

Operations (May–June 1919)” (pp. 109–188), includes images focusing on the visit to Oradea made by the King and Queen of Romania, after passing through Transylvania, as these are the moments which made official both Wilson’s point ten and the act 1 December 1918, read in Alba Iulia.

Chapter IV, “The Tisza-Budapest Military Campaign (July–August 1919)” (pp. 189–238), features information and images showing the Romanian soldiers, led by Queen Marie, crossing the Tisza River, symbolically bordering the jurisdiction of the abovementioned point ten. As shown by the official photographs, introduced into the scientific circuit thanks to this volume, the Romanian army crossed the Tisza River and went all the way to Budapest, because the regime in the Hungarian capital had not abided by point eleven (“Romania, Serbia, and Montenegro should be evacuated; occupied territories restored ...”) of the Wilsonian principles, meaning that the Hungarian regime had not evacuated the Romanian territories; on the contrary, it had launched a military offensive, and therefore the Romanian military action beyond the Tisza River had been a counterattack, hence the authors’ use of the term “liberation.” The last part of the photographic itinerary shows the Romanian army entering Budapest, marching across Heroes’ Square, flanked by curious, happy, and thoughtful children. All of these feelings reflect the sense of liberation experienced by the civilian population, caught in the military events that altered the social daily life.

The last two chapters, V (“Personalities”) and VI (“Photography As a Historical Document”), are the shortest in length and contain both biographical data on the personalities featured in this volume—from the highest level, the king and the

queen, to the high-ranking officers—and useful information about the meaning of photography in general as a source of information about the past.

The book deserves credit for having offered scholars a series of photographic documents showing the campaign of the Romanian army on the Western front in the spring of 1919, an action which reflected not only the dream of the majority population in Transylvania, but also the wish of the Old Kingdom of Romania, namely, the territorial unification of Greater Romania. □

ROBERT-MARIUS MIHALACHE

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JEREMY DRONFIELD

**The Boy Who Followed His Father into Auschwitz: A True Story**

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“THERE ARE many Holocaust stories, but not like this one. The tale of Gustav and Fritz Kleinmann, father and son, contains elements of all the others but is quite unlike any of them,” writes historian and novelist Jeremy Dronfield in the Preface to his book (p. xiii), and this because father and son lived the inferno together and managed to stay alive. It is a remarkable story about love and survival. Based on meticulous archival research and on Gustav’s secret diary, *The Boy Who Followed His Father into Auschwitz* tells the story of the two Kleinmanns for the first time.

Everything started in 1930s Vienna, where the Kleinmann family lived a simple, ordinary life. Gustav was a furniture upholsterer, while his wife, Tini, took care

of their modest family. Their greatest joy were their four children: Fritz, Edith, Herta, and Kurt. Life was good and the days passed by in harmony and peace. Then the Nazis annexed Austria, and the life the Kleinmanns knew rapidly shifted before their eyes. Neighbors turned on them. Fritz and Gustav were among the first to be taken (p. 27). In October 1939, the Nazi police sent them to Buchenwald, in Germany, where a new concentration camp was being built. That was just the beginning of an unimaginable period, a six-year odyssey almost without parallel. Over the months of suffering that followed, only the love between father and son kept them alive.

Every page of this book contains a painful description of a time when being a Jew meant being non-human. Their story at Buchenwald contains backbreaking Sisyphian toil in quarries, meager food rations, poor sanitation, bone-chilling cold, daily beatings and injuries, and the regular sight of arbitrary, senseless murders. They helped build Buchenwald, young Fritz learning construction skills which would help save him from extermination in the coming years. After three years in this camp, Fritz discovered that his father was to be transferred to Auschwitz, a dangerous place which they already knew had gas chambers capable of killing hundreds at a time. Instead of staying put, Fritz took the risk and asked to be sent away with his father. This was an extreme act of courage and unconditional love. The description of the first day in Auschwitz is terrifying:

“Next came the showers. Fritz, Gustav and the others watched anxiously as the first batch were herded through the door.

Minutes passed; a restlessness began to spread among the prisoners. Fritz could

feel the tension mounting, marked by a low murmuring. When their turn came, would they obey and walk meekly into the lethal chamber?

Suddenly, a man’s face appeared in the doorway, gleaming wet, with water dripping from his chin, grinning. *It’s all right*, he said. *It really is a shower.*

The next batches went through in much better spirits” (pp. 178–179).

There is nothing one can say about the cruelty of this episode and nobody can even imagine what those people felt or thought in those moments. But even in this cruel environment, the relationship between father and son stood the test of time.

“*And so the year of 1943 goes by*, Gustav wrote (in the diary he kept the whole time). Winter was upon them again; snow began to fall and the ground hardened. This would be his and Fritz’s fifth winter since being taken from their home, their fifth year of relentless nightmare. And yet, as much as they endured and suffered so far, the worst was yet to come” (p. 226). Soon, they would be separated. Gustav begged Fritz to escape and prayed for his son’s life: “The Lord God protect my boy. I cannot go, I am too weak. He wasn’t shot at. I hope my boy will win through and find shelter with our dear ones” (p. 285). But Fritz was captured by German soldiers and sent to Mauthausen. He was put in prison, again. “Physically as well as mentally Fritz altered. . . . The world in which he lived was the worst he had ever seen” (p. 305). But he was lucky and strong enough to resist until the liberation. Soon after that, with an emergency convoy, Fritz arrived in Regensburg, at the 107<sup>th</sup> Evacuation Hospital, weighing only thirty-six kilos (p. 325). The doctors took good care of him and soon he recovered and tried to find his

way back to Vienna. He arrived there “on Monday 28 May 1945, five years, seven months and twenty-eight days since leaving it” (p. 326).

On the other hand, his father, Gustav, “had found himself a good life in Bad Fallingbostal” (p. 328). But his greatest wish was to be reunited with his son. “On a day in September, Gustav Kleinmann entered Vienna. . . . Gustav found the one person he had most longed to see, . . . his beloved boy. . . . They were home and together again” (p. 331).

The story has a happy ending, but it also reminds us that “the Holocaust was a crime made of journeys, crisscrossing Europe to the accompaniment of a tuneless score of protesting machinery” (p. 282).

The worst of humanity is on display in *The Boy Who Followed His Father into Auschwitz*. But with all the painful episodes, some light shines through: the solidarity of the prisoners, the small acts of generosity between them, and the humbling random acts of kindness from strangers who put their own lives at risk to help ease the suffering of others. For Gustav and Fritz, it is the

will to live, the hope that they will survive, the determination to endure, the strength, and the tenacity of spirit, the ties that bind and the unbroken love for one another.

Biographer, historian and experienced non-fiction writer, Jeremy Dronfield has compiled, in this book, an incredibly moving account of the Holocaust. *The Boy Who Followed His Father into Auschwitz* is a moving memoir. Every page and every detail are carefully documented. The book contains four parts: “Vienna,” “Buchenwald,” “Auschwitz,” and “Survival.” A detailed Epilogue, an extensive Bibliography, Acknowledgements, Notes and a very useful Index complete Jeremy Dronfield’s book, which is indispensable to all those interested in Holocaust studies, the history of Europe, or extraordinary biographies. It is a book about love and survival and a true story of the faith and destiny of those few fortunate Jews who survived the Holocaust. It is a book that should be read by all of us.



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