



A University of Sussex DPhil thesis

Available online via Sussex Research Online:

<http://sro.sussex.ac.uk/>

This thesis is protected by copyright which belongs to the author.

This thesis cannot be reproduced or quoted extensively from without first obtaining permission in writing from the Author

The content must not be changed in any way or sold commercially in any format or medium without the formal permission of the Author

When referring to this work, full bibliographic details including the author, title, awarding institution and date of the thesis must be given

Please visit Sussex Research Online for more information and further details

University of Sussex
School of History, Art History and Philosophy

Inter-generational diachronic study of
the German-Jewish Fein family from Leipzig

Rico Langeheine

SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL IN FULFILMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS

for the degree

MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

Department of History

May 2013

Contents

Declaration	3
Acknowledgments	4
Summary	5
Illustrations and Tables	6
1. Introduction	7
1.1 Description of the Study	7
1.2 State of the research.....	13
1.3 Sources of the Study	15
2. A short history of the fur trade.....	17
3. The beginnings and the origins of the family: 1800 – 1848.....	21
3.1 The family and the tide of Jewish history in Poland	21
3.2 Brody and the Fein Family	25
3.2.1 Brody – the trade and cultural centre of European Jewry.....	25
3.2.2 Nachman Fein’s youth and early adulthood.....	29
4. Leipzig 1842 – 1871 Times of Assimilation.....	35
4.1 Jews in Leipzig.....	35
4.2 Nachman Fein between Dessau, Leipzig and Brody.....	38
4.3 The naturalization of the Fein family in Leipzig.....	44
4.4 Nachman Fein in the fur trade.....	46
5. Leipzig 1871 – 1905 Getting established.....	51
5.1 Leipzig from the Foundation of the Reich to the End of the Century.....	51
5.2 Alexander’s legal career 1897-1905	60
5.3 Fein & Co. - growth and getting established	67
5.4 Alexander Fein und Elisabeth Klein.....	69
6. 1918 -1933 Security and Crises.....	71
6.1 An ambivalent era.....	71
6.2 Fein & Co. – Growth and change in the Weimar Republic	72
6.3 I want my life to be an experience, not a game - Gerhard Fein’s youth in the Weimar period.....	79
6.4 Times in Italy.....	86
6.5 Alice Lustig – the development of a liberal Jewess in the Weimar Period.....	92
6.6 Alice Lustig und Gerhard Fein – Love and Politics	99
7. 1933-1945 Emigration and Starting Over	105
7.1 Leipzig – London	105
7.2 Beginnings in London.....	109
7.3 Fein & Co. Leipzig – Reconstruction of an engineered downfall.....	112
7.4 Elisabeth Fein – a well-considered emigration	114
7.5 The years of decision	118
7.6 Outlook: War and post-war experiences	127
8. Summary	135
Bibliography	138
Appendix	146

Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis has not been and will not be, submitted in whole or in part to another University for the award of any other degree.

Rico Langeheine

May 2013

Acknowledgments

The story of the Fein family could be told thanks to the efforts of many persons. First of all I want to express my gratitude to Mister Stephen Fein in London who has not only supported financially in a very generous way the research done for reconstructing the history of his family. He also has contributed in several interviews and talks in his house in London where he explained important details about the history of his predecessors and where he had also shown an impressive understanding of the last two centuries of European history.

Without the help of his sister Kathleen Fein the study could never had been completed. Her remarks on the text, her re-lecture of the English version and her fructuous comments on all stages of the study has supported me immensely. Our common journey to Brody and the old Galicia has also helped a lot to concretise the historic importance of those interesting places.

I also thank my academic teachers Prof. Paul Betts, Prof. Wiese and Dr. Gerhard Wolf whose suggestions and commentaries accompanied the process of the creation of the present work.

Summary

The aim of this study was first of all to describe, analyse and reconstruct the experiences of the German-Jewish merchant family Fein. This micro-historical intergenerational diachronic survey begins in the first half of the 19th century in order to gain an insight into how, during the course of around 120 years, the political, economical, social and cultural conditions of Jewish life in Leipzig were perceived by and affected the family from within. Finally an outlook shall examine successive stages of the family's integration into English society after its expulsion from Nazi Germany between 1933 and 1938.

As well as comparing patterns of how the family assimilated and adapted both in Germany and England, the thesis also highlights how their perception of Germany changed. As a Jewish fur-trading family originating from Brody in Galicia, the Fein family started to settle in Leipzig in the 1840s and one can perceive all further developments as a representative example of an assimilated Jewish bourgeois family. However, the coming to power of the National Socialists forced the 3rd and 4th generations to migrate again, under drastic conditions which were very different from those of the family members first officially registered in Leipzig in 1862. As early as 1933, some family members were obliged to leave Germany in order to earn their living elsewhere. In 1938 this current culminates in the enforced confiscation of the family business Fein & Co. During this wave of emigration, most of the family members went to London, some to New York, but whatever the destination, they saw themselves once more confronted with the need to integrate successfully into a new society.

The stories of these two immigrations – from Poland to Germany, and from Germany to the England or the US – are set off against one another. Thanks to official archived material, private notes, family correspondence and a variety of other documents put at disposal by the family, as well as some oral-history interviews, it was attempted to carry out a group-biographical analysis of the family's history. This analysis is then being embedded into the historical context and the issues the Jewish bourgeoisie was exposed to in Germany. To do this, the family members' experiences of the regularly changing political regimes in Germany are considered: the Kingdom of Saxony, the German Reich from 1871, the era of the Wilhelmism, the Weimar Republic and the National Socialist 3rd Reich.

Illustrations and Tables

List of Illustrations

Figure 1: Map of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.....	23
Figure 02: Brody Synagogue.....	27
Figure 03: From “Leipziger Meßszenen” by Georg E. Opitz, “Die Polen”.....	38
Figure 04: Christian G. H. Geißler “Leipzig Messeszene, 1922”.....	48
Figure 05: Guesthouse “Zum Tiger” in 1870.....	49
Figure 06: Franz von Lenbach: Brustbild Bismarck, around 1890.....	68
Figure 07: Friedrich Hecker with the so called Hecker hat	68
Figure 08: Storage room for furs.....	73
Figure 09: Fairytalehouse in Leipzig.....	76
Figure 10: Lattermanns Hof around 1900.....	77
Figure 11: View of the Irmgardhaus.....	96

List of Tables

Table 01: Fur types per continent.....	19
Table 02: Jewish visitors to the Leipzig fairs.....	36
Table 03: Income in marks of selected categories of salaried employees.....	59
Table 04: Gerhard Fein’s Business Trips 1934-1938.....	110
Table 05: Gerhard Fein’s Income 1933-1945.....	111
Table 06: Chart showing Fein & Co.’s bank debts 1928-1932.....	112
Table 07: Deaths at Buchenwald concentration camp.....	122
Table 08: Export Trade 1935-1941.....	131

„Leider gelingt es nicht, mit den Namen lebendige Vorstellungen zu verbinden. Die Zeit frisst ihre Kinder mit Stumpf und Stiel und nur ein blasser Name bleibt zurück.“

Letter from Albert Einstein to Rabbi Dr. A. Tänzer dated May 23rd, 1930 in which he thanks the Rabbi for having sent him a detailed genealogy of the Einstein family.

1. Introduction

1.1 Description of the Study

According to today's decision and to the corresponding minutes, we hereby issue Mr Nachman Fein from Brody a provisional warrant to confirm that after having been granted civil rights by the state authorities, the very same will be received into the association of local communities.¹

This official document, signed by four Councillors and issued on December 13th, 1869 by the Leipzig City Council, can be seen as the corner stone of the transnational life stories of the Galician Jewish merchant Nachman Fein and his descendants over six generations. The warrant actually never lost its temporary validity, but that was certainly not the intention of the Councillors who vouchsafed for Nachman Fein that day. To what extent he and his family imagined that their rights would only be of limited duration will be discussed subsequently. What is certain, however, is that the permission granted to Nachman made Germany the family's home for more than six decades, during which time also a strong international and transatlantic component was unwittingly embedded into their history. Today the family's diaspora lives all over the world, in countries such as the UK, the USA, Italy, France, Canada, Australia and Israel, all of which they consider as their homes. The following study is an attempt to reconstruct the experiences, viewpoints and life-styles of a German-Jewish middle-class family, and to use their saga as a narrative for the German-Jewish history of the 19th and 20th centuries.

The story begins in the second decade of the 19th century in the Galician town of Brody. There, Nachman Fein trained as a fur and hare skin trader, thereby planting the seeds for his progeny's rapid rise to prosperity over the next hundred years. He subsequently became an independent fur and skin trader and developed close trade relations with Leipzig, which at that time was the centre of the European fur trade.

¹ Leipziger Stadtarchiv WLA 26947, Blatt 008, translation R.L.

These business connections were certainly instrumental in the decision to settle with his family in Saxony, or at least facilitated the move.

Having successfully emigrated, the family went through all the stages of assimilation into the German middle class, also undergoing the acculturation of the German Jewish bourgeoisie. Only two generations later one of the family members had obtained a Law Degree and become a Doctor of Law. Concurrently, in the wake of astute marriage arrangements made in the very first years of the 20th century, the small commissioner's business was turned into a major world-wide wholesale fur and skin concern which remained in existence until 2010.

As a result of Hitler's accession to power in 1933, the family members, who were by then part and parcel of the German bourgeoisie, found themselves uprooted and forced to flee within Europe or beyond. Part of the family emigrated to England, which provided security to Jewish refugees, others fled via neighbouring Belgium or the Spanish port of Bilbao as far as Palestine, the United States of America, Canada and other distant destinations. In their new homelands, the various family members once again integrated and underwent profound acculturation, this time building on the stepping stones of their social, economic and academic achievements during their time in Leipzig.

That having been said, the Feins were not spared by the catastrophe of the Shoa. One branch of the family was unable to leave Germany early enough and had to share the destiny of the majority of European Jewry: They were exterminated in Auschwitz and Theresienstadt.

This research aims to reconstruct the historical development of the Fein family in order to answer specific micro-historical questions with the help of scholarly, concrete analytical tools. In particular, it uses the methodological instrument known as the diachronic inter-generational analysis of a group of persons (diachrone intergenerationelle Personenverbandsstudie) developed by Elisabeth Kraus in her study of the German-Jewish family Mosse. This instrument makes it possible both to chart a family's gradual rise to the middle classes through the prism of their individual judgements and perceptions, and to depict their respective broader European and global experiences.² The intention is to use a micro-historical lens to give a concrete account of how quintessential concrete research on individuals can throw light on the Jewish

² Elisabeth Kraus, *Die Familie Mosse: deutsch-jüdisches Bürgertum im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*, München 1999, 15.

contribution to the ‘adventure of modernity’ over the last two centuries.³ Since the 1980s, individual and group biographies have been completely rehabilitated in historiography and are now considered as an acceptable approach to historical writing.⁴ As early as the 1970s social history and historical social science were criticised for depersonalising historical writing, in particular due to their strong focus on synthetic problem-oriented analyses of determining structures and processes.⁵ Subsequent to the linguistic turn and the discrediting of the idea that historical truth can be discovered behind language or discourse, social and historical disciplines moved into Postmodernism, and different methods were developed to target completely new fields in history, such as women’s and gender history, everyday history (Alltagsgeschichte) or micro-history. The representatives of micro-historical approaches were particularly concerned not to lose sight of the individual, be it in the anonymous masses, or in global historical processes. On the contrary, their goal was to embed each person into their description of structural historical processes. The historical process was thereby no longer understood “as a unified process, a grand narrative in which the many individuals are submerged, but as a multifaceted flow with many individual centres.”⁶

The present study adheres to these principles. Through the multigenerational group biography of a middle-class German-Jewish merchant family and their experiences, it attempts to draw general conclusions about the strategies and limits of assimilation and acculturation in the 19th and 20th centuries. It is committed to the axiom that, in order to achieve a kaleidoscopic perspective, every scholarly biography must link its personal narratives to the backdrop of the times and to academic analysis.⁷ By concentrating on individuals in their everyday lives and surroundings, the profound social transformations to which European Jewry in general and German Jewry in particular were exposed will be closely examined.

Indeed, the history of this particular Jewish family is almost continuously played out against the political and historical fault lines of the last two centuries of European history. As the developments mainly took place in Germany, the description of their

³ Victor Karady, *Gewalterfahrung und Utopie. Juden in der europäischen Moderne*, Frankfurt a.M. 1999.

⁴ Ernst Engelberg; Hans Schleier, „Zur Geschichte und Theorie der historischen Biographie“, *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft* 3,38 (1990), 195-217, 205.

⁵ Georg Iggers, *Historiography in the Twentieth Century. From Scientific Objectivity to the Postmodern Challenge*, Wesleyan 1997, 103.

⁶ Ibid., 103.

⁷ Christian Meier, “Von der Schwierigkeit, ein Leben zu erzählen. Zum Projekt einer Caesar-Biographie”, in Kocka, Jürgen; Nipperdey, Thomas (eds.), *Theorie der Geschichte*, Vol. 3: *Theorie und Erzählung in der Geschichte*, München 1979, 229-258, 230.

German experiences will occupy a central position. However, rather than concentrating on the dominant Shoa focus of German-Jewish history, the research undertaken here will adopt a transnational perspective, thus better encompassing the multiplicity and variety of Jewish experiences, both before and after emigration. Furthermore, through individual biographies, it aims to contribute to understanding how Jewish self-perception has changed over several generations, and how it was determined more by cultural and historical currents than by religious and traditional patterns. The social and mental intangibility of Jewish communities set against the structural shifts of European history is of seismographic importance for any analysis of modern times.⁸ Two main goals are therefore to be pursued through the concrete case study of a particular German-Jewish family. The first is to gain an understanding of internal-Jewish processes of change, the second, to draw a general picture of the shifting external realities of everyday life for European Jewry in the 19th and 20th centuries.

To achieve these goals, in the manner of Geertz, “a thick description”⁹ will be attempted by means of the four-dimensional analytical matrix presented below. The aim is to strive towards Max Weber’s interpretative understanding of, and causal explanation for the actors’ social dealings.¹⁰

1) The economic dimension

Initially a small wholesale commission business, the firm was registered in the Leipzig Trade Register as a limited commercial partnership in July 1903. After that, until 1938, it grew to become one of the leading fur-trading houses on the Leipzig Brühl, with business contacts not only in other European countries, but also in Russia and America. The company was in fact the family’s centre of gravity. Not only did it provide the economic foundation for the rise to the middle classes and for the academic educations acquired in the third and fourth generations. It was also the nerve centre of a transnational network which at first served only professional goals, but which, with the advent of political threats, also became a springboard for emigration. The cities of Brody, Leipzig, London, Paris and New York were thus not only important trading hubs

⁸ Dan Diner states: “[D]en sozialen und mentalen Geweben der jüdischen Lebenswelten [muß] angesichts der tektonischen Verschiebungen europäischer Geschichte in der Moderne seismographische Bedeutung [beigemessen werden].” See Dan Diner, “Geschichte der Juden – Paradigma einer Europäischen Geschichtsschreibung”, in idem, *Gedächtniszeiten*, München 2003, 246-262, 247.

⁹ Clifford Geertz, “Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture”, in idem, *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays*, New York 1973, 3-30.

¹⁰ Max Weber, *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft*, Tübingen 1980 [1922], 1.

for Fein & Co., but also constituted a coordinated system for the emigration process which began in 1933. The post-war generation of the family extended the trading network to China and Japan, and the business continued to function as an economical basis for the family's integration into British and American society. When the fur branch of the enterprise came to an end in 2010 the history of the company's activities covered a period of more than one and a half century and had involved five different generations.

In the course of this study, not only the firm's development within the framework of German capitalistic expansion will be portrayed, but a short cultural history of the fur trade and the hat industry will also be provided.

2) The political dimension

When analysing the family members' history, experiences and perceptions, their involvement with the political sphere must be given as much prominence as the economical considerations above. As Galician Jews having immigrated to Leipzig, their personal biographical development was always intimately tied up with the political events which were being played out on the macro-historical stage. Thus, particular attention will be paid to the following: the change in the laws after the Austro-Prussian war (1866), formal equality after the foundation of the Reich (1871), open access to educational institutions, the massive and sustained process of acculturation and the gradual accession to bourgeois status until World War I, the growing confrontation with anti-Semitic tendencies in the Weimar Republic, the loss of the freedom to exercise one's profession after Hitler's accession to power, the expropriation and arrest of certain family members in the course of the 1938 November pogroms, the irreversible emigration from 1933 to 1938, the loss of German citizenship at the beginning of 1940, the immigration experiences in England and America before and also during World War II. The analysis should thus be able to validate the underlying hypothesis that the repeated exposure to political despotism and arbitrariness over the generations led the economically active network to fulfil another major function and to be used as a protection structure against political pressure.

3) The cultural dimension: religion and education

The reconstruction of the Fein family story will additionally question how far their religious and cultural concepts changed, how much significance was attached to the

Jewish religion in specific generations, and to what extent secular traditions subsequently replaced religious ones. In 1897 the first family member attended the university. After successfully completing his doctoral studies at the Faculty of Law, he became an independent lawyer in Leipzig. Whatever the case may be, by the 19th-century fin de siècle, the family had succeeded in becoming member of the cultivated bourgeoisie and had acquired the related amalgam of Jewish and German culture. Education as the expression of a bourgeois lifestyle and as a guarantee of social advancement continues to this day to play a fundamental role in the family's self-perception.

4) The dimension of social involvement

The last key set of questions which must be addressed in this study concerns the social dimension. It will be necessary to determine how the members of this Jewish family moved around in their respective social contexts, and what contributions they made to society in the form of social commitments. Apart from active involvement, their perception of literature, opera, theatre, newspapers and the cinema, which all reflect the social and cultural developments of the times, will be examined. This exposition will additionally serve as an indicator of the depth of the family's integration into the society which it had made its own. Parallels, differences and possible patterns between the social commitments and the cultural responses between Germany, Great Britain, America and France will also be highlighted.

In order to achieve a broader narrative, the flow of the family's history will in general be embedded in the macro-historical developments of the respective periods. The determining historical and social patterns to which the family was exposed, and which shaped their consciousness, will be investigated, not least to bring to light the "mental imprints" („mentale Einkerbungen")¹¹ of the respective generations, which in turn were perpetuated from generation to generation. What is more, it will be necessary to examine the extent to which, in this particular family, a disposition forged by textuality, urbanity, mobility and trans-territoriality¹² can be revealed, and whether such a disposition can be differentiated from 19th and 20th century non-Jewish peoples characterised by national histories with more homogenizing tendencies.

¹¹ Cf. Diner, "Geschichte der Juden", 86.

¹² Ibid., 87.

1.2 State of the research

In the contemporary academic landscape research into the history of the assimilating and assimilated German-Jewish bourgeoisie of the 19th and 20th centuries is abundant. In Great Britain, the USA and Israel, and also in Germany, German-Jewish History as a discipline has for some decades now been considered as an academic sub-Faculty.¹³ Furthermore, in the course of the past two centuries, there have been countless scholarly biographical research projects in the field. Jews who at a given time achieved prominent status, great wealth or high office attracted particular attention, and the following biographical or family-biographical historiographies can be seen as representative of the genre: Albert Ballin¹⁴, Bethel Strousberg¹⁵, Carl Fürstenberg¹⁶, Gerson Bleichroeder¹⁷ or the aforementioned family Mosse from Berlin.¹⁸

On the other hand, the urban middle-class Jewry to which the Fein family definitely belonged, as well as rural Jewry, have, until recent years, been largely overlooked. In addition, in the ex-GDR eastern regions of Germany, the research into the 19th and 20th-century historical developments within the Jewish bourgeoisie is still in its early days, and on-going. Indeed, it was only at the end of the 1980s that former GDR historians turned their attention to German-Jewish history and began to explore the successive changes in social status of German Jewry from their emancipation to their destruction by the National Socialists. Leipzig plays a special role in this process. Although in Saxony legal regulations regarding Jews remained comparatively restrictive until the middle of the 19th century, Jewish actors had been influential in Leipzig since the Middle Ages, due to the town's renowned trade fair and its general importance as a hub for east-west trade.

¹³ Avraham Barkai, *Jüdische Minderheit und Industrialisierung. Demographie, Berufe und Einkommen der Juden in Westdeutschland 1850-1914*, Tübingen 1988, vii.

¹⁴ Eberhard Straub, *Albert Ballin. Der Reeder des Kaisers*, Berlin 2001, or also Johannes Gerhardt, *Albert Ballin*, Hamburg 2009, or Tobias Brinkmann, "Why Paul Nathan Attacked Albert Ballin: The Transatlantic Mass Migration and the Privatization of Prussia's Eastern Border Inspection, 1886–1914", *Central European History* 43,1 (2010), 47-83.

¹⁵ Joachim Borchart, *Der europäische Eisenbahnkönig Bethel Henry Strousberg*, München 1991, or also Manfred Ohlsen, *Der Eisenbahnkönig Bethel Henry Strousberg. Eine preußische Gründerkarriere*, Berlin ²1987.

¹⁶ Erich Achterberg, *Berliner Hochfinanz – Kaiser, Fürsten, Millionäre um 1900*, Frankfurt am Main 1965.

¹⁷ Fritz Stern, *Gold und Eisen. Bismarck und sein Bankier Bleichröder*, Hamburg 1999, or Karin H. Grimme (ed.), *Aus Widersprüchen zusammengesetzt. Das Tagebuch der Gertrud Bleichröder aus dem Jahr 1888*, Köln 2002.

¹⁸ Kraus, *Die Familie Mosse*.

One of the first chroniclers of the Leipzig Jewry wrote in 1930:

The Leipzig Fair has for centuries played a vital role in the life of the Jews of the continent. Jewish businessmen and traders are indeed also permanent guests at the Braunschweig, Naumburg, Frankfurt an der Oder and Frankfurt am Main Fairs. But Leipzig carries particular weight with regard to the spiritual and religious life of the Jews, and will therefore for all time occupy a special position in Jewish history.¹⁹

In East Germany scholarly interest in the historical development of Leipzig Jewry began in 1988, during the preparations for the commemoration of the 1938 Night of Broken Glass pogrom. The GDR administration gave official instructions to organize an exhibition to outline the history of the Leipzig Jewry, and one year later a book called *Juden in Leipzig*²⁰ was published. In the ex-GDR the process of coming to terms with the past dates back to that time. It continues until the present day and has already led to a large number of publications. There is nevertheless a regrettable lack of research targeting the reconstruction of the inner-Jewish experiences of the assimilated Jewish middle class. Although some autobiographical recollections or studies of former Leipzig Jews exist, academic historical group biographies spanning several generations are few and far between. The existing publications are predominantly general overviews²¹ which either consist of biographies of former Leipzig Jews²² or else focus on a single institution.²³ The present study aspires to help counteract this lack of research into the experiences of middle-class Jewish entrepreneurial families.

The Fein family's special connection to the fur trade makes the proposition even more appealing. Despite a large range of publications on the Leipzig fur trade, and with the exception of Wilhelm Harmelin's article "Jews in the Leipzig Fur Industry"²⁴, the

¹⁹ Max Freudenthal, „Juden als Messegäste in Leipzig“, in *Festschrift zum 75jährigen Bestehen der Leipziger Gemeindesynagoge*, ed. by Vorstand der Israelitischen Religionsgemeinde, Leipzig 1930 (reprint Berlin 1994), 5, translation R.L.

²⁰ Manfred Unger, *Juden in Leipzig – eine Dokumentation zur Ausstellung anlässlich des 50. Jahrestages der faschistischen Pogromnacht im Ausstellungszentrum der Karl-Marx-Universität Leipzig*, Kroch-Hochhaus, Goethestr. 2, vom 5. November bis 17. Dezember 1988, Leipzig 1989.

²¹ As representative publications can be named: Ephraim Carlebach Stiftung (ed.), *Judaica Lipsiensia. Zur Geschichte der Juden in Leipzig*, Leipzig 1994; Adolph Diamant, *Chronik der Juden in Leipzig. Aufstieg – Vernichtung – Neuanfang*, Chemnitz / Leipzig 1993; Ephraim Carlebach Stiftung / Sächsische Landeszentrale für politische Bildung (ed.), *Antisemitismus in Sachsen im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*, Dresden 2004.

²² Barbara Kowalzik, *Wir waren eure Nachbarn. Die Juden im Leipziger Waldstraßenviertel*, Leipzig 1996; Andrea Lorz, *Suchet der Stadt Bestes. Lebensbilder jüdischer Unternehmer aus Leipzig*, Leipzig 1996; Andrea Dilsner-Herfurth, *Hedwig Burgheim. Leben und Wirken*, Leipzig 2008.

²³ Josef Reinhold, *Zwischen Aufbruch und Beharrung. Juden und jüdische Gemeinde in Leipzig während des 19. Jahrhunderts*, Dresden 1999; Barbara Kowalzik, *Das jüdische Schulwerk in Leipzig: 1912 – 1933*, Köln 2002; and also Barbara Kowalzik, *Jüdisches Erwerbsleben in der inneren Nordvorstadt Leipzigs 1900 – 1933*, Leipzig 1999.

²⁴ Wilhelm Harmelin, "Juden in der Leipziger Rauchwarenwirtschaft", *Zeitschrift für Firmengeschichte*

special part played by Jews in this crucial sector of Leipzig's economy in the 19th and 20th centuries has not yet been researched. Furthermore, until *The Eitingons – A Twentieth-century Story*, published in 2003, no historical monographs of a single Leipzig fur-merchant family existed, and even this publication only sporadically portrays the Leipzig branch of the family, favouring developments in the Soviet Union, New York, Paris and Berlin.²⁵

This work therefore seeks to complement existing research and to analyse and reconstruct the story of the merchant family Fein by means of a micro-historical multigenerational diachronic study. After setting the scene with a short description of Jewish life in Galicia and Brody in the first part of the 19th century, the study attempts to gain an insight into how the changing political, economic, cultural and social conditions of Jewish life in Leipzig from the mid-nineteenth century to the Nazi times affected the family and its members' internal perceptions. It then examines the integration process into English society, made necessary by the forced emigration during the 1930s.

1.3 Sources of the Study

The sources to answer these questions are of different origins. Firstly, the published secondary literature is consulted to set a backdrop of the individual developments of the family members. Secondly, the study uses personal documents which were preserved in the family archive for several generations. Diaries, letters and other correspondences between several family members, personal notebooks and notes of different quality will allow reconstructing the perception of the individuals regarding the contexts in which they had found themselves over time. At the same time it also offers a possibility to understand the change of identity questions. In addition notes taken during different conversations with several family members are used, in particular an interview given by Mister Stephen Fein in summer 2010 in his house in London.

By using that kind of historical raw material it is always taken in consideration that personal remembrances and interpretations of current developments in the surrounding environment reflect only on individual experiences, opinions and explanations.

und *Unternehmerbiographien* 11,6 (1966), 248-282.

²⁵ Mary-Kay Wilmers, *The Eitingons – A Twentieth Century Story*, London 2009.

Furthermore they are often not completely reliable as individuals tend often in seeing their particular role as more important as it probably was. Interviewed persons often tend to change aspects of their own life or the lives of their relatives in order to favour their importance to a wider extend.

In addition documents from the Stadtarchiv Leipzig (town archive) and the Staatsarchiv Leipzig (state archive), from the archival collection of the Buchenwald Memorial, from the state archive in Kew's Garden in London and the town archives from Lviv and Brody are used.

2. A short history of the fur trade

Founded in the mid-nineteen-hundreds by Nachman Fein, the Fein family business dealt on the one hand in furs, and on the other in hare skins, which were used as raw material for the manufacture felt hats. The relative importance of each activity varied, depending on the epoch and the generation in question. For understanding the networks, patterns and structures in which the family was embedded for more than one and a half centuries it is needed to win a short inside into the historical and geographical determinants in skin and fur trade.

The use of furs for clothing is as old as the cultural history of mankind, and certainly even dates back to prehistoric times. More recently we find mention of animal skins at the beginning of Genesis.²⁶ In classical antiquity merchants developed trade routes and travelled far and wide to satisfy the demand for furs. Thus the Phoenicians established trade relations with Britannia and the Baltic, the Greeks and early Romans with the Scythians in Southern Russia, the Parthians in Asia Minor, and also with the Gauls and the Teutons. The Silk Road from China to Bagdad and Byzantium was also used intensively by fur traders.²⁷

From the 16th century onwards, Canada and Siberia became the main sources for the world-wide fur trade.²⁸ Indeed, in early modern times, the search for new fur reserves and the lust for gain had influenced the routes chosen for exploration voyages. The conquest of Siberia was largely due to the strong demand for Russian sable. All important Siberian towns were founded between 1580 and 1699.²⁹ Tobolsk, Tomsk, Jakutsk, Obotsk and Kjachta were thus used as military bases, and, outside the walls, as collecting posts for the Jassak, a tribute levied by Imperial Russia on subdued tribes in its eastern territories, and paid exclusively in furs.³⁰ As from the mid-sixteen hundreds, a yearly fair was held on the left bank of the Volga, near the Makarjew monastery, and amongst other export goods, Russian furs were traded in considerable volume.³¹ In

²⁶ Gen. 3, 20-21: "And Adam called his wife's name Eve, because she was the mother of all living. Unto Adam also, and to his wife did the LORD GOD make coats of skins, and clothed them."

²⁷ Emil Brass, *Aus dem Reiche der Pelze*, Berlin 1911, 11.

²⁸ Ruth Turner Wilcox, *The Mode in Furs. The History of Furred Costume of the World from the Earliest Times to the Present*, New York 1951

²⁹ Brass, *Aus dem Reiche der Pelze*, 11.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 12.

³¹ Dieter Falke, et al., *Deutsche und Russen im Gouvernement Nishni Novgorod*, Münster / New York 1995, 36.

1816, the fair was relocated to Nishni Novgorod, and until its abolition in 1929 remained, alongside St Petersburg, one of the main trading centres for Russian fur.

The exploitation of fur resources in North America began at almost the same time as the development in Siberia. After Christopher Columbus's four voyages between 1492 and 1503, the continent was progressively opened up, along with its fur reserves. English merchants were helped by Henry Hudson (ca.1565-1611), who, in 1610, penetrated the Arctic region, searching for a northwest passage between the Arctic Sea and China, which of course was not found until the beginning of the 20th century. However, Hudson sailed down what is now known as the Hudson Strait and far into today's Hudson's Bay, enabling English traders to establish contacts in the most remote regions. The Hudson Bay Company was founded in 1670. It equipped and carried out expeditions, and also organised trade in the North American regions, thus laying the foundations on which Canada would later be built.³² The Company

founded an empire as big as Europe, a trade empire as had never been seen before. It laid down laws, issued its own money, collected taxes and considered the whole territory as its very own, a private fur reserve which it would defend against all intruders, France included.³³

Besides Russia and North America, China had huge reserves of fur-bearing animals and became an active player in the international fur trade no later than 1789, when Thomas H. Perkins founded a fur-trading company in Kanton.

The basic structure of the world-wide fur trade described above remained unchanged well into the 19th and 20th centuries and naturally determined the global nature of the Fein family's business. But as much as the structure remained stable as much the fur trade was been subjected to changes in fashion, before as now.

In past cultures the wearing of furs was related to the ceremonial rights of monarchs and priests. In the Middle Ages and early modern times a multitude of different dress-code regulations specified who had the respective right to wear a particular kind of fur. So it was for example that in the 17th century only lawyers were allowed to adorn their hats with ermine, whereas doctors were only allowed fabric. Ermine coats remained the privilege of kings. The commoner's coat had to be made out of ordinary fur.³⁴ In the 19th century, the function of fur changed radically. It became a modish accessory, above all for women, who could combine in a single item protection from the cold, fashion

³² Cyril J. Rosenberg, *Furs and Furriery*, London / New York 1920, 3-10.

³³ Quoted in Fritz Schmidt, *Das Buch von den Pelztieren und Pelzen*, München 1970, 12, translation R.L.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 13.

and luxury. The ever-greater need for individuality within the middle-classes, the ranks of whom had grown so rapidly, was also reflected in their clothing. One of the first women's jackets made out of sealskin was presented in London in 1884. In 1889, at the Paris Universal Exposition the first Persian lamb jackets were shown, and then in 1900 coats made out of sable, mink and chinchilla were presented as fine items of clothing for the chic and stylish bourgeoisie.³⁵ Thanks to new techniques and methods in chemistry, dressing and colouring, a whole range of uses for furs were developed. Having always been sensitive to trends in fashion, haute fourrure developed and became, in the 19th and 20th centuries, a part of haute couture.³⁶ Alongside coats, collars, stoles and boleros there were also fur ties, shawls, bonnets and caps. Also, demand for different kinds of fur tended to fluctuate. As from the 1860s, sea otter, skunk, white fox, racoon and seal were in particular demand, as was classic Persian lamb, which, over a long time span, proved to be a mainstay. After World War I, silver fox came into fashion, above all for collars, capes and trimming for fabric coats. After World War II mink became the hallmark of the middle-class dress code.³⁷

Until the 1920s 75% of raw fur skins came from the wild. The supply chain went from the trapper, professional or small-time, to the collector and the exporter, who in turn sold the raw skins to the wholesaler. Yet the need for fur became ever more pressing and wild animal stocks dwindled drastically, some species even being hunted to extinction. As a result, serious endeavours were made to develop alternative means of production and by the 1960s proportions were reversed, with almost 70% of furs coming from fur farms.³⁸ At this time, about 175 different kinds of fur were being used world-wide. The global distribution these species illustrates the trans-continental nature of the fur trade and explains why Fein & Co.'s structure was so resolutely international.

Continent	Types of fur
Asia	53
Europe	45
North America	37
South America	17

³⁵ Ibid., 15.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Numbers in *ibid.*

³⁸ Ibid., 20.

Australia	13
Africa	10

Table 01: Fur types per continent, from: Fritz Schmidt, *Das Buch von den Pelztieren und Pelzen*, München 1970, 15.

For years North America and Russia dominated the market, with Scandinavia and China supplying the rest. Over the centuries, various cities grew to become neuralgic centres within the global fur trade, and this structure remained unchanged from the nineteen hundreds until after World War II.

First there was New York, which, thanks to Johann Jacob Astor, became centre of the North American fur trade as early as 1763, and which, after World War II, handled more fur traffic than any other city worldwide. Secondly, London is to mention, where above all furs from the Hudson Bay Company were traded, but also skins from Russia and the Soviet Union, Afghanistan, South West Africa and South Africa. Third main spot of international fur trade was St Petersburg / Leningrad, where, alongside the aforementioned fair in Nishni Novgorod, the bulk of Russian furs was auctioned. Fourth main point in the international fur trade network was Leipzig, which until the end of World War II, remained an important hub for the fur trade. Three of these four nodal points were particularly relevant to the Fein family history: Leipzig, London and New York.

From the mid-nineteen hundreds until the 1960s, when hats went out of fashion, the second mainstay of the Fein family business was the hare and rabbit skin trade. Indeed, the felt for felt hats was manufactured from the fur of rabbit, nutria or beaver, which therefore played a major role in that industry. A more detailed explanation concerning this branch will be provided later in that study. What is more, the trade in hare and rabbit skins was carried on locally, since, for the most part, these skins came from on-site animal farms. Fein & Co. would buy the raw products in Saxony or in nearby regions, and then sell them on throughout Europe and also in large quantities to the USA.

3. The beginnings and the origins of the family: 1800 – 1848

3.1 The family and the tide of Jewish history in Poland

The earliest known official records relating to the Fein family are from the Galician town of Brody. An entry in the Jewish Community Family Register states that Nachman Fein was born there on June 15th, 1818. He is therefore considered as the family patriarch, the more so as it was he who later founded the fur-merchant business. Nothing is known about his parents, except that his father's name was Chaim Fein.³⁹ Genealogical research carried out prior to this study was unable to throw much new light on the history of the family before Nachman.⁴⁰ Tracing the origins of the Fein family back to these early days is in fact extremely difficult. The name Fein itself could even point to Sephardim roots.⁴¹ A Jewish-Portuguese name Fain did indeed exist and could possibly have later been germanised.⁴² However, since sources for this period are not available, the hypothesis cannot be substantiated by hard evidence. On the whole, genealogical research into the history of Galician Jews prior to 1781/1782 is almost impossible, since it was only then that the majority of families were given surnames. In those years as part of his Edict of Tolerance, Kaiser Josef II made it statutory for Jewish families to adopt surnames. Until this time the overriding majority of Galician Jews had no inherited family names, and had used patronymes, or sometimes also matronymes, but primarily the father's names.⁴³ The genesis of the name Fein is hard to ascertain. And regarding family roots, the name can only give a limited indication, since the law stated only in 1787 that Jews must take on a hereditary German(ic) family name. The choice of names was

³⁹ Genealogical Study 2009 Routes to Roots Foundation, *Papers of the Fein Family*.

⁴⁰ This applies for instance to the research carried out by Miriam Weiner's *Routes to Roots Foundation* in various archives. Within the Fein family the story is told that their ancestors immigrated there from Hamburg in the 18th century. For the history of Jews in Hamburg see e.g. Günter Böhm, "Die Sephardim in Hamburg", in Herzog, Arno (ed.), *Die Juden in Hamburg 1590-1990. Wissenschaftliche Beiträge der Uni Hamburg zur Ausstellung Vierhundert Jahre Juden in Hamburg*, Hamburg 1991, 21-40.

⁴¹ With the destruction of the second Temple in Jerusalem in 70 AD the Jewish people was forced to leave their land. In the galut, the exile, two different cultures of Judaism developed: Jews settling in North Africa, Spain and Arabic regions were called Sephardim. Jews who went via Turkey, the Balkans and North Italy to what are nowadays Germany, Hungary, Austria and Poland were called Ashkenazim. Cf. Walter Mehlitz, *Der jüdische Ritus in Brautstand und Ehe*, Frankfurt am Main 1992, 14-15.

⁴² Cf. the list of Sephardic family names, 18. This list is available online:

http://translate.googleusercontent.com/translate_c?hl=de&langpair=en%7Cde&u=http://ifmj.org/pdf/sephardic_surnames.pdf&rurl=translate.google.de&usg=ALkJrhiOavh9AeQyL17GxEQCXmXBKXGQQg (03/11/2012)

⁴³ However, some of the Jews in Galicia had worn a family name before the new law was introduced. In particular, families of Rabbis did use surnames long time before such as Katz or Sack as did successful merchants of German or French descent.

generally bound up with corruption, given that the officials took bribes for the available names. Better-off Jews were granted names such as Diamant, Rubinstein or Saphir, others were named after colours such as Rot, Grün or Blau, others after their professions, such as Drucker (printer), Singer, Spielmann (minstrel), etc. Jews of lesser means or who were otherwise disadvantaged were attributed names such as Fisch, Ochs or Hirsch. Derisive names such as Ellenbogen (elbow), Pfefferkorn (pepper-corn) or Wallyach (gelding) were particularly feared. In any case, whatever the name attributed, they were immediately recognized as Jewish, and thus the onomastic difference between Jews and Christians was sealed for generations.⁴⁴

In all likelihood, the name Fein fell into the category of names or nicknames that were indicative of character traits, or purely arbitrary. There is also the theoretical possibility that the name Fein was originally a wine merchant's name which underwent the transformation from Wein ([w], of course pronounced [v]), to Fein.⁴⁵ For example, there were Jewish wine merchants called Fainberg or Feinberg (only the spelling differed) rather than Weinberg or Fein- resp. Fajinstein.⁴⁶

We know nothing of Chaim, except that he called his son Nachman. The name comes from the Talmud period of 200 - 500 AD and is derived from the Hebrew verb “לְנַחֵם” [lenachem], which means something like ‘to comfort’.⁴⁷ Nachman Fein was born into a community of Ashkenasy Jews. It had close ties with the destiny of Poland, which at the time could already boast a thousand-year history. In their collective memory their deeply-anchored relationship with the political sphere was particularly marked.

The history of Poland and its Jewish population is that of a checkered relationship fluctuating between tolerance, acceptance, prosperity, oppression and marginalisation. Despite the extremely limited source material, there are numerous signs of very early Jewish settlements in Polish-Russian regions.⁴⁸ However, a truly evidence-based representation of the beginning of Jewish settlement in Poland is scarcely possible.

⁴⁴ Cf. Dietz Bering, *The Stigma of Names: Antisemitism in German Daily Life, 1812-1933*, Cambridge 1992.

⁴⁵ Rudolf Doepper, *Jüdische Namen in Geschichte und Gegenwart. Neue Entwicklungen und Erkenntnisse*, Lausanne 2004, 343. This shift could be explained by the close relationship between the labio-dental consonant [v] (voiced, with a vibration of the vocal cords) and [f] (unvoiced, without vibration of the vocal cords), both otherwise having the same articulation points (top teeth and lower lip).

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ [http://www.learn-hebrew-names.com/Show-Hebrew-Name-Nachman_\(Nachman\)-en540.htm](http://www.learn-hebrew-names.com/Show-Hebrew-Name-Nachman_(Nachman)-en540.htm) (11/10/2012). In the Bible itself there is no mention of a Nachman, only a Nahamani, who, along with fellow Jews, returns to Israel from exile in Babylon, (Neh 7, 6-7).

⁴⁸ Shlomo Netzer, “Wanderungen der Juden und Neusiedlung in Osteuropa”, in Brocke, Michael (ed.), *Beter und Rebellen. Aus 1000 Jahren Judentum in Polen*, Frankfurt am Main 1983, 33-49, 33.

Research frequently has to rely on sporadic evidence, such as legends, the etymology of town names or other linguistic clues.⁴⁹ Many historians postulate that Polish Jewry descended from the Turkik Khazars tribe.⁵⁰ But Jewish merchants and salespeople also immigrated from the emerging Kieven Rus, as well as from the Rhenish cities and from Magdeburg, Regensburg and Prague. Even if there was no real continuity, these immigrants constituted the initial core of Jewish settlers on Polish soil.⁵¹ A first big wave of Jewish refugees from Western Europe arrived as from 1096, in the wake of the crusades. For colonial reasons, the Polish princes encouraged the settlement of these refugees and offered them land on outskirts of their territories. In the 13th and 14th centuries there were new pogroms in Western Europe, which lead to further waves of immigration, particularly from the German-speaking regions. The refugees established themselves in the regions of Mazowia, Kujarien, Pommern, Grosspolen, Kleinpolen, Podolien, Wohlhynien, Reissen and later also in the Herzogtum of Lithuania.⁵²



Figure 1: Map of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Courtesy of the Library of Congress.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 36.

⁵⁰ At the end of the 9th century the Khazars who settled in the region of the lower Volga had converted to Judaism as their state religion under King Bulan. The Kazhar's kingdom remained powerful until the 11th century.

⁵¹ Netzer, "Wanderungen der Juden", 36.

⁵² Ibid., 40.

At the end of the 15th century there were in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth around 60 communities with 20.000 to 30.000 people of the Jewish confession. Parallel to the downfall in the fortunes of Western European Jews was the dynamic growth of Jewish life on Polish soil, which secured the perpetuation of Ashkenasy traditions.⁵³ Basically, thanks to historical coincidence, which opened new horizons for them, Middle European Jews were able to take part in the building of the Polish nation, if only indirectly.⁵⁴ Poland was at that time lacking an own middle class and the aristocracy welcomed the new settlers, who were on the whole culturally more educated than the local inhabitants:

In an era of universal illiteracy, the Jews were the only stratum of the Polish population to whom education was of prime importance. Jews who entered Poland during the thirteen and fourteenth centuries had a much better cultural education than the Poles – something no Polish historian would admit.⁵⁵

Poland at this time was a relatively under-developed and a predominantly agricultural country, composed of huge estates divided up between the nobility. Trade and finance were only marginal activities and the arrival of Jews from Western Europe, whose traditional strengths were in those very domains, were from the outset welcomed by the Polish rulers as economic innovators.⁵⁶ Nevertheless, the relationship between the Jewish population and the all-powerful State always remained unsecure. In Polish history the Jews were always at the mercy of the respective authorities and had to be constantly aware that they might lose their current status.⁵⁷ This led to a special relationship with princes and noblemen, but also created skepticism due to the arbitrariness of the state which was passed down from generation to generation. Despite the efforts of the clergy and the people living in the larger cities to restrict the privileges of the Jews, their numbers rose considerably in the 16th and 17th centuries. Poland was at that time the largest Jewish centre in the world. And the Jewish population benefited from a particularity in the development of the Polish states: In the second half of the 16th century the institution of electing kings was established. The emergence of the “Rzeczpospolita”, the Commonwealth, caused the kings to abandon special rights and a

⁵³ Netzer, “Wanderungen der Juden”, 40.

⁵⁴ Michael Riff, “Das osteuropäische Judentum”, in Bautz, Franz (ed.), *Geschichte der Juden – Von der biblischen Zeit bis zur Gegenwart*, München 1989, 115-139, 116.

⁵⁵ Leo Cooper, *In the Shadow of the Polish Eagle: The Poles, the Holocaust, and Beyond*, Houndmills 2000, 11.

⁵⁶ Cf. Aleksander Hertz, *The Jews in Polish Culture*, Evanston 1988, 69; and Cooper, *In the Shadow*, 11.

⁵⁷ Regarding the changeful history of privileges of Jews in Poland see Heiko Haumann, *Geschichte der Ostjuden*, München ³1991; Riff, “Das osteuropäische Judentum”.

substantial increase in the power of the Polish nobility. Those who benefitted most from this development were rich families of magnates who, above all in the east of the country, commanded huge estates and private towns and villages, over which they held legal jurisdiction. At about the same time, the Christian inhabitants of the larger predominantly royal cities increasingly attempted to expel the Jewish population and obtain the privilege of a writ 'de non tolerandis Judaeis'. On the other hand, the magnates and the rich noblemen granted Jews looking for new places to settle the right to establish themselves in their towns and communities.⁵⁸ The Polish Jews who settled in these small towns and villages were thus at the mercy of a new political might. And the magnate families hoped for an economic stimulus and the development of their villages and towns.⁵⁹ Thus the small town became the main focus for the settlement of the Jewish population of Poland: The shtetl, with its special professional and small-town character, was born as the predominant cultural model of Jewish life in Poland.⁶⁰ Jews took up all sorts of occupations. Besides the Armenians and the Scots, they were usually the only salespeople in the Polish-Lithuanian towns. They also dominated the clothing industry and worked as cutters, skimmers / furriers, cap makers. Furthermore, the feudal lords often gave them licenses to produce alcoholic drinks and to conduct business in breweries, pubs, mills and local inns.⁶¹

3.2 Brody and the Fein Family

3.2.1 Brody – the trade and cultural centre of European Jewry

One of these Polish small towns was Brody, the birthplace of Nachman Fein. However, it differed considerably from the run-of-the-mill shtetl. Situated in Galicia, it was, until its incorporation into the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy in 1772, a typical privately-owned Polish town belonging to magnate families. The first documentary mention dates from the 11th century. In 1441 it was given over to the Sieniński family as a vassal, and in 1584, under the Żółkiewski family, it gained the municipal law of Magdeburg.

⁵⁸ Jacob Goldberg, "Getaufte Juden in Polen-Litauen vom 16. bis zum 18. Jahrhundert. Versuch einer sozialen Integration", in Martin, Bernd and Schulin, Ernst (eds.), *Die Juden als Minderheit in der Geschichte*, München 1981, 161-183.

⁵⁹ Haumann, *Ostjuden*, 36.

⁶⁰ Goldberg, "Getaufte Juden", 166.

⁶¹ Ibid.

In Galicia at this time there were two prevailing trade routes. On the one hand the north-south connection on the Vistula River, which was mainly used for the transport of salt from the salt mines of Wieliczka to Danzig, and on the other hand the east-west trade route, the so-called *Via Regia*, which lead from Leipzig – Frankfurt/O - Breslau – Krakau – Jareslau – Lemberg – Brody – Berdyciv and Kiew and continued south towards Moldau and then into the Ottoman Empire. The town developed into one of the most important trade centres of the “*Rzeczpospolita*” – the Polish State. It was granted special rights such as for example the Staple Right, which stipulated that tradesmen passing through had to unload their goods and put them on offer for a certain time, or else, pay a fee to be exempted from the Staple Duty. It was also a duty-free zone and put on an equal footing with the cities of Krakau, Lemberg, Thorn and Lublin. These factors lead to a steep rise in business and population.⁶² Not only Jews were called in to take part in the economic development of the town, but also Scotsmen, Armenians, Greeks and Germans.

However, Jews had been living in Brody prior to this influx. They are mentioned in documents dating from the end of the 16th century, but must have settled there earlier than that as in the year 1648 there were already about 400 Jewish families in the town.⁶³ However, in that very year the Jewish population of East Poland experienced a dire catastrophe. Under Bogdan Chmielnicki the Cossacks and the peasants rose up against Polish rule in the Ukrainian regions.⁶⁴ Besides rising up against the Poles, the insurgents brutally massacred the Jewish population and during their campaigns destroyed about 300 Jewish communities, numbering some 10.000 believers. The Ukrainian peasants and Cossacks destroyed

the whole of the house of Israel, when [...] the hand of God went out against us and many myriads of Israel fell [...] and they were strewn over the fields as prey for the birds of heaven and were not even buried. The hand of the enemy also prevailed and they stretched out their hands against the synagogues.⁶⁵

Hence, the Polish Jews were once again confronted with a new challenge to their status. One of the reactions of the Jews who remained in these regions was cast in stone and is

⁶² Börries Kuzmany, “Die Grenze an der Grenze. Die Entstehung des Freihandelsprivilegs der Stadt Brody”, in Augustynowicz, Christoph and Kappeler, Andreas (eds.), *Die Galizische Grenze 1772-1867: Kommunikation oder Isolation?*, Wien 2007, 115-126, 115.

⁶³ “Brody”, in *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, Jerusalem 1967-1972, 1395-1399, 1369.

⁶⁴ Nowadays Chmielnicki is presented as hero of the Ukrainian national movement within Ukrainian historiography.

⁶⁵ “Chmielnicki (Khmelnitski), Bogdan”, in *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, Jerusalem 1967-1972, 480-483, 482.

still partly visible to this day: the fortress synagogues. Indeed, the synagogues of the community were at that time rebuilt and enlarged as fortresses. The roofs had loopholes and the windows and entrances were very small, offering considerable protection against potential attackers. The Festungssynagoge in Brody, erected in 1742 and destroyed by the national socialists in 1943, was a famous example of this fortress architecture.



Figure 02: Brody Synagogue, from <http://kehilalinks.jewishgen.org/brody/brody.htm> (16/03/2013)

In 1699, after the Cossack massacres of 1648, the Jewish merchants of Brody received renewed permission to settle, trade and do business in the city, thus once again securing safer status.⁶⁶ Since in Brody they were allowed to acquire real estate, which was not the case in the majority of Polish small towns, they in due course came to own most of the houses on the Ringplatz. They nevertheless had to pay exorbitantly high taxes. Indeed, they were required to finance a third of municipal expenditure and also to pay dues for royal protection.

In 1742 a devastating fire broke out in Brody and the Armenian traders, who were the Jewish merchants' direct competitors, found themselves forced to leave the town. Consequently, the Jewish population became the dominant economic power.⁶⁷ And thanks

⁶⁶ Bőrries Kuzmany, *Die Stadt Brody im langen 19. Jahrhundert – Eine Misserfolgsgeschichte?*, Dissertation, Universität Wien 2008, 50.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

to further settlement, by 1772, at the time of the Hapsburg annexation, there were 7.000 Jewish inhabitants in Brody, a good one thousand more than in neighbouring Lemberg.⁶⁸ This 18th-century influx of Jews to Brody caused its Jewish community to play an immensely important role within the Polish-Lithuanian Jewry. During this period, the town developed into one of the leading centres of Jewish scholarship and a citadel of traditional rabbinic Jewry.⁶⁹

At the same time, Brody became a trade and trans-shipment hub for many different goods. Silk from France, wool from England, thread, brassware and tin from the German states, steel wares and scythes from Austria, amber, incense and of course fur skins from Poland-Lithuania. The latter in fact came mainly from the Russian Empire, along with hemp, wax, flax, as well as tea, coffee, sugar and pepper. Wares from the Ottoman Empire were also traded and from southern Poland came products such as talcum powder, sodium nitrate and wax.⁷⁰ Amongst many others, the towns of Berdyczów in the east and Leipzig in the west were of particular importance, the latter of course also for Nachman Fein.

After the first partition of Poland in 1772, Brody's economic importance increased significantly. Henceforth, the newly-created Kingdom of Galicia and Lodomeria was part of the Hapsburg Empire. Initially, Brody was a border town with Poland, but then, as from 1795, it became the last urban outpost on the north-eastern border with Russia. In 1779, the Austrian state granted the town comprehensive free-trade privileges, which lead to another surging economic boom. Thus, in the 1790s, Brody's trading companies became a dominant market force in the transfer of Western European products to Eastern Europe (via Berdyčev), to the Ottoman Empire (via Moldau and Wallachia), to Crimea, the Caucasus and Persia (via the Black Sea). Even goods destined for Central Asia (Bukhara) and China were handled through Brody.⁷¹ Brody's merchants were therefore extremely important for trans-national trade and were welcomed guests at the trade fairs of the time. It is consequently quite possible that Nachman Fein's ancestors emigrated from Hamburg but also from elsewhere to Brody during these years of notable economic growth, to take advantage both of the wealth of business opportunities that the

⁶⁸ "Brody", in Klatzkin, Jacob (ed.), *Encyclopaedia Judaica. Das Judentum in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, Berlin 1929, Vol. 4, 1094.

⁶⁹ Kuzmany, *Brody*, 137.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 53.

⁷¹ ÖStA/AVA, Hofkanzlei, Ktnr. 947, IV J, Gal. Br., 324 Februar 1806; 105 Juli 1808; CDIAL, F. 146, op. 80, spr. 288, S. 1-17, 26, 41-46, 54, 66, 73-77, 84-85, 88, 102-139; Kuzmany, *Brody*, 71.

city offered and of its trade connections with Germany generally, and with Saxony in particular. Yet this hypothesis cannot be verified.

During the War of the Fourth Coalition, the Austrian administration forbade resident Jewish traders to travel to Saxony, in order to prevent them making potential contact with reputedly revolutionary French Jews. This had serious consequences for Leipzig. The Easter Fair of 1807 was, as the Fair Office unambiguously lamented “the saddest [Fair] that anyone can remember”.⁷² In November 1806, after Napoleon proclaimed the Continental System, or Economic Blockade, thus putting an end to the legal import of English and colonial products, Brody experienced yet another boom in its business activities: smuggling.

Since Russia was not affected by the trade blockade, it was able to import tea, coffee, sugar etc., and therefore extensive smuggling activities developed between Riga, Odessa, Warsaw, Prague, Saxony, the Confederation of the Rhine and France, with Brody as the kernel of the whole system.⁷³ Thus, in the geographical area between the Baltic and Black Seas, the border checkpoint of Brody-Radzivilov became the most important link with Russia. Additionally, after having lost all its coastal regions in the Treaty of Schönbrunn, Austria had become completely dependent on inland trade, which strengthened Brody’s position even further.

The end of Brody’s golden era coincided with the end of the Napoleonic Wars in Europe. In 1818, the year of Nachman Fein’s birth, the town was already going downhill, even if the trend was not yet perceptible. However, as from the second half of the 19th century, its decline accelerated dramatically, and this development must have played a significant role in the life-changing decisions taken by Nachman Fein.

3.2.2 Nachman Fein’s youth and early adulthood

When Nachman Fein was born, three years after the Congress of Vienna, Brody had, as previously stated, already lost some of its pre-eminence in trade and commerce, yet it remained an important economic and cultural centre.

⁷² *Sächsisches Staatsarchiv Leipzig* (SStAL), Messeamt, Druckschriften Nr. 858, Ostermesse 1807, quoted in Katharina Middell, “Brody, Leipzig, Lyon: europäische Handelsbeziehungen und ihre Träger (1770-1820), in Zwahr, Hartmut (ed.), *Leipzig, Mitteldeutschland und Europa*, Beucha 2000, 531-544, 536.

⁷³ Kuzmany, *Brody*, 80.

Almost nothing is known about the circumstances within which Nachman grew up. It can be assumed that he was raised in the orthodox traditions of the time, even though his home environment may well have already been influenced by the Haskala, the Jewish enlightenment. At this time, Galicia was an area full of tension characterized by disputes between modernity and tradition, orthodoxy, Hassidism and Haskala, and by polarity between urban and rural.⁷⁴ As well as rabbinical orthodoxy, there was an influential Hasidic tradition which most of the Jews living in small towns and villages felt they belonged to. It was in the bigger towns, such as Lemberg, that the Jewish enlightenment was rapidly propagated and accepted. Until 1820 Brody, whose population was almost 80% Jewish, was at once the most Jewish town in Austria and home to the largest Jewish community in Galicia. Due to its international connections, the city very rapidly came into contact with the ideas of the Jewish enlightenment, which had developed in Berlin. Consequently, in that far-eastern corner of the Austrian Empire, Brody experienced a sort of amalgam between the ideas of Moses Mendelssohn and Kaiser Joseph II's *Erziehungspolitik*, which established secular schools and elementary education for Jews and other religious minorities. Henceforth, the *Maskilim* – the enlightened rationalists – set up an intellectual circle in Brody and committed themselves to modernising the Jewish religious communities and overcoming dated traditionalism.⁷⁵ Those who strived to attain these goals were primarily intellectuals or members of the Jewish bourgeoisie. The lower middle classes and working classes rooted rather in Hassidism, although the rabbinical orthodoxy, in particular in Brody, fought untiringly over the years against this rather spiritual movement.

In his autobiography, Simon Ehrlich, a Brody Jew born around 1840 and raised by Hassidim in the orthodox tradition, offers a revealing description of different profiles of Brody Jewry:

Not all are Hassidim. Indeed, four fifths of the inhabitants are Jews through and through, but the community is composed of orthodox and enlightened; the former are partly poor, partly well-off and work in various trades. They are commission agents, currency traders, users, rabbis, slaughtermen, tailors, plumbers, cobblers, water-carriers, wagoners. The latter are wealthy merchants and businessmen. Most of them travel annually to the Leipzig Fair, from whence they come home with their purses blessed to lead a comfortable happy life within the family circle.⁷⁶

⁷⁴ Michael Brenner, *Kleine jüdische Geschichte*, München 2008, 223.

⁷⁵ Kuzmany, *Brody*, 82.

⁷⁶ Josef Ehrlich, *Der Weg meines Lebens. Erinnerungen eines ehemaligen Chassiden*, Wien 1874, S.32. Translation R.L.

How far Nachman Fein was directly involved in these developments and whether he actually enjoyed a school education is a matter for conjecture. As from 1806, schooling for German- Jewish children was no longer compulsory. Thirty years earlier, within the framework of his *Judenordnung*, Josef II had ordained that there must be at least one German-Jewish school per Jewish religious community, but the policy failed miserably, due to the resistance of the majority of the orthodox Jewish inhabitants. Nevertheless, Jewish parents were allowed to send their children to a state *Trivialschule*, during whose six-year curriculum pupils acquired basic skills in reading, writing and arithmetic. A special 1929 publication by Adolf Eckstein Publications on the history of *Fein & Co.* states that Nachman Fein entered a fur and skin business at age 13 as an apprentice.⁷⁷ It is possible that prior to this he had attended one of those *Trivialschule*. Regarding his linguistic knowledge, it is difficult to ascertain whether in his home environment he used exclusively Yiddish or also German.

What is certain, however, is that in the course of his later activities he had to communicate in German, and the first documents which attest to this ability stem from Leipzig in 1862. Nevertheless, it is also possible that he was educated within the classic eastern-European Jewish system, only gradually transforming himself from a youth schooled in pious Jewish values into an enlightened adult. As was the case for many Hassidim of his generation, he maybe initially has viewed German-speaking Jews only with suspicion or horror:

Out and about I looked with loathing on those who went forth with shaven beards and short hair. If I came across someone in German garb, I would stare at him lengthily from behind and pity him with all my heart. When I spied men and women arm-in-arm in the street (which only the Germans did), my blood boiled and from a hideaway I would throw a pebble at them, then to disappear with a light conscience, convinced that I had accomplished godly vengeance.⁷⁸

The fact that Nachman began his training at age 13 would imply that he had indeed received a traditional upbringing. Jewish schools admitted boys as from the age of four, and prior to that the children were mainly brought up by their parents. On the first day of school the father accompanied his son to the first lesson in the so-called Chedar, meaning ‘Room’ in Hebrew, and metonymically referring to the school, which was usually a room in the rabbi’s house.⁷⁹ In 1877, half a century after Nachman’s childhood,

⁷⁷ *Fein & Co. Leipzig*, Berlin 1929, 2

⁷⁸ Josef Ehrlich, *Der Weg meines Lebens. Erinnerungen eines ehemaligen Chassiden*, Wien 1874., 24-25, translation R.L.

⁷⁹ Haumann, *Ostjuden*, 133.

there were still 49 of these schools in Brody, with more than 600 pupils.⁸⁰ In groups, they learned to read the Torah, to read and write Hebrew, to add, subtract, multiply and divide. They were also taught the foundations of Jewish ethics and religious morality.⁸¹ In any event, whatever his schooling, it is documented that in 1831 Nachman became a Bar Mitzvah and was admitted into the Jewish Community of Brody. At this time, the forces of reform and the movement towards secularisation were not yet so marked that these traditional rites of passage could be waived. After this admission into adulthood, so to speak, Nachman started working for a local fur merchant and in doing so laid the foundation for the fur and skin business he would himself set up in 1843.⁸² It is impossible to determine exactly which firms he worked for while learning the trade. Between the 1780s and the 1840s the bulk and retail trade structure in Brody remained relatively unchanged. In 1840, there were officially 562 merchants altogether, of whom 63 handled bulk (56 Jews, 7 Christians) and whose total assets amounted to some 675.000 fl, of which 250.000 were already accounted for by the Christian trading house Hausner & Violland.⁸³ The remaining 499 retail merchants (of whom 2 were Christian) only possessed 70.000 fl in all, i.e. less than 7% of the Brody traders' total capital.⁸⁴ Thus, the overwhelming majority of the Brody merchants were retailers: cambists and pedlars. In 1820 the economic statistics count 118 furriers and eight skin merchants.⁸⁵ There is, however, no mention of the number of independent fur and skin merchants, commission agents and retailers. As from 1831, Nachman would have done his training with one of these many traders, just when Brody was developing into the hub of the worldwide fur trade. Business in furs from the Ural Mountains and Siberia grew significantly and the close ties with Odessa, founded by Katherine the Great in 1794, opened the trade routes deep into the Caucasus and Persia.

The networks were crucial to the international expansion of the fur trade. Towards the west, the traders looked mainly to the city of Leipzig. As from 1772 merchants from Brody constituted the largest group of guests at the Leipzig Fair (see Chapter 3) and in the period following the Seven Years War, they began to revive the Jewish community there. Through their regular stays for the fairs three times a year the fundamental struc-

⁸⁰ Kuzmany, *Brody*, 218.

⁸¹ Haumann, *Ostjuden*, 134.

⁸² Wilhelm Harmelin, "Jews in the Leipzig Fur Industry", *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book (LBIYB)* 9,1 (1964), 239-266, 262.

⁸³ Fl = florenus aureus = Gulden, currency of the Hapsburg Empire at this time.

⁸⁴ Kuzmany, *Brody*, 69.

⁸⁵ <http://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/brody/broe019.html> (04/06/2010).

tures for a Jewish community were established, even though permanent settlement for Jews was only granted in absolutely exceptional circumstances, as for example for publically-appointed Fair Commissioners.

Whether, as a merchant, Nachman Fein made the yet extremely arduous journey to the Leipzig Fair before his 25th birthday remains an open question, but from 1840 onwards he travelled there regularly and worked as a commission agent for furs.⁸⁶

His emigration to Leipzig later on can certainly be explained by the fact that during the 1840s Brody fell on hard times. Trade with the Russian regions was ever more under threat and Jewish merchants from the Hapsburg Empire travelling there were subjected to the same severe restrictions during their business trips as their Jewish counterparts living permanently in the Russian Pale of Settlement. For example, in 1840 one of the Jewish merchants from Brody complained that

they were barred from admission to the more important Fairs and Markets of the land [Berdyčev] and that after the expiration of a certain period of time, which was insufficient to carry out their trade and other business, they were expelled, despite the fact that they had brought with them legitimate passports from the Austrian Government.⁸⁷

Brody's difficulties were no secret at the Leipzig Fairs, as is demonstrated by this report from the Michaelmas Fair of 1842, which pinpoints Brody's diminishing importance:

As far as trading in goods is concerned, Brody is turning into more and more of a backwater, proportionally to the heavy restrictions on the Russian border and the increase in competition from the Russian manufacturers at Markets in southern Russia (Roman, Charkow, Berditschev, etc.). Furthermore, the Odessa trade via Brody is decreasing in direct proportion to the expansion of new shipping links between this free port and overseas countries.⁸⁸

For Nachman, this decline must have weighed heavily in favour of a move to Leipzig. His experience in the fur trade, his undoubted prior knowledge of the German language and the existence of a long-standing trade network between Brody and Leipzig were in

⁸⁶ Harmelin, "Jews in the Leipzig Fur Industry", 247.

⁸⁷ *CDIAL*, F. 146, op. 7a, spr. 19, Anweisung aus Wien ans Gubernium vom 22.1.1840, 12-13. There upon the Austrian authorities tried to get more information from the consul at that time Knight of Svjatskij. He explained which kind of documents and certificates needed to be presented in order to receive a visa. Finally, these explanations were sent to every district principals and police directors of East Galizia and made public. Cf. *CDIAL*, F. 146, op. 7a, spr. 19, Abschrift zur Z. 398 (31.12.1839 alten Stils). Brief des russ. Konsulats an das Brodyer Polizei Oberkommissariat. Translation R.L.

⁸⁸ *SächsHStA*, Loc. 39792, Acta die Leipziger Messen und den Waarenverkehr während derselben betreffen, vol. IV, 1841 f., 264, quoted in Jörg Ludwig, "Die Leipziger Messe in den ersten Jahrzehnten des Zollvereins (1834-1860)", in Zwahr, Hartmut and Topfstedt, Thomas and Bentele, Günter (eds.), *Leipzigs Messen, 1497 - 1997. Gestaltswandel, Umbrüche, Neubeginn*, Vol. 1: 1497-1914 (= Geschichte und Politik in Sachsen 9), Köln / Weimar / Wien 1999, 351-366, 353-354. Translation R.L.

all likelihood determining factors in his decision-making. His ability and capacity to uproot from one region and to enroot into another environment stays therefore also exemplary for the coming generations whose members would be forced to take similar decisions.

4. Leipzig 1842 – 1871 Times of Assimilation

4.1 Jews in Leipzig

Nachman Fein's decision to concentrate his business activities on the Leipzig-Brody axis after his years of education was more or less predictable. The topography of his migration corresponded exactly to the historical links which had connected the two cities. As previously stated, Jewish merchants from Brody had systematically attended the Leipzig fairs for generations and played a decisive role in Leipzig's development into one of Europe's most important fair towns. The tradition of fairs in Leipzig reaches back to the twelfth century. The town was situated at the crossroads of the two most important European trade routes, the Via Regia and the Via Imperii, and had two yearly markets, respectively at Easter and Michaelmas, so it became an influential trade hub.

In 1459 Elector Friedrich II introduced a third fair, the New Year's Market, and then in 1497 the German-Roman King Maximilian I conferred on Leipzig the *Reichsmesseprivileg*, which stated that no other fair could take place within a radius of 110 kilometres. Consequently, Leipzig became the undisputed European trade centre for trade fairs in Middle Germany.

To a certain extent, Jewish merchants occupied a special position at these fairs. The Jewish community of Leipzig, which had originated in the Middle Ages, certainly did not survive beyond 1543, the year of Moritz von Sachsen's ban. In fact, the last source which mentions a resident Leipzig Jew by name dates from 1446. For a good two hundred years Jews were prohibited from living permanently in the city. Only in 1710 did a Jew, whose name was Gerd Levi (1659-1739), once again obtain a permit from the sovereign to settle in Leipzig with his family and his servants. He and his family were under the direct control and protection of the Prince Elector. Only half a year later six families and ten individuals enjoyed the status of *Schutzjuden* ("protected Jews").⁸⁹ Indeed, in his publication of 1930 commemorating the 75th anniversary of the Jewish community synagogue, Gustav Cohn correctly observed that in the 250 years following the aforementioned ban there was never any mention of 'Leipzig Jews', but always of Jews in Leipzig.⁹⁰ This was because Jewish merchants had almost uninterruptedly been tolerated in the city as guests during the fairs.

⁸⁹ *Judaica Lipsiensia*, 13.

⁹⁰ Ephraim-Carlebach-Stiftung (ed.), *Festschrift zum 75jährigen Bestehen der Leipziger Gemeindesynagoge: 1855-1930*, Berlin 1994 [Leipzig 1930].

Their participation in the fairs can be traced back as far as 1490. Various regulations pertaining to Jews set out the exact requirements Jewish merchants at the fairs had to meet. Extra duties, taxes and Jewish customs tariffs were to be paid and a regulation in 1682 stipulated that the Jewish visitors should carry the little ‘yellow patch’ (“das gelbe Flecklein”) and produce it upon request.⁹¹

Despite these extensive restrictions, the fairs remained extremely attractive for Jewish tradespeople. For example, between 1675 and 1764 81.937 Jewish visitors to the fairs were registered in Leipzig, of whom 59.264 were independent merchants.⁹²

Year	Number of Jewish visitors to the fairs
1675	500
1700	1000
1800	2000
1840 (only the Easter Fair)	3596

Table 02: Jewish visitors to the Leipzig fairs, from: Wilhelm Harmelin, “Jews in the Leipzig Fur Industry, LBIYB 9,1 (1964), 240.

⁹¹ Josef Reinold, Die verspätete Emanzipation der Juden in Sachsen als legislativer Rahmen. Die Konstituierung der Israelitischen Religionsgemeinde zu Leipzig und die ersten Jahrzehnte ihrer Entwicklung, 2010 in <http://d-nb.info/1020561874/34> (16/03/2013), 4.

⁹² Harmelin, “Juden in der Leipziger Rauchwarenwirtschaft”, 250.

In the 19th century this specific situation changed to a certain extent: In 1832 140 Jews had already obtained the legal right to reside in Leipzig.

Thus Nachman Fein, who from the 1840s onwards regularly travelled to the Leipzig fairs, was a fair Jew who found himself embedded in a specific Jewish environment of fair travellers and a limited number of regular residents. Although the Jewish population of Leipzig grew considerably in the first two decades of the 19th century, with regard to legal emancipation and equality for Jews, Saxony was relatively backward compared to Prussia and other states where liberal regulations concerning Jews were introduced several years before.⁹³

The first small changes in policies relating to Jews ensued during the confederation with France and Saxony's membership of the Rhenish confederation after the Prussian side lost the Battle of Jena and Auerstedt in 1806. However, there were serious setbacks in the course of the Restoration after the Vienna Congress of 1815, and the prolonged oppression of the bourgeois-liberal forces finally gave rise to the July Revolution of 1830, which also brought in its wake the first significant new turn in policies regarding Jews.⁹⁴ Only three years later did the Dresden Jewry petition the first Chamber to grant civic liberties and political rights to Jews born in Saxony and therewith initiated a long drawn-out controversy between those who were for emancipation and its opponents.⁹⁵ The first laws concerning Jewish emancipation followed in 1837 and 1838, laying down the legal foundation for the formation of the community and the immigration of foreign Jews.⁹⁶

The permission for Jews to reside permanently in the Saxon cities of Dresden and Leipzig nevertheless remained restricted, and Jews like Nachman Fein, who were from outside the kingdom, were only permitted to settle there with the explicit approval of the Interior Ministry. Since Nachman Fein did not submit an application for such a permit prior to 1862, it must be assumed that he was only in Leipzig to do business during the fairs, but that he otherwise lived either in Dessau or in Brody.⁹⁷

⁹³ Reinold, *Die verspätete Emanzipation der Juden*, 5.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ *Gesetz- und Verordnungsblatt für das Königreich Sachsen (GVBl.)*, Dresden 1837, 65.

⁹⁷ *GVBl.*, 1838, 394-395.

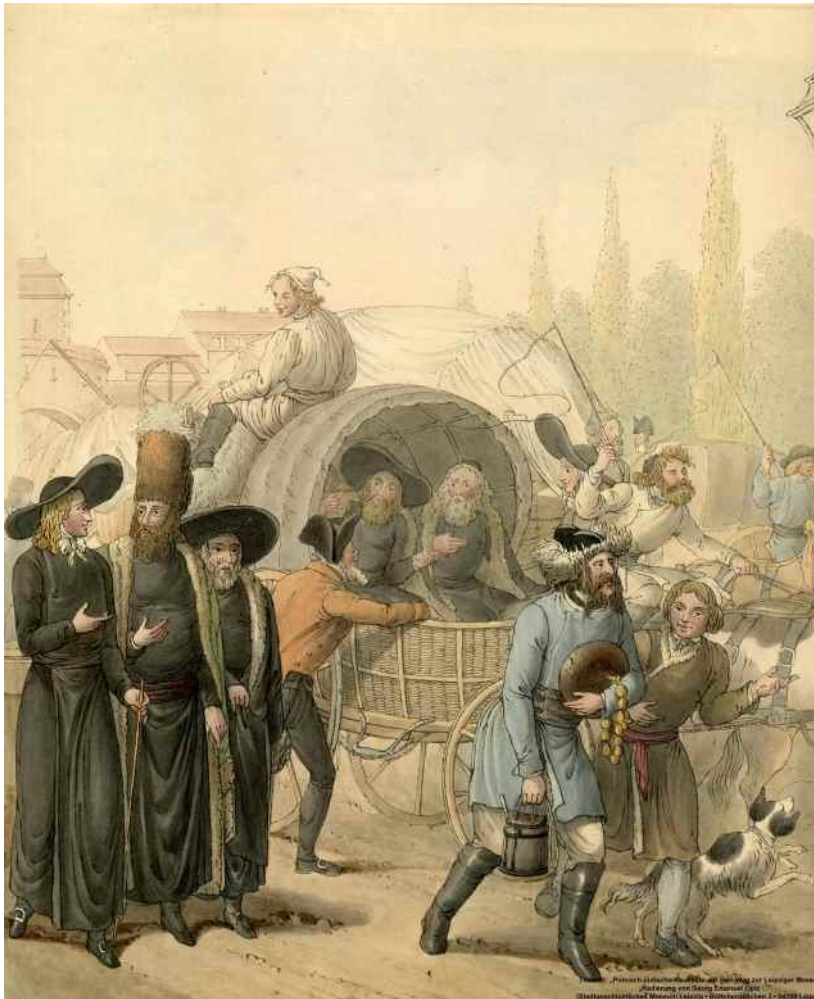


Figure 03: From “Leipziger Meßszenen” by Georg Emanuel Opitz, “Die Polen”, Courtesy by the Leipziger Messeamt.

4.2 Nachman Fein between Dessau, Leipzig and Brody

Hans Rückert’s report on the *Leipziger Rauchwarenwirtschaft – Im Handelsregister eingetragene Firmen*, published in 1930, which appeared as an insert in the Leipzig business handbook gives information about Nachman Fein’s immigration to Leipzig. According to Rückert Nachman settled in Dessau around 1840 and established the fur business Nachman Fein in Leipzig in 1842 or 1843.⁹⁸

His motives for leaving Brody were certainly complex. For one thing, he may have been influenced by the fact that Brody’s decline as a business centre had already begun. Another factor that played a crucial role must have been Leipzig’s rapid development and its impressive economic and cultural ascent as from the 1830s. The revolution of

⁹⁸ Hans Rückert, *Leipziger Rauchwarenwirtschaft. Im Handelsregister eingetragene Firmen*, Leipzig 1930, 34.

1830 lead to the implementation of a constitution in Saxony which in turn gave rise to a burgeoning of bourgeois energy in the economic and cultural domains, and also to liberal thought relating to the question of equality for Jews in the land. In 1837, King Johann declared in front of the Parliament (Landtag) that he was in favour of emancipation. From then on, Jews were permitted to found religious communities in Saxony. Moreover, in the same year the Orientalist Julius Fürst (1805-1873) became the first Jew to obtain a teaching post at the University of Leipzig. One year later, a further law was passed which guaranteed Jews born in Saxony the unrestricted freedom to settle in Dresden or Leipzig.

However, Jews born outside Saxony continued to be subjected to a myriad of restrictions and still required a ministerial permit to settle.⁹⁹ Nachman Fein was not in possession of such permit and it is therefore likely that he chose Dessau as his home town for the first years. This Anhalt city, which had been ruled over by Prince Leopold Friedrich Franz III since the second half of the 17th century, had developed into an important centre of the Enlightenment and was in many respects more liberal regarding the influx and settling of foreign Jews.¹⁰⁰ At this time almost a sixth of the population of the Principality of Anhalt-Dessau were of the Jewish faith.¹⁰¹

Compared to Leipzig, the more tolerant atmosphere in Dessau was not the only advantage for Nachman. Its strategic position in relation to his business activities was undoubtedly also attractive. Indeed, since the summer of 1840 a rail link existed between Dessau and Köthen, and from there, a connection to Halle and Leipzig. It was therefore easy for him to travel regularly to Leipzig and pursue his business there.

In fact, since the opening of Germany's first long-distance train link from Dresden to Leipzig in 1839, it had become relatively easy for Polish merchants to travel farther east, whereas the previous generations had had to transport their wares for weeks in huge waggons.

Almost nothing is known about Nachman's time in Dessau. It can be assumed that he travelled regularly between Dessau, Leipzig and Brody to do business. According to family narrative, his first daughter, Anna Fein, was born in Dessau. However, genealogical research has thrown no light on when Nachman married the first time. It

⁹⁹ Nathan Porges, "Leipzig", *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, Vol. VII, New York, 1907, 673.

¹⁰⁰ Werner Grossert, *Chronik – Geschichte der Juden in Dessau*, Dessau 1993.

¹⁰¹ The most famous Dessau Jew was Moses Mendelssohn, born in 1729, the son of a teacher and Torah transcriber. While he was in Berlin, he developed a close friendship with Lessing which for a long time was considered a perfect example of tolerance and understanding in German-Jewish relations.

can only be ascertained that his first wife's name was Ester Beile and that she was living in Dessau at the time of Anna's birth. Her second child, Chaim Leib Leon Fein, was born on March 8th 1845 in Galicia. He saw the light of day not in Brody, as one could have supposed, but in Zborov, about 60 km south of Brody. As the documents from the 1860s mentioned Nachman often stayed in Leipzig and Dessau from 1840, so we can surmise that he was not in Brody at the time of Chaim's birth and that Ester Beile, who was most likely from Zborov, had returned to her parents' home for her confinement.¹⁰² Yet why she left Dessau is anyone's guess. At that time, there were about 2.000 Jews in Zborov, almost 50% of the population.¹⁰³

From the beginning of the 19th century Zborov was subject to strong Hasidic influences and was as such a typically eastern-European Jewish Shtetl, contrary to the bigger and almost completely Jewish Brody. In the Zborov birth records, beside Chaim Leib's name and the address Haus 112, there is mention not only of his sex but also of his Jewish faith. The parents are registered as „married”.¹⁰⁴ However, it is not entirely clear whether this entry refers to a religious or a civil union, as this was indeed a tricky question in Galicia in the mid-19th century.

The German-Jewish school project collapsed in the Crown land of Galicia in 1806, but the regulation that all Jews wanting to marry had to take an exam in reading, writing and arithmetic in the respective government office of their district remained. As from 1812 they were additionally tested on the contents of the book *Bne Zion*. This was written by the Jewish philosopher of the Enlightenment Herz Homberg, although it was not published under his own name. It was a school book conceived as a “religious and moral textbook for young people” in which “the ethical standards were not only intelligently presented as stemming from rationality, but also based on evidence from the holy Jewish scriptures.”¹⁰⁵ It attempted to combine the civil ethics of enlightened absolutism and its efforts to emancipate Jews with the most important Jewish texts, and thus to win over a large number of the Jews hostile to the project initiated by Joseph II. The obligation to take the exam was however perceived very negatively by most Galician Jews.

Indeed, the exam was so unpopular that the partners usually dispensed with the civil

¹⁰² Leipziger Stadtarchiv, WLA 26947.

¹⁰³ “Zborov”, in *Encyclopedia Judaica*, 944.

¹⁰⁴ “Fond 701, Opis I, Jewish religious community”, *Central State Historical Archives of Ukraine*, Lviv.

¹⁰⁵ “Dekret der k.k. Studien- und Hofkommission”, printed in *Bne-Zion. Ein religiös-moralisches Lehrbuch für die Jugend israelitischer Nation*, Wien 1812.

proceedings, choosing to have only a religious wedding ceremony.¹⁰⁶ The birth records between 1831 and 1857, for which there are reliable entries in the Jewish registers concerning the status of children born in Brody, show a high percentage of illegitimate children. In the 1830s this number fluctuated between 30% and 40% and then rose sharply in the next decade to reach around 80% in the 1850s.¹⁰⁷

Chaim Leib's birth was registered as legitimate, although it is not clear whether the register was filled in by the Jewish community itself or by a state civil servant. What is surprising is that the child's mother is registered in full as Ester Beile, without the family name of Fein. This may be a sign that Nachman had married Ester according to Jewish rites, but not according to civil requirements.

Nothing is known about Anna's whereabouts during Ester's stay in Zborov. Family narrative has passed down that she later married a Male Rosenfeld, who served in the Saxon Cavalry.¹⁰⁸ The couple had two children, Hans and Fritz. Male apparently disappeared on a voyage to the USA and Anna subsequently lived with Chaim Leib and his family until her death. The firstborn son Hans fell in World War I and Fritz married a one Frieda. They remained childless, so that this branch of the family died out as early as the mid 1920s. The assertion that Fritz was murdered during the Shoa could not be substantiated in the databank inventories currently open to the public.

Ester Beile's fate is also shadowed in doubt. It is most likely that she died in Zborov after 1846, although no record of her passing has been found. The death records exist in Brody for the period from 1815 to 1861, but in Zborov they have only been preserved from 1819 to 1846 and then from 1875 and 1876. Neither was any mention of Ester's death found in Dessau sources.

Nachman got married again, this time to a woman from Brody named Fanny Patyn. She probably remained in her hometown until the 1860s. She was born Feige Fanny Patyn on September 16th 1831, and Nachman married her before 1855. They must have taken the previously-described exam required for civil marriages, since Feige Patyn took on the family name of Fein. Feige and Nachman had several children, although the joy of a really large family was denied to them. They lost several of their offspring at a very early age. On March 2nd 1855 in Brody, twins sisters, Reisel and Henie, were born. One and a half years later, Kohoss was born on November 24th 1856, but he died three

¹⁰⁶ Kuzmany, *Brody*, 142.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Records by Gerhard Fein, *Papers of the Fein Family*.

weeks later. In July 1858 another son, Mayer Munisch, saw the light of day. He died two and a half years later, in November 1860.¹⁰⁹

This high death rate was in no way unusual. In Austria in 1830 the infant mortality rate for all children of one year or less was 29.7% and 30.2% in 1850.¹¹⁰ In 1860 child mortality for all children of less than six years was 48.8%.¹¹¹ The children's chances of survival depended mainly on childcare and nutrition and as such were directly correlated to the social standing of the parents.

The fact that Nachman and Feige Fein lost two of their children so early unfortunately fits into the historical picture. Yet it is hard to say whether conclusions about the family's social standing can be drawn from this loss. Admittedly, there are a number of other pointers which indicate that Nachman Fein's financial circumstances were not particularly comfortable in the 1840s and 1850s. For one thing, the frequent moves from one house to another imply that Nachman did not own a house in Brody. In the register, the births and deaths of the children are recorded at different house numbers for with each entry. In March 1855 it was Haus Nr. 1214, in November 1856 Haus Nr. 634, in December of the same year Haus Nr. 639 and in November 1860 Haus 268.¹¹² Why Feige Fein moved so frequently and why she gave birth in each instance in a different place remains inexplicable.

Another indication of Nachman Fein's erstwhile modest social standing may well be the different official mentions of his profession. In 1855 he was registered as a middleman and in 1856 as a Chandler.¹¹³ It is therefore impossible to trace his economic circumstances correctly until 1860.

As a merchant travelling between Leipzig and Brody he probably did not suffer the fate of many other small salesmen, craftsmen and day labourers who often could not drum up sufficient business activity to feed their families.¹¹⁴ But he was not well-off either. Nevertheless, in Leipzig he laid the foundation stone for the wealth of the future generations. Another decisive change for Nachman resulted from the 1848/1849 revolution, in the course of which the National Assembly of Frankfurt, and Saxony in its wake, promulgated the "equality of Saxon Jews with Christians regarding civil liberties

¹⁰⁹ Genealogical Study 2009 Routes to Roots Foundation, *Papers of the Fein Family*.

¹¹⁰ Reinhard Rürup, *Deutschland im 19. Jahrhundert, 1815-1871*, Göttingen 1992, 27.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Genealogical Study 2009 Routes to Roots Foundation, *Papers of the Fein Family*.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Haumann, *Ostjuden*, 24-25.

and political rights” as one of the basic civil rights of the German people.¹¹⁵ That is exactly the time when, according to Wilhelm Harmelin, Nachman settled in Leipzig and also the period mentioned by Nachman himself in his application for the citizenship in 1869.¹¹⁶

What is in no doubt is that he lived through turbulent times there. After the February revolution of 1848 there was much revolutionary unrest in Saxony, as in many states of the German Confederation. The civic demands for democratic structures, for liberalisation, for German unification and a pan-German constitution were also vociferous in Saxony.

Saxon Jews, as well as foreign Jewish businessmen like Nachman Fein, hoped that there would be fewer restrictions and a more liberal attitude towards Jews from abroad wanting to settle permanently.¹¹⁷ Unfortunately, these hopes were soon dashed. The constitution, which had been drawn up by the National Assembly, and whose goal was to establish the foundations for a pan-German constitutional monarchy, was categorically rejected by Friedrich Wilhelm IV of Prussia. The Saxon King Friedrich August II also joined the ranks of the opposition.

The collapse of German union and the failure to implement liberal concepts lead to further uprisings in Saxony in May 1849. Dresden was particularly affected. The government along with the King and Queen fled to Königsstein Fortress, a provisional citizens’ government was formed and the Russian anarchist Mikhail Bakunin, who had hastily made his way to Dresden, took over the organisation of the uprising. But the struggle was to no avail. Prussian and German troops crushed the protest and those who had initiated or supported the revolt, amongst whom were Bakunin, Richard Wagner and Gottfried Semper, fled the city.

Nachman Fein was to be less affected by the revolutionary fights on the barricades. He nonetheless shared the hopes that the revolution would lead to changes in Jewish policies. However, the Leipzig Jewry’s aspirations as to the complete abolishment of the exceptional rules were not to be fulfilled until Saxony joined the North German Confederation in 1866, when the last legal restrictions against Jews were finally abrogated. A constitutional amendment of two years later stated that the civil rights existed independently of religious denomination, and that the restrictions concerning

¹¹⁵ GVBl., 1849, 67.

¹¹⁶ Harmelin, “Jews in the Leipzig Fur Industry”, 262.

¹¹⁷ Reinold, *Die verspätete Emanzipation der Juden*, 6.

Jewish settlers in Leipzig and Dresden were to be lifted. Furthermore, in 1869 the change to the trade regulations of 1861 removed the considerable restrictions to commerce and trade which had until then applied to Jews.¹¹⁸

This chronology of events was precisely mirrored in the trajectory of Nachman's own emigration. He had been active business-wise in Leipzig since 1842 or 1843 and had stayed there regularly as from 1848, but no permanent address is verifiable before that of Mittelstr. 9 as from 1866.¹¹⁹ Albeit, shortly after the implementation of the decree concerning freedom of commerce and trade in Saxony, Nachman applied officially to the Police Department in order that "his wife and two children may be granted permission to reside in Leipzig".¹²⁰

Under the condition that the above-mentioned family members came with certificates from abroad proving their identity, the Chamber of Trade and Commerce gave its consent: "Although the permanent settling of Nachman Fein and his family will in no way significantly impact trade relations in our town, we nevertheless deem it safe to grant his request."¹²¹ Thus Nachman and his family resided in Leipzig as from 1862.

4.3 The naturalization of the Fein family in Leipzig

Undoubtedly, the most important change for Nachman's professional career was the 1869 trade regulations reform. After the Prussian-Austrian war of 1866, Saxony became a member of the North German Confederacy. Then, in 1869, Bismarck decreed that within the Confederacy's territories Jews should have complete legal equality. He also introduced new regulations for commerce and trade which lead to a significant freeing-up of business activities and also to the lifting of restrictions for Jewish trading competitors. Shortly after, on 28th October 1869, Nachman submitted the following application to the Leipzig City Council:

After having done business as a commission agent in this town for more than 20 years, and having set up permanent residence here as from 1862 with my family, which is to say my wife, Feige, née Patyn, Chaim Leib, 24, and Reisel and Heni, 15. I wish to establish a wholesale company and in the long term I plead for the granting of citizenship. I do not however wish to give up my Austrian nationality.¹²²

¹¹⁸ Alphonse Levy, *Geschichte der Juden in Sachsen*, Berlin 1900, 99-102.

¹¹⁹ *Adressbuch Leipzig*, Leipzig 1866.

¹²⁰ Leipziger Messejudenbuch TitLI 184 Bl.101. Translation R.L.

¹²¹ Leipziger Messejudenbuch TitLI184BL101 Gutachten ad 1.1660 & 2242. Translation R.L.

¹²² Leipziger Stadtarchiv, WLA 26947 Bl003. Translation R.L.

In November Nachman extended his application and asked not only for granting of citizenship but also to be accepted as Saxonian subject.¹²³ The Leipzig Foreign Office subsequently confirms that “with occasional interruptions, the tradesman Nachman Fein from Brody [...] has resided [in Leipzig] since 1848 as commission agent for foreign trading houses, and that in 1862 he was joined by his family: his wife Feige, née Patyn, and their children Chaim Leib, born in 1845, and Reisel and Henie, born in 1854.”¹²⁴

Furthermore, Nachman provided a medical certificate from Doctor Livius Fürst, the son of Julius Fürst, the above-mentioned specialist in oriental studies, who was later to become a well-known children’s and women’s doctor. It confirms that Nachman is free of “the kind of illness or predisposition to illness which could have a lasting influence either on his capacity to earn his living or on his lifespan.”¹²⁵ Nachman additionally declares that he has earned “cash amounting to a total of 4000 [Talers]”, and that this sum is “a personal debt-free asset”.¹²⁶ “I inherited 1000 Talers and the rest was acquired little by little through my everyday business activities.”¹²⁷ He goes on to declare that disposes of goods worth several thousands of Talers and an entirely well-equipped household which was insured for 2000 Talers. There follows a detailed list of the equities he owned, among which three shares in the *Heimbank*, four in the Loebau-Zittauer railway, three in the Turing railway and 2 in the *Schwimmanstalt*. There were also receipts for cash holdings, and altogether these assets totalled 4000 Talers.¹²⁸

On December 14th his and his three children’s were admitted as provisional members of the municipality.¹²⁹ To gain permanent admission, he was in the end required to prove that he had given up his Austrian citizenship. He provided the justification in question at the beginning of 1870 and on 19th March 1870 he officially became a Saxon citizen. The following declaration was issued by the Royal District Chief Executive :

According to paragraph 6 of the decree of July 2nd 1852 and with the mandate provided by the Interior Ministry, The Royal District Chief Executive of Leipzig declares that the aforesaid authorities grant permission to Nachman Fein from Brody, situated in the Royal Austrian Crown Land Galicia, to settle in the city of Leipzig with his wife Feige, née Patyn, and his children Chaim Leib, Reisel and Henie, with the purpose of exercising his profession as a merchant and that, in accordance with the conditions stipulated in paragraph 6 of the decree, he is given citizenship of the Kingdom of Saxony.¹³⁰

¹²³ Leipziger Stadtarchiv, WLA 26947 Bl003.

¹²⁴ Leipziger Stadtarchiv, WLA 26947 Bl002. Translation R.L.

¹²⁵ Leipziger Stadtarchiv, WLA 26947 Bl004. Translation R.L.

¹²⁶ Leipziger Stadtarchiv, WLA 26947 Bl005. Translation R.L.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Leipziger Stadtarchiv, WLA 26947 Bl007.

¹²⁹ Leipziger Stadtarchiv, WLA 26947 Bl009.

¹³⁰ Leipziger Stadtarchiv, WLA 26947 Bl. 015-016. Translation R.L.

To obtain Chaim Leib's admission, Nachman explained the following: "My son, Chaim Leib, still lives at home. He assists me in the business and hence continues to be under my fatherly authority. I will naturally produce the evidence that he has completed his military service."¹³¹

Chaim Leib had in fact served in the Kaiser and Königlich Austro-Hungarian Imperial Army. He must have been called up just after the implementation of general conscription in the Hapsburg Empire. After the Prussian victory over Austria at the battle of Königgrätz in 1866, the decision was taken to introduce general conscription. Men between the ages of 21 and 37 were declared fit for service and usually had to complete two years of active service followed by ten years in the reserve force.¹³²

It was also possible to report freely as a volunteer, in which case active service was one year, followed by eleven years in the reserve force. Chaim Leib certainly did not serve for more than a year. In fact, it is even more likely that he benefitted from a third option, explaining that, as an only son, he had to help support the family.¹³³ It was not that Nachman was unable to earn his living, but that he was continually absent, so in fact it is nevertheless possible that Chaim was accepted as a volunteer, therefore having only to complete a one-year service. It is not clear exactly how long Chaim Leib then remained in Leipzig with his father at Schützenstr. 4, but in 1877 he married Charlotte Ashkenazy in Krakau and only returned to Leipzig in 1883.¹³⁴

4.4 Nachman Fein in the fur trade

Leipzig had been a prominent centre for the trans-shipping of furs and skins since the 1770s. Of course, fur and animal skins had been traded before that in the town, and during its fairs. That having been said, until well into the 1800s Leipzig was in direct competition with other fair towns in the east German territories, such as Frankfurt/Oder and Breslau, where chiefly Russian and Crimean lambskin and vair (Grauwerk) were traded, and with the Lübeck and Hamburg fairs, where mainly Siberian, northern and Islandic skins were exchanged.¹³⁵ Because of Prussia's protectionist policies at that time, merchants from the eastern regions of Europe were forced to fall back on the

¹³¹ Leipziger Stadtarchiv, WLA 26947 BI 003R. Translation R.L

¹³² Wehrgesetz Österreich, available online: <http://www.weltkriege.at/Justiz/wehrgesetz.htm> (02/04/2013)

¹³³ Ibid., paragraph IV 3.

¹³⁴ Leipziger Stadtarchiv, WLA26947 BI 017.

¹³⁵ Heinrich Lomer, *Der Rauchwaren-Handel*, Leipzig, 1864, 12.

Saxon city of Leipzig, thus irreversibly securing the latter's position as the fur trade centre of Central Europe. Frequently the participation of the fair-Jews from Brody proved to be a decisive factor in the success of the three fairs held in Leipzig each year, at Easter, Michaelmas and New Year.¹³⁶

After a decree issued by Leipzig magistrates, as from 1815 Jews were allowed not only to attend the fairs, but also to become fair commission agents. In 1818, there were already 24 fair commission agents, of whom 14 came from Brody. Building on this basic structure, various Jewish fur merchants set up in Leipzig in the first half of the 19th century. Wilhelm Harmelin names the most important:

The setting up of customs tariffs in the German territories in 1834 and the rapid expansion of the European rail network contributed considerably to the growth of the fur trade based in Leipzig, but all this came to an end during the German-French war of 1870. Unfortunately only a very few names have been preserved. The first Jewish firms which can be identified are: Marcus Harmelin (1830), J.B. Oppenheimer & Comp. (1834) and Theodor Wolf (around 1835). However, the last of these two, described as important, were no longer in existence / went out of business in the last quarter of the previous century. Then came M. Bromberg (1837), Nachman Fein (1842), I. Rosenthal (1848), Leopold Apfel (1850), M. S. Elias jr. (around 1830), Nathan Haendler (around 1850), Louis Littauer (1857), M. Rapaport & Sohn (1861), D. Kölner (1866), M. Rosenstock & Sohn (1868), Isaack Barbasch (1869) and A. Ch. Blumenfeld & Sohn (1869).¹³⁷

Not only did the Brody Jews play an important part in establishing and expanding the fur trade, but also in revitalising the Jewish community itself. They began to open small synagogues, known as Betschulen. The Brody Schul, a small Betstube, was for a long time housed in the *Haus zum Blauen Harnisch* which the Brody Jews had themselves erected immediately after the Seven Years War, thus founding what is considered the oldest Jewish Betstube in Leipzig.¹³⁸ The first Jewish cemetery in Leipzig, situated in the Johannistal, was founded by Joel Schlessinger, a Brody merchant who in 1811 paid the Municipal Authorities for a yearly lease. Before then, all Jewish fair guests who had died in Leipzig were buried in the cemetery in Dessau.¹³⁹

¹³⁶ Diamant, *Chronik der Juden in Leipzig*, 60.

¹³⁷ Harmelin, "Juden in der Leipziger Rauchwarenwirtschaft", 258.

¹³⁸ Harmelin, "Jews in the Leipzig Fur Industry", 242.

¹³⁹ A further indication of the close ties between Leipzig and Dessau.

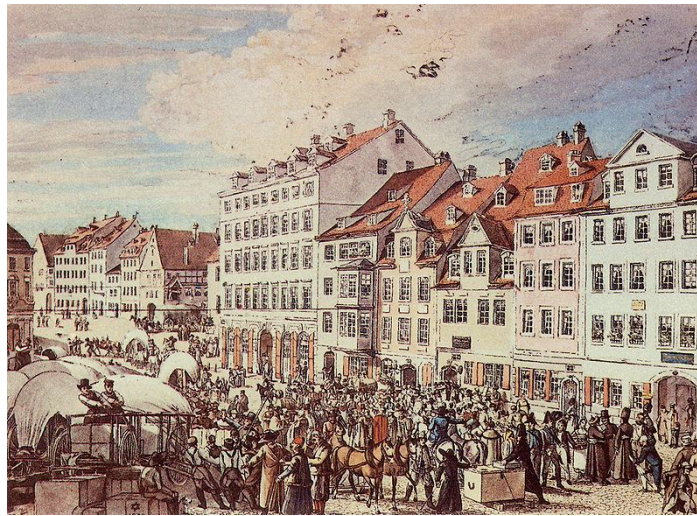


Figure 04: Christian G. H. Geißler “Leipzig Messeszene, 1922”. Courtesy of Stadtgeschichtliches Museum Leipzig.

Since the end of the 1700s most fair Jews were housed on the Brühl during their stay. This thoroughfare later gained world-wide importance for its countless fur-trading houses and also played a decisive role for the Fein family over several generations.¹⁴⁰ During the fairs the Brühl bordered by Ritter-, Nikolai- and Reichs-Street was populated almost entirely by Jewish fur and skin merchants.¹⁴¹ That was exactly where Nachman Fein would also have done business as from the 1840s. Initially he worked there as a commission agent, which means that he did not buy and sell goods in his own name, like a normal salesman, but that he acted as a broker or agent, organising purchases and sales on instruction from other firms against payment of a commission. Given the vast numbers of existing products he chose to specialise and concentrated mainly, although not exclusively, on hare and rabbit skins, which were particularly important for the manufacturing of hats.¹⁴²

The merchants, commission agents and brokers rarely concerned themselves with processing and finishing the goods. Rather, they acted as service providers between the producers of the goods and the manufacturers, who then further processed the pelts and skins. As for Nachman Fein, from 1869 onwards he no longer worked solely as a

¹⁴⁰ The word ‘Brühl’ was used as a street name in numerous towns in Saxony and Thüringen. Its etymology is probably Slavic. It means something like ‘bog’ or ‘swampland’.

¹⁴¹ Harmelin, “Juden in der Leipziger Rauchwarenwirtschaft”, 259.

¹⁴² *Fein & Co.*, 2.

commission agent, but, as stated above, he founded a ‘wholesale business in furs and other products on his own account’, and rented a retail outfit on the Brühl.¹⁴³



Figure 05: Nachman Fein’s office in the building of the guesthouse “Zum Tiger” in 1870. Courtesy of Stadtgeschichtliches Museum Leipzig.

The fairs were the high points in the business calendar and at that time lasted different lengths of time. The Easter fair went on for six whole weeks and the merchants, suppliers, buyers and sellers worked immensely hard during that period:

In some places the bustle and press was life-threatening. For instance, when a cart wanted to get across the Brühl in the vicinity of Nicolai Street, a police officer often had to fray a path. In the crowd, the many picturesque silhouettes of the Greeks and the Old Testament-like wearers of the Kaftans from Russia stood out particularly. Armenians, Englishmen, Frenchmen and so on were represented in large numbers [...] One worked intensively from 7am until midnight for the whole six weeks, and in certain firms, the work often went on even later into the night.¹⁴⁴

The autumn fair at Michaelmas lasted only three weeks and the January fair only one week.¹⁴⁵ During the rest of the year, the Brühl seemed forlornly empty, whereas in the course of the 1870s more and more firms moved their headquarters to that street, thus

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Emil Brass, *Aus dem Reich der Pelze*, Vol. 1: *Geschichte des Rauchwarenhandels*, Berlin 1925, 279-280. Translation R.L.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 280.

laying the foundation stone for the most important sector of Leipzig's economy until the Second World War.

How far Nachman Fein went through a process of assimilation during these years is uncertain. Due to the lack of personal records and documents it is impossible to determine his individual development. The only certitude is that in the years from 1871 into the 20th century the family turned itself into a German Jewish bourgeois family, taking on all the characteristics of the assimilated German Jewish middle class. What we cannot reconstruct, however, are the circumstances, reasons and motives for Nachman's emigration, and that of his children, the second generation. Whereas for those who followed such a depiction of their cultural, intellectual and economic development it was considerably easier.

5. Leipzig 1871 – 1905 Getting established

5.1 Leipzig from the Foundation of the Reich to the End of the Century

From 1871 on, Nachman Fein experienced a new era. Germany was becoming an emerging Middle European power, making great strides forward in industry, trade, commerce, transportation, technology and science. Simultaneously, a substantial and impoverished industrial workforce presented itself as one of the most pressing questions of the time.

Leipzig was a major player in this ambivalent development, becoming one of the most dynamic cities in the German Reich, in part thanks to the construction of the railway, which was of considerable importance in turning Leipzig into an important trade centre. Consequently, as Friedrich List had foreseen as early as 1833, shortly after the foundation of the Reich 1871, Leipzig had become the ventricle of Germany's domestic trade.¹⁴⁶ It was also noteworthy as a centre of the book trade, of the graphics industry and of German manufacturing. In the course of the industrial revolution, which took place in Saxony in the 1860s, Leipzig's population increased progressively, reaching about 107.000 inhabitants in 1871.¹⁴⁷ Economic growth was rapid. In 1877 3.421 enterprises and 208 subsidiaries were registered in 265 different economic branches. By 1907 the number had increased to 14.678 enterprises and 1.748 subsidiaries.¹⁴⁸ Numerous firms were founded by Leipzig's Jewish residents or by newly-arrived Jewish merchants. In 1871 there were already 1.768 Jews living in Leipzig and by 1890 there were 4.070, representing about 1.4% of the total population.¹⁴⁹ Jews were however not equally active in all economic fields. In professions such as medicine, law and the arts they were under-represented, whereas in other walks of life, such as the textile industry or the fur and hare skin trade, the contrary was the case.¹⁵⁰ Amongst the most prominent protagonists in the fur business were the Jewish merchants Marcus Harmelin (1796-1873), Julius Ariowitsch (1867-

¹⁴⁶ Cf. Friedrich List, *Über ein sächsisches Eisenbahn-System als Grundlage eines allgemeinen deutschen Eisenbahn-Systems und insbesondere über die Anlegung einer Eisenbahn von Leipzig nach Dresden*, Leipzig 1833, 5.

¹⁴⁷ Ernst Hasse, *Statistische Wanderungen durch Leipzig*, Leipzig 1876.

¹⁴⁸ Andrea Lorz, „Strebe vorwärts“: *Lebensbilder jüdischer Unternehmer in Leipzig: Familie Heine und ihr Unternehmen, das Tuchhaus Gebrüder Heine, Familie Leo Jolowicz mit den Unternehmen Buchhandlung Gustav Fock GmbH und Akademische Verlagsgesellschaft mbH*, Leipzig 1999, 8.

¹⁴⁹ Rückert, *Leipziger Rauchwarenwirtschaft*, 15.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., footnote 7.

1908) and Chaim Eitingon (1859-1932). The Jews were also of significant importance in specialized trades and the foundation of department stores. Worthy of particular mention would be the brothers Ury's store on the Königplatz, the brothers Held's in Lindenau, the clothes manufacturers Bamberger & Herz on the Augustusplatz in Goethestraße. There were others, such as Gebr. Joske at 4-12, Windmühlenstraße, M. Joske & Co. in Plagwitz, M. & S. Cohn at 2 in the Altenburger Sporenstraße and the store on the Brühl, established in 1908 on the site of Richard Wagner's birthplace.¹⁵¹ Besides the Brühl, the centres of Jewish economic life were mainly the Leipzig Nordvorstadt and the Waldstraßen district.¹⁵²

The fur business also underwent many changes. Chiefly Jewish merchants from Berlin, Breslau, Brody, Frankfurt am Main, Fürth, Lissa, Sklow and Vienna moved to Leipzig or established subsidiaries there.¹⁵³ The New York firm Jos. Ullman organized auctions of American furs. In 1878, Joseph Finkelstein & Co. did the same for Russian furs, but less successfully, since the Leipzig merchants gave preference to the London auctions, or else they travelled to the Russian fairs in Nischnij Nowgorod and Irbit, where they purchased their goods themselves.¹⁵⁴ During this prosperous period, Leipzig fur businesses also founded subsidiaries abroad, as for example the London branch of Haendler & Sohn, where Emil Brass (1856-1938), later to become a notable historian of the worldwide fur trade, did his traineeship.¹⁵⁵

Because of the growing importance of the fur trade in the second half of the 19th century, an increasing number of fur-conditioning factories were set up on the fringes of the city, in Böhlen, Grimma, Lindenau, Möckern, Naunhof, Rötha, Schkeuditz, Wahren and Weissenfels.¹⁵⁶ Simultaneously, the importance of the fairs themselves decreased in favour of a fixed trade base. From now on, offices, warehouses and branch offices had permanent premises on the Brühl.

Nachman Fein's concern was undoubtedly a small commission business, with no entry in the official trade register and no associates or partners. This remained the case until 1903. Nevertheless, on a daily basis, Nachman busied himself not only within Saxony, buying and selling hare skins from there. He also pursued a strategy of a small-scale

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² Kowalzik, *Jüdisches Erwerbsleben*, 20.

¹⁵³ Rückert, *Leipziger Rauchwarenwirtschaft*, 17.

¹⁵⁴ "Die Rauchwaren-Auktionen", *Das Pelzgewerbe* XII, 6, Leipzig 1961, 264.

¹⁵⁵ Arnon Lewin, *Leben und Wirken der jüdischen Rauchwarenhändler Marcus Harmelin, Leopold Lindheimer, Max Ariowitsch und Emil Braß*, Jahresarbeit, Frankfurt am Main o.J.; also cf. Rückert, *Leipziger Rauchwarenwirtschaft*, 17.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

internationalisation. An indication of this is the biographical development of his son. Born in 1845, Chaim Leib had come to Leipzig with his father in 1862 where he worked alongside him in the firm. Then, in the first half of the 1870's, he was regularly sent to Krakow to purchase hare skins. While doing business in that city, he met Charlotte Aschkenasy, whom he married there in 1877. Charlotte was born on July 8th 1856, the daughter of the merchants Hermann Aschkenasy and Salomea Aschkenasy, née Schoenberg. Not much has been passed down about the family in Krakow. There is a legend in the Fein family that one of the Aschkenasys' forbears was the famous Rabbi Zvi Aschkenasy, and that it might thus be legitimate to claim descendancy.¹⁵⁷ How far this connection with the Aschkenasys from Krakow is founded on historical fact must be discussed elsewhere. However, the very fact that such ancestry should be claimed by a German Jewish family which had completely assimilated by the second half of the 19th century demonstrates the ambivalence in which German Jewry found itself. Conflicting values and the rift between tradition and modernity are clearly at play here. The majority of German Jews, and particularly those who had achieved bourgeois status, attempted to adapt entirely to German culture. Yet at the same time, they wished to uphold tradition, if not through religious observance, then at least through a conscious awareness of personal embedding and anchorage in the century-long course of Jewish history.

The wedding between Chaim Leib Fein and Charlotte Aschkenasy took place on January 16th 1877 in Krakow. It can be surmised that Chaim travelled regularly between Leipzig and Krakow, as his father, Nachman, had done before him. To maintain business contacts and import furs from Eastern Europe via the Austrian city of Krakow, he must frequently have stayed there. The Aschkenasys also originated from Brody. Herman Aschkenasy worked as a timber merchant in Brody and Krakow and, like Nachman Fein, must have left his native town in the late 1840s or early 1850s, to settle permanently in Krakow.

The subsequent marriage connection also clearly highlights the networking propensity of the Brody merchants. Until the 1870s, marriages were undertaken by German Jewry primarily to improve their social or business status, and were considered, to a greater or

¹⁵⁷ Zvi Aschkenasy was a rabbi who was born in 1658 in Moravia and died in 1718 in Lemberg. Aschkenasy was one of the main opponents of Sabbtai Zevi, a self-proclaimed Messiah and founder of the Sabbatean movement. Aschkenasy was also considered as one of the most outstanding rabbinical scholars of his time, whose influence extended as far as Sarajevo, Hamburg, London and Amsterdam. Cf. "Aschkenasy, Zvi", in *Encyclopedia Judaica*, 733-735.

lesser degree, as a duty to be fulfilled by the spouses. It is likely that this was the case for Chaim Leib and Charlotte. Chaim's stepmother, Fanny Patyn, had already died in Leipzig in March 1874 and was therefore not involved in the arrangement. On the other hand, Nachman and maybe also his daughter Anna Fein, who, since Fanny's death, had been a member of the household, probably cleverly organized the meeting between the future couple, certainly with a degree of privacy which would allow them to conduct a kind of romantic courtship.

Between 1870 and 1900 expressions of affection between partners gradually became common. [...] Elders had selected the eligible mate and, under their supervision, the betrothed could engage in courting behaviour.¹⁵⁸

Already on November 13th 1877, the year they married, the young couple had a son, Alexander Fein. The child was born in Leipzig, although, as Chaim Leib declared to the Town Council, he only officially returned to live there in 1883.¹⁵⁹ Chaim must nevertheless have had accommodation in Leipzig, since Alexander's birth certificate states that he was born at 1.30pm in his father's dwelling at number 10 Eberhardstrasse. It follows that Chaim Leib resided in the Innere Nordvorstadt, where immigrant Jews from Eastern Europe typically settled as from the 1880s. The overwhelming majority of the Jewish migrants who moved to this district were poor and possessed no educational qualifications.¹⁶⁰ Even so, for the most part, they no longer resembled traditional Kaftanjuden.¹⁶¹ On the contrary, they constituted a vast, diverse, heterogeneous group with members from Congress Poland, the Baltic, Russia, Bukovina, or, as in the case of the Feins, from Galicia.¹⁶² Most of the inhabitants, even those who arrived later than 1880, remained orthodox and shunned integration. In contrast, many of the merchant families strived towards long-term integration into German society and made considerable efforts to achieve this goal. The Feins are a typical example of German-Jewish or immigrant Jewish families' endeavours to assimilate.

Charlotte and Chaim's other children were also born in Leipzig. After Alexander, they had a second son, Josef Franck, who was born on February 23rd 1879, but who died in October the same year. Only three-quarters of a year later, on July 9th 1880, Siegmund

¹⁵⁸ Marion Kaplan, *The Making of the Jewish Middle Class. Women, Family, and Identity in Imperial Germany*, Oxford 1994, 109.

¹⁵⁹ Leipziger Stadtarchiv, WLA 26947 Bl. 017.

¹⁶⁰ Kowalzik, *Jüdisches Erwerbsleben*, 18.

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² Ibid., 19.

Fein saw the light of day, followed by a daughter, Emilie Bella, born on July 12th 1883. Wilhelm, the last sibling in a family of six, was born on December 14th 1886. The fact that all the children were born in Leipzig implies that Charlotte lived there during all those years, and to accommodate the greatly enlarged family, they moved to 44 Nordstrasse, one of the big streets in the Innere Nordvorstadt.

The Hungarian historian Victor Karady identifies three main criteria which define assimilation and pinpoints acculturation, naturalization and secularisation as the most important integration strategies used by Jews in the nineteen hundreds. These three strategies are exemplified, albeit in different ways, by the successive Fein family generations.¹⁶³

Acculturation had for the most part already been achieved in Nachman's time. As someone who came from the Austrian Crown Province of Galicia and who thus spoke German, bridging the gap with German Gentiles had been relatively straightforward. Thus, as early as 1866, he was living at 9 Mittelstrasse with predominantly German neighbours. His flat was on the first floor of a three-storey apartment building whose residents were among others another merchant, a dressmaker, a restaurant owner as well as a conductor who worked on the Leipzig-Dresden railway.¹⁶⁴ At the beginning of the 1870s he moved to 4 Schützenstrasse, to the east of the Brühl, a better district, if one is to judge by his neighbours' professions. The building was divided into two blocks, with a front section located on the street and another located behind, designated as the middle section. The front section was primarily occupied by tenants who could be considered as bourgeois. Near Nachman and his family lived mostly free lancing middle lower class people like an attorney, a merchant, a mechanic and an Agent und Lottery Collector. On the ground floor of the front section there were a tobacco and spirits store and a lamp shop. The tenants in the back section were by contrast working-class people, sellers or simple craftsmen, but people who were by no means completely impoverished like one could find in many other districts of town. The address book shows a carpenter and furniture polisher, a locksmith, a post office clerk, a book binder, a shoemaker and a woman with a market stall.¹⁶⁵ Indeed, at this time also several other immigrant Jews lived in Schützenstrasse. The Lemberger Synagogue was only three houses down the

¹⁶³ Karady, *Gewalterfahrung und Utopie*, 154.

¹⁶⁴ *Leipziger Adreßbuch: unter Benutzung amtlicher Quellen*, Leipzig 1866, 373.

¹⁶⁵ *Leipziger Adreßbuch: unter Benutzung amtlicher Quellen*, Leipzig 1873, 444.

street, at number 7. It had been founded as early as 1830 by Eastern European merchants. Yet despite remaining within Jewish structures in Leipzig, there was already acculturation in Nachman Fein's generation, because they were mostly able German speakers. Fitting in was therefore not a problem for Nachman and his family.

The second strategy for assimilation described by Karady, naturalisation, is also applicable to the Fein family. Although they were immigrant Galician Jews, they very rapidly saw themselves as a German family of Jewish faith. Several factors lead to this conclusion. A crucial indicator is the choice of first names for the newly-born children.¹⁶⁶ Nachman's children were still given traditional Hebrew names such as Chaim Leib, Henie, Reissel or Kohoss, whereas his grandson's generation witnessed a significant Germanisation. The name Alexander harks back to the classical Greek, but Siegfried and Wilhelm clearly demonstrate that, as from the 1880s, their parents positioned themselves within the bounds of German tradition. This ability to merge into the national culture or naturalisation would also be observed in members of future generations, some of whom went as far as to change their first names to better adapt to their new environment, or to demonstrate their commitment to the country that had taken them in.

Secularisation, the third assimilation strategy in Karady's model, is difficult to ascertain for the first and second generation of Feins. One can assume a diminishing impact of Jewish religious observance in everyday life in the second half of the 19th century, due to social context within which the Nachman's family lived. However, the lack of source material makes this impossible to verify. And as one cannot reconstruct, for the second generation, i.e. Nachman's children, exactly how often they went to the synagogue, how far they upheld religious precepts or adhered to laws concerning food, it is also difficult to determine how far the secularisation tendencies of the third generation, i.e. Alexander, Emilie, Siegmund and Wilhelm, represented a genuine break. That having been said, dissolution of religious links in the first half of the 20th century cannot be overlooked.

The course of Charlotte Fein's life can also stand as an example of the way in which the family members of the second generation participated in the modernisation process. She

¹⁶⁶ Karady speaks of a nationalisation of names but rather drawing on surnames. Karady, *Gewalterfahrung und Utopie*, 155.

is an impressive representative of the nascent changes in the roll of Jewish women. From the outset, Charlotte and Chaim Leib provided their children with a modern German-Jewish social background and they saw themselves as bourgeois, even if the household's income had not yet reached its 1920s level. Only later events, determined by fate, denote insecure financial circumstances. After the foundation of the German Reich and the subsequent 'Gründerjahren', which led to the economic prosperity of the Jewish bourgeoisie, the participation of the wife in the husband's business generally became unnecessary. Thus the women could concentrate on creating a well-organised household and home as the mainstay of their bourgeois lifestyle.¹⁶⁷ It was also becoming easier for women to take part in cultural activities and contribute openly to civil society, even if there were still some constraints. Leipzig itself developed into a centre for the German women's civil rights movement. The first Society for the Education of Leipzig Women had been founded in 1865. It claimed equal rights for women, a goal closely related to that of the 1848 American women's rights movement. The Leipzig Society's activities subsequently lead to the creation of the *Allgemeiner Deutscher Frauenverein (ADF)*, which was founded by 330 members in the presence of August Bebel on October 15th 1865.

One of the principal figures of the Leipzig movement was the wife of the Rabbi Abraham Meyer Goldschmidt, Henriette Goldschmidt. Her commitment to the women's movement and her pedagogical theories were to be of primary importance to Charlotte Fein.

Henriette Goldschmidt was born in 1825 in the Province of Posen and is still today seen as a pioneer of the women's movement in Germany, which claimed the right to education, professional qualifications and paid employment. As a member of the *ADF*, she was interested in numerous social issues and stumbled almost by chance on writings by Friedrich Fröbel, pedagogue and founder of the Kindergarten movement. In his work she discovered a reformist approach to the upbringing of children and the idea of creating an association for professional training for young women. Like Fröbel, Henriette was convinced that

it was characteristic of the times to relieve females of their instinctive, passive tasks, and, given their natural attributes and vocation to care of human kind, to raise them up to the same level as their male counterparts.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁷ Kaplan, *Making of the Jewish Middle Class*, 4.

¹⁶⁸ Henriette Goldschmidt, *Was ich von Fröbel lernte und lehrte. Versuch einer kulturgeschichtlichen Begründung der Fröbelschen Erziehungslehre*, Leipzig, 1909, 9. Translation R.L.

In December 1871 she founded the *Society for the Family and for the Education of the People* (*Verein für Familien- und Volkserziehung*) of which she became Chairperson. Besides furthering Fröbel's ideas and educational model, the *Society* saw as its main task, "to raise well-off women's consciousness about their duties towards their own and the volk-family [...]".¹⁶⁹ The daughters of the least well-off families were also to be given the possibility of acquiring some professional training. In 1872 the *Society* created the first public kindergarten, and gradually institutional structures were put in place to train the teachers working there. In the same year the *Seminar für Kindergärtnerinnen* was founded. It was followed in 1874 by the creation of teaching courses for well-off women and, in 1878, by the *Lyceum für Damen*, an institute of higher education for teacher training in education and pedagogy.

Charlotte Fein would have come into contact with the pedagogical concepts of the Leipzig women's movement relatively soon after her arrival in Leipzig in 1877. In 1953, Gerhard Fein, her grandson, reports that she trained as a nursery school teacher in one of Henriette Goldschmidt's educational institutions. It can be assumed that she was also attending courses at the Lyceum for Women, where she acquired sound and exhaustive training. For Henriette Goldschmidt, the teaching profession was ideally suited to women: science and art, knowledge and know-how. If institutionalised, it could solve the vexed question of women earning a living. In her opinion, one could "debate whether the hunger to feed a woman's mind and spirit is justified, whereas everyone immediately understands the need to feed the body and the cry for bread."¹⁷⁰ There were diverse educational possibilities for Charlotte Aschkenasy at the Lyzeum. In addition, practice in four foreign languages was offered in the state kindergartens, elementary schools, day nurseries, and also for children with special needs. The fact that Charlotte undertook such training obviously pinpoints the modernity of the emergent Jewish bourgeoisie of that time. However, one cannot claim with absolutely certainty that Charlotte's choice to acquire educational qualifications was also motivated by the need to take up paid employment, as Chaim Leib's then still meagre income as a commission agent might lead us to surmise. Perhaps it was not solely hunger for intellectual nourishment which drew Charlotte Fein to the Lyceum, but also the limited income Chaim Leib made which probably did not compare very favourably with

¹⁶⁹ Henriette Goldschmidt, *Vom Kindergarten zur Hochschule für Frauen*, Leipzig 1911, 8. Translation R.L.

¹⁷⁰ Henriette Goldschmidt, *Der Kindergarten in seiner Bedeutung für die Erziehung des weiblichen Geschlechts*, Leipzig 1872, 3-5. Translation R.L.

earnings in other professions, and which made it difficult to maintain bourgeois life-style for the large family. There is only one source which indicates Chaim Leib's income. It is a letter to the Leipzig District Court written by friends of the family in support of a usual request by Alexander to be paid during legal traineeship, stating that Chaim's earnings were between 2.000 and 3.000 marks a year.¹⁷¹ This income can be put into a larger social perspective by a comparison with other yearly earnings of the time.

Year	Shop assistants	Technical workers	Office staff	Salesmen/ Reps	Office assistants
1897	1.549	2.138	1.603	884	971
1898	1.584	2.095	1.599	895	973
1899	1.618	2.187	1.597	894	961
1900	1.633	2.175	1.596	908	987
1901	1.622	2.160	1.489	918	985
1902	1.604	2.144	1.575	927	993
1903	1.579	2.116	1.665	931	1.000

Table 03: Income in marks of selected categories of salaried employees¹⁷²

Charlotte died at the age of 30, in March 1887, from the after-effects of the birth of her last child, Wilhelm, who was three months old when she passed away.¹⁷³ For Chaim Leib and his first-born son, Alexander, who was then 9 years old, this premature death must have been a terrible burden. These extremely difficult personal circumstances were certainly one of the reasons why, on 21st July 1887, Chaim Leib applied to the City of Leipzig to renew his franchise as commission agent. Besides, Nachman Fein died on December 15th of that same year and had probably been unable, in the preceding months, to continue working in the business on a regular basis. From then on, Chaim Leib, who was now alone at the head of a family of five, also drew his income from the

¹⁷¹ It is difficult to draw up a scientific and sociologically satisfactory survey of incomes before 1913. On the one hand, the data is fragmentary and on the other, the extremely heterogeneous groups, even in the white-collar professions, make it almost impossible to organise meaningful categories. Nevertheless, the figures in the table serve to illustrate the social standing of the Fein family at the turn of the century.

¹⁷² <http://info1.gesis.org/dbksearch18/SDesc2.asp?no=8177&ll=10&af=&nf=1&db=d&search=&search2=¬abs=1>. (17/03/2013).

¹⁷³ Genealogical Study 2009 Routes to Roots Foundation, *Papers of the Fein Family*.

fur business, although little definite can be said about the company at that time, due to the scarcity of records.

5.2 Alexander's legal career 1897-1905

The majority of Jewish parents set great store by the schooling of their children. A good education was seen as the key to social mobility and a means to legitimize a position within the German middle classes.¹⁷⁴ Alexander Fein's education stands as a good example of the strategies deployed by German Jews to access the middle classes through academic qualifications. Having passed his Abitur, he enrolled at the University of Leipzig in 1897 to study law.

On June 27th 1900 he sat for the first State exams, graduated and in July of the same year began his time as a trainee lawyer with the Leipzig District Court.¹⁷⁵ There he worked for the first six months in the Criminal Law Department, after which he was assigned to the Department for Civil Litigation.¹⁷⁶ His evaluations were invariably excellent. He was described as a gifted civil servant with good legal knowledge whose work was "always both diligent, useful and far-reaching".¹⁷⁷ His reports and Civil Court sentences showed legal insight and a skilful handling of the material.¹⁷⁸ His behaviour was also reported as impeccable.

However, Alexander's success at the Civil Court was overshadowed by family difficulties. Already in September 1900, the financial circumstances of the Feins seem to have been so disastrous that he was forced to make an unusual request to the Ministry of Justice: Given his family's difficulties, Alexander asked to be paid for his work, which at that time was particularly unusual for a legal trainee:

Having passed the first State Law exam on June 27th of this year and since then working as a trainee at the Royal Civil Law Courts in Leipzig, I unfortunately find myself obliged to humbly request your Honours at the Ministry of Justice to most kindly grant me the privilege of remuneration. This appeal so early in my career is due to my precarious family circumstances. My father has been ailing for a long time and has therefore been unable to attend regularly to his long-established skin and fur commission business, which in any case only provided a small income, so that our family had to live very sparingly. During my nine years of schooling at the local Royal Gymnasium [grammar school, R.L.] and my eight student semesters at the university, I refused

¹⁷⁴ Victor Karady, "Das Judentum als Bildungsmacht in der Moderne", *Österreichische Zeitung für Geschichtswissenschaft* 3 (1977), 347 -361, 351.

¹⁷⁵ Personalakte Alexander Fein, *Hauptstaatsarchiv Dresden*.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid. Translation R.L.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

to solicit any outside support, since my father, although badly-off, was able to maintain me, and I myself contributed to my keep by giving private lessons. However, a few months ago, my father suffered a narrowing of the oesophagus, which unhappily has degenerated into a cancer. He is getting weaker by the day and I, his eldest son, must stand by, helpless, alongside my younger and still needy siblings: my sister of 16 and my two brothers of 19 and 13. As for my mother, she passed away 13 years ago. Furthermore, I can expect absolutely no support from my few relatives who are still alive. I therefore plead ardently that the Justice Ministry will not refuse its support and already now grant me some remuneration.¹⁷⁹

To support his request and confirm his precarious financial situation, Alexander included this confirmation from the Frank brothers:

Fein Senior, the trainee Fein's father, has an exceptionally irregular and small income, which can be estimated at between 1.500 and 2.000 marks a year, rising to 3.000 marks in the best years. Consequently, it will be hard for him to provide for his family and he can by no means support his son in any way.¹⁸⁰

Alexander's superiors also backed his request and asked that "despite the fact that he had not been a trainee for long, his pay should correspond to that of a dutiful, conscientious and efficient worker."¹⁸¹ The cancer of the oesophagus led to a long period of suffering for Chaim Leib. As a result, Alexander became the sole provider for the family, subjected to an increased degree of stress. In addition to his siblings, Fritz and Hans, the children of Anna Fein, Chaim's sister, were living in the house. This extremely heavy double burden weakened Alexander's health and his fragile condition at this time might well be seen as the early sign of a serious illness which he would develop a few years later. His doctor, Arthur Goldmann, who's son Heinz later became a close friend of the family, diagnosed anaemia and "a high degree of neurasthenia, essentially brought about on the one hand by the acute suffering of his father and on the other by mental strain and exhaustion".¹⁸² Under the general designation of "Nervosität" (neurasthenia) Goldman diagnosed a marked suffering caused by weakness, agitation and nervous tension. At the turn of the century, neurasthenia was a cultural illness by excellence. Of course, neurasthenia was at that time also a fashion - or 'an illness of the era', and it often served as a blanket diagnosis for afflictions which could not be precisely identified. Every epoch has its closely related "Epochenkrankheit"¹⁸³: Madness in the late eighteen hundreds, depression and melancholia in the Romantic and

¹⁷⁹ Ibid. Translation R.L.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid. Translation R.L.

¹⁸¹ Ibid. Translation R.L.

¹⁸² Ibid. Translation R.L.

¹⁸³ For the term 'illness of the era' ('Epochenkrankheit') cf. Frank Degler and Christian Kohlroß (eds.), *Epochen/Krankheiten. Konstellationen von Literatur und Pathologie*, St. Ingbert 2006.

Biedermeier periods, Tinnitus for Kafka's generation, and syphilis, one of the most serious afflictions, which spread over several eras¹⁸⁴ and which was to play an important role in the history of the Feins. The fact that Alexander Fein was diagnosed with neurasthenia at the turn of the century can be seen as another meaningful sign of the embedding of the family in the modern urban environment of the upcoming middle classes.

Alexander Fein recovered from his nervous affliction. In 1902 he cut short his trainee time at the District Court and went to work at Counsellor of Justice Gustav Broda's, one of the best-known Leipzig law firms. Broda was born in Dresden in 1845 and practised as a lawyer in Leipzig from 1874 onwards. He became a notary in 1899 and one year later he was granted the title of Counsellor of Justice.¹⁸⁵ He was one of the founders of the Leipzig Lawyers' Association and at the turn of the century was considered as one of the most prominent Leipzig lawyers. Consequently, Broda's invitation to Alexander to continue his training with him sheds an extremely favourable light on Alexander's talent as a lawyer. He continued at Broda's until the end of September 1904 and received first-rate evaluations certifying his good professional knowledge and clear powers of judgement.¹⁸⁶ In January 1905 he passed the second State Law Exam. On March 25th of the same year, he requested permission to practise law and became the third partner in the firm, along with Broda and Dr Hans Neugebauer, where he remained until the end of 1911.¹⁸⁷

Alexander's legal career lends itself to interesting historical interpretation. In the mid-19th century, it was still unusual for Jewish lawyers to become barristers or even notaries, despite the fact that they were permitted to attend the university. Only Jews who were prepared to convert could get around this restriction and not until the beginning of the 1870s, in the wake of equal rights, were numerous Jews appointed as trainee lawyers. In 1878 the practise of the law became a free profession throughout the German Empire, which meant that it was open to all, and not only to functionaries.¹⁸⁸ Alexander's career clearly highlights the connection between the rise of the German-middle-class Jewry and their gradual access to education and the professions. From this

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., 5.

¹⁸⁵ Hubert Lang, *Martin Drucker – das Ideal eines Rechtsanwalts*, Leipzig 1997.

¹⁸⁶ Personalakte Alexander Fein, *Hauptstaatsarchiv Dresden*.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸⁸ Henning Frank, "Der Kampf um die freie Advokatur und die Gleichschaltung der Anwaltschaft im Dritten Reich. Zur Geschichte der Anwaltschaft Sachsens 1831-1945", in: *Justiz, Juristen und politische Polizei in Sachsen 1933 bis 1945*, 5-35, 16, available online at http://www.justiz.sachsen.de/smj/download/Band_06.pdf (17/02/2013).

point of view Alexander's choice to study law and later to join the Bar is almost a prototype for a Jewish middle class biography of this time. Entering the civil service, the army or the teaching profession was still at this time restricted by formal and informal barriers, so that Jewish university graduates tended to join the free professions. Amongst these, "the legal profession intersected with many other spheres of the bourgeoisie: cultivated, merchant, trade or industrial, top civil servants or independent professionals."¹⁸⁹ Consequently, Alexander was the archetypal young, modern, academically-educated generation of German Jews, who, building on the experiences of their parents and grandparents, strove to achieve a higher social status and steadfastly pursued their goal of successful and complete integration into German society:

The Jews tended to take on the characteristic of urban populations, engaging in urban enterprises, valuing the cultural offerings found in cities, and benefiting from urban educational institutions to a greater extent than the overall population.¹⁹⁰

The vast majority of the German Jewish population wanted to be recognized as 'German citizens of Jewish faith' ('deutsche Staatsbürger jüdischen Glaubens'). Despite this, they did not completely give up their religious group identity, as can be demonstrated by the Fein family even until the end of the Weimar Republic.

Observation of the social structure of German Jewry during the German Empire shows a continual decline of numbers in relation to the general population. In 1880 the Jewish population in the Empire was about 1.24%, whereas in 1905 it had declined to 1% and in 1910 to 0.95%.¹⁹¹ In 1885, 43% of all German Jews lived in big cities, compared to 16% of the general population, a clear indication of the earlier urbanisation of this minority. Jews also played an important role in industrialisation. In 1882, 20.8% were working in the industrial sector, although trade and commerce remained their privileged domain. Between 1895 and 1907 about 75% of all Jewish paid employment was in trade. According to Nipperdey, at the turn of the century about 60% of German Jews belonged to the middle and upper bourgeoisie, and another 25% to the petty

¹⁸⁹ Hannes Siegrist, "Berufe im Gesellschaftsvergleich, Rechtsanwälte in Deutschland, Italien und der Schweiz", in Haupt, Heinz-Gerhard and Kocka, Jürgen (eds.), *Geschichte und Vergleich. Ansätze und Ergebnisse international vergleichender Geschichtsschreibung*, Frankfurt am Main 1996, 207-238, 231. Translation R.L.

¹⁹⁰ Kaplan, *Making of the Jewish Middle Class*, 7.

¹⁹¹ Werner Habel, *Deutsch-jüdische Geschichte am Ausgang des 19. Jahrhunderts. Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der Innerjüdischen Sammlungsbewegung im Deutschen Reich 1880-1900*, Kastellaun 1977, 78. Total numbers in Gerd Hohorst and Jürgen Kocka (eds.), *Sozialgeschichtliches Arbeitsbuch: Materialien zur Statistik des Kaiserreichs 1870-1914*, München 1975, 53-55. Also Monika Richarz, "Die Entwicklung der jüdischen Bevölkerung", in Meyer, Michael A. (ed.), *Deutsch-jüdische Geschichte in der Neuzeit*, Vol. 3: *Umstrittene Integration 1871-1918*, München 1997, 13-38, 28.

bourgeoisie.¹⁹² One can thus conclude that the overwhelming majority of German Jewry during this time can be classified as belonging to the economically secure middle classes.

In order to accomplish the task of joining the middle classes and the German bourgeoisie, German Jews at this time adopted a strategy, which had already proved efficient in the early stages of Jewish Emancipation: education. The idea of Jewish Emancipation, initiated by Moses Mendelssohn, was rooted in the ideals of the Age of Enlightenment, which postulated that education would be the means by which the individual could free himself from what Kant condemned as “the self-imposed immaturity”.¹⁹³

For Jews striving towards Emancipation, education also implied a levelling out of religious and national differences, which in turn would guarantee successful integration, or so the German Jews believed. At the time of the German Empire, and to some extent also in the Weimar Republic, it is clear that Jews typically hoped to integrate through a combination of educational achievement and success in the market place.¹⁹⁴

Becoming a member of the educated classes became an ideal within the emerging Jewish bourgeoisie, who attached considerable importance not only to academic knowledge, as dispensed in the study of medicine, law or national economics, but also to the pursuit of music, literature, art and aesthetics. For German Jews, education was understood as the “integral self-development by which the whole man would develop his inherent form by transforming all of his faculties, mind and body, into a harmonious unit”.¹⁹⁵ Sustained efforts in schooling and character building, as well as improved moral integrity, should enable an individual to become cultivated, autonomous and well-balanced. These inner qualities would be recognizable through an inclination for aesthetics, good bearing, good manners and refinement.

To aspire to become an educated middle-class citizen was of course not solely a Jewish ideal. However, it was particularly widely adopted by the Jewish bourgeoisie, not least to prove that they were able to achieve a high level of assimilation and integration into German culture. Such proof was perceived as compulsory because anti-Semitism in the

¹⁹² Thomas Nipperdey, *Deutsche Geschichte 1866-1918*, Vol. I: *Arbeitswelt und Bürgergeist*, München 1994, 398. The problem with these statistical attempts at classification is that the term bourgeoisie is not a clearly defined concept. The frontiers between the various bourgeois stratifications are at once very rigid, but also, as the family Fein's development shows, quite permeable.

¹⁹³ Immanuel Kant, *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals and What is Enlightenment*, Indianapolis 1980.

¹⁹⁴ Kaplan, *The Making of the Jewish Middle Class*, 8.

¹⁹⁵ David Sorkin, “The Genesis of the Ideology of Emancipation, 1806-1840, *LBIYB*, 1987, 11-40, 19.

Reich had, after the 1870s, taken on a new and openly aggressive form. Indeed, Alexander Fein's home town was the stronghold for anti-Semitic propaganda. The Leipzig publishing house Hammer, directed by Theodor Fritsch, published numerous inflammatory anti-Semitic hate-pamphlets, and the Deutsche Reformverein zu Leipzig (Leipzig Association for German Reform) set out to further the anti-Semitic education of the local residents. In 1887 Hammer published a small guidebook entitled *Antisemiten-Katechismus* (A Catechism for Anti-Semitism). In 1944 a new edition was published as *Handbuch der Judenfrage* (A Handbook for Jewish Questions). It contained 44 requirements and it became a bestseller within the völkisch-nationalist movement.¹⁹⁶ Whether Alexander and his younger siblings were victims of Jew-baiting during this period cannot be ascertained. Nevertheless, they were certainly highly sensitive to such developments, and this awareness played a non-negligible role in the upbringing of the following generations.

During his student years, Alexander was an active member of the Alsatia fraternity, an association which had been founded in 1894. Its members were almost entirely Jewish, although it made considerable efforts to achieve parity between Jewish and non-Jewish members, and to avoid being perceived as a purely Jewish organisation.¹⁹⁷ Ever since the 1880s, far-reaching anti-Semite convictions had taken root within the German student fraternities, which finally led to the expulsion of Jewish members.¹⁹⁸ Along with many other nationalistic branches of the population, the German student body adopted an anti-Semitic ideology justified by biology and racism, not least because they feared competition for university places and professional positions. The commitment and success of Jewish students triggered fears of being squeezed out amongst the German students, who were failing in increasing numbers, all of which lead to anti-Semitic student uprisings in Vienna, Berlin and also Leipzig.

The University of Leipzig, along with Berlin and Munich, had one of the biggest and most important law departments. Furthermore, it had supra-regional status due to the

¹⁹⁶ Matthias Piefel, *Antisemitismus und völkische Bewegung im Königreich Sachsen 1879-1914*, Göttingen 2004, 60.

¹⁹⁷ Miriam Rürup, "Mit Burschenbund und Mütze – Der Verein jüdischer Studenten (VJSt) *Hatikvah* und die Verbindung *Saxo-Bavaria* an der Universität Leipzig", in Wendehorst, Stephan (ed.), *Bausteine einer jüdischen Geschichte der Universität Leipzig. Leipziger Beiträge zur Jüdischen Geschichte und Kultur*, Bd. IV, 2006, 99-130, 106.

¹⁹⁸ For a broad overview see Norbert Kampe, *Studenten und "Judenfrage" im Deutschen Kaiserreich. Die Entstehung einer akademischen Trägerschicht des Antisemitismus*, Göttingen 1988 (= Kritische Studien zur Geschichtswissenschaft, Bd.76).

Leipzig Courts (District and Regional Court) and the Seat of the Supreme Court of the Reich, and was in general characterized by an acutely anti-Semitic atmosphere.¹⁹⁹ For example, out of the 4.000 students who signed the antisemitic petition of 1880-81, 1.200 were from Leipzig alone. In response to this atmosphere, various merely Jewish student associations were founded, such as Lipsia at the end of the 1880s, the national Jewish Verein jüdischer Studenten created by Martin Buber in 1898, the Association of Zionist Students set up in 1904 and the most patriotic fatherlandish and strongly assimilated association Saxo-Bavaria, established as late as 1912. The fact that, as a student, Alexander Fein did not join the Verein jüdischer Studenten implies that he perceived himself as an acculturated German Jew. Martin Buber had founded his student fraternity with the aspiration of

raising Jewish self-awareness through the affiliation of Jewish students, the deepening of their knowledge of Jewish history and literature, the consolidation of their physical strength and agility.²⁰⁰

His fraternity, Alsatia, went out of its way not to be seen as a Jewish association. Consequently, it was a member of the the Burschenbund Convent and connected to the nation-wide liberal-minded Corporations. For patriotic reasons, it made sure that political activities were avoided at all student gatherings, such as fencing, pub-crawling or lectures.²⁰¹ The ideal of its members and thus also of Alexander Fein was to achieve an integrated student culture, both in terms of religion and politics. In this, they were relatively unsuccessful. Alsatia had always been refused large membership and was like all fraternities forcefully dissolved after the National Socialists' accession to power.

In his family, Alexander was the only member of his generation to have an academic education. His younger brother Siegmund did practical training at the wholesale textile merchants' Loevenberg & Lewin. There he acquired hands-on sales skills which would later be useful to him in the family firm, and indeed, when Fein & Co. was officially founded on July 1st 1903, they immediately proved their worth. Wilhelm also chose technical training which would lead directly to the merchants' office.

¹⁹⁹ Rürup, "Mit Burschenbund und Mütze", 104.

²⁰⁰ Quoted in *ibid.*, 100.

²⁰¹ Yvonne Kleinmann, "'Ausländer' – 'Russen' – 'Sozialisten'. Jüdische Studenten aus dem östlichen Europa in Leipzig 1880-1914", in Wendehorst, *Bausteine einer jüdischen Geschichte*, 517-540, 532.

5.3 Fein & Co. - growth and getting established

On June 4th 1904, Siegmund and Alexander Fein registered the almost one years old firm Fein & Co. in the Leipzig Trade Register. Being the merchant, Siegmund was entered as the personally liable partner. Alexander, who at this period was still a trainee lawyer at Broda, the Counsellor of Justice, was a partner liable for his contribution of 5.000 marks in capital. The company's first premises were at Brühl 47. The building belonged to the fur merchants Harmelin, who also opened a retail outlet for furs there in 1905.

Like Nachman Fein, the Harmelins had emigrated from Brody to Leipzig, albeit quite some years earlier. Jacob Harmelin (1770-1825) arrived as early as 1818 and became one of the rare Jews to enjoy the privilege of being sworn in as a broker at the Leipzig Fair, so that besides going about his daily business as a merchant, he was also a public official. His son took over this official function in 1830, and also created the fur and brush business, which developed into one of the most important in Germany. In 1905 the Harmelins acquired the group of buildings which stood on the Brühl, between Richard-Wagner-Straße and Nikolaistraße. There they erected a modern office block and they even planned a free-access covered passageway between the Brühl and Richard Wagnerstrasse under which there would be a fur exchange. Unfortunately, this ambitious project never saw the light of day, due to the outbreak of World War I.

The founding of Fein & Co. followed on naturally from Nachman's and Leon's commission agent activities, and the company built on the existing family trade structures. From the beginning, Fein & Co. diversified its activities into two separate businesses, thus largely spreading risks and ensuring the survival of the company in times of crisis. On the one hand, as any traditional fur merchant on the Leipzig Brühl, it sold dyed Persian lamb, dressed ermine, raw and dressed sable, as well as a variety of foxes. On the other, it traded in raw hare and rabbit skins, mainly used to manufacture hats. At the end of the 19th century, growth in this particular business was tremendous. When the so-called folding-rim hat came into fashion, the demand for hare and nutria skins, the raw materials for hat felt, grew accordingly. The animal fur from the skins was felted technically and then pressed into a conical shape. The material was particularly appreciated for its light weight and waterproof qualities.

Already during the revolution of 1848 new hat forms were created as alternatives to the top hat, now considered conservative and reactionary. These counter models were mostly wide brimmed, floppy hats like the Kalabreser from Italy, also known as the Carbonari, the Slouch from America or the Heckerhut, associated with and named after the southern German revolutionary Friedrich Hecker (1811-1881) and remembered as the democratic and freedom hat.²⁰² In the 1840s and 1850s, this was the hat sported by the progressively-minded. By the 1860s, it had lost its political significance and even Bismarck began to prefer this type of hat to the more conventional top hat.²⁰³



Figure 06: Franz von Lenbach: Brustbild Bismarck, around 1890. Courtesy of the Städtische Galerie im Lenbachhaus München.



Figure 07: Friedrich Hecker with the so called Hecker hat. Source: <http://angelbachtal.de/geschichte/persoennlichkeiten.htm>

In the following decades, the felt hat, with its soft crown and brim, made from the felted hare skins, became the fashionable accessory in all social spheres. At the turn of the century, in Germany alone, about 15.000 workers were employed in the hat industry. New manufacturing techniques brought prices down and turned the hare skin felt hat into an affordable mass-produced product. The very figure of 1.124.513 men's felt hats produced in Germany in 1903 demonstrates the economic worth of this manufacturing

²⁰² Gustav Menschel, *Der Filzhut*, Wien 2004, 21.

²⁰³ As late as 1853, coming to Baden from Switzerland, Liszt got into trouble with the police because he was wearing a Carbonari hat, given to him by Richard Wagner. Cf. Herbert L. Piedboeuf, "Mode-Design im Wechsel von sachlichen und ästhetischen Erfordernissen", *Lenzinger Berichte* 67 (1989), 5-10.

sector.²⁰⁴ A large number of hat manufacturing centres also developed in France, Italy and Austria and constituted a complex and closely-knit network of suppliers, dealers, manufacturers and retailers, in which the USA played a special role. The rise of the hat industry began there in the 1850s, and it grew into one of the most important economic branches of the clothes industry.²⁰⁵ The industrially-manufactured felt hat became a mass-produced article there too, and a proliferation of hat factories sprung up in towns such as Danbury, Norwalk, New York, Brooklyn, Newark, Orange and Bethel. The firm Stetson & Co. took the lion's share of the market with 4 million pieces sold in 1906.²⁰⁶ Distribution was mainly assured by travelling salesmen, and in 1909 turnover reached an all-time high with 35.871.000 felt hats sold, i.e. one hat per 2,5 American males - a huge market in which the newly-founded Fein & Co. would play a very successful, if indirect, role.

5.4 Alexander Fein und Elisabeth Klein

Alexander Fein's marriage to Elisabeth Klein gained Fein & Co. access to the American market. His choice of bride was an astute business move from which the firm profited enormously, because until then the vast US source of revenue had been closed to them. It is difficult to reconstruct how far the Fein brothers had previously developed business contacts with the Klein family. However, it is plausible that the parallel between the founding of the firm in 1903 and Alexander's becoming acquainted with his future wife, Elisabeth Klein, was not pure coincidence. As was the case for the marriage between Chaim Leib and Charlotte Aschkenasy in its time, the connection between Alexander and Elisabeth illustrates the change in patterns of wedlock in the Empire. Marital union was no longer entered into solely out of material considerations or duty, and there was some leeway for free choice, attachment and emotion.²⁰⁷ Whereas traditional Jewry prioritized business and social necessities and knew only 'successful' unions, but not 'happy' ones, it was now common practice to give space to more emotional bonds. Nevertheless,

²⁰⁴ Menschel, *Filzhut*, 20.

²⁰⁵ Ibid., 31.

²⁰⁶ Menschel, *Filzhut*, 31.

²⁰⁷ Kaplan, *The Making of the Jewish Middle Class*, 108.

[e]ven when academic and professional careers opened to Jews during the Imperial era, university-educated Jewish males often married the daughters of Jewish businessmen and therefore had the means to maintain a substantial existence.²⁰⁸

Yet as from the turn of the century, many parents tried to conceal this firmly-embedded matchmaking tradition by organizing social events during which the young people could become acquainted.²⁰⁹ The ‘chance encounter’ was arranged to mask the fact that everything was planned.²¹⁰ In 1905, Emmy, Alexander’s sister, wrote a letter to her brother bidding him to continue his courtship with Elisabeth, which indicates that the arrangement underlying the ‘chance’ meeting was indeed kept secret. Correspondingly, in August 1903 Alexander Fein took his first vacation and bought a combined ticket for Baden-Baden and Switzerland. He had originally planned to stay at the Hotel Drei Könige in Baden-Baden for two days, but in fact he stayed considerably longer. At the same time, the Kleins were taking the waters and staying at the Friesenwald Hotel. Elizabeth joined her parents there after spending several weeks in Schönau im Schwarzwald and met Alexander during one of the visits he paid to the family. In fact, he became an “inseparable companion of Miss Klein”.²¹¹ The future couple took walks together or met in the spa gardens, “of course all in the company of the parents, who, however, after they noticed how it was between the two, considerately kept their distance.”²¹² On August 27th, with the parents’ permission, the couple took a walk alone to the Old Castle, during which Alexander spoke of his intentions with respect to marriage “without any reaction from Miss Klein.”²¹³ That evening Alexander was yet again a guest at the Kleins’ hotel and

after dinner, although this was forbidden by her parents, Miss Klein took the three-minute walk to the letter box and on the way back, in the darkness of the woods, the young couple became engaged [...]. Quite a while later the parents finally learnt of this occurrence, which of course provoked much excitement. Mr Klein ordered a bottle of champagne to be brought to the room [...] and just when they were raising their glasses to the betrothed couple, the spotlights lit up the ancient castle just outside their windows.²¹⁴

²⁰⁸ Ibid., 8.

²⁰⁹ Ibid., 109.

²¹⁰ Ibid.

²¹¹ Wedding magazine for Alexander Fein and Elisabeth Klein,

Papers of the Fein Family. Translation R.L.

²¹² Letter within the Wedding Magazine for Alexander Fein and Elisabeth Klein, *Papers of the Fein Family*. Translation R.L.

²¹³ Ibid. Translation R.L.

²¹⁴ Ibid. Translation R.L.

Alexander then spent four days in Switzerland, after which he was officially welcomed to his future parents-in-law's house in Strasbourg as Elizabeth's fiancé.

6. 1918 -1933 Security and Crises

6.1 An ambivalent era

Between the end of World War I and the closing years of the 1920s, the Fein family story played itself out against a complex and ambivalent backdrop. On the one hand, the Feins enjoyed a long period of business prosperity, only briefly impacted by hyperinflation and the economic crisis of 1929. Indeed, in these difficult years, the family's strategies protected them from the ruin and bankruptcy experienced by other fur trading companies. Globally, the volume of trade between 1918 and the 1930s grew continually. Besides, the Feins' business networking links outside Germany and overseas were honed and strengthened. This business success finally culminated in the active participation of Wilhelm Fein in the *International Fur Trade Exhibition (IPA)* in the summer of 1930. By this time the Feins had firmly established themselves as prominent members of the fur trade in Leipzig and Germany as a whole, and had moved to a better address on the Leipzig Brühl.

The following generation seamlessly managed to build on the success of Nachman Fein's grandsons. Gerhard Fein did not only acquire the basic knowledge to run the business, but also pursued a similar professional career to his father and successfully studied law in Leipzig, Munich and Berlin. This family path to prosperity and integration was imbedded in a general change in the position of Jews in Germany subsequent to the newly-founded democratic constitution of the Weimar Republic. As of now, Jews were allowed to hold political office, a possibility which had previously been denied them. In the Scheidemann Government, two Jews held prominent positions: Hugo Preuß, Home Secretary and father of the Weimar Constitution, and Otto Landsberg, Minister of Justice. Under the Reich Chancellor Joseph Wirth (1921-1922) Walther Rathenau was the Jewish Foreign Minister and in the 1923 SPD-lead Government of Hermann Müller, as in that of 1928-1929, it was the Jewish Rudolf Hilferding who headed the Ministry of Finance. In this period some key positions in the Civil Service and the Universities were also held by Jews: "German Jewry seemed to have reached the summit of its success in the Weimar Republic. In truth, it had never

been in so imperilled since the beginning of the Emancipation.”²¹⁵ However, at the same time the deep interior turbulences after the defeat of Germany in 1918 lead to a massive rise in anti-Semitic propaganda. Furthermore, anti-Semitism became socially acceptable to win a majority and was used as a tool for political mobilisation. Anti-Semitic agitators went unhindered and could prone the existence of a Jewish world conspiracy and hold Jews responsible for communism, bolshevism and the November Revolution. The Weimar period was characterized by an acute spiritual and political lack of direction which developed into a deep ideological rift and made it impossible for different social groups to perceive the body politic as a unified entity.²¹⁶ To counter this loss of direction, different strategies were used. A frequent option, so can be assumed, was to take refuge in reassuring ideologies that offered a simple explanation for social and historic processes. However, liberals preferred to engage in on-going opposition to this trend, hoping to minimize the risk of an oversimplified, distorted interpretation of the world through all-encompassing political master plans. Gerhard Fein belonged to the latter category. During the Weimar period he gradually became the pivot of the family and tried consistently to maintain this stance as an unalterable rule of life right into the 1930's.

6.2 Fein & Co. – Growth and change in the Weimar Republic

During the last year of World War I, Fein & Co. underwent a far-reaching transformation. Until then, their premises had been in Ritterstrasse 9-11 near the first German Higher Education School of Commerce, but in 1918 Alexander, Siegmund and Wilhelm rented an office directly on the Brühl, at number 68, which was to become their address thereafter. By this time the Brühl had already become the busiest business street in Leipzig. Indeed, as early as 1914, the restructuring of the street was almost completed. In the front of the buildings, on street level, there were shop fronts or small warehouses, and on the upper floors there was office space, most of which was rented out to representatives of the fur and skin trade.²¹⁷ The so-called Brühlhöfe, like Brühl

²¹⁵ Jost Hermand, “Juden in der Kultur der Weimarer Republik”, in Grab, Walter (ed.), *Juden in der Weimarer Republik*, Stuttgart 1986, 9-37, 35.

²¹⁶ Cf. Ernst-Wolfgang Böckenförde, “Der Zusammenbruch der Monarchie und die Entstehung der Weimarer Republik”, in: Bracher, Karl Dietrich and Funke, Manfred and Jacobsen, Hans-Adolf (eds.), *Die Weimarer Republik 1918 -1933*, Bonn 1998, 17-43.

²¹⁷ Walter Fellmann, *Der Leipziger Brühl*, Leipzig 1989, 69.

68, were a specific feature. They were inner courtyards with commercial premises and multi-storey warehouses, and they often provided access to neighbouring streets.²¹⁸

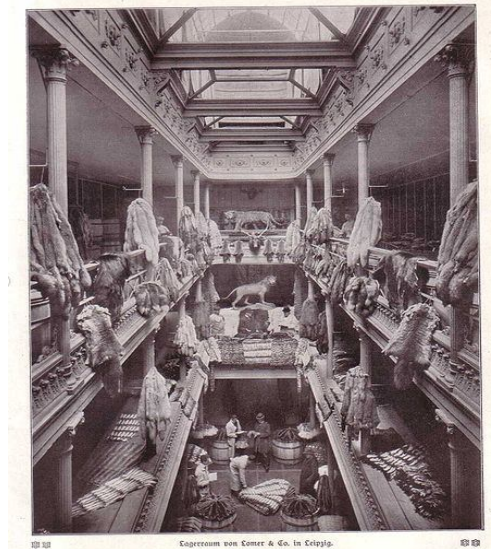


Figure 08: Storage room for furs, from: Hans von Zobelitz, *Rauchware. Ein Kapitel von Pelzen und dem Pelzhandel*, 1905/06, 411.

The architecture was specifically linked to the sorting processes. After being inspected and sorted in the atrium, the skins were tied into so-called bundles and pulled up by rope winches. Day light was therefore very important in order to measure the quality of a skin. The offices, separated from the warehouses by glass walls, were less important for business. The deals themselves took place on the street, or else in neighbouring coffee houses such as Reichskanzler (on the Brühl and in Goethestraße), the Goldene Kugel or Café Küstler in Richard Wagner Straße.²¹⁹ Places where Siegmund and especially Wilhelm Fein organised meetings, agreed to deals, sold and purchased often in an informal way, without signed contracts or written agreements.²²⁰

Shortly after World War I the Brühl saw a return of bustling activity and the Leipzig fur and skin trade was able once again to take up its position as a successful global player. From 1926 onwards, at the very latest, the Brühl had recovered its former trade volume, and Fein & Co. also continued to grow. The fact that the company's very existence was not jeopardised by the two big economic downturns of the time, the German inflation of

²¹⁸ Ibid.

²¹⁹ Fellmann, *Leipziger Brühl*, 73.

²²⁰ Interview with Stephen Fein 06/08/2010.

1923 and the crash of 1929, was primarily due to the astute strategies of its directors and partners. Their fundamental decisions and concepts will therefore be briefly outlined below. Firstly, the firm's deep-seated involvement in Russian trade after the Bolshevik revolution of 1917 was a decisive advantage. While the Czars were still in power, nearly all the Jewish fur merchants who had come to settle in Leipzig from Poland or Russia enjoyed exceptional connections with the Russian market. Indeed, at the turn of the century, around 30 guests from the Brühl were present at the yearly Fur and Skin Fair in Nishni Novgorod.²²¹ What is more, Nishni Novgorod was considered as the most important of some 4.300 fairs in Russia. Around a fifth of all the country's turnover in furs was traded there, in the 6.000 or more courtyards and booths. After the Russian Revolution, no Russian furs at all were officially imported by Germany and even in the early years of the Weimar Republic, politicians remained wary of establishing bilateral trade relations with the Soviet Union, fearing the further negative economic reactions on the part of the Western powers. However, in May 1921 the Government nevertheless signed a trade agreement with Moscow. The USSR established a trade delegation in Berlin and already in September that year the first Soviet fur auction was held in the large room of the Congress Hall. Indeed, in general during the post-war years, for most fur products, more business was done at auctions than at fairs. In Leipzig up to ten different auctions per quarter dealt in a variety of products.²²² Yet compared to other yearly sales, the Russian auctions were unrivalled both in volume and diversity.

For Russian hare skins, one of the most important products for Fein & Co., business was done differently. The brown hareskins used for the hat industry were supplied by Western Russia and the Ukraine, and trading was done through private business connections rather than by auction. For the Leipzig market, the Ariowitsch family was the main actor. This family had close links with the Soviet Government and had been deeply involved in the Leipzig-Russian trade for decades. In Leipzig, within only two generations after their immigration to the city in 1877, the Ariowitschs had built up a vast fur empire and arguably became the most influential of all the Jewish fur merchant families. After Max Ariowitsch had fled Germany and established himself in England, their Anglo-American Fur Merchants Corporation, founded in 1932, became even the biggest private fur merchant company in the world.²²³ The Ariowitschs enjoyed

²²¹ Fellmann, *Leipziger Brühl*, 83.

²²² Ibid., 138.

²²³ The Hudson Bay Company was still bigger but was semi-publically owned and can therefore not be

therefore in the early twenties a monopoly for the importing of hare skins from Western Russia and the Ukrainian regions. Together with Fein & Co., they set up a lucrative co-operation, since the Feins disposed of numerous sales channels and exported hare skins for the hat industry to various European countries, as well as to the USA.²²⁴ One of the reasons why Fein & Co. was consistently successful between the two World Wars was the Ariowitsch connection. Furthermore, during the turbulent economic times of the Weimar Period, this particular business relationship guaranteed favourable purchases of raw materials and thus adequate profit margins. This close cooperation between the Feins and the Ariowitschs continued after their emigration to England, and well into the 1970s.

Another strategy used by Alexander, Siegfried and Wilhelm to protect the firm against possible crises was for it to acquire property. The idea of integrating property into the capital of the firm, or into the family, was taken up by a not inconsiderable number of Leipzig fur merchants, who above all targeted investments in the centre of town.²²⁵ In 1921 Fein & Co. made its first acquisition, a large bourgeois apartment block in what was then Weststr. 81a-b.²²⁶ It had been built between 1900 and 1903 by the architect Robert Rödiger in the Historicism style. Because of its elaborate architectural design, the facade came to occupy a special place in the city's collective consciousness. The decoration, reminiscent of many different styles, and the overall effect of the lavishly-moulded portrait reliefs, horned heads, masks, putti and neo-renaissance pillars earned the building its nickname, The Fairytale House. This sobriquet continued to be well-known in Leipzig until the building was finally demolished in 2006.

compared in this regard.

²²⁴ Interview Stephen Fein

²²⁵ Rückert, *Leipziger Rauchwarenwirtschaft*, 23-24.

²²⁶ Later this street was renamed Friedrich Ebert Straße.



Figure 09: Fairytale House in Leipzig, from Heinz P. Brogiato, *Leipzig um 1900*, Vol. I: *Die Innenstadt in kolorierten Ansichtskarten aus dem Archiv des Leibniz-Instituts für änderkunde Leipzig e.V.*, Leipzig 2009, 102.

In the same year, Elisabeth Fein acquired an apartment house at number 11 Alsterstraße.²²⁷ This private investment was most probably undertaken with the financial support of her parents, Leo and Mathilde, whose sole heir she was in any case, as an only child. These two investments protected the firm and Alexander's family from the heart-rending consequences of the hyperinflation of 1923. This inflation, whose origins can be traced back to the war and the reparation payments, plunged a large section of both the business middle class and the working class into the pitfall of poverty, and played a considerable part in discrediting the young Weimar Democracy. Because of the horrendous depreciation of the currency, which in November 1923 fell to a record low of 4.2 billion marks to the dollar, anyone who had only monetary assets was almost completely dispossessed. On the other hand, the inflation helped to provide rapid debt relief to all those who owned property, and particularly, property acquired on credit. Property itself did not lose value and generally saved its owners from complete ruin.

The fact that the Feins could be counted among those who benefitted from the inflation is demonstrated by the fact that in 1926 they managed to expand their property ownership. The firm invested in a third of 27 Brühl, a large three-sided building in a

²²⁷ Later the street was renamed Balzacstraße.

courtyard which was also known as Lattermanns Hof. The Brühl building was used mainly as office and warehouse space, but it was above all a capital investment for the firm.



Figure 10: Lattermanns Hof around 1900. Source: Deutsche Fotothek, No. FD A 040 863.

However, Siegmund Fein invested in a completely different section of the property market. In the same year as the firm acquired 27 Brühl, Siegmund bought a farm in Mecklenburg with over 60 hectares of arable land. Spanielshof, as it was called, was situated between the townships of Hohen Sprenz and Mistorf, 40 kilometres south of Rostock, and was intended to provide an additional steady income to support him and his family, a popular idea at that time amongst merchants and factory owners who had recently acquired bourgeoisie status. Five years earlier Siegmund had remarried. With his new wife, Erna, born Creutzberger, he had another daughter, Marianne Gabrielle, so besides Hans, Charlotte and Wilhelm, there was a fourth child to support.

Particularly in the inter-war years, the strategy of separating business risks on the one hand and organizing a form of steady income on the other was common practice, in an attempt to

make room both for capital to fructify and for a relatively stable income as sought after by the ruling classes, in accordance with their social status. It is the way in which those ‘replete’ with capitalistic life-styles manage to secure their acquisitions from the stormy sea of economic strife in the farmyard of ‘otium cum dignitate’ – a ‘dignified leisure’ as enjoyed by Junkers living off their land.²²⁸

²²⁸ Max Weber, *Gesamtausgabe*, Vol. 8, *Wirtschaft, Staat und Sozialpolitik. Schriften und Reden 1900-*

For Siegmund, this calculation was not completely successful. Spanielshof was a relatively costly pastime and in 1931 Elisabeth Fein even had to grant her brother-in-law a loan of 40.000 RM, which was registered as a mortgage on the property.

All the land and buildings acquired by the firm or family members had their own individual destinies after Hitler's accession to power and the Feins's forced emigration. Their respective stories will be referred to again in the following chapters. The firm itself continued to expand until the end of the 1920s, thanks to astute governance by its partners. 1928 was a particularly important year which saw a variety of changes, one of the most crucial being the restructuring of the firm in the wake of Alexander Fein's death in June of that year. As Alexander's heir and in lieu of her mother Mathilde, Elisabeth Fein entered the firm as a limited partner with a 100.000 RM share. As of then she had a significant share in the firm and after an increase in capital in 1931 she actually controlled it in financial terms.²²⁹ She was consulted on transactions going beyond day-to-day business, and Gerhard Fein was also integrated into the decision-making processes as early as the beginning of 1930. Elisabeth continued to share in the gains and losses of the firm until 1932. Only subsequently was this direct participation transformed into a yearly payment of 35.000 RM. This was a substantial amount compared to the 22 RM net weekly earnings of an average industrial worker in the same year²³⁰ and when even 70% of doctors earned less than 1700 RM a year.²³¹ After her emigration the payment was lowered to 9.600 RM, but this remained a considerable income from her capital.

The good connections to the Russian hare skin market, the intelligent strategy of investing in property and capital cover backed by several partners allowed Fein & Co. to enjoy smooth economic sailing during the years of crisis. In 1928 the Dresdner Bank granted the firm a loan of one million RM. By 1931 it had reduced the debt to 454.985 RM and by 1933 the sum to be refunded had fallen to 367.000 RM.²³²

1912, edited by Wolfgang Schluchter, Tübingen 1998, 109. Translation R.L.

²²⁹ Letter from Leo Oppenheim to the President of Government in Hildesheim, 1957, *Papers of the Fein Family*.

²³⁰ Cf. Hans Jürgen Schönamsgruber, "Wirtschaftliche Entwicklung der Weimarer Republik", without date, available online at <http://www.glasnost.de/autoren/schoen/wrwirt.html>. (17/02/2013).

²³¹ Ibid.

²³² Letter from Leo Oppenheim, *Papers of the Fein Family*.

6.3 I want my life to be an experience, not a game - Gerhard Fein's youth in the Weimar period

In 1923 Gerhard Fein quoted a number of passages from Plato's Dialogue *Crito*. These he saw as crucial justifications used by Socrates to explain the latter's refusal to flee from imprisonment in Athens:

Dearer than father and mother and all other forebears is the Fatherland. Worthier and holier, it is held in greater esteem by Gods and men of wisdom. We must honour it more than our forefathers, obey and pay heed when it demonstrates its wrath. A man must either suggest a better way or do as it commands. The sufferings imposed must be calmly endured, whether one is beaten or shackled, whether one is sent to war, wounded or killed – everything must be endured, and it is right that it should be so.²³³

In the then seventeen-year old's notebooks long quotations from books he had read mingled with a myriad of personal thoughts on a wide range of subjects in art, literature, history, politics and current affairs. What led the teenager who had just passed his Abitur to consider Socrates' love for his fatherland so remarkable, how he evolved during the next ten years as a young adult member of the Jewish middle class, until the final prompt decision to emigrate after the ban which forbade him to exercise his profession, will be analysed in the following pages.

The reconstruction of the intellectual and emotional development of an individual is necessarily wanting. Supported by an analysis of external circumstances and factors which may have played a role, only written, and therefore enduring personal statements, plus the limited body of other people's reminiscences, can shed some light on what fundamentally determines the course of someone's existence. For Gerhard Fein, who was not yet thirty years old, one can perceive at least four formative factors. Thanks to official documents and private notebooks, they can be comprehensively, although not completely, documented. Firstly, of course, his schooling was of particular importance. Secondly, along with the education dispensed by state institutions, came the acquisition of knowledge through personal reading and intellectual probing. For Gerhard Fein, as for a large section of the cultivated middle classes of the 1920s and 1930s, such knowledge was characterized by striking breadth, but also, as his notes demonstrate, real depth. The third pillar, a fundamental influence in his teenage development, was his membership of the German-Jewish Wanderbund Kameraden. Here he had the opportunity to implement what he had previously acquired in terms of knowledge and

²³³ Quoted in Gerhard Fein's notebook of the year 1923, *Papers of the Fein Family*. Translation R.L.

ethics through pedagogy and social commitment. Last, but not least, came the formative influence of Gerhard's apprenticeship in the family business as a trainee in Italy and France, as well as his university education in law, which he completed in 1932 with the highest academic honours, as his father had done before him.

When he was seven years old, Gerhard went to the Höhere Bürgerschule in Leipzig, where he received his primary education, after which he was admitted to the Schiller-Realgymnasium. He began there in the Sexta at Easter 1916 and stayed at the same school until his Abitur on March 9th, 1925. During these years Gerhard chose to specialize in natural sciences and technology, despite the fact that he would surely have been far more at ease majoring in literature or the classics. Already at the age of 16, he clearly states the following about the rational choice of a bourgeois bread-and-butter profession:

In our time, for economic reasons, the genuine repositories of our culture are dwindling more and more. The majority of our young people opt out of cultural studies, giving preference to subjects which allow them to become salesmen, engineers, doctors or lawyers. Our culture is losing out to such an extent that its earlier unique, pure, intellectual character is beginning to degenerate and fossilize. It is becoming civilisation.²³⁴

In any case, Gerhard's passing his Abitur with good or even very good marks in some subjects provided excellent grounds for his final decision to study law, the last profession mentioned above. During the Weimar period the Schiller-Gymnasium was one of the most remarkable schools in Leipzig and it was there that many German-Jewish youths laid the foundation stones for a successful academic education. Philosophy, aesthetics and politics, which may well have been neglected at school, thus became important free-time activities for Gerhard. Indeed, he left behind a plethora of notebooks filled with excerpts and personal reflections indicating that from early on he saw himself as a German man of culture. In the framework of the debate between Culture and Civilisation which had been ongoing in Germany since before World War I, he intrinsically opposed and rejected a world view characterized by mechanical materialism:

Because matter is necessary to life, every man has the right to be a materialist. However, the need for matter, i.e. materialism, should not be promoted to a reason for living. That is animality, not humanity.²³⁵

²³⁴ Cf. an article by Gerhard Fein 1923, *Papers of the Fein Family*. Translation R.L.

²³⁵ Notes of Gerhard Fein, *Papers of the Fein Family*. Translation R.L. For the differentiation between culture and civilisation see Norbert Elias, *The Civilizing Process. Sociogenetic and Psychogenetic Investigations*, Malden 2009.

Nevertheless, exactly where his spiritual and intellectual development would lead was still unclear in the young school-leaver. In his youth he persistently sought after other callings than the law. He worked hard on the classic landmarks of German and European literature and after finishing each book he meticulously noted down his impressions and comments. Novels by Dostoevsky and Tolstoy or the problem of aesthetics in the plays of Schiller, Goethe, Wedekind or Hauptmann were studied in equal depth. The annotations of his teenage years show that he carried out exhaustive analyses of manifold themes from the European and German cultural landscape. His reading matter included philosophy before Socrates, Plato, the theosophic works of Heinrich Tiefenbrunner and the lyric poetry of Rilke or Werfel. He paid special attention to contemporary political authors such as Ernst Toller, Hans Blüher and in particular to the German-Jewish Foreign Minister and commentator on current affairs, Walther Rathenau. The following statement can be considered representative of Rathenau's diagnosis regarding the lack of direction of the Weimar period, and it was deemed entirely accurate by Gerhard: "Our time never tires of searching from whence it comes, but knows not where it stands, and wishes not to know where it is going."²³⁶ Rathenau's assessment of the predominant or perceived loss of all spiritual and material values in the Weimar period seemed perfectly expressed for Gerhard's generation, steeped as it was in the German-Jewish cultural tradition.

One key to understanding Gerhard's overall development is certainly his aforementioned membership of the Deutsch-Jüdischer Wanderbund Kameraden. For those young Germans of the Jewish faith who felt too connected with German culture and too committed to Germany to espouse Zionism as an intellectual safe haven, the German-Jewish youth movement offered a viable alternative.²³⁷ It was another way to react to what they perceived as a fundamental crisis in cultural values, and it was the way Gerhard chose.

Already before World War I a significant number of young Germans felt that they were living in threatening times and that their humanistic development was being fundamentally restricted. This perception continued to be widespread amongst the Jewish middle classes well into the 1920's, subjected as it was to powers which, through mechanization, urbanization and rationalization, seemed to be building what Max

²³⁶ Quoted in notes of Gerhard Fein, *Papers of the Fein Family*.

²³⁷ Gottfried Küenzlen, *Der Neue Mensch*, München 1994, 158.

Weber in his *Protestantische Ethik* called “iron cages”.²³⁸ The youth movement, which saw the light of day in Berlin in the summer of 1897 in the form of a hiking group led by the botanist Hermann Hoffmann (1819-1891), became a beacon of hope for many youngsters who longed for a change of direction and a holistic approach to life. Identified as Wandervogel until the interruption of World War I, the concept thereafter changed to Bündische Jugend or also Freideutsche Jugend. Until the idea was incorporated into the national-socialist ideology and the Hitlerjugend, the defining features of the movement remained constant. The primary goal of the German youth movements was to awaken the senses and free the spirit by hiking in small groups in natural and unspoilt surroundings. Nature seen as “the realm of the free soul”²³⁹ was to provide a retreat in which the maturing youngsters could allow their essential being to burgeon freely without falling prey to the degeneracy of city-dwellers.²⁴⁰ Thus, the teenagers’ and young adults’ ambition was nothing less than to create a new type of human being, reborn in body and spirit. Young people would develop unfettered by experiencing nature together while hiking in same-age groups, or through creativity, music-making and debating during regular social-evening sessions. A return to true intuitive living would be achieved, and youth would educate youth. Initially, for the Jewish youth from the middle classes, the Wandervogel and the youth movement associations also represented a homeland which embraced all confessions. However, since anti-Semitic and völkisch-nationalistic tendencies spread rapidly through the German youth movements, those young Jewish men and women who were not sympathetic to the out and out Zionist Blau-Weiß were induced to set up their own associations. Although they wished to maintain close links with the original Wandervogel, they identified more with a German-Jewish self-image.

Gerhard Fein’s involvement with the Kameraden very clearly highlights this movement and what it stood for. Gerhard grew up in a liberal German-Jewish home, and already as a child he deepened his knowledge of Jewish culture as a pupil attending religious education classes in a liberal Jewish religious school in Leipzig. Although there was scarcely a trace of any religious inheritance in his everyday life in his parents’ home, his childhood was characterized by a strong awareness of the cultural roots of the family, and a strong desire to preserve them. Alexander’s self-perception as a member of the

²³⁸ Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, London 2007.

²³⁹ Gustav Wyneken, *Der Kampf für die Jugend. Gesammelte Aufsätze*, Jena 1920, 154.

²⁴⁰ Küenzlen, *Der Neue Mensch*, 161.

educated classes and as a Jew steeped in German culture was perpetuated by his son. Gerhard credited Judaism with a strong ethical and humanistic educational capacity, which in his view distinguished it from Christian religions:

The stumbling block of the Christian church organisations lays in their tradition that they defined the religiosity of a forthcoming era in advance. Judaism does not suffer from this, since already 2000 years ago it transformed itself from a state church into a European intellectual fellowship, albeit conservative and mythological traditional, but not racially dogmatic. It staunchly and lovingly embraces both liberalism and Zionism, orthodoxy and free thought. This is not to say that religion is synonymous with piety, i.e. the religious institution is not synonymous with faith. Belonging to the Jewish religion means honouring the Ten Commandments and believing in one God only. How and what else I believe besides and within that recognition is not a determining factor. Judaism makes no distinction between Christian, Jewish, or any other kind of piety. Only one form exists, and that is human, nothing more.²⁴¹

Exactly when Gerhard Fein joined the Kameraden cannot be reconstructed. However, until the end of the 1920s he remained a proactive member of the organisation. As a student and senior, he participated actively in debates on substantive issues and wrote articles published by the association in which he expressed his point of view on a variety of subjects.

The Kameraden was originally a group of young boys and girls founded in Breslau in 1916. Then, after World War I, further groups were formed throughout Germany, which, in 1921, constituted the then Deutsch-jüdischen Wanderbund Kameraden.²⁴²

This association first saw itself as a true keeper of the German youth movement and of the credo laid down on the mountain Hoher Meissner in 1913:

The free German youth will shape their lives each according to its own will, its own responsibility, in tune with the inner truth of its being. In the name of this inner freedom, it will in all circumstances stand united.²⁴³

When the German youth organisations integrated anti-Semitic ideologies, the Kameraden accused them of betraying this basic principle. In any case, as long as it existed, the association was forced to think very seriously about exactly how they stood with regard to the Jewish question. In general three main currents can be detected and Gerhard's connection to one of them clarifies his position on the issue of German-Jewish identity. Since the outset, there had been a significant polarisation between those, who wanted to emphasize their Jewishness and those who believed that their

²⁴¹ Notes of Gerhard Fein 1924, *Papers of the Fein Family*.

²⁴² Bernhard Trefz, *Jugendbewegung und Juden in Deutschland. Eine historische Untersuchung mit besonderer Berücksichtigung des 'Deutsch-Jüdischen Wanderbundes Kameraden'*, Frankfurt am Main 1999, 93-95.

²⁴³ Meißnerformel from 1913.

Germanness should have precedence.²⁴⁴ In the spring of 1925, at a time when Gerhard Fein was already an active member of the Kameraden in Leipzig, the section in favour of emphasizing Jewishness underwent a serious revival within the association. Hermann Gerson, with whom Gerhard corresponded frequently, founded a new group within the Kameraden which he called Kreis, through which he sought to intensify the concern with Jewish culture, language and history.²⁴⁵ The Kreis followed the tradition of Martin Buber, for whom religious experience seemed more important than strict adherence to religious laws and who wanted to devise new formulas for the Jewish faith.²⁴⁶ And yet a close attachment with German culture remained an inviolate rule within the Kreis. Indeed, for most of the members of the Kameraden, this acknowledgment of religiosity went too far. They, and Gerhard Fein among them, claimed that the founding principles of the movement should be openly stated: experiencing togetherness through trips and outings, hikes, the fellowship of social evenings. In a 1927 issue of the association's booklet devoted to *New Education*, Gerhard formulated his understanding of its underlying philosophy as follows:

Within these groups young people find the kind of experience appropriate to their age, their inner selves, and their aspirations. [...] Youth knows no driving force more powerful than the desire to make an experience out of every kind of living, and such experiences are necessary if the 'I' is to be known in its plenitude.²⁴⁷

Thus, in Gerhard Fein's understanding, the important thing was not to convey a predetermined Weltanschauung or impart belief in a religion, but rather to create a "young people's realm" as his friend Mirabu later called it, which would provide somewhere where adolescents could meet at their own discretion, free from the constraints of home or school.²⁴⁸

Until now, the association has declined to draw support or content from either the realm of politics or that of religion. Confronted with imagery allowing the longing for more happiness and less suffering to take root in the hearts of men, the association never said: That is how life should be. Instead, it spoke to the individual: So shall you be. It was aware that the education of the individual is a prerequisite for collective change. It believed that the awakening of the heart, the toughening of the body and the moulding of the will were means by which humankind could become free. It therefore valued enabling individuals to become truly humanistic more than impelling the collectivity towards a common goal. It saw youth as virgin territory in the fight to improve the world.²⁴⁹

²⁴⁴ Trefz, *Jugendbewegung und Juden*, 168.

²⁴⁵ Ibid.

²⁴⁶ Ibid.

²⁴⁷ Gerhard Fein in *Neue Erziehung*, 1927, 12. Translation R.L.

²⁴⁸ Mirabu, "Bundesidee?", *Bundesblatt*, May 1929, 13.

²⁴⁹ Gerhard Fein in *11. Bundesblatt Kameraden*, December 1929, 16. Translation R.L.

For Gerhard Fein the Kameraden thus represented a movement which targeted the ongoing development of the individual. Concerns with political and religious issues need not be excluded, but should not constitute guidelines for the Association to move in a particular direction. For him, the young men and women were ‘people-in-the-making’, and each and every one of them was responsible for developing his or her personal views and beliefs for the future. In the second issue of *Ring*, a journal which Gerhard co-founded in the autumn of 1926, he wrote the following, clearly distancing himself from the thinking of one of the more committedly Jewish associations, the Kreis:

We feel that neither an unequivocal decisive political commitment, nor a clearly formulated religious belief can bond us or incarnate our views, for both require a consummate human being characterized by Wach-sein, Wissend-geworden sein: Mann-sein - being aware, being wise ,being truly human. Whereas in its groups the Association brings together only people-in-the-making, for the simple reason that they passionately want to live life’s experiences to the full.²⁵⁰

These statements clearly demonstrate that Gerhard was firmly opposed to the socialist movements which made up the third arm of the Association and which were divided into two groups: the Radikal-Sozialistischen Kreis and the Schwarzer Haufen. His defence of free thinking, the emphasis he laid on the importance of personal, accountable reasoning, the protection of individuality and the “belief that the man can achieve nobility, beauty and greatness” corresponded well to the elitist ideology of the Stefan-George-Circle, whose work he extensively quoted.²⁵¹ Thus, the instruction of group members concentrated not on useful life management, but on nurturing personal relationships and independent thought.

Gerhard Fein himself maintained these views even after the changing political circumstances forced him back to his Jewish origins, more by external pressure than through personal design. He also retained his personal connections, as for example his great friendship with Rudi Goldsmith, another active member of the Leipzig Kameraden, with whom he remained in contact long into his adult life. The exchange of ideas and experiences was kept up during Gerhard’s practical training in Italy and continued, if more sporadically, during and after Rudi’s emigration to New York, and Gerhard’s to London.

²⁵⁰ Gerhard Fein in *Ring* 2 (1926). Translation R.L.

²⁵¹ Notes of Gerhard Fein, *Papers of the Fein Family*.

6.4 Times in Italy

Gerhard passed his Abitur in 1925, at Easter, but was not yet entirely sure about his future profession. That he would go to university was self-evident, but it also went without saying that a deeper understanding of the family business was just as necessary. He therefore joined Fein & Co. as a trainee in March 1925, but had already worked with the firm's warehouse foreman, Johannes Tuchen, since 1918 in order to learn the ropes of the trade. This knowledge would only a few years later contribute to saving his life, something which he could not remotely have imagined while he was doing his initial work experience.

As from October 1925, he added an international dimension to his knowledge by working for one of Fein & Co.'s most important trade partners, Brivio Guiseppe in Milan. The fact that he chose Italy was certainly not only due to the business logic of the merchant-to-be, but also a sign that he had been successfully educated in the tradition of a cultivated German humanist. Ever since the 18th century the German aristocracy, and later the upper merchant classes, had treasured Italy as the repository of culture, the cradle of European civilisation, the rule of law, the Renaissance. Visiting Italy was a must and Goethe's Italian journey was the archetypal example of the intellectual fascination that Italian art, architecture, traditions and lifestyle exerted over the cultivated German bourgeoisie. However, Gerhard's everyday life turned out to be far more prosaic. He started out in an uncomfortable pension and worked on regular basis in the company in Milan:

I have been working at the office since yesterday. The firm is very big and there must be between 100-150 members of staff. In my department, the fur warehouse there is only four people besides me, and they are extraordinarily kind and helpful. I can talk about a lot of things with them. Apart from that, Mr Brivio is often there, and he sometimes has a thought for me. Almost only already sorted goods are bought (in enormous quantities), and nothing needs to be done except to prepare them to be manufactured, that is to stamp them, bundle them, and so on. There is even more manual work than in Leipzig, which alone makes it worthwhile to become acquainted with the business and purchases of this big Italian fur and skin merchant, and to be obliged to speak Italian.²⁵²

But he was quite horrified by Italian everyday life:

Milan is anyway unbelievably sloppy [...], particularly in regard to cleanliness, tidiness, and so on. When it rains here, all the streets (of which 75% have no pavements) are filthy, like ours are in the country. On the whole, I find that despite the war, we in Germany are more advanced than

²⁵² Letter from Gerhard Fein to Alexander Fein, 25/10/1925, *Papers of the Fein Family*. Translation R.L.

the people here, if ever it means anything to make that kind of comparison.²⁵³

Whatever the case may be, he participated actively in the political events of the country, studied the language diligently and acquired a deep understanding of the Italian fur trade which would stand him in good stead when he emigrated to London. On October 29th 1925, there was a parade in Milan to celebrate the third anniversary of the victory of Mussolini's Italian Fascists, which made a lasting impression on him:

Yesterday in the city there was a completely unbelievable nationalistic hype. I was naturally on the Domplatz when Mussolini addressed the crowd. I understood almost nothing, but at least I saw this fascinating political figure with my own eyes, and along with him I got an impression of this incredibly potent mode of contemporary Italianness. A very big, rather stout man with a brutal Roman face radiating power and intelligence, sure of himself and calm, yet also thrilling and inspiring to the last. By the way, Mussolini used to be just a bricklayer. The military stuff and the parades were indeed impressive,²⁵⁴ but, after horror and scars of the Great War, that are scarcely behind us, also pretty repulsive.

In historical retrospect, Gerhard's setting so much store by the fascination Mussolini exerted, or calling German Jewry to question the way he did in the following passage of his letter, may seem naive. However, the young man's attitude to Germany and his great love of his fatherland must be taken into account, although of course both went cold eight years later, and remained so for the rest of his life:

However, Mussolini has managed to gather a disunited Italian people together into a single and until now united state, and this is maybe the most noble thing that a man can do for his fatherland. Us Germans should take note, and maybe German Jews should henceforth consider whether something like a national (not nationalistic) consciousness without internationalist pacifism would not at the moment be healthier for Germany: one should not vote for the party which wants the well-being of Jews, but the party which promises to do what is best for Germany at this time. If we call ourselves German, it is not us that count, but Germany.²⁵⁵

During his time in Italy, Gerhard was in almost daily contact with Leipzig. He corresponded with his father about world events concerning politics or business, such as Stresemann's wireless declaration on the Treaty of Locarno or the movements on the fur and skin markets.

In general both parties qualified the economic situation as particularly difficult. According to Alexander, the Leipzig firm suffered from insufficient activity and spent more time sending out reminders and collecting debts than actually doing business:

²⁵³ Letter from Gehrhard Fein to Alexander Fein, 25/10/1925, *Papers of the Fein Family*.

²⁵⁴ Letter from Gehrhard Fein to Alexander Fein, 30/10/1925, *Papers of the Fein Family*. Translation R.L.

²⁵⁵ Ibid. Translation R.L.

It is like a sick body suffering from an illness so severe that it will either be destroyed by the crisis, or recover from it and become healthy again. During a crisis, the weak firms fall by the wayside whereas the strong ones, which can rely upon their healthy internal organs, survive.²⁵⁶

But the problems existed not only in Germany. In Italy too Gerhard witnessed economic difficulties. In February 1925 Guiseppe Brivio was forced to lay off half of his workforce, which caused him considerable concern regarding potential outstanding bills of exchange with Fein & Co. However, the regular correspondence did not only concern day-to-day economic developments and their repercussions on the Fein's line of business. In his letters to his sick father Alexander, despite Elisabeth's visit in November 1925 and that Wilhelm was occasionally his guest, Gerhard frequently reflected on this first long geographical separation and on the meaning of family:

I can indeed say that finally during this long period of separation from home I too have become acutely aware of the deep indissoluble bond that a close family kinship represents. In consequence, I consider that although I previously knew the feeling, it has today turned into an absolute certainty, for separation gives great value to memories of people to whom one is close: a thinking human being can only bear separation from his beloved family circle without melancholy, resignation or even oblivion if he deliberately carries his nearest and dearest in his heart, in the fullness of their beings.²⁵⁷

Gerhard was no more enthusiastic about his field of activity during his stay in Italy than he had been during his work experience in Leipzig:

I also think that I will get through the business here as easily and quickly as at home, in the sense that I am absolutely certain that this know-how of how to earn money has not the slightest thing in common with the inner being of Gerhard Fein, but that, as the most indispensable and necessary of all actions in this life, it is to be acquired with the utmost precision and speed, and with the least effort possible.²⁵⁸

This early insight of Gerhard's into the importance of mastering the basics of the business was retrospectively to be of enormous value for the family. Neither did it entirely preclude some cultural involvement during the stay in Italy. He therefore took a course in philosophy, political science and law at the University of Milan. Although he did not attend regularly, on his return to Germany this enabled him to validate his first semester at the University of Leipzig. Besides these studies, which he complemented by his own reading, he managed to go on a short trip to the Lago Maggiore, Verona and Florence, and at the end of his stay, in March 1926, he spent two weeks in the capital,

²⁵⁶ Letter from Alexander Fein to Gerhard Fein, 28/11/1925, *Papers of the Fein Family*. Translation R.L.

²⁵⁷ Letter from Gerhard Fein to Alexander Fein, 11/12/1925, *Papers of the Fein Family*. Translation R.L.

²⁵⁸ Ibid. Translation R.L.

Rome. His goal when visiting these cities was not necessarily to acquire a historical understanding. As he wrote in February 1926 from Verona:

I do not wish to understand a city academically, but apprehend it visually. It is not about getting to know specific cultural epochs, but grasping the organic, retaining the singular spheres which give each culture-drenched city its character, and which in its own unique way allows us to capture each artistic expression in its true spirit and beauty.²⁵⁹

Above all Rome exerted a particular attraction because of its innumerable cultural treasures: “One year would be the very least the marvelling adept would need to take in the wonders of this capital of the world.”²⁶⁰

Gerhard Fein’s Italian trainee period is of analytical significance for two reasons. On the one hand, it clearly highlights the European networking of the firm, which enabled a member of the following generation to broaden the range of his business expertise abroad. On the other, the contacts Gerhard established there proved valuable during the emigration process and certainly contributed to his successful integration into English society. Indeed, he was able to act for a number of Italian customers during the auctions. Thus Italy played a very special lifelong role for Gerhard and his family, and not only because of its supremely important appeal to the distinguished cultivated bourgeois.

At the end of March Gerhard returned to Leipzig to register at the Law Faculty and pass his first semester in a German higher education institution. In the previous year, he had checked out German universities, but also taken transatlantic options into consideration. Columbia University was short-listed and initial applications were filed with the International Students Bureau, but Gerhard finally chose his home town, at any rate for the time being. Despite this, at the end of his first semester of lectures, he extended his international network once again and in August 1926 he travelled to Paris, where he found accommodation with the family of the fur merchant Marcel Klein. Here too he applied himself to improving his knowledge and skills. As soon as he arrived he sought out the German student body to enquire about possible summer courses and took on a private French teacher. Besides working on his language skills, he devoted himself to the study of Roman law and, for about four weeks, as an inflation traveller, he enjoyed the relatively affordable Paris, experiencing a “variety of sensations.”²⁶¹

In October 1926 he returned to Germany and pursued his studies, not in Leipzig, but in Munich, where he lodged with the family of Baroness Friedagh, “highly genteel

²⁵⁹ Letter from Gerhard Fein to Alexander Fein, 01/02/1926, *Papers of the Fein Family*. Translation R.L.

²⁶⁰ Letter from Gerhard Fein to Alexander Fein, 03/03/1926, *Papers of the Fein Family*. Translation R.L.

²⁶¹ Letter from Gerhard Fein to Alexander Fein, 24/08/1926, *Papers of the Fein Family*. Translation R.L.

inflation victims living out a somewhat faded feudism.”²⁶² The city opened new windows on the German cultural landscape in the Weimar epoch. Not only did Gerhard go to the cinema regularly, writing mini-reviews to his family about his impressions, but he also showed a keen interest in keeping up with the literary scene. Thus, in the *Simplicissimus* Artists’ Tavern he saw the writer Ringelnatz who “gave a slightly drunken rendering of his works, right there before me, almost within my reach.”²⁶³ He also attended cultural and political meetings on the theme “Munich’s Decline as a City of Art” and supported the protest initiated by Thomas and Heinrich Mann against the sully of the reputation of the Bavarian capital.

At the university too his interests went far beyond the limits of his subject. He attended lectures by Sauerbruch,²⁶⁴ went to classes in rhetoric and took boxing lessons. He felt well integrated into life in Munich, “people are all extraordinarily nice. I already have quite some acquaintances and have never noticed anything anti-Semitic.”²⁶⁵

Gerhard returned to his Leipzig Alma Mater in 1927 and a year later he finished his studies. In December 1928 he passed his first state exam with a ‘good’ rating, although on June 9th of the same year his father Alexander had finally passed away after years of suffering. The grief of the parting had naturally overshadowed the preparation for this important exam.

Then, as from January 1929, like his father had done before him in 1900, he started working as an articled clerk with the Leipzig city court, where he spent the whole year in a variety of departments.²⁶⁶ After that he was attached to the public prosecution department for six months. In July 1930 he transferred to one of the best-known law firms in Saxony: QC Dr Martin Drucker.²⁶⁷ This change during his apprenticeship forcefully illustrates two important aspects concerning Gerhard’s career. Firstly, his qualifications, without which he would never have been admitted to such a prestigious law practice, and secondly his embedding in the network of the Leipzig Jewish middle-class. The move also highlights the fact that the members of the assimilated Jewish bourgeoisie remained within their own relatively closed circles. For although he was a protestant, Martin Drucker too had Jewish roots and there are marked parallels between

²⁶² Letter from Gerhard Fein to Alexander Fein, 29/10/1926, *Papers of the Fein Family*. Translation R.L.

²⁶³ Letter from Gerhard Fein to Alexander Fein, 10/11/1926, *Papers of the Fein Family*. Translation R.L.

²⁶⁴ Ernst Ferdinand Sauerbruch (1875-1951): German physician and one of the most famous and influential surgeon of the first half of the 20th century.

²⁶⁵ Letter from Gerhard Fein to Alexander Fein, 25/01/1927, *Papers of the Fein Family*.

²⁶⁶ Curriculum vitae and certificates of Gerhard Fein, *Papers of the Fein Family*.

²⁶⁷ For the biography of Martin Drucker see Lang, *Martin Drucker*.

his past and that of Alexander Fein. Drucker's grandfather was a silk merchant of sephardic descent who had settled in Leipzig in 1843. Martin himself was born in 1869. He studied law in Leipzig and Munich and established himself as a lawyer after graduating in 1898.²⁶⁸ Martin's father had converted to Protestantism in order to marry Marie Klein, the daughter of the head of the Leipzig City Councillors. Since 1924, Martin Drucker himself had been the Chairman of the German Lawyers Association and a member of numerous boards of directors and advisory boards in Leipzig and Saxony. Indeed, his practice was considered as one of the most important in Saxony. For example, during World War I he defended Rosa Luxemburg and Bruno Apitz.²⁶⁹ Gerhard completed part of his work experience there until the end of December 1930, after which he devoted himself to writing his dissertation and preparing his assessors' exam. He defended his doctoral thesis, entitled *Bankruptcy and Tax Procedures*, at his viva in July 1931 and was awarded a magna cum laude. The doctorate was published in January 1932 and the respective professional journals reacted most positively. The *Juristische Wochenschrift* wrote: "The work will provide extremely useful guidelines for bankruptcy administrators and tax advisers alike."²⁷⁰ The professional journal *Sächsische Verwaltungspraxis* was also complimentary: "The author has clarified many grey areas in clear and comprehensible terms and has produced a valuable theoretical and practical handbook."²⁷¹ On June 11th 1932 Gerhard passed his second state law exam with a 'good' rating. Then, on July 1st of the same year, after having completed an eminently successful academic education, he set up his practice at Brühl 52 as a lawyer registered with the Leipzig Employment Tribunal and District Court.

In his capacity as legal council, he quickly established connections with numerous firms and fur merchants, but also with banks and the city of Althoff's biggest department store, Held and Grohag.²⁷² He made further contacts within the family network. Correspondence extended as far as Paris and New York, and even to Cernowitz, where Otto Jonas, a member of his grandmother's family, also operated a fur trading house. In addition, he tried to build close links with Poland, a country to which the family was in any case connected in many ways. Firstly, the Feins automatically had a myriad of business contacts in Poland, which were one of the main suppliers of hare skins in the

²⁶⁸ <http://www.juden-in-sachsen.de/jjis/jjis112008.pdf>, 30-31, (24/05/2011).

²⁶⁹ <http://www.juden-in-sachsen.de/jjis/jjis112008.pdf>, 31, (24/05/2011).

²⁷⁰ *Juristische Wochenschrift* 2, 1932, 4. Translation R.L.

²⁷¹ *Sächsische Verwaltungspraxis* 1 (10/01/1932). Translation R.L.

²⁷² Documents of Alexander Fein, *Papers of the Fein Family*.

1920s and 1930s. Secondly, there were close family bonds with this neighbouring eastern land. Gerhard's grandmother, Charlotte Fein, née Aschkenasi, was Polish and from Krakow. She had a half-sister, Klara, born of her father Hermann's second marriage to a Beila Kaufman. In 1899 this Klara Aschkenasi married Salomon Ramer, a doctor from Sanok. They had two children, Sever and Jagda. The Ramers and Alexander Fein's family were in regular contact and often visited one another in Poland or Leipzig. Sever who was born in 1900, also did his apprenticeship in the fur trade and came to work in the Leipzig firm in 1928.

The friendly relationship between the distant cousins Gerhard and Sever – Sever used to say that he was a cousin seven times removed – lasted a lifetime, not least because of the emigration experience they later shared.

Given that both the business and personal ties with Poland were close, it is not surprising that when a lawyer from Lodz, Dr Armand Ackerberg, opened his practice, he asked Gerhard if he would consider their setting up a central office together which would handle all the court cases concerning Poles in Germany.

However, there was no longer any possibility that these plans could be implemented. On July 1st 1933, as was the case for 30% of his Jewish colleagues in Germany, Gerhard's authorization to practice law was withdrawn in the name of the Civil Service Restoration Act and the Act Relating to Admission to the Bar of April 1933.²⁷³ The decision he subsequently made to emigrate was however not taken alone, since he was now married to Alice Fein, née Lustig, who also had to bear the weight of these momentous resolutions.

6.5 Alice Lustig – the development of a liberal Jewess in the Weimar Period

According to their children Stephen and Kathleen, Gerhard Fein and Alice Lustig met at the end of the 1920s at the Rot-Weiss Tennis Club in Leipzig.²⁷⁴ The Lustigs were a well-established Jewish merchant family. Alice's father, Julius Lustig, originated from Low Frankonian peasant stock and had come to Leipzig from Unsleben at the beginning of the 1890s. There he filed his request for citizenship in 1900 and together with the merchant Josef Frank founded various very successful cloth wholesale businesses. They had offices at Brühl 10-12, and then from 1918 also at Augustusplatz 1, and from the

²⁷³ Friedländer, *The Third Reich and the Jews*, 42.

²⁷⁴ Interview with Stephen Fein 06/08/2010.

beginning of the 1930s also at Hainstrasse 20-24.²⁷⁵ Like the brothers Wilhelm and Siegmund Fein, besides his professional occupations, Julius Lustig was very active in a myriad of organisations. Between 1924 and 1936 he was a representative of the Israelite Religious Community of Leipzig and a member of their Welfare Committee. Additionally, from 1924 he held the office of Commissioner for the Synagogue. In this position as a prominent and thus exposed member of the Leipzig congregation he had been directly involved in the developments of that year, certainly one of the most turbulent in the community's history.

Since the turn of the century, the Jewish community in Saxony had undergone significant changes. Because of the growing anti-Semitism and the economic discriminations many east European Jews emigrated to Saxony. Although it was officially unified, from that period the Leipzig Jewish community was profoundly heterogeneous in its structure. From 1890 to 1924, the number of Jewish inhabitants of Leipzig grew from 1.070 to 12.594.²⁷⁶ Many of these new Eastern-European Jewish immigrants, who were craftsmen, workmen, or owners of small businesses, found that social mobility was barred for them after World War I.²⁷⁷ Even within the Jewish community of Leipzig itself they were underrepresented and had little say. Although they were entitled to a 68% representation on the electoral register, in 1925 only eight of the 33 seats on the Community Council were held by foreign Jews.

In the course of the inflation, the interim crisis of 1925-26 and the world economic crisis, coupled with the sharp rise of anti-Semitism in the Weimar period, the internal tensions already existing within Leipzig's Jewish community became ever more exacerbated. The Eastern-European Jewish immigrants continued to believe firmly in Zionism as their spiritual homeland, whereas the German citizens of Jewish faith, now members of the bourgeoisie, firmly and consciously subjected their Jewish lives to German culture, in the hope of counteracting possible social exclusion.²⁷⁸

The latter was also Julius Lustig's stance. Along with a large section of the German Jewry, this was to remain his position until long after the accession to power of the

²⁷⁵ Information provided by Sächsisches Staatsarchiv.

²⁷⁶ Kerstin Plowinski, *Die jüdische Bevölkerung Leipzigs 1853-1925-1933. Sozialgeschichtliche Fallstudien zur Mitgliedschaft einer Großgemeinde*, Diss., Universität Leipzig, Leipzig 1991, 48. However, the percentage of Jews within the total population changed only insignificantly from 1.38% in 1890 to 1.85 in 1925 due to the general increase in population.

²⁷⁷ Solvejg Höppner and Manfred Jahn, *Jüdische Vereine und Organisationen in Chemnitz, Dresden und Leipzig 1918 – 1933. Ein Überblick*, Dresden 1997, 9.

²⁷⁸ Ibid.

National Socialists.²⁷⁹ Apart from his political commitments within the community, he was at once a board member of the Leipzig Community and of the Saxony Council of Communities of German Citizens of Jewish faith, an organisation which firmly stated its patriotic sentiments and its identification with the humanistic ideals of bourgeois liberalism. The Centralverein did not consider Jews as a nation or a people, but exclusively as a denomination and a creed. With around 70.000 members, it was the most important mouthpiece of those Jews who saw themselves as patriots and who emphatically wished to make known their love of their fatherland.²⁸⁰ The quintessence of the philosophy embraced by the Central Association, and also by Julius Lustig until he felt compelled to emigrate, can best be grasped in the words of the Stuttgart Rabbi Paul Rieger in his book *Vom Heimatsrecht der deutschen Juden*:

The German Jews constitute a historical community within the German people, with a separate social structure and strong religious traditions. However, this specificity in no way precludes their belonging to the German people. It alienates the Jews from the Germans as little as, for instance, the difference which sets a Rhenish factory worker apart from a Lower Saxon peasant.²⁸¹

Julius Lustig's liberal attitudes coexisted with a particular piety which was not shared in equal measure by all the members of the C.V. Frequent visits to the synagogue and observing the religious calendar were extremely important to him.²⁸² Apart from his work at the Central Association and in the community, Julius was a member of the Support Group for Jewish businessmen and of the Jewish Charitable Society. He also sat on the board of the Mendelssohn-Foundation and of the Leipzig Chapter of the B'nai B'rith Fraternity of Germany. Until the events of November 1938 Julius remained convinced that no fundamental menace would threaten those Jewish citizens who were firmly rooted in German life and culture. After his emigration to Great Britain, Julius never managed to build a genuine connection with his new home. Even the English language remained alien to him until his death in the early 1950s.

He married Helena Lieberg in 1900. She was from Kassel and moved to Leipzig to found a family with him. Like Julius Lustig, the Liebergs were highly assimilated Jews, who also came from a merchant background. Helena's father had served in World War I

²⁷⁹ Oral History from Kathleen Fein's talks with Lotte Hamburger in Washington, December 2009.

²⁸⁰ Walter Grab, *Der Deutsche Weg der Judenemanzipation 1789-1938*, München 1991, 185-187.

²⁸¹ Paul Rieger, *Vom Heimatsrecht der deutschen Juden*, Berlin 1930, quoted in Kurt Löwenstein, "Die innerjüdische Reaktion auf die Krise der deutschen Demokratie", in Mosse, Werner (ed.), *Entscheidungsjahr 1932. Zur Judenfrage in der Endphase der Weimarer Republik*, Tübingen 1966, 349-404, 353. Translation R.L.

²⁸² Oral History from Kathleen Fein's talks with Lotte Hamburger in Washington, December 2009.

and felt deeply embedded in his fatherland.²⁸³ Helena was one of four siblings. Her sister Trudi initially stayed in Kassel and married a lawyer, Leo Oppenheim. The couple later also emigrated to Great Britain and in the 1960s Leo became the Feins' lawyer for restitution claims. Fritz Lieberg, one of the brothers, became an important business partner of Gerhard's. All four Lieberg children were extensively educated and felt closely connected to the German cultural heritage.²⁸⁴ Once married and in Leipzig, Helena remained committed to middle-class educational ideals she had inherited and gave her three daughters Margot, Käte and Alice with a comprehensive education. For instance, Käte studied psychology and worked in a kind of information centre for families at a hospital.²⁸⁵ However, after Käte married the merchant and hatmaker Fritz Levy from Cologne, she moved to that city, gave birth to her daughter Lotte, and had to give up work, a fate Alice shared after she married Gerhard. Like his father-in-law, Käte's husband Fritz Levy was a liberal highly assimilated German Jew, but far less pious. He had also fought in World War I and had escaped from a Soviet prisoner-of-war camp in Siberia. In the post-war years, he became a convinced pacifist who deeply mistrusted German rearmament. Käte and he left Germany relatively early, in 1935, much to the disapproval of Julius, who until the events of November 1938 had continued to believe in the inviolability of German Jewry.²⁸⁶

Alice was born in 1904, the youngest of the three sisters. For a girl from the upper middle-class of that period, she had a relatively progressive upbringing. In 1921 she was sent to the Irmgardhaus in Eisenach, a Higher Education Girls School run by the Mathilde Zimmer Foundation, where she benefitted from a commitment to some of the most modern pedagogic principles of the time. As well as the classical canon of literature, history of art, religious studies, civic studies, ethics and psychology the middle-class girls were also given instruction in housekeeping, gymnastics, arts and crafts, needlework and knitting.²⁸⁷ Besides theatrical performances and debates, great importance was attached to dance as a pedagogic medium:

Now comes the dance night. [...] Everyone here, all housewives, appeared barefoot in white dresses or rhythmic garments. [...] Both big rooms, which you know, were completely emptied and bathed in a magic red light. There were mattresses on the floor covered with carpets or blankets. Piano playing greeted us as we came in and we all sat on the floor. Then Leonie, Käten's room matron, gave a very nice speech and after there was a fine merry Polonaise. Then

²⁸³ Oral History from Kathleen Fein's talks with Lotte Hamburger in Washington, December 2009.

²⁸⁴ Oral History from Kathleen Fein's talks with Lotte Hamburger in Washington, December 2009.

²⁸⁵ Oral History from Kathleen Fein's talks with Lotte Hamburger in Washington, December 2009.

²⁸⁶ Interview with Stephen Fein 06/08/2010.

²⁸⁷ Letter from Alice Lustig to Helena Lustig, 01/08/1921, *Papers of the Fein Family*. Translation R.L.

more piano and the older girls danced to it, improvising completely. It was really pretty to watch. Then we were asked to dance too, as we felt like. Practically nobody was watching, as Frl. von Wolfersdorf [the principal of the school, R.L.] was dancing too. I was embarrassed at first, of course, but soon an older pupil came to get me, and we danced really well together. Then I just joined in anyway.²⁸⁸



Image 11: View of the Irmgardhaus, run by the Mathilde Zimmer Foundation Eisenach²⁸⁹

Her Jewish background did not play a prominent role while she was attending the school, although the then seventeen year-old nevertheless came up against anti-Semitic forces there.

In August there was a school fete, the house was decorated, there were performances, a Polonaise through the house, each of us with a ribbon with the black and green house colours. Two teachers were not given one. The anti-Semitic one and her friend, the housekeeping teacher. Oh, I was so pleased about that!²⁹⁰

After she finished school in Eisenach, she returned to Leipzig and went to the local commercial college.²⁹¹ Then in 1925 she began work as a secretary for Paul Würzler-Klopsch, the Leipzig architect and craftsman. At this time, Würzler-Klopsch was a well-known artist in the environs of Leipzig. He had founded the Leipziger Werkstätten, an association of craftsmen which had committed itself to the goals of the Deutscher Werkbund, of which Würzler-Klopsch was also a member.²⁹²

Both these economic and cultural institutions were concerned with attaining a

²⁸⁸ Letter from Alice Lustig to Helena Lustig, 11/05/1921, *Papers of the Fein Family*.

²⁸⁹ <http://www.akpool.de/ansichtskarten/119996-ansichtskarte-postkarte-eisenach-irmgardhaus-mathilde-zimmer-stiftung>.

²⁹⁰ Letter from Alice Lustig to Helena Lustig, August 1921, *Papers of the Fein Family*.

²⁹¹ Certificates of Alice Fein, *Papers of the Fein Family*.

²⁹² About the Deutscher Werkbund see: Theodor Heuss, *Was ist Qualität? Zur Geschichte und zur Aufgabe des Deutschen Werkbundes*, Tübingen 1951. Theodor Heuss, who later became Bundespräsident, was from 1918 to 1933 executive manager and a board member of this organisation, active throughout Germany.

refinement of commercial craft through the interplay of crafts, art and industry. Würzler-Klopsch's works were committed to the dictum of New Objectivity movement, and were characterized by a sobriety of form and a lack of ornamentation corresponding to their functionality.²⁹³ Despite the fact that her employer was so modern, Alice felt that her abilities were not being used to the full and decided to give up her position in January 1926.²⁹⁴ She subsequently took a job at Theodor Althoff's, a department store which had been established in Leipzig in 1903. Althoff's had merged with Karstadt as early as 1920 and their corporation grew into one of the most powerful department store chains in Germany. Alice worked there as a secretary and office manager. Later she also trained apprentices, and continued her employment there until 1931.

Despite her professional commitments, during the 1920s Alice Lustig frequently managed to get away to travel in Europe, an experience she had in common with Gerhard Fein. As with him, the destinations she chose reveal the underlying paradigms of the European outlook of the German Jewish bourgeoisie. Thus, in the summer of 1926 she travelled with her father and the Oppenheims to Engelberg in Switzerland, in order to rest and spend time practicing sports, in keeping with the habits of her class:

At present I am lying with no clothes on and only a blanket to hide what must be hidden, and I have had a rest in full blazing sun – it is warmer than in summer, the sky is bluer than in Italy and the colossal mountains are covered in snow. [...] I lie on the balcony wrapped in blankets and below Fritz and Gerhard Fein gallop by proficiently on their mounts.²⁹⁵

She also visited Italy, as she did from February to April 1927 for several weeks, visiting Verona, Rome, Naples, Taormina, Florence and Bozen. In April she went home via Switzerland. Like Gerhard, Alice described her impressions of the different cities in countless letters, reflecting on the architecture, the art, the landscapes and the Italian way of life. And like for Gerhard, her desire to develop the ability to experience elevated aesthetic sensations through direct perception can be seen as typical of the requirements and motivation structures of the Jewish bourgeoisie in Germany in the 1920s.

Admittedly, in the late 1920s, the frontiers with nascent mass tourism were beginning to blur and members of other social classes also aspired to travel abroad in Europe, both

²⁹³ A short introduction into the main ideas of this movement can be found on the website of the auctioneer Dr. Fischer: <http://www.auctions-fischer.de/catalogues/online-catalogues/196-i-europaeisches-glas-studioglass.html?L=1&kategorie=50&artikel=13475&L=1&cHash=0d254d01a9>.

²⁹⁴ Letter from Alice Lustig to Käte Lustig, 02/01/1926, *Papers of the Fein Family*.

²⁹⁵ Letter from Alice Lustig, 25/07/1926, (unknown recipient), *Papers of the Fein Family*. Translation R.L.

for relaxation and to better themselves. There were nevertheless considerable differences between the bourgeois trip formula – particularly in terms of duration and accommodation – and those taken by manual or white-collar workers, which would later turn into the National Socialist large-scale mass tourism project *Kraft durch Freude*.

This [the bourgeois trip, RL] still continued [...] in the tradition of the 18th and 19th centuries. One travelled to maintain or improve one's health, or one's culture. Destinations included spa towns, cures, Italy for the sites of Antiquity, France for the museums or exhibitions.²⁹⁶

In 1929 Alice travelled to England and, unbeknownst to her, got her first impression of the country which would a few years later become her new homeland. She spent more than seven weeks in England, visited Oxford, Eastbourne, Brighton, the Isle of Wight and London, which in its otherness seemed very foreign to her, although at the same time agreeable:

Stroll along Oxford Street. One stands there glued to the ground, totally amazed. So many shops next to one another – completely incredible. The most beautiful things beside the most tasteless. And its the same for how people are dressed. Weird beyond belief and then again very smart. Nobody looks at anybody else – too many people for that. You can dress exactly as you want, nobody will notice you. Yet one sees such strange pictures there. Gentlemen with top hats, yellow waistcoats, umbrellas and knots as neckties.²⁹⁷
 Apart from that, yesterday I saw a talking film for the first time. Unbelievable, and very impressive. 'The Singing Fool' with Al Jolson. I was carried away by emotion. Honestly. He is the American tenor and you hear him singing in his own voice and you see him act at the same time. More impressive than the theatre.²⁹⁸

After this stay of almost two months in England she travelled directly via Dover and Calais to Paris and from there to The Hague, where her brother-in-law Fritz Kaufmann lived with his son Franz. One year earlier the Lustig family had suffered a loss as bitter as the Feins' with the death of Alexander. Indeed, in April 1928, Alice's eldest sister, Margot, had died in childbirth while delivering her first child, Franz. Subsequently, Alice took up residence even more frequently in The Hague, continuing to do so once the relationship with Gerhard Fein had begun, and after she had become engaged to him in June 1932.

²⁹⁶ Christian Kleinschmidt, *Konsumgesellschaft*, Göttingen 2008, 108. Translation R.L.

²⁹⁷ Letter from Alice Lustig to Julius and Helena Lustig, 06/06/1929, *Papers of the Fein Family*. Translation R.L.

²⁹⁸ Letter from Alice Lustig to Käte Lustig, 04/06/1929, *Papers of the Fein Family*. Translation R.L.

6.6 Alice Lustig und Gerhard Fein – Love and Politics

Alice's free-time activities were those of a bourgeois girl of her time. Already on her return from Eisenach she expressed the following wish: "I want to practise a lot of sport: swimming, rowing, tennis. In addition I want to have two gym lessons a week."²⁹⁹ This enthusiasm for sport then led her to the Rot-Weiss Tennis Club where she met Gerhard Fein. However, he was not the first suitor to be taken seriously for marriage. Already in 1926, in her letters to Käte or to her parents, Alice mentions numerous interested parties, though until Gerhard Fein, the genuine emotional conviction was missing:

Concerning suitors: 1. Hillel – dead as a doornail. 2. Kahn Berlin – has to be taken seriously. 3. Erich K. – a tricky question, no word about marriage. 4. Ikenberg – For the time being I'm not getting engaged to him and want my peace of mind there too. Soon I will feel hounded like a wild animal, not by my parents, mind you, but by myself. For me, Christmas is the pits, the worst of all times. But do not prepare yourselves for an engagement – thanks to my experience in this matter, I have become a real juggler. I believe I have become so accomplished that there will never be an end. But in any case, no-one else is interested in me, although I shall soon be an old maid.³⁰⁰

What Alice writes here clearly shows that she was permitted to seek out an acceptable husband for herself, purely on the grounds of emotional compatibility. If this necessary condition was not fulfilled, it was entirely possible for her to give up the potential suitor, without it creating problems with her family:

Another heartache. It's over with Ikenberg. Yesterday, on his holy birthday I dealt him the painful blow. We were having dinner together when he gave me a key with a little rhyme: My heart belongs to you, etc. So then we had a talk and I told him that he was really nice, but that I could not make up my mind. Intellectually, I had no complaints. But emotionally, something was amiss. Upon which he replied that it was out of the question. The emotional bond must exist at all costs.³⁰¹

This 'emotional bond' was also undoubtedly in the foreground when Alice decided in favour of Gerhard Fein. She apparently even went against her parents' initial scepticism:

Mum takes it amiss, that, because of my friendship with Gerhard Fein, I do not show enough interest in Bremer. There is no doubt that he (Gerhard???) is a completely honourable candidate. The only question is whether he can support me, and then, Bremer. It is true that this friendship influences me, that there is a whole lot to say against it, but how can a person go against his or her feelings? Should I not take a look at the well-to-do home of the youngest of all my

²⁹⁹ Letter from Alice Lustig to Käte Lustig, 06/02/1922, *Papers of the Fein Family*. Translation R.L.

³⁰⁰ Letter from Alice Lustig to Käte Lustig, 11/11/1926, *Papers of the Fein Family*. Translation R.L.

³⁰¹ Letter from Alice Lustig to her parents, 25/07/1928, *Papers of the Fein Family*. Translation R.L.

pretenders (a year younger than me), and still doing his articles?³⁰²

In June 1931 Alice officially introduced Gerhard to her family as her future husband. However, the engagement was not publically announced at this time. Even if, for Alice, economic considerations must only have played a secondary roll in such a matter, she was nevertheless not entirely unaware of social status.

Gerhard has another eight days holiday at the beginning of September and then we want to meet up somewhere. If by then he has his venerable title of Doctor, we intend to put the announcement in the paper on my return. That will be about six months before the wedding. [...] I don't say anything about it here in Leipzig, although of course everyone knows, but for the moment I don't want to, firstly, I'd like the Dr. to be printed before my name (the work has been given in) and secondly, a year is too long.³⁰³

In the summer of the same year Alice went again to the Netherlands for a stay of several months in The Hague with her brother-in-law Fritz. The sustained correspondence she exchanged with Gerhard grants an extraordinarily deep insight into how the young generation of middle-class Jews assessed the distortions of their epoch. As from 1929, after a long period of economical and political stability, and as a consequence of the world economic crisis, the Weimar Republic once again faced serious financial and social problems. In the course of the following year, the social strife intensified, and along with it, the debate over the role played by Jews in the different social sub-systems. Not later than 1931, after the first turbulences, the Leipzig Brühl and its business community lived through a genuine crisis scenario caused by the bankruptcy of the Danatbank, the third biggest German bank. Numerous Brühl merchants were clients of theirs, or had deposited their customers' bills of exchange or bonds there. Gerhard wrote to Alice:

I am infinitely sorry that you are so upset by all the almost unbelievable things that happened today. At any rate, I am delighted that you can enjoy the clean North Sea fresh air blowing in your face, and not have to sit plumb in the middle of this bankruptcy failure. The Brühl of course was no less panic-stricken than everybody else. One will have to bide one's time, and getting upset, my love, can do nothing to help us poor penniless Germans. Of course, when one reflects with more composure on these events, they push all others into the background, the uncertainty about whether Germany will be saved or not is worrying and painful, and because one is personally so helpless, we somehow feel we must bear these financial hardships as our fate.³⁰⁴

Initially, the Fein family and the firm too were scarcely impacted by the consequences of the crisis. Instead, Gerhard's reports indicate that he was concerned by a change in

³⁰² Letter from Alice Lustig to Käte Lustig, 22/10/1930, *Papers of the Fein Family*. Translation R.L.

³⁰³ Letter from Alice Lustig to Käte Lustig, 04/06/1931, *Papers of the Fein Family*. Translation R.L.

³⁰⁴ Letter from Gerhard Fein to Alice Lustig, 13/07/1931, *Papers of the Fein Family*. Translation R.L.

the atmosphere, which, only two years later or so would lash out at all the family members with undisguised hatred:

Initially only assets over 20.000 RM are affected by the currency regulations. Since your mother-in-law only has older securities and that there is no such sum in my account, we are not personally impacted. At the office the lists must of course be drawn up. [...] The extent of the troubles the Reichsbank is in can be seen from the fact that for tax arrears a default interest rate of 120% per year (in the decree it is shamefully expressed at 5% per 14 days) will be levied. [...] Daily bank money costs 13%. One hears nothing more about the Dresdner, and we have until now not had the slightest difficulties (contrary to many other firms, but of course one never knows, this might change). But I scarcely believe that the diseased German financial sector could bear up to a further shock on the scale of the Danat scandal. [...] Here we are now no longer in such despair as we were at the beginning of the bank crisis. Only the Brühl has not yet returned to its senses.³⁰⁵

Only one day later the worries already seemed greater:

[...] here the banking difficulties are enormous (but fortunately not for us in the office, as I previously said. Yesterday we even discounted different assets, even in Marks). Actually, they wanted to found a bank for the Brühl for money transfers, but the plan gradually faltered and failed. It transpired that they were shitting in fear (to use the colourful Brühl jargon). It appears that above all Ariowitsch and also Thorer (both with high foreign credits) have a lot to worry about. Nobody at all has any liquid funds, not even the smallest amounts. [...] If the financial situation improves, or simply remains as it is, the Brühl will also survive. If it doesn't, we will all have to bite the dust.³⁰⁶

Due to his political and historical vision, Gerhard Fein was aware that this crisis, initially a financial one, could turn into a political and social one:

[...] The crisis is still only a financial one and essentially affects the circles of asset holders. The belief that it will not turn into a revolution is certainly not unfounded. The fear for one's money may well be justified, however, the fear for one's life is for the moment completely superfluous. [...] There is much talk about moratoriums and suchlike. But it's all just half-baked stuff [...] No one, be they private individuals or public leaders (that's the misery of it) is able to give a properly clear account of the inextricable undergrowth of the financial conditions. One can also predict precious little, and precious little can beforehand be judged as bad or good. We are as far away from the planned economy as from the political understanding between nations. And it is now commonplace to say that in the latter lies the heart of the matter.³⁰⁷

In August 1931 his words took on a more prophetic ring. The fact that the bourgeois propertied Jewry was inclined to see the solution of the existing problems in a socialist state-planned national economy seems initially surprising, but this class too was particularly exposed to the existential threat that stemmed from the events of these years of crisis:

My dearest: the awareness that these times will determine the fate of civil liberties in a large part

³⁰⁵ Letter from Gerhard Fein to Alice Lustig, 24/07/1931, *Papers of the Fein Family*. Translation R.L.

³⁰⁶ Letter from Gerhard Fein to Alice Lustig, 25/07/1931, *Papers of the Fein Family*. Translation R.L.

³⁰⁷ Letter from Gerhard Fein to Alice Lustig, 28/07/1931, *Papers of the Fein Family*. Translation R.L.

of Europe is now being discussed in the newspapers. And just like so soon after the war and in the ailing time of the inflation, the future and the rescue of European culture (still the heart of the world) lies in Germany. Each day that goes by I admire even more the serenity and composure of the overwhelming majority of the people. The wages of the officials and the salaries are paid late, welfare payments have been lowered. And none the less this discipline. I doubt that it is based on insight or wisdom, rather on an inability to react stemming from too much suffering and too little education national and economic matters. Quite apart from the very personal question of weal and woe, the de facto dictatorship we have today in Germany actually represents no imminent danger to the existing state or to the perpetuation of long-standing well-rehearsed ideals, as long as this dictatorship is in the hands of men who ideologically espouse neither communism nor today's run-wild nationalism. Yet who knows whether today's government in particular is not paving the way to a right or left-wing dictatorship, as a government before it has never done (it is socialising to an unprecedented extent). Still, the present government has no other choice, if it does not want to dig its own grave in the shorter term, than to master an exceptional situation with exceptional measures. The people seem to feel willing to go along with this, and that I see as the biggest 'plus' when calculating whether the fate of the current economic system in Germany will be life or death. I believe that we shall pay for our victory over the crisis with marked national-socialism. Whether this exchange is so bad, I do not yet know. That the economy – until now fantastically chaotic – needs sensible planning has already become plain for everyone to see. Even if the new order is forced upon us by this downright murderous crisis, and even if it maintains outmoded values, it will not be any the less welcome. It is indeed undeniable that in Germany at present private capital is behaving in a completely irresponsible manner and America, a rich country, can afford such experiments more easily, and there the numerical allocation of capital is proportionally far healthier than here in our country. [...] With all the novelties that almost every day brings, I consider it important to keep a cool head and to think things over carefully, instead of giving in to despair and fatalism, as so many do. Of course this consideration cannot go beyond the limits of what one personally deems acceptable. My wish: neither a right or a left wing terror.³⁰⁸

That this new order would soon turn into real terror was not immediately obvious for Gerhard Fein in the early thirties. In fact, he was much more fearful of the communist threat, as were a large section of the property-owning middle classes:

In any case, at this time the question of a radical change of political regime is not one of intellectual choice, rather (as the Marxist teachings confirm) one of economic prosperity. Should we become even poorer, the red world will glitter ever more golden in the eyes of the people.³⁰⁹

Mirroring the crisis looming in the background, Gerhard's personal conflict in relation to his Jewish roots took on a new quality. As a consequence of the ever-more ostentatious anti-Semitism and the increasingly intense discussions within the Jewish community at the end of the Weimar Republic, it was defined more in terms of what it was not: ex negativo. And whenever it was possible for him to approach Jewish issues impartially, he experienced a kind of historical and personal independence.

So it was during a visit to the Alt-Neusynagoge in Prague: "But I am always pleased anew, when I see things from the old Jews which can be observed with general interest,

³⁰⁸ Letter from Gerhard Fein to Alice Lustig, August 1931, *Papers of the Fein Family*. Translation R.L.

³⁰⁹ Letter from Gerhard Fein to Alice Lustig, 13/08/1931, *Papers of the Fein Family*. Translation R.L.

beyond anti-Semitism or intra-Jewish quarrels”³¹⁰ on reading a book by Walter Simons on the father of the Weimar Constitution, Hugo Preuss:

Quite good and inspiring, and incidentally very decent as far as Preuss is concerned, which then again seems natural and is to be expected of a serious researcher and responsible person such as he is. All the same, it is a sad sign of how far the veil of anti-Semitic hatred seems to have penetrated even the previously freest regions of our minds that one remarks on the objective assessment of a Jewish figure as being proper and appropriate.³¹¹

The majority of private decisions were as far as possible taken without regard for this veil of anti-Semitic hatred, at least until 1933, although the political constellations did indeed influence the considerations about the wedding and marriage. Only two years later however, the political sphere had undergone such profound changes that it was to become the primary force driving the individual life choices made by the young couple:

That you, companion of my days, suggest celebrating the wedding and my birthday at the same time, when Hitler and Hindenburg may come to some agreement or when some other menacing clouds may make May unfit for a honeymoon, yet you know that I will marry you unconditionally, on the spot, with or without mikvah, the temple, the wedding breakfast and the rabbi’s touching sermon – lovingly and a 100% certain. My darling, do not worry more about the big political picture than is absolutely necessary, otherwise your spirit will become overloaded, just as the body does when one eats too much fat. We are playthings in the grip of these events to such an extent that one cannot hope great compassion could make a difference. All in all, this consideration leads one to take care of oneself and one’s own joie de vivre on the narrow personal path, on the path we tread together, and precisely because of that it may lose its narrowness and recover its true character, infused with light and in no way burdensome.³¹²

Gerhard’s suggestion to withdraw to a more personal path during his engagement with Alice indicates that he set a noticeable distance between himself and the events of those years:

Now the mighty will soon have to come to the table and adapt their political claims to facts, their nationalistic feelings to the real necessities of life, rearmament to the money in our purses. Otherwise one will gradually become convinced that only a great tornado would be able to eradicate the stupidity of how funds are distributed, of frontiers, customs, arms expenditure, reparation, unemployment, the whole post-war calamity. But actually, observing it all is in itself pretty interesting.³¹³

Indeed, at this point it becomes necessary to ask whether the posture of observer and bystander which Gerhard Fein adopts in some of his letters cannot also be understood as a further expression of the incomplete integration of bourgeois Jewry in the societal issues of the time. The fact that observing events seems interesting also implies that one

³¹⁰ Letter from Gerhard Fein to Alice Lustig, 19/08/1931, *Papers of the Fein Family*. Translation R.L.

³¹¹ Letter from Gerhard Fein to Alice Lustig, 19/08/1931, *Papers of the Fein Family*. Translation R.L.
Hugo Preuss (1860-1925): Lawyer, father of the Constitution of the Weimar Republic.

³¹² Letter from Gerhard Fein to Alice Lustig, 19/09/1931, *Papers of the Fein Family*. Translation R.L.

³¹³ Letter from Gerhard Fein to Alice Lustig, 20/09/1931, *Papers of the Fein Family*. Translation R.L.

is only watching a spectacle which in the end one will not personally be affected by.

Yet maybe these sayings also indicate that well before 1933 Gerhard had said his inner farewells. Politics was perceived as chaotic and confused, bound to become a threat. As a result, it seemed worthwhile to avoid the public arena and withdraw into unobtrusive personal and private spheres. The fact that Gerhard Fein came to see such considerations as a fallacy is obvious, since only a little later his whole personal existence was to be impacted by political decisions. However, in 1931 he did not perceive the danger in all its blaring clarity, even if he suspected that the new order would not be long in coming.

And politics – what bedlam. Soon someone who does nothing but bring back law and order will welcome. How external unconcerned with inner content we are now becoming – soon the political penchant of the regime will make not the slightest difference. Just a regulated life, c'est ce qu'il nous faut.³¹⁴

Alice and Gerhard thus devoted themselves to their private lives as early as 19th June 1932. The wedding was celebrated according to the Jewish ritual, with the liberal Rabbi Goldmann and with a senior cantor, an organist, the Synagogue inspector and a Synagogue assistant in the Fürstenhof Hotel in Leipzig. And so the young couple married in the company of their extended family and numerous friends, with Beluga-Malossol caviar, butter, toast, Luis White Pale Sherry, ox-tail consommé, salmon from the Rhein and Dresden fattened goose.³¹⁵

Only a few months later there was a serious shift in the political constellation, and the fundamentals of this German-Jewish union changed radically. Decisions were made whose breadth could certainly not have been foreseen during the wedding feast and the honeymoon in St. Wolfgang which followed.

³¹⁴ Ibid.

³¹⁵ Menu of the wedding, *Papers of the Fein Family*.

7. 1933-1945 Emigration and Starting Over

7.1 Leipzig – London

The emigration of German Jews began almost immediately after Adolf Hitler was nominated Chancellor of the Reich on January 30th, 1933. Gerhard Fein was in fact one of many whom left their homes in the first year of National Socialist rule. Predominantly, intellectuals and artists decided relatively quickly to leave Germany, since they were the first to be affected by the initial boycotts and professional restrictions. That having been said, there was no fundamental disquiet or panic amongst the 525.000 Jews residing in Germany at this time.³¹⁶

The first big boycott of Jewish businesses on April 1st, which was only half-heartedly backed by the majority of the population, did not set alarm bells ringing. The reason for this was undoubtedly that the first significant National Socialist persecution measures were aimed at communists and sections of the Social Democrat party, and consequently did not directly concern the Jews. Yet anti-Semitism was so deeply embedded in the NSDAP manifesto that it would only be a matter of time until it surfaced, with the implementation of the first extensive measures.

As early as February 1920, 25 articles of the NSDAP manifesto had laid down the goals of its anti-Jewish policy.³¹⁷ It expressly declared that:

Only members of the nation may be citizens of the State. Only these of German blood, whatever their creed, may be members of the nation. Accordingly no Jew may be a member of the nation.³¹⁸

In addition, anyone not recognized as a citizen was to be subjected to special legislation for foreigners, and further immigration of non-Germans would be halted. In this manifesto, Jews were to be denied voting rights.

On April 7th 1933, these objectives were finally enshrined in the Law for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service. Through its exclusion mechanism, whose fundamental *raison d'être* was to align the bureaucratic system with National Socialist ideals, this law affected some two million state and city employees, among whom were

³¹⁶ Saul Friedländer, *Nazi Germany and the Jews*, Vol. I: *The Years of Persecution 1933-1939*, London 1997, 15.

³¹⁷ Ibid., 26.

³¹⁸ Quoted in *ibid.*

Communists, other political opponents, and Jews.³¹⁹ In article 3, the so-called Aryan paragraph, which announced the forced retirement of Jewish officials, was stated that: “Non-Aryan is to be understood as someone with non-Aryan, and in particular, Jewish parents or grandparents. It suffices if one parent or grandparent is non-Aryan.”³²⁰ Thus, at a single stroke, the emancipation of the Jews of 1871 was repealed.

As part of the Law for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service, a further decree was issued on April 11th revoking the right of Jewish lawyers to exercise their profession. Initially, due to certain provisions in the decree, 3.167 of the 4.585 Jewish lawyers practising in Germany were able to continue working, but Gerhard Fein was not one of them. Besides, in the run-up to their systematic exclusion, Jewish lawyers and barristers had already been victimised on a personal level, and sometimes even physically brutalised, as in Dresden, where Jewish lawyers and judges were dragged out of their offices and courts and even beaten up.³²¹ Gerhard Fein was also subjected to verbal aggression, as at the end of March when the phone rang in the middle of the night and an anonymous caller screamed, “You bloody gang of Jews”, and also when a National Socialist came to his practice, threatening to arrest him on the spot, but who turned about to be a braggart who would then be restrained and arrested by his comrades.³²² Gerhard made his decision to emigrate some time between April and June 1933, relatively soon after the implementation of the Law. He applied unsuccessfully to law practices of Belgian and French colleagues, who at that time were receiving an enormous number of applications from Jewish lawyers and thus responded with little enthusiasm. Regarding a political career in England, he quickly realised that the idea was impractical, since he would have to sit a complex new set of exams before he could practise the law there. On June 22nd 1933, he petitioned the counsellor at the Middle German Emigration Bureau. The latter informed him that he would in all likelihood lose his lawyers’ permit on July 1st of the same year, after which he would have no way of earning a living in Germany. He explained to the counsellor that with the help of American and English relations he was planning to found a business which would act as a commission agent and buy and sell raw furs and skins at the London auctions. Since American, English and Italian friends and relations had already promised to give him

³¹⁹ Ibid.

³²⁰ Joseph Walk (ed.), *Das Sonderrecht für die Juden im NS-Staat. Eine Sammlung der gesetzlichen Maßnahmen und Richtlinien*, Heidelberg 1981, 12. Translation R.L.

³²¹ Friedländer, *Nazi Germany*, 27.

³²² Police record on Gerhard Fein from March 31st 1933, *Papers of the Fein Family*. Translation R.L.

their commission business, all he needed now was an emigration permit and sufficient funds to found a Limited Company, i.e. the equivalent of some £ 2.000.

The legal hurdles for emigrating and taking out capital were already considerable, even if they cannot be compared with those in force in 1938, or on the eve of war. In 1931 the Brüning government had imposed an exit tax on capital assets over 200.000 RM, which the National Socialists initially reduced to 50.000 RM, a threshold which Gerhard Fein had to prove was sufficient for his needs. For the emigration counsellor, he began by listing his future capital needs in England as follows:

Capital to found the firm	£2.000
Expenses for a year, including costs to found the firm & rent	£155
Employees' salaries	£ 96
Market hand	£ 80
Telephone and expenses	£100
Personal salary for one year	£300
Equipment and furnishings	£200

All in all, it added up to a total of £ 2.931, i.e. 42.950 RM. The emigration officer then asked the Finance Authorities to authorise 35.000 RM to enable Gerhard to emigrate. At the end of June 1933, he submitted to the Finance Authorities a further list of all his assets: the plot of land in Yorckstrasse, Berlin, purchased in 1932, loans from the Kommunalbank of Saxony for 5.000 Goldmarks, bonds worth 1.000 Goldmarks, Hungarian treasury bills for 33.000 RM and a bank deposit of 3.000 RM. Finally, on July 13th, the authorities granted him 20.000 RM as well as 15.000 RM's worth of foreign value papers. At the beginning of August he gave the Jewish lawyer Dr Zander blanket power of attorney for his remaining estate in Germany and as from August 26th the Saxony Finance Office classified him as a foreigner, which meant that from then on he required permission from the currency control office (Devisenbewirtschaftungsstelle) to access his German assets.³²³

He arrived in London on September 14th, registered with the Bow Street Immigration Services as a German immigrant and took up lodgings at the Vandyke Hotel in

³²³ Papers of Gerhard Fein, *Papers of the Fein Family*.

Cromwell Street, where he lived for the first three months of his stay in London. Alice, who had since the summer of 1933 been expecting their first child, arrived in October. Alice and Gerhard were among the 4.000 Jewish immigrants who, according to the data of the Jewish Refugee Council, were admitted into Britain between March 1933 and October 1934.³²⁴ Although the Home Office had since April 1933 tightened its conditions, admission was still not as restrictive as in the following years. In most cases Jewish immigrants were granted a so-called 'short time' residence permit, usually for a 12-month period, to be renewed yearly. Until 1938, this was the case for Gerhard and Alice.

In 1905 Great Britain had introduced an Aliens Act, a modern system of curbing immigration designed to relieve the pressure of an ever-increasing number of eastern-European Jews applying to enter the country.³²⁵ From then on, Immigration Control checked new arrivals and decided if they could stay or not. In the early days of World War I, the Aliens Restriction Act came into force, requiring immigrants to report to the police. These regulations were reinforced by the Aliens Order of 1920, after which an immigrant could only obtain entry if he was able to prove that he could guarantee the economic survival of his family. Fortunately Gerhard Fein was in a position to fulfil all these conditions.

In general the enforcement of these immigration regulations was at that time very flexible:

Throughout the period, little of the policy for managing the refugee influx was formally articulated. The lack of definition at the level of formal policy allowed officials to use discretion to resolve day-to-day policy issues as well as individual cases. [...] The British system allowed officials wide scope for decision-making in line with their perceptions of departmental objectives.³²⁶

One of the political constants until 1939 was that no public resources were provided to cater for the needs of refugees.³²⁷ Having clearly foreseen this state of affairs, the Jewish community had declared in April 1933 that they would meet all costs for the temporary or permanent care of Jewish refugees from Germany, without restriction and

³²⁴ Louise London, *Whitehall and the Jews, 1933-1948. British Immigration Policy, Jewish Refugees, and the Holocaust*, Cambridge 2000, 31.

³²⁵ Traude Bollauf, *Dienstmädchen-Emigration, Die Flucht jüdischer Frauen aus Österreich und Deutschland nach England 1938/39*, Wien ²2011, 136-138.

³²⁶ London, *Whitehall and the Jews*, 10.

³²⁷ Bollauf, *Dienstmädchen*, 136.

“without ultimate charge of the state”.³²⁸ This guarantee functioned from then on thanks to the close cooperation between the Home Office and charitable organisations such as the Jewish Refugee Council, the Academic Assistance Circle (AAC), the Germany Emergency Committee (GEC), founded by the Quakers, or the Co-ordinating Committee, the umbrella agency for all these charities, founded in 1938 to meet the needs of the various emigration groups, ever more numerous.³²⁹

In 1933, at the outset of the immigration phase, the refugees were predominantly from the ‘professional classes’: lawyers, doctors, intellectuals, artists. As reported in April 1933 by the British weekly paper *The Jewish Chronicle*, the majority of the newcomers were “highly cultured people and Germans by birth, only a few being Poles”.³³⁰ Amongst the few Poles was a distant cousin of Gerhard, Sever Ramer, who travelled to England at the beginning of 1934 to help Gerhard establish the London firm. Sever’s mother was Clara Ashkenasy, a half-sister of Gerhard’s grandmother, and thus his great aunt. Sever, as he was known in the family, worked in Fein KG in Leipzig until 1939, when he emigrated via Brazil to New York, and then set up the New York branch of Fein & Co., together with another cousin, Hans Fein. Sever’s father, who was a doctor, his mother and his sister were all exterminated by the Nazis.

7.2 Beginnings in London

In London Gerhard Fein, together with Sever Ramer, quickly began to organise their everyday business activities. Just as the nerve centre of the fur business in Leipzig had been on the Brühl, so in London it was on Garlick Hill, in the City. All the fur and skin merchants had their offices in the vicinity of the headquarters of the Hudson Bay Company, where the latter had its extensive warehouses, administrative offices and auction rooms. The neighbouring trading companies, commission agents and warehouses overflowed into the near-by street of Skinner Lane.

As previously in Leipzig, Gerhard Fein established his new firm in two branches of the business, dealing on the one hand in furs and on the other in hare skins for the manufacture of hats. For the fur trade his connections with Italy were a clear advantage

³²⁸ London, *Whitehall and the Jews*, 28 -30.

³²⁹ Bollauf, *Dienstmädchen*, 138.

³³⁰ “Refugees in London: The Work of the Jews’ Temporary Shelter”, *Jewish Chronicle*, 14 April 1933, 21.

and his long-standing business partner Albarello declared Fein & Co. his official commission agent for the purchase of furs at the London auction. For hare skins, Gerhard and Sever found support from the American customers with whom the German firm had worked for many years. Despite these fortunate connections, it nevertheless proved difficult for a German newcomer like Gerhard to gain a real foothold in the sector. The cutting factories belonged to old-established English families such as Rought, Lingwood, Passavant or Applebee, who had all been in the business for generations. These firms then sold their raw materials to hat factories such as Battersby or Failsworth. Gerhard's firm, Fein & Co. Ltd. built up in fact an interface between individual hare skin suppliers abroad, regional collecting points or bulk traders such as Sainsbury, and cutting firms throughout the UK.

First the unsorted skins were bought and transported to London, where they were valued and sorted. The sorted skins were then ceded to the British cutting factories. However, Fein & Co. Ltd. supplied Belgian cutters, with whom Gerhard Fein kept in close contact. The wide reach of activities from London is also mirrored in the frequency of his business trips, which he had listed as follows for his application for British Citizenship.

Date	Journey
20/12/1933 – 08/01/1934	Germany, Italy, France
19/02/1934 – 10/03/1934	Germany
08/03/1934 – 10/03/1934	Belgium
22/05/1934 – 05/06/1934	Holland, Belgium
27/09/1934 – 03/10/1934	Germany
15/10/1934 – 24/10/1934	Germany and Czechoslovakia
18/12/1934 – 24/12/1934	Germany
12/04/1935 – 20/04/1935	Italy
09/05/1935 – 19/05/1935	Germany and Czechoslovakia
14/08/1935 – 11/09/1935	Italy, France
07/10/1935 – 16/10/1935	Belgium, Holland
22/01/1936 – 04/02/1936	France, Belgium, Germany
14/03/1936 – 25/03/1936	Belgium, Germany
28/05/1936 – 05/06/1936	Germany, Switzerland

22/07/1936 – 28/07/1936	Germany
29/10/1936 – 29/11/1936	USA
21/12/1936 – 12/01/1937	Switzerland
23/05/1937 – 29/05/1937	Germany, Belgium, France
11/10/1937 – 19/10/1937	Italy
14/04/1938 – 16/04/1938	Belgium
18/05/1938 – 15/08/1938	USA

Table 04: Gerhard Fein's Business Trips 1934-1938

Although he had now emigrated, Gerhard returned to Germany at regular intervals, not only to keep up the family contacts, but also to give a hand with the Leipzig business. It is significant that the final break with the homeland only really took place in the course of the antisemitic actions of November 1938. Until then, and during the first years of integration in England, Germany had continued to exert a considerable pull. However, the importance of England grew from year to year and Gerhard would eventually make his lifelong home there. And as his private income during the early years would appear to demonstrate, success in the newly-established business was not been long in coming.

Year	Income in £
1933/34	225
1935	700
1936	1.050
1937	700
1938	1.175
1939	1.300
1940	1.625
1941	1.826
1942	1.626
1943	1.500
1944	2.426
1945	2.276

Table 05: Gerhard Fein's income yearly from 1933 to 1945, from *Papers of the Fein Family*.

As it had done for the Leipzig generations, the good results of the company provided the cornerstone for successful intergration into the new society. Besides, in the coming years, Gerhard's profitable business allowed him to weather his 'alien' status relatively unscathed and also to provide emigration options for family members still in Germany. Up until 1938, the sound London business had however to be set against the dire situation in Leipzig. Indeed, since the Nazis had come to power in 1933, the firm there had been beset by more and more difficulties.

7.3 Fein & Co. Leipzig – Reconstruction of an engineered downfall

As early as September 1932, considerable pressure was exerted on Fein & Co. in Leipzig by its biggest creditor, the Dresdner Bank. This pressure intensified as from 1933 and even before 1938 had led the firm to the brink of ruin. When reconstructing the correspondence between the companies it becomes clear that the efforts of the Dresdner Bank were aimed increasingly at liquidating the company and divesting it of its properties on Weststrasse and the Brühl to cover outstanding debts. According to the bank, because of the non-profitable sales figures and the large quantity of stock, the earnings of the cutting business run by Siegmund were being eroded. The 46.800 RM profits made in 1932 by the cutting business had to be set against the general outgoings, which for the most part accrued from the fur business with handling and trading costs of 57.000 RM, as well as from the interest due of 31.000 RM for the whole firm.³³¹

According to the bank, all this plus the yearly income of their partner Elisabeth Fein, wife of the late Alexander, Wilhelm and Siegmund were not in a position to service their outstanding debt of 380.000 RM. This negative appraisal, however, failed to take into account the remarkably successful efforts of the firm, which since 1928 had reduced its debt of one million RM by two thirds, as well as consistently honouring interest payments when due.

Date	Bank debts of Fein & Co. in RM
31/03/1928	773.836
30/06/1928	408.000
30/09/1928	498.136

³³¹ File on Dresdner Bank, *Papers of the Fein Family*.

31/12/1928	580.937
31/03/1929	808.339
30/06/1929	564.207
30/09/1929	571.840
31/12/1929	566.058
31/03/1930	832.733
30/06/1930	783.150
30/09/1930	625.706
31/12/1930	590.915
31/03/1931	681.020
30/06/1931	557.739
30/09/1931	624.284
31/12/1931	511.758
31/03/1932	439.521
30/06/1932	365.045
30/09/1932	380.795
31/12/1932	336.187

Table 06: Chart showing Fein & Co's bank debts 1928-1932, from *Papers of the Fein Family*.

Between 1931 and 1932, there were 21 employees in the firm. Nine were dismissed at the end of 1932 to reduce expenses. Yet the situation remained problematic. Indeed, since 1932, costs had not been the only concern. There was also the heavy burden of big yearly incomes to be paid out to the partners: 30.279,25 RM to Siegmund, 25.336,78 RM to Wilhelm und 22.087,38 RM to Elisabeth. In response, the Dresdner Bank dispatched a representative to the firm and ordered an official commissioner to close down the fur warehouse. Furthermore, a plan was agreed upon for the refund of the remaining debt of 355.000 RM. The properties, worth 250.000 RM, the warehouse, as well as one of the firm's mortgages worth 25.000 RM were taken as guarantees. Additionally, the partners agreed to a significant reduction of their yearly earnings.

These strained circumstances remained unchanged during the following years. In 1934 the firm was unable to raise the agreed 55.000 RM from the fur business. The bank continued to press for the sale of the properties, but at a considerable loss compared to their real value, so Siegmund and Wilhelm resisted. In 1936 the pressure from the bank

increased again, since the partners had taken an income of 43.000 RM instead of the agreed 26.000 RM. The immediate liquidation of the firm was only avoided through the readiness of Elisabeth Fein to entirely relinquish the 100.000 RM capital that she had transferred to the firm between 1930 and 1934. Whether a political, anti-Jewish stance had played a role in the bank's decision cannot be claimed with any certainty. It is however indisputable that the relationship between the Dresdner Bank and Fein & Co. KG Leipzig, which had been established decades before, worsened significantly after 1933. Even for risk-free financing of the cutting business the bank reduced its maximum advance to 30.000 RM, forcing the company to be immediately profitable.³³² This massive economic pressure exerted on the family members, who still felt at home in the German bourgeois cultural environment of the time, was exacerbated by more and more restrictions in everyday life. Thanks to the pre-existent network of private and business connections in London, Brussels and New York, the Feins had a viable option, which was to emigrate. They indeed did so, even if not all at the same time.

7.4 Elisabeth Fein – a well-considered emigration

A multitude of reports and stories of the emigration of German Jews in the early stages of National Socialism imply that the decision to emigrate was in most cases seen as a fatality and that the emigrants had little room for manoeuvre.³³³ They had to put themselves totally in the hands of Jewish organisations, on which they were completely dependent. This was however by no means the case until the November Pogrom of 1938. The decisions to leave up until then were always personal and taken after weighing up the pros and cons. According to the theoretical model of Everett S. Lees, these personal decision processes were based on four main factors.³³⁴ Firstly the outcome of the decision was dependent on so-called push-factors. These push-factors were the changed circumstances in the homeland, which lowered the natural reluctance to emigrate: for instance, the loss of income or the licence to exercising a profession, as with Gerhard Fein; the continual curbing of civil rights, as for example in 1935 with the implementation of the Nuremberg Race Laws, or simply the generally hostile climate

³³² Letter of the Dresdner Bank to Fein & Co., August 1934, *Papers of the Fein Family*.

³³³ Aubrey Newman, "German Jews in Britain. A Prologue", in Mosse, Werner and Carlebach, Julius (eds.), *Second Chance: Two Centuries of German-speaking Jews in the United Kingdom*, Tübingen 1991, 31-36, 31-33.

³³⁴ Everett S. Lee, "A theory of migration", *Demography* 1, (1966), 47-57.

with which the Jews were permanently confronted, even before 1938. Secondly, the so-called bundle of pull-factors relating to the attractiveness of the future homeland: for example, a prior knowledge of the foreign language, the presence of friends, acquaintances or family members, etc. For Gerhard Fein these factors did undoubtedly play a role: his skills in English and the long-standing business connections with London certainly facilitated his choice. The third set of factors are the inhibiting factors related to the root, that is, facts and circumstances determining the cost of emigration: in the case of the German Jews, the aforementioned restrictions in the export of capital or the so-called Flight Tax, which was implemented later and proved to be an extremely efficient tool for expropriation. The fourth and last determining factors for a decision to emigrate are the respective personal, demographic, economic and social circumstances which interact with the three others, that is to say, age, social status in the homeland, family connections, etc. The extent to which these multiple factors influenced the considerations of the family members remaining in Leipzig will in the following be examined.

Alice Fein returned to Leipzig at the beginning of 1934, preferring to give birth on February 21st to her eldest son Michael in Germany.³³⁵ When she came back to London, the now three-member family took up temporary residence at 34 Marsfield Gardens in Hampstead, and then moved permanently to 85 Barn Hill, Wembley Park in July 1934. At the end of that year Herbert Fein, Wilhelm's eldest son, joined Gerhard in England. Under the guidance of Sever Ramer and Gerhard, he learned the trade and also to speak fluent English, which enabled him, as from 1940, to contribute to the British war effort by joining the army.

The other family members did not initially seriously consider emigrating. Only after the significant change in atmosphere of 1935 did the necessity become a preoccupation and a subject of conversation.³³⁶ Indeed, the developments of 1935 made it clear to German Jews that they would be gradually deprived of their homeland: in May, they were prohibited from serving in the newly-founded Wehrmacht, in summer numerous towns and cities denied them access to public swimming baths, and overall reports of particular incidents of brutality and anti-Jewish actions became more and more frequent.³³⁷

³³⁵ Correspondence between Alice Fein and Käthe Fein 1934, *Papers of the Fein Family*.

³³⁶ Correspondence between the Fein family members from 1935 onwards, *Papers of the Fein Family*.

³³⁷ Friedländer, *Nazi Germany*, 137-140.

At the beginning of August, in Leipzig, at Hitler's bidding, the last six Jewish or partly Jewish university professors, who had previously been protected by exemption clauses, were dismissed. On September 15th, in connection with the Nuremburg Reich Party Rally, Adolf Hitler summoned a session of the Reichstag, which had last sat in this town in 1543. In this session he justified anti-Jewish brutality by Jewish provocation. He accused the Jews of firing tension between peoples and analysed the growing grievances and rioting against the Jewish people and justified his legislation as the only way to avoid a major uprising against them:

To prevent this behavior from leading to quite determined defensive action on the part of the outraged population, the extent of which cannot be foreseen, the only alternative would be a legislative solution to the problem. The German Reich Government is guided by the hope of possibly being able to bring about, by means of a singular momentous measure, a framework within which the German *Volk* would be in a position to establish tolerable relations with the Jewish people. However, should this hope prove false and intra-German and international Jewish agitation proceed on its course, a new evaluation of the situation would have to take place.³³⁸

Before retiring, the Reichstag passed three laws. Firstly, the 'Reichsflaggegesetz', which pronounced the nation's colours to be black, white and red, and its flag the swastika. Secondly, the 'Reichsbürgergesetz' defined the difference between citizens with complete civil rights and subjects, who did not enjoy these rights. Only someone who was German or with congeneric blood could henceforth be a citizen. Jews were denied this right and were assigned quasi-foreign status. The third law provided for the protection of German blood and honour, and forbade marital or extra-marital relationships between Jews and Germans, declaring such existing unions void. These laws were used as a means to separate the Jews from the rest of the German nation. Shortly after these Reichs-Party Rally Laws were announced, Gerhard Fein put pressure on Elisabeth to emigrate rapidly. At the beginning, she resisted, saying that she needed time to make the necessary arrangements in order to take out as much of her capital as possible. Thus she writes to Gerhard on 25th September 1935:

On principle I can only agree with you, but I find myself unable to get a grasp on the situation at hand. The thought that I might be a burden to you – I know how well-meaning you are – is dreadful. [...] On the other hand life in Germany will in the long term become untenable. Bearing the emotional pressure alone is demoralising and ultimately you are my refuge. [...] In any case, one must see what can possibly be saved, I fear precious little. The year 1929 as a cut-off for the so-called Flight Tax is certainly because of the high income of the time, but particularly disadvantageous for me.³³⁹

³³⁸ Quoted in *ibid.*, 141-142.

³³⁹ Letter from Elisabeth Fein to Gerhard Fein, 25/09/1935, *Papers of the Fein Family*. Translation R.L.

In October, two months later, the discussions continued. Alice, who had once again travelled to Leipzig, tried to convince Elisabeth, as well as her own parents, to leave Germany and settle in London, but they were hesitant and wary of emigrating, in particular her father, Julius Lustig. "I am getting nowhere with my parents. Vati is difficult to uproot. He is also very down just now and feels tired and jaded. Too big a step because one cannot clearly see the consequences."³⁴⁰

Elisabeth only reached her final decision in 1936. There were manifold arrangements, mostly made by Gerhard in Leipzig and London. On 21st June 1936 Arthur Kaufmann, family friend and lawyer, listed Elisabeth's assets for the Home Office: almost £ 1.000 in London, £ 1.300 in Switzerland and a planned transfer of £ 1.500 to £ 2.000 from Germany. The lawyer explained that Elisabeth aspired "to live in the vicinity of her son and his family."³⁴¹ Only a week later the Home Office requested "documentary evidence that Mrs Fein is possessed of the funds outlined" and that Gerhard Fein would take responsibility "for the maintenance of his mother, should the occasion arise".³⁴²

After Gerhard had given these official guarantees, the Home Office declared that Elisabeth would be allowed to stay only until the end of September, when Gerhard's own residence permit expired. Finally, in late summer, Gerhard, Alice, Sever and Elisabeth were granted indefinite permits. On September 21st, Elisabeth wrote from The Hague, through which she was passing on her way to London:

So now it is done. The departure was yet again gruelling for the nerves. I could almost have been proud that everyone was so concerned about my person. The ovation at the station was well-meaning, but hard to bear. Tears, flowers, but I am not dead yet! I look forward to a joyful future with you. For the moment, it seems completely unreal that I have actually gone and done it!³⁴³

With regard to her assets, Elisabeth's emigration meant that she had lost almost everything. On 8th August she had already paid 74.500 RM in Flight Tax. She put the rest of her capital, which she was not allowed to take out, into a blocked emigration account. In 1939 she was finally stripped of all the funds on this account, because of the Jewish capital levy of 36.000 RM and the seizure of the account (5749.50 RM). Also, once she had left Germany, she lost her monthly pension of 800 RM paid to her by Fein & Co. KG.³⁴⁴

³⁴⁰ Letter from Alice Fein to Gerhard Fein, 05/10/1935, *Papers of the Fein Family*. Translation R.L.

³⁴¹ Letter from Arthur Kaufmann to the Under Secretary of State, Aliens Department, Home Office, Whitehall 21/02/1936, *Papers of the Fein Family*.

³⁴² Letter from the Home Office to Gerhard Fein, 27/02/1936, *Papers of the Fein Family*.

³⁴³ Letter from Elisabeth Fein to Gerhard Fein, 21/09/1936, *Papers of the Fein Family*.

³⁴⁴ Documents, *Papers of the Fein Family*.

Between Elisabeth's departure in 1936 and 1938 there were no further changes in the family geography and constellation. Gerhard Fein continued to travel a great deal for business, the building up of the firm in London continued and gradually the family established itself in its new surroundings.

7.5 The years of decision

The waves of terror unleashed against the Jewish population by Hitler's annexation of Austria in March 1938 were of a completely new ilk, unknown until then. In the historical literature 1938 is described in large part as the year which sealed the fate of the persecution of the Jews, and for the Fein family it was also the year which brought the final rift with Germany. This macro historical turning point in the fate of the German Jews is almost prototypically mirrored in the family's personal biography. As from the end of 1937, beginning of 1938, the Aryanisation measures that powered the new policy against German Jews became ever-more far-reaching and systematic.

Aryanisation as a means of distancing German Jews from business and the professions included the dispossession of Jewish property and assets to the benefit of non Jews, i.e. Aryans, as well as the limitation of Jewish employment and the direct seizure of Jewish wealth. In the framework of the decree of 26th April 1938 Jews had to disclose assets of over 5.000 RM, for which they were subjected to regulatory restrictions, such as for example the so-called security directive. The Third Regulation of the Reich Citizenship Law of 14th June 1938, pursuant to § 3 of the Reich Citizenship Law of 15th September 1935 stipulated that all Jewish businesses had to be registered. Businesses, companies and plots of land could, however, still be sold, although well below market price. Siegmund Fein, the owner of a farm in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, was directly affected by this. As from April 1938, he had been trying to sell his property in order to retrieve at least a part of its value before the looming expropriation. The sale was finally sealed for a cash sum of 13.600 RM, much of which was then used to compensate the tenant and pay the intermediary and notary. The remaining sum was registered as a mortgage on the farm, with 3% interest, a restricted rate, since the property, in accordance with the National Socialist agricultural policy, was immediately registered as hereditary, in which case higher interest rates were forbidden.³⁴⁵ The expropriation

³⁴⁵ Letter from Siegmund Fein to Gerhard Fein, 15/6/1938, *Papers of the Fein Family*. Translation R.L.

had thus actually taken place, disguised as a legal transaction.

This economic eviction of German Jews was pursued with further directives and reached its zenith in November 1938. Already in 1936 Reinhard Heydrich, the head of the Sicherheitspolizei and the Sicherheitsdienst – the security police and the intelligence service – had been allowed to create a Judenreferat Agency, whose top priority until 1939 was to “diminish the influence of Jews in all areas of public life (including the economy)” and to “promote Jewish emigration”.³⁴⁶ The subsequent group arrests between June 1938 and November 1939 were mainly aimed at convincing Jews that they must emigrate, and fast. In the Feins’ case, the strategy was successful and they did just that.

In January 1938 the question of unwanted persons had been legally solved by the Protective Custody Decree issued by the Reich Minister of the Interior, and the authorization to prolong internment for an unlimited period was included in the sanctions that could be imposed by the authorities.³⁴⁷ The first big wave of arrests took place in June and targeted mainly fringe groups such as Sinti, Roma, tramps, beggars, etc. Between June 16th and June 21st, 45 Jews were taken into preventive custody in Leipzig by a Criminal Police Squad specialised in professional crimes.³⁴⁸ They were only released on presentation of emigration documents proving they were going to leave the country. At more or less the same time this troubling news arrived from Germany, Alice Fein asked the family lawyer in Germany to prepare all the necessary papers for the departure of her parents.

I presume that you are back from your trip to Berlin. You doubtless always have the same tasks to fulfil. In this respect, I also should like to employ you to take the necessary steps for my parents. We are all aware that time has almost run out and that we can no longer leave the decision to them. How to best handle matters at this point we can no longer judge from here. We know that the laws are constantly changing and therefore we are unable to offer up-to-date assistance and advice.³⁴⁹

These preparations did not reach their final stages because of Julius Lustig’s long drawn-out resistance. His deep entrenchment in German culture and his above-described conservatism prevented him from recognizing the untenability of his position and personal circumstances. However, in the course of 1938 he had to face great

³⁴⁶ Steffen Held, “Der Novemberpogrom in Leipzig und die Massenverhaftung Leipziger Juden 1938/39”, in Ephraim Carlebach Stiftung (ed.), *Judaica Lipsiensia. Zur Geschichte der Juden in Leipzig*, Leipzig 1994, 194-206, 194. Translation R.L.

³⁴⁷ Ibid.

³⁴⁸ Ibid., 195.

³⁴⁹ Letter from Alice Fein to Leo Fein, 28/7/1938, *Papers of the Fein Family*.

disappointments which probably undermined his determination. As Alice wrote to her sister Käte after the liquidation of the firm in 1938, “Vati is distressed about the behaviour of his employees. Frank handed over the paperwork just like that, no-one said goodbye, after 40 years!”³⁵⁰ In August, after 26 years, the Lustigs left their long-established home in König Johann Straße, but remained in Leipzig. To what extent economic issues played a role in this move one cannot ascertain, but Alice’s concern over her parents’ future grew visibly during these summer months.

At present, you two are my main concern. We are quite happy here and must not complain, but without you here we cannot breathe freely. Besides, we do not want to enjoy all this alone and you should and must share it with us. Which is why I hope, for us (in the egotistical way children do) and for you, that you will at last dare to take the step, so that we can together raise children and grandchildren.³⁵¹

In November 1938 the decision was finally made, and not only for Julius and Helena Lustig, but also for Gerhard’s relations Rolf, Wilhem and Siegmund Fein.

On October 28th, during the so-called ‘Polenaktion’, another extensive wave of arrests and deportations took place. At dawn Leipzig Jews with Polish citizenship, who had been living in Germany for years, were arrested in their homes and taken first to the gym at the Höheren Israelitischen school and then to the train station, from where four special trains took them off to Poland. In this convoy there were around 1.500 members of the Leipzig community, which, as previously demonstrated, was in large part composed of Jews originating from Eastern Europe.³⁵²

A more or less equivalent number took refuge in the Polish Consulate to avoid immediate deportation, a move which was successful in the short term. However, this action depleted the Leipzig community of about one fifth of its members, and by this time most of them had come to realise that they would have to leave very shortly. A few weeks later, the Kristallnacht events demonstrated that there could no longer be any doubt.

After Herschel Grünspan, a 17-year-old boy of Polish-Jewish origin, who was living in Paris and whose family had been deported from Hannover during the ‘Polenaktion’, protested by going to the German Embassy and shooting the Third Secretary Ernst von Rath five times in the abdomen, the National Socialists used this assassination as a pretext to launch a nation-wide pogrom which began on the night of 9th to 10th

³⁵⁰ Letter from Alice Fein to Käte Fein, undated month 1938, *Papers of the Fein Family*. Translation R.L.

³⁵¹ Letter from Alice Fein to her parents, 22/8/1938, *Papers of the Fein Family*. Translation R.L.

³⁵² Cf. Held, “Das Novemberpogrom in Leipzig”, 198.

November and which they laconically named ‘Reichskristallnacht’, or the Night of the Broken Glass. Thousands of Jewish men – a number unheard of until now – were arrested and around 26.000 of them were interned in the concentration camps of Buchenwald, Dachau and Sachsenhausen.³⁵³ The Leipzig prison record has 553 entries for that night, classified as ‘Aktionsjuden’, among whom were Siegmund Fein and his nephew Rolf.³⁵⁴

In Leipzig the arrests were carried out by Special Branch Referat II B3.³⁵⁵ They began on November 10th at around 7am and continued until November 15th. They were precisely targeted, and mainly carried out in homes and offices. Siegmund Fein was taken on November 10th, Rolf Fein the next day.³⁵⁶ The arrests were accompanied by extensive destruction of Jewish property: 193 businesses, 34 private homes, 3 synagogues and temples, a cemetery oratory and a Jewish school were plundered, vandalised or torched.³⁵⁷

The prisoners were from all the different classes of Leipzig’s Jews. About a third declared their profession as merchants or salesmen, others were doctors, lawyers or held functions within the Jewish community. Of the arrested, 270 were sent by train to the Buchenwald concentration camp, about an hour away from Leipzig. This was the case for Siegmund, whose detainee number was 24493, and Rolf, whose number was 29210.³⁵⁸ The twenty-year-old Rolf was released two days later because he could satisfy the authorities that, prior to his arrest, he had already filed a request to emigrate. Siegmund however remained at Buchenwald until November 30th and thus experienced the horrendous conditions there at first hand. The violence inflicted on the Jewish prisoners began at the train stations in the form of blows and kicks from the security guards, and on the way from the station in Weimar to Buchenwald itself, the prisoners were subjected to even more terrifying violence:

We had to jump out of the compartments and walk to the gate of the Buchenwald camp between rows of SS thugs equipped with sticks and steel batons. In front of me walked an old friend from Halle. His name was Walter Schwabach and they cut off his ear. I myself was struck on the eye, after which I lost my sight on that side. At the gate we were met by prisoners who reassured us, divided us into groups and led us to the Appellplatz. There we had to remain standing late into the night because the sheds specially constructed for the Jews were not yet finished. By the evening thousands of Jews had already been driven through the gate to the Appellplatz. The

³⁵³ Harry Stein, *Juden in Buchenwald 1937-1942*, Weimar 1992, 41.

³⁵⁴ Letter from 21 July 2009, *Thüringisches Hauptstaatsarchiv Weimar*.

³⁵⁵ Held, “Der Novemberpogrom in Leipzig”, 202.

³⁵⁶ Letter from 21 July 2009, *Thüringisches Hauptstaatsarchiv Weimar*.

³⁵⁷ StAL, PP-V 4965, Bl.215.

³⁵⁸ Letter from 24 June 2009, *Buchenwald Memorial*.

scenes we witnessed were indescribable.³⁵⁹

The prisoners were then taken to the temporary sheds in an area of one hectare (2.47 acres) fenced with barbed wire. Each shed housed about 2.000 men. Jewish inmates were not allowed medical treatment at the camp hospital building, and could only receive assistance from other detainees in a corner of the prisoners' kitchen.

In a tiny area of that mouldy shack, on the ice-cold mud and concrete floor, lay shackled men, every which way, partly piled one on top of the other or closely packed together. [...] Some foaming at the mouth, bleary-eyed, lying in their own filth, stinking and terrifying.³⁶⁰

Dysentery, paratyphoid fever and frostbite were widespread and caused severe physical suffering. The unceasing violence and the continual announcements made over the camp loudspeakers exacerbated the psychological stress and drove a significant number of detainees to suicide. In the first days of detainment the announcements gave frequent news of the victims of the 'Judenaktion', the action against the Jews.

You Jewish birds, you listen to this. First: you shall remain here until your businesses, factories and homes have been sold and until you can prove that you are to emigrate immediately. Second: because of you the German Volk has sustained considerable damages. It is you who are responsible for the destruction that has taken place in our German cities. That is why it has been decreed that the insurance contracts for your homes and businesses do not belong to you, but to the German Volk. Third: your impertinence must be punished. That is why Jews in Germany will be forced to pay an atonement capital levy of one billion Reichsmark.³⁶¹

Time span	Number of deaths	Average population
10/10-09/11/1938	53	10.156
10/11-09/12/1938	244 (including 163 in special camp)	17.262

Table 07: Deaths at Buchenwald concentration camp: 10th October 1938 - 9th December 1938, from Harry Stein, *Juden in Buchenwald*, Weimar 1992, 45.

The first big group of prisoners was liberated about ten days after the so called 'Rathaktion'. All those freed were sworn to secrecy about what they had experienced, and threatening with re-arrest in case of breach. They were yet again strongly advised to emigrate and had to sign a declaration that they would bring no charges against

³⁵⁹ Quoted in Stein, *Juden in Buchenwald*, 41, footnote 70. Translation R.L.

³⁶⁰ Quoted in *ibid.*, 46 footnote 78. Translation R.L.

³⁶¹ Quoted in *ibid.*, 47, footnote 82. Translation R.L.

Buchenwald concentration camp. In January, 1.605 of the men arrested in November were still in the camp. Of those who had been freed, the vast majority had left the country. Between 1933 and November 1938, the Jewish community of Leipzig had lost 3.000 members. Between December 1938 and October 1940, it lost another 3.100. 1.500 of them went to Palestine.³⁶²

Heydrich's goal of solving the 'Jewish question' by emigration was relatively successful subsequent to the November arrests, as exemplified by Rolf and Siegmund, who delayed no further and left Germany immediately after their liberation. De facto, by November 14th, they had been dispossessed. The Leipzig Customs Investigation Office had issued a security ordinance in accordance with currency laws Art. I & 2 of 9th DfVO and § 37a. This ordinance stipulated that both the company Fein & Co. and its partners Siegmund and Wilhelm Fein together with their wives required prior written permission by the Oberfinanzpräsident of the City of Leipzig before they could dispose of all or part of their assets.³⁶³ Moreover, each person concerned had to "file a precise valuation of their total assets along with details of where they were held, and this before 19th November 1938."³⁶⁴ A one Herr Walter Kranich was named as trustee. Herr Kranich, instructed by the Oberfinanzpräsident, was "authorized and duty-bound to take possession of the assets of the firm Fein & Co."³⁶⁵ Siegmund and his nephew emigrated immediately after their liberation. As the family members who had left before them, they made good use of their previously-established networks. Rolf, who had already obtained a visa to the USA before his arrest, first travelled to London. His father, Wilhelm, had not been in Leipzig during the November pogrom, because he was on a business trip to London. He never returned to Germany, but remained in London, where his eldest son Herbert had been running his business in conjunction with Gerhard since the end of 1934. Before his departure, Rolf Fein promised to bring the love of his youth, Claire Linden, to America, and to marry her there as soon as circumstances allowed – a promise that he made good in 1944. After his stay in England he travelled to the USA at the beginning of 1939. Siegmund first fled to Belgium. Estranged from his family, his eldest son, Hans Fein, had already gone there as a teenager in 1933. Hans's mother, Anna Marie Händel, had died when he was 10, and he had a complicated relationship

³⁶² Held, "Der Novemberpogrom in Leipzig", 204.

³⁶³ "Bestätigung einer vorläufigen Sicherungsanordnung gem. §37a DG vom 01.12.1938", *Papers of the Fein Family*.

³⁶⁴ Ibid., translation R.L.

³⁶⁵ Ibid., translation R.L.

with his father's second wife, Erna Creutzberger.³⁶⁶ Like Gerhard, he had attended the Schiller-Realgymnasium in Leipzig, where he passed his Abitur, and like Gerhard, he did part of his work experience abroad, in particular in St Louis and New York City in 1929.³⁶⁷ In the winter of 1931/32, he fell in love with the Protestant Beatrix Schreck, a connection that was met with great disapproval by both their families.³⁶⁸

Hans's father had himself married the Lutheran Anna Händel at the beginning of the century, and although his bride converted Jewish religious traditions were scarcely observed in Siegmund's household.³⁶⁹ Despite this, and such a repetition in the family marriage pattern, Hans was more or less ostracised by his family, as was Beatrix by hers. He therefore finally moved to Belgium in May 1933, followed by Beatrix in June and in Brussels they later started their family, which would in time consist of five sons. Hans founded his own fur and skin business there, S.H. Fein S.a.r.l. His sister Charlotte followed in his footsteps in August 1933, together with her husband Heinrich Samuel Sack who was at this time assistant of the chemist and later Nobel Prize winner Peter Debye. In Brussels he found immediately a position in the team of Jaques Errera. As Heinrich Samuel Sack was from Switzerland also Charlotte got a Swiss passport, a fact which would extremely help them in 1940 to emigrate to the United States of America. Also the parents of Alice at the end decided to come to London. Alice, who since November 1938 worked at the rail way station service of a Jewish help organisation in order to support the new arrivers, was confronted with enormous problems concerning the immigration of her parents:

We are going everywhere but without any success. It doesn't seem to work out for Julius. Today we want to organise a visa for Peru. Yet the headquarters here is without any power or completely disorganised. I have hardly seen anyone who has reached something.³⁷⁰

The hopeless search for visa had in fact an exemplary character. In February 1939 Georg Landauer, Director of the Jewish settlement in Palestine, described it in a similar way:

Travel agencies, mainly in Paris, get in touch with consulates that can be bribed – this is mainly true of Central and South American republics – and purchase visas to foreign countries for high prices and enormous commissions. It has often happened that, having suddenly granted several hundred visas, consuls pocketed the money and were then dismissed by their governments.³⁷¹

³⁶⁶ Interview with Stephen Fein 06/08/2010.

³⁶⁷ Chronicle of the Fein Family, *Papers of the Fein Family*.

³⁶⁸ Interview with Stephen Fein, 06/08/2010.

³⁶⁹ Chronicle of the Fein Family, *Papers of the Fein Family*.

³⁷⁰ Letter Alice Fein to Julius und Helene Lustig 12.12.1938 *Papers of the Fein Family* Translation R.L.

³⁷¹ Quoted in Friedländer, *Nazi Germany and the Jews*, 317.

Nevertheless the efforts of Alice were successful and at the beginning of 1939 Helene and Julius Lustig arrived at secure England.

Gerhard Fein had already tried in early 1938 to create a more stable ground and position for the whole family in Great Britain. After Stephen Fein, Alice's and his second son, was born, Gerhard had travelled to the USA. There he founded in cooperation with Hans Stanley Fein, the son of Siegmund Fein, and Sever Ramer the company Fein & Co. Inc. "The foundation of this company was necessary", Gerhard Fein declared later to the civil chamber of the Hanoverian federal legal Court,

because it became clear to the owners of the Leipzig firm, that the persecution of the National socialists would not allow a longer existence of the Leipzig company. Therefore we searched for possibilities to avoid as much as possible a future damage of persecution to our business. It was planned that the former owners of the Leipzig company would become also owners of the American firm³⁷²

The foundation of this American firm took place on Mai 27th 1938 with a foundation capital of 7.500 \$. The owners had the aim to transfer the existing business connections outside of Germany to the new firm. Because of the long lasting partnership with Jonas & Naumburg and the connections in London and Brussels the idea succeeded.

But Gerhard Fein's commitments in order to build a stable situation for his family went even further. In September 1938 he offered his service as a volunteer to the Emergency Committee of the German Jewish Aid Committee. But the Committee promised only to register his name on the National Emergency Service List.³⁷³ He also asked his business partners to support his and Sever Ramer's application for the British citizenship. Bernard de Jongh, T.C. Blackwell and Victor Bergenroth agreed to help. But all those efforts were not enough. His official application on October 14th 1938 did not find any answer. But Gerhard stayed very active to find an entry to aid committees or other helping organizations. Those activities have certainly helped him and his family during war times. The members were not interned during the war as many of their German Jewish friends. The authorities even declared that Fein & Co. was participating in important war production. An issue who spared the Feins many problems other German Jewish immigrants were confronted with.

³⁷² Protokoll der öffentlichen Sitzung der 17. Zivilkammer des Landgerichts Hannover, 13/07/1972.
Translation R.L.

³⁷³ Letter of the German Jewish Aid Committees 30/09/1938, *Papers of the Fein Family*.

A summarising resume of the decisions for emigration of the individual members of the Fein family during the pre-war period helps to identify several particularities. At first it shows that the quality of the pull and push factors was different for each generation. The younger immigrants took their decisions fast. The danger of an upcoming occupational ban or already established professional or private contacts to London or Brussels were therefore of great importance. For the elder generation the circumstances in Germany had to become literally dangerous for their lives before a decision for emigration was taken. The Fein family followed a general pattern of German Jewish emigrants. Only 16% of the Jews who had stayed in Germany until 31st December 1938 were younger than 20 years. 25.93 % were between 20 and 45 years and 57.97 % were 45 or older.³⁷⁴ These observations follow also the logic of the “inhibiting factors to the root”. The members of the elderly German-Jewish generation who were often embedded into bourgeois or petit-bourgeois life conditions with property and a certain level of wealth were more hesitating to leave their home in order to begin a new life somewhere else. But also for the younger German Jews, who had been often polyglot, who possessed a more cosmopolitan orientation and were at the beginning of their professional careers, the emigration meant high social, family and emotional costs.

³⁷⁴ Friedländer, *Nazi Germany and the Jews*, 316.

7.6 Outlook: War and post-war experiences

The family member's orientation to networks which was already observable during the pre-war period was also important for the decisions taken during the war and in post-war times. Shortly before the outbreak of the Second World War, Gerhard Fein was still in London together with his wife Alice and his two children Michael (born 25/06/1934) and Stephen (born 28/01/1938). Gerhard's uncle Wilhelm Fein and his wife Toni lived also in London with their children Herbert (born 25/06/1915) and Annelore (born 04/11/1925). Wilhelm's son Rolf had already moved to the United States of America. Siegmund Fein and his fiancée Erna lived together with his mother in law and his youngest daughter Marianne Gabrielle (born 16/09/1921) in Brussels. His son Hans Fein (born 10/04/1909) and his daughter Charlotte Sack (born 28/03/1911) lived already with their own families in New York. The only branch of the family which had not yet emigrated was the family of Gerhard's aunt Emilie and her husband Herman Seckler. They continued to live in Berlin. Her son Kurt Leon Seckler had also moved to Belgium after the Pogrom in 1938.

The Feins were conscious about the fact that the current family constellation could not persist very long. The rhetoric of the National-Socialists gave enough evidence on a constant threat for the European Jewry. On January 30th 1939 these threats were pronounced very concrete in the speech of Hitler at the Reichstag celebrating the anniversary of coming in power:

If the international finance-Jewry inside and outside Europe should succeed in plunging the nations into a world war yet again, then the outcome will not be the victory of Jewry, but rather the annihilation of the Jewish race in Europe.³⁷⁵

The attack on Poland on September 1st 1939 and the declaration of war on September 3rd of the United Kingdom and France made it necessary for the family members to think again about new strategies. Now they were obliged to decide whether the new homes offered sufficient protection under the condition to enforce the measures of adaption and integration or if it was recommended to search again for new immigration options. Therefore the existing patterns of intercontinental contact-structures between family members or business partners did not lose any of its pre-war importance. For the family branch who had found shelter in Brussels it became soon clear that a further

³⁷⁵ Adolf Hitler, *Reden und Proklamationen*, Vol. I, T.1, Leonberg 1988, 1056-1058. Translation R.L.

emigration was necessary after the German attack on the neutral states Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Belgium. In 1985 the youngest daughter of Siegmund, Marianne, recalled the difficulties of this time in a family chronicle:

During the summer of 1940 the 'Jewish Question' was not the first priority of the German Army occupation. We knew, however, that once that Nazis had finished the initial process of occupying the Belgian countryside and cities, Hitler's cruel arms would reach out towards the Jews.³⁷⁶

Marianne's father had already registered himself and his closest relatives at the American Consulate in Brussels during a business trip in early 1938 hoping to obtain already the visa and authorisation to immigrate to the US, but at this very moment the Americans informed him that the application procedure would take several years until being finalized.³⁷⁷ Even with the efforts Siegmund's children, who were already living in New York, had undertaken they did not get the required visa. However, at the beginning of 1941 a new opportunity raised on the horizon:

Suddenly my brother notified us that the four of us could obtain this glorious piece of paper – an American visa! Our hopes were high. [...] We received notice that boat passage was booked for us from Spain to New York at the then exorbitant fee of 450 \$ each. We were advised to travel to Bilbao, Spain, where the necessary American documents would be issued to us.³⁷⁸

After several weeks of battle with the German occupying power in order to obtain the necessary emigration papers and getting the immigration allowance to Spain, Siegmund, Erna, Marianne and Anna Stein Creutzberger were allowed to travel to Bilbao. On 1st March 1941 they left Bilbao on the steam ship 'Magallanes'. Siegmund Fein and his family were lucky as already on May 1941 Hermann Göring declared interdiction to all further emigrations of Jews for Belgium and France.

One of the major bases for financing their stay in New York was the New York based firm led by Hans Fein and Sever Ramer. Sadly, only one year after having arrived safe in New York Siegmund Fein died on May 19th 1942 of a heart attack.

New York should also become of new importance to the family of Gerhard Fein, not only because of the business contacts with Sever Ramer but also as a secure emigration aim for Gerhard's mother Elisabeth and his little son Stephen. Because of the fast moving of the German Armies in Belgium, the Netherlands and in France, the London population increasingly feared an upcoming attack on British soil. After the evacuation

³⁷⁶ Family Chronicle "Miracles to happen", *Papers of the Fein Family*.

³⁷⁷ Ibid.

³⁷⁸ Ibid.

of 366.000 soldiers of Great Britain and France during the “operation Dynamo” it had become obvious that a successful counterstrike against the German aggression war would become difficult and long lasting. That air-raids on London would take place in the near future was not doubted anymore. This general situation of threat brought Gerhard Fein to the decision to send his mother together with his two-years-old son to New York. The business partner Georg Jonas from the company Jonas & Naumburg agreed immediately to give the needed affidavit. After proofing the financial status of 500 £ in five national certificates and 500 £ in goods hold by Fein & Co. Inc. the required visa was issued on 7th July 1940.

Elisabeth and Stephen were leaving from Glasgow on the steam ship ‘Cameronia’ from the anchor line on board with “hundreds of children of all ages with mothers, grannys and nurses.”³⁷⁹ Stephen’s parents, always doubting this decision, were “thinking and thinking again about our decision we always arrive anew at the same conclusion, that it was right for you to travel out here and to leave the trouble of the war to us younger people.”³⁸⁰

During the war this decision was proofed of being the right one. First of all it protected Elisabeth and her grandson Stephen against the growing dangers of internment, like many German-Jewish immigrants had experiences it on places like the Isle of Man. Furthermore it avoided the risk of becoming a victim of the massive bombings who had its peak in September 1940 when London was under massive attacks during the Battle of Britain. Stephen and Elisabeth left also economic worries and in later years of the war even the strong effects of a low supply situation.

Elisabeth and Stephen lived during the five years of war in Europe in a relatively stable and comfortable situation. Embedded in the family structures they seemed to have stayed mostly in Jewish emigrant circles of New York. Journeys to the Catskill Mountains, celebrating the main Jewish holidays and many remarks on their Jewish acquaintances in the letters to England give evidence of their social situation in America. Nevertheless the celebration of those Jewish traditions seemed to have more a custom and social component than a real religious reason. Jewishness was more understood as an identity and cultural heritage than a real religious conviction. Gerhard and the family who had stayed in Great Britain commented even ironically on religious happenings they had attended: “As we have been to the theatre twice last week, once to

³⁷⁹ Letter from Elisabeth Fein to Gerhard Fein, 23/07/1940, *Papers of the Fein Family*.

³⁸⁰ Letter from Gerhard Fein to Elisabeth Fein, 14/08/1940, *Papers of the Fein Family*.

the cinema and once to the synagogue, you will surely understand that I was simply exhausted.”³⁸¹

The economic situation of the Feins in New York could be described as rather well. Hans Fein who had already arrived in July 1938 possessed a yearly income of 10.000 \$ in 1941, a saving account of 20.874 \$ in cash and insurances for 45.000 \$.³⁸² It is difficult to reconstruct in how far he supported his relatives but the letters of Elisabeth to England never mentioned deep financial worries during her time in New York. Also Gerhard Fein on a monthly basis sent some money for covering the costs for Stephen. The integration into the American society seemed to have been for some members only on a superficial basis. In April 1941 Elisabeth wrote: “In contrary to England I do not feel ‘at home’ in this country, my heart is with you and so many other circumstances are the reasons that I cannot find the real contact.”³⁸³ Nevertheless, on May 5th 1941 she declared to the authorities her intention to become US-citizen. But only in 1946 it was granted to her. Her nephew Rolf succeeded faster in fulfilling his wish of getting accepted for the American citizenship. He joined the American army in 1942 and served as an interpreter at first in North Africa and later in Italy. The US recompensed his efforts with an US passport already in 1942. He stayed until the end of the war in the forces and was even holding the bronze star when he was honorably discharged from the US Army. Later he returned not only to the USA but also to the rabbit skin business until his retirement.

These two examples show two of the different strategies Jewish immigrants could use. Some of them did have great difficulties to acculturate into the new home and tried to stay in certain circles with members who had made similar experiences. Others and especially younger men tried hard to integrate into the new host societies. Proving their gratitude by serving in the armed forces was one of those signs of willingness to integrate. A strategy also Herbert Fein was using in Great Britain. He served for the British forces in different services and was already called up in August 1940. He served at the beginning as a pioneer and was later chosen to contribute to the intelligence service because of his high level language skills.

Also Gerhard saw it as his duty to contribute to the country which had provided security to him and his family:

³⁸¹ Letter from Gerhard Fein to Elisabeth Fein, 14/09/1942, *Papers of the Fein Family*.

³⁸² Declaration from Hans Siegmund Fein, 1941, *Papers of the Fein Family*.

³⁸³ Letter from Elisabeth Fein to Gerhard Fein, 27/04/1941, *Papers of the Fein Family*.

I am perfectly willing to evacuate Alice and Michael as soon as possible but I do not see at present any reason for myself to do so, on the contrary. In this war against Hitler, this man who has embittered yours and all our lives, I have to play the same role which every other of his enemies has to play: namely to carry on and not to run away and I do not see, why, what is good for 40 Million English people on this Island should not be good enough for me as long as they let me carry on.³⁸⁴

In July 1943 his application to the Home Guards was finally considered:

I am rather proud because last week I received permission from the war office to join the Home-Guard and as this came about only after a long time of endeavors and seems to be one of the first cases of people in my circumstances I feel rather satisfied. [...] I regret very much that I cannot do something better than the Home-Guard!³⁸⁵

Gerhard Fein was not only successful in integrating into the British para-military service. Already in 1942 he was elected into the executive Committee of the Export Group in London and often worked closely together with the Board of Trade. For an emigrant from the enemy Germany this was a rather high honor. The economic situation of the London firm seemed in general very positive. The London rabbit skin and the fur business profited of new regulations and significantly increased its export opportunities during the war time.

Year	Total £	America £
1935	103,800	29,200
1936	57,350	6,500
1937	99,875	32,600
1938	81,000	18,000
1939	77,200	34,500
1940	40,176	32,675
1941	49,373	48,264
1942		22,602
1943		32,684 (until 31.07.)

Table 08: Export trade 1935 -1941, from the declaration of 1943 in *Papers of the Fein Family*.

³⁸⁴ Letter from Gerhard Fein to Elisabeth Fein, 10/01/1941, *Papers of the Fein Family*.

³⁸⁵ Letter from Gerhard Fein to Elisabeth Fein, 25/07/1943, *Papers of the Fein Family*.

Within the six months period of June 1st to November 30th the firm made, for example, a profit of 2.000 £. Especially the United States were a major export field for the London branch. In 1943 Gerhard was exporting for about 33.000 £ to the United States. All that variables caused hope and led also to an extension of the family itself. On July 28th 1944 Gerhard's and Alice's third child was born – Kathleen. The return of Stephen was also planned for the time directly after the war although Elisabeth intended to stay for several years longer in the US.

The situation in Leipzig developed like Gerhard Fein had foreseen. In December 1940 Mister Kranich, the state named trustee of Fein & Co. wrote that the company could not get liquidated yet as the estate in Brühl Street was very difficult to sell. In August 1943 the German state annulated the "Sicherungsanordnung" concerning Wilhelm and Siegmund Fein:

Die vorgenannten Juden haben das Reichsgebiet verlassen. Laut Bekanntmachung im Deutschen Reichsanzeiger und Preussischen Staatsanzeiger Nr 68 v. 21.3.1941 und Nr.293 vom 13.12.1940 sind die Juden Siegmund Fein am 19.03.1941 und Wilhelm Fein am 11.12.1940 ausgebürgert worden. Ihr Vermögen ist dem Reiche verfallen. Die Firma ist gelöscht.³⁸⁶

A part of the ancient property of the family didn't stay long in the possession of the German state. During the bombings of Leipzig the Brühl and also the house of Fein & Co. was massively destructed. Also Elisabeth's house in Alster Street was bombed and completely destroyed.

The situation of the family of Emmy Seckler who had stayed in Berlin started to become very difficult in 1941. The son of Hermann (born in 1872) and Emmy (born in 1883), Kurt Leon Seckler, had already left Germany via Belgium at the end of the 1930s and ended up in an internment camp in Barcelona which he could leave in 1944 in order to travel to Palestine. His parents started to ask for help for their relatives in Great Britain and the United States but it was already too late. On October 30th 1942 Hermann and Emilie Seckler were deported to Theresienstadt.³⁸⁷ Since July 1942 this ghetto received many transports mostly with elderly Jews of the "Alt-Reich" and the mortality rate increased significantly. Only in September 1942 died 3.900 of a

³⁸⁶ Letter from the Oberfinanzpräsident Devisenstelle to Amtsgericht Leipzig Handelsregister 03/08/1943, *Papers of the Fein Family*.

³⁸⁷ <http://www.bundesarchiv.de/gedenkbuch/directory.html?id=1159351&submit=1&page=1&maxview=50&offset=0> (Hermann) and <http://www.bundesarchiv.de/gedenkbuch/directory.html?id=1159500&submit=1&page=1&maxview=50&offset=0> (Emilie Seckler). (30/04/2013).

population of 58.000 people.³⁸⁸ Hermann Seckler also did not survive this ghetto – a ghetto, which had changed over time more into a concentration camp. He died on February 2nd 1943. Certainly also his ashes were saved after burning his corpse as the prisoners did with all victims of Theresienstadt. All ashes were kept in individual small boxes carrying the name of the dead in hope to transfer it to their families after the end of persecution. At the end of 1944 the Germans gave order to put all the ashes into the nearby river Eger to clean all traces of their crimes.³⁸⁹ His wife Emilie was deported on 6th September 1943 to Auschwitz where she disappeared in the gas chambers like more than a million of other European Jews. In lack of any information her date of death was officially declared for 31st December 1945 after the war.

Almost one year after the end of Second World War Johannes Tuchen, the old warehouse foreman in the Leipzig firm with whom Gerhard had started his apprenticeship, wrote to the family in London. Gerhard Fein's answer stands exemplary for the feelings of the surviving Jews who learned how the majority of European Jewry had been exterminated. It contains mourning, the question of restitution and also hope:

You can probably imagine that [your letter] has brought up a very mixed batch of feelings in view of all the sufferings brought upon the world by Nazism supported by the German people. This and the fact that during the last ten years almost six million Jews and many of my dearest friends were slaughtered will always be present in my mind. Mr. Siegmund Fein died in New York in 1942, a little while after he had reached New York under the most difficult circumstances. His health had been very badly affected by the time he had spent in the concentration camp in Buchenwald. Also my uncle and aunt, Mr. & Mrs. Seckler from Berlin were killed in Auschwitz and Mr. Ramer's mother, sister and little Niece were killed in Belsen. [...]. I do hope that those Germans who have been spared the worst will attain a new and decent form of living with full prosperity so that in the end a lasting peace will return to Europe. [...]. I am also anxious to hear what happened to the graves of my father and grandparents in the Cemetery of the Berliner Strasse. Perhaps you are also permitted to let me know whether my mother's property in Alster Strasse 11 is still standing and what happened to the properties in Brühl 27 and West Strasse 80 and 81.³⁹⁰

All efforts for claiming restitution of the real estate during the 1950s, 1970s and 1990s did not succeed. Neither the Spanielshof in Mecklenburg, nor the estates of Brühl and Alsterstraße, where the RDA had reconstructed some buildings, were restituted. No property returned to the family's possession except the Fairy Tale house in the Weststr. 80/81. But this building was in terrible shape after forty years of socialism and the Leipzig commune and the family could not find an agreement for its restoration. In

³⁸⁸ Saul Friedländer, *Nazi Germany and the Jews*, Vol. II: *The Years of Extermination*, London 2007, 354.

³⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 735.

³⁹⁰ Gerhard Fein to Johannes Tuchen, 1946, *Papers of the Fein Family*.

2006, several months before the World Championship in soccer, the moment often described as the rehabilitation of German National pride, the town of Leipzig decided, under the massive protest of many of Leipzig's inhabitants, to deconstruct the whole building in order to widen the access road to the football stadium.

No one of the Family Fein members has ever planned to resettle on German soil. On June 24th 1946 Gerhard and Michael were naturalised and Gerhard even changed his given name to Gerald. Also the family of Wilhelm Fein got British passports in 1947. The German language which had not played any role during the war period was not used anymore at home. All three disciples of Gerhard Fein were raised in the intention to educate fine British citizens with the values of liberalism and peace. The first son of Gerhard, Michael, died very young in 1958. Stephen Fein took the company over and kept the fur business going until 2010 when he had to close it for economic reasons as the fur trade in Europe was in steady decline since the 1980s. But before he had already used the existing trade connections to diversify the activities of the firm and had become one of the leading British honey and wax importers in the 1990s. With business relations to the US, Russia and China he stayed with no doubt in the successful tradition of his predecessors. Kathleen Fein studied as member of the first student generation at the University of Sussex and settled later to Paris where she became not only a "maître de conference" at the university but also a successful lector in the edition house of Hachette.

For all of them, Gerhard, Alice, Stephen and Kathleen, a return to Germany for more than a visit was never an option.

8. Summary

The aim of this study was first of all to describe, analyse and reconstruct the experiences of the German-Jewish merchant family Fein. This micro-historical intergenerational diachronic survey began in the first half of the 19th century in order to gain an insight into how, during the course of around 120 years, the political, economic, social and cultural conditions of Jewish life in Leipzig were perceived by and affected the family from within. Finally an analytic description examined successive stages of the family's integration into English society after its expulsion from Nazi Germany between 1933 and 1938. A short outlook of the war-time period is also been given. The history of this particular Jewish family is almost continuously played out against the political and historical fault lines of the two last centuries of European history.

As well as comparing patterns of how the family assimilated and adapted both in Germany and England, the thesis also tried to highlight how their perception of Germany changed.³⁹¹ As a Jewish fur-trading family originating from Brody in Galicia, the Fein family started to settle in Leipzig in the 1840s and one can perceive all further developments as a representative example of an assimilated Jewish bourgeois family. However, the coming to power of the National Socialists forced the 3rd and 4th generations to migrate again, under drastic conditions which were very different from those of the family members first officially registered in Leipzig in 1862. As early as 1933, some family members were obliged to leave Germany in order to earn their living elsewhere. In 1938 this current culminates in the enforced confiscation of the family business Fein & Co. During this wave of emigration, most of the family members went to London, some to New York, but whatever the destination, they saw themselves once more confronted with the need to integrate successfully into a new society. The stories of these two immigrations – from Poland to Germany, and from Germany to the England or the US – were set off against one another. Thanks to official archived material, private notes, family correspondence and a variety of other documents put at disposal by the family, as well as some oral-history interviews, the study attempted to carry out a group-biographical analysis of the family's history. This analysis was then embedded into the historical context and the issues the Jewish bourgeoisie was exposed to in Germany. In order to do this, the family members' experiences of the regularly

³⁹¹ A similar approach was used in the professorial dissertation: *Die Familie Mosse. Deutsch-jüdisches Bürgertum im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*. Elisabeth Kraus uses here also a group-biographical approach.

changing political regimes in Germany were considered: the Kingdom of Saxony, the German Reich from 1871, the era of Wilhelmism, the Weimar Republic and the National Socialist 3rd Reich. Several main fields of analysis found consideration by describing and analyzing the history of the Feins.

1) Economic dimension

One of the factors of economic success of the family business was certainly its transnational orientation. The network between Russian, Polish, British and US-American tradesmen could guarantee for all generations an increasing economic development. It could be clearly identified that in times of political threat those structures helped to protect the majority of the family members against persecution.

2) Political dimension

All examined generations were confronted with exclusion tendencies in the political sphere. Their integration to the German social and cultural world was indeed often in question. Of course, the third and fourth generation experienced a new quality of arbitrariness, persecution and exclusion. They saw a general Anti-Jewish attitude turn into an ideological Anti-Semitism based on pseudo-scientific racial approaches.

3) Cultural dimension

The study also asked how far religious and cultural concepts have changed over time. A certain alignment to the Jewish religion as a spiritual conviction could be proved. Jewishness as a cultural heritage, as an identity and an intergenerational link never changed significantly during the two centuries. The family members of the third, fourth and fifth generation developed a secularized Jewish self-perception with none or only a few religious elements. The concept of “Bildung” or education kept nevertheless its importance. Academic education and a wide field of intellectual interest always played an important role since Alexander Fein had attended the Leipzig University in 1897.

4) Social involvement

Since the increase of economic wealth the different family members took their engagements in social initiatives. In Leipzig the brothers Wilhelm and Siegmund supported several associations and also in London Gerhard Fein always tried to contribute in a certain way to the country which had offered him and his family a new home.

This work therefore sought to complement existing research and to analyse and reconstruct the story of the merchant family Fein by means of a micro-historical multigenerational diachronic study. After setting the scene with a short description of

Jewish life in Galicia and Brody in the first part of the 19th century, the study attempted to gain an insight into how the changing political, economic, cultural and social conditions of Jewish life in Leipzig from the mid-nineteenth century to the Nazi times affected the family and its members' internal perceptions. It then examined the integration process into English society, made necessary by the forced emigration during the 1930s.

Bibliography

Archives

Central State Historical Archives of Ukraine, Lviv

Gesetz- und Verordnungsblatt für das Königreich Sachsen

Hauptstaatsarchiv Dresden

Leipziger Stadtarchiv

Österreichisches Staatsarchiv – Allgemeines Verwaltungsarchiv

Private Archive and *Papers of the Fein Family*, London

Routes to Roots Foundation

Sächsisches Staatsarchiv Leipzig

Primary Sources

Adressbuch Leipzig, Leipzig 1866.

“Dekret der k.k. Studien- und Hofkommission”, printed in *Bne-Zion. Ein religiös-moralisches Lehrbuch für die Jugend israelitischer Nation*, Wien 1812.

Ehrlich, Josef, *Der Weg meines Lebens. Erinnerungen eines ehemaligen Chassiden*, Wien 1874.

Fein & Co. Leipzig, Berlin 1929.

Goldschmidt, Henriette, *Was ich von Fröbel lernte und lehrte. Versuch einer kulturgeschichtlichen Begründung der Fröbelschen Erziehungslehre*, Leipzig 1909.

Goldschmidt, Henriette, *Vom Kindergarten zur Hochschule für Frauen*, Leipzig 1911.

Goldschmidt, Henriette, *Der Kindergarten in seiner Bedeutung für das weibliche Geschlecht*, Leipzig 1872.

Hasse, Ernst, *Statistische Wanderungen durch Leipzig*, Leipzig 1876.

Hitler, Adolf, *Reden und Proklamationen*, Vol. I, T.1, Leonberg 1988.

Leipziger Messejudenbuch.

Levy, Alphonse, *Geschichte der Juden in Sachsen*, Berlin 1900, 99-102.

List, Friedrich, *Ueber ein sächsisches Eisenbahn-System als Grundlage eines allgemeinen deutschen Eisenbahn-Systems und insbesondere über die Anlegung einer Eisenbahn von Leipzig nach Dresden*, Leipzig 1833.

Mirabu, "Bundesidee?", *Bundesblatt*, May 1929, 13.

Porges, Nathan, "Leipzig", *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, Vol. VII, New York 1907, 673.

"Refugees in London: The Work of the Jews' Temporary Shelter", *Jewish Chronicle*, 14 April 1933, 21.

Rückert, Hans, *Leipziger Rauchwarenwirtschaft. Im Handelsregister eingetragene Firmen*, Leipzig 1930.

Secondary Sources

Achterberg, Erich, *Berliner Hochfinanz – Kaiser, Fürsten, Millionäre um 1900*, Frankfurt am Main 1965.

Barkai, Avraham, *Jüdische Minderheit und Industrialisierung. Demographie, Berufe und Einkommen der Juden in Westdeutschland 1850-1914*, Tübingen 1988.

Bering, Dietz, *The Stigma of Names: Antisemitism in German Daily Life, 1812-1933*, Cambridge 1992.

Böckenförde, Ernst-Wolfgang, "Der Zusammenbruch der Monarchie und die Entstehung der Weimarer Republik", in: Bracher, Karl Dietrich and Funke, Manfred and Jacobsen, Hans-Adolf (eds.), *Die Weimarer Republik 1918 -1933*, Bonn 1998, 17-43.

Böhm, Günter, "Die Sephardim in Hamburg", in Herzig, Arno (ed.), *Die Juden in Hamburg 1590-1990. Wissenschaftliche Beiträge der Uni Hamburg zur Ausstellung Vierhundert Jahre Juden in Hamburg*, Hamburg 1991, 21-40.

Bollauf, Traude, *Dienstmädchen-Emigration, Die Flucht jüdischer Frauen aus Österreich und Deutschland nach England 1938/39*, Wien²2011.

Borchart, Joachim, *Der europäische Eisenbahnkönig Bethel Henry Strousberg*, München 1991.

Brass, Emil, *Aus dem Reiche der Pelze*, Berlin 1911.

Brass, Emil, *Aus dem Reich der Pelze*, Vol. I: *Geschichte des Rauchwarenhandels*, 2nd ed., Berlin 1925.

Brenner, Michael, *Kleine jüdische Geschichte*, München 2008.

Brinkmann, Tobias, "Why Paul Nathan Attacked Albert Ballin: The Transatlantic Mass Migration and the Privatization of Prussia's Eastern Border Inspection, 1886–1914", *Central European History* 43/01 (2010), 47-83.

Cooper, Leo, *In the Shadow of the Polish Eagle: The Poles, the Holocaust, and Beyond*, Houndmills 2000.

Degler, Frank and Kohlroß, Christian (eds.), *Epochen/Krankheiten. Konstellationen von Literatur und Pathologie*, St. Ingbert 2006.

Diamant, Adolph, *Chronik der Juden in Leipzig. Aufstieg – Vernichtung – Neuanfang*, Chemnitz / Leipzig 1993.

"Die Rauchwaren-Auktionen", *Das Pelzgewerbe* XII, 6, Leipzig 1961, 264.

Dilsner-Herfurth, Andrea, *Hedwig Burgheim. Leben und Wirken*, Leipzig 2008.

Diner, Dan, "Geschichte der Juden – Paradigma einer Europäischen Geschichtsschreibung", in idem, *Gedächtniszeiten*, München 2003, 246-262.

Doepper, Rudolf, *Jüdische Namen in Geschichte und Gegenwart. Neue Entwicklungen und Erkenntnisse*, Lausanne 2004.

Elias, Norbert, *The Civilizing Process. Sociogenetic and Psychogenetic Investigations*, Malden 2009.

Encyclopedia Judaica, Jerusalem 1967-1972.

Engelberg, Ernst; Schleier, Hans, "Zur Geschichte und Theorie der historischen Biographie", *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft* 3/38 (1990), 195-217.

Ephraim-Carlebach-Stiftung (ed.), *Festschrift zum 75jährigen Bestehen der Leipziger Gemeindesynagoge: 1855-1930*, Berlin 1994 [Leipzig 1930].

Ephraim Carlebach Stiftung (ed.), *Judaica Lipsiensia. Zur Geschichte der Juden in Leipzig*, Leipzig 1994.

Ephraim Carlebach Stiftung / Sächsische Landeszentrale für politische Bildung (ed.), *Antisemitismus in Sachsen im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*, Dresden 2004.

Falke, Dieter, et al., *Deutsche und Russen im Gouvernement Nishni Novgorod*, Münster / New York 1995.

Fellmann, Walter, *Der Leipziger Brühl*, Leipzig 1989.

Frank, Henning, "Der Kampf um die freie Advokatur und die Gleichschaltung der Anwaltschaft im Dritten Reich. Zur Geschichte der Anwaltschaft Sachsens 1831-1945", in: *Justiz, Juristen und politische Polizei in Sachsen 1933 bis 1945*, 5-35.

Freudenthal, Max, "Juden als Messegäste in Leipzig", in *Festschrift zum 75jährigen*

Bestehen der Leipziger Gemeindesynagoge, ed. by Vorstand der Israelitischen Religionsgemeinde, Leipzig 1930 (reprint Berlin 1994)

Friedländer, Saul, *Nazi Germany and the Jews*, Vol. I: *The Years of Persecution 1933-1939*, London 1997.

Friedländer, Saul, *Nazi Germany and the Jews*, Vol. II: *The Years of Extermination*, London 2007.

Geertz, Clifford, "Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture", in idem, *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays*, New York 1973, 3-30.

Gerhardt, Johannes, *Albert Ballin*, Hamburg 2009.

Goldberg, Jacob, "Getaufte Juden in Polen-Litauen vom 16. bis zum 18. Jahrhundert. Versuch einer sozialen Integration", in Martin, Bernd and Schulin, Ernst (eds.), *Die Juden als Minderheit in der Geschichte*, München 1981, 161-183.

Grab, Walter, *Der Deutsche Weg der Judenemanzipation 1789-1938*, München 1991.

Grimme, Karin H. (ed.), *Aus Widersprüchen zusammengesetzt. Das Tagebuch der Gertrud Bleichröder aus dem Jahr 1888*, Köln 2002.

Grossert, Werner, *Chronik – Geschichte der Juden in Dessau*, Dessau 1993.

Habel, Werner, *Deutsch-jüdische Geschichte am Ausgang des 19. Jahrhunderts. Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der Innerjüdischen Sammlungsbewegung im Deutschen Reich 1880-1900*, Kastellaun 1977.

Harmelin, Wilhelm, "Jews in the Leipzig Fur Industry", *LBIYB* 9,1 (1964), 239-266,

Harmelin, Wilhelm, "Juden in der Leipziger Rauchwarenwirtschaft", *Zeitschrift für Firmengeschichte und Unternehmerbiographien* 11,6 (1966), 249-282.

Haumann, Heiko, *Geschichte der Ostjuden*, München ³1991.

Held, Steffen, "Der Novemberpogrom in Leipzig und die Massenverhaftung Leipziger Juden 1938/39", in Ephraim Carlebach Stiftung (ed.), *Judaica Lipsiensia. Zur Geschichte der Juden in Leipzig*, Leipzig 1994, 194-206.

Hermant, Jost, "Juden in der Kultur der Weimarer Republik", in Grab, Walter (ed.), *Juden in der Weimarer Republik*, Stuttgart 1986, 9-37.

Hertz, Aleksander, *The Jews in Polish Culture*, Evanston 1988.

Heuss, Theodor, *Was ist Qualität? Zur Geschichte und zur Aufgabe des Deutschen Werkbundes*, Tübingen 1951.

Hohorst, Gerd and Kocka, Jürgen (eds.), *Sozialgeschichtliches Arbeitsbuch: Materialien zur Statistik des Kaiserreichs 1870-1914*, München 1975.

Höppner, Solvejg and Jahn, Manfred, *Jüdische Vereine und Organisationen in Chemnitz, Dresden und Leipzig 1918 – 1933. Ein Überblick*, Dresden 1997.

Iggers, Georg, *Historiography in the Twentieth Century. From Scientific Objectivity to the Postmodern Challenge*, Wesleyan 1997.

Kampe, Norbert, *Studenten und "Judenfrage" im Deutschen Kaiserreich. Die Entstehung einer akademischen Trägerschicht des Antisemitismus*, Göttingen 1988 (= Kritische Studien zur Geschichtswissenschaft, Bd.76).

Kant, Immanuel, *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals and What is Enlightenment*, Indianapolis 1980.

Kaplan, Marion, *The Making of the Jewish Middle Class. Women, Family, and Identity in Imperial Germany*, Oxford 1994.

Karady, Victor, *Gewalterfahrung und Utopie. Juden in der europäischen Moderne*, Frankfurt a.M. 1999.

Karady, Victor „Das Judentum als Bildungsmacht in der Moderne“, in *Österreichische Zeitung für Geschichtswissenschaft* 3 (1977), 347 -361.

Klatzkin, Jacob (ed.), *Encyclopaedia Judaica. Das Judentum in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, Vol. 4, Berlin 1929.

Kleinmann, Yvonne, “‘Ausländer’ – ‘Russen’ – ‘Sozialisten’. Jüdische Studenten aus dem östlichen Europa in Leipzig 1880-1914”, in Wendehorst, *Bausteine einer jüdischen Geschichte*, 517-540.

Kleinschmidt, Christian, *Konsumgesellschaft*, Göttingen 2008.

Kowalzik, Barbara, *Wir waren eure Nachbarn. Die Juden im Leipziger Waldstraßenviertel*, Leipzig 1996.

Kowalzik, Barbara, *Jüdisches Erwerbsleben in der inneren Nordvorstadt Leipzigs 1900-1933*, Leipzig 1999.

Kowalzik, Barbara, *Das jüdische Schulwerk in Leipzig: 1912-1933*, Köln 2002.

Kraus, Elisabeth, *Die Familie Mosse: deutsch-jüdisches Bürgertum im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*, München 1999.

Küenzlen, Gottfried, *Der Neue Mensch*, 1994.

Kuzmany, Börries, “Die Grenze an der Grenze. Die Entstehung des Freihandelsprivilegs der Stadt Brody”, in Augustynowicz, Christoph and Kappeler, Andreas (eds.), *Die Galizische Grenze 1772-1867: Kommunikation oder Isolation?*, Wien 2007, 115-126.

Kuzmany, Börries, *Die Stadt Brody im langen 19. Jahrhundert – Eine Misserfolgsgeschichte?*, Dissertation, Universität Wien 2008.

Lang, Hubert, *Martin Drucker – das Ideal eines Rechtsanwalts*, Leipzig 1997.

Lee, Everett S., "A theory of migration", *Demography* 1, (1966), 47-57.

Lewin, Arnon *Leben und Wirken der jüdischen Rauchwarenhändler Marcus Harmelin, Leopold Lindheimer, Max Ariowitsch und Emil Braß*, Jahresarbeit, Frankfurt am Main o.J.

Lomer, Heinrich, *Der Rauchwaren-Handel*, Leipzig, 1864.

London, Louise, *Whitehall and the Jews, 1933-1948. British Immigration Policy, Jewish Refugees, and the Holocaust*, Cambridge 2000.

Lorz, Andrea, *Suchet der Stadt Bestes. Lebensbilder jüdischer Unternehmer aus Leipzig*, Leipzig 1996.

Lorz, Andrea, „Strebe vorwärts“: *Lebensbilder jüdischer Unternehmer in Leipzig: Familie Heine und ihr Unternehmen, das Tuchhaus Gebrüder Heine, Familie Leo Jolowicz mit den Unternehmen Buchhandlung Gustav Fock GmbH und Akademische Verlagsgesellschaft mbH*, Leipzig 1999.

Löwenstein, Kurt, "Die innerjüdische Reaktion auf die Krise der deutschen Demokratie", in Mosse, Werner (ed.), *Entscheidungsjahr 1932. Zur Judenfrage in der Endphase der Weimarer Republik*, Tübingen 1966, 349-404.

Ludwig, Jörg, "Die Leipziger Messe in den ersten Jahrzehnten des Zollvereins (1834-1860)", in Zwahr, Hartmut and Topfstedt, Thomas and Bentele, Günter (eds.), *Leipzigs Messen, 1497 - 1997. Gestaltswandel, Umbrüche, Neubeginn*, Vol. 1: 1497-1914 (= Geschichte und Politik in Sachsen 9), Köln / Weimar / Wien 1999, 351-366.

Mehlitz, Walter, *Der jüdische Ritus in Brautstand und Ehe*, Frankfurt am Main 1992.

Meier, Christian: "Von der Schwierigkeit, ein Leben zu erzählen. Zum Projekt einer Caesar-Biographie", in Kocka, Jürgen; Nipperdey, Thomas (ed.): *Theorie der Geschichte*, Vol. 3: *Theorie und Erzählung in der Geschichte*, München 1979, 229-258.

Menschel, Gustav, *Der Filzhut*, Wien 2004.

Middell, Katharina, "Brody, Leipzig, Lyon: europäische Handelsbeziehungen und ihre Träger (1770-1820)", in Zwahr, Hartmut (ed.), *Leipzig, Mitteldeutschland und Europa*, Beucha 2000, 531-544.

Netzer, Shlomo, "Wanderungen der Juden und Neusiedlung in Osteuropa", in Brocke, Michael (ed.), *Beter und Rebellen. Aus 1000 Jahren Judentum in Polen*, Frankfurt am Main 1983, 33-49.

Newman, Aubrey, "German Jews in Britain. A Prologue", in Mosse, Werner and Carlebach, Julius (eds.), *Second Chance: Two Centuries of German-speaking Jews in the United Kingdom*, Tübingen 1991, 31-36.

Nipperdey, Thomas, *Deutsche Geschichte 1866-1918*, Vol. 1, *Arbeitswelt und Bürgergeist*, München 1994.

Ohlsen, Manfred, *Der Eisenbahnkönig Bethel Henry Strousberg. Eine preußische Gründerkarriere*, Berlin ²1987.

Piedboeuf, Herbert L., "Mode-Design im Wechsel von sachlichen und ästhetischen Erfordernissen", *Lenzinger Berichte* 67 (1989), 5-10.

Piefel, Matthias, *Antisemitismus und völkische Bewegung im Königreich Sachsen 1879-1914*, Göttingen 2004.

Plowinski, Kerstin, *Die jüdische Bevölkerung Leipzigs 1853 - 1925 - 1933. Sozialgeschichtliche Fallstudien zur Mitgliedschaft einer Großgemeinde*, Diss., Universität Leipzig, Leipzig 1991.

Reinhold, Josef, *Zwischen Aufbruch und Beharrung. Juden und jüdische Gemeinde in Leipzig während des 19. Jahrhunderts*, Dresden 1999.

Reinhold, Josef : „Die verspätete Emanzipation der Juden in Sachsen als legislativer Rahmen. Die Konstituierung der Israelitischen Religionsgemeinde zu Leipzig und die ersten Jahrzehnte ihrer Entwicklung, Leipzig 2010 in: Journal Juden in Sachsen 04/2010, <http://d-nb.info/1020561874/34> , 3-19.

Richarz, Monika, "Die Entwicklung der jüdischen Bevölkerung", in Meyer, Michael A. (ed.), *Deutsch-jüdische Geschichte in der Neuzeit*, Vol. 3: *Umstrittene Integration 1871-1918*, München 1997, 13-38.

Riff, Michael, "Das osteuropäische Judentum", in Bautz, Franz (ed.), *Geschichte der Juden – Von der biblischen Zeit bis zur Gegenwart*, München 1989, 115-139.

Rosenberg, Cyril J., *Furs & Furriery*, London / New York 1920.

Rürup, Miriam, "Mit Burschenbund und Mütze – Der Verein jüdischer Studenten (VJSt) *Hatikwah* und die Verbindung *Saxo-Bavaria* an der Universität Leipzig", in Wendehorst, Stephan (ed.), *Bausteine einer jüdischen Geschichte der Universität Leipzig. Leipziger Beiträge zur Jüdischen Geschichte und Kultur*, Bd. IV, 2006, 99-130.

Rürup, Reinhard, *Deutschland im 19. Jahrhundert, 1815-1871*, Göttingen 1992.

Schmidt, Fritz, *Das Buch von den Pelztieren und Pelzen*, München 1970.

Schönamsgruber, Hans Jürgen, "Wirtschaftliche Entwicklung der Weimarer Republik", without date.

Siegrist, Hannes, "Berufe im Gesellschaftsvergleich, Rechtsanwälte in Deutschland, Italien und der Schweiz", in Haupt, Heinz-Gerhard and Kocka, Jürgen (eds.), *Geschichte und Vergleich. Ansätze und Ergebnisse international vergleichender Geschichtsschreibung*, Frankfurt am Main 1996, 207-238.

Sorkin, David, "The Genesis of the Ideology of Emancipation, 1806-1840, *LBIYB*, 1987, 11-40.

Stein, Harry, *Juden in Buchenwald 1937-1942*, Weimar 1992.

Stern, Fritz, *Gold und Eisen. Bismarck und sein Bankier Bleichröder*, Hamburg 1999.

Straub, Eberhard, *Albert Ballin. Der Reeder des Kaisers*, Berlin 2001.

Trefz, Bernhard, *Jugendbewegung und Juden in Deutschland. Eine historische Untersuchung mit besonderer Berücksichtigung des ‚Deutsch-Jüdischen Wanderbundes Kameraden‘*, Frankfurt am Main 1999.

Unger, Manfred, *Juden in Leipzig – eine Dokumentation zur Ausstellung anlässlich des 50. Jahrestages der faschistischen Pogromnacht im Ausstellungszentrum der Karl-Marx-Universität Leipzig, Kroch-Hochhaus, Goethestr. 2, vom 5. November bis 17. Dezember 1988*, Leipzig 1989.

Walk, Joseph (ed.), *Das Sonderrecht für die Juden im NS-Staat. Eine Sammlung der gesetzlichen Maßnahmen und Richtlinien*, Heidelberg 1981.

Weber, Max, *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft*, Tübingen 1980 [1922].

Weber, Max, *Gesamtausgabe*, Vol. 8, *Wirtschaft, Staat und Sozialpolitik. Schriften und Reden 1900-1912*, edited by Wolfgang Schluchter, Tübingen 1998.

Weber, Max, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, London 2007.

Wilmers, Mary-Kay, *The Eitingons – A Twentieth Century Story*, London 2009.

Ruth Turner Wilcox, *The Mode in Furs. The History of Furred Costume of the World from the Earliest Times to the Present*, New York 1951.

Wyneken, Gustav, *Der Kampf für die Jugend. Gesammelte Aufsätze*, Jena 1920.

Appendix

Interview with Stephen Fein 06.08.2010

Stephen Fein

The purpose of the meeting, I think is to hand over all the documents. Some of them are rather important. Do you have a system in Sussex for photographing or microfilming the material?

Rico

I will meet on Monday the assistant of Prof. Wiese, Gerhard Wolf, and we are going to stock all material in a special archive room of the Center for German Jewish Studies and there it will stay until the end of the project and afterwards you are getting it back.

Stephen

Are you microfilming it, or not?.

Rico

I don't know yet, Prof. Wiese is in Jerusalem and I will photocopy certain documents, but firstly I am going to have a look in order to see what kind of material is interesting, what is the content of the documents, etc. to find out all interesting points. I will stay one week in Brighton. Later we will decide how to archive the material. The originals itself will always stay at the university.

Stephen

There are some what we give you now is more or less the bulk. But there are some documents which are birth certificates, marriage certificates which are the original, I don't want to part with so at some point it would be appropriate to come and have a look at them here and then we can have them photographed. There are marriage certificates from great great grandparents and things like that which are actually unique

Rico

In general do you have a kind of genealogy? It would be the most important for me at the beginning.

Stephen

Yes, we have that. It was done by a woman in New York who did a whole research of the origins of the family from Brody right the way down to now which I can give you a copy of. And we also employed a German who looked into the origins of the family in Germany. The Brody side goes back to the 1780. You can't trace it early than that because the Jews did not have surnames in that part of Poland. Where the mother's side of the family and our fathers mother, both her parents came from Southern Germany and their history goes back earlier than that. There was Jewish community in the Rhineland going back a long time. So, one of the things we have to decide today is to set up a frame work how far back you are going, how wide you are going in regard to the family network. And indeed what will influence how far back you go is what material is available.

Rico

What do you suggest?

Stephen

What I suggest is that we can divide it in several parts. If we start off with the family origins in Brody, we have gone back as far as the partition of Poland when Galicia was succeeded to Austria. It is certainly difficult to go back earlier than that in terms of the family, although there is certainly documentation about Jewish life in Brody. Brody was a free port. It had a very large Jewish community and a very commercial Jewish community. It was on the border between Poland and Russia, so there was a lot of trade.

Rico

There are some studies about Jewish life in Brody and its origins.

Stephen

That might be interesting, but again we have to discuss. There is also research being done on the trade that the family was involved with. The fur business where the merchants from Brody would go to Russia, to Nishni Novgorod to buy fur and bring it back to Brody, which was a free port. And then take the furs to the Leipzig trade fairs, three a year. That was a traditional activity of Brody merchants. I have some literature on that as well. So that's it if you like, if we talk at first about the Fein family. The surname was adopted in the 1780s after the partition of Poland. I have a document, a facsimile, of the edict of Joseph the second, the emperor of Austria, in which he says that all Jews have to adopt surnames. And there is a lot of literature on that. The delegation came to give them surnames, some got nice surnames and the ones who didn't bribe them they got horrible surnames. That is quite a nice story in itself. These edicts are all in facsimile.

Rico

Do you know how they came up with the name Fein?

Stephen

No, but that is better than Kanangeruch, isn't it? If you paid them enough money you got gold, or with less money you got only silver and so on. And so we got Fein, but I don't know really why.

Rico

In the contemporary meaning the name Fein means fine also in English.

Stephen

So, that's what era which after you have done some research we have to decide whether there should be a lot of work done on that or not. The second chapter, or the second era would be the emigration to Leipzig. Jews were not allowed although Jews were regular visitors to the Leipzig trade fairs. They had to pay a special tax to attend the fairs and they were not allowed to live in Leipzig and in fact Saxon Kingdom was one of the last German kingdoms to allow Jews to live with. Frankfurt was early, Berlin was early, Prussia was early but Saxony was particularly a reactionary place. The Jews were allowed first to live in Leipzig in 1838 and our family the Feins emigrated from Brody to Leipzig in 1842. But as far as we know, and there will be a lot of research on this necessary, there were not allowed to give birth in Leipzig nor were they allowed to be buried in Leipzig. So, it was Nachman Fein who emigrated from Brody to Leipzig but his wife was pregnant and she had to go back to her parents town which was near Brody, I can't remember the name, to give birth to their son who was Leon.

Rico

Nachman Fein was the first Fein who lived in Leipzig?

Stephen

Yes, Nachman is the first Fein buried in Leipzig. Then eventually Jews were allowed to have their cemetery in Leipzig. They were given the "best spot" which was by the railway line, the Alte Jüdische Friedhof, Berliner Straße. So that's the second sort of chapter what would be the emigration to Leipzig and their life in Leipzig. There I think what you would have to do to look at how Jewish immigrants integrated, assimilated into the German society, the extent they were allowed to assimilate, the extent they wanted to assimilate. And again there would be a lot of documentation about that. At some point, I don't know when, the Jews were allowed to attend university. Our grandfather Alexander Fein became a lawyer. Our father was a lawyer too. Probably about the same time as in England Jews were allowed to attend university. In England it was about 1860. Gerhard Fein was born in 1906, I don't know what age his father was, probably in the age of 30 and he probably graduated about 1890. And for sure he never converted. He was not a lawyer, but became very ill. He contracted syphilis and he was unable to practice. He was in a wheel chair for the most of his life. The family business, the fur business continued and there were three branches of the family. Nachman's son, Leon, had three children, so there were three partners in the business. There was our line and two others. Alexander, our grandfather, had a third share in the business and his two brothers had a third each. One was William, Willy, and the other one was Siegmund, Sigi. So, that would be the next story, how they lived in Leipzig and how they integrated, how they didn't integrate. And the extent to which they wanted to. I think you will find from the papers that they had a very strong Jewish identity. Whether that was because they weren't allowed to assimilate or they didn't want to, I don't know. But for instance there were many clubs which would not accept Jews, so the Jews set up their own. Their own tennis club, and whatever it was. It would be interesting to do some research on the schools, were they allowed to attend the normal Gymnasium? We know that our

father attended the Schiller Realgymnasium, I don't know what school Alexander went to. They were well to do. I think to a large extent they were excluded from the normal society. Our parents were completely agnostic, and I don't know about the previous ones, but there was a social life which took place around the synagogue.

Kathleen

I don't know whether you will be able to ascertain anything about that. But actually that is quite an interesting question regarding our family. At what point they stopped or if they ever were or to what extent they were believers and practicing Jews and whether their identity was defined by religion and then afterwards their identity was defined by what? And that looks a bit into the research you were telling me you have done in your studies. Because what Stephen is describing is actually an identity what has more to do with social historical currents though with religious beliefs.

And all that leads to the whole question, what does it mean to be Jewish? Obviously it didn't mean the same thing to be Jewish when you were in Brody in the 1780s. We don't know when they stopped to be believers. Our grandmother "Oma" Lisa was already completely secular. She was Alexander's wife and our father's mother. She lived with us. But now we are going already a bit too fast in the history periods.

Rico

Let me resume a bit. Alexander Fein was your grandfather, Stephen. He had how many children in fact?

Stephen

He had one child, my father. He was called Gerhard and when he came here to England he changed his name to Gerald. But just going back to that theme. I think we can talk about the business as a separate chapter. There are the almost 100 or 90 years or so of life in Leipzig which I think there is quite a lot of documentary in the papers. But we will talk about the business in a minute.

Rico

Did any of the family members participated in World War One?

Stephen

No. We are a very distinguished family where nobody ever fought. Well, that's not entirely true. There is a story of the WWI. But basically nobody ever fought.

Kathleen

Well our grandfather Alexander couldn't go to fight was very ill and our father was too young. He was born in 1906.

Stephen

There is a story that some distant relation was maybe called up or something. And his mother was so proud that she was preparing the uniform and she put a red band down the side of the trousers. This was, you know, the whisk of the generals. So the chap went off with his trousers and was very embarrassed as it was twice as wide as it shouldn't be. That's the only military history regarding our family.

Rico

But your father practiced how long as a lawyer in Leipzig?

Stephen

Well you will find that in the documents. I don't know when he finished his "Referendariat". It must have been about 1928, I would say. Maybe later in 1930.

Kathleen

But we've got that. We also got that via Mister Lang because Gerhard did his Referendariat with Drucker.

Stephen

So, we just continue that particular theme of the Jews in Leipzig and their assimilation or non-assimilation. Then you come to the Hitler period and the persecution and the exodus. On which there is a lot of documentation. Our family left in 1933. One of the first laws that Hitler passed was that all Jewish lawyers had to re-register and the only ones who were then commissioned to continue practicing were ones who had served in the First World War or were of a certain age. He was not given his license again

and he realized that it was time to leave. So you will also find correspondence in the documents. He was applying for jobs as a lawyer with the United Nations as a international lawyer in Geneva. There was also apparently the Kingdom of Egypt that advertised for 200 international lawyers. And he applied for that. So had he been accepted, we would have been Egyptians... which is quite a thought. He wrote to people in Italy, to people in Belgium and so on but obviously it wasn't successful. So he then came to England.

Kathleen

Was there already family in England or was he the first one?

Stephen

No, he was the first one. He chose England because in that time England represented the ultimate stability. A lot of his friends went to America. And there is a separate chapter again, his practices as a lawyer, but in fact he was telephoned. As a lawyer he was specializing in defending communists. Before Hitler came to power there was a lot of political upheaval in Germany, basically the fighting the right. And he defended communists. There were famous trials in Leipzig against communists. He in fact was phoned up by a communist who he had defended and warned him that he was going to be arrested. He knew he had to leave. Apparently he was warned. In that time people were arrested and kept in prisons or a concentration camp two or three months and were then released. So he then came to London and set up, and this is another chapter, the London branch of the family business which was in the fur trade. One of the reasons coming to London also was that London was a centre for the fur trade. There was a big auction company called Hudson Bay Company. Because it was already a centre of the fur business, by coming here he was able to earn money right away.

And then you go on to the next chapter, which is basically the settling in England. And again there is the same story again: integrating into English life, assimilating and so on.

And again, the whole family stayed in Leipzig. Our elder brother was born in 1934. I think our mother came with Gerhard to London but she was pregnant. And her parents were still in Germany. And they persuaded her to go back to Germany to have the baby. And that was quite an extraordinary thing to do. That was our elder brother who died when he was 24. But he was quite severely handicapped. He had spastics and very hard tremor and was partly paralyzed on one side of his body. They think the trauma of returning to Germany to have the baby may have well affected his health. You will also find correspondence in the papers on that. The family was a very closed unit and particularly in times of persecution. As far as I remember our mother spoke to her mother every day by telephone.

Kathleen

Well there is another question. When did the family stop speaking Yiddish? What did they speak when they came from Brody?

Stephen

Well, I don't know. In the fur business there were a lot of people who spoke no language or who spoke all languages with an accent. It was so cosmopolitan. But our father spoke a bit of Yiddish. I think he even thought that his Yiddish was quite good, but I am not so sure. Proper Yiddish is very difficult to understand. I can't imagine that Alexander did either. Speaking Yiddish and being a lawyer doesn't really fit.

Just to finish the chronology. What you have to look at is how the family settled here. What happened during the war. And when they finally got their naturalization papers which was after the war. And then I guess, you can more or less stop.

The process of becoming English or becoming British was, I suppose, highlighted during the war, when the British government interned the German citizens living in that country despite the fact that they were immigrants and Jewish and anti-German possibly. The British government in its wisdom interned them all. There was a big internment camp on the Isle of Man. There is an enormous amount of literature on that. On the Isle of Man were artists, musicians, physicists, and mostly Jewish. It was an extremely interesting community... Other German Jews were shipped to Australia in the same way of convicts had been a hundred years before. The ones who were shipped to Australia were probably quite lucky, they all stayed and did very well. Others, also one member of our family, were sent to Holloway prison. There is a story that they came to arrest our father who lived in a place called Wembley Hill on the top of the hill. And apparently he saw these policemen coming to arrest him and he jumped over the garden wall and disappeared and escaped. He wasn't arrested. We don't know what he did or where he hid. But that's something you can find in the records. But shortly afterwards the law was changed due to a speech in the House of Commons by Michael Foot, who was later the prime minister, who said it was ridiculous to intern all this people. They stopped the internment and Gerhard went home.

I for instance I had a German passport when I was a child. I was born in 1938 and my parents were still German citizens. I had to have some documents and apparently they went to the German embassy and asked for a passport for me. With a swastika stamp on it. Then again my parents felt that it would be inappropriate for me, I was 2 years old in the time, and they didn't think it wasn't good for me to be perhaps interned with them, so they sent me to America with my grandmother. I spent therefore the war in America. But this whole period of the war was really a defining moment. And after Gerhard came back and joined the home-guard.

There is a side story of Herbert Fein who was my father's first cousin. He was not yet a British citizen but he volunteered to serve in SES. He was trained to be parachuted into Germany behind Allied lines. I got all the papers regarding his training and all the reports from his superior officer, who said that chap doesn't look Jewish and things like that. I don't know if it was some sort a racist remark or it was meant that when he was chopped into Germany that he would immediately say that he was a Jew. Anyway, he was ready to be parachuted and he said to them, you must give me a British passport because if I get caught I will be shot right away without a British passport. They refused giving him a British Passport. All what they would do was change his name from Fein to Frazer. But he refused. He said if you don't give me a passport I don't go. He went then, I think, to the agricultural corps.

And then you come to our generation To what extent we are entirely assimilated or aren't assimilated. We were sent to boarding schools. We were educated to be as English as possible. In contrast to a lot of other refugee families whose identity was very much centered around being Jewish. Our upbringing was absolutely secular. We were sent to boarding schools for being English men and women. I think if you are coming as a newcomer to a country it is one way of settling there. In those days the Council tax wasn't delivered in 15 different languages. Today we have it in Farsi, in Arabic and different languages. In those days you had to learn English otherwise you couldn't go on with it.

Kathleen

Did the members of the family always married Jews?

Stephen

No, it so turned out that we always married Jews except that we are the first generation who didn't. But that was more by coincidence than for any religious reasons. But it is also true that the social life in Leipzig was very much centered around the Jewish community. But in this country possibly less, but in Leipzig certainly. So the chances of you marrying a Jew very pretty high. Our generation was not all raised in religious terms.

Rico

When your parents arrived in England which languages did they speak?

Stephen

They spoke English to us. They spoke German to each other. But not always, from time to time. My father always counted in German. Apparently you always count in your mother language.

Kathleen

I am 6 years younger than Stephen and my recollection is not really the same. I mean German was never talked at home at all. I mean they spoke German to our grandparents, but around the dinner table we all spoke English.

Stephen

I imagine my father had already a reasonably good English from his education, but I don't know how good his English was when he came to England.

That's the chronology. Another theme is the business which I am in the sixth generation that we know of that is doing it. That trade is a very very old trade. In Leipzig the business was not that prosperous. It went up and down all time. But the family lived well and had money because of the parents of our grandmother Elisabeth. The one who took me to America. They came from Strassbourg and moved to Leipzig when their daughter married Alexander. They were very wealthy and they brought money in our side of the family. The money came actually from trading. They supplied hat factories with their raw material for making fur felt hats which is basically rabbit skins and hare skins. So the fortunes of the company in Leipzig were quite mixed. And often they were almost bankrupt and our grandmother would bail them out by giving them money, she took mortgages and various things of security. That all brings us also to the chapter of restitution, what is also a difficult story. So you will find in the documents about the

family business, the mortgages they had to give, the arguments they had with the banks.

There were in fact three brothers running the business. There was Alexander, who was the share-holder and was paralysed. He was our grandfather. And there were his two brothers, Willi and Sigi. Wilhelm and Siegmund didn't talk to each other. They sat back to back in the office for many years. Their main preoccupation was that each of them should spend the same amount of money as the other. Siegmund fancied himself as a Junker and bought a massive estate in Pomerania in the north of Germany which was called Spanielshof. Our grandmother gave money to the two brothers, she took a mortgage on this Spanielshof which was a big estate of 50 acres or so. I tried to get it back. The house apparently is in ruins. But we couldn't get it back because it was farm land and you can't get farm land back concerning the restitution law. So the other one William, did just spend money, with lots of girlfriends and so on. When our father came to London didn't set up a London branch of the business. He set up a company in the same name. And when the two brothers were forced to leave Germany, what was in 1938, they wanted to come to London as partners of our father. And he refused to have them as partners. So there was a big rift in the family for some time. One of them, William, set up his own company and the other one, Siegmund went first to Bruxelles and then went to New York. All the companies were called "Fein".

Siegmund had a son, called Stanley. Stanley Hans went first to Bruxelles and then to New York and Siegmund sent his money to his son Hans in New York. And when Siegmund had to emigrate, he went to New York and apparently his son wouldn't give him his money. So Siegmund had a heart attack and died. There was a branch run in New York by Hans Stanley Fein and a distant cousin called Sever Ramer. His family came from Poland from Sanok. And that branch of the family was in Krakow called Ashkenazy. Hans married a German general's daughter called Beatrix Schreck. In 1938 after the Kristallnacht Siegmund and his nephew Rolf who was the eldest son of William were arrested and sent to Buchenwald. We have also the documentation for that. The father of Beatrix, the general was able to get the father of his son in law out of Buchenwald. I think they stayed around three months in Buchenwald. Afterwards they emigrated immediately. Rolf's father William was already in London. Willy was on a business trip somewhere during the Kristallnacht, so he didn't come back neither to Leipzig. Although they were secular Jews, they were still very Jewish. Hans Stanley became a Lutheran and converted because his wife was Lutheran. He was considered as a complete pariah of the family. That was the ultimate treason to convert. Nobody had converted before.

Then there are side issues. There is the whole question of restitution for which you will find a lot of papers. The restitution is that Leipzig in East Germany wasn't subdued to the restitution laws of the West where everybody who had property before the war got it back. The restitution in Eastern Germany started in 1990 after the Wende. So we had a long fight to get properties back in Leipzig. The business had properties in Leipzig and our grandmother had also properties in Leipzig. That's a whole other story which ended with us getting back just one property. We couldn't get the estate in Pomerania. Another property was bombed during a big attack in 1944 where most of Leipzig was destroyed and that was rebuilt on that plot where we had our house. But the new building straddled several sides and so we couldn't get that back. There was also one side on the Brühl in Leipzig which was very valuable. We couldn't get back this either because it was built over. But the lawyer that we got turned out to be a crock. He was recommended, he was a son in law of someone we did business with for several generations. He was recommended as being specialist and we trusted him, what was a mistake. But we still have the one side. That's again a whole area. Then there is the question to what extent you should have a look to our mother's side of the family. Before we do that, the Fein family came from Brody but our grandmother was born Klein, that family came from the southern Rhine where was a very old Jewish community. After the plague the Jews were pushed East and the king of Poland actually welcomed them to settle in Poland and gave them a higher degree of self rule and freedom. But despite that there was poppits of German Jewish communities. So this family came from Strasbourg. One of them is a Marx but we don't know whether they were related to Karl... Another one is called Nelson what is a funny name. We think it might have something to do with Nielson. But they all came from the same area. There is a marriage certificate from the early 19th century which is in Hebrew and it says in the German part of it that the bride didn't speak any German so it had to be done in Hebrew. Oma Lisa's mother came from Bad Dürkheim born as Jonas. That is the one side of the family. The other side of the family is our mother's side of the family. But we know very little about that side of the family and there hasn't been much research. Her parents came from a small place called Hunsleben. Our grandmother Helene Lustig used to say that her family was Sephardic. We are related to a very famous Rabbi called Ben Zvi, but we don't know whether it is true. I don't know when the Lustigs moved to Leipzig. They had three daughters. Margot, she died in childbirth, the child survived. Her husband went to California, Saint Diego I think. He was in the American army. Käthe was another sister of Helene. She married to Cologne. The next generation is then technically not being Jewish anymore.

Kathleen

When the next generation nevertheless defines itself as being Jewish what makes you feel Jewish.

Stephen

Yes that is interesting, but that has nothing to do with the study.

This is also an aspect of the whole processes as assimilation and non-assimilation.

Kathleen

I think it is relevant to speak about that fact. That even the youngest generation defines itself as Jewish and what does it mean being Jewish. Is it a heritage, is it a cultural thing. What does us define of being Jewish without being religious.

Stephen

Also in terms of social positions an analysis might be interesting. You have the emigration of Brody. We have no idea what sort of education the ancestors of Brody had. We have no idea of what sort of education Nachman Fein, we don't know the level of education Leon Fein had, But at a certain point starting with Alexander who went to university and our father and all the rest of it. We are talking about a middle class merchant family where Bildung is in a way unique German. We were brought up very much in that culture. It is a middle class culture, you are still a merchant family, but you are going to university, you are going to be educated. It is probably even a particularity of the German-Jewish culture.

The Jews coming from Eastern Europe were always looked down apart from the Jews already being in the West. I think from our mothers side we have very little documentation about. I think we have to concentrate on the Fein family. What we didn't mention was that Gerhard legal career in Germany. I suspect there is archival material about his cases. About the times in Brody we don't know much about it. The fur trade was one of the few trades Jews were allowed to exercise, because it was smelly. It was nothing else someone wanted to touch. Our mother, before she married, she was a teacher of bridge in a department store. I think she met our father in a tennis club.

Kathleen

And her sister Käthe was a psychologist and worked in a family planning clinic. She was very modern. I think they were more in the arts and so on.

Stephen

I think what you have to do is now to tell us what you think. And then we can discuss again about several details.