

***Prof. Dr Dr h.c. Peter-Alexis Albrecht***

**Presentation  
of the second part of the new exhibition  
in the former prayer room (Leslie Baruch Brent-Hall)**

**and the  
'Practice and reflections  
for a future culture of remembrance for SHOAH'**

Ladies and gentlemen, dear visitors to the new exhibition!

I would like to welcome you to this new Hall of Remembrance and its enhancement for the commemoration of the future of SHOAH and thank you for being here.

The charitable Cajewitz Foundation acquired the former orphanage to create a central cultural centre with the district's Janusz-Korczak-Library. *Janusz-Korczak-Library* in the district. Charitable organisations and later a school became co-tenants. The former prayer hall (for 200 people) became a centre for communication in Pankow. Since 2007, the foundation has organised 72 '*Pankow Orphanage Talks*' every year, attracting numerous participants from politics, culture and academia as well as a dedicated audience.

I would now like to give you a new perspective on the culture of remembrance in this former prayer hall, which now bears the name *Leslie Baruch Brent-Hall*.

Directly behind me, next to the Square of the Old Torah, the steles of the **592** deported and murdered Jews from Pankow are now permanently fixed with their first names and surnames. This is probably the only place in Pankow where the names of those murdered are united out of oblivion.

On the side of the window, two long blue flags list the names of the **44** murdered pupils, teachers and carers. They were all killed in concentration camps.

And now please look at the right-hand wall of this room. There, opposite all those murdered, 9 former pupils are now looking into this former prayer room – taken by the Swiss photographer Irène Zandel. Why these new portraits there?

It was the outstanding experience in this former prayer room in 2001, namely the "reopening" ('reunion') of the house, which was organised by 18 survivors of the former pupils and many of their relatives. From Israel, the USA, England and Canada, the *Cajewitz Foundation* and an active *association of friends and supporters of the orphanage* were able to persuade these people to return to the site of their expulsion for the first time after the SHOAH, and did so several times at annual reunions until 2014. They survived thanks to rescuing child transports and adventurous escapes. Since 2019, all 18 of these former pupils have passed away. They look from left to right at

- *Hilde Schoenfeld* from England, who died in London on 15 May 2001, a few hours after returning from the moving opening of the house
- *Renate Bechar* from Israel, daughter of the last and murdered director of the Jewish orphanage Kurt Crohn and his wife Susanne (also murdered)
- *Ernest Loewenberg* from England, survived by moving his school to England in 1938
- *Alex Deutsch* from the USA, a survivor of the Auschwitz concentration camp
- *Günter Goldbarth* from Canada, survives in hiding in Holland
- *Bert Lewyn* from the USA, adventurously survived underground in Berlin
- *Salomon Muller* from England, formerly a foundling from the orphanage and survived after 'Kindertransport'

- *Herbert-Farr Freytag* from Argentina, survived and went into hiding in Holland
- *Lothar, then Leslie Baruch Brent* from England, survived as a 13-year-old through 'Kindertransport' to

You and the other pupils have left us a **legacy** that is hard to imagine more convincing and future-proof. It is orientated – despite or because of SHOAH – towards

### **Reconciliation and peace in the world.**

The combination of the new exhibition on the orphanage's past and the lasting bond with the former pupils and their descendants is carried on today by their SECOND, THIRD and FOURTH GENERATIONS. After 15 years of intensive friendship with the pupils, their foresight for reconciliation and peace must be secured in the future culture of remembrance.

They left us their legacy in conversations and published texts at the numerous meetings up to 2014 (for example Albrecht / Baruch Brent / Lammele 'Verstörte Kindheiten', 2008, p. 33 ff.; Leslie Baruch Brent: 'Ein Sonntagskind? BWV 2009):

- ***A traumatised view of the past prevents us from looking to the future.***
- ***Violence begets violence! So: terrorism begets terrorism, you can't bomb it away.***
- ***Only positive antipodes help!***
- ***Peace must be set against violence!***
- ***Empathy and cooperation alone can racism***

These positive impulses, which we were able to receive from them here in this former prayer room, are to be encouraged and made permanent, even in the fear and realisation that it can only ever remain an attempt. The words of former pupil *Sally Schaul Moddel*, spoken at the tenth anniversary celebrations with the other pupils, place us under this obligation!

***"Our fate must be immortalised here".***

That is the **task of this orphanage**, he said to us all here on 10 May 2011. You can see and hear it in the video on the first floor

**How can this proximity, also to all other SHOAH-affected persons be ensured for the future of the culture of remembrance?**

It involves an extrinsic-rational and - more importantly - an intrinsic-emotional level. Rationalities have been imparted to the post-war generation by schools, universities and the media, for example. But emotionally?

It is intrinsic, like almost everything in life: You *only* learn *emotionally through personal closeness and experience*. For us, who have been able to be close to the former pupils in the Foundation, in the Association of Friends and Sponsors and also in other contexts over the past 15 years (there have been fewer and fewer every year), this has become a lifelong bond, which is also manifested in today's event of this exhibition opening. This shared experience with the former pupils and contacts with the second, third and fourth generations of those affected by SHOAH are our duty! And this gives all of us who were involved the strength to put the legacy of the pupils into practice for the future.

In practice, this legacy must be transferred **to the responsibility of the Berlin Senate and the House of Representatives** and should no longer be left as the sole burden of the Pankow district administration.

We know what we are talking about. Recently, the district of Pankow had agreed to relocate the Korczak Library to a distant commercial site by means of a preliminary agreement with an investor. They were hoping for a larger usable area of over 3000 square metres. This would have meant the end of the orphanage as a place of remembrance and commemoration. The Cajewitz Foundation learnt about the preliminary agreement at from the local newspaper. According to reports, it has been cancelled for the time being.

But not only the practical, but also the intrinsic responsibility for the orphanage should be taken into the care of the public by the Berlin Senate:

- The house is a project of **everyday reality**. Past and present intertwine. **Memory comes alive here**. The authenticity of the place influences the way in which future generations experience history - in view of all the pupils who were murdered or saved by escape. This can be experienced in the orphanage in the long term.
  
- The orphanage is the only surviving, living building associated with Jewish commemorative culture designed by the great **Jewish architect Alexander Beer**. It is also at the centre of tourist interest for many visitors to Berlin.
  
- The orphanage has a central function as a **Berlin-wide centre of action and communication**. With its new exhibition on Jewish life and death in Pankow, it facilitates discourse that spans generations. These impulses for peace, freedom and social security can be communicated from here to further generations who are marked and continually affected by the SHOAH.
  
- Funding for this building is largely secured by the Cajewitz Foundation and the non-profit tenants. The primary aim is to **secure the legal and political existence of** this unique, living memorial for a future culture of remembrance of the SHOAH.

We will then present some further evidence of all of the above for our approach: '**Memory comes alive here**':

- *Jenny Brent* and *Simon Brent* will be joining us as representatives and ambassadors of the next generations of SHOAH. They come from London and I thank them and welcome them warmly.
- *Tobias Weiß*, the director of the library, will remind us of *Janusz Korczak* and his children. The lasting reminder as the name and obligation of the library in this former orphanage!
- SchuleEins will be showing us their project courses being implemented by pupils with a class teacher (*Julia Gerlof*) and a class teacher (*Lars Engelke*). An encouraging pedagogy.
- We hope that the concluding panel discussion with *Gesine Schwan*, *Michael Fürst* and *Ulrich K. Preuss* will provide us with reflections and recommendations for the future culture of remembrance.

My thanks go to all those involved, but also and especially – and this should be emphasised here – to the curator of the exhibition, *Pascal Johanssen* from the non-profit organisation "*Meisterrat e. V.*" and his highly active staff. They have created an exceptional exhibition. May it appeal to many visitors to the Jewish Orphanage, inform them and engage them in a future culture of remembrance.

Thank you very much for your attention!

**Berlin-Pankow on 5 March 2025**