



Kindertransport

A special interest group of the Association of Jewish Refugees

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

Dear Kinder and Friends,

Having been volunteered as the new editor of the Newsletter, I must introduce myself. My name is Bernd Koschland and came from Fuerth, Bavaria, on the Kindertransport in April 1939. Enough of me. What I need from you, dear reader, are your items of news, letters, searches and contributions of any kind. Please send them to me by email nisraf@compuchange.co.uk or to Andrea at andrea@ajr.org.uk The next edition will be for Rosh Hashanah and material must be in by end of July latest. Details of the KT Lunches and an exciting visit will be found in the Newsletter.

BK

SHAVUOT

The festival of Shavuot marks the end of a very 'historyful' period from Pesach to Shavuot, from the Exodus out of Egypt to the giving of the Torah at Sinai, in sum the period of the Omer. This was a journey from becoming free to becoming a people with a constitution, the Torah.

Since that journey many things have happened to us as Jews. It may have been during this period of the year, that we fought for our freedom once again, but this time with Rome, under the leadership of bar Kochba; the result was that such a fight for freedom would not come again for 17 centuries. In between, we suffered much persecution at this time of the year. There were the Crusades with disastrous consequences for the Rhineland Communities and the Blood Libels, that we use the blood of Christians for the making of Matzah. 1948 saw the next struggle for Freedom, culminating in the establishment of the State of Israel, followed 19 years later by the unification of Jerusalem, the ancient capital of Judah and now of Modern Israel.

Having journeyed through these periods of darkness and light, we can for the most part enjoy our complete freedom and seal it with the celebration of Shavuot, the Feast of Weeks, a name which signifies passing time. Shavuot is the occasion when we can reconfirm our adherence to our Faith, to our Torah, to our people. The ceremonies associated with the Festival emphasise that reconfirmation. We read the Ten

Commandments, our documentary seal of the covenant with God, in preparation of which we stay up the first night, o study the contents of that covenant, the night of *leil limmud*, the night of learning. Ingenious reasons are given for the eating of dairy dishes during the Festival is also linked with the Torah. Milk, for instance, is a life sustaining food, like the Torah is our spiritual life sustaining food. The story of Ruth, is much more than an idyllic pastoral story. It is the acceptance by a Moabitess of her belief in our God, of His People, us the Jewish people, being her people. As the Festival of the First Fruit, we recognise that we must do our best as Jews, to give of the best for our beliefs, just as we would give the best of the first fruit for the Temple. This thought is further illustrated by the midrashic story of Cain and Abel. Cain was jealous of Abel, because the latter had brought the best of his flock and thus his sacrifice was accepted unlike that of Cain which was rejected because of its inferiority.

Bernd Koschland

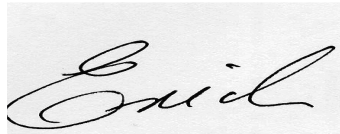
I hope you all enjoyed celebrating Seder night in the company of family and friends. Pesach is one of my favourite festivals, the awakening of nature after long cold winter months. The anticipation of longer days and warmer weather seems to arouse within us the feeling of good will and the wonders of being alive.

Above all, whilst a reminder of some of the unhappier periods in our history, Pesach is also the festival of hope and freedom, a goal the Jewish nation has, for centuries, been striving to achieve. It is an objective we as 'Kinder' are only too aware of..

One of the national newspapers is considering a feature in August following the careers of 'Kinder' who arrived, in London, on the 'Warszawa' from Gdynia, 70 years ago on the 29th August 1939. If you are one of them please contact Andrea at the AJR.

So as not to lose the momentum of our wonderful 70th anniversary celebrations we are planning an afternoon outing to Bletchley Park on Sunday 5th July to include a guide and tea. It should prove a very pleasant trip. The cost including travel will be £20 per person. Please contact Andrea to book as soon as possible.

May I use this opportunity and wish you all a very pleasant spring and summer ahead.



CHAIRMAN – KINDERTRANSPORT

HARWICH REVISITED

In December 2008 I was invited to participate in a commemoration service in Islington Town Hall. The audience was made up of mainly children over the age of 11 to 15 and their teachers. It wasn't easy to make them understand and feel as children, the trauma that we suffered as Jewish children in Nazi Germany from 1933 until the Kindertransport was established in December 1938. At first the German Jews felt that as *uns meint man nicht* (not us because our parents and grandparents were born in Germany), and religion was of secondary importance to some. I myself went to a Jewish school in Munich and all the teachers were Jewish, some of them very Germanic. The children from parents of Polish and Austrian extractions were not invited to mix socially (birthday parties etc.) with the children of German born parents. Although all the teachers were Jewish, they seemed to differentiate between the German, Austrian and Polish children regardless of our ability. The German families were usually quite affluent compared to the Polish and it reflected in our school life.

On 6 January 2009 I was asked to address an audience in Harwich Town Hall, where the plaque commemorating the arrival of the Kinder is affixed outside the Town Hall. This was taken from the quay where it was originally placed. I felt very emotional after having arrived there exactly 70 years ago.

Even though the audience were adults it was equally as difficult, as it was in Islington, to convey our feelings as children to be separated from our parents, all of whom expressed the hope that we would soon meet again in happier circumstances. In most cases this hope was not to be fulfilled, being one of the fortunate few has left me with a permanent guilt complex when mixing with friends who were not so lucky. In the audience were one Jewish couple from nearby Worthing who invited me and my driver home for something to eat. We had to decline as it was already 9 o'clock and I didn't get home till midnight.

By the time you get this Newsletter I will have been to Israel for Pesach and meeting a new great-grandchild.

Sending you my best wishes for a happy Shavuot.

Bertha

Many thanks to you, Bertha, as longtime Editor of the Newsletter.

There will be a special Kindertransport exhibition in Harwich on Sunday 12 July 2009.

A Teenager's Plight

On the 1st December 1938 a train departed from Berlin transporting Jewish children under the age of seventeen to England in a rescue operation now known as the Kindertransport. This was the first of the trains that would take Jewish children from Germany, Austria, Czechoslovakia and Poland to safety in England. Around ten thousand children were transported to the ports of Harwich and Southampton and then onwards from there; the majority came to Liverpool Station where there is now a sculpture commemorating the Kindertransport. Some went to hostels, some to farms and some to foster families. The hostels that took in Kindertransport children spread out across the British Isles from Swanage to Glasgow. This rescue mission can be seen as an act showing Britain's benevolence but some say it shows parsimony if you take into account that post-Kindertransport, one and a half million children were murdered under the Nazis' regime. The Kindertransport children escaped the horrors of genocide and were truly the lucky ones. I am a lucky one too because my grandfather was one of the ten thousand.

In October 1938, German police officers came knocking on the door of my grandfather's house in an operation purging many male Jews out of Berlin. They were made to walk through the cold night in a regimental format, terrified as bullets were fired over their heads and they had no idea where they were going. They arrived in a no-man's land between the German and Polish borders; this area was later transformed into a work camp. My grandfather managed to find a barn to sleep in. His mother, who was away in Poland at the time of his capture, arrived back in Berlin and pleaded with the SS to release him. Miraculously, an officer who had overheard her pleas agreed (for a fee) to forge papers that would have him released under the condition that he leaves Germany within six weeks. He was put on a train with his cousins to travel to Holland where his uncle was waiting but was refused entry. He arrived back in Berlin and on 2nd March 1939. After a great deal of arrangements he was fortunate to have a place on the Kindertransport to England. He said goodbye to his parents and younger brother not knowing if he would ever see them again.

On 23rd November 2008, I attended the seventieth anniversary celebration of the Kindertransport. Here, I was welcomed by Holocaust survivors – those who were the Kindertransport children (which seems weird to say as many of them were octo- and nonagenarians). In the room, I really felt part of a collective. Being third generation myself, it was unsettling to think that my grandfather was my age when he arrived in England seventy years ago. I could tell the day had a lot to offer before it had even started. The speakers were invigorating and each had a different story to tell. Spokespeople, Lords and Ladies, religious figures and political figures all gave accounts of how they related to the Kindertransport and the work that had been done to preserve these delicate memories. They told heart-wrenching stories of bravery and *angst*. It was listening to these people that I realised the importance of remembrance and keeping these memories alive.

For me, the day unearthed something else too. Today we live in a world where Nazi-type governments still exist. There are regimes that many would call dictatorial in a way similar to Nazi Germany and ruled by despots who are modernised Hitlers. Whilst I was thinking about history and genocide of yesteryear, there arose in me feelings of obligation to people in similar positions today. It also showed me the sheer hypocrisy of the anti-immigration Jew of then and now. I thought of Robert Mugabe's autocratic administration in Zimbabwe and North Korea's Kim Jong-il whose writers flood the news with propaganda stories. So personally, the day had a deeper message, one of learning from the past. Of the ten thousand children saved via the Kindertransport, many of them have gone on to achieve great feats. Some have become prominent figures in science, some in politics – flourishing in Britain, their adopted country. My grandfather in fact served for the British army and the Jewish Brigade and spent many years living here as a British citizen before making aliyah fourteen years ago.

I left the celebration in awe of the rescue operation and all who partook in it and gratefulness that my grandfather was one of the lucky few. I also left with the message that those fleeing from authoritarian regimes and genocide should be given every right to asylum and just as my grandfather was given freedom from the evil clutches of the Nazis, so should others whose lives hold just as much value.

Jacob Engelberg

'Sainsbury Children'

It was with great pleasure that I read John Rosen's letter in last month's magazine. I do not know whether my reminiscences of our experience as Sainsbury children will be of interest.

My sister Marion Goldwater and I came to England in March 1939 aged five and eight, respectively. We were met at Liverpool Street Station by Miss Turner, the assistant to Mrs Sabakin, Matron of the home established by the late Lord Sainsbury in Putney for twenty one children. I remember our time there as reasonably happy, we were well looked after, but the learning of English appears now as a battle between the poor man entrusted to teach and his unwilling pupils.

After about three months I had to go to the local junior school. With a minimal grasp of the language I was horrified to be surrounded by poverty stricken boys whose bottoms were often exposed, due to the torn state of their trousers and who constantly demanded piggybacks. I also remember to this day the smell of the unwashed clothes. The teacher who ruled fifty two of us was Mr Fraser, a small man with a Prussian haircut who brandished a short cane as a constant threat. He told us that by the next term starting September he expected perfect English, or else....I was saved by the outbreak of war.

In August we were all taken to Bexhill for a holiday, as John remembers, and I was still able to send photographs of that time to my parents in Berlin. On our return to London at the end of the month, most children were evacuated to Reading, but my sister

and I together with Marion Myrantz were sent to old Mr Sainsbury's riding stables in Leighton Buzzard, to live with the rather Victorian groom and his wife. Although I enjoyed riding the enormous hunters around the yard, Marion and I remember well the misery of trudging around the recreation ground in freezing weather to get fresh air. The smell of the iron swings is still with me and I avoided them when later looking after my grandchildren. Luckily our teachers at the school were kind; however after a short time we were sent to Harpenden to live with the daughter of the groom. This woman of twenty –six, and whose husband was called up, received 15 shillings for each of us from Mr Sainsbury for our keep. Extras were always granted, like the football boots desperately needed for one game after which I was chucked out of the team. We were happy with her and glad that we could attend her funeral when she died aged ninety. Mr Sainsbury sometimes came down to see us and take us to tea. He paid the fees for my grammar school to which I moved and likewise he did for my sister's college which she attended after leaving Stootley Rough School. There was also the annual visit to Sainsbury's HQ for tea and to present our reports. When my parents, who had miraculously survived the war in Berlin, finally came to England, Mr Sainsbury together with Woburn House paid for their living expenses. We always exchanged Christmas cards and there was the final twenty first birthday present, Roth's History of the Jewish People. I last spoke to this generous, kind and dignified man at our first ROK reunion. As I was unwell at the time of his death, I was pleased that at least my sister was able to attend his memorial service and speak with his family. I hope that my memory has not let me down, but John and his brother visited Willy Najman and me in Shepherds Bush in the early fifties, and I would be happy if he would care to contact me.

Hans-Wolfgang Danziger

The Lesson at the Statue

In March I was privileged to accompany Year Six of the Akiva School to Liverpool Street Station for a lesson round Frank Meisler's statue. At the invitation of the Head, Mrs Susy Stone and the class teacher, Mrs Liz Papier, I had met the class previously to talk about Kindertransport and the background. They had been taught well previously which made life easier when talking to the children. The follow-up was to "continue" the lesson with actual teaching and activity round the statue itself.

Careful preparations had been made beforehand in briefing the children what was to be done once they arrived. After a brief introduction by Liz Papier, the children divided into small groups to try and enter into the thoughts and feelings of the children on the statue. What would their feelings have been when leaving home? Of reuniting with their parents? What would they have felt on arrival in the United Kingdom? How different would they feel in their new surroundings, with a culture that might be quite different? To the latter point, Liz had read a letter for new arrivals on the Kindertransport from the then Chief Rabbi, Dr Hertz, written in 1938, to acquaint them with English customs. (see the letter below) The class was also made to observe and comment on the clothing, the cases, the number tags and so on. In fact I said that I had a case still to this day, similar to one on the statue. Apart from its beauty, there is so much material for learning about the Kindertransport times, be it the crease in the skirt of the girl, the look on their faces, their clothes, the direction in which they are looking and so on. The children reacted and responded beautifully. Questions were answered by Liz and Susy Stone (she had obtained a fellowship from the Imperial War Museum for Holocaust Studies) and myself.

Whilst the children were busy, several strangers came up to me – I was wearing a kippah – and spoke to me. One particularly interesting couple were mother and daughter from Ireland who were both teachers. The group of "living" children attracted a few passers-by to stop and look, even if only momentarily. On a lighter note, thanks to Costa Coffee, samples of the drink appeared magically as we stood there.

The outing was a very moving one. It gave the children a practical lesson by using an “artefact,” as distinct from just talking to them about the subject. If and when they pass by the statue again, I feel certain their experience of that March morning will come back to them. That visit highlighted a thought. Why do not other Jewish and non-Jewish schools visit the statue and make it the focal point of a lesson or two?

On a personal note, I thoroughly enjoyed (perhaps “found instructive” might be a better) the experience, as I am sure the other staff and parents that came with did also. My thanks go again especially to Liz Papier and Susy Stone. I had worked in the past with Susy on Kindertransport and Holocaust matters when she was previously Head of Bell Lane School in Hendon.



LETTER FROM CHIEF RABBI HERTZ

December 1938

My dear child

I am writing this letter to you on behalf of all the good people in England who are working for your welfare. We want you to understand that you have come to a land where you will find love and kindness extended to you from all sides. Everybody is working hard to try and find the best way of helping you and I am sure that you too will want to do your share. Here are some of the ways in which you can help:

1. Try to be considerate to all the people whom you meet in your new home. Behave quietly and politely to everyone including the other children with you.
2. It is customary in this country to wait your turn in getting into buses and trains; and for younger people to offer their seats to elder ones who are standing.
3. Remember that English people admire quietness and gentleness in behaviour; and therefore it is important not to crowd together or talk noisily in public places.
4. Everything that is being done for you is done willingly and out of love; remember to show your gratitude for what is done.
5. Remember that you are a Jewish child and often the whole Jewish people are judged by their actions of anyone of us. I am sure you will do your share to bring honour to our sacred faith and to the whole of Jewry.

It is the earnest hope of us all that you will be happy now and always in the future.

Yours affectionately
J.H.Hertz, Chief Rabbi

**DID YOU ARRIVE FROM
GDYNIA ON THE
WARSZAWA
ON 29 AUGUST 1939?**

We are looking for Kinder who arrived at London Docks on 29 August 1939, the day of the last sailing of the *Warszawa* from Gdynia. a national paper is considering a special feature to commemorate the arrival.

For further details, please contact Andrea Goodmaker on 020 8385 3070

LUNCHES - Please be sure to book your place!

- 11 May 2009 - Ruth Schneider - “Yiddish Theatre”**
- 1 June 2009 - Erich Reich - “Mystery Talk”**
- 6 July 2009 - Bernice Kranz - “ Homeopathy”**
- 3 August 2009 - Bernd Koschland - The JFS**

BLETCHLEY PARK – 5 JULY 2009
£12 per person

Please complete slip below and return to AJR, Jubilee House, Merrion Avenue, Stanmore, Middx HA7 4RL.

NAME.....

ADDRESS.....

TEL NO:.....

**I ENCLOSE CHEQUE IN THE SUM OF £ made payable to AJR
forpeople.**

BLETCHLEY PARK

The story of Bletchley Park goes back centuries to the Domesday Book, where its land is mentioned. In the last two centuries the House passed to various owners until in 1938 it was bought by Admiral Sir Hugh Sinclair. This prevented the house and lands becoming a housing estate. Within very few weeks of the outbreak of World War II, the house was taken over as the Government Code and Cypher School. By the end of the war many thousands worked there in the house, huts and adjacent areas on decryption of German cyphers. With the capture of the German Enigma encryption machine and also the Lorenz machine, German military messages were deciphered producing highly secret intelligence called ULTRA. Thus the Allies were enabled to read German messages, with the help of top academics and other staff, as well, and most importantly, with the use of the Colossus (the first semi-programmable computer) and the Bombe (the brainchild of Alan Turing). Initial strides in decryption were made in Poland before the war. For instance, the decryption of messages to and from German submarines helped to turn the war in the Atlantic. Colossus and the Bombe were reconstructed in recent years and can be viewed. After the war, several organisations used Bletchley Park. To prevent its demolition and redevelopment, Milton Keynes Borough Council declared it as a conservation area in 1992. Now as a museum, it attracts many, many visitors.

BK

SEARCH

Bernd Koschland would like to hear from anyone who stayed in the Great Chesterford (White House) Hostel during the war. Please contact: or 020 8203 5527.