

Fritz Gluckstein

Fritz Gluckstein is the son of a Jewish father and a Christian mother, Georg and Hedwig Gluckstein. He was born January 24, 1927, in Berlin, Germany, where his father, a lawyer by training, served as a district judge. Following the Nazi seizure of power, Georg was dismissed from his judgeship. He then went to work for the Jewish community, serving as their legal advisor. Since the family belonged to a liberal synagogue and was identified with the Jewish community, Fritz was considered a non-protected Mischling or Geltungsjuden (one who counts as a Jew). The family survived World War II in Berlin, owing in part to the assistance provided by Hedwig's Christian sister, Elfriede Dressler, who helped to look after Fritz and provided the family with extra food.

In 1942 the Glucksteins were forced to move to the neighborhood around the Oranienburgerstrasse synagogue, but shortly thereafter, their apartment was bombed, forcing the family to relocate a second time. In 1943 their apartment was again hit by Allied bombs, and they were forced to seek shelter in the Jewish hospital. At this time Fritz was working on a demolition and clean-up crew. One day, he was assigned to work at Eichmann's Gestapo headquarters in the Reich Security Main Office, along with other Mischlinge. Surprisingly, for the four days he worked there, he was supervised by a sympathetic SS officer, Second Lieutenant Ernst Henning von Hardenberg. In the fall of 1944, Fritz and his father were conscripted into a labor battalion made up of Jewish husbands of Christian wives and Mischlinge. Their job was to demolish partly-destroyed buildings and to clear rubble after bombing raids. Later, they were tasked with building defensive barriers around the city to slow the Soviet advance.

After the liberation the family remained in Berlin. Because Georg did not want to learn a new legal system at his age, he and Hedwig decided against emigration. Georg resumed his judicial career and also served as a chairman of the new Jewish community's assembly of representatives. Fritz immigrated on his own to the United States where he studied veterinary medicine.