

KINDERTRANSPORT NEWSLETTER

AJR Special Interest Section

Contact: Andrea Goodmaker at AJR,
Jubilee House, Merrion Avenue, Stanmore,
Middlesex HA7 4RL
Tel : 44 (0) 20 8385 3070
Fax : 44 (0) 20 8385 3080
e-mail: andrea@ajr.org.uk

SPRING/MARCH 2007
Editor: Bertha Leverton

Chairman:
Hermann Hirschberger

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

Dear Kinder and Friends,

By now you have all received the long delayed project and hopefully returned it, filled in, to the office. It will take time till the project is completed, but I'm sure the result will be worth the work. I am, with the help of good Kinder friends, going through old brochures, our books and other lists to find more and more names. January has been a very busy month with talks we have attended and given. Because of us thousands of school children learn our story and history.

The KT Lunches are really looked forward to and well attended now and Hermann is a wonderful organiser and works tirelessly to keep our group active and ticking. None of you can realise how much hard work and running about he, with help from Ronald Channing, (to whom we too are grateful), did and is still doing, to get our project up and running, now it's up to you to help us achieve our aim. Some of you have asked what is meant by our records to be obtained via WJR telephone number via AJR office. It was they who brought the Kinder to this country in 1938/39 and kept records about our placements and lives here for several years. These records, not too precise in many cases, were put in boxes and stored and rediscovered some twenty or so years ago. Now put on computer, they are available to us to purchase.

Pity the Quakers destroyed their records, as many of us came with their help. Other non-Jewish organisations helped, together with churches, philanthropists and public schools etc. We will never find them all. It's like a huge jigsaw puzzle which we are trying to put together. The main picture will emerge, but some parts will be missing. It will not only be we who need to be remembered, but through us, our lost families, and Kinder friends.

Now to other matters. Please try to get your families involved to make our Supper Quiz on Sunday 20 May a success. Venue next door to me and Canons Park Jubilee Line (I have been told it will be running) and 3 buses from Edgware and opposite direction all stop on the corner. The hall is now new with good facilities. I hope you will trust me and my volunteer (press ganged) friends with the kosher catering and décor.

There were so many functions put on during HMD that it was impossible to join them all. Several of us were invited to the City Hall, attended by the Mayor, and all Borough Councillors. Very moving presentations were made followed by kaddish by Rabbi Barry Marcus. Afterwards a reception with a kosher table was provided. Hermann and I spoke with a charming lady from Rwanda who agreed to speak to us about her history at a later KT Lunch date.

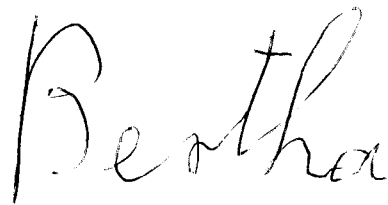
The main event nationally was held at Newcastle (see separate report). Very special and memorable is the only way to describe the Belsize Park synagogue event facilitated by AJR. I had the feeling of being at home and think we all felt the togetherness of a family. To commemorate Kristallnacht 8/9 November several Viennese Kinder (they seemed to have included me as a neighbour from Munich), were invited by their *Kulturgemeinde* to talk to schools, give interviews and attend the opening of a month long lasting exhibition of beautifully photographed and framed pictures of items

which had been in the glass suitcase at Liverpool Street Station, and are now housed in the Imperial War Museum. For me it did not quite come alive, as when we saw the actual mementoes in the case.

The Jewish museum in Berlin also emphasized the Kindertransport and put on the film *Into the Arms of Strangers* on the evening of 18 January. They invited me to talk afterwards to the audience. I flew in, just for that evening, intending to return early Friday. But owing to the stormy weather not only did we have a small attendance (though it was great to meet a new Kind (Ernst Loeser Tel: 49 (0) 030 241 4491) who though wheelchair bound, braved the weather. Lisa Schaefer, who looks after our interests in Germany and has met many of us on her trips to England was most helpful. I often ask myself where were all those nice young Germans and Austrians during the dreadful prewar years? I was lucky to get a flight back Saturday night. My next trip away will be to Israel for Pesach, and as the next Newsletter will be after that I take this opportunity to wish you all, first a happy Purim, followed by a very good Pesach. Please do not leave me messages during these dates 29 March – 16 April as my message box gets overloaded.

Most grateful thanks to my friend and fellow Kind Judy Benton who spent not only hours but days looking through our old brochures finding names and addresses of Kinder who are not members of AJR, handwriting literally hundreds of survey envelopes, so that it will be as comprehensive as possible. Marion Marston and Eve Glicksman also help when they can and I thank them too.

For years I was trying to get our wonderful photographic exhibition laminated so it can be shown and not hidden away as it was. It is now ready, thanks to the AJR and some kind and generous members who helped with finance AJR will be its custodians and store. It remains the property of the Kinder, can be borrowed by speakers, lent out by the AJR or us to venues and in years to come will be given to a Jewish Museum. Those of you who came to the Reunion in 1989, where it was displayed for the first time, will remember the stir it caused and memories it evoked. Credit for the research from various sources goes to Paula Hill PhD, the late Stephanie Colosanty, an outstanding photographic artist for her advice and the late Jessy Zierler for mounting the pictures. Thanks to the Wiener Library who stored them until now.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Bertha". The letters are fluid and connected, with a prominent 'B' and 't'.

Holocaust Memorial Day – Newcastle – 28.1.07

Early to bed and early to rise makes a person healthy, wealthy, and wise. That is the first proverb I learnt on coming to the UK in 1939. I cannot think of anything less true.

Thus I had to get up at 5.15am on Sunday, drive to Hendon, and from thence to Stanstead with kind help from the Holocaust Survivors Centre, especially Rachele, Melanie, and Norma. Arrived in Newcastle 10.30am, shown the Millennium Bridge and then to the Civic Centre for our lunch. Met many people from the whole spectrum of HMD, Holocaust Education, public relations and the press. A kosher meal, good company, and interesting conversation, the odd speech or two, and then to the City Theatre and the National Commemoration. Absolutely full, with many local citizens and genuine friends of ours. Well rehearsed presentations, good speeches, especially Sir Jonathan Sachs, Chief Rabbi and Ruth Kelly the Culture Secretary, and representatives from Rwanda and Darfur. The atmosphere was emotional and heavy with the doom of the horrendous history of the Holocaust, with music so depressing and sad. I missed the stirring melodies of Ani Maamin and the march of the Ghetto Fighters for some uplift.

Then back to the airport, Stanstead, Hendon and home by midnight. My heartfelt appreciation to all at AJR and HSC who organised the day, participated and commemorated with us.

But what does it all mean, and do we need it in 2007 and 63 years after the event? Recent genocides in Africa and the Balkans indicate that it can happen again. The unspeakable crimes of the Holocaust cannot be forgotten, not in our lifetime and not after. There are enough decent humans to give hope, there is a future to invest in for our children, we must look forward, but learn from the past. The answer to the question posed is therefore an emphatic yes, the education must continue, the lessons taught well, our sacred duty.

In conclusion, my admiration for the well planned AJR commemoration at Belsize Park. HMD is for all the people, and we must help in its continuation. The Jewish day for remembrance however, is Yom Hashoah, on 27 Iyar (this year 15 April) shortly after Pesach, when in Israel and worldwide we mourn for our departed kinsfolk, may they rest in peace. If the AJR could in future plan its meaningful and well attended service for that time of the year, the poignancy will be even greater.

HH

OBITUARIES

Klarchen Chana Alexander nee Windholz, Berlin, Raanana died January 2007.

Werner (Simon) Kassel, date not known, leaves son, daughter and grandchild and close friend Erika.

Rudy Khan died recently.

Saleh Shamash husband of Elsa died 8 June 2005.

Harold, brother of Ziggy Silver USA (passed away).

Ruth Sommerfield died November 2006.

Alfred Terry, Vienna, arrived aged 11 on KT died June 2006. Leaves 1 son, 2 daughters and his wife of 53 years. She told me of the bad care he received from his doctors and in hospital over a long period. It made very sad listening.

SEARCH NOTICES

Vera Gissing's friend Marcia Perkin seeks Peter Kamer Vienna. He was about 11 when he arrived.

Small advertisements that saved lives.

If you, or anyone you know, were saved by coming to Britain from Vienna as a result of a small advertisement placed before the war in the *Jewish Chronicle* or *The Times* please contact me with your details so I can pass them on to Eva Grudin in Vienna. She is planning to make a film based on the testimony of those who made it to Britain after placing a small advertisement. My contact details are: Mrs Charlotte Lang. Email: david.lang119@btopenworld.com .

Would anyone who stayed at the East Grinstead hostel during the second world war or after, or equally any person who knew about this hostel, please contact Andrea at the AJR office.

Bobby Feistman is now called Cartledge. Her husband Derek ran a business called Taxi Trucks from home which was in London NW3. The last time I saw Bobby she was a silversmith and had a shop in South Moulton Street, about twenty years ago.

Klaus Zanker. A friend sent me your search request. I have the right name but was born in 1936 in Dusseldorf and came to England in May 1939 as a refugee with my father Elias. We were interned as enemy aliens in the Isle of Mann. I have very little recollection of this and would be happy to learn more about this period from your members if possible. I got the name Joachim from Joachim Prinz, the Chief Rabbi of Berlin at the troubled time of my birth. Luckily I was too young to remember. Klaus Joachim Zanker.

Documentary filmmakers in New York City seek information from Czech, German or Austrian emigrés who were helped by the Unitarian Church or its representatives in Prague, an American couple named Reverend Waitstill and Martha Sharp who travelled to Prague to aid refugees from February to August 1939. While in Prague the Sharps set up an organization called "American Relief". In March 1939 Martha Sharp escorted 35 people from Prague to England, including Herbert Oestreicher, Henry Oestreicher and Gertrude Steiner. We would like to hear from anyone who knew of the Oestreichers, G. Steiner, the Sharps or of the relief and rescue work carried out by the Unitarians. Please contact Davina Pardo at davinap@gmail.com

We are currently accepting testimony from Kinder who would like to be published in a childrens book about the Kindertransport. Please submit a 3-6 page testimony documenting your life before, during, and after the Holocaust. (including: the good-bye to your parents, their words, your train ride, boat ride, where you lived, were you ever reunited with your family again etc..) You story will be quoted. If you can also submit a photograph or drawing of you or someone that you would like remembered that would be appreciated. Once finished the book will be sent to your home for you to enjoy with your family and friends. Please include your address. Please submit testimony to Lorigreschler@yahoo.com and thank-you!

Photographs wanted! I have written a children's book which has the Kindertransport as one of its themes: 'Shelter from the Storm', the last title in the 'Swallowcliffe Hall' trilogy, to be published by Simon and Schuster on 5 February 2007. I have set up a website to accompany the series, www.swallowcliffehall.com, and would very much like to include some photographs, if possible, of Kinder who came to England. Photographs would be fully acknowledged and I would treat them with great care! (I can collect from the London area, or return by registered post.) As I'm funding the site myself, I can't afford to pay huge reproduction fees, but I would pay all postage costs and happily donate a signed copy of the book. If you can help, please contact Jennie Walters at: jenphil@btopenworld.com,

GENERATION GAP

Inge's 10 year old granddaughter Shanielle. "Grandma, how old were you when you had your first mobile?"

NEWS

The Play *Kindertransport* by Diane Samuels will be running in the Hampstead Theatre in April. Please contact the Box Office for times and prices on 020 7722 9301. When phoning please state that you are one of the Kinder as they are quoting a special price of £13 for matinees. Diana tells me that if any Kinder who are attending are willing to answer some questions from the audience, they should let the theatre know. The Holocaust Survivors Centre are taking a group of people on the 26 April, if you would like to join them please contact Amanda Rase on 020 8203 9033.

Among many Kinder Ruth Barnett sent us a copy of an interesting article written about her by *The Brent Magazine*.

Lotte Kramer has just had two poems printed in a new book published by the British Council called *From Outside In*.

Vera Coppard now (Leibovic) sent me a nice long letter, informing me that she and her husband Nicky were involved in an accident last October. They are now happily on the mend and would like their friends to keep in touch. Email gphKnl@buffalo.edu.

Gerd Lederman (who must surely be our most travelled Kind) has just returned to Wales, where he now lives (because Nepal had come too dangerous a few years ago) from a visit to Australia. He did make an *abstecher* in Nepal to see his property there, including the many thousand trees he planted were faring. It is still not safe to return there, he states.

Sigi Faith was given the honour of opening the new Holbache House at the very prestigious Oswestry School he attended on his arrival on the *Kindertransport* in England. He received a top education, rose to become head boy, and went on to achieve great success in business. (His and other Kinder's) success brings honour to all of us. It showed that children who came here had guts, courage and determination to overcome obstacles and (in some instances) face reluctance of our own people to fully accept us. Sigi spoke to the assembled pupils and teachers about his Jewish background in Germany. He voiced all our thanks of being allowed to grow up in a free democratic country. Not all of us had Sigi's good fortune. Many had to struggle long and hard to find our place in British society. When our Survey is analysed, it will give a truer (but never a full) picture of how our lives were shaped. Congratulations Sigi.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR:

Sir – Every year Yad Vashem organise competitions among high school students based on studies of the Holocaust, with prizes for outstanding work by schools and individual students. Among the donors of prizes is family Najman, originally from Breslau, in memory and honour of their parents, Chuno and Blima Najman. There were four Najman children, John the eldest, who took the responsibility of helping to bring up his younger brother Herbert and little twins Yochi and Hannah (aged four at the time of their arrival in England). When after the war they heard that their mother had survived, John served in a civilian capacity with the American army, and found his mother in a DP camp. Eventually she was reunited with her children in England, though her husband had not survived the war. Those who knew John, who passed away a few years ago, at the first ceremony at Yad Vashem, admired him not only for having succeeded outstandingly in his career as one of the largest jewellers in Britain, together with his partner Fred Durst, but also for his tireless work on behalf of Israel, the UJA and many projects in this country.

This year a young high school student at the Horev school in Jerusalem, Talya Kirsch, won the first prize for her work on the Kindertransport. She knew of this episode from within her family, and was advised by her grandmother to choose this project. But, upon reading the finished work, 65 pages, one can only be amazed at the erudition and depth of understanding that such a young person has shown.

Talya divided her work into four sections, as well as a preface including general background and Kristallnacht, the history of that period, the actual organisation of the transports, some of the people involved in the rescue, the logistics, the feelings of the children, the hosts, etc. etc. Section 3 deals with the children's reactions to challenges and traumas, and several case histories from various angles. Chapter 4 dwells on the psychological effects of the children's experiences, going into great depths, with which many of us will identify. There is a final summary and conclusion, appendix and bibliography. The whole thesis is easily read and absorbed, and leaves one with a feeling of "Wow! How could such a young girl have so much insight and understanding!"

Inge Sadan

“SIGN HERE” LED TO EXPULSION AND A NEW LIFE

By Daisy Gill

Sir - Film scriptwriters are fond of depicting the knock on the door, usually at midnight, followed by interrogation or arrest of the unhappy occupants.

Well, in our case this was no fictional episode. Only the timing of the knock was different. It happened on 22 November 1956 – which happened to be my birthday. Two armed policemen turned up at my parents' flat in a smart area of Cairo, A sheet of paper was thrust in front of my surprised father, who was asked to sign.

Protestations that he could not read Arabic were ignored. He was told to sign first and an explanation would be given afterwards. It turned out to be a notice of expulsion and that we were leaving of our own free will!

It was not the first visit by police. We were already under house arrest and had received several routine checks that we were still indoors. During one call the porter, who was usually deferential, shouted what he would like to do to the English dogs. He did not realise that we were among the “dogs”. I suppose I can't really blame him. We were at war, and our troops had invaded his country.

The expulsion order was simple but direct. We had a week to leave the country in which I was born and where my parents, and for that matter grandparents had spent most of their lives.

Though neither my parents nor myself were politically active, we had world politics thrust upon us.

We had been caught up in the infamous “Suez War” which followed the seizure and nationalisation of the Suez Canal by Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser. The resultant intervention by British and French forces in cahoots with the Israelis led to the expulsion of all British and French nationals, who had to return to their supposed countries of origin.

I say “supposed” because, although proud of his British ancestry, my father, though educated in England, and a manager with the Shell Company, was in reality part of that unique polyglot, multi-lingual community, which typified European settlement in the Middle East. Culturally we were what “real” English people would consider distinctly “foreign”.

It was a tough period for us and for several thousand others. In some cases husbands and wives were separated. One partner may be expelled, the other not. For example, a Greek married to a Maltese. We were allowed to take 10 Egyptian pounds, which proved worthless, and one suitcase containing only clothes. It meant goodbye to family pets, photo albums and jewellery. (A few very precious small items, such as a couple of photographs or very precious jewel were slipped unnoticed in a handbag.) Items of furniture were left as they were. The key of the flat was left with a relative. Coinciding with the initial house arrest we had been dismissed from our jobs. Some employers, being decent people, did so only under duress.

At the time none of this bothered me much. I had a boy friend (not my future husband) in England, and expulsion would bring me closer to him. Those who were expelled to Britain were offered makeshift accommodation in nissen huts last occupied by German POWs in World War II. My parents were spared this indignity as my elder brother was working in London at the time, and we found temporary accommodation with him.

Things actually went fairly well for us. Within days of our arrival in a cold, wintry Britain my sister and I had found jobs with Barclays Bank International (then Barclays Bank DCO) in London, and were strap hanging on the “Tube” with the bowler hatted types. Dad was re-employed by Shell, though in a lower capacity. We had little money, and there was nothing at all for luxuries. Gradually we rebuilt our lives.

Young people rarely look back, which was perhaps as well. Fifty years on, I now have time to reflect. I think about the old days – the daily house help, the clubs and privileged life that European people enjoyed in the Middle East. In England I met my husband, Alan, and we emigrated together in 1971. The reality is that had I stayed in the Middle East the lifestyle I enjoyed would not have lasted and our friends have scattered. It is a bygone era that will not return. Perhaps Nasser did us a favour. We have found happiness in Australia and, and in spite of having travelled fairly widely, in the words of the song: “I still call Australia home.”

Thank you for this illuminating article. I always wondered why Alan was so interested in the “Kinder” story. I myself at that time lived in Birmingham, where several Egyptian Jewish families arrived. They did have a difficult time adjusting to the comparative austerity in England. Their children went to school with mine, and are still friends. They all made good (one father driving a “Rolls” with his own number plate. A true “Pesach” story. Ed.

Sir – I now have a copy of the book *I Came Alone*.

My parents, Fulje Budashevski (Vienna) and Markus (also known as Oster) Weichselbaum (Beutheun, Germany) were on the farm at Mill Isle, N. Ireland during the war. They met on the farm and married there in August 1944. After the war they settled in North London.

I have a photo album of many “farm photos”, if anyone would like to contact me they can do so by writing to me at the address below.

Shoshana Coleman

KINDERTRANSPORT SURVEY

Sir – I take this opportunity to thank you for all you have done, and still do, to keep the whole historical picture of those times – good and bad – in being. I was one of the lucky ones who went from one loving secure family at the age of six to another in England – who stayed my parents, and I their son for the rest of our joint lives. Others were less fortunate, I know.

Jack Black

Dr George Ettinger writes to draw our attention to several long term and more recent abducted Israeli soldiers. We are kept in the dark about any efforts being made to secure their release. Is the Red Cross involved? And what about the Arabic Red Crescent? Israel is always expected to do the right thing and criticised for protecting itself. The latest anti Israel outburst by Baroness Tonge was reported recently. I wish she and others like her, would live in the Arab places for a time, to see for themselves what really goes on. It's a case of bad news, blame Jews. George also enclosed a copy of his life story, part 1 is attached and will continue in next Newsletter. BL

A REUNION IN BERLIN

Some 30 Ex Theodor Herzl School pupils and their families met at the beginning of October 2006 in Berlin, to take part in the unveiling of a plaque where the school used to stand. They came from all over the world, many from Israel, others from Australia, Chile, Sweden and just six from England. The Mayoress of Charlottenburg met us at the Kaiser Damm, the original home of the school which was destroyed by the Nazis on Kristallnacht. She gave a moving introduction and then unveiled the plaque. Later two coach loads of over eighties were taken on a sight seeing tour of Berlin. This brought back happy and sad memories to most of us. Then it was on to the Fasanen Strasse, Ruin of the former great synagogue, now the seat of the Jewish Community. We listened to various talks about the school where a German curriculum was followed with the addition of Jewish studies, learning the spoken Hebrew in a friendly and safe environment. Many of the parents were Zionists and the school was what would now be termed as progressive. Later that day we all attended the opening of the Exhibition of the life of the school. One newspaper reporter called it *A paradise in Hell*.

Near the Brandenburg gate we saw the 2,711 concrete stelae which made a greater impression on me than on the photos I'd seen before. Below these is the Information Centre, showing texts and pictures of the development of the Holocaust. It was good to see so many people queuing to see the exhibition. There was an eerie silence in those rooms. We then went to the University square where we saw what appeared to be a large glass window set into the ground. On looking into this window all one could see was rows of empty bookshelves. This was where the Nazis had burnt all the books written by Jewish and other anti-government authors. This silent memorial impressed me very much. Another day we were taken to the Grunewald station from where the transports to the various concentration camps started. We used to get off at this station on our way to the Jewish Sports ground. We walked past the wall of the hollow people, different sized shapes cut out of the wall, a very sombre sight. All a very sad reminder of happier days. It poured with rain, echoing our feelings. Then it was on to the House of the Wannsee Conference. Such a beautiful villa overlooking the biggest lake with lovely gardens, where the Nazis hatched their most foul plot. The weather mirrored our feelings of desolation. As it was *Erev Succoth* we were invited to the Pestalozzi Strasse Synagogue. A liberal service which not everyone enjoyed, but for me it was an uplifting experience, after all we had seen. On a brighter note, some of us attended a concert or watched a play. Some friends and I went to the old Charlottenburger Schloss, the old royal palace, to hear a Mozart concert by candle light in period costume. Of course we visited the famous KaDeWe store, now bigger than Harrods and had numerous cups of coffee along the Kurfursten Damm. A new Exhibition had just been opened at the Jewish Museum including the special "Exhil" exhibition all about the Kindertransport on which so many of us came.

On the last evening we had a farewell dinner at the Makabi club. The next day we all went home to our various countries feeling both physically and mentally exhausted.

The Germans are trying very hard to make up for all the atrocities they committed, there are many memorials and reminders such as the names of all the extermination camps displayed near the Wiittenberg Platz with the heading "We must never forget".

Ruth Jackson

VIENNA - LONDON - NEW YORK -
LONDON - POOLE

GEORGE ETTINGER

This is a story of miracles and degrees - of worries, as I remember them from about age five (in 1930) and goes up to age seventy-eight (in 2003).



First worry: how to escape seven- or eight-year old bullies at primary school in the village of Liesing near Vienna, where I was born. With help from a teacher whom my father engaged to make me more robust, and from Aunt Paula, who sometimes fetched me from school, I got over the bullying.

By the age of nine, in 1934, I had listened to the two Austrian revolutions on the radio. First, the general strike, when the government decided to destroy the power of the unions. Many workers and their families, and some policemen, were killed. All I remember is the radio commentary on the funerals. The second revolution (called a putsch) was in July 1934, when German terrorists killed Austrian Chancellor Dollfuss, and took over the Vienna radio station. My parents and I were on holiday on the Semmering mountain, and again we listened to the radio commentary. Neither of these revolutions gave me any worries. People were relieved when the terrorists were killed, and the Nazi revolution defeated. Austria survived, and our holiday continued for another six weeks.

Later, in 1935, my Aunt Paula, widow of my father's uncle Oskar Perleberg, came from Berlin to live with us. As a ten-year old I had no idea that there was a political reason, that the Nazis had gained power in Germany and persecution of the Jews had started officially. Uncle Oskar had had a fur shop in Berlin, and I remember that Aunt Paula,

92

amongst her household goods, brought a large polar bear skin with head and paws. I became very fond of that bear.

Then, in 1935, my next big worry - the entrance examination to the grammar school (Gymnasium) in Moedling. After my mother and I waited until the afternoon, the results were announced. Great relief: I had passed. Over the next few years my academic worries started. Exams (called *Schularbeiten*) every term - I just managed to be in the first two or three in all subjects except for drawing and art. But it was not that easy. My mother helped me with homework and revision. The only subject in which I was totally unsuccessful was music. I joined the school orchestra, but the opening line of the piano music which I was given to play at the first orchestral session defeated me. End of my musical career.

Some time in 1936 or 1937 my parents took me to a Pesach seder at the B'nai B'rith Lodge in Vienna. My mother helped me for weeks before to learn the *Ma Nishanah*. Quite a worry to say the *Ma Nishana* in front of hundreds (so it seemed) of adults, but I managed.

Then came the worry of revising for my *Bar Mitzvah*. With the help of Rev Loewinsohn, minister of our synagogue in the village of Liesing, where my father was the ~~Schulmeister~~ ^{Schulmeister}, I got on quite well. The date arranged was Shabbat 12 March 1938. A kind of dress rehearsal at the Seitenstetengasse Synagogue in Vienna took place a week before. I wasn't particularly worried, although I had been somewhat surprised when my parents took me to Vienna for the Bar Mitzvah rehearsal, to see many posters, mostly saying "Vote Yes", and street demonstrations. That did not mean much to me, a very young thirteen-year old boy. But the posters were there for the plebiszite on Austria's independence, and thus for the survival of Austrian Jews.

Now comes another radio broadcast, which was to change history. I described hearing it in an essay which I wrote in England in 1940, entitled "But Fate Willed Otherwise". Here is a short summary: the *Bar Mitzvah* reception was cancelled at the last minute, on the advice of our uncle, Dr Otto Haas, when the Nazis forced Chancellor Schuschnigg to cancel the plebiszite. We listened to the radio on the 11th when Schuschnigg was forced to make his resignation speech. He was immediately imprisoned, and the Nazis took over. Stones started to hit

93

our windows. I remember Mary, our maid, crying. Much more information about this period is to be found in G E R Gedye's "Fallen Bastions" (Reference 1).

The next day, my *Barnitzvoh* date, the *Neue Freie Presse* newspaper had a headline in big gothic script: "Dr Seyss Inquart becomes Prime Minister (*Bundeskanzler*)". That was the end of my childhood.

Somehow, I don't know how, after just a few days my parents wrote to a cousin in America, Henry E Hoffman, asking him for an affidavit. How did the Jews know about emigration, about affidavits? I shall never know, but my parents registered at the American consulate in Vienna, towards the end of April 1938. The exact registration date, as we soon came to know, became a matter of life and death.

All the schools were closed for several weeks. Then came orders in the newspapers that schools were to re-open. I went back to school – third form of the grammar school – and our form-master gave an address, which I still remember: "Now especially, we must all be friends with all pupils in the class." I did not know what that meant. Young Nazis (they were perhaps fifth or sixth formers) took up much of class time with addresses about the glory of the *Fuehrer* and of the Third German Reich. Sometimes we two or three Jews in the class of 52 pupils were ordered to leave the class and wait in the playground. I was never physically attacked. I carried on until the end of term in June, took the exams, and got my report. That was the last I saw of the school and the other Jewish students. My friend, Heinz Polak, emigrated to South America with his father and brother. His non-Jewish mother chose to stay behind.

One day, a few weeks after the Nazi take-over (it is always described as "Hitler marched into Austria"), a young Nazi looking not more than 14 or 15 years old – in storm-trooper uniform – came to our front door and ordered my parents to accompany him. He took them to the central square at the railway station. Three or four hours later they came back. They, and all the other Jews in our suburban village of Liesing, had been forced to clean public lavatories with their bare hands. What else was done to them I did not find out then, and shall never know.

The next day my father, a lawyer, closed his law office – obviously he could not continue. We put up a notice by the front door: "Office furniture for sale". The office was soon taken over by a Nazi "colleague" of my father, the lawyer Dr Ludwig Mitan. My father never got a penny, but eight years later, and continuing to this day in 2003, sixty-four years later, the Austrian authorities claim that my father's legal practice had been voluntarily transferred to Dr Mitan and, believe it or not, in the year 2000 or thereabouts, when my family and I visited Vienna, Dr Mitan's nameplate was still on the door!

Now, one day in April or early May 1938, the postman brought a letter with large colourful foreign stamps. (As an active stamp collector I was very interested.) The letter was from the American cousin, and contained the "Affidavit of Support". Apparently that was all that was necessary to get a Visa for America. Little did any of the Jews know how critical the registration date had been. Our application, four weeks after 11 March 1938, would not be looked at for an indeterminate period, as the US immigration quotas for 1938 and 1939 had been exhausted. In any case my parents purchased three steamship tickets for the Italian ships Rex or Conte de Savoia, from Genoa to New York. I still have these tickets.

My parents had also written to an Egyptian gentleman whom they had met on holiday on the Semmering the previous year. He never answered. Very wisely my father also sent a letter to a former client who had moved to Leichworth, Hertfordshire, in England, to start a factory. This gentleman, non-Jewish, was Mr Kaupy, and by autumn 1938 he had persuaded the Dixons, an English family in Leichworth to sponsor us, by writing a guarantee of support. So things looked hopeful – a miracle. Read on:

A high-ranking SS officer came to our door about August or September 1938. He had been a friend of our maid, Mary. First of all he said: "I advise you that the time has come for you to leave the village of Liesing." I was not there, so I don't know the exact words, but I understand that before leaving he said: "If anybody asks, tell them I have been to search your flat." (*Hausdurchsuchung*). Very likely, by warning us to leave, he saved my father's life – a miracle.

YOU ARE INVITED TO JOIN US FOR A PRE- SHAVOUTH

SUPPER QUIZ ON SUNDAY 20 MAY 2007

AT THE NEWLY REFURBISHED HALL IN DONNEFIELD AVENUE BY

CANONS PARK TUBE STATION

WE HAVE BEEN ASSURED TRAINS WILL BE RUNNING A NORMAL

SUNDAY SERVICE ON THE JUBILEE LINE

BUSES 186, 340, 79 STOP ON CORNER

EASY PARKING

TIME 7pm

THE QUIZ WILL BE CONDUCTED BY PROFESSIONAL QUIZMASTERS

WE ARE AIMING THIS ALSO AT 2ND AND 3RD GENERATIONS, SO BOOK

YOUR BABYSITTERS NOW, BUT FORGET ABOUT USING US OLDIES FOR

THAT, AS WE WILL COME TOO, TO ENJOY THE FUN AND PIT OUR WITS

AGAINST YOU. PLEASE BOOK EARLY ENCLOSING PAYMENT OF £15.00.

MADE PAYABLE TO KT PUBLICATIONS AND SEND IT TO:

**JUDY BENTON, AT THE AJR OFFICE
ENCLOSING A STAMPED ADDRESSED ENVELOPE TO**

RECEIVE YOUR TICKETS.

.....

I/WE WOULD LIKETICKET(S) FOR SUPPER QUIZ AND ENCLOSE

CHEQUE FOR £.....

TABLES OF 8 OR 10 CAN BE RESERVED BUT MUST BE PRE-BOOKED

WITH NAMES AND PAYMENT.

PLEASE INDICATE : MEAT OR VEGETARIAN

