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Summary

Maria Strobl was born and grew up in Deutschkreutz, Austria, 80 km south of Vienna, right on the Hungarian border, in September 1931. She remembers a happy and safe childhood in a good family and in kindergarten. Her father was a carpenter, but also a cobbler, and her mother worked in a business owned by Jews. Also, the father had to do with Jews; he bought materials for shoe making from Jewish owned businesses and sold them pigeons he'd raised. Times were hard in the 30ies, the father was unemployed. He joined the military at some point.

A lot of Jews lived in Deutschkreutz. Most of them had businesses, shops. As a child she had no contact with Jews, but the parents did; they worked for Jews and went shopping in their shops. People kept their distance from Jews. That's the way it was. They did not work on Saturdays, took walks on that day and asked non-Jews, for example her older sister, to turn on the stove in their home for cooking, because they were not allowed to do anything on that day. It was like an inoculation: one kept away from Jews. When Hitler came one railed against the Jews, but not before Hitler. Before one kept one's distance, but did not rant. One did not know anything about their religious life. She tried to look into the doors of the synagogue, but could not open them, so she had no idea what was inside. One was nervous about the Jews, a little afraid. They never talked about the Jews at home. - The Jews were magnanimous, they gave. Her mother mentioned that and generally talked positively about them. - Her parents were poor, but in a Jewish shop one could buy things and pay off in installments. Other shopkeepers would not do that.

She does not remember that anything special happened at the time of the "Anschluss". Meetings were held, but she could not go because she was sick. After the Anschluss all teachers were Nazis. They sang Nazi songs in class. They had to open the windows and sing loudly so that people passing by could hear the singing. Of course, they celebrated Hitler's birthday in school. She did not finish school because of the war. She went on a camping trip once with the *Jungmädel*. This was voluntary, one did not have to go. Otherwise she did not notice any changes in 1938. She had a cousin who was a *Freiheitskämpfer*, a freedom fighter. He and a few others in town opposed the Nazis and went underground. His name was Ernst Gabriel. He was denounced by colleagues, was taken away, was hospitalized in Vienna and there they killed him with injections. His mother, Frau Strobl's aunt, visited him there and saw how he wasted away. Also her brother in law was part of this group of *Freiheitskämpfer*.

There were very many engaged Nazis in Deutschkreutz. They were very well off. About half of the population was in favor of the Nazis, she estimates.

After the Anschluss, she believes, the Jews sold their properties and left. There were no Jews left after '38. Their houses were torn down, except two-story buildings in the *Hauptstasse* (main street); they were taken over by Deutschkreutzer Nazis, without payment. The property was *arysiert*, aryanized. but otherwise the Jewish quarter was totally flattened, removed, including a well-known rabbinical school. A few Jews, came back after the war to visit, maybe

from America, but her mother did not have any contact any more with the Jews she worked for. The Jews visiting after the war particularly wanted to go to the Jewish cemetery, which is still kept up today. - The synagogue was blown up. Forced laborers, French and Russians, cleared the rubble away. A lot of the rubble was taken away by locals who used the bricks and other material for construction. The blow-up of the synagogue was announced and it was heard everywhere in town. A young woman was killed by a flying piece of debris.

She knew the Romanies in Deutschkreutz. They were very poor, the women went around begging, her mother gave to the extent possible. The Romani children did not go to school. One talked badly about these people. They lived a bit outside, in Girm. Many, apparently not all, were taken away after the "Anschluss". Some stayed after the war, first lived poorly, but then worked and built houses. She does not know why some were deported and others not.

Life during the war, during the Hitler time, was harsh, but she felt safe in her family. Raising pigs was illegal, but they did it clandestinely. Men went to war, including her father. The women had to do everything.

Forced laborers were accommodated in peoples' houses, they seemed to be mostly French. They built bunkers, dug trenches and cleared rubble. By coincidence she once saw how hundreds of miserable people, all bald-headed and in bad shape, were driven through town. She was horrified and went home, never talked about it, not sure who these people were.

The greatest horror came when the Russians came. The front fighters were ok, told people to go back into their houses and basements. The troops that followed, they called them the "Mongolians", drank and raped all women, including her mother, aunt and grandmother. She and her sister hid in the basement or the pigsty, crying. This was common during the first month of the Russian occupation.

After the war nothing much happened to the fanatic Nazis in town. Nobody talked about it.