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. . . immer etwas abseits. Jugenderinnerungen eines jüdischen Berliners 1920–1945. By Werner T. Angress. Berlin: Edition Hentrich. 2005. Pp. 335. €24.00. ISBN 3-89468-271-X.

Werner Angress's book adds a gem to the rich collection of memoirs and diaries written by European Jews who suffered persecution by the Third Reich before 1941 and/or survived (but lost relatives in) the Holocaust. Angress tells a gripping, suspenseful story in a voice that is sober, frank, and humane. His remembrances enhance our understanding of the political, social, and military circumstances of that dreadful era, while also illuminating the range and motivations of individual responses under dire conditions.

Angress's chronicle brings a unique perspective to these events, not only because every viewpoint is distinctive but also because he describes historically significant attitudes and events that, to my knowledge, the memoir literature has not discussed. Angress's account of life inside the Third Reich also corroborates, however, the memories of other German Jews. The deteriorating situation of his assimilated family illustrates the escalating material and emotional difficulties of Jewish existence, squeezed by the anti-Jewish decrees that the National Socialists imposed incrementally but relentlessly. He details the complexities of Jewish interaction with non-Jewish Berliners in schools, apartment buildings, and businesses. His vignettes reveal that the regime's anti-Semitism evoked widespread acquiescence or, at least, indifference, mixed with scattered antagonism or, at least, immunity to its message and deeds. He conveys the disbelief, bewilderment, depression, and fear successively felt by members of his family as they lived through the disorienting transformation of their city, their country, their culture into a hostile, alien environment.

Werner Angress was born in 1920, the first of three sons, into a family of practicing, though not particularly pious, Jews. Neither his parents nor their relatives were of the *Bildungsbürgertum*. Werner, in fact, was the first family member from either side to attend university—and that in the United States. His father, Ernst, was an employee in a bank owned by a Jewish family. He moved up the ranks, finally becoming bank director during the Depression. Ernst's character fit his name—he lived by strict rules of moral conduct, especially when it came to business and money. He was, according to Angress, stereotypically "Prussian." Werner's mother, Henny, was a housewife who was neither stereotypically Prussian nor stereotypically maternal. The marriage had its ups and downs, as did the son's relationship with his mother. Focusing on occasions that imprinted themselves on an observant child/adolescent, Angress paints candid, pithy, and poignant portraits of his poorly matched parents, a close extended family, and family members' complex connections to culture and daily life in middle-class Berlin.

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His descriptions of his schooling between 1933 and 1936 are fascinating. We read about encounters with teachers and classmates in elementary school and at his Lichterfelder *Realgymnasium*, where he was one of only three Jewish pupils. Whether relating instances of nationalistic, racist, regime-groveling behavior or telling us about the few "good Germans" at his school, Angress's tone remains composed and droll, shot through with the irony that one associates with German-language literature. Already then, he wrote German well, read literary and "entertaining" books, and kept a soul-searching diary dotted with memorized and self-composed verses. He emphasizes, though, that he was not generally a strong student, was not academically oriented, and left school at sixteen years of age, without the *Abitur*—and certainly with no inkling that in a new world, after 1945, he would get a Ph.D., become a professor of German and European history, and write an influential book about the Weimar Republic, *Stillborn Revolution: The Communist Bid for Power in Germany, 1921–1923* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963).

As an early adolescent, Angress was an avid German patriot, even a German nationalist. Like so many boys then and now, he was extremely impressed by military prowess—an infatuation that almost trumped his nationalism, he writes, so awed were he and his friends by any battle well-fought, no matter the nationality of the combatants. Almost, but not quite—his nationalism was powerful enough to render the thirteen-year-old short-sighted when it came to some early policies of the Nazis. In part because as an atheist he did not identify with Judaism as a religion, and in part because he identified deeply with his peers, suggests Angress, he initially could not see that the Third Reich was bent on separating him from his cohort and eliminating Jews from the *Volksgemeinschaft*. Angress is painfully honest about his inconsistent view of the early Third Reich. Of course, he did not like the Nazis as anti-Semites but he was attracted generally to their revanchist nationalism and specifically to the Nazi *Jungvolk*. Irritated by the anti-Nazi remarks of his father, mother, and maternal grandfather, he defended some of the regime's small, socially equalizing measures. Werner came soon to recognize the radical nature of National Socialism but he clung to his Germanness, nurturing fantasies of himself and other Jewish-German youth fighting heroically for Germany in a war against France. Angress comes down hard on his youthful self for such notions. They reflected, one suspects, not only naiveté and the *Zeitgeist* but also the fact that in 1933 non-Jewish friends still included him in their social circle, visiting him at his home in their *Jungvolk* uniforms. Whatever the explanation of his "false consciousness," Angress's frank discussion of his outlook illuminates the complex psychology and sociology of German-Jewish youth and their social worlds in the early Third Reich.

Gradually, Werner made the transition to a Jewish social identity—via the route of a nationally oriented, non-Zionist youth group. A fellow Jewish male

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adolescent recruited him into the "*Schwarze Fähnlein, Jungenschaft*" (SF), a youth organization of about 400 members, divided into small sub-groups, that had split from the larger non-Zionist, non-socialist *Kameraden, Deutschjüdsicher Wanderbund*. SF had its own uniform, secret salutation, etc. Until it was banned in late 1934, its units hiked the woods and dales of northeastern Germany, often (quietly) skirting big encampments of the *Jungvolk*, Hitler Youth, or even SS. *Schwarze Fähnlein* met Angress's hunger for close friends, for the discipline, fun, and camaraderie of a well-organized youth group, and for tramping and camping in the great outdoors—and he bonded tightly with this Jewish cohort.

When he left school in 1936, Angress was unsure what he wanted to do occupationally, much less what he could do in Nazi Germany. Upon hearing about a program to be run by the "liberal" *Reichsvertretung der Juden in Deutschland*, he applied. The Reichsvertretung planned to train Jewish youth in Germany for agricultural occupations and send these apprentice-farmers to North and South America to work in agricultural occupations. Angress was among the original group accepted to the program by the project's director, a pedagogue/psychologist named Curt Bondy. In 1936, Bondy and his young charges traveled to Gross Breesen, a former estate in Silesia leased by the Reichsvertretung. Project "Gross Breesen" soon encompassed more than 100 young men and women and operated from 1936 to 1938. For Angress, it was a formative developmental experience, both because of its intensive collective life and labor and because of the ethical philosophy of solidarity impressed upon them by Bondy. Although neither a socialist nor a Zionist, Bondy insisted that Gross Breeseners rise above individual needs and desires to join together and with a larger community to attain their moral and professional goals. Not only did many of them soon escape Germany to lead lives of communal service and professional dedication, suffused with humanitarian values, they also formed life-long friendships, maintaining contact with each other until today—despite being scattered over the four corners of the earth from 1938 on.

Angress left Gross Breesen in late 1937, not because he wanted to but because his father had decided, wisely, that he must get the family out of Germany. So began a trek that took them first to London and then to Amsterdam. Still connected to the project, Werner boarded a transatlantic liner in 1939, headed toward work on a farm in the United States. His family remained in Holland. His mother and two younger brothers, amazingly, survived the German occupation of the Netherlands, by going into hiding. Tragically, his valiant, vigilant father was taken into custody in Amsterdam in 1941 and died in Auschwitz in 1943.

Angress knew nothing of his family's fate until the war's end, for he lost contact with them in 1941. Meanwhile, he worked for a year and a half at Hyde Farmlands in Virginia, a property bought by a Jewish businessman toward the end of preparing exiles from Hitler's Europe for agricultural work

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in the U.S. Angress did not find this experience as affecting as the Gross Breesen one, although he worked there with several fellow Gross Breesener and other exiles with whom he forged—as this gifted friend did everywhere he stayed for more than even a few weeks—strong bonds. In 1939, having learned little English and increasingly disenchanted with the agrarian life, he and several comrades decided to enlist in the U.S. army, above all, to improve their English and accelerate naturalization. The decision accomplished those goals. It also opened another formative chapter in Angress's life, a chapter in which he participated in major historic events that tested the ethical principles he had imbibed at Gross Breesen and demonstrated that Bondy's lessons had sunk deep roots.

Angress's extraordinary experiences in the American army and in the European war are truly riveting. He took part in D-Day as a paratrooper and in the final year of the war as an interrogator of German POWs. Rather than summarize this dramatic material, I will comment on Angress—the former German nationalist enamored of military might—as American soldier. His account of his combat experiences makes clear that he was a dedicated, inventive, and brave soldier, and an effective interrogator. He describes, self-critically, some stupid mistakes and wrong choices, though none that cost innocent lives. He also presents, modestly, cases in which through hard work, intelligence, and luck he made good decisions that saved lives. True to Bondy's teaching, he put the interests of his comrades, unit, division, and army before his own. Despite what he had been through in Berlin, desperate anxiety about his family, and now identifying himself as an American, he treated German POWs with decency and humanity. His behavior as a real soldier was far removed from the militaristic fantasies he harbored as a boy, yet ironically fulfilled his youthful dream of contributing to the just victory of a powerful armed force.

I recommend this memoir to anyone who can read German. I hope that it soon appears in translation so it can reach an English-language audience, and especially undergraduates in the United States.

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Contemplating Edith Stein. Edited by Joyce Avrech Berkman. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press. 2006. Pp. ix-xii + 354. Cloth $75.00. ISBN 0-268-02188-0. Paper $38.50. ISBN 0-268-02189-9.

"They who seek the truth are seeking God whether they know it or not," was written by Edith Stein to Sr. Adelgundis Jaegerschmid, OSB, in 1938.

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