



After the Annex: Anne Frank and the Nazi Death Camps.

On 27 January 1945 Otto Frank was liberated from Auschwitz by Russian soldiers. This was not only the start of a long journey home, but also marked the beginning of his long quest to find out what had happened to his wife Edith, his daughters Margot and Anne and the four other people with whom he had been in hiding for almost two years in the Annex at 263 Prinsengracht in Amsterdam: Herman and Auguste van Pels, their son Peter and dentist Fritz Pfeffer. In the months after his liberation Otto Frank would discover that he was the sole survivor of this group of people. *After the Annex* continues the journey that Otto Frank began in 1945. Through thorough research and evaluation of all available archival resources and eyewitness accounts, it is an ultimate attempt to find out what happened to the eight people in hiding after their arrest.

Analysing the experiences of Anne Frank and the seven others within a broader historical framework, this book offers valuable insight into the complex system of the Nazi concentration- and death camps: into the daily lives of prisoners, into the way power was exerted within the camps, into the role and function of violence and into the ambiguities of post-war testimonies and eyewitness accounts. It also explores the development of the genocidal process and the changing conditions in the concentration- and death camps Westerbork, Auschwitz, Bergen-Belsen, Neuengamme, Mauthausen, Melk and Raguhn. By using the experiences of Anne Frank and the seven others as a point of departure, it argues that the exact moment of arrest and deportation was always important and sometimes crucial for the conditions in which deported Jews were imprisoned – as well as for their chances of survival.

After the Annex is structured around nine chapters, addressing the different concentration- and death camps in which the eight men and women from the Annex were imprisoned.

The first chapter 'You asked me if I could tell you some more' introduces the eight protagonists and gives a summary of their lives up until the moment of their arrest. It describes the departure of the Frank family from Frankfurt to Amsterdam -a few months after Hitler's rise to power in 1933; of the Van Pels family from Osnabrück in the summer of 1937 and the hasty flight of dentist Fritz Pfeffer from Berlin, just after Kristallnacht in November 1938. The chapter also briefly recounts the conditions leading up to the two families and the dentist going into hiding at the Annex in 1942 and how they were arrested in 1944. The second part of this chapter introduces the main impetus of this book and the research method applied. Taking Otto Frank's search for information as a point of departure, it examines the problems of working with fragmented archival resources and the specific difficulties of post-war Holocaust testimonies.

The second chapter 'Mama, did you know Margot is here?' follows the eight arrested men and women during their imprisonment in the Amsterdam House of Detention and their stay in the penal barracks of Camp Westerbork. It offers an historical overview of the prison and the transit camp and reconstructs the likely experiences of Anne and the others: their daily routines and their encounters with old acquaintances and new friends. It too addresses the circumstances under which they were selected for the last deportation from Westerbork to Auschwitz on 3 September 1944. The chapter furthermore explores the question to what degree the Frank family, the Van Pels family and Fritz Pfeffer were aware of what would await them in the East. What were their expectations and how much did they know about the reality of the genocidal process when they were deported to Auschwitz?

The third chapter 'Life was Hell' focuses on Auschwitz. It begins by analysing the role of the Auschwitz-complex within the broader process of the Nazi genocide against the European Jews. It addresses the camp regime and points out the changing conditions in this camp during Summer and Autumn of 1944. The chapter discusses the arrival, selection and registration process of the eight people from the Annex and then focuses on the experiences in Auschwitz I (Stammlager) of the three men: Hermann and Peter van Pels and Otto Frank. It analyses the process of quarantine, forced labour and selections and carefully reconstructs the circumstances under which Hermann van Pels was selected for the gas chamber in October 1944. Next, it shows how Peter van Pels and Otto Frank struggled to survive forced labour and arbitrary violence by the camp guards and explores how Peter managed to get a relatively privileged position working for the *Paketstelle* – the Auschwitz post-office. The chapter ends with the evacuation of Auschwitz in January 1945 and recounts Otto Frank's memories and Peter van Pels's dilemma having to choose between hiding in the Hospital Barrack or joining the other prisoners on their death march to Mauthausen.

The fourth chapter: 'You didn't have to give her any hope, because there was none' focuses on the experiences of Anne Frank and the other women in Auschwitz-Birkenau. It gives voice to various eyewitness accounts and uses these to analyse the conditions under which Anne Frank, her sister Margot and mother Edith and Auguste van Pels endured the harsh conditions of camp routines and how they tried to survive hunger, cold and arbitrary violence. The chapter ends with the selection of Anne, Margot and Auguste for Bergen-Belsen and a reconstruction of the illness and death of Edith Frank.

The fifth chapter 'I don't believe that I've seen her upright' recounts the ordeals of Anne and Margot Frank and Auguste van Pels in Bergen-Belsen. It points out the different functions of this camp and the harsh conditions, which the group of prisoners from Auschwitz had to endure shortly after they arrived at Bergen-Belsen. It examines the different eyewitness accounts, which refer to meeting Anne in Bergen-Belsen and reconstructs the encounter between Anne and her old schoolfriend Hanneli Goslar at the fence that separated the new arrivals from Auschwitz from the relatively privileged prisoners in the *Sternlager* (the exchange camp). By examining different source material it meticulously tries to reconstruct the final days of Anne and Margot and the conditions under which they became infected with epidemic typhoid. It argues that the moment of their passing was already early February 1945 and not, as has until recently been assumed, late March 1945.

Chapters 6 to 8 explore the probable camp experiences of Augusta van Pels in Raguhn, Peter van Pels in Mauthausen and Melk and Fritz Pfeffer in Neuengamme and the circumstances of their deaths. The sixth chapter: 'I remember Gusta van Pels, of German descent' addresses the final voyage of Auguste van Pels, who was sent from Bergen-Belsen to the small camp Raguhn in Germany, where she was forced to do slave labour in an aircraft factory. It reconstructs how, when the camp was evacuated, Auguste van Pels perished during a final train journey heading for Theresienstadt.

Chapter seven 'They never returned' follows Peter van Pels on his death march to Mauthausen and his imprisonment in sub-camp Melk. It recounts the harsh conditions under which the Melk prisoners worked in an underground ball bearing factory and the complete absence of medical care, that would also prove fatal for Peter. The chapter points out that Peter perished a few days after the camp was liberated.

Chapter eight relates Fritz Pfeffers last months in Neuengamme. It identifies how he was most likely selected together with a group of doctors and dentists for labour in Neuengamme. The chapter also analyses the different treatment political prisoners and Jewish prisoners received

in this camp and explores the different factors that would increase or decrease chances of survival in Neuengamme.

While these chapters all focus on reconstructing biographical details about three individuals, they do more than this alone. As there are hardly any eyewitness-accounts on Auguste's period in Raguhn, Peters final days in Melk or the death of Fritz Pfeffer, these chapters explore the possibility of using other resources to reconstruct the experiences of those who did not survive and did not leave behind a personal account. What tools are available to an historian who wants to give a voice to the victims that have been intentionally silenced as a deliberate part of the genocidal process?

The ninth and final chapter reflects on the problems of working with incomplete resources and connects the return of Otto Frank and his search for his loved ones to the results of the research that was conducted for this book. The chapter evaluates the most important new findings of this book and makes an argument for the importance of detailed individual life-reconstructions for Holocaust research.

Table of Contents

Preface

Chapter 1 ‘You asked me if I could tell you some more’: a search for the eight people who hid in the Annex.

Where Anne’s Diary Ends
Otto, Edith, Margot and Anne Frank
Hermann, Auguste and Peter van Pels
Fritz Pfeffer
Hiding and Arrest
The search
An incomplete jigsaw puzzle

Chapter 2 ‘Mama, did you know Margot is here?’: the Amsterdam House of Detention and transit-camp Westerbok

House of Detention
Camp Westerbok
Arrival
Everyday life in the penal barracks
‘That dreadful journey’: the deportation of 3 September 1944
Knowledge and expectations about mass murder

Chapter 3 ‘Life was Hell’. Auschwitz.

Auschwitz and the Genocide against the European Jews
Changing conditions
Funktionshäftlinge and the exertion of power
Arrival in Auschwitz: selection and registration
Stammlager: the men in Auschwitz I
The gassing of Hermann van Pels
Packages and other privileges

Surviving Auschwitz

A farewell

Chapter 4 'You didn't have to give her courage, because there was none': the women in
Auschwitz-Birkenau

Everyday life in the women's camp: hunger, cold, selections

Guards and violence

The 'Dutch Barrack'

Another farewell: the deportation of Anne, Margot and Auguste to Bergen-Belsen

'Edith is becoming ill'. The death of Edith Frank

Chapter 5 'I don't believe I have seen her upright': Anne and Margot Frank and Auguste van Pels
in Bergen-Belsen

Arrival at Bergen-Belsen

The different faces of Bergen-Belsen: POW-camp; *Sternlager* and concentration camp

Margot and Anne Frank in Bergen-Belsen

Encounters at the fence

The death of Margot and Anne Frank

Chapter 6 'I remember Gusta van Pels, of German descent'. Auguste van Pels in Raguhn

'Thank God, it's a small camp': Raguhn

Working in the aircraft-factory

The death of Auguste van Pels

Chapter 7 'They never returned': Peter van Pels in Mauthausen and Melk

Death march to Mauthausen

Melk

'A cabinet maker with an oval face': the death of Peter van Pels

Chapter 8 'Most of the Dutch died'. Fritz Pfeffer in Neuengamme

Neuengamme

Life and Death of Fritz Pfeffer in Neuengamme

Chapter 9 'Where the children are, I do not know'. Otto's search

Return to Amsterdam

Every detail counts