A MYSTERY MEMOIR: UNCOVERING THE SECRETS OF *SCHATTEN*, A POST-WII CAMP HODOLEIN MEMOIR

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This article tells the three-part story of a 1949 memoir, its historical context and a detective research journey leading to the identification of its author. The article describes the discovery of a memoir written by a German doctor in Camp Hodolein,[1] a camp for ethnic Germans slated for expulsion from Czechoslovakia in 1945/46 after the end of World War II. It examines the history of displaced Germans after World War II and the doctor's first-hand account of displacement and expulsion. It also presents the historical research that led to the identification of the memoir's author. Finally, it provides an understanding of how this memoir can serve as a valuable historical primary source as it becomes accessible to the public in an archive in Berlin.

It should go without saying that we, the researchers, recognize the controversial nature of the historical and political background of this topic, as it relates to the Sudeten Crisis. The postwar backlash against the Sudeten Germans occurred against the backdrop of singular atrocities: the Holocaust and Axis war crimes. After the war officially ended, millions of people suffered, in different contexts and different ways.

The story we are about to tell is about an ethnic German, one of a debated large number who experienced displacement after the war. While often groups of people who experienced

[1] The Czech name for Camp Hodolein is Hodolany. For the purposes of this article, the camp will be referenced as Hodolein, since the author of the memoir does so.

hardship were also complicit or bystanders to the hardship of others, it would not be good public history work to leave out any piece of the story. We will not feed any revisionist historical narratives, and seek to add to an ever-developing body of research, through faithful preservation of all historical records.

The Mystery of the Book

The mystery starts at a charity book sale in Grosse Pointe, Michigan near Detroit in the early 2000's. Sullivan's mother was part of a team reviewing books that had been donated to the local chapter of the American Association of University Women, for their annual fund-raising book sale. Part of her job was to identify special books that should not just be stacked on a table but should be auctioned off, or sold through a specialized bookseller. She came across a book written in German with an unusual cloth binding. She realized that it was a special find, bought the book herself and brought it home to do more research.

Figure 1: A photo from the *Grosse Pointe News* of Carolyn Sullivan, second from right, sorting books with members of the AAUW in 1990 (*Grosse Pointe News- Local History Archives*).

At Christmas that year, she gave the book to her son, John Sullivan, based on the fact that he knew some German, having studied in Bonn during college. She hoped that he might be able

to help develop a better idea of what the book's significance was. Looking at the book, Sullivan noticed right away that it was hand-typed on heavy paper and cloth bound, making it a one-of-a-kind object.

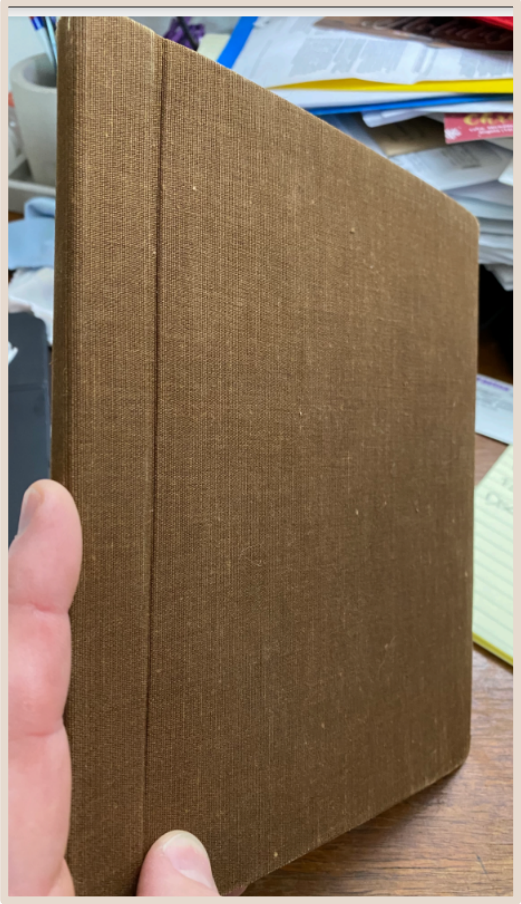
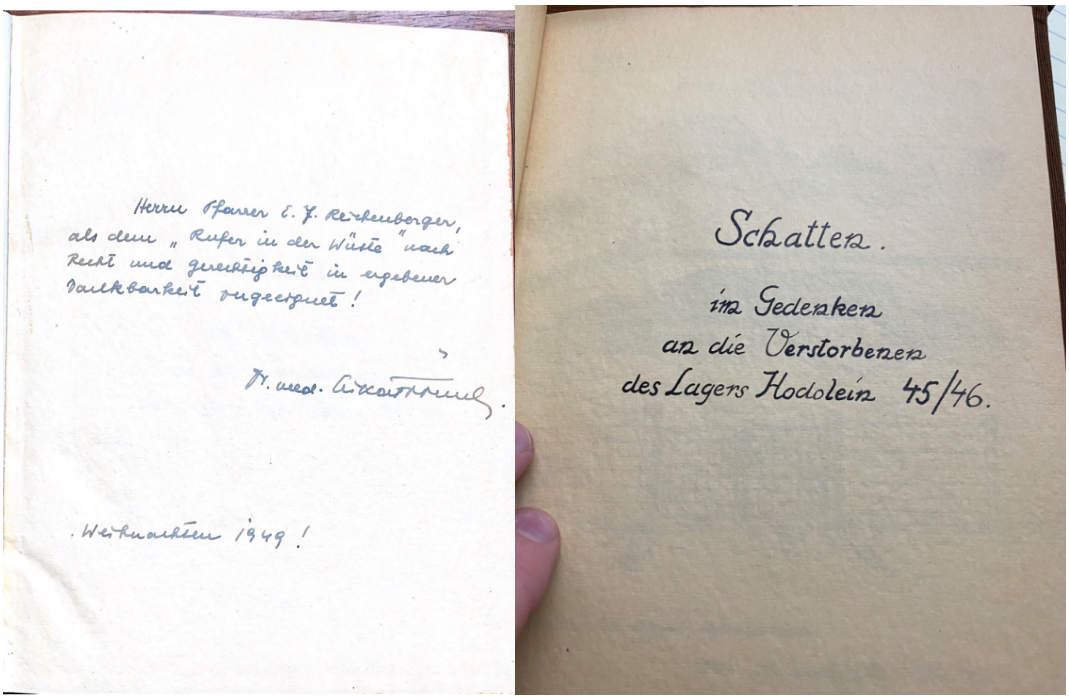


Figure 2: The memoir given to Sullivan.

It was 38 pages long, single-sided, consisting of an introduction, plus 9 numbered chapters. It also included two ink drawings and a hand-written title page. The title translated as *Shadows: In Memory of the Dead of Camp Hodolein 45/46* (*Shadows* 2). There was also a hand-written dedication dated Christmas 1949. The dedication was signed by the author, but the signature was not easily legible. Clearly this was a unique find.



Figures 3 and 4: Dedication page and title page of memoir given to Sullivan (*Schatten* 1-2).

Yet it was not until twenty years later, during the COVID-19 lockdown, that the mystery of the memoir began to unfold. Sullivan began working with the other authors of this article, Geaney-Moore, who was studying German, and Aliaga-Buchenau, who is a professional in the field of German translation. The three team members connected weekly via Zoom for more than a year and worked on the translation and research.

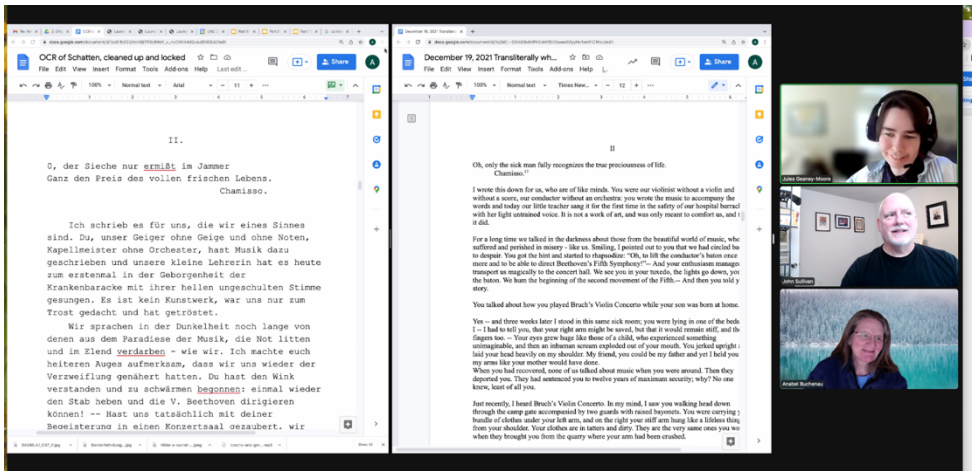


Figure 5: Typical Zoom session of the translation team.

In addition to the translation itself, the team conducted research about the memoir and its historical context, combing the text for clues about the author and the author's life. The team was also conscious that the memoir was written by a person who was reacting to specific historical events, and wanted to place the book accurately within its historical context.

Historical Background

The region about which our author wrote has a complex history. This area in Czechia, on the border of Germany today, has seen many governments. In order to understand the dynamics of the people living in this region, we must go back at least as far as the Habsburg Dynasty's arrival around 1620 (Glassheim 467). Both German and Czech speakers lived under this ethnically German rule for hundreds of years, in the area then called Bohemia and Moravia (Waters 69). Most Czechs considered the rule of the Habsburg's to be illegitimate, a foreign group taking over (Wingfield 264). In 1918 when the Habsburg Dynasty collapsed there were about 3 million ethnic Germans and 7 million ethnic Czech and Slovak people in that area (Glassheim 467).

With this in mind, there were already layers of history in this region when the first half of the 20th century arrived, and the world endured two world wars, resulting in tremendous human suffering. After World War I, the Versailles Treaty carved up Central Europe and many new nation states were created, among them Czechoslovakia, which sought to unite the ethnic Czech speakers with the Slovaks. In the process of redrawing maps, millions of people were displaced or found their homes in nation states in which they did not feel they belonged, or others wished they did not inhabit.

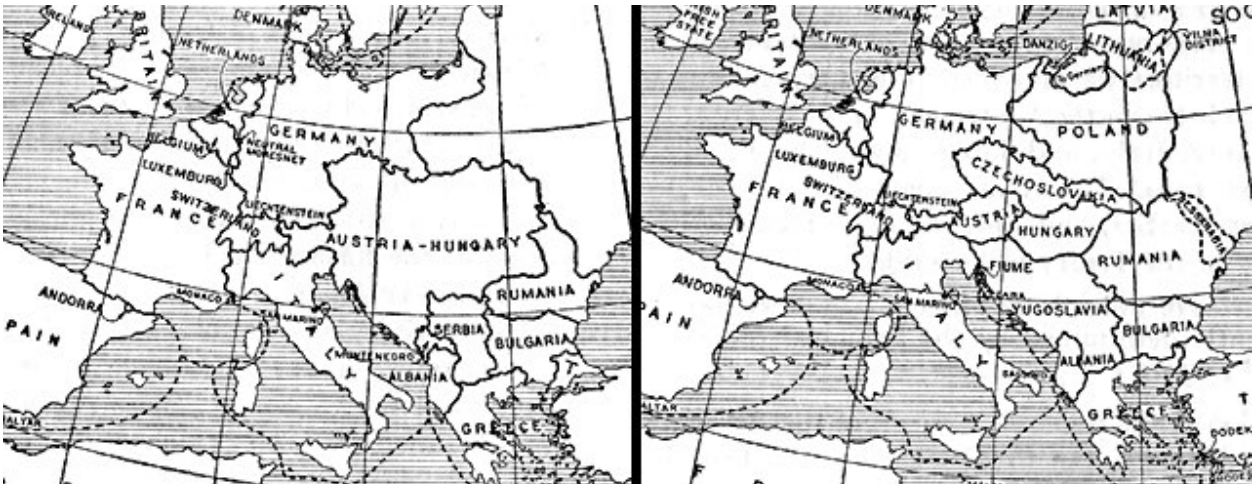


Figure 6: The Austro-Hungarian Empire in 1914 and split into several countries after WWI, here shown in 1924 ("Europe 1914 and 1924").

In the period between the two world wars, ethnic Germans continued to live in Czechoslovakia, in the areas bordering Austria and Germany. These hills surrounding Bohemia and Moravia (marked in purple on the map below) were called the Sudetenland and the inhabitants were known as the Sudetendeutsche or Sudeten Germans. According to one source, by 1918, the Czech speakers and Germans lived essentially separate lives (Glassheim 467). There were regulations about how many of the ethnic Germans could hold political office, which kept the representation below the proportionate amount for the population in that region (Glassheim 469). The 1930 census marked a pivotal moment for the citizens of this area, whether they were aware of it or not. In the census, national origin was designated by the self-declared "mother tongue" of the citizen (Frommer 389). Judging by the text of the memoir, we believe that the author of the memoir under discussion declared German as a mother tongue at this time.

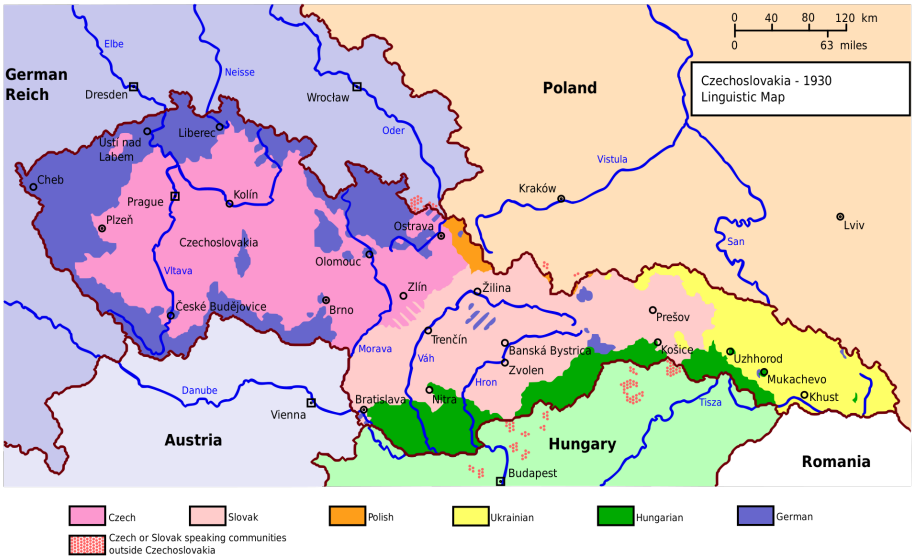


Figure 7: Linguistic Map of Czechoslovakia in 1930. German speakers lived in the Sudetenland (purple), which is the border region with Austria and Germany ("Czechoslovakia 1930 Linguistic Map").

In March 1938, when Hitler annexed Austria, the Sudetenland still remained part of Czechoslovakia. A few months later, however, in September 1938, Hitler signed the Munich Agreement with Italy, Great Britain and France which allowed Hitler to annex the Sudetenland (Hoeffkes, "Sudetenland"). The Sudeten Germans in Czechoslovakia greeted the Wehrmacht with enthusiasm. This was later used as evidence of disloyalty by Edvard Beneš, when advocating for the Sudeten Germans' removal from the region (Glassheim 470). The fact that Hitler was able to easily annex both Austria and the Sudetenland seemed to bolster his resolve to also bring all those who spoke German in Italy, Denmark, and Poland into the Reich. The British had signed the Munich Agreement, perhaps hoping that once Hitler had brought all ethnic Germans home into the Reich he would stop (Hoeffkes, "Vertreibung"). However, in March of 1939, Germany took control of Bohemia and Moravia by creating the "Reichsprotektorat Böhmen und Mähren" (Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia), which was from then on under

German rule. The result was that some non-Germans, in this case the Czechs and Slovaks in the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, now were within German borders.

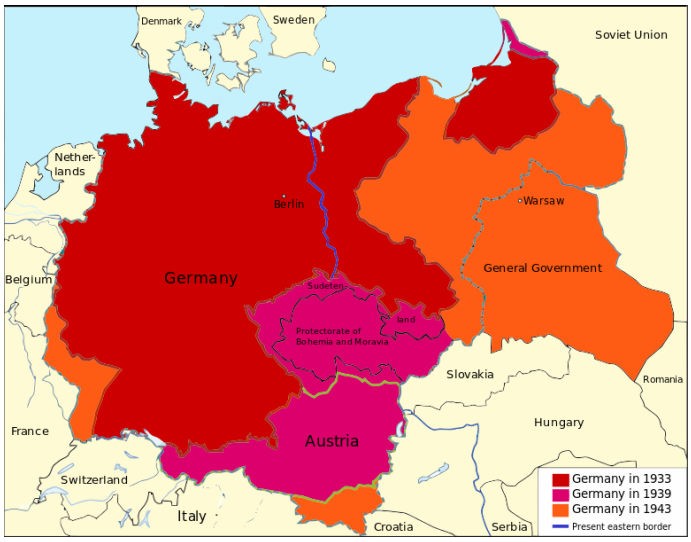


Figure 8: Annexation of Austria in 1938, annexation of Sudetenland 1938, and creation of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia 1939 (areas shown in purple) ("Nazi Germany").

A few months before the end of World War II, the Allies (France, Great Britain and the US) met in Yalta, and agreed that the annexations had to be returned. They wanted to restore all countries to the borders of 1938. After the end of World War II, at the Potsdam Conference, the Allies decided to give some eastern lands to Poland and Russia. The Sudeten Germans and those living in the border region then became citizens of Czechoslovakia and the border was similar to before the Munich Agreement. Tensions from years past and from recent history manifested in the society of that region in the form of social dissonance between ethnic groups. For the Germans in the newly recreated Czechoslovakia, this meant that their language was officially banned in public. Germans could not be on the streets other than to go to work and shop at designated stores. They could not go to cinemas, theaters, parks, cafes, pubs, or swimming pools and had to wear the letter N for "Němců" or "German" on an armband (Hoeffkes, "Vertreibung"). A cultural cleansing ensued in Czechoslovakia in which statues of famous

German figures were torn down (Wingfield 258) and street and place names were changed from German to Czech titles, sometimes simply reverting to the pre-war Czech names (Wingfield 257).

In addition, immediately after the war a search began for those the Czechs considered enemies, Nazi officials, collaborators, and ethnic Germans. During the German occupation in Czechoslovakia, there had already been Czech resistance groups who had demanded the deportation of ethnic Germans. Now, after World War II they began to put the plan into action. In the summer months of 1945, expulsions and revenge actions erupted. Many massacres and executions took place in what was called the era of "wild transfer." Recent research indicates that the "wild transfers" were not as common, spontaneous, or civilian-driven as previously thought (Gerlach 272). One author described the expulsions as "Sanctioned but unregulated expulsions" (Waters 73). On August 2, 1945, the official agreement for the expulsion of the German population was finalized at the Potsdam Conference (Wingfield 252). On October 28, 1945 the Czechoslovak president Edvard Beneš, in what is known as the Beneš Decree, called for the "konečné řešení německé otázky" or the "final solution of the German question," ordering the orderly deportation of ethnic Germans. While Beneš did not order the murder of ethnic Germans, he did order them to be rounded up in camps where they were held temporarily before being transferred to Germany.

But how did they decide who was German? At first it seemed anyone who spoke German and who could not prove their innocence and also demonstrate allegiance to the Czech cause should be punished as Nazi collaborators. However, thousands (perhaps as many as 200,000) of Germans and Czechs were in mixed marriages and had multi-ethnic children (Frommer 382). Many more thousands were bilingual. In 1939 the Reich Protector's Office had forced citizens to

declare themselves as “Reich citizens” vs. “state citizens” (Bryant 687). Faced with this, some Czechs had been influenced to declare their nationality as German under the Nazi regime, out of allegiance or self-preservation. Still other people in the area who were descended from Germans and self-identified as Sudeten Germans had not declared their Reich citizenship during the war in order to avoid being drafted (Frommer). Members of the Sudeten German Party who declared before 1938 were automatically marked as “Reich citizens” (Bryant 688). Some regions of Czechia used the 1939 rulings to determine who must be expelled, while others chose different methods of categorizing. In the city of Usti nad Labem/Aussig, “district officials issued a directive to local national committees that detailed the provisions for determining who should lose citizenship. It noted that all who had registered themselves as German as far back as the 1930 census, including Jews who had been persecuted during the war, should be considered German” (Gerlach 278, with footnote 53).

Beginning in January 1946, trains filled with Sudeten Germans left Czechoslovakia daily for the American zone of occupied Germany. The people identified as German were resettled in this “organized transfer” which was supposed to be “orderly and humane” as per the Potsdam Agreement. The expulsions grew less frequent around 1948. Historians do not agree on an exact number of how many ethnic Germans were displaced between 1945 and 1947 from Czechoslovakia. The most common estimate is nearly 3 million (Berglund 225; Bryant 683; Glassheim 467; Waters 73). One source indicates that there were between 650,000 and 800,000 “wild expulsions” in 1945 and about 2.1 million displaced in the following years (Gerlach 273). Another source points out that between 2 and 3 million ethnic Germans were displaced but tens of thousands were killed or died in transit (Thompson 936). We can assume from the date on the memoir (1949) that the author was one of the survivors of expulsion. In the larger picture, across

Europe during this time, about 12 million Germans were moved (Glassheim 465), and 21 million people displaced overall (Bryant 683).

For many years, the Czechs considered the expulsions a justified response to the Sudeten German betrayal of Czechoslovakia and the Nazi persecution of Czechs during the occupation of Bohemia and Moravia. After the fall of Communism, however, the Czech president Vaclav Havel publicly apologized for the expulsions. In 1990 when he spoke up, the public opinion of the Czech's, as seen in a poll indicated that they did not approve of his apology (Thompson 937). Nevertheless, Havel rejected the concept of collective guilt of the Germans (Hoeffkes, "Vertreibung").

The internment camps used for Germans to be expelled were established immediately after the war. They served as collection and quarantine centers throughout the territory as part of the second wave, or "organized and orderly deportations." Camp Hodolein (or Novy Hodolany), which features in the memoir, is one of about 75 camps in Czechoslovakia. Several of the other camps were being reused after housing Jews and marginalized groups during the war. Camp Hodolein was not one of the repurposed camps as far as we know from our research. Hodolein was located in Olomouc (in Czech) or Olmütz (in German).

Figure 9: Squares indicate some of the major internment camps for Germans after WWII ("Lager Für Deutsche").

Camp Hodolein consisted of 13 wooden barracks, nine of which were living quarters. Each barrack contained several rooms where about 60 people were housed. The camp held Germans from Olomouc and the surrounding areas to be transferred to Germany. Fifteen trains left from there, with each train consisting of 40 freight cars and each freight car holding 30 people (Frömel, "Bericht" 1).

Figure 10: Ink drawing from the memoir depicting three of the barracks of Camp Hodolein (*Shadows* 3).

The entire topic of the Sudeten Germans and their expulsion remains a controversial topic today, even amongst the German-speaking community. Within the community of German-speakers in Europe, different subsets of German-speakers were unequally affected by the war's consequences. The Sudeten Germans, of which there are still 500,000 self-identifying, like the German-speakers of East Prussia and Pomerania, lost everything: their property, their homes, their homeland. Some German-speakers did not have to leave their homes and property, but lost their freedom; those were the residents of East Germany and under a different type of government. Some Germans lost their property due to bombing, for example in Hannover or

Hamburg (West Germany), but if they survived, they were able to get their lives, property and liberty back. Some West Germans resented having to pay extra taxes to help the displaced people, while many groups of displaced Germans felt that they had lost their homeland and paid for the war in a way other Germans were not forced to do. There were millions of displaced people, who helped rebuild Germany, but who had to find new homes, and resentment has lingered for years.

The Dedication

The memoir begins with a hand-written dedication, which is dated Christmas 1949 – three years after the date on the title page. While there is a signature beneath the dedication, it was not immediately decipherable. What could be easily identified, however, was the person to whom the book was dedicated: Father E. J. Reichenberger.

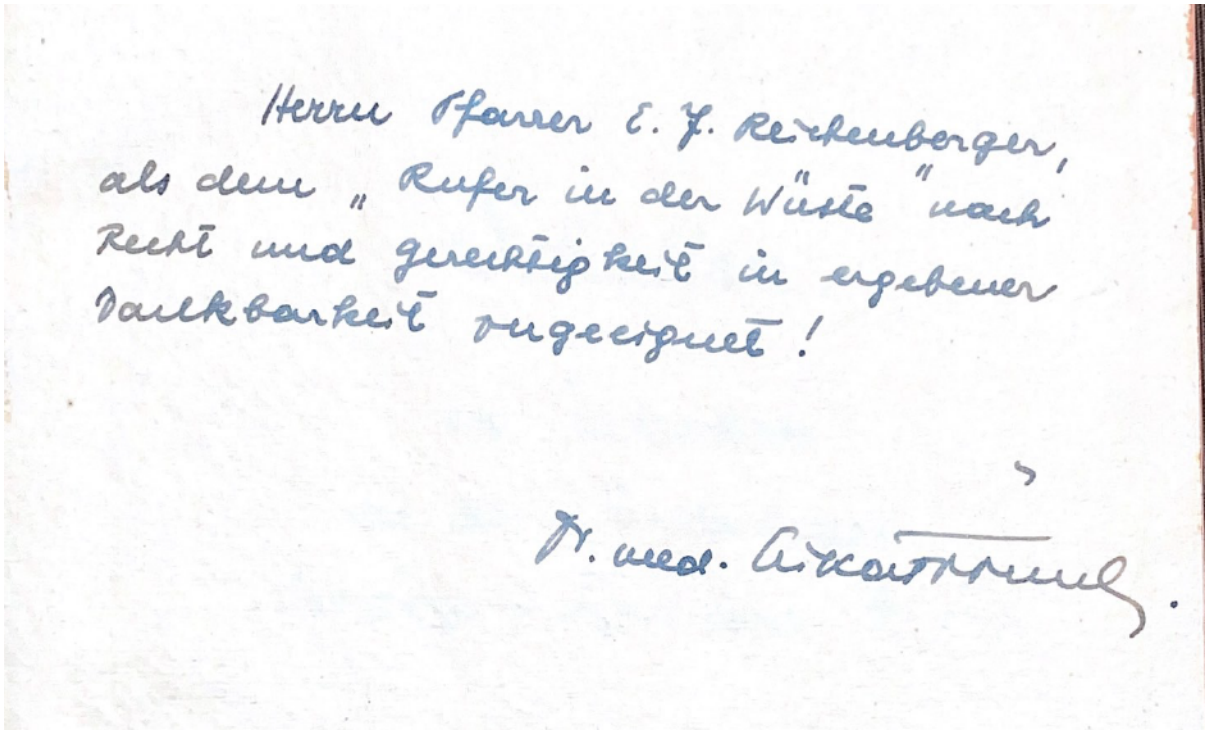


Figure 11: Dedication to "Father E. J. Reichenberger" and undecipherable signature (*Schatten* 1).

The author calls Father E.J. Reichenberger "the 'Voice in the Desert' calling for laws and justice" (*Shadows* 1).

Father Reichenberger was born in 1888 in Vilsek, Bavaria, and became a Roman Catholic priest in 1912. He spent the majority of his time in Litoměřice/Leitmeritz, Bohemia where he ministered to the poor. Reichenberger was also an outspoken critic of the Nazi Party and an opponent of the Sudenten German Party which had aligned itself with the Nazis. His outspoken opinions earned him the nickname "the Red Chaplain," and put him under increasing pressure from the Czech government (Grulich, "Roten Kaplan").

On September 17, 1938, Father Reichenberger made a widely-quoted broadcast on Radio Prague, arguing against the Nazi plans to annex the Sudetenland. He appealed to the Sudeten German listeners by saying "we are standing on the edge of a precipice" (Vaughn). He asked the Sudeten Germans to resist annexation and urged everyone to treat each other with kindness and empathy (Vaughn). However, in October 1938, Hitler annexed the Sudetenland and Father Reichenberger fled, first to France and then to England. He spent a year in England, working with the Sudeten German Social Democrat politician Wenzel Jaksch to negotiate the resettlement of Sudeten refugees in Canada (Grulich, "Roten Kaplan"). He was also given a spot in Hitler's "Black Book" – a list of people who were to be arrested immediately upon a successful German invasion of England (*Sonderfahndungsliste G.B*. 172).

In 1940, Father Reichenberger moved to the US where he settled in Glencross, South Dakota as pastor to a small community of Native Americans and Russian-Germans. He continued to advocate for German refugees, writing numerous articles and letters and running charity drives to help the displaced. After the end of the war in 1945, he traveled as a member of the US Army to resettlement camps for Sudeten Germans and documented the mistreatment of

the population. He was expelled by the Czech government as a dangerous German critic (Grulich, "Roten Kaplan").

In 1946 Father Reichenberger became a US citizen and continued his advocacy for the expelled peoples, especially the Sudeten Germans. He continued to write letters and articles and was even quoted in the US Congressional Record by the Senator from North Dakota. In the late 1940's and early 1950's Father Reichenberger wrote a series of books about the state of Europe and the treatment of expelled peoples. At this time, he was again refused entry into Germany because of his views. Father Reichenberger then moved from South Dakota to Chicago and ultimately to Vienna, where he died in 1966. He received commendations from the Catholic church and several towns in Germany and Austria for his work (Grulich, "Roten Kaplan").

The dedication page connects the memoir to Father Reichenberger, who would have been very well known at the time, especially to displaced Sudeten Germans, but there is no clear identification of the author or any kind of direct connection to Reichenberger, much less an explanation for how the book arrived in Detroit.

The Author

The only legible information about the author in the signature of the dedication was "Dr. med" and possibly an A or E for the first initial with an F for the last initial. So the only certainty was that they were a medical doctor.

Since the signature was unreadable, the team asked for help from someone who knew this type of handwritten script called *Sütterlin*. They ascertained that the last name started with an F, which was probably followed by an R and then an O. A search for "Dr. F" connected with the keyword "Reichenberger" returned an outdated web page. The webpage reproduced the 1950

book "Das Andere Lidice Tragödie der Sudetendeutschen" by Erich Kern, in which the author discusses the fate of Sudeten Germans after World War II. The team read one section mentioning "Dr. F" in an English translation and saw that it contained information about the head doctor of a camp located in the right region. Upon reading the German version of the text, the team discovered that the memoir's author was a female doctor by virtue of the gendered noun "Ärztin" in German, revealing that camp Hodolein had a female head doctor (Kern).

The search for "Reichenberger" and "Olmütz" also returned an edition of a newspaper called the *Sudetenpost*. It contained an article about Sudeten Germans in 1945/46 (Grulich, "Berichte" 8). It was indeed the camp Hodolein referenced in the memoir. To the team's delight, the article identified the head doctor of the camp as "Dr. Erika Frömel." The signature in the dedication could now easily be recognized as "Dr. med Erika Frömel."

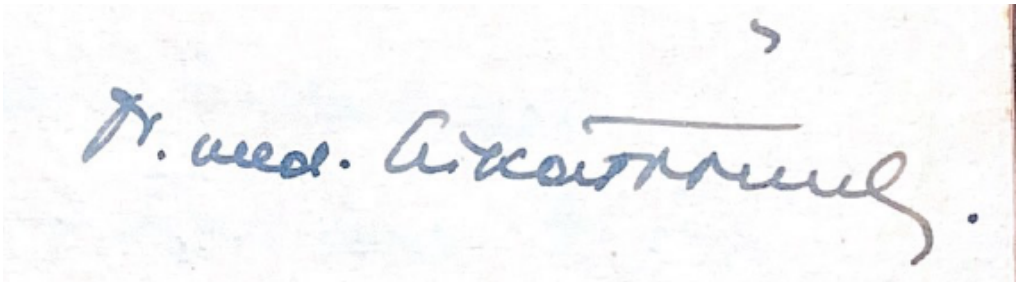


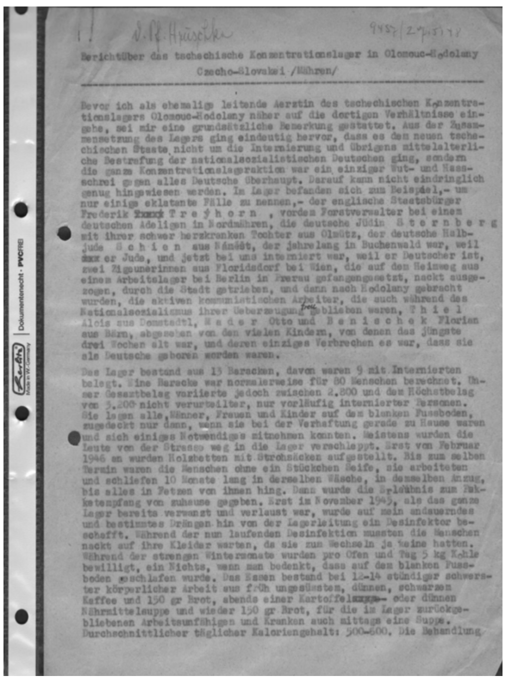
Figure 12: Signature of Dr. med. Erika Frömel (*Schatten* 1).

Translated into English the article in the *Sudetenpost* was titled "A Report about a Czech Camp in 1945 and 1946"[2] and quoted what appeared to be an entire formal report provided by Dr. Frömel about conditions in Camp Hodolein (Grulich 2006). However, this formal report was very different in nature from Dr. Frömel's memoir, which had a much more personal and emotional tone. The *Sudetenpost* article mentioned that Dr. Frömel had written the formal report in Obernburg, a German city where she was living after having been displaced

[2] All translations included in this article are provided by the authors.

from camp Hodolein and resettled (Grulich, "Berichte" 8). The team reached out to the author of the article, Professor Dr. Rudolf Grulich, the Director of the Institute of Church History of Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia in Königstein ("Grulich, Rudolf, Prof. Dr.").

Dr. Grulich wrote back with valuable information and included a copy of Dr. Frömel's formal report which he had cited in his article. This report had been given by Dr. Frömel on May 27, 1948 to the priest, Father Johann Hruschka.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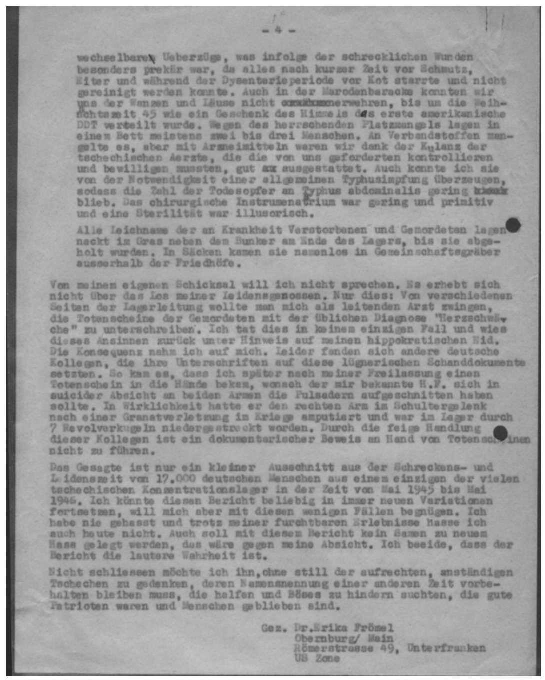
Bericht über das tschechische Konzentrationslager in Olomouc-Hodolany
Czecho-Slovakei /Mähren/

Bevor ich als ehemalige leitende Aerztin des tschechischen Konzentrationslagers Olomouc-Hodolany näher auf die dortigen Verhältnisse eingehe, sei mir eine grundsätzliche Bemerkung gestattet. Aus der Zusammensetzung des Lagers ging eindeutig hervor, dass es dem neuen tschechischen Staate nicht um die Internierung und übrigens mittelalterliche Bestrafung der nationalsozialistischen Deutschen ging, sondern die ganze Konzentrationslageraktion war ein einziger Wut- und Hassschrei gegen alles Deutsche überhaupt. Darauf kann nicht eindringlich genug hingewiesen werden. Im Lager befanden sich zum Beispiel,- um nur einige eklatante Fälle zu nennen,- der englische Staatsbürger Frederik T r e y h o r n , vordem Forstverwalter bei einem deutschen Adeligen in Nordmähren, die deutsche Jüdin S t e r n b e r g mit ihrer schwer herzkranken Tochter aus Olmütz, der deutsche Halbjude S c h i e n aus Námĕšt, der jahrelang in Buchenwald war, weil er Jude, und jetzt bei uns interniert war, weil er Deutscher ist, zwei Zigeunerinnen aus Floridsdorf bei Wien, die auf dem Heimweg aus einem Arbeitslager bei Berlin in Prerau gefangengesetzt, nackt ausgezogen, durch die Stadt getrieben, und dann nach Hodolany gebracht wurden, die aktiven kommunistischen Arbeiter, die auch während des Nationalsozialismus ihrer Ueberzeugung treu geblieben waren, T h i e l Alois aus Domstadtl, M a d e r Otto und B e n i s c h e k Florian aus Bärn, abgesehen von den vielen Kindern, von denen das jüngste drei Wochen alt war, und deren einziges Verbrechen es war, dass sie als Deutsche geboren worden waren.

Das Lager bestand aus 13 Baracken, davon waren 9 mit Internierten belegt. Eine Baracke war normalerweise für 80 Menschen berechnet. Unser Gesamtbelag variierte jedoch zwischen 2.800 und dem Höchstbelag von 3.200 nicht verurteilter, nur vorläufig internierter Personen. Sie lagen alle, Männer, Frauen und Kinder auf dem blanken Fussboden, zugedeckt nur dann, wenn sie bei der Verhaftung gerade zu Hause waren und sich einiges Notwendiges mitnehmen konnten. Meistens wurden die Leute von der Strasse weg in die Lager verschleppt. Erst von Februar 1946 an wurden Holzbetten mit Strohsäcken aufgestellt. Bis zum selben Termin waren die Menschen ohne ein Stückchen Seife, sie arbeiteten und schliefen 10 Monate lang in derselben Wäsche, in demselben Anzug, bis alles in Fetzen von ihnen hing. Dann wurde die Erlaubnis zum Paketempfang von zuhause gegeben. Erst im November 1945, als das ganze Lager bereits verwanzt und verlaust war, wurde auf mein andauerndes und bestimmtes Drängen hin von der Lagerleitung ein Desinfektor beschafft. Während der nun laufenden Desinfektion mussten die Menschen nackt auf ihre Kleider warten, da sie zum Wechseln ja keine hatten. Während der strengen Wintermonate wurden pro Ofen und Tag 5 kg Kohle bewilligt, ein Nichts, wenn man bedenkt, dass auf dem blanken Fussboden geschlafen wurde. Das Essen bestand bei 12-14 stündiger schwerster körperlicher Arbeit aus früh ungesüsstem, dünnen, schwarzem Kaffee und 150 gr Brot, abends einer Kartoffel- oder dünnen Nährmittelsuppe und wieder 150 gr Brot, für die im Lager zurückgebliebenen Arbeitsunfähigen und Kranken auch mittags eine Suppe. Durchschnittlicher täglicher Kaloriengehalt: 500-600. Die Behandlung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wechselbaren Ueberzüge, was infolge der schrecklichen Wunden besonders prekär war, da alles nach kurzer Zeit vor Schmutz, Eiter und während der Dysenterieperiode vor Kot starrte und nicht gereinigt werden konnte. Auch in der Marodenbaracke konnten wir uns der Wanzen und Läuse nicht erwehren, bis um die Weihnachtszeit 45 wie ein Geschenk des Himmels das erste amerikanische DDT verteilt wurde. Wegen des herrschenden Platzmangels lagen in einem Bett meistens zwei bis drei Menschen. An Verbandstoffen mangelte es, aber mit Arzneimitteln waren wir dank der Kulanz der tschechischen Aerzte, die die von uns geforderten kontrollieren und bewilligen mussten, gut ausgestattet. Auch konnte ich sie von der Notwendigkeit einer allgemeinen Typhusimpfung überzeugen, sodass die Zahl der Todesopfer an Typhus abdominalis gering blieb. Das chirurgische Instrumentarium war gering und primitiv und eine Sterilität war illusorisch.

Alle Leichname der an Krankheit Verstorbenen und Gemordeten lagen nackt im Gras neben dem Bunker am Ende des Lagers, bis sie abgeholt wurden. In Säcken kamen sie namenlos in Gemeinschaftsgräber ausserhalb der Friedhöfe.

Von meinem eigenen Schicksal will ich nicht sprechen. Es erhebt sich nicht über das Los meiner Leidensgenossen. Nur dies: Von verschiedenen Seiten der Lagerleitung wollte man mich als leitenden Arzt zwingen, die Totenscheine der Gemordeten mit der üblichen Diagnose "Herzschwäche" zu unterschreiben. Ich tat dies in keinem einzigen Fall und wies dieses Ansinnen zurück unter Hinweis auf meinen hippokratischen Eid. Die Konsequenz nahm ich auf mich. Leider fanden sich andere deutsche Kollegen, die ihre Unterschriften auf diese lügnerischen Schanddokumente setzten. So kam es, dass ich später nach meiner Freilassung einen Totenschein in die Hände bekam, wonach der mir bekannte H.F. sich in suicider Absicht an beiden Armen die Pulsadern aufgeschnitten haben sollte. In Wirklichkeit hatte er den rechten Arm im Schultergelenk nach einer Granatverletzung im Kriege amputiert und war im Lager durch 7 Revolverkugeln niedergestreckt worden. Durch die feige Handlung dieser Kollegen ist ein dokumentarischer Beweis an Hand von Totenscheinen nicht zu führen.

Das Gesagte ist nur ein kleiner Ausschnitt aus der Schreckens- und Leidenszeit von 17.000 deutschen Menschen aus einem einzigen der vielen tschechischen Konzentrationslager in der Zeit von Mai 1945 bis Mai 1946. Ich könnte diesen Bericht beliebig in immer neuen Variationen fortsetzen, will mich aber mit diesen wenigen Fällen begnügen. Ich habe nie gehasst und trotz meiner furchtbaren Erlebnisse hasse ich auch heute nicht. Auch soll mit diesem Bericht kein Samen zu neuem Hass gelegt werden, das wäre gegen meine Absicht. Ich beeide, dass der Bericht die lautere Wahrheit ist.

Nicht schliessen möchte ich ihn, ohne still der aufrechten, anständigen Tschechen zu gedenken, deren Namensnennung einer anderen Zeit vorbehalten bleiben muss, die halfen und Böses zu hindern suchten, die gute Patrioten waren und Menschen geblieben sind.

Gez. Dr. Erika Frömel
Obernburg/ Main
Römerstrasse 49, Unterfranken
US Zone

Figures 13 and 14: Dr. Erika Frömel's formal report typed in Obernburg, Germany in 1948 and given to Father Hruschka (Frömel, "Bericht" 1 and 4). The report also provided Dr. Frömel's full address where she had been resettled in Obernburg, in the American Zone, which became West Germany, although it is not a residential building today (Frömel, "Bericht" 4).

With the full text of Dr. Frömel's report in hand, the team was able to identify multiple citations of the same information in various publications, all of them pointing to a chapter in Father Reichenberger's book "Ostdeutsche Passion." Translated into English, the chapter is titled "Children under the Gallows," and signed by a "Dr. F." In this chapter, Reicheberger reproduces the entirety of Dr. Frömel's formal report from 1948. Father Reichenberger makes a point in his

introduction to the chapter to explain that he knows the name and address of the author, but is not revealing them for security reasons (Reichenberger, *Ostdeutsche Passion)*. This solidifies the connection between Father Reichenberger and the author, Dr. Frömel.

The typewritten original report, which Dr. Frömel had given to Father Hruschka, the reproduction of the report in the chapter "Children under the Gallows" in Father Reichenberger's book *Ostdeutsche Passion*, and the citation in the article by Dr. Grulich in the *Sudetenpost* are identical. They describe the conditions experienced by Dr. Erika Frömel in Camp Hodolein in 1945 and 1946 in the exact same words.

These three identical versions of Dr. Frömel's description of her experiences are very different, however, from what she describes in her memoir. Situations that were presented clinically and factually in her report found their way into her memoir as background to the very human stories she was telling about patients she treated.

In one case, a description of the mistreatment of the city magistrate is described in a single sentence in the formal report: "After beating him bloody, they killed Magistrate Dr. C., by inserting a tube into his rectum and allowing cold water to flow under pressure into his intestines until he died" (Frömel, "Bericht" 2). In the memoir, this scene is background to another patient's description of his own tuberculosis:

> Then he continued: 'When in our midst, they beat the Magistrate of the city to a bloody pulp and then filled his intestines with water while hooting and hollering and not letting him up until he had died, and the last of these torturers kicked him in the face with his boot to close his eyes, as he cynically said, that's when I got my first hemorrhage (Frömel, *Shadows* 20).

In another case there is a description of the execution of 68 elderly prisoners by the camp guards:

> On two consecutive days, the 68 old people of the Olomouc old people's home, who had been brought to the camp on ladder trucks after May 8, 1945, were simply shot up at night by the 17-19 year-old guards because they were "old and useless". I can still hear the horrible whimpering of the last 13 old women (the oldest was 92 years old and blind), when they were dragged out of the barracks to be executed amidst expletives such as "German sows, Germanic whores." (Frömel, "Bericht" 3)

In the memoir, the same tuberculosis patient describes his own reaction to the killing of these elderly people:

> Six weeks later, I screamed into this mattress for an entire night, when for two consecutive nights they dragged sixty some women by the hair from the old folks home next door to me, to the "Death Bunker", and to the "Board" and shot them with pistols, because they were useless, as they scoffed.
>
> (Frömel, *Shadows* 20-21).

The report also alludes to other facts such as living conditions, quality of food and the treatment of children. But the stories Dr. Frömel chooses to tell in her memoir are much more personal and emotional, not clinical at all.

The Stories

Erika, the author, chose to write these memories down perhaps as a way of processing residual post-traumatic stress from working in the camp. She began with the words, "Now more

than ever, I am haunted by the people who filled my soul with misery when their breath was still rising and falling in their chests. […] Their bodies waste away in unknown dungeons or decompose in nameless graves" (Frömel, *Shadows* 4). She was not done with the feelings that continued to haunt her and hopes that addressing them might help her deal with them: what "If I open my soul to you one more time, if I bring you fully into my consciousness and allow the agony, suffering and misery of the past to come to life one last time, relentless in all its cruelty?" (Frömel, *Shadows* 4).

Interestingly, a friend, the dentist who was also in the camp, identified only as Pio, once gave her the advice to distance herself emotionally. She even prided herself once in being distant and removed from the suffering in order to best help her patients: "How proud I had been of the lessons I had learned: be removed, observe from a distance, stand above things, think clearly, keep reason at the ready as a reagent to separate out emotions" (Frömel, *Shadows* 11). And yet the stories she continues to write down show that she was completely involved, emotionally and physically, suffering with her patients. "I really wanted to die too; my heart burned as if someone had poured salt into an open wound. My courage, my hope, and my strength were extinguished. I had slid down from the heights of my self-imposed solitude, down to you, and I suffered and cried with you. And I quarreled with God and lost all faith" (Frömel, *Shadows* 11).

One of the stories from chapter one the memoir recounts a night when Erika could not find her friend, the teacher's wife, who was missing from the barrack. The young woman had always been compliant, and had always done what she was supposed to do. Erika found her hanging from the frame of a window. She had been beaten several days earlier and had revealed her story to Erika as the doctor was caring for her and comforting her. The woman had explained that "while she was shopping, two guards had come, snatched her bag and given it to her little

boy. Countless times, she had turned around to look at the crying child. These glances were associated with the last warm feelings she had had before being devoured by the darkness of the cattle car, which had brought her to" camp Hodolein (Frömel, *Shadows* 6). Erika's response to finding her dead hanging from the window frame, was feeling the need for comfort, in a time when she was called upon to comfort others, as her own "heart, [...] needed so much comfort itself" (Frömel, *Shadows* 6).

In chapter three of the memoir, Erika tells another story in which she has to carry a dead baby to the place where corpses are collected in camp. Here again, she expresses her need for comfort, "Again, I suddenly feel a longing for someone on whose chest I could lay my head, in whose arms I could forget my own horror, whose kind hand would ease the torment that fills me" (Frömel, *Shadows* 12). But there is no time to comfort herself as the women of the camp are all trying to help the mourning mother and neglect the remaining living children. "I see the little ones waking up one after another. Here, I wash one of them, there I give another one some of the cold, thin coffee, put another's little socks on and stare again at this image of misery" (Frömel, *Shadows* 12). The mother who lost her child is then taken to an insane asylum. Erika is able to overcome her own need for comfort to help the mother of the dead child and the neglected children. She provides comfort and practical help.

In yet another chapter of the memoir, Erika recounts the tale of a family. The father and mother had agreed they would kill each other before being captured. However, they are arrested by the police. At the police station, the father lifts the pistol to shoot his wife mercifully, planning to then turn the gun on himself, but the police shoot him first. The woman is released to her apartment and there tries to poison herself and her child. The child dies while the woman survives and is charged with murder. Dr. Frömel asks if she can assist her or comfort her

somehow. When Erika tries to take her patient's hand, the woman shrinks away. She explains that she has gonorrhea, presumably as a result of being raped by the police in the apartment after her release from the police station. Again, Erika tries to comfort her patient in the face of horror and needing comfort herself.

In chapter seven of the memoir, the doctor gets permission to release the first camp resident. He is a tuberculosis patient and terminally ill. Upon his release, he staggers up to the gate and just before he can cross the threshold, he throws his arms wide like a figure on a cross and collapses. Later,

> a small package comes for him on Christmas Day. The hospital barracks received all the parcels whose recipients were no longer alive. I distributed the little things to his roommates. And the paper on top I kept for myself: a clumsy child's hand had drawn with colored pencils. A table with a Christmas tree and lighted candles, five chairs. The mother and three children sat on the chairs and the fifth one was empty. Written above it in block letters: Daddy, come back to us soon. (Frömel, *Shadows* 21)

Erika saves the drawing and after everyone's release. When she is treating those newly arrived in Obernburg, the dead man's family comes to Germany on a transport from Camp Hodolein. "I noticed the name: a mother, two boys and a girl. Unsure, I asked 'and your husband?' 'Yes, I would like to ask, what should I do? They always say that families may only be resettled together but my husband is still in the camp and sick.' 'Excuse me for a moment please'" (Frömel, *Shadows* 21-22). Erika goes through her belongings and finds the drawing where she had written a little cross and the name and date of the father's death. In giving the

mother the drawing silently, she is able to pass on the sad news, without upsetting the children. Yet again, Erika manages to provide comfort in the face of misery.

In the final story in chapter nine, Erika Frömel tries to come to terms with the death of one of her patients for which she blames herself. An inmate needs medical attention and is in an isolation cell. Erika receives permission from the camp leader to provide medical treatment in the isolation cell. However, the guard does not allow her entry. Unsure of how to proceed, Erika is surprised to find the camp leader passing by. She stops him and "since the commander of the camp had given permission for this treatment, I turned to him. In front of my eyes, the guard was told that he was wrong and received a reprimand. He had to open the cell" (Frömel, *Shadows* 26). The next morning, Erika finds her patient dead in the cell. The guard had killed him brutally. "He used the spilled blood of the prisoner to wash off his humiliation of having been told off about a German. It was my blood the guard would have liked to spill, not that of my brother" (Frömel, *Shadows* 26). Erika blamed herself for this death: "And I knew that it had been my fault. I had a human life on my conscience. I am the real murderer" (Frömel, *Shadows* 25). While trying to get justice and medical treatment for her patient, Erika inadvertently caused his death by incurring the wrath of the guard. Nevertheless, she does not cease to attempt to help her patients albeit suffering herself greatly with each loss and at the trauma they endure.

In each of the anecdotal chapters, Erika Frömel remembers a patient she treated. She seems to relive the moments she describes in her memoir as if to work through the trauma by remembering it and writing about it. In each case, she indicates that she herself does not manage to stay aloof as had been advised. She suffers with her patients and feels great empathy. However, as she tells one traumatic, brutal and violent story after another, it becomes clear that her empathy and caring nature do provide comfort to her patients and improve their lives and

allow her to survive the horrendous situations. It also becomes evident that her strategy for dealing with her PTSD is working. After retelling the stories of her patients, even the final one in which she feels she is to blame for the death of the inmate, she is able to say that "In the middle of nowhere, I was filled with a belief in a New Beginning, in the Power to do Good, in the Rebirth of Beauty and in the Hope for Freedom" (Frömel, *Shadows* 4). She affirms this belief with a drawing she includes as the final page of her memoir. It is an ink drawing of a naked man throwing or catching a burning torch. She includes a quote by German author Johann Wolfgang von Goethe: "Only he wins freedom and life, who takes them every day by storm" (Frömel, *Shadows* 27). Frömel seems to end on a positive, hopeful note. It is possible to achieve freedom. Beauty, and doing good, comforting, as well as helping others are part of her belief in new beginnings and the road to freedom.

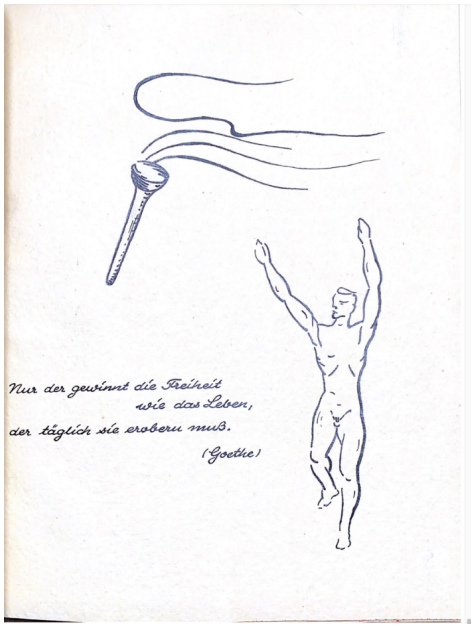


Figure 15: Drawing of naked man and torch with quote by Goethe (Frömel, *Schatten* 27)

Interestingly, Erika Frömel's formal report, which she completed a year before writing her memoir, also ends on a positive note of hope. She is able to give credit to those Czechs who treated the inmates with decency: "I do not want to close without silently remembering the

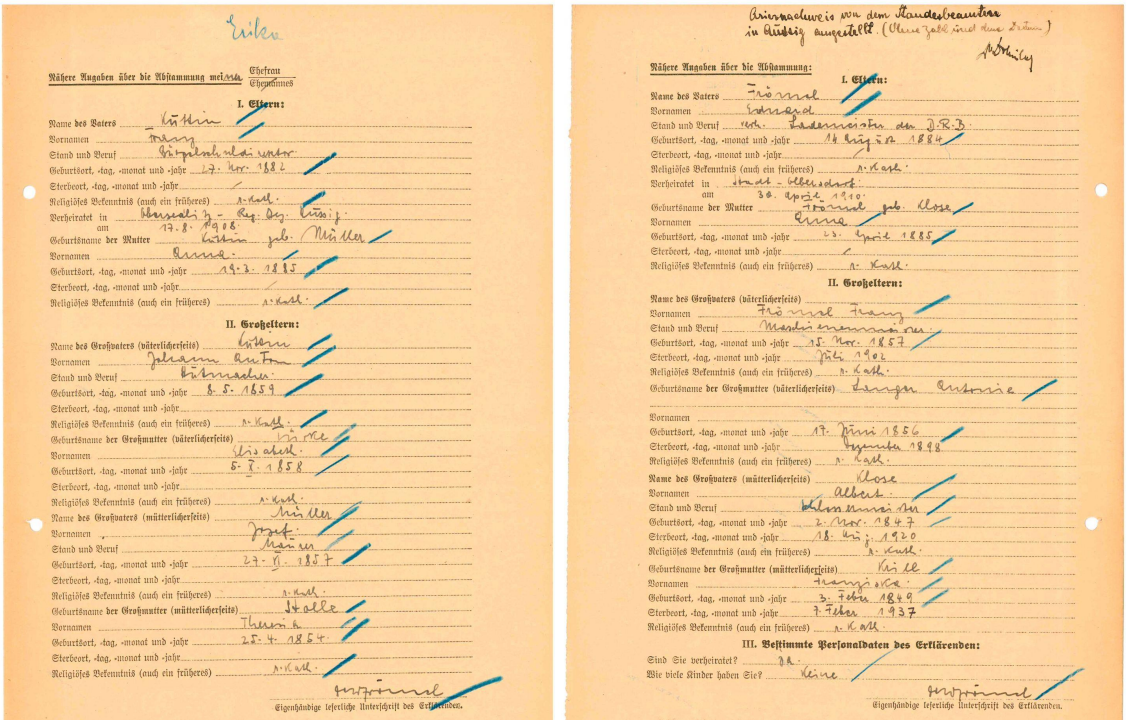
upright, decent Czechs. Naming them has to be done another time. They helped and tried to prevent evil. They were good patriots and remained human beings" (Frömel, "Bericht" 4). In addition, as in her memoir, she is not motivated by hatred or thoughts of revenge in providing the details of camp life: "I have never hated and despite my terrible experiences I do not hate today either. This report is also not supposed to be the seed of new hatred. I do not want that at all" (Frömel, "Bericht" 4). In light of the terror and misery of the camp, Erika Frömel does the only thing she is able to do: she offers comfort and caring in the face of torture and suffering. While it is against her own and her friends' advice of staying aloof, she realizes that it is what allowed her to exit the camp with some hope. In addition, she finds that articulating trauma in writing, and telling the stories, helps overcome the crippling effects of post-traumatic stress, to some extent.

A Home for the Memoir

The memoir was clearly an important addition to the accounts of that time period and therefore needed to go to a good home. In an ideal situation, Dr Frömel's family could be located and the memoir could be returned to them or housed somewhere in consultation with them. In looking for her family, a search for Erika Frommel spelled with two M's produced the result of an inventory for the Moravian Provincial Archive, written in Czech. Based on the translation, box 13 contained files about a Dr. Erika Frömmel, who seemed likely to be the author Dr. Erika Frömel of the memoir. Correspondence with the archivist led the researchers to personnel files dating from the Nazi annexation of the Sudetenland in 1938 through to the end of the war. The archivist confirmed that Dr. Frömel's files within box 13 document a request to avoid being transferred from the city of Brno/Brünn to Olomouc/Olmütz, a request which was denied. The archivists also confirmed Dr. Frömel's birthdate as May 20, 1915 and the city of her birth,

Aussig in German now called Usti nad Labem in Czech. They also stated that Dr. Frömel's maiden name was Kuttin (Pecha). The team completed the necessary paperwork to request all files relating to both Erika Frömmel, and her husband Wilfried, and received copies of over 300 pages of files covering the Nazi administration between the years 1940 and 1945 from the Moravský Zemský Archiv v Brně (Moravian Provincial State Archive) in Brno, Czechia ("Ausweis der Ausgezahlten Gehälter und Abzüge").

The archive documents added a significant amount of information to Dr. Frömel's biography. During the Nazi reign, an Ahnenpass, proof of Aryan ancestry, was required for employment, so the personnel records contained a significant amount of family detail. Erika Frömel's Ahnenpass shows that Erika's father was Franz Kuttin, the principal of a school, while her mother was Anna Kuttin, born Müller. Aussig, where Erika was born and grew up, was in the ethnically German Sudetenland, the region of Czechoslovakia that bordered Germany. Erika worked as a doctor in the Gerhard Wagner hospital in her hometown. The information in her husband's corresponding files indicated that he was born on August 3, 1910, in Olbersdorf to his father Eduard Frömmel, a railroad employee and to his mother Anna Frömmel, born Klose ("Ahnenpass Erika Frömel"; "Ahnenpass Wilfried Frömel").



Figures 16 and 17: The Frömel couple's "Ahnenpass" entries for Erika and Wilfried. ("Ahnenpass Wilfried Frömel"; "Ahnenpass Erika Frömel").

Wilfried's handwritten resume or "Lebenslauf" in German, from 1940 documents that he attended primary and secondary schools in Schönberg and Neustadt in Moravia. He continued his studies at medical school in Prague. After completion of his military service, he held an unpaid position as a gynecologist in Prague. In 1940, he was transferred to the Gerhard Wagner hospital in Aussig. The last lines of his resume indicate that he planned to marry a Dr. Erika Kuttin ("Lebenslauf Wilfried Frömmel").

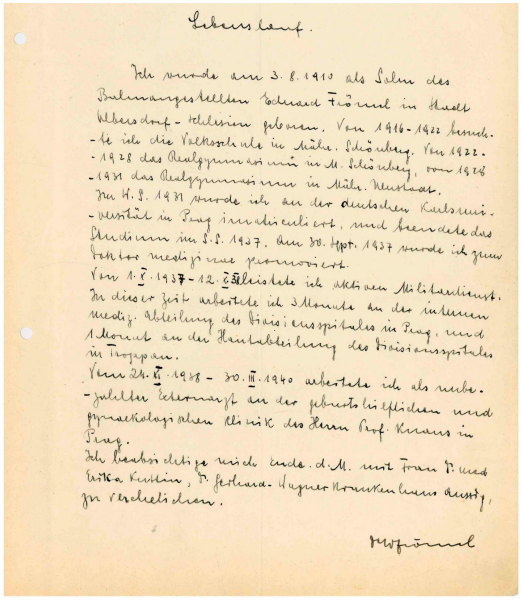
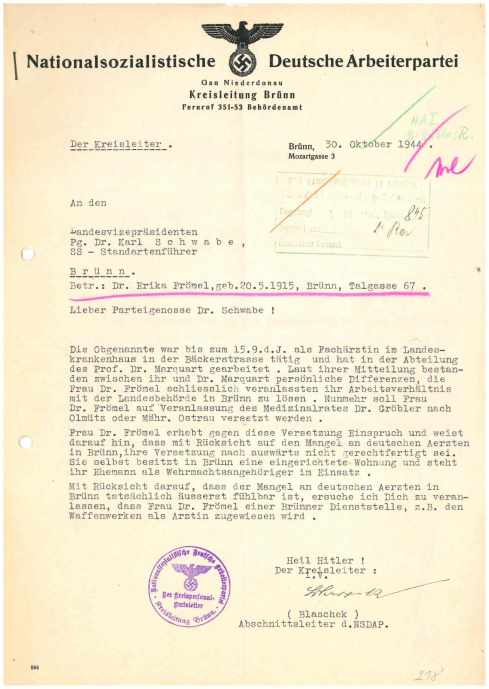


Figure 18: Wilfred Frömel's handwritten "Lebenslauf" ("Lebenslauf Wilfried Frömmel, 1940").

He did indeed marry Erika Kuttin, a fellow doctor in the Gerhard Wagner Krankenhaus on July 27, 1940 and then moved to Brünn or Brno (Klimmer). There, Wilfried worked at the Landesfrauenklinik and Gebäranstalt or Women's and Maternity Clinic (Landes-Frauenklinik), while Erika worked at the Landeskrankenanstalt or State Hospital ("Ausweis der Ausgezahlten Gehälter und Abzüge").

Figures 19 and 20: Dr. Wilfred Frömel worked at the Landesfrauenklinik und Gebäranstalt in Brünn until he was called back to serve the military. ("Maternity Hospital Brno"). Dr. Erika Frömel worked at the Landeskrankenanstalt in Brünn. ("Medicine of adult age, Brno")

Erika's chief medical officer at the hospital in Brno/Brünn was Dr. Walter Marquort, who was a member of the SS. After the war ended, he was tried and executed for his hand in creating torture and execution techniques (*Axis History Forum*). The files from the Moravian Archive contained the letter which explained that Erika had quit her job due to personal differences with Dr. Marquort. Furthermore, the letter indicates that she had asked not to be transferred to Olomouc/Olmütz as her husband was still stationed in Brno/Brünn and she had a home there ("Brief Kreisleiter an den Landesvizepräsidenten"). The response letter denied her request with the justification that she was needed in Olomouc/Olmütz ("Brief an die NSDAP Kreisleitung Brünn").



Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei
Gau Niederdonau
Kreisleitung Brünn
Fernruf 351-53 Behördenamt

Der Kreisleiter.

Brünn, 30. Oktober 1944.
Mozartgasse 3

An den

Landesvizepräsidenten
Pg. Dr. Karl S c h w a b e ,
SS - Standartenführer

B r ü n n .

Betr.: Dr. Erika Prömel, geb. 20.5.1915, Brünn, Talgasse 67 .

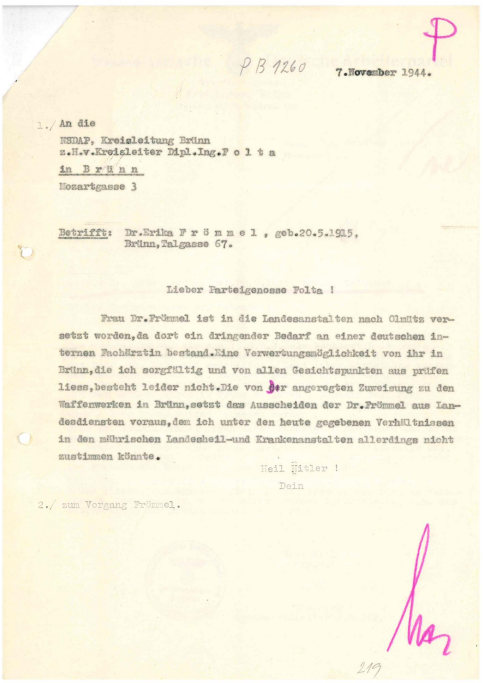
Lieber Parteigenosse Dr. Schwabe !

Die Obgenannte war bis zum 15.9.d.J. als Fachärztin im Landeskrankenhaus in der Bäckerstrasse tätig und hat in der Abteilung des Prof. Dr. Marquart gearbeitet. Laut ihrer Mitteilung bestanden zwischen ihr und Dr. Marquart persönliche Differenzen, die Frau Dr. Prömel schliesslich veranlassten ihr Arbeitsverhältnis mit der Landesbehörde in Brünn zu lösen. Nunmehr soll Frau Dr. Prömel auf Veranlassung des Medizinalrates Dr. Gröbler nach Olmütz oder Mähr. Ostrau versetzt werden.

Frau Dr. Prömel erhebt gegen diese Versetzung Einspruch und weist darauf hin, dass mit Rücksicht auf den Mangel an deutschen Aerzten in Brünn, ihre Versetzung nach auswärts nicht gerechtfertigt sei. Sie selbst besitzt in Brünn eine eingerichtete Wohnung und steht ihr Ehemann als Wehrmachtsangehöriger im Einsatz.

Mit Rücksicht darauf, dass der Mangel an deutschen Aerzten in Brünn tatsächlich äusserst fühlbar ist, ersuche ich Dich zu veranlassen, dass Frau Dr. Prömel einer Brünner Dienststelle, z.B. den Waffenwerken als Ärztin zugewiesen wird.

Heil Hitler !
Der Kreisleiter :
(Blaschek)
Abschnittsleiter d.NSDAP.



PB 1260 7.November 1944.

1./ An die
NSDAP, Kreisleitung Brünn
z.H.v.Kreisleiter Dipl.Ing.F o l t a
in B r ü n n
Mozartgasse 3

Betrifft: Dr.Erika F r ö m m e l , geb.20.5.1915,
Brünn,Talgasse 67.

Lieber Parteigenosse Folta !

Frau Dr.Prömmel ist in die Landesanstalten nach Olmütz versetzt worden,da dort ein dringender Bedarf an einer deutschen internen Fachärztin bestand.Eine Verwertungsmöglichkeit von ihr in Brünn,die ich sorgfältig und von allen Gesichtspunkten aus prüfen liess,besteht leider nicht.Die von der angeregten Zuweisung zu den Waffenwerken in Brünn,setzt das Ausscheiden der Dr.Prömmel aus Landesdiensten voraus,dem ich unter den heute gegebenen Verhältnissen in den mährischen Landesheil-und Krankenanstalten allerdings nicht zustimmen könnte.

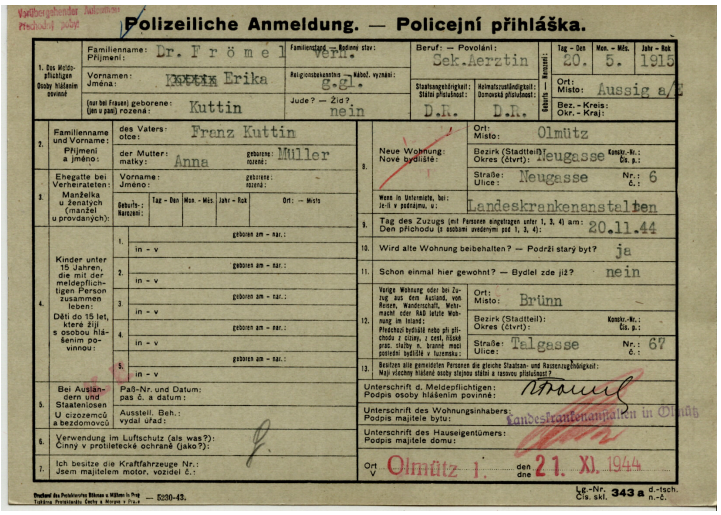
Heil Hitler !
Dein

2./ zum Vorgang Prömmel.

Figure 21: First letter: Erika's request not to be transferred to Olomouc (Brief Kreisleiter an den Landesvizepräsidenten). Figure 22: Second Letter: Denial of request ("Brief an die NSDAP Kreisleitung Brünn").

Erika, therefore, was sent to Olomouc/Olmütz, which is north and east of Brno/Brünn, in what is now Czechia. The Provincial Archives in the Opava State District Archives in Olomouc, Czechia (Zemský Archiv v Opavě Státní Okresní Archiv Olomouc) contained the police

registration record confirming this move for Erika Frömel (Polizeiliche Anmeldung Erika Frömel).



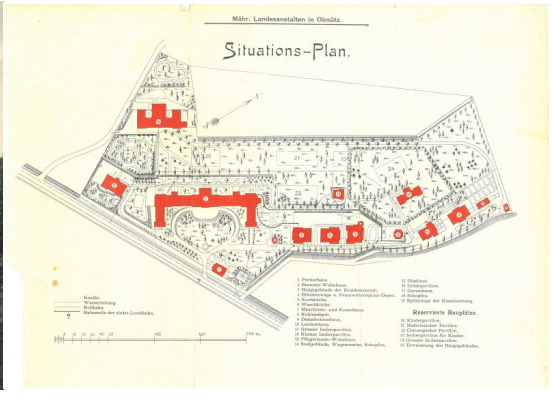
Polizeiliche Anmeldung. — Policejní přihláška.

Familienname: Příjmení:	Dr. Frömel	Verh.
Vornamen: Jména:	Erika	Rel.: vyznání: g.gl.
(bei Frauen) geborene: (jen u žen) rozená:	Kuttin	Jude? — Žid? nein
Beruf: — Povolání:	Sek.Aerztin	
Staatsangehörigkeit: Státní příslušnost:	D.R.	
Heimatszuständigkeit: Domovská příslušnost:	D.R.	
Tag – Den / Mon. – Měs. / Jahr – Rok	20. 5. 1915	
Ort: Místo:	Aussig a/E	
Bez. – Kreis: Okr. – Kraj:		
Familienname und Vorname: Příjmení a jméno: des Vaters: otce:	Franz Kuttin	
der Mutter: matky:	Anna geborene: rozená: Müller	
Ehegatte bei Verheirateten: Manželka u ženatých (manžel u provdaných): Vorname: Jméno:		geborene: rozená:
Geburts-: Narozen: Tag – Den / Mon. – Měs. / Jahr – Rok / Ort: – Místo		
Kinder unter 15 Jahren, die mit der meldepflichtigen Person zusammen leben: Děti do 15 let, které žijí s osobou hlášením povinnou: 1. 2. 3. 4. 5.	in – v / geboren am – nar.:	
Bei Ausländern und Staatenlosen U cizozemců a bezdomovců: Paß-Nr. und Datum: pas č. a datum:		
Ausstell. Beh.: vydal úřad:		
Verwendung im Luftschutz (als was?): Činný v protileteckém ochraně (jako?):		
Ich besitze die Kraftfahrzeuge Nr.: Jsem majitelem motor. vozidel č.:		
Neue Wohnung: Nové bydliště: Ort: Místo:	Olmütz	
Bezirk (Stadtteil): Okres (čtvrť):	Neugasse	Konskr.-Nr.: Čís. p.:
Straße: Ulice:	Neugasse	Nr.: 6 č.:
Wenn in Untermiete, bei: Je-li v podnájmu, u:	Landeskrankenanstalten	
Tag des Zuzugs (bei Personen eingetragen unter 1, 3, 4) am: Den příchodu (u osobami uvedenými pod 1, 3, 4):	20.11.44	
Wird alte Wohnung beibehalten? — Podrží starý byt?	ja	
Schon einmal hier gewohnt? — Bydlel zde již?	nein	
Vorige Wohnung oder bei Zuzug aus dem Ausland, von Heere, Wandernschaft, Wehrmacht oder RAD letzte Wohnung im Inland: Předchozí bydliště nebo při příchodu z ciziny, z cest, řídké prac. služby n. branné moci poslední bydliště v tuzemsku: Ort: Místo:	Brünn	
Bezirk (Stadtteil): Okres (čtvrť):		Konskr.-Nr.: Čís. p.:
Straße: Ulice:	Talgasse	Nr.: 67 č.:
Besitzen alle gemeldeten Personen die gleiche Staaten- und Nationalitätszugehörigkeit: Mají všechny hlášené osoby stejnou státní a národní příslušnost?		
Unterschrift d. Meldepflichtigen: Podpis osoby hlášením povinné:		
Unterschrift des Wohnungsinhabers: Podpis majitele bytu:	Landeskrankenanstalten in Olmütz	
Unterschrift des Hauseigentümers: Podpis majitele domu:		
Ort V	Olmütz	den dne 21. XI. 1944

Lg.-Nr. Čís. skl. 343 a d.-tsch. n.-č.

Figure 23: Police registration card for Dr. Erika Frömel, front of card, 1944 (Polizeiliche Anmeldung Erika Frömel 1)

As the card indicates, she worked in the Landesanstalten in Olmütz up until the end of the war.



Figures 24 and 25: Dr. Frömel was transferred to the Mährische Landesanstalten in Olmütz (Mährische Landesanstalten in Olmütz, and Mährische Landesanstalten in Olmütz, Lageplan).

The registration card confirms that she was sent to camp Hodolein on November 17, 1945 and displaced and resettled to Obernburg, Germany on October 19, 1946.

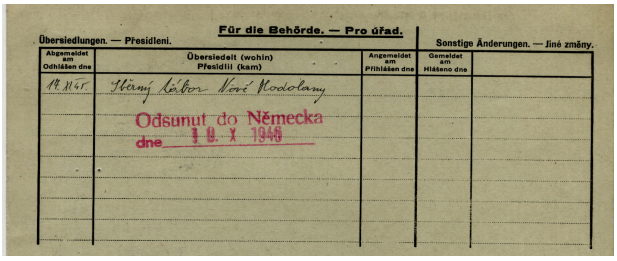
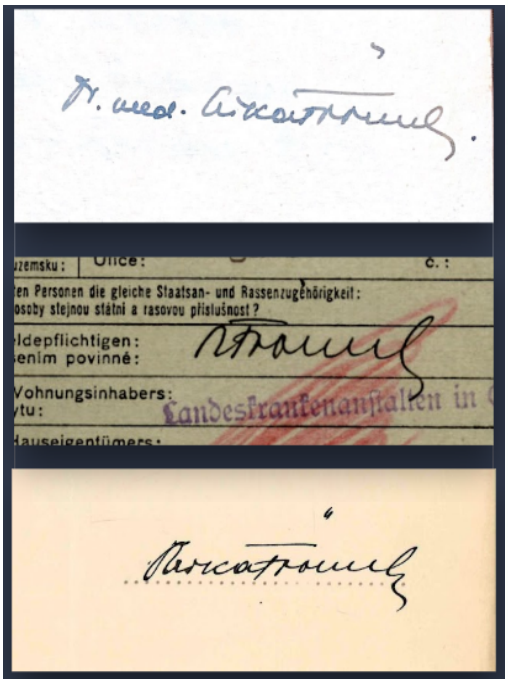
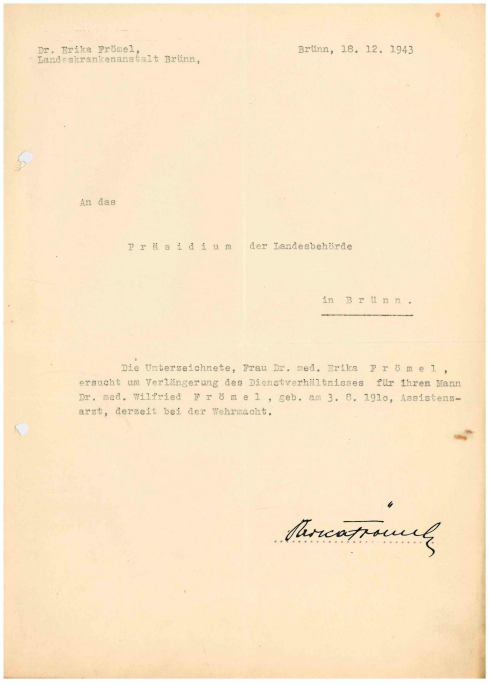


Figure 26: Police registration card for Dr. Erika Frömel, back of card, Transfer to Camp Hodolein 1945, and resettlement to Germany 1946 (Polizeiliche Anmeldung Erika Frömel 2).

The signature on the police registration card is an exact match with Dr. Erika Frömel's signature beneath the dedication of the memoir. It also matches a signature of Erika Frömel on a letter contained in the documents provided by the Moravian Provincial Archive. The letter dated December 19, 1943 asks for an extension of her husband, Dr. Wilfried Frömel's work contract as a doctor at his hospital while he was away serving in the military (Brief an das Präsidium der Landesbehörde Brünn).





Figures 27, 28, 29 and 30: Three signatures by Erika Frömel and letter of Dr. Frömel to the Landesbehörde (Shadows 1, Polizeiliche Anmeldung Erika Frömel front, Brief an das Präsidium der Landesbehörde Brünn).

Based on the information obtained from the documents in the Moravian Provincial Archive, subsequent searches were for Erika with her maiden name Kuttin. The result was a .xml file which turned out to be an index from the Bundesarchiv in Bayreuth, Germany. The Bundesarchiv record lists documents provided by a Dr. Erika Bergenthun-Kuttin asking for reparations due to suffering in World War II (Antragsteller Erika Bergenthun-Kuttin). One of the documents Dr. Bergenthun-Kuttin submitted as proof, is entitled "Kinder unterm Galgen: Erlebnisbericht der ehemaligen Lagerärztin Dr. Erika Bergenthun-Kuttin" or "Children under the Gallows: Report of the Experiences of former Camp Doctor, Dr. Bergenthun-Kuttin." This document bears the same title as Dr. Erika Frömel's formal report (Frömel, Bericht, 1948), identified only as authored by Dr. F., cited in Reichenberger's book, *Ostdeutsch Passion* (Reichenberger 1948) and in Dr. Grulich's *Sudetenpost* article (Grulich 2004). Dr. Erika Frömel, therefore, went by the name of Dr. Erika Bergenthun-Kuttin, in 1955 when she submitted this claim for reparations (Antragsteller Erika Bergenthun-Kuttin). While Kuttin is known as her maiden name, the additional last name of Bergenthun led to further searches.

Dr. Erika Bergenthun served as a doctor in Obernburg in 1952 according to an article in a publication of the Heimat und Verkehrsverein Obernburg, discussing the role of nuns of the Congregation of the Daughters of the Holy Redeemer in caring for the sick of Obernburg (Krankenschwestern in Obernburg 1). An inquiry with Rosemarie Klimmer, the town archivist of Obernburg, provided the last missing pieces of information. According to her, Erika's first husband Wilfried died in 1957, but she had separated from him by 1950. On April 8, 1950, she married the chemist Dr. Wilhelm Bergenthun, who was born September 7, 1896 in Berlin (Klimmer). According to the journal *Der Aussiger Bote*, Erika's parents, Franz and Anna Kuttin, came to live near the newly married couple in Obernburg until their deaths (Hüttl 385).

Throughout her career in Obernburg, Erika and her husband were members of the Deutsche Alpenverein, in particular the Sudeten German section of the group (DAV Deutscher Alpenverein).

In addition, Erika became politically active. She was listed as a candidate for the GB/BHE party. The party's name was "Gesamtdeutscher Block/Bund der Heimatvertriebenen und Entrechteten" or the "All German Block/League of Expellees and those Deprived of Rights" and she was a candidate in the voter district 231 in 1957. The GB/BHE was composed of a mixture of displaced peoples and ex-Nazis. This party is credited with passing the "Federal Expellees Act" which laid out definitions for "ethnicity" and "displacement" and allowed people who fit these categories as Germans to claim citizenship in the country (Sanchez). During the 1950's party did not win seats and some leaders of the GB/BHE later joined the CDU and CSU. In 1961, the GB/BHE merged with the All German Party (GDP) which failed to gain parliamentary seats in 1981.

When Erika ran in the GB/BHE, she did not win the election (Members of the German Bundestag 1946-1972). However, she did serve on the Obernburg town Council from 1972-1978. For her last years, Erika moved to an assisted living facility in Kleinwallstadt near Obernburg, and passed away on September 12, 1995. She is buried in the family grave of the Bergenthun family. She did not have any children and no surviving relatives have been found to date (Klimmer).

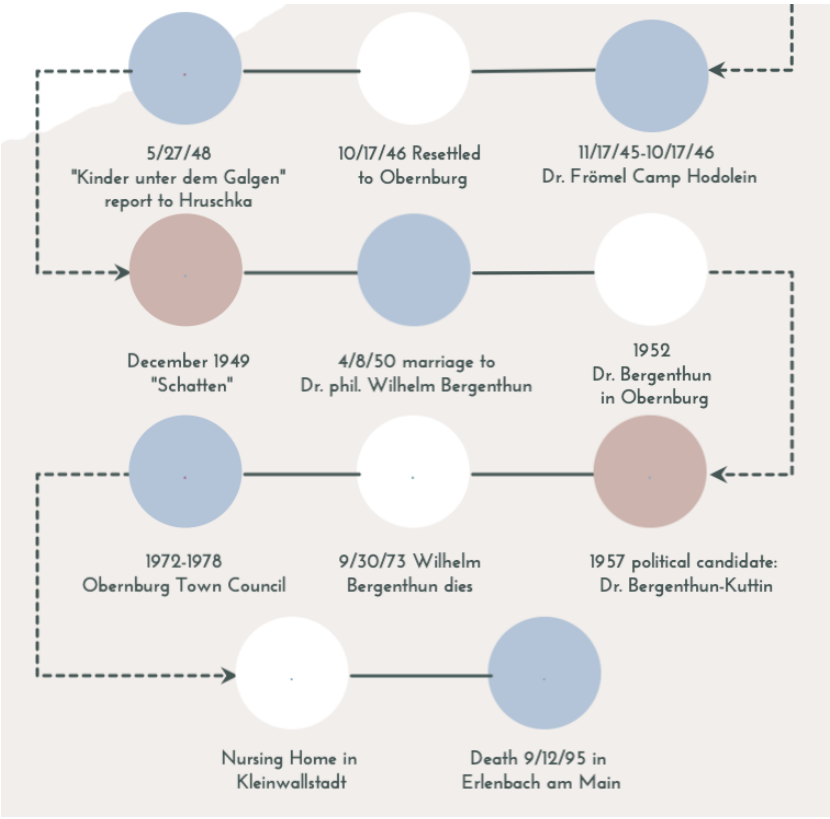


Figure 31: Timeline of Erika Frömel's life

In March, 2022, the memoir book was taken to its final home: the Documentation Center for Displacement, Expulsion and Reconciliation (Dokumentationszentrum) in Berlin, Germany. This museum features stories of people who have been displaced across the world, sometimes members of victim groups as well as members of perpetrator groups. The top floor features stories of displaced Germans. The Center now houses Dr. Erika Frömel's memoir *Schatten* as well as the translation *Shadows* and research notes. Erika Kuttin's story is available to the public and can serve as a historical primary source, shedding light on the German expellees from Czechoslovakia in 1945/46, after World War II.

Conclusion

While we may never know how the memoir ended up in Detroit, the researchers speculate that perhaps when Father Reichenberger toured Europe in 1950, he encountered Dr. Fromel. It is possible that the dedication indicates that the author gave the memoir book to this Catholic priest, who then took it back to America. The Archdiocese of Chicago's archivist did confirm that Father Reichenberger was there in 1950 (Hall), which may be the missing piece of the research. What is evident from the contents of the memoir is that Dr. Erika Fromel, later Bergenthun, felt deeply affected by personal experiences and what she witnessed during displacement after World War II. Her later political activity and affiliations help confirm that she felt an affinity towards the cause of displaced ethnic Germans from her experience. Erika's accounts could inform research on this time in history, along with other similar records, many of which can now be found at the Documentation Center for Displacement, Expulsion and Reconciliation in Berlin.

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