



In 1942, Georges-André Kohn, together with his siblings and his mother, converted to Catholicism to protect themselves against persecution in occupied France. The photo shows 12-year-old Georges-André on the occasion of his First Communion.

THE 20 CHILDREN

Georges-André Kohn

Georges-André Kohn was born in Paris on 23 April 1932. His father, Armand Kohn, was director of the Jewish hospital in Paris from the beginning of the war. The family was initially protected from deportation by his position. However they were arrested just before allied troops liberated Paris in August 1944. Georges-André Kohn, his parents Armand and Suzanne, his older siblings Antoinette, Philippe and Rose-Marie, together with their grandmother Marie-Jeanne, were taken to the Drancy transit camp near Paris on 28 July 1944. Their deportation into the German Reich followed on 17 August 1944. On the third day of the journey, Philippe and Rose-Marie – along with about 30 other prisoners – managed to escape from the train. The other members of the family were put into concentration camps: Georges-André's father Armand was deported to Buchenwald but survived his imprisonment. His mother and sister Antoinette were deported to Bergen-Belsen; Georges-André and his grandmother were sent to Auschwitz.

In 1978, Philippe Kohn learned of his brother's death from Günther Schwarberg, who had found the family in Paris.

There is a surviving letter that tells us a little about Georges-André. It was written to Armand Kohn in 1946 by a former French prisoner, Louis Micard:



Family Kohn with their children Philippe, Antoinette and Marie-Rose. The picture was taken around 1931 before the birth of Georges-André.

"Dear Sir, at the beginning of 1944, a transport arrived in Drancy which included your son. He was transferred almost immediately to Lager D (labor camp) where I and my comrades were. Do I need to tell you how warmly he was received by all of us? Each of us made an enormous effort to help him to forget where he was and to keep from him as much as possible the truth of what was going on. We did everything we could to comfort him over the separation from his mother who – together with his grandmother and aunt, as well as some other relatives, I believe – was held in the women's camp opposite ours on the other side of the railway line. Some of us managed to take letters there, so that Georges was able to exchange letters with his mother for several weeks. Then one when there was no more news from the women's camp. Georges was in despair. We tried to comfort him as well as we could, but we knew the meaning of this silence.

Weeks passed. A selection of children took place. Although Georges was healthy, he made a rather weak impression and we were worried that he would be picked out. But thanks to comrades, French doctors in the sick bay, he managed to pass muster with artificial help.

Then the most unpleasant time came; it was winter. We had so many enemies – snow, wind, cold! Georges was well. He wore warm clothing and – quite unusually – stout shoes which protected his feet from the wet. He was working with a trolley. His job, as you may know, was to push or pull the cart in which rubbish, firewood and sometimes coal was put. The Kapo was a German who bellowed, but was not too strict and did not hit us. December came, and January. The rapid advance of the Russians forced the Germans to evacuate this camp on 18



Philippe Kohn at the inauguration of Georges-André-Kohn street in Hamburg-Burgwedel on 21 April 1992.

January 1945. That was when I lost sight of little Georges.

Later in France, a doctor who had been in Birkenau and whom I met in Paris, told me that he had died in Germany. That is the only information I can give you about your son. He was such a dear little boy – my comrades and I regarded him as a little brother. His loss, if that has been his fate, will be a sadness most of us.”