

Curriculum vitae of Fritz Paul Hammerschmidt

Fritz Paul Hammerschmidt was born on 21 November 1894 in Cottbus, Brandenburg, Germany. His mother was Bertha Hirschberg, who was born in Berlin in 1859 and died in Cottbus in 1916. His father was the lawyer Abraham Leib Louis Hammerschmidt, also known as Abraham Ludwig Hammerschmidt (1858 in Jastrow/Jastrowie, Poland-1934 in Cottbus, Germany).

Hermann Siegfried Franz Hammerschmidt (1887-1944), Hans Hammerschmidt (1895-unknown) and Walter Otto Hammerschmidt (1900-1939) were brothers of Fritz Hammerschmidt, and like him they were all lawyers. His sisters were Frieda Berliner, née Hammerschmidt, born in Cottbus in 1892, who died in Berlin in 1937, and Hertha Goertel, née Hammerschmidt, also born in Cottbus in 1893.

Fritz Hammerschmidt was called up for military service at the end of May 1918, which he served until 20 August 1918. 'Fritz, the second eldest, a slight, petite law student, was discharged from the army because he had already failed his rifle training. He couldn't grip the stock with his small hands during drill, the 'grip tapping'. So he did the monstrous thing: he repeatedly dropped the rifle. When even the subsequent detention could not remedy this deficiency, Fritz was sent home,' as can be read in his nephew Wolfgang Hammerschmidt's book.

Fritz Hammerschmidt was sworn in in Cottbus in May 1919 after passing his first bar exam in Berlin. He passed his state examination in October 1922 and was subsequently employed as a temporary judge for several years. At the beginning of 1925, Fritz Hammerschmidt was admitted to the bar at the Court of Appeal in Berlin and, together with his brother, the lawyer Walter Hammerschmidt, ran his own law firm, which 'sometimes employed four or more typists'. The clientele also included 'the Chinese legation and its nationals'.

Fritz Hammerschmidt and his future wife Ernestine Frischmann may have met in this environment, as Ernestine Frischmann (1902-1984) worked as a secretary in the legation of the Republic of China.

On 28 November 1931, Fritz Hammerschmidt and Ernestine Frischmann married in Berlin-Charlottenburg. The marriage was witnessed by 'lawyer Walter Hammerschmidt' and 'graphic designer Marcel Frischmann'. Their son Anselm was born in Berlin-Wilmersdorf on 6 September 1934.

When the 'Law for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service' came into force, Fritz Hammerschmidt lost his professional livelihood. In a registered letter to the 'Prussian Minister of Justice' and the President of the Court of Appeal on 8 April 1933, Fritz Hammerschmidt 'humbly requested my continued admission or re-admission to the bar at the Court of Appeal' and enclosed 'a certificate from the Chinese Legation'. The legation attached great importance to 'continuing to entrust Mr Hammerschmidt with the representation of its nationals' and would 'very much welcome it if the wishes of the legation were taken into account'. In May 1933, Fritz Hammerschmidt repeated his request that 'the ban on representation imposed on us be revoked'.

Fritz Hammerschmidt lost his licence to practise on 30 November 1938 and was removed from the list of lawyers admitted to the Kammergericht on 1 December 1938.

Fritz Hammerschmidt was forced to perform hard labour, ultimately as a worker at Gelling & Co. at Kurfürstendamm 35 (Gelling, P. & Co. Holz-Leder- u. Werkstoff-Spezialität). 'From 19 September 1941, he was forced to wear the Yellow Star. Property had to be forcibly sold, the bank account was confiscated. Strong excitement due to frequent house searches and threats as well as worries about the family, combined with completely inadequate nutrition and hard, unaccustomed work, caused a decline in strength.' (Brussels in September 1956, Ernestine Frischmann-Godefroid, widowed Hammerschmidt)

The brother Hans Hammerschmidt recalled that Fritz Hammerschmidt was a 'passionate art collector'. In connection with the applications for compensation, Hans Hammerschmidt stated in an affidavit regarding the Hammerschmidts' last freely chosen residential address at Prinzregentenstraße 92: 'All I can say about the furnishings in my brother's and sister-in-law's flat is that, in addition to very beautiful and sometimes very valuable period furniture, they both owned very valuable works of art. I remember very clearly a bronze figure from China, which depicted a seated Buddha and was said to date from around the 7th century AD. This figure was unique in its beauty and so valuable that a museum - according to my memory the Kaiser Friedrich Museum [author's note: today's Bode Museum] was supposed to acquire it. My brother also owned a whole series of very valuable paintings. I still clearly remember a huge painting by the Impressionist Heckendorf, a painting by the Expressionist Nolde and countless drawings and etchings, especially magnificent drawings by the painter Liebermann.' The declaration of assets dated 29 February 1944 no longer contains any period furniture, paintings or drawings, just a few items of men's and women's clothing.

Weakened and humiliated, Fritz Hammerschmidt was arrested by the Gestapo on 1 March 1944 and taken to the Berlin Schulstraße collection camp. He was deported to Auschwitz together with his son Anselm Hammerschmidt and his mother-in-law Eugenie Frischmann, née Schwarz, on the 50th transport to the East. In a court decision from 1947, the date of death was recorded as 23 March 1944.

On 24 March 1944, the Chancellor of the Spanish Consulate in Berlin, Mr J. Salcher, lost his 'entire belongings' as a result of a 'direct bomb hit'. At the beginning of September 1944, he wrote to the Chief Finance President in Berlin with the subject 'Sale of the furniture in the former Jewish flat Hammerschmidt Berlin-Wilmersdorf, Babelsberger Str. 52'. Mr J. Salcher would take over the furniture for a fee, but mainly he wanted 'to be allocated the flat' so that he would have the opportunity as soon as possible to carry out his work 'as chancellor of the Spanish consulate (representative of the Spanish consul), as court interpreter (active in the administration of German justice), as house manager and as cell leader of the NSDAP', i.e. the 'official and professional work at home'. He was also celebrating his silver wedding anniversary and would be 'very happy' if he now had the opportunity to 'build his own home again' by buying furniture after the 'total loss of his bedroom furniture'.

Fritz Hammerschmidt and Ernestine Hammerschmidt, née Frischmann, were denied the opportunity to celebrate their silver wedding anniversary in their own home.

Sources: Address Books Berlin, ancestry, Bundesarchiv, BLHA (Brandenburgisches Landeshauptarchiv), Arolsen Archives, LaBo (Landesarchiv für Bürger- und Ordnungsangelegenheiten) and

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