



WORKSHEET: GROUP 3

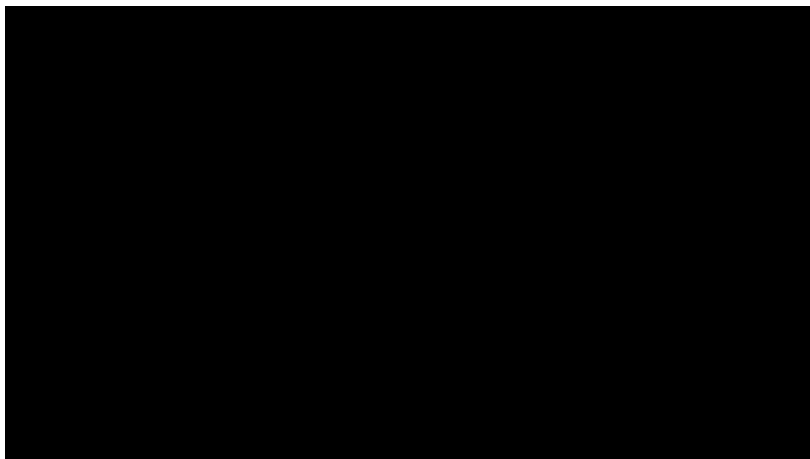
Testemonies

Lore Segal - Breslau (Germany), UK, New York (US)

I remember that last evening, all the cousins and all the aunts came to say goodbye and there was one aunt who had twins, who was extremely angry with my parents for getting me onto this transport and for not having managed to get her twins onto the transport. There was grief and panic and fury in that room and there was a moment that my father took me between his knees and he said: „Now, when you get the England you have to talk to all the English people you meet and you have to ask them to get your mother and me out, and your grandparents.“ And because this aunt was there and had been so unhappy and so angry, he said, „And aunt so-and so's twins.“ Before long I had a list of people whom I, at 10 years old, had promised to save from Hitler.

Each child was given a number. My number, and I still have it, was 152 and this was the number that every child put around its neck and a similar number was attached to our suitcase. And there we stood, in out groups of fifty, I think it was and there was mother and my father. And my mother kept up a conversation with me as if this was an ordinary and interesting thing that was happening and I remember she wore a pony fur with a fox collar and her face was inside the fox collar and I remember that even though her speech was as if everything was ordinary, her face, I remember, was hot. It was red and hot.

Taken from the film Into the arms of strangers. Stories of the Kindertransport [Warner Brothers, 2000], (31:30-32:36 min; 33:04-33:53 min).





Peter Mansbacher - Lübeck (Germany), Olympia Fields (USA)

On 25 August 1922 I was born as Fritz Ludwig Mansbacher in the town of Lübeck, Germany. As an only child, I was constantly surrounded by the love of my parents, Martin and Julia. I grew up like any other boy at that time in Germany. I believed myself to be a human being first, then a German citizen and then a member of the Jewish religion, in that sequence.

Never in my wildest dreams had I imagined that I was neither human nor German nor a citizen of the town of Lubeck. This thought hit me quite suddenly and was unexpected. Suddenly, many neighbours and friends no longer knew us and avoided us. Many of my schoolmates called me a 'Dirty Jew'. On the morning of 10 November 1938 two SS men arrived at five o'clock in the morning to arrest my father. I was excited about the prospect of going to England, never giving a thought to the seriousness of the moment of parting from my parents, my home, my world. This was to be the last day on which I would see my parents!

We were happy to be in England. We were so tired, hungry and cold by the time we arrived at the Lowestoft Pakefield Holiday Camp on the east coast. During Chanukah arrangements had been made in the dining hall for a celebration. A Chanukia was set up on the stage and the visiting Rabbi gave the blessings.

Soon we were moved to the St Felix School in Southwold, a girls' college, temporarily vacated for the Christmas holidays. After Lowestoft this school seemed like paradise. There were beds with white sheets and blankets and the washroom boasted hot water! The food was cooked and served by cooks and teachers who had volunteered to stay on over the Christmas holidays.

Everyone was so nice and friendly to us. The teachers taught us English, English history, English table manners and traditional British dances. We savoured our stay at the school and we all pitched in helping with cleaning, dining room and dishwashing tasks.

Alas, everything comes to an end and we soon had to leave the school at the end of the Christmas holidays. We left a 'thank you' note over our beds for the girls, who had so kindly left us a greeting as we arrived. Miss Southern and Mr Turner of the St Felix School were still with us and taught us English daily. The heated dining hall served as our school rooms and assembly hall for get-togethers and group singing.

Finally we were moved to the Dovercourt Holiday Camp nearby. Entertainers came to make life pleasant for us and families arrived to look us over in order to choose those children they were willing to take into their homes.



Slowly children from our camp were taken in by foster parents. Others left as they received their visas for other countries. Some left to stay with relatives. Fifty of us boys volunteered for work at the Lord Kitchener Camp, abandoned since World War I, which needed restoration. It was hoped that, upon completion, this camp would serve as home for 3,000 men from concentration camps.

Source: *I Came Alone: The Stories of the Kindertransports*. Editor, Bertha Leverton. Book Guild, 1990, pp. 206-207.

Bertha Leverton born Engelhard - Munich (Germany), London (UK)

Looking back over the years, one normally recalls not the ordinary things that happened in one's life, but the happy or sad events. They may recede into the background but are never forgotten.

The memory of five years I spent with my foster family can never be erased. On the bonus side they also kept my younger brother Theo, aged twelve, and my sister Inge, aged nine. I was just fifteen on my arrival in England.

The treatment of me by 'Aunty Vera' I can now put down to her resentment of my good health, she being a semi-invalid. But her torment of us and me in particular was nothing compared to 'Uncle' Billy's 'friendliness' which I successfully managed to avoid for five years. The first year was more endurable. We lived in Coventry, having been sponsored by Coventry Cathedral, but knew nothing about any Jewish refugee committee. However, Theo was *Bar Mitzvah* in the little *Shool* in Barras Lane and we were invited to the Rabbi's house for the *Seder* nights.

But returning home with a packet of *Matzot* made the yearning for a real Jewish homelife even harder to bear. On the rare occasions that we were allowed to go to the Sabbath Service (a two mile walk), not one of the small congregation seemed to notice the three forlorn children who so much wanted to be part of Jewish life. One day, Theo came home crying and limping from school. He had fallen into a bomb crater. For several days he was made to go to school and told not to be a cry baby. I too was told not to be silly when I suggested he should see a doctor. In the end his foot swelled up so much that he had to be seen by a doctor and it was found he had walked with a broken ankle for days.

Many times Inge's little arms were full of bruises from being pinched by aunty for some trivial naughtiness. When we were banished to the kitchen to have our meals, we did not mind in the least.

After the blitz on Coventry, we were evacuated with the family to a small town in Yorkshire. Now we were really cut off from any Jewish contact; but there must have been a Committee who knew about us, for I remember that twice a year a young Rabbi, whose job it was to visit children in non-Jewish homes, came to see us. There was no point in complaining to him about our treatment. It was our word against theirs, and by that time we were so cowed, we just accepted our fate.



I was sent to work in a nearby cotton mill, doing the housework at night and weekends, and Theo worked in a factory from age fourteen. Inge went to school and won a scholarship. I liked to work because it took me away from 'home' and the girls there were kind and accepted me. We were on piece work and within a short time I earned top rates. But of course Theo and I had to hand over our pay packets intact, getting half a crown back from each pound earned – one eighth! But that was in theory only. For after a day or so even that small sum was 'borrowed' back, never to be returned.

There were times when we rebelled and did unheard of things like asking for our sweet coupons. Then aunty would fall into a 'faint', accusing us of impairing her health and being ungrateful. Uncle and aunty liked playing Monopoly, but it wasn't much fun just played by two, so we were usually invited to play with them. We soon found that if we won, they did not like it and tormented us afterwards. So we developed a skilful strategy of losing. This made them happy and earned us treats like tea and biscuits, or some sweets.

I recall one wonderful week in January. Aunty and uncle went to visit her mother in Coventry and we were given permission to open our wage packets and take out our allowance and a little extra for food. It was my twenty-first and Inge's fourteenth birthday during that week. We went to Oldham, the nearest town, lunched in a cafe on eggs, beans and chips, saw the sights and then went to the swimming baths where I taught Inge to swim and then had our photographs taken. The happiness and freedom of that birthday will remain for ever in my memory. But even more happiness was in store for us.

Our parents had managed to escape in 1940 and, after five years journeying, ended up in Portugal. It was still war time. A law had been passed in parliament permitting close relatives from neutral countries to travel to England, providing they had children under fifteen there. Inge qualified on that score. Aunty's mother had bought another house in Coventry (she ran boarding houses) on hearing about our parents coming. It was intended to install them as housekeepers there so that they could earn their keep. However, when they arrived and saw the state we were in (I had no shoes, only wooden clogs for working in the cotton mill where they were the usual footwear), there was a terrible rumpus. We children had decided not to say anything bad about Aunty and Uncle, but during the night Mutti had wormed the whole story out of me. Inge had lost all and Theo most of his German. Parents are not deceived and I shall never know how, but Papa, via the village telephone, and not speaking any English, managed to contact the nearest Refugee Committee (Manchester) and within two hours they arrived by car and we were taken away. My parents insisted that I was bought a pair of shoes on the way. This was a few days after my twenty-first birthday.

When I recently bought my records from the CBF^[1] I found we had been labelled troublemakers for complaining to our parents.



A new happy era started. We settled in Birmingham. I married and raised a family and have two daughters and nine wonderful grandchildren in England and Israel. I am no stranger to tragedy either, having lost a wonderful son, Danny, at the age of twenty-one. Also Theo died forty-three years old. But I console myself with the knowledge that I can visit their and my parents' grave, a comfort which, unfortunately, is denied to so many of my generation of Kinder.

[1] Central British Fund for German Jewry (CBF) was formed in 1933 to support German Jews under Nazi rule and played a major role in organising the Kindertransport. The organisation still exists today under the name World Jewish Relief.

Source: *I Came Alone: The Stories of the Kindertransports*. Editor, Bertha Leverton. Book Guild, 1990, pp. 182-184.