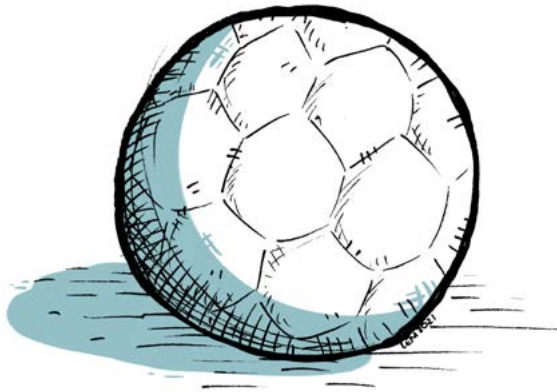




Life Journeys Leading to **MAUTHAUSEN**

Manuel García



Teres Stockinger

Alena Ertl

Dear student,

In 1938, in a small town in Upper Austria, one of the many Nazi concentration camps was constructed. It was known as the Mauthausen concentration camp. It existed from 1938 to 1945. The camp was run and guarded by the SS. The people who were imprisoned here came from many countries in Europe: Poland, Russia, France, Italy, Germany, Austria and others. They were political opponents, belonged to marginalised groups (e.g. 'criminals', 'asocials') or were persecuted for anti-Semitic and racist reasons (e.g. Jews). Most of the prisoners were men, but there were also women and children. In the Mauthausen quarry, the prisoners carried out hard forced labour. In the more than 40 subcamps (Gusen, Steyr, Linz, Ebensee, Vienna ...), they were deployed in the arms industry. People lived in overcrowded accommodation. They were not given enough food and clothing, and they starved and died of diseases. SS men beat many prisoners to death, shot them or murdered them in the gas chamber at Mauthausen. In total, almost 200,000 people were imprisoned at Mauthausen and its subcamps. Half of them lost their lives.

The Mauthausen concentration camp was on a hill and could be seen for miles around. Many people were involved with the camp: they worked there, brought deliveries or knew SS men. Almost everyone knew about the death camp. Often, the SS men committed the crimes in full view of the population. On 5 May 1945, the Mauthausen concentration camp was liberated by US troops. In this booklet, you will read the story of a person who was connected with the Mauthausen concentration camp. Where a word is underlined, you can find a short explanation at the end of the booklet. There are also tasks for you to work on in your small group after you've finished reading. Take the booklet with you on your visit to the Mauthausen Memorial! During your visit, you will encounter the places and stories you read about in the booklet.



Manuel García [Barrado](#), known as Manolo, is born in 1918 and grows up in Madrid. His father is a railroad worker, and his mother a seamstress. Manuel is the youngest of three siblings.

He is offered training to become a Catholic priest, but instead he attends a construction school. In his spare time, he plays football and even trains in a Real Madrid youth team. He also loves music and plays the horn.



When Manuel García is 18 years old, there is a military coup in Spain. General Franco wants to abolish the democratic republic and establish a dictatorship. A civil war breaks out and lasts three years. Manuel García fights as a volunteer with the Republican troops against General Franco.

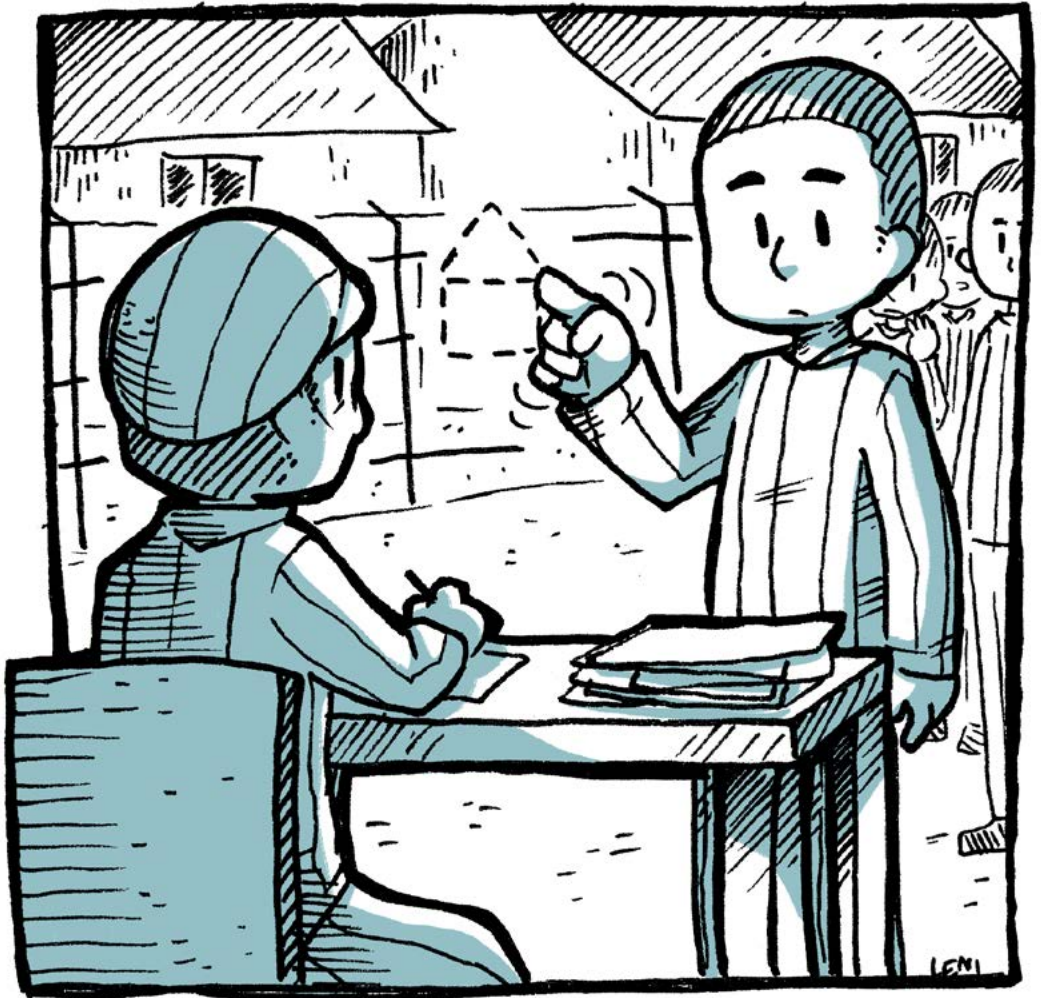
General Franco and his supporters win the civil war in 1939. They are brutal in their reprisals against the defeated Republicans. Large numbers of Republicans, including Manuel García, flee to France, where they end up in refugee camps.



Many Spanish refugees are put to work in France. García enlists in the French Foreign Legion, a military unit for foreigners. He fights with the Foreign Legion against the German Wehrmacht, which attacks France during the Second World War. After the defeat, Manuel García goes to Germany as a prisoner of war.

In March 1941, he is taken to the Mauthausen concentration camp, along with 7,200 other Spanish people. When he is admitted to the camp, he is asked what his job is. García cannot speak German. So he draws something in the air with his finger: a house. The clerk enters 'architect' into the records.

During his first weeks in Mauthausen, García has to do hard forced labour in the quarry. Every day he sees fellow Spaniards die, many of them murdered by the SS guards. He fears he also won't survive much longer.



One day García is taken out of his labour [detachment](#) and has to wait at the [camp gate](#). He trembles with fear. An SS man comes up to him and says: 'You. Tomorrow. Construction office.' The next morning, he begins working in the construction office.

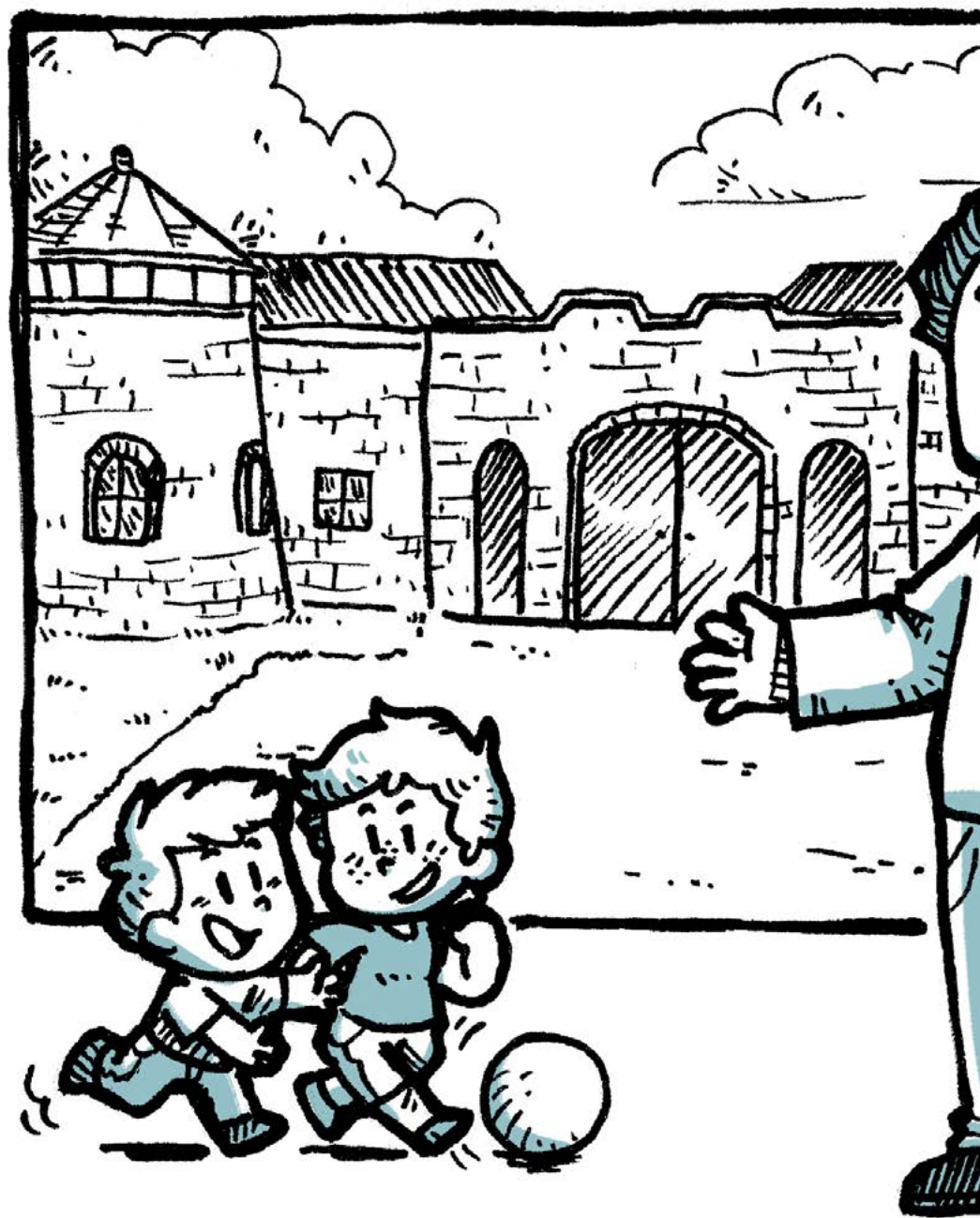
This is where the plans for the [barracks](#), walls and towers of the camp are drawn up. As a test, he has to draw a plan. He is nervous – will he pass? He makes a big effort, and the SS man is satisfied. So he stays in the construction office.

This is a fortunate turn of events for García because the work is much easier. Since there is often something to be measured for the plans, he can move freely around the camp. Sometimes he goes to the kitchen barracks and is sneaked food by the Spanish prisoners who work there. This helps him to survive.

García is later transferred to the Gusen concentration camp, where he also works in the construction office. A Spanish football team is being put together at Gusen. On Sundays, the prisoners from the different countries play against each other. Of course, this only includes prisoners in good positions, who, like García, do easier work and are better fed. Manuel García becomes captain of the Spanish prisoner team.

Towards the end of the war, he is no longer needed in the construction office and is expected to do hard physical labour again. But once again he has a stroke of luck. Many Spanish prisoners are active in an [underground organisation](#) and help each other. They manage to get García an easier job in the [Jourhaus](#) at Gusen.







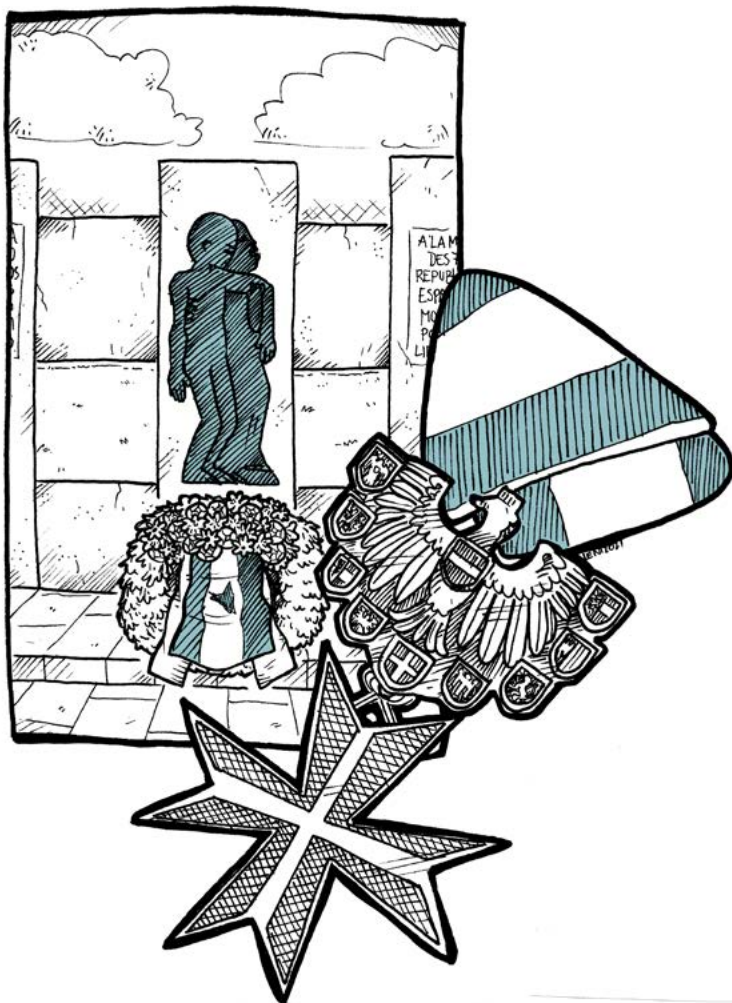
After the liberation of the Mauthausen concentration camp in May 1945, the Spanish prisoners cannot return to their homeland. The dictator Franco is still in power in Spain, and they would most likely be imprisoned or even murdered if they went back. Many choose to go to France, where they receive asylum. García and some of the others decide to stay in Mauthausen and wait until the end of Franco's dictatorship. He now speaks good German and works for a company as a draughtsman. Soon he marries and has a son and a daughter with his wife Anna. García also plays football again, for ASKÖ Mauthausen. In 1963, he starts a new job. The concentration camp has since become a memorial, and García becomes its caretaker. Now he lives with his family in accommodation provided by the Memorial which is located in the former [SS Administration Building](#). He looks after the Memorial and gives tours.

This is especially important for the Spanish visitors because they learn that Spanish people were imprisoned at Mauthausen. This is not talked about in Spain. García is caretaker of the Memorial for 20 years. The Spanish survivors of the Mauthausen concentration camp build a monument at the Memorial. It commemorates the thousands of Spaniards who were murdered in Mauthausen and Gusen.

After the death of the dictator Franco in

1975, García is able to travel to Spain again, and he sees his mother for the first time in over 30 years. He visits her more often, but he doesn't want to return for good. He now has his family in Austria. He receives commendations from the Spanish and Austrian governments.

Manuel García Barrado dies in Mauthausen in 2006.



Some words explained ...

Barrado - Spanish people usually have two surnames, with the first one being the most important, in this case García.

Wehrmacht – Literally ‘defence force’, this was the name for the armed forces in Nazi Germany.

SS – Stands for ‘Schutzstaffel’ or ‘protection squad’. The SS was one of the most powerful organisations in the Nazi regime: it reported to the police, had business operations and had armed troops (the ‘Waffen-SS’). The SS guarded the concentration camps and was mainly responsible for the persecution and mass murder under Nazism.

Labour detachment – A group of prisoners who had to carry out a specific form of forced labour in the concentration camp.

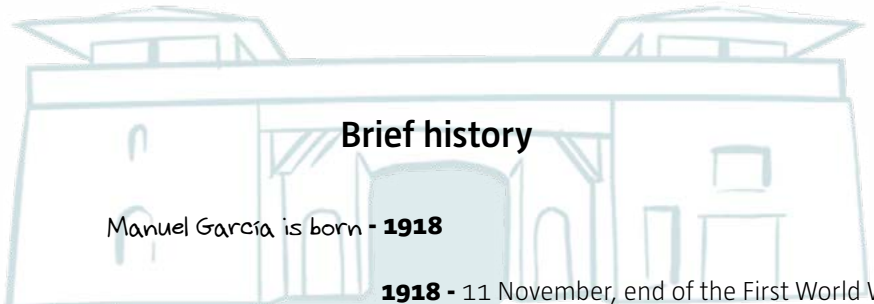
Camp gate – The main gate of the camp, which was the entrance to the area for prisoners.

Barracks – Often used to mean buildings for lodging soldiers. Here the term is also used to describe the wooden buildings in the concentration camps that were used for the prisoners.

Underground organisation – A prohibited political organisation that acted in secret. Resistance fighters were often part of underground organisations. If they were discovered, they were usually sent to concentration camps. In the final phase of the war, some prisoners also formed underground organisations in concentration camps.

Jourhaus – In the Gusen concentration camp, the main gate building was called the Jourhaus. It was effectively the entrance building to the camp.

SS Administration Building – The building for the commandant staff in the Mauthausen concentration camp. It contained administration rooms, as well as the offices of the camp commandant and other senior SS men.



Brief history

Manuel García is born - **1918**

1918 - 11 November, end of the First World War

1933 - 30 January, Adolf Hitler becomes Reich Chancellor in Germany

1936 - Military coup in Spain, start of the Spanish Civil War

García fights as _____
against Franco - **1936**

1938 - 12 March, 'Anschluss' ('Annexation') of Austria to Nazi Germany

- 8 August, construction starts on the Mauthausen concentration camp

1939 - General Franco wins the civil war; Spain becomes a dictatorship

García escapes to France - **1939**

1939 - 1 September, start of the Second World War

- December, Construction begins on the Gusen concentration camp

He is a prisoner of war in Germany - **1939**

He is transferred to _____ - **1941**

1945 - 5 May, Mauthausen concentration camp is liberated by the US Army

- 8 May, Nazi Germany surrenders; end of the Second World War in Europe

García remains in Mauthausen, working as a construction draughtsman. He gets married and has two children - **After the liberation**





He works as a _____
at the Mauthausen Memorial - **1963**

1975 - The Spanish dictator Franco dies

García visits Spain for the first time since his exile - **1975**

Manuel García dies in Mauthausen - **2006**

Further reflection in groups ...

-  In January 1940, after their defeat in the Spanish Civil War, many fighters fled with their families to France. In one drawing, we can see Manuel García in a refugee camp. Describe what you see in the picture.
-  The Spanish prisoners in the concentration camp stick together and help each other. Find examples of this in Manuel García's biography.
-  After liberation, Manuel García wants to return to his family, but the dictator Franco still holds power in Spain. Imagine Manuel is writing to his mother to explain why he's not coming home (one or two sentences): 'Dear Mother, ...'
-  The Spanish survivors of the Mauthausen concentration camp build a monument at the Memorial. Look for the monument during your visit to the Memorial. There are figures depicted on the monument. What do you feel this image expresses?



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