

Max Corden

Title: *Lucky Boy in the Lucky Country: The Autobiography of Max Corden, Economist*

Author: Werner Max Corden

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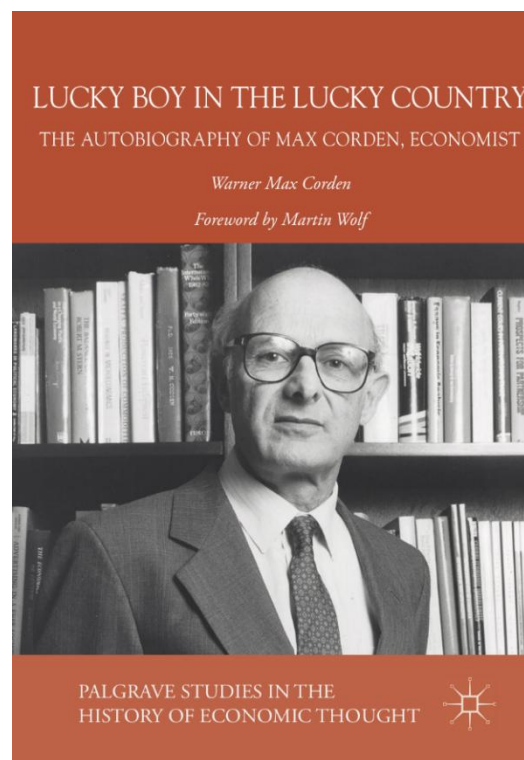
Location of Book: Monash University Library, Lamm Jewish Library, Melbourne Holocaust Museum and most public libraries.

Cities/towns/camps: Germany: Breslau; Australia: Melbourne.

Note: those cities/towns/camps underlined are those which are most central to the narrative

Genre: Memoirs

Key events/experiences: Nazi Germany; Jewish refugee.



Lucky Boy in the Lucky Country is the 243-page autobiography of German-born survivor Warner Max Corden, who fled Nazi Germany for England in 1938 before emigrating to Australia with his family. He later became a renowned economist for which he earned the Companion of the Order of Australia Medal (AC) in 2001.

Pages 1-16 provide a family history, recount the author's childhood and memories growing up under Nazism and flight to England. Pages 17-40 offer his reflections on the history of antisemitism and includes discussion of the Breslau diaries of his uncle Willy, which document experience of Jews under Nazism. Pages 41- 69 recount the family's emigration to Australia and describe the author's schooling experiences in Germany, England and Australia. Pages 70-94 offer reflections on identity and trace the fate of his family in Europe. Pages 95-209 address his studies and career as an economist, covering his work on the Australian Protection Policy, before reflecting on his time at Oxford University, the Australian National University, and his contributions to the International Monetary Fund, John Hopkins University, and the World Bank. Pages 210-243 include an appendix, with 16 historical photographs and an index.

Werner Max Cohn was born on 13 August 1927 in Breslau, Germany, to parents Kate Sophie Levy and Rudolf Simon Cohn. He had an older brother, Gerhart. The brothers were raised in a comfortable middle-class, assimilated background, and their father managed a successful family haberdashery business.

As a young child, Max was shielded by his parents from the growing crisis and had little awareness of the political upheaval unfolding around him. As a child he was even fascinated by the spectacle of marching soldiers and SA men in the streets. On one occasion in 1937, he witnessed Adolf Hitler passing through Breslau and, like many

other Germans, joined the crowd in giving the Nazi salute unaware of the regime's policies.

Shortly after the Nazis came to power, Max's maternal aunt Elli and her husband Heinrich emigrated to England – a move which would prove instrumental to the family's survival.

Until 1935, Max attended a state school without incident, but following the introduction of the Nuremberg racial laws Jewish children were forced to transfer to Jewish schools. As antisemitic restrictions intensified in 1937 his father Rudolph was dismissed as manager of his business, ultimately convincing the family to emigrate.

Following these measures, Aunt Elli worked desperately to secure her family's emigration to England and the Cohns applied for landing permits to Australia. Rudolf travelled to London in February to initiate this process. Finally, in 1937, fifteen-year-old Gerhart was able to leave for England. Max followed in April 1938, at the age of ten. Gerhart and Max lived briefly with their aunt and uncle in London before being placed in a boarding school where he learnt English.

While the boys were in England the situation in Germany deteriorated. During the *Kristallnacht* pogrom in November 1938 Breslau's synagogue was destroyed, Jewish businesses were looted, and their father was arrested and interned in Buchenwald for sixteen days before being released after proof was provided that the family had obtained visas to emigrate to Australia.

After reuniting in England, the Cohn family departed from Southampton on 16 December 1938 aboard the MS *Sibayak*, arriving in Melbourne on 25 January 1939. Although destined for Sydney they decided to stay in Melbourne. On arrival they were met by representatives of the Jewish Welfare Society and placed in a boarding house in St Kilda. Max began attending the local state school.

Soon after, the family anglicised their names: Werner Max Cohn became Warner Max Corden. After a few weeks in the boarding house, the Corden family rented their first home in Melbourne and were able to establish a clothing business with support from the Jewish community.

After Japan entered the war in December 1941, refugees from Nazi Germany were permitted to join Australian Army labour units in non-combatant roles. Now in his forties, Max's father Rudolph enlisted in a Pioneer battalion while the children continued their schooling. In 1944, five years after their arrival, the Corden family became naturalised Australian citizens.

After completing his schooling at Melbourne High School, Max studied economics at the University of Melbourne, graduating in 1950. He subsequently undertook postgraduate study at the London School of Economics, where he completed a PhD and began his academic career as an economist. In 1952, Max met his future wife Dorothy and the pair married in 1957.

During his distinguished academic career Max became one of Australia's most influential economists and a leading authority on international trade. In 2001, Max was awarded the Companion of the Order of Australia Medal (AC), **the highest civilian honour in the Australian honours system**, for his contributions to economics.

Lucky Boy in the Lucky Country is an eloquent and reflective autobiography divided into two distinct parts. The first explores the author's childhood in Nazi Germany, his emigration to England and Australia, and the impact of these experiences on his identity. The second traces his academic and professional career as an economist. The work is notable for its extensive engagement with historical and academic literature, with each chapter including a bibliography for further reading. It also reproduces English translations of several letters written by Rudolf Cohn to his brother, Willy Cohn, whose widely published diaries provide one of the most notable accounts of Jewish life in Nazi Germany. The memoir was published by Palgrave Macmillan.