



KINDERTRANSPORT NEWSLETTER

AJR Special Interest Section

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

Dear Kinder and Friends

I used to worry about getting enough material to include into our N/L but amazingly the worry now is what space allows us to include all the material we have. The AJR has asked us (our Committee) to restrict our N/Ls to three monthly send outs, and to save postage, to have them included within their *AJR Journal* posting. As they pay our expenses, for which we are grateful, we comply. The new arrangement will start with our next N/L.

We held a very successful Chanukah party at the Holocaust Survivors Centre, to whom go many thanks for their kind help. As it was during the Xmas period our usual venue, The AJR Day Centre, Cleve Road, was closed.

Our KT Lunches at the Day Centre in Cleve Road on the first Monday of every month are now attracting many more Kinder and the speakers provide additional reason for good attendances. Susie Kaufman and her staff always make us feel so welcome and our thanks to the chef for the tasty meals.

January proved to be a very busy month with many remembrance functions taking place all over the country. During the week of the 27th at London's City Hall (and what a grand building this is) Hermann gave a talk in front of all the Mayors of London Boroughs in the presence of Ken Livingstone, next to whom he sat. Hermann's speech was excellent, and did us proud. When it came to Ken Livingstone he just read from the memoir of Miep Gies (the special Dutch women who helped the "Frank" family and their friends to survive until their betrayal.) It was very thoughtful for City Hall to provide a kosher table at the reception that followed.

Separately, on Sunday 22nd January Barnet Council had erected a huge marquee filled to capacity, attended by the Mayor of Barnet and all the Councillors. Rev Bernd Koschland had much to do with organising this event. Sir Nicholas Winton spoke on his rescue mission of Kinder. The theme was "One Person can make a Difference". Testimonies by a survivor and a hidden child followed.

In my talk at this event I took this one step further and spoke about the one "Country" that made such a difference to us. This went down well with the audience and is, after all very true.

The AJR organised a commemoration day at Belsize Park Synagogue, introduced by Hermann. Main speakers were Ludwig Spiro and his son Anthony, followed by a reception hosted by the AJR.

One of the most moving occasions was the special event put on by the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust in Cardiff. Members from the AJR Office and the 45 Group (Survivors of the Camps) hired a bus for the occasion and invited several Kinder, including Hermann and

myself to join them. The main event was held in the evening when many presentations took place. One of the speakers was Kind, Ellen Davis, who lives in Cardiff. Afterwards during a reception we met the Chief Rabbi and Tony and Cherie Blair, who flew in for a few hours to be present. Hermann gave a copy of our reunion book to the Lord Mayor of Cardiff who sent us a letter of thanks. Many people seem to lose sight of the fact that the actual date and day was instituted by the German President some years ago to commemorate the liberation of Auschwitz. Now they try to combine it with atrocities that took place since. It seems the world does not even want us Jews to be allowed to mourn our tragedy (remember the cross in Auschwitz). With respect to our greatest Rabbonim since 1945 up to the present time, none came up with a memorial date like Tisha Be Av, which commemorates the destruction of both temples and the exile that followed. It was left to feeling non Jews to designate a day for our recent tragedy. A Jewish fast day would not have been out of place either.

Now to our big project, which I hope you will all take on board. As our birthdays come and pass (and may that be for many years) we, the committee have decided to design a detailed questionnaire to show how our lives were shaped by coming on the Kindertransport. This will be sent to you under separate cover. We hope you will take the time to complete and return it, for which we thank you in advance. Hopefully through this questionnaire we can find out how our lives were shaped.

I very much look forward to spending Pesach with my family (including Inge, who is also a proud new grandma to a baby girl) in Israel 6-26 April, where I shall have the pleasure of holding my latest great-grandson for the first time at three weeks old, so please no phone calls during those dates.

We have been told by WJR that the new KT Statue should be in place shortly. We ourselves are not actively involved with its new design, and hope the signage will this time, be clearly understood by everyone reading it, and be displayed on the statue.

Sorry I can't give you any information about dates, so I expect by the time the next N/L is out, it will be in place.

Wishing you all a Very Happy Pesach and also from Hermann/Andrea and the Committee.



A Pesach thought Why recall?

"...For you left Egypt in haste – so that all the days of your life you are to remember the day of your departure from Egypt all the days of your life." (Deuteronomy 16:3) This instruction is given in the singular and hence addressed to us as individuals.

The most recurrent theme in Jewish life, prayer, thought and practice is the Exodus from Egypt, G-d's deliverance of our ancestors from the abject misery of slavery. As a prelude, the Israelites in Egypt were to slaughter a lamb and be prepared for departure, with loins girded, shoes on and stick in hand; the lamb had to be eaten in haste. Our current Pesach recalls this initial celebration with all its detailed instructions through the removal of *Chamets*, the Seder and the eating of Matzah.

What is the significance of the recall of the Exodus, especially through the observance of Pesach? Of several answers, I would point to the concept of Freedom, to Israel becoming a nation in its own right. By our celebration we are sanctifying our long history, without which

we cannot really understand our present fully and certainly not plan – if one can plan – our future. Rabbinic thought enshrines this concept by pointing out that there are three types of Pesach: the unique one in Egypt, the present one from that time onwards and the Pesach of the future, *Pesach le'atid*, in the time of Redemption with the coming of the Messiah.

The present relates closely with the past. This is especially relevant to us of Kindertransport. In haste, with some preparation, we left our homes and family to come to a country strange to us, and adapt to a new life, not always pleasant and happy. Perhaps we looked back at what we had left behind and wished we had never left. The Israelites in the desert felt this way too, when they experienced hardships and looked back to Egypt where food was plentiful unlike their then situation. However, the Israelites became depleted but eventually reached their Promised Land. So likewise, despite hardships, we mostly reached safety and security, to lead a normal and fulfilled life.

In that passage of time from 1938/9 onwards, many of us from the Kindertransport found homes in hostels, up and down the UK. These hostels have long disappeared and with it their full story, though their history may lie buried in some archival material somewhere or the other. The KT Executive is interested in these hostels as part of a general authorised history of the Kindertransport. Much urgent help is needed, from you dear Readers, including resourcing, before these hostels disappear into limbo to be totally expunged from living memory.

Pesach is a Festival of recall. With the Exodus we became a people with a promised land. Before his death, Moses enjoins the people to “*remember the days of old, understand the years of each generation,*” to ask those of the previous generation to explain that past. For in our past lies our future destiny.

I wish you all *Chag Sameach*.

Bernd Koschland

LETTERS

Dear Bertha – In the January 2006 Newsletter you put forward for discussion the idea that AJR/KT should publish a “definitive history of the Kindertransport” if financial sponsorship can be found.

There is no need; an authentic definitive history already exists in the pages of *Men of Vision* by Dr Amy Zahl Gottlieb, published in 1998 by Weidenfeld & Nicolson. This important yet often overlooked book is a historical testament that records the formation of the Jewish Refugee Committee and how it supervised and assumed responsibility for the welfare of some 85,000 refugees from Nazi oppression, who arrived in the UK 1933-1945.

Chapters 9, 10 and 11 are devoted to a comprehensive account of the rescue of 10,000 unaccompanied children organised by the Central British Fund for World Jewish Relief. The collective and singular efforts of other bodies and individuals who participated, e.g. Sir Nicholas Winton, Rabbi Dr Solomon Schoenfeld, the Jewish Board of Deputies, Parliament, etc., are duly recorded and annotated.

It took 40 years after the end of WWII before the enormous tragedy of the holocaust was to gain the impact of worldwide awareness and recognition.

Since the first Reunion of Kindertransport in 1989, numerous publications, films, TV documentaries, centres for documentation, have been created relating to individual experiences. A compilation of some of our personal stories in *I Came Alone*, edited by Bertha and the late Shmuel Lowensohn was a trickle at the start of the flood. It has been printed in both hardback and paperback form, yet in the recent Newsletter we are informed that it will not be reprinted again, presumably, because demand has waned and the potential sale for a minimum 500 copies reprint is dubious.

The event of what is now known as Kindertransport and the circumstances for its inception are known and have been recorded. Would it not be of more value and possibly

inspiration, if the present and future generations were given the example and made aware how the majority of Kinder by their own will and determination, often against adversity, succeeded in making a new life and home in their newly adopted countries.

A book on this subject could also illustrate how Society may have benefited by their efforts and achievements in every walk of life such as medicine, science, art, literature, academia, industry, business, military and even politics. The biographies of prominent and successful personalities could be introduced which might interest and encourage a wide readership

To commission a worthy author for this work should not prove to be too difficult. We do not have to look very far; who else but none other than Ronald Channing, who is most ideally suited for the task? He has been involved with AJR and Kindertransport for many years and his regular informative *Profile* column and other articles in *AJR Journal* has already provided a useful base of research for such a project.

*Harry Heber
London NW8*

Dear Bertha – Might I comment on the letter from Bronia Snow and suggest to her, that we share the hostility of a brainless minority with all the other ethnic minorities. Perhaps we do better than some, because most of us are not ‘visible’ – we are white, and most dress like the majority population. On the other hand, simply because we are, broadly speaking, as she says, successful, law-abiding and mutually supportive, we attract more dislike. Envy is an exceptionally unpleasant motivator.

This leads me deeply to regret her racist attack on Hindus and Muslims. Her generalised attack on both these religious groups particularly the latter, on the basis of the conduct of a small minority, when the overwhelming majority are law abiding, responsible citizens, just like us, illustrates how easy it is for us to adopt the reasoning which creates anti-semites.

Finally, she is wrong about asylum-seekers. I spent my last nine working years specialising in asylum cases. And our position is not to be compared to theirs. HMG agreed to admit 10,000 unaccompanied children. They were pre-selected and on that base granted admission. The immigration administration did not touch us. The administration affected our parents, and was so successful that a mere 10% of us managed to be reunited with our parents.

Of course I don't approve of burning down detention centres, but can she not sympathise with these young, friendless men, facing deportation to Zimbabwe, facing certain torture and possible murder? Or in my day to Turkey or Iraq? How would the eldest amongst us have responded if we had been put into prison-like conditions, to await deportation back to the Hitler Reich?

At a meeting of asylum practitioners and the Immigration Directorate – in my days these were regular occurrences – I asked how Oakingdon (one of these centres) differed from a prison. The straight-faced reply from a Senior Exec. Officer was *The fences are two feet lower – that reduces them to 10'* – and after some thought, he added words to the effect that *we try to keep families in the same room.*

It is a dreadful thought that under the excuse of keeping out economic migrants the EU is spending €millions of our money providing a Fortress Europe with outer walls in North Africa, the Balkans, the Ukraine and so on. We are all getting on, but we who have benefited should be in the forefront of those calling for a fair, just and humane asylum system this is currently lacking!

*Francis Deutsch
Saffron Walden*

Dear Andrea -You may have heard that the Kingston, Surbiton and District Synagogue has a *sefer torah*, which came from Moravská Ostrava, on permanent loan from the Czech Scrolls Trust and that a small group there have been researching the history of Ostrava and its Jewish community, with particular reference the destruction of the 20,000+ who were there in 1939 when the Nazis occupied the country.

I, myself, was lucky to escape from Ostrava with my parents but many others were not so lucky but nevertheless managed to get out through the magnificent efforts initiated by Sir Nicholas Winton. In assisting our efforts to locate as many people originating from, or with knowledge of ,Ostrava, could I ask you to insert a short paragraph in a future newsletter inviting any members of your group who have any information or material to come forward and contact me or the chairman of our group, David Lawson.

David's recent talk on Ostrava is on the Shul website pages listed below.

<http://www.kingston-synagogue.org.uk/ostravasides.php>

<http://www.kingston-synagogue.org.uk/resources/ostravanotes.pdf>

My contact details are: e-mail heinz@vogel.org.uk

Heinz Vogel

Dear Bertha - In your January Newsletter you floated the idea of a “definitive history of the Kindertransport”, and invited opinions on that subject; so here is mine.

You more than anyone will know that the Kindertransport has already attracted the interest of historians. In English, we have the informative chapters in Amy Zahl Gottlieb’s book (1988, Weidenfeld and Nicholson), based on the archive of CBF. However, the frame of that book – covering as it does the whole of the German-Jewish refugee episode, and doing full justice to those to whom we owe gratitude – is too wide for it to serve as a history of the Kindertransport.

Much more focused is Rebekka Göpfert’s ‘Der Jüdische Kindertransport (pp217, 1999, Campus). Indeed, that well conceived, objective and comprehensively documented book – which grew out of a dissertation – comes close to being a ‘definitive history’. I think it deserves translation into English, if author and publisher were to agree. The cost of commissioning such a translation would be moderate and strictly definable. Better, the sale of such a scholarly work in the English speaking world may well recoup the outlay.

But surely you and the committee have read Rebekka Göpferts book. So I suspect that you are looking for something different: not so much a ‘definitive history’, more a narrative chronicle crafted, as you said, by “a big name”. Now, I can see merit also in such a book, it could contribute to the historical consciousness of our grandchildren. And if it were timed to appear around the 70th anniversary of the Kindertransport it may attract the necessary publicity. But I would be worried that a book commissioned by Kinder on the Kindertransport might be seen as self-publicising, even if unjustly so.

The need of the moment, as I see it, is to secure the historiography on the Kindertransport. Historians will then surely flock to the sources on their own accord, some to become great names.

Otto Hutter

Ed Note: *Just to state that Rebekka Göpferts’ received her first information from me many years ago and was so taken with the subject, she devoted herself to it. She also persuaded DTV, the German publishers, to publish I Came Alone, copies to date 16,000.*

Imperial War Museum – Holocaust Memorial Day Lecture 2006

This year the annual Holocaust Memorial Day lecture was given by Dr Nicholas Stargardt of Magdalene College, Oxford, author of the recently acclaimed account of children’s lives in Europe during WW2: *Witnesses of War: children’s lives under the Nazi occupation.*

Dr Stargardt's lecture, titled *Children Who Were Saved*, focused on children who remained on the continent during the war. His first accounts described the experiences of children in hiding, who were fortunate enough to find refuge in Aryan homes. These personal histories were accompanied by children's artwork depicting hiding and insights into the psychological effects of hiding from Nazi persecution including accounts of the difficulties of adopting new Christian identities.

Dr Stargardt then proceeded to describe the lives of children amongst the small number of child survivors of the concentration camps. He concentrated on two contrasting series of drawings recounting life in the camps used by two child survivors to try to make sense of the atrocities they had experienced during the war.

In keeping with the moving accounts presented by Dr Stargardt, the evening lecture was followed by music from the Solaris Quartet. Their performance included a dance composed in Auschwitz and the first public hearing of music composed for Kindertransport children by their father, who remained in Europe.

Zehava Gabriel
(3rd Generation)
Granddaughter of Prof. Hutter

Dear Andrea - In the last N/L I saw a communication from Rosi Reuther. My husband Erwin Dobson (Dobrzynski) was also born in 1923 in Frankfurt am Main and lived in Windeck Strasse with his parents. He went to Phylantrophene School. His relations were the well known Frankfurter Weinhandler Hirsch family.

He seems to recall the Fuld family and wonders if maybe Rosi Reuther remembers him. He left Germany for England in March 1939 aged 15 with the help of the Gemeinde organisation and then caught up with the Kindertransport. All his family perished.

Eventually, he volunteered for the RAF and his name was changed to Dobson. After fighting the Germans he was later posted to the Far East and was made a flight engineer instructor and later decorated with various RAF medals.

He is now seriously ill and I look after him. We have been married for 60 years.

Sylvia Dobson
Cheshire

I am so sorry to read Erwin is so ill and send him and you my very best wishes. Bertha

Dear Bertha – It is with great sadness that I have to inform you, somewhat belatedly, of the death of my dear father, Alfred Foster, husband of Kind, Vera Foster, on 28 June 2005.

I know that you met both my parents more than once. You may recall that my mother is hemiplegic, and confined to a wheelchair after suffering a severe stroke just weeks after the ROK Reunion in 1999. She is as you can imagine bereft after the loss of my father, who had a brief, painful struggle with cancer last year.

You may be interested to know that I accompanied my childrens' class from Israel on a trip to the Polish camps in September last year as a "Witness – 2nd Generation". I told the story of the Kindertransport; most of the Israeli children and the adults accompanying them had never heard it before. You have done fantastic work.

Suzanne Eigenstein
Ashkelon, Israel

Dear Kindertransport members – We would like to invite those of you not members of the Centre to visit and learn about the activities which take place.

The Holocaust Survivors' Centre is a Jewish Social Centre for survivors who were in Europe during the war or came as refugees after November 1938. The centre offers a very varied social programme six days a week, including art and creative writing classes, outings to theatre

and opera, as well as a drop in café facility for informal get-togethers and tasty food. The centre is also able to offer practical advice and befriending. Testimonies are recorded and public speaking skills developed.

If there are problems getting to the centre, please discuss with staff members on Monday-Friday 9.00 am to 5.30 pm. Tel: 020 8202 9844.

*Melanie Gotlieb
Centre Co-ordinator
The Holocaust Survivors' Centre*

Dear Mrs Leverton – We are experiencing problems in contacting former Kind in connection with formalising the ownership of the rich and varied collections of memorabilia deposited at the Imperial War Museum two years ago.

I am trying to contact the following people or next of kin: Jochewet Heiden, Richard Kaufman, Ilse Majer-Williams (dec'd), Eduard Chanoch Merzbach (dec'd), Rolf Metzger (dec'd), Susanne Pierson, Hanna Elsa Shamash nee Karplus (dec'd), Frieda Simmons. Any help you could give me would be greatly appreciated.

*Suzanne Bardgett
Imperial War Museum
Tel: 020 7416 5204*

MY EXODUS FROM BERLIN

There have been many accounts of the exodus of Kindertransport immigrants to the UK during the period from Kristallnacht to the outbreak of the last war. I am prompted to add mine, because I believe it differs somewhat from the experience of most of my fellow immigrants.

My mother, although hailing from Galicia in Poland, who moved to Berlin as a teenager at the beginning of the twentieth century, regarded Germany, in common with many fellow "Ostjuden", as the "goldene Medine". The Germany which admitted them, was a paradise, compared with the anti-Semitic backward Poland they left behind. She, in common with many German Jews, regarded Hitler as a temporary phenomenon, whose bark would prove to be worse than his bite. She even returned from Palestine, to which she emigrated with my father in 1936 (my sister and I were to follow) because she felt that she could not take roots there.

She therefore delayed her and our emigration until it was almost too late; i.e. "Kristallnacht". Reluctantly she was persuaded to register my sister, thirteen at the time, and me, fourteen then, for a Kindertransport, in conjunction with the Youth Alyah. We were booked for a transport in Mid-August 1939. In the third week of August, we were informed that, in view of the "uncertain political situation", all transports were suspended. In the fourth week of August we were notified that a transport would be organised after all, although only for a reduced number of children. The list included my name but, to our consternation, my sister was not on it. We were told to assemble in the evening outside the offices of the Jewish sponsoring organisation (which was, I believe in the Meinike or Fasanerie Strasse). We were allowed a small suitcase and a rucksack. As I was supposed to proceed to a "Hachshara" (training camp for Zionist pioneers) in the UK, I was given a list with special items suitable for agricultural labour. This included a pair of German jackboots (known in the German Army as "Knobelbecher"). On arrival in England I was advised to hide these immediately because they would be anathema to English people with memories of the German Army in WWI.

I was accompanied to the place of assembly by mother and sister, but none of the accompanying persons were allowed to come with us to the railway station. We thus had to bid farewell to them then and there. Although the thought did not occur to me at the time, and to most of us, it proved to be the last farewell. My mother and sister were smuggled across the

border to Belgium after the outbreak of war. A journey entailing an arduous journey on foot at night time, in return for a hefty fee for the smugglers.

They found refuge in Antwerp (a city with a large Jewish community), only to flee towards France a few months later from the invading German army, joining many non-Jewish Belgians with memories of WWI. By the time they got to La Panne on the Franco-Belgian border, the German army overtook them and ordered all the refugees to return to their home town. My family went into hiding with a family in Brussels. In addition to my mother and sister, there were also my mother's sister and brother and his fiancé. As can be imagined, the accommodation in their backroom apartment was very cramped.

One day in 1942 my mother decided to go to their former residence with my sister to wash their hair in comparative comfort. Their neighbours, possibly thinking that intruders had entered the flat of their former Jewish neighbours, must have alarmed the police, who handed them to the German authorities, who transferred them to a transit camp in Malines. From there they were transported *zum Arbeitseinsatz* (labour camp) in the east. From the records which I inspected at Yad Vashem (many years after the war) they were on the list of a transport which went to Auschwitz and almost certainly gassed immediately after their arrival in October 1942.

All this could not have been envisaged by me, or by any of my fellow Kinder, when we bade farewell to our loved ones on that evening in Berlin. When we arrived at the station we were allocated, much to our surprise, seats in comfortable compartments. This was all the more surprising because the gangways were packed with German army personnel who had to stand (for a long night journey) and who were being mobilised for the conflict which their leadership had evidently already planned. After a while the door of our compartment was opened by a German Army officer who asked, very politely, whether there was a vacant seat, which we affirmed with some trepidation. We soon got talking to him and he turned out to be a sympathetic person. He expressed his great regret that we were made to flee. After this, on this long night journey to Cologne, I fell asleep on his shoulder! A pleasant memory of my last personal contact with a German before the war.

We arrived in Cologne next morning and were told that the frontier had been closed and no more trains would be allowed to cross into Holland. The Jewish community put us up in a Jewish youth hotel, where we spent a further anxious night, wondering whether we would be turned back. However, to our immense relief, two buses arrived from Holland next morning, to drive us across the frontier and then to the Hook. We learned much later, that these buses had been organised by a courageous lady (a gentile) from the Dutch refugee committee. She personally took charge of us. When we reached the frontier we were confronted by a frontier guard who stood, somewhat dramatically, in the middle of the road, with his rifle raised as if he was about to fire at us. Our plucky lady protector got out and showed our transit papers to the guard. After some consultation, he waved us through, shouting, *Judenkinder* (Jew kids) to his comrades. I will never forget the immense feeling of relief which swept through the bus the moment we crossed the border. This lady was later honoured as a "righteous Gentile" at Yad Vashem.

The journey to the Hook took place at night time and we were all exhausted by the time we were allocated bunks on board the ferry to Harwich. I had never made a sea journey before and was afraid of sea sickness. Many years later, in my Army days, I frequently used this crossing when I was stationed in Germany, with the Army of Occupation, and experienced many a rough night crossing.

Coming back to 30 August 1939, the next think I remember, was waking up and asking my fellow Kinder, whether the ship had sailed yet, only to be told that we had already arrived at Harwich! My first sea journey turned out to be a non-event. When we disembarked (the morning of 1 September 1939) we were greeted by the news that the Germans had invaded Poland and that the British government had issued an ultimatum to them to withdraw immediately. Either

that evening or the following day, Chamberlain made his famous broadcast, finishing with “we are now at war with Germany.”

During the train journey to Liverpool Street, I was surprised by the comfortable upholstered seats (not known in pre-war Germany third class compartments) and disgusted by the tea we were served which I spat out immediately thinking it was coffee. I only knew tea without milk and with lemon. When we arrived at Liverpool Street station, it was crowded with evacuees and soldiers putting up sandbags. We were told that we would immediately proceed to a holding camp in Wales. This was Grwych Castle, in Abergele in North Wales. A half ruin without electricity or proper heating at that time. The castle had been allocated to the orthodox Youth Alyah. I and the other secular *chaverim* were later sorted out and sent to another castle in South Wales. In spite of the primitive accommodation at Grwych, I retain a pleasant memory of our Madrich (leader) Erwin Seligman. He took a personal caring interest in us all, whether orthodox or not. Although I later became disillusioned with the prospect of becoming a Chalutz, I retain fond memories of the sense of fellowship and mission which imbued us. I believe we were lucky, compared with more unpleasant experiences by some of the Kinder put up with (not always very caring) strangers.

Manfred Alweiss

A Royal Meeting

One of the last things my mother did of importance before she died was meeting Prince Charles and his wife Camilla in July last year at a reception for former Kindertransport refugees at Clarence House. This was her big day and she was able to talk about her Cologne background and her mother Johanna who had helped her and her eight siblings to escape the Nazis in late 1938.

My mother wasn't able to stand for long periods and was given a beautiful chair to sit on and when Prince Charles saw her sitting alone he came over to speak to her. He was amazed how many children my grandmother had been able to help escape the Nazis and told her that he thought it was probably a record!

My mother told him about the street in Cologne, Johanna Löwenstein Strasse, which had been named after her mother in recognition of her bravery and that a kindergarten had been built there. This was a wonderful thing for my mother to relate. I think it showed something good had come from her life which had great difficulties. The kindergarten is going to be for all creeds and nationalities, sending a clear message against the cruelty of the past under the Nazis.

Anthony Abbey

The following is the contents of a leaflet handed to people by the House of Commons if they show an interest in the plaque:

The Kindertransport plaque

In July 1997, the Committee of the Reunion of Kindertransport (RoK) wrote to Madam Speaker of the House of Commons, stating that the organisation wished to thank the people and Parliament of the United Kingdom for allowing 10,000 mainly Jewish children to escape from Nazi persecution in Germany, Austria and Czechoslovakia between 1938-39. The children were put on sealed and guarded trains – the Kindertransport – until they reached the Netherlands and from there most went by sea to Britain.

The RoK proposed commissioning and donating a plaque, to be sited within the precincts of the House, and that the unveiling might coincide with the 60th reunion to take place in June 1999. The proposal was approved in principle by the relevant House Committee (the Administration Committee) which co-ordinated advice received from the Accommodation and Works Committee and from the Advisory Committee on Works of Art on the siting, wording

and material to be used. It was agreed that the plaque should be sited opposite the Admission Order Office where it would be seen by many Members and staff of both Houses and by visitors to the Strangers' Gallery.

The plaque was unveiled by Madam Speaker on Monday 14 June 1999. The unveiling was attended by Members from both Houses of Parliament as well as representatives of the "Kinder" themselves.

The wording of the plaque:

In deep gratitude
to the people and Parliament
of the United Kingdom
for saving the lives of
10,000 Jewish and other
Children
who fled to this country
from Nazi persecution
on the Kindertransport

1938-1939

CONGRATULATIONS

Miriam and Alfred Buechler on their 45th Wedding Anniversary.

Rose and Paul Gotley on their Diamond Wedding.

Judy Benton on her 85th Birthday

Harry Heber for receiving the National award for WJR work. Volunteer of the Year 2005. He supplies prescription glasses for poor Jews in the Ukraine and other countries via World Jewish Relief.

OBITUARIES

Sophie Friedlander died 20th February 2006 after reaching her 101st birthday on 17 January. She was a teacher in Caputh, Nr Potsdam. Sophie came to Dovercourt, helped to facilitate placings in Homes/Hostels/Farms. She then together with her lifelong friend Hilde Jarecky, became housemothers in Birmingham and Redding Hostel. She taught in a girls grammar school in Mill Hill in 1956.

Natalie Spiegel nee Margulies died end October 2005, where the Chief Rabbi Officiated.

Gwen Richards nee Freidenreich, who after 50 years found a cousin in Israel, has died. She lived in Devon and we send our condolences to her family, sister Paula and Friends.

Hanni Baum nee Hochber, died on 2 November 2005, following a short illness. Born in Cologne in 1924. Arrived in England via the Kindertransport in July 1939. She spent most

of the war in Wittengehame, Scotland in a Hostel the property of Lord Balfour. Survived by her three sons and their families.

Astrid Zydower died May 2005. An obituary has been sent in by Max Dixon which appeared in *The Independent*. She was a kind and as an artist earned an MBE.

SEARCH NOTICES

Accommodation of KT children in Suffolk. There is much reference in the literature to the use of Pakefield holiday camp, but we believe that for a short period some Kinder were accommodated in the redundant workhouse at Claydon near Ipswich (also known as Barham or Bosmere Union). We can find no reference locally to this event, and would be grateful if you have any information that would help confirm that the workhouse was so used. Pls contact Geoffrey Brogden at brogden@fish.co.uk

Anyone who came on Kindertransport to Coventry and would like to share their story and experiences, pls contact me Natalie Heidaripour at Herbert Art Gallery and Museum in Coventry, where I am developing a new gallery on Peace and Reconciliation theme. Tel 024 7678 5320 or email Natalie.heidaripour@coventry.gov.uk

Obst, Fanny was adopted by Rubins family (?). In 1939 was 4-5 years old. Changed her name to Elisa. Lived at 39 Sanford Road, Mosely. Any info pls to andrea@ajr.org.uk.

Sisters Hansi and Ruth (surname unknown) went to Sweden on Kindertransport from Germany. We were in same Swedish family in Gavle and were transferred to a children's home in Skane, Osby. In 1942 Hansi was 15 and Ruth 12. Possibly they went to Israel after the war. Any info pls to andrea@ajr.org.uk

NOTICES

In our last issue there was a book review of Rose Gotley's *Journey into the Past*. Copies of this book can be obtained from Polysorb Ltd, Wenworth, Latchmore Bank, Hallingbury, Bishop's Stortford, Herts. CM22 7PH. £6.50.

Copies of *Into the Arms of Strangers* can be obtained on DVD only, by applying to Amazon.co.uk for £6.

DIALOGUE BETWEEN GENERATIONS DURING THE KINDERTRANSPORT REUNION

Following the 1999 Kindertransport Reunion, workshop facilitators were requested to submit a report for publication. In the KT newsletter of February/March 2005, you read Prof Leslie Baruch Brent's contribution on his workshop. We are now printing below the report of the workshop co-facilitated by Irene Bloomfield and Gaby Glassman. This paper was submitted originally before Irene died.

Irene Bloomfield (1918 – 2001), born in Berlin, Germany, came to England aged 18 on a domestic permit. A psychologist, psychotherapist and group analyst by training, she retired from

a NHS hospital in 1984. Since then, until her sudden death, she was in private practice as a psychotherapist and worked together with Gaby with two generation groups.

Gaby Glassman was born in Holland as the daughter of Holocaust survivors. She is in private practice as a counsellor, psychologist and psychotherapist and conducts second generation groups.

INTRODUCTION

Because of our previous experience in facilitating intergenerational groups over a period of several years, we were invited to be the facilitators of two workshops on this topic at the gathering that took place in June 1999 at the Logan Hall in London on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of the Kindertransports. Our earlier intergenerational groups were called *Mi Dor L'Dor*, the Hebrew for *from Generation to Generation*. Their purpose was to get the first and second generation to talk to each other openly and to break down the wall of silence which so frequently still existed between parents and children in the early 1990ies. Each tried to protect the other. Parents did not want to inflict the horrors of their Holocaust past on their children and children soon got the message that questions about that past were not welcome. Consequently, they were afraid that if they did ask, they might not be able to cope with seeing their parents upset. Frequently, parents' difficulty in speaking about their experiences began to extend to all communication and in several cases there was hardly any meaningful dialogue at all.

It seemed to us that it would have been too threatening, had members of the same family been in one group. Our hope and expectation was that in a group of people who were strangers to each other, the generations would be able to begin a dialogue which could then be carried over into their own families. In spite of this, there was a good deal of wariness, anxiety and even suspicion of the other generation and it generally took some time before group members were able to express their feelings openly.

THE REUNION

Although the purpose was the same, the workshops we led at the Kindertransport Reunion developed in a very different way from the *Mi Dor L'Dor* groups. On this occasion there were members of the same family in the groups: *Kinder* had brought their children and partners, non-Jewish ones included. Some of their children had done the same, so there were even a few members of the *third generation* present. All participated actively in the discussion, in spite of the considerable size of the afternoon group, more than fifty – and many others had to be turned away at the door. There was a wide age range, from eleven to late seventies. The atmosphere in the workshops conveyed a sense of urgency for those who still had the opportunity to talk. Sadly, though, for some second generation this interest in dialogue had come too late, as their parents were no longer alive.

CONTENT

Among the generation of Kindertransportees and among their descendants, there seemed to be an immediate sense of belonging for both generations. The *Kinder* had shared a common and unique fate, which they had come to value since the first meeting 10 years ago and this had also resulted in a special bond among the descendants. Consequently, the groups started almost before we had sat down. There was not a moment's silence at any point. The issues were well known by now and there was no need for preliminaries. One of the most debated themes was very similar to one, which had dominated our earlier groups. It was the parents' determination to protect their children from the horrors of their past experience. This time the conflict was

brought out into the open almost immediately and each side was able to say what it had meant to them, including a third generation member.

There seemed to be a consensus that with the current vast exposure of today's children to so many images of violence through the media, the situation was very different from the post-war situation during which the second generation had grown up. This could either mean that shielding them was not possible or that it was all the more important.

Opinions seemed to be divided whether children should be told horrific stories of parental experiences. Ruth, one of the Kindertransportees, felt: "*After all I went through, I did not want to ram it down their throats. I wanted to spare my children.*" Ruth's view may mirror the view of society at that time which did not want to know. She was adamant that "*If the children had wanted to know, they should have asked.*" The above had not been an issue for everyone. Some parents had been able to tell their children little by little.

However, it was often not as simple as that, as much communication took place non-verbally and, although not put into words, was equally telling. The second generation expressed the wish to hear their parents' story, even though in the process of telling parents might become emotional. In our sessions, some strong emotions emerged, with tears, anger, pain and hurt.

While there was a good deal of disagreement and sometimes quite heated discussion between first and second generation about the importance of talking about the painful experiences of each, everybody listened attentively when the grandchildren joined in the discussion. It became evident why so many first generation have found it easier to talk to their grandchildren than to their own children: the third generation seemed to us better able to protect itself and to articulate its thoughts.

One grandmother mentioned how some time ago her granddaughter had put her hands over her ears, when she heard something she did not want to hear. The girl had explained: "*I do not want to have nightmares.*" A grandson had told his grandfather in no uncertain terms: "*shut up*". These examples of open and direct communication would have been less likely to occur in the second generation. The eleven-year old present put it in clear, simple words: "*If I want to ask my grandparents, I do. If they want to tell me fine, if they do not, I do not mind*"

Many children wished to learn what happened to their parents and to understand its impact on them. They were genuinely curious and longed to discover their parent's family secrets. However, facts by themselves did not necessarily provide a total explanation either and not every parent was able to speak about the unspeakable. As one parent described it: "*We did not lie, we simply told a lot of half-truths.*"

Kinder who were fostered in non-Jewish homes, often did not have any contact with a Jewish community, particularly if they lived outside London. Some approached a local synagogue with a view to joining after they had left their foster homes, but did not feel welcomed. This made positive identification difficult for them. As a result they married out and tried to assimilate. Some *Kinder* joined a synagogue in later life. Although their children grew up in homes where no Jewish Holy days were kept, what was passed on was sufficient for some to make them search for their Jewish roots. This sometimes led to marriages back into the faith, but could also cause them to feel embarrassed when their lack of Jewish education was exposed.

Some members of the first generation felt anxious about their Jewishness and were ashamed of it or perceived it as too dangerous. *Kinder* spoke of anti-Semitic comments directed at them, such as *you are quite nice for a Jew*. In spite of having escaped from the brutal force of Nazi persecution, they were not free from racial harassment in the UK. It manifested itself as a subtle form of social exclusion or more blatantly in taunts such as *dirty Jew* or, even worse, *dirty German-Jew*. To be still seen as German, was a double affront and they regretted not having been able to stand up to abuse or defend the person under attack. While the second generation echoed this feeling, the third seemed on the whole much freer. They could ask openly without hesitation for kosher food on a plane and talk freely about Judaism in front of a class at school.

Some *Kinder* remembered their journey to England in detail, but many others only had fragments of memory and had forgotten the rest. In spite of their ordeal, for some only good experiences had stayed with them, whereas for others who were left behind at Liverpool Street Station, the seeds of abandonment that were sown have never left them completely. *Kinder* tried hard to learn English as quickly as possible. Parents' mother tongue or nursery rhymes were seldom passed on, so that their culture was lost to the next generation. Children doubted that it was possible for them to have a *normal* life when parents had experienced such trauma.

There seemed to be a consensus among the three generations present that it was important to talk about the Holocaust and speak in schools. Some *Kinder* had written down their stories; others had been interviewed by their grandchildren. Audio and video recordings had been deposited in archives. It was questioned whether it was right to insist on remembering the Holocaust when other genocides, such as those in Rwanda and Somalia, had already been forgotten.

A granddaughter of a Kindertransportee stressed that direct descendants should not be the only ones to hear about their grandparents' experiences, but others too. She said she would feel very sorry for non-Jewish people who were not taught about the Holocaust and might never hear about it, unless it was part of the syllabus. Some *Kinder* were involved in Holocaust education in schools which had helped them to talk more openly about their traumatic past. This had been a feature among participants in the Mi Dor L'Dor groups too. What was new, however, was the way in which some *Kinder* were accepting that remembering was important in order to learn from the past even when it is very painful. Speaking about it was also not found to have become easier over time.

SUMMARY

The groups provided an opportunity for the generations to speak directly to each other about issues they had never previously managed to address. There were passionate disagreements and arguments, but also much fruitful discussion about matters of mutual concern. On the whole, members were listening to each other and sharing thoughts, experiences and feelings. There were intensely moving moments.

In many ways the Kindertransport experience was like a miracle. The reunion formed a stark reminder that none of the 1,200 participating *Kinder* and members of the family they had created would have existed, without the Kindertransports in 1938/9 and without those who rescued them, many gentiles among them.

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The names used are fictitious.