

## Manfred Goldberg BEM



Manfred was born on 21 April 1930 in Kassel in central Germany into an Orthodox Jewish family. He and his family suffered escalating persecution in Germany under the Nazi regime in the years before the Second World War. Manfred's father was able to escape to Britain in August 1939, just days before the war began, but the rest of the family were unable to join him. The situation deteriorated following the outbreak of the war and in 1940 Manfred's Jewish school was closed by the Nazi authorities.

In December 1941, Manfred, his mother and younger brother were deported by train from Germany to the Riga Ghetto in Latvia. Life in the ghetto was characterised by lack of food, use as slave labour and constant fear: throughout Manfred's time in the ghetto, the Nazis and their Latvian collaborators regularly selected inmates of the ghetto for mass shootings in forests on the edge of the city. Despite this, Manfred was able to celebrate his Bar Mitzvah in March 1943.

In August 1943, just three months before the ghetto was finally liquidated, Manfred was sent to a nearby labour camp where he was forced to work laying railway tracks. The prisoners in the camp were treated brutally and again subjected to frequent selections. As the Red Army approached Riga, Manfred and the other surviving prisoners were evacuated to Stutthof concentration camp near Danzig (today Gdańsk in Poland) in August 1944. He spent more than eight months as a slave worker in Stutthof and its subcamps, including Stolp and Burggraben. The camp was abandoned just days before the war ended and Manfred and other prisoners were sent on a death march in appalling conditions. Manfred was finally liberated at Neustadt in Germany on 3 May 1945.

Manfred came to Britain in September 1946 to be reunited with his father. After learning English, he managed to catch up on some of his missed education and he eventually graduated from London University with a degree in Electronics. He is married with four sons and several grandchildren.

## Glossary - Manfred Goldberg BEM

**Concentration camp** - Sites such as Dachau and Buchenwald that were built by the Nazis to imprison individuals and groups of people they considered “enemies of the state” such as political opponents, Jehovah’s Witnesses and Jews.

**Death march** - Towards the end of the war, the Nazis forced those prisoners in the camps of Eastern Europe who were well enough to march back towards Germany. The distances involved were very long and prisoners were kept under guard. Many prisoners died during these death marches, killed by their guards or the harsh conditions.

**Ghetto** - Areas of cities, towns, or villages where the Nazis forced Jews to live. In some cases, these areas were physically sealed off from the non-Jewish population. Jews could not leave the ghetto without special permission. Many were extremely overcrowded and disease-ridden.

**Labour camp** - The Nazis established labour camps to which Jews were deported and made to work, often in terrible conditions. By 1945, approximately 14 million people had been sent to these camps across Nazi occupied Europe.

**Liberation** - As Allied soldiers pushed the Nazis further back into Germany towards the end of the war, they set prisoners free from camps where they found them. The experience of this liberation varied considerably.

**Liquidated/Liquidation** - The closing down of a ghetto, and the forcible transportation of its occupants to concentration camps and death camps.

**Orthodox Judaism**- A major branch within Judaism which teaches strict adherence to rabbinical interpretation of Jewish law and its traditional observances.

**Selection** - The sorting of prisoners into two groups; those who would be used for slave labour and those who would be immediately killed. Decisions would commonly be made by doctors and would be based on no more than a momentary glance.