

“I only wanted to go home, only back to Wawern“

The dual integration of the Auschwitz survivor Norbert Hirsch Korn

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(Translated by Manfred Quintus)

The history of the Hirsch Korn family from Wawern can be considered as exemplary of the integration efforts made by those Jewish families that immigrated from Eastern Europe into Germany in the 19th and early 20th centuries. This dual integration – on the one hand into the already existing German-Jewish communities, on the other hand into German society - was brutally interrupted by the NS-persecutions and the deportations. In post-war Germany, however, the survivors of the Shoah successfully resumed their efforts to become integrated. Their example proves that in spite of considerable cultural differences between residents and immigrants, e.g. in habits and language, a successful integration is possible. This means in this case: If the lives of the newly-arrived can be based on the familiar traditional basis of Jewish religious practice and way of life, the Halachá, then it is also possible to live together with the old-established residents and cooperate with them socially and economically (1). This, however, can only be fruitful on the condition that both sides work together, are open-minded and peaceful, and accept the “peculiarities” of the other side (2).

How “Herszkorn” became “Hirsch Korn”

According to the information given by Norbert the ancestors of the Hirsch Korn family from Wawern originally came from the South of Russia, the region on the Black Sea and Caucasus. As is shown by the company logo a large number of fellow-believers left because of famines and anti-Jewish pogroms in the years before and after 1860 and moved to the Kingdom of Poland (“Congress-Poland”), which had been dominated by Russia since 1815. There they started successful businesses in the expanding textile industry. On account of their family contacts to Southern Russia, their command of the language and the knowledge of the Russian administration they could transport industrially produced textile goods to Lodz where the workers’ wages were low. There these goods were processed into ready-to-wear clothing, which was exported to Germany and sold there (3). Norbert’s father Aaron was born in Lodz in 1885, his mother Sarah Lachmann, (b.1887), came from Drzewica near Radom in the present-day Lodz Voivodeship.

Because of this textile trade, business contacts to Darmstadt were formed where his elder brother Abraham Hirsch Korn (b. 1882) founded a new shop for boots and clothing in 1912. His wife Deborah (née Zale) and their son Max Philipp left Lodz in the same year and joined him (4). Three more children were born into the family, and during the First World War they

lived in Arheilgen near Darmstadt. Their original family name "Herszkorn" (i.e. "Hirse Korn" = "Milletseed") was transcribed into "Hersch Korn" on the registration forms (1912, 1921), then Germanized into "Hirsch Korn" (1927) (5). As far as we know Abraham's younger brother Aaron, his wife Sarah and their daughter Sophia (b. 1912) had lived in Lodz. Aaron had served in the Russian army, and in 1909 he took part in the occupation of Northern Iran by tsarist Russia. He even got as far as Teheran. This was an adventure he liked telling his children about. Their first son Jacob was born on 1 May or 5 May 1914 in Lodz. During the July Crisis in 1914 Aaron was drafted again and first saw military action when the Russian armies attacked Eastern Prussia.

According to Norbert's report Aaron became a prisoner of war in the Battle of Masuria in mid-September 1914. He was transported to the prisoners' camp in Zerst (6), and after that he was forced to work in the coal mine of Luisenthal near Völklingen/ Saar together with a large number of other prisoners of war. In 1917 he had an accident while working underground, and after some time in a hospital he was sent to the mill of Fellerich as a farm hand (7). After the Peace Treaty of Brest-Litovsk between the new revolutionary Russian government and the German Empire (3 March 1918) he was allowed to attend the religious services on "Schabbes" and on the Jewish holidays at the synagogue of Wawern. That is how he got to know the Jews living in the village, who welcomed him hospitably. Among them were the shoe manufacturer Heinrich Traub from Trier and some Catholic people from the village. In the course of time his command of the German language improved. Later on people in Wawern called him, and later his wife and children "*de Russ/ de Russen*" – "*the Russians*".

After the Armistice (11 November 1918) Aaron Hirsch Korn was released and moved to Darmstadt where he was joined by his wife who had stayed in Lodz during the war. After the birth of their daughter Paula (2 September 1919) they decided, however, to return to Wawern where the chairman of the Jewish community rented the small teacher's flat out to him. This was on the first floor of the old "*Schul*". At the same time his brother Israel Hirsch Korn and his family came to Wawern. His wife Esther/Ernestine was a sister of Aaron's wife Sarah. In 1925 the village had some 450 inhabitants, 46 of whom were Jewish. With a little more than ten percent of its inhabitants the village had the second highest percentage of Jewish citizens in the region, after Kirn and before Freudenburg (8). Since 1844 there had been a little synagogue at the centre of the village, and there was the old "*Schul*" with a mikwe (the ritual bath) in the basement, a classroom for those children preparing for Bar Mitzwa and the former teacher's flat on the first floor. The Jews from Wawern buried their dead on the Jewish cemetery in Niederleuken. The way of life of the Jews from Wawern can be described as "traditional" or even "orthodox". This stood in a contrast to the way of life lots of assimilated Jews lived in the cities, who attended the synagogues only on the high Jewish holidays and who did not observe the kosher rules anymore.

Norbert Hirsch Korn was born on 2 July 1921 in this little flat without running water and electric light. In 1923 a fifth child, Erna, was born there, too. Sophie and Jakob attended the Catholic primary school in Wawern. All the children of the Hirsch Korn family went there, and

Jewish religious instruction was taught by itinerant teachers (9). In the summer of 1928 the Hirschkorns moved to a large farm house behind the synagogue. The parents had bought it at an auction from the heirs of the deceased cattle trader Bernhard Bonem. After the years in the tiny flat in the old "Schul" this new house was "the most beautiful and the largest house" in Wawern. For the other villagers the purchase of this house by the "Russians" was absolutely sensational. (10)

Integration has two sides

In Wawern there were three families with Polish-Russian roots, who really worked hard to become integrated. They were the two Hirschkorn-families and the family of Leo Wachsmann. In 1921 Aaron Hirschkorn had been given a trade license for a travelling shoe business. These shoes were provided on commission by Heinrich Traub, that meant that they had to be paid for only in autumn. Every day except for the weekends Aaron and his wife travelled on their horse-drawn cart from village to village along the Rivers Saar, Moselle and Sauer and sold shoes, children's shoes and slippers. Soon they were known all over the villages they travelled to, their customers waited for them on certain prearranged days. They also gave them parcels and asked them to take them to certain addresses in other villages. Thus they won new customers. Aaron's brother Israel was a good housepainter, and as a craftsman he was much in demand.

Leo Wachsmann, a sculptor, was the founder and conductor of the mandolin orchestra, and he produced the instruments himself. He was also commissioned to make the church benches for the new parish church of Wawern. Aaron Hirschkorn and Benni Kahn, the prayer leader at the synagogue, met with friends and neighbours for card games in private houses and the local pub. Other members of the Jewish community sang in the men's choir and helped in the fire brigade (11). Integration was not difficult for the children; their new house was the meeting point for many other children, who could play there without being interrupted. They had as many Catholic as Jewish school friends. Because there were still a lot of prejudices, teachers and priests made sure that open hostilities were avoided (12). Catholics and Jews lived comparatively peacefully next to each other until the beginning of the 1930s although minor conflicts occurred. On the other hand everybody had to rely on the others because they all shared the same conditions of life in Wawern.

The Hirschkorns' lives like the lives of most of the other Jewish families in Wawern were characterized by simplicity and poorness, also by hard work from childhood on. They lived strictly according to the traditions, and at the same time they tried to adapt to the Catholic community around them. The Jews of the village attached great importance to keeping their religiously founded traditions; above all they maintained the "Schabbes" and the rules of kosher food laws (13). These traditions were the basis of their Jewish identity in the diaspora. To adapt to their environment the children and the adults learnt to speak the local dialect. These people, who had come from Poland, used a mixture of German and Yiddish,

which must have appeared odd to people from outside the family. At school great importance was attached to "Hochdeutsch" (= High German), at home Aaron and Sarah spoke Russian and Polish to each other whenever the children were not meant to understand them. Their business life was based on the exchange of goods: The shoes the customers bought were only partly paid for. In autumn the bill was settled by grain or other food. Most customers did not have large sums of cash, and that was true for the Hirschkorns as well. In the time from March till the first snowfalls the shoe trader's children walked barefoot like all the other children. Water and electricity were saved. People washed at a bucket of water in the basement and lit candles in the evening.

Life between hatred and solidarity

From 1930 on some boys from Wawern started to abuse Norbert and his family by hurling vulgar anti-Semitic insults at them. Some even tried to beat him up. But he had good friends who stood by him. Together they fought back successfully. In the interviews he mentions the names of the good boys, but also those of the bad ones. He knows that they were stirred up against the Jews. Therefore these thirteen- and fourteen-year-old boys even had weapons they threatened the Jewish boys with. They could do that because they knew they were supported by the grown-ups. Slowly the village was divided: "Those who had always been with us stayed with us. And those who were not on our side became worse and worse." So it was only logical that some men from Wawern and the neighbouring villages later served in the Waffen-SS or in "Einsatzgruppen" (paramilitary death squads) in Poland and the Soviet Union where they committed "atrocities".

After some time the children were in tears in the morning when they had to go to school because they were afraid of the violent boys, who were waiting for them and were threatening them. And the dignitaries of the village, the teachers and the parish priest, who had had a great influence on people's behavior, were now helpless outside the school building and the church although they kept trying to contain the growing anti-Semitism. Families, who had been on friendly terms with their Jewish fellow-citizens, "well-behaved Catholic citizens", gradually withdrew from them and were "neutral". But there were still families, adults and children, who stood by their Jewish friends and even supported them. They did that even though they were publicly threatened by the Nazis from Wawern (14).

The lives of the Jewish families were increasingly dominated by a great fear of the future, and this was intensified by the parades of HJ (Hitler Youth) and SA (Stormtroopers): "Jews, go to Palestine!" After the arbitrary arrests in early April 1933 there came the intimidating remarks: "If you don't leave, you'll go to jail for a long time, or to a concentration camp." That was the reason why Israel and his son Philipp Hirschkorn left for Paris in September 1933. In November 1933 the rest of the family escaped first to Paris, then to Paraguay; Moritz, Cilly and Irene Wolf moved to Trier and managed to flee to the USA in October 1937 (15). Norbert's parents wrote to relatives in the USA and England, but they could not get

visa. When Norbert finished school in April 1935 he and his family decided that he should emigrate to Palestine ("Eretz Israel"). So he travelled to a Jewish training institution ("Hachshara") in Havelberg/ Brandenburg where he became a car mechanic. After that he found work in Berlin for some months.

In the summer of 1935 the number of attacks on Jewish families in Wawern, but also in Freudenburg and Kirf, grew rapidly: In June young people threw stones into the shutters and the window panes of the Polish citizens Hirschhorn and Wachsmann and broke their front doors open. They did so under the orders of the SA-Sturmführer, and even the policeman was present. But he was a member of the SA, too. In this attack Mrs Hirschhorn and her children were injured. At the end of August the houses of both families and the synagogue were again damaged by stones that were thrown at them. In both cases the victims reported the incidents to the police because of the bodily harm and the acts of vandalism they had suffered. They had clearly recognized the offenders, among them their neighbour. Both legal proceedings, however, were dropped (16). But when Peter H., the leader of the Hitler Youth in Wawern, along with other Hitler boys attacked Norbert outside the village and stabbed him with a dagger into his leg, Norbert was sentenced by the law court in Saarburg to a fine of 50 Reichmarks because he had hit his attacker into the face (17). As the local government in Trier had cancelled Aaron's trade licence Norbert had returned home in the spring of 1937 to support his family.

Both he and his brother Jakob, who had trained to be a butcher in Saarbrücken and had returned to Wawern in 1935, found jobs on the Meisenburg farm at Fisch. They were paid in kind. Several times Jakob tried to flee to Luxembourg but each time he was expelled because he had no valid documents. On 12 September 1938 he got the official permission to leave for Osweiler/Luxembourg. On 27 October 1938, in the course of a nationwide mass deportation of Jews of Polish nationality Norbert and his father were arrested by the Wawern policeman and taken to the Gestapo in Trier. There they were at first confronted with the charge they had taken photographs of the fortifications of the Siegfried line and had thus committed treason. Then they were given an order of expulsion, were locked up for one night at the jail at Windstraße, and in the early morning guards took them by train to the exhibition halls in Cologne-Deutz. From there they and other "Eastern Jews" from the Rhine Province were transported in a locked railway car through Frankfurt/Oder to the station of Neu-Bentschen west of Poznan on the German-Polish border. From there they had to march the last five kilometers to the border and were guarded by SS-soldiers. As the Polish border guards refused lots of them permission to enter the country these people wandered around in the no-man's-land near the border. In the end Poland accepted some 10,000 people, but hundreds, among them Aaron Hirschhorn, had to live in dire conditions in the German camp of Neu-Bentschen and in other camps in or near the Polish border town of Zbaszyn (18). In Frankfurt/Oder Norbert had been taken out of the train and he and other young Jews had been deported to a quarry where they had to do hard slave labour. Here he was injured at his arms and legs.

Since the deportation of Aaron and Norbert the only family members left in Wawern were Sara, the mother, and Paula and Erna. They had to experience the horrible pogrom of 10 November and the night of 11 November 1938. During this raid their house was vandalized, too, by Nazis from Wawern and Wiltingen. It was very shocking for them that neighbours broke into their house and stole their belongings. On the other hand Catholic families gave them shelter for the night and the next day (19). On 7 September 1931 Sophie had married Jakob Schimmel from Tawern. On 12 August 1937 both had moved to Cologne. Both were expelled to Zbaszyn on October 28, 1938. A letter from February 1940 “written in Russia” was a sign of life, which reached her parents in Lodz (20). On 18 February 1939 Paula finally got her visa for England and arrived at Dover two days later, whereas Sara and Erna left Wawern in July to join Aaron in the camp of Neu-Bentschen. There Erna was informed that she could get a place in one of the “Kindertransporte” to England. So she also managed to flee from Nazi-Germany as late as 13 August 1939. In London she met her sister again (21).

Slave Labour, Ghetto and KZ

Soon after the invasion of Poland by Nazi-Germany on 1 September 1939 their parents fell into the hands of the “Einsatzgruppen”, which were to carry out Hitler’s order to destroy Poland completely: They murdered thousands of intellectuals, members of the Catholic Church and Jews. To prepare the integration of the Western Polish regions into the Reich they organized the systematic expulsion of the Jews living there (22). They deported Aaron and Sara Hirschhorn to Lodz where they first lived at Gdanska/Danziger Straße 138, but then in the ghetto in Block A 7, Basargasse 2, Wohnung 3. There they were packed together with 131 other deported persons. In the ghetto Aaron worked as a gardener (23).

Norbert and some 200 Jewish workers from Schwedt had been ordered by these “Einsatzgruppen” to work in a kind of special unit and clear out abandoned flats, shops, houses, farms and factories and load everything on goods trains, which transported the stolen goods to the Reich. They started clearing out the buildings in Poznan and went on working in the towns and villages nearby. In April 1940 this unit reached Litzmannstadt, which was the new German name for Lodz, and there he moved in with his parents in the ghetto. On November 8, 1940 and moved with them to Block B, Blaue Gasse Nr.15, flat 15. That was a house that accommodated 62 persons altogether. On December 16, 1940 he had to leave his parents – he never saw them again (24).

His brother Jakob who had stayed in Echternach/ Luxembourg was forced to work on the construction of the “Reichsautobahn” near Greimerath/ Eifel. On October 16, 1941 he was deported together with 325 Jews from Luxembourg to Trier. There he and 192 people more were put on the train, which went via Berlin to Litzmannstadt. There he found his parents again. While doing forced labour in the ghetto he met Chaja/ Halina Zylberberg, who was ten years younger. They got married in 1943, and on 11 April 1944 they moved to Bernhard-Straße 3. In the last deportations in August 1944 Halina’s mother Ester, her brother Adolf, her

sister Sara and Aaron and Sara Hirschkorn had been deported to Auschwitz on August 18, 1944 and were murdered there.- Halina and Jakob belonged to the 700 Jews who were allowed to stay and had to clean up the ghetto. They and others managed to hide in a cell of the ghetto prison until the arrival of the Soviet troops on 19 January 1945 (27). They both still feared for their lives in Poland. Halina was afraid of being raped by Soviet soldiers; Jakob spoke German, thus the language of the enemy. Therefore they left Lodz and returned via Berlin and Trier to Wawern.

The police document that orders Norbert's departure from the flat he had shared with his parents contains a statement: "Deportation to works outside the ghetto." (28). In the following years he and 1300 Polish Jews were forced to work on the construction of the Reichsautobahn Frankfurt/Oder – Poznan – Litzmannstadt. The construction management in Berlin locked up the workers in fenced camps, which were guarded by police- or Gestapo men. These camps were near Frankfurt/Oder, Selchow/Brandenburg, Sternberg and Schwiebus. After that he had to work on other construction sites of the Autobahn between Breslau (Wroclaw) and Krakow. This time the labour camps were near Oppeln (Opole), Groß-Strehlitz and Kattowitz (Katowice). Because of a directive from Himmler (June 30, 1943) this form of slave labour, which had lasted for three months and where Norbert had incurred a concussion in an accident, ended for the Jews of Polish nationality who had survived the harsh conditions in the camps and at work. In July 1943 Norbert was registered in the main camp of Auschwitz with the prisoner's number 142955. Later he was taken to one of the numerous satellite camps to do slave work again: "I worked on a construction site, I worked on a coal mine, I worked on an airfield, I was at Buna (= a firm producing synthetic rubber)" (29).

Probably on 7 July 1943 Norbert and other Polish Jews were transported to the newly established labour camp of Jaworzno. Three to four thousand prisoners on an average were housed there. He had to work for the commander, a former house painter, who lived in a villa in Jaworzno like a prince, who had prisoners work for him and who travelled in a horse-drawn coach. Norbert had to break in his second horse and look after the dogs. He also worked in the power station where hundreds of Jewish prisoners fell ill or died of malnutrition, severe mistreatments and insufficient clothing during the wet and cold season. While working in the coal mine "Rudolf" he had a bad accident and suffered a skull fracture, was taken to camp hospital for some time, but recovered and was sent back to work. SS-doctors from Auschwitz came regularly and selected prisoners, who were murdered in the gas chambers there. On the whole it has been reckoned that two to three thousand inmates of this satellite camp alone were murdered in a period of nineteen months (30).

Here more than ever Norbert was exposed to the "elimination through work" because slave labour slowly became physical destruction. "These conditions of work and detention did not simply deteriorate because of the war but were an integral element of the National-Socialist policy of elimination" (31). The fact that he survived all this can be attributed to his luck in spite of all the misery around him: "We had to master all the difficulties alone." When in January 1945 the Soviet troops were approaching the camp of Jaworzno was evacuated during

the night of 17/18 January 1945. Some 3000 prisoners had to start marching west in the bitter cold. Norbert remembers this death march as a “tragedy”, during which several hundred exhausted prisoners were shot by the SS-men guarding them. With a group of other prisoners he managed to escape from the camp of Blechhammer through a hole they made in the wall (32). For a few days the escapees hid in a farmhouse and waited for their liberation, which came with the Soviet soldiers.

Norbert’s greatest worry was to find out if his parents in Lodz had survived. So he returned to Lodz and for several weeks he also searched for them in Eastern Poland, but all he found out was that they had been deported to Auschwitz and had been murdered there. Again and again survivors from the large number of camps in and around Lodz arrived. So he stayed until May, still hoping to see his parents or one of his sisters. It was only when he had abandoned all hope that he decided to return to Wawern. With a transport of liberated former Belgian deportees he managed to get to Brussels where he found two friends from the Hachschara centre at Havelberg, (where young people had been prepared for the emigration to Israel). By a ruse – he claimed to have been born in Echternach/ Lux.) - he managed to reach Luxembourg, then got to Trier and returned to Wawern on 20 June 1945. That was only eight days after his brother Jakob and his wife Halina had returned to the village of their childhood and youth, and 78 months and 23 days after his arrest at Fisch (33).

Re-integration or Emigration?

His parents’ house in Wawern had been looted like the houses and flats of the other deportees and was uninhabitable. So he and his brother Jakob were accommodated in the house of their friends, the Könen family, until their own house had been repaired in a makeshift manner. On the orders of the French military administration former party officials and profiteers of the Aryanization and deportations were forced to compensate the returnees materially. Thus a former policeman from Wawern had to give them pieces of furniture. But in the first months after 1945 it was clear to him that Wawern was not his home. So again and again he travelled to Brussels where he met his friends Leo Guthmann and Joseph Mandelblatt. It was only in May 1946 that he registered his parents’ house with the local administration in Tawern as his place of residence. Supported by welfare money from a fund for persecuted persons he started a travelling business selling shoes and clothing. In 1948 the dairy at Kirf had to give him a lorry for his business (34).

In May 1946 Paula received a financial support for a trip to Brussels where she could meet her brother again. In October he saw Erna again in the Belgian capital after her husband Edward Blinke, then a British soldier, had come across him there by chance. It seems as if Norbert had been considering emigrating to England, too, but in the end he decided against it. His sisters, however, had ruled out a return once and for all. The memories of what the Nazis had done to them and their family were too painful. This manifests itself in the form of their name. They adopted the original form “Herszkorn” instead of the Germanized family name

(34). Their elder brother Jakob, however, registered Wawern as his place of residence as early as August 1945. Their daughter Ruth was the first Jewish child to be born after the Holocaust in Trier in February 1946. In 1949 their second child Remon was born. Jakob obtained a commercial licence for shoes and cattle, and as he was a butcher he established good business contacts to the butchers Thees and Merz in Konz. In 1952, after they had moved to Karthäuserstraße 95, Konz, they opened a textile shop there. In 1955 they became German citizens.

But above all mother Halina did not like Konz. Ruth, her daughter, remembers racist insults. On the other hand she had good friends at the secondary school (= Realschule) she attended. The reason why her parents decided in 1960 to emigrate to England was that they wanted their children to grow up in a solid Jewish community with a safe future. But they had to experience that for them as German Jews it was impossible to become integrated into this English-Jewish society. As far as this aspect is concerned Ruth's parents' decision was wrong (36). Until his death in 1976 Jakob worked at a kosher butcher's. Halina remarried in 1983 and died in 2001. Jakob's sister Erna Blinke died in 2014, Paula Berlin died at the age of 96 on 30 May, 2016.

Norbert's first identity card as a "displaced person" (DP) shows that he was a foreigner and a Polish national wanting to emigrate to Argentina. Even in 1951, when he had rented a flat in Karthäuserstraße 126 in Konz, he was still planning to leave Germany and go either to Canada or to South America (37). In the same year, however, he opened his first shop for ladies' and gentlemen's knitwear, "Hirschkorn at Hauptmarkt". He ran this shop until May 1972 and the address was Fleischstraße 81. In April 1952 a statement on his DP-card was added, his nationality was referred to as "German Jew". So he had decided to stay in the Federal Republic of Germany. An important reason for that was the fact that during one of his visits to Brussels he had met Rita Weinmann (b. 27 September 1931), who had fled together with her parents from Berlin in 1937. They got married in 1953 and moved into a flat at Petrusstraße 5 in Trier. In 1954 their daughter Sonia was born, and in 1959 their son Ronnie. Norbert's business now became a part of the German economic miracle ("Wirtschaftswunder"). In 1964 he opened a textile wholesale at Simeonstraße 38 and in 1966 a shop "Sonia Fashions" at Brotstraße 7, which both existed until September 1980. On 3 March 1970 he opened a boutique "Madame – House of 1000 Sweaters" at Simeonstraße 26. He closed this shop in 1991. He had also bought a house in Pommernstraße 10. There he lived with his wife Rita until her death in 1976. In 1979 he married again and lived there with his second wife Eva née Kahn (38).

His success in business was closely tied to the integration of the family both into the Jewish community and into the social life of the City of Trier. Under the chairmanship of Dr. Jakob Voremberg Norbert was elected into the council of the local Jewish community together with Martin Marschall and Erich Süsskind. In the Trier Society for Christian-Jewish Cooperation he became a member of the working committee and was active there between 1975 and 1979 (39). Sonia completed a bank apprenticeship, Ronnie went to a textile college.

Both, however, left Trier and went to London because they saw better professional opportunities there – Sonia in 1975, Ronnie in 1985. They started families in London. Sonia misses her time in Trier and her friends. For her the years in Trier were “a great time”, and she can imagine going back (40).

I met Norbert and Eva shortly before Christmas 1992 at the Jewish cemetery in Saarburg. The chairman of the Jewish community of Trier, Mr. Gerd Voremberg, introduced Mr. Norbert Hirschhorn to the students of my history project group. Since the beginning of the 1980s Mr. Voremberg had actively supported our research into the Jewish history of our region. Mr. Norbert Hirschhorn was an impressive figure, dressed in a dark coat, on his head a wide-brimmed Borsalino, and after his first words the students stopped talking and listened to his clear and earnest words. In the following years we became friends so that I went to the synagogue on almost every Shabbat to celebrate the service, standing between him and Mr. Voremberg. With his sonorous and musical voice he filled the place of worship. Both he and his friend Gerd Voremberg preferred the old Ashkenazi pronunciation and melodies of the Hebrew prayers to the modern Israeli one.

Whenever students worked on research papers dealing with topics such as “Jewish life in the villages of the Trier area”, “persecution and deportation” and “Jewish of today” Norbert readily helped again and again, drew upon his profound knowledge and his memories and often told amusing anecdotes. He could also inform my students from Saarburg very well on the life of the Jewish cattle traders and above all on horse breeding in Saargau, the area west of the River Saar (41). He died unexpectedly on 14 June 2002, and in my memory he lives on as a good friend who taught us about his Jewishness. His voice on the recordings remains with us. That will be a lasting memory of him.

Annotations

- (1) "Traditional basis" means here "living a life according to the Halacha", i.e. the practical observation of the religious norms in every-day life according to the Thora; cf. Rabbiner Dr. Meir Ydit, Kurze Judentumskunde, Neustadt/ Weinstraße 1984, p. 29.
- (2) The acculturated German Jews rendered an enormous integration service to the often poor Eastern Jews. The Jewish system of welfare made this act of solidarity possible to a large extent: http://www.ghwk.de/fileadmin/user_upload/pdf-wannsee/ausstellung/raum-3.pdf; 1.8.2016.
- (3) Heiko Haumann (ed.), Luftmenschen und rebellische Töchter. Zum Wandel ostjüdischer Lebenswelten im 19. Jahrhundert, Köln, Weimar, Wien 2003, p. 30.
- (4) Stadtarchiv Darmstadt, „Registry P.A. 47324 der Haupt-und Residenzstadt Darmstadt“ of 23. 02.1912. The family lived in Arheilgen from 1 July 1912 till 31. Dec. 1920, a suburb of Darmstadt. The shop was in Darmstadt, Kleine Bachstraße 1 (Friendly information from Mrs. Lemke, Darmstadt). Abraham Herschkorn is traceable from 1921 - 1933 in Darmstadt, Obergasse 4, his wife in 1935 as „widow of Hirschhorn Abraham, Elisabethenstraße 64“; cf. address books Darmstadt from 1921 – 1935;
In: <http://tudigit.ulb.tu-darmstadt.de/show/sammlung27>. According to the register of the cemetery there are three graves with the name "Herschhorn" but without first names and dates.
- (5) "Herschhorn, Abraham, Salesman, Obergasse 4", Address book Darmstadt 1921, p. 106; Hirschhorn, Abraham, Salesman, Obergasse 4", Address book Darmstadt 1927, p.119; *ibid*.
- (6) In October 1914 the number of prisoners in the camp was more than 2000; from: Heimat im Krieg, Class 9a of Europaschule Gymnasium Gommern, Gommern 2014, p.8.
- (7) During WW I some 20 Russian prisoners of war lived in Tawern; from: Rudolf Rosenkränzer, 2000 Jahre Tawern, Trier 1993, p.451f.
- (8) Willi Körtels, Materialien zur Geschichte der Juden aus Wawern, Konz 2013, p.26 ff. As a comparison: In 1925 Kirf had 78 Jewish inhabitants (12% of the entire population), Freudenburg had 62 (4.5%).
- (9) The following biography is based on interviews that lasted several hours (12 March 1994, Wawern) and 10 Feb. 1997 (with his sister Erna Binke), and on the files of compensation of Norbert (files 136760, 136761) Jakob (file 132878) and Halina Hirschhorn (file 71215 LfW-FW; SAB) cf. also <http://www.mahnmal-trier.de/Personen/Hirschhorn.htm>.
- (10) Norbert and Erna tell in great detail of the public auction in Wawern, cf.: Interview of 10. Feb. 1997, Trier.
- (11) Interview on 12 March 1994 by Beatrix Könen with Norbert Hirschhorn and her grandfather Johann Könen in Wawern.
- (12) "If my roots had not been so strong, I would not have returned after this horrible massacre." N.Hirschhorn, in: Interview, 12 March 1994.
- (13) Norbert Hirschhorn reports that boys from Wawern had forcefully put "Leberwurst" (pork liver sausage) into his mouth so that he thought he was going to die; in: Interview, 12 March 1994.
- (14) Joseph Könen, the father of his school friend Johann, was attacked at the village fair 1933 in front of the village pub by a group of SA-men but was courageously saved by his eldest son and a neighbour. After the November pogrom he secretly rescued the carriage and other belongings of the Hirschhorn family to the mill of Fellerich; Interview 12 March 1994.

- (15) Aron's sister Esther and his brother Ludwig managed to leave Darmstadt and to emigrate to England, but they could not get the necessary documents for their brother.
- (16) The police investigations and legal proceedings are documented in: LHA Ko, Best. 584,2 Staatsanwaltschaft Koblenz, Nr.177 und 183; cf. Pascale Eberhard. The pogrom night 1938 in Wawern, in: Jahrbuch Kreis Trier-Saarburg 2009, p. 251 ff. In August Jewish houses in the villages mentioned above were attacked by Hitler boys at the instigation of adults; cf. Heidt/Lennartz, Fast vergessene Zeugen. Juden in Freudenburg und im Saar-Mosel-Raum 1321 – 1943, Norderstedt 2000, p. 428 ff.
- (17) LHA Ko, Best. 584, 2 Staatsanwaltschaft Koblenz, Nr. 745/746; In connection with the pogrom of 10 Nov. 1938 in Wawern the farm worker NN. was at first sentenced to two years and three months in jail. This sentence was later reduced to two years and two months, finally to one year.
- (18) The expulsion of his family to Zbaszyn caused Herschel Grynspan living in Paris to shoot the German diplomat von Rath on 7 Nov. 1938. This incident was used as a pretext to incite the November pogrom 1938.
- (19) Lots of details are to be found in: Pascale Eberhard, Reichspogromnacht in Wawern, p. 244 ff. According to Norbert's memories two families gave them shelter (Bungerts Lisa/ Binze Pitter); also cf. Schnitzler, Marianne Elikan, S. 218.
- (20) Cf. Jacob's postcard (Echternach) to Paula (London) from 1 March 1940; in: Pascale Eberhard, Der Überlebenskampf jüdischer Deportierter aus Luxemburg und der Trierer Region im Getto Litzmannstadt. Briefe Mai 1942, Saarbrücken, 2012, p. 33. Sophie's fate has not been fully explained. According to the postcard and Norbert's statement she could have fled from Lemberg to the Soviet-occupied area, and in case she survived the mass murders there, she could have died in Majdanek; cf. his interview from 12 March 1994, or YewishGen. German Towns Project. htm.
- (21) "Archive copies of our mother Erna and aunt Paula when they arrived in England from the World Jewish Relief Organisation" by Mr. Raymond Binke, 24 Aug. 2016.
- (22) <https://www.dhm.de/lemo/kapitel/der-zweite-weltkrieg/voelkermord7einsatzgruppen.html>. 29 July 2016.
- (23) "Gdanksa 138" is written on one of Aron's postcards with a German stamp (The date is illegible) from "Lodsch" to Jakob; cf. Pascale Eberhard, Der Überlebenskampf, p.33. Concerning the flat cf. Block No. A 7 Basargasse No.2, in: USHMM Collections Search. Htm; 133 persons are listed under this address. (29 July 2016).
- (24) Dr. Pascale Eberhard, Wawern, was so friendly as to give me the registration data of the Hirschhorn family in the ghetto. She had found the data in the State Archive of Lodz.
- (25) Wolfgang Schmitt-Koelzer, Bau der "Reichsautobahn" in der Eifel (1939-1941/42). Eine Regionalstudie zur Zwangsarbeit, Berlin 2016, p.284 ff. In the compensation procedures a financial compensation was rejected: "For the employment during the construction of the Reichsautobahn, Wittlich, a compensation cannot be granted for the time between 1940 and the deportation to the concentration camp on 17 Oct. 1941, because the applicant cannot prove that he had do slave labour under conditions similar to those in concentration camps, and that he was housed in such a camp." (Compensation file Jakob Hirschhorn (File Nr. 132878 Lff-AfW, SAB) letter from the Ministry of Finances and Reconstruction, Mainz, 16 June 1951).
- (26) Pascale Eberhard, Der Überlebenskampf, pp. 32f.,58 and 80; Pascale Eberhard/Barbara Wierter-Matysiak, Die Deportationen der Trierer und Luxemburger Juden ins Ghetto Litzmann-

- stadt, in: Jahrbuch Kreis Trier-Saarburg, 1012, p. 178-185. W. Schmitz-Koelzer informed me that according to a new historical source the Jews from Trier were also deported to Litzmannstadt. E-mail from 15 Sept. 2016.
- (27) Compensation files Jakob (file Nr. 132878) and Halina Hirschhorn (file 71215 LfF-AfW, SAB). Interview with Mrs Kahn-Hirschhorn, in: <http://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/0018297> (12 Feb. 2016; cf. Treier vergisst nicht, p.76).
- (28) Copy of the deregistration certificate 17 Jan. 1941, given to me by Pascale Eberhard.
- (29) Wolf Gruner, Die Arbeitslager für den Zwangseinsatz deutscher und nichtdeutscher Juden im Dritten Reich, in: Gedenkstättenrundbrief (1997) 81, p.12-20. Chapter 4: "Little is known about the forced labour of thousands of Polish Jews in Germany and the system of labour camps that was specifically developed for this work assignment. The responsibility lay in the hands of the Authority for the Construction of the Reichsautobahnen." As to the camps: cf. compensation files Norbert Hirschhorn (files 136760 and 136761 LfF-AfW.SAB). Interview 12 March 1994.
- (30) As to the Jaworzno concentration camp cf. Andrea Rudorff, Neudachs (Jaworzno), in Benz/Distel, Der Ort des Terrors, Vol. 5, Munich 2007, pp. 284-289; reasons for the judgement of the High Court of Aschaffenburg, 29 July 1981, in: <http://wilikomunal.eu>. Norbert Hirschhorn was heard as a witness. (pp.92-185).
- (31) [http://www. Bundesarchiv.de/zwangsarbeit/haftstaetten/index.php?ab=28](http://www.Bundesarchiv.de/zwangsarbeit/haftstaetten/index.php?ab=28); 12 Aug. 2016. Access 12 Aug. 2016.
- (32) Reasons for the judgement (see above), p. 49; modern place names: Blachownia Slaska, part of Kedzierzyn-Kozle, Voivodeship of Opole. Cf. ITS Archives Bad Arolsen, Headquarters, Application for a certificate of imprisonment 9 July 1951.
- (33) ITS Archives Bad Arolsen, Copy of 3.1.1.3./78793066: 3ème Liste Aide aux Israélites Victimes de la Guerre, Bruxelles 21 Aug. 1945, Transit 20 June – 12 July 1945.
- (34) According to Norbert's statement the former NS district leader of the farmers Weinandy was the manager of this dairy after the war. The brothers received material and financial support from the "Office of Reparation" in Trier. Details: cf. Günter Heidt, "I am so lonely and unhappy, more than ever before." Jewish survivors of the Holocaust in the Post-War Years, in: Jahrbuch Kreis Trier-Saarburg 2016, S. 245-258.
- (35) Information from Mr. Raymond Binke, 24 Aug. 2016: "When Paula and Erna came to England their documents show the family name as Herszkorn." The E-mail contains further "archive copies of our mother and aunt Paula when they arrived in England from the World Jewish Relief Organisation."
- (36) Interview with Ruth Hirsch née Hirschhorn and Ronnie Hirsch on 15 Aug. 2016 in Trier.
- (37) ITS Archives, Bad Arolsen, DP-2, Copy of 3.1.1.1/115108064. The document does not contain a date, the photo could have been taken in the year 1946 (cf. photo with Erna in Brussels).
- (38) Interview with Mrs Eva Hirschhorn and Mrs. Inge Alten, former employee of Norbert's, on 1 Sept. 2016. The foundation and closing dates were given to us by Mr. Frank Schmitt, manager of the Chamber of Industry and Commerce of Trier, 19 Sept. 2016.
- (39) Rainer Barzen, Nur unter Vorbehalt? Jüdisches Leben in Trier 1945-1990. From the archives of the Jewish community, in: Reinhold Bohlen/Benz Botmann (eds), New Address: Kaiserstraße, p. 66f., Marianne Bühler (ed), Vierzig Jahre Trier Society for Christian-Jewish Cooperation 1969-2009, Trier 2009.
- (40) Interview with Mrs. Sonja Felixson, 20 Oct. 2015 in Trier.

(41) Beatrix Könen, Ein katholischer und ein jüdischer Schulfreund erinnern sich. Zur Geschichte zweier Zeitzeugen, Facharbeit am Gymnasium Saarburg 1994, and the transcript of an interview. Contributions to „History Competition of the Federal President“ 2001. The topic was „Animals in History“ with the titles: „Hamma neischt zu handeln?“ (= Anything we can bargain for?) Jewish Cattle trade in the Saaburg area, Gymnasium Saarburg 2001, and “Die Seilschaften – Treidelpferde an den Ufern der Saar” (= on the use of horses on towpaths), Gymnasium Saarburg 2001, Günter Heidt (tutor).

Captions

(the page numbering refers to the printout provided to Günter Heidt by the printing company)

p.2: Firm logo Hirschhorn Trier 1971

p.2: Russian prisoners of war (1914/13)

p.3: Mill of Fellerich (around 1910)

p.4: Hirschhorn family in Wawern (1928): names

p.5: School class in Wawern (Oct, 1935) with teacher Dietrich and the Jewish pupils: names

p.10: ID-card for frontier worker Jakob Hirschhorn (Dec. 1940)

p. 11: Norbert Hirschhorn with KZ-number tattooed on his left arm (1997)

p.13: Erna and Norbert in Brussels (16 Oct. 1946)

p-14: Remon, Halina, Jakob and Ruth Hirschhorn (1962)

p.15: Norbert und Rita with Sonia and Ronnie (1961)

p. 15: Three friends: Adolf Hess, Norbert Hirschhorn and Gerd Voremberg (1988)

p.16: Inge and Heinz Kahn with Eva and Norbert Hirschhorn (2002).