**DISCUSSION POINTS FOR TOPIC 2 OF *ABANDONED IN BERLIN***

1. Among the 400 pages of restitution materials from the Landesarchiv Berlin (Berlin State Archives) that ended our research during 2018 was a 1954 booklet written by Siegmund Weltlinger titled “Hest Du es schon vergessen?” (“Have you already forgotten?”). He was the founding member and first Jewish President of the Society for Christian Jewish Cooperation in Berlin 1949-1970. His call to never forget decided for us that *Abandoned in Berlin* should be written.
2. The research began thanks to the efforts of Frau Frey at the Amstericht Charlottenburg who diligently researched the office’s land registry files to confirm ownership of Guntzelstrasse 44 (on the corner of Holsteinischestrasse 19) with Hilda’s family from 1919 to May 1936. On November 23, 1933, it was recorded that, after the death of the family patriarch, the property was inherited as follows:
* One quarter to his wife
* Three eighths to his eldest daughter, now married
* Three eighths to Hilda’s mother then aged 15.
* The value of the plot was given as 150,000 Reichmarks (approx. US$60,000 in 1933)
1. That’s when our research encountered its first major obstacle. We wanted financial records and more details about the purchaser, Captain A.D. Mr. Hugo von Bonin. No further information could be found and the Amstericht claimed it did not keep financial records. On November 14, 2016 we visited the Consulate of the Federal Republic of Germany in San Francisco. Its representative was sympathetic to our cause and assured us that the Amstericht held financial records for at least the past 100 years.
2. Frau Frey once more confirmed her original response and referred us to the Bundesverbank deutscher to see if it held records. Research on the web discovered nothing new about the von Bonin family, and so began the most difficult part of our investigation. The purpose of our original research had been fulfilled - to discover the ownership details of Guntzelstrasse 44 - but now we were curious to learn about what happened to the funds from the sale.
3. Other German and Holocaust organizations were researched and contact made with the Federal Office for Central Services and Unresolved Property Issues. We were told that many banking records were lost because of the war and that monies deposited during the 1930s would have suffered from serious devaluation, assuming they had not previously been confiscated.
4. The breakthrough came in July 2017 when the Federal Office notified us that they had found a letter from June 1953 indicating that a claim for reimbursement involving Guntzelstrasse 44 took place between the Jewish Restitution Successor Organization (JRSO) and Hugo von Bonin. It recommended that we contact the Landesarchiv Berlin. A month later the Berlin State Archives announced it had a file containing details of a legal claim for reimbursement and would transcribe and send us a copy. Eventually, in early February 2018, over 400 pages of German arrived for translation and analysis. As we continued the search we learned that property claims in West Berlin had been banned after 1958 and despite whatever we discovered there would be no recourse for compensation.
5. We also researched the JRSO; apparently Hilda’s family property lay in the British sector of West Berlin but the US JRSO had acted on behalf of the British Jewish Trust Corporation in Berlin. It appeared its files had been sent to the Central Archives for the History of the Jewish People at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. The university could not locate any file related this particular claim but referred us to the German State Agency for Civil and Regulatory Affairs (LABO) where it said details of any compensation paid to Hilda’s mother could be confirmed. The Dusseldorf office passed us to the Berlin office which confirmed the details of monthly payments and lump sum awards paid to Hilda’s mother, but none related to Hilda’s her part ownership of Guntzelstrasse.
6. Assuming the files had been retained by the JRSO there was a chance that a copy of its documents was held in the Harvard Law Library. Contact was made and the Library investigated its digitalized volumes of the US Court of Restitution Appeal Reports, but nothing was traced.
7. At the same time, a box of correspondence was discovered in Hilda’s garage that contained letters between the two sisters written during the 1950s when the restitution claim was being processed. These materials, plus the mass of documents from the Landesarchiv Berlin, formed the basis for the last segment of our research and completion of the true story *Abandoned in Berlin.*
8. There were other actions we could have taken but we decided against these because of the likely outcome. Included were:
* Contacting Onnasch Baubetreuung GmbH & Co, the firm that took ownership of Gunzelstrasse 44 in the early 1990s
* Trying contact the von Bonin family
* Pursuing Friedrich Wilhelm, the Life Insurance Company that called in its loan during early 1936 and was witness to the 1950s Restitution hearings
* Seeking out the originals of the Guardianship Court records to see exactly what they said and who was present at the many hearings and assessing how accurate the legal depositions made by the defendant were during the restitution hearings
1. At the end of the day, we may have learned a few more details but the outcome would have remained the same. With a smile, Hilda returned to managing her rental properties, wondering if this was an occupation she had inherited and the author published *Abandoned in Berlin*!!