Max Kaufmann

A short story

This is a short story if anyone is interested in reading it:

I was twelve years old when Hitler marched into Austria. None of my friends in school were Jewish. We were not a religious family.

My father drove a taxi. He was not a banker. We lived from pay check to pay check. My mother worked as a secretary in an insurance office. My parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins were all born in Austria.

My grandfather volunteered in the army in World War One, he spent four years as a "Zugführer" [1]. He had two small children and a wife.

My father's two brothers were both killed in World War One, one in Russia and one in Italy, between 1914 and 1916 fighting for Germany/Austria. My father was too young at that time to join the army.

My father's sister had three children, her husband was a plumber. He spent four years in the army and two years in Russia as a prisoner of war. They were all killed somewhere in Poland around 1943.

My mother's younger sister, her husband and her four-year-old child were shot to death in front of my mother in a camp in Poland.

My father died only a few days before liberation in Bergen Belsen. He was 44 years old.

My mother survived in Bergen Belsen, my brother and I were liberated from Dachau. I was shot in the back but he got me in the arm, only days before reaching Dachau, on the death march. Luckily for me he was a bad shooter.

Today my best friends are Germans and Austrians and we see each other as much as possible. We love them and their families, and they love us.

To this day I cannot understand how this happened!

Max Kaufmann, Vienna 1938. (c) Maximilian Kaufmann

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[1] Platoon leader.