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H. G. Adler, Translated by Belinda Cooper, General editor Amy Loewenhaar-Blauweiss,

Afterword by Jeremy Adler, Assisted by Benton Arnovitz

Frontmatter

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## Theresienstadt 1941–1945

### *The Face of a Coerced Community*

First published in German in 1955, with a revised edition appearing five years later, H. G. Adler's *Theresienstadt 1941–1945* is a foundational work in the field of Holocaust studies. As the first scholarly monograph to describe the particulars of a single camp – the Jewish ghetto in the Czech town of Terezín – it is the single most detailed and comprehensive account of any concentration camp. Adler, a survivor of the camp, organized the book into three sections: a history of the ghetto, a detailed institutional and social logical analysis of the camp, and an attempt to understand the psychology of the perpetrators and the victims. A collaborative effort between the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum and the Terezín Publishing Project makes this authoritative text on Holocaust history available for the first time in English, with a new afterword by the author's son, Jeremy Adler.

Poet, novelist, and scholar H. G. Adler (1910–88) was deported with his family to the Theresienstadt Ghetto in 1942. From there, they were transported to Auschwitz. He was then dispatched to two outlying camps of Buchenwald. Eighteen members of his family, including his first wife, Gertrud Klepetar, perished in the camps. He returned to his birthplace of Prague in 1945 and then, in 1947, went into voluntary exile in the United Kingdom, where he wrote a total of twenty-seven books, including the celebrated Holocaust trilogy *Panorama*, *The Journey*, and *The Wall*. He received several awards for his work, including the Leo Baeck Prize for *Theresienstadt 1941–1945*.

Belinda Cooper is a senior fellow at the World Policy Institute in New York and an adjunct professor at NYU's Center for Global Affairs and Columbia University's Institute for the Study of Human Rights. She has written for a wide variety of publications in German and English and has translated German scholarly books and articles for twenty-five years.

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Jeremy Adler is Emeritus Professor of German and Senior Research Fellow in the Department of German at King's College London. The author or editor of numerous books, he is a member of the German Academy of Language and Literature.

# Theresienstadt 1941–1945

*The Face of a Coerced Community*

**H. G. ADLER**

Translated by

**BELINDA COOPER**

General Editor

**AMY LOEWENHAAR-BLAUWEISS**

*The Terezín Publishing Project*

With an afterword by

**JEREMY ADLER**

*King's College London*

*Published in association with the*

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FOR GERALDINE, AS A MEMORIAL.

GERALDINE, DR. GERTRUD ADLER-KLEPETAR, BORN ON  
DECEMBER 9, 1905, IN PRAGUE, MURDERED BY GASSING AND  
INCINERATED ON OCTOBER 14, 1944, IN AUSCHWITZ-BIRKENAU,  
ALONG WITH HER MOTHER.

FOR THIRTY-TWO MONTHS AND AT THE LIMITS OF HER  
ENORMOUS STRENGTH, SHE GAVE HER ALL IN  
THERESIENSTADT FOR HER FAMILY, FOR MANY FRIENDS,  
AND FOR COUNTLESS AFFLICTED.

TIRELESSLY, SHE SACRIFICED HERSELF. IT IS FOR HER  
MOTHER THAT SHE WENT TO HER DEATH.

IN HER, HUMAN DIGNITY DAILY CELEBRATED THE VICTORY  
OF HUMILITY OVER THE THREATS FROM IGNOMINY.

Just because God may grant forgiveness, it does not mean that he renders the forgiven sin harmless. This is an act of man.

If God forgives a sin, this does not mean that the effects of this sin are no longer being felt. The entire world suffers as a consequence of sins, those that are forgiven as well as those that are not forgiven. In this sense there is no difference between those sins that are forgiven and those that are not forgiven. Nevertheless, we must make an effort to seek forgiveness for our sins. This is an act of man.

Can this act of man succeed? It is the same as with every other human act: before it is completed, there is always the possibility that God will intervene. Without falling into heathen optimism, we can easily say that it is not necessary for human acts to fail. On the contrary. When speaking of an act of man – as opposed to an act of nature – we are referring to the latent possibility of Divine intervention.

It is therefore possible that any sin may be forgiven. And so it is possible that *all* sins will be forgiven!

Can this act of man, that which makes sins harmless, succeed? We merely know that to believe that something must fail is a superstition. What, then, constitutes the possibility for success?

So long as HE has not forgiven *all* sins, *we* too cannot render a *single one* harmless. We use a strange term to describe rendering a human sin harmless: doing good.

Given that until now the do-gooders have achieved nothing, absolutely nothing, we may conclude that the totality of humanity's sins has still not been forgiven. And given that new do-gooders are still being born and tormenting themselves, we may conclude that God remains prepared to forgive our sins.

Franz Baermann Steiner, "Essays and Discoveries"

London, August 1943

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Amy Loewenhaar-Blauweiss

## Foreword

Many of the acts perpetrated during those dark days could be titled “evil as an experiment.” In a very particular way, the concentration camp of Theresienstadt – Terezín, occasionally called the ghetto of Theresienstadt for the outside world – which was dedicated exclusively to the Jews, was such an experiment in the will to evil.

Minimal chances of remaining healthy in the camp were coupled with a great likelihood of becoming ill; the realm of life was replaced by the realm of death. This was one aspect of it.

More and more people were crammed into a small, ever-shrinking space, so that each person was constantly bumping into and rubbing up against everyone else; as intended, all manner of selfishness and greed blossomed, and all decency withered away. This was the second aspect of it.

And, finally, the third aspect was that crowded together into these confines were Jews from many parts of Europe – people, in other words, who for generations had been distinct from one another geographically, culturally, and linguistically; inevitably, so it seemed, every little jealousy and sense of superiority was unleashed and any sense of a collective identity decayed.

Any undertaking to depict all of this will be fraught with difficulties, but it is of significance in understanding human psychology and moral psychology in general, as well as the psychology of Jews in particular. Dr. H. G. Adler has taken on this task, and he has, it may be said, done it admirable justice. His book on Theresienstadt combines the human gift for remaining close to one’s subject, empathizing and sympathizing with it, with the mental ability to step back and maintain the detachment necessary to become aware of the dominant features shaping the whole.

A scientific rigor that does not overlook any fact and is always in search of new data is united with an artistic sensibility that is able to understand or intuit the underlying causes.

Anyone who is prepared to recognize that which occurred, and therefore anyone, wherever he may be, who has been granted new life, will remain deeply indebted to Dr. Adler for his work.

Leo Baeck

## Preface to the Second Edition

It fills me with gratitude and satisfaction that in 1958, three years after the publication of this book, it became necessary to print a second edition, which was delayed due neither to any fault of my own nor to that of the publisher. This book's success testifies to a salutary sympathy for the latest unfathomable calamity to befall the Jewish people. Its success was supported by insightful and detailed reviews in Germany and in many other countries. I am therefore now able to present a carefully revised, in many ways improved and partly expanded, text, which also benefited from the unintended delay in publication. I was able to expand the "Sources and Literature" section from 261 items to 634, some of which are extensively annotated so that this section will hopefully provide a useful list of resources for future research, especially because it includes previously unknown works or little-known publications. I recognize, however, that despite all this, this section, as well as the entire book, still contains errors and may be further improved on. I can only repeat my request that readers continue to provide me with corrections, lend me source materials, and keep me in mind when it comes to useful information and tips of any kind, all of which I or future researchers shall gratefully make use of. The account of business transactions and the background behind them remains particularly sketchy. Certainly there is much that could be added here. Nevertheless, it was possible to clarify or more thoroughly shed light on some essential matters, such as the nature of the deportees – of which it is always difficult to get a clear picture – the interventions by the International Red Cross, the major propaganda film of 1944, and the events of the last days and weeks prior to liberation and immediately thereafter.

Many corrections in the documentation occurred because of additional information I received in response to the bibliographic "Sources and Literature" section; this information, which I did not have access to when I originally wrote this book, usually served to confirm facts I had presented or views I had expressed. Furthermore, whereas previously I often had to rely on document copies, I have, in the interim, been able to compare some of these with their originals; this too gave rise to emendations, even if not terribly radical ones. Above all, however, the book's warm reception made it possible for me – with help from the New York-based Conference on Jewish Material Claims against Germany and with the cooperation of my always sympathetic and supportive publisher, Mr. Hans G. Siebeck, both of whom I would

hereby like to thank – to fulfill one of the wishes I expressed in the first edition: to put together and publish a book of documentary material from Theresienstadt, *Die Verheimlichte Wahrheit* (*The Hidden Truth*, 1958), with which I was able to round out and conclude my research on the topic. The two books complement each other; they presuppose each other; and only the two together can provide a sense of the scope of the issues addressed. The second book fills in gaps left by the first book and brings more detailed factual evidence to bear, thereby demonstrating clearly that, within the greater context of Nazi Germany's and the Reich Security Main Office's policy toward the Jews, this camp played a unique role as the first and most important camp for executing the so-called Final Solution to the Jewish Question. The true nature of this privileged camp thereby becomes just as transparent as the propagandistic purposes for which it was only too successfully maintained.

If, by adding the second book, I have succeeded in making this book somewhat more comprehensive factually, I must nevertheless confess that after careful deliberation, I stand by the first book's structure and development, its central tenets, and the in-depth manner in which it explores and interprets the issues it takes up. In these respects, nothing of consequence has been added, with the exception of a reevaluation of the Zionist youth's position in the camp (a word on that later); nothing whatsoever has been changed. This is why I would like to take the time here to respond to the diverse objections that have been raised by my well-meaning critics.

Various readers, many of them former inmates of Theresienstadt, wished I had gone into greater detail on one or the other point, something that may have been particularly advisable in depicting the camp's latter days. Yet, given that this book is already of considerable length – in its first edition alone it is the longest work ever published about a coerced community to date – and that it has just grown some more, it was impossible to comply with such requests. Despite one's best efforts, not everything that occurred in Theresienstadt can be covered. One has to set limits somewhere and abide by them. Nevertheless, the extensive additions made to the bibliography as well as *The Hidden Truth* should satisfy many of these requests. In 1957, through Zeev Shek, I discovered that valuable source materials on Theresienstadt have been preserved in Israel, but that they are not yet available to researchers. Apparently, they primarily consist of yearly and monthly reports prepared by the Jewish leaders for the German camp commanders. The hope is that these documents will be processed and published, at least in excerpts, in the coming years. It will then be possible to depict the camp's internal history much more comprehensively and in near microscopic detail, even if the language and the already familiar bias of such official reports only reveal a particular and narrowly defined aspect of the total picture. I have also been told that there is quite a bit of material among these unexplored documents in Israel that sheds light on the activities of the "Youth Welfare Office" and the illegal Zionist youth movement at the camp, as well as on the artistic work of numerous artists and laypeople.

Where some wished for greater detail, others were critical of the plethora of citations or of my having gone so far as to interpolate entire documents into the text, and they took issue with the numerous references I make to the "Sources and Literature" section, which, this opinion holds, slow down and exhaust the reader. Others saw merits in this approach. I side with the latter opinion, because I believe that it was in this way that I was able to connect the material presented with an intellectual analysis that unifies the whole. Naturally, not everyone appreciates

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statistics or other details, but it is easy to skip over interpolations, whereas, on the other hand, the expanded index allows one to pick out the relevant passages on most of the topics covered. Maybe one day there will be an opportunity to publish a simplified, popular edition.

Some suggested that, instead of prefacing the history of the camp with a brief overview of the persecution of the Jews in the then “Protectorate,” it would have been better to report on the circumstances in Germany, where Jews were being persecuted starting some six years prior. This point is well taken, but it overlooks what is established at the start of the first chapter; the current structure is therefore justified.

A few critics, none of whom were former camp inmates, doubted my claim that most people in Theresienstadt were not aware of the fate awaiting those deported to the East, particularly in Auschwitz. But this was the case. In the first edition I corroborated this by examining the psychology of the prisoners and by presenting several bibliographic references; now there is much more evidence for this lack of knowledge (e.g., 272) provided throughout the “Sources and Literature” section.

Some readers wished I had covered the SS functionaries in Theresienstadt in greater detail, particularly their fate after the war. I consciously chose not to do so and discussed these men only insofar as it seemed relevant to an understanding of the camp’s history. So much has already been written about this group that it is not necessary to also do so here; examining the sociology of the SS, the Reich Security Main Office, the Gestapo, the Eichmann Group, and the camp staff remains a task unto itself. Theresienstadt does not lend itself to this, because, to date, not a single document has surfaced regarding the private or official activities of the SS staff there. Describing what happened to some of these men in the aftermath – whose fate could only be successfully discovered by studying judicial case files, most of which cannot be obtained from Czechoslovakia – would do absolutely nothing to shed light on our own problems.

Sources in Holland made me aware of errors, which have since been corrected, particularly with respect to the Barneveld and Westerbork camps; moreover, I was chided for how I sized up the Dutch Jews in Theresienstadt. In doing so, my critics failed to consider that the Jews from Holland only started arriving in Theresienstadt in significant numbers in January 1944, and almost half of them only started coming in September of that year, so they did not have much of an impact on events prior to the camp’s final stages. What I have learned in the meantime, especially also regarding Westerbork, only seems to confirm my views and supports my overall assessment, made in the first edition, that they played a limited role. To the best of my abilities, I made every effort to accurately portray the role and particular ways of each of the groups in Theresienstadt. It was inherent to the history of this camp that the Bohemian-Moravian Jews and the German and Viennese Jews, who left their indelible mark beginning in the fall of 1941 and the summer of 1942, respectively, played the most prominent roles.

Some suggested that I draw parallels between the conditions in Theresienstadt and those in the Jewish camps in the East, such as in Łódź, Vilna, and Warsaw, whereby I was asked to compare such common traits as corruption and the internal camp bureaucrats responsible for it. I think this is a subject for a later study and is beyond the scope of this almost all-encompassing monograph; nevertheless, I have taken steps to satisfy this request this way: in defending my depiction of the Jewish

“self-administration” in charge of Theresienstadt, I draw on basic theses set forth by a venerated scholar in his examination of the Warsaw Jewish Council. When depicting the coerced community in which the SS imprisoned the Jews, it is essential to present a balanced picture. Such an assessment must foreground the leaders in charge in the Jewish administration and examine them much more closely than it does other eminent personalities who may have lived in the camps and may have distinguished themselves in myriad ways through their humane behavior. It is because of this that, in the case of Theresienstadt, figures such as Robert Stricker, Franz Kahn, and even the most admired among them all, Leo Baeck, are covered in a relatively cursory fashion. The history of a community cannot turn into biography; otherwise it would go on ad infinitum, especially given that residing in this small town over the long and short term were so many outstanding women and men who had achieved prominence prior to coming to the camp, either in the Jewish world and or in the general community, and who often certainly also stood out in the camp. Only studies dedicated to these particular individuals could depict their impact; regrettably, this cannot be undertaken here.

Those familiar with the circumstances at the camp will also allow that it was with good reason that I portrayed the “outsider” Karl Loewenstein in greater depth than I did many of the others. Even if some may find it disagreeable, it remains a fact that, for a year, Loewenstein – with his great virtues and obvious faults – was a decisive force in shaping the camp’s history. To ignore this would be a gross distortion of the truth; because Loewenstein has been treated quite unfairly in the past, there is all the more reason to emphasize his historical significance here and so try to strip away some of this injustice. Within the overall tragedy that was Theresienstadt it was a particular catastrophe that, of all things, those at the helm of the Jewish administration did not understand this man and were so myopically suspicious of him that they caused his downfall in a manner that struck at the foundations of this coerced community, while, for his part, Loewenstein was not able to adequately recognize and deal flexibly with the social fabric of this community into which he was so bizarrely forced. Admittedly, it remains unlikely whether, even then, he could have ultimately prevailed in his uncompromising fight against corruption. It is unfortunate that, from the start and for better or for worse, the Jewish camp administrators, although mainly Zionists, allied themselves with Karl Schliesser, a devotee of Czech assimilationism and the head of the Jewish Economics Department, which, under his direction, became the center of corruption in the camp and where primarily those who shared Schliesser’s ideology were employed in a business that was both lucrative and easily exploited. The internal administration almost consistently covered up for these employees, even when they were compromised by grave mismanagement.

I am grateful for how rarely and with how much restraint I was criticized by those in Israel and from within Zionist circles more generally for my assessment of the internal administration in Theresienstadt, which was led for the most part by well-known, often established Zionists. Such care was taken to protect me that when there was disagreement, the objections often reached me privately, and if they were raised in public it was done in muted tones. My critics were usually individuals who had known the Jewish camp administrators prior to the war. Often they had been close to them; in much rarer cases they knew them from the camps. This restraint is all the more noble given that in my treatment of various figures I seem to question an ideal that is held dear by many. Admittedly, I did not wish to target this ideal or any ideal,

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but, rather, I only wanted to get at its ideological and therefore far from ideal guise. Above all, I wanted to examine human behavior, which during the course of events – that is, history as we wish to nail it down in retrospect – supersedes every ideal. Ideals may determine history; patterns of behavior – ethos in the broadest sense – create the history that we experience and judge. This ethos, as one reader correctly asserts, is not a “character trait” but rather a strength that one has. One either possesses it or one doesn’t. The way things turn out, the way things could have been, all these are acts of man, which we judge, as soon as we – who are also not free of human weakness – are driven to speak out in accordance with our own conscience. Then we give voice to an authority that is greater than ourselves. This is a moral calling that one can either heed or ignore. One cannot dismiss this obligation by saying, “You, who were just a lowly inmate and were not burdened with such grave responsibilities, how would you have acted had you been in these men’s shoes?” The issues, which I raise in all seriousness, are not meant to incriminate or exonerate anyone; they are only intended to deepen our insight into the tragedy that befell those who were in charge – a tragedy for which they remain blameless – and our understanding of their failures, for which they may be blamed. By the time the first inmates arrived in Theresienstadt it was clear that this tragedy was already unfolding and could no longer be averted; it was inescapable. I never, however, assailed our martyred heroes – who were robbed of almost any free will – for their doomed fate. I only critiqued those at the head of this inmate community for acts that exceeded the orders they were forced to carry out; there was much they could have done or could have refrained from doing, which, especially given the circumstances, was also their duty. That’s what counts. Just because those I have attacked were Zionists, but I myself was not a Zionist, does not mean that I am attacking Zionism. What’s being attacked are individuals who actively participated in these events and who opened themselves up to attack for ideals that they dragged down with them into ossification and decay, even though they may have originally had a pure belief in their ideals and even though they believed they still represented these ideals – ideals that they no longer could represent, and that, in the affliction that was the camp, could no longer even be represented. Above all, it is this thesis that this book carefully explores.

One thing should be stated clearly, and I am doing so here: everything related to this issue in this book should be read as I describe it previously; particularly in such instances, I have not made the slightest change to the text. There is one thing, however, that I had overlooked, and I am grateful that it was kindly brought to my attention: the status of Zionist or Zionist-educated youth and their caretakers – who still were but adolescents themselves – in the camp. They all filled their young lives – spent in this most miserable of circumstances, in which there was no mercy and no way out – with values that provided comfort and a way to endure and beautify the present and to imbue the future with promise and meaning; for these young people, who, like all youth, were impressionable and credulous, the leaders of the “self-administration” represented venerable role models and a source of support. I have recognized and previously already stated that the youth were not at fault if they were misled in the process; what I say does not apply to those who were children at the time or to those among their caretakers who were still adolescents themselves. Many of them were terribly persecuted and humiliated while they were still living in apparent freedom, and so they only experienced a certain sense of freedom – that was theirs alone – once they were imprisoned in the camp and in the relatively

sheltered community of the “youth homes” created by the other inmates. I have written a new ending to Chapter 17 in order to do justice to the point of view of these youths, who led an isolated, privileged existence in the camp that was uncharacteristic of the general circumstances. One of the youth leaders, to whom I owe valuable insights into this issue, confessed to me how much fulfillment he found in everything symbolized by the figure of the first Jewish Elder, Jakob Edelstein – later called “Illusion Theresienstadt” by the few out of this group who survived – but how all of this crumbled when he was confronted with the reality of Auschwitz in the fall of 1944. Then the illusion became clear; those who were responsible for it lost esteem, accordingly. My source is beyond all reproach, for he remained true to his ideals and is now serving in the government of Israel.

Some readers and critics could not reconcile themselves to how I present Edelstein’s work and that of his successor, Paul Eppstein. My critics cited many of their own memories to argue against my portrayal. Readers pointed to these men’s past, their intentions, and their terrible demise at the hands of murderers. In responding to these objections, which are obvious on humane grounds, I do not wish to go much beyond what has already been conclusively chronicled in the documents on many pages of this book. An examination of such passages, which may be found throughout most of this book’s chapters – and which are supported by accounts in Chapters 12 and 14 as well as by witnesses featured in the “Sources and Literature” section – refutes practically every charge made by my critics. Some wished, and rightfully so, that I had mentioned the fact that Edelstein and Eppstein, as well as Otto Zucker and, incidentally, also Leo Baeck, could have emigrated prior to the war or even, in part, during the first years of the war and could have saved themselves. Instead, they remained with the besieged. But what was so beneficial in Baeck’s case was not a blessing in the case of the others. Even if this affects how harshly they are judged, it does not justify their later acts. The words of Franz Kafka that I used as an epigraph for Part 1 apply here: “Betrayed! Betrayed! Once one responds to a false alarm on the night bell, there’s no making it right – not ever.”

Edelstein led his wife and even his child to their doom; by, at first, voluntarily cooperating with Hans Günther, Eichmann’s representative in Prague – against the advice of Franz Kahn and other Zionists – he started down a path that, despite the best of intentions, could only lead into the abyss. Although he warned the Zionist youth who were prepared to resist against doing so, when he traveled to Amsterdam with Günther in 1941 – in order to assist in setting up a “Jewish council” and to arrange for its cooperation with the Dutch “Central Bureau,” that is, Eichmann’s office – Edelstein himself already understood how far he had gone when he said he would probably be turned into the messenger of such terrible tidings for the Jews that his own people would despise and scorn him. No, this man does not deserve our hatred and scorn, but when we look back at the impact he had, he also does not merit being turned into a role model or hero. The fact that he did not avoid the unavoidable only fits into the larger picture, but the fact that he also did not shy away from what was avoidable tarnishes his memory. There is no need to recount here what could have been avoided; the pages that follow disclose this. They also report on Edelstein’s last days as an inmate in Auschwitz, where, in the cathartic last few months of his life, he lifted himself out of the abyss of his years in Theresienstadt, so that a fellow inmate from this time, a Jew from Poland who had never been in Theresienstadt, stated that he was “like a saint.” Yet, because we are writing about the history and people of



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Theresienstadt, we must restrict ourselves to what occurred in this camp. There we see Edelstein stoop to new lows, which is also confirmed by documents presented in *The Hidden Truth*. His martyrdom will remain in our memories.

Among Eppstein's apologists were Professor Ernst Simon – whose arguments unfortunately are not based in fact (see 243c) – and Dr. Berthold Simonsohn, to whom I cede the floor in the annotated bibliography (243e). Perhaps I may reveal in this connection that, prior to the publication of the first edition of this book, I discussed one question repeatedly and at length with the late Leo Baeck: how to portray various individuals in relaying the history of Theresienstadt. I did not write anything about anyone in this book without first discussing it with Baeck. I may be the responsible party, because I shaped the sentences, but Baeck approved them and endorsed them with his preface. There was a lot more on Baeck's mind concerning Eppstein that he confided in me than is included here. Because Eppstein has been publicly defended in reviews that were published in 1959 in response to *The Hidden Truth*, I have found it necessary to allow other camp inmates to speak out about this man, at least in the "Sources and Literature" section (see 55b, 78a, 93, 243a). Eppstein went down a fateful path, in which he took the disaster that was already unfolding by the time he arrived at the camp and deepened it. He pushed people onto transports to the East only because they, Zionists like himself, dared to speak the truth. In this connection, I would like to mention the case of Vladimír Weiss, a Zionist from Prague, who was deported to Auschwitz in September 1943, with his wife and child, because he sent Eppstein a memo on corruption, reprinted here in Chapter 12. This was not an instance in which Eppstein succumbed to tragic circumstances; these were actions that he deliberated over and undertook out of his own free will. Something like this cannot be whitewashed by pointing to the man's merits; it overshadows his merits. We may only hope that this score was settled by the cruel fate that Eppstein met in the "Small Fortress" – the final judgment is not ours to make.

There were those who spoke out for others in the administration, particularly for Otto Zucker, Edelstein's deputy and the third person in the triumvirate – consisting of Eppstein, Benjamin Marmelstein, and Zucker – that took on the responsibility of leading the internal administration in the period following Edelstein's arrest and deportation to Auschwitz. His "acerbic wit and plucky pessimism" were cited. Although this may have been true of him, I cannot change my opinion of this clearly talented and unusual man. He too was so deeply enmeshed in the complicated, collective game of the Jewish administration that he must also be held accountable for not avoiding the avoidable. The observations Michel Mazor makes concerning the "Jewish Council" – to date the most insightful ones on the topic – in passages throughout *The Vanished City*, his book about the Warsaw Ghetto, apply to Zucker, just as they do to the other men who first acquiesced to and then became addicted to this game. Although the following sentences were written about the Warsaw Ghetto, which Mazor experienced, with minor modifications they may also be applied to Theresienstadt:

"It seems to me that as soon as any Jew became a member of a 'Jewish Council,' he was called upon to account for the role he was asked to play and for his culpability."

"Certainly, there can be no doubt that some members of the Jewish Council were sincerely convinced that, given the prevailing circumstances and the persecutions, only

these institutions could alleviate the suffering of the Jews. To the extent that they did not interfere in internal Jewish affairs this may, to some extent have been the case. But this cannot be allowed to distract from the fact that under orders from the Germans these individuals became ‘Jewish Führers,’ who, despite their good intentions, inevitably came to pursue a disastrous path that rendered them pliant tools in the hands of the Germans.” “Nevertheless, the ‘Jewish Councils’ cannot be viewed as agents of collaboration. The term ‘collaboration’, as we came to define it during the previous war, assumes that the Germans granted the persons concerned, as well as those around them who were drawn into voluntary cooperation (collaboration), a certain, even if slim amount, of freedom. This was not the case with the ‘Jewish Councils.’” “The community’s circumstances were extremely difficult and there were no good solutions to the problems that arose in this city of death. Nevertheless, it may be argued that no efforts were made to capitalize on those opportunities, however few and far between, that did present themselves to alleviate the suffering of the most miserable sectors of the population.” “As soon as they locked the Jews up in the ghetto, the Germans took little interest . . . in them and interfered relatively little in their lives or in their internal affairs. . . . It was the ‘Jewish Councils’ who were vested with the power of authority over this. Within the limits of what was possible . . . the ‘Jewish Council’ could organize and direct the lives of the Jews. This is why history will hold the ‘Jewish Council’ completely accountable for its actions and its impotence in this area. It is responsible . . . for the corruption that permeated all of its institutions and for many other things besides. But, above all, the ‘Jewish Council’ of Warsaw may be accused of having been completely indifferent to the terrible suffering of the masses and for not taking measures that were within its powers to alleviate the misery of the most needy strata of ghetto society.”

If I have gone so far as to pass judgment on these topics as well as on a host of other matters, then it remains, I confess, a risk I have taken, as I have already stated in my closing remarks to Chapter 20, but I thought that I should not avoid doing so, and I answer for it with my own conscience. I will applaud and be grateful to whosoever seeks to provide factual evidence to correct my daring assertions. I have not written to favor anyone nor to harm anyone; I tried, to the best of my ability, to advocate for Judaism as a particular expression of humaneness, to the extent that I understood what humaneness is. What brings me into conflict with other opinions, among them ones espoused by old campmates, is my conception of Judaism. There have been complaints that I openly call a spade a spade, that I do not disguise anything, that in depicting the abysmal catastrophe that befell us I have chosen to illuminate certain matters while keeping others in the dark, and that I also direct my accusations against my Jewish brothers. I cannot and could not have done otherwise. The more deeply I profess my allegiance to Judaism, to my people, and to the members of the coerced community of Theresienstadt – among whom I, as the least of them, never and nowhere exclude myself from its existing and possible circle of guilt – the more I must strive to reveal the truth and saturate the memory of the generations to come with this, as painful and as bitter as it may be.

No nation in history has dared to go to such lengths to blame itself as has the Jewish people; from Moses onward, its great teachers and admonishers have never done otherwise. Keeping guilt hidden exacerbates it and has a corroding effect, but revealing and investigating guilt has a cleansing effect and promotes the inscrutable mysterious workings of grace, which stir up the healing powers of the conscience and which cleanse the conscience of guilt unto the end of days, when the great promises made to humanity will be fulfilled and “though all the peoples walk each in the name

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of its gods, we will walk in the name of the Lord, our God, forever and ever” (Micah 4:5). In answer to questions from several critics, I hereby state that the concept of goodness in the name of the Eternal that we have been taught about ourselves – most forcefully through the commandment to love one’s neighbor as oneself – and a view of the Everlasting determined my understanding of Judaism and are, as I am describing them here, the spiritual underpinnings for the opinions expressed in this book and for the standards applied when passing judgment.

This is also how one is to understand what I mean when I discuss Judaism and describe its role in Theresienstadt in the final chapter of the book. In that passage, I write,

One’s own guilt, the guilt that, as a Jew, one has to account for through Judaism, was not taken as a starting point to develop a creative principle. People did not realize that those who suffer the most are those who always blame others and believe themselves to be blameless. In the relatively bearable conditions of Theresienstadt people failed to realize that persecution presented an opportunity for a human catharsis and for the rediscovery of a Judaism that most knew only superficially. Hardly anyone found his way back to Judaism as a result of being in Theresienstadt, nor did being there cause those who already were followers of a “Jewish” ideology to find their way to a freer and deeper approach.

I stand by this statement, but I have softened it a bit, because I put it too unconditionally originally; I have thus replaced “most” with “very many” and “hardly anyone” with “few.”

Dr. Benjamin Murmelstein took issue with how I worded the last sentence on p. 190 of the first edition; the sentence begins, “Following the departure from camp of the final transport, which Rahm and Möhs put together alone, and only with Murmelstein’s assistance . . .” Dr. Murmelstein read the word “assistance” to mean that he was being accused of actively collaborating with the Gestapo in assembling the final transport. This was not at all my intention and is also not implied by the context; with these words I intended neither to accuse him of active participation nor to implicate him in the least. But because Dr. Murmelstein felt my wording was unclear and others too could misunderstand it, I have omitted the words “and only with Murmelstein’s assistance.”

Finally, I wish to conclude my observations with a number of acknowledgments for which previously I did not find a place. First of all, I would like to thank ministerial counselor Dr. Richard Korherr for how generously he forgave me for causing damage to his reputation with a passage (p. 53) in the first edition that, as it turns out now, contains factually unfounded information, but for whose contents I cannot be held responsible. This passage has been omitted, and everything relevant to this matter can be found under number 156 in the bibliography. Because Dr. Korherr never belonged to the SS and because he has been rehabilitated on account of his behavior during the years of National Socialist rule, I have also emphatically decided that it was wrong to list Dr. Korherr as an “SS statistician” in the index of names.

My special thanks, once again, goes to the Wiener Library in London and its friendly staff, and especially to Dr. Alfred Wiener. I would also like to express my heartfelt thanks once again to this institution’s research director, Dr. Eva G. Reichmann. Over the course of the past few years, she always took an active

interest in my work and supported my efforts with her wise counsel. For their generous support I would also like to thank the Centre de Documentation Juive Contemporaine in Paris (specifically Dr. Michel Mazor), the Institute of Contemporary History in Munich (specifically Dr. Helmut Krausnick), Yad Vashem in Jerusalem, the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw (specifically Professor Dr. B. Mark), and the Rijksinstituut voor Oorlogsdocumentatie in Amsterdam (specifically Dr. L. de Jong), which was particularly forthcoming in its assistance. I am also much obliged to Dr. Gerhart Riegner who, via a very unusual cooperation, permitted me access to the important Archive of the World Jewish Congress in Geneva. In addition, I would like to extend a great thanks to all those who have helped me with documentation, eyewitness testimony, information, advice, critiques, and more. Of particular note for their assistance were the late Professor Philip Friedman and Klara Caro, Eva Manes, Dora Philippson, Grete Salus, Dr. Selma Segall, and Getty Spies, as well as Jehuda Bacon, Professor David Cohen, Dr. M. Dvorjetski, Maurits Frankenhuis, Dr. Alexander Gutfeld, Sender Israels, Friedrich Klein, Bernhard Kolb, Ota Kraus, Erich Kulka, Dr. Karl Loewenstein, Thomas Mandl, Sven Mayer, Oskar Perschke, Mozes Meijer Poppers, Karl Georg Roessler, Morten Ruge (MA), Zeev Shek, Dr. Berthold Simonsohn, Kazimierz Smolén (MA), and the assistant professor Dr. Aron Vedder.

In conclusion, I would like to point out that although several details in the preface to the first edition are now outdated, it is nevertheless being reprinted here unchanged.

H. G. Adler  
London  
July 1960

## Preface to the First Edition

Although I made an effort to write this book using an untainted German, because of the topic involved – an SS camp set up for Jewish inmates – the text came to reflect and was often subject to the general deterioration of language in the age of mechanical materialism, as well as, in particular, the amorphous, coerced language of the National Socialists and the colloquialisms and written language of Theresienstadt. But the demon that created this camp and left it to vegetate must, certainly, also be conquered linguistically. To show that a sound mind seeks to distance itself from amorphous words and phrases, which have been emptied of meaning, have been perverted to mean their opposite, or are simply wrong, I most often put such terms into quotation marks, even if I make frequent use of them. I purposely placed the glossary – which helps explain the nature of this “ghetto” and also demonstrates what components went into creating the camp’s language – at the beginning and not the end. The glossary makes no claims to being complete.\*

To the best of my knowledge, this book is the first comprehensive monograph to attempt so extensively to depict not only the history of a purely Jewish coerced camp of the SS, but also its societal makeup; moreover, no one has, as of yet, so exhaustively portrayed even a regular concentration camp under any regime whatsoever. I do not mean hereby to detract from the value of previous books and studies. On the contrary, without these previous studies – among them, the work by Zdeněk Lederer, until now the most important on Theresienstadt – it would have been difficult to realize this one; it is indebted to all of its predecessors. Naturally, I sought to present things accurately and properly, but I recognize that such a book will always contain errors. Mistakes and oversights creep in. Amendments will be necessary. Much has been left in the dark that remains to be illuminated. I may have missed some previously published works. And, above all, there remains unpublished material that I am unaware of, as well as eyewitnesses who could emend what is portrayed here in various ways. I am always grateful for any pertinent information that could be of use to a new edition of this book or for other projects.

\* The glossary, which appears in the German edition, has not been translated.

The syntax, spelling, and punctuation of citations have been left basically unchanged, no matter how much they may violate the rules; however, when they could have led to misunderstandings in the text, obvious errors were quietly corrected. One should bear in mind that many documents, such as some of the “orders of the day” and activity reports, were written either by native Czech speakers who could write German only poorly or by authors who were stylistically untrained and awkward. Furthermore, many documents had to be drafted in the greatest of haste. All of this, along with the psychological pressure weighing on their authors, contributed to the odd language found in most, if not all, of the documents – which I had to present just as they were without changing a whit, because only their faithful rendering could accurately reflect the nature of the coerced community in Theresienstadt. Usually, when possible, Czech texts were faithfully translated into the German commonly used in the camps; that is, they were not improved in the German translation, as would have been possible. Other foreign-language citations were also translated, with the exception of the French report written by the International Red Cross delegate in Theresienstadt. Numbers listed following citations correspond to numbers in the “Sources and Literature” section. When such numbers are missing, the citations come from documents, which may be found under number 307 and under numbers 176, 218, 219, 310, and 311, as well as in the preface to “Sources and Literature.” Even when I use information from Lederer’s book (166) and Prochnik’s survey (216), I do not always make explicit reference to them. For abridged citations or where additions or explanations were necessary, I used square brackets [-], whereas any text in parentheses (-) appeared as such in the original. Where text was omitted from a citation, two dots (. .) usually indicate that no more than three words were omitted, three dots indicate that part of a sentence or a short sentence were omitted, and four or more dots indicate that a longer passage was omitted.

Numbers within the body of the text likewise correspond to numbers in the “Sources and Literature” section, which also replaces the footnotes that I have avoided, although even when I do not refer to this bibliography there are many instances in which my book has benefited from these sources in the way of knowledge, inspiration, or corroboration. Furthermore, this annotated bibliography seeks to offer more than would a regular bibliography; many sources are briefly assessed, important information is cited or briefly described, and for the first time the outlines of the larger set of issues that this book attempts to address clearly emerge. This is why I would recommend that the reader devote a good deal of his attention to this bibliography, which mentions many matters not found in other parts of the book.

My greatest thanks go to Dr. Leo Baeck, without whose active assistance, encouragement, and never-flagging advice this book would not have been completed. I thank the Jewish Museum in Prague and its employees from 1945 to 1947 for their support, which enabled me to acquire most of the documents for my work. For his help in diverse and equally important ways, I would like to thank Dr. Alfred Wiener, as well as Dr. Eva G. Reichmann, Ilse Wolff, and all the other employees of his Wiener Library in London, whose treasure trove of books and other collections was generously put at my disposal. Professor Philip Friedman at YIVO in New York gave me bibliographic data for which I was grateful. Mr. A. Opitz of the International Tracing Service in Arolsen kindly made materials from his institute available to me. I would like to thank my late friend Dr. Franz Baermann Steiner, as well as Mrs. Else Dormitzer, Miss Grete Fischer, and Mr. Jehuda Bacon, Dr. Franz Bass, Dr. Elias

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H. G. Adler  
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