

LITERATUR

Bloch, Erich: Das verlorene Paradies. Ein Leben am Bodensee 1897-1939 (= Konstanzer Geschichts- und Rechtsquellen 33). Ostfildern 1992.

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BILDNACHWEIS

Erich Bloch, 1914. Das Foto zeigt Erich Bloch als Schüler in der Untersekunda, erkennbar an der Schülmütze. Es stammt aus dem Privatbesitz von Erich Bloch und ist abgedruckt bei: Bloch, Erich: Das verlorene Paradies. Ein Leben am Bodensee 1897-1939 (= Konstanzer Geschichts- und Rechtsquellen 33). Ostfildern 1992. S. 63.

ERICH BLOCH

* 1897 – WANGEN, MÜNCHEN



My name is Erich Bloch. I was born on 4th August 1897 in Konstanz. I grew up in Wangen at Lake Constance, which is close to the city Konstanz in Baden. My mother died when I was just four years old but nevertheless, I had a happy childhood. Since my father had his own chambers as a lawyer and a lot of clients, we kids were mainly raised by female servants. They were also responsible for running the household, so I had a lot of time to myself, which I spent outside in the nature. I loved to play with my friends outside: rounders, hide and seek, cricket and when it rained, we played cards. Together with the kids living on the other street, we often organized a theatre play and we had a big audience. But the best time ever was when the circus was in town. But I was also happy being on my own: I enjoyed daydreaming, observing the street and thinking about everything. This was the reason why I didn't want to go to Kindergarten, and I didn't have to in the end.

When I first attended the Stephansschule, I was the only Jew in my class. It wasn't bad though because for Religious Education the class got mixed up with other years and I met other Jewish kids. This is where I learned Hebrew. During my time at school, I was only hit with a cane once because I wasn't paying attention. This was also the time when I celebrated carnival for the first time and oh boy I had so much fun dressing up.

Afterwards I attended a humanistic Gymnasium, where boys and girls were educated together. However, I was never an eager student, I enjoyed doing sports much more. Additionally, I was not a very well-behaved student, I liked playing tricks on my teachers. Once I dressed up as a woman and asked my math's teacher to dance with me.

Whenever it was market day, we boys tried to talk to girls and behaved in a silly way. This is how I got my first kiss when I was 13 or 14 years old. My grandpa gave me a bicycle as a present for my Bar Mitzwa. I went on bike trips with my classmates when we didn't have to go to school. We enjoyed it the most to cross the border over to Switzerland to Bottighofen, or to ride at the Lake Constance. There was a shore with beautiful trees and flowers.

Although I am Jewish, I was often in Catholic Church and attended the Mass as a kid. Our nannies were Christian and when they looked after us on Sundays, we had to go with them of course. When I was only 12 years old, I already started to discuss the gospel with the Catholic priest, my father and classmates. We Jews were well integrated in Wangen. It didn't matter much which religion we were a member of or where we came from. My father was a liberal Jew. In my free time I was a member of an association called "Der Wandervogel" (birds of passage) because I enjoyed being outside in the nature.

In August 1914, I was 17 years old at that time, I volunteered for the army. I wanted to protect my home country. But after only 14 days all my comrades were dead, and I was injured. So, I returned home and finished school and graduated with A-levels. After that, I started studying law in Munich. I didn't think it was very interesting but the chances to get a job were pretty good and I was a skilled speaker. I enjoyed studying philosophy and literature much more. In Easter 1919, I was announced to be ready for the field and so I fought in the battle of Verdun¹, but I was also injured there and brought to a military hospital. I started to work in the book shop of the military base after that.

Back in Germany, I switched to the university in Freiburg, where I primarily studied philosophy and literature. If I hadn't been a pacifist because of my experiences in the war, the encounters with the anti-war and students' movements in Munich and Freiburg would have convinced me anyway. After studying in the library, I enjoyed going to the orchestra or to classical concerts. Together with one friend from university and my brother, we often crossed the borders and sang as street musicians to earn some money or get food. To get my doctor's degree I went back to Munich to work with Professor Borchardt. After being awarded my doctor's degree in German literature I went to the peninsula Hõri in 1922 and helped the farmers who lived there. It was much nicer to be dressed in sporty or rural clothes instead of running around in serious suits.

In 1925, I married my first wife Paula, we had one son, Walter. However, our marriage didn't last very long and so we got separated but stayed friends. I still enjoyed my time on the peninsula, bought an estate there and wrote my first poetry collection, which was about life and the gratitude towards my life. Shortly afterwards I met my now wife Lisel Levinger and we got married in 1930. Now we even have one daughter, Elisabeth.

Soon we moved onto the peninsula Hõri for good. I dedicated myself to agriculture and invented a method to harvest more. But besides that, I still worked as an author and also as the head of a publishing house. The Stadler-Verlag in Konstanz is under my control.

¹ grausamste und verlustreichste Schlacht im Ersten Weltkrieg