

Jewish Fates in Kreis Bütow

*"Then the Lord, thy God, will lead you to a place of safety."
(from the Talmud)*

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In Pomerania the percentage of the Jewish population always was rather low. So, in Kreis Bütow in 1930 it was about 0.5%, or 114 out of 21,000. In my hometown, Gross Tuchen, with about 1000 inhabitants, we had only 2 Jewish families. About their fate and that of one Jewish refugee, I'll talk here.



View of Radde farmstead in Kreis Bütow

It was the 14th October, 1944. The radio broadcast had reported on the heavy fighting for Aachen, about attempts by the Russians to break through at Memel and Warsaw, but also about the V1, under whose fire London lay. And in the newspaper one could read reports on the state funeral for Field Marshal Rommel. In Germany, all this was alarming, but on our isolated farmstead in eastern Pomerania in County Bütow near the border with West Prussia, we had entirely different problems. The potato crop had to be brought in. The entire family was pressed into field work to make the most of the last sunny days of fall.

My brother Karl was only ten, not yet ready for heavy field work, and had, as usual, to look after the livestock and to take care of the cows. Suddenly, a strange figure appeared in the barn door. Karl was frightened by the sight of a man in a shabby suit, unshaven and stooped. His right hand trembled mightily. Both looked at each other in silence for awhile, and then in a tired voice the man insisted on seeing our father. The stranger looked terrible, walking was obviously difficult for him, and he had a bad cough.

My brother pointed our father out to the man. The stranger went to Father quickly and spoke a few short

sentences. Our father shook his hand and took him aside. My brother could make nothing of the single words or the sentences in their conversation. "Special Camp, Stutthof, flight, Kapo, school friend, Rosen. . ." They spoke long and in whispers. Our father became very serious. At last he said to the stranger, "For the time being you will stay with us, get some rest and we will see what to do next."

The stranger was a guest among us

In the evenings we all sat around the table in the living room, together with our eastern workers. That was the practice with us, even after a local Nazi leader appeared without warning and ordered us to change our arrangements. The Nazi leader told us that eastern workers belonged in the barn. My father threw him out. It was still up to Father to make decisions on our farmstead, who ate at our table and who did not. The stranger was offered the honored place at our table. Our mother was overjoyed at the astounding appetite of our visitor and at his compliments on her cooking. We could not imagine what should be so special about oatmeal soup and fried potatoes, which was what we usually had for our evening meal.

After supper Warka, our house maid, a Ukrainian eastern worker, came suddenly, and in panic, into the living room. "I don't know what this man says," she cried in her limited German. We ran into the kitchen where a bed had been made for our guest. He knelt in his place,



Karl Radde with mother and sister Edith, about 1940.



Gross Tuchen was not far from the West Prussia border.

raised his hands and spoke in a remarkable language, one that we had never heard. "He is praying," said our mother in a quiet voice. To the Ukrainian, who obviously did not know that word in German, she said "he speaks with God," and sternly warned us all not to disturb him.

The visit lasted for a week. Then my father called my brother suddenly and gave him an assignment. He was to take our guest that evening to a certain forest house that was rather far into West Prussia. But my brother knew it well and also the way to get there, too. It was in that area the school had recently conducted a search. Supposedly an English airplane had dropped weapons in that forested area because it was whispered that Polish partisans lurked there.

My father accompanied them both for a little way. Then he shook the stranger's hand and said, "You will be safe in two or three hours." The handshake lasted a long time. "May God protect you from all the evil in this world," said our guest and he embraced my father. "May peace be with you. You will live. God will spare you from death." Back at home, my father had a long private talk with my brother and told him to forget everything that concerned our strange visitor. "That was a Jew," he said mysteriously!

It was a term that meant nothing in our isolated pocket in eastern Pomerania. In our village there were only two Jewish families, the innkeeper Rosen and the older Jakobys, who simply left in 1938 without saying goodbye. Rosen had been a respected citizen, was friendly and helpful. It was true that many of the villagers had seen Goebbel's propaganda film, *The Eternal Jew* in which all that was evil and unnatural was blamed on the Jews and they were impressed. But the film was a myth, something foreign, and the Jewish tavern keeper was reality, a villager.

Descendants still live

The prophecies of our Jew were not fulfilled. Months later our peaceful forest area experienced the inferno of the end of the war and our father, as well as our grand-

father, were murdered by Soviet soldiers. The rest of the family was expelled across the Oder River. Some of them still live with their descendants in Germany and Switzerland.

The Jewish innkeeper Rosen, mentioned by "our" Jew, who "simply left in 1938 without saying goodbye" as well as the family Jakoby went to Berlin after the pogroms of the so called "Kristallnacht".** From Berlin father Adolf Rosen and the Jakoby family were deported to Auschwitz and murdered there in 1943.

The Rosen's son Max, together with his wife Frieda and their son Heinz, born in 1932 in Gross Tuchen, escaped to Shanghai. Finally, in 1947 they immigrated by the ship "General W. H. Gordon" to the United States. Max, Frieda and Heinz have passed away, but their descendants still live in Chicago.



The Rosen and Jakoby families from Gross Tuchen were deported to death in Auschwitz in 1943. Today, this memorial stands on the site of a former Jewish home for the aged on Grosse Hamburger Strasse, one of the main streets of the former Jewish quarter in Berlin. The Nazis used the retirement home as a collection point for Jews about to be deported to Theresienstadt or Auschwitz. The memorial site was established in 1985; it includes a group of figures created by sculptor Will Lammert.

**** Editor's Note:**

Kristallnacht was the night of November 9, 1938. Gangs of Nazi youth roamed through Jewish neighborhoods in Germany and Austria, breaking the windows of Jewish businesses and homes, burning synagogues, and looting. Kristallnacht has been translated as Crystal Night or "Night of Broken Glass," describing the shattered windows covering the streets, shining like crystals.