

ABOUT THE STONE BY MARIUS VON MAYENBURG

*Excerpted from The Royal Court Theatre's The Stone Resource Pack**

The Play	History
<p>1935</p> <p>Mr. and Mrs. Heising (Wolfgang&Witha) buy the house from Mr. and Mrs. Schwarzmann, a Jewish couple who are preparing to leave Nazi Germany, after Mr. Schwarzmann had to yield his position to Mr. Heising and life gets increasingly restricted for Jews.</p> <p>When Witha (25) and Wolfgang (30) spent their first days at the new house it is attacked by members of the Hitler Youth or SA who believe that Jews live there.</p>	<p>1934</p> <p>Jan 24, 1934 - Jews are banned from the German Labor Front.</p> <p>May 17, 1934 - Jews not allowed national health insurance.</p> <p>June 30, 1934 - The Night of Long Knives occurs as Hitler, Göring, and Himmler conduct a purge of the SA (stormtrooper) leadership.</p> <p>July 20, 1934 - The SS (Schutzstaffel) is made an independent organization from the SA.</p> <p>July 22, 1934 - Jews are prohibited from getting legal qualifications.</p> <p>Aug 2, 1934 - German President von Hindenburg dies. Hitler becomes Führer.</p> <p>Aug 19, 1934 - Hitler receives a 90 percent 'Yes' vote from German voters approving his new powers.</p> <p>Sept 15, 1935 - Nuremberg Race Laws against Jews decreed.</p> <p>1935</p> <p>By this time Hitler had asserted his power, also with the help of the SS and SA who were allowed to run wild, killing socialists, communists and Jews. As a result, 1935 saw the first emigration wave of Jews, before society became more civilized again in preparation for the Olympic Games in 1936.</p>
<p>1945</p> <p>Wolfgang (40) and Witha (35) consider their possibilities in the face of the Dresden</p>	<p>1945</p> <p>England decides to attack the German civilian population in order to subdue the</p>

<p>Bombing. (Wolfgang commits suicide when the Russians march in, Witha survives with Heidrun, 5). The house survives the bombing.</p>	<p>German spirit and thus cut short the war. After cities such as Kassel and Cologne, they chose Dresden (Bomber Harris) which was considered the most beautiful of German cities, contained most refugees and had come to be believed to be saved from bombs.</p>
<p>1953</p> <p>Witha (43) decides to leave the house behind to escape with Heidrun (13) from the Russian sector, East Germany, to West Germany.</p>	<p>1953</p> <p>In 1949 Germany was officially split in two parts, one controlled by the Western Allies, one by the Russians. Fear of the Russians and the dire economic situation drove many people out of the Eastern part towards the West. The Wall was built-in 1961 to prevent more people from leaving and to seal the socialist territory.</p>
<p>1978</p> <p>The house is communal property, populated by three families. Witha (68) and Heidrun (38), who is pregnant, visit Dresden and the house, they meet Stefanie (15).</p>	<p>1978</p> <p>East Germans could not freely travel but West Germans could travel to the East...</p>
<p>1993</p> <p>Witha (83), Heidrun (53) and Hannah (15) have reclaimed their house, and have moved in. Stefanie (30) appears to challenge their right to the house.</p>	<p>1993</p> <p>1989 the Berlin Wall fell. A great wave of property restitution followed. Jews who had fled Germany could reclaim their property (except if they had sold it before 1939). Jewish property that was bought between 1939 and 1945 was not restituted to the buyers but the original Jewish owners. People who left the East for West Germany between 1945 and 1960 could generally reclaim the property they left behind.</p>

To help understand the significance of some of the events described in the table above, the historical background is explained here in more detail:

Racial Policy of Nazi Germany

The racial policy of Nazi Germany is the set of policies and laws implemented by Nazi Germany, asserting the superiority of the so-called 'Aryan Race' and based on a specific racist doctrine which claimed scientific legitimacy. It was combined with a eugenics program that aimed to achieve 'racial purity' of the 'Aryan race' by using compulsory sterilizations and extermination of specific minorities, which eventually culminated in the Holocaust and policies targeted, first of all Jews, who were considered as the most 'inferior races' of all on a hierarchy that included Jews at the bottom and the 'Herrenvolk' (or 'master race') of the 'Volksgemeinschaft' (or 'national community') at the top.

Exclusion of Jews

By 1 January 1938, German Jews were prohibited from operating businesses and trades, and from offering goods and services. In the autumn of 1938, only 40,000 of the formerly 100,000 Jewish businesses were still in the hands of their original owners. On 12 November 1938, a law was enacted enforcing the full transfer of the remaining businesses to non-Jewish owners and the proceeds taken by the state. Jewelry, stocks, real estate and other valuables had to be sold below market value. Jewish employees were fired, and self-employed people were prohibited from working in their respective professions.

In 1934, the year selected by Von Mayenburg to set the first section of the story, a number of laws were put in place to begin the process of systematically excluding Jews from German society. By this time, Jews had been prohibited from owning land, joining the German Labor Front and were denied national health insurance. The previous year saw the opening of Dachau and Buchenwald concentration camps and the establishment of the Gestapo. On 30 June 1934, the Night of the Long Knives occurred in which the SA was purged and the SS set up as an independent organization.

Post-War Germany Timeline

8 May 1945	World War II is over and Berlin is divided into 4 sectors: the American, British, French in the West and the Soviet in the East
30 June 1946	At the instigation of the Soviet military administration, the demarcation line between East and West Germany is safeguarded
29 October 1946	A 30-day valid Interzonenpass is required to travel between the sectors in Germany
24 June 1948	Berlin blockade begins

- 25 June 1948 Berlin airlift begins
- 12 May 1949 End of Berlin blockade
- 24 May 1949 Federal Republic of Germany is founded (West Germany) 7 Oct 1949
German Democratic Republic is founded (East Germany) 26 May 1952
Border between East and West Germany is closed
- 11 Dec 1957 Leaving East Germany without permission is forbidden
- 14 Aug 1961 Berlin Wall is built and Brandenburg Gate between East and West Berlin is closed
- 3 Sept 1971 Four Powers' Agreement making it easier for West Berliners to visit East Berlin
- 9 Nov 1989 Berlin Wall comes down
- 22 Dec 1989 Brandenburg Gate is opened 3 Oct 1990
Germany is reunited

**The Stone Background pack compiled and written by Lydia Ziemke and Lynne Gagliano, © February 2009.
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