

Why Anne Frank Wasn't Captured Sooner

When They Were Betrayed

In recent years, I have heard of interest in the question of who turned in the Frank family. I could not answer with a name, if I did remember those I have heard mentioned, because I wouldn't be able to single one, out. The answer must be, 'several'. Anyone who knew of the location of the business, would know of that annex. It's too big to miss. It was apparently built as a house for whatever business resided in that front building, before commuting was invented. Anyone who knew of the family and those premises, would immediately think of it, as a likely hiding place. It's an easy conclusion to leap to. It's plausible, especially in the absence of any other theory. Many people must have called or written the police. (It was the Dutch police who arrested them.) The only reason anyone might hesitate to assume that the Franks were hiding there, is that it's just too bloody obvious. They'd all say 'no; that would just be asking for it'. Because there was a price on their heads, the question of how much public opinion was against them, is not worth the cost of considering, and the Dutch were not the most sympathetic. The Franks were reported within days or weeks. The question is not who reported them, but how many. The answer is somewhere between 'a few and a lot more'. To report them, you wouldn't have to know for a fact, that they were there, and would not claim to know for sure. You would only need to suggest the possibility by reporting what you did know; the existence of that annex, that the owner of the business, in front of it, is Jewish and that his family had just dropped from sight.

Prioritizing the Captures

Margot received a letter, ordering her to turn herself in. Why would a police force warn someone that they intended to arrest them?! Anyone under such an order, might flee, and a Jew in 1942 Europe, would be at least as likely as a criminal, expecting a serious accusation. The authority which issued the letter, must believe that they would lose fewer than they would capture with such a warning, but how could they have such an expectation? The only possible answer is that they were short staffed. They couldn't capture their daily quota. The Dutch police must have been laboring under such a quota. I have heard of them in other countries. Some who receive the self-arrest demand, will just obey. Infirmary, age or other limitations might make running impossible. Not everyone has an option. Many would feel they must go along with it, and hope for the best. That the police (Gestapo; whoever) were understaffed, is only 1/4 of the answer. The another is, 'very'. If you could capture 75% of your quota, you wouldn't risk losing the other 25% by warning them. At least you know where they are, so why drive them into hiding? You just hope to get caught up, later, but, if you were only able to capture, for example, less than 60%, you might feel that bringing in 20% of the other forty, was worth losing many more. They must have been so swamped, and their daily shortfall, so bad, that they had to concede the loss of many more than they would catch, by ordering them to report. A few percent is better than nothing. {I'm not really guessing what percentages they might have seen as their thresholds.}

Some people are hiding [A] and some are not [B]. Both groups divide into two other categories; those whose location you know [1] and those you have not located [2].

Those whose location is a secret to you [A&B-2] are not on your schedule, whether they're in hiding, or not. Some whom you have not identified, are living undisguised [B-2] but, if you don't know where they are, they are equally out of reach. You can only hope to capture category 1 (whether they also reside in A or B). The choice between whether to concentrate your resources on capturing those who are hiding [A-1] or those who are not [B-1] is simple. Those who aren't hiding, yet, whom you have identified [B-1] might go into hiding, which would move them into that category of those whose location you don't know [2]. If people who were not hiding, start hiding [moving from cat. B to A] you have lost none who were also in category 2. You never knew where they were, anyway, but you will have lost those whom you already had located and who were not hiding [B-1] once they start hiding. You would have let them slip, away, into category A-2.

Of those whose location you know [1] the first targets were the ones who were not hiding [B] because people, already hiding, are not as likely to move. 1} Most of them would have no options, and those who do, are already spending one of them, by using their current hiding place. 2} They can't assume they would be safer in any other hiding place. No matter how promising that new place might seem, it's 50-50 which one might be discovered, first. 3} To go anywhere else, requires going outside, and getting seen is the most dangerous thing they could do.

Paying Protection

If someone is helping you in such a crisis, without a hope of payment, it's almost automatic to offer something. They might decline the first offer because they are doing it out of simple decency, and probably want you to know it. You would realize that and make the offer, again. Any payment, accepted, is a promise of another, and increases your protectors' interest in your safety. This is important because the assistance they give, puts them in danger, stretches their resources and, in every way, makes their lives more strenuous. All of those problems grow more difficult over the time their help is needed.

Karl Josef Silberbauer led the raid to capture the Franks. Otto Frank testified at his trial. He pleaded for leniency, on the basis that Silber was 'only doing his job'! To say that about the ranking person on the raid, after your whole family has been killed and you barely survived, cannot be chalked up to overweening saintliness. I suppose there are such people, but it makes much less sense to assume that about anyone, than to look for the most likely reasons, based on well known responses to circumstances.

Why would Frank try to protect him? Someone might accept payment for sheltering you, whether sympathetic or not, but, you would only feel indebted to him if he was sympathetic, as well. If he was personally hostile, and would have turned you in, had you not paid him, you would not feel quite so obliged.

Silberbauer was acquitted, but certainly not on Otto Frank's testimony, alone. Frank's lenient

attitude could not have quieted the howls for vengeance from so many others. Frank was not a celebrity, yet. No one had heard of the diary. That Silberbauer was released, means that most of the others must have defended him, and it must be with the same, or some other unlikely excuse. Silberbauer's position in the police, was the catbird's seat of extortion. If he accepted bribery from anyone, he would have accepted it from anyone else. He must have returned a good deal of the money, to sway others, besides Frank, toward an easy-going testimony. I only mention Frank's testimony, first, because it was easy to find and because the subject of this essay, is why they were able to remain free, for so long. The correct order of listing the facts, for the sake of reasoning, is: 1} Silberbauer was on trial for something he definitely did, 2} One of his victims, who lost his whole family, defended him. 3} The 'only doing his job' defense is farcical, given the offense, which suggests that Frank had another reason for his mild attitude. 4} Silberbauer was exonerated. > The combined facts indicate that others, besides Frank, must have defended him, and, if so many did, that he was acquitted, it ain't 'the quality of mercy' talkin'. The survivors recouped the protection money they had paid him, by speaking in his defense, and their reimbursement probably came with interest. Silberbauer was in no position to bargain. His nest egg must have been ravaged by the survivors, who would have demanded more, in return, than they had paid, but he would have salvaged a lot of it. He didn't have to pay anything, back, to those who didn't survive. The dead couldn't testify against him. Silberbauer would get away with all the money, he had taken from those families which were exterminated.

In the absence of bribery/extortion, it makes no sense that Miep Gies and others, skated. The penalty for harboring Jews, was the same as for being one. The people, protecting the Franks, were protected by the same bribes, even unto the condition that they would not be taken, if the people they were protecting, were captured. They must have been conduits of the payments.

With so much at stake, there's no telling how much an extortionist would demand. If Frank was paying Silberbauer, the timing of the raid might merely indicate the moment when Frank ran out of money. That would mean that Silberbauer was a sincere antisemite who would not have let them hide so long, except for payment, and, in that case, he might never have intended to allow them to escape. Such a back-stabbing is not inconsistent with keeping a promise to leave their protectors, alone. If Silberbauer is personally driven by antisemitism, he might not care too much about the dictate of his superiors, that "Jew lovers" be arrested, too. (Where bribery and extortion are factors, the issues of meeting quotas and what order to capture Jews [in hiding or not] would not have applied.)

The consensus seems to be that Jews who survived by hiding, moved from one place to another, while in hiding. (What I saw was stated, either, as 'stayed in at least two places' or 'moved at least twice', which means 'stayed in at least three places'.) Once in a hiding place, why would anyone leave it for another? There is no way of knowing which place is more likely to be discovered. Why risk exposing yourself to view, just to get to a different one? You wouldn't, unless you knew that your current hiding place had been exposed, but how would you know that, until you were caught? If the Nazis' workload delayed your capture, even for weeks, you would still be caught, unless you were warned that you had been found out. Those in hiding had help from many, working in the agencies, trying to capture them, and enough to sustain such an

estimate as all Jews in hiding, moving, at all.

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