

I see them all very clearly

(Speech of Gil Keness on June 11, 2013 at the grave of his great grandfather Marcus Wallach in Witzenhausen)

Let me take you back in time ...

The year is 1932. "Just" 81 years ago, and I have imagined myself, witnessing the funeral of our great grandfather and here is what I see:

The Wallachs and their relatives and about 50 other distinguished German citizens, among them, members of the 500 hundreds years old, Jewish community of Witzenhausen, are gathered in this very place just where we are standing right now, to honor their beloved father, Grandfather and friend Marcus, who was a highly respected person in town and a senior member of the Jewish community.

And I see them all very clearly ...

My grandfather Louis who is 49 years old and my grandmother Clara and their 4 children: My uncle Kurt 21 years of age who is just about to start his studies in nearby Goettingen University, my aunt Rosel, a handsome and intelligent young lady, uncle Erwin who studies in the Gymnasium and last but not least, a 11 years old girl, my own mother Erika.

All of them were living together in the same house, that still stands proudly in Witzenhausen with their grandparent Marcus and Fanny. In the same house they had their famous dressing store that was established by Marcus with the financial help of his father in law, Salomon Nussbaum, from Rothenkirchen/Burghaun.

And I see the widow, our great grandmother Frau Fanny Wallach, not yet aware of the difficult times lying ahead, wiping over the open Grave, And Amalia/Malchen and David Greenbaum and their children and Flora and Frieda, who arrived with her husband Max Ruhr by train from Leipzig a few hours ago.

And as the funeral reaches its end

and people are quietly going their ways, absolutely no one, but no one!, imagines that this respectful traditional Jewish burial ceremony is the last one to be held in Witzenhausen.

Marcus Wallach was actually "lucky". As one says: "one should also know how and when to die". Indeed, he was saved the suffering and the tragedy of his descendants and ever since rests in peace in this beautiful untouched, yet well preserved, corner of the world.

Less then a year will pass until on January 30,1933, Hitler and his Nazi followers will gain power over the mighty, technologically most advanced and very disciplined German Nation. This day **in which evil prevailed**, was no doubt, fateful for all Mankind, but a terrible historical turning point, for the Jewish people.

Nothing, but nothing will ever be the same again ! As it was before this day....

The Jewish community of Witzenhausen was blown up to pieces, everyone striving to escape the inferno. Those who did not leave Germany until 1939 have signed their own death sentence. The last Jews of Witzenhausen among them Amalia, David and Rudolph Greenbaum were sent to the death camps in September 1942.

Since than, there are no Jews living in the town of Witzenhausen or, using to Nazi terminology "Witzenhausen ist Juden rein". (=Witzenhausen is free of Jewish inhabitants). The same applies for many thousands of small towns and villages in Hessen and elsewhere in Germany and in east and west Europe.he Nazi Reich collapsed for ever after 12 years. However the strokes and scars of the Holocaust, will live with us for ever.

