



The chronicles of my Mother Adele Glaser: From Fürth to Belzec 1939 - 1942

Part 2: Izbica

by Willie Glaser

edited by Gerhard Jochem

I cannot bring them back but I can see that they do not die again when I die.

The road to destruction: The anatomy of a deportation from Fürth

I am compelled to record the story of my mother and her children's destiny in as many details as is humanly possible. It is my passionate desire to nail down the specificity of their fate. I could not accept the bare facts as found in records stating: "Deported to the east." I could not accept this statement, I did not want to see my family as part of a faceless tragedy.

I had to know the exact details what happened to my family. I have spoken with and questioned people who are familiar with and know about the deportation events in Fürth, Nuremberg, Izbica and Belzec.

I have searched in the files of the *Staatsarchiv* (State Archives) Nuremberg. I published an appeal in the Nuremberg edition of the mass circulation newspaper *Bild*, calling upon the population of Fürth and Nuremberg, especially citizens of my generation to come forward with any pictures or documents about the deportation of Jewish citizens. I have a gut feeling important data are gathering dust in somebody's attic or cellar.



Appeal in the newspaper *Bild*

At this point it is necessary to point out that some of my findings as recorded in “The chronicles of my mother Adele Glaser,” completed in September 2007, are overtaken by my visit to Izbica in July 2008.

This now is my mother’s complete story as seen through my eyes.

I walked in the same streets and squares in Fürth and later in Izbica, on which my mother walked on that fateful day of March 22, 1942. I retraced her final steps from the *Judenhaus* or Zwangswohnung (Jew house or enforced residence) in the Hindenburgstraße 8 (now Rudolf-Breitscheid-Straße).

This is her story:

My mother and her three youngest children were clothed in warm overcoats, it was still cool on Sunday March 22, 1942. According to *Deutscher Wetterdienst* (German Meteorological Service) it was a sunny day, the temperature was eight degree Celsius.

They all had their little homemade knapsacks on their backs. Their permissible *Großgepäck* (checked luggage) of up to 75 kg was probably picked up earlier by some sort of transport facility provided by the Jewish community.

My mother and her children had to walk only a few hundred meters from their house in the Hindenburgstraße 8 to the Schlageterplatz (now Fürther Freiheit), which was the designated place of assembly for 237 men, women and children as ordered by the Gestapo. This pitiful group comforted each other, not knowing what lay ahead for them. This was understandable: The community never received any news from the some 90 of its members which were deported to Riga only six months earlier on November 27, 1941.



Entrance of Hindenburgstraße (Rudolf-Breitscheid-Straße) 8
(Photo: Willie Glaser)



The *Judenhaus* Hindenburgstraße (now Rudolf-Breitscheid-Straße) 8 is the building with the advertising on the first floor
(Photo: Willie Glaser)



**Walking along Hindenburgstraße, passing
Parkhotel on the right**
(Photo: Willie Glaser)



Entering Schlageterplatz (Fürther Freiheit)
(Photo: Willie Glaser)

During this short walk she probably took a last longing look at the *Hindenburganlage* (Hindenburg park) facing the Schlageterplatz. She thought of the many happy summer days when over the years she wheeled her five babies in the carriage to her favorite bench by the fountain.

After all the designated evacuees were assembled wearing their identity numbers and boarded several covered transport trucks. The heavier luggage and any *Ghetto Sammelgut* (collective ghetto goods) were loaded on separate transport trucks.

This convoy, which no doubt was accompanied by a sizable police escort proceeded in the direction Nuremberg, driving along Nürnberger Straße, passing the *Stadtgrenze* (city border) and boarding the *Fürther Straße*, with the final destination, the Langwasser transit camp near Nuremberg.

All these events took place in open view of the Fürth and Nuremberg populace. I cannot but wonder: What was a Fürth or Nuremberg citizen thinking when he or she looked at this sorry gathering? Apart from convinced Nazis, I do not think that until the start of the Hitler years anybody in this group had an enemy amongst the German people in their neighborhood or for that matter with German people they worked with.

I know my mother had no enemies. Up until I left for England, which was one week before the war started, we avoided speaking to neighbors in public but everybody we knew was comfortable to converse in the privacy of the apartment building. The Nazis just could not completely eradicate the Jewish history of Fürth.

What did happen in Fürth prior to the deportation?

At this point I did ask myself the obvious question: Were there any persons from the Gestapo hierarchy in Fürth involved and responsible for the deportations? I have to consider the fact that it was the *Geheime Staatspolizeistelle Nürnberg-Fürth* (Secret State Police branch) from which all orders flowed.

The Nuremberg-Fürth Gestapo was able to destroy all incriminating documents, including a film shot during one of the deportations. My research, including a four day search in the files of the Nuremberg State Archives did produce some background facts regarding the Fürth officials in charge of the deportation and the preliminary routine orders prior to the deportation. One of those facts was that the Gestapo was not directly involved in the routine aspects of the Fürth deportation procedures. There was no official Gestapo presence in Fürth carrying out the day-by-day executions of the deportation order of March 22, 1942 for Jews living in Fürth. The preparations for the execution of the deportation were based on the Gestapo guidelines issued by *SS-Sturmbannführer und Kriminalrat* (SS-major and senior crime councilor) Dr. Grafenberger, which he issued for the deportations of Jews from Nuremberg and Fürth to Riga on November 11, 1941. An updated Gestapo guideline for the March 22 deportation with the ominous codename *Aktion II* was issued about 10 days prior.

The updated guideline (source: *Staatsarchiv* Nuremberg, holding LG Nü-Fü 1951 # 3070/IX) was based on a *Schnellbrief* (express letter) from the *Reichssicherheitshauptamt* (abbreviation *RSHA*, translated Reich Main Security Office) showing the signature of Adolf Eichmann, dated January 31, 1942. This shows the direct connection of him with the Fürth deportation on March 22, 1942. It refers to the *RSHA* letter, which states that the deportation action to “the east” is *der Beginn der Endlösung der Judenfrage im Altreich* (the start of the final solution of the Jewish question in Germany). The wording “final solution” of course is an euphemism for industrial killing.

In my opinion, this communication from Eichmann is of critical importance, as it states: *Zur Zeit werden neue Aufnahmemöglichkeiten bearbeitet mit dem Ziel weitere Kontingente von Juden aus dem Altreich, der Ostmark und dem Protektorate Böhmen und Mähren abzuschieben* (at the moment new absorption centers are planned with the aim to deport further quotas of Jews from Germany, Austria and the Protectorate Bohemia and Moravia).

When I take the date of the express letter of January 31, 1942, it is obvious that when Eichmann talks about new absorption centers, which is a code name for killing centers, he knew that the experimental extermination camp Belzec was to start the extermination process

very soon. Indeed, Belzec started to function on March 17, 1942, followed by Sobibor and Majdanek during April 1942 and Treblinka on July 22, 1942.

The deadly gears are starting to mesh

In a previous deportation, the Jewish community Nuremberg was the lead community with the largest contingent of victims. This deportation transport was a *Sammeltransport* (collective transport) which included Jews from other communities close by. The leadership of the Jewish community was informed of a pending deportation. Consequently the heads of the Nuremberg community issued their own internal guidelines, probably with a copy to the Fürth community. For details see the internal communiqué *Wichtige Mitteilungen der Israelitischen Kultusgemeinde vom 17. März 1942 Nr. 5/42* (important notices from the Jewish community, March 17, 1942, source: Nuremberg City Archives C 31/I # 26).

According to the files in the Nuremberg State Archives (source: *Staatsarchiv* Nuremberg, holding *Staatsanwaltschaft* Nü-Fü # 3070/V), I am able to identify two police officials in Fürth involved in the deportation on March 22, 1942:

Polizei-Oberinspektor (Police superintendent) Kandel was ordered to report to Gestapo Nuremberg sometimes in early March and was appointed by Dr. Grafenberger to oversee the deportation from Fürth. I have met inspector Kandel twice, in 1935 and 1936, when he was in charge of the *Ausländerpolizei* (alien police) in Fürth. As a Polish citizen, I had to renew my residential permit, which Kandel took care of.

According to the files in *Staatsarchiv* Nuremberg, to facilitate the deportation Kandel received oral orders only, nothing in writing. Kandel also received a set of consecutive identification numbers to be assigned to the deportees. He reported back to the director of the Fürth police department *Polizeirat* Loew regarding the instructions he received in Nuremberg. Kandel informed several employees of his department about the pending deportation and stressed the secrecy of it.

In March 1942 Kandel was in charge of the *Einwohneramt* (residential registry) in Fürth. He used the residential registry cards to select the persons to be deported. Kandel informed Mr. Früh, who was the secretary of the Jewish community Fürth of the names of individuals selected for deportation. According to Kandel's court testimony after the war, for him the selection of Jewish names was the same routine as he would have selected a German person who is *wehrpflichtig* (liable for military service).

The actual direct contact with the deportees was handled by *Polizeiobersekretär* (senior police secretary) Georg Hoffmann. It was his job to notify the individuals and families of the pend-

ing deportation. He received the list of names and guidelines and also the numbers assigned to the deportees, to be worn on the outside of their clothing. It was his duty to inform the deportees to prepare and hand over an envelope with a list of all paper securities and a list of household goods. On the day of the deportation he sealed all apartments of the deportees and collected the sealed envelopes. The luggage was not searched in Fürth.

At this point I note: Kandel claimed during his trial testimony, he was not given any official guidelines for the pending deportation when he was called to Nuremberg to receive his orders, only to identify and secure the individuals for deportation. Therefore, I must assume the police department in Fürth followed the same procedures and guidelines used during the deportation to Riga on November 27, 1941. The question arises: What happened to all personal belongings the deportees had to leave behind? This means furniture, clothing, valuables, moneys, securities and jewelry.

The fiscal department of the city administration was charged with disposing of all movable inventories, which among other places were warehoused in the municipal theater of Fürth. The municipal welfare department established priorities to supply clothing and furniture left behind by Jewish citizens to be given to citizens who were bombed out by allied air raids. Leftovers were sold to the public at large. The city administration established a *Referat X* (department 10) to look after this financial windfall, which was transferred through the *Stadtkasse* (municipal finance department) to the coffers of the German government.

In February 1943, a report to the office of Fürth's lord mayor Häupler states: *Die Aktion zur Räumung der Judenwohnungen ist abgeschlossen* (the action to clear Jewish homes is concluded). By 1944 a total of some 120,600 Reichsmark was transferred by *Referat X* to financial institutions of the German government.

The issue of confiscated Jewish property does not end so simply. We know moneys and securities had to be held in a bank and were under the control of German financial authorities. The important question I am asking is what happened to all the personal jewelry and religious artifacts prevalent in a Jewish home? This is best illustrated with what I know was the inventory of the Glaser household when I left for England during August 1939: My mother's diamond ring, diamond earrings, pearl necklace and other smaller items, a twelve piece heavy silver cutlery set, inherited from her grandparents Wolf and Genendel Krieser with their initials WGK, a set of heavy silver candlesticks, a wedding gift from her parents and my favorite item, an oil-burning silver *Chanukia*, engraved on the back "Henoch and Rachla Krieser 1730," my maternal great-great-grandparents.

No doubt the officials in Fürth who administered this windfall took good care to look after themselves. I know and feel these items are still sitting in a credenza or drawer in some houses in Germany.

The road to the waiting room of hell

My mother has now left town taking with her the memories of Fürth. In a closed *Lastwagen* (truck) the Fürth contingent was brought to Langwasser camp. It was a huge encampment used for participants of the annual party rallies. Five barracks were used to house the deportees, who arrived on March 22, 1942 from Fürth. They were body-searched, all valuables still in possession of the deportees were confiscated. On March 24 the whole deportation transport was entrained in *Sonderzug* (special train) *Da 36* in nearby Märzfild train station direction Poland. The train full with some 1000 deportees arrived in Izbica Poland on March 27, 1942.



Langwasser railroad station in 2007
(Photo: mef-presseservice, Manfred E. Fritsche)

***Durchgangslager* (transit camp) Izbica**

I have written about Izbica in my mother's story "The chronicles of my mother Adele Glaser: From Fürth to Izbica".

In July 2008 I visited Izbica and Belzec. Now I must report in depth and in complete detail what I have seen there: Simply put Izbica was the clearing house for Belzec and Sobibor. I am able now to write with authority and can assume with some certainty a scenario about the conditions existing and events in Izbica.

During my visit to Izbica and Belzec I was accompanied by the noted Holocaust historian Dr. Robert Kuwalek, previously director of Belzec museum and archives, at present director of archives and museum at the site of the concentration camp Majdanek.

As I was standing on the unloading ramp in Izbica, looking at the original, now rusty railway tracks, tall weeds growing between the dried out and split wooden ties, I was shaken by the enormity of the fact to be standing on the very ground on which on that fateful day of March 27, 1942 my family arrived in Izbica. This was the beginning of the end for them. Sometimes between early April and late May 1942 my mother and her children were marched again to the loading ramp and herded on a train to begin their final journey to their ultimate destination, the extermination camp Belzec.



Me at the original station sign in Izbica (1942)
(Photo: Willie Glaser)



Tracks and unloading ramp to the right in Izbica
(Photo: Willie Glaser)



Unloading ramp in Izbica
(Photo: Willie Glaser)

As we started to leave the ramp area to walk in the streets of Izbica, several gunshots from hunters were echoing from the surrounding woods. At this moment I fully understood the reports by local Polish citizens, as told and collected by Dr. Kuwalek. He was told by the few surviving inhabitants about the random shootings and horrible conditions prevailing in Izbica while my mother was there. I was not able to talk to any local citizens, who lived in Izbica during those dreadful years, they all died or moved away.

I walked in the streets of Izbica, which is now a clean little town with little houses; all have been rebuilt except two standing in their original squalor. With few exceptions most houses

had no sanitary facilities, thus indeed those two represented the squalor and filth of Izbica during the German occupation.



Original houses where deportees lived in Izbica
(Photo: Willie Glaser)

According to testimonies by the local population, Izbica looked like a large railway station, especially when a new transport arrived. People were sitting and sleeping on their luggage in the streets, which were not paved, overflowing with waste mixed with excrements. There was “No more room at the inn.” These conditions continued until another group of victims was rounded up and taken away to Belzec or Sobibor, thus making room for the next arriving train.

Again, as I started to walk from the train ramp towards the streets of Izbica, my walk was punctuated by the echo of gunshots coming from hunters in the nearby woods. I thought of my mother being in the street when she heard shots fired and she was running, seeking shelter in some house nearby. According to eyewitnesses, shooting of Jews in the streets and homes was a common event.

My visit to Izbica and my talks there with Dr. Kuwalek give me now the opportunity to fill in on events and personalities in Izbica, which affected the transient population. I was able to give some preliminary reports in the first part of my mother’s story, now I am able to construct a scenario and fill in with pertinent facts.

One of the puzzling features of the daily life in Izbica was the fact that people were allowed to write postcards to friends and relatives left behind. Messages were strictly limited in words used and censored. Many pictures of these postcards are in the public domain and show cancellation stamps as late as August 1942.



A postcard from Izbica, dated July 1942

(Photo: Mrs. Ruth Oppenheim)

I had difficulties to reconcile the facts of the daily cruelties in Izbica and this goodwill gesture of allowing sending mail. I turned to Dr. Kuwalek for an answer. He assumes that transports of non-Polish Jews were warehoused in the Lublin area and Izbica before and during the first half of March 1942. The hierarchy of *Aktion Reinhardt* was not yet able to bring the extermination camps Belzec and Sobibor to their full capacity. It suited them to create an impression for the Jews left in Germany, Austria and Czechoslovakia that they will be *umgesiedelt* (relocated) and perform work for the war effort. There is some evidence, not confirmed, that some Jewish men from Izbica were working in a *Wasserwirtschaftslager* (water management camp) somewhere near Izbica.

While discussing the aspects of work for Jews in Izbica with Dr. Kuwalek, he told me he has got the copy of a document in his archival files about a certain “Manor house Smorczewski” in Tarnogora, a small hamlet very close to Izbica. This agricultural estate was owned by a countess Smorczewska. It provided a large amount of food for the German army. Consequently during late March 1942 countess Smorczewska applied to the German authorities for permission to hire Jewish deportees from Izbica to work as agricultural helpers on the estate. The German authorities gave this permission.

(Source: Jewish Historical Institute Warsaw)

To the best of my knowledge, only two other documents originating in Izbica are connected directly with the Fürth / Nuremberg deportation:

- 1) A pleading letter from the *Judenrat* (Jewish council) in Izbica dated March 29, 1942 addressed to the Jewish community in Würzburg, referring to the recent arrival of the Nuremberg / Fürth transport, probably in the holdings of *Staatsarchiv* Würzburg.
- 2) A postcard dated August 15, 1942 written from Izbica by Paula Kolbinski (Kolb) from Nuremberg and addressed to Louis Pimper in Nuremberg which is in private possession.

I can only describe all the above communications to represent S.O.S. messages cast into the evil maelstrom of the Holocaust.

I continued walking in the streets of Izbica, accompanied by Dr. Kuwalek, my cousin Bernard Krieser, who lives in Poland and his son Witold. The total absence of people in the streets created an odd feeling in me and I asked myself: What's the matter with this place?

I mentioned my observation to my cousin. "Well," he said, "it is an extraordinary hot day even for the month of July." I glanced at the windows. Nobody peered out from behind them. After all strangers were walking in the streets. I did experience an eerie feeling.

We arrived in the center of Izbica and there on a small grassy area stood the *Gedenkstein* (memorial), dedicated in May 2007 by representatives and high school students from communities in Franconia from where Jews were deported to Izbica. Amongst this group were two men from Nuremberg who lost relatives in Izbica. One of the notable delegates was Albrecht *Fürst zu Castell-Castell* (Prince of Castell-Castell). Following a traditional Jewish custom many little stones were laying at the base of the memorial. This indicated a stream of visitors to Izbica.



Albrecht Prince of Castell-Castell at the inauguration ceremony of the memorial in Izbica
(Photo: courtesy of Fürst zu Castell-Castell)



Memorial in Izbica erected by communities in Franconia
(Photo: Willie Glaser)



Memorial close-ups

(Photos: Willie Glaser)

We made our way to our last stop, to see the Jewish cemetery. It is located on a hill overlooking Izbica. At the street at the bottom of the hill, a family was sitting outside their house, the first inhabitants of Izbica we met. We started to climb towards the cemetery on a washed-out, uneven narrow path, which was difficult to navigate.

I stood in reverence on holy ground, the resting place for the remains of thousand of Jews including Jews from the Nuremberg / Fürth transport, who were shot or succumbed to typhus, malnutrition and other diseases. I looked at a large area, overgrown with grass and weeds. Dr. Kuwalek told me that this was the mass grave of some 4000 Jews, who were brought to the cemetery after being shot during several actions. Nobody knows the exact number of victims.



Jewish cemetery in Izbica

(Photo: Willie Glaser)

In 2006 the Izbica Jewish Cemetery Commemoration Project with the support of the German embassy erected a monument and with the help of local students started to clean up the cemetery. Shortly before my visit the cleanup work in the area of the mass graves had to stop temporarily because the human remains were too close to the surface.

I stood in awe at the edge of the mass graves and composed myself and said *Kaddish*. I brought with me two *Yiskor* (memorial) lights and lit them. One candle I dedicated to the victims of the Nuremberg / Fürth transport, the other to all the Jews who perished in Izbica.



My *Yiskor* (memorial) candles at the Jewish cemetery
(Photo: Willie Glaser)

Apart from the daily cruelties committed by Gestapo chief *Hauptsturmführer* (captain) Kurt Engels, his deputy, a minor SS official Ludwik Klem and the *volksdeutsche* (ethnic German) mayor of Izbica Jan Szulc, this triumvirate of terror was guilty of the following major atrocities in Izbica:

During the early phases of the Izbica ghetto Kurt Engels desecrated the Jewish cemetery by hauling gravestones to Izbica and using them to construct a Gestapo prison. With the help of the Foundation for the Preservation of the Jewish Heritage and the Polish government the gravestones were returned to the Jewish cemetery and now form the foundation of a memorial wall.

On October 15, 1942 some 10,000 Jews were herded together at Izbica railway station for a selection to be deported to Belzec or Sobibor. Some 5000 victims were left behind. At this point, the SS men and Ukrainian auxiliary guards summarily shot some 500 Jews.

Beginning October 1942, the Nazis started to empty the ghetto Zamosc and the district Krasnystaw of Jews sending the victims to Izbica. Untold cruelties and suffering were part of this *Aktion*. Because there was no food, the hunger was horrendous.

During the middle of October 1942, the Nazis started to move the Jews from Izbica in alternating transports to Belzec and Sobibor. Right from the beginning these actions were very bloody. Everybody had a “piece of the action,” including SS men from the staff of *Aktion Reinhardt* in Lublin. Of course the Ukrainian SS auxiliaries played a role, they were front and center during this action. According to eyewitness reports some 500 Jews were shot even before boarding the trains.

On November 2, 1942, the Gestapo headquarters in Lublin decided to make Izbica *judenrein* and removed all remaining Jews in Izbica to Belzec or Sobibor. This was when the biggest killing spree ever took place in Izbica. All old persons were shot at the spot. The younger people were assembled to board the train. There was no room on the train for all the victims. The train departed and some 1000 Jews were left behind on the ramp area. Kurt Engels ordered them to be locked up in the small local cinema. The victims were held there for a day. Many died of suffocation. The next day Kurt Engels ordered them to be brought in groups to the Jewish cemetery and shot, all this in full view of the Polish population. The estimates by the Polish citizens of Izbica of Jews shot range from 1000 to 2000 victims.

There were no Jews left in Izbica.

The final count

It is estimated that some 65,000 Jews were *umgesiedelt* (relocated) from Izbica. This number includes some 26,000 Jews from Germany, Austria and Czechoslovakia.

We walked back to our car. I was mentally exhausted. I was very glad to have visited Izbica and connected the memories of my beloved mother, sisters and brother. It was the end of a very sad pilgrimage. I was also glad to leave Izbica, a little dot on the map of the Holocaust. A place the world has passed by.

During the long drive back to Lublin, I sorted and wrote up my notes and fired a million questions at Dr. Kuwalek. Back in the hotel, I could not sleep. I worked late into the night to transfer my very extensive data and notes to my laptop. Little did I know what mental anguish was waiting for at my next stop, the extermination camp Belzec.

Link to Part 1: [Fuerth*](#)

Link to Part 3: [Belzec*](#)

[Index*](#)

[Home*](#)