



Preface

Guido Goldman did not live to see the publication of this biography. But he read every line of the manuscript and, until the last, hoped to hold the book in his hands. It almost happened: the proofs were ready for the printers when he finally succumbed to illness, just weeks after his eighty-third birthday, at his home in Concord, Massachusetts. However, Goldman's life and work continue to have a profound impact after his death, and substantial parts of the story are told here as if he were still among us.

I had absolutely no idea who Guido Goldman was when I first met him in the fall of 2006. I had come to Harvard for three months, courtesy of a Gerd Bucerius Fellowship. The Center for European Studies had kindly provided me with a workspace, a telephone, and an internet connection.

A large inscription on a wall at the Center told me that its grand premises at 27 Kirkland Street in Cambridge had been restored with a bequest from the family of Minda de Gunzburg, hence the name “Minda de Gunzburg Center for European Studies.” But there was no sign, not even a tiny one, to tell me that this renowned academic institution had been founded by one Guido Goldman, who brought it into existence in 1969, then served as its director for no less than twenty-five years.

There was no Wikipedia entry (at the time of this writing, there still is none) to inform us that we owe our most important postwar transatlantic institutions, above all German-American ones, to this same Guido Goldman, who either brought them directly into being or at least helped them to grow and flourish, thanks to his energetic engagement and huge network of influential and wealthy friends who were all committed to contribute to social causes and the well-being of societies. Alongside the Center for European Studies (CES), these institutions include the German Marshall Fund of the United States (GMF), a think tank he helped establish in the early 1970s, the American Institute for Contemporary German Studies at Johns Hopkins University (AICGS), the John McCloy Scholarship program at Harvard’s Kennedy School of Government, and the American Council on Germany in New York (ACG).

Back then, I also had no idea that Guido Goldman was the son of Nahum Goldmann, former president of the World Jewish Congress, who died in 1982. After World War II, it was Nahum Goldmann who negotiated with Konrad Adenauer, the first chancellor of the Federal Republic, to ensure that German reparation payments to Israel and Holocaust survivors were made. I had no idea just how many famous twentieth-century personalities had passed through the Goldmanns’ New York home, from the pianist Arthur Rubinstein to the philosopher Isaiah Berlin, from Chaim Weizmann, Israel’s first president, to the UN Secretary General Dag Hammarskjöld, not to mention Eleanor Roosevelt, a United Nations cofounder and the wife of President Franklin D. Roosevelt. How could I have known? Guido Goldman’s last name was missing the second “n.” Later he would tell me that the second “n” went astray during his US

citizenship process. At the end of the citizenship ceremony, the document read “Goldman,” not “Goldmann” as his parents had it. And so the name remained.

After several weeks at Harvard, all I knew about Guido Goldman, almost intuitively, was that he must be a highly regarded man, with wide-ranging influence and a substantial fortune of his own.

I felt a bit like the young journeyman from the town of Tuttlingen in “Kannitverstan,” a calendar story by the nineteenth-century German writer Johann Peter Hebel. The youth goes to Amsterdam for the first time in his life, sees the marvelous buildings, ships, and goods for sale, and asks who they all belonged to. Every time, he is told “Can’tunnerstan” (“I can’t understand”). “My goodness,” thinks the journeyman, “this Can’tunnerstan must be a very rich and powerful man.”

At Harvard, whenever I asked at the Center, the answer was the same. Who donated the modern art in the stairwell? Who gave the precious nineteenth-century European poster prints? Who was behind this or that bequest? Above all, who was responsible for the existence of the CES, and its beautiful premises here in this building, the most beautiful in all of Harvard? Every time I received the same answer: Guido Goldman.

There was one small difference, however: “Can’tunnerstan” was an imaginary figure, conjured up by the journeyman because of his lack of Dutch. But Guido Goldman was very much a real person.

Goldman’s long-standing colleague Abby Collins, my Harvard point of contact, told me that Goldman had invited me to eat at a Japanese restaurant in Cambridge, as he did with most Bucerius Fellowship recipients. We had that single meeting, but then lost touch. Later, as a correspondent in Washington, DC, I saw Goldman only fleetingly. Not until late 2014, when I moved to Berlin from the United States, did I have a chance to get to know him better. Whenever Goldman came to Berlin, two or three times a year, he wanted to know about my experience of the 2015–16 refugee crisis, which I covered as a journalist for *Die Zeit* in the Balkans and North Africa. He wanted to understand how Germany was coping with hundreds of thousands of Syrian and Iraqi asylum seekers, and whether Angela Merkel could politically survive her famous statement, “Wir schaffen das” (“We’ll manage this”). In addition, he sought out all the news I had from political life in Bonn. Another attendee at these meetings was Karl Kaiser, a German Harvard professor who enjoyed a close friendship with Goldman for over half a century.

I soon became aware of Goldman's burning interest in politics. Even more than political themes, however, he was fascinated by the *people* in politics, their relationships, mistakes, preferences, and intrigues. Goldman always wanted to know who could bring down whom, who might replace whom. Of course, conversation often returned to the subject of the United States, Goldman's country, which I first visited as a sixteen-year-old on a year-long high-school exchange program. At that point in time, Goldman was already teaching at Harvard, had already founded the Center for European Studies—initially called West European Studies—and was about to bring the German Marshall Fund into existence.

We had coffee half a dozen times maybe, no more than that. So in the summer of 2019, I was surprised—perplexed, even—when Goldman asked me out of the blue if I would write a book about him. He said the German Marshall Fund was to celebrate its fiftieth anniversary in 2022, and the German Foreign Ministry wanted to commission his biography in recognition of his considerable involvement in the emergence of the transatlantic think tank.

I asked for time to consider the offer. My great admiration for Goldman notwithstanding, I was undecided, doubting whether the founding of the German Marshall Fund could be an adequate basis for a biography. It would be better to write a book about Goldman himself, rather than the Marshall Fund. I asked myself who would even know about Goldman, other than the usual suspects within the tight-knit transatlantic community? Above all, perhaps: what could younger generations actually learn from Goldman and his undoubted contributions to relations between the United States, Europe, and Germany? Then a final question: apart from his life's work, what made Goldman himself an interesting person?

I had no answers that summer. I accepted the offer nonetheless, then almost immediately gave up when I realized just how many contemporary witnesses there were, not to mention the rich and extensive collection of available historical documents. But I continued with the project, drawn deeper into Goldman's life story at every step, captivated by what I read, heard, and experienced. I finally came to a conclusion: this was a story of a life that needed to be told.

Almost no one knows about Goldman. Although not without vanity, he never sought the spotlight, preferring to hang back quietly, pulling strings from behind the scenes. Nonetheless, he was a key figure in contemporary history; his life story reflects the twists and turns of a century of German, Jewish, European,

and American history. His biography allows us to observe the continued impact of the Nazi era, the Cold War, and American racism; as if through a magnifying glass, we can examine the abysses, hopes, longings, successes, and defeats of the twentieth century. These twentieth-century events and emotions have not disappeared; they continue to resonate in our own world. As in a Tolstoy novel, the history of the Goldmann family is a story in which political, social, sociological pathologies—as well as some very personal ones—clash and intertwine.

The Goldmann family was forced to flee the Nazis in 1940, when they left Europe for the United States. The Goldmann family was wealthy, and their son Guido, as he himself acknowledges, led a life of privilege in New York. However, his parents took little interest in their two sons. Nahum Goldmann's passions were exclusively directed toward politics, and his own political trajectory; Alice Goldmann was largely preoccupied with herself. Despite this parental self-absorption and the absence of love, Goldman said he largely survived unscathed, ascribing this above all to the care shown to him by Ruth, his Barbadian nanny.

But there is another side to the story. Goldman's life work could never have come about without his father, including the famous name and the wide circle of illustrious friends. But if the father built the foundations, it was son who constructed buildings on top of them. Nahum Goldmann was a Zionist, passionately driven by the idea of a Jewish state in Palestine. By contrast, Guido Goldman had no specific political aim and no political program. What he did have was a keen sense for what matters.

Goldman firmly believed in the formative power of civil society institutions, in making well-chosen, effective connections between people who understand politics as a way of improving the world. Goldman was no revolutionary and he has never sought to overturn systems. He did not found movements like Greenpeace or Amnesty International. The institutions with which he was involved—the German Marshall Fund, for example—worked together with states and with groups of states in order to bring about change in governments' actions.

Like his father before him, Goldman became an intermediary among powerful people, as well as a brilliant, peerless fundraiser. Especially during the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s, Goldman moved easily among the rich, beautiful, and influential—the network he built up was his precious capital, the foundation of his life's work.

However, it would be wrong to reduce Goldman's contribution to this. In addition to prime ministers and presidents, professors, bankers, and art collectors, Goldman mixed with activists, dancers, and social workers. He had an open, generous heart—an exceptional philanthropist and patron, he helped a vast number of people out of difficult situations, while never putting his generosity on public display. He found it a lot easier to give than to receive.

Goldman was not without ego and was quite conscious of status. He was a patriarch, happy to tell you what's what, a person who liked to keep control. But he inherited a fine, dialectical Jewish sense of humor from his father, and was quite willing to make fun of himself.

When Goldman told a story, he liked to bring in one of these Jewish jokes. A joke which was a bit problematic unless someone like him was telling it. One of his favorite jokes—often wheeled out during complex negotiations with potential donors—went like this: The Israeli finance minister is stuck in difficult talks about a construction project and needs some help. He asks his assistant to bring him three particularly clever Jews. The assistant comes back with a German, a Hungarian, and a Romanian Jew. The minister asks the German: "What is seven times five?" "Thirty-five," says the German. "Good answer," says the minister, but he wants to ask the others too. The Hungarian asks for some time to think, then says: "A number between thirty and forty." "OK," says the minister, and asks the Romanian: "So, what is seven times five?" "Well, are we buying or selling?" comes the answer.

Guido Goldman had a complex personality. Susan Rauch, a trusted friend, says that, even after decades of friendship, he could be an enigma. "A mystery," she calls him. Goldman was a restless character, easily bored. When one project came to an end, he moved immediately to the next. Josef Joffe, editor of the prestigious German newspaper *Die Zeit*—also close to Goldman for more than half a century—says he can understand this restiveness. It was simply far more interesting to set up a project or institution than to manage it when it is up and running. Another friend, the renowned sociologist Andrei Markovits, calls Goldman a "crosser of borders, a wanderer between worlds." Goldman, he adds, is "always half of something . . . an academic, but only half an academic; a businessman, a Jew, an American, a German . . . but only half."

For this reason, Goldman—who never married—had more than one family. He had many families, autonomous and adjacent—transatlantic institutions, the famous Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater (a predominantly African

American company), the *ikat* family, collectors and lovers of Asian fabrics, above all from Uzbekistan.

Think tanks, dance companies, tapestries . . . the sheer range of Goldman's activities may appear random, eclectic, even quite disjointed. In fact, this was not the case. What may have looked like loose threads had their own coherent inner logic. Henry Kissinger, Goldman's friend and teacher, says that Goldman's World War II childhood gave him an acute sense for injustice, and a profound need for reconciliation. Goldman is a "shaper" of things, says Kissinger; his life's work, in its overall scope and in its detail, has contributed to overcoming the horrors of the Holocaust, building bridges during the Cold War, and making societies a little bit fairer.

I wrote this book at the request of Guido Goldman, and with his collaboration. He read and approved every line of the manuscript before its publication. In other words, this is an authorized biography. For an author accustomed to writing freely as a journalist, this was always going to be a hazardous venture. Presented with a commissioned work, the reader might get the impression that the portrait it contains is a touched-up one. So I would like to set the record straight here. From the very start, I have striven to tell Goldman's story according to the sources available, to the best of my knowledge, and in good conscience. I do not have textual sources for everything—much is based on stories told by witnesses, whose memories may have grown deceptive with the years. Where there were doubts, I have chosen not to use these memories as sources.

Guido Goldman made his entire archive available for my research, including highly personal letters written to his parents, his brother Michael, and to many friends. I have read more than a thousand documents and carried out over one hundred interviews, including two dozen with Goldman himself. I was surprised how eager all of Goldman's collaborators were to speak about him. In the interest of frankness, however, it should be said that most of the interviewees were and are devoted to Goldman, and even the occasional critical remark always came against a backdrop of sympathy.

My agreement with Guido Goldman was that he would intervene only on highly personal issues, above all sensitive family matters. He did so only on very rare occasions.

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I also owe a great debt of gratitude to my family—my wife Ute Main and my two daughters Gianna and Lea—for putting up with so much during my six-month immersion in research and writing.

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