



Ralph Giordano: German Jewish Writer ,

Memories of One Who Got away, Kiepenheuer und Witsch, Cologne 2007, (p 481-484)

on Gottfried Wagner's autobiography

The Wagner Legacy (GB) –

The Twilight of the Wagners (USA)

... Gottfried Wagner probes deeply into the question: "What is the connection between the Wagner family and Hitler really about?" The question reveals fascinating memories: of informal meetings, communication on first-name terms, cosy conversations at the fireside with the "Führer", memories peppered with sayings such as, "If Hitler had won the Jews over on his side, we would have won the war" and the milieu-typical code word USA. Not referring to the United States of America, but "unser seliger Adolf" (our blessed Adolf). An abysmal darkness is brought to light, becoming visible and audible. Gottfried Wagner does not give up, he leaves the trodden path and announces his intention, first within the family, then externally. Thus his life's motto comes into being - a motto which is to impede his career - an urgent quest for the truth, his refusal to be unswervingly loyal to the dubious family tradition of remaining silent. This results in his father's at first grim reaction which later turns to hostility, and his grandmother's turning her back on this unruly grandson - he who does not howl with the wolf... Now Gottfried Wagner designs his program: "There can be no comprehensive, historically honest image of the Wagner family and the Bayreuth Festival until the extensive correspondence between the Wagners and Hitler is published and the film and photo material from the Nazi era is made available to the public."

The breach takes place, expulsion from the Grail follows with slanders and character assassination - the Hill does not let any accusation of its most precious good, the life-long lie of a Bayreuth cleansed of the swastika, go unpunished. The outcast speaks of a "Bayreuth connection" and cites disturbing examples of the influence of its long arm, yet he does not let himself be discouraged by it. Richard Wagner's great grandson could have had an easier life, but Gottfried Wagner's incurable honesty makes it difficult for him to take the easy path. Everyone who comes into contact with him becomes aware of his integrity... The price for such conviction is high - in Germany he more or less has the status of persona non grata, an emigrant, not a voluntary one. It must be difficult for this Ahasver (eternal walker) from Bayreuth to seek his identity in the land of his birth.... What did not happen in Germany, however, happened elsewhere. Gottfried Wagner has built bridges to Israel, where he speaks publicly about the "case of Richard Wagner" as he has prepared it, unsparingly, presenting a differentiated view, refuting the misconception that a great artist must also have a great character with humanitarian ideals. He does not come to Tel Aviv as a discreet messenger, but rather as a Wagner who speaks to Jews about another Wagner who treated Jews badly. His book, "He who does not howl with the wolf" has been presented in numerous countries, ranging from Europe to the USA and Australia. And what about Bayreuth? I am firmly convinced that the "Hill of repression" carries the seed of its own destruction. The truth has an immense power of perseverance, and the later the collapse, the higher the pile of ash and rubble will be. In the pages of this book I wrote, "Auschwitz is my compass". Gottfried Wagner says the same.

Translation: Christina Whitelaw, Bünde, Germany, net work group, three generation discourse on the consequences of the Shoah - GW's autobiography is translated in 6 languages