns had been deported, we could not help but keep on looking at the sealed door of their room, thinking of them all the time and wondering what might have become of them. Their pots, plates and spoons left behind in the kitchen were treated by us with utmost respect, as though this would make up for the treatment that was meted out to them.

The owner of the local vegetable store had taken pity on me. I had to do the shopping, as Jews were restricted to shop in designated stores between 4 and 5 pm. My parents were still at work at that time of the day, and so it was left to me to queue up and get the little food that was allotted to us on the *Juden Marken* (Jew coupons); these were the same food coupons as were issued to the rest of the population, except that they were overprinted with words *Jude* (Jew) and many of the coupons were overprinted with the word “invalid”, thus putting us on a minimum subsistence ration.

On one occasion, the grocer allowed me to call back three times to buy spinach. It took us many hours to process a whole bathtub full of fresh spinach. The great taste of spinach which long ago helped me not to feel hungry for a short time, still lingers on. To run a store for Jews at that time brought the owner extra profit.

He filleted the pickled herrings and sold the fillet to his Aryan customers. The non-saleable leftovers he put through the mincer and sold to us Jewish customers. One had gradually learnt to eat anything if it stopped the feeling of being hungry.

In retrospect, the increased everyday chores and worries kept us sane, as they left little time for brooding and focusing on the real issues before us.