

The Jewish Community of Laupheim and its Annihilation

Book Pages 254 - 276

HEUMANN, Bertha, 17 Kapellenstrasse

Translated by: Theresa Klecker, Milen Ido, Sarah Hieber, Melany Vogel,
Andrea Kraemer, Da Hye Oh
Supervisor: Dr. Robynne Flynn Diez,
Ruprecht Karls Universität Heidelberg,
Institut für Übersetzen und Dolmetschen Englischabteilung

DR.. ANTJE KÖHLERSCHMIDT

[Beno Heumann, born February 27, 1856 in Laupheim, Germany, died June 26, 1932 in Laupheim], OO **Bertha Heumann, née Heumann**, born July 23, 1861 in Laupheim, Germany, died February 24, 1939 in Wil, Switzerland.

Richard Heumann, born September 30, 1885 in Laupheim, Germany, murdered September 5, 1942 in Auschwitz, Germany. OO **Luise Einstein**, born February 18, 1894 in Laupheim, Germany, died November 21, 1982 in Cincinnati, Ohio, USA.

Marianne Heumann, born August 13, 1920 in Laupheim, Germany, died October 18, 1991 in Bonnieux, France.

Franz Benno Heumann, born March 5, 1927 in Ulm, died 2005.

[Marianne Heumann, born May 23, 1888 in Laupheim, Germany, died July 11, 1965 in Wil, Switzerland], OO Eugen Brandenburger, born February 27, 1884 in Wil, died June 25, 1956 in Wil, Austria].

[Hedwig Heumann, born January 19, 1892 in Laupheim, Germany, died November 24, 1988 in Cincinnati, Ohio, USA, OO Wilhelm Westheimer, born April 5, 1888 in Erfurt, Germany, died April 5, 1961 in New York, USA].

The biography of this branch of the Heumann family stands out among the many other stories recorded in this book of Jews from Laupheim as particularly dramatic and tragic. During the first nationwide anti Semitic, hate campaign on April 1, 1933, the Nazis made an example of Richard Heumann in Laupheim by forcing him to resign from his position as director of the *Gewerbebank*¹. Consequently, his family fled to Paris, where French authorities arrested Richard Heumann as an alleged collaborator with Germany after a Nazi attack on France. Ultimately, he was captured by Nazis, deported to the Auschwitz concentration camp and murdered there. Franz Heumann, his son, who later changed his name to Frank Homan, wrote the "Memoirs 1927 to 1946". We have him to thank for the preservation of countless details about the family's exiled life in France, Richard Heumann's letters from Camp de Gurs to relatives, as well as the perilous escape from France to Switzerland with the help of the French Resistance, so that we could retell their story in this commemorative book.

The Family of Beno und Bertha Heumann

The family's story begins in Laupheim, where the extended Heumann family had been living for generations. The following information could be found about the 76 year old father of the family, Beno Heumann, who died June 26, 1932:

"The banker Beno, also called Baruch, held many offices: Bankteller of the Gewerbebank in Laupheim, head of the Jewish community, council member, member of the 'Laupheimer Werkzeugfabrik'² supervisory board, founder and long term chairman of the local group and the 'Central Verein'³ in Laupheim, authorized representative of Carl Lämmle in Laupheim, supervisor of socage, secretary and later head of the Jewish Superior Council, representative of the Broad Jewish Federal State Authority in the constituency of Ulm as well as member of the national church assembly from 1918 to 1924."

(Hüttenmeister, Nathanja: Der Jüdische Friedhof. Laupheim 1998. Page 506)

¹ commercial bank

² tool factory

³ Central Association



The range of these offices illustrates the natural coexistence of Christians and Jews in Laupheim. The city benefitted from their productive collaboration on an economic and local political level. However, the coexistence and collaboration would soon shatter, the consequences of which are evident just by looking at Beno Heumann's grave in the Jewish Cemetery in Laupheim (plot No. 26/3). It was supposed to be the final resting place

of both Bertha and Beno Heumann, who were married for 48 years. The right side of the tombstone was meant for Bertha's name, yet it remains blank because she had to leave her hometown Laupheim and flee from the Nazis to her daughter Marianne Brandenburger's home in Switzerland. Bertha Heumann died on February 24, 1939, in Wil, Canton of St. Gallen, and was buried in Zurich.



The family portrait below dates back to 1893 or 1894 and shows Beno and Bertha Heumann with their children Marianne (May 23, 1888), Hedwig (January 19, 1892) and Richard (September 30, 1885) (from left to right).

The couple, who were also cousins, married on May 12, 1884. They both grew up in Laupheim, where their families were also deeply rooted. They were already part of the third generation of the Jewish Heumann family to reside in Laupheim and their children continued on this path. They most likely went to the local Jewish *Volksschule*⁴ and at least Richard Heumann was probably a student at the *Realschule Laupheim*⁵ before completing an apprenticeship to become a banker. In doing so, he followed in his father's footsteps, who ran the family bank *Bankhaus Heumann* from their home at 17 Kappellenstrasse.



(“Laupheimer Verkündiger” April 15, 1915)

As is the case with many women, there was little evidence to be found on the life and work of Bertha Heumann. However, she is known to have been treasurer of the *Verband jüdischer Frauen für Kulturarbeit in Palästina*.⁶

Lotte Kwiatek, Hedwig Westheimer's daughter, remembers her grandmother fondly:

⁴ Primary school

⁵ Secondary School

⁶ Association of Jewish Women for Cultural Work in Palestine

"Bertha was an intelligent and proactive woman. She was an enthusiastic stamp collector and held correspondence with people from all around the world, with whom she also traded stamps. Her collection was very impressive. She was also good at knitting and liked to play solitary."
(Email from Frank Homan to Antje Köhlerschmidt on July 7, 2004)



Marianne Heumann was the couple's first daughter to get married in 1911 to Eugen Brandenburger from Wil, Switzerland. She then moved to Switzerland to settle down there with her husband. More than 20 years later, this decision would become the family's lifeline. The picture above shows the cheerful couple in later years, after the war.



Beno and Bertha's only son Richard Heumann served in the infantry during World War I. He achieved a promotion to Sergeant even though this was very unusual for a German of Jewish faith. During the Battle of Verdun in 1916, he lost part of his left upper arm. The shrapnel could not be completely removed and the residual pieces caused him constant pain. Later, he underwent surgery again in Ulm, which was performed by his close friend Dr. Mendler. As the doctor also enjoyed painting, he made an oil painting of his friend, which can be seen below.



Richard, Hedwig and Marianne Heumann (left to right) 1918.

On October 26, 1919, there was a double wedding in the Heumann house. Richard Heumann married Luise Einstein from Laupheim while his sister Hedwig Heumann married Wilhelm Westheimer, a merchant from Augsburg. Hedwig then left her hometown Laupheim, just as her older sister had done eight years before.

Richard and Luise Heumann

According to the *Adress und Geschäfts Handbuch für die Oberamtstadt und die Bezirksgemeinden Laupheim*⁷, the couple lived at 41 Kapellenstrasse, property of Simon H. Steiner. On August 13, 1920, their daughter Marianne, named after Richard's sister, was born there. Their son Franz Benno was born in Ulm on March 4, 1927 (left picture below). Marianne went to the Jewish *Volksschule* in Laupheim and can be seen below with her father (right picture).



Richard and Luise Heumann played an active part in the society of Laupheim and were highly committed to their community. Richard, for instance, was a member of the local *Schützenmannschaft*⁸ for many years and was honored along with many others in the seventh verse of the marching song composed by W. Pressmar in 1910:

"Zwei Heumann und der Schwed' marschieren an der Tet."

He was treasurer of both the *Freiwilligen Sanitätskolonne vom Roten Kreuz*⁹ and the *Verein für Heimatkunde*¹⁰ for many years. He also made various donations to the local museum such as a wooden Madonna from the Baroque period in 1927. Luise participated in women's gymnastics at the *TSV*¹¹ for many years and as a bank director Richard was very committed to the new gymnasium construction project. He was part of the

⁷ Address and business register of Laupheim

⁸ Association for shooting as a sport

⁹ Paramedic volunteer of the Red Cross

¹⁰ Association of local history

¹¹ Local gym and sports club

*Turnhallebau Verein e. V. 1924*¹², a committee founded by Jewish and Christian citizens for the construction of the gym, which managed to construct the *Bühler Halle*¹³ in 1927.



Richard was already director of the *Laupheimer Gewerbebank* in König Wilhelm Strasse at the beginning of the Weimar Republic. He guided the bank through the turbulent years of the young democracy, overcoming the global economic crisis in 1929 and the peak of the hyperinflation.

April 1, 1933

On Saturday, April 1, 1933, SA¹⁴ officials were positioned in front of the *Gewerbebank Laupheim* in König Wilhelm Strasse as part of the Nazi's appeal to boycott Jewish businesses, department stores, lawyers and doctors all over the German Reich. They put up a sign that read: "We demand the dismissal of the Jewish banker HEUMANN!", which can be clearly seen in the picture on the next page beside the SA official. The events taking place on April 1, 1933, have now been reconstructed almost in their entirety and vividly demonstrate the massive hate and pressure the Nazis directed at a renowned Laupheim citizen using just the flimsiest of pretexts. At 2 pm that same afternoon, in absence of director Heumann, an ordinary meeting of both the executive and supervisory boards was convoked to discuss the Nazi's demands. The committee agreed to request an explanation from the NSDAP before making a final decision concerning Richard Heumann's dismissal.

¹² Registered Association

¹³ Gym of Bühl

¹⁴ Storm Department

The station commander of the *Landjägerkorps*¹⁵ in Laupheim reported to the *Württembergisches Oberamt Laupheim*¹⁶ on the same day:

For this reason, Heumann was kept under guard this evening in the bank during the negotiations with the executive and supervisory boards of the Gewerbebank. At 5 pm, he was taken into protective custody and brought to the local, district court jail.

(State archives of Sigmaringen, Wü 65/18 T5 A No. 143)



Gewerbebank e.G.m.b.H. Laupheim in König Wilhelm Strasse on April 1, 1933.

(Picture: Archiv Günther Raff)

The person who primarily pressed for the bank director's so called "protective custody" was NSDAP district administrator and senior teacher Hörmann. He went to see the Chief of Police, Hohl, in the afternoon, presenting two phone calls by Richard Heumann as justification for the arrest. One of them was to Switzerland and one to a Mr. Friedland in Berlin, who was planning to move to Switzerland. According to Mr Hörmann, it was therefore risky to let him continue having access to the bank's assets. By mutual agreement of Mr Hohl and Dr. Dill, Interior

¹⁵ County police similar to the Gendarmerie

¹⁶ Highest administrative unit in the state

Minister of Württemberg, Heumann was then taken into "protective custody".

In an article of the *Laupheimer Verkündiger*¹⁷ of April 4, 1933, Hörmann claims that the arrest of Richard Heumann was exclusively for private reasons. This was an obvious lie used intentionally to defame him and again flimsy pretexts were fabricated to extend Heumann's arrest. Richard wrote a letter from the local prison to former lawyer Dr. Schmidt in Ulm on April 3, 1933, that exposed these pretexts:

"I've only learned about the reasons for my arrest today, April 3, when they told me I will be released if I just tell them who came for the machine gun."

(Staatsarchiv Sigmaringen, Wü 65/18 T5 A No. 143)

The machine gun was supposedly consigned to the *Gewerbebank* in 1919 for the bank's protection during the hyperinflation in the Weimar Republic and was returned in 1924. Richard Heumann could not remember having received or made out a receipt and was prepared to swear to this testimony even though it meant surrendering his passport to the police. That same day, he resigned from his position as director of the *Gewerbebank*.

Richard's wife Luise was not allowed to visit him until April 5. After two weeks of detention in the district court jail in Laupheim, Richard was finally released on April 14, 1933. The *Württembergische Oberamt* stated on April 11, 1933:

"The reasons given for his arrest at that time have now become insubstantial and extending his protective custody can no longer be justified."

(Staatsarchiv Sigmaringen, Wü 65/18 T5 A No. 143)

¹⁷ Local newspaper of Laupheim

N. S. D. A. P.

Gau Württemberg.
Kreis Laupheim.
Der Kreisleiter.

Zur Aufklärung!

Hüttisheim, den 3. April 1933.

An die

Gewerbebank
e. G. m. b. H.

Laupheim

Am 1. April 1933 wurde auf Anordnung der Kreisleitung im Einvernehmen mit Herrn Landrat Fiederer Ihr Vorstandsmitglied, der jüdische Bankdirektor Heumann, in Schutzhaft genommen.

Ich betone ausdrücklich, daß diese Maßnahme mit der Gewerbebank Laupheim in keinerlei Zusammenhang steht. Es handelt sich um eine Schutzmaßnahme, die nur Heumann privat betrifft.

Es ist also kein Grund vorhanden, der Gewerbebank irgend welches Mißtrauen entgegenzubringen. Ich lege Wert darauf, der Öffentlichkeit zu sagen, daß Ihr genossenschaftliches Bankinstitut im Interesse des Wirtschaftslebens unseres Bezirks ungestört weiterarbeiten soll unter der Leitung ihrer Herren Speer und Mohn.

Heil Hitler!

**Nationalsoz. Deutsche Arbeiterpartei
Kreisleitung Laupheim/Württ.**

gez. Hörmann.

(*"Nationale Rundschau"* April 4, 1933)

It can be assumed that the Nazis made an example of bank director Heumann, an established and renowned representative of the Jewish community in Laupheim, with two goals in mind: to intimidate and threaten Jewish citizens and to test the reaction of the Christian citizens in Laupheim. Just as in many other cities of Germany, there was no resistance against the April boycott in Laupheim.

According to records of persons in protective custody by the *Württembergische Oberamt*, eleven persons from Laupheim and Rot were imprisoned in April 1933 besides Richard, who was the only Jewish inmate. Some of them had been arrested for minor offenses against the

SA and NSDAP or their politics and behavior. News of these arrests probably spread quickly and certainly succeeded in intimidating the Christian citizens of Laupheim.

Abschrift.

Laupheim, den 3. April 1933.

Gewerbebank Laupheim e.G.m.b.H.

Laupheim.

Auf Grund meines Dienstvertrages kündige ich meine Stellung auf den nächst zulässigen Termin. Bis zum Ablauf der Kündigungsfrist bitte ich mich zu beurlauben.

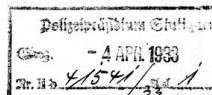
Hochachtungsvoll!

gez. Richard Heumann.



Beglaubigt! 3. 4. 1933
Laupheim, den
Urundsbeamter der Geschäftsstelle
des Amtsgerichts
Amrichter.

Dem
Landeskriminlapolizeiamt



Stuttgart

zur Kenntnisnahme. Das Originalschreiben wurde unmittelbar der Gewerbebank ausgefolgt, das diese Wert darauf legte, die Kündigung noch heute in die Hand zu bekommen. Dem Oberamt Laupheim wurde von dem Kündigungsschreiben Mitteilung gemacht.

Laupheim, den 3. April 1933.
Amtsgericht
Amrichter.

At the extraordinary general meeting of the *Gewerbebank Laupheim* on Monday, July 31, 1933, the chairman of the supervisory board *Schreinerehrenobermeister Mann* reported on the events of April 1 and voiced his opinion:

"Despite repeated attempts of the supervisory board to convince Heumann to revoke his resignation, it was not possible to change his mind. In accordance with the contract, Heumann's salary must continue to be paid until December 31. The chairman thanked the former director for his services in the name of the supervisory board and the assemblage and praised his achievements." (Staatsarchiv Sigmaringen Wü 65/18 T5 A No. 143).

Still in Laupheim

After Richard's family moved to the second floor of the bank building in König Wilhelm Strasse, he started working at a company called *Simon H. Steiner GmbH*, which traded hops and whose owners were close family friends. In 1933 and again in mid 1934, Christian family friends warned the Heumanns that Richard's life was in danger, which is why the Heumann family started preparing for their emigration.

On their way to exile

On the evening of July 17, 1934, Luise, Richard and their son Franz packed a few belongings and went to Ulm, where they spent the night at Dr. Hugo Neuhaus' place. The following day, they took a train to Zurich in Switzerland and stayed at the *Pension Sternwarte* at 37 Hochstrasse, which belonged to an uncle of Richard's, Alexander Heumann. The family lived there for six months, but as immigrants could not receive a work permit in Switzerland, Richard travelled to France, Spain and England during this time in search of work or the opportunity to start a new company. With the support of Alexander Heumann and a few others, he finally managed to found a company in Paris that manufactured white collars (which were attached to the shirts separately back then). He sent his daughter Marianne to Paris as an Au Pair for a French family before the rest of the family relocated to France in January 1935. Her responsibilities included taking care of the family's three young children, and in return, they supplied meals and housing for her.

Paris: 1935 to 1939

Once in Paris, the Heumann family moved into a small, furnished apartment at 92 Rue George Lardennois near the *Bastille*. It soon turned out that the white collar company could not employ everyone, and Richard was forced to leave the business. With the help of a family member, most likely Luise's brother from Washington, Hugo Einstein, they purchased a small launderette called *Blanchisserie POUR VOUS* in rue d'Hauteville in the tenth arrondissement of Paris. The income from this small shop was enough to provide for the family for the next few years. After moving once more, the family rented an unfurnished apartment on the fifth floor across the street from their launderette. They furnished their new home with the furniture from Laupheim, as they had finally managed to have it shipped to Paris. Among the furniture were antiques and paintings Richard had once collected, which would later become their financial lifesaver. In 1935, when Franz was eight years old, his parents sent him to a summer camp by the Atlantic coast near St Nazaire. As no one else spoke German there, Franz had to learn to speak French, which he did almost fluently by the

end of six weeks in camp. With the end of summer, he was enrolled in the *Ecole Communale de Garçons*¹⁸ at 5 Rue Martel. In 1938, Franz managed to pass the entrance exam to the *Lycée Montaigne*¹⁹ in the *Quartier Latin*²⁰ with the help of his sister Marianne and private tutoring.



Luise and Richard Heumann in front of their launderette.

¹⁸ Local elementary boy's school

¹⁹ University in Paris, still exists today

²⁰ Latin Quarter of Paris



Richard Heumann and Emanuel Einstein in Paris.

1938 was also the year in which Luise's father, Emanuel Einstein, left Laupheim, now under Nazi control, and came to Paris to live with his daughter's family. He was already 73 years old by the time he moved, yet was always energetic and very active. His wife Mathilde Einstein (née Levi) had died on July 22, 1937, in Laupheim.

Richard's daughter Marianne also lived in their house at that time and worked as a tailor for a couturier. At the same time, she took care of all the office and secretarial duties of an import and export company founded in 1938 by her father Richard and another German refugee, Hans Salm. However, this company was never fully established due to the outbreak of World War II in 1939.

In May 1939, Richard and his sisters Marianne Brandenburger and Hedwig Westheimer, as heirs of the family home at 17 Kapellenstrasse in Laupheim, sold it to a woman from Biberach called Rosa Fischbach. As a change in the political situation was not expected anytime soon, their decision could be considered the end of the Heumann family's history in Laupheim.

To grandfather Emanuel Einstein's great joy, 13 year old Franz celebrated his *bar mitzvah* in 1940 in a synagogue in Paris.

Outbreak of World War II

Following Germany's attack on Poland on September 1, 1939, France demanded the retreat of the German army. Heedless of this, the German soldiers overtook the whole country within three weeks as agreed in the Secret Protocol of the Molotov Ribbentrop Pact. Until spring in 1940, France was in a state of deceptive peace, during which the French government swept their territory in search of "enemy foreigners" and brought them into custody at the Vel d'Hiver, a large stadium near Paris. Despite his status as a "stateless/former German", Richard was considered a German citizen and ordered to go to the stadium, where he was detained for a long time in November 1939 together with thousands of other people. After signing a written oath in which he swore loyalty to France, Richard was released. But just six months later, in May 1940, he was ordered by French authorities to return to the Vel d'Hiver.

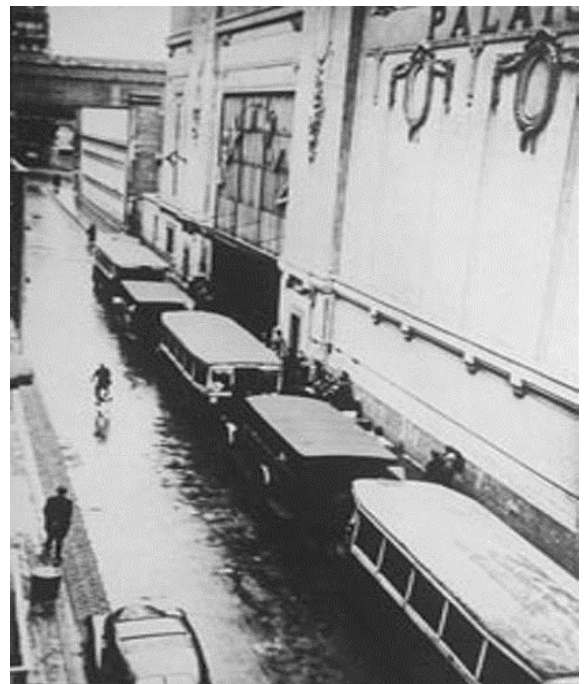
Frank R. Homan alias Franz Heumann:

"I remember going to the entrance of the Vel d'Hiver stadium with my father in May 1940. We took the metro, and he only had a small suitcase with him. That was the last time I saw him."

(Frank Homan: "Memoirs 1927 to 1946", page 20)

Busses in front of the Vel d'Hiver

As the French were afraid of a so called "fifth column", there were many arrests of mostly Jewish refugees from Germany. At this point, Hitler's Germany had already attacked the Netherlands, Belgium and Luxemburg. France had to rely on the Maginot Line bordering Germany to defend their territory and the threat of an invasion through occupied Belgium was imminent. After Richard was arrested for the second time, the rest of his family continued living much as before, with Luise running the launderette and Franz going to school. When Germany finally invaded France in early June 1940, Paris was gripped by terror and fear. Ten million people fled south in a mass exodus, among them Luise and Franz Heumann and Emanuel Einstein. On June 10, 1940, they fled together with a friend called Hanna Vogel and her two children Hans and Walter in their car, though they still advanced very slowly in the overflowing streets of Paris. Just 25 kilometres south of Paris, near Versailles, the group was forced to leave the car behind because of a faulty battery and fuel

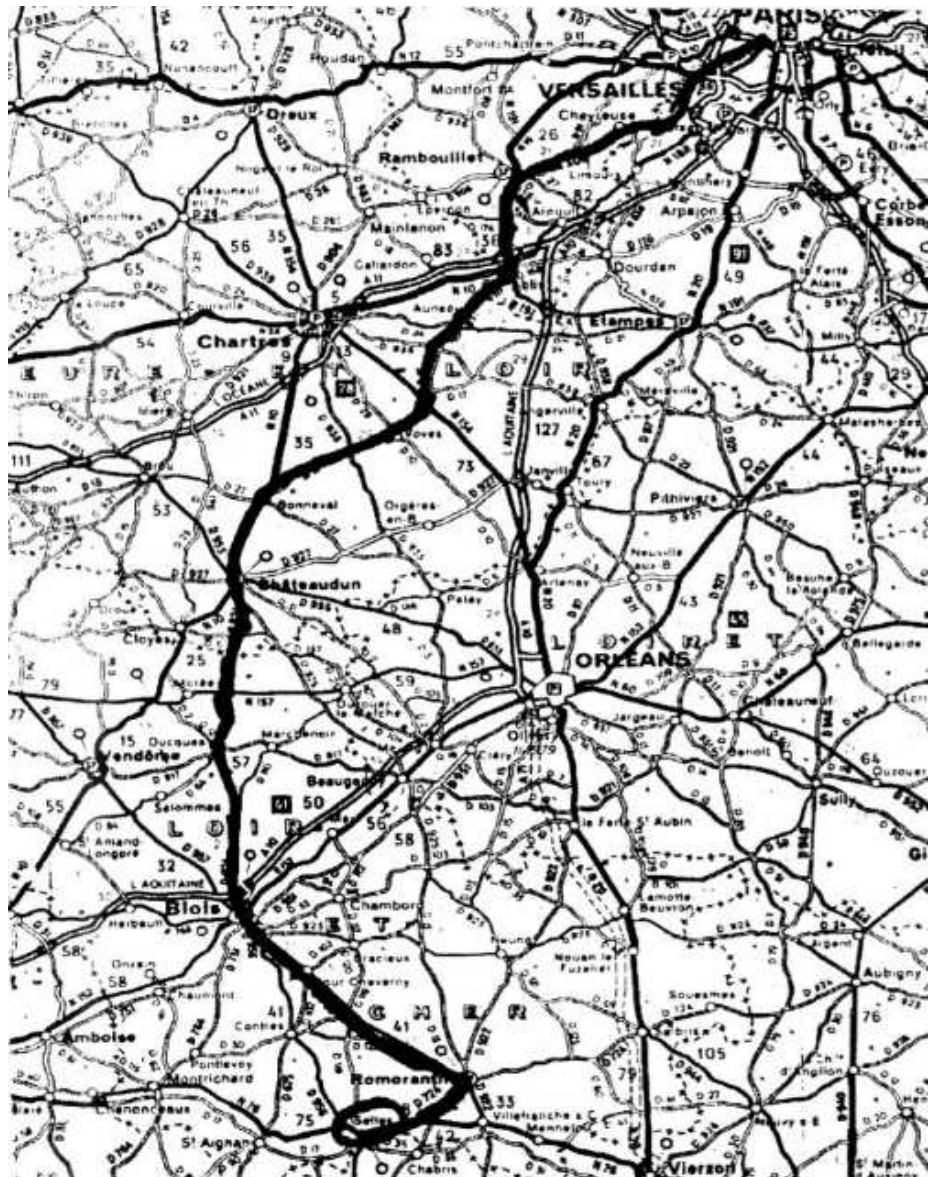


shortage. The six of them, aged 11 to 75, continued to flee on foot, travelling past Châteaudun, Blois and Romorantin to Selles sur Cher.

Frank Homan recorded his first experience with war:

"We heard the airplanes while we were crossing a small village just a few hundred feet behind a small convoy made up of fire trucks, some handcarts, and people on foot. It was a soft sound in the distance at first, but then it became louder and louder,

followed by the over revved sound of the German Messerschmidt Sturzkampfbomber²¹ called Stukas²² in a nosedive. Then we heard the sound of machine guns. We ran for the doorway of the nearest house. When we came back out, we saw people from the convoy, seemingly wounded and covered in blood, in urgent need of help. All this made a very strong impression on me and just as Hans and Walter Vogel, the other two boys with us, I thought this was no longer an interesting adventure. We were so scared!"
(Frank Homan: "Memoirs 1927 to 1946", pages 25/26)



Flight route from Paris to Selles sur Cher.

(Frank Homan: "Memoirs 1927 to 1946", page 44)

²¹ German dive fighter plane

²² Short for *Sturzkampfbomber*

Sleep was scarce during the nights, which they sometimes spent in the open, as the frightening noises of airplanes and bombs exploding in the distance kept them awake. In addition to a lack of sleep, the group was exhausted from their daily travels and lack of food. On June 16 or 17, they finally reached the outskirts of Selles sur Cher. When they found themselves in the midst of an artillery unit on motorcycles and trucks carrying armed soldiers, they realized in horror that they had ended up in the middle of a German *Wehrmacht*²³ unit. Though the soldiers were not interested in unarmed civilians and appeared friendly, the two families continued traveling in constant fear that someone would ask for their identification and realize they were Jewish refugees from Germany. The group of six found accommodations in a French village in the house of family Courtas, who gave them not only a place to sleep, but also provisions and any other kind of support they needed. It was pure luck that the German troops did not invade that very village. On June 22, 1940, Marshal Philippe Petain, the new head of the French government in exile, signed an armistice agreement with Hitler and fixed a demarcation line between occupied and unoccupied France. This line ran through Selles sur Cher, with the river Cher as its border. The families unfortunately ended up in the occupied territory. Hanna Vogel had found out by then that her husband Simon Vogel was staying at a camp in unoccupied France, and with the help of the Courtas, she managed to cross the demarcation line with her two sons. After reuniting with husband and father Simon Vogel, they set off on a lifesaving flight to the USA over Spain and Portugal in 1940. Luise, Franz and Emanuel, however, now had to figure out what to do. They had no news of Richard and their financial situation was so poor, so after six weeks with the Courtas family, they finally decided to return to Paris. Their decision was also influenced by Jean Courtas, their host family's son, who was a police inspector in Paris and sent them favorable reports from the capital that did not confirm a persecution of Jews there. In late July 1940, Jean Courtas picked up the Heumann family at the Paris train station and brought them back to their apartment, which was in the exact same state as they had left it in.

²³ German Armed Forces

July 1940 to August 1942

German occupation troops were now present on the streets of Paris and food, fuel and other resources had been rationed. Nevertheless, the returnees tried to continue living as they had before leaving. Luise Heumann reopened her small launderette and Franz went to the Lycée St Louis. Their lives played out without tribulations for the next few months, but the German army posed a constant threat and by 1941, Jewish people in France were no longer safe. In September, the family had to register as *Juifs* (Jews) and was forced to sew the well known yellow Star of David onto their sleeves shortly thereafter. They even had to display this star in the launderette's front window so everyone would know it was owned by Jews. They also had to pay additional fees as owners of the launderette.

During this time, Luise Heumann repeatedly tried to find out the fate of her husband from the *Gestapo*²⁴. She was unsuccessful, but Richard himself managed to reestablish contact with his family through letters and told them what had happened to him: In May 1940, he had been transferred from the Stadium Vel d'Hiver to a camp in St Antoine near Albi (Tarn). He was able to leave the camp for a short time during which he met with the Vogel family in Oloron after they had fled across the demarcation line. Soon afterwards, Richard was deported to the infamous Camp de Gurs near the Pyrenees, where living conditions were inhumane. He was once again permitted to leave for a short while during which he lived with a Swiss family called Schmitz in Tambouret, Ecosse. Then unoccupied France's Vichy government started cooperating with Nazi Germany and gathered all the registered Jewish foreigners as part of an agreement. They were prepared for deportation to Germany and Richard was once again arrested and imprisoned in the camp of Le Vernet. During his time in the camp, he established contact with his daughter Marianne in New York, the Brandenburger family in Wil, Switzerland, and of course with his family in Paris.

Frank R. Homan alias Franz Heumann:

„I have often wondered why my father never tried to flee to Switzerland or Spain during the time he was released and chose to live with the Schmitz family instead. There must have been several reasons for this, but the strongest reason was that he did not want to give up on us (his wife, son and father in law). I have now in my possession the letters he exchanged with his sister Hedwig Westheimer, who lived in New York at the time. They revealed his desperate attempts to procure a U.S. emigration visa and the necessary affidavits to move there. I am sure he believed, at least at first, that we could all be reunited in unoccupied

²⁴ : abbreviation of *Geheime Staatspolizei*, official secret police of Nazi Germany and German-occupied Europe

France. He obviously received no warning of his pending deportation to Poland. My father had always been the optimist of the family."
(Frank Homan: "Memoirs 1927 to 1946", page 44.)

On July 15, 1942, Jean Courtas, the Paris police inspector the family had befriended, came to the launderette and warned Luise, Franz and Emanuel about an upcoming police raid. As far as he knew, it would be the next day and the targets for arrest were mainly Jewish men. Following his advice, they hid Franz in their landlady Madame Gaudineau's home and on July 16, 1942, around 4 am, there was a knock on the Heumanns' front door. French police officers were standing outside and unexpectedly asked for Luise. They told her to get dressed, gather some luggage and be ready to leave the house in one hour. Luise refused to follow such an unfounded order and explained to the police insistently that she was very ill. Madame Gaudineau and Madame Morin rushed over to help Luise in the ensuing dispute and accused the police of cruelty. The whole house was in an uproar and after extensive discussions, the police finally allowed Luise to stay at home if she could provide a doctor's certificate attesting that she was fatally ill. Her doctor provided the document, but this incident made the Heumann family realize what was yet to come and nobody wanted to depend on luck to escape from such a situation again. They decided to ask Madame Morin to hide them in an empty apartment and help them prepare everything they would need to flee into the unoccupied part of France. This primarily meant money, false identifications and help to cross the demarcation line. To raise the money, they needed for the journey, they sold all of Richard's antiques that were small and could easily be carried, as Franz did not want to draw attention when he went to sell them to the antiques dealer. While he did this, he did not wear his yellow star either. The items he sold included an unsigned copper engraving of Mary and her child from the 15th century, a dressing table of King Luis XV, and several small oriental carpets. Although it was a great personal sacrifice for Emanuel Einstein, he even sold his gold pocket watch, a wedding gift from his late wife.



The occupied and free territories of France

The flight

The family hid in the empty apartment for three weeks during which they packed their belongings into suitcases and procured false identification. Then they boarded a train to Bourges, which was close to the demarcation line, and stayed a night there in a small hotel. The next day, they illegally crossed the border between unoccupied and “free” France by foot. They walked all the way to a place called Dun sur Auron, from where they travelled to Bellac. They lived there for two weeks, but on August 17, 1942, French police arrested them for crossing the demarcation line illegally and placed them on a train to the French concentration camp Nexon in Haute Vienne about 40 kilometers further south. They were only detained there for a short time, with men and women living in separate quarters. By the end of the week, 77 year old Emanuel Einstein was released because of his old age. Alone and unable to speak French, he moved back to Bellac. After about two weeks, Luise and Franz were deported further away to the camp in Rivesaltes and detained there.

Frank R. Homan wrote in his “Memoirs 1927 to 1946”, page 73:

“I remember that it was very large: almost two miles long with an area of 32 acres. The camp was divided in blocks of barracks, 150 in total. The large, single story buildings had a bare cement floor and no separate rooms. We slept on straw, men and women in the same place. I remember my mother asking me to sleep near her to protect her. There were no activities; all you could do was wait for the authorities to decide your fate. That year, October and November were very hot and dry during the day. The area was even known as “France’s Sahara”. The meals consisted mainly of celery and tomatoes, with a daily ration of bread and a weekly ration of meat and a package of chewing gum.”

Franz and Luise Heumann were extremely lucky to get out of the detainment camp. Had they not, they would have been deported east to the larger extermination camps and murdered there, which is exactly what happened a few months later to tens of thousands of the people detained with them.

On October 3, 1942, Franz left the Rivesaltes camp thanks to the children’s aid society “Œuvre de Secours aux Enfants”, which focused on saving children under 15 years old. Together with the other children, he was brought to a children’s home in Château de Montintin near Château Chervix by Bellac and Limoges.

On October 10, 1942, Luise was released from the Rivesaltes camp as well. She probably owed this to a woman she had befriended during her time in the Hotel Bellac, whose husband was influential in the Vichy government. At first, she stayed at a hotel near the camp in Perpignan and tried to procure exit visas. When this failed, she drove to Aix les Bains at the Swiss border to make preparations for her flight to Switzerland with

the help of Jewish organizations and the French opposition. During this time, she was in correspondence with both her son Franz at the Château de Montintin and her father Emanuel in Bellac. She even managed to get an official travel permit and in December 1942, the family was finally reunited in Bellac. Together, they travelled to Aix les Bains with fake documents, where they stayed another two weeks. Leaving France legally was impossible due to Vichy France's pact with Nazi Germany, so the only way to flee and save their lives was to cross the border illegally. On January 3, 1943, the family boarded a train to Annemasse, a French city and popular ski resort near Geneva. To avoid suspicion, Franz crossed the military controls at the end of the train station first with just a small backpack. The station was controlled by German forces with French police standing by to translate for them. Luise and Emanuel followed shortly after without incident.

Germany considered the region around Annemasse a potential area of illegal emigration because of its proximity to the Swiss border. Therefore, the Germans decided to place their own soldiers there to control the station located in Italy. A lucky coincidence made it so that the Italians had already left the border control but the Germans had not yet arrived to replace them at the time the Heumann family crossed, leaving the place unsupervised. It was at night that Luise, Franz and Emanuel crawled under barbed fences, crossed a stream and trudged through freshly ploughed fields before finally reaching friendlier terrain. They had made it to Switzerland!

Exile in Switzerland: January 1943 to 1946

The family spent the first two nights at the Hotel Geneva and then moved on to the *Scheller* guesthouse. They had immediately informed Eugen and Marianne Brandenburger about their arrival, and the Brandenburger's lawyer from St. Gallen informed the Swiss police that the Heumanns were allowed to stay in Switzerland and presented valid visas. This saved them from being sent back to France by the Swiss police, where they would have been deported and killed. Crossing the border alone was not enough to guarantee their permanent residence and safety in Switzerland.

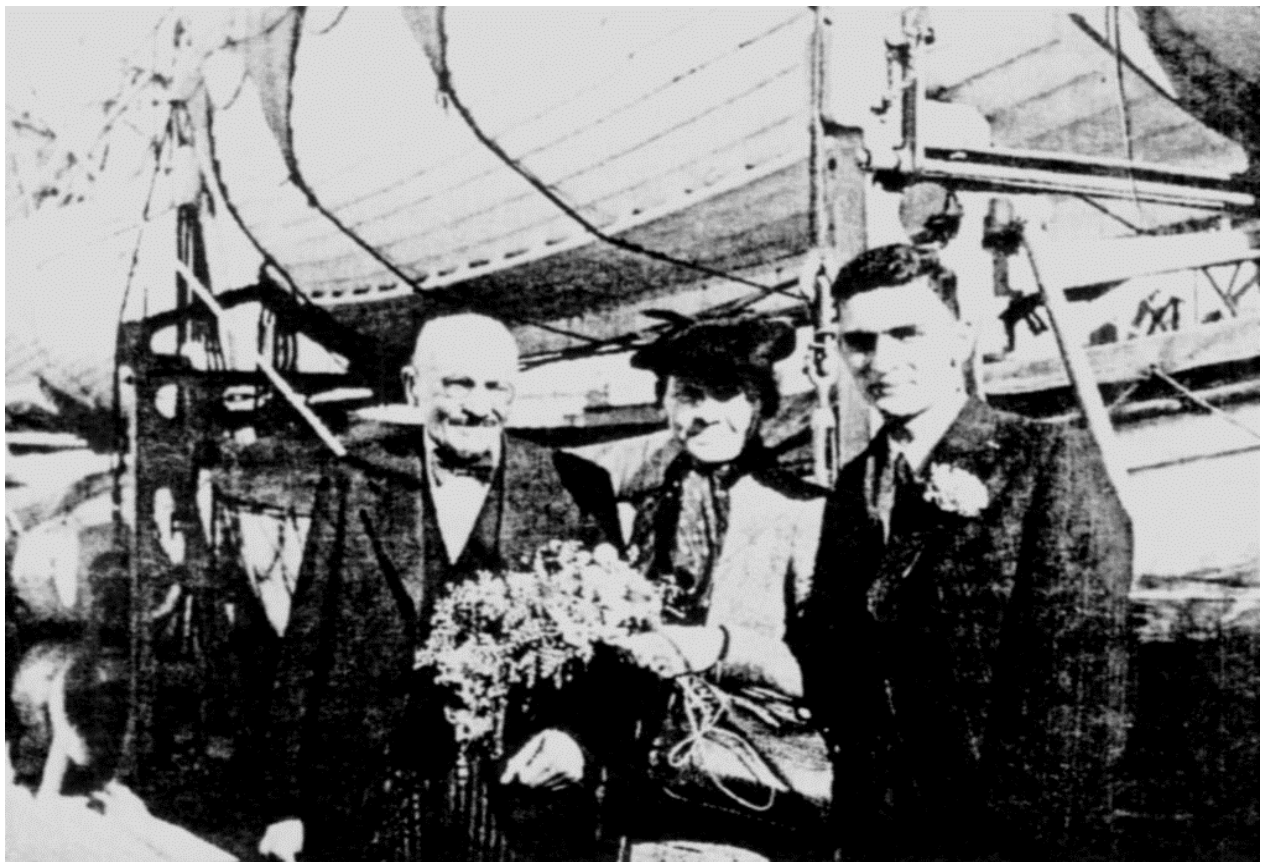
On January 18, 1943, Frank, Luise and Emanuel were allowed to visit their relatives in Wil with an official Swiss travel permit, where they spent the next three years under their family's generous support and shelter. During the first few weeks, Franz worked temporarily as a delivery boy and bagger for his uncle's apparel store. A few months later, his uncle found an apprenticeship for him at the "*Gebrüder Sulzer*²⁵" company, a worldwide leading diesel engine manufacturer for ships and trains.

²⁵ Sulzer Brothers Ltd.

Although he received no pay, he did receive training and further education at both the workshop and the vocational school, which was ground breaking for his future career. He attended evening classes to learn English, as they were already thinking about joining their relatives in the U.S. one day. Luise contacted various aid organisations to find out about the fate of her husband Richard, but had no success.

Emigration to the United States in May 1946

Once the war was over, Franz, Luise and Emanuel received visas for the United States, thanks to a declaration of guaranty by Luise's brother Hugo Einstein. He had immigrated to the U.S. in the twenties and was living in Washington, D.C. On their way to Göteborg in Sweden in May 1946, these three crossed first a bombed Germany and then Denmark. They left Europe on board the MS "Gripsholm" and arrived in New York on June 1, 1946.



Leaving Europe.

The first few years, the family lived with Dr.Hugo and Mary Einstein in Washington, D.C. Luise worked as a secretary for her brother. Her son Franz went to school there at first and later passed the final examinations for mechanical engineering at the University of Cincinnati, following which he started working for General Electric Co. in Cincinnati as a systems manager for jet engines. In 1951, Frank Homan, formerly called Franz Heumann, married Bernice Bibee with whom had three sons: Richard Paul, Steven John and Jeffrey Hugo. All three eventually started their own families and have children today. Frank Homan died in 2005 in Cincinnati. His mother Luise had moved to Cincinnati to live with her son's family in 1965, where she died at the age of 88 on November 21, 1982.



Frank Homan (Franz Heumann). Luise Heumann.

Marianne Heumann

Richard's sister Marianne had already immigrated to the United States in 1939 because her uncle Hugo Einstein had vouched for her. In New York, she started working as a tailor to make a living. In Paris, she used to work for different couturiers, but had to leave these behind along with the newly learned French language, her home and many friends. Since she missed all these things, she returned to France in 1956 and resided in a small apartment in the fifth arrondissement at the Place St André des Arts. She never married. Marianne worked in an art gallery before moving to Bonnieux, where she died on October 18, 1991.

Richard Heumann's fate

Luise contacted many organizations and institutions like the Red Cross, the Vatican and *UNRAH* in an attempt to find out what had happened to her husband after the war. She found out that the inmates of the camp in southern France were first sent to Drancy and then deported to extermination camps, primarily to Auschwitz in Eastern Europe. Despite the family's best efforts, they still did not receive absolute certainty.

It was not until April 15, 1991, when Franz Benno Heumann alias Frank R. Homan's research for his Memoirs brought him to the Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati, that he found his father's name on page 151 of the "Memorial to the Jews deported from France. 1942 to 1944" by Serge Klarsfeld. It seemed Richard Heumann was moved from the camp Le Vernet to Drancy near Paris on August 8, 1942, where the train was surrendered to German authorities. He was deported from Drancy to Auschwitz in Convoy 18 on August 12, 1942. In December 1999, Frank R. Homan learned about the existence of the "Sterbebücher von Auschwitz".²⁶ According to these books, Convoy 18 arrived in Auschwitz on August 13, 1942. Of the 1007 Jews 712 were gassed immediately upon arrival while 233 men and 62 women were spared only to probably be assigned work in different work commandos. Richard Heumann, detainee number 28171, was among the latter. By that time, he was 57 years old, an invalid and not capable of hard physical labour. On September 5, 1942, 23 days after his arrival, Richard Heumann died in the Auschwitz concentration camp.

²⁶ Death register of Auschwitz



Portrait of Richard Heumann by Dr. Mendler from Ulm.

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