Lilli Tauber

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Interviewer: Tanja Eckstein
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Lilli Tauber and her husband, Max Tauber, welcome me in their communal apartment in Viennas 19th district. We had already spoken on the telephone and were curious to finally meet each other. The smell of coffee fills the apartment, and a cake is sitting on the table. We chat for a while to get to know each other. Lilli Tauber is a small, lively woman with short, wavy hair. She laughs a lot which makes it hard to imagine what hardships she had to go through in her life. I immediately like her, and it is very easy to interview her because she remembers many events and names and relates stories as if they had only happened yesterday.

My family background

My maiden name, Schischa, is Hebrew and means ‘six’. King Salomon had a scribe, who was also called Schischa but his name was spelled ‘Shisha’. Legend has it that the Jewish community of Mattersdorf, which was renamed Mattersburg in 1924, was founded by six Sephardi brothers. At the end of the 15th century Jews had to flee Spain, and from about that time Schischa families have lived in Mattersburg.

All I know about my paternal great-grandfather, Heinrich Schischa, is that he was born in Neunkirchen [20 km from Mattersdorf].

My paternal grandfather, Josef Schischa, was born in Mattersdorf, but I don’t know when. He was a very religious man. He moved to Gloggnitz in Lower Austria, on the foot of the Semmering mountain. I have no idea why he moved. He had siblings in both Mattersdorf and Vienna. We visited some of them but I just recall a gipsy [Roma] camp we passed, which highly impressed me because of the horses and carts. Unfortunately I don’t remember my relatives at all.

My grandmother’s name was Karoline Schischa [nee Gerstl]. I don’t know where she was born. My grandfather and her had four children: Paula, my father Wilhelm, Helene and Adolf. My grandmother died in 1894 when my father was eleven years old. I don’t know what she died of. My grandfather got married again after her death. My second grandmother, Anna Schischa [nee Guenser], came from Lackenbach in Burgenland province. They had four children: Ludwig, Richard,

Malwine and Erna.

My grandfather was dealing with clothes and moved from Gloggnitz to Neunkirchen, but I don't know when or why. He owned a house in Neunkirchen and ran a clothes business.

Neunkirchen had a big Jewish community. Apparently there were so many Schischas several hundred years ago that some of them took on the name Loewy. I don't know why they chose the name Loewy.

I had eight uncles and aunts on my father's side. Paula [Pauline] Schischa married Gottfried Freudmann. I often go to Café Teitelbaum in the Jewish Museum [in Vienna], which also has a library. I think it was there that I came across the book, Heilige Gemeinde Neunkirchen. Eine jüdische Heimatgeschichte von Gerhard Milchram' [The Holy Community of Neunkirchen. A Jewish local history by Gerhard Milchram]. I browsed through the book, and all of a sudden I saw a wedding announcement. It said, 'Josef Schischa announces the marriage of his daughter Paula to Dr. Gottfried Freudmann'. I was very curious about how the wedding announcement of my aunt and uncle ended up in that book. I called Mr. Milchram, we met and it turned out that a certain Mrs. Vogel from the US, was a descendant of the Loewy family and thus also my family. She did a lot of research and also sent me our family tree.

Gottfried Freudmann's father's name was Aron Freudmann. [Source: 'Heilige Gemeinde Neunkirchen', Gerhard Milchram, Mandelbaum Verlag] Gottfried was a doctor of philosophy and worked as a civil servant with the Vienna Kultusgemeinde [Jewish Religious Community]. They lived in Viennas 9th district. Both were very pious, and Aunt Paula also wore a sheitl. My uncle was religious but a social democrat at the same time. I don't know how that worked, but that's the way it was. Aunt Paula and Uncle Gottfried were murdered. [Pauline Freudmann, nee Schischa, born 26th December 1880, and Gottfried Freudmann, born 17th November 1875, were deported to Izbica Lubelska from Vienna on 12th May 1942 and killed.] They had five children: Karoline, Walter, Erich, Selma and Armin.

Karoline Freudmann was born around 1908 and just called Lilli. She married Mr. Heller, a mathematician. They emigrated to Switzerland, where they probably lived with the support of aid agencies, and survived the war. Lilli was a communist through and through. Mr. Heller became a well-known mathematician in the US after the war, but Lilli didn't want to move to the US because 'a convinced communist doesn't go to a capitalist country'. She moved to Vienna, to her brother Walter, a doctor, who was also a communist. Lilli had a daughter, Gerti, who went to the US with her father. So Lilli was in a permanent inner conflict. One day her husband came to Vienna and just took her back to the US with him. Lilli died about five years ago in Washington.

Dr. Walter Freudmann, her brother, joined the Spanish Civil War [1936-1939] as a communist, was interned in France and then came to visit me in England. That was before 1st September 1939. He went from London to China as a doctor with the Red Cross. He became a major with the American army, but I have no details about how that came about. Shortly after the war he was in Austria again and worked as a general practitioner. He had his own practice in Vienna. He got married to Grete, a Roman-Catholic, and they adopted a child called Eva. Walter died about ten years ago.

Erich Freudmann, born in 1909, wasn't married and didn't have any children. He lived in Vienna, was a communist and ran away to Brazil when he was very young. I have no idea what he wanted

to do there. He fell sick with malaria and Aunt Paula and Uncle Gottfried somehow managed to bring him back to Austria. I remember that he visited us in Wiener Neustadt once. He came on his motorbike, and that was a sensation at the time. Later he became an editor with ‘Rote Fahne’ [the official organ of the German Communist Party] and fought in the Spanish Civil War. When Hitler came to power, Erich was deported to a concentration camp and we never heard of him again. [Erich Freudmann, born 17th June 1909, was deported from the French transit camp Drancy to Auschwitz on 31st July 1944 and died in Dachau concentration camp on 28th March 1945. Source: DÖW data bank.]

Selma Freudmann was a paediatrician. She got married to Dr. Kastan, a tax adviser, who was a very handsome man. Only one side of his family was Jewish. They lived in Vienna and had four children: Hans, Eva, Peter and Hilde. They emigrated to Cochabamba in Bolivia in 1939. Peter was still a baby at the time. Hilde was born in Cochabamba. The family stayed in Bolivia during the war and we kept in touch through letters. After the war they moved to New York and from there to Palo Alto, California, where we visited them once. Selma still worked as a doctor at the age of 80! Her daughters, Hilde and Eva, live in Palo Alto and sometimes write to me. Hansi lives in Los Angeles and is very religious, and Peter lives in the USA.

Armin Freudmann was the same age as my brother and often visited us in Wiener Neustadt. Armin was an engineer and an enthusiastic communist. After the German invasion he fled to Luxembourg and got married to a Jewish woman whom he had already known in Vienna. When Hitler invaded the Benelux countries in 1940, my uncle was deported to a concentration camp. He survived the war after having been in, I think, seven different concentration camps. His wife was murdered. Armin returned to Vienna after the war and got married again. His second wife’s father was Jewish. They had three children: Friedl, Nanni and Gustl. Armin worked for the ‘Rot-Weiss-Rot’ radio program in Salzburg after 1945 and later for the SMV mineral oil association [today: OMV]. [Radio Rot-Weiss-Rot, named after the colors of the Austrian national flag, was a popular Austrian radio station that was closed down in July 1955. Some of the programs were taken over by the OMV].Osterreichischer Rundfunk radio station.] He was also a poet; his son even published a volume of Armin’s poetry in a private publishing venture. Armin died shortly before his retirement. It was a shame because he was really looking forward to his retirement and had many plans for his life as a pensioner.

My aunt Helene Schischa got married to Adolf Weinstein. They didn’t have any children. They lived in Vienna. I don’t know what they did for a living. [Helene Weinstein, born 16th July 1886, and Adolf Weinstein, born 16th January 1883 were deported from Vienna to Maly Trostinec on 5th October 1942 and murdered on 9th October 1942. Source: DÖW data bank]

My uncle Adolf Schischa lived in Wiener Neustadt. He got married to Selma Gerstl, who came from Vienna, and they had two children: Herbert, who is the same age as me, and Erika. Uncle Adolf was in the clothes business, just like my father. Uncle Adolf and Aunt Selma fled to France after the German invasion but were later deported to Auschwitz from there. [Adolf Schischa, born 10th August 1888, and Selma Schischa, born 3rd May 1903, were deported from Drancy to Auschwitz on 26th August 1942 and murdered. Source: DÖW data bank]. Herbert and Erika were brought to England with a Kindertransport 3 and still live there.

My uncles, Ludwig and Richard Schischa, took over my grandfather's house and shop in Neunkirchen after his death in 1927. My mother got a silver spoon from him on the occasion of my birth shortly before his death. My grandfather was buried in the cemetery in Neunkirchen.

Uncle Ludwig never married. He lived with his parents in Neunkirchen and died very young before the war, I think of tuberculosis.

Uncle Richard continued to run the business. He lived with his wife, Helene, and my grandmother Anna. His wife was from Nitra, Slovakia. Her father was a vet. In 1938 their house was Aryanized, and Uncle Richard, his wife and their 5-year-old son, Heinz, tried to flee to Palestine. The first illegal transports left from Bratislava going downstream the Danube river all the way to Bulgaria. They were already on board a ship with the child, but shortly before the ship was about to cast off, the order was given that all children had to leave the ship and board another one. My uncle and aunt never saw their son again. Of course they never got over their grief.

Uncle Richard and Aunt Helene returned to Austria at the end of the 1940s. They first lived in Vienna, where my uncle worked as a laborer in a carpentry. When their house in Neunkirchen was returned to them, they moved back there and reopened the shop.

Aunt Helene suffered from fits of depression and was treated with electric shocks. I don't know if the electric shocks were the reason, but after one of those treatments she got a horrible stomachache An ambulance brought her to hospital in Vienna. They operated on her and found out that her stomach was caught in her diaphragm. She never came round from the anaesthetic. That happened in 1962. After her death they found the clothes of her murdered son in her wardrobe.

Uncle Richard stopped to go to the temple after the war, but he recited the Kaddish at my father-in-law's funeral. Uncle Richard died of a heart attack in 1972. That's the tragic story of Uncle Richard and his family.

I never met my aunt Malwine. She was married to Dr. Siegbert Pincus, who came from Danzig [Poland]. He was a professor at a grammar school in Vienna. They had a son, Ernst, who was born in 1924. He lives in England now. After the German invasion he was brought to Ireland and then further on to England with a Kindertransport. He had a good job in the oil business.

Aunt Malwine died in 1927. Now, there's a Jewish custom: If a wife dies and has a younger, unmarried sister this sister gets married to the widower. So my Aunt Erna had to marry Uncle Siegbert, and I don't think that she was very happy doing that. Uncle Siegbert was handsome but cold. I felt that when I was a child and talked with my aunt about it, and she confirmed my suspicion.

Aunt Erna had the chance to escort a Kindertransport and emigrate to England, where she got a job as a maid. Her husband was murdered. [Siegbert Pincus, born 15th December 1890, was deported from Vienna to Minsk on 28th November 1941 and murdered there.]

My father, Wilhelm Schischa, was the oldest son. He was born in Gloggnitz on 11th October 1883. My father was a master tailor. He opened a menswear shop in Wiener Neustadt, and his master craftsman's certificate was hanging on the wall there. He regularly drove to Vienna to buy clothes from wholesalers, which he then sold in his shop.

My father suffered terribly from varicose veins and therefore wasn't recruited to the K&K army during World War I. [Editor's note: 'k und k' is an abbreviation for the German 'kaiserlich und königlich' which means 'imperial and royal'. K&K army was the general term for the Austrian-Hungarian army.] But he must have been doing something that was connected with the war because he told us about a camp for Russian prisoners of war near Wiener Neustadt. My father had to deliver bread with a cart somewhere and passed by that camp. The prisoners were very hungry, and he always threw a few loaves of bread over the fence for them.

My maternal grandfather, Eduard Friedmann, came from a rabbi family in Hungary. They were very pious. I'm sure that my grandfather had siblings. I remember two women, my mother's cousins, who came to visit us once. They lived in Steinamanger [Hungarian: Szombathely], were very pious and wore a sheitl. None of them had children, however, and that's very unusual among pious people.

My grandmother, Sofie Friedmann [nee Daniel], came from Kobersdorf in Burgenland province. [Sofie Friedmann, born 17th September 1856; source: DÖW data bank.] Her sister Adele was married to a certain Mr. Riegler, who owned a grocery. Our family often told the story: Mr. Riegler was brought to Edlach, the health resort where Theodor Herzl 2 died in 1904, to wash Herzl's corpse because Riegler was the only Jew around.

Aunt Adele, my grandmother's sister, died in a Jewish old people's home in Vienna. Her son Julius and his wife Julia were killed in the course of the Kladovo transport 3. They had two sons; one of them was called Fredl. I don't remember the name of the second one. Both sons survived because they weren't on board the ship.

My grandparents lived in Prein, a small health resort, on the foot of the Rax mountain. They had a beautiful house and a grocery shop. One could buy anything in this shop – which was usual in the country at that time. There were newspapers, tobacco, food, handkerchiefs, and there was also a small gas station attached to the shop.

My grandparents had six children: My mother, Johanna, Isidor, Julius, Fany, Berta and a son, who died of typhoid, I think at the age of 14. I don't remember his name. My grandfather died in 1900 at the age of 49. His children hadn't come of age yet and therefore needed a guardian. Uncle Riegler became their guardian.

My grandmother wasn't very old yet and still helped out in the shop after her husband's death. She stopped wearing a sheitl when she grew older. When I was five or six, she was very old and lived in a room on the first floor of my uncle's house. Uncle Isi wasn't very religious and didn't lead a kosher life. She wouldn't have touched any of the food in the house, so my uncle regularly drove from Gloggnitz to Neunkirchen to get kosher meat for her. In the afternoon my grandmother went down to my uncle and aunt's place for coffee. The house was always bustling with activity, there were often visitors, and our whole family got together there, too. The house was extremely beautiful. It was torn down a little while ago. When I heard about this I felt miserable. I think I would have bought the house if I had had the money because to me it was more than just a house.

Uncle Isidor, who was just called Isi, took over my grandfather's house and shop in Prein. He was married to Josephine Katz. Her parents had a huge house in Vienna's 16th district. Isi and Josephine had two children: Erika and Erich. Shortly before World War I Uncle Isi built a new house opposite

the old one.

Erika married a fur dealer from Neunkirchen whose second name was Sidon. After the German invasion they illegally fled to Antwerp with their parents and headed further on to Palestine. They stayed in Israel. Erika had three daughters. She died comparatively young. Erich illegally went to Palestine in fall 1938 and married a girl from Berlin called Towa. He died in Israel in 1994.

Uncle Julius Friedmann was born on 15th September 1889. He was an enthusiastic mountaineer, in tune with nature, and a socialist. He got married to Josephine Katz's sister Elsa. They lived in her house in Vienna's 16th district. During the February fights 4 he was almost beaten to death. They had a son, Heinz, who came to England with a Kindertransport. Aunt Elsa emigrated to France and lived in the underground. Someone reported on her, and she was murdered. Uncle Julius was murdered, too.

Aunt Fany Friedmann, born in 1898, married a journalist whose second name was Bauer and who wasn't a Jew. They lived in Prague and didn't have any children. Once, after she returned from a health cure in Marienbad, she found out that he had cheated on her with the maid. She packed her bags and left. She returned to Prein but her husband followed her and tried to convince her to come back to him. However, she couldn't forgive him, stayed in Prein and helped out in the shop.

Aunt Berta Friedmann was born in Prein in 1898. She married Roland Ohme. They didn't have any children. They lived in Styria in the beginning. One of Aunt Adele's daughters owned a clothes factory there where they produced blankets and things like that. Aunt Berta's husband worked as an electrician in the factory. Later they moved to Vienna, and he started to work with Siemens. Uncle Roland wasn't Jewish and after the German invasion, he was advised to divorce Berta. He stayed with her, and that's how Aunt Berta managed to survive the war. She lived in Vienna, didn't have to wear a yellow star but had to do some kind of forced labor.

My mother, Johanna Schischa [nee Friedmann], was born in Prein on 19th May 1885. She was affectionately called Handschi. My mother went to primary school in Prein but had no further education.

There was a ball at Purim in Neunkirchen, my mother went to, and she met my father there. I don't know when that happened. In any case, my father traveled by cart to my grandmother and asked for my mother's hand. That was rather unusual because people mostly got married through shadkhanim back then. It seems that my grandmother gave them her consent because my parents got married in 1908. So my parent's marriage was one of love, which, apparently, was an exception to the rule back then.

Growing up

My brother, Edi [Eduard] Schischa, was born in Wiener Neustadt on 5th October 1914. He finished primary school and four years of grammar school. I don't know if he quit grammar school because he wasn't such a good student or because he just didn't want to study anymore. In any case, he served an apprenticeship as a tailor and finished it with his final examination. Afterwards he worked in my father's shop.

I was born on 13th March 1927 in Rudolfinerhaus in Vienna's 19th district. My mother was already 42 years old when she got pregnant with me and knew that there may be difficulties because they

had discovered a tumor during pregnancy examinations. They operated on her and removed the tumor. Nonetheless it could have been a difficult delivery, and that's why my mother went to hospital in Vienna.

I was a welcome surprise to the whole family, which was fairly big. My uncles and aunts were rather old at the time, and my cousins could have almost been my parents. I think they all enjoyed having me around. And my brother, who was 13 years older than me, loved me very much, too.

My name is Karoline Tauber, nee Schischa. Everyone calls me Lilli; no one knows that my real name is Karoline. I didn't even know myself until I started school. When I got registered at school they needed my birth certificate, and that's when I saw the name Karoline written down there. Nonetheless, I continued to be called Lilli. There's another Karoline in my family, the daughter of my father's sister Paula, and, for some strange reason, she's called Lilli as well. We were both named after our deceased grandmother; it's possible that she was just called Lilli, too.

We owned a house with a garden in Wiener Neustadt, which was quite luxurious for the standards back then. My mother was a housewife, and we also had a maid.

When I was a baby we apparently went on vacation to Katzelsdorf, a small village in Burgenland province, once. That was an exception. Back then things were different. People were on summer holidays but didn't go on vacation as such. We often spent the summer with my grandmother and Uncle Richard in Prein, which was a health resort anyways. My parents could never go on a holiday together because one of them had to take care of the shop. So either my mother or my father joined us on our vacation, and the other one stayed at home.

Grandma Anna, my father's stepmother, lived in Neunkirchen and we often visited her on Sunday because Neunkirchen isn't far from Wiener Neustadt. She was a very warm-hearted person and raised four adopted and four of her own children. She was always nice to us, her grandchildren, and sent us home-made hamantashen for Purim.

We also visited my uncles, aunts and cousins in Vienna and I remember visiting Schoenbrunn Palace 5 and Schoenbrunn Zoo.

My father's family was very religious, but my father wasn't really that religious himself. He kept the shop open on Saturdays and even smoked on Saturdays. My mother, on the other hand, was very religious. They never had any arguments about that. She didn't wear a kerchief, but she kept a strict kosher household, we had separate dishes for dairy and meat products and special dishes for Pesach. Apart from that we celebrated all holidays such as Yom Kippur and Rosh Hashanah and held seder. The shop was closed on high holidays, and we went to the temple. I don't remember whether my brother fasted or not, but him, my parents and me spent the high holidays together.

Jewish traditions were very important to my mother. Every Friday on Sabbath kiddush was said over a glass of wine, candles were lit, and we had barkhes. There was always a napkin folded over barkhes. We usually had cold food in the evening, but on Friday evenings we had diced carp as a starter and goose or chicken as a main dish. I remember that the geese were stuffed to become very fat and get a big liver. We used goose fat for cooking because we didn't eat any pork dishes.

I think my parents only had Jewish friends. I don't remember any acquaintances of ours who weren't Jewish.

We were five Jewish girls at primary school, and there were only two of us left at grammar school.

Religious classes took place in another school, and the father of our teacher was one of my mother's cousins. I don't remember his name. My mother always took me to our religious classes because they took place in the afternoon. She spent the first half an hour of our lesson chatting with our teacher, which we, students, were quite happy about of course. During my school years I had two Jewish friends: Trude Gerstl and Susi Bauer. Trude Gerstl lives in Israel today.

Ten days after I got my permit to emigrate to England [in 1938] I received a second permit. My father took it to the British Council and asked them to transfer it to my friend, Susi. They refused to do so, and she was murdered. [Susanne Bauer, born 14th July 1927, was deported to Wlodowa ghetto on 27th April 1942.]

There was a Christian family that lived two blocks from us. The husband was a policeman. They had two daughters, Grete and Hanni Gross, who were friends of mine.

During the War

I didn't experience any anti-Semitism until 12th March 1938 [Anschluss] 6. I was 11 years old and studied at grammar school. Andrea, the daughter of a non-Jewish doctor, picked me up at my parents' place every morning, and we went to school together. Back then everyone went on foot; it wasn't a long walk anyway. We were good friends but after 12th March she stopped hanging out with me from one day to the next. It was horrible for me; I was just a child and didn't understand why. As it turned out later she had brothers who had been Nazis illegaly a long time before the Anschluss.

Everything changed. Our shop was Aryanized, and my father was advised to sell our house. He did so, but we were allowed to stay until he found a new home for us.

Sometimes there were people who tried to help us. The priest's cook, for instance, brought my grandmother fresh vegetables. However, there were also people who spit at my grandmother's feet; they were customers who had debts in my grandfather's shop.

This happened during the summer holidays. I was supposed to go back to school in September but I wasn't allowed to go to the regular grammar school any more. The Jewish community in Wiener Neustadt continued to exist a bit longer, and a school was set up in the praying house, which was close to the big, beautiful synagogue. When I still went to grammar school our religious classes took place in the praying house, which could be heated in winter.

We had a Jewish teacher and about 20 to 30 children from Wiener Neustadt and surroundings came to the praying house and studied in the same classroom. It wasn't a regular school but at least we had the opportunity to study. I remember 10th November 1938 [Kristallnacht] 7 very well. It was a Thursday, the sky was cloudy and it was about 10am when someone came into the classroom and started whispering into our teacher's ear. Afterwards the teacher told us to go home, saying that something was going on. My parents were surprised that I returned from school so early. At about 11am the doorbell rang and the Gestapo arrested my father. They took him along with them.

Other Jewish families lived in our neighborhood, inlcuding the Schurany and the Gerstl family, who were friends of ours. My mother, who was devastated after my father's arrest, said, 'Lets go over

there and try to find out what's going on.' They told us that they had heard that all Jewish men would be arrested. When we were on our way home we saw two cars parked close to our house. The wooden gate to our place had been smashed, the SA had also broken into the house, and we saw them ransacking the veranda and the rooms.

We had one of those tills that don't exist any more today, and they asked my mother for the key. Afterwards we had to follow them. They took us to the synagogue. All Jewish women and children from Wiener Neustadt had been brought there and were searched for money and jewelry. They had to hand in everything; the SA deprived them of all their belongings.

Mrs. Gerstl, my friend Trude's mother, didn't want to sign a paper saying that she would hand over her house, so they beat her until she did sign it. I witnessed all of this. When night was falling they led us into the synagogue. The floors were covered with hay, and they gave us Torah blankets to cover ourselves up. We were locked in for three days. The synagogue had a yard with an iron gate facing the street. There were people outside the gate watching, and people from Wiener Neustadt looked on with amusement as we, Jewish children, had to go round in circles.

All of a sudden I had a soar throat and came down with a fever. A young SA man was sent to accompany me and my mother to the hospital in Wiener Neustadt and make sure we wouldn't escape. While we were waiting for the doctor there, nuns that worked at the hospital secretly gave us food. Then the doctor came and examined my throat. The next day, when three more children turned up with soar throats and fever, it turned out that scarlet fever was going around. The four of us had to stay in hospital in Wiener Neustadt. The women and the other kids were put onto a bus and taken to Vienna, dropped of in Taborstrasse [in Vienna's second district, where many orthodox Jews used to live and still live today] and allowed to go wherever they wanted to.

We never returned to our house; all our possessions had been stolen.

My mother went to her sister-in-law, Aunt Paula. Nobody knew where my father was.

My father turned out to be in the police prison on Elisabeth promenade, where they had crammed all Jewish men that had been arrested. He later told us that it was horrible, and that there wasn't even enough room to sit down. Then they made their choice about who would be brought to Dachau, and who would be allowed to go home. My father and Uncle Adolf stood next to each other. My father was told that he could go home, my uncle was deported to Dachau concentration camp.

I was in hospital at the time, and the nuns and doctors were fantastic. They made absolutely no difference between Jewish and non-Jewish people. My father picked me up after six weeks and we stayed with Aunt Paula and Uncle Gottfried in Vienna. That was at the end of December 1938. There was only one subject of conversation among Jews at the time: 'How do we get away from here?'

My brother fled to Palestine with an illegal transport in October 1938. After that I never saw him again. Traveling was expensive and we both didn't have enough money to travel after the war.

No one cared about school any more. Uncle Gottfried had connections with the Bnei Brit lodge, a Jewish social organisation. Bnei Brit means 'Children of the Covenant', and those lodges exit all across the globe. Back then they helped to save the lives of Jewish children.

The proceeding was such that someone had to guarantee that the child wouldn't be a burden to the British state. Children who had such a guarantee received a permit and were allowed to emigrate to England with a Kindertransport but without their parents. There were girls, boys and even babies in these Kindertransports – it's hard to imagine what it was like today.

No one ever told me that my parents would follow me to England, but I never gave up hope they would.

I only realized how courageous my parents were later, when I already had children of my own. It must have been terrible for them to bring me to the railway station. I was excited back then and understood that it was better for me to go away. I wasn't angry with them for sending me away. At the time I didn't even think of the possibility that I may not see my parents again.

Each child had a red plate with a number put around the neck. A plate with the same number was put onto each child's suitcase. That's how I arrived in England. I didn't speak a single word of English. Three children of our convoy were dropped off at the train station in London and taken into a hostel from there. The hostel belonged to the Bnei Brit lodge, and there were mainly children from Germany there, so everyone just spoke German.

I had been raised religiously. Our superintendent in England was strictly orthodox and forced us to live an orthodox way. We weren't even allowed to brush our teeth on Saturday, and had to pray after every single meal. She was horrible. There was a girl called Lotte Levy, who came from a strictly orthodox family in Cologne. Her father was a shammash. However, due to the pressure of our superintendent she completely broke away from religion.

In the beginning the girls from Germany made fun of my Viennese accent and were quite nasty to me. Later things calmed down and the nastiest one of the girls, Lotte Levy, became my best friend. She later moved to New York.

I still remember many other girls from that hostel: The youngest girl in the hostel was called Rosi; she was 5 at the time. There was Sylvia Avromovici, who came from Chemnitz. Her parents were murdered. Sylvia lives in America today. Cilly Horvitz came from Hamburg. Her mother was Christian, her father Jewish. I think he died during the war. Cilly still lives in London. Then there was Lilli Kohn from Vienna, who lives in Brazil now, and Helga Reisner from Berlin. I don't know where she lives today. Cilly Salomon and her older sister Ruth came from Danzig, and their parents and younger brother survived the war in Shanghai. Cilly lives in Israel today. Rita, whose surname I don't remember, lives in London, and so does Anita Schiller, whose parents were murdered during the war. Ruth Wassermann came from Berlin, and her parents managed to flee to China. Her father died in China, but Ruth and her mother met up again in America. Gretl Heller from Berlin lives in New York today. Her parents survived the war. Gretl got married to an Austrian and was therefore able to visit Vienna – once through the 'Jewish Welcome Service', an organization that invited Jewish expellees from all across the globe to visit their homecountry again. Their service lasted for many years, but now the state has cancelled its subsidy.

We even had a maid, who was from Vienna, at the hostel.

I dearly loved my parents as well as my brother Edi, my grandmothers and my many aunts, uncles and cousins. Of course I missed them a lot and was looking forward to see them again soon.

Despite their worries about us, it must have been a relief to my parents to know that me and my brother had escaped the danger, which wasn't all that obvious at that point. My parents had tried to leave Austria, too, but they didn't succeed because they didn't have enough money.

I wrote many letters to my parents and still have all these letters. My brother was in Palestine and I wanted to go there, too – much to my parents' dismay. In a letter I wrote to them from England on 21st August 1939 I said, 'Although I'm happy to be in England, it's my greatest wish to go to Israel. Dear Papa, please try your best to make my dream come true.' My father, who got very scared, replied, 'Why do you want to go to Palestine? Who has put that crazy idea into your head? You always write that you are doing fine. Don't make us even more desperate with such foolish ideas. Your dear brother Edi wrote that you are better off in London than in Palestine. Please don't mention those ideas of yours in your neighborhood … Do you know how happy we would be if our dear Edi wasn't in Palestine? If he were anywhere else in the world, we wouldn't have to worry so much about him …'

In another letter to my parents I wrote, 'My beloved ones, … Dear Papa, you are right. The faith in God is the most precious gift man can get, and those who lose their faith in God lose themselves. So trust in God and everything will be alright. God bless I can lead a kosher life here. I pray every Friday and Saturday as well as after every meal. I have decided to be a good and pious person.'

In August school started in England, or rather, one day we were just told that we had to go to school. It was a regular school and children were submitted to classes appropriate to their age. I was the only emigré in my class and didn't know a single word of English. It was horrible. First, everyone looked at me as if I was somehow spectacular. The teacher had probably explained to the other students who I was, but as I said, I didn't understand English. The teacher did her very best to teach me a little bit of English.

One or two weeks later the war began [1st September 1939]. We were sent to live in the country, in Cockley Cley, with a certain Lady Roberts. She belonged to the English landed aristocracy and wasn't Jewish. She was about 50 or 60 years old, very nice and concerned for our well-being. She knew what was happening to Jews and had enough money to help a lot of them. She owned a large plot of land and employed many farm workers who also lived there. It was a huge asparagus farm, and many people worked for Lady Roberts and lived on her estate.

English children lived with the farm workers, and emigrant children stayed with Lady Roberts.

I used to draw a lot at the time, and recalling the pictures I drew back then, I must say that they were very beautiful and I was very talented. I didn't think of it back then, but I really should have done something with my talent.

There was no school in the village so all the children went to school in Swaffham, the nearest bigger city. Our teachers from London had come with us, and Lady Roberts arranged for a little cottage with two rooms to be transformed into classrooms. None of the teachers knew German, so I learned English pretty quickly.

When we moved to Lady Roberts' estate our cook came along. She was strictly kosher and got her own kitchen. Lady Roberts made sure that she would get kosher meat and so on.

Lady Roberts received a certain amount of money for each child that she took on. She gave what remained from that amount to us, children, and we could use that money to go to the cinema.

Mr. Harry Watts was Jewish and the owner of a barber shop in London. We all called him Uncle Harry. He was always there for us, emigrant children, and took care of us in a really touching way. He was a member of the Bnei Brit lodge. He took us on trips and I especially remember a trip to Brighton, a seaside resort. I wrote a letter to my parents in which I described in minute detail what I had seen, what the sea was like and where we stopped for a break. Uncle Harry bought clothes for us because we quickly grew out of our old clothes, and he also gave us pocket-money. Once he came with a truck and brought us all new boots. We all loved him dearly.

My cousin, Selma Kastan [nee Freudmann], had fled to Bolivia with her family, and her brother, Armin Freudmann, to Luxembourg. Both were neutral states, so my parents sent their letters to either Luxembourg or Bolivia, and I received their letters from there. One day that stopped because Luxembourg was occupied by Germans, too. I received one or two more letters through the Red Cross and that was it.

When Aunt Fany was still in Prein, a farmer from Grossau offered to hide her on his remote farm. She might have survived the war there. However, she didn't want to leave her old mother, Granny Friedmann alone and died. [Fany Bauer, nee Friedmann, was deported from Vienna to Maly Trostinec on 20th May 1942 and murdered on 26th May 1942. Source: DÖW data bank.]

Grandma Sofie was a very old woman at the time. She had to leave Prein and moved to Vienna, where she stayed with her son, Julius Friedmann, in Lerchenfelder Gürtel 49. Aunt Fany lived there, too. They had to move out of the house because all Jews were put into special sections of the city. They had to move to Heinrichgasse in the 1st district and shared a flat with many other Jews. They were deported from there. [Sofie Friedmann was deported from Untere Augartenstrasse 16/13 in Vienna's 2nd district to Theresienstadt 8 ghetto on 22nd July 1942 and died there on 29th November 1942. Julius Friedmann was deported from Lerchenfelder Gürtel 29 to Nisko 9 on 27th October 1939. Source: DÖW data bank.]

Grandma Anna lived with her son-in-law, Dr. Siegbert Pincus, and his mother, Ida Pincus, in Neutorgasse in the city's 1st district. They and my parents were deported from there to Opole ghetto 10 on 26th February 1941. Siegbert and my granny were murdered. [Anna Schischa and Siegbert Pincus were deported to Minsk from Vienna on 28th November 1941 and murdered there. Source: DÖW data bank.]

I was 15 years old in 1942 and returned to London, where I lived in a hostel of the Bnei Brit lodge again. I wanted to learn a profession. I served an apprenticeship in a tailor's shop and became a dressmaker. I worked as a dressmaker in London until I returned to Austria.

I wasn't officially informed that my parents had been killed and always hoped that they would still live somewhere.

I first learned about places like Auschwitz in 1944, at the time of Rosh Hashanah, when they spoke about it in the British Parliament. It crossed my mind back then that my parents might not be alive any more.

My parents's life gradually became harder: As a qualified tailor, my father managed to earn some money in the beginning. He worked for the 'Damen und Herrenkleiderfabrik Richard Kassin' in Vienna's 1st district from 4th September 1940 to 21st February 1941. My parents were deported on 26th February 1941. I don't know where they were murdered. I just know that they were brought to Opole ghetto in Poland from Vienna on 26th February.

I own a large number of letters, which my parents wrote to Aunt Fany, Aunt Berta and my grandmother from Opole ghetto before they were murdered. Aunt Berta gave me a little leather suitcase after the war which included all documents and letters she had collected before Aunt Fany and my grandmother were deported. That way all these valuable documents were preserved.

Apart from these letters, my father also sent photos from Opole ghetto. Opole was a village that had been sealed off. Jews who lived there weren't allowed to leave, and more and more Jews arrived. There were a bakery, a butcher's shop, a barber's shop, restaurants and a photo shop, just like in any normal village. However, nothing could be brought into the ghetto, so food soon became extremely expensive, and my parents' depended on help from their relatives in Vienna. It must have been very important to my father, to have life in the ghetto captured on film. The Jewish photographer took pictures of everything my father told him to capture on film. My father inscribed things on some of the pictures and sent them to Vienna.

In his letters to his relatives my father expressed both his thanks for all the parcels they sent to him and my mother, and his fear of an uncertain future. In September 1941, shortly before Rosh Hashanah, my father wrote, 'It's only a few months to the beginning of a new year. We expected so much of the last year, but our fervent dream of seeing our beloved ones again didn't come true. What has the new year in store for us? Will the Good Lord have mercy upon us and bring us back together with all our dear ones? We ask ourselves every single day whether the bright sunny day of resurrection will arrive soon, or whether we are damned to spend the winter here. We don't dare to think of the latter.'

My brother Edi called himself Jeheskel in Israel. He had taken many good suits, shirts and ties from our menswear shop with him when he fled. Nonetheless life was difficult for him in Palestine. He first worked on an orange plantation. I had no idea how hard he had to work. After the harvest the trees had to be taken care of. They had to be irrigated by digging up the earth around the trees almost way down to the roots. Today all this work is done by machine but back then everthing was done by hand, so it was hard work, considering the high temperatures in Israel starting in March. Well, that was my brother's work, and he was lucky to have the job.

Once he sent me a British 10-shilling note to London. That was before the war, shortly after I arrived in England. It was a lot of money for the standards back then, and he told me that I should handle it carefully because he had to work very hard for it. At the outbreak of war my brother worked for the British Army as an office clerk. They took on many people who spoke good English. My brother also learned Ivrit. In 1948, when the state of Israel was founded and the British Army left the country, my brother worked as a waiter for a while. The American Allianz Tyre Factory was based in Hadera and my brother managed to become office manager there. He made good money and wanted to return to Austria for a visit, but then, one day, a telegram arrived saying that he had died of a heart attack. He was only 48 years old and single.

Post-war

There was a communist organization called Young Austria [11] in London, and all over England, for that matter. Young Austria had been founded by Austrian patriots, who told us that we had to return to Austria after the war and help build a democratic state. I was young, and when you're young you easily get enthusiastic about things, and that's why I returned to Austria. Most of the children who came to England stayed after the war or moved on to America, but I returned to Austria in 1946. However, I wasn't politically involved anymore in Austria.

Aunt Berta had a non-Jewish friend from her school years called Obermeier. She kept in touch with her throughout the years, and one day her friend wrote to her that she should come home quickly because our house and the shop were empty after the person who had aryanized it fled. Aunt Berta went to Prein and took over the house and shop. She was often on business in Vienna, rented a room there for that reason, and picked me up at the railway station when I returned from England. Vienna was in a horrible state in October 1946. There was no food, no electricity and nothing else to buy. When I arrived and saw how miserable it was, Aunt Berta, who didn't have any children of her own said, 'You come with me to Prein right now and help me out in the shop.' And that's what happened. Prein was a second home to me; the atmosphere was comfortable and warm.

I worked as a shop assistant with Aunt Berta and was known as 'Miss Lilli' among the customers. I also wrote business letters. I liked my work. Sometimes I went to Vienna to go to the theater or meet friends. I had served a dressmaker apprenticeship in England but it wasn't a custom there that you were an apprentice, did your exams and got a diploma at the end. Vienna was different in that respect, and since I didn't have a diploma I wasn't allowed to work as a dressmaker.

Uncle Isi [Isidor] had planned to return from Palestine and take over the house and the shop, but he died before, in October 1946, in Tel Aviv. A little while after his death, his widow, Aunt Josephine came to Prein and sold the house to her former chauffeur, who had already worked for them as an apprentice.

Uncle Roland, Aunt Berta's husband, became a self-employed electrician. The marriage didn't work out, and they got divorced but remained friends. Aunt Berta got married again a few years later. Her second husband, Wilhem Guenser was Jewish and had been interned in Kazahkstan during the war. He owned a poulterer's shop in Vienna, and she moved to live with him in Vienna.

Although I was madly in love once in Prein it never crossed my mind to marry a non-Jewish man. However, it wasn't all that easy to meet a Jewish man! Aunt Berta had acquaintances in Vienna, and they told her that they knew a nice young man. My future husband's name was Max Tauber and he was already 31 years old.

My husband was born in Vienna on 11th June 1920. His father's name was Moritz Tauber, and his mother's Sophie Tauber, nee Lerch. In 1934 my husband's father emigrated to Palestine for political and economic reasons, and a year later his mother and the children, Grete Taylor [nee Tauber, born 14th August 1921], Berta Feder [nee Tauber, born 24th October 1923] and my husband followed him. The family mainly lived in Jerusalem. My husband's father was a shoemaker and owned a shoemaker's shop in Vienna, and later in Jerusalem, where he employed four to five people. My husband also learned the profession of a shoemaker in Palestine. He never really liked Palestine and returned to Austria, which he had always regarded his home.

My aunt and I met my future husband in the Mozart café behind Vienna's opera. He had just come back from England where he had visited his sister. We immediately had a wonderful time. That first meeting took place at Whitsun 1953, and we got married on New Year's Eve 1953 at the registry office in Vienna. There were many people at the wedding: Aunt Berta, Uncle Roland, Uncle Richard, Aunt Helene, my husband's parents and many, many others. Afterwards we had a big wedding party.

Our son Willi [Wilhelm Tauber] was born on 3rd December 1954, and Heinzi [Heinz Tauber] followed two and a half years later, on 11th August 1957. Afterwards the dull routine of everyday life started. We had to wait for a flat in Vienna for four years. My husband worked in a shoe factory cutting out leather in the first few years. He made very little money. Later he worked for the Post Office until his retirement.

In 1967, when my children were already a bit older, I wanted to work to make a little money, too. But it wasn't all that easy back then and didn't work out in the end.

Aunt Berta died in 1985.

My sons, Wilhelm and Heinz, are Jewish and circumcised. They didn't attend religious classes and didn't have a bar mitzvah though. They were raised conscious Jews nonetheless. We have always been a very Jewish family, talked a lot about Jewish life at home and told our children our life stories – not only about the Holocaust but also about Jewish historys in general. Our friends and relatives who survived the war are Jewish, too. My father-in-law came from an orthodox family and sometimes took my sons to the temple on holidays.

My older son, Willi, finished seven years of grammar school and Social Academy. About ten years ago he also took external examinations to receive the diploma of a psychotherapist. He is a social worker and a psychotherapist. He works with Caritas in the morning and with Esra [Psycho-social center for Shoah victims and their families] in the afternoon. He has a private practice as a psychotherapist at Esra. He is married to a non-Jewish woman, and has one daughter from his first marriage.

My other son, Heinzi, finished a Secondary College of Engineering, too, and then went to Social Academy. Caritas has offices at the Westbahnhof and Südbahnhof railway stations in Vienna and whoever needs help can go there. A lot of homeless people seek help there. Heinzi worked there for a while, and later he got a job in the furniture warehouse of Caritas. Those in need can go there and get furniture. By the way, the prelat of Caritas was Dr. Ungar, a baptized Jew from Wiener Neustadt. Anyway, they later started selling the furniture from the warehouse and used the money to employ staff. An association for homeless people called 'Arbeitsgemeinschaft für nicht Sesshafte' was founded, and the members of this association clear houses and do various other things. The most important thing is that my son employs people who wouldn't be able to get a 'normal' job any more - long-term unemployed people or former prisoners. He has to make enough money himself in order to be able to pay them.

His wife's name is Elisabeth [Tauber, nee Ranzenhofer] and she works as a probation officer. Her father is Jewish.

My husband and I often went on bus journey to Spain, Greece and Germany. We met nice people on our trips but also some anti-Semites. As I said, it was possible to make friends on these journeys, but sometimes, when people learned that we were Jewish, they simply started to ignore us. My husband was often asked in which regiment he had served! That kind of thing still happened in 1991.

I've never been able to make friends with non-Jewish Austrians. Somehow I was incapable to trust people after what had happened to my family. We only spend time with our relatives and Jewish friends.

Israel is very important to me because to me it means the continuing existence of the Jewish people. I am very Jewish-minded, so Ariel Sharon, for instance, is primarily a Jew to me. [Ariel Sharon has been Israel's prime minister and a member of the Likud party since 2001.]

Looking back, and not taking my husband and sons into account, I don't think I would have returned from England because Austria never became a home to me again. Even after all these years that I've spent here, I feel homeless. If someone asked me where I felt at home, the answer would be England.

I wouldn't dream of denying that I'm Jewish. As a child in England, I asked God for help. In emergencies He is the last authority to turn to.

Glossary:

1 Kindertransport
a program implemented by the British government to move 10,000 Jewish children out of Germany and Austria into foster families just before the start of World War II.

2 Herzl, Theodor (1860-1904)
Jewish journalist and writer, the founder of modern political Zionism. Born in Budapest, Hungary, Herzl settled in Vienna, Austria, where he received legal education. However, he devoted himself to journalism and literature. He was a correspondent for the Neue Freie Presse in Paris between 1891-1895, and in his articles he closely followed French society and politics at the time of the Dreyfuss affair. It was this court case which made him interested in his Jewishness and in the fate of Jews. From 1896, when the English translation of his Judenstaat [The Jewish State] appeared, his career and reputation changed. He became the founder and one of the most indefatigable promoters of modern political Zionism. In addition to his literary activity for the cause of Zionism, he traveled all over Europe to meet and negotiate with politicians, public figures and monarchs. He set up the first Zionist world congress and was active in organizing several subsequent ones.

3 Kladovo transport
The fate of a group of Jewish refugees who tried to flee from the Nazis under extremely dramatic circumstances went down in history as 'Kladovo Transport'. In December 1939 a boat carrying more than 1,000 refugees left the harbor of Bratislava. The majority of the refugees had arrived in the Slovak capital from Vienna by train. After a two-week odyssey on the Danube river they

reached the Serbian town of Kladovo. All attempts to continue the trip failed because the Danube froze in the harsh winter. Later, the refugees still could not leave Yugoslavia mostly because of financial and administrative difficulties. Only about 200 adults were able to escape to Palestine a few days before the Nazi attack on Yugoslavia in April 1941. The others were murdered almost without exception.

4 Februarkämpfe (February Fights) in Vienna

the persecution of Socialists by Austro-fascists in Vienna in February 1934. Rather than imposing a fascist dictatorship directly, the Austrian chancellor Dolfuss aimed to take away the Socialists' power base. In February 1934 he ordered the Heimwehr (the fascist militia), the police and the army to 'cleanse' the working class areas of Vienna. A three day battle began. The Socialist Party ordered that resistance should be left in the hands of a few thousand Schutzband (Socialist militia) members. After three days of heavy fighting the Schutzband was defeated. Some 2,000 workers were killed, over 5,000 wounded, and tens of thousands were jailed. The Socialist Party and the trade unions were banned.

5 Schoenbrunn Palace: Schoenbrunn Palace was built in 1695 by architect Fischer von Erlach, who attempted to design a royal residence that surpassed Versailles' glamour. Financial and political problems interfered, but nonetheless it is one of Austria's most important cultural monuments. Used by Empress Maria Theresia as a summer residence for the Imperial family, Schoenbrunn has been one of Vienna's major tourist attractions from the 1860s. Soon after the end of the monarchy, the Viennese discovered the park as an attractive recreational area. Eventually the palace was opened to the public as well, and now draws around 1,5 million visitors a year. At the 20th World Heritage Committee meeting, held in December 1996, Schoenbrunn Palace was put on the list of UNESCO's World Cultural Heritage Sites.

6 Anschluss: The German term Anschluss (literally: connection) refers to the inclusion of Austria in a "Greater Germany" in 1938. In February 1938, Austrian Chancellor Schuschnigg had been invited to visit Hitler at his mountain retreat at Berchtesgaden. A two-hour tirade against Schuschnigg and his government followed, ending with an ultimatum, which Schuschnigg signed. On his return to Vienna, Schuschnigg proved both courageous and foolhardy. He decided to reaffirm Austria's independence, and scheduled a plebiscite for Sunday, 13th March, to determine whether Austrians wanted a "free, independent, social, Christian and united Austria." Hitler' protege, Seyss-Inquart, presented Schuschnigg with another ultimatum: Postpone the plebiscite or face a German invasion. On 11th March Schuschnigg gave in and canceled the plebiscite. On 12th March 1938 Hitler announced the annexation of Austria. When German troops crossed into Austria, they were welcomed with flowers and Nazi flags. Hitler arrived later that day to a rapturous reception in his hometown of Linz. Less well disposed Austrians soon learned what Anschluss held in store for them. Known Socialists and Communists were stripped to the waist and flogged. Jews were forced to scrub streets and public latrines. Schuschnigg ended up in a concentration camp and was only freed in 1945 by American troops.

7 Kristallnacht

On 7th November 1938, Herschel Grynszpan, a 17-year-old Polish-German Jew, attempted to assassinate Ernst vom Rath, Secretary of the German Legation in Paris, in the German Embassy. Two days later, vom Rath succumbed to the two gunshot wounds. This assassination was a (welcome) trigger for Joseph Goebbels to commence an arbitrarily-directed propaganda campaign

against the Jewish population. The pogrom which developed from this has been dubbed in human history “Kristallnacht” - an allusion to the numerous shattered glass shop windows. The night of 9th to 10th November 1938 can be considered as the real beginning of the Holocaust.

8 Terezin/Theresienstadt

A ghetto in the Czech Republic, run by the SS. Jews were transferred from there to various extermination camps. It was used to camouflage the extermination of European Jews by the Nazis, who presented Theresienstadt as a ‘model Jewish settlement’. Czech gendarmes served as ghetto guards, and with their help the Jews were able to maintain contact with the outside world. Although education was prohibited, regular classes were held, clandestinely. Thanks to the large number of artists, writers, and scholars in the ghetto, there was an intensive program of cultural activities. At the end of 1943, when word spread of what was happening in the Nazi camps, the Germans decided to allow an International Red Cross investigation committee to visit Theresienstadt. In preparation, more prisoners were deported to Auschwitz, in order to reduce congestion in the ghetto. Dummy stores, a cafe, a bank, kindergartens, a school, and flower gardens were put up to deceive the committee.

9 Nisko

The outbreak of World War II on 1st September 1939 reduced the possibility of further emigration and expulsion of Jews from the German Reich. The Nazi leadership held fast to its demand that the ‘Reich’ had to be cleansed of Jews. Therefore, Adolf Eichmann, commander of the ‘Head office for Jewish Emigration’ in Vienna, which had been pressing ahead with the expulsion of Jews since August 1938, planned the establishment of a ‘Jewish reserve’ on the banks of the San River east of Nisko along the border to the ‘Generalgouvernements’. The plan was never carried out. Nonetheless the head of the Reich’s Security Council, Reinhard Heydrich, who was put in charge of the organization of forced resettlement by Reichsführer-SS Heinrich Himmler, ordered deportation transports from Vienna and Moravska Ostrava to Nisko. In the course of this operation two transports made it from Vienna to Nisko; the first, with 912 men on board, on 20th October 1939 and the second, with 672 men, on 26th October 1939. The Israelische Kultusgemeinde (IKG, Jewish Religious Community) was put in charge of making up the list of 1,000 to 2,000 ‘emigrants’. However, those interested in getting on the transports were deliberately deceived: The IKG was forced to circulate a message among the Jewish population, which guaranteed people who enrolled for the transport freedom of action in building a new life for themselves. Reality in Nisko was different: Only a small number, approximately 200 men, of those transported from Vienna ever reached the camp. Officers firing warning shots chased the others over the Soviet-German line of demarcation. Most of the deportees approached the Soviet authorities for help to return to Vienna, whereupon Stalin’s Secret Police (NKVD) declared them politically ‘unreliable’ and sent them to forced labor camps. By 1957 hardly more than a hundred men had returned to Vienna from these camps. When the operation was disbanded in April 1940, 198 men, who had been kept in Zarezecze near Nisko as cadres, were sent back to Vienna – many of them to be deported again on later transports.

10 Opole ghetto

On 15th and 26th February 1941 two deportation transports with 2,003 Jewish men, women and

children on board left Vienna Aspang Station bound for Opole, a small town south of Lublin, Poland. By March 1941 about 8,000 Jews had been deported to the ghetto. The new arrivals were either lodged with resident Jewish families, or in mass accommodation, such as in a synagogue or in newly erected huts. The liquidation of Opole ghetto began as early as spring 1942. A transport to Belzec extermination camp left on 31st March 1942, and deportations to Sobibor followed in May and October 1942. Of the 2,003 Viennese Jews who were in the ghetto only 28 are known to have survived.

11 Young Austria

At the end of 1938 six teenagers met in London. They were the basis of what was to become Young Austria. The first youth group was formed on 15th March 1939; another twenty, spread all across Great Britain, followed. In the end some 1,200 teenagers became members. Most of them had come to England without their families and found a community and contact with people of the same age in these groups. There were discussions on social evenings, focussing on an independent Austrian nation and based on the ideas of Alfred Klahr and his consequent demand for the reestablishment of Austria. Young Austria established contacts with British youth organizations, and they organized events together. We particularly sought contact to trade unionists, who adopted resolutions and demanded the support of the British government for the reestablishment of an independent Austrian state. The initiatives expanded the more our members began to work in companies and thus were allowed to devote themselves to trade union work. The ‘Austrian Centre’ ran four houses in London, which became popular meeting-places for many Austrians and also contributed to making friends with the British population. The spectrum of activities included an inn, the ‘Laterndl’ theatre, cultural events, publications and the publishing of the ‘Zeitspiegel’ weekly. The Young Austria choir, directed by Erwin Weiss, further contributed to cultural exchange and friendship with British organizations. The promulgation of the ‘Austrian idea’ was one of the aims. Another one was solidarity with the Soviet Union in its fight against Hitler’s fascism, and thus we appealed for contributions at our various events. We considered the Moscow Declaration of 1943, which also stated the reestablishment of an independent Austrian state among the war aims of the Allies, a confirmation of our efforts. Three hundred Young Austria members volunteered for enrolment in the British military, demanding the formation of an Austrian military unit. Many of them were later called-up for service in British military units.