Model for the redesign of Berlin into "Germania" overseen by Hitler's architect, Albert Speer. The domed "Great Hall" was to be monumental, dwarfing other structures. A new north-south boulevard was to cross an expanded east-west boulevard including the Brandenburg Gate and the Victory Column. Little of this design was ever completed.

so many other youths during the pogrom? The overwhelming majority of them had not dropped out of school, and many came from families that one might characterize as "stabile." Groups of teenage boys tend to possess an especially high potential for aggression and mayhem, regardless of culture. In Nazi Germany, however, two factors contributed further to the unleashing of this potential. The first was the presence of adult authority figures who encouraged and rewarded the violent behavior. The second was the steady diet of antisemitic propaganda on which the boys had been nourished in the schools and in their Hitler Youth troops. In the eyes of the thousands of German teenagers who carried out attacks on houses of worship, property, and people during the pogrom, the Jews of Germany had been placed outside the bounds of the community.

The Kristallnacht forced German civil servants, especially policemen and firemen, onto the horns of a dilemma. Trained and sworn to uphold the law and to keep the community safe, they received explicit orders during the pogrom to refrain from doing their jobs. Throughout Germany on November 9 and 10, most German policemen did exactly as they had been ordered, which was to stand by and do nothing. The same held true for firemen, though some of them were called into action only when the flames from a burning synagogue threatened surrounding structures. In at least one case, in Heldenbergen, firemen were called in to dismantle a synagogue because a fire would have been too dangerous. Civil servants responded to their orders with obedience, if not necessarily always with enthusiasm.

One civil servant who did not conform to the general pattern was Wilhelm Krützelfeld, a police precinct captain in Berlin. Although the documentation for his actions is scant, Krützelfeld is widely credited with having saved the Oranienburgerstrasse Synagogue in Berlin—the city's largest and most architecturally impressive synagogue. As the story goes, Krützelfeld and some of the officers under his command faced down a group of Storm Troopers who were attempting to destroy the building. While holding the SA men at gunpoint, Krützelfeld commanded firefighters to douse the fire that had already been set. Although Krützelfeld, like other German policemen, had been ordered to refrain from intervening against the party-sponsored action, he invoked his responsibility to enforce a law protecting historic buildings. (It is also possible that he cited the potential danger of the fire spreading to neighboring buildings. The synagogue in question—like many in Germany—was integrated into a continuous block of buildings in a densely populated part of Berlin.) The following day, the head of the Berlin police, Count Halldorf, an avid Nazi, reprimanded Krützelfeld, though he suffered no formal punishment and was permitted to retire from the police without incident.

Krützelfeld is today regarded in Germany as a hero of the Kristallnacht. To honor his courage, the Berlin police have erected a memorial plaque on the front façade of the building that he saved, which is now a major tourist attraction. The singular personal quality of Krützelfeld's that Germany most celebrates, and to which his "civil courage" has been attributed, was his professionalism as a policeman—and, more specifically, the sense of duty and propriety that motivated him as a Prussian civil servant. He was not a member of the anti-Nazi resistance; nor was he a philosemitic. He merely possessed a healthy sense of right and wrong, reinforced by a commitment to the rule of law. His story is compelling not least because Krützelfeld's admirable behavior during the pogrom was fairly exceptional. Most German civil servants lacked the courage that has been attributed to Krützelfeld.

More typical were the police in the town of Gross-Krottenburg. On the morning of November 10, they received the order to tolerate the "actions undertaken by the party against the Jews." They stood by and looked on as the attacks unfolded. When an order arrived late in the day to put an end to the violence and prevent looting, they dutifully intervened. Police guards were placed in front of the synagogue to prevent its incineration. The passivity of the police in the face of what
When the Red Orchestra Fell Silent

By SHAREEN BLAIR BRYSCAC

On Feb. 15, 1943, a green police wagon left Charlottenburg Women’s Prison in Berlin, making its way through streets pockmarked by Allied bombs to the infamous execution center at Plötzensee. The handcuffed prisoner, a 40-year-old American woman, scholar, journalist, lecturer, teacher and translator named Mildred Fish Harnack, was led to a first-floor death cell. She was beheaded the next day.

Then, for many years, Mildred’s reputation — like those of many who resisted Hitler in Germany before and during World War II — became hostage to the Cold War. In the West she was depicted as a Soviet spy, in the East as a Marxist saint. But she was neither, and only after the Berlin Wall came down and secret files were declassified was Mildred’s humanity restored, as poignantly defined by her final hours.

She spent them translating lines of Goethe into English and receiving a welcome visit from Harald Poelchau, the prison pastor who had borne witness to the execution of a thousand resisters — including men and women belonging to the Harnack-Schulze-Boysen group or those caught in the failed July 20 conspiracy to assassinate Hitler.

They discussed the Bible, then Goethe, and finally Poelchau described her husband’s brave end three days before Christmas. Arvid Harnack’s petition to see Mildred before his execution had been denied. During his final hour, Arvid asked if the chaplain could recite “Prologue in Heaven” from Faust. And as Poelchau prepared to leave, Arvid asked him to join in singing the chorale, “I Pray to the Power of Love.”

In his last letter to his wife, Arvid wrote that “despite everything,” he looked back on a life in which “the darkness was outweighed by the light” largely because of their marriage. He recalled that their “intense work” meant that their life was never easy.

After Hitler’s rise to power, the couple had founded an underground group that helped imperiled Jews, assisted forced laborers, documented and archived Nazi acts of violence, especially in occupied areas in the East, and distributed anti-Hitler pamphlets.

Mildred used her work as an English instructor to recruit resisters to travel abroad to assist
potential émigrés. Her close friendship with Martha Dodd, the daughter of the American ambassador, William Dodd, enabled her to obtain elusive visas to the United States.

Mildred had met Arvid, a German student in the United States on a Rockefeller Fellowship, while a graduate student at the University of Wisconsin in Madison. Following their marriage, the couple in 1929 settled in Germany, where they gathered a study group of artists, writers, academics and government officials. After 1933, this literary salon became a network of resisters, and in 1940, Arvid Harnack established contacts with Soviet intelligence.

The group, subsequently named "Red Orchestra" by the Gestapo to underscore its ties to Soviets, was led by Arvid, by then an official in the Economics Ministry, and by Lt. Harro Schulze-Boysen, a member of Hermann Goering’s staff.

For nine months, the group provided vital military information to Moscow in the run-up to the June 1941 invasion of the Soviet Union. During the same period, Arvid Harnack met regularly with the first secretary of the American embassy, Donald Heath, for long walks in Berlin’s parks and forests, using their wives as cover. Thus Arvid kept Washington informed on the state of the Third Reich’s economy, its trade agreements, rearmament and war plans.

On two trips to the United States in 1938 and 1939, Arvid Harnack (with Heath’s help) met with Treasury officials and passed information about German assets in the United States.

After the Germans intercepted a radio communication, 120 persons were arrested by the Gestapo. Mildred and Arvid were arrested on September 7, 1942. After a secret trial, Arvid was sentenced to death. Mildred received a sentence of six years hard labor for “the preparation of high treason and espionage.” Hitler heard this after the German defeat at Stalingrad and refused to confirm the sentence. She was retried and sentenced to death.

Mildred’s last words, before she was executed on Feb. 16, 1943, were: “And I have loved Germany so much.”

For many years after the war, resisters remained suspect in West Germany, unwelcome reminders that opposition had been possible. Members of the Harnack-Schulze-Boysen group were dismissed as Soviet spies. By contrast, East Germans celebrated them as anti-fascist heroes who lent a measure of legitimacy to the Soviet-imposed regime.

After German reunification in 1990, I was able to obtain intelligence files from the United States, Russia and several East German archives, and to interview relatives and survivors.
German scholars and I were able to piece together material that allowed a more nuanced account of the activities of the group. The “Red Orchestra” group came to be known as the “Harnack-Schulze-Boysen” group.

Two streets in Berlin and in Giessen — where Mildred received her doctorate — were named after her; memorial plaques dedicated to both Harnacks have appeared on public buildings in the German capital.

In 2007, the German artist Franz Rudolf Knubel, with the help of students of the Mildred Harnack High School in Berlin, created a memorial exhibit inspired by Mildred’s translations of Goethe. The exhibit was shown in Berlin and other German cities, as well as at the Hillel Foundation in Madison and at Milwaukee’s Jewish Museum. In 2011, Wisconsin Public Television aired a one-hour documentary film about her. Sept. 16, the date of her birth, has been designated Mildred Harnack Day in Wisconsin.

Many letters by members of the group have now been published. They include Schulze-Boysen’s final letter to his parents. “It is common in Europe for spiritual seeds to be sown with blood,” he wrote. “Perhaps we were simply a few fools; but when the end is this near, one perhaps has the right to a bit of completely personal historical illusion.”

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The End of Jewish Owned Businesses in Nazi Berlin

Aktives Museum Faschismus und Widerstand in Berlin e.V.

Small and medium-sized Jewish businesses in Berlin 1930–1945
A research project by the Department of Modern German History, Humboldt University, Berlin

in cooperation with
Leo Baeck Institute New York

English translation by Charlotte Kreuzmüller
Berlin 2010
Final Sale. The End of Jewish Owned Businesses in Nazi Berlin

Berlin – a center of Jewish business

Berlin, the capital of the German Reich, was one of the largest industrial cities in the world, an international center of commerce and finance, and a Jewish capital. A quarter of all German publicly traded companies were based in Berlin. And nearly a third of all Germany's Jews lived here.

The Jewish population of Berlin was highly heterogeneous. In June 1933, Berlin's Jewish community counted 160,564 members, about a third of whom were not German nationals or had been only since the end of World War I. They differed not only in their attitudes to religion and financial situations: Besides the prominent business elite, there were also thousands of Jewish blue-collar and white-collar workers, petty traders and unemployed as well as a broad middle class.

Jewish-owned businesses played an important role in the city's economy and dominated some branches. The preponderance of Jews in Berlin's banking, clothing industry and department store sector is well known and has gained negative connotations in the light of anti-Semitic resentment. But Jews were also active in many other fields and branches, including the egg, grain, leather, metal and furniture trade, in textile and shoe manufacturing, in the radio and electrical industry and in the pharmaceuticals industry.

Persecution and Counter Strategies

By 1933 all Jewish commercial enterprises were threatened by National Socialist persecution. The SA menace was ever-present; business connections were cut, supply and service channels blocked and interest groups and chambers of commerce brought into line. However, the intensity of the threat differed from case to case and depended on a number of factors: The branch in which the business was active and its significance for foreign trade; the attitude of interest groups, competing businesses, employees and neighbors; the business's location in the city and the nationality of the proprietor or main shareholder.

In an environment which was growing more hostile almost daily, Jewish business people developed a range of strategies in order to keep their heads above water. Some tried to take judicial action against their unfair treatment and sue their persecutors with the help of the Jewish community or the Central Association of German Citizens of the Jewish Faith. Others tried to occupy specific market niches or develop their foreign trade, enhancing their position as sources of foreign exchange and opening an escape route at the same time. Many began to explicitly address a Jewish clientele for the first time and advertised in Jewish community papers. Still others took on non-Jewish partners or changed the business's name to sound non-Jewish. Most, however, simply tried to be inconspicuous, lived off their assets and waited for better times. Although none of the strategies could ultimately lead to success as Nazi terror and persecution took on unprecedented dimensions, this nevertheless shows that Jewish business people continued to act as independent agents.

Pogrom and the destruction of Jewish commercial enterprise in Berlin

There were violent disturbances in Berlin even before the boycott of April 1, 1933, of which the “Köpenick week of blood” in June 1933, in which at least 23 people were brutally killed, formed a terrible climax. More disturbances, partly of a pogrom-like nature, occurred in Berlin in summer 1935 and June 1938. The latter so-called June riots served the Nazi regime as a dress rehearsal for the November pogrom in 1938. Between November 9 and November 12, thousands of Jewish businesses were systematically destroyed and plundered. The SS, SA and their henchmen destroyed not only window panes but also entire shop interiors and stocks and frequently business documents. After the pogrom, Jews were prohibited by law from conducting retail trade and handicrafts enterprises and from providing goods and services. Their businesses were liquidated or ownership transferred to non-Jews. At about the same time, the remaining Jewish owned manufacturing and wholesale businesses were systematically pressurized to liquidate their businesses or transfer them to non-Jewish ownership. A few Jewish business owners managed to continue to run their enterprises until 1941.

Tragically, it was precisely the relative success of their defense strategies, combined with the optimistic view that things would improve, which led to some Jews leaving it too late to emigrate. This is clearly reflected in the Berlin commercial register. From late 1941, the deletion of businesses often occurred in tandem with the deportation of their owners and in some cases businesses were even deleted from concentration camps.

CHRISTOPH KREUTZMÜLLER
Nazi Institutions and Networks of Persecution

Main parties involved in the persecution of Jewish businesses

before 1933
from 1933
from 1937-38

NSDAP
SA
SS
Hitler Youth
German Labor Front
Nazi shopfloor activists

Economic Advisor to the Berlin Nazi Party

The press
Nazi press
(Der Angriff, Der Stürmer,
Völkischer Beobachter)
- Daily press
- Trade press

Jewish commercial enterprises

Municipal administration
Chief of Police (Dept. IV: Economic Control)
State commissioner (from 1936, city president)
Mayor of Berlin
Local government offices and local mayors

Reich Culture Chamber

Regional tax offices
(from 1937 "superior finance directorates")
- Customs administration
- Exchange control agencies

Chamber of Industry and Commerce

Reich and Prussian Ministries
Reich Department of Commerce
Reich Ministry of Finance
Prussian Ministry of Finance
Commissioner for the Quarter-Year Plan (from 1936)
Reich Ministry for Popular Enlightenment and Propaganda
Central Bank

Interest groups and corporations
Various trade associations
(from 1934-36 'Reich groups' and 'Commercial groups')
German Labor Front (Nationalsozialistische Betriebszellen Organisation or NSBO)
The German Labor Front (NSDAP) acted as a successor organization to the trade unions, which were abolished in 1933, and pursued a radically anti-Semitic course. Nazi shop floor activists (Nationalsozialistischer Betriebszellen Organisation or NSBO) demonized Jewish co-workers and caused unrest in Jewish businesses. This usually led to the isolation then dismissal of Jewish members of staff and the seizure of Jewish businesses.

Economic Advisor to the Berlin Nazi Party (Gewerkschaftschef)
Heinrich Hütte was economic advisor to the Berlin Nazi Party. From the outset, he saw it as his task to "further stoke the Jewish influence in Berlin's trade and industry". He propelled the destruction of Jewish commercial enterprise and, from mid-1937, was the de facto executive power in all instances of property transfer.

Chamber of Commerce and Industry (Industrie- und Handelskammer)
In 1933, the Berlin chamber of commerce and industry (IHK) was the largest chamber in the Reich. It acted as a center of liaison for businesses and authorities. From 1931, its tasks included assessing the projected usefulness of companies' foreign travel and commissions. Even before the boycott, the president of the IHK, Karl Gelopicki, dismissed all active Jewish board members under pressure from an "action committee of the Commercial Law department of the Federation of National Socialist German Lawyers" which stormed his office. At the same time, the IHK received an increasing number of inquiries into whether businesses were Jewish. The IHK began systematically screening all businesses in early 1938. After the pogrom, when the destruction of Jewish commercial enterprise was legally enforced, the IHK assessed the suitability of non-Jewish transfers and determined how many of the 3,000 Jewish retail businesses were to be liquidated. From 1939-40, the IHK attended to the deletion of the remaining Jewish businesses in the commercial register in close cooperation with the district authorities.

Interest groups and corporations
The city's trade associations and interest groups were reorganized in 1933-34 in the interests of the new regime and leading Jewish members either removed or rendered powerless by the founding of new institutions. Subsequently, the old associations - now renamed "commercial groups" (Wirtschaftsgruppen) - were required to submit business assessments on the basis of which supplies and commissions were affected. This placed them in a position of authority, which they often abused to deliberately discriminate against Jewish businesses.

Hitler Youth (Hitler Jugend)
The leaders and members of the Hitler Youth (HJ) helped the regime before the boycott of April 1933 by drawing up boycott lists. In summer 1938 they played a major role in the riots. In June 1938, HJ units were partly responsible for debasing abusive graffiti on Jewish shopfronts and marking out Jewish businesses and participated in the pogrom.

Regional tax offices (Landesfinanzämter)
As well as the central tax office, the regional tax offices, which were subordinate to the Reich Ministry of Finance and renamed "superior finance directorate" (Obertaxidirektorat) from 1937, enforced a tax adjustment law from 1934 designed to discriminate against Jews. In some cases, tax debts were invented in order to increase the pressure on businesses. After the pogrom, the tax offices charged a "Jewish property levy". The exchange control agencies of the regional tax offices carried out extensive examinations of Jewish businesses, especially scrutinizing any possible intention of Jewish business people to transfer assets abroad. Often the existence of high debts was enough to trigger this suspicion. In this case, the exchange control agencies could block business accounts or confiscate traders' passports.

NSDAP
The Nazi Party (NSDAP) was the central agent in the network of persecution. Joseph Goebbels, head of the administrative district of Berlin (Gauleiter), used his position to instigate pogrom-like disturbances in September 1931, early summer 1936 and June 1936. Goebbels played a key role in instigating and carrying out the pogrom in November 1938 and as administrative head of Berlin and Reich Minister of Popular Enlightenment and Propaganda was instrumental in radicalizing the persecution of Jews to the point of mass murder.

The press
The most important Nazi newspapers were Völkische Beobachter and Der Angriff, which was founded by Goebbels in 1927. Der Stürmer was not a Nazi Party paper in the narrow sense but was the most influential, maintaining a Berlin office from 1935. Jewish businesses were regularly attacked in all these newspapers. Der Stürmer also published lists of Jewish businesses and the names of their customers. Once the Nazis' policy of Gleichschaltung, forcing people into line, had taken effect, the trade press and specialist journals also assumed an anti-Semitic style and reported sometimes quite openly on the destruction of Jewish commercial enterprise.

Reich Culture Chamber (Reichskulturkammer)
Founded in September 1933, the Reich Culture Chamber (RKK) aimed tounits all fields of the arts under one roof. At first it was difficult for Jews to become members and from 1935 they were actually barred. Exclusion from the RKK was equal to a professional ban and forced Jews in all fields of the arts to give up their professions.

Reich and Prussian Ministries
The old-established ministries viewed the uncontrolled persecution of Jews, which began with the Nazis' seizure of power, with skepticism. The Reich Ministry of the Interior feared for national interests, the Reich Department of Commerce was concerned about the consequences for foreign trade and the Foreign Ministry feared repercussions in international politics. Hence a number of appeals, especially those made by the Central Association of German Citizens of Jewish Faith, were initially successful. From 1935, however, nearly all ministries were involved in developing anti-Jewish legislation. Following Hajnmar Schacht's resignation in late 1937, the Reich Department of Commerce was reorganized under Hermann Göring, in his capacity as commissioner for the quarter-year plan, and eventually became the central supervisory body overseeing the destruction of Jewish commercial enterprise.

SA
The SA (Sturmabteilung) violently threatened Jewish businesses even before the Nazis' seizure of power, organized the boycott on April 1, 1933, and continued to harass Jews and Jewish-owned businesses afterward. SA violence reached a peak during the pogrom in November 1938.

SS
From 1934, all state concentration camps were controlled by the SS (Schutzstaffel). From 1936, the SS also infiltrated and controlled the entire police system. Jews were completely defenseless in the face of SS violence in the illegitimately made concentration camps. This also applied to the 7,000 or more Berlin Jews - among them an unknown number of business owners - who were taken mostly to Sachsenhausen concentration camp in June and November 1938.

Municipal administration
In the city of Berlin, the chief of police - Magnus von Levetzow and from 1935 Wolf Graf von Helffort was in charge of the economic administration. From April 1938, all property transfer contracts concerning Jewish businesses had to be authorized by him. The state commissioner and later "city president" Julius Lippert, who was superior to the Mayor of Berlin, terminated all municipal business contracts with Jews even before the boycott in 1933 and supervised the registration of Jewish commercial enterprises in 1939. Mayor of Berlin Heinrich Sahn tried to drive Jewish traders out of the city's central market and in summer 1933. Local government offices also boycotted Jewish businesses and barred Jewish traders from local markets. In 1938-39, they drew up directories of Jewish businessmen and traders and supervised their takeover or liquidation on site.

CHRISTOPH KREUTZMÖLLER
E. Braun & Co. Berlin

Emanuel Braun is widely considered to be the inventor of the boutique. His luxurious E. Braun & Co. stores in Vienna, Prague, Karlovy Vary and Berlin supplied Europe’s high society with formal wear, table linen and accessories. As Austrian nationals, the company’s Jewish owners were initially protected in Nazi Berlin. This changed however after Austria’s annexation in 1938.

Viennese Luxury in Berlin

E. Braun & Co. began as a bridal wear and accessories store, founded by brothers Emanuel and Josef Braun in Vienna. They were soon appointed suppliers to the Austrian Imperial and royal court and opened branches in Karlovy Vary and Prague. Finally, in 1914, E. Braun & Co.’s largest branch was opened in Berlin, Unter den Linden 75, next to Hotel Adlon. Here the range of products was extended to include men’s wear and table linen and later also items of furniture and home accessories. Between 1926 and 1928, the store’s premises were renovated by Viennese architect Ferdinand Kratzy at a cost of 850,000 Reich marks. Now the building boasted a grand portal on the corner of Wilhelm Strasse and Unter den Linden and an elevator to the salesrooms on the second and third floors. The store was fitted with antique furniture and chandeliers imported from Vienna. In December 1930, Emanuel Braun’s sons-in-law, Hans Friedrich Mayer-Braun and Siegfried Franz Oser-Braun, took over the Berlin branch as partners of the parent company. Among their most prominent customers were the actors Käthe Dorsch, Helene Thimig, Emil Jannings, Heinz Rühmann and Theo Lingen as well as actor and theatre director Fritz Kortner and composer Paul Hindemith.
The store E. Braun & Co. was situated next door to the legendary Hotel Adlon on Pariser Platz and profited from the hotel's wealthy international clientele. The company held a ten-year lease on the premises. "The house owner, Hotelbetriebe-A.G., [will] take care not to give notice to quit to a solvent and old-established tenant, while conversely the tenant-taxpayer (E. Braun & Co.) will only seek alternative sales premises in the worst case. The expenditure of over 850,000 Reich marks shows how convinced the tenant-taxpayer is that the lease will be renewed on expiry after 10 years. They would certainly not have made such an investment if there seemed to be even a remote possibility of having to vacate their premises in 1937. Even now there is no evidence to suggest they think otherwise." (Berlin tax office, auditor's report on the company E. Braun & Co, 1936; JCC AZ 127438)

View of one of the opulent salesrooms in the E. Braun & Co. store at Unter den Linden 2 after renovation in the late 1920s.

Luxury evening wear, accessories and lingerie in the shop window, around 1927.

Forced to sell after Austria's annexation in 1938

In May 1938, Siegfried Franz Oser-Braun was arrested by the Gestapo while on a routine business trip because his Austrian passport was no longer valid. While still in detention in September 1938, the property transactions office in Vienna forced him to sell the company E. Braun & Co. to Georg Wiedersum in Bremen. In 1942, E. Braun & Co. Nachfolger [successor] Georg Wiedersum, as the company in Berlin was now named, still had a turnover of 1.6 million Reich marks. On February 20, 1943, the store on Unter den Linden was closed as part of the campaign to close down businesses in Germany which were not relevant to the war effort. The premises with their contents were seized by the Nazi authorities and assigned to a senior SS official (Persönlicher Stab Reichsführer SS). The businesses continued in the form of a 'war sales agency' in Leipziger Strasse 43-44. The former store premises at Unter den Linden 2 were razed to the ground in a bomb attack in September 1943. The premises on Leipziger Strasse were also destroyed by bombing in November 1943.

Hans and Hansi Mayer-Braun emigrated to Egypt with their sons Robert (left) and Ferdinand following Austria's annexation in 1938. In 1940 they moved to New York.

Escape into Exile

On 28 September 1938, Siegfried Franz and Edith Oser-Braun emigrated with their children Maria and Gustav to London, then to Egypt in March 1939, and finally to the USA. The Oser-Braun family was denationalized by the German Reich in 1941. With salvaged inventory boldly transported by truck from Prague and Karlovy Vary to the
USA, Siegfried Franz Oser-Braun opened a store on Madison Avenue in Manhattan and a branch in Palm Beach, Florida, which both flourished.

Following Austria's annexation in 1938, Hans Friedrich Mayer emigrated with his son Robert to Egypt, where he too opened a store selling textiles. His wife Johanna, known as Hansi, and their son Ferdinand joined him in late 1938. The family stayed about two years in Egypt before moving to the USA. Hans-Friedrich Mayer-Braun became Henry Myer and opened a store on Long Island under the name H.E. Braun.

**Restitution and settlement**

After the war, the Viennese company E. Braun & Co. was returned to the founders' heirs. Henry Myer became director in 1962. He was accompanied back to Vienna by his son Fred, Fred's wife Marietta Myer and their sons. The Prague branch was destroyed in the war. The Berlin branch on Unter den Linden was not rebuilt but Georg Wiedersum continued to run his 'successor' business in Berlin at Kurfürstendamm 43 and 219. In 1954, the Oser-Braun and Myer-Braun families approached Georg Wiedersum in the hope of reaching an amicable agreement. The forced sale in 1938 was declared to be null and void.

Georg Wiedersum and his son now obtained a license to use the company name. A store named E. Braun & Co. Nachf. Georg Wiedersum existed at Kurfürstendamm 43 until the year 2000, listed in the commercial register as a limited company with Brigitte Hilversum as director. Today there is a branch of the Swiss shoe store Bally at Kurfürstendamm 219. Bally also took over the main branch of the company in Vienna in 1985. In 1988, Gustav Oser sold the rights to the company name E. Braun & Co. to a US investor, who opened luxury goods stores in New York and Beverly Hills, following in the footsteps of the original company founders in Austria.

**Christine Fischer-Dreyer**

"In summer 1938, when we still owned the stores in Karlovy Vary and Prague, we loaded a truck in Karlovy Vary with the most valuable stock of table and bed linen. I'm talking about lace, best quality linen, silk and so on. The whole thing was organized by Mr. and Mrs. Hirsch. Hersch was a Jewish employee of the company, who was later beaten to death by other employees. This truck was shipped to New York care of one of our best members of staff, Sophie Klausner. When we arrived in New York my father opened a store in Manhattan with Miss Sophie and [the contents of] the truck. Sophie knew all our American customers from her time in Karlovy Vary."

Gustav Oser, June 2008
The Deutsche Theater

The Deutsche Theater, or DT, in Schumann Strasse is probably the best known case of a Nazi business seizure in the culture industry. By systematically ousting its owner, Max Reinhardt, the Nazis in power aimed to tap into the theater’s glamour and prestige. Reinhardt’s counter strategies were not able to prevent this.

The path to fame: 1883-1933

In 1906, young actor and director Max Reinhardt bought the Deutsche Theater, founded in 1883. He installed a studio theater, the Kammerspiele, in the adjacent building and set about making his theater one of the most renowned in Europe if not the world. Reinhardt was not only a pioneering artist; his theater was also exceptionally prosperous for 25 years. The secret of its success was expansion and multi-usage. By buying or renting additional theaters, he could continue to stage acclaimed productions while trying out new plays at the same time.

Reinhardt named his flourishing theater business Deutsche National Theater AG and floated it on the stock market in 1917, reducing his economic risk and allowing ambitious plans to be forged for the construction of a large-scale theater. In 1919, the Grosse Schauspielhaus was opened seating 3,200. When a public entertainment tax on all private theaters was introduced in 1920, Reinhardt responded by turning his enterprise into the limited company Deutsche Theater in Berlin GmbH. It was officially recognized as useful for the public benefit, reducing its tax liability, in 1926. Gradually Reinhardt built up the largest theater corporation in the world. By 1931 it comprised twelve theaters and over 10,000 seats.

However, the world economic crisis also left its mark on Reinhardt’s empire. Audience numbers dropped and theaters had to be closed or leased. In 1932, the DT was targeted by militant anti-Semitism for the first time. Joseph Goebbels, the administrative head of Berlin and editor-in-chief of the newspaper Der Angriff (Attack), published an article raging against Karl-Heinz Martin’s production of Gyula Hás’s Gott, Kaiser und Bauer (God, Emperor, Farmer). For fear of violent repercussions — Berlin’s chief of police did nothing to prevent them — the play was taken off the program. The loss of ticket revenue almost ruined the DT.
In mid-January 1933 Max Reinhardt leased his theater to Carl Ludwig Duisberg-Achaz. Although Achaz was the wrong person for the job of theater director, he had access to considerable funds and was able to prevent the DT from going bankrupt. But the future Reich Minister of Popular Enlightenment and Propaganda, Joseph Goebbels, also had designs on the world famous theater. Through the Reich Ministry for Popular Enlightenment and Propaganda and in cooperation with the German Labor Front, the Nazi authorities proceeded to take possession of the Deutsche Theater in five stages.

First, the Deutsche Theater in Berlin GmbH was no longer recognized as useful for the public benefit and charged with millions of marks worth of taxes. Then Goebbels, in his capacity as head of theater, refused to extend Achaz's contract when it expired in April 1934. Instead the Propaganda Ministry paid "Reich subsidies" of 450,000 marks annually to Heinz Hilpert, who rented the theater in June 1934 from Max Reinhardt. The entire rent went to the German Labor Bank, which had been Max Reinhardt's and the Deutsche National Theater AG's chief creditor since world economic crisis broke out and controlled by the German Labor Front since the trade unions were dissolved. The bank then made use of its vote as creditor to force all the existing members of the Deutsche National Theater AG's supervisory board to resign in April 1934. They were replaced by Nazi sympathizers and supporters. The capital stock was reduced and old bearer share certificates
required to be personally submitted in Berlin otherwise they were declared invalid and auctioned off. This meant that stockholders who fled abroad were effectively expropriated without compensation. Reinhardt managed to hold on to a symbolic amount and sold the securities to the bank for 10 per cent of their value. All new bearer share certificates were bought by the German Labor Front's own Trust Company for Commercial Enterprises which thus acquired 52 per cent of the shares.

But Max Reinhardt still privately owned the property and land on which the DT and the studio theater stood. Consequently, the new owners broadened the object of the business to include the purchase of real estate. As Reinhardt's creditor, the German Labor Bank applied for the theater to be sold by public auction. In September 1934, the Deutsche National Theater AG purchased the property for 600,000 Reich marks.

The DT and Kammerspiele were henceforth the property of the German Labor Front and controlled by Joseph Goebbels. The seizure of the theater was complete. While theater director Hilpert sought to maintain a certain distance to the Nazi regime on an artistic level, he had incriminated himself by complying with the Propaganda Ministry's racialist staff policy. In 1944 all theaters in Germany were closed.

In 1949 the DT — now in Soviet-controlled East Berlin — was nationalized. The restitution files were closed in October 1992 when the properties were returned to Reinhardt's heirs. Proceedings aimed at the restitution of shares in the Deutsche National Theater AG are still pending in court.

Heinz Hilpert, born 1890 in Berlin, worked for Max Reinhardt at the Deutsche Theater where he became one of the leading stage directors. He was one of the few directors to keep his job after January 30, 1933 — initially as manager of the Volksbühne which the Nazis regarded as a "Marxist party theater." But Goebbels admired his artistic ability and Hilpert took over the Deutsche Theater, backed by the Propaganda Ministry, in 1934. Hilpert complied with the Nazi authorities' racialist strategies in the naive belief that he could preserve the artistic integrity of the theater and prevent "the worst" but effectively became their — albeit not entirely compliant — puppet. Technically he remained a private employer, but was actually dependent on money from the Propaganda Ministry. Hilpert could only look on at Max Reinhardt's operettas, which he had unknowingly participated in. He died in Göttingen in 1957.

Goebbels insisted that Hilpert mount plays by Heinrich von Kleist, which Hilpert had long avoided since they had become part of the Nazi canon. In 1942 he finally staged three Kleist plays: Hilpert's Amphitryon with Dora Krüger (left) and Gisela von Colnander. From March 1942, made some clear concessions to the Nazi aesthetic.
Eduard and Max Moses Wassermann

The life story of the brothers Eduard Elias and Max Moses Wassermann, grocery traders in Berlin's oldest northern suburb, illustrates some of the range of strategies that Jewish business people used to resist Nazi oppression in the late 1930s. One brother got by as a silent partner while the other managed to stay in business by changing branches. Nevertheless, their example also shows that relative economic success did not offer real protection and even the most diverse defense strategies could ultimately lead to the same conclusion: deportation and murder.

From Tarnow to Berlin

Eduard Wassermann was born in 1883 in Tarnow in Poland. He left his hometown shortly after the turn of the century for Berlin, where he became a poultry trader. Listed in the Berlin commercial register from 1923 as proprietor of a small business, he imported meat – mainly from Sweden and Yugoslavia – and sold it at the market in Wichert Strasse, at the central livestock market and in a shop at Rodenberg Strasse 40. The shop, which his wife and daughter ran and which moved in the early 1930s to Brunnen Strasse 71, was increasingly used as an ice cream parlor in the summer months.

Max Wassermann, born 1895, joined his brother in the German capital in 1912. He set up a grocery store with his wife Leonora in Kugler Strasse and sold eggs wholesale from the backrooms. The egg business went so well that he soon closed the grocery store and moved the wholesale branch to a shop at Wisbyer Strasse 63 in 1929. Max imported his eggs from countries including Denmark and Holland and sold them by the crate to bakeries and stores. Apart from the driver of the company truck, the only employees were workers required to load the goods. Max Draber, a convert to Judaism for the sake of his Jewish wife, took care of the accounts on a part time basis.

The fact that Max Wassermann and his family were able to move into a 4-room apartment in the newly built Wisbyer Strasse 65 and employ a maid indicates that, like his brother Eduard, he prospered in business.
Oppression and counter-strategies

The situation rapidly worsened for the two brothers in the mid-1930s. Their licenses to import eggs and meat were withdrawn. In December 1936, Eduard Wassermann sold his business to the non-Jew Edwin Hansen but remained a silent partner with a 48% per cent holding, which enabled him to get by.

When Max Wassermann was barred from trading eggs a short time later, he had to close down his business. Despite his popularity and good reputation, many of his customers refused to pay their outstanding bills. He subsequently tried to break into wholesale meat trading but soon had to give up. On coming into an inheritance soon afterward, he set up a gentlemen’s clothing factory, Wassermann & Adler, at Kaiser Wilhelm Strasse 38 which later moved to Münz Strasse 15, with a Jewish partner who soon left. The factory manufactured mostly coats and suits which were sold wholesale to clothes stores. The shop was devastated during the November pogrom in 1938 and the sewing machines and hand saws destroyed but he still tried to keep the firm going. At this point he considered fleeing for the first time but his wife Leonora refused to leave Berlin. Disagreement over the question of emigration together with their extreme financial difficulties put their relationship under such strain that in 1939 Leonora divorced Max.
Death in Sachsenhausen

The two brothers, who had tried in different ways to defy the National Socialist's anti-Semitic measures, ultimately both faced a tragic end. They were among the 534 Jewish men and youths holding Polish passports to be arrested in Berlin immediately after the outbreak of World War II and taken to Sachsenhausen concentration camp on September 13, 1939. They died there in 1940, allegedly of appendicitis. In fact, Eduard Wassermann was diabetic and had both legs amputated in Sachsenhausen — an operation from which he never recovered. Max Wassermann, crushed by the death of his brother, died just under a month later.

JONAS KRECHENBAUM

The brothers' gravestone on the Jewish cemetery in Berlin-Weissensee
GERMANY // FRIEDA ADAM

Berlin, Germany... September 1942 – In 1938 Erna Puterman was working as a seamstress in Berlin where she met Frieda Adam, a co-worker. The two teenage girls became friends. Even when Erna was forced to change jobs because she was Jewish, Frieda continued her friendship with Erna. Frieda refused to be intimidated by the anti-Jewish laws and climate. Life became increasingly difficult and exceedingly harsh for the Jews of Germany. In September 1942 Erna’s mother was arrested and put in a camp in Germany. Later, she was sent on one of the early transports to Auschwitz. Erna was left to care for her brother who was deaf. Not knowing what to do, Erna went to Frieda for help and advice.

Frieda’s response to Erna was immediate, “As long as there is food for us, there will be food for you, too.” Thus in September 1942, Erna and her brother went into hiding for more than two years. Frieda had three small children ages six, four, and two, and a husband in the German army. Frieda said of her husband, “He was an evil man. Everyone was evil back then.” When Frieda’s husband discovered that she was hiding two Jews, he began to blackmail her. Late in 1944 Frieda was forced to find Erna and her brother another place to hide. They all survived the war.

Frieda Adam is in her 90s and continues to live in Berlin.
Germany marks 80 years since rise of Hitler with 'project of remembrance'
Hundreds recount personal stories in Berlin as country starts year of events

Kate Connolly in Berlin
guardian.co.uk, Wednesday 30 January 2013 14.01 EST

As the German flag flew at half mast outside the Reichstag, Inge Deutschkron addressed rapt members of the Bundestag within. She recounted in vivid detail her experience of the day, 80 years before, that was to become a turning point not just for her but for the world.

The 90-year-old Jewish-German author recalled details of the two life-changing events of 30 January 1933, the day Hitler came to power. One was the torchlit parade of SA stormtroopers and SS detachments marching through Berlin to the cheers of thousands of Germans. The other was a poignant conversation with her mother, who was trying to
prepare her for the difficult times that lay ahead. "My child, you are a Jew," she said. "You belong to a minority and you must defend yourself."

Deutschkron and her mother became so-called "U-Boote" — submarines — staying alive in Berlin throughout the war thanks to German families who hid and cared for them. "The guilt of having survived has persecuted me ever since," the author told German MPs, "and it has never let me go."

Deutschkron's account was one of hundreds of personal stories in Berlin on Wednesday as the city started a year of events to commemorate the Nazis' accession to power, in what the state secretary for culture, André Schmitz, described as "the biggest project of remembrance that has ever taken place in Germany".

Exhibitions, concerts, art shows and guided tours are among the many hundreds of events inviting Germans to reflect on Hitler's rise to power and the extent to which ordinary citizens aided his accession.

In the Berlin Philharmonie, the Frankfurt-based Roma and Sinti Philharmoniker performed a requiem for the hundreds of thousands of their people believed to have been murdered in death camps, as pictures of scores of victims in happier times were projected on to a screen behind the orchestra.

Opening the exhibition Berlin 1933 — The Road to Dictatorship at the documentation centre Topography of Terror, on the former grounds of the SS and Gestapo headquarters in Berlin, the chancellor, Angela Merkel, said the rise of Hitler had been made possible because "the majority had, at the very best, behaved with indifference".

"The co-operation of the German elite and broad swaths of society" had allowed it, she said, speaking almost precisely to the minute that Paul Hindenburg, then the president of the Reich, had sworn Hitler in as chancellor eight decades before.

The exhibition Destroyed Variety — Berlin 1933-1938 at the German History Museum charts the consequences of the National Socialists' dominance of German life between January 1933 and November 1938, when the Kristallnacht pogrom saw thousands of Jewish businesses and synagogues torched to the ground across the country. Displaying examples of the Nazi party's propaganda, the exhibition describes how the party came to power through democratic means, promising Germans "work and bread" at a time when the world economic crisis had created a breeding ground for extremist views. SS knuckledusters, weaponry and uniforms are among the many objects used to illustrate how Jews, Gypsies, gay people and political "undesirables" were subjected to state-institutionalised terror practices even before 1933.

It also focuses on the avant garde cultural figureheads who, having transformed Germany into a modern, open-minded metropolis famous for its theatres, cabarett and...
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dance during the Weimar Republic, abandoned Germany in droves in 1933, leaving the country bereft of much of its best talent.

At the Brandenburg Gate an open-air exhibition recalls the SS and SA's torchlit parades, staged by the Nazis in order to undo the images of battered troops returning from the first world war. It links up to an outdoor exhibition of portraits on huge pillars across the city which will highlight the biographies of around 200 Germans who were persecuted by the Nazis. One, outside the department store KaDeWe, tells the story of its Jewish owner who like many was robbed of his property.

Among the projects is a "Zeitzeugen" or "Witness" app, created by the Geschichtswerkstatt or History Workshop which can be downloaded on to smartphones and will guide visitors between sites connected to 1933 and Hitler's takeover.

The author Deutschkron welcomed the efforts to keep history alive, recalling her first attempt to return to Germany in the 1960s and how her "feeling of survivor's guilt suddenly gave way to one of amazement" when people suggested to her: "Why don't you just forget it ... you have to be able to forgive, it happened such a long time ago after all."