



Kindertransport

A special interest group of
The Association of Jewish Refugees



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Review: Gaby Weiner, *Tales of Loving and Leaving*. Author House 2016

I used rabbinic interpretation methodology where one word or phrase gives rise to many laws. I review this book because p 98 mentions Kindertransport in a passing reference. More seriously, while the book traces the history of the author's family to the present day. It contains much useful and easily readable history. This is especially so of the late 1930's so relevant to our lives as Kinder. The conditions which the author's families experienced, under the heel of the Nazis, were the same as those of Kinder and their families in Austria or Germany. Reference is made for example to the 'seizure' of businesses, declaration of the individual's finances, bureaucracy to obtain travel permits, £50 guarantee to come to the UK for individuals, adults in this instance, and so on. The adults could also have been our parents, siblings or relatives.

The introduction traces the research undertaken, as already stated, is into the individual person's life but also the general historical background, for example chapter 3 which gives a good bird's eye view of the history of the town of Brody, a deeply religious community '*in the far eastern part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire.*' Gaby Weiner points outright at the beginning of the introduction that '*historians take their topics from society's main actors... but usually ignore the landscape of ordinary lives.*' Thus Kinder who speak or write about their lives have a vital role in the overall picture of the Shoah. Another push to write the book was, as she states '*is to give voice to people like my mother....who were harassed and maltreated during their lifetime and who may at last be granted dignity and affirmation.*' (p.xvi)

Fascinating are the accounts of the individual lives against the political and social backgrounds and their reactions. AS it comes to the 1930's one can almost live alongside the family, as Kinder went through similar experiences, of the horrors Nazi dominated Germany and especially Austria, both with endemic anti-Semitism. Borders were closed to Jewish refugees. How history has repeated itself in this day and age! Chapter 12 is intriguing. Whilst many refugees obtained UK citizenship, Steffi (the author's mother) came to the attention of MI5 and was regarded as a Communist sympathiser, allegations which eventually were untrue and after some years she was naturalised.

I thoroughly enjoyed the book and see a family come to 'life'. The skill of the author, as far as I am concerned, made me feel close to the people as if I had known them personally. It is an excellent read.

An extremely helpful family tree at the beginning enables the reader to follow more easily the stories of the individual persons mentioned. E.g. her mother Steffi. Also valuable is the bibliography.

About the Author Gaby Weiner has worked at universities in the USA, UK and Sweden and currently is Visiting Research Professor at Sussex University and Research Fellow at Manchester Metropolitan University. Apart from academic writings, *'this book is for her children. Grandchildren, extended family members and the wider reading public.'*

Rev. Bernd Koschland