



Isidor and Berta Paul in the 1930s
Source: Private Collection of Isak Paul

Isidor Jakob Paul

March 26, 1897 to October 12 or 13, 1941

Vienna, Austria

Isidor Jakob Paul was born in Vienna to Michel and Belle Paul on March 26, 1897. Isidor had a twin brother named Samuel, as well as two older and three younger siblings. Little is known about Isidor's childhood. His father owned and ran a second-hand household goods store, which was located in the same building where they also lived. It was located in the 20th District of Vienna at Klosterneuburgersg. 66. The building is still standing today, and was photographed by his grandson.

When the First World War broke out, Isidor served as a soldier in the Austrian military. He was an infantryman in Regiment 99 and served from December, 1915 until November, 1918. At the end of the war, he was wounded while fighting in Italy.

On November 23, 1919, Isidor married his first cousin, Sarel Basia (called Betti) Pohl. Their first son, Oswald, was born on September 30, 1920. A second son, Kurt, was born on September 21, 1925.

The period between the two World Wars was a grim one in Vienna. Inflation was rampant, to the extent that a customer's lunch would double in price while he ate it. One woman who lived in Vienna at that time describes it in this way:

"...certainly Vienna between the two wars was not a friendly place. Maybe it was the endless economic misery which made people bitter and resentful. Employees at public offices were often rude and particularly intolerant of children. I never understood where the legend of the golden Viennese heart came from. Perhaps from the time of the Strausses, the music and the waltzes. We still had music and waltzes. Fasching (the Mardi Gras carnival) offered beautiful balls and festivities, but it was marred by the unemployed in the streets and the political tensions."

Klosterneuburgersg. 66, the location of the apartment and shop.
Source: Private Collection of Isak Paul



Isidor Paul during World War One
Source: Private Collection of Isak Paul

Michel Paul, Isidor's father, was a religious man and observed the Sabbath. He most likely participated in worship and activities at the Briggittenau Temple, where Isidor and Betti were married. When the economy continued to worsen, the family realized that they would need to have the shop open on Saturdays if they were to make a living. For this reason, Michel gave the shop to his daughter-in-law, Betti, so that he could remain within Jewish law by not being the one who opened the shop on the Sabbath. Despite the hard times, the family was close and loving. They had to work hard to survive, especially as economic conditions worsened. The 20th District, also called the Briggittenauer District, had a large population of Jewish immigrant residents who were mostly poor and Orthodox in their religious practices. The Briggittenau Temple was the center of Jewish life, but Christians and Jews lived side by side in peaceful co-existence.

Once the Nazis took over in March of 1938, all of this changed. Christians no longer looked at their neighbors as being neighbors, but as being Jews. Peaceful co-existence ceased for the most part. Starting in May of that year, Jewish individuals living in Austria had to register with the Emigration Department of the Jewish Community of Vienna. To do so, they were required to fill out a detailed questionnaire. Isidor completed one of these. In it, he expressed his wish that the entire family could emigrate together either to Palestine or to the United States. The economic standing of the family quickly deteriorated, as the family was forced to sell their two apartments and shop to the Nazis for a token fee. From that time onwards, the family was all but destitute.

Conditions in Vienna continued to worsen for its Jewish residents. Signs were placed in Jewish shops warning Christians not to shop

there, Jewish children were no longer allowed to attend school and former classrooms were turned into holding cells for detainees. The first transports to Dachau Concentration Camp took place as early as April, 1938. On November 9, 1938, the "Reichskristallnacht" resulted in the arrest of Jewish men and the total destruction of the Brightenauer Temple.

Isidor was among those who were arrested. He was sent to Dachau and was registered in the camp on November 15, 1938.

Upon arrival, the men were forced to stand at attention for 10 hours, with no water and no bathroom. Because so many men were passing out, they were taken inside and given water, but then brought back outside and forced to stand for several more hours. They were photographed, shaved, showered and deliberately given the wrong size uniforms. They were not allowed to sleep for more than 36 hours.

Not much is known about the rest of Isidor's time at the concentration camp. His wife, Betti, attempted to obtain proof of his World War I military service in the hope of facilitating his release. Isidor was released on January 13, 1939, although Betti's attempts probably had nothing to do with this. Most of the other Jews were also released after only a few weeks, but they were all required to promise to leave the German Reich, and to keep secret the things they had experienced in Dachau.

Upon returning to Vienna, Isidor began to make arrangements to emigrate. He applied to the Vienna Jewish Community for funds to use for this emigration, although it is not clear whether this request was approved or denied. Oswald, Isidor's oldest son, left Austria in August, 1938. He arrived in Palestine in early 1939 via travels through Switzerland and Italy. The

younger son, Kart, was approved for emigration to Palestine with the Youth Aliya program at the end of 1939.

With their options for leaving Vienna quickly running out, Isidor and Betti made the decision to join one of the "illegal" transports to Palestine, the Kladovo Transport. With approximately 1200 members, the group left by ship from Bratislava in December, 1939. Since the British refused to give the refugees any visas to enter Palestine, the Romanian authorities refused to grant them permission to enter the country, which they needed to do in order to reach the mouth of the Danube. In addition, no vessel was waiting for them at the mouth of the Danube. Despite these obstacles, the transport organizers felt that the refugees should proceed anyway. Worsening weather conditions, however, caused everything to come to a halt. On December 31, 1939, the ships carrying Isidor and the other refugees were directed to winter harbor in the Yugoslav town of Kladovo. After many delays, the group was finally able to leave Kladovo in September, 1940. Unfortunately, they were sent not to the Danube delta, but to the Serbian town of Šabac located a few hundred kilometers upriver. Several attempts to continue the trip failed, and when the Germans marched into Yugoslavia in April of 1941, more than 1,100 Jewish refugees remained in Šabac. Among them were Isidor and his wife.

In July of 1941, the remaining refugees were imprisoned in a military barracks on the outskirts of town. Responding to the increased strength of partisans in the area, Hitler appointed General Franz Böhme to the highest army command in Serbia. When the partisans killed 21 German soldiers in October, 1941, Böhme ordered the execution of 2100 people in reprisal. Isidor was one of those murdered, along with the rest of the remaining males from



Wedding Photo of Isidor and Betti
Vienna, 1918
Source: Private Collection of Jack Pearl

