

Laudo-Hefter
Nr. 1139

Betrifft

Homburger, Emil

Nauen

Am Bitterfeld

vom	193	
bis	193	
BRANDENBURGISCHES LANDESHAUPTARCHIV		
Abgeschlossene ältere Hefter sind in der Ablage unter		
Nummer:	begonnen:	geschlossen:

OV. DR. REP. 90A
**OBERFINANZ-
PRÄSIDENT
DEVISENSTELLE**

Farb-
signal

FG 48

Bearbeiter:

The Fate of the Homburger Family from Nauen in Osthavelland

Contents

Part 1 – Nauen, 1897 to 1933	Page 3
Part 2 – Nauen, 1933 to 1939	Page 7
Part 3 – Escape to Bolivia, 1939	Page 13

Source References

Aus der Geschichte der Stadt Nauen, die ehemalige Jüdische Gemeinde by Ursula Arzbächer

Wie in einer Rumpelkammer, Erinnerungen 1923 – 2005 by Günther Mönke

Transnationale Spurensuche in den Anden, von geflüchteten Juden, „Altdeutschen“ und Nazis in Bolivien by Juliana Ströbele-Gregor

Hotel Bolivia by Leo Spitzer

Und seh'n wir die Heimat nicht wieder – vom märkischen Nauen zum nördlichen Eismeer 1941 -1945 by Kurt Raschke

Das Landwerk Neuendorf: Berufsumschichtung – Hachschara -Zwangsarbeit by Harald Lordick

Nauener Heimatblätter, herausgegeben by Nauener Heimatfreunde 1990 e.V.

In Nauen durch die Jahrhunderte by Martina al Diban

We would like to thank the following people and institutions for their kind support with the research work and for handing over documents, photos and information:

Brandenburgisches Landeshauptarchiv Potsdam, Rep. 8 Stadt Nauen Nr. 101 und Rep. 36A
Oberfinanzpräsident Berlin-Brandenburg F648 (BLHA)

Niedersächsisches Landesarchiv Hannover, Nds. 110 W Acc. 8/90 Nr. 221/19 und Acc. 31/99 Nr. 210927 (NLA)

Landesarchiv Berlin

Kreis- und Verwaltungsarchiv des Landkreises Havelland, Herrn Uwe Siegfried

Magistrat der Stadt Gedern, insbesondere dem Stadtarchivar Herrn Erhard Müth

Geschichte hat Zukunft – Neuendorf im Sande e.V., Herrn Bernd Pickert

Stadt Nauen, insbes. dem Bürgermeister Herrn Manuel Meger und Herrn Christoph Artymiak

Goethe-Gymnasium Nauen, insbes. Herrn Wieland Breuer und Frau Uta Reichel sowie den Schülerinnen und Schülern des Leistungskurs Geschichte Klasse 12

Frau Ursula Arzbächer, Nauen und Herrn Günther Mönke, St. Ingbert

Herrn Wolfgang Johl und Herrn Bodo Kalkowski, Nauen (Nauener Heimatfreunde 1990 e.V.)

Herrn Wolfgang Wiech, Nauen (Nauener Nachtwächter)

Frau Juliana Ströbele-Gregor, Berlin sowie Herrn und Frau Nölte, Nauen

Herrn Marco Strahlendorf, Wustermark und Herrn Axel Schröder, Nauen

Herrn Axel Huber, Singen und Herrn Andreas Freiberg, Berlin

Frau Karla Meyer/Berlin, Herrn Mario Oberling/Falkensee, Herrn Jim Harrison/Dallgow

Herrn Jörg Zander, Frau Isabel Llorens, Frau Katharina Schorsch, Frau Sylke Hannasky

Frau Dr. Luisa Callejón, Berlin (Luisa Callejón Sprachdienste)

and all other friends and acquaintances who helped make this project possible.

Special thanks go to the daughter of Hans Homburger, Betty Homburger, for her trust and willingness to provide us with many personal documents and information.

Part 1 – Nauen, 1897 to 1933

At the end of the 19th century, this up-and-coming district town in Osthavelland (East Havel Land) near Berlin promised much economic success. In 1889, a sugar factory was opened, which not only provided income and food for its many residents but was also lucrative for the farmers in the area. The town was experiencing the boom of the neo-renaissance Wilhelminian era and with it the growing purchasing power of the town's residents.

In addition, the town's attractive location, directly on a main railway line and the road from Berlin to Hamburg, attracted many merchants and traders, including Jewish ones.

By 1890, the general population of Nauen had risen to 8,040. The number of members of the Jewish community had also increased, and by 1892 stood at a total of 84 people from 22 families. In 1897, Simon and Ida Homburger also arrived in Nauen with their 3-year-old son, Emil.

The Homburgers were originally based in Gedern in Upper Hesse, a small town between Fulda and Frankfurt on the Main. For decades they had been making a living raising and selling cattle there, a customary trade at the time.

Their second son, Lothar, was born in August 1900 but sadly died one year and three months later. It is interesting to note that Lothar's death certificate was signed by Mr. Julius Frank.



Nauen around 1900

The Frank family was already well known in Nauen at that time. Julius Frank ran the cattle trade in the town, but even more renowned was the merchant Alfred Frank, who had an excellent reputation in the town and lived in the "Frankschen Villa" at Berliner Straße 35, later known as the so-called "Mayor's Villa".

Since the name Frank also appears in the records of the Jewish community in Gedern, it is reasonable to assume that both families already knew each other from there.



Villa Frank around 1922

In addition, Alfred Frank's wife, Hanna, had the maiden name Homburger. Alfred Frank died in 1922 and his wife 10 years later. Both were buried in the Jewish cemetery in Nauen, which since 1819 had been located well outside the town at a location called Am Weinberg.

By the way, the first Jewish cemetery in Nauen was located on Jüdenkirchhof-Straße which today is called Waldemarstraße.

Back to the Homburgers...

Having lots of children was a real blessing 100 years ago, regardless of which denomination you belonged to. Of course, the more children one had, the more work one had to do, which is why on February 19, 1903, Ida Homburger placed the advertisement you see to the right in the "Osthavelländische Rundschau" newspaper looking for a girl to work as a house and kitchen helper.



Advertisement from Ida Homburger, 1903

On May 14, 1903, 9-year-old Emil welcomed twin sisters to the family. The two girls were named Ilse and Herta.

Unfortunately, little Ilse died just 9 months later. This time the death certificate was signed by her uncle David Homburger, a younger brother of her father.

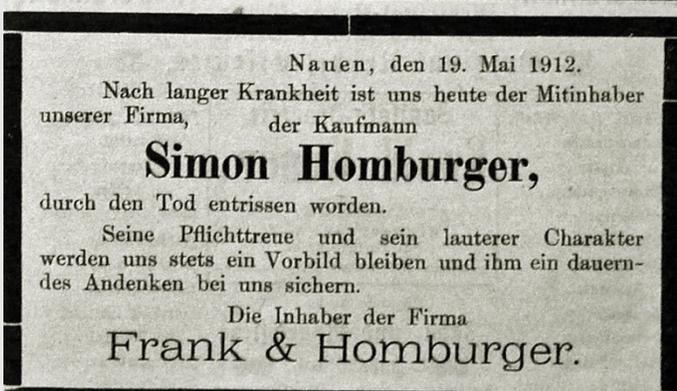
According to the address book from 1908, Simon Homburger and his family lived at Marktstraße 24 and David Homburger at Chausseestraße 88. Both brothers were known as merchants and were co-owners of the Frank & Homburger Company.



Frank & Homburger company seal



In 1912, Simon Homburger died in Nauen at the age of just 47, leaving behind his wife Ida and their children Emil (17) and Herta (9).



After Emil finished school at the Realgymnasium on Lindenplatz (now the elementary school on Lindenplatz) he began a commercial apprenticeship at a bank in Hildburghausen, in the free state of Thuringia. He then worked as a bank clerk in various cities throughout Germany until the end of 1914.

Obituary Notice for Simon Homburger, 1912

He then became a soldier in World War I and was awarded various medals, such as the E.K. II, the Hessian Badge of Honor, and the Front Fighter Cross. He was immensely proud of these awards as they were the reward for his commitment to the German Fatherland.

After his discharge from military service, he married Frieda Horwitz on November 18, 1919, in Prenzlau. Sadly, their happiness was to be short-lived. Frieda Homburger died at the young age of 26, just three months after they had wed.

After a year of mourning, the young widower met Bianka Bernstein. She originally came from Schroda, a small town in what was then the province of Posen, but now lived with her family in Berlin on the Kurfürstendamm, the famous shopping street. They married in Berlin on July 5, 1921, and a year later, on July 18, 1922, their son, Hans, was born.



Nauen. Funkstadt

Marktstr.

Marktstraße, Nauen around 1930 (E. Homburger's shop is to the left of the Michaelis flower shop)

In the same year, the family moved to Nauen where Emil Homburger opened a clothes shop at Marktstrasse 19. Meanwhile, his uncle, David Homburger, was running his own banking business in Nauen at Potsdamer Straße 55, today's Goethestraße.

Emil's sister Herta married the bank clerk Herbert Goldmann in Nauen in 1923. Her brother Emil signed the marriage certificate as best man. Her second marriage was to Josef Bauer, with whom she later lived in Berlin.

Although the 1920s were marked by inflation, unemployment, and the economic crisis, everyone tried their best to somehow get by, some more fortunate than others. Nevertheless, all residents of the city lived peacefully side by side regardless of which religious community they belonged to.

In 1932 there were 13 Jewish families in Nauen. Like many Jews in the German Reich, they tried to adapt to their non-Jewish environment by adopting behavioral norms and lifestyles with religious concerns taking a back seat. The focus was on political and civic identity, which the Jewish fighters coming back from the Front in the First World War were particularly proud.

David Homburger,
Bankgeschäft,
Berlin W 8, Nauen,
Mantgrafenstr. 28. Potsdamer Str. 55.
Fernsprecher: Fernsprecher:
Zentrum 9670, 4537. Nauen 90.

**An- und Verkauf von Effekten
und Devisen.**

Eigene Börsen-Informationen.
**Ausführung sämtlicher bank-
geschäftlichen Transaktionen.**

David Homburger bank advertisement, 1922

The residents of Nauen were not interested in the religion of the various business owners. They simply wanted to shop for good and inexpensive items and enjoyed visiting the numerous large and small stores at the old town, even if they had Jewish owners, such as the Emil Hirsch department store at Mittelstraße 37 or the Ploschitzki department store on the corner of Berliner Straße and Mittelstraße.



The Ploschitzki Siblings' Department Store around 1905



Emil Hirsch's Department Store, around 1910

Smaller shops were also popular with the people of Nauen, such as the long-established photo studio of the Laski sisters at Dammstraße 17, or Emil Homburger's clothing shop at Marktstraße 19.

The same applied to the schools in the city, where all pupils were treated equally regardless of which religion they belonged to. This was written at the time about the Reformrealgymnasium, today's Goethe Gymnasium:

"The number of pupils at Easter, 1930, was a total of 256, of which 243 were Protestant, 12 Catholic and 1 pupil of the Jewish denomination."



Isidor Laski photo studio around 1910

Since 1929, Emil's son, Hans, attended the seven-year Knaben Volksschule at Berliner Straße 29 (where the Rainbow School is now located). His teacher was Richard Lange, who had a reputation for both encouraging and challenging his students. He was strict but fair. Although he still belonged to the so-called "Pauker" generation, he was very popular with the students.



This popularity, his subject knowledge, and his unencumbered past enabled him to continue teaching in Nauen well after 1945.

In 1933, the then 10-year-old Hans Homburger switched from the Knaben Volksschule to the Reformrealgymnasium.

Knabenschule (boy's school), Nauen around 1930 with teacher R. Lange (Hans Homburger is standing central in the first row in a sailor's shirt)

Part 2 – Nauen, 1933 to 1939

Hitler was appointed Chancellor of the Reich on January 30, 1933, by Reich President Hindenburg. More than 6 million people were unemployed at the time, and many hoped that Hitler would improve their situation. This may be the only way to understand how he quickly found followers who were willing to support him in the attacks he had begun against the Jewish population.

On April 1, 1933, all newspapers throughout the Reich called for a boycott of all non-Aryan businesses. In the same issue for the town of Nauen, the Havelländische Rundschau newspaper also managed to publish this report:

“Yesterday evening, a procession through the streets of the town of Nauen heralded the beginning today here of the boycott of Jewish shops and doctors. The Nauener SA, the Motorstaffel, the SA Reserve, and members of the NSBO marched in front of some of the shops to be boycotted, carrying banners calling for a boycott of Jewish shops, while a band played the song “Muß i denn, muß i denn zum Städele hinaus...””

The actual boycott of Jewish shops and medical practices in Nauen began on Saturday, April 1, 1933, at 10 a.m. sharp. SA guards blocked the shop entrances and hung signs in front of the doors calling for a boycott.

The public observed the events calmly or even approvingly, depending on their attitudes. Most of the businesses affected by the boycott had closed voluntarily.



NS boycott of a Jewish shop in Berlin on April 1, 1933
(Federal Archive picture 102-14468)

SA guards were also manned in front of the houses of Jewish doctors, such as the pediatrician Dr. Olga Philip at Hamburger Straße 4 and the dentist Dr. Lebram at Dammstraße 15.

Despite all this, Emil Homburger continued to see his future in Nauen, so much so that he bought the house and property at Ritterfeld 22 at the end of 1933.

Other business owners, however, had recognized the signs of the times early on and left the town in time. The Ploschitzki siblings' department store became the Herke department store. A Kaiser's coffee shop moved into the former Emil Hirsch department store on the ground floor while the NSDAP district leadership resided on the upper floors, with the address now changed from Mittelstraße to “Straße der SA”.



Straße der SA, Nauen, around 1938

Suddenly, the entire social life of the town changed. In all areas of life, there was conformity to National Socialism. Those who did not conform or subordinate themselves were arrested or, at the least, lost their jobs. This was the fate of the highly respected director of the Gymnasium, Dr. Paul. He was an avowed democrat who had to make way for a veteran NSDAP party member.

Things were now very different at the Gymnasium.

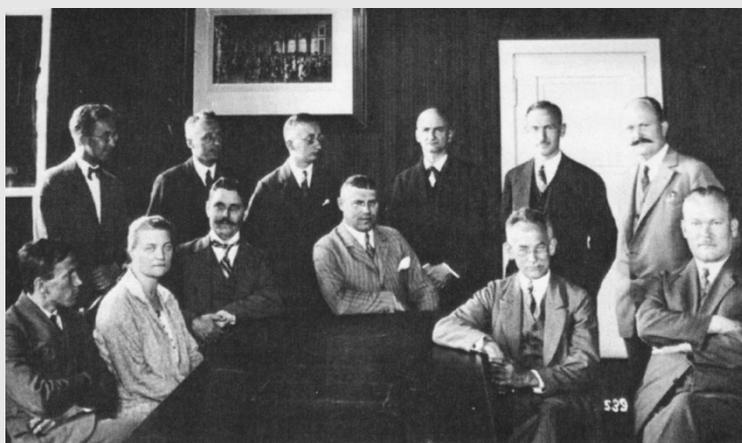
From the memoirs of the former high school student, Günther Mönke:

“May 1, 1933, was an extremely cold day. On this “Labor Day”, all working people in the town of Nauen were called upon, or, more correctly, ordered to take part in a large-scale rally.

In orderly blocks, flags held before us, we moved - five people in a row - through the city and out onto the sports field. The "brown shirts" were at the front. Then came the blocks of the fire brigade, the postmen, and the railroad workers in their blue uniforms. Civilian-clad groups formed at the rear. They were considered “not yet registered” which disrupted the overall image of the uniformed men and thus made up a shabby remainder. The school classes marched with their teachers in this group, still proudly wearing our colored school hats.”

Hans Homburger attended the Gymnasium until March 1938 in the so-called “Obertertia” (a class year). It was then that the pressure became more and more unbearable.

Even his membership in the VDA (Volksbund für das Deutschtum im Ausland), a people's association for Germans abroad, could no longer protect him from the reprisals at school. The VDA in Nauen was founded by Dr. Scholz, who was known for his partisan abstinence. He wanted to create an alternative to the Hitler Youth but quickly failed due to a lack of members.



Reformrealgymnasium council around 1932 (the lecturer Dr. Scholz is standing, second from left)

15-year-old Hans was now completely ostracized. He either couldn't understand it or simply didn't want to admit that people were no longer allowed to have contact with him. In his heart, he felt very German!

As his classmate Günther Mönke relates in his memoir:

“Hans had repeatedly applied for membership in the Deutsche Jungvolk (German Young People), but his efforts were ignored. However, this 15-year-old wanted to refute all blanket defamations, so with the help of his father, he leased a piece of arable land from a farmer, along with a horse and the necessary agricultural equipment. He wanted to prove that a Jewish boy can work just as hard as a German boy.

At that time, I lived with my parents on Fontaneweg and could see this field across Hamburger Chaussee. [...]“

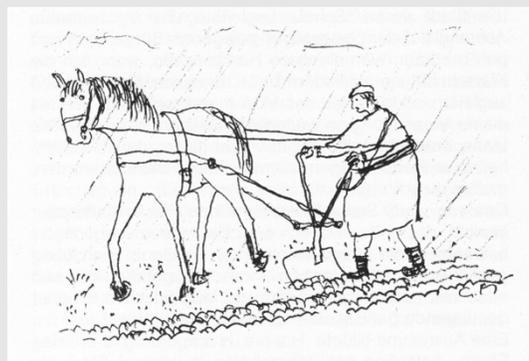


Illustration from the book “Wie in einer Rumpelkammer“ by Günther Mönke

„[...] It pained me to see Hans dragging himself behind the horse and the heavy iron plow in the autumn wind and rain, in rubber boots and a raincoat, a black beret on his head, the horse leash tied around his body. Furrow by furrow, he broke open the heavy clay soil that repeatedly caused him to stagger with the plow.

His arms and legs seemed to be shaking from the exertion. Every time he got to the side of the road, he stood erect to straighten his sore back before turning his horse and plow in the opposite direction.

Some time after that, he and his parents disappeared from Nauen without a trace."

The actual trigger for the disappearance of the Homburgers was the Pogromnacht (Pogrom Night) from November 9 to November 10, 1938, which the Nazis contemptuously called "Reichskristallnacht" (Crystal Night).

As the Havelländische Rundschau newspaper reported:

"Anti-Jewish rallies in Osthavelland

The justified indignation over the Jewish crime against the young German diplomat vom Rath in Paris yesterday also led to strong anti-Jewish rallies in the Osthavelland district.

In Nauen at lunchtime, the shop windows of the two remaining Jewish shops were smashed and the shop fittings were demolished. The goods in the shop naturally remained untouched.

The synagogue on Potsdamer Straße and the rooms of other Jews living in Nauen were also impacted by the general outrage."

This depiction shamelessly played down the events of the Pogromnacht. In reality, the Nauener SA and their helpers marauded through the city and looted the Jewish shops and apartments in the worst possible way.

The carpenter's apprentice Kurt Raschke, born in Nauen in 1923, wrote in his memoirs:

"On the morning of November 10, 1938, like every day, I went to do my apprenticeship at the Weizenegger construction, coffin and furniture carpentry business at Marktstraße 14.

As I approached Bergstraße, I saw two SA men beating a somewhat smaller man with clubs. On closer inspection, I saw that it was the owner of the clothing shop, Emil Homburger. His shop window was smashed and the display goods from his shop lay scattered on the ground in front of his shop and the shop next door, the Michaelis flower shop."



Destroyed Jewish shop in Magdeburg on November 10, 1938 (Federal Archive picture 146-1970-083-44)

This matches the information given in Emil Homburger's shop reparations file from 1956. Here he puts it on the record:

"On November 10, 1938, the large window sheath of my shop was smashed and the goods thrown onto the street. On this occasion, looters also stole many goods from the shop. As a result, at the instigation of the police, master carpenter Krumrey in Nauen installed a wooden crate in front of the broken shop window. During the night, however, Nazis broke into the shop and stole more stock from the warehouse ... "

The Homburgers' private apartment was also attacked, the intruders smashing lamps, dishes, windowpanes, pictures, porcelain - in short, everything they could get their hands on.

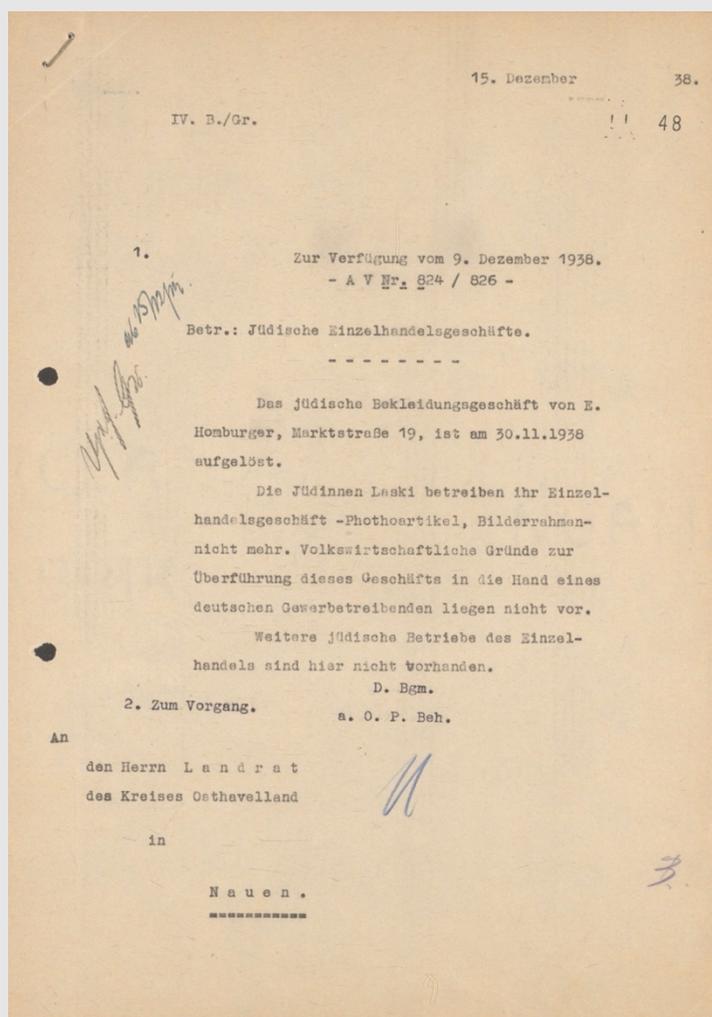
The local police depicted this incident as a "thorough search". The synagogue (more of a prayer room) on Potsdamer Straße was also not spared. That it was not set on fire is only due to the fact that it was located right next to the building of a well-known SS leader.



Memorial plaque on the building of the former synagogue in Nauen, Potsdamer Str. 11

Two days later, he wrote a letter to the mayor asking for his release, promising that he would be available to the police at any time, but it was in vain.

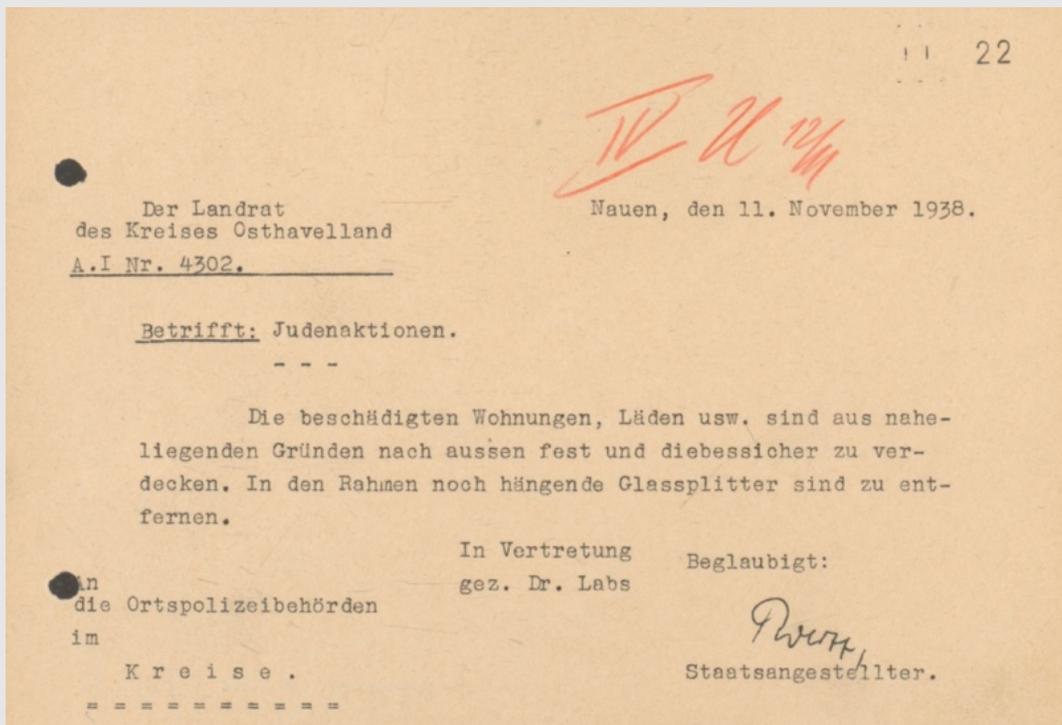
On November 15, he was brought to the Gestapo headquarters in Potsdam. There it was made very clear to him that he had to leave Germany as quickly as possible, otherwise he could be arrested again and deported to a concentration camp. After almost two weeks of constant threats and intimidation, Emil Homburger was released from Gestapo custody.



Letter to the district administrator from December 15, 1938, about the liquidation of the last two Jewish shops in Nauen (BLHA archive)

At that time, Emil Homburger was the last board member of the Jewish community still living here. In this role, he was forced to hand over to the police authorities all the documents still available from the demolished Jewish Community Hall, as well as the butcher's knife (the so-called "Schächtemesser") that was in the safe at the Nauener Bank Association.

According to orders from the Gestapo headquarters in Potsdam, all "wealthy male Jews who were not too old" were to be arrested. As a result, Emil Homburger was arrested on November 10 and taken to the Nauen police prison.



Letter from the district authority of November 11, 1938 to the police authority of the district of Osthavelland (BLHA archive)

His son, Hans, knew nothing of these events in Nauen in November 1938 because he had started agricultural training on April 1, 1938 in Landwerk Neuendorf near Fürstenwalde/Spree. This training in agriculture and horticulture was established in 1932 by the Jewish Arbeitshilfe Association and offered training opportunities to Jewish young people in the areas of agriculture, forestry, livestock farming, gardening and initially also in manual and technical professions.

Furthermore, after the National Socialists' assumption of power, the Landwerk Neuendorf became vitally important as a safe intermediate stop before the emigration of young Jews to Palestine as well as other host countries. It was soon considered the "largest vocational training center for young Jews in Germany". The association tried to connect the training, the so called Hachschara, with actual emigration possibilities at the time but this became more difficult from year to year. Despite this, the association succeeded between December 1935 and June 1939 in helping quite a few families emigrate to Argentina. The applicants to Landwerk Neuendorf had to prove through a doctor's certificate that they were able to physically work very hard.



Youth working on reclaiming garden land (unknown photographer, Leo Baeck Institute New York)

Especially young men were used for hard farm labor to improve the soil and land. These experiences would prove to be of great benefit to Hans Homburger a few years later.

Because he had always been interested in horses, he also worked in the horse stables of the estate. At 3:30 in the morning, his work day began with the care of the horses and carriages. There he experienced the aggressive attack of the SS in November 1938.

Kurt Gumpel, a former Neuendorf inhabitant, remembers the Pogrom night at Landwerk Neuendorf:

"An incident occurred that showed clearly how life at the Neuendorf estate was not at all without danger. One night a group of SS men appeared who wanted to take the trainees to Sachsenhausen concentration camp. Only through the determined intervention of the Jewish head of the estate, Alex Moch, was it possible to convince the SS leader that the farm could not be run without sufficient labour. At least the younger trainees could remain unharmed."

Hans Homburger later also told his daughter, Betty, about these incidents:

"My father remembered well his training at Landwerk Neuendorf. He was always very grateful when learning about agriculture and working with horses, which he loved. He was especially thankful to the responsible persons who, in a very difficult time of his life when he was nearly sent to a concentration camp, saved him by stating that he had to stay to take care of the horses."



Neuendorf 2021, Hans Homburger worked in this horse stable between April 1st, 1938 and February 22, 1939

Hans stayed at Landwerk Neuendorf until February 22, 1939. In his work certificate, his love for animals was emphasized and he was recommended to be a zookeeper in the future. Normally the vocational training at Neuendorf would have taken one year, but Hans had to stop his training early because his father had received the long-awaited visa for emigration.



Snack time – Kurt Gumpel in Neuendorf, top row third from the left, 1937/38. Unknown photographer (municipal museum Lemgo / Memorial Frenkel-Haus, estate of Kurt Gumpel)

Part 3 – Escape to Bolivia, 1939

Over the past six years, Emil Homburger had still not lost his faith in the good in people, but after the incidents of the Pogrom night he had no illusions anymore. Finally the time had come that he and his family would have to leave Germany even though they still loved their home country so much!

Immediately after his release from Gestapo custody an odyssey began for this family man, going from one office to the next. Which papers did the Nazis require for emigration, what costs were to be expected and – above all – where could you even emigrate to?

These kinds of questions were being asked by many Jews in Germany after November 9, 1938, and a run on Jewish aid organisations began, e.g. the Palestine Office in Berlin which issued the so-called immigration certificates for Palestine of the British authorities.

It is unknown if Emil Homburger applied for such a certificate. We know that in a letter from the local police to the Nauen tax office from December 9, 1938, Trinidad in South America is mentioned as the emigration destination. It is unclear whether this was the island in the Caribbean or the city in Bolivia.

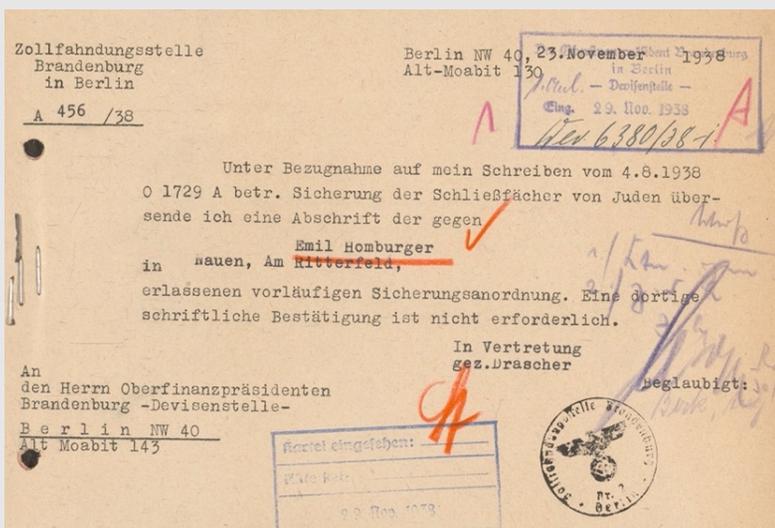


Bundesarchiv, Bild 183-EO1073
Foto: o. Ang. | Januar 1939

Jewish emigrants in front of the travel agency Palestine & Orient Lloyd in Berlin (Federal Archives Picture 183-1939 EO1073)

In any case, all following correspondence only talked about Bolivia as the emigration destination.

For the issuance of a visa, Emil Homburger applied for a clearance certificate from the tax office. The tax office immediately informed the Gestapo (secret police) about the family's intention to emigrate.



"Sicherungsanordnung" (Preliminary Order) of the customs investigation office from Nov. 23, 1938 (BLHA archive)

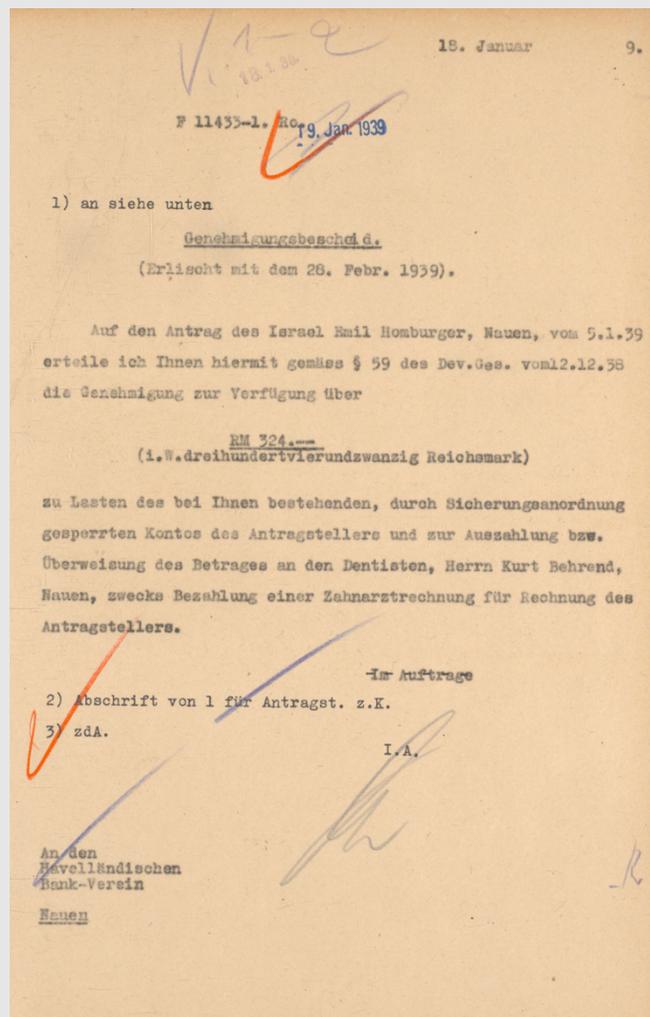
The customs investigation office in Brandenburg was even faster. On November 23, 1938, immediately after the release from custody of Mr. Homburger, the office had his safety deposit boxes at the Nauen Bank Association blocked.

This caused the currency exchange control office of the Oberfinanzpräsident in Brandenburg to have all accounts, credit balances and insurances of Emil Homburger immediately blocked as well. The Homburger family was not able anymore to access their own money.

Any expenses had to be applied for beforehand at the tax authorities. The requested amount would then be released by the authorities and paid by the respective bank. Whether it was the rent for the shop which had been closed since the Pogrom night yet still had to be paid by March 31, 1939, or a bill from the dentist or expenses for the purchase of items needed for their emigration, this was the lengthy and tedious procedure required to pay for everything.

Until the end of 1938, Emil Homburger was allowed to sign financial transactions using his proper name. After January 1, 1939, though, he was forced by law to add the extra name "Israel". Yet another step of discrimination and exclusion!

By applying German thoroughness, those in charge now demanded that the Jewish population subsequently add the names "Sara" and "Israel" to their birth and marriage certificates.



Official authorisation to the Nauen Bank Association to release 324 Reichsmark for the payment of a dental bill (BLHA archive)



Emil Homburger's passport, stamped invalid in the 1950s by the Consular Section of the Federal Republic of Germany in La Paz, Bolivia (private property Betty Homburger)

The personal possessions of the people who were forced to emigrate were also no longer safe.

Following the "Decree on the Use of Jewish Assets", issued on December 3, 1938, Emil Homburger was forced to sell his property as well.

Nauen, Am Ritterfeld 22 (2001)

All registrars in the entire country were faced with a flood of certificates they had to process because applications from Jews who had already emigrated were also sent in from abroad. The German consulates in those countries had asked the emigrants to get new identity documents.

The compulsory introduction of extra names was only one of the many harassments the Jewish population had to endure.



Only one week after the enactment of this decree, the purchase agreement for the house and property at Am Ritterfeld 22 was signed. Not only the house and the garden changed hands through this agreement but also the furniture, piano, carpets and paintings. The Homburger family was never able to access the purchase price, though. The money had been immediately transferred to a blocked account.

As a board member of the local Jewish community, Emil Homburger had to also offer the property with the synagogue itself for sale to the Nauen municipality. On March 1, 1939 the property at Potsdamer Straße 11 was transferred to the town.

In mid-January 1939 the Homburgers received the long-awaited message: The Palestine & Orient Lloyd travel agency wrote to Emil Homburger on January 14, 1939:

"Regarding your emigration to Bolivia

Dear Mr. Homburger,

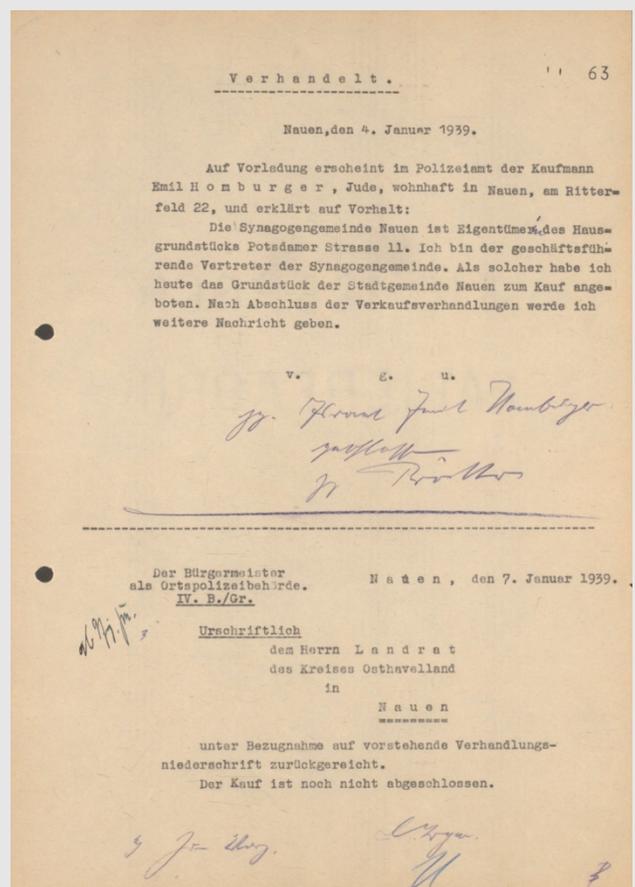
We kindly inform you that we have reserved seats on board the "COLOMBO" travelling from Marseille to Mollendo on January 25, 1939. The passage for yourself, your wife and your son will cost 3,300 Reichsmark including board and fees. We will provide you with a detailed invoice. You have already paid 1,350 Reichsmark.

We would highly recommend that you take the opportunity of this passage because in the coming months it will be extremely difficult to find housing to accomodate you."

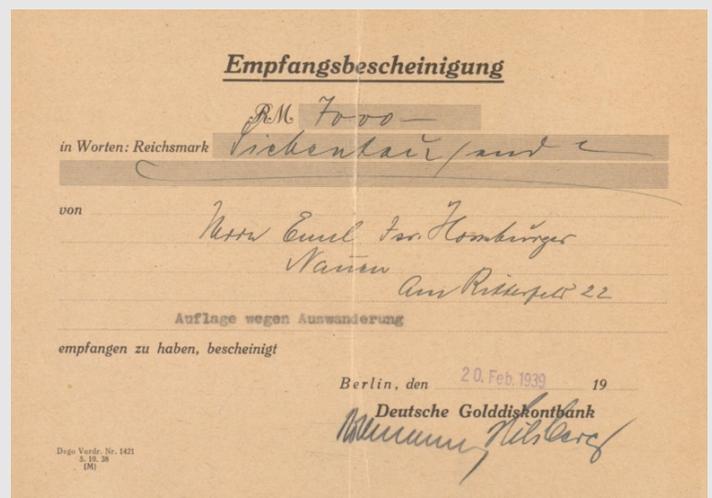
A race against time began!

In order to manage the tremendous amount of correspondence with the authorities, Mr. Homburger authorized an exchange advisor in Berlin to organize, in particular, the timely transfer of all compulsory levies:

- "Judenvermögensabgabe" 20.000 Reichsmark
(Jewish Property Levy)
- "Reichsfluchtsteuer" 20.000 Reichsmark
(Tax on flight from Reich)
- "Golddiskontabgabe" 7.000 Reichsmark
(Gold discount levy)



Letter from January 4, 1939 about the sale of the synagogue building to the city of Nauen (BLHA archive)



Receipt of the gold discount levy (BLHA archive)

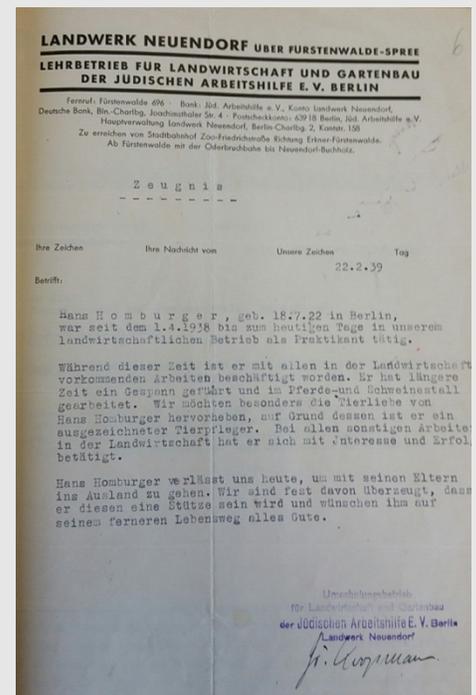
First, their son had to return from Neuendorf, but finally, at the end of February 1939, Emil, Bianka and Hans Homburger left their hometown of Nauen.

Before the ship passage could begin in Marseille, the family had to obtain transit visas for Chile because Bolivia does not have direct access to the sea.

On February 27, 1939, the Chilean consulate in Paris finally issued the visas. One day later the family boarded the "ORAZIO" and left Europe.



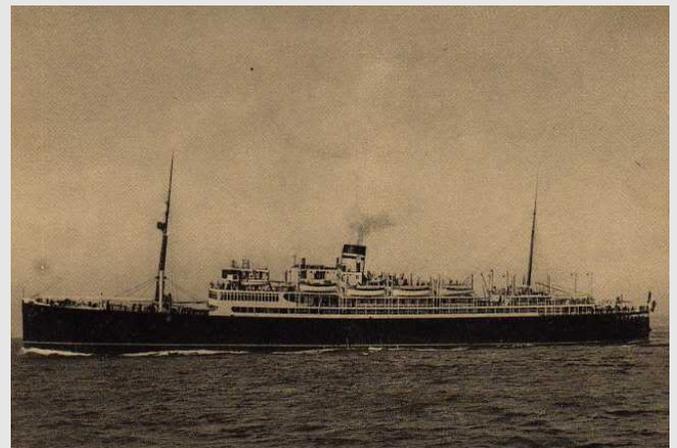
Hans Homburger's transit visa for Chile, Paris February 27, 1939 (private property Betty Homburger)



Hans Homburger's report/reference letter from the Landwerk Neuendorf from February 22, 1939 (private property Betty Homburger)

After sailing several weeks, the boat reached Arica in northern Chile. From there they continued by train on April 9, 1939 to the Bolivian capital, La Paz, where they arrived after a two and a half day trip. The Jewish organization SOPRO helped them get started in this new and unknown country. But something else helped the Homburger family – the „ERIKA“ typewriter from Germany! It was sold and the proceeds ensured their survival for the first few weeks.

Bianka Homburger started working as a nurse for the Red Cross and her husband found a job in a grocery store. In November 1939 Emil Homburger opened a small café and restaurant which later became a delicatessen.



MS Virgilio, sister ship of the MS Orazio, travelled the same route



Agricultural workers in the Buena Tierra 1943 (JDC archive)

Their son, Hans, first worked in a sausage factory in La Paz before he went to the subtropical Yungas region east of the capital where he started a job as a farm worker in 1940. At that time three agricultural colonies, the Buena Tierra, were established for the resettlement of Jewish emigrants from Europe. They were to cultivate this inhospitable region. Only under this condition did the Bolivian government issue the so-called "Agrarian Visa" for Jewish refugees from Europe in 1939/1940. Not every holder of such a visa had the necessary experience in agriculture and forestry. Hans Homburger did!

Building these colonies was an enormous challenge for the European settlers. Therefore, many colonists eventually decided to return to the city. The last ones left the Yungas region in 1946. Only Hans Homburger stayed! He settled down and started a family.



Clearing for a new chicken farm, Buena Tierra 1943 (JDC archive)

In the meantime, his father had given up his delicatessen shop for health reasons. Since his arrival in April 1939 he had suffered from the unusually high altitude of the city (3,600 meters). Difficulty in breathing and anxiety were the consequences.



La Paz 1952, city center with the main shopping street El Prado (postcard from the private property of Juliane Ströbele-Gregor)

Emil Homburger died on December 24, 1969, and his wife, Bianka, on July 9, 1980. Both were buried in the Jewish cemetery of La Paz.



Emil, Bianka, Hans and Betty Homburger, La Paz 1974 (private property of Betty Homburger)

Hans Homburger later moved from La Paz to Santa Cruz, a big city in the southeastern part of the country.

Near the city he acquired a small farm with cows and horses. Even into old age he did not stop working with animals.

On July 15, 2005, shortly before his 83rd birthday, Hans Homburger passed away. His grave is in the Jewish cemetery in Santa Cruz, Bolivia.



Gravestone of Hans Simon Homburger in the Jewish cemetery in Santa Cruz, Bolivia

Edel sei der Mensch,
hilfreich und gut.
Das war sein Wahlspruch.

Let man be a noble creature,
helpful and good.
This was his motto.

(Words on the gravestone of Emil Homburger)

We also remember:

Herta Bauer, née Homburger
deported to Auschwitz on February 3, 1943 and there murdered

David Homburger
escape into death on July 28, 1942





In memory of our ostracized and
murdered Jewish fellow citizens
as a lasting reminder to the living
Site of the former Jewish cemetery
redesigned in 1988