

## **The Education of the Cologne Jawne Gymnasium Children and the Berlin ORT School Boys in Germany and England**

*by Monica Lowenberg*

Endlich ist wieder Karneval;  
"Heidewitzka", so toent's ueberall!  
Wir armen Judenkinder nur  
Haben von Frohsinn keine Spur.  
Wir sehen die Masken, die Jecken und Narren  
Mit ihren Kostuemen, Gloeckchen und Knarren.  
Donnerwetter! Da ist einer als Teufel mit "Sterz"---  
Und etwas Wehmut stiehlt sich einem ins Herz.  
Wir wollen doch auch mal 'was Freude haben  
Und nicht immer bleiben nur Musterknaben;  
Man ist doch auch der Stadt Koeln Sohn,  
Und der Karneval ist Tradition!---  
Aber man ist Jude.....  
Und das wirkt wie 'ne Brause-  
Und man stopft sich die Ohren zu-  
Und bleibt still zu Hause!

("Karnevalsgedanken juedischer Schueler 1937"  
by Rudi Stern former Jawne pupil)

### **Life in Germany**

From their rise to power in 1933 and World War 11 the Nazis had managed in only six years to create four hundred laws and edicts against Jews. Laws that the Nazi's zealously executed until their final defeat in 1945 and which were ultimately bound with the overall aim of totally ghettoizing and secluding Jews from the wider community and eventually eliminating them all together by emigration and extinction. It is estimated that at least twenty of these regulations were concerned with the education of the Jewish child in Germany.<sup>1</sup>

For Jewish children the degree of persecution they suffered depended very much on where they lived, their relations with their German neighbours and size of

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<sup>1</sup> Solomon Colodner, *Jewish Education in Germany Under The Nazi's* (New York City: Jewish Education Committee Press, 1964) p37. For a detailed list of all the laws that affected Jewish youth and their education see pp 37-39.

the Jewish community. It is safe to state though that the situation of the Jewish child in a very small Jewish community was worse and a deciding factor for them and their parents to move in some cases. In small towns and villages, Jewish families and their children tended to become completely ostracized from non Jews. Friendships that they had nurtured for many years were almost over night abruptly terminated, leaving them to fend for themselves as they became the subjects of mockery and beatings . Leslie Baruch Brent<sup>2</sup> recalls the following,

When I recall my early childhood some images return to me in sharp focus. I remember my mother tucking me into bed each night, singing Brahms' Lullaby. I have abiding memories of Sunday afternoon walks with my parents up a hill through a lovely beech wood; of wonderful summer holidays by the Baltic; of the love and affection in which I was enveloped as a little boy.

I grew up in Koeslin, a small town in north Germany close to the sea. My father was a children's clothes sales rep, my mother helped part-time doing accounts in her parents' haberdashery shop. I was the only Jewish boy at a non-Jewish school. Our class teacher was a Nazi who sometimes dressed in uniform. He began to vilify me, and the children started throwing stones at me. My Jewish friend Inge recalls that I arrived several times at her flat bleeding from scalp wounds. Eventually my parents realised the situation was too dire for me to remain at school. My father knew the director of the orphanage in Berlin, so he took me there for my own safety in 1937. I was eleven.<sup>3</sup>

Jewish children brought up in the cities could also relate similar stories of cruelty, teachers relishing in the theory of 'Rassenkunde', excluding them from sports shouting, 'Jews can't do gym they are useless, go in the corner'<sup>4</sup>, making the child's life so unbearable that to leave and attend a Jewish school became for many their only option. Nevertheless, it would be wrong to assume that all German teachers were in favour of the hostility and racism that was nurtured within the

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<sup>2</sup> Professor Leslie Baruch Brent emeritus professor of Immunology at St Mary's Hospital Medical School London, former Kindertransportee , pupil of the Zweites Waisenhaus Berlin Pankow and Bunce Court School in England run by Anna Essinger. Personal Interview taped. 12 June 1998. London

<sup>3</sup> Sonia Purnell and Frances Hardy , 'The Children Britain saved from the Nazis' *Daily Mail Weekend* ( Saturday 22 May 1999), 20-22 (p.21).

<sup>4</sup> Interview with Hilde Schoenfeld Kindertransportee from Berlin and former pupil of the Zweites Waisenhaus school in Pankow, Personal Interview taped. 2 July 1998. London.

school environment, a number were not but they saw resistance as being simply too personally dangerous. As one pupil recalls who eventually left his school to attend the Jawne Gymnasium,

My mother went to the school and said to the class teacher that there was so much bullying that she would have to take us away and he said, "I know and it is more than my job is worth to stop it". And she said he was in tears.<sup>5</sup>

Not only did the Jewish child have to contend with a high degree of unrest at school, but in their domestic situation as well. The Nuremberg Laws of 1935 paved the way for the complete exclusion of Jews from intellectual, economic and social life in Germany ensuring that the lives of all Jews, children and adults became increasingly intolerable. As one Kindertransportee, Hilde Schoenfeld describes, 'Germany was like an octopus with tentacles coming all around you, in the end you couldn't breathe anymore'.<sup>6</sup> Numerous children witnessed their parents slowly slide into utter desperation as they were forced to sell up their businesses, sell their stock at laughable prices and in the worst cases sent to concentration camps after the 9 November 1938, the night of broken glass, Kristallnacht. In most cases the father's returned, but showed visible signs of severe beatings and trauma that only heightened the atmosphere of anxiety that the child daily breathed. Rolf Schild's father was taken to Dachau for two to three weeks when he returned, 'he didn't talk about it, but spent six months living on a barge, was many nights away to avoid being arrested in the night'.<sup>7</sup> Tragically the fear of being caught and further persecuted very often remained even once parents and children had left Germany to the extent that one Jewish mother once in England kept poison in a cigarette holder in case Germany won the war.<sup>8</sup>

The Order of September 10, 1935 demanded that all Jewish pupils be

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<sup>5</sup>Interview with Ralph Blumenau former Jawne pupil. Personal Interview taped. 12 March 1998. London.

<sup>6</sup>Interview with Hilde Schoenfeld. Personal Interview taped. 2 July 1998. London.

<sup>7</sup>Interview with Rolf Schild OBE former Jawne pupil Cologne . Personal Interview taped. 7 July 1999. London.

<sup>8</sup>Interview with Ralph Blumenau. Personal Interview taped. 12 March 1998. London.

expelled from Aryan schools, consequently the number of Jewish pupils attending Jewish schools literally doubled with ten thousand in 1933 to twenty thousand in 1935. In Berlin it has been estimated that approximately four thousand expelled Jewish pupils subsequently attended Jewish schools, many spoke of the relief they felt to be able to go to a Jewish school where they were finally accepted and allowed to 'be themselves'. In 1935 Jewish teaching personnel totaled 1,057, an increase of two hundred and forty four since 1933. However, there was a shortage of physical training teachers, and in commercial and technical subjects. In the same year forty four thousand Jewish pupils were enrolled in all types of schools. It is important to note that twenty thousand or 45.5% attended Jewish public schools, junior and senior high schools and the remaining twenty four thousand or 54.6% continued to attend German schools up through high school despite the order to have them expelled.<sup>9</sup> Two years later, according to the survey conducted by the Reichsvertretung, the total number of Jewish pupils in the German Reich was reported at 38,632, a decrease of approximately five thousand. The drop in Jewish pupils was undoubtedly a consequence of emigration, deportation and mortality.<sup>10</sup> On December 17, 1938, the Reich's Minister of Education announced the cessation of support of Jewish schools. However, blatantly at odds with this order the government continued up until 1939, to give subsidies to Jewish elementary schools, paid part of the taxes back to the Jewish community and paid teachers' pensions. The legalistic mentality of the Nazi's is laughable when one considers that on one hand they persecuted German Jews mercilessly and on the other met their financial obligations and helped in the education of Jewish elementary children!

Under such fraught circumstances the task of educating Jewish children

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<sup>9</sup>Colodner, *Jewish Education in Germany under the Nazi's*, pp44-45.

<sup>10</sup> Colodner summarises that in 1937:

1. Of the reported 38,632 Jewish pupils 23,670 or 61.27% were enrolled in Jewish schools.
  2. About 18,000 attended Jewish elementary schools and about one-third of all children attended these schools.
  3. More than half of the Jewish schools were elementary schools and about one-third of all children attended these schools.
  4. About two-thirds of Jewish pupils in high schools attended Jewish schools.
- Colodner, *Jewish Education in Germany under the Nazi's* p53.

became increasingly difficult. School staff were not only obliged to contend with the new state orders, malicious propaganda, daily changes in class sizes as a consequence of inner immigration and emigration<sup>11</sup> but also accommodate basic changes to their teaching habits to meet the new demands and needs. Such alterations entailed:

1. placing greater emphasis on the training of Judaism and the Hebrew language.
2. persuading and transforming indifferent children into pro-active Jews by making them participate in celebrations and activities within a Jewish context.<sup>12</sup>
3. prepare them to deal with their fragile position in the Nazi world
4. prepare them for emigration and
5. give them a vocational training which could be used in the country they were emigrating to.

Against this backdrop the Jawne and ORT school children were educated<sup>13</sup>.

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<sup>11</sup> After the assassination of a Secretary of the German Legation in Paris, Ernst vom Rath, Jewish emigration increased five fold. By November 1938, 100-150,000 Jews had left Germany, 40,000 were allowed to enter Britain, a quarter of whom were children coming under the umbrella of the Kindertransport. The Jawne Gymnasium children and Berlin ORT school boys came under this number. According to the Central British Fund for World Jewish Relief exactly 9,354 children were saved. Youth Aliyah under the directorship of Arieh Handler managed to save a further 10,000 children, 3262 of which were German Jewish children sent to Palestine where they worked on Kibbutzes and were instructed in Jewish culture and religion.

<sup>12</sup> Lotte Kaliski, founder of the (private) Kaliski school in Berlin noted: "Most of us came from very assimilated families and so did the children, but we understood that in order to give children a more positive attitude, they had to know something about their background" quoted in Kaplan, Marion. 'The School Lives of Jewish Children and Youth in the Third Reich' in *Jewish History*, Vol 11, No.2 (1997) pp41-52, p47.

For further details regarding the Kaliski school see Hertha Luise, Busemann; Michael Daxner, and Werner Foelling. *Insel der Geborgenheit Die Private Waldschule Kaliski Berlin 1932 bis 1939*. (Stuttgart; Weimar:Verlag J.B.Metzler, 1992) and Werner Foelling, *Zwischen deutscher und juedischer Identitaet Eine juedische Reformschule in Berlin zwischen 1932 und 1939*. (Opladen:Leske & Budrich, 1995.)

<sup>13</sup> The Jawne Gymnasium and ORT school teenagers were transferred en bloc to Britain in the late 1930's with their schools. As part of my doctorate I have been researching the lives these teenagers constructed for themselves once in Britain, comparing them with other refugees who came to Britain by other means, with their parents or as adults already established in a profession.

It was decided to research and compare the Jawne and ORT schools for a number of reasons:

## THE ORT SCHOOL

ORT Organization for Rehabilitation Through Training or Obschestvo Remeslenovo i zemledelcheskovo Trouda was founded in Tsarist Russia in 1880 by Samuel Poliakov a financier and railroad builder who with four other Jewish businessmen and residents of St. Petersburg was committed to the general improvement of conditions for Jews in Russia and their integration into Russian society. ORT's primary aim was to train young people in manual trades and agriculture.<sup>14</sup> The first ORT vocational school was opened in Berlin in 1937 with the help of German ORT and the World ORT Union. However, between the years of 1931 and 1934, ORT had already established in Berlin seven vocational courses providing training in woodwork, motor repair, and other crafts. The plight of German Jewry became obvious when some 200 unemployed former physicians, lawyers and clerks enrolled for these courses. As Shapiro states, 'The establishment of the school at this particular time, aside from its practical importance, was a demonstration on the part of the remnants of German Jewry of their will to survive and resist'.<sup>15</sup> The school located in an empty factory in the north west of Berlin , Siemenstrasse 15, offered vocational training to Jewish youth between the ages of 15 -17, boys who were unable to attend a state or municipal

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1. Find out to what extent an academic training the children received at the Jawne and to what extent a practical training given at the ORT would influence career choice.
  2. Research the two schools as they are of historic interest due to being the only two schools that arranged for the transportation of their pupils to Britain as late as 1938 and 1939, as a school or in classes as was the case with the Jawne.

Fifty six persons were interviewed, 36 men, 20 women.

18 Jawne pupils (including one teacher)

12 ORT pupils (including one teacher)

26 other persons: 15 who came over as youngsters and 11 as adults.

<sup>14</sup> The other four businessmen who helped Samuel Poliakov set up ORT were called Baron Horace Gunzburg, Abram Zak, Leon Rosenthal and Meer Fridland. For further details of the foundings of ORT see Leon, Shapiro, *The History of ORT A Jewish Movement For Social Change*. (New York:Schocken Books, 1980) chapters 1 - 10, regarding the founding fathers pp11-38.

<sup>15</sup> Shapiro, *The History of ORT A Jewish Movement For Social Change* ,p174.

trade school. 101 students were enrolled for training in woodwork, two thirds of whom came from Berlin, and 13 adults in courses in gas and water plumbing. Louis Wolff , the last chairman of ORT Germany before the second world war, stated that the total number of pupils or 'Lehrlinge' as he named them, attending the school was by the end of 1938 in the region of 200 and administration and teaching staff approximately 20.<sup>16</sup> The Berlin technical school or 'Private juedische Lehranstalt fuer handwerkliche und gewerbliche Ausbildung auswanderungswilliger Juden der ORT Berlin' was heralded as the most important institution of professional training for German Jewry and apparently allowed to open with Adolf Eichmann's personal consent on the condition that it was exclusively for Jews , who were willing to emigrate.<sup>17</sup> The school had a curriculum of 3 years and the courses for adults reduced to 18 months. Officially founded by the British ORT, the school was subsequently under protection of the British government and the only institution that remained unaffected by the violent events of November 1938. The board of the school was headed by civil engineer Hans Behrendt who had worked for many years in various industrial enterprises and had administered his own factory.<sup>18</sup> Many of the pupils had prior to attending

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<sup>16</sup> Nele, Loew Beer., '70 Jahre ORT in Deutschland Ein Rueckblick auf die Geschichte' in *ORT 1921 -1991 70 Jahre ORT in Deutschland*, 5 (Winter 1991/92) p45 .

World ORT Union Historical Archives Geneva *From Despair to Hope Rescue Action of WOU of young Hitler-persecuted German Jews* state that at the end of July 1938 the school had 215 pupils see Historical Archives p18.

<sup>17</sup> World Ort Union Historical Archives Geneva *From Despair to Hope Rescue Action of WOU of young Hitler-persecuted German Jews* p 17.

<sup>18</sup> World Ort Union Historical Archives Geneva *From Despair to Hope* p25 state, "The ORT Technical school in Berlin is at present (December 1st 1938), according to the unanimous opinion of all authoritative Jewish leaders in Germany, the best Jewish school, not only in Berlin, but in the whole country. It has a rich equipment which fills the two big floors of a factory building, and it possesses also a splendid staff of teachers and foremen collected with very great effort, after a long and extensive search, since it is exceedingly difficult at present to find in Germany highly qualified Jewish technicians and foremen. A number of first rate specialists in the field of factory organisation have become grouped round our Technical school. They devote it their time and energy giving it the benefit of their exceptional knowledge in an honorary capacity. I may mention among them:

Professor Rupert, who was at the head of a State technical institute ("Technikum") in Germany during 25 years;

the ORT been studying at non-Jewish schools and some gymnasiums. For those pupils from outside of Berlin, not only did they have to rapidly adapt to life in the city but sharing dorms with a number of other boys in a hostel which was inspected by the Nazis <sup>19</sup>.

At all times, the hostel was controlled by the Nazis. The uniformed policemen would come, without prior notice, to inspect the hostel. The beds had to be made in the same way as in the army. They would also check all the wardrobes and toilets and push us around all the time. The laws of the hostel were strict, order and discipline had to be kept up within the house. Members of the hostel were from many different social backgrounds. The only thing they had in common was their Jewish background and the wish to study something in the engineering trade which would enable them to find a job outside of Germany.<sup>20</sup>

A number of boys spoke of the pleasure and sense of satisfaction they found in learning a craft. Helmut Gruenewald decided to become a toolmaker under the watchful eye of Max Abraham a former employee of the machine factory Ludwig Loewe who had dismissed him on the grounds of being Jewish.<sup>21</sup>

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Regierungsrat Heiborn, who was an adviser of the State Patent Office during the last ten years before the present regime;

Regierungsrat Landsberg, one of the chief engineers of the German railway administration;

Civ. Eng. Wiener, one of the chief engineers of the General Electric Corporation in Germany (A.E.G.) an outstanding specialist in the field of factory organisation;

Civ Eng. Feige, who was before an engineer of the Central Administration of the German Ministry of Posts, Telegraph and Telephone".

<sup>19</sup> The hostel for the ORT school boys was located in the Rosenthaler Strasse, in the east of Berlin, on the first floor of the department store 'Wertheim'. The Reichsvertretung der Juden in Deutschland was in charge of the hostel and Herr Schoenfeld, a former band leader, the manager.

<sup>20</sup> Helmut Gruenewald *A Jew - Boy Was Not Allowed To Be A German* Bristol 1999. Unpublished family memoir p43.

<sup>21</sup> On September 5 1999 the Berlin ORT school boys 'Class of 1939' were reunited after sixty years at the British ORT Head Quarters in London. Max Abraham aged 85 and his wife Hanni attended the function, Max is the only surviving teacher of that time. For further details see article written by Ruth Rothenberg 'Berlin 'Class of 1939' is reunited' Jewish Chronicle September 17 1999 p20.

I liked the work on the bench very much, learning at school less. Soon, one of my teachers told me, "Gruenewald, you will pass the practice examination very well, but in respect of the theory, I am not too sure. But the first examination would turn out very different. Due to the splitting of the tool I was producing during the hardening process, I only received the mark 3. Whilst in respect of the theory, I was lucky in being asked a question whose answer I knew very well. So I received the mark 1. This mark surprised the teachers and fellow students."<sup>22</sup>

On the eve of war Col J.H. Levey of British ORT came to Berlin to obtain permission to transfer the school plant, which had been purchased on behalf of the British ORT, its students and teachers to England. In the last moment, the Nazi's refused to have the equipment removed, severely stalling procedures to transfer the students and their teachers. Finally, the British consented to the transfer taking place without the equipment. A total of 106 boys between the ages of 15-17 with eight instructors and their families left Berlin for England on August 29, 1939. One of the last transports out of Germany. A further transfer for the remaining 100 odd ORT boys and schools director Dr. Werner Simon was planned for the 3.9.39, tragically too late, the majority of this group perished in the Holocaust.

As a consequence of the German authorities refusal to allow the schools plant to be transferred, arrangements regarding accommodation for the students and staff in Britain had not been made. Temporary accommodation had to therefore be found for the male staff and students at the Kitchener camp in Kent, and the women and children sent on to Leeds where the schooling of the Berlin boys was to be resumed. During the two month period that the boys spent at the camp they developed their English skills by doing odd jobs for the locals filling sandbags and picking apples.<sup>23</sup> By November 1939, the same boys under the

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<sup>22</sup> Helmut Gruenewald *A Jew- Boy Was Not Allowed To Be A German* Bristol 1999 p 48.

<sup>23</sup> Interview with Bernard Pomeranz . Personal Interview taped. 10 December 1997. London.  
See also Berlin ORT School boys diary written whilst in the Kitchener Camp in Kent from September 1939- November 1939.

guidance of their instructors from Berlin, installed the machinery, connected it with the electric power supply and made all fittings possible in the workshop of the school . The students of the plumbing and sanitary section of the school erected lavatories, wash houses and within a short time the school was up and running. The Leeds ORT school was divided into five sections or departments:

1. Welding, Turning and Fitting
2. Sanitary Engineering
3. Electrical Engineering
4. Mechanical Engineering
5. Carpentry and Joining

The training consisted of both practical and theoretical work, and all lessons were given in English. In the practical section students learnt methods of working with metals, wood, tools , and machines and in the theoretical, subjects such as mathematics, physics and geometry. No religion was taught in the hostels where the boys lived<sup>24</sup>, but arrangements were made for classes to study Jewish education and additional evening classes in English. As the Leeds ORT stated in their prospectus, "We are a technical school, not a religious educational establishment".<sup>25</sup>

Some of the students had only started to attend the Berlin ORT school in the year before emigration and therefore had not acquired technical skills that were sufficient in entering the respective trades they wished to pursue. Nevertheless, time spent at the Leeds ORT enabled them to fully complete their studies and be suitably well qualified. In some cases their Gymnasium education had been severely disrupted, but they had been given the opportunity to finish their studies in a stable environment with individuals they knew. This was unfortunately not the case for the Jawne Gymnasium students.

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<sup>24</sup> The ORT school boys were housed in five hostels all in easy reach of the school. The main hostel, which also contained the dining room where all students assembled for meals, was situated at 226 Chapeltown Road see Leeds ORT school prospectus 'From Despair to Hope A Constructive Form of Help ' The ORT Technical Engineering School, Roseville Avenue, Roseville Road, Leeds, 8. p7.

<sup>25</sup> The Leeds O.R.T Technical Engineering School prospectus p11.

## THE JAWNE GYMNASIUM

The iron gate at St.-Apern Strasse opened onto the narrow yard which widened into the large yard. There stood the grey building of the Jawne with its four floors, its steep staircases and worn out banisters and the smell of freshly cleaned linoleum floors.<sup>26</sup>

The Jawne Gymnasium Cologne was formed by the Rabbis Dr Emanuel Carlebach and Dr Benedikt Wolf in 1919 to meet their orthodox congregations need for a grammar school. The head of the new school became Rabbi Carlebach, ten years later after its conception a young Dr Erich Klibansky took over the role of headmaster.<sup>27</sup> It was a private fee paying Jewish school, a Reformrealgymnasium, that represented the orthodox line of the Adass-Jeschrun-Community. Ever since its foundation the school had renounced all claims for state support, in the light of economic despair, this not surprisingly created a continuous shortage of money and was keenly felt by staff. Nevertheless, by 1931 with the growing anti-Semitism teachers were prepared to accept salary cuts, in some cases only 60% of a normal salary and ever increasing class numbers. In 1929 only 100 pupils had enrolled at the school, all orthodox, by 1931/32 the number had risen to 230 and by October 1933 the Jawne was in such demand that 60 to 70 pupils were crowded together in one class of the first form. Under such conditions Klibansky found it necessary to ask the 500 odd parents to come to the school hall on the 26 November 1933 and explain to them in no uncertain terms the position of German Jewry.

I am surely not going too far when I state that the greatest part of these new Jewish circles who are now joining us would never have considered sending their children to a Jewish school without the recent events. ...Well, we have all witnessed the end of the epoch of German Jewish emancipation. Jewish history

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<sup>26</sup> Hermann Gurfinkel's memories of the Jawne Gymnasium see Dieter Corbach *Die Jawne Zu Koeln Zur Geschichte des ersten juedischen Gymnasiums im Rheinland und zum Gedaechtnis an Erich Klibansky* Spurensuche juedischen Wirkens 4. (Koeln:Scriba Verlag, 1990 ). p279.

<sup>27</sup> Corbach notes : "Jawne' is not simply a name but also a relevant philosophy, which has great significance in the traditions of Judaism. Jawne is the ancient Jewish town, which after the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. became the spiritual centre of the revival and rise of Judaism. Under Jochanan ben Sakkai the Synedrion arose here. Here began under Gamliel II. the epoch of talmud Judaism and the establishing of the binding Halachah. For a longtime this was the centre of an uncompromising Judaism. -Jawne is situated near Aschdod, to the South of present day Tel-Aviv and was founded again in 1948". Corbach,*Die Jawne Zu Koeln* p264.

has taken an immense leap backwards and has now recommenced where we apparently stopped one and a half centuries ago. Of necessity, all those whose eyes have been opened by the events are now turning again to the spiritual resources of our people, in order to arm themselves to survive as Jews in such distress . ... To which school shall I send my child? This question has now been decided. One can no longer point out that we ourselves do not want to go back to the ghetto, because the process of separation of the German people towards the Jews is taking its course.<sup>28</sup>

By Easter 1934 more than half the pupils had left the school with their families who had emigrated. The next intake of pupils came from state schools and in some cases from more distant towns like Bonn, Duesseldorf and Essen where life was becoming increasingly more difficult for Jews.<sup>29</sup> Apart from offering the pupils a rounded education in the three sciences, Religion, French, German, Latin, Hebrew, English, Geography, History, Mathematics, Music and Art, (lessons conducted as from November 1935 by the well known painter Ludwig Meidner<sup>30</sup>), Klibansky recognised the glaring fact that the school had to equip the pupils for a life abroad. Consequently, as from Easter 1934 Klibansky established commercial training courses at the Jawne and for the lower and middle school optional craft teaching at the workshop of the orphanage in the Aachener Strasse. In 1933 by order of the Education Authorities in Koblenz the sixth form had had to be closed down, however by the beginning of the new school year of 1938 it was allowed to be reopened. With the help of two English teachers Nicklas Abramson and Raphael Loewe, two men Klibansky had personally brought over the year before, the new sixth form was prepared for the Cambridge

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<sup>28</sup>Corbach *Die Jawne Zu Koeln* , p271.

<sup>29</sup>Corbach notes that in 1937 20% of the pupils came from the more distant towns like Bonn, Duesseldorf, Essen, Ohligs, Solingen, Remscheid and smaller places, very often travelling on the train for hours or looking for lodgings in Cologne during the week, arranged by the school. The Cologne children's homes in Luetzowstrasse , Aachener Strasse and the Morijah home on the Salierring also housed pupils. Corbach *Die Jawne zu Koeln* p277.

<sup>30</sup>Meidner joined the teaching staff of the Jawne in November 1935 and very often portrayed many of his pupils during lessons or asked them to come and sit for him in his private studio. Many students still fondly remember him, one in particular who had private lessons with him Ernst Kolmann and later worked as a graphic artist in London. ( Taped Interview with Ernst Kolman by Monica Lowenberg 26 November 1997 London) For further details see Corbach *Die Jawne Zu Koeln* pp275-276 and Thomas Grochowiak *Ludwig Meidner* (Recklinghausen:Verlag Aurel Bongers Recklinghausen,1966)

University 'School Certificate Examination'. All lessons were conducted in English, one former pupil Ian Karten recalls the following:

We studied English, Latin, French, German, Hebrew, elementary mathematics, physics with Chemistry, everything had to be done in English, it was easy in some subjects like English, English Literature and very enjoyable, but difficult in Latin, French and Hebrew when you had to change suddenly from thinking and writing in your language to another language and translating into another foreign language. Two young teachers from Cambridge who had graduated a year or two before taught us, one English and the other religious knowledge and the other teachers were the ordinary staff who suddenly had to do their best in English, most of them managed quite well, it lasted one academic year.<sup>31</sup>

The final exams enabled pupils to study at any English university which fundamentally improved the pupils chances abroad, particularly in England and the United States. The final exams for this diploma were held in Frankfurt between the 11th and 21st July 1938 with twelve successful candidates. The exam results were said to be excellent and the Jewish Chronicle in Britain described them as, 'extraordinarily brilliant'.<sup>32</sup>

A few months later however, the school was raided during the night of 9 November 1938 by a group of gestapo men, non locals. Benches and equipment were destroyed, documents torn up and books thrown into the yard. This brutal attack catalysed Klibansky into action. For quite a while he had been considering transferring the whole of the Jawne to England, now the time had come to do so, within four weeks nearly all the parents had enlisted their children for the move. Four transports took place on the 17th January 1939, February 1939, 9 May 1939 and July 1939. According to calculations 127 children were saved in this way, 87 boys and 40 girls. Children from the first two transports were sent to London and stayed in hostels in Cricklewood and Willesden. The third transport of children were accomodated in a hostel in Liverpool and the last in Manchester.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Personal Interview with Ian Karten 23 April 1998 Surrey.

<sup>32</sup> See Corbach *Die Jawne zu Koeln* p277.

<sup>33</sup> In Willesden 15 girls from the second transport were housed in a hostel at 243 Willesden Lane. 15 Boys were taken to a hostel nearby at 1 Minster Road. In Liverpool the hostel was situated at 19 Linnet Lane in Manchester Waterloo Road. For further details see Corbach *Die Jawne zu Koeln* pp284-285.

In spite of the various disruptions emigration created, and then war Klibansky continued to carry out his duties as principal of the Jawne. In 1938 it was noted that the school had seen the highest number of pupils 450 boys and girls since its foundation, by October 1939 the school had only 100. On the 1st October 1939 the primary schools attached to the Jawne (Morijah and Loewengasse, former Luetzowstrasse) both merged with the Jawne and moved into its premises. By autumn 1941 Klibansky, aware that even abroad qualifications from German Jewish schools were no longer recognised, finally conceded to give up the Jawne as a secondary school and turn all three schools into one single elementary school. At the end of June 1942 all Jewish schools were officially and finally closed, teachers and pupils 'evacuated' to the East. However, already in the October of 1941 Jawne teachers and pupils had been ordered to set out on their journey to Litzmannstadt/Lodz where they met their deaths.

On the 20th July 1942 a special transport left Cologne-Deutz, it carried all the young Jewish people of Cologne. In positive mood they proclaimed that they would return, with them travelled Klibansky and his wife Meta. Official records state that the transport was sent to Minsk and met by an SS death squad. The children and the Klibanskys did not return.<sup>34</sup>

### **Life in England**

My mother and father both came to the station to wave me goodbye tears streaming down their faces. I can still remember my mother saying to me, "Don't forget you are a Jewish child and learn something when you get to England!". That was the last time I saw my parents.<sup>35</sup>

Many children spoke of the sense of adventure they felt leaving Germany to come to England, it was 'exciting'. They had been told that their parents would follow them shortly and that all would be well. However, for the vast majority this

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<sup>34</sup> For further details see Corbach *Die Jawne zu Koeln* p 295 -298 and Dieter Corbach *6.00Uhr ab Messe Koeln-Deutz Deportationen 1938-1945. Spuren juedischen Wirkens* 6. Koeln:Scriba Verlag, 1999.

<sup>35</sup> Personal Interview taped. Hilde Schoenfeld 2 July 1998. London.

was not the case, once war broke out the possibility of obtaining a visa out of Germany was no longer possible, As war continued the Red Cross letters arrived less frequently, until they finally stopped altogether. In the meantime the children had to learn to adapt to their new surroundings, new food which many found far from appetising, new customs and speaking English. 'Vere zere iz a vill, zere iz a vay' was the motto that many stood by<sup>36</sup>, and by trial and error they learnt to master the English language sometimes in the most endearing of ways, as one former Jawne pupil humourously remembered:

When I landed in Dover I asked the guard when the next train to London was and he said, 'In alf an 'our'. I thought he was speaking some foreign language. ... I attended a summer camp on the coast near Margate, attended by working class boys. I asked one of them, 'When did you commence to exercise your calling?' It was very embarassing because they all laughed<sup>37</sup>.

As tradition would dictate Jewish children had been weaned on a faith that learning was a means to a prosperous and fulfilling way of life. Once in Britain their sights were drastically lowered. On arrival the Jawne pupils were sent to hostels and a few weeks later to elementary schools. Many complained of the educational standards in the schools they attended being much lower than the education they had received at the Jawne, about three years behind as one interviewee claimed particularly in maths and sciences. 'We did not learn anything new. We often played chess in the classroom and also taught the boys of the school how to play chess. But there was no more learning, which meant the end of the 'Jawne dream'.<sup>38</sup> Older boys had their education further disrupted when they were interned, Rolf Schild recalled spending most of his time as an internee playing 'ping pong'.<sup>39</sup> After a short spell at Hayton internment camp, other Jawne boys were shipped to Canada and Australia. It is believed that at least two Jawne boys were on the 'Aranora Star' that on 2nd July 1940, was hit by a torpedo from a

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<sup>36</sup> Personal Interview taped. Ralph Blumenau. 12 March 1998. London.

<sup>37</sup> Personal Interview. Ian Karten 24 April 1998. Surrey.

<sup>38</sup> Corbach *Die Jawne zu Koeln* p291.

<sup>39</sup> Personal Interview taped. Rolf Schild. 7 July 1999. London.

German submarine, 1200 people drowned on board as a consequence.<sup>40</sup>

According to British law all children were entitled to free elementary education up to the age of fourteen. After that time, a limited number of free places at secondary and university level were open to stiff competition. For the children who had sat the Cambridge University 'School Certificate Examination'; whose parents later joined them or those who were taken in by other families, their chances of attending school or university were higher than those who had to remain within the hostels.<sup>41</sup> Without the financial and emotional support of their families or others, many of these children felt it necessary to leave school at fourteen and start work in local factories and the like. As a senior Home Office official announced at a Refugee Children's Movement conference in October 1942, refugee children were to be treated no differently than an English child adding, 'It is not possible to provide continued education except in highly exceptional cases of brilliancy.'<sup>42</sup>

Under such circumstances, it is perhaps not very surprising that the Jawne pupils who were unable to be further schooled, entered for the most part professions where they could train on the job. For them this was the only viable and available way of earning money, 'keeping one's head above water.' University education was a luxury that many simply could not afford or were qualified to apply for. As a result the lack of it prevented them from entering the liberal professions. A fair proportion of the men, whether they had been to school at the Jawne or the ORT, consequently pursued careers in commerce, retail (in particular the manufacturing of ladies corsetry), industry and engineering.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Corbach *Die Jawne zu Koeln* p294

<sup>41</sup> The Kindertransport managed to rescue 10,000 Jewish children from war torn Europe, it has been noted that 4,000 of these children went to stay with Quaker families in Cambridge and were given the opportunity to be secondary schooled. Personal Interview taped. Lore Robinson 22 April 1998. London.

<sup>42</sup> quoted in Barry Turner *...And The Policeman Smiled 10,000 Children Escape From Nazi Europe*. (London:Butler and Tanner Ltd, 1990 ), p178.

<sup>43</sup> From the Jawne and ORT school boys I interviewed only one chose to attend nightschool to become an accountant and one to train on the job to work as an optometrist. Four became wealthy industrialists, 2 from the Jawne, 2 from the ORT. (Two of whom were awarded

However, after the war a number of pupils, particularly the women did take the opportunities the British government offered them to re-train as language teachers, nurses and social workers, professions where their acute understanding of suffering would prove invaluable when helping those experiencing hardship.<sup>44</sup> For them, having to leave home at an early age, say good-bye to their parents, had literally forced them to learn how to support themselves, in turn break away from the traditional roles of housekeeper and mother, roles many most likely would have followed if they had stayed in Germany.

Due to the Jawne pupils education having been so disrupted, many mourned the loss of an education that had been denied them, whilst the ORT school boys less so. Nevertheless, all pupils interviewed expressed deep gratitude at having been able to have at least attended the Jawne or ORT, maintaining that the high standard of teaching, had given them skills that had equipped them for life. Under the worst of circumstances, whether religious or not, they had found

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OBE's and one given an honorary doctorate.) From my sample of 56 interviewees it is interesting to note that only the interviewees who came over to Britain in their mid-twenties and who had already received a formal training in a particular line of work or who had been university educated in Germany were able to pursue their profession in England as a musician, rabbi, director of Youth Aliyah and economist. The one lawyer interviewed, a Heidelberg university graduate, was not allowed to practise in England, without sitting British law exams. As he was not in a position to retrain he decided to employ instead his legal knowledge to deal with German pension and compensation claims. Amongst my sample group there were no doctors, architects, bankers or journalists. Five professors were interviewed, none of them had attended either the Jawne or the ORT and were all scientists working in the fields of either physics, mathematics, sociology or immunology. However, two Jawne students did become teachers in history and languages. Education, commerce and public health were the three main areas that the women entered, before deciding to become in most cases full-time mothers. Six women took up the opportunity to study after the war, train as teachers, nurses and social workers, in contrast to only two men who with the financial support of the British Army went to university to study Zoology and social work. One ex Jawne female student was awarded in 1994 the Sri Lankan State Literary award for short stories.

<sup>44</sup> It is interesting to note that quite a number of the refugees I interviewed, (male or female) if not able to do so in their working life, forged ways for themselves to become in their freetime involved in organisations where they could help others, working in hospitals in a voluntary capacity, becoming actively involved in local politics, taking calls at Childline, supporting Amnesty International and Prisoners of Conscience.

within themselves the inner resources to survive. This was the very least many felt they could do, to acknowledge the personal sacrifice their teachers and parents had made, to save theirs.

**Endnotes:**