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Posthumous Testimony for Dr. Leo Gross and his Family

Restoration of the 'Lost' Biography of a Physician Victim of the Holocaust

KURZFASSUNG: In einer Zeit, in der es immer weniger Zeitzeugen des Holocaust gibt, müssen neue Zugänge zur Erforschung ‚verlorener‘ Biographien erwogen werden. Diese Untersuchung beschreibt das Potential einer internationalen Zusammenarbeit, die überlebende Familienmitglieder miteinbezieht. In Jerusalem gefundene archivalische Quellen dokumentieren die Diskussion zum Approbationsentzug von Dr. Leo Gross in Palästina. Während eines kurzen Besuchs im Land Ende 1935 beantragte er die Lizenz, remigrierte aber nach Deutschland, wo er in einem Konzentrationslager inhaftiert wurde. Im Jahr 2014 wurde mehr bekannt, als eine Gruppe von Wissenschaftlern archivalische und Internetquellen verknüpfte und so einen Neffen von Gross fand. Die Erinnerungen des Neffen wurden mit anderen Quellen abgeglichen und ermöglichte die Rekonstruktion der ‚verlorenen‘ Biographie seines Onkels und dessen Familie, ein posthumes Zeugnis. Diese Lebensgeschichte bindet Dr. Leo Gross wieder ein in sein berufliches und soziales Netzwerk und dient seinem Gedenken im Kontext von Familie und Gesellschaft. Die Studie zur Biographie von Dr. Leo Gross stellt ein Beispiel für die biografische Holocaustforschung der Zukunft dar.

Schlagworte: Zeugen des Holocaust – ‚posthumes‘ Zeugnis – Rekonstruktion einer Biographie – Opfer des Holocaust – medizinische Approbation – Palästina – Emigration – Remigration – Verfolgung von Ärzten – Nationalsozialismus

ABSTRACT: At a time when the last direct witnesses of the Holocaust are passing, new approaches to the restoration of 'lost' biographies of victims need to be considered. This investigation describes the potential of an international collaboration including surviving family members. Archival documents discovered in Jerusalem in 1983 concerned a discussion on the cancellation of a medical licence for a German Jewish physician, Dr. Leo Gross of Kolberg, who had been disenfranchised from medical practice under Nazi law. After applying for a medical licence during a 1935 visit to Palestine, Gross remigrated to Germany, where he was imprisoned in a concentration camp. No further information was found until 2014, when a group of scholars linked a variety of archival and internet-accessible sources and located a nephew of Gross. The nephew's testimony, cross-referenced against data from other sources, enabled the reconstruction of the 'lost' biography of his uncle and family, in fact a posthumous testimony. The resulting narrative places Dr. Leo Gross within his professional and social network, and serves

his commemoration within this context of family and community. The restored biography of Dr. Leo Gross presents an exemplary case study for the future of Holocaust testimony.

Keywords: Holocaust testimony – ‘posthumous’ testimony – restoration of biography – victim of Holocaust – medical licensing – Palestine – emigration – remigration – persecution of physicians – National Socialism

“I have to accept history, for without history there is no future.”

Wolff Gross¹

1. Introduction

This is the story of a journey that started over 30 years ago. In 1983, co-author Bill Seidelman, a Canadian physician with an interest in the history of medicine, spent a sabbatical investigating the licensing of refugee physicians from Europe in the 1930s. Apart from practices in Canada, he also studied records from British Palestine, which were held at the Israeli State Archives. Here he came across a document that would worry him for many years to come. A folder labeled “cancellation of licenses” included a correspondence concerning Dr. Leo Gross, a Jewish physician from Germany, who came to Palestine in 1935 and successfully applied for a license to practice medicine. However, not long after arriving in Palestine, Dr. Gross returned to Germany without having collected his new license. In 1940 the revocation of the license was discussed, even though friends of Gross had informed the authorities that he could not communicate with them, because he was detained in a concentration camp. There was no further information on Dr. Gross’ fate in the files, and Seidelman’s repeated efforts to learn more remained futile. Apparently, Dr. Gross and his biography had been destroyed by Nazi persecution.

In 2014 Seidelman used a newly formed network of international scholars as a means to recommence his search for Gross. This time his inquiry was successful within a short period of time. A convergence of felicitous developments in the documentation of the history of the Holocaust facilitated this work. They include the digitalization of archival records and memorial sites; new autobiographies of survivors of the Holocaust; publications of research results from local and lay historians; and open communication between international scholars. All of these led to Professor Wolff Gross, the one surviving family member who had personal knowledge of the life and times of his uncle Dr. Leo Gross, his aunt Helene Gross, and his cousin Ursula Gross. Professor Gross’ gracious willingness to testify became the basis for the reconstruction of the seemingly irretrievable biography of a Jewish physician victim of National Socialism.

At a time when there is much concern about the future of Holocaust testimony be-

1 Gross and Gross, *Kinder story* (2003), P. 158

cause the last survivors may soon no longer be available as witnesses², new approaches to the restoration of seemingly ‘lost’ biographies of Holocaust victims need to be considered. This investigation describes the potential of an international scholarly collaboration, which included testimony from surviving family members.

2. Origin of Source Material

Archival materials were located in the Israel State Archives, record group 2 M/7/40, “Cancellation of licences under section 4930 of medical practitioners ordinance”³, and in the Zionist Archives, file L17–1145 “Leo Gross”⁴. In addition, a student file is held at the University of Greifswald archives, where Dr. Leo Gross submitted his medical dissertation thesis⁵.

Important digital sources were the *Stolpersteine* website for Berlin⁶ and the Memorial Book of the German Federal Archives⁷. The *Stolpersteine* project was first conceived by the artist Gunter Demnig in 1993. He designs bronze plaques in the shape of cobblestones, which are engraved with the biographical data of Jewish and other victims of Nazi persecution and placed in the street pavement in front of the victims’ last place of residence. The physical stones are connected to a website with the biographical information, and date of placement of the stone. By January 2016, *Stolpersteine* were placed in over 610 locations in Germany, as well as in Austria, Hungary, the Netherlands, Belgium, the Czech Republic, Norway and Ukraine; overall, more than 53,000 of these markers have been set in over 1,400 places in Europe⁸. The *Stolpersteine* project has not remained without its opponents, as Charlotte Knobloch, president of the Jewish community in Munich, did not want to see the names of Jewish victims surrounded by “road grime and worse pollution”, and others agreed with her⁹.

The Memorial Book of the German Federal Archives¹⁰ was first published in 1986, and its second edition from 2006 became available in a digital version in December 2007. Among other new digital sources is the “Virtual Shtetl” project, launched in 2008, which combines a wealth of detailed information from various sources. It collects research results on Jewish communities in Poland, including names and photographs of persons and places, and sites of commemoration¹¹.

No personal documents from Dr. Leo Gross, his wife Helene or daughter Ursula exist any longer, other than letters in the Zionist archives. Any of their personal items

2 “Workshop on the Future of Holocaust Testimony IV”, Akko / Israel, Western Galilee College, 2016

3 quoted as ISA 2 M/7/40

4 quoted as ZA L17–1145

5 quoted as UAG Med. Diss. I-643

6 stumbling blocks, *Stolpersteine Berlin* (no date)

7 BA Gedenkbuch, Memorial book (no date)

8 *Stolpersteine Europa* (no date)

9 Slater, *Dispute* (2015)

10 BA Gedenkbuch, Memorial book (no date)

11 *Virtual Shtetl, Kołobrzeg* (no date)

such as letters and photographs, which had been in the possession of Wolff Gross and his mother Klara, were lost when Klara fled Kolberg at the end of the war¹².

Contact was made with Professor Wolff Gross by mail. A first letter was answered three weeks later by a telephone call from Wolff Gross to Sabine Hildebrandt, who was surprised to hear her youthful sounding caller apologize for not contacting her earlier. The 90-year-old retired professor of medicine, who lives in Würzburg / Germany, had been on a four-week journey to Italy to introduce his granddaughter to the country. He was happy to provide information about the man whom he remembers as “a kind uncle”¹³. Telephone conversations took place on 13 and 29 June 2015, 30 January 2016, 22 and 25 February 2016. Immediately after the exchanges, the author documented the content in detail from memory¹⁴. Wolff Gross also made available a memoir written by his sister Eva Gross¹⁵. This memoir includes an English translation of Wolff Gross’ own autobiography, originally published in German¹⁶.

Autobiographical sources such as memoirs and oral testimonies have been recognized as problematic. A discussion of this complex issue is beyond the scope of this study, but the question has been analyzed in some detail by historian Anika Walke in her work on the oral history of Nazi genocide in Belorussia¹⁷. For the purposes of the story of Dr. Leo Gross, great care was taken to place any information from the memoirs and Wolff Gross’ oral testimony in the context of data from other sources.

3. The Journey to Dr. Leo Gross

The documents Bill Seidelman found in 1983 represented part of a file on questions about the cancellation of medical licenses granted to immigrant physicians by the Palestine authorities in the 1930s. On 29 October 1940, the Director of Medical Services of the Government of Palestine wrote to the Chief Secretary of Government Offices concerning the:

“Cancellation of Licence Under Section 4(3) of the Medical Practitioners Ordinance: I have to submit the following for your consideration: Dr. Leo Gross, a licenced medical practitioner, has been abroad since the end of 1935. His last known address was 2 Kaiserplatz Kolberg, Germany. Dr. Gross applied for a licence to practice medicine in Palestine in November 1935. He was granted the licence on December 12th, 1935, but could not collect it as he had in the meantime left the country for Germany having stayed in Palestine for less than a month. His friends in Palestine informed this office that he was detained in a concentration camp in Germany and could not therefore communicate with the Department. In view of these circumstances the

12 Wolff Gross, personal communication

13 phone WG 6/13/15

14 phone conversations are quoted as “phone WG, date”

15 Gross and Gross, *Kinder story* (2003)

16 Gross, *Davidstern* (2002)

17 Walke, *Pioneers and partisans* (2015), P. 23–36

consideration of the cancellation of his licence was postponed until now. [...] I recommend that his licence to practice medicine No. Dr. 2444 dated 12-12-35 be cancelled [...] as he has lost permission to remain permanently in Palestine.”¹⁸

The correspondence following this inquiry circled around the interpretation of the term ‘permission to remain permanently in Palestine’. As early as the 1920s, the British Mandate Government had defined criteria for Palestine immigration based on economic status of the applicant, occupation and age¹⁹. The administration of these policies was in the hands of the Jewish Agency in Palestine. From December 1935 on medical licensing was restricted and became contingent on citizenship or residency in Palestine at that date, and only a small, undetermined quota was dependent on “need assessment” by the High Commissioner. The Solicitor General ultimately decided not to revoke the licence for Dr. Gross.²⁰

Seidelman and his colleague Michael Kater were deeply moved by this glimpse of the fate of Dr. Leo Gross, who had been lucky enough to apply for his medical licence before the restrictions were put into place, but had apparently been prevented from retrieving this licence and emigration because of detention in a concentration camp. No further information on Gross could be found, and Kater concluded that: “[...] Dr. Leo Gross almost surely became the victim of remigration to the Third Reich. [...] Gross was one of those unlucky émigrés deluded into returning to Germany in 1935–37. He seems to have traveled back to his native Kolberg, believing his residency status in Palestine to be sufficient protection in case of dire need.”²¹

Bill Seidelman did not forget Dr. Leo Gross and renewed his search efforts 30 years later, by involving a network of international scholars. In October 2014, medical historian Dr. Anna von Villiez found traces of Gross’ work in a physicians’ almanac from the time of the Weimar Republic²² and in the online registers of digital memorial sites for the *Stolpersteine* project and the memorial book of the Federal Archives Berlin. Here she discovered the names of Leo Gross’ wife, Helene, and his daughter, Ursula. At the same time, Professor Rhona Seidelman, a historian of Modern Israel at the University of Oklahoma, USA, located files on Gross in the Zionist Archive in Jerusalem, which were retrieved by her historian colleague Professor Shifra Shvartz of Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, Beer-Sheva, Israel.

One of the first tasks was to ascertain the identity of the “correct” Leo Gross mentioned in the ISA documents. The memorial book of the Federal Archives Berlin lists 6 persons of this name, the Zionist Archives have files on 2 individuals with the name, and Holocaust survivor Mietek Pemper remembered in his memoirs of Auschwitz

18 Director of Medical Services, Department of Health, Jerusalem, Government of Palestine, to Chief Secretary of Government Offices, ISA 2 M/7/40

19 here and in the following: Kater, *Doctors under Hitler* (1989), P. 214–215

20 Note 43, signed Solicitor General, ISA 2 M/7/40

21 Kater, *Doctors under Hitler*, (1989), P. 217

22 *Reichsmedizinalkalender*

a Jewish camp physician Dr. Leo Gross, who was still alive in the summer of 1945²³. Collating the information from all sources solved this problem. The next step of discovery was the realization that Dr. Gross' daughter Ursula home address was given on the *Stolperstein* as well as in a letter handwritten by her in November 1941 not as Berlin like her parents, but as Nordrach²⁴. A search for information on the town of Nordrach, a resort town in the northern Black Forest region, led to the *M. A. von Rothschild'sche Lungenheilstätte*. This was a tuberculosis hospital for Jewish women, founded by Baroness Adelheid von Rothschild in 1905, which was under Jewish orthodox management and had its own synagogue. The website describing the institution listed Ursula among the patients who perished during the Third Reich²⁵. It also referenced the booklet "*Deportiert aus Nordrach*", which was to provide the decisive link to the surviving relative of Dr. Leo Gross²⁶. In this publication, local and lay historians painstakingly collected biographies of the last patients of the hospital by tracing family members and archival documents. In the biography of Ursula Gross, a "Wolff Gross" and his autobiography were quoted²⁷. After reading this, the aforementioned letter of first contact was sent to Dr. Wolff Gross.

4. Dr. Leo Gross

Life before 1933

Leo Lewin Gross was born on 22 March 1887 in Rügenwalde / Darłowo in the Prussian province of Pomerania, on the Baltic Sea. His parents were the textile merchant Wilhelm Wolff Gross and his wife Fanny, née Grand, born on 8 September 1858 in Bischofsburg / Biscupiec, East Prussia. The father's name signified the double allegiance of the Gross family: "Wilhelm" for Prussia and its Prince Wilhelm, and "Wolff" for his Jewish heritage, whereby the spelling with "ff" was considered to be an indication of Jewish heritage²⁸. Wilhelm Wolff Gross served as a military scribe during his service year with the German Imperial Army in Posen / Poznan and died at a relatively young age²⁹. His older son Alfred was born in 1886. After elementary school in Rügenwalde, Leo attended the *Progymnasium*³⁰ in nearby Schlawe, and finished his schooling at the *Realgymnasium* in Kolberg / Kołobrzeg, obtaining the high school diploma in the fall of 1906. He decided to become a physician and started his medical studies in Königsberg / East Prussia. As was typical at the time, he attended several other univer-

23 Pemper, *Der rettende Weg*, (2010), P. 173

24 Ursula Gross to *Office Palestinien de Suisse*, Genève, ZA L17-1145

25 *Alemannia Judaica*, Nordrach (2003)

26 Schellinger et al., *Schicksal* (2010)

27 Gross, *Davidstern* (2002)

28 phone WG, 1/30/16

29 phone WG 2/22/2016

30 first 2 years of high school

sities, moving to Kiel, Berlin and finally Greifswald, where he graduated in December 1911. His medical dissertation thesis was titled “*Beitrag zur Kenntnis der paroxysmalen Tachykardie*”³¹, and he received his medical license in 1913. By then he lived in Berlin at Brunnenstrasse 12b³². Meanwhile, brother Alfred became a lawyer. In their professional choices the men of the Gross family reflected the general sociological profile of Jews in Pomerania at the time. Many of them were businessmen in the textile, fur and leather industry, and among the academic careers medicine and the law were most common³³.

By 1911, Leo and Alfred seemed to have developed decidedly different outlooks on life. The first of several deep divisions of opinion that Wolff Gross remembers manifested itself when Alfred married on 31 January 1911³⁴. Alfred’s bride was Klara Berta Ernestine Henning, a Lutheran, born on 11 January 1890. His marriage to a gentile woman was symptomatic of the disagreement in religious matters between the brothers. While Leo did not oppose Alfred’s marriage to a non-Jewish woman of Protestant faith, he was not comfortable with Alfred’s own conversion to Protestantism, which was formalized many years later with Alfred’s baptism. Leo, on the other hand, was an observant Jew, and his own bride was Helene Walter, born to a Jewish family in Kolberg on 2 February 1880. The exact date of their wedding is not known, but it must have been in 1912 or 1913, because they were married by the time their only child, daughter Ursula, was born on 6 August 1914 in Kolberg³⁵. Asked about the unusual age difference of 7 years between Leo and his older wife, Wolff Gross thought that this would have been acceptable at the time, given a sufficient dowry that Helene brought to the marriage³⁶. After his graduation from medical school, Leo worked for a while as an assistant physician in Berlin, his position there is unknown³⁷. The start of World War I (WWI) brought another debate between the brothers, this time over political matters. When Leo volunteered for military service, Alfred criticized his brother’s eagerness to join the war effort, as Alfred apparently did not share his brother’s great nationalistic fervor. However, Leo was one of more than 10,000 Jewish men, who voluntarily joined the military between 1914 and 1918 to prove their patriotic spirit³⁸. Leo spent all of WWI as a military physician, at times stationed in Verdun, and later in a military hospital in Kolberg. Alfred waited to be drafted in 1915, was wounded, and received an Iron Cross Award. Thereafter he accepted an administrative position in the eastern fields of war, where one of his stations was Bialystok. When the war finally ended, both brothers chose Kolberg as their place of residence, opening practices in medicine and law, respectively³⁹.

31 “Current knowledge on paroxysmal tachycardia”

32 Curriculum Vitae and other correspondence, UAG Med. Diss I-643

33 Wilhelmus, *Juden in Vorpommern* (1996), P. 65–67

34 phone WG 6/29/15

35 Schellinger et al., *Schicksal* (2010), P. 42

36 phone WG 6/29/15

37 phone WG, 1/30/16

38 Ritzmann, *Widersprüchliche Identitäten* (2014), P. 348

39 phone WG, 6/13/15

Kolberg / Kołobrzeg in Pomerania is located 50 miles to the West of the brothers' birthplace Rügenwalde, on the shores of the Baltic Sea. The harbor city had thrived on the salt trade since the 13th century and had a long military history, represented by an old fortress and a garrison station⁴⁰. After earlier expulsions of Jewish citizens in the 15th and 17th centuries, the first 19 Jewish families had again been allowed to settle in Kolberg in 1812. The foundation stone for their first synagogue was laid on 7 May 1844. By 1905, 349 of the 20,200 citizens of Kolberg were of Jewish faith⁴¹. During the 19th century Kolberg had established itself as a popular seaside resort and rehabilitation spa, on the basis of its healing saltwater springs, beautiful beach, and, from 1859 on, easy accessibility by rail. Several hospitals were opened, among them the *Jüdische Kurhospital*⁴² on 28 July 1874. The religious house had its own salt-water spring, initially 10 beds, and a prayer room. Only destitute patients were accepted for recuperation, many of them malnourished children from Berlin. It was financed by philanthropic donations from the Jewish community, who had also contributed to the foundation of the Christian hospital *Siloah*. Connections with the Jewish community of Berlin were strong, as several members of the board of trustees hailed from there, and the nurses were deputized from a nursing association in Berlin⁴³. By 1900 the *Jüdische Kurhospital* was one of 8 hospitals and rest homes in Kolberg⁴⁴, with 100 beds, 40 of which were reserved for children. The patients stayed for an average of 29 days and were cared for by a doctor, a nurse and an aid. By 1910, a majority of visitors to Kolberg were well-to-do Jews from Eastern Europe. When pogroms had intensified after the turn of the century, many poorer Jewish refugees from the Eastern regions were also among the spa population, and were supported by the local welfare organizations. Many languages other than German were heard in the streets of Kolberg, among them Polish, Yiddish, and Russian⁴⁵. Hotels and private guesthouses were specifically geared towards religious Jewish guests⁴⁶. "The Pearl of the Baltic Sea", as Kolberg was called, often had a higher annual number of visitors than local citizens⁴⁷.

When the brothers Gross settled in Kolberg in 1919, the town was a bustling community with features of the seaside resort and military station. At the end of WWI, Kolberg had served as the "military capital" of Germany, when field marshal Paul von Hindenburg with the general staff of the army were quartered there for a short time⁴⁸. The garrison remained, and Wolff Gross remembers fondly how as a small child he greatly enjoyed the military band with its music and drills, marching through the

40 Voelker, Kolberg (1964)

41 Wilhelmus, Juden in Pommern (2004), P. 82, 262

42 Jewish Convalescence Hospital

43 Ruprecht, Das jüdische Kurhospital (1995); Voelker, Kolberg (1964), P. 55; Wolf, Kleine jüdische Geschichte (2012)

44 Guttstadt, Krankenhaus-Lexikon (1900), P. 282–283

45 Bajohr, Bäderantisemitismus (2003), P. 38–39

46 Jüdische-Gemeinden.de, Kolberg (no date)

47 Wildt, "Der muss hinaus!" (2001), P. 6–7; Geschichte der Stadt (no date); Voelker, Kolberg (1964), P. 63

48 Geschichte der Stadt, (no date)

beautiful city streets⁴⁹. Alfred and Leo found themselves in a place with an appealing and diverse cultural scene including, for Leo, an active religious community, and they had family in and around Kolberg. Their mother Fanny, who had been widowed since before 1911, had moved to Kolberg in the early 1920s⁵⁰. In 1931 her address was listed as one of the private residences open for paying guests, with the comment that a “ritual kitchen” was provided⁵¹; Helene had her brother Louis Walter in town, as well as her cousin Lisbeth Walter with her children Käte and Hans. Alfred’s brother-in-law Hugo Henning lived nearby. The families thrived. After 8 years of marriage, Alfred and Klara had their first child Eva on 8 December 1919, with Wilhelm Wolff following on 10 April 1926. Alfred’s legal practice prospered. Leo, too, had no trouble establishing himself as a family physician, as he was well known in town from his work during the war, especially among the members of the military. In 1932 he lived with his family at Kaiserplatz 2 on the corner of Pfannschmiedestrasse. Alfred had his home and business office in nearby Luisenstrasse 19, where he owned several apartments⁵². Contemporary images of this neighborhood show a generous cityscape with wide streets, leafy town squares and beautiful tall apartment buildings⁵³. Mother Fanny Gross owned several apartments in Viktoriastrasse 9. She must have been a formidable woman. Wolff characterizes his relationship with his grandmother as rather distant. The social contacts between Fanny and Alfred’s family might have been fraught because of the religious differences between the households, as Fanny attached importance to a ritual lifestyle. Wolff remembers: “Our contacts were limited to visits on holidays and to show her my school reports. She examined these very critically”⁵⁴. After having lost all her investments during the hyperinflation in the early 1920s, Fanny was very careful with money, even though she received rent from the apartments in her house and financial support from both sons. Leo and Alfred seem to have been able to afford this easily, as within a few years they were fully established in their professions and greatly respected by their patients, clients, and neighbors⁵⁵.

According to the *Reichsmedizinalkalender*, Dr. Leo Gross served as chief physician of the *Jüdische Kurhospital* from 1928 to at least 1937⁵⁶. The position was an unpaid one, first held by hospital co-founder Dr. Hermann Hirschfeld, father of sexologist Dr. Magnus Hirschfeld. The annual number of patients had risen from 12 in 1874 to nearly 500 in 1918, increasing with the general popularity of the resort, and accounting for 2–3% of all visitors to Kolberg. The *Jüdische Kurhospital* served an important function in the public health system, as it expressly restored those sick children to health,

49 Gross and Gross, *Kinder story* (2003), P. 76

50 phone WG 2/22/2016

51 Schroeder, *Wohnungsnachweis* (2000)

52 Wilhelmus, *Juden in Pommern* (2004), P. 275; Gross and Gross, *Kinder story* (2003), P. 88

53 Jancke, *Kolberg* (2007); *Virtual Sztetl, Kołobrzeg* (no date)

54 Gross and Gross, *Kinder story* (2003), S. 103–104

55 Gross and Gross, *ibidem*

56 Schwalbe, *Reichs-Medizinal-Kalender* (1926–1937)

who had been diagnosed as “genetically at risk”⁵⁷. Its function changed temporarily in 1914. At the beginning of WWI the board of trustees had not only contributed money from the hospital’s capital to the war effort, but also made the facility available for the care of military personnel. It is possible that Leo worked there during his military service. The regular hospital business was reestablished soon after the war, with 120 beds in 1926, and 150 by 1928. There were always far more applicants for the free treatment places than beds available⁵⁸. Wolff Gross had never heard of his uncle’s involvement with the *Jüdische Kurhospital*, and thinks that this might have been a minor part of Leo’s work⁵⁹. This was probably the case, as the hospital operated only seasonally, from May to September⁶⁰.

Despite the lack of any direct information, Dr. Leo Gross’ daily life can nevertheless be reconstructed from other sources. It would have been characterized by his work as a general physician, his family, and his activities in the Jewish community. His professional routine included seeing patients in his practice, on home-visits, and possibly ward rounds at the *Jüdische Kurhospital* during the summer season. Helene would have been responsible for their home life and care of Ursula, who attended high school in preparation for university studies⁶¹. Helene might have helped out in Leo’s practice, just as Klara did in Alfred’s legal office⁶². Leo and his family were members of the synagogue at Baustrasse 28, less than half a mile away from their home, and most likely attended services on a regular basis. Helene might have been active in the community’s charity organization and the Jewish women’s association, and Ursula possibly in the Jewish *Jugendbund*⁶³. By 1932, Leo was president of the Kolberg Jewish literature association and of the local chapter of the *Centralverein*, the association of German citizens of Jewish faith⁶⁴. The family might have spent leisure time on the weekends in a similar fashion as Alfred’s family did, going for walks in Kolberg and vicinity⁶⁵. They might also have enjoyed the concerts on the beach promenade and swimming in the Baltic Sea. This of course would have depended on Ursula’s health, as she developed tuberculosis at some point before 1935.

It is unclear how much of the political strife and increasing anti-Semitism of the 1920’s affected the life of the Gross families. Many Jewish citizens had hoped for full integration into the German people after “fulfilling their patriotic duty” as soldiers in WWI, but found themselves among those blamed for the loss of the war. The anti-Semitic organization “*Deutschvölkischer Schutz- und Trutzbund*”⁶⁶, founded in 1919,

57 Ruprecht, *Das jüdische Kurhospital* (1995)

58 Ruprecht, *Das jüdische Kurhospital* (1995)

59 phone WG 6/13/15

60 Zentralwohlfahrtsstelle der deutschen Juden, *Jüdische Wohlfahrtspflege*(1928), P. 205

61 phone WG 6/13/15

62 Gross and Gross, *Kinder story* (2003), P. 10

63 youth association

64 Wilhelmus, *Juden in Pommern* (2004), P. 275

65 Gross and Gross, *Kinder story* (2003), P. 11

66 “Protection and Defense Union of the German People”

gained 180,000 members by 1922⁶⁷. With the many visitors, the societal discord found its way into resort towns like Kolberg. Political differences were advertised with hotly embattled flags raised over sandcastles on the beach. Jewish visitors encountered open hostility. The administration of the *Centralverein* was the recipient of letters such as one sent by a lady after a visit to Kolberg in the summer of 1920, when she was confronted with “Swastika-adorned gentlemen” parading through the spa, and bloody brawls between them and Jewish visitors⁶⁸. Indeed, a “beach-company” of anti-Semites had formed in Kolberg, despite the fact that it was a traditional vacation spot for Jews⁶⁹. In 1932 the mayor of Kolberg prohibited the raising of Swastika flags on the beach, but was disobeyed by visitors from the extreme political right. In one incident, 40 to 50 NSDAP⁷⁰ members marched through Kolberg and shouted “*Juden raus*”⁷¹ in front of hotels and guesthouses⁷². The *Centralverein* published a list of resorts with anti-Semitism ratings each year. The number of spas with anti-Semitic hotels and guesthouses rose from 24 in 1920 to 165 in 1931⁷³.

Leo and Alfred must have been aware of these incidents, even if they were “imported” by the visitors and not necessarily rooted in the local population. For Leo the situation may have been particularly difficult, as he was the one with the greater patriotic tendencies. As a German nationalist, Leo must have been deeply affected by the developments in the follow-up of the war. His leadership position in the local *Centralverein* is telling in this respect. The organization was one of several national “Jewish civil rights” organizations formed in the second half of the 19th century, for the purpose of fostering a secular “Jewish consciousness”⁷⁴. Founded in 1893, the *Centralverein* was to avert rising anti-Semitism in Germany through the simultaneous preservation of its members’ dual identity as German *and* Jewish, and worked towards the emancipation of Jews as German citizens equal to all other Germans. In contrast to Zionist groups, the *Centralverein* promoted the moderation of so-called “Jewish characteristics” that might lead to adverse reactions from non-Jewish Germans. By 1925, 60,000 of the roughly 500,000 German Jews were organized as members in 555 local groups of the *Centralverein*⁷⁵. Like so many of his colleagues and his father before him, Leo was with all his heart a German *and* a Jew. Alfred, on the other hand, did not share this dual identity in the same manner. He was not quite as patriotic as Leo, even though he had given his son his father’s name, and he had given up Judaism and lived with a Christian wife. It is possible that Alfred at first did not count himself among the targets of any anti-Semitism. Together with Leo he may have believed that the anti-Semitic tirades

67 Wildt, “Der muss hinaus!” (2001), P. 4

68 Wildt, *ibidem*, P. 6

69 Bajohr, *Bäderantisemitismus* (2003), P. 60

70 Nazi-party: Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei

71 “Jews out”

72 Bajohr, *Bäderantisemitismus* (2003), P. 106; Wildt, “Der muss hinaus!” (2001), P. 18

73 Wildt, “Der muss hinaus!” (2001), P. 16

74 Friesel, *Centralverein before 1914* (1986), P. 121–122

75 Matthäus, *Centralverein 1933–1938* (1999), P. 249–250

were mostly aimed against Jews from the East, and not against German Jews, who themselves sometimes lacked solidarity with their poorer neighbors⁷⁶. However, by the time the National Socialists gained absolute political power, the brothers realized clearly that they were at the center of a storm.

1933–1935

The year 1933 found Leo and Alfred firmly established in their careers and as leaders in their local community. Leo's daughter Ursula would have graduated from high school during that year; Eva was 14 years old and starting high school across the street from her home in Luisenstrasse; and 6-year-old Wolff had begun elementary school. Even though he was young, Wolff Gross remembers the date of 31 January 1933 well, as the day of Adolf Hitler's appointment as chancellor of Germany by president Paul von Hindenburg coincided with his parents' wedding anniversary⁷⁷. The mood in the house changed and became dark, and his parents worried about the political developments. Alfred, who had read Hitler's manifest "*Mein Kampf*"⁷⁸, expected severe reprisals, not so much against himself, as he was not practicing his faith and was a decorated WWI veteran, but against other Jews in general. With Leo he shared the conviction that the agitation against Jews would lead to negative consequences for their professional lives. While Alfred rarely commented openly on politics, Leo confronted patients who bore the Swastika, telling them: "You are pointing a gun to my chest by wearing your party badge!" The so addressed were usually quick in assuring him that this was not meant personally, one of them responding: "But my dear, *you* are not meant here at all, you are a German. This is intended against the Eastern Jews, those who came from Poland"⁷⁹. Leo was indeed well regarded by his patients. Even after 1933, people preferred being treated by him rather than another doctor, but, as they formulated in conversation with Wolff Gross, could not do so because Leo Gross "had not joined the party" – a polite way of avoiding the term "Jew"⁸⁰. Also, Wolff does not recall any incidents of overt personal anti-Semitism from their fellow citizens aimed against his father or Leo⁸¹.

The danger was thus not so much posed by their neighbors, but by the new government and its agents. The brothers' worst fears were confirmed with the boycott against Jewish businesses on 1 April 1933. Wolff remembers SA and SS⁸² men positioned in front of their home, turning away his father's clients. Some of the visitors circumvented the guards or took advantage of the confusion arising from the fact that Klara

76 Bajohr, *Bäderantisemitismus* (2003), P. 43–44

77 here and in the following: Gross, *Davidstern* (2002)

78 "My struggle"

79 Gross, *Davidstern* (2002), P. 13, translation by author, emphasis original

80 phone WG 6/13/15

81 phone WG 1/30/16

82 SA: *Sturmabteilung*; SS: *Schutzstaffel*; both paramilitary National Socialist organizations

was a so-called “Aryan”. At the same time, Leo’s practice was targeted by SS men, who prevented patients from entering, but left the inventory mostly intact. It is somewhat ominous that 2 weeks after this incident Leo wrote to the University of Greifswald, asking for copies of his 1911 exam papers, as they “apparently were lost during a move a few years ago”⁸³. Either his practice rooms had been raided after all and the exam document destroyed, or the papers were truly lost earlier on, and he was now looking for them, possibly in preparation for emigration. From the time of the boycott on, Leo’s and Alfred’s practices declined rapidly, even though both men were still legally permitted to follow most aspects of their professions. Wolff observed that “people became rather chilly” towards his family after the April pogrom⁸⁴.

The Law for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service was passed on 7 April 1933, and Alfred lost part of his clientele because he had to give up the office of notary, as this could only be held by a civil servant. Leo, on the other hand, was affected by the “*Arier- und Kommunistengesetzgebung*”⁸⁵ of 22 April and 2 June 1933. The law excluded Jews and political dissidents from panel practice, i. e. the right to be reimbursed by panel health insurance funds, which financed medical treatment for most German citizens. There were 8–9,000 Jews among the total of 52,500 doctors in Germany in early 1933⁸⁶, and the new legislation meant the economical end mostly for younger Jewish physicians. Leo, however, would not have been affected by this exclusion from panel reimbursement, because of his WWI veteran status. Appeals for exemption were usually granted and enabled physicians like Leo, who were indeed a majority among the Jewish doctors at the time, to continue their practice until the next round of discriminatory legislation, which came with the Nuremberg Laws in 1935⁸⁷. However, such successful interventions with the NS government were also the reason why many of the older and established physicians were deceived into thinking they could “hold out” until the end of the NS regime, and repeatedly postponed decisive actions like emigration⁸⁸. And even if the government and many medical professional organizations were hostile towards them, doctors like Leo felt reassured and supported by patients, who remained loyal to them despite being threatened by NS authorities⁸⁹. Wolff recalls: “I myself heard how an SA man, who was my uncle’s patient, was reprimanded for attending his surgery. He argued that the doctor had helped him considerably in years past, even taking optimal care of him when he received an injury during a brawl”⁹⁰. So Leo might have felt relatively safe for a while. However, he would have been affected economically when Jewish physicians were no longer allowed to perform substitute work for non-Jewish colleagues or to take on

83 Dr. Leo Gross to Universität Greifswald 19 April 1933, UAG Med. Diss. I-643, author’s translation

84 Gross and Gross, Kinder story (2003), P. 88

85 “Aryan and Communist legislation”

86 Adler-Rudel, *Jüdische Selbsthilfe* (1974), P. 139; Kümmel, *Ausschaltung* (1985), P. 56–81

87 Leibfried, *Stationen der Abwehr* (1982), P. 11

88 Kröner, *Emigration* (1988), P. 85

89 Leibfried, *Stationen der Abwehr* (1986), P.12

90 Gross, Davidstern (2002), P. 21, author’s translation

weekend and night shifts in emergency services, where they would have had to tend to non-Jewish patients⁹¹.

Alfred and Leo pondered various strategies of response to the looming economic and existential crisis. Alfred had to let all of his staff go, and Klara assisted him with the remaining clients. It is unclear which arrangements Leo had to make in his practice. Most likely, he had put enough money aside to live off his savings for the following years, like Alfred had done. However, Leo did not have recourse to one way of preserving his property, which was open to his brother: Alfred had transferred most of his assets to Klara, as she was not subject to the discriminatory laws against Jews that he had foreseen. She had also refused to divorce him⁹². Leo seems to have taken further financial precautions by transferring money into foreign stocks⁹³. It is possible that he did this in preparation of a potential emigration, a topic on which the brothers disagreed. Wolff remembers: “My uncle was of the opinion that even though he was a German and had fulfilled his duty as a soldier in WWI, he felt like a Jew and was bound to his religion. Thus he pursued his emigration to Palestine. [...] My father would have emigrated right away if it had been possible to transfer his money outside the country. However, this would have gone in its entirety to the state, based on absurd justifications such as tax debts and the *Reichsfluchtsteuer*⁹⁴95. The question of emigration became acute for Leo and many other Jewish physicians with the passing of the Nuremberg “race” laws in September 1935, when all previous exemptions from discriminatory legislation no longer applied⁹⁶.

Visit to Palestine, November 1935

Leo decided to explore his options for emigration and travelled to Palestine for a visit of several weeks in November 1935. This step was in line with a general change in attitude within the *Centralverein*, which after 1933 started to accept Zionist ideas and Palestine as a country of emigration. It changed its name to *Jüdischer Centralverein*, thus denoting that it was no longer an association of German citizens of Jewish religion, but of a group of people with common Jewish heritage⁹⁷. Leo applied for a license to practice medicine there, but did not stay long enough to collect the document, which was granted on 12 December 1935⁹⁸. He had travelled on a return-visa, which he gave back to the British Passport office⁹⁹.

91 Adler-Rudel, *Jüdische Selbsthilfe* (1974), P. 140

92 Gross, Davidstern (2002), P. 14, 64

93 ZA L17-1145

94 *Reich* fugitive tax

95 Gross, Davidstern (2002), P. 142, (translation by authors).

96 Kater, *Doctors under Hitler* (1989), P. 182-188; Matthäus, *Centralverein 1933-1938* (1999), P. 265

97 Matthäus, *Centralverein 1933-1938* (1999), P. 265-268

98 Letter Director of Medical services, Department of Health Jerusalem, to Chief Secretary, Government Offices, Jerusalem, 29 October 1940, ISA 2 M/7/40

99 Letter *Palästina-Amt* of Jewish Agency for Palestine, Berlin, to *Hitachduth Olej Germania*, Tel Aviv, 4 October 1939, ZA L17-1145

Palestine had been the favored haven of escape in the first wave of the emigration of physicians in 1933, and many, particularly younger people with Zionist leanings, had found a new home and employment there. By 1935 the number of doctors had increased to such an extent that the British Mandate Government implemented new rules in medical licensure effective 1 Dec 1935, limiting new licenses to an annual quota. Leo fit the general profile of the 400–500 mostly German physicians, who arrived in Palestine in October and November 1935. They were older than 30 years, married, experienced in their profession, relatively well off, and were forced to emigrate¹⁰⁰.

Leo was not the only physician who came to Palestine on a scouting mission and then returned home. Apparently, the *Palästina Amt*¹⁰¹ in Berlin helped with the organization of exploratory trips¹⁰². However, it is unclear if any of the other temporary visitors successfully applied for a medical license. Several studies have addressed German physicians' emigration to Palestine¹⁰³, but a systematic investigation of this question of journeys to Palestine, medical licensure and remigration is missing, even if there is anecdotal evidence of exploratory journeys. The Berlin urologist Professor Paul Rosenstein travelled there in 1936, but decided against an emigration to Palestine because of beginning political violence in the country and the costs for visa¹⁰⁴. The radiologist Alfred David Beutler was among those arriving in the fall of 1935. However, he received an affidavit for the USA during his time in Palestine and moved with his wife Dr. Käthe Beutler, who had pushed for emigration, and sons Frederick and Ernest to the US¹⁰⁵. The ophthalmologist Dr. Fritz Wiesenthal and his wife also took a trip to Palestine in 1935, but ultimately moved to the USA¹⁰⁶.

Looking at a well-documented sample of Jewish physicians from Hamburg¹⁰⁷, no other example of “remigration” from Palestine at any time during the Third Reich is evident. Some physicians returned to Germany after a first trial of emigration and then left for another country¹⁰⁸. The total number of German physician émigrés is estimated at about 6000, another 3000 emigrated from Austria¹⁰⁹, with the last and largest emigration wave occurring between late 1938 and 1941. Palestine was second only to the USA as a country of emigration¹¹⁰. All together, 650 doctors moved from Germany

100 Niederland, *Deutsche Ärzte-Emigration* (1985), P. 157–158

101 office of the Jewish agency in Palestine

102 Adler-Rudel, *Jüdische Selbsthilfe* (1974), P. 82

103 on the question of knowledge transfer see: Baader, *der Einfluss deutsch-jüdischer Emigranten* (2005); Müller, *Medizinische Expertise, zionistische Visionen* (2005)
on specific medical disciplines: Seidler, Siegfried (Shimon) Rosenbaum (2004) for pediatrics; Zalashik and Davidovitch, *Professional identities across the Borders* (2009) for psychiatry.

104 Rosenstein, *Narben bleiben zurück* (1954), P. 251

105 Fred Beutler, personal communication; Schwach, *Berliner Jüdische Kassenärzte* (2009), P. 95–96

106 Schwach, *Berliner Jüdische Kassenärzte* (2009), P. 891–892

107 Villiez, *Entrechtung und Verfolgung* (2009)

108 e.g. Dr. Erich Reinhard, who went to England in 1933, came back to sort out his emigration papers and left again for the USA, Villiez, *Entrechtung und Verfolgung* (2009), P. 381–382

109 Kröner, *Die Emigration deutschsprachiger Mediziner 1933–1945* (1988), P. 85.

110 Villiez, *Emigration jüdischer Ärzte* (2014), P. 191–192

to Palestine between 1933 and 1939, as well as several hundred of their Austrian colleagues, and more from territories occupied by Germany¹¹¹. The group of physicians from Hamburg investigated by Villiez included 313 physician refugees. Fifty-five immigrated to Palestine between 1933 and 1939, among them seven who, like Leo Gross, did so in the last months of 1935. While a majority chose to remain in their new home country, some moved on to the USA, and 6 remigrated to Germany, however this was years after the war¹¹². So far, Dr. Leo Gross seems to be the only documented case of a physician who returned to National Socialist Germany after successfully applying for a license in Palestine.

1936–1938

After his return, Dr. Leo Gross continued to explore additional options for moving his family away from Germany. Both he and his brother made plans for their children's future. Whereas Alfred refused to emigrate, he considered this step for Eva and Wolff. The final incentive was the discrimination his children had to suffer from their teachers and peers, the children were even banned from the beach. Early on Alfred had made sure that they both learned conversational English to prepare them for a life abroad. His decision to officially join the Protestant church may also have been motivated by his wish to make the family safe. He connected with Dr. Arnold Frank of Jerusalem Church in Hamburg, an Irish Presbyterian church. Not only was Dr. Frank a converted Jew and a leader in the International Hebrew-Christian Alliance, but he also had close contacts with Northern Ireland, and was willing to assist Jews who wanted to leave Germany¹¹³. Following Alfred's baptism on his silver wedding anniversary in January 1936, he used his acquaintance with Dr. Frank to place Eva as a student teacher at Victoria College in Belfast. Eva left in September 1936 and visited NS Germany for the last time on Christmas 1937¹¹⁴. Wolff and his mother travelled to Belfast in March 1939, but he was considered too young to stay with Eva. The idea was for him to join his sister after her graduation in late 1940, a plan that never materialized because of the start of the war¹¹⁵. Wolff's only respite from the "racially" separated beaches and other persecutions came from vacations spent at the home of a former nursemaid in rural Finkenwalde¹¹⁶.

In Leo's case, care for his daughter's future meant that he actively sought an alternative to Palestine as a country of emigration, as he considered the climate there as detrimental to Ursula's recovery from tuberculosis¹¹⁷. It is not known where Ursula lived

111 Villiez, *Emigration jüdischer Ärzte* (2014), P. 194–195

112 Villiez, *Entrechtung und Verfolgung* (2009), P. 117–118

113 Jerusalem Kirche, *Historie* (no date); During, Dr. Arnold Frank (2012)

114 Gross and Gross, *Kinder story* (2003), P. 82–83, 88

115 Gross and Gross, *Kinder story* (2003), P. 90–92

116 Gross and Gross, *Kinder story* (2003), P. 87

117 phone WG 6/13/15

during the years before 31 May 1940, when she was first registered in the tuberculosis hospital in Nordrach¹¹⁸. Her studies in dental medicine, possibly in Freiburg¹¹⁹, would have been disrupted by NS policies, which forced the expulsion of all Jewish students from German universities¹²⁰. Wolff Gross remembers that she spent most of her time in Swiss lung sanatoriums¹²¹. She was not registered with her parents in Kolberg during the census of 1939, at a time when Leo and Helene had moved in with Fanny in Viktoriastrasse 9, probably for economic reasons¹²². Despite their physical separation, Ursula remained a central part of her father's calculations for a future country of emigration. Some time after his return from Palestine, Leo started negotiations to secure a position as a US government military doctor in the Philippines. It is unclear how this plan was facilitated. Leo's stationing was to be close to Manila, and he expected the climate there to be dry, and beneficial for his daughter's health. Once the contract was signed, Leo purchased instruments and other materials for his new post overseas, and stored them at Hamburg harbor in anticipation for shipment. His new position was set to begin on 1 December 1940, but after the start of the war Leo and his family were unable to find a way to leave Germany¹²³.

Leo's days before the autumn of 1938 would have been filled with correspondence concerning emigration plans, serving the few remaining patients in his shrinking medical practice, organizing adequate health care for Ursula, and finding ways to save the family's property. As long as the family's financial means were sufficient, Ursula could remain in Switzerland, unencumbered by NS persecution. One of Leo's financial transactions was the investment in foreign stocks offered in 1935 by the *Zentralstelle für die Ansiedlung deutscher Juden in Palästina*¹²⁴, based in London and Jerusalem. This organization owned the "Rural and Suburban Settlement Company" (RASSCO), which supported the establishment of middle-class families in Palestine¹²⁵. Other daily activities of Leo probably revolved around his work for the *Centralverein*. After 1933, the organization spent much of its efforts on the alleviation of the suffering of fellow-Jews, including consultations, especially on legal and economical issues for lawyers and physicians and other civil servants, and mediation with the NS authorities¹²⁶. Leo would also have spent part of his time on carpentry, as Wolff remembers that his uncle had started to learn this craft¹²⁷, possibly in preparation for his emigration to Palestine, where experience in manual labor was seen as an asset in immigrants.

1938 brought an escalation in NS expansionist politics and in the persecution of

118 Schellinger, *Deportiert* (2010), P.43

119 phone WG 6/13/15

120 Bodo, *The role of anti-Semitism* (2002)

121 phone WG 6/13/15

122 Virtual Sztetl, Kolobrzeg (no date)

123 The luggage remained stranded at the harbor in Hamburg until after the war. All of Wolff's efforts to claim it remained in vain, because he could not produce his uncle's testament, phone WG 6/29/15

124 Central agency for the settlement of German Jews in Palestine

125 Kulka, *Deutsches Judentum* (1997), P. 542

126 Matthäus, *Centralverein 1933–1938* (1999), P. 260

127 phone WG 6/13/15

Jews. In March, the annexation of Austria was accompanied by atrocities against the Jewry there. On 25 July 1938, the 4th provision of the *Reichsbürgergesetz*¹²⁸ was passed, which decreed the revocation of the medical licenses of all 3,300 Jewish physicians remaining in Germany, effective 30 September 1938. Only 709 of them were allowed to continue treating Jewish patients as so-called *Krankenbehandler*^{129, 130}. It is not clear if Leo was granted even this title. Another new provision of the *Reichsbürgergesetz* deprived Alfred of his professional rights as a lawyer¹³¹, so that by October 1938 both brothers had lost their professional practices. Hugo Henning, Klara's brother and a former police officer, warned the family to be very careful, as he knew that they all were being watched by the GeStapo¹³². Then, the pogroms of November 9 and 10 brought greatest destruction to the Jewish community of Kolberg. All ritual spaces were defiled and destroyed by the raging SA and SS: the synagogue was torched and demolished, the Jewish hospital damaged and used for coal storage, and the Jewish cemetery building was converted into a stable¹³³. Wolff remembers returning from school and finding SS guards posted outside his home. His mother told him that Alfred had been arrested by the police, and that their apartment had been searched. Alfred's office had been vandalized by the SS men, but Klara prevented further damage by declaring the contents of all other rooms as her dowry, and thus untouchable as "Aryan" property. Leo was also arrested, however, his home was not searched, and no guards had been posted¹³⁴.

Leo and Alfred were among the 20–30,000 "healthy, not too old, male Jews, especially wealthy ones", who were seized during the November pogroms, following an order by Gestapo leaders Heinrich Müller and Reinhard Heydrich¹³⁵. A total of 6,000 Jewish prisoners from Northern- and Eastern-Germany were brought to the concentration camp Sachsenhausen¹³⁶. On arrival in the camp, Leo gave a false name and address, to "set up a false trail", as Wolff assumes¹³⁷. Leo's prisoner number was 13283, and Alfred's 13230¹³⁸. The brothers were separated, and Leo was housed with Communist prisoners, some of whom had been his patients and protected him. They claimed he was a craftsman, and he worked as a carpenter¹³⁹. Alfred was very upset with Leo, as he feared that both of them would be severely punished if Leo's lie were discovered¹⁴⁰. Alfred never spoke to Wolff about his experiences in the camp, but a study of autobi-

128 *Reich* citizen law

129 handler of the sick

130 Adler-Rudel, *Jüdische Selbsthilfe* (1974), P. 139; Leibfried, *Stationen der Abwehr* (1982), P. 11; Kröner, *Emigration* (1988), P. 85–86

131 Dokumentationsarchiv, *Reichsbürgergesetz* (no date)

132 Gross and Gross, *Kinder story* (2003), P. 87

133 Voelker, *Kolberg* (1964), P. 63

134 Gross and Gross, *Kinder story* (2003), P. 86–87

135 Pollmeier, *Inhaftierung* (1999), P. 107–108

136 Pollmeier, *Inhaftierung* (1999), P. 110–111

137 Gross and Gross, *Kinder story* (2003), P. 90

138 USHMM, Holocaust database (no date)

139 phone WG 6/13/15 and 1/30/16

140 phone WG 6/29/15

ographical statements from former Sachsenhausen inmates, who were incarcerated at the same time, gives insight into the kind of life the brothers were subjected to¹⁴¹. The prisoners had to perform military exercises throughout the first week there. Later they also had to do senseless labor. There was no health care; on the contrary, the SS doctors tended to torture the men. The greatest psychological problem was the unpredictability of their treatment by the SS guards. In addition, there were tensions among prisoners because of their origin from different social and religious groups¹⁴². Alfred returned from Sachsenhausen in December 1938. He had lost weight and “looked like a broken man”¹⁴³. He told his family that the whole experience had only been bearable because he had learned as a soldier how to conduct himself. Leo was released weeks later, in late December, to Breslau, which was apparently the place of residence he had wrongly given at his registration in the camp¹⁴⁴. Wolff thinks that the brothers’ early release had been due to the fact that the National Socialists knew about Leo’s emigration efforts and hoped to be rid of the family soon¹⁴⁵. In fact, on 28 November all WWI veterans and under 16-year-olds were released, and on 12 December all over 50-year-old inmates. By spring 1939 most of the Jewish prisoners from November 1938 had left the camps. They were clearly recognizable as former detainees, as they were marked by shaved heads and injuries. All of them had to sign statements that their liberty was contingent on emigration and silence about their camp experience¹⁴⁶.

1939–1940

After his release from Sachsenhausen, Leo apparently worked on two different escape routes out of Germany, Palestine and the Philippines. He tried to obtain another visa for Palestine, this time an A I certificate for himself and Helene, which would also enable Ursula to accompany them¹⁴⁷. The A I visa category was a so-called *Kapitalistenvisum*, a travel document that many of his physician colleagues had used for immigration into Palestine before him¹⁴⁸. It was available to persons who had the financial means to bring a minimum of £ 1,000 as capital to the new economy¹⁴⁹. The *Palästina-Amt* in Berlin assisted Leo in his application, as did Dr. Georg Landauer and Dr. Israel Auerbach, functionaries of the Jewish Agency in Jerusalem¹⁵⁰. However, obtain-

141 Pollmeier, *Inhaftierung* (1999)

142 Pollmeier, *Inhaftierung* (1999), P. 122–124

143 Gross and Gross, *Kinder story* (2003), P. 89

144 After the war this “false trail” became an obstacle for Professor Wolff Gross, when he searched for Dr. Leo Gross in the International Tracing Service Files in Bad Arolsen, phone WG 6/13/15

145 phone WG 6/29/15

146 Pollmeier, *Inhaftierung* (1999)

147 Feilchenfeld et al., *Havaara-Transfer* (1972), P. 39

148 Kröner, *Emigration* (1988), P. 87

149 Adler-Rudel, *Jüdische Selbsthilfe* (1974), P. 82

150 Letter *Palästina-Amt* of Jewish Agency for Palestine, Berlin, to Hitachduth Olej Germania, Tel Aviv, 4 October 1939, ZA L17–1145

ing a visa had become very difficult by 1939, and certainly after the start of WWII. The situation is reflected in the correspondence between the various agencies concerning Dr. Leo Gross' request. In January 1940 the *Palästina-Amt* in Berlin was informed by its counterpart in Geneva / Switzerland that the *Hitachduth Olej Germania*¹⁵¹ in Jerusalem saw no more hope for Dr. Gross' application, following a report from the Jewish Agency there¹⁵². Leo must have been desperate, as he also appealed to the HICEM in Geneva¹⁵³, listing his previous efforts and contact persons concerning another visa. He ended his letter by noting: "Of course I would be willing to emigrate semi-officially and have my wife follow me later"¹⁵⁴. No follow-up to his plea is documented in the files.

Thus, by early 1940, Leo's hopes for an escape to the Philippines had been dashed, and Palestine as his last option for emigration became increasingly improbable. At the same time, his financial assets would have been severely depleted due to the discriminatory NS legislation that resulted in high taxation and expropriation of Jewish individuals and businesses. The harassment concerning taxation must have been a considerable burden, as a correspondence between Leo and the *Palästina-Amt* in Geneva reveals. The German tax authorities had ordered him to report the value of his RASSCO shares and obligations, and he sent repeated inquiries to Geneva¹⁵⁵. A letter by the *Palästina-Amt* to the representative of RASSKO in Tel-Aviv, Dr. Franz Meyer, apparently remained without answer¹⁵⁶. Even Ursula had to involve herself in the matter, when Leo was no longer able to do so¹⁵⁷. The difficult financial situation may be the reason why Ursula was no longer treated in a Swiss hospital, as she transferred to the *Rothschild'sche Lungenheilstätte* in Nordrach / Germany on 31 May 1940¹⁵⁸. After 1938, this sanatorium had become the only facility left for the treatment of Jewish tuberculosis patients in Germany, and it was booked to capacity throughout the last years of its existence. It is likely that Leo's network of relationships within the Jewish medical community facilitated Ursula's admission to this charitable institution. She was one of 40 to 60 female patients, and lived there probably continuously until the dissolution of the hospital in late 1942. Her name is documented in the house register for 1941¹⁵⁹.

Unbeknownst to Leo and his family, his 1935 sojourn in Palestine had a postlude in Jerusalem in 1940. The Commissioner for Migration and Statistics of the Government of Palestine had realized at some point that Leo had never collected his medical license issued in 1935, and notified the Department of Health on 11 July 1939 that Leo had "not established his home here [in Palestine] and therefore his licence may be

151 Association of German immigrants

152 Letter Samuel Scheps to *Palästina-Amt*, Berlin, 9 January 1940, ZA L17-1145

153 Hebrew Immigration, Colonization and Emigration office

154 Letter Dr. Leo Gross to HICEM, 8 January 1940, ZA L17-1145, translation by the author

155 see letters Leo Gross / *Palästina-Amt* Geneva, 12 March 1941 to 1 September 1941, ZA L17-1145

156 Letter Pozner to Dr. Franz Meyer, 1 September 1941, ZA L17-1145

157 Letter Ursula Gross to *Office Palestinien de Suisse*, 24 November 1941, ZA L17-1145

158 Schellinger et al., *Schicksal* (2010), P. 43

159 Schellinger, *Deportiert* (2010), P. 43; Schellinger et al., *Schicksal* (2010), P. 13

cancelled”¹⁶⁰. The Department of Health however knew about Leo’s detention in a concentration camp and postponed the cancellation for another year. A “final warning” was sent to Leo’s Palestine address in September 1940. When this remained without reply, the Director of Health Services wrote to the Chief Secretary of Government Offices on 29 October 1940 with the recommendation to cancel Leo’s medical licence, because “he has lost permission to remain permanently in Palestine.” This interpretation of Leo’s situation was disputed by the Chief Secretary, who simply stated that “it cannot be said that Dr. Gross has no ‘permission to remain permanently in Palestine,’ as he is apparently physically prevented from doing so”¹⁶¹. The Commissioner for Migration then weighed in with the argument that, if Leo was “placed in a concentration camp”, the war prevented them from finding out the facts, and “If he were detained for long, he is now probably dead.” Thus, the Commissioner argued, a cancellation of Leo’s licence could lead to a larger annual quota of medical licences, implying that this would be beneficial for other potential immigrants. He added: “If when the war is over Dr. Gross should wish to return it can be determined whether he is a returning resident or immigrant”. The Commissioner appeared critical of Leo: “If, however, he returned to Germany as some did, having secured in Palestine a kind of insurance against a contingent future, in order to resume his ordinary life there he would not be regarded as a returning resident”¹⁶². In the end it was found that the cancellation of Leo’s licence would not affect the annual quota at all, and the Solicitor General decided that he not only had not lost permission to remain permanently in Palestine, but was also prevented from objecting to any such decision¹⁶³. It seems that even as late as 1940, some individuals within the government of British Palestine had no clear understanding of, or willfully misunderstood, the kind of “ordinary life” Jews were forced to endure in the German *Reich*.

1941: The End

While Ursula was hospitalized in the Black Forest, Leo apparently started exploring options for an “internal migration” within Germany. His idea was to move to Berlin, where he hoped to be able to “disappear in the crowd” or might even still be able to emigrate¹⁶⁴. Again, this was a point on which Leo and Alfred could not agree, as Alfred thought that the plan was not a practical one¹⁶⁵. Alfred was very realistic and took

160 Letter Director of Medical Services, Department of Health of the Government of Palestine to Chief Secretary, Government Offices, 29 October 1940, ISA 2M/7/40

161 Letter Chief Secretary to Director of Medical Services, 29 November 1940, ISA 2M/7/40, emphasis in original

162 Letter Commissioner for Migration and Statistics of the Government of Palestine to Chief Secretary, 30 December 1940, ISA 2M/7/40

163 Handwritten note 42, 12/20/40 and Typed Note 43, 1/1/41, legal evaluation by solicitor general, ISA 2M/7/40

164 phone WG 2/25/2016

165 phone WG 6/13/15

all threats by NS leaders at face value, expecting that the government would cause the death of many more persons¹⁶⁶. However, Leo's rationale was shared by many other Jewish citizens, who moved from rural areas to the supposed anonymity of the big cities and their larger Jewish communities in search for a measure of safety¹⁶⁷. Leo may have used connections to the Berlin medical community from his earlier years of work there, as well as contacted acquaintances from the trustees of the Jewish Hospital in Kolberg. He may also have scanned advertisements in the *Jüdisches Nachrichtenblatt*, a weekly newspaper for the Jewish community, which carried job offers by the Jewish Hospital in Berlin until 14 March 1941. Since 1940, the Jewish Hospital had become one of the last Jewish medical facilities still open in Germany. The turnover of staff was high due to emigration, especially after the November pogroms of 1938, and new *Krankenbehandler*-physicians as well as nursing staff were constantly needed¹⁶⁸. Thus the house became a haven for many, who were trying to find not only a new job, but also an opportunity to "become invisible"¹⁶⁹. Even at this hospital the number of *Krankenbehandler*-physicians was limited, and Leo decided to accept a position as nurse. He was not the only doctor who did so, as e. g. Dr. Ilse Kassel, a family physician from Berlin, also worked in this capacity¹⁷⁰. Leo and Helene moved to Martin-Luther-Strasse 81, Berlin-Schöneberg, by 12 March 1941¹⁷¹. It is unclear, why they chose to live there, as the place was 5 miles away from the Jewish hospital, and Leo had to walk nearly 2 hours each way, as Jews were prohibited from using public transportation. However, this address may have been his only choice in a housing market restricted for Jews, who were forced to live in so-called *Judenhäuser*¹⁷². From 1 September 1941 on, he and Helene, with the rest of German Jewry, were under orders to carry the yellow star on their clothing, a measure that ended all hope for legal anonymity¹⁷³. On 18 October 1941 the first deportations of Jews from Berlin started and were headed for Lodz ghetto, Minsk, Kovno and Riga¹⁷⁴. The Jewish hospital provided each transport with a team of medical personnel, who shared the fate of those transported. These teams included nurses, and at least one doctor. It is unclear, how the decision was made who would be part of such a group of caregivers, or if some doctors and nurses were considered more "irreplaceable" than others¹⁷⁵. Leo, who had kept in touch with Alfred via mail, wrote a letter of farewell in late 1941. He informed his brother that he had to accompany a transport of Jewish people to the East. Wolff believes that Leo was secretly hoping that he might have a chance to once

166 Gross, *Davidstern* (2002), P. 51

167 Kröner, *Emigration* (1988), P. 85

168 Elkin, *Jewish hospital Berlin* (1993), P. 172

169 Kater, *Doctors under Hitler* (1989); Kotowski and Schoeps, *From Heqdash to Hightech* (2007)

170 Schwoch, *Berliner Jüdische Kassenärzte* (2009), P. 433–434

171 Gross and Gross, *Kinder story* (2003), P. 102; address on letter Leo Gross / *Palästina-Amt* 12 March 1941, ZA L17–1145

172 assigned dwellings for Jews

173 *Polizeiverordnung, Kennzeichnung von Juden* (1941)

174 *Statistik des Holocaust a*, no date; Elkin, *Jewish hospital Berlin* (1993)

175 Elkin, *Jewish hospital Berlin* (1993), P. 166, 175

again work legally as a doctor at his new destination. The family never heard again from Leo or Helene¹⁷⁶.

Leo Gross was among the 1,006 persons who arrived in Kovno / Kaunas days after their train had left Berlin on 17 November 1941¹⁷⁷. What is known about this transport is that the deportees had probably been told that they were headed for Kovno ghetto as their new place of residence. Instead, Lithuanian so-called “partisans”, who sided with the Germans, as well as members of the German police battalion 11, received the Jews at Kovno station and told them that their luggage would be forwarded for them. The soldiers marched them to the nearly 4 miles distant Fort IX, a part of Kovno fortress that was used as a prison and execution site. There, several long open pits had been dug behind the walls of the fort. Each of these graves could fit the bodies of 3,000 persons¹⁷⁸. The Jews were apparently deceived as to the real destination of their journey, up to the last minutes of their lives, in order to avoid any resistance. They were separated into groups of 80 to 100, sent towards the pits under the pretense of morning exercises or similar pretexts, and shot with concealed machine guns¹⁷⁹. On 25 November 1941, “1159 Jewish males, 1600 Jewish females, 175 J[ewish] child[ren], 2934 (persons resettled from Berlin, Munich and Frankfurt a. M.)” were killed in Fort IX, according to the lists kept by SS-*Standartenführer*¹⁸⁰ Karl Jäger¹⁸¹. In late 1943 the Kovno GeStapo ordered the exhumation and burning of the bodies, and the scattering of the ashes in an effort to cover up the murder of the many thousands of victims¹⁸². It is all but certain that Dr. Leo Gross was murdered in Fort IX, and his wife Helene possibly too. There is no definite documentation of their deaths. Leo’s declaration of death gives the date of his demise as 25 November 1941, and Helene’s as December 1941, without any more specific date. Their place of death in this certificate is stated as Kovno¹⁸³. Alfred was never notified of Leo’s and Helene’s deaths. The inquiry he sent to the Berlin authorities’ elicited the response “new address unknown”¹⁸⁴.

Ursula never learned of her parents’ fate. Poignantly, it may have been her disease that allowed her to survive them by 10 months. On 22 October 1940, in one of the first large deportations of Jews from Germany, the majority of Jewish citizens from Southwest-Germany had been transported to Gurs detention camp in France. However, the Nordrach Jewish *Lungenheilstätte* was among the few facilities named that were explicitly excluded from the evacuation order¹⁸⁵. As no other reason for this exemption was given, it can be speculated that the measure was based on the NS functionaries’ noto-

176 Gross and Gross, *Kinder story* (2003), P. 102

177 BA Gedenkbuch, *Memorial Book* (no date); Scheffler and Schulle, *Buch der Erinnerung* (2003), P. 89

178 Porat, *The legend* (1991), P. 371

179 Porat, *The legend* (1991), P. 382–384

180 colonel

181 Scheffler and Schulle, *Buch der Erinnerung* (2003), P. 89–90

182 Porat, *The legend* (1991), P. 379

183 BA Gedenkbuch, *Memorial Book* (no date)

184 Gross, *Davidstern* (2002), P. 52

185 *Statistik des Holocaust b*, (no date)

rious fear of infectious diseases, especially those supposedly spread by Jews¹⁸⁶. However, the hospital was closely watched by NS activists, and in September 1941 the local anti-Semitic press polemicized against it by calling it a “nature reserve for Jews”¹⁸⁷. In the summer of 1942, deportation orders finally reached the Nordrach hospital. Five older patients were included in a transport of 1078 persons to the concentration camp Theresienstadt / Terezín, which left Stuttgart on 22 August 1942¹⁸⁸. In the following weeks the dissolution of the hospital was planned, and the local Jewish authorities knew by 20 September 1942 that the house would be closed after the deportation of the last patients, which was expected for the following days¹⁸⁹. The patients themselves were informed on 21 September 1942¹⁹⁰, and 28-year-old Ursula had time to write to her uncle Alfred’s family. Wolff remembers this last letter, in which she expressed her hope of meeting her parents in the East, a thought that made her embark on the journey in good spirits¹⁹¹. She must not have known the destination of this transport, as she asked Alfred to make inquiries¹⁹². Ursula and seventeen other patients, as well as the nine persons of Jewish personnel of Nordrach *Lungenheilstätte*, were deported on 29 September 1942. Within days, the *M. A. von Rothschild’sche Lungenheilstätte*, a religious Jewish facility for the philanthropic care of the sick, was expropriated, and converted into a *Lebensborn*¹⁹³ facility under the leadership of the SS¹⁹⁴. From October 1942 on the renamed *Heim Schwarzwald*¹⁹⁵ was to serve the SS *Lebensborn* ideology of positive selection of the worthy, i. e. caring for new mothers and infants of “Aryan” descent.

Ursula’s deportation train started in Karlsruhe, stopped in Darmstadt, and then departed with about 900 persons aboard towards the Eastern regions of the *Reich*. Ursula’s name appears on a typed list of names with the handwritten heading “*Sommer 1942 abgeschoben nach dem Osten*”¹⁹⁶. The destination of Ursula’s train is still unknown. Wolff never heard again from his cousin.

Fate of the Relatives of Dr. Leo Gross

Brother Alfred Gross and his family remained in Kolberg and had to deal with NS persecution there. They were allowed to remain in the apartment they had taken after Alfred had been forced to give up his practice. This was possible because they lived in

186 Schellinger, *Deportiert* (2010), P. 16

187 Schellinger, *Deportiert* (2010), P. 18

188 Statistik des Holocaust c (no date)

189 Schellinger, *Deportiert* (2010), P. 20–21

190 Statistik des Holocaust d (no date)

191 Gross and Gross, *Kinder story* (2003), P. 104

192 Schellinger, *Deportiert* (2010), P. 21

193 fountain of life

194 Schellinger, *Deportiert* (2010), P. 28

195 Black Forest Home

196 “deported to the East, summer 1942”; Statistik des Holocaust e (no date)

what was called a “*privilegierte Mischehe*”¹⁹⁷, a concept that was regulated by the Legislation on the Tenancy of Jews from 20 April 1939¹⁹⁸. Alfred and Klara were exempt from the order to move to a *Judenhaus* because Wolff lived with them. Had he emigrated, they would have had to leave their home. At the beginning of the war they were ordered to hand over their radio, one of the many restriction on daily life that Jewish citizens had to suffer. In the fall of 1941 all fur clothing was seized from Jews, gold and other valuables had already been expropriated¹⁹⁹. In August 1942 children from mixed marriages were barred from finishing their high school education, and Wolff had to leave school. He opted for training in agriculture, as he longed for physical exercise and hoped to be less noticeable for his German peers or GeStapo spies in a rural setting²⁰⁰. During this summer, Wolff’s 85-year-old grandmother Fanny Gross received notice that she had to leave Kolberg with a transport from Tilsit-Königsberg to Theresienstadt / Terezín on 24 / 25 August 1942. Alfred tried to argue with the authorities on the grounds of Fanny’s great age, but to no avail. The only relief he could obtain for Fanny, who suffered from arthritis of her knees and hips, was transportation by taxi to the assembly point in Stolp, 70 miles away from Kolberg. He accompanied his mother there, and was scandalized when he observed that Hitler Youth under supervision of the SS searched and robbed the baggage of the old people. Alfred never again heard from Fanny²⁰¹. She died within days of her arrival in Theresienstadt concentration camp, on 14 September 1942²⁰².

Wolff Gross started his work on a farm in Henkenhagen near Kolberg in February 1943, where he worked with forced laborers from Eastern Europe and led a relatively quiet life. In the spring of 1944 his father became very ill. A tumor was suspected, but a NS official refused surgical treatment for Alfred in the local hospital. Alfred died of cancer on 5 March 1944. The relentless NS discrimination continued even after his death, as the municipal cemeteries did not allow the burials of baptized “non-Aryans”. Paul Hinz was willing to help. He was pastor at the Cathedral of Kolberg and a member of the Confessing Church, which stood in opposition to Hitler. Hinz negotiated an interment in a Christian cemetery in Karlsberg near Kolberg²⁰³. Now Klara had to fend for herself, and Wolff tried to visit her as often as possible on weekends. However, in November 1944 he was ordered to report for forced labor, following new legislation regarding the children from mixed marriages²⁰⁴. His experiences in various work camps, and his journey after the war to his mother’s place of escape in Northern Germany, are beyond the scope of this study and are reported in his autobiography. It shall only be mentioned that Klara, Eva and Wolff met again for the first time after the war

197 privileged mixed marriage

198 Reichsgesetzblatt, Mietverhältnisse mit Juden (1939)

199 Gross and Gross, Kinder story (2003), P. 99–103

200 Gross and Gross, Kinder story (2003), P. 104–105

201 Gross and Gross, Kinder story (2003), P. 104

202 BA Gedenkbuch, Memorial book (no date)

203 Gross and Gross, Kinder story (2003), P. 107–108; Skiles, Preaching to Nazi Germany (2016)

204 Gross and Gross, Kinder story (2003), P. 112

in 1948, when mother and son travelled to Belfast. Eva remained in Northern Ireland for the rest of her long life, while Wolff pursued his career in medicine in Germany.

There is some information on the extended family of Dr. Leo Gross and his wife Helene. His mother's cousin, 74-year-old Lisbeth Walter, was deported with the same train to Theresienstadt as Fanny. Her daughter Käte accompanied her, possibly voluntarily. Like Fanny, Lisbeth died soon after her arrival in the camp, on 20 September 1942²⁰⁵. Her daughter's name does not appear on any memorial list for the victims of the Holocaust, thus she might have survived. Lisbeth's son Hans Walter had been among the men incarcerated after the 1938 November pogrom. After his release he emigrated to Palestine in early 1939²⁰⁶. Helene's brother Louis Walter, who had been wounded in WWI and worked as a massage therapist in Kolberg, lived in a "mixed marriage" with a so-called "Aryan" woman. He was killed in the spring of 1945, during one of the final battles in Kolberg²⁰⁷. Hugo Henning, Klara Gross' brother who had warned the family about the SS, was recruited as lieutenant of the army²⁰⁸ in 1942 and rose to the rank of captain. A day after his army recruitment he was also ordered to serve in the police as captain; however, he refused to accept the higher rank in the police. When his nephew Wolff asked why he had turned down the more prestigious offer, he answered that the police now had to do things that had nothing to do with policing and that he did not want to be part of. In 1945 Hugo Henning became a Russian prisoner of war in Güstrow / Mecklenburg. When, in 1947, he learned that his camp was to be deported to Siberia he fled and spent the rest of his life as a retiree in Duisburg with his daughter²⁰⁹.

5. Memorials

Wolff Gross summarizes his long search for the fate of Leo Gross and other relatives in the words: "*Ich habe sehr geforscht*"²¹⁰. In 2009 he donated *Stolpersteine* as a memorial for Dr. Leo Gross and his wife Helene in front of the house in Martin-Luther-Strasse 65. In 2014, when he had learned about his cousin Ursula's fate, he had a stone placed for her, too. These *Stolperstein* memorials are also signifiers of the concept of "biography as construct"²¹¹, meaning that reconstructed biographies are shifting with the availability of data. Dr. Leo Gross' last known address was Martin-Luther-Strasse 81, and not 65, as testified by his handwritten card to the *Office Palestinien* from 7 August 1941²¹². Also, Ur-

205 BA Gedenkbuch, Memorial book (no date)

206 phone WG 2/22/2016

207 phone WG 1/30/16

208 *Wehrmacht*

209 phone WG 1/30/16

210 "I have looked so very hard", phone WG 6/13/15

211 Villiez, *Entrechtung und Verfolgung* (2009), P. 24

212 handwritten postcard Dr. Leo Israel Gross to *Office Palestinien*, 7 August 1941, ZA L17-1145; also: Scheffler and Schulle, *Buch der Erinnerung* (2003), P. 102

sula's place of death is stated as Auschwitz on the *Stolperstein*, but the true destination of her deportation train still remains unknown. Despite these changes in details, of greater importance is the fact that these victims of the Holocaust are finally memorialized by their own name and as individual persons, not only as part of an anonymous mass of human beings. Their names also appear in the online Memorial Book of the Federal Archives of Germany²¹³ and can be found in several other works of commemoration.

One of the older memorial sites for the victims of the Holocaust is the Fort IX Museum and Memorial Site in Kovno, which has been in place since 1958. It honors the memory of the tens of thousands of Jews from Kaunas ghetto and those transported from the *Reich*, who were murdered there together with other victims of the National Socialists²¹⁴. The turn of the millennium seems to have brought a new willingness to remember the history of NS atrocities in various parts of Europe. In 2002, a *Lapidarium*²¹⁵ was created at the site of the Old Jewish Cemetery in Kołobrzeg, now Poland. Gravestones from the Old and New Jewish Cemeteries of Kolberg were arranged in a Star of David pattern and inscribed in memory of the Jewish congregation that existed in Kolberg from 1812 to 1940, and of the murder of the Jews of Kolberg by the National Socialists. Several Jewish physicians are remembered by name, among them Dr. Magnus Hirschfeld, but not Dr. Leo Gross²¹⁶. In 2007, the community of Nordrach decided to create a memorial for the Jewish citizens, who had been deported from the *M. A. von Rothschild'sche Lungenheilstätte*. A commemorative stone was placed close to the site of the former hospital, but it does not include the names of the last patients of the hospital (Alemannia Judaica, 2003).

6. Conclusion

After 30 years of search for Dr. Leo Gross' biography, a reconstruction of his life is now possible. It should come with the cautionary warning that any such reconstruction can only be preliminary for two main reasons; firstly, it is highly likely that not all archival documents pertaining to the life of Dr. Gross have been located yet; and secondly and most importantly, the current reconstruction is dependent to a large extent on the use of autobiographical information. The latter has its own set of problems, as there is "a sharp distinction between what was remembered, what was told, and what was true"²¹⁷. Even the great care, which has been taken here to place the autobiographical data in a context of verifiable data from other sources, may not prevent entirely the occurrence of false conclusions. However, even if such a biography remains simply a construct, it is a first approach to the truth, and has to be attempted in the name of remembrance.

213 BA Gedenkbuch (no date)

214 Stiftung Denkmal (no date)

215 stone monument

216 Virtual Sztetl, Kołobrzeg (no date)

217 Powers, *The Yellow Birds* (2012), P. 60

This ‘posthumous’ testimony was facilitated by a confluence of fortuitous developments in research on the history of the Holocaust in general, of medicine during the Third Reich specifically, and of the increasing awareness of the need for individual memorialization of victims of the National Socialists²¹⁸. The open and equitable collaboration of an international network of scholars made it possible to harness specific expertise and language skills, and to connect new digital resources with traditional archival documents and publications from local historians in Germany. The successfully restored biography of Dr. Leo Gross once more underlines the importance of direct communication with the last survivors of the Holocaust, the preservation of their testimony, and the careful interweaving of their stories into the existing context of information. It may also serve as an exemplary case study for the future of Holocaust testimony.

The story of Dr. Leo Gross presents several questions that as of yet have not been systematically examined. Among them are: how often and when did potential emigrants from Germany travel to Palestine for exploratory purposes? Who were those travellers, how many doctors were among them? How many of the physicians did apply for medical licences, and where these granted? And finally, were there truly “some”, who “returned to Germany” in the manner that the Commissioner of Migration suggested in 1940, or was it only Dr. Leo Gross who remigrated? These questions remain open for now.

What has become abundantly clear from this preliminary reconstruction of Dr. Leo Gross’ life, is his embeddedness in a large family and a long tradition of Jewish life in Pomerania, Prussia and Germany. He was connected to the history of Germany and its Jewish community, and he was bound into a tight family network. Even in their disagreements the brothers Leo and Alfred come alive, and their brotherly bond shines through the narrative. And despite the fact that Ursula did not live with her parents, she was part of Leo’s continued considerations for emigration, and the main reason why he did not escape to Palestine in 1935. Ursula was not “without a network of family who could have supported her”, as the situation of the 31 single women deported from Nordrach in September 1942 has been described²¹⁹. Rather, this social network, which Ursula and most other victims of NS persecution could normally count on, had been completely disabled and destroyed by the NS regime and its policies.

Wolff Gross’ testimony, cross-referenced against data from other sources, enabled the reconstruction of the ‘lost’ biography of his uncle and family. The resulting narrative places Dr. Leo Gross in the social network of his family’s past and present, his country and his beliefs, and it serves his commemoration within this context. The destructive nature of the National Socialists’ persecution of Jews continues to act, if the victims are remembered without this connection to their families, including the survivors. The future of Holocaust testimony may depend in large part on the reconstruction of these family and community networks. Consequently, the correct title of

218 e. g. Weindling, *Victims and survivors* (2015)

219 Schellinger, *Deportiert* (2009), P. 23

the quest for Dr. Leo Gross has to be “Posthumous testimony for Dr. Leo Gross *and his family*”.

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