

***Tobias Weiß – Head of the library***

**The Janusz - Korczak - Library**

**in the former Jewish orphanage**

– A library project with new experience strategies –

Ladies and gentlemen, dear Brent family,

First of all, I would like to assure you that the Janusz Korczak Library feels very much at home in the rooms of the Jewish orphanage, and we are very, very happy to use this building every day and I think we are also quite successful. We have around 600 visits a day. The library is open seven days a week. So you are welcome to drop by on a Sunday at your leisure and take another look at the exhibition. And I hope that this exhibition will also help to increase the number of visitors not just to the library, but to the building as a whole. And that the Janusz Korczak Library will also become more important beyond the borders of Pankow.

And the house in Berlin? Janusz Korczak, who gave his name to the library, was a Polish educator who himself ran an orphanage in Warsaw, which was then moved to the Warsaw ghetto by the Nazis. And Janusz Korczak had the opportunity to be saved. And he did not take this opportunity, but stayed with his children in the orphanage and eventually went to the gas together with his children.

I would like to read them a play that I think builds a good bridge between the children in Korczak's orphanage and the children who grew up here in this orphanage in Pankow.

As a good librarian, I naturally read something aloud – from the book by Christian Nürnberger *'Mutige Menschen. Resistance in the Third Reich'*, which was named Youth Book of the Year in 2015. Here is a short paragraph from it...

*"On 17 June (1942), the children performed a short play that Esther Winogron, a young teacher on Korczak's staff, had rehearsed with them, "The Post Office" by Rabindranath Tagore.*

*It is about Amal, the adopted child of a man called Madhav. Amal is seriously ill and is not allowed to leave the house. Although there is little hope of recovery, Madhav does everything for the sick boy. From the window, he observes life around him and talks to people: the milkman, the watchman, the flower girl and the children on the farm. Amal waits longingly for someone to come and free him from his enclave: "When will this great doctor come to me? I can't stand it in here any more."*

*The children in the orphanage recognised themselves in Amal. It is reported how they were carried away by the play and how depressingly realistic they found it. At the end of the play, little Amal sees death as redemption. The audience understood this perfectly. They probably had no idea that they were performing their own fate. They couldn't have known that it had long since been decided. Nor could they have known that many of their peers and contemporaries were already being tested to see what lay ahead."*

I think this exhibition, which opens today in the Pankow orphanage, is a very fitting reminder of these atrocities, but also of what was in this house. And that was life. And life is back in it today, more than ever. And I am very happy about that.

Thank you very much.