

The Jewish Community of Laupheim and its Annihilation

Book Pages 327 - 31

KURZ, Siegfried,

Tobacconist, Kapellenstraße 33

Translated by: Maja Mrahovcic

HANS - GEORG EDELMANN

Siegfried Kurz, born on 1st April 1877 in Gailingen, died in Laupheim on 18th May 1939, married to **Laura Kurz, neé Hirschfeld**, born in Laupheim on 26th September 1880, murdered in Riga/Latvia on 5th December 1941.

– **Rudolf Kurz**, born in Laupheim on 9th August 1904, died in Leonia, NY/USA on 17th September 1999.
Siegfried Kurz's brother-in-law and sister:

Rubin Schwarz, born in Rexingen on 2nd May 1865 and wife **Melanie, neé Kurz**, born in Gaoilingen on 26th January 1875. Moved from Horb to Laupheim on 30th April 1938, both murdered 1943/44 in Theresienstadt and Auschwitz.

Siegfried Kurz moved from his birthplace Gailingen to Laupheim where he married Laura Hirschfeld in 1903, whose parents owned the wholesale distribution of cigarettes *Leopold Hirschfeld & Co.* Siegfried took over the business of his parents-in-law. In a letterhead of 1936 the business is named as *Sigfried Kurz Kommanditgesellschaft, Generalvertretung der ESKA Tabakfabrikate* (Siegfried Kurz Limited Commercial Partnership, General Agency of the ESKA Tobacco Products) that has bank accounts at the post office bank in Stuttgart, at the German Gewerbebank and the banking business of Otto Heumann, both in Laupheim. According to his son Rudolf, the family belonged to the "upper class" of Laupheim. Siegfried Kurz served as a convinced German soldier in the First World War, initially at the front to Alsace and later for the General Command in Stuttgart. At the instigation of the political Land Police Office of Wuerttemberg, regional office in Ulm, his passport was withdrawn by the Oberamt Laupheim in a secret mission. After a year, Kurz asked submissively for the return of his passport to visit his sick brother in Zurich, Switzerland. However, it is unknown if his request was successful.

The family owned a car, an Opel P4, which was also used as company car. The Kurzs were on business trips a lot, they even had business relations that reached up to Mannheim. The cigarette wholesale business sold all types of tobacco goods and also delivered on consignment. Kurz's mother, who ran the station bar in Orsenhausen, had only a low income that was not enough to feed the big family. Contemporary witness Franz Erhart said that Kurz helped his mother to earn some extra money by selling a wide range of tobacco goods in her bar and he would only expect payment after she had sold all the goods. It is noteworthy that in 1925 there were 26 dealers in Laupheim who also sold tobacco goods as secondary business. Siegfried Kurz was a committee member of the funeral home Chavra Kadischa.



Sigfrid Kurz's tobacco shop in Laupheim, Kapellenstraße, photographed in 1930 at the traditional agricultural district fair. (Archive Theo Miller)

Sigfried Kurz was one of the 17 Jewish men who were driven from their homes in the night of 8th to 9th November 1938 and deported to the concentration camp Dachau on 10th November. Kurz was released from Dachau on 17th December 1938 and according to son Rudolf, died in Laupheim on 11th May 1939 from the effects of his imprisonment in the concentration camp.

His wife Laura Kurz, née Hirschfeld, whom Sigfried married on 26th October 1903 in Laupheim, was deported on 28th November 1941 under the cloak "resettlement of the Jews to the East" – official term "Evacuation of the Jews to the Reichskommissariat Ostland" (administrative unit of the Nazi Germany in the Baltic states) from Laupheim's western railway station first to the sorting concentration camp Killesberg in Stuttgart and later with 1013 other persons deported to Riga, Latvia. Laura Kurz did not survive and was declared dead on 21st September 1994 by the county court of Laupheim. "Time of death: 5th December 1941, 12 p.m."

Siegfried Kurz had an older sister, Melanie, who was born in Gailingen on 16th January 1875. She was married to Rubin Schwarz from Rexingen, born on 2nd May 1865. The family lived in Horb, in the southwest of Stuttgart. In April 1938 they moved to Laupheim, where they probably at first lived with Melanie's brother Siegfried. Later they were compulsorily displaced to Wendelinsgrube 9. On 19th August 1942, Melanie and her

husband were deported to the concentration camp Theresienstadt. Rubin Schwarz died in Theresienstadt on 20th February 1943, Melanie Schwarz was deported from there to Auschwitz on 16th May 1944, where she was sorted out and murdered.



*(Illustration says:
Jelousy is a plague!
High reward for
remedy against that.
Offers to Schropfer.)*

Much is known about Siegfried's and Laura's only son, Rudolf Kurz, thanks to an interview with Frank Häusler which was held in the United States in 1994, when Rudolf Kurz was already 90 years old.

Rudolf grew up in Laupheim and completed a three-year apprenticeship at the Gewerbebank Laupheim. Through business relations he started working for the Commerzbank in Mannheim in 1924. Later, Rudolf worked in the office of a butcher shop in Karlsruhe for a short time. Because of the bad state of health of his father, Rudolf had to take over his parent's business. Nevertheless, Rudolf and his father Siegfried went on larger business trips in Wuerttemberg and Baden together. On 6th August 1937 Rudolf Kurz married his cousin Irma Bergmann, neé Schwarz, which was, however, forbidden by the legal situation of that time. The marriage was only possible thanks to the intervention of Völk, a friend who worked as the city councillor. Irma Kurz was born in Horb in October 1906. She had first been married to Ferdinand Bermann from Rottweil. The couple had one daughter, Beate (later called Beatrice), who was born in Pforzheim on the 18th August 1924. After the death of her husband Ferdinand, Irma married Rudolf Kurz. Rudolf's membership in the tennis club and his participation in the dancing lessons held by the dancing school Geiger from Ulm, indicated that Rudolf was part of the wealthier and prestigious community of Laupheim. Before contemporary witness Franz Erhart emigrated to the United States, Kurz gave him the dance school's graduation ball magazine "Walzertraum" as a present. Although the participants of the dance lessons are only mentioned with their nicknames in the magazine, the nickname "Schropper" clearly refers to Rudolf Kurz.

The graduation ball magazine also includes a poem:

***"Der Schropper ist traurig ich glaub bald, er ist und oft auch
betrübt, in Staubs Lisbeth verliebt."***

("Schropper is sad and often worried, in love with Staub's Liesbeth he is".)

(Elsbeth Staub was master gardener Staub's daughter, they lived in Rabenstraße, Laupheim)

Rudolf Kurz sang in the synagogue's choir and in the Jewish singing club "Frohsinn" under the direction of Dworzan. Rudolf was furthermore part of the German-Jewish youth movement, which is the reason why the political police of Wuerttemberg, seated in the Ministry of the Interior in Stuttgart, suspected him of running a Jewish youth hostel in Laupheim, so his post was monitored. However, the process was stopped one year later, in January 1934, when Laupheim's mayor and the police confirmed that Kurz only financially supported travelling Jewish adolescents. A Jewish youth hostel never existed.

Rudolf Kurz saw himself as well integrated in Laupheim's society and even described the city as his home. Kurz said that in Laupheim, before the year 1933, also many Jews had been supporters of the German nationalism. They were fully taken by surprise by the anti-Semitism and the terrible persecution of the Jews carried out by the Nazis. Rudolf Kurz described his religious beliefs as liberal. As a child he regularly went to the Synagogue on Friday evenings and on the Sabbath, as an adult he only went there occasionally. Kurz said that having a meal together at the "Ochsen" afterwards and playing cards was very important. On Sundays they would also sometimes watch the football match of Laupheim's football team.



*Kapellenstrasse towards the north, on the right is Kurz's tobacco shop.
(Archive Theo Miller)*

In August 1937, Rudolf Kurz moved with his wife and child to Ulm. Thanks to Otto Hirsch, a friend of Kurz who worked for the Palästinakomitee, the family was able to emigrate via Luxembourg to Tel Aviv with just ten Reichsmark. The Palästinakomitee was able to transfer 1000 English Pounds. In Tel Aviv, Rudolf Kurz worked for a bank to gain new Jewish German-speaking clients. After Irma Kurz's Swiss life insurance was accepted as guarantee, the family emigrated to the USA in 1940. With the remaining family capital Rudolf Kurz joined a candy factory that was mostly financed by Americans. When Irma Kurz's daughter Beatrice (Beate) married Kurt Adler, who is still the leading importer of German holiday decoration, Rudolf Kurz joined the company Kurt Adler Comp in 1960. He worked for this company until old age. Rudolf Kurz died at the age of 95.



Rubin Schwarz, Rudolf Kurz's uncle from Rexingen, had lived with his wife Melanie in Laupheim since 1938. In 1941 they were compulsorily displaced to the Wendelinsgrube and deported to Theresienstadt in 1942.

(State Archive Sigmaringen Wü 65/18, T4)

Sources:

Lebenszeichen: Juden aus Württemberg nach 1933 published by Walter Strauss, Geilingen, Bleicher 1982. Interview with contemporary witness Rudolf Kurz by Frank Häußler, New York.

Interview with contemporary witness Fritz Erhart by Hans-Georg Edelmann, Burgrieden. Dance school magazine of 19. Sept. 1924 Museum für Christen und Juden in Laupheim. Diverse letters of the Oberamt Laupheim, country archive, photo archive.

Photo archive Theo Miller.