



Kindertransport

Immediately after Hitler came to power, most German Jews assumed Nazi anti-Semitism was emblematic of a new nationalism and unlikely to affect them directly. However, when violent unprovoked attacks on Jewish people and property began, prosperous Jews, especially those with business connections overseas, academics, writers and musicians began to leave Germany. Others, as Germans who served in the First World War, were convinced that this outbreak of state sponsored animosity could not possibly last. The less affluent Jews found it more difficult to leave. Much of Europe and the United States were in a state of recession and with high unemployment and inflation did not want to encourage immigration.

British law allowed special consideration for an immigrant 'seeking admission to this country solely to avoid prosecution on religious or political grounds' but German Jews were not deemed eligible in the early thirties. The only nation able to offer practical resettlement at that time was Holland.

As the situation in Germany grew more dangerous, the Jews plight was championed in Britain the Jewish Refugees Committee (later the German Jewish Aid Committee) led by Otto Schiff. In May 1933 Lionel de Rothschild and Simon Marks raised funds to help the committee lobby the League of Nations. Palestine had been designated the Jewish National Home in 1917 and a mass immigration to Palestine would solve part of the problem. The large number of Zionists amongst the German Jewry began to train their young people with skills they would need resettling there.

In 1933, German schools had to reduce their Jewish pupils to less than five percent and in 1935, the Nuremberg decree insisted German citizenship was restricted only to Aryans and the Jews lost their right to vote, employment and state education.

By 1936, about 80,000 Jews had left Germany and by 1938, at least 30,000 had found new lives in Palestine. After the Nazis marched into Vienna and Eichmann declared his intention to free Austria of all Jews, those Austrians intended to flee.

More support was gathering in Britain. The Save the Children Fund and the Society of Friends raised funds and petitioned to provide practical support. On the nights of 9 and 10 November 1938 Nazi stormtroopers destroyed Germany's synagogues, vandalised thousands of Jewish homes and businesses, murdered a hundred Jews and arrested thousands. This became known as Kristallnacht - 'the night of broken glass'. The Jewish situation had become desperate.

The British House of Commons debated refugee policy on 21 November. It was decided to make special provision to accept Jewish young people, provided they would not 'burden the state' This would be organised by the Refugee Children's Movement.

Just a week later, the plans for kindertransport were taking shape. It was decided the Dutch Refugees Committee would assist with the initial stages of the journeys. The main route would be by train to the Hook of Holland then by boat to Harwich and to Liverpool Street Station, London by train. The children would be sent from Berlin, Hamburg, Munich, Frankfurt, Vienna and Prague. Amongst the first children to be accepted on the



kindertransport were orphans from a Jewish orphanage in Berlin. Each child was allowed to bring a small suitcase and ten Reichsmarks.

Between December 1938 and 31 August 1939 (the date of the last kindertransport), just under 10,000 children were brought to Britain. Many never saw their parents again.

Clive "Teddy" Teddern.

Teddy was born in 1923 in Hamburg and was raised in a liberal Jewish household. His father was a doctor in general practice but in 1934 new German racist laws deprived him of his practice.

As a schoolboy, Teddy experienced some discrimination but remembers the majority of the teachers and pupils were very sympathetic towards him. He was forced to leave school after Kristallnacht although he remained in contact with some of his school friends.

In 1939, Teddy came to Britain with the kindertransport.

I went to Scotland, to Edinburgh, because at that time I had a cousin living in Edinburgh and he made contact with a family with whom I came to live, and this was possibly the unhappiest year of my life. (This Jewish family) were practising, orthodox in a rather superstitious fundamental way and they objected very strongly that I did not come from the same background... and I was constantly taken to task because my parents didn't practise Judaism the way they felt it should have been practised and therefore my parents were wicked people and it was their fault that the Nazis had come to power, and I had to live against this background...

Teddy had learnt some English at school in Germany, and although he had initial problems understanding the Scottish accent, he soon became fluent. He enjoyed school and was treated very well by his classmates but in May 1940 he was interned, as were all 'enemy aliens'.

Those under eighteen were sent to a camp at Lingfield Racecourse.

It was a camp for German sailors, German seamen. Now the camp itself was large, spacious, and accommodation and everything was good. It was May. It was lovely weather. We were together with Nazis and there were some clashes. We were with an agricultural school with 46 or 48 boys who were training to go to what was then still Palestine, and we integrated with them. The group itself had arranged some sort of classes and instructions which we joined in. By and large it was, to me, a holiday and a liberation because I was not under this constant pressure and antagonism, which I experienced in Scotland... I made lots of friends. It was very companionable.

Teddy estimates there were about a thousand interned at the camp and that just five percent were Jewish. Most of the other internees seemed indifferent to the Jewish boys although there were antagonistic Nazis and equally there were those sympathetic to their situation.



3 members of 2 Troop, 'A' on a Cromwell turret. CT is the trooper in the middle.



When Italy joined forces with Germany, all the internees in the camp were taken to Liverpool by train.

(We were) put in a ship and sent to Canada... There were just a few of us - twenty of us roughly - amongst 2,000 or more Nazis. The recently arrived Italians and our friends from the agricultural school remained behind. There was pushing and shoving, not really hard, but certainly we were in constant fear. There was one man who put himself in charge - a German civilian - who gave us a very, very hard time. We were continually threatened with being thrown overboard and that the ship would turn round and sail to Germany because the war was over. Also there was a political mutiny in which one German was shot and killed. We had no sleeping accommodation. We just slept.

The Duchess of York had been a luxury liner before the war and the journey took five days. On arrival in Canada, they were divided into four groups and Teddy and the other Jewish internees were taken to a camp in Northern Ontario. They were accommodated in wooden huts with separate chemical toilets and the conditions were quite comfortable.

Obviously we lacked freedom, we lacked privacy, and the boredom was there, but amongst the other people in our little group we made friends, we had company. We kept ourselves busy, my friends and I we made bottle ships and things like that... I could correspond with my parents because we had prisoner of war mail, and the huts were warm - smelly but warm. We were provided with warm clothing, and as regards food it couldn't be better. We were on Canadian Army rations and they weren't bad.

In January 1941, Teddy and his group were sent to a camp simply for refugees with more relaxed discipline. In June, the British Parliament questioned the status of the Jewish internees and sent a representative of the Home Office to interview and select any suitable and willing to return to Britain to join the services. Teddy wanted to enlist but he was too young. He was sent back to Britain unconditionally and told he could join the services when he was eighteen.

Back in England, Teddy went to stay in Oxford with an aunt and found work in a local shop. After the attack on Pearl Harbor and America's involvement in the war, he attended the Army recruiting office and in March 1942 he joined the The Pioneer Corps and started training at Huyton, near Liverpool.

After training he was sent to Bicester.

They sent me to Bicester to where they were building a huge ordnance depot and we were involved in the construction of that because the Pioneer Corps were ex-convicts, mentally retarded and foreigners. I was in a company of doctors, lawyers, artists and so on. The atmosphere was still basically German. The language was mostly German and we were an alien company.

After Bicester I was sent to Long Marston, near Stratford-on-Avon... That's when we were told that combatant units were now open to us and we put in our applications and I put mine in for the Royal Armoured Corps... then on 8 August, when Italy came out of the war, on the same day I had a Red Cross letter that my parents were sent to a concentration camp. Everybody was rejoicing except me.



That was the last communication I had from them... they were sent to a camp called Theresienstadt in Czechoslovakia. I always lived under the impression that when the war is over I will go back to Hamburg and in my rather immature mind I always felt we will go back, things will be back as they were. We will pick up where we left off except I wouldn't have to go back to school - I was living in a dreamworld.

In December, Teddy received his transfer to the Royal Armoured Corps and began training as a tank-gunner at the 55th Training Regiment in Farnborough. He was completing his training at Barnard Castle on D-Day. He and his crew were sent to Newhaven and sailed to the newly built Mulberry Harbour.

Teddy was Cromwell trained and was sent as reinforcement to The 8th Hussars. They experienced heavy shellfire at Falaise and continued the advance towards Holland. They encountered heavy German resistance at the Nijmegen Corridor, but there were no casualties in Teddy's squadron.



Teddy in the driver's seat of a Cromwell

(In) January 1945, it was freezing cold and we were in the tanks overnight then in the morning we were supposed to advance on Schilborg. C Squadron was planning to do the old-fashioned cavalry charge, and we were all very glad about it - glad that we were not C Squadron, that is - and it was done with Commandos (Royal Marine Commandos) riding on the back of tanks but by that time the Germans had withdrawn so there was no serious resistance. But we also had some very serious fighting at the time in that area, in that sector. My troop, we were in a sort of farmyard and out Troop Sergeant's tank was knocked out. The Wireless Operator was killed and the Commander, the Sergeant, was severely wounded.

(On another occasion) We were caught in the farmyard and cut off because the damaged tank was in front of us so the only way out was actually going through the building itself, and what we didn't realise was there was a German 75 SP waiting on the other side which hit us, but at such an angle that it knocked a whole big piece out of the amour without penetrating it... as it was so aptly put, our gun was remodelled to fire round corners.



'A' Squadron Cromwell during the thaw in February 1945.



Camouflaged 8th Hussar Challenger tank.

(There was) German armour all around us and we spent the night in slit trenches and during the day in the farmhouse. We didn't suffer many casualties, but we were relieved by The 11th Hussars, The Cherry Pickers.

Teddy attended a gunnery training course in Belgium for two weeks and rejoined his Regiment for the Rhine Crossing.

The day I crossed into Germany was 29 March at 3pm, which was one hour short of the time I left Germany in 1939 - 29 March, 4pm. (We went across) on a Bailey bridge. The first town we came to was Wesel and it was still on fire.

When we advanced into northern Germany - the Luneberg area - I knew that very well because we had friends there and used to spend holidays there. Like a fool I shot off my mouth and said, "I know the area like the back of my hand". So when there was anything interesting going on, I was volunteered, and one of the instances was when some Belgian officers came up to us. They were from a German prisoner of war camp. They gave us a location and it was decided that we would send a troop of tanks out to liberate them and a number of half-tracks to bring them back. Of course, obviously since I knew the area, I was on the Troop Leader's tank... we took a number of prisoners but by that time they had been abandoned. My Troop Leader insisted I dismount with him to go to all the various houses to see what we could find, which wasn't my idea, but I mean we had to go.

Teddy was in Hamburg when Germany surrendered.

Hamburg was declared an open city and we were the first British troops in there. My Troop Commander again he wanted me to take him to the best known photographic shop in Hamburg, for reasons of his own. We found, liberated, a small German car. We drove about in that, and I also drove to the house where I spent my childhood, which, of course, was no more. It was completely destroyed in the firestorm. I have still got a tile which I broke off of what used to be our kitchen, and then we drove along to a place outside Hamburg, but when I was told the transports were coming back. I went to Hamburg several times. My unit was very, very helpful and very supportive and generous and understanding... and when the transports came back I was



there, it was then that I heard. Well, out of 3,000 people, 600 came back and some of them knew my parents and told me that they were sent to Auschwitz and, of course, very few came back from there.

I insisted on carrying out normal duties, and I was expected to, and I think that was the best thing to do. I had enormous sympathy and support from everybody but I was not given any exceptional treatment. I wouldn't have wanted that. I mean, everybody knew what had happened to my parents and I had to accept that.

There were times when it really hit me. For instance on the occasion of my birthday, for instance... (and once) in a farm, with a new born calf, somehow it was my friend because the calf was separated from it's mother and so I could identify with it, somehow. But I just carried on with soldiering.



8th Hussar Cromwell crossing the 'Friendship' Bridge built by the Red Army to replace the destroyed Autobahn bridge on the motorway to Berlin, Summer 1945.



'A' Squadron outside 'Haus des Deutschen Sports' on the Olympic Games Complex where we were billeted in Spring 1945.

(I stayed in Germany until) 1947. I was due for demob in 1946, but I signed on for another year. I had nobody to go back to.

When I came out of The Army, not everybody was waiting for the war heroes to return and I found some antagonism towards someone who was not British born.

Because I was depressed, I took a job in a pharmaceutical firm in the warehouse, no prospects, just loading up. By that time I was married and my first child was on the way, and I think I couldn't have got anywhere if I didn't have my wife's wonderful support at the time. Because I was repressed I was pottering about with bits of wood and I found I had a talent there.

When I got some restitution money from Germany I thought I could use it to pay (to train to become a woodwork teacher.) They didn't make it easy, but my father-in-law, who was very astute in that respect, he went to Germany several times and he dealt with it very efficiently. If it hadn't been for him we wouldn't have got anything. I mean I was compensated for my parents' death with two hundred pounds each. Admittedly it was a lot in those days, but even then I thought it was not exactly a fair assessment.



I went to Auschwitz two and a half years ago, and just on one day trip. In a way it was traumatic, in another it laid a few ghosts. I used to have nightmares before that and guilt - a terrible feeling of guilt... I stood in the actual gas chamber in which my parents died, or at least as far as I know they died. I think its quite on the cards that my father died on the transport but I am glad that I went. I also went to Israel and I went to Yad Vashem, the memorial gardens and the eternal flame there, and again I felt my parents' presence there.

Ken Ward

Ken Ward was born in November 1922 into a liberal Jewish family. His father ran a private music school in Frankfurt and played the organ at the Synagogue.

Ken's early years were very happy; he had three elder brothers and his father's music school prospered despite Germany's inflation and unemployment problems. However, once The National Socialist Party came to power, Ken noticed a difference in the way he was treated at school.

Quite rapidly I became a second-class citizen and I was not allowed to participate in all the lessons, which the other boys did. But in fairness to the other boys I was in class with, they did treat me reasonably fairly. There was some, of course, who called me a Jew or a dirty Jew or whatever, but I was actually still accepted by the other pupils at that school until I had to leave it towards the end of 1936.

My best friend was called Heinz Jochen Stiege. He kept up with seeing me... but he joined the Hitler Youth like all the other boys did, and by 1936 when he invited me to his birthday it was a separate birthday party especially for me and one or two other boys, who also knew me and accepted me. So there was this separation then, which was a little bit hurtful.

Ken's father was very aware of the political situation and, although it was forbidden to listen to broadcasts from Britain. By the late thirties he was sure there would be another war and wanted his family safely away from Germany. His second son Walter, a left wing university student, took his saxophone and clarinet, fled to Paris in February 1933 and became a street musician, never to return to Germany. He played in a band in Singapore when war broke out and fortunately for him he was interned and sent to Australia just before the Japanese occupied Singapore. His eldest son Hans went to work in North Africa in 1934 but had to return to Germany when his work visa expired in 1936. As he suffered from asthma he was unable to emigrate and perished in the holocaust with his parents.

After Ken's school would no longer teach him, his parents hoped he could emigrate to Palestine and decided to send him to an agricultural training camp in preparation.



Ken Ward



I actually passed a test and was accepted to be able to go to Palestine, but at the same time a cousin of mine, who was in England, had found somebody who paid a fifty pound deposit into the funds of a Jewish committee to sponsor me to come on a Kindertransport to England... and my parents thought it would be better for me to go to England.

The relevant documents were received confirming Ken's place on the Kindertransport leaving Frankfurt on 25 August 1939.

The day before I left I was having singing lessons from my father and I sang the final aria from the opera Tosca and the words of the lyrics actually say, "I have never loved life so much but now I must die", and I was singing that in a tenor voice as I always did and as I sang out the high C at the top of my voice, I turned around and for the first time in my life I saw my father crying. I suddenly realised properly as a youngster what was happening.

My mother took me to the station at that time. I shall never forget that because she was not allowed to go on the platform and she had to stay at the barrier, no one else was allowed to come.

I leant out of the window, saw my mother standing all alone crying by a pillar and when my mother waved goodbye, that was horrendous, and that was of course the last time I saw her -

On arrival at London's Liverpool Street Station, I was taken over by a committee member who took me to a lady's house where there were four or five other boys staying like myself and then a week later we were sent to Margate - Cliftonville - to a hostel for refugee children. I was there with many other children and there we heard Prime Minister Chamberlain, declare war on the third of September. About two weeks later I was summoned to the Town Hall of Margate in front of about ten or twelve good citizens who interviewed me... I was sixteen then, and I looked much younger. I was sitting there in the centre, in front of a horseshoe table and they asked me why I was in England, what I was doing and all sorts of things like that, and suddenly came the killer question which utterly shattered me, "would you like to go back to Germany?" I actually burst into tears and said, "for God's sake don't send me back to Germany. I have only got here about a few weeks ago and at least here I can walk about freely and needn't be afraid of members of the Hitler Youth standing at corners and beating me up on the way past them. My parents can't get out of Germany because my father is blind and he can't get a visa to get into any other country in case he becomes a liability. If you send me back I shall probably be killed eventually by the Nazis, so please don't do this." And they said, "well, don't worry, don't worry, it's quite alright. We won't do that and we will actually classify you as a friendly enemy alien, and if you go to the police station tomorrow you will be getting a book, an identity book, for that and then you will be quite alright and don't worry."

At the end of 1939, Ken was sent to a refugee hostel in London also funded by a Jewish committee. He found work as a houseboy at a boarding house in Swiss Cottage after the job



was advertised at the labour exchange for a week, and no English boy could be found willing to take on the job, he was given a labour permit. He worked 87 hours a week for 7 shillings and six pence plus his board and lodging.

But I was always very happy to be free and to be in England. I don't think anyone who hasn't experienced being a second class citizen and being scared to walk down the streets will realise how important it is to feel free and despite the fact that the war had started and that I spoke with a very, very strong accent, I was accepted by everyone, I was absolutely accepted as an equal. Nobody ever assaulted me; nobody ever called me a "filthy Jew" or a "bloody foreigner" or anything like that. It was absolutely marvellous.

When the Blitz began in the East End of London, Ken decided to find employment elsewhere. In December 1940, he found work in a factory, cutting uniforms. In 1941, contact with his parents suddenly ceased and Ken's aunt in the USA wrote to him.

She sent me a letter which had been published in a German refugees magazine in America that my parents and my eldest brother Hans had been deported to Poland and that they assumed they had been killed on arrival... Of course, that shocked me terribly and that made me decide that I have got to do something, and that's when I volunteered for The Army.

Ken joined 87th Company Pioneer Corps and began training at Huyton Camp near Liverpool.

Then a regulation came through that aliens or foreigners who want to join fighting units may do so once they had been interviewed. So, of course, I wanted to be in a fighting unit because I felt my parents and my brother had been killed and I wanted to get my own back so instantly I volunteered. I chose tanks because I felt it would be nice to be in a tank and then you don't have to carry all your kit... after an intelligence test and agility test they accepted me... and I was trained as a wireless operator in the RAC (The Royal Armoured Corps) at Farnborough.

There was only a little anti-Semitism and some of "these bloody German Jewish Refugees"...but all the other things were just friendly comments at times. I mean for instance when I had joined the 1st RTR and was on a tank crew, we were very friendly, we were mates... The guys would say "come and have a look at our tame Jerry at a penny a time" - but these were very friendly comments. I must say I was always very well treated and I always felt I was part of the group.

Just when we knew we were going to join the tanks an order came through suggesting that those of us who had volunteered should change our names, because if you get taken prisoner with a German name you wouldn't stand much of a chance. As all my kit had been marked with my initials KRW, I had to choose a name with those initials. I chose a name which was very common and did not stand out in any way. We were issued with dog tags (identity discs) which you carried on a chain round your neck. The disc gave your name and number and in the centre your religion, to ensure you were buried in the right grave. In the centre of my disc was a large 'J'. I knew I would have to get rid of my disc if I was ever taken prisoner.



After six months intensive training, Ken joined the 1st Royal Tank Regiment, part of the 7th Armoured Division that had recently served in Africa and Italy.

The crew on my tank looked down on me a little bit - not because I was Jewish or German or anything like that, but simply because I was a rookie who had never seen an angry man before... But I learnt and as soon as I learnt, I became more accepted by them.



Our Crew



Our Firefly

Ken was posted to Normandy. The Sherman Firefly tanks were waterproofed in the huge grounds of Orwell Park School, a private prep school near Ipswich, which had been evacuated. From there the tanks were driven to Felixstowe, taken across The Channel by LST and on 7th June 1944, on D Plus 1, landed on Gold Beach at Arromanches. The tanks were brought close to the beach on Rhino ferries and the waterproofing was discarded on the beach and the tanks moved into Normandy.

On the second or third day there, things quietened down a bit. We were parked in a field and we were sitting behind our tank, brewing up, and a German soldier came crawling out of the ditch next to me, and he had been lying in the ditch for at least 24 hours. He was dirty and soaking wet and he looked terribly old to me, but he was probably only 30 or 35 and he was so scared, I could see. He thought he was going to be shot and not taken prisoner. I had made my resolution, "I am not taking any prisoners", but when I saw him, and saw the fear in his eyes, I couldn't do anything. As we were just brewing up tea, I made him a mug of tea and that's how I learnt my first lesson, that although the Nazis had killed my parents, he hadn't done that. He was just an ordinary soldier fighting the same as I was.

The first major action Ken saw was at Villiers Bocage.

We were moving along a hedge and as we came to the end I looked to the right hand side and I saw two German Tiger tanks pulling out from a hedge further down. I called out to Les, the tank commander who said: "Oh, cor blimey, look at those bastards there! Christ, lets get in there and make sure we get them." The gun was already loaded and then we started firing at these tanks, hitting one front on. I ran out of armour piercing shells on my side and he shouted: "never mind, never mind what it is.



Just put anything in and fire!" So I got some HE (high explosive) shell in there and the gunner fired at these two German tanks as we were moving. Then because the gun sticks a long way out, as we were moving quite fast, we hit a tree with the gun and the turret started spinning round very fast, smashing the traversing gear, which put our tank out of action. I was very lucky that I was standing with my feet on the turret platform and not on the floor, as my feet would have been cut off.

When the Regiment had broken through Normandy, they advanced towards Belgium. In September 1944, Ken witnessed the parachute drop at Arnhem and from Holland entered Germany.

It was Christmas 1944, which was a cold, cold winter and we were dug in in a place called Sittard. We were expecting to be attacked in a pincer movement because the Germans were attacking the Americans in the Ardennes further south and we were on a standby... I was in a fox hole on Christmas Eve and I could hear the Germans sing Christmas carols in German and I found that very disturbing and moving in one way, but I also felt, "I am now on German soil and we are getting rid of the Nazis."

Eventually they headed for Hamburg where the surrender was being negotiated. In a nearby village, Ken became aware of what was known as the 'Adolf Hitler tree' planted there by Hitler many years earlier.

I went to the nearest farmhouse and I got the chaps out and said, "look, I want this tree chopped down. I am not having that tree here, get on with it quickly." And they came out and chopped that tree down. They took all the timber away because they needed timber and they were very pleased to do that. It gave me great satisfaction to see this memorial tree of Hitler's chopped down. This was one of the things I liked.

They went through Hamburg to Schleswig Holstein and the German Army surrendered there on 5 May 1945.

I was still purely in a tank crew with the other soldiers and we tried to sort things out before the Military Government people took over. The squadron leader called me over and said: "Well, we really ought to separate out the SS and the Nazis from the ordinary soldiers. Go round with the only one other chap who can speak German and see what you can do. So I went round trying to find special Nazis, which was, of course, very difficult, but we had to try and keep order. I found out later, that a tall German Airborne officer with an eye patch, in the German army hospital I inspected, was in fact Heinrich Himmler. Unfortunately I did not recognise him at that time.

When the War in Europe ended, Ken volunteered to become an interpreter. He was attached to the British Military Police in Berlin and eventually joined the SIB (Special Investigation Branch) investigating crimes committed by British soldiers against German civilians and damage to British property caused by Germans.

I met a lot of Germans when I was stationed in Berlin and that probably changed my attitude, and I met a German non-Jewish girl there - a Christian girl - and we weren't actually allowed to fraternise to start with, but we did, and then eventually I decided to marry her. Hildegard had not been involved in any Nazi activities and she came back



The Second World War Experience Centre
Reproduction of an article from the Centre's website
<http://www.war-experience.org/history/keyaspects/kindertransport/default.asp>

with me when I was demobbed as a war bride, and then we had problems when we came to England because she was not accepted so easily by the British people as a war bride... That was in January 1948. Eventually the marriage broke up and I married Joyce, an English non-Jewish girl and now have two English sons, one son from my first marriage, and an English daughter.

I am not only contented but I love this country, I love this country dearly and I love living in England, and in one way I feel perhaps a little bit better than an English person who is born here because he is English purely by birth, but I am British by choice, because I love this country so much.