

ness of retracing my steps if only to serve as a guide to my children to steer a course by or more importantly to avoid one."

But the star will not be the only one looking back on the course of his life. In June, the film critic Richard Schickel is publishing his study, *Brando*, for Atheneum, which Lee Goerner says "will consider the films and the life, although it doesn't purport to be a tell-all." In early 1992, Morrow will take delivery of an as-yet-untitled biography by Peter Manso, who has written about Brando's recent travails for Evans's wife Tina Brown in *Vanity Fair*. Englund dismisses Manso thus: "He is the latest in a long line of faceless unauthorized biographers. There is nothing like the real voice." But will that voice speak up when the time comes to publicize the memoir?

One publisher with a serious interest withdrew from contention in part because "Brando refused to do any national TV shows or publicity, which is crucial to selling a book like this." Englund will only remark, "Mr. Brando has traditionally not made personal appearances in association with his films, and whether he will for the book is not for me to say." Harry Evans comments, "There is some contractual publicity but I won't specify its exact nature."

The last word, perhaps, should rest with the reclusive, larger-than-life actor himself. He says, "I intend to disclose all of my life and the people in it from my earliest memory of playing in my moonlit bed with the naked body of my sleeping beloved Ermi to this present scribbling in my bed of another day." What that scribbling should amount to, we shall find out in due course; but to avoid encouraging too much overheated speculation, it is well to remember that the naked body in question belonged to none other than Brando's nanny.

→ Sons and Daughters of Third Reich Leaders Find Voice in New Book

When author Gerald Posner approached Random House executive editor Bob Loomis with the idea of interviewing the grown children of the most powerful Nazi leaders, Loomis thought it was a splendid but impossible idea: "First of all, no one had ever been able to find them.

And if these children hadn't yet talked, why would they now?"

Two years later, after six extended trips to Germany and untold hours of labor and luck, Posner turned in *Hitler's Children: Sons and Daughters of Leaders of the Third Reich Talk About Their Fathers and Themselves* (\$21), to be published on May 13 with a 20,000-copy first printing.

Random had been committed but cautious. "We made an arrangement that allowed us to see if Gerald could possibly carry it off—and he did," Loomis says. "The people he got to are amazing. And, for the first time, they speak under their fathers' real names."

Göring. Hess. Mengele. Dönitz. What is it like to be the children of men whose names evoke the darkest crimes of humankind? For publicist Kent Holland, *Hitler's Children* asks a different question: "What are Germans whose fathers were the architects of Nazism doing today with this horrible legacy?"

Posner's journey to this subject was atypical. He's half-Jewish, half-Catholic, and attended Catholic schools as a child. There were no personal reasons for what he calls his "obsession." No one in his family was killed in the Holocaust, nor was anyone a survivor of the camps. But as a young lawyer, he was approached by a friend to take on the case of a survivor of Mengele's medical experiments who wanted to sue

the Mengele family and the German government.

"The lawsuit went nowhere," Posner recalls. "We couldn't prove that the Mengele family had links to the fugitive, and we couldn't sue a foreign government in a U.S. court. But Argentina let me into their Federal Police Archives, and I had access to Paraguay's Interpol file. I got hooked."

The result was *Mengele: The Complete Story* (Dell), published in 1986 and critically acclaimed as the definitive biography of the "Angel of Death." Posner gave 20% of the book's American proceeds to Mark Berkowitz, the survivor who had inspired his exploration.

The idea for *Hitler's Children* began to germinate in 1985, when the then 30-year-old Posner was invited, along with four internationally recognized historians, to validate for the German magazine *Bunte* the 5000 pages of diaries and letters that Mengele's son, Rolf, had finally decided to make public after his father's death was conclusively proven.

It was Posner's first encounter with the child of a Nazi murderer. As he writes in the introduction to *Hitler's Children*, "The conversations that June [with Rolf Mengele] sparked my curiosity about whether other children of prominent Nazis felt the same as Mengele's son"—a complex range of emotions from condemnation to family loyalty.

Many of Posner's 10 subjects have lived all their lives in a state of denial to one degree or another, a state captured by Edda Göring's comment: "I actually expect that almost everybody has a favorable opinion of my father, except maybe in America." Some of the children had no opportunity to confront their Nazi fathers, who died as war criminals condemned by the Allies. Others chose silence even in the face of sure knowledge. But a few faced the truth about their unsought legacies.

One of the most moving stories is that of Dagmar Drexel, the only child in the book who knew nothing of her father's Nazi past until adulthood. Her father, Max Drexel, who served in an exemplary manner in the murderous Einsatzgruppen D—charged with the massive liquidation of Jews and other civilians on the Eastern Front—is still alive; daughter and father are now completely estranged.

But Posner says, "The most startling incident happened when I was

HITLER'S CHILDREN

SONS AND DAUGHTERS OF LEADERS OF THE THIRD REICH TALK ABOUT THEMSELVES AND THEIR FATHERS
GERALD L. POSNER

Posner explores what it's like to be the child of an evil man.

with Mengele's son. I was sitting in his office when he said, 'Wait a minute, I have something to show you.' He took out a book his father had made for him when the elder Mengele was a fugitive in South America. It was a children's fairy tale with innocuous little drawings: this by a man who had made a career out of torturing children. That moment was as chilling as it got in two years of research. I handed the book back to Rolf Mengele holding it by the edges."

Indeed, the most difficult aspect of Posner's research was the paradoxical character of men like Mengele and Drexel, who "don't fit into any category that would make it easier to deal with their savagery," he says. "They were capable of unrivaled brutality, only to return then to 'normal' lives without their murderous behavior ever exhibiting itself again. First, I realized that without a Hitler, millions of Nazis might have lived those normal lives; Mengele might have lived and died a doctor in a small Bavarian town. Then I understood that the reverse is also true: many people you run into in your everyday life have the same capacity for evil that these men had."

Will this book be read in Germany? "The Mengele book appeared in six countries in addition to the United States and Britain, but not in Germany. And there's been no interest yet in this book either," Posner states, despite rights sales to Britain and France. His contention that Germany has not yet come to terms with its past is substantiated by the reactions of the approximately two dozen young Germans he got to know during his years of research. "They found it mind-boggling that a young American would be interested in this subject, when in their minds there are so many more important issues on the world agenda, such as the environment and nuclear proliferation. 'It's of interest in the States,' they said, 'but not really here.'"

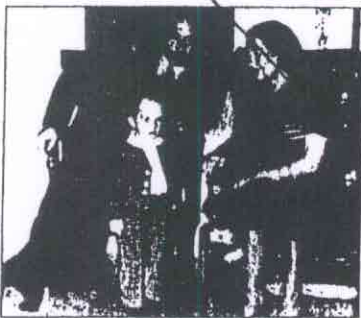
Random House plans a six-city tour and will bring one or two of the offspring to be interviewed here with Posner. At this point, according to Holland, there is "major TV inter-

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est and strong paperback interest as well." —NESSA RAPOFORT

One Nazi Father and His Raging Son, From Knopf

Niklas Frank, the son of Hans Frank—the Nazi governor-general of Poland who was hanged at Nuremberg for war crimes—was one of



Niklas Frank and his parents in wartime Poland.

the sons whom Gerald Posner interviewed for his book. But the younger Frank—a journalist at the news magazine *Stern*—had already, explosively, set about confronting the horrors of his family and country's past when he published *Der Vater* (Bertelsmann) in 1987. In August, Knopf will publish a revised, English-language version of the memoir, translated by Arthur S. Wensinger with Carol Clew Hoey and retitled *In the Shadow of the Reich* (\$23).

But although Frank's book, unlike Posner's *Mengele*, did at least reach publication in Germany, it received the same sort of chilly reaction accorded the recent German film *The Nasty Girl*—also about the country's unwillingness to confront its history. According to editor Jonathan Segal, "the book created a furor. At least 75% of the people who wrote to the author and his publisher said things like, 'Can't we put all this behind us?' Only a small percentage were really supportive. Although the book appeared both in hardcover and paperback in Germany, the total sales, as far as I recall, were no more than 15,000 overall."

Segal sees the book as "a cry of rage at a people and a period of German history. Niklas's anger and hatred stems from Germany's unwillingness to come to grips with the past, and a continuation of similar values in German society today. The

book has received wonderful praise from Simon Wiesenthal and others; and interestingly, it's being published in Poland."

Knopf will be starting with a 10,000–15,000 first printing, and Segal may bring Frank over for interviews—his English is good enough to do so. The book will be illustrated with 16 pages of photographs. Conjur-ing up the image of his monstrous father, Frank says, "I will be trying to leap away from you for the rest of my life." But painful, shocking, raw though it is, Frank's rage is also strangely comforting—given the seeming amnesia of so many of his fellows. —G.F.

BACK TO PRESS

- Delacorte. Maeve Binchy's *Circle of Friends* (cloth \$19.95) now has 135,000 copies in print following a seventh printing of 25,000; *Riders on the Storm* (cloth \$19.95) by John Denmore has an in-print total of 115,275 following a seventh run of 15,000; *A Place Called Sweet Shrub* (cloth \$19.95) by Jane Roberts Wood now has 11,000 copies in print following a second run of 2500; *Linda Barnes's Coyote* (cloth \$18.95) now has 16,000 copies in print after a second run of 3500; and *The Death of Elvis* (cloth \$19.95) by Charles C. Thompson II and James P. Cole has 35,000 copies in print following a second run of 5000.
- Ecco Press. Joyce Carol Oates's *I Lock My Door Upon Myself* (cloth \$8.95) now has 20,000 copies in print following a second printing of 5000.
- Fjord Press. *Pelle the Conqueror, Vol. I: Childhood* (paper \$9.95) by Martin Andersen Nexø now has 5000 copies in print following a second run of 2000.
- Hearth Publishing of Hillsboro, Kan. *Year of the Storms: The Destructive Kansas Weather of 1990* (paper \$12.95) edited by Howard English now has an in-print total of 20,000 copies following a second printing of 10,000.
- Random House. John Richardson's *A Life of Picasso Volume 1: 1881–1906* (cloth \$39.95) now has 30,000 copies following a second pre-publication printing additional 20,000.