

# Kurt Brodmann

Kurt Brodmann

City: Vienna

Country: Austria

Name of Interviewer: Tanja Eckstein

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*I met Kurt Brodmann – a tall, elegant, good-looking and charming gentleman – for the first time at ESRA [1](#). ESRA regularly organized coffee afternoons and many of the elderly people who attended wanted to talk about their lives.*

*Mr. Brodmann, who lived in Vienna's third district, had recently lost his wife. While telling his story, he became very emotional and had tears in his eyes.*

*He would visit me several times, and afterwards, I used to drive him back home in my old VW rabbit. Those rides were always fun.*

*I never thought that he would die only a few months later, at the beginning of 2003.*



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## • My Family's History

All I know about my paternal grandfather, Saul Brodmann, is what my father told me. He was born in 1825 in Galicia and lived in Vienna's first district, at 6 Judengasse. My father was born in this house. My grandfather was a shipping agent. He owned a horse-drawn cart, with which he brought the parcels to the post office. He was a typical Viennese man, and he had a mustache. You wouldn't be able to distinguish him from a carriage driver on Stephansplatz [1st district]. He died in 1903 in Vienna.

My grandmother, Betty Brodmann, was a delicate woman. I got to know her. She was born close to Wiener Neustadt and lived in a Jewish retirement home in Vienna, at Seegasse, when I got to know her. She died there in 1936; she was over 80 years old.

My father's name is Leopold Brodmann. He was born on November 23, 1892 in Vienna. He had two brothers, Heinrich and Max, and one sister, Ernestine.

Max was wounded in WWI. He lived from a pension, which he received from the state. He sat in a wheelchair, and he brought me to the kindergarten every day. He must have been really popular, because when he died in 1927, at the age of only 44, there were at least a hundred people at the funeral.

Heinrich was born in 1888 in Vienna. He was very elegant and he used to collect money for poor people. He survived the war in an internment camp in Switzerland and afterwards he went back to Vienna, where he died in 1963.

Ernestine was born in 1885. In 1933 she married Karl Blum, at the Tempelgasse Synagogue in Vienna's 2nd district. They didn't have children and both died in Auschwitz [Note: On May 20, 1942, Ernestine Blum was deported to Maly Trostinec [2](#) and killed; Karl Blum was deported to Nisko [3](#) in 1939. Source: DÖW Database].

On my father's side, our family was quite poor. When my father got to know my mother, our financial situation improved. Thank God for Nana, who used to slip us some money, so that we could get by.

My maternal grandparents' names were Benjamin and Etl Goldstaub. They were quite wealthy, very orthodox people, who came to Vienna from Lviv in Galicia. My Grandpa was shot in his leg when he served for the Austro-Hungarian army, so his leg was stiff. Actually, he was a strange person: he was smart, but he didn't talk much. I know that he had a brother who was a general in the army and who was missing a hand.

My grandfather had an antiques store at 10 Landesgerichtsstraße. He used to go to the countryside in order to search basements and attics for antiques. People sometimes wouldn't even know what they had there. But my grandfather knew, and he bought very, very beautiful things. My grandma worked at the store.

She didn't really speak German; she spoke Yiddish. Grandpa had many regular customers. Most of them were baronesses and countesses, who knew a lot about art and antiques. They bought expensive paintings and furniture at my grandparents' store.

They had four children: my aunt Rosa was born in 1901 in Lviv. She lived in Vienna and married a Hungarian named Desider Harsanyi. She went to Hungary with him. We visited them in 1932, when I was 9 years old. We stayed a bit outside of Budapest. I remember that we had a great time. Rosa had a son; his name was Artur. He sang at the temple – this kid was sensational. They stayed in Hungary. I received a postcard from them when I was already in a Kibbutz [4](#) in Palestine. It was a cry for help. But I couldn't help them. That was the last sign of life from them. All of them were killed.

Aunt Anna – we called her Anni – was born in 1904 in Lviv. She was pretty, but she was complicated. She went to school with my mum, even though she was two years younger than my mum. They put her in the last row, because she was a good child. When they asked her something, she wouldn't answer. My mum looked after her. So Anni never said anything, but she still got a school certificate.

When grandma went to talk to the teachers to see how her daughter was doing, they would say: "What do you want to hear? Anni doesn't say anything all day." Then grandma would say: "Let her sit there, and let's leave it at that."

Aunt Anni married Josef Lauber. It was a very unhappy marriage. They got divorced in 1924. She got married again; her second husband's name was Erwin Neumann, but he was a gambler. She really had bad luck with men. She had a daughter, whose name was Liane. She became a great dancer.

She, too, had bad luck with men. She got divorced from her first husband, then she married again, but her second husband died from a kidney disease. I remember him; he was a wonderful man. Anni went to Shanghai with my father. Later she went to the USA to be with her daughter, and she died there.

Artur was born in 1908 in Vienna and died in 1926 from a lung disease. When he was a baby, he fell from the diaper-changing table. My grandparents had a baby nurse, and she didn't dare telling them what happened. When he fell, he broke his spine.

The broken spine pinched the lung, but they didn't know that until later. He had a hunchback, too. He was a very smart boy, a whiz at numbers. I remember that we visited him at the hospital before he died, and my mum said to me with a soft voice: "Kurti, you know where the old woman with the flowers has her stand, right? Go down and get some flowers for Turli [*short for Artur*], he will die soon." I went down to buy the flowers, and when I came back and wanted to give him the flowers, he said: "Kurti, don't come close, I am so sick." So I threw the flowers on the floor.

## • My Parents

My mum, Franziska Rachela Brodmann (née Goldstaub), was born on August 28, 1902, in Lviv. A few years later, the family moved to Vienna.

My father was an actor - a great, famous actor. He really was something special. He beamed when he went on stage. He was an actor with all his heart and soul. My parents met in Bad Hall. My father was on the stage, and my mum was sitting in the first row. For my dad, it was love at first sight.

And my mum immediately fell for him, too; he was a wonderful man. But there were obstacles: my dad was not orthodox, and my mom's parents were.

My grandfather called my dad a buffoon, a fool on a stage. "You are not right for our family, you are not a religious man. If you want to marry our daughter, you have to quit your job. We can't have someone like that in an orthodox family." And because my dad loved my mum so much, he said: "I will give up everything; I'll do it for my one, big love."

But my parents had a difficult marriage. I realized that. They used to fight a lot – my father had affairs – and my mother often cried. It wasn't easy. My mum had a hard life, and she was such a pretty and bright woman, too.

### • **My Childhood**

I was born on March 23, 1923, in Vienna. My brother Harry is five years younger than I. He was born on August 28, 1928, in Vienna.

If Hitler hadn't come, I would have studied to become a famous singer. I never had singing lessons. But music is a part of me. I live for music. It's inherent; I got it from my dad. I sang even more beautifully than my dad, but he was a great actor. I never wanted to be an actor, but I guess I wouldn't have been that bad on stage either. It never got around to this.

My grandparents lived in Vienna's 8th district, at 16 Wickenburggasse. I went to visit them often, and it was great. There was a dining table was always clad in white; it was all very festive. We would celebrate Passover [5](#) there, too. My dad had no clue about Orthodoxy. But he was a good Jew: if someone said something bad about Jews, he would go berserk.

### • **My Schooldays**

My first school was located at Czerninplatz in the 2nd district. We lived in the 2nd district back then, at Stuwestraße. Then we moved to Kaisermühlen, which is the 22nd district. I attended elementary and junior high school there, until Hitler came. I was in 8th grade then.

I was the only Jewish kid in our class, and they did make me feel it: people didn't like us Jews. But I wouldn't take it seriously back then. It was nothing out of the ordinary, it was just the way it was. And I wasn't ashamed either. Some kids insulted me – I insulted them. We would get into fights, too. But that's how it goes among boys. There were only boys at our school back then. Girls at the same school? Unimaginable! I had friends at school, though.

Our class teacher was a Nazi – his name was Huber. But he liked me, even though I was a Jewish kid, because I sang beautifully. I still sing today, and I sang back then, and everybody would listen. Our teacher told us once: "We will have a singing lesson now. Everyone has to sing a song."

The other kids sang, and then it was my turn. I still remember what song I sang. Our teacher would look at me, and he said: "Kurt, that's impossible, you're an artist!" And I said: "Well, it's a beautiful song." "Wait, we'll go upstairs to see my wife. You have to sing something for her." So he took me by the hand, we went upstairs and I sang for her. "That's impossible," she said.

After that, I often had to sing at school. Even the other kids liked it. Our Nazi teacher – he was our music teacher as well – liked to talk about music, and I was able to answer him. I liked him, even though he was an anti-Semite. The other kids were not as educated as I was.

I talked very nicely, too, because we spoke proper German at home. Once I sang Jewish songs at school. I brought the musical score and told our teacher: "This is a beautiful song, we could learn to sing this." But the teacher said: "No, we can't learn that, but you sang beautifully."

Huber was our math teacher, too. He would ask me questions, of which he knew that I wouldn't be able to answer them, because I was very bad at math. And he discriminated against me when it came to grading. But he did like me because of the music. When we went on an excursion, he used to walk next to me and he talked only with me. It was some sort of love-hate relationship. He somehow felt: this Jewish boy is different from the rest of the little rascals.

I also had religious classes, in a girls' school in Kaisermühlen. All the Jewish kids from the surrounding schools got together there on Monday afternoons. The lessons were a joke. Our teacher was very young, Mr. Victor Rosenfeld. He was a very nice guy, but we didn't take the classes seriously.

To be sure, we did learn the „Shema Yisrael“ [\"Hear, [O] Israel\"; the most important prayer, recited each morning and evening] by heart, and we recited it every Monday, but that was basically it. Mr. Rosenfeld couldn't really teach us anything, because we were making so much noise. It was mayhem... but well, that's the way it was.

My parents had Jewish and non-Jewish friends. It was a mélange; many Jewish men married Christians. It wasn't something out of the ordinary. Even though my parents had a difficult relationship, I had a carefree childhood. We were not rich, because my father earned his money as a shoes salesman.

He worked for a Jewish manufacturer. He was very diligent; he brought in a lot of orders. But they often delivered two left or two right shoes to him. Then he didn't get the commission payment. So we had a difficult time financially. Thank God, we had Grandma!

As a child, I was a member of Bilu, a Zionist movement. I knew a lot about Palestine and Eretz Israel, and I knew many Hebrew songs.

In summer, my parents went on vacation to a simple farm with us children. Grandma paid for it, of course. Once we went to Gars am Kamp, where I learned to swim. There was a dam; it was very slippery. I slipped and fell in. And I thought: „Ah, I actually know how to swim!“ I ran to my father and said: „You know what? I can swim!“ „What? What do you mean?“ I took him by the hand and said: “I'll show you how well I can swim!” And I jumped in again. My father was terrified, but I said: “No, don't worry, I can swim.” Then we ran back and my dad told my mum: “Imagine, Kurt can swim, what do you think of that?”

My dad was really kind. He had a difficult life, because he had to give up acting. It broke his heart. At times, he organized something in Kaisermühlen, for the workers and their children [*note: Kaisermühlen was – and still is – a district with a high working class population*].

He was a Social Democrat, and several times, he staged the operetta “The Jolly Peasant” for the party. They needed a boy, and my dad said: “Kurti, that's your role, you have to learn it by heart.” So I was on stage with my dad, and I sang: “Heierle, Heinerle, I don't have no money...” I was nine years old. It was great fun. My mother was in the audience. But my grandparents did not show up. They wouldn't go to the movie theater or watch a play; they lived for their religion.

We had a maid, too. Our first maid's name was Mizzi. When Mizzi left, we hired Leopoldine. The girls were really thankful: they could live with us and eat with us; they were doing well. Grandma financed all that; she always helped. Leopoldine loved us very much, and we loved her like our own

mother. She was so sweet, and so good to us children.

We didn't celebrate my Bar Mitzvah [6](#). I remember that my grandfather was very unhappy. A Bar Mitzvah is the most important thing for a Jewish boy. But it simply wasn't possible back then. It was 1934; it was such a dangerous time for my father, a Social Democrat [7](#). But I saw my grandfather cry because of it.

In 1938, my mum already anticipated what was to come. After I had to leave school, I started an apprenticeship at a leather company. I was only there for a short while, then I was expelled for racial reasons. I did get a certificate though: "We are very pleased with his work, but due to the momentary confusions..." – or something like that – "we had to let Kurt Brodmann go."

### • Escape

Right after Nazi-Germany invaded Austria, my mum sent my brother and me to an institution for Jewish children, to save our lives. My brother went to England on a Kindertransport [8](#). He was nine years old. And I got on a transport to Palestine. My brother was very lucky: he was taken to a Jewish lord in England. He was doing very well over there. He studied a lot and he became a great personality; a nuclear scientist. He married an English woman and they have three sons. He became famous because of one of his inventions. They wrote newspaper articles about him; I remember a photo of him, with his nuclear gloves.

He only reads books with formulas and signs in them. He founded a company. He also developed special beds for hospitals, to which one could attach x-ray machines or television sets, so that the patients could operate everything lying in bed. I visited his company; it was very interesting. He lives in a suburb of Birmingham in a great mansion. Once I told him: "Harry, I am old. Can I come live with you?" And he said: "Of course! You just take a room in our house!" I was joking, but that was really good to hear.

I went to Palestine on the last legal ship. I arrived in a different world. Everything was different! A young man, Walter, picked us up and brought us to a Kibbutz. Then he showed us around in Haifa. I saw a policeman on a horse, and I asked: "Wait, is this a Jew, too?" Then I saw several workers, and I asked: "Are all of them Jews?" "Well, of course! Does it surprise you?" Walter asked. I had never seen something like that.

My uncle Emanuel – my mother's brother – emigrated to Holland with my grandma. His wife was Dutch, and she had a textile store in Amsterdam. They lived and worked together. But when the Nazis came to Holland, they were deported and killed [*note: Ettel Stark (Goldstaub), born in 1872, deported from Holland to Sobibor, killed on March 16, 1943; Emanuel Stark (Goldstaub), born in 1906 in Lviv, deported from Holland, killed on January 21, 1945; source: DÖW database and Center for Research on Dutch Jewry*]. I still have a lot of letters from Emanuel. It's tragic.

My grandfather had an artificial anus. He was a very sick man. He got thrown out of his apartment and was not allowed in any hotel. He couldn't even sit on a park bench. As a Jew, he couldn't do anything anymore. He smelt, because he couldn't wash up.

My mum already had a ticket to go to Shanghai, but she said: "I can't do it. I can't leave my father alone." My mum gave her ticket to her sister, my aunt Anni. My dad and aunt Anni fled to Shanghai



together. My mum did incredible things for my grandfather, until he died in January 1939.

She arranged his funeral at the central cemetery, gate four; together, in one grave, with my uncle Artur, his son. She had postponed her emigration to Shanghai, and now she couldn't get out. She looked like a Christian, but each day, she went to the Jewish Community Center and said: "My husband is in Shanghai. I must join him."

One day, the official said: "Mrs. Brodmann, I am pleased to tell you that there is a ticket to Shanghai deposited in your name in Triest. You may go." So my mother managed to get out, too.

Thousands of Jews fled to Shanghai: Austrians, Germans, Russians, and Poles – everyone who was able to run. Just to survive. The Kaiser supported the Jews: "They are my guests," he said.

In Shanghai, my dad staged Viennese operettas for Chinese and Japanese people. He learned the operettas by heart in Japanese, and he staged them together with actors from Germany. He was very successful.

The Jews established their own little town in Shanghai. There were boutiques, butchers, restaurants and Viennese Cafés. They had everything, like in Berlin or Vienna. My mum opened a small Viennese café, the "Wiener Stüberl". She baked apple-strudel and other pastries. But my dad got sick because of the climate there.

### • The Kibbutz

In the Kibbutz, we had to write an essay about our first impressions of Israel. I wrote a beautiful essay; it was even displayed publicly.

After some time, I went to the Yfat Kibbutz, close to Nahalal. We studied Hebrew for half a day, and then we went to work in the fields or with the turkeys. I had never worked on farms before, so it wasn't easy for me. The house we lived in was called the "house for the young people". In Hebrew, we called it "beit ha noar", *beit* meaning house and *noar* meaning youth. Yet, I felt miserable there, because I did not like the work in the fields.

The Madrich, our supervisor, asked everybody the same question: "Well, what do you want to be when you grow up? What would you like to learn?"

And I would say: "I'd like to learn a trade." That's what my grandpa had always told me: "Come what may, Kurt, you have to learn a trade." And so I would answer: "Well, I'd like to be a carpenter, because I like crafting." And I was good at it.

"Well, great. Then let's go to the joinery and ask whether they have something to do for you." And he took me to the joinery. "Unfortunately, you are too late," is what I was told. They all spoke Yiddish there. "We took in Jakov and he will stay with us."

Today I speak Yiddish perfectly well. I can read and write. In the Kibbutz, people either spoke Yiddish or Hebrew. It was only us, the children, who did not speak Hebrew fluently. Yet, we spoke German, and that's rather similar to Yiddish.

Finally, the carpenter told me: "But, you know, David Goldwasser, the shoemaker is looking for somebody in his "shistere" (Yiddish for shoemaker's workshop). Would you like to become a shister (Yiddish for shoemaker)?"

Me? A shoemaker? I knew at least something about shoes, because my father sold them. So the man took me to the shoemaker. I still remember the way he looked at me, saying: "So, you would like to be a shister? Do you like manual work?" And I answered: "David, let me tell you one thing: I do not want to work in the fields. That's not what I'm made for. So, yes, I'd like to be a shoemaker."

And he said: "Good. Come here tomorrow at 8 o'clock in the morning. You'll get a "fartach" (Yiddish: apron). Tomorrow will be your first work day, and you will be a shoemaker."

I was up all night because I could not sleep. And the next day, I was there at 8 o'clock in the morning. I got a chair and my first task was to take a pincer and tear the heels for the baby-shoes. I said: "I wanna make a shoe." And the answer I got? "Already? Be patient! You will do it."

And I did. I worked there for two years. Then I knew everything. I made some awesome shoes, even tops for shoes. I had been taught everything. And I made use of it in the future. I would go on to own a wonderful workshop in Tel Aviv, with a total of eleven people working there.

I got myself involved in orthopedics, too. I earned a lot of money. I needed it, because I wanted to leave the Kibbutz. I was such a good shoemaker that they sent me to another Kibbutz to teach the people how to make shoes. Back then, I earned 5 English pounds a month. Board and lodging were free of charge so I could save a lot of money for my future. I wanted to build something for myself in the city.

From 1942 to 1948 I was with the Haganah [9](#). My whole troop fell in the battle against the Egyptians; only one survived, and he was shot in the jaw. The night before the battle I had a renal colic – it saved my life. Never in my life did I have problems with my kidneys, and then this one night. That's pretty steep!

## • Paula

Before all this, I got to know Paula. Paula was incredibly beautiful, and I liked her immediately. She worked for the English air force, in the office. I met her by coincidence, but then lost sight of her. Then, during a vacation, I met her in what was previously an Arabic Movie Theater, but was made into a dance hall. Jewish boys and girls went there to dance.

I saw her there, dancing with a tall air force officer. He was holding her in his arms. We couldn't talk to each other, because she spoke neither German nor Hebrew. She had only recently emigrated from Bucharest, Romania.

Paula was born in 1928. When she was thirteen years old, she was deported into a concentration camp. In 1946, she emigrated to Palestine with her parents. Somehow, I managed to ask her, where she lived, and she gave me an address. The next day, I went to see her.

There was a lion's head to knock on the door. Her mother opened the door. I went in, and there she sat, at the table. She immediately recognized me. Her mother translated. Paula was so beautiful, like a dream! I was crazy for this woman. But my vacation was over; I couldn't go back the next



day, because I had to return to the military.

We had to march into the field, about 40 kilometers from Jaffa. I was anxious, because I was jealous. I thought if I didn't do anything, someone would snatch my big love from under my nose. Our camp was more than 15 kilometers away from the street, so if I wanted to bunk off, I would have to run for 15 kilometers to even get to a street. But I decided that I would do it. I jumped over the barbwire fence and ran. I didn't care, I had to see my Paula.

After some time, the military police picked me up at Paula's place. The thing: these 15 kilometers were mined. So the officer asked: „Well, OK. You're in love. But the whole field is mined, how did you make it through alive?“ I made it out alive again. I could have lost hands and feet, but apparently, I had a guardian angel with me. But it was worth it. I wouldn't want to have missed the seven years I was with Paula.

We got married and started to build our future. We made special white shoes for nurses, with which we made a lot of money. I hired two specialists. Paula and I specialized in orthopedic sandals for children. They sold like hot cakes. Our first store in Tel Aviv was very small. Then we moved closer to the Yarkon River. We brought all the machines into this wonderful, huge venue. I felt great.

Unfortunately, my wife Paula couldn't conceive. That was a big problem, for her even more so than for me. She got hysterical; it became impossible to live with her. We got divorced three times; and three times, we got back together. I couldn't live without her, either. But then, one day, I grabbed my passport in secret and fled from my wife.

At four o'clock in the morning I went to Haifa – on a vegetable cart. I went to the chauffeur and said: “Excuse me, please take me to Haifa, I'm leaving.” And he said: “But you have a wife!” She would have killed me, had she known that I was leaving. I loved her so much, but I had to leave. The only way to save my life was to go back to Vienna. I left my wealth, my store, everything behind.

### • **Back to Vienna**

I hadn't heard anything from my parents for ten years. I knew that they were in Shanghai, but I didn't receive any letters. It wasn't possible; we were at war. They returned to Vienna in 1947; and I went back in 1954.

They had some money. My father, who was still relatively young, went back to working as a sales representative for the textile industry. That's how I got into the textile industry, too. I wanted to work as a shoemaker, but my father said: “Kurt, here in Vienna, you can't do that.

There is no Jew in Vienna who works as a shoemaker.” “Well, OK, but what should I do then? I have to do something,” I answered. My father suggested I should become a sales representative, too. “OK, dad. I will go to work with you for two days. I will carry your suitcase, listen to what you say, and if it speaks to me, I will try it.”

So I ran around with him. It was July, it was hot and I wore a suit and a tie, because appearance is the most important thing for this job. Dad sold and sold. People needed everything back then,

because there really wasn't anything on the market. In the evening, we went back home with our suitcases, and he asked me: "So, Kurt, what do you say?" And I said that I would try it.

The next day, I ran around from morning until evening, with the heavy suitcases, filled with sweaters and cardigans, without selling one thing. And then there was another coincidence: it was half past five in the evening when I passed a store at Laxenburgerstraße.

With the last of my strength, I entered a shop with my two suitcases. I didn't think that I would sell anything. In the shop, there was a beautiful woman and a man. She looked at the goods, and she placed an order for 8000 Austrian Schilling – that was a lot of money back then! I was so happy, and I became THE sales representative!

I acquired a wide clientele and earned a lot of money, which wouldn't be possible today; in fact, I stopped doing it as soon as I realized that there was no more money in it. I am retired now and receive a nice pension. I still earn some money on the side. And I sing again!

### • My New Family

I got remarried. My wife Erika was a Hungarian Jew. It was not a good marriage. She was the exact opposite of Paula. We were married for 31 years. I married her, because I was alone. But I had two great children with her, Gabriele and Alfred.

Alfred was born in 1956; he's been living in New York for 12 years. He studied at the art academy. He is an artist; a painter, illustrator, caricaturist. He got married, and he has a sweet little boy. His name is Leo, like my dad. And he is a redhead, like my grandpa. My daughter has a wonderful job at a newspaper in Vienna. She also has a son, David, and he's only 11 years old.

I went back to Israel three times. Once with the whole family: my parents, my brother and his wife, and other relatives. I looked for Paula every time, but I didn't find her. But even if I had seen her: I wouldn't have walked up to her.

I immediately feel at home when I come to Israel. My chawerim [Hebrew: friends] established a Kibbutz at Lake Hula. There were two lakes: Kineret and Hula. They had to drain Lake Hula, because of the danger of malaria. They are still sad that they had to do it, because there were so many fish in the lake. But people got sick; they got Malaria.

My friends grew old, just like me. Hard to believe, they are 80, but they are still working hard. The women were really nice looking back then, but the hard work and the climate changed them. It eats people up. There is a wonderful poem in the Torah, and there's a line that expresses exactly what I mean: This country eats up its people.

### • My Life Today

I know the Austrians; I was born here. Vienna is my home. There are many debates, but I'm quick-witted and I always win people over when we sit together and talk. Also, I don't look like a Jew, which may have been a big advantage at work. I went to small villages, slept on farms and sat down with farmers.

I heard a lot of different things. I never explicitly said that I was a Jew. But I always defended the Israeli people. That's why they often asked: "Are you Jewish yourself?" The young Israeli people – that's an entirely different world; really something to be proud of. Unbelievable boys and girls, who live and fight for their country. That's what I say to everyone.

I recorded a CD and sold it. I sang in a small theater in Vienna's 19th district. There were around 100 people in the audience. I sang classical music, Schubert for instance. Sometimes I sing at the Jewish retirement home, too, and a good friend of mine accompanies me. And because I eat my lunch there, I meet a lot of Jewish people.

They don't go to see a movie or to the theater, they only live for their businesses and for their religion. Now they have a screening room there, but they don't even frequent that. They don't read the newspaper either; it's just not interesting for them. But on the other hand, that's the people who keep Judaism alive. If all people were like me, Judaism wouldn't exist anymore.

## • Glossary

### **1 ESRA was founded in 1994 in Vienna as a psychosocial center providing medical, therapeutic and social care for the victims of the Shoah and their relatives**

Additionally, ESRA also offers counseling for Viennese Jews and integration assistance for Jewish immigrants.

### **2 Maly Trostenets**

An extermination camp close to the city of Minsk, Belarus. It is difficult to establish the exact number of victims, but estimates run between 40 000 and 60 000 people who were either shot or killed in mobile gas chambers. Most of the victims were Jews.

### **3 Nisko**

Nisko is the name of a village in Poland. In the course of the so-called "Resettlement to the East", two transports with more than 1500 Viennese Jews were sent there in 1939. Only 200 men arrived at the camp; the majority was chased over the German-Soviet demarcation line by gunshots. After this resettlement project was cancelled in 1940, 198 men were sent back to Vienna; many were sent back to the East with later deportation transports.

### **4 Kibbutz [PI**

: Kibbutzim]: Collective, agricultural communities in Israel, traditionally based on principles of shared property and collaborative work.

### **5 Passover**

Passover is one of the most widely observed Jewish holy days. It commemorates the Exodus from Egypt, i.e. the liberation of the Israelites from slavery and the emergence of an independent Jewish people. For religious Jews, this event also signified the election of the Jewish people as "God's

people".

## **6 Bar Mitzvah**

A young Jewish man automatically becomes a Bar Mitzvah at the age of 13. According to Jewish law, this is the age when he becomes responsible for his actions. Translated, Bar Mitzvah means "son of the commandments".

A young Jewish woman reaches religious maturity at the age of 12; this is when she becomes a Bat Mitzvah, which means "Daughter of the commandments". The celebration of this special initiation is also referred to as Bar/Bat Mitzvah respectively. The celebrations, however, primarily take place in liberal Jewish communities.

## **7 Austrian Civil War [February Uprising 1934]**

In February 1934, the conflicts between the Social Democrats and the Christian Social Party lead to a civil war in Austria. The armed conflict started in Linz and spread to Vienna. The unorganized uprising took its toll: more than 300 people died, 700 were wounded, and after this uprising, the Social Democratic Party and labor unions were prohibited. In further consequence, the so-called February Uprising lead to the establishment of the 'Ständestaat'.

## **8 Kindertransport**

The term Kindertransport (Refugee Children Movement) refers to a rescue mission initiated in 1938, bringing almost 10 000 children who were considered "Jewish" in terms of the Nuremberg Laws from threatened countries to Great Britain between November 1938 until September 1939. After the Pogrom Night in 1938, the British government and the British population acted fast: on November 15, 1938, the British premier Chamberlain received an appeal from influential British Jewish leaders, arguing for the admission of Jewish children and youths into Great Britain.

The Jewish community guaranteed a sum of 50 British Pound per child (around 1500 Euro today) in order to cover transport and resettlement costs. Additionally, the Jewish community promised to spread the children across the country and make sure that they received proper education. It was supposed that, at some point, the children would re-unite with their parents and find a new home in Palestine. This is how many children from Germany, Austria, Poland and Czechoslovakia were rescued; but many of them were the only ones of their family to survive the Holocaust.

## **9 Haganah**

Hebrew "Defense". Zionist military organization representing the majority of the Jews in Palestine from 1920 to 1948. Although it was outlawed by the British Mandatory authorities and was poorly armed, it managed effectively to defend Jewish settlements.

After the United Nations decision to partition Palestine (1947), the Haganah came into the open as the defense force of the Jewish state. It clashed openly with the British forces and defeated the military forces of the Palestinian Arabs and their allies. By order of the provisional government of Israel (May 31, 1948) the Haganah was dissolved as a private organization and became the national army of the state.