ALFRED KLEE AND HANS GOSLAR:  
FROM AMSTERDAM TO WESTERBORK TO BERGEN BELSEN 

Benjamin Ravid 

Background 

Alfred Klee (born 1875) was a younger associate of Theodor Herzl and one of the earliest leaders of German Zionism. He possessed unusual oratorical abilities, which he devoted to advocating the implementation of Herzl’s program of “conquering the [Jewish] communities” and winning them over to the Zionist cause.¹ He was also one of the founders of the Jüdische Volkspartei in 1919 and its leading representative on the Council of the Berlin Jewish community.² He additionally participated actively in numerous other Jewish political and educational organizations and served as vice-president of the Preussischen Landesverbandes jüdischer Gemeinden [Association of Prussian Jewish Communities] and as the representative of the Berlin Jewish community on the Board of the Jewish Colonization Association (ICA).³ 

A lawyer by profession, in partnership with Sammy Gronemann⁴ and his own cousin Fritz Simon, Klee specialized in criminal law and especially cases involving Jewish honor and, among other successes, won the libel trial against Count von Reventlow and his support of the Protocols of the Elders of Zion. Around 7 or 8 November 1938, Klee left Berlin with a small suitcase to defend a Jewish doctor somewhere in Westphalia. While there, on 10 November, the day after Kristallnacht, 

³ For biographies of Alfred Klee published before the outbreak of World War Two, see Jüdische Lexikon (Berlin 1930), vol. 3, p. 733, and Encyclopaedia Judaica (Berlin 1934), vol. 10, p. 68.  
⁴ Sammy Gronemann (1875–1952) was a German lawyer, playwright (especially of comedies), novelist, and Zionist leader, who moved to Palestine in 1936; see Encyclopaedia Judaica (Jerusalem 1972), vol. 7, pp. 930–31. All subsequent references to the Encyclopaedia Judaica are to this edition.
he spoke with his son Hans (born 1906) in Berlin, who gave him the cryptic message that his granddaughter had a birthday and would be very glad if he would come to see her. Alfred Klee understood the message to mean that he should not return to Berlin—indeed, the Gestapo had come to look for him in his office—and went directly to find refuge in Holland where his wife Theresa (born 1877) soon joined him. Hans Klee also left Berlin and went to Basel where he received the Doctor of Jurisprudence and then studied at the Graduate Institute of International Studies in Geneva.

Already then residing in Holland was the younger daughter of the Klees, Ruth (born 1901). Her husband, Hans Goslar (born 1889), journalist and author, had been a leader in the religious Zionist movement, Mizrahi, and, like his father-in-law, Alfred Klee, also a representative of the Jüdische Volkspartei on the Council of the Berlin Jewish community. Goslar, a committed Social Democrat, served as Press Chief of the Prussian state government (Pressechef der Preussischen Staatsregierung, as well as Dozent an der Verwaltungsakademie, according to his stationery) and as advisor to the Prussian Minister of Domestic Affairs as a Ministerialrat until his dismissal in 1933. He then obtained a position with Unilever in London, but when he arrived there and indicated that he could not work on the Sabbath, the position was withdrawn. Consequently, he went to Amsterdam where, together with an associate who was a lawyer and his wife Ruth as secretary, he opened a small office to advise Jewish immigrants from Germany how to arrange their economic and legal affairs. Hans and Ruth Goslar also translated the biblical commentaries of the British Chief Rabbi Joseph Herman Hertz to Exodus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy from English to German. Their daughter, Hanna (born 1928), the granddaughter referred to in the phone call, became a classmate and close friend of Anne Frank, who mentioned Hanna a few times in her diary, in some versions under the pseudonym of Lies (Elizabeth) Goosens.5

The eldest of Alfred and Theresa Klee’s three children, Esther Eugenie (born 1900), married the Judaica scholar and Hebraist Simon

---