

No More Offside

The Story of Gottfried Fuchs



Gottfried Fuchs breaking through the opposing defense for Karlsruher FC.



Gottfried Fuchs and Pelé at the ceremonial kick-off, Montreal, June 30, 1971. Exhibition match: Santos FC vs. Bologna FC.

Gottfried Fuchs: National Player, Record Holder, Refugee

His call-up to the German national team on March 23, 1911, marked the beginning of the rise of a man who would become a soccer hero. His legendary goal record – ten goals in a single match during the 1912 Olympic Games in Stockholm – ensured his place in soccer history as a prolific striker.

The First World War brought his soccer career to an end. After four years at the front, he returned home, worked in the family business, and started a family. In the years after the Nazis took power, Fuchs and his family were increasingly persecuted because they were Jewish. In 1937, he fled his homeland, eventually finding safety in Montreal, Canada. He started a new life far away from the cheers of the stadiums, under the name Godfrey Fochs.

The exhibition traces his life journey – from his great sporting triumphs to the painful experience of persecution, erasure and flight to his new beginning in a foreign country. **“Nie wieder Abseits”** commemorates Gottfried Fuchs, honors his legacy, and is intended as a powerful appeal against discrimination and hate, and for humanity in sport and society.

A Star of German Soccer

From Early Training to Olympic Record

Fuchs in a 1911 KfV team photograph.



Fuchs in a duel, (match date unknown).

Gottfried Fuchs (in the foreground) and Julius Hirsch (in the background), attacking in a match against Mannheim, 1912.

Gottfried Fuchs was born on May 3, 1889, in Karlsruhe, Germany. From an early age, he fell in love with the sport of soccer, recently imported into Germany from England. At sixteen, he began his remarkable career with Düsseldorfer FC, helping the team win the West German Championship in 1907. Soon after, he joined Karlsruher FV, where he became a key player in the team's famous Innensturm (forward line), alongside Fritz Förderer and Julius Hirsch. Together, they won several regional titles and ultimately the German national championship in 1910.

In 1911, "Gotti" – as he was known to his teammates and fans, was selected to the German national team. In just six international matches, he scored an incredible 14 goals. His most legendary moment came at the 1912 Stockholm Olympics, when he scored ten goals in a single match against Russia – a German record that still stands today.

Gottfried Fuchs combined soccer brilliance with a strong sense of fairness. When an opposing player was penalized for tripping him, he told the referee that he had stumbled over his own two feet. And after winning the German national championship, he turned celebration into a gesture of respect by giving each opposing player a leaf from his winner's laurel wreath. Winning was important – but fair play and respect mattered just as much.



The German National Soccer Team, Olympic Games, Stockholm 1912 (Fuchs third from left).



Video Clip
Fuchs/Hirsch
Striking Duo 1910;
German Football

From the Soccer Field to the Battlefield

From Glory to Horror



Fuchs in an artillery position, Seine, France, May 1917.



Reserve Lieutenant Gottfried Fuchs (date unknown).



Gottfried Fuchs receives the Iron Cross from the Grand Duke of Baden, March 1917.



Fuchs during World War I.

With the outbreak of the First World War on August 1, 1914, Gotti's soccer career was interrupted. The 25-year-old volunteered for military service and fought as a frontline officer on the Western Front from 1914 to March 1918, seeing action in some of the war's most devastating battles. He was wounded four times.

Fuchs received numerous decorations, including the Iron Cross First Class and the rarely awarded Knight's Cross of the Royal House Order of Hohenzollern with Swords. His commanding officer described him as a "competent, dashing officer ... special bravery ... very welcome and well liked among his comrades." He is likely one of the most highly decorated German soccer national team players to this day.

He was discharged from his regiment on November 30, 1918, and returned home to Karlsruhe. The horrors he witnessed at the front left a lasting mark on him. Seeing suffering and cruelty at close range deeply shaped his outlook, fostering a sober awareness of human nature and reinforcing his conviction that one must hold fast to moral values, even - especially - when circumstances encourage people to ignore or forsake them.



Gottfried Fuchs (2nd from left) with his three brothers (date unknown).

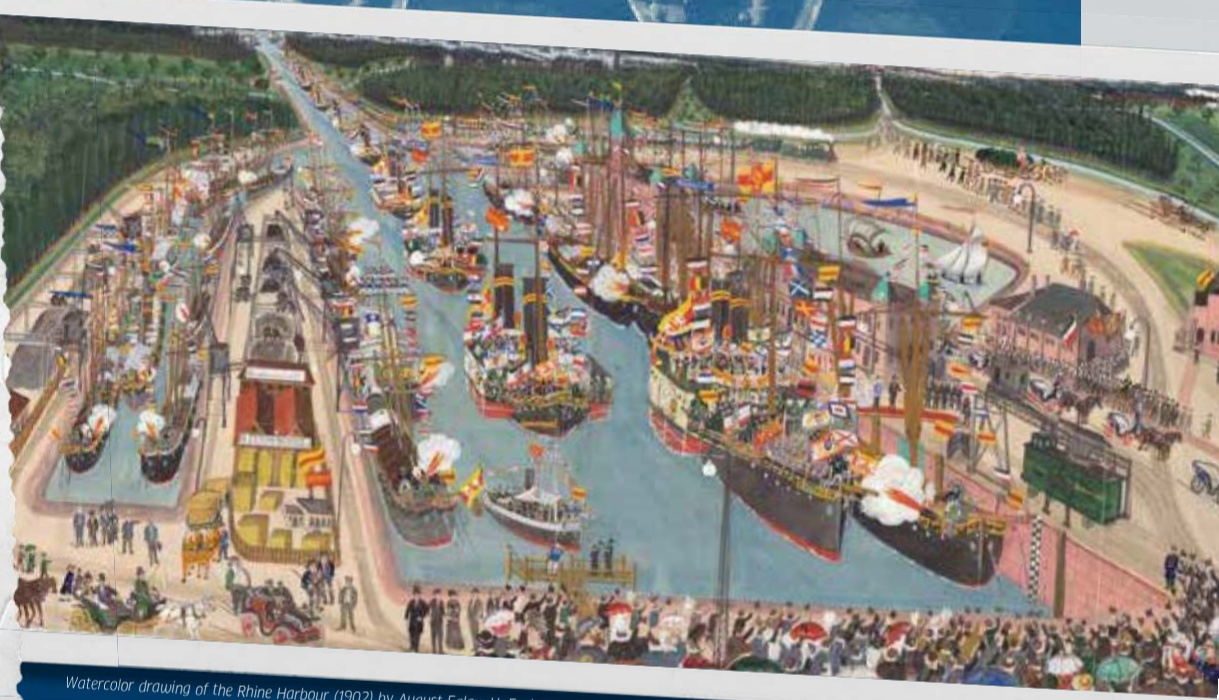
Back to Business

Timber and Family after World War I

Factory Hall of H. Fuchs Söhne, circa 1910.



Timber yard with logs and beams, circa 1910.



Watercolor drawing of the Rhine Harbour (1902) by August Eglau; H. Fuchs & Söhne (left).

In 1871, the Fuchs family had settled in the fast-growing city of Karlsruhe. In 1877, the family founded H. Fuchs Söhne, a lumber company based in the city's rapidly expanding port on the Rhine river. New branches opened in Stuttgart in 1897 and in Strasbourg in 1901, turning H. Fuchs Söhne into the leading lumber company in southwest Germany.

After finishing his military service and retiring in 1920 from soccer, Gottfried Fuchs joined the family business and began his remarkable career as an entrepreneur. By 1921, he had assumed management of H. Fuchs Söhne Trading Company, overseeing the company's lumber trading operations, travelling regularly to Poland and what is now Czechia. In Warsaw, he met Eugenia (Genia) Steinberg; they married in Karlsruhe in 1923. Between 1924 and 1929, they welcomed four children: the twins Jan and Ivonna, followed by their daughters Anita and Natalie.



Wedding photo of Gottfried and Eugenia, Karlsruhe, July 10, 1923.

Setting Down Roots in Berlin

Business Success, Daily Life, and Community

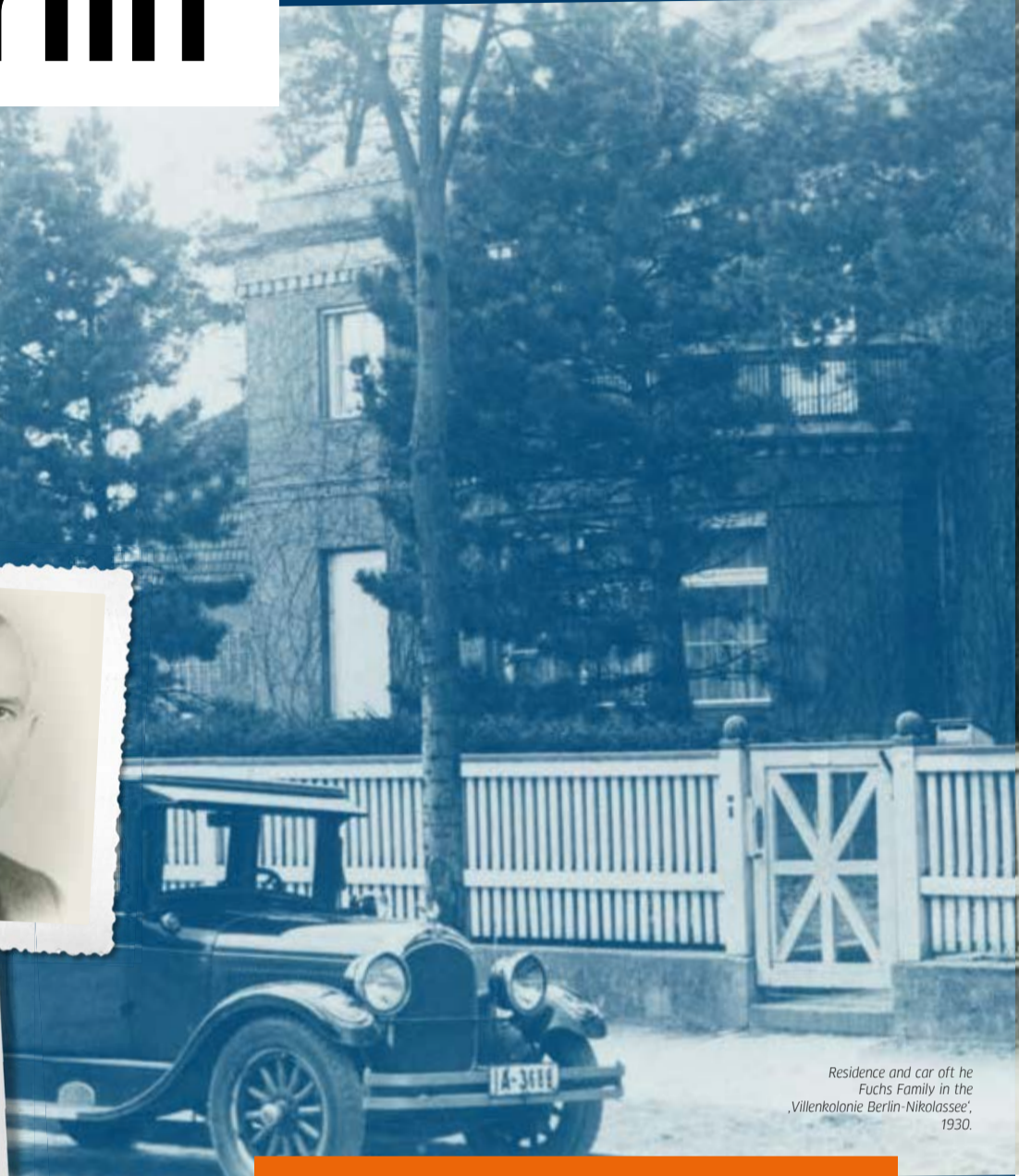
Gottfried and Genia in the Swiss Alps (date unknown).



Gottfried Fuchs' children with the nanny „Mam'zelle" on holiday in Heringsdorf, 1932.



Residence and car of the Fuchs Family in the „Villenkolonie Berlin-Nikolassee", 1930.



In 1928, the young family relocated from Karlsruhe to the vibrant capital of Berlin, settling in a beautiful house in the elegant villa district of Nikolassee. Gottfried Fuchs quickly established his business, further extending its international reach. Even when the global economic crisis struck, his business continued to thrive.

Daily life revolved around business and social engagements, travel, and a close-knit circle of friends and relatives, with frequent visits from Warsaw and Karlsruhe. The children enjoyed a carefree upbringing, forging friendships at school and among neighboring families, spending summer days at the nearby popular Berlin city beach, Strandbad Wannsee, and taking holidays along the Baltic coast.

At this point, soccer played a smaller role in Gottfried Fuchs's life, although his record and achievements were still very much celebrated during the interwar period. A lifelong athlete, his active sporting interests shifted to tennis, and he became involved in the local sports club, Ortsverein Nikolassee e.V., where he was both respected and warmly regarded by fellow members. As late as March 29, 1933 – by which time the National Socialists were already in power – he was elected, albeit briefly, to the club's board, a testament to his standing and popularity within the local community.

Gottfried Fuchs' children with neighborhood friends sitting on the wall in front of the family home (date unknown).



Everything changes

The Nazis Come to Power



An elementary school class and their teacher perform the compulsory Nazi salute in a schoolyard in Germany, circa 1933.



The former Lehweess School in Nikolassee, Berlin-Zehlendorf, which was attended by Gottfried Fuchs's daughters.



Wannsee beach with Nazi flags, Berlin, 1936.



Queue at Wannsee beach with the sign: "Entry prohibited for Jews", 1935.

Geheime Staatspolizei

Staatspolizei-Leit-Stelle Berlin

Gb. Nr. Stapo IV C 3 - F. 713/41

Bezug: Ohne.

Anlagen: Eine.

Jch bitte
aufgeführten Juden
auf Grund der 11
S. 722 ff.) dem R

1 Name: **Fuchs**
(bei Frauen auch Geburtsname)

2. Geburtstag: **3.5.89**

3. Geburtsort und Kreis: **Kar**

4. Letzter inländischer Wohnsitz:
(genaue Anschrift ist anzugeben)

5. Zeitpunkt der Abwanderung: **30.12.37**

(falls er vor dem Inkrafttreten der 11 Verord-
nung zum RStG. liegt, genügt diesbezügliche An-
gabe.)

5. Inländische Vermögenswerte: **siehe Anlage.**

(Art der Vermögenswerte und deren ungefähre
ziffernmäßiger Wert ist anzugeben, ferner An-
gabe, ob bereits Sicherstellung der Vermögens-
werte erfolgt ist.)



People in front of a display case for the newspaper "Der Stürmer" with Nazi antisemitic propaganda, 1935.

In early 1933, with Adolf Hitler's seizure of power, life changed completely for Gottfried Fuchs and his family, who were suddenly confronted with an escalating regime of antisemitic measures.

At school, the Nazi greeting (Heil Hitler!) became compulsory. While at first the students didn't take this change seriously, within weeks, it was normalized. On April 1, 1933, the family witnessed the boycott of Jewish shops, and step by step, social exclusion of Jews intensified: friends withdrew, invitations stopped and swimming at Lake Wannsee was forbidden. Increasingly, they were forced to confront what it meant to be defined as Jews. After seeing a hateful Nazi antisemitic propaganda poster, daughter Anita asked quietly, "Is that who we are?" Gottfried and Genia did what they could to protect their children, including sending son Jan to school in Scotland to get him out of an increasingly violent school environment.

In 1935, the Nuremberg Laws officially excluded Jews from public life and institutions. The children were barred from attending school, and Gottfried Fuchs was expelled from his tennis club. His social and business life was curtailed. Then, in 1936, amid the systematic expropriation of Jewish property under the Nazi policy of "Aryanization," he was forced to sell his business for far below its value.

Confronted with the accelerating danger of their predicament, Gottfried and Genia saw no other option but to make the painful decision to uproot their lives in Germany and seek safety elsewhere in Europe.

Gestapo order for the seizure of Gottfried Fuchs' assets, March 1942. The document cites the Nazi law used for the state-led robbery of Jews living in exile.



Interview with Anita Heller, Montreal Holocaust Memorial Centre, 1997

Forced into Exile

Navigating Danger, Saving the Family

In the summer of 1937, the parents told their children they were going on holiday to Switzerland. In fact, they were trying to see whether exile had become unavoidable; they settled in Engelberg, enrolling the children in school. On December 31, 1937, the family officially emigrated from Germany.

Switzerland allowed them to stay for only one year. Gottfried applied for visas to France and the United States, but let the U.S. visas lapse because the children wanted to stay in Europe. In the autumn of 1938, the family fled to Paris. The children went to school. In 1939, Gottfried clandestinely got his mother, Sara, out of Germany. In Paris, he saw his friend Julius Hirsch for the last time – a farewell that scarred him for life; Hirsch was deported to Auschwitz in 1943.

Safety in Paris was also short-lived. When war broke out, Gottfried, now stateless, was interned as a German "enemy alien," while his siblings still in Germany struggled to escape (his sister Senta and her husband were unable to, and were killed at Auschwitz). Desperate, Genia applied for visas abroad, including to Canada, which hardly admitted any Jewish refugees. The Canadian Ambassador Georges Vanier was exceptionally allowed to grant them entry permits. On 23 May 1940 – the German army was already in Northern France – the family fled on a day's notice, catching the last boat train from St Malo to Britain and from there to Canada.



Passport photograph and Canadian visa of Gottfried Fuchs, 1940.



Gottfried and Eugenia Fuchs with their children in Paris, May 1939.



Gottfried and Genia, Saint-Cloud, near Paris, 1939.

Polizeiliche Abmeldung
(Großer Meldeschein)

Gilt nicht als Personalausweis

Für amtliche Zwecke.

Am 30. Dezember 1937 verzieht – verziehen

von Berlin-Nikolaasse Schopenhauerstr. Straße Nr. 74 Kreis

nach Engelberg/Schwyz Villa Fortuna Straße Nr. _____ Kreis

Für Meldepflichtige, die ihren Wohnsitz nicht aufgegeben haben: Zweck und voransichtliche Dauer

1. Familienname (bei Frauen auch Geburtsname und gegebenenfalls Name aus der letzten früheren Ehe)	2. Vornamen (sämtliche, Rufname ist zu unterscheiden)	3. Familienstand (ledig, verheiratet, verwitwet, geschied.)	4. Beruf (genaue Angabe, ob selbständig oder Angestellter, Arbeiter usw.)	5. Geburts-			7. a) Geburtsort b) Kreis c) Staat (wenn Ausländer)	8. Staatsangehörigkeit	9. Religion	10. Wohnung (Ort, Straße, Hausnummer) bei der letzten Personalausgabe (10. Oktober jeden Jahres)
				Tag	Monat	Jahr				
Fuchs	Gottfried	verh.	Kaufmann	3.	5.	39	Karlsruhe-Deutsches Reich	"	"	Schopenhauerstr.
Fuchs geb. Steinberg	Eugenia	"	Ehefrau	5.	10.	95	Warschau	"	"	dto.
Fuchs	Jan	led.	Sohn	20.	6.	24	Herrnolb	"	"	dto.
Fuchs	Ivonna	"	Tochter	20.	6.	24	Herrnolb	"	"	dto.
Fuchs	Anita	"	Tochter	26.	4.	26	Karlsruhe	"	"	dto.
Fuchs	Natalia	"	Tochter	11.	3.	29	Berlin	"	"	dto.

Eigenhändige Unterschrift des Angemeldeten: [Signature]

Eigenhändige Unterschrift des Hauseigentümers oder seines Vertreters: [Signature] Gottfried Fuchs

Den 30. Dezember 1937 abg. an die Polizei

Official police deregistration of the Fuchs family, Berlin, December 30, 1937.

Building a New Life

Challenges, Identity, Renewal



The Fuchs family in Montreal, circa 1947. Standing from left: John, Godfrey, Anita, Yvonne. In front: Natalie and Eugenia.



Godfrey Fuchs with his granddaughter Monica, Montreal, circa 1957.



Godfrey Fuchs, playing tennis in Vermont, USA (date unknown).



Godfrey Fuchs, Montreal, 1971.

On 12 June 1940, the Fuchs family arrived in Montreal aboard the Duchess of Richmond, as war raged across Europe. Their new beginning in Canada was far from easy. Having fled Nazi Germany, the family now had to navigate the underlying antisemitism of Canadian society while also encountering reserve from Montreal's established Jewish community, not least because they were German and lived secular lives.

With help they found housing and initial employment for Gottfried. To avoid discrimination – and because “Fuchs” sounded harsh in English – he adopted the name Godfrey Fuchs.

Further challenges arose from Quebec's complex language and religious divisions. Although the younger daughters spoke French but no English, they were excluded from Francophone Catholic schools and required to attend an anglophone Protestant school.

Nonetheless, the girls led their high school graduating classes and excelled in university. Jan (now John) joined the Canadian air force after initially being rejected because he was deemed German, eventually flying many missions. Fairly quickly, Godfrey Fuchs was able to reestablish himself in business, purchased a family home in a good neighborhood, and he returned to a lifelong passion: playing tennis.

Only in 1945 did the family obtain formal naturalization. After the war, Godfrey began the complicated bureaucratic German restitution process to gain compensation for the property that the Nazis had expropriated. This process was not completed in his lifetime. His grandchildren had to complete it decades later.



Interview with Anita Heller, Montreal Holocaust Memorial Centre, 1997

Ripped Out of History

Erasure and Re-Engagement



Godfrey Fochs with the players of Bologna FC in Montreal, 1971.

Excerpt from a letter from Godfrey Fochs to Sepp Herberger, March 1972.

“To completely forget the Hitler era is not easy for those who endured and suffered under it ...

... Yet it nevertheless remains a human duty for us all not to hold anything against anyone – certainly not against the new generation.”



In the stands at the Santos FC vs. Bologna FC match, Montreal, June 30, 1971.

Montreal, June 1971: Before a Santos FC match, Godfrey Fochs meets the world star Pelé. According to a handwritten note by the former football star on the back of the photo, he told Pelé: “I am 53 years older than you. My wish for you is this: that you will still be in the prime of life in the year 2025.”

Excerpt from a letter from DFB Vice-President Hermann Neuberger to Sepp Herberger regarding the refusal to invite Godfrey Fochs, February 1972.

“Gottfried Fuchs ... is not so well known in German football that his invitation would be understood or even received with particular approval.”

Excerpt from a letter from Sepp Herberger to Godfrey Fochs, March 1972.

“This rejection is for me a single, bitter disappointment and once again an occasion to observe that in this world, so distorted as it is today, one can rely on NO ONE anymore.”

In Nazi Germany, Gottfried Fuchs and his records had been erased from soccer history – a silencing that stretched long beyond the end of the war. Yet what troubled him more was the abandonment of his friend Julius Hirsch by the soccer community they had served. Even on later visits to Germany, he never returned to Karlsruher FV – “because they murdered Juller Hirsch.”

It wasn't until 1955 that German soccer reached out to him. National team coach Sepp Herberger had, as a young man, cheered on Fuchs and idolized his playing style and exemplary sportsmanship. He sent Fuchs a postcard signed by the team marking Germany's first match against the Soviet Union since the 1912 Olympics. A sincere exchange of letters between the two soccer greats followed.

Fuchs and his record had not been forgotten in Canada. In 1971, at the age of 82, he was invited to take the kickoff together with Pelé at a friendly match between Santos FC and Bologna FC in Montreal.

In the lead-up to the 1972 opening of Munich's new Olympic Stadium, Herberger suggested inviting Fuchs as an honorary guest as a gesture of restitution. However, the Deutscher Fußball-Bund (DFB, German Football Association) refused, officially citing financial reasons. At the time, several former Nazi Party members still sat on its board.

Fuchs never learned of this decision. He passed away in Montreal on 25 February 1972, having played tennis the night before.

A Legacy Beyond Soccer

This Is Not About the Past – It's About the Present.

War and persecution scattered the family of Gottfried Fuchs across the globe. In defiance, the survivors were determined to remain connected and present in the world. After 1945, Gottfried and Genia took an active part in rebuilding family ties through letters, visits, and photographs, nurturing a shared sense of belonging. Alongside the pain of exile stood a conscious commitment to embrace life and secure a future for their children.

This resilience shaped the generations that followed. **Today, relatives on four continents remain closely connected, and large family reunions have become meaningful steps in a long process of healing.**

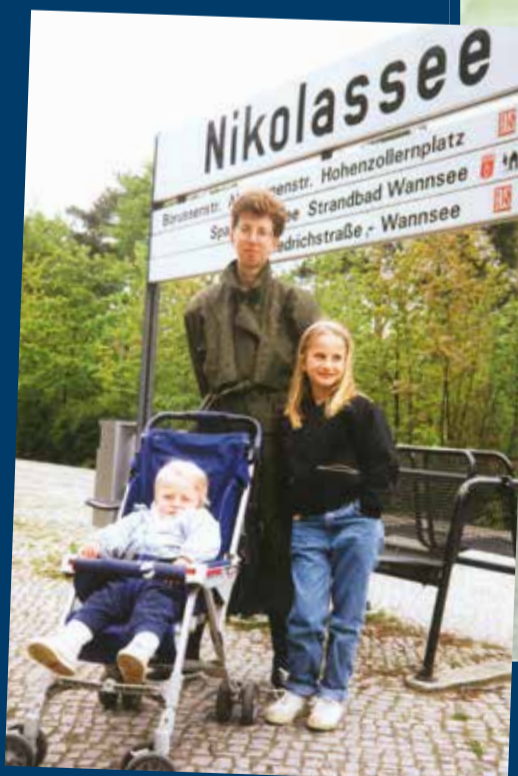
For decades, however, the family's relationship with Germany remained ambivalent. The former national player had been stripped of his citizenship, and he had to battle for restitution, but he travelled to Germany and often spoke German in his daily life. His children felt torn between happy childhood memories and the trauma of persecution, often feeling their right to speak German had been taken from them. In the 1980s, his daughters began returning to Berlin to visit the places of their childhood. **In 2000, sixty years after exile, Gottfried Fuchs's descendants regained German citizenship; today even his great-great-grandchildren hold German passports.**

It is the grandchildren's generation that now actively carries the memory forward. At the first Fuchs family reunion in Karlsruhe in 2009 – seventy years after "Gotti" and "Juller" had last seen one another – their grandchildren embraced for the first time, forging a lasting bond between the families.

Gottfried Fuchs's legacy reaches far beyond football. His story shows that remembrance is not only about the past – it is a responsibility in the present.



Andreas Hirsch and Monica Heller during an interview for the "ZWEITZEUGEN" project, 2024.



Monica Heller with her children during a trip to Berlin, 1992.



Anita Heller in front of the KaDeWe, Berlin 1997.



Natalie Fuchs Isaacs in front of the former "Lehweß School" in Nikolassee, 2006.



Masthead of the Fuchs Family Newsletter.



Interviews with Monica Heller and Andreas Hirsch, "Zweitzeugen" Project



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