KINDERTRANSPORT STORIES

The Viennese Jews remember the Kindertransports

INTRODUCTION

When we speak about the Kindertransport, we refer to the rescue of approximately 10,000 Jewish children from Germany, Austria, and the Czech Republic to the United Kingdom between 1938 and 1939.

The first Kindertransport from Berlin departed on December 1, 1938, the first from Vienna on December 10. In March 1939, after the German army entered Czechoslovakia, transports from Prague were hastily organized. Trains of Polish Jewish children were also arranged in February and August 1939.

The last group of children from Germany departed on September 1, 1939, the day the German army invaded Poland and provoked Great Britain, France, and other countries to declare war. The last known transport of Kinder from the Netherlands left on May 14, 1940, the day the Dutch army surrendered to Germany. Tragically, hundreds of Kinder were caught in Belgium and the Netherlands during the German invasion, making them subject once more to the Nazi regime and its collaborators.

Upon arrival in Great Britain, some Kinder were sent to prearranged foster families, while others without prearranged foster families were sheltered at temporary holding centers on the coast of East Anglia – Dovercourt near Harwich. In the end, many of the children for whom no home could be found were placed on farms or in hostels run by the RCM (Refugee Children Movement).

From the moment of their arrival, the children struggled to maintain contact with their parents. At first, letters between parents and children flowed fairly easily, and many were filled with hopes and plans for reunion. The beginning of the war in 1939 meant the end of this dream. In addition, the German government restricted the delivery of mail to and from Jews, forcing parents and children to rely on intermediaries or the Red Cross. In 1942 many stopped receiving letters for reasons they could not understand until later.

In 1940, the British government ordered the internment of 16-to 70-year-old refugees from enemy countries – so-called 'enemy aliens.' Approximately 1,000 of the Kinder were in internment camps, and around 400 were transported overseas to Canada and Australia. About 1,000 German and Austrian teenagers served in the British armed forces, including combat units.

Most of the Kinder survived the war, but only few were reunited with parents who had either spent the war in hiding or survived the Nazi camps.

Sources:
"Kindertransport Association." Kindertransport Association. N.p., n.d. Web. March 24, 2014.
"Great Britain & the Holocaust: The Kindertransport." The Kindertransport. N.p., n.d. Web. March 24, 2014.

HANNAH FISCHER

Born in Vienna, 1925

Hannah and her twin brother, Rafael Erwin Fischer, were born in 1925 in Vienna. They grew up in an unusual family setting: their father was a rabbi, their mother a communist journalist. The siblings escaped Vienna through a Kindertransport to England. Their father survived the war in Mauritius, their mother in England, and later on both moved to Palestine. After studying and working as a kindergarten teacher with Anna Freud, Sigmund Freud's daughter, in England, Hannah moved back to Vienna where, in the sixties, she adopted her son, Franz, and worked as a psychologist, teacher and eventually became the director of the Institution for Nursery Education.

"My father was arrested at the end of March 1938. They arrested and imprisoned him in the 20th district in a school on Karajangasse. Jews were collected there and deported to Dachau. My father was on the so-called *'Prominententransport'* to the concentration camp Dachau on 1 April 1938.

My brother and I never saw our father again. By the time he was released from the concentration camp we were no longer in Austria.

Our mother brought us to the Westbahnhof. I can remember that even back then I knew exactly: I am coming back! I still carry this feeling with me. We knew that our mother would follow in two or three weeks, but we didn't know that she had sent us earlier because she was afraid that war would break out and we would be lost. Many children had to go to England without their parents, and they never saw them again. Luckily we were not yet as wise as we are now.

My mother had already cleared the apartment, taking no furniture, only bedding and other such things. She distributed our things amongst friends, since it was clear that if my father were released, he would not be allowed to enter the apartment. My mother followed us two or three weeks later, after she left a permit for my father with the English embassy.

Maybe it was because of this permit that my father was released from Dachau, but as soon as he was back in Vienna again – that was in July or August 1939 – the British embassy didn't actually exist any more. My father stayed in Budapest illegally for a time, but he was deported and returned to Vienna. In September 1940, he was successful in getting on one of four ships trying to reach Palestine illegally. The journey was very dramatic. The crew went on strike, demanding more pay, and only after more than three months my father reached the harbor at Haifa. After a short stay in

Hannah Fischer and her mother Luise Fischer in 1925, Vienna

the internment camp Atlit, near Haifa, the British transported the refugees, who had just narrowly escaped death, by ship to Mauritius.

In London we were collected by the Jewish Committee for Refugee Children and brought to Deal. Deal is a small city on the coast near Dover. There was a so-called children's home there that was overseen by a Mr. Howard. Mr. Howard was the director of a single-class hedge school. He had a large house with a big garden. He lived in this house, which was called The Glack, with his wife and two children. They also took in refugee children whose parents had paid, as well as others, like us, who were sent by the committee. He made a big difference between the children with paying parents and the children from the committee. Those of us from the committee needed to help in the household and garden. I washed linen, made beds, and from time to time helped in the kitchen; Rafael worked in the garden. That agitated us, of course. Mr. Howard was a very authoritarian personality. He took us along with him to school in order to demonstrate to us how he reigned over a flock of children. He would rap the children on the fingers in front of us to show us what would happen if we didn't comply. Mrs. Howard was a somewhat friendlier woman who tried to meet our wishes – in regards to food, for example.

There was also a dance class with a dance teacher in the children's home that Mr. Howard arranged for the youth. But the worst was when Mr. Howard granted us the "honor," to dance with him. He was a heavy pipe-smoker and stank of smoke, and dancing with him is one of my worst memories. That took away my desire to dance for the rest of my life.

I had learned English for three years and could communicate. But my brother – he took the name Erwin since everyone called him Ralf instead of Rafael, which annoyed him – did not say a single word in English. He had not learned English back in Vienna. After two months in England, though, he spoke perfect English.

Exactly at this time we went to the Central School, which was the main school. My brother went to the boys' school and I went to the girls' school. At that time the English system was organized in such a way that much less was taught in the girls' school than in the boys' school. For example, girls didn't learn Algebra in mathematics, whereas Erwin was plagued with Algebra. But I could help him, since I had learned well in Vienna.

My German and History teacher, Miss Billings, took an interest in me and took me under her wing. She gave me books and, to this day, I still have some from her. Because of her, my stay there was much more bearable as we were unhappy in the home.

Our mother was in London, but she worked in a household and couldn't visit us. Of course, we would moan about it in our letters to her, but it was no use,

Bela Fischer, Hannah Fischer's father, as rabbi in 1925, Vienna

she couldn't have us with her. It would have been impossible.

After a year, our stay in Deal came to a dramatic end. One day my brother needed to help in the garden and something happened that wasn't to the satisfaction of Mr. Howard. Mr. Howard was cross and gave my brother a smack on the ear. We weren't used to anything like that. Mr. Howard was a small man, and my brother, seemingly large and strong, hit back. In the end this event was a great fortune, as there were then legitimate grounds for why we should be quickly sent to London. However, that was the end of our life together, as Rafael went to a home for boys and I to one for girls. Of course, my mother spent her free afternoons with us. She would collect us from the homes and we'd go together for a bite to eat or a walk in the park, and then she'd bring us back.

For us kids, the acquisition of English was easy, but for older people, like our mother, it was a problem. Once, for example, my mother, my brother, and I were out on the street. My mother was able to speak a little English, and had learned more in the meantime, but we could speak it better, of course. Amongst the emigrants there developed the so-called *'Emigranto.'* It was a mixture of German and English, like, for example, the sentence, 'Ich hab schon meine Schule gechangt.' [*'Gechangt'* from the English *'changed'* rather than the German *'gewechselt'– 'I have already changed my school.'*]

Mrs. Dr. Gellner, a German and the director of the girls' home in London, had a mentally handicapped son. Michael couldn't go to school. I befriended him and began to give him lessons. That was the beginning of my pedagogical career. I decided to involve myself professionally with children, after I had given up my actual dream of becoming a doctor because of emigration. When I passed the entrance exam for a public school in Bristol – the Badminton School for Girls – and left London, I handed over Michael to my former Latin teacher in Vienna, Mrs. Dr. Klein-Löw, who had saved herself in 1939 by becoming a maid in London. She supported him further.

These Public Schools are not "public" schools, rather very expensive schools for the children of the well off. My school was a renowned and very progressive school. There were a number of emigrants, of whom I was the youngest. We had a lot of opportunities to play sports; there was a swimming pool, a tennis court, hockey pitches, and much more. As the bombing of Bristol became too dangerous, the school was evacuated to a former hotel on the north coast of Devonshire in Lynmouth, a small fishing town. It was a very wild and very beautiful place. I remember that the hotel was near the coast and we would always look down to the sea; the slope to the sea was grown over with rhododendrons. I've never seen anything like it since – such a large sea of rhododendrons. We went for many walks there. These walks were organized in such a way that a student

Hannah Fischer and her twin brother, Rafael Fischer, in Vienna, 1933

from one of the upper classes was responsible for a group of three to five students in one of the lower classes and we would often discuss politics.

On Sundays there was either church or a Quaker meeting. The Quakers collected in a large room. They didn't pray; instead someone suggested a theme. If it worked it would be taken up and talked about. It would always degenerate into a political discussion, which was of course not the intention of the host. I either went to these Quaker meetings, or I would go for a walk. There was nothing for Jews, since there were too few Jewish students.

At the beginning of June 1941 I already had my tests behind me and left school with the Cambridge School Certificate. If one had achieved a particular grade average, one would also receive the London School Certificate and could study both at Cambridge and in London. In 1946, the Ministry of Education in Vienna recognized my credentials as a certificate of qualification for university matriculation.

My brother was in the boys' school and attended for another year. Then he began with an apprenticeship as a precision mechanic in a large factory in London. The part of the factory where he worked was evacuated to Cheltenham, where he stayed for a rather long time. He attended evening classes and became an engineer. Afterwards, he worked in a small factory in Wales and eventually became director. The war had already ended by then. In London he married Rosslyn, the daughter of a Jewish toy-maker, and after the wedding he worked in her father's factory. They had two sons, Lorenz and Robert, whom he once brought to Vienna to visit me after the war.

After her work as a maid, my mother worked as a hospital cook. She earned more there than in the household. She could do it because in Vienna she would set up a sort of large canteen during the Jewish holidays. After two years – she was already over 50 and the work was physically difficult – she got an office position. While she was working in the office, she rented a small flat. I lived with her there in London after I successfully finished school.

At the Jewish community I was told that I had the chance for a position in the household where I would learn everything one needs for the management of a good household. That was miles away from how I had imagined my future. I left the committee very depressed and ran into a friend of my mother's in the street. She said to me, *'Listen, I've heard that Anna Freud has opened a children's home in Hampstead and is looking for young caretakers. Why don't you go to her?'* I had no idea who Anna Freud was, but children – that sounded good. So I looked through the telephone book and then went to 20 Maresfield Gardens, which was Anna Freud's address, and knocked on the door. A woman, obviously the maid, opened the door and said in her best English, *'Wat du yu wont'* – through which I immediately knew that she wasn't English. She was Paula Fichtl from Salzburg, who had been a maid for the Freud family in Vienna. Although she wasn't Jewish, she emigrated with the Freud family. I said that I would like to speak with Miss Freud and was invited to return the next day. On the next day I was led through Anna Freud's library, which was also the library of her father, Sigmund Freud. This library was a large room, rather dark, with a few totems that he had acquired. He was interested in such things. Two women were sitting in the room, one of whom was Anna Freud, a very imposing figure with very interesting eyes, a long skirt, and traditional Austrian costume shoes. The other woman was Mrs. Burlingham, a colleague and long-time friend of Anna Freud's. Anna Freud conducted an interview with me about my family, my story, my education, and asked why I wanted to work with children. Mrs. Burlingham remained silent and smiled at me encouragingly. After a two-hour conversation, Anna Freud said that I should come to 5 Netherhall Gardens the following day. I would be taken on as a trainee for work with the children at the home. I would be able to live in a house there and receive a bit of pocket money.

The home was financed by the American foundation, Foster Parents' Plan for War Children, and every month Anna Freud needed to send a report about the work with the children, who ranged in age from infancy to five-year-olds. At that time, children in England were sent to school after five years.

For over two years I worked and learned in the children's home. The personnel were organized in such a way that each department had a manager, under whom the trainees worked. The majority of the children had parents who were without an apartment; they had perished or were bombed out. These homeless children then slept in a shelter – and that was a catastrophe. They were often sick. We collected and brought them to the home. For older children, there was also a home in the countryside. The younger children were to stay in London because, Anna Freud said, these children still needed contact with their families, even if it was very limited. This was at the time when planes were arriving every night; all the children needed to sleep below in the shelter. The older children in the countryside were spared from all that.

I experienced a lot in those years with Anna Freud. They were – based on Gorki, I used to say – *'my university.'* I learned more about children there than I did later in Vienna at the university. My mother would claim that my world was covered with diapers, because I was so absorbed in this work.

After about two years I looked for other work, since always being the youngest was beginning to irritate me. I was appreciated as a colleague, but wanted to finally manage my own group.

At first I went to a woman who had started something like a large family, but the methods she used weren't what I

had imagined. Everything sounded quite good in theory, but looked completely different in practice. Then I had luck as a nursery-school teacher in the Austrian kindergarten at the Austrian Centre. The TV-journalist Toni Spira, the singer Lena Rothstein, the mathematics professor Walter Fleischer, and many other emigrant children went to this kindergarten. It was a fantastic group, and something became of all of them. Because of their background, many were extraordinarily talented; most of them had Jewish parents. As the Germans were shooting at London with V2-missiles, the kindergarten was evacuated to Scotland for a year. Scotland was very interesting for me. It was another landscape and the people were very nice to us.

During this time I was already a Communist, but not a member, only a candidate. I wasn't a party member because I wasn't accepted. I was always in a group where much was discussed. Together we would read the history of the CPSU [Communist Party of the Soviet Union] and comment on it. My mother criticized the party and didn't agree with many things. For example, she didn't agree that it was said that Tolstoy was a traitor. She was also very critical of Stalin and believed that he had Kirov killed. She was also never accepted into the party. In the Austrian Centre we worked on plans for organizing re-immigration to Austria and were convinced that Austria was only waiting for us to return as quickly as possible.

I returned to Austria in September 1946, and, some months later, my mother relocated to live with my father in Palestine. He lived in Petach Tikva and at that time already had a nursery and a small shop. He brought plants from Mauritius and was certainly happy to devote himself to this work. I don't exactly know if that was his life's dream; we never spoke about it. I also don't know if my father, after all of his experiences, ever again was the man that my mother had known. They lived together in Israel until 1952; he had his small flower shop and nursery, and she worked as a translator."

Hannah Fischer with children of the Austrian kindergarten in 1944, Scotland

KITTY SUSCHNY

Born in Vienna, 1924

Kitty Suschny was born in 1924 in Vienna. Kitty survived the war in England where she arrived by Kindertransport and where eventually her older brother, who had escaped to Switzerland, joined her. Her father died before the war and her mother died in the Maly Trostinec death camp. After the war, Kitty moved back to Vienna where she met her husband, Otto. Together they have three children, Eva-Ruth, Dinah, and Peter.

"As the Germans invaded in March 1938, everything was covered with Nazi flags. They had already been hanging them the day before.

At the end of June 1938, my brother, who was 18, fled illegally to Switzerland. He wasn't alone. A man with the SS helped him and said, *'Run now,'* as soon as it was safe. His flight was successful. Later it became really difficult to get to Switzerland. When my brother was in Switzerland my mother said to me, *'You also need to get out of here, it doesn't matter how.'* My mother believed that no one would do anything to her, because my father hadn't done anything to anyone, was well liked, and, besides, had been an officer in the First World War. That was, of course, a deadly mistake.

At first my best friend Ilse and I wanted to go to Palestine. We went to the Palestine Bureau on Marc Aurel Strasse, where we submitted everything. Unfortunately, it cost money and my mother didn't have much anymore. The pension was becoming smaller and smaller. I also didn't have any money. My friend and I then went through Beserlpark to the waterfront. We ran into Mrs. Maurer, Ilse's mother. She said, *'Go immediately back to the Jewish Community Centre, there is a Kindertransport to England there.'* That was after the 10th of November, 1938 [Reichspogromnacht]. I responded, *'I don't have any papers with me.'* But Mrs. Maurer had already been to my mother's and had my papers. My moth-er didn't come because she had very poor eyesight – she had glaucoma. It couldn't be operated on in those days. Mrs. Maurer went with us to the Community Centre and signed us up for the transport to England. We needed to have a physical examination. They tried to sort people out.

We were 1,000 children; it was already the second Kindertransport to England. My mother said, *'Don't go to England. Go to Holland. Then you can come back on foot. Take a little wagon, a farmer will drive you for a bit, or you'll walk home. You won't be able to get back over water.'*

Kitty Suschny and Ilse Wagner in 1938, Vienna.

No one was allowed to give anything to the children, so that the transport, heaven forbid, wasn't put in danger. It was strictly forbidden. But Ilse had jewelry and some money. She had hidden it and I only found out about it in England. Back then one received two pennies for a mark. The mark was worth nothing. My mother would have been able to follow, but by then it was, unfortunately, already two weeks too late. In the last weeks before the war the English were not allowing any more people in. She would have been able to work with a German cook for an English family in Liverpool. The English family already had contact with the Home Office, but it was 1939, shortly before the start of the Second World War. It was too late.

At first we lived on the coast in Dovercourt in a summer camp, with bunk beds on each side. They put us there in winter. It was a cold winter. It was the first time it had snowed in 20 years.

Everyday people arrived who wanted to take children. They wanted to adopt little blond boys up to two years old. Most of the small children had older siblings, but they didn't want to take them. But some also took along an older child.

One day Mrs. Jacobs from Manchester came seeking ten girls from age 14. I said to Ilse, *'Come, let's go to the dog selection, maybe she'll take us.'* They all wanted smaller children or else youths already capable of work. But at 14 one isn't yet fit for work. She wanted us as maids, but one is too young for this work at 14.

Mrs. Jacobs brought us to Manchester. We were taken to a pub. Then people came and had a look at us. We had numbers [and tags], upon which our names, ages, and other information about us was written. A Mrs. Burns from Southport, a doctor's wife, suggested that she would take me because my father was a doctor. I felt quite honored! My friend Ilse went with Mrs. Kaplan, who herself had four children. She was very nice. Unfortunately, Mrs. Burns didn't have any children. She couldn't have any and became so jealous of me that I had to go to another family. Then I was with Mrs. Royce, a large, energetic woman who also had no children, but was very nice. Her husband was a furniture dealer. Then the Jewish Committee set up a house for us in Southport. We were nine girls in the house; one girl got adopted. Other girls from Germany also arrived.

We met the old Mrs. Marks from Marks & Spencer [a major chain of department stores in England]. In 1939 she was already 90 years old. She was very lovely, looked like an old Queen Mary, who spoke English and a little bit of Yiddish. I said that I couldn't speak Yiddish and that my English wasn't good. To that she asked me, astounded, 'Did you not speak Yiddish at home?' She looked after us. We were invited to her place to eat. Mrs. Marks was there for the founding of the Committee. Marks & Spencer spent a lot of money on us: linens and quilts,

Kitty Suschny and friends in England

pillows and clothes. Mrs. Marks always made sure that we got new things. When something wasn't good enough, it was exchanged.

We received a shilling for pocket money, with which we were supposed to pay for toiletries: toothpaste, toothbrush, and soap – all from the single shilling. We were four in a room and often bought a piece of soap together. We also got jobs, but were paid very poorly because, as refugees, we were not officially allowed to work. They only gave us an eighth of a pound. That was very little.

We were in the Southport home until March 1940. Then we relocated to Manchester.

I saw my brother again in 1940. The first thing I said when I saw him was, *'If you hit me once more, then you needn't ever visit me again.'* Thereupon he looked at me very strangely; he was already 18 after all. He had worked for a farmer, and after the war studied agriculture at the university in Vienna and became an agricultural engineer.

Every month, for as long as I could, I wrote my mother two to three letters. At first, the letters went through Switzerland, and then through America until America entered the war, and from 1942 [they went] through the Red Cross. One could only write 20 words in every letter. One day a letter returned: undeliverable.

In her letters my mother begged my brother and me to make sure that she got out, otherwise she would be sent to where Josef and Walter Fischkus – they were relatives – were sent. They were deported to Nisko in Poland.

When my brother and I were still in Vienna, we had to give up an apartment in our house. Then we lived with our mother in the larger apartment. My mother had to move out of this apartment. At the end she was in the first district, in Lazenhof. There were four women in a room. That was her last address: Lazenhof 2/Door 13. The Jewish Community owned these buildings. Jews were relocated there and then from there they were deported. On 22 May 1942 my mother was deported to Minsk. [Malwine Pistol was deported to Maly Trostinec near Minsk on 20.5.1943 and murdered on 26.5.1942. Source: DÖW-Database]

In Manchester we lived in a bed and breakfast that had been rented to the Jewish Committee. The owner was Mr. Ackermann, also a Jew. It was a two-storey house. Below there was an air-raid shelter with bunk beds. My friend Ilse and I signed up as air raid wardens. We had helmets and dark-blue uniforms with gold buttons. If sirens went off, we walked to the base. The Germans began bombing Manchester during Christmas in 1940 – the harbors, the churches, even the horseracing tracks in the area, where the dog races also took place. Bombs also landed on our street. There had been an open space where the children always played football. The next day there was suddenly a great hole. There were missiles that skidded along the length of the street and destroyed all the houses. People went under the stairs in their homes, since there weren't so many air-raid shelters. Then the German planes stopped coming to Manchester; it was too far for them.

The collapse of France was in June 1940. That's when the English began detaining people. They said that Austrians were also German, since after Hitler's invasion there was no more Austria. But the majority didn't even know that. There were also gentiles who had fled for political reasons. They were also interned. I was just 15 years old; at 16 they also detained women. My brother was interned for nine months – first in an old factory in Manchester, then he was taken to the Isle of Man. Refugees were also sent to Australia and Canada, where they were interned. They wanted to get rid of them; they just weren't needed. After nine months my brother was released from internment. Then he worked in the country and could register for the English military.

In Manchester I had begun working in an office that exported textiles to Africa, and then I had a position in the office of a steel factory. My friend Ilse moved in with an English family and worked as an elevator girl at Henry Brothers, a small department store. After the war her parents got in touch with her. The Maurer family survived the war.

In October 1946, I went back to Austria. My brother arrived in December. I went immediately to Vienna."

LILLI TAUBER

Born in Vienna, 1927

Lilli Tauber was born in Vienna in 1927. Lilli escaped the war by Kindertransport to England, and her brother fled illegally to Palestine. Their parents were deported to the ghetto in Opole and were murdered during the war. When she came back to Vienna after the war, her aunt gave her a leather suitcase filled with letters her parents wrote during the war. Lilli married Max Tauber in 1953 and together they have two sons, Wilhelm and Heinz.

"I didn't experience any antisemitism until March 12, 1938 [the Anschluss]. I was eleven years old and attended the grammar school. Andrea, the daughter of a non-Jewish doctor, picked me up at my parents' place every morning, and we went to school together. Back then everyone went on foot; it wasn't a long walk, anyway. We were good friends but after March 12 she stopped hanging out with me – from one day to the next. It was horrible for me; I was just a child and didn't understand why. As it turned out, she had brothers who had been Nazis illegally, a long time before the Anschluss.

Everything changed. Our shop was aryanized, and my father was advised to sell our house. He did, but we were allowed to stay until he found a new home for us.

This happened during the summer holidays. I was supposed to go back to school in September but I wasn't allowed to go to the regular grammar school any more. The Jewish community in Wiener Neustadt continued to exist a bit longer, and a school was set up in the prayer house, which was close to the big, beautiful synagogue. When I still went to grammar school our religious classes took place in the prayer house, which could be heated in winter.

I remember November 10, 1938 [Reichspogromnacht] very well. It was a Thursday, the sky was cloudy and it was about 10 am when someone came into the classroom and started whispering into our teacher's ear. Afterwards the teacher told us to go home, saying that something was going on. My parents were surprised that I returned from school so early. At about 11 am, the doorbell rang and the Gestapo arrested my father. They took him along with them.

They took us to the synagogue. All Jewish women and children from Wiener Neustadt had been brought there and were searched for money and jewelry. They had to hand in everything; the SA deprived them of all their belongings. Mrs. Gerstl, my friend Trude's mother, didn't want to sign a paper saying that she would hand over her house, so they

Lilli Tauber in Vienna, 1938

beat her until she did sign it. I witnessed all of this. At nightfall they led us into the synagogue. The floors were covered with hay and they gave us Torah covers to cover ourselves up. We were locked in for three days. The synagogue had a yard with an iron gate facing the street. There were people outside the gate watching, and people from Wiener Neustadt looked on with amusement as we Jewish children had to go round in circles.

We never returned to our house; all our possessions had been stolen.

My father turned out to be in the police prison on Elisabeth promenade, where they had crammed all Jewish men that had been arrested. He later told us that it was horrible, and that there wasn't even enough room to sit down. Then they made their choice about who would be brought to Dachau, and who would be allowed to go home. My father and Uncle Adolf stood next to each other. My father was told that he could go home, my uncle was deported to the Dachau concentration camp.

There was only one subject of conversation among Jews at the time: How do we get away from here?

My brother fled to Palestine with an illegal transport in October 1938. After that I never saw him again. Traveling was expensive and neither of us had enough money to travel after the war.

No one cared about school anymore. Uncle Gottfried had connections with the Bnei Brith lodge, a Jewish social organization. Bnei Brith means *'Children of the Covenant,'* and those lodges exist all across the globe. Back then they helped to save the lives of Jewish children. The procedure was such that someone had to guarantee that the child wouldn't be a burden to the British state. Children who had such a guarantee received a permit and were allowed to immigrate to England with a Kindertransport but without their parents. There were girls, boys, and even babies, in these Kindertransports - it's hard to imagine today what it was like.

Only later, when I had children of my own, did I realize how courageous my parents were. It must have been terrible for them to bring me to the railway station. I was excited back then and understood that it was better for me to go away. I wasn't angry with them for sending me away. At the time I didn't even think of the possibility that I might not see my parents again.

Each child had a red plate with a number put around his or her neck. A plate with the same number was put onto each child's suitcase. That's how I arrived in England. I didn't speak a single word of English. Three children from our convoy were dropped off at the train station in London and taken to a hostel from there. The hostel belonged to the Bnei Brith lodge, and there were mainly children from Germany there, so everyone just spoke German.

Lilli Tauber (left), Aunt Jenny and Ruth Wasserman in Cockley Cley, 1940

I had been raised religiously. Our superintendent in England was strictly Orthodox and forced us to live an Orthodox way. We weren't even allowed to brush our teeth on Saturday, and had to pray after every single meal. She was horrible. There was a girl called Lotte Levy, who came from a strictly Orthodox family in Cologne. Her father was a *shammash* [synagogue official]. However, due to the pressure of our superintendent she completely broke away from religion.

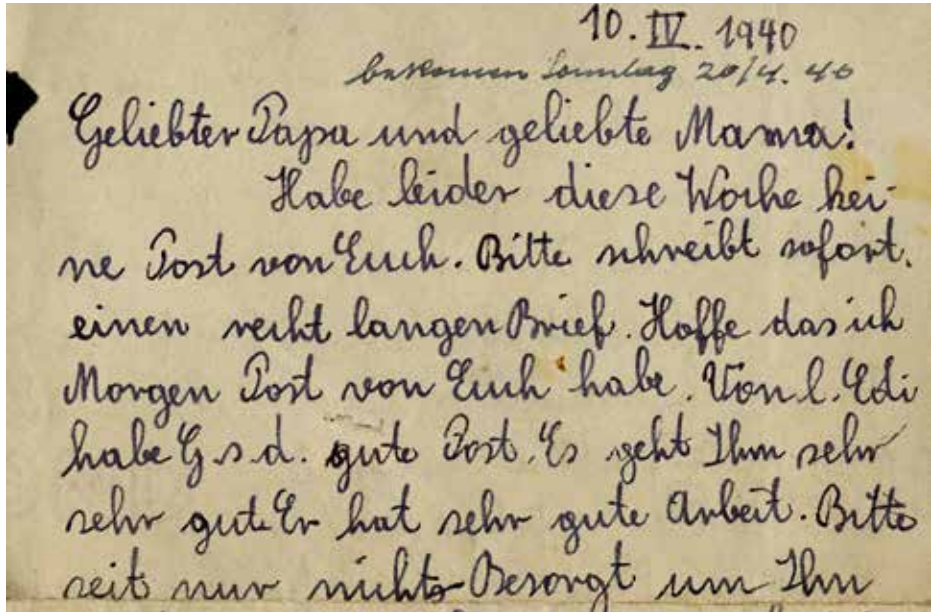
In August, school started in England, or, rather, one day we were just told that we had to go to school. It was a regular school and children were admitted to classes appropriate to their age. I was the only émigré in my class and didn't know a single word of English. It was horrible. First, everyone looked at me as if I was somehow spectacular. The teacher had probably explained to the other students who I was, but as I said, I didn't understand English. The teacher did her very best to teach me a little bit of English.

One or two weeks later the war began [1 September, 1939]. We were sent to live in the country, in Cockley Cley, with a certain Lady Roberts. She belonged to the English landed aristocracy and wasn't Jewish. She was about 50 or 60 years old, very nice, and concerned for our well-being. She knew what was happening to Jews and had enough money to help a lot of them. She owned a large plot of land and employed many farm workers who also lived there. It was a huge asparagus farm, and many people worked for Lady Roberts and lived on her estate.

There was no school in the village so all the children went to school in Swaffham, the nearest bigger city. Our teachers from London had come with us, and Lady Roberts arranged for a little cottage with two rooms to be transformed into classrooms. None of the teachers knew German, so I learned English pretty quickly.

When we moved to Lady Roberts' estate our cook came along. She was strictly kosher and got her own kitchen. Lady Roberts made sure that she would get kosher meat, and so on. Lady Roberts received a certain amount of money for each child that she took on. She gave what remained from that amount to us children, and we could use that money to go to the cinema.

Mr. Harry Watts was Jewish and the owner of a barbershop in London. We all called him Uncle Harry. He was always there for us emigrant children and took care of us in a really touching way. He was a member of the Bnei Brith lodge. He took us on trips. I especially remember a trip to Brighton, a seaside resort. I wrote a letter to my parents in which I described in minute detail what I had seen, what the sea was like, and where we stopped for a break. Uncle Harry bought clothes for us because we quickly grew out of our old clothes, and he also gave us pocket money. Once he came with a truck and brought us all new boots. We all loved him dearly.


10. IV. 1940

Antwort Sonntag 20/4. 40

Geliebter Papa und geliebte Mama!

Habe leider diese Woche keine Post von Euch. Bitte schreibt sofort einen recht langen Brief. Hoffe das ich Morgen Post von Euch habe. Von L. Edi habe G s.d. gute Post. Es geht Ihm sehr sehr gut Er hat sehr gute Arbeit. Bitte seit nur nicht Besorgt um Ihn

Letter from Lilli Tauber to her parents, 1940

In 1942, I was 15 years old and returned to London, where I lived again in a hostel belonging to the Bnei Brith lodge. I wanted to learn a profession. I had an apprenticeship in a tailor's shop and became a dressmaker. I worked as a dressmaker in London until I returned to Austria.

I wasn't officially informed that my parents had been killed and always hoped that they would still be living somewhere. I first learned about places like Auschwitz in 1944, around Rosh Hashanah, when they spoke about it in the British Parliament. It crossed my mind back then that my parents might not be alive any more. My parents' life gradually became harder: As a qualified tailor, my father managed to earn some money in the beginning. He worked for the *'Damen und Herrenkleiderfabrik Richard Kassin'* in Vienna's first district from September 4, 1940 to February 26, 1941. My parents were deported on February 26, 1941. I don't know where they were murdered. I just know that they were deported to the Opole Ghetto in Nazi-occupied Poland from Vienna.

I own a large number of letters, which my parents wrote to Aunt Fany, Aunt Berta, and my grandmother from the Opole Ghetto before they were murdered. Aunt Berta gave me a little leather suitcase after the war, which included all documents and letters she had collected be-

fore Aunt Fany and my grandmother were deported. That way, all these valuable documents were preserved.

Apart from these letters, my father also sent photos from the Opole Ghetto. Opole was a village that had been sealed off. Jews who lived there weren't allowed to leave, and more and more Jews arrived. There was a bakery, a butcher's shop, a barbershop, restaurants, and a photo shop, just like in any normal village. However, nothing could be brought into the ghetto, so food soon became extremely expensive, and my parents depended on help from their relatives in Vienna. It must have been very important to my father to have life in the ghetto captured on film. The Jewish photographer took pictures of everything my father told him to. My father inscribed things on some of the pictures and sent them to Vienna.

There was a communist organization called Young Austria in London, and all over England, for that matter. Young Austria had been founded by Austrian patriots, who told us that we had to return to Austria after the war and help build a democratic state. I was young, and when you're young you easily get enthusiastic about things, and that's why I returned to Austria. Most of the children who came to England stayed after the war or moved on to America, but I returned to Austria in 1946. However, I wasn't politically involved anymore in Austria."

Lilli Tauber's parents, Wilhelm and Johanna Schischa, in the Opole Ghetto, 1941