



**German Resistance
Memorial Center**

**German Resistance
1933 – 1945**



**Inge Deutschkron We survived
Berlin Jews Underground**

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The title photo shows Ella and Inge Deutschkron in the summer of 1939.

Inge Deutschkron

**We survived
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”You’re Jewish,” my mother told me on April 1, 1933. That was the day the Nazis introduced a boycott on shops owned by Jews, after two months in power. It was their first campaign against Jews, to which they sang: “When Jewish blood spurts from the knife, it makes things a lot easier.”

The boycott was obvious on the streets of Berlin. SA guards in uniform were posted in front of Jewish shops to stop Berliners from going inside. Some people didn’t let that put them off, often simply to demonstrate their sympathy with the Jewish owners. But that was to be the last time – showing support for Jews in this way was later made a criminal offense.

What was this, to be a Jewess? I can’t remember how my mother explained the word to me, a ten-year-old girl. I had grown up without a religion. I didn’t even know the meaning of the word. My parents didn’t observe any Jewish festivals. We didn’t own any Jewish ritual objects, nor did we follow any religious rules. My parents had renounced their religion long ago. For the first four years of my education, I attended what was called a “worldly school,” which did not teach religion.

I knew much more about the National Socialists and their contemptible politics. My parents, active Social Democrats, had told me who Adolf Hitler was, and explained what he and his party would mean for Germany and the world if they came to power, including discriminating against and persecuting Jews. It was perfectly normal for me to join demonstrations against the Nazis with my mother, or to help my parents' friends folding leaflets against the detested extreme right-wingers in the back rooms of pubs. I was very proud of doing my bit for this political fight, which now seemed to be also my concern. Now I was part of a minority, victimized by the Nazis. But that didn't mean I was inferior to other children, my mother told me, and added: "Don't let them get you down, defend yourself!" – which became a motto for the whole of my life.

When the Nazis really did come to power on January 30, 1933, I felt my parents' horror very clearly. It was as if they had not been able to believe it beforehand, despite all the warnings. My mother immediately urged me to avoid the pub frequented by the SA on my way home from school. SA men armed with clubs and metal bars used to start out on their violent campaigns against their political opponents from there. I remember street-fighting in our district of Prenzlauer Berg. I will never forget the sight of a Communist beaten up by the Nazis. I began to worry about my father.

My parents had joined the German Social Democratic Party when they were young. It was a party which promised to create social and economic equality for all, once it came to power. That would put an end to anti-Semitism, which had not been eradicated in the Weimar Republic. My parents were convinced of that, along with many other Jews who were active members of left-wing parties during those years. The majority of the Jews, however, were bourgeois liberals with a passive outlook towards politics.

My father, Dr. Martin Deutschkron, had been elected as a senior teacher at the Luisen Oberlyzeum Grammar School in Berlin-Mitte in 1931. He devoted all his free time to the party – especially at the end of the 1920s, when the National Socialists (NSDAP) were fighting for the election majority to take over power. On January 30, 1933, they succeeded in gaining the key role in a coalition government. They immediately fired their political adversaries from all leadership positions. My father was one of the first teachers to have to leave the civil service in April 1933, under Section Four of the Law for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service introduced by the Nazi-led government. As a general rule, Jews who had served at the front in World War I like my father were not dismissed until 1935/36.

The justification for my father's dismissal was that he allegedly could not guarantee that he would educate the German youth in the national spirit. As

he had fought on the front in World War I, he was granted three quarters of his pension. My father defended himself against this decision in a letter to the institution that had dismissed him, the Berlin-Brandenburg Provincial Board of Education. He pointed out his service on the front and his political work in one of the country's leading democratic parties. For him, these two aspects were proof of his national convictions, and he demanded that the board take back his dismissal. He never received a reply.

My father's Jewish friends from university sympathized with the SPD to a certain extent. But they always smiled at my father's great dedication to the party. Now that the National Socialists were in power, they felt they ought to console him – they said that it had been time for someone to come to power in Germany who would bring order to the chaos of the Weimar Republic, like Mussolini in Italy. And anyway, they told my father, it would not turn out as bad as he and his political friends feared. They called the arrests of innocent citizens for their political opinions “excesses.” They saw reports of maltreatment in the newly established concentration camps as “labor pains,” which they found perfectly normal for a new era with untrained staff.

Some Jewish citizens who considered themselves Germans with equal rights on the basis of the 1871 constitution raised public complaints against the Nazis' accusations that Jews were parasites on the new German state. Others even sent letters of allegiance to the new rulers, declaring their loyalty to the new national state. The majority rejected this ingratiation, as they called it. But there were even reports of Jews who would not have hesitated to vote for the Nazis, had it not been for the anti-Semitism anchored in their manifesto.

Jewish organizations kept a concerned eye on political developments. The Central Association of German Citizens of Jewish Faith (CV) had been founded in 1893, to attain formal and social equality for Jews in Germany and strengthen public awareness of their German identity. It had the largest membership of all German Jewish organizations. After the Nazi-led government was formed, the CV's moderate position attracted many new members. The association's leaders had close contacts to conservative politicians. They now called on these contacts to remind them that the new government also had to guarantee the Jews constitutional equal rights under all circumstances.

The Reich Association of Jewish Veterans was formed after World War I, to counteract the popular misconception among the Germans that Jews had shirked military service. They emphasized Jewish people's major contribution to the war effort, and the 12,000 Jewish soldiers who had fallen for Germany. They insisted on the rights promised to them as war veterans. Their aim

was the complete integration of Jews into German society. In 1937, the government limited the association's task to caring for Jewish war invalids.

In contrast to the Jewish war veterans, there was a small group of mainly young people who called themselves Zionists. Their aim was to build a Jewish state in the Holy Land. They were largely ignored up until 1933. At that time, German Jews were not generally interested in a state of their own, as this seemed an unrealistic idea. The Zionists became more popular after 1933. But they never became a mass movement, even at the time of the worst persecution. Young Zionists were of course among the first people to emigrate. Many of the 37,000 people who left the country in 1933 were young people who were no longer allowed to attend universities or take part in any other form of classical education. But despite all the humiliation and threats made against them, the majority of German Jews were firmly convinced there was no real need for panic. They thought they would survive the new regime in Germany, albeit with less respect than they were used to. Emigrating therefore seemed to be jumping the gun. This trend was confirmed by the reduced number of people leaving the country in 1934 and 1935 as compared to the year 1933 – 23,000 and 21,000 respectively. The very well respected Rabbi Dr. Leo Baeck wrote an article reinforcing their standpoint: "Don't leave Germany for no good reason, do your duty here!" It was not clear what Leo Baeck saw as Jewish people's duties in the Nazi state. But the majority of German Jewry agreed wholeheartedly with these words; their loyalty to Germany remained unshaken until the last moment.

The Jewish Community, the official representative body of the Jews in Berlin, tried to come to terms with the new government. It has to be stressed, however, that its first duty was to represent the rights of the Jewish population. It was not a party that pursued certain political goals. It maintained this standpoint, even in the years of the worst persecution, at a time when its members were struggling for their bare existence and had been deprived of all their rights. To begin with, the Jewish Community proved its loyalty to the new regime by ostracizing people the new state had declared its enemies. It refused to let them work in its institutions, for instance. The organization ran schools in Berlin, which had a high influx of new pupils due to the political changes. Yet they must have thought employing my father would be an affront to the new government – they rejected his application outright.

My family was outraged at the Jewish Community's attitude. My parents thought the Community should have acted with much more pride, as the representative of 160,000 official citizens of Berlin. The risk that their rights would be declared null and void by Germany's new regime was so obvious that they expected more than blind obedience to anti-Jewish regulations. There were no signs of solidarity with all the Jewish people who had been

arrested on political or often obscure grounds, and who faced a terrible fate in the concentration camps recently stamped out of the ground. People only knew vague details about the camps from the few prisoners who had been released but had still been obliged to maintain secrecy. Initially, the political resistance against the Nazis was very minor, and restricted to former members of left-wing parties, which were soon banned. Some of the prisoners in the camps were Jews, mainly people who had only been vaguely connected with the Jewish community. The Nazi authorities provided evidence that they were Jews, either through denunciation or from nineteenth-century church registers, which had the same role as registry offices in later times. Anyone not listed in the church register was assumed to be a Jew, and the Nazi laws also regarded their twentieth-century descendants as Jews. To begin with, these prisoners and their families did not receive the generous support of the Jewish Community, since it was against any form of action against the Nazi state and any Jewish involvement in the resistance.

Members of left-wing movements behaved very differently towards former comrades who were suffering under the Nazi dictatorship. We helped each other as a matter of course. For a long time, my family ate a certain kind of bread and drank bad coffee that friends of ours sold to make ends meet. The comrades collected donations to start new lives. I helped write out addresses. An unemployed friend of the family got ten marks for every thousand addresses. My father gave German tuition to foreign students, mostly Chinese or Japanese, who enrolled at German universities in large numbers after 1933. When he received an unexpected job offer one day, he passed his private students on to other teachers who had been dismissed.

Unlike the Jewish Community, the Theodor Herzl School on Kaiserdamm, a Zionist school, was unconcerned about my father's political background and offered him a teaching position. They must have thought a former militant Social Democrat would be ideal for their school. For the people who ran it, helping to build a Jewish state meant sending people to what was then Palestine. The teaching was very free and progressive, without the constraints of a religious structure like in the Jewish Community schools. My father made no secret of the fact that he was not a Zionist and had no intention of emigrating to Palestine. His pupils called him a "strange fellow" – a conscious German and Social Democrat who taught them a lot of things about another world. That's how former pupils described him after his death.

The word "emigration" was not even in my parents' vocabulary. My father always said he was a German and always would be; his family had been in Germany for centuries. His language was German and so was his culture. He saw no reason to emigrate, he said. After all, he was still a civil servant, and couldn't just run away. That was the argument he used to reject a teaching

job he was offered in Australia in 1935. Like his political friends, he believed that the Nazi regime wouldn't last long. But he wasn't quite as optimistic as some of his friends, who thought the Nazis wouldn't be in power for more than three months after certain events, such as the Reichstag fire (in February 1933) or the elimination and murder of Ernst Röhm and the rest of the SA leadership (in June 1934).

Yet now that the regime had showed its vulnerability, the threat didn't seem as great to my father and other Jews as they had initially assumed from all the noisy rhetoric. They got used to being treated unfairly as Jews, but noted with satisfaction that the principle of not disciplining Jews who had served in World War I still held, as long as they did not get involved in anti-Nazi activities.

It almost seemed to confirm the privileged position of these Jews when my father was awarded the "Cross of Honor for Combatants" inaugurated by Reich President Paul von Hindenburg in memory of the World War I, "in the name of the Führer and Reich Chancellor," in August 1935. The officers at our local police station saluted my father, thanked him for his war effort and congratulated him on receiving the honor. For the Jews, this seemed clear-cut proof that they had nothing drastic to fear in Nazi Germany. But they overlooked the fact that a large part of the German population applauded Hitler and his Nazi movement. The support the party received from German banks and industry, which anticipated benefits from the new government program, made many things possible that could not happen in the Weimar Republic due to lack of funds. The outrageous unemployment level of seven million fell due to Hitler's labor creation program, for example, giving hope to the poorest of the poor.

What they didn't know, of course, was that this policy only had one goal even then – to conquer other countries in war and enslave their people to Germany. It was the new autobahns that won a large number of Germans over to the new state, bringing them closer to regions that had previously been out of their reach. And that, of course, in the new Volkswagen the Nazis promised would be affordable for all. The subsidized vacation program "Strength through Joy" attracted masses of ordinary people. Alongside travel to faraway places, the program brought them together with like-minded people, reaping enthusiastic support for the Nazis' policies. The winter relief organization provided free hot meals once a month, encouraging the formation of a unified "national community."

The mass of Germans looked on with pride as Hitler provoked the international community and simply ignored Germany's obligations laid down by the Treaty of Versailles as a result of the lost war. He took Germany out of the League

of Nations to intensify his campaign. He then set up a new German army, although it was banned, and invaded the French-occupied Rhineland in 1935. The international community did nothing to stop all this. They said nothing against the violation of international treaties, nor the crimes taking place in the concentration camps. The world was well aware of these crimes, and of the discrimination and persecution of the Jewish population, who were being gradually robbed of all their possessions.

The Nazi propaganda campaign against Jews and political opponents had a profound effect inside Germany. It meant that these people were under observation, often without even realizing it. People were encouraged to inform on their neighbors, forming networks of *Blockwarts*, air raid wardens and “reliable” nationalists, who regarded it as their duty to protect the new regime in this way. To escape this and similar kinds of persecution, we moved to the west of Berlin, convinced we would be able to live in peace where no-one knew us.

However, our close contact with two non-Jewish families in the building must have been extremely suspicious for an old couple living below us. After all, we were Jews and our friends were former heads of secular schools who had been dismissed by the Nazis. One day, two Gestapo officers banged on the door of our apartment with a search warrant. They spent an hour going through our drawers and closets, finally confiscating two brochures: “Marx and the Jews” and a biography of Heinrich Heine. They had to admit there were no grounds for our neighbors’ accusations that we and our friends were involved in a conspiracy against the government. The old couple downstairs had said that my father, who did a lot of typing in the evenings to earn some extra money, had been writing political leaflets. A friend’s wife, they said, had copied them. The copy machine they thought they had heard turned out to be a modern electric sewing machine. According to the neighbors, our friends’ daughter, a nurse who often worked weekend shifts, had smuggled the leaflets out of the building in her suitcase. My parents laughed with relief after this terrible incident, and were relieved to note once again that there was still justice in Germany after all.

I kept thinking about the incident for a long time, though. When the Gestapo had turned up, they sent me into the kitchen. I stayed there, calmly reading a book, not realizing the situation my mother was in. Once the Gestapo had left, my mother asked in amazement whether I had told our friends that the Gestapo was there. I had to admit that I hadn’t done so, and then I was very ashamed of myself.

Only one month after the Jewish veterans were awarded their medals in August 1935, the exceptions they had been granted were cancelled. All “non-

Aryans” were dismissed from the civil service. The so-called Aryan Clauses had laid out exactly who was a non-Aryan in 1933 – Jews, half-Jews and quarter-Jews; that is, people with one Jewish parent or even one Jewish grandparent. The term had nothing to do with religion, only with Jewish “descent,” and also applied to Jews who had converted to Christianity. Some people had thought that converting would save them from anti-Jewish laws and campaigns, even under the Nazis themselves.

For many Jews in Berlin, the name of Pastor Heinrich Grüber was like a magic word. He had baptized many Jews seeking protection from state prosecution. After the Reich Citizenship Law was introduced, these baptisms were worthless, however. The law was announced at the NSDAP party conference in Nuremberg on September 15, 1935. It robbed Jews of all political rights, such as the rights to vote and be elected to political office. Jews were degraded to “subjects of the state” rather than citizens.

The “Law for the Protection of German Blood and German Honor” was introduced on the same occasion. This ruling outlawed marriages and extramarital intercourse between Jews and Germans, and made *Rassenschande* or disgracing the German race, as the Nazis called any violations of the law, a punishable offense. The law meant that people who had been living together for years had to separate. Children from these mixed relationships were not allowed to see their Jewish parent any more. Dr. Hans Globke, a bureaucrat in the Interior Ministry, had foiled any attempts to marry before the law came into effect, beginning seven weeks beforehand. (After the war, Dr. Hans Globke was a secretary of state to the West German Chancellor Dr. Konrad Adenauer. In his time at the Reich Interior Ministry, he had written a commentary on the Nuremberg Race Laws, among other things. Despite public outrage in Germany and abroad, he remained in his high position for many years after the war.)

Simple friendships could now have fatal consequences, as the law gave informers free reign. Penalties for the often random accusations were high, with the Jewish partners sent to concentration camps for life. The government declared these Nuremberg Laws constitutional laws. They formed the basis for the exclusion of the Jews from public and social life. From today’s perspective, they were the ideological foundation for the murders to come.

The Jewish community was initially shocked by the new legislation sanctioning the discrimination and persecution of the Jews. But a minority saw it as a possibility for Jews to stay in the country. At least we know where we stand now, they said; we just have to assimilate to the situation. This was more or less how the Reich Deputation of German Jews put it. On the one hand,

the laws were humiliating. On the other hand, however, they did not seem to prevent Jews from having a future in Germany.

The topic of emigration was more hotly discussed than ever before. More and more people were emigrating or trying to find ways to leave the country, even though there were reports of people who had emigrated and then decided to return to Nazi Germany, which wasn't exactly encouraging. They were disappointed by people who hadn't wanted to give them a home abroad or help them get their new lives off to a good start. Many of these people had emigrated themselves, and had forgotten the fear of persecution and discrimination in Germany, as we could tell from the letters they sent back to Berlin. Others returned because they couldn't stand the dirt, chaos, or plagues of insects such as in Palestine at the time. Another factor was that people with intellectual professions had poor chances abroad, unless they were prepared to do manual work. Most of them didn't have enough money to study over again in order to practice their original profession. Skilled laborers were much better off. It was usually much easier for them to find suitable work abroad. As a reaction, the Jewish Community set up retraining courses, which were immediately very popular. Office clerks learned to make chocolates, lawyers learned to milk cows, teachers learned to mend shoes, and others learned tailoring or pedicures.

With this in mind, wealthy Jews invested what was left of their capital in tools of various trades, to help them start new lives abroad. My father decided to train as a shoemaker, as a result of an incident he remembered from his childhood. Even years after those terrible times, we had a pair of unused leather-cutters at home as evidence of how unsuitable he was for the job. Nevertheless, there was a certificate from the master shoemaker Herbert Krysteller attesting to my father's great skill in the trade. Judging by the style and content of the certificate, I assume that Mr Krysteller's only contribution to the "document" was his signature.

The Nazi authorities decided to extend the Nuremberg Laws to children. It had not gone unnoticed that many Jewish pupils were not subject to any disadvantages at schools. At my new school in the west of Berlin, the Fürstin Bismarck Grammar School, half of the girls in my class came from Jewish families, most of them wealthy and established. Nothing seemed to have changed at the school since 1933. The teachers were forced to give the Hitler salute when they entered the classroom, but they did so with obvious distaste. I remember my class teacher, who always carried packages in both hands so that she couldn't raise her hand in salute. None of the teachers made a distinction between us and the non-Jewish children in my class. I never heard one word against Jews, not even from the other girls in the class. Then one day, the authorities ruled that Jewish pupils were no longer allowed

to take part in excursions, join in the traditional week in the country, or take part in swimming lessons. And we were certainly not allowed to use the same changing rooms as the non-Jewish pupils.

When these rulings were announced, my father decided to put me into a Jewish school to protect me from this kind of discrimination. He chose the Jewish Grammar School at 27 Große Hamburger Straße, because it was one of the few remaining state-recognized Jewish schools. He thought it would give me the opportunity to go back to a non-Jewish school after the end of the Nazi regime, and start a career in state institutions. Once again, his hope that the Nazi regime would soon be over influenced his decision.

Like all Jewish schools in Berlin at the time, the Jewish Grammar School was very overcrowded. This hadn't always been the case. Before 1933, the only people who thought it was important to send their children to Jewish schools were those who wanted to keep up the Jewish religion and traditions in Germany. This was by no means the majority of the Jews living in Germany at the time. According to contemporary statistics, less than a quarter of Jewish children in Germany attended Jewish schools. Even many orthodox parents thought non-Jewish schools would give their children a better start in life in Germany. Jewish schools, on the other hand, mainly educated their pupils for living in a strict Jewish community, of the type mostly kept up by the Jewish immigrants from Poland in Berlin.

The new Nazi rules excluding Jewish children from non-Jewish schools prompted a rush on the few Jewish schools. Although some new ones were set up, there were far from enough schools. The state-recognized grammar school was the most popular. In 1932 it had had 470 pupils, but by 1934 numbers swelled to 1,025.

I found the new school rather confusing. There were never less than fifty children in each class, making normal teaching almost impossible. Pupils and teachers were continually coming and going. Some of them emigrated, while others came from non-Jewish schools and joined our classes. In 1935, all Jewish civil servants were forced to leave work, including teachers. My father, who had only been allowed to teach at Jewish schools since 1933, had to give up teaching again. Concentrated and continuous teaching was impossible. The teachers, pupils, and their parents were unable to think of anything but their many problems. Should they emigrate? Should they stay? Where could they go? Or might it be possible to lead a decent life in Germany after all? It was no surprise that some of our teachers were often nervous to the point of hysteria, unable to teach us any values, let alone maintain discipline. But others possessed admirable mental composure and balance, which had a reassuring effect on all those around them.

The pupils at the school came from many different backgrounds, socially and intellectually. These divides automatically had a negative effect on teaching. But despite all these restrictions and difficulties, we did learn something at the school. The curriculum was designed to teach us things that would be useful in the event of emigration. Foreign languages for example, especially English and Hebrew, were at the top of the agenda. In the last two years, we were also taught shorthand and typing. We had an hour a week of commercial English and French. Pupils who preferred domestic training had the opportunity to learn cooking and sewing. Of course, this kind of curriculum meant there was far less time for traditional school subjects such as history, mathematics, chemistry, and physics, to say nothing of literature and other arts subjects.

This and other Jewish schools went to great efforts to make sure the children in their care had fun, regardless of the difficult situation they were in. As Jewish children were banned from using the same sports grounds or changing rooms as other pupils, all the Jewish schools in Berlin pooled their resources to use a sports ground on the outskirts of the city in Eichkamp. We held sports meetings there, with each school competing for victory. They were major events that occupied all our waking hours with feverish anticipation. Without a doubt, my memories of these few hours at the Eichkamp sports ground are the only really pleasant ones of my years at the school. It was as if all the cares and woes of school life were blown away. When we got onto the train to go back home, though, the relaxed atmosphere disappeared as quickly as it had come. We were suddenly a little scared, and very careful not to attract attention, let alone cause any disturbance. When one of us laughed too loudly, the others would tell her off. Although we never spoke about it, we knew the other passengers might recognize that we were Jewish children and start insulting and abusing us.

In 1936, the Olympic Games were held in Berlin, attracting international visitors. The Nazi government promised the “youth of the world” heavenly games. The city of Berlin was to receive guests from around the world – a proud, great, and magnificent backdrop to the games. Numerous repairs were undertaken, with buildings and facilities enlarged and newly decorated. Anything that might disturb these guests from around the world was removed – temporarily. Signs, posters, and bans denying Jews entry to cafés, restaurants, and places of entertainment vanished. The teams tacitly accepted several half-Jewish athletes for whom there was no German substitute. There is little point in discussing what motivated these people, otherwise despised and discriminated against, to compete for Nazi Germany. My parents found it appalling and wouldn't let me go to the Olympic Games. I was very interested in sports and had been looking forward to the games, but I accepted my parents' ban without argument once they explained they were a Nazi-run event to put up a pretense of a friendly Germany for the

world. They were utterly dismayed when the French Olympic team marched into the stadium sporting the Hitler salute.

Laws, bans, and restrictions to make life harder for Jews were reintroduced in 1937. To begin with, most of them were “improvements” on existing laws, for example: “Jews may be released from preventive detention if it is guaranteed that they are about to emigrate to Palestine or overseas (not in the case of emigration to neighboring countries)” or “Judges married to Jews shall only be occupied with land register and administration matters and similar areas in future.” These regulations proved that the Nazis had only interrupted their continued anti-Jewish legislation for the Olympics.

In 1938, they proved it in a very drastic way. A cousin of mine was arrested in June of that year. He was one of 1,500 Jews, mostly young people, who had past criminal records and were deemed “asocial” or “work-shy” elements. My cousin had been convicted for his involvement in a car accident. Regardless of the situation, “criminal record” seemed such a weighty term to us that it even justified doubts as to the personality of the people in question. Although we and many other Jews were appalled at the injustice of this measure, it did not affect us directly. But when we then found out that the Nazis misused these young prisoners they had branded “asocial” to build Buchenwald concentration camp, it fitted perfectly into the picture as a whole.

I was particularly upset by the regulation that every Jew over the age of fifteen had to carry an identity card at all times, and present it to all officials without being asked. This identity card was marked with a large “J” on the cover and a yellow “J” on the inside, ruling out any doubt as to the holder’s descent. We had to have special photos taken for the card, in which the left ear had to be visible. Nazi ethnologists had stated that Jewish people’s left ears revealed their Semitic roots. Just like any other sixteen-year-old girl, I was vain. I kept checking my ear in the mirror, comparing it to those of the Berliners I came in close proximity to on public transport, but I couldn’t find anything to distinguish my ears from anyone else’s.

There was a story going round among the Jews in Berlin at the time, which no-one was quite sure whether to believe or not. Allegedly, a member of the audience at a Nazi event had been invited onto the stage, to use his ear as an illustration of pure Aryan descent. The Nazi propagandist had no idea that the gentleman he had invited onto the podium was actually Jewish. For understandable reasons, the man chose not to reveal this to the gathering of Nazi sympathizers in the room. And so his Jewish ear became an Aryan demonstration object. The story spread like wildfire, with everyone laughing at the Nazis’ primitive simple-mindedness. That humor presumably helped many people to deal with the humiliations of the new rules and regulations of 1938.

One of these was that the newly issued identity card had to include the bearer's fingerprints, emphasizing the "criminal nature" of the Jews. My parents, who must have felt how deeply I was affected by this regulation, impressed upon me that the Nazis had no right to brand us criminals. They proved it to me with the many crimes the new government had committed against humanity since it came into office.

The day I collected my identity card was the first time I had to sign with the added name of "Sara." My name was now Ingeborg Sara Deutschkron. According to a law passed in August 1938, all male Jews were given the additional name "Israel," and women "Sara." This new name had to be inserted between our first names and surnames, and was stated on all identity papers, certificates, and so on as of January 1, 1939. "Violations," that is, not signing with this additional name, were punished with up to one month in prison.

I admired my parents' strength of character – they always managed to put on a cheerfully ironic face toward me when it came to this ridiculously petty regulation. My father talked about the two "Zores" he now had, adapted from the name of Sara. The Yiddish word *zores*, which has also become part of the German language, or *zaroht* in Hebrew, means trouble and strife.

The regulations passed against Jews in Germany in 1938 seemed to indicate that the Nazi regime was serious about the "solution to the Jewish question," as they called it. The regulation on the "registration of Jewish assets" passed on April 26, 1938, had a particularly profound effect. All Jews who owned more than 5,000 reichsmarks had to register their assets in Germany and abroad. This meant the Nazi authorities had complete insight into the entire Jewish assets in the Third Reich. My parents were not affected in this case; civil servants rarely had so much money. But I do remember very well the anxiety it caused among our closest friends. The friends of my parents who had welcomed Hitler as a necessary factor for creating order when the Nazis first took power now fell into an awkward silence. Others started to realize that they were no longer in control of their own lives.

In June of that year, another new regulation meant that Jewish businesses had to be publicly identified as such. I saw men busily painting the names of the Jewish owners in big white letters on the windows of stores on the Kurfürstendamm shopping street, of course with the additional name of "Israel" or "Sara." In July, Jewish doctors were banned from practicing and in September the same happened to Jewish lawyers. Some doctors were allowed to continue treating Jewish patients, but were referred to as *Krankenbehandler* or carers for the sick.

These were all signs of a development that practically robbed the Jews of their financial basis in Germany. They were also subject to petty control and humiliation by all means at the hands of the state.

On October 27, 1938, 15,000 to 17,000 Polish Jews living in Germany and people who had taken on German nationality after World War I but had had it revoked since 1933 were dragged out of their beds by the SS and the police one night, and driven to the Polish border. They were allowed to take ten reichsmarks and the clothes they were wearing. These people spent days wandering around in the no-man's land at the border to Poland. The Polish authorities initially refused them entry. To avoid having to allow Polish citizens of Jewish belief, persecuted in Germany, back into the country, the Polish government had taken the precautionary measure of deciding that Polish passports became invalid when the bearer had lived abroad for over five years. This regulation was symptomatic of the anti-Semitism that held the Polish population in its grip for many centuries. Jews were officially given equal rights in Poland in 1917, but the general attitude had not changed one bit. The pogroms continued into the early 1920s, prompting many Jews to flee to the west.

On the morning of October 28, 1938, many of the desks in my classroom were empty. When our teacher held roll call, many of the girls' names remained unanswered. Then she laid the missing girls' schoolbooks aside without a word. There was rarely a classroom as silent as ours was that morning. By that time, we were old enough to imagine what had happened that night of October 27 in the streets of Berlin where mainly Jewish families from the east had lived.

The links between German Jews and their Polish refugee counterparts were not very close in Berlin. Many German Jews were afraid that these people's different appearance would stoke the flames of anti-Semitism in Germany, and had always hoped the Poles would emigrate to America, their original destination. Like my parents, however, many Berlin Jews were appalled by the expulsion of the Polish Jews. The general opinion was that they had never wanted them to be treated like this. At that time, it was still inconceivable to the Berlin Jews that German Jews could ever be treated the same way. But less than two weeks later, on November 9, 1938, the Nazis opened up a new chapter in the file dedicated to the "solution of the Jewish question."

The parents of Herschel Grynszpan, a seventeen-year-old Jew of Polish extraction living in Paris, were among those expelled from Germany. Grynszpan swore revenge on the Germans. He went to the German Embassy and demanded to speak to the ambassador. Mistaking the embassy aide who received him, Ernst vom Rath, for the ambassador, he shot at him. Vom

Rath spent a week fighting for life on his deathbed. During this time, the Nazis initiated a terrible hate campaign against “world Jewry.” German newspapers ran giant headlines accusing the Jews of all kinds of crimes. They claimed they were swindlers, criminals, and thieves, and wanted to destroy the German people. Now, they proclaimed, the Jews had revealed their true nature. Over those few days, it was not only Ernst vom Rath’s mother who prayed for her son to live. Every conversation between Berlin’s Jews began with the words: “If only he doesn’t die...” But he did die. That was the starter signal for the first state-organized pogrom in Germany. And it had been well prepared. Days beforehand, police stations received orders not to prevent actions against Jews. 20,000 to 30,000 Jews were to be arrested, mainly wealthy people. SA men were to be allowed to ransack Jewish stores unhindered and place guards to ensure that nothing valuable was destroyed. Synagogues would be set alight. The adjacent houses of non-Jews were to be protected.

On the afternoon of November 9, 1938, we received several calls from friends, who told us in hurried and scared voices that one or other of their relatives had been arrested. The radio reported “spontaneous” acts of wrath by the people, who had set synagogues on fire and destroyed Jewish stores. 200 synagogues were burned down, 800 stores wrecked, 7,500 looted. Eyewitnesses reported that fire fighters stood idly by, and that the police did not intervene in favor of Jews or Jewish storeowners. Everything went according to the Nazi authorities’ plan.

On the morning of November 10, reports were coming thick and fast. All hell had broken loose on the streets of Berlin. Armed with axes, hatchets, and clubs, SA men had smashed the windows of Jewish stores, easily recognized by the white lettering, causing terrible destruction. Kurfürstendamm was dotted with stained store mannequins surrounded by broken glass. Rags fluttered in the wind in empty window frames. Looters had added to the picture of destruction and violence. The stores were a mess of pulled-out drawers, scattered clothing, broken furniture, smashed and trampled porcelain, dented hats. Dense clouds of smoke hung above Fasanenstrasse, where the famous synagogue was.

My parents wanted to see the destruction our friends had told us about on the telephone for themselves, and went out on the street in the early hours of the morning. As if paralyzed, they looked upon the havoc that had been wreaked. They saw non-Jewish passers-by shaking their heads in miscomprehension at the sight of all the chaos. The outbreak of “spontaneous wrath,” which had apparently taken on even worse forms in the provinces with attacks on the homes of Jewish people, was the harmless prelude to the “retribution,” as the Nazis called it, for the Polish Herschel Grynszpan’s “cowardly murder” of the German diplomat vom Rath in the Paris embassy.

My father had gone to work as usual on November 10, at the Theodor Herzl School on Kaiserdamm. A few hours later, two Gestapo officers rang at our door and demanded my father. They sat down at my father's desk and wanted to know where he was. My mother pretended she didn't know, and that she had tried to reach him at work in vain. As soon as my father turned up, the officers barked, he was to report to the local police station on the double. The moment they left our apartment, my mother reached for the telephone. "Get out of here, they're after you!" she shouted, and hung up right away. As if talking to herself, she told me that my father was sure to turn to his friend Dr. Otto Ostrowski, the former SPD mayor of the Prenzlauer Berg district, for advice. There was nothing more she could do.

We heard nothing from my father all that day. My mother was terrified, and kept worrying whether the Gestapo had got hold of him, like many other people we heard about. We didn't dare turn the lights on that evening, so that our neighbors would think we were away. Suddenly we heard the front door creak. My father crept into the apartment. "I can't just hide if the police want to pick me up," he said, to my mother's great dismay. He was still a Prussian civil servant, he added, and would spend the night in his own home. My mother ran to the telephone and asked our old friend Dr. Ostrowski to come and decide what to do. He didn't waste any time. He put my father in a taxi and sent him to his lady-friend's parents in the Neukölln district. A former headmistress at a secular school, Mrs. Giese, took my mother and me in so that we wouldn't have to face the Gestapo's questioning if they came to collect my father again.

My father occasionally visited us to talk about what to do next. We couldn't stay in hiding forever, although we were still in a fairly good way. The few times we had ventured out in the hours of darkness, we had seen men and women who seemed to be in the same situation as us, meeting in doorways, saying a few hasty words, exchanging packages and parting again as quickly as they had come.

"Don't you think I should give myself up?" my father asked again and again. He couldn't grasp the fact that it was right to resist this new state authority and its criminal laws by "illegal" means. If Dr. Ostrowski had not persuaded him, my father would probably never have done what my mother wanted. My parents now occasionally talked about emigrating. They decided to write to a cousin of my father who might be able to help us emigrate to England, as she was born there. Previously, our only communication had been greetings cards at New Year. Under the Nazis, we felt we had to keep our friends and acquaintances abroad informed about what was happening in Germany. We gave our letters to non-Jewish friends who were traveling abroad.

By these means, we sent a letter to my father's cousin Daisy Landa in London, asking whether she could help us get to England. When we went back home after two weeks in hiding, we found her reply. She would provide the guarantee sum required for temporary immigrants, to ensure that no costs arose for the state. It was useful, she wrote, that my father had applied for entry permission for Palestine years ago as a possible way of leaving Germany at some point, as that would show that he didn't intend to stay in England. Due to the high guarantee sum, however, she regretted that she could only place the application on behalf of my father. But we were convinced that my father would somehow be able to fetch my mother and me over once he was in England – despite all the barriers that Britain and all the other countries had set up against immigrants. That's why I rejected my parents' suggestion to send me to England with a party of children. Britain had agreed to accept 10,000 children without their parents, but I didn't want to be separated from my parents at any price.

The Gestapo's campaign of action against the Jews had lasted two weeks. After that, some of the men were released from the concentration camps, as long as they could prove they were planning to emigrate. Britain also offered to take in men who had been put into camps during those days in November. These poor men looked so shocking! Their heads were shaven, some of them had lost a great deal of weight, and others were hardly recognizable with all their bruises and injuries. Most of them seemed very distressed. Hardly any of them talked about what they had been through, not only because they had been made to sign a statement on their release that they had been treated well. No-one spoke openly of the people who had died in the camps, who were not only the old and the sick.

The physical suffering of the Jews was followed up by new laws and punishments. On November 11, 1938, the government ruled that the Jews in Germany had to pay one billion reichsmarks in reparation for the death of the diplomat vom Rath, payable in four installments. They also ordered the Jews to pay for the damages to shops and homes of November 9 on their own. And they had to repair the damages straight away. Jews were not allowed insurance compensation for damage to buildings. A communiqué stated that the damages were caused by the German people's aversion to international Jewry's agitation against Nazi Germany on November 8 and 9. What followed was bans forbidding Jews from visiting museums, movie theaters, theaters, concert halls, or parks.

The persecution and discrimination thought up by the Nazi government sent many Jews flooding back to the synagogues. They were looking for explanations, something to hold onto and comfort them over the suffering they were burdened with. This was the task of the rabbis, two of whom –

Dr. Joachim Prinz and Dr. Max Nussbaum – must have excelled at it. Their services were always overflowing with people, with many leaving the synagogues in tears. Whether they provided moral strength is a point of contention. Later, when the deportations began, most rabbis were no longer in Berlin. They had emigrated in good time.

The German Jews finally started to see what was really going on. They raced from one consulate to the next, often queuing for hours to find out about possible immigration terms, but they found out that most countries demanded impossible conditions: first-degree relatives as guarantors, large sums of money as a guarantee that the immigrants wouldn't incur costs for the state in question. The reason they gave was economic difficulties. German Jews were banned from taking more than ten reichsmarks out of the country. And how many German Jews had wealthy relatives abroad to act as guarantors, or freely available funds? The state had robbed them of their last assets in February 1939, demanding they hand in all gold, silver, platinum, gemstones, and pearls. In spite of all these difficulties, the number of emigrants rose to 120,000 in 1938/39, without doubt as a result of the increasingly aggressive anti-Jewish policies and the threat of a world war. These figures would certainly have been even higher if the western world had relaxed its very restrictive immigration policies.

It was almost like a never-ending board game, sitting desperately in front of a map and tracing their fingers across it to find a country that would let them in. Shanghai and Aleppo were two possibilities, but very few people knew anything about the places or the conditions there. "Have you tried New Zealand?" "What about Paraguay?" "10,000 marks for a visa to Venezuela?" they asked each other.

There was only one piece of good news. Columbia was prepared to take in people with agricultural skills. That didn't seem very attractive to most Berliners. But some people did get visas – by pretending to be gardeners.

One of the most shocking examples of how one country after another was closing its doors to immigrants was the odyssey of the St. Louis, which set sail from Germany for Cuba with more than 930 refugees on board on May 13, 1939. All of them thought they had valid visas, purchased for large sums of money. But shortly before they embarked, the Cuban president had declared their visas invalid – which the refugees didn't know. When the ship entered Cuban waters on May 27, the government refused permission to land. Following torturous negotiations, the ship was forced to chart a course back to Europe. The Cuban navy was under instructions to use force if necessary. Every attempt that the German captain made to unload his passengers in another country failed, for instance in the USA. Some of

the over 930 passengers were granted dubious asylum in Britain, Holland, Belgium, or France. The rest had to return to Germany on the St. Louis. There can be little doubt as to what happened to them.

All the smashed glass of November 9, 1938 did nothing to prompt the international community to alter its immigration policies one iota. Nor did the clear language of an announcement in the *Völkischer Beobachter*, the NSDAP newspaper, of November 23, stating that the German people had “started out towards the final and inevitably uncompromising solution of the Jewish problem.”

My father understood this language, and realized it was meant seriously. With a heavy heart, he began to tackle the formal hurdles the Nazis had placed before immigration. He collected his passport stamped with a “J,” in which the British consulate entered his visa. The next step was the *Reichsfluchtsteuer*, emigration tax that every Jew emigrating had to pay. A customs officer checked my father’s baggage and approved it for export. But he kept postponing the date of his departure. One day he received a summons to the Gestapo. A Jew had no right to bear a name containing the word *Deutsch*, meaning German, they told him. “Choose one of your grandmothers’ names.” My father opted for the name *Besser* (meaning better), and signed a prepared form to “voluntarily” give up the name of Deutschkron. It was this episode that finally made him see that he had to leave as soon as possible, as his passport and the British visa were issued in the name of Deutschkron.

A few weeks after he left, my mother and I were also summoned to the Gestapo to apply for a “voluntary” name change. The outbreak of war prevented the matter from being processed.

My father left for Britain on April 19, 1939. His three brothers and sisters, and of course my mother and I, said our farewells at Anhalter Station. My mother kept telling him to do everything in his power so that we could soon join him. “No matter what kind of work you find for us, get us out of here.” His brothers and sisters cried, as if they could foresee their own fates. Not one of them survived in the end. My father was as white as a sheet, and didn’t say a word, just nodding when anyone spoke to him.

The first letters he sent sounded interesting. He was discovering a new world. But they didn’t contain the news we were so urgently waiting for. He himself had no prospect of a job. He was working as a volunteer at Bloomsbury House, where they helped refugees and people who wanted to come to England. In the meantime, the international situation was growing tenser by the day, with war no longer out of the question. Hitler demanded the return of Danzig, declared a free city under the supervision of the League of Nations

in the Treaty of Versailles, and the Polish Corridor, which ensured Poland access to the sea. It seemed unlikely that the western powers would give in to his demands yet again. My mother wrote insistent letters to my father. "Don't you read the newspapers?" Undisguised references to the threat of war in letters abroad, which were often censored, could be interpreted as espionage. She wrung her hands in desperation whenever he either failed to react in his letters, or explained his inability to fulfill our request.

In early August, Paula Fürst, the former headmistress of the Theodor Herzl School, accompanied a group of children on a Kindertransport to England. My mother begged her to explain to my father, if he hadn't realized for himself, that there was a real threat of war. She must have made an impression on him. Shortly after Paula Fürst returned to Berlin, we received the exhilarating news that my mother and I could work as domestic servants for a professor in Glasgow. Paula Fürst, incidentally, could have stayed in England, as her friends expected her to do. But she came back to Berlin because she didn't know what to do with herself in Britain. She explained her decision by saying that in Berlin she had a job to do, an apartment, friends, and a pension. She was deported in June 1942. She was one of the 200,000 Jews remaining in Germany when the war broke out, most of them with no chance of leaving the country.

My mother got everything ready for our emigration. Some of our belongings that seemed useful for starting a new life abroad were packed up and sent to the port of Hamburg to await a call to England. We had to sell everything else. We handed the sale over to a "specialist," who undertook the task in a routine and emotionless way. The buyers turned up and pounced on the things on sale. "It's just dead weight for you," they told us, pushing the prices down. It was hard to cope with. When the last things had been sold or packed up in the container, my mother rented a furnished room for us to live in while we waited to emigrate. She wasn't choosy about the room. It was dark, with heavy old furniture and a rather dirty kitchen and bathroom. Friends of ours lived in the room next door, which made things easier for us. "It's just for a little while," they comforted us.

August 1939 was pure torture for us. It became more and more obvious every day that Hitler wanted war. The newspapers were full of descriptions of terrible crimes allegedly perpetrated by Poles on ethnic Germans. The Germans left no room for doubt that they would rush to their compatriots' aid if German lives continued to be threatened. Poland had a military assistance pact with Britain and France. Would they stand by this pact if the Nazis invaded Poland? Before we had finished thinking about this question, we heard the shocking news of a friendship pact between the Soviet Union and the Nazi Reich. We couldn't understand it. It was an unbelievable betrayal of the free world by

the Soviet Union, the natural ally in fighting the Nazis. We found it slightly reassuring for the moment that this new alliance would at least reduce the threat of war for the time being. We thought it unlikely that the western allies would stand by the pact with Poland if it meant having to go to war against the Nazi Reich and the Soviet Union. But we were wrong.

A few days after Moscow and Berlin signed their friendship pact on August 23, the doorwoman in our building handed out food ration cards. Ours were marked with a “J” and prevented us from buying special rations and unrationed goods. The streets were full of young men rushing to the army offices with parcels under their arms. Horses were led through the city. There was no longer any doubt; Hitler was eagerly preparing for war. The pact with the Soviet Union enabled him to provoke the west without fear of intervention from the east. A simulated Polish attack on the Gleiwitz radio transmission station provided the perfect excuse. On September 1, German troops crossed the Polish border. Two days later, on September 3, the western powers declared war on Nazi Germany. My mother tried to call my father in London again. “England is not answering any more,” the telephone operator said, and it remained that way for six long years.

Germany was at war. It still seemed unreal, apart from the fact that there was an air raid warning on the afternoon of that September 1. Even today, no one really knows whether a foreign airplane had actually flown into German airspace. Everyone in our building trooped obediently down to the basement with their regulation air raid bags containing drinking water and medicines, gas masks hung around their necks. The air raid warden put on a show of importance in his new uniform, checking which of the residents were present and giving them instructions on what to do in an emergency. He showed us Jews to a corner of the basement, where we sat in silence, not daring to look at our “Aryan” neighbors. There was a later regulation that Jews had to stay in the basements until the very end of the all-clear, so that they couldn’t send light signals to the enemy.

The outbreak of war was a welcome opportunity for the government to pass many new regulations against Jews, to stop them from practicing “subversive activities,” so the Nazis said. Jews had to hand in their radios, and their telephone lines were cut off. They were not allowed to leave their homes between eight in the evening and six in the morning, or from nine in the evening in the summer. The official justification was that Jews had used the blacked-out streets to assault “Aryan” women. Jews had to hand in all furs, binoculars, cameras, and electrical devices, including irons.

Stores were banned from selling soap to Jews. Men who grew beards for lack of shaving soap would be easier to recognize as Jews, was the official

explanation. Jews were not allowed to go to non-Jewish barbers and hairdressers. All the Jewish barbers' shops had been closed down long before. Laundries were banned from washing Jewish people's clothes. These are just a few examples of the rules and regulations that made life difficult for Jews. They were extended to other areas over the years, up to the final deportation of the Jews from Berlin in February 1943.

My mother kept up her habit of ignoring these rules and regulations as far as possible. We took the things we were supposed to hand over to the Nazis to our non-Jewish friends, who we called "*Aufbewahrier*" – a pun on Aryan keepers. Almost every Jewish family had a good friend like that who did them this kind of favor. Many an expensive Persian rug spent years in Berlin garden sheds, valuable musical instruments were kept in damp basements, fur coats mothballed in deep closets. There was probably no one who couldn't find a hairdresser or a laundry to serve them secretly.

When war broke out, our ugly rented room on Hohenstaufenstrasse was suddenly not a temporary station on the way to freedom any more. When we had moved in, most of the rooms in the large apartment were let to people in a similar situation to my mother and me.

They lived as if in a waiting room. They were waiting for papers that would open the doors to foreign countries, so that they could flee from persecution in Germany. One of them would say, "I've applied for a visa to Panama, and I'm sure I'll get it any day now." Another of our neighbors had spent the last of his money, 10,000 reichsmarks, on a visa for Venezuela. Others were certain that their affidavit for the USA would arrive in a matter of days. Some relied on relatives who had already emigrated, and had promised to help their family join them. Letters arrived asking for patience, as the relatives were not in a financial position to help just yet. It was as if those who had already left the country had forgotten what it was like to be persecuted in Nazi Germany.

In fact, there were actually several emigrations at the last minute. In their desperation, some people made the daring move to Shanghai, where conditions were said to be poor. It was mostly only young people who had the courage for an illegal immigration to Palestine, on ships that were barely seaworthy. Britain, which held the mandate over Palestine, restricted immigration to Palestine for five years in May 1939. Only a few of the many thousands who applied to enter the USA got their affidavit in time, and were able to leave Germany legally just before the USA joined the war (in December 1941).

On October 23, 1941, the Nazis passed a ban on emigration for the length of the war. There were about 70,000 Jews still living in Berlin at that time.

My mother didn't agree with some of our non-Jewish friends who thought the war would be over in three months' time. They trusted in the strength of the western allies. We started looking for another furnished room we liked better than the first, and found it at number 7, Solinger Strasse. A kind old couple with two daughters took us in. The oldest daughter had emigrated to Australia and managed to get immigration visas for her parents and her sister. But they couldn't leave. Their younger daughter suffered from tuberculosis and so was not allowed into Australia. Her parents decided to stay with her in Germany.

Hildchen, their sick daughter, was in her mid-twenties. She got neither the medicine she needed to get better, nor milk and butter. Food rations for Jews were constantly reduced, with no regard for the sick. On some days, Hildchen was determined to live. She invited friends around, who danced and celebrated with her and pretended everything was normal. Some of them were young Jewish doctors, who must have known what she was going through. I didn't understand it all, and I envied these young people's apparent carelessness. Of course they took no notice of me, a seventeen-year-old girl. Hildchen was absolutely exhausted after these dancing parties, and it took her days to recover. Her parents gave her their rations to help her get well again.

As our emigration had been postponed indefinitely and I had graduated from the Jewish Grammar School, I had to find something to do – anything. The only place I could get any training was the Jewish Kindergarten Teachers' Training College at 36, Wangenheimstrasse in the Grunewald district. I had always wanted to be a teacher, so the course was not such a bad idea. I was only able to get a place with the help of Paula Fürst. Thanks to the Nazis' regulations, the only alternatives were working in a factory or a Jewish household so it was understandable that I preferred to train as a kindergarten teacher. Many of the students would have gone to university under normal circumstances, which made the level of training unusually high, especially in didactics and psychology, for example. I found the practical work that was part of our training very interesting, too, as it gave me an insight into sides of Jewish life in Berlin I had never known before.

The Keil family needed me to clean their rooms and look after their two children. They lived in the Jewish Community's poorhouse behind the synagogue on Pestalozzistrasse. They had once been well off, owning a chain of shoemakers' workshops. I can't recall why, but the father was arrested and the workshops were closed down. By the time he was released, he was no longer fit to work. His wife was pregnant, and they lived in a single room, furnished only with iron bedsteads, a table, and a couple of chairs. Their seven-year-old son slept in a tiny room next door. They got their food from the Jewish Community, which provided lunch for the poor in its backyard.

After that, I looked after two old ladies in Cauerstrasse. The two of them lived as if on a desert island. No-one took care of them. They had no family. They could hardly walk and were eternally grateful for anything I did for them.

My final training placement was with a young woman with a baby. Her husband was in a concentration camp. The woman and her child lived in a dark, musty room in the east of Berlin. She shared a toilet in the corridor with other tenants. The baby, who must have been two years old, was not yet quite potty-trained. When the mother noticed the child had soiled itself, she hit it in the stomach with a stick. I couldn't get the child's screams out of my mind until hours after I came home.

I was forced to end my training after a year. The government cancelled my father's pension, which my mother was entitled to, as he was resident in an enemy country, so I had to start earning money. I got a job as a domestic help for the family of Dr. Conrad Cohen, at 8, Lietzenburger Strasse. Dr. Cohen held an important position in the Reich Association of Jews in Germany. Cohen, his wife, their eleven-year-old daughter, and his parents, who had moved to Berlin from Breslau, lived in a five-room apartment. It was still obvious that they were wealthy. The floors were covered with Persian rugs, most of the furniture was antique, and they had a lot of crystal and valuable paintings. The first time I set foot in the apartment, I couldn't believe that Jews lived there. Other once-rich Jews had had to sell such valuable belongings long ago. The Nazis had confiscated their bank accounts, leaving only what they considered necessary for everyday survival. Dr. Cohen told me he couldn't live in any other surroundings. He didn't tell me how it was possible. The Cohens had a lot of visitors – including Hanna Kaminski and Cora Berliner, colleagues of Dr. Cohen. They also numbered the former judge Dr. Arthur Lilienthal and the lawyer Dr. Eugen Fuchs – people who had once been well known beyond the Jewish community. They talked about Hegel and discussed Kant's theses, as if their lives were an unchanged round of intellectual stimulation. I stayed with the Cohens for a year. Then a new regulation applying to all Jews forced me to find work in a factory in April 1940.

There was a labor exchange for Jews at 15, Fontanepromenade in the Neukölln district. The jobs on offer were in ammunition factories, road construction, street cleaning, sewage farms, and coal stockpiles. We were banned from looking for our own jobs. Nevertheless, Dr. Cohen sent me to a lady from the Jewish Community who said she knew of employers who treated Jews well. Otto Weidt, the owner of a workshop for the blind making brooms and brushes, was one of them. When I went to his workshop at 39, Rosenthaler Strasse in the Mitte district, I saw that he was almost completely blind.

He asked me about myself and my family. He was particularly interested in my father's former work for the Social Democratic Party. It was easy enough to see that Weidt hated the Nazis. He told me to come to the labor exchange for Jews the next day. There would be other men and women there he wanted to take on. Weidt himself disappeared into the office of the director, Alfred Eschhaus. Suddenly, the door flew open and Eschhaus came running out, shouting: "You dirty Jews, you kikes, I'll teach you some *mores* (the Yiddish word for manners). How dare you look for your own jobs?"

An employee came running up at the noise, and Eschhaus ordered him to give us the hardest jobs as a punishment for acting on our own initiative. I was sent to ACETA, a subsidiary of IG-Farben in Lichtenberg, which manufactured parachute silk. This meant ten hours a day standing at a machine and making sure the thread didn't tear or the spindles run out. We had a breakfast room for our breaks, furnished only with a table, and no chairs. We had to fix the "Jewish star" to our work coats, so that nobody in the factory would talk to us by mistake. The forewoman only spoke to us from a distance of three feet. We were cursed at and insulted every day. The only thing on the Jewish women's minds was how to get out of working at that factory. Anyone who could prove they had gynecological problems, stomach ulcers, or bone problems was not allowed to work standing up. This was decided by the IG-Farben health plan, which still had to give Jewish workers sick pay at that time. Jewish women found and invented various ways to get out of the factory.

I wracked my brains, but as a robust nineteen-year-old, I couldn't find a suitable health problem. Then one day I had an idea – I went to work in high-heeled dancing shoes. That meant thirteen hours on my feet, as we weren't allowed to sit down on public transport, either. After three days of this, I couldn't move my right knee. Following unpleasant examinations and the support of a non-Jewish doctor who attested that I was not allowed to work standing up, IG-Farben finally laid me off.

Otto Weidt grinned with enthusiasm at my trick, and promised to have another try at getting me employed in his workshop at the next opportunity. One day, he took his white cane and his blind person's armband, which he only wore to create a certain atmosphere on official business. I bandaged up my injured knee, took a cane of my own, and the two of us headed to the labor exchange. Weidt had a package under his arm. This time Eschhaus bowed and scraped before him and lead him into his office. A few minutes later both came out again, Weidt without the package he had taken in. Eschhaus followed him and said, looking at me: "We're so grateful, Mr. Weidt, that you always take these ones off our hands who we can't place anywhere else." Once we were out of sight of the labor exchange, Weidt threw away his cane and took off his armband, I started playing around with my cane, and we laughed and laughed.

When we got back to the workshop, Weidt admitted he didn't actually have any work for me to do. But he made work for me. I had to operate the telephone, set up a dispatch system for incoming and outgoing goods, and write invoices. None of these jobs would really have needed a full-time employee.

Otto Weidt employed about thirty blind and deaf Jews. He had a major order for brooms and brushes from the armed forces, which meant his workshop was classified as "important for the war effort." As a result, he was allocated raw materials and could start manufacturing. But he didn't deliver the goods he made immediately to the Wehrmacht. Whenever they reminded him of any delayed goods, he sent out part of the order and told them the reason for the delay was a lack of raw materials. In fact, though, he used some of the goods made from the raw materials for his own business. Large department stores bought them in exchange for things that were hard to come by on the market. He used these to bribe government officials, and gave his workers tobacco and food. He occasionally invited us office workers to a social evening with plenty of food and wine. No matter how many times he filled our glasses, none of us ever got drunk. Our nerves were so tense as a result of the constant repression that we never got even the slightest bit merry.

One of the most drastic repressions was the "Jewish star" that we had to fasten to our outer garments. I wore this "star" for the first time on that September 19, 1941. I walked to the subway station with my colleague Alice Licht, as I did every day. Naturally, we were afraid of reactions from the people on the streets. But there were none. People looked at us, of course, some of them with furtive friendliness, others with eyes full of hate, and the majority looked straight through us. Every now and then, someone put something in my coat pocket on a crowded train – an apple or a few meat ration stamps, obviously knowing that the food rations for Jews were constantly being reduced. On that first day I wore the "star," a gentleman offered me his seat on the train. I turned it down, as we were banned from sitting down on public transport. He insisted, only giving up when I explained that it wasn't him but me who would be arrested if I took his seat wearing the "star" on my coat.

It was especially hard for Jewish children. They had to wear the "star" from the age of six. As children can be cruel and were just as exposed to the constant anti-Semitic agitation as adults, many of them picked on Jewish children and beat them up, unless their parents had the courage to correct their image of Jews.

Between four and five in the afternoon, Berlin's streets in certain areas were crowded with Jewish women. That was the only hour they were allowed to do

their shopping. With the “star” on their coats, they couldn’t have dared to go shopping at any other time. The women raced from one shop to the next, and this rush made it impossible for shopkeepers to give their regular customers anything under the counter, as many of them had used to do.

The “star” restricted my life, too. Before I had to wear it, I had attended cultural events despite the ban. That would have been impossible with the “star.” But I saw these cultural evenings as an essential distraction from the constant torments, keeping up my energy and will. So I thought of a way to leave home wearing the “star,” finding a dark corner to change my jacket with the “star” for one without, which I took along in a bag. This meant I also escaped from the captivity we were supposed to be in, forced to stay at home between eight in the evening and six in the morning. They had taken our radios away a long time ago. We weren’t allowed to buy newspapers. There were no new books available to us, and we wouldn’t have liked them anyway. Books by foreign and Jewish writers were banned. Most people had had to sell their private libraries along with the rest of their belongings.

Meeting up with friends and relatives was almost impossible because of the ban on leaving home after eight o’ clock. All the Jewish people capable of working were forced to do heavy labor. Because most of them were unused to physical work, they were far too exhausted to have a social life. The only time they had for meeting people was Sundays, but most people needed to rest and summon up new energy for the coming working week then.

As a favor to an old friend of my mother’s family, we moved again. Olga Rosenberg had a large apartment on Bayrischer Platz with a few beautiful antiques, which she had to sell one by one to survive. She was exactly the way one imagined an old society lady at the time. Always well dressed, she valued good manners and lived by the rules of *savoir vivre*. Her life revolved around a regular coffee afternoon with her friends. The old ladies played cards and acted as if life all around them hadn’t changed a bit. They never talked about politics or their situation as Jewish women. My mother and I, however, enjoyed the company of our neighbor Elsa Becherer, who used to give us little treats she knew weren’t included in our rations, via the back door to our apartment.

Every now and then, she invited me to come and listen to the English radio station BBC, which we found provided a more accurate version of the war’s progress than the German radio stations. The penalty for listening to foreign radio was death, even for non-Jews, but that didn’t stop people who longed for the end of the Nazi regime, as we did. Those evenings with Mrs. Becherer and her friends distracted me from my fears of what the Nazis had in store for us next. We knew nothing of the government’s instructions to the Chief of

the Security Police and the SD (security service), Reinhard Heydrich, of July 31, 1941, to make all the necessary preparations for a “final solution to the Jewish question” in the territories under German influence in Europe. Mrs. Becherer, who had studied astrology, tried to cheer us up. She swore that the constellation of the stars predicted a speedy end to the Nazis and to our suffering. She was so convincing, we almost believed it.

For the time being, though, there were more and more petty regulations, bans, and restrictive measures against us. First it was the ban on using telephone booths. Then we were banned from buying meat, eggs, fruit, vegetables, and cake. Luckily, our butcher Mr. Krachudel helped us in secret, as did the Junghans family, who had opened a fruit and vegetable shop with my father’s help after 1933. Apartments where Jews lived had to be marked with the “star.” Pets had to be handed in for killing – including guide dogs for the blind. This list is, of course, incomplete. It was hard enough for us to adapt our lives to all the restrictions. I was always consciously breaking them, which seemed to us to be no less dangerous than actually abiding by them.

One day at the beginning of October 1941, our roommate Klara Hohenstein received a form from the Jewish Community, in which she had to list her possessions – including bed linen and underwear. We didn’t take these “lists,” as we called them, very seriously, thinking we would soon get them, too. But on October 16, Mr. Hefter, an employee of the Jewish Community, came rushing into the workshop for the blind. He seemed almost bewildered, demanding to speak to Otto Weidt immediately. He told him what was still top secret, that one thousand Jews would be picked up from their homes and deported that evening. The thousand people were those who had received the “lists.” I didn’t want to believe it, but we still couldn’t stop thinking about Mrs. Hohenstein, a woman of about 65 in ill health who looked after her grandchildren. My mother and I spent hours debating whether to tell Mrs. Hohenstein the news. We didn’t in the end. What would have been the point? And who knew if it was even true? But then, just after eight o’ clock that evening, two Gestapo officers demanded to be let into Mrs. Hohenstein’s room. No more than ten minutes later, Mrs. Hohenstein came to us, her face as white as a sheet, to tell us she was being taken away; the “gentlemen” didn’t know where she was going. Then the “gentlemen” led her to the door. We heard it slam behind them and listened to the sound of Mrs. Hohenstein’s quiet little steps and the echo of boots stamping down the stairs. Then all was silence again.

The next morning, the news quickly went round that the thousand or so people who had been picked up the evening before had been taken to the synagogue in Levetzowstrasse. No one was allowed in to see them. A few days later, they were put onto trains at Putlitzstrasse Station and, as we found out later in Berlin, transported to the Litzmannstadt Ghetto (Łódź). From there,

we actually received a pre-printed postcard from Mrs. Hohenstein bearing the words: "I am well. I am in Łódź. Send me parcels." The card also bore a number, which had presumably been tattooed onto her arm by that point.

From then on, approximately one thousand people were transported out of Berlin every month. We never found out where they were sent. The Gestapo gave the Jewish Community instructions on what kind of people they wanted to have deported each time. The Jewish Community had to compile the lists of names. Sometimes the people were welfare recipients, sometimes they were people with disabilities, or women with children, or people the factories could do without. They were prepared for their "migration," as it was officially called, by the "lists," in which they had to enter their belongings, and a notice of when they would be picked up. The Jewish Community added a note of its own: "We cordially request that you follow these instructions most precisely and make preparations for the transport with calm and composure. The members affected must be aware that their personal behavior and orderly fulfillment of all instructions can make a decisive contribution to the smooth procedure of the transport. It goes without saying that we will do everything permissible to provide the members of our community with support and any possible help."

The Jewish Community had to provide stewards to pick up the people selected. They were now taken to 26, Große Hamburger Strasse, a former Jewish Community old people's home. The trains now left from the Grunewald Freight Station. Rumor had it that they had attracted too much attention from the general public at Putilitzstrasse Station. After each of these transports, those who had been spared from deportation for the time being breathed a sigh of relief. But a few days later, the fear that they might be selected for the next transport set in again.

Around 7,000 people threatened by deportation committed suicide between 1941 and 1945.

Horror was caused among all those Jews still remaining in Berlin by a group of young Jewish Communists who carried out a political attack on May 18, 1942. They set fire to a stand at a Nazi-run exhibition with the cynical title "The Soviet Paradise," in protest against what they considered slanderous exhibits. Many of the members of this group, called the "Baum Group" after their leader Herbert Baum, were arrested and condemned to death. Nine days after the arson attack, on May 27, 1942, the Gestapo rounded up 500 Jewish men and took them to Sachsenhausen concentration camp – 250 of them were shot there and then, and the others were murdered at a later date or deported to the Auschwitz-Birkenau extermination camp. The relatives of those shot were deported to the Theresienstadt Ghetto.

In 1942, the Nazi government stepped up its campaign against the Jews. Up until then, the leading functionaries in the Jewish Community and the Reich Association of Jews had felt relatively safe, as they were carrying out government orders. But then their relations with the Gestapo turned into a kind of tightrope act. Even a missing bar of soap in one of the Jewish institutions under Gestapo supervision could spell the end of the person in charge. And that's exactly what happened. Dr. Conrad Cohen was arrested on a petty charge, and committed suicide in Mauthausen concentration camp. At precisely eight in the morning of June 22, 1942, the Gestapo turned up at the Reich Association of Jews in Kantstrasse. Any employee arriving after that point was immediately arrested. The Gestapo used a similar tactic with the employees of the Jewish Community. They drove to the administration building in Oranienburger Strasse and blocked all the exits. The Gestapo declared that as the community had shrunk due to the deportations, it didn't need such a large administrative body any more. They had come to pick up the superfluous functionaries.

"I've got the lists, Mr. Weidt." His whole body shaking, blind Levy held the forms out to his boss. By now, every Jew in Berlin knew what the forms meant. Weidt didn't say a word, almost tore the papers out of Levy's hand, and had someone fetch his white cane and armband. Nobody knew where he went. It was unusually silent in the workshop. Everyone assumed that Weidt had gone to the Gestapo with Levy's "lists." When Weidt came back, that turned out to be true. He told us he had explained to the Gestapo that he couldn't fulfill his Wehrmacht orders if they took away his workers. Even the Gestapo had seen his point, he said. Levy was taken off the deportation list. Weidt managed to claim his workers back several times in this same way.

Then one day, two Gestapo officers suddenly turned up in the workshop unannounced, and told the blind workers to get ready to go with them. They took no notice of Otto Weidt's protests. The blind workers packed up their things and stumbled down the spiral staircase, each one supporting another. In a matter of minutes, the Gestapo had shoved them into a furniture van and taken them away. Otto Weidt left the office almost simultaneously. Once again, he explained to the Gestapo officers what the deportation of his workers would mean for him. He lent extra emphasis to his words with a parcel that he left behind. It contained a gift of goods in short supply that Otto Weidt had got hold of through his wheeling and dealing.

Once again, the Gestapo gave in to him. Otto Weidt himself went to the collection point and picked up his blind workers. They all walked back together from Große Hamburger Strasse to Rosenthaler Strasse, Weidt leading his blind workers, still in the aprons they had been wearing when they were taken away. "It worked this time, but will it next time...?" Weidt was skeptical.

The deportations went on, relentlessly.

My father's sister Elsa sent us a message to say that she and her husband were due for deportation. She asked us to come and visit them one last time. As they lived in Spandau on the outskirts of Berlin, we had almost lost contact. Jews had had their telephones confiscated, and were only allowed to use public transport to and from work. My mother and I took off our "stars" and went to Spandau. In a tiny room they had been allocated – their apartment had been taken away from them long ago – two tightly packed backpacks stood ready and waiting. The room was stuffed full of furniture that had once belonged in a grand apartment. My aunt and uncle were sitting waiting and crying. "Send my regards to Martin," my aunt kept saying, over and over again. My father was her favorite brother. My mother stayed incredibly calm, saying just as often, although she didn't believe it: "But we'll see each other again." My aunt shook her head. She could sense what was coming, like most Jews. But they didn't want to acknowledge it, and told themselves and everyone else that they would be sent to labor camps, where things were sure to be tough. My aunt asked us to leave. They were to be picked up at an allotted hour. We were only a few steps away from the house when we saw the truck arrive. Two Jewish stewards with the "star" on their coats jumped out, disappeared into the building, and came back with my relatives. My aunt came first, shouldering her much too large backpack, with my uncle stumbling after her. They never looked back at the city they had lived in for over thirty years.

In June 1942, the first transports of people over 65 years of age left for Theresienstadt, which was considered a privileged camp where "deserving" functionaries from the Jewish Community were sent. Some wealthy old people were forced to sign a home contract, making them paying inhabitants of the ghetto. Deliberately misled, many of them believed they would be looked after there like in an old people's home.

One day, Jewish people had to evacuate apartments in buildings belonging to "Aryan" owners. My mother and I had to leave Olga Rosenberg's apartment for a "Jews' building" at 22, Bamberger Strasse. The house, where two people had to share each room, was owned by a Jew. There were eleven of us living in one apartment, with five large rooms and one tiny one. There was one kitchen and one toilet.

Early mornings in the apartment were terrible. Everyone wanted to get to work on time; unpunctuality could provide an excuse for deportation. Anyone who dared to spend too long in the bathroom was driven out by wild knocking on the door, or hysterical screaming and shouting.

An attempt to introduce a kind of rota failed because people worked different shifts. The tenants started arguing and the divisions soon became irreconcilable. Fear of what might happen the next day made everything even worse. There were constant new rules, laws, and bans. Some of the tenants were separated from their families. Mothers were worried about their children who had been sent to Britain, who they hadn't heard from since the outbreak of war. We were just as worried about my father. On Sundays, most of us slept all day or crept about our ugly and under-furnished rooms.

One day we heard that Gestapo officers from Vienna were being brought to work in Berlin. Vienna was already "cleansed of Jews," but Berlin had fallen behind. The Vienna Gestapo used a different method to their Berlin colleagues before them. They abolished the "lists" and stopped informing people of the date they would be picked up. They used large furniture trucks, driving up to "Jewish buildings." Everything happened very quickly. People were driven into the trucks with only the clothes on their backs. And when they called out for their children, husbands, or wives, they were simply told, "You'll meet them later."

Three Jews came to Berlin along with the Vienna Gestapo. These men had assisted them in Vienna. My colleague Alice Licht knew one of them, Robert Gerö, from her former work for the Aid Association of Jews in Germany. She introduced him to Otto Weidt, who was practically obsequious to Gerö, as he promised to keep the furniture trucks away from the buildings where Alice and I lived as long as possible. He kept that promise, until one day he told me: "You're going to have to decide now whether to be deported or go underground." There weren't enough "Jewish buildings" left in Berlin to avoid the ones Alice and I lived in any more.

One day, Emma Gumz, who ran a laundry and hot mangling service with her husband Franz at 17, Knesebeckstrasse in the Charlottenburg district, and had been washing our laundry for years, pressurized my mother to make her a promise. She didn't say what it was. My mother eventually gave in and then asked what she had promised her. The laundress answered: "You've just promised that you and Inge won't let yourselves be deported like the others." My mother was shocked, and asked: "What's got into you to talk like that? How on earth do you think we can do that?" Mrs. Gumz broke down in tears and told my mother about her neighbors' son Fritz, who had been a soldier in Poland and seen "what they do there to Jews." He had had to sign a paper promising not to speak about it. "But who could do that?" Emma Gumz asked, adding: "We'll help you. I promise you." Her husband and she had already made up their minds. "You come to us, we'll hide you."

My mother decided to consult an old friend of my father's, the former mayor of the Prenzlauer Berg district, Dr. Otto Ostrowski. "The Gumzs are such simple people that they might not realize the consequences of their intentions," she told him. But Dr. Ostrowski saw things differently: "That's a great idea," he crowed. "We'll help you too, of course." And there were other people in Berlin who would be prepared to help, he told my mother. He mentioned Walter Rieck, whose family we had lived with in Uhlandstrasse. He managed to convince my mother that we should risk going underground.

She started making preparations. Every afternoon when I came home from work, after my mother had already left for her night shift at the Loewe battery factory, I found a packed suitcase in our room. The next morning, I took it with me to the workshop for the blind. According to a new law, Jews weren't allowed control over their property. They were referred to as beneficiaries of state loans. Otto Weidt arranged for two couches to be picked up in his company van. These last remnants of our belongings ended up in the workshop basement.

I had informed Otto Weidt about our plan to go into hiding. "You can carry on working for me," he told me; he would try to legalize it. A few days later, Weidt asked me for fifty marks for a workbook, which he had bought from a prostitute via a friend. She didn't want to work in a factory until she was 55, like all other German women had to. She preferred to carry on in her old trade, so she sold her workbook. I was now Gertrud Dereszewski, registered with the labor exchange and the health insurance company.

On January 15, 1943, we took two small cases containing the bare minimum we thought we'd need in hiding, and walked to number 17, Knesebeckstrasse. Mrs. Gumz broke out in a grin when she saw us coming. "I'm so proud I managed to persuade you." She showed us to a tiny room at the back of the gloomy ground-floor apartment behind the store. I can't remember the first night of our new life. I was so exhausted that I fell asleep the moment I got into the oak bed I now had to share with my mother.

The next morning, I went to work as usual at the Otto Weidt Workshop for the Blind. My existence had been legalized, so to speak, by Gertrud Dereszewski's documents. We told Weidt's customers and representatives who knew me that I had got married. My daily work was the same as ever. My mother found it difficult doing nothing. She tried her best to help around the house, but it didn't really work, as the Gumz family didn't have a fixed routine. My mother couldn't even help out in the kitchen, as the stove was in the store, where the laundry was hung from the ceiling to dry, the ironing woman smoothed starched collars with the gas iron, and the hot mangle was in almost constant operation. "Look on the bright side, just take a bit of a

rest,” was Mrs. Gumz’s reaction. She didn’t understand that my mother’s new situation as an “illegal” Jew meant she just couldn’t relax. But we still slept much more soundly than before, as we were no longer worried about what new petty rules and torments the next day would bring.

A few days after we went underground, I was in my little office at the workshop, when I heard a familiar woman’s voice that I couldn’t quite identify, asking after me. “Miss Deutschkron hasn’t turned up for days now. What do you want from her?” Otto Weidt asked the woman, who I finally recognized as the “Aryan” wife of one of our roommates at 22, Bamberger Strasse. I ducked down under my desk. My colleague Alice Licht sat down in front of it to make sure I couldn’t be seen. “The Deutschkrons have disappeared, and they haven’t paid their gas or electricity bills. And they took the door key with them, too.” Weidt’s reaction was quick as a flash. “Now I come to think of it, Miss Deutschkron didn’t collect her last wages.” He told the woman he could cover the unpaid bills out of this money, but he didn’t know what to do about the key. The woman left the workshop, pleased about the money. I crawled out of my hiding place, embarrassed. I hadn’t even thought about the bills. “Never mind. Practice makes perfect,” Otto Weidt consoled me. A few days later, I went out to Grünau, on the outskirts of Berlin, to post a letter to the people in our old apartment, containing the key and more money for the bills. Everything had gone so fast, I apologized.

We could tell that the Jews’ situation was reaching a climax. Weidt rented a store in Neanderstrasse (now Heinrich-Heine-Strasse), which he claimed was to be an extra storeroom for his workshop. My colleague Alice and her parents went into hiding there, with large street brooms in the storefront blocking the view to the inside. Then Weidt separated off the last room of the workshop at 39, Rosenthaler Strasse, which was laid out as a series of rooms leading one into another, by pushing a heavy wardrobe in front of the door. Coats and dresses hung in the wardrobe. But if you pushed them aside you could see that there was no back wall behind them. This was how the four members of the Horn family got into their later hiding place. Otto Weidt placed the twin Bernstein sisters, about eighteen years old, one of whom was blind and worked for the Workshop for the Blind from home, with an acquaintance whose apartment was directly opposite the police station on Alexanderplatz. No one knows how many people Otto Weidt helped to hide, for whom he also had to provide food.

It was very unpleasant for Mrs. Gumz, but she had to tell us that a neighbor had asked who her visitors were who had been there for such a long time. She told the woman it was a cousin from her home in Pomerania. “We’ll have to leave,” my mother whispered to me, “how long can a visitor stay?” Mrs. Gumz advised us to talk to our other friends about what to do next.

Dr. Ostrowski listened to what we had to say and then said simply: "Sure, we'll help you." Emma Gumz wept bitterly when we said goodbye to her. She kept repeating: "You will come and visit us, won't you?" almost begging. She couldn't get over the fact that she was letting us down.

We spent the next night sleeping on the living-room floor of the tiny apartment shared by Grete Sommer and her partner Dr. Otto Ostrowski. Grete was never short of a good idea. She decided to make us up somewhere to sleep in her store, at 64, Westfälische Strasse. We laid mattresses on the floor behind the counter every evening. There was a toilet and a washbasin in the basement. We weren't allowed to turn the light on, in case someone thought there had been a break-in. The following morning, we were the first customers to leave the store, so to speak. My mother went to Grete's nearby apartment to help with the housework, and I went to work at the workshop for the blind as usual. But this arrangement was no good for the weekends. It was mid-February and still very cold. Nevertheless, Otto and Grete decided to take us out to their boathouse in Schildhorn. Dr. Ostrowski had bought a boat in 1933, and he and his political friends used to sail out far along the River Havel, so as to discuss politics undisturbed.

It was obvious that we needed some other accommodation that was less complicated. Ostrowski turned to other former Social Democrats for help. Mr. and Mrs. Garn in Olivaer Strasse, in the Prenzlauer Berg district, were immediately willing to take us in. We slept on a sofa in the kitchen. Mr. Garn had previously worked for the metalworkers' union, and had been sacked by the Nazis. Both of them must have been over sixty, and Mrs. Garn suffered from heart disease. One day she told us honestly and openly that her heart couldn't take the stress of us being there. Whenever there was a ring at the door, she had palpitations. The two of them were very sad to see us go. We went back to Dr. Ostrowski's small apartment in Halensee.

"This is the Criminal Investigation Department," said a voice on the other end of the telephone. "Does a certain Gertrud Dereszewski work for you?" Shocked, I told the caller I would pass him on to the personnel department, although of course we didn't have one. Otto Weidt reacted straight away, saying that Miss Dereszewski hadn't come to work for some time. When the police informed him that Miss Dereszewski had been arrested for prostitution in Hungary, he told them she needn't come back. "Does that mean I'll have to leave?" I asked him, terrified. Weidt assured me that I could carry on working for him, but that was the end of my legal status.

It was February 26, 1943 when my friend Hans Rosenthal, who had an administrative post with the Jewish Community, begged me not to go to Otto Weidt's workshop the next day, and not even to leave the house. He refused

to tell me why. The next morning, we saw police vans racing through the streets. Whenever they stopped outside a building, men in plain clothes or police uniforms ran in, came back out with someone, put them into the van and drove on to the next building, where the same thing happened again. They were picking up the last Jews left in Berlin. They picked them up from their workplaces in the factories, and from their homes. They took them away in their working clothes, their pajamas, without coats. I stood at the window behind the net curtain, watching. I can still see them in my mind's eye, as the policemen pushed them into the vans, almost frozen in terror. Passers-by stopped to look and whisper to one another. Then they hurriedly got on with their shopping – it was Saturday, after all – and went straight back to the protection of their own homes. From behind the curtains, they stole surreptitious glances – almost like I did – down at the street, watching what was going on.

From various collection points around the city, the Jews were all taken to Grunewald freight station. Goods trains were ready and waiting for the journey “to the East,” as we called it, as we had no idea where they were really going. “Operation Factory,” as it went down in history, lasted several days. Then they were all gone. We hadn't heard a single scream, there was no protest. I went back to Otto Weidt's workshop one more time. There was no-one there any more. The blind Jewish workers were gone, the bookkeeper Werner Basch, and the sighted workers. Only a handful of non-Jewish employees were sitting at their workbenches, the two men who were married to non-Jewish women, and a few of the people who had gone into hiding. They kept things going in the workshop.

Our non-Jewish friends suffered along with us. Grete Sommer looked close to tears for days, trying to comfort us with the words, “Those pigs will get what they deserve one day!” She offered to let me help out in her store. When I voiced my doubts, she just laughed. “No-one knows you around here. You're my friend Inge, who can help me out a bit.” I soon got used to my new job as a sales girl, eventually forgetting that I, a Jew in hiding, was serving customers whose politics I didn't know, some of whom even gave the Hitler salute when they came into the store. Grete showed me what to do. I had to know the prices and the content of the books in her lending library. She told me which customers she trusted, and let me into her secret of trading rationed writing paper for food in short supply with the shopkeepers in the area. After a brief introduction, she left me alone in the store. When she saw that I was getting on fine, she and her partner left Berlin, as they were scared of the bombings. She came by once a week to check everything was alright.

I enjoyed the work. It kept me busy from morning to evening, so I had no time to worry about our situation, and it helped me get hold of food. Around the

same time, we found accommodation. “You can stay with me as long as you like,” Lisa Holländer told us determinedly. “I’m not scared – they’ve already taken what I loved most.” The Nazis had unexpectedly arrested her Jewish husband Paul Holländer, who had been a successful exporter up to 1938. She couldn’t find out anything about his fate, and was turned away from pillar to post, until one day she received a parcel from a concentration camp containing her husband’s bloodstained clothing, along with a message that he had died of heart failure.

There was plenty of space in her apartment at 26, Sächsische Strasse. I even had a little room all of my own, something I hadn’t had since 1933. We shared everything with Auntie Lisa, as I soon called her. She bought everything she could with her ration cards, and I added the food I traded for the rare writing paper in the store.

As Auntie Lisa wasn’t well off, we paid her a small amount of rent. To do so, my mother had to find work. My pay from Grete Sommer was mostly in kind – butter, coffee, or meat products. Hans Rosenthal, who now had to live under Gestapo supervision in the Jewish hospital in Iranische Strasse, because he had good contacts to Berlin’s wholesalers and could get hold of rare goods, got my mother a job at Theodor Görner’s printing press. The company, at 26, Rosenthaler Strasse, was a textile printing firm and classified as “important for the war effort” like Otto Weidt’s workshop for the blind. Like Weidt, Theodor Görner hated the Nazis. He decided to employ my mother as a worker in the composing room. She adopted the name of Ella Richter, introducing herself to her new workmates as a widow. Görner gave her the monthly ration cards that every other worker had to hand in for their lunch at work.

At that time, our life seemed almost “normal.” We both had jobs and a roof over our heads. We knew nothing about the deportees. We did hear about mass shootings of Jews and about Auschwitz on the BBC, but we never talked about it. It paralyzed us.

“They’re all gone.” Hans Rosenthal told us one day that Chaim Horn, one of the Jews hiding in Otto Weidt’s workshop, had met a Jewish friend on the street and told him all about what went on in the workshop. A few days later, the Gestapo turned up. Otto Weidt managed to make sure his “illegal Jews” were taken to Theresienstadt rather than Auschwitz. It may have been because the Gestapo accepted bribes. From then on, Weidt sent packages to his friends in Theresienstadt. They contained dried vegetables, dried potatoes, dried bread. Comments written on the cards confirming receipt told him how welcome these packages were.

One day, a very different card arrived at the workshop for the blind. On it, Alice Licht informed her colleagues that she was being deported from Theresienstadt to the "Birkenau Labor Camp." She told them not to worry... Alice had thrown the card out of the train without a stamp. Someone had picked it up and sent it off. Weidt looked for some way to get Alice out of Auschwitz. But it was all in vain. It was only when he found out that she had been taken from Auschwitz to Christianstadt, a subsidiary camp of Groß-Rosen Concentration Camp, that he managed to contact her. A Polish civilian worker who went in and out of the camp helped him. From then on, Weidt not only provided medicines and tonics, but also told Alice he had rented a room for her in the nearby town. Money and clothes were waiting for her there. She was to do all she could to escape and return to Berlin. And that's precisely what she did. One day at the end of January 1945, Alice Licht turned up at the door of Otto Weidt's workshop in Berlin.

The closer it got to the end of the war, the more difficult our situation became. One day, the government ruled that every German woman under the age of 55 had to work in a factory. They were to take the place of the workers fighting on the frontline. That put an abrupt end to my job in Grete's store. The risk was too great that government inspectors or informers might recognize me as a Jewess in hiding if they saw me there.

During the night of January 30, 1944, the building where we were hiding at 26, Sächsische Strasse was bombed out. We sat on the street with Auntie Lisa that night, desperately wondering who could possibly hide us now. Early next morning, our friend Walter Rieck came by, as he had heard about the devastation in our district. He took us straight to Potsdam, which had not yet been hit by a single bomb. Many Berliners had moved there for protection from the air raids, including Walter Rieck and his family. They let us have a room in their apartment – just for the time being, of course. With their help, we found a former goat shed in the little development "Potsdam Eigenheim," which was officially uninhabitable. It was ideal for us for that very reason. We told the neighbors we were Berliners by the name of Richter whose home had been bombed, and they lent us beds and a closet.

One day, the Gestapo turned up at Görner's printing press to inform the staff it was being closed. Their boss had tried to register a half-Jewish child at a high school, they were told, and that was bordering on high treason. My mother stood among the workers, shaking with fear in case the Gestapo officers spotted her.

Now unemployed, we spent a while walking around in Sanssouci Park. We couldn't stay in our hiding place during the day, as all Germans capable of working had to be at their workplaces. That was unfortunate, especially as

no-one could say how long the situation would go on like this. By 1944, it was as clear as day that Germany was going to lose the war. But every day that we had to stay in hiding brought new problems. "I can't stand it any more," my mother said one day, "I can't keep running away. You carry on alone." Our friends consoled her, encouraged her to keep going. "It won't be much longer..." People in Berlin had started pinning offers and ads to trees or fences. Many parents who didn't want their children to be evacuated with their schools to areas as yet untouched by the war advertised for teachers. My mother replied to a few ads as Ella Richter, the widow of a grammar school teacher who had done a lot of private tutoring. She managed to get a tutoring job, teaching children from several families. They greeted her with "Heil Hitler," not even noticing that my mother didn't return their salute.

"This Mr. Levy is probably lying in a mass grave by now," Mr. König, the owner of a second-hand bookstore in Neukölln, said, looking at me with an evil grin on his face. He had bought a pile of second-hand books, including some that used to belong to a Mr. Levy. I worked part-time in his store. Walter Rieck, who was the administrator of the building housing Mr. König's store, had introduced me to him, without revealing my true identity, of course. Because of my knee injury, I was only allowed to spend a few hours a day standing on the factory floor. I told him I had time for his store as well. That was plausible enough. König, who told Walter Rieck how pleased he was with me and my work, revealed that he was a member of the NSDAP. He showed me his party button, now hidden under his lapel. He openly admitted that he was scared for his life if the American and Soviet troops occupied Berlin. After the war, his building was reduced to rubble.

At the beginning of 1945, the Allied troops had entered German territory in the east and the west. But that didn't make our situation any easier. The war made it harder to get hold of food, and our friends found it almost impossible to give us any of their meager rations. Prices on the black market had shot up. Potential accommodation was destroyed by bombs. Following a vague denunciation of our friend Walter Rieck, claiming he had hidden Jews, our goat shed was no longer safe.

There was only one thing for us to do. We went out towards the Soviet front. In the Lausitz region, we fell in with the refugees heading west out of fear of the Red Army. "They steal, rape, and murder," we were told by people who had left their homes just before the Soviet troops arrived, taking what little they could carry. We listened carefully on the train to Berlin – we wanted to be taken in as refugees just like them. "Ella Paula and Inge Elisabeth Marie Richter from Guben," we wrote down at the National Socialist welfare organization as our last address before our flight. Refugees from the Lausitz region were to be housed outside the city in Osthavelland but we insisted

on staying in Berlin, saying we had relatives here. “Nobody stays in Berlin voluntarily,” the clerk argued. When we asked her why, she said there might be a siege. My mother’s reaction was: “The Führer would never allow that to happen!” The clerk hurried to write out our permit to move to Berlin. We soon found a furnished room at 6, Ludwigkirchstrasse. The landlord had to sign our registration form. At that very moment, the lights went out. The power station had been hit by a bomb. “How annoying,” the landlord said, “Oh well, I’m sure you’re not Jews or Poles,” and signed in the dark. The next stop to confirming our legal status as the Richters was the police station. But that was a mere formality.

Our “illegal” status came to an end on April 22, 1945, when the Soviet troops arrived in Potsdam. I welcomed them from outside our “stable.” But I had to go back into hiding as quickly as I could. Women were in demand. No-one, not the Soviet soldiers or later the Americans, was willing to believe that there were Germans who had risked their lives to help us survive.

But we cried, cried for days on end, when we found out just what had gone on in the concentration camps. There was no doubt any more – we had no family left. They had all been murdered. We kept remembering more and more people we had been close to, who were not alive any more.

About the Author:

Inge Deutschkron, born in Finsterwalde in 1922, grew up in Berlin from 1927 onwards. Her father Dr. Martin Deutschkron emigrated to England in 1939, but she and her mother did not succeed in leaving Germany. Inge Deutschkron worked in Otto Weidt's Workshop for the Blind from 1941 to 1943. From 1943 to 1945, she and her mother lived in various hiding places to escape deportation.

Inge Deutschkron and her mother joined her father in England in 1946. Inge studied foreign languages and worked in the London office of the Socialist International. In 1954 she traveled to southeast Asia, returning to Germany in 1955. She started a career as a freelance journalist, and was accredited as German correspondent in Bonn for the Israeli newspaper *Maariv* (Tel Aviv) in 1960.

In 1972, she moved to Tel Aviv and worked as a journalist for *Maariv* until 1987. In this role, she concentrated on German-Israeli relations and subjects related to the Holocaust. The GRIPS-Theater in Berlin staged the play "Ab heute heißt Du Sara," based on her autobiography, in 1989. Up until 2001, she traveled between Berlin and Tel Aviv, in response to the many requests from schools and organizations in Berlin to report on her experiences of National Socialism.

Inge Deutschkron now lives in Berlin once again and works as a writer. She is the Chair of the "Blindes Vertrauen" Association, which plays a key role in supporting the Museum Otto Weidt's Workshop for the Blind. She is the founder of the Inge Deutschkron Foundation, which works to combat Nazism, anti-Semitism and racism.

