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Summary

Johann Krizsan was born on October 1, 1929, in Lackenbach.

Many Jews lived in Lackenbach. All of the stores, other than two, belonged to Jewish families. They were very religious. Out of boredom, Krizsan and some of his friends used to go to the synagogue.

Krizsan is not aware that people spoke desperately about the Jews. He asserts that the locals generally liked them. The only Jewish names he remembers are of the Kulm family, who owned the bakery, and the Wieselmann family, with the butcher shop. In around 1938, both families left town once they found out that the situation is getting dangerous for them. The locals were aware of and anticipated the terror against the Jews that was about to come. Krizsan did not know that the Nazis persecuted the Jews. He was not a member of the HJ, but the PIMPF (for boys 10-14 years old). The children were proud to belong to that organization, all wearing uniforms. The most important date the boys had to remember was Hitler's birthday, April 20, 1889. Discipline was crucial. The supervisors were all ordinary people from Lackenbach. Everyone in Lackenbach was a Nazi. If there were some against the regime, they would've been scared to talk about it in the open. People in Lackenbach glorified Hitler.

In 1938, Krizsan and his friends watched through a window how the town's Nazis blew up the synagogue. The site had been fenced off and prepared for the detonation. It happened fast. Out of fear of repercussions, no one commented afterward about it.

One day, in 1938, Krizsan witnessed how the out-of-town Nazis, went from one apartment building to another and rounded up the Jewish population, pushed them onto a car, and drove them away. That lasted about the entire day. The Jews knew that they were going to be deported. Krizsan insists that the deportees were not able to escape and that they actually didn't seem to have cared. Everything took place in a calm and no-frills kind of way. The Lackenbacher looked on; there wasn't anything they could have done. Some onlookers snatched away the belongings that the Jewish people were holding. The town's Nazis seized the belongings that the Jewish families left behind.

Krizsan did not have any contact with the Lackenbach Roma. He remembers seeing how the Nazis imprisoned the Roma in a nearby camp, which used to be the Maierhof estate. He saw camp guards holding whips that they often used to lash out at the Romani. Hundreds of Roma and Sinti were in the camp. They were forced to haul blocks of stones and work on road construction. On the camp, there was one water well and several open-air showers for the inmates. The commandants were SS; they kept offices on-site and lived in houses. In approximately 1940, hundreds of Romani and the camp's commandant died due to the breakout of a typhus epidemic. The victims were all buried in the Jewish cemetery. Those who survived were deported in 1941. It was public; everyone in town was able to see that.

Krizsan heard the fighting on the front line, the detonation of the grenades. The moment the Russians entered the town. Everywhere they went, they created mayhem. People were scared, but nobody dared to do something.