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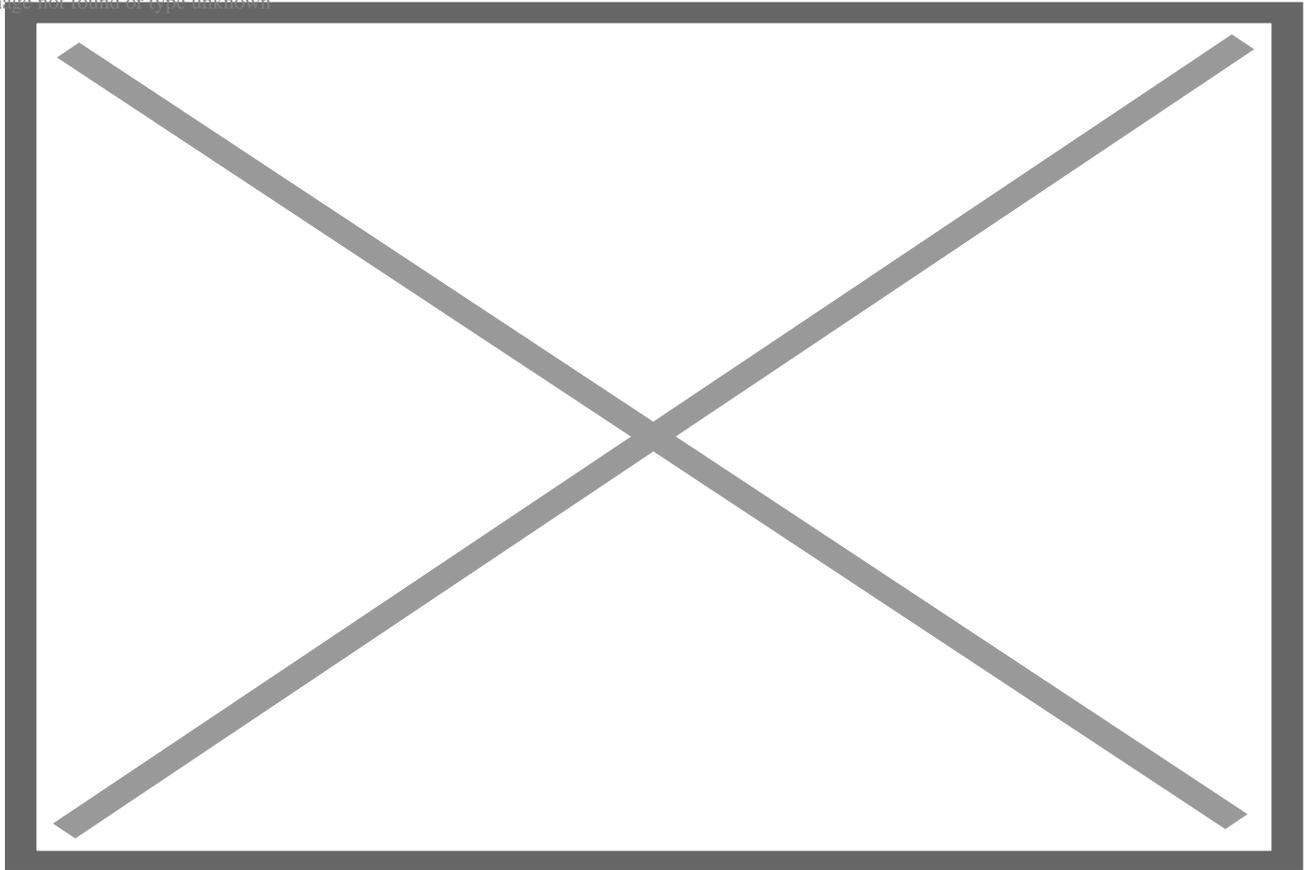


Obituary Helga Pollak-Kinsky

17 Nov 2020

Helga Pollak-Kinsky passed away on 14 November. “*I was lucky, I survived. It was pure chance.*” These are the words Helga Pollak-Kinsky once used to sum up her fate, which saw her return from Theresienstadt and Auschwitz.

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Helga was born in Vienna in May 1930. Her father ran the legendary Palmhof on Mariahilferstraße, one of the great concert cafés of that age. In 1938 she was sent to stay with relatives in Czechoslovakia, but an escape to England on a *kindertransport* eluded her. In January 1943 she and her father were deported to the Theresienstadt Ghetto, where she was separated from her father and sent to the girls’ home. Helga Pollak-Kinsky compellingly described her time there and the lives of the girls in Room 28 in her book “Terezín Diary”.

In 1944, she was put on the penultimate transport from Theresienstadt to Auschwitz, where she was put to work as a slave laborer. In April 1945 she was sent back to Theresienstadt, where she and her father lived to see the liberation. In 1946 she went to live with her mother, who had managed to escape to London. 63 members of Helga Pollak-Kinsky’s family in Czechoslovakia were murdered in concentration camps.

As a surviving eyewitness, Helga Pollak-Kinsky made it her mission to keep alive the memory of Nazi persecution and to pass on the lessons of history – even though talking about it caused the pain to resurface time and again. We thank her for this valuable gift to future generations, which makes us appreciate all the more the value of the freedom we have so painstakingly won. With the passing of Helga Pollak Kinsky, another voice of warning has now fallen silent. But her story will continue to live on as part of Austria’s collective memory.