

LEON KAHANE *Jerricans to Can Jerry*

curated by Nils Emmerichs

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PERIODE Leipziger Straße 61 10117 Berlin

It is becoming increasingly clear that contemporary political and social crises also have a cultural origin. They are symptoms of protracted conflicts and a German past that has not been dealt with. The need for discussions about street names and sculptures representing anti-Semites and racists in public space show that even 75 years after the Allies' victory over Nazi Germany, coming to terms with history can by no means be seen as complete.

The revisionist need for an identity-forming German culture continues to drive people into the arms of Nazis and identitarians. A new cross-front is presenting itself at Corona demos and above all in the social networks. With their essentialism, they feel they are in the right, because after all it is about "saving" culture. National Socialism also wanted to save the cultures of the world from being mixed by cosmopolitan Jews. So anyone who does not want to recognise anti-Semitism in the identitarian rhetoric of the present day would be hard pressed to find it in the language of the Third Reich. For years, surviving contemporary witnesses had the painful role of reminding Germany of this past and protecting it from revisionism. These eyewitnesses are slowly dying out.

In Leon Kahane's work *Jerricans to Can Jerry, 2020* we encounter a contemporary witness of a very unusual kind, namely the Wehrmacht unit canister known today primarily as the "Jerrycan". It was developed by the German engineer Vinzenz Grönnvogel for the German Wehrmacht and mass-produced by the Max Brose company from 1936 as their first mass product. The canister was of enormous importance for wartime production and the company quickly called for forced labourers in order to be able to expand further. There were about 200 Soviet prisoners of war barracked next to the company premises under the supervision of the Wehrmacht. "Humanitarianism is by no means in order," Max Brose wrote in an instruction to his employees on how to deal with the forced labourers.

Max Brose was first classified in the "group of the less incriminated" before the Nuremberg war crimes tribunal. Later the sentence was reduced to "fellow traveller", which was tantamount to a so-called Persilschein. He was able to take over his company again and continue to expand. The Wehrmacht unit canister was still produced by the company for 20 years. So much for a German family business that had grown into a mass producer during the Nazi era.

Contrary to what is now common practice, Brose heir Michael Stoschek is still trying to paint an embellished picture of his grandfather. To this end, he has commissioned a biography of Max Brose that is completely devoid of references and has caused outrage among historians. In it, Max Brose is retroactively absolved of any guilt and the family business is thus exonerated of any responsibility even in the present. In 2015, the Brose grandson was able to "persuade" the administration to name a street after his grandfather by cancelling all social benefits and donations to his home town of Coburg. Coburg's Max Brose Street runs past the town's former synagogue, of all places. Thus, in 2015, a street was named in Germany after an NSDAP member, military economic leader and war profiteer who never admitted his deep involvement in the Nazi regime.

The great-granddaughter and partner of the Max Brose Fahrzeugteile company, Julia Stoschek, is considered one of the most important collectors on the international art market today. She, too, has not yet confessed to her family history in order to contribute to a progressive reappraisal. So only the last contemporary witnesses remain.

Please Meet Colonel Jerrycan!

