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The Jewish Leadership of the Theresienstadt Ghetto: Culture, Identity and  
Politics

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ABSTRACT

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by Sarah Kavanaugh

This thesis explores the Jewish leadership of the Theresienstadt ghetto in relation to the Czech and German Jewish communities imprisoned there between November 1941 and May 1945. It broadens the category of Jewish leadership by focusing not only on the men who ran the Theresienstadt Judenrat but on the broad spectrum of community leaders, including social, cultural and spiritual leaders. This approach represents a conscious attempt to highlight the relationship between the Jewish elders and their communities, rather than between those elders and the Nazi officials which has characterised much of the previous work on Jewish leadership during the Holocaust.

To achieve this shift, this thesis focuses on five main themes. First, the day-to-day work of the leaders in Theresienstadt in the context of their community work prior to the outbreak of the war. Secondly, the conflicts between the German and Czech communities in the ghetto. Thirdly, the conflict between the assimilationist and the Zionist factions in the ghetto, both within and across national groups. Fourthly, the existence of education and welfare programmes as survival mechanisms in the lives of the young, and finally, the existence and importance of a cultural and spiritual life for the ghetto inhabitants.

This thesis uses a wide range of historical sources, focusing primarily on the diaries, memoirs, and oral testimonies of those who were imprisoned in the ghetto. It is only by including their accounts that we can begin to understand how the ghetto was interpreted by the Jewish leaders and experienced by the broad mass of Czech and German Jewry.

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## **Chapter One. Introduction. Theresienstadt Historiography and Methodology: Meaning and Memory of the ‘Jewish Spa Town.’**

The position of President (or Elder) of a ghetto was intrinsically frightful, but it was a position, it constituted social recognition, raised one a step up the ladder and conferred rights and privileges, that is, authority.<sup>1</sup>

### 1.1 Introduction

The Jewish population of Theresienstadt was not a homogenous society. Rather, it was made up of many diverse and fractured communities, giving rise to conflicts over issues of culture, welfare, politics, identity and education. The objective of this thesis is to shed new light on those conflicts by focusing on the Jewish leadership of Theresienstadt in relation to the imprisoned communities. This approach focuses on the relationship between the Jewish leaders and their communities and represents a conscious attempt to shift the emphasis from the relationship between the Jewish leadership and the Nazi officials which has characterised much of the previous work on Jewish leadership during the Holocaust.<sup>2</sup> It is only by looking at the leadership in relation to their communities that we can understand the position of the leaders in the ghetto and the history of the ghetto itself.

This approach opens up and expands the concept of Jewish leadership, ensuring that it no longer refers exclusively to the men of the Jewish councils but to all the men and women who led their communities, whether in politics or education, cultural activities or through offering religious and spiritual guidance. The relationship of those who served on the three Jewish Councils of Theresienstadt to the Jewish Police, and the routes by which the cultural leaders

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<sup>1</sup> Primo Levi, *The Drowned and the Saved* (London: Abacus, 1989), p.44.

<sup>2</sup> Raul Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews* (Chicago: Quadrangle, 1961), p.125, pp.145-56, pp.312-22, p.666; Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem – A Report on the Banality of Evil* (New York: Penguin, 1997), pp.115-121, 123-125, 166, 195-199; Isaiah Trunk, *Judenrat – The Jewish Councils in Eastern Europe Under the Nazi Occupation* (Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1972); Trunk, *Jewish Responses to Nazi Persecution: Collective and Individual Behaviour in Extremis* (New York: Stein and Day, 1979).

and other non-appointed leaders found their places within the ghetto hierarchy, will be examined.

There are several overriding themes which run throughout this thesis and which will be examined in the following chapters. First, the day-to-day work of the leaders in Theresienstadt in the context of their community work prior to the outbreak of the war. Secondly, the conflicts between the German and Czech communities in the ghetto. Thirdly, the conflict between the assimilationist and the Zionist factions in the ghetto, both within and across national groups. Fourthly, the existence of education and welfare programmes as survival mechanisms in the lives of the young, and finally, the existence and importance of a cultural and spiritual life for the ghetto inhabitants.

Within these themes this thesis will examine the division of ‘administrative power’ in the ghetto, the history of those who held it, the welfare educational and religious life of the inmates, and the exploration of the culture of the communities that were brought to Theresienstadt and that thrived there. This thesis will also look at the last remnants of the former life that existed in the ghetto, and ask whether this made Theresienstadt life more bearable. These remnants can be seen throughout the history of the ghetto – the cultural performances that were organised by the leaders and prisoners, the political meetings, the communal gatherings, religious services, and even in the ‘cooking lessons’ in which the ghetto women took part.<sup>3</sup>

The examination of these themes necessitates two important projects: a re-thinking and a critical examination of work previously published on Theresienstadt and a re-working of the existing historiography on Jewish leadership. A discussion of the different sources and genres used in writing the history of Theresienstadt, its communities and their leaders is also necessary.

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<sup>3</sup> Cara De Silva, *In Memory’s Kitchen* (Northvale, New Jersey: Aronson, 1996). De Silva describes how the women of Theresienstadt gathered together in order to recite old recipes and take part in ‘cooking lessons.’

## 1.2 Theresienstadt Historiography

The seminal publication on Theresienstadt is the epic work by H.G. Adler, *Theresienstadt 1941-1945; Antlitz einer Zwangsgemeinschaft / Theresienstadt; The Face of a Forced or Coercive Community*, first published in 1955, with a second edition in 1960.<sup>4</sup> Adler was a survivor of the ghetto and remains to this day its primary chronicler. Many of the subsequent books published on aspects of the ghetto have taken their material from Adler’s work and it should now be asked what problems are raised by the fact that the main work on the history of Theresienstadt, and the one to which most historians refer, is written by a survivor. Due to the density of Adler’s book and the fact that it is the only comprehensive text on the history of the Theresienstadt ghetto, it is treated by historians and researchers as a reference book, as an objective account of ghetto life even though it is in fact an extensive ‘memoir’ – an account of life in the ghetto written by one of its prisoners. While he uses a vast spread of original documents in order to construct his work, it is important to recognise that Adler’s work is a memoir and hence subjective. So while his approach may be that of the conventional historian, his views on the characters and personalities of the ghetto are those of a memoirist. Therefore, while much of his material can be used to substantiate facts, his views on individuals should be approached with caution.

Adler’s work will be examined throughout this thesis and his views on the Jewish leadership of the ghetto will be critiqued. It will be suggested that by dismissing the Zionist leadership out of hand, Adler fails to recognise the complexity of the positions the early Jewish leaders held within the administration and the work they did *vis a vis* the ghetto community. It will be asked whether the views presented in Adler’s work have helped to shape the way certain Jewish leaders have been perceived and remembered. This will be approached when scrutinising both the lives and work of the council men and prominent ghetto figures against the backdrop of the historiography on both Theresienstadt and on Jewish leadership.

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<sup>4</sup> H.G. Adler, *Theresienstadt 1941-1945. Das Antlitz Einer Zwangsgemeinschaft* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1955).

Adler’s hard-hitting approach to the Zionist leadership of the ghetto is evidenced in an attack made against Jakob Edelstein, the first leader of the Theresienstadt council, and his administration.<sup>5</sup> Adler described Edelstein as,

dishonest and no more than average intelligence, whose ideas were superficial, dogmatic and fossilized ... His conception of Judaism was one seen through dark Zionist glasses, which unfortunately he was unable to take off.<sup>6</sup>

This view of Edelstein will be discussed during an examination of his life and work as the first leader of the Theresienstadt Jewish Council / Judenrat.<sup>7</sup> The young Zionist leaders, Egon Redlich and Fredy Hirsch, who worked with the children in the ghetto, were also attacked by Adler who describes them as ‘vain, ambitious and dictatorial’ and complains that they indoctrinated the young with idealism and Zionist dreams.<sup>8</sup> The only leaders that Adler writes positively about are the non-Zionists, primarily Rabbi Leo Baeck from Berlin upon whom he heaps praise. Adler claims that unlike Jakob Edelstein and Paul Eppstein, the second leader of the ghetto, Baeck was a ‘profound thinker’ and an honourable leader.<sup>9</sup> The administration of these two men will be examined in Chapter Three and Adler’s views on them will be analysed.

Adler’s insistence on praising only the non-Zionist leadership narrows his work and creates a false impression of ghetto life. Although some of his criticisms may be grounded in fact, he makes several sweeping and negative statements about Edelstein and his council. Adler criticises Edelstein’s policy of ‘rescue through work’ in Theresienstadt and his decision to stagger the food rations in favour of the young.<sup>10</sup> In addition, Adler’s views on the ghetto’s

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<sup>5</sup> For biographical details of Jakob Edelstein and all other individuals mentioned throughout this thesis see Appendix 4.

<sup>6</sup> Adler, *Theresienstadt*, p.113.

<sup>7</sup> For a discussion on the different names given to Jewish Councils across occupied Europe, e.g. *Judenrat*, *Ältestenrat* see Trunk, *Judenrat*, pp.10-13.

<sup>8</sup> Adler, *Theresienstadt*, p. 544.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid*, pp.249-250.

<sup>10</sup> The term, ‘Rescue-Through-Work’ was first used by Trunk in, *Judenrat*, pp. 400-413. For Edelstein and ghetto rations see: Adler, *Theresienstadt*, Chapter 12, pp.343-375.

cultural life are both condescending and in many cases inaccurate.<sup>11</sup> Throughout this thesis Adler’s criticisms of the Jewish leaders will be contrasted with the views and accounts of other survivors. Adler’s work has been widely criticised by his fellow survivors, but it should be asked whether their views are necessarily more accurate. In some areas, straightforward disagreement between survivor testimonies can be identified. In others, there is an overwhelming body of testimony which stands in direct opposition to Adler’s views. These inconsistencies will be examined.<sup>12</sup> Chapter Three examines Adler’s views on the Jewish leaders while Chapter Six explores his attack on ghetto culture.

Other prominent works on the history of Theresienstadt include *Ghetto Theresienstadt* by Zdenek Lederer published in 1953, and *Hitler’s Gift to the Jews* by Norbert Troller published in 1991.<sup>13</sup> Both of these authors were also survivors of the ghetto. Lederer takes a chronological look at the ghetto through the eyes of one of its prisoners. Although he acknowledges his position as a prisoner, this book is written primarily as an objective history in a style reminiscent of Adler’s. Lederer refrains from using the first person pronoun in the main body of his text which is written in a more traditional historical manner. However, he writes in his preface: ‘I have attempted to record a chapter of Jewish

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<sup>11</sup> Adler, *Theresienstadt*, pp.584-626. For criticism of the way in which Adler writes about ghetto poetry see: Ruth Schwertfeger, *Women of Theresienstadt – Voices From a Concentration Camp* (Oxford and New York: Berg, 1989), pp.69-87. This will be discussed in Chapter Six.

<sup>12</sup> After the first edition of Adler’s work many survivors of the Theresienstadt ghetto criticised him for the derogatory manner in which he wrote about Jakob Edelstein the first Jewish elder of Theresienstadt. When Adler published the second edition in 1960 these criticisms were briefly acknowledged.

<sup>13</sup> Zdenek Lederer, *Ghetto Theresienstadt* (London: Edward Goldston and Son Ltd, 1953); Norbert Troller, *Theresienstadt Hitler’s Gift to the Jews* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991). For other works on Theresienstadt see: Miroslav Benesova, *The Small Fortress 1940-1944, Terezín* (Terezín: Terezín State Archives, 1996); George E. Berkley, *Hitler’s Gift. The Story of Theresienstadt* (Boston: Brandon Books, 1993); Vojtech Blodig and Margita Karna *Theresienstadt in der Endlösung der Judenfrage* (Prague: Panorama, 1992); Frantisek Ehrman, ed. *Terezín* (Prague: Council of Jewish Communities in the Czech Lands, 1996); Walter Hacker, *Theresienstadt* (Vienna: Europa-Verlag, 1968); Miroslav Karny, ed. *Terezín Memorial Book – A Guide to the Czech Original* (Prague: Terezín Iniativ Foundation, 1996); Groag Weiss, *Totenbuch Theresienstadt* (Vienna: Jewish Committee for Theresienstadt, 1971); Gita Zbavitelova, *Terezín’s Small Fortress* (Terezín: Památník Terezín, 1992). For general works on the Holocaust with sections on Theresienstadt see: Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews*, pp.277-284 and pp.378-379. Lucy Davidowicz, *The War Against the Jews 1939-1945* (London: Penguin, 1990), p178. Martin Gilbert, *The Holocaust: The Jewish Tragedy* (London:

destiny which I witnessed.<sup>14</sup> This example raises questions as to the ability of survivors objectively to record their experiences.<sup>15</sup>

Troller’s work, while covering similar ground, is more consciously subjective. Although he writes a history of certain aspects of the camp, his work fits more easily into the genre of the traditional Holocaust memoir. He writes in a more personal manner and uses the first person pronoun throughout this work. One of the early chapters focuses directly on the his own experiences in the ghetto and that of this family. Troller begins,

For a description of life in Theresienstadt during the years 1941-1944, I will combine my own experiences with the fate of my immediate family as well as that of dear friends, men and women alike.<sup>16</sup>

Additional works written on Theresienstadt have tended to focus on just one area of ghetto life and the majority of them have also been written by survivors. Josef Bor’s, *The Terezín Requiem* which describes musical performances in the ghetto, primarily the production of Verdi’s *Requiem* conducted by Raphael Schächter, is one such example.<sup>17</sup> Another example is *I Never Saw Another Butterfly*, a collection of paintings and drawings created by the children of Theresienstadt and compiled by the Prague Jewish museum.<sup>18</sup> Ruth Schwertfeger’s *Women of Theresienstadt – Voices From a Concentration Camp* also focuses exclusively on one aspect of ghetto life. Her text concentrates on the personal experiences of a group of women who were imprisoned in Theresienstadt identifying, ‘gender related areas of women’s suffering.’<sup>19</sup>

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Collins, 1986), p.238. Leni Yahil, *The Fate of European Jewry 1933 – 1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), pp.397-400.

<sup>14</sup> Lederer, *Ghetto Theresienstadt*, p.vii.

<sup>15</sup> See later section on the use of survivor testimonies.

<sup>16</sup> Troller, *Theresienstadt*, p.60. Chapter 7, *The Fate of My Family*, pp.60-69.

<sup>17</sup> Josef Bor, *The Terezín Requiem* (London: Heinemann, 1963).

<sup>18</sup> Hana Volavkova, *I never saw another butterfly* (London: Spearman, 1965).

<sup>19</sup> Schwertfeger, *Women of Theresienstadt*, p. 61. See Chapter Four for discussion on women in relation to forced abortions. See Chapter Five for role of men and women in lives of the ghetto children.

Several works have been written that focus on the cultural life of Theresienstadt and on art during the Holocaust in general. Early volumes on the subject include Sybil H. Milton’s *Art of the Holocaust* and Gerald Green’s *The Artists of Terezín*.<sup>20</sup> Two of the most recent studies are, Rebecca Rovit’s *Theatrical Performances During the Holocaust – Texts, Documents, Memoirs* and Elena Makarova’s and Sergei Makarov’s, *University Over the Abyss*, which concentrates on the lectures given in Theresienstadt.<sup>21</sup> While Rovit’s work is an insightful piece on the value of maintaining a cultural life under forced conditions, Makarova’s book fails at every point to tackle the subject of Jewish leadership. Rovit concentrates on the important question of how cultural performances affected the lives of the people in the ghettos across Europe, focusing in detail on the programme produced by the *Freizeitgestaltung*/ Leisure Time Bureau in Theresienstadt.<sup>22</sup> She explores the idea of forbidden culture as a form of creative resistance and as a means of transcending the horrors of everyday life in the ghetto. She explores how, through the act of performing, some inmates were able to gain an element of control over their lives and experience a psychological distance from their immediate surroundings and circumstances. She uses testimony to examine the significance of theatre and music in the ghetto, describing how these performances took on a new importance because of the surroundings. These ideas will be discussed in Chapter Six which questions whether such performances created a genuine element of choice in lives dominated by the constant fear of transports east.

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<sup>20</sup> Sybil H. Milton, *Art of the Holocaust* (New York: Routledge, 1981); Gerald Green, *The Artists of Terezín – Illustrations by the Inmates of Terezín* (New York: Hawthorn Books, 1978).

<sup>21</sup> Rebecca Rovit and Alvin Goldfarb, eds. *Theatrical Performances During the Holocaust – Texts, Documents, Memoirs* (Baltimore, Maryland: The John Hopkins University Press, 1999); Elena Makarova and Sergei Makarov, *University Over the Abyss – The Story Behind 489 lecturers and 2309 lectures in KZ Theresienstadt 1942 – 1944* (Tel Aviv: Verba Publishers, 2000).

<sup>22</sup> *Freizeitgestaltung* – The Leisure Time Bureau that ran all the cultural events in Theresienstadt was established in February 1942 under the leadership of Rabbi Erich Weiner under the auspices of the Jewish Self-Administration.

Makarova fails to analyse any of the material she has compiled. She describes an event or person in the ghetto but does not comment on what this means in relation to their politics, culture or identity. The reader is left with only a shell, a shallow picture of events rather than an overall breakdown of the complexities of ghetto life. Interesting points are raised throughout this work and Makarova has a large selection of primary source material available to her, but these points are seldom explored. For example, Makarova writes about the position of a female Rabbi in Theresienstadt, potentially an extremely interesting topic, but she fails to comment on the most significant part of the story. Regina Jonas was finally granted a private rabbinical licence in the 1930s after years of fighting with the German authorities. She arrived in Theresienstadt in November 1942, only for the Jewish Council to revoke her rabbinical licence shortly thereafter. Surely it should be asked why they did this. Perhaps they saw her as a threat or were not progressive enough to allow a woman to preach. Makarova fails to explore whether the council wanted all positions of authority occupied by men or whether the Nazis decreed that she would not be allowed to practice because of her faith or gender. All of the above approaches and texts will be examined during this thesis and their importance and relevance to the overall history of Theresienstadt will be discussed.

Further important work on the history of Czech Jewry, Zionism and the leadership of Theresienstadt has been carried out by Hillel J. Kieval, Livia Rothkirchen and Shlomo Schmiedt. The work of Hillel J. Kieval is important to this thesis as it offers a comprehensive account of the history of the Czech communities from Emancipation to the Second World War.<sup>23</sup> Although it does not concentrate on Theresienstadt, it is relevant to the argument developed here that the welfare, educational and cultural work carried out by the Jewish leaders of the ghetto was a continuation of their pre-war community work. Schmiedt’s

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<sup>23</sup> Hillel. J. Kieval, *The Making of Czech Jewry: National Conflict and Jewish Society in Bohemia, 1870-1918* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988); Hillel. J. Kieval, *Languages of Community: The Jewish Experience in the Czech Lands* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2000).

article, *Hehalutz in Theresienstadt – its Influence and Educational Activities* and Rothkirchen’s article, *The Zionist Character of the ‘self-government’ of Terezín* shed light on one of the main themes of this thesis – the antagonism between the assimilationists and the Zionists in the ghetto.<sup>24</sup> Theresienstadt was divided nationally, linguistically, culturally and politically, and within the political sphere the two main groups which vied for prominence were the liberal assimilated Jews from Germany and Austria and the younger more politically active Czech Zionists.<sup>25</sup>

The works of Schmiedt and Rothkirchen form an important part of the historiography of the ghetto precisely because they grasp the relevance of the internal politics of Theresienstadt. They argue that a study of the internal leadership is the key to understanding the day-to-day running of the ghetto. Schmiedt focuses on the important world of the Zionist leadership and examines the work that they did, primarily in relation to the children of the ghetto.<sup>26</sup> Rothkirchen also discusses the role of the Zionist leadership and raises the point that originally the ghetto was fraudulently promoted by the Nazis as a ‘Zionist enterprise’, a Jewish town or state in the heart of Europe. Once established, the genuine Zionist beliefs of the Jewish leaders took over. Rothkirchen writes,

Zionist activity can be traced throughout the annals of the camp. It made its mark on Terezín society from the very beginning, and its effect persisted until the day the camp was liquidated.<sup>27</sup>

Although the work of both Rothkirchen and Schmiedt is relevant to this study, there is a need to take their work further. Like Troller, Adler and Lederer, Schmiedt is a survivor of the ghetto and also a committed Zionist which affects

<sup>24</sup> Shlomo Schmiedt, ‘Hehalutz in Theresienstadt – its influence and Educational Activities.’ In: *Yad Vashem Studies Volume 11 – On the European Jewish Catastrophe and Resistance* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1968); Livia Rothkirchen, ‘The Zionist Character of “Self-Government” of Terezín’. In: Michael R. Marrus, ed. *The Nazi Holocaust, Vol. 6, The Victims of the Holocaust* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1979), pp. 986–1020.

<sup>25</sup> See Chapter Three for the relationship between these factions among the leaders and Chapter Four for among the population.

<sup>26</sup> See Chapter Five.

<sup>27</sup> Rothkirchen, ‘The Zionist Character’, p.989.

the way in which he perceives Theresienstadt’s leaders. Whereas Adler dismisses the Zionist leaders out of hand, Schmiedt takes the opposite approach, pronouncing them all beyond criticism – he presents a unified and homogenous Zionist leadership that in reality was often heavily divided. Rothkirchen is highly critical of Adler and his views on the Jewish leaders, but, like Schmiedt, due to Zionist leanings she fails to see the divisions and tensions inherent in the Zionist leadership and the ghetto communities. She writes,

Despite national and language differences between German and Czech-speaking prisoners, the social structure of Terezín was relatively homogenous as to social background, educational level and lifestyle.<sup>28</sup>

She underplays the magnitude of these ‘national and language differences’ and the huge part they played in the internal politics of the ghetto.<sup>29</sup> She continues,

This is not to say that absolute harmony prevailed: the Germans did their best to sow discord among the diverse groups of Jews from Bohemia, Moravia, Austria, Germany, Holland and Denmark.<sup>30</sup>

Chapter Four which focuses on the adult community and their experiences of the ghetto and its leadership will examine whether Rothkirchen is right in concluding that conflict existed only because the German authorities incited it and whether the divisions present in the ghetto community existed before the Nazis sought to exaggerate them.

### 1.3 Theresienstadt History and Memory

Before moving on to discuss the body of work that exists on the subject of Jewish leadership during the Holocaust, it is important to examine how all the aforementioned works have shaped the history and memory of the Theresienstadt

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<sup>28</sup> *Ibid*, pp.990-991.

<sup>29</sup> See Chapters Three and Four.

<sup>30</sup> Rothkirchen, ‘The Zionist Character’, p.991.

ghetto. It must be asked how the historiography of Theresienstadt has evolved and where it fits into Holocaust historiography in general. The question of how its cultural meaning has changed and how the above texts have helped to create a specific memory and meaning for Theresienstadt must also be answered.<sup>31</sup> When sections on Theresienstadt are included in general works on the Holocaust and works on ghettos, certain aspects of the Theresienstadt's history are often highlighted. Special significance is attached to the cultural life of the ghetto and to the history behind the Nazi plans for Theresienstadt, and in particular its propaganda element.<sup>32</sup>

Has this concentration on the cultural life of the ghetto, at the expense of other aspects of Theresienstadt's history, affected how Theresienstadt has been remembered? Has the Nazi propaganda image of Theresienstadt as a Jewish town or 'luxury ghetto' crept into the historiography? Similarly, we need to explore whether the fact that Theresienstadt did not resemble other ghettos has affected its portrayal. The geographical location of the ghetto undoubtedly helped the Nazis' propaganda image of Theresienstadt as a self-contained Jewish town. Theresienstadt is the only ghetto that, 'did not grow out of an existing Jewish community, but was founded in a place where no Jewish population (except for perhaps half a dozen assimilated families) had existed before.'<sup>33</sup> It did not border an existing city or area of town. Rather, as highlighted by Nicholas Stargardt, 'In Theresienstadt children looked over the eighteenth-century walls of the small garrison town at gently rolling countryside and the river Eger.'<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> For information on how the mass murder of the Czech Jewish community who passed through Theresienstadt has been remembered in the Czech Republic post World War Two see: Vojtech Blodig, 'Terezin and the Memory of the Holocaust in Czechoslovakia Since 1945.' In: Ronald Smelser, ed. *Lessons and Legacies – The Holocaust and Justice*. Volume 5 (Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 2002), pp.331-342.

<sup>32</sup> The fact that Theresienstadt is often excluded from general works is also of interest. General works on the Holocaust which have a section or chapter on Theresienstadt include: Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews*, pp.277-284; Yahil, *The Holocaust – The Fate of European Jewry*, pp.297-301; Gustavo Corni, *Hitler's Ghettos – Voices From A Beleaguered Society 1939-1944* (London: Arnold, 2003). Rothkirchen, 'The Zionist Character', pp. 986-1020.

<sup>33</sup> Ruth Bondy, 'The Theresienstadt Ghetto: Its Characteristics and Perspective.' In: *The Nazi Concentration Camps: Structure and Aims – The Image of the Prisoner – The Jews in the Camps. Proceedings of the Fourth Yad Vashem International Conference* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1984), p.303.

<sup>34</sup> Nicholas Stargardt, 'Children's Art of the Holocaust.' *Past and Present*. 161 (1998), p.192.

In the light of its geographical location and its cultural life – and the emphasis placed on these facts – has Theresienstadt been presented in Holocaust historiography and literature as a ‘novelty ghetto’, one in which prisoners could go to the café after work, talk and listen to jazz?<sup>35</sup> Finally, has this resulted in creating a ghetto hierarchy with Theresienstadt presented as being the least severe?

While the Nazi policy behind the creation of the Theresienstadt ghetto is fundamental to its history – primarily to the history of the deportations in and out of the ghetto – it is important that this aspect does not come to define Theresienstadt. Hence, the role of the Jewish leaders and their communities will be examined, not in an attempt to shed further light on Nazi plans and personalities, but in order to uncover the day-to-day lives of the men and women imprisoned in Theresienstadt between November 1941 and May 1945.

#### 1.4 Jewish Leadership Historiography

The works which have dealt directly with the subject of Jewish leadership have tended to focus on the subordinate relationship of the Jewish council leaders to Nazi officials and have used this as the focal point for further discussions on leadership during the Holocaust. This has proved both misleading and damaging. Raul Hilberg’s *The Destruction of the European Jews*, published in 1961, promoted these views which were later amplified by Hannah Arendt’s reporting of the Eichmann Trial for the *New Yorker*, published by Viking in 1963 under the title *Eichmann In Jerusalem – A Report on the Banality of Evil*.<sup>36</sup> In this volume she followed Hilberg’s lead in damning the Jewish leaders and labelling them as collaborators. Hilberg’s and Arendt’s approach proved detrimental because so

<sup>35</sup> Chapter Six will examine the ghetto’s cultural life and show not only how and why it evolved but also who it was for and who was excluded from it and what it meant in terms of survival in the face of the transports east.

<sup>36</sup> Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews*, pp.115-121, 123-125, 166, 195-199. Later editions were published in 1967 and 1986. It should be noted that in his later editions as well as in other works, Hilberg did not substantially alter his views on the subject of Jewish leadership during the Holocaust. See Hilberg’s discussion of Jewish leadership in *Perpetrators, Victims and Bystanders* (London: Limetree, 1993), pp.105-117 and pp.159-169. On Jewish leadership: Aharon Weiss, ed. *Yad Vashem Studies*. Volumes, 13 and 19. (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1979 and 1988); Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, pp.117-126 on Jewish leadership and Hilberg.

few works on the subject of Jewish leadership had been published at that time and little was known about the complex role the Jewish leaders had been forced to play. Rather than tackling the seminal questions and substance of Jewish leadership, Hilberg and Arendt focused on what they saw as the failings of these men and women – their alleged collaboration and compliance in the mass destruction of European Jewry.

There are several aspects to Hilberg’s analysis which must be discussed in relation to this study of Jewish leadership. When Hilberg explores the topic of resistance during the Holocaust in relation to the Jewish leaders, he discusses armed resistance as the only ‘acceptable’ form and does not allow for any other types. His failure to address the importance of cultural resistance and cultural, educational and religious leadership leaves striking gaps in his writing. As there was relatively little armed resistance to the orders issued by the Nazis he classes the behaviour of the leaders as ‘collaboration’ rather than discussing how many were forced to co-operate. Hilberg’s agenda when researching and writing *The Destruction of the European Jews* does however need to be taken into account. Hilberg was not attempting to examine Jewish leadership as part of Jewish history but to highlight the role played by Jewish leaders in the Nazi destruction process. Therefore the lack of depth with which he explores the role played by the Jewish leaders should not necessarily be viewed as a failing as they were not his primary focus of study. However, if Hilberg’s agenda was to examine the role played by different groups in the destruction process he misinterprets the ‘strengths’ and ‘weaknesses’ of the position held by the Jewish leaders. On the subject of Jewish leadership Hilberg writes,

The Germans controlled the Jewish leadership, and that leadership, in turn, controlled the Jewish community. This system was foolproof.<sup>37</sup>

By using the same word, ‘controlled’, for the action both of the Nazis and of the Jewish leaders Hilberg implies that there was no difference in their ‘controlling’

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<sup>37</sup> Hilberg, *Destruction of European Jews*, p.125.

actions – that both groups of leaders had their own people to command. This in turn implies a failure to understand the hierarchical nature of the power relationships that were involved. He confuses 'responsibility with no power' for 'power with responsibility' and judges the Jewish leaders according to the same principles he applies to the Nazis perpetrators. He does not allow for the tensions and conflicts inherent in the position of the Jewish leaders and for the distressing and complex decision-making process in which they found themselves playing a part. Their position was one which deserves a more intensive examination than Hilberg allows. Later in his account, he is once again too free with his terminology and instead of describing issues of 'forced co-operation' refers to 'forced collaboration'. He writes,

Much has been said and much has been written about the Judenräte, the informers, the Jewish police, the Kapos – in short, all those persons who deliberately and as a matter of policy co-operated with the Germans.<sup>38</sup>

It is extremely problematic to class together as one group this diverse collection of people because each 'category' held quantitatively and qualitatively different positions within the destruction process as outlined by Hilberg. Their relationships to their Jewish communities both prior to incarceration and later within the ghettos and concentration camps also varied enormously. Although Hilberg briefly comments on these groups it is sweeping statements like this that have helped to classify the majority of Jewish leaders as 'collaborators'.

Hilberg's treatment of the Jewish Councils during the Holocaust was further expanded in *Perpetrators, Victims and Bystanders*, first published in 1992.<sup>39</sup> Firmly rooted in the section entitled *Victims*, Hilberg's discussion on Jewish leadership begins, 'A ubiquitous feature of Nazi domination of the Jewish

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<sup>38</sup> *Ibid*, p.666.

<sup>39</sup> Hilberg, *Perpetrators, Victims and Bystanders*, pp.105-117.

communities was the system of *Judenräte*, or Jewish councils.<sup>40</sup> The voice he adopts towards the Jewish leaders in this work is far gentler than that which he used in *The Destruction of the European Jews*. He concludes this chapter on Jewish leadership by saying,

The Jewish leaders were in the cauldron themselves. They too were victims ... The fewest of them would speak of wielding power, although they were conscious of knowing more than the Jewish multitude and of making decisions for the whole community.<sup>41</sup>

Hannah Arendt’s account of the Jewish Councils during the Holocaust is in many ways less pertinent to the debate on Jewish leadership as the majority of her views in *Eichmann in Jerusalem* are based on Hilberg’s *The Destruction of The European Jews*. In addition, two other factors influenced what she wrote. First, the testimony of Eichmann himself, and secondly, her prejudices against the post-war Zionist leadership in Israel, which arguably affected how she viewed the Zionist leadership during the war. Arendt does, however, take several of Hilberg’s points further. Hilberg writes that the Jews played an important part in their own downfall but Arendt concludes,

Wherever Jews lived, there were recognised Jewish leaders, and this leadership, almost without exception, cooperated in one way or another, for one reason or another, with the Nazis.<sup>42</sup>

In various passages throughout this work Arendt describes how the Germans treated the Jewish leaders. She writes, ‘the members of Jewish councils were as a rule the locally recognised Jewish leaders, to whom the Nazis gave enormous powers.’<sup>43</sup> Arendt is mistaken in her interpretation of the role played by the Jewish leaders and the nature of the ‘powers’ given to them. Her

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<sup>40</sup> *Ibid*, p.105.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid*, p. 116.

<sup>42</sup> Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, p.125.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid*, p.117.

misinterpretation of Jewish ‘power’ during the Holocaust culminates in her claim that,

Jewish leaders could be trusted to compile the lists of persons and of their property, ... to keep track of vacated apartments, to supply police forces to help seize Jews and get them on trains, until, as a last gesture, they handed over the assets of the Jewish community in good order for final confiscation.<sup>44</sup>

Although the Jewish leaders in most areas found themselves having to carry out the majority of these tasks they were often forced into situations which made refusal impossible.<sup>45</sup> By using the word ‘trusted’ instead of ‘forced’ Arendt implies that the Nazis only had to ask, and that the Jewish leaders did not hesitate to comply. She concludes by saying, ‘In the Nazi-inspired but not Nazi-dictated, manifestos they issued, we still can sense how they enjoyed their new power.’<sup>46</sup> This final claim falls apart when examining the pre-war position of the Czech and German Jewish leaders and their community work inside Theresienstadt, as well as the work they were forced to carry out in relation to the deportations to and from the ghetto.<sup>47</sup>

In his discussion of the criticism heaped upon Arendt after the publication of *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, Peter Novick claims that much of this criticism was

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<sup>44</sup> *Ibid*, p.118.

<sup>45</sup> See Chapter Two for the early ‘relationship’ between the Nazis and the Jewish leaders.

<sup>46</sup> Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, p.118.

<sup>47</sup> For information on Arendt and *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, see: Lionel Abel, ‘The Aesthetics of Evil: Hannah Arendt on Eichmann and the Jews.’ *Partisan Review*. 30:2 (1963), pp.211-230. Steven E. Aschheim, ‘Nazism, Culture and the origins of totalitarianism: Hannah Arendt and the discourse of evil.’ *New German Critique*. 70 (1997); Dagmar Barnouw, *Visible Spaces – Hannah Arendt and the German-Jewish Experience* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1970); Richard J. Bernstein, *Hannah Arendt and the Jewish Question* (Oxford: Polity Press, 1996); Barry Clarke, ‘Beyond the “Banality of Evil”.’ *British Journal of Political Science*. 10 (1980), p.417-439. Dan Diner, ‘Hannah Arendt reconsidered: On the banal and the evil in her Holocaust narrative.’ *New German Critique*. 71. (1997); Jeffrey Isaac, ‘Situating Hannah Arendt on Action and Politics.’ *Political Theory* 21:3 (1993), pp.534-540. Peter Novick, *The Holocaust and Collective Memory* (London: Bloomsbury, 1999), pp. Chapter 7, *Self-Hating Jewess Writes Pro-Eichmann Series*, pp.127-145. Norman Podheretz, ‘Hannah Arendt on Eichmann: A study in the perversity of brilliance.’ *Commentary* 36:3. (1963), pp.201-208. Jacob Robinson, *And the Crooked Shall be Made Straight – A New Look at the Eichmann Trial* (New York: Macmillan, 1965); Robert Barry Sharp, *Judgement on Trial: Hannah Arendt, Adolf Eichmann and the*

undeserved.<sup>48</sup> He asserts that Arendt was attacked for several reasons. First, that she blurred the ‘safe’ categories of victim and perpetrator in her attempt to further her analysis of behaviour under totalitarianism.<sup>49</sup> Secondly, that she went against the widely held popular opinion during the 1960s of Jewish resistance and heroism, and lastly that the criticisms she received were actually misdirected criticisms made against Hilberg for his work which was published in 1961.<sup>50</sup> Novick draws on the work of Primo Levi, focusing on Levi’s analysis of the *Grey Zone*.<sup>51</sup> Yet Novick uses Levi’s work out of context in an attempt to exonerate certain claims made by Arendt. Novick cites Levi’s claim that,

It is naïve, absurd, and historically false to believe that an infernal system such as National Socialism sanctifies its victims: on the contrary, it degrades them, it makes them resemble itself ... The harsher the oppression, the more widespread among the oppressed is the willingness, with all its infinite nuances and motivations, to collaborate.<sup>52</sup>

This passage of Levi’s is part of an in-depth study of the positions that some Jewish men and women found themselves in during the Holocaust. Levi’s study covers the Jewish councils inside the ghettos and the positions occupied by the Jews within the concentration and extermination camps, including the *Kapos* and *Sonderkommandos*. Arendt, however, is writing about Eichmann and ‘totalitarianism’ and it is therefore inappropriate for Novick to use Levi’s discussion of the *Grey Zone* in reference to Arendt’s work.

It was not until 1972 when Isaiah Trunk published his monumental work, *Judenrat – The Jewish Councils in Eastern Europe Under Nazi Occupation* that the imbalance caused by previous works on Jewish leadership was redressed.

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*Judenräte* (South Carolina: University South Carolina, 1995); Elisabeth Young-Bruehl, *Hannah Arendt: For Love of the World* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982).

<sup>48</sup> Novick, *The Holocaust and Collective Memory*.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid*, p.135. See Hannah Arendt, *Origins of totalitarianism* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace and Company, 1973).

<sup>50</sup> Novick, *The Holocaust and Collective Memory*, p.138-139. For references on Hannah Arendt receiving misdirected criticism, Novick, *The Holocaust and Collective Memory*, p.139.

<sup>51</sup> Levi, *The Drowned and the Saved*, Chapter 2, *The Grey Zone*, pp.22-52.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid*, p.25.

Trunk removed the label of ‘collaborator’ from the council leaders and tackled the complexities of the councils themselves. His work starts with the Nazi decree for setting up the Jewish Councils and he traces their establishment and outlines their structure. He then focuses on aspects of the councils’ work across a broad spectrum of ghettos. He writes on their economic and financial work, issues of welfare, medical aid, religion and education. He also explores the relationship that the Councils had with the occupation authorities in eastern Europe and with the Jewish police. Although this approach is a welcome change to previous work which had focused almost exclusively on the relationship between Nazi officials and the Jewish councils, Trunk’s work failed to completely shift the focus and broaden the category of ‘leadership’ to include men other than those of the Nazi appointed councils.

Although *Judenrat* focuses only on the ghettos of Eastern Europe, Trunk’s work is relevant to this study on Theresienstadt because he identifies the need to examine the relationship between the different areas of official Jewish leadership – between the leaders of the Jewish council and the Nazi and Jewish Council appointed men of the ghetto police. One area in which Trunk does broaden the sphere of ‘leadership’ is in his analysis of the relationship between the council members and underground Jewish resisters.<sup>53</sup>

This examination of Theresienstadt will critique the existing body of work on the *Judenräte* – in addition to the historiography on the ghetto – in its re-examination of the Jewish leadership of Theresienstadt in relation to issues of culture, identity and politics. This approach helps to enlarge an understanding of the relationship between the German, Austrian and Czech Jews in the ghetto. It was a relationship mediated through anxiety and conflict over position within the administrative hierarchy. The politics of identity infiltrated all areas of ghetto life and the nationality and cultural affiliations of inmates and the ghetto leaders became crucial to the positions they held in the ghetto. For example, when Paul Eppstein from Berlin replaced Jakob Edelstein from Prague in January 1943 as

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<sup>53</sup> Trunk, *Judenrat*, Chapter 17, ‘The Attitude of the Council toward Physical Resistance’, pp.451-476.

the Jewish Elder of Theresienstadt, the balance of power shifted from being predominantly Czech to German, with repercussions throughout the ghetto.<sup>54</sup>

It is also crucial to study the subject of Jewish leadership as part of a wider Jewish history not just as part of the history of the Holocaust. By placing it within the context of Jewish political behaviour, and the history of the Jewish communities, the relevance of their previous life to the patterns of behaviour and ideas prevalent in Theresienstadt can be better assessed.<sup>55</sup> To achieve this, it is first necessary to situate the Jewish leadership in its pre-war context, and to look at the lives of each of the leaders prior to their position in Theresienstadt. Jakob Edelstein, the first leader of the ghetto *Judenrat*, provides a good example.<sup>56</sup> Prior to any discussion on Edelstein’s role in Theresienstadt it is vital to study his character and actions in relation to his pre-war life. What did he do in Prague before the occupation? How was he viewed by the Prague Jewish community? Would he have been their natural choice of leader? Should he be seen as being representative of his community? Did he think that he would be able to achieve positive results for the community by taking up the position of Jewish Elder? How much choice did he have in taking up this position?

## 1.5 Methodology

### 1.5.1 Oral History, Memoirs and Diaries

Having described the historiography of Theresienstadt, its place in the historiography of the Holocaust, and some of the controversies surrounding the subject of Jewish leadership, it is necessary to highlight the variety of archival sources and genres used in this study. In its exploration of the Jewish leadership of Theresienstadt and the Jewish communities imprisoned there, this thesis seeks to combine traditional archival sources with survivor memoirs, letters, diaries and oral history.

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<sup>54</sup> For detailed discussion see Chapter Three.

<sup>55</sup> See: Daniel J. Elazer, ed. *Kinship and Consent. The Jewish Political Tradition and its Contemporary Uses* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1997).

<sup>56</sup> For detailed discussion of Jakob Edelstein’s life and work before deportation to Theresienstadt see Chapter Two.

By finding a balance between these different genres, this thesis attempts a new approach to the issue of leadership in Theresienstadt. The collections of Theresienstadt diaries and memoirs are vital to an in-depth study of the conditions inside the ghetto and to an examination of the internal politics and leadership. The details contained in oral and written testimonies provide information that cannot be found through examining official ghetto documents because these fail to explain how the camp was experienced by its prisoners. By concentrating exclusively on Nazi documentation and the official ghetto reports produced by the Jewish Self-Administration there is a danger that the voices of the majority of prisoners become lost. It is important that their experiences are heard and incorporated into Theresienstadt’s history. However, while valuing the testimonies of those imprisoned in Theresienstadt and placing them on a par with more traditional historical documents it is also important to highlight possible difficulties associated with relying on these sources.<sup>57</sup>

When using first-hand accounts of the Holocaust, issues relating to the language of the text need to be addressed, including: the language the text was written in and the language for publication, when and where the text was constructed and who it was written or recorded for. The majority of the original sources that survived the Theresienstadt ghetto – whether produced by the *Kommandantur* (Nazi Headquarters) or the Jewish Self-Administration – are printed or handwritten in German. The majority of those produced by the general

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<sup>57</sup> For information on Oral History, Memoirs and Diaries and the questions and difficulties raised by using personal accounts of the Holocaust see: Dan Ben-Amos and Liliane Weissberg, eds. *Cultural Memory and the Construction of Identity* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1999); Henry Greenspan, *On Listening to Holocaust Survivors* (Westpoint Connecticut and London: Praeger, 1998); Berel Lang, ed. *Writing and the Holocaust* (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1988); Lawrence L. Langer, *Admitting the Holocaust – Collected Essays* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995); Lawrence L. Langer, *Holocaust Testimonies – The Ruins of Memory* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991); R. Ruth Linden, *Making Stories, Making Selves – Feminist Reflections on the Holocaust* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1993); David Patterson, *Sun Turned to Darkness – Memory and Recovery in the Holocaust Memoir* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1998); Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson, eds. *The Oral History Reader* (London: Routledge, 1998); Andrea Reiter, *Narrating the Holocaust* (London and New York: Continuum, 2000); Mark Roseman, ‘Surviving Memory: Truth and Inaccuracy in Holocaust Testimony.’ *The Journal of Holocaust Education*. 8:1 (1999), pp.1-20; James E. Young, *Writing and Rewriting the Holocaust* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1988), Chapter One, ‘On Rereading Holocaust Diaries and Memoirs’, pp.15-39. Zoë Waxman, ‘Unheard Stories – Reading Women’s Holocaust Testimonies.’ *The Jewish Quarterly*, 177 (2000), pp.53-58.

population are also in German as nearly all Czech prisoners were bilingual, speaking, reading and writing both German and Czech. Those documents which were written in Czech – often as a means of escaping Nazi censorship – have since been translated into German and English.<sup>58</sup> Unpublished survivor accounts and memoirs written since liberation exist primarily in German with some in Czech and Hebrew while the majority of published accounts have been translated into English.

When discussing oral and video testimony it is important to ascertain whether the interview was originally recorded in the interviewee’s first language and, if not, what difficulties this might present. When examining written accounts, it must be remembered that both meaning and context can be lost in translation. The selection of language by diary writers should be explored. Gonda Redlich chose to write his Theresienstadt diary in Czech while the diary he wrote for his son was written in Hebrew, in the hope that after the war the boy would live in Palestine.<sup>59</sup> The importance of choosing a language for diaries should not be underestimated and can be seen as a form of resistance.

The question of how testimony is used is crucial – whether is it being used to establish facts or to ascertain a view point on a certain aspect of ghetto life. Whether it is being used to back up more traditional primary sources or as a primary source in its own right should also be explored. For the purpose of this study it is important that all testimony is placed on a par with the official ghetto records produced and kept by both the Jewish Self-Administration and the *Kommandantur*.

When focusing on a survivor testimony or a diary it should be asked whether the completed text is representative of what the author wanted to write or

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<sup>58</sup> Yad Vashem Archives (hereafter YVA) 0.64 Theresienstadt series and 0.641 copies of material from the Terezín State Archives (hereafter TSA).

<sup>59</sup> Both of these diaries are now published in one volume English by the University of Kentucky Press. Saul S. Friedman, ed. *The Terezín Diary of Gonda Redlich* (Lexington, Kentucky: University of Kentucky Press, 1992).

whether there is a gap between what the survivor or diarist wanted to write and what is actually written.<sup>60</sup>

Several differences exist between memoirs and diaries as written accounts. For example, the memoirist knows how his or her story is going to end and can therefore either consciously or unconsciously order events, dialogue and meaning accordingly. Diarists on the other hand are not aware of what is going to happen to them and can only imagine what is to come.<sup>61</sup> It must be asked whether diaries are perceived as being more truthful and more immediate than memoirs as they are written as events unfold. The two genres also have different agendas. Diaries are recorded at the time by individuals, often in secret as an act of resistance so they can be used as ‘evidence’ at a later date. Memoirs however are often written long after events took place and rely on memory.<sup>62</sup> They can be used to memorialise, to bear witness, or to influence contemporary people and events.

When discussing Theresienstadt diaries it is interesting to compare the *Tatsachenbericht* (documentary report) kept by Phillip Manes in Theresienstadt and the diary written by Gonda Redlich. Redlich’s diary is traditional in form and layout with dated daily, weekly and monthly entries written in sequence as events occurred. Manes’ work, however, although classed as a diary, was written in sections – some several months after events took place – although all entries were written within Theresienstadt. For example, the first few entries in book 1 of the *Tatsachenbericht* describe Manes’ arrival in the ghetto beginning with the words,

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<sup>60</sup> Young, *Writing and Rewriting the Holocaust*, p.23; Gillian Banner, *Holocaust Literature – Schulz, Levi and Spiegelman and the Memory of the Offence* (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2000), p.31.

<sup>61</sup> For a discussion on the use of ghetto diaries see: Langer, ‘Ghetto Chronicles – Life at the Brink’. In: Langer, *Admitting the Holocaust*, pp.41-51. Also see: Young, ‘On Rereading Holocaust Diaries and Memoirs’. In Young, *Writing and Rewriting the Holocaust*, pp.15-40.

<sup>62</sup> For a comprehensive account of the various types of memory see: Langer, *Holocaust Testimonies – The Ruins of Memory*. His main source for this work is the Fortunoff Video Archive of Holocaust Testimonies at Yale University. Also see: Langer, ‘Interpreting Survivor Testimony’. In: Lang, *Writing and the Holocaust*, pp.26-40; Dori Laub and Marjorie Allard. ‘History, Memory and Truth’. In: Michael Berenbaum and Abraham J. Peck, eds. *The Holocaust and History, The Known, the Unknown, the Disputed and the Reexamined* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998), pp.799-813. Banner, *Holocaust Literature*, Chapter 2, *Memory’s Attributes*, pp.9-37.

‘On the 23 July the Berlin transport I/29 arrived at Bauschowitz.’<sup>63</sup> It is most likely, however, that this entry was written (together with the subsequent ones in book 1) several months later. Very few of the entries in the *Tatsachenbericht* are dated so it is difficult to ascertain the exact date they were written.<sup>64</sup>

The intention of the author also needs to be addressed. In the case of Manes’ *Tatsachenbericht* the intention was to have it published after the war which might easily have affected what Manes chose to write about.<sup>65</sup> Other variables will also have an impact on the final written record, not least the identity of the author, their culture, education, politics, language and religion. This caveat is articulated by Henry Greenspan when he discusses the individuality of Holocaust testimonies, both oral and written. He claims that the memoirists and diarists should not be viewed as, ‘abstract “witnesses”, but as particular people who bring to retelling their specific concerns, identities, and styles.’<sup>66</sup>

It should be asked how this representation of memory differs from an oral or a video recording where the listener / viewer is confronted with a voice or a face.<sup>67</sup> In, *Interpreting Survivor Testimony*, Lawrence L. Langer writes, ‘Oral survivor narrative unfolds before our eyes and ears; we are present at the invention of what, when we speak of written texts, we call “style”’.<sup>68</sup> There is also the issue of how frequently a memory is recalled and expressed. Primo Levi writes,

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<sup>63</sup> Philipp Manes, *Tatsachenbericht*. Volume 1, p.1. Also see: Klaus Leist, ‘Philipp Manes: A Theresienstadt Chronicle. In: *The Journal of Holocaust Education*, 6:2 (1997), p.43 and Leist, ‘Dienst am Ghetto und Kulturat – Ein Tatsachenbericht von Philipp Manes.’ In: Kárný, ed. *Theresienstädter Studien und Dokumente* 6 (2000), pp.123-150.

<sup>64</sup> Although the entries are not dated it is possible to date them due to key events in the history of the ghetto are that described.

<sup>65</sup> See Chapter Five for discussion on Manes diary and the entries and ‘dedications’ by other prisoners.

<sup>66</sup> Greenspan, *On Listening to Holocaust Survivors*, p.170.

<sup>67</sup> Young, ‘Holocaust Video and Cinematic Testimony’. In: Young, *Writing and Rewriting the Holocaust*, pp.149-157. On the uniqueness of oral history as a historical source see: Alessandro Portelli, ‘What Makes Oral History Different’. In: Perks and Thomson, eds. *The Oral History Reader*, pp.63-75 and Naomi Rosh White, ‘Marking Absences: Holocaust Testimony and History’. In: Perks and Thomson, eds. *The Oral History Reader*, pp.172-183.

<sup>68</sup> Langer, ‘Interpreting Survivor Testimony’. In: Berel Lang, *Writing and the Holocaust*, p.33.

It is certain that practice ... keeps memories fresh and alive ... but it is also true that a memory evoked too often, and expressed in the form of a story, tends to become fixed in stereotype.<sup>69</sup>

The reliability of memory must be questioned; indeed can oral and written testimony be viewed as historical documents at all? Diaries, memoirs, oral and written testimony are by their very nature subjective. Gillian Banner comments that the subjective nature of a first hand account, ‘vies with and undermines the linearity of conventional history.’<sup>70</sup> She argues that the use of memory drags the events being described into the present, thus altering their message.<sup>71</sup> She adds, that, ‘The change that memory enacts upon fact is not something which needs to cause alarm or wariness, nor is it something that needs to be hidden.’<sup>72</sup> A similar point is raised by Mark Roseman in *Surviving Memory: Truth and Inaccuracy in Holocaust Testimony*.<sup>73</sup> While the title of Roseman’s article establishes the two opposing categories of ‘truth’ and ‘inaccuracy’ he claims that his aim is not, ‘to challenge the fundamental veracity of Holocaust survivor testimony.’<sup>74</sup> Roseman claims that it is understandable that people are wary of confronting gaps, discrepancies, and juxtapositions in Holocaust testimony as they do not want to be seen to criticise or judge survivors and their ability to tell their stories. Yet it is often these inconsistencies which make the testimonies so revealing – not only about the events that took place and the person retelling them but also about the nature of memory itself.

Despite the problematic nature of survivor sources, the use of memoirs and other forms of survivor testimony is important not only in relation to this study of Theresienstadt but also to scholarship on Jewish leadership in general. Survivor testimony and diaries can further new approaches to the subject of Jewish leadership because allegations of ‘collaboration’ which have characterised some

<sup>69</sup> Levi, *The Drowned and the Saved*, pp.11-12.

<sup>70</sup> Banner, *Holocaust Literature*, p.9.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid*, pp.10-11.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid*, p.11.

<sup>73</sup> Mark Roseman, ‘Surviving Memory: Truth and Inaccuracy in Holocaust Testimony.’ *The Journal of Holocaust Education*, 8:1 (1999), pp.1-20.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid*, p.10.

of the earlier work on Jewish leadership may fall apart when confronted with the testimonies of those in positions of leadership. These allegations have often created an academic atmosphere in which other aspects of the leadership have paled into insignificance, an imbalance that is slowly being corrected. The everyday role of the community leader before and during the Holocaust must be explored if Jewish leadership as a whole is to be understood and the use of testimonies and diaries can assist in this task.

### 1.5.2 Gender, Class and Generation

Through this examination of leadership, community, welfare, culture and education in Theresienstadt issues of age, class and gender will be raised and explored. Contemporary theories on gender raise several questions, most importantly, whether or not examining the Holocaust through the discourse of gender can help in our understanding of events, and if so how.<sup>75</sup> An examination of the socio-economic and occupational backgrounds of the inmates can also further our understanding of the positions that they occupied in the ghetto hierarchy and how they viewed their fellow inmates. Finally, approaching various aspects of ghetto life through the lens of age, focusing on the generation gaps in Theresienstadt, can further enhance an understanding of ghetto decisions and behaviour.

This study uses a positive gender-orientated analysis which explores concepts of femininity in the ghetto in tandem with masculinity, as a gender study

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<sup>75</sup> For information on debates surrounding gender issues during the Holocaust see: Judith Tydor Baumel, *Double Jeopardy: Gender and the Holocaust* (London and Portland: Vallentine Mitchell, 1998); Cynthia Crane, *Divided Lives – The Untold Stories of Jewish-Christian Women in Nazi Germany* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2000); Brana Gurewitsch, ed. *Mothers, Sisters, Resisters: Oral Histories of Women who Survived the Holocaust* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1998); Marlene E. Heinemann, *Gender and Destiny – Women Writers and the Holocaust* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986); Paula Hyamn, *Gender and Assimilation in Modern Jewish History* (Prague: Jewish State Museum, 1995); Franková, *The World without Human Dimensions* (Prague: Prague Jewish Museum, 1991); Dalia Ofer and Lenore J. Weitzman, eds. *Women and the Holocaust* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998); Allen Ann Taylor, ‘The Holocaust and the Modernisation of Gender: a Historiographical Essay.’ *Central European History*. 30:3 (1997), pp.349-364. Lisa Pine, *Nazi Family Policy 1933-1945* (Oxford: Berg, 1997), Chapter 5, ‘The Jewish Family’, pp.147-178. Joan Ringelheim, ‘Taking Women into Account.’ *The Jewish Quarterly*, 147 (1992), pp.19-23.

focused exclusively of women in the ghetto provides a distorted history of the community.<sup>76</sup> While exploring issues of gender in the ghetto it should be asked whether the use of a gender analysis can detract from appreciating the main cause of Jewish suffering.<sup>77</sup> There is a concern that using such an analysis encourages comparisons to be made between victims which could result in creating a hierarchy of suffering and victimhood. A gender-focused narrative of the Holocaust could lead to people being singled out on the basis of gender and behaviour, which could ultimately be more damaging than productive.

The debate over gender studies is important and leads to two crucial questions: first, whether the women's experience was qualitatively or quantitatively different to that of the men, and secondly, whether the women's experience was intrinsically linked to that of the children. One of the negative aspects of a gendered analysis is that it can end up by describing both women and subsequently men in traditional and stereotypical terms. It is important to talk about women during the Holocaust and inside Theresienstadt not only in relation to sexuality and children but also in relation to other areas of their lives. Their relationship to their communities needs to be examined as does their contribution to these communities in the way of cultural activities and survival strategies both as mothers and wives but also as individuals and valued community members.<sup>78</sup>

An examination of how the Nazis set up the Jewish leadership sheds light on actual and imposed areas of gender difference.<sup>79</sup> The Jewish councils across Europe were, almost without exception, made up of men. This can partly be explained by the make-up of the pre-war leadership of Jewish communities which was predominantly, if not wholly, male. Throughout its entire existence, and the founding of three *Judenräte*, the leadership of the Theresienstadt ghetto was entirely male. Women did, however, adopt some positions within the broader

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<sup>76</sup> See Chapter Five for the roles played by men and women in the lives of the children.

<sup>77</sup> For a discussion on the controversy over Jewish suffering see, Ofer and Weitzman, eds. *Women and the Holocaust* and Gabriel Schonfeld. 'Auschwitz and the Professors.' *Commentary* 106:1 (1998), pp.1-8.

<sup>78</sup> See Chapters Four, Five and Six.

<sup>79</sup> These differences will be explored in Chapter Three.

framework of the ghetto leadership.<sup>80</sup> The positions that they held will be examined and their subsequent role within the ghetto community analysed. Differences in the treatment of men and women in the ghettos start to appear when focusing on the deportations to and selections in the death camps. The role of pregnancy, childbirth and the care of children raise important questions, as does the order for compulsory abortions that was issued in Theresienstadt during the summer of 1943 – examined in chapters four and five. Although the order for forced abortions in Theresienstadt affected the female community more directly, the role played by the men of the ghetto in relation to the lives of the child and adolescent population should not be overlooked.<sup>81</sup> Gender, as a socio-political study of men and women, should be viewed not as a defining characteristic in relation either to the Theresienstadt community or to the Holocaust but as an extremely important aspect of any contemporary study of it.

Focusing on class and age as well as gender in relation to the Jewish leadership and the community of Theresienstadt can be seen as one of the missing chapters in the ghetto’s historiography. This thesis will scrutinise how the old and the young of each culture and linguistic group interacted inside the ghetto and whether their socio-economic backgrounds affected their position within the ghetto hierarchy.<sup>82</sup>

The importance of socio-economic background and social privilege is made clear when discussing the *prominente* / prominent prisoners in the ghetto who were given better housing and rations than the average prisoner and subsequently had a much higher chance of survival.<sup>83</sup> The lives of the *prominente* who came from Germany and Austria to Theresienstadt, starting in the summer of 1942, can be examined alongside the lives of the elderly from Germany and Austria who were not granted prominent status in the ghetto. This second group of elderly people were the first to succumb to the hardship of ghetto life.

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<sup>80</sup> See Chapter Three.

<sup>81</sup> For the role played by Egon Redlich and Fredy Hirsch see Chapter Five.

<sup>82</sup> The adult community experiences are discussed in Chapter Four while Chapter Five examines the lives of the young.

<sup>83</sup> See Chapter Four.

Although often described as a ‘privileged old-age ghetto’, both in the Nazi propaganda and subsequently in Holocaust historiography, the elderly in the ghetto died in their thousands often within days of arrival.<sup>84</sup>

In comparison with the treatment of the elderly in Theresienstadt, everything possible was done by the Jewish leaders in the ghetto to save the lives of the child and adolescent population. The young were granted extra food rations, were exempt from hard labour, received better housing and were granted the privilege of a ‘ghetto education’. This discrepancy between the treatment of the old and the young in Theresienstadt will be addressed.

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<sup>84</sup> For details on Theresienstadt being viewed as an ‘old-age ghetto’ by German and Austrian deportees see: Adler, *Theresienstadt*, Chapter 3 and Chapter 9. Information on transports to the ghetto. Lederer, *Ghetto Theresienstadt*, Chapter 3 and Chapter 4. For plight of the elderly see Chapter Four of this thesis.

## **Chapter Two. The History of the Czech and German Jewish Communities Deported to Theresienstadt**

Father was very patriotic, very patriotic. Although he was Jewish, he was a Prussian. The normal thing, he was a real good German.<sup>1</sup>

### **2.1 Introduction**

The Theresienstadt ghetto was operational from 24 November 1941 until 10 May 1945. Throughout this period both the Jewish leaders and the inmates of the ghetto were continually 're-enacting' and 'reliving' debates and controversies from their communal past. For example, on 17 and 18 May 1942, Gonda Redlich wrote in his diary, 'The conflicts between the Zionists and the assimilationists sadden me.'<sup>2</sup> The differing ideas held by the Zionist factions and the broad spectrum of the assimilationists extended to all issues of politics, culture, welfare and administration in Theresienstadt. Although efforts were made to reach unanimous decisions and to create uniformity and cohesion, the ghetto population often remained as divided in outlook and expression as its communities had been pre-war. In order, therefore, to understand the tensions inherent in the ghetto leadership and the population as a whole it is crucial to explore the background history of these Jewish communities.

From 1871 to 1941, the Jews of Europe experienced several dramatic changes affecting their socio-economic factors, party political affiliation, decisions over education and language choice, religious and cultural alignment, anti-Semitism and their relations with non-Jewish communities. From emancipation through assimilation and acculturation, to the First World War and beyond, these changes are among the most fundamental to occur in the modern history of European Jewry. This chapter will look at how these changes manifested themselves and ask how were they dealt with by Jewish religious and

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<sup>1</sup> Sarah Kavanaugh, interview with Eva Manes (Oxford: 2000), p.2.

<sup>2</sup> Saul S. Friedman, ed. *The Terezin Diary of Gonda Redlich* (Lexington, Kentucky: University of Kentucky Press, 1992), p.43.

communal leaders, and how they were experienced by the Jewish communities. This chapter will address these questions by focusing on the Jewish communities in general and on individuals in particular. This approach rejects the notion of there being one homogenous German-Jewish or Czech-Jewish history. Rather, it recognises a multi-layered and heterogeneous European Judaism, differentiated by factions and classes within each and every community.

It is important to locate and identify the different ideologies that were in circulation at the time and to question what these meant in relation to the Jewish communities. This chapter will examine existing political and ideological trends in the Czech lands in comparison to their development in Germany and Austria. It will assess the impact of national identities and national conflict on the ancient Jewish communities in these countries and ask how issues over language choice and cultural affiliation divided communities on both regional and national levels. It is important to pose these questions and explore these issues for two reasons: first, to highlight the history of the communities, and secondly, to relate these issues to the communities which were later imprisoned in Theresienstadt. This will provide an understanding of how nationality, language, politics and culture, which had preoccupied the German and Czech communities, ultimately affected the face of the Theresienstadt ghetto between the years 1941 and 1945.

Prior to emancipation in the German-speaking lands, the two factions of Orthodox and Reform or Liberal Judaism were continuously at odds with one another, clashing over their place within the Jewish community.<sup>3</sup> The mid-nineteenth century witnessed a decline in orthodox Judaism although this had

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<sup>3</sup> For information on Jewish Emancipation in Germany see: Werner E. Mosse, 'From "Schutzjuden" to "Deutsche Staatsbürger Jüdischen Glaubens": The Long and Bumpy Road to Jewish Emancipation.' In: Pierre Birnbaum and Ira Katnelson, eds. *Paths of Emancipation – Jews, States and Citizenship* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1995), pp.59-93; Reinhard Rürup, 'Jewish Emancipation in Bourgeois Society.' In: *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book*. Vol. XIV (1969), pp.67-91; Marion A. Kaplan, 'Tradition and Transition – The Acculturation, Assimilation and Integration of Jews in Imperial Germany – A Gender Analysis.' In: *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book*. Vol.XXVII (1982), pp.3-36; Katz, Jacob. *Out of the Ghetto - Social Background of Jewish Emancipation, 1770 - 1870* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1973). For more subjective accounts of Jewish emancipation see: Monika Richarz, ed. *Jewish Life in Germany – Memories from Three Centuries* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991). Section 1, *The Age of Emancipation, 1780-1871*, pp.105-164.

begun to level-off by emancipation.<sup>4</sup> As the Jewish community gained improved civil and legal rights, traditional gender roles altered, with women coming to play a greater role in community welfare projects and healthcare.<sup>5</sup> The separation between the community and its leadership, and between the leadership and the synagogue, was a prominent post-emancipation change. Whereas during the early nineteenth century, the synagogue and the community had represented the same thing to those within a given community, the role of the leadership took on a new and more overtly political meaning in the post-emancipation era.<sup>6</sup>

The changes that took place across the newly unified Germany were echoed in the Czech lands, although on closer inspection an extra layer of evolution can be identified.<sup>7</sup> Within Germany, Jews faced no complex decision over language choice. In the Czech lands the choice of language was not only a question of linguistic preference but a measure of identity. The choice was not only between speaking Czech or German but also whether to retain a Jewish identity. A member of the Prague Jewish community could choose the Czech language while embracing elements of German culture; or decide to speak Czech but politically and ideologically side with elements of Prague Zionism over aspects of the Czech Jewish Movement or the Czech Nationalist party.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Steven M. Lowenstein, 'Religious Life.' In: Michael A. Meyer, *German-Jewish History In Modern Times. Volume 3 Integration In Dispute: 1871-1918* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), pp.103-123.

<sup>5</sup> Monika Richarz, 'Jewish Women in the Family and Public Sphere.' In: Michael Meyer, ed. *German-Jewish History In Modern Times. Volume 3*, pp.68-102.

<sup>6</sup> For a history of the Jewish community / *Kehillah* across Europe see: Daniel L. Elazar, ed. *Kinship and Consent – The Jewish Political Tradition and its Contemporary Uses* (New Brunswick and London: Transaction Publishers, 1997), Chapter 8, *The Kehillah*, pp.233-276.

<sup>7</sup> For background history on the changes in the Czech lands see: Kieval, *The Making of Czech Jewry*; Kieval, *Languages of Community*; Wilma Abeles Iggers, ed. *The Jews of Bohemia and Moravia – A Historical Reader* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1992); *The Jews of Czechoslovakia – Historical Studies and Surveys*. Vol. 1 (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1968); Vol. 2 (1971); Vol. 3 (1984). On emancipation in both Austria and the Czech lands see: Hillel Kieval, 'Caution's Progress: The Modernization of Jewish Life in Prague, 1780-1830.' In: Jacob Katz, ed. *Toward Modernity: The European Jewish Model* (New Jersey: New Brunswick, 1987), pp.71-105.

<sup>8</sup> On language choice see: Kieval, *The Making of Czech Jewry*, Chapter 2, 'Communal Politics and the National Struggle, 1883-1900', pp.36-63. The issue of language choice was closely allied to that of Jewish education, see: Kieval, *Languages of the Community*, Chapter 6. 'Education and National Conflict: Germans, Czechs and Jews', pp.135-158.

The Czech Jewish Movement and Prague Zionism provided the two main Jewish identities to which the Bohemian community could subscribe, up to and immediately after, the turn of the century.<sup>9</sup> The first involved Jewish assimilation into the Czech nation, language and culture, while the second constituted a Jewish national programme with roots in a separate Jewish identity – an alternative to German or Czech assimilation. The Czech Jews had a more flexible and fluid view of national identity than the non-Jewish Czechs following years of being forced to change identities and shift allegiances due to lack of civil rights.<sup>10</sup>

The 1880s and 1890s saw a growth in anti-Semitism particularly across the newly unified Germany, in response to which the German Jews established the *Centralverein deutscher Staatsbürger jüdischen Glaubens* (The Union of German Citizens of Jewish Faith).<sup>11</sup> Its mission was to combat anti-Semitism throughout Germany, working publicly outside and inside the community, combating assertions that German Jews were ‘aliens’ by asserting a coherent, cohesive German-Jewish identity. With the support of the majority of German Jewry the *Centralverein* combated anti-Semitism in prominent areas such as the law, medicine and journalism.

While the Jewish communities in the German-speaking lands were establishing the *Centralverein* and converging to form a more coherent German-Jewish identity, the Jewish communities in the Czech lands remained heterogeneous, maintaining a balancing act between separate Czech, German and Jewish identities. The unrest and riots of 1891 tipped the balance however and the majority moved towards a Jewish identity.<sup>12</sup> Prominent in this move was a

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<sup>9</sup> For a detailed discussion of Prague Zionism see: Kieval, *The Making of Czech Jewry*, Chapter 4, ‘Zionism in Prague: Bar Kochba, 1899-1909’, pp.93-123.

<sup>10</sup> Kieval, *The Making of Czech Jewry*, Chapter 2, ‘Communal Politics and the National Struggle, 1883-1900’, pp.36-63 and Chapter 3, ‘Breakdown and Reconstruction: Anti-Semitism and the Reorientation of Czech Jewry’, pp.64-92.

<sup>11</sup> For nineteenth century anti-Semitism and the birth of the *Centralverein* see: Mosse, In: Birnbaum and Katznelson, eds. *Paths of Emancipation*, pp.59-93; Peter Pulzer, ‘The Response to Antisemitism.’ In: Meyer, *German-Jewish History In Modern Times. Volume 3*, pp.252-280; Ismar Schorsch, *Jewish Reactions to German Anti-Semitism, 1870-1914* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1972).

<sup>12</sup> Kieval, *The Making of Czech Jewry*, Chapter 3, ‘Breakdown and Reconstruction: Antisemitism and the Reorientation of Czech Jewry’, pp.64-92.

student group, *Bar Kochba*. Its members challenged the assimilationists of the Czech Jewish Movement on their own ground and at their meetings, and by 1914 the student Zionists were dominating the face of Jewish Nationalism in Prague.<sup>13</sup>

In the years prior to the outbreak of the First World War, the Czech lands – and Prague in particular – witnessed a cultural renaissance.<sup>14</sup> German and Czech plays were performed throughout Prague and the literary, philosophical and political café-life took off as those who excelled in these areas met for *Kaffee und Kuchen* in the Savoy and Arco. For many, including the young Franz Kafka, the close knit café-life began to represent an alternative family unit.<sup>15</sup> Each café could boast a broad political, cultural and religious spectrum spanning Zionists, Socialists, Nationalists, Jews, Catholics and agnostics, as well as those who supported the avant-garde and those who stuck to more traditional approaches to the arts.

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<sup>13</sup> There are three stages in the history of Bar Kochba: 1. 1901-1905 under the leadership of Hugo Bergmann, 2. 1905-1909 which was overtly political and saw the establishment of the newspaper, *Selbstwehr / Self Defence*, and 1909-1914 which was marked by a collaboration with Martin Buber. See Kieval, *Making of Czech Jewry*, pp.93-122.

<sup>14</sup> Kieval, *The Making of Czech Jewry*, Chapter 5, ‘Martin Buber and the Prague Zionists: Elective Affinities’, pp.124-153; Frederick Karl, *Franz Kafka – Representative Man: Prague, Germans, Jews and the Crisis of Modernism* (New York: Fromm International Publishing Corporation, 1993), Chapter 6, ‘The Advent of High Modernism: Prague, Vienna, Berlin, Paris, Munich’, pp.148-178 and Chapter 8, ‘Early Years of Achievement in an Age of Hostility’, pp.234-307.

<sup>15</sup> For background on Franz Kafka see: Ronald Gary, *Franz Kafka* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973); Martin Greenberg, *The Terror of Art: Kafka and Modern Literature* (London: Andre Deutsch, 1971); Max Brod, ed. *The Diaries of Franz Kafka, 1910-1923* (London: Penguin, 1964); Frederic V. Grunfeld, *Prophets Without Honor: A Background to Freud, Kafka and Einstein and their World* (London: Hutchinson, 1979); Joseph Peter Stern, *The World of Franz Kafka* (New York: Holt, Rhinehart and Winston, 1980); Peter Stine, ‘Franz Kafka, Metamorphosis, and the Holocaust.’ *Witness*, 1:1 (1987), pp.132-153. For an interesting account of Franz Kafka in relation to the Holocaust see: Lawrence L. Langer, ‘Kafka as Holocaust Prophet – A Dissenting View’. In, Lawrence L. Langer, *Admitting the Holocaust* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), pp.109-125. For information on Kafka’s troubled relationship with his father and his views towards culture see: Franz Kafka, *Letter to his Father* (New York: Schocken Books, 1966).

While Kafka was drinking coffee in the Savoy, Jewish cultural life in Berlin and Vienna also thrived. Vienna in particular had become a vibrant cultural centre and was associated with cultural innovations in several fields.<sup>16</sup>

By comparison, the cultural circle in Berlin was still in comparative infancy. Berlin was not yet the cultural centre it would become during the Weimar Republic.<sup>17</sup> Although the first two decades of the twentieth century witnessed an increase in Jewish culture in Berlin, their input was not as comprehensive or as innovative as it was in Vienna. While Jews in Vienna flourished in classical music, psychoanalysis and fiction, Berlin Jews excelled as artists, chemists and physicists.

The First World War and its aftermath had a substantial effect on the relationship between the Jewish and non-Jewish communities across Europe.<sup>18</sup> The call for the *Judenzählung* (Jewish census) of 1916 was a striking blow to the Jewish community. It was a visible turning point in the attitude of the authorities towards the Jews of the Empire who had shown their patriotism and support during 1914 and 1915.

The impact of war and the constant changes in borders and fronts caused thousands of eastern Jews to arrive in Prague. This caused problems and had an impact on the cultural balance of the Jewish community. Prior to the war, most German and Czech Zionists held romantic and stereotypical views of the Yiddish speaking *Ostjuden*, while in reality having never encountered Jews from the

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<sup>16</sup> On Viennese cultural life see: Steven Beller, *Vienna and the Jews, 1867-1938: A Cultural History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); Marsha L. Rosenblitt, *The Jews of Vienna, 1867-1914: Assimilation and Identity* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1983); Ivar Oxaal and Michael Pollak, *Jews, Antisemitism and Culture in Vienna* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1987); David Rechtler, *Jews of Vienna and the First World War* (London: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilisation, 2001). For Freud see: Peter Gay, *Freud, Jews and Other Germans: Masters and Victims in Modernist Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979); Peter Gay, *Freud: A Life for our Time* (London: Norton, 1988); Sander L. Gilman, *Freud, Race and Gender* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1993); David Meghnagi and Mortimer Ostow, *Freud and Judaism* (London: Karnac, 1993).

<sup>17</sup> Steven M. Lowenstein, 'Jewish Participation in German Culture.' In: Meyer, *German-Jewish History In Modern Times. Volume 3*, pp.305-335.

<sup>18</sup> Pulzer, 'The First World War.' In: Meyer, *German-Jewish History In Modern Times*, pp.360-381; Kieval, *The Making of Czech Jewry*, Chapter 6, 'The Test of War', pp.154-182. See also Minika Richarz, in Michael Meyer, ed. *German-Jewish History in Modern Times. Volume 3*, p.388.

eastern communities other than in the cultural arena.<sup>19</sup> The Prague community did try to help those from the east by setting up charities, welfare organisations and an emergency school but problems arose as relations with the non-Jewish population worsened. This pushed the Prague Jews further away from the *Ostjuden* and the long-term Prague Jewish residents expressed their views in the Czech newspaper, *Rozvoj*,

No reasonable person would claim that they are our brothers. Their religion is certainly not ours; and if one takes a look at the physiognomy of these Jews, one could not even claim that we are members of the same race.<sup>20</sup>

Large sections of the Jewish community hoped that the end of the war would finally usher in full emancipation. They wanted the legal and civil equality and recognition that had not been granted to them during the nineteenth century. However, Pulzer claims that the situation was different in Austria. There,

The collapse of the protecting Habsburg umbrella affected the Jews rather differently. Those who had sheltered under it could only regard the triumph of the competing nationalisms with dismay ... And so in the winter of 1918-1919 the Jews of the defeated empires trod the path from the old to the new, not knowing whether to fear or to hope.<sup>21</sup>

## 2.2 Post World War One Jewish Communities: 1918 – 1933

### 2.2.1 The New Czech Republic

By 1919 the majority of the Jews who would later be deported to Theresienstadt were geographically divided between the Weimar Republic,

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<sup>19</sup> Kieval, *The Making of Czech Jewry*, p.140.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid*, p.175.

<sup>21</sup> Pulzer, 'The First World War.' In: Meyer, *German-Jewish History In Modern Times. Volume 3*, p.384.

Austria and the first Czech Republic.<sup>22</sup> The new Czech Republic, recognised at the Paris Peace Settlements, had a population of 14.5 million people.<sup>23</sup> This included 3.1 million Sudeten Germans who had been placed under Czech rule following a re-drawing of national boundaries.<sup>24</sup> The first elections that took place in the Czech Republic did not pass without incident.<sup>25</sup> Most communities in the new state had Jewish representatives in governing bodies although during the first parliamentary election in 1920, it proved impossible to elect candidates from the Jewish community. In order to be considered, candidates had to win a minimum of 20,000 votes in at least one constituency, which was impossible for the dispersed Jewish communities to achieve.<sup>26</sup> But by 1925 the situation had improved and at the second election The Jewish Movement – the Czech Jewish political party – received 98,845 votes, and the Jewish Economic Party, 16,936 votes. By 1929 the new Jewish Party had 104,539 votes. The same year this secular Jewish nationalist party sent two representatives to the parliament in Prague and in 1935 a further two were elected.<sup>27</sup> Ezra Mendelsohn claims that,

One should emphasise that in Czechoslovakia, as in Poland and Romania, it was the secular Zionists who proved themselves not only the most active political force within Jewry but also the most capable of defending the interests of all Jews, not simply those of Zionists.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>22</sup> The Weimar Republic contained approximately 550,000 Jews who equalled 0.9% of the total population. See: Niewyk, *The Jews in Weimar Germany* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University, 1980), Chapter 2, 'The Role of the Jews in the Economic, Political, and Cultural Life of Weimar Germany', pp.11-43; Erich Rosenthal, 'Trends in the Jewish Population in Germany, 1910-1939', *Jewish Social Studies*, 6 (1994), pp.233-274.

<sup>23</sup> The Treaty of St. Germain guaranteed the state law for the new Czech Republic see: Aharon Moshe Rabinowicz, 'The Jewish Minority' In: *The Jews of Czechoslovakia*, Vol. 1, pp.155-266. For specific details on the treaty see, pp.232-236. Ezra Mendelsohn, *The Jews of East Central Europe Between the World Wars* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), Chapter 3, 'Czechoslovakia', pp.131-170.

<sup>24</sup> For information on Sudeten Germans see: Mark Cornwall, 'The Struggle on the Czech-German Language Border, 1880-1940.' *The English Historical Review*. 109:433 (1994), pp.914-952.

<sup>25</sup> For information on Czech Jewish politics see: J.W. Brügel, 'Jews in Political Life', In: *The Jews of Czechoslovakia*, Vol. 2, pp.243-252. Aharon Moshe and K. Rabinowicz, 'The Jewish Party', In: *The Jews of Czechoslovakia*, Vol. 2, pp.253-346.

<sup>26</sup> For information on the first elections in the new Czech Republic see: Maria Dowling, *Czechoslovakia* (London: Arnold, 2002), Chapter 2, 'The First Czechoslovak Republic, 1918-1938', pp.19-38; Kieval, *The Making of Czech Jewry*, pp.183-197.

<sup>27</sup> Mendelsohn, *The Jews of East Central Europe*, pp.152-162.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid*, p156.

## 2.2.2 Post-war Prague Zionism

The main aim of the post-war Czech Zionists was to transform the role of the Czech Jewish community into a national representative institution. Alongside plans to emigrate to Palestine there were simultaneous efforts to expand Jewish national culture within the new Republic. In the immediate post-war years, the Prague Zionists were much more successful in gaining support for their cause than the non-Zionist Czech-Jewish leaders had been. The Zionists were increasingly pro-active, assisted by a vibrant campaign from *Bar Kochba*.

Thomas Masaryk, the Czech politician and philo-semite, emerged from the war as the clear leader of the Czech Nationalist movement. He had for several years been sympathetic to the Zionist cause and in 1918 announced,

I have observed the Zionist and national movement of the Jews in Europe and in our own country, and have come to understand that it is not a movement of political chauvinism, but one for the moral rebirth of its people.<sup>29</sup>

Jealous of the Zionist successes, the Czech-Jewish leaders claimed that although the Zionists were superficially neutral on Czech-German debates their true support lay with the Germans. Some of the Czech-Jewish leaders, however, favoured Zionist success as it signalled a decline in German influence over Bohemian and Moravian Jewry.

It was against this background of disputes between the Zionists and the Czech-Jewish assimilationists that the question of Jewish education raised its head, as it had done previously during the 1880s and 1890s.<sup>30</sup> The efforts made by the Zionists in the sphere of education, primarily to close German schools and open Jewish ones, were successful in some areas, with the first Jewish primary school opening in Prague on 6 September 1920 on the same piece of ground

<sup>29</sup> Kieval, *The Making of Czech Jewry*, p.188. For biographical and historical information on Masaryk see: Katerina Capková, 'Pilsudski or Masaryk? Zionist Revisionism in Czechoslovakia 1925-1940.' *Judaica Bohemiae*, 35 (2000), pp.210-239. Also see Weiner Library (hereafter WL) OSP.862, Fred Hahn, *T.G. Masaryk and the Jews*.

<sup>30</sup> Kieval, *The Making of Czech Jewry*, pp.193-194.

where a German community language school had stood in 1860. This school differed from previous Jewish educational institutions because the children were to be taught in Czech rather than German.

An important landmark for the Jews of the Czechoslovak Republic was the national census of 1921. A comparison with the 1910 census reveals striking changes in the German-Jewish communities in the Czech lands. In 1910, 40,647 Jews had declared themselves German but by 1921 this number had fallen to 26,058. In the 1921 census, 11,000 Bohemian Jews claimed to be Jewish by nationality having previously been ‘German’ in 1910.<sup>31</sup> The 1921 census, together with the political situation in the new republic, shows that during the 1920s there were really only two possible identities open to Czechoslovakian Jewry – Czech and Jewish. The strong German-Jewish identity of the nineteenth century that had been important for so many was no longer viable.<sup>32</sup>

The two strands of post-emancipation Jewry, the Czech-Jewish movement and Prague Zionism, moved closer together in the post-war years in order to create a more cohesive Czech-Jewish community. Although the Prague Zionists called for Jewish autonomy, they did not put up barriers to Czech-Jewish assimilation in politics or social relations. The complex differences in the two movements, and their aims for the Jewish communities of the Czech Republic, combined in an unexpected way to bring about the birth of a modern Czech Jewry.

With the declaration of peace and the creation of states came a new wave of anti-Semitism. During October and December 1920, mobs attacked the ancient Jewish town hall destroying the valuable collection of documents and artefacts that related to the Jewish community. Kafka who was living in Prague wrote to Milena Jesenská about the riots.

I’ve spent all afternoon in the streets, wallowing in the Jew-baiting ... The heroism which consists in staying on

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<sup>31</sup> *Ibid*, p.195.

<sup>32</sup> For information on German Jews and liberalism during Nineteenth Century see: Niewyk, *The Jews in Weimar Germany*, Introduction, pp.1-11.

in spite of it all is that of cockroaches which also can't be exterminated from the bathroom.<sup>33</sup>

This exemplifies Kafka's mixed feelings about the Prague Jewish community and about life in the Diaspora. He discusses the idea of being an 'outcast' in one's own city with the only safety provided by the law.

The post-war years also witnessed an increase in Jewish involvement in the cultural life of Prague. At the centre of the Jewish literary movement in Prague were Kafka and Max Brod. The question of language which had been so prominent during the last few decades of the nineteenth century continued to play an important role in the new Republic. In the cultural sphere this was recognisable in debates over language choice for publications. In 1920 Kafka had been introduced to Milena Jesenská who was to translate his early works from German into Czech. In a letter of thanks, Kafka wrote: 'I'm deeply moved by the faithfulness with which you've done it, sentence for sentence, a faithfulness I wouldn't have thought possible in the Czech language ... Are German and Czech so near to one another?'.<sup>34</sup> In a separate letter he added, 'German is my mother-tongue and therefore natural to me, but Czech feels to me far more intimate, which is why your letter dispels many an uncertainty'.<sup>35</sup>

### 2.2.3 The Jewish communities of the Weimar Republic

The post-war years saw a convergence in the Czech Jewish communities that had not existed pre-war. Side by side with this move towards a more unified Czech Jewry came a distancing from aspects of non-Jewish Czech society as a younger generation of Jews asserted a more overtly Zionist identity. While the Jews in the Czech lands were forging this new identity, the more assimilated German Jewish communities continued to balance their German identity and patriotism with aspects of cultural and religious Judaism.<sup>36</sup> Although the Weimar

<sup>33</sup> Kieval, *The Making of Czech Jewry*, p.186.

<sup>34</sup> Willy Haas, ed. *Letters to Milena* (London: Vintage, 1999), p.21.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>36</sup> For information on the social history of Jews in the Weimar Republic see: Niewyk, *The Jews in Weimar Germany*; Arnold Paucker and Benz Wolfgang, *Jüdisches Leben in der Weimar Republik*

Jewish community was to become one of the most assimilated in the Diaspora, Paul Mendes-Flohr describes their position as,

At the same time affirmative and defensive. Their eager identification with the Weimar Republic expressed both a firm commitment to its founding principles and a defiant assertion of their rights to be regarded as full citizens of the German state and full-fledged participants in German culture.<sup>37</sup>

Mendes-Flohr claims the word assimilation is problematic as it does not allow the Jewish communities complex subject positions. He writes,

The Jewish identity of most German Jews was not as fractured and attenuated as the code word assimilation might suggest. They continued to associate as Jews, although in the process of acquiring German culture and identity their knowledge of Judaism was often severely diminished.<sup>38</sup>

Philipp Manes, born in Elberfeld on 16 August 1875 and deported to Theresienstadt in July 1942, is representative of Mendes-Flohr's description. His family had lived in the Rhineland for several generations and moved to Berlin in 1886. By the time the Weimar Republic was established, Manes was already in his forties, had travelled extensively and fought in the First World War, for which he had received the Iron Cross Second Class. Manes' daughter Eva claims that he always considered himself to be 'fully German' although both he and his family maintained links with the Berlin Jewish community. Eva says, 'Father was very patriotic, very patriotic. Although he was Jewish, he was a Prussian. The normal thing, he was a real good German.'<sup>39</sup>

The effect of World War One, the creation of the Weimar Republic, and the increase of Jewish participation in cultural and social arenas combined to

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(Tübingen: Mohr, 1998); Lloyd P. Gartner, *History of the Jews in Modern Times* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp.267-318.

<sup>37</sup> Paul Mendes-Flohr, 'Introduction.' In: Meyer, ed. *German-Jewish History in Modern Times. Volume 4*, p1.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid*, p.2.

<sup>39</sup> Kavanaugh, Manes, p.2.

rejuvenate the limited political agenda of the German Jewish communities. Even under the ‘liberal’ laws of Weimar, the legal status of the Jewish communities continued to be defined by the various German states rather than by a comprehensive central law. Whether a community defined itself in terms of religion / *Religionsgemeinde*, synagogue affiliation / *Synagogengemeinde*, or cultural identity / *Kultusgemeinde*, they were legally bound to the state in which they resided.<sup>40</sup>

The disparity between the urban and rural Jewish communities in terms of size and structure decreased in Weimar Germany due to an increase in secularisation and the internal movement of Jewish communities. Simultaneously there was a decline in interest in traditional Judaism which can be seen in the falling attendance figures for services at synagogues.<sup>41</sup>

#### 2.2.4 Culture in Weimar Germany

The part played by the German Jewish community in the production and consumption of culture during the Weimar Republic is complex and often misrepresented. Donald Niewyk claims, ‘There is no question that the Jews’ ability to control or influence Weimar economic and political life was overrated. Their role in Weimar culture is another matter.’<sup>42</sup> Between 1919 and 1933, the Jews of Germany did make a substantial creative input into the cultural life of the Weimar Republic, though, it is important not to exaggerate their role. It is also imperative to remember that the leading figures in art and literature of the

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<sup>40</sup> Avraham Barkai, ‘The Organised Jewish Community.’ In: Meyer, ed. *German-Jewish History in Modern Times. Volume 4*, pp.72-101. For information on legal position see, ‘The Legal Status of the Gemeinden’, pp.72-75.

<sup>41</sup> As well as a decline in interest in religion see decline in number of communities: Barkai, ‘The Organised Jewish Community’. In: Meyer, ed. *German-Jewish History in Modern Times. Volume 4*, pp.75-81. For Jewish communities in Austria see: pp.81-86.

<sup>42</sup> Niewyk, *The Jews in Weimar Germany*, p32. For background to Jews in Weimar Culture see: Mendes-Flohr, ‘Jews Within German Culture’, In: Meyer, *German-Jewish History In Modern Times. Volume 4*, pp.170-194; Peter Gay, *Weimar Culture: The Outsider as Insider* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1969); Keith Bullivant, *Culture and Society in Weimar Republic* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1977); Michael Brenner, *The Renaissance of Jewish Culture in Weimar Germany* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996); Marjorie Lamberti, ‘German Schoolteachers, National Socialism and the Politics of Culture at the End of the Weimar Republic.’ *Central European History* 35:1 (2001), pp.53-82.

Weimar period were predominantly non-Jews. The German Jews who were to become famous took their place alongside non-Jewish heavyweights such as Bertolt Brecht and Heinrich Mann. While the majority of those who worked in the field of culture during the Weimar period were non-Jews, the majority who strove for cultural innovation and transgression were Jewish. Jewish experimentation covered areas such as Marxian socialism, Pacifism, Internationalism, Expressionism, Psychoanalysis and Atonal music. Yet Mendes-Flohr claims that the very nature of Weimar culture was non denominational and cites the popular *Three-Penny Opera* as an example. He writes,

Who in the world identified Weill's music for the *Three-Penny Opera* as Jewish or Brecht's text as outright German? ... The pleasant, uncomplicated everyday living and working together – that, above all, remains worthy of remembrance.<sup>43</sup>

Yet, despite substantial collaboration between Jews and non-Jews in the cultural milieu during the Weimar years, Jewish participation in German culture was fraught with anxiety. Alongside the rise in Jewish participation came a rise in German anti-Semitism. The forms of modernism that were expressed through the culture of the Weimar years were criticised by many during the collapse of the Republic, and blame was placed on the Jews for their part in this while the gentile contribution to Weimar culture was ignored.

#### 2.2.5 Party Politics and anti-Semitism in the Weimar Republic

The Weimar Republic witnessed a continuation of the links between German Jewry and liberalism established in the nineteenth century, with three quarters of German Jews identifying themselves as socially and politically liberal. The most prominent party to hold Jewish allegiance was the Social Democratic Party/ *Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands*.<sup>44</sup> Yet the influence of German

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<sup>43</sup> Mendes-Flohr, 'Jews Within German Culture.' In: Meyer, ed. *German-Jewish History In Modern Times. Volume 4*, p.192.

<sup>44</sup> For detailed description of the relationship between German Jewry and the SPD see: Donald Niewyk, *Socialist, Anti-Semite and Jew: German Social Democracy Confronts the Problems of Anti-Semitism 1918-1933* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1971).

liberalism in the Weimar Republic did not prevent a proliferation of political parties. Other prominent parties included, *Deutsche Demokratische Partei* (German Democratic Party), *Deutsche Volkspartei* (Conservative People's Party), *Zentrum* (Roman Catholic Centre Party), *Bayerische Volkspartei* (Bavarian People's Party), the National Socialist German Workers' Party, and a selection of other far right and smaller parties.

Anti-Semitism flourished in the Weimar Republic. It was located in various political groups and parties the most prominent being the German Völkisch League for Defence and Defiance/ *Deutsche Völkischer schutz fur Trutz und Bund*, and it was part of the core ideology of the National Socialist German Workers' Party / NSDAP, run by Adolf Hitler.<sup>45</sup>

Jewish experiences of German anti-Semitism varied enormously although all Jews were aware of its pervasive nature. Middle class families living in Berlin experienced anti-Semitism differently from those in small towns running businesses who were susceptible to anti-Semitic boycotts, while newly arrived families from the east in turn experienced different forms of discrimination to either.

The *Centralverein* continued to pinpoint anti-Semites and areas of anti-Semitism as well as offering advice for combating it. For example, the *Centralverein* issued lists of holiday destinations and travel information avoiding areas where anti-Semitism was rife. In 1924 it had a membership of 72,400, though this had fallen to 64,000 by 1933. The organisation had wide ranging support but was bypassed by the majority of Zionists.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> For information on anti-Semitism during the Weimar Republic see: Niewyk, *Socialist, Anti-Semite and Jew*; Niewyk, *The Jews in Weimar Germany*; Dan Cohn-Sherbok, *Anti-Semitism* (Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 2002), Chapters 15, 16 and 17, pp.231-266. Klaus P. Fischer, *The History of an Obsession – German Judeophobia and the Holocaust* (London: Constable, 1998), Chapter 4, *The Rise of Pathological Judeophobia, 1918-1933*, pp.119-153. Albert S. Lindemann, *Essau's Tears – Modern Anti-Semitism and the Rise of the Jews* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), Part Five, *The Fascist Era*, pp.461-497. David Bankier, ed. *Probing the Depths of German Anti-Semitism – German Society and the Persecution of the Jews, 1933-1941* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2000) For anti-Semitism in schools and universities see: Niewyk, *Socialist, Anti-Semite and Jew*, pp.92-94, for churches see: 49-50 and 164-65, for the police force see: pp.156-157 and for the legal system see: 86-90 and 152-155.

<sup>46</sup> For information on Zionists and the Centralverein see: Stephen M. Poppel, *Zionism in Germany 1897-1933 The Shaping of a Jewish Identity* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of

The various Zionist organisations that existed during the Weimar years failed to unite in the form of a coherent party but did offer the Jews of Germany the choice of an alternative subject position. Their fight against assimilation did not however make a great impact on the majority of the liberal Jews.<sup>47</sup>

## 2.3 Jewish Communities, 1933-1938

### 2.3.1 Anti-Jewish Laws and Restrictions across Germany.

The NSDAP, founded in 1919, remained a marginal party until 1928.<sup>48</sup> As its support increased, it stirred up racial hatred and encouraged the spread of virulent anti-Semitism. It enjoyed an electoral break during the years 1929-1933 due to the economic crisis which resulted in Hitler's assumption of power in January 1933. Hitler's elevation immediately changed the situation for Germany's Jews.<sup>49</sup> Families who identified themselves as German, whose mother tongue was German and who had fought for Germany in the First World War, became targets of National Socialist aggression, and Jewish children were forced

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America, 1977), Chapters 1-4, pp.1-69. Also see: Hagit Lavski, *Before Catastrophe – The Distinctive Path of German Zionism* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1996), Chapter 5, 'For the Sake of the Land of Israel', pp.88-106, especially pp.96-100.

<sup>47</sup> Poppel, *Zionism in Germany 1897-1933*, Chapter 6, 'Ideology and Identity: The Function of German Zionism', pp.85-102 and Chapter 7, 'Zionism, Anti-Semitism, and German Politics', pp.103-136. Lavski, *Before Catastrophe*, Chapter 2, 'The Impact of the War on German Zionism', pp.32-45 and Chapter 12, 'Confronting Nazism', pp.227-253.

<sup>48</sup> For background on the early years of the Nazi Party and Hitler's rise to power see: Neil Gregor, *Nazism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); Michael Burleigh, *The Third Reich: A New History* (London: Macmillan, 2000), Chapter 1, 'The Weimar Republic and the Nationalist Socialist German Worker's Party', pp.27-148 and Chapter 3, 'Replacing the Bridge: New Times, New Man', pp.219-280; Ian Kershaw, *Hitler: 1889-1936: Hubris* (London: Allen Lane, 1998), Chapter 7, 'Emergence of a Leader', pp.221-254, Chapter 8, 'Mastery Over the Movement', pp.255-312, Chapter 9, 'Breakthrough', pp.313-376 and Chapter 10, 'Levered into Power', pp.377-428; Ian Kershaw, *Hitler: 1936-1945: Nemesis*. For Austrian and Czech Nazi parties and their recognition of Hitler see: Kershaw, *Hitler: 1889-1936: Hubris*, Chapter 7, 'Emergence of a Leader', pp.221-254.

<sup>49</sup> For information on Anti-Jewish measures and anti-Semitism in the Third Reich see: Avraham Barkai, *From Boycott to Annihilation – The Economic Struggle of German Jews 1933-1943* (New England: Brandeis University Press, 1989); H. Graml, *Antisemitism in the Third Reich* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992); M. Burleigh and W. Wippermann, *The Racial State: Germany 1933-1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991); Klaus P. Fischer, *The History of an Obsession – German Judeophobia and the Holocaust* (London: Constable, 1998), Chapter 7, *The Jews in the New Nazi Racial State, 1933-1939*, pp.233-291 and Chapter 8, *Prologue to the Holocaust: From Euthanasia to Ethnic Cleansing*, pp.292-330. For Jewish responses in Palestine see: Benny Morris, 'Responses of the Jewish Daily Press in Palestine to the Accession of Hitler, 1933.' In: *Yad Vashem Studies*, 27 (1999), pp.363-408.

to recognise the ‘differences’ between themselves and the wider communities in which they lived. Löre Löwenthal from Hagen in Germany remembers, ‘I had a lot of friends. The question of Jewish or not never came up.’<sup>50</sup> Almost overnight, however: ‘We were singled out and made to feel not like everyone else.’<sup>51</sup>

In February and March 1933, violence towards Germany’s Jews started to escalate. On 5 March the Nazis won a narrow majority in the Reichstag and during March the first concentration camps were erected at Dachau and Oranienburg.<sup>52</sup> On 17 March 1933, Victor Klemperer wrote, ‘It is shocking how day after day naked acts of violence, breaches of the law, barbaric opinions appear quite undisguised as official decree.’<sup>53</sup> Klemperer followed the progression of anti-Jewish laws and wrote on 20 March, ‘Every new government decree, announcement etc. is more shameful than the previous one.’<sup>54</sup>

Boycotts of Jewish shops took place between 1-3 of April, and, on the 7 April, the compulsory retirement of Jewish civil servants was ordered under the Law for the Restoration of a Professional Civil Service.<sup>55</sup> Further anti-Jewish legislation was passed during 1933 including the law on the Repeal of Citizenship which resulted in the majority of the *Ostjuden* becoming stateless.<sup>56</sup>

Throughout the summer of 1935, acts of violence against Jewish shops and businesses increased restrictions on civil liberties and legal infringements reached a pinnacle on 15 September 1935, with the introduction of the Nuremberg Laws.<sup>57</sup> The Reich Citizenship Law deprived Jews of civil rights in

<sup>50</sup> Fortunoff Video Archive (hereafter FVA) testimony: 0946, Löre Löwenthal.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>52</sup> From February 1933 the Nazis rounded up political enemies, including Jews, and placed them in *Schutzhalttager* / protective-custody camps. See: Abraham J. Edelheit and Hershel Edelheit, eds. *History of the Holocaust – A Handbook and Dictionary* (Boulder and Oxford: Westview Press, 1994).

<sup>53</sup> Victor Klemperer, *I Shall Bear Witness. The Diaries of Victor Klemperer 1933 – 1941* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1998), Volume 1, p.7. See: Daniel Johnson, ‘What Viktor Klemperer Saw.’ In: *Commentary* 109:6 (2000), pp.44-50.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>55</sup> Barkai, *From Boycott to Annihilation*, Chapter 1, ‘Consolidation of Power and Boycott of the Jews’, pp.13-53.

<sup>56</sup> On 14.10.33, Germany withdrew from the League of Nations.

<sup>57</sup> For Nuremberg Laws see: Richard Lawrence Miller, *Nazi Justiz – Law of the Holocaust* (Westpoint, Connecticut: Praeger, 1995); Cornelia Essner, *Die Nürnberger Gesetze oder Die Verwaltung des Rassenwahns, 1939-1945* (München: Schöningh, 2002); Andreas Rethmeier, ‘Nürnberger Rassengesetze’ und Entrechung der Juden Zivilrecht.’ In: *Rechthistorische Reihe*

addition to the Law for the Protection of German Blood and Honour which made relationships between Jews and non-Jews illegal.

In March 1938, Hitler achieved his most daring and aggressive pre-war move, annexing Austria and securing the Anschluss.<sup>58</sup> From 1938 onwards, the Nazis unleashed their anti-Semitic terror on the newly incorporated areas of the swelling German Reich. For Ernst Kolben from Vienna, the changes were immediate and devastating. ‘I felt very bad. It was frightening. It bothered me. Everyone pointed and I couldn’t sit on a bench. I was only 13 years old.’<sup>59</sup> Acts of violence continued across the Reich, and on 9 June synagogues in Munich were destroyed. On the 23 July, the Jews of the Reich were issued with separate identity cards, and on 17 August, Jews were forced to take the names of ‘Sara’ and ‘Israel’. Attacks on Jews were facilitated by the identification process that had begun in 1933 and continued throughout 1938. On 5 October Jewish passports were stamped with a red ‘J’.

### 2.3.2 Jewish Methods of Survival and Responses to anti-Semitism pre-Munich.

Cut off from the non-Jewish population and targeted for persecution, the Jews of Germany turned to their leaders for guidance. In 1933, the *Reichsvertretung der Juden in Deutschland* / The National Representation of the Jews in Germany was established as an umbrella organisation to unite the various Jewish communities across the German Länder both in terms of politics and religion.<sup>60</sup> Avraham Barkai states,

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126 (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1995); Ingeborg Hecht, *Invisible Walls – To Remember is to Heal – Encounter Between Victims of the Nuremberg Laws* (Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1984).

<sup>58</sup> For information on Austria in the years prior to the Anschluss see: Eoin Bourke, *The Austrian Anschluss in History and Literature* (Galway: Arlen House, 2000); Kurt von Schuschnigg and Richard Barry, *The Brutal Takeover: The Austrian ex-Chancellor’s Account of the Anschluss of Austria by Hitler* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1971); Burleigh, *The Third Reich*.

<sup>59</sup> United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Oral History Archive (hereafter USHMM) testimony: RG – 50.106.07, Ernst Kolben.

<sup>60</sup> For the establishment of The National Representation of the Jews in Germany / *Reichsvertretung der Juden in Deutschland* see: O.D. Kulka, ‘The Reichsvereinigung of the Jews in Germany – Problems of continuity in the Organisation and Leadership of German Jewry under the National Socialist Regime’. In: *Patterns of Jewish Leadership in Nazi Europe 1933-1945. Proceedings of the Third Yad Vashem International Historical Conference – April 1977*

The vilified and persecuted Jewish minority was permitted that which was expressly forbidden to all others: it alone was allowed to maintain its existing institutions of democratic representation.<sup>61</sup>

Why was it that German Jews were permitted to maintain their *Gemeinden* up until 1938? Barkai argues that the Nazis saw these organisations as a convenient target for propaganda and anti-Semitism. Perhaps the Nazis also believed that the divided and heterogeneous nature of German Jewry would work against them, and that their internal struggles for unity would ultimately fail.

The *Reichsvertretung*'s first declaration stressed the importance of unity to the Jewish community stating,

When it comes to all the great and decisive tasks, there can be only *one* representative body ... Only then will we be able to struggle for every right, every job, every inch of space in which to exist.<sup>62</sup>

The community leaders decided that Rabbi Leo Baeck should take overall command of the *Reichsvertretung*, and in 1933 he became the figurehead of German Jewry.<sup>63</sup> Otto Hirsch was appointed executive director and he nominated Siegfried Moses as his deputy. The committee consisted of nine men, of which three were committed Zionists, three liberal Jews and three were chosen to represent the orthodox. This remained the case until 1939 when the *Reichsvertretung* was transformed into the *Reichsvereinigung* – a compulsory

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(Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1979), pp.45-59; The Establishment of the “Reichsvereinigung der Juden in Deutschland” and its Main Activities.’ In: *Yad Vashem Studies*, 12 (1968), pp.19-38.

<sup>61</sup> Barkai, ‘Shifting Organizational Relationships.’ In: Meyer, *German-Jewish History In Modern Times. Volume 4*, p. 258.

<sup>62</sup> Barkai, ‘Shifting Organizational Relationships.’ In: Meyer, *German-Jewish History In Modern Times. Volume 4*, p.265.

<sup>63</sup> For general information on the life and work of Rabbi Leo Baeck see: Albert H. Friedlander, *Leo Baeck, Teacher of Theresienstadt* (New York: The Overlook Press, 1968); Albert H. Friedlander, *Leo Baeck – Leben und Lehre* (Munich: Kaiser Taschenbücher, 1990); Leonard Baker, *Days of Sorrow and Pain – Leo Baeck and The Berlin Jews* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978).

Gestapo organisation for all those defined as Jewish by ‘race’ under the Nuremberg Laws.

Baeck and Hirsch fought tirelessly for the rights of the community, at grass roots by establishing welfare projects, and at a higher level by writing to the government on behalf of their communities. On 22 September 1935, in response to the Nuremberg Laws, they sent a signed declaration to Adolf Hitler. They demanded that he:

create a plane on which tolerable relations will be possible between the German and the Jewish peoples ... The precondition for such relations is the hope that ... the Jews and their communities in Germany will be left with a basis for moral and economic survival.<sup>64</sup>

### 2.3.3 Jewish Welfare, Emigration and Restrictions across the Czech Republic

The increased reliance on Jewish leadership in Germany during the 1930s was similarly present in the Czech Republic. In 1921, the Palestine Office opened on Dlouhá Street in Prague and soon became the centre for all emigration matters. It also became, after his move to the Czech capital, the ‘home’ of Jakob Edelstein.<sup>65</sup> Edelstein had been elected by the Palestine committee of the Zionist Organisation to revitalise the office in Prague, because in 1932 only 180 Czechs had left their homes for Palestine.<sup>66</sup>

Soon after taking over the Palestine Office, Edelstein secured his position among the Prague Zionists and became a well respected and diligent worker.<sup>67</sup> Working with him in the field of emigration were the prominent figures of Maria Schmolka and Hannah Steiner, the president of Prague’s Women’s International Zionist Organisation – WIZO.

<sup>64</sup> Barkai, ‘Shifting Organizational Relationships.’ In: Meyer, *German-Jewish History In Modern Times. Volume 4*, p. 268.

<sup>65</sup> For details of his move to Prague see: Ruth Bondy, *Elder of the Jews – Jakob Edelstein of Theresienstadt* (New York: Grove Press, 1989), Chapter 4, pp.44-55.

<sup>66</sup> Bondy, *Elder of the Jews*, p.46.

<sup>67</sup> For information on refugees in Prague during the 1930s and emigration to Palestine see: Kurt R. Grossmann, ‘Refugees to and from Czechoslovakia’, In: *The Jews of Czechoslovakia*, Vol. 2, pp.565-581. Manfred George, ‘Refugees in Prague, 1933-1938’, In: *The Jews of Czechoslovakia*,

The Jewish community centre on Dlouhá Street opened in 1930. In addition to Edelstein's Palestine Office, it also housed the Jewish National Fund, the Czech-Jewish newspaper *Zidovské Zprávy*, and the Maccabi and Hagibor offices. It also had lecture theatres, a cinema, and the Café Aschermann, known by the regulars as *Aschermannka*. This was an important political and cultural centre, and one of the main meeting places for the Zionists and Aid Workers.

In 1935, the young Fredy Hirsch arrived in Prague from Germany. He was a 20 year old athletics teacher and a committed Zionist. Another important youth worker who was close to both Edelstein and Hirsch was Egon / Gonda Redlich. Redlich had grown up in a lower-middle class family and his father, a non-orthodox Jew, had a modern outlook on Judaism. Redlich joined Maccabi Hatzair – the Zionist youth group movement – during his school years, attended their summer camp and soon became a fully committed member of their circle.<sup>68</sup>

The death of Thomas Masaryk, on 14 March 1937 marked an important point in the life of Jakob Edelstein. As Masaryk had been the only non-Jewish Czech leader openly to show support for the Jews of Prague, the Jewish community was now more reliant than ever on its own leadership.<sup>69</sup>

#### 2.3.4 The Munich Agreement

After the Anschluss, Hitler turned his attention to Czechoslovakia and made plans to invade on 1 October 1938.<sup>70</sup> Following the Munich Agreement on 29 September 1938, one third of Bohemia and Moravia was moved within the borders of the German Reich.<sup>71</sup> The Munich Agreement guaranteed the downfall

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Vol. 2, pp.582-588. Fini Brada, 'Emigration to Palestine', In: *The Jews of Czechoslovakia*, Vol. 2, pp.589-598.

<sup>68</sup> For information on Zionist Youth Groups see: Asher Cohen and Yehoyakim Cochavi, eds. *The Zionist Youth Movements During the Shoah* (New York: Peter Lang, 1995); Joseph C. Pick, 'Sports', In: *The Jews of Czechoslovakia*, Vol. 2, pp.185-228.

<sup>69</sup> Bondy, *Elder of the Jews*, p.74.

<sup>70</sup> For general background on Czechoslovakia from 1938 see: Livia Rothkirchen, 'The Jews of Bohemia and Moravia: 1938-1945', In: *The Jews of Czechoslovakia*, Vol. 3, pp.3-74.

<sup>71</sup> For information on the Munich Agreement see: Dowling, *Czechoslovakia*, Chapter 3, '1938: Foreign Policy and the Munich Agreement', pp.39-57. For Hitler's intention to invade see: Kershaw, *Hitler, Nemesis*, Chapter 5, 'Going for Broke', pp.181-230.

of Czechoslovakia and sealed the fate of the Sudeten Jews as thousands were expelled from their homes.<sup>72</sup>

In November 1938, Slovakia, with its population of one million, became 'independent' although part of it, together with areas of Subcarpathian Rus, were ceded to Hungary. In October 1938, Poland claimed Teschen / Tesin, part of the former Czechoslovakia, and Slovakia achieved full autonomy with Subcarpathian Rus, changing its name to Carpathian Ukraine. As a concession to the Slovaks, the name of the republic was changed from Czechoslovakia to Czechoslovakia. All of these changes had considerable effects on both the Czechs and the Jews as the fate of both groups was bound up with the security of the republic.

The Jews of the Sudetenland were forced to flee their German-speaking homeland. Marlene Altman recalls, 'We all had to go to Prague. And now I was stuck in a school and I couldn't understand a word anybody was saying.'<sup>73</sup> Helen Lewis also made the move to Prague from the Sudetenland. She claims, 'My home was the democratic Republic of Czechoslovakia; my mother tongue was German, my religion was Jewish.'<sup>74</sup> Although there was already a sense of danger in Prague in 1937, she describes the move as 'a revelation.' She remembers how, 'On Sundays I often explored Prague and the countryside in the company of my mother, and in the evenings I went to as many concerts, operas and plays as I had time for and could afford.'<sup>75</sup> However her sense of delight in the new city was to change with the onslaught of anti-Jewish laws that were to blight the lives of the Prague Jewish Community. She says overnight, 'jobs were lost and bank accounts frozen.'<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> For more information on those Jews expelled to no-man's land see report submitted by Maria Schmolka: The National Archives Public (hereafter PRO) PRO.FO.371/21588. See: Ronald M. Smelser, *The Sudeten Problem: 1933-1938. Volkstumspolitik and the Formulation of Nazi Foreign Policy* (Kent: Dawson, 1975); Radomir Luza, *The Transfer of the Sudeten Germans – A Study of Czech-German Relations: 1933-1962* (London: Routledge, 1964); Wilhelm Turnwald, *Documents on the Expulsion of the Sudeten Germans* (Munich: Germany University Press, 1953).

<sup>73</sup> Sarah Kavanaugh, interview with Marlene Altman (London: 2000), p.2.

<sup>74</sup> Helen Lewis, *A Time to Speak* (Belfast: Blackstaff, 1992), p.3.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid*, p.6.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid*, p.13.

## 2.4 Jewish Communities Post-Munich, 1938 – 1939

### 2.4.1 The Invasion of Czechoslovakia

With the arrival of German-speaking Jewish refugees from the Sudetenland came an increase in anti-Semitism from both right-wing German groups and from the newly formed Czech United National Party.<sup>77</sup> Panicked by the reduction in the size of their nation forced on them at Munich, the Czech National Party demanded that the refugees ‘go home’. In late October, the Czech organisation *Sokol* declared, ‘The Jewish question should on national and social grounds be so resolved that those who have immigrated into the country since 1914 should return to their original homes.’<sup>78</sup>

Up until the German invasion in March 1939, it was the German speaking Jewish refugees who were singled out for anti-Semitic attacks rather than the Czech Jews. In a report to the Secretary of State written in February 1939, George Kennan writes, ‘Such resentment of the Jews as exists in Bohemia thus centres largely on the German-speaking Jews – particularly on those who have come to Bohemia since the war.’<sup>79</sup>

The Czech 1930 census was used against Jews residing in Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia. All those Jews who had claimed German nationality in the census were now potential targets of Czech anti-Semitism. However, this form of Czech anti-Semitism was rarely violent and not as virulent as its German counterpart. Livia Rothkirchen writes,

On the eve of occupation the vast majority of the Jews in Bohemia and Moravia, though morally offended and gravely concerned, in fact remained unmolested in both their private lives and in their economic activities.<sup>80</sup>

<sup>77</sup> This was formed in November 1938. See: Mendelsohn, *The Jews of East Central Europe*, Chapter 3, ‘Czechoslovakia’, section 5, ‘The End of the Honeymoon: Anti-Semitism and the Collapse of Czechoslovakia’, pp.162-168. There were now native Prague Jews, the Sudeten Jews and German Jews who had already fled Germany living in Prague, all of whom would be included in the transports to Theresienstadt.

<sup>78</sup> PRO 366 C13068/ 1667/ 62. Letter sent to Lord Halifax by a British minister in Prague, dated 26.10.38.

<sup>79</sup> George Kennan, *From Prague After Munich, Diplomatic Papers 1938-1940* (New Jersey: Princeton, 1968), p.4.

<sup>80</sup> Livia Rothkirchen, ‘Czech Attitudes Towards the Jews During the Nazi Regime.’ In: *Yad Vashem Studies* 13 (1979), p.304.

Hitler always intended to occupy the Czech lands, by diplomacy or by force. On 15 March, the Germans finally forced the Czech government under Dr. Hachá to surrender its sovereignty and German forces marched unhindered into Bohemia and Moravia.<sup>81</sup> Simultaneously, Hungary absorbed the remaining areas of Subcarpathian Rus. This move spelt disaster for the Subcarpathian Jewish communities who would eventually share the fate of Hungarian Jewry.<sup>82</sup>

#### 2.4.2 March-September 1939 in the Czech Republic

On 18 March 1939, Constantin Freiherr von Neurath was appointed *Reichsprotektor* of Bohemia and Moravia. His initial instructions were to dismantle the existing Czech government, dissolve all political parties, curtail the press and crush any resistance. He was also quick to target the clergy and implement the Nuremberg Laws. As *Reichsprotektor*, von Neurath stood at the head of the new Protectorate although all foreign affairs, military matters and transportation details were to be handled directly from Berlin. Hácha was to remain President and Alois Eliáš was appointed Prime Minister.<sup>83</sup> Although Prime Minister Eliás superficially co-operated with the Protectorate authorities, he soon joined *Obrana národa-ON* (The Defence of the Nation), an undercover military organisation which worked against the Nazis. Later, he co-operated with the Czech government in exile in London and the Czechoslovak National Committee.<sup>84</sup>

Once the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia had been declared, all Germans were given Reich citizenship, while all Czech citizens became German nationals which in reality meant that they were now subject to German laws. The

<sup>81</sup> Hácha was appointed President after Benes resigned as a result of the Munich Agreement. Benes had taken over as President from Masaryk in 1935. See: Rothkirchen, 'The Protectorate Government', pp.331-362. For information on this meeting see: Kershaw, *Hitler, Nemesis*, Chapter 4, 'Miscalculation', pp.157-180.

<sup>82</sup> David Cesarani, ed. *Genocide and Rescue: The Holocaust in Hungary 1944* (Oxford: Berg, 1997), pp.29-46.

<sup>83</sup> For more information on both Hácha and Eliáš see Rothkirchen, 'The Protectorate Government', pp.331-362. Discussion on 'collaboration' of Hácha, p. 331.

<sup>84</sup> Rothkirchen, 'The Protectorate Government', p.337.

Prague Gestapo, under the leadership of *Polizeikommisar* Fuchs, saw to it that communists, anti-Nazi supporters, socialists and refugees were rounded up and arrested. Thousands were sent to Germany to work as forced labourers. This early spate of arrests, referred to as *Aktion Gitter* / Operation Bars, was ordered by the Gestapo, though many of the arrests were carried out by the Czech gendarmerie.<sup>85</sup> The citizens of Prague, both Jewish and non-Jewish, had to orient themselves within this new and confusing regime. They had to work out who was in charge of the new Protectorate and how the role of the Czech police differed from that of the Gestapo. They also had to establish what role the army was to play and who they should speak to if they wanted to lodge a complaint. The population was unclear as to who they could trust and who would represent them before the new authorities.

Prior to the invasion, Josef Weiner, like many other Czech-Jewish assimilated children was shocked by the changes in attitude of the non-Jewish population. He claims, ‘I never had a feeling that I was different from the other children. I knew I was Jewish but Jewish by religion. I felt Czech.’<sup>86</sup> He adds that as soon as the Germans entered Prague, ‘I then realised fully that I was Jewish and different from the guys who can go where they want.’<sup>87</sup> This testimony differs from that of Emily Schleissner who remembers few strong feelings about the German invasion during the early days, ‘We didn’t like it but since I could go on working and stay in my home – we were pretty indifferent.’<sup>88</sup> Her overriding feeling was, ‘I speak German – what can they do to me.’<sup>89</sup>

Vera Schiff, who was living in Prague at the time of the invasion, felt increasingly uneasy. She recalls, ‘Prague experienced the fear of a city expecting calamity. Jews scrambled for visas to anywhere at all. Every day at dawn (or even earlier), long queues formed in front of every embassy.’<sup>90</sup> While some panicked

<sup>85</sup> For more on the early role of the Gestapo in Prague see Rothkirchen, ‘The Protectorate Government’, pp.331-362 and Rothkirchen, ‘Czech Attitudes towards the Jews’, pp.287-320.

<sup>86</sup> FVA: 1411, Josef Weiner.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>88</sup> USHMM: RG – 50 – 030.344, Emily Schleissner.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>90</sup> Vera Schiff, *Theresienstadt – The Town the Nazis Gave to the Jews* (Toronto: Lugs, 1996), p.13.

for exit visas others did not consider leaving their native city, or could not. Unlike many German and Austrian Jews, the majority of Czech Jews did not have family and friends in the west. The majority of their relatives were either in the Protectorate or in Germany and Austria having fled pogroms in eastern Europe.

#### 2.4.3 Emigration and Welfare in Prague

After the German invasion, Edelstein's role in the community grew in importance and his responsibilities multiplied. In his position as head of the emigration office he became a trusted adviser and figurehead for Prague's Jews. Bondy calls his office, 'an address of salvation.'<sup>91</sup> He was overwhelmed with emigration requests and worked tirelessly with his team to answer all the demands placed upon him.

Milena Jesenská, a writer and Franz Kafka's confidante, became an important ally to Edelstein during this time. As a well connected non-Jewish Czech she had access to information that he could not otherwise gain. She had a wide network of political contacts throughout the city and allowed her apartment to be used to house refugees as well as illegal documents. After the invasion, Haim Hoffman, who was in charge of refugee welfare in Prague, contacted Milena for information regarding the Germans' next move. Milena spent the morning of the 15 March contacting all her Jewish friends in the city, checking that they had heard the news and offering them reassurance.<sup>92</sup>

Within days of the invasion, the Germans had drawn up lists of key figures in the Prague Jewish community, establishing who was a security risk and who might prove useful to them. The Gestapo paid an early visit to the offices on Dlouhá Street closing down the empty rooms and interrogating workers before moving onto WIZO where they arrested Hannah Steiner.<sup>93</sup> The Prague Zionist leaders met to discuss who should leave for Palestine immediately and who should remain to help with emigration. Decisions were made and key positions

<sup>91</sup> Bondy, *Elder of the Jews*, p. 103.

<sup>92</sup> Margarete Buber-Neumann, *Milena* (New York: Arcade Publishing, 1977), p.134.

<sup>93</sup> Steiner was released after three weeks in prison. On her release she continued her work in Prague where she remained until her deportation to Theresienstadt in January 1943.

re-assigned. Edelstein was to stay in Prague and run all matters relating to emigration. Dr Kahn, Paul März and Otto Zucker were also assigned leadership positions.

#### 2.4.4 Eichmann and Emigration

The temporary post-occupation halt in emigration created a substantial backlog of people trying to leave the country.<sup>94</sup> The Gestapo were still carrying out their initial interrogations when Kahn, head of the Zionist Federation, Enoch, head of Hehalutz, and Edelstein head of the Palestine office, were called before them. Kahn was appointed head of all emigration matters, soon realising that what the Gestapo was calling 'emigration' would in reality be forced deportation.

From this point on the Jewish leaders in Prague were placed in a difficult position, forced to have increasing contact with the Nazis in order to keep some control over the future of their communities. Over the next few weeks, although Kahn remained the figurehead of the Jewish community, he and Edelstein began gradually to swap places. It was Edelstein who increasingly dealt with the Gestapo, led meetings with Zionist groups and spoke out on the future of the Czech community. It was also Edelstein who tried to maintain strong links with the Jewish community at large although this proved impossible as the Jewish press had been banned and there was no method of mass communication.<sup>95</sup>

The lives of the Czech Jewish community were to change irrevocably on 21 June 1939 when the New Jewish Laws / *Neurichtung*, were introduced bringing the Protectorate in line with the Reich's Nuremberg Laws of 1935.<sup>96</sup> Czech Jews were now officially declared a separate 'race' and targeted for anti-

<sup>94</sup> This halt ceased when a Youth-Aliyah group was allowed to leave on 4.04.39. See: Bondy, *Elder of the Jews*, Chapter 10, 'The Germans Came Prepared', pp.112-128.

<sup>95</sup> Karl Baum, 'Nazi Anti – Jewish Legislation in the Czech Protectorate: A Documentary Note.' In: *Soviet Jewish Affairs: A Journal on Jewish Problems in the USSR and Eastern Europe*. 3 (1972), p.121.

<sup>96</sup> On 21.06.39 anti-Jewish laws were published by the Reichsprotektor including the *Verordnungen des Reichsprotektor über das jüdische Vermögen* / a comprehensive decree on Jewish property which declared, *Jüdisches Vermögen wird Volksgut* / that Jewish property becomes people's property. YVA: 07/1-1, 151/156. See: Rothkirchen, 'The Protectorate Government', p.343; John G. Lexa, 'Anti-Jewish Laws and Regulations in the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia.', In: *The Jews of Czechoslovakia*, Vol. 3, pp.75-103.

Semitic persecution. By order of the *Reichsprotektor* all Jews had to register their property as well as hand over their jewellery, bonds and paintings by 31 July 1939. Two weeks later, all Jews were banned from public life, forbidden to act as lawyers, politicians, or teachers of non-Jews.

Following the invasion, Eichmann was transferred to Prague from Vienna where he was ordered to make plans for setting up a *Zentralstelle für jüdische Auswanderung* (Central Office for Jewish Emigration). In his capacity as head of the new department, Eichmann was empowered by Berlin to start an emigration programme and run all Jewish affairs. Eichmann's first move was to summon Edelstein before him and demand that 60,000 Jews emigrate within the next year.<sup>97</sup> On 15 July 1939, Eichmann officially opened the *Zentralstelle* and the *Reichsprotektor* announced that from now on, any Jews wishing to emigrate had to go through this central organisation in Prague. The Jewish community could no longer 'authorise' Jewish emigration without the official approval of Eichmann. The same week the Jewish community was ordered to open a new emigration department with a staff of 90 people.

Eichmann was soon to discover that the process of emigration was not going to work as smoothly in Prague as it had done in Vienna.<sup>98</sup> The Jewish community in Prague was less organised than its Viennese counterpart and Eichmann found the Prague leaders less accommodating. The fact that many of them did not share the same first language also obstructed progress. The Jewish leaders were quick to pick up on these differences and used them to their advantage. Another crucial difference was centralisation – in Austria, the

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<sup>97</sup> No documentation of this meeting remains so the exact conversation is unknown. By March 1939 Eichmann was already overseeing forced emigration of Czech Jews to Poland and in October 1939 he was given the position of special advisor on the 'evacuation' of Jews and Poles. In December 1939 he was again transferred this time to *Amt IV* of the Reich Main Security Office / Gestapo. Here he was put in charge of *Referat IV B4* which dealt with Jewish affairs and evacuation. It was not until late 1941 that Eichmann's office would start dealing with mass transports and death camps. See: Hans Safran, *Die Eichmann Männer* (Vienna: Europaverlag, 1993), Chapter 3, 'Aufbau und erste Aktivitäten des Referats IV D 4', pp.87-104.

<sup>98</sup> For details on the forced emigration and deportations from Vienna see: Safran, *Die Eichmann Männer*, Chapter 1, 'Eichmann und die Entwicklung des 'Wiener Modells', pp.23-67; Jonny Moser, *Die Judenverfolgung in Österreich 1938-1945* (Vienna: Europaverlag, 1966). Also see: Avraham Barkai, 'Self-Help in the Dilemma: To Leave or to Stay?' In: Meyer, ed. *German-Jewish History in Modern Times. Volume 4*, pp.313-332.

majority of Austrian Jews lived in Vienna, whereas in the Protectorate less than half of the Jewish community lived in Prague. This ‘problem’ was solved on 11 August 1939 when Jews living in the provinces were ordered to resettle in Prague within one year.<sup>99</sup> As the Prague community expanded, the Jewish leaders were ordered to provide the authorities with lists of all newly arrived Jews, as well as their age, sex and occupation. The stability of the Jewish communities, and the individuals within them, weakened as they were uprooted from their homes, jobs and families. Simultaneously, the position of the Gestapo grew stronger as they compiled comprehensive files on all Jews in the Protectorate.<sup>100</sup>

#### 2.4.5 1938–1939 in the Reich

While the Jews of Bohemia and Moravia were adapting to their new situation, the Jews of the German Reich suffered a blow on 7 November 1938 when Herschel Grünspan, a seventeen year old Polish Jew, assassinated Ernst vom Rath, a Legation secretary, in the German embassy in Paris. This unleashed a violent spate of anti-Jewish attacks called *Reichskristallnacht* by the Nazis which took place between the 9 and 10 November 1938, and consisted of the nationwide destruction of Jewish businesses, homes and synagogues.<sup>101</sup>

Following the November pogrom, all Jews were ordered to sell their valuables, and on 15 November all Jewish children were expelled from German schools. This ban in education meant that many Jewish children now had a long and tiring journey to the nearest Jewish school. Hilda Bodenheimer remembers, ‘We had to get up at 6 – run, then take a boat, then get a train and walk for 20 minutes.’<sup>102</sup>

The increase in anti-Jewish propaganda brought about a further surge of anti-Semitism among younger Germans. Jewish families were subjected to anti-

<sup>99</sup> This would pave the way for the later deportations from Prague to Theresienstadt.

<sup>100</sup> Bondy, *Elder of the Jews*, Chapter 12. ‘Eichmann Presses for Emigration’, pp.135-148.

<sup>101</sup> For more on Kristallnacht see: Yehuda Bauer, ‘The *Kristallnacht* as Turning Point: Jewish Reactions to Nazi Policies.’ In: Michael R. Marrus, ed. *The Nazi Holocaust, Volume 2. The Origins of the Holocaust* (London: Meckler, 1989), pp.553-581; Peter Loewenberg, ‘The Kristallnacht as a Public Degradation Ritual.’ In: Marrus, *The Nazi Holocaust, 2*, pp.582-596.

<sup>102</sup> FVA: 1461, Hilda Bodenheimer.

Semitism from their neighbours, and Jewish children from their school friends. Gerda Haas remembers the changes that took place in the young Germans in Ansbach.

They came from a downtrodden, broken homes, they had no clothes to wear ... they were suddenly dressed up in their nazi uniforms ... first in the Hitler Jugend – beautiful, and later on they were dressed up in their SA and SS uniforms, underneath they were still very mediocre, very pedestrian German people. But all of a sudden they were shining, they were beautiful.<sup>103</sup>

As the anti-Jewish violence increased, many families began to consider emigration.<sup>104</sup> For those who stayed behind, either because they were unable to obtain an exit visa or because they refused to be forced from their homes, living conditions became unbearable.

#### 2.4.6 The Organised Jewish Community

On 4 July 1939, the *Reichsvertretung der Juden in Deutschland* became the *Reichsvereinigung der Juden in Deutschland*. There were two main differences between these institutions. First, the *Reichsvertretung* was an independent Jewish body whereas the *Reichsvereinigung* was fundamentally a Gestapo appointed body. Secondly, the *Reichsvertretung* was a federal union of smaller bodies whereas the *Reichsvereinigung* was a centralised institution. The change in name and function took place as the Gestapo realised that they needed the ‘help’ of the Jewish community leaders to smooth the running of the emigration / deportation process. This transformation is vital as it marks the point at which the Jewish leaders no longer controlled their communities and were

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<sup>103</sup> USHMM: RG – 50 – 030.334, Gerda Haas.

<sup>104</sup> For German and Austrian emigration see: Franz Goldner, *Austrian Emigration, 1938-1945* (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co, 1979); Gertrude Schneider, *Exile and Destruction – The Fate of Austrian Jews, 1938-1945* (Westpoint, Connecticut: Praeger, 1995); William R. Perl, *Operation Action – Rescue From the Holocaust* (New York: Frederick Ungar, 1983); Paul H. Silverstone, ‘Our Only Refuge – Open the Gates!’ *Clandestine Immigration to Palestine 1938-1948* (New York: Paul H. Silverstone, 1999).

forced into a position where they had increasing contact with the Nazi officials. Friedländer claims,

For all practical purposes, the Reichsvereinigung was becoming the first of the Jewish councils, the Nazi-controlled Jewish organisations that, in most parts of occupied Europe, were to carry out the orders of their German masters regarding life and death in their respective communities.<sup>105</sup>

Although there were important differences between the two organisations, it is wrong to view them as being totally separate. The intensification in Jewish communal life witnessed between 1933 and 1938 continued, at least in part, into the 1940s and can be identified inside the ghettos and concentration camps.<sup>106</sup> To view the years 1938/9 as a fundamental departure from what went before obscures the many continuous themes and personalities and leads to the second era, 1938-1943, being linked to accusations of 'Jewish collaboration'.<sup>107</sup> Focusing on the role of the leaders only in relation to deportation in the later years clouds their earlier role in the years 1933-1939, and fails to recognise the extensive work that many Jewish leaders continued to do under occupation, inside the ghettos and even within concentration camps.<sup>108</sup> This bi-polar approach places everyone within diametrically opposed categories and makes no allowance for the heterogeneous and diverse strands of Jewish leadership. It refuses to recognise the possibility of a 'grey zone', instead demanding clarity and simplification on issues which were complex and fraught with impossible choices.<sup>109</sup>

The continuation or revival of Jewish communal life during the years of persecution can be seen in the area of Jewish education of both adults and children. During the years preceding the Second World War, there were various

<sup>105</sup> Saul Friedländer, *Nazi Germany and the Jews: The Years of Persecution 1933-1939* (London: Phoenix, 1998), p.318.

<sup>106</sup> This will be discussed in Chapters Three, Four, Five and Six.

<sup>107</sup> Kulka, 'The Reichsvereinigung of the Jews in Germany', pp.45-59.

<sup>108</sup> See Chapter Five for the work carried out by Fredy Hirsch and Gonda Redlich in Theresienstadt.

<sup>109</sup> Primo Levi, *The Drowned and the Saved* (London: Abacus, 1986), Chapter Two, 'The Grey Zone', pp.22-51.

Nazi bans on Jewish education and public lectures.<sup>110</sup> So education took on the spirit of resistance and had to become covert, which increased its illicit and defiant character.<sup>111</sup>

## 2.5 From The Outbreak of War to the Start of Deportations, 1939-1941

### 2.5.1 Jewish life in Prague.

The outbreak of war heralded a change in attitude of the non-Jewish Czech population towards the Jewish community of the Protectorate.<sup>112</sup> According to Rothkirchen, ‘Sympathy for the Jewish plight became one of the outlets for hatred against the occupying forces.’<sup>113</sup> Quick to recognise the growing Czech sympathy for the Jews, the Nazis implemented a system of punishments to be meted out to anyone found in a Jewish home or Jewish communal property. All such ‘traitors’ were to be handed over to the Gestapo for questioning and could face deportation to a concentration camp.

On 5 September 1939 all nationals of enemy states in the Protectorate, primarily Polish Jews, were ordered to register with the police. They were banned from leaving their place of residence without permission and were required to carry permits at all times.<sup>114</sup> Hana Muller-Bruml recalls, ‘...things were getting worse in terms of getting supplies, buying food, working, going places.’<sup>115</sup> She continues,

I worked at that time at what they used to call a *Palestine Amt* [Palestine Office] at that time there were still people able to move – emigrate ... And I knew that Jakob Edelstein was the head of the Palestine Amt, and knew some people there – which later became very important to me.<sup>116</sup>

<sup>110</sup> Ernst Simon, ‘Jewish Adult Education in Nazi Germany as Spiritual Resistance.’ In: *Leo Baeck Yearbook*, 1 (1956), pp.68-105.

<sup>111</sup> It is interesting to highlight the fact that many of Baeck teachings and speeches given during the late 1930s are more coded than those he made in Theresienstadt.

<sup>112</sup> Kershaw, *Hitler, Nemesis*, Chapter 6, ‘Licensing Barbarism’, pp.231-280; Burleigh, *The Third Reich – A New History*, Chapter 6, ‘Occupation and Collaboration in Europe, 1939-1943’, pp.405-481.

<sup>113</sup> Rothkirchen, ‘Czech Attitudes Towards the Jews’, p.309.

<sup>114</sup> See Baum, ‘Nazi anti-Jewish legislation in the Czech Protectorate’, pp.116-128.

<sup>115</sup> USHMM: RG – 50 – 030.043, Hana Muller-Bruml.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*

On 24 November 1939 the Prague edition of the *Jüdisches Nachrichtenblatt* published an address signed by both the Prague Jewish community and the Zionist Central Federation in Prague, calling for all the Jews to come together. Under the new conditions in the Protectorate, the Prague community was to oversee all areas of Jewish communal life and was to function as the means through which Jews could contact the Protectorate authorities. Avraham Barkai writes,

From now on, the authority of the community over all Jews in the Protectorate was based solely on the regulations and decisions of the Gestapo Central Office, which also appointed its leaders.<sup>117</sup>

By the outbreak of war, the Prague Jewish community had a staff of over six hundred and its departments now included housing, welfare and employment offices. Education took on a new importance when Jewish children were banned from Czech schools in 1941. The community now added children's education to their list of responsibilities which resulted in a dramatic increase in Jewish schools.<sup>118</sup> In July 1942, Jewish children were banned from attending any form of school prompting the community to establish special classes within Jewish homes.

For Edelstein, the outbreak of war brought about a closer working 'relationship' with the Nazi authorities. One early order required him to draw up a list of all Polish nationals known to the Jewish community that were living in Prague. After debate, this list was submitted and soon afterwards the Polish nationals were arrested.<sup>119</sup> This decision and the resulting action was published in the weekly report of the Prague Jewish community. It claimed there was, 'a great

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<sup>117</sup> Barkai, 'In a Ghetto Without Walls.' In: Meyer, *German-Jewish History In Modern Times. Volume 4*, p.355.

<sup>118</sup> This dedication to the education of Jewish children was continued inside Theresienstadt and even within the Czech family camp in Birkenau – Camp BIIb. See Chapter Five for Youth education.

<sup>119</sup> The position Edelstein found himself in over the list of Polish Nationals was a pre-cursor to the decisions he would have to make regarding transports out of Theresienstadt. See: Chapter Three.

deal of disquiet among the Jews of Prague and in the provinces, and the entire community staff had had to be mobilized to reassure the relatives of those arrested.<sup>120</sup>

During October 1939, SS *Reichsführer* Heinrich Himmler called for the resettlement of various Jewish communities, including those from Moravská-Ostrava and Vienna. It was decided that they would be deported to an area between the San and Bug rivers to form a 'Jewish reservation.' Their destination was Nisko. It is important to examine the early deportations to Nisko as the later transports to Theresienstadt were carried out in the same manner. An *Aufbaukommando* / Construction detail was ordered to leave on 20 October 1939 and ready the Nisko site.<sup>121</sup> The men of the advanced transport were told they could take whatever personal belongings they could carry and that the transport, which would include several doctors, would be well equipped with food, medicine, and building tools. On 18 October 1939, a report was issued by Heydrich's Central Office for Jewish Emigration in Berlin which announced that, 'The composition of the transport is arranged by the Jewish community of Vienna ... and a Jewish transport management is responsible for the transports.'<sup>122</sup>

Two days after the arrival of the construction unit, further transports arrived from Vienna and Katowice. The Vienna transport included one of the leaders of the Viennese Jewish community, Benjamin Murmelstein. The Nazis had informed the Jewish leaders that the war had driven the locals away. In reality, the local population remained in place and were extremely hostile to the

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<sup>120</sup> Bondy, *Elder of the Jews*, p.154. After the outbreak of war and the portioning of Poland into the *Warthegau* and the *Generalgouvernement* the Nazis ordered that Jewish Councils be set up in all the occupied territories. For this order see: Yisrael Gutman, ed. *Documents on the Holocaust – Selected Sources on the Destruction of the Jews of Germany and Austria, Poland and the Soviet Union* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1981), p.191.

<sup>121</sup> For Nisko see: Safrian, *Die Eichmann Männer*, Chapter 2, 'Der missglückte Beginn: Deportationen nach Nisko am San', pp.68-86. Seev Goshen, 'Eichmann und die Nisko-Aktion im Oktober 1939 – Eine Fallstudie zur NS-Judenpolitik in der letzten Etappe vor der "Endlösung"' In: *Vierteljahrsshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 29 (1981), pp.74-96. Also see: Bondy, *Elder of the Jews*, Chapter 13, 'A Jewish Colony Under SS Patronage', pp.149-165. This same process was used later with the deportations to Theresienstadt. See Chapter Three.

<sup>122</sup> The manner in which the Nazis were manipulating and using the Jewish leaders in relation to the deportations was to be repeated later when it came to deporting the Protectorate Jews to Theresienstadt.

new arrivals. While the majority of the early transportees were kept busy building housing, the community leaders were ordered by Eichmann to tour the local area looking for more suitable places to settle. Edelstein travelled to meet the head of the Lublin community who agreed that the sick of Nisko could be treated in 'his' hospital. However, after only one week, the transports to Nisko were halted – the 'resettlement' experiment had failed.<sup>123</sup>

In December 1939, Eichmann was transferred to *Amt IV* of the Reich Main Security Office (RSHA) in Berlin, which later became *Referat IV B 4*, where he was given a new position as head of the department handling Jewish Affairs.<sup>124</sup> His position in Prague was filled by his deputy Hans Günther. In March 1940, Edelstein together with representatives from Vienna and Berlin, was summoned to a meeting in Berlin by Eichmann. Among those present at this meeting were Dr. Paul Eppstein from Berlin and Löwenherz from Vienna. The Jewish leaders were informed by Eichmann that if they failed to achieve new emigration targets the authorities would organise all of the transports themselves.

Throughout this period, the role of the *Zentralstelle* in Prague grew, and by 18 March 1940, it had extended its authority to cover all of the Protectorate. Simultaneously, the jurisdiction of the Prague Jewish community was extended to cover the same area. On 18 March 1940 the Nazis appointed Frantisék Weidmann, who was already secretary of the Prague Jewish community, as the official head of the Protectorate Jews with Edelstein acting as his deputy.

In January 1940, all Jewish bank accounts in the Protectorate were frozen and Jews were no longer allowed to participate in any area of the Protectorate economy. Some 'illegal' emigration continued with families sending their children to Palestine, causing distressing scenes of family separations at train stations. These scenes of familial devastation were similar to those taking place in

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<sup>123</sup> For the reasons behind the failure of this programme see: Safran, *Die Eichmann Männer*, pp.78-79.

<sup>124</sup> Safran, *Die Eichmann Männer*, Chapter 3, 'Aufbau und erste Aktivitäten des Referats IV D 4', pp.87-104.

Berlin and Vienna as a result of the *Kinderstransports* to the United Kingdom.<sup>125</sup>

Fredy Hirsch was responsible for the Zionist training camps in the Protectorate, which prepared children for their new lives in Palestine. He claimed, ‘Cafes and amusement sites have no place in our education. We would rather draw closer to nature in hikes and camps. This is our way of building Palestine.’<sup>126</sup>

In January 1941, all Jews were ordered to hand over their driving licences constituting a further restriction to their lives. In February 1941, Jews were banned from cinemas and theatres, and, by June 1941, Jews could only get their hair cut between 8am and 10am. On 6 October 1941, the compulsory wearing of the Yellow star was introduced in the Protectorate for all Jews over the age of six.<sup>127</sup>

### 2.5.2 Concentration Prior to Deportation – 1940-1941.

From 1940 onwards, the possibility of emigration for Protectorate Jews decreased as more ports were closed.<sup>128</sup> During the latter half of 1940, the Prague Jewish community continued to work at securing as many exit visas for the Protectorate Jews as possible while attempting to fend off orders from the *Zentralstelle*. As Edelstein was now the primary go-between for his community and the Nazis, the authorities kept a strict eye on his whereabouts and forbade him to apply for a personal exit visa. Up until the Spring of 1940, visas had been made available for Edelstein, Steiner and other Zionist leaders but they had decided that they should remain in the Protectorate and help others to Palestine. Now they had waited too long and found that their exit was barred.

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<sup>125</sup> For information on Kinderstransports see: B. Leverton and S. Lowensohn, eds. *I Came Alone: The Stories of the Kindertransports* (Sussex: Book Guild, 1990); B. Turner, ... *And the Policeman Smiled. 10,000 Children Escape from Nazi Europe* (London: Bloomsbury, 1990).

<sup>126</sup> Bondy, *Elder of the Jews*, p.175.

<sup>127</sup> This had been decreed on 1 August but became law on 6 October. See: Baum, ‘Nazi Anti-Jewish Legislation in the Czech Protectorate’, p.123.

<sup>128</sup> For background to emigration in the Protectorate see: Bondy, *Elder of the Jews*, Chapter 12, ‘Eichmann Presses for Emigration’, pp.135-148 and Chapter 14, ‘If Only There Were Dollars’, pp.166-179. For illegal emigration see: Jon and David Kimche, *The Secret Roads – The Illegal Migration of a People, 1938-1948* (London: Seckler and Warburg, 1954); Francis R. Nicosia, *The Third Reich and the Palestine Question* (London: I.B. Taurus and Co. Ltd, 1985), Chapter 8, ‘Continuation of the Zionist Option’, pp.145-167.

On 16 October 1941, the first deportation train left Prague for the Lodz ghetto.<sup>129</sup> This was followed by a further four transports on 21, 26, 31 October and 3 November 1941, each containing 1000 people.<sup>130</sup> Margit Galat who watched the first transports leave Prague for Lodz remembers, ‘They were watched by crowds who filled the pavements on both sides of the street, the men demonstratively removing their hats, many of the women weeping.’<sup>131</sup> The Czech gendarmes helped prepare the Jews of Prague for the deportations to Lodz and worked with the Nazis in the deportation process, although according to Rothkirchen,

On the whole the Czechs were assigned a minor role in the deportation process. Czech gendarmes served as escorts for transports on the way to the railway stations and were placed as guards at the assembly points, and in Terezín Ghetto.<sup>132</sup>

Although Rothkirchen describes their role as minimal, they were involved in some capacity with every transport that left Prague.<sup>133</sup>

Between May and June 1941, all Jewish men in the Protectorate between the ages of 18 and 50 were forced to undergo a medical examination by a Jewish community doctor, by order of the Protectorate authorities.<sup>134</sup> If they were proved fit for work they were ordered to report for labour details. While many of the young Jewish men in Prague were being enlisted into forced labour details, an

<sup>129</sup> A Jewish ghetto had been established in the Polish city of Lodz on 10.12.39. The early transports from the Protectorate were sent there. For the order to establish the Ghetto see: Gutman, ed. *Documents on the Holocaust*, pp.192-195. For more on the Lodz Ghetto see: Alan Adelson and Robert Lapides, eds. *Lodz Ghetto: Inside a Community Under Seige* (New York: Viking, 1989); Lucjan Dobroszycki, ed. *The Chronicle of the Lodz Ghetto: 1941-1944* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984); Josef Zelkowicz, *In Those Terrible Days – Notes From the Lodz Ghetto* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2002); Alan Adelson, ed. *The Diary of Dawid Sierakowiak – Five Notebooks From the Lodz Ghetto* (London: Bloomsbury, 1996).

<sup>130</sup> Transport A which left on 16.10.41 and the subsequent 4 transports all contained 1000 people.

<sup>131</sup> YVA: E:2, Margit Galat.

<sup>132</sup> Rothkirchen, ‘Czech Attitudes Towards the Jews’, p. 312.

<sup>133</sup> See Chapter Three for their role in Theresienstadt.

<sup>134</sup> Bearing in mind that the transports from Vienna had resumed in February 1941 and that 5,000 Jews had been transported to the Lodz ghetto, Edelstein started to think about the possible work opportunities for his community. By early 1941 it was not only the Jews of Lodz who were living in a ghetto, all of Poland’s Jews had been ghettoised by this point. The Warsaw ghetto had been established by order of Dr. Fischer, Governor and head of the Warsaw district on 2.10.40.

alternative future was being planned for them. On 31 July 1941, Göring ordered Heydrich to complete the task that he had been assigned in 1939 – to design an overall and final solution to the Jewish ‘problem’ in Europe.<sup>135</sup>

The next important development in the future for the Jews of the Protectorate came late in the summer of 1941 when, under the leadership of Otto Zucker, the Prague community opened department ‘G’. This department’s task was to prepare for the possible establishment of ghettos and labour camps in the Protectorate. Edelstein was quick to promote this idea as he saw it as a positive alternative to being deported to Poland – it had become clear to him that the Jewish community could not remain in Prague.

By the end of September 1941, all Jews in the Protectorate had been ordered to register with the *Zentralstelle*, starting with the Prague community and working out to the regions. These stringent anti-Jewish measures came after Reinhard Heydrich arrived in Prague from Berlin, replacing von Neurath as *Reichsprotektor* on 27 September 1941. Heydrich was quick to establish a regime of terror which spread across the Protectorate. On 28 September, only one day after Heydrich’s arrival, Prime Minister Eliás was arrested and sentenced to death.<sup>136</sup>

Keen to deport the Protectorate Jews en masse, Heydrich met Eichmann and Günther on 10 October 1941 and they decided that two ghettos should be established, one in Bohemia and one in Moravia. They concluded that, for the convenience of transportation, the ghettos should be as near to Prague as possible. The Czech garrison town of Terezín – Theresienstadt in German – emerged as a suitable place. Heydrich and Eichmann believed that the small military

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<sup>135</sup> For Göring’s order to Heydrich see: Gutman, ed. *Documents on the Holocaust*, p.233.

<sup>136</sup> For more on the early days of Heydrich’s rule see: Miroslav Kárny, Jaroslav Milotová and Margita Kárna, eds. *Deutsche Politik im Protektorat Böhmen und Mähren unter Reinhard Heydrich 1941-1942, Eine Dokumentation* (Berlin: Metropol, 1997), document 12, p. 94. For Heydrich’s letter on Eliás’s trial and death sentence see: document 20, p.102-106. Eliás was not in fact executed until 19.06.42. His execution was carried out as part of the reprisal killings for the assassination of Heydrich in Prague.

population residing there could be billeted elsewhere and the neighbouring Czech population expelled.<sup>137</sup>

While the Nazis met to decide the fate of the Protectorate communities, the Jewish leaders were called upon to suggest suitable places in which their communities could be re-housed. They narrowed the choice to two possible sites: Guaya (Kyjov), which was situated in Southern Moravia near the Slovakian border, and Terezín.<sup>138</sup> It was while this search was taking place that the transports out of Prague resumed. On 14 October, Kurt Dalüge the chief of police, ordered that 5,000 Jews leave Prague by 3 November. The sudden resumption of the transports threw the Prague community into chaos. While some were already getting used to the idea that they might be transported within the confines of the Protectorate, no one was ready for Poland. Heydrich gave orders that no help be given to those leaving but, under the watchful eye of Hannah Steiner, the Youth Movements were rallied and the young pioneers rushed to aid the deportees.<sup>139</sup>

At the beginning of November 1941, SS Obersturmführer Siegfried Seidl, an Austrian Nazi who had proved his worth during the early deportations from Vienna, was appointed commandant of the planned ghetto and was sent to Terezín to compile a final report as to its suitability. Seidl approved the site but concluded that only 30,000 Jews could be housed there – Heydrich was planning on deporting 80,000. While Seidl was writing his report, the *Zentralstelle* ordered Edelstein and Weidman to propose members for a Jewish Council for the new ghetto, including themselves as Elders. Bondy writes, ‘The Germans chose Edelstein’s list, and so, at the age of thirty-eight, Jakob Edelstein led the Jews of Bohemia and Moravia on their road to the unknown.’<sup>140</sup>

<sup>137</sup> Although the first Jewish transports made their way to the ghetto during November and December 1941 the non-Jewish Czech residents were not removed from Theresienstadt until the summer of 1942.

<sup>138</sup> For a comprehensive account of choosing the Czech town of Terezín see: Lederer, ‘Terezín’, In: *The Jews of Czechoslovakia*, Vol. 3, pp.104-164.

<sup>139</sup> For similar youth organisations see Chapter Five for the *Helping Hand* scheme inside Theresienstadt.

<sup>140</sup> Bondy, *Elder of the Jews*, p.241.

### 2.5.3 Background to the Departure of ‘AK I’ – The First Transport to Leave Prague for Theresienstadt.

Seidl informed the leaders of the Prague Jewish community on the 19 November that the first *Aufbaukommando* / Constructions Unit, ‘AK I’ transport should arrive in Terezín no later than 12 noon on 24 November 1941. As requested, the transport containing 342 men arrived on time at Bohusovice train station and from there marched to the Sudeten barracks inside the walls of what was now the Theresienstadt ghetto.

Under the belief that Theresienstadt was an *Endlager*, a final destination, the majority of those being deported were distressed and nervous but confident that they were to remain within the confines of the Protectorate. So while emotions ran high, fear that accompanied call up notices for transports heading east was absent. Karel Hoffman who was included on ‘AK I’ remembers how,

The Germans had created a judenrat – a council – we had to do whatever they said. One day in the fall of 1941 I got a letter saying I had to show up at a certain place – I didn’t know how many people would be there. There were about 300 young men.<sup>141</sup>

The men of the ‘AK I’ were told that their families could either follow them or remain in Prague and be included on the last transport leaving Prague for Theresienstadt.<sup>142</sup> The transportees’ hopes that the Theresienstadt ghetto was an *Endlager* were dashed as early as 9 January 1942 when the first transport left Theresienstadt for Riga. The realisation that Theresienstadt was nothing more than a transit camp – a stopover on the way to Poland – filled the population with terror. Their entire fate now depended on whether or not they were to be included in the next transport east. For some the wait was a matter of days, for others months or even years.

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<sup>141</sup> USHMM: RG – 50 – 091.20, Karel Hoffman.

<sup>142</sup> The families of the men of ‘AK I’ transport ‘enjoyed’ some level of protection once inside the ghetto and were exempt from the early transports east. See Chapters Three and Four.

## 2.6 The Theresienstadt Ghetto

In order to facilitate an understanding of subsequent chapters it is useful to incorporate at this stage a brief historical overview of the main events which took place inside the Theresienstadt ghetto between November 1941 and May 1945. This section will focus primarily on the movement of people in and out of the ghetto.<sup>143</sup>

Theresienstadt was built in 1780 by Emperor Franz Joseph II of Austria in memory of his mother Maria Theresa. It was designed as a garrison town – a military fortress 60km from both Prague and Dresden on the junction of the rivers Elbe and Eger. It consists of two distinct areas.<sup>144</sup> First, the main fortress which was to become the Jewish ghetto, was overseen by a Nazi Commandant, and had its own Jewish Self-Administration under the auspices of the Jewish Elder. The second, smaller section, known as the Small Fortress, became the Gestapo prison and execution site. During the First World War, prisoners of war were camped there and the Small Fortress acted as a prison, housing – among others – Gavrilo Princip, the assassin of Archduke Franz Ferdinand.<sup>145</sup>

When the independent Czech Republic was established in 1918, Terezín became a Czech town with a population of over 3,500, precariously balanced between the Czech and German regions. Once Germany claimed the Sudetenland in 1938, Terezín found itself on the border of what remained of the Czech lands and the Nazi Reich. In 1939 the Gestapo set up a prison in the small fortress and in November 1941, the Jewish ghetto was established on the site of the garrison town.

Once Terezín had been chosen as the likely destination of the Jews of the Protectorate, and the Jewish Elder and Commandant had been selected, transport ‘AK I’ was dispatched on 24 November 1941. The moment of their arrival marks

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<sup>143</sup> See Appendix 3 for all transports to Theresienstadt from the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, Austria, Germany and Holland.

<sup>144</sup> See Appendix 2 for a map of the ghetto.

<sup>145</sup> For information on the Small Fortress see: Miroslav Benesova, *The Small Fortress 1940-1945, Terezín* (Terezín: Terezín State Archives, 1996) and Gita Zbavitelova, *Terezín's Small Fortress* (Terezín: Památník Terezín, 1992).

the birth of the Theresienstadt ghetto. All early arrivals were confined to barracks as the native non-Jewish Czech population of Terezín was still in residence.

Originally, Theresienstadt was to function solely as a transit camp and ghetto for the Protectorate community. However, while the early transports of the Protectorate Jews were arriving in the ghetto, the Nazis were experiencing problems with the deportations of certain categories of Jews from the Old Reich. On 18 November 1941 Goebbels wrote in his dairy,

The problem [of deportation] seems harder to solve than we originally believed...quite a lot of old Jews cannot be moved to the East. For them a Jewish ghetto in some little town in the Protectorate should be established.<sup>146</sup>

Theresienstadt seemed the perfect solution for the elderly from Berlin and Vienna.

The Wannsee Conference, which took place on 20 January 1942, changed the future of the Theresienstadt Ghetto, by finalising plans for the deportation of the elderly from the Old Reich.<sup>147</sup> Heydrich decided that Theresienstadt would play several crucial roles. First, it would continue to serve as a concentration and transit ghetto for the Jews of Bohemia and Moravia. Secondly, it would act as a collection point where the elderly, the war veterans and the socially prominent and privileged from the old Reich could be sent, thus avoiding letters of intervention on behalf of Jews in these categories. Such letters were bound to be written if these Jews were included on the regular transports east. It was therefore suggested that the Old Reich Jews who had not already been included in transports east could be deported to the Theresienstadt ghetto during the summer of 1942. Thirdly, Heydrich decided that it could solve the problem of what to do with the mixed race children and Jewish partners of Aryan / Jewish marriages.<sup>148</sup>

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<sup>146</sup> For original see: Joseph Goebbels, *Die Tagebücher von Joseph Goebbels* (München: K.G. Saur, 1996). Extract dated 18.11.41, pp.306-312. Also see: Karny, ed. *Terezín Memorial Book*, p.48.

<sup>147</sup> See Appendix 5.

<sup>148</sup> For information on what was decided for the *Mischlinge*, those Jews viewed as mixed race under the Nuremberg Laws, see: Roseman, *The Villa, the Lake, the Meeting*, pp.115-117.

Finally, Heydrich hoped Theresienstadt would mask the final solution. If the Nazis could make Theresienstadt appear as an *Endlager* and not a transit camp, it could be presented as a model Jewish settlement, a humane solution to the ‘Jewish problem’ in Europe.

According to the minutes of the Wannsee Protocol there were approximately 74,200 Jews in the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia that needed to be deported from the main cities and ‘rehoused’ in a *Durchgangslager* / *Durchgangsghetto*, a transit camp or ghetto.<sup>149</sup> There were also 131,800 Jews in ‘Germany proper’ that the Nazis were eager to evacuate as soon as possible.

Heydrich was keen to define exactly who would be eligible to remain in such a ghetto, at least for a limited period, and who would be sent to the east.

It is intended not to evacuate Jews over sixty-five years old but to send them to an old-age ghetto – Theresienstadt is being considered for this purpose. In addition to these age groups – of the approximately 280,000 Jews in Germany proper and Austria on October 31, 1941, approximately 30 percent are over sixty-five years old – severely wounded veterans and Jews with war decorations (Iron Class 1) will be accepted in the old-age ghettos. With this expedient solution, in one fell swoop many interventions will be prevented.<sup>150</sup>

The mention of ‘interventions’ is important. If the elderly were deported to Theresienstadt, the Nazis could be seen to be treating these individuals with ‘respect’ according to their position in German society. Once they had been in Theresienstadt for a few months, nobody would notice if they were added onto a transport heading east.

Although the decisions to deport the elderly to Theresienstadt were not finalised until the Wannsee Conference, plans to make space for them in Theresienstadt were already underway at the beginning of January 1942. As Theresienstadt was reaching bursting point, deportations from the ghetto began

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<sup>149</sup> For the minutes of the Wannsee Protocol see: Mark Roseman, *The Villa, the Lake, the Meeting* (London: Penguin, 2002), Appendix A, pp.108-118.

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.*

on 9 January 1942. This first phase of deportations – the transportation of Protectorate Jews – which began on 9 January 1942 and ended on 13 July 1942 succeeded in clearing space for the arrival of the German and Austrian Jews.

The first German Jews arrived in the ghetto on 2 June 1942 and within weeks the camp was again overflowing. In response, another ‘space-saving’ decision was made. The native non-Jewish Czech population of Theresienstadt would be expelled. This would not only guarantee more space for the Old Reich Jews but would also remove these potential allies from the Protectorate Jews – some of whom had gained sympathy from the non-Jewish Czechs. On 3 July 1942 the native Czech inhabitants were forced to leave their homes, and on 6 July at 12.30pm the Czech gendarmes were taken off the doors to the barracks. The ghetto was now ‘open’ and the imprisoned population was ‘free’ to wander around the confines of Theresienstadt. Simultaneously, security was tightened and the arrival procedures toughened. These harsh new procedures had to be endured by the majority of the elderly from Germany and Austria.<sup>151</sup> A new phase in the history of Theresienstadt had begun.

Transports of German and Austrian Jews continued to arrive throughout June and July 1942 with transports of Protectorate Jews leaving to make room for them. The influx of these transports from Germany led to terrible overcrowding, hunger and impossible sanitary conditions. Between April and September 1942 the population of the ghetto increased by four times while the mortality rate increased by a factor of 15.<sup>152</sup> The summer of 1942 was one of the hardest periods in the history of Theresienstadt, with the highest daily death toll of 156 being recorded on 18 September.

The second phase of deportations which began on 14 July 1942 and continued until 26 October 1942, targeted the elderly and the infirm from

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<sup>151</sup> For the arrival experience see Chapter Four. The first transport of German Jews arrived in the ghetto on 2 June 1942 and the first Austrians on 21 June 1942. By September 1942 the population was 53,000. Transports left Theresienstadt for Trawniki on 12 June (1000 people, no survivors) and a second transport, destination unknown, left on 13 June (1000 people, no survivors).

<sup>152</sup> Karny, ed. *Terezín Memorial Book*, p.52.

Germany and Austria, conveying a total of 25,870.<sup>153</sup> Although many of these had only recently arrived in the ghetto, the population was unsustainable, and, fearing epidemics, the Nazis targeted the elderly for removal. The last deportation from the ghetto in 1942, which left on 26 October 1942, was the first deportation to go to Auschwitz.<sup>154</sup>

While the mass transports of September 1942 had carried with them only the elderly from Germany and Austria, the October transports saw a change in policy. All prisoners over the age of 60, including those from the Protectorate, were now liable to be transported. By the end of 1942, all those over 60 had been summoned to the German Head Quarters / Kommandantur in Theresienstadt where they received a stamp on their identity cards which sealed their fate. Those who were stamped with a 'T' were allowed to remain in Theresienstadt but those who received an 'O' / *Osttransport* were to be deported east.

From 26 October 1942 until 10 January 1943 there was relative calm in the ghetto as no more orders for deportations were received by the Jewish elders. However, on 10 January 1943 the ghetto was once again thrown into turmoil when the daily report announced,

In accordance with instructions from the camp commandant's office, five transports of 2,000 persons each are to be dispatched to the East in the course of this month. The transports will be composed, in equal halves, of persons who arrived in the ghetto in

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<sup>153</sup> Three transports left the ghetto during August. On 4 August a transport left for Trostinetz (1000 people, 2 survivors), the next left for an unknown destination on 20 August (1000 people, no survivors) and the third left for Trostinetz on 25 August (1000 people, 1 survivor). Eight transports left Theresienstadt during September 1942. On 1 September a transport left for Raasika (1000 people, 45 survivors), the second left for Trostinetz on 8 September (1000 people, 4 survivors), the third for Trostinetz on 19 September (2000 people, no survivors), the fourth for Trostinetz on the 21 September (2020 people, no survivors), the fifth for Minsk on 22 September (1000 people, 1 survivor), the sixth for Trostinetz on 23 September (1980 people, no survivors), the seventh for Trostinetz on 26 September (2004 people, no survivors) and the eighth for Trostinetz on 29 September (2000 people, no survivors). Six transports left Theresienstadt during October 1942. The first left for Treblinka on 5 October (1000 people, no survivors), the second for Treblinka on 8 October (1000 people, 2 survivors), the third for Treblinka on 15 October (1998 people, no survivors), the fourth for Treblinka on 19 October (1984 people, no survivors), the fifth for Treblinka on 22 October (2018 people, no survivors) and the six and last for Auschwitz on 26 October 1942 (1866 people, 28 survivors).

<sup>154</sup> This transport contained 1866 people out of which 28 survived.

transports from the Old Reich and of persons who arrived in transports from Bohemia and Moravia.<sup>155</sup>

It was clear from the daily report that the transports which were set to leave the ghetto during January 1943 were not to be defined by age or origin: they would affect everyone.<sup>156</sup> The first of these transports left Theresienstadt on 20 January 1943 and continued until 1 February 1943 when Himmler called a halt to all transports leaving Theresienstadt.<sup>157</sup>

Himmler's halt in the deportation process signalled the start of the *Stadtverschönerung* / the city beautification project which would turn Terezín from an overcrowded disease ridden ghetto into a model Jewish settlement as part of the systematic preparation for a visit by the International Red Cross. From 1 May 1943 it was ordered that street names replace numbers, and a ghetto bank with money was opened, as well as a coffee house complete with jazz band, and shops selling the personal belongings of inhabitants stolen months before.

One problem remained – the cessation in the deportations again led to overcrowding. By the end of July 1943 the population once more reached 46,000. Since the ghetto was to be presented to its visitors as a Jewish retirement settlement, it was now young Czech prisoners who were deported to make room. Therefore on 6 September 1943, 5,000 people left the ghetto for Auschwitz. They were divided into three age groups: 285 children under the age of 14, 3,925 people between the ages of 15 and 60, and 797 men and women between 60 and 65. There was also a second reason for their deportation to Auschwitz – the

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<sup>155</sup> *The Trial of Adolf Eichmann* (Jerusalem: State of Israel Ministry of Justice, 1992), Volume 6, document: 1205. Order of the Day, 10.01.43.

<sup>156</sup> Four transports left Theresienstadt for Auschwitz in January 1943. The first left on 20.01.43 (2000 people, 2 survivors), the second on 23.01.43 (2000 people, 3 survivors), the third on 26.01.43 (1000 people, 39 survivors) and the fourth on 29.01.43 (1000 people, 23 survivors). On the 28.01.43 between the third and fourth transports, Rabbi Leo Baeck from Berlin arrived in the ghetto. One transport left Theresienstadt for Auschwitz in February 1943 prior to the halt in the deportation process. This transport left on 1.02.43 (1001 people, 29 survivors) After the departure of this February transport, the population of Theresienstadt was 43,683 people.

<sup>157</sup> The halt in deportations which lasted from 2.02.43 until the 5.09.43 resulted in a period of relative calm in the ghetto with the ghetto population stabilising at 44,672 people.

creation in Birkenau of the Terezín family camp – B11b.<sup>158</sup> The Red Cross had been told that in addition to viewing Theresienstadt that they would be allowed to tour one labour camp. Instead of undergoing the standard arrival procedures, the men, women and children of these *Arbeitseinsatztransport* / labour transports, were sent straight to camp B11b where they were allowed to keep their own clothes and where men and women were housed in the same enclosures. This latter ‘privilege’ went against all official procedures and had only been extended once before to the prisoners of the ‘Gypsy family camp’ in Birkenau.

A total of 10,000 people were deported to camp B11b between September and December 1943. Two transports left on 6 September 1943, each containing 2,500 men, women and children, and a further two further transports of 2,500 left during December. Within six months of the arrival of each of the transports, all those still alive were gassed.<sup>159</sup> Karny writes,

Among Terezín’s Jews slaughtered on 8 March 1944, there were at least 3,700 Czech Jews. Thus, this was the biggest mass execution of Czechoslovak citizens carried out in the whole six years of the German occupation of Czechoslovakia.<sup>160</sup>

The International Red Cross after several inquiries was granted permission to visit Theresienstadt on 23 June 1944. The group was led by Dr. Maurice Rossell.<sup>161</sup> The beautification project was hailed as a success since Rossell wrote in his report, ‘Let us say that to our complete amazement we found in the ghetto a town which is living nearly a normal life....The Jewish town is remarkable.’<sup>162</sup>

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<sup>158</sup> For more on the history of Camp B11b in Birkenau see articles: O.D. Kulka, ‘Ghetto in an Annihilation Camp – Jewish Social History in the Holocaust Period and its Ultimate Limits.’ In: *Yad Vashem Studies XXIV* (1994); Shimon Adler, ‘Block 31: The Children’s Block in the Family Camp at Birkenau.’ In: *Yad Vashem Studies* (1994). See Chapter Five for information on Fredy Hirsch and his deportation to B11b.

<sup>159</sup> The September transport was killed on the night of 8.04.44. Out of the 3,732 men, women and children who had managed to stay alive until 8 March, only 38 survived the war.

<sup>160</sup> Karny, ed. *Terezín Memorial Book*, p.70.

<sup>161</sup> WL: G59/12, document 18. Red Cross collection.

<sup>162</sup> *Ibid.*

The Autumn of 1944 witnessed the mass deportations from Theresienstadt to Auschwitz which virtually liquidated the ghetto. The first three transports left Theresienstadt during September 1944; by 19 October 1944 a further seven had been dispatched.<sup>163</sup> Together, the seven October transports carried a total of 10,651 people to Auschwitz, of which 753 survived. On 22 October 1944, the SS announced that the population of Theresienstadt would be fixed at not less than 12,000 people. As the population was still well above this figure a further two transports, containing the majority of the Jewish leaders, left the ghetto. The last transport to leave Theresienstadt for Auschwitz departed on 28 October 1944 containing 2,038 people, of which only 37 survived. This final transport included both Philipp Manes from Berlin and Gonda Redlich from Prague. Manes travelled with his wife Gertrud; Redlich together with his wife Gerta and baby son Daniel. Both families were gassed soon after their arrival in Auschwitz.<sup>164</sup> Also included in the last transport to Auschwitz was Hedwig Eppstein, the wife of Paul Eppstein. After the departure of this final transport, the ghetto population stood at 11,077 just below the SS requirement. Of the remaining population, 29.5% were men, 70.5% were women, and the average age of prisoners was 50.9 years old.<sup>165</sup>

The deportations to Theresienstadt between the years 1941 to 1945 consisted of 73,468 prisoners from the territories of Bohemia and Moravia, 42,124 from Germany and 16,404 from Austria.<sup>166</sup> In January 1945 Jews from mixed marriages were deported to Theresienstadt in 9 transports; the same month prisoners from other camps and from death marches began to arrive. Within 10 days the population grew from 17,000 to 29,000. The total number that arrived in Terezín from death marches exceeded 13,000.

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<sup>163</sup> For more details on the mass transports which left Theresienstadt during October 1944 see: Adler, *Theresienstadt*, p.700 for lists of transports leaving the ghetto and for more detailed information see Chapter 9 part 2. Also for extensive lists of all transports leaving the ghetto during this time see the Terezín Memorial books. Transports left Theresienstadt for Auschwitz on 1.10.44, 4.10, 6.10, 9.10, 12.10, 16.10, and 19.10.44.

<sup>164</sup> For the deportation of Redlich and family see Chapter Five and for the fate of Philipp Manes see Chapter Six.

<sup>165</sup> See Chapter Four for the experiences of those who remained in the ghetto.

<sup>166</sup> Out of the 73,124 from Bohemia and Moravia, 6,000 prisoners died in the ghetto, nearly 7,000 were liberated there and over 60,000 were deported east where they were killed.

A second visit by the International Red Cross took place on 6 April 1945, led by Mr. Paul Dunant. Dunant stayed on in Prague in order to be near the ghetto and made a return trip later that month. On 5 May, the ghetto was placed under the protection of the Red Cross. The same day Commandant Rahm and the remaining SS fled. During the evening of 10 May the Russians troops liberated the ghetto.

Between November 1941 and May 1945 there were three Jewish Elders who ran the Jewish Self-Administration of Theresienstadt.<sup>167</sup> The three administrations of Jakob Edelstein from Prague, Paul Eppstein from Berlin and Benjamin Murmelstein from Vienna will be discussed in the following chapter.

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<sup>167</sup> These were in addition to three Nazi Commandants. They will also be discussed in Chapter Three.

### **Chapter Three. The Jewish Self-Administration of the Theresienstadt Ghetto: November 1941 – May 1945**

No one envies the Council of Elders their power over life and death. We know they spend sleepless nights, burdened by the responsibility to make impartial selections. The 1,000 persons to be selected ... are not just numbers as we all know, not faceless masses. At stake are our brothers, our essence, all of us.<sup>1</sup>

#### 3.1 Introduction

This chapter will concentrate primarily on the administrative leadership of the Jewish Council of Elders under the leadership of Jakob Edelstein, Paul Eppstein and Benjamin Murmelstein. It will look at the division of 'power' within the ghetto and the history of those who held it, the hierarchical nature of ghetto power, and ask how this power was experienced by the leaders. It will examine the position of the Jewish leaders in the light of their pre-war lives and work and how the decisions they made affected the ghetto. The different leadership styles of the three principals will also be explored. In addition to looking at the leaders' work in the light of their pre-war experiences, this chapter will also look at how the politics and cultural identities of the leaders affected their administrations. It will shed light on the conflicts between the German and Czech communities in the ghetto and between the assimilationist and the Zionist factions in the ghetto, both within and across national groups.

This chapter will explore the structure and make-up of the Jewish Self-Administration under the various leaders and examine how they coped with 'power' in their positions of responsibility. It will highlight the work of Dr. Erich Munk in the Health Department and Chief Justice Klang who presided over the ghetto's legal system. Finally, this chapter will study the role played by the ghetto police, with attention directed towards its leader, Karl Löwenstein from Minsk.

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<sup>1</sup> Troller, *Theresienstadt*, p.48.

It is important to examine all aspects of the Jewish Council and the Jewish Self-Administration down to its smallest branches. When the council is broken down into its constituent elements, the role played by individuals, as well as by certain groups and figureheads, is revealed. This study of a cross-section of the appointed council will contribute to an understanding of the internal politics of the varied communities, and will help to highlight the problems and disputes caused by different ghetto factions.

### **3.2 Section One – Jakob Edelstein and The First Ghetto Administration**

#### **3.2.1 The Arrival of ‘AK I’ and the First Months of the Jewish Self-Administration**

The opening phase of the history of the Theresienstadt ghetto – the Edelstein administration – can be divided into two sections. The first starts with the arrival of *Aufbaukommando 1* / ‘AKI’ on 24 November 1941 and continues until the expulsion of the local Czech community between 3 and 6 July 1942. The second runs from the summer of 1942, when the Jewish communities from Germany and Austria arrived, up until 31 January 1943 when Jakob Edelstein from Prague was replaced as Jewish Elder by Paul Eppstein from Berlin.

The first transport of Jews to Theresienstadt constituted 342 men, who arrived at Bauschowitz train station at midday on 24 November 1941.<sup>2</sup> According to Theresienstadt prisoner Zdenek Lederer, the men of ‘AK I’,

walking to Theresienstadt will at first see nothing but the waterworks and the top of Theresienstadt’s church steeple. Coming nearer, he will notice the red and grey roofs of the enormous barracks; then at the crossroads to Litomerice his eye will perceive the first characteristic signs of the town; battlements and ramparts, the battlements high and of baked brick whose colours range from dark red to purple through exposure to weather.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Up until June 1943 transports arrived at the Bauschowitz train station and walked from there to the ghetto. In June 1943 a new section of railway was completed which extended the existing line right into the ghetto.

<sup>3</sup> Lederer, *Ghetto Theresienstadt*, p.1.

Lederer continues, 'While seen from the outside Theresienstadt seems a town of ramparts, inside the barracks overshadow all other buildings.'<sup>4</sup> On arrival the men made their way to the Sudeten Barracks on the Western edge of the ghetto which was to become their sleeping and living quarters. Since the ghetto leaders did not arrive until 4 December there was no administration in place at this time, and the men of the 'AK I' transport did not have to undergo the rigorous arrival procedures that would be endured by future transportees.<sup>5</sup>

The period between the arrival of 'AK I' on 24 November and the subsequent arrival of the majority of the Jewish leadership on 4 December was one of confusion. Even today this ten day period remains hazy – because there was no Jewish Self-Administration, there are no official written records. The only information comes from survivor testimonies and diaries, of which there are a number since the survival rate of the 'AK I' transport was relatively high compared to later transports from the Protectorate.<sup>6</sup>

Although there was a noticeable SS presence in the ghetto during the early days, as well as a number of Czech gendarmes, the men of 'AK I' were not issued with any direct orders other than that they should clear the Sudeten barracks and make them habitable. They disposed of the belongings of the soldiers who had been billeted there and worked hard at scrubbing and cleaning the floor and walls. As there were no mattresses or bedding of any kind, they placed a layer of straw on the ground.<sup>7</sup> Edelstein's biographer Ruth Bondy writes,

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<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*, p.2.

<sup>5</sup> The arrival procedures which were later put into place were most rigorous during the arrival of the German and Austrian Jews during the summer of 1942. See Chapter Four of this thesis.

<sup>6</sup> Out of the 342 men deported to Theresienstadt on 24.11.41, 86 survived (25.1%). This should be compared to later transports during the summer of 1942 from Prague to Theresienstadt where the survival rate was considerably lower. Transport 'AA1' which left Prague for Theresienstadt on 2.07.42 consisted of 1000 people out of which only 94 survived (9.4%) and transport 'Aan' which left Prague for Theresienstadt carrying 1000 on 6.07.42 had a survival rate of 4.5%. For statistics and transport lists see: Miroslav Karny, ed. *Terezín Memorial Book – A Guide to the Czech Original* (Prague: Terezín Iniativ Foundation, 1996) and Groag Weiss, *Totenbuch Theresienstadt* (Vienna: Jewish Committee for Theresienstadt, 1971).

<sup>7</sup> For information on the first 10 days of life in the Theresienstadt ghetto see: Lederer, *Ghetto Theresienstadt*, Chapter 1; Adler, *Theresienstadt*, Chapter 9. FVA: 1411, Josef Weiner.

The builders were all men – artisans, engineers, laborers – and many of them belonged to the Hechalutz movement, a Zionist organisation that prepared candidates for immigration to Palestine.<sup>8</sup>

Jakob Edelstein and Commandant Siegfried Seidl had been informed that no family transports would arrive until the leaders were settled in the ghetto. However, both transport ‘H’ from Prague which arrived on 30 November and transport ‘G’ from Brno which arrived on 2 December consisted primarily of women, children and the elderly.<sup>9</sup> The majority of these people were immediately housed on the second floor of the Sudeten barracks where, like the men of ‘AK I’, they were forced to make their beds on the floor.

The leaders arrived on 4 December, on transport ‘St’ from Prague. In addition to Edelstein, this transport contained his deputy, Otto Zucker, and 21 specialists who were to run the different areas of the administration. Transport ‘J’ also arrived that day containing 1,000 people; this transport became known as ‘AK II’, the second *Aufbaukommando*.<sup>10</sup> The arrival of these two transports brought the ghetto population to 2,342 people.<sup>11</sup>

Arriving separately from the 21 men of the ‘St’ transport came the only four women that Edelstein consented to have among his immediate staff of 24. These women were not allowed to be members of the Jewish council but were part of Edelstein’s personal team. During the three administrations, lasting over three years, not a single women was included in the Jewish Councils of Theresienstadt. The four women on Edelstein’s staff were: Jakob Edelstein’s and

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<sup>8</sup> Ruth Bondy, ‘Women in Theresienstadt and the Family Camp in Birkenau.’ In: Dalia Ofer and Lenore J. Weitzman, eds. *Women in the Holocaust* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1998), p.312.

<sup>9</sup> Transport ‘H’ arrived from Prague on 30.11.41 contained 1,000 people of which 105 survived (10.5%) Transport ‘G’ arrived from Brno on 2.12.41 contained 1,000 people of which 126 survived (12.6%).

<sup>10</sup> Transport ‘St’ from Prague contained 23 people out of which 7 survived (30.4%) and transport ‘J’ contained 1000 people out of which 242 survived (24.2%) The early arrivals in the ghetto occupied a more ‘privileged’ positions and were for approximately 20 months, exempted from deportation east.

<sup>11</sup> Kany, ed. *Terezín Memorial Book*, p.103.

Otto Zucker's secretaries from Prague, Edith Orenstein, who had worked with Edelstein in the Palestine Office, and Dr. Ruth Hoffe.<sup>12</sup>

On 5 December a further 1,000 people arrived from Brno on transport 'K' bringing the total population of Theresienstadt to 4,365.<sup>13</sup> During these first two days it became obvious to the leaders that some form of proper ghetto administration needed to be established before chaos ensued. Edelstein acted quickly and established the *Jüdischen Selbstverwaltung* / Jewish Self-Administration.<sup>14</sup> Ruth Bondy writes, 'The leadership took over a room on the ground floor of the Sudeten barracks and Jakob opened his office out of a suitcase.'<sup>15</sup>

On 6 December, orders were issued that all ghetto inhabitants would be confined to barracks. Shocked by this decision, the couples and families who made up the ghetto population appealed to Edelstein and his newly formed Jewish Council. They realised that Theresienstadt was not the 'self-governed town' that the Nazis had promised them. Josef Weiner, who had arrived on 'AK I' recalls the early restrictions.

We weren't allowed to go out freely from garrisons only with conduct – not the German soldiers or SS but Czech gendarmes. They guarded the borders of Terezín.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Both Dr. Ruth Hoffe and Edith Orenstein had husbands working for Edelstein in Theresienstadt. For background on the role of Jewish women in community positions see: Monika Richarz, 'Jewish Women in the Family and Public Sphere.' In: Michael M. Meyer, ed. *German-Jewish History in Modern Times, Vol. 3*, pp.68-102.

<sup>13</sup> Out of the 1000 people who arrived in Theresienstadt from Brno on 5.12.41, 67 people survived (6.7%) *Terezín Memorial Book*, p. 103.

<sup>14</sup> The Jewish self-Administration was often referred to by prisoners as, *Jüdischen Selbstvergewaltung* – Jewish self-rape. See testimony of Werner R. In: Joshua M. Greene and Shiva Kumar, eds. *Witness – Voices from the Holocaust* (New York and London: The Free Press, 2000), pp. 80-81.

<sup>15</sup> Bondy, *Elder of the Jews*, p. 252.

<sup>16</sup> FVA: 1411, Josef Weiner. By this time there were a force of between 120 and 150 Czech gendarmes in Theresienstadt guarding the gates to the ghetto, the entrances to all barracks as well as other key positions. Freedom of movement around the ghetto would only become a reality when the non-Jewish Czech population were removed from Theresienstadt during the summer of 1942.

The main reason for the confinement was that the non-Jewish Czech population of the town of Terezín was still in residence and it was strictly forbidden for the two groups to mix. The non-Jewish Czechs occupied the town houses and continued to socialise, shop and go to church while the Jewish prisoners were crammed into the former military barracks. This situation was exacerbated by the fact that families were divided into gender-defined barracks.<sup>17</sup>

### 3.2.2 The Construction of the Jewish Self-Administration

Theresienstadt's first *Judenrat* or *Ältestenrat* (Jewish Council) was appointed by the Nazis and run by Jakob Edelstein with twelve men.<sup>18</sup> These men worked tirelessly during the first few days of December 1941 to put their administrative machine into action. The first *Tagesbefehle* (Daily Report) was published by the Jewish Council of Elders on 15 December 1941 and was signed, 'Der Ältestenrat'.<sup>19</sup> It was entitled, 'Verwaltung des Ghettos' and announced to the population that the head of Theresienstadt was Jakob Edelstein and that he had appointed Ing. Otto Zucker as his deputy. It informed the population that the core of the ghetto administration was to be divided into five different sections: 1. Administrative Department, 2. Economic Department, 3. Finance Department, 4. Technical Department and 5. Health Department. It explained that the Jewish Self-Administration would be run from the Magdeburg barracks and that prisoners would be kept informed of all administrative decisions via their *Gebäudeältesten* (barrack elder or leader).

Attached to the first daily report was a document, dated 15 December 1941, which explains how the administration would communicate with the ghetto's inhabitants. The reports of all house elders would be made available to

<sup>17</sup> YVA: 0.64/396. Daily Order 12, dated 27.12.41. This announced that (prior to the establishment of the children's homes) children under the age of 12 would be housed with mothers whereas children over 12 would be housed with a parent of the same sex. Also see: Lederer, *Ghetto Theresienstadt*, p.17.

<sup>18</sup> Lederer, *Ghetto Theresienstadt*, p.20.

<sup>19</sup> YVA: 0.64 / 385. *Tagesbefehle* / Daily Order 1, 15.12.41. Although this was the first daily report, written communications between the Jewish leadership of Theresienstadt date back to 5.12.41. This early correspondence consisted of informal notes and letters and does not make up the official communication of the Ghetto.

everyone through *Zimmerältesten* (room elders). Sample reports of the house elders would be sent to the Jewish council every morning at 9 am and would be displayed in room 96 of the Magdeburg barracks. The Council would then compile an overall daily report from these smaller reports which would be issued to the building elders and passed back down the chain of command to the room elders and the general population.

This communication thus worked in both directions – from the bottom up and the top down. This was an important part of the administrative set-up – even though the Jewish leaders occupied an authoritative position over the Jewish population, the population were made to feel as if they were taking part in the bureaucratic process. This two way communication was to be tested during the transport decisions.

Johanan Zeev ben Pessah Scheck who worked for the Jewish Council kept and buried copies of several of the *Tagesbefehle*.<sup>20</sup> He was liberated from Theresienstadt, and later testified at the trial of Adolf Eichmann. Copies of the daily reports saved by Scheck were described by State Attorney Bar-Or during session 44 of the Trial. Bar-Or explained how,

Through these orders of the day, the following kind of information was brought to the attention of the inmates of Theresienstadt Camp: (a) Instructions from the *Dienstelle*, the Commandant's office: (b) Internal instructions given by the management of the ghetto, which was in the hands of the so-called Council of Elders (*Altästernrat*) for internal purposes, for the issue of internal permits and information about certain prohibitions, about punishments imposed by the Commandant's office or by the court which existed within the ghetto, run by the Council of Elders.<sup>21</sup>

It was through these daily reports that all prisoners were kept up to date with the current requirements of the Jewish leaders as well as with SS orders. An

<sup>20</sup> For information on Johanan Zeev ben Pessah Scheck see *The Trial of Adolf Eichmann*, Volume 2, session 44, pp. 792-794, volume 2. Also for more information and copies of the majority of the daily reports see: YVA: 0.64 Theresienstadt series and for published copies of the daily reports see H.G. Adler, *Die Verheimlichte Wahrheit: Theresienstädter Dokumente* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1958).

<sup>21</sup> *The Trial of Adolf Eichmann*, Volume 2, session 44, pp. 792-794.

examination of several of these reports gives an indication of their content and flavour.

The second daily report which was issued on 16 December 1941 informed all male prisoners that their hair should be cut to a length of 3mm while women were told to wear their hair short at all times.<sup>22</sup> This second report discusses the problem of illiteracy and announces that a list would be compiled of those who could not read or write. The population were informed that all inmates by law were ordered to salute German officers and that they were required to hand over any *Zundholzer* / matches in their possession by the following day.

The document calls on all room elders to report room counts to the group elders, who at 17.30 hours would report to the Barrack elder, who, in turn was asked to appear in person at the *Zentralevidenz* / Central Registry by 18.00 hours. Prisoners were told that if they received permission to move about the ghetto they were required to carry with them the following items at all times: their name and transport number, their old or current room number, their new room number if they were in the middle of moving barracks, and the signature or approval of the building elders concerned. The report stated that these requirements would remain in place for the foreseeable future. The report finished by stating that, on Sunday 21 December 1941, there would be a count of the entire population and that no-one should leave their barracks.

The third daily report, which was issued on 17 December 1941, set the daily bread ration at 35.5kg, ordered that all straw beds be ventilated once a week and that pregnant women report daily between the hours of 16.00 and 18.00 to the hospital for sick women.<sup>23</sup> On 24 December 1941, daily report number nine announced that prisoners must be inside their rooms by 20.45 hours every night and that the room elders were to be held responsible for making sure this happened.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> YVA: 0.64, Tagesbefehle 2, 16.12.41. Also see: Adler, *Die Verheimlichte Wahrheit*, p. 121.

<sup>23</sup> Later prohibitions on births in the ghetto and the treatment of pregnant women will be examined in Chapter Four.

<sup>24</sup> YVA: 0.64, Tagesbefehle 9. See: Adler, *Die Verheimlichte Wahrheit*, p. 120.

Under the leadership of Edelstein and Zucker, a full hierarchy of departments and sub-departments was established.<sup>25</sup> The *Leitung* (leadership), was directly responsible for the following departments: *Gemeindewache*, *Detektivabteilung*, *Feuerwehr und Luftschatz* and the *Wirtschaftsüberwachungstelle* which together made up the Ghetto Security Services, the *Zentralevidenz* (Central Registry), *Bank der jüdischen Selbstverwaltung* (the Bank of the Jewish Self-Administration) and the *Zentralsekretariat* (Central Secretariat), which functioned as the executive organ of the Jewish Elder.<sup>26</sup> Both Lederer and Adler write about the importance of the Central Secretariat and the power it wielded. According to Lederer, 'Being concerned with the execution of orders and directives, the Central Secretariat became in time more influential than the Board of Three.'<sup>27</sup> Bondy comments, 'All threads came together at the central secretariat ... Its domain included the administrative department and the transport division, which determined who was to be deported.'<sup>28</sup>

Other departments which were not directly under the control of Edelstein but functioned independently with their own leaders were: *die Arbeitzentrale* (Labour Exchange), *Abteilung für innere Verwaltung* (the Department for Internal Administration), *Wirtschaftsabteilung* (the Economic Department), *Technische Abteilung* (the Technical Department), *Finanzabteilung* (the Financial

<sup>25</sup> Initially the Jewish Leader was Edelstein and his deputy was Zucker but it was possible to have two deputies. In such cases the leadership was referred to as, 'the board of three.' See Lederer, *Ghetto Theresienstadt*, p.58.

<sup>26</sup> Largest and most important section of the Security Service was the Ghetto Guard. See later section on the role of the Jewish Police.

The Central Registry acted as a central indexing office. It kept index cards on every prisoner in the ghetto, including all those who died. There was a transport section which had details of every prisoner deported east and of all arrivals in Theresienstadt. It also acted for the transport commission and issued summonses for transports east. In addition the office recorded information on escapes which was passed onto the Elders.

The Central Bank of the Jewish Administration was set up by the Germans and was complete with counters, bank notes and customer accounts. All departments sent their pay-rolls to the bank which credited accounts with play money. The ghetto money had Edelstein's signature on it as well as a picture of Moses. Salaries were paid to prisoners and entrance fees were charged to ghetto events. If prisoners were sent money by people on the outside this was converted into ghetto money and all real currencies were stolen by the ghetto Commandant and sent to Berlin. The Ghetto bank was run by Dr. Desider Friedmann.

<sup>27</sup> Lederer, *Ghetto Theresienstadt*, p.58.

<sup>28</sup> Bondy, *Elder of the Jews*, p.265.

Department), *Gesundheitswesen und Fürsorge* (the Health and Welfare Department), the Youth Welfare Department / *Jugendfürsorge* (the Youth Welfare Department), and *Freizeitgestaltung* (Leisure Time Bureau).<sup>29</sup> All the departments listed contained several sub-departments which had their own departmental heads and division leaders.

The Labour Department, which was originally part of Internal Administration, was responsible for supplying both the ghetto and the German authorities with workers.<sup>30</sup> From the outset it declared that all able-bodied people over the age of fourteen would carry out some form of work in the ghetto.<sup>31</sup> All those prisoners who were skilled in manual labour were allotted appropriate tasks while the rest of the population were either given clerical jobs or menial ghetto work such as cleaning. The Labour Department had two sub-departments: one oversaw all the male workers, the second was responsible for women and juveniles. The Labour Department worked closely with the Health Department, which assessed both men and women's ability to work, and the Welfare Department which provided workers with clothes.<sup>32</sup>

The Department for Internal Administration had six main sections as well as a sprawling web of committees and sub-departments; it was run by Dr. Egon Popper, a member of the Jewish Council of Elders.<sup>33</sup> Initially an important

<sup>29</sup> Much of the work of the Finance Department was farcical. It was ordered by the SS to draw up fake wages and to falsify records to be sent to Berlin. It did however keep some accounts for the ghetto, such as, the cost of living per head. In comparison to the Finance Department, Lederer records that, 'The Health Department together with Youth Welfare Department were the only administrative departments that can be regarded as having been entirely beneficial to the prisoners.' Lederer, *Ghetto Theresienstadt*, p.73. The role of the Health Department is discussed later in this chapter and in Chapter Four which explores the experiences of the adult population of the ghetto. The Health department was run by Dr. Erich Munk. See Chapter Five of this thesis for information on the Youth Welfare Department, run by Gonda Redlich from Prague who worked closely with Fredy Hirsch who was in charge of Ghetto buildings and housing. For information on all departments see Adler, *Theresienstadt*, pp.224-240 and Lederer, *Ghetto Theresienstadt*, pp.57-87. For more on the *Freizeitgestaltung* / the Leisure Time Bureau see Chapter Six of this thesis which examines the cultural leadership of the ghetto. The department was run by Moritz Henschel and Rabbi Dr. Weiner.

<sup>30</sup> The Labour Department was run by Dr. Erich Österreicher and after his deportation to Auschwitz in autumn 1944, by Dr. Robert L. Weinberger.

<sup>31</sup> See: Adler, *Theresienstadt*, Chapter 13, 'Arbeit', pp.376-421. For prisoners under the age of fourteen see Chapter Five.

<sup>32</sup> For more information on the Labour Department see: Lederer, *Ghetto Theresienstadt*, Chapter 4, pp.57-88.

<sup>33</sup> The Department for Internal Administration was run by Dr. Egon Popper.

department, it lost influence in time as its work was re-routed to the Central Secretariat. The six subsections of the Department for Internal Administration were: A) The Legal Section, B) The Housing Section, C) The Administration of Buildings, D) The Registry of Births and Deaths, E) The Postal Service and F) The Transport Service.<sup>34</sup>

The Economic Department was a source of continuous controversy since it was in charge of food supply and was thus constantly open to charges of misappropriating the inadequate rations. It consisted of six subsections: A) The Central Food Depot, B) The Central Administration of Materials, C) The Section for Production, D) The Section for Shops, E) The Section for Agriculture and F) The Section for Transport.<sup>35</sup>

The Technical Department was responsible for maintaining the ghetto's standard of living as well as overseeing building work, supplying vital equipment to rebuild the ghetto hospitals and delousing stations, and dealing with heating and water problems. It was also in charge of sewage disposal and electricity. It built new roads in the ghetto and managed the project for the railway extension from the station at Bohusovice to Theresienstadt. It also ran the Technical Drawings Department which compiled ghetto statistics.<sup>36</sup>

The Nazi *Kommandantur* in Theresienstadt functioned separately from the Jewish Council and maintained absolute authority. It issued orders to the Jewish leaders who submitted a daily report in return. The *Kommandantur* had its own administrative and economic and security offices, all of which were directly controlled by the camp commandant. Theresienstadt functioned under the leadership of three commandants during its existence: Dr. Siegfried Seidl, Anton Burger and Karl Rahm. The commandant had a staff of SS men, all of whom belonged to the *Sicherheitsdienst* / SS security service, who were each assigned

<sup>34</sup> The Postal Service was run by Moritz Henschel. For more on the Department for Internal Administration see: Lederer, *Ghetto Theresienstadt*, pp. 65-69.

<sup>35</sup> For a complete breakdown of each of these subsections see: Lederer, *Ghetto Theresienstadt*, Chapter 4, pp.63-65.

<sup>36</sup> The Technical department was organised and run by engineer Robert Stricker. For more on the Technical Department see: Lederer, *Ghetto Theresienstadt*, Chapter 4, pp.69-70. Also see Chapter Six of this thesis.

responsibility for a department of the Jewish Self-Administration. Many of these men had been members of the Nazi underground movement in Austria and their early commitment to the Nazi cause had earned them privileged jobs in Theresienstadt. The SS were supported by Lieutenant Janetschek, a Viennese Czech who complied with the SS, and was appointed as head of the Czech Gendarmes.

Initially, the *Kommandantur* was located in the main square of the ghetto but was later moved to the old Municipal Savings Bank and finally to the town hall. There were several other members of the SS who had a substantial influence over the ghetto in terms of policy and procedure. Two of the more prominent Nazi party members who had a direct role to play in the ghetto's life were Hans Günther and Adolf Eichmann.<sup>37</sup>

A complex chain of command linked Theresienstadt to Berlin and the *Führer*. The ghetto population was the responsibility of the Jewish Self-Administration under the leadership of the *Judenälteste* who reported directly to the camp commandant and the *Kommandantur* in Theresienstadt. The Commandant in turn received his orders and delivered his reports to the *Zentralstelle* in Prague which was run by Hans Günther. Günther received his orders from and reported to his superiors in Berlin.<sup>38</sup> They issued their directives from the Central Office for the Solution of the Jewish Question which functioned as a sub-section of IVB4 of the Reichs Main Security Office under the leadership of Heinrich Müller. Müller reported to Reinhard Heydrich and after Heydrich's death, to Ernst Kaltenbrunner. Heydrich and Kaltenbrunner reported directly to and received their orders from Heinrich Himmler.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Lederer, *Ghetto Theresienstadt*, Chapter 4, pp.57-87. See Appendix 4 for biographical information on these two men.

<sup>38</sup> During his trial Eichmann pointed out that at this point in the chain of command, orders could come from one of two offices. If the orders related directly to matters of 'vital importance to the Reich' they would be issued directly from the Head Office for Reich Security but if they were not vitally important to the Reich, they would be issued and dealt with more locally, for example by the 'Protectorate authorities.' *The Trial of Adolf Eichmann*, Volume 4, session 82, p.1469. '

<sup>39</sup> For more on the chain of command see: *The Trial of Adolf Eichmann*, Volume 4, session 82, pp.1469-1470.

Having established the set-up of the ghetto administration, it is important to establish how the national identities and political outlook of the Jewish leaders and department heads conditioned their approach to leadership, and how this in turn, affected the development of the ghetto. For example, how was Jakob Edelstein, a committed Czech Zionist, to shape the face of the ghetto during his leadership as well as mould the future administrations? Would the overall physiognomy of the ghetto have developed differently if the first Jewish elder had not been a Protectorate Zionist? It needs to be asked whether his beliefs and politics infiltrated all areas of the administration.

There are two approaches to understanding the Jewish leadership under Edelstein. The first is through the historiography which covers his administration and which focuses heavily on the Zionist roots of the ghetto; the second is through the testimonies of those prisoners who knew him in Theresienstadt. This first historiographical approach is outlined in Chapter One.<sup>40</sup>

The testimonies relating to Edelstein are an invaluable source of information on the character and behaviour of the first Jewish elder, both in Prague before the war and in the ghetto. Trude Groag, who was deported to Theresienstadt in November 1942 and worked there as a nurse, writes, 'I knew Jakob Edelstein before the war. He was the head of the Palestine office in Prague. He was an eager, enthusiastic worker, who was always overtired from his work for his people.'<sup>41</sup> She describes how this energy and enthusiasm was transferred to his work in the Theresienstadt – sometimes to the exclusion of all else.

Jakob Edelstein had already been in Theresienstadt a year when I arrived there. When I wrote him a note after my arrival he responded in a letter, which I have kept, that I should not be

<sup>40</sup> The starting point for this historiographical debate on Edelstein and the role he played in the ghetto is: Adler, *Theresienstadt*, Chapter 20, pp.627-682, especially pp.656-660. For a counter view to Adler's see: Rothkirchen, 'The Zionist Character of 'self-government of Terezín', pp. 986-1020. For a continuation on the arguments raised by Adler and Rothkirchen on the Zionist nature of the first Jewish Administration see: Schmeidt, 'Hechalutz in Theresienstadt.' See Chapter One for historiographical discussion.

<sup>41</sup> Testimony of Trude Groag. In: Gurewitsch, ed. *Mothers, Sisters, Resisters*, p.244.

presumptuous; he had no time for private audiences. He hardly had time to speak to his wife, let alone with strangers.<sup>42</sup>

This demonstrates that Edelstein showed no favouritism for those people he had known in Prague. Groag's testimony also sheds light on some of Edelstein's views towards the ghetto SS. When she did finally manage a meeting with Edelstein, Groag asked why, even in the intense summer heat he would not wear a hat, Edelstein replied, 'I prefer to die of sunstroke rather than doff my hat and make a deep bow to the Nazis. To spare myself the ordeal, I prefer to walk without a cap or hat.'<sup>43</sup>

While some prisoners, including Groag, had substantial contact with the Jewish leaders, others remained totally separate from them. Indeed, most of the population would have had difficulty naming the men who made up the Jewish council. While the majority of the leaders were respected, not all were liked and many in the community felt that the leaders were too distant, aloof, and elitist. Marlene Altman recalls her feelings about the Jewish councils, 'I always felt that it was a lot of old men sitting around making decisions on our behalf.'<sup>44</sup>

This gap between the community and its leaders was to widen over time. This is partly explained by the increase in the ghetto population and also by the different leadership styles of the subsequent Elders. During Edelstein's early administration, the ghetto population was made up primarily of Protectorate Jews. This meant that Edelstein was responsible for a more intimate and homogenous community than that inherited by Paul Eppstein in January 1943. By that time the ghetto population was half-Czech and half-German and Austrian, and was increasingly diverse and heterogeneous. By the time Benjamin Murmelstein took over as Jewish Elder in September 1944 there were also Danish and Dutch Jews as well as baptised Jews – practising Protestants and Catholics – who made up fifteen percent of the population.<sup>45</sup>

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid*, p.248.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid*, p.249.

<sup>44</sup> Kavanaugh, Altman, p.5.

<sup>45</sup> Baker, *Days of Sorrow and Pain*, p.302.

### 3.2.3 The Establishment of The New Zionist Council

In November 1942, the Hehalutz movement sought to unite all the Zionist factions in the ghetto in an attempt to reach some kind of uniformity of view. They held a conference attended by 500 prisoners at which a Zionist council and a central committee were established. It was decided that this would remain separate from the official Jewish Council of Theresienstadt raising questions about competing power bases. This separation was partly forced by necessity: the new council only allowed as members those who worked as physical or manual labourers, thus excluding the men of Edelstein's council and Edelstein himself.<sup>46</sup>

The new committee was made-up of various sub-committees and units which were responsible for a variety of tasks including: the advancement of Hebrew culture and education, and the protection of various areas of the ghetto. A covert protection or 'self-defence unit' was established consisting of 200 men, all of whom had served in the army. They were responsible for overseeing the ghetto food stores, medical supplies and water distribution. This self-defence unit should be viewed as the closest Theresienstadt came to having any kind of organised resistance movement. Shlomo Schmiedt explains that while overseeing these positions in the ghetto, the unit, 'made all the preparations which in time of danger would make it possible to prevent the German Guard entering the camp.'<sup>47</sup>

In addition to their security tasks, these men also managed to make illegal contact with Czech partisan groups outside the ghetto walls. They set up their base in the basement of building L 404 where they used an illegal radio set in order to keep up to date with news from outside the ghetto. According to Schmiedt, in 1944, when the population feared the ghetto was going to be liquidated, some members of the self-defence unit broke into the Nazi archives in the Sudeten barracks and stole documents which they wanted to preserve as evidence. They also drew up plans to attack the *Kommandantur* in Theresienstadt

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<sup>46</sup> For more on the Zionist conferences held in the ghetto between 1942 and 1944 see, Schmiedt, 'Hehalutz in Theresienstadt', pp.113-125. The second conference was held in the ghetto in August 1944.

<sup>47</sup> Schmiedt, 'Hehalutz in Theresienstadt', p.124.

as a last resort. Although the ghetto was indeed virtually liquidated, the attack never took place as most able-bodied men were deported to Auschwitz in September and October 1944.

By the spring of 1943, the Hehalutz movement in the ghetto had taken over two dormitories in the Sudeten barracks, rooms 53 and 75. They operated out of these two rooms holding regular meetings and proposing new strategies for running the ghetto. In August 1943 the movement held its second conference and, despite disagreements, decided that the main aim of all members would be the education and advancement of the young.<sup>48</sup> The other topic for debate at the second conference was deportation and how the Hehalutz movement should behave in the face of future transports east. Schmiedt writes,

There was also a bitter argument over the pressing question of whether to permit members of Hehalutz to volunteer for transports and to join parents being sent to Auschwitz, (we didn't yet know the significance of these transports!) or demand that they continue to work in the Ghetto, for the benefit of all.<sup>49</sup>

He concludes by saying that, 'In the end it was decided to leave the decision to each individual member.'<sup>50</sup> This conference resulted in the election of a new central committee of four men and a new council of 28.

Since this new Zionist council was appointed by the prisoners rather than being forced on them by the Nazis, it was seen by many as a more legitimate source of power in the ghetto. However, the administrative control of the Council of Elders was never threatened. This is primarily due to the fact that the new Zionist council was not established to overthrow Edelstein and his men but to undermine the Nazi control of the administration. If Edelstein indirectly became a target of their policies it was only because he had been hand-picked by the Nazis and not because the Hehalutz members doubted his abilities or his dedication to

<sup>48</sup> See Chapter Five of this thesis.

<sup>49</sup> Schmiedt, 'Hehalutz in Theresienstadt', p.113.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.* See Chapter Five for discussion between Hirsch and Redlich about whether Zionists should volunteer.

the cause. Although many continued to debate and discuss the best ways in which Theresienstadt should be run, the official Ghetto Council maintained its primary position and was able to cohabit with the Zionist council in relative peace, largely because their ultimate goals – the education and protection of the young – were the same.

### 3.2.4 The Role of the Ghetto Police and their Relationship to the Jewish Leaders

Balanced precariously between the Jewish community, the ghetto administration and the *Kommandantur*, the Jewish police occupied a complex position.<sup>51</sup> The relationship between the *Judenrat* (Jewish Council) and the *Jüdischer Ordnungsdienst* (Jewish Police) in Theresienstadt was fraught with tension, mirroring the situation in other ghettos across Central and Eastern Europe.

It is necessary to discuss whether the role of the Jewish Police during the Holocaust was inherently problematic and controversial, or whether it became so following post-war accusations made against those who served in these forces. Although there is a considerable volume of documentation by survivors on the role and character of the Jewish police during the Holocaust, it was often those who had not been imprisoned that later made accusations against those who had served as police.<sup>52</sup>

When discussing the role of the Jewish Police in Theresienstadt, it is important to examine how the police force was established and how it fitted into

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<sup>51</sup> For more on the sensitive nature of areas of Jewish leadership and on the role of Jews in positions of 'power' during the Holocaust see Levi, *The Drowned and the Saved*.

<sup>52</sup> One of the main sources which proved disastrous not only for the men of the Jewish Councils but also for those of the Jewish Police was Hannah Arendt's *Eichmann in Jerusalem*. As well as labelling the Jewish leaders as collaborators she turned her hand to the men of the Jewish Police. Criticising Arendt for her approach to the subject of Jewish leadership is not to deny the problematic role played by members of the Jewish Police during the Holocaust and the extremely delicate position they occupied both inside and outside the Jewish community as a whole. For additional information see: Don Levin, 'How the Jewish Police in the Kovno Ghetto Saw Itself'. In: *Yad Vashem Studies*, 29 (2001), pp.183-240. Bela Vago, 'The Ambiguity of Collaboration: The Centre of the Jews in Romania (1942-1944).' In: Yisrael Gutman and Cynthia Haft, eds. *Patterns of Jewish Leadership in Nazi Europe, 1933-1945*, pp.287-310; Trunk, *Judenrat*, Chapters on the Jewish Police: 8, 18, 19 and 20; N. Blumenthal, *The Judenrat and the Jewish Police*. YIVO Colloquium, December 2-5, 1967 (New York: YIVO, 1967).

the ghetto hierarchy.<sup>53</sup> The Security Service in Theresienstadt was run under the auspices of the Jewish Council and contained several subsections, the largest and most prominent of which was the Ghetto Guard. Although the Guard was answerable to the Jewish Council it had been established by orders from Berlin. At his trial, Eichmann discussed how the police force was established.

And then things happened in such a way that I was ordered to set up a Jewish police force down there, composed of one hundred and fifty persons, so that they could take care of their own affairs.<sup>54</sup>

Originally the ghetto guard or police force consisted of a group of 150-200 men and was set up to assist the Czech Gendarmes in their efforts to enforce ghetto rules and regulations. They also had the less formidable role of escorting prisoners through the ghetto and assisting Jewish leaders in their day-to-day work. In May 1942 this original police force was disbanded when the authorities discovered that they had been smuggling letters and parcels into Theresienstadt. Czech gendarmes implicated in the racket were sent to the Small Fortress while the Jewish police involved were immediately deported east.

In May 1942, Karl Löwenstein arrived in Theresienstadt and was imprisoned in the Dresden barracks. On his release he was given the order to set up a new ghetto guard. He accepted the task and established a force which he ran with military precision. Norbert Troller remembers how,

The great unknown Prussian, the Jew Löwenstein, took over the Ghetto Guards and began a tight reorganization. Drills, standing to attention, saluting, marching, passing in review, in short: 'the works'.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> For information on the Jewish Police in Theresienstadt see: Adler, *Theresienstadt*, Chapters 4 and 9. Lederer, *Ghetto Theresienstadt*, Chapter 4. Friedman, ed. *The Terezín Diary of Gonda Redlich*. See: WL: Philipp Manes, *Tatsachenbericht*, for his personal experiences of working for the Security Services.

<sup>54</sup> *The Trial of Adolf Eichmann*, Volume 5, session 112, p.2008.

<sup>55</sup> Troller, *Theresienstadt*, p.65.

Löwenstein's ghetto guard was double the size of the original force and he saw to it that his 400 men were well equipped with uniforms, exempt from heavy work details and eligible for extra food rations. Most importantly he arranged that they, together with their families, would provisionally be excluded from all deportations east. It is understandable that the presence of this 'privileged' and 'protected' force created feelings of resentment among the population at large. The community wanted to know why Löwenstein's men should receive extra food rations and, more importantly, why they to be excluded from the transports. It was not only the ghetto population that showed resentment towards the new police force. As the force grew in number and as Löwenstein grew more powerful, both the Jewish Council and the SS began to query the necessity for such a force. The two institutions of the Jewish Council and the Jewish police would later clash as they fought with one another to gain the upper hand in the ghetto.<sup>56</sup>

Philipp Manes arrived from Berlin on 23 July 1942 on transport I/29. On arrival he was given the job of running the ghetto's Orientation Service which was a subsection of the ghetto police. As previously mentioned, the *Ghettowache* was a complex organisation which spawned several offshoots including the *Ordnungsdienst* and Manes' *Orientierungsdienst*, which later changed its name to the Auxiliary Service of the Ghetto Watch / *Hilfsdienst der Ghettowache*. After accepting this position Manes set about choosing his co-workers. Initially he picked a group of twelve men, all Berliners. This narrow selection policy caused tension and he was later asked to diversify his team. Manes' men were requested to help new arrivals and those who lost their way in the ghetto. Manes was typical of those who made up the Ghetto Watch, all of whom wanted some formal position within the ghetto administration.<sup>57</sup> The base of the Orientation Service was in room 38 of the Magdeburg barracks, the building chosen as the head

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<sup>56</sup> See later section on Löwenstein and the Jewish Council under the Eppstein administration.

<sup>57</sup> The majority of Manes' men had fought in the First World War and several of them had been decorated. They believed that they should be given a job inside the ghetto that reflected their age and position. Once the *Hilfsdienst* was disbanded in February 1944, these men turned their hands to guarding important ghetto locations such as the food stores and the administration blocks.

quarters for the Jewish Self-Administration. It was also the building in which Manes lived. Manes describes his first day in his new position in the Orientation Service,

The first hours passed calmly – we told each other about our experiences during the last months. Around half past ten, the door opened, and the Ghetto-watchman ushered in two, crying, trembling old ladies: they had lost their way. The first thing was to calm the poor things down so we could ask them something ... They didn't have their papers with them, hadn't written down the house name. Well, what could we do but turn to the information office? There we easily got the necessary data.<sup>58</sup>

From the beginning of Manes' diaries, the reader becomes aware of how closely Manes had to work with the Jewish Police and the difficult position that this placed him in *vis à vis* the ghetto community. Within the *Tatsachenbericht* there are descriptions of all aspects of ghetto life and Manes often looks with a controversial eye at the behaviour of other Jews in the camp and of the German officials and the Czech Gendarmes. He writes passages on the German officials with unveiled admiration for their behaviour. It is clear that Manes appreciated efficiency and hard work and was perhaps too easily swayed by the working attitudes of the ghetto police, and, in more extreme cases, the SS. An interesting example of this is Manes' relationship with Karl Löwenstein. Manes describes him as, 'a 50 year old, stocky, energetic Reichs German who regarded the Ghettowache as a military formation.'<sup>59</sup> Within weeks of his arrival Löwenstein had instilled both fear and admiration into the men of his watch. Manes claims, 'his hunger for power was great and led to enmity in the ghetto.'<sup>60</sup> But Manes also describes how the Jewish Elders sacked Löwenstein and 'toppled the capable man.'<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> WL: Philipp Manes, *Tatsachenbericht*. Book 1, Chapter 2, pp.58-59. Also see: Makarova, *et al*, *University over the Abyss*, pp. 82-83.

<sup>59</sup> WL: Manes, *Tatsachenbericht*. Book 5.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*

The Jewish police functioned as the community's main contact with the forces of law and order as most of the population rarely had prolonged contact with the SS. This meant that many of the community's grievances over ghetto life, and much of their fear and hatred of the German authorities, were directed at the men of the ghetto police force. Dr. Eva Rocek recalls, 'We really didn't have a lot of contact with the SS. We had much more dealings with the Jewish police in the ghetto and also their superiors, the Czech gendarmes.'<sup>62</sup>

### 3.2.5 Law and Order in the Ghetto

Another important and controversial element of the Jewish Self-Administration was the Legal Department and Court system. This was established under the umbrella of the Jewish Council within the Department for Internal Administration and worked closely with the Jewish police. Part A of the Department for Internal Administration, which constituted the legal section, was made up of three subsections: the judicial section, which was in charge of the courts, the section which oversaw the estates of the deceased, and the section which handled issues of guardianship. There were several types of court in Theresienstadt including the penal court, the arbitration court and the labour court.<sup>63</sup>

Dr. Justice Heinrich Klang arrived in Theresienstadt on 21 September 1942 and was appointed head of the judicial system. Inside the ghetto he worked closely with Dr. Ludwig Freundenthal and a team of up to 20 lawyers. Their task was complicated by the fact that ghetto law was a very different creature to the law they had practised in Vienna and Berlin. The very notion of what constituted 'justice' was to be called constantly into question. How could they sentence a starving man to a month in solitary confinement for stealing potato peelings?

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<sup>62</sup> FVA: Dr. Eva Roeck. 24.04.94.

<sup>63</sup> For information on the ghetto judicial system see: Adler, *Theresienstadt*, Chapter 8, 'Verwaltung', pp.223-263 and Chapter 13, 'Arbeit', pp. 376-421 and especially Chapter 15, 'Rechtverhältnis', pp.453-492. Lederer, *Ghetto Theresienstadt*, Chapter 4, 'The Organisation of the Ghetto', pp.57-87.

They were faced with cases like this on a daily basis and presided over the ghetto courts without a clear idea of their brief.<sup>64</sup>

Although there was no Jewish law inside Theresienstadt which functioned independently of the *Kommandantur*, the courts were able to imprison people. This meant that Jewish men and women who were already in effect imprisoned could be incarcerated in specific barracks and guarded by either Czech gendarmes or Jewish police. There were several levels of imprisonment that the courts could impose on the ghetto population, with confinement to barracks the least stringent custodial punishment available. This could at least be endured in the short-term whereas imprisonment in the Small Fortress invariably led to death by starvation or deportation east.<sup>65</sup> Those prisoners who were confined to their barracks often found they had lost their jobs when they had served their time. This meant going without the crucial extra food rations that were linked to their jobs.<sup>66</sup>

While all minor criminal infractions were dealt with by the Jewish council and court system, major crimes were handled by the SS inside the *Kommandantur*. Crimes such as possession of cigarettes or making contact with the non-Jewish community, both inside the ghetto prior to July 1942 and, later, outside the ghetto, were dealt with by the Germans who would sentence the prisoners themselves, incarcerating them in the basement of the *Kommandantur* prior to transferring them to the Small Fortress or including them on the next transport. Every arrest made by the ghetto police, Czech gendarmes or SS, and every conviction made by the ghetto court, appeared in the daily reports issued by the Jewish Self-Administration. Bondy discusses the legal processes at work in Theresienstadt and comments on how many more men were sentenced than women. She concludes,

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<sup>64</sup> For more on the ghetto court system see: Lederer, *Ghetto Theresienstadt*, Chapter 4, pp.57-88. Adler, *Theresienstadt*, Chapter 15, pp.453-493. Makarova, *et al*, *University over the Abyss*, pp.224-228. For information on the 'legal system' in other ghettos see: Dina Porat, 'The Justice System and Courts of Law in the Ghettos of Lithuania.' *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, 12:1 (1998), pp.49-65.

<sup>65</sup> For descriptions of imprisonment in the Small Fortress, see the 'Artists' affair' in Chapter Six. As a rule, only prisoners who had been sentenced to a term longer than four weeks would be included in a deportation east.

<sup>66</sup> See Chapter Four of this thesis for the distribution of food.

This inequality may have been a result of the leniency of the Czech gendarmes toward women who returned from the vegetable gardens with a cucumber or some spinach leaves smuggled in their clothing.<sup>67</sup>

Stealing among the male community was commonplace but, in contrast to women, men dominated offices such as the transport department, which was overseen by the SS and where the potential for being caught was thus proportionally greater. Stealing from common areas and stores in the ghetto was considered, 'morally tolerable' whereas stealing from other prisoners was unpardonable.<sup>68</sup>

Chief Justice Klang faced the daily problem of condemning the starving for stealing food and lived in a perpetual dilemma. After his liberation from the ghetto in May 1945 Klang wrote about some of the problems he faced:

*Die Kriminalität...hatte eine einzigartige Färbung.../ The criminality had a specific colouring: next to the small number of official and regrettable offences against the person ... offences against property stand out. These were driven by insufficient nutrition, and consisted either of stealing from the camp community or fraud in the distribution of portions. Because there were so many of these trespassers, much thought was expended on this problem, and their punishment had to be disproportionate in comparison to similar punishments outside Theresienstadt.*<sup>69</sup>

On 8 January 1942, daily report number 21 announced that,

Several inhabitants of the Ghetto have been arrested while having attempted to smuggle out letters. This act constitutes a violation of martial law; hence the culprits must expect the death penalty.<sup>70</sup>

<sup>67</sup> Bondy, *Women in Theresienstadt*, p.319.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>69</sup> Klang, 'Denkschift über die Ausübung der Gerichtsbarkeit in Theresienstadt' / Notes on the practice of Law in Theresienstadt. In: Adler, *Theresienstadt*, p.457. Also see Makarova *et al*, *University over the Abyss*, pp. 224-227.

<sup>70</sup> Lederer, *Ghetto Theresienstadt*, p.20. Throughout the time the ghetto was running, there were several bans issued on sending and receiving mail both within the ghetto and externally. For more information on the postal service in Theresienstadt see: Frantisek Benes and Patricial Tosnerová, *Mail Service in the Terezin Ghetto 1941- 1945* (Prague: Profil, 1996).

This distressing news was explained in greater detail in the daily report on 10 January 1942. ‘Nine inhabitants of the Jewish Ghetto were sentenced to death by hanging by order of the commandant of the Security Service.’<sup>71</sup> The men were executed within the walls of the ghetto on a makeshift gallows which was erected outside the Ustecky barracks. The Council of Elders were forced to attend the executions which were presided over by Commandant Seidl and Hans Günther from Prague. The nine men were hanged for the following crimes: attempting to contact their wives and children outside the ghetto, leaving their barracks unescorted by the ghetto guards, and attempting to buy food and clothing from the shops in Theresienstadt which were only open to the non-Jewish inhabitants still in residence. The news of the executions sent shock waves through the ghetto. Eva Roubícková wrote in her diary on 8 January 1942, ‘There’s much desperation everywhere.’<sup>72</sup>

### 3.2.6 Health and Medical Care in the Ghetto

The *Gesundheitswesen* (Ghetto Health Department) was one of the first five departments set up by the Jewish Council of Elders soon after their arrival in Theresienstadt in December 1941.<sup>73</sup> Dr. Erich Munk was appointed head, and, as

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<sup>71</sup> Lederer, *Ghetto Theresienstadt*, p.21.

<sup>72</sup> Roubícková, *We’re Alive and Life Goes On. A Theresienstadt Diary* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1998), p.20. The SS ordered that one of the Theresienstadt population had to perform these executions. The man chosen for the job was Ada Fischer, a trained hangman who went on to become a kapo in Auschwitz. See: Anita Franková, ed. *The World Without Human Dimensions – Four Women’s Memories* (Prague: Prague Jewish Museum, 1991), pp.97-98 and Ruth Bondy, *Elder of the Jews*, p.409. Although most of the descriptions of Fischer are negative, there are descriptions of him sharing his food rations with children in the Theresienstadt orphanage.

<sup>73</sup> The Ghetto Health and Welfare Department, *Gesundheitswesen und Fürsorge* was established together with, the Economic Department, the Department for Internal Administration, the Technical Department and the Financial Department. It was divided into several sub-sections under the control of G 0 – The Leadership. These consisted of: G 1 Administration, G 2 Patient welfare, G 3 Central Dispensing Pharmacy, G 4 Laboratories and Auxiliary Unit, G 5 Sanitary Services, G 6 The Department of the Medical Officer, G 7 Welfare Department. See: H. G. Adler collection of Documents at the Rijks Instituut voor oorlogsdocumentatie, Amsterdam, Holland (hereafter RIOD) Adler collection, File 10 section A, document 86. Each of the sub departments of the Health Department (G 1 – 7) were further divided into numerous committees and sub committees totalling 124 sections. In October 1942 the Health Department was expanded and became known as the Health and Welfare Department / *Gesundheitswesen und Fürsorge*. RIOD: Adler, file 12, section B, p.12. The Document is a short report / *Kurzbericht* which deals with organisation and planning of the Welfare Department. Although it is dated October 1943 it

a close friend of Edelstein's, occupied an important place within the ghetto hierarchy. Dr. Karel Fleischman was given the job of chief physician and Dr. Erich Springer named head surgeon.<sup>74</sup> The role of the Health Department was less controversial than the work of the Jewish Police and Courts as it was more directly linked to the welfare of the imprisoned community. Dr. Munk has been criticised however for the manner in which he presided over the Health Department and how he treated the ghetto population at large. Like Judge Klang, Dr. Munk and the other doctors faced conflicts between their (medical) ethics and the reality of the ghetto.<sup>75</sup>

Under the watchful and forceful eye of Dr. Erich Munk, the ghetto Health Service oversaw a huge array of departments which included The Pest Control Service, The Department of Research, The Bacteriological Laboratory, The Pharmacy, The Children's Health Care Department and the Department for Medical Education as well as the individual hospitals and clinics which were spread throughout the ghetto.<sup>76</sup> Each of these departments had a staff of highly qualified doctors and nurses who worked round the clock attending to their patients' needs.

The web of sub-departments and committees that made up the Ghetto Health Service were run in as bureaucratic a fashion as the rest of the Internal Administration.<sup>77</sup> The Health Service produced a vast quantity of paperwork mirroring any hospital functioning outside the ghetto walls. Notes were taken on each patient, prescriptions were written and then stamped with the doctors

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explains the origins of the department. While Dr. Erich Munk was head of the Health Department, Dr. Karl Fleischmann was head of the Welfare Section.

<sup>74</sup> TSA: A 9124, series 5. Letter of appointment to Dr. Springer as head surgeon – Dr. Hájek appointed as his deputy. 'Herrn Dr. Erich Springer, Chefarzt Dresdnerkaserne. Sie werden hiermit zum Leiter der chirurgischen Abteilung des Krankenhauses und Siechenheimes bestimmt.' It is signed by Jakob Edelstein. At the time of his appointment as chief surgeon in the ghetto Dr. Springer was already working as the head doctor in the Dresden barracks. This section on the ghetto's Health Department will examine the breakdown of the department and its leadership but the personal experiences of the doctors, nurses and patients will be discussed in Chapter Four.

<sup>75</sup> This final point is examined in Chapter Four in the section on forced abortions.

<sup>76</sup> The Children's Health Care Unit was set up inside the children's home L417 during July 1942. Dr. Rudolf Klein who presided over work in this unit wrote, see: Makarova, *et al*, *University Over the Abyss*, pp. 218-219. For experiences of the children and youth workers see Chapter Five.

<sup>77</sup> For information on Health Care in other ghettos across occupied Europe see: Solon Beinfeld, 'Health Care in the Vilna Ghetto.' *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, 12:1 (1998), pp.66-98.

personal stamp, and all medicine and equipment was meticulously monitored.<sup>78</sup> Every time doctors withdrew medicine from the central store or requested further supplies they had to provide written documentation. One example is the request made by Dr. Erich Springer, the chief surgeon in the ghetto, for *Ein paar Handschuhe* (a pair of gloves).<sup>79</sup> Dr. Springer wrote a post-liberation memoir chronicling his imprisonment which sheds light on the hierarchy of medical staff and how the Health Department functioned.

The large blocks, with many thousands of occupants, were headed by a chief doctor who gave orders to each block doctor. Subordinate to the supervisor of the health system were the head doctor of the hospital and those of the auxiliary hospitals, the sanitary squad for removing bodies and, finally, the central pharmacy.<sup>80</sup>

On top of the daily care of all the ghetto's patients, the tasks of the doctors and nurses included performing emergency operations, inoculating against and attempting to prevent the spread of infectious disease, caring for pregnant women, delivering babies and later, after the ban on pregnancies, carrying out abortions as well as removing and burying the dead. In the performance of all these tasks the medical staff were obstructed at every turn by a lack of food, hygiene, medical equipment and sterilisation, yet they continued their work, often sacrificing their own health in order to save others.

Heart disease and intestinal disease were the most common afflictions in the ghetto.<sup>81</sup> Tuberculosis, typhus, bites from lice and bedbugs, and infected cuts also caused considerable problems. The elderly were particularly susceptible to

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<sup>78</sup> TSA: A 3504, series 5. Example of a ghetto prescription. Hand-written prescription / *Rezept*. The prescription is faded but Dr. Munk's signature and stamp are still visible.

<sup>79</sup> TSA: A 9147, series 4.

<sup>80</sup> Erich Springer, 'Health Conditions in Terezín.' In: Makarova, *et al*, *University Over the Abyss*, p.210.

<sup>81</sup> For general information on various diseases in the ghetto see Adler, *Theresienstadt*, Chapter 16, 'Gesundheitsverhältnis', pp. 493-534. (pp.513-522). Also see: Corni, *Hitler's Ghettos*, Chapter 8, 'Life and Death', pp.195-227.

fractures caused by poor nutrition. Dr. Springer wrote about the need for Pest Control as a means of limiting lice and bed-bugs.<sup>82</sup>

The service tasked with the eradication of insects was organized as early as November 1941 by J. Pacovsky. Later, chemists joined the service: they worked long to solve the problem since it was the source of many diseases ... Pest control raids were carried out.<sup>83</sup>

The Pest Control services required all prisoners to play their part in keeping their clothes and mattresses free of lice. Prisoners could either attempt to clean their mattresses themselves or take them to the ghetto de-lousing station. Dr. Antscherl who worked in the de-lousing station explains how mattresses were taken into gas chambers where they were left, 'for five hours at a temperature of 5 degrees C. To maintain the temperature we have stoves that can be fired from the outside. Each chamber is about fifty to eighty cubic meters in volume.'<sup>84</sup>

Although medical equipment was sporadically introduced into the ghetto, conditions were poor and many prisoners were operated on without anaesthetic with insufficiently sterilised equipment. An article written for the children's home magazine *Vedem* (In the Lead) describes how Dr. F. Mlady, who arrived in Theresienstadt on 'AK I', had to give an appendix operation to a fellow prisoner under such conditions.

There was no operating room, no reliable sterilizing medium, no recovery room ... Three days and three nights the patient hovered between life and death, tossing and turning with a high fever. For three days the doctor did not leave his bedside, nursing his patient as if he were his own child.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> Springer, 'Health Conditions in Terezín'. In: Makarova, *et al*, *University Over the Abyss*, pp.217-218.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>84</sup> Dr. Antscherl, in: Marie Rút Krizková, Kurt Jirí Kotouc and Zdenek Ornert, eds. *We are Children Just the Same – Vedem, the Secret Magazine by the Boys of Terezín* (Philadelphia and Jerusalem: The Jewish Publication Society, 1995), p.94.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*

Emily Schleissner explains why the Nazis sometimes introduced medical equipment into the ghetto.

The Germans were afraid of something breaking out of the camp and of them being infected, so they supplied us with equipment and supplies. Not because they liked to help the Jews but because they were afraid for themselves.<sup>86</sup>

Despite the poor conditions there was a startling array of medical expertise in the ghetto as doctors of every kind had been transported there from the Protectorate, Germany, Austria and later from Holland and Denmark. A February 1942 list compiled by the Health Department reveals the presence of 85 practising doctors in Theresienstadt. The expertise of these men and women spanned the medical spectrum, from general practitioners to orthopaedic surgeons, dermatologists, dentists, ear specialists, obstetricians, gynaecologists and neurologists.<sup>87</sup> Even though by 31 December 1943 there was a total of 2,966 people working for the Health Department in the ghetto, the medical staff were unable to provide prisoners with adequate care.<sup>88</sup>

In his post-war memoir, chief physician Fleischmann writes in detail about Dr. Munk, and about how Munk was affected by the horrors of the ghetto.

All through July 1942, Munk was unable to sleep due to the endless transports. He gave his food rations to the Children's House at the Dresden barracks. When Munk became severely ill, I tried through official channels to get him additional rations. It worked, but Munk refused [to take] them.<sup>89</sup>

H. G. Adler paints a more negative and controversial portrait of Dr. Munk, however, describing him as,

a talented and ambitious despot ... [who] was sent to his death in autumn 1944 ... his coldness and uncompromising stance, his

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<sup>86</sup> USHMM: RG – 50 – 030.344, Emily Schleissner.

<sup>87</sup> TSA: A 9324, series 1. List of working doctors in Theresienstadt dated, 5.2.42.

<sup>88</sup> Lederer, *Ghetto Theresienstadt*, p.72.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*

arbitrary rule and vanity served him poorly. He was restlessly active, and obsessed by introducing over all order and control ... He was never available for a talk, worked nights through and terrorized both himself and his subordinates ... This possessed [man] put on his office's door a sign 'I know friendship and not protection', and on his home's door another one: 'Here lives Dr. Erich Munk who patronizes no one.'<sup>90</sup>

What Adler describes as a form of obsessional or 'possessed' behaviour can be interpreted in different ways. Munk's insistence on not 'patronising' or 'protecting' anyone should not be interpreted as a lack of compassion but as a desire to treat all equally. He did not want to misuse his authority in the ghetto to save one person over another. Perhaps it would have been preferable to save some rather than none, but in many ways Munk's impartiality in the presence of so much corruption is admirable and a sign of strength rather than weakness.

Vera Schiff who worked as a surgical nurse in the ghetto had several encounters with Dr. Munk. During her imprisonment Schiff was offered a job in one of the ghetto kitchens, a much sought after post as it meant extra rations for her and her family. She wrote to the Health Department resigning as a nurse but was told she could not be released from her position. Schiff then arranged a meeting with Dr. Munk believing that he would grant her wish. She describes him as 'a cold man in a cruel environment.'<sup>91</sup> She continues,

There were moments when he was charming, exuding wit and ready repartee, but mostly he displayed a lack of empathy and compassion ... He continued to explain that the camp did not have any trained surgical nurses and that I, who had been working in that capacity for two years, could not be replaced....he reiterated that his only concern was the smooth functioning of the camp's health care.<sup>92</sup>

<sup>90</sup> Adler, in: Makarova *et al*, *University Over the Abyss*, p.213. Also see Adler, *Theresienstadt*, p.252.

<sup>91</sup> Vera Schiff, *Theresienstadt – The Town the Nazis Gave to the Jews* (Toronto: Lugus, 1996), p.85.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid*, pp.85-86.

Although Munk's refusal and Eppstein's subsequent statement that, 'it would be inappropriate to overrule Dr. Munk on health-care matters' came as a blow to Schiff, it is clear why Munk felt incapable of releasing her.<sup>93</sup> In Munk's eyes Schiff's request was insignificant in comparison to the tasks confronted by him and his staff on a daily basis. Munk believed that the only way to proceed with his work in the ghetto was to concentrate on the community at large and not on the individual. By acting in this manner he could not be accused of any partiality towards those who worked for him or those he treated.

In her description of the early months of the Theresienstadt ghetto, prior to the evacuation of the non-Jewish Czech population, Bondy writes,

Perhaps more than anyone else, Dr. Erich Munk, the former Youth-Aliyah physician who now headed the health services, was impatient for the Czechs to evacuate. At least he could open a nursery, set up homes for the blind and the elderly, add more clients.<sup>94</sup>

She describes how aspects of his character meant that he was prone to arguments with other members of the ghetto council. She describes him as, 'proud, meticulous, quick-witted, and endowed with a boundless capacity for work – a man whose reason rather than emotions lighted his way.' She adds that he 'sometimes came into fierce conflict with Edelstein, opposing, criticising and accusing.'<sup>95</sup>

When examining how Dr. Munk used or abused his position within the ghetto hierarchy, it is important to scrutinise how much information was available to him regarding the transports east. It is not clear how much Dr. Munk knew about the destination of the transports out of the ghetto, though he was sure that it was preferable to remain in Theresienstadt. He knew that once included in a transport himself he was unlikely to return to Theresienstadt. Dr. Munk was included on the final transport from Theresienstadt to Auschwitz which left the

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<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>94</sup> Bondy, *Elder of the Jews*, p.289.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*

ghetto on 28 October 1944. His wife Emily Schleissner recalls how she attempted to join him on this transport. She remembers,

I wanted to go with him but he knew more than I – he knew he wasn't to come back and he didn't want three people on his conscience as my parents would have to go. His mother had to go when he was sent.<sup>96</sup>

### 3.2.7 Deportations from Theresienstadt: January 1942 – February 1943.

Deportations out of Theresienstadt took place in several distinct phases between January 1942 and February 1943.<sup>97</sup> It is necessary to examine the role that the Jewish leaders were forced to play in the deportation process – a role that guaranteed controversy.<sup>98</sup> The leaders continued to occupy a difficult and precarious position in the deportation process until the third Jewish Self-Administration by which time the Nazi officials played a more active part.

Section F of the Department for Internal Administration, the Transport Service, was responsible for arrival and departure of all prisoners.<sup>99</sup> The staff of section F was responsible for drawing up lists of prisoners to be transported as well as sifting through letters from prisoners and heads of department and compiling exemption lists. The nature of their work meant that the transport orderlies and all the staff of section F were among the last prisoners deported

<sup>96</sup> USHMM: RG – 50 – 030.344, Emily Schleissner.

<sup>97</sup> See final section of Chapter Two on the history of Theresienstadt for all statistics relating to these deportations.

<sup>98</sup> For information on the deportation process out of Theresienstadt see: Adler, *Theresienstadt*, Chapter 9, 'Der Transport', pp. 264-292, and pp. 689-702; Lederer, *Ghetto Theresienstadt*, Chapters 3, 4, and 5. pp.35-88; Troller, *Theresienstadt*, Chapter 2 pp.7-20 and Chapter 5 pp.46-52; Bondy, *Elder of the Jews*, Chapters 26-31, pp.360-428; Bondy, 'Women in Theresienstadt and the Family Camp in Birkenau', In: Ofer and Weitzman, eds. *Women in the Holocaust*, pp.310-327. For all information on transports to Theresienstadt from Czechoslovakia see: Terezín Initiative, *Terezinská Pamětní Kniha / Terezín Memorial Books*, volumes 1 and 11. (Prague: Terezinská Iniciativa, 1995); Miroslav Karny, ed. *Terezín Memorial Book*. For information on transports from Germany to Theresienstadt see: *Theresienstädter Gedenkbuch*, (Prague: Institut Theresienstädter Initiativ, 2000); for transports from Austria to Theresienstadt see: George Weiss, ed. *Totenbuch Theresienstadt – Deportierte Aus Österreich*. (Vienna: Jüdischer Komitee für Theresienstadt, 1971).

<sup>99</sup> Although initially an important department, once the administration had been up and running for a few months, much of its work was taken over by the Central Secretariat.

from Theresienstadt to Auschwitz in October 1944. The threat of deportation east was a constant fear that overshadowed everything else in Theresienstadt, both for the community as a whole and for the Jewish leaders and administrative staff. Prisoners' hopes of spending the war within Theresienstadt were dashed as early as 9 January 1942 when, only seven weeks after the arrival of transport 'AK I' from Prague, the first transport left Theresienstadt for Riga.<sup>100</sup> This transport marked the beginning of six months of deportations out of the ghetto which were disastrous for the Czech community. The departure of this transport fundamentally changed the ghetto, banishing any illusions that the Jewish Self-Administration had of creating a 'safe' environment for their Protectorate communities. Eva Roubicková's ghetto diary captures the sense of fear that is present in many of the testimonies of those awaiting their fate – feelings that are also present in the reports of the Jewish leadership.<sup>101</sup> On 4 January 1942 she wrote, 'Everybody's upset. A transport is leaving for Poland. Will we be in it? It's horrible. We thought we'd be secure here, but from now on it'll be exactly the way it was in Prague.'<sup>102</sup> Six days later she records how,

Another transport is going to Poland. Nobody knows for sure where ... Some people say Riga, others say Josepfstadt. Only two old ladies from our transport were included. One of them started screaming hysterically. It's a disaster.<sup>103</sup>

This second transport which left Theresienstadt for Riga on 15 January 1942 contained 1,000 people, of which 15 survived. Roubicková explains how last minute substitutions were made to the transports. 'This morning they summoned an additional fifty women to the transport, because lots of the Protectorate

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<sup>100</sup> This first transport out of Theresienstadt on 9.01.42, transport 'O', contained 1000 people who were sent to Riga. (102 survivors).

<sup>101</sup> For a detailed discussion of how the deportation process was experienced by the adult population see Chapter Four of this thesis. For the deportation of the children out of the ghetto see Chapter Five.

<sup>102</sup> Roubicková, *We're Alive and Life Goes On*, p.20.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid*, p.21.

children were pulled out again.'<sup>104</sup> These exemptions were a crucial part of the deportation process. According to Troller,

The concept of 'protection', at times secured through (one's position) in the work force, was of such paramount importance for all of us that it overshadowed any other considerations.<sup>105</sup>

Protection and privilege were weapons in the fight to avoid transportation. Troller explains, 'To escape that fate one had to do everything to be included in the privileged group of the "protected".'<sup>106</sup> Lederer concludes that Theresienstadt was a class bound society. He writes,

While in most societies wealth is the source of privilege, in Theresienstadt privilege was based on two factors: one, as in most societies, was a privileged economic position (namely the possession of or access to extra rations), and the other exemption from deportation.<sup>107</sup>

Deportation was a complex problem for the Jewish leaders. As in all areas of ghetto life, the process was anything but random and was carried out according to an established hierarchy of authority, power and responsibility. Organising a transport departure was a multi-staged process. Having received their orders from Prague, the *Kommandantur* in Theresienstadt would inform Edelstein that a transport was to leave the ghetto in approximately three days. He would be informed as to the number of prisoners to be included and possibly their age range. It is fundamental to understand that, from these instructions, it was left up to the Jewish leaders to compile the deportation lists. They often found themselves having to 'bargain' with the SS over the number and ages of deportees. 'Compromises' could be struck – numbers could be reduced if the ages of the prisoners included were altered, or if, for example, only the sick travelled

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<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>105</sup> Troller, *Theresienstadt*, p.34.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, p.36.

<sup>107</sup> Lederer, *Ghetto Theresienstadt*, p.83.

east.<sup>108</sup> Once the Council of Elders had received the orders from the SS they immediately set about drawing up possible lists. They would sit for hours with a list of the entire population in front of them and begin the impossible task of deciding who should go and who stay. At this stage of the process, the Council would be joined by the heads of all departments who would present their cases for removing their most skilled workers and who would defend their protection lists before the selection committee. Troller describes the atmosphere during the compilation of the lists,

When the notice with the final assignment arrived, they would mobilize all their powers of influence and connections to smuggle a letter to a member of the selection committee of the Council of Elders, who met throughout the night, begging them desperately to remove them or a mother, sister, or child from the list. Single individuals had little chance to escape transports.<sup>109</sup>

Troller adds, 'No one envies the Council of Elders their power over life and death. We know they spend sleepless nights, burdened by the responsibility to make impartial selections.'<sup>110</sup>

Asked whether the Jewish leaders were responsible for the transports, Emily Schleissner who worked in the transport office says, 'Yes and no. The order came from the Germans – on this day, 1,000 Jews have to go east. 1,000 Jews had to go no matter what.'<sup>111</sup> Asked who compiled the transport lists, she replies, 'The Jews really. But there were instructions – everybody over 55 years or under 25 years or everybody who had done this work. There were always bad feelings amongst the Jews.'<sup>112</sup> Troller explains how the Nazis,

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<sup>108</sup> Similar 'deals' were made in other ghettos: see case of Chaim Rumkoswki in the Lodz Ghetto. On 4.09.42 Rumkowski was informed that he could reduce the numbers on a deportation east only on the condition that those included were children under the age of ten. For transcript of Rumkowski's speech see: Alan Adelson and Robert Lapidus, eds. *Lodz Ghetto – Inside a Community Under Siege* (New York: Penguin, 1989), pp. 328-331. For decisions made in the Theresienstadt ghetto over the deportation of children see the role of Gonda Redlich and Fredy Hirsch in Chapter Five.

<sup>109</sup> Troller, *Theresienstadt*, p.40.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid*, p.48.

<sup>111</sup> USHMM: RG – 50 – 030.344, Emily Schleissner.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid*.



put the burden of selection on the Jews themselves; to select their own coreligionists, relatives and friends. In the end this unbearable, desperate, cynical burden destroyed the community leaders who were forced to make the selections.<sup>113</sup>

Edelstein was forced into a prominent position of responsibility for the compilation of the deportation lists. Trude Groag writes, 'Even [Edelstein] suffered the trauma of the transports. He probably knew that even he, the Jewish head of the camp, would also get his turn.'<sup>114</sup>

### 3.3 Section Two – Paul Eppstein and The Second Jewish Self-Administration

#### 3.3.1 The Changes Made to the Jewish Leadership of the Ghetto:

While the huge influx of German and Austrian Jews into Theresienstadt during the summer of 1942 had dramatically changed the composition of the ghetto, the Jewish council had remained the same.<sup>115</sup> It continued to reflect the old face of the ghetto with relatively young Protectorate Zionists filling the main positions. Originally the majority of the ghetto population had consisted of Protectorate Jews but by January 1943 it was already half-Czech and half-German and Austrian. Later the balance would shift again, moving in favour of the German and Austrian communities. Yet, while the balance of the population in terms of nationality now swung precariously between the Jews from the old Reich and those from the Protectorate, the leadership remained Czech. Understandably about half the population felt that their politics and cultural identity were not fairly represented by their leaders. Change was essential, as Lederer notes:

Twice, in October 1942 and in January 1943, the Jewish camp administration was reorganised, partly in order to register the

<sup>113</sup> Troller, *Theresienstadt*, p.40.

<sup>114</sup> Groag, in Gurewitsch, *Mothers, Sisters, Resisters*, p.249. Groag was right as Edelstein would be deported to Auschwitz where he was sentenced to death on 20.06.44.

<sup>115</sup> See Chapter Four of this thesis for the interaction of the Czech, Austrian and German communities.

changed national structure of the population, and partly owing to external influences.<sup>116</sup>

This first change, announced in Daily Order, number 227, released on 3 October 1942, reshuffled the entire composition of the council to incorporate several German and Austrian Jews.<sup>117</sup> While Edelstein from Prague remained Jewish Elder, Otto Zucker from Prague was replaced with Heinrich Stahl from Berlin. Dr Erich Munk, Dr. Leo Janowitz, Dr. Egon Popper, Julius Grünberger and Karel Schliesser remained in place but Dr. Rudolf Bergman, Leo Hess, Ervin Elbert, Dr. Erich Klapp and Jiri Vogel were replaced by Dr. Desider Friedman, Dr. Leopold Neuhaus, Karl Stahl, Dr. Hermann Strauss and Robert Stricker.

On 27 January 1943, a second and more dramatic change was announced by SS Major Möhse:

Senior Jewish Officials from Berlin, Vienna and Prague will arrive in Theresienstadt tomorrow. It is planned to set up a new Ghetto. It had been proposed that Edelstein should be head of the new Ghetto. The whole matter is being given active consideration. For the present Theresienstadt will be run by a board of three: Dr. Eppstein, Dr. Löwenherz and Edelstein. Dr. Eppstein will be head of this board.<sup>118</sup>

Dr. Paul Eppstein arrived from Berlin on 26 January 1943 on transport I/86 which contained one hundred people. Gonda Redlich, head of the Youth Welfare Department recorded this event in his diary. 'Eppstein arrived today, the head of the *Reichsvereinigung* [Association of Jews in Germany] It's possible he will be appointed Elder of the Jews.'<sup>119</sup> Three days later he reported that the change had taken place. 'The change in ghetto leadership has brought great confusion. Today they decided that Murmelstein would take Zucker's place. Edelstein would be second, Murmelstein third.'<sup>120</sup>

<sup>116</sup> Lederer, *Ghetto Theresienstadt*, p.41.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>118</sup> Lederer, *Ghetto Theresienstadt*, p.42.

<sup>119</sup> Friedman, ed. *The Terezín Diary of Gonda Redlich*, p.99.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*

Eichmann was responsible for some of the more important changes made to Theresienstadt's leadership.<sup>121</sup> On 27 January 1943, Eichmann wrote to Edelstein as follows,

Eichmann expresses his recognition to Jacob Edelstein, the senior Jewish representative, for his work, and trusts that the announced change will not be perceived by him as a slight ... In the light of this situation, a new management is to be appointed for Theresienstadt, vis, a triumvirate consisting of Eppstein, Löwenherz and Edelstein.<sup>122</sup>

Asked by his trial lawyers if this in fact constituted a dismissal for Edelstein, Eichmann replied, 'No, it was not a demotion; it was putting him on the same footing as Löwenherz and the other Jewish ex-officials from Berlin.'<sup>123</sup> In reality, it was a demotion. Previously Edelstein had been the sole Jewish Elder in the ghetto and had run Theresienstadt with the support of Zucker. He now had to share his position with two other men from Berlin, and later act as deputy elder in Eppstein's administration. Asked whether his letter caused difficulties between him and Edelstein, Eichmann declared, 'No, the relationship was not a strained one.'<sup>124</sup>

The decision to replace Edelstein with Eppstein from Berlin was fundamental; the ghetto would now be run by a German Jew, and the Protectorate community no longer held sway on the Jewish council. On 31 January 1942, the council confirmed that Eppstein had been appointed leader and Dr. Murmelstein from Vienna and former leader Edelstein from Prague would act as his deputies. The three most prominent positions in the Jewish leadership were now filled by a German, an Austrian and a Czech Jew.

<sup>121</sup> For Eichmann's role in Theresienstadt see: *The Trial of Adolf Eichmann*, pp.758-759, 788-789, 1466-1467, 1469-1470, 1732, 2008, 2166, 2171, 2231, 2290, 2307, 2313-2314, 2368.

Volumes 2-5. These documents as well as the transcript of the trial also back up various testimonies which testify to Eichmann's occasional presence in the ghetto.

<sup>122</sup> *The Trial of Adolf Eichmann*, Volume 4, document: 1239 / T/852 / t/37(304), p.1468.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, p.1469.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*

### 3.3.2 The Second Jewish Council of Elders.

This section will examine how the administration of Paul Eppstein from Berlin differed from that of Jakob Edelstein from Prague. It will also ask to what extent those differences can be explored by reference to the different characters of the two men and their leadership styles. When examining the new additions to the Council of Elders in January 1943, Lederer writes,

The weakest personage among these men was Dr. Eppstein ... In his contacts with the German officers Eppstein lacked Edelstein's ready wit or Zucker's stubbornness. Perhaps his moral fibre had suffered through imprisonment and the brutal treatment by the German police to which he had been subjected before his deportation to Theresienstadt. He seemed to lack courage, and meekly complied with all orders from HQ.<sup>125</sup>

This harsh description of Eppstein needs to be examined alongside other testimonies and documents from both Czech and German prisoners to get a more balanced opinion of Eppstein and his administration.

Once the changes to the council had been made, the Czech Jews rallied behind Edelstein and Zucker while the German and Austrian communities gave their full support to Eppstein and Marmelstein. In relation to the changes, Bondy writes, 'German Jews were [now] of a higher status than Protectorate Jews. Ghetto veterans understood the significance: their existence was in danger.'<sup>126</sup> The real significance of the changes and their relevance to the ghetto community lay not only in the day-to-day decisions of the council and the allocation of food and living quarters, but in the construction of transport lists. The Protectorate Jews now felt that they were more susceptible to being transported. This feeling was particularly dominant among the Czech Jews who had arrived in Theresienstadt in November and December 1941. They now felt as though their 'luck' had run out and that their deportation was fast approaching. Their worst

<sup>125</sup> Lederer, *Ghetto Theresienstadt*, p.44.

<sup>126</sup> Bondy, *Elder of the Jews*, p.354.

fears were realised later that year when Paul Eppstein had to oversee mass transports of Czech Jewry to the Czech family camp in Auschwitz-Birkenau.<sup>127</sup>

Throughout the early months of 1943 Gonda Redlich continued to comment in his diary on the changes in leadership, describing not only his feelings but those of the Protectorate community. On 30 January 1943 he wrote,

A bombshell. A directive to change the leadership. Eppstein, Löwenherz, Edelstein. Today a change: Eppstein, Edelstein and Murmelstein ... Never were Edelstein and Zucker as popular as today ... I'm not enthusiastic about these changes.<sup>128</sup>

Vera Schiff records how as,

[Her] family sustained one disastrous blow after another, the camp underwent a few major shake-ups. The most important perhaps was the appointment of Dr. Paul Eppstein as the Elder of the Jews. This piece of information shook us up badly, but in its wake came reassurances by Dr. Tarjan that Edelstein remained in the Council as Eppstein's first deputy. The lifeline of the *Schutzliste* remained in place.<sup>129</sup>

The *Schutzliste* was the all important protection list, which could provide a vital form of insurance against deportation – but also a fragile one. Schiff's family was protected by Dr. Tarjan, whose place in the ghetto was in turn dependant on Dr Erich Munk of the Health Department, who relied on the security of Edelstein. This hierarchy of protection was not uncommon in the ghetto and the removal of a department leader or key administrative figure could topple an entire chain of protected prisoners and ensure their inclusion in the next transport east.

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<sup>127</sup> See later deportation section in this chapter. For community experiences of the deportations see Chapter Four of this thesis.

<sup>128</sup> Friedman, ed. *The Terezin Diary of Gonda Redlich*, p.100. The 'Prominent' from Prague refer to those Czech Jews who for reasons chosen by the Nazis had been allowed to remain in Prague until this point.

<sup>129</sup> Schiff, *Theresienstadt*, p.66. Dr. Tarjan who Schiff mentions in her testimony was the head doctor in the Hohenelber barracks. See reference to Tarjan as head of the H. barracks in a letter from Dr. Erich Munk head of the ghetto health department to the Jewish Council, dated, 13.5.42. This letter is reprinted in, Adler, *Die Verheimlichte Wahrheit*, p.217.

According to Bondy, Edelstein was not only hurt by his dismissal but seriously worried about his successor's abilities. Bondy writes, 'When Harry Tressler asked him why he was so worried, he said that he did not trust Eppstein's staying power. "I know the man. It's a disaster for the ghetto."'<sup>130</sup> Although Bondy's natural bias is towards Edelstein, she is revealing about the differences between the two leaders' management styles and how they coped with Nazi orders. She writes,

In many respects, Eppstein was the complete antithesis of Edelstein: a son of Western culture, highly educated in philosophy, sociology, and political economics...Little by little in the wake of the emigration and liquidation of the Jewish leadership, Eppstein became the central figure in Jewish life.<sup>131</sup>

She continues, 'Edelstein liked having people around him; Eppstein was by nature a loner, reticent, unreceptive.'<sup>132</sup> Bondy concludes by describing the two men's behaviour towards the SS.

Edelstein showed courage and resourcefulness, and did not hesitate to falsify records, quietly sabotage German instructions, lie. Eppstein was by nature a man of truth, whether because of his Prussian correctness would not let him lie, even to the SS, or because he lacked the necessary impudence.<sup>133</sup>

Through the various testimonies of prisoners, the records of the Jewish council and the transcript of the Eichmann trial, it is possible to identify the changes in Nazi thinking behind the appointment of the ghetto elders. On 1 February 1943, Redlich commented on Eppstein's appointment, writing, 'The Germans sent the different "leaders" here only to cause quarrels and confusion in the ghetto.

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<sup>130</sup> Bondy, *Elder of the Jews*, p.354.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid*, p.355.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid*. This is an important comment and should be remembered when examining the role played by Eppstein during the visits made to the ghetto by the International Red Cross in 1944.

Perhaps they think if the situation continues without rancor or strife it might pose a danger to them.<sup>134</sup>

The first leader of the ghetto had to be someone the Protectorate Jewish community trusted, who was familiar to them from Prague and who they would follow to Theresienstadt. Edelstein fitted the bill. The second leader would ideally be a German or an Austrian due to the mass arrivals of Jews from the old Reich during the summer of 1942, and also someone who could be presented to the outside world, as pressure was put on the Nazis to allow inspections of the ghetto. This new leader had to be an efficient administrator and a credible 'president' or 'mayor' of the Jewish Old-Age Spa – *Theresienbad*. The Nazis chose Paul Eppstein to fulfil this new function.

### 3.3.3 The Second Jewish Council and the Jewish Police Force.

The changes made to the Council of Elders not only affected the ghetto population as a whole but also created unease and anxiety between the departments of the internal administration. Discord emerged between the Council of Elders and the Ghetto Police. Bondy explains, 'Contrary to German expectations, most of the tensions did not derive from the relationship between Eppstein and Edelstein ... but between Eppstein and Löwenstein.'<sup>135</sup> Bondy's view is that this clash occurred because, 'They were both rigid, Prussian in nature, and ambitious for authority.'<sup>136</sup> She continues,

When Löwenstein asked the people who did strenuous physical work to forgo their added food rations at least once a week in favor of the constantly hungry elderly, he did so behind Eppstein's back and incurred his anger. Eppstein felt that Löwenstein had overstepped his authority to the detriment of the division of labor, while Löwenstein accused Eppstein of trying to shift responsibility for the elderly onto German shoulders.<sup>137</sup>

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<sup>134</sup> Friedman, ed. *Terezín Diary of Gonda Redlich*, p.100.

<sup>135</sup> Bondy, *Elder of the Jews*, p.358.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.* This was also going against the system that Edelstein has put in place which linked prisoners' jobs to the amount of food they received.

Löwenstein received universal criticism for his running of the Police Force exacerbating the tension between him and Eppstein. The Berlin authorities also feared that Löwenstein was preparing a Jewish paramilitary force capable of initiating an uprising. This concern first arose after Löwenstein invited the SS men billeted in Theresienstadt to witness a demonstration by his police force.

Troller writes,

They came, were amazed, turned pale, and the next morning there appeared the following notation in the daily orders: 'Drilling, marching, or any kind of formation exercise are strictly forbidden.'<sup>138</sup>

Soon after this display, Löwenstein was removed from his position and sentenced to three months imprisonment in the Small Fortress.<sup>139</sup> The ghetto guard was disbanded and replaced by a group of men over 45 who were viewed as non-threatening by the SS. On his release from the Small Fortress, Löwenstein was placed in the 'prominent' house.<sup>140</sup> On 28 February 1943, Gonda Redlich wrote,

A dispute with the head of the Jewish police [Löwenstein]. He interferes everywhere. He wants to oversee every department of the ghetto. The ghetto administration does not block him and he thinks he's all powerful.<sup>141</sup>

### 3.3.4 The *Stadtverschönerung*, The Red Cross and Transports east:

Himmler's directive of 16 February 1943, which called a halt to the deportations out of Theresienstadt, signalled the start of the city beautification project.<sup>142</sup> From 1 May 1943 the *Kommandantur* in Theresienstadt ordered that

<sup>138</sup> Troller, *Theresienstadt*, p.65.

<sup>139</sup> Although the tension between the ghetto police and the Jewish council had existed primarily between Löwenstein and Eppstein, it was Edelstein who Löwenstein blamed for his demise. Löwenstein blamed Edelstein for influencing the SS and for intimating to them that he was a threatening force.

<sup>140</sup> See earlier section on housing in the ghetto.

<sup>141</sup> Friedman, ed. *The Terezin Diary of Gonda Redlich*, p.105.

<sup>142</sup> When the deportations ceased in February 1943 the ghetto population stood at 44,672. During the year 1943, 15,126 people arrived in the ghetto while 12,696 died there.

street names replace numbers, that a ghetto bank be opened, as well as a coffee house complete with jazz band, and shops selling the personal belongings of inhabitants stolen months before.<sup>143</sup> L and Q streets [which had previously been numbered 1 – 6] now became Lake Street and Upland Street. Miroslav Karny writes,

There was no lake anywhere, the Terezín park was out of bounds to the prisoners, and they could only see the mountains very far away beyond the walls of the ghetto; to call any Terezín street Spa St. or Huntsman St. was a cruel mockery for the prisoners.<sup>144</sup>

Lederer explores the reasons behind the renaming:

Anyone sending a letter from abroad to such an address would be taken in, and this was an important consideration, since it had become possible to send letters from abroad to Theresienstadt through the good services of the Red Cross.<sup>145</sup>

By 21 April 1943 the ghetto bank was fully functioning with a cash reserve of 53 million *Kronen* (ghetto Crowns).<sup>146</sup> The bank played an extraordinary role in the history of the ghetto and a key part in the city beautification project. It was intended to show the outside world that Theresienstadt had its own flourishing economy, that the Jews were not only allowed to have jobs but also received cash which could be paid into personal bank accounts. According to one prisoner, 'Theresienstadt had its own money (real money was forbidden) and it was even possible to buy something for this as the goods of people who died came to the community.'<sup>147</sup>

Commandant Anton Burger showed a distinct preference for Eppstein over Edelstein, causing Eppstein's prominence as the primary ghetto elder to grow. Although the deportations out of the ghetto ceased, transports from Prague

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<sup>143</sup> See Chapter Six on the cultural life of the ghetto for information on the café and jazz band.

<sup>144</sup> Karny, *Terezín Memorial Book*, p.68.

<sup>145</sup> Lederer, *Ghetto Theresienstadt*, p.91.

<sup>146</sup> Adler, *Theresienstadt*, p.696.

<sup>147</sup> YVA: 0.33 / 711.

and other Protectorate towns continued to arrive in Theresienstadt. Between February and September 1943 no transports left the ghetto but 18 transports arrived with a total of 3,846 people.<sup>148</sup> Theresienstadt was slowly reaching bursting point. On 28 July 1943, the housing responsibilities of the ghetto elders were further complicated when the Nazis ordered the evacuation of the Sudeten barracks which meant that approximately 6,000 people had to be immediately rehoused. The barracks were to be cleaned and repainted so that they could be used by the Germans as an archive.<sup>149</sup>

### 3.3.5 Deportations Under Eppstein – Autumn and Winter 1943

By July 1943, the Germans recognised that the ghetto was suffering an accommodation crisis which could trigger an epidemic. They were quick to act. On 6 September 1943, 5,000 people were deported to Auschwitz in a *Arbeitseinsatz* ('work' transport) primarily made up of Czech Jews. There were three main reasons behind the mass deportation of the Czech community during September and December 1943. First, they would look out of place in the 'old-age spa town' which was meant for the Jews from the Old Reich. Secondly, the Germans had begun to have serious reservations over the size of the population in the ghetto. With the memory of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising fresh in their minds, the Nazis feared a Czech revolt.<sup>150</sup> Finally, the International Committee of the Red Cross had been informed that, in addition to viewing Theresienstadt, they would be allowed to tour one labour camp. A suitable labour camp was

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<sup>148</sup> For statistics on the Protectorate transports to Theresienstadt between February 1943 and October 1943 see: Karny, ed. *Terezín Memorial Book*, p.105.

<sup>149</sup> Trucks full of German documents arrived in the ghetto and were housed in the barracks. These trucks contained the archive of the Central Office for Reich Security which had been moved from Berlin to avoid allied bombing. It was decided that the documents would be safe in the military barracks at Theresienstadt.

<sup>150</sup> The Warsaw Ghetto Uprising took place between 19 April and 16 May, 1943. For information on the uprising see: Israel Gutman, *The Warsaw Ghetto Uprising* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1994); Elaine Landau, *The Warsaw Ghetto Uprising* (New York: New Discovery Books, 1992); Yitzak Zuckerman and Barbara Harshaw, *A Surplus of Memory: Chronicle of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).

constructed within the confines of Auschwitz-Birkenau to be filled with transportees from Theresienstadt.<sup>151</sup>

The September transport came as a traumatic blow for two reasons: first, because of its sheer size, and, secondly, because of its effect on the structure of the ghetto population and the balance of power. Commandant Burger used this mass deportation of Czech Jews not only to free up much needed space in the ghetto but also to undermine the position of Edelstein and to eradicate any remaining authority he possessed. Included in the transports east was Leo Janowitz, a staunch Edelstein supporter and a prominent member of the original ghetto council. Just prior to deportation, Janowitz was acting as the head of the Central Secretariat, a pivotal position in the ghetto administration. Also included in the December transports were several members of the Labour and Economic departments. Burger's decision can be seen as a direct strike against Edelstein, who saw the Labour department as central to his administration and had placed the majority of his faithful workers in key positions within it. The fact that Burger included members of 'AK I' and 'AK II' in the September 6 transport undermined the universal belief promoted by Edelstein that the men of the *Aufbau* units together with their families were exempt from transports.<sup>152</sup>

### 3.3.6 The Theresienstadt Census and the Downfall of Edelstein

On 11 November 1943 during the mass transports to Auschwitz-Birkenau the *Kommandantur* in Theresienstadt ordered that a census take place. This census was no simple exercise in demography, but was closely connected to Nazi perceptions that their authority in the ghetto had weakened. The events that prompted the census also led to the downfall and death of Edelstein.

The deportation statistics which were kept by the SS did not tally with those kept by the Transport Office of the Jewish Council. The numbers differed for two reasons: first, there had been several escapes from the ghetto which the

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<sup>151</sup> See information on the deportation of Fredy Hirsch and the ghetto children to camp B11b in Chapter Five.

<sup>152</sup> Those included in the September and December transports were deported to Auschwitz and housed in what became known as the Terezín family camp, camp B11b.

Jewish council had not reported, and, secondly, the council had failed to report the death of several inmates. They had left the names of the escapees on the ghetto population lists in order not to attract attention to the escapes and they had left the deaths unreported so that they could include their names on the transport lists, thus freeing a few living prisoners. The hectic conditions present at the departure of all transports meant that it was impossible for the SS to carry out an exact count and in this manner a few people could be saved from each transport.

In November 1943, having identified the discrepancies, Burger was swift to arrest Edelstein whom he viewed as a troublemaker. He was also able to show his predecessor, Commandant Seidl, in a poor light for failing to exert control over Edelstein's administration. Having discovered the miscalculations, the SS called the census to enable them to establish a comprehensive count of the ghetto population. On 10 November 1943, Redlich wrote, 'They imprisoned Yaakov. Tomorrow there is to be a great census. There is a connection between these occurrences and the great tension that exists in the ghetto.'<sup>153</sup> An unidentified Yad Vashem document, reads,

Never can the participants in this story forget the Terezin census of November 11, 1943. On the eve of this event we learned that the following day the whole ghetto would gather in the Bohusovice Hollow where the census would take place ... At half past ten, at last, the caravan set out.<sup>154</sup>

The prisoners were escorted to a huge open area of farmland on the outskirts of Theresienstadt where they were guarded by the SS and all the Czech gendarmes. During December 1943 Edelstein was deported to Auschwitz where he was sentenced to death on 20 June 1944. He was shot after being forced to witness the execution of his wife and child.<sup>155</sup>

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<sup>153</sup> Friedman, ed. *The Terezin Diary of Gonda Redlich*, p.134.

<sup>154</sup> YVA: loose document in 0.64 series. 'Not identified', possibly extracts from one of the ghetto magazines. Extract on the November 1943 census, entitled, *A Bit of History*. Noviny Bergmann.

<sup>155</sup> For the death of Edelstein and family see: Bondy, *Elder of the Jews*, p.441-442. For the final letters written by Edelstein during 1944 and his correspondence with Dr. Erich Munk of the Health Department see: Miroslav Kárný, 'Jakob Edelstein's Letzte Briefe.' In: Kárný, ed. *Theresienstädter Studien und Dokumente* 3 (1997), pp.216-229.

### 3.3.7 The *Stadtverschönerung* Proper: January – June 1944

In February 1944, Karl Rahm became the third and final commandant of the Theresienstadt ghetto, replacing Burger. Rahm, who was brought in to oversee the Red Cross visits to Theresienstadt during 1944, openly disliked the German Jews in general and Eppstein in particular. Rahm was later responsible for appointing a fellow Austrian, Rabbi Benjamin Murmelstein, as Eppstein's successor.

The structural changes made to the face of the ghetto during 1943 were not the only changes that took place in preparation for the Red Cross visits. On the 15 April 1944 it was announced that the *Order of the Day* would henceforth be known as the *Bulletin of the Jewish Administration of Theresienstadt*. On 21 April 1944 the *Bulletin* announced,

All whom it may concern are again reminded that compulsory saluting has been abolished. It is forbidden to shout 'attention' and to rise on the arrival of visitors; no notice should be taken of them and work should continue.<sup>156</sup>

This was in direct contradiction to the daily order of 30 September 1942 which had declared, 'Prisoners must salute all members of HQ, all uniformed Germans and all gendarmes by raising their cap and bowing.'<sup>157</sup>

Although changes had been made to the ghetto under the leadership of Burger during the summer of 1943, it was under Rahm that the *Stadtverschönerung* really took off. Lederer writes, 'While Burger had merely ordered that the park near the square should be improved, Rahm, soon after his arrival, inspected the town from end to end and then issued detailed orders.'<sup>158</sup> Golly D who was imprisoned in Theresienstadt during the *Stadtverschönerung*

<sup>156</sup> Lederer, *Ghetto Theresienstadt*, p.109.

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>158</sup> Lederer, *Ghetto Theresienstadt*, p.110.

describes how the ghetto, ‘received a face-lift, so to speak. Everything was scrubbed and cleaned, and we received extra ration of food.’<sup>159</sup>

Rahm’s most important decision was to devise the Red Cross Commission’s route through the ghetto. Once this had been agreed, the necessary changes could be made to the relevant streets and buildings. Rahm saw no need to ‘beautify’ the whole ghetto, only those areas which the Commission would pass through. Gerda Haas writes, ‘We were suddenly involved in sowing grass and painting flowers – and painting the houses and sewing curtains to put into only the downstairs where the commission would walk by.’<sup>160</sup> Throughout April and May 1944, Rahm issued orders for the cleaning and painting of all the buildings on the proposed route, made sure that all the gardens were planted, built a playground for the children, and designed a mock school complete with a sign that read, ‘closed during holidays.’ He also saw to it that the ghetto hospitals were cleaned, the nursing staff were presented with new uniforms and the shops were fully stocked. On 3 May 1944 Rahm ordered that the ghetto cemetery and mortuary be ‘beautified’ and that, ‘The road leading from the gate of the mortuary to the building proper will also be bordered with flower beds.’<sup>161</sup>

Although Rahm was content with the changes that were taking place in the ghetto, he was aware of one remaining problem: the ghetto was too crowded to be passed off as an old-age home or spa town. Therefore, in May 1944, Eppstein was given the order to prepare 7,500 people for deportation east. These mass transports were to include people from all areas of ghetto society regardless of age, political persuasion and nationality. Lederer writes how, ‘Day and night the Central Secretariat and the Transport Commission sorted index cards, all the time besieged by a desperate crowd.’<sup>162</sup> A large number of children were to be deported in these transports including all the orphans from the ghetto. It was

<sup>159</sup> Golly D. In: Greene and Kumar, eds. *Witness – Voices from the Holocaust* (New York: The Free Press, 2000), p.79.

<sup>160</sup> USHMM: RG – 50 – 030.334, Gerda Haas.

<sup>161</sup> Lederer, *Ghetto Theresienstadt*, p.111.

<sup>162</sup> *Ibid*, p.112.

feared that if they remained in Theresienstadt, the Red Cross commission might ask difficult questions about their parents' whereabouts.

The first two transports left on 15 and 16 May 1944, each containing 2,500 people.<sup>163</sup> The lists for the first two transports had been compiled in the usual way by the Jewish leaders, without much interference from Commandant Rahm and his men. This was not the case as for the third transport. Rahm was adamant that he take part in the selections and several times he ordered that again council lists be revised. This caused unimaginable distress in the ghetto as whole families were torn apart and reunited several times before the final decisions were made. Lederer explains how Rahm,

summoned Eppstein, Zucker, Murnmelstein and other members of the Council of Elders to his presence and, standing in the middle of the courtyard, ordered the whole transport to form a queue and to march past him.<sup>164</sup>

While the Germans were busy preparing the ghetto for the Red Cross commission, Lederer writes that the, 'Council of Elders sought to exploit the German project for the real benefit of the prisoners.'<sup>165</sup> Although the Jewish leaders knew the reasons behind the embellishment project, they believed that the ghetto community should exploit the changes while they could. This however, placed them on the horns of a dilemma – while wanting the prisoners to enjoy the improved conditions in the ghetto, they did not want the reality of the ghetto to be hidden from the Red Cross.

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<sup>163</sup> Three transports left during May 1944 containing a total of 7,503 people. The first left on 15 May and contained 2,503 (119 survivors). The second left the following day on 16 May and contained 2,500 (5 survivors). The third May transport left on 18 and contained 2,500 (261 survivors). These three transports contained a total of: 511 children under the age of 14, 3,601 people between the ages of 15-60 and 3,391 people over the age of 61. The 7,501 people deported to from Theresienstadt to Auschwitz during May consisted of: 3,125 German Jews, 2,543 Czech Jews, 1,276 Austrian Jews and 559 Dutch Jews. For more on the transports leaving Theresienstadt see: Adler, *Theresienstadt*, Chapter 9, section 2. pp.282-292. Also see p. 699.

<sup>164</sup> Lederer, *Ghetto Theresienstadt*, p.113.

<sup>165</sup> *Ibid*, p.116.

### 3.3.8 The Red Cross Visit Theresienstadt

Dr. Maurice Rossel arrived in the Theresienstadt ghetto on behalf of the ICRC on the morning of 23 June 1944, together with representative of the Danish Red Cross.<sup>166</sup> Throughout his visit, Rossel was accompanied by the SS chief of police in the Protectorate, head of the *Sicherheits-Reichauptamt* (Security police) in Berlin, representatives of the Foreign ministry and representatives of the German Red Cross. He was never left alone in the same room as Dr. Paul Eppstein and was not allowed to talk to him without a formidable SS presence. He was only allowed to photograph certain areas of the ghetto and was refused access to the Small Fortress.

While they were escorted along the specially prepared route, the commission was shown the *Kommandantur* as well as the offices of the Jewish Self-Administration. They paused at the town square and admired the café before moving on to examine the ghetto bank. Inside the bank, the manager offered the distinguished visitors some cigarettes from his personal stash. Lederer describes this incident and adds, ‘What he did not tell them was that some months before their visit he had been arrested for illicit smoking and spent three months in prison for this crime.’<sup>167</sup> The Danish representatives were impressed by what they saw in the ghetto, particularly in the bank and later wrote in a report which they issued to the Danish Foreign Ministry, ‘Accommodation and food are free, and everybody gets a salary for their work. There is a special currency ...’<sup>168</sup> Once the tour reached the children’s homes, the visitors witnessed Rahm handing out packets of sardines to happy looking children who grimaced and exclaimed,

<sup>166</sup> WL: B G 59/12, Theresienstadt. B G 59 Theresienstadt is a sub series of their main document collection on Jews during the war: B G 59, Israélites. The ICRC has also compiled a compendium of their documents relating to Theresienstadt, edited by the ICRC in 1990. All details of Dr. Rossel’s visit are recorded in his report written for the ICRC dated, 26.06.44. Compendium document number 17. ICRC Archive document number: B G 59/ 12 Theresienstadt – Rossel Report. Representatives Hvass and Juel-Henningsen visited the ghetto with Rossel on 23.06.44.

<sup>167</sup> Lederer, *Theresienstadt*, p. 118. The commission was also not informed about the men who had been hanged in 1942 for smoking in the ghetto.

<sup>168</sup> YVA: 0.64/106. Report by Dr. Juel-Henningsen – Representative of the Danish Red Cross on visit made to the Theresienstadt ghetto on 23.06.44 for the Danish Foreign Ministry. Presented at a meeting at the Danish embassy in Stockholm on 19.07.44.

‘What, sardines again, Uncle Rahm.’<sup>169</sup> Trude Groag who worked as a nurse with children in the ghetto writes,

The whole spectacle was an act. Tragically, after the commission left, all the children were deported. The kindergarten was left vacant. We knew that something was bound to happen; you could feel it.<sup>170</sup>

The hypocritical and torturous treatment of the children during the visit was matched only by the treatment meted out to the Jewish Elder, Dr. Paul Eppstein. Throughout the day, a newly suited Eppstein, was driven about in a car by an SS man who opened the door for him and ‘obeyed his orders.’

Was the Red Cross fooled by the beautification of Theresienstadt?<sup>171</sup> When the ICRC questioned Dr. Rossel about his visit they demanded to know whether Theresienstadt was an *Endlager* (a final destination) or a transit camp, a way-station to Auschwitz. Rossel’s view was that, ‘Le camp de Theresienstadt est un ‘Endlager.’<sup>172</sup> On 19 July 1944, Rossel was asked by Jean-Etienne Schwarzenberg, head of the ICRC Special Assistance Division, whether he knew anything about 80,000 people who had been imprisoned in Theresienstadt but had since been deported to Auschwitz. The queries on this point continued but without effect.<sup>173</sup>

### 3.3.9 The Final Months of Eppstein’s Administration: July – September 1944

The autumn of 1944 was one of the most traumatic periods in the ghetto’s history as it witnessed not only further changes to the Jewish leadership but also mass deportations to Auschwitz. On 23 September, the *Kommandantur* issued the

<sup>169</sup> Lederer, *Ghetto Theresienstadt*, p.118. For information on the children’s homes see Chapter Five and the work of Redlich and Hirsch.

<sup>170</sup> Groag, in Gurewitsch, *Mothers, Sisters, Resisters*, p.252.

<sup>171</sup> For another perspective on how the Red Cross viewed the ghetto see the testimony of Commandant Rahm see: *The Trial of Adolf Eichmann*, Volume 2, session 45, pp.804-805.

<sup>171</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>172</sup> WL: B G 59 / 12. Report by Maurice Rossel, 26.06.44.

<sup>173</sup> For more information on whether Theresienstadt was viewed as an *Endlager* see Dr. Rossel’s report and the post visit correspondence between Rossel and Schwarzenberg. ICRC compendium, documents 20 and 21.

Jewish council with orders to compile transport lists of 5,000 people. Under the guise of putting together work transports in order to aid the war effort, the order read,

Hence it has been decided that 2,500 able-bodied men will leave Theresienstadt for this purpose on the morning of Tuesday 26 September, to be followed by the same number of able-bodied men on Wednesday, the 27 September. They will set up a new Labour camp under the direction of Otto Zucker.<sup>174</sup>

The Czech community would make up the majority of these transports as the Germans still feared the threat of rebellion. Since Edelstein's departure from the ghetto, Otto Zucker had been the recognised leader of the Czech community so, together with Karel Schliessner, he was included in the transport which left Theresienstadt for Auschwitz on 28 September 1944.<sup>175</sup> Zucker was told that as transport leader he could occupy his own carriage. He refused this 'privilege', preferring to travel with everyone else.

The day after Zucker's departure a second transport left for Auschwitz containing 1,500 men, of which 76 survived. All the survivors were Protectorate Jews as they were considerably younger than the transported Austrian and German Jews and were therefore more likely to be chosen for a work detail in Auschwitz. The Austrian and German elderly were killed on arrival. According to Lederer, 'The order that 5,000 men out of a total male population of 11,804 were to be deported, left no family unaffected and that meant that very few of the young men would remain in Theresienstadt.'<sup>176</sup>

These September transports were only the beginning of the Autumn 1944 mass transports to Auschwitz. But the later transports would be organised under a new Jewish Self-Administration. Shortly after the departure of the 27 September transport, Eppstein was ordered to the *Kommandantur*. He never returned. Having

<sup>174</sup> Lederer, *Ghetto Theresienstadt*, p.146.

<sup>175</sup> In September 1944 the population stood at 29,481. This transport contained 2,500 people of which 371 survived. The survivors of this transport were all Protectorate Jews. Adler, *Theresienstadt*, p.699.

<sup>176</sup> Lederer, *Ghetto Theresienstadt*, p.148.

been arrested by Commandant Rahm and placed in custody by the SS, he was later shot in the Small Fortress. He was to be replaced as Jewish Elder by Rabbi Benjamin Murmelstein from Vienna.<sup>177</sup>

### **3.4 Section Three – Benjamin Murmelstein and the Third Jewish Self-Administration**

#### **3.4.1 The Changes Made to the Jewish Self-Administration**

The third ghetto administration, under the leadership of Rabbi Benjamin Murmelstein from Vienna, signalled the start of a new phase in the history of Theresienstadt. It was during Murmelstein's administration, in October 1944, that the Nazis ordered the virtual liquidation of the ghetto. Sixteen prominent men from the ghetto administration were included in these final transports to Auschwitz.<sup>178</sup>

After Murmelstein's appointment the 'powers' of the Jewish council were substantially curtailed. From October 1944, the Jewish council no longer played a role in choosing who was to be deported, as the Germans insisted on compiling all the deportation lists themselves. This decision was met with mixed feelings by the Jewish elders. They were relieved to be free of the burden of compiling lists, but they also felt as if they had been robbed of the ability to save lives. They were left feeling inactive and ineffectual, and lacking the authority of true community leaders. All they were allowed to do now was to specify a few key workers on whose behalf they could petition to keep in the ghetto.<sup>179</sup>

Although Murmelstein was selected as Eppstein's successor in September 1944, he did not officially take up the position until December 1944. At that point, Prochnik took up position as head of the Central Secretariat. It was vital to Murmelstein that this crucial position was filled by a friend. Lederer writes, 'For

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<sup>177</sup> For information on the arrest and murder of Dr. Paul Eppstein see: Lederer, *Ghetto Theresienstadt*, Chapter 7, 'The Last Chapter', pp.145-198. Adler, *Theresienstadt*, Part 1, Chapters 6 and 7, pp. 150-185. Bondy, *Elder of the Jews*, p.446.

<sup>178</sup> See Chapter Five of this thesis for the deportation of Gonda Redlich, head of the Youth Welfare Department. See Chapter Six for the deportation of all the prominent musicians, actors, singers and artists who were imprisoned in the ghetto.

<sup>179</sup> See: Lederer, *Ghetto Theresienstadt*, Chapter 7, 'The Last Chapter', pp.145-198, especially pp.166-67.

appearance sake the Germans appointed a Council of Elders composed of a few representative personages who had weathered the storm of deportations.<sup>180</sup> The majority of the new council were elderly men from Vienna and Berlin, and while the Commandant and SS took over the role of compiling the deportation lists, Murmelstein was ‘invested with far reaching powers.’<sup>181</sup> In contrast to the previous two administrations, the Ghetto Elders who had confided in their council men and shared decision making with them, Murmelstein ran the third administration from above. He rarely conferred with council members and while the responsibility of compiling the transport lists was no longer his, he worked closely with the SS during the October deportations.

Murmelstein’s elevation was concurrent with other important changes to the administration. Adler writes, ‘After the autumn catastrophe of 1944 the Jewish council was practically dissolved.’<sup>182</sup> He explains how 16 prominent ghetto men had been deported and how the rest of the men were stripped of their posts. On 13 December 1944, a new council was nominated, which, in addition to Murmelstein, consisted of 13 elderly men. At the heart of this new council were five men, one representative from each of the five main nationalities in the ghetto.<sup>183</sup>

One of the new council members was Rabbi Leo Baeck. Although a prominent figure in the ghetto, he had not previously been part of the official administration. The four other men who made up the core of the new council were Friediger from Denmark, Dr. Heinrich Klang from Austria, Dr. Alfred Meissner from Czechoslovakia and Prof. Dr. Eduard Meijers from Holland. Baeck was the most prominent member, and he acted as a nominal council President.<sup>184</sup> According to Adler, Baeck brought a new morality to the leadership

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<sup>180</sup> *Ibid*, p.168.

<sup>181</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>182</sup> Adler, *Theresienstadt*, ‘Nach der Herbskatastrophe 1944...’, p.254.

<sup>183</sup> *Ibid*, ‘Im Dezember 1944 wurde ein neuer Ältestenrat mit je einem Vertreter aus fünf Ländern ernannt’, p.254. One German, one Austrian, one Czech, one Dutch and one Danish.

<sup>184</sup> In May 1945 when Murmelstein resigned as Ghetto Elder, Baeck took over while Ing. Geory Vogel was to oversee the liquidation of the ghetto and was in charge of repatriation. See: Adler, *Theresienstadt*, p.255.

of the ghetto and represented a welcome change to what Adler saw as the inherent corruption of the council of elders.<sup>185</sup>

### 3.4.2 Murmelstein and Deportations out of Theresienstadt:

Benjamin Murmelstein has emerged from the history of the Theresienstadt ghetto as the most controversial of its three Jewish leaders. There are several possible explanations for this. First, and perhaps most importantly, he was the only one to survive the war. Secondly, he was the last of the three men to serve as head of the Jewish Council and therefore oversaw the liquidation of the ghetto during October 1944. Thirdly, he worked closely with the ghetto SS, raising questions about his commitment to his community.

Perhaps, however, the principal reason Murmelstein has been remembered in a negative light is due to his character and his leadership style, which differed markedly to that of his two predecessors. Murmelstein had first joined the Jewish council in Theresienstadt after the January 1943 reshuffle. Originally Löwenherz from Vienna was meant to act with Edelstein as joint deputy to Eppstein but in the end he was allowed to remain in Vienna until the end of the war. Murmelstein took his place and had remained in the council since. Bondy describes Murmelstein as,

A native Galician proud of his Viennese accent, fat, round faced, pug-nosed, with small eyes, was a doctor of philosophy, and ordained Rabbi. He had a phenomenal memory and a mind that was both sharper and wittier than that of his two partners in the triad.<sup>186</sup>

She describes how the community viewed the new Jewish Elder,

The general attitude toward Murmelstein, both of the Viennese residents whom he had represented on the community committee since 1937 and the Prague Jews, was one of suspicion.<sup>187</sup>

<sup>185</sup> Adler, *Theresienstadt*, p.254, 'Baeck verkörperte das Gewissen des Lagers....'

<sup>186</sup> Bondy, *Elder of the Jews*, p.356.

<sup>187</sup> *Ibid*, p.357.

Like Bondy, Lederer also praises aspects of Murmelstein's character.

Besides being a man of scholarly attainments and great organising abilities, he was also extremely ambitious. Though highly strung he knew how to conceal and control his emotions. He possessed an encyclopaedic memory and his deductive powers were amazing.<sup>188</sup>

Several of the councilmen and department heads were also extremely wary of him. While under arrest in the Small Fortress, letters were smuggled between Edelstein and the ghetto. In one smuggled letter Edelstein wrote, 'beware of Murmelstein.'<sup>189</sup>

In light of the post-war allegations made against Murmelstein, it is important to examine his part in the October 1944 liquidation.<sup>190</sup> The role played by Leo Baeck will also be examined, as he too has been criticised for his behaviour during this period.

The issue of resistance in relation to Jewish leaders and their communities during the Holocaust is often raised, and it should be asked why there was no resistance to the autumn 1944 transports.<sup>191</sup> Lederer writes,

<sup>188</sup> Lederer, *Ghetto Theresienstadt*, p.167.

<sup>189</sup> Bondy, *Elder of the Jews*, p.396. It is not known why Edelstein said this but he could have been referring to Murmelstein's role in Vienna prior to his deportation to Theresienstadt. Murmelstein was also now occupying the position of Ghetto Elder which had been stripped from Edelstein so there could have been considerable ill-feeling between the two men. For a report on the work of the Jewish community in Vienna from 2.5.38-31.12.39, compiled by Dr. Josef Löwenherz and Rabbi Benjamin Murmelstein See: Löwenherz and Murmelstein, *Report of the Vienna Jewish Community*. WL, document 70811. For Murmelstein and Nisko see: Bondy, *Elder of the Jews*, Chapter 13, 'A Jewish Colony Under SS Patronage', pp.149-165.

<sup>190</sup> Due to various post-war allegations made against Murmelstein by liberated Theresienstadt prisoners, information was gathered on him by the Leitmertiz tribunal for collaborators. Murmelstein was never officially tried but the allegations ruined his reputation and he moved to Italy seeking refuge in the Vatican. He died there in 1989. For statistics on the Autumn 1944 deportations see final section of Chapter Two. Also see: Miroslav Kárny, 'Die Theresienstädter Herbstransporte 1994.' In: Kárny, ed. *Theresienstädter Studien und Dokumente* 1 (1995), pp.7-37.

<sup>191</sup> For information on resistance in Jewish ghettos during the Holocaust see: Dov Levin, 'The Fighting Leadership of the Judenräte in the Small Communities of Poland.' In: Gutman and Haft, eds. *Patterns of Jewish Leadership in Nazi Europe 1933-1945*, pp.133-151. Yitzak Arad, 'The Armed Jewish Resistance in Eastern Europe: Its Unique Conditions and Its Relations with the Jewish Councils in the Ghettos'. In: Berenbaum and Peck, eds. *The Holocaust and History*,

Faced with the choice between certain death and improbable but still possible survival, Theresienstadt had decided for survival. Thus the merits of a policy of resistance as compared with a policy of compliance were judged by their costs in terms of human lives: it was calculated that in this respect the costs of revolt would be higher.<sup>192</sup>

Resistance, or the lack of it, was directly related to knowledge. If the majority of those leaving Theresienstadt for the east knew little of their destination or their fate, then the case for resistance is moot. If, however, the majority of those transported knew that deportation equalled death, the question of resistance becomes more complex. It needs to be established what those in Theresienstadt knew about Auschwitz during the Autumn 1944 mass transports. How much information had been smuggled into the ghetto by the local Czech communities and how much of this had been passed down from the ghetto leaders to the community at large?

Rabbi Leo Baeck and Rabbi Benjamin Murmelstein are the two men most heavily criticised for what they knew about the transports, and how they acted on that knowledge. While Murmelstein was the official leader of the ghetto, many prisoners considered Baeck to be the head of the German community, and turned to him for advice and counselling in the face of deportation east. Theresienstadt prisoner, Fred Klein, discusses the role played by Leo Baeck during the autumn transports. He writes,

He gave the impression of a prophet, a wise, old, influential sage with great moral authority. After the war it was revealed that the

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pp.585-591. Livia Rothkirchen, 'Czech and Slovak Wartime Jewish Leadership: Variants in Strategy and Tactics'. In: Berenbaum and Peck, eds. *The Holocaust and History*, pp.629-647. Trunk, *Judenrat*, Chapters 16 and 17, pp. 388-475. George M. Kren and Leon Rappoport, 'Resistance to the Holocaust: Reflections on the Idea and the Act'. In: Yehuda Bauer and Nathan Rotenstreich, eds. *The Holocaust as Historical Experience* (New York: Homes and Meier, 1980), pp.193-223. Hilberg, *Perpetrators, Victims and Bystander*, Chapter 16, 'The Unadjusted', pp. 170-186. Yahil, *The Fate of European Jewry*, Chapter 17, 'The Armed Struggle of the Jews in Nazi-Occupied Countries', pp. 457-496. Arnold Paucker, 'Resistance of German and Austrian Jews to the Nazi Regime, 1933-1945.' In: *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book*, Volume, XL (1995), pp.3-21.

<sup>192</sup> Lederer, *Ghetto Theresienstadt*, p.165.

rabbi knew about the genocide but chose to keep the secret ... this was a tragic mistake.<sup>193</sup>

What did Rabbi Leo Baeck know and when did he know it? In, *Days of Sorrow and Pain – Leo Baeck and the Berlin Jews*, Leonard Baker writes,

After the war Baeck reported that he had first learned of the death camps in August 1943 ... Despite his knowledge Baeck continued to walk through the streets of Theresienstadt, stopped to chat with old friends, went to the hospitals, watched out for children, lectured the people about the ultimate triumph of the law, spirit, and decency – choosing not to say that many of them soon would be sent to their deaths.<sup>194</sup>

According to Albert H. Friedlander, Baeck was informed about Auschwitz's true nature by an engineer called Grünberg. After liberation, Baeck claimed,

I went through a hard struggle debating whether it was my duty to convince Grünberg that he must repeat what he had heard before the Council of Elders, of which I was an honorary member. I finally decided that no one should know it. If the Council of Elders were informed the whole camp would know it within a few hours. Living in the expectation of death by gassing would only be the harder. So I came to the grave decision to tell no one.<sup>195</sup>

Golly D, who was deported to Theresienstadt in 1943, was married in the ghetto in a ceremony performed by Rabbi Baeck. In September 1944 her husband was included in one of the 'men only work transports' destined for Auschwitz. She sought advice from Rabbi Baeck about whether or not she should volunteer for the next transport east. She recalls how he persuaded her.

He looked at me and said, 'Mrs. Herzberg, please imagine the following – a train pulling up wherever your husband is located – the train is at the platform – your husband is waiting for you to

<sup>193</sup> Unpublished memoir sent to Sarah Kavanaugh by the author. Fred Klein, *No Name, No Number – The Story of a Holocaust Survivor* (California: 1999), p.109.

<sup>194</sup> Baker, *Days of Sorrow and Pain*, p.311.

<sup>195</sup> Friedlander, *Teacher of Theresienstadt*, p.47.

get off the train and you are not there – can you imagine his feelings?” I will never forget that – neither did I understand him – it was October 1944 and he was in a high position – I want to say – how could you at that point of time give me that advice?<sup>196</sup>

It is clear from Golly D’s testimony that Baeck advised her to volunteer. She took his advice and by the time she arrived her husband had been dead for several days.

### 3.4.3 The Last Months of the Murmelstein Administration

On 1 January 1945 the population of Theresienstadt stood at 11,465, made up of 3,500 Protectorate Jews, 4,000 German, 1,500 Austrian, 1,700 Dutch, 400 Danish and 400 Slovakian Jews.<sup>197</sup> Only 6,034 of the population were capable of working.<sup>198</sup> During the autumn of 1944 it was decided in Berlin that a decision had to be made about the fate of the *Mischlinge* (Jews of mixed parentage) and also the Jewish partners of mixed marriages who were still living under occupation in the Protectorate. It was decided that they would be sent to Theresienstadt on ‘work transports’. A total of 3,657 people were deported to Theresienstadt on nine *Arbeitseinsatztrasnporte* (‘AE’ work transports) between 31 January 1945 and 16 March 1945. These transports came from Prague, Ostrava, Olomouc and also from the labour camp at Lípa which was in the process of being liquidated.<sup>199</sup> Between 1 January and 5 May 1945, a total of forty-eight transports arrived in the ghetto containing a total of 8,414 people. Ruth Schwertfeger records how, ‘The stretching of racial laws now brought in

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<sup>196</sup> FVA: Golly D.

<sup>197</sup> Adler, *Theresienstadt*, p.700.

<sup>198</sup> This figure consisted of 6,034 workers, 1,693 were male and 4,071 were female. See: Adler, *Theresienstadt*, p.700.

<sup>199</sup> Transport ‘AE1’ arrived in Theresienstadt from Prague on 31.01.45 containing 1,056 people. ‘AE2’ arrived on 4.02.45 from Prague with 895 people, ‘AE3’ on 11.02.45 from Prague with 761 people, ‘AE5’ on 15.02.45 from Lípa with 55 people, ‘AE4’ on 25.02.45 from Prague with 520, ‘AE6’ from Mährisch Ostrau on 4.03.45 with 53 people, ‘AE7’ on 7.03.45 from Olmütz with 53 people, ‘AE8’ on 15.03.45 from Prague with 122 people and ‘AE9’ on 16.03.45 from Prague with 139 people.

more people from mixed marriages, so that there was a considerable body of practising Christians in Theresienstadt.<sup>200</sup>

From 15 April 1945, further transports started to arrive in the ghetto from various destinations. Unlike the January-March transports, which only contained Jews from mixed marriages, these later transports also contained prisoners from other concentration camps which had already been liquidated.<sup>201</sup>

Following persistent enquiries, the Red Cross managed to engineer a second visit to Theresienstadt. The second trip to the ghetto was made by Dr. Otto Lehner and Mr. Paul Dunant on 6 April 1945. Again they were escorted by the SS and Foreign Ministry representatives and, again, no private conversation with the Jewish Elder was permitted. They were, however, informed during their visit that 10,000 Jews had been sent east six months earlier and that they were not seen again.<sup>202</sup>

During their visit, Paul Dunant asked if he would be allowed to remain in the ghetto but was refused permanent access. Instead he chose to stay in Prague in order to be near Theresienstadt. He visited again on 21 April under similar conditions. Now convinced of Theresienstadt's status as a way-station to other concentration camps, the ICRC distributed extracts from Dr. Lehner's report of his visit to the ghetto to various Jewish organisations as well as to several Red Cross delegations across Europe. On 22 April 1945, one day after Dunant's visit, the Daily Order of the ghetto announced,

Monsieur Dunant, a member of the International Red Cross Commission, who had already visited the Jewish Settlement on April 6, came again to Theresienstadt yesterday, April 21. On this

<sup>200</sup> Schwertfeger, *Women of Theresienstadt*, p. 19. For more information on Christians in Theresienstadt see Chapter Six of this thesis.

<sup>201</sup> The Terezín Memorial books note a further nine transports arriving in the ghetto between 16.03.45 and 15.04.45. The following transports arrived in the ghetto between these dates: 'XII/11' from Frankfurt am Main on 17.03.45, 'XVI/7' from Leipzig on 17.03.45, 'IV/17' from Vienna on 20.03.45, 'I/123' from Berlin on 28.03.45, 'XIX/12 Ez' from Aussig on 29.03.45, 'Ez' from Prague on 30.03.45, 'V1/11' from Wesermünde on 4.04.45, 'XXVI/4' from Sered on 7.04.45 and 'IV/16a' from Amstetten on 15.04.45. The experiences of the deportees will be discussed in Chapter Four. See the Epilogue for the experiences of these arrivals and the liberation of the ghetto.

<sup>202</sup> ICRC Theresienstadt compendium, document 25.

occasion he was present at a meeting of the Council of Elders and used the opportunity to speak to the chairman and the members of the council assuring them that henceforth the International Red Cross would take charge of the Jewish Settlement in Theresienstadt.<sup>203</sup>

On 4 May 1945 the ICRC wrote to the World Jewish Congress in London informing them of their new information with an attachment entitled, *visite du camp Theresienstadt par les Délégués du Comité international de la Croix-Rouge*. (Visit made to the Theresienstadt camp by the delegates of the International Committee of the Red Cross). Unfortunately this letter was sent nearly one year after their first visit to the ghetto and less than one week before Theresienstadt would be liberated by the Russians.<sup>204</sup>

Although the Russian troops did not enter Theresienstadt for another five days, the day of 5 May 1945 witnessed the virtual breakdown of the ghetto.<sup>205</sup> The majority of the SS fled in fear of the imminent arrival of the Russians and Benjamin Murmelstein resigned as Elder of the Jews of Theresienstadt. Murmelstein announced his resignation in a letter to Dunant, and the ghetto was formally placed under the protection of the Red Cross.

Murmelstein's letter, dated 5 May 1945, explains the reasons behind his decision. The letter is divided into four sections: a) Work Situation, b) Quarantine, c) Sanitation and d) Reorganisation.<sup>206</sup> This final section describes how together with the council, Murmelstein, had decided that external events necessitated a change in internal administration of Theresienstadt. In particular, he suggested that in the light of the Red Cross presence, the existing Jewish Self-Administration, with its split between the Jewish Elder and the Jewish Council was too complex and disorganised. He wrote, 'Die Existenz von zwei Instanzen

<sup>203</sup> YVA: 0.64/103. Daily Order 68, 22.04.45. Also see: Lederer, *Ghetto Theresienstadt*, p.189.

<sup>204</sup> WL: G 59/7/12. Also see: ICRC compendium, document 29. WL: G 59/M/1211. Also see: ICRC compendium, document 30. Dunant returned to Theresienstadt a final time on 2.05.45 and remained there until 10.05.45. In June 1945 he compiled a report on all the information that he brought back with him to Geneva.

<sup>205</sup> The arrival of the Russians troops in the Theresienstadt ghetto will be examined in the Epilogue.

<sup>206</sup> Adler, *Die Verheimlichte Wahrheit*, pp. 142-143. *Murmelstein Demissioniert*.

schafft eine Desorientierung und bringt weitere Schwierigkeiten.<sup>207</sup> Following Murmelstein's resignation a final quasi council was established under the leadership of Rabbi Leo Baeck to oversee the final days of the ghetto. He was assisted in this task by Dr. Meissner, Dr. Klang and Prof. Dr. Meijers and Friediger. Ing. Georg Vogel was appointed as the member of the council responsible for the repatriation of the Theresienstadt prisoners.<sup>208</sup> After three and a half years of trying to save the ghetto inhabitants from starvation, disease, death or deportation, the Jewish Self-Administration of Theresienstadt – an extraordinary experiment in self-government under impossible circumstances – had one final task: to repatriate the survivors.

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<sup>207</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>208</sup> See Epilogue for the final days of the ghetto and the 'liberation experience.'

**Chapter Four: The Adult Community of Theresienstadt and their Experiences of the Ghetto and the Jewish Leadership, November 1941 – May 1945**

Still today I can hear ringing in my ears, their cultured German, as they asked those lined up their only question. They hardly looked into anyone's eyes, their heads slightly tilted, with a humiliated expression, they repeated over and over, 'Nimmt der Herr die Suppe? Oder die Dame?' Loosely translated it meant, 'Could the gentleman or lady spare the soup?'<sup>1</sup>

#### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter will examine the adult community experience of the Theresienstadt ghetto and scrutinise the relationship of the adult population and the leaders of the Jewish Self-Administration. While Chapter Three sheds light on the administration of the ghetto and the three leaders of the Jewish council, this chapter will examine what life in Theresienstadt was like for the broad mass of the ghetto population. What was the day-to-day ghetto life like for the Protectorate Jews, and how did this contrast with life for those from Germany and Austria? Through this examination, the conflict between the German and Czech communities will be highlighted as will the disputes amongst the Zionist factions – within and across national groups.

This chapter will examine how inhabitants survived, the rations available to them, the housing and healthcare provisions, contact with the outside world and their mechanisms for coping with the constant fear of being deported east. This chapter will ask how much the nationality and political views of the leaders affected the everyday lives of the ghetto inhabitants. For example, did the presence of a Zionist Czech leader mean that the Czech inhabitants had a better standard of living than the German and Austrian Jews?

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<sup>1</sup> Schiff, *Theresienstadt*, p.84.

## 4.2 Section One: The Community Under Edelstein, November 1941-January 1943

### 4.2.1 The Arrival of the Protectorate Communities, November 1941 – June 1942

While Edelstein and the Jewish Self-Administration were compiling the first lists for deportations out of Theresienstadt during January 1942, a constant stream of transports continued to arrive. Initially these transports came from the Protectorate but by the summer of the 1942 thousands of German and Austrian Jews were being sent to Theresienstadt. Ruth Schwertfeger concludes,

First impressions of Theresienstadt are among the bleakest in Holocaust literature, not because it was the worst concentration camp but because it bore no resemblance to the descriptions that people had been given of it before they arrived.<sup>2</sup>

Schwertfeger's comment is particularly relevant to those arriving from Germany and Austria during the summer of 1942. The contrast between what the Jews from Berlin and Vienna were expecting and the reality of the conditions in which they found themselves was unimaginable. The majority of these early transports from Berlin and Vienna consisted of elderly people whose shock on arrival combined with meagre rations and impossible living conditions caused a startlingly high mortality rate.<sup>3</sup>

Every new deportee who arrived in Theresienstadt between November 1941 and June 1943 arrived at the Bauschowitz train station and made their way along the road to the ghetto. Each had come with their transport number and *Handgepäck* (hand luggage). *Mitgepäck* (larger items of luggage) were carried in a dedicated wagon on the train and were dealt with on arrival by the *Transporthundertschaft* (transport hundred) who were waiting at the station. The transport workers were accompanied by SS officers and sometimes by the ghetto commandant. There were also a number of Czech gendarmes present at the arrival of each transport, together with representatives from the Jewish Self-

<sup>2</sup> Schwertfeger, *Women of Theresienstadt*, p.26.

<sup>3</sup> For statistics on transports into the ghetto during summer 1942 see: Adler, *Theresienstadt*, pp.691-695.

Administration, including men from the transport department and the leader of the Jewish council. Norbert Troller remembers seeing the Czech gendarmes on arrival at the ghetto and explains how, ‘still in their old uniforms but with the Nazi emblem on their caps, they were employed as guards.’<sup>4</sup>

Prior to deportation to the ghetto, each person was sent a luggage requirement together with their call-up notices. Everybody was allowed to travel with fifty kilograms of food, clothing and whatever other possessions they thought necessary.<sup>5</sup> In most families it was the women who prepared for the journey to Theresienstadt, making sure that every eventuality was covered and that the children were well equipped for their journeys. Bondy writes,

In preparation for the unknown, the women baked rusks, fried flour in fat, boiled milk and sugar to paste, changed white sheets for coloured, and endlessly weighed and pondered what was most important to take.<sup>6</sup>

The lovingly prepared goods were packed into bags which in many cases were bought especially for the journey. According to Norbert Troller, ‘Brünn experienced a sales boom in rucksacks, as if war were approaching.’<sup>7</sup>

Ela Fischerová remembers her journey to Theresienstadt and her shock on arrival in the ghetto.

In those days the train went only to Bohusovice and from there on foot with heavily loaded knapsacks and shopping bag in a stringently guarded procession about 6 km to Terezín ... The first impression was awful, 100, or even more people were dying every day ... All of Terezín stank in the awful heat with the smell of rotting bodies.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Troller, *Theresienstadt*, p.22.

<sup>5</sup> For various documents relating to deportation to Theresienstadt and individual baggage allowance see: Adler, *Die Verheimlichte Wahrheit*, pp. 37-41 and pp. 46-71.

<sup>6</sup> Ruth Bondy, ‘Women in Theresienstadt’, p.311.

<sup>7</sup> Troller, *Theresienstadt*, p.4.

<sup>8</sup> Franková, ed. *The World without Human Dimensions*, p.15.

Once inside the ghetto walls, the usual process for new arrivals was to proceed through the *Schleuse*.<sup>9</sup> The prisoners were pushed through a series of checkpoints where their transport number was checked and recorded, and their valuables invariably stolen. Once inside the *Schleuse* the new arrivals were told not to speak to anybody until they had been assigned barracks. Once they had been searched and their identity cards stamped they were assessed as to whether or not they were fit for work. They were then allocated a number which corresponded with where they were to sleep; in the first few months this consisted of a straw berth on the barracks floor.<sup>10</sup> Anna Hyndraková-Kovanicová who arrived on a Protectorate transport describes her experience.

Our ‘schleuse’ in Terezín, in other words the place where we were received, assembled and our luggage was taken from us, was the Aussig army barracks. There were lots of people there, confusion, aimless pushing and shoving, and in the midst of it all shouted commands.<sup>11</sup>

These feelings of confusion and fear are prominent in all the testimonies of the Schleuse experience as the new arrivals had no idea what was happening to them.

According to Adler, once the transportees were fully registered they were provided with accommodation, ration cards and employment. Adler claims that the administration saw that all new arrivals followed a rigorous initiation, being passed from one checkpoint to another and forced to comply with a sixteen point checklist. It must be assumed that part of the reason for this process was to ensure that the prisoners became institutionalised or ghettoised. Adler writes that, 1) barracks were allocated for new transport arrivals, 2) all barracks were then cleaned, 3) all barracks were appropriately darkened or blacked out, 4) all barrack

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<sup>9</sup> The literal translation of this is ‘sluice.’ For more information on the process involved in the *Schleuse*, see; Adler, *Theresienstadt*, Chapter 9, pp.264-295. Lederer, *Ghetto Theresienstadt*, Chapter 3, pp.35-57. Also see: WL: Manes, *Tatsachenbericht*, Book 1, Chapter 1, p.1. Due to the fact that so many items were stolen in the *Schleuse*, the word took on a new meaning in the ghetto slang, where together with words such as ‘organising’ and ‘flood gating’, ‘to sluice’ meant ‘to steal’. See Lederer, *Ghetto Theresienstadt*, p.40.

<sup>10</sup> As previously discussed, those in the first four transports to arrive in the ghetto were spared the humiliation and trauma of the *Schleuse* as the administrative machine was not in place.

<sup>11</sup> Franková, ed. *The World without Human Dimensions*, p.154.

installations were properly checked.<sup>12</sup> The final three points on Alder's list deal with the prisoner being informed of the ghetto rules, issued with work cards and being assigned to a labour detail.

The arrival process was to become more aggressive and demanding as the ghetto population grew. Although the Protectorate Jews could expect to have some of their belongings taken from them, they were not subjected to a delousing programme and were looked upon sympathetically by the majority of the Czech gendarmes. According to Adler, the Czech gendarmes saw to it that the Protectorate transportees were *glimpflicher behandelt* (treated in a milder fashion), than those from Germany and Austria.<sup>13</sup> Adler's description is backed up by various testimonies of deportees from Berlin and Vienna who describe the 'benefits' and 'privileges' enjoyed by those coming from the Protectorate, such as remaining inside their own country and sharing a language, culture and history with the Czech gendarmes and the ghetto administration. Another important benefit for the Czech prisoners was the common ground in terms of language and politics which they shared with the local Czech residents who remained inside Theresienstadt until the summer of 1942. There are several recorded incidents of the local Czech population bestowing gifts of food and cigarettes on the ghetto prisoners as well as helping smuggle letters and parcels into the ghetto.<sup>14</sup> On 15 January 1942 Eva Roubíková wrote in her diary, 'There's a lively black market in cigarettes and food.'<sup>15</sup>

During July 1942 there was a huge influx of prisoners into Theresienstadt with sixteen transports arriving from the Protectorate and forty-seven from

<sup>12</sup> For the continuation of this list see: Adler, *Theresienstadt*, p. 270. For detailed information on the arrival of transports in Theresienstadt see: Adler, *Theresienstadt*, Chapter 9, section 1, 'Ankommende Transporte', pp. 266-281.

<sup>13</sup> Adler, *Theresienstadt*, p.271.

<sup>14</sup> The importance of cigarettes as a form of ghetto currency should be mentioned as significant weight is attached to them in many Theresienstadt testimonies. They held an extremely important place in the ghetto black market and in the early days of the ghetto, before the food shortages were apparent, people traded food for cigarettes. For more on smuggling and post see later section on Law and Order in the ghetto.

<sup>15</sup> Roubíková, *We're Alive and Life Goes On*, p.21.

Germany and Austria. Together they increased the population by a further 25,078.<sup>16</sup>

#### 4.2.2 Arrival of the Summer 1942 Transports: the German and Austrian Communities Arrive in Theresienstadt.

On 3 July 1942 the native Czech inhabitants of Theresienstadt were expelled from the ghetto in order to make room for the new arrivals from Germany and Austria.<sup>17</sup> While some of the transports from Germany and Austria contained people who had been plucked from hospitals and old people's homes in Berlin, Hamburg, Munich and Vienna, many were still healthy. Transports from Austria and Germany, consisting of famous academics, doctors, lecturers, painters, musicians and actors also began to arrive during the summer months.<sup>18</sup> These 'privileged' transports contained prominent Jews from the Old Reich who the Nazis could not risk sending directly to the death camps in the east in case questions were asked about their disappearance. Instead they were to be 'stored' in Theresienstadt.<sup>19</sup> Bondy writes,

By German order, privileged residents from Germany and Austria received special treatment and added a new term to ghetto vocabulary – 'the prominents.' They numbered between eighty and a hundred and twenty people, and formed a strange conglomerate of leftover splendor of Central European Jewry and people who merited privileges in German eyes.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>16</sup> The first transport to arrive in Theresienstadt from Germany during July 1942 was transport 'V/1' which arrived on 1.07.42 from Dresden and contained 50 people. The last July transport from Germany to arrive in Theresienstadt during July 1942 was transport 'I/ 35' which arrived in the ghetto on 31.07.42 from Berlin. For all information on transports to Theresienstadt from Czechoslovakia see: *Terezin Memorial Books*, volumes 1 and 11 and Karny, ed. *Terezín Memorial Book – A Guide to the Czech Original*. For information on transports from Germany to Theresienstadt see: Theresienstädter Gedenkbuch and for transports from Austria to Theresienstadt see: *Totenbuch Theresienstadt – Deportierte Aus Österreich*.

<sup>17</sup> On 2.06.42 the first German Jews arrived in Theresienstadt. The first Austrian Jews arrived in the ghetto three weeks later on 21.06.42 and by September 1942, the ghetto population had reached, 53,000.

<sup>18</sup> Construction began on the railway spur joining Bauschowitz railway station to Theresienstadt on 14.08.42 which simplified the journey of all incoming and outgoing transport.

<sup>19</sup> See Appendix 5 for information on the Wannsee Conference.

<sup>20</sup> Bondy, *Elder of the Jews*, p.322.

Philipp Manes who arrived in the ghetto on a German transport from Berlin on 23 July, recorded his arrival in his *Tatsachenbericht* (daily report / diary). The first entry reads,

On the 23 July the Berlin Transport I/29 arrived at Bauschowitz. We were lined up in rows of three – young people with [yellow] stars took the luggage, which one could not carry oneself – the cases were put on cars and as a last load those who could not walk...We walk through it without any premonition. Now Theresienstadt receives us – the ghetto – our new home.<sup>21</sup>

He goes on to describe the painful experience of being processed.

We learn a new word: *Schleuse* ... There were tables – on one side the gendarme, on the other we, and now the *Schleusen* began. We quickly learnt its meaning, saw with horror, how practised hands dived searching into each bag, rucksack, basket and took any valuable objects away. Medicines, good scissors, blade sharpeners and to our dismay the carefully packed thermos flask...<sup>22</sup>

Manes explains how the various transports from Germany, Austria and the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia were identifiable by a Nazi-installed lettering and numbering system. He writes,

Every Jew sent from Germany had a number ... we bore the number of the transport. Those who came from Germany also received a Roman numeral. Those who came from Berlin and Prussia were given the Roman numeral I, those who came from Bavaria the Roman numeral II, and those who came from Czechoslovakia did not have Roman numerals, but simply the letters and numbers of the transport.<sup>23</sup>

He also adds that, the Jews from Germany had a *Kennort* (place of identity) and a *Kennnummer* (identity number). Lederer describes how the transportees that

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<sup>21</sup> WL: Manes, *Tatsachenbericht*. Book 1, Chapter 1, p.1.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

arrived during the summer of 1942 differed in terms of dress and behaviour. First he portrays the Jewish deportees from Hamburg, Bremen and Kiel,

most of them wearing the blue sailors' caps worn by shipping and dock clerks in Germany ... with their blue eyes they watched the confusion around them; their faces were criss-crossed by small reddish veins and their upper lips adorned by handlebar moustaches.<sup>24</sup>

He describes those from Berlin, 'as petty, pompous and officious as their gentile Prussian compatriots.'<sup>25</sup>

Before leaving their homes in Germany and Austria, those on the summer transports had been forced to sign *Heimeinkaufverträge* (home purchase agreements) which aimed to persuade them that they were swapping their home in Vienna or Berlin for a lake-side villa in *Theresienbad*.<sup>26</sup> The fact that this 'contract' was printed and issued by the *Reichsvereinigung der juden in Deutschland* gave the impression that the Jewish community was behind these transactions. This meant that the elderly Jewish couples and families from Germany and Austria had their homes and belongings stolen and were transported to a Nazi ghetto in the name of the Jewish community. The *Heimeinkaufverträge* that they were forced to sign read, 'Heimeinkaufverträge Nr. ... Zwischen der Reichsvereinigung der Juden in Deutschland und Herrn / Frau ...'<sup>27</sup> This implied a contract between two consenting parties, the Jewish community and the individual named on the form. These elderly people expected a pleasant place to stay and had packed accordingly. They had not included essential items such as blankets, food and medicine which had been so carefully fitted into the Protectorate suitcases and rucksacks. This is not to say that the Protectorate transportees were always well prepared and knew what to expect on arrival; but in general, they were not subjected to the debilitating shock that awaited the

<sup>24</sup> Lederer, *Ghetto Theresienstadt*, p.54.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid*, p.55.

<sup>26</sup> These 'home purchase documents' were issued to all those who had to give up or 'swap' their houses and apartments for space in Theresienstadt. For an example of one of these documents see: Adler, *Die Verheimlichte Wahrheit*, p.55.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid*.

elderly from Austria and Germany. Adler discusses how the shock on arrival affected the Jews from Germany,

The average German Jew did not comprehend what the camp was about. They had been helplessly thrown into a situation which they did not understand ... With one blow the foundation of their bourgeois lifestyle had been removed and many were too old or helpless to be able emotionally to replace this loss.<sup>28</sup>

#### 4.2.3 Housing

In all areas of Theresienstadt life, from the moment of arrival to the moment of death through starvation or deportation east, conditions differed slightly depending on origin. The Protectorate Jews experienced Theresienstadt differently from those from Germany and Austria. Later arrivals from Holland and Denmark also underwent a different experience. Nationality, however, was not the only differentiating factor in terms of ghetto life. The gender and particularly the age of the deportees were crucial elements in terms of endurance and survival. These factors played a part in several areas including: housing, food supplies, employment and also likelihood of inclusion in a transport east.

Protectorate Jews were the first to arrive in the ghetto and on average they received better accommodation than those from Germany and Austria. They were also more likely to know someone in a position of authority – someone in the housing department for example which helped to guarantee better sleeping quarters. The very first Protectorate Jews to arrive, however, experienced appalling conditions. Only a lucky few were assigned living quarters in the town houses rather than in the huge barracks. Conditions in the houses were preferable as rooms were smaller and bunks had fewer occupants.<sup>29</sup> The conditions in the barracks were appalling all year round due to overcrowding, lack of hygiene and infestations of bed bugs and lice. Emily Schleissner, the wife of Dr. Erich Munk, was one of the few who received ‘privileged’ accommodation inside one of the

<sup>28</sup> Adler, *Theresienstadt*, pp.304-305. ‘Der Durchschnitt der deutschen Juden erfasst nicht...’

<sup>29</sup> The majority of these houses only became available after the native Czech population had moved out in July 1942.

town houses. She arrived in the ghetto from Prague during December 1941, and says, ‘I was lucky – I was assigned to a room that happened to be a small house. And in my room we were seven people on three or four mattresses. I didn’t think too much. I just took things as they came.’<sup>30</sup> Eva Roubicková who had also arrived from Prague during December 1941 was assigned housing with her mother. On 20 December 1941 she wrote,

Finally we were given a huge freezing room. The situation was hopeless. Everybody was crying... We sat on our luggage and fought for space. We were freezing, hungry, and about to go crazy. We were completely shut off from the world, no help anywhere, no way out.<sup>31</sup>

She describes the random process of selecting a room elder. ‘They were looking for a room leader, and I was selected. At least I had something to do right away. I had to take down everybody’s name, etc., and so the worst was over.’<sup>32</sup> But by 25 December 1941 conditions had not improved and she wrote, ‘The housing situation is making us desperate. All the rooms are overcrowded ... By January 1 everything is supposed to be turned in, and now we don’t even have a place to hide stuff.’<sup>33</sup>

Not only were the housing conditions impossible to live with, but prisoners were continually moved about the ghetto. Else Dormitzer explains,

A particular kind of torture in Theresienstadt was the repeated transfer of people to different rooms and barracks, presumably to deter friendship and discourage solidarity among the inmates. I myself moved seventeen times.<sup>34</sup>

Although no prisoner was allocated adequate accommodation in Theresienstadt, it was the elderly from Germany and Austria who suffered the

<sup>30</sup> USHMM: RG – 50 – 030.344, Emily Schleissner.

<sup>31</sup> Roubicková, *We’re Alive and Life Goes On*, p.10.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p.13.

<sup>34</sup> Else Dormitzer, in: Schwertfeger, ed. *Women of Theresienstadt*, p.31.

most in terms of housing. Charles Bruml, who arrived in the ghetto in December 1941 and remained there until January 1943, describes how the elderly in the ghetto were often housed in the attics of the buildings which were especially overcrowded.<sup>35</sup> ‘With the elderly, it was a difficult situation because they were under the roofs of the barracks. In day, it was either too cold or too hot and many of those people died.’<sup>36</sup>

Löre Löwenthal, who arrived in the ghetto from Germany during July 1942 remembers receiving her barrack designation. ‘Finally we reached Theresienstadt. We were assigned rooms. My mother and I stayed together. Father was assigned to a different barracks.’<sup>37</sup> She describes her sleeping arrangements, ‘Bare floors with straw mattresses on the floor – one stove we were given, little tin plates and told to line up for food.’<sup>38</sup> She adds that, ‘eventually we had bunk beds.’ Teenage girls were often shared with sick and elderly women who died in front of them. Löwenthal remembers, ‘People died overnight. Theresienstadt had a lot of old people. They didn’t survive. You just woke up in the morning and the person next to you was dead.’<sup>39</sup> Mordecai Ansbacher testified at the Eichmann trial about the plight of the elderly and their living conditions.

They performed their bodily functions in the room itself, for they no longer had the strength to stand on their feet. Particularly the Jews from Germany – it can be said – fell like flies. Many of them died already within the first months of arriving there.<sup>40</sup>

Ansbacher’s testimony is backed by Vera Schiff who claims that, ‘There in the indescribable filth, unable to fend for themselves, they died by the hundreds.’<sup>41</sup>

<sup>35</sup> On 18.09.42 the population of Theresienstadt reached 58,491 – the highest amount of people in the ghetto during its existence. 3,941 people died in the ghetto during September 1942 due to lack of food, poor hygiene and inadequate clothing and shelter. The ghetto crematorium which was built in September and had four functioning ovens by October 1942 was used to burn the bodies of the dead.

<sup>36</sup> USHMM, RG – 50 – 030.042, Charles Bruml.

<sup>37</sup> FVA: 0946, Löre Löwenthal.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> Ansbacher, *The Trial of Adolf Eichmann*, Volume 2, session 38, p.680.

<sup>41</sup> Schiff, *Theresienstadt*, p.58.

Although being assigned accommodation in one of the old town houses was preferable to being billeted in the barracks, those really considered ‘privileged’ lived in their own housing blocks. This form of housing was extremely hard to come by, available only to the ghetto ‘prominente’, level I or II.<sup>42</sup> The term ‘prominente’ did not exist in the ghetto prior to the arrival of the German transports during the summer 1942.<sup>43</sup> Troller describes where the fortunate ‘prominent’ people were housed.

There were perhaps two dozen old-fashioned stores in the streets around the parade ground. In the yard of two houses in a side street was a typical garrison brothel with tiny rooms without any plumbing on two floors fronted by open balconies. These quarters were choice housing for the *prominente*.<sup>44</sup>

Troller describes how between the years 1941 and 1945 it was only the ‘members of the Council of Elders, prominente, and the Danes [who] had separate rooms for themselves and their wives.’<sup>45</sup> Zdenek Frantlová writes, however, that it was possible to pay for these rooms if you had the requisite funds.

The Accommodation Department started allocating small spaces in the extensive attics to some of the more distinguished inmates to create ‘penthouses’ for themselves. A penthouse was meant for married couples, and there were many applicants. The lucky ones either had contacts in high circles or simply paid for their penthouse as on the black market.<sup>46</sup>

Ruth Bondy explains how entering the housing blocks reserved for the *Prominente* was like stepping back in time. She discusses how the men and

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<sup>42</sup> All ghetto *Prominente* were issued with special identity cards which they were ordered to carry with them. These were headed, ‘Jüdische Selbstverwaltung Theresienstadt’ and announced that the *Zentralevidenz* had classed the bearer of the card as a Prominent. There was a space for the name and also for the class of *Prominente* – either Class 1 / A or Class 11 / B. See: Adler, *Die Verheimlichte Wahrheit*, p.128.

<sup>43</sup> See earlier section on the arrival of these transports.

<sup>44</sup> Troller, *Theresienstadt*, p. 83.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid*, p.87. Danish Jews started to arrive in Theresienstadt on 5.10.43. The first Danish Jews arrived in Theresienstadt the day the Bialystok children were deported out of the ghetto to Auschwitz.

<sup>46</sup> Zdenka Fantlová, *My Lucky Star* (New York and London: Herodias Books, 2001), p.82.

women housed there refused to alter their behaviour and manners and spoke to one another with a polite formality not out of place at a Berlin society party.

In the homes of the ‘prominent’ people still used titles from the past. Women greeted one another as Frau Baronin and Frau Gräfin, and when one of the workers of the commendable *Putzkolonne* (a former writer) tried to give a message to Professor Emil Klein of Jena University, considered the father of naturopathy, he cut her off tersely: ‘I do not speak to servants.’<sup>47</sup>

#### 4.2.4 Food

Similar differentiating factors came into play in the distribution of food as in the allocation of accommodation. Vera Schiff explains how it was not only the members of the Jewish Council and ghetto administration who occupied influential and important positions. She writes,

Like any self-contained unit, Theresienstadt had its own strata of favoured top brass and logically, near the top, right below the members of the Council, were those who administered and handled food, for any supplement, no matter how trivial, often made the difference between life and death.<sup>48</sup>

Schiff’s statement about the importance of supplementing the daily food ration cannot be overestimated. The food that was available to the inhabitants of Theresienstadt was not sufficient for survival.<sup>49</sup> The overcrowding of the ghetto, which reached its height during the summer of 1942, soon led to severe problems in the distribution kitchens due to food shortages.<sup>50</sup> There was simply not enough

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<sup>47</sup> Bondy, *Elder of the Jews*, p.323. The *Putzkolonne* was a cleaning division, one of the *hunderschaften* work groups.

<sup>48</sup> Schiff, *Theresienstadt*, p.38.

<sup>49</sup> For information on the rations available to inmates in the Theresienstadt Ghetto, see: Adler, *Theresienstadt*, Chapter 12, pp.343 – 375, daily bread ration, p.354; Lederer, *Ghetto Theresienstadt*, Chapter 4, pp.57 – 87. Troller, *Theresienstadt*, Chapters 6 and 8. Also see: USHMM: RG – 50 – 030.334 Gerda Haas; RG – 50 – 030.344 Emily Schleissner; RG – 50 – 106.07 Ernst Kolben. In addition see: FVA: 1461 Hilda Bodenheimer; 2268 Irene Wolf; 1321 Lori Schwartz; 0946 Löre Löwenthal. For examples of early and late food ration cards used in Theresienstadt see Adler, *Die Verheimlichte Wahrheit*, pp.173-174.

<sup>50</sup> Adler, *Theresienstadt*, p.694. The population by the summer of 1942 was 58,491 (18.09.42).

food and equipment to feed everyone, a situation which only began to ease at the end of 1942 when more supplies reached the ghetto.

In November 1941 it was decided that all prisoners in Theresienstadt would be issued with three meals a day.<sup>51</sup> The quantity of food which was prepared in the ghetto kitchens related directly to the figures supplied to them by the Central Registry. As prisoners approached the kitchens to collect their food, they held out their ration cards and one token or coupon was cut off the card by queue monitors. The kitchen staff were responsible for making sure that no prisoner queued twice for the same meal. For the average prisoner in Theresienstadt the diet consisted of mouldy bread and potatoes, while workers received an extra ounce of margarine and an ounce of sugar in addition to the regular rations. Lederer describes the food available to the prisoners,

Lunch, mostly potatoes with gravy, swedes or a ladle full of boiled barley, was prepared and distributed in several shifts. Long queues of prisoners lined up in the courtyards, many of them even without mess tins. Food was brought to the blocks and houses for those who were unable to fetch it. But it reached them cold and was indigestible in this state for the aged and infirm.<sup>52</sup>

Henry Örtelt who was deported to Theresienstadt from Berlin, describes how the meagreness of the rations was thrown into stark relief by the pervading smell of good food.<sup>53</sup>

The smell of the bakery lingered over the whole town, but it was a teaser. When our food was dished out, it was a piece of white bread three by three inches and a couple of inches high.<sup>54</sup>

<sup>51</sup> For general information on food and nutrition in the ghetto see: Adler, *Theresienstadt*, Chapter 12, 'Ernährung', pp.343-375. Lederer, *Ghetto Theresienstadt*, Chapter 3, 'The Overcrowded Ghetto', pp.35-56.

<sup>52</sup> Lederer, *Ghetto Theresienstadt*, p.48.

<sup>53</sup> Prior to the summer of 1942 this would have come from the town bakeries supplying bread to the non-Jewish residents and afterwards, any fresh bread would have gone straight to the *Kommandantur*.

<sup>54</sup> Henry Örtelt, in: Rhoda G. Lewin, ed. *Witnesses to the Holocaust – An Oral History* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1990), p.64.

This situation persisted until May 1942 when Jakob Edelstein made one of the most controversial decisions of his entire leadership – to stagger food rations and to create a hierarchy of food allowance and nourishment among the ghetto community.<sup>55</sup> Under his direction, the Jewish Self-Administration introduced three food categories: S, K and N. Group S, consisting of heavy workers, were allocated more bread than other prisoners and extra portions of margarine, sugar and meat paste. This was controversial because the ghetto leaders were only able to supplement the diet of the workers in group S by reducing the rations available to group K.

Category K was made up of the elderly and the infirm, and being placed in this group was akin to a death sentence. Without the extra rations the elderly were quick to succumb to illness and died in their hundreds.

Category N was introduced for administration officials and regular workers who occasionally received extra rations. Even when they were not receiving extra rations, however, the normal allowance of sugar and bread was higher than that given to category K prisoners. Although an inmate's food group status was critical to survival, these categories were not rigid and it was easy for a prisoners to slip from group S to group N. If an S worker was sick he would lose his extra bread ration for 8 days. If an N worker was ill for several weeks at a time his rations would be reduced to those of a K inmate, regardless of the fact that he might be an essential worker. So although the prisoners in categories S and N felt some level of protection through receiving extra food, the boundaries between categories were thin and fluid, and the 'privileged' witnessed for themselves the terrible hunger and deprivation of the category K inmates.

Prior to the introduction of the food categories, the daily bread ration for prisoners was 350g.<sup>56</sup> When the categories were introduced on 19 May 1942, category S was to receive 500g, category N 375g and category K 333g.<sup>57</sup> The

<sup>55</sup> See Adler, *Theresienstadt*, Chapter 12 'Ernährung' / Food / Nourishment, pp.343-376. Also see Lederer, *Ghetto Theresienstadt*, Chapters 3 and 4.

<sup>56</sup> This was set on 17.12.41.

<sup>57</sup> Adler, *Theresienstadt*, p.354. For charts and statistics on amount of food in grams distributed see Adler pp.344-351. In his description of food rations in the ghetto Lederer draws attention to

categorisation did not prevent hunger being rife. According to Vera Schiff, ‘It overcame any other consideration, overwhelming and crushing its victims.’<sup>58</sup>

Many of the elderly and infirm did not have any relatives left outside of the ghetto who could send them parcels to top up their meagre rations or anyone inside the ghetto who might share their food with them. Schiff writes,

The camp’s famine generated yet another feature: the thinned-out presence of the old German Jews who hung to life by a mere thread. They offered a pathetic, heartbreaking sight. Unattached unassisted, they suffered from terrible hunger, which chased them out of their miserable attics, where they lived crowded with other old people covered with fleas, bedbugs and lice. This then was Europe’s former intelligentsia: distinguished, illustrious university professors, physicians, lawyers, businessmen now reduced to derelict beggars for a spoonful of so-called soup.<sup>59</sup>

She describes the aged Germans and Austrians collecting their pitiful rations and begging the young Czech kitchen staff for more food or asking their fellow inmates for leftovers.

Still today I can hear ringing in my ears, their cultured German, as they asked those lined up their only question. They hardly looked into anyone’s eyes, their heads slightly tilted, with a humiliated expression, they repeated over and over, ‘Nimmt der Herr die Suppe? Oder die Dame?’ Loosely translated it meant, ‘Could the gentleman or lady spare the soup?’<sup>60</sup>

In *Fragments of Memory – from Kolin to Jerusalem*, Hana Greenfield recalls the huge benefits of working with food in the ghetto and the horror with which she served the starving elderly from Germany and Austria. She recalls one day while serving the soup,

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the discrepancies in the German figures and the figures kept by the Jewish administration in relation to food distribution in the ghetto. Lederer, *Ghetto Theresienstadt*, p.63.

<sup>58</sup> Schiff, *Theresienstadt*, p.84. The arrival of the final transports in the ghetto together with those who came on the death marches will be discussed in the Epilogue.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*

An old man standing before me whispered: ‘Miss, please give me from the bottom, I am so hungry,’ hoping that there would be a potato or turnip at the bottom of the barrel. I looked up and recognised the old man as my grandfather. Not wishing to humiliate him, I refrained from making any sign of recognition.<sup>61</sup>

Emily Schleissner reinforces the importance of working in the kitchens, or knowing someone who did. She writes,

We had to go with our small plate to get whatever they gave us – mostly soup. If somebody had somebody who worked in the kitchen they stole. My mother worked in the kitchen and she didn’t steal too much but we had something extra. I personally was not hungry. My mother worked in the kitchens and then I was married to a chief physician and he had extra.<sup>62</sup>

Schleissner’s reference to her husband’s status highlights an important issue, namely that the members of the Jewish council and other men and women who held positions in the administration were allotted extra rations together with their spouses. While the majority of the administrative figures were placed within category N, and therefore received some extra food compared with those in category K, there are few instances of administrative figures taking advantage of their position.<sup>63</sup>

#### 4.2.5 Work

Edelstein’s decision of May 1942 to introduce the ration categories shows how closely linked were the two areas of food and employment. The fact that certain jobs guaranteed better food was to play an enormous part in the distribution of work by the Labour Department. Prior to Edelstein’s decision, the Labour Department had established the *Hunderschäften* on 25 December 1941. These were work groups of men and women who carried out essential but often

<sup>61</sup> Hana Greenfield, *Fragments of Memory – from Kolin to Jerusalem* (Jerusalem: Gefen Publishing House, 1992), p.4.

<sup>62</sup> USHMM: RG – 50 – 030.344, Emily Schleissner.

<sup>63</sup> Chapter Five outlines how many of those who worked with children ensured that the young received extra rations which they could have claimed for themselves.

menial tasks in the ghetto. All new arrivals over fourteen were forced to work in these groups prior to being assigned more permanent positions. Those who were exempt from work were the chronically ill, the blind and those classified as either ‘Prominente A’ or ‘Prominente B’. However, most of the prominent prisoners volunteered in some area of the ghetto administration.<sup>64</sup>

Ditl Orenstein who was one of only four women on Edelstein’s staff and the only woman in Theresienstadt to hold a prominent position in the official administration, was made head of the *Frauenarbeitseinsatz* (the employment office for women). Furious at having been lied to by the SS about the separation of families, the women who arrived in the ghetto in December 1941 refused to work. Bondy writes,

Eventually, after some persuasion by Ditl Orenstein and her aides, some women began to work voluntarily. Work eventually became a regular duty for all women between the ages of fourteen and sixty; only mothers of small children and the disabled were excluded.<sup>65</sup>

Emily Schleissner who was given the privileged position of working in an office describes her work there. ‘I’d write reports which were submitted to the Germans or to the other Jewish agencies. I would type them – they would dictate to me.’<sup>66</sup> She adds,

It was the best I could have got. I was more or less protected. They wouldn’t send me away. I was needed. Once in a while maybe they brought something but I couldn’t use it. I wouldn’t say I had special things.<sup>67</sup>

Asked by her interviewer whether she was able to gain more information than the average prisoner, especially in relation to forthcoming transports, she replied,

<sup>64</sup> For detailed description of work in the ghetto see: Adler, *Theresienstadt*, Chapter 13, pp.376-421.

<sup>65</sup> Bondy, ‘Women in Theresienstadt.’ In: Ofer and Weitzman, eds. *Women in the Holocaust*, p.312.

<sup>66</sup> USHMM: RG – 50 – 030.344, Emily Schleissner.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*

Yes, definitely. But whether I could use it or not I wouldn't be able to say. I was somehow protected. And I wasn't married at that time, [so] my parents were protected by me, as they didn't divide families.<sup>68</sup>

Having worked in a good position in one of the ghetto kitchens, Eva Roubicková from Prague was given the relatively enviable job of working outside in the ghetto gardens and allotments. This had two substantial benefits: it allowed exercise and fresh air and, more importantly, provided an opportunity to 'steal' vegetables from the gardens. The negative aspect was that the weather was often intolerable – extreme heat in the summer and debilitating cold in the winter. Describing her work in the kitchen she wrote, 'Kitchen duty's great. Even though we have to be there all the time, morning till night and fight with people who want to come in.'<sup>69</sup> Having moved to her new position working outside, she wrote on the 10 December 1942 'It's terribly cold in the pasture. Sometimes we warm ourselves in the crematorium.'<sup>70</sup>

Once Edelstein had established the ghetto administration, and the various departments under his jurisdiction were running as smoothly as possible, he became convinced by the need to keep the population of Theresienstadt employed. He believed that through labour lay the possibility of survival, by both maintaining the ghetto population and minimising deportation. Edelstein was confident that if enough of the population worked productively, the Nazis would not think of breaking up his community. It was this belief that led Edelstein to promote the concept of 'rescue through work'.<sup>71</sup> Ansbacher explains Edelstein's strategy.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>69</sup> Roubicková, *We're Alive and Life Goes On*, p.20.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, p.61.

<sup>71</sup> The term, 'Rescue-Through-Work', was first used by Trunk in, *Judenrat*, pp. 400-413. Jakob Edelstein was not alone in his belief that the best way for his community to survive was to create a productive work force for the Nazis. This was also the belief of Rumkowski in the Lodz ghetto and was also ghetto policy in Bialystok and Vilna. For more information on survival strategies in the ghettos including the concept of 'Rescue-Through-Work', see: Yisrael Gutman, 'The Concept of Labor in Judenrat Policy.' In: Gutman and Haft, eds. *Patterns of Jewish Leadership in Nazi Europe*, pp.151-181. Bauer, 'Jewish Leadership Reactions to Nazi Policies.' In: Bauer and Rotenstreich, eds. *The Holocaust as Historical Experience*, pp.173-192; Yahil, *The Fate of European Jewry*, Chapter 7, 'The Jews' Struggle for Survival', pp.186-224; Arnold Paucker and

The policy in Theresienstadt – and this was the policy of Edelstein, and also of Eppstein who continued it afterwards – was to distribute the workers widely. That is to say, sometimes scores of people worked in one office on something which, let us assume, three or four people could manage efficiently; they aimed at dividing up the tasks, so that each one could be considered essential, in order to release him from the deportation to the East.<sup>72</sup>

One of the most coveted jobs for women was working in the mica factory outside the confines of Theresienstadt.<sup>73</sup> The work in the mica factory consisted of splitting blocks of mica into paper thin sheets which could be used for the war effort. Alexandra Sternberg describes the painful hours spent in the factory.

The glare from the mica was so strong that after half an hour everybody's eyes were watering. After three or four hours our eyes were bleeding and we could only feel what we were doing, because seeing was now out of the question.<sup>74</sup>

These conditions notwithstanding, the positions inside the mica factory were sought after because the job was categorised as essential to the war effort and workers were thus exempt from deportations east.

#### 4.2.6 Health

Regular washing and the maintenance of hygienic living conditions, though near impossible, was considered a crucial survival tactic by both the ghetto's medical staff and the community.<sup>75</sup> While most adults were left to fend for themselves when it came to hygiene, the children of the ghetto were forced to

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Konrad Kweit, 'Jewish Leadership and Jewish Resistance.' In: Bankier, ed. *Probing the Depths of German Antisemitism*, pp.371-94; Dalia Ofer, 'Life in the Ghettos of Transnistria.' In: *Yad Vashem Studies*, 23 (1993), pp.145-71.

<sup>72</sup> *The Trial of Adolf Eichmann*, Volume 2, session 38, p.684.

<sup>73</sup> Mica was an essential mineral that was used during the war as a form of electrical insulation.

<sup>74</sup> Alexandra Sternberg in Schwertfeger, *Women of Theresienstadt*, p.48.

<sup>75</sup> The role of the Health Department and Dr. Munk is explored in Chapter Three of this thesis.

wash and clean themselves, their clothes and their sleeping quarters as often as possible.<sup>76</sup> Vera Schiff who worked in one of the ghetto hospitals writes,

At dawn we all dashed to the few rusty water faucets, hoping to cleanse ourselves ... So the day began with the fight for access to the cold-water faucets. Underneath were long gray basins, into which the precious water dripped, but we had no plugs to prevent drainage. Perhaps the facilities were once suitable for the soldiers who were housed here before us, but they were totally inadequate for the thousands of us.<sup>77</sup>

Ruth Schwertfeger concentrates on the role played by women in maintaining hygienic living conditions. She writes,

The women, including those from the upper classes, are credited with having curbed the spread of infectious diseases by their scrupulous cleaning. Since certain types of lice were carriers of typhus, every effort was made to eradicate them ... Several women write about moving their mattresses outside into the corridors where they had more room to do battle with the bedbugs.<sup>78</sup>

Apart from the individual efforts made by doctors, youth workers and parents to maintain standards of cleanliness for the young and old, an initiative was set up the Jewish Council to combat epidemics. Ruth Bondy explains how signs were erected throughout the ghetto during 1943 which read, 'Nach dem Stuhlgang vor dem Essen Händewaschen nicht Vergessen.'<sup>79</sup> She writes, 'Over and over again people were told to wash their hands after going to the toilet and before eating

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<sup>76</sup> See Chapter Five on the welfare of the child and adolescent population of the ghetto.

<sup>77</sup> Schiff, *Theresienstadt*, p.54.

<sup>78</sup> Schwertfeger, *Women of Theresienstadt*, p.43. Although Schwertfeger claims it was the women who were responsible for hygiene it was Fredy Hirsch who maintained such high standards amongst the children, see: Chapter Five of this thesis.

<sup>79</sup> Bondy, *Elder of the Jews*, p.362. 'After going to the toilet do not forget to wash your hands before you eat.'

and to make sure that the toilets and outhouses were kept as clean as possible. The smell of Lysol and Carbol was everywhere.<sup>80</sup>

#### 4.2.7 National and Community Conflict in the Ghetto

Throughout his administration Edelstein was aware of the difficulties between the different factions in the ghetto. He worked closely with the German community in Theresienstadt trying to ease their grievances and overcome the tensions between them and the Protectorate Jews. Edelstein was a great arbitrator and, according to Lederer, ‘The Ghetto in general, and the Czech Jews in particular, were the beneficiaries of his diplomatic skill.’<sup>81</sup>

From the summer of 1942 onwards, the influx of Jews from the Old Reich, caused the ghetto to assume a new character. Until this time, the ghetto had been the home of the Protectorate Jewish community. As more and more transports arrived and space became scarce, food rations were reduced and tensions mounted. Having been forced from their homes in Prague, Brno, and Ostrava the Protectorate communities had managed to create a precarious form of life for themselves in the ghetto which was now threatened by the arrival of the German speaking deportees. Far from welcoming the new arrivals as fellow Jews who like them had been forced to leave their homes, the Protectorate population viewed these deportees with suspicion. They spoke German rather than Czech, they came from highly assimilated families and compared to the Czech Jews were relatively apolitical. In short, they had little in common with the veteran Czech community of Theresienstadt which often associated the new arrivals with Germany and the Nazi regime.

Tension and conflict not only existed between the Czech and German communities but within the German community as a whole. Philipp Manes who arrived on one of the summer transports was among those who raised suspicion among his fellow Germans for his views on Germany and the Nazi regime. These criticisms forced him to question his Jewish identity and attitudes.

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<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.* Other aspects of health and medical care will be highlighted later in the examination of the community under the administration of Dr. Paul Eppstein.

<sup>81</sup> Lederer, *Ghetto Theresienstadt*, p.41.

One distinguished gentleman regards me as being too emphatically German. Another as not being Jewish enough in the ghetto. One should not accuse me of being too ‘western’ or of preferring the ‘teutonic’ spirit. It is only in Theresienstadt that I learned about the past and the phenomenal spiritual development of Judaism.<sup>82</sup>

Manes’ internal development while in the ghetto is not dissimilar to that of several of the Jewish leaders both Czech and German who were forced by circumstance to address their identities as Jews and as Zionists.<sup>83</sup>

The suspicious and critical manner in which the Czech community viewed the German and Austrian Jews was reciprocated. Feeling their dislike, the Germans responded in kind, chastising the Czechs for their unwelcoming and ungenerous spirit. Manes wrote about these nationalistic divisions in his diary. While he admired many of the Czech workers and leaders he wrote, ‘The Jewish Czech does not love us – he sees only the German in us.’ But he later admitted that he knew ‘too little about Czechoslovakia.’<sup>84</sup> His opinion on the Czech communities is echoed in several diaries and memoirs; and is mentioned by fellow prisoner Hedwig Ems who claims, ‘The Czechs hated us just as much as we hated Hitler and they held us responsible for the calamity that had it them.’<sup>85</sup> Rosa Solomon from Berlin was also critical of the Czech community in the ghetto. She lamented the fact that they did not treat the German Jews as fellow sufferers, writing, ‘One would have anticipated a certain bonding and solidarity ... But nothing of the sort happened. For them we are not persecuted fellow-believers but hated Germans.’<sup>86</sup> She explains how an inmate’s native language corresponded to how they were treated and how they experienced the ghetto. She writes,

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<sup>82</sup> WL: Manes, *Tatsachenbericht*, Book 6, Chapter 24, pp.541-544.

<sup>83</sup> In particular see description of Gonda Redlich in Chapter Five of this thesis.

<sup>84</sup> WL: Manes, *Tatsachenbericht*, Book 2, p.543.

<sup>85</sup> YVA: 02/241, p.6. Testimony of Hedwig Ems.

<sup>86</sup> Rosa Solomon, in: Schwertfeger, *Women of Theresienstadt*, p.35.

Our Czech brothers were superior to us in that they could speak German and Czech. They could understand us but we could not understand them, for they always spoke Czech and addressed us in German only when they absolutely wanted to or had to.<sup>87</sup>

Adler also notes how the Germans were at a linguistic disadvantage,

Germans from the Reich were handicapped by their difficulty in understanding camp jargon with its mixture of old Austrian military language and sprinklings of Czech, Slavisms, Nazi-German and Zionist expressions, Theresienstadt coined words, and Bohemian and Moravian dialect.<sup>88</sup>

The nationalistic tensions in the ghetto were complex and layered, existing not only between the Czech and the German and Austrian communities – between the young political Protectorate Jews and the older more assimilated Jews from the Old Reich – but also between people from Germany and Austria. Although the Jews from Berlin and Vienna superficially had more in common with each other than with the Czechs, old Austrian-German tensions ran high. Manes was particularly critical of the ghetto's Austrian Jews who, according to him, had none of the work ethic that he so admired in the Czechs. He wrote,

Austria, Golden Vienna, Blue Danube. Not all is gold. I have found little of all that in the people of transport 1V ... An unusual sensitivity and a love of arguing that is grotesque. With their eternal hand kissing they think they represent Vienna but all our sympathy for the Emperor's city is disappearing now we have got to know the inhabitants. We North Germans don't like the Viennese. They are far removed from us.<sup>89</sup>

Manes was not the only German who was critical of the Austrians. Gertrude Schneider detected a hierarchy of criticism and snobbery among the ghetto population, writing, 'The Viennese looked down on the Ostjuden and the German

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<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>88</sup> Adler, *Theresienstadt*, p.304.

<sup>89</sup> WL: Manes, *Tatsachenbericht*, Book 2, p.544.

Jews looked down on the Viennese Jews and so you stayed with your own in order to avoid conflict.<sup>90</sup>

Gonda Redlich was, like Manes, aware of the tensions not only between the Zionists and non-Zionists but also of the nationalistic tensions as well.<sup>91</sup> On 26 May 1942 Redlich notes in his diary, ‘Jews from Germany, medal winners from the war, may be arriving in a couple of days. Their relations with the Czech Jews will not be friendly.’<sup>92</sup> All these testimonies lie in direct opposition to Livia Rothkirchen’s views on ghetto harmony.<sup>93</sup> She claims that what discord there was among the various ghetto factions was sown by the Nazis. She writes,

Despite national and language differences between German and Czech-speaking prisoners, the social structure of Terezín was relatively homogenous as to social background, educational level and lifestyle. This is not to say that absolute harmony prevailed: the Germans did their best to sow discord among the diverse groups of Jews from Bohemia, Moravia, Austria, Germany, Holland and Denmark.<sup>94</sup>

Lederer writes extensively on the differences between the summer of 1942 arrivals and the Protectorate communities which had been in Theresienstadt since November 1941. Describing some of the young Berlin Jews who had escaped deportation east and had ended up in Theresienstadt, he writes that they were, ‘completely assimilated: the girls tried to imitate the manners and mannerisms of German film actresses, and the boys strutted around in jackboots.’<sup>95</sup> It is not hard to see why the Czechs Jews would have found the arrival of the German transports problematic, especially when so many of their fellow countrymen had been deported east to make room for the Berlin Jews.<sup>96</sup>

<sup>90</sup> Gertrude Schneider, in: Schwertfeger, *Women of Theresienstadt*, p.37.

<sup>91</sup> See Chapter Five for Redlich’s work as head of the Youth Welfare Department.

<sup>92</sup> Freidman, ed. *The Terezín Diary of Gonda Redlich*, p.45.

<sup>93</sup> See Chapter One of this thesis.

<sup>94</sup> Rothkirchen, ‘The Zionist Character’, pp.990-991.

<sup>95</sup> Lederer, *Ghetto Theresienstadt*, p.55.

<sup>96</sup> See earlier section on deportations up to June 1943.

Lederer also describes the Polish Jews who had settled in Vienna and had been caught up in the transports to Theresienstadt. He describes them as, ‘Viennese spivs, smelling of haircream and scent, obliging and up to all sorts of tricks, always on the make.’<sup>97</sup> He places people from both these groups in contrast to the Jews from the Protectorate. He writes,

There was the corny country cousin from Bohemia and Moravia with his sturdy, knotty walking stick and his walrus moustache, wearing a sheepskin coat in the winter; old Czech women with their heads wrapped in coloured scarves; young, typically Czech, intellectuals, and proud, self-assured young Zionists; young women from Czech towns dressed in Theresienstadt fashion in skirts patched together from blankets and wearing headscarves.<sup>98</sup>

While the majority of the adult population was well aware of tensions between the communities, it seems that the children and adolescents in Theresienstadt were less conscious of the rupture caused by the new arrivals, or if they were aware of it, were less concerned by it. Marlene Altman says,

First the Czechs came and then the Germans, then we got the Danes. But we all somehow got on together. No, I can't remember any fights, anything. The only fights we had were over food. Nothing else mattered very much.<sup>99</sup>

Although the differences between the communities were stark and tensions ran deep, everyone including the ‘prominente’ had to live within the confines of the ghetto walls and were forced to endure largely similar conditions. Lederer concludes, ‘This hustling and bustling crowd lived in a town of nightmarish quality worthy of the brush of Breughel or the pen of Kafka.’<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> Lederer, *Ghetto Theresienstadt*, p.55.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>99</sup> Kavanaugh, Altman, p.6.

#### 4.2.8 Deportations East, 14 July 1942 – February 1943

The first phase of deportations out of Theresienstadt, which started on 9 January 1942 and ended on 13 July 1942, mainly affected the Protectorate Jews, whereas the second phase which ran from 14 July 1942 until 26 October 1942 primarily targeted the elderly and the infirm from Germany and Austria. Gerty Spies describes the Autumn of 1942 in her memoir, *My Years in Theresienstadt*,

Daily transports came and went, thousands of feet whirled the disaster-steeped dust into our lungs ... everything was terrifying, existence unbearable, the body weak, nerves shattered, continued existence impossible.<sup>101</sup>

Spies recorded this in her diary at a time when everyone in the ghetto was at risk of being transported east. Previous exemptions and privileges now counted for little and people tried desperately to form new relationships that might help them remain in the ghetto. Joan Ringelheim describes how some men and women searched out partners who might secure their stay, and concludes that some women were forced to prostitute themselves to influential men in order to survive.

You also survived by your male connections. It was the males who had the main offices, who ran the kitchens....[the] *Judenrat* [was] running [the ghetto and the Jewish men] *used* it. And did they *use* it. That was how you survived as a woman – through the male. I was done in by one. I suppose I didn't sleep high enough, to put it bluntly. Because in that society, that was the only way you could survive.<sup>102</sup>

Though there were undoubtedly cases of both men and women forming a relationship for the benefits it could bring them, it is damaging for Ringelheim to claim that this was women's primary survival strategy. This claim not only

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<sup>100</sup> Lederer, *Ghetto Theresienstadt*, p. 55.

<sup>101</sup> Gerty Spies, *My Years in Theresienstadt – How One Woman Survived the Holocaust* (New York: Prometheus Books, 1997), Chapter 5, 'How I survived it', p.75.

ignores and undermines the strenuous work and ingenuity of hundreds of women in the ghetto but classes all male administrative staff as exploiters.

Until the summer and autumn of 1942, a prisoner's status as a member (or even the relative of a member) of one of the two Aufbau transports ('AK I' and 'AK II'), could save him or her from deportation. This 'protection' was of little use come the second phase of deportations. Michael Honigwachs explains,

Because we were on the Zionist Schutzliste we were privileged. It wasn't privilege because there was no privilege in the camp. You didn't get any special treatment. All you got was protection that you wouldn't leave by virtue of the fact you were related to an AK person.<sup>103</sup>

Asked whether the threat of deportation was constant and whether the young were aware of it, Marlene Altman replies, 'People leaving, yes, people leaving because they all had to assemble at the same place. But we didn't know where - they went to different places.'<sup>104</sup> Asked whether people in Theresienstadt knew about the destination of the transports and whether they knew the significance of Auschwitz she replies, 'No, Nobody knew.'<sup>105</sup>

#### **4.3 Section Two: The Community under Eppstein, January 1942 – September 1944**

##### **4.3.1 The Arrival of Eppstein**

Two days after the arrival of Dr. Paul Eppstein on 26 January 1943, Rabbi Leo Baeck arrived from Berlin on transport I/87. The two most prominent leaders of the German Jewish community were now inside the ghetto and their arrival substantially altered the face of Theresienstadt, finally tipping the balance of the ghetto population in favour of the German Jews. Theresienstadt was no longer a

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<sup>102</sup> Joan Ringelheim, 'Women and the Holocaust: A Reconsideration of Research.' In: Carol Rittner and John K. Roth, eds. *Different Voices – Women and the Holocaust* (St. Paul, Minnesota: Paragon House, 1993), p.376.

<sup>103</sup> YVA: 033C /1733, p.39.

<sup>104</sup> Kavanaugh, Altman, p.8.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.* The question of what the Jewish leaders and the prisoners knew about the camps in the east will be asked again in sections 2 and 3 under the Eppstein and Murmelstein administrations.

Czech ghetto. Paul Eppstein took over as Jewish elder of Theresienstadt in January 1943 when the ghetto population stood at nearly 44,000.<sup>106</sup>

The ghetto underwent its most fundamental changes during Eppstein's administration, particularly in terms of national make-up, with the once dominant Czechs being replaced by the Germans and Austrians. The year 1943 also witnessed the arrival of Dutch and Danish Jews in the ghetto.<sup>107</sup> Although Eppstein oversaw the ghetto during the relative 'calm' of Himmler's deportation ban, he was still in position when the Nazis issued the orders for the mass deportations out of Theresienstadt during the autumn of 1943 and the spring of 1944. He was Jewish Elder during the *Stadtverschönerung* (the city beautification project) and was forced to act as the Nazis' front man during the visits made to the ghetto by the International Red Cross in June 1944. Eppstein's leadership also saw Edelstein's arrest and deportation to Auschwitz, which finally destroyed the vestiges of the Protectorate community's influence in the ghetto.

Vera Schiff developed some contact with Paul Eppstein during his time in office.

I knew a little then of Paul Eppstein ... Later, I got more insight into his complex personality. A friend of mine, Helen, a woman of unusual beauty and charm, became his mistress.. Though she loved Eppstein passionately, she had a few qualms about his character ... But who of us can judge a man who lived on borrowed time, fully aware of his death sentence. Every Elder of the Jews and the members of his Council were mindful of the fact that their stint in power would be short and terminated at the pleasure of the commandant.<sup>108</sup>

When asked whether the community under Eppstein knew how the ghetto was organised, Gabriele Silton claims, 'Yes, the people imprisoned knew how the camp was run – and also that the so-called 'self-government' was in actual fact

<sup>106</sup> Out of which 17,083 prisoners were unable to work due to age, disability or illness. This left a capable work force of 25,917 prisoners: 11,879 men and 14,038 women.

<sup>107</sup> The first Dutch transport arrived in Theresienstadt on 22.04.43 and the first Danish transport arrived on 5.10.43.

<sup>108</sup> Schiff, *Theresienstadt*, p.74.

under command of the Nazis.<sup>109</sup> Even though the majority of the ghetto community was aware of the Nazis' ultimate control, the fact that the population had so little contact with the SS and other Nazi functionaries meant that much of their anger over conditions in the ghetto and fear of deportations was directed at the Jewish leaders. The price paid by the men of the Jewish council for trying to continue their community work, and for acting as the visible face of the ghetto command, was that they were blamed for decisions which were not theirs and condemned for orders which were issued in Berlin.

The living conditions which prevailed under Edelstein continued under Eppstein's administration. Rabbi Leo Baeck describes in a post-war article how ghetto conditions 'submerged the individual',

He was enclosed in the mass, just as he was encircled by the crowded narrowness, by the dust and the dirt, by the teeming myriads of insects and encircled, as it were, also by the need and distress, always together, the hunger that seemed never to end – enclosed in the camp of the concentrated, never alone by himself.<sup>110</sup>

He saw maintaining one's individuality almost as a 'test'. 'Much, perhaps everything, depended on whether ... the individual in one remained alive as an individual and continued to recognize the individual in the other.'<sup>111</sup>

#### 4.3.2 Pregnancy and Abortion During the Eppstein Administration:

The care of pregnant women in the ghetto and the forced abortions that Theresienstadt doctors had to perform on prisoners as late as eight months into their pregnancy is one of the most sensitive areas of the medical history of the Theresienstadt community.

In *Women in Theresienstadt and Birkenau*, Ruth Bondy points out how it was difficult for women in the ghetto to know whether or not they were pregnant as insufficient food and disease meant that they no longer menstruated. Gonda

<sup>109</sup> Sarah Kavanaugh, interview with Gabriele Silton (London: 2000), p.7.

<sup>110</sup> Baeck, 'Life in a Concentration Camp.' In: Baker, *Days of Sorrow and Pain*, pp.286-287.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*

Redlich draws attention in his diary to the paradoxical fact that both contraception and giving birth was illegal in the ghetto. On 3 October 1943 he writes,

Now I recollect: they have forbidden having children here. But it's also forbidden to use contraception. A young man was incarcerated and charged with [possession of] contraband when a condom was found in his gear.<sup>112</sup>

Bondy writes about the treatment of pregnant women in the ghetto, explaining

At first, women who had arrived pregnant were allowed to give birth, but in July 1943 an order for compulsory abortion was issued. The parents had to agree to the abortion in writing. The heads of the living quarters, the *Zimmeraelteste*, were asked to report any case of pregnancy known to them. Babies born henceforth were sent with their parents on the next transport to the East.<sup>113</sup>

Although Bondy writes that the law relating to abortions in the ghetto was brought into action in July 1943 it was not until 23 August 1943 that this law was printed in full in a Theresienstadt *Tagesbefehle* (daily report).<sup>114</sup> Gonda Redlich describes the build up to this law in his diary, writing on 7 July 1943, 'It was commanded in the Order of the Day: all pregnant women are required to report their condition.'<sup>115</sup> He continues, 'They want to destroy the offspring of all women who are less than six months pregnant.'<sup>116</sup>

On 21 August 1943, Dr. Erich Munk, head of the Health Department, wrote as follows to the chief medical officer and all the gynaecologists in the ghetto,

As a consequence of the two latest notifications of births, SS Obersturmbannführer Burger had announced that in future all

<sup>112</sup> Friedman, ed. *The Terezín Diary of Gonda Redlich*, p.132.

<sup>113</sup> Bondy, in: Ofer and Weitzman, eds. *Women in the Holocaust*, p.315.

<sup>114</sup> YVA: 0.64 series, files 1-7.

<sup>115</sup> Friedman, ed. *The Terezín Diary of Gonda Redlich*, p.124.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*

fathers of children conceived here, and also the mothers and the children, will be included in transports and deported. We therefore request you again to report, first of all, all pregnancies known to you which have not yet been reported, since otherwise the examining gynaecologist becomes an accessory, and therefore guilty.<sup>117</sup>

By inferring that the examining doctors and possibly their families could be included in transports east, the Nazis ensured that few pregnancies remained unreported.

In *Women of Theresienstadt*, Ruth Schwertfeger identifies an area of ‘gender-related suffering’ covering the treatment of mothers in the ghetto and the laws relating to motherhood, pregnancy and abortion.<sup>118</sup> Although it was obviously the women who underwent the ordeal of abortion and coped primarily with the deportation and death of any offspring, Schwertfeger correctly identifies that, ‘Men presumably suffered the absence of their children no less than women.’<sup>119</sup> She continues, however, that ‘since men did not work directly with children they were at least not reminded on a daily basis of their loss. Nor did they have to suffer the trauma of losing children with whom they had developed strong emotional ties.’<sup>120</sup> This second statement is not only controversial but substantially incorrect, as demonstrated by the work of Egon Redlich and Fredy Hirsch with the ghetto’s children and youth.<sup>121</sup> Countless diary entries made by Redlich describe his and Hirsch’s anguish over the deportation of children and babies out of the ghetto and also the anxiety Redlich felt over his own wife’s pregnancy.<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>117</sup> *The Trial of Adolf Eichmann*, Volume 5, sessions 115-119, document no: T/863, p.2171.

<sup>118</sup> Schwertfeger, *Women of Theresienstadt*. For information on ‘Gender related suffering’ and how men and women coped inside the ghettos and camps see: Milton, ‘Women and the Holocaust: The case of German and German-Jewish Women.’ In: Rittner and Roth, eds. *Different Voices – Women and the Holocaust*, pp.213-250.

<sup>119</sup> Schwertfeger, *Women of Theresienstadt*, p.62.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>121</sup> See Chapter Five of this thesis.

<sup>122</sup> Redlich explains in his diary how his wife was allowed to give birth despite the ban on births in the ghetto. On 16.03.44 he writes, ‘The wife of an enemy officer gave birth before her time to a stillborn child,. Jewish doctors saved this woman. Our enemies felt for the bereaved mother and allowed your mother and other mothers to give birth’, p.152.

Even though the punishment for refusing an abortion was automatic inclusion on the next transport east, many healthy, young women decided on this course of action.<sup>123</sup> For those women who arrived in the ghetto pregnant, the Jewish medical officials, with the approval of Edelstein and later Eppstein, falsified ghetto records and dates allowing women to give birth in secret. On several occasions doctors and nurses assisted the attempts of families to disguise a pregnancy. Trude Groag recalls,

My daughter-in-law, Madla, was a stunning woman. This energetic, friendly, extraordinary woman became pregnant. I stuffed clothing around her to round her out so she looked fat, not pregnant.<sup>124</sup>

Some of the babies which were born in the ghetto were hidden while others were instantly deported east.<sup>125</sup> Between 13 February 1942 and 5 March 1945, 150 babies were born in Theresienstadt, of which 17 survived the war.<sup>126</sup> Out of the 133 who died, 31 died in the ghetto while the remaining 102 were deported east where they were killed on arrival in Auschwitz. The first child to be born in the ghetto on 13 February 1942 was known as 'AK I', a reference to the *Aufbaukommando*, the first transport of Jews from Prague to arrive in the ghetto on 24 November 1941.

<sup>123</sup> In other ghettos not only were women threatened with deportation if they failed to comply with the laws on pregnancy and abortion but they were told they would be killed. On 24.07.41 the head of the ghetto police in Kaunas issued the following command, 'Pregnancies and births are prohibited in the ghetto. Pregnancies must be terminated. Pregnant women will be shot.' Corni, *Hitler's Ghettos*, p.206. Corni also describes similar laws being issued in the Vilna ghetto.

<sup>124</sup> Gurewitsch, *Mothers, Sisters, Resisters*, p.251.

<sup>125</sup> Those which were deported east as well as some of those who survived in the ghetto were registered in the Central Registry. Birth certificates were filled out for them by their parents and had to be signed by the officiating midwife and two witnesses. For an example of a ghetto birth certificate see: TSA: A 1333, series 1.

<sup>126</sup> Of the 15,000 children who were imprisoned in Theresienstadt throughout the war approximately one hundred survived. For more on births in the ghetto see: Schwertfeger, *Women of Theresienstadt*, p.62; Adler, *Theresienstadt 1941-1945*, p. 573. Although Adler says there were only 10,000 and 8,400 died. He carries on to say that out of those who died in the ghetto and those who were included in the Swiss transport, 100 survived the war. For general statistics on children who were born and died in Theresienstadt and those who were deported east see: Karny, ed. *Terezin Memorial Book*.

The laws surrounding pregnancy and abortion were made more distressing for women by being constantly changed. This can be seen in the diary of Eva Roubicková who recorded these changes as they took place. In March 1944 she writes, ‘Every woman in the ghetto had to sign a paper saying that she’ll report any pregnancy immediately.’<sup>127</sup> Later that month, she notes, ‘We’re suddenly allowed to give birth again and abortions are now punishable.’<sup>128</sup> Those women who were permitted to give birth in the ghetto received a permit of pregnancy which was stamped and signed by the Jewish Elder of the Ghetto. On 20 March 1944 a permit was typed and signed for Hanna Neurad which read that, ‘The pregnancy of Hanna Neurad has been reported.’ It went on to say that the delivery would be allowed to take place that autumn.<sup>129</sup>

During March 1945, just two months before liberation, Vera Schiff was ordered to have her own pregnancy terminated. Having fainted at work she was examined by a ghetto doctor. She writes, ‘The diagnosis was fast in coming: I was pregnant, some three months plus, and I had to have an abortion as fast as possible. There was nothing anyone could do for us to change the situation.’<sup>130</sup> She continues,

Following the procedure, short in duration, but to me lasting an eternity, Dr. Klein sat on my bed, supported my forehead and wiped my tears. The ether, which failed to put me to sleep, had some effect after all. I kept on choking, vomiting and feeling so wretched that Dr. Klein did not dare to move from my side. The very next day I returned to work, which offered, as always, the occasion to forget all individual pains.<sup>131</sup>

An example of the horrific dilemmas faced by some doctors in the ghetto is described by Schiff when she explains how, together with her boss, Dr. Freund, they killed a new-born baby in order to save the life of the mother. The woman arrived in the ghetto heavily pregnant and succeeded in hiding the fact. Three

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<sup>127</sup> Roubicková, *We're Alive and Life Goes On*, p.136.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid*, p.137.

<sup>129</sup> TSA: A 9258, series 2. Pregnancy permit of Hanna Neurad, 20.3.44.

<sup>130</sup> Schiff, *Theresienstadt*, p.126.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid*, p.127.

days later she gave birth, pleading with the doctor to kill her child and thus prevent both being sent east. Dr. Freund in a desperate attempt not to go against his Hippocratic oath begged Schiff to kill the baby for him. Schiff writes,

For a moment I thought he had taken leave of his senses. The life of the baby, as well as the life of his mother, was beyond anyone's deliverance. But Dr. Freund was not insane, he was paralyzed by the pledge he had taken in other times and in another world.<sup>132</sup>

Together they killed the child in order to save the mother. Schiff writes, 'Dr. Freund not only violated his Hippocratic oath but he had also made me his accomplice, in his perhaps noble attempt to save the woman's life.'<sup>133</sup> Schiff never established if the woman survived the ghetto.

#### 4.3.3 The Arrival of the Danish and Dutch Communities and the Further Expansion of the Ghetto

Nine months into the Eppstein administration, the first transport of Danish Jews arrived on 4 October 1943. Mordechai Ansbacher describes the shock and sadness with which the ghetto veterans watched the procession of Danish Jews enter Theresienstadt.

Suddenly there appeared a group of people with top hats, frock coats, with patent leather shoes, with walking sticks, as if they were strolling on some promenade abroad. We could not bear to see this, we cried. We said: 'How can it happen that these people are being brought here unaided, without anything?' Later on they told us that they were literally dragged from the streets, that the Danish people, helped them and objected to their being taken.<sup>134</sup>

According to Adler, by 31 December 1943 the population of the ghetto was 34,655. This number included 15,000 Protectorate Jews, 13,000 German Jews, 5,500 Austrian Jews, 250 Dutch Jews and the newly arrived Danish

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<sup>132</sup> *Ibid*, p.53.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid*, p.54.

<sup>134</sup> *The Trial of Adolf Eichmann*. Volume 2, session 38, p. 683.

community of 460 Jews.<sup>135</sup> The Danish community, which arrived on 4 October 1943, remained in Theresienstadt until they were transported back to Denmark via Sweden on 15 April 1945.<sup>136</sup> The Danish Jews were all classed as ghetto 'prominent' and received 'privileged' accommodation and better rations than the average prisoner. They still went hungry, however. According to Leni Yahil,

The Danish prisoners in Theresienstadt testified that the parcels they received from their homeland from 1943 onward were a factor in enabling them to prevail both physically and psychologically. The parcels if not filched by the SS, supplied important goods for the black market on which prisoners could purchase vital items such as bread or soap.<sup>137</sup>

Yahil concludes by saying, 'While these packages carried an expression of support for the prisoners, they did not represent a means of rescue.'<sup>138</sup>

In January 1944 the ghetto population was further diversified when the first transport of Dutch Jews arrived from the Westerbork transit camp in Holland.<sup>139</sup> They were to add a new dimension to the already complex ghetto population. Max E. Mannheimer, who was deported from Westerbork to

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<sup>135</sup> Adler, *Theresienstadt*, p.698. He also records that by January 1945 there were only 400 Danish Jews in the ghetto. As the Danish Jews were rarely included in transports heading east due to their privileged position in the ghetto these 60 people remain largely unaccounted for.

<sup>136</sup> Adler, *Theresienstadt*, p.701. The Danish Jews occupied a special place in the ghetto community and in the history of Theresienstadt. Due to the fact that a huge amount of pressure was put on the German Foreign Office by Denmark, the Danes were treated as special 'guests' inside the ghetto. For background on the history of the Danish Jewish community see: Ellen Levine, *Darkness Over Denmark: the Danish Resistance and the Rescue of the Jews* (New York: Holiday House, 2000); Therkel Straede, *October 1943: the Rescue of the Danish Jews from Annihilation* (Copenhagen: Royal Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1998); Leni Yahil, *The Rescue of Danish Jewry: A Test of a Democracy* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1969); Yahil, *The Fate of European Jewry*, Chapter 20, 'Attempts at Rescue', pp. 573-576.

<sup>137</sup> Yahil, *The Fate of European Jewry*, p.564.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>139</sup> This was the first transport of Jews from the Dutch transit camp at Westerbork. The first transport of Dutch Jews had arrived in Theresienstadt in April 1943. For information on the Dutch Jewish Community during the Holocaust in relation to Westerbork and Theresienstadt, see: Bob Moore, *Victims and Survivors – The Nazi Persecution of the Jews in the Netherlands 1940-1945* (London and New York: Arnold Books, 1997); Jacob Boas, *Boulevard des Misères: The Story of the Transit Camp Westerbork* (New York: Hamden, 1985); Jacob Presser, *Ashes in the Wind* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1988). Also see: RIOD: Theresienstadt collections.

Theresienstadt arrived in the ghetto on 25 February 1944. He remembers leaving Westerbork writing,

Neither myself nor the 1,800 people who were detailed for transfer to Theresienstadt on the 25 February 1944 were frightened when we heard about the deportation order. The name Theresienstadt, the model camp of the Nazis, did not imply horror. It considered a special favour to be permitted to live in Theresienstadt.<sup>140</sup>

As well as complicating the work of the already fraught housing department in the ghetto, the arrival of the Dutch Jews was to cause further tensions between the ghetto communities and nationalities. Silton recalls the divide, ‘The Czechs were nasty to all of us, especially the German speakers. The Dutch did not like the German speakers either. Therefore they did not help each other out.’<sup>141</sup> The arrival of the Dutch Jews brought up all the old disputes that had divided Jewish communities across Europe for decades as thousands of people with a multitude of languages, political views, cultural and nationalistic identities were forced together inside Theresienstadt. Silton later comments on the national conflicts saying, ‘I was aware of general conflict, not specific to any group. The Czechs were particularly disagreeable to any other group, but the German speaking people were not liked by any.’<sup>142</sup>

#### **4.4 Section Three: The Community under Murmelstein, September 1944 – May 1945**

##### **4.41 Murmelstein Takes Over**

The community that Murmelstein inherited from Eppstein in September 1944 was disjointed and fraught with anxieties and tensions, primarily due to the mass transports to Auschwitz, but also because of the proliferation of

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<sup>140</sup> RIOD: Box 35, file 3, C (51) og. Testimony of Max. E. Mannheimer.

<sup>141</sup> Kavanaugh, Silton, p.10.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*

nationalities, cultures, politics and identities. The community felt more distanced than ever from Murmelstein's administration and felt helpless in the face of future deportations. Now that the Jewish leaders were no longer responsible for compiling the transports lists, the community saw the leadership as having been stripped of its last useful task. The once vital protections lists were now redundant as the Jewish council could only compile short lists of key workers. All previous links and relationships with council members and heads of department were void. Asked about the relationship of the ghetto leaders and the community during 1944 and 1945 Marlene Altman replies, 'They were not approachable, I'm afraid, well some of them were all right. But there are some that I haven't got very good memories of.'<sup>143</sup> When asked if she could recall any one leader in particular she replied,

Yes, one in particular. A rabbi from Prague - Murmelstein. Who actually made it his business, when the Germans said well the next transport we'll send 500 and he said you'll do much better if you send 700 or 1000. This is how, actually, my brother had already left, but my mother because she was matron of the hospital was protected, they needed her, and when they decided that I should move on, my mother said, well then I'll go as well because I don't want to stay and my daughter go. And it was Murmelstein who said, then you both go.<sup>144</sup>

She continues to say, 'I remember the way he looked, the way he talked.' Asked if she had much contact with Murmelstein, Altman says,

I didn't but he was around, strutting around saying, look what I'm doing for you, I'm emptying the camp so that you can move about more freely and so that you have more space. And he actually did the Germans work for them.<sup>145</sup>

Altman also mentions Murmelstein in relation to how much the Theresienstadt leaders and the community knew about Auschwitz and the deportations east. She

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<sup>143</sup> Kavanaugh, Altman, p.7.

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*

claims that no one knew about Auschwitz except Murmelstein and that he kept his knowledge secret.

The name never cropped up. You were simply sent by another transport to somewhere else and the only person who apparently knew was that Murmelstein. He knew and he still made it his business to send people.<sup>146</sup>

Altman also claims that the men of the Jewish council and administration did not exploit their position to give themselves better rations or accommodation. Altman remembers that, ‘The only advantage they had I remember was that they had books.<sup>147</sup>

#### 4.4.2 October 1944 and Aftermath of the Mass Transports to Auschwitz

The mass transports out of Theresienstadt during September and October 1944 completely changed the face of the ghetto by including the majority of the Jewish leaders in addition to decimating the population. As a result, Theresienstadt entered its final phase. Ruth Schwertfeger explains,

The transports of the autumn of 1944 demolished the camp hierarchy, obliterating all distinctions between ‘Prominenten’ and ordinary inmates, taking even the Jewish Elders and their families.<sup>148</sup>

During the final phase of deportations friendships took on a new fragility. Inmates might lose a friend in a transport, and seek to make new friends only to see these new ties swiftly broken. Gerty Spies remembers saying goodbye to her friend Martha Geissmar who was included in the October transports.

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.* Murmelstein and Baeck received criticism from survivors after the war for not passing on information about the true nature of Auschwitz and the other death camps. Although from Baeck’s writing it is clear that he had more information available to him than Murmelstein and the Jewish Council.

<sup>147</sup> Kavanaugh, Altman, p.7.

<sup>148</sup> Schwertfeger, *Women of Theresienstadt*, p.89.

Seldom did I see a more sorrowful parting than Martha's. It was with a gentle, knowing melancholy that she distanced herself from life and people, disappointed by both. "You are the only person I am grieving for," she repeatedly said. We parted in the evening on the pitch-black street. "So – farewell," she said softly and kissed me.<sup>149</sup>

Lederer discusses the devastation caused by the October transports and the community's response. He writes,

During November, the remnants of the prisoners in the Ghetto slowly recovered from the shock of the October deportations. Though most of them knew that nothing short of a miracle had saved them from deportation, they did not feel relieved. The blow had struck the very vitals of the Ghetto: there was scarcely a prisoner who had not lost relatives or friends. As an aftermath deep gloom spread among the prisoners.<sup>150</sup>

Käthe Starke adds,

After this [last October] transport our hearts were empty, the streets were empty and the sidewalks were empty. The silence of death had entered the anthills of Theresienstadt. After four weeks filled with fear, agitation, the pain of separation, a workload that had now doubled and even tripled, slowly our feeble lives re-emerged from a deep, exhausted sleep.<sup>151</sup>

It was primarily the women who took on this 'triple workload' as the mass deportations of October 1944 had contained the majority of the ghetto's young men. After the transports left, according to Bondy, 'Theresienstadt was a city of women. The only men remaining were most of the prominent, all the Danish Jews, and others privileged in German eyes.'<sup>152</sup> These remaining women were now subjected to a 15 hour day and expected to carry out all the hard labour

<sup>149</sup> Spies, *My Years in Theresienstadt*, p.109.

<sup>150</sup> Lederer, *Ghetto Theresienstadt*, p.167.

<sup>151</sup> Schwertfeger, *Women of Theresienstadt*, p.95.

<sup>152</sup> Bondy, 'Women in Theresienstadt and Birkenau.' In: Ofer and Weitzman, eds. *Women in the Holocaust*, p.322.

which the men had primarily undertaken. One task was to dispose of the ashes of ghetto victims.

The Germans ordered women and children to throw the ashes of all the dead of the ghetto (almost thirty thousand people), which had been kept in numbered urns, into the Eger River, to remove the damning evidence.<sup>153</sup>

Trude Groag describes the process, writing, ‘Long chains of people stood shoulder to shoulder, women, children and old people handing the urns of our dead to one another, just like masons passing bricks on a building site.’<sup>154</sup>

#### 4.4.3 The Swiss Transport and the Repatriation of the Danish Community.

The psychological impact of the many deportations on those left behind was considerable. Schwertfeger writes,

Transport anxiety had become so ingrained in their psyche that when the inmates were offered the opportunity in February 1945 to leave on a transport to a neutral country – Switzerland – the offer was met with distrust, scepticism, and by many with flat rejection.<sup>155</sup>

On 3 February 1945 the daily report announced that a transport of 1,200 people were to leave the ghetto for Switzerland in two days.<sup>156</sup> Those considered for this transport had to fulfil certain criteria. Prisoners were automatically ruled out if their family had been deported east or if they knew too much about how the ghetto and how the transport system was run. The SS tried to include those who had contacts abroad and those who remained in good health. The transport of

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<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>154</sup> Schwertfeger, *Women of Theresienstadt*, p.99.

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.* p.101.

<sup>156</sup> For background information on why this transport left see: Yehuda Bauer *Jews for Sale? Nazi-Jewish Negotiations, 1933-1945* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), Chapter 12, ‘The Swiss Talks and the Budapest Tragedy’, pp.222-238. Sune Persson, ‘Folke Bernadotte and the White Buses.’ In: David Cesarani and Paul A. Levine, eds. *‘Bystanders’ to the Holocaust* (London: Frank Cass, 2002), pp.237-268. See pp.253-260.

1,200 also excluded any Slovak or Danish Jews or those from mixed marriages. Lederer writes,

These directives supplied both the pessimists and the optimists with arguments in support of their views. The exclusion of the privileged Danes was certainly a point in favour for the pessimists, while on the other hand the fact that certain usually well-informed prisoners had volunteered for this transport confirmed the views of the optimists.<sup>157</sup>

Vera Schiff adds,

In early February hearsay had it that new transports of Jews would be exchanged for German prisoners of war under the mediation of the Red Cross. The Council of Elders asked for volunteers. Few believed the proposed exchange... We became less certain, when those who enrolled were given ... nearly new luggage; no numbers were issued to them and, wonder of wonders, they boarded a passenger train where each had a seat. We tried to decipher the enigmatic ruse, suspecting some new deceit. We were all proven wrong. Sometime later postcards arrived, mailed by the members of this transport, from a place we thought impossible for them to reach: Switzerland.<sup>158</sup>

Despite the attempts of the SS to exclude those with knowledge of the transport system, in early 1945 the Red Cross met passengers from the Swiss transport. The ICRC declared that Theresienstadt was definitely not an *Endlager* (a final destination) and that thousands of people had been deported from there to Auschwitz.<sup>159</sup>

A further surprise awaited the ghetto population who were still recovering from the shock of the Swiss transport. Schiff writes,

The month of April ushered in sensational rumours to Theresienstadt. The favoured Danes would be allowed to leave the camp and return home. At first nobody paid attention to such incredible rumours, but when April 15 came, the inmates woke up

<sup>157</sup> Lederer, *Ghetto Theresienstadt*, p.175.

<sup>158</sup> Schiff, *Theresienstadt*, p.124.

<sup>159</sup> WL: Red Cross, ZA/ X11. 1287/00. Document 23 in Red Cross compendium.

to look at the sight of a near miracle. The camp's central square was visited by white Swedish buses.<sup>160</sup>

Prisoners rushed to the central square to witness the departure of the Danes.

Out of those buses stepped men in white uniforms, some of them drivers, others sent to accompany the inmates about to be released ... The Danes, were totally amazed as they received food and the camp's taboo: cigarettes. To say that they were overjoyed is an understatement ... The rest of us watched the extraordinary display with rising spirits, happy for our Danish co-religionists, wishing them well, and for the umpteenth time longing to be one of them.<sup>161</sup>

The rest of the imprisoned population would have to wait another month before the arrival of Russian troops and the final liberation of Theresienstadt.<sup>162</sup>

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<sup>160</sup> Schiff, *Theresienstadt*, p.127. For more on the Swedish white buses see: Persson, 'Folke Bernadotte and the White Buses', pp.237-268.

<sup>161</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>162</sup> See Epilogue.

## **Chapter Five – The Child and Adolescent Community of Theresienstadt and their Experiences: Youth Welfare and Education in the ghetto, November 1941 – May 1945**

Petr and Pavel are in the transport ... I am trying to be calm in front of Petr. I don't want him to be even more upset ... Mummy and Daddy, I miss you awfully, especially now when I am losing the only person who stood by me. Who knows if we all shall meet again?<sup>1</sup>

### 5.1 Introduction

This chapter will focus primarily on the Youth Welfare Department of the Jewish Self-Administration highlighting the work undertaken by teachers, counsellors, welfare and housing officers as well as the countless untrained men and women in their twenties and thirties who dedicated their time and energy to ghetto children. This chapter will scrutinise the educational and welfare systems of the ghetto through the optic of the Jewish leadership in relation to the ghetto children and adolescents. It will concentrate on Egon Redlich, who ran the Youth Welfare Department, and Fredy Hirsch, who headed the Youth Housing section. It will also survey the role of nurses, counsellors and teachers.

In its examination of these areas, this chapter will explore how close contact with the youth leaders helped to ease the conditions for the ghetto's children, and the extent to which the youth workers allowed their cultural and political views to affect their work providing further insight into the responsibilities and characters of the leaders.

### 5.2 The Background to the Youth Welfare Department

While the *Gesundheitswesen* (ghetto Health Department) oversaw the health and social welfare of the adult population of Theresienstadt, the care of the children was left to the Youth Welfare Department / *Jugendfürsorge* (Youth

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<sup>1</sup> Ornstein, et al, *We are Children Just the Same*, p.71.

Welfare Department).<sup>2</sup> One of the most influential figures in Theresienstadt, and the man primarily responsible for the well-being of all the children and adolescents deported there, was Gonda / Egon Redlich who ran the youth department. Prior to leaving Prague, Jakob Edelstein had appointed Gonda Redlich head of the youth department which he had already planned to establish on arrival in Theresienstadt. Therefore, while Edelstein was overseeing the initial stages of the internal administration of the ghetto during December 1941, Redlich and his newly appointed team were making provisions for the arrival of the Jewish children from the Protectorate. Redlich's department, while part of the Jewish Self-Administration, was not directly answerable to the Council of Elders, and Redlich was allowed to run it under his own authority. His Department was divided into three main sections all of which he controlled.<sup>3</sup> The first section dealt with the children's education, the second with social welfare, and the third managed youth housing. Although the Jewish leaders of Theresienstadt were allowed to attend to some of their community's welfare needs, all education was banned by the Nazis. Redlich and his team had to make sure that the educational function of the youth department was carried out in secret. Shlomo Schmiedt summarises the department's various functions.

[It] dealt both openly and clandestinely with the setting up of homes for children and youth (*Jugendheime*), the supervision of the employment of the young people, the setting up of children's libraries, the supervision of teaching, allocation of extra rations for children and youth between the ages of 4-18 of whom there were 2,300 by the summer of 1943.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> For information on the administrative breakdown of the ghetto Health Department see Chapter Three and for the experiences of sick prisoners see Chapter Four of this thesis.

<sup>3</sup> The Youth Welfare Department was divided into three main sections which were further divided into a further forty sections and committees. The Three main sections which functioned under J 0 The Leadership were: J 1 Educational Department, J 2 Social Department and J 3 which managed the children's homes. See: RIOD: 10/A/86, Adler collection.

<sup>4</sup> Schmiedt, 'Hehalutz in Theresienstadt, p.114.

Willi Groag, the son of nurse and welfare worker Trude Groag and Redlich's friend and colleague from Prague, has written about the special qualities that Redlich brought to the job:

His gray eyes, almost transparent, gazing from old-fashioned glasses, his high brow, the clarity of thinking. At times he was like a sweet prince from a story. At times he resembled a sleeping, little girl with a red face and smile. At times he seemed like an infant had disguised himself as a professor. Always, however, the contrasts worked: the cool look and warm hand; his casual dress and his careful movements; his delicate body and great strength; his shy character and his sharp wit, all combined to give force to his teaching.<sup>5</sup>

On arrival in Theresienstadt, Redlich immediately started putting into place the necessary apparatus for the arrival of 'his children'. Although the majority of the children arrived in the ghetto after 4 December 1941 transport which contained the leaders, two family transports had arrived before that.<sup>6</sup> As further transports arrived in the ghetto, Redlich and his team began to assess the condition of the children and to formulate ideas on the best way to care for them. All the children in the ghetto were, on arrival, placed under his jurisdiction and he was in charge of organising their educational and daily needs. As head of this department, he was also responsible for deportation lists that included any of his charges.<sup>7</sup> According to the testimony of Zeev Shek, given before a post-war commission on 29 June 1946, the youth workers were quick to help the newly arrived children.

Gonda Redlich and Fredy Hirsch, true to the tradition of youth movement from which they came, immediately took charge of these children, and managed to arrange slightly better conditions for them ... There were even a few people in the ghetto administration who understood the responsibility we had toward

<sup>5</sup> Friedman, ed. *The Terezín Diary of Gonda Redlich*, p.X11.

<sup>6</sup> Transport 'H' arrived from Prague on 30.11.41 and contained 1000 people out of which 105 survived (10.5%) Transport 'G' arrived from Brno on 2.12.41 and contained 1000 people out of which 126 survived (12.6%).

<sup>7</sup> See later section in this chapter on the deportation of children out of the ghetto.

these children and who tried as best they could to ease their life in the ghetto. The main person in this was Jakob Edelstein.<sup>8</sup>

### 5.3 Gonda Redlich, Fredy Hirsch and Youth Housing

Prior to the establishment of the Theresienstadt children's homes during the summer of 1942 the children lived in the ghetto barracks. Some were housed in the same rooms as their parents while others were assigned to designated children's rooms. During the early stages of the ghetto, when movement was restricted, children were escorted at all times by young Zionist teachers and counsellors. Due to the long work hours in the ghetto many of the children spent little time with their parents and special *Elternbesuch* (parental visits) had to be set up by the youth workers.<sup>9</sup>

After the arrival of the German and Austrian communities in the summer of 1942, Redlich questioned in his diary the possibility of German and Czech children living and studying together, 'An interesting debate. Is it better to separate children from the Reich or to educate them together with the children from the Protectorate?'<sup>10</sup> Even in the ghetto, Redlich was concerned with debates and conflicts that had been a feature of the German and Czech Jewish communities during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. These historic nationalistic and linguistic battles were now being re-enacted within the Nazi ghetto and concentration camp system. This shows not only the complexities of Jewish life and culture before the era of Nazi persecution but also how that culture survived in the ghetto. These debates greatly influenced the treatment of Theresienstadt's children and youth and determined the manner in which they were housed and educated.

While Gonda Redlich was preparing to take up his position as head of the Youth Welfare Department it was decided that Fredy Hirsch would oversee all matters related to Youth Housing. For the two young men this was a continuation

<sup>8</sup> Ornstein et al, *We are Children just the same*, p.30.

<sup>9</sup> TSA: A 82/16, series 3. This is a pass for 20 children to be allowed to visit their parents under the escort of 2 child minders or *Betreuer*.

<sup>10</sup> Friedman, ed. *The Terezin Diary of Gonda Redlich*, p.68.

of a working relationship and friendship which had started with their pre-war Zionist Youth work in Prague. As well as being in charge of the living quarters of the children in the ghetto, Hirsch later took it upon himself to oversee their physical well being.<sup>11</sup> Prior to his deportation to Theresienstadt, much of his work in Prague had been in the area of physical fitness and he had run various Zionist training camps for Maccabi Hatzair.<sup>12</sup> Extremely popular with the ghetto children, Hirsch soon became a pivotal figure in the Youth Welfare Department. Ruth Bondy explains how Hirsch's position in the ghetto evolved and how his relationship with Redlich flourished.

Gonda worked in tandem with Fredy Hirsch, who was at first also responsible for the management of the ghetto buildings, but when the number of youngsters reached the hundreds and then the thousands, he devoted himself entirely to the children, especially their physical education.<sup>13</sup>

Gerda Haas recalls an early meeting with Hirsch in the ghetto,

I met Fredy when I was still in the Hundertschaften because I was detailed to sweep in front of his home – his children's home. He was the leader of the children's home. He was already a prominent Zionist before, and he attracted the young people around himself ... He was very much beloved. He was a lovely young man – a real Zionist...and the Germans respected him for a long time.<sup>14</sup>

Mordecai Ansbacher also remembers Hirsch, writing, 'At the head of the Youth activities in Theresienstadt there was a young man – I think he came from

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<sup>11</sup> See section on Youth Sport in this chapter.

<sup>12</sup> For information on Zionist Youth Organisations during the 1920s and 1930s as well as their continued work during the Holocaust see: Asher Cohen and Yehoyakim Cochavi, eds. *Zionist Youth Movements during the Shoah* (New York: Peter Lang, 1995). Also see: WL: OSP 88. Rivka Knoller, *The Activities of Religious Zionist Youth Groups in Europe During the Holocaust, 1939-1945*.

<sup>13</sup> Bondy, *Elder of the Jews*, p.255.

<sup>14</sup> USHMM: RG – 50 – 030.334, Gerda Haas.

Germany – Fredy Hirsch. He was a wonderful lad, and the children were very fond of him.<sup>15</sup>

From the summer of 1942 onwards children in Theresienstadt were housed according to age while mothers of babies and children up to the age of 5 were housed together in a mothers' and babies' house. One of the children's magazines which was produced in Theresienstadt, *Vedem*, contained a regular column entitled *Rambles Through Terezín* which covered a different topic each week. One of the subjects that the boys covered was the mothers' and babies' home in the ghetto. The column reads,

About one hundred and eighty children between the ages of two weeks and eighteen months live here, as close as possible to their mothers, who stay in rooms specially assigned to them. Some of the babies came to us on the transports, some were born in Terezín and were sent to us from the maternity ward from ten to fourteen days after their birth.<sup>16</sup>

In addition to the mother and baby home there was also a ghetto orphanage. Mothers who were too ill, either psychologically or physically, to care for their offspring were housed there together with the orphans. Vera Hájková-Duxová who arrived in Theresienstadt on transport AAW, number 185 from Prague, worked in the ghetto orphanage. She remembers how she ended up working there.

I learned that Dr. Feiglová, a teacher in my nursing course, was working in the orphanage. I immediately set out to find her and the very next day was once again a children's nurse, this time in Kreichlingsheim, as the section for toddlers was called.<sup>17</sup>

She explains the layout of the orphanage and the work that she did.

In three large rooms we had orphans from two to five years of age ... The rest of the first floor was divided into rooms for mothers

<sup>15</sup> Ansbacher, *The Trial of Adolf Eichmann*, Volume 2, session 38, p.682.

<sup>16</sup> Ornstein et al, *We are Children Just the Same*, p.105.

<sup>17</sup> Vera Hájková-Duxová, in Franková, ed. *The World Without Human Dimensions*, pp.84-85.

and children ... Children who were there with their mothers were somewhat better off, because the mothers gave them something from their own meagre rations. But what about our orphans? We took them small amounts from the supply of food we'd brought with us to Terezín and each of us saved for her pet child a bit of something from her ration.<sup>18</sup>

The women who worked in the orphanage also faced problems when it came to communicating with the children. As orphans from all over Europe ended up in their care they were confronted with a multitude of languages and dialects.

Of course the number of children constantly increased, especially orphans. And often not only did we have no idea of where these poor, miserable, scared little tots had come from but we didn't even know their names, age, or even what language they spoke.<sup>19</sup>

The teachers and nurses in the orphanage came up against severe linguistic problems during the spring and summer of 1943 with the arrival of the early transports from Holland. Having described the difficulties she had with some young German children, Hájková-Duxová recalls not being able to understand a group of Dutch toddlers.

We had even greater problems with a group of four or five tiny tots, who arrived in better physical condition ... but after 14 days we still didn't know what language they spoke and didn't even know their first names. Later someone helped me figure out that they were small Dutch children and so we found out how each was called.<sup>20</sup>

While this reveals the carers' own difficulties, it also highlights the horrific upheaval and disorientation experienced by the ghetto orphans. The children who were forced onto trains in Westerbork without their parents or any other chaperon arrived in Theresienstadt in a terrible state. They then spent the next 14 days

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<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> Franková, *The World Without Human Dimension*, p.88.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

unable to communicate even their most basic needs to the orphanage carers. The psychological damage caused by these events for those that survived the ghetto was immense.<sup>21</sup>

At age five, the majority of the ghetto children, were removed from the care of their parents and placed under the care of the Youth Welfare Department in specially designed children's homes.<sup>22</sup> Trude Groag comments on these homes and why the Zionist leaders believed them to be necessary.

It was important to remove the children from the unhygienic living quarters of the adult population and let them grow up under halfway humane conditions. Considering the circumstances, the homes were very well run. The principal concern was the child, to preserve the lives of Jewish children. Everything was done with this mission: although we live in awful times, our children should have it better.<sup>23</sup>

The first two Czech children's homes were opened in July 1942. Home L 410 was set up for Czech girls between the ages of eight and sixteen and home L 417 for Czech boys between the ages of ten and fifteen. The Bauhaus artist Friedl Dicker-Brandeis who worked closely with the Theresienstadt children taught in home L 410 while Valtr Eisinger, the academic and poet, presided over the boys of L 417. These two houses were set up partly to facilitate the clandestine education of the young away from the prying eyes of the Czech gendarmes, the Jewish police and the *Kommandantur*. While many of the children were moved into the newly opened homes, however, hundreds continued to live with their

<sup>21</sup> A few of the Theresienstadt orphans survived the war. Some of these came to England where they were adopted. Most were taken in by Christian families and did not find out about their Jewish background and roots until their adolescence. For a description of the post-war lives of some of these children see: *The Children of Bulldogs Bank*. Produced and written by Beatrix Schwehm (Peter Stockhaus Filmproduktion, Hamburg: 1999). WL: video collection, no: 1350. Six children came from Theresienstadt to The Bulldogs Bank Children Home where they were looked after by two German sisters: Sophie and Gertrud Dann. Some of the surviving Theresienstadt orphans were treated by Anna Freud in her Hampstead nurseries. See: Anna Freud, *Normality and Pathology in Childhood* (London: Karnac, 1989), p.41.

<sup>22</sup> Adler is critical of this approach. He did not approve of the children being removed from the care of their parents. For Adler's views on the Youth Welfare Department and on the children's homes see, Adler, *Theresienstadt*, Chapter 17 part 11, pp.547-574.

<sup>23</sup> Gurewitsch, *Mothers, Sisters, Resisters*, p.250.

parents, so that while these new arrangements were encouraged they were not mandatory. From the summer of 1942 onwards, several other children's homes were established. Inside each, the children were divided by age into dormitories where they slept and where taught. A *madrich* or *madricha* (youth leader) was assigned to each room and was made responsible for the welfare of those children.<sup>24</sup> Each of these youth leaders were supported by one or two assistants, who, although still young, acted as teachers, artists and counsellors. Bondy writes, 'The instructors were aged between twenty and twenty-five, which led the parents to mockingly dub the youth division *kluko-kratiya* (boy's government).'<sup>25</sup>

When the German and Austrian children started to arrive during the summer of 1942, a German-speaking children's home was set up alongside the Czech homes and was run by members of Hehalutz. According to Schmiedt,

The majority of these children were the offspring of war invalids or other 'prominent' personalities, who were sent to what was presented as being a sanatorium – *Theresienbad*. The number of children in this house often reached 500 (aged 10-16) which meant that each child occupied no more than one square metre.<sup>26</sup>

The Theresienstadt children's homes were the idea of the ghetto's young Zionist leaders who were dedicated to the survival of the children in their care. They believed that this kind of communal living would ensure the highest possible survival rate and help to maintain better living conditions for the young. It was believed that it was better for them than living in the single-sex barracks with a parent or grandparent.<sup>27</sup> Inside the children's homes, great importance was attached to routine and the lives of the young were highly structured. Anna Hyndraková-Kovanicová who arrived in Theresienstadt from Prague on transport CA, number 280 on 24 October 1942, was housed in one of the homes. She had

<sup>24</sup> Nicholas Stargardt draws attention to the fact that the Youth Welfare Department chose to use the Hebrew word *Madrich* meaning youth leader or friend in place of the German word *Betreuer* meaning carer or teacher. Stargardt, 'Children's Art of the Holocaust', p.210.

<sup>25</sup> Bondy, *Elder of the Jews*, p.255.

<sup>26</sup> Schmiedt, 'Hehalutz in Theresienstadt', p.115.

<sup>27</sup> See: Adler, *Theresienstadt*, pp.557-558, for an account of a girl who lived with her grandmother.

originally been housed in the Hamburg Barracks but this was emptied during 1943 to make room for new arrivals from Holland. She recalls,

I moved into Judendheim L 414 into a room of Czech girls where I shared a bunk with Dudla. There were two rooms of Czech girls in a home filled with German girls ... Life in the children's home was the best thing Terezín could have provided for us in the ghetto environment. We young people lived together without closer contact with the old, sick and wretched.<sup>28</sup>

This passage shows that although German and Austrian children were housed separately from the Czech children, some of the buildings were mixed. Children were divided first by gender and age and secondly by nationality. Age and gender were seen as the most important defining characteristics and then, where possible, linguistic, nationalistic and cultural identities were respected. Some of the children testify that certain houses were politically divided with specific floors being reserved for the Zionists. Kurt Ladner who was deported to Theresienstadt in 1942 remembers how he was moved round the ghetto on several occasions. He describes his move to Youth Home L218.

A few days later, Herbert, Maxie, Peter and I were transferred again. This time to a building for young men up to the age of 19. As we entered the two-storey building with our belongings, a man asked us to wait for a room to be assigned. The surprising first question that we were asked was whether we were Zionists. I replied, 'No', without consulting my friends. The man smiled and said that's alright. You and your friends can join the fellows on the first floor, first door to the left.<sup>29</sup>

This implies that the ground floor of this building was reserved for Zionist youth with non-Zionists on the first floor.

It was not only the children who were sometimes made to feel like outsiders due to their nationality or political affiliation. Some of the teachers,

<sup>28</sup> Franková, ed. *World Without Human Dimensions*, p.157.

<sup>29</sup> USHMM: RG – 02.192, p.93. Kurt Ladner, *Not a Moment Too Soon*.

counsellors and maternity nurses were similarly excluded. Gerda Haas who worked for the Health Department as a children's nurse in the Czech girls home L410 remembers how, as a German, she felt like an outcast. The general tension and divisions that existed in the ghetto community as a whole also existed within the confines of the children's homes. She remembers,

In that room where we lived, in the basement, and where we worked upstairs with the children, most of the other inhabitants were Czech nurses – Czech girls – because we were after all in Czechoslovakia, and looking back, they were very tightly close together. And there was a bit of a gulf between them and us. They considered themselves in their own country, and we were the newcomers. So we didn't form friendships with them at all.<sup>30</sup>

According to Vera Schiff, 'The best buildings in Theresienstadt were allotted to the children ... They received better bunks, blankets and care, but above all their food rations were superior to the ones of an adult inmate.'<sup>31</sup> Mordecai Ansbacher, reinforces Schiff's statement. He describes how after living in one of the barracks that,

I was moved with my possessions to a youth hostel in Lange Street – it was L414. There were several hostels: One mainly for children from Czechoslovakia, one for the children of people from Germany and Czechoslovakia, and one for girls only. In the Youth Hostels the situation was much better. We received food which was totally different, there were sanitary facilities, and we were forced to wash.<sup>32</sup>

Despite these better food rations, children did go hungry and like the women of Theresienstadt, children also fantasised about cooking non-existent food.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> USHMM: RG – 50 – 030.334, Gerda Haas.

<sup>31</sup> Schiff, *Theresienstadt*, p.71. Not only were the children given superior rations but in 1943 they no longer received their food from the adult kitchens. Special children's kitchens were set up inside the children's home to cater for their needs. See: Adler, *Theresienstadt*, Chapter 12, section, 'Die Küchen', pp.356-357.

<sup>32</sup> Ansbacher, *The Trial of Adolf Eichmann*, Volume 2, session 38, p.681.

<sup>33</sup> For more on the 'cooking lessons' the women of Theresienstadt took part in see: De Silva, *In Memory's Kitchen*. For descriptions by child survivors see: Esther Katz and Joan Ringelheim, eds. *Women Surviving the Holocaust* (New York: 1983), p.153.

By January 1943 the children's homes had been running for six months but still needed substantial oversight and maintenance. Although Fredy Hirsch had more direct contact with the homes, Gonda Redlich, as head of the Youth Welfare Department, tried to play a role in the children's day-to-day care. On 10 January 1943 he wrote in his diary, 'I wanted to visit the children's homes and stay a week in each one.'<sup>34</sup> On 18 January 1943 he records, 'I visited the children's houses. Through these visits, I want to know the existing conditions of the houses and their problems.'<sup>35</sup> After one such visit to the children's homes, Redlich came away depressed, worried that some of the children might need psychological treatment. On 1 April 1943, he wrote,

In one of the girls' rooms, you can see signs of sadomasochism. The teacher wanted to punish the girls and spoke with them about the punishment. The girls suggested slaps, pinching, striking the legs. It's difficult to determine at first glance if the matter is serious. Doctor Baumel wants to inspect the children's drawings.<sup>36</sup>

Leo Demner who worked in children's home L 417 also commented on some of the negative behaviour of the children in his care. He contributed an article to *Vedem* which he called, *Destroy Whatever You Can – A Terezín Proverb?* He describes how, many children in his care, unable to handle their emotions, resorted to destroying ghetto property. He wrote,

I don't know what it is – but it's a proven thing: the inmates of our home (interestingly only those up to the age of fifteen) have been afflicted by a strange disease ... Suddenly the patient feels an irresistible urge to destroy or disturb some part of Home L 417 ... Some of those affected, for instance, carry things in such a clumsy manner that they break as many windows as possible.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Friedman, ed. *The Terezín Diary of Gonda Redlich*, p.96.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid*, p.97.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid*, p.111. Dr. Baumel was a child psychologist in the ghetto.

<sup>37</sup> Zdenek Ornstein et al, *We are children just the same*, p.48.

An important youth worker and role model for the girls of L 410 was Tella Pollak who oversaw the girls who lived in room 28. Eva Winkler Zohar who was one of Tella's girls remembers,

The unofficial symbol of Room 28 was a flag with the image of two hands in a tight grip, the *Maagal*. Inspired by our room leader, Tella Pollak, we formed the *Maagal*, which meant 'circle', and metaphorically, 'perfection.' ... Tella strongly influenced us. She taught us to distinguish between bad and good. All girls who acted on behalf of the common whole were admitted to this *Maagal*. To enter this *Maagal*, we tried to be good, tolerant, considerate, orderly, and clean – we strived for perfection.<sup>38</sup>

The other survivors of Room 28 of L 410 also remember the work of Tella Pollak and her assistant Eva Weiss. Eva Landa recalls how, 'They taught us a new ideal of humanity, friendship, and solidarity. We received a new scale of values from them, a new conception of human worth.'<sup>39</sup> However, some teachers were less dedicated and professional. Redlich recorded in his diary on 24 September 1943, 'Not all the counselors in the children's quarters were selected carefully. Some of them call the children 'Polish pigs'.<sup>40</sup>

On the subject of the children's homes Nicholas Stargardt writes,

The cultural atmosphere animating these experiments was a peculiarly central European kind, an eclectic mixture of German educational ideas, Zionist and Communist ideals, and notions of the collective with some admixture of Freud.<sup>41</sup>

However it is primarily the Zionist ideals and the leadership's initiative in setting up the children's homes that have been criticised. For example, Gustavo Corni writes,

<sup>38</sup> Anne D. Dutlinger, *Art, Music and Education as Strategies for Survival: Theresienstadt 1941-1945* (New York and London: Herodias, 2001), p.65.

<sup>39</sup> Dutlinger, *Art, Music and Education*, p.66.

<sup>40</sup> Friedman, ed. *The Terezín Diary of Gonda Redlich*, p.131.

<sup>41</sup> Stargardt, 'Children's Art of the Holocaust', p.210.

Children were removed from their families and subjected to a strict Zionist discipline. This project was only marginally implemented, but testifies both to the tremendous illusions nurtured by the Jewish leaders and to their passionate concern for the formation of their young.<sup>42</sup>

Although, as Corni implies, the majority of the Jewish leaders were concerned with the children's post-war reintegration into society, they were also concerned with the here and now, and making the lives of the young in the ghetto as bearable as possible. Not all those who held positions within the Jewish Self-Administration approved of the Zionist roots of the children's homes. During the summer of 1943, Valtr Eisinger, a prominent figure inside the children's homes, persuaded Redlich to lessen the Zionist education of the young.<sup>43</sup>

In the Summer of 1943 the *Jugendfürsorge* celebrated its first anniversary and all those involved were encouraged to produce reports on their work and on the children they supervised, primarily those from Youth Home L417. The reports were put together and filed under the heading of *The Forum of Ideas*.<sup>44</sup> Among those who contributed were Otto Zucker, Friedl Dicker-Brandeis, Fredy Hirsch and Gonda Redlich. All the reports had one thing in common: their focus on communal living and the importance of preparing the children for their post-war lives.

*The Forum of Ideas* sheds light on the views of the Zionist leadership. Otto Zucker, entitled his report, *What did we learn from this year's experience – One Year of L 417*. He wrote,

The conditions of Terezín were favourable because they permitted us to concentrate youth in bigger buildings and in one block. When drafting the settlement plan we took these intentions into account right from the start. I planned the houses that seemed best to me for youth ... The Youth Homes are accommodated in

<sup>42</sup> Corni, *Hitler's Ghetto*, p.215.

<sup>43</sup> Stargardt, 'Children's Art of the Holocaust', p.210 and Friedman, ed. *The Terezín Diary of Gonda Redlich*, p.116.

<sup>44</sup> YVA: 0.64 series – Forum of Ideas. Also see, Makarova *et al*, *University Over the Abyss*, pp.139-161.

three large buildings. When settlement is complete, block C IV is ultimately meant to be inhabited by youth only.<sup>45</sup>

Turning next to the boys home L 417, Zucker explains how it was a microcosm of all the troubles and conflicts that were at large in the ghetto and a testing ground for the ghetto youth.

In this Home, all tensions and conflicts were first and maybe most intensively experienced and I hope, overcome in a positive way. Many of the improvements gradually made in the equipment of the other Youth Homes were tested here. The fact that it was a Home for boys, for growing young Jewish men, often intensified difficulties and conflicts. All the possibilities of community life, as far as they can be offered to young people here, are within the walls of L 417.<sup>46</sup>

In his report of a year in the youth homes, Hirsch concentrates on his efforts to reintroduce values and morals into the children's lives. He describes how the war and treatment of Jewish communities across Europe resulted in a breakdown of social order,

In this world, we established Houses for young people ... Now that one year has passed, we should ask ourselves how much did we succeed in reaffirming Generosity and Kindness. We managed to create for youth a place where they are taken seriously, where they dare to be young without trouble, where they can freely raise problems they need to have solved.<sup>47</sup>

But it is Redlich who really examined what lay behind the idea of collective living. In his report, *Are we Right in our Intentions?* he explains his search for the best way in which to help the children, and expresses his concern that perhaps he and his workers have not always made the best choices. He speaks of his,

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<sup>45</sup> Makarova *et al*, *University Over the Abyss*, p.143.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>47</sup> YVA: 0.64/27 part 2. Fredy Hirsch, *Did We Succeed in Being Generous and Kind?*

Struggle for better living conditions for children. In normal life, parents would take care of their children; in our case the collective shall do it. Thus, instead of the parents, we have to fight for better living, health and nutritional conditions for your children ... The choice of tutors. This is the most complicated task. In this immense crowd of children, a tutor must be a teacher, hygienist, and to a certain extent mother and father. Our children live in a crowded space. It is up to us to be able to take a child out to freedom.<sup>48</sup>

#### 5.4 The Academic and Social Education of the Ghetto Children

Education was a key element of preparing children for life after the war.<sup>49</sup>

As Otto Zucker wrote in *The Forum of Ideas*,

We are convinced that collective education, guiding youth to fit into the community, to subordinate individual interests to the interests of the community... are an essential part of the mission of modern education.<sup>50</sup>

But the issue of education also proved a fertile ground for conflict between the Zionists and the assimilationists.

From as early as 1933 the education of Jewish children and youth had been made a priority by Jewish community leaders across Europe in response to Nazi persecution.<sup>51</sup> What had been promoted as a valued means of maintaining a normal community life for Jewish children had, by 1941, been transformed into a survival technique and a crucial tool in continuing links with the outside world. Within Theresienstadt all educational matters relating to the young were handled by the *Jugendfürsorge*, whereas educational lectures and evenings for adults were

<sup>48</sup> See TSA: A 1237, series 12 E and A 1238, series 12 E. Reports on the children's home L 417 written by Gonda Redlich, printed in both Czech and in German.

<sup>49</sup> For information on Jewish education inside concentration camps and ghettos see: Adler, 'The Children's Block' In: *Yad Vashem Studies XXIV* (1994), pp.281-315. Joanna Michlin-Coren, 'Battling Against the Odds: Culture, Education and the Jewish Intelligentsia in the Warsaw Ghetto, 1940-1942.' *East European Jewish Affairs*, 27:2 (1997); Corni, *Hitler's Ghettos*, Chapter 5, 'Life in the Ghettos', pp.119-168 and Chapter 11, 'Resistance in the Ghettos', pp.293-330.

<sup>50</sup> YVA: 0.64/20 Part 2.

<sup>51</sup> For information on Jewish education in Nazi occupied Europe see: Solomon Colodner, *Jewish Education in Germany under the Nazis* (USA: Jewish Education Committee Press, 1964); Lucie Schachne, *Education towards Spiritual Resistance – The Jewish Landschulheim Herrlingen*.

carried out under the auspices of the *Freizeitgestaltung* / Leisure Time Bureau.<sup>52</sup> While the early decision to save as many children as possible was being made, it was also decided that the children in the ghetto should continue with their education even though this was banned. It was believed by the Zionist Youth leaders that education would help to distract the children from the horrors of ghetto life. According to Shlomo Schmiedt,

The various strands of the Hehalutz movement in Theresienstadt united, and set up clandestine groups for education and work. The Zionist education in the Ghetto was ideologically aimed at communal agricultural settlement. Members of Hehalutz who held key positions in the Ghetto, and among whom were those who had dealt with youth and education matters even before they had entered the Ghetto, concentrated now in their hands the work with youth, and thus determined the framework and method of educational work in Theresienstadt.<sup>53</sup>

Elena Makarova agrees with Schmiedt and claims that the Zionists factions united and came together with other political factions in the ghetto in order to aid the children, on educational matter. When discussing Zionist beliefs on education, she writes,

Other perspectives were advocated by atheist Czech Communists, Czech nationalists (often Christians), and generally humanistic German-Czech educators. Miraculously, all these conflicting parties could come to an understanding and even cooperate in their work with children and youth.<sup>54</sup>

While every effort was made to forward the children's education, the Zionists and other political and cultural factions in the ghetto remained a highly fractured and heterogeneous 'community'. This can partly be explained by the fact that those

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1933-1939 (Frankfurt am Main: Dipa Verlag, 1988); Simon, 'Jewish Adult Education in Nazi Germany', pp. 68-105.

<sup>52</sup> See Chapter Six of this thesis.

<sup>53</sup> Schmiedt, 'Hehalutz in Theresienstadt', pp.112-113.

<sup>54</sup> Makarova *et al*, *University Over the Abyss*, p.129.

who taught in Theresienstadt were from a variety of backgrounds and were therefore as divided in outlook and expression as their pre-war communities had been.<sup>55</sup> In his diary Redlich continually draws attention to the factions in the ghetto community and his testimony stands in opposition to the statements made by Schmiedt and Makarova. On 17 and 18 May 1942, Redlich wrote,

The conflicts between the Zionists and the assimilationists sadden me. I think it's ridiculous when they complain about us that we are forcing the children to become Zionists. Nevertheless, I am angry because after the war our detractors will surely say that the Zionists were enemies of Czech culture and all progress. In reality most of the counsellors are assimilationists. I have to admit that there aren't enough male and female Zionist councillors.<sup>56</sup>

The differing ideas on educational goals which existed between the Zionists and the non-Zionists extended throughout the children's schooling. On 27 November 1942 Redlich recorded in his diary, 'The opposition between the Zionists and the assimilationists extends also to art.'<sup>57</sup> Although the Zionist model of teaching prevailed in the ghetto, sections of the ghetto community continued to object to how the young were being educated. On the subject of how the Zionists 'ruled over' the assimilationists, Vera Schiff writes, 'Even today I am not certain if those in charge had the God-given right to promote their own over the resented assimilated Jew.'<sup>58</sup>

Starting with the education of the youngest children it was decided that three kindergartens should be opened inside the children's homes: one Czech, one German and one Hebrew. These schools were open to all the children in the ghetto, including those who continued to live with their parents as well as those who had moved into the specialised homes. The three kindergartens catered for children up to the age of five. Children who were too old for kindergarten

<sup>55</sup> Due to the fact that the majority of the first council of elders were Zionists and therefore so were the heads of department of the Jewish Self-Administration, it is not surprising that the Zionist model of teaching and communal living prevailed.

<sup>56</sup> Friedman, ed. *The Terezín Diary of Gonda Redlich*, p.43.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid*, p.86.

<sup>58</sup> Schiff, *Theresienstadt*, p.97.

attended one of the ‘primary schools’ which functioned out of the two main children’s homes: L 417 and L 410. Trude Groag describes the layout of the Czech girls’ home L 410. She writes,

In the basement, below ground, was the schoolroom, a large room with benches for the children. The windows were small airholes at street level. The room was secret because it was illegal to teach children. We even had a piano in that basement schoolroom. It had no legs; it rested on wooden boxes ... The director was Mrs. Rosa Englander, and my son Dr. Willi Groag, was the house trustee. They and the staff made the lives of the children as pleasant as possible.<sup>59</sup>

Fritz Stecklmacher wrote a report entitled *On the Conditions in House L410* in which he commented on the work of Valtr Freud and the various counsellors and teachers who lived and worked there. He wrote,

The conditions of the girls’ lives are tolerable. Mr. Valtr Freud takes his responsibilities seriously, all the teachers are highly educated, but their knowledge of Judaism is very poor. The teachers work around the clock. Every third week they have night duty ... They attend to sick children on the average five times a night ... Those with whom I discussed this explained it as love for the children, that is, pure idealism. The average age of the teachers is 25. The youngest ones are 18 to 20 years of age.<sup>60</sup>

As teaching the children in the ghetto was strictly banned by the Nazis the teachers had to invent ingenious ways round this problem. According to Schmiedt,

In some houses, history, geography and even mathematics were studied with the aid of playing cards made in the Ghetto. While lessons were in progress one child stood on guard outside the building, while another was posted outside the classroom door. Whenever anyone in uniform approached, the boy on guard

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<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>60</sup> Fritz Stecklmacher, ‘On the Conditions in House L410’. In: Makarova *et al*, *University over the Abyss*, p.130.

informed the instructor immediately. As soon as the signal was given the children hid their exercise books or the papers they had been using and the teacher ‘continued’ reading them a story from a book ready at his side for the purpose.<sup>61</sup>

Schmidt’s description of children keeping watch is repeated in Yehuda Bacon’s account of lessons in the ghetto. Bacon writes,

If an SS man crossed our way, they reported it. We already knew how to behave. You began immediately to talk about something or to read from a book. Our paper was quickly hidden.<sup>62</sup>

Ansbacher also remembers how even after a day’s hard labour many adults gave up their only spare time to help educate the children. He recalls,

We organized lessons. There were excellent teachers, and they devoted some of their time after work or during work, they obtained special authority from Edelstein, who viewed this favourably and supported the idea of maintaining lessons.<sup>63</sup>

Irma Lauscherová who taught in L410 remembers how, ‘This was not a place where bureaucrats worked but people of great sensibility who knew how to squeeze something out of nothing under terribly difficult conditions.’<sup>64</sup> She describes how the teaching was organised:

The older children assembled after work, solving equations, studying literature. In one home a former engineer, who was a garbage collector in Terezín, explained physics in a very interesting way, in another home they were drawing, or modelling or discussing problems of aesthetics ... A young graduate from Prague University lectured on sociology and made the young people understand for the first time what had brought them to Terezín. Do the fourteen-year-olds of today appreciate every

<sup>61</sup> Schmiedt, ‘Hehalutz in Theresienstadt’, p.119. These ingenious teaching methods were carried on by Hirsch and his helpers within the confines of Birkenau. For more information on this see: Adler, ‘The Children’s Block’, pp.280-315.

<sup>62</sup> Yehuda Bacon, ‘My Life in Terezín’ In: Adler, *Theresienstadt*, p.553.

<sup>63</sup> Ansbacher, *The Trial of Adolf Eichmann*, Volume 2, session 38, p.681.

<sup>64</sup> Lauscherová, in Makarova *et al*, *University Over the Abyss*, p.130.

opportunity of learning something? Do they know how to make use of every moment? Can we today appreciate education as we did then?<sup>65</sup>

Handa Pollak explains how the education that she received in L 410 was affected by the arrival and departure of the transports in the ghetto. She writes,

We had lessons every morning, but they were always strained, because transports were coming and going all the time. One day we had a teacher who was able to teach us English, so we learned English. The next day he was gone, transported ‘to the east.’ The teacher who was found to replace him could teach us mathematics, so we learned mathematics. We learned like this. There was no possibility to keep some plan of learning because everything was so unstable. New pupils arrived, old friends departed. Our teachers came and went. We learned whatever we could.<sup>66</sup>

Some of the children who lived with their parents rather than in the children’s homes still received an education. Inge Auerbacher was one such child. In her memoir *I am a Star*, she writes,

Some attempts were made to teach us in *Beschäftigung*, or keeping-busy classes. School was absolutely forbidden, but some heroic teachers gathered us children in attics and other places where there was a little space. They taught us from memory, since very few schoolbooks were smuggled into the camp.<sup>67</sup>

Not every child who lived with their parents was as fortunate as Auerbacher in receiving a basic education. This is also true of a small fraction of those in the children’s homes. It is not clear how and why these children escaped the notice of the Youth Welfare Department and the other authorities. Marlene Altman, from the Sudetenland, was one of these children. Aged twelve at the time she should have, according to the covert regulations that governed the education

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<sup>65</sup> *Ibid*, p.137.

<sup>66</sup> Dutlinger, *Art, Music and Education*, p.65.

<sup>67</sup> Inge Auerbacher, *I am a Star – Child of the Holocaust* (New York: Puffin Books, 1986), p.56.

of the young, attended classes but was ordered to work as a nurse's assistant. She remembers with incredulity how, 'Some children actually went to school in Theresienstadt. I never did. I was told to help my mother in the hospital and this I did ... I have since come across someone who told me, 'Why didn't you go to school?' Well I was never given the opportunity. Nobody ever said, 'report here' or 'report there'.<sup>68</sup>

By 1943 the role of teachers and counsellors in the youth homes became more complex as they were trying to balance the need for as formal an education as possible with the realities of ghetto life. Although it was believed that the children should continue with a 'proper' education, the counsellors and youth leaders had to address the countless problems faced by the children in Theresienstadt. Schmiedt writes,

The children saw the negative example of the adults; their surroundings taught them to fend for themselves, to cheat, steal and lie, and the instructors had the difficult task of battling against these manifestations. They had no choice but to shut their eyes to the theft of public property but on no account did they tolerate theft from other children.<sup>69</sup>

This implies that occasionally children did steal from one another and that this was deeply frowned upon and that the children who transgressed were punished. Eva Landa who was one of Tella Pollak's girls in room 28 of L 410 however writes that,

No one could even imagine stealing anything from a fellow resident or neighbor – and if it should have happened once, it was certainly the big exception. All of us, 'the Girls from 28', strove to realise ourselves, to read more, to know more, to experience more – to improve ourselves.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Kavanagh, Altman, p.4.

<sup>69</sup> Schmiedt, 'Hehalutz in Theresienstadt', p.117.

<sup>70</sup> Dutlinger, *Art, Music and Education*, p.66.

One of the more prominent role models among those who worked with children was Fritzi Zucker, the wife of Otto Zucker, Edelstein's deputy in the Jewish Council. According to Ansbacher,

Fritzi was regarded as the second mother of all the children. She gave all her time, day and night, to the children, taught them, instilled in them high moral standards and helped to train them in the Zionist spirit ... Actually this was a very difficult precept, since everybody, including the children, was exceedingly egoistic. Everyone worried only about himself.<sup>71</sup>

Redlich was aware of the fact that the teachers and counsellors were finding their jobs increasingly difficult. On 21 April 1943 he recorded these feelings in his diary, 'The counselors who have been teaching the children for more than a year are very tired. They don't know what to do with the children. A difficult problem.'<sup>72</sup>

During 1944 the Nazi attitude towards the children's education altered. Although it was still illegal to provide the children with proper education, the Jewish Self-Administration was informed they were now allowed to keep the children 'occupied'.<sup>73</sup> By the summer of 1944 the task of the youth leaders was becoming increasingly difficult as children grew more accustomed to the everyday horrors of ghetto life and began to internalise ghetto attitudes and morality. The teachers found it increasingly hard to teach the children, and the counsellors found the children less and less receptive to the care they received. In 1944, one of the Zionist instructors wrote,

Some of the boys have already been in Theresienstadt for 18 months ... The children's morality is the morality of the Ghetto. Their reactions are totally different from our own at their age, or of children outside the Ghetto ... The depressing, suffocating atmosphere of the Ghetto had caused their laughter to be unlike the merry laughter of children of their age.<sup>74</sup>

<sup>71</sup> Ansbacher, *The Trial of Adolf Eichmann*, Volume 2, session 38, p.682.

<sup>72</sup> Friedman, ed. *The Terezín Diary of Gonda Redlich*, p.114.

<sup>73</sup> Schmiedt, 'Hehalutz in Theresienstadt', p.119.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid*, p.118.

However the report ends by saying,

And despite this, they have extraordinary stamina, a positive approach to life. They have lost one or two years, but in spite of everything they are ready, they will find their place in life, they will fulfil their task.<sup>75</sup>

It appears that ‘difficult’ children were in the minority.<sup>76</sup> Bondy writes, ‘On the whole the children learned willingly.’<sup>77</sup> She describes how it was difficult for the teachers and carers to decide how best to discipline wayward children. She explains,

The instructors deliberated at length over the question of punishment: withholding food was forbidden, corporal punishment was not even considered. Giving the children extra work did not seem educational – work was something they tried to instill a love of; it should not be a detestable chore. Punishments therefore consisted chiefly of moral censure within the group, reproofs, and exclusion from cultural activities.<sup>78</sup>

One mechanism for teaching children good ‘citizenship’ was the *Helping Hand* scheme established in March 1943. This was set up under the auspices of the Hehalutz leadership by Sonia Okun, a committed Zionist from Germany. The scheme was founded to help ease the suffering of the ghetto’s elderly. The young were assigned to help the older population in what the Zionists believed to be a mutually beneficial system of welfare. Boys and girls were divided into groups of five, each group having its own leader, and were given chores in the houses of the elderly. As most of them lived in appalling conditions in the attics of the

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<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>76</sup> For more on ‘difficult’ children see: Arnost Lustig, *Night and Hope* (London and New York: Quartet Books, 1989), Chapter 3, ‘The Children’, pp.106-120 and Chapter 4, ‘Moral Education’, pp.121-147. Also see: Lustig, *Diamonds of the Night* (London and New York: Quartet Books, 1989) and Lustig, *Darkness Cast No Shadow* (London and New York: Quartet Books, 1989).

<sup>77</sup> Bondy, *Elder of the Jews*, p.311.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*

Theresienstadt houses and barracks, these chores largely consisted of cleaning their living space and helping the ill and infirm collect their food rations. Schmiedt writes,

At first the old people were suspicious of the children, and even threw them out, because they could not imagine that they really wished to help. But later, when they learnt that the children did not cheat them when bringing their food and had not come to steal their belongings, they accepted their assistance gratefully.<sup>79</sup>

One of the youth leaders who helped Okun set up *Helping Hand* wrote,

We gave a lot of thought to how we could not only be of assistance to the old people, but also bring them some joy. We looked through the card index and found out the birthdays of the old people who were alone, and on these days the scouts would go and bring them presents they had made or acquired themselves – a few flowers, a plaited loaf of bread or cake they had saved from their rations; they sang songs for them and – in short – arranged a small party. The old people were extremely happy and thankful that someone had paid attention to them.<sup>80</sup>

Although the *Helping Hand* project was successful and many old people benefited from it, Bondy is honest in her description of how the majority of the children reacted to the conditions of the elderly. She explains how the children were usually kept separate from the ghetto's ill and elderly so that when they were confronted with them,

Most of the youngsters were repelled and disgusted by the foul sheets and the stench, but a few persisted, formed ties with an elderly person, and took the place of distant grandchildren.<sup>81</sup>

This description is backed up by the testimony of Anna Kovanicová who claims that, 'We young people lived together without closer contact with the old, sick

<sup>79</sup> Schmiedt, 'Hehalutz in Theresienstadt', p.122.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid*, p.123.

<sup>81</sup> Bondy, *Elder of the Jews*, p.312.

and wretched.<sup>82</sup> Mordecai Ansbacher writes that although *Helping Hand* was set up by Sonia Okun, Fredy Hirsch had overall responsibility for the programme. Ansbacher who was fifteen years old at the time took part in these activities.

Fredy Hirsch issued instructions on how to organize aid for the old people. Those were special activities by which children were sent to the houses of the elderly, and we had to serve the food to them, to read to them from books, fiction, books about Jewish tradition, or the Bible. And it used to happen that, when we were reading to them, these old men and women were so moved that they cried all the time. It would also happen that in the middle of the reading these old folk, who were mostly sick and feeble, died in the course of the reading of a chapter from novel.<sup>83</sup>

In addition to the *Helping Hand* scheme children also assisted the elderly and infirm when they received their deportation orders. They helped the deportees pack their bags and carried them to the departure point. Schmiedt concludes by saying, ‘An iron rule of all these activities was that no one was allowed to receive payment of any kind for services rendered.’<sup>84</sup>

### 5.5 Youth Work

Having focused on various areas of child and adolescent life in the ghetto it is important to highlight an area in which the lives of the adolescent population differed considerably to that of the children – namely work, which was compulsory for all men and women between the ages of fourteen and sixty-five. According to Ruth Bondy,

The world of the children over fourteen was not as sheltered as that of the younger ones. They were apprenticed to carpenters, metalworkers, or electricians, and though they lived in the common dormitories, they lived the reality of the ghetto, where the strong man was the winner.<sup>85</sup>

<sup>82</sup> Franková et al, *The World Without Human Dimensions*, p.157.

<sup>83</sup> Ansbacher, *The Trial of Adolf Eichmann*, Volume 2, session 38, p.682.

<sup>84</sup> Schmiedt, ‘Hehalutz in Theresienstadt’, p.124.

<sup>85</sup> Bondy, *Elder of the Jews*, p.313.

While children under the age of fourteen were exempt from all work those between the ages of fourteen and sixteen, though not subjected to the harsh labour routine of the adult population, were expected to undertake some form of work.<sup>86</sup> The most coveted youth jobs were those inside the ghetto kitchens. These jobs meant extra rations, and also guaranteed protection from extreme weather and sometimes from deportation as kitchen staff were considered essential workers.

While the winters in Theresienstadt could be bitterly cold the summer's intense heat could be equally unbearable; but if the weather was clement it was often beneficial to work outside. Trude Groag remembers how while the younger girls of home L 410 were exempt from work many of the older girls found jobs outside the ghetto gardening and working in agriculture. She writes,

Work in the fresh air was desirable for young people, rather than work in a closed room with a poor supply of oxygen or at forced labor. They left in the morning to work at planting gardens or harvesting fruit and vegetables. They were healthy.<sup>87</sup>

As a healthy sixteen year old, Vera Schiff was required to work. As her family were on the protection list of Dr. Tarjan in the Health Department, Schiff took a job as a nurse while her sister Eva found a job in the fields beyond the ghetto walls. Vera writes,

I decided early on to work as hard and efficiently as possible. I wanted to prove to Dr. Tarjan that his trust in us was justified and I hoped to somehow show our gratitude by putting in my best efforts at work as the O.R. nurse.<sup>88</sup>

It was often the fourteen to sixteen year olds who, on top of their own work, had to relieve their elderly parents of some of their chores, sharing their extra rations

<sup>86</sup> Those over the age of sixteen were treated as adults by the Labour Department. See: Lederer, *Ghetto Theresienstadt*, Chapter 4, 'Organisation of the Ghetto', section on Labour Department, pp.70-73; Adler, *Theresienstadt*, Chapter 13, 'Arbeit', pp.376-421. For breakdown of ages of those who worked in the ghetto during 1942 and 1943 see: Adler, *Theresienstadt*, p.386.

<sup>87</sup> Gurewitsch, *Mothers, Sisters, Resisters*, p.253.

<sup>88</sup> Schiff, *Theresienstadt*, p.43.

from jobs in the fields and kitchens and generally taking on the caring role of their parents. Schiff remembers,

While Eva and I handled our assignments relatively well, mother found it more difficult ... Even though mother's job seemed undemanding, it exacted its toll on her. Her energy level was fast depleted, and the protracted standing was hard on her ... I would finish my shift in the hospital at seven o'clock and rush back to the Hamburg barracks, before joining the sentry at the gates at 8pm. The guard got used to my substituting for mother.<sup>89</sup>

While all those over the age of fourteen were meant to work, some did not. As with the rules over the clandestine education of the young, some adolescents escaped work and continued to live and spend their time with the younger children.

### 5.6 Youth Sport

In addition to his work in the field of Youth Housing and his creation of welfare schemes such as *The Helping Hand*, Fredy Hirsch was responsible for the physical fitness of all the children and adolescents in Theresienstadt. He believed that through regular exercise the ghetto young would be able to strengthen their minds as well as their bodies. Hirsch ensured that even those aged over fourteen with work assignments found time to exercise and play sport. In his report written for *The Forum of Ideas* Hirsch declared,

In spite of the prevailing conditions, our youth in Terezín should receive light, air and sun, and this can be achieved only by improving housing conditions and creating opportunities for games and sports. Every young person in the Home should organise and carry out everyday duties for himself ... His body should be strengthened by competitions and sport. Even though many sport facilities are lacking, I consider competitions necessary. Through competition, everyone proves to himself that he has a strong will, whether he wins or loses. When young people enter the playground for sport competition, the best is

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<sup>89</sup> *Ibid*, p.43-44.

awakened in them, and they can strive for the most beautiful activity.<sup>90</sup>

The most popular organised sport in Theresienstadt was football.<sup>91</sup> Within the confines of the ghetto there were two fully functioning football leagues: the 'Majors' or adult league and the 'Minors' which contained players under eighteen. One of the adult games of football is described by an unknown child in the house magazine, *Vedem*. He writes,

The yard of the Dresden barracks is crowded, packed so tight from the attic to the ground you couldn't fit a pin in. Fourteen players are running round the field. The match between *Kleiderkammer* and *Köche* (Clothing Supply and Cooks) is under way. *Kleiderkammer*'s left winger, Naci Fischer, attacks. The crowd hums with excitement. He comes in on the goal, he shoots, but the goalkeeper dives after the ball and stops it. A mighty round of applause.<sup>92</sup>

This article describes how football matches in the ghetto differed from those played before the war. It explains how, rather than being viewed as a business, a way in which to make money, football within Theresienstadt was played purely for entertainment and exercise.<sup>93</sup> The boy continues,

Here in the Terezín football league, what do players on the winning team receive? Nothing. Here they play with true élan for their club. They play for the sake of playing and not for money. I think you can see far more self-sacrifice here than anywhere else. In the *Kleiderkammer* – *Köche* match, Glückner started with inflammation of the middle ear and a high temperature, yet he was one of the best players on the field.<sup>94</sup>

<sup>90</sup> YVA: 0.64/27 part 2. Hirsch, *Did We Succeed in Staying Generous and Kind?*

<sup>91</sup> For sport in Theresienstadt see: Zdenek Ornest et al, *We are Children Just the Same*, pp.,51-52.

For sport in other ghettos see: Eisen, *Children and Play in the Holocaust: Games Amongst the Shadows* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts, 1988), pp.76-81; Mark Dvorjetski, 'Adjustment of Detainees to Camp and Ghetto Life.' In: *Yad Vashem Studies*. V (1963), pp.193-220.

<sup>92</sup> Zdenek Ornest et al. *We are children just the same*, p.52.

<sup>93</sup> See Ladner and Hirsch and the transfer of teams and jobs for an example of football taking on a more important role than exercise and entertainment.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*

Even though the ‘Majors’ often attracted more spectators, the games played between the ‘Minors’ were seen as vital by the Youth Welfare Department. Kurt Ladner who was fifteen on his arrival in Theresienstadt in 1942 recalls how, ‘Through various tryouts and several practice sessions, we finally fielded our first soccer team and joined the Youth League as ‘Vienna’.’<sup>95</sup> He continues,

I played centre half; Ernie Hacker played centre forward; Pepi Goldstein was our right wing and Josefberg was our left wing. There were a few other kids that substituted for one another, for the field was small and only seven men could play. There were several teams, but it was always Vienna and the Czech All Stars that wound up in the play-offs.<sup>96</sup>

After several months of playing in the ‘Minors’, Ladner was approached by Mr. Fischer who managed the Viennese football team for the ‘Majors’. As he was considered to be good enough to play with the adults Ladner was soon transferred. He explains how the adult league functioned.

This league was made up of many teams and various combinations. The teams were named mostly according to the jobs they performed, like the Cooks had a team, also Gardeners, Electricians, Ghetto Police, Clothing Chamber (Kleider Kammer), Youth Agency (Jugend Fürsorge) ... There were many formidable soccer players who played for major league teams in their respective countries before Hitler.<sup>97</sup>

From Ladner’s description it can be seen that the ‘Minors’ and the ‘Majors’ were not only divided by age but by ability, as talented boys under the age of 18 who were considered good enough could be included in the ‘Majors’.

There were several reasons why the Youth Welfare Department encouraged the participation of boys in both the Adult and Youth Leagues. Not

<sup>95</sup> USHMM: RG – 02.192, p.94, Ladner, *Not a Moment too Soon*.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, p.96.

only was the physical exercise seen as beneficial but it meant that the adolescent male population of the ghetto was kept busy out of working hours and therefore out of trouble. There was a more important reason why football was encouraged: it was seen as being a way in which boys could ensure an extra level of protection within the ghetto. As the leagues took on an increasingly important position in ghetto life, being allied to a team captain or key player could guarantee extra rations, a better job or on the rare occasion exemption from deportation. Ladner explains how after some weeks of playing for the ‘Majors’,

I asked my manager and supporters of the team if they could get me a better job than a painter. I specifically requested to become a cook, because painting was a lousy job, dirty with long hours, especially when we had to work outside the ghetto, and left little time to practice soccer, and most of all, I was always hungry. I was promised that I would get a job in the kitchen, but promising does not make it so.<sup>98</sup>

While waiting for his job change Ladner experienced some of the benefits of becoming a Theresienstadt sportsman or ‘celebrity’. He writes,

Through playing soccer, I became better known, and when I stood in line to receive my ration of food, I usually got a little extra soup or something else. Every little bit of extra food helped; for food was not easy to obtain.<sup>99</sup>

The severe winters meant that football could not be played all year round. During the winter months Fredy Hirsch was responsible for organising other sports and games for the young people. Ladner describes the winter of 1942-43.

This is when I joined a group of young men that took ‘judo’ instructions. Our teacher was a young Czech gymnast with world-class credentials. His name was Fredy Hirsch. His job was to work for the youth organisation as a teacher, gymnastics and judo instructor. He was a good guy and a good teacher.<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.* p.97.

Through taking these judo classes Ladner and Hirsch became friends but Ladner explains that Hirsch was not happy that he was playing football for the ‘Vienna’ team and that he wanted him to leave them and join the *Jugendfürsorge* team. Ladner was reluctant to leave the Viennese team remembering that they had promised him a job in one of the ghetto kitchens. As they still had not followed through on this promise, Hirsch was able to persuade him to change teams. Through his extensive contacts across the ghetto Hirsch was able to get Ladner a job in the kitchen in a matter of days. Ladner recalls, ‘Just as they promised, I received a job transfer from painting to a cook in the Dresdner Kasserne, and I switched from Vienna to the Jugend Fürsorge.’<sup>101</sup> Ladner claims he had no reservations about the transfer as, ‘my friends and I had a greater allegiance to the fellows I lived with, than a city that betrayed us.’<sup>102</sup>

The intriguing aspect of this story relates not to a transfer of teams, but of jobs. What did Ladner think about his change of job and what had Hirsch had to do to secure Ladner one of the most coveted ghetto jobs, that of cook? It is unlikely that there was a job waiting for Ladner in one of the kitchens, and it is probable that someone else moved from the kitchen to Ladner’s painting job. Whose job did Ladner receive? Whenever a change like this was made in the ghetto, whether it was from one job to another or whether it involved reclaiming someone from a transfer list, another person always suffered. Someone inevitably took the place of the ‘privileged’ man, woman or child.

Sport in general and football in particular played an important role in bridging the gap between the Czech and German communities. Although the football teams were highly nationalistic and *Vienna* was constantly rivalling the *Czech All-Stars*, it was through the Youth League that most contact was made between the young Czechs and Germans. Ruth Bondy writes,

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<sup>101</sup> *Ibid*, p.98.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid*.

The Czech and German children at first kept apart from one another, but in time the gap between them closed through common sports activities and courses, and through the love they shared for soccer.<sup>103</sup>

### 5.7 The Deportation of Children and Adolescents

Despite the efforts of the youth workers in educating the children and in resisting the most negative forces of the ghetto, children were deported from Theresienstadt with increasing regularity. As head of the youth department, Gonda Redlich not only had to deal with problems that occurred between the factions in the ghetto over the day-to-day welfare and education of the children but also take responsibility for ensuring the safety of the children in his care up until their death or departure east. Redlich worked tirelessly, exhausting all possibilities for extracting children from deportation lists. This was a stressful process and one that guaranteed controversy. Redlich was aware of the fact that every time he rescued a child from a deportation list it meant that, somewhere else in the ghetto, an elderly or a sick adult would be forced to take its place. As previously described in Chapter Three, all heads of departments of the internal administration had their own *Schutzliste* (protection list) when it came to the compilation of the deportation lists. The protection lists consisted of prisoners who should be exempt from deportation, the usual reason given being they were classed as essential workers. Due to his position in the ghetto, Redlich's list consisted primarily of children, teachers and counsellors. As the children in his care who were under the age of fourteen could not be classed as essential workers, Redlich had to apply new criteria. His reasons for removing the children from the deportation lists can be seen in the various plea letters he wrote to the Council of Elders and departmental heads on behalf of his charges.<sup>104</sup>

The chain of events which led to Redlich implementing his protection list was as follows: when a child was placed on a deportation list, a parent or guardian would write to a councillor in the Youth Department begging for his or

<sup>103</sup> Bondy, *Elder of the Jews*, p.311.

<sup>104</sup> See later section on plea letters and reclaiming children and youth workers from the transports.

her removal. The youth workers would hand these letters on to Redlich and his team who would forward them to the department of the Jewish Elder, via the deportation and appeals committees, having signed them and often having attached a letter of their own.<sup>105</sup> The deportation of children occupied a considerable amount of Redlich's time and much of the space in his diary. When the first transports left the ghetto in January 1942, he wrote, 'Our mood is very bad. We prepared for the transport. We worked practically all night. With Fredy's help, we managed to spare the children from the transport.'<sup>106</sup> By February 1942 the stress of his position was taking effect and he was overwhelmed by his duties. On 24 February he wrote, 'Perhaps it's cowardice, but I am not prepared to assume responsibility for thirteen hundred children.'<sup>107</sup> By April 1942 the situation was becoming increasingly bad as more and more children were being included on transports east. The heightened tension caused by the transports led to arguments amongst the Zionists and other political factions in the ghetto as to whether or not certain adults should volunteer for the transports. On 13 April 1942 Redlich wrote,

An argument with Fredy. If they ask me who to exempt from the transports – healthy Zionists or the sick, children, orphans – I will answer that the harm is not so great if healthy Zionists travel ... The whole problem here is very difficult. For there is no problem that goes according to fixed law. For every problem touches upon actual questions of life and death.<sup>108</sup>

Later that month Redlich was still debating with Hirsch whether or not Zionists should volunteer on transports. On 22 April he wrote, 'Fr. [Fredy] said that we are obliged to volunteer. I told him that if someone must volunteer, he is the most likely since he is a bachelor. He doesn't have any relatives in Europe.'<sup>109</sup> But by 19 October 1942 the situation reached crisis point and children could not be saved

<sup>105</sup> YVA: 0.64 files 1-22. Internal correspondence between different departments in the ghetto.

<sup>106</sup> Friedman, ed. *The Terezín Diary of Gonda Redlich*, p.3.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid*, p.21.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 34-35.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 36-37.

from deportations: it was no longer possible to send adults instead of children. Redlich concluded, ‘And regarding the children, the question remains: to travel with them or stay in the ghetto.’<sup>110</sup> Throughout October, Redlich wrote about the work he and his colleagues had to do during the build up to the departure of the transports. On 22 October 1942 he wrote,

Again a crisis. All week, day and night we make up transports without stopping. Tension, fear and confusion rule those designated for travel and, at times, also those ‘who decide.’<sup>111</sup>

Redlich was concerned by the deportation of the very young out of the ghetto because he feared the worst about the severe conditions in the east. He did not know exactly what awaited the children but understood that it would be worse than Theresienstadt. On 9 January 1943 he wrote, ‘Already children have died in the ghetto. Sending a child to Poland means sending him to his death. Last year the age limit was twelve, this year three years.’<sup>112</sup>

An example of Redlich’s role within this deportation process can be seen when on the 16 August 1943 he wrote a letter addressed to Dr. Paul Eppstein, the second Jewish leader of Theresienstadt, on behalf of Harry Hoffmann a child in his care. It reads,

The Youth, Hoffmann, Harry, transport number Bg 724, born 1927, has been registered for deportation with his mother Hoffmann Martha, Bg 725. The boy has pneumonia and is run down and should remain in the ghetto. He can stay with his father who is divorced from the mother. As his parents are divorced, the mother needs to give permission for the boy to remain with his father, Dr. Hoffmann, Karl, Cc 294. Please rectify this mistake and remove him from the transport.

Youth Welfare Department, Redlich.<sup>113</sup>

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid*, p.79.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid*, p.96.

<sup>113</sup> YVA: 0.64/15 part 2, p.179.

Such letters were common and, on 27 August 1943, Redlich had to write regarding the imminent *familienzerreissung* (tearing apart of a family), Oskar Fuchs and his daughter Franziska.<sup>114</sup> The question of *familienzerreissung* had troubled Redlich as early as October 1942 when he wrote in his diary,

On one transport, for example, they are sending an entire family except for an aged mother who is more than sixty-five years old. This mother will go with another transport to another ghetto. They tear the family apart, kill, torture, and they give to this a semblance of order. I would like to sleep and wake up at the end of the war.<sup>115</sup>

Petr Ginz who lived in children's home L 417 and was the editor of the house magazine *Vedem*, was deported to Auschwitz without his parents on 28 September 1944. Petr's sister Eva, who kept a diary of her time in the ghetto, recorded Petr's inclusion in the transport. She wrote,

Petr and Pavel are in the transport ... I am trying to be calm in front of Petr. I don't want him to be even more upset ... Mummy and Daddy, I miss you awfully, especially now when I am losing the only person who stood by me. Who knows if we all shall meet again?<sup>116</sup>

Eva continued to write about how she remained with Petr right up until he got into the train. She watched him climb into the carriage with his cousin Pavel having been told that they were going to work near Dresden. She writes,

Petr is number 2392 and Pavel 2626. They are together in one carriage ... It was a terrible sight. I shall never forget it. A crowd of women, children and old men were milling round the barracks to get a last look at their sons, husbands, fathers or brothers ... You could hear sobbing everywhere ... Now the boys are gone. All that is left are their empty beds.<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> *Ibid*, p.21.

<sup>115</sup> Friedman, ed. *The Terezín Diary of Gonda Redlich*, p.76.

<sup>116</sup> Ornstein et al, *We are children just the same*, p.71.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid*, p.72.

For the children included in the transports the departure from the ghetto was confusing and traumatic. Those children who were left behind and who had lost friends and relatives in the transports were often unable to comprehend their loss. Unable to accept what had happened to them these children often wrote indirectly about their loss in their diaries, sometimes concentrating on the loss of belongings as the pain attached to the loss of the relative was too severe to focus on. Inge Auerbacher who was nine years old at the time of the final deportations from Theresienstadt to Auschwitz recalls how her best friend Ruth was deported with her parents.

She was an only child, just two months older than I. We were like sisters and shared our daydreams and secrets with each other. She had beautiful blond hair. Ruth and I owned identical dolls. Before she embarked on her final journey, she entrusted me with all of her doll's clothing, which her mother had carefully sewn from rags. Ruth's father was half Christian and half Jewish, and Ruth had been raised as a Christian.<sup>118</sup>

The deportation of *Mischlinge* out of Theresienstadt was extremely complex and in some cases being *Arisch versippt* (Aryan related) was reason enough for a prisoner to be removed from a deportation list. Several *Mischlinge* children were included on the protection lists of the Youth Welfare Department and Redlich received and signed many letters on their behalf. Attempting to reclaim any children or youth workers who were classed as *Mischlinge* was however an extremely lengthy procedure. All *Mischlinge* had to complete a special *Fragebogen für Mischlinge* (questionnaire) which contained all their personal information; name, address, date of birth, religion and details of parents including details of grandparents on father's side and mother's side. All this information had to be provided together with the relevant documentation.<sup>119</sup> Given the rushed nature of the deportations to Theresienstadt, many had travelled

<sup>118</sup> Auerbacher, *I am a Star*, pp.63-64. See next section on religious life in the ghetto for position of Christians in Theresienstadt.

<sup>119</sup> YVA: 0.64/21, p.231. Example of a *Fragebogen für Mischlinge*.

to the ghetto without the necessary documents. On 14 March 1943 Redlich wrote about the fate of the *Mischlinge* children in his diary. He wrote,

What do children from mixed families (the father or the mother is a Gentile) have in common with our fate? Most of them did not even know of their Jewishness till they arrived here. And now they must bear the fate of their blood, the fate of the Jewish people that comes and goes forever, from generation to generation.<sup>120</sup>

Charlotte Veresova who was one of the children deported to Theresienstadt under the laws relating to children of ‘mixed’ marriages. She recorded her feelings about her deportation in her diary. She wrote,

My father is Jewish and my mommy is Aryan, so my brother and I are mixed and children of mixed marriages must, according to German laws, go to Terezín. Why, I don’t know, nor why it had to be us and not Dad, it’s all a big mix-up. They say Mom saved Dad from being sent in a transport, but not us. It isn’t clear to me, but nothing can be done about it, it’s stupid regulations. So I sit here in my bunk and write and am unhappy.<sup>121</sup>

It was not only children that Redlich and his team worked day and night to remove from the transport lists; they also worked tirelessly in order to reclaim any youth workers who had been included. On 5 September 1943 Redlich wrote to Paul Eppstein personally to request the removal of Anna Markus from a deportation list. His letter is addressed to ‘The Jewish Elder, Dr. Paul Eppstein from Egon Redlich, Youth Welfare Department.’ He writes that Anna Markus, number: AAM 220: 5690, born 1880, is the mother of one of their best youth workers who is ill at the moment with diphteria. Redlich writes that the daughter, Hansi Diamant is *unermüdlich in der Arbeit* (tireless in her work with the children), and that, as her husband died some time ago in the ghetto, the mother

<sup>120</sup> Friedman, ed. *The Terezín Diary of Gonda Redlich*, p.108.

<sup>121</sup> Extract from the diary of Charlotte Veresova, in: Laurel Holiday, ed. *Children’s Wartime Diaries – Secret Writings from the Holocaust and World War II*. (London: Piatkus Publishers, 1995), p.202.

should be released to look after her.<sup>122</sup> Although some Youth workers were deported either separately or together with children from the ghetto it was the departure of the children that affected the community most severely. Vera Hájková-Duxová who worked in the Theresienstadt orphanage describes how many of the children in her care were included on transports east and how this affected parents and friends who stayed behind. Although some of the orphans remained in the ghetto and survived the war, nearly all the children of sick mothers who were housed in the orphanage were sent east and killed. She writes,

The summons to join the transport were delivered to the rooms of the children's mothers. The leavetaking was heartbreaking. On the days the transport left a suffocating pall of horror blanketed Terezín.<sup>123</sup>

The deportation of children out of Theresienstadt increased during the autumn and winter of 1943 and reached its height during the *Stadtverschönerung* and the mass deportations of Autumn 1944.<sup>124</sup> In a dairy entry dated August 24-September 8, 1943 Redlich records that, 'They incarcerated Fredy [Hirsch] and Janowitz and put them on a transport. A transport of five thousand people. They sent five thousand in one day.'<sup>125</sup> The deportation of Fredy Hirsch was a disaster for the ghetto and a considerable blow to Gonda Redlich both personally and professionally. In his professional capacity working with the children of Theresienstadt Hirsch was irreplaceable, and his confidant and friend Redlich keenly felt the loss. The background to the deportation of Fredy Hirsch remains unclear but the majority of testimonies claim that his deportation was directly linked to the arrival and subsequent departure of a group of children who arrived in Theresienstadt from Bialystok during the summer of 1943.

<sup>122</sup> YVA: 0.64/11 part 2, p.155.

<sup>123</sup> Franková, *The World Without Human Dimensions*, p.89.

<sup>124</sup> After the October transports left Theresienstadt only 819 children remained. See: Adler, *Theresienstadt*, p.315. The amount was to almost double in April and May 1945 with the arrival of transports from other concentration camps, the death marches and some Slovak Jews.

<sup>125</sup> Friedman, ed. *The Terezín Diary of Gonda Redlich*, p.129.

On 21 August 1943, the Bialystok Ghetto was liquidated and about 2,000 people were deported to Auschwitz. The adults and children under four were killed, leaving 1,260 children (those over the age of four) who were sent to Theresienstadt.<sup>126</sup> They were held there until they were deported back to Auschwitz on 5 October 1943 together with 53 adults.

Lilly Skutezky describes what had happened to the children in Auschwitz. ‘In front of the children the parents had to undress, received soap and towels, were forced to go into the bath-house and never come back any more.’<sup>127</sup> As the children who were sent to Theresienstadt were deported back to Auschwitz six weeks later, it remains unclear why were they sent to Theresienstadt at all. It is however, apparent from the testimonies of those who witnessed the arrival of the Bialystok children that they were in a terrible condition. Edith Lowy remembers their arrival and how the council of Elders called for volunteers to work with them. The selection of approximately fifty nurses and counsellors was kept secret from the community at large and those who volunteered were not informed about the origins of the children whom they would care for. Lowy recalls,

They needed volunteers – a transport of children came from some place. They asked who would bathe the children – I volunteered. They wanted people with languages. I was looking forward to it. I came to the train. There were children there which had old faces – they were skinny, dirty, smelly, bare footed. We were not allowed to touch them. They gave us powder and told us to put the children in the showers. They didn’t talk – but they hit and beat us. They didn’t want to shower – they were vile children. What did they see that they behaved like this?<sup>128</sup>

Hana Greenfield describes how the ghetto population was ordered to remain inside while the Bialystok transport was unloaded and until the children were safely housed outside the main ghetto wall. She writes,

<sup>126</sup> Bronka Klibanski, ‘Kinder aus dem Ghetto Bialystok in Theresienstadt.’ In: Kárny, ed. *Theresienstädter Studien und Dokumente* 1 (1995), pp.93-106.

<sup>127</sup> YVA: O33/ 702, p.1. Lilly F. Skutezky, *Memorandum*.

<sup>128</sup> FVA: 1469, Edith Lowy.

No one was allowed to look out, even peep from a window, under threat of severe punishment ... Suddenly a column of bedraggled children appeared, hundreds of them, between the ages of four to twelve years, holding each others hands. The older ones helped the smaller ones, their little bodies moving along in the pouring rain.<sup>129</sup>

Although the arrival of the Bialystok children was supposed to be a secret, news of their arrival spread through the ghetto once the volunteers had started their work with the children. According to Vera Schiff, ‘Theresienstadt's walls were permeable: Nothing remained secret and all orders were transgressed.’<sup>130</sup>

Over a six week period, the children were properly fed and clothed and began to make substantial physical and emotional progress thanks to the help of both nurses and teachers. However, they were deported en masse to Auschwitz where they were killed together with their carers.<sup>131</sup> Gonda Redlich records in his diary the departure of the Bialystok transport on 5 October 1943. ‘The children from the wooden huts traveled with their counselors out of the country.’<sup>132</sup>

Eva Roubicková also discusses the transports which started to leave the ghetto around this time and describes how the entire ghetto was thrown into a state of panic over who was to be included. She focuses on the repercussions for Fredy Hirsch who, in violation of Nazi orders, went into the compound containing the Bialystok children to find out where they had come from and what had happened to their families. There is no information recording the date on which Hirsch made contact with the Bialystok children but Redlich recorded his arrest on 8 September 1943, less than a month before the Bialystok children were sent to Auschwitz on 5 October. Roubicková writes, ‘Transport fever. This time it stops for nobody, whether old or young, whether longtime resident or not ...

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<sup>129</sup> Greenfield, *Fragments of Memory – from Kolin to Jerusalem*, p.17.

<sup>130</sup> Schiff, *Theresienstadt*, p.68.

<sup>131</sup> For more information on the background to why the Bialystok children were to sent to Theresienstadt and later deported to Auschwitz see; Adler, *Theresienstadt*, Chapter 6, *Jüdisches Siedlungsgebiet – Sommer 1943 / Sept. 1944*, pp.150-184, particularly pp.154-158. Some of the accounts of the Bialystok children and their arrival in Theresienstadt claim that these children were part of a deal – that money was meant to arrive in Berlin from Switzerland in order to secure their release but as the money never arrived the children were deported to Auschwitz.

<sup>132</sup> Friedman, ed. *The Ghetto Diary of Gonda Redlich*, p.132.

Fredy Hirsch was thrown in jail for talking to the Russian children, and now he's going.<sup>133</sup>

A second reason given for the deportation of Hirsch was his popularity among both old and young in Theresienstadt. Karel Hoffman claims that the Nazis felt threatened by the position Hirsch occupied in the ghetto and that they feared he was capable of starting a revolt. Hoffman writes, 'There was a young man who could organise people – Fredy Hirsch – as soon as the Germans recognised this they took him away.'<sup>134</sup> Shimon Adler offers a third possible reason for the deportation of Hirsch,

His deportation was allegedly a punishment for violating the Nazi ban on any contact with the children brought from Bialystok to Theresienstadt in the summer of 1943. It is possible that the Nazis used it as an excuse; if the German authorities did actually plan to establish an 'exemplary camp' in Auschwitz for propaganda purposes, Hirsch was the most suitable candidate for running it.<sup>135</sup>

On September 9 1943 Hirsch was deported to camp B11b, the Terezín family camp in Auschwitz, as part of a mass transport of 5,007 people.<sup>136</sup> The second mass transport to the Terezín family camp left Theresienstadt in December 1943.<sup>137</sup> Redlich recorded its departure in his diary. 'They sent those sick with tuberculosis and then children one year old. They travelled in filthy cattle cars.'<sup>138</sup>

On 16 March 1944, amid the various entries about his work and the deportation of children from the ghetto, Gonda Redlich recorded the birth of his son Daniel in his diary. He wrote, 'My son has been born. May God bless and

<sup>133</sup> Roubicková, *We're Alive and Life Goes On*, p.98-99. Roubicková's entry for the arrest of Hirsch is dated, 29 August-8 October 1943.

<sup>134</sup> USHMM: RG – 50 – 091.20, Karel Hoffman.

<sup>135</sup> Adler, 'The Children's Block', p.287.

<sup>136</sup> For information on Camp BIIb, The Terezín family camp see: Kulka, 'Ghetto in an Annihilation Camp', pp.315-330 and Adler, 'The Children's Block', pp.281-315. This second article outlines the work carried out by Fredy Hirsch and his team inside Birkenau between September 1943 and June 1944. The majority of the information available about camp B11b comes from the testimonies of fifteen teachers and children who survived the camp.

<sup>137</sup> For more information on Hirsch and camp B11b see: Adler, *Die Verheimlichte Wahrheit*, pp.307-309.

<sup>138</sup> Friedman, ed. *The Terezín Diary of Gonda Redlich*, p.138.

protect him. I want to give my beloved a diary and write his history in it.<sup>139</sup> The final entry in Redlich's diary is on 2 August 1944 but the diary that he began for Daniel continues until their deportation to Auschwitz in October 1944. Willi Groag, the son of the welfare worker Trude Groag, remembers that the last time he saw his friend Gonda in Theresienstadt was on the day he received his deportation notice.<sup>140</sup> Groag writes,

He was looking for me and was glad to find me. He told me he had been promised a place in a passenger car and had permission to take a baby carriage. Nothing bad could be in store if he could bring along a baby carriage, wasn't that right?<sup>141</sup>

The final entry in *Dan's Diary* reads,

We bought a baby carriage for you. The seller was one of my clerks and wanted to bribe me by giving me the carriage for free. We paid one kilo of sugar, one kilo of margarine, and two cans of sardines.<sup>142</sup>

Redlich received the family's deportation notice, prompting this final entry in his diary.

Tomorrow, we travel my son ... We did not register for the transport. They put us in without a reason ... It seems they want to eliminate and leave only the elderly and people of mixed origin ... They send small children, and their prams are left here. Separated families. On one transport a father goes. On another, a son. And on a third, the mother. Tomorrow we go, too, my son. Hopefully, the time of our redemption is near.<sup>143</sup>

Gonda Redlich was killed on arrival in Auschwitz together with his wife Gerta and his six month old son Daniel.

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<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.* p.144.

<sup>140</sup> Willi Groag took over Redlich's position as head of the Youth Welfare Department after his deportation to Auschwitz.

<sup>141</sup> Willi Groag in Makarova *et al*, *University Over the Abyss*, p.133.

<sup>142</sup> Friedman, ed. *The Terezín Diary of Gonda Redlich*, p.161.

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*

**Chapter Six: Cultural and Religious Leadership in the Ghetto and the cultural and religious experiences of the Adult and Youth populations, November 1941 – May 1945**

It is great here, so many interesting people. One could live here quite decently, if not for the constant fear of being sent to the east.<sup>1</sup>

### 6.1 Introduction

On 23 September 1943 the premiere of *Brundibár*, the children's opera, took place in the Magdeburg barracks distracting, if only for a short time, the audience from the horrors of ghetto life. Rudi Lamb claims, 'for us actors it will remain one of the few beautiful memories we have of that place.'<sup>2</sup> The cultural events that took place in the ghetto are an essential part of the history of Theresienstadt and should be examined for several reasons. First, for the unifying and uplifting effect they sometimes had on both audiences and performers.<sup>3</sup> Secondly, because cultural events had a practical benefit for the prominent actors and musicians who were allowed to abandon hard labour, thus conserving their strength, and pursue their artistic careers. As always, this benefit was a two-edged sword as workers who took part in cultural events automatically forfeited the extra rations that a 'permanent' job in either the *Hunderschafoten* or one of the administrative departments guaranteed. All jobs had to be filled, so as soon as one person abandoned their hard labour for a part in a play, their position was filled by someone else. Finally, cultural events should be examined as much for who was excluded from them as for those who took part.

Jana Sedova remembers how certain performances were capable of transforming, 'nameless transport numbers into an enthusiastic human

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<sup>1</sup> Friedl Dicker-Brandeis, in: Makarová *et al*, *University Over The Abyss* website.

<sup>2</sup> Rudi Lamb, *Terezín Diary*. Video documentary narrated by Eli Wallach, produced by Zuzanna Justmann and directed by Dan Weissman (Terezín: Terezín Foundation, 1992).

<sup>3</sup> It is important to stress the fact that only a small proportion of inmates were able to attend cultural performances in the ghetto. This point will be raised throughout this chapter.

community.<sup>4</sup> Zdenka Ehrlich-Fantlová, a Czech actress, who was imprisoned in Theresienstadt also attests to the heightened significance of these events. She insists that the importance of the evenings, ‘rose so high that it can’t be compared to any entertainment in normal life.’<sup>5</sup> While these feelings were clearly held by some of the people who took part in and attended the ghetto productions, the majority was excluded and for this reason the cultural events must be placed in their proper context.

Ghetto productions were not for everyone. The young, the sick, the elderly and the starving were unable to attend. Others had neither the energy nor the desire to join in. What did the elderly lying in their attics and those struggling with hard labour think of the actors, cabaret artists, singers and dancers who spent their days rehearsing their latest production, if they thought of them at all? Although the existence of a cultural life in the ghetto was of great importance to those it affected, the ghetto community should not be viewed as being a cohesive and homogenous society, where all attended lectures and classical concerts after a day’s hard labour. Ghetto politics infiltrated all areas of camp life including the cultural life, with Zionists, Czech Nationalists, Communists and Assimilationists arguing every point of order.

It should be asked whether the cultural evenings represented a last tenuous link with the life before the ghetto, whether in Prague, Berlin or Vienna, and if they did, was this continuation of their former lives desirable and psychologically beneficial? Should the cultural events be viewed only as a brief distraction from day-to-day ghetto life? Did the continuation of cultural events from their pre-war lives help the ghetto inhabitants to orient themselves in their new surroundings while guaranteeing some form of escapism? If this is the case it should be asked whether escapism was valuable in such a situation or whether it acted as a blindfold – filtering out the worse realities of the ghetto and therefore diminishing the awareness and strength of the individuals concerned.

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<sup>4</sup> Jana Sedová, *Terezín* (Prague: Council of Jewish Communities in the Czech Lands, 1965), p.17.

<sup>5</sup> Zdenka Ehrlich-Fantlová, ‘Czech Theatre in Terezín.’ In: Rovit and Goldfarb, eds. *Theatrical Performances*, p.173.

In order to assess the cultural life of Theresienstadt it is necessary to examine the cultural department of the Jewish Self-Administration – the *Freizeitgestaltung* (FZG) – and its development.<sup>6</sup> The chronology of the emergence of a cultural life is crucial to understanding the cultural life itself. The provisions made for cultural performances by both the Nazi officials and the Jewish Self-Administration play an important part in the history of this culture. The creation of the FZG was crucial to the maintenance of a cultural life as it granted all performances an official seal of approval. This meant that illegal performances no longer had to be carried out in attics, and larger more adventurous evenings could be planned for significant audiences. This did not mean, however, that these performances were free from censorship. The Jewish Self-Administration, reporting to the camp command, kept a close eye on all cultural events. It is necessary to discuss the creation of the FZG prior to discussing specific areas of achievement as it helps to locate individual performances and events within the official framework and history of the ghetto.

Each area of artistic achievement in the ghetto had its own group leader or head of department. It is the role of these figureheads that will be highlighted in this chapter and examined in relation to their audiences and fellow artists. Who were the men and women who ran these groups? What choices and sacrifices did they have to make for their work? How did these men and women inspire and encourage those around them? Finally, it should be asked whether uncovering and examining their work helps to recreate and maintain the culture that was lost during the Holocaust or whether it attaches undue importance to these events, ignoring those who could not attend and ultimately distorting the history of Theresienstadt? These questions will be answered in this chapter as the following areas are examined in turn: the creation of the FZG, Music, Theatre, Cabaret, Lectures, Creative writing and Art.

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<sup>6</sup> For a breakdown of FZG in terms of sub-departments and key workers see: Adler, *Theresienstadt*, Chapter 19, 'Kulturelles Leben', pp.584-626; Rovit and Goldfarb, eds. *Theatrical Performances*, Section 3, 'Freizeitgestaltung in Theresienstadt', pp.209-230.

## 6.2 The Origins, Structure and Aims of the *Freizeitgestaltung* (The Leisure Time Bureau).

The emergence of a cultural life in Theresienstadt mirrors the creation of the Jewish Self-Administration. The first cultural evenings and performances followed the arrival of ‘AK I’ and ‘AK II’ on 24 November and 4 December 1941.<sup>7</sup> Using the official ghetto reports issued by the Jewish Self-Administration, the writings of Erich Weiner who was appointed head of the FZG, and various memoirs and diaries, it is possible to recreate the chronology of Theresienstadt’s cultural life and assess the role it played in the lives of the ghetto population.<sup>8</sup>

Erich Weiner records that the first cultural event took place on the evening of 5 December 1941, the day after ‘AK II’ transport arrived, and that these events constituted a reunion for the early arrivals who had been separated from family and friends in Prague. The evening’s ‘festivities’ were not difficult to organise as the early transports had included many talented musicians and actors. The transport which arrived in the ghetto on 30 November 1941 contained Raphael Schächter and Otto Ungar; by 4 December, Bedrich Fritta/Bedrich Taussig, Petr Kien, Gideon Klein and the writer Zdenek Lederer were all in residence.

The event of 5 December 1941 took place in room 69 of the Sudeten Barracks. Within a few days, several more evenings had been arranged including a flute performance by Viktor Kohn, a harmonica duet by Kurt Maier and Wolfgang Lederer, and a recital of Czech poetry by Mirko Tuma. Similar performances continued until February 1942. Throughout this time the performers faced several obstacles and set-backs, including a Nazi ban on musical instruments, issued at the end of December 1941. The ban did not put a stop to cultural life, as lectures soon began to replace the music recitals. The early cultural pioneers were replaced by the more formal FZG, which was officially opened by the Jewish council in February 1942. The energetic youth leader Fredy

<sup>7</sup> See Chapter Three.

<sup>8</sup> YVA: 0.64/50-75. Files relating to the FZG in Theresienstadt. Weiner’s article, *Freizeitgestaltung in Terezín*, is reproduced in English in, Rovit and Goldfarb, eds. *Theatrical Performances*, pp209-230.

Hirsch contacted Rabbi Erich Weiner about the possibility of Weiner taking charge of the FZG and subsequently of all leisure time activities in Theresienstadt.<sup>9</sup> With the help of the youth directors from several barracks, and under the guidance of Hirsch, Weiner established a series of cultural afternoons which took place during March 1942. The first event took place on 21 March and was sufficiently successful to be repeated on 28 March. Initially each of the ghetto barracks organised their own events under the auspices of the FZG. In the Hamburger Barracks, Frau Grab-Kernmayer held an exhibition of her art while Otto Brod spoke on *Voltaire and the Huguenots*; in the Sudeten Barracks, Leopold Sonnenschein outlined his work in the *Buildings Department*.<sup>10</sup>

In April 1942 Weiner wrote, ‘The work this month caused a few sensations.’<sup>11</sup> He describes the schedule for March which included a performance of *The Theresienstadt Suite* by Karl Taube and the *American Quartet* by Dvorák. The month of April marked an important stage in the creation of a cultural life because a comprehensive series of language lessons was set up in the Kavalier barracks. In addition to the growing number of evening lectures and concerts, adult prisoners could now take lessons in Hebrew, English, Czech and Spanish. Weiner was aware of the effect that his organisation was starting to have on those inmates able to attend.<sup>12</sup> He wrote,

Time and again one had to admire the enormous work zeal which our voluntary artistic collaborators put themselves at our disposal; and fully gratis, [they] made it their business to lift the spirits of the barracks’ inmates, offering them something from the artistic sphere.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Rabbi Erich Weiner’s job was to include overseeing all religious instruction in the ghetto. As Weiner was already a member of the three man Rabbinate which was established in Theresienstadt he was seen as the perfect man to head religious matters. See later section in this chapter on the religious life of the ghetto.

<sup>10</sup> Weiner, ‘Freizeitgestaltung.’ In: Rovit and Goldfarb, eds. *Theatrical Performances*, p.212.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid*, p.214.

<sup>12</sup> Due to the fact that the majority of the early arrivals in the ghetto were relatively healthy many could attend these evening events. This should be compared to the arrivals from Germany and Austria during the summer of 1942.

<sup>13</sup> Weiner, ‘Freizeitgestaltung.’ In: Rovit and Goldfarb, eds. *Theatrical Performances*, p.215.

By the summer of 1942 the output of the FZG had increased dramatically and performances went ahead despite poor conditions and lack of space. Weiner commented,

The question of space naturally presented the biggest difficulty for all the barracks. This was one of the obstacles against which we had to fight in the end. The Sudeten barracks had after all no room; the potato peeling room was rarely at our disposal. I do not want to judge whether this was because of little cooperation on the part of the administration or really due to frequent use.<sup>14</sup>

The expulsion of the non-Jewish Czech population of Theresienstadt during the summer 1942 signalled a broadening of the FZG's programme. Now that the ghetto was 'open' and the prisoners 'free' to walk around, the performances no longer needed to be held in specific barracks and larger, more adventurous programmes were devised. Since its inception, the Theresienstadt ghetto had been divided into four districts, with each district having a self-appointed cultural leader. District Three became the most prominent – it had the largest population and Professor Emil Utitz proved himself a skilled district commander.

Weiner's department flourished as he broadened the sphere of cultural performances. He was aware, however, that not all the ghetto population could attend these events. He was especially concerned by the plight of the elderly and the infirm, and turned his attention to how they might be included.

I saw that hundreds of old people in hospitals lay abandoned – both invalids and the incurably ill. And I wanted to offer them some amusement. Thus I created the institution of the reader. These were mostly very old people who approached their task with dedication and eagerness: to regularly visit hospitals to provide the elderly with an hour of distraction through reading aloud, lectures, or storytelling.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> *Ibid*, p.218

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid*, p.221.

It might be argued that Weiner was using up vital resources to promote ‘some amusement’, but, as he was unable to provide more food or better living conditions, he was helping in the only way he could.

In the internal ghetto report of October 1942, the Jewish Self-Administration discussed the progress of the FZG.

Despite the tragic events in regard to the departing transports, the FZG could, nonetheless, register a larger circle of interested people. Countless lectures, evenings of entertainment, and variety hours are being organised in houses and blocks. And these performances were organised, for the most part, by persons who after their full day’s work, summoned the desire to offer thousands of ghetto inmates several hours of entertainment and instruction.<sup>16</sup>

By the end of October 1942 the Jewish council decided that the FZG had become so popular that it should form an independent department of the ghetto administration. It therefore broke away from the Housing/Buildings administration under the leadership of Fredy Hirsch and became an independent body under the control of Rabbi Weiner, who was answerable to Dr. Egon Popper, director of the Internal Administration.

One of the most important moments in the history of the cultural life of the ghetto occurred in November 1942 when Theresienstadt acquired its first piano. This had been discovered in a house during the evacuation of the native Czech residents. It was in a terrible condition, but was soon reassembled by Dr. Pick and set up inside children’s home L417. The piano opened up a new world of possibilities with concerts and recitals by Gideon Klein, Kaff and Schächter.<sup>17</sup> Having seen Schächter’s production of Smetana’s *The Bartered Bride*, Weiner wrote,

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<sup>16</sup> *Ibid*, p.223

<sup>17</sup> Schächter’s production of the Smetana opera, *The Bartered Bride*, was first performed in the ghetto 28.11.42.

This was a great art event that had not been surpassed to this day, nor can it hardly be surpassed again; at best, perhaps, only by Schächter's *Requiem* by Verdi.<sup>18</sup>

The first anniversary of the arrival of the 'AK' transports in November 1942 was marked by several cultural performances and premieres of important works. By this time the FZG was hosting regular lectures, Czech and German cabarets and theatre, poetry readings and language classes. There were individual events in specific barracks, cross-barrack events and inter-departmental evenings. The November 1942 report issued by the internal administration announced,

The leisure time activity made progress this month not only in the number of lectures, evening and other performances, but mainly in the quality of these performances. This month for the first time, plays, as well as an opera were produced. It may be said that the enthusiasm of the organisers and participants enabled the execution and the high quality of these performances.<sup>19</sup>

November 1942 witnessed the opening of the *Centralbucherei* (ghetto library) and in December the ghetto 'coffee house' was established.<sup>20</sup> Jazz was to be played in the coffee shop which resulted in the ban against musical instruments being lifted.<sup>21</sup> This meant that instruments became available for concerts throughout Theresienstadt.<sup>22</sup> The 'Ghetto Swingers', who played in the coffee house, became a huge success offering the latest in contemporary jazz and blues. Alfred Kantor, who spent his teenage years in Theresienstadt, remembers

<sup>18</sup> Weiner, 'Freizeitgestaltung.' In: Rovit and Goldfarb, eds. *Theatrical Performances*, p.224.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p.227.

<sup>20</sup> For information on the ghetto library see: David Shavit, *Hunger For the Printed Word – Books and Libraries in the Jewish Ghettos of Nazi-Occupied Europe* (North Carolina: McFarland and Company, 1997), Chapter 7, 'Theresienstadt Ghetto', pp.113-134.

<sup>21</sup> For a discussion on music during the Holocaust see: Rovit and Goldfarb, eds. *Theatrical Performances*, Section 3, 'Operatic Performances in Terezín', pp.190-202; Joza Karas, *Music in Terezín 1941-1945* (New York: Beaufort Books, 1985); Ulrike Migal, ed. *Und die Musik Speilt dazu: Chansons und Satiren aus dem KZ Theresienstadt* (München: Piper, 1986); Lubomír Peduzzi, 'Aus dem Theresienstädter Musikleben.' In: Kárný, ed. *Theresienstädter Studien und Dokumente 5* (1999), pp.217-225.

<sup>22</sup> The building of the café was directly linked to the city beautification project and the Red Cross visit. See Chapter Three.

how prisoners were issued with a green ticket which entitled them to listen to jazz and drink a cup of ersatz coffee once every two months. He describes it as ‘two hours of bliss.’<sup>23</sup> But such ‘bliss’, he writes, gave rise to a paradoxical situation in that inmates experienced, ‘A piano concerto one night and deportation to death the next.’<sup>24</sup> Once inside the coffee house the famous artists mixed with the general population of Theresienstadt. Kantor claims, ‘For me who had never had a chance to come near people like that – it was fantastic.’<sup>25</sup>

In January 1943, a combination of bad weather and an increase in the number of transports east slowed the pace of cultural events. The monthly report of the internal administration reads,

The performances of the FZG this month suffered greatly under different circumstances. First, several stages had to be shut down because the attics – where they were – could not be heated. Second, anxiety was caused by the departing transports and, in part, also by the departure of various employees.<sup>26</sup>

Although this is the last entry that Rabbi Weiner recorded in his report on the FZG, the cultural department remained in operation up until the mass deportations to Auschwitz during the autumn of 1944.

### 6.3 Music

The single most important cultural contribution of artists in the ghetto was in the field of music. An astonishing array of concerts, operas, cabarets and choirs existed in the ghetto and musicians made up a large proportion of the ghetto’s famous and prominent. Among the best known were: Raphael Schächter, Viktor Ullmann, Hans Krasá, Gideon Klein, and Peter Kien. The performances that arguably had the greatest effect on both performers and audiences, and which will be examined in detail, are: Schächter’s production of Verdi’s *Requiem*, the Czech children’s opera, *Brundibár*, and the German production of *Der Kaiser von*

<sup>23</sup> Kantor, *Terezín Diary*.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> Weiner, ‘Freizeitgestaltung.’ In: Rovit and Goldfarb, eds. *Theatrical Performances*, p.230.

*Atlantis* by Viktor Ullmann and Peter Kien. As previously mentioned, musical performances featured prominently among the early cultural events in the ghetto owing to the fact that the two ‘AK’ transports were rich in musicians. According to Joza Karas,

The arrival of the first *Aufbaukommando* signaled the beginning of a cultural life unparalleled in the history of Western civilization. For its members not only took care of the physical needs of the incoming transports, but some of them also started catering to their spiritual necessities.<sup>27</sup>

Karas claims that two people in particular were responsible for the early musical efforts; Karel Svenk and Raphael Schächter. The organisation of the early *Kameradschaftabende* (evenings of fellowship) were facilitated by the fact that many of those included in the ‘AK’ transports had disobeyed orders not to bring musical instruments into the ghetto.<sup>28</sup> Among the early arrivals, Karel Fröhlich and Kurt Maier brought with them a violin, a viola, and an accordion. Schächter soon started to organise choral evenings and performances in the ghetto. And, at the beginning of 1942, together with Karel Svenk, he produced his first ghetto cabaret which included Svenk’s inspired *Terezín March*. According to Dr. Jacob Jacobson, who was imprisoned in Theresienstadt from 1943 to 1945,

Concerts were given in the Town Hall and in a large room in the Magdeburg barracks, which also served as a Synagogue. From June, 1944, the main concerts were given in the large halls of the Sokolowna, the modern building of the former Sokol Society. There were popular orchestra concerts, song recitals, oratoria, piano and violin recitals, opera performances, classical and light music.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>27</sup> Karas, *Music in Terezín*, p.11. For more on ‘spiritual necessities’ see final section of this chapter on religious life in the ghetto.

<sup>28</sup> RIOD: file 1/E. Adler collection, documents relating to what Jews were allowed to take with them to Theresienstadt.

<sup>29</sup> WL: P III h testimonies: Dr. Jacob Jacobson, *Jewish Survivor’s Report – Terezín – The Daily Life, 1943 – 1945*.

Raphael Schächter realised his full musical potential inside Theresienstadt. Prior to the war, he had worked as a pianist and conductor first in Brno and later at the Prague Conservatory. However, his career reached its highpoint in the ghetto with his rendition of Verdi's *Requiem*. On 28 November 1942 Schächter produced the ghetto's first opera – a production of Smetana's *The Bartered Bride*. It was performed thirty-six times between November 1942 and Autumn 1944 and its success led to other operas being performed. Among those staged were: Smetana's *The Kiss*, Strauss's *Die Fledermaus*, Verdi's *Aida* and *Rigoletto*, Mozart's *The Magic Flute* and *The Marriage of Figaro*, Bizet's *Carmen*, Puccini's *Tosca*, and Offenbach's *Tales of Hoffmann*. While most of the operas performed were traditional renditions of favourite classics, the plays and cabarets staged were often more daring in content and more likely to be censored.<sup>30</sup>

Schächter decided to undertake Verdi's *Requiem* in the middle of 1943. By September 1943, he had auditioned and rehearsed his soloists – Marion Podolier, Hilde Aronson-Lindt, David Grunfeld and Karel Berman – and compiled a chorus of 150 singers. His two chosen pianists were Gideon Klein and Tella Pollak. He mainly worked in a music studio created in the basement of the girl's home L410 and wherever else he could find space.<sup>31</sup> The first performance was a resounding success, although disaster struck soon afterwards when most of his chorus was deported to Auschwitz. The majority of them were deported to camp B11b in Birkenau. The deportation of his singers was later repeated and it was only with a third chorus that he managed to maintain a run of fifteen performances.

In one of his unpublished musical reviews Viktor Ullmann writes about Schächter's performance of the *Requiem*. In *Verspätete Glossen zu Verdi's Requiem* (*Belated Glosses to Verdi's Requiem*), he writes,

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<sup>30</sup> The exception regarding operas was *Der Kaiser von Atlantis oder der Tod dankt ab* – see later section.

<sup>31</sup> Trude Groag in, Gurewitsch, *Mothers, Sisters, Resisters*, p,253.

It would appear correct to emphasize once more that Raphael Schächter, to whom the Terezin musical life is indebted for so many stimulations and artistic deeds, delivered a performance of a big-city standard (*eine Aufführung von grosstädtischen Niveau zustande gebracht hat*).<sup>32</sup>

Schächter's performances of the *Requiem* continued throughout 1944, the most infamous evening taking place in front of the delegates from the International Committee of the Red Cross and Adolf Eichmann in June 1944.

Why did Schächter, an imprisoned Jew in Nazi Germany, choose to perform a Roman Catholic Requiem? Doubtless, it was partly the *Requiem's* striking words that encouraged him.

Judex ergo cum sedebit, quidquid latet apparebit, nil inultum remanebit / Therefore, when the Judge shall be seated nothing shall be held hidden any longer, no wrong shall remain unpunished.<sup>33</sup>

The final section of the *Requiem* ends with the *Libera Me*:

Deliver me, O lord, from Eternal death  
on that dreadful day,  
when the heavens and earth shall be moved,  
when Thou shall come to judge the world by fire.  
I am full of fear and I tremble  
Awaiting the day of account and wrath to come.  
Day of wrath, day of mourning,  
Day of calamity and misery,  
That day great and most bitter.  
Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord,  
And let perpetual light shine upon them.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>32</sup> RIOD: file 12/ D. Adler collection. Ullmann, *Verspätete Glossen von Verdi's Requiem*. Other reviews include; *Mozart Abende, Klavierabende – Gideon Klein, Klavierabende – Alice Herz-Sommer, Goethe und Ghetto, and Verspätete Glossen zu Verdi's Requiem, Bernard Kaff spielt Beethoven and 24 Chopin-Etuden, gespielt von Alice Herz-Sommer*.

<sup>33</sup> YVA: 0.64/70. Latin words from the Verdi Requiem translated by Louise Dobbs.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid*, p.10.

Schächter believed that the subject matter of the *Requiem*, a mass for the dead, though grounded in Catholicism, was relevant to his situation in the ghetto. Adler, however, considers Schächter's choice, 'a bad blunder'.<sup>35</sup> Schächter came from an assimilated Jewish family which celebrated, albeit not religiously, the Christian festivals of Christmas and Easter. As a musician and an assimilated Jew he would therefore have seen little reason not to rehearse and perform a Catholic Requiem by so eminent an artist as Verdi. Schächter chose the *Requiem* as much for its meaning and words as for Verdi's masterful music. Other artists however, used their performances to express their political and cultural roots.

While *Der Kaiser von Atlantis oder der Tod dankt ab* (The Kaiser of Atlantis or Death Abdicates), rivalled the performances of Verdi's requiem in frequency and popularity, it should be seen as a far more political production than the Requiem. *Der Kaiser* was the largest piece of work that was composed by Viktor Ullmann during his imprisonment in Theresienstadt and he collaborated with Petr Kien, the talented artist, writer and musician whom he commissioned to write the libretto.<sup>36</sup> Herbert Mandl claims that,

Ullmann's opera *The Emperor of Atlantis*, may at first sight look like an attempt to depict artistically the main characteristics of Nazism ... The opera, however never degenerates into a snapshot of this particular historical phase. It evokes the eternal danger of planetary tyranny.<sup>37</sup>

In the opera, Atlantis is ruled by the tyrannical Emperor *Uberall / Overall* who orders everyone including 'Death' to do his bidding. Refusing the orders of the evil emperor, Death goes on strike ensuring that no one will die. Realising the error of his ways, the Emperor implores Death to return to his duties. Death agrees but only on the proviso that the Emperor himself dies. Various pieces and styles of music influence Ullman's opera – the most relevant to the ghetto community was a variation on the German national anthem, *Deutschland*,

<sup>35</sup> Adler, *Theresienstadt*, p.584.

<sup>36</sup> One of the original drafts of the opera is housed at the Wiener Library in London.

<sup>37</sup> Makarova *et al*, *University Over the Abyss*, p.206.

*Deutschland über alles.* This was included at the end of the opera. Ullmann slowed the tempo of the melody but it remained easily recognisable even to those untrained in musical appreciation. The opera's premiere was due to take place during the Autumn of 1944 but was prevented by the mass deportations to Auschwitz, which included Ullmann and many of the musicians and singers. If the opera had been performed it would most surely have been banned due to the subject matter and the subversive use of the German national anthem.

The third musical production, and the one which attracted the largest audiences, was the Czech children's opera *Brundibár*.<sup>38</sup> In December 1935, the composer Hans Krasá met the playwright Adolf Hoffmeister at the Club of Czech-German Theatrical Workers in Prague. It was this meeting which led to the creation of *Brundibár*. The opera was written as an entry for a competition staged by the Ministry of Education and Culture in Prague in 1938. After the ban on Jewish cultural performances in Prague, and the expulsion of Jews from public life, one of the main cultural meeting places became the Jewish Orphanage on Belgium Street run by Rudolf Freudenfeld. Freudenfeld was a music lover and welcomed artists who had nowhere else to play.<sup>39</sup>

In July 1941 a party was held at the Prague orphanage for Freudenfeld's fiftieth birthday with Raphael Schächter among the invited artists. While discussing music with Freudenfeld's son, Schächter decided that Krasá's opera *Brundibár* should be performed by the children of the orphanage later that year. Schächter immediately set about rehearsing the opera but was deported to Theresienstadt on 24 November 1941 before it was ready to be performed. Freudenfeld's son took over the rehearsals and the premiere of the opera took place in the dining room of the orphanage during the winter of 1942. The former set designer of the Czech National Theatre, Frantisék Zelenka, designed the stage which had to be erected in secret due to the Nazi ban.

The story of the opera follows two small children, Pepicek and Aninka, whose mother is sick. They have no money but need to buy her some milk. On

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<sup>38</sup> YVA: 0.64/433. Full score of *Brundibár*.

<sup>39</sup> Karas, *Music in Terezín*, pp.93-103.

the street corner they notice an organ-grinder named Brundibár who is earning money. The children decide to copy him and sing for money but Brundibár chases them away. A cat, dog and a sparrow come to the aid of the children and together they sing a song which earns them the much needed money. Brundibár then steals their earnings, but is pursued and the money recovered.

By the time the premiere was due to take place, not only Krasá, but also Schächter and Zelenka had been deported to Theresienstadt. Not long afterwards the children of the orphanage, together with the director and his son, also found themselves on transports to Theresienstadt. Once inside the ghetto, Freudenfeld presented Schächter with the score of *Brundibár* and together they decided to stage a performance. Rehearsals began straight away in the attic of the boys home L417. Although Schächter entrusted the conducting to Freudenfeld's son, he took an active part in the rehearsals and assumed the role of casting director. He cast Pinta Mühkstein as Pepicek, and Greta Hofmeister as Aninka. Zdenek Ornstein who had originally played Pepicek in Prague, now took the role of the dog. Ela Stein played the cat, and Maria Mühlstein the sparrow, while Honza Treichlinger was chosen to play the evil organ-grinder Brundibár. The ghetto premiere took place on 23 September 1943 in the Magdeburg barracks. Frantisek Zelenka, who had designed the original set in Prague, reprised his work. Honza Treichlinger soon became a huge hit and a ghetto celebrity. Rudolf Freudenfeld described him in the part,

Although he played a wicked character, he became the darling of the audience. He learned to twitch the whiskers which stuck under his nose. He twitched them so well, and at just the right time, that tension relaxed in the auditorium, and often we could hear the children releasing their breath.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> *Ibid*, p.98.

Rudi Lamb, one of the children who sang in the chorus of *Brundibár*, claims that despite a few last minute hiccups, ‘The premiere came off splendidly.<sup>41</sup> He also wrote that,

Brundibár will soon disappear from the thoughts of those who watched it in Terezín, but for us actors it will remain one of the few beautiful memories we have of that place.<sup>42</sup>

This comment sheds light on the differing responses the actors and the audience had to the production and the meanings it held for them. In light of Lamb’s claim that *Brundibár* was much more significant for the actors than the audience it should be asked whether it was right to channel so much ghetto time and energy into a production which was meaningful to so few people.

Zdenek Ornstein, who played the Dog, remembers the production slightly differently stressing how popular it was with the audience. He recalls *Brundibár* as follows,

The performance took place almost anywhere – in lofts – barracks – they made seats from anything they could find. The costumes were T-shirts and underwear. The first night was exciting – because of how it ends – Brundibár is defeated, ‘we have beaten him – play the drums, we have won because we didn’t give in.’ The words were not only about Brundibár and that is why the adults came to see it. And that is why it was a huge success and why it was performed so many times ... until they were all gone.<sup>43</sup>

The children’s opera was performed 55 times inside Theresienstadt, including a performance for the International Committee of the Red Cross during their visit.<sup>44</sup> It became the number one musical attraction in the ghetto and, although there was no charge to attend, entry was by ticket only and there was limited seating. This of course meant that only those who had the time or strength

<sup>41</sup>Ornest et al, *We are Children Just the Same*, p.156.

<sup>42</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>43</sup> Ornstein, *Terezín Diary*.

<sup>44</sup> See later section on cultural performances during the visit made by the ICRC.

to queue for tickets enjoyed these performances. The popularity of the opera was partly due to the message it portrayed, summed up in the last lines which read, ‘He who loves justice and will abide by it, and who is not afraid, is our friend and can play with us.’<sup>45</sup> The fact that it was the children of the ghetto singing these lines should also be taken into account as it was important for parents and carers to be able to see ‘their’ children play acting within the confines of the ghetto. This did however cause conflicting emotions for parents in the audience and for many it was too much to bear. While it was often possible for the directors, producers and youth workers to help the children ‘escape’ the reality of the ghetto during these performances, the threat of transports east was never absent from the minds of the parents.

#### 6.4 Theatre and Cabaret

The early *Kamaradenabende* of late 1941 and 1942 included some theatrical entertainment. These had started as one man/woman shows in the attics of the barracks but as soon as more space was provided little stages sprung up all over the ghetto and theatrical companies formed. Those involved in these productions have claimed that they helped them to retain some elements of a normal life. By performing in the ghetto the actors not only had the satisfaction of ‘entertaining’ the audience but of momentarily taking their minds off their surroundings. Zdenka Ehrlich Fantlová who was deported to Theresienstadt in January 1942 at the age of nineteen recalls,

If it hadn’t been for the transports to the east, taking place at irregular intervals and hanging over our heads like swords of Damocles, we could almost have fancied we were living normal lives.<sup>46</sup>

As the threat of transports was continuous and overwhelming, it was in fact impossible for those imprisoned to live ‘normal lives.’ She uses the phrase,

<sup>45</sup> YVA: 0.64/433. Last lines of Krasá’s and Hoffmeister’s *Brundibár*.

<sup>46</sup> Fantlová, ‘Czech Theatre in Terezín.’ In: Rovit and Goldfarb, eds. *Theatrical Performances*, p.235.

‘dancing under the gallows’ to describe the situation of cultural performances in Theresienstadt which captures the conflicting nature of the position the Czech and German artists found themselves in. Otto Dov Kulka writes,

Jewish artists created Jewish theatre. An enormous system of adult education. A paradox – a democratic pluralist society in a totalitarian state. They were allowed to perform things that were forbidden in the nazi state. In a way this was a kind of a freedom of the sentence of death.<sup>47</sup>

As well as creating an ‘optimistic’ or alternative atmosphere for their audiences, Czech actors in Theresienstadt found their performances personally beneficial. The fact that they were working with the same people with whom they had worked in Prague and Brno offered some comfort. It helped these ‘lucky’ few orientate themselves in the ghetto and become accustomed to their new lives while having something of the familiar to cling to. However, these precious hours came – if they came at all – after an eight hour shift of hard labour either in the *Hunderschaften* or in their assigned jobs.

Karel Svenk who wrote, composed, choreographed and acted, was among the famous actors and cabaret stars in the ghetto. The majority of his work was political satire and his first piece performed in the ghetto was entitled *Long Live Life*. The last song of the evening became a hit overnight and was adopted as a Theresienstadt anthem. The song written by Svenk ended with the words,

so hold hands now, hold them fast  
and over the ghetto’s ruins we  
shall laugh aloud at last.<sup>48</sup>

His second evening of cabaret, *The Last Cyclist* had an overtly anti-Nazi message which somehow escaped the ghetto censors. The show was about a group of psychiatric patients who escape from a hospital and take power. In order

<sup>47</sup> Kulka, *Terezín Diary*.

<sup>48</sup> Fantlová, ‘The Czech Theatre in Terezín.’ In: Rovit and Goldfarb, eds. *Theatrical Performance*, p.236.

to cover up all the damage they have caused while in power they chose a section of the population to act as scapegoats – cyclists. The audiences loved the play for its familiar message and liberating effect. All those involved were highly disappointed when it was pulled after a short run. Having escaped the Nazi censors the play was in fact stopped by the Jewish elders. Afraid that the message was too obvious, and that both the Jewish Self-Administration and the players would be punished, the Jewish leaders banned all future performances of *The Last Cyclist*.

In Theresienstadt, artistic work could be banned or censored by the Nazi officials or by the Jewish council. More often than not it was the Jewish elders who censored the work fearing that if the Nazis became aware of any ‘cultural resistance’ that there would be serious repercussions. While the Jewish elders would simply stop all future performances, the Nazis would ensure all those involved in any contraband were deported east. It was therefore safer for the Jewish leaders to strike first and ban performances before any indiscretion was noticed at the Kommandantur. While the majority of the performances that took place in the ghetto contained some elements of cultural resistance – most of the plays and pieces of music carried a subversive, anti-Nazi message – only the most overt were banned by the Jewish Council.

Further plays and cabarets which were performed during 1943 and 1944 include *Ben Akiba Was No Liar – Or Was He?* a production of Gogol’s *Wedding*, Shakespeare’s *Twelfth Night*, Langer’s comedy *Velbloud Uchem Jehly* (A Camel Through the Eye of a Needle), and Fryd’s biblical epic *Esther*. The production of *Esther* marked an important moment in the history of Czech theatre in the ghetto, signalling a total break from the plays that had previously been staged. It was written in verse and performed in near medieval Czech. The story which followed the life of Queen Esther who saved her Jewish Tribe from annihilation, had deeply significant meaning for the ghetto population. Frantisek Zelenka designed the costumes and the sets and was responsible for the staging of the production. Zdenka Ehrlich Fantlová who played Queen Vashti wrote,

The Esther production, however well-rehearsed and well-received, finally fell victim to another series of transports. Several of the cast were taken off and the end was inevitable. So that was the end of *Esther* in the little Magdeburg theatre. But it was certainly a vintage production and retains a lasting place in the memories of the participants and of those spectators who had the chance to see it.<sup>49</sup>

This production of *Esther* highlights the often bitter cultural and political divide between the Czech and German Jews in the ghetto. For the German Jews, this production was not only incomprehensible but it was also seen as a fanciful and exclusionary waste of time. Whereas the majority of the Czech speaking Jews from the old Republic understood the German language, German speaking Jews from Germany and Austria were rarely able to understand Czech. They were therefore automatically excluded from cultural events staged in the Czech language.

It is more likely however that the Czech theatre groups decided to perform *Esther* as a way of expressing their Czech roots and nationalistic feelings rather than as a means of excluding the German Jews. By speaking and performing in Czech, the Protectorate community made a conscious move away from all that was German, even if that meant enlarging the divide between the Czech and German Jewish communities. Finally, the use of Czech language also provided a means of escaping censorship, as both the Jewish Elders and the German authorities would be unlikely to understand it.

## 6.5 Lectures and Creative Writing

The divide between the Czech and German communities which was highlighted by the production of *Esther* extended to all areas of art and culture and can be traced back to the production of a ghetto lecture series, and creative writing initiatives. Here it is necessary to explore the role played by Philipp Manes who had arrived on 23 July 1942.

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<sup>49</sup> *Ibid*, p.248.

Prior to his appointment as head of the *Orientierungsdienst*, Manes had begun giving informal talks to men from Berlin and Hamburg.<sup>50</sup> This slowly increased into a complex cultural organisation called the Manes Group which existed under the auspices of the *Ghettowache*.<sup>51</sup> Near the end of 1942 Manes wrote in diary,

I have established contact with all the 'stables', and in the afternoon – don't know myself what made me do this – I asked the old Hamburgers in Stable 13, whether they would like me to help them pass their time away with talks. They answered enthusiastically, brought me a bench and I – I spoke to the eagerly listening audience ... I painted their beloved home town so vividly that many began to pull out handkerchiefs from their pockets and dry their moist eyes ... At the Berliners', I was received with the same joy, and discovered thoughtful and inspired listeners.<sup>52</sup>

In the field of lectures, the Manes Group flourished and outshone the other cultural cells that existed in the ghetto. The group organised a series of concerts, cabarets, poetry recitals, plays and lectures, and soon began to represent a valuable and necessary part of ghetto life for those who attended. Gerty Spies recalls Manes as follows,

Arriving on one of the first transports from Berlin, he and several companions had been given the office of 'orientation service' in the Magdeburg Barracks. They were to assist the people arriving with the transports by day and night with accommodations, and help them in getting used to camp. To fill the intervals of waiting and watching, these men, at his suggestion, sat in a circle and started telling each other about their lives.

She continues,

Philipp Manes recognised early that only mental turning away from the misery of the crushing present made it possible to

<sup>50</sup> For a description of Manes in his role in the *Orientierungsdienst*, see Chapter Three.

<sup>51</sup> For a description of the establishment of the *Ghettowache*, see Chapter Three.

<sup>52</sup> Makarova *et al*, *University over the Abyss*, p.82.

survive this time of trial with dignity. Under his guidance, these tales became reports, the reports became performances, and thus, quietly, a significant cultural organisation originated here, amidst gloomy barrack walls, lacking light and day and night, surrounded by garbage, misery, epidemics, and death.<sup>53</sup>

Manes threw himself into this organisation and according to those who worked with him, he was rarely seen unless writing in his journal or organising that evening's entertainment. Gerty Spies who attended several of Manes' talks claims that he,

was one of the best storytellers I have ever heard. He sat there, the old gentleman, shadowed by the darkness of his room, and spread the pictures of his extended travels out before us, the varied experiences – the hours then carried us away on broad wings.<sup>54</sup>

The first formal lecture hosted by the Manes Group took place on 21 September 1942 and was held in room 38 of the Magdeburg Barracks. Manes spoke on his early years in Berlin and wrote in his diary, 'This will hopefully play a small modest part in the history of the intellectual movement in Terezín.'<sup>55</sup> On 10 March 1943 the group was already celebrating the one hundredth lecture evening with a talk by Jakob Edelstein on *The Jewish Question*. By the time the anniversary of the Orientation Service took place on 1 August 1943, there had been no less than 178 lectures, 18 recitals and 5 readings of Faust.<sup>56</sup> From the Spring of 1943 there were daily lectures and, by the summer, the Manes group had found a permanent address – V 118 in the Magdeburg Barracks. By the time the five hundredth lecture was announced, the Manes Group had come under the leadership of the FZG. This reorganisation had taken place in February 1944 when the *Hilfsdienst der Ghetadowache* (Ghetto Police) had been disbanded.<sup>57</sup>

<sup>53</sup> Spies, *My Years in Theresienstadt*, p.78.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid*, p.82.

<sup>55</sup> WL: Philipp Manes, *Tatsachenbericht*, Volume 1, p.60.

<sup>56</sup> YVA: 0.64/50-70.

<sup>57</sup> For a description of the fate of the Ghetto Watch see Chapter Three.

Rabbi Leo Baeck was asked to deliver the 500 anniversary lecture on *The Ages of Life*, which took place on 6 August 1944. Manes wrote,

Dr. Leo Baeck has become Theresienstadt's most popular lecturer ... The great philosopher Baeck enjoys unconditional respect and admiration in every circle of the ghetto – and that really means a lot.<sup>58</sup>

Although the lectures continued throughout 1943 and 1944 there were many interruptions including several short term bans.<sup>59</sup> These bans were either the result of minor indiscretions on the part of ghetto inmates or were simply due to the whims of the resident SS officers. They were, however, extremely hard times for Manes and his group, as he recorded in his notebooks.

The German authorities stipulated only one thing: prohibition of any leisure time activity. This lasted from 7 April to 12 May. It is hard to describe what this lack of activity meant for us in the evenings, how it depressed us all.<sup>60</sup>

In the summer of 1944, Philipp Manes organised a poetry competition. Manes entered some early poems by his friend Gerty Spies for the competition which she had asked him to read. She was astonished to find that he had included them and that she was one of the finalists. Spies recalls,

The prizes were distributed ... Even today I can still feel in the solemn excitement with which I climbed the few steps when it was my turn, and the emotion with which I accepted the book. Manes's handshake accompanying it was an expression of his friendship, across all the horrors of the times, a spiritual bond over which death had no power.<sup>61</sup>

Although Manes was a judge on the panel, the final decision went to Professor Emil Utitz, who chose George Kafka, a cousin of the writer Franz Kafka, as the

<sup>58</sup> WL: Manes, *Tatsachenbericht*, Volume 3. Chapter 11, p.233.

<sup>59</sup> Bans took place between: 7.04.43 – 12.05.43, 13.03.44 – 21.03.44 and 12.05.44 – 21.05.44.

<sup>60</sup> WL: Manes, *Tatsachenbericht*, Volume 3. Chapter 10, pp.319-320.

<sup>61</sup> Spies, *My Years in Theresienstadt*, p.104.

winner in place of Manes' protégé, Gerty Spies. Manes acknowledges rather bitterly in his report that, 'after all the professor of literature knows more than the fur merchant.'<sup>62</sup>

Gerty Spies was not the only person in Theresienstadt to be encouraged and tutored by Manes. Many of the younger German male and female prisoners found him a thoughtful and caring companion. Fritz Janowitz who worked closely with Manes during their time in the ghetto wrote the following on the day of his deportation east.

Dear Fatherly friend!

You have honoured me in many ways, but I have always considered the extended walks at your side as the greatest honor ... Philipp Manes was and is for me a big part of the Theresienstadt experience ... May the twilight of your life be blessed among your dear ones, ... And please remember now and then your admiring and youthful friend, who is proud that you called him this and so honoured him, who honours and loves you as only a son can love and honor his father. F. Janowitz. House Elder BV. Theresienstadt. 8.10.44. Written on the day of departure of Transport Equ.<sup>63</sup>

There are several similar dedications to Manes in his notebooks. Another by Oscar Fein reads,

It is impossible to overestimate the achievement of Philipp Manes who devoted himself so selflessly to this cause of persuading all the people in the ghetto who he thought could contribute interesting talks to take part in his series of lectures. All of those who could gain his friendship, along with their amicable attitude feel sincere gratitude for Master Manes whom everybody will always remember with heartfelt affection. Oskar Fein. 17 July 1944.<sup>64</sup>

<sup>62</sup> WL: Manes, *Tatsachenbericht*, Volume 3. Chapter 10, p.223.

<sup>63</sup> WL: Manes Collection. 3 Booklets of Prose, Poems, Drawings and Dedications to Philipp Manes from other prisoners in Theresienstadt. Booklet 2, letter from Janowitz to Manes, 8.10.44.

<sup>64</sup> WL: Manes Collection. Dedications, booklet 2.

These two eulogies were both written inside Manes' dairy and not in the writers' own, which raises several questions. Why were people writing like this in Manes books where he could read it? Where they genuinely thanking him for his lectures and his contribution to the cultural life of the ghetto or where they also trying to curry favour with him in some way? Although Manes occupied a position in the *Orientierungsdienst* he did not have a formal *Schutzliste* (protection list) like the men higher up in the Jewish Self-Administration. He would, however, have been able to write letters on behalf of friends and colleagues included in transports east although, by 1944, these would not have been able to save anyone from deportation to Auschwitz.

Manes played a substantial role in the cultural life of the ghetto, but he was by no means the only person who organised talks and lectures. In order to place his work in context it is necessary to examine the role played by Engineer Milos Salus who was deported to Theresienstadt in February 1942. While Manes organised cultural evenings for the German community in Theresienstadt, Salus ran a similar forum for assimilated Czech Jews. Although he organised debates and even staged plays, his passion – like Manes' – was for lecturing. Salus organised 118 evenings that were dedicated to Czech culture of which 21 were premieres of new works with 53 evenings being assigned to performing translated pieces.<sup>65</sup>

Salus spoke on several occasions between 26 July 1943 and 26 August 1944. His lectures included; *Terezín Poetry, Meaning of Life, Spirit and Matter, Educating Youth and Discussing Education*. Some of these talks were presented in Czech while others were given in German – an important distinction as it meant that his lectures were accessible to a large proportion of the ghetto population. Although his priority was representing Czech culture he was also aware of the strong cultural divide in the ghetto and did his best to guarantee that this was not exacerbated by his work. It was not only in the area of cultural politics that Salus was sensitive to the needs of the population. In August 1943, deeply affected by the plight of the elderly in the ghetto, Salus started to on a new

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<sup>65</sup> TSA: Milos Salus file, series 2.

project – establishing a system whereby people would visit the elderly in their barracks. He was aware of the appalling conditions in which they lived and was concerned about their physical and psychological welfare. He wrote in his diary,

A month ago I have been entrusted with a function which gives meaning to my vegetation in Terezín. It is to organise a Czech cultural service among the old people. Until now, no one has cared for them, and they cannot do anything themselves. The job was tough, finding places, rallying a system of workers, spotting amongst the old people themselves story-tellers and actors. Each eastbound transport destroyed what I had built. But I could no longer be stopped.<sup>66</sup>

A sub-section of Salus' group was the Women's Group, which was established by Milena Illová. She gathered together talented Czech women to speak on a variety of subjects. The group included, Anna Aurednicková, Gisella Picková-Saudková, Milada Lesná-Krausová and Maria Friedmannová-Konová. The majority of the lectures given by these women have not survived, though some are recorded in the testimony of survivors and in the recovered dairies of those who died in Auschwitz. Illová wrote in Salus' album,

It is times like these that history gives to those who, down to the very end, live and think through their meaning, and who do not avoid the depth of the pain suffered in the past and present, nor the joyful expectation of labor that awaits our cooperation.<sup>67</sup>

It was not only in this sub-section of the Salus Group that women featured in the artistic life of the ghetto. They made a huge contribution to the broader field of creative writing, especially poetry. Adler calls all the ghetto poetry, which was written mainly by women, *Reimkrankheit* (rhyming sickness).<sup>68</sup> He describes creative writing in detail and complains about the writers lack of 'inner distance'. He concludes that the ghetto inmates were unable to process their experiences

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<sup>66</sup> Makarova, *et al*, *University Over the Abyss*, p.66

<sup>67</sup> TSA: Milos Salus file, series 2.

<sup>68</sup> Adler, *Theresienstadt*, p.617.

and were insufficiently removed from their feelings to write better poetry or prose. He claims,

The immense, mostly lost, flood of these writings consists of verses. For the most part they are clumsy, dull rhymes, that testify to the will to live and to the boredom of their composers; there were, however, more ambitious attempts, even remarkable documents, though hardly works of art in the sense their authors wanted.<sup>69</sup>

Zdenek Lederer is in agreement with Adler as to the quality of the poetry written in Theresienstadt. He concludes that,

A great deal was written in Theresienstadt, mostly poetry, but the standard was mediocre. Though most of the writers and poets were adults, their works bore the mark of immaturity.<sup>70</sup>

Adler claims that the majority of those who wrote what he views as bad poetry had fairly high opinions of themselves as writers. This claim is unfounded. Ruth Schwertfeger explores Adler's accusation, providing various examples that refute his statement, including the work of Trude Groag.<sup>71</sup> In the preface of her volume of poetry Groag writes, 'Do not take the contents as literature but as the expression of the deepest assault that overwhelms me every time I recall these memories.'<sup>72</sup> Groag does not claim to write great poetry or contribute substantially to literature, but cites instead a need to write in order to cope with her experiences and feelings. This is an important distinction. It does not mean that substantial works of art were not written, painted and performed inside the walls of the ghetto but that we should not judge these works by the same criteria as we would those created outside the confines of Theresienstadt.

Many of the people who wrote poetry in the ghetto did so for the first time in a desperate attempt to express their feelings. Overwhelmed by their

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid*, p.618. Also see translation in Schwertfeger, *Women of Theresienstadt*, p.70.

<sup>70</sup> Lederer, *Ghetto Theresienstadt*, p.128.

<sup>71</sup> Schwertfeger, *Women of Theresienstadt*, pp.70-87.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid*, p.71.

surroundings and the lack of emotional outlets, writing became an unexpected source of comfort for many. Although it can be argued that Adler was only trying to show the destructive impact of the ghetto on those who wrote poetry, his comments come across as being condescending and often inappropriate. Gerty Spies believed that writing would,

concentrate - each minute, each second – so that perhaps you can bend your pain into an expression of your imagination ... only your body will still be here.<sup>73</sup>

It is interesting to note that a high proportion of ghetto poetry was written by women, including: Trude Groag, Ilse Weber, Getrud Kantorowicz, Elsa Dormitzer and Alice Bloemendahl. This fact is hardly commented on by Adler who finds only the writing of Ilse Weber tolerable, though still *irritiert unbeholfen* (awkwardly constructed).<sup>74</sup> The fact that more women than men wrote poetry is not easily explained. Perhaps women had more time in which to write or maybe they were simply in greater need of expressing their feelings. Men arguably had other emotional outlets. Else Dormitzer's poems *Census* and *Then and Now*, and Kantorowicz's *Daughter of the Day*, are examples of poems that do not fit with Adler's and Lederer's view of ghetto writing.<sup>75</sup> Far from being 'irritatingly awkward' they simply and effectively capture the atmosphere of the ghetto while stressing the conditions the authors were subjected to. The women of Theresienstadt give a number of reasons why they wrote poetry in the ghetto. Some give spiritual and religious reasons while others offer social and psychological explanations. Klara Caro claims that she wrote,

to show to those who were spared that there are forces, or rather a force, that is stronger than privation or death, more powerful than

<sup>73</sup> Spies, *My Years in Theresienstadt*, p.18

<sup>74</sup> Adler, *Theresienstadt*, p.619.

<sup>75</sup> Schwertfeger, *Women of Theresienstadt*, p.57 and pp.80-82. For the original German versions see: Else Dormitzer, *Theresienstädter Bilder* (Hilversum: De Boekenvriend, 1945), pp.11-15. Schwertfeger, *Women in Theresienstadt*, p.71. For the German original see: Manfred Schlösser, *An Den Wind Geschrieben* (Darmstadt: Agora, 1961).

all the evil that cruelty and satanic sadism can ever devise or practise.<sup>76</sup>

Caro gives this spiritual explanation while others such as Grete Salus simply claim, ‘Writing helped me.’<sup>77</sup> One reason why so many more women wrote poetry than men is that they were able to find the time to write down their thoughts and create their poems due to the kinds of jobs that they were assigned after their stint in the *Hunderschafoten*. They were often given jobs which involved working inside or remaining in one place. Some found time in between shifts in the potato sheds or the mica-slate workshop while others grabbed a few minutes in between working on the hospital wards, reading to the elderly or once the children in their care had gone to bed. Spies recalls how she was able to write at work.

By five o’clock in the morning I would already be in the mica workshop removing sediment from the ovens using a hammer and searing cold poker – and creating a poem while doing it.<sup>78</sup>

After working in the mica factory Spies got a job as a stoker and remembers with affection how her boss allowed her time to write. ‘If my four stoves were going ... a task I had to supervise – he passed me smilingly and turned a blind eye when he saw me sit on my wooden crate and write.’<sup>79</sup>

Women also made important contributions to other areas of cultural achievement. They played a prominent part in all areas of the FZG. Elsa Dormitzer and Alica Bloemendahl gave regular lectures on European Literature. Bloemendahl’s lectures included; *Emile Zola and his Times*, *Voltaire: the Man and his Philosophy*, *Shakespeare’s Histories (Dramas About King John and Richard III)*, *Human and Sarcasm: Thackeray and The Comedy of Moliere*. Bloemendahl who arrived in Theresienstadt in July 1942 also found herself a job in the FZG reading to the elderly and the sick. She recalls, ‘My listeners, often

<sup>76</sup> YVA: 0.64/02/217, p.1. Klara Caro.

<sup>77</sup> Grete Salus, *Eine Frau erzählt* (Bonn: Kolten, 1958), p.5.

<sup>78</sup> Spies, *My Years in Theresienstadt*, p.66.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid*, p.70.

seriously ill, lay pale against the pillow and listened, sometimes making an observation or expressing a special request.<sup>80</sup>

In addition to the various contributions made by the women of the ghetto, a substantial amount of creative writing was produced by the boys of children's home L417 between the years 1942 and 1944.<sup>81</sup> The majority of this was produced in their weekly magazine, *Vedem* (In the Lead).<sup>82</sup> The boys renamed their building, The Republic of Shkid and, under the care of Valtr Eisinger, became accustomed to their day-to-day lives.<sup>83</sup> *Vedem*, the weekly magazine consisted of a collection of poems, diary extracts, quizzes, reports and journalistic articles which covered the main weekly ghetto news. Petr Ginz was the undisputed editor of the magazine and ruled over it with pride and dedication.<sup>84</sup>

Kurt Kotouc remembers him from the days of L417 and says,

Young as he was, his personality was already fully formed and he did not willingly let anyone encroach on what he considered his territory. I can still see him, sitting cross-legged on his lower bunk, surrounded by pens, pencils, engravers, brushes, and paints, and sheets of paper of all sizes, along with what was left of a parcel from his parents.<sup>85</sup>

Every week *Vedem* contained a Cultural Report section which discussed the week's performances in Theresienstadt. Many of these were written by Petr Ginz. Although he was only a child, these reviews are highly critical and express an impressive level of comprehension. One of his reviews reads,

Two lectures were given last week: Hanus Weil on 'The History of Chess' and Pepek Taussig and Nora Fryd on 'Gogol'. The first lecture was extremely well prepared and little Weil delivered it faultlessly from memory. But I'm afraid it wasn't very original. It

<sup>80</sup> YVA: O2/452. *Theresienstadt einmal anders*. Alice Bloemendahl.

<sup>81</sup> For detailed account of the Theresienstadt children's homes see Chapter Five.

<sup>82</sup> There was also a short lived girls' magazine called, *Bonaco*. For information on this see: Stargardt, 'Children's Art of the Holocaust', p.211; Ornstein *et al*, *We Are Children Just the Same*; Dutlinger, ed. *Art, Music and Education As Strategies for Survival*, p.30.

<sup>83</sup> See Chapter Five for lives of children in the children homes.

<sup>84</sup> See Chapter Five for deportation of Petr Ginz out of Theresienstadt.

<sup>85</sup> Ornstein, *et al*, *We are the Children*, pp.17-18.

is not the task of the lecturer to spew out the text of a book he used for research, but to gather material and, like a bee turning nectar into honey, suck out the most relevant material from his reading, digest it, and deliver a lecture in his own words.<sup>86</sup>

## 6.6 Ghetto Art and Cultural ‘Resistance’

Drawing and painting were the most private art forms in the ghetto. Unlike theatre and music, most of the ghetto paintings and drawings were created in a hurry in the few precious hours after work, as none of the artists were allowed time off in order to pursue their careers. The production of realistic images of the ghetto was strictly illegal so any work created could not be displayed. Artists received no public recognition of their work but many hoped that after the war they would be able to display their art. As well as painting realistic impressions of ghetto conditions, they also sketched their hopes, aspirations and memories of home. These illegal works of art, like the poetry and musical pieces created in the ghetto, should be classed as a form of cultural resistance as most were produced under extreme conditions and were punishable by death.

When using the term, ‘cultural resistance’, it is important to discuss its meaning and to distinguish between the act of resisting an event and that of witnessing and representing an event. Does an act of resistance have to be one that hurts or damages the oppressor, or can it be an act or event that is only beneficial to the person who carries it out? If witnessing and representing an event is illegal then surely the representation can be classed as an act of resistance. Lawrence Langer writes,

What we call ‘cultural resistance’ to mitigate our horror at the enemy may have been for the victims nothing more than a similar alternation between confronting and coping: sketches of corpses and drawings of deportations on the one hand; and on the other, portraits and landscapes or normalcy, preserving the inherent dignity in the faces of prospective victims.<sup>87</sup>

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid*, p.157

<sup>87</sup> Lawrence, L. Langer, ‘Cultural Resistance to Genocide.’ In: *Witness* 1:1 (1987), p.83.

The acts might have been ways of ‘confronting and coping’ but there is no reason why that should not count as resistance if such expressions were forbidden. Whether or not the production of these works should be classed as acts of resistance in the traditional sense, it was through their production that the artists gained some sense of dignity and exercised limited choice. Langer is concerned that to use words such as ‘resistance’ and ‘culture’ when describing art created during the Holocaust somehow degrades personal experience and the meaning of the words themselves. He writes,

We look at sketches of starving Jews, or crowds awaiting deportation to the death camps, of desolate children, of executions, and suddenly ‘resistance’ sounds irrelevant and ‘culture’ itself a term from an antiquated vocabulary.<sup>88</sup>

To discuss only the art works and to forget the reality of what they depict would be degrading to those who were imprisoned in Theresienstadt. It can surely be argued however that it is partly the uneasiness with which the viewer sees these works which make them important aspects of the history of Theresienstadt.<sup>89</sup> For the paintings not only depict the reality of the ghetto but it is through them we begin to understand the circumstances in which the artists worked and what they had to overcome in order to paint. Clearly these works of art did not represent ‘resistance’ in the form of saving lives or impeding the ghetto’s ability to wage war, but that is to take a narrow view of resistance. Langer puts too much emphasis on traditional forms of resistance concluding,

Just as Raphael Schächter’s performance of Verdi’s *Requiem* saved no lives, so the production of *The Post Office* in the Warsaw ghetto had no effect whatsoever on the physical fate of Korczak and his orphans.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> *Ibid*, p.85.

<sup>89</sup> For a discussion of children’s art in the ghetto and whether or not works of art can or should be used as historical documents see: Stargardt, ‘Children’s Art of the Holocaust.’

<sup>90</sup> Langer, ‘Cultural Resistance.’ In: *Witness*, p.88.

The ghetto's artistic events were not expected to save lives, but if for a few brief moments they were able to create an alternative ghetto atmosphere they surely more than achieved their goal. Perhaps, however, the act of briefly lifting the audiences out of the ghetto and back to the concert halls of Berlin, Vienna and Prague only created a painful reminder of the past and an unrealistic view of the present.

The artists of Theresienstadt shared many of the same conflicts and fears as their acting and performing colleagues. Freidl Dicker-Brandeis wrote, ‘It is great here, so many interesting people. One could live here quite decently, if not for the constant fear of being sent to the east.’<sup>91</sup> Dicker-Brandeis was among a group of highly respected and talented artists who had been deported to Theresienstadt from both the Protectorate and Germany. Other prominent painters and draftsman included: Norbert Troller, Leo Haas, Bedrich Fritta, Karel Fleischmann, Otto Ungar and Petr Kien.

On arrival, the artists were assigned jobs in the *Technische Abteilung* (Technical Department). Their official brief was to maintain a census of the ghetto population, and draw up charts reporting on conditions relating to health, money, provisions, occupancy and other statistics. The charts were then sent to Berlin. The Technical Department, also known as the Graphics Department or ‘the artists’ group,’ was situated in the Magdeburg barracks and occupied several rooms. The majority of the Magdeburg artists had come from Prague on transports ‘AK I’ and ‘AK II’ with their immediate families and were supposedly exempt from deportation.<sup>92</sup>

The head of the Magdeburg artists was Bedrich Fritta who was imprisoned in Theresienstadt with his wife and their young son, Tommy. He used his position as head of the department to procure painting materials so that the production of illegal paintings could continue. One of the more mature of the ghetto artists, he was known in pre-war Prague for his woodcuttings and

<sup>91</sup> Dicker-Brandeis, *University Over The Abyss* website. [WWW.Irael.u/lel/terezin.first.htm](http://WWW.Irael.u/lel/terezin.first.htm).

<sup>92</sup> For a detailed description of ‘The Artists’ Affair’, see: Gerald Green, *The Artists of Terezín* (New York: Hawthorn Inc, 1978); Troller, *Theresienstadt*.

watercolours. Several of his paintings survived, together with a children's book that he painted and wrote for his son, and from which Tommy learned to read and write.<sup>93</sup> Norbert Troller, who worked in the Technical Department and had originally trained as an architect, survived the war. In his memoir he remembers the different types of work that the artists carried out in Theresienstadt.

We also produced, 'commercially' exploitable work; for instance, I painted the bakers at their jobs to earn an extra loaf of bread, or I would paint the cooks in the institutional kitchens for some extra potatoes or an occasional yeast dumpling, and the electricians' workshops to have my simple electric hot plate repaired.<sup>94</sup>

In July 1944, after the visit made by the International Committee of the Red Cross, disaster struck for the artists of the Magdeburg barracks. Around noon on 16 July, Norbert Troller was called up before the Jewish Self-Administration. When he arrived, Ungar was already there and Haas arrived shortly after, followed by Bloch, Fritta and Strass. They were informed by Otto Zucker that they had to report to the camp commander the next morning. They duly appeared before the SS on the following day and were informed that their subversive paintings and sketches of the ghetto had been discovered.

The work of Fritta and Haas, the natural leaders of the group, had always been political in nature and their imprisonment in Theresienstadt had only exaggerated his anti-German feelings. The satirical cartoons and caricatures of Haas were biting in their message. Several of these openly mocked the ghetto command and depicted vivid and disturbing scenes of ghetto life. Images including Fritta's *Quarters of the Aged* and Haas's *Expecting the Worst*, were among those which had been discovered.<sup>95</sup> Fritta's work depicts three 'elderly people' in the form of skeletons lying on bunks behind bars and Haas shows a group of malnourished people awaiting deportation in an attic. While waiting in the SS basement Troller remembers thinking,

<sup>93</sup> Fritta's paintings are kept at the Jewish Museum in Prague and at the Terezín State Archives, Terezín, Czech Republic.

<sup>94</sup> Troller, *Theresienstadt*, p. 133.

<sup>95</sup> These paintings are housed at the Jewish Museum in Prague.

In all probability a truck will come to collect us. We imagine the road: passing the gates of the ghetto, straight to the Little Fortress. Only rumors were known about that place. It seemed a place without hope; they either hanged you, tortured you, or beat you to death ... We were prepared to be sent east with the next transport.<sup>96</sup>

The artists' perilous situation became clear when high ranking SS men, including Hans Günther from Prague and Adolf Eichmann, arrived at the ghetto to question them. The SS's anger was due not just to the fact that the drawings had been completed in the first place, but that some had been smuggled out of the ghetto. Strass, who was among those arrested, was a keen art collector and had been trading food and cigarettes with the artists for their work. He then smuggled the paintings to friends and family on the outside. By nightfall several trucks arrived to take the artists to the Small Fortress. Troller writes,

Now when it was a matter of life and death, the families were united. Waiting for Fritta in the truck was Fritta's wife and four year old son, Strass's wife, a frail old lady, Hass's blond young wife, Ungar's wife and daughter.<sup>97</sup>

Leo Haas was separated from the others, and sent to the neighbouring town of Leitmeritz / Litomerice to work in a factory. Unable to continue work due to a leg infection, he was thrown into an underground cell in the Small Fortress with Fritta. They were both deported to Auschwitz in August 1944, where Fritta died eight days after his arrival. Bloch was killed in the Small Fortress. Troller survived his ordeal in the Fortress only to be sent to Auschwitz, where both he and Haas visited Fritta in the infirmary just before he died. Strass and his wife survived the Fortress but were both gassed at Auschwitz. Haas survived for a while in Auschwitz, before being selected to go to Sachsenhausen while Otto Ungar, who was deported to Auschwitz before Fritta and Haas, was

<sup>96</sup> Troller, *Theresienstadt*, pp.139-140.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid*, p.141.

evacuated in January 1945 and forced on a death march to Buchenwald. He died in Buchenwald on 25 July 1945 from starvation and from the wounds he had suffered in the Small Fortress. Survivors of Buchenwald claim to have seen Ungar during his last days sketching with a piece of coal on scraps of paper.<sup>98</sup>

The wives and children of the artists all remained in the fourth yard of the Small Fortress. Hansi Fritta died from maltreatment after a few months, leaving the four year old Tommy an orphan. Erna and Leo Haas both survived the war and legally adopted Tommy Fritta. Prior to their arrest and imprisonment in the Small Fortress, both Fritta and Haas managed to hide several of their paintings. Fritta buried his in the farmyard, while Haas, with the help of a friend, had created a secret panel in the wall in his barrack. Their work survived the war. Soon after his liberation, Leo Haas returned to Theresienstadt to recover his hidden works of art along with those of Fritta and the other artists.<sup>99</sup>

## 6.7 Religious Life in the Ghetto

The religious and spiritual lives of Jews during the Holocaust which has been neglected until recently, is an important part of the history of the period.<sup>100</sup> The Theresienstadt community had a rich and complex religious life which needs to be explored. The most prominent religious leader in the ghetto was Dr. Rabbi Leo Baeck from Berlin.<sup>101</sup> In her testimony Trude Groag describes how she,

Revered and worshipped Dr. Baeck. He was able to harmonize his philosophy of Judaism with his worldly philosophy. He was a marvellous lecturer on Jewish and Christian ideas, giving analytic discourses on both religions. His conclusion was that Judaism

<sup>98</sup> Green, *The Artists of Terezín*, pp.110 - 125.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid*, pp.120 – 125.

<sup>100</sup> For information on the religious life in Theresienstadt see: For other ghettos and camps see: Thomas Rahe, 'Jewish Religious Life in the Concentration Camp Bergen-Belsen.' In: Jo Reilly *et al*, *Belsen in History and Memory* (London: Frank Cass, 1997); Dan Michmann, 'Understanding the Jewish Dimension of the Holocaust.' In: Jonathan Frankel, ed. *The Fate of the European Jews, 1939-1945 Continuity or Contingency? Studies in Contemporary Jewry* XIII (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), pp.225-252.

<sup>101</sup> Chapter Three examines Baeck's official role in the Jewish council. This chapter examines his role as the religious figurehead of German Jewry. For general information on the life and work of Rabbi Leo Baeck see: Friedlander, *Teacher of Theresienstadt* ; Friedlander, *Leo Baeck – Leben und Lehre* (Munich: Kaiser Taschenbücher, 1990); Baker, *Days of Sorrow and Pain*.

was a universal religion, that each Jew should turn to his own religion. Judaism had no dogma, only concepts; it was elastic and therefore all Jewish convictions could flourish within it.<sup>102</sup>

Groag was not the only person to write eulogies on Leo Baeck after the war. H.G. Adler, who wrote so critically of the ghetto's Zionist leadership, praised Baeck for his 'quiet activity' and for bringing the various religious factions in the ghetto closer together.<sup>103</sup> Albert H. Freidlander also discusses how Leo Baeck not only inspired inmates intellectually through his lectures on 'Plato and Kant' but was also a major source of spiritual inspiration. Friedlander writes, 'there were also the many private encounters in which Baeck reached out to his fellow inmates, serving as rabbi and comforter.'<sup>104</sup> Friedlander explains that for people who knew Baeck from Berlin and even for those who had never heard him speak, Baeck remained the figurehead of German Jewry. He claims that many prisoners turned up to his services and lectures and that his presence alone helped calm the assembled crowd. Friedlander continues,

And when he stood before them they knew that he had not changed. He had given away nothing of himself. Proud, fearless, dispassionate (to the point where this was resented by many), he stood before his community and spoke to them of the universal in which the particular was affirmed.<sup>105</sup>

It was not only the ghetto's German Jewish community that were aware of the effect that Leo Baeck had on the Theresienstadt population. Gonda Redlich, wrote in his diary on 12 June 1943, 'A walk with Rabbi Baeck. He truly seems to be a special, moral personality, a man of exceptional depth.'<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> Gurewitsch, *Mothers, Sisters, Resisters*, p.254.

<sup>103</sup> Adler, *Theresienstadt*, Chapter 19 on religious life in the ghetto, pp.584-627 and for Judaism in the ghetto, pp.680-682.

<sup>104</sup> Friedlander, *Teacher of Theresienstadt*, p.46.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid*, p.217. This is an extremely positive picture of Leo Baeck and one that stands in opposition to some of the testimonies that were used in Chapter Three when discussing the amount of knowledge Baeck had about the nature of the camps in the east and about the advice he gave prisoners on whether or not to volunteer for transports.

<sup>106</sup> Friedman, ed. *The Terezín Diary of Gonda Redlich*, p.121.

Religious services were held in Theresienstadt throughout its existence. According to Max. E. Mannheimer, 'Services were held by Dr. Baeck and other Rabbis. I venture to say that, in spite of the hardships we had to undergo in the ghetto ... people had not become more deeply attached to religion than they had generally been.'<sup>107</sup> Mannheimer's claim that deportation to Theresienstadt and subjection to ghetto conditions left most people's religious beliefs untouched is backed up in several other testimonies. Those who had always been observant remained so while others did not necessarily find a new and enhanced form of Judaism or Christianity because their lives had changed. The religious services that Mannheimer mentions were held in various places round the ghetto and attended by a variety of inmates representing a broad spectrum of religious belief, from the non-observant baptised Jew to the orthodox families from the east. Leonard Baker writes that,

Many attended services conducted by their own rabbis – the Berlin Jews usually attending Baeck's. Since many of the people in Theresienstadt were Protestants or Catholics, services were held for them, too, in the barracks. Indicating the relentlessness with which the Nazis pursued anyone with a Jewish parent or grandparent, the percentage in the Ghetto of those people with some Jewish ancestry who were Protestants or Catholics increased significantly. In May 1944 that group represented 15 percent of the total population at Theresienstadt.<sup>108</sup>

Anna Aurednicková describes the arrival of transports of practising Catholics in the ghetto, and says they soon established their own congregation complete with weekly services,

It was run by two Jews, Donath from Vienna and Gerson from Germany. The first sermon was held on 29 November in an attic on Larson Street ... Also a cross was found, in the Sudeten barracks, in the rubbish ... The head of the Protestant community,

<sup>107</sup> RIOD: Adler collection. Box 35/3, p.4. Max. E. Mannheimer, *Theresienstadt and From Theresienstadt to Auschwitz*. Eye Witness Report collected by the Jewish Central Information Office. July 1945.

<sup>108</sup> Baker, *Days of Sorrow and Pain*, p.302.

Dr. Jur. Goldschmidt had artistic abilities, so he painted an altar picture which was used by both Protestants and Catholics.<sup>109</sup>

It was not only the practicing Jews in Theresienstadt that attended talks and services given by Rabbi Baeck. The Catholic community in the ghetto were extremely positive in their attitude towards him. A Catholic survivor of the ghetto concludes,

We Catholics honored him especially, and he was a frequent guest at our meetings. When he lectured on philosophic subjects or commented on current problems, his appearance, his personality, the depth of his thought, and the clarity of his expression made an extraordinary impression. Respect and tolerance for his fellow man formed the basis of his ethics.<sup>110</sup>

The religious community in Theresienstadt was as diverse as the religious communities that had existed across Germany, Austria and the Czech Republic prior to the outbreak of war, a fact reflected in the variety of services that took place. There were several prayer halls throughout the ghetto, various rooms which acted as functioning churches and a makeshift synagogue in the Magdeburg barracks. On 26 March 1943 Gonda Redlich wrote in his diary,

A house of prayer, Jews pray in the *Freizeitgestaltung* [free time or cultural activities] hall. In the back of the hall are dancers, a stage. There aren't any orthodox among us, for the real orthodox would not pray in a hall such as this.<sup>111</sup>

Two days later he recorded,

People worship God in strange ways here. Terezín may be the only ghetto in the world where prayers are said according to the rituals of Catholics and Protestants. Catholics and Protestants pray under one roof. Here those two churches have made peace with one another. The Protestants pray before a picture of the

<sup>109</sup> Aurednicková, in Makarova *et al*, *University Over the Abyss*, pp.115-116.

<sup>110</sup> Baker, *Days of Sorrow and Pain*, p.303.

<sup>111</sup> Friedman, ed. *The Terezín Diary of Gonda Redlich*, p.110.

Holy Virgin that was placed there for Catholic ritual. The two churches are reconciled. When things deteriorate, divisions give way before the victorious cross.<sup>112</sup>

In addition to leading weekly services, the religious leaders were also responsible for overseeing weddings and funerals. Josef Stiassny wrote an article for *Vedem* that describes a wedding which took place in the makeshift theatre in the Magdeburg barracks during April 1943.

The atmosphere of a school graduation photograph, young men in borrowed hats and dark, borrowed clothes. The bridegroom, a youth who up to the very last minute chatters loudly with a group of comrades. The bride, a seventeen-year-old girl, who only an hour ago removed her sweatshirt and in a few hours, as Mrs. XYZ and dressed in work clothes, will transport cases, mattresses, or planks through the streets of Terezín on a funeral cart.<sup>113</sup>

He continues to describe the service itself,

Bride and bridegroom are standing under the canopy, the rabbi says the words of the vow in Hebrew, the bridegroom repeats after him ... The theatre, the comedy, the third-rate actors, the set depicting an operating theatre – this is the Terezín surrealism of everyday life.<sup>114</sup>

In her Theresienstadt memoir Vera Schiff comments on various weddings that took place including her own. Although she claims that many of the couples who were married in the ghetto might well have married on the outside, she is frank in her description of why other ceremonies took place.

The weddings, permitted by the SS commandant, were basically unions of deaths. People decided to marry chiefly for the reason to leave the camp together. Another motive, usually futile, was the wish to protect the other vulnerable person from deportation. Some young couples nourished the hope that they might, in

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<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>113</sup> Stiassny in Ornstein *et al*, *We are Children Just the Same*, p.166.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid*, pp.166-167.

another camp, remain together and so get a better chance of life. While all married couples were separated upon arrival in Theresienstadt, it appears foolish, in hindsight, that many believed that there was somewhere a camp offering a nearly normal life. Man's self-deception is boundless.<sup>115</sup>

The question of why the Nazis permitted the weddings to take place needs to be explored. Was it just another part of the illusion of Theresienstadt as a Jewish town? Did the German authorities believe it was wise to allow the imprisoned population this one 'luxury' in an attempt to quell any possible resistance? Schiff explains that civil weddings were chosen by some couples but, 'There were also weddings styled on a traditional ceremony, under the *chuppah* (the canopy) with an officiating rabbi. There were always several rabbis at any one time interned in the camp.'<sup>116</sup> When it came to her own wedding, Schiff and her fiancé chose a traditional ceremony and they were married less than two months before Theresienstadt was liberated in May 1945. She writes,

On my wedding day, March 6, 1945, I donned the elegant pitch black dress, designed by one of the best Viennese fashion designers, and I walked to the Magdeburg barracks, the centre of the camp's administration. There, in one of the rooms, was the *chuppah* ... In reality, it was only a semblance of the real thing. The drapery fastened above our heads was a thin blanket supported by four sticks, rather wobbly and unsteady. Compensating for the shabby exterior was the impressive presence of the officiating rabbi, Dr. Friediger.<sup>117</sup>

As well as attending weddings, funeral processions became a familiar sight for the Theresienstadt inhabitants. Although traditional funerals did not take place, relatives and friends walked behind the coffin of the deceased as far as the burial site or crematorium. To begin with those who died in the ghetto were buried just outside the boundaries of Theresienstadt and could be escorted by

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<sup>115</sup> Schiff, *Theresienstadt*, p.81.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*, p.126.

their family but from late 1942 onwards, when a modern crematorium was constructed, the deceased were cremated and the ashes placed in labelled cardboard boxes. Norbert Troller describes the early burials of the elderly in the ghetto,

Wrapped in a sheet, they were buried in a simple coffin nailed together from six rough boards. The attending family members would repeat the rabbi's prayers dry-eyed. Death was a daily occurrence. In spite of the grief, the immediate family members, if there were any, would breathe a sigh of relief. They were rid of the worry of seeing their dear old ones sent to the East to their death and knew they had been spared unbearable suffering.<sup>118</sup>

But for those who lost children or young siblings the suffering was unbearable. On the death of her sister Eva, Vera Schiff writes,

The next day we buried her. We joined the procession of mourners behind the hearses, loaded high with coffins, one of which was Eva's. At the fence of the camp, the throng came to a halt and the bodies were transported to the crematorium. We stood at the fence, watching with pain and despair. I knew that my parents had sustained a blow from which they could not recover and that a part of us had died with Eva.<sup>119</sup>

Vera Schiff had to walk along the same road three more times within the next year and a half behind the coffins of her fiancée Max, her father and later her mother. On the death of her mother she writes,

In little more than two years I had lost all my immediate family. I buried all those I loved and I felt as if all that made life worth living had been taken away from me. I had only one wish: All I really wanted was to give up, join my loved ones.<sup>120</sup>

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<sup>118</sup> Troller, *Theresienstadt*, pp.28-29.

<sup>119</sup> Schiff, *Theresienstadt*, p.64.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid*, p.114.

Although the *Kommandantur* in Theresienstadt allowed prisoners to escort the dead as far as the ghetto boundaries, they imposed stricter laws regarding funerals than they did for weddings. On 23 July 1943 Redlich recorded in his diary, ‘It is forbidden to dress in mourning garb. They ordered us to announce this to the residents of the ghetto in an appropriate way.’<sup>121</sup> There are two possible interpretations for the Nazis’ ban on mourning clothes. Perhaps they feared that the constant reminder of death would help foment revolt, or perhaps it was just another callous blow against the population.

In addition to the regular weekly services which were attended by Jews, Catholics and Protestants, special thought always accompanied preparations for the Sabbath, the high holy days and festivals. While the non-Jewish Czech population still occupied the houses in Theresienstadt up to the summer of 1942, the prisoners witnessed these residents preparing for Christmas. For many of the Protectorate Jews, witnessing the non-Jewish Czechs’ festive preparations was poignant since,

There was not a Jewish home in Czechoslovakia that in former times had not marked Christmas in some way: a festive dinner – braided bread laden with raisins, fish soup, fried carp – small gifts for the children, a frolic in the snow.<sup>122</sup>

The Czech Jewish community’s relationship with Christmas prompted Edelstein to approach the *Kommandantur* during December 1941 and ask for permission for those prisoners who identified as Christian to be allowed to attend the midnight mass service in the town church of Theresienstadt. Bondy explains how ‘Permission was refused, but they were allowed to hold prayers in their barracks on condition that it did not disturb the other inmates.’<sup>123</sup> She continues, ‘On Christmas Eve the Czech Jews sat and sang Christmas carols, longed for home,

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<sup>121</sup> Friedman, ed. *The Terezín Diary of Gonda Redlich*, p.126.

<sup>122</sup> Bondy, *Elder of the Jews*, p.258.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*

and consoled one another with the thought that next Christmas they would be home.<sup>124</sup>

It was not only the adult population of the ghetto that wanted to mark and celebrate religious festivals and holy days. The counsellors and teachers in the children's homes made sure that their charges were able to observe these occasions and sought to make them both enjoyable and educational. One teacher from a German speaking children's home remembered how,

We took every opportunity to celebrate the Festivals. We wanted to give the children some way to cast a few rays of light on their drab life. Not only were lessons given around the theme of the approaching Festival, but its special atmosphere was captured through decorating the house and the like ... While many of the Czech houses had Christmas trees at Christmas, we lit Hanukah candles in our houses. For eight days we carried out a programme full of joy and seriousness.<sup>125</sup>

She concludes,

All these celebrations were made possible at the cost of certain deprivations but our efforts bore fruit. The result persists to this day, because for the few children who remained alive, these moments were first experiences which remain with them to this day, the only enjoyable experiences of their childhood.<sup>126</sup>

A female worker from one of the Czech girls homes remembers how important the preparations for the Sabbath were in the lives of the children.

The assembly on Friday evening was the most moving experience of the week ... the most exciting moment being the presentation of the prize (an engraved board) to the best house of the week. These assemblies intensified the feeling of close relationship between our collective houses.<sup>127</sup>

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<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>125</sup> Schmiedt, 'Hehalutz in Theresienstadt, p.119.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.* p. 121.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.* p.116.

The desire to mark the annual festivals and holy days and thus the passing of time was felt strongly by most of the ghetto population. Bondy writes,

Hopes were always pinned on specific dates, both Jewish and Christian: Passover, Rosh Hashanah, Christmas – the New Year would bring redemption. The last day of 1941 was celebrated in one form or another in every hall and room of the barracks.<sup>128</sup>

This desire to mark the annual festivals was not specific to the early months of ghetto life or to those who were particularly observant. Valtr Eisinger who ran room A1 of the boys home L417 and who helped the children with their magazine *Vedem* wrote about the preparations which were made for Rosh Hashanah. ‘I noticed an interesting psychological feature in myself this week: How even a unbeliever and atheist can be drawn against his will into the emotions surrounding the high holidays.’<sup>129</sup>

Leonard Baker discusses how in addition to the weekly Friday night, Saturday and Sunday services in the ghetto there were occasional Bar Mitzvahs. He concludes,

Of the many services conducted in Theresienstadt perhaps the Bar Mitzvahs were the most impressive. In them the Jews reaffirmed a resolve to pass on their religion and their life to their children.<sup>130</sup>

Ralph Blume remembers his Bar Mitzvah which took place in August 1944 at which Rabbi Baeck officiated. He recalls how they used a room in one of the barracks.

We had a Torah ... Eight people were called up and Leo Baeck called me for my Torah portion ... I think the point Leo Baeck made which, in my opinion, was the most important, was that, despite all I had gone through so far, I should never change my

<sup>128</sup> Bondy, *Elder of the Jews*, p.259.

<sup>129</sup> Ornstein et al, *We are Children Just the Same*, p.160.

<sup>130</sup> Baker, *Days of Sorrow and Pain*, p.303.

religious beliefs. By the way, we ‘celebrated’ the occasion by having a special treat; we had dry bread and mustard.<sup>131</sup>

As well as overseeing the Bar and Bat Mitzvahs of their children in Theresienstadt, the parents of new-born male infants had to decide whether or not they should be circumcised. On 4 May 1944 Redlich recorded in his diary how important it was for him that his baby son Daniel should be circumcised. He writes,

Eight days old ... You were seven weeks old before we circumcised you. We feared for your health and so we waited till you gained weight. Your mother waited nervously and with fear for your circumcision for she worries about you constantly, as if she felt your pain. She knew my decision to bring you into Abraham’s covenant was strong and it was impossible to argue with me.

This passage shows the conflicting emotions which surrounded his son’s circumcision. It was clearly important for Redlich as a culturally and religiously identified Jew to have his son circumcised, thought he was also well aware of the attendant risks. The lack of hygiene, the risk of infection, the prevalence of disease and the fact that the baby was already suffering from malnutrition combined to make the procedure potentially fatal. Redlich’s diary entry explains that not all boys born in the ghetto were circumcised and that this was not necessarily due to health concerns. He writes,

Don’t think that all the boys born here are circumcised. There is a child here who is several years old. The doctor recommended circumcision, but the parents wouldn’t hear of it, because circumcision is a Jewish custom and they hate themselves and their Jewish brethren. In general, there are uncircumcised Jews, children of mixed marriages, and ‘modern Jews’.<sup>132</sup>

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<sup>131</sup> *Ibid*, p.304.

<sup>132</sup> Friedman, ed. *The Terezin Diary of Gonda Redlich*, p.156.

Redlich believed that Jewish couples who refused to have their sons circumcised in the ghetto no longer wanted to identify or be identified as Jews, a self-hatred brought on by years of persecution.<sup>133</sup>

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<sup>133</sup> Prior to ghettoisation and during the Holocaust there were other more practical and life-saving reasons not to have babies circumcised. Jewish infants who remained uncircumcised could pass for gentiles and go into hiding.

## The Liberation of the Theresienstadt Ghetto

The first post-war year was the single most unhappy one for me ... I was gathering information about the extermination camps and accumulating a long, hopeless list of murdered relatives.<sup>1</sup>

When the first detachments of the Soviet Army entered Theresienstadt on the evening of 8 May 1945, the imprisoned population represented a fragment of the ancient and vibrant communities which had been deported there since November 1941. The majority of the Protectorate community had perished in the Czech family camp in Birkenau and those elderly from Germany and Austria that had survived long enough in Theresienstadt to be deported were killed on arrival in Auschwitz.<sup>2</sup>

Most of the survivors had been classed as *Mischlinge* under the Nazi racial laws or had been married to an 'Aryan' German. Also included among the liberated were Jews from other concentration camps who had only recently arrived on transports during April 1945, together with those who had been forced to walk to the ghetto on the Death Marches. Very few of the veteran Theresienstadt community were alive to witness the ghetto's liberation. Ruth Schwertfeger writes,

The final sixth months of the camp oscillated between catastrophe and celebration. The Swiss transport had already left when mass transports started arriving in Theresienstadt, bringing with them the full implications of the transports to the East.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Schiff, *Theresienstadt*, p.150.

<sup>2</sup> The Danish Jews had been repatriated while the majority of the Dutch community had been deported east.

<sup>3</sup> Schwertfeger, *Women of Theresienstadt*, p.103.

After the departure of the Danish Jews on 15 April 1945, the final transports started to arrive in the ghetto from various destinations.<sup>4</sup> The arrival of these transports not only shocked the Theresienstadt population due to the appalling condition of the new arrivals, but also because they were able to confirm the worst fears of the Theresienstadt survivors about the fate of European Jewry. As Schwertfeger writes, 'Their arrival ended the illusion of Birkenau as a 'family camp.'<sup>5</sup> Those who had witnessed the departure of their relatives to Birkenau now knew that if their family members did not return soon, they never would. Grete Salus who had been deported east from Theresienstadt in October 1944 and returned on a transport on 21 April 1945 recalls the scene on her arrival. She explains how occasionally people were reunited with relatives and friends they had left behind but for most people returning to the ghetto, there were no relatives to greet them. Salus writes,

We staggered through a cordon of people. It had become deathly silent. People held hands to protect us from the crowd that was descending upon us. Yet even with this the human chain was broken when a mother saw her daughter. Dear God, I cannot begin to describe what happened to us that day, for its brutal force almost tore us apart. We had, after all, been presumed as good as dead and now had returned safely to the ghetto, the first of the larger transports of women from Theresienstadt.<sup>6</sup>

While the final transports continued to arrive from other camps throughout April, the majority of the Theresienstadt SS remained in place as did the Ghetto Commandant, Karl Rahm. Ben Helfgott comments on how the increasing presence of the International Committee of the Red Cross in

<sup>4</sup> See: Karny, ed. *Terezín Memorial Book*; *Terezín Memorial Books*, volumes 1 and 2; *Theresienstädter Gedenkbuch*. The Terezín Memorial books note a further nine transports arriving in the ghetto between 16.03.45 and 15.04.45. The following transports arrived in the ghetto between these dates: 'XII/11' from Frankfurt am Main on 17.03.45, 'XVI/7' from Leipzig on 17.03.45, 'IV/17' from Vienna on 20.03.45, 'I/123' from Berlin on 28.03.45, 'XIX/12 Ez' from Aussig on 29.03.45, 'Ez' from Prague on 30.03.45, 'V1/11' from Wesermünde on 4.04.45, 'XXVI/4' from Sered on 7.04.45 and 'IV/16a' from Amstetten on 15.04.45.

<sup>5</sup> Schwertfeger, *Women of Theresienstadt*, p.19.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p.105.

Theresienstadt changed the behaviour of the SS and commandant Rahm in particular.<sup>7</sup> He remembers, 'Rahm sort of played it down because the official from the Red Cross was always around so Rahm must have been very conscious of this.'<sup>8</sup> Asked whether the Jewish Self-Administration was still functioning when he arrived in April 1945, Helfgott replied,

They were still working. They were still in touch and working with Rahm – the Chairman, Murmelstein. We met them. They came to see us. I remember seeing Rabbi Leo Baeck. He came and I was told this was the Chief Rabbi of Berlin and so on. I heard the name Murmelstein.<sup>9</sup>

Although the official transports stopped arriving in Theresienstadt at the end of April 1945, thousands continued to enter the ghetto at the end of death marches. Edith Mayer-Hartog recalls the terrible condition of these new arrivals:

They came in by foot to Theresienstadt. Thousands and thousands and thousands of people every, single day. In these outfits. In their striped suits. No underwear, no shoes, no socks. These men they looked like 120 maybe they were 18 or 20 or a little older. And finally they reached Theresienstadt where they were at least given a place to rest and a little cabbage soup. Most of these people were already beyond help. Because they were unable to get their hands to their mouths anymore. Most of them were not able to feed themselves.<sup>10</sup>

Ben Helfgott remembers,

They were either swollen with the sockets of their eyes set deeply in their heads and by that stage, these people could not be saved any more or, they were completely emaciated with their hair overgrown and they didn't look like human beings - one of them, a friend, a very, very close friend – when I saw him I hardly recognised him but he sort of threw himself into my arms and said, 'Give me something to eat, give me something to eat.' He was like an animal.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>7</sup> See the end of Chapter Three for the build up to the Red Cross arriving in Theresienstadt during April and May 1945.

<sup>8</sup> Sarah Kavanaugh, interview with Ben Helfgott (London: 2000), p.1.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid*, p.5.

<sup>10</sup> YVA: 06g / 47, p.15, Edith Mayer-Hartog.

<sup>11</sup> Kavanaugh, Helfgott, p.2.

Asked whether the death march survivors were housed alongside the other inhabitants, Helfgott replies, 'No, many of them had to be taken to hospital – many of them contracted typhoid.'<sup>12</sup> He explains how he arrived 'before the typhus had started and we were disinfected and given fresh clothes.'<sup>13</sup> Through his descriptions and the testimonies of other survivors it is possible to establish the conditions of the various 'types' or 'categories' of prisoners. Those who arrived on the death marches were in the worst condition of all, with those who had come to Theresienstadt on the final transports in only slightly better health. To those who arrived on the last trains, the long-term ghetto inhabitants appeared in relatively good health. Charlotte Salzberger explains,

For us, who came from another concentration camp, the situation in Theresienstadt was so good, it was laughable. There were 6,000 people with Jewish institutions, a comparatively normal life, family life, cultural life, an internal Jewish regime. For us this was laughable. Of course, in reality everything was only pretence ... an unreal reality actually...<sup>14</sup>

In his examination of the final day of the ghetto, Adler describes the total physical and psychological breakdown of the men and women who had been forced to walk from the camps in the east. Adler writes,

These people no longer had any belief. They believed in nothing and nobody. They did not even believe in themselves. Everything had been extinguished and devalued. There was no such thing for them as a friend, no such thing as a breath of human warmth.<sup>15</sup>

The new arrivals also brought disease. According to Schwertfeger ,

The first case of typhus was diagnosed among the newcomers on 24 April, and within a short time hundreds had died, including many nurses and doctors who attended the sick and also,

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<sup>12</sup> *Ibid*, p.3.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid*, p.4.

<sup>14</sup> Charlotte Salzberger, *The Trial of Adolf Eichmann*, Volume 2, session 42, pp.760-761.

<sup>15</sup> Adler, *Theresienstadt*, p.212. "Diese Menschen glaubten nicht mehr, sie glaubten nichts und niemanden ..."

ironically, many who had so far survived the rigours of Theresienstadt.<sup>16</sup>

The typhus epidemic was a disaster for what remained of the ghetto community, killing many of those who had managed to survive months of deprivation and starvation in Theresienstadt and elsewhere. On the 4 May 1945 while the typhus epidemic was raging across the ghetto, the Czech Assistance Action group entered Theresienstadt. Dr. Raska, a ruthless member of their team announced on arrival,

Anybody jeopardising by irresponsible actions the success of the sanitary measures taken in the hospital No.1 (Small Fortress), the hospital No.2 (Sudeten Barracks), or anywhere in Theresienstadt will be confined to a cell occupied by patients suffering from Typhus or other contagious diseases.<sup>17</sup>

While the Theresienstadt veterans struggled to assist the new arrivals and contain the spread of infectious disease, the first troops of the Soviet Army were making their way past the perimeter of the ghetto. Vera Schiff remembers their arrival,

And then we saw them – Russian tanks, manned by young soldiers. Never did men personify angels as closely as these men around the heavy mounted guns. We all broke into wild cheers, welcoming our liberators. When they reached the fence we made out their faces; they were so young, boyish and looked at us and our enthusiasm with an uncertain smile.<sup>18</sup>

Schiff explains how, as the troops were rushing past the ghetto walls, prisoners stopped them and explained who they were.

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<sup>16</sup> Schwertfeger, *Women of Theresienstadt*, p.19.

<sup>17</sup> Lederer, *Ghetto Theresienstadt*, pp.193-194.

<sup>18</sup> Schiff, *Theresienstadt*, p.133. The confusion and uncertain look which Schiff describes is present in the testimonies of many who witnessed the arrivals of the Russian troops. See Primo Levi's description of the troops who liberated Auschwitz. Levi writes, 'They did not greet us, nor smile; they seemed oppressed, not only by pity but by a confused restraint which sealed their mouths, and kept their eyes fastened on the funereal scene.' Levi, *The Drowned and the Saved*, p.54.

We yelled and shouted that we were no ordinary prisoners; we were innocent Jews, held captive behind the fence. I do not know if they understood or if it helped any, but they began to slow down, looking at us with more curiosity.<sup>19</sup>

Ben Helfgott also witnessed the arrival of the Russians.

Well, the Russians arrived ... the Russians when they saw us - of course they were very sympathetic and they didn't tell us in so many words but we were given to understand that they gave that day to us - that we could do what we wanted. So those who had any strength to get out went.<sup>20</sup>

David Hermann remembers how the liberated community was allowed to do as it wished the day the Russians entered Theresienstadt. Both he and Marlene Altman remember how the Russian troops encouraged survivors to take their revenge on Germans found in the surrounding areas. Hermann explains, 'We got twenty-four hours free doing what we wanted and we went down to the nearest town and people left food and which we ate and our stomachs weren't ready for it.'

Marlene Altman says,

During the last week when the Russians were in Theresienstadt, they came round and said does anyone want to come out with us we are going hunting. When we were feeling slightly better and I said no, hunting what is that? They said, hunting for Germans. Some people went. It wasn't my thing. But I thought afterwards I should have gone, why not. But I couldn't.<sup>21</sup>

Hermann adds, 'I could not, I could not hate ... but many people went ... Older people in their twenties and thirties. They took revenge ... But I don't think it made them feel any better. Not really.'<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Schiff, *Theresienstadt*, p.133.

<sup>20</sup> Kavanaugh, Helfgott, p.6.

<sup>21</sup> Kavanaugh, Altman, p.10.

<sup>22</sup> Kavanaugh, Altman and Hermann, pp.10-16.

Although the first Russian troops had entered the ghetto on 8 May 1945 the majority did not arrive until 10 May, with the medical units of Red Army setting up hospitals and quarantine facilities on 11 May. The Russians initiated a process of repatriation but this was slow and complex due to the typhus epidemic, the dissolution of the Theresienstadt Jewish Self-Administration and the total breakdown in communications across occupied Europe. On 14 May, the Russians ordered an immediate fourteen day quarantine after it became clear that the spread of typhus was out of control. No one was allowed to enter or leave certain areas of the ghetto and repatriation did not continue until 28 May 1945. By 30 June 1945 there was still a population of 5,952 people in Theresienstadt and the official repatriation process did not end until 17 August 1945.<sup>23</sup>

Although many had received the Russian troops with joy, liberation was not a happy and celebratory experience for all and should be viewed as a time of extreme anguish and pain during which survivors realised the full extent of their loss. Edith Kramer describes how liberation was not the joyful experience many had longed for. She writes,

But hardly had the first excitement passed than it appeared that the energy used so far for self-preservation would be necessary for a new struggle ... Many felt not up to the new struggle, and even amongst my four room-mates two committed suicide.<sup>24</sup>

Gillian Banner writes, 'the liberation of the camps was not a happy ending. It signalled for the survivors their entry into a time which is in many respects was as onerous as that experienced during the Holocaust.'<sup>25</sup> Vera Schiff adds, 'The first post-war year was the single most unhappy one for me ... I was gathering information about the extermination camps and accumulating a long, hopeless list of murdered relatives.'<sup>26</sup> For others, the sense of loss was only exacerbated by going home. Hedwig Ems concludes,

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<sup>23</sup> The last prisoner did not leave the confines of what had been the Theresienstadt ghetto until November 1945.

<sup>24</sup> Schwertfeger, *Women of Theresienstadt*, p.114.

<sup>25</sup> Banner, *Holocaust Literature*, p.17.

<sup>26</sup> Schiff, *Theresienstadt*, p.150.

I am not going to write about Berlin, bombed to pieces and totally changed, and for me now devoid of relatives and friends. It was impossible to recognize it and I would perhaps be glad to be able to leave it.<sup>27</sup>

Clara Eisenkraft, however, does describe returning ‘home’ to Prague. She writes,

I covered the second half of the journey to freedom and to Prague by foot. Not celebrating and jubilating, as I used to imagine, but filled with dread and fear. Prague – I walked through the streets in amazement. There was indeed still a city in which one could walk alone ... My husband – I kept looking for my husband. Slowly streets were changing to voices. Voices of the past now chased me mercilessly from one grave to another ... My husband was gone – my parents – millions were gone.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Schwertfeger, *Women of Theresienstadt*, p.114.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid*, p.111.

## Conclusion

This thesis has examined the Jewish leadership of the Theresienstadt ghetto in relation to the Jewish communities imprisoned there between November 1941 and May 1945. Through its examination of politics, culture, welfare, religion, and national identity this thesis has attempted to broaden the definition of Jewish leadership during the Holocaust while expanding our understanding of Theresienstadt.

This thesis has highlighted and explored five main themes. Firstly, the day-to-day work of the leaders in Theresienstadt in the context of their community work prior to the outbreak of the war. Secondly, the conflicts between the German and Czech communities in the ghetto. Thirdly, the conflict between the assimilationist and the Zionist factions in the ghetto, both within and across national groups. Fourthly, the existence of education and welfare programmes as survival mechanisms in the lives of the young, and finally, the existence and importance of a cultural and spiritual life for the ghetto inhabitants.

These five themes are to be examined in greater detail. As regards the first theme, an examination concentrating on the lives of the Jewish communities and their leaders prior to the Second World War, as explored in Chapter Two, makes it possible to trace the history of the communities from emancipation to the First World War, and from there to the birth of the Nazi regime, the introduction of anti-Jewish measures, and finally their deportation to and their imprisonment in Theresienstadt. While tracing the history of these communities it is important not to focus exclusively on Nazi ideology and policy but on the agenda of the Jewish leaders and their communities, both independently from the Nazi regime and in response to it.

An understanding of the political, social and cultural make-up of the pre-war communities sheds light on certain decisions made on both an individual and a communal level inside Theresienstadt. For example, without knowing why and how the German Jewish communities were, on the whole, more assimilated than

the Czechs, it would be impossible to follow the decision-making process within the ghetto or comprehend the importance of the nationality of the three Jewish elders.

This discussion leads on to the second of the five themes – the conflicts between the German and Czech communities in the ghetto. The Theresienstadt ghetto was run in turn by a Czech, a German and an Austrian Jew. As shown in Chapters Three and Four, however, the Jewish Self-Administration did not always reflect the make-up of the ghetto community. When the German and Austrian Jews began to arrive in Theresienstadt in their thousands during the summer of 1942, Edelstein – the Czech Zionist leader – was still running the Jewish Self-Administration. It was not until January 1943 that Eppstein – a German Jew – replaced him.

The nationality of, and the subsequent tensions between, communities and individuals infiltrated all areas of Theresienstadt life and was prominent across the national groups. For example, when Philipp Manes claimed, ‘We North Germans don’t like the Viennese. They are far removed from us’ he was only reflecting the views of the Viennese and the Czechs towards the Germans.<sup>1</sup> As Hedwig Ems explains, ‘The Czechs hated us just as much as we hated Hitler and they held us responsible for the calamity that had hit them.’<sup>2</sup>

Perhaps because of these differences rather than despite them, individuals made an effort on both a private and a public level, compromises were made and gulfs bridged. Yet, the two communities remained, for the most part, separate while imprisoned within the ghetto.

Conflict between the Czechs and the Germans was present throughout the history of the ghetto, as was conflict between the assimilationist and the Zionist factions. This conflict, which makes up the third main theme, has been highlighted both within and across national groups. This tension did not exist during the early months of the ghetto when Edelstein was responsible for a largely Zionist Czech community. With the arrival of the more assimilated, less

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<sup>1</sup> WL: Manes, *Tatsachenbericht*, Book 2.

<sup>2</sup> YVA: 02/241, p.6. Testimony of Hedwig Ems.

political German and Austrian Jews, however, came the first open hostilities as the leadership seemed more removed from these communities.

Not only did the elderly from Germany and Austria in general feel that their politics and culture were not represented by the Edelstein administration, but in particular they were directly and adversely affected by its policies. Edelstein introduced the ration categories in May 1942 and did not alter these once the majority of the elderly from Germany and Austria had arrived. His Zionist administration openly supported and encouraged the survival of the ghetto children and, as rations were scarce, this resulted in a high mortality rate among the elderly. Although his decision had the knock on effect of decimating the elderly community, it only highlights the impossible position he and his successors were in.

The decisions made by Edelstein's Zionist administration, including the treatment of the elderly in comparison to that of the young, leads onto the fourth theme explored – the existence of education and welfare programmes as survival mechanisms in the lives of the young. Whether it was because the young represented the future – however this was perceived at the time – or because promoting their education and possible emigration to Palestine continued the work of Maccabi Hatzair and the other pre-war Zionist groups, the Edelstein administration dedicated itself to their survival.

The education and welfare programmes introduced during the Edelstein administration, via the youth welfare department, were continued once Eppstein had been appointed Jewish elder. The survival of Theresienstadt's youth was from the start a priority for all. Germans, Austrians and Czechs agreed on its importance even if they were heavily divided over how to achieve it.

The introduction of the Theresienstadt children's homes and the promotion of this style of communal living along Zionist lines caused conflict among certain German and Austrian families whose children were sometimes excluded from the 'inner circle.' Although there was a children's home established for the offspring of German prisoners, as the majority of the ghetto teachers and counsellors were young Czech Zionists, it was the Czech children who benefited the most from the

history and language lessons, the religious instruction and the cultural events offered by these men and women. The distinctions made between Zionist and non-Zionist children is highlighted by Kurt Ladner when he describes how, on arrival at the children's home,

The surprising first question that we were asked was whether we were Zionists. I replied, 'No', without consulting my friends. The man smiled and said that's alright. You and your friends can join the fellows on the first floor, first door to the left.<sup>3</sup>

The varied programme of events organised in the children's homes by the teachers brings us onto the fifth and final theme – the existence and importance of a cultural and spiritual life for the ghetto inhabitants, both young and old. As with the education and survival of the ghetto youth, the cultural life of the ghetto was another area in which there was some interaction between the German and Czech communities, although, on the whole, the two remained separate. This distinction between the two communities is evidenced by the German lecture series run by Philipp Manes and the Czech one run by Milos Salus. While anyone who could attend a specific cultural event was welcome, prisoners tended to stick in their national groups for the organisation and consumption of ghetto culture.

Like every other aspect of life in Theresienstadt, the ghetto's cultural life did not affect all equally. Distinctions can be drawn both between the Old Reich and Protectorate Jews, who sought out their own cultural experiences, as well as between performer and audience. Perhaps the clearest distinction that can be made, however, is simply between the cultural 'haves' and 'have nots', namely between the few who were able to enjoy a lecture or concert, and the mass of the population who remained untouched by Theresienstadt's extraordinary cultural life.

The German and Czech Jewish communities attempted to maintain aspects of their pre-war religious life inside the ghetto as adults and children continued to observe traditions and practices. The complex religious community

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<sup>3</sup> USHMM: RG – 02.192, p.93. Kurt Ladner, *Not a Moment Too Soon*.

of Theresienstadt was made up of observant, liberal and baptised Jews and later Protestants and Catholics. While some attended the make-shift synagogues and observed Jewish traditions, others with the help of Edelstein, fought to attend Theresienstadt's church. This diverse Jewish community which celebrated Hannakah and Passover, Christmas and Easter co-existed within Theresienstadt, arguing points of doctrinal importance while following their chosen set of beliefs. The less observant Czech Jews who, according to Bondy, 'On Christmas Eve ... sat and sang Christmas carols, longed for home' lived side by side with more observant Czech Jews who questioned whether to circumcise their sons or fast inside the ghetto.<sup>4</sup>

Although this thesis has focused on the more concrete areas of the Jewish communities such as their nationality and political and cultural affiliation, it has also highlighted and teased out subtle differences between individuals and explored the complex make-up of both the Jewish Self-Administration and how it received and transmitted orders issued from the *Kommandantur*. These subtler points are important because whether or not a prisoner survived Theresienstadt and escaped deportation east did not necessarily depend upon nationality or age. Many factors played a part in the fate of each prisoner, ranging from their singing to their football skills.

However, nobody within the Jewish communities could ultimately determine a prisoner's stay in the ghetto. If a decision was issued from the *Kommandantur* or from Prague or Berlin, that decision was final. The Jewish leaders and the individuals who made up their communities, however, could and did affect Jewish life inside the ghetto and played a prominent role in the vibrant Jewish life that existed within the confines of Theresienstadt between November 1941 and May 1945.

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<sup>4</sup> Bondy, *Elder of the Jews*, p.258. See: Friedman, ed. *The Terezín Diary of Gonda Redlich*, p.156.

## Appendix 1. Theresienstadt Timeline, 1941 – 1945

### 1941

November

24.11.41 Transport ‘AK I’ arrives in Theresienstadt from Prague.

26.11.41 First warm meal for the men of ‘AK I’.

30.11.41 Transport arrives containing Raphael Schächter and other prominent musicians and actors.

December

4.12.41 Two transports arrive. One with Jakob Edelstein and the Jewish Council and the other with more musicians and actors: Petr Kien and Gideon Klein.

5.12.41 First cultural evening takes place in room 69 of the Sudeten Barracks. Reunion for the men of the two ‘AK’ transports.

5.12.41 First documents recorded by the Jewish leaders.

6.12.41 Men and women are confined to gender defined barracks and guarded by gendarmes. Men are chosen for the *Ghettowache* (Police).

15.12.41 The first Daily Report is issued.

17.12.41 The daily bread ration is set at 350g.

25.12.41 The *Hunderschaf*ten (work units) are established.

### Statistics for 1941:

Number of people deported to Theresienstadt – 7,365.

Number of fatalities in ghetto – 11.

## 1942

January

- 1.1.42 Ghetto population reaches 7,350.
- 8.1.42 Hospitals are established.
- 9.1.42 First transport leaves Theresienstadt for Riga.
- 15.1.42 Second transport leaves Theresienstadt for Riga.
- 19.1.42 Eichmann visits Theresienstadt.
- 20.1.42 The Wannsee Conference takes place

February 85 practising doctors registered in Theresienstadt.

21.2.42 The Ghettowatch men are sworn in by the Jewish council.

May Karl Löwenstein arrives in the ghetto.

3.5.42 Work on the construction of the ghetto crematoria begins.

18.5.42 Edelstein decides on food hierarchy and bread categories are established.

June

2.6.42 First transport of German Jews arrive.

21.6.42 First transport of Austrian Jews arrive.

July The first children's homes are established – L 410 and L 417.

1.7.42 Ghetto population reaches 21,269.

3.7.42	Non-Jewish Czech population expelled from Theresienstadt.
23.7.42	Philipp Manes arrives in the ghetto with his wife Gertrud.
August	
1.8.42	Ghetto population reaches 43,303.
10.8.42	<i>Orientierungsdienst</i> is set up by Philipp Manes.
24.8.42	Work on the new railway line from Bauschowitz to Theresienstadt commences.
27.8.42	<i>Zentralstelle für jüdische Auswanderung</i> changes its name to the <i>Zentralamt zur Lösung der jüdische frage</i> .
31.8.42	Ghetto population reaches of 51,552.
September	Total number of people incapable of work reaches 38,912. Leaving 7,748 capable of work. Daily workers: men – 7,648 and women – 7,748.
7.9.42	The crematorium opens.
21.9.42	Dr. Justice Heinrich Klang arrives in Theresienstadt. First formal lecture given by the Manes Group.
October	
3.10.42	Jewish Self-Administration reshuffle is announced.
5.10.42	First transport leaves Theresienstadt for Treblinka.
November	The New Zionist Council is established.
1.11.42	Ghetto population reaches 45,312.
28.11.42	Raphael Schächter produces his first ghetto opera – Smetana's, <i>The Bartered Bride</i> .

December

6.12.42                    3,541 children between the ages of 3 and 18 are registered in Theresienstadt.

8.12.42                    Ghetto coffee-house opens.

24.12.42                 Ghetto population reaches 50,006.

**Statistics for 1942:**

Number of people deported to Theresienstadt: 101,761.

Number of people deported from Theresienstadt: 43,871.

Number of fatalities in ghetto: 15,891.

Number of suicides in ghetto: 264.

**1943**

January

1.1.43                    Jewish administration records 374 prisoners over the age of 80 and 320 over the age of 85.

9.1.43                    Redlich records in his diary the lower age limit for children being deported from Theresienstadt on their own is 3 years old.

26.1.43                  Dr. Paul Eppstein arrives in Theresienstadt.

28.1.43                  Rabbi Leo Baeck arrives in Theresienstadt.

31.1.43                  Council Triumvirate set up with Eppstein as Jewish leader and Edelstein and Murmelstein as deputies. New Council confirmed.

February

1.2.43                    Ghetto population reaches 44,672.

16.2.43 Ghetto population reduced to 43,683. Himmler calls a halt to all deportations from Theresienstadt. This signals the start of the *Stadtverschönerung* (City Beautification Project).

April

21.4.43 Ghetto bank announces a cash reserve of 53 million ghetto crowns.

22.4.43 The first transport from Holland arrives in Theresienstadt.

May

1.5.43 Street names are put up in order to replace numbers.

8.5.43 The Minsk ghetto is liquidated.

June

27.6.43 The delegation from the German Red Cross arrives in Theresienstadt for a two day visit.

30.6.43 Ghetto population reaches 44,621. This includes 3,561 hospitalised patients.

July

31.7.43 New regulations on pregnancy are announced – compulsory abortions ordered.

August

8.8.43 Ghetto population reaches 46,127.

21.8.43 The Bialystok ghetto is liquidated.

24.8.43 The Bialystok children arrive in Theresienstadt.

September

8.9.43 Redlich records Hirsch's arrest in his diary.

23.9.43 Premiere of the Children's opera *Brundibár*

October

5.10.43 1,260 Bialystok children and 53 nurses and assistants are deported to Auschwitz from Theresienstadt.

November

427 prisoners die in the ghetto. Edelstein deported to Auschwitz.

3.11.43

The Riga ghetto is liquidated.

10.11.43

Redlich records the arrest of Edelstein

11.11.43

Ghetto census takes place.

30.11.43

Ghetto population reduced to 40,145.

December

The *Stadtverschönerung* is ordered.

### **Statistics for December 1943**

Number of blind prisoners – 600.

Number of workers – 21,997.

Number of hospital beds in five hospitals – 2,200.

### **1944**

January Number of workers recorded at 20,697.

1.1.44 Ghetto population reduced to 34,655.

February	The <i>Stadtverschönerung</i> starts.
March	
28.2.44	Danish Jews arrive in Theresienstadt.
May	
3.5.44	Ghetto cemetery ‘beautified.’
14.5.44	Ghetto population reaches 35,733.
15.5.44	A ‘work’ transport of 2,503 men leave the ghetto out of which 119 survive the war.
16.5.44	A ‘work’ transport of 2,500 men leave the ghetto out of which 5 survive the war.
22.5.44	Ghetto population reduced to 28,090. 12,106 – men and 15,984 – women.
June	
20.6.44	Edelstein is killed in Auschwitz together with his wife Miriam, son Arieh and mother in law Mrs. Olliner.
23.6.44	Commission of two Danes and one Swiss member of the Red Cross arrive in the ghetto.
July	
	Manes holds poetry competition. Ghetto artists are arrested and imprisoned in the Small Fortress.
12.7.44	Camp B11b, the Terezín Family camp in Auschwitz is liquidated.
31.7.44	Ghetto population reduced to 27,475.
31.7.44	Number of children in Theresienstadt under the age of 16 recorded at 2,658. Number prisoners over the age of 65 recorded at 4,452.

August

21.8.44 The Lodz ghetto is liquidated.

September

1.9.44 14,574 Jews left alive in Germany.

23.9.44 Jewish Self-Administration ordered to compile transport lists of 5,000 people.

27.9.44 Eppstein is arrested and taken to the Small Fortress where he is executed. Murmelstein is announced as his successor.

29.9.44 A transport of 1,500 Czech Jewish men leaves Theresienstadt of which 76 survive the war. A further eight transports leave between 1.10.44 – 19.10.44.

October

22.10.44 The SS order that the population of the ghetto remains at 12,000.

28.10.44 The final transport from Theresienstadt to Auschwitz leaves the ghetto containing 2,038 men out of which 37 survived the war. Philipp and Gertrude Manes and Gonda, Gerta and Daniel Redlich are amongst those deported.

31.10.44 Ghetto population falls below the 12,000 mark – recorded at 11,068.

November

2.11.44 The 28.10.44 transport from Theresienstadt is gassed in Auschwitz.

December 7,439 people are transported to Theresienstadt.

13.12.44 The Jewish council and the self-administration are rearranged and Leo Baeck becomes the acting deputy of

the Jewish Elder. Murmelstein becomes the new Jewish Elder.

## 1945

January

1.1.45 Ghetto population reduced to 11,465. This consists of: 3,500 Protectorate Jews, 4,000 German Jews, 1,500 Austrian Jews, 1,700 Dutch Jews, 400 Danish Jews and 400 Slovakian Jews. Out of all these only 6,034 people are capable of work – 1,693 men and 4,071 women.

31.1.45 Transports of *Mischlinge* are transported to Theresienstadt.

February

Construction of possible gas chambers starts in Theresienstadt.

3.2.45

Swiss transport announced in the Daily Orders.

5.2.45

The Swiss transport leaves the ghetto with 1,200 people on board.

28.2.45

Ghetto population reaches 15,681 out of which 10,598 are capable of work.

March

5.3.45

A new *Stadtverschönerung* is ordered.

8.3.45

A transport of Hungarian Jews leaves for Theresienstadt.

April

6.4.45

The International Committee of the Red Cross enter Theresienstadt for inspection.

15.4.45

Danish prisoner population leave the ghetto for Sweden.

20.4.45

Ghetto population reaches 17,539 out of which 7,000 are Czech, 5,000 German, 1,250 Austrian, 1,250 Dutch, 1,400

Slovakian, 1,000 Hungarian. Approximately 13,500 – 15000 prisoners arrive in the ghetto from concentration camps which have been liquidated.

21.4.45 Further inspection by the Red Cross.

May

4.5.45 A Czech Red Cross commission including doctors is sent to Theresienstadt

5.5.45 Due to incoming transports the ghetto population now stands at 30,000. The SS flee the ghetto. Murmelstein is decommissioned. 2,803 Jews are left alive in the Protectorate.

8.5.45 First sighting of Russian Troops.

10.5.45 Russian troops arrive in the ghetto. The Red Cross begins the repatriation of prisoners.

12.5.45 Russian troops set up sanitary laws in Theresienstadt as disease spreads.

14.5.45 Theresienstadt placed under quarantine for 14 days.

28.5.45 Quarantine ends and repatriations continues.

June Theresienstadt population still 5,952.

August

17.8.45 Official repatriation ends.

November The last prisoners leave Theresienstadt.

**Appendix 2. Map and plan of the Theresienstadt Ghetto.<sup>1</sup>**

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<sup>1</sup> This map is reproduced from the inside cover of Adler, *Theresienstadt*.

## Key to the Theresienstadt Map.<sup>2</sup>

### Streets:

L1	<i>Seestrasse</i>	Lake Street
L1a	<i>Kurze Strasse</i>	Short Street
L2	<i>Bahnhofstrasse</i>	Station Street
L3	<i>Lange Strasse</i>	Long Street
L4	<i>Hauptstrasse</i>	Main Street
L5	<i>Parkstrasse</i>	Park Street
L6	<i>Wallstrasse</i>	Wall Street
Q1	<i>Bäckergasse</i>	Baker Street
Q2	<i>Jägergasse</i>	Border Street
Q3	<i>Badhaustrasse</i>	Bath Street
Q4	<i>Neue Gasse</i>	New Street
Q5	<i>Turmgasse</i>	Tower Street
Q6	<i>Rathausgasse</i>	Town Hall Street
Q7	<i>Berggasse</i>	Mount Street
Q8	<i>Postgasse</i>	Post Office Street
Q9	<i>Egergasse</i>	Eger Street
<hr/>		
	<i>Eisenbahn</i>	Railway / railroad

### Buildings and Barracks:

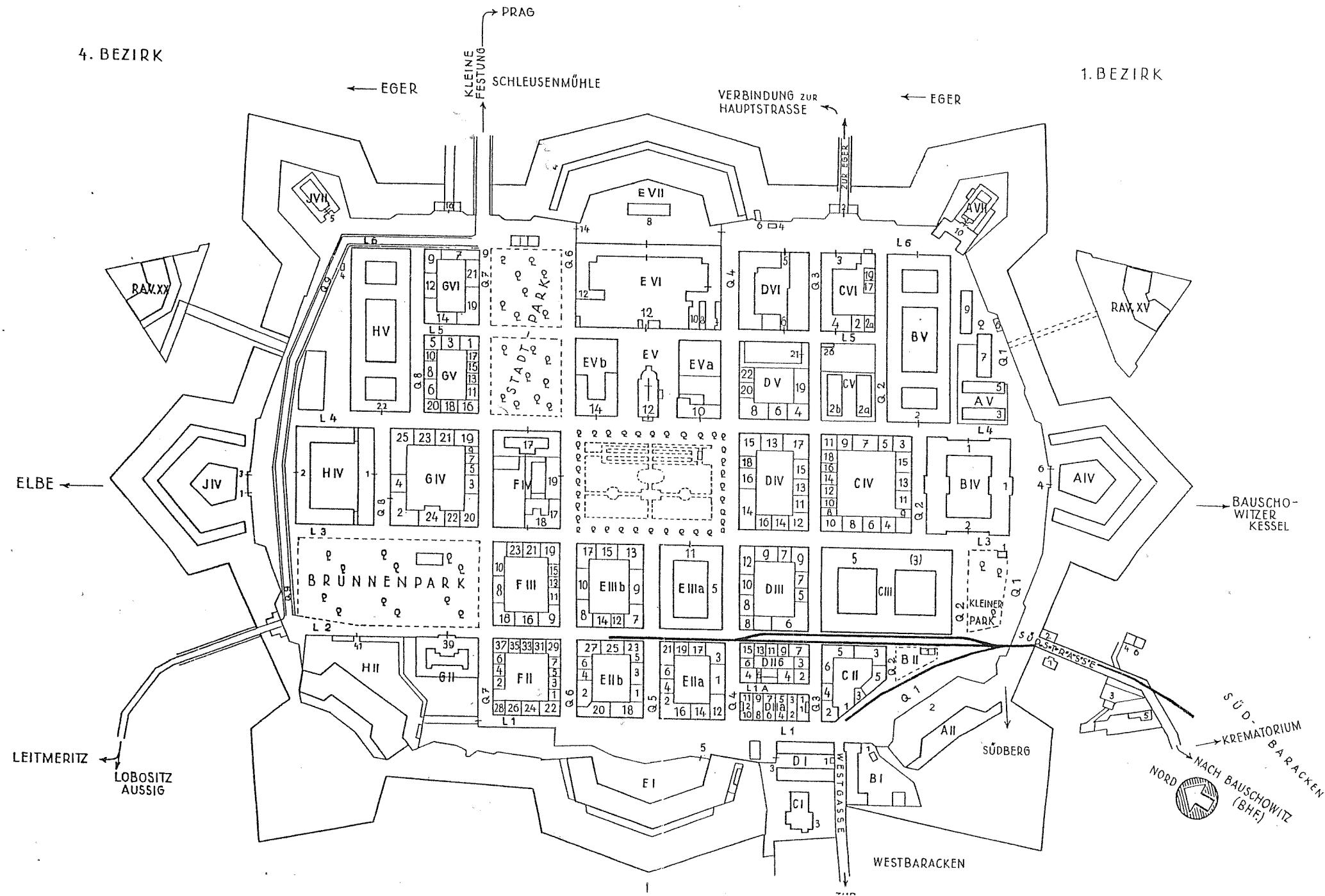
A II	<i>Jagerkaserne</i>	Men
A IV	<i>Heeresbäckerei</i>	Military Bakery
B IV	<i>Hannover Kaserne</i>	Men
B V	<i>Magdeburger Kaserne</i>	Offices and living quarters of Jewish Self-Administration and Prominent. Philipp Manes' Orientation Service was in room 38 and the Daily Reports were displayed in room 98. The barracks also the venue for the premiere of Brundibár.
C III	<i>Hamburger Kaserne</i>	This was used as the

<sup>2</sup> This key was compiled from Adler's, *Erklärung Zum Stadtplan* together with a variety of primary and secondary sources which describe the layout of the Theresienstadt Ghetto.

		Schleuse and also to house Dutch Prisoners.
E I	<i>Sudetenkaserne</i>	Arrival point and living quarters of 'AK1' and later any male deportees. Turned into German Archive by SS.
E IIIa	<i>Geniekaserne</i>	Hospital and Old People's Home
E Vb	<i>Kommandantur</i>	SS HQ
E VI	<i>Hohenelber Kaserne</i>	Central Hospital. Dr. Tarjan was the head doctor in these barracks
E Va	<i>Kindeheime</i>	Children's Home
E Vb	<i>Kindeheime</i>	Children's Home
E VII	<i>Kavalier Kaserne</i>	Old People's Home and site of language lessons set up by the Freizeitgestaltung
G II	<i>Offizerkasino</i>	Gendarmerie
H IV	<i>Bodenbacher Kaserne</i>	Berliners
H V	<i>Dresdner Kaserne</i>	Living quarters of female deportees and the Jail of the Jewish Police. Dr. Springer worked as head doctor. The yard was used for football matches.
I IV	<i>Aussiger Kaserne</i>	Clothing Store
J IV	<i>Usti Kaserne</i>	Registration – Checking Area and later ghetto stores. Gallows erected outside these barracks.

#### 4. BEZIRK

## 1. BEZIRK



### Appendix 3 Transports to Theresienstadt – 1941-1945.

3.1 Transports from the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia to Theresienstadt, November 1941 – May 1945.<sup>1</sup>

Date of Departure	Transport Designation	Place of Departure	Number of People	Died	Liberated	Fate Unknown
<b>1941</b>						
24.11.1941	Ak	Prague	342	256	86	
30.11.1941	H	Prague	1000	894	105	1
2.12.1941	G	Brno	1000	873	126	1
4.12.1941	St	Prague	23	16	7	
4.12.1941	J	Prague	1000	758	242	
5.12.1941	K	Brno	1000	933	67	
10.12.1941	L	Prague	999	868	131	
14.12.1941	M	Prague	1000	754	246	
17.12.1941	N	Prague	999	901	98	
<b>1942</b>						
18.1.1942	R	Plzen	1000	927	73	
22.1.1942	S	Plzen	1001	937	64	
26.1.1942	T	Plzen	604	537	67	
28.1.1942	U	Brno	1000	910	90	
30.1.1942	V	Prague	1000	906	94	
8.2.1942	W	Prague	1000	921	79	
12.2.1942	X	Prague	1000	911	89	
22.2.1942	Y	Kladno	800	746	54	
26.2.1942	Z	Kladno	823	756	66	1
19.3.1942	Ac	Brno	1000	957	43	
23.3.1942	Ad	Brno	998	952	46	
29.3.1942	Ae	Brno	999	942	57	
31.3.1942	Af	Brno	1000	921	79	
4.4.1942	Ah	Brno	1000	943	57	
8.4.1942	Ai	Brno	923	844	77	2
18.4.1942	Akb	C. Budéjovice	909	881	28	
24.4.1942.	Am	Prague	999	939	60	
28.4.1942	Ao	Prague	999	927	72	
7.5.1942	At	Prague	1000	953	47	

<sup>1</sup> *Terezín Memorial Book – A Guide to the Czech Original* (Prague: Terezín Initiative, 1996), pp.103-106.

Date of Departure	Transport Designation	Place of Departure	Number of People	Died	Liberated	Fate Unknown
12.5.1942	Au	Prague	1000	936	64	
15.5.1942	Au 1	Prague	1000	933	67	
18.5.1942	Av	Trebíč	720	678	42	
22.5.1942	Aw	Trebíč	650	632	18	
27.5.1942	AAa	Brno	81	63	18	
5.6.1942	AAb	Kolín	744	703	41	
9.6.1942	AAc	Kolín	724	695	29	
13.6.1942	AAd	Kolín	734	670	64	
20.6.1942	AAe	Prague	1001	928	73	
26.6.1942	AAf	Olomouc	900	856	44	
30.6.1942	AAg	Olomouc	900	844	56	
2.7.1942	AAl	Prague	1000	905	94	1
4.7.1942	AAm	Olomouc	900	848	51	1
6.7.1942	AAAn	Prague	1000	955	45	
8.7.1942	AAo	Olomouc	745	662	82	1
9.7.1942	AAp	Prague	1000	962	38	
13.7.1942	AAq	Prague	1000	948	51	1
16.7.1942	AAr	Prague	1000	919	80	1
20.7.1942	AAs	Prague	1000	965	35	
23.7.1942	AAAt	Prague	999	947	52	
27.7.1942	AAu	Prague	1000	933	67	
30.7.1942	AAv	Prague	999	933	66	
3.8.1942	AAw	Prague	1000	924	74	2
10.8.1942	Ba	Prague	1460	1287	165	8
4.9.1942	Bd	Prague	1000	946	51	3
8.9.1942	Bf	Prague	1000	866	133	1
12.9.1942	Bg	Prague	1000	879	120	1
15.9.1942	JB I	P.Brezany	51	34	17	
18.9.1942	Bh	Ostrava	860	824	35	1
22.9.1942	Bi	Ostrava	860	823	33	4
26.9.1942	Bl	Ostrava	860	822	38	
30.9.1942	Bm	Ostrava	862	788	81	3
21.10.1942	JB II	P.Brezany	10	8	2	
24.10.1942	Ca	Prague	1000	887	95	18
12.11.1942	Bz	Tábor	650	617	32	1
16.11.1942	Cb	Tábor	617	580	38	
20.11.1942	Cc	Prague	1000	843	154	3
26.11.1942	Cd	Klatovy	650	613	37	
30.11.1942	Ce	Klatovy	619	585	32	2
1.12.1942	Jb II	P.Brezany	3	3		
5.12.1942	Cf	Pardubice	650	603	45	2
9.12.1942	Cg	Pardubice	606	560	46	
17.12.1942	Ch	Hr.Králové	650	597	52	1

Date of Departure	Transport Designation	Place of Departure	Number of People	Died	Liberated	Fate Unknown
21.12.1942	Ci	Hr.Králové	548	499	47	2
22.12.1942	Ck	Praha	1000	857	142	1
<b>1943</b>						
13.1.1943	Cl	Ml.Boleslav	550	521	27	2
16.1.1943	Cm	Ml.Boleslav	491	470	21	
23.1.1943	Cn	Uh.Brod	1000	920	79	1
27.1.1943	Co	Uh.Brod	1000	934	65	1
31.1.1943	Cp	Uh.Brod	837	783	54	
25.2.1943	Cv II	Plzen-Bory	13	10		3
6.3.1943	Cv	Prague	1021	788	239	4
9.3.1943	Cw	Prague	84	53	28	3
22.3.1943	Cx	Prague	51	46	5	
9.4.1943	Cy	Prague	150	96	53	1
30.4.1943	Cz	Prague	47	24	21	2
8.5.1943	Da	Prague	9	5	1	3
13.5.1943	Db	Prague	56	36	18	2
9.6.1943	Dc	Prague	175	123	49	3
12.6.1943	Dd	Prague	15	11	4	
30.6.1943	Df	Ostrava	72	55	15	2
1.7.1943	Dg	Brno	60	36	24	
5.7.1943	De	Prague	603	491	108	4
8.7.1943	Dh	Prague	485	413	72	
13.7.1943	Di	Prague	838	643	192	3
15.7.1943	Dk	Prague	30	23	7	
11.9.1943	Do	Prague	53	36	17	
14.9.1943	Dn	Lípa	84	52	32	
29.10.1943	Dp	Prague	17	9	8	
8.12.1943	Dq	Prague	18	9	9	
<b>1944</b>						
10.1.1944	Dt	Prague	143	41	100	2
11.1.1944	Dt II	Prague	14	2	11	1
28.1.1944	Du	Prague	26	8	17	1
25.2.1944	Dv	Prague	18	10	8	
21.3.1944	Dw	Prague	17	5	12	
26.4.1944	Dy	Prague	20	12	7	1
17.5.1944	Ec	Prague	24	13	11	
16.6.1944	Ed	Prague	25	17	8	
21.7.1944	Ee	Prague	17	12	5	
18.8.1944	Ef	Prague	51	28	23	
8.9.1944	Ei	Prague	13	8	5	
17.11.1944	Fa	Prague	40		40	

Date of Departure	Transport Designation	Place of Departure	Number of People	Died	Liberated	Fate Unknown
1945						
26.1.1945						
26.1.1945	Fc	Prague	13	1	12	
26.1.1945	AE 1*	Prague	1057	1	1056	
4.2.1945	AE 2*	Prague	896	2	893	1
11.2.1945	AE 3*	Prague	762	2	760	
15.2.1945	AE 5*	Lípa	55	7	48	
25.2.1945	AE 4*	Prague	520	2	513	5
4.3.1945	AE 6*	Ostrava	53	1	51	1
7.3.1945	AE 7*	Olomouc	53	1	52	
15.3.1945	AE 8*	Prague	122		121	1
16.3.1945	AE 9*	Prague	139		139	

\* Indicates transports of 'mixed race' and 'mixed marriage' Jews who were deported from the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia to Theresienstadt.

Total number of people deported to Theresienstadt from the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia between 24.11.41 and 26.01.45 was 73,468.

3.2 Transports from the Sudetenland to Theresienstadt, October 1942 – March 1945. These deportations left from three destinations: Ustí nad Labem, Karlovy Vary and Opava.<sup>2</sup>

Date of Departure	Transport Designation	Place of Departure	Number of People	Died	Liberated	Fate Unknown
Deportations from Ustí nad Labem to Theresienstadt						
1942						
13.11.1942	XIX / 1	Ustí nad Labem				
20.11.1942	XIX / 2	Ustí nad Labem				
27.11.1942	XIX / 3	Ustí nad Labem				
16.12.1942	XIX / 4	Ustí nad Labem				
1943						
11.6.1943	XIX / 5	Ustí nad Labem				
1944						
10.1.1944	XIX / 6	Ustí nad Labem				
18.2 – 14.11.1944	XIX / 7	Ustí nad Labem				
1945						
6.2.1945	XIX / 8	Ustí nad Labem				
22.2.1945	XIX / 9	Ustí nad Labem				
23.2.1945	XIX / 10	Ustí nad Labem				
23.2.1945	XIX / 11	Ustí nad Labem				
2.3.1945	XIX / 12	Ustí nad Labem				

<sup>2</sup> *Terezín Memorial Book*, pp.109-110.

Deportations from Karlovy Vary to Theresienstadt						
1942						
25.11.1942	XXII / 1	Karlovy Vary				
9.12.1942	XXII / 2	Karlovy Vary				
1943						
12.3.1943	XXII / 3	Karlovy Vary				
29.6.1943	XXII / 4	Karlovy Vary				
1945						
7.2.1945	XXII / 5	Karlovy Vary				
7.3.1945	XXII / 6	Karlovy Vary				
Deportations from Opava to Theresienstadt						
1942						
18.11.1942	XX / 1	Opava				
1943						
18.11.1943	XX / 2	Opava				
1945						
10.1.1945	XX / 3	Opava				

Total number of people deported from the Sudetenland to Theresienstadt between 18.10.42 and 7.03.45 was 612.

3.3 Transports from Vienna to Theresienstadt, June 1942 – May 1945.<sup>3</sup>

Date of Departure	Transport Designation	Place of Departure	Number of People	Died	Liberated	Fate Unknown
1942						
21.6.42	IV / 1	Vienna	1000			
29.6.42	IV / 2	Vienna	1000			
11.7.42	IV / 3	Vienna	1000			
15.7.42	IV / 4	Vienna	1000			
23.7.42	IV / 5	Vienna	1000			
29.7.42	IV / 6	Vienna	1000			
14.8.42	IV / 7	Vienna	1000			
21.8.42	IV / 8	Vienna	1000			
28.8.42	IV / 9	Vienna	1000			
11.9.42	IV / 10	Vienna	1000			
25.9.42	IV / 11	Vienna	1,300			
2.10.42	IV / 12	Vienna	1,299			
10.10.42	IV / 13	Vienna	1,323			
1943						
6.1.43	IV / 14	Vienna	100			
9.1.43	IV / 14b	Vienna	100			
12.1.43	IV / 14c	Vienna	100			
29.1.43	IV / 14d	Vienna	9			
26.2.43	IV / 14e	Vienna	70			
1.4.43	IV / 14f	Vienna	101			
2.4.43	IV / 14g	Vienna	72			
27.5.43	IV / 14h	Vienna	205			
26.6.43	IV / 14i	Vienna	152			
16.7.43	IV / 14k	Vienna	17			
3.9.43	IV / 14l	Vienna	20			
10.9.43	IV / 14m	Vienna	10			
12.11.43	IV / 14n	Vienna	91			
1.12.43	IV / 14o	Vienna	46			
1944						
11.1.44	IV / 14p	Vienna	6			
11.3.44	IV / 15	Vienna	84			
29.4.44	IV / 15b	Vienna	80			

<sup>3</sup> Totenbuch Theresienstadt I, Deportierte Aus Österreich (Wein: Jüdisches Komitee für Theresienstadt, 1971), pp.V-VI.

Date of Departure	Transport Designation	Place of Departure	Number of People	Died	Liberated	Fate Unknown
18.5.44	IV / 14p	Vienna	1			
3.6.44	IV / 14p	Vienna	1			
22.6.44	IV / 14p	Vienna	4			
10.7.44	IV / 14p	Vienna	5			
27.7.44	IV / 14p	Vienna	1			
17.8.44	IV / 15d	Vienna	16			
22.9.44	IV / 14p	Vienna	2			
21.11.44	IV / 14p	Vienna	4			
23.11.44	IV / 14p	Vienna	1			
1945						
2.2.45	IV / 15d	Vienna	4			
16.2.45	IV / 15e	Vienna	7			
8.3.45	IV / 16	Vienna	1,073			
20.3.45	IV / 17	Vienna	11			
15.4.45	IV / 16a	Vienna	77			

The total number of people deported from Austria to Theresienstadt between 1942 and 1945 was 16,404.

The above dates are the dates on which the transports left Vienna not when the transports arrived in Theresienstadt.

### 3.4-3.59 Transports from Germany to Theresienstadt

Transport left Germany for Theresienstadt from: Berlin, Munich, Köln, Dresden, Hamburg, Düsseldorf, Hannover, Breslau, Dortmund, Münster, Frankfurt am Main, Stuttgart, Königsberg, Kassel, Leipzig, Darmstadt, Oppeln, Magdeburg and Danzig.

#### 3.41 Berlin<sup>4</sup>

Date of Departure	Transport Designation	Total Number of People	Number of People known to have died	Number Liberated	Fate Unknown
1942					
2.6.42	I / 1	50	50	0	0
4.6.42	I / 2	100	100	0	0
5.6.42	I / 3	100	74	26	0
9.6.42	I / 4	50	48	2	0
11.6.42	I / 5	50	48	2	0
12.6.42	I / 6	50	45	5	0
17.6.42	I / 7	50	50	0	0
18.6.42	I / 8	50	48	2	0
19.6.42	I / 9	50	44	6	0
23.6.42	I / 10	50	48	2	0
25.6.42	I / 11	50	50	0	0
26.6.42	I / 12	50	46	4	0
30.6.42	I / 13	50	49	1	0
2.7.42	I / 14	50	45	5	0
3.7.42	I / 15	50	50	0	0
6.7.42	I / 16	100	95	5	0
7.7.42	I / 17	100	96	4	0
8.7.42	I / 18	100	98	2	0
9.7.42	I / 19	100	95	5	0
10.7.42	I / 20	100	98	2	0
13.7.42	I / 21	100	97	3	0
14.7.42	I / 22	100	99	0	1
15.7.42	I / 23	100	99	1	0

<sup>4</sup> Theresienstädter Gedenkbuch: Die Opfer Der Judentransporte Aus Deutschland Nach Theresienstadt 1942-1945 (Prague: Institut Theresienstädter Initiative, 2000), pp.55-59.

Date of Departure	Transport Designation	Total Number of	Number of People	Number Liberated	Fate Unknown
16.7.42	I / 24	100	98	2	0
17.7.42	I / 25	100	1000	0	0
20.7.42	I / 26	100	96	4	0
21.7.42	I / 27	100	96	4	0
22.7.42	I / 28	100	99	1	0
23.7.42	I / 29	100	95	4	1
24.7.42	I / 30	100	98	2	0
27.7.42	I / 31	100	97	3	0
28.7.42	I / 32	100	95	5	0
29.7.42	I / 33	100	98	2	0
30.7.42	I / 34	100	95	5	0
31.7.42	I / 35	100	96	4	0
3.8.42	I / 36	100	97	3	0
4.8.42	I / 37	100	98	2	0
5.8.42	I / 38	100	91	9	0
6.8.42	I / 39	100	96	2	2
7.8.42	I / 40	100	99	1	0
10.8.42	I / 41	100	96	4	0
11.8.42	I / 42	100	91	8	1
12.8.42	I / 43	100	96	4	0
13.8.42	I / 44	100	95	5	0
14.8.42	I / 45	100	97	3	0
18.8.42	I / 46	997	981	16	0
19.8.42	I / 47	100	98	2	0
20.8.42	I / 48	100	99	1	0
21.8.42	I / 49	100	94	6	0
24.8.42	I / 50	100	97	3	0
25.8.42	I / 51	100	92	8	0
26.8.42	I / 52	100	99	1	0
27.8.42	I / 53	100	96	4	0
28.8.42	I / 54	11	97	3	0
31.8.42	I / 55	100	99	1	0
1.9.42	I / 56	100	95	5	0
2.9.42	I / 57	100	94	6	0
3.9.42	I / 58	100	97	3	0
4.9.42	I / 59	100	97	3	0
7.9.42	I / 60	100	93	7	0
8.9.42	I / 61	100	95	5	0
9.9.42	I / 62	100	96	4	0
10.9.42	I / 63	100	95	5	0
11.9.42	I / 64	100	100	0	0

Date of Departure	Transport Designation	Total Number of People	Number of People known to have died	Number Liberated	Fate Unknown
15.9.42	I / 65	1000	941	57	2
21.9.42	I / 66	100	90	10	0
22.9.42	I / 67	100	93	7	0
23.9.42	I / 68	100	91	9	0
24.9.42	I / 69	100	93	7	0
25.9.42	I / 70	100	93	7	0
4.10.42	I / 71	995	922	72	1
28.10.42	I / 72	100	87	13	0
29.10.42	I / 73	100	90	10	0
30.10.42	I / 74	100	84	16	0
4.11.42	I / 75	100	91	9	0
5.11.42	I / 76	100	85	15	0
6.11.42	I / 77	100	94	6	0
19.11.42	I / 78	100	90	10	0
20.11.42	I / 79	100	94	6	0
15.12.42	I / 80	100	87	13	0
16.12.42	I / 81	100	82	18	0
17.12.42	I / 82	100	94	6	0
1943					
12.1.43	I / 83	100	83	17	0
13.1.43	I / 84	100	90	10	0
14.1.43	I / 85	100	95	5	0
26.1.43	I / 86	100	81	19	0
28.1.43	I / 87	100	80	20	0
29.1.43	I / 88	100	89	11	0
2.2.43	I / 89	100	89	11	0
18.3.43	I / 90	1282	1062	219	1
19.4.43	I / 91	100	84	160	0
17.5.43	I / 92	100	84	16	0
18.5.43	I / 93	100	86	14	0
19.5.43	I / 94	100	70	30	0
29.5.43	I / 95	327	284	42	1
17.6.43	I / 96	429	347	81	1
29.6.43	I / 97	100	67	33	0
30.6.43	I / 98	100	68	32	0
1.7.43	I / 99	100	74	26	0
4.8.43	I / 100	70	46	22	2
10.9.43	I / 101	63	46	16	1
15.10.43	I / 102	51	39	12	0

Date of Departure	Transport Designation	Total Number of People	Number of People known to have died	Number Liberated	Fate Unknown
15.11.43	I / 103	44	32	12	0
22.11.43	I / 104	17	6	11	0
<hr/>					
<b>1944</b>					
11.1.44	I / 105	352	138	213	1
21.1.44	I / 106	63	22	41	0
10.2.44	I / 107	100	31	69	0
23.2.44	I / 108	73	40	33	0
10.3.44	I / 109	56	36	20	0
10.4.44	I / 110	50	20	30	0
4.5.44	I / 111	26	12	14	0
26.5.44	I / 112	32	9	23	0
16.6.44	I / 113	28	12	16	0
13.7.44	I / 114	26	11	15	0
11.8.44	I / 115	32	13	19	0
8.9.44	I / 116	27	14	13	0
13.10.44	I / 117	32	13	19	0
27.10.44	I / 118	50	9	41	0
24.11.44	I / 119	37	1	36	0
8.12.44	I / 120	23	2	21	0
<hr/>					
<b>1945</b>					
5.1.45	I / 121	19	0	19	0
3.2.45	I / 122	38	2	36	0
28.3.45	I / 123	42	0	42	0
<hr/>					
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>15,031</b>	<b>13,092</b>	<b>1,924</b>	<b>15</b>

3.42 Munich<sup>5</sup>

Date of Departure	Transport Designation	Total Number of People	Number of People known to have died	Number Liberated	Fate Unknown
<b>1942</b>					
4.6.42	II / 1	50	40	10	0
5.6.42	II / 2	50	50	0	0
6.6.42	II / 3	50	50	0	0
11.6.42	II / 4	50	50	0	0
12.6.42	II / 5	50	49	1	0
18.6.42	II / 6	50	49	1	0
19.6.42	II / 7	50	48	2	0
24.6.42	II / 8	50	48	2	0
25.6.42	II / 9	50	46	4	0
26.6.42	II / 10	50	43	7	0
2.7.42	II / 11	50	49	1	0
3.7.42	II / 12	50	50	0	0
4.7.42	II / 13	50	43	7	0
11.7.42	II / 14	50	46	4	0
16.7.42	II / 15	50	42	8	0
17.7.42	II / 16	50	47	2	1
18.7.42	II / 17	50	43	7	0
23.7.42	II / 18	50	36	14	0
24.7.42	II / 19	50	34	16	0
30.7.42	II / 20	50	39	11	0
1.8.42	II / 21	50	50	0	0
6.8.42	II / 22	50	46	4	0
8.8.42	II / 23	50	48	2	0
13.8.42	II / 24	45	35	9	1
11.9.42	II / 25	1000	949	51	0
24.9.42	II / 26	680	640	40	0
<b>1943</b>					
21.4.43	II / 27	18	16	1	1
18.6.43	II / 28	36	30	6	0
25.6.43	II / 29	10	4	4	2
<b>1944</b>					
14.1.44	II / 30	33	9	24	0

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid*, pp.59-61.

Date of Departure	Transport Designation	Total Number of People	Number of People known to have died	Number Liberated	Fate Unknown
18.1.44	II / 31	15	9	6	0
20.1.44	II / 32	7	1	6	0
7.4.44	II / 32 Ez	1	0	1	0
23.5.44	II / 32 Ez	1	0	1	0
2.6.44	II / 32 Ez	1	0	1	0
23.12.44	II / 32 Ez	1	0	1	0
<hr/>					
1945					
14.2.45	II / 33	14	0	14	0
22.2.45	II / 34	52	0	52	0
23.2.45	II / 35	31	0	31	0
<hr/>					
TOTAL		3,095	2,739	351	5

### 3.43 Köln<sup>6</sup>

Date of Departure	Transport Designation	Total Number of People	Number of People known to have died	Number Liberated	Fate Unknown
<hr/>					
1942					
16.6.42	III / 1	962	925	37	0
28.7.42	III / 2	1163	1075	88	0
5.9.42	III / 3	50	41	9	0
12.9.42	III / 4	50	47	3	0
19.9.42	III / 5	50	44	6	0
26.9.42	III / 6	50	48	2	0
3.10.42	III / 7	42	40	2	0
<hr/>					
1943					
19.6.43	III / 8	35	29	6	0
1.8.43	III / 9	45	24	21	0
30.10.43	III / 10	20	8	12	0
<hr/>					
1944					

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid*, p.61.

Date of Departure	Transport Designation	Total Number of People	Number of People known to have died	Number Liberated	Fate Unknown
23.2.44	III / 10 Ez	1	1	0	0
26.4.44	III / 10 Ez	1	1	0	0
<hr/>					
1945					
14.3.45	III / 11	45	0	45	0
<hr/>					
TOTAL		2,514	2,283	231	0

### 3.44 Dresden<sup>7</sup>

Date of Departure	Transport Designation	Total Number of People	Number of People known to have died	Number Liberated	Fate Unknown
<hr/>					
1942					
1.7.42	V / 1	50	50	0	0
14.7.42	V / 2	50	48	2	0
Date of Departure	Transport Designation	Total Number of People	Number of People known to have died	Number Liberated	Fate Unknown
28.7.42	V / 3	50	44	6	0
11.8.42	V / 4	50	49	1	0
25.8.42	V / 5	50	47	3	0
8.9.42	V / 6	50	48	2	0
22.9.42	V / 7	27	24	3	0
<hr/>					
1943					
29.3.43	V / 8	32	23	9	0
21.6.43	V / 9	28	25	3	0
<hr/>					
1944					
11.1.44	V / 10	42	15	26	1
9.2.44	V / 10 Ez	1	1	0	0
8.3.44	V / 10 Ez	1	1	0	0
9.8.44	V / 10 Ez		1	0	0

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid*, pp.61-62.

Date of Departure	Transport Designation	Total Number of People	Number of People known to have died	Number Liberated	Fate Unknown
30.8.44	V / 10 Ez	1	0	1	0
27.9.44	V / 10 Ez	1	0	1	0
8.12.44	V / 10 Ez	1	1	0	0
1945					
2.2.45	V / 10 Ez	1	0	1	0
15.2.45	V / 11	56	0	56	0
TOTAL		492	377	114	1

### 3.45 Hamburg<sup>8</sup>

Date of Departure	Transport Designation	Total Number of People	Number of People known to have died	Number Liberated	Fate Unknown
1942					
16.7.42	VI/1	925	885	40	0
20.7.42	VI/2	802	709	93	0
1943					
Date of Departure	Transport Designation	Total Number of People	Number of People known to have died	Number Liberated	Fate Unknown
26.2.43	VI/3	50	39	11	0
12.3.43	VI/4	50	40	10	0
26.3.43	VI/5	50	48	2	0
7.5.43	VI/6	50	33	17	0
11.6.43	VI/7	81	73	7	1
25.6.43	VI/8	108	97	11	0
22.12.43	VI/8 Ez	1	1	0	0
1944					
22.1.44	VI/9	61	20	41	0
31.5.44	VI/9 Ez	1	0	1	0

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid*, pp.62-63.

Date of Departure	Transport Designation	Total Number of People	Number of People known to have died	Number Liberated	Fate Unknown
7.6.44	VI/9 Ez	5	0	5	0
26.7.44	VI/9 Ez	1	0	1	0
23.8.44	VI/9 Ez	1	0	1	0
6.12.44	VI/9 Ez	1	0	1	0
<hr/>					
1945					
23.2.45	VI/10	294	2	292	0
4.4.45	VI/11	9	0	9	0
<hr/>					
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>2490</b>	<b>1947</b>	<b>542</b>	<b>1</b>

### 3.46 Düsseldorf<sup>9</sup>

Date of Departure	Transport Designation	Total Number of People	Number of People known to have died	Number Liberated	Fate Unknown
<hr/>					
1942					
22.7.42	VII/1	965	905	59	1
25.7.42	VII/2	979	917	61	1
<hr/>					
1943					
27.6.43	VII/3	32	23	9	0
10.9.43	VII/4	9	9	0	0
16.12.43	VII/4 Ez	1	1	0	0
<hr/>					
1944					
13.1.44	VII/5	14	4	10	0
12.7.44	VII/5 Ez	5	2	3	0
1945					
26.1.45	VII/5 Ez	2	0	2	0
<hr/>					
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>2007</b>	<b>1861</b>	<b>144</b>	<b>2</b>

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid*, pp.63-64.

3.47 Hannover<sup>10</sup>

Date of Departure	Transport Designation	Total Number of People	Number of People known to have died	Number Liberated	Fate Unknown
<b>1942</b>					
24.7.42	VIII/1	779	704	75	0
<b>1943</b>					
1.7.43	VIII/2	9	6	3	0
<b>1944</b>					
12.1.44	VIII/3	19	7	12	0
13.1.44	VIII/4	10	2	8	0
6.12.44	VIII/4 Ez	1	0	1	0
15.12.44	VIII/4 Ez	1	0	1	0
<b>1945</b>					
25.2.45	VIII/5	220	2	218	0
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>1039</b>	<b>721</b>	<b>318</b>	<b>0</b>

3.48 Breslau<sup>11</sup>

Date of Departure	Transport Designation	Total Number of People	Number of People known to have died	Number Liberated	Fate Unknown
<b>1942</b>					
27.7.42	IX/1	1100	1077	23	0
31.8.42	IX/2	1065	1035	30	0
<b>1943</b>					
24.2.43	IX/3	102	94	8	0
2.4.43	IX/4	276	233	43	0

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid*, p.64.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid*, pp.64-65.

11.6.43	IX/5	161	140	21	0
Date of Departure	Transport Designation	Total Number of People	Number of People known to have died	Number Liberated	Fate Unknown
16.6.43	IX/6	18	15	3	0
27.10.43	IX/6 Ez	1	0	1	0
<b>1944</b>					
9.1.44	IX/7	71	18	53	0
11.1.44	IX/7 Ez	3	2	1	0
25.4.44	IX/8	17	4	13	0
25.5.44	IX/8 Ez	1	0	1	0
8.11.44	IX/8 Ez	1	0	1	0
<b>TOTAL</b>					
		2816	2618	198	0

### 3.49 Dortmund<sup>12</sup>

Date of Departure	Transport Designation	Total Number of People	Number of People known to have died	Number Liberated	Fate Unknown
<b>1942</b>					
30.7.42	X/1	968	878	90	0
<b>1943</b>					
Date of Departure	Transport Designation	Total Number of People	Number of People known to have died	Number Liberated	Fate Unknown
10.4.43	X/2	97	81	16	0
20.5.43	X/3	36	29	7	0
<b>1944</b>					
13.1.44	X/4	8	3	5	0
23.2.44	X/4 Ez	2	1	1	0
17.5.44	X/4 EZ	2	0	2	0
3.8.44	X/4 Ez	1	1	0	0

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid*, p.65.

Date of Departure	Transport Designation	Total Number of People	Number of People known to have died	Number Liberated	Fate Unknown
22.12.44	X/4 Ez	1	0	1	0
1945					
26.1.45	X/4 Ez	1	0	1	0
20.2.45	X/5	10	0	10	0
TOTAL		1126	993	133	0

3.5 Münster<sup>13</sup>

Date of Departure	Transport Designation	Total Number of People	Number of People known to have died	Number Liberated	Fate Unknown
1942					
1.8.42	XI/1	900	835	65	0
1943					
13.5.43	XI/2	40	34	6	0
29.6.43	XI/3	33	28	5	0
1944					
13.1.44	XI/4	3	2	1	0
1945					
20.2.45	XI/5	58	0	58	0
TOTAL		1034	899	135	0

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid*, p.66.

3.51 Frankfurt Am Main<sup>14</sup>

Date of Departure	Transport Designation	Total Number of People	Number of People known to have died	Number Liberated	Fate Unknown
<b>1942</b>					
Date of Departure	Transport Designation	Total Number of People	Number of People known to have died	Number Liberated	Fate Unknown
19.8.42	XII/1	1013	996	17	0
2.9.42	XII/2	1110	1078	32	0
16.9.42	XII/3	1369	1259	110	0
<b>1943</b>					
13.4.43	XII/4	11	9	1	1
28.4.43	XII/4 Ez	1	0	1	0
17.6.43	XII/5	19	14	5	0
10.11.43	XII/5 Ez	3	1	2	0
<b>1944</b>					
10.1.44	XII/6	56	18	38	0
16.3.44	XII/7	7	1	6	0
14.6.44	XII/7 Ez	1	0	1	0
5.7.44	XII/8	7	3	4	0
25.10.44	XII/9	9	0	9	0
<b>1945</b>					
18.2.45	XII/10	616	6	610	0
17.3.45	XII/11	5	0	5	0
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>4227</b>	<b>3385</b>	<b>841</b>	<b>1</b>

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid*, pp.66-67.

3.52 Stuttgart<sup>15</sup>

Date of Departure	Transport Designation	Total Number of People	Number of People known to have died	Number Liberated	Fate Unknown
1942					
23.8.42	XIII/1	1078	1029	49	0
1943					
17.4.43	XIII/2	20	16	4	0
18.6.43	XIII/3	9	7	2	0
1944					
11.1.44	XIII/4	41	10	31	0
12.1.44	XIII/5	35	7	28	0
20.4.44	XIII/5 Ez	1	0	1	0
29.6.44	XIII/5 Ez	1	0	1	0
1945					
17.2.45	XIII/6	144	0	144	0
18.2.45	XIII/7	58	0	58	0
TOTAL		1387	1069	318	0

3.53 Königsburg<sup>16</sup>

Date of Departure	Transport Designation	Total Number of People	Number of People known to have died	Number Liberated	Fate Unknown
1942					
27.8.42	XIV/1	763	732	31	0
1943					
18.6.43	XIV/1 Ez	3	3	0	0
7.7.43	XIV/1 Ez	2	2	0	0

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid*, p.67.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid*, p.68.

Date of Departure	Transport Designation	Total Number of People	Number of People known to have died	Number Liberated	Fate Unknown
21.7.43	XIV/1 Ez	1	1	0	0
1944					
19.1.44	XIV/2	10	4	6	0
27.1.44	XIV/3	9	2	7	0
10.2.44	XIV/3 Ez	1	0	1	0
29.3.44	XIV/3 Ez	1	1	0	0
13.4.44	XIV/3 Ez	2	0	2	0
26.4.44	XIV/3 Ez	1	0	1	0
20.5.44	XIV/4	11	1	10	0
1945					
8.3.45	XIV/5	5	0	5	0
TOTAL		809	746	63	0

3.54 Kassel<sup>17</sup>

Date of Departure	Transport Designation	Total Number of People	Number of People known to have died	Number Liberated	Fate Unknown
1942					
8.9.42	XV/1	844	772	70	2
TOTAL		844	772	70	2

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

3.55 Leipzig<sup>18</sup>

Date of Departure	Transport Designation	Total Number of People	Number of People known to have died	Number Liberated	Fate Unknown
1942					
20.9.42	XVI/1	877	785	92	0
1943					
25.5.43	XVI/1 Ez	1	0	1	0
18.6.43	XVI/2	18	9	9	0
20.6.43	XVI/2 Ez	2	2	0	0
28.6.43	XVI/2 Ez	1	1	0	0
9.9.43	XVI/2 Ez	1	0	1	0
21.10.43	XVI/2 Ez	1	1	0	0
1944					
12.1.44	XVI/3	24	8	16	0
14.1.44	XVI/4	46	18	27	1
13.3.44	XVI/4 Ez	2	0	2	0
27.4.44	XVI/4 Ez	2	1	1	0
15.5.44	XVI/4 Ez	2	0	2	0
13.6.44	XVI/4 Ez	3	1	2	0
11.10.44	XVI/4 Ez	1	0	1	0
8.11.44	XVI/4 Ez	1	0	1	0
1945					
2.2.45	XVI/5	172	2	170	0
12.2.45	XVI/6	55	1	54	0
17.3.45	XVI/7	7	0	7	0
TOTAL		1216	829	386	1

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid*, p.69.

3.56 Darmstadt<sup>19</sup>

Date of Departure	Transport Designation	Total Number of People	Number of People known to have died	Number Liberated	Fate Unknown
1942					
28.9.42	XVII/1	1287	1198	89	0
1943					
12.2.43	XVII/2	53	47	6	0
1944					
10.1.44	XVII/3	10	5	5	0
20.9.44	XVII/3 Ez	1	0	1	0
TOTAL		1351	1250	101	0

3.57 Oppeln<sup>20</sup>

Date of Departure	Transport Designation	Total Number of People	Number of People known to have died	Number Liberated	Fate Unknown
1942					
13.11.42	XVIII/1	56	55	1	0
20.11.42	XVIII/2	50	40	10	0
4.12.42	XVIII/3	50	43	7	0
11.12.42	XVIII/4	53	44	9	0
1943					
21.4.43	XVIII/5	46	35	11	0
30.6.43	XVIII/6	5	4	1	0
3.8.43	XVIII/6 Ez	2	2	0	0
18.11.43	XVIII/6 Ez	1	0	1	0
1944					

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid*, pp.69-70.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid*, p.70.

Date of Departure	Transport Designation	Total Number of People	Number of People known to have died	Number Liberated	Fate Unknown
20.1.44	XVIII/7	9	4	5	0
21.3.44	XVIII/8	22	6	16	0
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>294</b>	<b>233</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>0</b>

3.58 Magdeburg<sup>21</sup>

Date of Departure	Transport Designation	Total Number of People	Number of People known to have died	Number Liberated	Fate Unknown
<b>1942</b>					
18.11.42	XXI/1	73	69	4	0
25.11.42	XXI/2	76	73	3	0
2.12.42	XXI/3	70	69	1	0
<b>1944</b>					
11.1.44	XXI/4	16	6	10	0
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>235</b>	<b>217</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>0</b>

3.59 Danzig<sup>22</sup>

Date of Departure	Transport Designation	Total Number of People	Number of People known to have died	Number Liberated	Fate Unknown
<b>1942</b>					
11.12.42	XXIII/1	54	51	2	1
17.12.42	XXIII/2	56	50	5	1

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid*, pp.70-71.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid*, p.71.

Date of Departure	Transport Designation	Total Number of People	Number of People known to have died	Number Liberated	Fate Unknown
1943					
1.7.43	XXIII/3	4	1	3	0
<hr/>					
1944					
14.6.44	XXIII/3 Ez	3	0	3	0
<hr/>					
TOTAL		117	102	13	2

Total number of people deported to Theresienstadt from Germany between 2.02.42 and 30.03.45 was 42,124.

3.6 Transports from Holland to Theresienstadt<sup>23</sup>

Date of Departure	Transport Designation	Place of Departure	Number of People	Died	Liberated	Fate Unknown
1943						
22.4.43	XXIV/1	Holland	295			
27.5.43	XXIV/1 Ez	Holland	2			
1944						
20.1.44	XXIV/2	Holland	870			
27.1.44	XXIV/3	Holland	283			
26.2.44	XXIV/4	Holland	809			
7.4.44	XXIV/5	Holland	289			
12.7.44	XXIV/5 Ez	Holland	3			
2.8.44	XXIV/6	Holland	213			
2.8.44	XXIV/6 Ez	Holland	1			
6.9.44	XXIV/7	Holland	2081			
20.11.44	XXIV/8	Holland	51			
TOTAL				4897		

The total number of people deported to Theresienstadt from Holland between 22.04.43 and 20.11.44 was 4897.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid*, pp.73-89.

## Appendix 4. Biographies - 'Who Was Who?'

### 4.1 Jewish Inmates of the Theresienstadt Ghetto

**Dr. Med. Gertrud Adler (Klepeter)** was born in Prague. She qualified as a doctor and specialised in Haematology. She married Adler in 1941. She was deported with her husband to Theresienstadt on 8.02.42 where she worked as a doctor. She was deported to Auschwitz on 12.10.44 where she was killed.

**Dr. Phil. Hans Günther Adler** was born in Prague on 2.7.10. He was a writer, teacher and historian. In 1935 he received his doctorate, *Musical Rhythm as a Source of Knowledge*. From 1935 he worked in the Prague Jewish Community where he was given the task of registering confiscated Jewish books. He was deported to Theresienstadt on 8.02.42 where he worked as a bricklayer. He was deported to Auschwitz with his wife on 12.10.44. His wife was killed but he survived and was liberated in Langenstein-Zwieberge. He returned to Prague and moved to London in 1947. He died in 1988.

**Dr. Anna Aurendnicková** was born in Prague on 22.01.1873. She worked as a translator and writer and translated over 70 books. She was deported from Prague to Theresienstadt on 3.08.42. Inside the ghetto she was a member of both the Manes and the Salus literary groups. She was liberated in Theresienstadt and returned to Prague.

**Rabbi Leo Baeck** was born in Posen in Germany on 23.05.1873. In 1891 he entered the Rabbinical Seminary which he left in 1997. After that he led congregations in Oppeln, Düsseldorf and Berlin. From 1939 until his deportation to Theresienstadt on 28.01.43, he was head of the Jewish State Union in Germany. Inside Theresienstadt he received 'Prominent' status and became an honorary member of the Jewish council and finally, during the last days, its chairman. He was liberated in Theresienstadt and died in London in 1956.

**Karel Berman** was born on 14.04.19 in Southern Bohemia. He was a talented opera soloist who studied at the Prague Conservatory. He was deported to Theresienstadt from the labour camp at Lípa on 6.03.43. Inside the ghetto he was a general worker. He was deported to Auschwitz on 28.09.44 and was liberated in Bleichenhammer. He returned to Prague after the war and enjoyed an active operatic career. He died in Prague in 1995.

**Alice Bloemendahl** was born in Hamburg on 6.02.1874. She worked as a school teacher and was deported to Theresienstadt from Hamburg on 20.07.42. She worked as a librarian in the ghetto library and gave over one hundred lectures

during her imprisonment. She was included on the Swiss transport that left the ghetto on 5.02.45. She survived the war and died in Hamburg in 1959.

**Friedl Dicker-Brandeis** was born in Vienna on 30.07.1898. In 1915 she received a place to study art at the Viennese Royal School of Applied Arts. In 1916 she began to work with the Bauhaus artist Johannes Itten in Vienna moving to Weimar with him and his fellow students in 1919. By 1923 she was living and working in Berlin but returned to Vienna in 1924. In 1934 she joined an anti-fascist group and after a short term in prison moved to Prague. In 1936 she married Pavel Brandeis and gained Czechoslovak citizenship. On 14.12.42 they were deported to Theresienstadt. In Theresienstadt she lived in the Girls home L 410 and taught art the ghetto children and adolescents. She was deported to Auschwitz on transport 'Eo' and was killed there on 9.10.44.

**Else Dormitzer** was born in Sorchheimer in Germany on 17.11.1877. She fled to Holland where she was arrested and deported to Westerbork. From there she was sent to Theresienstadt on 22.02.43. She delivered 275 lectures on over 22 topics. She was liberated in Theresienstadt in May 1945 and moved to England. She died in London in 1958.

**Jakob Edelstein**, first elder of the Jews of the Theresienstadt ghetto was born in Horondenka on 25.07.07. After his move to Prague during the 1920s he ran the Palestine office where he worked closely with other Zionists in the refugee and emigration circle. Edelstein was a confirmed Zionist and his views were to shape the first Jewish administration. He was deported to Theresienstadt on 4.12.41 as Jewish elder and remained in that position until January 1943. He was deported from Theresienstadt to Auschwitz where he died in June 1944.

**Valtr Eisinger** was born in Podivín in Moravia on 27.05.13. He later moved to Brno where he taught Czech language and literature at the local gymnasium. He translated Russian poetry into Czech and had some of his translations published. He was deported to Theresienstadt from Brno on 28.01.42 and was appointed head of room A1 of the boys home L417. He was adored by the boys of L417 who nicknamed him 'Tiny.' He was deported to Auschwitz on 29.09.44 and died on a death march on 15.01.45.

**Paul Eppstein** was born on 4.3.1902 in Ludwigshafen in Bavaria. He was an accomplished economist, journalist and sociologist who by 1933 was head of the Mannheim School and a prominent figure at Heidelberg university. He was a prominent figure in the Berlin Jewish community and between 1938 and 1941 was head of the *Reichsvereinigung der Juden in Deutschland*. He was deported to Theresienstadt from Berlin on 26.1.43 where he became the second Jewish Elder. In September 1944 he was arrested and taken to the Small Fortress at Theresienstadt and was killed on 28.9.44.

**Dr. Karel Fleischmann** was born in Klatovy in Bohemia on 22.02.1897. He was a physician, writer and artist. He specialised in Dermatology. He was deported to Theresienstadt on 18.03.42 and worked as the head of the social care department. He was deported to Auschwitz on 23.10.44 where he was killed.

**Valtr Freud** was born in Brno on 25.05.17. Having studied engineering in Brno he went on to specialise in Jewish history. As an active member of the Czech Zionist movement he taught and lectured the youth of Maccabi Hatzair as well as working in the Jewish orphanage in Brno. He was deported to Theresienstadt on 31.03.42 with his wife and the children from the orphanage. He was responsible for the Czech girls home L 410 during its first year and was deported to Auschwitz on 29.09.44 where he was killed.

**Dr. Desider Friedman** who was born in Boskovice in Moravia on 24.11.1880. He was vice president of the Jewish community in Vienna and worked as a lawyer. He was also a committed Zionist. He was deported to Theresienstadt on 25.9.42 where he was appointed as Chief Judge for Youth Affairs as well as head of the Ghetto Bank. He was deported to Auschwitz on 12.10.44 where he was killed.

**Dr Martha Friedmannová-Konová** was born in Kolin in Bohemia on 27.03.15. She was deported from Prague to Theresienstadt on 6.03.43. She was a member of the Salus Group. She was deported to Auschwitz on 1.10.44 and was liberated in Mauthausen.

**Petr Ginz** was born in Prague on 1.02.28. Petr's mother was not Jewish and managed to survive the war in Prague despite the fact that her husband was Jewish. Petr was the first of the family to be deported to Theresienstadt and although he was alone in the ghetto he had the benefits of a family on the outside. They were able to send him food parcels which kept him and his cousin Pavel well supplied. On 17.05.44 Petr's sister Eva was deported to Theresienstadt and their father followed on 11.02.45. The father and Eva were liberated in Theresienstadt and returned to Petr's mother in Prague. Only Petr was deported to Auschwitz where he died in September 1944.

**Trude Groag** was born in 1889 in Austria. She married in 1913 and moved with her husband to Olmütz in Moravia. She was deported to Theresienstadt in June 1942 where she became a nurse. She survived the war and moved to Israel in 1949.

**Moritz Henschel** was born in Breslau on 17.2.1879. He was deported to Theresienstadt on 16.6.43 and was classed as a prominent and made a member of the Council of Elders. He first worked as head of the *Freizeitgestaltung* and was later given the position of Chief of the Ghetto Postal Services. He was liberated in Theresienstadt in May 1945 with his wife and died in Jerusalem in 1947.

**Fredy Hirsch** was born in Aachen in Germany on 11.2.16. He emigrated to the Czech Republic during the 1930s where he became an active member of the Zionist Youth Community. He was deported to Theresienstadt on 4.12.41 where he was appointed to the board of the Youth Welfare Department and put in charge of housing. Working closely with Gonda Redlich, Hirsch was influential in the lives of the ghetto children. He was deported to the Terezín Family Camp in Auschwitz, camp B11b on 6.9.43 and was killed on 8.3.44.

**Milena Illová** was born on 25.05.1888 in Bohemia. She was the leader of the Social Democratic Movement in Prague. She was deported to Theresienstadt from Prague on 23.07.43. She was a member of the Salus Women's Group. She was deported to Auschwitz on 19.10.44 where she died.

**Dr. Leo Janowitz** was born on 8.12.11 in Rumburk in Northern Bohemia. Prior to his deportation to Theresienstadt on 4.12.41 he worked for the Prague Jewish Community in the Emigration certificate centre. In Theresienstadt he worked as head of the Central Secretariat and remained close to Edelstein throughout his time in office. He was deported to Auschwitz on 6.9.43 and was killed on 8.3.44.

**Rabbi Regina Jonas** was born in Berlin on 3.08.02. She graduated from the Berlin Rabbinical Seminary. She was deported to Theresienstadt on 6.11.42 where she joined a women's education circle. She was deported to Auschwitz on 12.10.44 where she was killed.

**Petr Kien**, a talented musician and artist was born in and deported from Theresienstadt to Auschwitz in October 1944 where he died. His most famous contribution to the cultural life of the ghetto was the libretto for the opera, *Der Kaiser von Atlantis*.

**Dr. Justice Heinrich Klang** was born in Vienna on 15.4.1875. He was a leading Austrian lawyer. He fought in World War One and was awarded one of the highest Austrian medals – the Golden Cross with Crown. He was deported to Theresienstadt on 25.09.42 where he became head of the ghettos legal system. He was liberated in Theresienstadt and died in Vienna in 1954.

**Gideon Klein** was born in Moravia on 16.12.19. He was deported to Theresienstadt from Prague on 4.12.41 where he contributed to all areas of the ghettos musical life. He was deported to Auschwitz in October 1944 where he was killed.

**Hans Krasá** was born in Prague on 30.11.1899. He graduated from the German music academy in Prague in 1921 and later moved to Paris to study composition. He was deported to Theresienstadt from Prague on 10.08.42 where he played a prominent role in the musical life of the ghetto. He is best known for his children's opera, *Brundibár*. He was deported to Auschwitz on 16.10.44 where he was killed.

**Milada Lesná-Krausová** was born in Prague into a Catholic family on 2.12.1889. She worked as a court interpreter and lectured on foreign languages. She was deported to Theresienstadt on 12.10.42 and was liberated there in May 1945.

**Philipp Manes** was born in Eberfeld in Germany on 18.08.1875. He studied in Berlin and later got a job with the New Photographic Society, Berlin-Steglitz. During World War One he fought for Germany and was awarded the Iron Cross Second Class. In 1910 he had joined the family fur firm which was shut down in 1939. He was deported to Theresienstadt with his wife Gertrud on 23.07.42. He was made head of the Ghetto's Orientation Service which later became known as the Auxiliary Service of the Ghetto Watch. He was also responsible for setting up a cultural group which held over 500 lectures. Both he and Gertrud were deported to Auschwitz on 28.10.44 where they were killed.

**Dr. Erich Munk** was born in Bohemia on 21.3.04. He later became a physician and worked in the Prague Jewish Community as head of the emigration department. He was deported to Theresienstadt on 4.12.41 where he organised and ran the Health Care Department. He was deported to Auschwitz on 28.10.44 where he was killed.

**Rabbi Benjamin Murmelstein** was born in Lvov, Poland on 9.06.05. In 1931 he became the chief Rabbi in Vienna and on 29.01.43 he was deported to Theresienstadt. He became the third Jewish elder of Theresienstadt on 28.09.44. He was liberated in the ghetto in May 1945 and later moved to Italy where he died in 1989.

**Gisela Picková-Saudová** was born in Kolín in Bohemia on 21.02.1883. She worked as a writer and a journalist. She was deported to Theresienstadt on 13.06.42 with her son. They were deported to Auschwitz together on 18.12.43 where they were both killed.

**Dr. Egon Popper** was born on 28.02.08 in Bohemia. He was deported from Prague to Theresienstadt on 24.11.41 as a member of the council of Elders. He was appointed head of Internal Administration. He was deported to Auschwitz on 28.10.44 where he was killed.

**Gonda Redlich** was born in Olomouc / Olmütz in Moravia on 18.10.16. Prior to his deportation to Theresienstadt on 4.12.41 he worked in Prague as a prominent Zionist Youth Leader. In Theresienstadt he was given the job of head of the Youth Welfare Department. He was deported to Auschwitz on 28.10.44 where he was killed together with his wife Gerta and baby son Daniel.

**Gerta Redlich (Peck)** was born in 1916. She was a sewing teacher from Bohemia and met Redlich while volunteering with Maccabi Hatzair before the

war. She was deported to Theresienstadt on 14.09.42 and married Redlich the following week. Their son Daniel was born in March 1944. She was deported to Auschwitz with her husband and baby on 28.10.44.

**Daniel Redlich** was born in Theresienstadt on 16.03.44. He was deported to Auschwitz with his mother and father on 28.10.44 where he was killed.

**Engineer Milos Salus** was born in Kladno in Bohemia on 4.09.1896. He studied in Prague and taught at several schools in Bohemia. He also worked as an amateur theatre director. He was deported to Theresienstadt on 26.02.42 and worked in the *Freizeitgestaltung* where he established the *Salus Group*. He was deported to Auschwitz on 1.10.44 where he was killed.

**Raphael Schächter** was born in Romania on 17.05.05. He was raised and educated in Brno and Prague. He died in Auschwitz in October 1944. He was deported to Theresienstadt in November 1941 where he became a key player in the musical life of the ghetto – primarily as a conductor. His main work was a production of Verdi's *Requiem*.

**Hannah Steiner** was born in Lípa in Bohemia on 27.04.1894. Prior to her deportation she was working in Prague as head of the Prague section of WIZO. She was deported to Theresienstadt on 13.07.43. Inside the ghetto she taught Hebrew and set up a WIZO group. She was deported to Auschwitz on 16.10.44 where she was killed.

**Robert Stricker** was born in Brno on 16.8.1879. Prior to his deportation to Theresienstadt on 25.9.42 he was politically active in Vienna. He edited various newspapers including the *Vienna Jüdische Zeitung*, and was head of the Austrian section of the World Jewish Congress. On arrival in Theresienstadt he was made head of the Technical department. He was deported to Auschwitz on 28.10.44 where he was killed.

**Norbert Troller** was deported to Theresienstadt from Brno in March 1942. He survived there for over two years, working in the Technical Department. He was among the artists sent to the Small Fortress in July 1944. He survived the war.

**Viktor Ullmann** was born in Silesia on 1.01.1898. He was a well-known composer prior to his deportation and had studied and worked with Arnold Schönberg in Vienna. He was deported to Theresienstadt from Prague on 8.10.42 where he continued with his music and took part in many concerts and wrote several new pieces. His most famous piece being, *Der Kaiser von Atlantis*. He was deported to Auschwitz on 16.10.44 where he was killed.

**Otto Ungar** was born in Brno in 1897. Prior to his imprisonment in Theresienstadt he worked as an impressionist landscape painter. He was deported

to Theresienstadt on transport 'AK I' from Prague on the 24.11.41 and was deported from there to Auschwitz in Autumn 1944 where he was killed.

**Isle Weber** was born in Witkowitz in Northern Moravia on 13.01.03. She later moved to Prague where she wrote poetry and later married and had three sons. She was deported to Theresienstadt in 1942 where she continued to write. She was deported to Auschwitz in October 1944 where she was killed.

**Frantisék Zelenka** was born on 8.06.04 in Bohemia. He trained as an architect and a set designer at the Prague Technical University. He was deported to Theresienstadt with his wife and son on 13.07.43. He belonged to the Salus Group and worked on various ghetto productions. He was deported to Auschwitz on 19.10.44 where he was killed.

**Otto Zucker** was born in Prague on 3.10.1892. He fought in the First World War and was highly decorated. He became an outstanding civil engineer and was one of the more prominent Zionists in the Czech Republic. Prior to his deportation to Theresienstadt on 4.12.41 he held several important positions in the Prague Jewish Community, alongside Edelstein in the Palestine Office. In Theresienstadt he worked as Edelstein's deputy in the first Jewish Council. He was deported to Auschwitz on 28.9.44 where he was killed.

## 4.2 Nazi Functionaries

**Anton Burger** was born in Austria. Prior to becoming a member of the Nazi party and later a member of the *Sicherheitsdienst*, he was a schoolteacher. He played a key role in events leading up to the Anschluss in 1938 and later in the deportation of Jews from Vienna. He became the second Commandant of Theresienstadt in June 1943 and remained there until he was replaced by Karl Rahm in February 1944.

**Adolf Eichmann** was born in Solingen in Germany on 19.03.06. His family moved to Linz in Austria where he spent his childhood. He failed to become an engineer and became a travelling salesman for an oil company between 1927 and 1933. He joined the Austrian Nazi Party on 1.04.32. In 1934 he joined the SD and by 1935 he was responsible for the 'Jewish Question' in Berlin. In 1938 he was put in charge of the Office for Jewish Emigration in Vienna where he oversaw the forced emigration of Austrian Jews. From there he moved to Prague. In 1939 he was transferred to the Gestapo where he took over *Referat IV B4* of the Reich Main Security Office which dealt with Jewish evacuation. He was involved in decisions involving Theresienstadt and in the organisation of the Wannsee Conference. In 1944 he worked in Budapest and was involved with the mass killings of Hungarian Jews. After the war he was interned in an American camp from which he escaped to Argentina. In May 1960 he was found there and abducted by Israeli Secret Service officers and taken to Israel to be tried. The trial took place between 2.04.61 and 14.08.61. On 2.12.61 he was sentenced to death by hanging which was carried out on 31.05.62.

**Constantin Freiherr von Neurath** was born in Württemberg on 2.02.1873. On 2.06.32 he joined von Papen's government as Foreign Minister and kept this position during the early Nazi years. Prior to becoming Reichsprotektor in 1939 he was side stepped out of the Foreign Office and given the position of President of a Reich Secret Cabinet. He remained Reichsprotektor until 23.09.41 when he was replaced by Reinhard Heydrich. Von Neurath was tried at Nuremberg and was sentenced to 15 years imprisonment. He served 8 years and died in 1956.

**Reinhard Heydrich** was born in Halle in 1904. In 1919 he joined the Freikorps and in 1931 he joined the NSDAP. By 1932 he was head of the SD (security services) and in 1936 was head of security across the German Reich. In 1939 he was appointed head of the RSHA – Reich Main Security Office and in September 1941 he took over from von Neurath as Reichsprotektor of Bohemia and Moravia. He was instrumental in the Wannsee Conference in January 1942 and in the Final Solution. He was killed in Prague in June 1942.

**Karl Rahm** was born in Klosterneuburg in 1907. Prior to joining the Nazi party he worked as a tool maker. Rising through the ranks of the Nazi Party, Rahm was

sent to Holland to set up a Central Office for Jewish Affairs in Amsterdam. He then worked as Günther's deputy in the Central Office for Jewish Affairs in Prague. He became the final Commandant of Theresienstadt in February 1944. He remained in Theresienstadt until 5 May 1945 when he fled the approaching Russian troops. He was arrested in Austria in 1946 and was sentenced to death by hanging in 1947.

**Siegfried Seidl** was born in Vienna in 1911 and joined the Nazi Party in 1930, the SA in 1931 and the SS in 1932. He was instrumental in choosing Theresienstadt as the site for the Protectorate ghetto. He arrived in Theresienstadt in December 1941 and remained Commandant until June 1943 when Anton Burger replaced him. Seidl was then posted to Bergen-Belsen and later to Budapest where he oversaw the deportations of Hungarian Jews to Auschwitz. He was arrested in Vienna in July 1945 and hanged.

## Appendix 5. The Wannsee Conference

The following are extracts from the Minutes of the Wannsee Conference, 20 January 1942, which relate directly to Theresienstadt. The translation is taken from Mark Roseman, *The Villa, the Lake, the Meeting – Wannsee and the Final Solution* (London: Penguin, 2002), Appendix A, ‘Translation of the Protocol’, pp.108-118.

Section III of the minutes records,

‘Approximately eleven million Jews will be involved in the Final Solution of the European Jewish question, distributed as follows among the individual countries:

Country	Number
A.	
Germany proper	131,800
Austria	43,700
Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia	74,200
Denmark	5,600
Netherlands	160,800
B.	
Slovakia	88,000, <sup>1</sup>

Section III of the minutes records,

‘In the course of the practical execution of the Final Solution, Europe will be combed through from west to east. Germany proper, including the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, will have to be dealt with first due to the housing problem and additional social and political necessities.

The evacuated Jews will first be sent, in stages, to so-called transit ghettos, from where they will be transported to the east.

SS-Obergruppenführer Heydrich went on to say that an important prerequisite for the evacuation as such is the exact definition of the persons involved.

It is not intended to evacuate Jews over sixty-five years old, but to send them to an old-age ghetto – Theresienstadt is being considered for this purpose.

In addition to these age groups – of the approximately 280,000 Jews in Germany proper and Austria on 31 October 1941, approximately 30 per cent are over sixty-five years old – severely wounded veterans and Jews with war

<sup>1</sup> Mark Roseman, *The Villa, the Lake, the Meeting – Wannsee and the Final Solution* (London: Penguin, 2002), Appendix A, ‘Translation of the Protocol’, section III, pp.111-112.

decorations (Iron Cross I) will be accepted in the old-age ghettos. With this expedient solution, in one fell swoop many interventions will be prevented.<sup>2</sup>

Section IV of the minutes records,

‘3. Marriages between Full Jews and Persons of German Blood

Here it must be decided from case to case whether the Jewish partner should be evacuated or, in view of the effects of such a step on the German relatives of the marriage, sent to an old-age ghetto.

4. Marriages between Persons of Mixed Blood of the First Degree and Persons of German Blood

a) Without Children

if no children have resulted from the marriage, the person of mixed blood of the first degree will be evacuated or sent to an old-age ghetto (same treatment as in the case of marriages between full Jews and persons of German blood, point 3).

b) With Children

If children have resulted from the marriage (persons of mixed blood of the second degree), they will, if they are to be treated as Jews, be evacuated or sent to a ghetto along with the parent of mixed blood of the first degree. If these children are to be treated as Germans (regular cases), they are exempted from evacuation as is therefore the parent of mixed blood of the first degree.

5) Marriages between Persons of Mixed Blood of the First Degree and Persons of Mixed Blood of the First Degree or Jews

In these marriages all members of the family (including children) will be treated as Jews and therefore be evacuated or sent to an old-age ghetto.’

6) Marriages between Persons of Mixed Blood of the First Degree and Persons of Mixed Blood of the Second Degree

In these marriages both partners will be evacuated or sent to an old-age ghetto without consideration of whether the marriage has produced children, since possible children will as a rule have stronger blood than the Jewish person of mixed blood of the second degree.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* Appendix A, section 111, p.113.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* Appendix A, section IV, pp.115-116.

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