



Kindertransport

A special interest group of the

Association of Jewish Refugees
SERVING HOLOCAUST REFUGEES AND SURVIVORS NATIONWIDE



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**Previous issues may also be viewed at:
www.ajr.org.uk/kindertransport.htm**

Dear Kinder and Friends



From the Editor's Desk

This edition of the Newsletter shows how much it has become YOUR Newsletter. The lead story of course is Erich's Knighthood. Bertha has sent a short message. Two accounts take 1938/9 right into 2010 – the Winton Train and the *SS Warszawa*. I have added a new item, Memorabilia, which may recall some emotional periods in life, as do journeys and questionnaires. Please send in materials for our next edition, Rosh Hashanah by latest mid-July. Rosh Hashanah? We are about to celebrate Pesach. Am I wishing the year away? No, just looking ahead. Chag Sameach to you from all of us on the organising Committee.

Dear Fellow Kinder

It's been a long hard and cold winter both weatherwise and on the economic front. I hope you have all managed to cope and are now looking forward to a warmer, brighter spring and Pesach ahead.

Meanwhile as you are all no doubt aware I have been quite unexpectedly awarded an honour in the Queen's New Year List. Something I am still trying to come to terms with. What has been particularly satisfying is the pleasure this accolade has given members of the Kindertransport, to be recognised in such a wonderful way. It also had a similar effect on the staff and charities with whom I have been working for some 19 years.

So I regard the honour as one given communally to us the 'Kinder' and to the world of Charity Fund raising.

May I take this opportunity and wish you all Chag Sameach for Pesach the festival of freedom and Spring.



Sir Erich Reich



This edition of the Newsletter is the first KT opportunity to wish Erich heartiest Mazal Tov on his Knighthood, so well deserved. His work for charities is now deservedly recognised. The award also highlights his untiring work for the Kindertransport before and after taking the Chair. The last reunion which he led was an outstanding success. AJR is also an aspect of his activities. Carry on, Sir, with your wonderful work for the benefit of so many people worldwide as a knight in shining armour.

I am informed that he will be knighted by Her Majesty in May.

BK

FROM BERTHA



Picture taken of Bertha with Elizabeth Rosenthal (a kind in regular contact with Bertha) and Carol Rossen in Israel last November when a group of members went on a trip accompanied by Carol Rossen, Carol Hart and Joseph Pereira..

I spoke to Bertha just recently. She sounded very happy and in fact said she very happily settled in Kedumim near her daughter Miri and her lovely family. She keeps herself busy by going daily to the English speaking club every morning listening to talks and lectures as well as having lunch there. She would love to hear from you all; when you are in Israel, she asked for you to give her a call. Her number is 00972 9 792 8150. She would also appreciate a visit if that were possible. She said, "I often think of my friends over here." Bertha, we also think often of you. All in all she is extremely happily settled in Israel.

She wishes you Chag Sameach. Have a great Pesach.

BK

PESACH – then, later and now

A couple of years back, AJEX sent me a copy of a letter describing the arrangements for a Seder right on the front line during World War 1. It was fascinating to read the account, especially as the Officer conducting it was an uncle of mine. Under those conditions, celebrating a festival of freedom would have been a little fraught. Freedom from what? Shelling? Gassing? Or the ultimate "freedom" awaiting – death in battle. In contrast, for many of us Kinder, the Festival of Freedom has significance, since it would have been the first major festival to observe in a new land, away from the horrors of the counties under the heel of the jackboot.

I am sure many of us will remember details of how they celebrated, with emotion choking them, that they were free but their parents, siblings, relatives and friends would be marking the days under great hardship. The bitter herbs and the salt water of the Seder Dish were more than some remote symbolism, they were real, the bitter times and the tears. The words quoted in the *Haggadah* "An Aramean sought to destroy my (fore) father and he went down to Egypt...." had become again a reality. The Aramean, the Germans, sought to destroy not just my-our-father, our parents and grand -parents. This forefather, these forefathers of ours, went down into 'Egypt', where they were enslaved cruelly. Our own modern 'forefathers' as part of the attempt to destroy us as a people, were made to go down; they went down in their estate as persons, went down to leave everything behind as they were taken to their own Egypt, the Ghettos, the camps or wherever, where they were slaves, where their lives were regarded as nothing; for 6 million their slavery ended in the final embracing darkness of the Holocaust.

Many, thank God, survived; 10 000 of their children, you dear reader and I, found our freedom in a land of liberty, soon to be under dire threats as the war broke out.

On the Seder dish are two items which are symbols of things quite the opposite of the bitter herbs and salt water. The dish contains the *karpas*, the green vegetables to be dipped in the salt water and *charoset*, the sweet mixture, originally meant to remind us of the mortar of slavery in Egypt. However let me take the symbols somewhat differently.

Why *karpas*? It is regarded as a sort of hors d'oeuvre, the function of which is to whet the appetite for what is to come (hopefully). It thus points to something of the future and, if taken figuratively, to the future of us Kinder on arrival. Of course no one can tell what the future would be, especially in 1939, but at least the future seemed safe for the moment, a future in which we could grow up and build new lives; perhaps even a future where Kinder would be reunited with a parent or parents or other surviving relatives. The *charoset*, the sweet tasting dish could perhaps be the

sweetener of our future lives as we rebuilt them, to use the ‘mortar of the *charoset*’ to firm up the rebuilding on solid foundations.

Pesach then is a time for looking back and looking forward. I hope that we can look forward to a happier future in 2010 and onwards. As the Children of Israel built the cities of Pithom and Raamses, so too must we ‘build,’ we must put in our efforts, in order to make that future secure once and for all – if that is possible, and so perhaps bring about the arrival of the Messiah, whose eventual coming is stressed at the Seder.

Bernd Koschland

Family Memorabilia – new venture

Hermann Hirschberger has done and is doing tremendous work on the KT Questionnaire – a hearty *shekoach* to you Hermann. This led me to think in another direction, a direction in which you dear readers can help. As we arrived many of us came with certain items of various kinds, which were treasured and may still be with us, as part of memories of many years back, of memories of home or of loved ones. It could therefore be interesting to read about some of these reminders. Some will be, in the concept of the Antiques Road Show, collectors’ items. I therefore invite you to write a short piece about some of them – but no photographs of any kind to be included. It would make reproduction difficult.

I’ll start you off with a couple of items. The first is a card game, called *Arbah Mi Yodea* (*who knows four?*) based on Happy Families, and of Jewish educational value with the sets of four, e.g. the four species for Sukkot, the four Matriarchs. They are still in their original box, with the rules in German and were published in the early 1930’s by the Ezra Pirchei Agudas Yisroel (Education Department) of Frankfurt a/M, whose aim was to send boys to *Yeshivah*.

Another item is a small *Megillat Esther* (Book of Esther) 7x8 cm. The Hebrew text is in the form of a “chain” attached to two covers, and probably dates from early 20th century. It belonged to my father and was probably used by him on his travels in the course of his work.

- Please email your descriptions of items to me at nisraf@compuchange.co.uk for inclusion in the next editions of the Newsletter

Editor

A Moving Experience: the Winton Train journey from a daughter’s perspective.



Last September (2009), I was one of forty second-generation family members accompanying the twenty-two “Kinder” who were recreating their 1939 journeys from Prague to London on board the Winton Train. Among them were my mother Josephine Knight, and my aunt Alice Masters.

Like many in the second generation, I grew up in England keenly aware that our lives had been shaped in a particularly painful way. My parents and their friends spoke with continental accents and cooked wonderful continental food, but there was no getting away from it: we were different. As a child, I wondered why we had so little actual family and yet so many “aunts” and “uncles” from so many countries. As I grew older, I learned more about our history, but I believe I held back from asking too many probing questions; intuitively aware, perhaps, of the pain such questions might bring. Being a passenger on the Winton Train brought an extraordinary opportunity to close that gap and to step into my mother’s past in a way I would never have thought possible.

Flying with us to Prague, about to start a term studying there, and curious to know more about her family’s past, was my nineteen-year-old daughter, Joelle. She was deeply moved by the ceremonies and performance of “Brundibar” at the National Museum on the evening prior to the train’s departure; it was no small thing to be standing beside her grandmother and great aunt in an ornate hall in which their history of being uprooted at such a tender age was being commemorated. The next morning she came to see us off at Wilsonova station. A BBC cameraman caught our tearful farewells on camera. As the train pulled out of the station, whistle blowing, belching clouds of steam, the irony of the moment wasn’t lost on any of us: seventy years ago a train just like this one carried my mother and her sisters away from their parents, family, friends and homeland. This time we represented a story of renewal and survival.

On board the train, it was thrilling and deeply comforting to talk with other second-generation family members and to find out that we had shared such similar childhoods. As we talked, I discovered that I was not alone in my reluctance to travel through what is still perceived by many of the second-generation as hostile territory; memories of childhood nightmares, which we could only partly understand, had clearly not been dispelled with the passing of time.

We second-generation travellers felt the enormous weight of our parents’ pasts. We had all worried about the physical and emotional demands the trip would place upon them. We needn’t have been concerned. Our twenty-two Kinder, survivors through and through, took it all in stride, earning the admiration and respect of all on board. They displayed resilience, grace and patience. They told their stories and showed their photographs and documents repeatedly to reporters, TV crews and government officials in Czech Republic, Germany, the Netherlands and the U.K.

In addition to the news coverage, the Kinder were summoned to the original 1930’s carriage at the rear of the train by director Matej Minac, in order to film scenes for his film, “Nicky’s Family,” due to be released in 2010. Undeterred by the bouncing, jolting train, our intrepid travellers made their way there, jostled precariously from side to side, passing from carriage to carriage on the sliding metal platforms. They told us about their feelings on their original journey, when they sat nervously together in the sealed carriage, armed German soldiers keeping watch. They commented that there were no people standing in fields and at small stations en route to cheer them on, take photos and wave, as there were now.

As they told their stories, I was so impressed by their approachability, intelligence and strength of character. I understood with a new sense of clarity how important it was to them to know that their story was being heard – and deeply listened to – once again, this time by a new generation. And I believe that it was the respect that was paid to them at every stage of the journey that helped them to navigate through the experience.

I remembered my mother always telling me that arriving at the Hook of Holland was the first time she and her sisters, coming from landlocked Czechoslovakia, had ever seen the sea. Even in 2009, I was overwhelmed with relief on coming to the coast. Holland, from what I had understood from my mother's stories, had brought memories of windows opened at last, kind Dutch ladies on station platforms with hot chocolate and bread, and no more soldiers menacing them.

Arriving in England the following morning, I understood at last how strange this new land must have seemed: its language, its landscapes, its soft, white, bread. It is hard to describe the emotions experienced as we arrived at Liverpool Street Station and watched our parents stride along the platform to greet Sir Nicholas.

The second generation family members were asked to walk as a group behind the Kinder. As had been the case for much of the journey, we were invisible to the media, but had anyone asked, we would have had much to say about our own complex emotions: joy and sadness, a renewed sense of loss and life, a greater understanding of what they had been through, and a greater understanding of what it means to be a child of a survivor. As the cameras rolled, and the Kinder greeted Sir Nicholas, I had the unspoken sense that we were all grateful to the Czech Railways executive whose idea this journey was, the Winton Train organizers, the filmmakers, TV crews and reporters, for giving our parents this gift of recognition. It was a joy to see them being so honoured.

My daughter has been inspired to use her time in the Czech Republic to do research on Jewish community life before and after the war, with particular emphasis on our own family history. She has travelled back to her grandmother's village in Slovakia's Tatra Mountains. There, she visited the gymnasium, a new school built only a stone's throw from what was once her great-grandparents' house: the students and teachers are all familiar with it. Close by is the former synagogue, now used as a shoe shop, but recently repainted. For the first time, a plaque has been placed on the front of the synagogue, in memory of the Jewish citizens of the town. It was the result of a recent initiative by the history teacher and students at the school.

Two of the teachers assisted my daughter in visiting the Town Hall and regional archives. A student assigned to be her guide took it upon herself to go in search of people who might remember our family and succeeded in finding two elderly ladies who had many memories to share. In addition, my daughter was invited to speak to two classes at the gymnasium and was shown photo-essays done by the students cataloguing the homes and businesses of Jewish community members before the war. She has been promised that they will continue to share the results of their research with our family. We are much comforted by the knowledge that the torch has been passed to the third generation and that our story continues

Vera Sklaar (nee Knight)

SEARCH NOTICES

In May 1939, I was allotted as a Kindertransportee to a Jewish refugee boys' hostel in Harold Road, Cliftonville, Margate (previously perhaps a boarding house owned by a **Mr Myers**). I was there for several months and had my Bar Mitzvah there in July '39, wearing a dark suit borrowed from an older boy who acted as cook. Could anyone else who stayed there at that time please contact Wolfgang (Marc) Schatzberger at skeschatz@aol.com

Am looking for any information on **Erika Katz** and **Inge Fraenkel**. Erika, her father and sisters came to England in December 1938 from Vienna. In 1944 she moved to Leeds. Inge came in May 1939 on a Kindertransport from Berlin. In 1944 they both lived in a hostel at Shoot-up Hill, Cricklewood Broadway, West London. They were training to be nurses. If you know anything about the persons in question or their families please contact Jurgen Schwiening Schwiening@tesco.net

Assistance please in tracing anyone (e.g., kindertransport people) who knew my aunt **Edith Robinski**. Edith taught at the Volksschule Choriner Strasse in Berlin in the mid-1930s. She taught music at the school. robins@netactive.co.za

COMMUNITY: WERE YOU ON THE KINDERTRANSPORT ?.....

(or perhaps you are "Second Generation Kinder"?)

Gabriella Karin is a holocaust survivor and an artist – she is making a train sculpture as a tribute to the children survivors that were saved by Kindertransport. Michele Gold is doing the research and is looking to receive childhood photographs of survivors from the Kindertransport to insert into the train sculpture. The more pictures she has, the longer the train will be. Michele & Gabriella are looking to exhibit this sculpture in the new Los Angeles Holocaust Museum which is scheduled to open in May 2010. The photograph can be of any size and will be reduced to the size that is needed. Please include your name, where you left from and where you arrived to. If possible the approximate date at your final destination.

Photographs and any questions whatsoever can be emailed directly to Michele Gold at michelegold@covad.net

Thank you in advance for your support in this very important project.
Kind regards,

Michele

Dr AMY ZAHL GOTTLIEB (1919-2009)

I visited Amy in hospital as the Jewish Chaplain at the Royal Free Hospital. I had never met her before, though I had spoken to her on the phone on one or two occasions. I knew of her work but in no great details. In speaking to her, one could not realise that she was suffering in the extreme. She was yet full of bounce and I said that I would look forward to speaking to her again when next at the hospital. It was not to be. She died a few days later and my next contact with her was her cremation. I went in a personal capacity and as part of Kindertransport.

Amy was born in what was then the borough of Stepney on December 28th 1919. She was the youngest of her mother's seven children by her two marriages: The Zahl's and the Cravitzes. As a youngster, she joined the Stepney Jewish Girls' Club which was run by Phyllis Gerson who recognised the special spark in this club girl and took her under her wing. She encouraged her to set her horizons beyond those normally available in the 1930's to a girl from the East End.

In 1944, aged 23, Amy joined Phyllis as members of the first Jewish Relief Unit sent overseas by the Jewish Committee for Relief Abroad. Her work for victims of the Holocaust took her from Egypt to Greece and Italy.

In July 1946, in her role as representative of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, known as the JOINT, Amy attended the trial in Greece of Abram Vital Hasson, a Jew who had worked with the Germans.

Post-war she continued her work with the JOINT directing the emigration of thousands of Jews living in displaced persons camps in Austria and Germany to the United States, Australia, Canada and South America. In 1949 she was introduced to Oscar Schindler and organized his visa, enabling him to emigrate to Argentina. Michael Klein, retired professor of Physics, who survived Auschwitz wrote a personal tribute to Amy in his book *An Odyssey Of Survival*: "To Amy whose untiring devotion and dedication to rescue many youngsters - including myself - trapped in Europe after the disaster of WWII - with gratitude and eternal love, Michael."

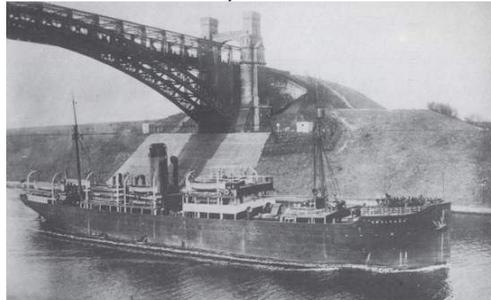
In the early 90's, angered by what she saw as an unfair slur on Anglo-Jewry's response to the Holocaust, she set about researching these events. Her book *Men of Vision, Anglo-Jewry's aid to Victims of The Nazi Regime 1933-1945* published by Weidenfeld in 1998 was her attempt to put the record straight.

When the records of the Kindertransport children were found stored in a garage, the conventional wisdom of the time was to let sleeping dogs lie. Nothing would be achieved by giving them light of day. It was Amy who ensured that not only were they archived properly, but that the 'children' had access to their own history. Only those who themselves have had their families and identities torn so cruelly taken from them can fully appreciate the importance of this.

Joan Salter, a close friend, in her tribute at the cremation, concluded with these words: "So while we mourn the loss of this exotic creature, and celebrate a truly extraordinary life, we have to give thanks that at last she is free to soar to a happier place."

Bernd Koschland, mostly based (with permission) on Jane Slater's tribute.

The SS Warszawa; From Poland to London



Two ships on which I travelled changed my life: the *SS Warszawa* and the *Pan York*. The first took me to Britain while the second brought me home to the land of my people.

In October 1928, Polish Jews residing in Germany were expelled and taken by train to the Polish border town Zbaszyn on the river Obra. My widowed mother had to report to the police knowing that she was going to be expelled. She took with her the youngest two children, me (aged 10) and my little brother Adie (Avraham, aged 8). My older brother Yisrael (15) and sister Netta (17) remained to look after our flat and belongings which were in the building of the Bayersgasse shul in Cologne. We travelled that Friday night and all day Shabbat until we arrived at that primitive border town, Zbaszyn where the train stopped. The inhabitants were peasants. We refugees were abandoned. We huddled close together and sat on whatever luggage was brought inside the station hall or left outside in the cold. There was no food; water was pumped from the street pumps. Sanitary facilities did not exist. This situation continued for some days until eventually things became organised. A hall and the mill storehouse were turned into huge dormitories by spreading straw on the floor to sleep on. At least it was warm and sheltered. Food was prepared on a World War 1 field kitchen.

The local stadium including a gym hall, was ultimately turned into a children's home, where wooden beds with straw filled sacks and one blanket provided sleeping accommodation. Because of the bitter cold, my brother and I slept in the same bed with two blankets covering us; thus we kept each other relatively warm.

Early in 1939 my mother agreed to send me to England on a Kindertransport, hoping that I, a ten year old boy, could arrange for her and Adie to follow. Sadly it was not to be. We returned to the station where mothers were seeing their children off, hugging and kissing them for the last time ever. We were a group of 54 children travelling to Warsaw, where we were taken to a vacant summer camp, called Valenica. A week later we journeyed to Gdynia to board the *SS Warszawa*.

We were allotted small cabins with six bunks in each. These cabins were placed around an open space on the deck below the top deck, which actually was also one of the ship's holds. Above were wooden removable planks forming a ceiling. These were covered on the top deck with heavy tarpaulins. The floor of the hold also consisted of planks which when lifted provided the opening to a lower hold in which the ship's cargo was stored.

There was nothing for a boy of 10 to do but to roam about and explore. I found the engine room where coal was continually shovelled into the boiler. It was very hot down below whereas on deck it was freezing cold. On the top deck there was a continuous smell of food being prepared, which came from the galley where it was pleasantly warm. The friendly cook let me come in and even offered me some tasty bits.

We sailed through the Kiel Canal. It was frightening to see those mighty German warships flying huge red flags with black swastikas on white round patches. On the fourth day of our journey the ship entered the Thames estuary, sailed up river towards the Port of London and under Tower Bridge which had been raised. We arrived on 15th February 1939. Already I missed my mother, sister and brothers. On leaving the ship, we were taken to a restaurant in Whitechapel where good Jewish people waited to take children into their homes.

From there a Mrs Freedman and her son took me and two other boys, Marcus Stemmer (11) and Herman Feldman (12) to the son's clothing factory. There we were welcomed by the rest of the Freedman family and Dr Daniel Lewin. The factory workers spoke to us in Yiddish and today I realise that they had been refugees

themselves years earlier from oppression and poverty in Eastern Europe. Before we went on the next part of our journey, we each received a half-a-crown coin which the workers had collected; that was a lot of money in those days.

The young Mr Freedman and Dr Lewin took us to Golders Green where we boarded a bus for Welwyn in Hertfordshire. There a large country house in a 9 acre estate was being prepared to absorb some 40 refugee boys who were temporarily housed in seaside holiday camps. We were welcomed by the staff who were to run the hostel which was supported by a committee of Jewish business men headed by Mrs Freedman. Dr Lewin became our tutor for English and mathematics to enable us to go to the local school in the village and also took care of our religious needs. After a few months (the war had already begun) we started St. Mary's C of E school in Old Welwyn.

In 1941, the hostel closed to become a school for RAF mechanics. Dr Lewin left to become the Rabbi of the growing Welwyn Garden City community. The boys dispersed to various parts of Britain; I went to Nottingham and then to the Northampton Hostel,

After leaving school in 1945, I joined the Bachad Farm Hachsharat Noar. In 1948 I made Aliyah arriving in Haifa on the *SS Pam York*. Six months later our *garin* (group) established Kibbutz Lavi in the Lower Galilee. Our, that is Ruth and mine, marriage was the first wedding there. For the first year a tent was our home.

Mordechai Vered (formerly Theo Verderber), Holon, Israel.

**A Postscript and a tale of two Ruth's-
(or as the proverb has it: "The world is one small town.")**

- Of the two boys mentioned above, Mordechai eventually contacted Herman in 1989 (whose name appeared in the KT Reunion Brochure) and who died in 2009. Marcus came on Aliyah in 19 and shortly afterwards fell in the battle for Jerusalem where he is buried on Mt. Herzl.
- RUTH 1. In 1995 Mordechai and Ruth with their baby son came to England. After calling Mrs Freedman, they went to visit her. They were picked up from the flat by Maurice Golker, Mordechai's father-in-law. When Mr Golker saw Mrs Freedman he realised they knew each other, as she was dressmaker to Ruth's grandmother.
- RUTH 2. *A mishpological personal note from the editor*) Mrs Freedman's daughter mentioned above (named Cissie) married the late Dr Sam (Simon) Yudkin a well known paediatrician and a brother of my late father-in-law, Solomon Yudkin, whose late daughter Ruth I married in 1957. My wife often spoke of the Northampton hostel. A later email shows that Mordechai knew my whole family and visited them later in London. The Jewish world is small.

Views expressed in the Kindertransport Newsletter are not necessarily those of the Kindertransport Special Interest Group or of the Association of Jewish Refugees and should not be regarded as such.