

DACHAU

S O N G

THE TWENTIETH-

CENTURY

ODYSSEY OF

HERBERT

ZIPPER

BY PAUL

CUMMINS

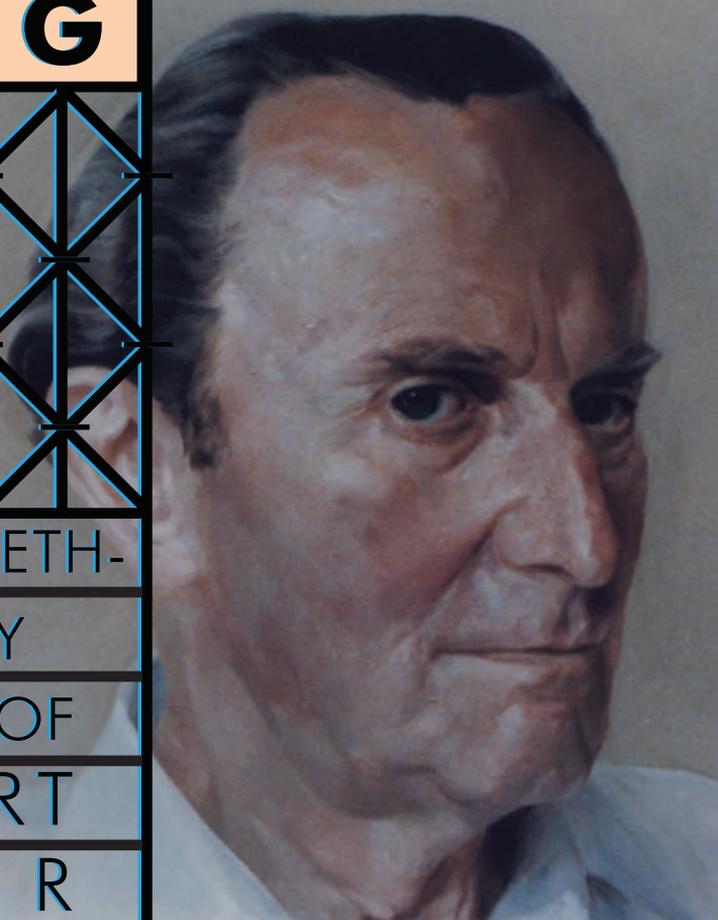




PHOTO: CLYDE A. JOYCE

“Zipper, you didn’t omit a chance to be killed.”

—OTTO KLEMPERER, Conductor

Herbert Zipper was born in 1904 in Hapsburg, Vienna. He was educated in the finest academies, studying under Richard Strauss and Maurice Ravel, among others, and became a conductor-composer in Germany in the early 1930s. When Hitler became Chancellor, he hastened back to Vienna, composing music for underground cabarets. In 1938, after the Anschluss, he was sent to Dachau and transferred to Buchenwald (1939).

In Dachau, he organized clandestine concerts in an abandoned latrine. He and prisonmate Jura Soyfer also composed a song, “The Dachau Lied,” which was to have an extraordinary history.

He was released from Buchenwald and journeyed to Manila to marry the love of his life and to conduct the Manila Symphony Orchestra. When the Japanese invaded (1942), he was put in prison again. A few weeks after the liberation of Manila, out of the rubble of the city he created an extraordinary concert.

After the war he came to America, was responsible for the founding of over a dozen community arts schools, and has been an internationally effective educator.

Throughout his remarkable journey, Zipper maintained a spirit of hope and achievement. This is a story of the triumph of human will and spirit.

Praise for

DACHAU SONG

“Don’t forget, Zipper, this whole civilization of man has been built by very few people, and I’m talking to one.”

—JOHN D. ROCKEFELLER III to HERBERT ZIPPER

“I read the book with growing suspense. It is written with crystal clarity and with a knowledge of European dimensions rarely found among Americans!”

—SEBASTIAN FELDMAN, Writer for
the *Rheinische Post*, Dusseldorf, Germany

“In Dachau, Herbert Zipper secretly led an orchestra. He survived the Nazis to champion his beloved art.”

—PATRICIA WARD BIEDERMAN, *Los Angeles Times*

Dachau Song



PETER LANG
New York • San Francisco • Bern
Frankfurt am Main • Paris • London

Paul F. Cummins

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Contents

Acknowledgments	ix
PRELUDE:	xi
FIRST MOVEMENT:	1
I Train to Dachau	3
II “Fin de Siècle” to “Fin de Millennium”	13
III War to the Academy	29
SECOND MOVEMENT:	49
IV A Young Conductor in the Gathering Storm	51
V Dachau: Arbeit Macht Frei	75
VI Buchenwald	93
THIRD MOVEMENT:	111
VII Manila: Reunion and a New War	113
VIII Liberation: Dr. Zipper Gives A Concert	133
INTERLUDE:	153
Patriot of the Globe	155
FOURTH MOVEMENT:	159
IX America: The New World Symphony to the New World	161
X Chicago	179
XI Manila Revisited	193
FIFTH MOVEMENT:	213
XII California	215
XIII China	229
CODA:	251
Vienna: Return	253

Endnotes.....	265
References	273
Index.....	303

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Dedication

To the memory of Walter and Otto Zipper, Hedy Zipper Holt and Trudi Dubsy Zipper.

To Henry Holt and Lucy Horwitz.

To the memory of Jura Soyfer and those others of the six million whom Herbert left behind in Dachau and Buchenwald and to those who suffered and died in Manila.

To Ruthie and Lee, Mimi and Ken, Anna and Emily, Liesl and Richard, and Julie and Paul.

To the Richard D. Colburn family.

To Maryann.

And, of course, to my dear friend Herbert.

“In the prison of his days
teach the free man how to praise.”

- W. H. Auden

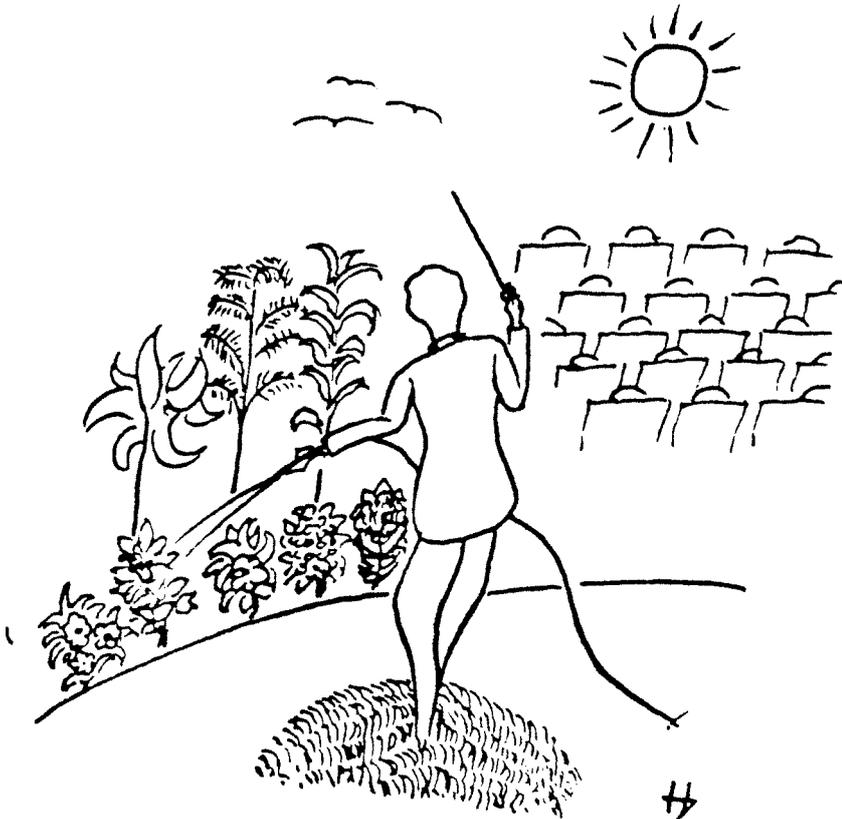
“Stay humane Dachau mate
“Be a man Dachau mate.”

- Herbert Zipper and Jura Soyfer

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PRELUDE



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86

Prelude

Defenceless under the night
Our world in stupor lies;
Yet, dotted everywhere,
Ironic points of light
Flash out wherever the Just
Exchange their messages:
May I, composed like them
Of Eros and of dust,
Beleaguered by the same
Negation and despair,
Show an affirming flame.

- W. H. Auden, "Sept. 1, 1939"

The project of writing the story of Herbert Zipper presents interesting problems for a biographer. Zipper's life has been one of little inner conflict. His frustrations have not been with himself but with the mess men have made of this planet. His marriage was loving and happy and he cannot recall any periods of serious depression or neurosis. Rather his conflicts have been with the outside world. Zipper and I have speculated that our own compatability is probably due in part to our concern with "what could be." We find ourselves fantasizing about new programs to change this school, that social institution, that political problem. The biographical problem, however, is clear: how to make engaging the story of a sane, rational man seeking to promote intelligent projects. Zipper's life does not offer fertile ground for deep psychological excavations and discoveries of hidden secrets. As a friend once said to him, "Herbert, you are boringly sane."

I first learned of Herbert Zipper in 1972 from my wife, Mary Ann, who had just heard him speak at a music educator's conference. She came home inspired by this 72 year old man's passionate defense of the Arts in education and in life. Since then I have gradually come to know "Dr. Zipper" and, as I learned more and more about his life, I became convinced that his story must be told. Lives such as his are all too rare and must be recorded to serve as a beacon in the growing gloom and darkness. How has this man survived and emerged so affirmative about life and its possibilities? What resources was he able to draw upon? What

lessons did he learn in the horrors of Dachau and Buchenwald and during the fall of Manila? How was it that he came to see that the Arts are not an ornament in our lives but are the very essence of life itself? The questions haunted me and when, in 1986, my Board of Trustees granted me a half-year sabbatical, I asked Zipper if he would like to work together and to be the subject of a biography. Although he has never been much of a self-promoter, he agreed to the project and we began. With cassette recorder and notebook in hand, I came to his home several mornings each week and began to take down his story. Then, each afternoon, I would write. When the sabbatical ended, I had compiled a crude rough draft. I then spent the next three years meeting Zipper every Sunday morning at 8:00 a.m. sharp, revising several drafts, adding stories as he recalled more and more events, adding incidents from his current experiences, and coming to know more about him. Also, in 1988 and again in 1990, my wife and I accompanied Zipper to Austria and spent many days visiting his old haunts in Vienna and in the countryside. These trips uncovered both events and feelings and added a valuable dimension to the book. My biographical problem has been to present a critical, evaluative account of a life I have come to admire. I also found it difficult to verify stories since so many of his contemporaries are dead. Nevertheless, each draft has gained a little more objectivity and I have managed to verify many accounts so that the final draft, I believe, tells an accurate story.

I believe his story is also instructive because of its remarkable span: From his birth in "fin de siècle" Vienna, in the twilight of the Hapsburg Empire, to the depression of the 1930's, the rise of Hitler, imprisonment in Dachau and Buchenwald, escape to Manila and then incarceration by the Japanese, to the new world of America and a life of music education, and now in the twilight of his own amazing life, to a new venture traveling to China as an honored consultant and conductor. Europe, America, Asia - he has served on three continents. His life has also spanned three centuries: from the 19th Century Hapsburg world to the 20th Century with its horrors and glories, and now in his educational work preparing American and Asian young people for the approaching 21st Century. There are too few leaders today who have any real concept of posterity. Whether the cause be despair or greed or simply ignorance, we live in a century wherein exploitation of human and natural resources has become epidemic.

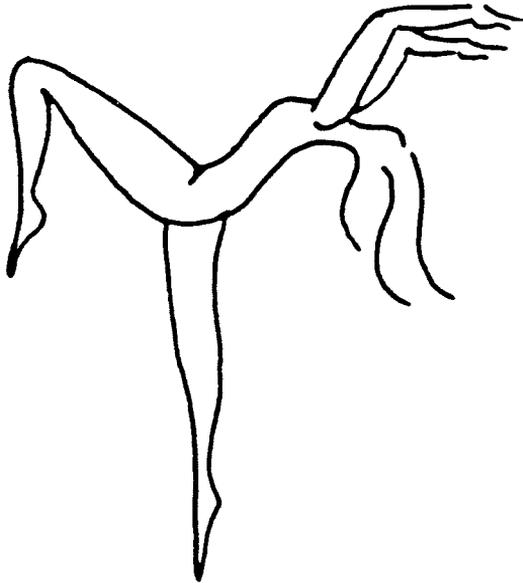
Herbert Zipper has often said, "I want to be a good ancestor!" Perhaps we all share this wish. But the challenge is not just to dream but to make dreams come true; to actively bring wishes into concrete reality. All of his life, Herbert Zipper has found ways to do just this. From

organizing concerts in the latrines of Dachau to helping found community schools in America to showing Chinese youth how to play a Beethoven string quartet, Zipper has been a builder. Whatever the practical obstacles, he has found ways to overcome and to “only connect” people with each other, with ideas, with the Arts, with their better selves. His own integrity is contagious - being with him makes one want to be less trivial, more involved in the real stuff of life.

Men such as Herbert Zipper often go to their grave with their stories relatively unknown. Even many of Zipper’s friends and associates do not know the full richness and drama of his life. Such people are usually overlooked by the media because their stories are not glamorous or flamboyant. Often society is not sensitive to nuance and subtlety of character; quiet, humble courage is often overlooked in favor of sensationalism and self-advertisement. One unusual feature of Herbert Zipper is his disinterest in publicizing or even acknowledging his own achievements. Bringing joy to others through his projects has pleased him most and he has rarely sought credit for himself. I offer this story of a different kind of hero in hopes that I may add a touch to our understanding of heroism and human worth. Herbert Zipper once told me that he learned in prison camp the joy of giving; it is my joy to give to the readers of this book the story of this courageous man.

FIRST MOVEMENT

- I Train to Dachau
- II From Fin de Siècle to Fin
de Millenium
- III War to the Academy



17
19
80

Chapter I

Train to Dachau

Believe me, who for thousands of years
has chewed this toughest of food, Know
That from the cradle to the bier
No man can digest the ancient bitter dough.
Trust one of my kind, this show
Is made only for a God's delight
He dwells in an ageless aureole,
Us he has thrust in darkness out of sight
And you are fit for only day and night.

—Mephistopheles from¹
Goethe's *Faust-Part One*

A 1938 article in the Parisian newspaper, *Le Soir* (*The Evening*), written by the French correspondent in Vienna, M. Pertinax, was headlined: "J'ai Vu Mourir L'Autriche" (I saw Austria die). He was not the first. Over the centuries from the plains to the east along the Danube the invaders have marched, Huns, Avars, Magyars, Turks. And on March 12, 1938 once again the Barbarians, this time from the north, invaded yet were welcomed into the ancient city of Vienna. This invasion would trample under foot the final flowers of Viennese culture and grace. The Hapsburg Empire had crumbled in 1918, and the post World War period, culminating in the Great Depression of 1929, had brought ruin to many more lives. Yet somehow the arts, literature, science, philosophy all remained vital. When the Nazi gangsters of Adolph Hitler marched into Vienna, overnight this center of European culture dwindled into a provincial German burg.

Herbert Zipper and his family were a well-to-do middle class Jewish family living in the first years of this century in a large home within sight of St. Stephen's Cathedral in the first district of town. They were, however, not a religious family and paid little attention to Jewish ritual or custom. Like many Viennese Jews they considered themselves primarily Viennese and, until March 12, 1938, were proud of this allegiance. On this day their blindness to the essential and deep-rooted anti-semitic

nature of their city hit them full force. Their comfortable illusions were shattered and their pride in being Viennese was destroyed.

By the time Hitler invaded Austria to reclaim it for Germany, many Viennese Jews saw what was coming and left the city and the country. Having heard Hitler speak several times and having read of atrocities at Dachau, Herbert Zipper knew that Jews were in for terrible times, though neither he nor anyone else could foresee just how devastating these times would be. But, in retrospect, it should have been clear to them. They didn't perceive what they should have been able to perceive. Hitler's speeches were anything but ambiguous and the history of anti-semitism in both Germany and Austria was immense. The Zipper family, like many other middle-class Jewish families had reached such a level of comfort and psychic satisfaction with "being accepted" into acceptable society that they had become blind to their own status. They would never be fully acceptable to gentile society. They were living in a dream which turned into the inevitable nightmare which Adolf Hitler had promised. Finally, after the troops arrived on March 12, Zipper and his family began making plans to escape from their beloved city. It took time, however, to pack and sort out the accumulation of several generations of books, antiques, clothes, memorabilia and the like. But even more time consuming was the process of acquiring legal papers to leave. The 34-year-old Zipper, who five years earlier had experienced Hitler's rise to power in Düsseldorf, urged his family - mother, sister, and two brothers - to leave immediately. He was voted down in a family council.

Why could not the Zipper family and thousands of other Jewish families have seen the extreme peril they faced and made every effort to escape, to leave Vienna before or immediately after the Anschluss on March 12th? The answer is both complicated and simple. Quite simply, many Viennese Jews did not consider themselves Jews as much as they did Viennese. They had helped build Vienna; its golden age was due largely to their contributions. This Golden Era of Vienna we remember today in terms of its leading artists and intellectuals. The list of famous Jewish-Austrian figures is staggering: in psychology, Sigmund Freud; in philosophy, Edmund Husserl, Martin Buber, Ludwig Wittgenstein; in music, Gustave Mahler, Karl Goldmark, Arnold Schoenberg, Oskar Strauss, Erich Korngold, Eugen Zador, Hans Gal, Karl Weigel, Eric Zeisl, Ernst Toch; in letters, Theodore Herzl, Edward Hanslick, Karl Kraus, Egon Friedell; in literature, Arthur Schnitzler, Peter Altenberg, Stefan and Arnold Zweig, Herman Bahr, Richard Beer-Hofmann, Franz Werfel, Hermann Broch; conductors such as Otto Klemperer, George Szell, and Bruno Walter; in film, Erich von Stroheim, Otto Preminger, Josef von Sternberg, Fred

Zinneman and Billy Wilder and the list goes on and on. Given this massive array of talent and contributions and given the status which they had largely helped to bestow upon Vienna, how could the Jews of Vienna have expected anything other than decency? How could they have anticipated revilement, rejection and, ultimately, an attempt at total extermination? It was, then quite literally, unthinkable. Nevertheless, given the history of anti-Semitism in Austria, they should have thought the unthinkable. As George Berkley writes, "The story of the Jews in Vienna is the story of what may be the most tragically unrequited love in world history." ²

The story begins in medieval times when Vienna, as a central trading center of Europe, attracted Jewish traders and money-lenders. As early as 966 A.D. the phrase "Jews and other legitimate merchants" appears in the city's records. Over the next four centuries the Jewish community grew in numbers and in successful ventures and their success aroused hostility. Perhaps because of their strange ways and customs, the Viennese Gentiles in 1421 launched the first attack. As George Berkley relates, in a 1988 study *Vienna and Its Jews*, the 1421 pogrom was officially sanctioned: "All Jews who refused to become Christians (the vast majority) were either executed or expelled. Their goods were expropriated and their children were forcibly baptized. For the first but not the last time in modern history Vienna destroyed its Jewish community." ³

During the next few centuries Jews gradually returned to Vienna and "by the mid-1600's a Jewish community of some five hundred families was living along the banks of the Danube in a small ghetto called Leopoldstadt, named after the reigning sovereign, Leopold I."⁴ Despite numerous restrictions placed upon them, these Jews too became successful. And, as in 1421, it happened again. This time, in 1670, Leopold expelled all of Vienna's Jews, converted their synagogue into a church, and eliminated all signs of their culture. However, their removal was a financial disaster for the city and, once again, Jews were allowed to return. They were not missed for their cultural contributions or for their religious customs; they were permitted to return because their absence hurt the economic well-being of the comfortable Viennese who threw them out in the first place. The hypocrisy and nastiness of the Viennese to their Jewish fellows defies comprehension. Yet, despite the hostility of rulers such as Maria Theresa, gradually the returnees regained rights and privileges. One is staggered by the realization that "by 1848 Austria was the only major power in the Western World that was still imposing medieval restrictions on its Jews."⁵ They were subjected to "restrictions on residence, land ownership, trade, and even on religious organizations... They had to pay special taxes and crippled or invalidated Jewish veterans received no exemptions from these

burdens while those who stayed in the army in peacetime encountered frequent discrimination.”⁶

Finally, in 1849 Emperor Franz Joseph I granted full constitutional rights to Jewish immigrants. Vienna’s Jewish population increased from about 6,000 in 1860 to 147,000 in 1900. And with this influx came the talent and creativity that was to make Vienna the cultural center of Europe. As Stefan Zweig wrote “Nine-tenths of what the world celebrated as Viennese culture in the Nineteenth Century was promoted, nourished, and even created by Viennese Jewery.” And these contributions continued and grew in the first 38 years of the 20th Century. So one returns to the question: How could Austria and Vienna treat their Jews as they did on and after March 12, 1938? And, how could the Jews have been so blind to their history and their tenuous status?

Until March 12, 1938 the Jews of Vienna considered themselves as loyal and proud Viennese citizens first and Austrians or Jews second, much as many French consider themselves Parisians above all else. This explanation while probably accurate is still, nevertheless, difficult to accept fully. Given the history of how the Viennese treated Jews and given the clear disgust with which the Jews of Leopoldstadt were blatantly regarded, it is difficult to see why the Viennese Jewish middle class was in fact so proud of being Viennese. Why were they so eager to be members in this club? Had they unconsciously accepted notions of inferiority which assimilation would assuage? In any event, to be treated as anything but equal Viennese was simply inconceivable. In fact, large numbers of Jews sought acceptance in the social mainstream by converting to Christianity and “by 1900 Viennese Jews had the highest conversion rate of any Jewish Community in the world.”⁷ Berkley argues that “the appeal of assimilation resulted less from a need to overcome anti-Semitism’s economic and professional effects than from a desire to counter its social and psychological impact. Most of Vienna’s Jews wanted to integrate as much as possible into the city they so passionately loved.”⁸ To abandon Vienna did not seem a serious option, at the same time. The Zipper family was no exception to the prevailing sense that while Hitler was a menace he was not as dangerous as some believed. They did realize then, however, that they were no longer Viennese; now they were Jews. But still operating out of a false sense of security they decided not to leave immediately, as Herbert Zipper implored. Instead, in good middle class fashion the family set about to pack and to make their plans. On March 12, 1938, Zipper’s father, Emil, by a stroke of good fortune, was in England on business. He immediately traveled to Paris and set about securing papers to rescue his family from their beloved Vienna.

During the next two months, while Jews were being reviled, humiliated and arrested in Vienna, Herbert Zipper frequently slept away from home, calling first by telephone before coming home to see if it was safe. His precautions were not sufficient and on the evening of May 27, 1938, a plain clothesman came to the Zipper home at 120 Hietzinger Hauptstrasse and said that the three young brothers, Herbert, Otto, and Walter, must come with him. When the plainclothesman knocked at the Zipper residence, he asked Herbert Zipper to bring along his typewriter. This confused the three brothers who thought the typewriter was perhaps going to be used as evidence in some way. Actually, there were so many citizens being arrested the police simply needed more typewriters. The policeman took the three men down to the local precinct station by streetcar and, as it turned out, none of the four of them knew what was coming next. Quite remarkably, and perhaps indicative or symptomatic of the overall fog which enveloped Vienna, not even the Austrian police really knew what was happening and what process they were helping along. To illustrate, the policeman returned to the Zipper home a few days later to apologize to Hedy Zipper, the sister of the three "criminals," saying if he had known they were to be sent to a concentration camp he would have warned them and urged them to escape.

The three Zippers and some twenty others were detained at the police station filling out identification papers and then were taken downtown to a public school on Karajangasse which had been converted into a makeshift detention center. The street had been named after a doctor who was the personal physician of the Habsburg Emperor Franz Joseph I and who was also the father of the late conductor Herbert Von Karajan. At this point no one knew what was going on. Zipper, however, was not expecting anything favorable and began to create a rumpus. His brother Otto, suffering from a lung ailment for which he received Pneumothorax treatments, must be allowed to go to the hospital, Zipper insisted. He admonished the Austrian guards that they would be held personally responsible if anything were to happen to Otto. Here, perhaps, was one of the last acts of a middle class Jew asserting his authority over a Viennese working class gentile. Zipper still believed he had the social power and status and rights to issue warnings and to assert himself. Finally, the police relented and Otto was driven to the hospital, an act which probably saved his life. Given his physical condition there is little chance that he would have survived the days and months to come.

For two full days Walter and Herbert Zipper and approximately 500-700 others were locked up in the school with nothing to do but wonder what was going to happen. Occasionally a Nazi official would appear and

scream irrational nonsense designed, as best Zipper could determine, merely to intimidate. In fact, the Austrian police did seem intimidated by it all. For a brief moment the Austrian police and authorities were caught in a dilemma: did they recognize their allegiances and responsibilities to their fellow citizens or were they to transfer their allegiances to the new bully on the block? It did not take them much time to wrestle with this dilemma. If any of the prisoners had known where they were going to be sent, they might have tried to break out and escape.

On the evening of the second day, Zipper, his brother Walter and about 20 others were loaded into a paddy wagon and told they were to be taken to Elizabeth Promenade - synonymous with police headquarters. The wagon, however, began moving in a different direction - toward the Westbahnhof, a train station. The driver soon admitted that they were to be carted off to Dachau and Zipper's fears dropped to a deeper level.

As early as 1934 Zipper and other Austrian and German Jews knew what kind of place it was. Dachau had been established in 1933 and the word had spread quickly. An Austrian newspaper, *Die Stunde* ("The Hour"), for which a friend of Walter Zipper named Robert "Bobby" Kahan was a writer, had published a series in 1934-35 describing the conditions at Dachau. Already the name Dachau had become synonymous with terror and brutality.

When the many paddy wagons arrived at the Westbahnhof, they did not go to the passenger loading area but instead to the Gueterbahnhof, the freight loading area. The Nazis did not want anyone to see what they were doing. Perhaps at some deeper level even the pigs are aware of the nature of the mud they are wallowing within. Also, at the freight area the wagons could drive right up to the train doors and deposit their "freight" - the Jews of Vienna. Here at the train station the SS men began screaming at them, shouting obscenities and beating the slow moving and bewildered prisoners. Zipper was grabbed by the hair, smashed with a rifle butt in the chest breaking two of his ribs, and slugged in the face closing his left eye. Some men in their confusion went in the wrong direction. They were shot and killed. Zipper and the others were then pushed and slammed into 3rd class passenger trains and ordered to sit on benches, with heads raised staring at the light, five to a bench facing each other. In this manner they were transported from Vienna to Munich. During this trip Zipper believed that this was the end: that he would probably be killed. At Munich they were pushed into freight cars and packed like herrings in a tin. The events of the subsequent train trip have been preserved in a letter Zipper wrote to a friend, Eric Simon, a year later in June 1939:

During this day of May 30th we did not get anything to eat; we were standing for seven hours in the gymnasium in the Karajan Gasse, but at that moment, traveling to the railway station, we seventeen men forgot hunger and fatigue. Not a word was spoken. We all knew that something terrible was in store for us.

As the wagon turned into the freight terminal our guard said, "Get out fast and into the railway car even faster, otherwise you are out of luck."

The wagon stopped, the door was flung open. We jumped out, Walter ahead of me, I was one of the last ones. There was earsplitting, vociferous shouting.

What followed is rather difficult to describe. I will try, although I know that it is impossible to fully communicate the horror of this nightmare. What I can describe objectively are the actual happenings, but what they did to us as they were done to us, the extreme physical and verbal injuries, are not describable at all. This is too bad, because it would be important for all who want to know and feel the full truth to get valid and vivid information of our state of mind at that time.

As I jumped out of the wagon I saw Walter lying on the floor of the railway car's entrance in front of me. Immediately I received the blow of a fist on my left eye and a number of heavy blows against my chest from the butt of a rifle. The entrance to the car I did not reach through my own power because I was lifted up by my hair and propelled by kicks from behind. How I got to my place in the car's compartment I don't remember exactly. What I remember is the ear-splitting screaming of the SS men and being pushed by rifle butts and bayonets and being dragged by my hair. When I finally arrived at the seat assigned to me, the place appeared to me as being occupied by lunatics. We were ten men in the compartment; opposite me was Walter; all sat at the very edge of the bench with heads uplifted high. Staring as if hypnotized into the light at the ceiling. This was the position we had to assume, ordered by command of the SS guards, for the duration of the thirteen-hour trip, interrupted only by furious exercising and brutal beatings. An SS man in gray uniform, steel helmet and armed to the teeth, shouting commands, was with us throughout the first few minutes.

My first clear thought was: These then are the genuine "neo-barbarians." This is what they really are. Everything that had been written and told about them did not come near to the essence. Here are the facts: The various tortures and excruciating torments of a physical and psychological nature are not left to the initiative of the individual SS guard, who incidentally were replaced every half hour, but are being inflicted on us, as became evident beyond the shadow of a doubt, according to the prescribed rules, drilled in by the Nazi authorities. Nazi ideology does not permit free reign of the raw instincts of brutalized monsters. That would be a mistake, because eventually the worst brute after a while will have spent his sadistic impulses and for at least a short time may become tame. This cannot be permitted and, consequently, brutality,

inhuman behavior to the extreme and unmitigated pitilessness are being trained to perfection. The SS man, as long as he is on duty such as in this instance, has to follow the instructions he has received to the letter. If he does not, it will be judged refusal of duty and as such severely punished. Subsequently, in Dachau, I found this confirmed by former SS men who became inmates because of supposed insubordination.

The first instruction we received was "calling attention." This had to be done whenever an SS man passed by which happened every so often. The person seated at the outside corner and facing the oncoming guard had to shout, "Attention," whereupon all of us had to jump up, eyes into the light. The person opposite the attention shouter had to yell, "Reporting obediently, ten Jewish swine in the compartment." The railway car had eight compartments. You can figure out how often and in what rapid succession this "report" was heard during the thirteen hours of our trip.

There were other Nazi utterances worth mentioning, for instance, "Who does not like it here? The best thing for you would be to let yourself be shot at once, or hang yourself immediately when you arrive in Dachau. This now is a joy ride. The real seriousness of life begins in Dachau. If anyone wants to die just say so. Nobody comes out alive from Dachau," etc.

What the SS guards called "sport" started after a while: "Kneel down, get up, kneel down, get up," twenty times, thirty times, forty times, etc. You have to imagine that this happened in the compartment packed with ten people, kneeling every other second in the narrow space between the two benches, eyes looking into the light. Closed windows, curtains drawn; it was summer, the air was hot and sticky; we did not have anything to eat or to drink for twenty-four hours during which we could not use a toilet. If one could not fully kneel or was not fast enough up or supported oneself with one's hands on the opposite person, one received heavy blows with the rifle butt or bayonet.

Two men over sixty were among us. One of them, after about ten minutes of this "sport" fainted. The treatment for fainting was administered according to the following procedures: First, the patient's head receives heavy blows from a clenched fist, and at the same time is kicked with a foot. If this does not have the desired result, a bucket full of water is emptied over the patient's head. If the patient still does not wake up and remains lying on the floor he is lifted up brutally by his testicles. All these procedures are accompanied by a set of curses they obviously had to memorize. For instance, "Croak you old Jewish swine, all your life you have swindled the people," or "You lecherous Jew sow all your life you have seduced Aryan girls," and more of the same.

All of us, naturally, received more or less heavy injuries during the trip. Comparatively speaking I got off modestly, only two or three broken ribs and the closed left eye. Of course, some died during the trip, some were beaten to death, some shot. I don't know how many perished. I only saw four corpses that were carried past our compartment. There were some who lost one eye, many who lost some of their teeth. Those who made defensive motions were

shot on the spot and quite a few lost their minds. Many became mentally disoriented at the very beginning of the trip. The man who sat next to me once whispered, "Are we in the movies?"

We were not allowed to move, to speak or to step out. These thirteen hours never ended. Many never recuperated fully from the nightmare of this trip.

Somehow this introductory journey into German concentration camp life did not affect my mind adversely. I still remember the thoughts that went through my mind during that night. I soon convinced myself that I would never regain freedom alive except if there was revolution in Germany for which, however, there was no prerequisite. I remember that during this journey we brothers bid farewell to each other by means of the language of the eyes. I also remember that after a while I broke through that mental layer called fear for one's life, fear of pain, fear of death. It might have been curiosity and the resolve to hold out to the last at all cost in order not to give in to these barbarians that kept me going. It is possible that I owe it to this resolve that throughout the following nine months I remained untouched. It is a basic characteristic of fascism to attack with ferocity when detecting fear and weakness and to avoid confrontation with the opposite. I am not at all claiming to be strong and fearless but I have learned during the course of my imprisonment how to fake it. I soon realized that this was the only defense left at one's disposal.

Shortly before we arrived at our first destination we had to sing, together and individually. When my turn came the "Ode to Joy" came to my mind and I started singing,

"Joy, the god descended Daughter of Elysium." At the passage, "all mankind are brothers" the SS guard furiously interrupted me shouting, "What are you singing, you bolshevistic Jew swine?" Upon which I jumped up and in military and Germanic attitude shouted, "Reporting obediently, poem by Schiller, music by Beethoven." After that for a while we remained unmolested.

At 11:30 a.m. on May 31st we arrived at a train station and were loaded into cattle wagons. One hundred fifty men in each, tightly packed like sardines. When the doors were locked we were without guards. But it was pitch-dark and the atmosphere became suffocating. We did not know what was in store for us; nobody dared to speak. The horror of the situation defies verbal description.

Whatever he might have become in the old Vienna, leading a life of genteel music making, of pleasant intellectual discussions in fashionable coffee houses, of living in a relatively homogeneous culture, all of this was shattered, forever, in March and the months following in 1938. And by the time Herbert Zipper returned to Vienna in February of 1939, all was changed. As the poet W. B. Yeats wrote: "All changed, changed utterly." The story of Herbert Zipper's life has two distinct phases: B.D. and A.D. -

Before Dachau and After Dachau. The train trip to Dachau was for Herbert Zipper the most terrifying and shocking event in his life: "I began to learn who I really was; I grew up that night."

Chapter II

From Fin de Siècle to Fin de Millennium

Give me those days with heart in riot,
The depths of bliss that touched on pain,
The force of hate, and love's disquiet—
Ah, give me back my youth again!

—Goethe

The streets of the old section of Vienna were surfaced with what looked like cobblestone but were actually hard wooden tiles which had been soaked with tar. As a child, Herbert Zipper would fall asleep to a unique sound: not iron horse hooves or stone but a warm, inviting sound, like the musical sound of a wooden, bass xylophone. This wooden pavement (“Stoeckel Pflaster”) was almost an extension of the home, like wooden halls. The echo of the horses’ hooves was a mellow clippity-clop that is in Zipper’s memory, the essence of old Vienna. To lie in bed as a child and hear this fairy tale sound was utterly beautiful.

Herbert Zipper’s father, Emil, was the youngest of eleven children. Born on September 24, 1875, in the 27th year of Franz Joseph I’s reign, he grew up in Vienna and, following his induction into engineering, attended technical college also in Vienna. Zipper’s mother, Regina Westreich (“Rosie”), the oldest of three sisters was born on October 19, 1877, completing only high school as was customary for girls at the time. Emil and Rosie met in Vienna and were married in 1901. In 1902 their first son, Walter, was born, followed by Herbert in 1904, Hedy in 1907, and Otto in 1914.

The Zipper home was located just a few houses from the Stephansplatz, the heart of the city. Here was the central station for the Stellwagen (horse-drawn buses) which reached out to twenty-one different districts. From the Stephansplatz it is just around the corner to the Graben. A contemporary (1902) account of the Graben described it as a place:

“Whose broadside of shops arouses every dormant sense of covetousness, appeals to every taste, and can satisfy the caprices of the most fastidious; the Graben, with its Cafes Dores, provided with red velvet couches, but whose

patrons swarm over the sidewalks in summer time, protected by quantities of coquettish little awnings; the Graben, always crowded with promenaders, both men and women - the Boulevard des Italiens of Vienna. There the fashionable world and all strangers assemble in the morning and again in the evening... Here - on the Graben - from ten a.m. to mid-day, and from six to nine p.m., there is a constant coming and going - a rush and palpitation of life, the 'demi monde' especially turning out in force."⁹

Emil and Rosie moved into this elegant business district, just a couple houses away from the landmark St. Stephen's Church called Stephansdom, and began their married life in a rental apartment at "31 AM Graben."

Around the corner from their home was the square and St. Stephen's Church. The tower is a restoration of one begun by Duke Randolph IV in about the middle of the 14th Century, the original tower being declared unsafe in 1860. From this tower in 1683 Count Starhemberg could watch the movements of the invading Turks and here, in 1805, the Viennese watched the approach of Napoleon's invading forces, there one can see the plains of Hungary, then Galicia, the Carpathian mountains, the Black Forest, and the beloved Danube. It stands high above the surrounding buildings, a gorgeous monument to human creativity and determination. Here the young Herbert Zipper could look out over the city and over history and dream his boyish dreams.

One of Zipper's earliest memories is looking out the front living room window and seeing regal processions. It was particularly thrilling to see the man who then had held the Austro-Hungarian Empire together for almost sixty years (1848-1907) and who would continue on until 1916, Emperor Franz Joseph I. Each year at the feast of Corpus Christi - a Catholic celebration of the Eucharist - the Emperor joined in a splendid procession of all the nobility, in elegant carriages, marching slowly down the street in front of the Zipper home. The whole street was laid out with gorgeous carpets and bleachers for people to witness the procession of the entire Habsburg family in full regalia. Zipper watched them in awe, the Esterhazys, the Kinskys, the families who over the years had been the powers of Austria, the patrons of Haydn and Beethoven. Historian Z.A.B. Zeman describes the scene:

"The Corpus Christi procession outshone all others. The restraint of Lent and the grave pomp of Easter had been left behind: this was a dazzling occasion. The soldiers and gendarmes lining the streets had ivy leaves in their helmets; the archdukes arrived separately, in crystal caleches drawn by six greys' then the Emperor, accompanied by Archduke Franz Ferdinand, came in a carriage of gold and crystal, drawn by eight horses."¹⁰

Zipper could not only watch history pass by his home but he could see everywhere in town monuments of the past. For just in front of his home, on the Graben, stood a huge statue of "Trinity Column" popularly called "Pest Säule," the Plague Column, a historic reminder of the European plague epidemic of the 17th Century which struck Vienna most severely in 1679 when it wiped out one third of its population. "The Trinity Column was built by Emperor Leopold I as a thanksgiving for the plague having spared at least a portion of Vienna's population. Leopold can be seen kneeling at the foot of the column, an ugly, bizarre creature with a superb Hapsburg lip and a great deal of humanity. The column put up in 1687, which was designed by the leading artists and craftsmen of the day, including the young J.B. Fischer von Erlach, was something entirely new and startling: a mixture of theatrical hyperbole, fervent faith and joyous rapture."¹¹ In another part of town, the young Zipper often saw the statue of a survivor of the Plague and heard his legendary story, "Der liebe Augustin."

The story has it that during the height of the plague epidemic, a famous street musician, Augustin, one night when he had drunk a bit too much wine, went to sleep in the middle of the street. In the Vienna of that year there always were corpses of plague victims lying on the streets and undertakers were roaming through the city at night collecting the corpses and throwing them into open plague pits. The fast asleep, motionless Augustin was mistaken for a corpse by the undertakers, lifted onto their wagon and then thrown into the next plague pit. The following morning, Augustin cold and shivering, woke up to his precarious predicament. Unable to get out of the deep pit by himself he took his bag pipe, that still was fastened to his belt, and began playing lustily. Pedestrians passing by, hearing music rising from the dead were frightened out of their wits and making the sign of the cross, ran away from that spooky experience. Eventually, however, some recognized the very much alive Augustin and helped him out of his predicament. It is the event that Augustin immortalized with a ditty that is known all over the world, albeit with different words.

O beloved Augustin all has been lost;
Cane is gone, coat is gone
Augustin lies in filth;
O beloved Augustin all has been lost!

As the legend has it, from the event of this day on, Augustin continued to go around the city singing, playing and cheering up people without contracting the dread disease. It was believed that he had a charmed life. He

was a Zipper childhood hero and, perhaps, unconsciously, a model for Zipper at Dachau. In any event, the parallels, as we will see, are striking.

Like many young children of his day, Zipper took an early delight in reading fairy tales of the Brothers Grimm and Hans Christian Andersen and, in his eighties, he still remembers reading "The Golden Pot" by E.T.A. Hoffman. As a child, he committed a great deal of poetry to memory which he would recite to his delighted family and their friends. One early memory, along with the Corpus Christi Procession, is reciting poetry at his grand aunt's house before he was three years old. These experiences may well have been the beginning of the development of an exceptional memory - a memory which would play a key role in his later prison camp experiences. As early as six years old he also began to read the works of Wilhelm Busch, a satirical cartoonist whose woodcut drawings were superb works of art accompanied by short lines of distinctive, rhymed verse. Busch really has no counterpart in the last half of the 20th Century. His drawings and verse were critical of all aspects of the German speaking world and were enjoyed by adults and children alike. Some of them were anti-semitic but, secure in their Viennese identity, even these the Zipper family read and laughed at. In addition to the poetry of Busch, Emil (Papa) Zipper was always reading substantial and philosophical works. For example, on Saturday afternoons, usually after lunch, he would read to his children librettos of operas as well as Heine, Goethe, Schiller, and other classic German writers. He had little time for trivia, and young Herbert quickly internalized this quality. For all his life Zipper has had little traffic with the inconsequential or the frivolous.

In addition to books, music was an integral part of the Zipper home. Like most good Viennese families of the time, the Zippers provided music lessons for their children. One could walk up and down the streets of old Vienna and from every window hear children practicing their instruments or singing. In the Zipper family, Walter studied piano and cello, and Herbert and Hedy studied piano. Otto, who was born in 1914 when the First World War was already in progress, had no formal instruction although he was very musical. The world of Vienna changed radically in 1914 and Otto, his brothers believed, did not grow up with either the same advantages or sense of security and confidence in the future.

Because at an early age he demonstrated an unusual musical talent Zipper's parents sought a piano teacher when he was only 5 years old. His first piano teacher was an Italian, Herr Radovani. The young Zipper disliked his clumsy way of walking and even more his clumsy way of teaching. He was almost a caricature of the old-fashioned, knuckle-thwacking tyrant and he would rap Zipper's fingers with his pencil when the child made a

mistake. His exercises for a 5 year-old were exceedingly boring. The next teacher, Madame Vukovic, played the piano well and amused her pupil with her huge concert accordion. After her, he studied for the longest time with Ernst Pilzer, a student of Emil Sauer (Chair of the Piano Department at the Vienna Academy). With Pilzer he developed a life-long love of Bach, Mozart and Beethoven, also his mother's favorites. Rosie Zipper never had to tell her son to practice; he just did it - usually 2 hours a day from age ten on.

From his earliest days the Vienna of Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert was implanted deep in his soul. He and Walter would listen and talk about music for hours upon hours. At a very early age, Zipper and his brother Walter would go alone to concerts, to the Vienna Opera, to the standing room area in the Fourth Floor Gallery. "Once," Zipper recounts, "we stood for five hours to get standing room tickets and then stood another five hours listening to Wagner's *Tristan*. What we forget today is that to enjoy music one had to either go to the concert hall or opera or to make music oneself." Young Zipper did both. His mother was also a fine musician; an excellent sight reader, with a good ear. "I remember often playing, with delight, four-handed music with her." He also heard Pablo Casals for the first time when he was 9 years old (1913). The concert was memorable because Casals revolutionized cello playing. He would, for example, move his thumb out from the neck of the cello to play on the string in first position thus allowing a longer reach for the little finger and he would play melodies across strings to avoid sliding on only one string. Young cellists of the day, such as Emmanuel Feuermann, could not have played the way they did without Casals, and Zipper himself learned Casals' new techniques, techniques he would come to teach members of his own orchestras in years to come. Zipper also heard, during these years, a variety of young pianists: the young Walter Giesecking, wild Ignaz Friedman, pianists-composers such as Eugen D'Albert, Ferruccio Busoni, Liszt student Emil von Sauer, and, after World War I, virtuoso pianist and composer Sergei Rachmaninoff.

By 1908 the Zipper family had outgrown their little apartment on AM Graben and so they made the first of several moves. First they moved to the westernmost province of Austria, Vorarlberg, to the Hotel Europe in Bregenz with a view of Lake Constance. There the family engaged their first governess, an elderly French-speaking lady. In the spring of 1909, they moved to a home with a garden in Dornbirn, a 30-minute train ride from Bregenz. Soon a new governess was hired, Emma Kaspar. Emma was to remain with the family for many years and had a profound influence on Zipper and his sister.

Emma was raised in Alsace, then a German province next to France, and educated in a Catholic convent. Her father, an officer in the German Army, answered an advertisement placed by Emil Zipper. So she arrived at the garden gate in Dornbirn, looked into the garden and, as Zipper recounts, "Saw my bearded father in his bathrobe carrying a huge water spray gun. My brother and friends, my mother, Ernst Stefan, and I also had water guns and water bottles and we were having a water fight. We were giggling and laughing and here came this woman from a convent to teach us French. She wasn't sure she should stay with these crazy people."

But stay she did. Zipper was five when Emma was hired and she was his main teacher during most of his and Hedy Zipper's childhood. She was hired to teach them French, reading, writing but she taught them much more. Zipper and his sister loved their lessons with her so much that, by comparison, school was a bore. Schools then were rigid and didactic given over to enormous amounts of memorization and rote learning. But Emma, an intuitive radical, involved them in the process of learning. She introduced them, at an early age to magical children's literature, to E.T.A. Hoffman and others. She considered Grimm's Fairy Tales to be too gruesome so she invented her own stories, charming and delightful. By contrast, as they grew older she introduced them to the dark and turbulent world of Dostoyevsky and passed on to them her own brand of humanism. As she grew intellectually, in her own reaction against the Catholic Church, she passed her curiosity and learning on to Herbert and Hedy Zipper. Moving from a convent to the cultural and intellectual freedom of the Zipper family was for Emma an exciting revelation and she shared her excitement with her young tutees. The combination of Emil Zipper's agnosticism and Emma's evolving humanism were, no doubt, a major factor in Zipper's own agnosticism and humanism.

She was also fascinated by art and passed her fascination on to her young charges. At this time there were a series of monographs, known as "Blue Books," on painters available in the book stores and Emma began giving these to Zipper when he was only 6 years old. There were "blue books" on Michelangelo, Da Vinci, Raphael, Rembrandt, Durer, and so on. From this early age Zipper began a life long love affair with the visual arts and Emma was a prime motivator. Emma herself, of course, was a major beneficiary of this household dedicated to culture and, often to the humor of Papa Zipper.

Life in the Zipper household was not only a surprise to Emma but to many who visited. Visitors were astounded by the dinner conversations, the play of wit, rapid fire ideas which jumped from jokes to politics to philosophy in aphoristic humor about every subject imaginable. Lunch con-