**book reviews**

**Sunday’s child? A memoir**

In one of the last Red Cross letters to England that Lothar Baruch received from Germany in 1942, his father wrote, ‘You will make your way alright, you are after all Sunday’s child’, which signifies good fortune. Lothar, who was obliged to anglicise his name to Leslie Baruch Brent on joining the British army, was born in 1925 in Köslin, then a German town near the Baltic coast. He had a happy childhood until he went to secondary school where he was the only Jewish boy in the class and was increasingly subjected to bullying and humiliation. Fortunately, his father knew the director of the Pankow Jewish orphanage in Berlin who agreed to take the boy. Like all such organisations it was increasingly attacked by the mob, culminating in Kristallnacht at the end of 1938. As a result Kindertransports were organised to send Jewish children out of the country and, at the age of 13, Lothar Baruch was one of the first 200 children to leave Berlin for England. In all some 10,000 children escaped persecution in this way.

The legendary teacher Anna Essinger had had the foresight to transfer pupils and teachers from her progressive boarding school in Ulm to Bunce Court in north Kent in 1933. ‘Here’, says Brent, ‘school made me an all rounder’. It not only provided him with an identity, but formed lasting friendships with people throughout the world, and acted thereafter as his surrogate home. From there he went as a laboratory assistant to a technical college in Birmingham, joined the Home Guard, and enlisted in the army at the age of 19 as ‘a friendly alien’; he served in the infantry in different parts of Europe, ending as a captain in 1947. An ex-service grant enabled him to study zoology at Birmingham University, where he had a distinguished career, winning a hockey blue, getting the vice chancellor’s prize for undergraduate. He had a happy childhood until he went to secondary school where he was the only Jewish boy in the class and was increasingly subjected to bullying and humiliation. Fortunately, his father knew the director of the Pankow Jewish orphanage in Berlin who agreed to take the boy. Like all such organisations it was increasingly attacked by the mob, culminating in Kristallnacht at the end of 1938. As a result Kindertransports were organised to send Jewish children out of the country and, at the age of 13, Lothar Baruch was one of the first 200 children to leave Berlin for England. In all some 10,000 children escaped persecution in this way.

The discovery of insulin in 1921 instantly changed a fatal disease into a chronic disease requiring lifelong treatment. The award of the Nobel prize to Frederick Banting and JIR Macleod (1923) for this achievement was followed by five further Nobel prizes during the subsequent decades. It was awarded to Bernardo Houssay (1947) for his work on the effect of pituitary hormones on insulin sensitivity; twice to Frederick Sanger (1958 and 1980) for his work on the structure of insulin; to Dorothy Hodgkin (1964) for elucidation of the crystalline structure of insulin; and to Rosalyn Yalow (1977) for studies on the immunogenic properties of insulin leading to methods for its immunoassay (and that of many other hormones). These achievements occurred almost simultaneously with remarkable clinical developments. Thus, foetal mortality in diabetic pregnancy, initially between 50% and 70%, was gradually reduced to less than 2%; mortality from diabetic ketoacidosis from 50% to a negligible percentage; and blindness, renal failure and amputation rates all decreased. The stories behind these achievements and many others must thrill both those with the condition and indeed any health professional.

The diversity of the mode of discoveries alone engenders the greatest interest. For example, the casual observation that